

2021 polling data regarding opinions of Colorado voters on crime, low-level offenses, public safety, and the criminal justice system.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The results suggest that large majorities of Colorado voters:

- ✓ Support **reductions in low-level arrest** policies in Colorado.
- ✓ Prefer measures to **reduce the pre-trial detention and incarceration** for most low-level offenses, ranging from trespassing to low-level drug possession.
- ✓ Overwhelmingly support **increasing funding for community-led social programs and policies** that tackle the root causes of crime, rather than expecting the police to solve every problem in Colorado.

These results were measured at the end of the fall of 2021, when many suspected that increases in the crime rate would reduce support for criminal justice reform. Our results suggest this has not occurred. Colorado voters continue to support reforms to the criminal justice system.

KEY DATA SUMMARY

The majority of Coloradans believe:

People **should NOT be detained pre-trial** for these low-level offenses:

69% Trespassing **73%** Shoplifting **68%** Lower-level theft **80%** Low-level drug possession

These low-level offenses should be punished with a **citation or fine** rather than any jail time:

67% Trespassing **90%** Noise violations **85%** Public intoxication **66%** Low-level drug possession

The majority Coloradans believe solving the following large social issues should include or be limited to resources **other than police**:

95% Homelessness **90%** Poverty crime **86%** Drug addiction **94%** Mental health

Definitions

Pre-trial detention: Holding people in jail to await their trial while still legally innocent.

Lower-level theft: Theft of property that totals less than \$300 in value.

QUESTIONS FROM THE POLL

Opinions on pre-trial detention by offense

Below you will see some crimes that people may be accused of committing. For each one, if a person is accused of that crime, **do you think they should generally be detained, or jailed, before their trial and potential conviction?** This would mean someone accused of a crime would await trial in jail, rather than at home.

	No	Yes	Not Sure
Trespassing	69%	18%	13%
Public intoxication	84%	9%	6%
Shoplifting	73%	17%	10%
Low-level drug possession	80%	11%	9%
Public noise violations	92%	4%	5%
Lower-level theft (under \$300)*	68%	19%	13%
Burglary	20%	65%	14%
Carjacking	15%	75%	10%
Assault	11%	77%	13%
Sexual assault	5%	87%	8%
Arson	9%	83%	9%
“White-collar crime”**	49%	37%	15%
Murder	3%	94%	3%

*that is stealing someone’s property that totals less than \$300 in value. ** such as insider trading or insurance fraud.

■ Opposition to pre-trial detention for offense polled over 50%
 ■ Support for pre-trial detention for offense polled under 25%

Opinions on appropriate punishment by offense

Below you will see a list of crimes that some people may commit. For each one, what should the typical consequence be for someone who is convicted of committing that crime?

	This should be typically punished by a citation or fine	This should be typically punished by a jail sentence of one year or less	This should be typically punished by incarceration of more than one year , but less than five years	This should be punished by a incarceration of over five years
Trespassing	67%	24%	8%	1%
Public intoxication	85%	11%	3%	2%
Shoplifting	57%	34%	7%	2%
Low-level drug possession	66%	25%	6%	3%
Public noise violations	90%	5%	3%	1%
Graffiti	75%	18%	4%	3%
Lower-level theft (under \$300)*	39%	49%	9%	3%
Burglary	4%	26%	47%	22%
Carjacking	3%	21%	38%	38%
Assault	5%	28%	37%	30%
Sexual assault	1%	6%	16%	76%
Arson	2%	11%	29%	59%
“White-collar crime”**	8%	13%	42%	37%
Murder	1%	2%	3%	95%

*that is stealing someone’s property that totals less than \$300 in value. ** such as insider trading or insurance fraud.

■ Support for citation/ fine for an offense polled over 50%
 ■ Support for incarceration for an offense polled under 25%

Severity of punishment for low-level offenses

Even if it isn't exactly right, which of the following is closer to your view?

<p>People should be given warnings or small fines for causing a public disturbance or trespassing because the individual mental and physical harms of jailing outweigh the harm they might have caused.</p>	<p>78%</p>
<p>Offenses like causing a public disturbance or trespassing, might be minor in the grand scheme of things, but actions should always have consequences and these crimes should be punished severely, as a deterrent.</p>	<p>17%</p>
<p>Not sure</p>	<p>5%</p>

Totals: 100%. Unweighted N: 504

■ Polled over 50% ■ Polled under 25%

Even if it isn't exactly right, when it comes to people with substance abuse or mental health problems that result in committing a lower-level offense like sleeping outside, which of the following is closer to your view?

