

SAFETY

WE CAN FEEL

Results from the landmark 2020 Safety We Can Feel survey on what it takes to build a safe community in the greater Philadelphia area

FEBRUARY 2021



INVESTING IN
SAFETY
WE CAN FEEL

OVERVIEW

KEY FINDINGS

WHAT DO OUR COMMUNITIES NEED TO BE SAFE?

We released the Investing in Safety We Can Feel survey, in October 2020, to help answer that question. 1345 Philadelphia residents responded to our city-wide survey, and their responses **tell us very clearly that Philadelphians know that directly investing in communities is how we make them strong, healthy, and safe—not investing in policing. Here are some key findings:**

THE POLICE ARE NOT KEEPING US SAFE

Respondents who think the police are bad at preventing violence in their neighborhood.

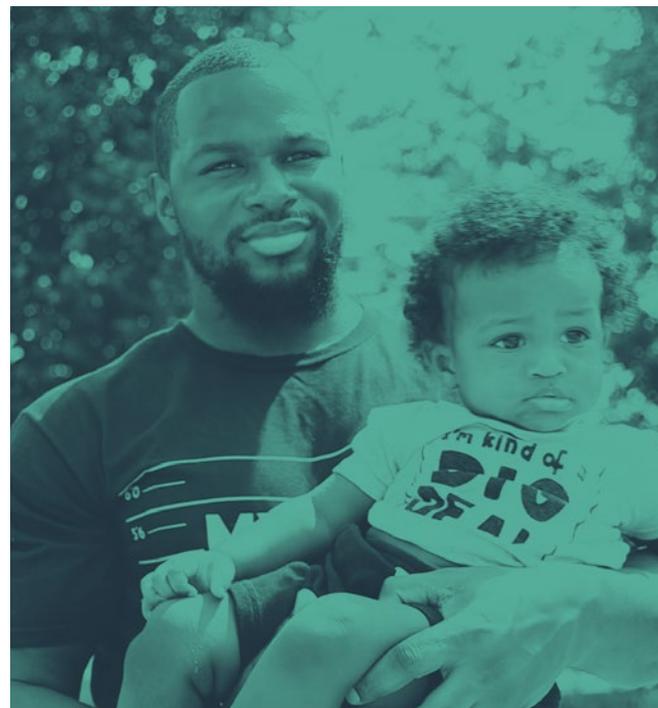
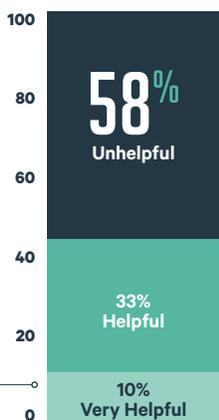
n=1298



Only 10 percent thought they were 'very helpful'.

Of those that had to call the police for help this year, the majority (58%) said the police were unhelpful.

n=614



PEOPLE OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORT REALLOCATING POLICE FUNDING TOWARDS COMMUNITY SERVICES

Respondents wanted to see more funding going towards centers for mental health and addiction recovery (58%), housing and stability assistance (57%), and education and youth programming (53%) as approaches to addressing violence.

THE CITY IS NOT PRIORITIZING KEY SERVICES FOR FUNDING

Affordable housing, mental health services, and public schools & community colleges were the essential services respondents said the city prioritized the LEAST for funding. Community violence prevention, drug treatment, and youth recreational programming were also frequent choices.



Support the decision to reallocate funds from policing to these programs and services
n=1345



THE DISTRIBUTION OF THIS SURVEY WAS INTENTIONALLY A COMMUNITY EFFORT.

We know internet access is a barrier to hearing from some of the most crucial perspectives. That's why community organizers distributed the survey in churches and at community meetings, in families' and respondents' native languages, and some even made phone calls and helped people take it over the phone. It was a challenge with our limited resources, and we didn't reach every community we would like to in the future. However, we know this survey provides crucial insight into how Philadelphians think about the role of police in keeping us safe, and what investments communities want instead.

With Philadelphia reflecting on one of its most violent years in recent history, it's painfully clear that our investments are misdirected. Every year, Philadelphia has given more and more funding to policing and less and less funding to resources that are proven to address the root causes of violence. It hasn't made our communities any safer. Now, we have over 1000 Philadelphians saying very clearly what the city must do to chart a different path forward. And the time to do it is now.



THE CRISIS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

CONTEXT

BUILT ON RACISM AND FRAUGHT WITH A HISTORY OF BRUTALITY AND SCANDAL,

the Philadelphia Police Department has never promoted real safety for our communities. The Police were formally founded in the mid-19th century in response to migration and poverty, and to protect capital interests from “pauperism.” Without any evidence that policing actually keeps our communities safe, the city has spent the past century and a half pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into policing and has repeatedly divested from the basic resources our communities need.

The only thing our communities can count on from public dollars is a fully outfitted force of violence and punishment. To truly become safe, our communities need and deserve so much more.

