



Justice Center

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

Beyond the Headlines: Bringing Together Data and People to Improve Public Safety Outcomes

August 26, 2025 | grace beil call



Justice Center

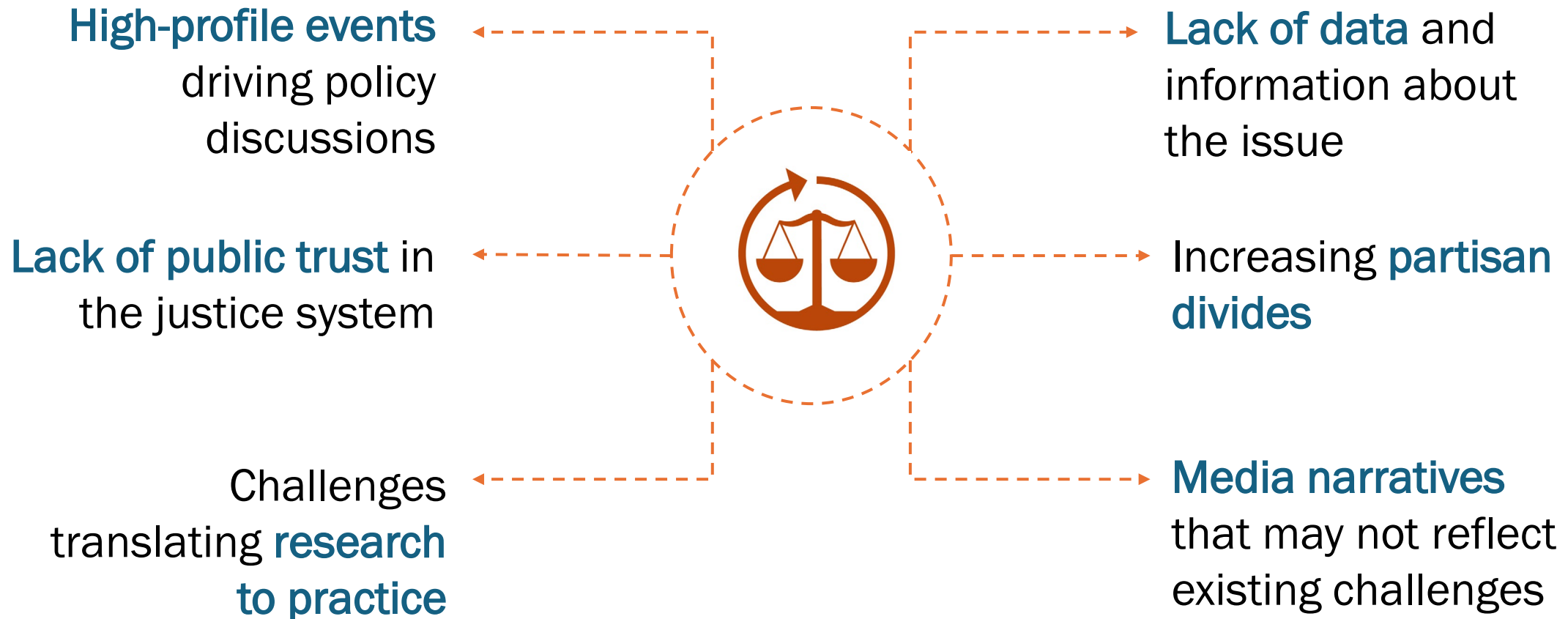
THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

We are a national nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that combines the power of a membership association, serving state officials in all three branches of government, with policy and research expertise to develop strategies that increase public safety and strengthen communities.

What We Do

- **Harness the Power of Data** – Use data-driven approaches to address rising crime, recidivism, and public safety concerns.
- **Address Critical Issues** – Support responses to behavioral health challenges impacting the justice system, as well as staffing shortages in law enforcement, jails, and prisons.
- **Empower Evidence-Based Policies** – Help states implement strategies that are proven to work.
- **Invest in What Works** – Guide resource allocation to effective programs and solutions.
- **Enhance Public Safety** – Reduce crime, improve behavioral health responses, and strengthen community well-being.

What factors complicate criminal justice policymaking?



The public is concerned about crime and distrustful of the justice system.

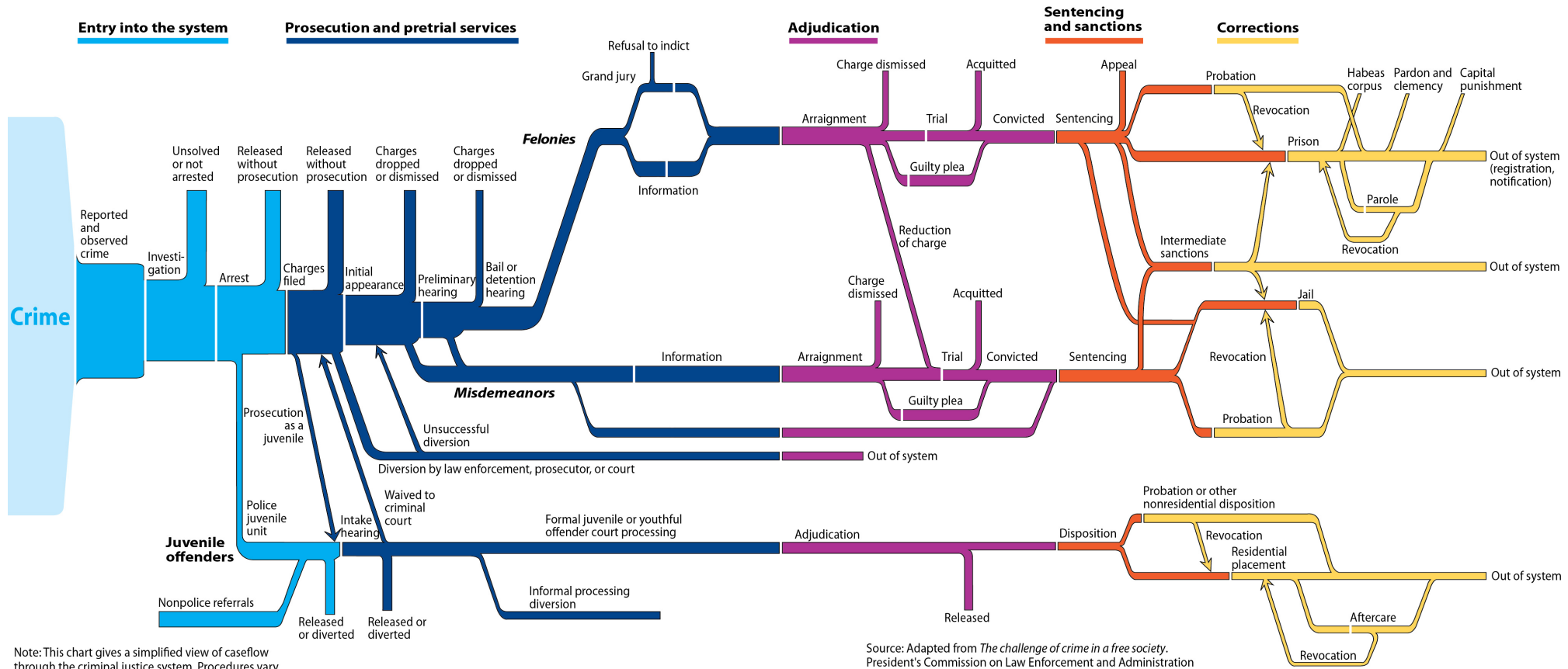
78% of people think that there is **more crime across the United States** than in previous years.

