Tools for South Dakota to Address Crime

The public is concerned about crime and distrustful of the justice system.
An all-time high of 40 percent of people are very dissatisfied with policies to control or reduce crime.[1] To reverse this trend, state leaders need a plan to advance safety and justice that is grounded in data and evidence.

Percent change in violent crime, 2019–2022

Nationally, violent crime fell in 32 states (and DC) and rose in 18 states between 2019 and 2022.

Violent index crime reported to police
Rate per 100k residents

In South Dakota, the violent crime rate increased 16 percent from 2012 to 2022.

South Dakota's violent crime rate spiked in 2020 but has since declined.

−2% — U.S.
+16% — SD

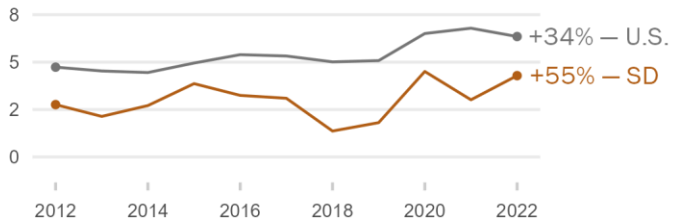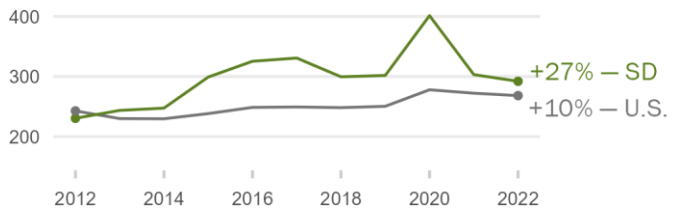**In South Dakota**, the homicide rate increased 55 percent from 2012 to 2022.

Homicide incidents reported to police
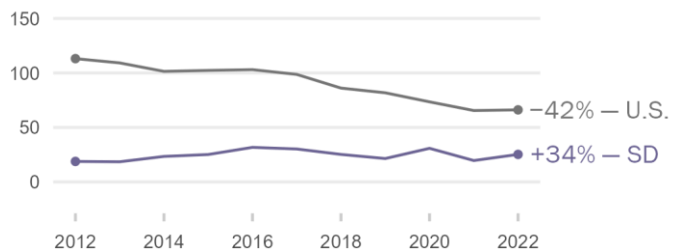Rate per 100k residents

+34% — U.S.
+55% — SD

The aggravated assault rate peaked in 2020 before declining.

Aggravated assault incidents reported to police
Rate per 100k residents

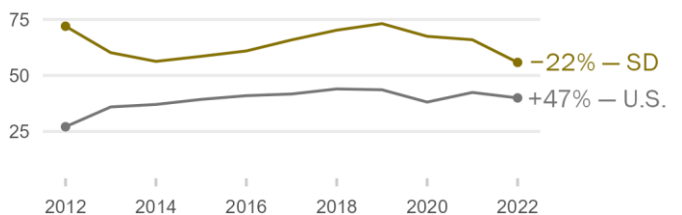+27% — SD
+10% — U.S.

Unlike most other states, the robbery rate in South Dakota has increased.

Robbery incidents reported to police
Rate per 100k residents

−42% — U.S.
+34% — SD

Rape incidents reported to police decreased 22 percent from 2012 to 2022.

Rape incidents reported to police
Rate per 100k residents

−22% — SD
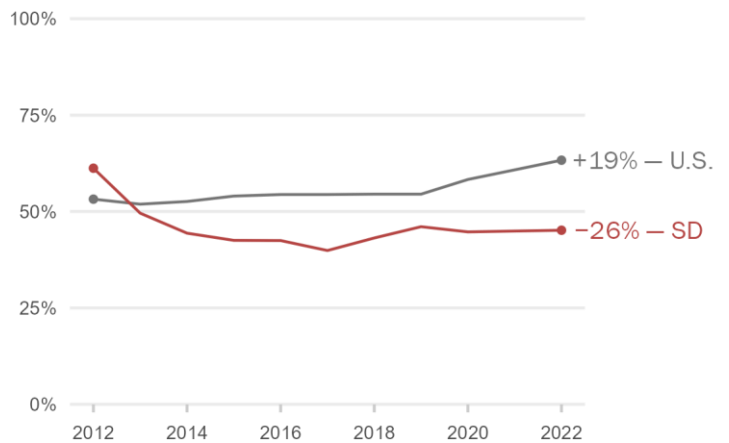+47% — U.S.