PHILADELPHIA POLICE DEPARTMENT’S LEGACY OF RACISM & VIOLENCE

The Philadelphia Police Department has a clear legacy of corruption, resistance to oversight and reform, and racial oppression. From the indictment of 52 officers and the mayor in 1937,¹ to 80 instances of illegal interrogation methods in 1977,² to 72 officers being benched for bigoted social media posts in 2019,³ corruption has permeated the department from its very origins. Scholar Chenjerai Kumanyika even stated that there “hasn’t been a 10-year period where [the Philadelphia Police Department] has not had some major scandal since it was founded.”⁴

Philadelphia is now on its third attempt to create a police

IN A CITY WITHOUT THE RESOURCES WE DESERVE, POLICING HAS BECOME A SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT FOR A WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES THAT POLICE ARE NOT SUITED TO ADDRESS: POVERTY, POOR QUALITY EDUCATION, HOUSELESSNESS, MENTAL HEALTH, AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE, TO NAME A FEW.

oversight body, as the previous two were gutted by the police or never had real power. And newly proposed reforms such as bias training, body-worn cameras, and universal tasers have been attempted in the past to little effect: they have not curtailed police power, nor have they prevented police from killing Philadelphians.

The Philadelphia police also have a history of fomenting racial violence. The police joined with white mobs and attacked Black protesters during numerous racial upheavals from 1838 through 2020.⁵ Police commissioner and mayor Frank Rizzo infamously used extreme tactics against Black protestors, and the MOVE bombing is one of the most egregious uses of police force against civilians in US history. Black Philadelphians are still disproportionately arrested and killed by police, and their killers are rarely brought to justice.

Despite these deep-rooted and enduring problems with the police, they have consistently received budget increases, even as social services like libraries and schools have seen major cuts and closures. The police budget has increased almost \$100 million over the past decade⁶ and now houses almost 7500

01. <https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/police-department-philadelphia/>

02. <https://www.inquirer.com/news/inq/philadelphia-police-brutality-history-frank-rizzo-20200710.html>

03. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/20/us/philly-cops-plain-view-project.html>

04. <https://momentum.medium.com/philadelphia-is-fed-up-463553a98dbc>

05. <https://www.inquirer.com/news/inq/philadelphia-police-brutality-history-frank-rizzo-20200710.html>

06. Note: This number is based on the Operating Budget, General Fund Obligations from FY 2010-FY2021- Years FY20-21 are based on estimated obligations and the approved budget. Adjusted for inflation.

employees. By contrast, the Office of Violence Prevention, tasked with keeping harm from happening in the first place, has only 13 employees for FY2021.⁷

Regardless of the ever-increasing police force and the size of its budget, it has not prevented violence in our city or made us safer. Between FY2006⁸ and FY2020,⁹ the homicide count only changed from 387 to 368,¹⁰ but the department's budget increased by almost \$150 million. The clearance rate for homicides during the pandemic has only been 45%, and the number of dismissed cases has increased from 18% in 2015 to 47% in 2020.¹¹

PUBLIC DIVESTMENT HAS STARVED BLACK & BROWN COMMUNITIES FOR DECADES IN PHILADELPHIA

Focusing solely on policing and its relationship to violence fails to take into account the key role that divestment from essential resources and services has played in making our communities less safe and whole. Neighborhoods made up primarily of Black and brown, working class residents have faced both public cuts from the city and private divestment for generations.

Philly is still feeling the long-term effects of historic redlining, and communities of color now face the double-barreled issues of gentrification¹² and discriminatory loan practices.¹³ This means lower rates of Black and brown home ownership and intergenerational wealth accrual, as well as higher rates of eviction for renters.¹⁴ Black residents have been pushed

into areas deemed “unworthy of investment” by the federal government,¹⁵ and even now struggle to get city funding for basic amenities like parks.¹⁶

Public services have suffered from massive divestment as well. Libraries, a key community service that offers a safe space and free resources to all, have been on the front lines of cuts both during the pandemic and in prior years.¹⁷ Houselessness is an enduring but not insurmountable problem in Philly: Liz Hersh of the Office of Supportive Housing stated, “With an additional \$31 million a year, we could end chronic street homelessness.”¹⁸ That \$31 million is a mere 4% of the police budget. Meanwhile, organizers had to fight hard to keep the police from getting a \$19 million increase for FY21, most of which they received in the fall budget transfer.¹⁹

Philly spends thousands less per student on schooling than surrounding counties;²⁰ for decades, Philly students have not gotten the level of investment in their education they deserve. Our students have suffered through years of massive school closures and toxic levels of lead and asbestos, and many are now struggling to get affordable internet access during online learning. Other essential services that invest directly in our communities, such as adult education and workforce development, have all suffered while the police budget almost never falters.

