



September 2023

Portland's Police Staffing Crisis

What It Is, Why It Is, and How to Fix It

Charles Fain Lehman

Report

Fellow
Manhattan Institute

Contributing Editor
City Journal

Executive Summary

Like other major cities, Portland, Oregon, has experienced a surge in crime and disorder over the past three years. But unlike other major cities, Portland is uniquely ill-equipped to deal with this problem, because its police department is uniquely understaffed. With just 1.26 officers per every 1,000 residents, the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) ranks 48th among the nation's 50 largest cities for its staffing-to-population ratio. As a result, PPB struggles to provide even basic service, taking up to half an hour to respond to high-priority calls.

As this report shows, the staffing crisis has both short-run and long-run causes. In the short run, the city's particularly harmful riots following the 2020 murder of George Floyd, as well as its leadership's embrace of the "defund the police" movement, dealt a massive blow to police morale, driving mass resignations and retirements, which have continued to hamstring operations. But that shift was just the culmination of years of declining staffing-to-population ratios, driven by challenges in hiring and training that preexist the protests.

To their credit, Portland's civilian leadership has belatedly recognized that increasing PPB staffing is the only way out of the current crisis. To that end, this report recommends a number of steps that Portland can take to address its staffing problems, including:

- Increasing officer pay
- Civilianizing PPB desk jobs
- Increasing the number of employees working on processing job applications
- Reducing the length of academy and field training
- Conducting PPB training in Portland, rather than in the state facility in Salem
- Working to regain the trust of police officers by unambiguously emphasizing support for them and their profession

About Us

The Manhattan Institute is a think tank whose mission is to develop and disseminate new ideas that foster greater economic choice and individual responsibility.



