



NCSC Sentencing Surveys

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National Center for State Courts
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NCSC Sentencing Reform Project: Getting Smarter about Sentencing

1. Reduce over-reliance on incarceration
2. Promote alternatives to incarceration
3. Eliminate inappropriate racial and ethnic disparities
4. Promote greater flexibility and judicial discretion
5. Provide greater rationality
6. Expand use of evidence-based practices
7. Promote sentencing commissions and guidelines

NCSC Survey of State Court Leaders

- I. Reduce over-reliance on incarceration and expand use of evidence-based practices
 - A. Most important
 - B. Most amenable
 - C. Most frequent topic of concern
 - D. Most frequent subject of complaints
 - E. Leading current efforts

NCSC Survey of State Court Leaders

- I. Reduce over-reliance on incarceration and expand use of evidence-based practices (cont.)
 - A. Most effective program: problem-solving courts
 - B. 50%: risk assessment tools
 - C. 75%: 1+ measures of effectiveness
 - 1. Recidivism
 - 2. Program completion

NCSC Survey of State Court Leaders

- II. Provide greater rationality and eliminate inappropriate racial and ethnic disparities

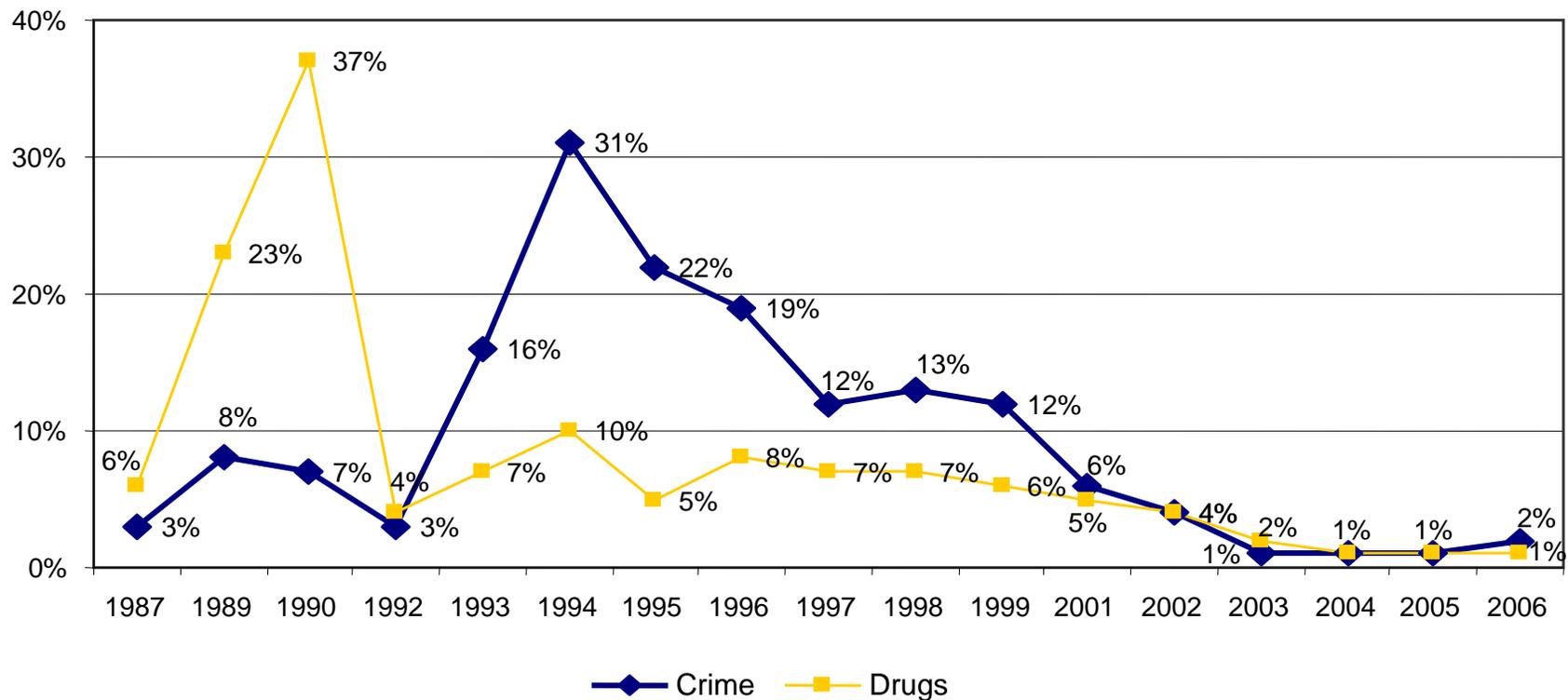
- III. Promote greater judicial discretion (including repeal of mandatory sentences) and use of sentencing commission and guideline systems
 - A. States split on importance of repeal
 - B. Sentencing commissions: “least important”

