



# REDEFINING COMMUNITY SAFETY IN MISSOULA, MONTANA

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The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the participants and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the agencies for which they are employed.

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01

# INTRODUCTION

Everyone wants to feel safe in their community. Yet, little is known about how people make sense of what community safety looks and feels like to them. Discussions among policymakers and in the media often emphasize crime rates as a key measure of community safety and the criminal legal system as the primary means of achieving this goal. This traditional conceptualization has several negative consequences. First, it often overlooks the perspectives and experiences of people most impacted by violence, high levels of enforcement, and mass incarceration, many of whom are people of color. Second, low crime rates do not necessarily ensure that residents perceive their community is safe. Other factors, such as media coverage and the physical and social environment, also play a role in shaping views of safety.<sup>i</sup> Moreover, not all crime is reported to authorities, and this may be particularly true in areas where residents experience elevated levels of police enforcement activity and have little trust in the police.<sup>ii</sup> Third, relying on crime and other criminal legal system data can provide a narrow and skewed conceptualization of safety because they tend to reflect law enforcement priorities, police discretion, and willingness to report crime. Finally, aspects of safety captured by criminal legal system data may not align with community priorities or values. Narrow crime-oriented definitions often fail to recognize that conversations around community safety are highly localized. Allowing communities to define what safety means to them facilitates the development of locally driven priorities for action and interventions, ultimately helping advance the goal of safety for all.

This report explores the meaning of community safety for people who live and work in Missoula County, Montana by documenting local dynamics of crime, the criminal legal system, and conversations around the meaning of community safety. This report is part of a [larger project](#) that considers how adult residents of three US counties (Missoula County, Montana, St. Louis County, Missouri; and Mecklenburg County, North Carolina) define and understand community safety. These counties are currently working on interventions around crime and community safety funded, in part, through the MacArthur Safety and Justice Challenge. The goal of the project was to develop a broad conceptualization of community safety that considers the views of people most impacted by crime and the criminal legal system. The findings are based on data from community surveys, as well as interviews and focus groups. The surveys were designed to capture a diversity of community voices. The interviews and focus groups allowed for a more in-depth examination of the views of criminal legal system actors, system-impacted individuals, and people who work with system-impacted persons, groups whose voices are often omitted in work of this type. Throughout, we draw on the interviews to highlight key findings and bring voice to the people closest to the challenges of building and maintaining safe communities.



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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Missoula faces a number of challenges that impact community views of safety, and there is general agreement that the physical and social environment is rapidly changing. Housing-related concerns and the visibility of the unhoused population dominated conversations around safety. Part of these changes are due to an influx of new residents and associated increases in home prices, making basic needs less affordable even for people with stable employment. Few people we spoke with were unaffected by rising housing costs. For example, people working in the criminal legal system and service providers reported their own personal challenges with housing and discussed the impact of this issue on hiring and retaining staff. Many perceive that the unhoused population is growing in visibility due to a higher prevalence of drugs, a limited supply of low-income housing, and difficulty accessing mental health and substance use treatment services. Residents also indicated that domestic violence and missing and murdered indigenous persons should be top priorities.
- Media coverage of crime trends often features the perspectives of government officials and criminal legal system actors. An analysis of local media articles discussing crime trends found that coverage in Missoula focused primarily on drug-related issues and violence. Individuals who work for the criminal legal system (e.g., courts, police) and government officials were most frequently quoted. The perspectives of people directly affected by crime and the legal system were rarer. Media reporting primarily attributed rising and persistent rates of violence to root social issues, such as mental health and substance use, while discussions of solutions focused equally on addressing root social problems and criminal legal system responses. The emphasis on criminal legal system actors and responses may reflect, in part, the ease of accessing government actors and the recognition that effective immediate short-term responses to crime often involve law enforcement partners. This does not diminish the fact that all voices and perspectives need to be heard in these discussions, given the prominent role of media narratives in shaping public perceptions of safety.
- Community safety is a multifaceted concept and reflects the diversity of the community. We surveyed community members about what safety means to them and then collaborated with a group of local stakeholders to help organize and make sense of these responses. A Community Safety Concept Map was generated that has 11 components, which can be categorized into five domains or “regions”: 1) Personal safety and security; 2) Thriving and socially connected community; 3) Resources and services for a socially and economically just community; 4) Responsive and effective government and public safety agencies; and 5) Systems for preventing and addressing harm.



- Personal safety and security are at the heart of community safety; yet the types of harm and day-to-day hassles that most concern residents vary based on life experiences. These differences underscore that conversations about community safety must be inclusive and include the perspectives of marginalized groups, as their safety concerns may require a different set of policies and actions. In Missoula County, the unhoused population was primarily concerned with violent victimization, harassment, and having their belongings taken. This group, along with system-impacted individuals and people of color, discussed feeling unsafe because they perceive that they receive lower-quality emergency services than others. Some residents reported worrying about their safety and, more often, the safety of their children in areas where unhoused individuals congregate because they view this group as unpredictable.



- Viewpoints on the role of the criminal legal system in promoting community safety are often nuanced and conflicting. A common theme was that the criminal legal system is a key partner in community safety, but current systems can be unjust, ineffective, and harmful to people and communities.
- Many community members believe that the police play an essential role in keeping communities safe, and they feel safer when police are visible and active in their neighborhood. Others, especially system-impacted individuals and those from marginalized groups, indicated they feel unsafe around law enforcement and avoid calling them for help. These views are rooted in personal or shared negative prior experiences with the police. However, many of these same individuals also described positive interactions with law

enforcement. For them, it is the unpredictability of how the police will treat them that leads them to avoid law enforcement.

- While people acknowledged the importance of accountability for those who cause harm, they also indicated that current systems are inequitable, ineffective, and make people and communities feel less, not more, safe. A common theme, particularly among victims of violence, was that those who engage in harm should be held accountable, and steps should be taken to ensure that they do not continue this behavior. At the same time, others perceived that the criminal legal system does not achieve this goal and instead creates long-term barriers that make it hard for system-impacted individuals to succeed. Some respondents highlighted the importance of identifying effective alternate models of accountability.
- Community safety is multidimensional, and survey respondents rated all 11 components of community safety as important or very important. Recognizing the overlap of safety with other community priorities, such as ensuring that everyone has their basic needs met and an equal opportunity to lead a stable life, can help promote and sustain collaboration among agencies. Respondents in Missoula County were most likely to rank social and economic justice (e.g., having access to attainable housing, healthy food, quality education) as the most important components of community safety; however, they felt these aspects of community safety are currently underprioritized.
- Safety cannot be measured with a narrow set of indicators. Participants agreed measuring safety is challenging, and there was no consensus regarding the most effective method to measure this concept. Many recognized that administrative data, including crime statistics and perceptual measures typically collected with surveys, have their strengths and weaknesses. Other common themes included the importance of disaggregating data to look at disparities, the need to measure factors "upstream" of crime (e.g., poverty, graduation rates, employment), and the value of regularly convening people to review data. In addition, accessibility and quality of supportive services were identified as important, but sometimes overlooked, measures of community safety.
- Community safety should be a collective responsibility, not just the responsibility of the police and/or those who live in areas that are most impacted by crime, violence, and high levels of enforcement. Participants felt that everyone benefits when people work together to reduce violence and other harms; however, some believed that the burden of crime and the responsibility for increasing safety are not equally distributed in the community.
- Several universal recommendations emerge from these findings.
  - Frame conversations around "community safety" instead of "public safety" to help people think more expansively about what safety looks like and how to achieve this goal. This also has the potential to reveal the broader historical forces that create and sustain inequalities associated with safety.

- Communicate to residents and leaders a more inclusive and equitable vision of community safety. While low rates of violence and feeling secure are key components of community safety, it is much more than that. The methods used in this report can help residents and stakeholders think more inclusively about safety.
- Identify local priorities and structure future action using the [Community Safety Concept Map](#) generated from this research. This map is designed to be a dynamic tool to engender discussions about safety and ensure that a holistic perspective is being considered by a multitude of stakeholders (e.g., community groups, local leaders, education providers).<sup>iii</sup>
- Collect data from a representative group of individuals, including groups most impacted by crime and the criminal legal system. This includes unhoused individuals, people of color, and other minoritized groups as well as people who work in the criminal legal system. Rural communities may have unique perspectives on safety and should be included in any effort of this type.
- Make data on community safety easily accessible to the public. Missoula has ongoing data collection efforts that can be leveraged to measure the various components of community safety identified in this study. Creating a dashboard or website that brings together these data and makes it easily accessible can empower communities to assess their progress toward achieving safety.
- Promote the message that creating and sustaining safe communities is a collective responsibility and support initiatives that take this approach.
- Work with local media to ensure the voices of those most impacted by crime and the criminal legal system are represented in news coverage. Hold the media accountable for following best practices. Resources are available that outline best practices for the media when reporting on crime trends.<sup>iv</sup>
- When resident input is solicited, ensure there is follow-up, so that communities know how the information is being used. For example, local stakeholders could partner with the media to describe what is being done to address safety-related concerns and educate the public on how they can contribute to these efforts.
- Replicate this work, focusing on the experiences of youth. Youth are an important part of the community that we were not able to reach, and they may have different views than older community members. From an equity and representation perspective, it is important to continue to broaden the voices considered when developing effective public policy.
- Connect with other local and national efforts to reimagine public safety. Throughout the country, there are ongoing efforts to rethink what makes a community feel safe and how to achieve this goal. Bringing this work together can help catalyze change.
- Perceptions of community safety can change, which necessitates regular public input to reflect shifting priorities. Changes in the demographic or economic profile, like what happened during the COVID-19

pandemic, can shift resident perceptions. Views on safety are dynamic and should continue to be reassessed. [The Toolkit for Prioritizing and Measuring Community Safety](#) associated with this project provides a step-by-step guide for local communities interested in reimagining community safety. Communities may want to partner with a local university if more advanced analyses, like those conducted in this report, are desired.



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# BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

In 2020, high-profile police killings, including those of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, led to widespread discussions on the meaning of community safety and the role of equity in these conceptualizations. Among politicians and local leaders, there have been recent efforts to “reimagine public safety” and invest in new tools, approaches, and methods to keep communities free from harm. Many scholars, practitioners, and activists have called for a broader understanding of the meaning of safety, who benefits from the current conceptualization, and who should play a role in setting safety-related priorities.<sup>v</sup>

This push for new ways of thinking about safety has been complicated by highly publicized increases in violence in many urban areas, including Missoula County, MT.<sup>vi</sup> Some increases coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic. Nationally, some have attributed the rise in violent crime to changes in criminal legal system policies, such as bail reform, decarceration, and decriminalization of minor offenses, despite a lack of evidence linking these practices to increases in the crime rate.<sup>vii</sup>

These challenges highlight that “reimagining public safety” requires moving beyond a reliance on criminal legal system data—such as crime, arrests, jail admissions, and police calls for service—which are traditional benchmarks for evaluating safety. Yet, there is little consensus on new ways to conceptualize and measure community safety. This gap can hinder the development of effective and equitable reform and safety initiatives.

## **WHY DOES THE WAY WE DEFINE AND MEASURE COMMUNITY SAFETY MATTER?**

A comprehensive, localized definition and measure of community safety can provide a foundation for effective, equitable action tailored to community needs, priorities, and values. First, how safety is conceptualized shapes the types of solutions implemented. Thus, a community-driven definition can lead to solutions that align with community needs and values.<sup>viii</sup> Conversely, a failure to unpack the meaning of this term can lead to continued reliance on a narrow set of traditional crime control strategies, especially if calls for “public safety” are conflated with enforcement and incarceration. Second, the current dependence on official crime data can contribute to stigmatizing narratives that some neighborhoods are “dangerous.” It also fails to recognize that communities with high rates of reported crime suffer from many issues that negatively impact safety, such as limited access to health care and mental health treatment. At the same time, it overlooks that areas with lower rates of reported crime may struggle with less visible forms of harm, including domestic violence, mental health issues, and substance use disorders. Third, if the success of programs and policy changes is measured exclusively by their effects on crime, the broader positive impact of these initiatives on residents' daily lives and well-being can be overlooked. In other words, a more holistic set of community safety measures allows for the inclusion of various social, economic, and political indicators, such as access to affordable healthcare and government accountability. Finally, there is a broad

understanding that "what gets measured gets done." Most current public safety initiatives focus on reducing crimes reported to the police and may not reflect the broader safety goals of a community. Regularly measuring and monitoring key non-crime indicators helps ensure a sustained focus on locally identified safety priorities and can be used to assess if, and under what conditions, initiatives have a positive impact. In addition, these measurements can help gauge if existing policies and programs are generating unintended consequences or harms that undermine community safety.

This report explores issues around the meaning and measurement of community safety in Missoula County, MT and presents a more holistic conceptualization of these ideas. The report begins with a discussion of the local context, describing recent trends in safety-related issues. We also discuss changes in local policies, laws, and programs implemented in response to pressing local safety-related issues. Then, we describe the multi-faceted conceptualization of community safety derived through an iterative engagement process with local stakeholders. Results from two surveys are used to identify the most critical components of community safety for study participants. Next, we draw on interview data to discuss issues and recommendations surrounding the measurement of community safety. Finally, we summarize the key findings and identify their broad implications and how they might support local efforts to promote community safety.

### Community Safety versus Public Safety

Across all three sites, stakeholders suggested using "community safety" instead of "public safety" to emphasize a more expansive and inclusive way of thinking about safety that moves beyond a focus on crime and the criminal legal system. Community safety recognizes that harm can come from many sources, including the criminal legal system itself. As a person in Missoula noted, "I think public safety, there's a large agreement that we're focusing on conventional definitions of things related to crime, and law enforcement, and investigations, and things of that nature. I think community safety is where the conversation gets a lot more nuanced..., of being free from harm. But that harm doesn't necessarily need to come from crime." It also emphasizes that **community safety is a collective endeavor**. It requires law enforcement as well as residents, churches, hospitals, schools, and other groups to actively work together in a supportive ecosystem. Further, unlike public safety, community safety highlights that efforts to define safety must be community driven and that solutions need to be tailored to the community. A person in Missoula who works on criminal legal system reform noted that this requires approaching conversations around safety with an equity perspective: Threats to safety that a more privileged person experiences look different from those faced by marginalized communities. Finally, continuing to rely on notions of public safety helps sustain reliance on traditional law and order solutions. A community member in Missoula discussed the link between public safety and more punitive measures of crime control, "Right now public safety is about being just harsh on crime and there's no forgiveness or anything" Collective safety, in contrast, moves toward holistic and harm reduction approaches.



04

LOCAL CONTEXT



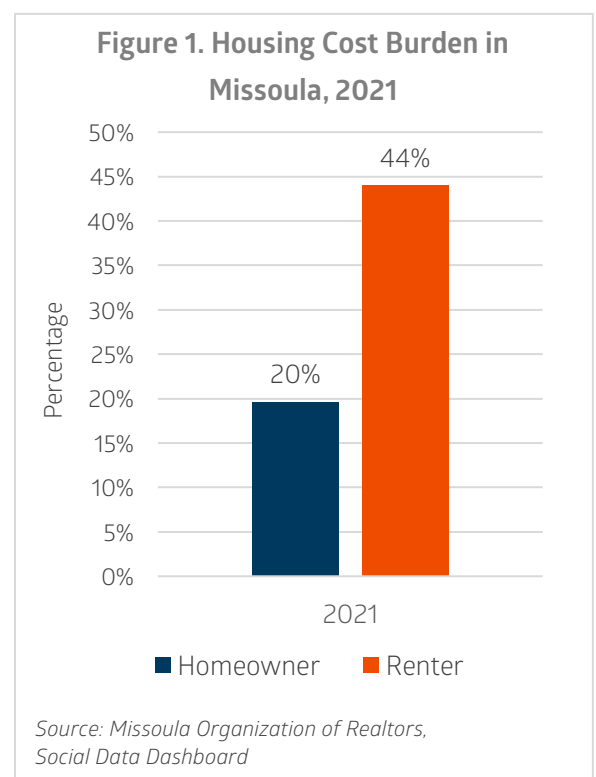
To develop a more inclusive conceptualization of community safety, it is important to consider the local context. We provide an overview of Missoula County demographics and other characteristics that shape how safety is experienced, including housing and crime trends. Recent legislative, programmatic, and policy changes are detailed. Given the role of the media in shaping public views of safety, a descriptive account of local newspaper coverage for a five-year period is presented.

