

CRIME SURVIVORS SPEAK

2022

NATIONAL SURVEY OF VICTIMS' VIEWS ON
SAFETY AND JUSTICE



ALLIANCE FOR
SAFETY AND JUSTICE



ABOUT ALLIANCE FOR SAFETY AND JUSTICE



Alliance for Safety and Justice (ASJ) is a multi-state organization that works to advance public safety reform in states across the country through coalition building, research, education, advocacy, and grassroots organizing. Our Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice membership program represents more than 80,000 diverse survivors of crime from across the country.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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In producing this report, ASJ leaned on the experience of staff and members of Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice. Many thanks are owed to them for their dedication and ongoing commitment to elevating the voices of survivors in safety policy debates. Thank you for your partnership.

Many people played a role in developing and executing this work. ASJ would like to thank Seiji Carpenter and David Kordus at David Binder Research.

Finally, and most importantly, we would like to thank all of the people who have told us their stories and allowed us to learn from their experiences. We owe a great deal to those who have allowed themselves to be profiled in this report and who speak out with great courage and conviction. Thank you deeply.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Protecting public safety is an essential function of government. Yet, despite the crucial importance of this responsibility, public safety policies and investments are rarely informed by the experiences of people who have been hurt by crime and violence.

In 2016, Alliance for Safety and Justice (ASJ) responded to this oversight by commissioning a nationwide survey of victims regarding their experiences with the justice system and public safety policy preferences. That landmark, first-of-its-kind study revealed a profound gap between the needs and preferences of crime victims and U.S. justice system priorities. The study found that most victims do not receive help in the aftermath of crime, and perhaps to the surprise of some, victims overwhelmingly prefer safety approaches that prioritize rehabilitation and prevention over punishment.

Six years later, this gap between victims and the justice system remains. Today, it is even more urgent than ever to close it. After decades of declines in reported crime, in 2020 homicide rates in cities across America spiked, fanning widespread concern about crime. These increases have led to renewed public debate about the best ways to address crime and violence.

In this context, there has never been a more important time to listen to the perspectives of those most commonly victimized. If new approaches to safety and justice do not consider the experiences or incorporate the voices of survivors, the political responses to crime shifts will inevitably fail to deliver the safety communities across the country deserve.

To inform the urgent debate on crime policy, in August of 2022, Alliance for Safety and Justice commissioned our second National Survey of Victims' Views — the 2022 National Survey of Victims' Views. This report describes the findings from this survey and points to opportunities for further research and reform to advance policies that align with the needs and perspectives of victims.

KEY FINDINGS

VICTIMS' EXPERIENCES



More than 6 in 10 people have been a victim of crime in the last ten years and roughly **half of those have been the victim of a violent crime**

- Demographically, victims of crime are more likely to be young people, people of color, people from low income communities, LGBTQ people, people with disabilities, and people with records
- Victims of violent crime are **three times as likely to be repeat victims** of four or more crimes



96 percent of victims of violent crime did not receive victim compensation to help recover

- Victims of crime experience significant challenges in recovery and healing – **7 in 10** report experiencing at least one symptom of trauma
- **87 percent of victims did not receive financial or economic assistance** to help recover

- **74 percent of victims did not receive counseling** or other mental health support to help recover
- Roughly **80 percent of victims received help from friends or family or the health care system** while roughly 20 percent received help from the justice system



For more than 4 in 5 victims who reported crime, **the crime was not solved**

- Nearly **1 in 2 victims** who did not get the support they wanted did not know where to find support
- Only **1 in 4 victims found the justice system helpful** in providing information about recovering from crime or referrals for support services



Nearly 1 in 2 victims did not feel their interactions with law enforcement during the investigation were helpful or reassuring

VICTIMS' VIEWS ON PUBLIC POLICY

By a nearly 2 to 1 margin, most victims prefer the justice system focus more on **rehabilitating** people who commit crimes than punishing them



- **Mental health and violence prevention** were the two most popular investments victims preferred **to improve public safety**
- By a margin of nearly 8 to 1, victims prefer investments in **schools and education** over investments in prisons and jails
- By a margin of 6 to 1, victims prefer investments in **mental health treatment** over investments in prisons and jails



6 in 10 victims prefer shorter prison sentences and more spending on prevention and rehabilitation to prison sentences that keep people incarcerated for as long as possible

- **Three out of 4 victims prefer authorizing credits toward sentence reductions** for people who participate in rehabilitation, treatment, education, and job training than requiring the completion of the full sentence length issued at sentencing

- **85 percent of victims prefer making people with old records eligible for jobs and housing**



By a margin of 3 to 1, victims prefer holding people accountable through options **beyond just prison**, such as rehabilitation, mental health treatment, drug treatment, restorative justice, or community service

- **Nearly 7 out of 10 victims prefer reducing the number of people in jail** by releasing those who can safely await trial in the community or serve their sentence through diversion, community service, or treatment programs over keeping people in jail
- By a 2 to 1 margin victims think that **prisons and jails generally worsen mental illness** rather than improve mental illness for people who commit crimes while struggling with mental illness



By a more than 2 to 1 margin, victims prefer investing in crime prevention, crisis assistance, and strong communities over increasing arrests, strict punishment, and incarceration

VICTIMS' VIEWS CONSISTENT ACROSS DEMOGRAPHICS

- For each of the questions above, there is majority or plurality support across **demographic groups**, including age, gender, race and ethnicity, and political party affiliation



For each of the questions above, there is **majority support among both crime victims overall and victims of violent crimes**, including the most serious crimes such as rape or murder of a family member

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Advancing safety for victims must include effective strategies to hold individuals who commit crimes accountable and stop cycles of violence, as well as strategies to provide victims with pathways to recover from the physical, emotional, and financial consequences of crime.

As of today, there is inadequate information from people hurt by crime and violence guiding safety policy. The most comprehensive information currently available about victims is the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics. The NCVS is an annual data collection from a nationally representative sample of more than 90,000 U.S. households and nearly 160,000 people aged 12 and older. The annual NCVS report is an invaluable resource. However, none of the nation's 50 states annually conduct state-level analyses of victimization or regularly survey victims. This is a profound gap, particularly considering that the majority of public safety policymaking occurs at the state level.

To ensure public safety policy can be informed by up-to-date input from victims, in August 2022 Alliance for Safety and Justice commissioned our second national study of victims' experiences and preferences, after releasing our first national study findings in 2016. A nationally representative sample of 2,400 people across the country were contacted, and from that pool 1,537 people who had been victimized by crime or violence were interviewed about their experience with, and expectations of, the criminal justice system, as well as their own priorities regarding public safety policy.¹ This represents roughly twice as many crime victims as were interviewed in our 2016 study.

This report is a summary of the study's findings.

WHO ARE CRIME VICTIMS?

Crime in the United States impacts large numbers of people every year.

In 2021 more than 16 million victimizations took place in the U.S.² More than 4.5 million of these victimizations were violent, amounting to more than 2.7 million individuals experiencing at least one violent crime during a single year.³

To capture the experiences of people who are victimized repeatedly, as well as a broader cross-section of those who occasionally experience crime, the 2022 National Survey of Victims Views went beyond a one-year snapshot and instead utilized a 10-year reference period. The result shows even more widespread victimization: more than six in ten survey respondents indicated they had been a victim of crime over the preceding decade, which means 64 percent of people in the United States have been a crime victim in the last decade.

6 IN 10 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN
A VICTIM IN THE
LAST DECADE

Survivors of violent crime are the most likely to experience repeat victimization

Violence impacts people of all walks of life and the people who experience crime are as diverse as the country itself. National data indicate, however, that the strongest predictor of victimization is having previously been a victim of crime.⁴ This is known as repeat victimization.

The 2022 National Survey of Victims' Views found that repeat crime victims bear a sharply disproportionate share of the impact of crime and violence. People



who have been the victim of a violent crime are more than three times as likely to have been victimized four times or more. Nearly two-thirds of violent crime victims (63 percent) have been victimized repeatedly.

Ninety percent of those who report being the victim of a violent crime report also being the victim of property crime. Only five percent of crime victims report experiencing violent crime only.

MORE THAN
9 IN 10 VICTIMS SURVEYED
REPORT BEING A
VICTIM OF MULTIPLE
CRIMES

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), other national studies, and the 2022 National Survey on Victims' Views show the impact of violence is not borne equally. People with low incomes, people of color, people with disabilities, people who are LGBTQ, people who are unhoused, and people with records are significantly more vulnerable to becoming victims of violent crime.⁵

WANDA, FLORIDA

In 2006, my then husband stabbed me seven times and almost killed me. My children and I had to flee for our own safety. Although I received victims' compensation, I was not offered any other help or referrals from the state. Luckily, we found a local shelter, but the Department of Children and Families (DCF) said I couldn't provide a safe place for my children and forcibly put them in foster care. I was devastated.

A year later, I found permanent housing and I was reunited with my children. But the trauma had been compounded by the fact that my four-year-old son had been sexually abused in foster care. Although a doctor confirmed the abuse, DCF said it was impossible to prove where it took place since he had been in several foster homes. They then closed the case.

My son needed mental health counseling, but I couldn't get any help from the state, DCF, or the local criminal justice system.

In 2019, just as I was putting my life together, my teenage son was murdered. At the time, I was not given any referrals to mental health services. While I received victims' compensation, I received only \$1,500 — the burial and funeral costs were roughly \$14,000.

After losing a loved one, it is all but impossible to return to work when suddenly planning a funeral, dealing with profound shock and grief, and in some cases trying to protect remaining family members.

It was a financial struggle every day because I wasn't getting any paid time off from work, despite personal help from my co-workers.



I was given unpaid leave from work so I had a job to go back to, which is not the case for many survivors. Protections at the workplace, such as unpaid leave, or unemployment benefits for victims who need to flee their work for safety would prevent them from having to choose between their safety and being able to support themselves and their children. I worked with other survivors to help pass a bill in 2019 to provide these benefits to domestic violence victims. However, all victims of violent crime need this support.

For a long time, I was traumatized and filled with anger and despair. My healing journey didn't start until I became a pastor and started helping others.

I was able to overcome the traumatic situations in my life, but many survivors don't have the knowledge or access to services. Some commit suicide. Some become addicted or harmful due to unresolved trauma.

Survivors need a system to connect them to resources, support them at court, provide mental health support, and help us actually get through to law enforcement.

These are things a Trauma Recovery Center can provide. We need these in Florida.

Being a survivor with unaddressed trauma can lead to cycles of victimization and pain. People need help so we can stop the violence and make our communities safer for all.

People of Color Are More Likely to be Victims of Crime

According to an analysis from the national Center for Victim Research, overall, Black people in the United States have faced serious violent victimization at a rate that is 150 to 200 percent the rate among white people. The rate among Latino people is 120 to 150 percent as high, among indigenous people it is 240 percent as high, and people of multiple races face a risk of serious violent victimization that is 410 percent that of white people.⁶ Vulnerability to deadly violence is even more disproportionate – in 2019, Black people represented 14 percent of the U.S. population but more than half of all homicide victims.⁷

Black boys and young men ages 15 to 34 are victims of gun homicides at 20 times the rate of white boys and young men of the same age range.⁸

LGBTQ People Are More Likely to be Victims of Crime

A recent report from the U.S. Department of Justice found that lesbian and gay people face violent victimization at rates twice as high as heterosexual people. Among bisexual people the rate of violent victimization is about seven times the rate of heterosexual people, and transgender people are 2.5 times as likely to experience violent victimization than people who are not transgender.⁹

People in Low-Income Communities are More Likely to be Victims of Crime

There are also large disparities in victimization rates across economic groups. People with lower incomes face heightened vulnerability to becoming a victim. The results of one study found, for example, that **the rate of victimization among people with family incomes below \$15,000 was more than three times the rate of those with family incomes of \$75,000 or more.**¹⁰

People With Disabilities are More Likely to be Victims of Crime

A report from the U.S. Department of Justice shows that the annual rate of violent victimization against people with disabilities is nearly four times the rate of violence against people who are not disabled.¹¹ The 2022 National Survey of Victims' Views found that people who identified as disabled or chronically ill were 119 percent as likely to report having been a victim of any crime in the last 10 years, and 142 percent as likely to report having been the victim of a violent crime compared to people without disabilities.

People With Records Are More Likely to be Victims of Crime

People with old records are also more likely to become victims of crime. The 2022 National Survey of Victims' Views found that people who have a past conviction are 140 percent as likely to report having been a victim in the past ten years compared to people who have never been convicted of a crime, and they are nearly twice as likely to report having been the victim of a violent crime. Nearly nine in ten people with a past conviction (87 percent) have been the victim in the past ten years, and six in ten people with a past conviction have been violently victimized.

NEARLY

9 IN 10

WITH A PAST
CONVICTION HAVE
BEEN A VICTIM IN
THE PAST 10 YEARS.