NCSC Sentencing Attitudes Survey

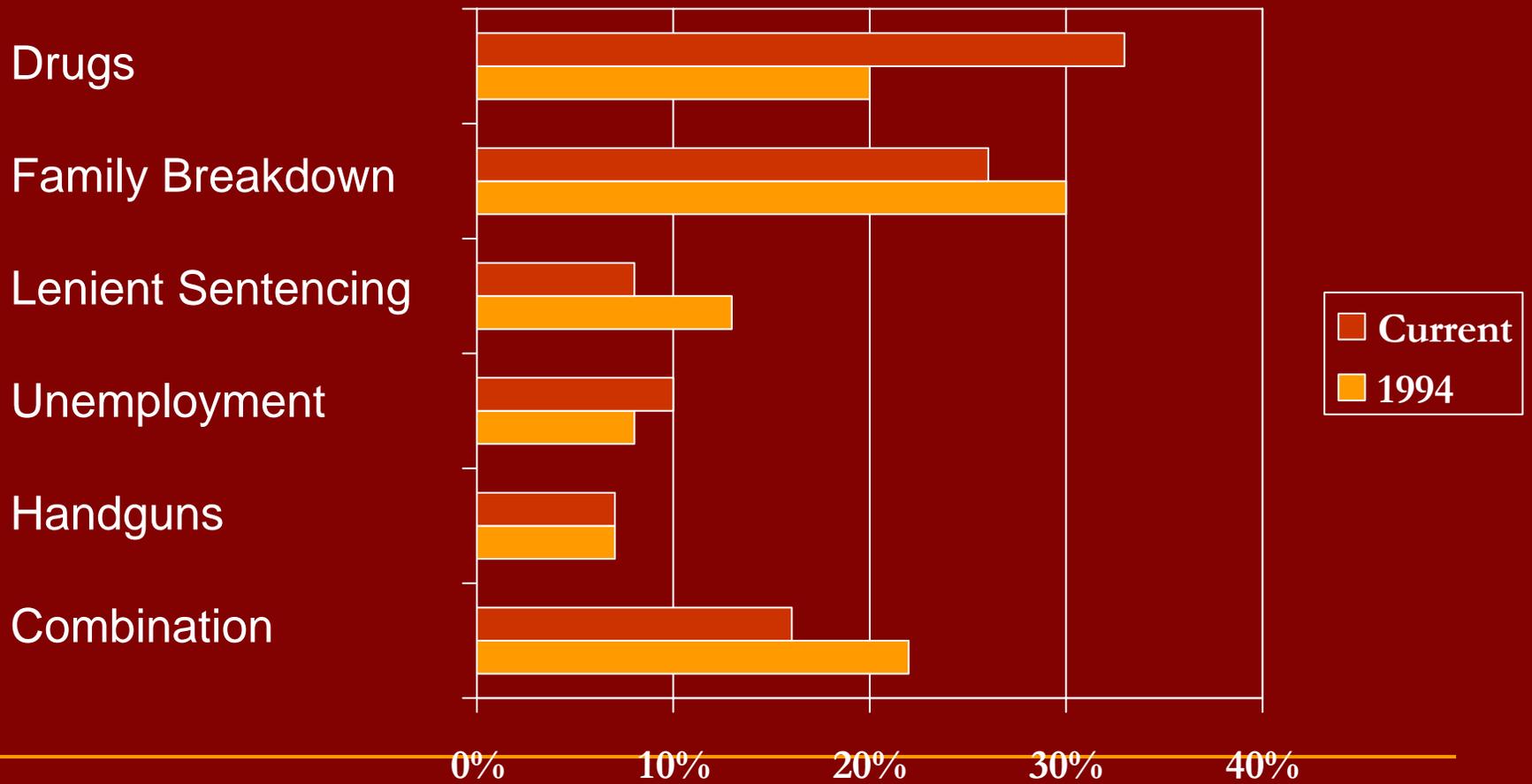
Methodology

- National telephone survey
- 1,502 adults, age 18+
- Oversampling to allow analysis by race/ethnicity
- Interviewing conducted March 6 – April 9, 2006
- Sampling error: ± 3.1 percentage points

