

Third Way Crime Poll Highlights

These are the highlights of a 1,139 person survey conducted by Cooper & Secrest Associates, December 15–19, 2007 on voter attitudes toward crime.

Americans View Crime as a Resurgent Threat

Although, crime does not rival the economy or Iraq as a front burner issue, there are clear indications that the public is becoming more concerned about the issue.

- 57% rate crime as a “very serious” issue
- By a 56-11% margin, the public believes there is more crime rather than less crime in America than one year ago
- 78% say that children are more vulnerable to crime than ten years ago
- By a 69-19% margin, Americans feel that crime is more of a threat to their own safety than terrorism

Most Americans Are Non-Ideological Pragmatists on Crime

Our research identified three distinct groups of Americans on the crime issue. The most prominent was the 55% of Americans whom we call “Solve-the-Problem” voters. They are non-ideological pragmatists who are open to a very active government role in crime prevention and intervention if properly designed and framed to emphasize personal responsibility. These voters are evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans and are dispersed evenly throughout the country.

The remaining two groups are far more ideological. “Throw-the-Book” voters comprise a small minority of the population and oppose any efforts at changing criminal behavior beyond enforcement and prison. They are overwhelmingly conservative. “Read-a-Book” voters believe wholeheartedly in rehabilitation and are far more likely to be liberal than the general population. They rank crime lower as an issue and see crime as slightly less of a threat to themselves.

Democrats and Republicans are at Parity on the Crime Issue

When asked who would do a better job of “working to reduce crime,” 33% chose Democrats, 31% chose Republicans, and 36% volunteered “not sure” or “neither party.” Compared to the 1970s and 80s, when the country trusted only conservatives to combat crime, our polling indicates that there has been a significant shift in public opinion towards parity. However, Americans still have distinct preconceptions about both parties’ approaches to the issue. They see Democrats as too quick to blame crime on circumstances, like bad schools, broken

families, and dysfunctional neighborhoods. They see Republicans as holding individuals responsible for their own actions, but straying too far towards punitive sentencing for crime.

Voters Favor Intervention Efforts to Reduce Crime

There is strong support for programs aimed at reducing crime, but those designed to make people improve and take responsibility scored the best. For example, when prison rehabilitation programs were defined as a requirement of, not a benefit for, prisoners—support soared. Specifically, a policy forcing prisoners “to work, get an education, and learn skills because they need to be productive when they get out” scored 36-points higher (with 91% approval) than one providing prisoners who have “difficult family, economic or mental health circumstances” with the “proper counseling and training they need to be rehabilitated.”

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AREA:

	Total
Pacific West	14
Mountain-Plains	16
Midwest	24
South	24
Northeast	22

GENDER:

	Total
Male	47
Female	53

Q.1 Are you registered to vote at this address?

	Total
Registered (CONTINUE)	-
Not registered (TERMINATE)	-
Not sure (TERMINATE)	-

Q.2 Looking ahead, what are the chances you will vote in the November 2008 general election for President--are you almost certain to vote, will you probably vote, are the chances 50-50, or don't you think you will vote at this time?

	Total
Almost certain (CONTINUE)	-
Probably (CONTINUE)	-
50-50 (TERMINATE)	-
Don't vote (TERMINATE)	-
Not sure (TERMINATE)	-

Q.3 Generally speaking, do you believe that things in this country are headed in the right direction, or do you believe things are off on the wrong track?

	Total
Right direction	19
Wrong track	66
Not sure	15

Q.4 What if the 2008 general election for the U.S. CONGRESS were being held today, do you think you would vote for the Republican candidate or the Democratic candidate for Congress in your district? (If "NOT SURE":) Well, which way do you lean as of today--toward a Republican or a Democratic candidate?

	Total
Republican candidate	34
Democratic candidate	44
Neither (vol)	4
Not sure	18

Q.5 What if the 2008 general election for the STATE LEGISLATURE were being held today, do you think you would vote for the Republican candidates or the Democratic candidates for state legislature in your district? (If "NOT SURE":) Well, which way do you lean as of today--toward a Republican or a Democratic candidate?

	Total
Republican candidate	33
Democratic candidate	42
Neither (vol)	3
Not sure	22

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Q.6 How would you rate the overall job performance of George Bush as President-- excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

	Total
Excellent	6
Good	23
Only fair	26
Poor	44
Not sure	1

Q.7 Much of our survey today is focused on the issue of CRIME. Thinking about the issue of crime in the UNITED STATES AS A WHOLE, would you describe it as a very serious problem, a fairly serious problem, a not very serious problem or a not at all a serious problem?