Young People of Color From Low-Income Communities Are Hurt by Crime at the Highest Rate

People from overlapping demographic groups with higher rates of vulnerability become victims of crime, especially violent crime, at particularly acute rates. Young low-income men of color living in cities face some of the highest rates of violent victimization in the nation.¹² This group's vulnerability to violent victimization is 15 times higher than that of older, higher-income white women living outside of cities.¹³

TAMARA, CALIFORNIA

I was a victim of sexual assault in 2017. It happened while I was in a vehicle with someone I knew. I tried to flee, but I was forced to stay.

The next day, I was in shock. I felt violated and depressed. Unresolved trauma from domestic violence as a teen, where my nose was broken, resurfaced, so it was difficult to seek help. I eventually called a local domestic violence service center, but they were unavailable until after the holidays.

When I finally spoke to someone at the center, they told me I had to file a police report to receive services from victims' compensation. I had mixed emotions — being scared and empathetic — but I knew my mental health was a priority.

Because the incident happened in Los Angeles, Stockton Police sent a report to the Los Angeles Police Department. But after two months of PTSD and suicidal thoughts, I still had not heard back from them. Reaching out continuously, I finally got ahold of someone who was able to help me. Later, I followed up again and was told they couldn't reach my perpetrator and were too busy.

To this day, they never got a sworn statement from my perpetrator and he has not been held accountable. The process made me feel unimportant, because I was the one who always had to reach out.

Criminal justice system policies need to be trauma informed. Law enforcement could have done better.

Two and a half months after I first reached out for help, I was finally connected to a therapist and diagnosed with major depressive disorder. That is when my healing began.

I have worked for legislation to extend the deadline to file for victims compensation. And I run a campaign called Rara Rocks, where we paint rocks and give them to people who serve as "rocks" (inspiration) in our lives. I also organize events about the importance of the healing process, and work in the community to educate people on being more trauma informed.

I have seen firsthand that people who commit crimes can change. My ex-boyfriend — who had physically and emotionally abused me as a teen — called me years later to ask for forgiveness. He credited me for him becoming a good father and husband.

People change and we can't judge them on their past. There needs to be redemption and restorative justice for people with past convictions. That is how we will break generational cycles of violence and trauma.

I thank God for victims' compensation and therapists. To this day, I still suffer from being hypervigilant, but I have come a long way into my healing.



WHAT IS

THE IMPACT OF CRIME ON VICTIMS?

Being a victim of crime is both a common experience and an experience that can have long-term consequences, including severely detrimental impacts on survivors' financial, physical, and physiological wellbeing.

With proper support, these consequences can be addressed and people harmed by crime and violence can recover and thrive.

However, without appropriate recognition or support, survivors report experiencing long-term and debilitating costs, such as depression, anxiety, insurmountable debt, chronic illness, additional injuries, difficulty with substance use, joblessness, housing insecurity, or more. Without victim support, the collateral impacts of unaddressed victimization can also contribute to people later becoming perpetrators of crime themselves.

In the 2022 National Survey of Victims' Views respondents reported experiencing a wide range of impacts. Supporting victims to recover from these impacts is crucial for wellbeing and safety.

Crime Affects Feelings of Safety for Victims

People who have been victimized by crime feel less safe. Only three in ten victims report feeling very safe. Nearly one in five crime victims (19 percent)

reported that they felt unsafe (15 percent somewhat unsafe and 4 percent very unsafe). Among victims of violent crime, one in four (25 percent) said they felt unsafe (19 percent somewhat unsafe and 6 percent very unsafe).



Crime is a Traumatic Experience Impacting Economic and Physiological Wellbeing

Victims surveyed report the following impacts arising from their victimization:

- 70 percent of all crime victims report experiencing stress or anxiety,
- More than half (52 percent) said the experience left them feeling unsafe or scared,
- Fifty percent of victims reported difficulty sleeping,
- More than one in three wanted to relocate as a result of their victimization (36 percent) and nearly half of those who wanted to relocate were not able to do so (47 percent),
- One in three said the experience led to difficulties in their relationships (34 percent),
- One in three reported difficulty with work or school (32 percent),
- One in four experienced injury or other health issues (24 percent),
- More than one in ten feared losing housing or were evicted (16 percent), and
- One in ten lost a job or were demoted as a result of needing time off (10 percent).



These Impacts are Even More Pronounced for Victims of Violent Crime

Experiencing trauma in the aftermath of victimization is a very common and normal physiological response. Nearly half (49 percent) of all crime survivors and seven out of ten victims of violent crime describe their experience as traumatic.



Victims of violent crime report the following impacts arising from their victimization:

- Nearly nine in ten victims of violent crime (86 percent) experienced stress or anxiety
- Seven in ten (71 percent) said the experience with crime left them feeling unsafe or scared
- Nearly seven in ten violent crime victims experienced difficulty sleeping
- More than half (52 percent) wanted to relocate as a result of their victimization, yet nearly half of this group were unable to do so (44 percent)
- More than half report difficulties in their relationships (54 percent)
- More than half report difficulties with work or school (52 percent)
- Four out of ten (39 percent) experienced injury or other health issues
- More than one in four (27 percent) feared being forced from their home or evicted
- One in six victims of violent crime (16 percent) lost their job or were demoted

These kinds of consequences are especially prevalent among repeat victims. For example, national data show people who are repeatedly victimized are more likely than other crime victims to experience significant mental health challenges, such as higher levels of depression, anxiety, and symptoms related to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).¹⁴

HALEIGH, OHIO

Throughout my childhood, starting at age three, I was sexually abused and exploited by multiple family members. It caused so much pain that at age six I told daycare staff I wanted to stab myself and drew a picture of myself crying with a dark spot between my legs — yet no one investigated or helped me.

At 16, I disclosed fragments of the abuse after attempting suicide. I was diagnosed with PTSD and received some counseling, but I aged out and the progress was derailed. Children Services substantiated my case, but no one was prosecuted.

At 17, I left home. Trying to support myself, I found employment at a massage parlor. The owners sex trafficked me for two days. Ohio's laws at the time prevented prosecution. As an adult, I was sexually exploited for drugs.

Then, in 2017, I found the CitiLookout Trauma Recovery Center, beginning an ongoing journey to heal.

In the revolving door of the adult mental health system, I was asked what was wrong with me instead of what happened to me. This led to misdiagnoses, unnecessary medications, and inadequate treatment — all centered on changing my behavior instead of helping me heal.

What made my experience with the Trauma Recovery Center different was their focus on trauma-informed and trauma-responsive care. They helped me develop skills to cope with my triggers and process my past, and to find places for that pain to live outside of me.

The wrap-around, trauma-specific services offered by Trauma Recovery Centers are vital to a survivor's ability to heal and thrive.

Today, as a social worker, I see abused and neglected youth trapped in this same cycle. Or their trauma-based behavior leads them to the juvenile justice system.

When my abuse was reported, law enforcement expected a perfectly detailed, linear timeline of my experiences. But trauma affects your brain and memory. It's messy and complex.

To help survivors, these systems have to change by addressing trauma at every stage of its processes.



IS THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM MEETING VICTIMS' NEEDS?

The criminal justice system's mandate is to protect public safety, which is envisioned to include the investigation and prosecution of crime, as well as facilitating victim access to medical, emotional, and economic recovery.

Without recovery help, the consequences of crime can have severe and long-term impacts on victims' personal, familial, and professional lives.

Despite this crucially important role, very few crime survivors report that the justice system was responsive, either in the investigation and prosecution of their case or in facilitating victim access to recovery assistance.

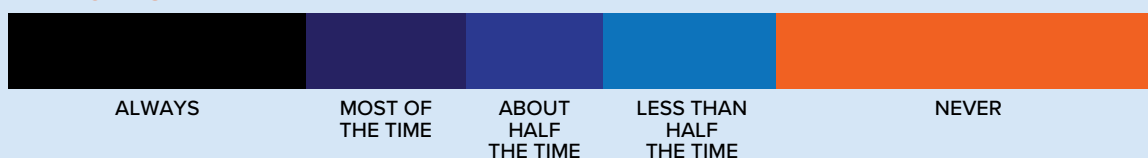
Very Few Victims Trust the Justice System

Many crime victims express low expectations of the criminal justice system's ability to investigate and prosecute crime. This is expressed, in part, by the frequency of victims choosing to not report crime. Nearly one in three victims (32 percent) indicated they did not report those crimes — including one in four victims of violent crime.

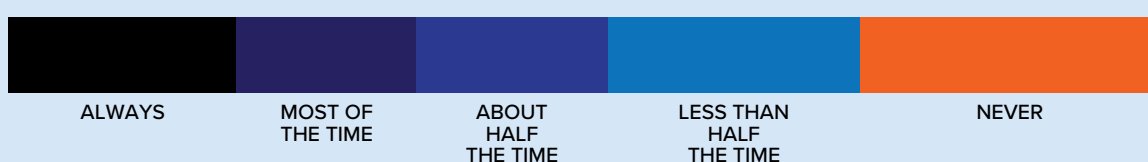
3 IN 4 victims did not always report crimes to law enforcement

HOW MANY OF YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH CRIME WERE REPORTED TO LAW ENFORCEMENT?

ALL VICTIMS



VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME



There are many reasons victims do not report crime, including fear that doing so will make them less safe.

FOR WHAT REASONS DID YOU DECIDE NOT TO REPORT A CRIME TO LAW ENFORCEMENT?

42%

Police wouldn't do anything

25%

Didn't trust the justice system to protect me

23%

Too scared or worried about retaliation

22%

Prosecution and courts wouldn't do anything

16%

Concern about getting blamed or scrutinized

The Justice System Resolves Very Few Criminal Legal Cases

Part of the low trust in the justice system emanates from a lack of faith that the justice system will resolve the case. This lack of faith is backed up by experience. National data reveal that the majority of reported crime is not solved by the justice system. Less than half of all reported crime is prosecuted

and less than half of prosecuted crime ends in a conviction.

In the 2022 National Survey of Victims' Views, of victims who did report crime, fewer than one in five saw the case resolved. This includes 19 percent of victims of violent crime and 25 percent of people who lost a loved one to homicide.

FOR MORE THAN

4 IN 5

victims who reported crime, the crime was not solved

WHICH BEST DESCRIBES WHAT HAPPENED WITH YOUR CASE?

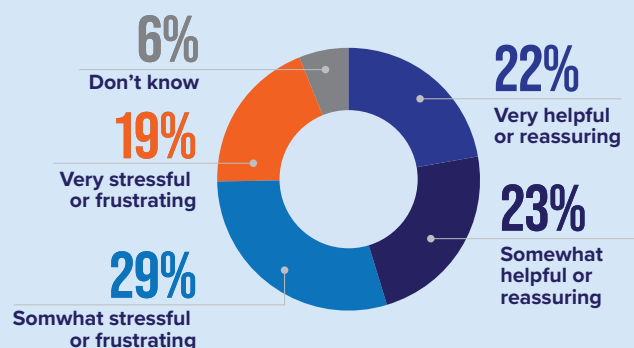


NEARLY

1 IN 2

victims did not feel their interactions with law enforcement were helpful or reassuring

WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR INTERACTIONS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT DURING THE INVESTIGATION OF YOUR CASE?



BERNICE, MICHIGAN

My youngest son, Natalian, was shot in his car — an Impala he proudly purchased with earnings from his job — on a vacant street in Highland Park. He was 23 years old.

That day the police knocked on my door and gave me the worst news of my life, but they never followed up with me. No one has reached out to me in the three years since. I found myself alone with my shock and my trauma.

Natalian's murder devastated me and my family. My other son started drinking and lost his job. When I say no one reached out to give me a number for help, a contact, I mean no one. Nothing. I was so deep in my own pain, I couldn't deal with any other person's pain. I even started to fear for my own life. Because if somebody can kill my son and everybody knows where I live....

My friend who works at the funeral home gave me an application for victim compensation to help cover the funeral costs, but I was denied. Then, when I joined a grief support group and someone appealed it, I was denied again.

There's always an assumption when a young man is killed in the city of Detroit or Wayne County. There's always an assumption.

It was almost like I was being criminalized because my son was murdered.

I'm an activist in Detroit. I have a Spirit of Detroit award. When families would lose a child to gun violence, I was at their house dropping off food. I didn't know it was going to come to my home.

I still find myself working with mothers and families on a regular basis. They call me and I want to refer them to get help. And as a member of Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice, I was part of passing the Safer Michigan Act, a new law that expands access to the victims compensation program. That probably was the proudest moment of my life.

As of now, though, I have no clues in Natalian's murder. No suspects, no leads. All I ask is that it not be a cold case. But to expect any justice, I don't see it coming. I am my only detective and my own source of justice. They may not mention my son's name anymore. But I do. Every chance I get.



