



Leading the Way 2025 Tour

MILWAUKEE REPORT

HIGHLIGHTING WHAT WORKS

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LETTER FROM CITIES UNITED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: **AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Dear Friends, Partners and Milwaukee Leadership and Community,

Milwaukee has long been recognized as a jurisdiction that shaped the national conversation on comprehensive public safety. From the launch of the Blueprint for Peace in 2017 to the deep partnerships among the community, City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, law enforcement and institutional leaders, Milwaukee has often served as a **model for what a public health approach to safety** can look like. Cities United chose Milwaukee as a stop on the Leading the Way Tour not only for its history of leadership, but also because even model cities must continue to adapt — and the lessons here can guide communities across the country.

The Leading the Way Tour is designed to listen deeply to those closest to the work — credible messengers, young leaders, survivors, grassroots organizations, county agencies, and city staff — and to reflect back both what is working and what more is needed. In Milwaukee, we heard powerful examples of frontline workers de-escalating conflict before it became violence, of young people sharing urgent priorities for their safety and well-being, and of partners in government and health systems making public safety a core part of their strategies. These stories illustrate Milwaukee's current strengths while also making clear what participants want to see in the future: **stronger accountability, consistent investment, and authentic roles for young leaders and survivors.**

The report that follows captures these insights. It highlights Milwaukee's progress, surfaces the challenges that participants candidly shared, and lifts up their vision for what comes next. Recommendations are paired with immediate and long-term opportunities, but they are grounded in **what participants themselves expressed** during our time together.

Milwaukee's story matters nationally, but even more importantly, it matters to the families and neighborhoods across this jurisdiction. Young leaders were clear about what they need to feel safe and thrive, and adults across sectors affirmed the importance of moving from conversation to action. Cities United is committed to walking alongside Milwaukee as these steps are taken, so that together we can advance our shared vision of building **safe, healthy, and hopeful communities** where young Black men and boys — and all families — can thrive.

In partnership,

Anthony D. Smith

Executive Director, Cities United



INTRODUCTION

Milwaukee stands at a crossroads. The city's Blueprint for Peace sets forward a clear vision: **"Milwaukee is a safe and resilient city where the lives of all residents are valued, promoted and protected."** First released in 2017, the Blueprint introduced a public health approach to violence prevention and has remained a touchstone for the city's ecosystem. Although aspects of the plan have been evaluated, the true story of its success has yet to be told.

As one community partner noted during a strategy session, "There have been conversations around a Blueprint 2.0... the goal is really moving forward to... take stock of how the Blueprint has been implemented... and what new strategies may need to be added." Stakeholders emphasized that Milwaukee's next phase should both celebrate progress under the original Blueprint and move toward a renewed plan — a **"Blueprint 2.0"** — that reflects current realities and community priorities.

Over the past two years (2022-2024), that vision has translated into measurable change. **Milwaukee saw a 34 percent drop in shootings overall and a 51 percent decline in young people identified as suspects.** Behind those numbers are countless moments of intervention — outreach staff stepping in to cool conflicts, credible messengers preventing retaliation, and community partners providing support before situations spiraled. These stories underscored what many residents already know: progress comes when people closest to the work carry both the trust of neighborhoods and the backing of stable partners like the County and the Medical College of Wisconsin.

Yet, as many participants reminded us, progress alone does not guarantee transformation. Frontline workers described **exhaustion and instability in their ranks.** Some juggle multiple part-time jobs to sustain themselves in roles that require constant presence and emotional resilience. Grassroots partners raised questions about data integrity and whether city systems are building public confidence or eroding it. And young leaders pressed for more than symbolic involvement, calling instead for safe spaces, jobs, and real roles in shaping solutions. "Don't let this be the last time," one young leader urged. Their words captured both the **urgency and the opportunity of this moment.**

The **Leading the Way Tour** came to Milwaukee to listen, to learn, and to support the path forward.

THE TOUR SEEKS TO:

- Highlight effective, comprehensive public safety practices and models
- Foster cross-sector collaboration
- Amplify community-led solutions
- Enhance local capacity
- Evaluate progress and impact through the Cities United Roadmap Framework
- Assess and foster young leader engagement

Throughout the stop, participants emphasized that Milwaukee has the pieces of a strong ecosystem: **a trusted table in Violence Reduction Public Health and Safety Team (VRPHAST)**, stabilizing leadership from the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services and the Medical College of Wisconsin, and a cadre of frontline organizations such as **414Life and Running Rebels** that carry credibility with young people and families. These strengths were consistently named as reasons for optimism. What remains fragile is **trust in city leadership, sustainable funding for frontline capacity**, and consistent structures for survivor and youth engagement.

Milwaukee currently sits in Phase 4 of the Cities United Roadmap (develop continuous improvement and evaluation). This placement reflects a city with a framework in place and promising reductions in violence, but still working to establish the durable governance, accountability, and resourcing needed to sustain progress. The discussions during the Tour underscored that moving deeper into Phase 4/5 will require stronger **alignment between city and county government**, celebrating and building on the Blueprint's achievements, and **investing in the people closest to the work**.

This report captures that moment — celebrating what Milwaukee has achieved, naming the challenges that remain, and offering recommendations for both immediate actions and long-term strategies that can make the city's vision for safety **durable for generations to come**.

