

COLORADO
**CRIMINAL
JUSTICE
REFORM**
COALITION

VICTIMS
SPEAK

Better Understanding the Needs
and Experiences of Crime Survivors



April 2018

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FOREWORD

I have experienced first-hand the impact victimization can have on a person's quality of life, including their mental and physical health. Over the course of my life, I have been the victim of both violent and non-violent crimes without receiving the help I needed to recover. In reflecting on my experiences, the most upsetting realization was my lack of desire to even seek help or support services. Even if I had wanted them, I don't think I would have known where to go for help either to deal with my trauma or meet other basic needs that were upended from the crime.

Like me, too many victims do not know about the services that are available and the importance of addressing both their short-term and long-term need for support. Like me, too many victims of color, especially black men, struggle with the notion that someone from our neighborhood cannot be a victim. Like me, too many experience a response by the criminal justice system that seems more focused on what is best for the investigation and prosecution than on what is best to meet the needs of a diverse group of crime survivors.

It is against this backdrop that the Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition (CCJRC) decided to learn more about the experiences of crime survivors, their needs, and their perspectives on strategies that could promote community safety.

Folks may be surprised to see a report like this coming from CCJRC, which has been commonly perceived as an advocate for "offenders" rather than victims. CCJRC rejects this either-or binary where you can only care about one group. Those silos may be appropriate in a courtroom context but are not particularly helpful or useful from a community based context because both victims and offenders are our neighbors, our family members, and are often the same person.

In the fall of 2016, CCJRC commissioned Ridder/Braden and Stay Current Strategies to conduct a survey of 500 crime survivors in the Denver metro area. We also consulted with Wendy Talley, MSW,

who convened nine different focus groups of victims who are often not included in the design of public safety policy and crime survivor services, namely victims of color, men, young adults, and people who also have criminal records.

This report summarizes the key findings from the survey. We hope it contributes to a comprehensive and robust discussion about how to do a better job at preventing crime and promoting health and safety policy that works for all communities.

We also hope this report sparks new thinking about how to address the wide service gaps and barriers so that help is more accessible and delivered by and within the community and not so heavily dominated by delivery via the criminal justice system.

We are also committed to expanding access to support services regardless of whether the crime was reported or not, whether the crime occurred 10 minutes ago or 10 years ago and with equal competence to help crime survivors across the wide spectrum of age, gender, gender expression, and race/ethnicity.

Having survived victimization, it is an honor to be the lead of this campaign for CCJRC. I look forward to participating in the discussions I hope this important report may generate.

Juston Cooper
Deputy Director
Colorado Criminal Justice
Reform Coalition



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the fall of 2016, CCJRC commissioned RBI Strategies and Research and Stay Current Strategies to conduct an independent survey of 500 crime victims from the Denver Metropolitan Statistical Area who self-reported being a victim of at least one crime in the last ten years. The survey intentionally oversampled victims of color (N=250) to gain explicit insight on their experience of victimization. Unless otherwise cited, the data contained in this report reflect findings from the survey. At the end of this report is a full description of the survey methodology.

The Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition (CCJRC) decided to commission this survey to gain a better understanding of the complex experiences of crime survivors and the tangible and psychological impacts from those experiences. We also wanted to understand the extent to which people reported the crime(s) to law enforcement and the reasons why people choose to report a crime, or not. The survey also draws further investigation into levels of awareness and interest in various victim support services and the reasons why people choose to seek support, or not. Finally, this report offers details on crime victims and their public policy preferences to improve community safety in Colorado.

The survey found that victims were much more likely to experience property crimes than violent crimes, although violent crimes resulted in a much higher overall impact on the victim. There is significant variance among demographics by crime type; mainly victims of violent crimes are disproportionately non-white.

For an overwhelming majority, being a victim of a crime is not an isolated experience. Those victimized the most frequently in their lifetime are also more likely to have experienced violent crime, more likely to experience a higher frequency of negative impacts, and are more likely to have been convicted of a crime themselves.

Crime survivors experience significant trauma from being a victim – 86 percent of survey respondents have experienced at least one symptom commonly associated with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Nearly one-third of victims (30 percent) have experienced six or more negative impacts including challenges such as loss of income or ongoing medical issues.

Coupled with victims' experience of crime is the extent to which they report the crime to law enforcement or not. Our study found that the majority of victims report crime primarily for practical reasons. However, crimes go unreported when a victim does not feel that they have anything to gain from involving law enforcement.

The study also revealed there are major gaps in victims' access to treatment and services, especially among men and black victims. Black and male victims are the least likely to receive services. For men, a focus on building interest in services is key. For the black community, a focus on building awareness in services that are available is key. The underlying interest is already present.

Building more trust in communities of color in the system is crucial. 40% of Latino and almost 60% of black survivors reported having had an experience with law enforcement that they characterized as inappropriate. An overwhelming majority of all respondents believe that people of color are treated differently in the criminal justice system, whether they are being accused of a crime or are the victim of a crime.

Overall, crime survivors surveyed overwhelmingly prefer prevention strategies that focus on building communities over building prisons and public safety strategies that focus on rehabilitation versus punishment.

KEY FINDINGS

1

Victimization impacts many residents, but violent crime disproportionately impacts communities of color.

- 83 percent of respondents experienced at least one property crime and 46 percent experienced at least one violent crime.
- There are large racial disparities in victimization – black people are 34 percent more likely and Latinos are 38 percent more likely, respectively, than white people, to report having been the victim of a violent crime.

2

Reporting behaviors of victims may vary by crime, experience, and demographic. Although victims report at a high rate, a third do not report the crime to law enforcement.

- 71 percent of crime survivors said that they reported the crime to law enforcement, which is higher than the national average of 54 percent as reported by the National Crime Victims Survey (NCVS). However, only one-in-three victims of sexual assault reported the crime to police.
- Victims who reported a crime generally said they involved law enforcement for very practical reasons. The most common reason cited (37 percent) for reporting the crime was an attempt to recover stolen property, report property damage, or obtain proper documentation and insurance reasons.
- Hispanic/Latino victims were the most likely to have reported the crime to law enforcement at 77 percent, compared to 69 percent of white and 67 percent of African American victims.
- Survivors who did not report crimes to law enforcement simply did not see the point for one reason or another. Half of those answering the question either believed it would be a waste of time, the crime was not important enough, or reporting would be futile due to lack of evidence.
- Not reporting a crime to law enforcement was more significant among young adults 18-29 years of age than any other age demographic. Although a strong majority (61 percent) did report, this is 10 points lower than the survey average and lower than any other age demographic.

Victimization, particularly repeat victimization, can lead to significant trauma for many victims, but few receive the services or treatment they need to heal and recover.

- Most crime survivors experienced repeat victimization – eight in 10 victims (83 percent) had been victimized three or more times. Nearly one-third of crime survivors (29 percent) have been victimized eight or more times.
- Most survivors experience significant trauma from being a victim – 86 percent of survey respondents have experienced at least one symptom commonly associated with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Nearly one-third of victims (30 percent) have experienced six or more negative impacts including loss of income or ongoing medical issues.
- Only one in 10 respondents received victims' services. Nearly four in ten victims (37 percent) were aware of services and interested in receiving them but could not access them, but most victims were unaware of the services that are available.

Across all racial demographics, crime survivors believe the criminal justice system treats people of color differently whether they are accused of a crime or the victim of the crime.

- Black and Latino/Hispanic survivors reported having experiences of inappropriate police behavior at a far higher rate than white survivors.
- Three out of four crime survivors believe the criminal justice system treats people differently based on their race or ethnicity. This belief was consistent whether the person of color was the victim or the accused. This was particularly true for African Americans, for whom 9 in 10 believed people of color were treated differently by the criminal justice system.

By a wide margin, crime survivors believe that prevention, education, treatment and rehabilitation improves public safety more than incarceration.

- By a 4 to 1 margin, crime survivors prefer that Colorado focus more on rehabilitating than punishing people who commit crimes.
- Crime survivors surveyed vastly prefer crime prevention strategies outside of the criminal justice system. By margins of at least 3 to 1, victims believe education, treatment, employment, and housing programs will be more effective than incarceration at preventing crime.
- By a margin of 5 to 1, crime survivors prefer shortening prison sentences and spending the savings on rehabilitation to increasing the length of prison sentences.
- Victims' support for new approaches cuts across party lines, and majorities of every demographic group feel Colorado should focus more on rehabilitation than punishment. They support shortening prison sentences to reinvest in rehabilitation.
- Two-thirds (66 percent) of crime survivors believe victims' services should be made available to people regardless of whether or not they reported the crime to the police.

CRIME SURVIVORS' EXPERIENCE WITH VICTIMIZATION

All of the people surveyed have been a victim of at least one crime in the past ten years, with 83 percent experiencing at least one property crime and 46 percent experiencing at least one violent crime.

Type of Crime Experienced	%Experienced
Property theft	71%
Identity theft	52%
Vandalism	50%
Burglary	32%
At least one property crime	83%
Harassment	25%
Assault	17%
Robbery	17%
Murder of an immediate family member	7%
Rape or sexual assault	6%
At least one violent crime	46%

Table 1: Types of crime experienced

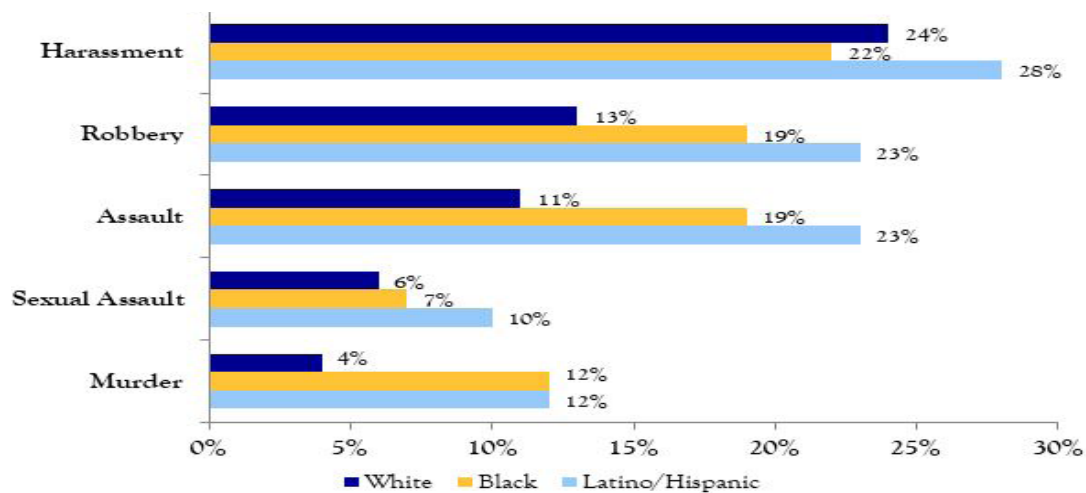
Racial disparities in victimization

Although crime can affect anyone, there are significant differences in the frequency and severity with which different groups experience victimization.

Consistent with national findings from the National Crime Victim Survey, (NCVS) people of color are far more likely to be victims of violent crime. Black respondents were 34 percent more likely and Latino respondents were 38 percent more likely to report experiencing violent crime than white respondents.

These differences exist across all the types of violent crimes included in the survey but are most pronounced with regard to assault and the murder of a family member. In fact, the survey found that Black and Latino respondents are three times more likely to have lost a loved one to murder than white respondents. Rates of victimization for property crime are more similar across race/ethnicity lines.

Chart 1: Victims' experience with violent crime by race and ethnicity



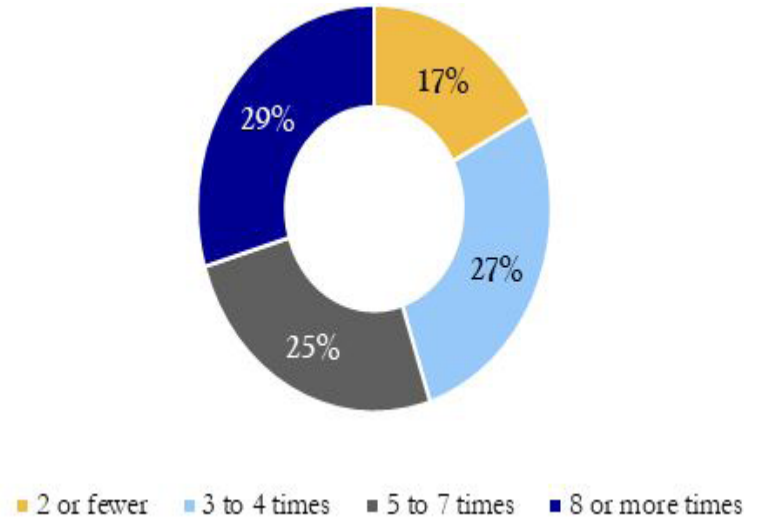
The impact of repeat victimization

While many people may think of victimization as something that happens in isolation, most crime survivors are victims of multiple crimes. More than eight in 10 people (83 percent) have experienced three or more crimes. Half of the survey respondents have been victimized five or more times. Overall, 92 percent of survivors are victims of more than one crime.

