



CRIME SURVIVORS

SPEAK

MICHIGAN VICTIMS' VIEWS ON



SAFETY AND JUSTICE

ALLIANCE FOR
SAFETY AND JUSTICE



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Protecting victims of crime and promoting public safety is the most important function of Michigan's criminal justice system. It is therefore essential to consider the experiences and perspectives of crime survivors when determining safety and justice policy.

Because comprehensive data hasn't been available, the public safety debate in Michigan has had to rely on anecdote rather than data when it comes to the views and needs of those most negatively impacted by crime and violence: victims.

To fill this gap, the Alliance for Safety and Justice commissioned the first-ever survey of Michigan crime survivors. Conducted in October 2017, this groundbreaking study by David Binder Research¹ highlights the myriad ways in which Michigan crime survivors are impacted by crime, what they need from the criminal justice system to recover and heal, and how state policy can better align with their safety priorities.

The results provide surprising insight regarding victims' views on safety and justice policy. Contrary to what many expect to be the position of victims of crime, and contrary to how their views are portrayed in the media and in discussions at the state capitol, the vast majority of crime survivors in Michigan believe the criminal justice system invests too little in rehabilitation and treatment and focuses too much on punishment.

Crime victims want accountability, but they also believe prison makes people more likely to commit crimes in the future. They would prefer that the criminal justice system do more to stop crime before it happens. Victims prefer options beyond just incarceration and would rather their taxpayer dollars be spent on education, job training, and workforce development.

There has never been a more important time for an examination of the views and experiences of Michigan's diverse crime survivors. Policymakers are considering a wide range of reforms to Michigan's sentencing and parole laws, and the public safety debate must incorporate victims' voices to deliver real safety and smarter approaches to safety and justice policy.



KEY FINDINGS

VICTIMS' EXPERIENCES



1 IN 4

Michiganders have been a victim of crime in the past 10 years, and roughly half (**48 percent**) of those have been the victim of a violent crime

- ✓ **Victims of crime are more likely to be:** low-income, young, and people of color
- ✓ People of color are **73 percent more likely** than white people to have been the victim of violent crime

✓ **Nearly one-third (29 percent)** of victims of violence have been victimized four or more times, nearly four times the rate of repeat victimization for people who have only experienced property crime

✓ **Seven out of 10 crime survivors (72 percent)** describe the experience as traumatic, and nearly everyone (99 percent) have experienced symptoms of trauma or other negative impacts related to their physical health, mental health, or financial well-being

✓ **There is a large gap between victims' needs and access to services,** and fewer than half receive the support they need from the police or prosecutor

VICTIMS' PERSPECTIVES ON SAFETY AND JUSTICE POLICY

✓ **By a margin of more than 4 to 1,** victims believe that prison makes people more likely to commit crimes than to rehabilitate them

✓ **More than 6 out of 10 victims (64 percent)** support shorter prison sentences and more spending on prevention and rehabilitation programs over sentences that keep people in prison for as long as possible



3 OUT OF 4

(73 percent) believe rehabilitation, drug treatment, and mental health treatment more effectively prevent future crimes than punishment through incarceration

✓ **By a margin of 8 to 1,** victims think Michigan should invest more in job training and workforce development than in prisons and jails

✓ **By a margin of 12 to 1,** victims think Michigan should invest more in education and neighborhood health than in prisons and jails

7 IN 10



victims believe that prison worsens mental illness and makes people with mental health issues more of a safety risk, rather than rehabilitating them

✓ **8 out of 10 victims** support reducing prison sentences for people in prison who participate in rehabilitation, mental health, substance abuse, or educational or vocational programs

✓ **8 out of 10 (78 percent)** support prosecutors focusing on solving neighborhood problems and stopping repeat crimes through rehabilitation, even if it means fewer prison convictions

BROAD SUPPORT FOR NEW SAFETY PRIORITIES

✓ **For each of the questions above,** there is a plurality of support for reform across all demographic groups (age, gender, race and ethnicity, geography, political party affiliation)



The majority of victims of violent crimes, including the most serious crimes such as rape and murder of a family member, support proposals to reform the criminal justice system. In some cases, victims of violent crime are even more likely to prefer alternatives to prison



VICTIMS' EXPERIENCES

WHO ARE MICHIGAN CRIME VICTIMS?

Crime impacts people across the state of Michigan. According to survey results, more than one in four residents (27 percent) reports being a victim of crime in the past 10 years. Nearly everyone who has been victimized experienced property crime (95 percent), and 48 percent have been the victim of a violent crime. While crime victims are as diverse as the state itself, research has repeatedly shown that certain demographic groups experience crime more than others.² Survey responses demonstrate that crime disproportionately impacts people who are black or Latino, young, and low-income. This finding is supported by data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), which shows that these groups experience crime and violence at much higher rates.³

In Michigan, people of color are 26 percent more likely to be a victim of crime than white respondents; Millennials are 17 percent more likely than older respondents; and people with an annual income of less than \$50,000 are 28 percent more likely than people who earn more than \$50,000.

Violence is concentrated and unequal

Differences in victimization are most pronounced among those who have experienced violent crime. In fact, the groups at highest risk of being a victim experience even higher rates of violent crime—people of color are 73 percent more likely to be a victim of violent crime than white respondents; Millennials are 58 percent more likely than older respondents; and people with an annual income of less than \$50,000 are 70 percent more likely than people who earn more than \$50,000.

Survey results also demonstrate that victims of violence are the most likely to suffer from repeat victimization.

Nearly one in three victims of violent crime (29 percent) have been victimized four or more times, and they are nearly four times as likely as victims of property crime alone to have been repeatedly victimized.

HOW DOES CRIME IMPACT MICHIGAN CRIME VICTIMS?

Crime impacts the quality of life for victims

Not surprisingly, the people most impacted by crime are also the most likely to report that victimization has affected their quality of life. Crime survivors in Michigan are 76 percent more likely than people who haven't been victimized to say that their lives are affected by crime, and three times more likely to report feeling unsafe in their community.

Diminished quality of life is even more likely for people who have experienced violent crime or repeat victimization. In fact, people who have been victimized four or more times are more than twice as likely to say that they are affected by crime, and nearly four times as likely to report feeling unsafe in their community.

There are also stark racial disparities when it comes to perceptions of safety. Black respondents are nearly twice as likely as white respondents to say their quality of life is impacted by crime, as well as report that they feel unsafe in the area where they live.

Crime is a traumatic experience for most victims

Victimization has a negative impact on crime survivors and can lead to a wide range of problems associated with trauma. The effects of trauma can be devastating, and research shows that unaddressed trauma increases the risk for mental health issues, substance abuse, and

other challenges that ultimately lead to employment, housing, and income insecurity.⁴

Trauma is compounded for people who experience repeat victimization, and can even contribute to the cycle of crime by increasing the likelihood that victims engage in risky behaviors including becoming perpetrators of violence themselves.⁵

In Michigan, seven out of 10 victims (72 percent) describe their experience as traumatic. When asked about the specific ways in which victimization has impacted them, crime survivors report being deeply impacted by crime and experiencing numerous symptoms of trauma.