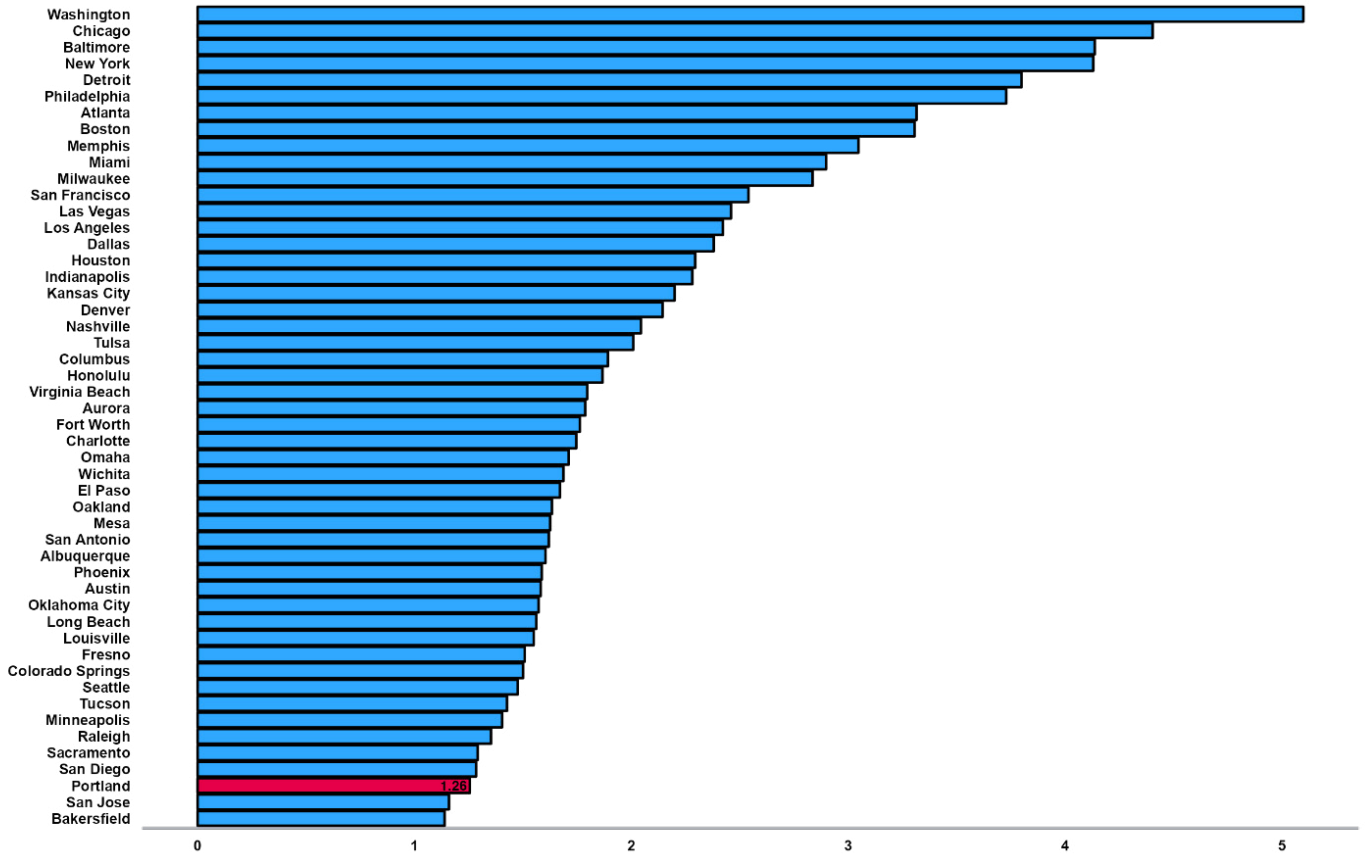
Introduction

Portland, Oregon, is in the middle of a public safety crisis. The city set homicide records in the past two years and is facing a wave of shootings that has not yet receded.¹ Property crimes have surged.² Public disorder, in the form of camping and public drug use, is rampant.³

These problems do not make Portland unique. Many major U.S. cities have experienced large increases in violence, property crime, and public disorder since 2020. 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.

Figure 1

Police-to-Population Ratio, Top 50 Cities (2022)



Source: FBI Crime Data Explorer



The Portland Police Bureau (PPB) is one of the most understaffed forces in the nation. It ranks 48th among the 50 largest cities in the U.S. in its ratio of police officers to population, ahead of only San Jose and Bakersfield (**Figure 1**).⁴ At 1.26 officers per 1,000 residents, Portland is substantially below the median of that group (1.79 officers per 1,000) and further below the national average of 2.1 per 1,000.⁵

As this report documents, understaffing contributes to Portland's problems in myriad ways. In its most recent, extreme form, understaffing has meant that almost all available officers are dedicated to responding to emergency calls. This leaves no capacity for proactive patrol, a proven method for reducing crime.⁶ It also means that police officers must triage crimes, taking hours to respond to "minor" offenses and leaving drug overdose deaths uninvestigated.

Why is PPB so understaffed? As detailed below, recent phenomena—most important, the George Floyd protests and subsequent "defunding" of PPB—have exacerbated preexisting problems in the department. Police morale is a serious issue, but so is the arduous process of becoming a police officer, an issue that PPB executives point to in explaining their staffing problems.

This report proposes several broad solutions to address these problems. In particular, it recommends increasing officer pay, expanding civilianization of the PPB workforce, shortening the application and field training period, and expanding the state's and city's capacity for basic training. Most important, it recommends an about-face on how Portland's civilian leadership treats police officers. Without a change of attitude, Portland will remain a city that cops view as hostile—and, as a result, it will continue to suffer from understaffing and all its harmful effects.

