

# NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLIC SAFETY: Facts, Issues, Options for Advocacy



Prepared by the Education Committee

## FACTS

**CRIME STATISTICS:** The Uniform Crime Report (UCR) is produced by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) based on voluntary reporting from individual city and county police departments throughout the United States. The UCR categorizes crimes as either Part I, which include all violent crimes (murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) and the property crimes of burglary, larceny and automobile theft; or Part II, which include forgery, fraud, vandalism, prostitution, disorderly conduct and vagrancy, as well as other serious crimes such as manslaughter, arson, drug offenses, and driving under the influence. Traffic and parking violations are not included in the Part I or Part II categories compiled by the FBI.

“Crime rate” generally refers to the incidence of Part I crimes and is expressed as crimes per 100,000 residents. Part II crimes are monitored in “zero tolerance” strategies. Arrest rates are not crime rates because they do not capture crimes in which no arrest occurred, arrests sometimes do not end in convictions, and arrests do not reflect unreported crimes in areas where citizens are either inured to crime, cynical about likely police response, or fearful of reprisal if they contact authorities.

**DEMOGRAPHICS:** Criminology researchers have found statistical correlations between crime rates and certain characteristics of the population, such as age, sex, race, educational levels, unemployment, and income, and neighborhood characteristics such as abandoned buildings, home-ownership, and land use.

**NEIGHBORHOODS:** The long-term Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN) was designed to investigate the development of crime and violence in children and adolescents. It combines a longitudinal study of more than 6,000 Chicago children and adolescents with a study of 80 Chicago neighborhoods. The work was conducted from 1995 through 2001. The study has found that adolescent violence rates are lower for those young people who live in neighborhoods that have more “protective factors”(residents share values, have common expectations that neighbors will intervene in problem behavior, and trust each other, referred to in the aggregate as “collective efficacy”), who live with married parents, and who are immigrants or have parents who are immigrants. Of the three, neighborhoods have the strongest influence on the different rates at which adolescents of all races commit violence. Collective efficacy is reduced in neighborhoods where poverty is high and residential stability is low. (NIJ2007PHDCN)

**GANG ACTIVITY:** Data from the PHDCN showed that young people who witness gun violence are more likely to engage in violent crime. Youth who live in dangerous, disadvantaged neighborhoods and have been exposed to violence are more likely to carry guns...Violence appears to be learned in the company of others. (NIJ2008why) A study in Columbus, OH and St. Louis, MO found that young women join gangs because of their neighborhood environments, serious family problems (including in-family sexual abuse from which they feel male gang members might protect them), and gang-involved family members. However, gang membership increases young women’s risk of victimization, particularly of assaults. Suppression has been found to be the least effective response to gangs, while providing social opportunities through job training and education are more promising. However, “in many American cities, gang violence has so disrupted the social fabric of some neighborhoods that socialization, employment, and education can no longer work successfully...[in] Chicago, Los Angeles, and St. Louis...gangs are responsible for more than 25 percent of all homicides and assaults.”(NIJ2002)

**DRUG TRADE AND DRUG USE:** Drug use contributes to higher crime rates. Drug use is more closely linked to robbery and property crime than to violent crime. Many addicts commit crimes to get money to buy drugs. In state prisons, those convicted of violent crimes are less likely to have used drugs than those convicted of property crimes. Yet at least a quarter of men who commit acts of domestic violence also have drug abuse problems. Women who are drug addicts are more likely to be victims of abuse.

Compulsory treatment can work. Attempts to deter drug use through punishment fail because they do not address the complex causes of drug abuse, which begin within the context of family problems and peer deviant behavior. Therapeutic, structured programs can reduce recidivism, whether in prisons, through community corrections or drug court supervision, or when people reenter the community following imprisonment. One characteristic necessary for successful programs is continuing, comprehensive aftercare in the community. This reduces the chances that someone will be arrested and convicted again. (NIJ2008drug)

**GUN AVAILABILITY:** Many juveniles and young adults can easily obtain illegal guns; most claim to carry them for self-defense. A study of persons arrested for a wide range of crimes showed that a higher percentage of arrestees than regular citizens own firearms. Arrestees are also more likely to be injured or killed by gun violence. Within a community, this amounts to an identifiable group of "career" offenders. Surveys of offenders have found that they prefer newer, high-quality guns and may steal or borrow them; most, however, acquire guns "off the street" through the illicit gun market. (NIJ2008who)

**RECIDIVISM:** "Of the 108,580 prisoners released from prisons in 11 states in 1983, nearly 63 percent were re-arrested within three years, 47 percent were convicted of a new crime, and 41 percent were returned to prison or jail. Among nearly 300,000 prisoners released in 15 states in 1994, 68 percent were re-arrested within three years, 47 percent were convicted of a new crime, and 25 percent were recommitted to prison with a new sentence..."