UNDERSTANDING THE LOCAL LANDSCAPE

Milwaukee's public safety landscape reflects both the depth of its history and the complexity of its present moment. The jurisdiction has built a **nationally recognized foundation through the Blueprint for Peace** and decades of organizing that framed safety as a public health issue. During the Leading the Way Tour, participants described an ecosystem with **credible messengers, institutional anchors, and cross-sector tables** that demonstrate real capacity. At the same time, they pointed to **fragile trust in city-led coordination**, uneven political will, and **sustainability concerns** that continue to shape the day-to-day reality of prevention. This section captures those dual truths — highlighting the grounded strengths that have fueled recent progress, naming the persistent challenges that threaten momentum, and lifting up the areas of emerging opportunity that participants see as central to Milwaukee's next phase.

Grounded Strengths: Trusted People, Trusted Places, Trusted Plans

Milwaukee's public safety ecosystem is anchored by assets that participants described as **resilient, credible, and deeply rooted in community**. Frontline organizations like **414Life and Running Rebels** were repeatedly named as critical touchpoints for young people and families. Their credibility in neighborhoods allows them to intervene before conflicts spiral, offering immediate support where traditional systems cannot.

MOMENT THAT MATTERS

During the community dinner, a young leader reflected on his experience with 414Life mentors who helped him redirect after a violent incident in his neighborhood: ***“They didn’t just stop me from doing something in the moment — they showed me another path.”*** His story underscored the trust frontline staff hold and the way their work turns individual moments into long-term impact.

The jurisdiction also benefits from **stabilizing institutional anchors**. The Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services and the **Medical College of Wisconsin** were lifted across sessions as reliable partners who bring evaluation capacity, public health expertise, and a commitment to continuity. Their involvement has helped frame **violence prevention as both a health and equity priority**.

Collaboration has found a consistent home in the **Violence Reduction Public Health and Safety Team (VRPHAST)**, which participants described as one of the few tables where **information flows freely and accountability feels shared**. One CU team member noted during the debrief that VRPHAST stands out because it is “a space where the county, community, and institutions can sit together without the politics overshadowing the work.”

Finally, Milwaukee has a recognized framework in the **Blueprint for Peace**. Even without a recent public refresh, stakeholders continue to use it as a common language for planning and coordination. Its six goals — spanning from **stopping the shooting to advancing opportunity** — remain a north star for many partners, ensuring that new initiatives are still connected to the jurisdiction's broader vision.

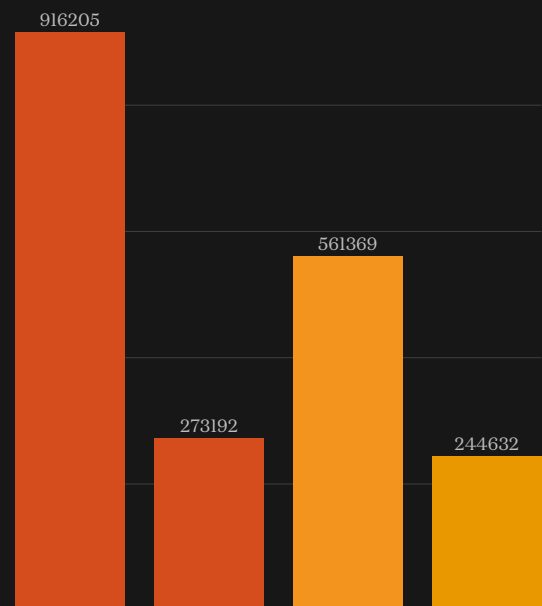
In addition to these core assets, participants in the Roadmap Bootcamp highlighted a range of other strengths that contribute to Milwaukee's capacity for violence prevention:

- **A network of committed credible messengers and outreach staff** who are known and trusted in their neighborhoods.
- **Hospital-based intervention efforts**, which connect directly with survivors of violence and their families.
- **Faith leaders and community advocates** who provide consistent presence and influence, even if not always formally integrated into planning tables.
- **Youth leadership programs** that have cultivated new voices, even if structures for consistent decision-making power are still emerging.
- **A commitment to collaboration across agencies** — education, workforce, housing, and health — with stakeholders naming interagency partnership as both a value and a practice.
- **Wraparound supports** already in motion — housing, behavioral health, and workforce programs — that can be scaled and better connected to prevention work.
- **Policy, advocacy, and coalition leadership** from community partners and elected champions who have advanced violence prevention as a public priority.
- **A tradition of resilience and organizing in Milwaukee's neighborhoods**, paired with emerging storytelling and school partnerships that continue to strengthen the ecosystem.

These strengths are reflected not only in stories but also in outcomes. Milwaukee has recorded **significant progress, including reductions in shootings and youth involvement in violence** reductions that stakeholders credited to the combined work of credible messengers, trusted institutions, and collaborative tables.

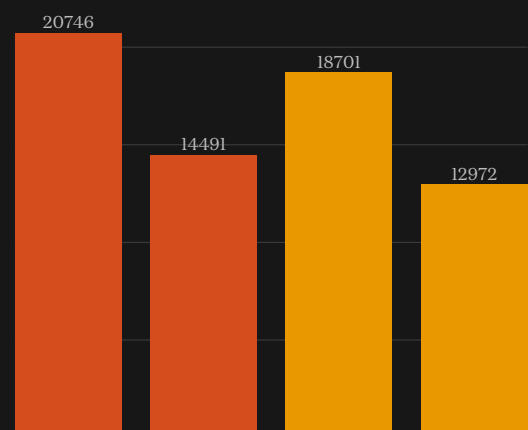
POPULATION

● County Population ● County Black Population
● City Population ● City Black Population



BLACK MEN/BOYS AGES 10-24

● County 10-17 Years Old Black Boys
● County 18-24 Years Old Black Men
● City 10-17 Years Old Black Boys
● City 18-24 Years Old Black Men





PERSISTENT CHALLENGES: TRUST, LEADERSHIP, AND SUSTAINABILITY.