Repeat victimization can take a tremendous toll on crime survivors and can lead to a wide range of problems, including trauma. Trauma can increase the risk of substance abuse, depression, anxiety, and other issues that can negatively affect family relationships, employment, housing, and income. (Kilpatrick & Acierno, 2003) The effects of trauma can also linger long after a crime has occurred, and research shows that people repeatedly victimized are most likely to suffer from trauma. (Justice, August 2016)

Chart 2: Crime survivors' experience with repeat victimization

How many times have you experienced crime, including experiences you might have had as a child?



There are few significant differences in repeat victimization rates for people who have been the victim of crime between 1 and 4 times with regard to the race, age, or educational attainment of a victim. However, there is a noticeable difference by race/ethnicity for those who have been a victim five or more times.



Rate at which crime survivors report being victimized five or more times

In addition, 57 percent of those with eight or more experiences with crime are male, which highlights the need to better understand repeat victimization of men and better address their service needs.

Those who have experienced a higher number of lifetime crimes are more likely to have experienced violent crime: 59 percent of those who experienced more than eight crimes were the victim of at least one violent crime, compared to 34 percent of those who experienced two or fewer crimes.

IMPACTS OF VICTIMIZATION

Crime victims often suffer in the aftermath of their experience. Victimization affects crime survivors’ mental and physical health, feelings of safety, and emotional wellbeing. These impacts have serious consequences for victims when left untreated. Although outside of the scope of this survey, it is important to understand that loved ones of crime victims are also negatively impacted, and should receive support as well.

Overall, survey findings reveal that 86 percent of victims surveyed had experienced at least one symptom commonly associate with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). These impacts range from feeling anger, irritability, or mood swings to feeling guilt, shame or self-blame. Many victims experience multiple symptoms of trauma, with more than half (54 percent) reporting three or more impacts and more than one in 10 (13 percent) experiencing six of the most common PTSD symptoms.

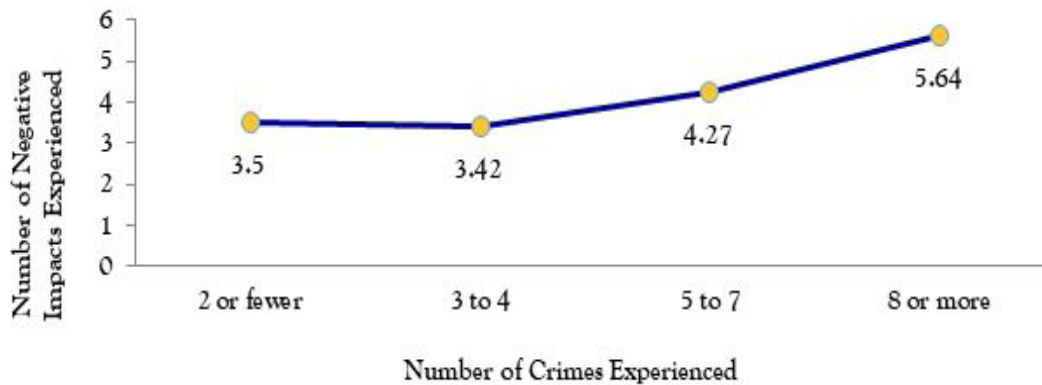
Victims also reported other major challenges such as ongoing medical issues (24 percent), loss of income (31 percent), or negative impacts on relationships with family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers (39 percent). All told, nine out of 10 victims (88 percent) experience at least one negative impact. The average crime survivor experiences four out of the 12 impacts we surveyed.

Table 2: Impacts of victimization on crime survivors

Impact	%Experienced
Feeling anger, irritability, or mood swings	68%
Feelings of shock, denial, or disbelief	60%
Feeling unsafe or scared	52%
Difficulty sleeping	44%
Difficulty focusing	35%
Feeling guilt, shame, or self-blame	33%
At least one symptom of trauma	86%
A negative impact on close relationships with family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers	39%
Loss of income	31%
Ongoing medical issues or physical pain	24%
Job loss	15%
Increased drug or alcohol use	13%
Loss of housing	12%
At least one negative impact	88%

Overall, 30 percent of victims experienced at least half of the twelve impacts listed. This increased significantly for those who had higher rates of repeat victimization. For those who had experienced at least eight or more crimes throughout their lives, 46 percent reported six or more negative impacts.

Chart 3: Number of crimes experienced



WENDY Survivor

Despite the serious nature of child sexual abuse, many such crimes are not reported to law enforcement.

In a sixth month span at the age of 13, my mother's boyfriend and my best friend's uncle sexually assaulted me. I didn't understand what was happening to me and I was terrified to tell anyone, let alone the police. Both men were very familiar to me and told me that no one would believe me.

When I told my mother about her boyfriend, her response was "you misunderstood." I never bothered to tell her about the second time.

Not once did I consider that a crime had been committed. I actually thought I was to blame. The men responsible never got reported or held accountable for what they did to me.

I believed what happened to me was my fault, and thus began a spiral of anger, self-hatred and depression. For 10 years my journey included being hospitalized for a near

fatal suicide attempt, numerous medications, and very little healing. I learned to keep secrets and became self-destructive.

I was in college majoring in social work before I finally realized that being sexually assaulted was the source of my trauma. A mental health professional trained in trauma recovery helped me to begin my lifelong healing process.

There is not one area of my life that this experience has not affected. The impacts still haven't ended, even though both of the men who hurt me have since died. From my perspective, the crimes committed against me and the harm they caused requires ongoing attention. I never know when the trauma will revisit my everyday life.

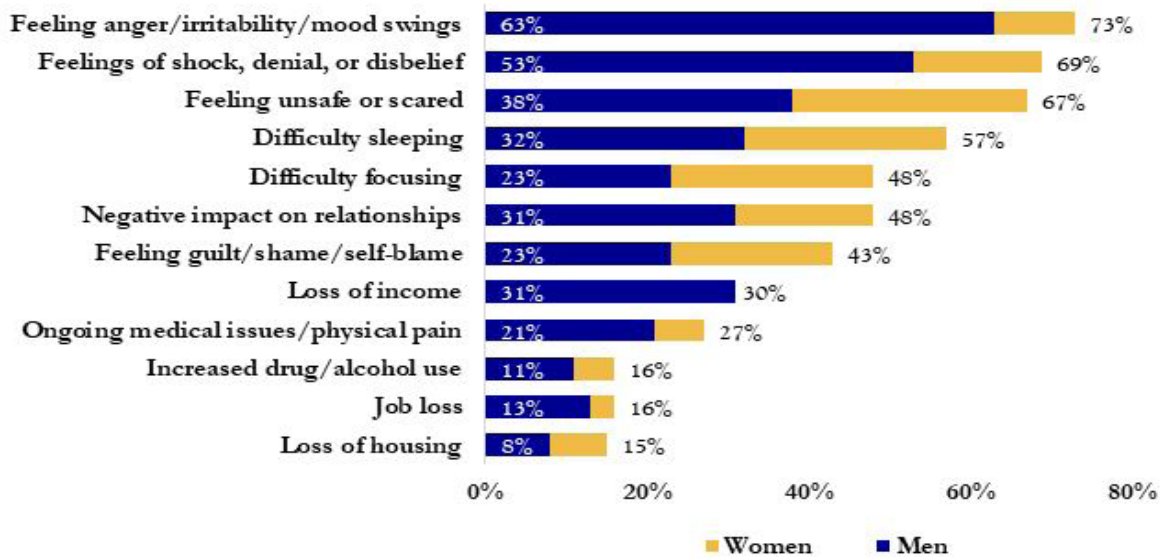
Having access to resources and services helped me to find a path from trauma to liberation.

Treatment helped me recover; treatment helped me understand I am a survivor.

Impact by Gender

On average, women reported a higher number of negative impacts than men. Nearly four in 10 (38 percent) of women reported at least six negative impacts compared to 22 percent of men. In addition, female victims experienced each impact more than male victims did. It is unclear whether women are more impacted by crime than men, or whether men were simply more reluctant to report the impact.

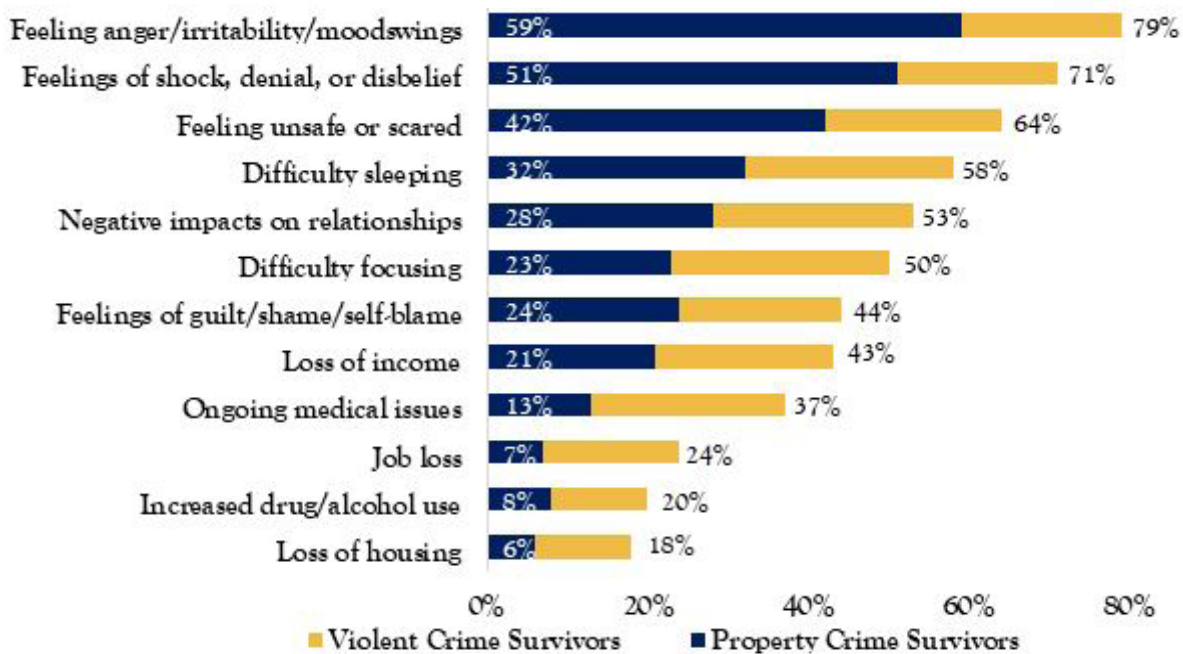
Chart 4: Victimization by gender



Impact by Crime Type

On average, violent crime victims were 21 percent more likely than property crime victims to experience one of the 12 negative impacts. Violent crime victims also experienced each impact more frequently than property crime victims.

