

A REPORT ON RECORD-LOW CRIME DURING THE BIDEN- HARRIS ADMINISTRATION

THE WHITE HOUSE
DOMESTIC POLICY COUNCIL

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Overview

In 2020, the nation experienced the largest increase in murders ever recorded and the largest increase in violent crime in thirty years. Having inherited this dire public safety challenge, President Biden and Vice President Harris immediately got to work. Guided by their belief that the first responsibility of government is to keep people safe, President Biden and Vice President Harris backed their commitment with historic investments in public safety. The end result is clear: **violent crime is at a 50-year low and homicides have fallen dramatically in the last four years to nearly a 50-year low.**

The Biden-Harris Administration's historic investments in reducing crime included:

Funding the police.

- Shortly after taking office, President Biden signed into law the American Rescue Plan, which led to the largest-ever federal investment in public safety. More than 1,000 states, cities, and counties invested over \$15 billion to support police officers, employ more innovative technologies, and fund more prosecutions of violent criminals.
- President Biden also increased funding for the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) office by 72%, from \$386 million to \$665 million.

Expanding federal partnerships with state and local law enforcement.

- The U.S. Marshals Service worked closely with non-federal law enforcement partners to apprehend more than 10,000 fugitives, including more than one thousand charged with homicide.
- The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), in response to the sudden rise in carjackings, created task forces in cities that brought together local, state, and federal officers, agents, and prosecutors. These cities saw double-digit declines in carjackings.
- The Department of Homeland Security's Operation Boiling Point partnered with state and local law enforcement officers across the country to combat the rise in organized retail crime. DOJ also made additional agents, prosecutors, and other resources available.

Addressing the scourge of gun violence.

- In 2022, President Biden signed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA), the most significant gun violence law in nearly 30 years, which made gun trafficking and straw purchasing federal crimes, expanded background checks including for people under 21, funded state red flag laws, and allocated \$250 million for proven violence reduction programs. More than 500 defendants already have been prosecuted for gun trafficking and straw purchasing, and BSCA has stopped 800 sales of guns to people under 21 who are prohibited from buying guns.

Investing in programs proven to prevent crime.

- Creating safe communities requires preventing violence, not just prosecuting it. President Biden funded programs that prevent violence, including expanding access to mental health services, substance use counseling, and violence intervention programs, as well as providing economic opportunity to young people and individuals with criminal records. These programs are leading to dramatic, sustained reductions in crime.

Building trust between police and the communities they serve.

- Pursuant to the President’s Executive Order, federal law enforcement agencies have minimized uses of force, banned chokeholds and no-knock warrants except in rare, emergency situations, and implemented other reforms to make civilian-police encounters safer.

President Biden and Vice President Harris’ steadfast commitment to fighting crime worked. Violent crime is at a 50-year low, and these positive trends are only accelerating. Preliminary data through September 2024 show that homicides are falling at an even faster rate than the record pace of 2023.

There is more progress to be made. Every community deserves to feel safe. The President and Vice President have spent their careers working for safer communities, because public safety is the foundation for growing small businesses, securing stronger schools, and helping communities thrive. They have dramatically reduced crime through record investments in police and historic reforms. If these investments and reforms continue, we will continue to build safer, more vibrant communities.

Historic Investments in Police, Crime Prevention, and Reform

President Biden’s game-changing investments in police, crime prevention, and reform have led to historically low crime and thriving communities.

The President’s American Rescue Plan led to the largest-ever federal investment in public safety, including for hiring and retaining local police.

A. Funding the police

Every 10 additional officers results in one fewer homicide, and the reduction is twice as large for Black victims.¹ President Biden and Vice President Harris understand that investing in police is investing in public safety, which is why they:

Passed the American Rescue Plan. The American rescue plan led to the largest-ever federal investment in public safety—more than 1,000 cities, counties, and states invested over \$15 billion. Local jurisdictions used ARP funding to address the specific needs of their communities, including to fund critical police hiring and retention, make cutting-edge technological upgrades, purchase essential equipment and vehicles, and invest in enhanced officer training. Experts have linked the dramatic declines in violent crimes to federal investments like ARP.² And police

chiefs agree. Detroit’s police chief said funding from ARP was “a tremendous game changer for Detroit. It’s helped us reach these historic lows in crime.”³

Funded Community Oriented Policing Services. Three decades ago, President Biden was one of the original creators of DOJ’s Community Oriented Policing Services or COPS office, which, among other things, has helped to put 136,000 more cops in police departments nationwide. Funding for the COPS office increased by 72%, from \$386 million to \$665 million, since the end of the previous administration. Additionally, President Biden signed the Recruit and Retain Act to help police departments recruit and retain police officers by giving them new flexibility in using COPS funding.

