



ILLINOIS CRIME REDUCTION TASK FORCE REPORT



Illinois Crime Reduction Task Force Report

A Report to the Illinois Governor and General Assembly

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Background

To develop and propose policies and procedures aimed at reducing crime in Illinois, the Crime Reduction Task Force Act established the Crime Reduction Task Force (20 ILCS 3926/1-5) (*Appendix A*). This report presents a record of Task Force activities and a summary of its recommendations (20 ILCS 3926/1-15) (*Appendix A*). Sen. Robert Peters and Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth served as Task Force co-chairs. The Task Force met seven times between October 4, 2022, and June 6, 2024. Meetings were held virtually and were open to the public. Meeting content included:

- Testimony from subject matter experts.
- Input from community service providers.
- Reports and other documents submitted by Task Force members and other interested parties.
- Votes taken on submitted recommendations.

Task Force [meeting announcements, agendas, and minutes](#) are publicly available.

Task Force membership was statutorily mandated in the Crime Reduction Task Force Act (20 ILCS 3926) (*Appendix A*). The roles and/or organizational affiliations of statutory and other Task Force members are listed below.

Two State Senators, appointed by the President of the Senate:

Robert Peters- State Senator, Illinois General Assembly, 13th District, Co-Chair

Cristina Pacione-Zayas- State Senator, Illinois General Assembly, 20th District (6/01/2022 through 5/31/2023)

Natalie Toro- State Senator, Illinois General Assembly, 20th District (8/25/2023 onward)

Two State Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives:

Jehan Gordon-Booth- State Representative and Speaker Pro Tempore, Illinois General Assembly, 92nd District, Co-Chair

Eva Dino Delgado- State Representative, Illinois General Assembly, 3rd District

Two State Senators, appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate:

Steve McClure- State Senator, Illinois General Assembly, 54th District, Assistant Republican Leader

Neil Anderson- State Senator, Illinois General Assembly, 47th District, Republican Caucus Chair

Two State Representatives, appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives:

Deanne Mazzochi – State Representative, Illinois General Assembly, 47th District, Assistant Republican Leader (6/1/2022 through 1/9/2023)

Patrick Windhorst- State Representative, Illinois General Assembly, 117th District

David Friess – State Representative, Illinois General Assembly, 115th District (1/18/2023 onward)

The Director of the Illinois State Police, or his or her designee:

Brendan Kelly- Illinois State Police

The Attorney General, or his or her designee

Ashley Hokenson- Office of the Attorney General (through 4/22/2024)

John Carroll, Office of the Attorney General (4/23/2024 onwards)

A retired judge, appointed by the Governor:

Marcus R. Salone- Principal Attorney, Law Offices of Marcus R. Salone (2/3/2023 onward)

A representative of a statewide association representing State's Attorneys, appointed by Governor:

Vacant

A representative of a statewide association representing public defenders, appointed by the Governor:

Keith Grant- Senior Supervising Attorney, Lake County Public Defender's Office (2/17/2023 onward)

The executive director of a statewide association representing county sheriffs or his or her designee, appointed by the Governor:

Jim Kaitschuk- Executive Director, Illinois Sheriffs Association

The executive director of a statewide association representing chiefs of police, appointed by the Governor:

Vacant

A representative of a statewide organization protecting civil liberties, appointed by the Governor:

Benjamin Ruddell- Criminal Justice Policy Attorney, ACLU Illinois

Two justice-involved members of the public, appointed by the Governor:

Lou Centeno- Founder/Owner, Fit Results

Willette Benford- Director of Reentry, Office of the Mayor, Chicago

Four justice-involved members of the public appointed one each by the President of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Minority Leader of the Senate, and Minority Leader of the House of Representatives:

Lance Bennett- MBA Prep Coach, Management Leadership for Tomorrow

Avalon Betts-Gaston- Project Manager, Illinois Alliance for Reentry and Justice of Safer Foundation

One member representing a statewide organization of municipalities as authorized by Section 1-8-1 of the Illinois Municipal Code, appointed by the Governor:

Rita Ali- Mayor of Peoria

A representative of an organization supporting crime survivors, appointed by the Governor:

Vacant

A representative of an organization supporting domestic violence survivors, appointed by the Governor:

Jennifer Elana Jenks- Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Illinois Certified Domestic Violence Professional, Metropolitan Family Services (12/9/2022 onward)

The Executive Director of the Sentencing Policy Advisory Council, or his or her designee:

Kathy Saltmarsh- Executive Director, Sentencing Policy Advisory Council (6/01/2022 through 6/30/2023)

Victoria Gonzalez- Executive Director, Sentencing Policy Advisory Council (7/01/2023 onward)

One active law enforcement officer, appointed by the Governor:

Vacant

Testimony

The following subject matter experts and service providers addressed the Task Force. See *Appendix B* for presentations summarized in this section.

October 4, 2022

Dr. Timothy Lavery, Research Director, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

Task Force brought members set the foundation for subsequent meetings. Dr. Lavery presented Illinois crime statistics and trends spanning several decades to present. Task Force members asked questions about the presentation.

January 19, 2023

Dr. Jarmese Sherrod, Director, Sherrod's Independent Mentoring Program
Zack Schrantz CEO, Saint Leonard's Ministries
David Harris, Administrative Assistant/Formal Resident, Saint Leonard's Ministries
LeVon Stone, Sr., CEO, Acclivus

Members recognized community input as being integral to crime reduction. Community stakeholders working in the crime reduction and violence prevention fields were invited to present and share their experiences.

Dr. Sherrod provided details on her organization, which is focused on academic advising, mentoring, and youth development in Decatur. Dr. Sherrod highlighted collaborations with local small businesses, law enforcement, community colleges, schools, community organizations, youth violence prevention groups, and parents and families and their contributions to the program's violence reduction work. Dr. Sherrod advocated for including youth in decision-making to ensure programming and policies are relevant to them.

Zack Schrantz and David Harris from Saint Leonard's Ministries detailed their re-entry program, which empowers formerly incarcerated men and women to successfully re-integrate into the community. The presenters emphasized the importance of holistic services for returning citizens, including transitional and long-term housing, mental health services, substance abuse recovery services, case management, medical care, education, and workforce development.

LeVon Stone highlighted Acclivus, a community organization focusing on the health and well-being of individuals living in Chicago's most vulnerable neighborhoods. She said its program was being implemented in four hospitals for victims and families when shootings and related incidents occur and provided grant assistance to grassroots organizations. The presenter encouraged members to examine crime through a public health lens and provide a clear path to redemption after crime does occur.

ICJIA Center for Violence Prevention and Intervention Research staff gave members crime reduction program summaries to inform final recommendations. All programs were vetted for effectiveness and scientific rigor.

February 17, 2023

Dr. Daniel Webster, Director, Center for Gun Violence Solutions, Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University

Dr. Andrew Papachristos, Director, Center for Neighborhood Engaged Research and Science (Corners), Northwestern University

Dr. Kathryn Bocanegra, Assistant Professor, Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois Chicago

Prominent crime reduction researchers attended the meeting to provide testimony on a range of issues for members to consider.

Dr. Webster provided a summary of his research on gun violence prevention to the Task Force. He also described a data-driven public health approach to reforming unsafe environments, risky behaviors, policies, and systems. He indicated that additional community and government-based efforts are needed for a truly effective crime reduction ecosystem. He pointed out that additional funding is needed for homicide and shooting review boards, improvements to physical environments, and violence interruption.

Dr. Papachristos' presentation on community violence interventions featured several Illinois-based programs, including Communities Partnering 4 Peace, Chicago CRED, and Heartland Alliance. Community violence intervention programs are, as the name suggests, programs based in the community rather than on police-based crime reduction programs. He noted investment in these programs increased after a 2016 spike in crime. These programs reduced crime prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Bocanegra's victim serve presentation emphasized that victims often become criminal justice system involved and that victim services are an under-resourced but important inflection point for breaking the cycle of violence. Her research highlighted several areas of disconnect between existing services and the communities they are intended to help.

Written Testimony

The Task Force also accepted written testimony concerning important issues, personal experiences, or research related to crime reduction (*Appendix C*).

Recommendations and Supportive Findings

The Crime Reduction Task Force approved the following recommendations at its February 26, 2024, meeting. One recommendation was not approved (*Appendix D*).

Recommendation

There should be a new legislation that mandates judges to order an abusive partner to complete a Partner Abuse Intervention Program (PAIP) when granting an Order of Protection for domestic violence in civil courts. This can help prevent domestic violence, and crime in general, because domestic violence offenders can pose a threat to a family as well as to the community. A PAIP focuses on power, control, and relationship dynamics. It helps people reflect on their relationship and take responsibility for one's behavior.

If the person fails to complete the PAIP, there should be a consequence, such as restrictions in child custody or supervised visitation of family members. Because taking a PAIP costs money and it lasts 26 weeks, there should be a financial support to complete a PAIP for low-income earners.

6 in favor, 4 opposed, 3 abstained/present

Findings

Services offered in a Partner Abuse Intervention Program (PAIP) hold abusers accountable and help them to change. The services give the abusive partner an opportunity to stop choosing violence and to control his or her behavior. A PAIP focuses on power, control, and relationship dynamics. It helps people reflect on their relationship and take responsibility for their own behavior. The program puts the responsibility for ending violence where it belongs—with the perpetrator, not the survivor. Because domestic violence offenders can pose a threat to a family and the community, a PAIP may help prevent domestic violence as well as other crimes. Findings on the impact of a PAIP are mixed, but some studies (e.g., Bennett et al., 2007; Cheng et al., 2019) indicate batterer intervention programs like a PAIP may help reduce repeated domestic abuse and violence.

Currently, the remedy of requiring the abuser to attend and complete a PAIP occurs through a criminal court order. However, civil court may be a better place to order the completion of a PAIP. Many victims of domestic violence go to civil court because they lack evidence for criminal charges or do not intend to incarcerate the abusive partner. Domestic violence is also often identified in civil court during the divorce/parenting time process.

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Cheng, S.-Y., Davis, M., Jonson-Reid, M., & Yaeger, L. (2019). Compared to what? A meta-analysis of batterer intervention studies using nontreated controls or comparisons. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 22(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838019865927>

Recommendation

Civil court judges and other court personnel should be required to receive training on how the abusive tactics of domestic violence—such as harassment, threats, and manipulation—play out in the courtroom and continue the cycle of emotional and financial abuse upon victims. Crime victims should not be revictimized, especially by the judicial process itself.