The city's precious resources have been drawn away from key services that our communities need and funneled towards an ineffective, corrupt, and often racist police department that doesn't keep us safe. It is past time to reimagine our budget to match our communities' priorities.

07. https://www.phila.gov/finance/pdfs/budgetdetail/budgetdetail_FY21/BOOK_II_ADOPTED_new.pdf

08. https://www.phila.gov/finance/pdfs/budget_FY06.pdf (p. 113)

09. <https://www.phila.gov/finance/pdfs/budgetdetail/Mayor's%20FY%202020%20Operating%20Budget%20Detail%20-%20Book%20II.pdf> (p. 160)

10. <https://controller.phila.gov/philadelphia-audits/data-release-police-budget-and-homicides/>

11. <https://why.org/articles/philly-police-homicide-clearance-rate-on-the-decline-as-murder-rates-rise>

12. <https://hiddencityphila.org/2018/06/a-brief-history-of-race-contested-space-in-west-philly/>

13. <https://why.org/articles/unequal-lending-keeps-redlining-alive-philadelphias-gentrifying-neighborhoods/>

14. https://www.reinvestment.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Evictions_in_Philadelphia_brief_Final.pdf

15. <https://controller.phila.gov/philadelphia-audits/mapping-the-legacy-of-structural-racism-in-philadelphia/>

16. <https://placesjournal.org/article/nicetown-inequality-in-philadelphia/>

17. https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/14qiYnjB_vAndXv0JocSR8ybVdQQf5t1nn1kgsEt657E/edit#slide=id.ga4b6f455d5_0_9

18. <https://www.phillymag.com/news/2020/02/08/philadelphia-homeless-opioid-epidemic/>

19. <https://billypenn.com/2020/11/12/philly-police-seek-extra-18-million-for-protest-coverage-and-raises/>

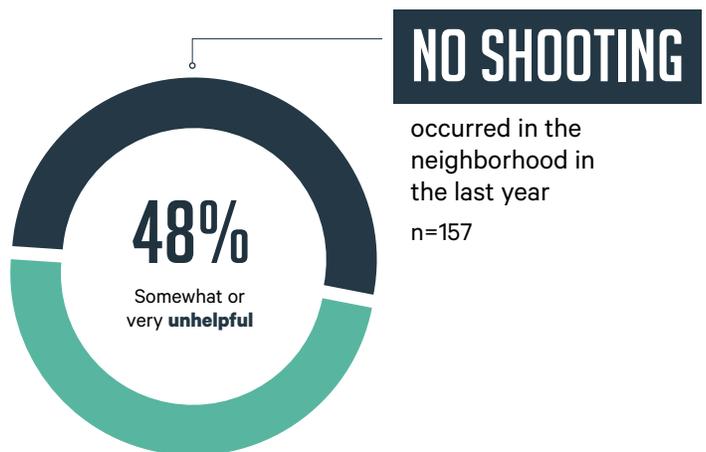
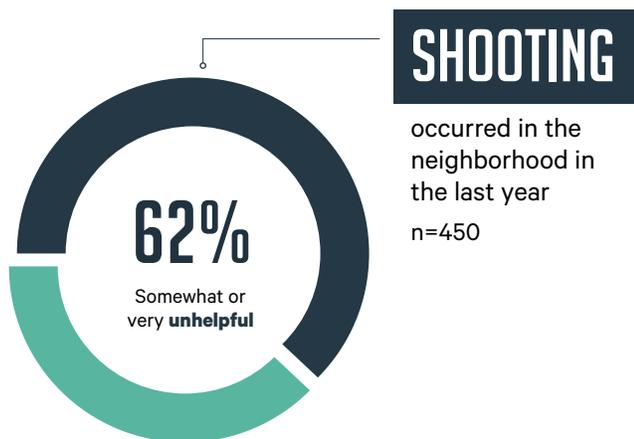
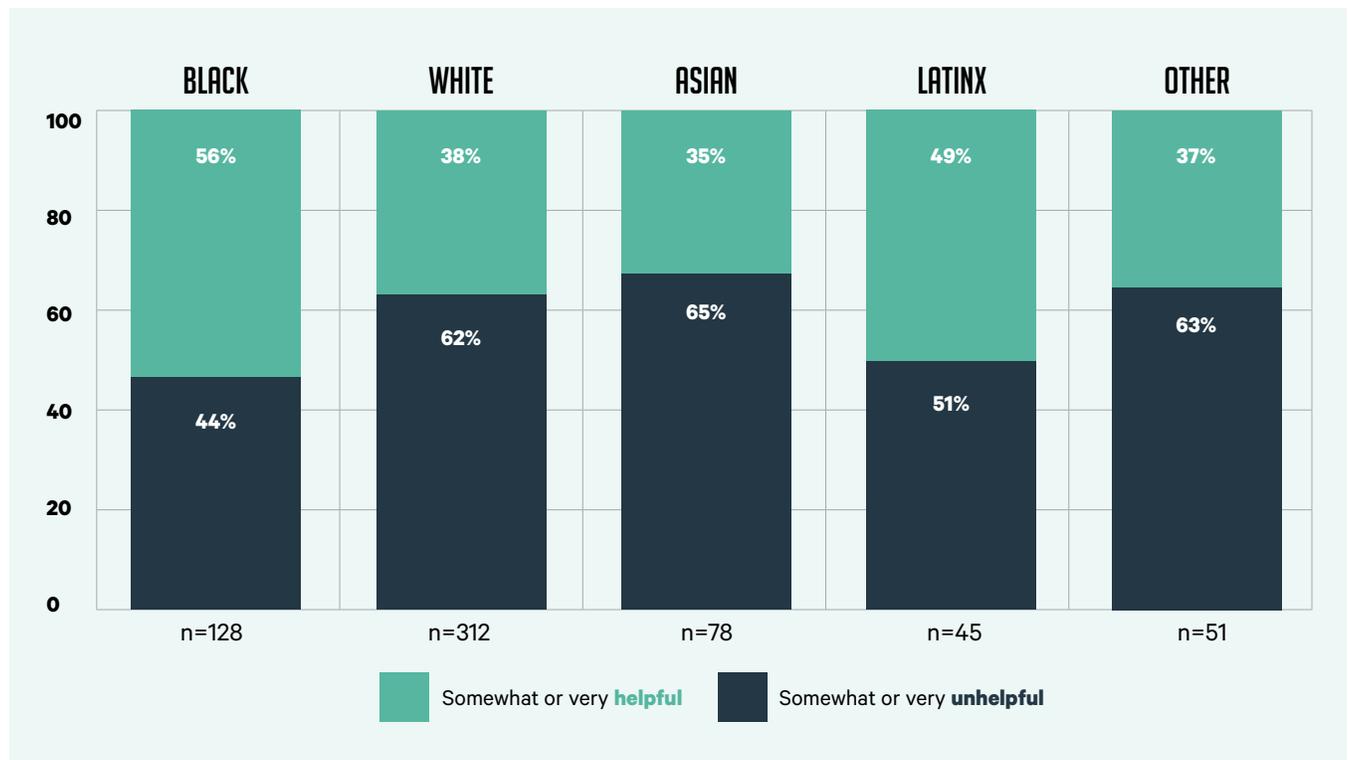
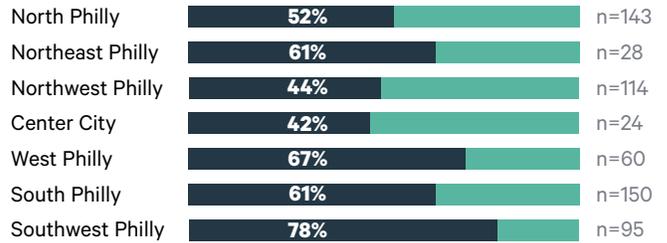
20. <https://phillys7thward.org/2019/04/public-schools-always-separate-unequal-continue-funded/>

