

Public Safety Funding

Executive Summary

Police officers are primarily responsible for public safety, including crime prevention and investigation. However, in recent years, police officers have taken on many additional duties that may be outside of their traditional scope of practice and require additional training. Recently, various cities and municipalities have restructured their public safety budgets to include increases for mental health and community-based services.

Highlights

- Most criminal activity is classified as non-violent crime. In 2018, 13% of all Missouri criminal activity was classified as violent crime.
- Mental illness, homelessness, and substance use disorders are significant public health crises in Missouri. Individuals experiencing mental illness, homelessness, and/or substance abuse are likely to be jailed for both violent and non-violent offenses and be repeat offenders.
- State and local spending on U.S. police departments has increased 26% over the last 20 years.

Limitations

- Recent reallocations of police funds have occurred in various cities and local municipalities; however, the effectiveness of the reallocation of funds to mental health and community-based services has yet to be evaluated.
- Many non-budgetary factors play a role in determining the amount of crime that occurs. Budgetary analysis, alone, will not account for these factors.

Research Background

Role of Police Officers

There are three key distinctions in defining the role of police officers which include: (1) statutory authority to make arrests or apprehensions; (2) authorization by the agency of the employee to carry firearms; and (3) the prevention, detection, investigation, prosecution of, or the incarceration of any person for any violation of law.^{1,2} When responding to 911 calls and emergencies, police officers may also serve as first responders, mediators, and social workers.³

Criminal Offenses

Violent criminal offenses are defined as murder, rape, assault (including sexual), and robbery. Nonviolent criminal offenses include property, drug, and public order offenses which do not involve a threat of harm or an actual attack upon a victim. A recent study that assessed police response to service calls across nine police agencies in different regions of the U.S. from 2013 and 2017 showed that approximately two-thirds of service calls do not seem to be for violent crimes

(traffic violations, peace disturbances, property crimes).³ The percentage of these service calls that resulted in arrest or citation varied between crime and region; for example, traffic violations that resulted in arrest or citation ranged from 1.3 to 28.4%.³ In 2018, approximately 13% of all Missouri criminal offenses were violent crimes.⁴ More specifically, 22% of the arrests made in Kansas City and St. Louis were for violent offenses.⁵

Recent research indicates that to prevent 1 homicide, 10 police officers need to be added to a city's police department.⁶ Additionally, adding more police reduces other violent crimes, like robbery, rape, and assault.⁶ At the same time, adding more police officers to a city means more individuals may get arrested for nonviolent crimes, which disproportionately affects Black and Hispanic communities.⁶

Public Health Crises and Criminal Offenses

[Homelessness, mental illness and substance use disorders](#) are significant public health crises in Missouri. Individuals may experience more than one of these conditions;^{7,8} the 2019 Missouri Homelessness Study indicates that mental health illness and/or substance use disorders affect 20% of homeless Missourians.⁹ Individuals experiencing mental illness, homelessness, and/or substance abuse are likely to be jailed for both violent and non-violent offenses and be repeat offenders.^{6,7} When an individual experiences a mental health crisis, they are more likely to interact, and sometimes *only* interact, with a law enforcement officer instead of a medical or mental health professional.^{3,7,8}

Homelessness

There is a link between homelessness and incarcerations. In general, homeless individuals (including those who utilize shelters) are more likely to be arrested for nonviolent offenses such as trespassing, loitering, and acquiring inhabitable living spaces (park benches).⁸ These are often referred to as "quality of life" crimes. Homeless individuals are more likely to be repeat offenders for these low-level offenses, especially for those who are unsheltered. A recent survey of 441 homeless individuals conducted in Denver, Colorado showed approximately 70% of police officer and homeless individual contacts resulted in citation and 36% resulted in incarceration.¹⁰ Additionally, 10% of police and homeless encounters resulted in referral to social services and 5% resulted in calling outreach workers.¹⁰

Re-entry programs that emphasize housing have the potential to break the homelessness-jail cycle. The 2016 Denver Supportive Housing Social Impact Bond Initiative (Denver SIB) aimed to increase housing stability and decrease jail stays among homeless individuals using a Housing First approach (prioritize permanent housing for those experiencing homelessness). The program reduced people's interactions with the criminal justice system with a 34% reduction in police contacts and 40% reduction in subsequent arrests. The program also resulted in decreased costs associated with other public services (~\$8.6 million), including emergency room visits.¹¹

Mental Illness

Individuals with mental illness are more likely to be arrested for minor offenses; this is partly due to the fact that the individual's presenting symptomatic behavior may be perceived as

disrespectful or hostile.¹² In Missouri, 25% of people with a serious mental illness have been arrested by the police in their lifetime.¹³ Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) models involve mental health and medical professionals with the primary goal to reduce police officer and citizen injuries during an emergency interaction with an individual experiencing a mental health crisis.¹⁴ Over 5,700 Missouri police officers are CIT trained and the MO CIT Council receives funds from the state through the Department of Mental Health and outside donation resources. Eighty-three counties in Missouri have an established CIT Council, although all counties may have CIT trained officers.

There is strong evidence to suggest that CIT implementation results in significant increases in the number of identified mental health calls, more transports to the emergency department for mental health-related reasons, and an increase in the proportion of transports that are voluntary.¹⁵ However, there is limited research about the extent to which CITs have reduced injury or death for individuals with mental health crises during police officer interactions.¹⁴ With recent implementation in January 2021, mental health crises called into the 911 call system are diverted directly to [Behavioral Health Response](#) in St. Louis City, however, the effectiveness of this partnership has yet to be evaluated.

