

MassINC Criminal Justice Poll
 Survey of 754 Massachusetts Registered Voters
 Field Dates: April 27 – May 1, 2017

How much confidence do you have in the criminal justice system here in Massachusetts, which consists of the police, the courts, probation, parole, and prisons — do you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, a little or no confidence at all?

	2014 ¹	2017
A lot of confidence	23%	32%
Some confidence	47%	43%
A little confidence	20%	15%
No confidence at all	8%	7%
Don't Know / Refused	2%	3%

How safe from crime do you feel in your neighborhood?

Very safe	67%
Somewhat safe	27%
Not too safe	3%
Not at all safe	2%
Don't Know / Refused	<1%

Which do you think should be a top priority for dealing with crime? **READ AND ROTATE.**

	2014	2017
Prevention, such as education and youth programs	43%	41%
Rehabilitation, such as education and job training for prisoners	22%	25%
Punishment, such as longer sentences and more prisons	14%	8%
Enforcement, such as putting more police officers on the streets	19%	22%
Don't Know / Refused	2%	4%

Here are three options. Which is the best way for judges to sentence convicted offenders? **READ AND ROTATE.**

	2014	2017
Require judges to sentence some offenders to prison for a minimum period of time	12%	8%
Have judges use sentencing guidelines while still having some discretion	45%	46%
Let judges decide the punishment each time on a case by case basis	40%	41%
Don't Know / Refused	4%	5%

¹ The 2014 data in this document is from a MassINC statewide poll of 1,207 residents of Massachusetts. To make it fully comparable to this year's poll, only the data from the 1,051 registered voters interviewed in the 2014 poll are included in the figures shown in this document. The 2017 poll focuses only on Massachusetts registered voters.

In your opinion, should using drugs be treated more as a crime or more as a health problem?

	2014	2017
More as a crime	23%	24%
More as a health problem	65%	66%
Both / neither / depends (not read)	11%	9%
Don't Know / Refused	2%	1%

Do you think there are too many people in prison in Massachusetts, not enough people in prison, or is the number of people in prison about right?

	2014	2017
Too many	40%	42%
Not enough	17%	10%
About the right amount	27%	23%
Don't Know / Refused	15%	25%

What if a person addicted to drugs were to **READ FIRST**? In this situation, would you favor sending them to prison or to treatment? What if they were to **READ NEXT**?

<i>Order rotated.</i>	Prison	Treatment	Both / neither / depends (not read)	Don't Know / Refused
Sell drugs to other users.	51%	37%	10%	2%
Break into a car on the street to commit theft.	48%	40%	10%	2%
Break into a home to commit burglary	64%	24%	11%	1%
Sell drugs to other users while carrying a knife or a gun.	71%	18%	9%	2%

Next, for each of the following, please tell me how effective, if at all, you think that it is or would be in substantially reducing crime—very effective, fairly effective, not too effective, or not really effective at all. First, **READ FIRST?** How about **READ NEXT?** **REPEAT QUESTION STEM AND SCALE ONLY AS NEEDED.**

<i>Order rotated.</i>		Very effective	Fairly effective	Not too effective	Not really effective at all	Don't Know / Refused
Doing more to prepare inmates for release from prison by gradually moving them to a lower security level in prison, to work-release programs, to halfway houses and the like	1997**	35%	43%	11%	5%	5%
	2014	48%	40%	5%	5%	3%
	2017	46%	40%	6%	5%	3%
Connecting prisoners nearing the end of their sentence with community groups that can offer them services and support after their release	2014*	53%	36%	6%	4%	1%
	2017	58%	35%	3%	2%	2%
Requiring all prisoners to serve out their entire sentence with no chance of early release	2014	20%	24%	22%	29%	5%
	2017	19%	22%	24%	31%	5%
Providing prisoners with job training so they can find work after they are released	1997	49%	39%	8%	3%	2%
	2014	59%	30%	6%	4%	1%
	2017	64%	28%	4%	3%	2%
Providing prisoners with education so they can earn a degree and find work after they are released	2017	59%	30%	4%	6%	2%

*Wording from 2014 survey: "Require prisoners who are about to be released to connect with community groups that can help them after their release."

**MassINC 1997 survey of 400 registered voters in Massachusetts.

As you may know, deaths from heroin and other opiate drugs have risen sharply in recent years. In response to this, should Massachusetts focus more on **READ AND ROTATE?**

Sending as many drug dealers as possible to prison	28%
Investing more money in drug treatment programs and facilities	62%
Both / neither / depends (not read)	9%
Don't Know / Refused	1%

In Massachusetts stealing property valued over \$250 is a felony crime, and thus the offender faces time in prison. Most states have raised this felony threshold to a higher amount so fewer crimes are counted as felonies. Do you favor or oppose a proposal to raise the felony threshold in Massachusetts to \$1,500? And is that strongly (favor / oppose) or just somewhat?

Strongly favor	35%
Somewhat favor	25%
Somewhat oppose	13%
Strongly oppose	23%
Don't Know / Refused	4%

After release from prison, some people are charged supervision fees or court fees related to their case. Some people who have just been released are unable to afford these fees. Should they be responsible for paying these fees if they do not earn enough money to afford the payments, or not?