HOW HELPFUL ARE THE POLICE, WHEN CALLED?

58%

The majority of respondents, said the police were very or somewhat **unhelpful** when they called for help

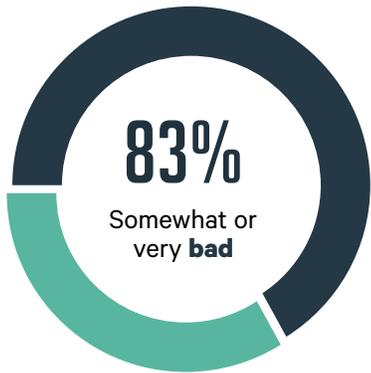
AMONG RESPONDENTS WHO SAID THEY'VE CALLED THE POLICE FOR HELP (N=614)



HOW GOOD ARE THE POLICE AT PREVENTING VIOLENCE?

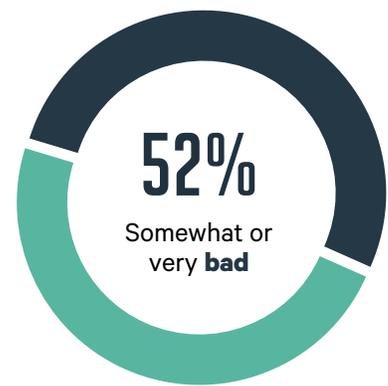
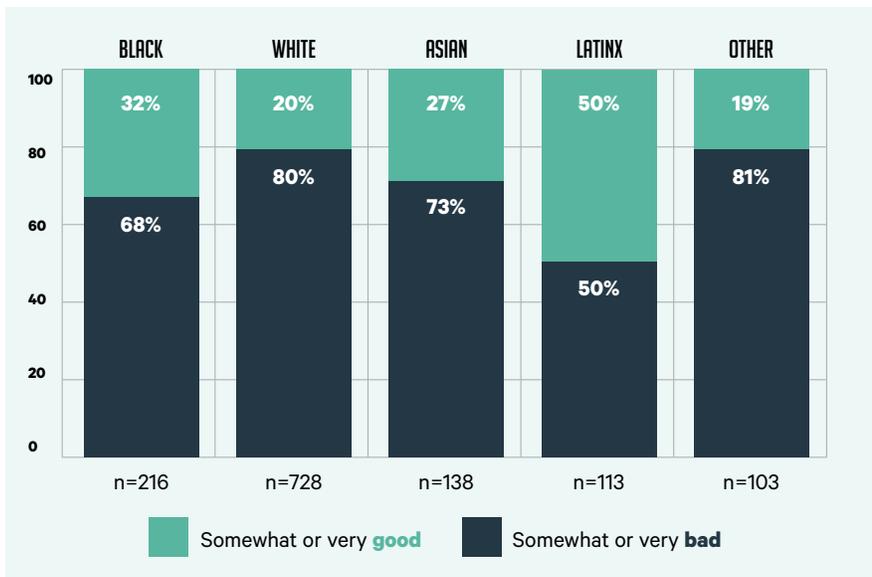
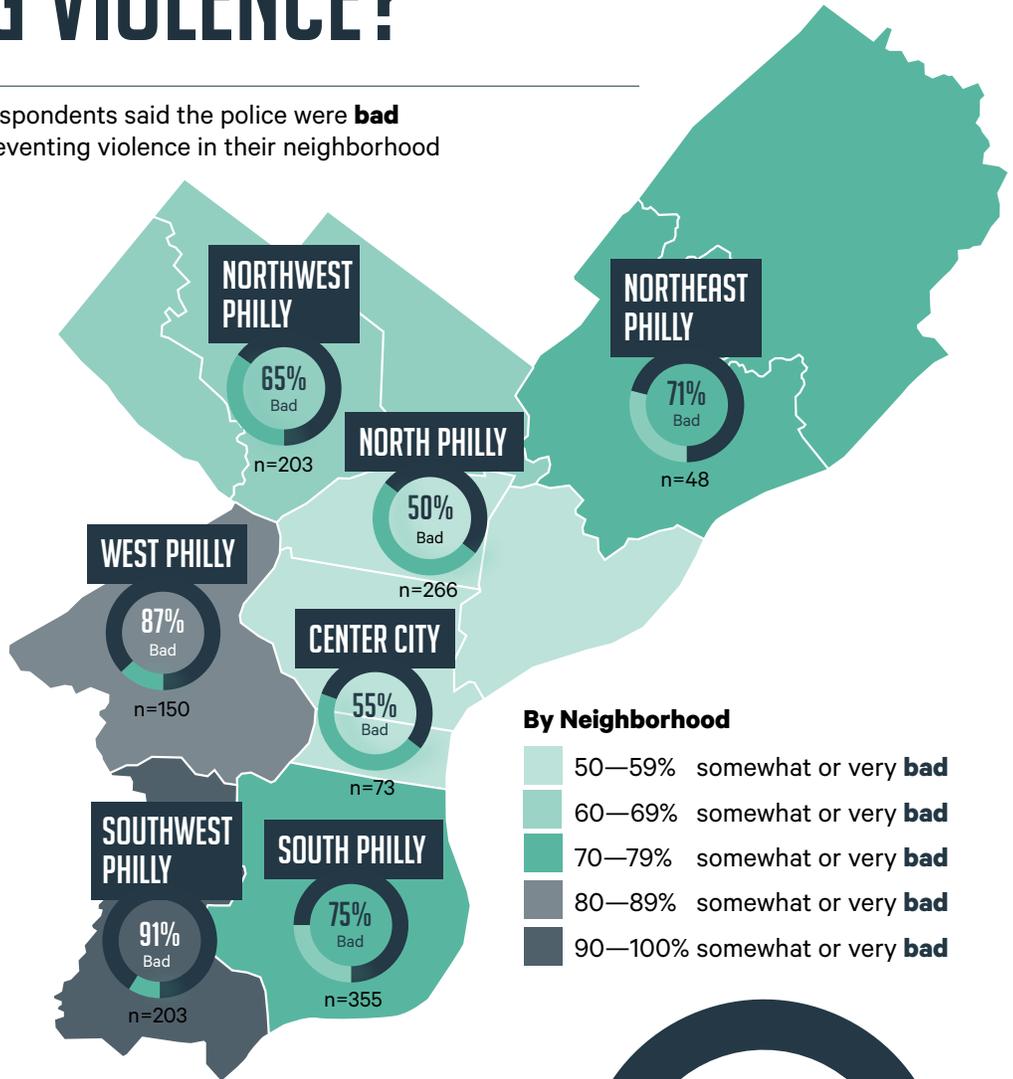
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The majority of respondents said the police were **bad** or **very bad** at preventing violence in their neighborhood