Crime and Drugs as Nation's Top Problem 1987-2006

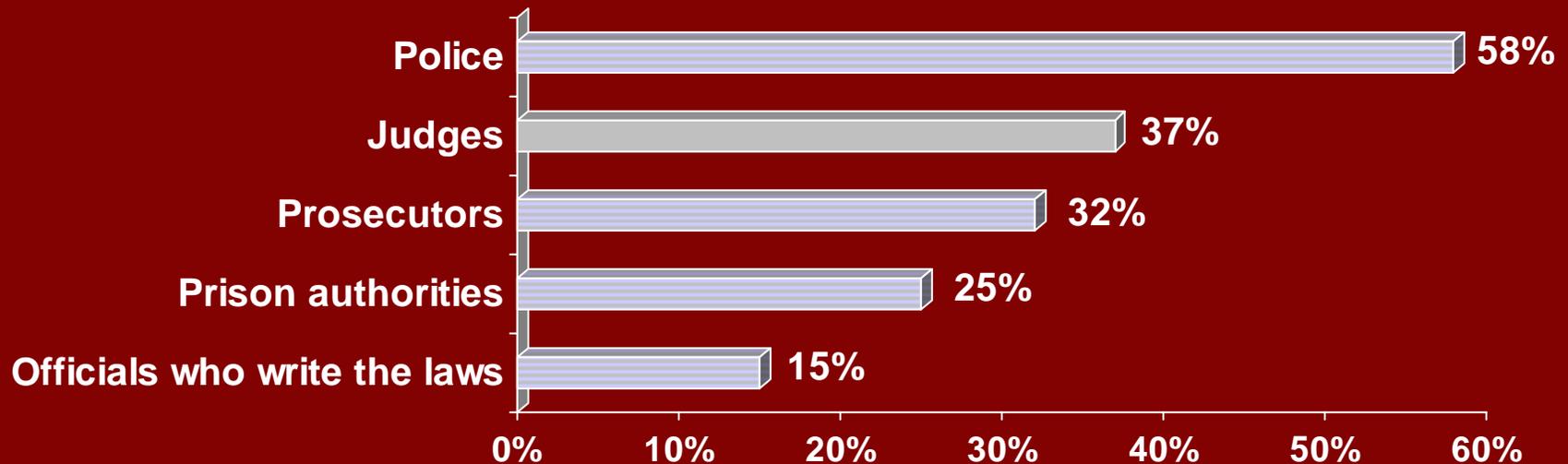


Causes of Crime



Ratings of Key Players in the Criminal Justice System

Percent who rate the performance of each "excellent/good"



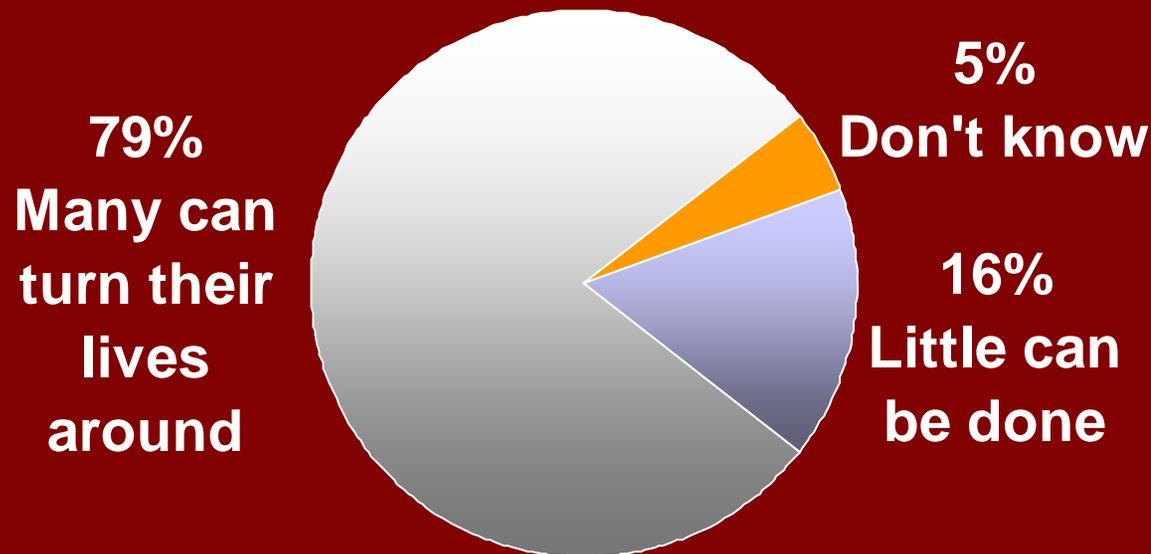
Attitudes about Prisons

Which would you most want your tax dollars spent on: 1) building more prisons, OR 2) funding programs that help offenders find jobs or get treatment?