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Missoula County, Montana, is located at the western edge of Montana in the Northern Rockies, approximately 45 miles from the Idaho border. After Billings, the county is the second-largest metropolitan area in Montana. According to the U.S. Census, the population of Missoula County was 121,041 in 2022.<sup>ix</sup> Over the past decade, the county has gained approximately 10,000 new residents.<sup>x</sup> Missoula County has a majority white population (91.3%), with small percentages of residents who identify as Native American/Alaskan (2.8%) and Black (0.5%).<sup>xi</sup>

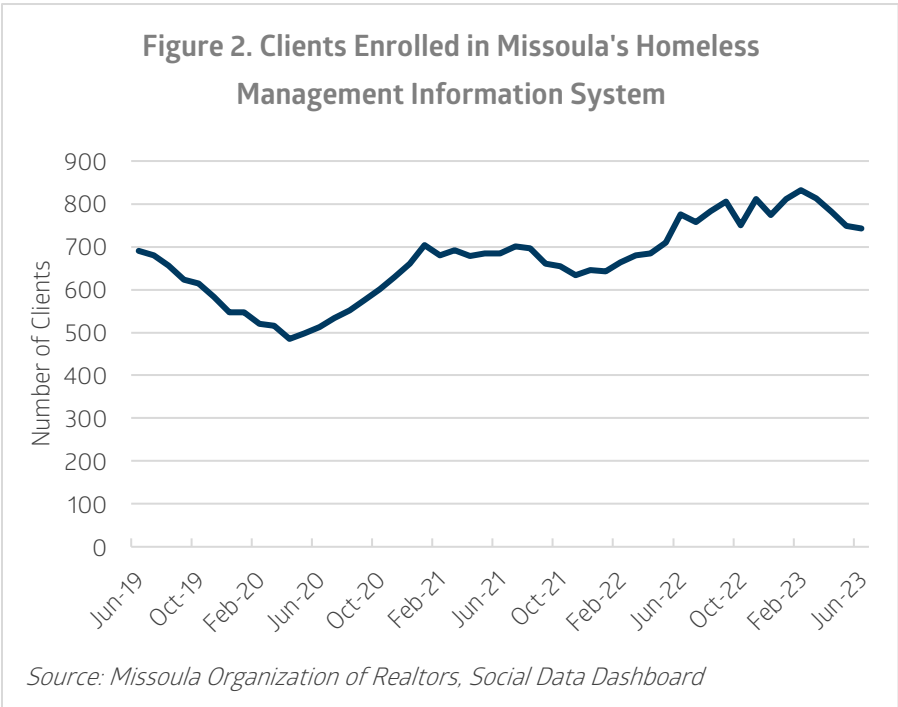
Changes in the housing market and issues with houselessness have significantly influenced how residents of Missoula County think about safety. It is one of many metropolitan areas where a drastic uptick in housing and rental prices on the heels of a low supply of available housing has created an unstable housing market.<sup>xii</sup> Median home values jumped in 2021, increasing 24.2% to \$415,600. At the same time, Missoula has experienced a shortage of homes on the market and rising rent costs. In 2021, the median monthly rent paid by individual renters in Missoula was \$1,034.<sup>xiii</sup> This was up from \$783 in 2017, an increase of 32.1%.<sup>xiv</sup> Many people we spoke with attributed the rise in housing costs to an influx of out-of-state residents. In 2020, for every person moving out of Missoula, 7.1 people moved in. This ratio decreased in 2022 but was still high—2.4 people moved into Missoula for every one person who left.<sup>xv</sup>

From 2017 to 2021, the median household income in Missoula rose 11.3% to \$66,803, but most residents interviewed indicated this increase was not enough to keep pace with rising housing costs. Although lower than national averages, both renters and homeowners face considerable financial burdens related to housing costs. In 2021, 44% of renters and almost 20% of homeowners spent 30% of their income or more on housing (see Figure 1). Individuals working in the criminal legal system indicated that the inflated cost of housing made it difficult to hire and retain staff, placing a strain on public safety-related services.



Poverty rates and reliance on some forms of public assistance increased with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, 13.9% of residents were categorized as living in poverty, compared to 11.5% in 2019. Participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP) also increased sharply during this period, from 6.9% in 2019 to 10.9% in 2021,<sup>xvi</sup> but remained below the national rate of 12.5%.<sup>xvii</sup>

Houselessness is tied to the housing crisis and rising rates of poverty. As seen in Figure 2, the number of unhoused individuals receiving services from Missoula agencies and local non-profits peaked at 803 in February 2023. In this month, a disproportionate number of those unhoused and receiving services were persons of color, particularly Indigenous residents. While Native American/Alaskan people make up 2.8% of the population in Missoula County, they made up 13% percent of the unhoused individuals receiving services. Black residents make up 0.5% of the population but comprise just under 4% of residents experiencing houselessness.<sup>xviii</sup> Survey and interview data indicated that housing insecurity and the unhoused population are at the center of many people’s safety concerns, and that unhoused individuals feel particularly vulnerable to victimization.



### Criminal Legal System Reforms

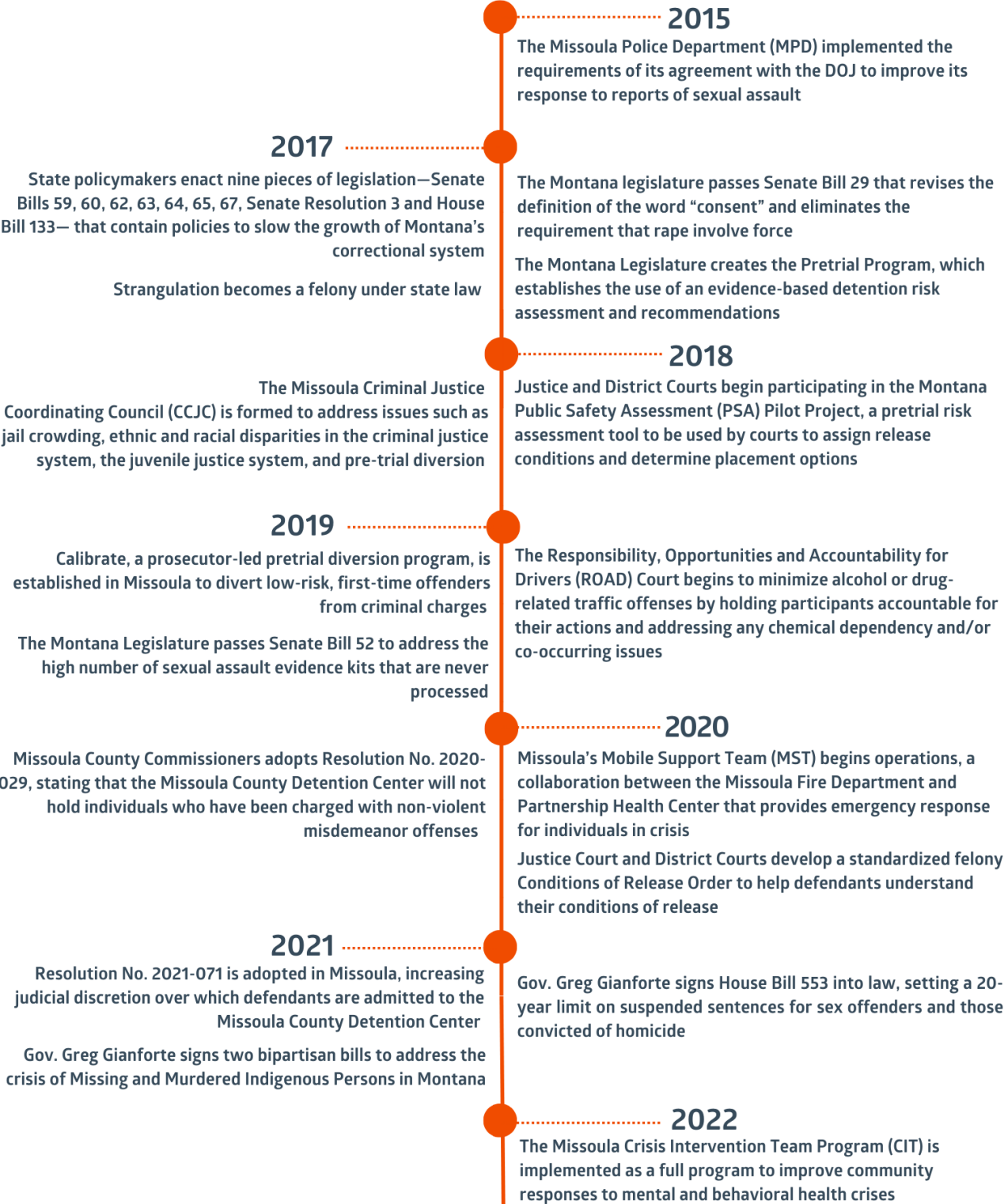
In recent years, Missoula County has enacted reforms to enhance the safety of residents and address their concerns related to crime and the criminal legal system (see Figure 3).<sup>xix</sup> Many of Missoula’s efforts aim to divert individuals away from the criminal legal system. For example, in 2019, the county implemented Calibrate, a prosecution-led diversion program that seeks to divert adults who do not have significant prior interaction with the criminal legal system out of the court process and into programming that can address the underlying causes of their law violating behavior. In addition, the Missoula Public Defender’s Office provides a support specialist to assist Indigenous defendants with navigating the criminal legal system. In the fall of 2020, Missoula launched a Mobile Support Team to respond to low-risk behavioral health 911 calls with the goal of diverting individuals from jail and hospitals. In

response to the rising rates of substance use, Missoula County invested in several diversion courts, including ROAD (Responsibility, Opportunities, Accountability for Drivers) Court and SMART (Strategies in Maintaining Addiction Recovery and Treatment) Court. As of May 2023, ROAD Court had 39 graduates and diverted 1,014 days (approximately 3 years) of jail time.<sup>xx</sup>

Missoula County and the state legislature have taken additional steps to address jail overcrowding. In 2017, the Montana Legislature created the Pretrial Program, which established the use of evidence-based detention risk assessments and recommendations for supervising individuals who are released and awaiting trial. In 2017, state policymakers also enacted nine pieces of “justice reinvestment legislation” that contain policies designed to slow the growth of Montana’s incarcerated population.<sup>xxi</sup> Taken together, this legislation seeks to: limit the length of incarceration for people convicted of less serious violations; develop pretrial services programs and deferred prosecution programs; prioritize supervision resources (e.g., probation) for people who are most likely to reoffend; reduce penalties for specific nonviolent drug, property, and traffic offenses; and increase the quality of and access to community-based resources (e.g., housing, behavioral health care) for people returning to their communities after incarceration. Spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Missoula County Commission also adopted Resolution No. 2020-029 in 2020, which stated that the Missoula County Detention Center would no longer accept individuals charged with nonviolent misdemeanor offenses.<sup>xxii</sup>

Individuals we spoke with in Missoula indicated domestic violence is a serious concern. To help combat domestic violence, in 2017, strangulation was reclassified as a felony offense, which carries a term of imprisonment of up to five years for the first offense. Strangulation was targeted due to the potential lethality associated with this act and the belief that it is a precursor to intimate partner homicide.<sup>xxiii</sup> Still, some domestic violence survivors and criminal legal system actors that we interviewed indicated more needs to be done to address this issue. Another issue raised in interviews was Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP). According to the Montana Attorney General’s Office, there were 3,254 unique individuals recorded as missing between 2017 - 2019, a quarter of whom identified as Native American.<sup>xxiv</sup> In response to this issue, legislation was enacted in 2021 that formed a Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force, created a missing persons database, and instituted a Missing Persons Review Committee. These measures were intended to facilitate the review of cold cases and to identify potential ways in which law enforcement can better address the issue of MMIP.

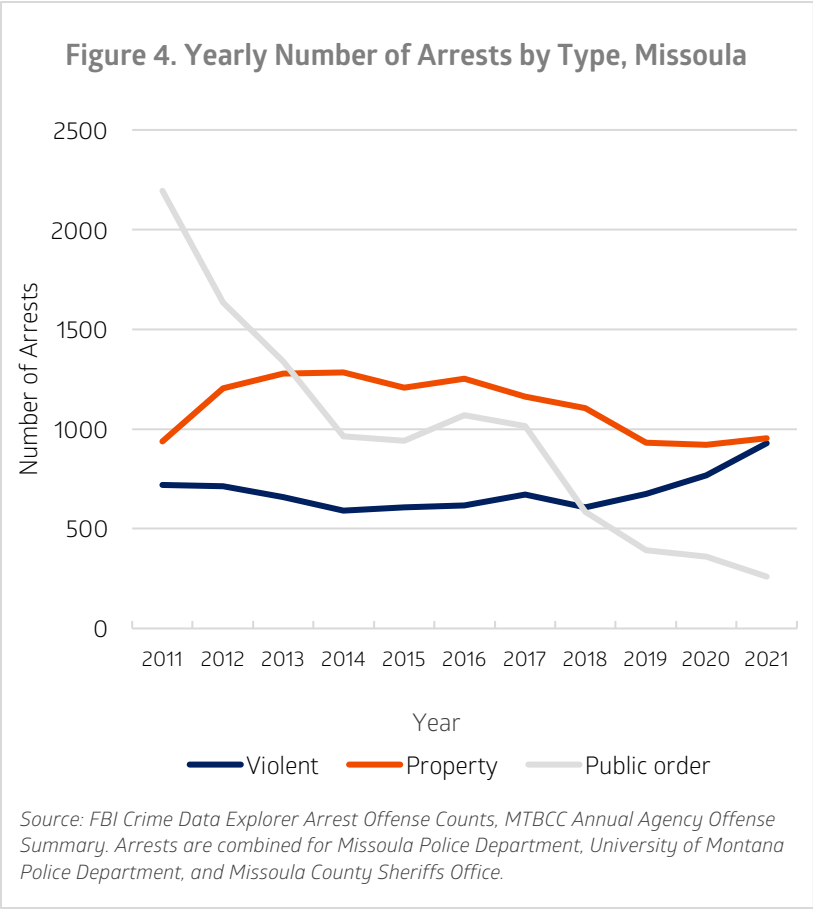
## FIGURE 3. MISSOULA COUNTY REFORM TIMELINE



### Arrest and Crime Trends

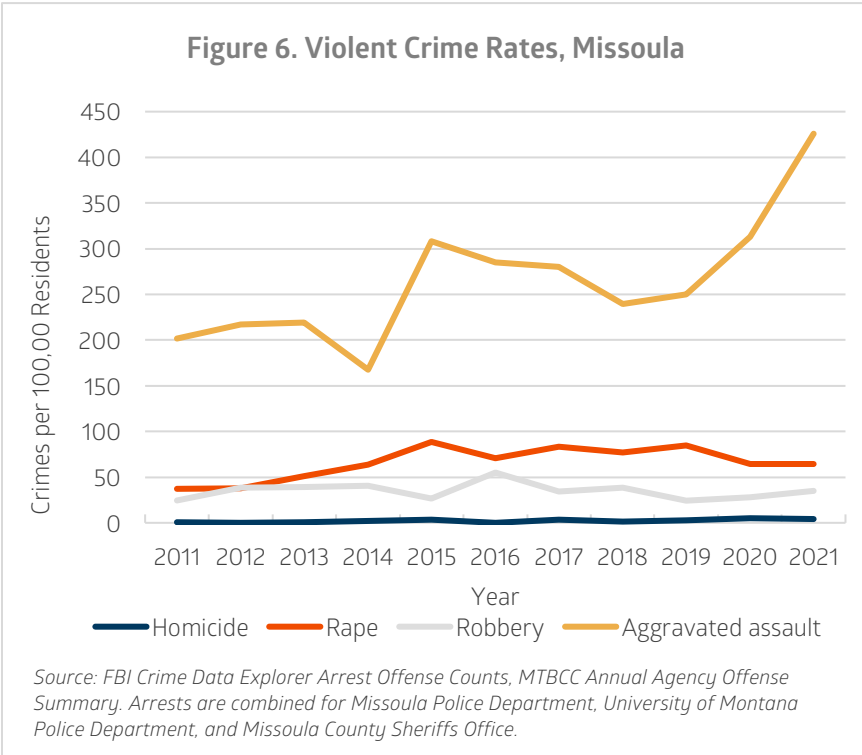
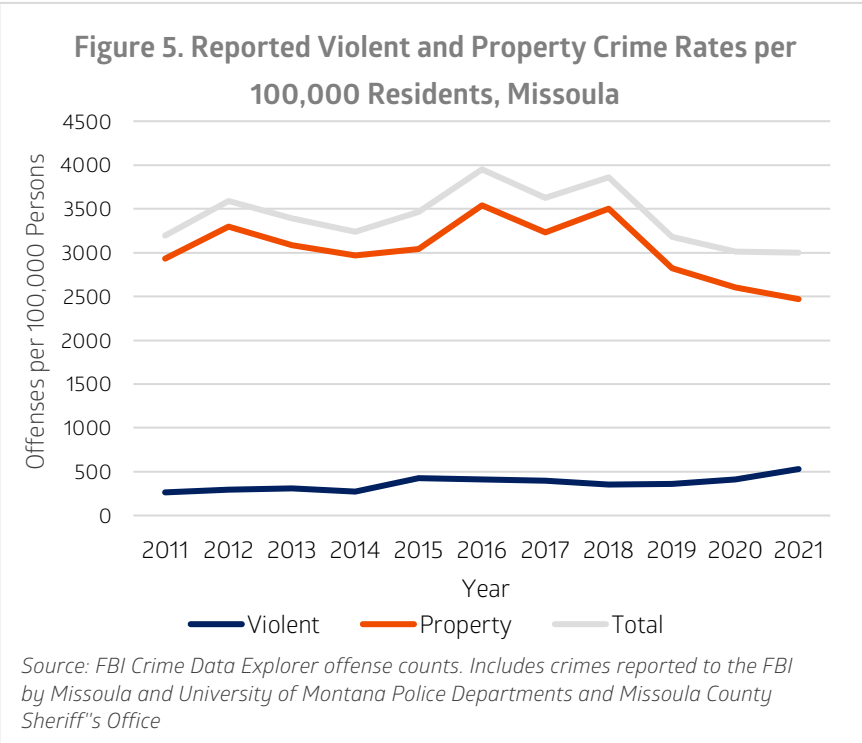
The results of these reform efforts can be seen in trends in arrests and jail populations. Over the last decade, arrests have declined by 48% in Missoula County. When broken up by crime type, much of this drop is attributed to an 88% decline in low-level, public-order arrests (see Figure 4).<sup>xxv</sup>

Over the past five years, the quarterly average daily population (ADP) housed in the Missoula County Detention Center has fluctuated.<sup>xxvi</sup> During the period with available data, the ADP was highest in September 2018, with an average of 209 individuals in jail on a given day. The ADP was lowest in April 2020 (106) during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although most detained individuals are White, Indigenous individuals are consistently overrepresented in the jail population. For example, in July of 2022, American Indian/Alaska Native individuals made up 20% of the average daily jail population in Missoula, even though they constitute only 2.8% of the county’s total population. In July 2022, more than half of (52%) detained individuals were awaiting trial. While this percentage is high, it is lower than the national average of 71%.<sup>xxvii</sup>



As displayed in Figure 5, overall rates of crime known to the police dropped in Missoula County, reaching a low of 3,000 reported offenses per 100,000 residents in 2021. Decreases in property crime, particularly larceny, drove this decline, while violent crime rates rose to a high of 530 per 100,000 in 2021.

