



# Arizona Crime Survivors Speak

A Statewide Survey of Arizona Victims' Views on Safety and Justice

MAY 2022



CRIME SURVIVORS FOR  
SAFETY AND JUSTICE

ALLIANCE FOR  
SAFETY AND JUSTICE



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**Conclusion and recommendations: Victims want priorities to shift from prisons to treatment, rehabilitation, and healing.**

- 1) Streamline victims' services and remove obstacles to healing.
- 2) Collect and analyze more data on crime victims to inform policy.
- 3) Increase community outreach about victims' services.
- 4) Advance public policy that more closely aligns with victims' priorities.

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## Overview and Background

Arizona's criminal justice system exists to fulfill two core functions: promote public safety and serve victims of crime. Yet the experiences and perspectives of crime survivors themselves are rarely, if ever, taken into account in safety and justice policy discussions to the depth and scale that truly reflect victims as a constituency representing hundreds of thousands of Arizonans.

To help bridge this gap, Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice commissioned the first of its kind statewide survey of representative groups of victims, *Arizona Crime Survivors Speak: A Statewide Survey of Arizona Victims' Views on Safety and Justice*. It is the first-ever statewide study to survey crime victims on their experiences with the criminal justice system and their views on public safety policy.

The survey revealed that the majority of Arizona's crime victims are unable to access much-needed aid and services that could support recovery and healing. The research also found that most crime survivors strongly favor investment in crime prevention and mental health treatment, and the prioritizing of rehabilitation over incarceration to keep themselves and their communities safe.

*Arizona Crime Survivors Speak* shines a spotlight on the myriad ways crime survivors are impacted by crime; reveals what victims say they need from the criminal justice system; and shows how state policy can better align with survivors' stated safety priorities. The results provide critical and perhaps surprising insights into victims' experiences and their views on policy solutions that can protect all Arizonans.

### ABOUT CRIME SURVIVORS FOR SAFETY AND JUSTICE AND THE ALLIANCE FOR SAFETY AND JUSTICE



Alliance for Safety and Justice (ASJ) is a multi-state organization that aims to win new safety priorities in states across the country. It brings together diverse local crime survivors to advance policies that help communities most harmed by crime and violence, as part of its Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice network that has thousands of members in Arizona.



Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice (CSSJ) is a national network of crime survivors, including more than 1,350 members across Arizona, joining together to create healing communities and shape public safety policy. With 90,000 members and growing, including four chapters and leaders across Arizona, Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice is building a movement to promote public safety policies that help the people and communities most harmed by violence. CSSJ is a flagship project of the Alliance for Safety and Justice.

# Executive Summary

*Arizona Crime Survivors Speak* found that about four out of every ten Arizonans were victims of a crime in the last ten years. Twenty-seven percent of Arizonans had a family member who was a victim of crime within the last ten years.

- Many of these victims reported suffering from physical and mental trauma and experiencing financial hardship as a result of their victimization. *More than seven out of ten crime victims reported having experienced anxiety or stress that interfered with their well-being.*
- The majority of crime victims said they wanted, but did not receive financial assistance, counseling, medical assistance, or another type of service aimed at helping people recover and stabilize. *Only one in ten victims or less received financial assistance to help with stolen or damaged property, and with covering lost income from missed work. Only 5% of victims received financial help to move to safer housing.*
- One out of four victims said they had to take time away from work or school to recover from the incident. Of the victims that took time off work as a result of crime, *a third lost a job because of it.*
- Four out of ten victims wanted to relocate to new housing as a result of the crime they experienced, *but 40% of them were not able to successfully relocate.*
- When they did get help, most crime victims reported receiving it from family and friends and hospital or healthcare providers, not the prosecutors' office. *Of the crime victims surveyed, more said the criminal justice system was not helpful in providing information about services than said it was helpful.*

4 out of 10

Arizonans were victims of a crime in the last ten years.

More than 2 out of 3

Victims were repeatedly victimized.

1 in 10

Victims or less received financial assistance to help with stolen or damaged property, and with covering lost income from missed work.

*Arizona Crime Survivors Speak* showed that victims want more services and want the barriers to them removed.

- Nearly nine in ten victims support the expansion of Trauma Recovery Centers for crime victims.
- Eight in ten victims support increasing funding for victim compensation so that the program can meet current needs and more crime victims can be eligible.
- More than six in ten victims support removing victims' compensation requirements that the crime be reported within three days and a claim made within two years.

Nearly **9** in **10**

Victims support the expansion of Trauma Recovery Centers for crime victims.

**8** in **10**

Victims support increasing funding for victim compensation so that the program can meet current needs and more crime victims can be eligible.

Contrary to what many would expect to be the position of victims of crime, the survey found that strong majorities of Arizona crime survivors reject increased spending on corrections and longer sentences in favor of public safety solutions rooted in rehabilitation and prevention:

- By a six-to-one margin, crime victims say that investing in strong, healthy communities is the best way to reduce crime, compared with increasing funding for prisons and jails.
- Six out of ten crime victims said they believe investing in rehabilitation, mental services, and drug treatment is a better way to prevent future crime than punishment through incarceration.
- Eight out of ten crime victims surveyed supported replacing lengthy mandatory sentences by authorizing judges to consider individual circumstances in determining sentencing and best practices.
- By a three-to-one margin, crime victims said they prefer shorter prison sentences and spending more on crime prevention and rehabilitation programs over prison sentences that keep people in prison for as long as possible.

Over **8** out of **10**

Victims want to replace lengthy mandatory sentences by authorizing judges to consider individual circumstances in sentencing.

More than **6** out of **10**

Victims say rehabilitation, mental health services and drug treatment are a better ways to prevent future crime.

**8** out of **10**

Victims say investing in strong, healthy communities is the best way to reduce crime.

These findings can help lawmakers develop justice policies that better align with victims' priorities, which call for greater investment into victims' support services and a more balanced approach to public safety grounded in prevention, rehabilitation, and treatment over incarceration.

## Victims' Experiences and the Impact on Crime

*Arizona Crime Survivors Speak* found that about one out of four state residents reported having been victimized in the past ten years. Crime affects Arizonans from all walks of life: Not one demographic group was spared across gender, ethnic, or income-level lines.