FOR EVERY
VICTIM WHO GOT HELP
UNDERSTANDING AND
NAVIGATING THE CRIMINAL
JUSTICE SYSTEM

4X AS
MANY

**WANTED HELP
BUT DID NOT GET IT**

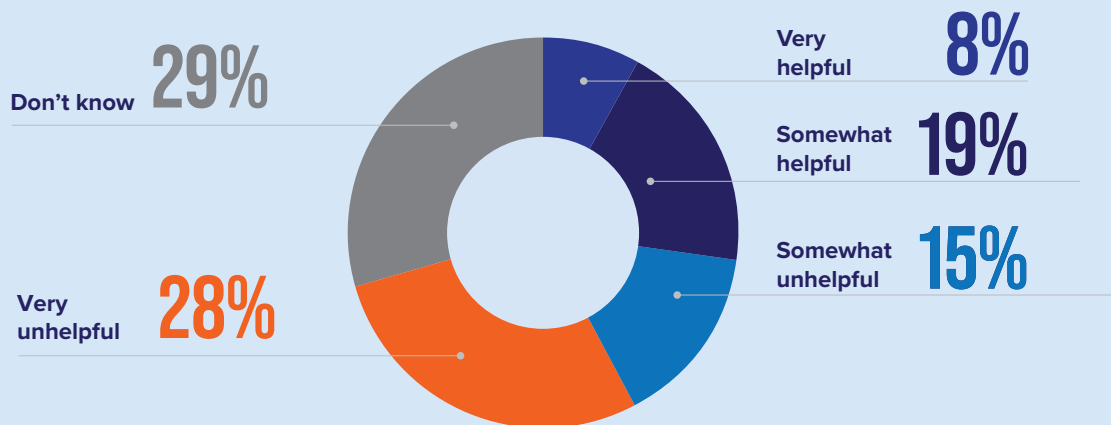
Most Victims Do Not Receive Help to Recover

Most crime victims need help understanding and navigating the courts and criminal justice system while their case is being investigated and resolved. Only about one in ten crime victims (12 percent) received this basic assistance. Four times as many victims (48 percent) said they would have wanted this kind of help but did not get it.

Another basic need for many victims is access to information about recovering from crime, including referrals for support services — such as crisis assistance, counseling, or financial assistance. While offering this kind of information is often a stated goal of criminal justice agencies, less than one in ten victims reported that the justice system was very helpful in providing information about recovering from crime or referrals for support services.

LESS THAN **1 IN 10** victims say the criminal justice system was very helpful

HOW HELPFUL WAS THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN PROVIDING INFORMATION ABOUT RECOVERING FROM CRIME OR REFERRALS FOR SUPPORT SERVICES?



AMBER, TEXAS

I am a domestic violence survivor. For years, my husband was mentally and physically abusive. He even ran over me with a car. I didn't file charges because I was more afraid of retribution when he was released from jail. Law enforcement didn't understand this. They were angry at me for not filing charges. They couldn't even offer any suggestions for protection for when he would get out, should I press charges.



I developed an addiction trying to cope with several abusive relationships and was eventually arrested and placed on probation. I was also under investigation with Child Protective Services (CPS) due to the domestic violence I was suffering. After seven years of probation and being clean, I went to prison for violation of probation, all because I self-reported one incident of drug use to get help. I was sentenced to prison for six years. Though I had resolved my CPS case by doing everything they asked, they ignored my pleas and gave my children to my husband, who had not complied with any of the CPS requirements — despite the fact that I told them he was using meth and was abusive.

While I was incarcerated and my children were in the custody of my abuser, CPS became involved again. But because I was in prison I couldn't do anything. CPS was trying to take my rights to my children due to "unintentional abandonment" because I was incarcerated. I couldn't go to the court dates because I was in prison. However, while my husband was in county jail, he was picked up from jail to go to his court dates.

When the children, who were three and five, were finally removed from my husband's custody, they tested positive for drugs and it was discovered that they were sexually abused. My husband is now in prison, but it is so hard to watch my children suffer with mental and emotional issues due to the abuse. How can you let a man out of prison who has hurt children and yet keep women in prison who have turned to addiction to deal with abuse?

I was offered addiction counseling and parenting classes while in prison and on probation, but I never got trauma-specific counseling, so I didn't heal. CPS never gave me any help either. I still suffer from PTSD, anxiety, and panic attacks.

Experience has shown me that abuse survivors need access to safe relocation and other victim services even if you don't file charges. If incarcerated abuse victims had access to more mental health classes and services, people would have a better chance once they got out. The justice system should be trying to get to the root cause of addiction or abuse, and trying to rehabilitate men and women.

When I got out of prison, I didn't have quick access to shelter and was homeless at first. CPS would not let me stay at my parents' house because they had my children.

Even though I complied with counseling and drug tests, CPS still wanted me monitored just because I went to prison, not because I had ever done anything to my kids. After two years of fighting, I eventually won sole conservatorship over my children.

There need to be systems to help women who are nonviolent, who fell into addiction to cope with abuse, or who are victims of domestic violence. The current system either makes their situations worse, takes away their children, or leaves them in more dangerous situations.



For **every victim** of violent crime who received compensation...



...there were **11 more** who would have wanted compensation but did not receive it

96%

of victims of violent crime did not receive victim compensation to help recover



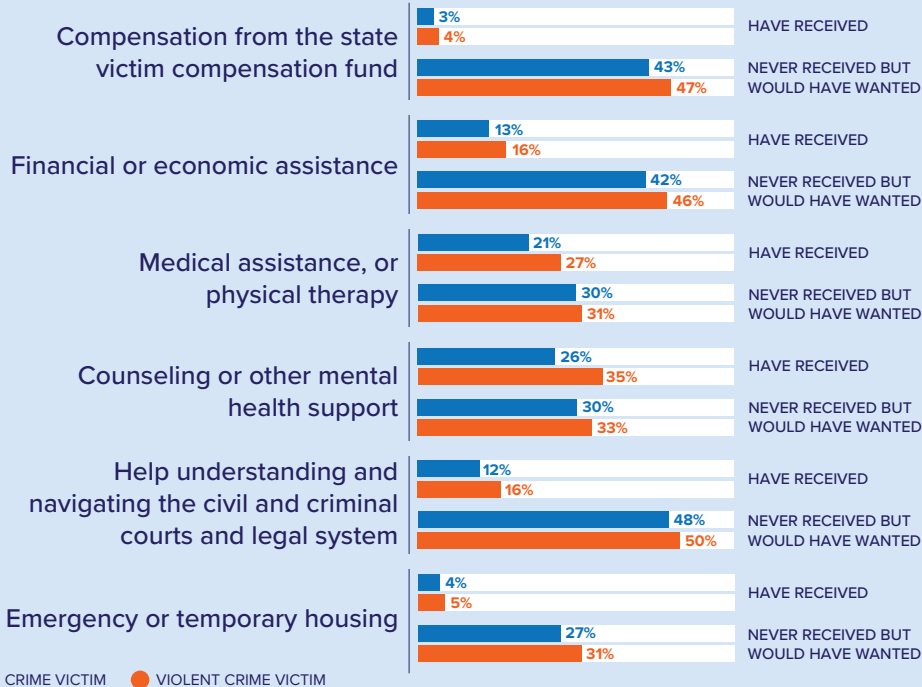
Providing victim compensation — financial assistance to help victims in the aftermath of a crime — is a commonly stated responsibility within the criminal justice system as well. Every state has a victim compensation program created to provide financial reimbursement to victims for expenses that resulted from a violent crime, such as medical costs, lost wages, counseling, or funeral costs. Yet for every victim of violent crime who received victim compensation, there were eleven more who would have wanted such support but never got it.

Similarly, while more than half of violent crime victims hoped to relocate to new housing following

their victimization (52 percent), nearly half of these (44 percent) said they were unable to do so. **Just four percent of all victims received emergency or temporary housing, compared to 27 percent who would have wanted but did not get such support.**

For many crime victims, counseling and mental health support is key to recovering from their experience. While slightly more than one in four crime victims (26 percent) said they received this kind of support, even more — nearly one in three (30 percent) — said they would have wanted but did not get it.

SERVICES AVAILABLE TO VICTIMS OF CRIME



87%

did not receive financial or economic assistance to help recover

74%

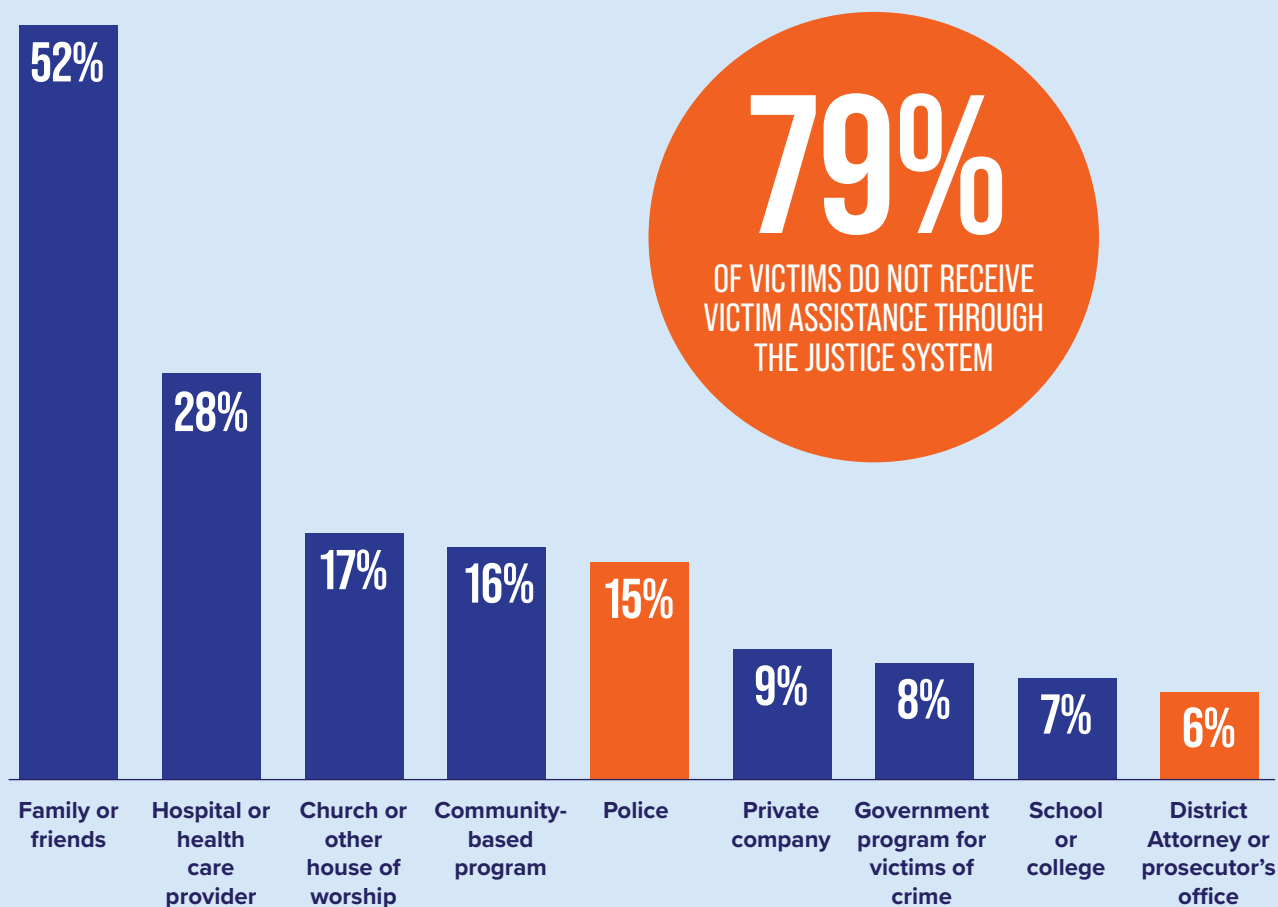
did not receive counseling or other mental health support to help recover

47%

of those who wanted but did not receive support said they did not know where to find it

TOP SOURCES OF VICTIMS' SUPPORT

FROM WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DID YOU RECEIVE THE HELP OR SUPPORT YOU DID RECEIVE?



Few of Those Who Receive Help Get It Through the Criminal Justice System

When victims did receive support in the wake of crime, it most often was provided by family or friends (52 percent) or hospital and health care providers (28 percent).

Agencies within the criminal justice system were far less likely to be cited as a source of support. Fewer than one in three victims who got support received it from the police, a district attorney or prosecutor's office, or a government program specifically for victims of crime.

WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES OF VICTIMS ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY POLICY?

In addition to interviewing crime victims about their experiences with crime and the criminal justice system, the 2022 National Survey of Victims' Views also collected data about victims' attitudes regarding criminal justice and public safety policy.

Beginning in the 1980s through 2009, the United States experienced unprecedented growth in incarceration rates and prison spending, becoming home to the world's largest incarcerated population, with more than 2 million people in jail or prison (a 500 percent increase over forty years)¹⁵, as well as nearly 4 million more people living under community supervision.¹⁶ In the 2010s, states across the nation initiated a new direction. After historically low crime rates, concerns about waste in the justice system, depleted state budgets, the lack of effectiveness, and racially disparate impacts of incarceration led many lawmakers to seek new approaches.

However, as gun-related homicides sharply increased again in the Covid-era of 2020, many elected officials have advocated for returning to the law-and-order crime policies that drove incarceration up in prior years.