Among the negative impacts affecting the physical and mental health of crime survivors:

- **9 in 10 (87 percent) felt stress as a result of the incident**
- **8 in 10 (75 percent) felt anxiety**
- **9 in 10 (93 percent) felt anger**
- **6 in 10 (61 percent) felt fear**
- **1 in 2 (58 percent) experienced trouble sleeping**
- **1 in 4 (28 percent) experienced trouble with work or school**
- **1 in 3 (30 percent) experienced physical or medical issues**

All told, 99 percent of crime survivors experienced at least one of the negative impacts identified above.



▶ Leslie, Grand Rapids

I was born into a dysfunctional home where I experienced violence and abuse and frequently ran away. I met an older man who made me feel safe at first but then turned me against my family. At the age of 15 I began my journey as a victim of human trafficking.

Over the next 20 years, I was in and out of the justice system. I turned to drugs and alcohol to cope. When I asked for help in the system, I did not receive the services I needed. I was seen as a perpetrator of crime, not recognized as a victim of trafficking.

In 2000, I miraculously found the strength to become a survivor. But I hit rock bottom first. I tried to take my own life on July 4 of that year. I called out, "If there's a God, you better help me. If you're real, help me!" I can't explain it, but in that moment, I received a warm and powerful hug that gave me the strength to go on.

I entered a detox program with the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids, got clean and joined their staff. I started

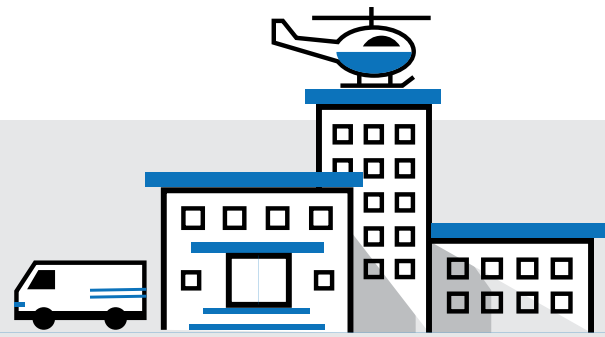
working with the Grand Rapids Police Department to reach out to other women who had also been trafficked and were trying to change their lives.

I realized these women had nowhere to go to escape the streets. With that need in mind, I started Sacred Beginnings in 2005. Since then, we have reached more than 500 women to provide transitional housing and recovery, a 24-hour victim advocacy center, and support to women referred to us by law enforcement and healthcare professionals.

I have committed my life to rescuing and rehabilitating women just like me. Together with other survivors, we lift our voices to change lives and meet women where they are.

These impacts are often magnified for crime survivors who have experienced violence or repeat victimization. Victims of violent crime are 48 percent more likely than victims of property crime to describe their experience

as traumatic, and victims who have experienced four or more crimes are 46 percent more likely than people who have only been victimized once.



BUILDING A TRAUMA RECOVERY CENTER NETWORK FOR MICHIGAN SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE

In the fall of 2017, Michigan became the third state in the nation to implement the Trauma Recovery Center (TRC) model. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) awarded a federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant to the Hurley Medical Center in Flint to establish the state's first TRC, a model introduced to the state by Alliance for Safety and Justice.

Trauma recovery centers remove barriers to health and stability, heal communities, and interrupt cycles of violence. First developed as a pilot program at the University of California at San Francisco General Hospital in 2001, this breakthrough and evidence-based model helps the hardest-to-reach survivors of violent crime heal and recover from the effects of trauma.

The TRC in Flint will operate in partnership with community-service organizations to provide comprehensive care to crime victims. TRC trauma counselors will offer immediate mental health support to hospitalized patients who are the victims of traumatic violent crimes such as gunshot and stab wounds, gang violence, physical attacks, sexual assault, human trafficking, domestic violence, and hate crimes. The TRC will follow and care for victims throughout their hospital stay and post-hospital experience, advocating on their behalf and ensuring a continuum of care.

An evaluation of the UC San Francisco Trauma Recovery Center found that TRC clients had six times higher odds of receiving needed mental health and case management services, resulting in 74 percent of TRC patients showing an improvement in overall mental health. Other benefits include a 65 percent increase in follow-up treatment for sexual assault survivors and a 56 percent increase in victims returning to employment.

MDHHS has made an historic commitment to bring TRCs to victims recovering from violence across the state. With the launch of this first TRC, Michigan is setting a national example for how states can commit to better meeting the needs of survivors.

IS THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM MEETING THE NEEDS OF VICTIMS?

There is no more important role of our justice system than protecting victims of crime and facilitating their medical, emotional, and financial recovery. Yet despite this critical function, most victims do not feel supported by the criminal justice system or receive the help they need to recover and heal.

According to survey results, 57 percent of crime survivors felt either “not at all supported” by the criminal justice system (34 percent) or only “slightly supported” (23 percent). Making matters worse, the

communities most harmed by crime and violence are often the least supported by the criminal justice system. For example, Latino respondents are the least likely to feel supported by the criminal justice system – 38 percent less likely than white or black respondents.

This lack of support has serious consequences for the wellbeing of crime survivors and public safety in our communities. For many crime survivors, the criminal justice system does not meet their basic needs, provide assistance in recovery, or help them navigate the legal system. In fact, fewer than half of victims (38 percent) report receiving help or support from the police and only 19 percent report receiving help from the prosecutor’s office.



▶ Andrea, Detroit

In 2011, I lost my only son Darnell. He was shot and killed while working at a club in downtown Detroit. I became a crime survivor overnight and did not know where to turn.

I could not return to normal life after the funeral. I was dealing with grief while also trying to find resources to support my family and I through this terrible time. I needed grief counseling, therapy, access to victim services resources, and help navigating the legal system.

Unfortunately, the resources that my family and I needed were unknown or were not easily accessed by crime victims like me. Often in communities like mine crime survivors feel overlooked, we feel invisible.

I felt isolated and alone. To channel my pain, anger, and grief, I created an organization, Mothers of Murdered Children, to provide support to other parents who lost their children as I did—senselessly and suddenly.

Through my work, I’ve partnered with law enforcement and am the Victim Advocate for the Detroit Police Department Homicide Division. It’s wrong to leave families in the dark about the status of their loved one’s case and we remind them that people need and deserve answers and closure.