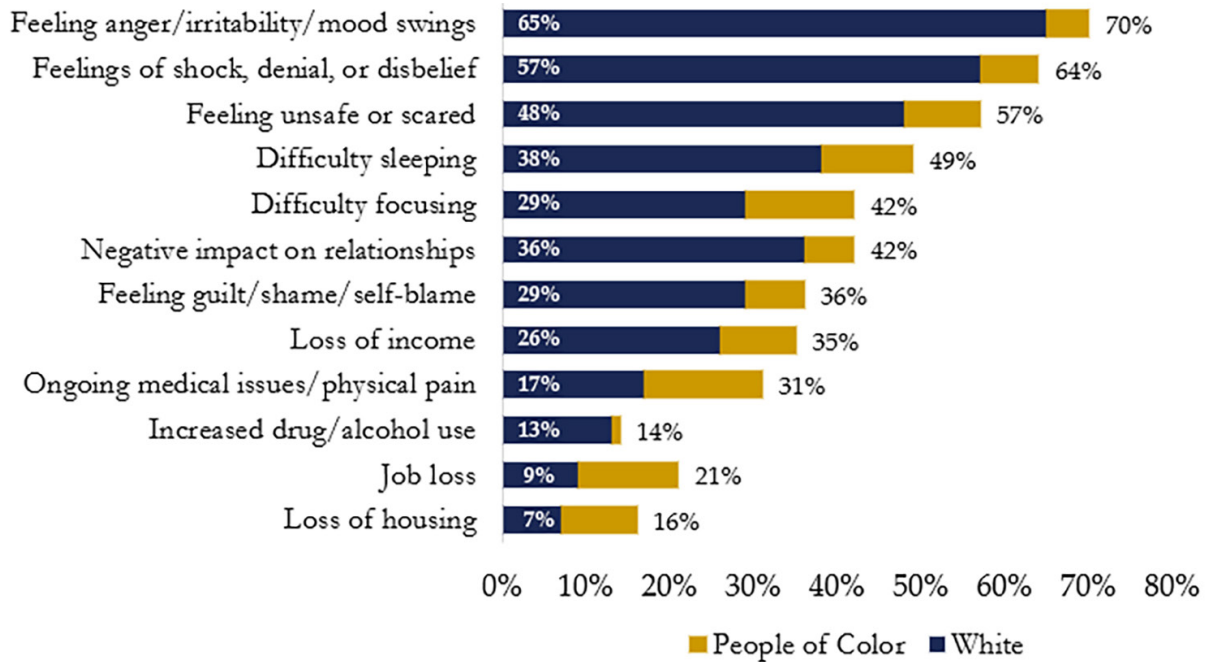
Chart 5: Impact by crime type



Impact by Race and Ethnicity

On average, victims of color are more likely to report impacts from victimization than white victims are. This may be driven by the fact that victims of color experience higher rates of violent and repeat victimization, which research has shown to increase the risk of trauma and other negative impacts. (Truman & Morgan, August 2015 (*National Crime Victimization Survey*)).

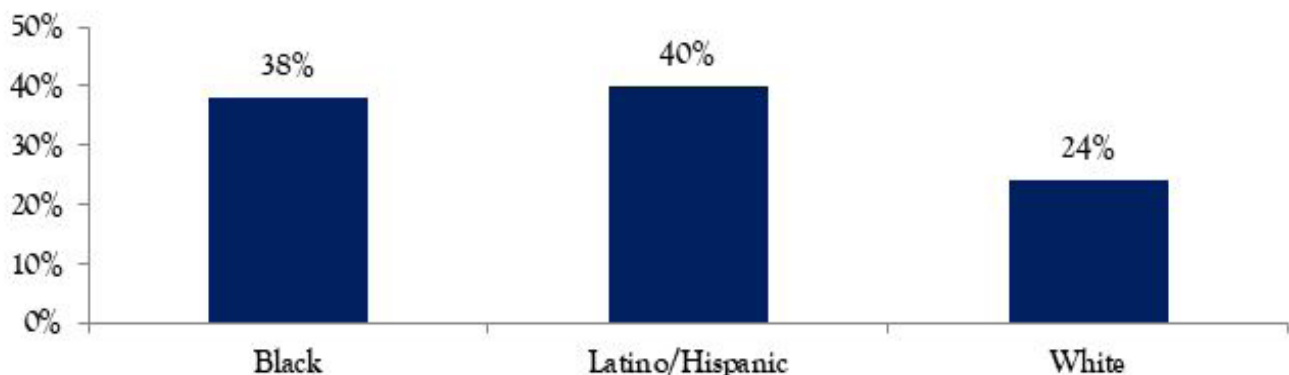
Chart 6: Impacts by race and ethnicity



Indeed, victims of color are far more likely to experience multiple symptoms of trauma. Black and Latino victims were significantly more likely to report six or more negative impacts.

Chart 7: Percentage experiencing six or more impacts by race and ethnicity

Percent experiencing six or more negative impacts



Impacts of crime survivors who are justice-involved

We often identify “victims” and “offenders” as discrete groups of people. However, one fourth of crime survivors interviewed said that they had also been convicted of a crime. Among those who have been victimized eight or more times, 39 percent have a criminal record.

Chart 8: Relationship between repeat victimization and conviction history

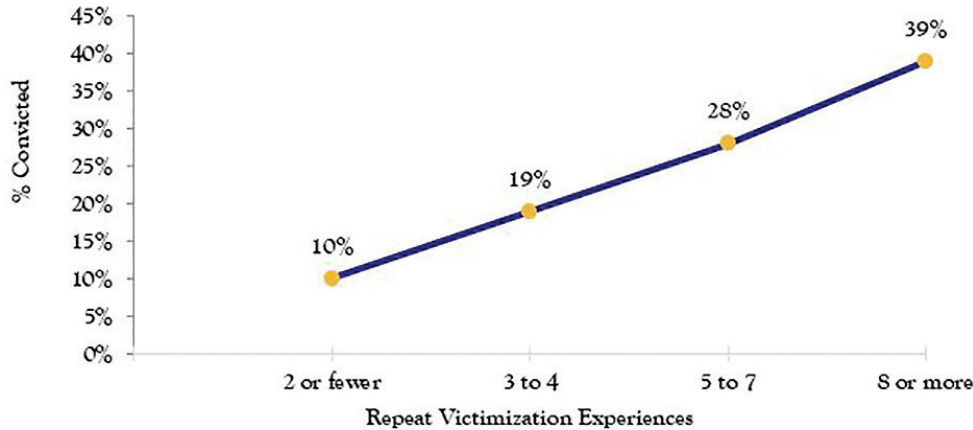
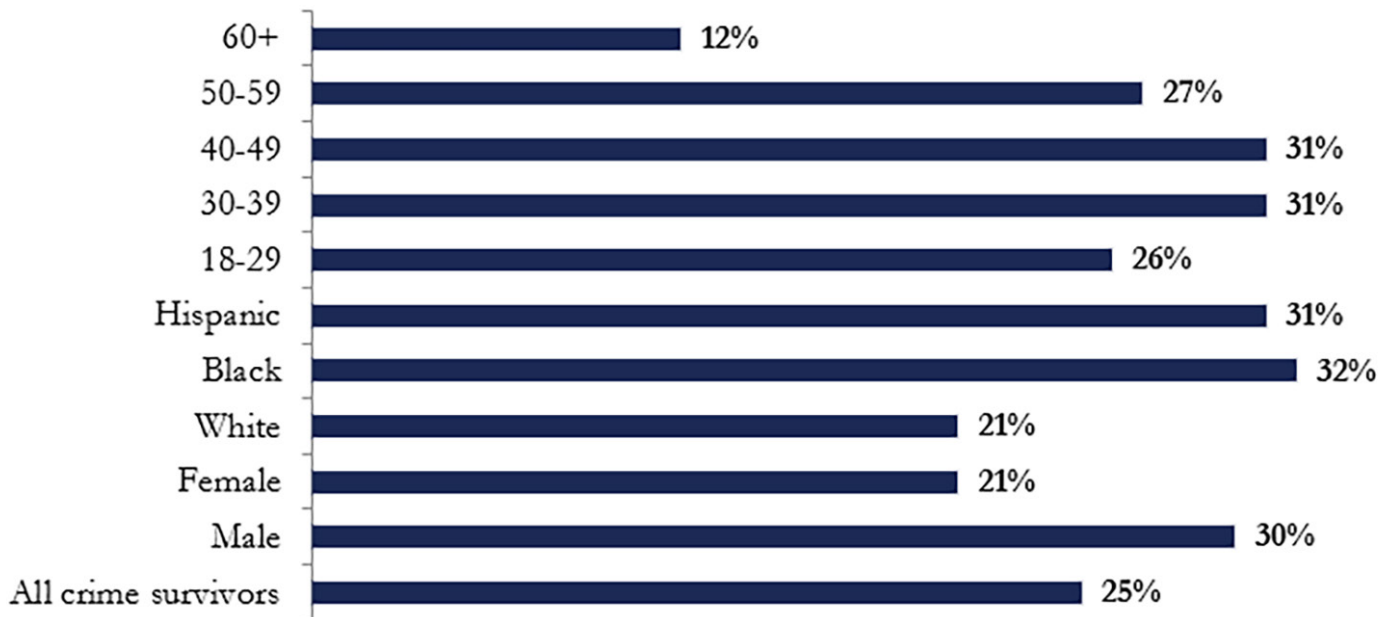


Chart 9: Demographic breakdown of victims with a criminal conviction

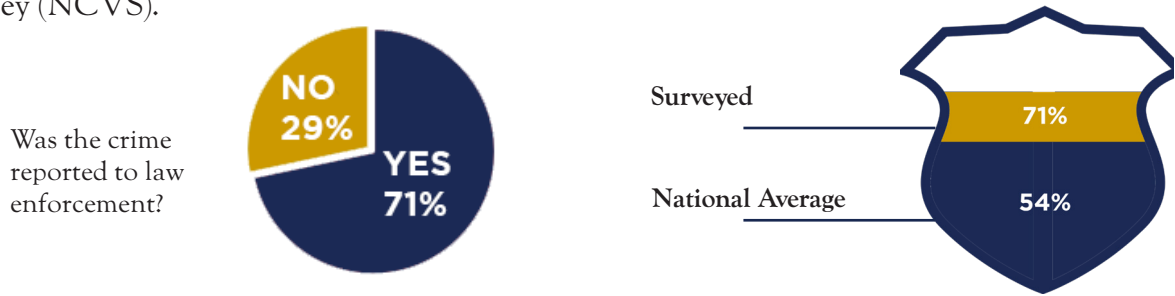


REPORTING PRACTICES OF CRIME

Victimization and Law Enforcement Reporting Rates

Survey participants were also asked whether they reported the crime to law enforcement.

71 percent of crime survivors said that they had reported the crime to law enforcement. This reporting rate is significantly higher than the national average of 54 percent as reported by the National Crime Victims Survey (NCVS).

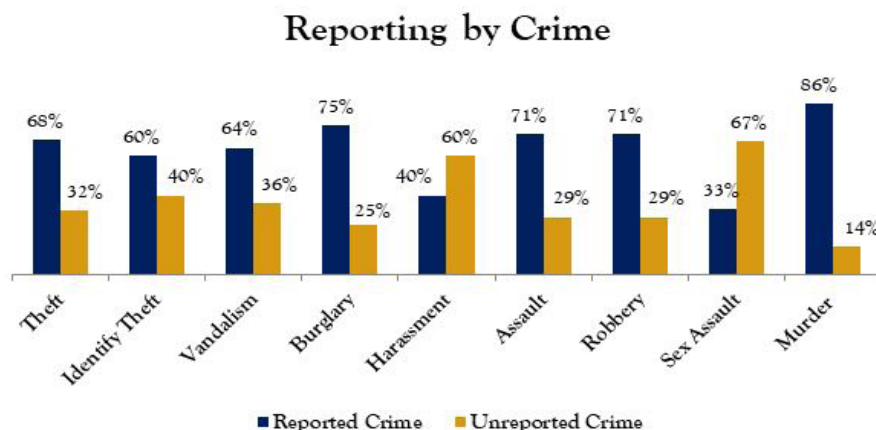


Hispanic/Latino victims were the most likely to have reported the crime to law enforcement: 77 percent said they had reported the crime to law enforcement, compared to 69 percent of white, and 67 percent of black victims.

Of significance, only 61 percent of people under the age of 30 reported the crime to law enforcement, the lowest reporting rate of any other demographic and a full 10 points lower than the survey average.

Reporting rates also varied by the type of crime. On average, violent crimes were reported less frequently than property crimes: 57 percent of violent crimes were reported to law enforcement compared with 67 percent of property crimes. There are also different reporting rates when looking at specific crimes individually, as demonstrated by the chart below.