The Supreme Court of Illinois Judicial College is in charge of continuing education for Illinois judges and certain court stakeholders. Committee staff develop curricula and courses and approve faculty. Courses are available online and through a one-week conference, which is held twice a year. All judges must attend one conference a year. Domestic violence training currently falls into the elective category for training. There are six committees that approve courses for the following groups:

- *Committee on Circuit Court Clerk Education (CCCE)*
- *Committee on Judicial Education (COJE)*
- *Committee on Probation Education (COPE)*
- *Committee on Guardians ad Litem Education (GALE)*
- *Committee on Judicial Branch Staff Education (JBSE)*
- *Committee on Trial Court Administrator Education (TCAE)*

The committees do accept recommendations for training topics or additional training to fill in gaps in curriculum that has already been developed. The process involves submitting a proposal and, if approved, then working with staff from the committees to develop the training.

9 in favor, 3 opposed, 1 abstained/present

Findings

The civil court system is a crucial part of resolving domestic violence because it is often the only help victims can turn to. Nevertheless, the victims of domestic violence may have to go through retraumatizing experiences in the court system (Katirai, 2020). They must face the abuser in the same courtroom even when the abuser is harassing, threatening, and abusing emotionally. Judges and attorneys sometimes treat victims in an administrative way and show apathy to victims' emotional pain.

The treatment of victims in the court system can either encourage or discourage victims to reuse the court system in the future (Fleury-Steiner et al., 2006). Empowering experiences in the court can have a positive effect on victims' mental health and improve their quality of life (Cattaneo & Goodman, 2010).

References

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Recommendation

Launch a statewide pilot program for guaranteed basic income from poor areas and gradually expand it to other areas. Guaranteed basic income can help reduce poverty, which, in turn, can help reduce crime.

This pilot program should start with areas in Illinois with a higher portion of poverty, relative to the rest of the state. The eligible poverty level can be set considering living cost in the area people live. Individual income, rather than household income, will be considered for the selection of program participants so that the total amount of payment for a family can increase as the family size increases. The degree of the need should be the top priority in the selection process.

The guaranteed income payment should be at least \$500 per month for each person, an amount similar to existing pilot programs in Illinois. The pilot period should be at least 1 year because it can take some time before the program can make an impact. Recipients of other guaranteed basic income programs would not be eligible for this program.

9 in favor, 3 opposed, 1 abstained/present

Findings

Poverty can harm people and increase crime rates in multiple ways. The experience of economic troubles is associated with mental illness (Riddley et al., 2020), but poverty can also result in lack of access to quality healthcare, including mental or behavioral healthcare (González, 2005). While most people suffering from mental illness do not commit a crime, offenders with mental illnesses are at a greater risk for recidivism (Peterson et al. 2014). Poverty may also encourage people to adopt criminality to meet their needs and improve their current circumstances (Hannon, 2002). Therefore, reducing poverty can help reduce crime.

A guaranteed basic income program, also known as a universal basic income program, is an approach that intends to reduce poverty by guaranteeing the minimum amount of income necessary for living. It guarantees this payment to persons in need without any condition. It is a straightforward, efficient way to reduce poverty by giving out cash directly and letting people in need decide how to spend it with minimal government intervention.

Many municipalities in the United States and other countries have been experimenting with pilot programs (Hoynes & Rothstein, 2019; Bastagli et al., 2019). Most of them are not full implementations of guaranteed basic income. They provide *some* income, not *basic* income, for a limited period of time. While a full assessment of guaranteed basic income programs has not been done, studies have found some positive impacts. Spending on such basic needs as food increased among participants as intended by the program; moreover, participants bought qualitatively better food which has health implications (Owusu-Addo et al., 2018; Hamilton & Mulvale, 2019). Additionally, participants overall did not withdraw from the workforce or reduce their work hours in meaningful ways (Gilbert et al., 2018; Jones & Marinescu, 2022). Regarding crime, evidence showed that cash transfer programs reduced property crime to some degree (Watson et al., 2020; Calnitsky & Gonalons-Pons, 2020).

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Recommendation

Wage theft is a serious crime that needs to be eliminated. We should take crimes like wage theft more seriously, especially those by big corporations. Reducing wage theft can also help reduce poverty, thereby reducing other crimes.. We should create a system that sends a clear message to employers that wage theft is a serious crime, and they will be punished seriously for stealing wage.

Within the enforcement agency (e.g., the Office of the Illinois Attorney General), create a department that is mandated to enforce the elimination of wage theft. If a company is found guilty of wage theft, the company should be mandated to add at least one employee representative with veto power to its board of directors. In this way, we can change how the company is managed and operates.

Penalties for wage theft are often way too small. Increase the monetary penalties for wage theft so that paying a penalty is more costly than stealing wages. Heavier penalties can force employers to take the wage theft issue more seriously and prioritize restitution. The use of penalty funds may be delegated to state agencies to fund community programs like guaranteed basic income programs or community-driven safety initiatives. For a prolonged wage theft or an excessive amount of wage theft, the employer shall be mandated to give up shares of ownership, in addition to the already imposed penalties. The renounced shares will be invested in employee-owned companies or given to its own employees.

5 in favor, 3 opposed, 5 abstained/present

Findings

Wage theft can create economic instability both at the individual and community levels. According to one estimate, through minimum wage violations, \$8 billion worth of wages were stolen annually between 2013 and 2015 from 2.4 million workers in the 10 most populous states (Cooper & Kroeger, 2017). The amount would have increased if the data had included other forms of wage theft, such as overtime violation and confiscating tips.

Insufficient enforcement along with lucrative financial incentives to commit wage theft do not currently serve as a strong enough deterrent to curtail this conduct. There were just 11 prosecutions of wage theft between 2011 and 2013 in the United States (National Employment Law Project, 2013). Increasing enforcement of wage theft laws and adding non-monetary penalties may increase the efficiency of deterrence (Hallett, 2018).

Within the Illinois Office of the Attorney General, there is a Worker Protection Unit to protect workers' rights.¹ It covers a wide range of unlawful employment practices, including wage theft, but it is not dedicated to wage theft.

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Recommendation

Increasing investments in community-driven safety initiatives can be an effective way to reduce crime. Expand the existing community services and programs (e.g., mental health services, youth programs,

¹ For more information, see <https://www.illinois.gov/news/press-release.20532.html>.

legal aids, and violence interruption) with a clear intention and direction toward community-driven safety. Community organizations that provide services to the community should receive more funds to get appropriate equipment and sufficiently compensate staffs for their hard work. To do this, increase the funding for the government agencies that run these community programs with an intention to reduce crime based on the community-driven approach.

12 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstained/present

Findings

Crime has roots in a variety of interconnected issues in the community such as poverty, mental health, and youth development. There is no single solution that can immediately reduce or prevent crime.

Police alone cannot solve all the problems in a community. This is especially true when police are increasingly getting more involved in social work, such as domestic violence and mental health (Jacobs et al., 2021), and when many police agencies face staffing issues (Wilson & Grammich, 2024).

Many places across the country are experimenting with a new approach that centers on community rather than police involvement in crime-related issues (Sakala et al., 2018). Community-driven safety initiatives approach community safety by letting community groups take care of their own community issues. For example, interactions between police and people with mental health problems often result in negative outcomes, especially for Black Americans (McLeod et al., 2020). For better outcomes, a community-driven approach allows community groups to intervene and de-escalate situations in the event of mental crises (Jacobs et al., 2021) while limiting the role of police in mental health as much as possible (Cummins, 2023).

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Recommendation

Many law enforcement agencies are having a hard time filling officer vacancies. Developing incentives for recruiting more quality individuals into law enforcement professions will help reduce crime. One of the incentives that can be developed is offering tuition benefits or loans to students of advanced degrees who agree to serve as law enforcement officers in underserved areas for a certain period of time. The existing programs that support recruiting and retaining quality law enforcement officers should also be expanded to increase support for smaller agencies and those in rural areas where they have difficulty offering competitive salaries.

12 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 abstained/present²

Findings

Police staffing has been an issue for many police agencies, as retaining experienced officers and recruiting quality new officers pose challenges (Wilson & Grammich, 2024). Understaffing weakens police agencies' capabilities and overloads officers.

The number of full-time police officers working in American cities went from approximately 452,000 in 2009 to 443,000 in 2019 (Mangual, 2022). A survey of Illinois police chiefs found a significant reduction in the number of people taking the police entrance exam by 40-70% in 2021 from 2-3 years ago (Wojcicki, 2022).

The State of Illinois announced the notification of funding opportunities for the [Officer Recruitment and Retention Grant Program](#) in Fall 2023, which intends to support hiring and retaining law enforcement officers of local agencies. The Illinois Law Enforcement Training Standards Board is currently reviewing applications.

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Recommendation

Illinois should improve policies and resources to reduce substance use because substance use often leads to criminal behaviors.

Expand the existing resources for people who use substances and make them more accessible, especially at the local level. The biggest concern here is getting substance use resources, including

² Beginning with this recommendation, total votes increase from 13 to 14. This is because one member joined the meeting late.

treatment, to those who need them. The existing resources are often too far from those people who need them and have extensive wait lists, especially in rural areas. As such, the expansion of these resources should consider another way of making substance use treatment more accessible is by offering it to those who are arrested. If someone with a substance problem is arrested for a non-violent crime, he or she is often offered an opportunity to complete a treatment and get their charge reduced or dismissed.

8 in favor, 2 opposed, 4 abstained/present

Findings

Substance misuse and crime are closely associated. A review of various studies shows that drug users are more likely to offend than non-drug users (Bennett et al., 2008) although the ways substance use leads to offending can be multiple and complex (White, 2016).

Substance misuse is a problem in many places, including rural areas. In Illinois, total numbers of overdoses are typically higher in urban areas, but opioid overdose rates per 100,000 population are higher in some rural counties (Illinois Department of Public Health, 2017). Yet, access to treatment facilities in rural areas can be a challenge. In Illinois, one-third of rural hospitals are in designated primary care shortage areas, and almost all of them are in designated mental health shortage areas (Post, 2019). There may also be longer waitlists and not enough information about treatment options in rural areas (Stopka et al., 2024). Moreover, rural facilities may not offer services as broadly as urban facilities (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2011).

