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| [Author Headshot](https://nl.nytimes.com/f/newsletter/41IpS3vO3XFRz-yD4Ma6Xg~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRl4b-FP0TAaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubnl0aW1lcy5jb20vYnkvZGF2aWQtbGVvbmhhcmR0P2NhbXBhaWduX2lkPTkmZW1jPWVkaXRfbm5fMjAyMzAzMDEmaW5zdGFuY2VfaWQ9ODY1Njgmbmw9dGhlLW1vcm5pbmcmcmVnaV9pZD0xOTA2OTE4NjQmc2VnbWVudF9pZD0xMjY1NzQmdGU9MSZ1c2VyX2lkPWI5NDFlNTljYjNmNjM1MmY0MjQ2OWUyODE5MTM1NDQ1VwNueXRCCmP2hTr_Y2t987xSFXRjbWl0Y2gxOTUxQGdtYWlsLmNvbVgEAAAAAA~~) | **By**[**David Leonhardt**](https://nl.nytimes.com/f/newsletter/41IpS3vO3XFRz-yD4Ma6Xg~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRl4b-FP0TAaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubnl0aW1lcy5jb20vYnkvZGF2aWQtbGVvbmhhcmR0P2NhbXBhaWduX2lkPTkmZW1jPWVkaXRfbm5fMjAyMzAzMDEmaW5zdGFuY2VfaWQ9ODY1Njgmbmw9dGhlLW1vcm5pbmcmcmVnaV9pZD0xOTA2OTE4NjQmc2VnbWVudF9pZD0xMjY1NzQmdGU9MSZ1c2VyX2lkPWI5NDFlNTljYjNmNjM1MmY0MjQ2OWUyODE5MTM1NDQ1VwNueXRCCmP2hTr_Y2t987xSFXRjbWl0Y2gxOTUxQGdtYWlsLmNvbVgEAAAAAA~~) |

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| **Good morning. After a crime surge, Chicago voters have ousted their current mayor.** |
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| **A progressive problem** |

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| Chicago’s mayor race has joined the growing list of evidence that Americans are unhappy about crime. |
| Lori Lightfoot, the incumbent, yesterday became the first Chicago mayor in 40 years to lose a re-election campaign. Lightfoot — a progressive in her first term — finished third in the initial stage of this year’s campaign, in which nine candidates were trying to qualify for a runoff in April. Lightfoot received [only 17 percent of the vote](https://nl.nytimes.com/f/newsletter/vBpcAAzLezYbZySgek4W2Q~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRl4b-FP0TqaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubnl0aW1lcy5jb20vMjAyMy8wMi8yOC91cy9jaGljYWdvLW1heW9yYWwtZWxlY3Rpb24tbGlnaHRmb290LXZhbGxhcy5odG1sP2NhbXBhaWduX2lkPTkmZW1jPWVkaXRfbm5fMjAyMzAzMDEmaW5zdGFuY2VfaWQ9ODY1Njgmbmw9dGhlLW1vcm5pbmcmcmVnaV9pZD0xOTA2OTE4NjQmc2VnbWVudF9pZD0xMjY1NzQmdGU9MSZ1c2VyX2lkPWI5NDFlNTljYjNmNjM1MmY0MjQ2OWUyODE5MTM1NDQ1VwNueXRCCmP2hTr_Y2t987xSFXRjbWl0Y2gxOTUxQGdtYWlsLmNvbVgEAAAAAA~~), according to the latest count. |

