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U.S. Department of Justice
Bureau of Justice Statistics



Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report

Police Employment and Expenditure Trends

This report presents trend data on police expenditures and employment for 88 large cities in the United States. Expenditure data cover the period of 1938 to 1982; employment data are presented for 1954 to 1982. The 88 cities included in the study all had populations of at least 100,000 in 1980. The average population was 346,000 and the median was 205,000. These cities, located in 35 different States, constitute about half of all the cities in the United States with at least 100,000 residents. Among the major cities included are Baltimore, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Philadelphia, San Diego, and Washington, D.C.

The data in this report are derived from the International City Management Association's Municipal Yearbook for each of the years 1938-82, supplemented by population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and crime data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports.

Major findings of this study include:

- Between 1938 and 1982 spending for police services increased 37-fold in nominal dollars. Adjusted for inflation, police expenditures increased 5 1/2 times during this period, peaking in 1977.
- Per capita police expenditures adjusted for inflation nearly quadrupled during this period, peaking in 1978.
- The number of police employees, sworn and civilian, nearly doubled in the 18 years from 1954 to 1972. In the 10 years since, police employment has remained fairly constant.
- The police share of total city budgets

February 1986

This report on police expenditures and employment in 88 American cities is part of a major Bureau of Justice Statistics initiative to establish a program for collecting nationally representative police administrative and management data. In cooperation with the University of Maryland's Institute for Criminal Justice and Criminology, BJS is developing the capacity for gathering information on the many services police departments provide to a community as well as the amount of resources and effort allocated to each.

As local, State, and national officials make the important decisions about what services government should provide and at what level, data on the past and present allocation of government resources will figure prominently in the policymaking process. It is our hope that this and future BJS reports on police services will be of use to those interested and involved in promoting the public safety.

Steven R. Schlesinger
Director

increased steadily from 8% in 1940 to 14% in 1980.

- Northeastern cities and cities with a million or more residents spend considerably more per capita on police services than do cities in other regions or cities with fewer residents.
- Although cities with the highest crime rates spend more per capita for police protection than do cities with lower crime rates, there is little difference in per capita police spending between the cities with the lowest crime rates and those with the next to lowest crime rates.

Patterns in police expenditures, 1938-82

Total police expenditures for the 88 cities included in this study increased from 80 million dollars in 1938 to more than 3 billion dollars in 1982, a 37-fold

increase (table 1). Much of this increase was the result of inflation: in constant 1967 dollars spending in 1982 was about 5 1/2 times greater than in 1938. Analyzed by decades, the increase in constant dollars was 16% in the 1940s, 72% in the 1950s, 103% in the 1960s, and 31% in the 1970s.

The graphic representation of adjusted expenditures shows four distinct phases in expenditure trends (figure 1). From 1938 to the early 1950s adjusted expenditures remained relatively constant. Expenditures then began to increase at a fairly consistent rate through the mid-1960s. Beginning in 1967 the rate of increase accelerated and remained at the higher level until peaking in 1977. Since 1977 real expenditures have dropped slightly.

In addition to controlling for inflation, it is possible to control for the effect of population increases on police

