

A RESPONSE TO EXECUTIVE ORDER 14321*

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On Wednesday, July 24, 2025, President Trump signed Executive Order 14321, “Ending Crime and Disorder on America’s Streets.”¹ To justify its necessity, he implies that crime rates have increased, and “[e]ndemic vagrancy, disorderly behavior, sudden confrontations, and violent attacks have made our cities unsafe.”² However, a *Crime Trends Report*, issued in July 2025 by the Council on Criminal Justice,³ provided evidence that this is not entirely true.⁴ By interpreting the report, it could be argued that crime levels have decreased.⁵ The report indexes “monthly, half-year, and yearly rates of reported crime for 13 violent, property, and drug offenses in 42 American cities that have consistently reported monthly data over the past six years.” The Council shares “[r]eported levels of 11 of the 13 offenses covered in this report were lower in the first half of 2025 than in the first half of 2024; domestic violence was the only offense that rose during this period, and drug offenses remained even.”⁶

Comparing violent offenses from the first six months of 2024 and 2025, the Council states:

The rate of homicides in the 30 study cities providing data for that crime was 17% lower, representing 327

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1. Exec. Order No. 14,321, 90 Fed. Reg. 35817, 35820 (July 24, 2025).

2. *See id.*

3. *See* ERNESTO LOPEZ AND BOBBY BOXERMAN, COUNCIL ON CRIM. JUST., CRIME TRENDS IN U.S. CITIES: MID-YEAR 2025 UPDATE (2025), <https://counciloncj.org/Crime-Trends-in-U-S-Cities-Mid-Year-2025-Update/>.

4. *See id.*

5. *See id.*

6. *Id.*

fewer homicides. There were 10% fewer reported aggravated assaults, 21% fewer gun assaults, 10% fewer sexual assaults, and 3% more domestic violence incidents. Robbery fell by 20%, while carjackings (a type of robbery) decreased by 24%.⁷

Moreover, “[r]eports of residential burglaries (-19%), non-residential burglaries (-18%), larcenies (-12%), and shoplifting (-12%) all fell in the first six months of 2025 compared to the first part of 2024, while drug offenses remained even.”⁸

From a longitudinal perspective, the data suggest that, overall, America is becoming safer. For instance, the Council notes “[t]here were 14% fewer homicides in the study cities in the first half of 2025 than in the first half of 2019. Similarly, reported aggravated assault (-5%), gun assaults (-4%), sexual assault (-28%), domestic violence (-8%), robbery (-30%), and carjacking (-3%) were lower in 2025.”⁹

The Bureau of Justice Statistics corroborated these findings, showing a historic decline in violent crimes since 1955. Finally, the Brennan Center for Justice who publishes an analysis of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s latest report on crime trends¹⁰ found, “[t]he national murder rate saw a historic drop from 2022 to 2023 and is down by around 16 percent from its 2020 peak.”¹¹

Thus, President Trump offers no evidence to substantiate the claim that America is reeling from “[e]ndemic vagrancy, disorderly behavior, sudden confrontations, and violent attacks [that] have made our cities unsafe.”¹² What he has done, however, is employ the trope that characterizes people experiencing homelessness as dangerous, unruly, undesirables who cannot help themselves and need to be put away for their safety and the safety of others. According to the R Street Institute¹³, law enforcement agencies often do not track or report

7. *Id.*

8. *Id.*

9. *Id.*

10. *U.S. Crime Rates and Trends — Analysis of FBI Crime Statistics*, BRENNAN CTR. FOR JUST., <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/us-crime-rates-and-trends-analysis-fbi-crime-statistics> (last updated Oct. 29, 2025).

11. *Id.*

12. Exec. Order No. 14,321, 90 Fed. Reg. 35817, 35817 (July 24, 2025).

13. Lisel Petis, *The Crime and Safety Blindspot: Do Homeless Populations Pose an Increased Risk to Public Safety?*, R ST. INST. (July 9, 2024),

homelessness data, which makes it difficult to substantiate large-scale generalizations about the correlation between crime and our unhoused neighbors. Fortunately, however, there are a few studies that provide some insight into this issue. Overall, research suggests we live in a very different reality from the one President Trump is using to incite fear and alarm his constituents.¹⁴ R Street Institute cites 2022 data from the San Diego County District Attorney's Office and a survey of homeless women completed in Los Angeles. Both surveys¹⁵ reveal the high rates of victimization among our unhoused neighbors.¹⁶ For instance, the San Diego District Attorney's Office data "shows homeless individuals face murder 19 times more often, attempted murder 27 times more often, assault 12 times more often, and sexual assault nine times more often" than people who have safe, stable housing.¹⁷

Another study, *Property Crime and the Social Control of Homelessness*¹⁸ from Seattle Pacific University, provides insight into whether the presence of tent encampments is related to incidents of property crime at nearby dwellings. Interestingly, they found that property crime in Seattle was not increasing. The study revealed a "near zero or negative relationship between dwellings and crime," despite the increasing number of people experiencing homelessness in the city. Their study engages the narrative framework that the Trump Administration and its supporters employ to justify social controls and sanctions that further victimize people who do not have a clean, safe, stable, and affordable place to live. In short, they argue that the "[n]arrative conflating visible homelessness with property crime [in Seattle] may be unwarranted." While this study is limited to one city, it reveals how local communities, Continuums of Care, and/or state governments can resist the misleading narrative that stereotypes unhoused residents as dangerous people rampantly committing violent and property crimes across the United States.¹⁹

<https://www.rstreet.org/commentary/the-crime-and-safety-blindspot-do-homeless-populations-pose-an-increased-risk-to-public-safety/>.