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| The runoff will be between [Paul Vallas](https://nl.nytimes.com/f/newsletter/IUXm5pizeIXRrzHS61qOcg~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRl4b-FP0TjaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubnl0aW1lcy5jb20vMjAyMy8wMy8wMS91cy9wYXVsLXZhbGxhcy1jaGljYWdvLW1heW9yLWVsZWN0aW9uLmh0bWw_Y2FtcGFpZ25faWQ9OSZlbWM9ZWRpdF9ubl8yMDIzMDMwMSZpbnN0YW5jZV9pZD04NjU2OCZubD10aGUtbW9ybmluZyZyZWdpX2lkPTE5MDY5MTg2NCZzZWdtZW50X2lkPTEyNjU3NCZ0ZT0xJnVzZXJfaWQ9Yjk0MWU1OWNiM2Y2MzUyZjQyNDY5ZTI4MTkxMzU0NDVXA255dEIKY_aFOv9ja33zvFIVdGNtaXRjaDE5NTFAZ21haWwuY29tWAQAAAAA), a former head of the city’s school system who ran on a tough-on-crime message, and Brandon Johnson, a progressive county commissioner who previously worked as a teacher and union organizer. Vallas finished with 34 percent of the vote and Johnson finished second with 20 percent. |
| |  | | --- | | A person shaking another person's hand  Description automatically generated with medium confidence | | Brandon Johnson talking to supporters yesterday.Jamie Kelter Davis for The New York Times | |

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| Crime in Chicago has surged since the pandemic began, with the number of major crimes 33 percent higher last year than in 2019. The murder rate has fallen from its 2021 peak but only modestly, and robberies and car thefts have kept rising recently. In a recent poll, nearly two-thirds of Chicago residents said that they felt unsafe. |
| “Chicagoans are genuinely frustrated by the state of the city, and crime is vastly overshadowing any other concerns,” Julie Bosman, The Times’s Chicago bureau chief, told me. “In a city known for its powerful leaders, it’s unsurprising that a lot of Chicagoans see this as Lightfoot’s failure. Many voters I’ve talked to see this mayoral race as a chance to reset.” |

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| **New York and Oregon, too** |
| Crime has been a particularly vexing issue for progressive Democrats, both in Chicago and nationally. After police officers in Minneapolis murdered George Floyd in 2020, progressive activists and politicians called for both reforms to reduce police violence and reduced funding for police departments. Many of the proposed reforms — including body cameras and greater accountability for police misbehavior — are popular, but defunding the police is unpopular even among most Democratic voters, polls show. |

