

8 Cities That Help Explain National Crime Wave

- Jarrett Stepman ^{1 year ago}



After years of steadily falling crime rates, the United States is quickly heading back to a level of urban criminality not witnessed since the early 1990s. Pictured: New York City police officers secure and investigate a shooting scene on Aug. 20, 2020, in downtown Brooklyn, New York. New York City has seen a dramatic increase in gun violence since 2020. (Photo: Andrew Lichtenstein/Corbis/Getty Images)

The rise in violent crime has become a national trend in the past few years as cities reach homicide rates not seen in decades.

FBI statistics show a [30% increase in violent crime in 2020](#) compared to the previous year, the largest single-year increase since the agency began tracking those numbers in the 1960s.

That trend [didn't stop in 2021](#), although all the numbers aren't compiled yet, and in some cities it accelerated.

After years of steadily falling crime rates, the United States is quickly heading back to a level of urban criminality not witnessed since the early 1990s.

So, why are we seeing this sweeping trend?

The left's explanations for the sudden, almost incomprehensible spike in violence usually revolve around the pandemic, the economy, and guns. However, none of these explanations seems even remotely satisfactory.

America's decadeslong decrease in crime occurred while gun ownership remained high and even climbed. If it really was guns to blame, why did the surge suddenly happen in 2020, and in cities with strict gun control?

Plenty of other economic hard times, such as the years [following the financial crash of 2007](#), did not include a significant increase in violent crime. The old canard that crime stems from poverty just doesn't seem to be the case in practice.

Connecting the surge in crime directly to the COVID-19 pandemic seems shaky at best. Most other countries experienced a decrease in crime across the board since the outbreak began, and certainly nothing like the record-breaking increase in violence that we've seen in the U.S.

In addition, the surge in violent crime [didn't really begin](#) until after the May 2020 death of George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis and the subsequent protests and riots.

And that's really what the story of America's sudden descent into violent criminality revolves around.

The message immediately following the Floyd incident was that law enforcement is a problem, and that it is—in the words of many activists—systemically racist. The answer to our problems was to “defund the police” and change the way we do law enforcement.

Unfortunately, “defund the police” wasn’t just a slogan. And it wasn’t just “bad messaging,” as some Democrat political consultants have pointed out. Instead, it became an idea taken seriously by state and local governments that pursued a course that undermined law and order and created a nationwide epidemic of criminality that may not soon abate.

To see how this situation was created, it’s worth getting a snapshot of the most prominent cities hit by the crime surge and the route they took in responding.

Minneapolis

Minneapolis was sort of the epicenter of the “defund the police” movement following the death of Floyd at the hands of then-Minneapolis Police Department officer Derek Chauvin on May 25, 2020.

The city was rocked by protests, then violent riots in the name of Black Lives Matter. Criminals burned large parts of the city [to the ground](#) and looted businesses.

Minneapolis City Council members joined with activists and [vowed](#) to defund the police while creating a “holistic” police force.

The city not only defunded the Police Department, but considered abolishing the police altogether. The plan for the department’s replacement was vague at best, but it appears the goal was to reduce the number of police officers and [replace them with social workers](#).

The city’s attitude and public statements regarding police created what law professor Paul Cassell has called the “[Minneapolis Effect](#).” That’s where political rhetoric and the reduction of proactive policing results in higher crime. This is exacerbated by police forces that are both defunded and undermanned while stretched thin in controlling riots.

Since the Floyd riots, violent crime has exploded to an astounding degree in Minneapolis. Homicides [nearly doubled](#) from 2019 to 2020. And 2021 was worse, with the city just [one murder shy](#) of the record set in 1995. This while other crimes, such as [carjackings](#), were up too.

It seems, though, that many Minneapolis residents have had enough. An “abolish the police” ballot measure went [down in defeat](#) in November, in part based on the strength of “no” votes in predominantly [black north Minneapolis](#).

Comments from a Democrat strategist on why voters opposed the initiative were telling.

“When someone talks about a carjacking or a shooting, it’s not an abstraction. It’s the life they live each and every day,” Abou Amara told KARE-TV (Channel 11), the local NBC affiliate. “And so, some were having an abstract conversation about the role of police, and those folks in north Minneapolis—black elders, others—know that this is not an abstract conversation. This is a real conversation, where lives are on the line.”

Now, Minneapolis is [looking to hire more police officers](#).