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Recommendation

Increasing crime clearance rates can reduce crime, because it prevents repeated crimes by the same offender, and it also encourages victims to report crimes to law enforcement. Law enforcement should adopt a policy that puts more emphasis on criminal investigation than the current practice. The need for additional investigation is often necessary, especially in serious violent crimes. Dedicated investigators should be allocated to criminal cases because patrol officers are often unable to gather evidence and investigate in addition to fulfilling their regular patrol duties. Investigators should be called into the scene immediately because timing can impact investigations and therefore clearance rates.

Emphasis on criminal investigation should be supported by increased funding so that law enforcement agencies can have investigators and technology needed. Small agencies and agencies in the rural area should receive more support for criminal investigation, by funding agencies adequately and/or by providing more support through the Illinois State Police. Make sure an adequate amount of funding goes to equipping agencies with forensic technology, including DNA analysis. The evaluation of physical evidence is crucial which can make an innocent person exonerated or hold a responsible person accountable.

14 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstained/present

Findings

Crime clearance rates have been declining nationally (Avdija & Akgul 2021). The homicide clearance rate, in particular, declined by 41.6% from 1962 to 2020, but the East North Central region (including Illinois) experienced a greater drop of 52.8% (Cook & Mancik 2024). The Chicago Police Department improved their homicide clearance rate in 2023 (Garcia, 2024) although it remains to be seen whether it can sustain the improvement.

Low crime clearance rates have a number of effects on crime rates. When offenders are not brought to justice, they may engage in more criminal activities (Mangual 2022). When crime victims do not receive justice, they may lose trust in police and become less likely to report future criminal activity (for example, see Ocegüera & Agrelo, 2023).

Crime clearance rates can be improved by adequate staffing, allocating appropriate investigators, and providing investigators with equipment and resources (Carter, 2013). Braga et al. (2018) found that investigative resources—along with crime scene results, subsequent actions, and forensic tests—have a positive, significant effect on homicide clearance rates.

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Recommendation

Providing more resources and support for victims of violent crimes can help reduce crime because victims may also become offenders. There can be a victim-offender connection. The existing programs for crime victims should be expanded and made more accessible. Rural counties especially lack resources for victims.

The Crime Victims Compensation Program should be more widely available and adequately funded. The program should be evaluated for any gaps in what is currently offered to victims and provide additional resources that victims may need. This offering can be added to the compensation program or through another program. Because victims often do not receive restitution or compensation for a significant time due to various reasons (e.g., the incarceration of the offender), they should be supported to cope with financial difficulties. Further, crime victim's advocates should be adequately funded to become more available for victims.

To make sure victims are aware of the resources available to them, increase advertisement on available resources through the Crime Victims Compensation Program. Informing victims about the available resources should also be part of the criminal justice system. While other agencies or community groups may get involved to disseminate information about the resources for victims, the prosecutor's office, victim advocates, or attorneys in the criminal justice system are often the best sources of information for victims. These agencies and people in the criminal justice system should be encouraged to inform victims about the resources available.

12 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 abstained/present

Findings

Victims of violent crime may suffer from trauma. Traumatization can impact both adults (Hullenaar et al. 2020) and children (McTavish et al. 2016). Women are more likely to be victims of domestic violence, which can have long-term adverse mental effects (Howard et al., 2010). In addition, there is victim-offender overlap in intimate partner violence (Tillyer & Wright, 2013). Experiencing or witnessing abuse in childhood can also increase the chance of engaging in similarly abusive behaviors in adolescence (Miley et al., 2020).

Many rural residents face barriers to accessing resources for victims. Rural women must travel a distance three times longer than urban women to access resources for intimate partner violence (Peek-Asa et al. 2011). In Illinois, 30% of rural hospitals are located in designated primary care shortage areas and 94% in designated mental health shortage areas (Post, 2019).

In addition to physical and mental problems, victims also may suffer from other issues, such as economic burden. Victims of intimate partner violence, for example, can have a substantial amount of lifetime cost, which include medical costs, lost productivity, and criminal justice activities (Peterson et al., 2018). Victims may need legal aid as they go through a lengthy, complicated, and expensive criminal justice process.

The State of Illinois currently has resources to help victims. For example, the [Crime Victims Compensation Program](#) reimburses expenses resulting from a violent crime up to \$45,000. The [Violent Crime Victim Assistance Grant](#) supports community programs that assist victims and witnesses.

Yet, victims may not be aware of the resources available to them. In 2016, a study found that 58% of Illinois violent crime victims did not receive services because they did not know how or where they could receive services; 45% did not seek or receive services because they thought they were not eligible (Maki, 2017). In fact, only about 10% of crime victims received support by accessing services provided from a district attorney or a prosecutor's office in Illinois (Alliance for Safety and Justice, 2016).

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Recommendation

Providing job skills and entrepreneurship training for at-risk youths and returning residents will reduce crime because these populations can learn skills needed to get a job or start their own business. There are programs that provide general job skills trainings, but individuals who complete these trainings still face difficulties obtaining jobs. Programs should partner with employers that will hire individuals that successfully complete job training programming. This programming should cover both soft and hard skills and include training on entrepreneurship topics. Entrepreneurship is a particularly important avenue for individuals with criminal histories, because they often face many barriers to obtaining traditional employment.

12 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 abstained/present

Findings

Employment can be a “turning point” event for residents returning from prison because it helps reduce recidivism (Uggen & Staff, 2001). Obtaining quality jobs is especially helpful in reducing offenses (Schnepel, 2018).

The State of Illinois and the federal government fund job information and training programs in which individuals can learn necessary skills for jobs and entrepreneurship. For example, non-profit organizations can provide construction skill trainings through the [Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#). Under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the [Adult and Dislocated Worker Program](#) provides information and training opportunities for job seekers who encounter barriers, such as low income, low skills, and job dislocation. Additionally, [Illinois Small Business Development Centers](#)

provide information and resources for starting and running small businesses. However, while returning residents may be eligible for these programs, these programs do not specifically target returning residents.

Youth employment programs can help reduce violent crime among youths at risk (Heller, 2014). The [Illinois Youth Investment Program](#) targets youths at risk and helps develop essential skills for employability and career paths. WIOA also has a youth program which helps youths with barriers attain education and/or skills training credentials.

Yet, although these programs may provide job information and skills, they do not offer job opportunities. The trainees may remain unemployed even after completing a training.

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Recommendation

Providing reentry programming that starts from prison and continues into halfway houses and the community can reduce repeated crime. Current programs are provided at each stage without much connection between them which may be discouraging to program participants. There should be a coordination between these programs so that returning residents can get help in continuation more effectively.

A part of the help for returning residents should be providing more positive feedback and encouragement of their achievement, whether it is small or big, so they can stay motivated. Community groups should put more efforts to advertise client achievement publicly because it can provide examples of success and motivate other returning residents.

13 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstained/present

Findings

Employment can help prevent crime by providing a legitimate way to fulfill economic needs and by socially integrating people into the community (Lageson & Uggen, 2013). Returning residents face barriers in employment, and their unemployment rate is estimated to be high nationally (Carson et al., 2021) as well as in Illinois (Reichert et al. 2023).

The State of Illinois provides services to residents returning to the community to assist their successful reentry. The [Re-Entry Employment Service Program](#) is run by the Illinois Department of Employment Security, which provides employment search resources to returning residents. The Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) sponsors [training and employment programs for returning residents](#). In communities

where most parolees return, IDOC develops [Community Support Advisory Councils](#) to help facilitate and support community reintegration.

Programs in Illinois provided by government agencies and community groups are not necessarily coordinated with one another. The result may be redundant, inefficient, or disconnected services.

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Recommendation

Government contractors should be required to reserve a certain percentage of job positions for returning residents. This can help reduce repeated crimes because it can expand employment opportunities for returning residents. Tax incentives should also be expanded to encourage businesses to hire returning residents. Tax incentives should be available long enough to cover the first few years after release from the prison, which is the high-risk period of recidivism, and they should cover various types of employment (e.g., contract work).

8 in favor, 3 opposed, 3 abstained/present

Findings

Expanding employment opportunities for returning residents can help reduce repeated crimes. As one study showed (Schnepel, 2018), employment opportunities helped divert returning residents from recidivism, especially when quality jobs were available. Although it may not prevent reincarceration, employment can still delay recidivism by motivating ex-offenders to desist from committing a crime again (Tripodi et al., 2010). People returning from prison, however, face barriers when they try to find jobs.

The State of Illinois provides legal protection from employment discrimination to returning residents. The [Illinois Human Rights Act \(775 ILCS 5/2-103.1\)](#) prohibits employers from disqualifying job applicants based solely on conviction records. The [Federal Fidelity Bonding Program](#) also provides insurance coverage to encourage employers to hire returning residents at no cost. For a 6-month period, it covers employer losses caused by dishonest acts of employees who have returned from prison. The [Work Opportunity Tax Credit](#) provides a federal tax credit to employers for hiring individuals from certain targeted groups, which include returning residents. Illinois offers [Tax Credit for Ex-Felons \(35 ILCS 5/216\)](#) to employers for hiring returning residents. The eligible employers can receive 5% of qualified wages paid during the tax year. These tax incentives are provided if the returning resident is employed

within one year (federal) or three years (Illinois) after being released from prison or a correctional center. The tax incentives are available for the first year of employment.

Nevertheless, the unemployment rate among returning residents is still high, at around 46% in 2022, among those who were released from Illinois state prison in 2018 (Reichert et al., 2023). A study (Carson et al., 2021) found that 33% of those who were released from federal prison in 2010 did not find any employment for four years since the release, suggesting a need for long-term incentives and protections post-release. Further, gaps in incentives exist. Currently, tax incentives are offered for wages, and payments for contract work may not be eligible.

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Appendix A: Crime Reduction Task Force Act

Article 1.

Sec. 1-1. Short title. This Article may be cited as the Crime Reduction Task Force Act. References in this Article to “this Act” mean this Article.

Sec. 1-5. Crime Reduction Task Force; creation; purpose. The Crime Reduction Task Force is created. The purpose of the Task Force is to develop and propose policies and procedures to reduce crime in the State of Illinois.

Sec. 1-10. Task Force Members.

