



David Binder Research

California Voter Survey: Opinions on Crime and Solutions

Summary

Most California voters say crime is getting worse, but there is greater concern about violent crime than property crime or homelessness. Asked about potential contributors to crime, large bipartisan majorities say mental illness, cost of living, and homelessness are leading causes. Most say rehabilitation and crime prevention are better solutions to crime than incarceration, and overwhelming majorities support specific policies to expand treatment, rehabilitation, trauma recovery, and violence prevention.

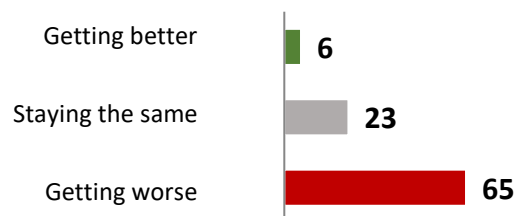
Survey Results

Most voters say crime is getting worse, with violent crime the top concern.

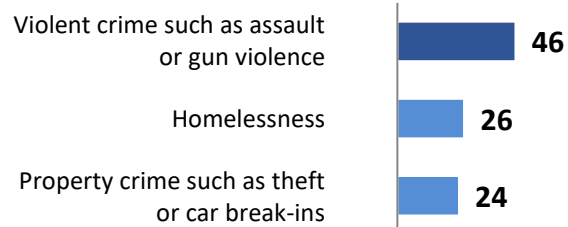
Nearly 2 in 3 voters (65%) say crime in California is getting worse, while 23% say it is staying the same, and 6% say it's getting better. Majorities across party and race say crime is getting worse. Today a higher share of voters say crime is getting worse than said so in January of last year (50%).

Survey respondents were asked whether they are most concerned about violent crime, property crime, or homelessness. Among these, voters are most likely to say violent crime (46%), and this is the most common response across party and race. Around 1 in 4 voters say they are most concerned about either homelessness (26%) or property crime (24%).

Do you think that crime in California is...



Which of the following are you personally most concerned about?



Mental illness, cost of living, and homelessness are seen as leading causes of crime.

Asked about several potential contributors to crime in California recently, strong majorities—including at least 2 in 3 across party—say untreated mental illness (77%), rising cost of living and increased poverty (76%), and homelessness (75%) have contributed to crime either a lot or some.

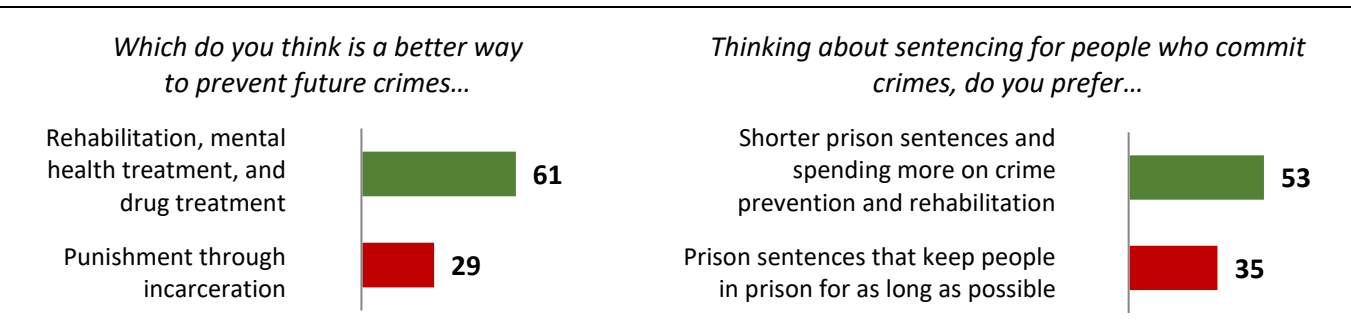
At least 2 in 3 say issues related to the Covid pandemic have contributed to crime, including job loss and financial insecurity (70%) and isolation, mental health crisis, and loss of life (68%).

How much, if at all, do you think the following have contributed to crime in California recently?
(% saying a lot or some)

| | Total | Dem | Ind | Rep |
|---|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| Untreated mental illness | 77 | 77 | 72 | 79 |
| Rising cost of living and increased poverty | 76 | 79 | 75 | 71 |
| Homelessness | 75 | 69 | 73 | 84 |

Most say rehabilitation and crime prevention are better solutions to crime than incarceration.

Asked the best way to prevent future crimes, by a two-to-one margin voters choose rehabilitation, mental health treatment, and drug treatment (61%) over punishment through incarceration (29%). For sentencing of those who commit crimes, most voters prefer shorter prison sentences and spending more on crime prevention and rehabilitation (53%), while 35% prefer prison sentences that keep people in prison for as long as possible.



Overwhelming majorities support specific policies to increase rehabilitation and crime prevention.

In line with voter opinion on what contributes to crime and the best ways to address it, support is high for policies to expand treatment, rehabilitation, trauma recovery, and community-based violence prevention.

At least 8 in 10 support expanding police community engagement strategies, expanding trauma recovery centers for victims of violent crime, increasing community-based violence prevention, and expanding community-based victim services. Over 7 in 10 support creating a 9-1-1 for mental health crisis response, requiring treatment for those who commit crimes as a result of substance abuse or mental illness, and reducing sentences for those who participate in rehabilitation and treatment programs. Each policy tested has majority support across party.

Support for Reform Policies

| | Total | Dem | Ind | Rep |
|--|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| Expand police community engagement strategies to improve trust between police and communities to reduce misconduct and solve more unsolved crimes | 87 | 88 | 81 | 87 |
| Expand trauma recovery centers that help victims of violent crime stabilize and recover through mental health treatment, aid navigating the justice system and family support | 85 | 89 | 81 | 80 |
| Increase the number of community-based violence prevention workers who help prevent young people from getting involved in gangs or gun violence, mediate conflicts and prevent retaliation or escalation of violence | 81 | 88 | 81 | 68 |
| Expand community-based victim services with flexible funding that allows victims to get emergency financial help, relocation and legal assistance services | 80 | 82 | 80 | 75 |
| Create a new 9-1-1 for mental health crisis response that deploys teams of mental health first-responders so that mental health experts instead of police handle emergency calls involving psychiatric crises, homelessness, and drug abuse | 75 | 90 | 66 | 52 |
| For people that commit crimes as a result of substance abuse, require substance abuse treatment programs that can address addiction, including community-based drug treatment and medication assisted treatment, instead of incarceration | 75 | 87 | 70 | 57 |
| For people that commit crimes as a result of mental illness, require mental health treatment instead of incarceration | 73 | 82 | 61 | 62 |
| Reduce prison sentences for people in prison who participate in rehabilitation, mental health, substance abuse, educational, or vocational programs | 72 | 80 | 69 | 57 |

David Binder Research conducted a survey of 1,000 likely November 2022 voters in California, June 19-23, 2021. Interviews were conducted online, and respondents were recruited by text message using voter file contact information, or via an online survey panel. The margin of error for the full sample is $\pm 2.8\%$, and it is larger for subgroups.