

**Penta** Policy Insiders

# Minnesota Insights Review

Crime and Public Safety

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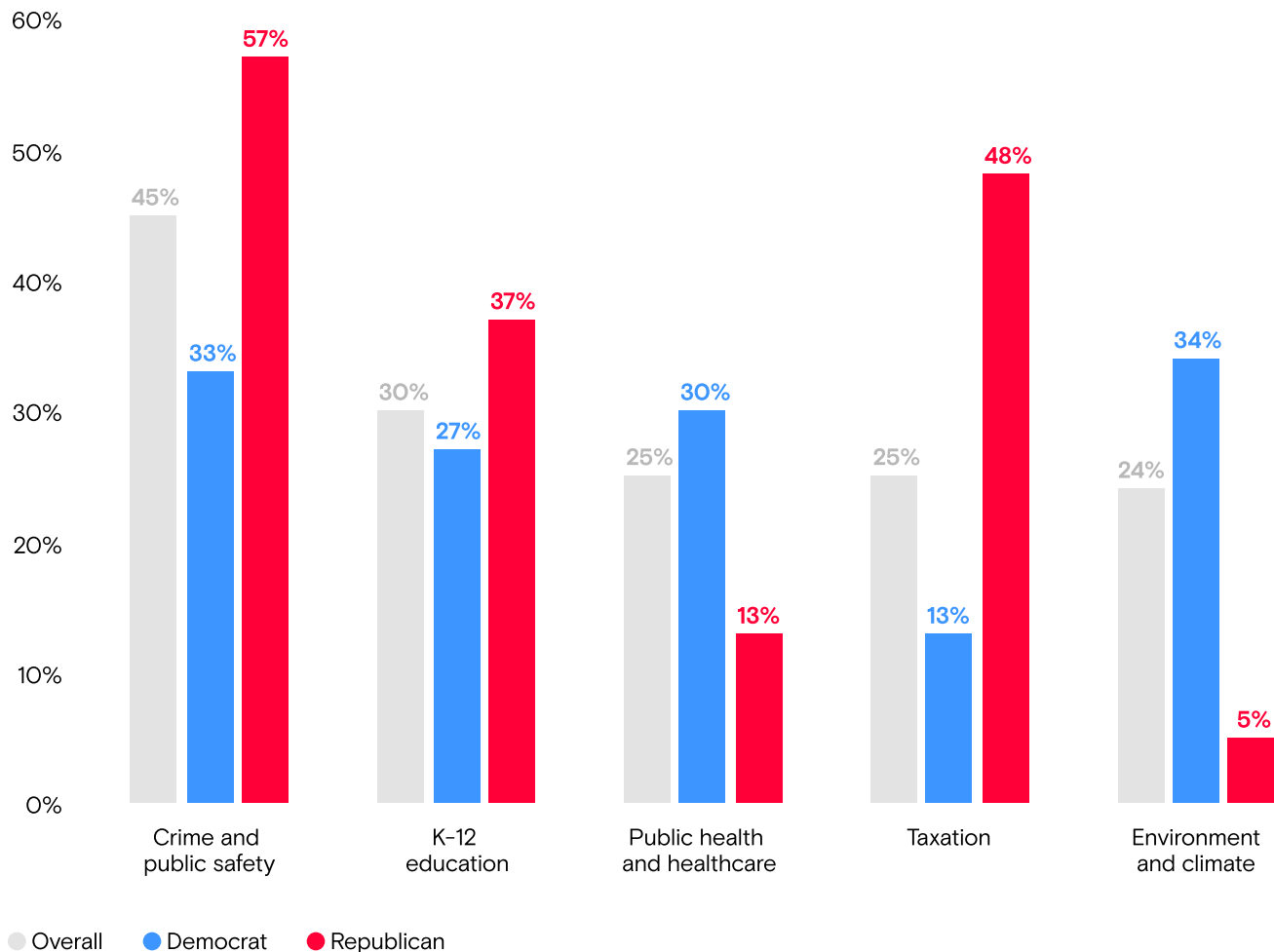
# Executive summary

We are delighted to share our findings from this year's Minnesota Insights Review. From June to December 2022, we interviewed over 219 policymakers in Minnesota to find out what their top policy priorities are, as well as the main challenges communities are facing across the state.

Minnesota policymakers we spoke to detail a variety of challenges facing neighborhoods across the state including crime, K-12 education, public health, taxation, and the environment. At the top of policy leaders' minds are crime and public safety, with almost half of all policymakers - 45 percent - reporting these as their main concerns. This focus on public safety comes in spite of recent data showing a downward trend in violent crime in the state's largest city, Minneapolis.<sup>1</sup> The second highest-ranked priority for policy staff is K-12 education, with almost a third of policy staff across party lines citing issues such as teacher shortages and lack of funding to be hurdles for the state's public education system.

