**Police Budgets Writeup**

During his State of the Union Address On March 1, 2022 [President Biden stood in front of America](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=329390639150172) and declared:

“We should all agree: the answer is not to defund the police—it's to fund the police. Fund them!”

Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva [held a press conference on March 9](https://lasd.org/defunding-has-consequences/) about staff shortages and defunding, opening with and titling his presentation: “defunding has consequences.”

La'Ron Singletary, a Rochester, NY former police chief who is now a candidate for Congress, said on [Fox News earlier](https://video.foxnews.com/v/6305059291001#sp=show-clips) this year he is “seeing the consequences of the defund the police movement.”

Dallas Police Chief Eddie Garcia said in a [TV interview with Jeanine Pirro](https://twitter.com/JudgeJeanine/status/1408959206946922496?s=20) that the reason for violent crime increases are, in part, due to the “dismantling [and] defunding combination, you have officer morale — where honorable, respectable officers have felt under siege, unappreciated, undervalued — they’re human, and that impacts their work productivity. What’s happened is we’ve lost proactive police engagement where we need it the most.”

**Have law enforcement agencies actually been defunded?**

According to an ABC Owned Television Station analysis of more than 100 departments in cities and counties across the country, governments have largely ***not*** defunded law enforcement agencies.

Of the departments that had adopted budget numbers available for FY 2018-19 through FY 2021-22, just 11 departments saw a decrease in their adopted budgets between FY19 and FY22:

* Chula Vista Police Department in California – by 12%
* Seattle Police Department in Washington – by 11%
* Buffalo Police Department in New York – by 8%
* Glendale Police Department in Arizona – by 8%
* Washington D.C. Metropolitan Police – by 7%
* Milwaukee Police Department in Wisconsin – by 6%
* Corpus Cristi Police Department in Texas – by 5%
* New York City Police Department – by 3%
* St. Louis Police Department in Missouri – by 2%
* Boston Police Department in Massachusetts – by 1%.
* Suffolk County Sheriff in New York – by one thousandth of a percent.

The remaining agencies saw an increase.

Of the top 5 increases in adopted budgets between FY19 and FY22, four were in California: Sacramento PD (+44%), Bakersfield PD (+42%), Riverside County Sheriff (+26%), and San Diego PD (+26%).

* Oakland PD and San Jose PD saw 18% increases
* Chicago PD and San Bernardino County Sheriff saw 15% increases
* Fresno PD saw a 14% increase
* Raleigh PD had an 11% increase
* Los Angeles PD and Houston PD saw 9%
* San Francisco PD and Los Angeles County Sheriff saw 4% increases.
* Philadelphia PD saw a 3% increase in its proposed budget.

**Budget changes over the years**

Only two departments saw decreases in their adopted budgets between all four of the years we collected. (Buffalo PD in New York and Milwaukee PD in Wisconsin.)

Roughly half, about 51 departments, saw increases in their budgets between all four of the years studied.

A larger share of the roughly 100 departments, though, had decreases in their budget between FY20 and FY21 – after the murder of George Floyd and the rise of the “Defund the Police” movement.

35 departments saw decreases between these two fiscal years, but only nine of those departments kept the trend and saw decreased budgets the next year. The remaining 26 departments had budgets went back up the next year, for FY22.

**Austin Police Department**

The most notable of this pattern is the [Austin Police Department](https://financeonline.austintexas.gov/afo/afo_content.cfm?s=1), which saw a 33% drop in its adopted budget, from $434 million in FY20 to $293 million in [FY 21](https://assets.austintexas.gov/budget/20-21/downloads/2020-21_Approved_Budget.pdf). (Although the [next year’s budget (FY22)](https://assets.austintexas.gov/budget/21-22/downloads/FY22_Approved_Budget.pdf) showed the amended amount to be about $310 million.)

