



Public Safety and Policing

Throughout the last year, Austin has been leading American cities in reimagining public safety. With the help of our Reimagining Public Safety Taskforce and input from the Austin community, we are prioritizing diversity, violent crime reduction, and mental health when it comes to public safety in our city.

Violent Crime/Homicide

- **Austin is the 5th safest city nationally.**



Alternate link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZwtGN8k1ocF7oywedop9IW9J_KXEswD2/view?usp=sharing

- **The rise in homicide rates is not isolated to Austin.** The root cause of this rising trend in violent crimes may be hard to identify, but this trend is not limited to just Austin or Texas cities in general. Increases are being seen nationally in almost every major city. [Houston's number of homicides in the](#) first half of this year (222) is up 45% over last year and up almost double over just two years ago. Its number of 2021 homicides is 4 times higher than that in Austin. The City of Denver has already recorded 44 homicides this year and is on track to surpass the 95 homicides the city reported in 2020. The City of San Antonio has seen almost double the number of homicides as Austin, 95 within the first six months of this year, exceeding the 75 homicides the Alamo City experienced in 2020. Neither of these cities has [reimagined their local police department in the way Austin](#) has

over the last year. Yet, they saw historic increases in the number of homicides occurring in their communities.

- **Creation of the [Office of Violence Prevention](#).** In 2020, the City Council approved the creation of the Office of Violence Prevention, which has focused on community-led violence intervention efforts. In June 2021, Michelle Myles was named Program Manager of the Office.
- **Implementation of the Violence Intervention Program.** In April 2021, the program was launched to take proactive measures to reduce the number of violent and gun crimes occurring in Austin. Through the program, APD found 78 guns possessed illegally and has made 44 arrests so far.
- **Fighting Gun Violence with the Biden Administration.** In June 2021, the City of Austin was one of 15 cities to join the Biden Administration's [Crime and Violence Initiative Collaborative](#). Through the collaborative, Austin has shared its ongoing work with re-imagining public safety and pushed for more federal action on increasing gun violence in American cities.

Racial Equity

- **City of Austin's commitment to racial equity in policing.** Over the course of the last year, the City Manager, City Council, and the [Reimagining Public Safety Taskforce](#) have done the following:
 - Set a goal of no racial disparities in discretionary arrests
 - Updated the police academy curriculum to address needed changes
 - Recruited one of the most diverse cadet classes in the City's history and a more diverse senior management for APD

Emergency Medical and Disaster Response

- **Wildfire Preparedness.** The [Wildfire Urban Interface code](#) went into effect this year, which ensures that we are building smarter today to prevent wildfire risks tomorrow.
- **Emergency Medical Services in the 2021-2022 City Budget.** Austin EMS received funding for [medical services, equipment](#), and [more efficient response time](#), as a result of budget items from Councilmember Alter.

Mental Health

- **Prioritizing Mental Health as part of the Reimagining Public Safety process.** Austin's Emergency Call Center was expanded to house mental health clinicians as part of the first response line.
- **Addressing the needs of vulnerable populations in the 2021-2022 City Budget.** For the upcoming year, an additional \$1.2m for Integral Care's Road to Recovery Program was included in the City budget. The Road to Recovery Program helps adults who struggle with mental illness and substance abuse, and who also experience chronic homelessness and involvement in the criminal justice system. Additionally, the city's Homeless Outreach Street Team team received funding to hire additional staff.