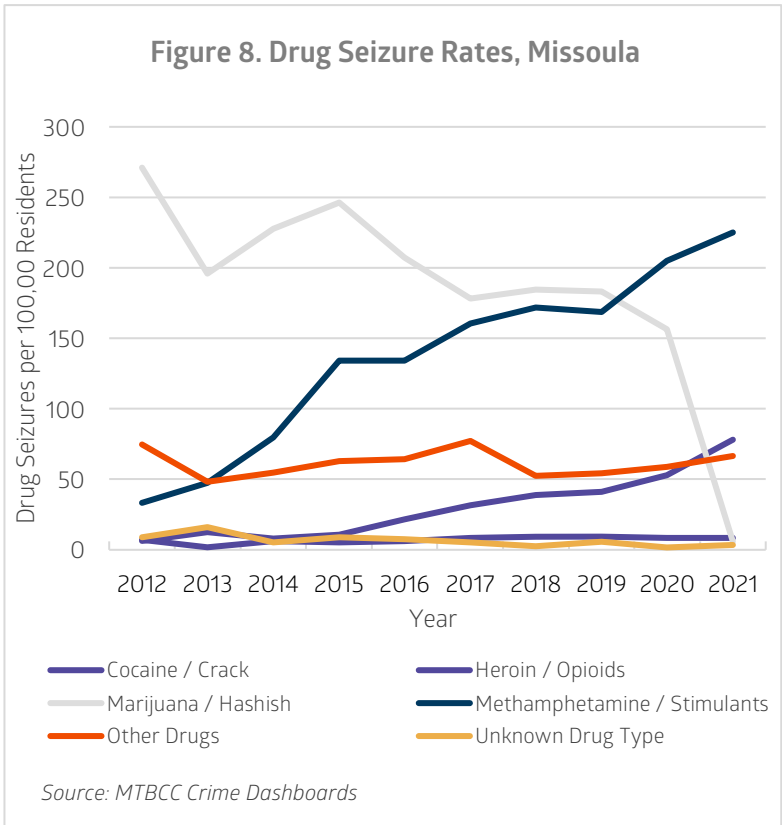
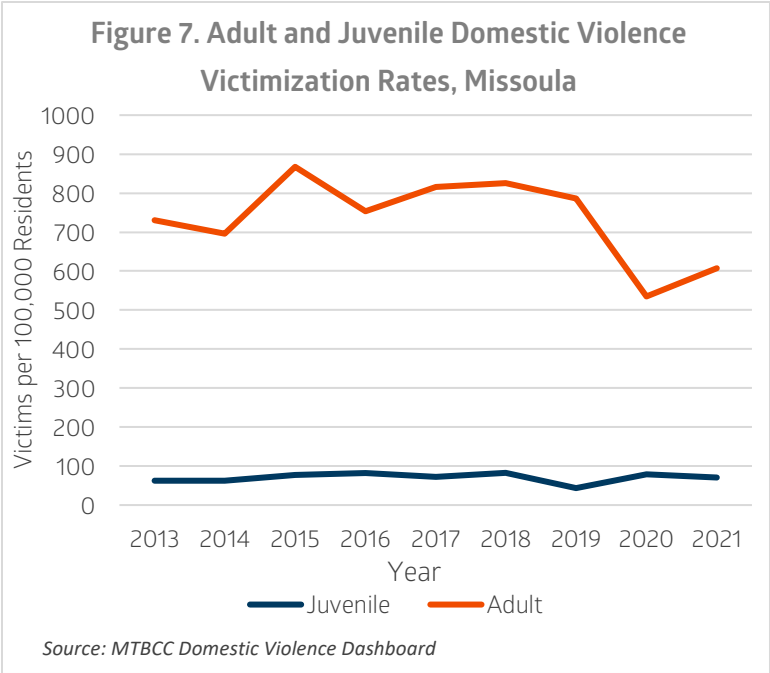
Reported aggravated assault rates remained high and experienced a notable increase, rising 154% from a low of 168 per 100,000 in 2014 to 426 in 2021 (see Figure 6). Homicide rates also climbed from 2019 to 2021, but these crimes remained infrequent (4 per 100,000). Rates of rape fluctuated over time as well; these peaked in 2015 at 89 per 100,000 and then fell to 65 per 100,000 in 2021. Domestic violence is a persistent issue in Missoula County. Adult domestic violence victimization rates have fallen since 2012 but remain elevated, while juvenile domestic violence victimization rates remained stable (see Figure 7). In 2022, the Montana Board of Crime Control reported 743 domestic violence-related victimizations in Missoula County, highlighting the ongoing prevalence of this issue. Notably, despite American Indians making up less than 3% of the county's population, they accounted for almost 10% of domestic violence victims.



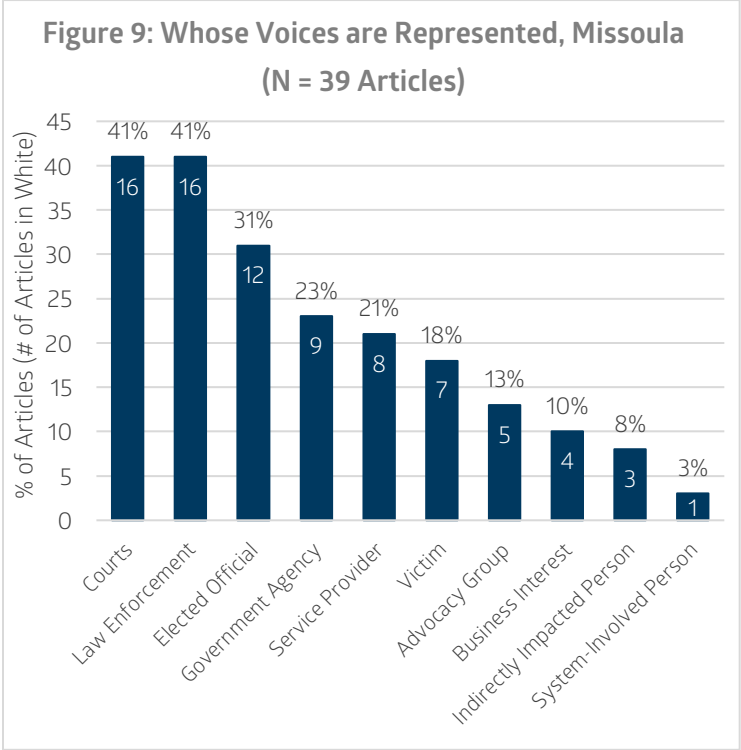
Like many other areas across the US, Missoula County has faced an ongoing drug epidemic. As shown in Figure 8, both heroin/opioid and methamphetamine seizures steadily increased over the last 10 years. From 2019 to 2021, there was a 91% increase in the rate of opioid drug seizures (from 41 to 78 per 100,000) and a 33% increase in methamphetamine seizures (from 169 to 225 per 100,000).<sup>xxviii</sup>

**Media Depictions of Crime Trends**

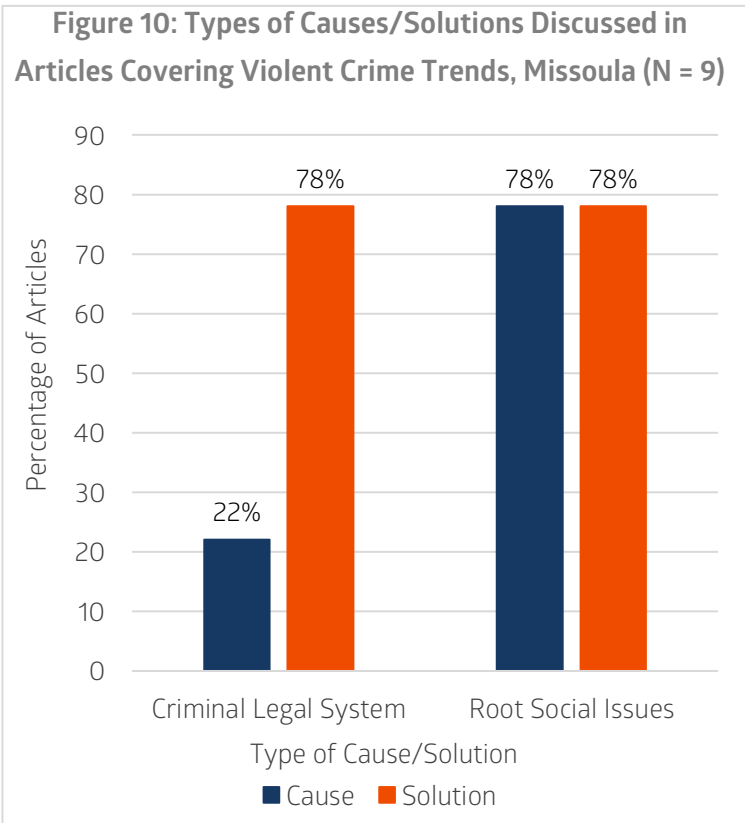
The media plays a significant role in shaping how people think about crime, including its nature, its causes, and potential solutions.<sup>xxix</sup> An examination of 39 articles spanning five years of crime trend coverage (2017–2021) from *The Missoulian* indicates drug-related crime was the most common type of trend covered, and most of the 14 stories on this issue described it as an increasing (11) or persistent problem (3).<sup>xxx</sup> This coverage of drug-related crime corresponds with the significant rise in seizures of methamphetamines and heroin/opioids as reported in law enforcement data for this period (see Figure 8). Violence and homicide were the next most prevalent crime trends covered by *The Missoulian*. All nine of the articles that covered increases in serious violent crime and/or homicide framed these as increasing or persistent problems.<sup>xxxi</sup> Although serious property crime dropped from year-to-year after 2018 (see Figure 5), none of the articles discussed this declining trend.<sup>xxxii</sup>



How an issue is framed depends, in part, on whose viewpoints are represented in the media. The groups most often quoted in articles discussing crime trends were those of government actors, primarily representatives of the courts and law enforcement, who each appeared in 41% of the articles, followed by elected officials (31%) and government representatives (23%) (see Figure 9).<sup>xxxiii</sup> Among those directly or indirectly impacted by crime, victims were most likely to be quoted (18%), followed by indirectly impacted person (8%), such as a victim's family member or an impacted member of the community. The perspectives of people impacted by crime were often shared via service providers and advocacy groups. Quotes by system-impacted individuals were rare and only appeared in 3% of articles.<sup>xxxiv</sup>



Violent crime rates in Missoula increased sharply after 2019 (see Figure 5). To understand how discussions of increasing and persistent violence are framed, we identified the causes and proposed solutions described in the subset of nine articles covering increasing violence and/or homicide. Causes and solutions were classified depending on whether they were related to 1) root social issues or 2) the criminal legal system. As displayed in Figure 10, root social causes were most often described as driving the increase in violence, appearing in seven of the nine articles. Most frequently mentioned were substance use and mental health issues, which appeared in four of the nine articles. Other root causes discussed less often included unemployment, housing issues, untreated trauma, poverty, and inequality. In contrast, the criminal legal system was portrayed as contributing to increases in violence in just two articles.





Although the discussions of causes skewed more heavily toward root social issues than criminal legal system interventions, the two types of strategies were equally prevalent in discussions of solutions, each appearing in seven of the nine articles. For root social issues, the most common types of solutions discussed were interventions intended to address mental health issues and substance use, which were featured in five articles. Solutions related to the criminal legal system primarily focused on better coordination among agencies, which appeared in four articles.

## Views on the Media

The people we spoke with reported getting information about crime through multiple forms of media, including newspapers, news apps, social media, and television news; however, some indicated they actively avoid the news because it makes them feel overwhelmed and unsafe. A public-school educator in Missoula also described the media as increasingly biased and detailed what is needed to get an accurate picture of the news, stating, "I feel like our news is getting more biased, and so you have to watch three different news channels to get the whole story. You have to watch how Fox presents it. You got to watch how CNN presents it, and you watch NPR, and then you can put the whole picture together."

In Missoula County, several people we spoke with discussed how the media also stigmatizes individuals, explicitly calling out the practice of publishing mugshots online. One formerly incarcerated person described this practice. "It's embarrassing. They're putting [people with substance use disorders] on the news for crimes ... they aren't hurting other people ... you can't come back from that. That's permanently online." One unhoused mother shared her frustrations with inaccurate news portrayals of an incident that involved her, and then discussed the difficulty of getting this information removed. "[The media] said some awful things about me. And so now I can Google my name or Google my eight-year-old daughter's name, and that's the first thing that pops up, and things that were said were untrue... and so I've been trying to get it removed, but I'm having a hard time." She later recalls the negative impact this had on her life. "I ended up painting my car a different color because I was recognized all the way in Billings and had the cops called. ... I lost a job because of it."

When asked how they wanted the media to cover crime, most people discussed a desire to hear positive stories or coverage about ongoing efforts to address safety-related issues. For example, some participants mentioned "positive news time" and "positive messaging in the media."

## SUMMARY

Missoula County has undergone many transitions in recent years. The county has experienced a growing population, coupled with a shortage of housing and rising rates of houselessness. The prevalence of drugs, including methamphetamine and opioids like fentanyl, has emerged as a significant concern, as have increasing rates of violence. Recent criminal legal system reforms focused on diverting people away from jail and into treatment and safely decreasing the jail population using tools such as risk assessments and specialty courts.

Media coverage of crime trends primarily featured the voices of people who work in the criminal legal system and government. The perspectives of system-impacted individuals were rare. There are many factors that might explain these patterns, including differences in the accessibility of these groups to the press and reluctance of some groups to speak to the media. Regardless, the outcome is that when it comes to coverage of crime trends in the media, the views predominantly represented are those of government actors.

In *The Missoulian*, stories discussing rising or persistent rates of violence primarily attributed these increases to root social causes, especially mental health issues and substance use. In comparison, the solutions presented were just as likely to rely on the criminal legal system as to target underlying causes. The focus on criminal legal system responses may be due to the recognition that many short-term, evidence-based solutions to violence incorporate police interventions.<sup>xxxv</sup> Although news coverage of violence is shaped by a variety of factors, these narratives hold significant sway over public perceptions of this issue.

The local context plays a significant role in shaping how people define safety and their primary safety related concerns. This can be observed in the remainder of the report, which details a broad conceptualization of safety that draws on the perspectives of individuals across three counties. Throughout, we highlight how the meaning and prioritization of various components of a safe community varies across locales.



05

# STUDY METHODS

To explore how community safety is conceptualized, this study took a multi-method approach drawing on the perspectives of a broad range of stakeholders in all three study sites. Figure 11 provides an overview of the study methods. A more detailed account of the methods can be found in Appendix A.

**Group Concept Mapping**

The Community Safety Concept Map was developed using a process called Group Concept Mapping (GCM).<sup>1</sup> Conceptually, this process involved giving volunteers a deck of 120 cards, each containing a different statement describing or defining a safe community. These statements were created from responses to survey prompts and discussions with local stakeholders. Each volunteer “sorter” was instructed to make sense of these data by sorting statements into “piles” that captured similar ideas. Next, the sorter was asked to give each pile a name that best reflected the statements in the group. This information was then analyzed to create a visual representation of the data, or concept map, in which statements that tended to be sorted together were placed into the same group, or “cluster.” On average, sorters placed the statements into 11 clusters, representing various aspects of community safety. A series of focus groups were held in which project participants were shown a draft of the concept map and asked to provide their feedback regarding the statements and cluster names. The map was revised accordingly and appears in Figure 13.

**FIGURE 11. A MULTI-METHOD APPROACH TO REDEFINING COMMUNITY SAFETY**

**CONTEXT SETTING**



Analyzed local media and conducted interviews and focus groups with 54 people in Missoula County to learn about their perspectives on community safety.

**GROUP CONCEPT MAPPING**

**BRAINSTORMING**

Surveyed 469 people in Missoula County about what community safety means to them. The research team then reduced the responses to 120 unique statements on the meaning of safety.

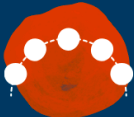


**SORTING**

62 volunteers sorted statements into groups capturing similar ideas.