(a) The Crime Reduction Task Force shall be composed of the following members:

- 1) Two State Senators, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- 2) Two State Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- 3) Two State Senators, appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate;
- 4) Two State representatives, appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives;
- 5) The Director of the Illinois State Police, or his or her designee;
- 6) The Attorney General, or his or her designee;
- 7) A retired judge, appointed by the Governor;
- 8) A representative of the statewide association representing State’s Attorneys, appointed by the Governor;
- 9) A representative of a statewide association representing public defenders, appointed by the Governor;
- 10) The executive director of a statewide association representing county sheriffs or his or her designee, appointed by the Governor;
- 11) The executive director of a statewide association representing chiefs of police, appointed by the Governor;
- 12) A representative of a statewide organization protecting civil liberties, appointed by the Governor;
- 13) Two justice-involved members of the public, appointed by the Governor;
- 14) Four justice-involved members of the public appointed one each by the President of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Minority Leader of the Senate, and Minority Leader of the House of Representatives;
- 15) One member representing a statewide organization of municipalities as authorized by Section 1-8-1 of the Illinois Municipal Code, appointed by the Governor;
- 16) A representative of an organization supporting crime survivors, appointed by the Governor;
- 17) A representative of an organization supporting domestic violence survivors, appointed by the Governor;
- 18) The Executive Director of the Sentencing Policy Advisory Council, or his or her designee; and
- 19) One active law enforcement officer, appointed by the Governor.

As used in this Act, “justice-involved” means having had interactions with the criminal justice system as a defendant, victim, or witness or immediate family member of a defendant, victim, or witness.

- (b) The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House shall appoint co-chairpersons for the Task Force. The Task Force shall have all appointments made within 30 days of effective date of this Act.
- (c) The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority shall provide administrative and technical support to the Task Force and be responsible for administering its operations and ensuring that the requirements of the Task Force are met. The members of the Task Force shall serve without compensation.

Sec 1-15. Meetings; report.

- (a) The Task Force shall meet at least 4 times with the first meeting occurring within 60 days after the effective date of this Act.
- (b) The Task Force shall review available research and best practices and take expert and witness testimony.
- (c) The Task Force shall produce and submit a report detailing the Task Force's findings, recommendations, and needed resources to the General Assembly and governor on or before March 1, 2023.

Appendix B: Presentations

Public Safety Outcomes Update- Dr. Lavery (10/4/2023)

Slide 1.



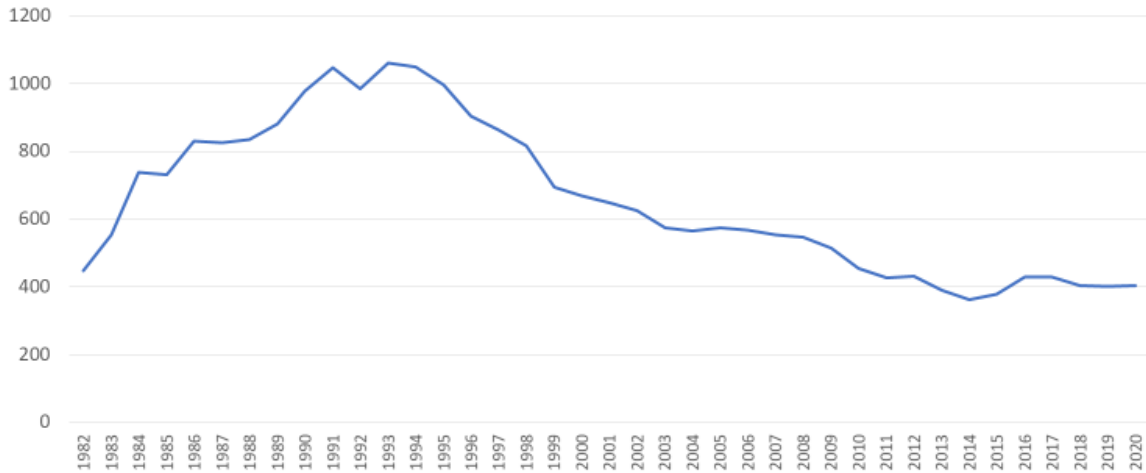
Slide 2.

Overview

- Adaptation of a report for a Senate hearing with some enhancement
- Shows Illinois and Chicago
- Crime
 - Violent Crime
 - Murder
 - Shooting Victims
 - Domestic Assault/Battery
- Arrest
 - Total
 - Murder
 - Domestic
- Adult and Juvenile Correction System Population

Slide 3.

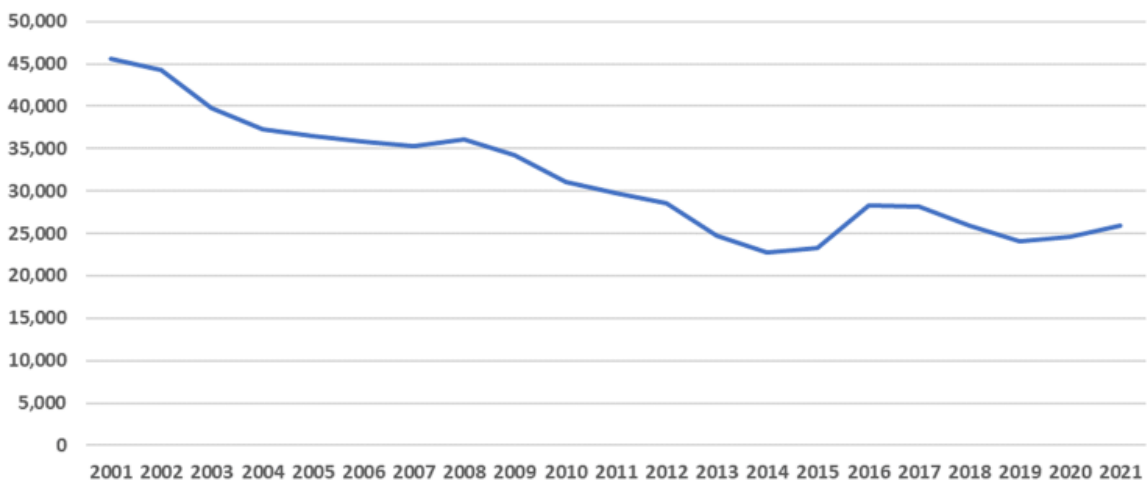
Illinois Violent Crime Rate - 1982-2020



Data source: ISP, UCR data

Slide 4.

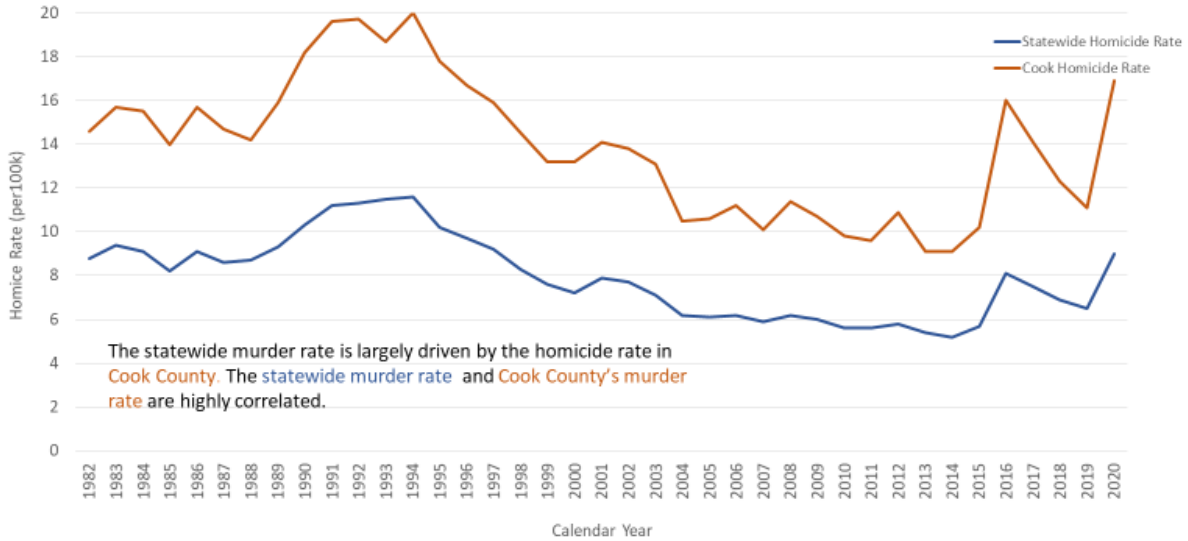
Chicago Violent Crime Totals - 2001-2021



Data source: ICJIA analysis of "Crimes – 2001 to Present" data table available on the City of Chicago data portal.

Slide 5.

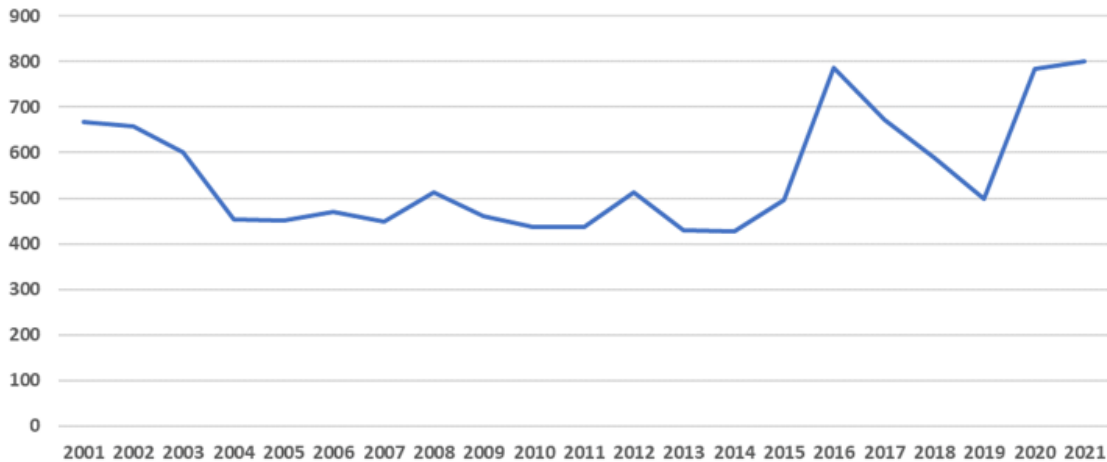
Violent Crime Trends: Murder



Data source: Illinois Uniform Crime Report incident data

Slide 6.