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| It became more unpopular after crime began to soar during the pandemic. Across 27 cities that publicly report crime data, the murder rate last year was 34 percent higher than it had been in 2019, according to the Council on Criminal Justice. |
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| Progressives have struggled to develop a persuasive response. Some have suggested that the crime increase is [mostly a right-wing talking point](https://nl.nytimes.com/f/newsletter/lcGcPaXX2FAbMMyg6tnesQ~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRl4b-FP0TqaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubnl0aW1lcy5jb20vMjAyMi8xMS8xOC9ueXJlZ2lvbi9lcmljLWFkYW1zLW1pZHRlcm1zLWRlbW9jcmF0cy1jcmltZS5odG1sP2NhbXBhaWduX2lkPTkmZW1jPWVkaXRfbm5fMjAyMzAzMDEmaW5zdGFuY2VfaWQ9ODY1Njgmbmw9dGhlLW1vcm5pbmcmcmVnaV9pZD0xOTA2OTE4NjQmc2VnbWVudF9pZD0xMjY1NzQmdGU9MSZ1c2VyX2lkPWI5NDFlNTljYjNmNjM1MmY0MjQ2OWUyODE5MTM1NDQ1VwNueXRCCmP2hTr_Y2t987xSFXRjbWl0Y2gxOTUxQGdtYWlsLmNvbVgEAAAAAA~~), but the statistics say otherwise. And voters evidently agree with the statistics: |
| * In New York City, Eric Adams won the mayor’s race in 2021 [by focusing his campaign on crime](https://nl.nytimes.com/f/newsletter/ymOf2IXG8WgzLPFAjuoHkg~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRl4b-FP0TzaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubnl0aW1lcy5jb20vMjAyMS8wNi8yOS9icmllZmluZy9uZXcteW9yay1tYXlvcnMtcmFjZS1yYW5rZWQtY2hvaWNlLWRlbW9jcmF0cy5odG1sP2NhbXBhaWduX2lkPTkmZW1jPWVkaXRfbm5fMjAyMzAzMDEmaW5zdGFuY2VfaWQ9ODY1Njgmbmw9dGhlLW1vcm5pbmcmcmVnaV9pZD0xOTA2OTE4NjQmc2VnbWVudF9pZD0xMjY1NzQmdGU9MSZ1c2VyX2lkPWI5NDFlNTljYjNmNjM1MmY0MjQ2OWUyODE5MTM1NDQ1VwNueXRCCmP2hTr_Y2t987xSFXRjbWl0Y2gxOTUxQGdtYWlsLmNvbVgEAAAAAA~~). In the Democratic primary, he lost only one of the city’s five boroughs: Manhattan, the wealthiest. * In New York State last year, Republican candidates in the midterms focused on crime and did much better than usual. Democratic candidates often tried to change the subject. “I think those who stated, ‘Don’t talk about crime,’ it was an insult to Black and brown communities where a lot of this crime was playing out,” Adams said after the election. Nancy Pelosi told The Times’s Maureen Dowd that Democrats might have maintained [control of the House of Representatives](https://nl.nytimes.com/f/newsletter/VXa_3rLXGUGrQCvwbl8baQ~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRl4b-FP0TpaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubnl0aW1lcy5jb20vMjAyMy8wMS8yMS9vcGluaW9uL25hbmN5LXBlbG9zaS1tYXVyZWVuLWRvd2QtaW50ZXJ2aWV3Lmh0bWw_Y2FtcGFpZ25faWQ9OSZlbWM9ZWRpdF9ubl8yMDIzMDMwMSZpbnN0YW5jZV9pZD04NjU2OCZubD10aGUtbW9ybmluZyZyZWdpX2lkPTE5MDY5MTg2NCZzZWdtZW50X2lkPTEyNjU3NCZ0ZT0xJnVzZXJfaWQ9Yjk0MWU1OWNiM2Y2MzUyZjQyNDY5ZTI4MTkxMzU0NDVXA255dEIKY_aFOv9ja33zvFIVdGNtaXRjaDE5NTFAZ21haWwuY29tWAQAAAAA) if the party’s candidates in New York had taken crime more seriously. * Republicans also [fared well last year in Oregon](https://nl.nytimes.com/f/a/mljJSzPK3_cPAQoQGIvSRw~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRl4b-FP0TvaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cub3BiLm9yZy9hcnRpY2xlLzIwMjIvMTEvMTkvb3JlZ29uLXJlcHVibGljYW5zLWNlbGVicmF0ZS13aW5zLWZvY3VzLW9uLWZ1dHVyZS8_Y2FtcGFpZ25faWQ9OSZlbWM9ZWRpdF9ubl8yMDIzMDMwMSZpbnN0YW5jZV9pZD04NjU2OCZubD10aGUtbW9ybmluZyZyZWdpX2lkPTE5MDY5MTg2NCZzZWdtZW50X2lkPTEyNjU3NCZ0ZT0xJnVzZXJfaWQ9Yjk0MWU1OWNiM2Y2MzUyZjQyNDY5ZTI4MTkxMzU0NDVXA255dEIKY_aFOv9ja33zvFIVdGNtaXRjaDE5NTFAZ21haWwuY29tWAQAAAAA), where the largest city — Portland — has become a symbol of post-pandemic disorder. Between 2019 and 2022, murders nearly tripled, vandalism incidents nearly doubled and car thefts rose 69 percent. |

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| **The Bass model** |
| Karen Bass, the recently elected mayor of Los Angeles, has developed arguably the most [successful progressive message](https://nl.nytimes.com/f/newsletter/LYI1fzQ-75U_bSH0jsKCfQ~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRl4b-FP0TpaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubnl0aW1lcy5jb20vMjAyMi8wNi8wNy91cy9wb2xpdGljcy9rYXJlbi1iYXNzLXJpY2stY2FydXNvLWxhLW1heW9yLmh0bWw_Y2FtcGFpZ25faWQ9OSZlbWM9ZWRpdF9ubl8yMDIzMDMwMSZpbnN0YW5jZV9pZD04NjU2OCZubD10aGUtbW9ybmluZyZyZWdpX2lkPTE5MDY5MTg2NCZzZWdtZW50X2lkPTEyNjU3NCZ0ZT0xJnVzZXJfaWQ9Yjk0MWU1OWNiM2Y2MzUyZjQyNDY5ZTI4MTkxMzU0NDVXA255dEIKY_aFOv9ja33zvFIVdGNtaXRjaDE5NTFAZ21haWwuY29tWAQAAAAA) on crime. A former community organizer who spent 12 years in the House of Representatives, Bass defeated a more conservative candidate not by downplaying crime concerns but by talking about them frequently. Bass herself was a burglary victim last year. |