**VISUALIZATION**

Analyzed sorting data and generated a visual map of community safety that identified 11 distinct aspects of a safe community.



**MEANING MAKING**

Held focus groups to get feedback on the Community Safety Concept Map and revised it accordingly.

**RATING**

Surveyed 224 residents to identify components of community safety they view as most important.



**THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

Used interview and focus group data to contextualize the components of community safety.



06

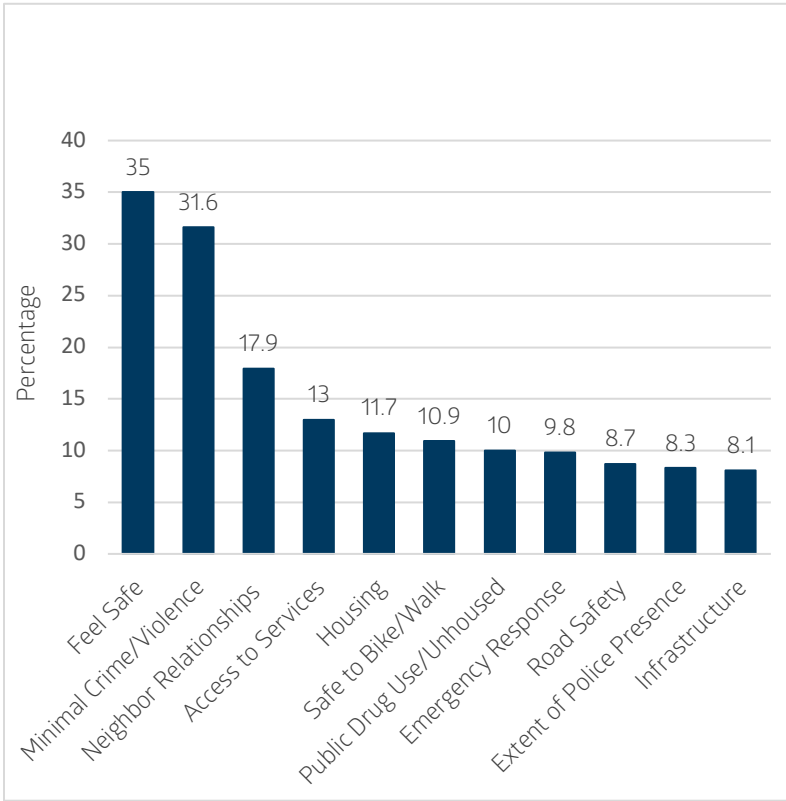
# DEFINING COMMUNITY SAFETY

## OPEN-ENDED PROMPT RESPONSES

A key goal of this study was to develop a comprehensive and inclusive definition of community safety. The first step in this process involved administering a survey to people who live, work, or go to school in the participating counties. Survey participants in all three study sites completed a prompt that asked them to explain, in their own words, the meaning of community safety. These responses contained 120 unique aspects of community safety that were used to create the Community Safety Concept Map. Before presenting the map that draws on the richness of these data, we identify the most prevalent themes in the Missoula County prompt responses.

As depicted in Figure 12, the 469 Missoulians who completed the survey prompt most often mentioned feeling safe as they moved through their daily lives as a key characteristic of a safe community (35%), closely followed by minimal crime (32%).<sup>xxxvi</sup> When a specific crime type was mentioned, it was most frequently violence (in 12% of all responses). These two themes highlight the dual importance of the more "objective" aspects of traditional conceptualizations of community safety (i.e., crime), as well as the more subjective perceptual and emotional side. While perceptions of safety are influenced by exposure to crime, many discussed other factors that affect day-to-day feelings of safety, such as fear of harassment and discrimination. The third most prevalent theme was neighborhood relationships, appearing in almost 18% of responses, particularly neighbors being willing to assist each other and offer support (9%).<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Figure 12: Most Common Community Safety Themes in Open-Ended Responses, Missoula (N = 469)



Several other common themes represented more traditional conceptualizations of safety, including emergency response, the extent to which police were present and visible, road safety, and public drug use and/or presence of unhoused individuals. At the same time, other themes represented a more expansive and inclusive conceptualization of safety, such as access to supportive services like mental health care and substance abuse treatment and attainable housing.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

In summary, the findings show that when people are asked to define community safety, they usually emphasize traditional notions of personal and public safety, which include freedom from crime and violence, living without

fear of victimization or harassment, and being protected by the police. However, some pointed to other factors, like supportive relationships with neighbors and attainable housing. Overall, the prompt responses contained 120 different facets of a safe community. This broader set of responses helped inform the development of the holistic and multifaceted conceptualization of community safety that is described in the next section.



# A HOLISTIC AND MULTIFACETED CONCEPTUALIZATION OF COMMUNITY SAFETY

The survey prompt responses were distilled into 120 different statements describing a safe community. As described in Section 5, “Study Methods”, 62 volunteer “sorters” independently placed these 120 statements into groups based on similarity. This information was used to generate a visual representation (i.e., concept map) of community safety, consisting of 11 different components that fall into 5 different broad domains, or “regions”. The final Community Safety Concept Map and its components can be found in Figure 13.<sup>xxxix</sup>

This section describes each component of community safety by region. We also provide a sample of statements that participants associated with that aspect of safety. Next, for each region, we describe how the individuals we interviewed in Missoula County link these concepts to safety.

Figure 13. Community Safety Concept Map





**Definition of Community Safety**

When viewed holistically, the Community Safety Concept Map defines safe communities as places in which people, individually and collectively, can live their lives free from a wide range of real and perceived threats that include crime and other harm. When harm does occur, safe communities have well-funded, accessible resources and community support to help impacted people cope. Furthermore, not only are basic needs fulfilled, but individuals are also treated with respect and dignity, residing in environments that promote their overall well-being and allow them to thrive.



## Region: Personal Safety and Security



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### Freedom from Violence and Other Harm

This component of safety includes ideas related to traditional conceptualizations of public safety (e.g., low rates of crime and victimization). It also involves avoiding harm that many people of color and other marginalized groups, like LGBTQ+, experience daily, such as discrimination.

- There are low rates of violent crime.
- People are not injured or killed by stray bullets.
- Children are safe from harm both inside and outside of school.
- There are low rates of property crimes, such as theft, vandalism, or car theft.
- There are low rates of drug use, including public drug use, and drug-related harm (e.g., overdoses).
- People do not stereotype, discriminate against, or harm others based on their race, ethnicity, or other personal characteristics.

### Day-to-Day Feelings of Safety

Statements that capture people's perceived ability to live their daily lives without worrying about harm make up this component of community safety. Many of the statements capture emotions and feelings of security.

- People can travel freely anytime, anywhere, including late at night, without being on alert.
- People feel safe and secure in their homes.
- People are not worried they will be victims of crime.
- People are not harassed when walking down the street.



## Region: Thriving and Socially Connected Community

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### Sense of Community

Many people described a safe community in terms of their relationships with others. It is a place where people watch out for one another and provide support and assistance when needed. In addition, people trust one another and work together to address common problems, and neighbors are friendly and welcoming to all.

- Community members trust one another.
- People watch out for each other and provide support and assistance for neighbors in need.
- Neighbors know one another and talk regularly.
- There is a lot of activity, with people out in the community and children playing outside.
- People in the community are welcoming and respectful to all, regardless of their identity or personal characteristics, such as age, sexuality, gender, or race.
- Community members work together to solve local problems.

### Investments in Infrastructure, Businesses, and Programming for a Thriving Community

This component of safety encompasses thriving businesses and local organizations that are invested in the community. A thriving community also includes well-maintained and developed infrastructure. People also associated this component of safety with access to amenities, like restaurants and childcare, and recreational opportunities, as well as a clean community with little physical disorder, such as overgrown lots and abandoned buildings.

- Business owners are invested in the community, and businesses are thriving.
- There are programs youth can participate in outside of school.
- There are grocery stores, and people have access to healthy food.
- There are shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues.
- There are public libraries and institutions that support the arts.
- There are well-maintained parks and access to outdoor recreational activities.
- Infrastructure, such as roads, sidewalks, lights, and signs, are well-maintained.
- There is adequate lighting, including lights on the streets and roads.
- Infrastructure allows for people to walk and bike safely.
- There is reliable and safe public transportation.
- The community is clean, and there are no run-down, boarded up, or empty buildings or overgrown lots.

## Region: Resources and Services for a Socially and Economically Just Community

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### Access to Supportive Services

This component includes statements related to access to and quality of supportive services and aid for people in need.

- Everyone who needs it has access to comprehensive mental health services and treatment for substance use problems.
- Resources and support are available for all victims of crime and violence, regardless of the circumstances in which they were harmed.
- Resources are available to help support vulnerable populations, including people experiencing houselessness.
- Social services agencies are adequately staffed by competent and compassionate people.
- When natural and man-made disasters occur—such as flooding, hurricanes, tornadoes, and fires—there is aid for those affected.

### Social and Economic Justice

The statements in this cluster reflect what a community looks like when fairness, equality, and human dignity are upheld for all individuals.

- A quality education is free and accessible to all.
- Affordable, quality housing is available for people of all income levels.
- People do not need to worry about where their next meal will come from.
- Everyone has access to quality healthcare and healthcare providers.
- There are good job opportunities, and everyone can earn a living wage.
- There are low rates of income inequality.
- People are financially secure.
- There is clean air to breathe and clean water to drink.



## Region: Responsive Government and Public Safety Agencies

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### Responsive, Ethical, and Transparent Government

This aspect of safety describes a well-functioning government that acts in the community's best interests. Statements also focused on government transparency, information sharing, and communication.

- Elected officials with different viewpoints work together to solve community problems.
- Government agencies are transparent and act in an ethical manner.
- People in power make fair, just, and unbiased decisions.
- The government is responsive to the needs of all and acts in the community's best interest.
- Information about how to access government services and the legal system is easily available.
- There is consistent and open communication from public officials.
- Community members have a voice in decisions that affect the community.
- People can reach out to local officials, and they know they will be respected.

### Comprehensive and Effective Emergency Response

Some survey respondents described community safety in terms of well-prepared and effective emergency response systems, including those traditionally associated with public safety (e.g., police, fire department, and emergency medical technicians). They also discussed first responders who are part of a “re-imagining” of public safety, such as mental health workers and alternate responders.

- First responders—including the police, fire department and emergency medical technicians—arrive quickly when called and are well-trained and equipped to handle an emergency.
- People aside from the police, such as mental health workers, are available to respond to emergencies and provide help.
- The local government invests in crime prevention and solutions that do not involve the police.
- People are educated about and prepared to handle natural disasters, including flooding and fires.

## Gun Violence Prevention

In addition to low rates of gun violence, some people indicated that they feel safer when efforts are in place to ensure that guns are used responsibly and safely and kept out of the hands of people who could use them to harm themselves or others, such as children and people struggling with mental health issues. However, there was general agreement that gun violence prevention is a highly nuanced concept, and the meaning varies across people and communities.

- Children do not have access to guns without the supervision of a responsible adult.
- Guns are kept out of the hands of people not allowed to own them.
- People are educated about owning and operating firearms safely.

## Region: Systems for Preventing and Addressing Harm



### Fair and Ethical Policing

This component of safety captures various aspects of fair and ethical policing, including freedom from harm at the hands of the police; community preferences regarding the visibility of police; and police and the public working together to make safe communities. Many people feel this is what ideal policing looks like, but some, particularly people of color, questioned whether this vision would ever be realized in their communities.

- Police treat people in a way that is fair, just, and respectful.
- Law enforcement is trustworthy and acts in the community's best interests.
- People in the community respect and support local law enforcement.
- Police and community members work together to solve problems, prevent crime, and address concerns.
- Police officers know the members of the community.
- Law enforcement visibility and activity are aligned with community needs and preferences.
- People do not fear getting harassed, harmed, or killed by the police.
- No one has to worry about being stopped by law enforcement or federal immigration authorities because of their race, ethnicity, or immigration status.

## Accountability for Harm

This aspect of safety includes ideas related to holding individuals, institutions, and businesses accountable for harm. It encompasses fair and consistent courts, and well-trained police and prosecutors who take violent crimes seriously. Some participants pointed out how research and lived experiences show that traditional forms of punishment, such as incarceration and detaining people who are awaiting trial, do not contribute to community safety and, in fact, can increase offending and make communities less safe. Others argued that if the criminal legal system does not hold people who cause harm accountable, it makes communities less safe, especially if these individuals harm again or if victims believe they need to take responsibility for their own safety (e.g., through retaliation). Still, others suggested a potential common ground between these two views—effective alternatives to incarceration. Statements regarding government and business accountability emerged in the stakeholder interviews and were added to provide a more inclusive conceptualization of accountability that recognizes those in power can also cause harm.

- Individuals who commit violent crimes & felonies are held accountable.
- Effective alternatives to incarceration are available when people have caused harm.
- Police and prosecutors take violence, including domestic and sexual violence, seriously and have significant training in how to handle reports and investigations.
- Police enforce laws in accordance with community needs and preferences.
- The courts can be trusted to uphold the law in a fair and just manner, giving out consistent and appropriate penalties for breaking the law.
- Police are held formally accountable for their actions.
- Governments and businesses are held accountable for harm they have caused.

## COMMUNITY SAFETY IN THEIR OWN WORDS

We spoke with stakeholders and community members to learn more about how they conceptualize community safety. In each county, at least one representative from each of the following agencies was interviewed: 1) law enforcement, 2) courts, and 3) corrections. We also interviewed multiple individuals who had been involved in the criminal legal system, as well as people who are service providers or work for community-based organizations or advocacy groups (see Appendix A for additional information on the people who were interviewed). In this section, we describe how the individuals we spoke with in Missoula County linked each of the five domains to community safety. Findings indicate that safety is more complex and nuanced than crime and criminal legal responses, which tend to dominate public conversations on this issue. Still, issues with law enforcement permeated discussions. In addition, we found that the meanings of these components vary across groups, and we highlight some of these differences.

### Region: Personal Safety and Security



This region of the map encompasses both more "objective" components of safety, such as rates of violence, which are often measured with administrative criminal legal system data. It also captures less quantifiable emotional perceptions or feelings of safety, such as people's perceived ability to live their lives without worrying about their safety or security. While these two things are related, participants recognized that people can still feel unsafe even when their risk of experiencing crime or violence is low.

Most people we spoke with indicated a key component of community safety is the ability to move through their daily lives without worrying about being physically harmed or harassed. As one female community member in Missoula described, "To me, it means that I don't feel fear of being harmed in my own home or when I'm out walking. I was the victim of a crime in my own home. It was a sexual crime, and [so] feeling safe really just means that I don't feel fear." Safety was also discussed in terms of low rates of violent crime and victimization. A person who works for the courts noted, "We all desire to be safe, and, I think, part and parcel with that desire to be safe is that we desire to be free from crime and victimization, right? I think to me, safety looks like decreasing the rate that happens societally, and the likelihood that it happens to any of us as individuals".



Although most people discussed freedom from harm as central to safety, the types of harm deemed most concerning differed according to their life experiences. For many, the forms of harm that they were primarily concerned with came from fear of physical harm for themselves or their loved one. Parents were particularly concerned about the physical safety of their children, even if they themselves felt safe. As a mother who works for the county government stated when asked what safety means to her, “Personally, it’s not something that I worry about a ton...Missoula is a place that you can walk around at night by yourself and have a reasonable expectation that no one’s going to mess with you. For me, at this point in my life, I guess I gauge my personal safety by whether or not I can leave my kid at home and whether or not she’s safe.” Some expressed concerns about the safety of their children in school.

In Missoula, people indicated that the visibility of unhoused individuals and public drug use led them to feel unsafe, even if they recognized unhoused individuals were unlikely to harm them. A Missoulian stated that he avoided downtown due to “all the needle use and stuff. I just don’t want to be around anything because people like that just have tempers and triggers or switches.” Unhoused individuals, on the other hand, often described safety in terms of freedom from personal harm, including serious violence, harassment, and the security of their belongings. A formerly unhoused individual who had been a victim of serious violence while living on the streets in Missoula defined safety as “when I lay my head down at night, I don’t have to worry about getting beat up in my sleep.”



People working in the criminal legal system, including law enforcement, also worry about their personal safety and the safety of their families, particularly from individuals they have encountered as part of their job. According to one police officer in Missoula, “We have now become targeted ... because I interacted or intervened during some criminal offense. Then they take offense to that action itself, and they will take that back out on me and potentially my family. There are, unfortunately, plenty of examples where an offender or a convicted party has shown up at the home of a law enforcement officer with an intent to do harm.” He described how police officers’ work experiences shape the way they approach a situation, and “from the outside, it starts to almost look like a sense of paranoia, where officers are constantly scanning an environment to be able to identify all the known and potential threat factors.”