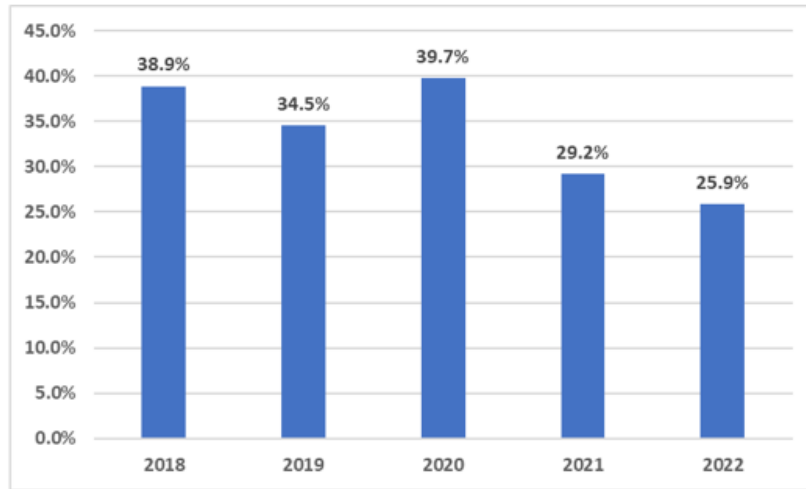
Chicago Murder Totals - 2001-2021



Data source: ICJIA analysis of "Crimes - 2001 to Present" data table available on the City of Chicago data portal.

Slide 7.

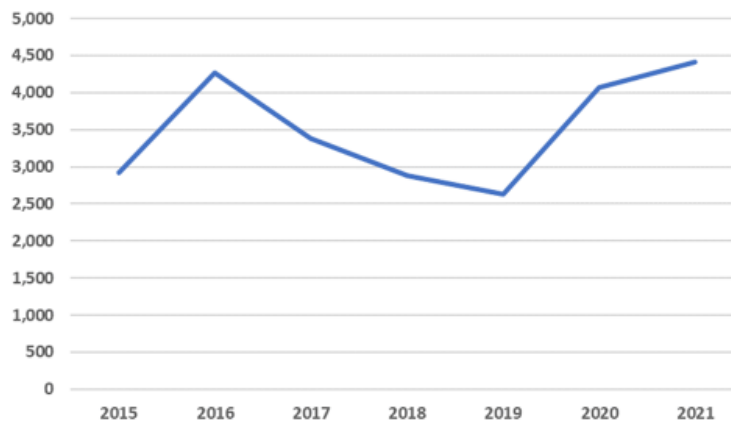
Chicago Murder Clearance Rates – 2018-2022



Data source: ICJIA analysis of "Crimes – 2001 to Present" data table available on the City of Chicago data portal.

Slide 8.

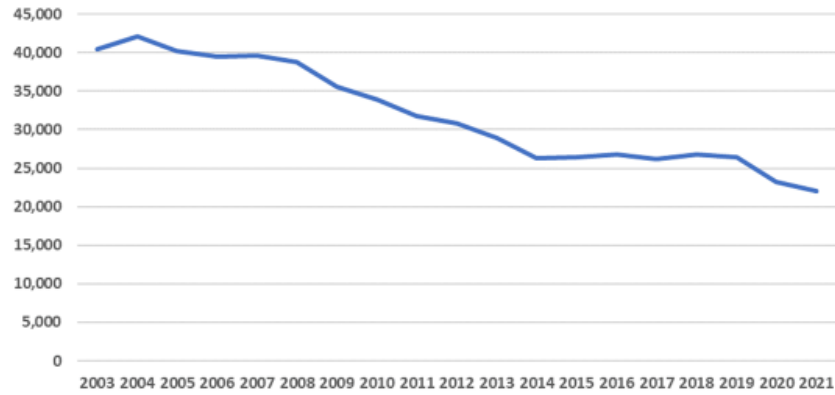
Chicago Shooting Victim Totals – 2015-2021



Data source: City of Chicago Violence Prevention Dashboard

Slide 9.

Chicago Domestic Battery Totals - 2003-2021



Data source: ICJIA analysis of "Crimes – 2001 to Present" data table available on the City of Chicago data portal.

Slide 10.

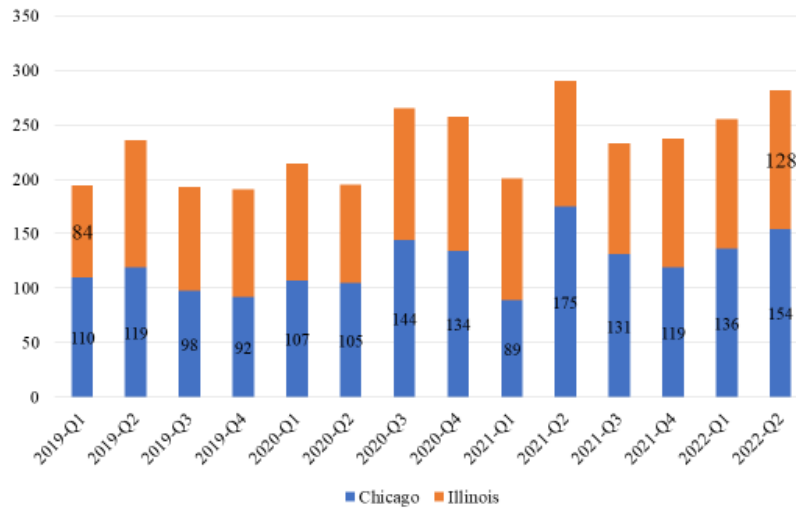
Illinois Arrest Trends 2019-2022



Data source: ICJIA analysis of ISP CHRI data, "Illinois" excludes city of Chicago

Slide 11.

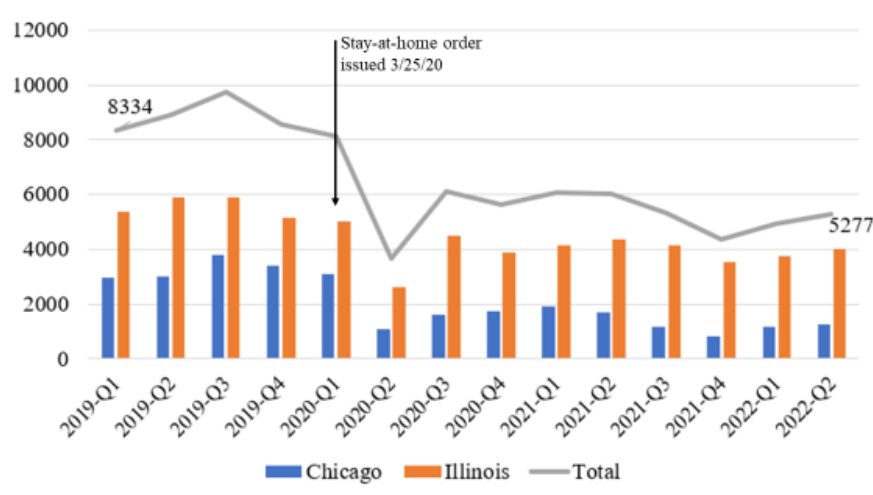
Illinois Homicide Arrest Trends 2019-2022



Data source: ICJIA analysis of ISP CHRI data, "Illinois" excludes city of Chicago

Slide 12.

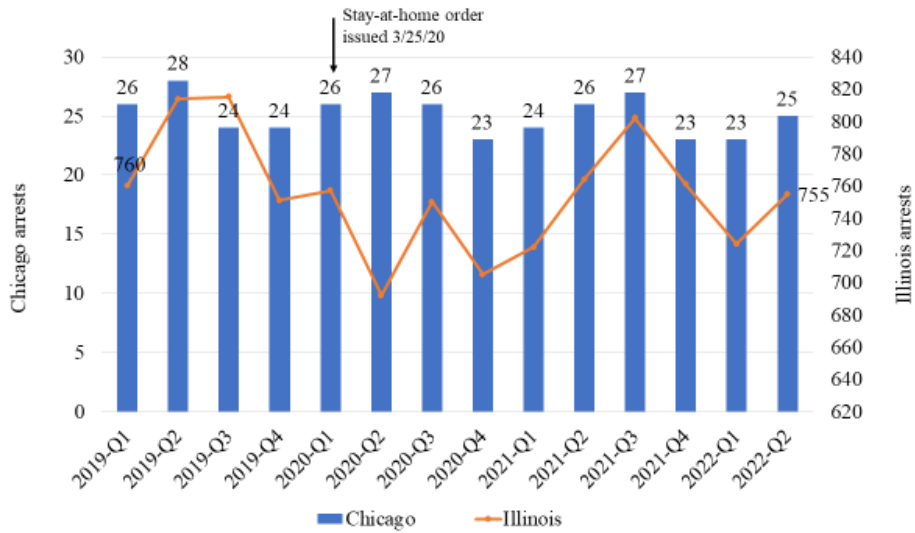
Illinois Drug Arrest Trends 2019-2022



Data source: ICJIA analysis of ISP CHRI data, includes drug possession and drug manufacture and delivery, "Illinois" excludes city of Chicago

Slide 13.

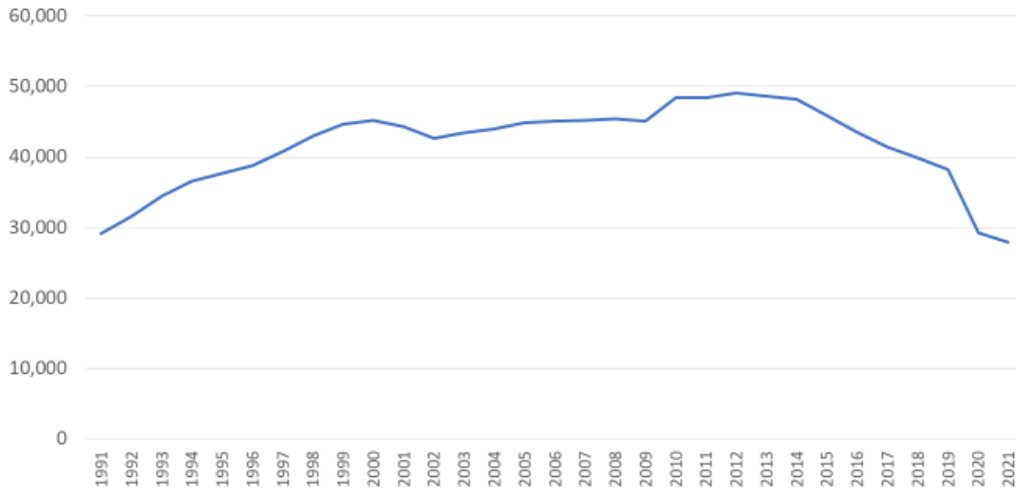
Illinois Domestic Violence Arrest Trends 2019-2022



Data source: ICJIA analysis of ISP CHRI data, includes aggravated domestic battery or domestic battery, "Illinois" excludes city of Chicago

Slide 14.

