

**To:** Interested Parties

**From:** Global Strategy Group

**Date:** October 2025

**Re:** Democratic leaders have a roadmap to put Republicans on defense on crime and safety

For the past three election cycles, Democratic policymakers have been on defense for their record on security and safety. Decades of branding struggles for Democrats leave voters believing Democrats are still “soft on crime,” while Republicans are “strong” — a major challenge for Democrats since [safety and security are top priorities](#).

The truth is Democratic policymakers have had a strong record on crime and safety while the Republican majority is taking action to make our communities less safe:

- [The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act \(BSCA\) was extremely popular](#), and it advanced policies that have helped keep crime under control in communities across the country.
- Republicans in Congress are making significant cuts to federal law enforcement and the Department of Justice and rolling back commonsense safety reforms.

Recent polling and focus groups conducted by Global Strategy Group on behalf of GIFFORDS and House Majority Forward find that House Democrats can start to chip away at their long-held disadvantage on crime by highlighting Democratic lawmaker accomplishments and exposing Republican lawmakers' corruption as they put the profits of their corporate gun lobby donors ahead of Americans' safety.

Democrats can put Republicans on defense by:

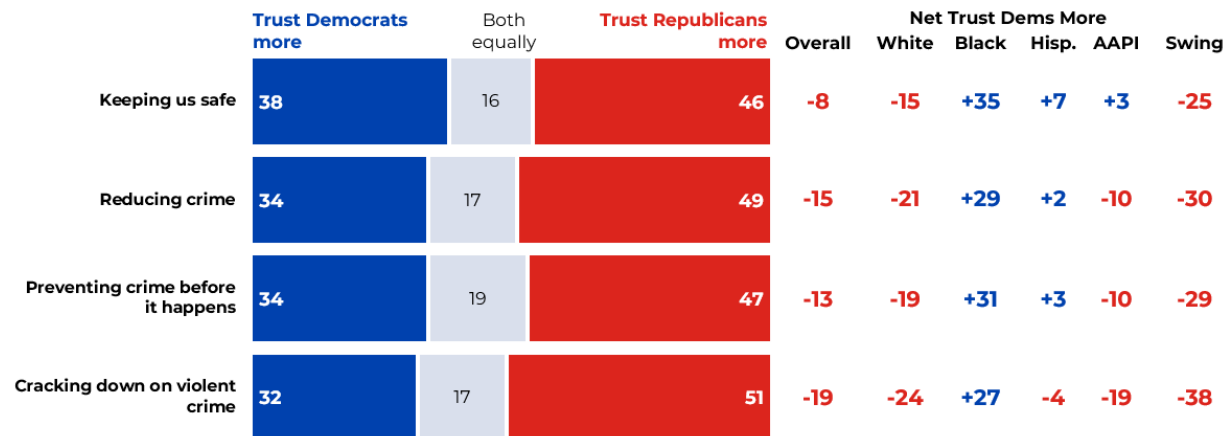
- **Communicating about what Democratic lawmakers have done to reduce crime that sounds less typically Democratic.** This includes:
  - Cracking down on criminal gun traffickers with up to 15 years in prison (BSCA)
  - Preventing domestic abusers from buying guns
  - Keeping guns away from violent criminals by:
    - Strengthening background checks
    - Banning ghost guns
    - Making straw purchases illegal
- **Framing Republican actions around their corruption and the chaos they are causing.** Voters already believe Republican officials are corrupt and put their profits over people because they are beholden to wealthy gun industry CEOs who donate to their campaigns. Voters are also watching the chaos of a Republican majority, which hurts Americans with damaging cuts, unfold before their eyes.
- **Expose Republicans' cuts that put us at risk counter the notion they are strong on crime.** This means calling out:
  - Cuts to the ATF and FBI, weakening federal law enforcement
  - Measures that make it easier for criminals to access guns, making the cuts above more salient, including weakening background checks on gun sales and allowing the sale of certain triggers that enable guns to shoot faster than semi-automatic weapons

When we effectively communicate about crime and safety as outlined above, we can shift opinions.

## Improving House Democrats' brand on crime and safety is critical

**Democrats are at a trust disadvantage on crime and safety.** The vast majority of voters (89%) say it is important for their member of Congress to keep them safe, including 57% who say it is extremely important for them to do so. Only 38% of voters trust Democrats more than Republicans to keep them safe, including only 59% of Black voters and 46% of Hispanic/Latino voters. This trend holds true on reducing crime, preventing crime before it happens, and cracking down on violent crime as well. House Democrats' brand on crime and safety is weak, and it will be key to build trust.<sup>1</sup>

Please indicate whether you trust Democrats or Republicans more on each.