40% of people are “very dissatisfied” with **policies to control or reduce crime.**

17% of people have “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of **trust in the justice system.**

The criminal justice system is complex, and each part is interdependent on the others.

Criminal Justice System Flowchart



Note: This chart gives a simplified view of caseload through the criminal justice system. Procedures vary among jurisdictions. The weights of the lines are not intended to show actual size of caseloads.

Source: Adapted from *The challenge of crime in a free society*. President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, 1967. This revision, a result of the Symposium on the 30th Anniversary of the President's Commission, was prepared by the Bureau of Justice Statistics in 1997.

How can policymakers respond?

Policymakers can take a comprehensive approach to improving public safety outcomes.

Define the Issue

Identify the problem and target the specific outcomes that you want to improve.

Know Your State Context

Ask the right questions to better understand the issue in your state.

Identify Policy Options

Tailor promising and evidence-based practices to your state context.

Sustain Support

Maintain partnerships through implementation and deal with challenges together.



Justice Data Snapshots

United States Justice Data & Trends

Community and Behavioral Health - Criminal justice trends vary by state—now more than ever. Decision-makers need up-to-date, state-specific data to navigate today's challenges. These snapshots pull together the most recent data for each state on crime, arrests, behavioral health, workforce, recidivism, and more in one place.

Community mortality rates

Behavioral health service providers
Substance use challenges and needs
Mental health needs and services
Homelessness and poverty

To help put your state's trends in context, request a briefing from our justice data experts by contacting Madeleine D. at mderdeau@csag.org.

-- Select a State --

Community and Behavioral Health

Community mortality rates

Justice Data Snapshots

Iowa Justice Data & Trends

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Community and Behavioral Health

Community mortality rates

Iowa Criminal Justice Data Snapshot

January 2025
Version 2.1, updated 01.06.2025

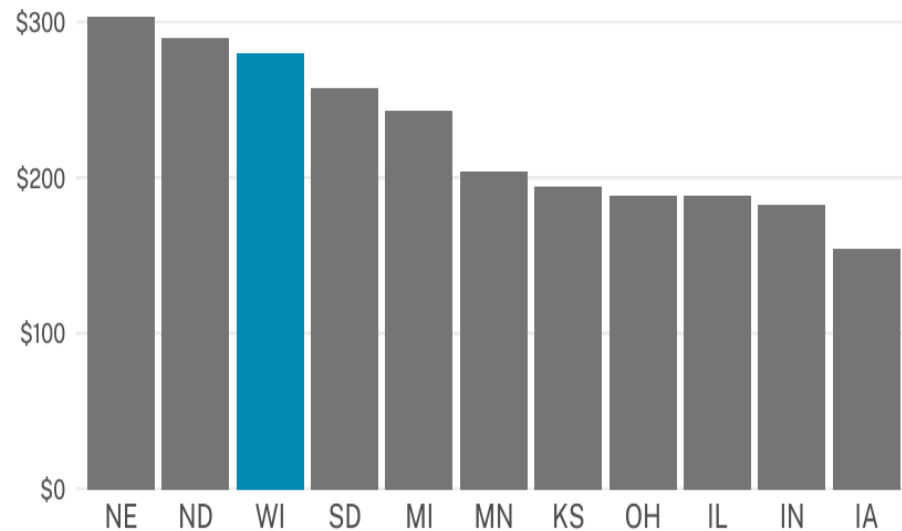
Criminal justice data tour for your state starts here.

States are actively advancing improvements to the criminal justice system.

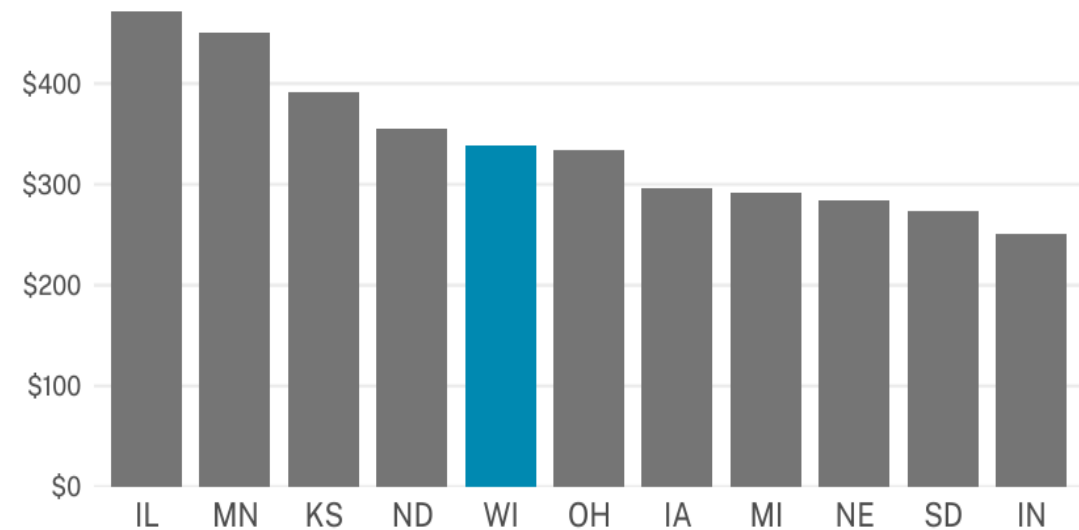
- Improving **reentry** outcomes
- Strengthening **crisis response systems**
- Enhancing community **supervision** practices
- Advancing effective **parole** strategies
- Improving outcomes for **youth** in the justice system
- Leveraging **Medicaid** to improve justice and health outcomes
- Improving the use and quality of criminal justice **data**
- Strengthening processes for **competency** to stand trial
- Expanding access to **behavioral health** and **housing** supports

States invest considerable funding in public safety to achieve intended system and community outcomes.

