Delivering Accountability

A Plan To Stop Crime in Our Communities

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Introduction and summary

Ensuring the safety and security of the public is the government's most fundamental responsibility. Crime and violence devastate the lives of victims and their families and reverberate across entire communities. A chief charge of government is to keep individuals safe by solving crime when it happens, ensuring swift and certain accountability for those who harm others, and working to prevent crime in the first place. Crime is falling in communities across the country because we know what strategies work. In 2025, cities including Baltimore, Chicago, Philadelphia, and San Francisco recorded historic lows in the number of murders by providing law enforcement with the necessary tools and resources to stop crime, by improving the justice system to deliver swift and certain punishment, and by investing in community violence intervention and prevention programs.[1]

No amount of violence is acceptable. The difficult work of reducing crime is an ongoing, daily effort in cities and counties across the country. Lasting public safety requires leaders who know the local dynamics, collaborate with police officers and community members on the front lines, and share in the collective responsibility for public safety.[2] Deploying U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents who mask their identities and grab people off the street is an affront to local policing and to the authority that rests with states and localities to enforce laws and pursue justice in their communities.[3] Importantly, the Trump administration is violating the age-old principle of posse comitatus, which holds that the military should not carry out domestic law enforcement—a crucial protection to the citizen freedoms that our founders held dear.[4]

Leaders in a free society must deliver public safety through smart anti-crime strategies and respect for the rule of law. The following principles should guide efforts to reduce crime:

- **Every person, no matter who they are,** deserves to be safe and free from violence where they live, work, and send their children to school.

- **The first job of government is to keep people safe** by holding people who commit crime accountable and preventing crime before it occurs.

- **Solving crimes reduces further crime.** When more crimes are solved and prosecuted, victims receive the justice they deserve and perpetrators are deterred from lawbreaking.

- **Collaboration is necessary to reduce crime effectively.** Ongoing partnerships between police, the justice system, and all the communities they serve foster the trust needed for improved public safety.

While crime is coming down in the United States, we also know more about how to further reduce crime than ever before. Many cities are successfully reducing crime by pairing stronger accountability strategies that deliver swift and certain consequences with proven prevention programs that stop crime before it happens.[5] Strategies that are working to increase accountability for lawbreakers and reduce crime include hiring law enforcement, like additional detectives, to solve more crimes; funding crime intelligence tools; and focusing enforcement on the smaller number of individuals and locations that drive most crime.[6] Cities and counties have demonstrated that we can prevent crime by expanding youth-focused prevention programs, investing in community violence intervention efforts, preventing illegal gun trafficking, and supporting reentry services that help people returning home become productive citizens, thereby avoiding reoffending.[7]

Together, these approaches are reducing crime today while addressing the conditions that drive crime tomorrow. These lessons will help us reduce crime further.

Trump's dangerous actions threaten public safety

Rather than advancing these core principles — the foundation of real solutions to crime in America's communities — the Trump administration is cutting funding for law enforcement, crime gun intelligence, and programs that have been successful in improving public safety across the country.[8] President Donald Trump claimed he sent the National Guard to Washington, D.C., and Chicago to reduce crime,[9] but crime data analyst Jeff Asher's preliminary review of D.C. crime trends after the deployment of the National Guard and other federal law

enforcement concluded "there's little evidence of a change in overall violent crime in DC."[10] Since peaking in 2023, D.C. violent crime has continued to fall at similar rates before and after federal intervention.[11] Asher also found that "Chicago crime was falling prior to Midway Blitz and it's falling at roughly the same rate after."[12]

While President Trump is engaged in a dangerous power grab and sending troops to American cities,[13] he is actively cutting real crime-fighting resources from local communities:

- President Trump's Department of Justice (DOJ) terminated approximately $500 million in remaining federal grants supporting more than 550 organizations across 48 states.[14] These grants funded efforts to improve policing, prosecution, and child protection and to prevent violence and human trafficking. For example, $3.5 million was cut from Project Safe Neighborhoods.[15] Launched in 2001 and implemented in communities nationwide, Project Safe Neighborhoods is an effective model for reducing violent crime, supporting U.S. attorneys' offices in bringing together police, prosecutors, community members, and researchers to reduce gang and gun violence and other pressing crime problems in local communities.[16]

- President Trump's fiscal year 2026 budget proposes $2.5 billion in cuts to the DOJ, including $545 million to the FBI, $468 million to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), $212 million to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and $823 million to state and local grant programs.[17]

- The Trump administration's proposed 29 percent funding cut to ATF would make it harder to solve crimes by kneecapping federal crime gun intelligence tools that local law enforcement relies on to arrest repeat violent offenders and to cut off the supply of illicit firearms.[18] The Trump administration plans to revise or eliminate more than 50 firearm regulations and safety measures.[19]

- The DOJ harmed federal, state, and local collaborations by dissolving the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF), the nation's largest anti-crime task force focused on dismantling gangs and transnational criminal organizations.[20] On June 30, 2025, the DOJ shut down the OCDETF's Strategic Initiative Program, which provided state and local law enforcement with funding and resources to carry out targeted operations against drug trafficking organizations.[21]

- Federal drug prosecutions this year, including conspiracy and money laundering cases against higher-level traffickers, have fallen to their lowest level since at least the late 1990s as the Trump administration has ordered thousands of federal agents to focus on immigration raids.[22] An internal report by Homeland Security Investigations comparing enforcement statistics between October 1, 2024, and September 30, 2025, with the same period the previous year found that agents opened 15 percent fewer new investigations into narcotics crimes and the number of weapons seized dropped by 73 percent.[23] FBI field offices were ordered to spend a third of their time on immigration enforcement, rather than conducting complex investigations to dismantle large criminal organizations or stop national security threats.[24] The FBI redirected task forces previously dedicated to securing convictions for drug trafficking to focus instead on deportations while diverting other resources away from cartel cases and toward immigration arrests and investigating protestors.[25]

- The Trump administration has fired career federal prosecutors who investigated January 6 rioters,[26] worked on the prosecutions of President Trump,[27] and expressed skepticism about prosecuting his political adversaries.[28] In addition to terminations of federal prosecutors far outpacing typical turnover in the DOJ, many more prosecutors resigned, retired, or were demoted.[29]

Communities across the country will feel the effects of reduced federal support through lower clearance rates for violent crime, meaning fewer violent crime cases will be solved and there will be fewer tools to address threats to public safety.

