

Subj: New Message Testing on Public Safety and Crime

Date: December 18, 2025

From November 4th to November 8th, we tested 25 unique messages on public safety and crime via web panel with 5,165 respondents to see how effective they were at moving voters to support a Democratic candidate. Of the 25 crime messages tested, 14 were above average at moving vote choice.

The most persuasive messages paired tough, “common-sense” language on locking up violent offenders with investments in housing, mental health care, education, and rehabilitation.

Another message mainly focused on community and violence intervention investments also performed well. We find voters rewarded a ‘**both-and**’ approach that signals seriousness about safety without abandoning root-cause solutions:

- **91st Percentile:** *“Democrats are proposing a two-step approach to keep us safer: first, lock up violent criminals who target innocent people while rehabilitating those in prison for poverty, addiction, or mental illness. Second, invest in housing, mental healthcare, and early childhood education to tackle the root causes of crime. When we treat housing, healthcare, and education as human rights instead of commodities, crime drops naturally.”*
- **86th Percentile:** *“Democrats are proposing a common-sense two-step plan to make our communities safer: first, we get tough on violent criminals, locking up those who threaten our families and neighborhoods, while also giving a second chance to those in prison for issues like poverty, addiction, or mental illness. Second, we invest in affordable housing, mental healthcare, and early childhood education to tackle the deep-seated problems that lead to crime.”*
- **83rd Percentile:** *“Democrats are proposing real solutions to bring down crime: community investment, violence intervention programs, and giving people opportunities out of cycles of crime. They will focus resources on what actually reduces crime - good jobs and strong schools - instead of pouring more money into a broken criminal justice system. We can't arrest our way out of social problems. It's time for smart solutions that make communities safer.”*

On the flip side, we found that ideological or abstract framing - both for progressive and conservative messaging - underperformed in this test. Conservative “law and order” rhetoric without proposed solutions performed the worst of the set, but messages that highlighted Donald Trump’s recent actions also performed at the bottom. These findings suggest that voters are looking to hear Democrats affirm that we want to keep violent criminals off the streets, but also fundamentally understand that we need to do more than that to keep our communities safe.

Percentile ranking is relative to other messages tested on a variety of topics, like inflation, abortion, the economy, and more. The higher the percentile, the more effective that talking point is at moving

a voter to support a Democrat. **We recommend utilizing above-average talking points, i.e. those above the 50th percentile.**

Message Content	Vote Choice Percentile
Democrats are proposing a two-step approach to keep us safer: first, lock up violent criminals who target innocent people while rehabilitating those in prison for poverty, addiction, or mental illness. Second, invest in housing, mental healthcare, and early childhood education to tackle the root causes of crime. When we treat housing, healthcare, and education as human rights instead of commodities, crime drops naturally.	91%
Democrats are proposing a common-sense two-step plan to make our communities safer: first, we get tough on violent criminals, locking up those who threaten our families and neighborhoods, while also giving a second chance to those in prison for issues like poverty, addiction, or mental illness. Second, we invest in affordable housing, mental healthcare, and early childhood education to tackle the deep-seated problems that lead to crime.	86%
Democrats are proposing real solutions to bring down crime: community investment, violence intervention programs, and giving people opportunities out of cycles of crime. They will focus resources on what actually reduces crime - good jobs and strong schools - instead of pouring more money into a broken criminal justice system. We can't arrest our way out of social problems. It's time for smart solutions that make communities safer.	83%
Democrats are proposing real solutions to make neighborhoods safe. Dangerous criminals belong behind bars – while also recognizing that we must address why people turn to crime. Democrats will invest in proven programs that tackle the roots of crime: accessible mental healthcare, economic opportunity in every community, and getting guns off our streets.	82%
Democrats are proposing a three-step approach to keep us safer: first, lock up violent criminals who target innocent people while rehabilitating those in prison for poverty, addiction, or mental illness. Second, invest in housing, mental healthcare, and early childhood education to tackle the root causes of crime. Third, pass smart gun safety legislation that requires basic background checks to purchase a gun.	82%
Everyone deserves to feel safe and it's time to take crime seriously. They are proposing holding violent criminals accountable and passing universal background checks to get guns out of the hands of dangerous people. This includes increasing prison sentences for illegal gun traffickers and domestic abusers.	76%
Democrats are proposing real solutions to bring down crime. Violent offenders need to be locked up – and a real plan for public safety acknowledges that people aren't born criminals, they become criminals. Democrats will also invest heavily in addressing the root causes of crime: mental health, poverty, and unlimited access to weapons.	75%
It's ridiculous that convicted violent criminals are free to roam the streets. Violent offenders need to be held accountable – and also people aren't born criminals, they	73%