Reentry programs primarily hope to increase public safety and reduce offender recidivism. A key way to accomplish that goal is to institutionalize the cross-agency and community teamwork needed to make reentry succeed. Reentry efforts must begin in the prison and be actively carried into the community after prisoners are released. Services that are tailored to prisoners' needs help them reintegrate into society. Individualizing a prisoner's needs and assessing his risks also keep the victim's perspective in mind. Typical reentry services include housing, education, employment aid, peer mentoring or case management, health services, family reunification, and heightened surveillance." (NIJ2007)

#### **POLICING STRATEGIES:**

Community policing: While the definition remains somewhat fuzzy because the idea is that it be tailored to each community's needs, consensus has emerged that community policing has five main ingredients: solving underlying problems that link seemingly unrelated incidents of crime and disorder instead of responding to them one by one; de-emphasizing routine patrol and rapid response as primary crimefighting tools; involving the communities being policed as partners in identifying problems and planning or even executing responses; preventing crime through strategies for socializing children and youth and for making high crime places safer; and changing organizations to support the other goals. (NIJ2000)

Zero tolerance (sometimes called "broken windows"): The theory behind this approach is that a downward spiral begins as community disorder – increased vandalism, trash, and nuisance crimes – that makes people fearful and less likely to exercise informal social controls on their neighbors. People spend less time out of their houses and communicate less with each other, trust each other less, and take less responsibility for each other. Supervision of young people is reduced, and local housing and business conditions deteriorate. Lawbreakers see an absence of attention as an opportunity. Criminal justice agencies that have embraced this theory regularly cite and sanction those who commit Part II crimes.

Project Safe Neighborhoods PSN uses a strategic research-based model — built on successful approaches used in Boston Ceasefire (directed by David Kennedy), the 10-city Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative (SACSI) and Richmond's Project Exile Exit Notice — to reduce gun violence through enforcement, deterrence and prevention. At the core of PSN is increased federal prosecution of illegal gun possession and use. Other PSN intervention strategies include police patrols and chronic violent offender and re-entry programs. PSN prevention strategies included neighborhood development, education and school-based programs. (NIJ2009or)

A National Institute of Justice-funded evaluation of the effectiveness of this major multiyear, multiagency crime prevention initiative found: 1) reduced violent crime overall in PSN cities – reductions were greater in cities with a high-level of federal prosecution; 2) a decline in gun-related violence in nine PSN cities that were studied in depth; and that 3) key factors for success included United States Attorneys Offices' leadership, cross agency buy-in and the flexibility of the program to adjust to the realities of individual jurisdictions. (NIJ2009osn)

**CRIME TRENDS:** Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey crime data show that:

- Serious violent crime levels have declined since 1993, leveling off about 2000;
- The UCR homicide rate has been relatively stable since 2000;
- Violent crime rates declined for both males and female victims since 1994;

- Serious violent crime rates have declined since 1993 for both blacks and white victims (rates for blacks have been higher than whites since at least 1973, though the gap is narrowing);
- Teens and young adults (12-24) experience the highest rates of violent crime;
- Nonfatal firearm-related crime has plummeted since 1993, before increasing in 2005;
- The estimated number of arrests for drug abuse violations for adults has been increasing, while the number for juveniles stabilized;
- Property crime rates continue a four decade decline; and
- The percentage of crimes reported to the police has been increasing (**BJS**)

Preliminary UCR data for 2008 shows a decrease of 2.5 percent in the number of violent crimes brought to police agencies' attention in 2008, compared to 2007. The number of property crimes in the United States from January to December of 2008 decreased 1.6 percent when compared to data from the same time period in 2007. (**FBI**)

