



Although crime rates are at the lowest they have been in over 30 years,¹ the number of arrests has declined only slightly between 2009 and 2010² and the U.S. still spends more than \$100 billion on police every year.³ This money goes to fund 714,921 sworn police officers and an increasing number of militarized police units.

Police play a role in protecting communities from violent and property crime. However, police forces have morphed over the years from a locally-funded and managed entity to protect public safety, to also serving as a federally-funded jobs initiative, an engine for surveillance, and a militaristic special forces agency engaged in a war on drugs, gangs, and youth. Federal government funds and involvement have helped create large police forces that are disconnected from communities and operate in a punitive rather than preventative way resulting in more arrests, more prison, and more costs to taxpayers, among other negative effects on communities. It is not just the sheer number of police that lead to more arrests and more prison, but also the style of policing, which treats entire communities as though they should be contained, surveilled, and punished.

**Spending on
police
protection has
increased
445%
since 1982.**

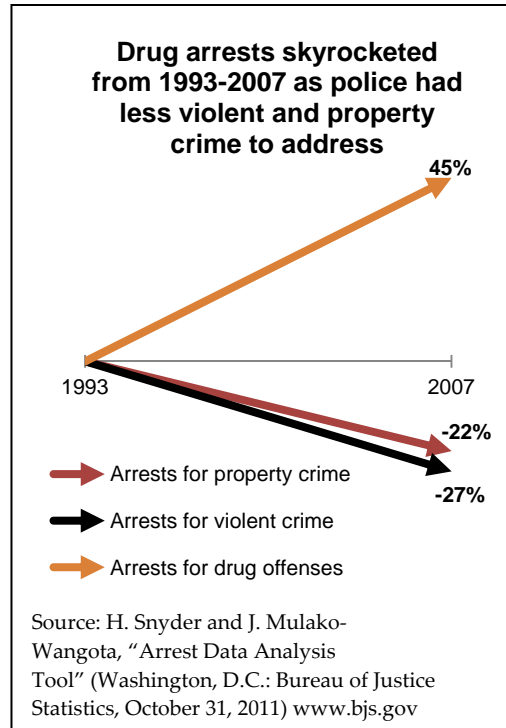
WHAT CREATED THE CURRENT POLICING SYSTEM?

A confluence of factors created the current policing system, including new theories about crime prevention, the focus on individual users in the war on drugs, a general increase in laws, and the adoption of new policing strategies.⁴ A surge in violent crime in the early 1990s also increased focus on police, especially from the federal government. Even though localities continue to fund and hire most police, the federal government infused more money into jurisdictions through such laws as the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which established federal grants to fund local jurisdictions to hire 100,000 police officers through Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grants, positions localities would then need to fund themselves. As localities hired thousands of new police officers, the U.S. saw dramatic increases in arrests and prison populations.

EVEN THOUGH CRIME WAS ON THE DECLINE, WE CONTINUED TO HIRE MORE POLICE.

However, crime had already started to decline by the time these grants were distributed and implemented. Therefore, additional police only contributed to increases in arrests for both serious and minor offenses, without significant additional impact on crime – although law enforcement took credit for declines. The increases in arrests were, however, a likely major driver of incarceration rates, which increased 39 percent from 1993⁵ to 2010, reaching 732 per 100,000.⁶ And the greatest impact of these policies was seen in communities of color.

As arrest rates have not dropped at a rate corresponding to that of violent and property crime, police are now arresting people for other types of offenses, particularly drug offenses. These arrests, often for possession of very small amounts of drugs, carry tremendous costs both to society and to the people involved, who must then face the rest of their life with the collateral consequences of a criminal record.

