



Welcome to the August [Youth Rights & Safety Hub](#) (YRSH) newsletter! YRSH is non-political and non-partisan. We seek to educate, not advocate. We do this by sharing relevant resources and data debriefs about youth rights and safety issues in our state.

Spotlight

August Focus: [Donald Trump—and Others: The Wrong Diagnosis for Youth Crime and the Wrong Response](#)

We've all heard Trump's claims about out of control crime in the District of Columbia, Chicago, Baltimore, and other cities across the country. He has also called for charging teens as young as 14 as adults, drawing criticism from many in the media. The sad truth, however, is that in making this call — which, to be clear, is completely unjustified and contrary to everything known to work in reducing crime by young people — the president is repeating a narrative reinforced by media outlets and politicians in both parties. It's also a regular topic of debate here in Maryland despite being the wrong response to youth crime.

New Resource: [Decoding the News](#)

Media stories about crime and young people are popular. Unfortunately, these stories can also be sensationalized; sometimes they are downright misleading. The following tips can help you screen out the distortions, cut through the hype, and get nearer to the truth with this explainer on how to decode the news.

Commentary

[Views on the News](#) from July & August

Starting in July and continuing through August, headlines have focused on the continuing drop in crime in Maryland—albeit for different reasons following recent comments from President Trump.

The statistics remain undisputed: During the first six months of 2025, Baltimore saw a 22.7% decrease in homicides and a 19.6% drop in nonfatal shootings compared to the same time in 2024, as reported by the Mayor's office on July 1st. WBAL provided good coverage of the trend the following day. Weeks later, a press release issued by the Governor's office reported "homicides and non-fatal shootings are the lowest they have been, statewide, in a decade."

None of this data focuses specifically on young people, but the overall trend of dropping crime rates may explain why there was so little coverage in July of alleged offending by youths aged 17 or less. Compared to a few years ago, when stories about youth misbehaving over summer break dominated news cycles, this is a major change.

Nevertheless, debate about how to respond to crime by young people continues. The Baltimore Sun published two opinion pieces, one by a Columbia-based copyright attorney calling for readier use of incarceration, and one by the paper's co-owner, Armstrong Williams, featuring his usual hyperbole: "As we can see almost daily, juveniles continue to commit crimes with little to no accountability." Meanwhile, Maryland Matters ran an opinion piece by two former leaders of youth justice agencies warning against backsliding. Similarly, some media outlets have resorted to covering individual perceptions of crime, such as this piece from The Baltimore Sun which misleads readers into believing crime by young people is out of control and state leaders are failing to respond, which is simply not true.

Fast forward to August and crime statistics once again dominated the news—now fueled by President Trump's inaccurate claim that crime is out of control in major cities such as the District of Columbia, Chicago, and Baltimore. On a positive note, most media coverage has included fact-checking and presented data demonstrating crime is down in each of the cities targeted as well as nationally.

Since 2026 is an election year, we can expect crime to continue to dominate media coverage, whether actual incidents of crime are trending up or down. Fact-checking is helpful, but it does little to counter sensationalized headlines and coverage of perceived spikes in crime. Historic drops in violent crime in Baltimore did not happen on their own. Headlines should focus on how and why crime is down so the public can learn about what works, as this Guardian article about Baltimore does well. Articles suggesting crime is out of control when it is at historic lows undermines the public safety strategies that are clearly working.

We all want to be and feel safe, and we deserve to know which policies and investments are making us safer—and which ones don't work—if we want to ensure the statistics continue their downward trend.

In The News

- [Teens charged in DOGE staffer attack moved from youth detention facility](#), by Olivia George, *The Washington Post*, August 21, 2025 - Two teens charged in the attempted carjacking of a former U.S. DOGE Service staffer earlier this month will be moved into less restrictive detention on orders from a D.C. judge, despite a prosecutor's objection.
- [What's Behind Baltimore's Drastic Reduction in Violence](#), by Jeremy Biddle and Ben Struhl, *Vital City*, August 20, 2025 - At the end of 2021, alongside St. Louis, Baltimore was regularly cited as the most dangerous city in America, with a homicide rate 10 times higher than New York City's, even amid its COVID-era surge in violence. Three-and-a-half years later, Baltimore is making news again, this time for reducing violence. In 2024, Baltimore saw its lowest homicide toll in a decade. The first half of 2025 closed with the fewest killings ever recorded in the city.
- [Unmarked graves of children expose an uncomfortable truth for Maryland](#), by Liz Ryan, *Maryland Matters*, August 22, 2025 - The discovery recently of more than 150 unmarked graves at a juvenile detention center in Cheltenham has exposed uncomfortable truths not only about the state's history of mistreating poor Black children in the justice system, but also about its ongoing, racially disproportionate practice of automatically charging young people accused of crime in the state's adult criminal courts.
- [Trump's return to 'law and order' highlights a sore spot for Democrats: crime policy](#), by Elena Moore, *NPR*, August 20, 2025 - Democrats have decried Trump's effort to address crime in DC, arguing that while crime did surge nationwide during the pandemic, numbers have since fallen. Nonetheless, the move has exposed a political sore spot for Democrats, who have struggled to counter GOP efforts to frame itself as the party of "law and order" and establish a credible message of their own in the minds of many voters.
- ['Indefinite lockdowns' are keeping prisoners in nearly 24-hour confinement, group says](#), by Ben Conarck, *The Baltimore Banner*, August 14, 2025 - Maryland prisoners in numerous facilities are spending nearly all their days locked in their cells, preventing opportunities for education, recreation, recovery support and other services to such an extent that it violates the U.S. Constitution's prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment, according to a letter from a prisoners' rights advocacy group.
- [How Baltimore's violent crime rate hit an all-time low: 'This is not magic. It's hard work'](#), by George Chidi, *The Guardian*, August 16, 2025
- [From the streets to second chances: How Roca is changing the lives of Baltimore's young men](#), by Darreonna Davis, *The Baltimore Banner*, August 15, 2025

ICYMI

- [Maryland's juvenile justice system must embrace accountability](#), by Robin Grammer and Lauren Arian, The Baltimore Sun, June 19, 2025
- [Justice for Maryland's youth still has a ways to go](#), by Alvin Lee (a student at River Hill High School in Clarksville and founder and president of the Student Justice Alliance), The Baltimore Sun, June 23, 2025 - The movement for juvenile justice reform is increasingly necessary, writes Alvin Lee.
- [Maryland unveils new gun violence plan and dashboard to reduce incidents](#), by Scott Maucione, WYPR, June 26, 2025 - The Maryland Department of Health is launching a new [dashboard](#) focused on cataloging firearm violence around the state; it coincides with a state preliminary [plan](#) for an approach to reduce firearm violence.

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