

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/what-policing-costs-in-americas-biggest-cities>

Policy Issue Resources

A Look at Spending in Americas Biggest Cities

Modern day police departments are among the most powerful local government agencies and much of that power lies in their funding. As protests against police brutality and the overpolicing of Black communities sweep the country, people are demanding cutting police department budgets.

The message is clear: *now* is the time to spend less on policing and more on communities.

To explore the cost of policing at the local level, Vera compiled data from the fiscal year 2020 adopted budgets of 72 of the biggest cities across the United States.

Choosing a city will take you to a more detailed breakdown of the policing budget with a calculator that allows you to explore how changes to each spending category could reduce the total. Where available, the budgets are contextualized with data on historic policing expenditures and enforcement practices, including racial disparities in arrests.

The table below presents fiscal year 2020 overall policing budgets, the percent of city funds allocated to police departments, the number of city dollars per resident allocated to the police, and the number of police employees per city resident. Clicking on each column allows you to sort the data to see how your city compares to others.

Learn more about Veras [methodology and data sources](#).

The police make 10.5 million arrests a year, mostly for minor offenses. In fact, less than 5 percent were for incidents that involved serious violence. Every police encounter threatens escalation, injury, and death. Real accountability in policing is long overdue. Vera is committed to dismantling the current culture of policing and working toward s ...

Systemic policing reform is long overdue

Protesters are flooding the streets demanding change after the death of George Floyd and so many other Black people at the hands of police. Crowds are echoing the rallying cry to defund the police. But what exactly do they mean? Some advocacy groups are calling for the current policing structure to be dismantled and rebuilt, investing more resour ...

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