Portland's Current Staffing Crisis

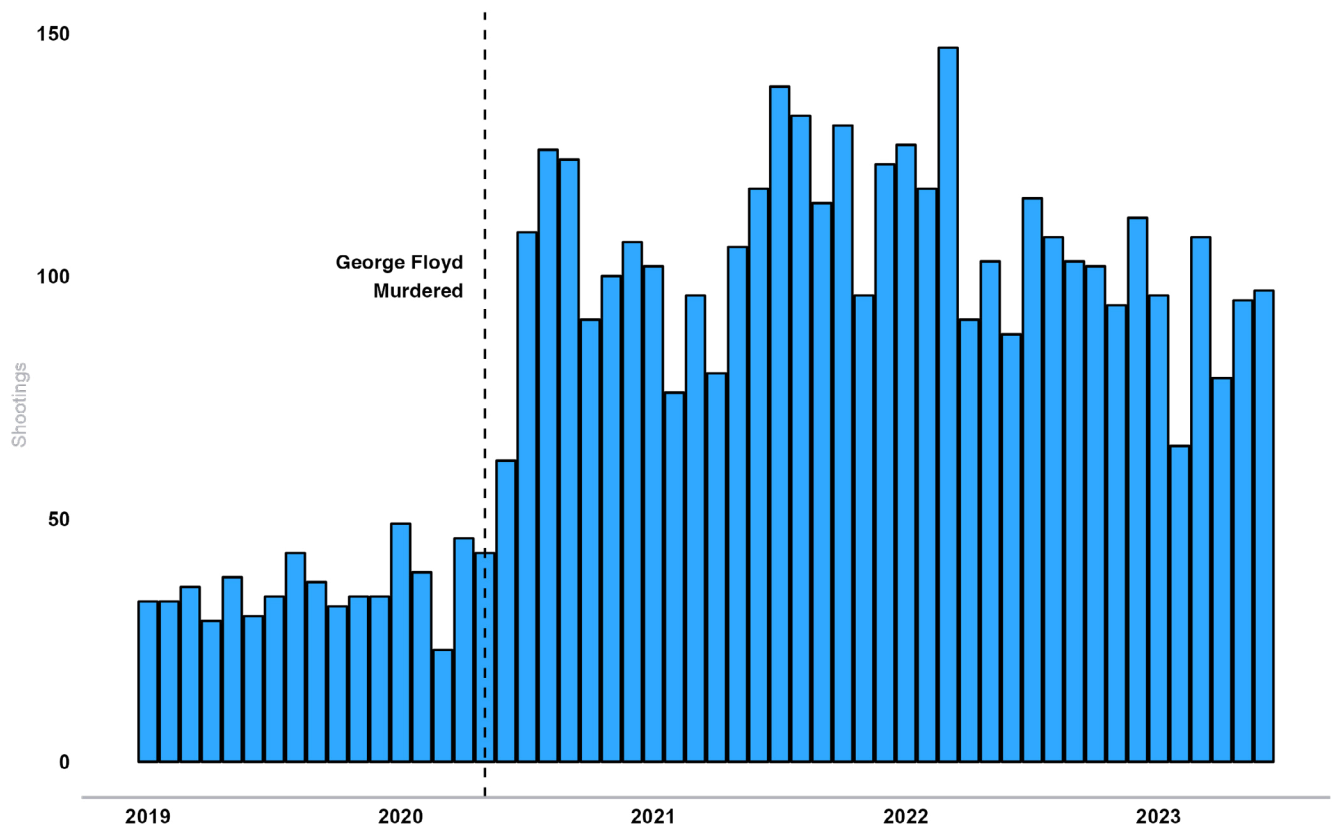
Portland police leadership raised the alarm about their staffing problems in the years before 2020. Speaking to a local news affiliate in May 2019, then-deputy police chief Chris Davis said that the department had "fewer and fewer police officers with more and more demand for their time." At the time, the department was 120 sworn officers short of its authorized staffing levels.⁷

But the city's staffing problems were about to take a turn for the worse. In the wake of the murder of George Floyd, Portland was, like many other cities, beset by protests and riots. Portland's were far more aggressive: PPB identified a riot 16 times in the three months following Floyd's death.⁸ The protests persisted for at least a year.⁹ And unlike in many other cities, Portland's leadership listened to calls to "defund the police." The city slashed \$15 million from the bureau's budget and cut the number of sworn officers by 8%.¹⁰



Figure 2

Shootings in Portland (January 2019–June 2023)



Source: Portland Police Bureau

Following these events, Portland began to experience a violent crime wave. Shootings surged, more than doubling in the immediate aftermath of the protests to levels from which they have not yet, as of the most recent data, fallen (Figure 2). In 2020, the city saw the most homicides it had seen in 26 years; in 2021 and 2022, it set all-time homicide records.¹¹ The effects of this crime wave fell disproportionately on those whom protesters claimed to help: one in every 1,000 black Portland residents was murdered in the year following Floyd’s death, as Portland’s black homicide rate became one of the highest in the nation.¹²