Even as Milwaukee demonstrates clear strengths, participants were candid about challenges that make progress difficult to sustain. The most frequently raised concern was **fragile trust in jurisdiction-led coordination**, particularly within the Office of Community Wellness and Safety (OCWS). Partners questioned the **transparency and accuracy of data** being shared, noting that skepticism around numbers can erode confidence across the ecosystem.

Another recurring theme was **uneven political will**. Stakeholders pointed to disengagement at both the mayoral and aldermanic levels, including the *absence of key leaders during the Tour*. One reflection captured the sentiment plainly: ***“The work is moving, but leadership isn’t fully at the table.”*** This perception was echoed in the post-survey, where **nearly half of respondents identified inconsistent leadership engagement** as a barrier to sustaining progress.

Frontline sustainability was also lifted as a critical weakness. Outreach workers and credible messengers often juggle multiple part-time roles across organizations, raising concerns about safety, wellness, and **burnout**. One staff member noted that the current setup *“asks us to risk everything without giving us stability,”* underscoring that passion alone cannot sustain a workforce over the long term. Survey results reinforced this concern, with a **majority of respondents naming burnout and unstable funding** as top ecosystem challenges.

Participants also emphasized **gaps in youth and survivor engagement**. While young leaders and survivors were present during the Tour and brought critical insights, many felt there are **no consistent structures for them to influence decision-making or implementation**. Without intentional design, these voices risk being invited to events but excluded from shaping strategy.

Finally, Milwaukee continues to wrestle with **inconsistent data systems and communication**. The absence of unified standards or shared reporting practices has contributed to **duplication and competing narratives**. This not only frustrates partners but also weakens the jurisdiction's ability to show **collective progress to funders and residents**.

MOMENT THAT MATTERS

During one session, an outreach worker shared that his team had mediated three potential shootings in a single week, but the success never appeared in any official data. ***“It’s like we don’t exist in the numbers,”*** he said — a reminder of how frontline contributions remain invisible even when they save lives.

In addition to these top concerns, participants also highlighted other weaknesses during the Roadmap Bootcamp activities, including:

- **Gaps in reentry support** for individuals returning from incarceration.
- **Limited engagement of schools** in prevention work.
- **Inconsistent coordination with the broader medical community** outside of MCW.
- **Funding instability**, with short-term grants and competitive environments undermining sustainability.
- **Community fatigue and trauma**, as repeated exposure to violence continues to erode resilience in neighborhoods.

EMERGING MOMENTUM: BUILDING ON CREDIBILITY TO SHAPE THE FUTURE

Despite the challenges, participants consistently pointed to **areas of momentum** that position Milwaukee to take the next step in its public safety journey. A major theme was the **opportunity to refresh and expand the Blueprint for Peace**. Stakeholders emphasized that the Blueprint remains a valuable framework but must be updated to reflect current realities, celebrate progress, and rebuild public trust. As one participant noted, **“We can’t keep pointing back to 2017 — people need to see that we’ve grown.”**

Momentum is also grounded in **evaluation and data**. Local assessments and system data have documented measurable improvements, including a **51 percent decrease in youth shooting suspects (ages 0–17) from 2023 to 2024** and a **25 percent decline in youth victimization** during the same period. The proportion of youth involved in group violence or retaliation also **dropped from 42 percent to 29 percent**. These outcomes are widely credited to the combined work of credible messengers, outreach teams, and supportive programming that interrupts cycles of harm.

Number of people “at highest risk” of
being directly impacted by gun violence
in the city:

193

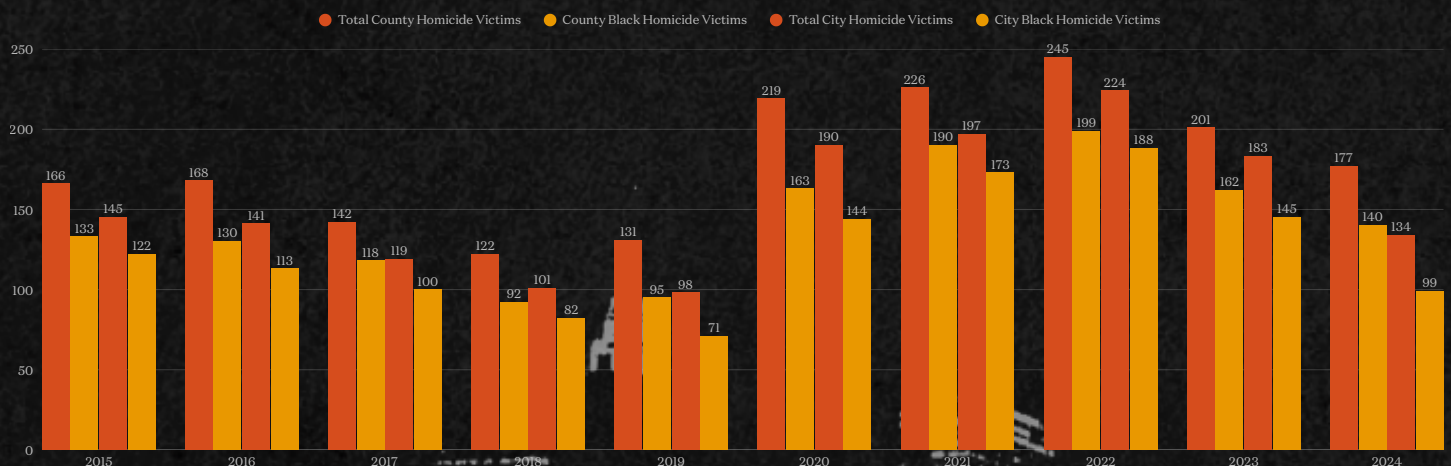
(CVIEcosystem.com)