States that voted for President Trump in three consecutive elections have a combined homicide rate that is more than 50 percent higher since the beginning of 2023 than that of states that never voted for him.[30] As of July 2025, the six Republican-controlled states that sent National Guard troops to Washington, D.C., at President Trump's request had a murder rate that was approximately double that of states that never voted for President Trump.[31] Mississippi's homicide rate is more than twice that of Illinois, Alabama's is nearly three times that of California, and South Carolina's is nearly three times that of New York.[32]

Contrary to perceptions that violence is only a large city problem, 11 of the top 20 U.S. counties with the most gun homicides per capita from 2021 to 2024 were rural.[33] States with high gun ownership rates and weak gun laws have the highest gun death rates, including higher rates of intimate partner homicides.[34]

> Conversely, California, which is perennially recognized as a state with some of the strongest gun laws,[35] achieved the second-lowest homicide rate in the state's history since at least 1966 in 2024: 4.3 homicides per 100,000 residents,[36] which also marked the 19th-lowest homicide rate in the country.[37]
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> If the Trump administration cared about public safety, it would not be weakening gun regulations at the urging of the gun lobby.[38] Research consistently shows that weak gun laws and regulations are associated with higher violent crime rates and firearm-related deaths.[39] In 2024, the homicide rate for U.S. counties in states with the weakest gun regulations was 2.4 times higher than that of counties in states with the strongest gun laws.[40]
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> By defunding federal law enforcement and crime prevention efforts, the Trump administration is actively harming public safety and threatening the hard-fought progress that has been achieved in recent years.

Crime remains a significant concern in communities nationwide, regardless of political affiliation.[41] Even while crime has been declining rapidly since 2023,[42] including a dramatic drop in violent crime, property crime, and murder in 2025,[43] the work of keeping people safe is never done. The nation can make even more progress to reduce crime by applying lessons learned from what has worked to reduce crime locally.

The Center for American Progress' plan meets the challenge to protect everyone from crime by detailing the most effective strategies to reduce crime and keep all communities safe, including:

1. **Holding lawbreakers accountable** by hiring more detectives and police officers, delivering swift and certain consequences, and recruiting additional first responders
2. **Stopping crime** by investing in crime prevention strategies, expanding community violence intervention programs, and reducing recidivism
3. **Disrupting illicit markets** by concentrating federal law enforcement resources on the violent criminal organizations and individuals who profit from the illegal trafficking of drugs, guns, people, and stolen goods

Holding lawbreakers accountable

Evidence shows that the certainty of being caught and punished for committing crimes is crucial to reducing crime.[44] Ensuring people who commit crimes face consequences for their actions is the hallmark of effective public safety. Holding lawbreakers accountable reduces future crime by deterring crime in the first place. When people believe they will be caught, they are less likely to commit crimes.[45]

However, today, too many crimes go unsolved in cities and rural areas alike, undermining deterrence and allowing people who commit crimes to avoid accountability for the harm they cause.[46] Just 44 percent of violent crimes and 16 percent of property crimes are solved in the United States, according to the most recent FBI report.[47] Moreover, clearance rates for murder dropped from 72 percent in 1980 to 61 percent in 2024,[48] emboldening people who commit crimes, harming victims and their families' ability to receive justice, and causing communities to lose faith in law enforcement and the justice system. This is an especially pressing concern for Black Americans, who experience higher homicide victimization rates and lower clearance rates.[49] In 2020, the murders of white victims were 50 percent more likely to be solved than the murders of Black victims and 30 percent more likely to be solved than the murders of Hispanic victims—meaning that the murderers of Black and Hispanic people are punished at a much lower rate.[50] That is unjust. If someone who commits murder is not caught, they are free to commit more murders in the future.

Additional federal resources should be allocated to strategies proven to curb crime and deliver what matters most: safer streets, fewer shootings, and justice for victims. Local jurisdictions require additional resources to prevent crime before it occurs by focusing on the small number of people and places driving most criminal activity.[51] To successfully deter and solve crime, police departments and sheriff's offices need proper staffing, adequate support, and strong partnerships with community-based service providers who offer individually tailored resources to help people step away from violence.

By targeting and disrupting the small number of people behind the majority of violent crime, strategies such as Project Safe Neighborhoods[52] and focused deterrence can stop crime, deliver accountability, and offer social services that provide people with ways to thrive without committing crimes.[53] Leveraging cutting-edge crime intelligence tools and evidence-based strategies ensures those responsible for crime are apprehended, charged, and face swift and certain consequences.

When a crime is committed, local law enforcement gets the first call and puts their lives on the line responding to dangerous situations. The federal government should ensure police officers and departments have the resources, training, and support they need to deliver the safety residents deserve. Police departments should receive federal grants to help hire and keep the best local police officers because research shows that more officers, when well-trained and properly utilized, reduce crime.[54] A 2022 study estimates that one homicide is prevented for every additional 10 to 17 officers hired.[55] The study also found that the per capita effects were twice as large for Black versus white victims, and evidence suggests that larger police forces reduced serious crime primarily through deterrence rather than arrest or incapacitation.[56]

But officers are asked to do too much—to be nurses, social workers, and crossing guards, while simultaneously doing the most critical job of all: protecting the public from crime. Police recognize that they cannot be expected to handle every issue that arises in communities alone and should receive federal support to hire additional local community responders to relieve some of the policing burden.[57]

The certainty of being caught and quickly sanctioned is one of the most powerful deterrents to future crime.[58] Once someone is apprehended and charged, effectively holding them accountable within the justice system requires balancing swiftness of prosecution and safeguarding due-process rights. Policymakers should embrace solutions that efficiently bring to justice those who commit crimes, ensure the system has sufficient resources to guard against error, and impose fair and proportionate consequences that are maximally effective at changing future behavior. Swifter application of the law to those who commit crimes does not mean a return to the policies of mass incarceration that often made it impossible for those who have served their sentence to be productive again. To improve both policing and public safety, law enforcement at every level must maintain high standards and strong safeguards against practices that undermine trust or violate civil liberties.