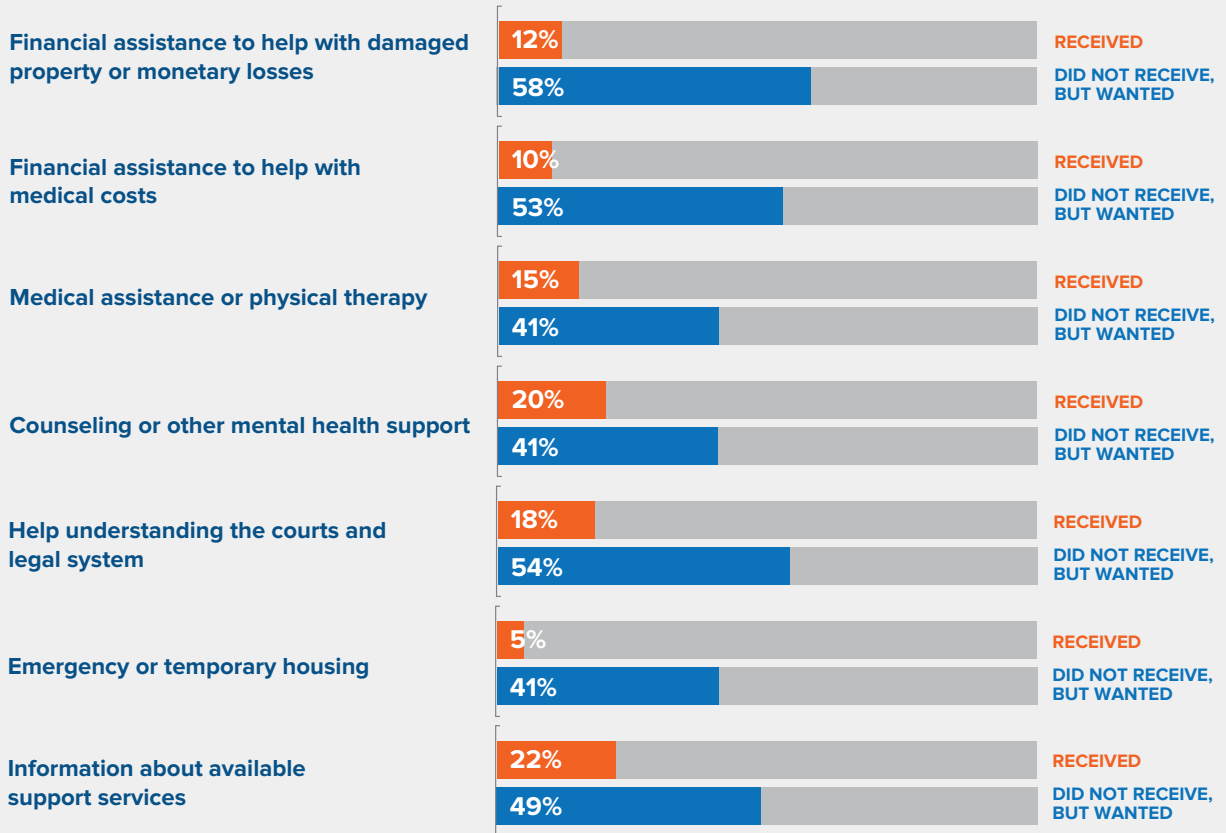
I have found a sense of purpose in my work with families whose children have been killed and I know that each

and every one of us wishes we could rewind the clock and have our children back.

Our work is hard and sometimes I wake up overwhelmed. Non-traditional community-based organizations are often under-funded and under-resourced. We need more investments that focus on mental health, rehabilitation, and trauma recovery services.

Sometimes I wish I could just sit on my porch and feel safe. I work with mothers who cannot lift their heads or stop crying due to the loss of their child. Through our work, mothers are able to transform their grief into action, talking to young people in our community about what they can do to avoid violence and succeed in life. That is why I do this work.

LARGE GAPS BETWEEN VICTIMS' NEEDS AND ACCESS TO SUPPORT



Despite the widespread prevalence of trauma and other negative impacts on victims' lives, most do not access services to help them recover. This large gap between victims' needs and the treatment they receive creates a vicious cycle of behavioral health problems, repeat victimization, and crime.

Only one in five crime survivors (22 percent) receive information about available services and even fewer receive counseling or mental health support (20

percent), help understanding the legal system (18 percent), medical assistance (15 percent) or financial assistance to help with damaged property or monetary losses (12 percent). Of those who did not receive these services or information, at least 4 in 10 would want them.



VICTIMS' PERSPECTIVES

ON SAFETY AND JUSTICE POLICY

In addition to surveying crime victims about their experiences with crime and the criminal justice system, this study also examined victims' views on criminal justice and public safety policy.

Faced with a large prison system and very large corrections budget, Michigan policymakers across party lines are considering new approaches to public safety that will deliver better results at a lower cost to taxpayers.

As lawmakers consider policy changes, it is important to reexamine the current assumptions regarding prison spending. Many of the current laws adopted in Michigan to ensure public safety were discussed in a "tough on crime versus soft on crime" framework. In these debates, victims were often portrayed as strongly favoring tough sentencing policies and long prison sentences.

To inform the present policy conversation in Lansing, this study sought the perspectives of a comprehensive and representative sample of victims. Contrary to commonly held beliefs about victims' views, the results suggest crime survivors want more out of the criminal justice system and would prefer new approaches to criminal justice that emphasize rehabilitation and rely less on incarceration.

Victims believe prisons make people more – not less – likely to commit another crime and prefer investments in treatment and prevention to spending on prisons and

jails. They support reducing prison sentences for people who participate in programs that lower the likelihood of reoffending, and other options beyond incarceration to hold accountable people who commit crimes.

These findings, described in more detail below, hold across all demographic groups, including race, gender, age, income, and political party affiliation. Findings also hold true for victims of violent crime, including those who have survived the most serious types of violence such as rape or the murder of a family member.

Growth in Michigan Incarceration and Prison Spending

Michigan spends more of its budget on corrections than any state,⁷ and has the 9th largest prison population in the nation.⁸ One out of every five taxpayer dollars goes toward corrections – a proportion of Michigan's general fund budget nearly twice that of the next highest spending state. Between 1985 and 2015, the amount Michigan spent on corrections tripled.⁹ Despite a decline in the prison population over the past decade, a rapid rise in the prison population in the 1980s and 1990s drove ballooning costs – the prison population today is nearly three times its 1980 size, with more than 41,000 people imprisoned at the end of 2016.¹⁰

The massive prison expansion in Michigan was not due to rising crime rates. Statewide crime rates remain at the lowest level in a generation, and were trending downward overall during Michigan's period of rapid prison growth.¹¹ Imprisonment rates increased because

of changes in state policy and practice that increased the number of people sent to prison and the amount of time they spend there. These changes included eliminating the ability to earn good-time credits, and adopting a truth-in-sentencing policy requiring people to serve 100 percent of their minimum sentences in custody.¹²

Prisons and jails in Michigan have also become de facto service providers for individuals with behavioral health issues. According to a University of Michigan study commissioned by the legislature, roughly 1 in 5 people in Michigan prisons has symptoms of a severe mental illness.¹³

Michigan has made admirable strides to reduce the number of people sent to prison. In the early 2000s, the state passed reforms to divert people charged with low-level offenses.¹⁴ Despite these changes, nearly 6 in 10

new prison commitments are still for property or drug offenses,¹⁵ and the state is an outlier in terms of length of punishment imposed for more serious offenses.¹⁶

Criminal justice experts now agree that excessively lengthy sentences do not reduce crime, and instead sap resources from solutions that make communities safer. In 2014, the National Academies of Sciences summarized the research on the causes and consequences of the historic growth in incarceration and found that “long prison sentences are ineffective as a crime control measure.”¹⁷

Resources spent on lengthy sentences are at the expense of solutions shown to be effective at making communities safer. Today, Michigan has the opportunity to join other states that are reexamining their sentencing and corrections policies and taking steps to reduce crime and incarceration.