Number of people “at highest risk” of
being directly impacted by gun violence
in the county:

916

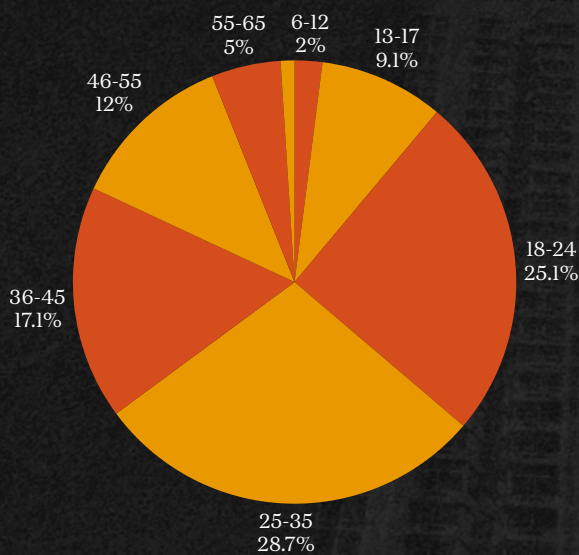
(0.1% of population)

MILWAUKEE HOMICIDES

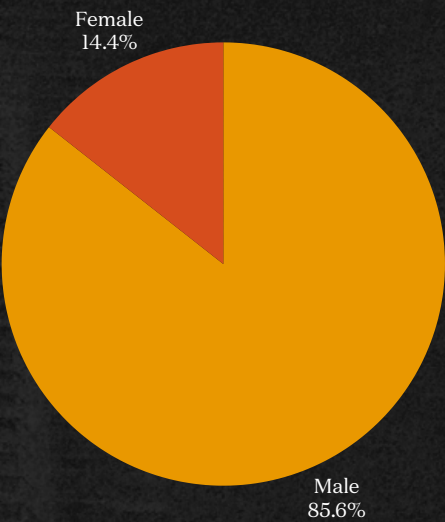


	Number of violent crimes	Violent crime rate per 100,000 residents	Murder Rate per 100,000 residents
City	8,202	1461	31
County	N/A	N/A	N/A
State	17,057	289	5
Country	1,253,813	374	6