Solving Violent Crime

Over the last 10 years, the number of violent crimes reported to law enforcement that go unsolved has increased. Nationally, 63 percent of violent crimes known to law enforcement went unsolved in 2022.[2] Failing to hold people accountable by solving crime erodes trust in law enforcement, prevents effective intervention, and fuels retaliatory violence.

In South Dakota, 45 percent of violent crimes reported to law enforcement were not solved in 2022.
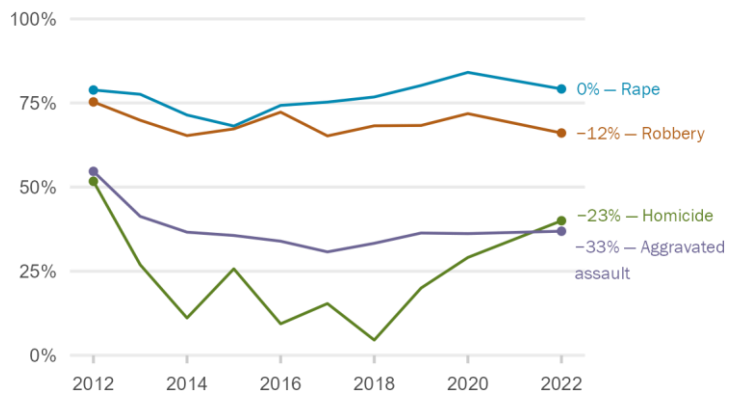
The percentage of violent crimes that went unsolved in South Dakota decreased 26 percent from 2012 to 2022.

Aggravated assault is the violent crime most likely to be solved, while rape is the least likely to be solved.

Unsolved rate of violent crime reported to police

+19% — U.S.
−26% — SD

Unsolved rate of violent crime by offense
South Dakota

0% — Rape
−12% — Robbery
−23% — Homicide
−33% — Aggravated assault

How does solving more violent crime deter future violence?
Research is clear that the certainty of getting caught—not the severity of punishment—is what deters crime.[3] This means that a dollar spent on increasing the likelihood of being arrested for committing a crime does far more to reduce crime than a dollar spent to incarcerate someone longer.

5 Ways States Can Reduce Violent Crime

1. **Solve more violent crimes to increase accountability and deter future violence.**

Support focused-deterrence policing strategies that work with the people and places most at risk of crime and victimization. Invest in training and assistance for agencies with low solve rates. Support targeted capacity building and the implementation of best practices to solve more violent crimes.

2. **Make data-driven investments in violence prevention.**

Develop and fund a statewide, data-driven crime-prevention strategy. As part of the plan, use data to focus evidence-based violence prevention efforts in communities most impacted by violent crime.

3. **Address trauma to prevent trauma.**

Invest in trauma-informed responses to victims and people who commit crimes, as well as support for law enforcement and corrections staff. Ensure adequate resources are available to meet the needs of victims through emergency financial assistance and victim compensation programs.

4. **Commit to a statewide recidivism-reduction goal.**

Set ambitious statewide recidivism-reduction goals. Convene agency leadership from corrections, health, education, social service, and economic and workforce development to develop a recidivism-reduction plan and commit to how each agency can support the state in meeting these goals.

5. **Safety and justice deserve better data.**

Collect, analyze, and report data as aggressively as the issue demands. Get your state's Criminal Justice Data Snapshot to begin identifying and understanding key trends across decision-making points in your system.

Take Action

The CSG Justice Center is available to help state leaders diagnose and address their violent crime challenges without cost. Interested in an in-depth briefing? Further analysis? Or just have questions about your state's data?

Contact Madeleine Dardeau at mdardeau@csg.org to be connected to our team.

Data Sources: Data regarding crime and unsolved rates come from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program. Counts of reported violent crime between 2012 and 2022 are derived from the Summary Reporting System (SRS) and the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). Crime rates are calculated by dividing the number of estimated incidents by the total population for a given geography. Unsolved rates are the number of reported crimes not cleared by arrest or by exceptional means divided by the number of reported crimes.

1. Gallup News Service telephone interviews of random survey of adults living in all 50 U.S. states and DC, June 1–22, 2023.
2. "Tools for States to Address Crime," The Council of State Governments Justice Center, accessed August 29, 2023, https://projects.csgjusticecenter.org/tools-for-states-to-address-crime/50-state-crime-data/.
3. National Institute of Justice, "Five Things About Deterrence," June 5, 2016, accessed November 29, 2022, https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/five-things-about-deterrence.