## BALTIMORE CITY ISSUES

### REPORTED CRIME: BALTIMORE COMPARED TO OTHER CITIES OF COMPARABLE SIZE (FBI)

City	Population 2008	Violent crimes reported to law enforcement*	# of Murders	Violent crime rate**	Property crimes reported to law enforcement
<b>BALTIMORE</b>	<b>634,549</b>	<b>10,030</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>1,581</b>	<b>30,570</b>
Albuquerque	527,464	4,718	38	894	6,137
Atlanta	537,958	7,408	105	1,377	38,978
Boston	604,465	6,676	62	1,104	22,429
Charlotte	758,769	7,070	83	932	46,934
Cleveland	433,452	6,184	102	1,427	25,031
Columbus, OH	751,887	5,821	109	774	48,282
Denver	592,881	3,361	40	567	19,316
Detroit	905,783	17,428	306	1,927	53,095
El Paso	612,374	2,825	17	461	19,722
Fort Worth	701,345	4,601	49	656	35,325
Kansas City, MO	451,454	6,269	115	1,389	28,277
Memphis	672,046	12,927	137	1,924	53,817
Milwaukee	602,131	7,339	71	1,219	36,376
Nashville	602,181	8,404	76	1,396	32,347
Oklahoma City	552,452	5,400	57	977	32,563
Portland, OR	553,023	3,445	26	623	29,243
St. Louis	356,204	7,383	167	2,073	30,443
Seattle	598,077	3,447	29	576	32,820

\*Including murder \*\* Violent crimes per 100,000 population

**CRIME RATE TRENDS:** Baltimore City has made progress in reducing violent crime in recent years, reducing homicides to their lowest level since 1970. However, 2009 data shows that Baltimore City's homicide rate ranked second highest in the nation among cities larger than 500,000. Homicide was the fourth leading cause of death for Baltimore City residents in 2007, and the leading cause of death among 15-34 year-olds. (**BCHD2009**)

**GUNS:** According to the Mayor's Office, the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms ranks Maryland near the top of its list for gun trafficking. Half of the 7,000 Maryland guns recovered by law enforcement officials came from Baltimore City. Mayor Dixon has adopted a comprehensive strategy to combat gun trafficking and possession of illegal guns, including an illegal gun task force, legislation to create a gun offender registry, and the creation of GunStat. GunStat closely tracks gun arrests and seizures, monitors the time it takes to analyze guns used in crimes, and provides information on the prosecution and sentencing for gun crimes in Baltimore. Participants include the Mayor's Office of Baltimore City, Baltimore Police Department, Office of the Attorney General, the Department of Juvenile Services, the State's Attorney Office, Maryland State Police, and the ATF.

**EX-OFFENDER RE-ENTRY:** Each year, about 15,000 inmates are released from prison statewide, approximately 9,000 of whom return to Baltimore City. Most have very limited education, employment-related skills, or job readiness. Over half of young men in Baltimore have been incarcerated, which limits their employment options. Another 43,000 individuals who were arrested but not sentenced to long-term incarceration are released annually from short-term detention facilities into the community.

Their education and work history are similar to those of inmates. Research shows that many of them will return to prison again and again. In 2007 and 2008, the Maryland General Assembly passed a series of new laws that reduce barriers for ex-offenders. These laws changed Maryland's approach to criminal record expungement, and created the nation's first Child Support Incentive program. (JOTF)

**DRUGS:** Baltimore has a long history of heroin use, and even today, nearly ¾ of treatment admissions are heroin abusers (often in combination with cocaine or alcohol).(CESAR) Estimates from the mid-1990s indicate that well over 30,000 Baltimore City residents need treatment for heroin addiction. Drug treatment funding in Baltimore City has tripled over the last decade, but in 2005, there were only 4,200 public methadone – the gold standard treatment for heroin addiction – treatment slots. A 2000 survey of 10 of the City's 14 methadone clinics found that they received an average of 500 calls per week for 50 available treatment slots. (UMBC)

**JUVENILE VIOLENCE:** A recent Baltimore City Health Department study that analyzed youth victims and perpetrators of violence in Baltimore City reveals that 99% of these youth for whom data is available had a record indicating interaction with social services, education, or criminal justice agencies in the time period preceding their shooting, death, or crime; 48% of these youth had previous contact with the Department of Social Services for allegations of abuse or neglect; 92% of them had been chronically truant in at least one of the last eight academic years; 63% had a history of school suspension or expulsion; 73% had a history of referral to the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services; and 12% had an adult arrest record. The Baltimore City Health Department's Office of Youth Violence Prevention operates Operation Safe Kids, Multisystemic Therapy, and Safe Streets programs.