The plan was to reallocate funding to other community safety needs including:

* Additional staffing and resources for the Office of Police Oversight and the Equity Office
* Full implementation of recommendations for a clinician‐based approach to mental health emergency response including an expanded EMCOT contract and 7 new community health paramedics
* Expanded funding for mental health, family violence prevention, and immigrant legal services in the Austin Public Health department
* More funding for the Housing Trust Fund
* Additional police officer training on trauma‐informed response, unconscious bias, racial and cultural sensitivity, and on the use of Noloxone for people experiencing a drug overdose
* The creation of a new Civil Rights Office housed within the Law Department.

Then, in FY22, the department saw a 51% increase to about $443 million, so the city would be in compliance with the Texas Legislature’s HB 1900, which “prohibits a municipality with a population above 250,000 from decreasing its Police budget amount year-over-year, effective for the adoption of the FY 2021-22 budget,” according to the city budget.

**Minneapolis Police Department**

The city of Minneapolis had a similar, but less drastic change compared to Austin. In FY21, the police department’s adopted budget was about $164 million, a 15% decrease from the $193 million in FY20. In FY22, the budget went back up to $193 million.

However, this wasn’t just limited to the police department. Minneapolis’s entire city budget decreased about 8% from 1.88 billion in FY20 to 1.73 billion in FY21. Then, it went back up 12% to 1.94 billion in FY22.

The police department’s budget went from about 10.3% of the total city budget, to about 9.5%, back up to 9.97%. So while some of the cuts may have been due to attempts to “defund” or reallocate funding, some of the change can also be attributed to the entire city budget decreasing.

**Interactive graphic**

[This searchable interactive graph](https://abcotvdata.github.io/police-budgets/police-budgets-graphs/index.html) shows police department budgets for FY19 through FY22 and can be embedded in any story.

**Police Budget reporting guide**

Firstly, do not hesitate to reach out to the data journalists with any questions. We are more than happy to help anything.

This is a reporting guide to be used alongside the above budget analysis findings. You’ll have access to over 100 police department budgets from 2019 to 2022, in some cases we may be able to get you the next fiscal year as this is budget season for many municipalities.

In the data there are two key sets of numbers to look at: “Actual” and “Budget/Approved/Adopted/etc.”

The “Actual” budget is just that, what it actually cost to run that department for that year.

The other number (Budget/Approved/Adopted/ect) is what the government planned on spending. Notice that the two numbers for the same year are different, one could be higher or lower, and that’s worth investigating.

* If higher: Was there more overtime? Were patrols increased and where?
* If lower: How did the city manage to cut costs? Is the city losing police? Did COVID budget woes have anything to do with it?

We’ve provided two sets of data: One comparing just the adopted budgets for each department, and one showing the other available types (adopted, actuals and in some cases, revised or estimated budgets.)

Next, you’ll see the 19 to 22 change numbers, that’s a percent change in the planned budget from pre-defund and the most budget. That will show how much the budget has changed.

There is more than likely a hardball question to ask, you have the official numbers so, “What changed between 2019 and 2022?” For instance, New York City had numerous politicians and civil leaders, backing the “Defund” movement, the result, a 3% drop in funding. Now the mayor will barely mention defund, save for a political dig at progressive politicians there.

Good questions to ask:

* Was that enough of a decrease?
* Have they changed priorities or shifted their stance?
* Where did that money go?

For many departments we also have staffing numbers by year, so feel free to reach out and we can help get those.

Staffing numbers can be a key element in these stories. For example, the NYPD is losing thousands of veteran police — a story on its own — and worth asking local officials about in conjunction with their policing efforts. Crime rates are rising across the board, so getting academics also can add depth and authority to the story.

For instance, WABC used Maria Haberfeld in a story about police retirements, and may use her again for this story. While the defunding was minimal in NYC, there was a demoralizing effect on police.

*Maria Haberfeld, a criminologist and professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, laid plenty of blame at the feat of New Yorkers.*

*"They basically feel like the profession is under attack," Haberfeld said. "They're under attack on a daily basis whether they do right or wrong, and who wants to go to work every day being disrespected and criticized.”*

Of course there are community activists to report on, while political support for defund movements has seemingly evaporated. But their takes on the failure or local success would be good for balancing the story. Crime survivor stories can also be used that can add massive impact. How do they feel about the budget going up or down?