

Portland's Liberal Hellhole: Crime Skyrocketing Along with Police Response Times Following 'Defund the Police' Calls

By [Warner Todd Huston](#) September 19, 2023 [Story source: The Western Journal](#)

Oregon's biggest city still has not recovered from the destructive rioting in the wake of the death of George Floyd in 2020, and the resulting "defund the police" has seriously undermined the Portland Police Bureau as crime skyrockets and dwindling police resources slow response times.

A [new report](#) released Thursday from the Manhattan Institute, titled "Portland's Police Staffing Crisis: What It Is, Why It Is, and How to Fix It," reveals a police force that has been disastrously weakened by its political masters, leaving the safety of the city's residents in serious jeopardy.

"Portland, Oregon, is in the middle of a public safety crisis," wrote Charles Fain Lehman, a Manhattan Institute fellow who specializes in policing and public safety. "What sets Portland apart are the limits on its capacity to respond to these issues with the traditional tools of the criminal justice system and, in particular, its capacity to use the police."

The department is seeing response times rise as manpower shrinks. Response times to high-priority incidents clock in at more than 20 minutes, while medium-priority response times have risen to more than 50 minutes, and non-emergency calls are well past one-and-a-half hours.

"Like other major cities, Portland, Oregon, has experienced a surge in crime and disorder over the past three years," Fain Lehman wrote. "Unlike other major cities, Portland is uniquely ill-equipped to deal with this problem, because its police department is uniquely understaffed."

With the [riots](#) having cooled, and despite the fact that Portland is still in the midst of a crime wave — shootings reached a 26-year high in 2020 and homicide has climbed in every year since — the city slashed its police budget by \$15 million between fiscal years 201-20 and 2020-21, and cut the number of officers by 8 percent, Fain Lehman wrote.

Property crime is way up, homelessness has increased, and public disorder is rampant in the form of open drug use and camping in the streets, Fain Lehman wrote.

The [crime rate](#) is also disproportionately affecting the city's black population, which had a murder rate of one per 1,000 residents in 2021, Fain Lehman wrote. And it should be remembered that black residents were the very constituency that the "defund the police" movement claimed was the chief beneficiary of the move to kneecap the police.

"The effects of this crime wave fell disproportionately on those whom protesters claimed to help," Fain Lehman wrote. "The city set homicide records in the past two years and is facing a wave of shootings that has not yet receded."

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Police officers have also fled the city in huge numbers as more than 115 officers retired or resigned in the face of the anti-cop movement seizing city hall. It has been the largest loss of

police officers in the city's history. And it isn't getting better as [low morale](#) and a newly installed, and lengthy, hiring and training process is making restaffing extremely difficult.

The report adds that the PPB was already 120 officers below its authorized size the year before the riots and the "defund the police" mania spread through the city government. Now it is far worse.

With only 294 officers left, the PPB now has the 48th lowest staffing-to-population ratio among America's 50 largest cities, with just 1.26 officers per 1,000 residents, Fain Lehman wrote.

The study suggests that the city can make several policy changes to alleviate the problem. And while some moves have been made to [reverse](#) its defunding policies, they haven't been enough.

One is to increase pay so new officers can actually afford to live in a city where rents are 12 percent higher than the statewide average, Fain Lehman wrote. (They're 12 percent higher than in Oregon's second-largest city, Eugene, he noted.)

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Another is to reassess the 1,120 hours of basic training the city imposes on recruits and to move it more in line with the average of 971 hours seen elsewhere.

The city could also "civilianize" some of the jobs now handled by sworn officers, relieving officers of some of the pressure they are now under as duties spread a depleted force even thinner.

It would also help if left-wing, [George Soros-backed](#) Multnomah County District Attorney Mike Schmidt would stop his [soft-on-crime](#) campaign and actually started prosecuting the suspects that the PPB send his way.

Fain Lehman warned, though, that things can only [get worse](#) unless action is taken.

"Without intervention, a once-vibrant city could fall victim to this vicious cycle, hollowed out by its own inaction," he concluded. "The time to reverse course and to arrest the problem is now."

Portland, with its [population](#) of about 619,000, lags far behind the rest of America's big cities in addressing public safety issues thanks to the ill-considered "defund the police" mania. The movement gained its biggest foothold in Portland, but if there is one good thing to come of this, it is that Portland has proven that all the concepts and policies that the movement claimed would improve life are instead a dangerous failure.