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| She has tried to strike a balance by calling for both the hiring of hundreds of additional police officers and tougher punishments for abusive officers. “We must stop crimes in progress and hold people accountable,” she said in her inaugural address. “Let me be so bold as to add that we can prevent crime and community violence by addressing the social, the health and the economic conditions that compromise a safe environment.” |
| The Chicago runoff will become the next test of whether a progressive message on crime can win in an overwhelmingly Democratic city. As was the case in Los Angeles, the more progressive candidate — Johnson — is Black, while the more conservative one — Vallas — is white. |

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| In the past, Johnson supported calls to defund the police but he has tried to avoid the subject during the mayoral campaign. He has instead emphasized his plans to build more housing, expand pre-K and increase funding for social services. He is likely to portray Vallas as a conservative who is out of touch with Chicago. The local police union, whose top official is a Donald Trump supporter, has endorsed Vallas. |
| “No matter where you live, no matter what you look like, you deserve to have a better, stronger, safer Chicago,” Johnson said at his election night party last night. |

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| As the chief executive of the Chicago schools, Vallas expanded the number of charter schools. As a mayoral candidate, he has focused overwhelmingly on public safety, calling it “a basic human right for Chicagoans,” and promising an expansion of the police force, and described the city as being in disarray. He is likely to emphasize Johnson’s previous support for defunding the police. |
| “We will make Chicago the safest city in America,” Vallas said last night. |

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| **Related:**Read [The Times’s coverage of the election](https://nl.nytimes.com/f/newsletter/vBpcAAzLezYbZySgek4W2Q~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRl4b-FP0TqaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubnl0aW1lcy5jb20vMjAyMy8wMi8yOC91cy9jaGljYWdvLW1heW9yYWwtZWxlY3Rpb24tbGlnaHRmb290LXZhbGxhcy5odG1sP2NhbXBhaWduX2lkPTkmZW1jPWVkaXRfbm5fMjAyMzAzMDEmaW5zdGFuY2VfaWQ9ODY1Njgmbmw9dGhlLW1vcm5pbmcmcmVnaV9pZD0xOTA2OTE4NjQmc2VnbWVudF9pZD0xMjY1NzQmdGU9MSZ1c2VyX2lkPWI5NDFlNTljYjNmNjM1MmY0MjQ2OWUyODE5MTM1NDQ1VwNueXRCCmP2hTr_Y2t987xSFXRjbWl0Y2gxOTUxQGdtYWlsLmNvbVgEAAAAAA~~), and see [the results](https://nl.nytimes.com/f/a/_6f9-yo9fXznwb5a_phECw~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRl4b-FP4QCAWh0dHBzOi8vd3d3Lm55dGltZXMuY29tL2ludGVyYWN0aXZlLzIwMjMvMDIvMjgvdXMvZWxlY3Rpb25zL3Jlc3VsdHMtaWxsaW5vaXMtY2hpY2Fnby1tdW5pY2lwYWwtZWxlY3Rpb24uaHRtbD9jYW1wYWlnbl9pZD05JmVtYz1lZGl0X25uXzIwMjMwMzAxJmluc3RhbmNlX2lkPTg2NTY4Jm5sPXRoZS1tb3JuaW5nJnJlZ2lfaWQ9MTkwNjkxODY0JnNlZ21lbnRfaWQ9MTI2NTc0JnRlPTEmdXNlcl9pZD1iOTQxZTU5Y2IzZjYzNTJmNDI0NjllMjgxOTEzNTQ0NVcDbnl0Qgpj9oU6_2NrffO8UhV0Y21pdGNoMTk1MUBnbWFpbC5jb21YBAAAAAA~) for all nine candidates. |