Police cannot deliver accountability alone. Solving crime is a community responsibility that requires increased partnership and buy-in from community groups, faith leaders, and citizens to report crime, share information, and help ensure justice is achieved. When police and the community work together, the result is more justice and less crime.

Increase detective and investigator resources

Too often, crimes go unsolved, leaving victims without justice and offenders undeterred. Local law enforcement needs additional resources to increase clearance rates. When investigators have manageable caseloads, they can follow leads thoroughly, build stronger cases, and bring more offenders to justice. A core element of crime reduction is ensuring that there are sufficient detective resources to quickly solve crimes.

To provide law enforcement with the resources needed to swiftly solve crimes, federal policymakers should:

- **Hire more detectives** by dedicating federal funding for local law enforcement agencies to hire 7,000 additional detectives to solve homicides and nonfatal shootings. In the first seven months after the Denver Police Department established a specialized detective unit in 2020 to investigate nonfatal shootings, the clearance rate increased from 39 percent to 65 percent.[59]

- **Deploy technology to help law enforcement solve crimes** by investing $150 million in federal funds for state and local law enforcement agencies to leverage emerging technologies such as advances in improving the speed and precision of DNA extraction and analysis,[60] weapons ballistics,[61] and 3D reconstruction of crime scenes.[62] Funds should also support the expansion of digital evidence labs to collect and analyze evidence such as text messages, photos, and geolocation data from cellphones, computers, and other electronics.[63] State police and attorneys' general offices are uniquely positioned to provide centralized support to local law enforcement, especially in smaller jurisdictions that lack resources, and combine digital forensics evidence with other tools such as social media analysis and video surveillance to help solve cross-jurisdictional cases and secure convictions.

Deploy focused deterrence strategies

Focused deterrence strategies are police-community partnerships that identify the individuals or groups most likely to commit violence and offer them a choice—accept resources to transition away from high-risk behavior or face swift and certain arrest and prosecution if they continue to cause harm.[64] Focused deterrence strategies can reduce murders by communicating directly with high-risk groups; leveraging credible "moral voices" in the community such as clergy members and residents affected by violence; and delivering services to those most at risk.[65] For example, since launching in 2022, Baltimore's Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) has contributed to the fewest homicides ever recorded in the city in 2025,[66] with more than 600 GVRS-related arrests and more than 300 individuals receiving services, including cognitive behavioral therapy, relocation, and life coaching.[67]

Congress should:

- **Increase funding for law enforcement to hire additional officers and professional staff** through the COPS Hiring Program and the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program to pilot and expand focused deterrence strategies that reduce violence.[68] A 2017 study evaluating the effects of the DOJ's COPS Hiring Program found evidence that federal grants to hire additional officers are a cost-effective approach to reducing violent crime.[69] Consistent with previous research showing that arrests fall along with crime rates in places that receive grants to hire more police, the authors found evidence that additional policing resources can reduce crime through deterrence without contributing to "mass incarceration."[70]

- **Provide funding for services that support focused deterrence program participants in transforming their lives,** including outreach by credible messengers, intensive case management, cognitive behavioral therapy, hospital-based violence intervention resources, and employment services. A major reason focused deterrence strategies fail is the lack of funding for meaningful services that accompany messages of support and accountability.[71]

- **Provide federal funding to local governments to hire additional professional staff** to operationalize and sustain focused deterrence and other violence reduction efforts through strategies such as conducting weekly shooting reviews; implementing performance management systems; building crime reduction infrastructure in mayors' offices, including civilian data analysts and community-based outreach; and establishing offices of violence prevention.[72]

Focus on places where crime is most concentrated

Crime is not evenly spread throughout cities. Rather, it is highly concentrated in specific places in certain neighborhoods.[73] Police can effectively prevent gun violence and other crimes by focusing on these persistent and dangerous "hot spots."[74] Hot spots policing is a widespread proactive policing strategy that shows consistent evidence of reducing crime.[75] A National Research Council review found that "studies that focused police resources on crime hot spots provided the strongest collective evidence of police effectiveness that is now available."[76]

For example, in Philadelphia, teams of four patrol officers concentrating on 60 crime hot spots were associated with a 23 percent reduction in violent crime over three months.[77] And Boston police curbed a spike in youth robberies in a neighborhood by increasing patrols and partnering with the city's public works department to trim overgrown bushes and fence a vacant lot that concealed robbers from potential victims.[78]

Proactive hot spots policing strategies must be carefully implemented to prevent undermining police legitimacy, civil liberties, and community trust. Rather than relying on excessive and unlawful stops of young men of color, precision policing requires using data and crime intelligence to focus on the relatively few individuals who make communities unsafe.

To aid in these and other data-informed policing efforts, Congress should:

- **Provide federal funding to local law enforcement** to address violent hot spots in 10 core cities with homicide rates above 15 per 100,000, with a preference for cities currently experiencing spikes in crime. Funding can be used to hire dedicated officers and data analysts, provide technical assistance and procedural justice training,[79] and improve management structures.