State and local corrections expenditures
Total per resident, Midwestern Region, 2021



State and local law enforcement expenditures
Total per resident, Midwestern Region, 2021



Crime & Violence

Challenges:

- Overall decline in violent crime, but not in all communities
- Ongoing public concerns about crime
- Drastic decline in federal funding for crime victim services
- Low solve rates for violent offenses

Opportunities for Impact:

- Increasing use of cross-system, evidence-informed strategies
- Investing strategically in law enforcement
- Building trust through community engagement



A Case Study: Addressing Violent Crime

“There are too few consequences for people who are committing violent crime.”

“Violent crime is out of control.”

“Violent crime is being driven by people released from prison and reoffending after serving very short sentences.”

“I no longer feel safe in my community.”

Define the Issue

What's the problem?

- Concerns about crime, violence, and safety
- High-profile media coverage about violent crime
- Law enforcement concerns about staffing, retention, and capacity to address crime and violence

What is the desired outcome?

- Increased personal and community safety
- Increased accountability for people who commit violent offenses
- Increased justice for victims of violent crime
- Law enforcement that is resourced and trained to effectively address crime and violence



Know Your State Context

Examine your state data

- Violent crime trends by offense
- Unsolved violent crime trends
- Differences by region, county, and department
- Law enforcement staffing trends
- Recidivism trends for people on supervision and leaving incarceration

Key Questions

- Is violent crime higher than in previous years? If so, is that true across the state or just in certain areas?
- Are specific violent offenses up or down?
- How much violent crime goes unsolved? Are there differences by geography, offense, or race?
- Is law enforcement struggling with hiring and retaining staff compared to prior years?
- How are arrests of people on supervision or leaving incarceration contributing to violent crime trends?
- What is the average length of stay for violent offenses in your state? How has this changed over time?

Know Your State Context

Talk to stakeholders closest to the issue

- Law enforcement
- Community organizations and representatives
- Victim service organizations and advocates
- Corrections leadership
- Other public safety leadership

Key Questions

- What challenges do they see to improving community safety?
- What is the state of community-law enforcement relationships?
- What are the barriers to solving more violent crime? Crime lab processing times?
- What violence prevention and intervention services exist in the community? What's working? What's not?
- How do corrections officials work with people on supervision or reentering from incarceration to reduce recidivism?
- How may corrections budget, staffing, and capacity be impacted by increasing sentence lengths for violent offenses?
- How are victims of violent crime supported? What's working? What's not?

Identify Policy Options

Pursue **policies** to improve identified outcomes using evidence-based or promising practices tailored to your state's context

- Grant funding to support law enforcement capacity to solve more violent crimes
- Targeted investments in prevention and intervention
- Increased victim service supports
- Addressing crime lab backlogs
- Etc.

Improve **data collection and reporting** to inform future decision-making.

Establish a **working group** to explore the issue and build consensus support.

Implement a **media and communications** strategy.



Evidence-based policymaking

Evidence-based programs and practices are grounded in empirical evidence, scientific research, and outcome evaluation that prove effectiveness in achieving the desired positive outcomes.

Promising programs and practices show initial evidence or indicators of effectiveness in addressing a particular issue or achieving a desired outcome.

Sustain Support

70%

estimate of change initiatives that will ultimately **fail**.

Strategies to sustain support through implementation

- Build in **outcome measures** and data tracking.
- Resource agencies as needed to **fully implement** change.
- Maintain partnerships to stay **focused** on and maintain **urgency** around implementation.
- Consider a **crisis** communication plan.

What criminal justice challenge does your state face?

Question 1

What data would you need to better understand the challenge? What questions does it prompt?

Question 2

What stakeholders would you need to engage about the challenge? What kinds of questions should you ask?

Question 3

How can you sustain support through implementation to achieve intended outcomes?

Reentry & Reducing Recidivism

Challenges:

- High reincarceration rates despite historical reductions
- Supervision violations driving prison admissions
- Significant gaps in reentry supports
- Economic barriers

Opportunities for Impact:

- Leveraging cross-system partnerships and resources
- Strengthening community supervision
- Expanding access to housing, employment, health care, and education



Parole Board
Decision-Making



Reentry 2030



Supervision Violations

Youth Justice & Adolescent Health

Challenges:

- Overall decline in youth arrests for violent offenses, but surge in arrests for homicide and weapons
- Increasing mental health, school, and community violence challenges
- Increase in homicides where victim is youth
- Provider shortages

Opportunities for Impact:

- Implementing statewide approaches to adolescent prevention services and supports
- Focusing limited resources on small number of youth who pose the greatest public safety risk
- Addressing provider capacity issues



Behavioral Health & Criminal Justice

Challenges:

- Estimated half of people entering jail have a behavioral health need
- Continually high overdose death rates despite recent declines
- Provider shortages
- Lack of coordination across behavioral health and criminal justice systems

Opportunities for Impact:

- Improving cross-system alignment to break cycles of incarceration, hospitalization, and housing instability
- Increasing use of alternative response models to connect people to care and reduce pressure on law enforcement
- Leveraging Medicaid waivers to improve reentry outcomes for people with complex needs.



Stepping Up



Implementing Medicaid
Waivers

Thank You!

Join our distribution list to receive updates and announcements:

<https://csgjusticecenter.org/resources/newsletters/>

**For more information, please contact grace beil call
gcall@csg.org.**

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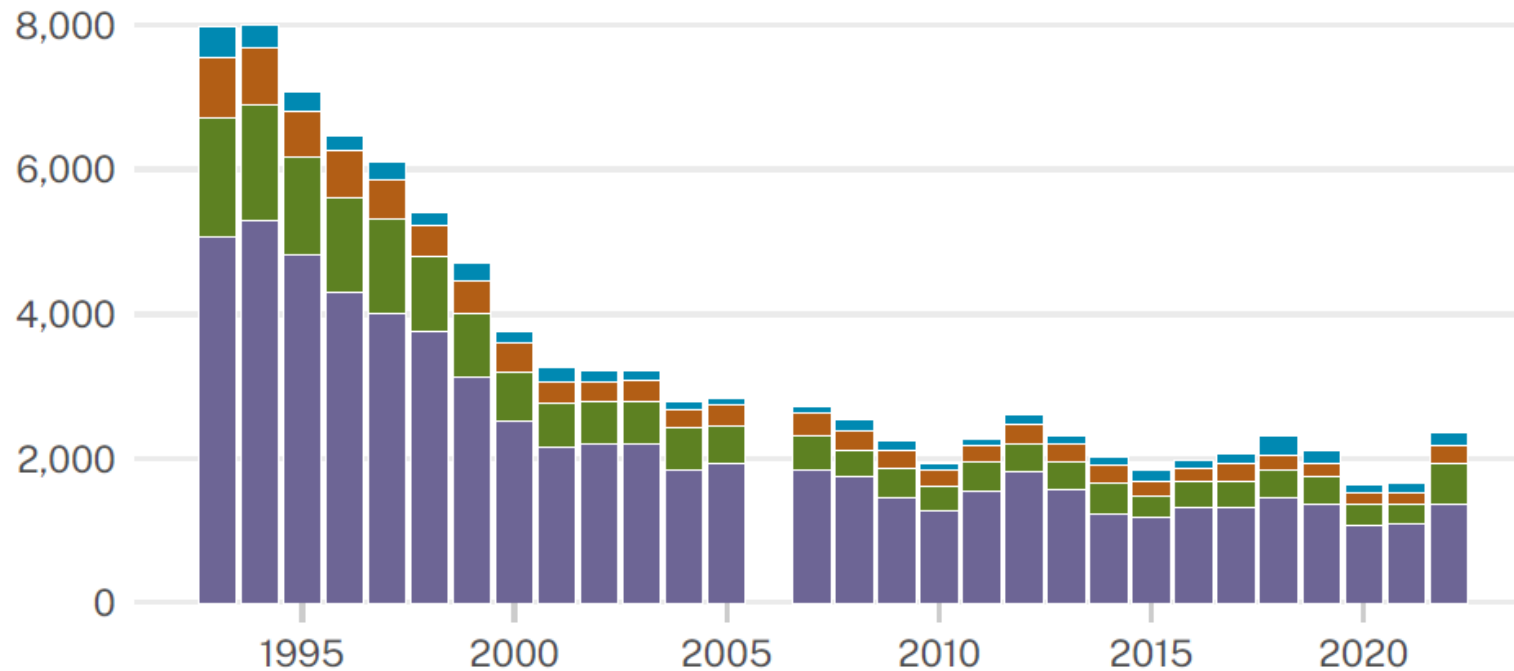


The rate of violent victimizations in 2022 was 70 percent lower than in 1993.

Violent victimizations

Rate per 100k residents, United States

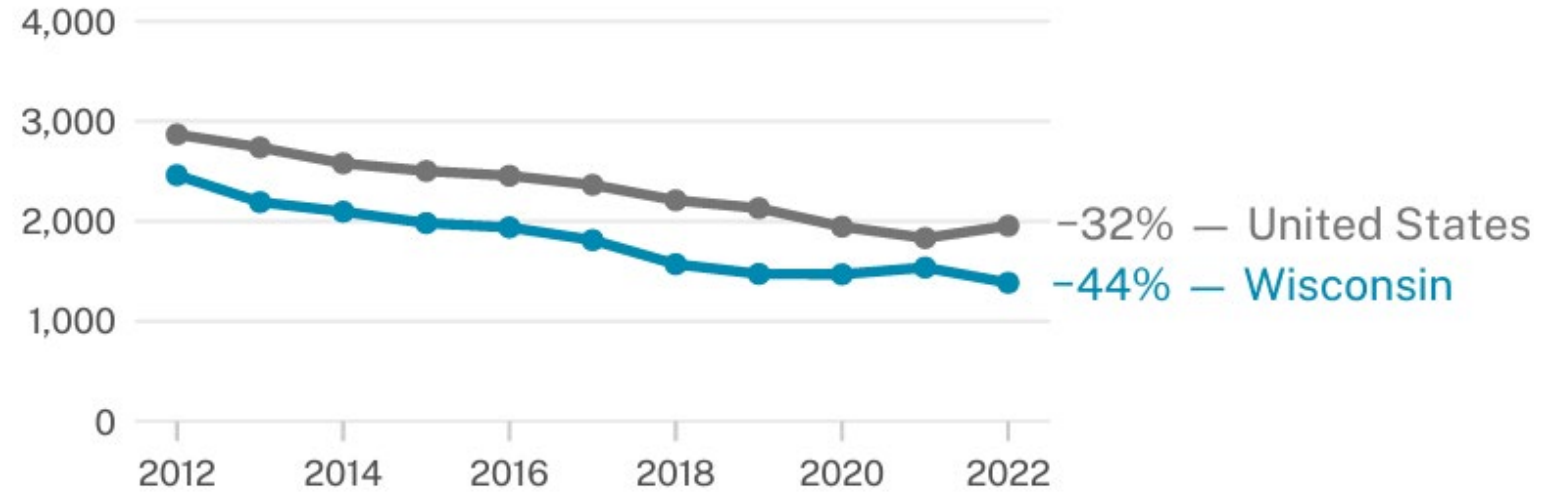
Simple assault Aggravated assault Robbery Rape



BJS National Crime Victimization Survey

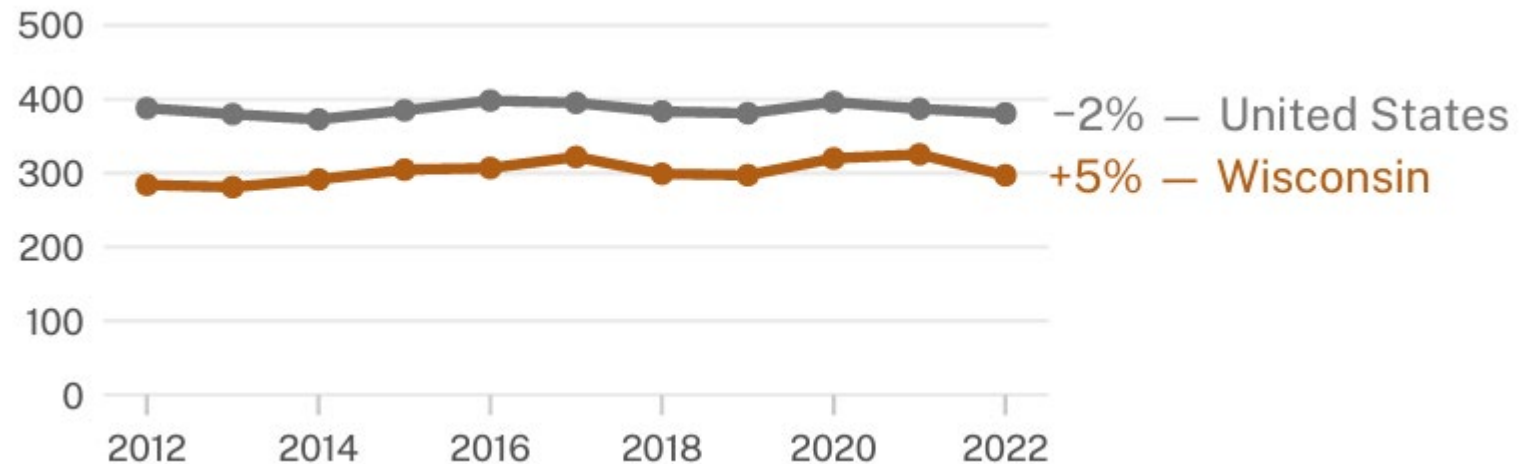
Nationally, property crime declined **32 percent** from 2012 to 2022.