Portland

Portland, Oregon, is another poster child for progressive leadership that leads to dysfunction and high crime.

Like Minneapolis, Portland was also hit with protests. Mayor Ted Wheeler, a Democrat, not only participated in the protests, he was [tear-gassed](#) at one.

As in Minneapolis, the protests turned violent, and criminals vandalized or destroyed large parts of the city.

It wasn’t just a few riots, either. Portland experienced over [100 days straight of protests](#), many of which got out of hand and became riots. To add to the city’s woes, Multnomah County District Attorney Mike Schmidt simply [refused to prosecute](#) most rioters.

When then-President Donald Trump offered to send aid to Portland, Wheeler sent a snarky response blaming Trump and the federal government for the escalation in violence.

Today, I sent this letter via email to [@realDonaldTrump](#) declining his recurring offer to aid Portland by sending federal enforcement to the city. <https://t.co/W85EDfryk>

pic.twitter.com/CC1IWTP5k8

— Mayor Ted Wheeler (@tedwheeler) [August 28, 2020](#)

Wheeler pledged to [defund the police](#). Like Robespierre during the French Revolution, the mayor's left-wing bona fides did not spare him from the metaphorical guillotine.

Protesters quickly turned on Wheeler, angrily demonstrating at the mayor's house and [harassing him](#) at restaurants.

As Portland descended into anarchy, violence reigned and crime soared.

“Nationally, homicides increased by nearly 30% from 2019 to 2020, based on FBI data,” Fox News [reported](#). “However, in Portland, deadly violence is increasing at a faster rate than nearly all major cities, with an 83% increase in homicides in 2020, according to the Associated Press.”

Things somehow got worse in 2021 as homicides kept climbing.

Portland ended up defunding its police and the city now has a decimated, overstretched force that suffers low morale. From Fox News:

Portland police have struggled to quell the violence, with the bureau 128 officers below authorized strength. Since August 2020, about 200 officers have left the department. Many, in their exit interviews, cited low morale, lack of support from city officials, and burnout from months of racial justice protests, which often ended in plumes of tear gas and confrontation but have largely died down since last summer.

Portland [refunded](#) its police force in 2021, but how much damage was already done?

Chicago

Chicago was the scene of some of the nation's biggest protests and riots, with large parts of downtown [burned and destroyed](#).

Mobs tore through the city's famous shopping district, the Magnificent Mile, and [looted](#) stores en masse. It was a preview of what was to come.

Mayor Lori Lightfoot mostly supported the protests in the city, and pledged to cut \$80 million from the [police budget](#).

“I think mayors across the country, particularly in this time, we have a moment where we can really change for the good the narrative around accountability and legitimacy and policing,” Lightfoot said. “And we’ve got to seize this moment and move forward aggressively and not be timid. We’ve got to be bold.”

Chicago went ahead with the mayor's defunding plan in 2021.

As in Portland, protesters eventually turned on Lightfoot, [rallying outside her home](#) because she wasn't doing enough to placate their demands.

Since the summer of riots, Chicago also has been hit by waves of [violent crime](#). Shootings downtown have [tripled](#) since 2019, according to the Chicago Sun-Times.

Other violent crimes are up too, to levels not seen in 25 years.

From the Chicago Sun-Times:

In just the Central police district—which includes much of the downtown business district—the total number of shootings and total shootings per 1,000 residents has shot up nearly 220% since 2019—by far the largest increase in any police district in the city.

The Near North district, which includes parts of downtown and also Lincoln Park,

saw the second-highest rise in shootings in that time—20%.

The downtown area has also seen a 35% increase in sexual assaults—to nearly 200 cases—and a 51% increase in car thefts—to more than 800, while the numbers of robberies and aggravated batteries have dropped in the past two years.

The picture is grim.

Organized retail theft in Chicago mirroring the waves that hit Chicago’s Magnificent Mile during the riots also has become common. Lightfoot [blamed](#) retailers for not doing enough to protect themselves.

Now, just a year after defunding the police, Lightfoot is [begging the federal government](#) to step in and save Chicago from its out-of-control violence.

Philadelphia

In December, U.S. Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon, D-Pa., was [carjacked](#) at gunpoint in broad daylight in Philadelphia.

The incident was symbolic of a city that had been plunged into criminality and violence after years of decreasing crime.

