

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/conservatives-trump-voters-overwhelmingly-support-criminal-justice-reform-new-poll-says>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

On the eve of President Trump's 100th day in office, [a new poll](#) indicates strong support among American conservatives and Trump supporters in particular for criminal justice reform.

The poll, released by the right-leaning CKI, found that eight out of ten Trump voters classified criminal justice reform as being an issue that was important to them.

Vikrant Reddy, a senior research fellow at CKI, said in a conversation with Vera that he wasn't surprised by the results though he conceded many on social media might be.

In the time that I've spent working on criminal justice reform, I've seen a widespread support for criminal justice reform among conservatives, he said. Some people felt that was disappearing, but I hadn't sensed that in the people that I was talking to. So, this poll took a lot of people by surprise but it didn't take me by surprise.

Reddy noted that these findings indicate a strong opportunity for conservatives to lead on criminal justice reform.

[The Trump administration could support] prioritizing community supervision alternatives like drug treatment and rehabilitation, for example, better probation and parole [policies], rather than prison.

Another interesting component of the poll, Reddy pointed out, is that Trump voters were the sample group most likely to report knowing people who are incarcerated or who have been involved with the criminal justice system at some point.

When asked what that personal relationship with incarceration might mean for how the Trump administration could galvanize its base to pursue criminal justice reform, Reddy referenced the [opioid crisis](#) that is crippling communities nationwide.

Trump did very well in areas where the opioid crisis has hit America the hardest. Anybody who's followed the opioid crisis and followed the electoral map in November noticed this. It would make sense to pursue more treatment and rehabilitation options, and for the federal government to find ways to incentivize those types of reforms at the state level. That's definitely an area where the administration could exercise real leadership.

This poll while just one body of research indicated what the Vera Institute of Justice has long believed to be true: there is a real appetite for criminal justice reform in America that exists on both sides of the political aisle.

Reddy agreed that the issue was one that has become so pervasive that it can no longer be ignored.

The criminal justice system has gotten so big, and so vast, that virtually every American has some exposure relative, a friend, maybe even themselves and that's something that transcends any political label.

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