Chart 10:

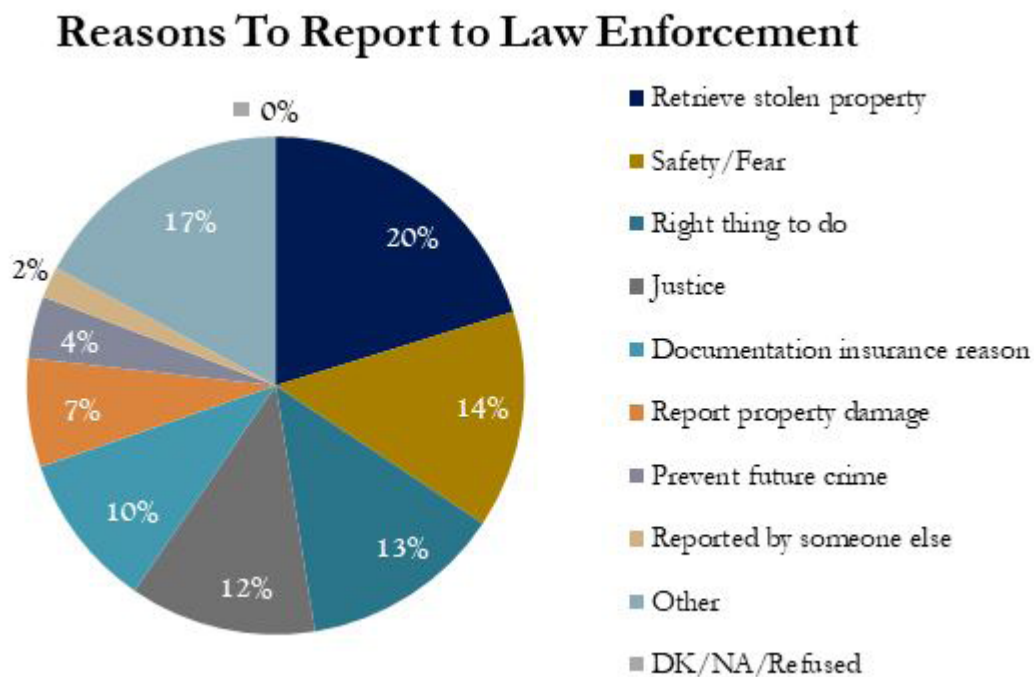


Reasons to Report to Law Enforcement

Respondents who reported the crime to law enforcement were asked the open-ended question: **In a few words, for what reason did you decide to report this crime to the police?**

Many respondents involved law enforcement for very practical reasons. 37 percent of respondents reported the crime as an attempt to recover stolen property, report property damage, or for proper documentation and insurance reasons.

Chart 11:



Another common response was some variation of “it was the right thing to do”.

Men and women often had different motives for contacting the police. Safety and fear concerns were more pertinent to women than men: 11 percent more women than men responded that they involved police due to concerns regarding their own safety or out of fear.

White respondents were much more likely than respondents of color to report crimes to police in order to recover stolen property or for documentation and insurance reasons. 37 percent of white respondents gave an answer in one of those two categories compared to 18 percent of black and 22 percent of Hispanic/Latino respondents.

People of color were much more likely to involve law enforcement for reasons of safety and fear. 27 percent of black and 21 percent of Hispanic/Latino respondents cited safety and fear concerns compared to just 8 percent of white respondents.

Reasons Not to Report to Law Enforcement

Respondents who did not report the crime to law enforcement were asked the open-ended follow-up: **In a few words, for what reason did you decide not to report this crime to police?**

Many of those who did not report crimes to law enforcement simply did not see the point for one reason or another. Half of those answering the question either believed it was a waste of time, not important enough, or futile due to lack of evidence.

Table 3: Reasons respondents did not report to law enforcement

Reasons Not to Report to Law Enforcement	
Waste of time / wouldn't do any good	28%
Incident not important enough	16%
Reported by someone else/other entity	10%
Police won't believe / couldn't prove anything	6%
Committed by friend/family	6%
Embarrassment / thought it was own fault	4%
Do not trust police	4%
Extra-legal justice / took matters into own hands	4%
Unable / Incapable	3%
Safety / fear	3%
Didn't believe it was a crime	2%
Crime committed by police	2%
Other	9%

Men were much more likely than women to say that it would be a waste of time or that they didn't believe the crime was important enough to involve law enforcement. 59 percent of men said it would either be a waste of time or that the crime was not important enough compared to 28 percent of women. Women were more likely than men to avoid involving the police due to embarrassment, lack of trust in the police, safety and fear concerns, or because someone else or another entity had involved the police.

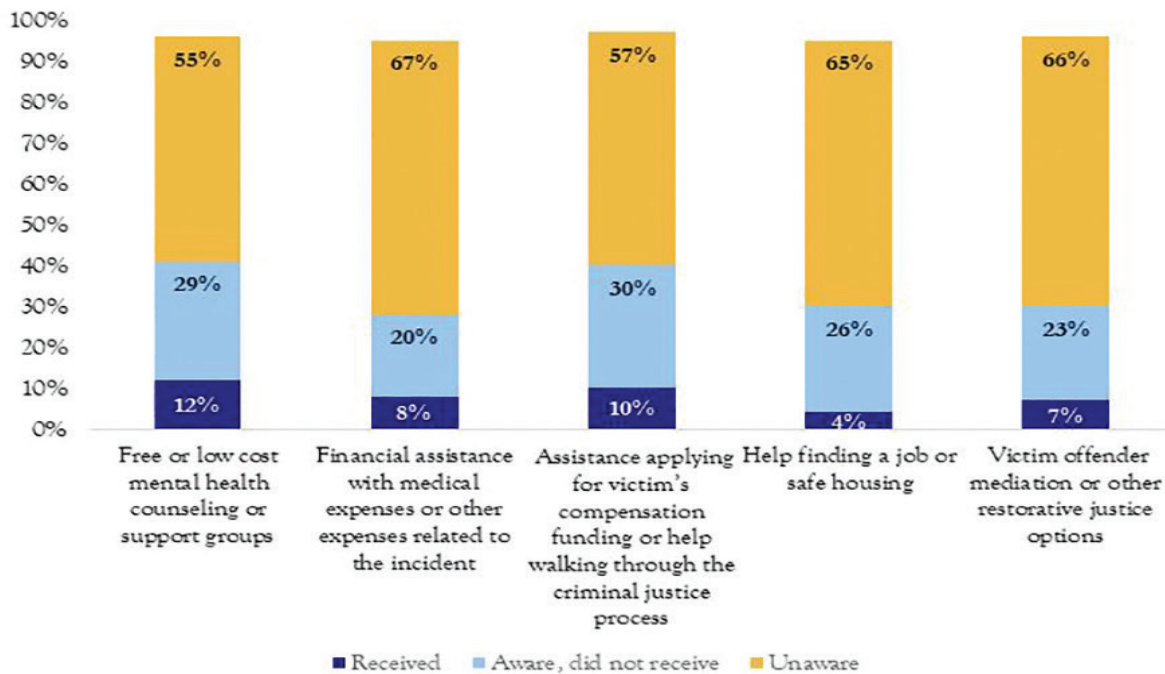
Victims of color were much more likely than white victims to cite concerns about law enforcement themselves as influencing their decision not to report the crime. 14% of victims of color cited either a lack of trust in the police or police involvement in the crime as the reason for not reporting compared to just 1 percent of white respondents.

VICTIMS' SERVICES

One of the more surprising findings from the survey was that fewer than half of crime survivors were aware of the availability of commonly offered victim services such as counseling or support groups, financial assistance with medical expenses, victims' compensation, housing or employment assistance, or restorative justice programs.

In fact, an average of fewer than one in ten victims (8 percent) utilized at least one of the services commonly available. Women were more likely to be aware of services, and were much more likely to utilize them. On average, 12 percent of women reported accessing at least one service compared to just 4 percent of men.

Chart 12: Awareness and access to victim's services



Encouragingly, an overwhelming 87 percent of victims who did receive services reported good experiences, including being treated appropriately with regard to their race, gender, and culture. This is generally consistent across age, gender, and racial/ethnic demographic groups.

Many victims were interested in services but did not receive them

Respondents were asked a series of questions related to victim services to better understand whether they received services and, if so, what kind of services. For those who had not received services, we wanted to better understand if they were aware of the services and uninterested in receiving them, or if they were not aware of the services and would have been interested had they known.

The survey clearly shows that the majority of crime victims were simply not aware of available services. The lack of awareness about victims' services clearly prevented many crime survivors from getting the help and support they need. In fact, the percentage of victims surveyed who would have been interested in receiving services had they been aware of them was greater than the percentage of those who actually received them.

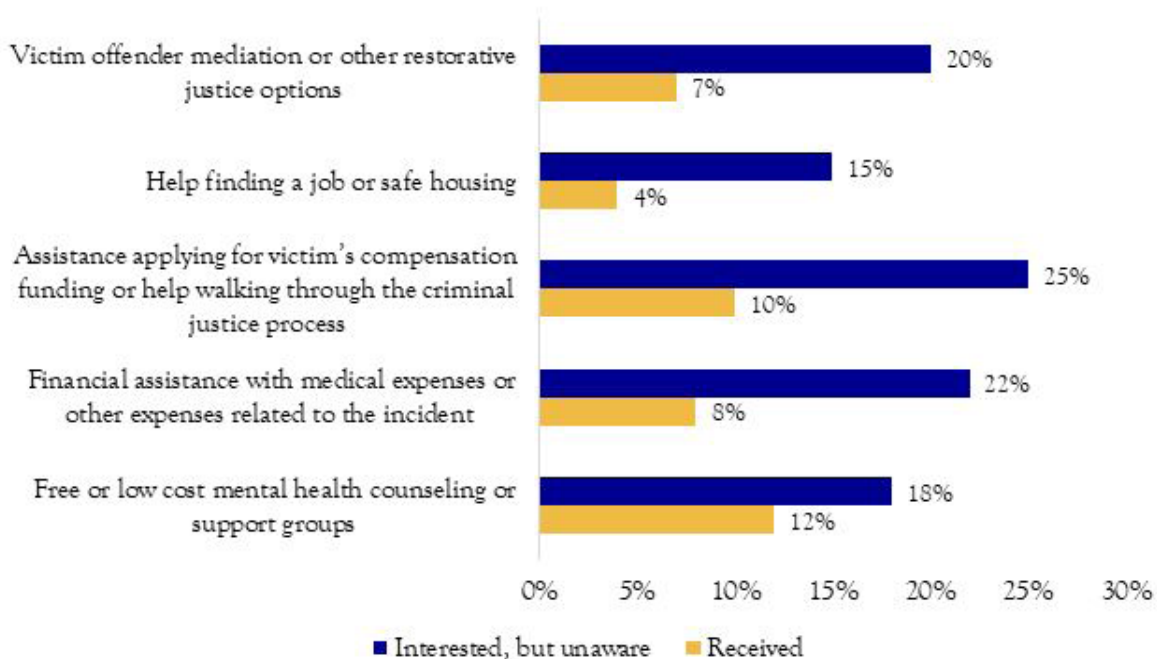
FUNDING VICTIMS' SERVICES

Victims' services in Colorado are largely funded through a variety of federal, state, and local government programs. The largest source of funding comes from a federal block grant program authorized by the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA).

Colorado's VOCA funding has increased significantly in recent years, from \$7.6 million in 2014 to \$37 million in 2016. Other programs include the state Victim Assistance and Law Enforcement (VALE) program and federal funding for Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

In 2019-2020 the Colorado Department of Public Safety, announces the estimated availability of \$52 million (total announced is the amount available for 2 years).

