

April 28, 2025

To: Interested Parties

From: ACLU

Re: Vermont Voters Support Reducing Non-Safety Traffic Stops & Addressing Root Causes of Crime

On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), YouGov fielded a survey of 205 registered voters in Vermont in February 2025. This poll finds that voters in Vermont support legislation that reduces unnecessary police interactions through non-safety traffic stops and policies that address the root causes of crime. The following are key findings from the poll:

- **Voters are focused on economic issues, not crime.** Voters are most concerned about inflation and the cost of living (30 percent), presidential abuse of power (30 percent), immigration (12 percent) and jobs and the economy (7 percent). *Only 2 percent of voters identified crime and public safety as the most important issue.*
- **Voters want real safety solutions that address the root causes of crime.** Voters overwhelmingly believe that over-reliance on jails and prisons causes many of the problems that lead to unsafe communities (76 percent) and that we need to invest in proven solutions to crime, like affordable housing and mental health and addiction services to make our communities safer (77 percent).
- **Voters support changing how police enforce non-safety traffic violations.** Although most voters have not heard of laws to limit police enforcement of minor traffic violations, 81 percent say they would strongly or somewhat support a law that changed certain minor offenses, like an expired registration or cracked windshield, to secondary violations.
- **Voters want police to focus on the most dangerous driving behaviors.** An overwhelming majority (87 percent) want law enforcement to prioritize traffic stops for serious offenses, like drunk driving or speeding, even if it means small infractions, like an expired registration or broken taillight get missed.

Safety Proposals:

Most voters believe changing how police enforce minor traffic violations would enhance road and community safety:

- **An overwhelming majority (81 percent) want law enforcement to prioritize traffic stops for serious violations, like drunk driving or speeding,** even if it means small infractions, like an expired registration or broken taillight get missed.
- **68 percent of voters,** including 78 percent of registered Democrats, 61 percent of registered Republicans, and 52 percent of registered independents, strongly or somewhat **support limiting or ending police enforcement of certain minor traffic violations to prioritize serious, safety-related offenses** and to reduce unnecessary police interactions with drivers.
- By a three-to-one margin, **(76%) are somewhat or very convinced** that despite arguments from police that stops for minor infractions often lead to bigger issues, **overall stops for minor traffic violations are ineffective at making communities safer** and that it's a better use of police time and resources to focus only on stops related to dangerous driving.

- **68 percent of voters say that no longer tasking police with enforcing non-safety traffic violations**, allowing them to focus on dangerous driving and solving serious crimes like murder or rape, **would help a lot or some to improve safety in communities.**
- Voters prioritize constitutional rights and reject policing for profit. When asked what factors should influence how Vermont enforces equipment and administrative violations, **90 percent of voters**, including 96 percent of registered independents, 91 percent of registered Republicans, and 86 percent of Registered Democrats, **believe that ensuring drivers' constitutional and legal rights are upheld should factor a great deal or some.** Conversely, about half (52 percent) of voters think that revenue generation from tickets should not be a factor at all, with another 26% saying it should only factor in a little.
- **Voters find it very or somewhat convincing (67 percent) that ending police enforcement of minor traffic violations will reduce the number of civilians harmed** or killed by police and that it will increase trust in police by reducing unnecessary interactions that can escalate and lead to harm (71 percent).

Most voters support public safety solutions beyond police, including sending behavioral health specialists to certain emergency calls:

- 79 percent of voters say that sending mental health and addiction specialists, rather than the police, to calls related to mental health, homelessness, and substance use would help improve safety in communities a lot or some.
- 76 percent of voters, including 70 percent of registered Republicans, strongly or somewhat support ending stop-and-frisk policing.

Most voters support reducing the prison population:

- 76 percent of voters believe that an over reliance on prisons causes unsafe communities, and 72 percent believe we should prioritize bipartisan efforts to promote rehabilitation over incarceration and safely reduce the size of the prison population.
- 68 percent say that it is very or somewhat important to reduce the jail and prison population in the US, especially liberal voters (87 percent), 18-34-year-olds (80 percent), 35-49-year-olds (81 percent) and registered independent voters (60 percent).

Most voters support addressing the root causes of crime:

- 86 percent of voters, including 98 percent of registered Democrats, 76 percent of registered independents, and 72 percent of registered Republicans, say that increasing access to mental healthcare and treatment for drug addiction would help improve safety in communities a lot or some.
- 92 percent of voters say that addressing poverty, economic despair, and lack of opportunities would help improve safety in communities a lot or some.

Most voters believe homelessness should be addressed as a resource issue:

- By an over three-to-one margin, 81 percent of voters say we need to address homelessness as a resource issue, focusing on improving access to affordable housing, mental health, and addiction services, compared to 19 percent who say that we need to address homelessness as a public safety issue, forcing homeless people to leave public spaces or face arrest.

Messaging findings

- **When it comes to public safety, voters want investments in solutions that prevent crime** by investing in reaching people with the resources they need – instead of sending them to jail and giving them criminal records that make it harder to get a job, housing, or education. Messaging that focuses on addressing crime through investments in proven solutions wins over tough-on-crime messaging. 71 percent of voters say they prefer a candidate who uses messaging that focuses on solutions to prevent crime, drug addiction, and homelessness from happening in the first place.

METHODOLOGY: The above is based on 205 interviews conducted by YouGov on the internet of registered voters. The sample was weighted according to gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, and U.S. Census region based on voter registration lists, the U.S. Census American Community Survey, and the U.S. Census Current Population Survey, as well as 2020 Presidential vote and approximate 2024 Presidential vote based on available results. Respondents were selected from YouGov to be representative of registered voters. The weights range from 0.06 to 4.51 with a mean of 1 and a standard deviation of 0.98. The margin of error (a 95% confidence interval) for a sample percentage p based upon the subsetting sample is approximately 9.7%.