SHOOTING

occurred in the neighborhood in the last year
n=928

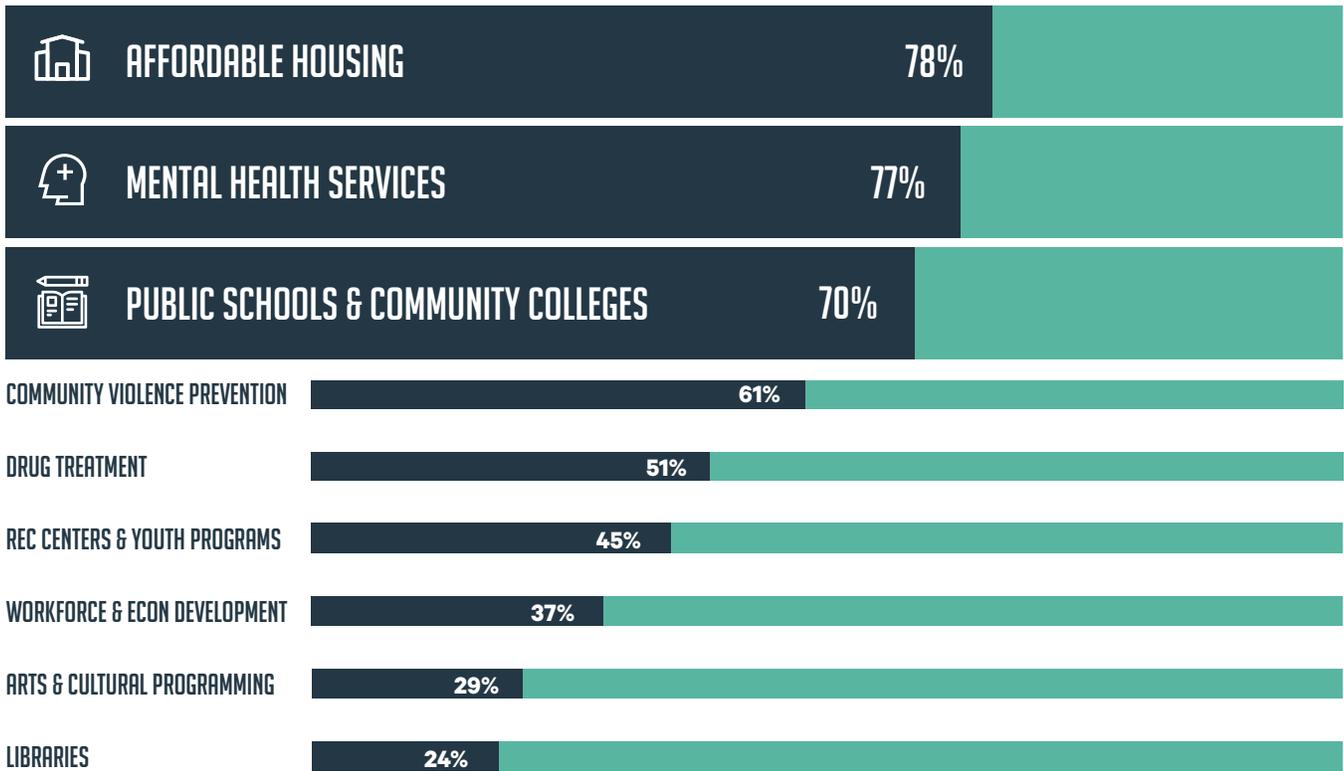


NO SHOOTING

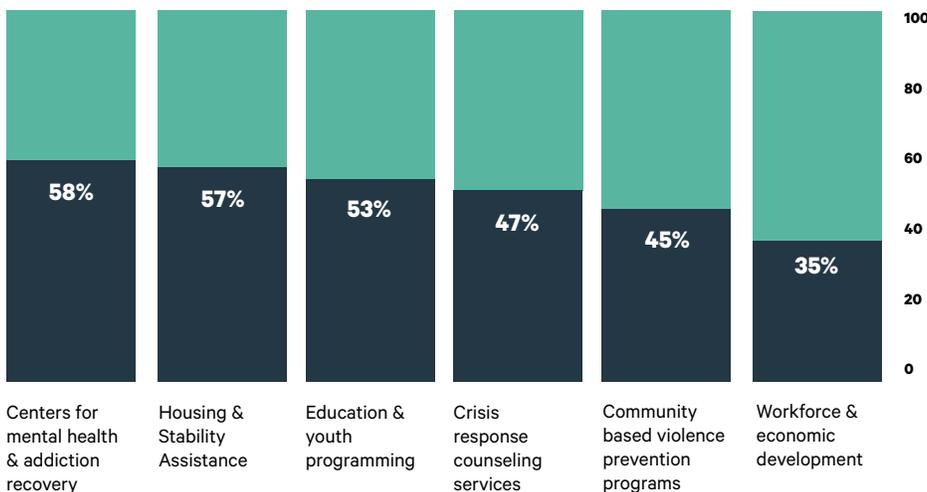
occurred in the neighborhood in the last year
n=359

ADDRESSING THE CRISIS OF DIVESTMENT FROM COMMUNITIES IN PHILADELPHIA

WHICH SERVICES HAS THE CITY HISTORICALLY PRIORITIZED THE LEAST?