- **Establish a federal grant program to pilot data-informed community policing strategies** in cities and counties of all sizes, hiring and training additional personnel on how to proactively identify and address potential violence and disorder problems that make communities feel unsafe. Funding can be used to hire cops and professional staff in police departments, increase crime intelligence capabilities, expand community partnerships, and reduce disorder in ways that prevent crime while avoiding unintended harms from unfocused and aggressive policing. Larger reductions in violence can be achieved by focusing police resources on small geographic areas and addressing the underlying social

and physical disorder problems that allow crime to persist.[80] A 2024 meta-analysis found that community problem-oriented policing programs focused on addressing disorder at smaller "hot spot" locations resulted in a nearly 45 percent reduction in crimes, compared with a 20 percent reduction by interventions across large areas.[81]

Improve police recruitment and retention

Police need the resources and tools to investigate crimes, arrest suspects, and build strong cases to secure convictions in court. In recent years, police departments nationwide have faced challenges in attracting and retaining a strong workforce.[82] To implement the policing strategies detailed in this crime reduction plan, police departments should receive additional support to hire and retain good officers.

Congress should:

- **Provide grants to local law enforcement agencies to support efforts to recruit, hire, and retain motivated and qualified officer candidates.** These efforts, based on a local assessment of departments' staffing challenges, may include providing education and training incentives, offering competitive salaries, adopting targeted marketing and community engagement approaches,[83] promoting transparent agency culture,[84] and improving training—such as procedural justice, deescalation, and active bystander training.[85]

- **Support officers' mental health and well-being** by providing grant funding to local law enforcement agencies to increase officer wellness[86] and peer support services.[87]

- **Provide resources and set best practice standards to improve 911 response times nationwide** and increase recruitment and job quality for 911 professionals.[88]

Resource federal law enforcement

Policing is largely a state and local function,[89] and local police have the best understanding of the dynamics of crime and how to address it.[90] However, federal law enforcement needs to step up and increase their support to state and local police departments. Congress needs to ensure federal agencies such as the FBI and ATF have the necessary resources to partner with local law enforcement to stop cross-jurisdictional and transnational crime, supply intelligence, and support high-risk tactical responses.

Congress should:

- **Dedicate FBI, DEA, and ATF resources to support states and local police departments** in their efforts to stop cross-jurisdictional and transnational crime, including by supplying intelligence, coordinating across agencies, and supporting high-risk tactical responses. By redirecting thousands of federal law enforcement agents to focus on immigration enforcement at the expense of investigating crimes ranging from drug and firearms trafficking to child sexual exploitation, the Trump administration is actually weakening enforcement of our criminal laws.[91]

- **Enhance federal law enforcement's data collection and intelligence-gathering capacities** to improve major investigations, supply critical intelligence to state and local partners, and standardize data nationwide.

Ensure swift and certain justice

The effective administration of the criminal justice system is necessary to ensure that people who commit crimes face the consequences of their actions without undue delays or burdens on victims and their families. Swift and certain consequences—rather than overly harsh or delayed punishments—are more effective at deterring crime.[92] An efficient[93] and fair system that aims to resolve cases quickly must also safeguard the right to due process[94] and discourage coercive plea bargains.[95]

To help ensure swift and certain justice, Congress should:

- **Hire more local prosecutors** to staff specialized units that focus on prosecuting violent and complex crimes through the establishment of a community block grant program administered by the DOJ.[96] The DOJ's Bureau of Justice Assistance should also grant additional funds to local jurisdictions to hire new prosecutors and paralegals to implement geographic community-based prosecutions. Local community prosecution programs can lead to more efficient prosecution by encouraging prosecutors to develop proactive partnerships with local police precincts and residents, build stronger cases, identify repeat offenders, and solve local crime problems.[97] Philadelphia's adoption of community-based prosecution led to fewer felony cases being dismissed and felony cases being disposed of more efficiently.[98]

- **Provide federal funding to help improve how court systems manage the flow of cases and resolve court backlogs** by modernizing technology and other policy changes.[99] Lengthy court processes delay accountability for those who commit crimes, eroding the deterrent effect of punishment and leaving some victims to wait years for justice.[100]

- **Expand and fully staff judicial and public defender positions**[101] to reduce caseloads and speed up the delivery of justice.

- **Increase federal funding for alternative prosecution models,** including diversion programs that require defendants to comply with specific conditions such as drug treatment or counselling.[102] These approaches have been shown to reduce future crime by addressing substance use, unmet mental health needs, or other factors driving crime.[103]

Increase funding for local crime intelligence

Crime intelligence tools make policing more precise, efficient, and effective. By integrating information from multiple sources—such as video cameras, ballistics evidence, and license plate readers—investigators can identify crime patterns, connect related incidents, and generate strong cases against those driving violence. These tools help police identify and apprehend the individuals committing crime. Expanding access to such tools ensures that all jurisdictions—regardless of size or resources—can leverage technology to deliver swift and certain consequences.

The federal government should invest in resources to strengthen local jurisdictions' ability to solve crimes faster, build stronger cases, and prevent retaliation, including:

- **Local real-time crime centers (RTCCs)** have crime analysts who examine information from cameras, license plate readers, social media, and emergency calls that can lead to arrests for violent crimes and may be used to more efficiently address quality-of-life priorities, such as illegal dumping of trash and construction debris, and the recovery of stolen cars.[104] One study of RTCCs found that local law enforcement is 66 percent more likely to clear violent crime cases when using RTCC assistance than when not.[105]

- **Crime labs** are essential for processing forensic evidence to solve and prosecute crimes, but many are facing backlogs. A combination of long-term underinvestment and rapidly increasing demand has created yearslong backlogs in some state labs, making federal funding essential to strengthening investigative and prosecutorial capabilities.[106]

- **Ballistic imaging technology** should be available to every community that wants it. Currently, there is a waitlist for 90 law enforcement agencies to access the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN), which has produced more than 1 million investigative leads for law enforcement to solve gun crimes.[107] Firearm arrests increased 150 percent when Tulsa, Oklahoma, significantly increased NIBIN use.[108] Congress should invest an additional $200 million for local and state law enforcement to acquire NIBIN terminals, purchase BrassTrax machines to capture images of fired cartridge cases, and hire technicians and staff to process NIBIN evidence.[109]