▶ Aswad, Highland Park

At age 10, I lost my best friend in a senseless drive-by shooting in Highland Park, where we both grew up. Afterward, we had no grief or trauma counselors in the community or at our school help us cope and heal after Reubin's death.

Years later, in 2009, I lacked support again, when I was shot twice in an attempted robbery in Hartford, CT. I had recently graduated from college and signed to play basketball

professionally in Europe. Those bullets ended my basketball career.

I suffered from depression, paranoia, PTSD, and had no place to turn for therapy or emotional recovery. I was angry and prepared to testify against the young man arrested in my shooting, to sentence him to 40 years in prison.

At the hospital, the doctor treating my injuries told me the story of a 14-year-old he'd treated three years prior. I realized he was describing one of the two young men involved in my shooting, the one who escaped arrest.

Something clicked. This is how the cycle of violence and unaddressed trauma results in further victimization. No one had been there for this young man and so the cycle continued.

I wanted to help make things different. I worked with the prosecutor to secure a shorter, six to 10-year sentence for the young man arrested in my shooting. During my healing journey, I decided to pursue my Masters in Social Work to understand how trauma impacts people's social behaviors and its lasting impact on communities most impacted by violence like Highland Park, Detroit, Flint, Grand Rapids, and Saginaw.

Too many crime survivors never receive the care and support they need. In order to achieve true safety in our communities, our voices — the voices of crime survivors— must be at the center of the debate on criminal justice reforms in Michigan. In short, we must invest more in serving survivors, prevention, and recovery than incarceration.

VICTIMS PREFER A JUSTICE SYSTEM THAT FOCUSES MORE ON REHABILITATION AND TREATMENT THAN PUNISHMENT

8 out of 10 victims support reducing prison sentences for people in prison who participate in rehabilitation, mental health, substance abuse, or educational or vocational programs

3 out of 4 (73 percent) victims believe rehabilitation, drug treatment, and mental health treatment more effectively prevent future crimes than punishment through incarceration

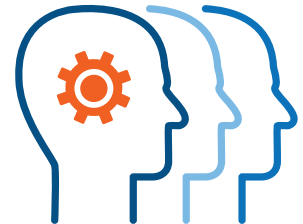
8 IN 10

VICTIMS SUPPORT REDUCING PRISON SENTENCES



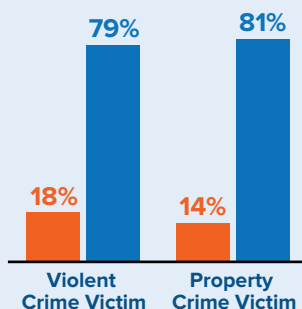
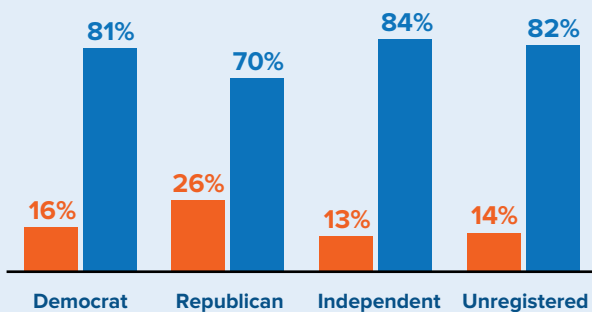
73%

PREFER FOCUSING ON REHABILITATION



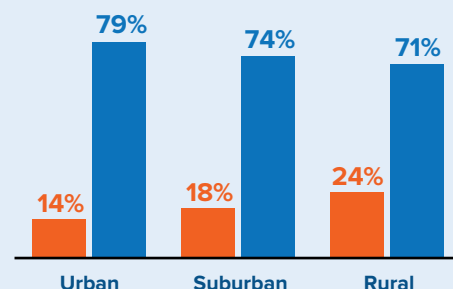
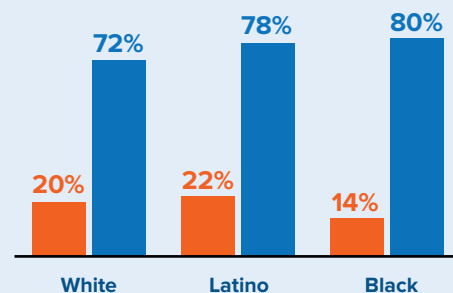
Do you support or oppose reducing prison sentences for people in prison who participate in rehabilitation, mental health or substance abuse programs, or educational or vocational programs?

Oppose Support



Which do you think is a better way to prevent future crimes...

Punishment through incarceration
Rehabilitation, drug treatment, and mental health treatment



VICTIMS PREFER ALTERNATIVES TO PRISON AND INVESTMENTS IN NEW SAFETY PRIORITIES

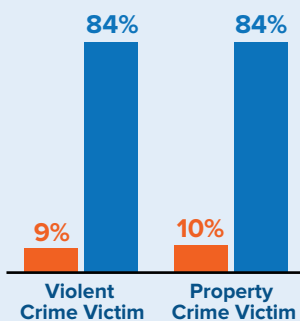
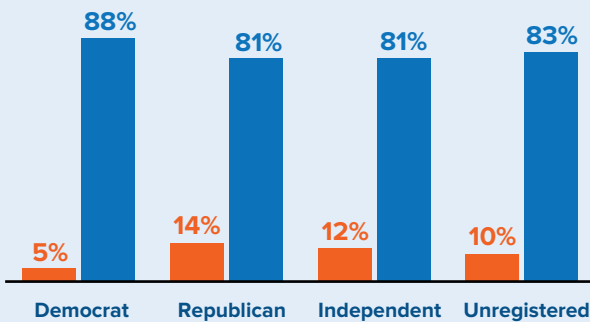
By a margin of **8 to 1**, victims think Michigan should invest more in job training and workforce development than prisons and jails

By a margin of **12 to 1**, victims think Michigan should invest more in education and neighborhood health than in prisons and jails



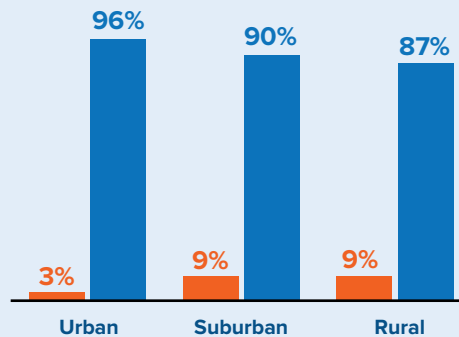
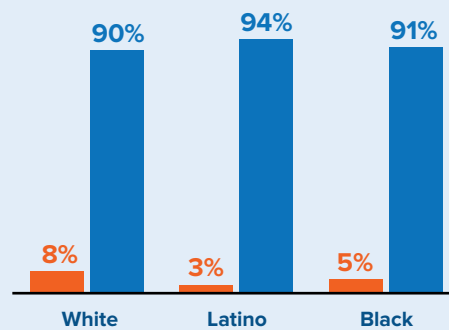
Do you think Michigan should...