Police staffing, meanwhile, spiraled downward. In April 2021, 115 officers resigned or retired, the largest mass departure that the city had seen in recent history. Departing officers said that they were “overworked, overwhelmed and burned out,” and they particularly objected to the budget cuts and antipolice protests.¹³ Two months later, officers on Portland’s crowd-control unit resigned from the unit en masse after one of their number was indicted for using unlawful force on a protester.¹⁴

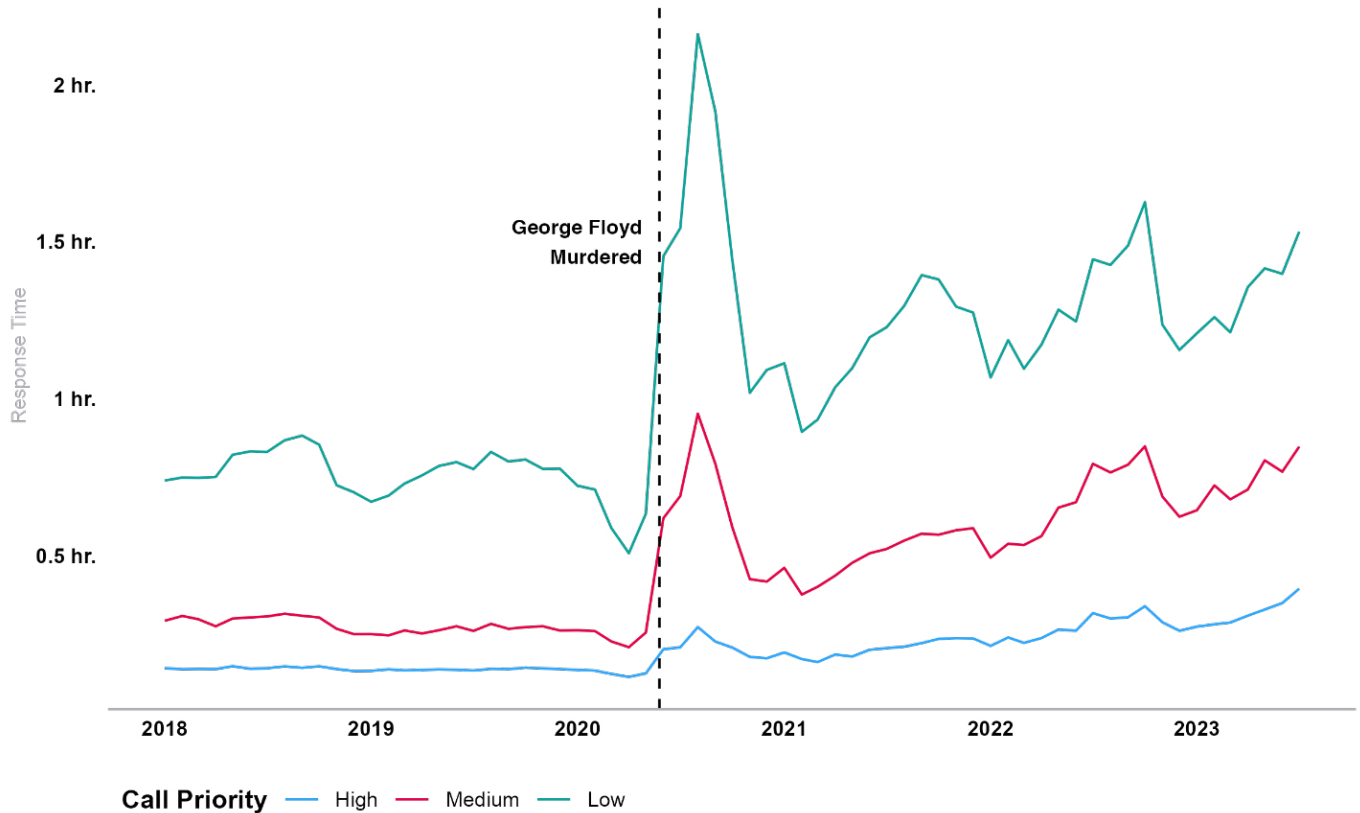
The surge in crime and collapse of police employment left little capacity to serve the public. In December 2020, then-chief Chuck Lovell ended dedicated traffic enforcement, citing the need to place those officers on emergency response.¹⁵ Traffic deaths surged. The year 2021 saw 63 motor vehicle fatalities, the most in a decade.¹⁶ Drug overdoses, also climbing, went uninvestigated; by 2023, the bureau reported that it had just one narcotics detective, as more than half of narcotics officers had been transferred to patrol back in 2021.¹⁷ The loss of specially trained officers compounded



the problem: as PPB noted in its 2021 annual report, “Long-time Special Emergency Reaction Team members, Metro Explosive Disposal Unit members, K9 Unit and others who had spent years being specially trained separated from the Bureau. This is a tremendous loss in historic and institutional knowledge and relationships with the community.”¹⁸