Like other cities on this list, Philadelphia leaders defunded police, but [then refunded the force](#) after crime went through the roof. That doesn’t tell the whole story, though.

Violent crime already had been rising before the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter riots of 2020.

This is in part [thanks to Larry Krasner](#), Philadelphia’s George Soros-backed district attorney. During Krasner’s election night victory party in 2018, supporters chanted, “F—the FOP [the Fraternal Order of Police]” and “No good cops in a racist system!”

Krasner's office refuses to prosecute many crimes, including some serious ones, in the name of social justice.

Cully Stimson and Zack Smith, legal experts at The Heritage Foundation, cataloged the [dramatic change](#) in law enforcement that Krasner implemented.

The result has been a disaster, wiping out the serious gains Philadelphia had made on crime, as The Federalist's Kyle Sammin laid out:

It has been an unmitigated disaster. In the face of rising crime, the DA has alienated cops, forced out career prosecutors, and rigged the bail system to dump more criminals back onto the streets. Between intentional weakness on crime and more conventional ineptitude, all of the gains of the 1990s and early 2000s have been erased. The average Philadelphian has a greater chance of being the victim of a crime than ever before. This is the 'progress' leftist prosecutors have wrought.

Following the riots of 2020 there was a massive jump in violent crime as well as other offenses. The trend didn't abate.

In 2021, [559 people were murdered](#) in Philadelphia, the most in city history.

San Francisco

No surprise: San Francisco, the West Coast city now known for its left-wing politics and permissive attitude toward drugs and homelessness, has been rocked by violence and crime.

After the Floyd protests, Mayor London Breed and other city leaders [defunded the police force](#) by a massive amount. Not only that, but the city has one of the most notorious left-wing district attorneys in the country, Chesa Boudin.

Boudin is another radical district attorney [backed by](#) wealthy left-wing donors associated with Soros. His father, a member of the terrorist Weather Underground in the 1960s, served 40 years in prison in connection with the [murder](#) of two police officers and a Brink's truck guard during a botched robbery.

Like Krasner in Philly, Boudin pursued a course of declining to prosecute serious crimes, reducing sentences, and generally taking an anti-police attitude to law enforcement.

Crime has exploded.

The beautiful City by the Bay is [now in the top 2%](#) of the most dangerous cities in America, according to some statistics. Violent crime rates have soared, but other property crimes, such as retail and auto theft, are clearly on the rise too—despite left-wing California media organizations [saying otherwise](#).

Walgreens and other retailers [decided to pull up stakes and closed their stores](#).

It's become so bad that some of Boudin's prosecutors not only quit but [joined an effort to recall the radical district attorney](#).

And crime has been so out of control that wealthier neighborhoods have banded together to pay for private security.

So much for equality. In San Francisco, it seems that [only the wealthy and powerful can thrive](#).

Apparently, this chaos is even starting to shake the city's reliably left-wing politicians.

In a dramatic reversal, Breed, a Democrat, said in December: "It's time that the reign of criminals who are destroying our city—it is time for it to come to an end."

She continued: "And it comes to an end when we take the steps to be more aggressive with law enforcement, more aggressive with the changes in our policies, and less tolerant of all the bulls— that has destroyed our city."

Los Angeles

Almost nothing better symbolizes the decline and de-evolution of California than the recent train robberies.

“At a rate of 90 freight cars ransacked per day, Union Pacific estimates that thefts against its trains are up by more than 160% over the last year. In the year ending October 2021, the increase was a mind-boggling 356%,” the [editors](#) at National Review wrote.

Images of empty Amazon boxes and wrappers strewn with unwanted merchandise about the tracks in Los Angeles demonstrate the scope of the problem.

Keep hearing of train burglaries in LA on the scanner so went to [#LincolnHeights](#) to see it all. And... there's looted packages as far as the eye can see. Amazon packages, [@UPS](#) boxes, unused Covid tests, fishing lures, epi pens. Cargo containers left busted open on trains. [@CBSLA pic.twitter.com/JvNF4UVy2K](#)

— John Schreiber (@johnschreiber) [January 13, 2022](#)

Even California's Democrat governor, upon surveying the situation, [noted](#): “We look like a Third World country.”

Gov. [@GavinNewsom](#) at the site of L.A. train theft: “What the Hell is going on? We look like a third-world country” [pic.twitter.com/DBTjL9kY1Q](#)

— Tom Elliott (@tomselliott) [January 21, 2022](#)

No kidding.