Today, the nation is again at an inflection point. With concerns about homicides and violent crime continuing, political debates about the direction of crime policy are intensifying. Yet, despite the increased attention, there remains a significant gap in information: What do people hurt by crime and violence prefer lawmakers to focus on as it relates to safety and justice policy?

In many state capitals and in the media, anecdotal representations of victims at times portray victims as strongly favoring tough sentencing policies and maintaining high prison rates. Given the large impact of these anecdotal representations, this survey sought to discern the perspectives of a more comprehensive and representative group of crime victims.

What matters most to protect public safety?

Public safety expenditures have increased sevenfold in the last forty years, with much of that increase attributed to the cost of expanded incarceration. As states began to rethink incarceration and develop a diverse range of local safety programs, new strategies to reduce crime and recidivism and help

victims have gained steam. Still, most local strategies have limited funding and remain unable to meet the demand. The 2022 National Survey of Victims' Views asked victims about their public safety investment preferences. The answers point to an urgent need for new safety investment priorities.

WHEN IT COMES TO PUBLIC SAFETY, WHICH TWO OF THESE ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO FUND?

MOST POPULAR: MENTAL HEALTH AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION



6 in 10 victims chose expanding mental health and substance use treatment



4 in 10 victims chose expanding violence prevention and youth programs

CO-EQUAL IN SUPPORT: POLICE, REENTRY, TRAUMA RECOVERY



Roughly 2 in 10 victims chose increasing the number of police officers



Roughly 2 in 10 victims chose expanding jobs and housing options for people leaving prison



Roughly 2 in 10 victims chose expanding crisis response and trauma recovery services

LEAST POPULAR: INCREASED ARRESTS, LONGER SENTENCES, MORE INCARCERATION



1 in 10 victims chose increasing law enforcement arrests



Less than 1 in 10 chose making prison sentences longer



Less than 1 in 10 chose expanding prisons and jails

lack of consequences lack of jobs bad parenting drug addiction **poverty** mental health issues economic desperation

What causes crime?

The 2022 National Survey of Victims' Views asked respondents to answer an open-ended question: What do you think are the main causes of crime? Here are the insights victims gave:

- ✓ The most common responses pointed to poverty and economic issues/economic desperation — more than one in three survivors (**36 percent**) referenced this theme in their responses
- ✓ Drugs/substance use issues (**15 percent**), mental health issues (**9 percent**), family issues/parenting (**9 percent**), lack of consequences/weaknesses in the justice system (**8 percent**), and education (**6 percent**) were also common themes

IN THEIR WORDS:

"People in this area are poor. They steal to feed their family."

"Lack of resources, lack of education, lack of hope for a better future"

"Drugs, alcohol, poverty, poor upbringing"

"Lack of basic resources, discrimination on a small and large scale"

"Poverty and a lack of being able to provide for oneself"

"Drugs and poor education leading to crime as a primary means of income"

"Desperation"

"Hunger, homelessness, joblessness..."

"People not having enough money in their life to live on"

"Poor education and low access to jobs and opportunities"

"Hurt people hurt people, fear, shame, poverty, addiction, history of abuse, unaddressed mental health differences"

"Consequences aren't strict enough"

"Poverty and lack of consequences"

- ✓ A few respondents also pointed to character issues to understand their experiences, like a lack of morality (**7 percent**), greed/selfishness (**4 percent**), or other individual character traits (**8 percent**) are all examples

IN THEIR WORDS:

"Lack of morals and upbringing"

"Bad people"

"Lack of Christian values and lack of emphasis on the traditional family unit"

- ✓ **Two percent** talked about inadequate police

JORGE, TEXAS

I grew up in an abusive environment, and when I was 19 I was arrested for a DUI. Instead of being put in the usual pretrial cell, I was put in the tank full of men waiting to be sent to prison, some of whom committed violent crimes. Later that night, I was raped. The next day, I was released and never told the jail staff what had happened to me.



Over the next few days, I felt like I was in a fog. I was traumatized and confused. Two weeks later, I committed an armed robbery and was later sentenced to five years in prison. During my sentence, I became violent out of fear and because I believed that everyone knew I was a punk. In these moments, I was vulnerable to being victimized again or to committing more violence in prison.

Back in 1977, there was nothing for a 19-year-old Chicano male victim of sexual assault if that person wanted to seek help. If there had been, I might have stayed around and examined the responsibility I had to myself and to my brothers — since my parents had just divorced and my father went away. Instead, I got deep into cocaine and robberies and was in and out of prison two more times.

Now I've been out since 2008. I don't know what healing looks like as a survivor and someone living with a past conviction. Victims with a past conviction like me are often denied access to victim compensation, stable housing, and employment. I still have nightmares about my time in prison. To this day, I have never received the mental health and victim services that I need.

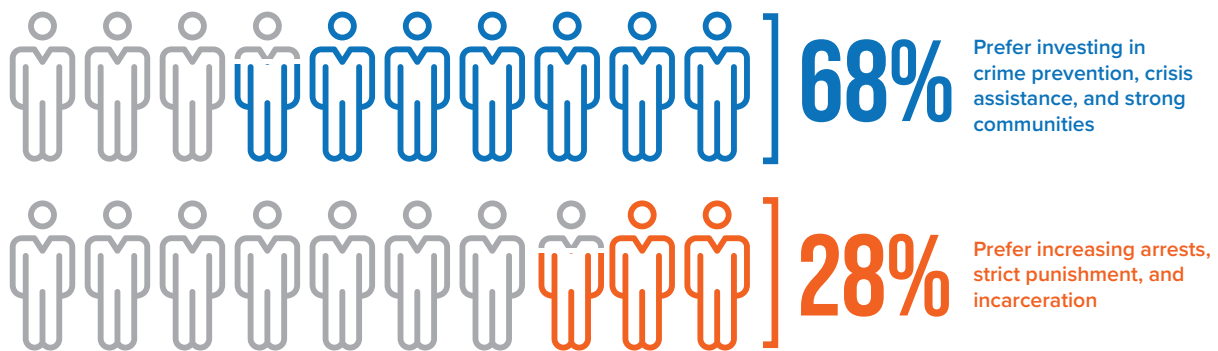
There's such an emphasis on punishment in this society — that if you harmed someone the same way you were harmed, you are now a harmer, not a harmee. But as someone smarter than me once said, the first time you commit violence is not the first time you encounter it.

I never thought of what happened to me when I was 19 as state-sanctioned violence — that somehow I should be eligible for services as a victim. How do you prove that? No charges were ever filed.

When trauma goes unaddressed, it leads to self destructive behavior. In my case, it was robberies and drug use. If I had received the help I needed, I wouldn't have engaged in the behavior that led to incarceration. Victims need mental health and trauma recovery to stop cycles of crime and help them heal.

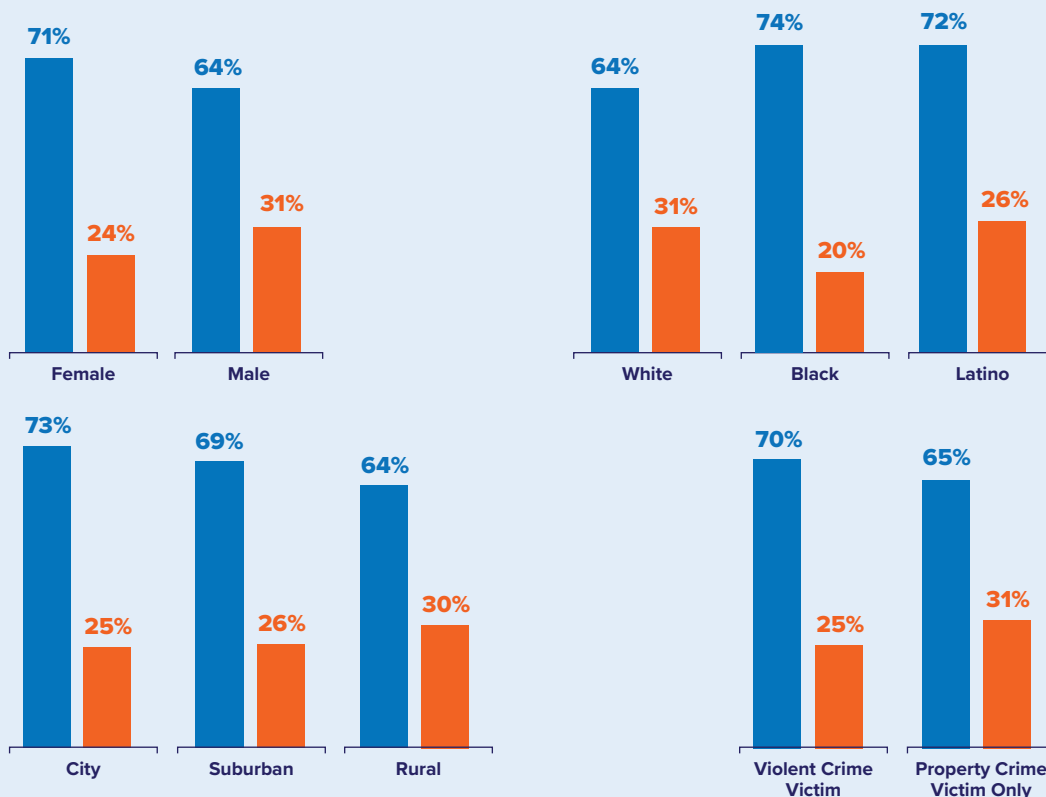
Victims prefer reducing crime through prevention, crisis assistance, and strong communities over increasing arrests and incarceration

By more than a **two to one margin** victims prefer investing in crime prevention, crisis assistance, and strong communities (**68%**) over increasing arrests, strict punishment, and incarceration (**28%**).



DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD BE MORE FOCUSED ON...

- Investing in crime prevention, crisis assistance, and strong communities
- Increasing arrests, strict punishments, and incarceration



Victims prefer a justice system that focuses more on rehabilitation than punishment

By a margin of nearly **two to one**, most crime victims prefer that the criminal justice system focus more on rehabilitating people who commit crimes (**57%**) than punishing them (**33%**).

For nearly every two victims who prefer the criminal justice system focus on rehabilitation...

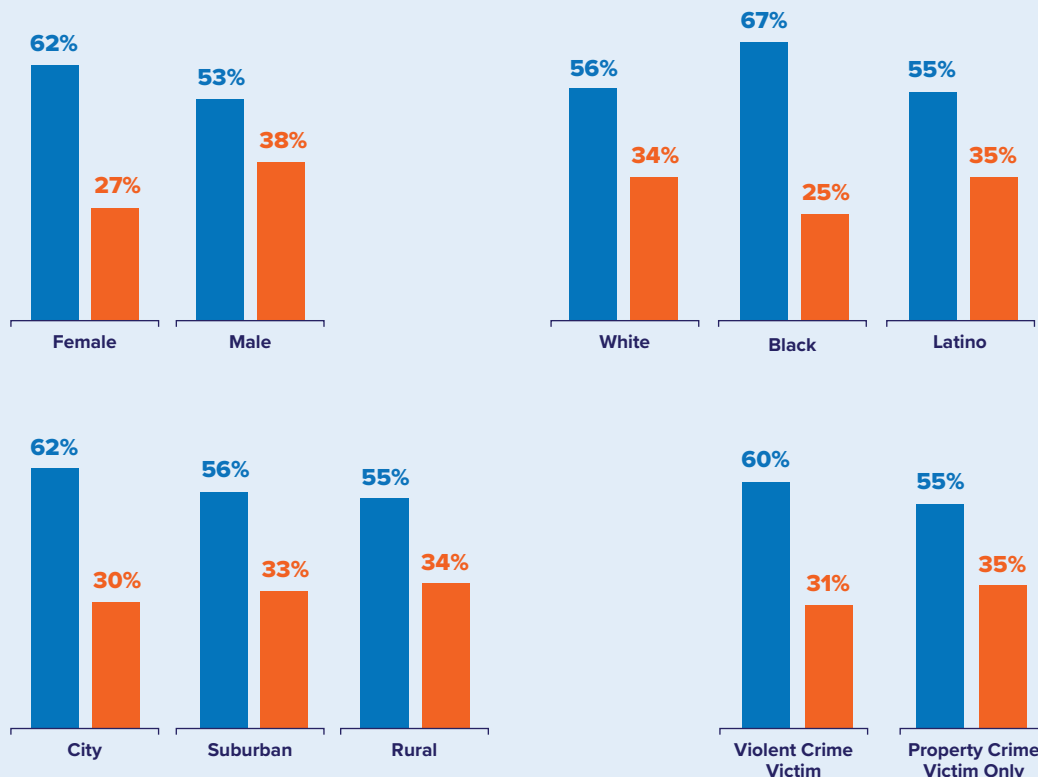


...there is one victim who prefers it focus on punishment.