For others, personal safety was more encompassing than physical safety and included being able to “take up space” and experience bodily autonomy. Related to this idea, many participants expressed that personal safety included freedom from worrying about being targeted due to their identity, including their race. Women, unhoused

individuals, and Native Americans voiced concern about violence, human trafficking, and missing and murdered Indigenous women. When asked if there was anything else she wanted people to know about safety in Missoula, a young Native American woman replied, "I guess I want people to not be afraid to talk about the missing, murdered Indigenous people. ... It's like they're trying to wipe out the Indigenous people by kidnapping them, murdering them. ... And it's sad because Native and Indigenous people are just as human as anybody else." Similarly, a system-impacted woman living in Missoula stated,

*BB Sometimes you'll hear about if a white male goes missing and it's a huge deal, but then there's all these missing Indigenous women on the reservations and stuff like that. And because it's such a common occurrence over there, it's not [seen] as a big deal. But, really, there's 100s and 100s of cases in Missoula that, from what a police officer told me, and by going to the police station, they have a board up about all these missing people, but the officer told me, he's like, 'That doesn't even cover a quarter of how many people are really missing,' and it's mostly females.*

People discussed the negative impact of racism when talking about the safety of their children. As one mother in Missoula, who identified as part Native American, stated, "[I] have two boys ... they're big, Brown men, and so it's hard. My younger one, he's always been profiled. Like, I take him to the mall and when we go shopping at one of the stores specifically, people at the store would just follow him around all the time. And that's not a state that makes you feel safe.

Others reported safety-related concerns related to their gender or sexual identity. One female resident of Missoula, who had been a victim of a violent crime, stated, "I don't often go out by myself after dark. I think that is a universal experience for a lot of women, even here." A Missoulian who identified as gay noted that she was more concerned with "having the little sideways microaggressions more than not feeling safe because somebody's going to break into my home and assault me." Housing status and involvement with the criminal legal system were two other factors that people indicated made them vulnerable to harassment, both from the police and the public.

## Region: Thriving and Socially Connected Community



Many participants described safe communities as vibrant places, referencing both the social fabric of neighborhoods and the physical environment. This region includes both a strong sense of community and investment in infrastructure, businesses, and programming that generates a thriving community.

Safe communities were characterized as places where neighbors know, look out for, and support one another. In these communities, people are friendly, welcoming, and respectful of differences, and people trust one another and work together to solve problems. A sense of community was one of the most common themes to emerge. People often discussed this concept in terms of supportive neighbors who look out for each other and help each other in

times of need. For example, one community member indicated he generally felt safe in his neighborhood because “we see something suspicious around here, we call each other.”

Relatedly, people discussed the importance of welcoming neighbors who cultivate a feeling of belonging. According to a woman who does equity work in Missoula County, belonging means “being able to be in a space and be who you are and be comfortable with that, and not expect any sort of confrontation ... knowing you're accepted, and that people are not going to target you for whatever reason.” Several people indicated that communities could facilitate a sense of belonging by making efforts to be inclusive and “treat people like humans.” For example, one participant who works in behavioral health in Missoula discussed how a program that provided haircuts to unsheltered people cultivated belonging, which was central to her definition of safety.



*I think that unsheltered people are told all the time they don't belong. They have to get out. When I first started... I was doing the thing where they get a haircut. [The people giving the haircut] spend almost an hour with each person, and the person ends up looking great. ... To me, [unsheltered individuals] want a haircut, and they want somebody to take that time with them. They felt great. I want that for them everywhere.*

A public-school administrator also described safety as “everyone working together with a common mission... all of our arrows pointing in the same direction so that we can actually make a difference.”

People also included infrastructure and amenities in definitions of community safety. Safe communities were described as having activities and events for people to do and places to go, such as parks, libraries, and grocery stores, and supporting thriving businesses that are invested in the area. Aspects of the built environment that were often linked to community safety were adequate lighting, well-maintained sidewalks, and neighborhood upkeep. “Street lighting and sidewalks” is how a woman working in strategic community planning in Missoula summarized the findings from a recent effort to learn what makes specific neighborhoods feel safe. She and others pointed out how these issues were particularly important for people with mobility issues, including people in wheelchairs. Other infrastructure described as facilitating safety included bike lanes, and quality public transit. Clean communities were also associated with safety, and many people discussed the need for parks and other places to be free of dangerous items like drug paraphernalia, which could harm children. People living in more rural areas indicated that cell phone coverage and internet access made them feel safe because they could get help if needed.

Several people recognized that making communities more vibrant can sometimes come with costs, including the risk of being priced out of neighborhoods. For example, a system-impacted person in Missoula stated that new development and amenities might lead him to be “pushed out”, but still, these changes made him feel safer: “You just think ‘Oh man, these are some pretty respectable people and places and things,’ it might just make me feel more safe. [Or] it might run me out because I can't afford it...” Similarly, even though there is desire for more

amenities, individuals we spoke with suggested that people living in communities experiencing historic disinvestment are skeptical that community improvements are made to benefit them.

## Region: Resources for a Socially and Economically Just Community



Many people we spoke with conceptualized community safety as a more equitable distribution of opportunities and resources that would ensure people not only have what they need to get by, but to thrive. Participants emphasized the importance of a network of well-resourced supportive services and access to a good education, job training, and quality employment opportunities.

A common theme was that a safe community is a place where everyone's basic needs are met. For example, when asked to define safety, a police officer in Missoula stated, that this involves a holistic approach.

*“[Safety has] got to be not just addiction. It also has to be people. Are their basic needs being met? I mean, do they have shelter? Do they have three meals a day? Do they have access to medical care and medicine if they need it? If those needs aren't being met, we're not going to be able to do anything. And that's really unfortunate because you've got people out there where those needs aren't being met.”*

A formerly incarcerated person shared a similar sentiment, but also highlighted lack of education as a barrier to safety.

*For me, what [safety] means is food security, housing security, good health plans, decent wages, better education. Because I noticed the more educated people are, the less likely they continue to do certain things. ... [My buddy] was in prison for 13 years. He got out and he didn't know how to read and write. Those were, I think, very big barriers for his safety...and being a good member of society.*

The fundamental association of housing with safety was a prevalent theme in the interviews. A system-impacted man living in Missoula described how, for him, safety means stability, which is predicated on having a place to live. He also notes that having stable living contributes to community safety because it keeps him from engaging in illegal behavior.

*For me, safety means being able to know that I can care for myself, and I can work to take care of myself and my family. That way, I don't have to do stupid things for money, whatever those may be. ... For me, it's stability. Being able to have a place to come to after I work ... a place to wash my clothes, to rest my head, to make my meals, to do what I need to do—and because I finally have that, things are working for the better—a positive change in my life. It has been tremendous since I've started my recovery journey because I have a place to stay.*

For those who are unhoused, housing provides a measure of protection from potential victimization, including both serious violence and the theft of their belongings. For example, when asked to describe a safe situation, an unhoused woman in Missoula said, "Being in a home and not being vulnerable in a tent." A person who works in community behavioral health in Missoula recounted how unhoused individuals may cope with their fear of victimization and trauma with illegal behavior. She described how she had met an unhoused mother of two children, who was living in her car while escaping an abusive relationship. This woman explained to her that she uses IV drugs because "they increase my sense of safety right now. When I am alone in my car overnight with my children, I am able to stay awake and alert so I can protect my children, because that is the time when we feel the most vulnerable, and that is when we are most at risk of being found [by the partner she was running away from]."



However, several people who work with unhoused individuals noted that some chronically unhoused individuals feel safer being outside than living in a house. A Missoulian who works in behavioral health stated, "There are absolutely tons of folks that might feel safer being unhoused than they feel being housed, depending upon the length of time they've been unhoused. That just becomes their new normal and their baseline. ... They know the neighborhoods, they know the people, the places, the safe spaces. ... What feels less safe to them is being closed in as opposed to being outside, where you can see all around you."

Many participants discussed how poverty is tied to safety because it can lead people to engage in crime. A service provider who works with system-involved youth in Missoula noted that many theft-related charges are "directly a result of [youth] taking something that they needed or taking something that a sibling needed." A victim advocate in Missoula spoke more broadly on this issue, noting that "the root is poverty, to me. If we can work on the disproportionate effects of poverty versus middle class even, I think we would see a lot of drug use go down. We would see a lot of violence go down. We would see a lot of theft go down because people would have their needs met." An unhoused man living in Missoula explained that the way to make everybody feel safe is to "give the same quality of life to everybody, or the chance to have a better quality of life to everybody... Give everybody equal living conditions, equal rights. That's the only way it's going to ever happen."

In discussing the importance of meeting basic needs, others highlighted the role of supportive services for safety. A person who works for the courts in Missoula stated, "I think that the availability of services... those are directly related [to safety] in my mind because they are responsive to an attempt to address criminogenic factors in people's lives. Even though they're not direct barometers of things like crime, I think that their correlation to criminality and, subsequently, victimization seems pretty apparent to me." Others suggested that access to services is key because it is unrealistic to expect total freedom from harm. A woman living in Missoula who had been a victim of violence noted, "I don't think everyone can feel safe with everything all the time. I don't think that's realistic. But I think knowing that there's resources when you don't feel safe is important."

Another woman in Missoula who works with vulnerable populations described how problems accessing services can make communities less safe, even leading to death.

*BB A huge [layer of safety is] for people to know exactly where to go in the event that things go haywire, or they're at rock bottom, or they need to go into recovery like today and not wait forty-five days for a bed date. Because what happens when people are waiting for those times? They die, they die. They find them in ditches, they go to jail. So those lag times in between actually getting services is a huge deal, and we see it over and over again.*

## Region: Responsive Government & Public Safety Agencies



This region of the map includes clusters linked to government and emergency response systems. Statements emphasize local government officials acting ethically, fairly, and in the community's best interest. Safety in this region is also about having a voice in decisions that affect the community and being treated with respect when making complaints or requests to local officials. People also discussed the role of well-trained first responders who arrive quickly when needed, particularly focusing on police responsiveness. People tended to associate gun violence prevention with government and public safety agencies, perhaps because much of the responsibility for these aspects of safety falls on these two groups.

The government was often discussed as one of the primary groups responsible for promoting community safety. Some described the government as a system of agencies that enforce an expansive set of laws and regulations intended to keep people safe and healthy. According to a police officer in Missoula,

*BB Safety within my community is not just like police officers or sheriff's officers' interactions. The entire government system, in essence, is built on some form of enforcing of the law in general. And so that's your health department, that's your code enforcement, that's your billing department. And so, what is safety?*

*Safety is to ensure that I hold the proper permits to ensure that my electrician is laying down electricity in the right way in my house, so that I don't flick on a light switch and my house burns down.*

People also described a safe community as one in which the silos among agencies and organizations were dismantled to improve access to services and coordination among the various groups responsible for community safety.



When discussing safety, participants regularly mentioned the government agencies connected to the first response system, including the police, emergency medical technicians, and fire departments. Many people indicated that a safe community is one in which first responders arrive quickly when called and are well-trained and equipped to provide quality services to those in need. People reported a great deal of variability in the quality of police responses. Some participants stated that the

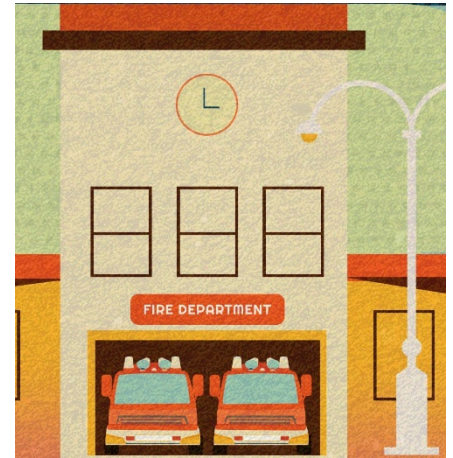
unpredictable nature of emergency response systems led them to avoid seeking help in an emergency. An unhoused woman in Missoula stated, “It’s like if something bad were to happen and I want to call them for help, but then there are times where they haven’t helped me ... How do I know what I’m going to get? I don’t feel comfortable calling them and knowing that I’m going to get the help that I need. So, it’s like I got to try to find as much resources that I can do for myself.”

For some, there was a perception that emergency responses differed based on race, housing status, living location, and whether they had been involved in the criminal legal system. A system-involved woman who described receiving little police assistance in the wake an attempted abduction stated, “I’ve had terrible experiences with the cops in general, and they’ve never made me feel like I could call them in a situation and get the help I need. And I’ve never felt like they made me feel safe because every time they either don’t believe you or they take the other side or it’s something of the sorts.” In Missoula, some Native American persons described experiencing long wait times for police and emergency medical technicians and poor treatment when help did arrive. A Native American man described his experiences:

*So many times, it has taken the ambulance or police so long. ... I used to live with this family, and they needed help there. They know that’s a Native American household. It would take them 45 minutes to an hour to sometime two hours for them to arrive for help if they even showed up at all. Well, meanwhile there’s white neighbors ... sometimes we would actually ask them to call for us, because they would show up immediately and it was awful. ... So we just say, all right, this is how it is. So, we just pull together, and we take care of each other.*

An individual in Missoula, who was in recovery from a substance use disorder, described being treated dismissively by hospital staff: “[The hospital staff] were very judgmental and they thought maybe I was coming in there drug seeking, or they didn't take me seriously.”

Participants said an inadequate emergency response not only made them feel less safe but also harmed community safety because people felt they could not rely on the police for assistance and needed to handle problems on their own. For example, one system-impacted woman in Missoula indicated that rather than relying on the police to keep her safe, she depended on her deep connections with biker gangs. Because of the protection she received from these groups, people knew that there “would be consequences if something did happen to me.” Similarly, a woman who works with system-impacted juveniles in Missoula discussed how youth sometimes carried guns because they felt they had no other option for staying safe. She noted, “They’re unsafe, and they feel unsafe, and this is the only way they're going to keep themselves safe. And they don't understand how that puts the community then in an unsafe situation because they're on survival mode.”



Some people looked beyond traditional public safety agencies and indicated that community safety should include the availability of alternative or co-responders for people in crisis, such as mental health professionals or social workers. A police officer in Missoula explained that people turn to the police when they don't know where else to go. Still, law enforcement does not always have the tools to assist them, which is why he supports the integration of crisis intervention training (CIT) in policing.

*BB Officers are the master problem-solvers whether they are the best problem solver for the problem or not. When there is no other clearly identified or defined place for somebody to be able to go, they land on my doorstep. So why CIT works from a law enforcement perspective is we are the last line, and we ultimately push back and push these problems back into other resources, or other departments, or other areas where there are better solutions. Because my options as a law enforcement officer also are limited.*

Respondents in Missoula also highlighted the work of the Mobile Response Team, which is a partnership between the Missoula Fire Department and Partnership Health Center that promotes community safety by responding to behavioral health crisis calls therapeutically. However, they also identified challenges with staff burnout and recruiting staff who are prepared to handle the challenges associated with this job.

The individuals we spoke with in Missoula rarely brought up gun violence as a safety concern, although several people mentioned gun deaths related to suicide. When directly asked about what can be done to prevent gun



violence, participants most often mentioned education and enhanced background checks to keep guns out of the hands of people who might not use them safely, such as people with mental health issues.

## Region: Systems for Preventing and Addressing Harm



This region of the concept map generated considerable discussion. While a focus of the prior domain was the role of police in providing timely, effective, and equitable emergency responses, here, the focus is more broadly on the contribution of police treatment to feelings of (un)safety. Statements in this region also focus on holding individuals, institutions (e.g., police, courts), and businesses accountable for the harm they have caused. There was general agreement that these aspects of safety mean different things depending on a person's life experiences, particularly their prior interactions with the criminal legal system.

Participants' views of the police and systems for holding people accountable were complex and varied. Many described an active and visible police force as a key component of a safe community. These individuals often discussed the role of law enforcement in enforcing laws that protect the public and reported that they feel safe when police are visible and active. At the same time, they were clear that they want a police force that acts in the public's best interest, exhibits genuine concern for the welfare of residents, and focuses on reducing harm and not harassing individuals. A system impacted Missoulain, who used to feel unsafe around law enforcement, discussed this tension.

*BB When I see [the police], that stigma of not just anticipation but insecurity and paranoia aren't there anymore. I know that they're doing their jobs, and if they're doing their jobs, they're out here protecting the overall welfare of the community. I'm fine with that. But when they're out there stereotyping people. ... I've seen the police go out there and do some really awful things to people because of where they're from, who they are, and what they know, and what they think they know. ... But when I see the police now, I feel like they're doing their jobs. If I'm in the wrong, I'm doing something I'm not supposed to be doing, then yeah, by all means, they're doing their job. I don't feel any way about it, because then I know already that those things are put in place for a reason. But if they're out there, if they're going to just be messing with me for no reason, then I would have to speak up about that.*

Similarly, when asked to describe interactions with the police that made her feel safe, an unhoused woman said, "They would approach the situation calmly. They would let you know that they don't want to hurt you...they're there to help you and understand what's going on in that situation. And they would just be really ... what's that word? Care. They cared about your well-being, and they would ask if you needed any medical help." Moreover, people indicated wanting a police force that knows the community and is dedicated to serving the public's best

interests. Many vocal critics of the police still saw a role for law enforcement in creating safe communities but believed that they needed better training and vetting.

People spoke about the role of law enforcement in enforcing different types of laws that protect the public. In the interviews, participants generally agreed on the enforcement of laws related to severe harm such as violence, especially domestic violence, and sexual assault, and maintaining safe roads. There was less consensus around the enforcement and court processing of quality-of-life crimes, like public drug use and loitering, particularly in Missoula, where these behaviors were more likely to be viewed as safety issues and perceived as being related to the unhoused population. For example, some Missoulians, especially those who completed the survey prompt, described a safe community as one in which these laws are enforced. Others suggested the most concern was around unhoused individuals who engage in *violent* crime. A woman working on criminal justice reform in Missoula described what she was hearing related to this issue, emphasizing the challenges of working with unhoused individuals who cycle in and out of jail. "Where the line seems to be really drawn is people who are unhoused, who are committing violent crimes, were being let out of jail—"Why didn't you just lock this person up because they're back again?' [But] it's a population that is really hard to serve, and it's a population that's really hard to supervise."