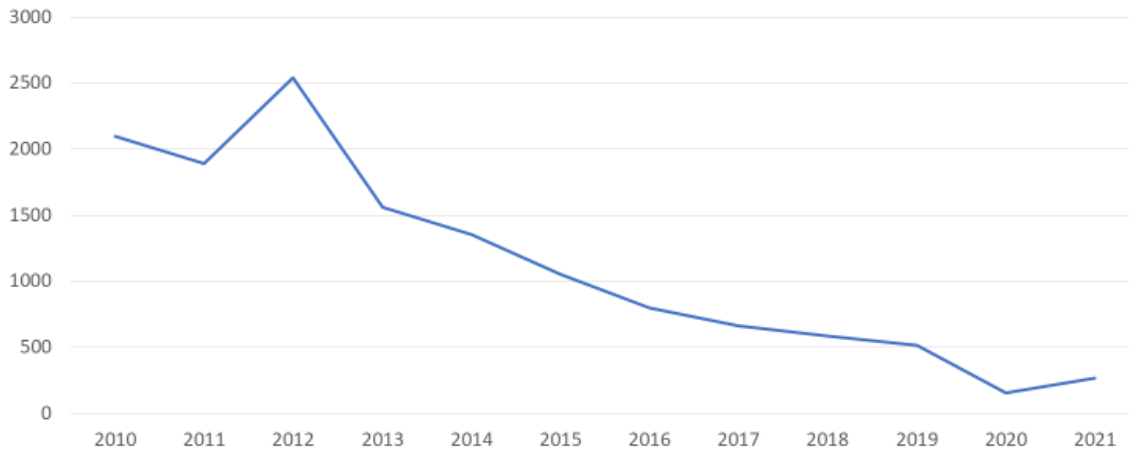
Illinois Adult Prisoner Population Trends



Data source: IDOC website <https://www2.illinois.gov/idoc/reportsandstatistics/Documents/CY21%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

Slide 15.

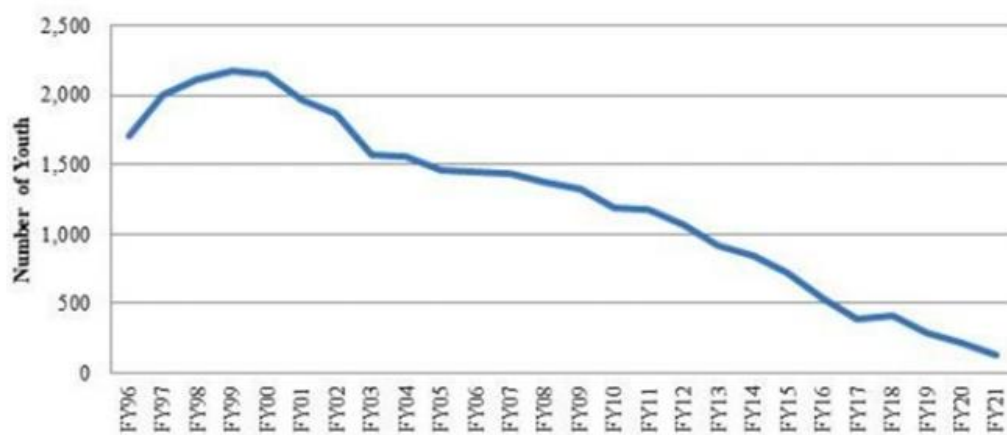
Total Illinois Juvenile Corrections Admissions, 2010-2021



Data source: IDJJ data

Slide 16.

Average Daily Youth Corrections Population FY96-FY21



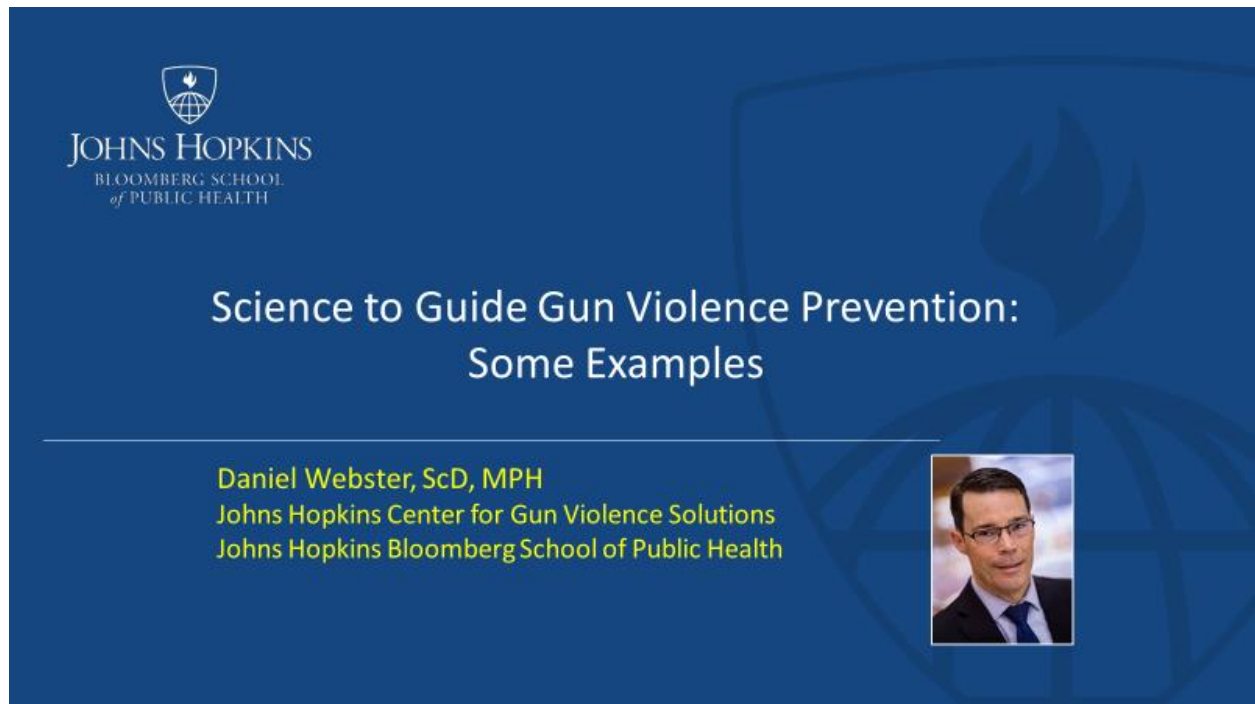
Source: IDJJ, <https://idjj.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/idjj/documents/idjj-2021-annual-report.pdf>

Slide 17.

Summary

- Violent crime has remained relatively stable since 2010.
- Murder and shooting victimization totals increased in 2020 and 2021, but are on pace to decrease in 2022.
- Chicago domestic battery totals decreased in 2020 and 2021.
- Arrest totals decreased shortly following COVID stay at home, and have risen since but not to pre-COVID levels.
- Correctional populations have predominantly been decreasing.


Slide 1.



JOHNS HOPKINS
BLOOMBERG SCHOOL
of PUBLIC HEALTH

Science to Guide Gun Violence Prevention: Some Examples

Daniel Webster, ScD, MPH
Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health



Slide 2.

Recommendations

1. Provide funding and technical assistance for local jurisdictions to create homicide and shooting review boards to gather and analyze in-depth data on the individuals, places, and circumstances driving shootings to mount appropriate countermeasures.
2. Provide/increase funding for projects that combat blight and other conditions that contribute to high concentrations of violent crime in neighborhoods scarred by chronic disinvestment.
3. Increase funding for community violence intervention programs (CVI) with the goal of creating CVI systems (like EMS) with the capacity to effectively deescalate conflicts involving individuals and groups at highest risk for involvement in shootings.
4. Violence interruption programs should be enhanced by or include intensive outreach, provision critical social services, and supports for obtaining and retaining gainful employment.
5. Fund Group Violence Intervention programs – highly focused deterrence and supports.

2

Slide 3.

What is a Public Health Approach to Reducing Gun Violence?

- ▶ **Data-driven and pragmatic** to solve problems efficiently and justly
- ▶ Focused on changing unhealthy or **unsafe environments** as well as **risky behaviors**
- ▶ **Reforms policies and systems** that create violence-producing conditions.
- ▶ **Smart laws (esp. “upstream”) and enforcement** can reduce gun violence and disparities; but we must minimize exposure to incarceration.
- ▶ Appropriately targeted efforts that invest in and support individuals and neighborhoods at greatest risk for involvement in gun violence can save lives and reap impressive ROI

Daniel W. Webster. “Public health approaches to reducing gun violence.” *Daedalus*, Vol. 151, No. 1, Reimagining Justice: The Challenges of Violence & Punitive Excess (Winter 2022), pp. 38-48. See also Butts et al. *Reducing Violence Without Police* (2020)

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Slide 4.



- ▶ **Mission:** Reduce violence through **data-driven interagency collaboration**
- ▶ **Vision:** A community where residents, CBOs, and law enforcement work together to decrease violence
- ▶ **Goals:** 1) Understand homicide through **strategic problem analysis**
2) Develop data-informed prevention strategies
3) Focus prevention and intervention resources

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Slide 5.



REDUCING VIOLENCE WITHOUT POLICE: A REVIEW OF
RESEARCH EVIDENCE

NOVEMBER 9, 2020

REPORT SUBMITTED TO ARNOLD VENTURES BY THE JOHN JAY COLLEGE RESEARCH
ADVISORY GROUP ON PREVENTING AND REDUCING COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

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Slide 6.

Advisory Group Members and Contributors

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- ▶ Anna Harvey, NYU
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- ▶ Joseph Richardson, Jr. – University of Maryland
- ▶ Caterina Gouvis Roman – Temple University
- ▶ Daniel Webster – Johns Hopkins Univ.