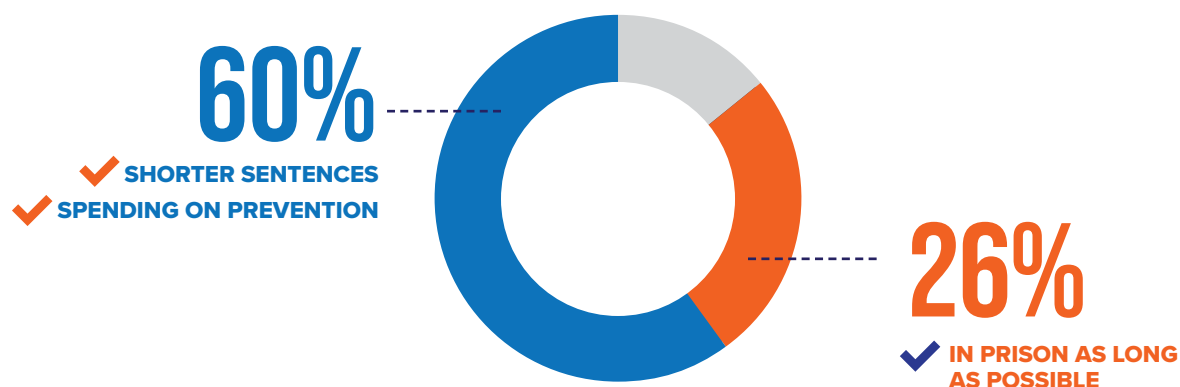
DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD BE MORE FOCUSED ON...

- Rehabilitating people who commit crimes
- Punishing people who commit crimes



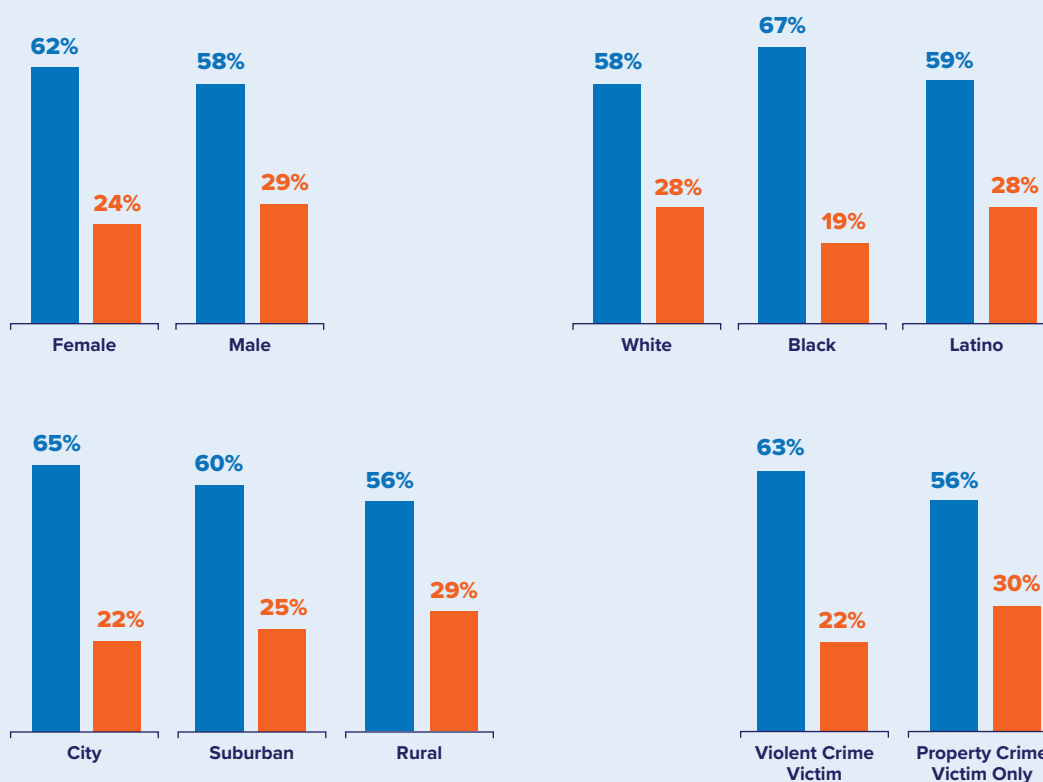
Victims prefer shorter prison sentences and more spending on prevention to longer prison sentences

Two out of three crime victims prefer shorter prison sentences and spending more on prevention and rehabilitation (60%) over prison sentences that keep people in prison for as long as possible (26%).



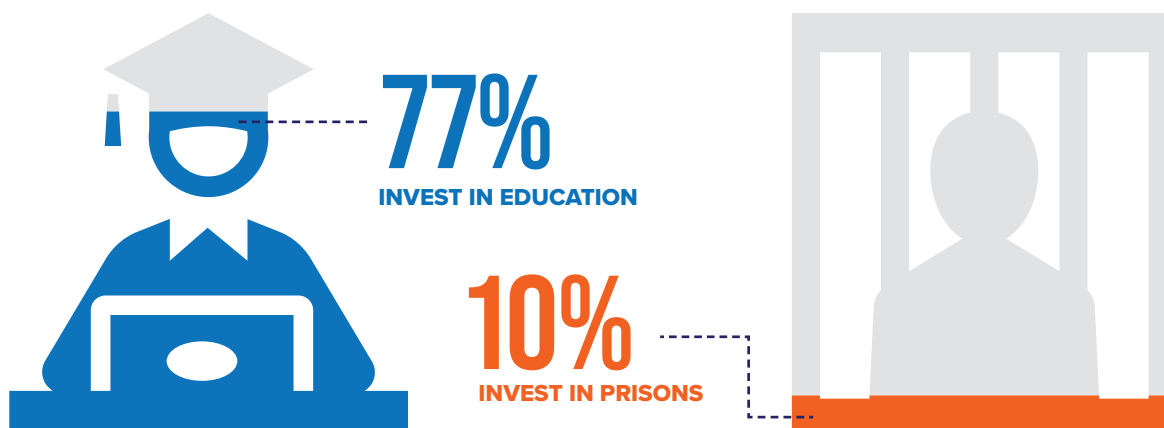
WHICH DO YOU PREFER?

- Shorter prison sentences and spending more on prevention and rehabilitation programs
- Prison sentences that keep people in prison for as long as possible



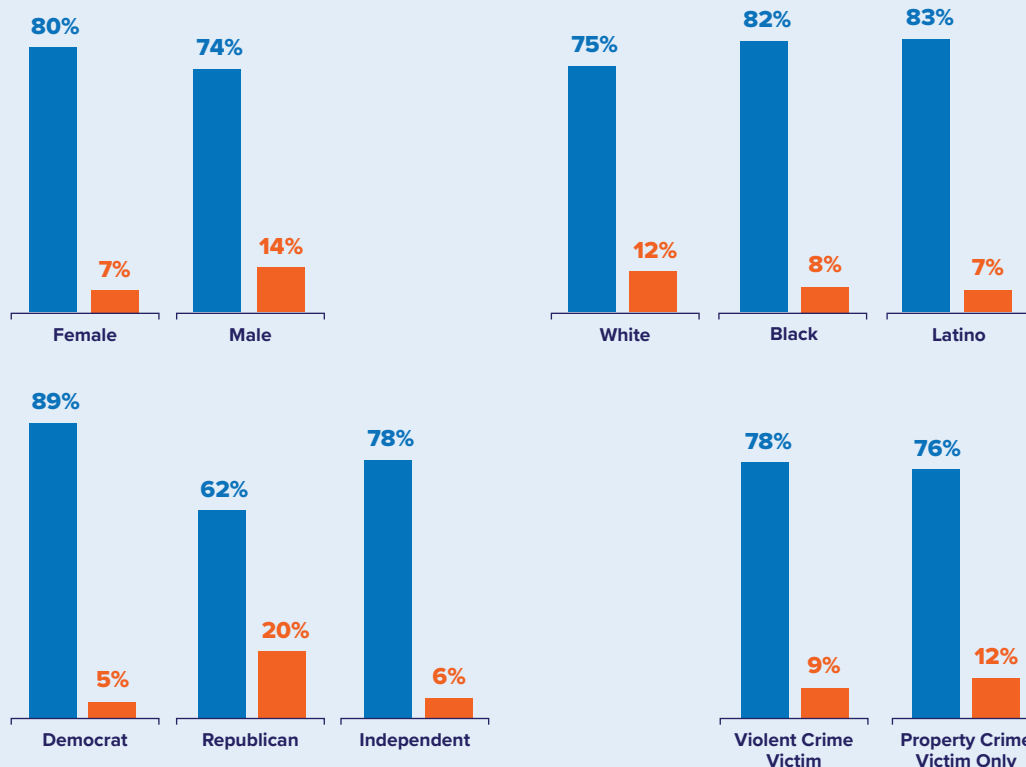
Victims prefer investments in schools and education to prison and jails

By a margin of **nearly eight to one**, victims prefer investments in schools and education (**77%**) over investments in prisons and jails (**10%**).



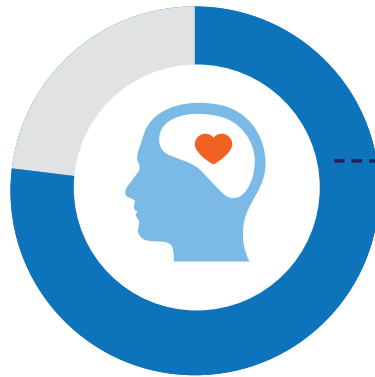
DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD...

- Invest more in schools and education
- Invest more in prisons and jails



Victims prefer increased investments in mental health treatment to prisons and jails

More than **six times** as many victims prefer investments in mental health treatment (**77%**) over investments in prisons and jails (**12%**)

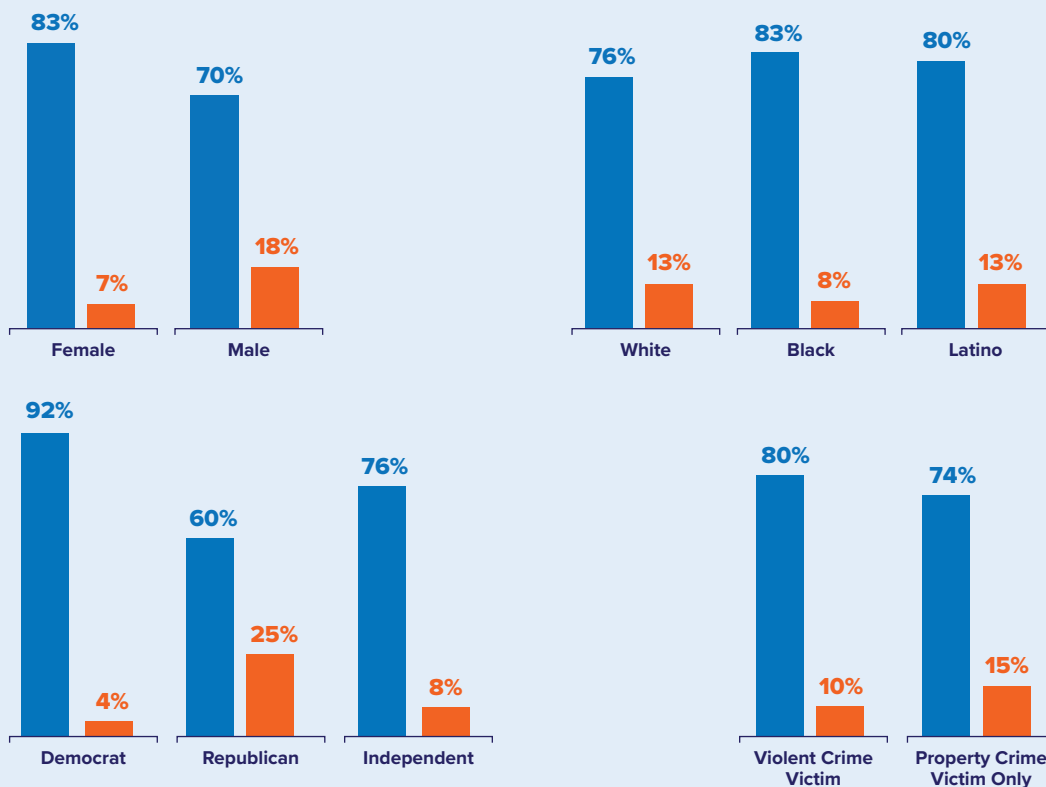


77%
**INVEST MORE
IN MENTAL
HEALTH TREATMENT**



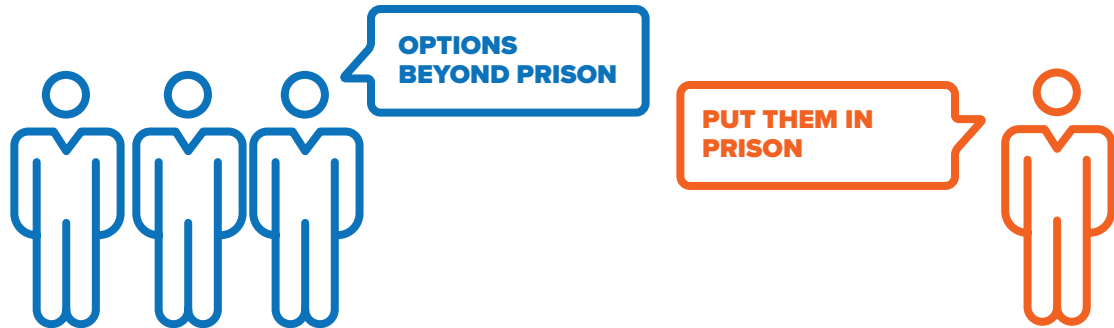
DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD...