B. Expanding Federal Partnerships with State and Local Law Enforcement

The Biden-Harris Administration fostered essential partnerships between federal agencies and state and local law enforcement to pool resources, expertise, and intelligence. These partnerships included:

Getting violent fugitives off the streets. The U.S. Marshals Service partnered with state and local police to apprehend fugitives in cities experiencing a significant number of homicides and shootings. More than 10,200 fugitives—including violent criminals, self-identified gang members, and 1,153 defendants charged with homicide—were apprehended in over 30 locations since July 2022. Law enforcement recovered more than 1,400 weapons associated with violent crime.

Since 2022, the U.S. Marshals Service has partnered with state and local police to apprehend more than 10,000 fugitives, including those charged with murder.

Combating carjacking with federal task forces. In response to a rise in carjackings in certain cities in 2022, DOJ launched carjacking task forces in Chicago, Philadelphia, Tampa, and Washington, D.C. By bringing together federal, state, and local law enforcement to crunch data and share intelligence, these task forces successfully investigated and prosecuted carjacking rings. Following on the successes in these cities, DOJ launched carjacking task forces in seven additional cities in 2024. The 2022 task forces made major progress:

- Carjackings in Philadelphia declined 31% in 2023.
- Armed carjackings were down 28% in the District of Columbia in 2024 compared to the same period in 2023.
- In Chicago, carjackings decreased 29% from a high in 2021 through the end of 2023.

Using advanced forensics to solve gun crimes faster. DOJ expanded and improved Crime Gun Intelligence Centers (CGICs), which bring together federal, state, and local law enforcement. CGICs allow law enforcement to use innovative technologies to rapidly collect, analyze, and share forensic information about guns used in violent crimes to solve more cases and prevent more crimes. CGICs also connect law enforcement to technologies that obtain and analyze DNA

from crime guns that help identify violent perpetrators. Evaluations of CGICs in Detroit and Milwaukee found they helped police successfully identify and investigate shooters.⁴

- Since 2021, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) has almost doubled the number of CGICs and more than doubled the law enforcement agencies that are contributing forensic information.
- ATF examiners now obtain DNA from guns and ammunition in 75% of cases, up from less than 40% from firearms in 2012, and from 75% of ammunition, up from 0% before 2019.

DOJ has almost doubled the number of Crime Gun Intelligence Centers that are helping cities like Milwaukee identify and investigate the most violent offenders.

Combatting organized retail crime. In response to the rise in organized retail crime in certain areas, the Department of Homeland Security launched Operation Boiling Point in October 2022. Operation Boiling Point includes 7,100 federal agents dedicated to investigating and dismantling these groups in partnership with other federal, state, local law enforcement and prosecutors, as well as financial, retail, freight transportation, and other industries and industry groups in various cities, including Baltimore and Houston. DOJ expanded the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) Program to make funding, federal agents, federal prosecutors, and other resources available for the investigation and prosecution of transnational organized retail crime groups. This expansion also included a new national strategic initiative that provides additional funding specifically for prosecutor-coordinated, multi-agency federal investigations of organized retail crime groups.

C. Addressing the scourge of gun violence

Research shows that gun safety laws reduce gun violence.⁵ President Biden signed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA), the most significant gun violence prevention law in nearly 30 years, which made gun trafficking and straw purchasing federal crimes, expanded background checks including for people under 21, funded \$750 million for state red flag laws, and allocated \$250 million for community violence intervention programs. Due to BSCA, law enforcement has seized over 1,300 illegal guns from suspected gun traffickers.

D. Investing in programs proven to prevent crime

Creating safe communities requires preventing violence, not just prosecuting it. President Biden funded and expanded access to mental health services, substance use counseling, and violence intervention programs, as well as programs providing economic opportunity. These investments are leading to dramatic, sustained reductions in crime.