- **Crime gun intelligence centers (CGICs)** can connect shootings by linking ballistic evidence, identify gun traffickers, and build cases against repeat violent offenders.[110] In Detroit, fatal and nonfatal shootings were 4.84 times more likely to result in a case clearance following a lead created by the city's CGIC.[111] Congress should allocate $75 million to ATF to open additional centers that provide real-time data to prevent and solve crimes by bringing together ATF's crime gun intelligence tools.[112]

Prioritize police time

Sworn police officer resources should be prioritized to solving crime. Therefore, for police to address the variety of issues that fall outside the umbrella of crime solving, departments should deploy additional first-responder resources to meet those needs. Jurisdictions across the country have seen success in expanding the workforce of specially trained professionals who can respond to 911 calls that do not require a badge and a gun.[113] Nonpolice responders can reduce the burden on police by giving them more time to focus on deterring and solving crime and by offering targeted resources and services to the communities they serve.

Congress should:

- **Invest in community responder models** that deploy specially trained professionals as first responders in low-risk behavioral health and quality-of-life emergencies so that they do not escalate.[114]

- **Encourage law enforcement agencies to establish civilian roles**[115] within police departments for tasks[116] such as report-taking[117] and traffic accident investigations.[118]

Increase accountability for police policy and practice

Police accountability increases trust between police and the communities that they serve, reduces police violence and misconduct, and builds a collective commitment to addressing crime. Police practices that violate civil liberties—such as unlawful stops, surveillance practices that infringe on privacy rights, or excessive force—undermine legitimacy, fuel resentment, and discourage cooperation, making it more difficult to prevent and solve crime. Ensuring that officers receive robust and ongoing training can reduce officer-involved shootings and other use-of-force incidents.[119]

Studies show that training has the potential to reduce use-of-force incidents[120] and community complaints[121] while improving officers' ability to recognize when situations are escalating and provide appropriate responses.[122] For example, an evaluation of Louisville, Kentucky's de-escalation training found that it resulted in a 28 percent reduction of use-of-force incidents, a 26 percent reduction in citizen injuries, and a 36 percent reduction in officer injuries after training.[123] And in Chicago, an innovative behavioral science approach to training police officers in high-stress environments, known as "Sit-D," has shown promising results, reducing both officer use of force and discretionary arrests by 23 percent while seeing fewer injuries among officers and no loss in productivity.[124]

To improve accountability for federal law enforcement, federal policymakers should:

- **Ensure strong standards for federal use of force** as well as restrictions of dangerous tactics such as masking and other efforts to obscure identities.[125] In addition, available legal mechanisms should be enhanced to hold federal officers accountable and civilly liable for misconduct when it happens.[126]

- **Reactivate the National Law Enforcement Accountability Database (NLEAD)**[127] and restart use-of-force reporting to ensure that federal law enforcement agencies have accurate information about officers' history of misconduct.

To strengthen accountability mechanisms for state and local law enforcement, federal policymakers should:

- **Provide training, guidance, and technical assistance** to state and local law enforcement to guard against violations of civil rights. This should include engaging in collaborative agency assessments in partnership with police departments[128] and providing oversight, enforcement, and "pattern-or-practice" investigations[129] where violations persist.

- **Disseminate the latest evidence-based training for law enforcement** to prevent excessive use of force and police shootings. A commitment to the highest standards of training and professionalization will help officers resolve encounters safely, protect civilian lives, and strengthen public trust. After the Seattle Police Department made improvements to training and policies related to use of force, behavioral health crisis incident response, and investigative stops and detentions, use of serious force fell by 60 percent.[130]

- **Create national data collection requirements** related to the use of force and surveillance technologies.[131]

- **Ensure that police surveillance technologies safeguard against undue privacy intrusions and racially disparate impacts.**[132] Federal policymakers should promote best practices, set national standards for implementation and data collection, and enforce prohibitions on inappropriate uses of surveillance technology.[133]

- **Prevent racial profiling by police at the federal, state, and local level** by conditioning federal grant funds on reporting on racial discrimination, creating an enforcement mechanism when problems persist, and supporting grants for new state and local strategies[134] to reduce pretextual policing.[135]

Stopping crime

Sustained crime reduction requires greater investment in crime prevention and community safety strategies. Lasting safety is built by concentrating resources in communities that have experienced decades of disinvestment and economic insecurity.[136] Communities that experience the highest rates of crime are often in areas of concentrated poverty[137] that lack affordable housing,[138] health care,[139] employment opportunities,[140] and clean and green public spaces.[141] Evidence shows that exposure to better neighborhoods and pro-social inputs, especially for youth, can improve individuals' long-term outcomes.[142]

Coordinated action by federal, state, and local leaders to expand both immediate interventions and long-term investments can reduce crime and support thriving neighborhoods. Community violence intervention programs can address the immediate safety concerns of community members, and locally driven prevention strategies can create lasting public safety by addressing the root causes of crime and violence.[143] Targeted prevention efforts—including protecting and empowering young people, increasing economic opportunity, expanding mental health and substance use treatment, and improving the physical environment in neglected communities—can interrupt cycles of crime and violence.

Reducing reoffending is critical to preventing crime. Enforcement alone cannot sustainably reduce crime if individuals just commit crimes again and again. Once someone completes their sentence, ensuring they have a true second chance and the opportunity to become productive citizens makes them less likely to commit crimes again.[144] Increased support for people returning from incarceration and expanded services for crime survivors who are at risk of retaliation and further victimization can help break cycles of violence.[145] Together, prevention and recidivism reduction not only lower crime and victimization but also strengthen communities, reduce system costs, and create safer, more stable neighborhoods over the long term.