<p>These aren't the kinds of problems that can be solved by a night or more in jail. Society would be better off building compassionate care for people in these situations, including spending more on mental health and rehab facilities.</p>	<p>68%</p>
<p>These aren't the kinds of problems that can be solved by a bunch of new government programs. Society is better off when people are held accountable for their actions, even if it means going to jail for committing a crime while having a crisis or to feed a habit.</p>	<p>22%</p>
<p>Not sure</p>	<p>10%</p>

Totals: 100%. Unweighted N: 510


■ Polled over 50% ■ Polled under 25%

Increasing crime rates

Which of the following is closest to your viewpoint, even if none are exactly correct?

When the crime rate increases, the best thing to do is help invest in and revitalize our social programs because crime is a symptom of larger underlying problems.	51%
When the crime rate increases, the best thing to do is increase the size and budget of the police force to keep us safe.	36%
Not sure	13%


Totals: 100%. Unweighted N: 511

 Polled over 50%

Even if it isn't exactly right, which of the following is closer to your view?

If the crime rate is going up, that means our current approach to policing isn't as effective as we thought and we should focus less on arresting and jailing people and more on providing services and interrupting violence.	52%
If the crime rate is going up, that means our current approach to policing isn't strong enough, and we should be increasing the use of arrests and jail time .	38%
Not sure	10%

Totals: 100%. Unweighted N: 512

 Polled over 50%

Responsibility for solutions

Bearing in mind that no police force can do everything, and they must prioritize – when it comes to the role of police here in Colorado, for each of the following, please say whether police should be **primarily responsible**, **partially responsible**, or **not really responsible** for solving each.

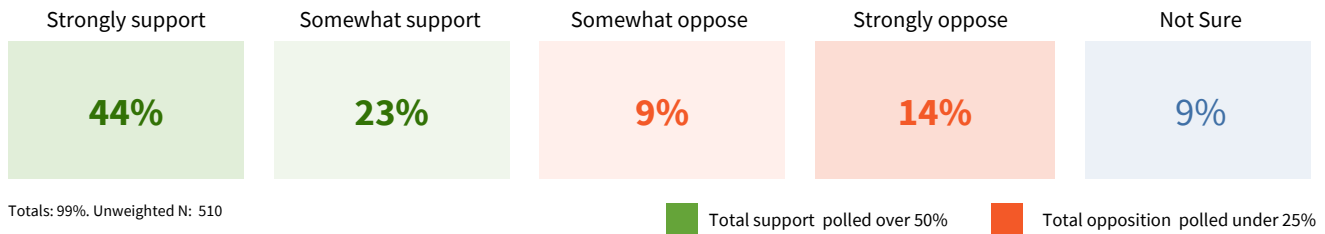
	This is a problem that should be solved by other means than the police	Police may be involved in solving this, but other tools and social programs are needed	Police should be primarily responsible for solving this	Not sure
Homelessness	59%	36%	3%	2%
“Poverty crime” such as being homeless or trespassing to find a place to sleep	50%	40%	7%	3%
Shoplifting	9%	43%	46%	3%
Drug addiction and related consequences such as public intoxication or minor possession	36%	50%	13%	1%
Untreated mental health issues and their consequences such as mental health episodes	51%	43%	4%	2%
Traffic enforcement	10%	20%	67%	3%
Violent crime such as assault or murder	2%	14%	82%	2%
Nonviolent crime such as burglary or theft	4%	32%	63%	2%
Carjacking	3%	16%	80%	2%

Support for responsibility including and/or being limited to resources other than police polled over 50%

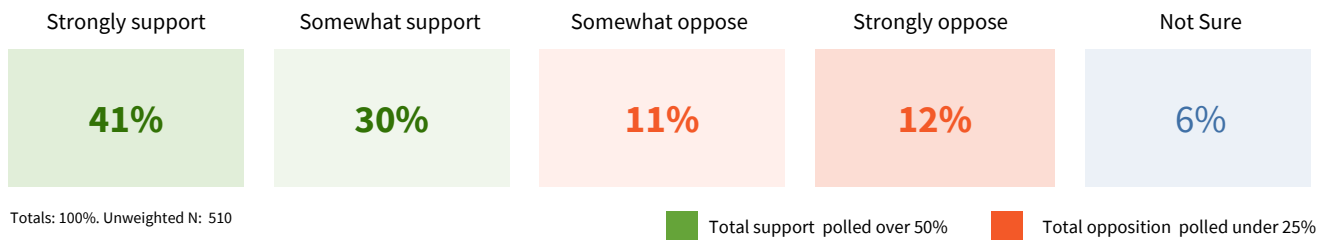
Support for police being solely responsible polled under 25%