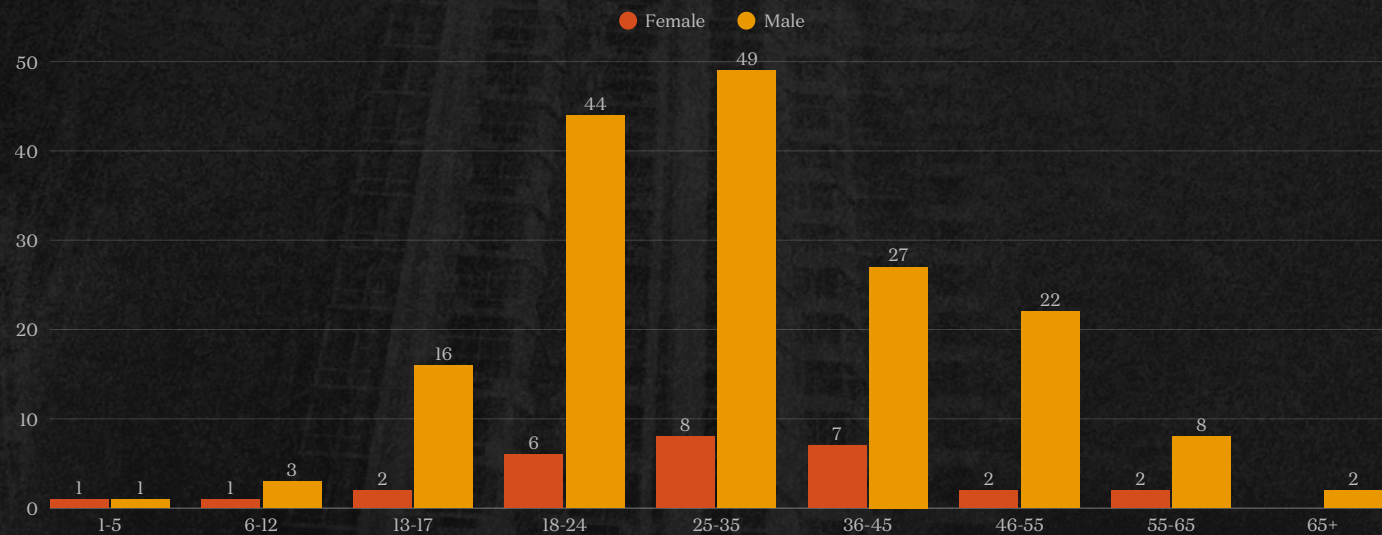
2023 COUNTY HOMICIDES BY AGE



2023 COUNTY HOMICIDES BY GENDER



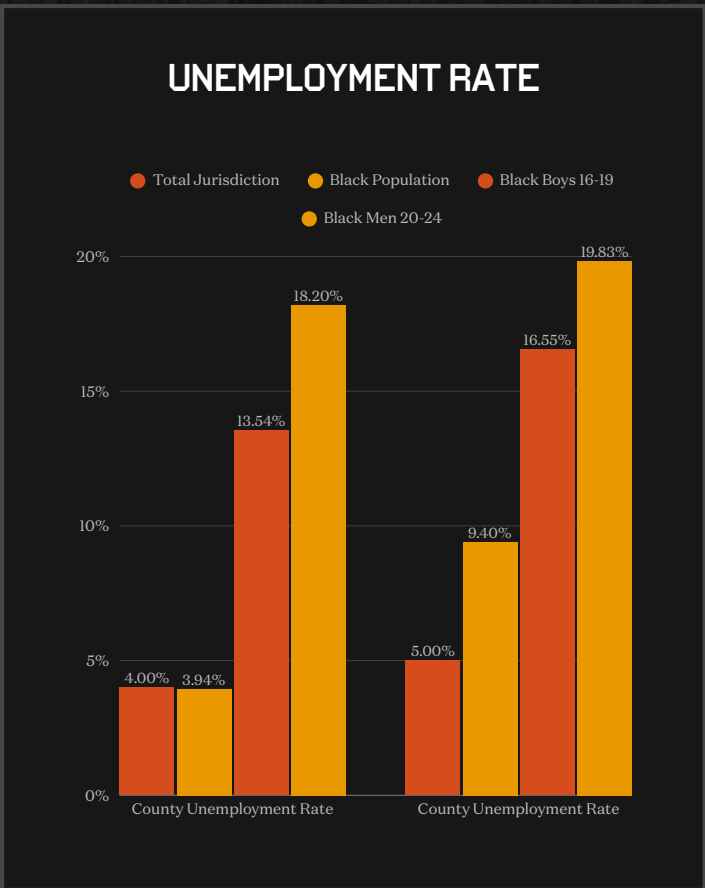
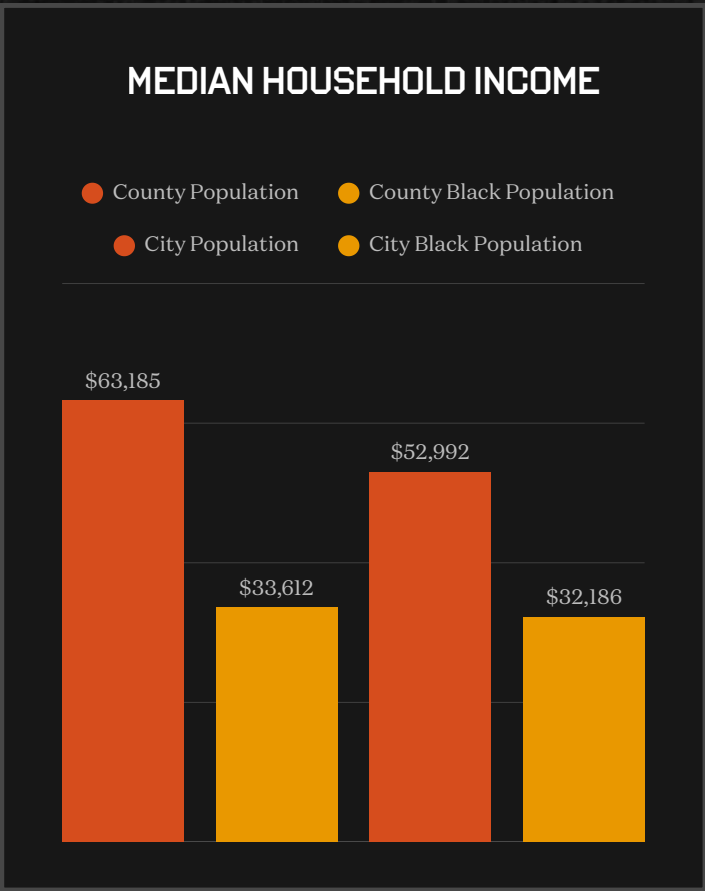
2023 COUNTY HOMICIDES BY AGE & GENDER



Leadership changes also signal a **new chapter**. In August 2025, the jurisdiction appointed a **new director for the Office of Violence Prevention (now Public Safety)**. While participants voiced concerns about uneven political will, this transition was seen by some as an **opening for fresh energy, new relationships, and a chance to reestablish public trust** in jurisdiction-led coordination.

Young leaders also created **momentum of their own** during the Tour. They named **jobs, housing, and safe spaces** as urgent needs, and called for **opportunities to hold leadership accountable**. Several emphasized that these priorities must be paired with a **seat at the table**, so youth perspectives remain central to the solutions. As one young participant put it, “We’ve told you what we need — jobs, housing, and safe spaces. The next step is to act on it.” Their clarity signaled a shift from **symbolic inclusion to concrete demands for power**.

Another sign of progress is **growing collaboration across sectors**. Partners named the **Violence Reduction Public Health and Safety Team (VRPHAST)** as a model table for cross-agency work, while also pointing to new connections being built between public safety, workforce development, housing, and behavioral health providers. This emerging integration reflects recognition that reducing violence requires more than intervention — it also requires **long-term investments** in opportunity and stability. The **2025–2027 DHHS Strategic Plan** reinforced this alignment by naming community safety as one of its four pillars, with explicit commitments to upstream solutions and sustained collective impact.