Actual and adjusted police expenditures, 1938-82

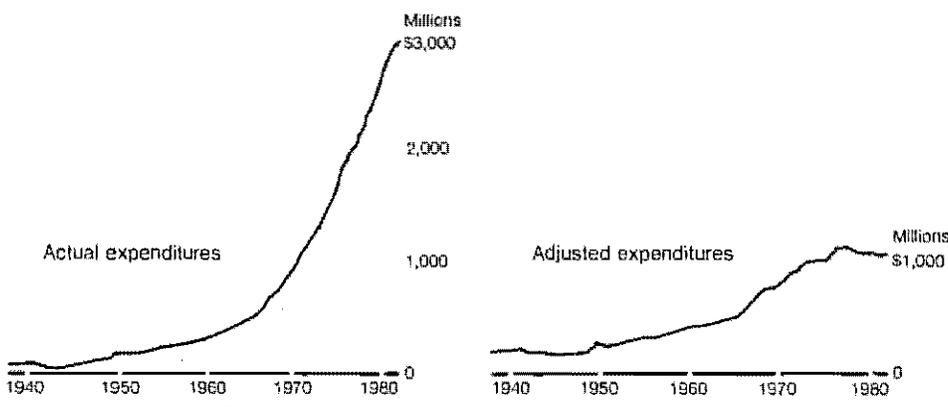


Figure 1

Table 1. Police expenditures in 88 cities, 1938-82

Year	Total expenditures in millions of dollars		Adjusted per capita expenditures*
	Actual	Adjusted for inflation*	
1938	\$80,232	\$190,123	\$7.05
1939	79,615	191,382	7.29
1940	79,071	188,264	7.33
1941	81,792	185,469	7.19
1942	78,254	160,357	6.59
1943	83,023	160,276	6.46
1944	87,613	166,249	6.77
1945	90,030	167,032	6.89
1946	101,321	173,203	7.33
1947	117,151	175,114	7.71
1948	134,162	196,078	8.35
1949	163,740	228,768	7.58
1950	157,971	219,100	7.70
1951	165,964	213,321	7.70
1952	187,403	235,727	8.45
1953	200,389	250,172	9.07
1954	213,563	265,296	9.92
1955	235,391	293,496	10.91
1956	246,564	302,994	11.62
1957	276,690	323,476	12.93
1958	294,237	339,766	13.99
1959	311,236	356,513	10.90
1960	334,345	376,939	11.69
1961	356,778	393,190	12.33
1962	376,214	415,247	12.93
1963	396,524	432,414	13.48
1964	425,449	457,964	14.28
1965	458,715	485,413	15.23
1966	494,339	508,641	16.11
1967	597,868	597,868	18.42
1968	722,264	693,152	20.70
1969	816,711	743,817	18.87
1970	888,132	763,656	19.62
1971	1,020,587	841,374	21.62
1972	1,153,018	920,206	23.49
1973	1,260,966	947,382	24.61
1974	1,458,435	987,431	25.00
1975	1,598,376	991,548	25.70
1976	1,835,616	1,076,608	27.97
1977	2,015,898	1,110,688	28.73
1978	2,150,306	1,100,412	28.94
1979	2,283,043	1,050,158	27.85
1980	2,461,085	997,198	26.93
1981	2,738,846	1,004,716	27.02
1982	3,022,667	1,045,544	27.60

*Figures are in constant 1967 dollars, as adjusted for changes in the Consumer Price Index.

spending by examining per capita adjusted expenditures. These increased almost as rapidly as total expenditures, nearly quadrupling between 1938 and 1982, from \$7 per person to almost \$28. Per capita adjusted expenditures peaked in 1978 (figure 2). By decades the increase was 5% in the 1940s, 51% in the 1950s, 69% in the 1960s, and 37% in the 1970s.

Census data for the cities in this study show that the police share of total direct city expenditures has

Table 2. Police employment in 88 cities, 1954-82

Year	Total employees: sworn and civilian	Sworn officers	
		Percent of total*	Number per 1,000 residents*
1954	46,214	88%	1.45
1955	47,686	89	1.52
1956	49,305	89	1.59
1957	50,803	89	1.70
1958	52,350	89	1.77
1959	53,713	88	1.90
1960	54,579	88	1.42
1961	56,080	87	1.47
1962	57,170	86	1.49
1963	59,904	87	1.53
1964	59,671	87	1.61
1965	61,925	87	1.63
1966	61,902	86	1.68
1967	65,367	86	1.67
1968	68,972	96	1.77
1969
1970	79,089	83	1.42
1971	85,753	85	1.83
1972	90,309
1973	87,421	86	2.06
1974	97,786	83	1.93
1975	89,576	82	1.92
1976	88,617	81	1.99
1977	86,212	81	2.03
1978	89,768	81	2.03
1979	89,401	81	2.06
1980	87,641	81	2.00
1981	86,728	80	1.96
1982	87,606	79	1.94

*Data available for between 65 and 77 cities for various years. ...Not available.

almost doubled over the past four decades:

1940	8%
1950	10
1960	11
1970	13
1980	14

Other published data show that the police share of total State and local spending remained at a fairly stable 3-4% from 1950 to 1980.² This difference between the trend in city spending and in combined State and local spending may reflect the fact that increasing proportions of State budgets during the past three decades have been devoted to such social welfare functions as education, public assistance, and health care.