- Invest more in prisons and jails
- Invest more in job training and workforce development



Do you think Michigan should...

- Invest more in prisons and jails
- Invest more in education and the health of neighborhoods



VICTIMS BELIEVE PEOPLE WHO COMMIT CRIMES WHO ARE DIAGNOSED WITH MENTAL ILLNESS NEED TREATMENT MORE THAN INCARCERATION

7 out of 10 victims (69 percent) believe that prison worsens mental illness and makes people with mental health issues more of a safety risk, rather than rehabilitating them

8 out of 10 of victims (82 percent) support placing defendants diagnosed with mental illness into mental health courts instead of traditional criminal courts, so that their mental illness can be considered in sentencing and so that they can receive treatment

69%

BELIEVE PRISON WORSENS MENTAL ILLNESS



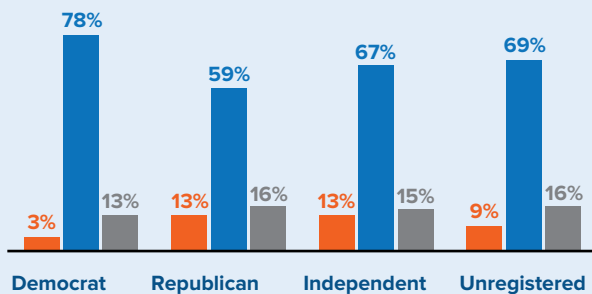
82%

SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH COURTS



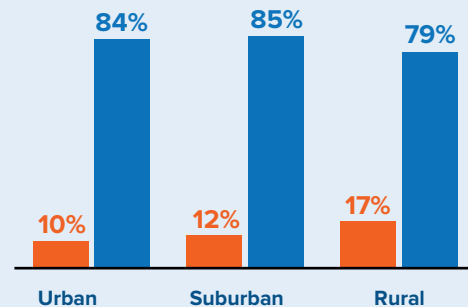
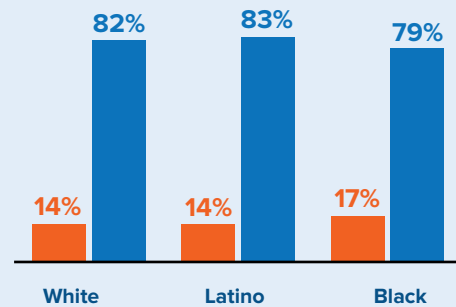
Thinking specifically about people that commit serious crimes as a result of mental illness – do you think that prison...

- Helps to remedy their mental illness and rehabilitate them
- Worsens their mental illness and makes them more of a public safety risk
- Doesn't have an impact either way



Do you support or oppose placing criminal defendants with diagnosed mental illness into mental health courts instead of traditional criminal courts, so their mental illness can be considered in their sentencing and they can be sentenced to mental health treatment?

- Oppose
- Support



VICTIMS PREFER SHORTER PRISON SENTENCES AND MORE SPENDING ON PREVENTION AND REHABILITATION

More than 6 out of 10 victims (64 percent) support shorter prison sentences and more spending on prevention and rehabilitation programs over sentences that keep people in prison for as long as possible

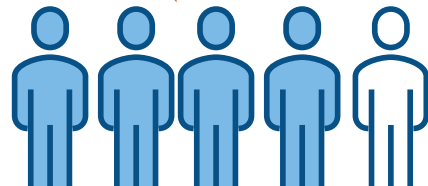
By a margin of more than 4 to 1, victims believe that prison makes people more likely to commit crimes than to rehabilitate them

6 IN 10

- ✓ SHORTER SENTENCES
- ✓ PREVENTION & REHABILITATION

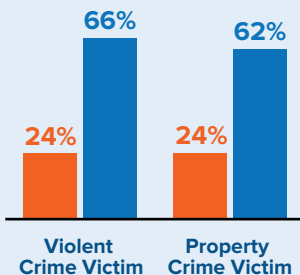
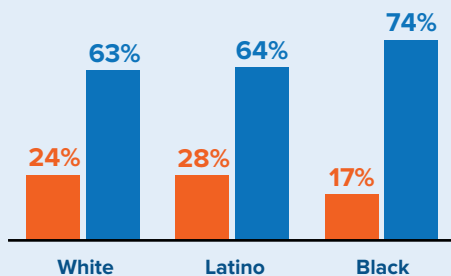


PRISON MAKES PEOPLE MORE LIKELY TO COMMIT CRIMES



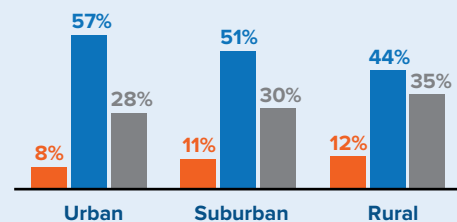
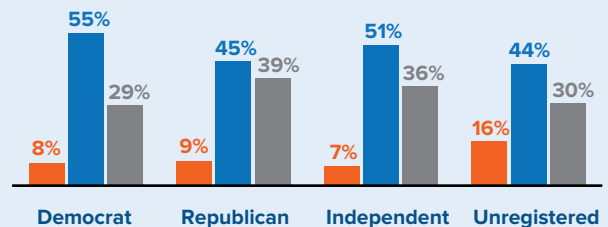
Thinking about prison sentences, which do you prefer?

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



Thinking about people who go to prison, do you think that prison...