Gov. Gavin Newsom is apparently looking for answers to California's dystopian swing, but it isn't hard to find them.

Los Angeles, like countless other cities, has seen an [immense crime spike](#) in the past few years. In 2021, Fox 11, a local media outlet, [reported](#) an "11.8% increase in homicides, while violent crime increased 3.9% and property crimes rose by 4.2%. The number of people shot rose by 9%."

As with Philadelphia and San Francisco, Los Angeles [defunded its police](#). The City of Angels also has a radical district attorney who refuses to prosecute crimes.

George Gascón, another Soros-backed DA, [pursued a long list of ways](#) to not prosecute criminals.

Recently, after police said a hardened criminal stabbed to death a young woman while she worked at an upscale furniture store, a Los Angeles County deputy district attorney vented about Gascon's policies.

"We are not focused on victims, we are not focused on public safety, and in Los Angeles County you know, my boss, George Gascón, has a soft spot for criminals," John McKinney [said](#) in an interview on Fox News.

McKinney elaborated.

"He has created an environment where crime thrives here in Los Angeles County by explicitly telling the criminal community [that] you can commit crimes, certain crimes I will not prosecute you at all," McKinney said of Gascón.

The numbers back that up.

Last year, Los Angeles "experienced 397 murders, up 11.8% from the 355 the previous year, and a 53.9% increase from the 258 in the pre-pandemic year of 2019. It was the highest figure since the 395 killings in 2007," [reported](#) Los Angeles Magazine.

New York

Following the Black Lives Matter riots of 2020, New York City [defunded](#) the vaunted New York Police Department. The City Council pulled about \$1 billion out of the police budget in 2020.

The city's mayor at the time, Bill de Blasio, celebrated the move.

“We are reducing the size of our police force by not having the next recruit class. We are reducing our overtime levels. We’re shifting functions away from police to civilian agencies,” de Blasio [said](#), according to NPR. “We think it’s the right thing to do. It will take work. It will take effort and we’re going to be reforming that work in the meantime.”

Can you guess what happened next?

Violent crime went through the roof.

“The number of shootings soared 97% from 777 in 2019 to 1,531 in 2020 and murders jumped by 44% from 319 to 462, according to the NYPD,” the New York Post [reported](#).

In 2021, things got [worse](#).

While the city's new mayor, Eric Adams, has at least rhetorically [committed](#) to take a tougher stance on crime, the situation is looking grim.

The new district attorney, Alvin Bragg, [announced](#) in a “Day One” memo that he would stop prosecuting many crimes and would reduce the penalty for some kinds of armed robbery to the level of a misdemeanor.

It appears that the city, in just a few short years, is wiping out the crime-fighting revolution begun by Mayor Rudy Giuliani in the 1990s.

District of Columbia

The nation's capital is certainly not immune to the national crime wave.

In a nod to the Black Lives Matter protests, the District of Columbia created a “Black Lives Matter Way” leading to the White House, then occupied by Donald Trump. The D.C. City Council stripped [\\$15 million](#) out of the Metropolitan Police Department's budget in support of the “defund the police” movement.

Mayor Muriel Bowser may be committed to the ideas of Black Lives Matter, but in the District that slogan is a serious case of false advertising.

In [2021](#), the city—where nearly half of all [residents are black](#)—saw its [most violent year](#) in decades.

Carjackings have become rampant. A council candidate recently was carjacked at gunpoint. He was just one among many. In July, Fox News reported that carjackings in the District [already were up 74%](#) in 2021.

DC is on a pace right now for more than a carjacking a day. Axios reports there had been 37 carjackings as of Jan. 20 in the District. Also there have been 200 car thefts already this month.

— James Oliphant (@jamesoliphant) [January 24, 2022](#)

Like countless other police forces in big cities, the Metropolitan Police Department faces a shortage of personnel following a mass exodus of employees.

According to the District's police union, “more than half of the 417 members who left since the council-imposed measures in June 2020 resigned before being eligible for retirement.”

“This means over 225 police officers turned in their badge and walked away,” union Chairman Gregory Pemberton said in a written statement, according to The Washington

Post. “The council’s continued desire to reduce the size and funding of the police department hangs like a dark cloud [over] our city.”

This article has been corrected to reflect that George Soros did not personally donate to the Boudin campaign.

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