Police employment

Between 1938 and 1982 police employment (sworn and civilian) increased 170% for the 88 cities surveyed, from 32,413 to 87,606 (figure 3). From the mid-1940s through the mid-1960s police employment increased at a fairly consistent rate. The rate then accelerated sharply until reaching its peak in 1972: in just the 6 years from 1966 to 1972 total police employment increased 46% (table 2). After 1972 the total number

¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *City and County Data Books*.

² Report to the Nation on Crime and Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ-87068, October 1983, p. 130.

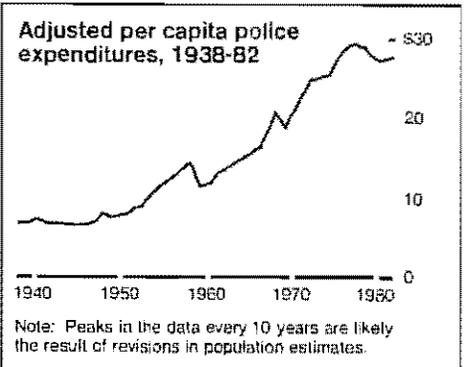


Figure 2

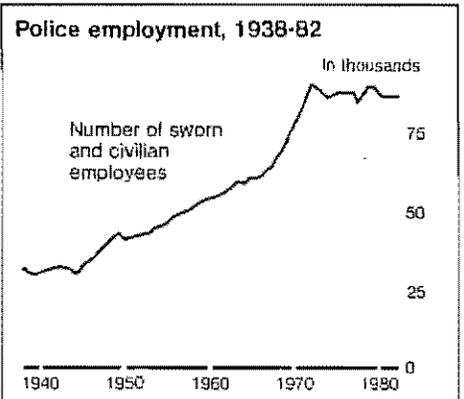


Figure 3

of police employees dropped slightly and has held more or less constant since that time.

Sworn officers as a proportion of total police employees dropped from 89% in 1955 to 79% in 1982, reflecting "civilianization" of police departments over the past 3 decades. On the other hand, the number of sworn officers per 1,000 residents increased by 42% between 1954 and 1973 and has remained fairly stable since.

Thus, the 10% increase in total adjusted police expenditures and the 12% increase in adjusted per capita police expenditures between 1973 and 1982 did not result in more total police employees or in more sworn officers per 1,000 residents. Apparently, the real increases in spending were consumed by nonpersonnel costs or by increases in average salaries or fringe benefits.

Region, population growth, and crime rates

Northeastern cities have, since 1940, spent about 1 1/2 to 2 times as much per capita on the police as cities in the Midwest, South, and West (table 3). For every year examined the cities in these regions were ranked in the same order in per capita police expenditures: Northeast, West, Midwest, and South. During the same period, however, cities located in the Midwest have increased police spending the fastest. There are not large differences in the rates at which cities in the four regions increased police spending.

Overall, the largest cities in the study spent about twice as much per capita for police protection as the smallest ones. The ratio of per capita adjusted police spending between cities with more than 1 million residents and those with 100,000 to 249,999 increased over the four decades, from 1.9 to 2.2. Most of this change occurred between 1960 and 1970.

For each of the years examined the one-quarter of cities with the highest crime rates spent the most per capita on police (table 4). The ratio of such spending between cities with the highest crime rates and those with the lowest was 1.4 in 1960, 1.8 in 1970, and 1.7 in 1980. There was, however, little difference in per capita police spending between the one-quarter of cities with the lowest crime rates and the one-quarter with the next to lowest crime rates.

Table 3. Per capita adjusted police expenditures for 88 cities by region and population, 1940-80

	Per capita adjusted spending ^a					Percent increase, 1940-80
	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	
Region						
Northeast	\$12.00	\$11.25	\$15.95	\$32.25	\$44.98	274%
Midwest	6.69	6.58	9.77	17.00	26.88	302
South	6.28	6.31	9.07	15.07	23.10	268
West	7.52	9.00	12.36	21.00	29.08	287
Population^b						
1,000,000 or more	\$13.67	\$13.66	\$19.41	\$35.66	\$50.49	269
500,000 - 999,999	12.68	9.30	15.33	25.64	33.83	167
250,000 - 499,999	7.79	7.96	11.31	19.93	28.51	266
100,000 - 249,999	7.19	7.18	10.67	16.38	22.90	218
Less than 100,000	6.25	7.43	10.74	17.19	e	

^aFigures are in constant 1967 dollars, as adjusted for changes in the Consumer Price Index.
^bCities were grouped according to their population for each year shown. A city may be in a different population group at different times.
^cNo cities under 100,000 in 1980 were included in the study.