Yes they should	43%
No they should not	50%
Both / neither / depends (not read)	5%
Don't Know / Refused	3%

Asked of half: Right now, people who commit misdemeanors, complete their sentence, and have no new involvement with the criminal justice system are allowed to seal their criminal record after 5 years. Sealing their record means most employers can't see their record but law enforcement can still access it. One proposal would reduce the waiting period before they can seal their records from 5 years to 3 years. Would you support or oppose this legislation? And is that strongly (favor / oppose) or just somewhat?

Strongly favor	35%
Somewhat favor	27%
Somewhat oppose	15%
Strongly oppose	21%
Don't Know / Refused	3%

Asked of half: Right now, people who commit felonies, complete their sentence, and have no new involvement with the criminal justice system are allowed to seal their criminal record after 10 years. Sealing their record means most employers can't see their record but law enforcement can still access it. One proposal would reduce the waiting period before they can seal their records from 10 years to 7 years. Would you favor or oppose this legislation? And is that strongly (favor / oppose) or just somewhat?

Strongly favor	42%
Somewhat favor	23%
Somewhat oppose	14%
Strongly oppose	17%
Don't Know / Refused	3%

Would you favor or oppose providing judges with the ability to grant supervised medical release to a prisoner who is terminally ill or incapacitated, so that they can be moved to a hospital, nursing home, or hospice? And is that strongly (favor / oppose) or just somewhat?

Strongly favor	55%
Somewhat favor	29%
Somewhat oppose	6%
Strongly oppose	8%
Don't Know / Refused	2%

Solitary confinement is the practice where some prisoners are locked in rooms by themselves for 22 to 23 hours per day. **ROTATE SUPPORT / OPPOSE EXPLANATIONS.** Supporters say it is necessary as a way to separate disruptive or dangerous prisoners apart from the rest of the population and to keep potentially suicidal prisoners safe. Opponents say the practice is cruel, unnecessary, and can cause lasting mental damage to prisoners. Do you favor or oppose the use of solitary confinement in Massachusetts prisons? And is that strongly (favor / oppose) or just somewhat?

Strongly favor	28%
Somewhat favor	24%
Somewhat oppose	16%
Strongly oppose	27%
Don't Know / Refused	5%

In Massachusetts, when most inmates get out of prison, do you think they are **READ AND ROTATE?**

	2014	2017
LESS likely to commit new crime because they've learned their lesson or been rehabilitated	29%	27%
MORE likely to commit new crime because they've been hardened by their prison experience	59%	53%
Don't Know / Refused	12%	20%

Have you or a member of your immediate family ever been a victim of a crime?

Yes	48%
No	51%
Don't Know / Refused	1%

If not a crime victim, skip to demographics

Did you or your family member experience any of the following as a result of this crime?

<i>Order rotated.</i>	Yes	No	Don't Know / Refused
Physical harm or stress	52%	47%	1%
Emotional harm or stress	82%	17%	1%
Financial harm or stress	69%	30%	1%

Was the crime reported to the police?

Yes	90%
No	10%
Don't Know / Refused	<1%

If crime was reported, continue below.

Were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the response from law enforcement when the crime was reported to police?

Satisfied	67%
Dissatisfied	26%
Don't Know / Refused	7%

If dissatisfied, ask next question.

What were the reasons for your dissatisfaction? **OPEN ENDED, CODING TO FOLLOW.**

Was the person who committed the crime found by law enforcement?

Yes	53%
No	43%
Don't Know / Refused	4%

If the person was caught, continue below. If not, skip to demographics.

Was the person who committed the crime punished in any way such as prison, probation, or community service?

Yes	70%
No	21%
Don't Know / Refused	10%

If individual was punished, continue below.

Were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the sentence or punishment?

Satisfied	66%
Dissatisfied	29%
Don't Know / Refused	4%

If dissatisfied, ask next question.

What were the reasons for your dissatisfaction? **OPEN ENDED, CODING TO FOLLOW.**

Did the criminal justice system provide assistance to help you or your family member recover from the crime?

Yes	19%
No	78%
Don't Know / Refused	3%

Were you satisfied or dissatisfied the help provided to recover from the crime?

Satisfied	88%
Dissatisfied	10%
Don't Know / Refused	2%

If dissatisfied, ask next question.

What were the reasons for your dissatisfaction? **OPEN ENDED, CODING TO FOLLOW.**

Demographics

Race

White/Caucasian	81%
All Others	17%
Don't Know / Refused	3%

Age

18 to 29	18%
30 to 44	26%
45 to 59	29%
60+	28%

Gender

Male	48%
Female	52%

Education

High school or less	32%
Some college, no degree	22%
College graduate (BA/BS)	27%
Advanced degree	18%
Don't Know / Refused	1%

About the Poll

These results are based on a survey of 754 registered voters in Massachusetts. Interviews were conducted April 27 – May 1, 2017 by live telephone interviews via both landline and cell phone using conventional registration based sampling procedures. The margin of sampling error sample is 3.6 percentage points with a 95 percent level of confidence. The poll was sponsored by MassINC.