Property index crime reported to police, 2012-2022



During this same period, violent crime also declined **2 percent** despite a spike in 2020.

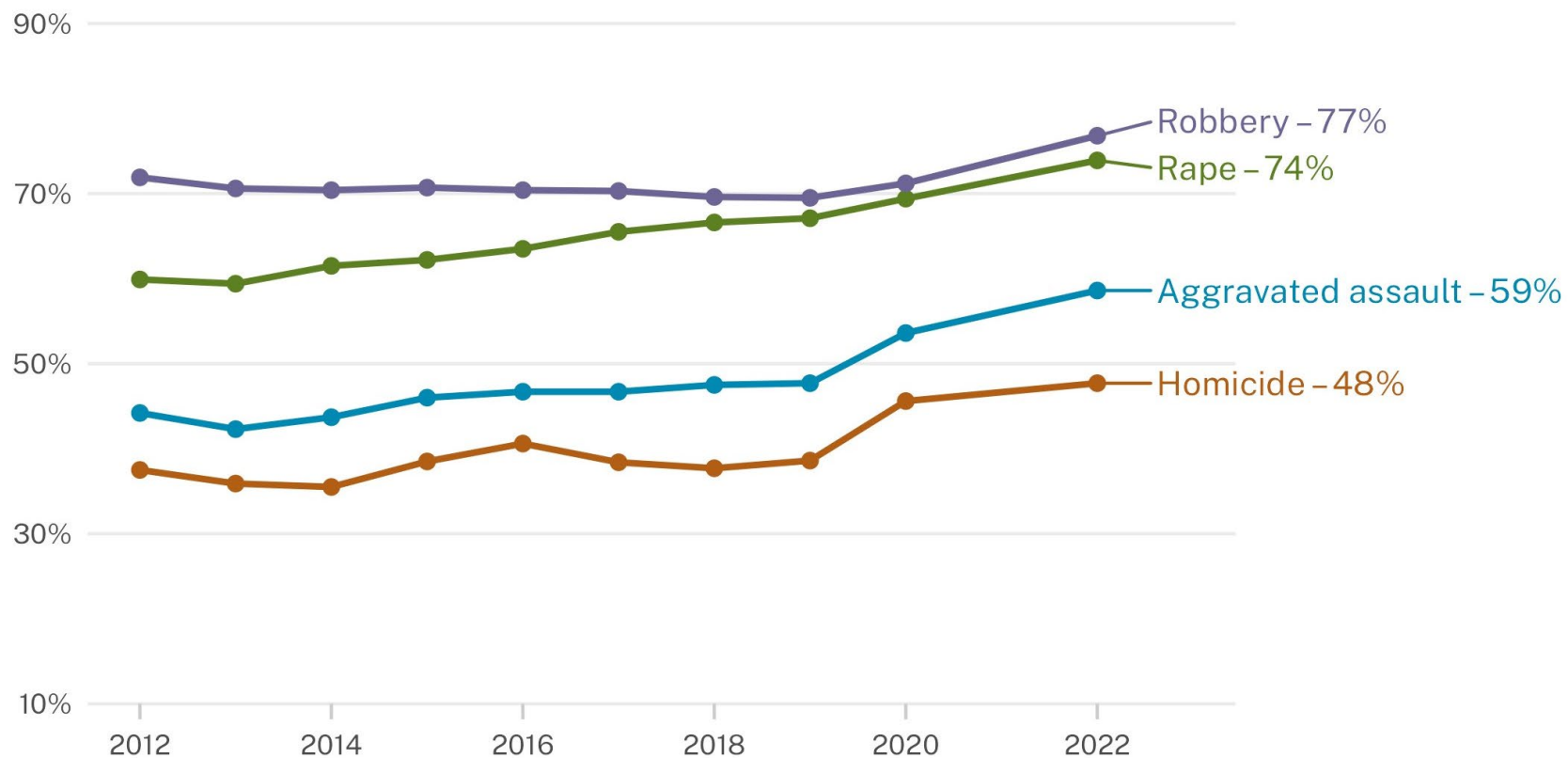
Violent index crime reported to police, 2012-2022





The percentage of violent crimes reported to police that were unsolved increased 10 percent over the last decade.

National unsolved rate of violent crime by offense, 2012–2022



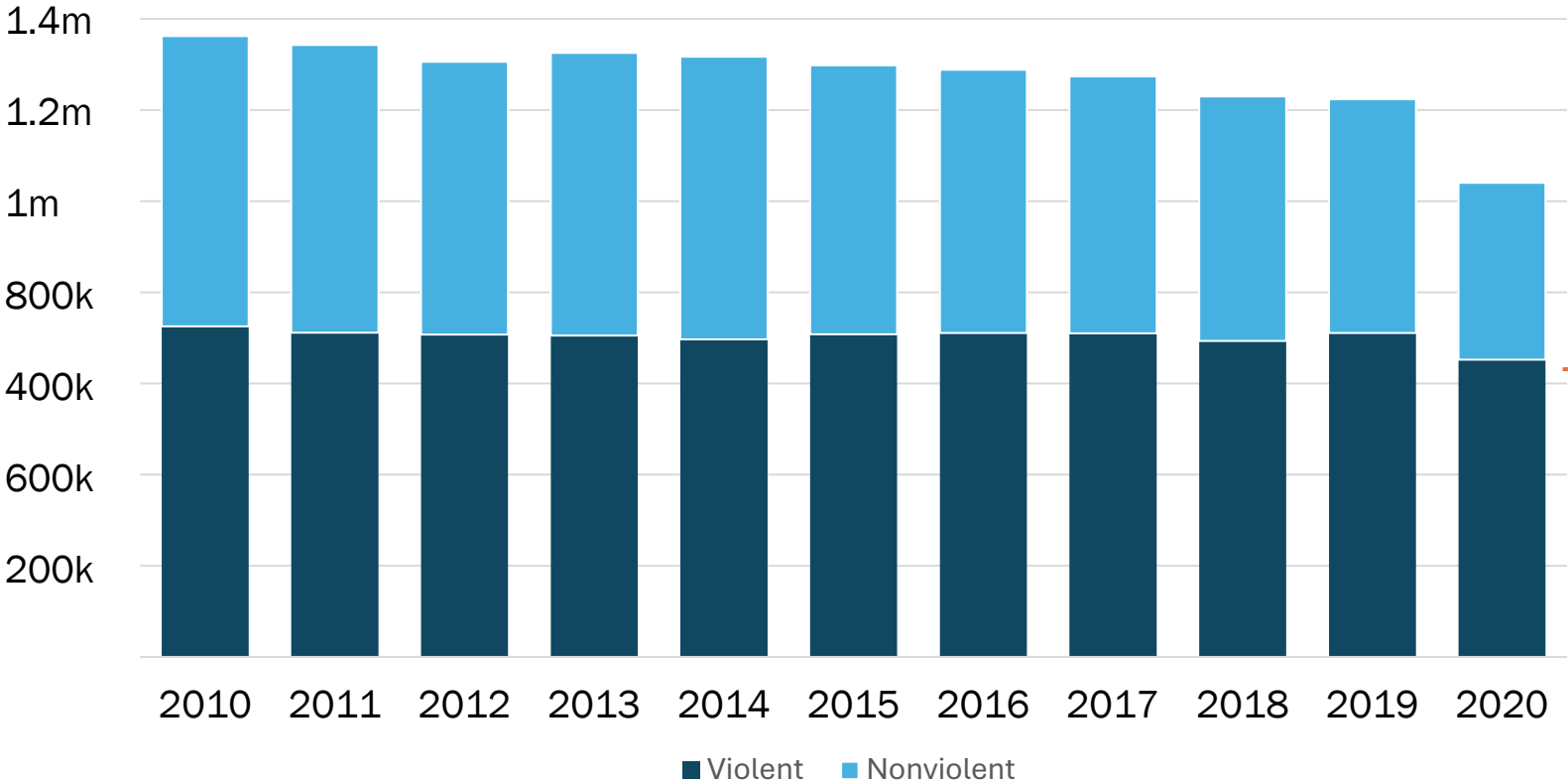
Change rate unsolved by offense, 2012–2022:

- +10% Homicide
- +14% Aggravated Assault
- +14% Rape
- +5% Robbery

FBI Crime in the United States, Table 25

From 2010 to 2020, the overall state prison population across the U.S. dropped 25 percent.

National prison population by offense type, 2010–2020*

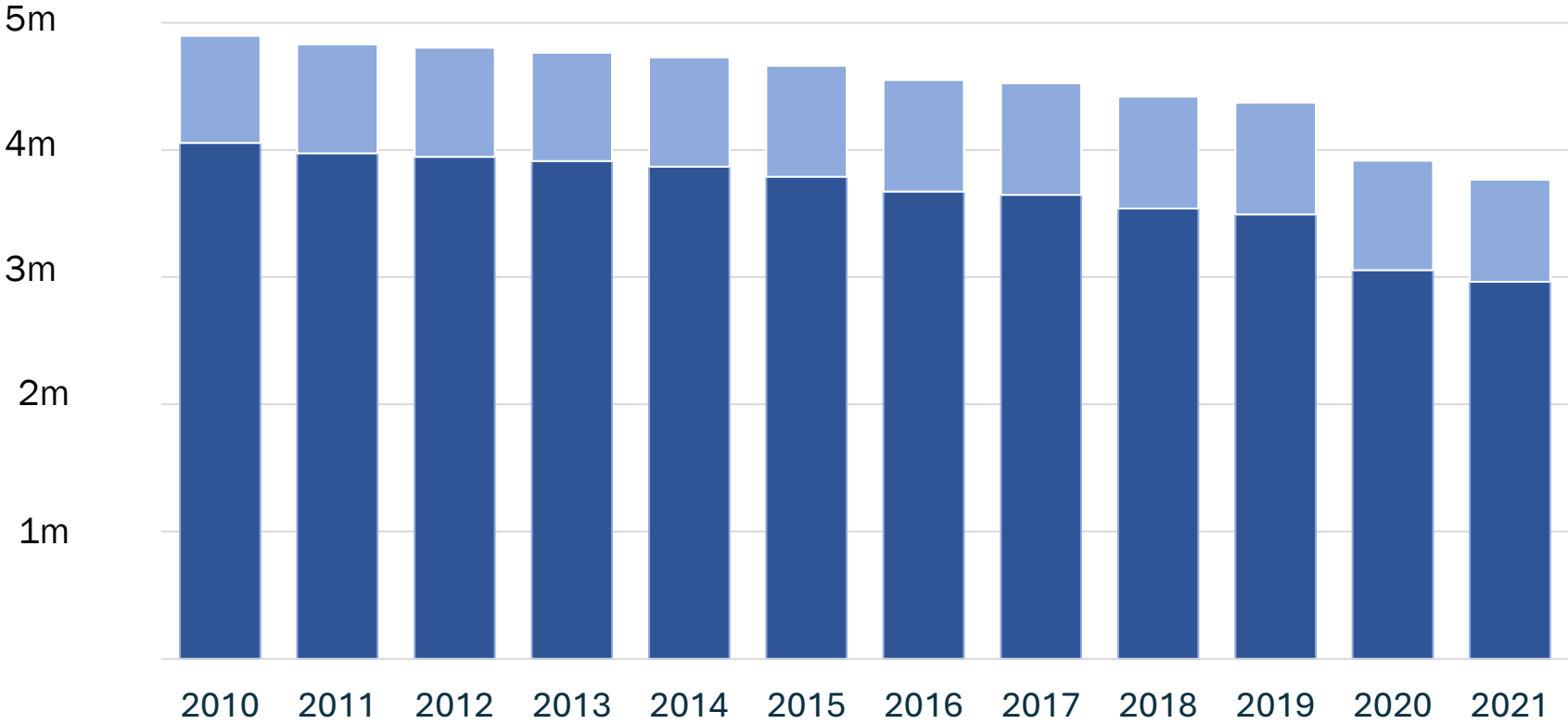


+18%
Increase in average time served for violent offenses, 2010–2020

* 2020 is the most recent year for which data is available.
“The Footprint: Tracking the Size of America’s Criminal Justice System,” The Council on Criminal Justice, accessed October 3, 2023, <https://counciloncj.foleon.com/the-footprint-trends-in-crime-arrests-and-the-total-correctional-population/the-footprint/#state-prison>.

Similar to the prison population, the overall supervision population in the U.S. dropped 23 percent from 2010 to 2021.