- Invest more in mental health treatment
- Invest more in prisons and jails



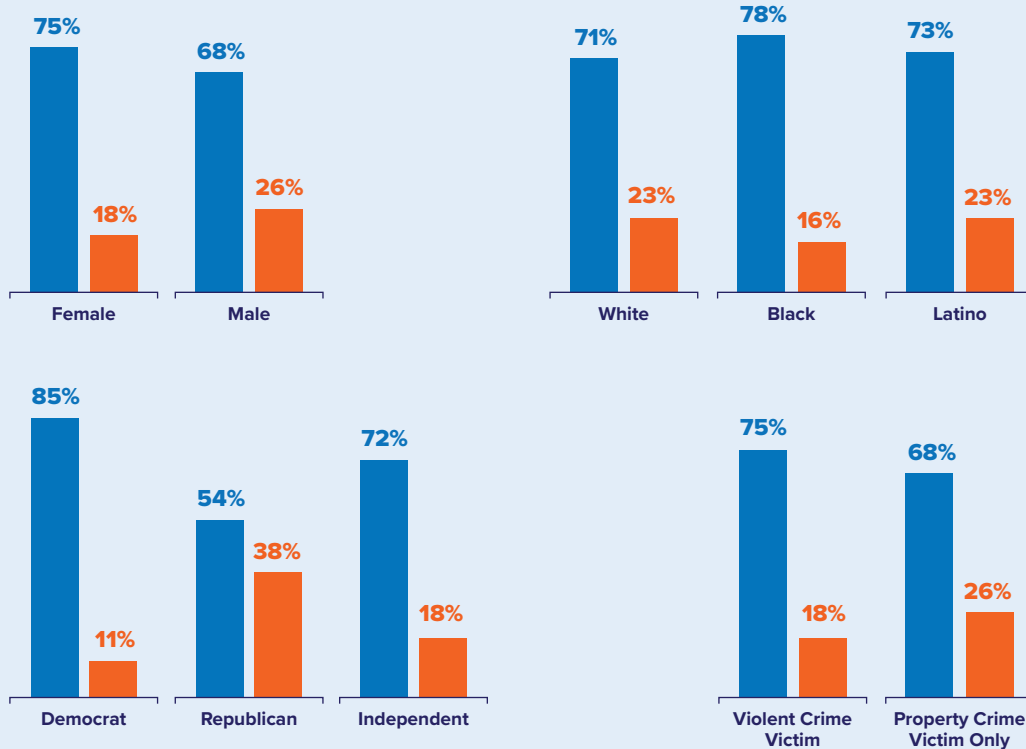
Victims prefer alternative options beyond prison to hold people accountable

By a margin of **three to one** (72% to 22%), victims prefer holding people accountable through options beyond just prison, such as rehabilitation, mental health treatment, drug treatment, community supervision, or community service.



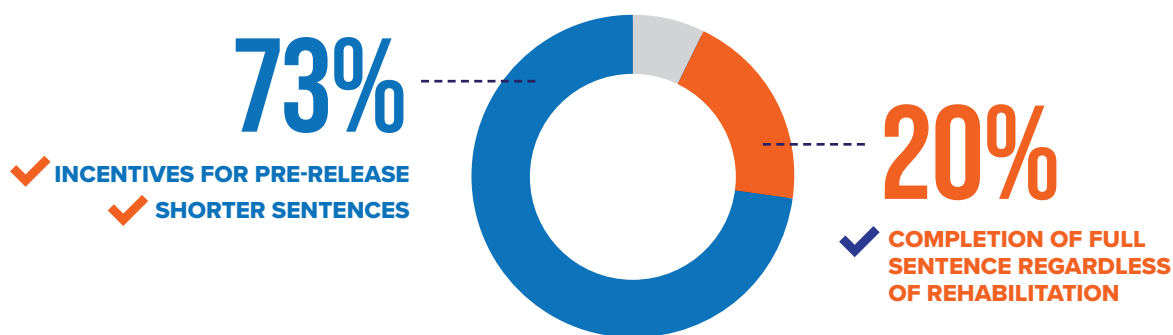
WHEN PEOPLE COMMIT CRIMES, WHICH DO YOU THINK IS GENERALLY THE BEST WAY TO HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE?

- Options beyond just prison, such as rehabilitation, mental health treatment, drug treatment, restorative justice, or community service
- Put them in prison



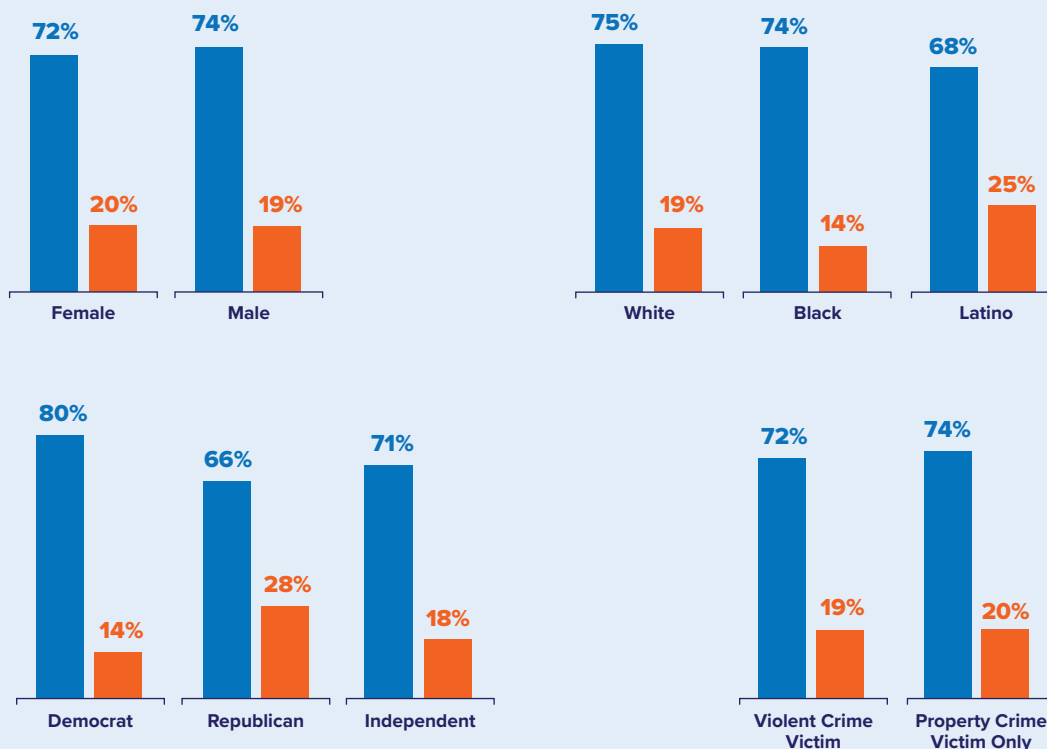
Victims prefer incentives for pre-release rehabilitation and shorter sentences to mandatory full prison terms

Crime victims are more than **three and a half times more likely** to prefer authorizing earned credits toward sentence reductions for people who participate in rehabilitation, treatment, education, and job training programs, and follow prison rules (**73% to 20%**) to requiring completion of the full sentence lengths issued at sentencing, regardless of whether they participate in rehabilitation or not.



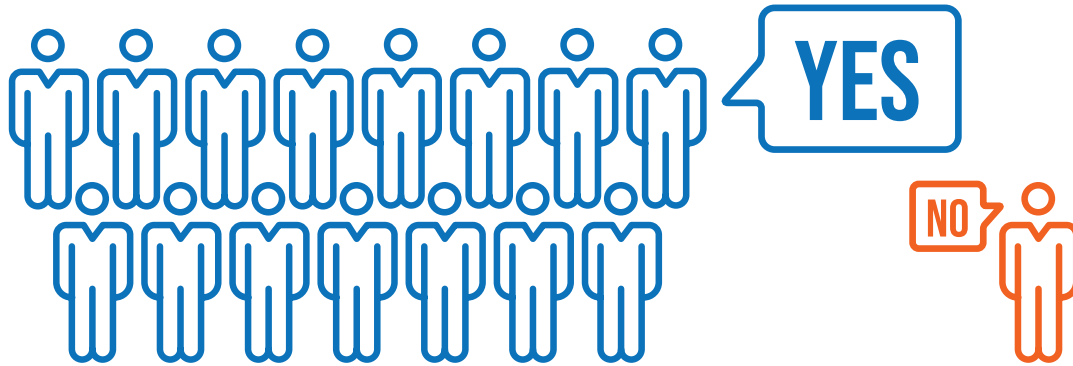
FOR PEOPLE IN PRISON WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR RELEASE, DO YOU PREFER...

- Authorizing earned credits toward sentence reductions for people who participate
- Requiring completion of the full sentence lengths issued at sentencing



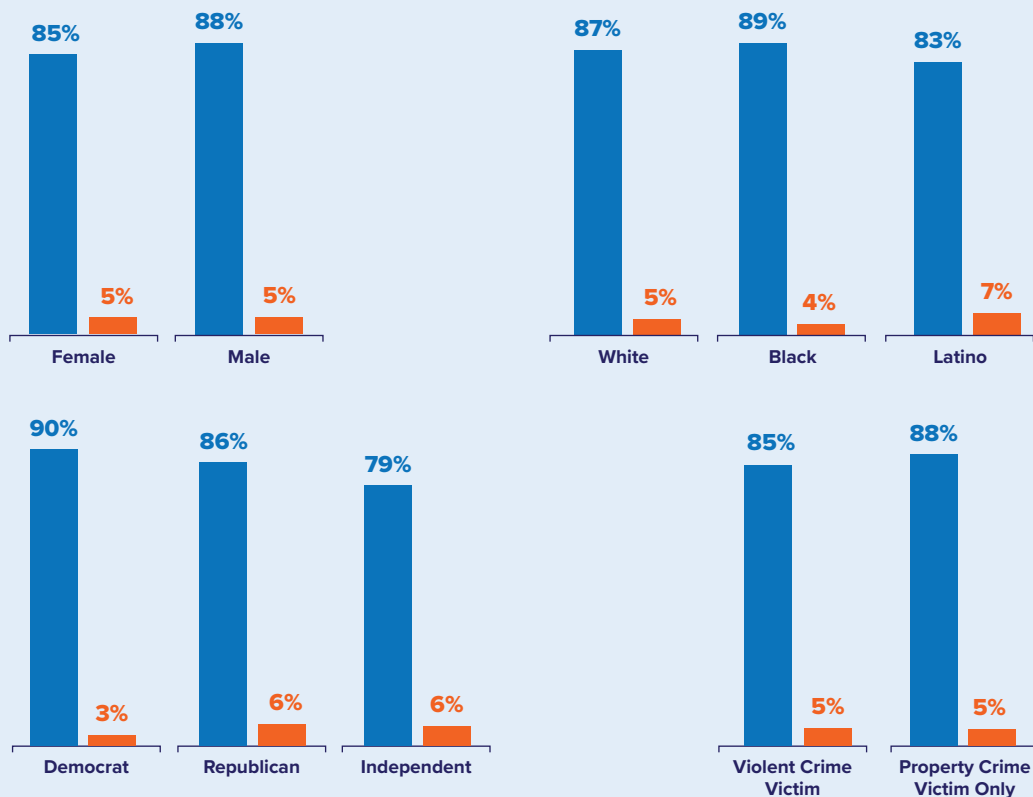
Victims prefer making people with records eligible to attain jobs and housing

By a **17 to one** ratio, victims prefer that people with records are eligible to attain jobs and housing. Notably there are more than 40,000 legal prohibitions that people with records currently face to being eligible for jobs, housing, loans, occupational licenses and more.



AFTER SOMEONE COMPLETES THEIR FULL SENTENCE, DO YOU THINK THEY SHOULD BE...

- Eligible to apply for employment, occupational licenses, and housing
- Ineligible for employment, occupational licenses, and housing



Victims prefer reducing local jail populations through safe alternatives to keeping people in jail

Thinking about people in jail either waiting for their trial or serving sentences for low-level offenses, nearly **seven out of ten (69% to 23%)**, victims prefer reducing the number of people in jail by releasing those who can safely await trial in the community or serve their sentence through diversion, community service, or treatment programs to keeping people in jail instead of using alternatives to incarceration.