Among all Arizonans surveyed, more than a quarter (27%) reported having a family member who was a victim of a crime.

The Arizona survey showed that the challenges residents face with safety are far greater than are reported in crime statistics, through crimes reported to the police: One-third (33%) of Arizona crime victims said the crime was never reported to the police, either by themselves or by someone else, versus 26% who said the crimes they experienced were always reported to law enforcement.

One in ten Arizonans lost a loved one to violence. One in five was injured or threatened with physical force.

Arizona residents were victimized in a range of different ways. When given a list of types of crime and asked if they had personally experienced any of them during the last ten years:

- One in ten (10%) experienced losing a loved one to violence.
- More than one in ten (13%) reported someone trying repeatedly to contact them, sharing information about them publicly, or following them in a way that made them afraid for their safety.
- More than one in ten (14%) experienced someone taking or trying to take something from them, using force or threat of force.
- One in five (17%) reported someone injuring or threatening to injure them with a weapon or physical force.
- Nearly a quarter (23%) reported that someone broke into or tried to break into their home or car.
- More than a third (36%) reported someone using or trying to use their personal information, credit card, or other accounts without their permission.
- More than a third (37%) reported someone stealing or trying to steal something that belonged to them.

Six percent of Arizona residents personally experienced someone trying to kill them or shooting at them with a gun in the past ten years, and 3% of Arizona residents personally experienced someone forcing them to perform labor or sex work.

### **More than two out of three victims were repeatedly victimized.**

*Arizona Crime Survivors Speak* found that repeat victimization is common among people who have experienced crime.

Close to six out of ten (58%) crime victims surveyed reported being victimized more than once in the past ten years. Nearly one out of three crime victims (29%) have been victimized *four or more times* in the past ten years.

More than **2** out of **3**

Victims were repeatedly victimized.

## Victims who are young, low-income, or people of color are more likely to be revictimized.

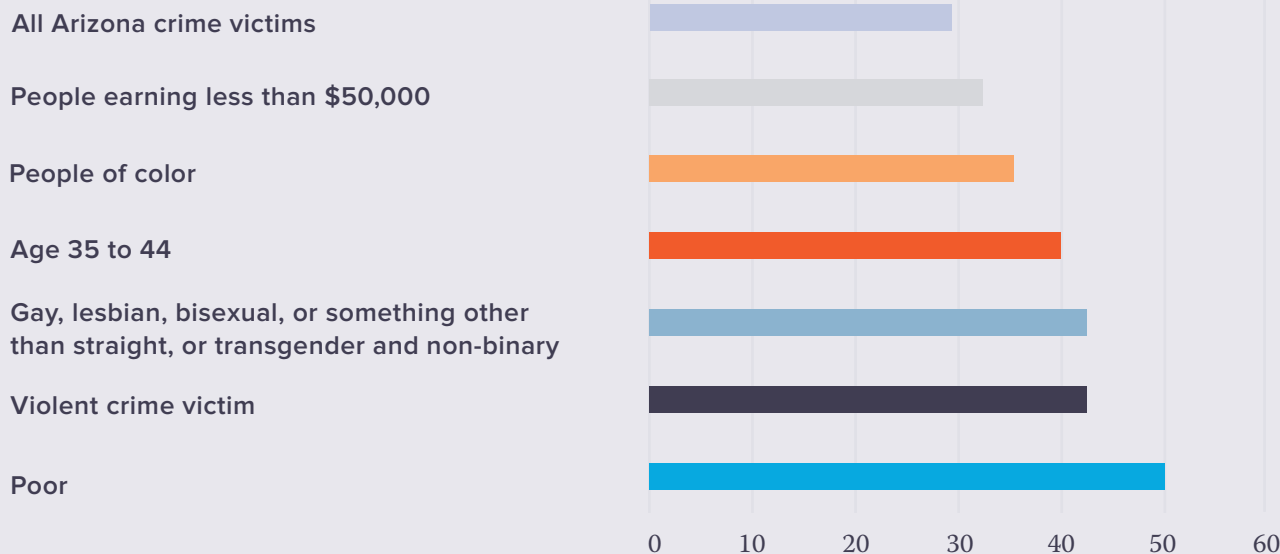
No single demographic group is immune from crime, but national studies have repeatedly shown that violence and crime have an unequal impact. Communities most harmed by concentrated cycles of crime are also often the least supported by the criminal justice system. The National Crime Victimization Survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Statistics has found that people of color, people who are young, and people who are low-income are disproportionately victimized.<sup>1</sup> Other federal data have shown that people who are disabled are twice as likely to be victims of crime as people who are not disabled.<sup>2</sup> One in eight (13%) transgender adults reported being physically attacked in the previous year.<sup>3</sup>

These trends in national studies and surveys hold true among Arizona crime victims and extend more broadly to other groups that are more likely to be revictimized.

Following being given the list of crimes and asked if they had personally experienced any of them in the past ten years, Arizona victims were asked *how many times* they had experienced those crimes over the decade. Among all Arizonans surveyed, 29% had been victimized four or more times in the past ten years. People earning less than \$50,000 a year (32%), people of color (35%), and people aged 35–44 (40%) were more likely to be victimized four or more times. Arizonans who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, something other than straight, or transgender and non-binary (42%) or who described themselves as poor (50%) were much more likely to be victimized four or more times.

*More than half of violent crime victims (44%) were revictimized.*

### “HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU HAD AN EXPERIENCE WITH A CRIME LIKE THIS IN LAST TEN YEARS? FOUR OR MORE TIMES?”



1 Morgan, R. E., & Oudekerk, B. A. (2019). Criminal victimization, 2018. Retrieved from: U.S. Justice Department, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics: <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv18.pdf>  
2 Data on disparities by disability are from Bureau of Justice Statistics (2016). Crimes against persons with disabilities, 2009–2014, Statistical Tables. Washington, DC: Department of Justice, BJS. Retrieved from: [https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/capd0914st\\_sum.pdf](https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/capd0914st_sum.pdf)  
3 National Center for Transgender Equality (2017). The report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey. Retrieved from: <https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS-Full-Report-Dec17.pdf>



## KATRINA | PHOENIX

I had to pay upfront for the trauma recovery treatment I needed to heal.