One woman in Missoula who had experienced serious violent victimization and the murder of a family member believed that strict enforcement of minor offenses diverted attention away from serious crimes. She said, "[The police] are more focused on the drugs and everything else that, yes, it's important, but it's like, okay, but murders are happening, and they're being put on the back burner. ... It's all backwards. You shouldn't feel unsafe because of the crime. And then, on top of it, feel unsafe because the police force is doing nothing about it."

In many ways, discussions around accountability mirrored those of policing. People described this as an essential part of community safety, arguing that when people are not held accountable, it endangers the public and makes communities more dangerous. At the same time, many viewed the current criminal legal system, particularly incarceration, as ineffective, harmful, and unjust.

A common theme was the link between accountability for harm and safety. A Missoula community member who had been incarcerated expressed concern about DUI case handling. She reported that while she was detained, she saw people with this charge released and then almost immediately re-arrested for a new DUI offense. Several people, both victims and system actors, expressed concern that not enough is being done to hold accountable individuals who commit domestic violence and sexual assault, and this puts people at risk for repeat victimization. A Missoulian working in probation and parole indicated he would feel safer if the courts took violent offenses a little more seriously. "Some judges are a little too lenient, and they are letting out domestic violence abusers a day after they just beat up their girlfriend. And we all know exactly what that's going to look like. And 9 times out of 10, it does, and they're back beating them up again." While he praised recent changes that made strangulation of a partner or family member a felony on the first offense, "that's still just a band-aid on the issue of a severed arm."

He was more hopeful about new strangulation training for law enforcement that might lead to more police identification and reporting of the offense.

A woman living in Missoula shared with us, "When I got sexually assaulted and stuff, [the police] literally didn't do anything. They took the reports and everything, and they said if they had contact with him, then, at that point, he would be served and arrested." In contrast, a Missoulian who was dealing with a partner's violence said she felt the criminal legal system was contributing to community safety "a little" because they were holding the perpetrator and themselves accountable. "He's in jail, and I think they're going to hold him accountable, which is great. ... And I'm pretty sure the district attorney—because they're the ones that are actually pressing charges on him, not me—I think they are holding themselves accountable and doing what they're supposed to, which is great because I've seen that not happen a couple of times with family members."



While most people acknowledged the importance of accountability for safety, many also indicated that current systems are inequitable, ineffective, and make communities less, not more, safe. They noted that incarceration often disrupts people's lives and hinders their ability to meet their basic needs, ultimately leading them back to crime and making the community less safe. A person who works for the courts in Missoula made this point.

*BB I think, again, it begs the question: someone experiencing poverty who steals food from Walmart three times, if we put them in jail for 30 days at public expense, are we categorically safer on the back end than if that mandatory minimum is five days? I think there's probably a pretty good amount of academic support that says we're actually less safe because that person's probably been destabilized and probably lost employment and maybe housing. And you've just ironically dramatically increased their likelihood to steal again in the future, thereby making us less safe.*

A formerly incarcerated person in Missoula expressed a similar viewpoint, describing the lack of substance use treatment in jails, which puts the community at further risk. "They are throwing a lot of addicts in jail, and they're not giving them the help that they need, and then they're throwing them back on the streets. So, therefore, they're more likely to commit the crimes. ... I've just dealt with it myself. ... I've seen a lot of friends ... they're not able to access help, and it's so hard to get help for stuff like that."

Another concern people raised was unequal treatment by the courts. One Missoulian described how his stepdaughter's father, who identifies as Native American, accidentally shot someone, "and they gave him the harshest sentence that the judge possibly could give him. But yet, you hear and see all these others where white

people did this exact same thing, and their total sentence is half the time of what he ended up with." People also perceived that unhoused individuals receive less fair treatment in the courts. A woman in Missoula described a recent court experience in which she witnessed this:

*BB I was driving on suspension, and I went to court. And back then, it was mandatory two days jail time. Well, my son had just purchased a mobile home for me. And the judge says, 'What kept you from coming to court?' And I said, 'Well, your Honor, I'm sorry. I forgot. I just moved into a new place.' And she stops me, goes, 'Really? Congratulations. Case dismissed. Time served.'... Well, my friend... she was the next person in line. They call her name. She goes up there, and the judge tells her she's a menace to society, and people like her should be locked up, and the key should be thrown away. Because she was homeless? Are you kidding me?*

Given the perceived failings of the current system, some people discussed the need to implement new or improved systems for accountability. When asked what accountability should look like in Missoula, a system-impacted woman who had been the victim of domestic violence stated, "Just that all people should be accountable, I mean, but without blasting about it, and I feel like [the courts] should consider them needing help. Doing the help instead of just throwing them in jail or something like that. It's like trying to help the situation, not just throw it away."

People who work on criminal legal system reform in Missoula County also expressed a desire for new forms of accountability. One pointed out the adverse effects of jail time on health and inequality, arguing for the need to create alternatives to incarceration.

*BB There's a lot of research at this point that going to jail is generally not good for your life, and for your stability, and for your public health. So ideally, we should be trying to minimize that, as long as it doesn't pose greater risks elsewhere. And certainly, we see a disproportionate amount of people of color go to the detention facility. ... And so, I think when we're talking about community safety, that's certainly an aspect of it. Involvement in the justice system itself poses risks to these populations and further marginalizes them. And so, we should be thinking about how can we find resources or alternatives to try and limit their exposure.*

Another person working on criminal legal system reform for Missoula County described how pandemic-related decarceration policies had opened the door for new conversations around accountability and public safety that focused on "intelligent use of incarceration so that we keep our jail useful." She indicated discussions were now centered on "How do we ensure public safety while still doing some recognized best practice that mitigates those kind of collateral incarceration impacts for people who aren't necessarily a danger to public safety awaiting trial? I think that while that might've been a foreign language lesson 10 years ago, that is a very widely accepted topic of conversation at this point."

Finally, although most people referenced personal accountability for harm, some discussed the importance of holding the government and the criminal legal system accountable for the harm they cause. When asked if institutions are held accountable, a system-impacted woman in Missoula said, "They aren't necessarily held accountable for things. I've had friends who have died in the jail and things hadn't changed ... and there was still no repercussions ... A lot of the time in Montana, things are just not talked about again." An unhoused woman discussed how the \$130 she had to pay for weekly drug tests as part of her pre-trial release hindered her ability to save for a place to live despite the fact she was employed at a local fast-food restaurant. She felt this was particularly unfair since she had not been convicted of a crime, and if she was ultimately found innocent, no one would hold the criminal legal system accountable for addressing the hardship this financial burden created in her life.

For some, the lack of accountability for government agencies, particularly police departments, made them feel unsafe when interacting with the criminal legal system, and they suggested that more police accountability is needed. A woman in Missoula who had experienced violence stated,

*BB [The police's] actions should be really looked into, and the way they go about things and their protocol. And all that needs to be better documented or better watched, and actions should be taken on the police that are making illegal decisions or doing things not by protocol. There should be better consequences for that. They shouldn't just get an 'Oh, well, you're not supposed to do it that way,' so the case gets thrown out. No. That can't just be okay. That is wrong.*

## SUMMARY

Conceptualizations of community safety are individualized and depend heavily on personal experiences. Factors identified as accounting for differences in viewpoints included experiences with the criminal legal system and being unhoused, minority status, gender and sexuality, and exposure to victimization. Moreover, some safety domains were given greater priority by some groups versus others. These findings highlight the need for conversations around community safety to be inclusive and localized. The next section provides a more in-depth examination of how various components of community safety are prioritized in Missoula.



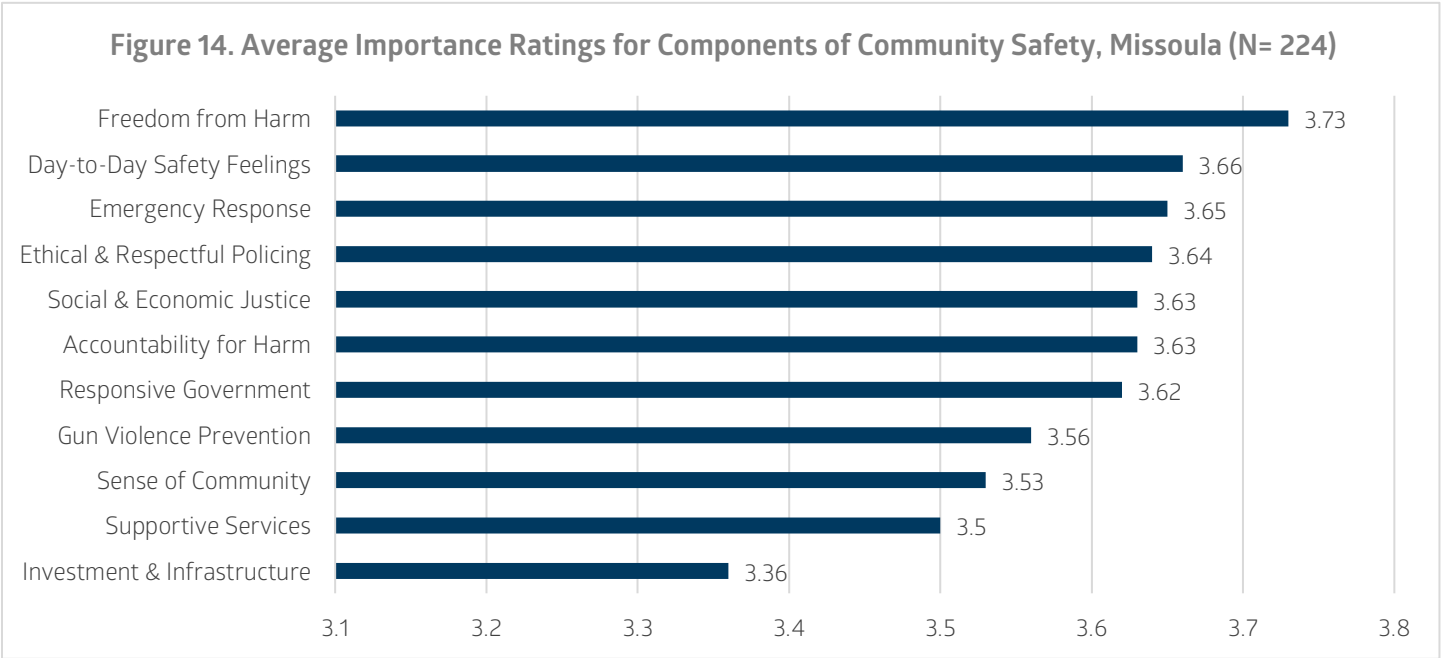


07

TOP SAFETY-RELATED  
PRIORITIES FOR LOCAL  
RESIDENTS

A key theme that emerged is that the meaning of safety differs across communities and people with different life experiences. Many people indicated that safety must be locally defined and that communities need to determine the aspects of safety that are most important to them. To this end, a second survey was administered that asked people to rate the importance of each component for community safety using a scale of 1 (not at all important) to 4 (very important). Respondents were also asked to rank in order the top three **most important** components of community safety (1 = most important). Finally, respondents were asked to rank the three aspects of community safety that they **believe their community currently gives the most priority**. When compared to the rankings on perceived importance, this information provides further insights into areas of consensus for problem-solving and action-taking.<sup>xi</sup> It also helps to identify aspects of safety that survey respondents perceive their community currently underprioritizes relative to their importance.

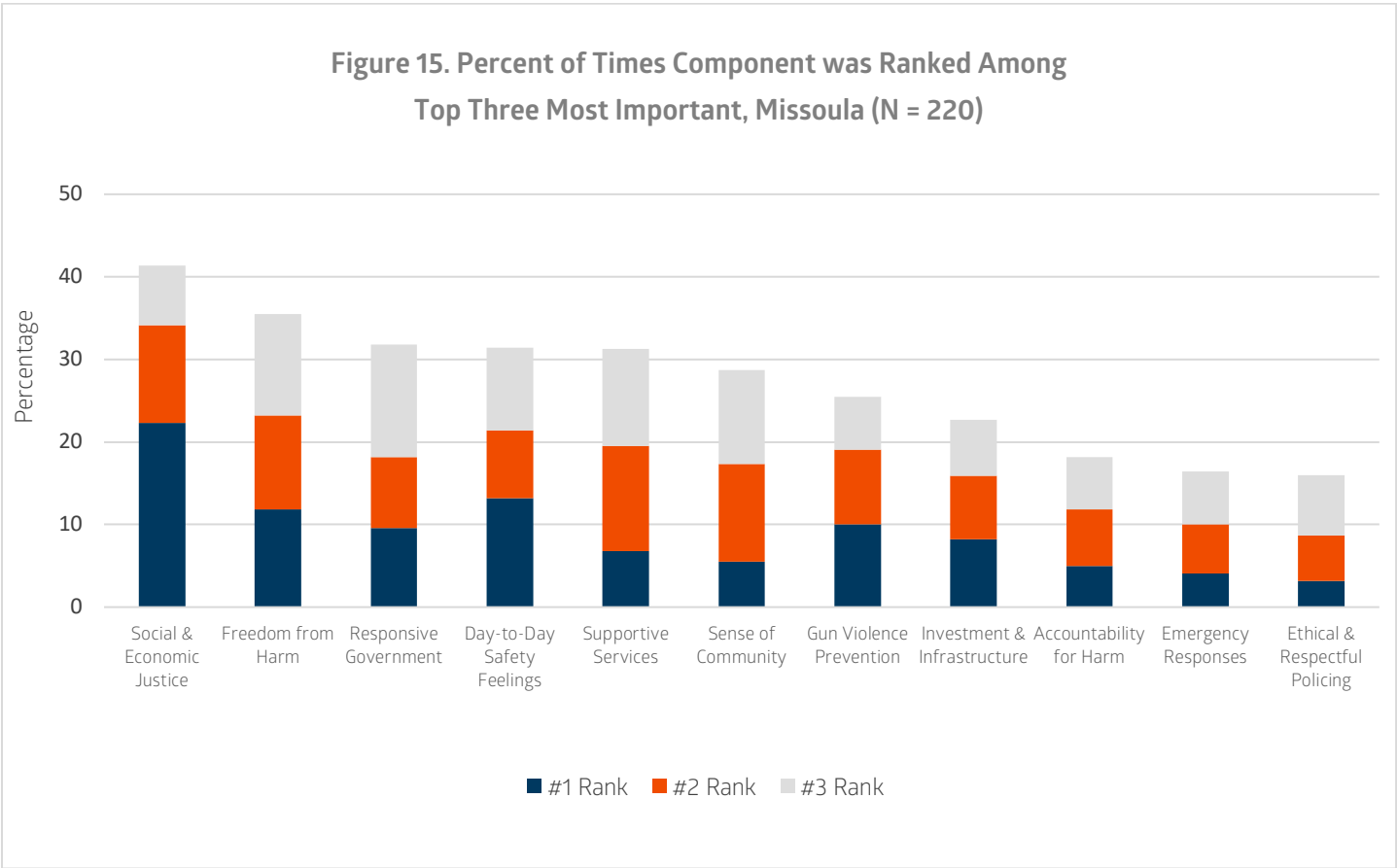
On average, when asked to rate the importance of each component of community safety on 1-4 scale, survey respondents in Missoula rated all the components of community safety as important or very important. The safety component with the highest rating score was freedom from violence & other harms, with an average rating of 3.73 (see Figure 14). The next six most highly rated components had similar levels of importance, ranging from 3.62 to 3.66. These included day-to-day safety feelings, followed by comprehensive and effective emergency responses, rated at 3.65. The least important aspect was investment in infrastructure, businesses, and programming for a thriving community.



Respondents were also asked to identify and rank the three most important components of community safety. Focusing on the top ranking is particularly informative, given the similarity in the rating scores across safety components. The results for Missoula are displayed in Figure 15. Social and economic justice was most consistently



ranked in the top three (41%), and it had the greatest percentage of #1 rankings (22%). This was followed by freedom from violence and other harm, which was ranked among the three most important components of community safety by 35% of respondents. Surprisingly, despite being rated relatively high in importance (see Figure 14), comprehensive and effective emergency responses and ethical and respectful policing, traditionally associated with public safety, received among the fewest top ranks in Missoula.