14. *Id.*

15. *Id.*

16. *Id.*

17. *Id.*

18. Chuck Lanfear, Lindsey Beach, and Karen Snedker, *Property Crime and the Social Control of Homelessness*, CTR. FOR SOC. INVESTIGATION, SEATTLE PAC. U. (Jan. 12, 2022), https://clanfear.github.io/CampsPolicing/presentations/nuffield_22/slides.html#1.

19. *See* Exec. Order No. 14,321, 90 Fed. Reg. 35817, 35817 (July 24, 2025).

The Executive Order also demonizes our unhoused neighbors by characterizing the majority of them as chronic drug abusers who do not seek and do not want help by stating “[t]he overwhelming majority of these individuals are addicted to drugs, have a mental health condition, or both. Nearly two-thirds of homeless individuals report having regularly used hard drugs like methamphetamines, cocaine, or opioids in their lifetimes. An equally large share of homeless individuals reported suffering from mental health conditions.”²⁰ President Trump is likely referring to the results of a recent study by the University of California San Francisco (“UCLA-SF”) published on February 19, 2025, in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*²¹. However, the research challenges the propaganda of the Trump Administration. The UCLA-SF findings are based on the largest representative survey study on illicit drug use by people experiencing homelessness (n = 3200) since the 1990s. In it, the researchers share that in the past 6 months, 37.1% of participants reported regular drug use.²² That means 62.9%, a significant majority, reported that they had not regularly used drugs in the last six months.²³ This study, like others, presents a nuanced perspective that honors the complex intersectionality of people who experience homelessness.²⁴ While people who live unhoused do have higher rates of drug use and mental health disorders than the general population, studies correlating mental health, drug addiction, and homelessness have consistently shown that homelessness often contributes to the onset of or exacerbates these issues.²⁵

Instead of providing greater access to clean, safe, adequate, and affordable permanent housing, which we know contributes to improved health, the Administration is choosing to punish people who are already suffering.²⁶ Fines, incarceration, forced relocation, and

20. *Id.*

21. Ryan D. Assaf et al., *Illicit Substance Use and Treatment Access Among Adults Experiencing Homeless*, 333 *JAMA* 1222, 1223-26 (2025), <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2830616>.

22. *Id.*

23. *See generally id.* at 1227.

24. *Id.*

25. Deborah K. Padgett, *Homelessness, Housing Instability and Mental Health: Making the Connections*, 44 *BJPSYCH BULL.* 197, 197 (2020), <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/bjpsych-bulletin/article/homelessness-housing-instability-and-mental-health-making-the-connections/9F3CE592DBF5909AF29330FCCE5BD4C4>.

26. NABIHAH MAQBOOL, JANET VIVEIROS AND MINDY AULT, CTR. FOR HOUS. POL’Y, *THE IMPACTS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON HEALTH: A RESEARCH*

involuntary commitment will only increase their barriers to success.²⁷ Why spend money on harmful temporary solutions that are neither as effective nor as financially efficient as the Housing First model?²⁸ Is it simply disdain for the poorest among us? Or is the Administration using smoke and mirrors to deflect our attention away from the real causes of homelessness – skyrocketing rent, the shrinking availability of deeply affordable housing, poverty-level federal minimum wage, high-barrier rental requirements, a fractured, high-barrier medical system, and discriminatory financial practices that date back to the inception of this country?

Our unhoused neighbors and those who provide care to these individuals need long-term solutions that work to end the traumatic cycle of homelessness and help people rebuild their lives. We need federal, state, and local governments to pass housing wage²⁹ legislation and reject all laws and ordinances that criminalize poverty, mental illness, and/or homelessness. We need affordable housing and a commitment to support private property owners as they renovate, repair, and manage homes that could be rented to people currently living on the streets. We need a more robust, low-barrier, human-centered coordinated entry process grounded in trauma-informed practices that meet the needs of people who spend their days fighting to survive in a county that has labeled them *persona non grata*. We need more funding for local communities to recruit and train peer specialists and response teams whose priorities are to care, listen, and connect people living without homes to the resources they need. We need to expand Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Re-Housing programs. We need to expand Medicaid and Medicare so that the programs cover

SUMMARY (2025), <https://nhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/The-Impacts-of-Affordable-Housing-on-Health-A-Research-Summary.pdf>.

27. NICOLE DUBOIS, CLAIRE HEBERT, AND E. MAE SOWARDS, NAT’L ALL. TO END HOMELESSNESS, CRIMINALIZING HOMELESSNESS WORSENS THE CRISIS, RESEARCH SHOWS 3–6 (2015), https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/CriminalizingWorsensTheCrisis_NAEH_2-4-25.pdf

28. *See id.* at 1.