Substance Use Disorder

In February 2021, Oregon decriminalized possession of small amounts of schedule I drugs and now refers individuals possessing drugs to addiction recovery services. Prior to the decriminalization of drug possession, Oregon ranked first in most cases of substance abuse and addiction and ranked lowest in addiction services.¹⁶ Given the lack of addiction services and resources in Oregon, it is unknown if this shift of funds into different resources can be truly met due to accessibility. Other states have proposed similar legislation to Oregon, including California, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, Virginia, and Washington.

Public Safety Program Spending and Outcomes

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, state and local police-protection expenditures per capita increased 26%, accounting for inflation, from 2000 to 2017 across the U.S.¹⁷ Approximately 8% of the Missouri state budget goes to fund public safety and corrections with a large portion of police funds coming from local funds.¹⁸ The total appropriated budget for Kansas City police departments for FY '21-'22 is \$265 million (or 43% of the city's funds);^{4,19} in 2021, St. Louis police department expenditures were \$151 million (or 27% of the city's funds).^{4,20} These funds are used for salaries, ammunition, fleet and automobile maintenance, technology, education and training, and administrative services and supplies.

Funding for health and social services can provide specialized support to individuals experiencing mental health concerns, addiction, and homelessness, and help reduce arrests for people with mental health conditions and addiction.^{7,8} In rural and low-income areas, police officers may be the only option for the wide variety of potential crises given that these areas may not have the infrastructure or resources available to develop and improve mental health and social service needs.³

Several large cities such as Baltimore, Denver, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Portland, and San Francisco have restructured their public safety budget to put \$4 to \$150 million (3 to 9%) into mental health services, programs and resources that will help underserved communities. Given the recent implementation of such measures, there is no evaluation available on how reallocating public safety funds to other services has affected crime rates and outcomes.

References

1. 34 U.S.C § 50301 (2008)
2. RsMO 556.061 (2020)
3. Lum, C., Koper, C. S., & Wu, X. (2021). Can We Really Defund the Police? A Nine-Agency Study of Police Response to Calls for Service. *Police Quarterly*, doi: 10986111211035002.
4. Missouri State Highway Patrol. (2018). Crime in Missouri. Retrieved August 2021 from <https://www.mshp.dps.missouri.gov/MSHPWeb/SAC/CIM/CrimeInMissouri.html#>
5. Vera Institute. (n.d.) What Policing Costs: A look at spending in America's biggest cities. Retrieved August 2021 from <https://www.vera.org/publications/what-policing-costs-in-americas-biggest-cities>
6. Chalfin, A., Hansen, B., Weisburst, E. K., & Williams, M. C. (2020). *Police Force Size and Civilian Race* (No. w28202). National Bureau of Economic Research.
7. Fischer, S. N., Shinn, M., Shrout, P., & Tsemberis, S. (2008). Homelessness, mental illness, and criminal activity: Examining patterns over time. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 42(3-4), 251.
8. Roy, L., Crocker, A. G., Nicholls, T. L., Latimer, E. A., & Ayllon, A. R. (2014). Criminal behavior and victimization among homeless individuals with severe mental illness: a systematic review. *Psychiatric services*, 65(6), 739-750.
9. Missouri Housing Development Commission. (2019). 2019 Missouri Statewide Homelessness Study. Retrieved from https://www.mhdc.com/ci/Missouri%20Homelessness%20Study_Final_11.18.19.pdf
10. Robinson, T. (2019). No right to rest: Police enforcement patterns and quality of life consequences of the criminalization of homelessness. *Urban affairs review*, 55(1), 41-73.
11. Urban Institute. (2021). Housing First Breaks the Homelessness-Jail Cycle. Retrieved August 2021 from <https://www.urban.org/features/housing-first-breaks-homelessness-jail-cycle>
12. Charette, Y., Crocker, A. G., & Billette, I. (2014). Police encounters involving citizens with mental illness: use of resources and outcomes. *Psychiatric Services*, 65(4), 511-516.
13. National Alliance on Mental Health. (2021). Mental Health in Missouri. Retrieved August 2021 from <https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/StateFactSheets/MissouriStateFactSheet.pdf>
14. Rogers, M. S., McNeil, D. E., & Binder, R. L. (2019). Effectiveness of police crisis intervention training programs. *J Am Acad Psychiatry Law*, 47(4), 414-21.
15. Vera Institute. (2019). Crisis Response Services for People with Mental Illnesses or Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: A Review of the Literature on Police-based and Other First Response Models. Retrieved August 2021 from <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/crisis-response-services-for-people-with-mental-illnesses-or-intellectual-and-developmental-disabilities.pdf>
16. Oregon Criminal Justice Commission. (2019). Analysis of Oregon's Publicly Funded Substance Abuse Treatment System: Report and Findings for Senate Bill 1041. Retrieved August 2021 from https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/citizen_engagement/Reports/2019-OCJC-SB1041-Report.pdf
17. United States Department of Justice. (2020). State and Local Government Expenditures on Police Protection in the U.S., 2000-2017. Retrieved August 2021 from <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/slgeppus0017.pdf>
18. Missouri Budget Project. (2021). Missouri State Budget Overview. Retrieved August 2021 from <https://www.mobudget.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/MO-Budget-Overview-2021.pdf>
19. Kansas City, Missouri Police Department. (2021). Appropriated Budget 2021-2022. Retrieved August 2021 from <https://www.kcpd.org/media/3444/kcpd-fy-2021-22-adopted-budget.pdf>
20. St. Louis Police Department Expenditures. (2021). Retrieved August 2021 from <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/budget/transparency/expenditure/departments.cfm?center=6500000&fiscalYear=2020&fund=1010>