Mental health support. Up to 10 percent of all police contacts involve a person with a mental illness.⁶ Research shows that connecting individuals with mental health support reduces their chances of offending.⁷ It also alleviates burdens on police. BSCA is providing \$250 million

over four years to states and territories to expand access to mental health services, including through mobile crisis teams. Additionally, ARP funded \$1.2 billion for Medicaid to support mental health professionals who respond to people in crisis and provided \$15 million to more than 20 states to help implement mental health intervention services. For example:

- Houston allocated \$23 million in ARP funding towards its mental health professionals who respond to residents experiencing mental health crises.⁸ Houston’s analysis showed that these programs effectively connected residents with the correct resources, diverted them from arrest or jail, and allowed officers to focus on public safety.
- DeKalb County, GA invested \$600,000 in ARP funding to quadruple the mobile crisis nurse staff. The staff has handled over 5,000 calls, allowing uniformed officers to focus on responding to crime.
- Chicago invested \$15 million for the alternative 911 response initiative, which diverts behavioral health crises from police interactions.

Substance use treatment. Specialized courts divert eligible individuals with substance use disorders into treatment and connect them with essential services. Drug court participants have lower rates of recidivism,⁹ and research shows that expanding access to substance use treatment reduces crime.¹⁰ BSCA is providing funding for these essential courts. DOJ also issued grants for specialized treatment courts and funding for diversion programs to connect people to community-based resources. And the Department of Health and Human Services also funded drug courts that offer substance use disorder treatment and recovery support.

Community violence intervention (CVI). CVI programs engage individuals and groups at the highest risk of violence to prevent and disrupt cycles of violence and retaliation. Interventions often occur through trusted messengers and referrals to social services like cognitive behavioral therapy that teach young people how to de-escalate conflicts. These programs have been shown to reduce homicides by as much as 60% in areas where they are implemented.¹¹ ARP funding, \$250 million from BSCA, and annual appropriations have funded nearly 80 organizations across the country to expand effective CVI programs.

Between August and October 2024, two Detroit CVI programs funded by the President’s American Rescue Plan reduced shootings and homicides by more than 70%.

Detroit used ARP and BSCA funding for its ShotStoppers CVI program, which focuses on youth at-risk to engage in gun violence. Between August and October of 2024, all six CVI groups achieved steep reductions in homicides and shootings, with shootings and homicides falling 73%-83% in areas served by two of the groups.¹²

Second chances. Research shows that employment reduces recidivism,¹³ but formerly incarcerated people have difficulty obtaining employment.¹⁴ The Biden-Harris Administration improved employment opportunities for those returning to their communities in two ways: by

increasing access to entrepreneurship and by removing criminal history barriers to securing good jobs. With people employed, communities gain safety and economic growth.

- Entrepreneurship is an important path to employment for people with criminal records.¹⁵ In 2024, the Small Business Administration (SBA) eliminated a bar on accessing funds for people on probation or parole.
- Competitive grant programs now use preferences for employers that provide high-quality jobs to qualified workers who face systemic barriers to employment, including those with criminal history records. Federal agencies also are now prohibited from requesting an applicant’s criminal history information in most circumstances before making a conditional offer of employment. Finally, the President issued full, unconditional, and categorical pardons for certain prior federal and D.C. marijuana simple possession offenses, which removed a potential criminal history barrier to employment.
- Summer youth employment programs are proven to improve youth outcomes like school attendance and college enrollment and reduce youth arrests and youth violent crime.¹⁶ Milwaukee, among other cities, used ARP funding to expand summer programs for at-risk youth.

Improving neighborhoods. Research shows that addressing blight—like cleaning up vacant lots—reduces crime.¹⁷ Detroit used over \$4.7 million in ARP funding to create a new civilian unit focused on blight remediation. Detroit also used ARP funding for its Neighborhood Beautification Program, which provides grants to local organizations to fix up vacant lots.

E. Historic reforms to advance public trust in policing

Public safety requires public trust. President Biden and Vice President Harris implemented the most comprehensive federal effort to improve policing ever undertaken. Research shows that improvements in policing lead to increased compliance with the law because of perceived police legitimacy which makes communities safer.¹⁸ After the Administration implemented these reforms, “Americans’ confidence in the police increased eight percentage points over the past year to 51% [in 2024], the largest year-over-year change in public perceptions of 17 major U.S. institutions measured in Gallup’s annual update.”¹⁹ In comparison, the average confidence in 17 different institutions remained historically low, at 28%. Other polls show similar approval.²⁰

Americans’ confidence in the police grew by eight points in 2024, from 43% to 51%.