## ADVOCACY OPTIONS

- Ask any candidate running for office who seeks your contribution what he or she has done or plans to do to address the issue of public safety in low-income neighborhoods.
- The **Job Opportunities Task Force** ([www.jotf.org](http://www.jotf.org)) supports a wide range of workforce-related public policy initiatives and budget decisions, including increased investment in adult education and training, expanding the Earned Income Credit, reducing barriers to work for ex-offenders, and unemployment insurance reform.
- The **Public Justice Center** ([www.publicjustice.org](http://www.publicjustice.org)) is a nonprofit legal advocacy organization that seeks to enforce and expand the rights of people who suffer injustice because of their poverty or discrimination. It advocates in the courts, legislatures, and government agencies, and through public education and coalition building. Current projects focus on tenants, workers, immigrants, prisoners, homeless children, families needing medical assistance, and creating a right to counsel in civil cases.
- The goal of the Criminal Justice Program at **Open Society Institute-Baltimore** is to increase public safety and to reduce incarceration and recidivism by encouraging support for effective and humane responses to criminal behavior and victimization. The Program seeks to infuse public debate on crime with a broader discussion of the causes of incarceration and of the strategies that can effectively reduce crime and recidivism. ([www.soros.org/initiatives/baltimore/focus\\_areas/a\\_criminal\\_justice](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/baltimore/focus_areas/a_criminal_justice))
- **Advocates for Children and Youth** ([www.acy.org](http://www.acy.org)) promotes public policies and investment so all children are safe, healthy, educated, and secure in their families and communities. Its juvenile justice agenda is targeted on creating a continuum of community-based services so that delinquent children are not unnecessarily removed from their homes or placed in confinement.
- **Power Inside** ([www.powerinside.org](http://www.powerinside.org)) has been providing services to women inside and outside the Baltimore jail since 2001. It has also played an advocacy role in improving the conditions of confinement at the Baltimore women's jail and starting a jail release program.

**SOURCES:** **BCHD2009** Baltimore City Health Department, "Examination of Youth Violence in Baltimore City 2002-2007; **BJS** Bureau of Justice Statistics "Key Crime & Justice Facts at a Glance" [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance.htm#Crime](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance.htm#Crime); **CESAR** "Drug Use in Maryland" University of Maryland Center for Substance Abuse Research [www.cesar.umd.edu/cesar/county/dcs.asp?county=balt\\_city](http://www.cesar.umd.edu/cesar/county/dcs.asp?county=balt_city); **FBI** "Crime in the United States" <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/08aprelim/index.html>; **JOTF** Job Opportunities Task Force [www.jotf.org](http://www.jotf.org); **NIJ2000** Roth, JA and JF Ryan "The COPS Program After 4 Years—National Evaluation" National Institute of Justice [Research in Brief](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/corrections/reentry/welcome.htm); **NIJ2002** Reed, WL and SH Decker, eds. "Responding to Gangs: Evaluation and Research;" **NIJ2007PHDCN** Liberman A. "Adolescents, Neighborhoods and Violence" National Institute of Justice [Research in Brief](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/corrections/reentry/welcome.htm); **NIJ2007** "Reentry" [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/corrections/reentry/welcome.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/corrections/reentry/welcome.htm); **NIJ2008drug** [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/drugs/research-findings.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/drugs/research-findings.htm); **NIJ2008rec** "Recidivism" [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/corrections/recidivism/welcome.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/corrections/recidivism/welcome.htm); **NIJ2008who** "Who Has Illegal Guns and How are They Acquired" [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/crime/gun-violence/aquired.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/crime/gun-violence/aquired.htm); **NIJ2008why** "Why Do Some Youth Become Violent and Carry Firearms?" [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/crime/gun-violence/youths-gangs-guns/why-carry.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/crime/gun-violence/youths-gangs-guns/why-carry.htm); **NIJ2009or** "How Operation Safe Neighborhoods Came About," <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/crime/gun-violence/prevention/psn-origins.htm>; **NIJ2009osn** "Gun Violence Programs: Operation Safe Neighborhoods" [/www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/crime/gun-violence/prevention/project-safe-neighborhoods.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/crime/gun-violence/prevention/project-safe-neighborhoods.htm); **UMBC** "An Evaluation of Whether Medical Savings are Associated with Expanding Opioid Maintenance Therapy for Heroin Addiction in Baltimore City;"

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