This report is the second in a series that examines Minnesota policymakers' top policy priorities for 2022. This review examines Crime and Public Safety in the state.

## Top policy priorities in Minnesota



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## Minnesota deep dive

# Crime and public safety

Addressing crime is a primary policy objective for Minnesota policy staff, with 45 percent of Democratic and Republican policy leaders citing public safety as a top concern. Minnesota policy leaders are increasingly apprehensive about public safety and rising crime in communities throughout the state.<sup>2</sup> Policy staff specifically cite concerns about crime impacting the economy by disincentivizing the private sector from bringing business into the state, which would impact communities across the state.

## Public concern with rising crime

Policymakers across communities in Minnesota say that public safety is a top priority. Some Republican policy leaders believe that crime is being exacerbated by a failure to hold criminals accountable. Moreover, Democratic policymakers say the 2020 murder of George Floyd has made public safety even more top-of-mind for local communities. Policy leaders across both sides want to see increased safety in the state due to their concerns that crime will destabilize communities and impact economic growth.



In general, the two things that are **top of mind for the Minnesotans** that I've been speaking with so far have been public safety and then inflation and the high prices of gas, groceries, eggs, butter, all the day-to-day staples that people need to feed their families.

**Representative, Minnesota House of Representatives, R**



Minnesota's where George Floyd happened. And I think that prompted really a national, international response. And since that time, we have seen a somewhat significant uptick in violence, crime in the state, which has obviously created considerable levels of public concern, and has been highly politicized.

**Representative, Minnesota House of Representatives, R**



The inability for us to hold criminals accountable [is a problem]. The downward pressures that we're seeing in judges doing what are called downward departures. They're taking the sentencing guidelines and either they're A, not following the guidelines, or B, they're doing downward departures when they should not.

**Representative, Minnesota House of Representatives, R**



Given I'm a mayor, one of the things that I'm very concerned about is how this issue around gun violence and gun control is really spiraling out of control and affecting our local municipalities and local cities.

**Mayor, Minnesota Municipality, D**



It [public safety] needs to be the priority because nothing happens without safe communities. And if communities aren't considered safe then people are going to stop going there. And that's what we've seen dramatically. And the businesses are impacted, the residents are impacted, the tourists or guests diminished dramatically, and everyone suffers.

**Sheriff, Minnesota State Municipality, N/A**

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One of the main reasons [for increased crime] is everybody has a gun all of a sudden. When the pandemic hit in 2020, almost twice as many guns were sold in the United States as in 2019. 2021 was another record year, just slightly below 2020. It seems that, when the pandemic hit, everybody felt insecure and lots of people went out and bought guns. **Guns are everywhere, and while we have very stringent laws in New York State, the iron pipeline from the south continues to bring guns here to New York State.**

**Sherriff, Municipality, N/A**

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There's a deep public concern, and if you don't have public safety, people don't feel hopeful. People don't want to invest here and stay here. Neighborhoods can become destabilized. The business centers can become destabilized, and so there's good reason to focus on public safety.

**Commissioner, Minnesota Executive Branch, D**

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## Republican policymakers say crime is pushing businesses away

Republican policy staff are particularly concerned that rising crime is driving businesses away from Minnesota and are apprehensive that a lack of public safety will continue to disincentivize the private sector from doing business in the state.

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They're getting rid of their jobs in downtown areas and letting people stay home because they don't feel safe.

**Representative, Minnesota House of Representatives, R**



We still have a lot of businesses that haven't been able to reopen; crime is a huge part of it.

**Representative, Minnesota House of Representatives, R**

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We're watching hundreds of businesses across Minnesota - I can't say hundreds - dozens per month are closing their doors. And they're stating that the reason that they are closing their doors is it's no longer worth it to have crime at the intense level that's been there. They don't want to do it anymore.

Representative, Minnesota House of Representatives, R

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## Conclusion

Minnesotan policymakers across the aisle want to ensure communities across the state are safer, especially as public concern over crime continues to grow. In order to improve public safety and reduce crime, Minnesota's Democrat Governor Tim Walz recently proposed a 66 percent budget increase for the state's Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.<sup>3</sup> However, some state lawmakers question whether the solution is to improve crime reduction strategies rather than budget increases.<sup>4</sup>



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## About Penta Policy Insiders

Penta Policy Insiders provides direct feedback from policymakers to government relations professionals, improving advocates' ability to understand, validate, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their engagement.

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### Citations

1. <https://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/government-data/datasource/crime-dashboard/>
2. <https://kstp.com/kstp-news/top-news/minneapolis-violent-crime-drops-during-first-part-of-2023/>
3. <https://minnesotareformer.com/2023/03/17/walz-budget-would-expand-the-state-crime-bureau-even-as-crime-falls/>
4. Ibid.

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