National supervision population, 2010–2021*



From 2010 to 2021:

- 4%

parole population

- 27%

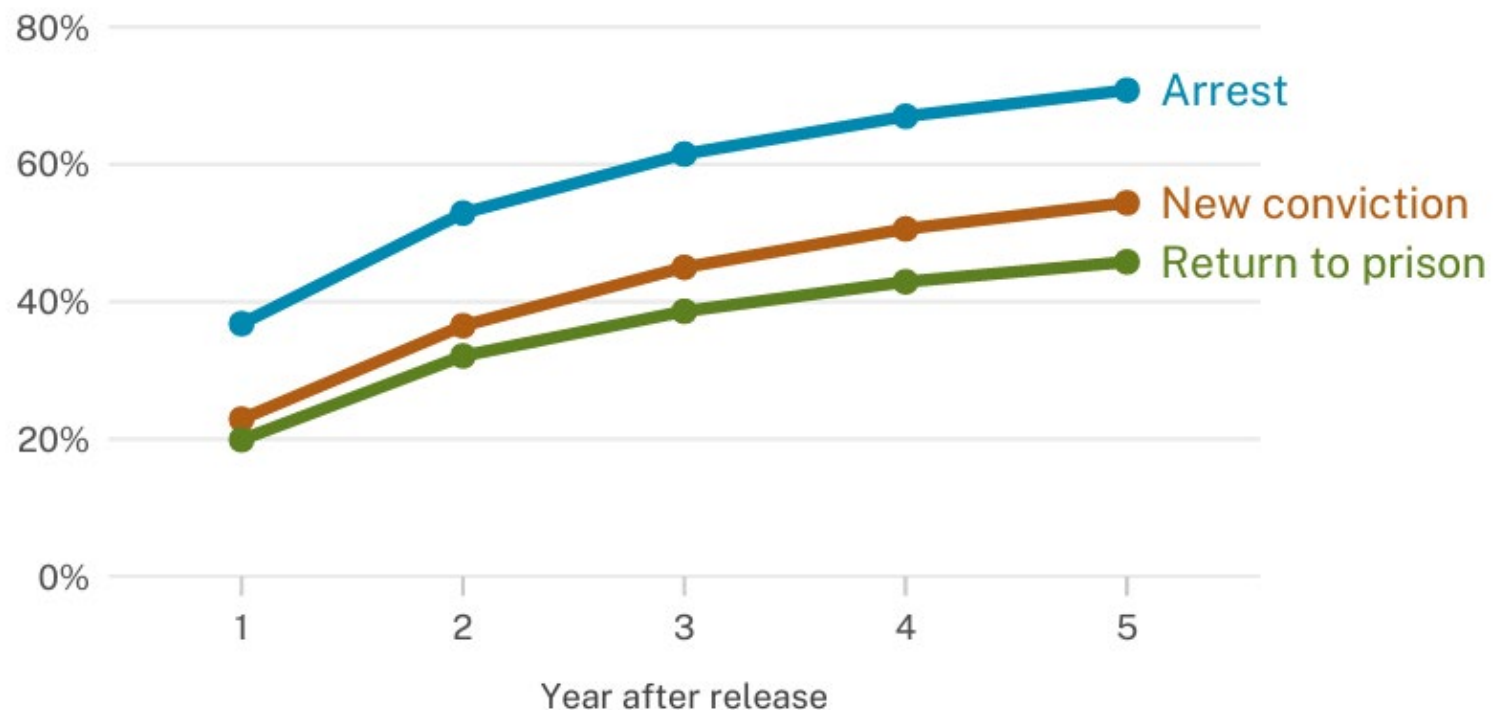
probation population

■ Parole
■ Probation

* 2021 is the most recent year for which data is available.
“The Footprint: Tracking the Size of America’s Criminal Justice System,” The Council on Criminal Justice, accessed October 3, 2023, <https://counciloncj.foleon.com/the-footprint-trends-in-crime-arrests-and-the-total-correctional-population/the-footprint/#state-prison>.

While the national recidivism rate is declining, 46 percent of people released from prison in 2012 returned to incarceration within 5 years.

Cumulative percentage of people released from prison who had a recidivism event within 5 years of release
34 states, 2012 releases

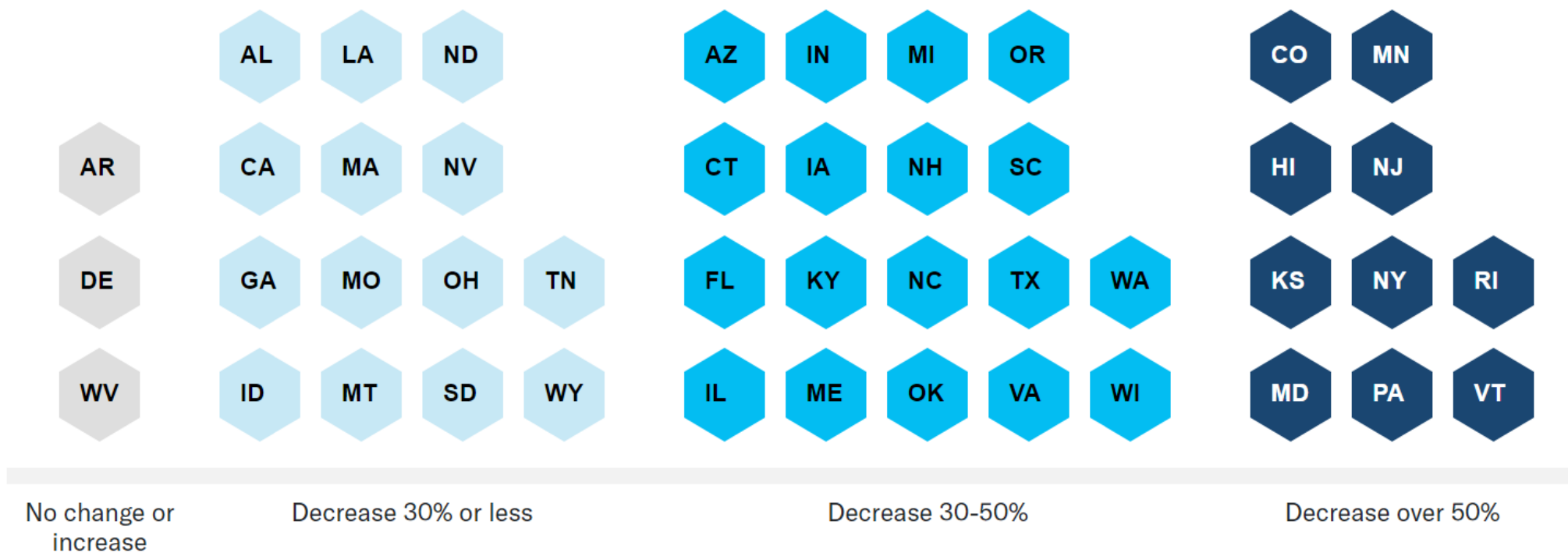




From 2018 to 2021, prison admissions from supervision decreased by one-third across the country.