Figure 3

Average PPB Call-for-Service Response Time (January 2018–July 2023)



Source: Portland Police Bureau

Despite this rededication of resources, PPB struggled even to respond to emergencies. Emergency response times spiked as the George Floyd riots engulfed the city (**Figure 3**), but, as with other indicators of Portland’s dysfunction, they never returned to pre-Floyd levels. As of July 2019, it took PPB 8 minutes to respond to a “high”-priority call, 16.7 minutes for a “medium”-priority call, and 46.5 minutes for a “low”-priority call. In July 2023—the most recent month available, as of this writing—the equivalent figures were 23.7 minutes for “high” priority, 51 minutes for “medium” priority, and 92 minutes for “low” priority. In other words, Portlanders with a non-pressing issue can expect to wait more than an hour and a half for service, a nearly 100% increase over 2019. The wait for an emergency response has increased by nearly 200%. In 2023, Portland residents now wait longer in a high-priority emergency than they did for a medium-priority call in 2019.

Slowly but steadily, Portland’s government has begun to acknowledge its mistakes. In early 2021, Mayor Ted Wheeler sought a \$2 million budget increase to PPB, but legislators rebuffed him; the city council eventually agreed to give \$6 million to community organizations and hire an additional



24 unarmed park rangers to address Portland's violent crime crisis.¹⁹ In November 2021, Wheeler told the press: "There is such a thing as too few officers," adding that "I can objectively say we are critically short staffed."²⁰ The council listened and signaled willingness to rehire and spend on police.²¹ That month, it approved an additional \$5.2 million for the police department.²² Using that and other money, Wheeler and Lovell pledged to hire 300 new police officers over three years.²³

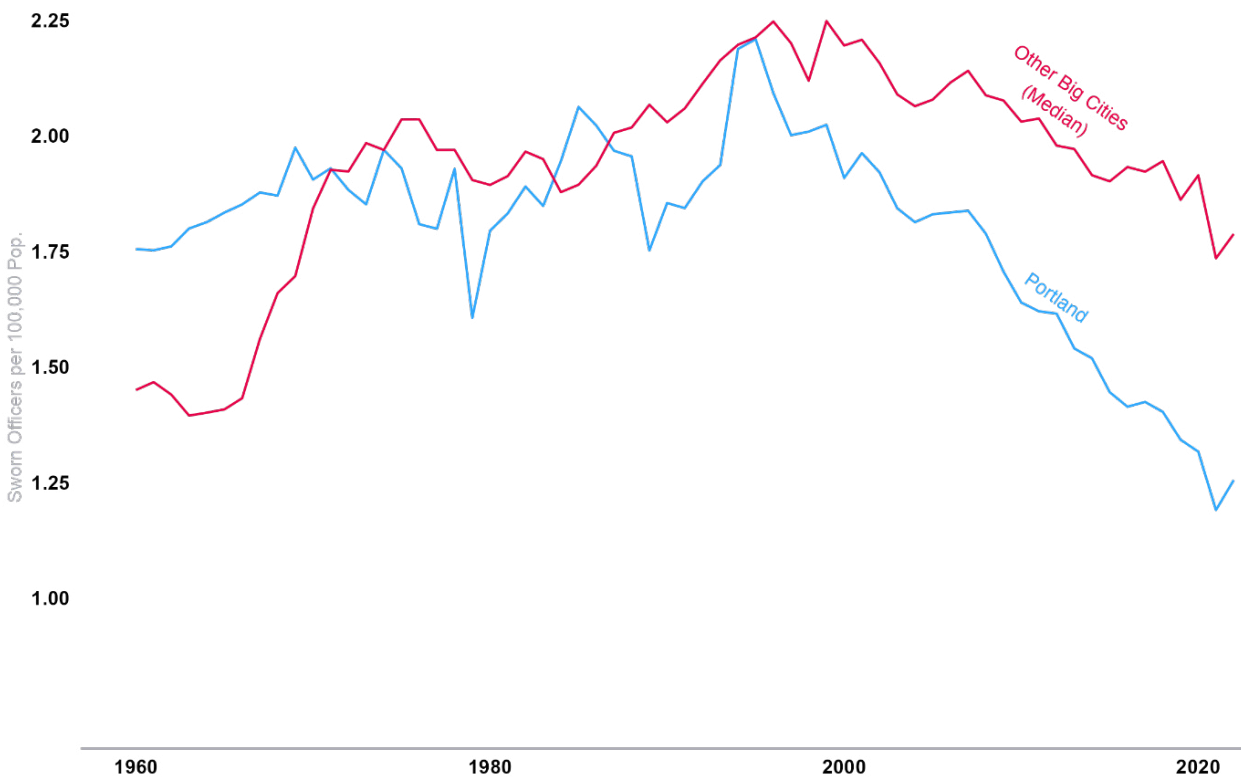
Is Portland turning it around? Wheeler has said that as of 2023, the city is ahead of his hiring-rate goal.²⁴ But even a return to 2020 staffing levels will put the city well behind other major municipalities, and it continues to struggle with a violent crime problem, as well as rising property and drug crime. Barriers—both cultural and legal—remain in fixing this deeper staffing problem.