Table 4. Per capita adjusted police expenditures for 88 cities by crime rate, 1960-80

Cities with the:	Per capita adjusted spending			Percent increase, 1960-80
	1960	1970	1980	
Highest crime rate	\$13.82	\$26.16	\$38.33	177%
Next to highest	11.14	18.45	28.47	156
Next to lowest	9.14	16.54	22.50	146
Lowest	10.12	14.33	22.08	119

Note: Cities were ranked by index crime rate for each year, derived from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, and divided into groups of equal size. For 1960 data are available for only 80 cities. Figures are in constant 1967 dollars, as adjusted for changes in the Consumer Price Index.

Methodology

This study utilizes data from the International City Management Association Municipal Yearbooks. The ICMA has collected information on police and other city agencies continuously since 1938, including data on police expenditures, salaries and wages, and total police personnel (sworn and civilian). Other sources of police data—such as the surveys conducted by the Fraternal Order of Police, the Kansas City Police Department, the Police Foundation, and the Police Executive Research Forum—provide more kinds of information on police departments and police operations but do not go back as far as the ICMA Yearbooks.³

One hundred and twenty-six cities with at least 100,000 residents participated in the ICMA data collection effort for 1982. The 126 cities were traced backwards in time for a number of variables. In instances where data

were missing for 5 consecutive years, the city was eliminated from consideration. This left 88 cities in the study. ICMA data on police expenditures and personnel were supplemented by population data from the Bureau of the Census and crime data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports.

Bureau of Justice Special Reports are prepared principally by BJS staff under the direction of Joseph M. Bessette, deputy director for data analysis. This report was written by Craig Uchida of the University of Maryland's Institute for Criminal Justice and Criminology and Robert Goldberg of BJS. Carol Bridgeforth, Anne Roschelle, Debra Kaufman, and Patrick Gartin of the Institute of Criminal Justice and Criminology assisted in the data collection and analysis. The report was edited by Mr. Bessette, assisted by Marianne Zawitz. Marilyn Marbrook, publications unit chief, administered report production, assisted by Millie J. Baldea, Kimberly Hill, and Joyce M. Stanford.

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³For a broader explanation of the available data, see Craig D. Uchida, Carol Bridgeforth, and Charles E. Wellford, "Law Enforcement Statistics: The State of the Art," Institute of Criminal Justice and Criminology, University of Maryland, 1984.

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- 1982 (final report), NCJ-92820, 11/84
- 1973-82 trends, NCJ-90541, 9/83
- 1981 (final report), NCJ-90208
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Appendix table. Population and police expenditure data for 88 cities, 1940-80

