



FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

Indiana

23 January 2024

TOP TAKEAWAYS

- Participants are concerned about crime being driven by bad public policy. This concern leads participants to support various reforms to hold local prosecutors accountable when they repeatedly refuse to prosecute crimes.
- Medicaid is a well-known program; however, its problems and Medicaid expansion specifically are less well understood. Voters, when educated on the program's problems, especially as they relate to expansion, are open to meaningful reforms.
- Participants want to keep Indiana's elections secure, and they support measures currently underway to enhance the integrity of the state's elections.
- Regulations and legislative oversight of the bureaucracy are not attractive issues to voters. Efforts to require legislative approval of costly regulations should be discussed as transparency, rather than oversight.

THE BIGGEST ISSUES

Crime: Participants say they are concerned about the rise of crime in Indiana, especially in cities like Indianapolis and Bloomington. However, crime from cities is creeping into the surrounding areas with criminals committing crimes in outlying areas and then fleeing back to the cities. Participants favor reforms to tackle crime, including allowing the governor to remove prosecutors and granting concurrent authority to the attorney general to prosecute crimes.

Fixing Medicaid: Focus group participants are concerned about the increased number of able-bodied adults on Medicaid and the program's billion-dollar budget shortfall. They say that the state should evaluate the program and fix the underlying issue before putting a Band-Aid on the problem and calling it healed.

Election Security: As voters, participants are concerned about non-citizen voting and support enhanced measures to identify and remove non-citizens from voter rolls. They also support keeping the influence of special interests out of election administration.

WHAT DID PARTICIPANTS THINK?

Crime is on the rise in Indiana according to participants, who support reforms to hold accountable local prosecutors who repeatedly refuse to prosecute crimes.

- Participants say that crime is especially bad in Indiana's big cities—Indianapolis and Bloomington were repeatedly mentioned by name. However, participants say that crime is creeping beyond the cities and is rising in the rest of the state.

“Being in a suburb to Indianapolis, we experience a lot of theft...the people come here from Indianapolis...and steal stuff out of these homes...I saw a case the other day where a middle-aged guy...robbed a gas station here in Fishers from Indianapolis.”

- Participants attribute the rise in crime to drug use and bad public policy. One participant is a law enforcement officer who changed jobs from a big city agency where officers are hindered from fighting crime by leftist policies to an agency in a more conservative part of the state. Participants acknowledge that law enforcement varies from county to county.

“Definitely public policy, and depending on the county that you're in can make a difference in terms of what your law enforcement does.”

- In a discussion about prosecutors who refuse to prosecute crimes, one participant said, **“They should lose their jobs.”** When asked whether they would support various policies to hold accountable local prosecutors who repeatedly refuse to prosecute crimes, most participants say they support allowing the governor to remove prosecutors and allowing the attorney general to prosecute local crimes. All the participants say they support the appointment of a special prosecutor by the governor or attorney general in serious cases a local prosecutor refuses to pursue.

The state needs to fix the underlying issues creating problems with Medicaid expansion and the billion-dollar budget shortfall.

- Participants are well-versed in Medicaid and understand the program's assistance for traditional beneficiaries. However, a decade after Indiana expanded Medicaid to cover able-bodied adults, participants are unaware (unaided) that the program covers able-bodied adults and are unaware (after being informed about such coverage) of the parameters for coverage of this population.

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"I'd like to understand the full parameters of what that is. It sounds like a handout. If someone is able-bodied, what's their real challenge there?"

- Unaided, participants say that able-bodied adults who receive Medicaid coverage should be required to work as a condition of being on the program. They also say that Medicaid coverage for able-bodied adults should be time-limited, **"like unemployment."**

"If you're able, get out there and get a job and provide for yourself."

"If you're just not wanting to get a job...I'm paying for something that could be prevented."

- Focus group participants seemed unaware of the billion-dollar budget deficit in the Medicaid program. They said that to fill the gap, the state would probably move money from other programs, especially education, where local governments would then raise property taxes to fill the gap, an approach they disagree with. Instead, they say the state should fix the underlying, structural issues in the program before putting a Band-Aid on the problem by moving money from other programs or raising additional revenue through cannabis legalization.

"Trim the fat. All these programs like this are so...no one is vetted on them...and people just work the system."

Cannabis legalization "doesn't fix the problem. Who do they say is able-bodied and why are they funding them?... Why are you taking funds away from somebody who needs to be at home or can't work to give it to able-bodied [people]? That's just putting a blanket over it."

"It's just putting a Band-Aid on the problem. We didn't solve the problem. We're just finding a new way to create a new revenue stream, which means more money, more problems. In the end, figure out how we got in this problem to begin with."

Participants support efforts to remove non-citizens from voting rolls and to keep special interests out of election administration.

- Participants say that voting is an important right for citizens and that it must be protected; they oppose allowing non-citizens to vote. They support current efforts to enhance the ability of election officials to identify and remove non-citizens from voter rolls. They say proving citizenship is easy for citizens, and if someone can't prove citizenship, they should be removed from the voting rolls.

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"Voting is a great right. And, you know, it's, it's a privilege to citizens."

"I don't think there's any issues because if, if you are a citizen, you should have more than enough proof to actually prove that you are."

"It would take me five minutes to prove that I'm a citizen."

- They also support the legislature's efforts to remove the influence of special interest groups from election administration. They say that special interest groups should not be training, coaching, or providing staff for election officials.

Government regulations are not a top priority for participants, although they support efforts to bring transparency to costly regulations.

- Participants are seemingly unfamiliar with the regulatory process. One participant asked who makes regulations and who they are responsible to, and another confused regulations with government purchasing. This topic is clearly not top of mind for the average voter.
- However, participants say they support current legislative efforts to require legislative approval of bureaucratic rules costing \$1 million or more. Some say that it will bring accountability to the process because legislators are elected by the people, and others say they support it if subject-matter experts in the legislature are responsible for the review. Others, unaided, say they would support a citizen review panel to review costly regulations.

"Well, that's a lot of money. They should probably get approval from somebody. I like the legislature [doing it]. I mean, we've elected them to oversee things, so they're the only ones we can trust to do it, I guess."

- Participants are more drawn to the idea when it is discussed as a measure to bring transparency to the bureaucratic process rather than as a legislative oversight measure. Future discourse on the topic should use the transparency framing.

METHODOLOGY

- Eight participants took part in the 90-minute focus group, which was held online via video conference.
- Participants were recruited by a national focus group recruiting company and screened for participation based on meeting several criteria, including likelihood of voting, party affiliation, and self-reported political ideology.
- All eight were registered Indiana voters. Of the participants, seven were Republican, and one was a self-described moderate Independent. Three males and five females participated. Two participants were Hispanic, one was black, one was Asian, and four were white.