The Long-Run Decline in Portland's Police Staffing

Understaffing is not a new problem for PPB. By some measures, it has plagued the department for more than two decades. Remedying understaffing, therefore, requires more than just a reversal in recent policies.

Figure 4

Police Staffing Ratios, Portland vs. Other Big Cities (1960–2022)



Source: FBI Crime Data Explorer

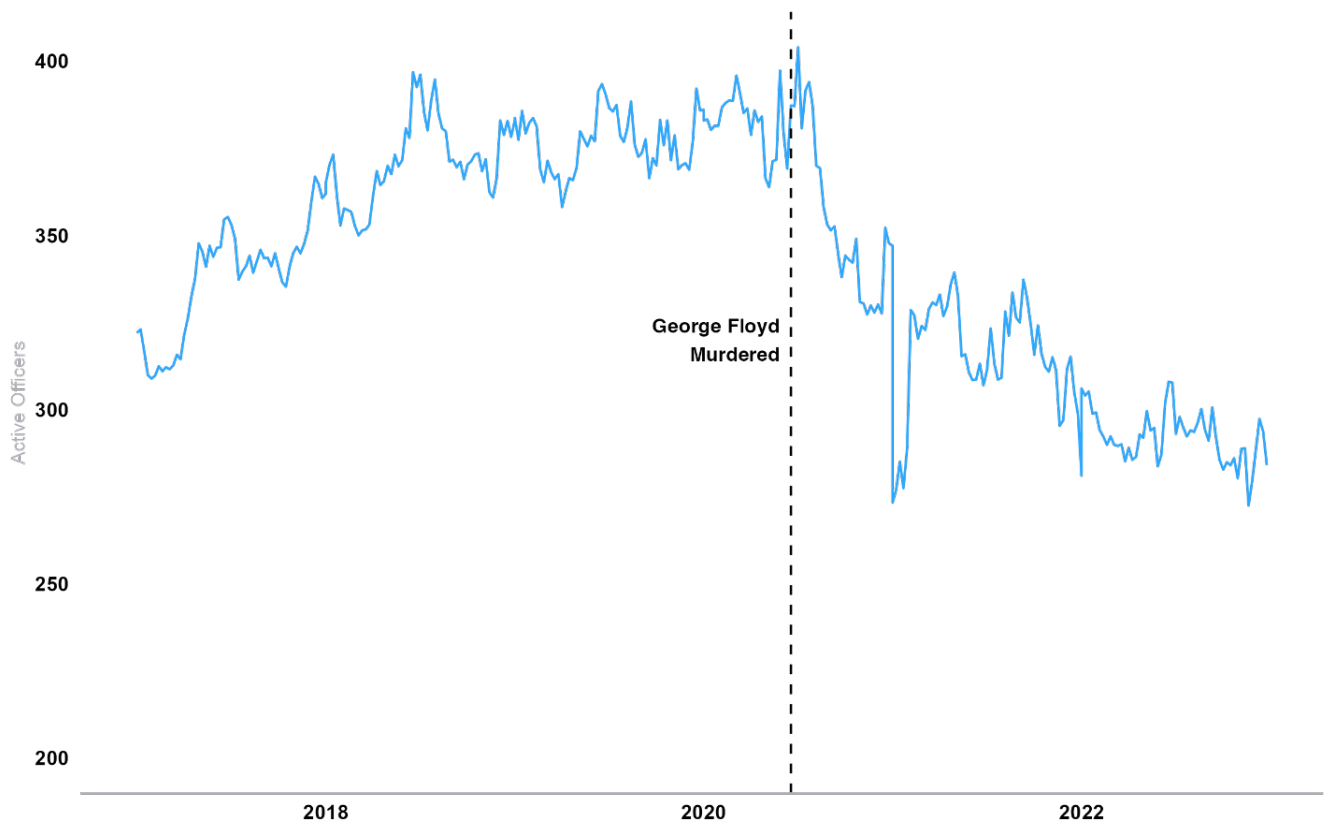


Portland's police staffing ratio has been in decline relative to its big-city peers for some time (**Figure 4**). Police hiring has, in general, failed to keep pace with population growth since the Great Recession, a trend replicated in other big-city departments.²⁵ But Portland's decline began earlier: its staffing ratio peaked at 2.21 officers per 1,000 people in 1995. By the year 2000, it was below 2 per 1,000, a point to which it has never recovered in the intervening two decades. By 2022, Portland reported 1.26 officers for every 1,000 people, more than half an officer below the median figure of 1.79 per 1,000.

This trend can be attributed to changes in both the population of the city and the number of sworn officers. Portland's population was more or less flat between 1960 and the mid-1980s.²⁶ It then climbed steadily, until the disorder of 2020 led to a rapid reversal.²⁷ FBI data show that sworn officer counts, meanwhile, were relatively flat between 1960 and 1985, ranging between roughly 650 and 740. In the 1980s, PPB began a hiring binge, leading to steadily increasing sworn officer numbers. The number of sworn officers finally peaked at 1,054 in 2001. At that point, however, counts appear to have stagnated, and they then entered a post-Great Recession decline. In other words, from about 2009 on, Portland's population grew while sworn officers declined; as a result, staffing ratios plummeted.

Figure 5

PPB Officers on Patrol, Weekly Average (2017–22)



Source: Portland Police Bureau