I suffered the tragedy of losing my husband. I came to learn how unhelpful the system is for people experiencing grief, trauma, and loss and how this pain can affect someone. I learned that the system is not providing what victims really need to recover, and I am now working with other victims to change that.

After the crime, they put me in a victims' services van for six hours while I waited for the detective to interview me. The victims' services people were just chatting about what a cute neighborhood I lived in. My husband had just been murdered; it was insensitive. Victims' services were also incredibly robotic and transactional. A little care and compassion would have gone a long way—even just wrapping me in a blanket and holding me.

I had been working at the U.S. District Court. Because of the crime and the trauma it caused, I found my work was too triggering, so I ended up quitting.

Victims' compensation paid for the cremation, the urn, and a video to be played at his funeral. But I had to pay upfront for the high-intensity trauma recovery treatment I needed to heal. I saw a therapist who engaged me in Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing therapy. It was \$200 an hour, and I saw her four times a month. While victims' services did pay for all of it, you have to pay upfront, and then they reimburse you. There's a lot of

paperwork to be filled in, and not everyone can afford to outlay that money upfront. More victims could be served more effectively if they could receive funds upfront to spend on trauma-informed therapy, gas for the transportation to get to therapy, and additional medical expenses.

We do not spend enough to keep people out of prison once they're released. We later learned that the person who killed my husband had mental health issues, and he was homeless. There needs to be a huge overhaul of the way people experiencing mental illness receive services and are processed through the system. A better way to prevent crime than by punishment through incarceration would be through rehabilitation and the provision of mental health and drug treatment. While the individual is in treatment, there should be safeguards to make sure that person is checking in with a psychiatrist after they are released from prison.

Victims in Arizona are slowly starting to insert themselves into the policy process. Until last year, we didn't even have a psychiatrist or a victims' advocate on the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission. It was just judges and police officers or sheriffs on the commission. Now there's one advocate and one psychiatrist. Victims need more opportunities to drive policy change in Arizona.



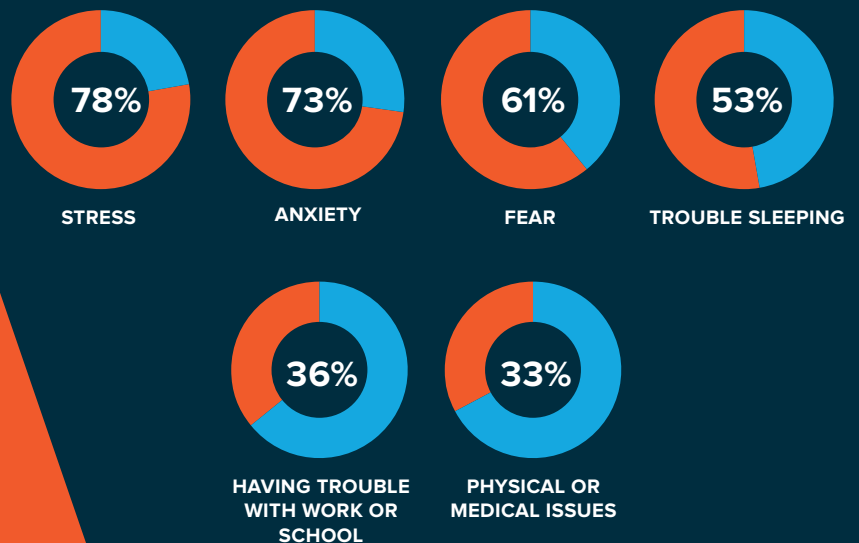
## Crime exacts an immense toll on all victims' lives.

Victims of violent crime face many barriers to healing along their journey to recovery. Experiencing interpersonal violence, such as a physical or sexual assault, or a gunshot wound or stabbing, can cause devastating, lifelong psychological and/or physical consequences, especially if the survivor does not receive timely and effective support services. Unaddressed trauma can lead to chronic emotional distress, relationship problems, and self-medicating through increased alcohol or drug use, all of which can lead to challenges with maintaining employment and/or housing. Lives frequently begin to unravel. Untreated trauma has costly consequences for the survivor, their family, and the community.<sup>4</sup>

Being victimized in a crime can be traumatic. If left unattended, these traumatic effects can be devastating and long-lasting. Research shows that unaddressed trauma increases the risk of mental health issues, substance abuse, and other challenges that can ultimately lead to unemployment and/or housing and income insecurity.<sup>5</sup>

Seventy-eight percent of victims said their life had been affected by experiencing crime. Seven out of ten reported experiencing stress (78%) and anxiety (73%). Nearly two-thirds experienced fear (61%). Fifty-three percent of victims said they had trouble sleeping, more than a third (36%) reported having trouble with work or school and a third (33%) reported having physical or medical issues related to the crime. Among violent crime victims, half (53%) reported having trouble with work or school as well as physical and medical issues related to the crime. A third or more victims reported having trouble with work or school or physical and medical issues.

“Crimes can cause many feelings. Next, I will read a list of feelings. For each, please tell me if it’s something that you ever felt as a result of a crime.”



4 National Association of Trauma Recovery Centers (2020). Trauma Recovery Centers: Addressing the needs of underserved crime survivors. Retrieved from: <https://allianceforsafetyandjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/TRAUMA-RECOVERY-CENTERSAddressing-the-Needs-of-Underserved-Crime-Survivors.pdf>; Miller, T. R., Cohen, M. A., & Wiersema, B. (1996). Victim costs and consequences: A new look. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. Retrieved from: <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/victcost.pdf>

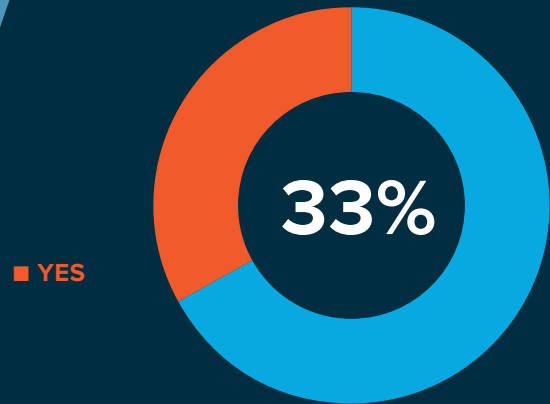
5 See note 4.