Youth crime prevention efforts

Lasting public safety requires preventing crime before it happens by helping young people succeed.

Congress should increase funding for the following local programs:

- **Youth employment programs** can match young people with jobs during the summer months, when they lack school structure. These programs have been demonstrated to be effective at reducing crime and violence among young people in several major cities.[146] For instance, Philadelphia's WorkReady summer program was associated with a 65 percent reduction in arrests in the first year after participants completed the program.[147] And Boston's summer youth program reduced violent crime by 35 percent. [148]

- **Early education programs,** such as Chicago Child-Parent Center and the High/Scope Perry Preschool program, have been associated with significantly lower rates of arrests for violent offenses and higher levels of educational attainment.[149]

- **Programs that reduce childhood lead exposure** and the associated impact on brain development have been shown to reduce the likelihood that young people will commit violent crime.[150] Investing in lead removal is a cost-effective crime reduction strategy.[151] A 2019 Rhode Island study found that a one-unit increase in blood lead levels in boys increases the likelihood of juvenile detention by 57 percent.[152]

Community violence intervention

Community violence intervention (CVI) programs connect individuals at the highest risk of violence involvement with resources and services to interrupt and stop violence.[153] Cities that scaled up[154] these evidence-based programs[155] in recent years have experienced some of the most significant declines in gun violence.[156] When properly implemented and sustained, CVI programs have reduced shootings by as much as 60 percent[157] and could save taxpayers as much as $41 for every dollar invested.[158] Effective strategies to prevent gun violence[159] and homicides[160] include intervention programs that provide intensive case management, cognitive behavioral therapy, transitional employment, and other services to high-risk young adults.

For example, young adult males referred by outreach workers to Rapid Employment and Development Initiative (READI) Chicago's 18-month program experienced a 79 percent reduction in shooting and homicide arrests and a 45 percent reduction in victimizations.[161] Another intervention program, Chicago CRED, reduced arrests for violent crime by more than 70 percent for participants who completed the program.[162] And students participating in Becoming a Man's (BAM) group sessions during school were up to 50 percent less likely to be arrested for violent crimes.[163]

An evaluation of Baltimore's Safe Streets program found that the longest-running sites were associated with a 32 percent reduction in homicides within the first four years.[164] A randomized controlled trial of the youth-focused Choose 2 Change program in Chicago found that participants were 39 percent less likely to be arrested for a violent crime up to two years after participation and saw the largest effects for the most serious crimes, such as aggravated assault.[165] A survey conducted by the Center for Neighborhood Engaged Research and Science (CORNERS) found that among CVI participants, gun carrying was reportedly down 56 percent and participation in risky behaviors was down 36 percent.[166]

From these promising results, CVI-based models have earned the trust of law enforcement leaders. A Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) survey found that more than 90 percent of respondents who previously worked with a CVI program say they would do so again.[167] In June 2025, 18 law enforcement groups and police chiefs in Louisville, Minneapolis, Omaha, and Tucson wrote a letter to Attorney General Pam Bondi asking her to reinstate canceled CVI grants.[168] The letter states, "These aren't feel-good programs; they're lifesaving, law-enforcement-enhancing strategies that work," producing "measurable and significant reductions in violence and homicides."[169]

Congress should:

- **Provide $625 million in annual funding for the DOJ's Community-Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative (CVIPI)** to establish and expand local evidence-based programs. Grantees should be encouraged to partner with academic researchers to conduct evaluations and expand the evidence base for CVI programs.[170]

- **Establish a National Community Violence Response Center** to provide technical assistance to cities and counties receiving CVIPI grants. Doing so would ensure that programs adopt best practices to maximize their effectiveness in reducing shootings.[171]

Reduce recidivism

Stopping people who have already committed a crime from repeat offending is a crucial goal of the criminal justice system. It means fewer victims. Ensuring those who served their time can go on to reintegrate into their communities makes them less likely to recidivate.[172] Breaking the cycle of recidivism, thereby reducing both future crime and future victimization, requires removing barriers that impede individuals' reentry and their ability to contribute to their community.

Providing coordinated services that meet the specific needs of an individual is especially important for young people who have made mistakes and deserve a second chance. Research on adolescent brain development and criminal offending trajectories shows that adolescence and early adulthood are critical intervention windows, when decision-making and impulse control are still developing and timely support can reduce the likelihood of future offending.[173] For most offense types, research shows that the likelihood an individual will commit a crime begins to increase at late childhood, peaks in their teens years, and begins to decline as they mature.[174] Only between 10 to 30 percent of individuals who commit a crime commit their first offense in early adulthood or later.[175] Violent offenses and serious crime escalation tend to occur later and among those who already have a large number of convictions.[176] This means that early and successful interventions for young people who commit crimes can interrupt this progression and the chance that future, more serious crimes occur.

Efforts that focus on removing structural barriers to reentry, for example, have proven effective in breaking the cycle of recidivism and reducing future crime. Policies like D.C.'s Youth Rehabilitation Act (YRA), which allows for eligible young people's convictions to be set aside if they comply with all of the conditions of their release, and hybrid justice systems that blend aspects of the adult and juvenile systems have been effective at reducing recidivism.[177] These approaches balance the need for accountability with ensuring that young people who have made mistakes have the opportunity to recover.