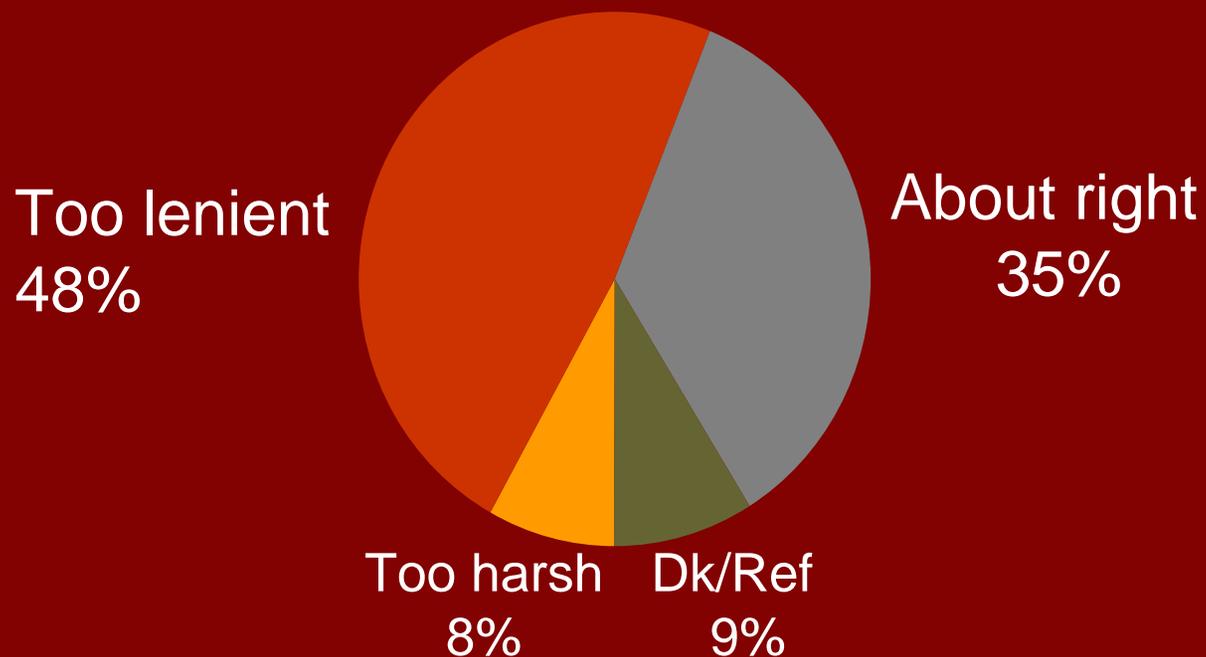
Attitudes about Rehabilitation

Which statement best describes your own views about efforts to rehabilitate offenders:



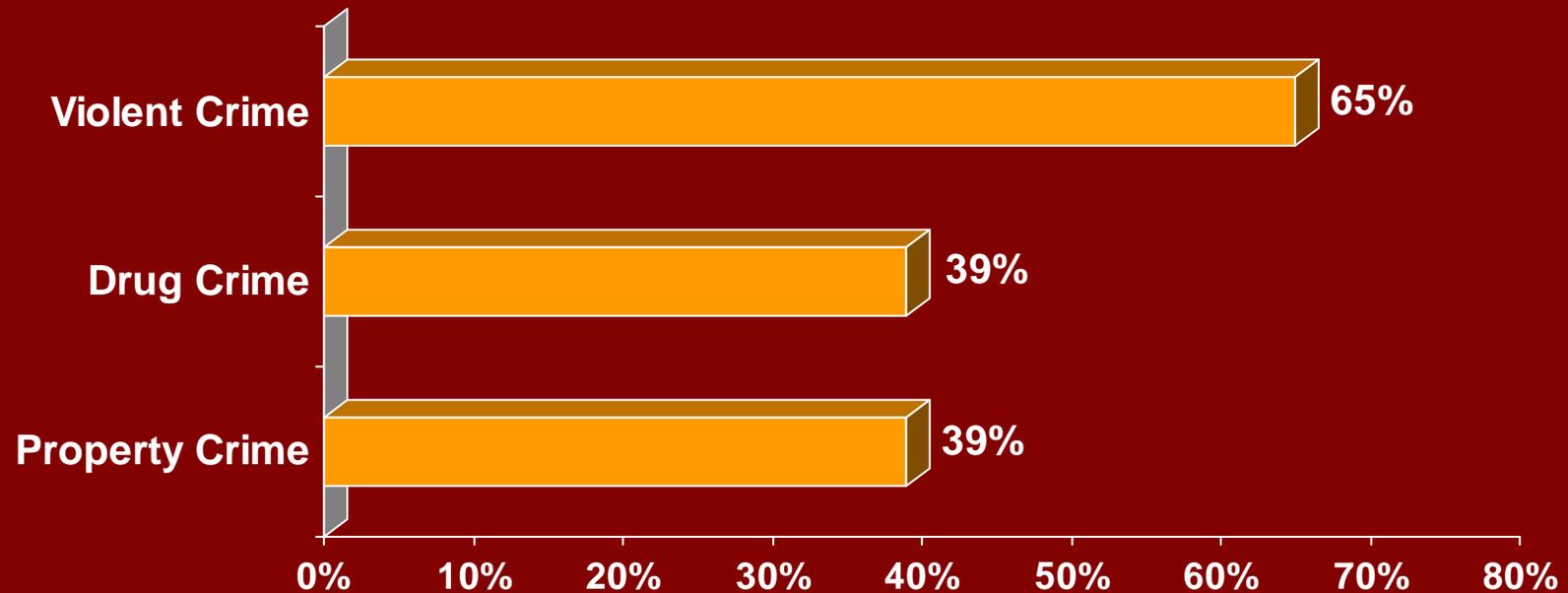
Attitudes about Sentences

In general, do you think sentences are too harsh, too lenient, or about right?

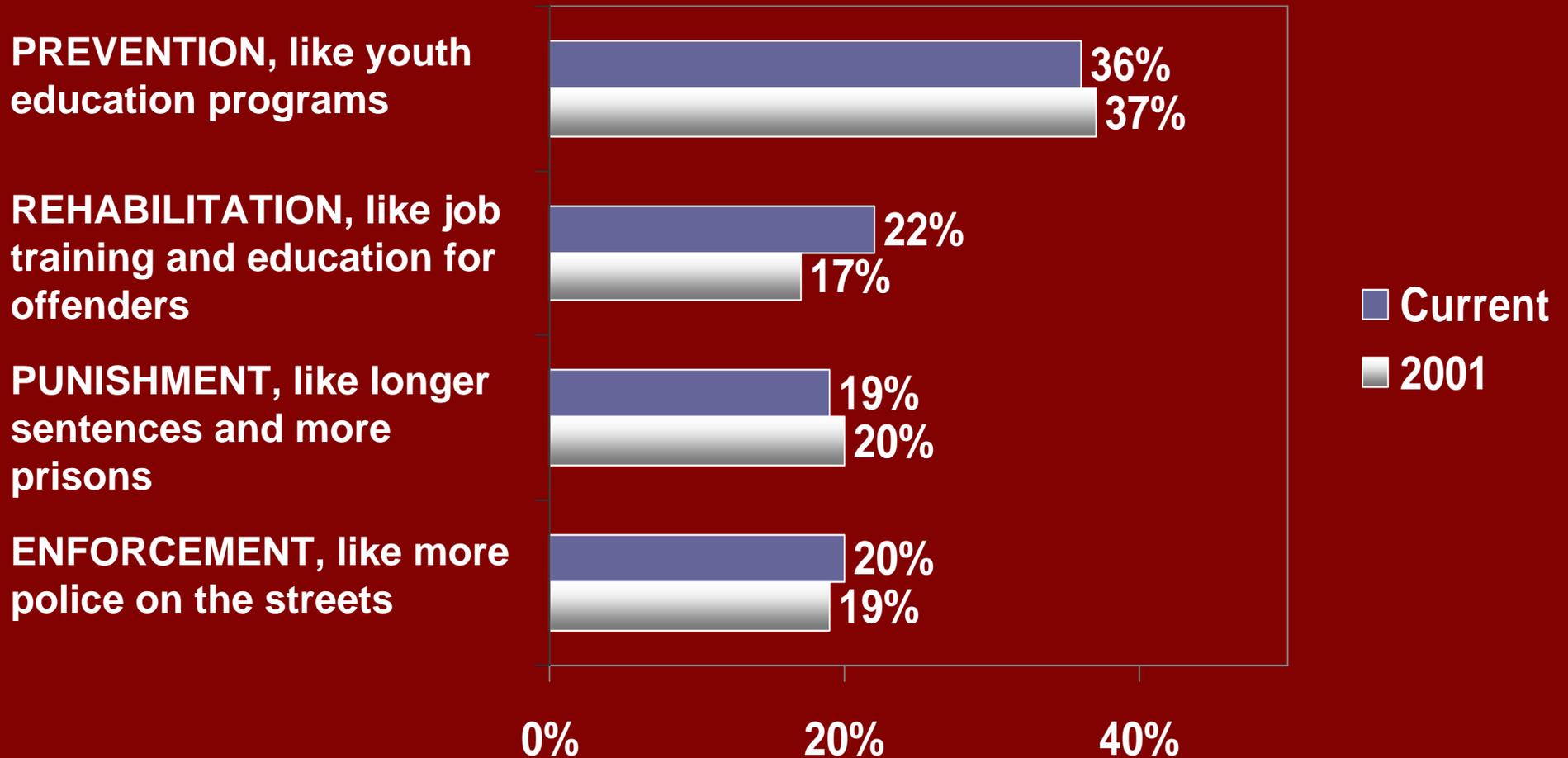


Sentencing Attitudes By Type of Crime

Percent who think sentencing for each is "too lenient"