### A third of victims who took time off work because of a crime experienced job loss.

One out of four crime victims said they had to take time away from work or school as a result of the crime they experienced (21% for work, 4% for school). Nearly a third of violent crime victims (30%) said they had to take time away from work as a result of the crime experienced.

*A third of victims (33%) reported having lost a job because they needed time away as a result of a crime they experienced. Among violent crime victims, 40% reported losing a job because they needed time away from work.*

If they took time off of work because of the crime, a third reported having lost a job because they needed time away as a result of a crime they experienced.

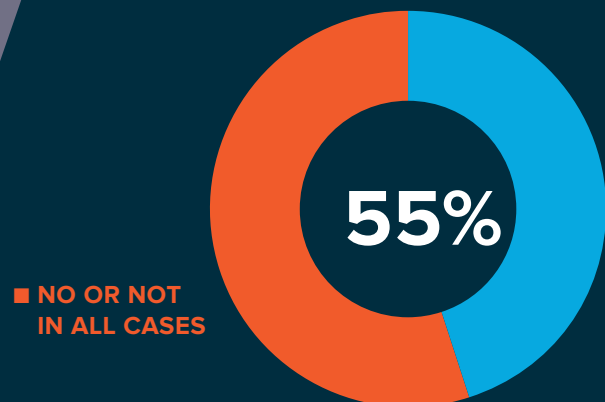


### Half of victims reported some level of difficulty relocating.

Forty-three percent of victims reported wanting to relocate to new housing as a result of the crime they experienced. Of those victims, four out of ten (42%) said they were not able to do so successfully in that situation. Underlining that some victims wanted to relocate because of multiple incidents, an additional 13% said they were not able to reallocate in all cases—*meaning more than half of crime victims had some level of difficulty relocating.*

The percentage of victims reporting that they were not able to reallocate in that particular situation or other cases is even higher among victims of violent crime (57%), among victims who did not report the crime (60%), and among robbery victims (61%).

“Have you ever wanted to relocate to new housing as a result of the crime you experienced? If you wanted to relocate, were you able to successfully relocate in that situation?”



## Only 12% of victims said the criminal justice system was “very helpful” relative to their healing.

It is the role of the justice system to protect crime victims and facilitate their medical, emotional, and financial recovery. Government-funded resources exist, for example, to compensate victims and their loved ones for medical and burial/funeral costs as well as costs related to medical bills, lost wages, and relocation costs when a victim’s home no longer feels safe.

Yet many Arizona victims report that the criminal justice system provided little support in their time of need. When victims were asked “How helpful was the criminal justice system in providing information about recovering from crime or referrals for support services?,” only 12% said “very helpful.” Twice as many victims (27%) said the criminal justice system was “very unhelpful” in providing information about recovering from crime or referrals for support services.

## Most crime victims do not receive the support they need to heal.

When asked about different types of support that people who have experienced crime may have received, the majority of victims surveyed said they would have wanted this help, but reported not receiving it.

Only about one in ten victims or *less* received:

- Financial assistance to help with stolen or damaged property;
- Financial assistance to help cover lost income from missed work;
- Financial help to move to safer housing or housing away from incidents of violence. Only 5% of victims received this type of support;
- Emergency or temporary housing. Only 6% of victims received this type of support.

Only 11% received financial assistance to help with medical costs.

Only 14% of victims received help understanding the criminal courts and criminal legal system, and 13% received help with the legal issues they were personally facing.

Sixteen percent of victims received medical assistance or physical therapy, and 21% received counseling or other mental health support.

By contrast, about half of victims *or more* said they did not receive, but would have wanted to use, these types of services. Out of the nine categories of support, in seven, half of the victims or more said they did not receive, but would have wanted the treatment, program, support or service. Forty-five percent of victims did not receive but would have wanted to receive medical assistance, physical therapy, counseling, or other mental health support—the only two categories where less than half of victims said they would have wanted to use, but never received this type of help after the crime.

1 in 10

Victims or less received financial assistance to help with stolen or damaged property, and with covering lost income from missed work.

**When victims receive help or support, most get it from family and friends, and the healthcare system—not the criminal justice system.**

Nine out of ten crime victims who reported receiving support that aided them in their recovery after the crime said the support was helpful.

When asked to identify who they received help from in the aftermath of their victimization, more than half said: “family and friends” (55%). Another 28% reported receiving help from a hospital or healthcare provider. Only about one in five (23%) said they received help from the police and one in ten (10%) reported getting support from the prosecutor’s office.

These findings are especially sobering given that, of the crime victims who received help of some kind, *an overwhelming 93% said it was helpful.*

**THE MAJORITY OF VICTIMS DID NOT RECEIVE THE SUPPORT THEY WANTED IN ORDER TO HEAL.**

<p>“Next I will read a list of types of support that people who have experienced crime may receive. For each, please tell me if it is something you received. And if you did not receive it, please tell me, if this were available to you, would you have wanted to use it?”</p>	Have received	Have never received, but would have wanted to use.
Financial assistance to help with stolen or damaged property?	8%	60%
Financial assistance to help with medical costs?	11%	53%
Financial assistance to help move to safer housing or move to housing away from incidents of violence?	5%	58%
Financial assistance to help cover lost income from missed work?	6%	57%
Medical assistance, or physical therapy?	16%	45%
Counseling or other mental health support?	21%	45%
Help understanding the criminal courts and criminal legal system?	14%	55%
Help dealing with the legal issues you were personally facing?	13%	55%
Emergency or temporary housing?	6%	50%



## CELINA | PHOENIX

It took me four months to get into a domestic violence shelter.

My family and I were victims of domestic violence by my ex-husband, a green beret, in November 2016. We suffered unthinkable recurring abuse that sometimes left me unconscious, deeply harmed my son, and severely traumatized all my children. My family is doing better today, but I'm transforming pain into a passion: I am working with other survivors to make sure what happened to us does not happen to anyone else.