Participants also emphasized that **storytelling itself is part of the momentum**. During the Roadmap Bootcamp session, partners mapped where Milwaukee has made the most progress since 2017, turning individual successes into a **shared narrative**. The visual filled quickly with examples of **hospital-based interventions, new partnerships, and lives redirected through credible messenger work**. Seeing these stories captured on paper shifted the energy in the room, reminding participants that **Milwaukee's momentum is not abstract but grounded in tangible wins** that can fuel the next phase of planning.

MOMENT THAT MATTERS

At the community dinner, a young participant shared that too many of his peers had lost hope without real opportunities. He urged leaders to do more than listen: ***“If you invest in us now, we’ll change the whole story of this city.”*** His words captured both the urgency and the optimism of youth leadership as a driver of Milwaukee’s next phase.

In addition to these areas, the Roadmap Bootcamp visuals lifted other opportunities Milwaukee can build upon:

- **Philanthropy and business engagement**, with several partners naming readiness for broader investment.
- **Strengthening hospital partnerships** to expand survivor supports.
- **Restorative practices and survivor-centered approaches** that deepen healing.
- **Intentional youth employment and housing pathways** to address drivers of violence.
- **Expanding partnerships with schools and youth-serving agencies** to reach young people earlier and strengthen prevention efforts.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS: STRENGTHENING STRUCTURES FOR SHARED ACTION

As Milwaukee prepares for the next phase of their journey (a Blueprint 2.0 or otherwise), participants lifted a set of **strategic considerations** that will determine whether the jurisdiction can move from fragile progress to durable systems change.

Governance and accountability emerged as the most pressing need. Participants stressed the importance of **clarifying roles across city, county, and community partners**, as well as **establishing standards for data sharing and public reporting**. Without consistent structures, progress risks being uneven or invisible. As one frontline partner explained, *“If we don’t know who is responsible for what, it’s too easy for things to fall through the cracks.”*

Resourcing and sustainability were also front of mind. Outreach staff and community-based organizations cannot be expected to sustain lifesaving work on short-term contracts or without attention to their wellness and safety. As one credible messenger put it, *“I love this work, but love doesn’t pay the rent.”* Post-tour survey data reinforced this concern, with a **majority of LTW participants citing burnout and unstable funding** as top ecosystem challenges. Long-term **investment from government, philanthropy, and business** was described as essential to stabilize the workforce and expand programs with demonstrated impact.

Young adult and survivor power was another core priority. While young leaders and survivors were active in the Tour, participants urged that Milwaukee move from ad hoc engagement to formal structures that embed these voices in decision-making. As one young leader shared, *“We’re not just the future — we’re the present. Decisions about safety should include us now.”*

Participants also emphasized the need to harness Milwaukee’s **tradition of grassroots organizing**. Community organizers have historically driven change in the jurisdiction, and partners noted that an updated strategy must not only update strategies but also **strengthen ownership by the neighborhoods most impacted**. This includes **elevating community-led storytelling** as a tool to celebrate progress, counter skepticism, and rebuild trust.

The **2025–2027 DHHS Strategic Plan** provides another opportunity for alignment. Beyond naming community safety as a pillar, the plan commits to **upstream investments in housing, workforce, and behavioral health**. Participants stressed that leveraging these existing commitments will be critical to advancing a **public safety strategy that addresses root causes as well as immediate needs**.

MOMENT THAT MATTERS

*During a strategy session, a community leader voiced frustration at the **lack of coordination between agencies**. He described a recent incident where multiple departments responded separately to the same neighborhood conflict, each with different information and priorities. “We need to **stop working in silos** — when something fails, the community doesn’t care which department it was. They just see that we failed,” he said. The comment underscored the **urgency of building shared accountability across systems** so that residents experience one coordinated response, not fragmented efforts.*

In addition to these priorities, participants highlighted other considerations Milwaukee must address:

- **Expanding restorative justice practices** in schools and neighborhoods to prevent escalation.
- **Deepening survivor supports**, including trauma care and long-term healing resources.
- **Strengthening coordination between housing, workforce, and public safety systems** to address root causes.
- **Engaging philanthropy and the private sector** in sustained investment, not just pilot funding.
- **Creating stronger pathways for reentry supports**, ensuring that individuals returning from incarceration are connected to opportunity and stability.

MILWAUKEE: SAFETY & EQUITY SNAPSHOT

Informed by tour discussions, CU reflections, the Milwaukee Pre-Stop Report, and local data, the following snapshot highlights **key indicators of Milwaukee's public safety ecosystem** (see Appendix for sources). These figures underscore both **reductions in shootings and youth involvement**, and the **persistent inequities** that continue to shape outcomes.

- **Population:** ~563,000 (city); ~918,000 (county)
- **Black Population:** ~39% (city)
- **Overall Shootings:** 34% decline (2021–2023)
- **Youth Shooting Suspects (0–17):** 51% decrease (2023–2024)
- **Youth Victimization (0–17):** 25% decrease (2023–2024)
- **Group Violence/Retaliation (Youth):** 42% → 29% (2023–2024)
- **Gun-Related Homicides:** 214 in 2022 → 193 in 2023 (~10% decrease); rate remains high (~24 per 100k)
- **Strategic Plans:** Blueprint for Peace (2017; Blueprint 2.0 in development); Milwaukee County DHHS 2025–2027 Strategic Plan (community safety pillar; upstream investments); CVI partner strategies
- **Governance & Coordination:** VRPHAST convenes county, health, and community partners; Milwaukee Office of Community Wellness and Safety (OCWS) provides city coordination but faces trust challenges; DHHS and MCW provide stability
- **Funding Commitment:** City ARPA allocations, county DHHS contracts, and national philanthropy together represent tens of millions in recent investment.
- **Education:** MPS graduation rate ~66% (2023); disparities remain (Black students ~61% vs white ~83%)
- **Socioeconomic Context:** Citywide poverty ~23%; Black household poverty ~33%; unemployment ~6.1% overall but >15% in some North Side ZIPs; Milwaukee remains one of the most segregated cities nationally
- **Community Assets:** 414Life; Running Rebels; Urban Underground; Community Advocates; Sojourner Family Peace Center; Milwaukee Christian Center; Employ Milwaukee; Safe & Sound; Common Ground; Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council; Milwaukee Coalition Against Hate Violence; faith networks; survivor advocates; youth councils and grassroots organizers; MCW (evaluation); Milwaukee County DHHS (public health anchor).