The President’s Historic Executive Order on Reform. In 2022, the President signed Executive Order 14074²¹ to improve police accountability and public trust. In the two years since, federal law enforcement agencies have acted to enshrine dignity, accountability, and transparency in their work:

- **First-ever federal misconduct database.** Police agencies—and the citizens they serve—should know that the officers they are hiring are qualified and trustworthy. DOJ

launched NLEAD, the first-ever federal law enforcement misconduct database, containing 5,300 records covering misconduct for more than 4,300 past and present federal officers over the last seven years. Federal agencies already have conducted thousands of NLEAD checks to identify potential misconduct before making critical decisions about hiring, promotions, and officer assignments.

- **Expansion of state-level misconduct database.** Through funding and accreditation standards, the Administration has encouraged state and local agencies to expand use of a state and local misconduct registry that is currently in place in all 50 states and DC. Since May 2023, the number of users has increased almost 75%, and the number of records in the database has increased almost 85%. The average number of monthly queries has increased about 85%.
- **Sharply limited use of force and no-knock entries.** Federal law enforcement agencies have implemented policies that sharply limit the use of deadly force and no-knock entries; banned the use of chokeholds and carotid restraints unless deadly force is authorized; and implemented early warning systems and other risk management tools that enable supervisors to identify problematic conduct and undertake interventions to help prevent avoidable uses of force. To improve transparency, agencies are publishing their use of force policies and publicly reporting data on no-knock entries. DOJ also provided training to law enforcement agencies to increase submission to FBI's publicly available Use-of-Force Data Collection program.
- **Mandated the use of body worn cameras.** To promote transparency and accountability, federal law enforcement agencies have publicly posted their policies mandating the use of body worn cameras during pre-planned operations and patrols, as appropriate, and the expedited public release, as practicable, of recordings in cases involving serious bodily injury or death.
- **Promoting accountability in state and local law enforcement.** In the last two fiscal years, DOJ made available nearly \$1 billion in discretionary grants funding in a manner that supports and promotes the adoption of the Executive Order's policies by state, Tribal, local, and territorial law enforcement agencies.
- **Restricted military equipment for non-federal law enforcement.** DHS, DOJ, the Department of Defense (DOD), the General Services Administration, and the Department of Treasury acted to prevent certain militarized equipment from being sold or transferred to non-federal law enforcement agencies.