When the violence occurred, I reached out to the Air Force victims' advocate. After completing a lethality assessment—a series of questions victims are asked to assess their risk of serious injury—I was given 24 hours to get out of the house. I called my dad, he flew out, and he drove my children and me to safety.

Domestic violence shelters statewide were at capacity, and, it took me four months to get into one. My children and I had to be in a shelter for nearly a year.

Emergency orders of protection last only one business day and allow someone else to identify the city you are in. So, upon my arrival to Arizona, I had to risk my and my family's lives and safety to obtain an order of protection during the 72 hours window when we were in the greatest danger. These types of orders do not provide long-term protection.

The new bill, Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice, supports extending orders of protection to two years. That would have been ideal for us. The year after our protection order expired, I went to renew it. They put only my name on the order for protection from my ex-husband, creating more safety risks and disruption for my family.

It was challenging to find the resources we needed and to receive trauma recovery in a timely manner for healing. My ex-husband controlled our benefits. It was very difficult to find services outside his control. Everything was scattered, not centralized in a way that would help individuals even know what they are looking for. Arizona needs to allow people to be more informed about where to get help. Everything a survivor needs to recover should be in one place and accessible.

One of the things lost within trauma is trust. Focusing on trauma and the recovery process would help reform the criminal justice system. Preventative care and crime prevention are always better than treatment after the crime has occurred. If policymakers prioritized rehabilitation, we would all be safer. How do you expect someone to show a new form of conduct if we're not giving them rehabilitation services? The criminal justice system is not trauma-informed, but I'm optimistic we can change the system.

# Victims' Views on Safety and Justice Policy

In the debate over public safety, crime survivors are often assumed to be a constituency that wants tough sentencing mandates and lengthy prison sentences for people convicted of crimes. In fact, the opposite is true. *Arizona Crime Survivors Speak* found that the majority of the state's crime victims support rehabilitation over punishment. They also want to see lawmakers prioritize putting greater effort and investment into helping crime victims with their recovery and finding proactive ways to increase safety and prevent crimes.

## **Victims want more services and want the barriers to them removed.**

Currently, there are barriers in the law, policy, and practice of Arizona's criminal justice system that limit crime victims' access to support and programs.

## **Victims want access to Trauma Recovery Centers.**

Trauma Recovery Centers provide wraparound direct services for underserved crime survivors to help them connect to housing, medical care, treatment, legal aid, and other key services. Trauma Recovery Centers have now been established in thirty-nine communities in seven states. Arizona is not one of those states, but *nearly nine in ten victims support the expansion of Trauma Recovery Centers for crime victims.*

## **Victims want to stabilize funding for the victims' compensation system.**

Arizona, like every state, administers a crime victim compensation program that provides financial assistance to victims of both federal and state crimes. A county-based Crime Victim Compensation Board determines whether a victim can receive an award based on state law and the application process in that community.

For the past few years, the Victim Compensation and Assistance Fund, which provides counties the funds to award victims compensation, has seen a decline in balances and revenue.<sup>6</sup> The revenue for this fund is largely funded by criminal fees and court costs, an unstable funding source. The instability of this funding source also raises concerns about expanding access to victims' compensation for more victims of crime.

*Eight in ten (82%) victims support increasing funding for victim compensation so that the program can meet current needs and more crime victims can be eligible.*

## **Victims want to reduce barriers that limit access to help and healing.**

Across the country, policymakers have started to recognize that unreasonable time limits around certain processes limit access to help. As an individual is navigating the traumatic experience of a crime, a time limit for filing an application or satisfying some other requirement in a matter of days can mean that the victim is ineligible to apply for or receive victim compensation. Recognizing that this is a problem, Illinois and California recently extended the timelines for accepting applications for victims' compensation benefits.<sup>7</sup>

*More than six in ten (63%) victims support removing the requirement for victims' compensation that a crime must be reported within three days and a claim made within two years.*

**8** in **10**

**Victims support increasing funding for victim compensation so that the program can meet current needs and more crime victims can be eligible.**

6 "Revenues for the Victim Compensation and Assistance Fund have always been primarily derived from "special revenue" that is part of the fines and fees associated with criminal offense charges and civil traffic violations. Since funding into the program has been declining, decisions on victim services have been based solely on anticipated revenues coming into the fund and not on the actual needs of the victims applying to the program. This is not how the state should approach assisting victims. Andrew T. LeFevre, Executive director, Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, "Time for state to augment victims' fund," March 18th, 2022, *Arizona Capitol Times*. Retrieved from: <https://azcapitoltimes.com/news/2022/03/18/time-for-state-to-augment-victims-fund/>

7 Alliance for Safety and Justice (2022). Guidelines for Lawmakers to Advance New Safety Solutions, Creating a Model Victims' Compensation Policy.



## CAROL | TUCSON

If you look at the violence in our cities, it is all about stories of unaddressed trauma. We don't have to live like this.

I know the pain of violent loss more than I would ever want to know, and that pain motivates me to advocate for others. The day my daughter was killed changed my life forever.

The young man who committed the crime got life in prison. I think that is sad and tragic.

The young man who killed my daughter had a juvenile record file that is inches thick. He grew up in a home full of addiction and abuse. There was no help for him. When you live in that kind of pain, you act out violently either to yourself or to someone else. That's why I'm so passionate about getting services to young people and the right kind of support to families. If you look at the stories around mass killers, they're stories of trauma. If you look at the violence in our cities, it is all about stories of unaddressed trauma. We don't have to live like this.

After my daughter's murder, I was hard-pressed to find professionals who really were trauma-informed. I went to counseling, and it was not helpful. I went to a psychiatrist because I was very worried about my mental health. Because I had absolutely no experience in the criminal justice system, the crime victim compensation fund was wide open for me, but it was very limited in what it would fund under \$5,000 for the funeral. It would fund counseling, but there weren't trauma-informed counselors.

I found support through a local organization called Homicide Survivor. They provided the helpful peer support I need-

ed. This is where I became involved in victim advocacy for survivors of homicide.

Trauma-informed programs are still too scarce in Arizona. If we want to make communities safer, we have to start helping children who are living with trauma all the time. The data on what Trauma Recovery Centers achieve is impressive. We need to extend these types of programs to schools because that's where our children are, and we can make a difference in their lives and our collective safety.