- Helps to rehabilitate them into better citizens
- Makes them more likely to commit crimes
- Doesn't have an impact either way



VICTIMS WANT PROSECUTORS TO FOCUS ON SOLVING NEIGHBORHOOD PROBLEMS

8 out of 10 (78 percent) support prosecutors focusing on solving neighborhood problems and stopping repeat crimes through rehabilitation, over getting as many convictions and prison sentences as possible

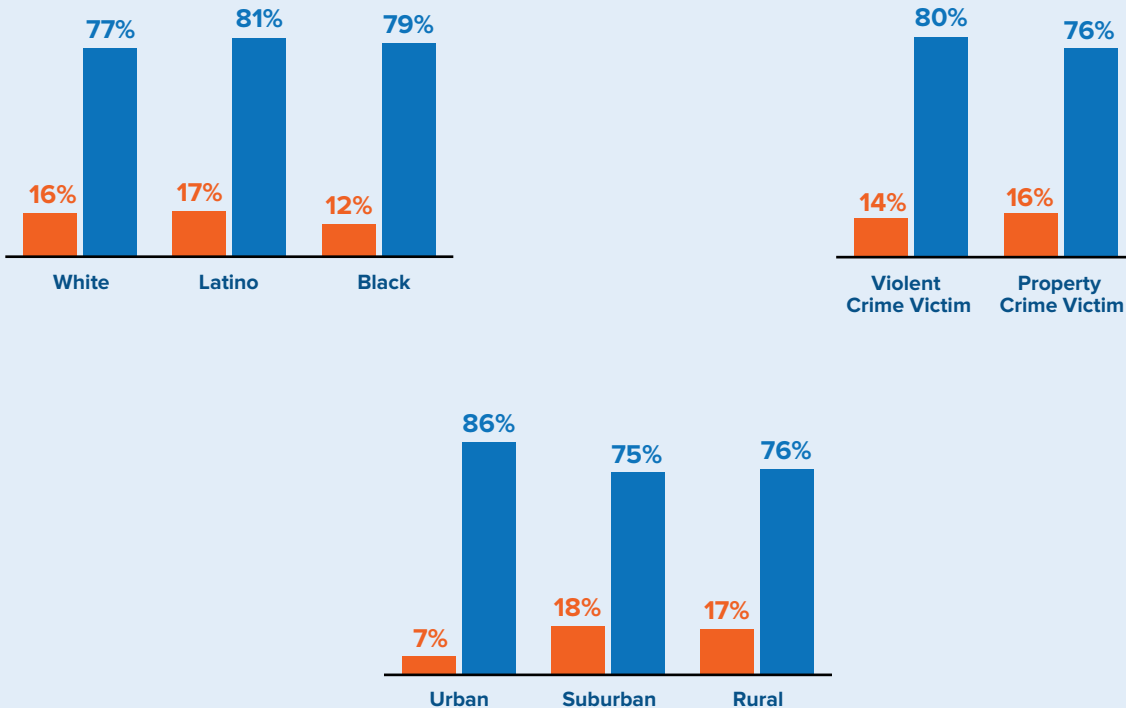
8 IN 10

- ✓ SOLVING NEIGHBORHOOD PROBLEMS
- ✓ STOPPING CRIMES WITH REHABILITATION



Which would you prefer be the primary goal of prosecutors?

- Getting as many convictions and prison sentences as possible
- Solving neighborhood problems and stopping repeat crimes through rehabilitation



VICTIMS SUPPORT RESTORING JUDICIAL DISCRETION AND ALLOWING JUDGES TO DETERMINE THE MOST APPROPRIATE SENTENCE

By a margin of **4 to 1**, victims prefer that judges use their discretion to determine the best sentence length in each case based on the specific circumstances over state laws that mandate specific minimum jail or prison terms



4 TO 1

JUDGES DECIDE MOST APPROPRIATE SENTENCE

8 out of 10 victims prefer giving discretion to judges to sentence people with diagnosed mental illness who commit serious crimes to secure mental health facilities or community treatment programs instead of prison, if treatment would lower risk to reoffend

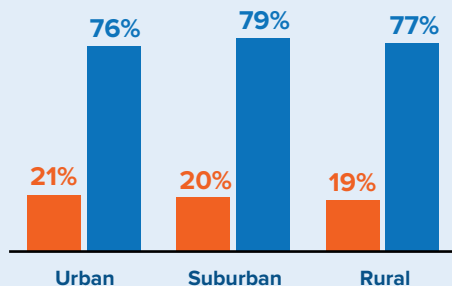
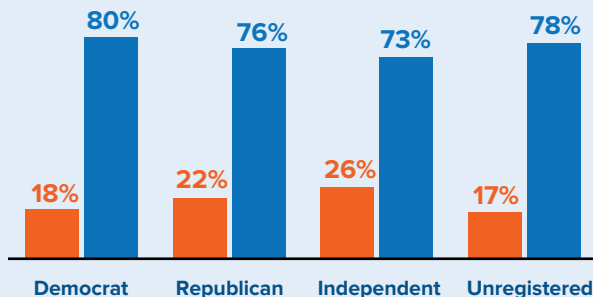


8 IN 10

GIVE JUDGES DISCRETION IN CASES INVOLVING MENTAL ILLNESS

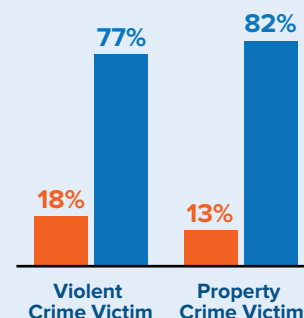
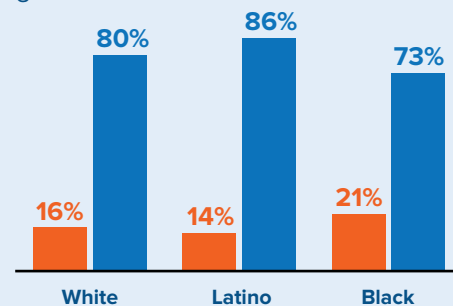
To determine sentence length, which do you prefer?

- State laws that mandate specific minimum jail or prison terms
- Judicial discretion to determine the best sentence length in each case



Which do you prefer for people with diagnosed mental illness disorders who commit serious crimes?

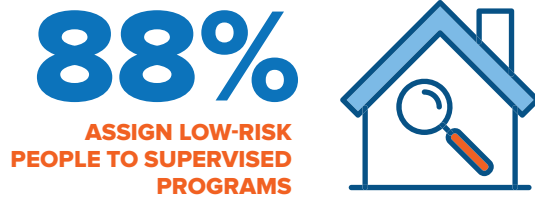
- Laws that require prison sentences for serious crimes
- Authorizing judges to sentence people to secure mental health facilities or community treatment programs



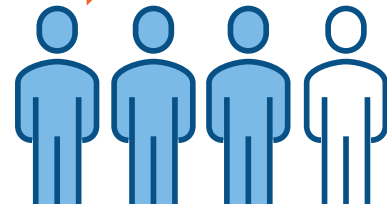
VICTIMS SUPPORT RELEASING PEOPLE WHO ARE A LOW-RISK TO PUBLIC SAFETY FROM PRISONS AND JAILS

9 in 10 (88 percent) prefer that county or state officials have authority to assign people in prison or jail who are determined to be a low-risk to public safety to supervised programs in their communities, rather than require them to remain incarcerated for their full sentence