City	Population		Adjusted per capita expenditure*		City	Population		Adjusted per capita expenditure*	
	1980 count	Percent change, 1940-80	1980 rate	Percent change, 1940-80		1980 count	Percent change, 1940-80	1980 rate	Percent change, 1940-80
Akron, Ohio	237,000	3%	\$24.42	373%	Montgomery, Ala.	178,000	128%	\$15.98	234%
Allentown, Pa.	104,000	7	17.32	213	Nashville, Tenn.	456,000	173	19.86	185
Anaheim, Calif.	222,000	1918	28.17	316	New Orleans, La.	557,000	13	29.57	293
Atlanta, Ga.	425,000	41	29.14	228	Newport News, Va.	145,000	292	16.04	163
Austin, Texas	345,000	292	25.28	401	Norfolk, Va.	267,000	85	22.45	54
Bakersfield, Calif.	106,000	266	31.14	208	Oakland, Calif.	339,000	12	48.16	428
Baltimore, Md.	787,000	-8	43.07	220	Oklahoma City, Okla.	403,000	98	18.11	183
Baton Rouge, La.	219,000	526	23.67	320	Omaha, Neb.	314,000	40	22.28	225
Beaumont, Texas	118,000	100	16.63	235	Pasadena, Calif.	119,000	45	38.68	231
Birmingham, Ala.	284,000	6	25.64	389	Peoria, Ill.	124,000	18	32.93	329
Buffalo, N.Y.	358,000	-38	43.61	227	Philadelphia, Pa.	1,688,000	-13	60.32	323
Cedar Rapids, Iowa	110,000	77	17.33	224	Phoenix, Ariz.	790,000	1115	29.12	197
Charlotte, N.C.	314,000	211	19.71	276	Pittsburgh, Pa.	424,000	-37	33.69	241
Cincinnati, Ohio	385,000	-16	30.60	206	Portland, Ore.	366,000	20	39.04	343
Colorado Springs, Colo.	215,000	481	18.56	276	Portsmouth, Va.	105,000	106	22.47	535
Columbus, Ohio	565,000	85	30.86	442	Providence, R.I.	157,000	-38	25.85	104
Dallas, Texas	904,000	206	30.67	380	Pueblo, Colo.	102,000	96	24.22	452
Davenport, Iowa	103,000	56	16.18	198	Raleigh, N.C.	150,000	219	20.91	282
Denver, Colo.	491,000	52	38.14	512	Reno, Nev.	101,000	380	30.86	225
Des Moines, Iowa	191,000	19	23.28	295	Richmond, Va.	219,000	13	27.58	279
Detroit, Mich.	1,203,000	-26	91.71	442	Riverside, Calif.	171,000	389	25.58	366
Durham, N.C.	101,000	68	28.05	367	Roanoke, Va.	100,000	45	15.69	151
Flint, Mich.	160,000	5	48.72	708	Sacramento, Calif.	276,000	160	32.62	259
Fort Wayne, Ind.	172,000	46	19.22	221	Salt Lake City, Utah	163,000	9	30.79	404
Fullerton, Calif.	102,000	920	22.22	230	San Diego, Calif.	876,000	332	17.52	226
Glendale, Calif.	139,000	67	22.23	239	San Jose, Calif.	637,000	837	21.61	275
Grand Rapids, Mich.	182,000	11	26.16	337	Santa Ana, Calif.	204,000	538	27.95	333
Greensboro, N.C.	156,000	164	27.15	330	Savannah, Ga.	142,000	48	17.50	166
Houston, Texas	1,595,000	314	23.07	356	Shreveport, La.	206,000	110	16.01	193
Huntsville, Ala.	143,000	1000	14.81	86	South Bend, Ind.	110,000	9	22.17	257
Independence, Mo.	112,000	600	14.20	186	Spokane, Wash.	171,000	40	22.54	257
Indianapolis, Ind.	701,000	81	19.32	127	Springfield, Mo.	133,000	118	12.40	167
Jackson, Miss.	203,000	227	22.05	362	St. Paul, Minn.	270,000	-6	32.77	303
Jacksonville, Fla.	541,000	213	30.09	286	Stockton, Calif.	150,000	173	25.66	281
Kansas City, Mo.	448,000	12	34.51	398	Tacoma, Wash.	159,000	46	25.05	303
Lansing, Mich.	130,000	65	31.55	380	Tampa, Fla.	272,000	152	31.70	465
Lincoln, Neb.	172,000	110	14.58	211	Toledo, Ohio	355,000	26	21.14	167
Little Rock, Ark.	158,000	80	14.35	273	Tucson, Ariz.	331,000	819	24.89	342
Long Beach, Calif.	361,000	120	38.07	302	Waco, Texas	101,000	80	16.68	281
Los Angeles, Calif.	2,967,000	97	43.06	251	Washington, D.C.	638,000	-4	99.88	885
Lubbock, Texas	174,000	444	15.71	243	Wichita, Kans.	279,000	143	18.93	245
Madison, Wis.	171,000	59	29.02	365	Winston-Salem, N.C.	132,000	65	30.27	371
Miami, Fla.	347,000	102	33.55	355	Worcester, Mass.	162,000	-16	34.69	198
Minneapolis, Minn.	371,000	-25	32.79	390					
Modesto, Calif.	106,000	563	17.71	114					

* Figures are in constant 1967 dollars, as adjusted for changes in the Consumer Price Index.