We really need to strengthen the victims' compensation system for victims of violent crime. The problem with crime victim compensation is that funding goes through the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission. Most victims have had some form of interaction with law enforcement. That means you have to navigate a lot of hoops before you can get help. If you're poor and you get arrested, if you're behind paying court-ordered fines and fees, then you can't get crime victims' compensation. I know victims who've had to go back to work a week after their loved ones have been killed or victims who've been assaulted and can't take time off work because they have to eat, and there's no support. I find that unconscionable.

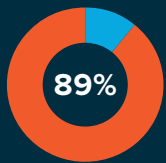
Crime victims need immediate, real financial help, without all the strings and the barriers that are there.

## Victims want to increase access to safe housing.

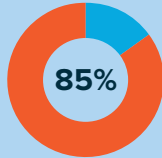
Some legal protection already exists to help victims obtain safe housing when they are being victimized or are recovering from a crime. Victims of domestic violence and certain survivors of sexual assault have the right to break a lease in Arizona without repercussions, and current law requires landlords to change the locks on a unit if a victim of one of these crimes requests it. But these protections are limited by the requirement that the crime be reported to law enforcement—they apply only if the survivor can provide a police report or order of protection to the landlord as proof.<sup>8</sup>

*Eighty-five percent of crime victims support allowing victims of violent crime to end their lease early, so they can move, or have their locks changed.*

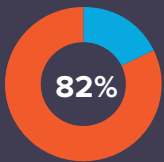
“Next are some ideas to reform the criminal justice system.  
For each one, please tell me if you support or oppose the proposal.”



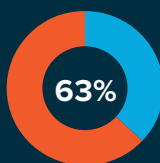
Expand Trauma Recovery Centers for crime victims.



Allow victims of violent crime to end their lease early so they can move, or have their locks changed.



Increase funding for victim compensation to meet current needs and make more crime victims eligible.



Remove requirements on victims' compensation that that the crime be must be reported within three days and a claim made within two years.

8 A.R.S. § 33-1318.



## Victims prioritize rehabilitation and treatment over punishment.

*Arizona Crime Survivors Speak* also showed that victims want to see lawmakers put greater priority on finding proactive ways to increase safety and prevent crime. Victims want a more balanced approach to public safety and prefer investing more into rehabilitation.

### **Eight out of ten victims: Invest in strong, healthy communities over increased funding for prisons and jails.**

The majority of the crime survivors surveyed believe Arizona relies too heavily on incarceration. They want policymakers to invest in new safety priorities that better protect victims and help make them whole from the crimes committed against them.

Eight in ten crime victims (80%) believe that investing in strong, healthy communities is the best way to reduce crime, not increasing funding for jails and prisons. By comparison, only 13% of crime victims believe increasing funding for jails and prisons is the best way to reduce crime.

When asked if they believe the better way to prevent future crimes is to invest in rehabilitation, mental services, and drug treatment over punishment through incarceration, 62% agreed with this statement. By contrast, 27% prioritized punishment through incarceration.

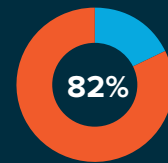
### **Eight out of ten victims: Authorize judges to determine the length of the sentence.**

In Arizona, judges have limited discretion when determining a person's sentence, including weighing factors such as drug addiction or mental illness, and other reasons that may have led to the crime being committed in the first place. Lengthy punishments under mandatory sentencing have accounted for a significant increase in the prison population.

When asked if, instead of mandatory minimum sentences, judges should be authorized to determine the length of the sentence that is most appropriate based on individual circumstances and best practices, 82% crime victims agreed, compared to 13% who opposed—*representing a six-to-one margin in favor of judicial discretion.*

“Next are some ideas to reform the criminal justice system.  
For each one, please tell me if you support or oppose the proposal.”

Instead of mandatory minimums, authorize judges to determine the length of sentence.



### **Seven out of ten victims: Consider individual circumstances and rehabilitation over long sentences.**

By nearly a three-to-one margin (70% to 24%), victims prefer, as the best way to reduce crime, considering individual circumstances and focusing more on rehabilitation over long sentences and increasing funding for jails and prisons.

### **More than two-thirds of victims prefer shorter sentences and more spending on crime prevention.**

By roughly a three-to-one margin, 68% (versus 23%) of victims say they prefer shorter prison sentences and spending more on crime prevention and rehabilitation programs over sentencing that keeps people in prison for as long as possible.

An overwhelming majority (90%) of crime victims said they support allowing people serving prison time for non-dangerous offenses to earn credits to reduce their prison sentence by following prison rules and participating in work, training, rehabilitation, treatment, and education programs.

“Thinking about people who are convicted of drug possession, do you prefer...”

**82%**  
Rehabilitation and treatment

**12%**  
Time in prison

**6%**  
Don't know

“Which of the following comes closer to your view?”

**80%**  
Investing in strong, healthy communities as the best way to reduce crime

**13%**  
Increasing funding for jails and prisons as the best way to reduce crime

**7%**  
Don't know

“Thinking about sentencing for people who commit crimes, do you prefer...”

**70%**  
Considering individual circumstances and focusing more on rehabilitation than on long sentences

**24%**  
Automatically adding years onto a sentence based on past convictions

**6%**  
Don't know

“Thinking about sentencing for people who commit crimes, do you prefer...”

**68%**  
Shorter prison sentences and spending more on crime prevention and rehabilitation programs

**23%**  
Prison sentences that keep people in prison for as long as possible

**9%**  
Don't know

“Which do you think is a better way to prevent future crimes?”

**62%**  
Rehabilitation, mental health services, and drug treatment

**27%**  
Punishment through incarceration

**12%**  
Don't know



## DANIELLE | MARICOPA CITY

Victims' compensation funds should not be limited because someone has a criminal record.

I am both a survivor and someone with an old criminal record. I am like millions of people in that regard. And I deserved help just like everyone else when I became a victim.

In part because of the trauma, I started taking prescription drugs. I was navigating addiction at the time I was convicted of a crime and was incarcerated for one year. Upon release, I fell under the control of an abusive drug user. That led to a terrible decision and a five-and-a-half-year prison sentence.