3 out of 4 victims (77 percent) believe the parole board should be required to conduct risk assessments and release people who have completed their minimum sentences and who are a low-risk



RELEASE LOW-RISK PEOPLE WHO HAVE COMPLETED MINIMUM SENTENCES

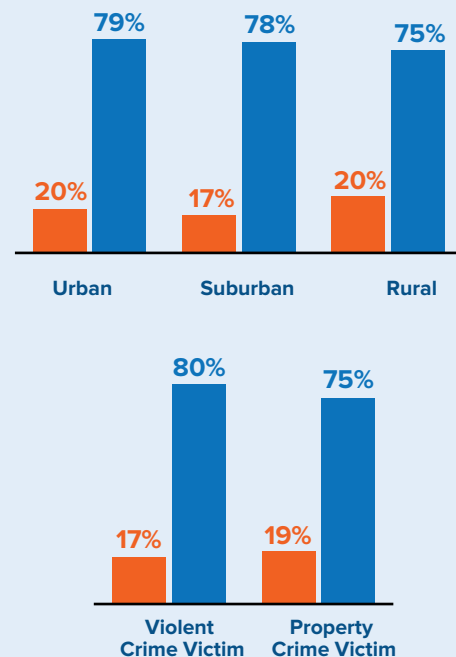
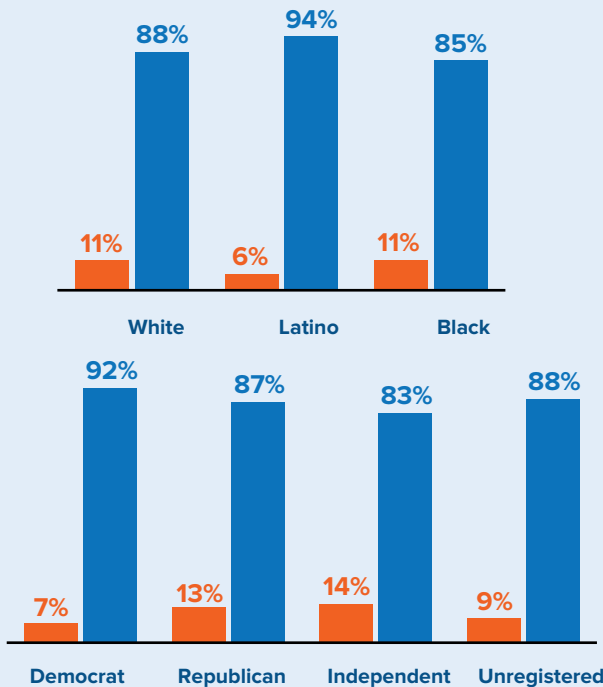


For individuals serving a sentence in prison or jail who are determined to be a low-risk to public safety, which do you prefer?

- Require prisoners to remain incarcerated for the full sentence
- Authorize officials to assign prisoners to supervised programs as they complete their sentence

When the parole board considers releasing people eligible for parole who have completed their minimum prison sentence, which do you prefer?

- Allow the parole board to prevent release without citing specific evidence
- Require the parole board to conduct risk assessments and release people who have completed their minimum sentences and who are a low-risk



VICTIMS SUPPORT OPTIONS OTHER THAN INCARCERATION FOR PEOPLE WHO CAN RECEIVE SUPERVISION AND MEDICAL TREATMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

More than 8 in 10 (83 percent) support authorizing prison officials or county sheriffs to place low-risk people in their custody onto supervised electronic monitoring instead of prison or jail

More than 8 out of 10 victims (84 percent) support prison officials or county sheriffs placing medically frail or elderly individuals who are in their custody into medical treatment, if those people are incapacitated and require long term care



83%

SUPERVISED ELECTRONIC MONITORING INSTEAD OF PRISON

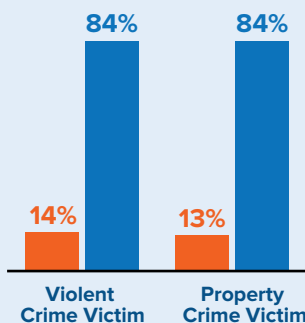
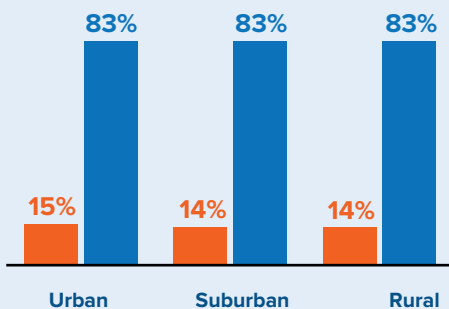


84%

PLACE FRAIL OR ELDERLY INDIVIDUALS INTO LONG TERM CARE TREATMENT

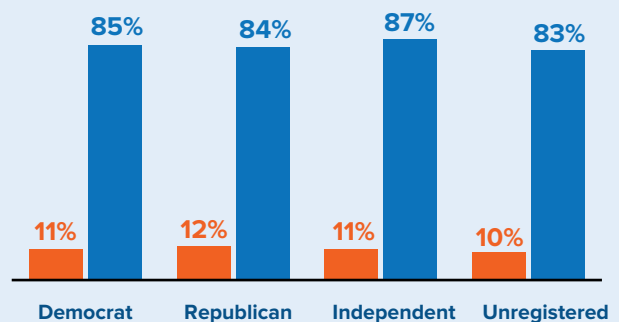
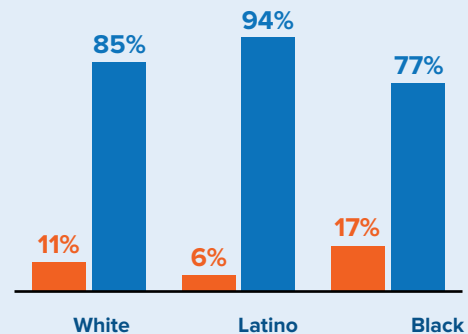
Do you support or oppose authorizing state prison officials or county sheriffs to place individuals in their custody onto supervised electronic monitoring instead of prison or jail if they are a low-risk to public safety?

■ Oppose ■ Support



Do you support or oppose authorizing state prison officials or county sheriffs to place medically frail or elderly individuals in their custody into medical treatment if those persons are incapacitated as a result of their condition and require long-term care?

■ Oppose ■ Support





RECOMMENDATIONS

Results of this first-of-its-kind study point to numerous policy recommendations and criminal justice reforms supported by crime victims in Michigan. As state leaders debate the future of justice policy in the state, the perspective of diverse victims can help guide the conversation and offer a more balanced approach to safety and justice policy.

Our survey demonstrates that (1) too many victims suffer from trauma with no help from the criminal

justice system; (2) victims prefer shorter sentences and more spending on prevention and treatment to long prison sentences; (3) victims support policies that restore judicial discretion, utilize risk and needs assessment in decision-making, and reduce sentence lengths for people who engage in rehabilitative programming.