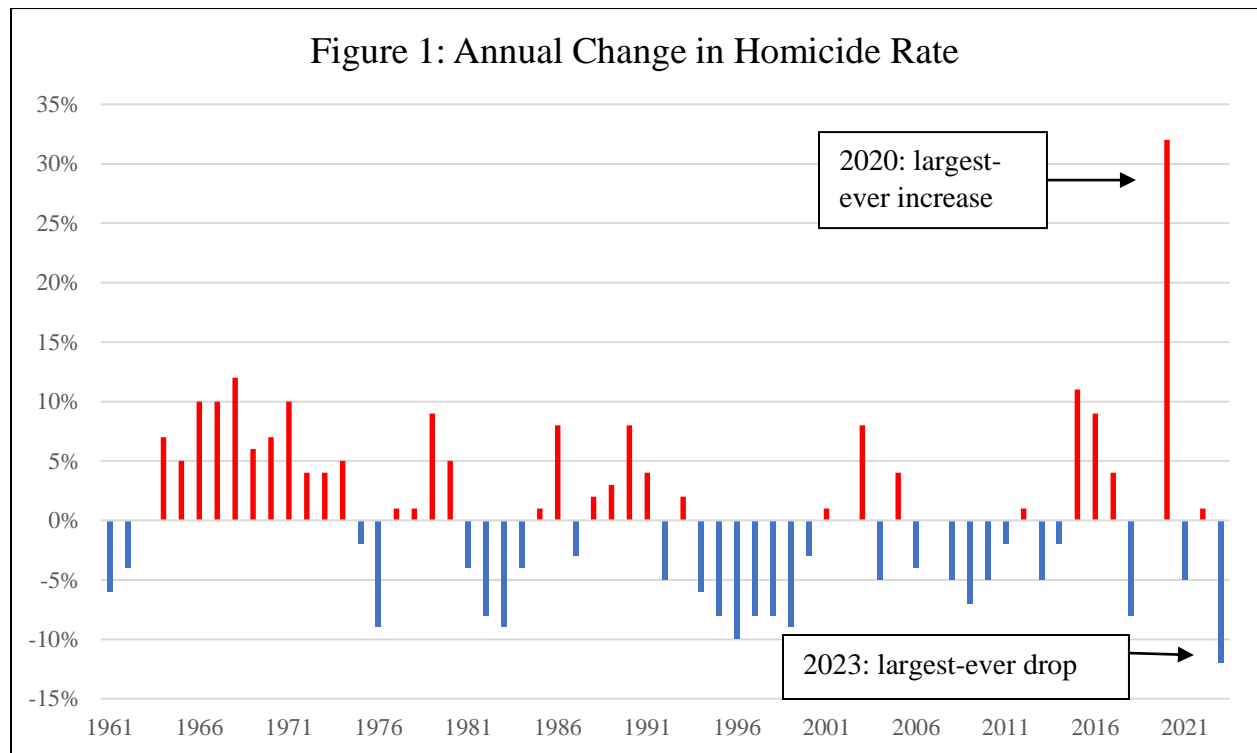
De-escalation training. De-escalation training equips officers with the skills to take specific actions to de-escalate a crisis situation."²² De-escalating a potentially volatile situation reduces the risk of injury to the officer and citizen.²³ Under the Executive Order, federal agents are required to receive de-escalation training and use de-escalation techniques if feasible. In 2022, the President signed the Law Enforcement De-Escalation Act of 2022, which authorized \$124 million to support de-escalation training for officers, and the COPS program has funded de-escalation training for state and local police. Detroit police invested nearly \$11 million of ARP

funding to enhance a training facility to provide officers with a world-class environment to hone their de-escalation skills, empowering them to use less force, improving safety for officers and residents alike.

President Biden’s Actions Contributed to Historic Declines in Crime

After the Biden-Harris Administration implemented these historic investments, partnerships, and reforms, national homicide and violent crime rates declined dramatically. In 2020, before the President took office, the country experienced its largest-ever increase in homicides. Since then, during this Administration:

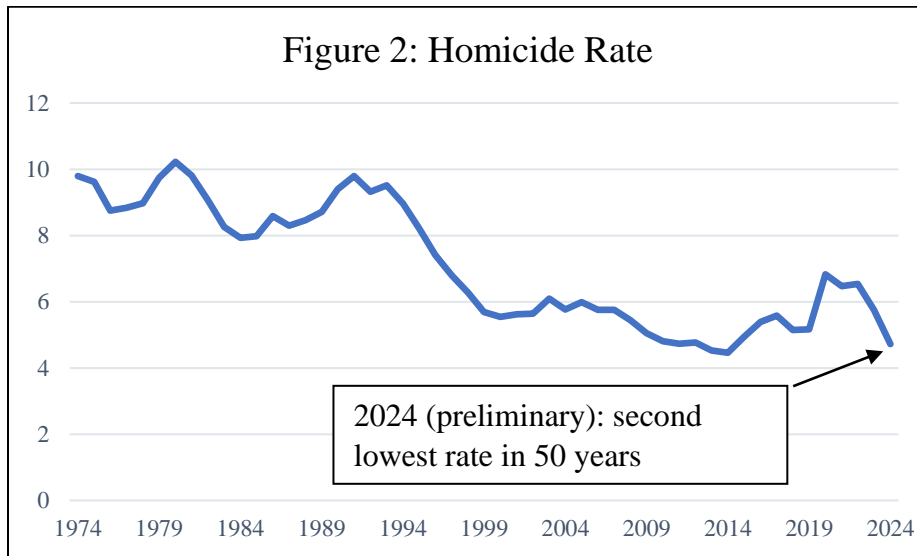
- Homicides declined 12% in 2023, the fastest rate ever recorded, as shown in Figure 1, and have fallen another 18% in 2024 according to preliminary data. Homicides are at nearly a 50-year low.
- Violent crime is at a 50-year low, having fallen another 7% in 2024.
- Cities that used the federal investments and partnerships detailed above have seen dramatic reductions in crime. In 2023, homicides in Detroit fell by 18% to the fewest since 1966 and are down another 17% through November 2024. Similarly, cities like Baltimore, Houston, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Toledo, and Wilmington have seen homicides drop by 20% or more.