**REDUCING JAIL
POPULATIONS THROUGH
SAFE ALTERNATIVES**

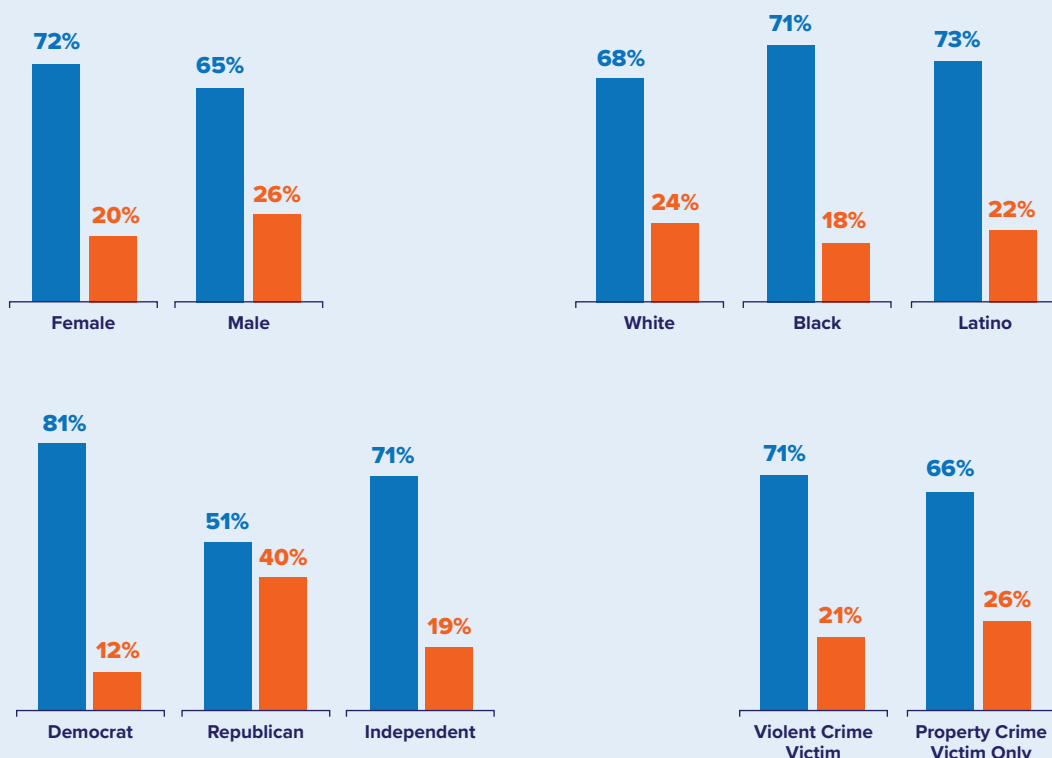


**KEEPING PEOPLE
IN JAIL**



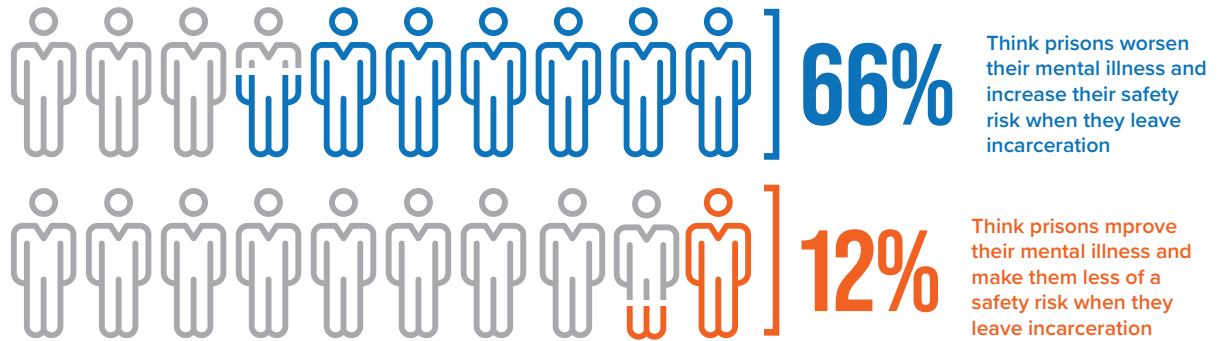
THINKING ABOUT PEOPLE IN LOCAL JAILS, EITHER WAITING FOR THEIR TRIAL OR SERVING SENTENCES FOR LOW-LEVEL OFFENSES, DO YOU PREFER...

- Reducing the number of people in jail by releasing those who can safely await trial in the community or serve their sentence through diversion, community service, or treatment programs
- Keeping people in jail instead of using alternatives to incarceration



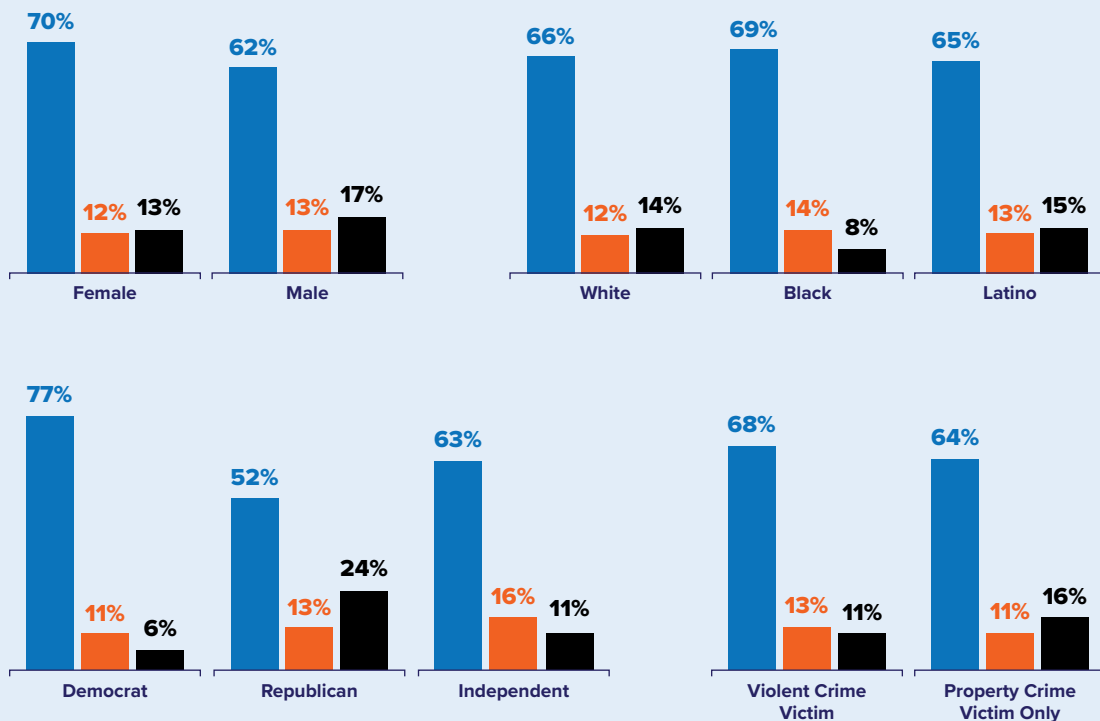
Victims think incarceration generally worsens outcomes for people with mental illness

Thinking about people who commit crimes while struggling with mental illness, by a **two to one** margin, victims think that prisons and jails generally worsen mental illness and increase the safety risk when people leave incarceration than improve mental illness and make them less of a safety risk.



THINKING SPECIFICALLY ABOUT PEOPLE THAT COMMIT CRIMES WHILE STRUGGLING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS — DO YOU THINK THAT PRISONS AND JAILS GENERALLY...

- Worsen their mental illness and increase their safety risk when they leave incarceration
- Improve their mental illness and make them less of a safety risk when they leave incarceration
- Doesn't have an impact either way



Victims of Violent Crime Share the Views of Crime Victims Overall

The vast majority of crime survivors believe that public safety policies rely too heavily on incarceration. They want investments in new safety priorities that help victims recover from the crimes they have experienced and prevent new crime from happening in the first place.

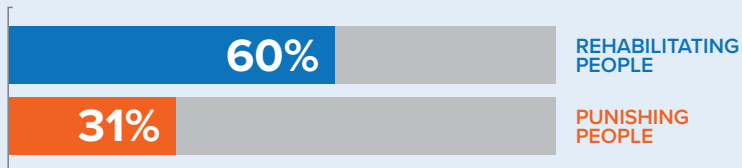
The nature of the crime that victims have experienced has less influence over victims' views than one might expect. Survivors of violent crime — including victims of the most serious crimes such as rape or murder of a family member — widely support investing in prevention and rehabilitation instead of incarceration and all strongly believe that prison can do more harm than good.

VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME THINK PRISON CAN MAKE MATTERS WORSE

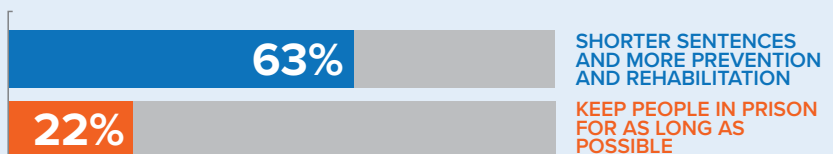


AND FAVOR SHORTER SENTENCES AND MORE INVESTMENTS IN REHABILITATION

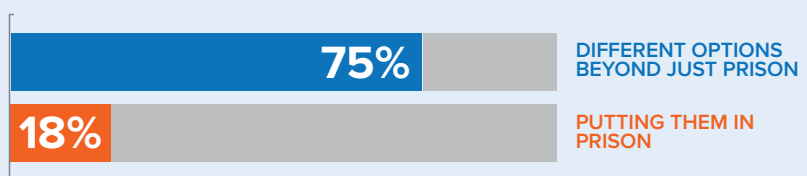
Do you think we should be more focused on rehabilitating people OR punishing people who commit crimes?



Do you prefer prison sentences that keep people in prison for as long as possible OR shorter prison sentences and spending more on prevention and rehabilitation programs?



Do you prefer holding people who commit crimes accountable by putting them in prison OR through different options beyond just prison?



The Experiences of Losing a Loved One to Violence

People who lose a loved one to murder are victims of crime. As parents, children, siblings, spouses, and other family members of people who are killed by violence, the aftereffects have a dramatic impact on nearly every aspect of the surviving loved one's life.



They have also been frequently directly victimized – 62 percent of those who lost a loved one to violence say they have been the victim of multiple crimes in the last ten years.

They experience not only life-altering grief and trauma, but also consequences such as diminished financial or housing security and decreased personal safety – especially if the murder is unsolved. And unsolved homicides are a major problem: In the 2022 National Survey of Victims' Views only one in four people who lost a loved one to homicide report that the crime was solved.

People who have lost a loved one to violence report a wide array of negative consequences:

- More than half (55 percent) had difficulty with work or school,
- One in four lost a job or was demoted for taking time off,
- Nearly three in four (73 percent) report having difficulty sleeping,
- Nearly half (48 percent) wanted to relocate after the crime yet only about half were able to do so (52 percent), and
- Almost seven in ten (67 percent) felt unsafe or scared.

Yet, many people who have lost a loved one to violence did not get the support – emotional or practical – to deal with the aftermath of their loss.

- Just one in ten (10 percent) said the criminal justice system was very helpful in providing information about recovering from crime or referrals.
- Nearly one in four (39 percent) would have wanted but never received emergency or temporary housing.
- Only one out of every fourteen people who lost a loved one to homicide reported receiving victim services.

People who have lost a loved one to violence also report a preference for new safety priorities.

- By a margin of two to one (60 percent to 29 percent) people who lost a loved one to violence prioritize rehabilitating people who commit crime over punishment.
- They were nearly three times as likely (69 percent to 25 percent) to prefer investments in crime prevention, crisis assistance, and strong communities over increasing arrests, strict punishments, and incarceration.

BERTHA, ILLINOIS

My son Maurice was killed in 2017 in front of a barbershop. I got a call and rushed to the hospital, but they denied me entry. They said they were trying to prevent violence inside the building. I sat outside waiting for word on my son. Finally, a security guard came out to tell me my son had passed.

This would have never happened in any other neighborhood. Neither I, nor his young children or fiancé were ever offered counseling or other support after the killing.

When Maurice was killed, the closest mental health services were 40 minutes away. I was never referred to mental health services by the criminal justice system. The only reason I could even get mental health support was because I worked for the hospital system.

A Trauma Recovery Center would have made a huge difference for me and Maurice's family. Even today, there are no mental health services in my community. I had good insurance at the time, so I was not eligible for victims' compensation to help with burial and funeral costs.

Time off from work is essential for survivors, but most victims aren't offered enough time. Although my employer was generous, when I tried to go back a month after my son was killed, it was impossible to function. I spent most of my day in my car crying. I walked away from my career as a nurse – I realized I was trying to save lives and I couldn't save my own child.

As I tried to deal with the trauma, I couldn't get clear information on my son's case. The police and the state attorney's office weren't communicating with each other or following up on information requests. I had to go back and forth between the two offices. There was no way I could work a job and get the information needed to solve my son's murder. Finally, the man who killed my son was charged.

Now, five years later, the court case is still going, and the court process is retraumatizing. Five years later, we are finally finishing with preliminaries prior to court, now court will start next month.