These findings point to several recommendations that align with crime victims' views on safety and justice policy:

1

CONDUCT REGULAR VICTIMIZATION STUDIES IN MICHIGAN.

Michigan is already further along than many states in surveying victims – over the last few years, the Michigan Justice Statistics Center at Michigan State University has piloted first-time local-level victimization surveys in Detroit, Saginaw, and Battle Creek. More data and research are needed to advance policies that are responsive to and effectively meet victims' needs. By regularly surveying victims, the state can better identify the policies and practices that will best protect victims, stop the cycle of crime, and help survivors recover from victimization.

2

INCREASE INVESTMENT IN EVIDENCE-BASED SERVICES THAT PROTECT VICTIMS AND STOP THE CYCLE OF CRIME, AND EXPAND MICHIGAN'S TRAUMA RECOVERY CENTER NETWORK.

A growing body of research demonstrates that when victims' basic needs go unmet – including access to safe housing, food, medical and mental health services – their mental health and practical recovery issues may be exacerbated. Untreated trauma, especially among those who experience repeat victimization, can contribute to substance abuse, mental health issues, housing instability, and other problems that increase risky behaviors and lead to further victimization or crime itself.

Trauma recovery centers, and other programs that provide wraparound services, can stop this cycle by providing access to treatment, housing, referrals, and other forms of assistance. Michigan has already made tremendous strides to address gaps in meeting victims' needs in the wake of trauma. In 2015 and 2016, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) convened a series of roundtable meetings across the state, and worked with organizations including Alliance for Safety and Justice to better understand the needs of underserved survivors. As a result, in 2017 the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services committed to funding a network of trauma recovery centers. Michigan became the third state in the nation to implement the model with the launch of its first trauma recovery center in Flint.

3

TARGET VICTIMS' SERVICES FUNDING FOR THE COMMUNITIES THAT HAVE BEEN MOST HARMED BY CRIME AND LEAST SUPPORTED BY THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.

Michigan received \$56 million in Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding from the federal government in 2017. These dollars should go to programs that provide services to vulnerable populations and communities experiencing concentrated crime and violence.

4

ADVANCE SENTENCING AND CORRECTIONS POLICIES THAT MORE CLOSELY ALIGN WITH CRIME VICTIMS' PRIORITIES.

Many of the “tough on crime” policies that led to Michigan’s current large corrections price tag were adopted under the premise that victims wanted harsher punishments. These survey results show overwhelming victim support for policies that place more emphasis on investments in new safety priorities that improve community health. Below are just some of the policies that Michigan could adopt to reduce overcrowding in prison and invest in programs that support victims:

- ✔ **Revise sentencing guidelines** to tailor sentence lengths to public safety needs, and give judges more discretion.
- ✔ **Incentivize participation in programs that reduce recidivism** by restoring authority to the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) to provide good-time credits to individuals who successfully complete rehabilitation programs while in prison.
- ✔ **Expand the power of judges to sentence people to community supervision and/or mental health and addiction treatment** instead of incarceration when appropriate, and allow judges to determine when and how to consider prior offenses and other circumstances in a crime.
- ✔ **Reduce the number of people sent to prison for technical violations of probation or parole** by adopting graduated sanctions and tailoring terms of supervision to a person’s individual risks and needs.
- ✔ **Give MDOC authority to transfer individuals with severe mental or physical illnesses** to receive treatment outside of prison facilities, if MDOC determines that transfer would pose a minimal risk to public safety.
- ✔ **Increase parole grant rates for people who have reached their earliest release date** and who score high and medium probability of release.



METHODOLOGY

Alliance for Safety and Justice commissioned this survey to fill in gaps in the knowledge about who crime victims are, what their experiences are with the criminal justice system, and their views on public policy.

Some of the questions were informed by the largest and most comprehensive source of data on victimization — the annual National Crime Victimization Survey, administered by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Statistics. This survey expands on questions related to the prevalence of victimization by deeply exploring victims’ experience with the criminal justice system, their views on sentencing and corrections policy, and their preferences related to law enforcement, prosecution, and incarceration. This study also builds on the first-ever national survey of victims’ views, commissioned by Alliance for Safety and Justice in April 2016.

David Binder Research conducted the survey in English and Spanish in October 2017. The poll was administered both by telephone — landlines and mobile phones — and online. The research methodology was designed to ensure the inclusion of harder-to-reach demographic groups, such as young people and people with less housing stability. Respondents self identified as victims and provided the types of crimes they have experienced in the past 10 years.

A common challenge in victimization research is the reluctance of people to discuss their victimization with a researcher. For reasons relating to the social stigma of being a crime victim and associated data collection challenges, it can be difficult to identify sufficient respondents in victimization research. For this reason the Michigan Survey of Victims’ Views used a 10-year reference period. However, just as many crimes are not reported to the police, some crime is not reported to researchers. Like NCVS and other victim surveys, the Michigan Survey of Victims Views likely does not capture the total number of crimes experienced by those surveyed. While David Binder Research informed people that their personal information is kept confidential and used for research purposes only, we anticipate that respondents may have under-reported their victimization in this survey.

The overall margin of error for the Michigan Survey of Victims’ Views is 2.2 percent, while the margin of error for crime victims is 4.2 percent.

ENDNOTES

- 1 David Binder Research is a public opinion research firm with more than 20 years of experience in all types of research, from focus groups to surveys to online research, on behalf of clients ranging from businesses to government agencies to nonprofit organizations.
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- 5 Warnken, H. (2014). *Untold Stories of California Crime Victims: Research and Recommendations on Repeat Victimization and Rebuilding Lives*. Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Law and Social Policy, University of California, Berkeley School of Law.
- 6 Fonger, R. (27, October 2017). \$365K grant will make Hurley trauma center first of its kind in Michigan. *MLive*. Retrieved from http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2017/10/365k_grant_will_make_hurley_tr.html
- 7 National Association of State Budget Officers (2017). *State Expenditure Report*.
- 8 Carson, E.A. (2018). *Prisoners in 2016*. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- 9 National Association of State Budget Officers (1987). *State Expenditure Report*.; National Association of State Budget Officers (2017). *State Expenditure Report*.
- 10 Carson, E.A. (2018). *Prisoners in 2016*. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- 11 Citizens Research Council of Michigan (2008). *Growth in Michigan's Correctional System: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Fries, E.B. (2010). *Independent Study of Mental Health and Substance Abuse: Final Report*. University of Michigan.
- 14 Greene, J. & Mauer, M. (2010). *Downscaling Prisons: Lessons from Four States*. The Sentencing Project.
- 15 Michigan Department of Corrections (2017). *2016 Statistical Report*.
- 16 Bureau of Justice Statistics (2014). National Corrections Reporting Program.
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