Source: Data submitted to the FBI and published by Jeff-alytics.²⁴

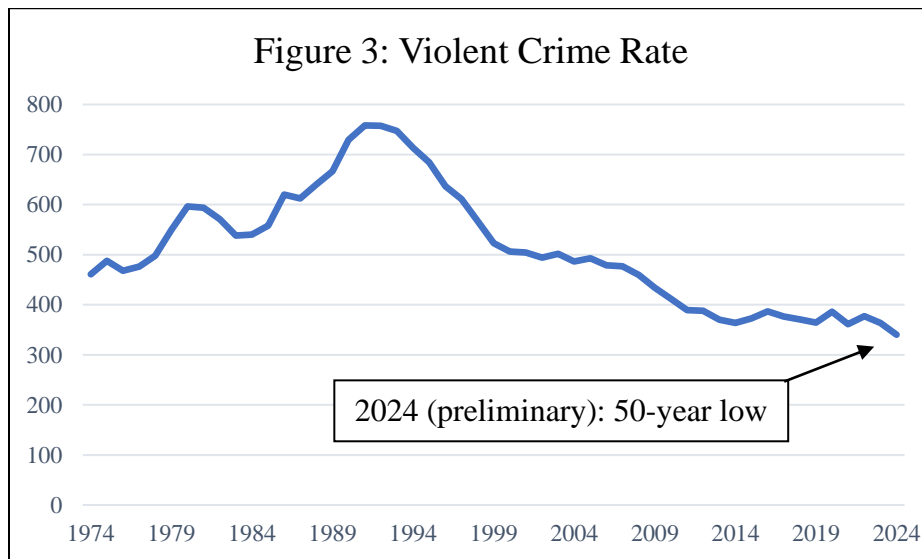
The homicide rate has continued its rapid decline in 2024. According to preliminary data from the independent group of police chiefs, homicides are down another 18% through the end of September 2024—a pace that breaks the record set last year.²⁵

Based on this preliminary data, the homicide rate per 100,000 people now sits at one of the lowest in 50 years, as shown in Figure 2.



Source: Major Cities Chiefs Association; data submitted to FBI and published by Jeff-alytics.

Violent crime also has declined since President Biden took office. Figure 3 shows that violent crime is now at its lowest level in 50 years. When the President took office in January 2021, violent crime was worsening, having increased 6%. By the end of 2023, violent crime was near its lowest level in 50 years. Through September 2024, violent crime has fallen another 7% to a 50-year low, according to the preliminary data from the independent group of police chiefs.²⁶



Source: Major Cities Chiefs Association; data submitted to FBI and published by Jeff-alytics.

Cities that used the federal investments and partnerships detailed above have seen dramatic reductions in crime. Notably, Detroit, Baltimore, Houston, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Toledo, and

Wilmington used federal resources for crime fighting made possible by the Biden-Harris Administration. They saw homicides decline by 20% or more.

- **Detroit** invested over \$100 million in ARP funding for critical police hiring and technology upgrades. Detroit paid \$4.8 million in retention bonuses, including to every sworn officer, which also enabled the city to hire 200 new police officers. Detroit also bought 50 new police cruisers to improve response times and a new helicopter to safely track suspects during high-speed pursuits. More police and better technology allowed officers to apprehend violent offenders while minimizing risk to themselves and to the community. Working with Detroit PD and the Wayne County Sheriff's Office, the U.S. Marshals Service arrested 95 fugitives across Detroit and Wayne County during a 30-day period in July 2023. Detroit also invested money to expand teams of police and mental health professionals who can respond to people in crisis.

Crime dropped to historic lows after these federal investments and expanded partnerships. In 2023, homicides fell by 18% to the fewest since 1966.²⁷ Homicides are down another 17% through November 2024, and down about 30% since President Biden took office.²⁸ Non-fatal shootings are down 25% through September 2024, and down 44% since 2021. Violent crime overall is down 21% since 2021.

Detroit invested over \$100 million from the President's American Rescue Plan into crime reduction. Last year, it had the fewest homicides since 1966.