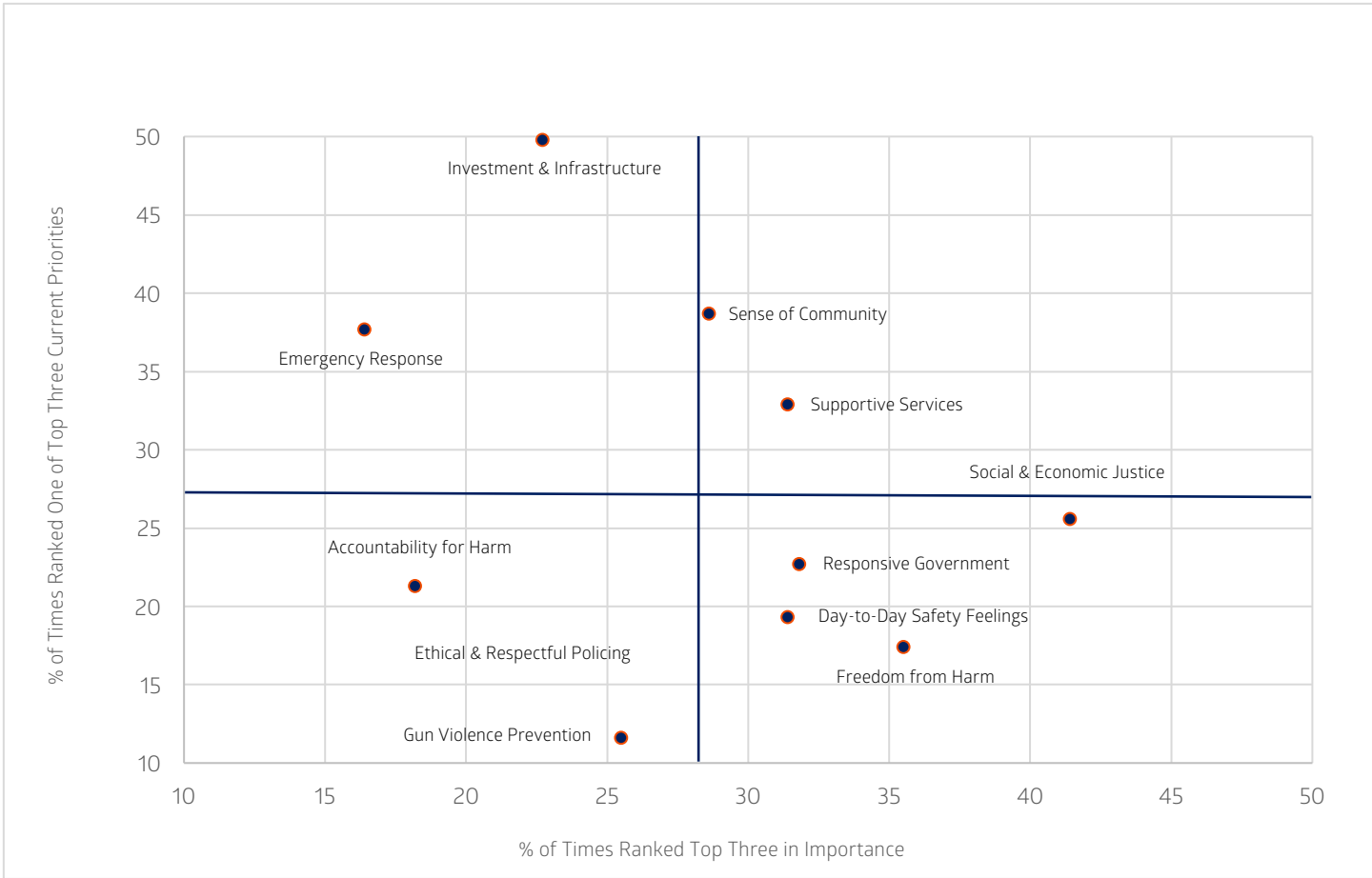


Survey respondents were also asked to rank the top three components of safety currently prioritized in their community. In Figure 16, each component of safety was placed on a matrix according to the percentage of respondents in Missoula who ranked it as one of the top three most important components of safety (horizontal axis) and the percentage who reported that it was currently one of their community’s top three priorities (vertical axis). This allows us to identify the aspects of safety that respondents view as highly important, but only a small percentage believe are being treated as top priorities in their community.<sup>xli</sup>

The data indicated that among respondents in Missoula, there was more consensus around a sense of community and supportive services, meaning that a high percentage of respondents think they are important for safety and that their community is currently prioritizing this component. For example, 31% of respondents in Missoula indicated that they viewed supportive services as one of the top three most important aspects of community safety,

and a similar percentage (33%) thought their community made providing these services a top priority. In comparison, a relatively high percentage of Missoula respondents believed that a responsive government, freedom from harm, and day-to-day safety feelings are among the most crucial elements of a safe community, but a smaller percentage believed that their community gave these things top priority. Thus, respondents perceived these safety aspects as under-prioritized in their community relative to their importance. While half of respondents in Missoula reported that investment in infrastructure and businesses is currently treated as a top priority, less than a quarter ranked this as highly important. Emergency response is similarly overprioritized relative to its perceived importance.

Figure 16. Most Important Components of Community Safety versus Highest Current Priority, Missoula



In summary, all data sources (interviews, prompt responses, and rating surveys) point to personal safety and security as key elements of a safe community. However, survey data highlight that all the components were rated as important or very important, stressing that people see community safety as more than just safety from physical harm and low crime rates. In addition, comparing the results from the open-ended prompt responses (Figure 12),

where survey respondents defined safety for themselves, to the above rating and ranking results bolsters the idea that when people are provided with options for what a more expansive conceptualization of safety might include, they recognize the value in thinking about this concept broadly. For example, social and economic justice was consistently ranked among the top three most important components of community safety in Missoula County.



08

# MEASURING COMMUNITY SAFETY

A multifaceted definition of community safety necessitates a new way of measuring this concept and its various components. We interviewed people about how they think we should measure community safety, and this section describes the key themes from the responses we received. Broadening the focus of safety initiatives requires a set of indicators that move beyond crime data and other measures associated with the criminal legal system. Appendix B outlines indicators that can be used in Missoula County to assess the various components of community safety and promote action, transparency, and accountability.

## PERCEPTUAL MEASURES VERSUS CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM DATA

When asked how to measure community safety, most people we interviewed identified police administrative data (e.g., reported crimes, calls to the police) and surveys that capture individuals' perceived level of safety as key indicators. However, they also acknowledged that there is often a disconnect between the two, and each has strengths and limitations. For this reason, a prevalent theme was the recommendation to use both objective crime data and perceptual measures.

### Problems with Criminal Legal System Measures

Individuals who reported that community safety is best measured "in the eyes of the people who live in those communities" identified administrative data as problematic for multiple reasons. They indicated that police data miss many crimes, and it is more likely to undercount crime for groups of people who do not trust the police, such as system-impacted individuals, people who identify as non-white, and immigrants.

People also recognized that many factors go into creating "objective data," and some measures, such as calls to the police, may go up when people's trust in the fairness and effectiveness of the criminal legal system increases. Others described administrative data as problematic because they viewed crime as the outcome of poverty and inequality. They noted that measuring safety using crime data—and ignoring these underlying causes—leads us to view safety through a narrow lens and ultimately steers us toward criminal legal system solutions.

More broadly, people discussed that when we focus on crime, we miss other important aspects of safety. Some noted that using crime as a metric is problematic because it keeps a focus on the negative aspects of a community rather than the positive, which can be challenging to measure. Participants also noted that it can be limiting to evaluate the value of any given reform solely on its crime reduction potential, and it is important to look at the myriad of other benefits reforms can bring.

## Problems with Perceptual Measures

People who supported the use of administrative data argued that relying on measures that capture people's perceptions of safety provides an inaccurate picture of what is happening in an area and makes comparing safety across places and over time problematic. They noted that perceptions of crime are shaped by the media, with social media and breaking news apps being particularly influential. Relatedly, people's perceptions of safety may be heavily influenced by one recent salient personal experience or represent feelings of "discomfort" and not actual safety. One court employee in Missoula made this point, noting, "I suspect that a lot of people are using anecdotal evidence in their own subjective interpretation of their safety (or lack thereof) as how they define it. I don't think it's quite as objective." Several participants suggested that the best way to align perceptions of safety with actual risk is through education.

People also recognized the difficulties associated with perceptual data: It is time consuming and difficult to collect, yet crime is viewed as a pressing issue that requires immediate action. Also discussed were challenges with representing the views of a wide range of people, especially since the people most impacted by crime are often the hardest to reach.

## IMPORTANCE OF DISAGGREGATING BY GROUPS

A second prevalent theme was that, regardless of how safety is measured, it is crucial to disaggregate measures by groups. This means examining disparate outcomes based on demographic characteristics such as race and ethnicity but also by geographic location and life experiences (e.g., victimization, involvement with the criminal legal system). Individuals also emphasized the importance of disaggregating data on resource access and utilization to determine who is (and isn't) accessing services and to pinpoint ways to distribute resources more equitably. One person discussed the value of moving beyond the traditional focus on differences by race and ethnicity and looking at other underserved groups, such as trans people and undocumented individuals. A woman who works with unhoused individuals noted that to generate an accurate and inclusive accounting of safety, it is vital that data collection efforts include the people closest to the problem.

## THERE IS A NEED TO CAPTURE MEASURES UPSTREAM OF CRIME

A third common theme was that safety should be measured using indicators "upstream" of interactions with the criminal legal system. This includes the underlying factors that can push people to engage in crime, like poverty, unemployment, limited educational opportunities, a lack of stable housing, and mental health issues. A woman who works in community mental health in Missoula stated, "I'm looking at access to housing, access to education, access

to jobs that pay well. ... I think zooming out and looking at the populations that are disproportionately impacted and figuring out what's the why of that."

The importance of measuring access to stable housing was frequently discussed. A system-impacted person in Missoula explained that when people don't have secure housing, it is difficult to maintain employment, and they may turn to illegal behavior to meet their basic needs. Reductions in barriers to entering the workforce, such as laws that prevent individuals convicted of crimes from getting the licensures needed for some types of employment, was also identified as another upstream measure.

Participants pointed to school outcomes as important indicators of safety, in part because of the links among quality education, employment, economic need, and offending. For example, an educator from Missoula linked graduation rates to violent victimization and perpetration via illiteracy, noting, "From a school system perspective, our graduation rates are really important to academic achievement and reading levels. I mean, there's so much correlation [between] if you can't read and your own exposure [to violence] or your violent tendencies."

Given that health issues can impede one's upward mobility, people also suggested using metrics for mental and physical health, such as obesity rates, to assess safety. Similarly, several mentioned the idea of utilizing trauma or Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) scores to determine individuals' exposure to experiences that undermine feelings of safety.

## **DATA ON THE PROVISION AND UTILIZATION OF SERVICES ARE KEY, BUT OFTEN OVERLOOKED, METRICS**

The people we interviewed also suggested that safety should be measured using administrative data that captures the provision of services as well as people's subjective experiences finding and accessing resources. Participants described the need to record and access information on the number of people served by local agencies and the types of services they received. The importance of service providers collecting data that allows them to measure the impact of their services was also discussed. People recognized that there are challenges associated with collecting this type of information and that agencies may need assistance building data collection capacity.

People also suggested measuring individual's subjective experiences when accessing services. This includes the public's knowledge about what services are available and how to access them, confidence in their ability to access needed support and resources, barriers to receiving assistance, and satisfaction with services received. However, one participant who works in behavioral health in Missoula noted that care needs to be taken to ensure individuals don't feel coerced into sharing information out of fear of being denied services.

## THERE IS VALUE IN CONVENING PEOPLE TO DISCUSS DATA AND BUILD TRUST

The value of regularly gathering people to review and discuss data is another issue that the people we interviewed, particularly practitioners, raised. They noted data measuring community safety are already being collected. Bringing stakeholders together can allow for a more coordinated data collection and dissemination strategy that reduces duplication of efforts and has the potential to increase transparency if these data are made readily available to the public. In addition, regular convenings provide an opportunity to bring together people from different sectors (e.g., law enforcement, hospitals, victim services, mental health providers, the community) to identify emerging issues and potential solutions as well as to determine how best to provide support and resources to people most affected by safety-related issues.

Others discussed the need for practitioners and researchers to work with stakeholders and the community to overcome distrust of data. A common theme among practitioners was that some segments of the community are skeptical of the accuracy of crime data and worry that it can be skewed depending on someone's interest or purpose. This was perceived as a particular issue in politics, where elected officials were described as sometimes cherry-picking data to serve their goals. Others indicated that people sometimes question the accuracy of data on safety-related issues.





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MOVING FORWARD

The people closest to the issues surrounding community safety are best situated to offer suggestions on how a broader definition of this concept and a more expansive set of measures can be used to improve communities. The people we spoke with offered the following ideas:

- Language is important. Framing conversations around "community safety" instead of "public safety" may help people think more expansively about what safety looks like and how to achieve this goal. Redefining community safety has the potential to reveal the broader historical forces that create and sustain inequality in access to safety. Many of our most unsafe places are contending with decades of neglect and divestment that contribute to neighborhood violence. Yet existing safety approaches often fail to recognize that communities with high crime rates suffer from various systemic issues that negatively impact safety.
- Education is key for getting people to think more expansively about safety. This includes not only a stronger educational system but also exposing people to what a safe, equitable community might look like. This was discussed by a woman who works for an advocacy organization.

*BB And so, when we talk about safety and collective safety, we have to have people who are able to think critically, because what we see right now is the underfunding of education. ... All of those things are equal impediments to safety, I would say. Because some people think locking their doors and carrying their shotgun that's the ultimate safety. And that's just because they don't know that safety could look like not needing food stamps at all, that your light bill is paid, that there is no light bill, [as a] matter of fact. Because then their definition of safety would be more expansive than locks on doors and more police on the streets.*

- Community safety is everyone's responsibility. Creating safe communities requires getting people who live and work in spaces that have less crime to see that violence is also their problem. Everyone is better off when safety is viewed as a collective, not individual, responsibility.
- There are many aspects of community safety that people with various life experiences can agree are important. As one community member from Missoula stated, there are "core values" of safety that can unite people across different communities. While some aspects of community safety may be more polarizing or contentious, it is possible to build off already-existing points of consensus. For example, a sense of community and supportive neighbors was one of the most common themes. Protecting children from harm was another.
- Some elements of safety are universal, but the types of harm people are concerned about vary based on life experiences, including racial, sexual, and gender identity, experiences with the criminal legal system, and exposure to victimization and violence. Although safety is a collective responsibility, its meaning, safety-related priorities, and the preferred methods for achieving these priorities will vary

from community to community. It is important that people critically reflect on which current strategies are making communities safer versus just making a subset of the community feel safe.

- When developing policies and practices, the perspectives of those most impacted must be heard and considered. As one woman who works with unhoused individuals discussed, decision-makers traditionally rely on best practices and research to make decisions but don't consider the views of the people who will be impacted by these changes. Moving toward a more equitable vision of safety requires having a more diverse set of voices at the table. The people most impacted by crime and the criminal legal system should be consulted when identifying the nature and causes of safety-related issues, determining the types of strategies that should be prioritized, and implementing solutions.
- It is crucial to measure safety with a wide range of indicators that capture community priorities. What is measured is what gets done. Tracking and communicating information about a more expansive view of community safety can help engage additional stakeholders and partners, communicate progress or areas of underinvestment, and help promote accountability across sectors and communities.
- Connect with other local and national efforts to reimagine public safety. Throughout the country, there are ongoing efforts to rethink what makes a community feel safe and how to achieve this goal. Bringing this work together can help catalyze change.

### Safety is Everyone's Responsibility

There was a consensus that everyone has a role in creating safety, and community members—not law enforcement—should take on a larger role. In addition to the criminal legal system and other government agencies, the responsibility for protecting communities must be shouldered by friend and family networks, neighbors, teachers, researchers, religious leaders, non-profit organizations, social service workers, and businesses. It is these individuals and entities that are closest to the problems facing communities and, therefore, have the most insight on how to make communities safer. But perhaps most critical is getting people who live and work in spaces that have less crime to see that violence is also their problem, not just someone else's. It is a collective approach that will ultimately make everyone safer. As stated by a probation officer, "Community safety belongs to all of us. It is a cliché answer, but it's also the right one. It belongs to law enforcement and non-law enforcement. It belongs to treatment providers. It belongs to the courts. It belongs to the everyday citizen."

## ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- In Missoula, there is general agreement that the physical and social environment is rapidly changing, especially in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic. Escalating housing insecurity and the increasing visibility of the unhoused population dominated conversations around safety. Moving forward, Missoulians must grapple with the myriad of safety concerns that revolve around housing instability.
- Personal safety and security are at the heart of community safety for most people in Missoula. The idea of personal safety, however, is quite diverse and encompassing. Unhoused, system-impacted, and Native American Missoulians discussed feeling unsafe because they perceive that they receive lower quality emergency services than other individuals and are mistreated by the police and others. These findings underscore that improving personal safety and security must be inclusive and include the perspectives of marginalized groups, as their safety concerns may require a separate set of policies and actions.
- There is broad consensus that investment in high-quality and accessible supportive services is both important and currently prioritized in Missoula. However, the accessibility and quality of supportive services is viewed as an overlooked measure of community safety in the region. Tracking and communicating information and data about supportive services could help communicate progress toward this community safety priority. Moreover, measuring the impact of supportive services on residents' daily lives and well-being can help secure funding to expand social services and programming.
- System-impacted individuals described being harmed by the media's practice of publishing arrest photos. For example, they discussed feeling stigmatized and facing challenges obtaining employment, which can contribute to further offending. Any value associated with publishing booking photos should be weighed against this practices' potential harm.