To prevent crime by reducing recidivism, Congress should:

- **Reduce barriers to reentry** that prevent returning citizens from accessing safe and affordable public housing,[178] including by creating a federal mechanism for clearing certain records that can often disqualify someone from public housing[179] and investing in transitional[180] and supportive housing programs.[181] When people returning from prison have a stable place to live,[182] they are less likely to commit future crimes.[183] A review of the Returning Home-Ohio pilot project found that participants who received housing support were 40 percent less likely to be

rearrested.[184] And four reentry programs in Oregon that include support for housing led to a 33 percent reduction in new felony and misdemeanor arrests, including a 38 percent decrease in property crime arrests.[185]

- **Increase access to health care for returning citizens.**[186] Increasing access to health care and substance use treatment upon release from incarceration is shown to reduce the likelihood that people will commit future crimes.[187] Policymakers should ensure the accessibility of health insurance,[188] mental health and substance use disorder services, and food assistance benefits for people reintegrating into their communities.[189] A study on the impacts of Medicaid expansion found a 16 percent reduction in two-year recidivism between 2010 and 2016 for people who had reoffended multiple times.[190] A reentry program in California that offered substance use disorder treatment among other services found that program participants were 14 to 15 percentage points less likely to recidivate.[191]

- **Expand employment opportunities for individuals leaving incarceration.** Access to stable employment has been shown to reduce recidivism.[192] Federal policymakers should remove barriers to employment opportunities[193] for people with criminal records by creating a record-clearing mechanism,[194] funding the implementation of state record clearance,[195] and providing pre-release services[196] like prison education programs[197] and post-release services to increase workforce participation.[198] Groups that obtained stable employment after release from Ohio prisons had recidivism rates as low as 12 percent, while groups that had no stable employment after release saw recidivism rates as high as 41 percent.[199] Minnesota's EMPLOY program provides job placement and readiness support for returning individuals before release and for one year after leaving prison. Program participants were 72 percent more likely to find employment post-release and 63 percent less likely to have parole revoked due to a technical violation.[200]

- **Seal criminal offense records for certain offenses by young adults** after they have completed their sentence. Laws that allow young people who have made mistakes and served their time to return to society with set-aside convictions are associated with lower rates of recidivism.[201]

Victim services

When harm does occur, survivors should receive the resources they need to heal. Expanding victim services is not just an ethical duty; it can help reduce gun violence.[202] Survivors who receive support are less likely to develop risk factors associated with future crime involvement,[203] which helps to stop future cycles of violence.[204]

Crime survivors who participated in services from a trauma recovery center in California, such as being connected to safe housing, mental health care, and legal services, were 44 percent more likely to cooperate with a prosecutor to solve crimes than clients receiving usual care.[205] An investment in survivors is an investment in safer communities.

Congress should:

- **Fully fund programs** that directly serve victims of crime and bolster the Crime Victims Fund, which supports state victim compensation and assistance programs.[206]

- **Create a $200 million federal grant program** administered by the Office for Victims of Crime to incentivize cities to expand recovery support for crime survivors, hire victim service liaisons in law enforcement agencies, provide safety planning and relocation for witnesses and victims, and provide referrals for victim compensation programs and other supportive services.

Mobilizing federal resources to disrupt illicit markets

For communities to thrive, crime must not pay. Policymakers should support concerted efforts to disrupt illegal markets and eliminate financial incentives for organized crime syndicates, drug trafficking organizations, retail theft operations, and bad actors within the gun industry. Criminal networks trafficking drugs, guns, people, and stolen goods do not respect jurisdictions; they move fluidly across state lines and international borders. Communities pay the price in the form of gun violence, overdoses, carjackings, shuttered businesses, and erosion of trust in government to keep communities safe and free from disorder.

The same irresponsible gun industry practices and weak gun laws that contribute to firearms being the leading cause of death for U.S. children and teens[207] are also fueling violence and instability in Mexico and Central America.[208] America's borders can be strengthened,[209] and international cartels can be weakened by using technology and interagency task forces to deprive them of revenue from the sale of opioids and by reducing access to U.S. firearms, which are used to protect their criminal operations.[210]

Congress needs to provide federal and local law enforcement agencies with the resources necessary to dismantle violent criminal organizations and stop the steady flow of guns, drugs, people, and stolen goods across state lines and the southern border, while simultaneously investing in community resources that reduce the demand. [211]

Drug trafficking

Drug trafficking undermines public safety, national security, and public health. It fuels overdose deaths, destabilizes neighborhoods, and creates cycles of harm that ripple across generations. Drug trafficking persists because those at the top of the chain too often escape accountability, while low-level offenders bear the brunt of enforcement and are easily replaced. Law enforcement must go upstream, targeting the networks and profiteers who drive the illicit market.

Congress should:

- **Ensure the DOJ's OCDETF has the necessary resources** to dismantle international drug trafficking organizations and the financial networks that support them.[212]

- **Provide resources for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to invest in nonintrusive scanning technologies** at all ports of entry to reduce the supply of illicit opioids such as fentanyl and xylazine from entering the United States.

- **Dedicate federal resources to support state and local efforts to eliminate open-air drug markets** by building strong cases through wiretaps and surveillance, coordinating arrests of drug-market leaders, dedicating specialized prosecutors to secure meaningful sentences, and investing in community efforts to prevent other drug organizations from filling the vacuum after a takedown.[213]

- **Reduce the demand for illicit opioids** by removing barriers and increasing funding for evidence-based community overdose prevention, medication-assisted treatment, and recovery support.[214]

- **Build on successful state efforts and legalize marijuana** to focus crucial law enforcement resources on the serious and dangerous drug crime that is causing great harm to our communities.[215]

Gun trafficking

State and local crime prevention efforts are undermined by the illegal flow of firearms, supplying the weapons that are later used in crimes. While much of today's drug trafficking is driven by transnational cartels and criminal networks operating beyond U.S. borders,[216] gun trafficking begins at home—enabled by weak laws, lack of federal enforcement of the small number of irresponsible gun dealers, and an industry that profits from the diversion of firearms into the illegal market. Solving the nation's gun violence epidemic requires strong federal action to disrupt the illicit trafficking of guns into communities. Preventing gun trafficking and reducing violent crime requires strengthening gun laws at the state and federal levels, increasing targeted enforcement efforts on straw purchasers and traffickers, and holding negligent firearm manufacturers and dealers accountable for contributing to and profiting from gun crime.