- **Baltimore** is investing over \$50 million in ARP funding for public safety, including \$7 million to replace its outdated fleet and approximately \$12.5 million for its focused deterrence program. Focused deterrence is a proven strategy that reduces crime by giving those most at risk for engaging in violence or being victims of violence a choice: choose a positive path and receive services and support, or commit a crime and face certain arrest and punishment.²⁹ A University of Pennsylvania study found Baltimore's model reduced gun violence by about 25%.³⁰ Baltimore also used ARP funding to implement other violence reduction programs and the city has seen a decline in violence. Homicides decreased 21% in 2023 and another 28% through September 2024, with violent crime overall also decreasing in 2023 and 2024.³¹
- **Houston** is investing \$72 million in ARP funding for public safety, including \$25 million for overtime for police officers to deter violent crime in hot spot neighborhoods, \$7 million for cadet retention, almost \$1 million for tactical equipment, and almost \$5 million to reduce the backlog in evidence testing at Houston's crime lab. In 2022, DOJ surged federal agents, analysts, forensic experts, and gang prosecutors to Houston to reduce violent crime. Homicides decreased 22% in 2023 and another 13% through September 2024, with violent crime overall also decreasing in 2023 and through September 2024.³² Since 2020, homicides are down 19% and violent crime is down 9%.³³

- **Milwaukee** invested over \$40 million in public safety, including to pay new officers engaged in community policing, fund gun crime investigations, and increase the number of dispatchers to handle 911 calls. The city and county of Milwaukee also partnered with the state of Wisconsin to invest \$28 million more on fighting crime, including to reduce dramatically the court backlog of violent crime cases. Homicides dropped 20% in 2023 and another 22% through mid-December 2024.³⁴
- **Philadelphia** is investing \$200 million in ARP funding for initiatives to reduce and prevent violence, including to investigate and prosecute violent gun crimes. The city partnered with the state of Pennsylvania to devote \$25 million in ARP funding for a comprehensive upgrade to the city’s crime lab and \$20 million for crime-fighting technology like license plate readers. Philadelphia also used \$3.5 million in federal funding to fund the mobile surge team to increase the number of police officers on the street in high-violence areas to respond to criminal activity and emerging crime patterns. Research shows that expanding funding for policing in high-crime neighborhoods lowers crime.³⁵ The Philadelphia police department’s data shows violent crime has decreased in areas where officers spent more time being visible and engaging in proactive policing.

Philadelphia used almost \$5 million from a federal grant to fund additional DNA analysis and advanced DNA robotics to improve analysis of DNA recovered from crime guns and ammunition, which, according to Philadelphia police, has been a game-changer. With equipment and personnel provided by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Philadelphia police also have been able to acquire and test thousands of gun forensic samples, developing over 14,000 leads between 2021 and 2024.

Homicides dropped 22% in 2023 and nonfatal shootings fell 26%.³⁶ As of November 15, 2024, homicides are down 46% and shootings down 36%.³⁷

- **Toledo** used ARP money to hire police officers and invested \$2.3 million in gun violence reduction strategies that are focused on neighborhoods with highest instances of gun violence. The city is also investing \$2 million in gunshot detection technology and safety cameras to fight crime. Homicides decreased 42% in 2023, with violent crime overall also decreasing last year and through June 2024.³⁸ Homicides are down 39% since 2020 and violent crimes are down 2%.³⁹
- **Wilmington** employs “Marian,” a six-year-old golden retriever loaned by ATF that helps police find illegal firearms, shell casings, and ammunition. Since 2021, Marian has located 33 stolen firearms, over 500 shell casings from shootings, and four pipe bombs in a shed belonging to a member of a drug cartel. Firearm seizures have gone up while gun-related violent crime has decreased. Homicides have dropped 27% this year and 41% between 2020 to 2023. Violent crime overall has dropped 4% this year and 25% between 2020 and 2023.



Conclusion

Americans are safer today than in decades. This outcome was not preordained when the President took office. Homicides and violent crime were increasing rapidly. The President implemented crime reduction policies and programs that were supported by police chiefs, researchers, and the communities that best know their needs. Implemented alongside historic criminal justice reforms that increased trust in police, these investments worked. The country saw dramatic—and sustained—drops in violent crime over the last four years. Homicides and violent crimes are now at historic lows. As long as these effective policies continue, communities across our nation will continue to thrive.

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