Alternative tools and social programs

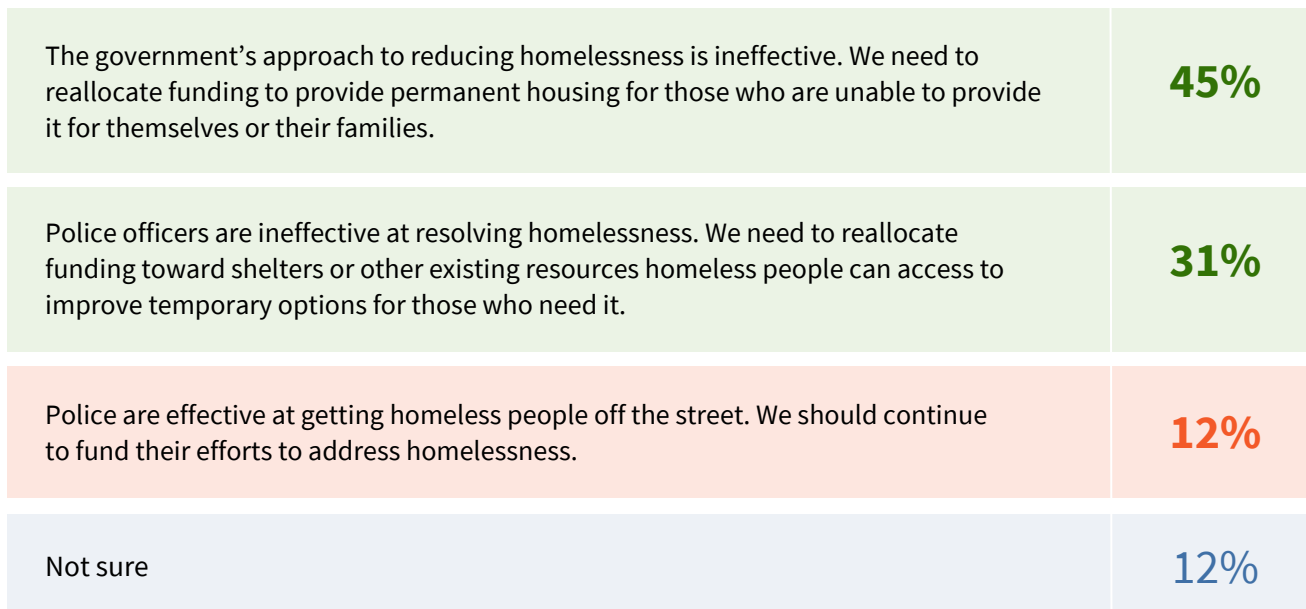
Some have proposed a program to replace armed police officers, who currently respond to non-violent public disturbances or mental health emergencies, with **EMTs** and **other health specialists**. Would you [support or oppose] a police alternative like this?



Some have proposed a program to replace armed police officers, who currently respond to substance abuse emergencies, with **health specialists** and **mental health professionals**. Would you [support or oppose] a police alternative like this?



Which of the following is closest to your viewpoint, even if none are exactly correct?



Totals: 100%. Unweighted N: 512 ■ Total support for reallocation polled over 50% ■ Opposition for reallocation polled under 25%

ABOUT THE SAMPLE

YouGov Blue online survey of 512 Colorado voters fielded from September 14 to September 27, 2021 regarding their opinions on low-level offenses, policing, and the criminal justice system.

Survey Margin of Error: $\pm 6\%$

This survey is based on 512 interviews conducted by YouGov on the internet of registered voters in Colorado. The sample was weighted according to gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, and US 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. Respondents were selected from YouGov to be representative of registered voters. The weights range from 0.14 to 6.33 with a mean of 2.08 and a standard deviation of 1.87.

The margin of error (a 95% confidence interval) for a sample percentage p based upon the subsetting sample is approximately 6%. It is calculated using the formula:

$$\hat{p} \pm 100 \times \sqrt{\frac{1 + CV^2}{n}}$$

where CV is the coefficient of variation of the sample weights and n is the sample size used to compute the proportion. This is a measure of sampling error (the average of all estimates obtained using the same sample selection and weighting procedures repeatedly). The sample estimate should differ from its expected value by less than margin of error in 95 percent of all samples. It does not reflect non-sampling errors, including potential selection bias in panel participation or in response to a particular survey.