



A Framework for Evidence-Based Decision Making in Local Criminal Justice Systems

*An initiative funded by the National Institute of Corrections
with support from the Office of Justice Programs*

Technical assistance provided by:
Center for Effective Public Policy, Pretrial Justice Institute,
The Justice Management Institute, and The Carey Group

Starter Kit

7a: Developing a Communications Strategy; Building Stakeholder and Community Engagement

Appendix: EBDM Public Opinion Survey Questions

1. Which of the following do you think should be the primary purpose of the criminal justice system?

- Punishing those who commit crimes
- Reducing the likelihood that convicted offenders will commit new crimes
- Protecting the rights of people accused of crimes
- Addressing the interests of victims of crimes
- Not sure/Other

2. Have you, a family member, or anyone you know ever served time in a jail or prison?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Questions 3–6:

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the criminal justice system should ...

3. Make neighborhoods safer?

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not sure

4. Increase the confidence of the public in the criminal justice system?

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not sure

5. Reduce taxpayers' costs for public safety?

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree
Not sure

6. Strengthen the well-being of offenders' families?

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree
Not sure

7. If research consistently showed that there are ways other than jail to deal with people who are convicted of non-violent crimes that could reduce the chances they will commit new crimes, would that information make you more or less likely to support alternatives to jail?

Much more likely
Somewhat more likely
Somewhat less likely
Much less likely
Not sure

8. If research consistently showed that there are ways other than jail to deal with people who commit violent crimes that could reduce the chances they will commit new crimes, would that information make you more or less likely to support alternatives to jail?

Much more likely
Somewhat more likely
Somewhat less likely
Much less likely
Not sure

9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: "We should increase spending on approaches proven to reduce the chances that offenders will commit new crimes"?

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree
Not sure

10. When criminal justice officials make decisions, what should be the most important thing they rely on?

Research on what works in preventing crimes
Their professional experience

Their personal beliefs on what's the right thing to do
Not sure/Other

11. Knowing that research shows that about half of the people released from prison eventually go back to prison and about a third of the people on probation commit new crimes, to what degree do you think these results are acceptable?

Very acceptable
Somewhat acceptable
Somewhat unacceptable
Not at all acceptable
Not sure

Questions 12–17:

Doctors use research about risk factors to help identify which people are more likely to have a heart attack. Similar research about risk factors exists that helps identify which offenders are more likely to continue to commit crime. Should this research be used ...

12. By prosecutors when they decide what sentence to recommend to the judge?

Yes
No
Not sure

13. By corrections officials when making decisions about release from jail or prison?

Yes
No
Not sure

14. By defense attorneys when they are helping their clients?

Yes
No
Not sure

15. By judges when deciding the appropriate sentence?

Yes
No
Not sure

16. When deciding if a person should be released from jail on bail until their trial?

Yes
No
Not sure

17. By the police when deciding to make an arrest?

Yes
No
Not sure

18. Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

Statement 1: "The most important thing in dealing with people who have committed a crime is to see to it that the punishment fits the crime."

Statement 2: "The most important thing in dealing with people who have committed a crime is to do things that will reduce the chances they will commit future crimes."

Statement 1
Statement 2
Neither
Not sure/Other

19. If two people were convicted of the same kind of crime, but one of them is more likely to commit crime in the future, what should happen in terms of sentencing?

Both people should be treated exactly the same.

The person more likely to commit a crime should be sentenced differently.

Not sure/Other

20. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: "Criminal justice officials should tell the public how well they are doing at reducing crimes"?

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree
Not sure