Milwaukee's **reductions in youth shootings and overall gun violence since 2021** demonstrate the impact of **coordinated intervention, credible messengers, and county-led stabilization**. Yet inequities in education, housing, and workforce access continue to undermine safety, particularly in Black and Brown neighborhoods. Sustaining momentum will require durable funding, stronger governance, and consistent inclusion of young leaders, survivors, and grassroots providers.

RECOMMENDATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITIES UNITED SUPPORT

Milwaukee's public safety ecosystem is **in motion**. Partners pointed to **real progress** — **reductions in shootings, credible messengers interrupting cycles of harm, VRPHAST providing trusted coordination, and county leadership embedding community safety as a public health priority**. Yet beneath this momentum lies fragility. Concerns about data integrity, uneven political will, sustainability for outreach workers, and gaps in survivor and youth leadership were repeated across sessions.

The following recommendations balance **immediate actions** that can be advanced in the **next 3–6 months** with longer-term strategies to stabilize and strengthen the ecosystem. Together, they provide a **roadmap for sustaining momentum while addressing structural challenges** that continue to limit progress.

IMMEDIATE ACTION STEPS (3–6 MONTH PRIORITIES)

1. Launch a pilot for data integrity and transparency

Develop clear practices for collecting and sharing disaggregated data, including short public reports on shootings, interventions, and progress.

CU Opportunity: Provide technical assistance, share best practices from other CU cities, and offer toolkits/resources on data management.

2. Develop a short-term narrative strategy

Highlight frontline wins, youth demands, and survivor voices in a coordinated campaign that builds trust in a new strategy or plan.

CU Opportunity: Provide TA on messaging and storytelling infrastructure, and train youth/survivor storytellers.

3. Stabilize the frontline CVI workforce

Provide short-term wellness support, safety resources, and recognition initiatives for credible messengers and outreach staff, while building toward long-term sustainability.

CU Opportunity: Share workforce stabilization models, offer technical guidance on wellness supports, and help identify funding strategies that sustain frontline roles.

4. Formalize compensated roles for young leaders and survivors

Establish short-term advisory and action teams with decision-making power, ensuring these voices shape new/revised priorities.

CU Opportunity: Facilitate peer learning from CU jurisdictions where young leaders and survivors are integrated into governance. Provide TA on structuring compensated engagement and highlight Milwaukee's youth and survivor roles across CU's national network.

5. Advance the development and early implementation of a revised plan/strategy

Finalize refreshed goals, assign shared ownership across city, county, and community partners, and launch initial accountability structures.

CU Opportunity: Serve as a neutral convener and share peer practices on embedding accountability mechanisms.

LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Improve data integrity, transparency, and accountability systems

Participants raised repeated concerns about accuracy, disaggregation, and transparency of public safety data. Partners noted that inconsistent reporting erodes trust and fails to capture frontline contributions. Building stronger systems that make progress visible will be essential to sustaining momentum.

Opportunities for Support:

- Provide technical assistance and best practices on long-term data collection and public reporting.
- Share CU-developed toolkits and peer resources on sustainable data systems.
- Elevate Milwaukee's data reforms as a model for other CU jurisdictions.

2. Empower community ownership and narrative power

Milwaukee's tradition of grassroots organizing is a strength, but participants stressed the need for more neutral spaces to mobilize and for storytelling that celebrates progress. Narrative infrastructure is critical to sustaining public confidence and centering community voices.

Opportunities for Support:

- Provide training and TA for grassroots storytelling and narrative infrastructure.
- Facilitate peer learning on community organizing as a public safety strategy.
- Support funding strategies that sustain narrative and organizing capacity.

3. Strengthen city–county collaboration by clarifying roles through a revised coordinated plan

Stakeholders pointed to challenges in leadership alignment between city and county, with unclear responsibilities creating duplication and frustration. Revisiting the Blueprint for Peace provides an opportunity to clarify roles, reduce silos, and establish durable collaboration that survives leadership transitions.

Opportunities for Support:

- Serve as a neutral convener to facilitate joint city–county planning sessions.
- Share peer examples from CU cities with strong city–county coordination structures.
- Provide guidance on developing formal agreements that sustain collaboration across administrations.
- Position Milwaukee's alignment outcomes as a case study for other jurisdictions navigating city–county dynamics.

LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Build sustainability for the frontline CVI workforce

Outreach workers and credible messengers shared stories of juggling multiple jobs, safety risks, and burnout. Participants stressed that passion alone cannot sustain a workforce — Milwaukee will need multi-year investments, safety supports, and wellness resources to stabilize and grow the CVI infrastructure.

Opportunities for Support:

- Provide or connect Milwaukee team to experts in the field of wellness and safety support for CVI frontline workers.
- Share models of sustainable CVI funding streams from CU's national network.
- Elevate Milwaukee's CVI workforce development efforts as a peer-learning resource nationally.