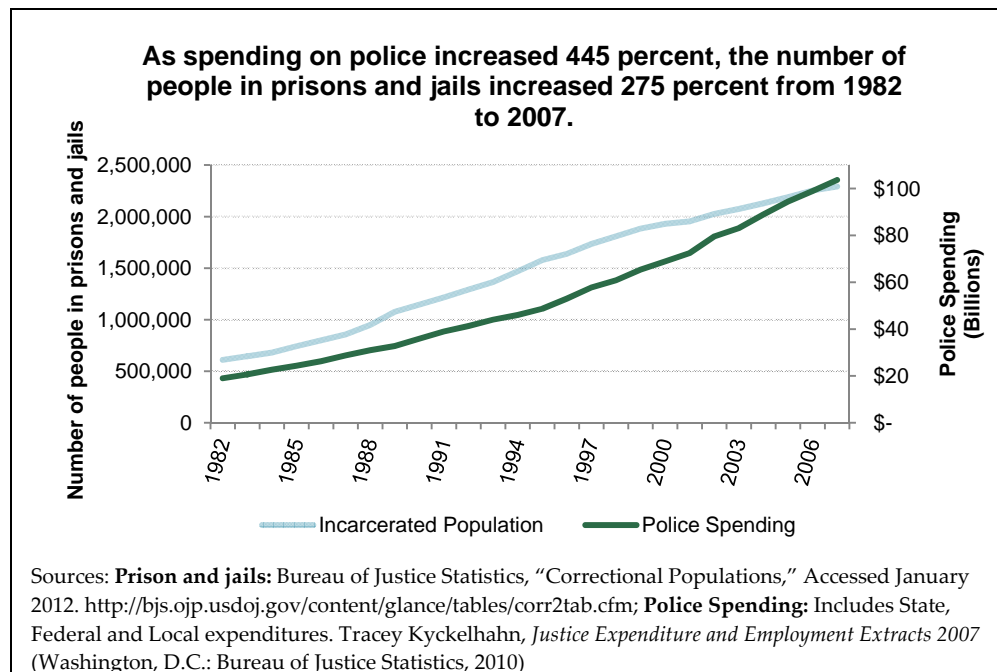


public safety at a very high cost. Policymakers should be directing funds toward true community-based and collaborative policing efforts, prevention, intervention, treatment, education, and a host of other programs and initiatives that have been shown to promote healthy safe communities. When arrests are the bottom line instead of public safety and healthy, prosperous communities, our priorities are skewed.

The combined numbers of police, encouraged by federal funding and aggressive policing, are representative of a continued misguided approach to keeping communities safe. Because the Department of Justice considers "successful law enforcement policies" as those that increase the number of people arrested and imprisoned, governments are shortchanging the public in regards to

argue that some communities are not seriously harmed by crime, but that communities and the federal government should reconsider how much is being spent and on what type of policing. A balanced approach is needed that concentrates on prevention and doesn't result in arrests and surveillance focused on communities of color.

JPI does not argue that there should be no law enforcement, nor do we



The following are some of the main findings from the report:

Expenditures, not crime drive increases in police forces and arrests.

Crime is at the lowest levels it has been in over 30 years, but funding for police has increased 445

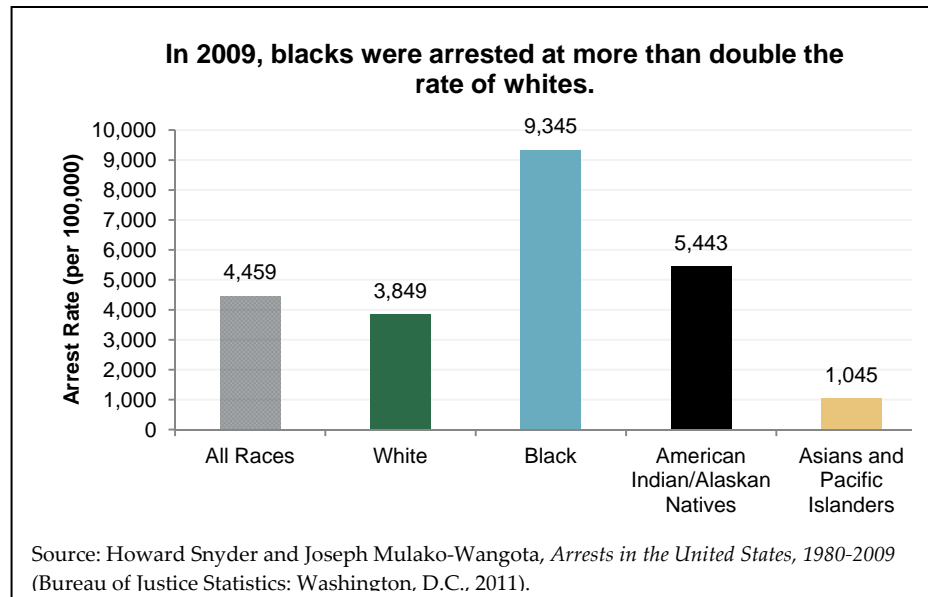
percent between 1982 and 2007, with federal funding increasing the most at 729 percent.

More police don't necessarily keep us safer. Studies of federally-funded police programs, specifically Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) found that the program did not significantly contribute to the dramatic

decrease in crime over the last 30 years. Also, there is no clear correlation between spending more on police and lower violent crime rates, as state level data on both shows.