become criminals. Democrats will invest heavily in addressing the root causes of crime: mental health, poverty, and unlimited access to weapons.	
It's common sense that our neighborhoods should be safe, and violent criminals belong behind bars, not back on our streets. Our justice system must focus on putting and keeping dangerous offenders in prison, while also giving those who only made minor mistakes a chance to get back on track.	71%
It's ridiculous that convicted violent criminals are free to roam the streets while innocent people are behind bars for minor marijuana offenses. Our justice system needs to prioritize locking up violent people, rehabilitating those who commit petty crimes like shoplifting, and investing in fixing the root causes of crime like poverty and lack of mental healthcare.	65%
Our justice system needs to work better for everyone. Right now, it's too easy on dangerous criminals and too hard on people who just need a second chance. Democrats will make sure police and prosecutors do their jobs fairly, keep violent offenders off the streets, and invest in programs that help people stay out of trouble for good.	62%
For all the talk on crime, data shows that violent crime is falling, not rising. We all want safer communities, and we need to pursue real solutions - not fearmongering - to bring down crime. Mass incarceration and mass deportation haven't made us safer. Real safety comes from addressing the root causes of crime: poverty, inadequate mental health care, and systemic inequality.	60%
Strong communities start with everyone having respect for law and order and for one another. Democrats will help rebuild trust by backing our local police, creating and supporting community watch programs, and actually holding criminals accountable. When families, neighbors, and officers work together, crime goes down and our neighborhoods become safe places to live, work, and raise kids.	58%
Democrats will finally put victims and families first. People are tired of feeling unsafe in their own homes and on their streets. They'll make sure violent criminals are locked up and stay there – no more excuses or soft-on-crime policies. Democrats will stand with law enforcement and protect law-abiding citizens, not the criminals and vagrants who break the law.	55%
When the same administration uses military-style forces in our cities and sends ICE agents to round up vulnerable families, it shows the wrong kind of leadership: fear and force. Democrats stand for real public safety – protecting Americans, holding criminals accountable, and reviving trust between law enforcement and our communities – not for using showy deployments or mass deportations to score political points.	51%
Democrats will restore safety and security to our neighborhoods. Enough is enough – families deserve to feel safe in their homes and on their streets. Democrats will work with law enforcement to get dangerous criminals off our streets and ensure they face real consequences for their actions. Instead we should focus on public safety and holding criminals accountable.	49%
Democrats support holding violent criminals accountable and increased funding for	49%

law enforcement to keep our communities safe. Democrats will increase funding for law enforcement so police have the resources and training they need to protect our neighborhoods. When we back our officers and keep dangerous criminals off the streets, families can feel safe in their communities again.	
Democrats will bring common sense and accountability back to the justice system. They believe in enforcing the law, backing our law enforcement, and making sure prosecutors actually do their jobs and keep criminals in prison and off our streets. They will restore order, hold criminals responsible, and make sure our communities are safe again.	48%
Democrats support deporting violent criminals who entered this country illegally, but masked federal agents rounding up and detaining law-abiding children, grandmothers, and even US military veterans is simply un-American. We need comprehensive immigration reform that secures the border and provides a pathway to citizenship for those who pay taxes, are law-abiding, and those who serve in the military.	48%
It is un-American for masked agents to rip away innocent grandmothers, parents or longtime U.S. residents without warning. We need to reform our immigration system to make it easier for people to have a pathway to citizenship, not mass deport people for the color of their skin. Democrats will back smart immigration enforcement that respects families and treats immigrants with dignity while safeguarding our neighborhoods and values.	48%
Democrats will back the blue and make sure police have all of the tools they need to keep us safe. They will stand with officers who risk their lives every day to protect our communities. We need to rebuild respect for law enforcement so families can count on safe streets and strong communities, and actually tackle crime head on.	45%
We have to stop the overreach of an unprecedented, unwarranted, un-American assault on our cities by Donald Trump. Crime is decreasing, not increasing, and we can't stand by while Donald Trump is waging a fascist takeover of the United States and deploying federal troops to "liberate" cities that don't want them. Democrats know we need to stand up in the face of fascist power grabs.	27%
Democrats oppose Donald Trump's unconstitutional deployment of the National Guard, which has been a dangerous and unprecedented infringement on our rights. Democratic mayors believe public safety is incredibly important and have taken action to reduce crime - but the way the federal government has deployed the National Guard just creates more chaos and real danger in our communities. We need real solutions, not stunts.	21%
Using our National Guard for local policing is the wrong approach and undermines local control. Our communities deserve fully funded, well-trained police departments who know our neighborhoods, not federalized troops. We need to empower our local law enforcement, ensure they have the resources to keep us safe, and focus on practical solutions that actually reduce crime, so families can feel secure again.	18%
Democrats will restore law and order to our streets. Enough is enough - we need to	13%

crack down hard on violent thugs and career criminals who are terrorizing our communities. They will make sure dangerous criminals are locked up and stay locked up, with no more soft-on-crime catch-and-release policies. We're done with excuses about "root causes" - criminals need to face consequences.