What does that staffing problem look like on the ground? **Figure 5** provides a more detailed picture, based on six years of Uniform Daily Active Roster reports obtained through a public records request to PPB. In particular, it reports the average number of officers assigned to a specific precinct in a given week between the beginning of 2017 and the end of 2022.²⁸ This figure is not the count of sworn employees of PPB but the average number of officers (as opposed to supervisors) on the active roster on any given day—an approximate measure of available patrol capacity.

As is apparent in Figure 5, the average count of active officers was rising or flat through much of the pre-Floyd period. Then, as the city descended into protest and riot, active-duty officers declined. That decline persisted even as the protests abated, a reflection of the continuous decline in officer capacity since then. (The large drop and then recovery in early 2021 appear to be attributable to some change in the data as reported, rather than to a real change in staffing levels.) Indeed, by the end of the period covered by the data, the daily active count had fallen almost 30% from its peak in the weeks immediately following Floyd's death.

PPB has acknowledged this particular challenge. In its 2022 annual report, it notes:

During 2022, even with the reorganization of many units in 2021, the Bureau averaged approximately 310 patrol officers to cover three precincts 24/7. While this number may seem adequate, officers have days off, vacation, leaves, training, etc. Therefore, at any given time there are 36 to 60 officers patrolling Portland during each shift, dependent also on if supervisors were able to even meet minimum staffing.²⁹

These data, though they provide only a limited window into PPB's activities, broadly confirm the sense that its staffing problem is a crisis. Declining sworn officer counts do not necessarily reduce the number of cops on the beat—because cops can be moved on to patrol from other areas; but at some point, the problem becomes overwhelming. The city needs to take decisive action to address its staffing problems, addressing both its acute and chronic causes.