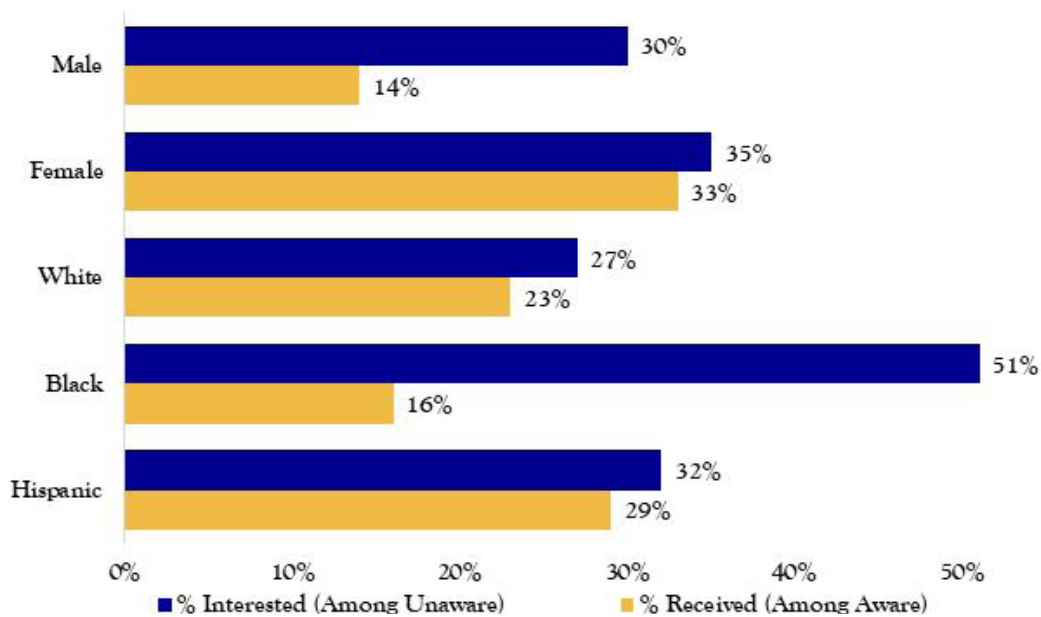
Chart 13: Access to Victim's Services Compared to Interest



Black and male victims are the least likely to receive services

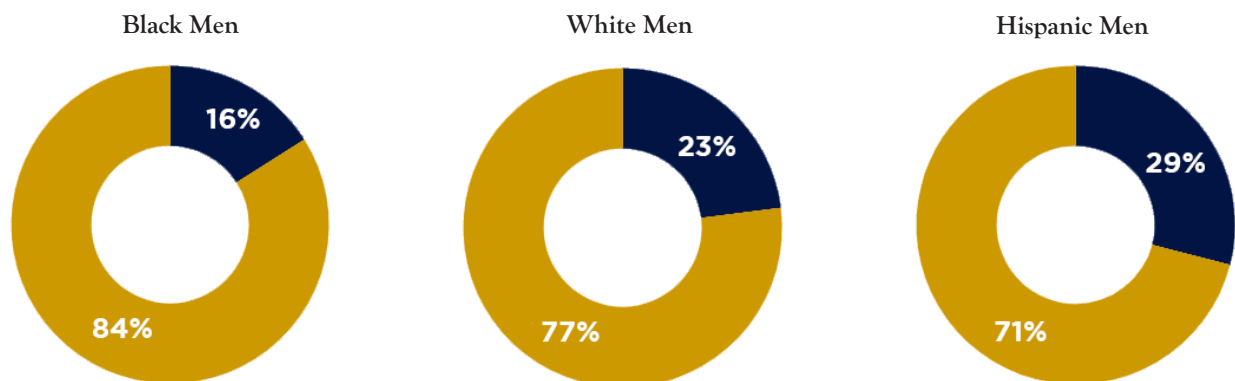
Black victims were less likely than white and Hispanic/Latino victims to have received any given service. Among those who were unaware of services, black victims were much more likely to be interested: 51 percent of black victims who were unaware of each service were interested in receiving it on average compared to 27 percent of white and 32 percent of Hispanic/Latino victims.

Chart 14: Access to victims' services compared to interest by demographic



The gap in access to victims' services between men and women is even more pronounced when analyzed by the race/ethnicity of the victim. Among those who were aware of services, only 16 percent of black victims received services, far less than white (23 percent) and Hispanic (29 percent) victims. Additionally, men of color are the least likely group to access victims' services.

Chart 15: Access to victims' services Among those aware of services



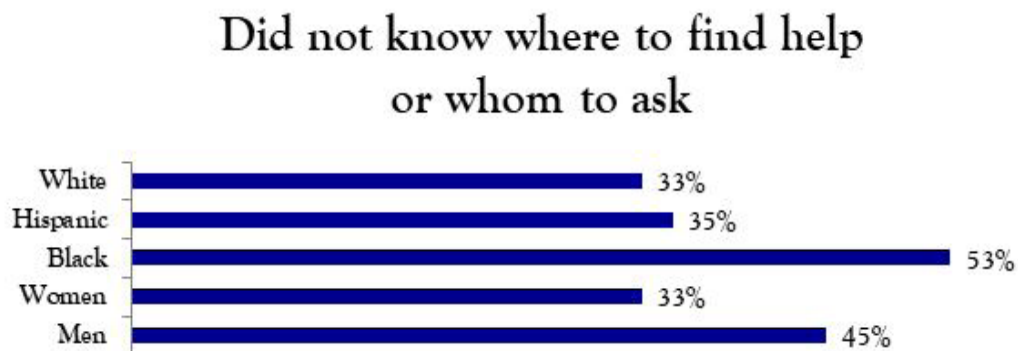
All told, the survey results demonstrate that only a fraction of victims are able to access the services they need to recover and heal from the crimes committed against them.

Victims face many obstacles to accessing services

Among those who were aware of services, but did not receive them, there was also strong interest in accessing help. More than one in three victims (37 percent) were interested in receiving services but were not able to access them. In addition to a lack of awareness, many victims faced numerous obstacles to receiving victims' services. Among those who were interested and aware of services, but did not receive them, more than one-third (38 percent) indicated that they did not know where to find help or whom to ask. Other common barriers included being too embarrassed to ask (10 percent), being told they would not qualify (8 percent), and believing that the services were too expensive (7 percent).

This lack of information about how to access services was notably higher among male and black victims, with nearly half of both groups reporting that they did not know where to find help.

Chart 16: Barriers to accessing services by demographic group



In many situations, crime survivors must report the crime to law enforcement to be eligible for victims' services. There are a myriad of reasons that crimes go unreported, and nearly one-third of survey victims (29 percent) did not involve law enforcement, which is likely to create a major barrier for them to receive support services.

3 in 10
crimes go unreported by victims



YOUNG VICTIMS OF CRIME

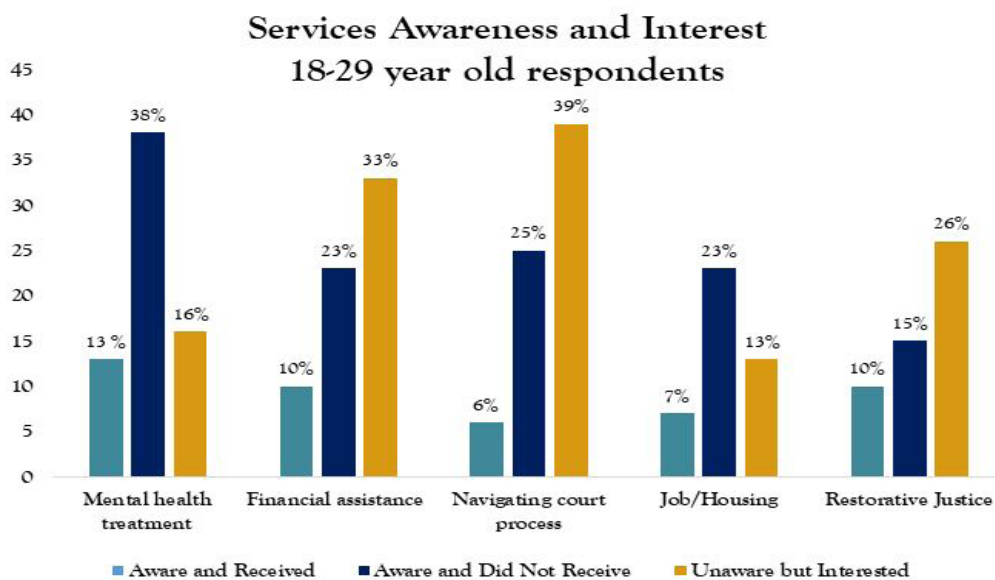
One of the more important lessons from this survey was that special attention should be paid to the experiences and needs of younger adults (18-29) who have been the victim of a crime. Survey results show that more than 8 in 10 (82 percent) of crime survivors between the ages of 18-29 have been victimized four or more times. Nearly one-third (31 percent) have been victimized 10 or more times.

Young adults are less likely than others to report crimes, yet they indicate a high prevalence of victimization and limited connection to services. Even though young adults had high rates of repeat victimization, only 61%, actually report the incident to law enforcement. This reporting rate is lower than any other age group, gender or ethnicity.

The primary reasons young adults stated that they do not report a crime because it seemed like a waste of time or the incident was not important enough. The next most prevalent reasons for not reporting included a lack of trust of police or an inability to report. From the perspective of many young people, the value of reporting is not part of their lived experience.

The impacts of crime most identified by young people are: feeling unsafe; shock, denial, and disbelief about the experience; challenges dealing with anger, irritability, or mood swings; and negative impacts on relationships. Young people expressed a high interest in the following services:

Chart 17:



KIMBERLY

Survivor

From the outside looking in, we appeared to be living the American dream. My family was college educated, my parents had successful careers, and we lived in a good neighborhood. Unfortunately, this was a façade that hid my personal experience with victimization and unaddressed trauma.

After experiencing sexual abuse on multiple occasions, I left home at an early age and struggled to find my way without family support. By my early 20's, I was a single-mother of a young child, living in a transitional housing program. On one occasion, my partner at the time hurled a 25 lb free weight through the back window of my Hyundai hatchback, spraying me and my child with glass.

Terrified and focused on protecting us, I drove away quickly, filed a police report and changed the locks to my apartment. Several hours later someone started banging on my door but I couldn't see anything through the peephole and reluctantly opened it.

My partner burst in and began threatening and screaming at me, then abruptly left. I closed and locked the door and sat on the floor weeping and shaking. Suddenly more pounding and screaming came from the other side of the door, demanding, "Open the door, it's the police!" I did not move; I didn't believe or trust the voices.

The banging and demands only grew louder and more threatening. Finally, out of pure fear, I began to slowly unlock the door. Six officers burst through the door, slamming me against the wall, throwing me across the living room to the couch. Instinctively, I fought back, only to find myself handcuffed and shackled in my bare feet in the middle of a Colorado winter night, and all in the presence of my young child. I was charged and held for assaulting a police officer.

For some reason I was not seen as victim and not treated as someone in need of help. When I showed up to my court date, none of the officers appeared and the charges were dropped. Sadly, the incident only furthered the trauma that had been inflicted on my son and me.

It never entered my thoughts not to report this crime to the police. I needed help to protect my son and myself. I believed reporting the crime was the right thing to do. We weren't offered any supportive services, even after the charges were dropped.

I've spent my life vowing to keep my son safe in a way that I was not growing up. We needed support from the police, not to be treated so poorly in our time of greatest need. The criminal justice system has a responsibility to help victims like me and to deal with people suffering from trauma, mental illness, or substance abuse, and respond appropriately to domestic violence.

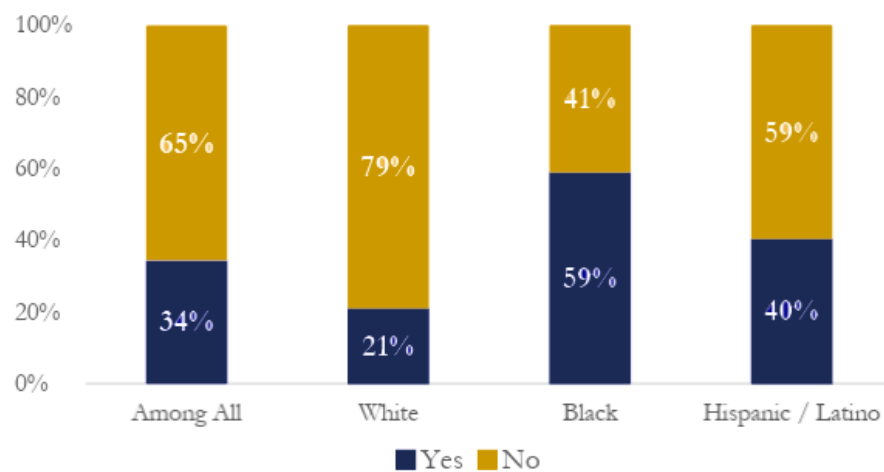
PERCEPTIONS OF RACIAL AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Unequal Treatment

When it comes to experiences with law enforcement, there is clearly a large difference between white victims and victims of color. Survey results demonstrate that victims of color reported experiencing behavior from law enforcement they believe was inappropriate or unprofessional at much higher rates than white victims of crime.

Chart 18: Inappropriate interactions with law enforcement by demographic

Respondents were asked: Have you ever had an encounter with law enforcement that you thought involved the inappropriate use of force or other type of police misconduct or unprofessional behavior?



Black victims reported having experiences of inappropriate police behavior at rates far higher than any other demographic group, with 59 percent indicating they have had such an experience, including 65 percent of black men.

Crime survivors were also asked whether they believed victims of color were treated equally by the criminal justice system. Three out of four crime victims believe the criminal justice system treats people differently depending on their race or ethnicity. This belief was consistent whether the respondent of color was the victim or had been charged with a crime.

Given the previous finding that victims of color experience inappropriate police behavior at higher rates than white people, it is not surprising that black and Latino victims are more likely to believe the criminal justice system does not treat victims equally. More than 9 in 10 black and 7 in 10 Latino victims believe that victims of color are treated differently, compared to 56 percent of white victims, as indicated in the following chart.

Chart 19: Treatment of victims by the criminal justice system

Are Victims of Color Treated Differently by the Criminal Justice System?