	Total
Very serious problem	57
Fairly serious problem	37
Not very serious problem	5
Not at all a serious problem	0
Not sure	1

Q.8 Crime takes all forms, of course, especially in today's culture. As you think about this issue, what one or two TYPES of crime would you say are MOST likely to touch you and your family? (PROBE.) Anything else?

	Total
Theft/Robbery	36
Identity theft	17
Burglary	10
Drugs	8
Murder	7
(Top 5 of 23)	
Don't know	12

Q.9 I am going to read you a short list of approaches that elected leaders and law enforcement must consider when it comes to controlling crime. While all of them may be important, please tell me tell which ONE or TWO of these items on this list should be the top priority. (READ LIST. ACCEPT TWO RESPONSES)

ROTATE

	Total
a. Our approach to fighting crime must be tough--punishing criminals, and getting justice for the victims of crime	35
b. Our approach to fighting crime must be smart--investing in the most effective and practical crime-fighting programs to best deal with the crime problem in America today	25
c. Our approach to fighting crime must be fair--balancing punishment for criminals with giving people the opportunity to earn a second chance to become productive citizens	31
d. Our approach to fighting crime must be accountable--rejecting crime-fighting methods that no longer work and using proven crime-fighting strategies so that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely	28
e. Our approach to fighting crime must be punitive--ensuring that criminals are punished for their crimes, even if that means there is less emphasis on treating and rehabilitating criminals	18
All (vol)	4
None (vol)	3
Not sure	-

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Q.10 Is there any area near where you live--say, within a mile or so--where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?

	Total
Yes	34
No	65
Not sure	1

Q.11 Do you believe children are MORE vulnerable to the dangers of crime today, than, say 10 years ago, are they LESS vulnerable, or are they ABOUT AS VULNERABLE to the dangers of crime today compared to 10 years ago?

	Total
More vulnerable	78
Less vulnerable	3
About as vulnerable	18
Not sure	1

Q.12 And which would you describe as the bigger threat to you, personally--violent crime or a terrorist attack?

	Total
Violent crime	69
Terrorist attack	19
Neither	7
Not sure	5

Q.13 Is there more crime in America than there was a year ago, or less crime?

	Total
More crime	56
Less crime	11
Same amount (VOL.)	21
Not sure	12

Q.14 When it comes to 'working to reduce crime' which political party does the better job of representing your views, the Democrats, or the Republicans?

	Total
Democrats	33
Republicans	31
Neither (VOL.)	19
Not sure	17

Q.15 Generally speaking, would you say the criminal justice system in America is always fair, usually fair, sometimes fair, usually unfair, or always unfair?

	Total
Always fair	2
Usually fair	51
Sometimes fair	35
Usually unfair	9
Always unfair	2
Not sure	1

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Q.16 Do you believe illegal immigrants are more likely, less likely, or just as likely to commit a violent crime as other people?

	Total
More likely	25
Less likely	10
Just as likely	62
Not sure	3

Q.17 Thinking again about the issue of crime in general, please tell me which of the following statements comes closer to your point of view? (READ STATEMENTS.)

ROTATE

Statement A: Say what you will, most people who commit crimes are simply bad people who have chosen the path of crime, and are highly unlikely to change or to be rehabilitated.

Statement B: Most people who commit crimes have faced some difficult family, economic or mental health circumstances, and with proper counseling and training, can be rehabilitated and will turn away from crime.

	Total
Statement A	33
Statement B	55
Neither (vol)	7
Not sure	5

ROTATE Q.18 AND Q.19

Q.18 And which of the following two statements concerning the spending of tax dollars on criminals comes closer to your point of view? (READ STATEMENTS.)

ROTATE

Statement A: The fact is, spending a great deal of tax dollars trying to counsel, train or rehabilitate criminals, while well intended, is throwing good money after bad, and this spending is very unlikely to pay off.

Statement B: The reality is, 3 million criminals are scheduled to be released from prisons in the next four years. If we do not get practical and invest tax dollars so prisoners complete drug treatment, earn a high school degree, and learn work skills, we're just asking for a big increase in crime when they get out.

	Total
Statement A	21
Statement B	71
Neither (vol)	4
Not sure	4

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Q.19 And, again, which of the following two statements about spending to REHABILITATE criminals comes closer to your point of view? (READ STATEMENTS.)

ROTATE

Statement A: As long as they are serving their time in prison, inmates must be required to do things that will help make them accountable and productive when they leave. They shouldn't be wasting their time doing nothing while in prison.

Statement B: We have no obligation to provide expensive social services to prisoners. That obligation ended the moment they broke the law.

