



To: Interested Parties
From: Danny Franklin, Jessica Reis; Bully Pulpit Interactive
RE: Support for Clemency
Date: May 18, 2022

Majority Supports Clemency to Address Unfair Sentencing

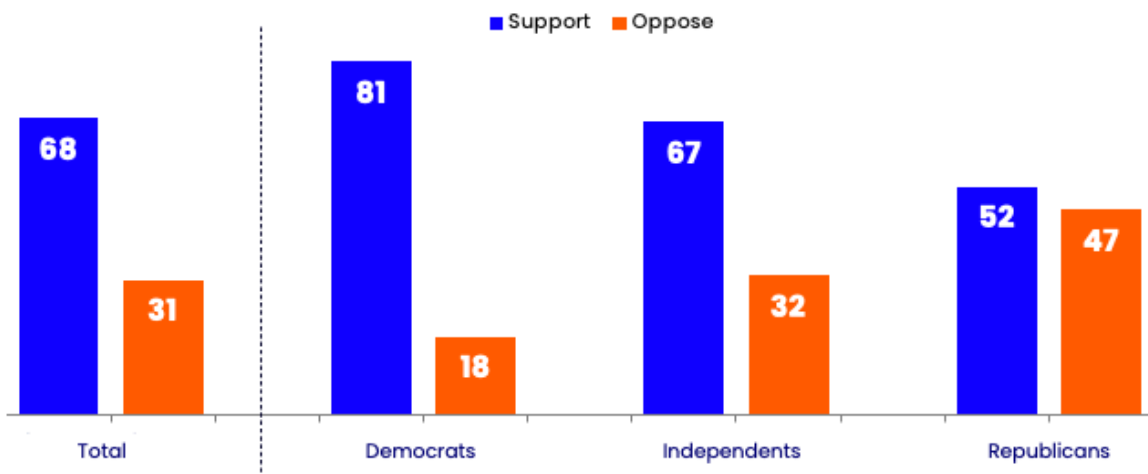
Methodology: Bully Pulpit Interactive surveyed a nationwide sample of 829 registered voters from March 28 – April 6, 2022. Interviews were conducted via a mixed-mode methodology, with 200 interviews completed over the phone including cell phone, and 629 online. The margin of error on a truly random sample of 829 interviews is +/- 3.4 percentage points and is higher among subgroups.

With concern about the impact of mass incarceration broadly shared, a majority of voters nationwide support extending clemency to broad categories of people currently incarcerated. Majorities of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans support clemency, reflecting the widespread belief that War on Drugs era policies led to sentences that were unfairly punitive and did not make communities safer.

Voters support clemency 68% to 31%, and there is majority support across party lines: 81% of Democrats, 67% of Independents, and 52% of Republicans support clemency.

Majority Support for Clemency

Some people have suggested ending or shortening the prison sentences of certain individuals in prison if they were to meet certain selected criteria and determined not to pose a threat to public safety. Would you support or oppose considering releasing these people from prison?



Voters support clemency for three clear categories of people in prison: **those serving time in cases where the laws or sentencing guidelines have since changed; those serving excessively long sentences that are seen as unjust; and those who are still serving time despite no longer posing a threat to the community.**



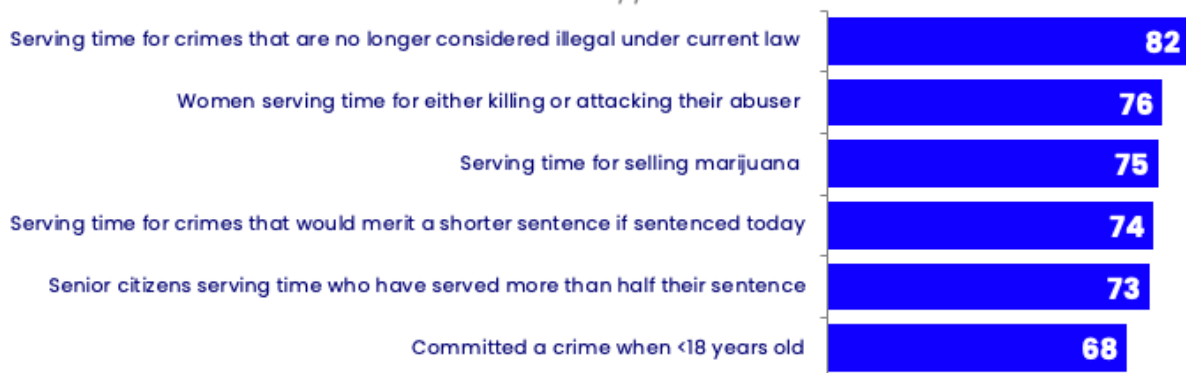
A strong majority of voters support clemency across these three circumstances:

- Instances where laws or sentencing guidelines have changed or since been updated:
 - **82% support** considering release for people serving time for crimes that are no longer considered illegal under the current law (including 65% of Republicans).
 - **74% support** considering release for those who are serving time for crimes that would merit a shorter sentence if sentenced today (including 62% of Republicans).
- Instances in which voters now see the original sentencing as unfair or unjust:
 - **76% support** considering clemency for women who are serving time for either killing or attacking their abuser (including 59% of Republicans).
 - **75% support** considering clemency for people who are serving time for selling marijuana (including 56% of Republicans), an act now that is legal in many states.
- Instances involving those who have aged out of criminal behavior or were children when a crime was committed:
 - **73% support** considering clemency for senior citizens serving time who have served more than half of their sentence (including 51% of Republicans).
 - **68% support** considering release for those who were under 18 when convicted (including 52% of Republicans).

Specific Criteria Strengthen Support for Clemency

For each criteria, do you support or oppose considering release if they fulfill that criteria – and are also determined not to be a threat to public safety?

Total Support



Driving this support for clemency are three factors.

First, **voters see clemency as a tool for correcting past mistakes in sentencing and believe there is a moral call to do so.** When given a host of reasons to support clemency, 60% of voters say the best reason to support clemency is “to correct for sentences that are too long



and do not fit the crime.” Further, voters believe that there is a responsibility to correct these injustices: 74% agree that “we have a responsibility to correct the unjust sentencing laws of the past that keep too many people in prison for too long.”

Second, **voters believe in the potential for rehabilitation and providing people who have shown they are rehabilitated a second chance.** Seventy-nine percent of voters agree that “clemency is a way to give people who have committed to rehabilitating themselves a second chance.”

And third, **support for clemency is strengthened by a call for racial justice in redressing the unfair system.** Sixty-six percent of voters agree that “clemency is a way to correct for failed War on Drugs policies that disproportionately affected people of color” and another 60% agree that clemency is “a way of restoring fairness after a generation of policies that unfairly targeted Black and Brown communities.”

Support for clemency is high, and **voters want to see their elected officials take action.** Overall, 61% of voters say they would be more likely to vote for a gubernatorial candidate that supports a plan for clemency. Among Independent voters, 62% say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate if they supported clemency; 42% of Republicans would be more likely to vote for a candidate that supports clemency; and among Democrats – a core constituency to mobilize – 82% are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports clemency.

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