

Crime & Safety

Discussion Guide



Let's review

At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room. And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so listen and be prepared to hear a different point of view. Remember, you do not need to share your political affiliation; this is a discussion and exchange of ideas, not politics.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

The "Table-it" Rule: If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

Let's begin

- Take five minutes to review the [Executive Summary](#) and walk through the brief. Highlight the main point of each section and key statistics.
- Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-three minute reaction** to the Brief:
 - Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this Brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
 - What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the Brief? What matters?

Spread the word: facts to share during your discussion:

- The surge of rising crime rates sparks concern. It weighs heavily on the minds of many Americans, with [61% of registered voters ranking crime](#) in 2022 as "very important" when weighing political decisions.
- Between 2019 and 2021, property crimes like robbery, burglary, and larceny went down, while [homicide rates went up](#) by 39.42% and aggravated assault went up by 14.9%. Similarly, while examining these trends on a local level, a report showed Chicago neighborhoods saw seven major crime categories [spike to the highest levels since 2018](#).

- According to a [Gallup](#) poll conducted in October 2021, 51% of Americans said they felt local crime worsened, up from 38% in 2020 - the highest level since 1972. In April 2022, [Gallup reported 53%](#) of Americans worried "a great deal" about crime - the highest uptick since 2016.
- "[Crime—burglary, robbery, vandalism, shoplifting, employee theft, and fraud—costs businesses billions of dollars each year.](#)
- A November 2021 study estimated that the annual cost of crime in the United States is "[\\$4.71-5.76 trillion including transfer from studies from victims to criminals and \\$2.86-\\$3.92 trillion net of transfers.](#)" State and local governments spent [\\$123 billion on police in 2019](#), which is approximately 3.7% of state and local general expenditures for operational costs (e.g., salaries and benefits).
- A 2022 [study](#) conducted by The Associated Press and Northeastern University examined databases and details surrounding mass violence between 2006 and August of 2022, and found that 2,742 victims had lost their lives in 526 [mass killings in the United States](#).
- Nearly all of the [2.2 million incarcerated individuals](#) will be released from prison at some point, and 4 in 10 are reincarcerated again within 3 years.
- The [National Institute of Corrections](#) indicates that previously incarcerated individuals who participate in "Offender Workforce Development" are 33% less likely to be re-incarcerated.

Let's discuss

Below are questions for the group to consider and discuss, or choose your own.

- **Community:** What are the crime rates in the community? Are there accurate reporting/databases to measure crime in your community? Are there community programs to combat crime through workforce development, mentorship, or increased education access? Are there community efforts to support any community revitalization projects?
- **Government:** Who is the United States [Attorney](#)? Who is your District Attorney? What are the top prosecutorial policies and issues for your local DA?
- **Business:** What are local community efforts to reduce crime and increase economic opportunity? Are there programs to support those in their reentry to society following incarceration?

Let's act

1. **Take it local.** Talk to neighbors, friends, and family about their experiences with crime and safety in your community. Does the data tell the full picture? Has your community's prosecutorial strategy changed? How has this impacted crime or the perception of safety?
2. **Explore local policies related to crime, safety, and the criminal justice system in your community.** Is your local community reporting to the new FBI crime data system? Why or why not?
3. **Investigate community programs** in your state or municipality. Look up your state's community efforts for workforce development and community revitalization programs.
4. **Research your elected representatives' positions** on crime, safety, and criminal justice reform. What is their vision to ensure safety in communities? How do they plan to reduce

recidivism? You can find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#). Your state or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders. Try looking at the drop-down menu for a *Government* tab.

5. **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).
6. **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed in your local newspaper.** Learn how on [The Policy Circle website](#).

Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present, and share planned actions from group members. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- **Decide your next meeting topic.** Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? Suggestions include:
 - [Financial Literacy](#)
 - [Healthcare](#)
 - [K-12 Education](#)
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [influencing policy](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness. Don't miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper on this issue and more.