	Total
Statement A	79
Statement B	16
Neither (vol)	3
Not sure	2

Q.20 Do you favor or oppose a law that allows people who have passed a police background check to carry a concealed firearm? Would that be strongly (FAVOR/OPPOSE) or somewhat (FAVOR/OPPOSE)?

	Total
Strongly favor	32
Somewhat favor	23
Somewhat oppose	14
Strongly oppose	27
Not sure	4

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Q.21 Now, I'm going to read you several statements. For each one I read, please tell me whether you associate that statement MORE with the Democrats, MORE with the Republicans, with BOTH parties, or with NEITHER party. (READ EACH STATEMENT, THEN ASK.) Do you associate that statement more with the Democrats, the Republicans, both or neither?

ROTATE

	Democrats	Republicans	Both	Neither	Not Sure
a. Criminals aren't bad people; they're usually forced into crime because of family or economic circumstances.....	41	8	19	24	8
b. Because of the Internet and other cultural influences, our children have never been so vulnerable to crime.....	13	18	44	18	7
c. The criminal justice system is biased against blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities.....	36	12	14	30	8
d. If we make the investment in anti-poverty, early childhood education and job training programs, we can reduce crime significantly.....	53	10	23	9	5
e. Until we get control of our borders, the United States will struggle to get crime under control.....	14	38	26	16	6
f. Getting serious about crime means getting serious about punishment; tough sentences are the only answer.....	10	48	21	14	7
g. Changing a criminal's behavior means changing his heart; this will only happen through an experience in religious faith.....	12	34	16	30	8
h. People are responsible for their own actions, even if they had a bad upbringing.....	11	37	32	14	6
i. Anti-crime programs need to be held accountable to the taxpayer, so taxpayers know programs are actually working and that their money isn't being wasted.....	20	28	30	15	7
j. Prisoners should be forced to work, get an education, and learn skills because they need to be productive when they get out.....	29	17	34	13	7

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Q.22 I am now going to read a series of statements a candidate might make on crime. For each one I read, please tell me whether it makes you more likely or less likely to support a candidate who makes that statement. If it makes you MUCH more or MUCH less likely to support the candidate, please say so. (PROBE: Are you more or less likely to support a candidate who makes the statement? (IF CHOICE) And is that much more/less likely or somewhat more/less?

	ROTATE					
	Much More Likely	Somewhat More Likely	Somewhat Less Likely	Much Less Likely	No Difference	Not Sure
a. Criminals aren't bad people; they're usually forced into crime because of family or economic circumstances.....	15	22	25	27	7	4
b. Because of the Internet and other cultural influences, our children have never been so vulnerable to crime	42	32	9	7	6	4
c. The criminal justice system is biased against blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities	15	18	22	34	6	5
d. If we make the investment in anti-poverty, early childhood education and job training programs, we can reduce crime significantly	52	30	7	6	3	2
e. Until we get control of our borders, the United States will struggle to get crime under control	39	22	16	15	5	3
f. Getting serious about crime means getting serious about punishment; tough sentences are the only answer.....	33	25	19	16	4	3
g. Changing a criminal's behavior means changing his heart; this will only happen through an experience in religious faith.....	21	22	20	27	6	4
h. People are responsible for their own actions, even if they had a bad upbringing.....	45	28	12	8	4	3
i. Prisoners should be forced to work, get an education, and learn skills because they need to be productive when they get out.....	61	29	3	3	2	2

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Many experts believe there is growing evidence of a coming increase in crime in the next few years. They attribute this to several different trends, including: the release of several million prisoners in the next five years, lower federal funding for crime fighting, the ongoing issue of illegal immigration and new technologies like the Internet that may make children more vulnerable.

Q.23 Here are some suggestions some people have made for reducing crime. For each item I read, please tell me if you think it is a very effective suggestion to reduce crime, a somewhat effective suggestion, a not very effective suggestion, or a not at all effective suggestion reduce crime? (READ LIST AND REPEAT CHOICES.)