Top Priority for Dealing with Crime

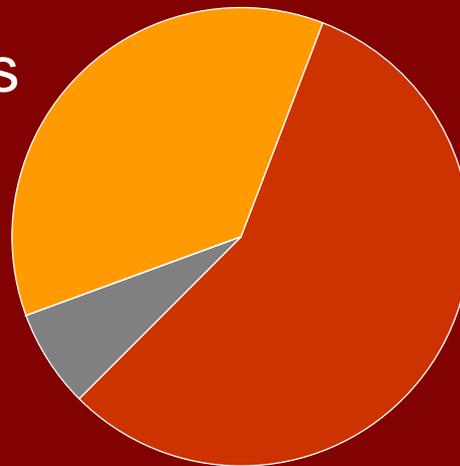


Mandatory Sentences

In general, do you think that mandatory sentences are a good idea, or that judges should have more leeway in deciding what the punishment should be?

Mandatory sentences
are a good idea
36%

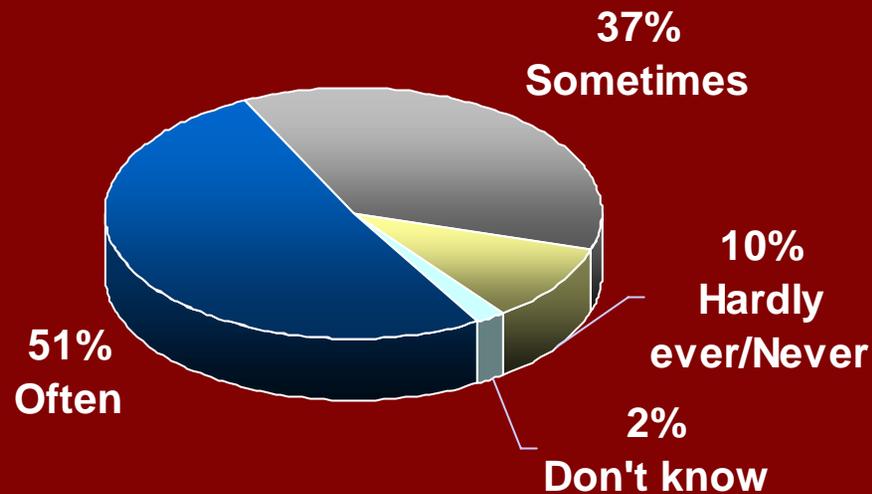
DK/Ref
7%



Judges should have
more leeway
56%

Support for Alternative Sentencing in Non-Violent Cases

How frequently should alternatives to prison be used in sentencing for non-violent crimes?



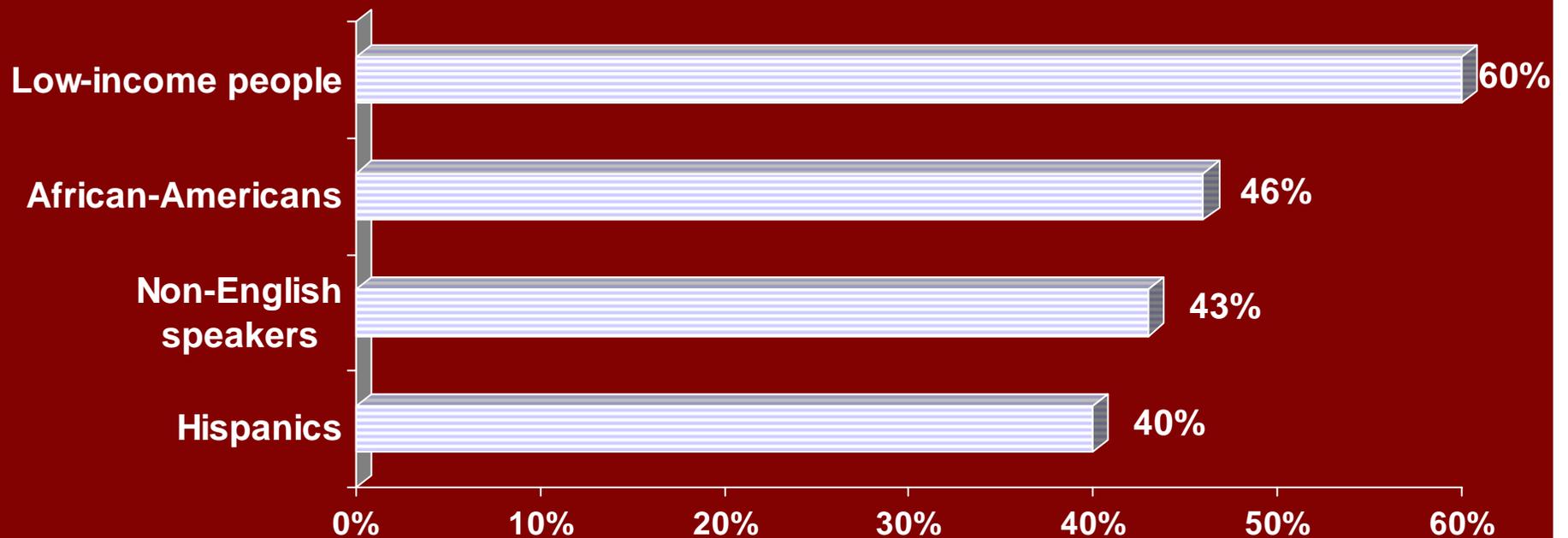
Alternatives to Prison Are Broadly Popular

