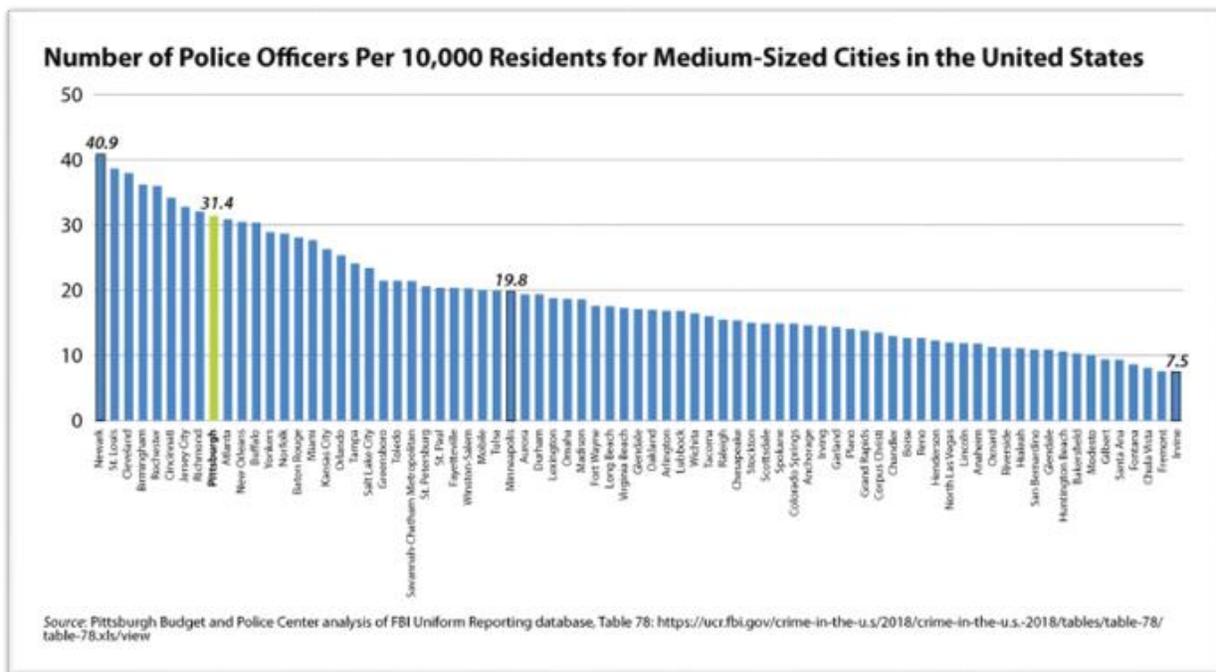


## Funding for Police in Mayor Peduto’s Proposed 2021 Budget



The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and 17-year-old Pittsburgh-area resident Antwon Rose has forced our country and city to face the reality and prevalence of systemic racism, militarism, and police violence towards Black Americans. While the phrase *defund the police* has become highly politicized, individuals on both sides of the issue tend to agree, in principle, that an overreliance on police to solve today’s deepening social and economic problems is unsustainable and ineffective. As the city proposes city-wide department cuts, police spending continues to encompass a large percentage of the budget.<sup>1</sup> A larger evaluation of what public safety looks like is necessary for Pittsburgh to be a safe community for all residents.

**Police spending in Pittsburgh is high relative to other cities.** Pittsburgh is one of the most heavily policed medium-sized cities with 31 police officers per 10,000 residents compared to the median of 19. This is not justified by crime rate levels at which Pittsburgh ranks in the middle.<sup>2</sup>