29. *See generally* ESTHER COLON-BERMUDEZ, DAN EMMANUEL, RAQUEL HARATI AND KATIE RENZI, NAT’L LOW INCOME HOUS. COAL., OUT OF REACH: THE HIGH COST OF HOUSING (2025), https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/2025_OOR_FullReport.pdf (describing the housing wage movement as activism surrounding “the growing gap between income and the cost of rent” in the United States and reporting “how low pay makes it impossible for low-wage workers and people living on a fixed income to reasonably afford a safe, quality place to call home.”).

more supportive services that lead to better health and housing outcomes. We need to listen to the people who are navigating these systems in an increasingly hostile environment.

In the report *Housing and Homelessness in the United States*,³⁰ submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council in April 2025, researchers from the University of Miami School of Law Human Rights Clinic and the National Homelessness Law Center provide a more comprehensive perspective on the brutality and ineffectiveness of our nation’s approach to end homelessness. They write:

At the core, homelessness stems from a failure to realize the fundamental human right to adequate housing. The U.N. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) explains that the right to adequate housing is not merely a right to shelter. Rather, it requires housing that fulfills seven dimensions: Accessibility, Affordability, Legal Security of Tenure, Habitability, Availability of Services, Location, and Cultural Adequacy. The U.S. falls short in each of these dimensions.³¹

How can we boast of being great while trampling upon those who are already suffering? “Ending Crime and Disorder on America’s Streets” calls on state and local governments to prey upon the weak by “[s]hifting homeless individuals into long-term institutional settings,”³² which means:

1. Increased surveillance in a free society,
2. Increased profiling and harassment of vulnerable people,
3. Increased involuntary commitments to mental health and carceral facilities,
4. Increased likelihood of dangerous, even violent, encounters with law enforcement,
5. Increased barriers to permanent housing due to fines and criminal records,
6. Decreased ability of people experiencing homelessness to exercise agency and self-determination, and
7. Decreased funding for Housing First and harm-reduction programs.

30. Tamar Ezer, Abigail Wettstein, Katirina Delviscio, Wilmy Dessalines, Tiana Rose Montague, Nicholas Tricarico, Eric Tars, and Siya Hegde, *Housing and Homelessness in the United States*, NAT’L HOMELESSNESS L. CTR. (Apr. 7, 2025), <https://homelesslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/USUNreport2025.pdf>.

31. *Id.* at 8.

32. Exec. Order No. 14,321, 90 Fed. Reg. 35817 (July 24, 2025).

The order also indicates the federal government's intention to store and use Personally Identifiable Information (PII) to track and control the people caught in this dragnet policy.³³ I would call this a nightmare, but that term is much too mild. How long will it take for them to cast the net again, to identify the next group of undesirables to catch, flay, and devour?

Executive orders signal the kinds of laws our federal government intends to pass. They also signal the initiatives the federal government will fund. So, what can we do?

1. Continue educating ourselves and our communities by:
 - a. talking to and making authentic connections with unhoused people,
 - b. reading the information linked in this essay,
 - c. volunteering at an organization working to end homelessness,
 - d. hosting documentary parties – watch films and discuss them, and
 - e. hosting book clubs or dialogue groups to learn about and discuss root causes of homelessness,

2. Join local, state, and national organizations that are actively resisting executive Orders, bills, laws, and ordinances, such as:
 - a. the North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness (“NCCEH”),³⁴
 - b. the North Carolina Housing Coalition,³⁵
 - c. the National Alliance to End Homelessness,³⁶
 - d. the National Coalition for the Homeless,³⁷ and
 - e. the National Low Income Housing Coalition,³⁸

3. Use our voices by:
 - a. speaking out at Town Halls,

33. *See generally id.* at 35819.

34. *N.C. Local Leadership Response*, N.C. COAL. TO END HOMELESSNESS, <https://ncceh.org/local-leadership-response/> (last visited Sept. 5, 2025).

35. N.C. HOUS. COALITION, <https://nchousing.org/policy-advocacy/> (last visited Aug. 28, 2025).

36. NAT'L ALL. TO END HOMELESSNESS, <https://endhomelessness.org/about-us/policy/> (last visited Aug. 28, 2025).

37. NAT'L COAL.FOR THE HOMELESSNESS, <https://nationalhomeless.org/> (last visited Aug. 28, 2025).

38. NAT'L LOW INCOME HOUS. COAL., <https://nlihc.org/> (last visited Aug. 28, 2025).

- b. writing editorials or blogs,
 - c. starting conversations on social media,
 - d. testifying at legislative hearings, and
 - e. writing or calling our representatives,
4. Financially support organizations like NCCEH that are committed to Housing First.

Now more than ever, we need a compassionate, justice-oriented community to rally around and walk in solidarity with our neighbors experiencing homelessness. This evening, I'll unlock a door and step into a place where I feel safe, hopeful, whole, peaceful, and cared for. A place where I can rest and enjoy time with my family. Home – a human right that everyone should have. Let's keep fighting until we all do.