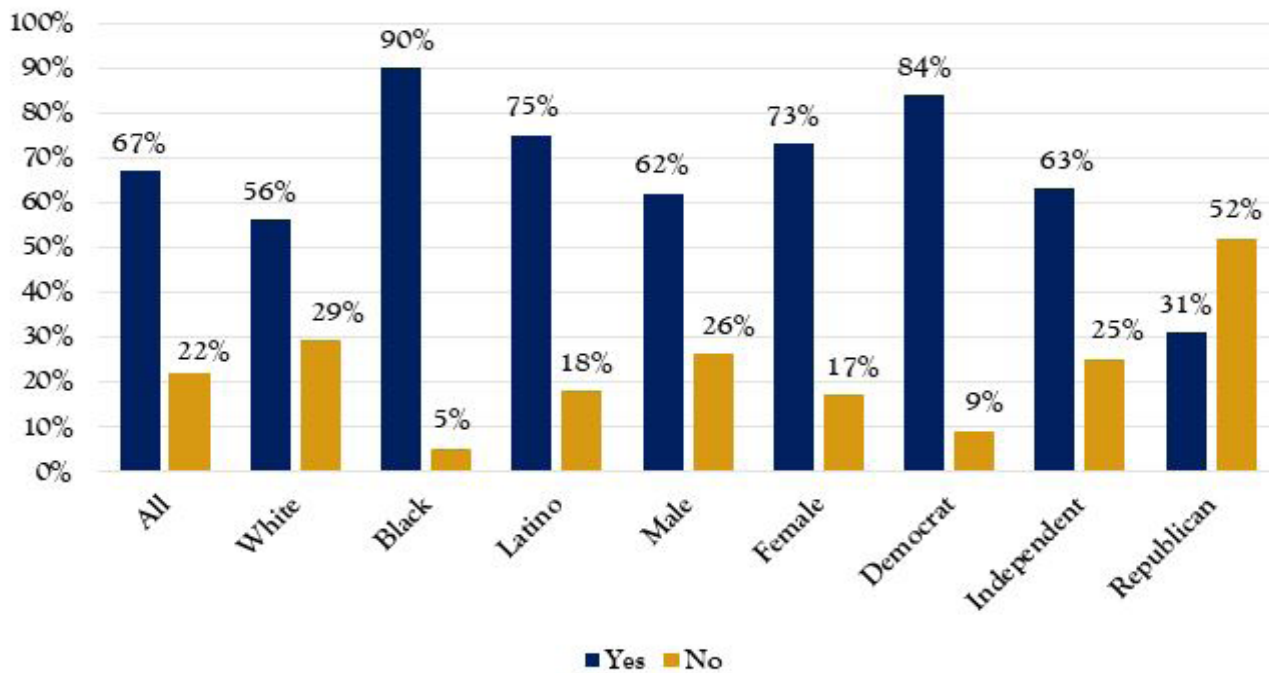
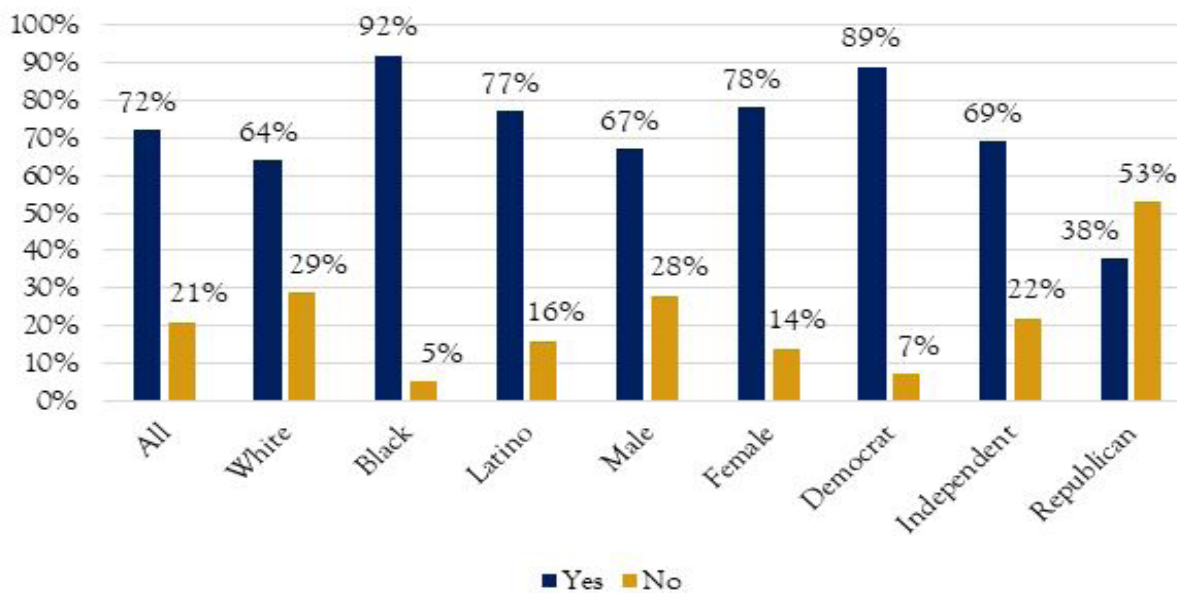


Chart 20: Treatment of people accused of crimes by the criminal justice system

Are people of color accused of crime treated differently by the criminal justice system?



SURVIVORS' OPINIONS REGARDING PUBLIC SAFETY POLICY PRIORITIES

Crime survivors were also asked to share the policy preferences they believe are most effective in promoting public safety. In sharp contrast to how victims are often portrayed or perceived, crime survivors overwhelmingly prefer approaches that prioritize rehabilitation over punishment and want investments in community-based crime prevention strategies.

Understanding these views is fundamental to developing victim-informed approaches to public safety and criminal justice policy. For more than three decades, policymakers prioritized so-called “tough on crime” laws that were designed to send more people to prison and keep them there longer. These policies were often adopted on the premise that victims wanted more punitive laws, but our survey results paint a different picture.

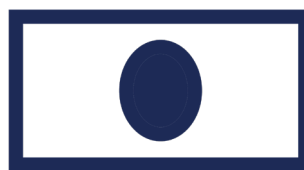
When it comes to what works to stop crime, victims prefer crime prevention strategies such as education, mental health services, employment, and housing over increased incarceration by a 3-to-1 margin.

Fortunately, Colorado’s criminal justice system is in transition. After decades of unprecedented growth in the prison population and corrections budget, lawmakers and other stakeholders have begun to seriously question the assumption that longer prison sentences are the key to improving public safety. Policies that prioritize crime prevention and effective rehabilitation have begun to be implemented in recent years, although there are still almost eight times as many people in prison today (19,792) as in 1980 (2,658), and taxpayers spend more than twenty-three times as much on the prison budget.

The survey results show that victims support these changes and want to see Colorado go further to reform the criminal justice system and invest in community-based crime prevention strategies.



8x
as many people in
prison now vs 1980



23x
as much money spent
on prisons vs 1980

Victims’ support for new approaches cuts across party lines. The majority of every demographic group feel Colorado should focus more on rehabilitation than punishment and support shortening prison sentences to reinvest in rehabilitation. These findings, shown in full detail on the pages to follow, provide a roadmap for transforming safety in Colorado.

Chart 21: Victims Prefer Rehabilitation to Punishment

By a 4 to 1 margin, crime survivors surveyed prefer that Colorado focus more on rehabilitating than punishing people who commit crimes. This sentiment is consistent for a strong majority across all demographic groups.

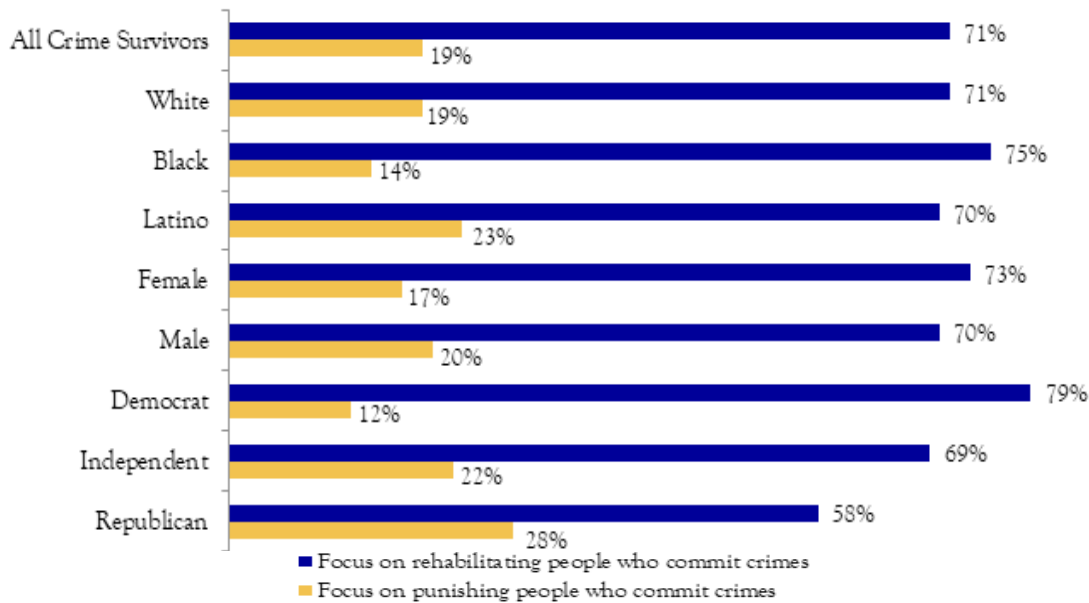
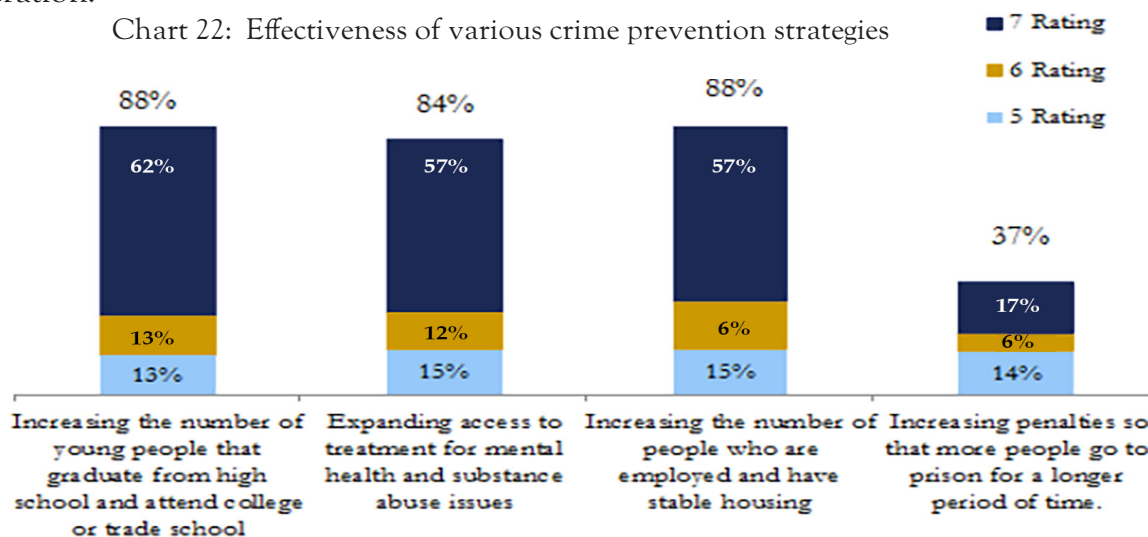


Chart 22: Prioritizing Approaches to Safety That Are Community-Based

Crime survivors vastly prefer proactive crime prevention strategies. Expanding education, behavioral health treatment, employment, and stable housing were all viewed as being significantly more effective in promoting public safety than increasing prison sentences. Survivors were asked: *How effective do you think the following crime prevention strategies would be at reducing the total amount of crime in Colorado?* By margins of at least 3 to 1, victims believe community-based approaches are “extremely effective” compared to more incarceration.

Chart 22: Effectiveness of various crime prevention strategies



**Note: Respondents were given the option of rating each strategy from a scale of 1-7 with 1 being “not effective” and 7 being “extremely effective”. A rating of 1-3 indicates that the strategy was perceived as being ineffective to varying degrees. A rating of 4 is neutral and a rating of 5-7 indicates that the strategy is perceived as effective to varying degrees. In this section, we report only the percentage of responses in the effective range.*

Chart 23: Education Viewed As An Effective Public Safety Strategy

Increasing the number of young people that graduate from high school and attend college or trade school was the highest rated crime prevention strategy. 62 percent of all respondents gave this the highest rating of 7 and 88 percent viewed this strategy as effective. This is consistent across all demographics.