	ROTATE Very Effective Suggestion	Somewhat Effective Suggestion	Not Very Effective Suggestion	Not At All Effective Suggestion	Not Sure
a. Require criminals to perform 40-hours of work every week while in prison so that they are productive, not destructive, when they get out	61	30	5	2	2
b. Expand programs to help prisoners get off drugs, get an education, get help with mental health problems, and gain work skills	56	34	6	3	1
c. Put more police on the street.....	58	32	5	3	2
d. Require police to check the immigration status of any suspected illegal immigrant arrested for a violent crime	65	23	5	5	2
e. Make it illegal for an adult to pose as a minor on the Internet.....	66	17	8	7	2
f. Use mandatory drug testing and mental health counseling as an alternative to prison for JUVENILE offenders	40	41	11	5	3
g. Allow illegal immigrants to report crimes to police WITHOUT anyone checking on their immigration status	32	34	15	16	3
h. Create tax breaks for companies to hire ex-prisoners ...	23	45	16	12	4
i. Devote more resources for after-school and weekend programs for troubled youths.....	60	31	6	1	2
j. Create a college scholarship program for low-income teens who graduate high school and stay off drugs and don't get arrested	61	29	6	3	1
k. Support faith-based partnerships that train ex-offenders and place them in jobs	36	44	10	8	2
l. Use new technology to watch over high-crime communities, including video surveillance, gunshot detectors, and license plate scanners.....	47	34	9	7	3
m. Create an illegal immigration strike force to crack down on those who encourage and assist in illegal immigration, including those who create false identification, engage in human trafficking, and provide phony immigration legal services.....	60	24	7	6	3
n. Deny state contracts to businesses that repeatedly disobey immigration laws.....	54	24	12	8	2
o. Support efforts to match state records on sex offenders with data released by social networking sites such as Facebook.....	52	29	8	4	7

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Q.24 In what age group are you? (READ LIST)

	Total
18-24	4
25-34	9
35-49	29
50-64	30
65 and over	28
Refused	-

Q.25 What type of work does the person who is the main source of income in the household do? What is the job called? (BE SURE TO GET ENOUGH INFORMATION TO CLASSIFY PROPERLY. IF UNEMPLOYED, GET USUAL OCCUPATION. DO NOT READ.)

	Total
Professional	24
Executive/Manager/Proprietor	9
Sales	4
Civil service/Government	6
White collar/Clerical/Technical	10
Skilled craftsman/Foreman	10
Semi-/unskilled labor	5
Student	0
Retired	29
Housewife	0
Farmer	1
Other	1
Refused	1

Q.26 which of the following best describes the area where you live: a mostly rural area, a small town, a suburban area, or a medium-to-large city?

	Total
Mostly rural area	20
Small town	28
Suburban area	25
Medium/large city	27
Not sure	-

Q.27 Please tell me which of the following best describes your marital status. (READ OPTIONS.)

	Total
Married	65
Single	13
Divorced/Separated	10
Widowed	12
Refused (DO NOT READ)	-

Q.28 Do you have children in the household age 18 or under?

	Total
Yes	32
No	68
Not sure	-

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Q.29 What is the last grade of school you have completed?

	Total
8th grade or less	2
Some high school	3
High school graduate	26
Some college	17
2-year college graduate	12
4-year college graduate	22
Post-graduate	18
Not sure	-

Q.30 Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend Church or other religious services?

	Total
More than once a week	17
Once a week	31
Once or twice a month	18
Once or twice a year	15
Almost never	19

Q.31 And how would you describe your own political beliefs--very liberal, somewhat liberal, moderate, somewhat conservative, or very conservative?

	Total
Very liberal	9
Somewhat liberal	19
Moderate	28
Somewhat conservative	27
Very conservative	17
Not sure	3

Q.32 How would you describe your point of view in terms of the political parties? Would you say you are mostly Democratic, leaning Democratic, completely Independent, leaning Republican, or mostly Republican?

	Total
Mostly Democratic	31
Leaning Democratic	13
Completely Independent	18
Leaning Republican	12
Mostly Republican	23
None (VOL)	1
Not sure	2

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Q.33 For statistical purposes only, we need to know your total family income for 2006. I'm going to read you a list of categories. Please stop me when I reach the category that best represents your total family income in 2006.

	Total
Under \$10,000	4
Over \$10,000-\$20,000	9
Over \$20,000-\$30,000	10
Over \$30,000-\$40,000	12
Over \$40,000-\$50,000	11
Over \$50,000-\$60,000	10
Over \$60,000-\$70,000	7
Over \$70,000-\$80,000	6
Over \$80,000-\$90,000	3
Over \$90,000-\$100,000	4
Over \$100,000-\$110,000	4
Over \$110,000-\$120,000	2
Over \$120,000	9
Not sure (VOL)	2
Refused	7

Q.34 Are you, or is any member of your household, of Hispanic or Latino origin? (IF "NO" ASK:) What is your race--white, black, Asian, Native American or other?

	Total
Hispanic/Latino	9
White	77
Black	11
Asian	0
Native American	2
Not sure/refused	1
Other	-

Q.35 And finally, do you or anyone in your household own a firearm?

	Total
Yes	44
No	54
Not sure/refused	2

Thank you very much for your time. You have been most helpful. Have a nice afternoon/evening.