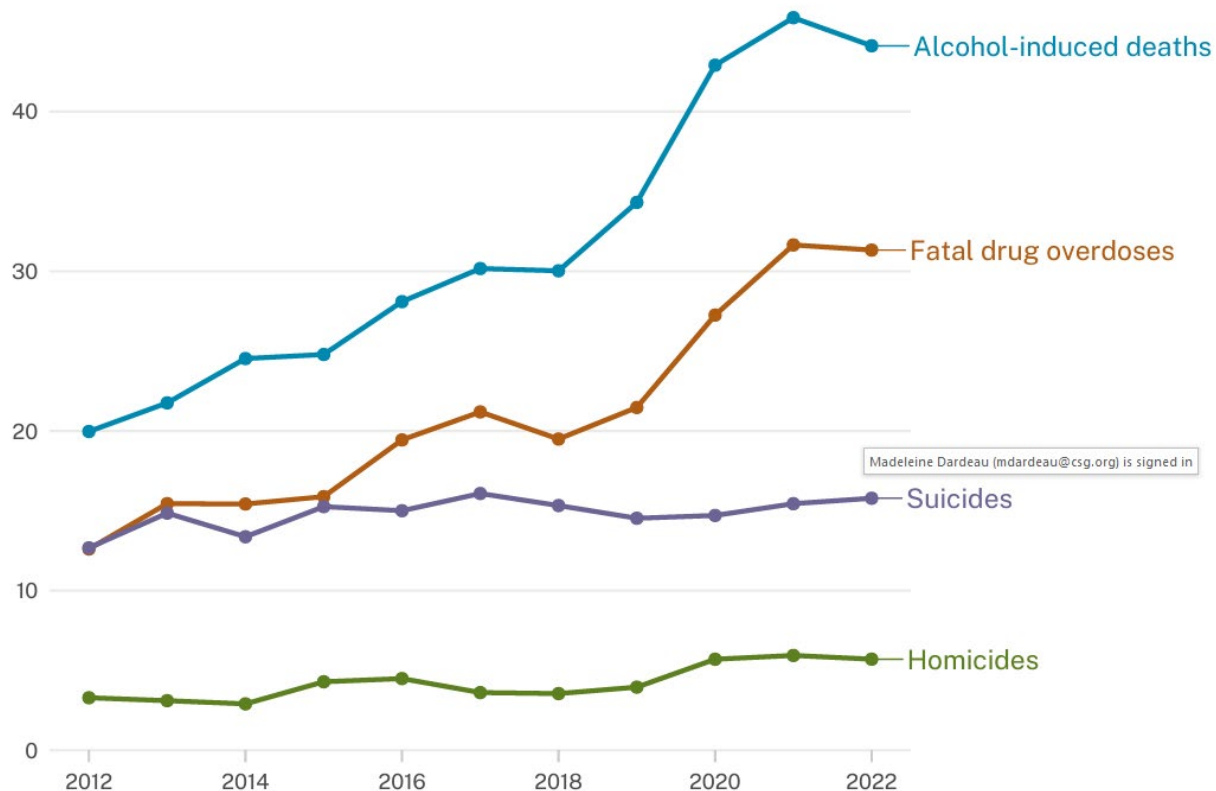
However, **1 in 4** people in state prison were incarcerated because they violated the terms of their supervision in 2021.

Percent change in prison admissions from supervision, 2018–2021



In most states, deaths due to alcohol and drugs have significantly increased in the last several years.

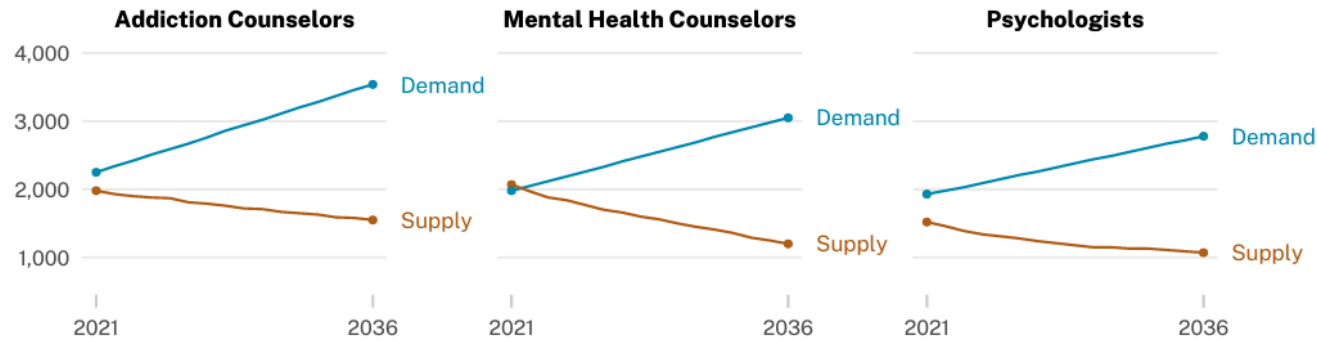
Cause of death, Wisconsin, 2012–2022
Rate per 100k residents



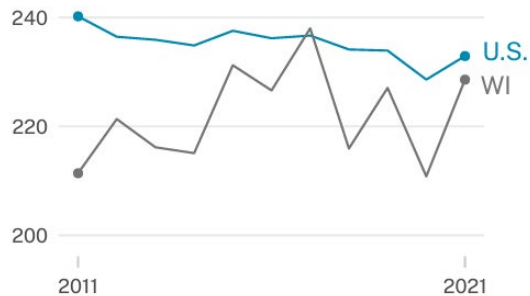
Nationally, **four times** more people died of drug overdoses, and almost **twice** as many people died by suicide compared to homicide in 2022.

States continue to struggle with critical workforce shortages in behavioral health and public safety.

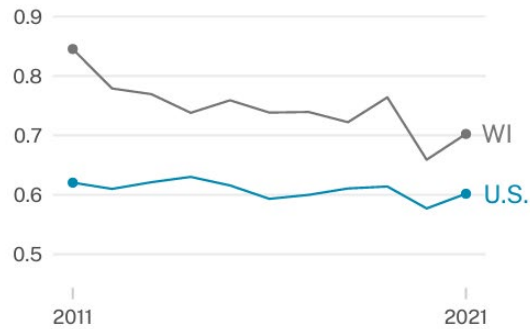
Projected supply and demand of behavioral health providers, Wisconsin



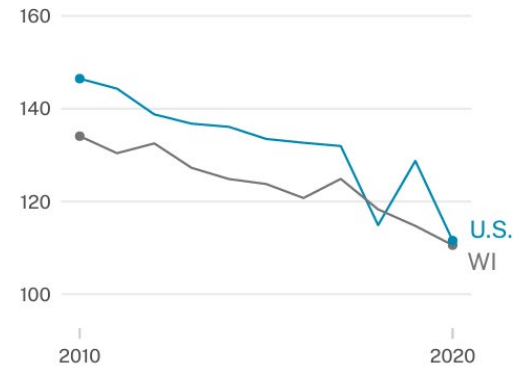
Police officers and detectives employed, Wisconsin



Police officers and detectives per violent crime, Wisconsin



Correctional officers employed, Wisconsin



Number of incarcerated persons per correctional officer, Wisconsin