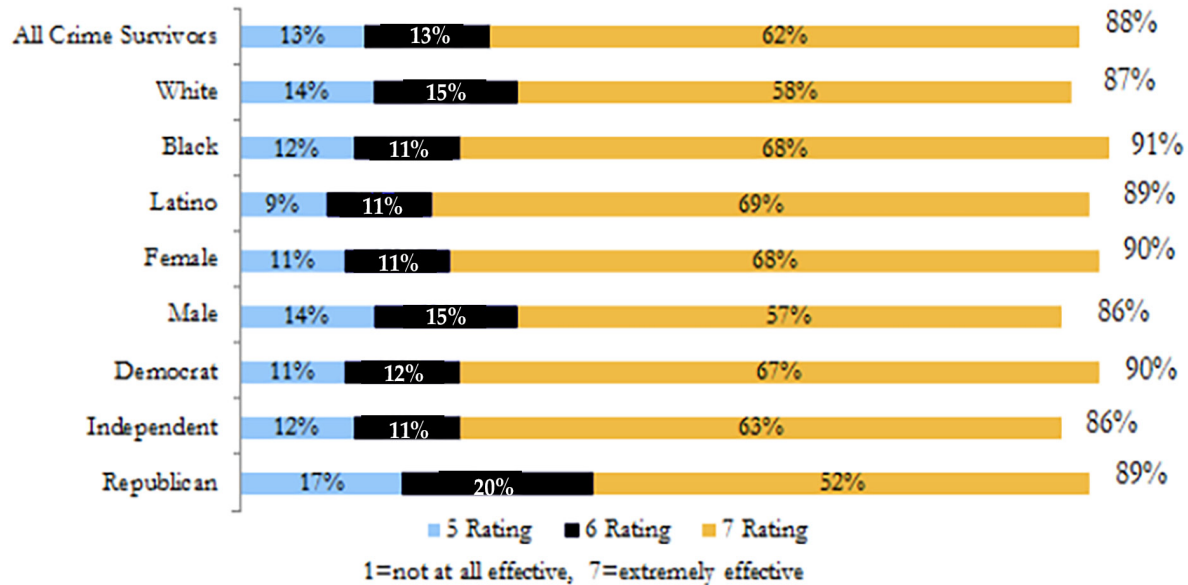


Chart 24: Employment and Housing Viewed as Effective Public Safety Strategies

Increasing the number of people who are employed and have stable housing was the second highest scored crime prevention strategy with 57 percent of respondents giving it the highest rating and 88 percent believe it to be an effective strategy.

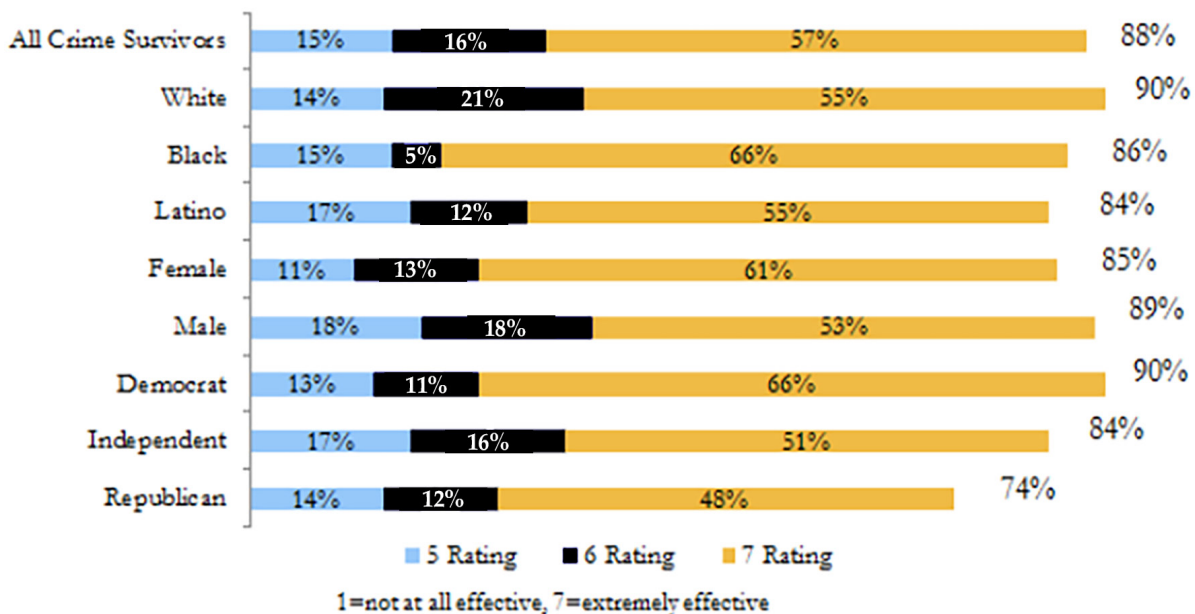


Chart 25: Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment Viewed as An Effective Public Safety Strategy

Expanding access to treatment for mental health and substance abuse issue was the third highest rated crime prevention strategy with 57 percent of all respondents giving this strategy the highest rating of 7 and 84 percent rating this strategy as effective.

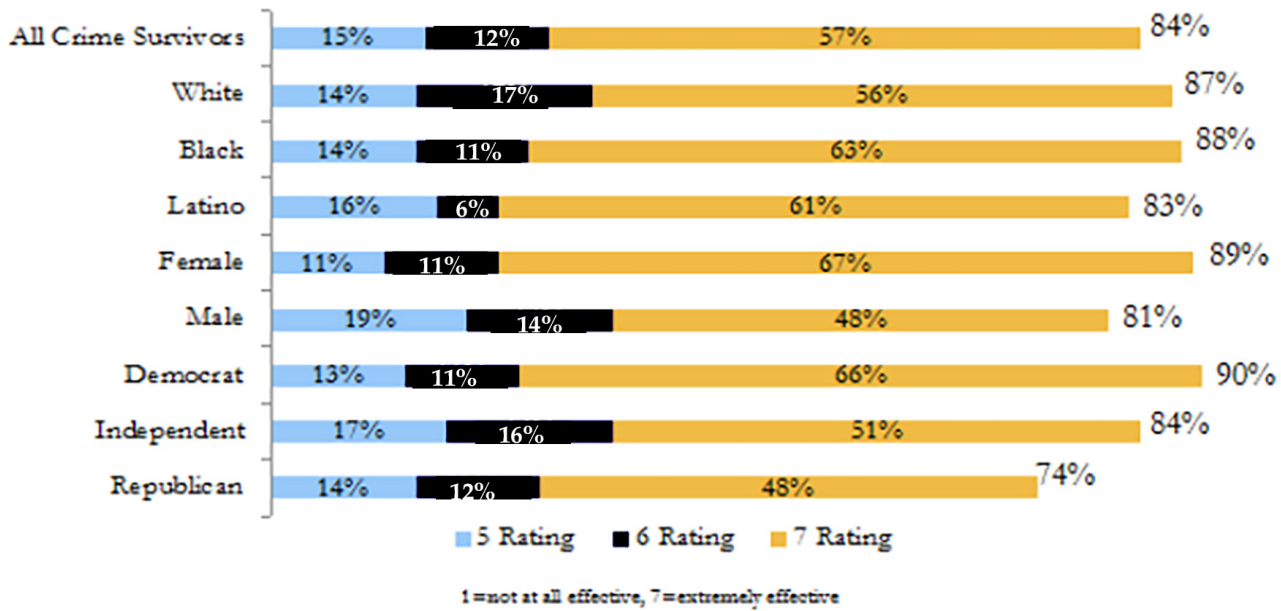


Chart 26: Increasing Incarceration Not Viewed As An Effective Crime Prevention Strategy

Conversely, increasing penalties so that more people go to prison for a longer period of time was by far the lowest scored strategy and was not viewed as an effective strategy by any demographic majority of crime survivors.

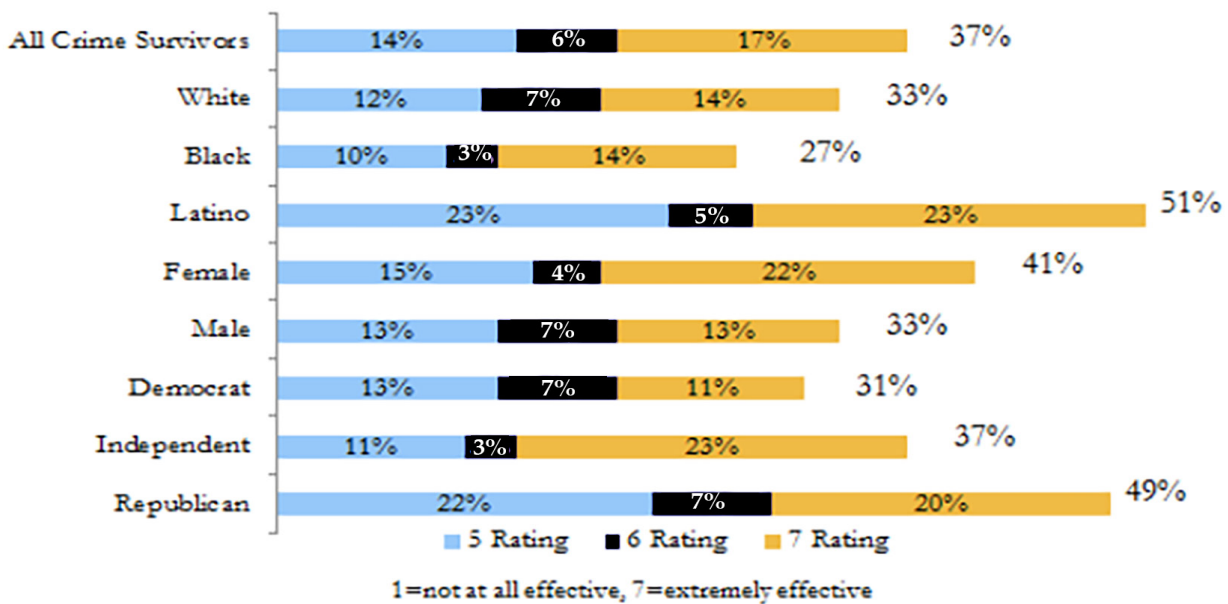
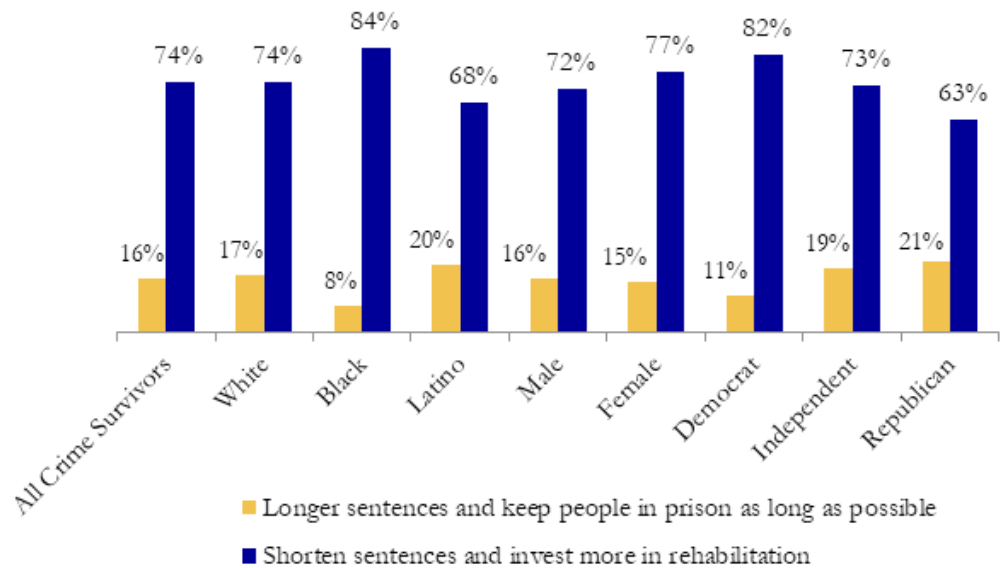


Chart 27: Reducing sentence lengths to reinvest in rehabilitation

By a margin of 5 to 1, crime survivors prefer that lawmakers shorten prison sentences and spend the savings on rehabilitation rather than increasing the length of prison sentences. This support cuts across party lines with Democrats (7 to 1), Independents (4 to 1), and Republicans (3 to 1) all preferring reduced incarceration.