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Slide 7.

Key Evidence-Based Recommendations

- ▶ Improve the physical environment
- ▶ Strengthen anti-violence social norms and peer relationships
- ▶ Encourage and support youth
- ▶ Reduce substance abuse
- ▶ Mitigate financial stress
- ▶ Reduce harmful effects of the Criminal Justice process

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Slide 8.

Policies to Reduce Lead Poisoning

- ▶ Early-life interventions recommended by CDC for lead-poisoned children - education for caregivers, voluntary home environment investigation, and a referral to lead remediation services - greatly reduced juvenile offending and violent crime in treatment. Billings & Schnepel 2017
- ▶ Pres. Biden announced more than \$4 billion from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds and annual appropriations can be used to begin replacing lead pipes and provide additional resources to get rid of lead, especially in the most impacted communities.
- ▶ Lead abatement is costly, but lead poisoning effects are more costly.

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Slide 9.

More foreclosures, more violent crime

- Pennsylvania sets a time period between when a foreclosure process begins and residents' eviction, making the property vacant.
- Using geocoded foreclosure and crime data from Pittsburgh to compare areas immediately surrounding vacant homes and similar areas without vacancies. Violent crime rates were 19% higher in surrounding areas after foreclosed homes became vacant.

Cui, Lin and Randall Walsh (2015). Foreclosure, vacancy and crime. Journal of Urban Economics, 87, 72-84.

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Slide 10.

Housing and income security to those at risk of losing housing prevents violence

- Chicago's Homelessness Prevention Call Center (HPCC) connects families and individuals experiencing income loss with immediate financial assistance. The availability of the support varies unpredictably due to public budgeting cycles.
- Palmer et al. (2019) found that eligible individuals requesting assistance during periods of funding availability were **51% less likely to be arrested for violent crime** during the follow-up period compared with eligible applicants who failed to secure help simply due to funding interruptions.

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Slide 11.

11

Philadelphia's Basic Systems Repairs Program effects on violence

- ▶ City provides grants to low-income homeowners up to \$20,000 to repair electrical, plumbing, heating, and roofing damage.
- ▶ Block faces with that received the BSRP funds 2006 – June 2013 compared with block faces with eligible homeowners on waiting list for BSRP funds on crime December 1, 2019, to February 28, 2021.
- ▶ **Decreases of 22% in total crime, 19% in assaults, 23% in robberies, 22% homicides.**

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Slide 12.

Before and after vacant lot greening by the Pennsylvania Horticulture Society



Before greening

Garvin E C et al. Inj Prev doi:10.1136/injuryprev-2013-040439



After greening

©2012 by BMJ Publishing Group Ltd



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Slide 13.

Effects of cleaning & greening on crime and fear

- ▶ RCT: reduced perceptions of crime (-37%) and safety concerns when going outside their homes (-58%) and increased use of outside spaces socializing (76%). Significant reductions in crime (-13), gun violence (-29%), burglary (-22%), and nuisances (-30%). Branas et al. 2018
- ▶ Systematic Rev. Urban Green Space and Its Impact on Human Health. Kondo et al. 2018
 - ▶ Consistent negative association between urban green space exposure and violence and positive association with attention and mood.

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Slide 14.

Fixing Abandoned Buildings

n = 676



n = 676



- Significant **-39% drop** in gun violence
- Every \$1 in **returns \$5.00**

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Slide 15.

15

More street lighting, less violence – but at what cost?

- ▶ RCT of street lighting of temporary street lights in public housing developments across New York City found a **36 percent reduction in night-time outdoor, violent crime** (Chalfin et al. 2019)

THE NEW YORKER DOCUMENTARY

THE CONTROVERSIAL FLOODLIGHTS ILLUMINATING NEW YORK CITY'S PUBLIC-HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

The documentary short "Omnipresence" looks at the complicated ways that a set of bright lights, installed to help reduce nighttime crime, is affecting residents' lives.

<https://www.nber.org/papers/w25798>

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Slide 16.

> J Stud Alcohol Drugs. 2020 Jan;81(1):24-33. doi: 10.15288/jsad.2020.81.24.

The Violence Prevention Potential of Reducing Alcohol Outlet Access in Baltimore, Maryland

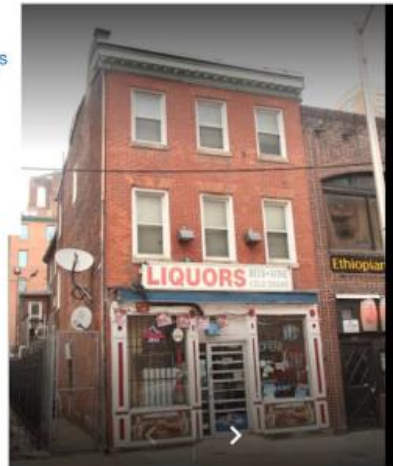
Pamela J Trangenste in ^{1, 2}, Raimee H Eck ³, Vi Lu ², Daniel Webster ⁴, Jacky M Jennings ⁵,

Carl Latkin ⁶, Adam J Milam ⁷, Debra Furr-Holden ⁸, David H Jernigan ²

Affiliations + expand

PMID: 32048598 PMCID: PMC7024813 DOI: 10.15288/jsad.2020.81.24

[Free PMC article](#)



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Slide 17.

KEY COMPONENTS OF CURE VIOLENCE

- 1** **DETECT AND INTERRUPT** violent conflicts and violent retaliations (analogous to stopping epidemics).
- 2** **IDENTIFY AND TREAT** the people most at risk of violence by helping them to change behavior, leave gangs, learn conflict resolution skills, and get assistance with employment, etc.
- 3** **MOBILIZE** community to shift social norms to non-violence and support the individual-level changes made by Cure Violence participants.



The poster features three silhouettes of men in a dark setting. The central figure is orange, while the two flanking figures are white. The central figure has his arms outstretched towards the other two. Below the silhouettes, the text 'SAFE STREETS' is written in large, bold, orange letters. Underneath that, the slogan 'STOP SHOOTING. START LIVING.' is written in white, all-caps letters.

Slide 18.

History of Collaboration

- Previously evaluated Safe Streets in 2010, 2012, and 2018
- Early evaluations showed:
 - favorable effects on gun violence in 2 of 4 sites,
 - reductions in youth's attitudes supportive of using guns to settle disputes,
 - positive effects on participants.
- Positive evaluation findings helped to secure and expand program funding.
- Data through 2017 indicated decreasing protective effects on gun violence using multiple statistical models (Webster et al., 2018; Buggs, Webster, & Crifasi, 2021).



Slide 19.

Current Work

- Updating previous evaluation to include 6 newer sites
- Expanded study period to include 2018-2022
- New statistical modeling techniques to improve the validity and precision of estimates Safe Streets effects on homicides and non-fatal shootings.



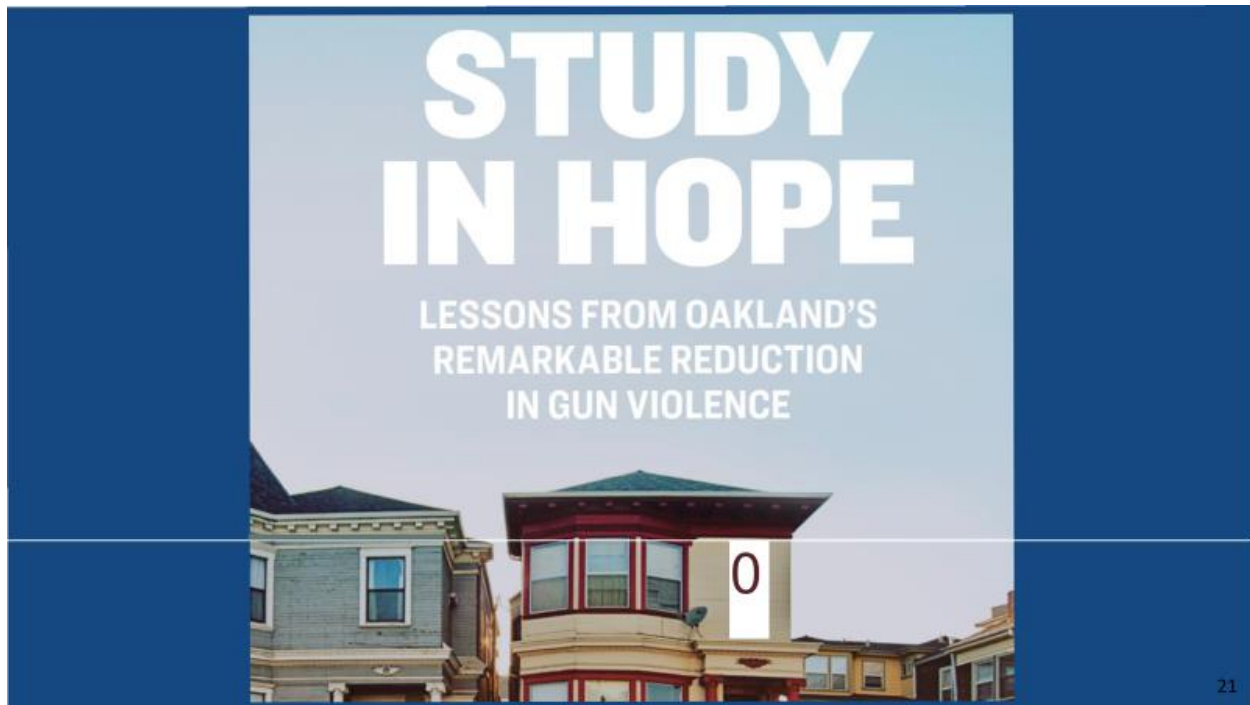
Slide 20.

Summary of Estimated Program Effects

- **Reduced homicides:** 16% over all sites, 22% in longer-running sites, 32% in first 4 years of implementation.
- **Reduced nonfatal shootings an average of 23% across all sites**
- **Prevented estimated 56 homicides and 112 nonfatal shootings over 669 program months.**
- Return on investment is between \$7 and \$19 for every \$1 spent on Safe Streets. Sound investment in health equity and social justice.



Slide 21.



Slide 22.

Oakland's Ceasefire Program

1. **Problem analysis** – patterns of gun violence, identification of individuals and groups driving violence – 0.1% of residents at high risk.
2. **Respectful in-person communications** – law enforcement, “moral voice of the community,” outreach workers, and service providers. Promise to help and promise consequences for serious violence.
3. **Relationship-based social services.**
4. **Narrowly focused law enforcement actions** focused on curtailing violence.
5. Management structure for accountability.