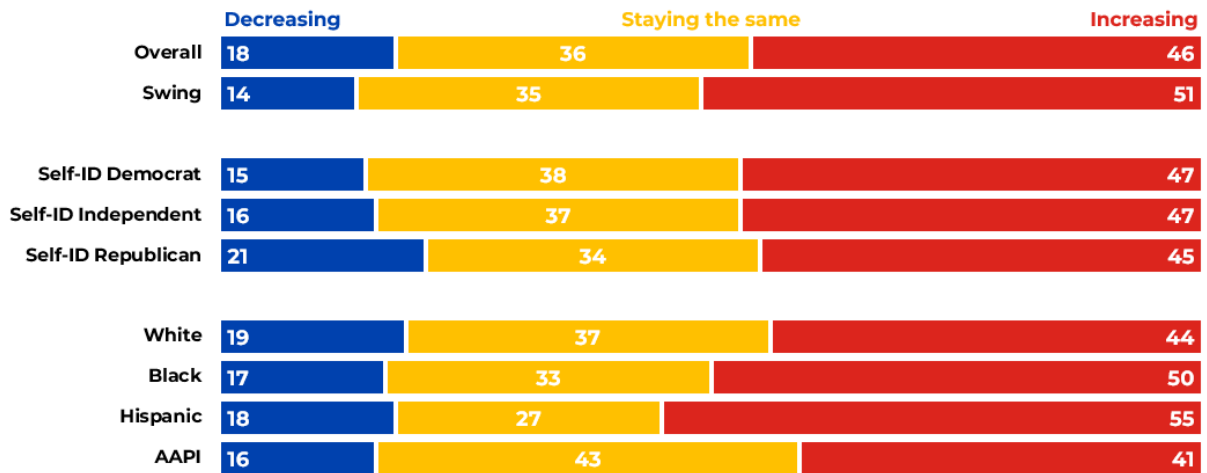
## Important lessons for House Democrats to keep in mind

**Connect with voters' concerns.** Regardless of what crime statistics say about recent trends, voters feel like crime is a real problem. The majority of swing voters, Black voters, and a majority of Hispanic/Latino voters say crime is increasing. Democrats should not overlook the genuine concerns voters have about crime simply because crime is down on paper, since voters don't care about statistics when they are worried about leaving their homes.

- "I don't go to concerts in big arenas anymore since there's been targeting of mass places."  
– White Swing woman
- "Road rage is a big one. I recently saw a gentleman pull out a handgun on somebody else."  
– Hispanic man
- "The younger generation lately, have been doing a lot of violent acts and doing a lot of pranks, getting killed over stupid stuff." – Black man

<sup>1</sup> Swing voters (24% of electorate) don't consistently vote for one party and identify with that party, or are independent

Is crime in the United States...



**Talk about House Democrats' public safety vision and proof points that demonstrate what they have done.** Democrats have to make up for lost time. While rebuilding the Democratic brand on crime is a much larger feat, we can capitalize on this moment to win by taking down the congressional Republican brand and strength on the issue. However, criticizing Republicans alone is not sufficient: We also need to lay out a proactive agenda and communicate about what Democrats in power have done so far on this issue.

**Highlight the policies House Democrats advanced that are less typically associated with Democrats.** The policies that challenge voters' perceptions of Democratic lawmakers on crime include:

- Cracking down on criminal gun traffickers with up to 15 years in prison (77% feel safer; 61% does not sound like a Democrat)
- Preventing domestic abusers from buying guns (79% feel safer; 54% does not sound like a Democrat)
- Keeping guns away from violent criminals by:
  - Strengthening background checks (75% feel safer; 47% does not sound like a Democrat)
  - Banning ghost guns (75% feel safer; 52% does not sound like a Democrat)
  - Making straw purchases illegal (76% feel safer; 55% does not sound like a Democrat)

**Explain why House Republicans are turning their backs on public safety: corruption.** Following decades of successful positioning from Republicans, many voters are inclined toward skepticism or outright dismissal of our criticisms of their dangerous policies. Some actions are so egregious that voters find them, quite literally, hard to believe — that is, at first. Reminding voters of who Republican lawmakers serve — the wealthy gun industry CEOs who donate to their campaigns — gives voters a credible motive for why Republicans would be making decisions and advancing policies that are so blatantly bad for the safety of the American people. When relevant, it can also be helpful to link to reckless Trump administration cuts, as many already believe DOGE-inspired cuts went too far.

- **Cuts that make voters feel less safe, and are credible considering other cuts voters are hearing Republicans pursue:**
  - Cutting funding for the FBI (78% less safe)
  - Cutting funding for the ATF (75% less safe)
- **Ways Republicans have made it easier for criminals to access guns, making the cuts more salient, and connecting to Republican corruption:**
  - Weakening background checks on gun sales (80% less safe)
  - Legalizing machine guns by allowing the sale of certain triggers, which enable guns to shoot faster than semi-automatic weapons (76% less safe)
- *“I was surprised about gutting the DEA and defunding the FBI when Trump ran as ‘I’m all about law enforcement’ and is now taking away the ATF, DEA, and FBI.”* – Black man
- *“We don’t want bad guys having guns. That’s what most people would agree on. Bad guys shouldn’t have guns, and people who break the law should not get off easily. I’m not sure what lobbyist this is benefiting, but, for example, giving guns back to convicted domestic abusers.”* – White woman, swing voter
- *“Why do citizens need machine guns? Why do people on the terrorist watch list need guns?”* – Hispanic man

