

Los Angeles County Survey: Victims of Violent Crime

Conducted February 3 to 10, 2021



David Binder Research

Summary

David Binder Research conducted a survey of violent crime victims in Los Angeles County and found few get victim support services. All support services tested were received by fewer than three in ten victims of violent crime. Most say they were not informed about these services, and majorities say they would have wanted services they did not receive.

Most violent crime victims want changes to the criminal justice system that emphasize rehabilitation and crime prevention, rather than more incarceration. Large majorities support policies to shift resources away from incarceration and invest in prevention, rehabilitation, and support services. Asked about criminal justice preferences, the vast majority of violent crime victims support community-based victim services, mental health crisis response, and violence prevention outreach workers as well as alternatives to incarceration and reducing sentences for people in prison that participate in rehabilitation.

1. Few victims of violent crime get support services—among those who didn’t, the vast majority would have wanted them.

Many victims of violent crime living in Los Angeles County say they did not receive support services that they would have wanted. Among those not receiving services, large majorities would have wanted financial assistance or help understanding the courts and legal system. In contrast, fewer than 1 in 5 say they received financial assistance for property damage or monetary losses or received emergency or temporary housing.

Only 1 in 3 say the criminal justice system was helpful in providing information about support services, and only 1 in 4 say they were informed about victim compensation. Those with incomes under \$75,000 were much less likely than those with higher incomes to say they received this information (20% to 37%), and much less likely to say the criminal justice system helpful (29% to 43%).

Next is a list of types of support that victims of crime and their immediate family members may receive. For each, please tell me if it is something you have ever received. And please tell me if this were available to you, would you have wanted to use it?

	Have Received	Have not received	Don't know	Among those who have not received	
				Would have wanted	Would not want
Financial assistance to help with damaged property or monetary losses	13	81	6	74	26
Financial assistance to help with medical costs	17	76	7	72	28
Help understanding the courts and legal system	21	73	6	75	25
Medical assistance, or physical therapy	25	69	6	68	32
Counseling or other mental health support	27	67	6	66	34
Emergency or temporary housing	15	79	6	57	43

After you experienced violent crime, how helpful was the criminal justice system in providing information about recovering from crime or referrals for support services? Was it...

Very helpful	17	33
Somewhat helpful	16	
Slightly helpful	13	
Not at all helpful	36	67
Don't know	18	

After you experienced violent crime, were you informed about the California Victim Compensation Program, which can help pay bills and expenses that result from violent crime?

Yes	26
No	61
Don't know	13

2. Victims of violent crime want more focus on rehabilitation, not incarceration.

When asked about the direction of the criminal justice system, large majorities of violent crime victims prefer increased focus on rehabilitation and crime prevention, rather than more incarceration.

Seven in ten say a prosecutor's primary goal should be solving neighborhood problems and stopping repeat crimes through prevention and rehabilitation, even if it means fewer convictions. Six in ten say rehabilitation, mental health, and drug treatment are better than punishment through incarceration for preventing future crimes. And six in ten prefer shorter sentences and more crime prevention and rehabilitation over longer prison sentences. Two in three want individual circumstances taken into account when deciding a sentence, rather than automatically adding years onto a sentence based on past convictions.

Thinking about sentencing for people who commit crimes, do you prefer...

Taking the individual circumstances into consideration when deciding a sentence	65
Automatically adding years onto a sentence based on past convictions	28
Don't know	7

Which do you think is a better way to prevent future crimes...?

Rehabilitation, mental health treatment, and drug treatment	61
Punishment through incarceration	30
Don't know	9

Thinking about sentencing for people who commit crimes, do you prefer...

Shorter prison sentences and spending more on crime prevention and rehabilitation programs	61
Prison sentences that keep people in prison for as long as possible	28
Don't know	10

Which of the following should be a prosecutor's primary goal?

Solving neighborhood problems and stopping repeat crimes through prevention and rehabilitation, even if it means fewer convictions	69
Prosecuting crimes to get as many convictions and prison sentences as possible	25
Don't know	6

3. Victims support policies that shift resources away from incarceration and invest in prevention, rehabilitation, and support services.

Overwhelming majorities of violent crime victims support policies to reform the criminal justice system that emphasize violence prevention, alternatives to incarceration, and expansion of victim services.

Eighty-eight percent support expanding community-based victim services to help more victims of violence get access to programs that help them with stability and recovery from trauma. Nearly as many support increasing the number of community-based violence prevention workers who mediate conflicts, and over 3 in 4 support increasing the number of hospital-based violence prevention workers. Over 8 in 10 support expanding police community engagement strategies, and support expanding mental health crisis response so emergency calls are handled by mental health experts instead of police.

At least 8 in 10 support expanding alternatives to incarceration, such as diversion, mental health treatment, restorative justice, and community service, and reducing prison sentences for people who participate in rehabilitation programs.

Next are some ideas to reform the criminal justice system. For each one, please tell me if you support or oppose the proposal.

	Support	Oppose	Don't know
Expanding community-based victim services to help more victims of violence get access to programs that help them with stability and recovery from trauma	88	8	3
Increasing the number of community-based violence prevention workers who mediate conflicts and help prevent young people from getting involved in gangs or gun violence	85	12	3
Expanding police community engagement strategies to improve trust and solve more crimes	83	14	3
Expanding alternatives to incarceration such as diversion, mental health treatment, restorative justice, and community service	82	13	5
Expanding mental health crisis response so that emergency calls about psychiatric crisis are handled by mental health experts instead of police	82	14	4
Reducing prison sentences for people in prison who participate in rehabilitation, mental health, substance abuse, educational, or vocational programs	80	15	5
Increasing the number of hospital-based violence prevention workers to help prevent retaliation for gun violence and help gun violence victims stabilize	77	14	8

Survey Methodology

David Binder Research conducted a survey of 2,000 adults in Los Angeles County from February 3-10, 2021. A total of 724 respondents reported having experienced violent crime, including those who lost an immediate family member to homicide. Interviews were conducted by cell phone, landline, and online, in English and Spanish. Telephone interviews were conducted using random digit dialing and online interviews were conducted using a survey panel. The margin of error among victims of violent crime is $\pm 3.6\%$, and it is larger for subgroups.