Percent favoring use of alternatives to prison
“often” for non-violent offenders:

- **Compensation for victims (66%)**
- **Treatment for mentally ill offenders (65%)**
- **Mandatory education/job training (63%)**
- **Treatment/counseling for offenders under 25 (61%)**
- **Treatment/counseling for drug offenders (56%)**

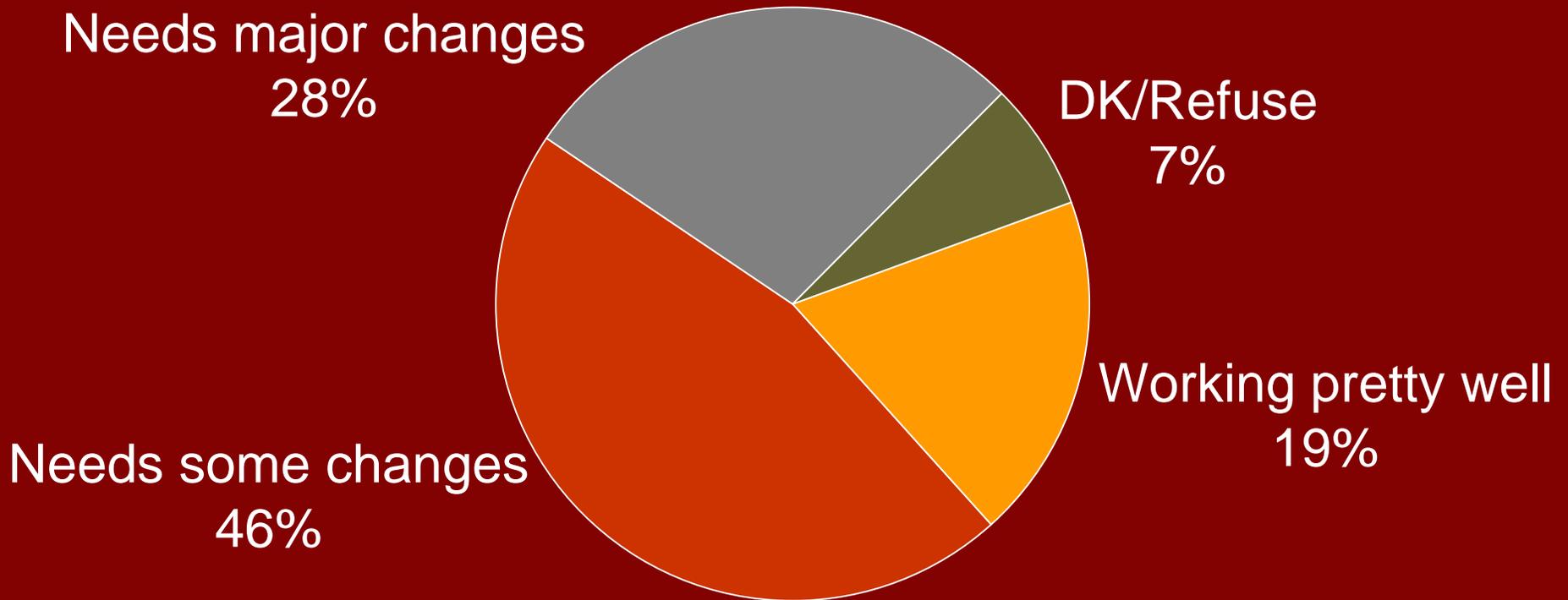
Perceptions of Bias in Sentencing

Percent who think each group is treated worse



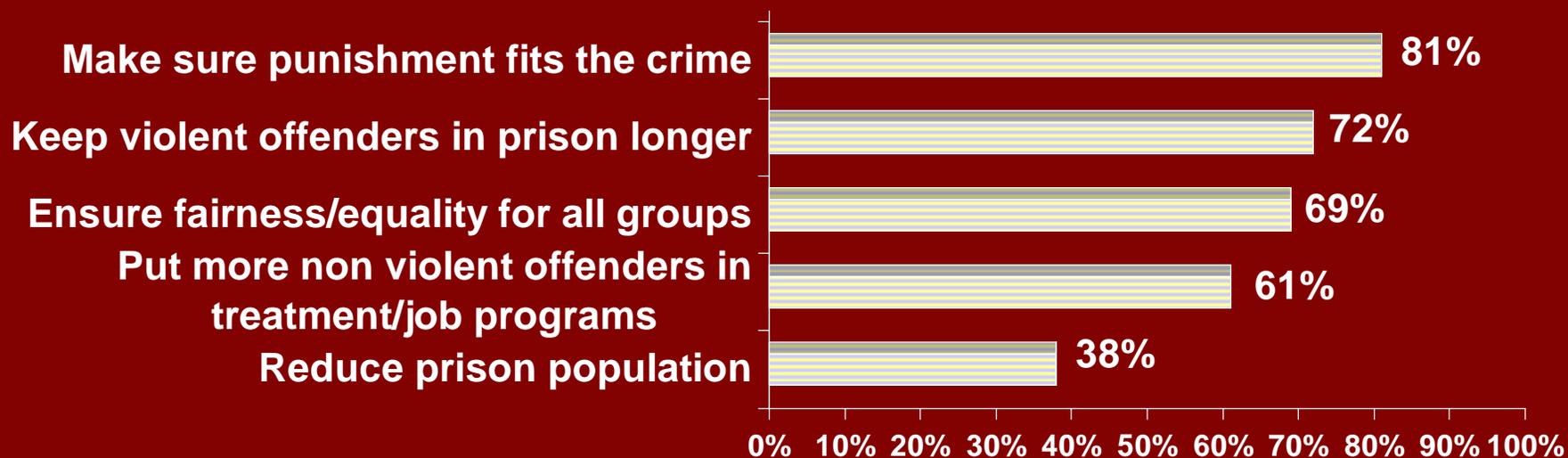