## The case for communicating about House Democrats’ crime and safety vision and approach

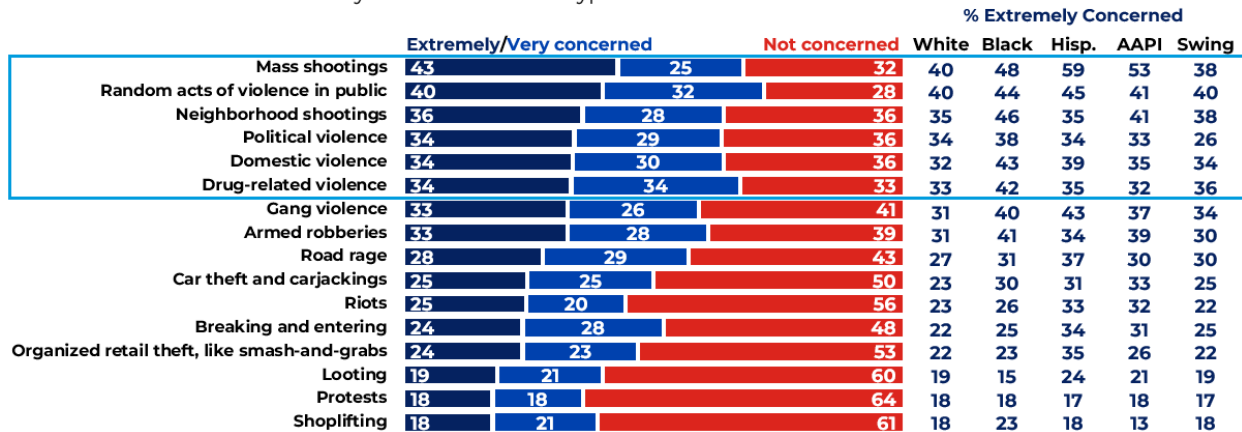
**Highlighting what Democrats have done on crime helps evaporate the Republican brand advantage.** Drawing this contrast between Democrats and Republicans chips away at the Republican brand advantage on the issue across key metrics. Voters become less trusting of how they handle the issue. Building long-term change on this issue starts with taking a strong approach to communicating on the issue now.

### Traits Movement

	Overall			Swing			NET Trust Democrats									Hispanic			AAPI		
	Initial	Final	Change	Initial	Final	Change	White			Black			Hispanic			AAPI			Initial	Final	Change
Preventing crime before it happens	-13	+6	+19	-29	+6	+35	-19	-1	+18	+31	+44	+13	+3	+24	+21	-10	+15	+25			
Cracking down on violent crime	-19	-1	+18	-38	-1	+37	-24	-7	+17	+27	+42	+15	-4	+19	+23	-19	+2	+21			
Reducing crime	-15	+2	+17	-30	+6	+36	-21	-3	+18	+29	+43	+14	+2	+22	+20	-10	+6	+16			
Keeping us safe	-8	+4	+12	-25	+7	+32	-15	-2	+13	+35	+39	+4	+7	+24	+17	+3	+14	+11			

**Gun crime is a major concern for voters.** Violent crime involving guns continues to cause fear and anxiety in many battleground voters, and these kinds of crime are among the crime voters are most concerned about. This is an opportunity for House Democrats: With House Republicans mostly silent and afraid to talk about the issue, Democrats have space to communicate and share what they have done to reduce gun crime.

Please indicate how concerned you are about each type of crime.



**In fact, voters blame lax laws for the violent crime they're most concerned about.** Violent crime involving guns is preventable, and there are solutions. While many voters see larger societal factors like a general increase in anger and division (32% top factor), drug addiction (31% top factor), and poor parenting (28% top factor) as factors contributing to crime, they are more likely to blame easy access to guns (38% top factor), prosecutors letting criminals off the hook (37% top factor), and illegal gun trafficking (34% top factor). Over two thirds of voters say that laws that make it easier to access guns make them less safe, and another 73% of voters say that closing loopholes in gun laws is more important than making guns more accessible for self-defense when it comes to reducing crime. It's clear Democrats are on the right side of the crime issue, and now voters need to hear about it.

#### ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Global Strategy Group conducted 6 focus groups of registered voters in House battleground districts (as rated by Cook Political Report) between June 9 and June 12, 2025. The groups included: 2 groups with white swing voters (1 with men/1 with women), 1 group with Black non-opposition voters, 1 group with younger Black men (ages 18-34), and 1 group with non-opposition Hispanic/Latino voters, and 1 group with younger Hispanic/Latino men (ages 18-34). Global Strategy Group then conducted a survey of 1,200 likely voters across 2026 House battleground districts (as rated by Cook Political Report) between June 26 and July 14, 2025. The survey has a confidence interval of +/- 2.8. The confidence interval on sub-samples is greater. All interviews were conducted via web-based panel. Oversamples were conducted to reach 328 Black voters, 320 Hispanic/Latino voters, and 149 AAP voters. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic, political, and demographic divisions of the population of likely battleground voters are properly represented.