Crime Survivors were asked:
Do you think Colorado lawmakers should focus on policies that increase the length of prison sentences and keep people in prison as long as possible or on policies that shorten prison sentences so that money can be spent on rehabilitation?



SHARLETTA

Survivor

Four days before Christmas twenty-two years ago, I suffered the greatest loss anyone could ever experience.

That night, my niece called to ask for my help. There had been a drive-by-shooting in her neighborhood and she needed me to come get her and her three-year old daughter out of harm's way. My only thought was to pick them up and keep them safe for a few days.

I put my boys in the back seat of my car and figured I would quickly grab my relatives and bring them back to my house for Christmas festivities. For reasons I'll never fully understand, it didn't turn out that way.

To my heart wrenching surprise, the shooters returned, twenty-one bullets were fired – fourteen to my car, seven to my niece's home. Casson Xavier Evans, my beautiful three-year old son, received a fatal bullet to his head that shattered his brain stem. My "Biscuit" took his last breath in my arms that night.

It is far too common for people in my community to experience the trauma that became a part of my life on that fateful night. The fact that the shooters returned to continue the violence is a prime example of the normalization of repeat victimization, and violence and trauma that result.

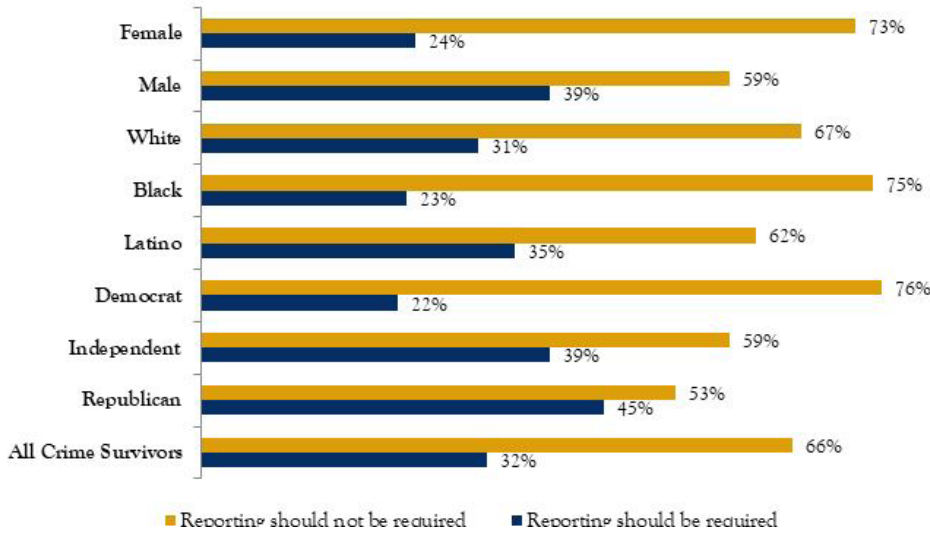
After the experience of losing my son, I realized that this level of unchecked violence and untreated trauma is not normal. I have since dedicated my life to helping countless victims of crime heal from the trauma they've experienced and become Crime Survivors. I started Victims Offender Mediation Information (VOMI), a non-profit committed to providing restorative justice services for victims and victimizers hoping to reconcile the injustice that occurred. This evidence-based practice is proven to help redeem and rehabilitate those who have offended, heal those who are victims of crime, and serve as an alternative to more punitive sentencing practices.

While I can never have my son back, I can be of service to others because I am a survivor. We can't afford to keep relying solely on a criminal justice system response to victimization, trauma, and crime prevention. Our communities deserve real public health and safety solutions. Building prisons and locking more people up has never been the answer, and the countless victims in my community need much more than punishment to feel safe and heal. I am the Victim Offender Mitigation Initiative, our communities have answers!

We must invest in families, our children and the environments in which we all live and work.

Chart 28: Reporting Should Not Be A Requirement for Receiving Services

Two-thirds (66 percent) of crime survivors believe victims' services should be made available to people regardless of whether or not they reported the crime to the police.



66% believe victims services should be made available to people without them having to report the crime

PEDRO Survivor

I never thought I would be a victim. But on May 2, 2016, my life changed forever when two unknown men robbed me at gunpoint on my way to paying rent. They robbed me of my money and they robbed me of my security.

I was chased in my own community and feared for my life. The people who robbed me knew I was going to pay rent and they didn't care that I had worked hard so my family would have a roof over their heads. They knew what they were doing and robbed me of more than my money – they robbed me of my faith in humanity.

I could never have prepared for such an experience. No one can ever prepare to have his or her safety jeopardized like that. I tried to be strong, but I knew the assailants could end everything. Even though my culture as a Latino man demands me to be strong, I felt powerless during the crime and hopelessness afterwards.

No matter how strong I want to be, my mental and emotional wellbeing have been permanently affected and I still deal with the trauma today.

A few days after that frightful encounter, the Victim Assistance Unit in Denver referred me to the Center for Trauma and Resilience, a place where victims can come and get the assistance they so desperately need. There, I did 1-on-1 counseling, family and couples counseling, men's support groups, and was fortunate to receive financial assistance from CTR and other agencies to cover my losses. Thanks to the Center for Trauma and Resilience, I, now have peace of mind and can forgive my assailants for what they did to me.

Many people aren't as fortunate as me. Their crimes go unsolved, and those who harmed them are set free. They feel like they are alone in this world and cannot cope with what was taken from them. Many don't even know what programs are available out there. Many don't realize that programs exist to assist and aid those who have been harmed and to put an end to the trauma regular people have to endure. We should do more to make these programs available to victims and help others get the help that changed my life.

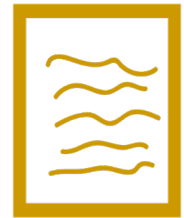
RECOMMENDATIONS

We hope this report has helped shine a light on the experiences, needs, and policy preferences of victims who participated in this survey. The information gleaned directly from crime survivors provides a critical look into our responses to crime and the gap between victims' needs and the services they receive.

CCJRC offers the following recommendations for policymakers, service providers and advocates to consider:

Require a statewide annual report to the General Assembly for all victim services funding administered by the Department of Criminal Justice (DCJ).

The Division of Criminal Justice in the state Department of Public Safety should be required to provide an annual report to the General Assembly that is publicly available and provides more detail regarding victim services grant funds it administers to provide more transparency. Details that should be reported at a minimum should include the grantee organization, services provided, number of victims served, and demographics. Any recent program evaluations for any grantee should also be made publically available.



Better data collection and analysis regarding victimization and crime trends at a local level



The state should provide funding to every county health department to conduct a household victimization survey at least every three years. Colorado does not currently have a reliable method for documenting crime rates. In Colorado, we often use arrest rates as a proxy for crime rates. This is an undesirable proxy because not all crimes are reported. Of those reported, not all crimes result in arrest. The National Crime Victimization Survey is useful but does not provide Colorado-specific information. Having better localized data on victimization and crime trends could serve many useful purposes.

State law should mandate that any state or federal funding received by Colorado for crime victim services may not require that a crime survivor report the crime to law enforcement or participate in the prosecution as a precondition to receiving victim support services.

Eligibility for victim services should not be tied to whether the victim reported the crime to law enforcement or whether they participate in the prosecution. Although the majority of victims surveyed indicated that they did report the crime, almost one-third did not. Similarly, no victim should be denied services under the rationale that they somehow “participated” in their victimization. There are other ways to encourage people to report the crime to law enforcement and participate in the prosecution than denying services.



There must be much more vigorous public education on the availability of victims' services.

More robust public education campaigns on the availability of victims' services can increase enrollment and participation rates. Specific outreach to men, youth, and people of color will help address the service gap discovered in this survey.



Addressing issues of mistrust and building better relationships between law enforcement and communities of color is essential.

Levels of mistrust, anger, and frustration between law enforcement (and the wider criminal justice system) and communities of color are unacceptably and dangerously high. Much of these feelings are driven by fear and past negative experiences. These feelings also exist in both directions. We cannot have healthy and safe communities in this environment. Investing in community and economic development in high crime neighborhoods could help prevent crime and over-policing and help build bridges between law enforcement and the community. Forums that bring law enforcement and community members together to have real conversations (not shouting matches or silent glares) are an essential step. Community policing strategies and a more meaningful opportunity to file complaints about inappropriate interactions with law enforcement can strengthen relationships and enhance accountability. Increased trust in law enforcement will also increase crime reporting rates, improve public safety, and increase victims' access to services.

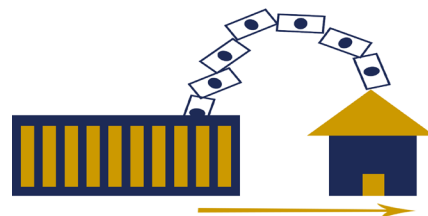
Increase funding for community-based organizations that provide trauma recovery and other victims services to broaden the accessibility of survivor services, particularly those that can serve men, people of color, and young adults.

Addressing the trauma that victims experience improves outcomes for individuals, their families, and the community. Unaddressed trauma, on the other hand, can lead to a host of problems including substance abuse, housing instability, loss of income, and other issues that contribute directly to repeat victimization and criminal behavior. By ensuring that treatment modalities address the immediate, short-term, and long-term effects of trauma, and do so in culturally appropriate and sensitive ways, service providers will achieve better results. Furthermore, the state must invest in these services and make them much more available in the communities that have been most harmed by crime and violence.



Enact sentencing reforms in order to reinvest savings into community-based crime prevention strategies consistent with this survey.

Victims surveyed overwhelmingly preferred criminal justice approaches that focus on rehabilitation rather than punishment. Colorado should do more to ensure that sentencing and parole policies better align with these views. While the state has taken important baby steps to reduce unnecessary incarceration in recent years, there is a wide range of public safety solutions that could be implemented with the savings from additional reductions in the prison population to support locally determined crime prevention strategies similar to the crime prevention pilots enacted in HB17-1326 (Justice Reinvestment Crime Prevention Initiative). (see <https://transformingsafety.org>)



METHODOLOGY

The Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition (CCJRC) commissioned RBI Strategies and Stay Current Strategies to field the Denver Metropolitan Area Victims Survey between August 29 and September 17, 2016. The researchers contacted 1,430 people in the Denver-Aurora Metropolitan statistical area, 500 of whom self-reported being a victim of at least one crime in the past ten years. Live telephone interviews were conducted from a randomly selected sample of cell phones and landlines.

Prior research has shown that victims of color experience victimization at increased rates. (Truman & Morgan, August 2015 (National Crime Victimization Survey)) To account for this, and because CCJRC is particularly interested in understanding the experiences and needs of crime survivors of color, RBI oversampled victims of color to ensure that the respondents reflected the population of crime survivors in the community.

Victims were sampled from the 10-county Denver-Aurora-Lakewood Metropolitan Statistical area consisting of Adams County, Arapahoe County, the City and County of Broomfield, the

City and County of Denver, Clear Creek County, Douglas County, Elbert County, Gilpin County, Jefferson County, and Park County. Aside from an oversample to ensure that at least 50 percent of the sample was non-white, no quotas or additional screens were used.

This survey should not be used to assess the level or nature of crime in the Denver Metropolitan Area as the survey included self-identified crime survivors regardless of the city or state where the crime took place. Nor is this survey intended to be demographically representative of the total population of the Denver-Aurora MSA.

The margin of error for this study is +/- 4.385 at the 95% confidence interval. In addition to the telephone survey, over the summer and fall of 2016 CCJRC also conducted nine in-person focus groups with a wide range of crime survivors. The findings from these groups have informed this analysis and are reflected in the insights and recommendations that it contains. CCJRC contracted with Wendy Talley, MSW, to facilitate the focus groups and analyze the findings. Neither RBI Strategies nor Stay Current Strategies were involved in the focus groups.

		CRIME SURVIVORS SURVEYED	DENVER-AURORA-LAKEWOOD MSA
GENDER	MALE	51%	49%
	FEMALE	49%	51%
AGE	18-24	6%	11%
	25-34	16%	21%
	35-44	24%	19%
	45-54	23%	19%
	55-64	20%	16%
	65+	1%	14%
	RACE/ETHNICITY	WHITE	50%
	BLACK	16%	5%
	HISPANIC OR LATINO	21%	20%
	ASIAN	3%	4%
	OTHER	10%	5%

CCJRC's mission is to eliminate the overuse of the criminal justice system and advance community health and safety.

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