The judge in the case and the lawyer for my son's killer are friends. They ask about each others' wives and golf dates in front of me, which is inappropriate. It also means that the lawyer has been able to come to court an hour late without penalty and postpone court dates. Also, my son's killer has the money to afford a lawyer who can conduct delay tactics indefinitely.

Recently, this retraumatization has caused me to spiral, and I was referred to a mental health professional. But there was an eight-month waiting period to get help, and I only got access to counseling due to my personal network.

I now work to try to help other crime victims because the system has failed us. We are working with organizations to provide restorative justice in our community because communities need healing.

As survivors, we are treated horribly at every turn – whether it's how we're treated during the court process, or by law enforcement or our lack of access to services in our communities.

We need access to trauma recovery. We need time to heal. We need law enforcement to provide us information throughout investigations. We need to be treated with respect. We need a public safety system that actually helps victims and hears our voices, victimization, and pain. People need help so we can stop the violence and make our communities safer for all.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Perhaps the most basic response to crime and violence that the justice system can offer is responding to the needs of victims and investigating the crime. The 2022 National Survey of Victims' Views reveals the justice system's profound inability to meet this basic need.

In addition to a gap between victims needs in the aftermath of harm and the capacities of the justice system, victims are not aligned with the public safety policy and investment priorities that have defined American criminal justice for the last forty years.

These gaps between victims' experiences and preferences and the justice system's capabilities remain, despite recent increases in several forms of violent crime.

Large majorities of crime victims indicate that they have been poorly served by the criminal justice system and traditional policies focused on incarceration and punishment. Many have avoided reporting crime for fear that nothing would come from their report — or, worse, that going to the police would further jeopardize their safety. Also, many crime victims have failed to receive even basic information and services that would help them understand and navigate the criminal justice system's response to their victimization, as well as support that could help them cope personally with the aftermath of crime, such as victims compensation and counseling.

Crime victims are disproportionately poor, young, people of color, LGBTQ and transgender, and those

who are housing insecure. Nearly half said they felt trauma as a result of the crime and violence they experienced. The full toll of crime on their lives includes anxiety, fear for their safety, difficulty sleeping, a desire to relocate from their home, and even difficulties in their relations, work, or school. Yet, these consequences, which not only can be severely destabilizing but also can perpetuate cycles of crime and violence, continue to go mostly unaddressed by current criminal justice practices.

Victims prioritize public safety strategies that are based on healing and prevention instead of on incarceration and punishment. Investments in mental health and substance use treatment, violence prevention and youth programs, and schools and education all receive greater support from crime victims than do investment in jails and prisons.

Finally, crime victims strongly support rehabilitation initiatives as part of accountability measures, such as earned time for participating in treatment, education, and job training programs. Similarly, as a public safety measure victims favor removing the barriers that currently prevent people living with old records from securing the necessities of full reentry into the community, like jobs and housing.

Recommendations

Given the conspicuous gap between victims access to help and the justice system, as well as the still-dominant incarceration-first approaches to public safety and crime victims' persistent preference for new safety strategies, we offer the following policy recommendations.

1

MORE RESEARCH

- **Conduct annual victimization studies at the state level:** States should invest more to collect information on who crime victims are and their experiences with the justice system. Information about reporting crime, the impact of repeat victimization and trauma, and access to services and treatment can be used to identify policies and practices that best protect victims, stop cycles of crime, and help victims recover.
- **Eradicate disparities in access to compensation and services:** Because some demographic groups — including young people, immigrants, people of color, people who are LGBTQ, and people with low-income — are most likely to experience repeat victimization and less likely to attain support and services, states must track and publish service denial and approval data by race and other key demographics and immediately address disparities to ensure equal access to help.
- **Fund research to identify evidence-backed services and establish best practices that are effective at stopping cycles of crime and victimization,** such as those provided by Trauma Recovery Centers.

2

MORE SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS

- **Expand victims' civil legal services to help all victims recover:** Civil legal services programs provide pivotal support for everything from tenant and worker protections to immigration issues to family law assistance. Yet, too few victims are aware of, or gain access to, them. Special attention should be paid to ensure these services are trauma-informed and geographically, culturally, and linguistically accessible.
- **Extend breadth and depth of support and extend access deadlines:** Crime victims deserve a diverse range of healing, treatment, and support services to recover. Policymakers should increase the breadth of available benefits, match the actual costs of recovering from crime and violence, and extend application deadlines to ensure victims are reasonably able to access these services. This includes ending exclusions that render some victims, such as family members of violence victims and people with prior records, ineligible for support.

CONTINUED >

2 > MORE SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS CONTINUED

- **Ensure Trauma Recovery Services are widely available:** While a mixture of federal Victims of Crime Act funds and state and local general funds have helped grow the number of Trauma Recovery Centers to more than 40 across ten states, only a fraction of victims who need these services receive them. A dedicated federal funding stream for Trauma Recovery Centers, combined with easing federal and state policies and practices that limit the use of Medicaid and mental health funding streams to address victims' trauma could help Trauma Recovery Centers meet the demand for their services.
- **Increase legal protections for victims to prevent job and housing loss while victims are recovering from a crime.** There are some legal protections that prevent victims from losing housing or employment, but these protections must be expanded to ensure that all victims have the rights to maintain stable employment and housing while recovering from crime.

3

ALIGN CRIME POLICY WITH VICTIM PREFERENCES

- **Reach more survivors in crisis:** Expand proactive outreach programs and ensure these are available in multiple languages, through multiple platforms, and in all places under-supported victims frequent. This includes targeting victim services funding to reach groups and communities that are most harmed by repeat crime and least supported by the criminal justice system.
- **Advance sentencing and corrections policies aligned with survivors' priorities:** This includes, for example, shorter sentences and more spending on prevention, earned credit programs for participation in rehabilitative programming, the use of options beyond incarceration to hold people accountable, including mental health treatment, restorative justice, diversion, and expanding investments into education and youth programming.
- **Remove obstacles to self-sufficiency** — including barriers to jobs and housing — so that people with old records can reintegrate and attain economic stability and mobility.
- **Ensure dignity, respect, and support for victims of unsolved crimes:** Victims of unsolved crimes can suffer extreme stress and chronic trauma. The justice system should treat surviving family members and victims of unsolved crimes with respect and ensure that they are connected to recovery services and support.
- **Invest in trauma-informed, community-based victim services:** Culturally competent community-serving programs rooted in neighborhoods that experience concentrated violence and crime must be scaled up and supported with multi-year flexible funding and sufficient resources to meet the need.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Alliance for Safety and Justice commissioned the National Survey of Victims' Views to fill in gaps in knowledge about who crime victims are, what their experiences are with the criminal justice system, and their views on public policy.

Some of the questions were informed by the largest and most comprehensive source of data on victimization — the annual National Crime Victimization Survey, administered by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics. The National Survey of Victims' Views expands on questions related to the prevalence of victimization by deeply exploring victims' experience with the criminal justice system, their views on sentencing and corrections policy, and their preferences related to law enforcement, prosecution, and incarceration.

David Binder Research conducted the interviews in English and Spanish in August 2022. The research survey was administered both by telephone — landlines and mobile phones — and online. This research methodology was designed to ensure the inclusion of harder-to-reach demographic groups, such as young people and people with less housing stability.

These findings reflect the opinions of a broad and diverse nation: All ages 18+, all racial and ethnic groups, and all geographic locations are represented. Respondents were given the opportunity to self-identify as gender non-binary and one percent of respondents selected this option. Additionally, survey administrators used the following phrase to provide respondents the opportunity to self-identify as Latinx: "Latino, Hispanic, or Mexican American."

These efforts were part of a comprehensive survey methodology that ensured the results are

representative, demographically and across political affiliation, of the entire U.S. population.

These findings also reflect a diverse array of victimization experiences. Several parts of this report distinguish experiences of violent and property crime. To categorize these experiences, the survey described a number of types of crimes, and asked respondents to indicate if these were crimes that they had personally experienced during the 10-year lookback period. Forced robbery, physical assault, sexual assault, stalking, attempted murder, human trafficking, or losing a family member or loved one to homicide are classified as experiences of violent crime for the purposes of this report. Theft, burglary, vandalism, and identity theft are classified as property crimes.

A common challenge in victimization research is the reluctance of people to discuss their victimization with a researcher. For reasons relating to the social stigma of being a crime victim and associated data collection challenges, it can be difficult to identify sufficient respondents in victimization research. For this reason, the National Survey of Victims' Views used a ten-year reference period. However, just as many crimes are not reported to the police, some crime is not reported to researchers. Like NCVS and other victim surveys, the National Survey of Victims Views likely does not capture the total number of crimes experienced by those surveyed. While David Binder Research informed people that their personal information is kept confidential and used for research purposes only, we anticipate that respondents may have under-reported their victimization in this survey.

The overall margin of error for the National Survey of Victims' Views is 2.0 percent, while the margin of error for crime victims is 2.5 percent.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ David Binder Research is a public opinion research firm with more than 20 years of experience in all types of research, from focus groups to surveys to online research, on behalf of clients ranging from businesses to government agencies to nonprofit organizations.
- ² Thompson, A. and Tapp, S.N. *Criminal Victimization, 2021*. Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ 305101 (September 2022), <https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/cv20.pdf>.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Weisel, Deborah Lamm. "Analyzing Repeat Victimization," Center for Problem Oriented Policing, 2005.
- ⁵ Crime Against Persons with Disabilities, 2009-2019 – Statistical Tables. Washington, D.C.: US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.; US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (2022). Violent Victimization by Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, 2017–2020. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/vvsogi1720.pdf#page=2>; National Center for Transgender Equality (2017). The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey.; Bradford, S.L., Reisner, M.A., Honnold, J.A., and Xavier, J. (2013). Experiences of Transgender-Related Discrimination and Implications for Health: Results From the Virginia Transgender Health Initiative Study. *American Journal of Public Health*.; Sterzing, P.R., Edison, J., Fisher, A., Gartner, R.E. (2013). Polyvictimization Prevalence Rates for Sexual and Gender Minority Adolescents: Breaking Down the Silos of Victimization Research. University of California, Berkeley, School of Social Welfare. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/251353.pdf>; Christensen, R. C., Hodgkins, C. C., Garces, L. K., Estlund, K. L., Miller, M. D., & Touchton, R. (2005). Homeless, mentally ill and addicted: The need for abuse and trauma services. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 16, 615-622.; Harrell, E. (2017). Hiday, V.S. et. al. (1999) Criminal Victimization of Persons With Severe Mental Illness. *Psychiatric Services* 50: 62-68.; White, M.C. et al (2006). History of arrest, incarceration and victimization in community-based severely mentally ill. *Journal of Community Health*: 31:123–135.
- ⁶ Warnken, H. and Lauritsen, J.L. (2019). Who Experiences Violent Victimization and Who Accesses Services? Center for Victims Research.
- ⁷ Violence Policy Center (2022). Black Homicide Victimization in the United States: An Analysis of 2019 Homicide Data. <https://vpc.org/studies/blackhomicide20.pdf>
- ⁸ Warnken, H. (2021). "A Vision for Equity in Victim Services: What Do the Data Tell Us About the Work Ahead?". Presentation hosted by the US Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime. Retrieved from: <https://ovc.ojp.gov/media/video/12971#transcript--0>
- ⁹ US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (2022). Violent Victimization by Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, 2017–2020. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/vvsogi1720.pdf#page=2>
- ¹⁰ Kearney, Melissa S.; Harris, Benjamin H.; Jácome, Elisa; Parker, Lucie. "Ten Economic Facts about Crime and Incarceration in the United States," The Hamilton Project, May 2014.

- ¹¹ Crime Against Persons with Disabilities, 2009-2019 – Statistical Tables. Washington, D.C.: US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. [https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/crime-against-persons-disabilities-2009-2019-statistical-tables#:~:text=Persons%20with%20disabilities%20were%20victims,disabilities%20\(12.3%20per%201%2C000\).](https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/crime-against-persons-disabilities-2009-2019-statistical-tables#:~:text=Persons%20with%20disabilities%20were%20victims,disabilities%20(12.3%20per%201%2C000).)
- ¹² Warnken, H. and Lauritsen, J.L. (2019). Who Experiences Violent Victimization and Who Accesses Services? Center for Victims Research.
- ¹³ Warnken, H. (2021). "A Vision for Equity in Victim Services: What Do the Data Tell Us About the Work Ahead?". Presentation hosted by the US Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime. Retrieved from: <https://ovc.ojp.gov/media/video/12971#transcript--0>
- ¹⁴ Kilpatrick, Dean G.; Acierno, Ron. "Mental Health Needs of Crime Victims: Epidemiology and Outcomes." Journal of Traumatic Stress, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2003.
- ¹⁵ Criminal Justice Facts, The Sentencing Project, accessed from <https://www.sentencingproject.org/criminal-justice-facts/#:~:text=There%20are%202%20million%20people,explain%20most%20of%20this%20increase.>
- ¹⁶ Kaeble, Danielle, Probation and Parole in the United States, 2020, Bureau of Justice Statistics NCJ303102 (September 2022) <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/ppus20.pdf>



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