## CONCLUSION

Regardless of how people defined community safety, there was a consensus that there is a need to move from identifying what is wrong, to taking concrete steps to making communities safer. This report departs from dominant approaches that explore community safety exclusively as an individual experience to emphasize that safety is a collective endeavor in which people are encouraged to critically think about others' definitions of safety, evaluate them and identify areas of consensus for action. We show that "handing the microphone" to individuals closest to the problem illuminates overlooked areas of safety that are often taken for granted or not considered in mainstream discussions about this issue. As such, the derived concept map should not be considered as having the final say on how safety is and should be defined. Rather, the clusters serve as topics or themes that structure

collective actions that are more aligned with community priorities and values. To this end, local conversations are more centered on the advancement of achieving safety for all than narrow crime-oriented definitions that may be only a small part of how many people actually experience and think about safety.



# APPENDIX A. STUDY METHODS

To explore how community safety is conceptualized, this study took a multi-method approach, drawing on the perspectives of a broad range of stakeholders. Each of the study methods we employed is detailed below.

## MEDIA ANALYSIS

Members of the research team analyzed articles that covered crime trends and were published during a five-year period (2017-2021) in select local newspapers. In doing so, we sought to understand how media covered traditional markers of a safe community and whose voices are heard. This analysis focused on understanding how local *crime trend* reporting is portrayed, as shifts in the nature and extent of crime can spur policy changes and, when depicted as on the rise, can generate public concern. Using the news aggregator Access World News, we identified newspaper articles discussing crime and victimization trends during the study period. We used the following search terms: (crime OR violence OR assault OR strangulation OR strangle OR drug\* OR gun\* OR burglary OR rape OR arson OR theft OR arrests OR jail admissions) and (increase\* OR decrease\* OR rose OR fell OR trend\* OR spike\* OR crisis OR drop\*). Given the centrality of violence to discussions of community safety, we delved deeper into the subset of media stories that discussed this form of crime. This exploration included identifying the causes and solutions that were discussed around violence. In Missoula County, we analyzed 39 media stories on crime trends from *The Missoulian*, with a more in-depth analysis of the 9 stories focused on increasing and persistent violence.

## INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Members of the research team interviewed and conducted focus groups with individuals residing or working in each respective county to better understand their views on community safety. We made a concerted effort to speak with those people who are most impacted by crime and the criminal legal system. These included people who work for the criminal legal system (courts, corrections, law enforcement), people who had been impacted by the criminal legal system (arrested, incarcerated, victims of crime), and individuals who worked with system-impacted individuals (e.g., service providers, advocates, county employees). In Missoula County, we interviewed 50 individuals, and an additional 8 people participated in focus groups. Many (10) of these individuals were current or former representatives of criminal legal system agencies (law enforcement, courts, and corrections) or worked with populations that are often system-impacted (8). A sizable portion had been involved in the criminal legal system (20), described being victims of violent crime (20), and/or were currently or formerly unhoused (13).

We conducted a thematic analysis of the interview and focus group data for all three sites to identify primary safety-related concerns, conceptualizations of community safety, and views on how community safety should be measured.

## GROUP CONCEPT MAPPING

The research team used group concept mapping to identify the various components of community safety and to describe how the people we spoke with in each county conceptualized these elements. Group concept mapping is a research technique that empowers diverse participants to articulate their own definitions of safety, ultimately generating a visual representation of this concept. This technique, which incorporates data from surveys, focus groups, and interviews, involves three phases: brainstorming, sorting, and generating a map.

**1) Brainstorming.** The research team conducted both online and in-person surveys with residents from Missoula County, St. Louis County, and Mecklenburg County in fall 2022. We aimed to understand how individuals from various backgrounds and perspectives described community safety in their own words. We sent the online survey to our contacts in the three counties, which included people from local criminal legal system agencies, advocacy organizations, neighborhood associations, service providers, and religious congregations. We then encouraged our contacts to circulate the survey within their organizations. We also posted the survey on multiple social media platforms. In Missoula and St. Louis Counties, we established advisory boards to provide feedback on the project and assist in disseminating the survey. Moreover, in Missoula, we displayed the survey on the engagement platform, Missoula County Voice, and distributed it in person at the Western Montana Fair. In St. Louis, we also conducted surveys at a local farmer's market. To broaden the diversity of our respondents, we partnered with Qualtrics to distribute the survey to a sample of individuals representing the racial, ethnic, and political diversity of each county.

In the survey, participants were asked to complete the following prompt:

“Safety can mean different things to different people. Pause for a moment and envision a safe community. Think about safety broadly, including what safety means and looks like in your daily life, in your neighborhood, and in your interactions with local organizations and agencies such as the police, courts, social service providers, schools, etc. Think about the things you find in safe communities as well as the things that are absent. Now complete the following statement. You are encouraged to be as specific as possible in your response and avoid one-word answers. You may provide more than one response. When I think about a safe community, I think about....”

Participants also answered questions about their demographic characteristics and life experiences, including involvement with the criminal legal system and victimization.

The survey generated 1,254 valid prompt responses, including 469 from Missoula County. We supplemented these survey responses with information gleaned from discussions with individuals who had been involved in the criminal legal system, organizations that serve system-impacted groups, and criminal legal system actors to ensure their perspectives were represented. From these discussions and the prompt responses, the research team compiled



120 unique statements that described various aspects of community safety. Additionally, stakeholders from each site read through the statements and provided feedback on the content and the wording.

**2) Sorting.** Sixty-two volunteers from across the three sites independently organized the statements into groups that captured similar ideas and then named these clusters.

**3) Map Generation.** We used a statistical method called “multidimensional scaling” to analyze the sorting data and create a visual representation of meaning of community safety. This concept map was shared with 31 individuals who provided feedback, and a final graphic representation of community safety was produced.

## RATING SURVEY

In the spring and summer of 2023, we conducted a second community survey in which we asked respondents to rate the importance of the 11 components of community safety previously identified through concept mapping. We computed mean rating scores to identify the most important components of community safety. Respondents were also asked to rank the top three most important components of safety and the three elements they believed were currently given the highest priority in their community. To identify aspects of safety that are currently underprioritized, components of safety were compared in terms of importance and current priority.

To ensure broad distribution, we used the same channels as the original brainstorming survey. Additionally, we directly emailed participants from the fall 2022 survey who expressed their interest in further involvement in the study. The rating survey generated 718 valid responses including 224 from Missoula County. Although efforts were made at each stage of the project to reach a diverse group of people, these findings cannot be generalized to the population of each respective county due to convenience sampling. The tables below provide characteristics and demographic information for the sample and the populations of Missoula County.

Missoula County Survey Sample Characteristics

	Brainstorming Survey Sample % (N = 469)	Rating Survey Sample % (N=224)	Missoula County %
Race			
White alone	79.9	86.1	91.4
Black/African American alone	2.0	.93	0.5
American Indian & Alaska Native alone	3.1	1.4	2.7
Asian, alone	1.1	.93	2
Other, including multiracial	13.9	9.3	3.4
Hispanic/Latino	4.4	1.4	3.9
Gender			
Male	30.4	21.9	50.5
Female	53.9	64.3	49.5
Non-binary/Gender fluid	3.4	2.8	
Missing	12.2	11.2	
Foreign born	2.4	2.8	3
Age			Median age = 34.7
18-20	3.6	1.3	
21-26	8.7	4.5	
27-32	14.3	15.2	

33-43	26.0	22.3	
44-54	16.0	23.2	
55-65	17.1	17.4	
66-76	12.8	13.8	
77 or older	1.5	2.2	
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	57.6	72.3	44.2
Worked or volunteered for an organization that works with victims	61.7	40.8	
Worked or volunteered for an organization focused on safety	52.1	55.5	
Worked or volunteered for an organization that provides services to system-impacted individuals	36.3	36.2	
Worked for a criminal legal system agency	17.3	12.4	
System impacted (e.g., arrested, charged, jailed)	18.7	17.1	
Someone close has been system-impacted	38.0	45.0	
Victim of violence	26.0	22.7	
Someone close has been a victim of violence	40.3	37.5	

Population data obtained from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/missoulacountymontana/PST045222#qf-headnote-a>



# APPENDIX B. POTENTIAL MEASURES OF SAFETY

Broadening the focus of safety initiatives requires access to a set of indicators that move beyond crime data and other measures associated with the criminal legal system. This appendix outlines indicators that can be used in Missoula County to assess the various components of community safety and promote action, transparency, and accountability. To identify these indicators, we relied on existing reports and research projects.

## FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE AND OTHER HARM

	Indicator	Potential Data Source
Physical Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Violent Crime Rate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Montana Board of Crime Control Violent Crime Dashboard</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Domestic Violence Victimization Rate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Montana Board of Crime Control Domestic Violence Dashboard</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Victimization Rate for Individuals under 18</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Montana Board of Crime Control Violent Crime Dashboard</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rate of Missing Indigenous Persons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Montana Missing Persons Database</a></li> </ul>
Drug Crime and Harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rate of Drug Overdose Deaths</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">CDC National Center for Health Statistics Provisional County-Level Drug Overdose Death Counts</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rate of Drug Crime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Montana Board of Crime Control NIBRS Offense Summary Dashboard</a></li> </ul>
Other Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rate of Property Crime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Montana Board of Crime Control Property Crime Dashboard</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University of Montana Campus Crimes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">University of Montana Police Department Crime Log</a></li> </ul>

## DAY-TO-DAY FEELINGS OF SAFETY

	Indicator	Potential Data Source
Perceptions of Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">2020 National Community Survey Report – Missoula County</a></li> </ul>
Number of Calls for Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Law Enforcement Annual Reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">2021 Missoula Police Department Annual Report</a></li> </ul>
Traffic Safety and Accidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traffic accident and fatality rates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">2021 Missoula Police Department Annual Report</a></li> </ul>

## SENSE OF COMMUNITY

	Indicator	Potential Data Source
Sense of Community and Trust in Neighbors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">2020 National Community Survey Report – Missoula County</a></li> </ul>
Inclusivity of Neighborhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">2020 National Community Survey Report – Missoula County</a></li> </ul>
Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">2020 National Community Survey Report – Missoula County</a></li> </ul>

## INVESTMENTS IN INFRASTRUCTURE, BUSINESSES, AND PROGRAMMING FOR A THRIVING COMMUNITY

	Indicator	Potential Data Source
Satisfaction with Outdoor Space and Community Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Survey - Level of satisfaction with parks, trails, open space, and recreation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">City of Missoula Resident Survey</a></li> </ul>
Satisfaction with Public Works Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Survey - Level of satisfaction with street repair and maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">City of Missoula Resident Survey</a></li> </ul>
Access to Recreational Outdoor Amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Survey – Level of importance attributed to outdoor amenities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">City of Missoula/University of Montana 2018 Survey</a></li> </ul>

## ACCESSIBILITY AND AVAILABILITY OF SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

	Indicator	Potential Data Source
Access to Resources for Vulnerable Populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Satisfaction with Access to Mental Health Services such as Crisis Intervention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">City of Missoula Resident Survey</a></li> </ul>
Utilization of Services Related to Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of People Served by Homeward, a Non-profit that Provides Home Ownership and Financial Literacy Counseling and Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Missoula Organization of Realtors' Social Data Dashboard</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of Clients Enrolled in Missoula's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Missoula Organization of Realtors' Social Data Dashboard</a></li> </ul>

## SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

	Indicator	Potential Data Source
Attainable Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Satisfaction with Housing Affordability</li> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">City of Missoula Resident Survey</a></li> <li><a href="#">2022 Community Needs Assessment</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing Burden – Percent of Renters and Homeowners who Spent 30 Percent of their Income or more on Housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Missoula Organization of Realtors' Social Data Dashboard</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing Affordability Index</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Missoula Organization of Realtors' Social Data Dashboard</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percent of Recipients of Missoula Housing Authority Vouchers who Secure Housing before their Voucher Expires</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Missoula Organization of Realtors' Social Data Dashboard</a></li> </ul>
Access to Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percent of Persons without Health Insurance, Under the Age of 65</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">US Census, Quick Facts</a></li> <li></li> </ul>
Financial Stability and Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poverty Statistics</li> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Census Poverty Statistics for Missoula County</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unemployment Rate</li> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Missoula County Unemployment Rate</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum Wage</li> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">State of Montana Minimum Wage</a></li> <li></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Income Tax Brackets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">State of Montana Income Tax Brackets</a></li> </ul>



## RESPONSIVE, ETHICAL, AND TRANSPARENT GOVERNMENT

	Indicator	Potential Data Source
Access to Government Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Satisfaction with Access to Information and Engagement with City Government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">City of Missoula Resident Survey</a></li> </ul>
Satisfaction with Government Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Survey – Level of Satisfaction with Law Enforcement Services, Municipal Court Systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">City of Missoula/University of Montana 2018 Survey</a></li> </ul>

## COMPREHENSIVE AND EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

	Indicator	Potential Data Source
Satisfaction with Government Responses and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Satisfaction with Fire Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">City of Missoula Resident Survey</a></li> </ul>
Alternatives to Law Enforcement Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crisis Intervention Team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">City of Missoula Crisis Intervention Team</a></li> </ul>
Resources Regarding National Disasters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flood Resource Guide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Missoula County Resource Guide for Flooding</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wildfire Resource Guide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">City of Missoula FD Fire Prevention and Awareness</a></li> </ul>

## GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

	Indicator	Potential Data Source
Gun Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gun Violence Statistics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">State of Montana Gun Violence Statistics</a></li> </ul>
Access to Guns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirements for Concealed Carry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Missoula County Requirements for Concealed Carry Permits</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gun Confiscation Laws</li> <li>• Confiscation Laws for Domestic Violence Misdemeanants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">State of Montana Firearm Confiscation Laws</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">State of Montana Firearm Prohibition Laws</a></li> </ul>

## FAIR AND ETHICAL POLICING

	Indicator	Potential Data Source
Police Use of Force and Misconduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rates of Use of Force Incidents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Missoula Police Department Annual Report</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rates of Citizen Complaints about the Police</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Missoula Police Department Annual Report</a></li> </ul>
Resident Perceptions of the Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfaction with the Police, Resident Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">City of Missoula Resident Survey</a></li> </ul>
Willingness to Call the Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rates of Citizen Requests for the Police (i.e., Calls for Service to the Police)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Missoula Police Department Annual Report</a></li> </ul>

# ACCOUNTABILITY FOR HARM

	Indicator	Potential Data Source
Enforcement of Laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rates and Types of Arrests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">FBI Crime Data Explorer</a></li> </ul>
Satisfaction with Government Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Satisfaction with Municipal Court services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">City of Missoula Resident Survey</a></li> </ul>
Accountability for Criminal Acts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crime Incident Clearance Rate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Montana Board of Crime Control Dashboard</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of Drug Seizures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Montana Board of Crime Control Dashboard</a></li> </ul>

## Endnotes

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- xxii Jail admissions for non-violent misdemeanors is allowed on a case-by-case basis if deemed necessary by law enforcement who make the arrest. This allows for situational and collateral information to impact the hold decision. However, most individuals with non-violent misdemeanors are given citations instead of being detained (personal communication, Chelsea Wittmann).

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- xxx *The Missoulian* was selected based on conversations with local partners who indicated this news outlets that would provide a varied perspective on crime and the criminal legal system. Circulation is 34,855 on Sundays, 30,466 on weekdays (<https://destinationmissoula.org/partner/missoulian>).
- xxxi We use the term “serious violent crime” to refer to the FBI index crimes of homicide, aggravated assault, rape, and robbery.
- xxxii We use the term “property crime” to refer to the FBI index crimes of larceny, burglary, and motor vehicle theft.
- xxxiii Other government officials include government spokespeople and representatives from government agencies not associated with the criminal legal system (e.g., Department of Health).

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- xxxiv Quotations from other groups were present in the articles, but no other group was quoted in more than three articles (8%).
- xxxv Abt, T. (2019). *Bleeding out: The devastating consequences of urban violence and a bold new plan for peace in the streets*. Hachette UK.; Weisburd, D. & Braga, A. A. (2019). *Policing innovation: Contrasting perspectives*. Cambridge University Press.
- xxxvi The theme day-to-day safety feelings encompassed the following statements: feel safe at home; can travel freely without being on alert or harassed; and property unlocked without fear. The theme minimal crime includes the following statements: little crime or victimization; low rates of property crime such as theft, vandalism, or car theft; low rates of violent crime such as murder, robberies, and assaults; no gangs in the community; few/no hate crimes; people are not victimized in their homes; minimal drugs in community; low rates of gun violence; and most people follow the law.
- xxxvii Neighborhood relationships included: Neighbors watch out for each other and provide support; events bring people together; and neighbors know each other and socialize/talk regularly.
- xxxviii Access to services included: Access to mental health/substance use resources; resources for vulnerable groups; resources, support for victims; and bullying addressed.
- xxxix The original map created through GCM and the summary of the feedback from community members that guided its revisions are available from the report authors by request.
- xl Unidos, M., Udani, A., Torres Wedding, M., Flores Fontanes, Á., John, S., & Seleyman, A. (2023). Envisioning A world without prisons: Group concept mapping as a collective strategy for justice and dignity. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*. DOI: 10.1080/21565503.2023.2266721.
- xli The quadrants were created using the average percentages for importance (M = 27%) and priority (M = 27%), This allowed us to identify components of community safety that a high percentage of people think are important and are currently prioritized (high consensus); a low percentage of people think are important and are currently prioritized (low consensus); a high percentage of people think are important, but few people think they are currently prioritized (more importance than priority); and a low percentage of people think are important, but high percentage of people think they are currently prioritized (more priority than importance).