



To: Interested Parties
Date: June 20th, 2014
Re: Attitudes towards criminal justice of California Latino voters.

A recent survey of California Latinos, conducted by David Binder Research¹, revealed that Latino voters believe that criminal justice policies should prioritize rehabilitation, probation, mental health services, drug and alcohol treatment, and investing in education, rather than additional spending and investment on jails and prisons.

In particular, Latinos are more likely to believe that we have too many nonviolent offenders in prison rather than too few. They believe that we should focus more on rehabilitation over prisons, and that we should invest more in education and health services, rather than in prisons. Further, they believe in general that we should focus more on policies that spend less on incarceration.

These beliefs result in overwhelming support for three proposals tested: giving judges more flexibility based on individual circumstances, rather than mandatory minimums; allowing low-risk offenders to be supervised in the community rather than being jailed; and shortening criminal sentences to use the savings for education and health services.

Incarceration of Nonviolent Offenders

California Latino voters believe that California imprisons too many nonviolent offenders – as opposed to too few nonviolent offenders – by a margin of more than three to one. Nearly half believe that we send too many nonviolent offenders to prison, while only 13% believe that we send too few nonviolent offenders to prison.

Do you believe the state of California sends too many people to prison for nonviolent offenses, sends too few people to prison for nonviolent offenses, or sends about the right amount of people to prison for nonviolent offenses?	
Too Many	44%
About Right	34%
Too Few	13%

¹ David Binder Research conducted a statewide survey of 1,050 California voters who identify as Hispanic or Latino and are likely to vote in November 2016. The survey was conducted by phone – using both landlines and cell phones, from May 28th through June 6th, 2014. All survey interviewers were bilingual in English and Spanish and conducted the survey in the language preferred by the respondent. The survey has an overall margin of error of 3%.

The sample is representative of Latino voters who are likely to vote in the November 2016 election. This survey represents the broadest representation of the full diversity of California Latinos, of all ages, geographies, generations, and gender.



Newer immigrants are more likely to accept the status quo – with 37% saying it is about right. Those whose families have been in the United States for a generation are 47% too many, versus 13% too few.

By Generation

	<i>Percent of Sample</i>	Too Many	About Right	Too Few
All Latinos	100%	44%	34%	13%
1 st Generation	35	39	37	11
2 nd Generation	38	47	33	13
3 rd Generation or higher	26	44	32	15

Rehabilitation versus Prison

By a margin of about five to one, Latino voters believe that California should focus more on providing supervised probation and rehabilitation, rather than sending more people to jail and prison.

Do you think that the state of California should focus more on sending people to jail and prison, or more on providing supervised probation and rehabilitation programs, or is the balance about right?	
Rehabilitation	51%
About Right	32%
Prison	11%

This preference is more pronounced for new immigrants, who favor more of a focus on rehabilitation over more of a focus on prison by a margin of six to one (53% versus 9%), while those whose families have been in the United States longer are still much more likely to prefer focusing on rehabilitation, but the margin is somewhat smaller (49% to 12%).

By Generation

	<i>Percent of Sample</i>	Rehabilitation	About Right	Prison
All Latinos	100%	51%	32%	11%
1 st Generation	35	53	29	9
2 nd Generation	38	51	35	12
3 rd Generation or higher	26	49	31	12

Education Spending versus Prison Spending

On questions of spending, Latinos expressed even stronger preferences. When comparing spending on prisons or education, California Latinos are nearly universal. 86% advocate for more spending on education, while only 4% would prefer more spending on prisons.

Thinking about California's spending on schools and prisons, do you think California should invest more money in prisons, or should invest more money in education, or is the balance about right?	
Education	86%
About Right	9%
Prisons	4%

Health Spending versus Prison Spending

Attitudes towards spending on health services are similarly more pronounced. More than two in three (70%) believe that California should invest more in health services like mental health and drug and alcohol treatment, while only 5% believe we should invest more in prisons.

Do you think that the state of California should invest more in health services like mental health and drug and alcohol treatment, invest more in jails and prisons, or is the balance about right?	
Mental Health	70%
About Right	22%
Prisons	5%

Incarceration Spending

When asked whether California should be pursuing policies that depend more on incarceration or less on incarceration, Latino voters overall prefer those that depend less on incarceration by a margin of 47% to 40%.

Do you think that elected officials in California should pursue criminal justice policies that depend more on incarceration in jails and prisons, or should they pursue criminal justice policies that depend less on incarceration in jails and prisons?	
Less on Incarceration	47%
More on Incarceration	40%

Proposal: Community Supervision

When asked about specific criminal justice reforms, California Latinos are overwhelmingly supportive. More than two in three support a proposal that would allow low risk offenders to be supervised in the community, rather than jailed. Opposition – on the other hand – is minimal, with only 25% saying they oppose the proposal.

Allowing low-risk offenders who are waiting for their trial to be supervised in the community, rather than being jailed.	
Support	69%
Oppose	25%

Support is strongest among those who have been in the United States for more generations, but support is relatively equal across demographic groups. 72% of third generation Latinos support the proposal, while 69% of new Californians support it.

By Generation

	Percent of Sample	Support	Oppose
All Latinos	100%	69%	25%
1 st Generation	35	69	22
2 nd Generation	38	69	28
3 rd Generation or higher	26	72	26

Proposal: Judge Flexibility

More than three in four support giving judges flexibility based on the individual circumstances of the crime – rather than having mandatory minimums. Only one in six Latino voters oppose this proposal.

Gives judges flexibility based on the individual circumstances of the crime, instead of having mandatory minimum sentences.	
Support	76%
Oppose	16%

Support is also most pronounced among newer immigrants (78% support), although Latinos of all generations are supportive of this reform.

By Generation

	<i>Percent of Sample</i>	Support	Oppose
All Latinos	100%	76%	16%
1 st Generation	35	78	13
2 nd Generation	38	77	18
3 rd Generation or higher	26	74	20

Proposal: Shorten Sentences

California Latinos are overwhelmingly supportive of shortening criminal sentences and using the savings to invest in education, health services and crime prevention efforts. More than three in four (78%) support, while only 16% oppose.

Shorten longer criminal sentences and use the savings in prison costs to invest in education, health services and crime prevention efforts.	
Support	78%
Oppose	16%