The federal government should:

- **Hire 1,000 additional industry operation investigators** to ensure ATF regularly inspects federal firearms licensees.[217] Some dealers are currently inspected only once a decade,[218] thereby allowing a small number of bad-apple gun dealers to profit from the diversion of guns to the underground market. The Trump administration's proposed budget calls for cutting two-thirds of its investigator positions,[219] which would render ATF unable to do meaningful inspections to ensure gun dealers comply with federal laws.

- **Reinstate ATF's Enhanced Regulatory Enforcement Policy,** which the Trump administration repealed, to ensure there are consequences when gun dealers willfully violate federal law.[220]

- **Repeal federal restrictions on crime gun trace data.**

- **Repeal the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA),** which grants limited immunity to gun manufacturers and dealers who contribute to illegal gun trafficking in civil litigation.[221]

- **Reduce access to stolen firearms** by passing legislation requiring firearms to be securely stored and mandating the reporting of lost and stolen firearms.

Human trafficking

Human trafficking is a modern form of slavery that exploits people for profit by using force, fraud, and coercion, all while undermining public safety and human dignity.[222] It is not only a grave violation of human rights but also a public safety issue that destabilizes communities, fuels organized crime, and inflicts lasting trauma on survivors. Law enforcement, service providers, and the wider community must work together to prevent trafficking, hold traffickers accountable, and support survivors.

Congress should:

- **Increase grant funding to establish local and state interagency human trafficking task forces** to identify victims of sex and labor trafficking, arrest and prosecute traffickers, and provide comprehensive services.[223]

- **Expand access to legal protections** for immigrant victims and witnesses of human trafficking and other gender-based violence.

Organized retail crime

Federal policymakers must take action to target leaders of organized criminal enterprises that profit from stealing and reselling stolen goods, often online. Many of these individuals are also linked with other criminal activity such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, and money laundering.[224] These highly organized criminal enterprises harm retailers, employees, and customers alike.[225] The proliferation of online marketplaces has also created an evolving and highly unregulated frontier that enables these illegal activities to take place.[226]

To reduce organized retail crime, federal policymakers should:

- **Increase federal law enforcement support for cross-jurisdictional organized retail crime (ORC) task forces** that bring together federal, state, and local law enforcement to target leaders of criminal organizations engaged in ORC.[227] This can also include dedicating federal intelligence resources to monitoring high volume and unusual activity, especially online; sharing that information with state and local law enforcement; establishing a federal definition of ORC; and enhancing nationwide data collection.

- **Enhance prosecutions by providing grant resources for state and local vertical prosecution units for complex ORC cases,**[228] assigning a single prosecution team to handle the case from beginning to end.

- **Enact a federal criminal penalty for organized retail crime** to hold leaders of organized retail crime organizations accountable. This should apply to individuals who oversee operations that involve the receipt of stolen goods valued at more than $50,000 within a 12-month period, where such goods have traveled in interstate commerce. Specifically, those who recruit, supervise, or manage at least 10 people in the theft or resale of stolen goods should be penalized.

- **Require online marketplaces to make reasonable efforts to stop the sale of stolen goods** and allow retailers to hold online marketplaces civilly liable for failing to do so. In particular, the Integrity, Notification, and Fairness in Online Retail Marketplaces (INFORM) Consumers Act[229] could be enhanced to require online marketplaces to proactively identify stolen goods, verify information collected by high-volume sellers, and suspend sellers of stolen goods.

Carjacking

Effective policy solutions to prevent carjackings align with the motivations of those who commit these serious offenses, ranging from crimes of opportunity[230] to highly coordinated organized carjacking rings.[231] Federal policymakers are best positioned to support[232] state and local law enforcement in bringing down the organized carjacking and car theft operations that occur across state lines.[233]

To reduce carjackings, federal policymakers should:

- **Improve clearance rates for carjacking**[234] by increasing the number of officers available to respond and focusing investigative and prosecutorial resources on those committing repeat carjackings across state lines.[235] This can be accomplished by establishing or expanding regional and cross-jurisdictional carjacking task forces.[236] For example, Philadelphia experienced a 31 percent drop in carjackings from 2022 to 2023 after the creation of the Philadelphia Carjacking Task Force.[237]

- **Increase access to automated license plate readers** by providing federal funds for state and local law enforcement to acquire these tools, which help catch carjackers and recover stolen vehicles.[238]

- **Direct ATF to work with state and local law enforcement** and leverage real-time crime centers to trace and identify the source of guns used in carjackings and cut off the supply of illegal guns.

- **Require car manufacturers to include auto theft technology,** including immobilizers and remote GPS tracking,[239] in all new passenger motor vehicles and require that the location of stolen cars be shared in real time with law enforcement.[240]

- **Increase funding for states and localities** that can be used for evidence-based youth prevention strategies[241] or infrastructure and environmental improvements, such as additional street lighting.[242]

Conclusion

Protecting people from crime is one of the government's most fundamental and urgent responsibilities. However, the current reality is that too many crimes go unsolved, too many victims lack justice, and too many offenders evade accountability. Local police, prosecutors, and community partners are working every day to stop crime, but they need additional federal support both to ensure that those who commit crimes are held accountable and to prevent crime before it occurs.

Congress should invest in proven strategies that strengthen the capacity of law enforcement to solve crimes, deliver swift and certain justice, and increase public trust. This includes hiring more detectives, funding crime intelligence tools, deterring violence, and providing local police and prosecutors with additional resources to focus on the people and places driving the most crime. Congress should also ensure law enforcement has the resources to dismantle violent criminal organizations and stop those profiting from trafficked guns, drugs, humans, and stolen goods. In addition to bolstering policing, the federal government should expand evidence-based prevention and recidivism reduction programs that break cycles of violence.

Everyone deserves to be protected from crime and violence—without sacrificing their civil liberties, their privacy, or the rule of law. It is time for the federal government to stop the political games and invest in safer communities.

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