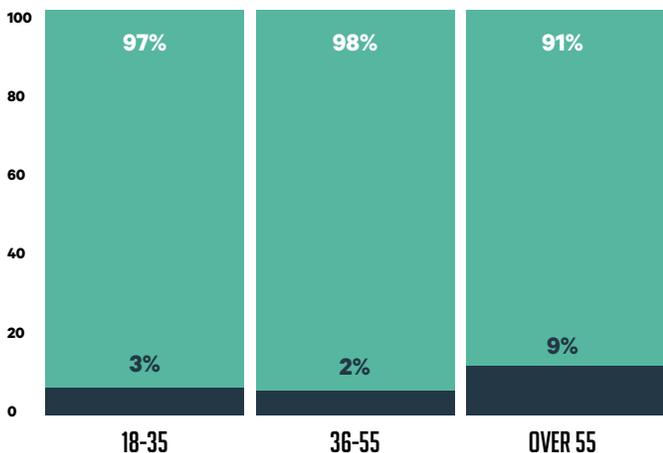
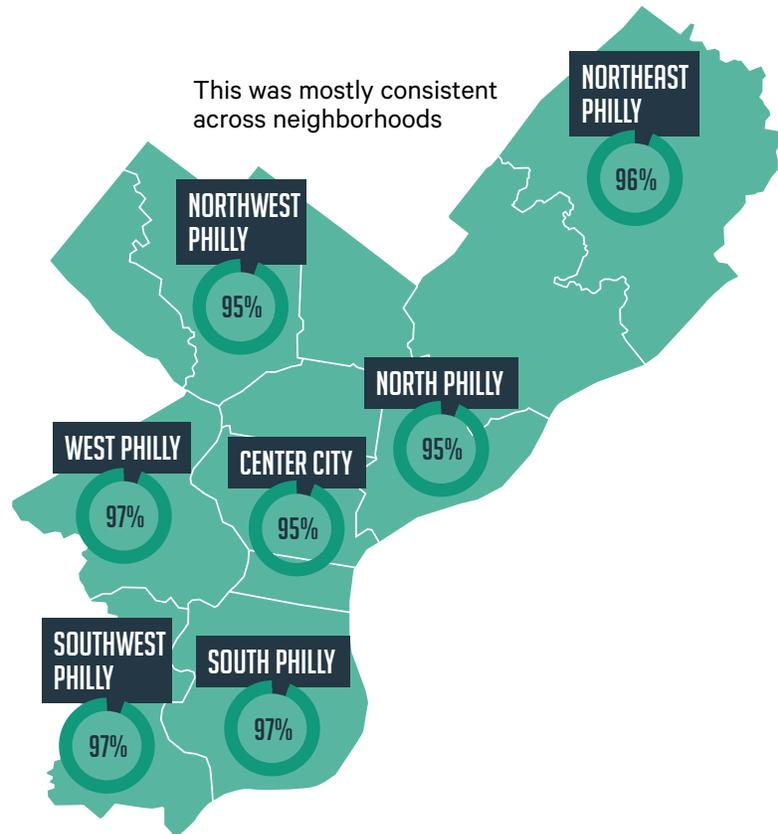
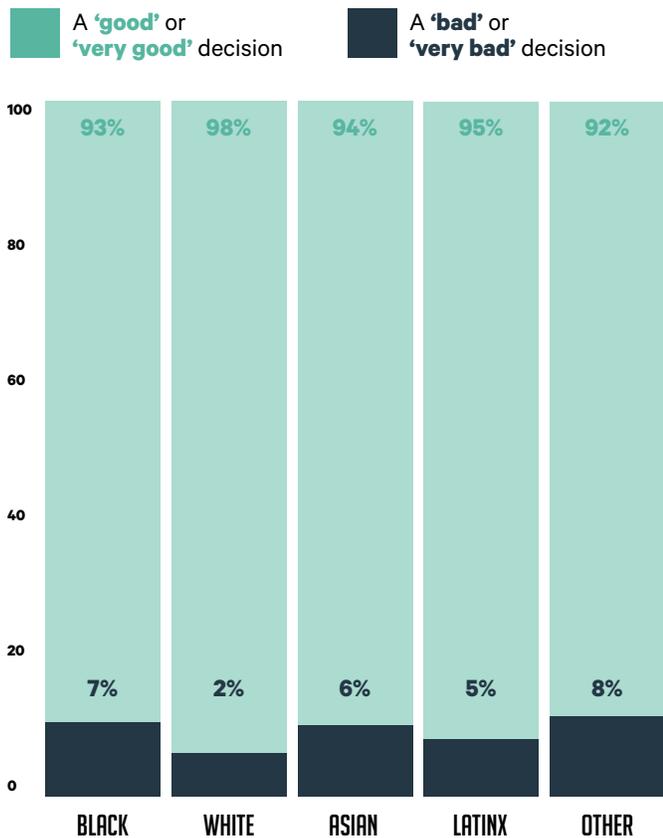
WHICH APPROACHES NEED MORE INVESTMENT TO MAKE COMMUNITIES SAFER & HEALTHIER?