Overall Attitudes Towards Need for Sentencing Reform

Do you think sentencing in your state is now working pretty well, or needs changes?



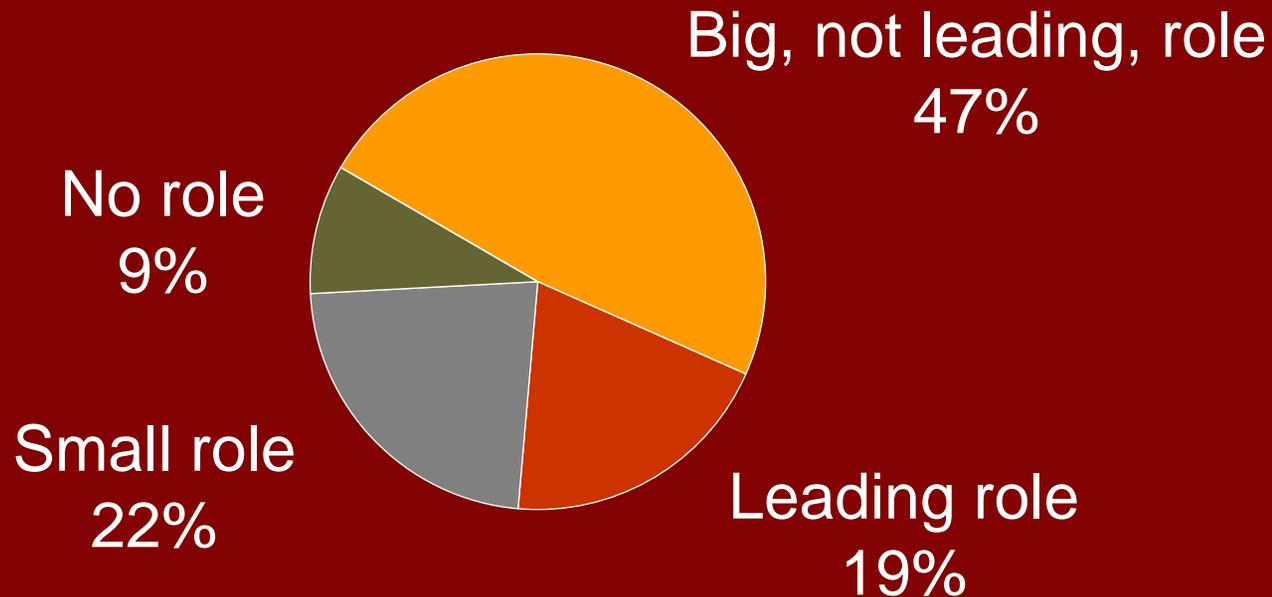
Public's Top Sentencing Reform Priorities

Percent who say each goal is "very important"



Judges' Role in Efforts to Improve Sentencing

What role would you like to see judges play in efforts to improve sentencing?





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