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Slide 23.

Evaluation of Oakland's Ceasefire Program (Braga et al., 2019)

- ▶ Reductions in gun violence of about 30% in communities and groups with Ceasefire. The size of the reduction is in line with similar programs in other cities.
- ▶ Reduced violent victimization by individuals in the program.
- ▶ Reductions in arrests and officer use of excessive force.

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Appendix C: Written Testimony

Submitted by Task Force Member Jennifer Jenks

Individual and/or Organization Offering Written Testimony:

Written by Jennifer Jenks, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Illinois Certified Domestic Violence Professional; Program Director, Metropolitan Family Services-North Center

Crime Reduction Task Force member Jennifer Jenks conducted these interviews on Feb. 15, 2023, (with assistance from a Spanish-English translator).

Written Testimony:

Gabriella

Gabriella (not her real name) spoke in Spanish and she wanted to share her story to highlight the dangers of domestic violence, especially when a survivor tries to leave. Gabriella's story also highlights the lack of support for survivors of domestic violence in the court system.

"I met my husband in Mexico, and we both made the trip to the United States together. The abuse started as verbal and transitioned to physical. He would hit me, and this continued through the pregnancy with our first child, and it continued for many years. I told him I wanted to leave. He said that before I could leave him, he would kill me. I had two children with him at the time. They are now both adults

The abuse had gotten to the point where he was being abusive to my youngest son, who was 8 years old at the time. I tried to interfere, and he became physically abusive with me. I called the police, and he was arrested and briefly incarcerated.

After he was let out, he came home, and I allowed him to come home because I was afraid. But after he came back, the abuse ended up being a lot worse. About 1½ years after that I made the decision to leave. I didn't call the police out of fear, and he threatened me that the next time he saw me he would kill me.

After I had left, some years later, he did find me. He was abusive and he tried to run me over with his car. He injured my legs. He saw me outside of a bakery and said all his threats again. He said, 'Do you remember, I said, if I saw you again, I would kill you. You sent me to jail, and now you're going to pay.'

He grabbed me by the hair and started hitting me. Then he started the car, and he was basically dragging me while he was driving. I had injuries to my legs and body from being dragged. Somebody got in front of the car so he couldn't keep going.

When we went to the court for the case, my youngest son was 14 at the time. My son showed up in court with his father. His father had gone to the school and taken him out. His father brought him to court. I was trying to tell the judge that he lives with me, and his father had taken him without permission. The judge said he showed up with his father and the judge said he 'seems to be a good dad.' The judge said, 'You're not supposed to talk ill about him.' The judge told me to stop talking and wouldn't listen to what I was saying. I tried to show the judge the injuries to my legs, and she didn't want to see anything. The judge ruled that because he was 14 years old, he could decide where he wanted to stay. The judge talked to my son, and then she ruled that he could stay with his father.

The advocates who were working with me were shocked. They were shocked that the judge would rule in that manner. They encouraged me to appeal and so I did. The judge ruled exactly the same way. The judge said, 'I have made my decision.' And, the judge didn't give me any visitation. The judge actually stated that the only way I could visit my son would be to call his father and ask to speak to my son and if my son wanted to speak to me, then I could talk to him. If I wanted to visit, I would have to go to his father's house. The judge didn't care about the father's background, which included alcohol abuse and gang involvement.

From the age of 14, my son ended up staying with his father until the age of 17. At age 17, my son came home and told me that his father made him lie to the judge. His father made him lie and say that I was abusive toward him and that is why he was able to stay with the father."

Marisol

Marisol (not her real name) spoke in Spanish, and she wanted to share her story to highlight the way she has been treated during a court process that has been drawn out for years. Marisol's story also highlights the lack of support for survivors of domestic violence in the court system.

"The abuse skyrocketed in the last few years of the relationship. It started with verbal and was also physical, emotional and financial. Throughout the court case, I was overwhelmed because I wanted to advocate for him also and wanted us to be a family. I wanted him to be a part of his children's lives. I had normalized the abuse. During the court case, it was overwhelming. I felt the abuse was continuing during the court case.

My children are 12-year-old and 8-year-old boys. They are with me now and visit their father on the weekends. When I went to court for a divorce, they kept giving him extensions. I filed for divorce at the end of 2019 and it was extension after extension. I had to pay for the attorney each time I went to court. He didn't show up for the whole last year in court. I didn't understand why they kept granting extensions when he didn't show up. Finally, it went to publication, and he didn't show up. I was granted the divorce in February 2021. I was given full parenting rights. I thought it was over. I had to pay the attorney expenses, and I wasn't getting any child support.

The court ended, but the threats didn't end. In the summer of last year, he took the children on a trip. He took the passports and said that he wouldn't give them (passports) back. He threatened me and made me feel afraid. He did give the passports back.

He ended up going to court over child support. He didn't want to pay, so he re-opened the case. I have to get an attorney again. Since, he has re-opened it, he has to cover my attorney expenses. But, the judge says we are now going to start from the beginning. There are no specific dates yet. It is very disheartening and very difficult to see everything that I had done and then to see how easy it was for them (the judge/court) to just backtrack. It is very exhausting for me to go through all of this again.

I feel stronger because of the counseling I have had. I also feel more prepared and know that the abuse will continue through the court process, especially financially. But, I will not give up because of my sons."

There are so many examples just like these two of how the court system, civil and criminal, allows the abuser to continue to perpetrate domestic violence – and even becomes a willing participant. Gabriella and Marisol's hope is that their stories will lead to advocacy, policies and laws to reduce the crime of

domestic violence. They are true survivors and speaking out makes them feel empowered and continues to help with their process of healing.

Submitted by Task Force Member Luis Centeno

Individual and/or Organization Offering Written Testimony:

Written by Luis Centeno, founder/owner, Fit Results

Written Testimony:

My name is Luis Centeno. The founding owner of Fit Results.

Fit Results is not an organization, but we help to change lives on a daily basis, mentally/physically via fitness.

I write testimony today because I too lived a lifestyle of criminal activity since I was 14 years old. I am 48 now. It took blood, sweat and tears to get where I am today. The reason I was in and out of jail growing up was because that lifestyle is all that I knew. I was never taken out of the neighborhood nor was I ever mentored. To learn ways to be an entrepreneur and expand my mind. Working a regular job was not sufficient in my eyes back then. I know what I needed to be successful. I know what the youth and returning citizens need.

Government funding should really go towards organizations that are uplifting the underserved population. The ones that are educating and job placement and even more so, entrepreneurship. There are too many nonprofits organizations that are simply milking the system for money. That needs to stop. To be successful they need the tools and mentorship to be led the right direction. Someone should overwatch them and perhaps a one stop shops for communication purposes.

The task force should take this into consideration. Stop putting a bandage on the problems we have. Stop with the simple solutions that doesn't resolve anything long term. The statistics show after local/federal sweeps of gangs and neighborhoods. It will happen again at some point like today.

uplifting those that need to be uplifted and showing them how to do it. By uplifting those that are possibly going back to their old neighborhoods. They can potentially be new business owners and continue uplifting others in the community. Highlight them and show them they're doing good in front of everyone so others can see. That would cause an impact.

Implement the programs for returning citizens starting inside, and for them to continue outside. The programs and different organizations must communicate with each other.

Those that change their lives around can also serve as mentors. Now they can make a decent livable wage to support themselves and continue to help the youth or oncoming returning citizens. The revolving door to living a healthier lifestyle begins then. The same revolving door that exists to the department of corrections for so many.

If I would have been given the opportunity, I could've avoided the sentence I served in the federal system. Masculine ego in these neighborhoods is what keeps us from learning and doing the right thing. We don't want to look weak in the eyes of our peers.

We must change that by praising and highlighting those that change their lives.

Appendix D: Recommendation Not Approved

Recommendation

There should be a new legislation that requires the immediate issuance of a warrant to remove firearms and Firearm Owner's Identification (FOID) card from an individual for which an emergency or plenary Order of Protection is granted against. This can reduce domestic violence, and crime in general, because domestic violence offenders can pose a threat not only to a family but also to the whole community, especially if they have firearms in their possession.

If judges grant an Order of Protection, a search warrant to seize firearms should be issued at the same time. Currently, even if an Order of Protection is granted and a judge indicates that an individual needs to surrender firearms and their FOID card, it does not happen immediately. Rather, the person may not turn them in, and many times law enforcement officers do not request a search warrant to confiscate. A simplified warrant process can help victims receive protection more promptly, without law enforcement having to return to the court to petition for a warrant.

4 in favor, 4 opposed, 5 abstained/present

Findings

Studies (e.g., Murrell et al., 2007) found that many domestic violence offenders often experienced abusive homes during their childhood and were more likely to commit general violence in the community. Over half of mass shootings between 2014 and 2019 were related to domestic violence in which perpetrators killed at least one family member or partner (Geller et al., 2021).

The use of firearms exacerbates the severity of domestic violence by increasing the number of victims (Kivisto & Porter, 2019). Domestic violence offenders who have firearms can pose a threat to the whole community, not just to their families. Domestic homicide and firearm injuries can be reduced by issuing a restraining order that confiscates firearms from those who commit domestic abuse (Vigdor & Mercy, 2006). However, offenders do not always surrender the FOID card or the weapon. For example, between 2015 and 2018, only 37% of all revoked FOID cards were returned, and only 26% of the revoked FOID card holders returned firearms (Bustos, 2019). Immediate removal of firearms and FOID cards can reduce not only domestic violence but also crime in general.

Currently, judges may order revocation of a FOID card and removal of a weapon as part of an Order of Protection.³ Even if an Order of Protection is granted and a judge indicates that an individual needs to surrender firearms and their FOID card, it does not happen immediately. Judges do not issue search warrants at the time as the order, leaving lag time between the order and law enforcement's follow up. In the interim, offenders may hide firearms and lie about firearm possession. Law enforcement *may* petition the circuit court to issue a warrant to search for and take the FOID card and any firearms. However, law enforcement is not required to do so.

References

³ For more information, see the Order of Protection form approved by the Illinois Courts: <https://www.illinoiscourts.gov/forms/approved-forms/forms-approved-forms-circuit-court/order-of-protection>

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