5. Expand survivor and family supports

While survivors and families were present during the Tour, participants emphasized that engagement remains inconsistent and supports are often fragmented. Calls for more trauma-informed services, family-centered programming, and attention to unsolved homicides highlighted the need for deeper investment in healing.

Opportunities for Support:

- Support efforts to strengthen survivor engagement and leverage existing structures, such as the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission.
- Highlight Milwaukee's survivor-led efforts as a national model through CU's network.
- Support funding strategies that sustain trauma-informed survivor services and family-centered care

Conclusion:

A Call for Aligned Action

Milwaukee's public safety ecosystem is showing both **real progress and persistent fragility**. The jurisdiction has achieved measurable reductions in shootings and youth involvement, with credible messengers, county leadership, and cross-sector collaboration driving results. At the same time, challenges in **leadership alignment, data transparency, sustainability for frontline workers, and gaps in survivor and youth engagement** must be addressed if progress is to last.

The recommendations in this report reflect what stakeholders shared throughout the Leading the Way Tour stop: Milwaukee's future public safety strategy will depend on **stabilizing what works** while creating new structures of accountability and inclusion. Quick wins can come from **improving data integrity, strengthening narrative, and supporting frontline workers**, while longer-term strategies must focus on leadership alignment, durable systems, and community ownership.

To achieve this, Milwaukee must act with **urgency** — advancing a **new or revised collaborative strategy** while ensuring survivors and young leaders have real power in shaping solutions. Progress will require shared responsibility, with government, community, philanthropy, and residents working together to align leadership, **build trust, and sustain investments**.

For Cities United, this work is rooted in our shared vision: **building safe, healthy, and hopeful communities** where all Black men and boys — and all families — can thrive. Milwaukee's progress demonstrates what is possible when **community, county, and institutional partners work together**. Milwaukee has the opportunity to deepen its impact while continuing to serve as a **national leader in redefining public safety for the next generation**.

APPENDIX

Referenced Quotes & Attribution

- “They didn’t just stop me from doing something in the moment — they showed me another path.” (Young Leader, Community Dinner transcript)
- “The work is moving, but leadership isn’t fully at the table.” (Stakeholder reflection, End-of-Stop survey)
- “It’s like we don’t exist in the numbers.” (Outreach worker, Roadmap Bootcamp session)
- “We don’t just want to be at the table — we want to help set the agenda.” (Youth participant, Community Dinner transcript)
- “This asks us to risk everything without giving us stability.” (Frontline staff, End-of-Stop survey)
- “We need more healing spaces between the city and the county if this is going to work.” (Community partner, Community Partnership Strategy Meeting)
- “If we can stop retaliation, that saves lives — but no one writes it down.” (CVI worker, Community Safety Engagement Meeting)

Key Data Points Referenced in Report

- **34% reduction in shootings overall between 2021–2023** (local partner data shared during Tour).
- **51% reduction in young people identified as suspects during the same period** (local partner data shared during Tour).
- Nearly half of **LTW Post-Survey respondents identified inconsistent leadership** engagement as a barrier to sustaining progress (LTWT Post-Survey Milwaukee Responses).
- A majority of respondents highlighted **burnout and unstable funding** as top ecosystem challenges (Milwaukee LTW End-of-Stop Reflections Form).
- Youth and survivors present during the Tour lifted **jobs, housing, and safe spaces** as urgent priorities (Community Dinner and session transcripts).
- **U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2022** — Population, demographics, socioeconomic indicators.
- **Milwaukee Blueprint for Peace (2017)** — Strategic framework and goals.
- **Milwaukee DHHS 2025–2027 Strategic Plan** — Strategic priorities and alignment with public health and equity.
- **Local data shared during LTW Tour sessions (2021–2023)** — Shooting reductions, youth suspect data.
- **LTWT Post-Survey Milwaukee Responses** — Perceptions of leadership engagement, ecosystem challenges.
- **Milwaukee Ecosystem Partners Incoming Responses** — Context on partnerships and organizational capacity.

APPENDIX

Sources of CU Team & LTW Jurisdiction Member Feedback

- CU Team Leading the Way Tour Debrief Session (Milwaukee) — transcript
- Milwaukee LTW Daily Reflections Form (Responses)
- Milwaukee LTW End-of-Stop Reflections Form (Responses)
- LTWT Post-Survey Milwaukee Responses
- Cities United Community Dinner: Milwaukee Young Leaders Feedback — transcript
- Community Engagement Experience transcript
- Community Partnership Strategy Meeting transcript
- Community Safety Engagement Meeting transcript
- Community Safety Initiative transcript
- Community Violence Prevention Meeting 1 transcript
- Community Violence Prevention Meeting (brief + full) transcripts
- Milwaukee Community Tour transcript
- Milwaukee Leadership Debrief transcript
- Milwaukee Violence Prevention Debrief transcript
- Public Safety Evaluation Meeting transcript
- Public Safety Strategy Meetings (1–4) transcripts

Supplemental Materials Reviewed

- *Milwaukee Blueprint for Peace (2017)*
- *Milwaukee DHHS 2025–2027 Strategic Plan*
- *CVI One-Pager (v.9)*
- *LTW Pre-Stop Report: Milwaukee, WI*
- *Milwaukee LTW Working Agenda Template*
- *Milwaukee Ecosystem Partners Responses (incoming responses)*
- *Implementation/strategy visuals from Roadmap Bootcamp SWOT activity*



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