In prison, I realized I needed to change my life. I'd been approached by the deputy warden to teach a substance abuse co-dependency class. I did it for three years. I found my passion—in helping others and giving back.

I was released in 2019. I got off parole in 2020 and have been doing really well since then. I started working for Arouet, a community-based organization working to help women transition back into society and teach them how to succeed upon release. I've been working there ever since.

I have had the pleasure of guiding the majority of women I work with into treatment. In each case, their stories all stemmed from having abuse happen to them. The majority said they didn't have the resources to go anywhere, and law enforcement wouldn't honor the

restraining orders. I've seen women with protection orders that have run out who couldn't get an extension, and the men would come back. It's vital we have protection orders in place that don't expire.

All the women I work with transitioning back to the community and navigating the trauma of past abuse by their partners are also self-medicating and navigating addiction. Arizona needs more treatment centers and safe havens for these women.

I didn't know I had the choice to receive victims' compensation, so I never tried to access it. Victims' compensation funds should not be limited just because someone has a criminal record.

We need treatment centers that can go deep into co-dependency issues and can teach self-reliance.

Arizona should invest more in treatment and rehabilitation, less on just time in prison, and divert more people and money into treatment centers. And there should be more support for women who are incarcerated to give them more resources for reunification with their families and children.

## Victims with old criminal records are more likely to be revictimized and face larger barriers to obtaining help.

Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice represents 90,000 survivors from across the country and organizes its members to understand their needs. In 2021, this membership organization published the [National Victims Agenda: A Plan to Address the Needs of Our Nation's Diverse Victims of Crime](#). The National Victims Agenda is a set of recommendations to policymakers to address the needs of those crime victims who are most harmed, and the least helped. These include victims who are the most likely to be chronically underserved, repeatedly victimized, and experience unaddressed trauma.

In the National Victims Agenda, Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice called on policymakers to *end discrimination by expanding victim services eligibility to all victims of crime and violence*. Specifically, victims called on policymakers to end discriminatory rules and practices that treat victims differently depending on their status or demographics. This includes victims who have past convictions and old criminal records. The membership of Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice recommended that *“no one should be excluded from receiving victim support simply because of their record or status on supervision. These policies reduce access for people at greater risk of violent crime and in most need of healing and help.”*

*Arizona Crime Survivors Speak* found that people with old criminal records were more likely to be victims and repeatedly victimized.

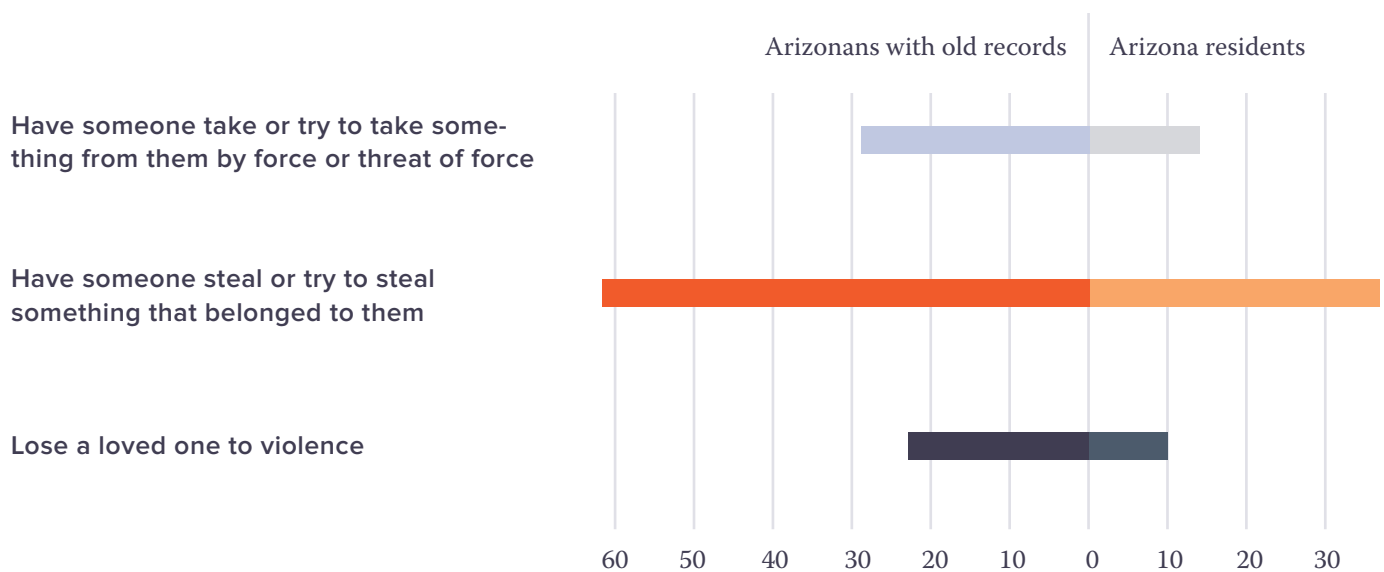
### When given a list of types of crime and asked if they had personally experienced any of them during the last ten years, Arizonans with old records were about **twice as likely** as Arizona residents overall to

- have someone take or try to take something from them by force or threat of force (29% versus 14%);
- have someone steal or try to steal something that belonged to them (62% versus 37%);
- lose a loved one to violence (23% versus 10%);
- be forced to perform labor or sex work (7% compared with 3%).

Arizonans with old records were three times as likely to experience someone trying to kill them (19% versus 6%) or shooting at them with a gun (18% versus 6%).

More than one in four crime victims surveyed (29%) have been victimized *four or more times* in the past ten years. People who have a criminal record (52%) were much more likely to report being victimized four or more times.

### “HERE IS A LIST OF TYPES OF CRIME. FOR EACH, PLEASE INDICATE IF IT IS SOMETHING YOU PERSONALLY HAVE EXPERIENCED DURING THE LAST 10 YEARS.”



“No one should be excluded from receiving victim support simply because of their record or status on supervision. These policies reduce access for people at greater risk of violent crime and in most need of healing and help.”

- NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS AGENDA:  
A PLAN TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF OUR NATION’S DIVERSE VICTIMS OF CRIME

**There are implicit and explicit barriers to accessing healing and support that impact Arizona crime victims with old criminal records.**

Arizona is one of only two states (along with Washington State) that exclude victims from receiving compensation solely on the basis of their having unpaid court obligations. It means that someone who is not current with fines and fees levied on them as part of a sentence can be denied aid.

A victim in Arizona can be denied compensation based on their alleged conduct or alleged contribution to or responsibility for the crime that occurred. A review commissioned by the Criminal Justice Commission in 2021 offered as a reason for the decline in claims and payouts under the compensation program that *“potential claimants are discouraged because of strict—or stricter—interpretations of ‘contributory conduct’ rules.”*<sup>9</sup>

These two types of exclusion can discourage someone from ever seeking help, simply because the victim perceives that they are ineligible.

When Arizona crime victims were offered some ideas to reform the criminal justice system, *more than twice as many supported removing the prohibition on victims’ compensation for people with unpaid court fines and fees as opposed the proposal.*

Victims, whether they have an old criminal record or not, recognize that unaddressed trauma is a barrier to someone being able to achieve rehabilitation and reintegration. Lack of access to immediate help and healing services, like those provided by a Trauma Recovery Center, is a barrier to someone’s successful reentry after serving a sentence in a prison or jail.<sup>10</sup> The instability that unaddressed trauma causes can increase the likelihood that a person will engage in another crime, reducing safety for everyone.

Arizona is one of only two states that exclude victims from receiving compensation solely on the basis of their having unpaid court obligations: Someone who is not current with fines and fees levied on them as part of a sentence can be denied aid.

9 Bill Hart and Erica Edwards. Standing with the Victims: A Review of Arizona’s Crime Victim Compensation Fund. Commissioned by the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission. (2011). Arizona State University Morrison Institute for Public Policy. Retrieved from: [https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/pubs/InnovativePractices/Practices\\_Findings-508.pdf](https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/pubs/InnovativePractices/Practices_Findings-508.pdf)

10 Researching and responding to barriers to prisoner reentry: Early findings from a multi-state trial. (2018). Florida State University: Institute for Justice and Research Development.

## Conclusion and recommendations:

Victims want priorities to shift from prisons to treatment, rehabilitation, and healing.

Arizona survivors of crime believe too many people are sent to prison and for too long, and current incarceration policies make people more, not less, likely to commit another crime. Victims want laws to authorize judges to consider individual circumstances and focus more on rehabilitation than on long sentences, and to shift the dollars spent on prisons to programs that make communities safer. These include investments in rehabilitation and mental health services.

*Arizona Crime Victims Speak* identified another area that urgently requires expansion and investment: services for crime survivors. A significant majority of victims we surveyed never received the help they desperately needed to heal from their trauma and recover financial losses that stemmed from their victimization. More criminal justice resources should be directed to meeting these needs.

### Recommendations

1

#### Streamline victims' services and remove obstacles to healing.

Arizona policymakers should identify and review the obstacles to accessing services and reduce barriers so that all victims can get the help they need. This could include but is not limited to establishing Trauma Recovery Centers and funding them; providing a dedicated general fund appropriation to support and stabilize the Victim Compensation and Assistance Fund; removing or at least extending time limits on when victims must report a crime or apply for compensation; extending to a broader group of victims the protections where victims can end their leases or have locks changed, and removing the requirement that crimes be reported to law enforcement before the victims can receive those protections. Our survey also confirmed that a significant number of crime victims with old criminal records are facing challenges accessing healing and support. Law, policy, and practice barriers that limit access or deny aid to individuals with old criminal records should be addressed so that all victims get the help they deserve.

2

#### Collect and analyze more data on crime victims to inform policy.

Criminal justice policies that seek to do right by victims must be grounded in what victims themselves say matters most to them. These priorities include improving access to services they need to heal and recover and investing in safety solutions beyond incarceration. The research involved in *Arizona Crime Victims Speak* should be supported, expanded, reviewed, and systemized by criminal justice agencies and key partners so that data are regularly collected and analyzed. Doing so will help policymakers better understand the scale of the challenges that Arizona's crime victims face and their views on policy reform. Smart justice strategies must account for community and demographic differences and reflect a deeper and more nuanced qualitative understanding of the diversity of victimization experiences.

### 3

#### Increase community outreach about victims' services.

This survey revealed a massive opportunity gap between the services available to victims and the majority of victims' lack of awareness that such aid exists. These services, which range from referrals and coverage for medical and mental health support to compensation for lost wages and relocation, among other hardships, can be of immeasurable help to victims struggling to heal and rebuild. Much more must be done to expand outreach about the availability of these services and to target this outreach so that it gets, especially, to the communities that historically may have been most underserved.

### 4

#### Advance public policy that more closely aligns with victims' priorities.

The notion that the majority of Arizona crime victims support mandatory sentencing and reliance on incarceration to deter crime and produce more justice is false. In fact, as this survey shows, victims strongly support a shift in priorities. Lawmakers should consider how their stances on public safety policy priorities can better reflect victims' stated preferences for investment into rehabilitation programs, crime prevention, and substance abuse treatment over more jail and prison time. Lawmakers should pay particular heed to victims' support for replacing mandatory sentence requirements with greater judicial discretion as well as their support for alternatives to long sentences. Victims in Arizona say that current laws pass a heavy cost burden onto taxpayers without having a commensurate impact on recidivism or public safety.

#### Methodology

Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice commissioned this survey to help policymakers better understand who crime victims are, what their experiences with the criminal justice system are, and their views on public policy. David Binder Research conducted the survey in English and Spanish in February and March 2022. The poll was administered both by telephone—including landlines and mobile phones using random digital dialing—and online.

The survey included all residents of Arizona aged 18 years and older and is representative of the Arizona population according to age, race, ethnicity, geography, sex, and education. The overall margin of error for the survey is 2.2 percent among the 2,000 residents surveyed. Of those 2,000 residents, 1,229 said they had experienced at least one type of crime or described themselves as having been a victim of crime. The margin of error for this group of respondents is 2.8 percent.



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