Percentage of respondents who chose these services in their top 3

ADDRESSING THE CRISIS OF DIVESTMENT FROM COMMUNITIES IN PHILADELPHIA

SHOULD POLICE FUNDS BE REALLOCATED TO INVEST IN COMMUNITIES?



We partnered with Social Insights Research to launch this city-wide survey. From October to December of 2020, 1,345 Philadelphia residents responded to the Safety We Can Feel Survey.

Most surveys were completed online, while some were administered in-person and via phone calls from community organizers.

For a deeper look at the data, [click here](#) to request the raw data download.

To see the survey questions

[CLICK HERE](#)



WHAT'S NEXT THE SURVEY

THIS SURVEY IS JUST THE BEGINNING.

This survey is just the beginning. The Safety We Can Feel Campaign is a multi-faceted effort to build the power needed to shepherd a real transformation in how our city is resourced in the long term. We are building with community groups deeply embedded in Philadelphia's neighborhoods: groups that are building relationships, support, and organizing that contends with police violence, heals trauma and meets our young people's basic needs. We've also been consulting with community organizations working for years to build the resources our people deserve, from richly funded schools and libraries to just jobs and housing.

We are working to combine the reflections of those groups and their leaders to craft a comprehensive report. It will lay out a vision for how the city can reinvest the money we spend on police into the essential resources that prevent violence, heal trauma, and meet the needs of Black and brown communities.

Grounded in generational history of police corruption and divestment of Philly's communities of color, this report isn't a recipe or a map. It is the beginning of a conversation on how Philly's communities can actually take control of the budget processes that determine so much of their future - and to spur work over the next many budget cycles to transform failed police funding into safety we can feel.



ABOUT THE INVESTING IN SAFETY WE CAN FEEL CAMPAIGN

THE INVESTING IN SAFETY WE CAN FEEL CAMPAIGN

is an effort to create a Philadelphia where investments in public safety means investments into what our communities deserve and need to thrive: fully funded quality education, housing, healthcare and treatment, and transformative solutions to harm, free from policing and cages. Our campaign is led by a collective of organizations that are fighting against violent policing and the criminalization of Black and brown folks, for a vibrant multiracial working class, affordable housing, progressive taxation, thriving and safe immigrant communities, and to bring home our people who are languishing in prisons and jails.

We know that real safety will always be out of grasp for our communities if officials continue to invest in the harmful institution of policing. But we also know that Philadelphia can be a city where everyone can thrive if we make a commitment to investing in human needs and divest from punishment.

We want to extend a heartfelt thanks to YEAH Philly, POWER/LiveFree, and 215PA who distributed this survey in their communities.

OUR PARTNERS

A SPECIAL THANKS TO

APPENDIX

RESULTS

NEIGHBORHOOD, BY ZIP CODE

NORTHEAST PHILLY 4.4%	19111 - 1.1%
	19114 - .3%
	19115 - .1%
	19116 - .2%
	19135 - .1%
	19136 - .6%
	19149 - .3%
	19152 - .5%
	19154 - .2%
	19155 - .1%
NORTH PHILLY 20.2%	19121 - 1.5%
	19122 - 2.5%
	19123 - 1.9%
	19124 - 1.0%
	19125 - 3.5%
	19130 - 3.7%
	19132 - 0.7%
	19133 - 2.3%
	19134 - 1.8%
	19137 - .3%
19140 - 1.0%	
NORTHWEST PHILLY 16.2%	19118 - .4%
	19119 - 5.4%
	19120 - 1.6%
	19126 - .2%
	19127 - .1%
	19128 - 1.8%
	19129 - 1.3%
	19138 - 1.0%
	19141 - .6%
	19144 - 3.3%
19150 - .5%	
WEST PHILLY 11.3%	19104 - 6.2%
	19131 - 1.1%
	19139 - 3.2%
	19151 - .8%
CENTER CITY 6.6%	19102 - .6%
	19103 - 2.1%
	19106 - 1.5%
	19107 - 1.7%
	19175 - .1%
SOUTH PHILLY 27.3%	19145 - 6.1%
	19146 - 6.9%
	19147 - 7.1%
	19148 - 7.2%
SOUTHWEST PHILLY 15.3%	19142 - 2.0%
	19143 - 12.7%
	19153 - .6%