Crime is down, but arrests continue, especially for drug offenses. Violent and property crime rates have fallen 47 percent and 43 percent since 1991, when the crime rate was at its highest, but arrests have fallen only 20 percent. Instead of making arrests for violent and property crime, police focus on drug offenses, especially small amounts of drugs. Arrests for drug offenses have increased 45 percent between 1993 and 2010, while arrests for violent and property crime have fallen 27 and 22 percent, respectively.

Militaristic policing does more harm than good. Drug task forces, S.W.A.T. teams, gang task forces, and other militaristic styles of policing have resulted in corruption, deaths of innocent people, wrongful convictions, and the disproportionate arrest of people of color. These types of police forces have done very little to improve public safety, but significantly harm communities and the image of police.



Some communities are disproportionately affected by policing. People of color and lower income communities experience law enforcement in a concentrated way. For Black communities, this is particularly true for drug arrests. Although Blacks make up 13 percent of the population, they make up 31 percent of arrests for drug offenses, while whites are 72 percent of the population, but 67 percent of arrests. Meanwhile both groups report similar rates of drug use.⁷

The negative effects of over-policing, including punitive, militaristic policing, outweigh the benefits. Research indicates that more investments in police lead to more arrests, especially for drug offenses. Arrests are the first step to involvement in the justice system, which carries with it the potential for incarceration and a host of negative outcomes for individuals and communities, including high taxpayer costs.

Community-supportive and supported policing protects public safety without the negative side effects. Policing initiatives that are

community-driven and supported have had similar, if not better public safety benefits as more aggressive, arrest-driven policing initiatives. San Diego's, now defunded, community supported policing initiative had similar public safety outcomes as New York's zero tolerance approach, with fewer arrests and without complaints of police misconduct or abuse.

More spending on policing means fewer resources available for other public safety strategies that are better for communities. Investments in community based drug and mental health treatment, education, and other social institutions can make communities safer while building their other assets and improving life outcomes for all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Reform laws and sentencing so police don't have to pick and choose. State and federal policymakers must take sentencing reform seriously, reducing the harmful impacts of harsh sentences, and must examine both drug laws and those related to other lesser offenses to

determine where they might be rolled back or eliminated completely.

2. Reallocate resources to positive social investments known to improve public safety. Research shows that investing in services and programs that keep people out of the justice system is more effective at improving public safety and promoting community well-being than investing in law enforcement.⁸

3. Focus law enforcement on the most serious offenses Arrests for low-level offenses have less of an impact on public safety, but still use up considerable law enforcement resources. Focusing law enforcement efforts on the more serious offenses will allow officers to use their resources more effectively, thereby improving public safety.

4. Implement policies that allow police to issue citations over arrests for certain offenses. A number of cities across the country have started to recognize the waste involved in arresting people for certain low-level offenses, which result in people spending days and sometimes longer in jails.

The Justice Policy Institute is a national nonprofit organization that changes the conversation around justice reform and advances policies that promote well-being and justice for all people and communities. To read the full report, *Rethinking the Blues: How we police in the U.S. and at what cost*, please visit www.justicepolicy.org or contact us at Justice Policy Institute 1012 14th St. NW, Suite 400 Washington, DC 20005 Phone: (202) 558-7974 or at info@justicepolicy.org.

¹ FBI Uniform Crime Report Data Tool, "Estimated Crime in the United States – Total," accessed December 2011. www.ucrdatatool.gov/Search/Crime/State/RunCrimeStatebyState.cfm

² FBI Uniform Crime Report, *Crime in the United States, 2010* www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm

³ Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Employment and Expenditure," Accessed October, 2011. <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=5>

⁴ Samuel Walker and Charles M. Katz, *The Police in America: An Introduction Fifth Edition* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2005).

⁵ Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics Online, *Table 6.13.2009 Number and rate (per 100,000 U.S. residents) of persons in State and Federal prisons and local jails* (Albany, NY: 2010). <http://www.albany.edu/sourcebook/pdf/t6132009.pdf>

⁶ Lauren E. Glaze, *Correctional Populations in the United States, 2010* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011) <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpus10.pdf>

⁷ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies (2008). *Results from the 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings* (NSDUH Series H-34, DHHS Publication No. SMA 08-4343). Rockville, MD.

⁸ See Justice Policy Institute, *Pruning Prisons and Costs of Confinement*, www.justicepolicy.org