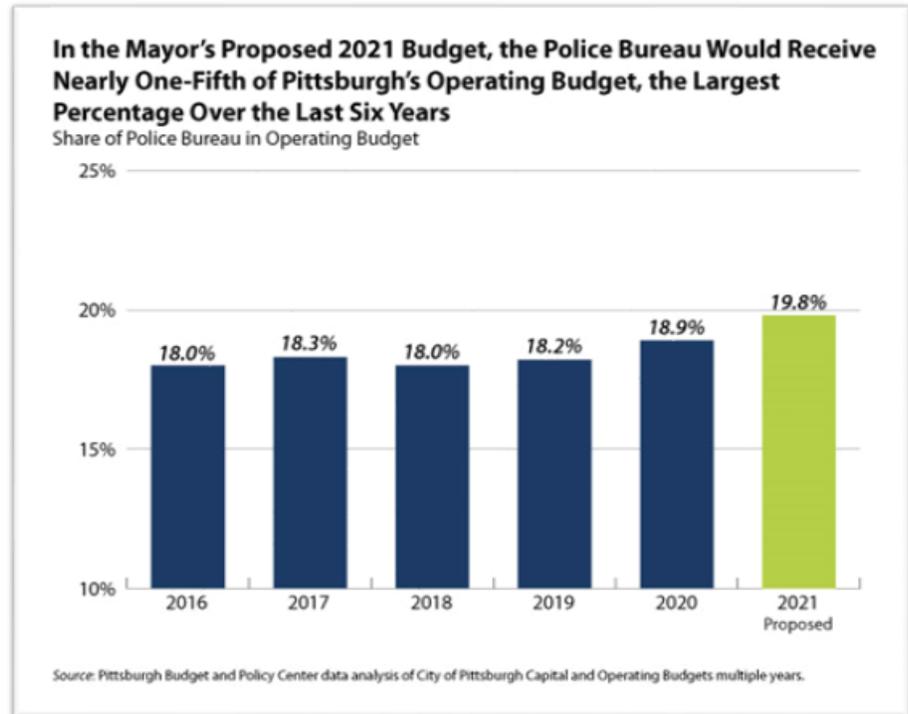
As the city enacts department cuts due to the COVID-19 recession, the mayor has proposed a police budget cut of 2.9%, smaller than most other departments. The Police Bureau’s share of the operating budget has grown to its highest point in the last six years (see graph below). If the Police Bureau budget

<sup>1</sup> Police expenditures account for 20% of the operating budget making it the second highest department expenditure.

<sup>2</sup> In 2018, Pittsburgh had 58 violent crimes per 10,000 residents and nearly 360 per 10,000 residents (considering all crimes). This puts Pittsburgh in the middle of the pack for medium-sized cities, ranking 37<sup>th</sup> out of 79 cities for violent crime (47<sup>th</sup> percentile) and 39<sup>th</sup> out of 79 cities for all crimes (49<sup>th</sup> percentile).

remained at its 2016 level (18% of the operating budget), it would be funded at \$101.5 million this year, nearly \$10 million less than the mayor's proposal.

**Reimagine Public Safety:** A focus on reimagining police spending, while bolstering public safety, could benefit all Pittsburgh residents. The city recognizes that all the situations that currently fall under police purview do not require a police presence.<sup>3</sup> The funding of the Office of Community Health and Safety is a step forward as are other police reform measures passed by City Council. But greater investment in communities on the front end will lead to less need for police intervention on the back end.



**Recommendations:** There are measures the city can take to reimagine police spending, including:

- Increase the reallocation of funds from the Police Bureau to other community priorities. If the Police Bureau's funding level stayed at its 2016 level, Pittsburgh could redirect nearly \$10 million to affordable housing and double the funding available in the Housing Opportunity Fund.
- Adopt the Task Force on Reform Priorities' recommendations with clear timelines for implementation. These reform priorities include both cultural and policy changes that aim to bridge the gap in police culture and community interactions.
- Shift additional money to the Office of Community Health and Safety. Ensure qualified staff are hired to address issues that the police typically deal with, including mental health, homelessness prevention, and domestic abuse support. This will reduce the workload of police officers and contribute to community safety.
- Increase transparency in police budget expenditures. Police spending is greater than the expenditures outlined in the Bureau of Police operating budget. The city should provide citizens with a comprehensive breakdown of police spending, including in the operating budget, the capital budgets, and multiple trust funds.

For the full report, please go to: [https://krc-pbpc.org/research\\_publication/budgeting-our-values-analysis-pgh-2021-budget-proposal/](https://krc-pbpc.org/research_publication/budgeting-our-values-analysis-pgh-2021-budget-proposal/).

<sup>3</sup> Councilwoman Erika Strassburger reports that the top five 911 call types are "regarding traffic stops," "burglar alarms," "parking complaints," "welfare checks," and "domestic violence." In most instances, armed police are not necessary to address these problems.