Why a Staffing Problem?

But what are those problems? Most clearly, declining police morale has exacerbated preexisting issues. But, as this section lays out, PPB's lengthy and under-resourced hiring and training process also contributes to understaffing.

In the short run, Portland has a clear problem with officer dissatisfaction. In exit interviews first obtained by *The Oregonian*, PPB officers who departed in 2021 described themselves as “overworked, overwhelmed and burned out.”³⁰ In other interviews, obtained by KOIN 6, departing officers pointed the finger at other parts of the justice system, with one complaining: “As long as the other branches of the criminal justice system (district attorney and jail) refuse to hold up their obligations, police officers will continue to be ineffective at making any lasting change.”³¹ One patrol officer, speaking to local news, said that “morale is low, and I would say it's attributed to essentially being underfunded, understaffed, and under-supported.”³²

In this regard, PPB looks like other big-city departments in the past three years. In a survey of major police departments, the Police Executive Research Forum found that many respondent departments were shrinking. Asked about changes in their department, respondents “brought up the decline in police officers' morale over the past two years” and “cited the protests and public sentiment towards the police over the past two years.”³³ Police heard loudly and clearly the message of pro-“defund” protesters and policymakers, and it is little surprise that some responded by leaving jurisdictions particularly supportive of that rhetoric and policy action.



Portland's Police Staffing Crisis

But unlike other cities, Portland has deeper problems in its policing infrastructure, problems that may explain the long-term decline in staffing ratios. For example, while PPB has seen large-scale resignations, it does not appear to struggle to find applicants to replace the lost officers. In 2019, 1,075 people applied for positions in the department; in 2021, the equivalent figure was 675. But those high rates of initial application are winnowed down to minuscule employment rates. In 2019, the bureau hired just 43 officers; in 2021, 27.³⁴ In both cases, that represents a yield of just 4%—below the bureau's historical norm of a 10% hiring rate.³⁵

One reason routinely cited for this attrition rate is the bureau's hiring standards. PPB has had selection standards since 1881, when officers were first required to be “a U.S. citizen, able to read and write English, a resident of Portland for one year, have no criminal record, be of good health, sound body and mind, at least 5'10,” and weigh a minimum of 175 lbs.”³⁶ Today, the requirements are slightly more stringent.

Applicants should:

- Be over the age of 20½
- Have a high school diploma or GED
- Be able to obtain a valid driver's license
- Be a citizen within 18 months of hiring
- Have experience “with people from racial backgrounds different from your own”
- Show interest in serving the public and others

Applicants should not:

- Have a poor “traffic record, police contacts, accident report, and credit report”
- Have “a history of poor judgment or refusal to confront problems” in their personal lives
- Misrepresent themselves or ignore laws
- Sell drugs or otherwise be involved in criminal activity
- Have a history of “unexcused absences, discipline, or discharge”
- Have a questionable character, in the opinion of others
- Have used marijuana (which is legal in Oregon) in the past year³⁷

Some of these requirements are more challenging to meet than others. One PPB personnel officer told local news that “spotty driving records” (more than three tickets in the past three years) and “recent marijuana use” (which makes it impossible for officers to access federal background check resources) are major barriers to hiring.³⁸ The department has already reduced its educational requirements, no longer requiring an associate's degree. Understaffing challenges are also self-reinforcing, insofar as the rate at which the department can process applications is determined by the number of officers available to do so. As of mid-2021, the department was processing only about a dozen applications per month.³⁹



After new recruits are hired, they go through a rigorous and lengthy training process. For the state of Oregon to certify them, officers must undergo 18 months of “training and mentoring.” This includes a four-month, 640-hour, “basic academy,” which is administered by the state in its full-time, residential training program at its facility in Salem. Portland police officers undergo an additional 12 weeks (480 hours) of basic training.⁴⁰ Officers from all of Oregon’s departments train at the facility in Salem, and then undergo field training with their agency before the state officially certifies them.⁴¹

PPB’s training requirements—1,120 hours of basic training—are an outlier compared with national norms. As of 2018, recruits at state police training facilities received an average of 667 hours of basic training, while municipal departments received an average of 971.⁴² PPB officers also appear to spend longer on field training: 24 weeks, or about 960 hours, compared with a national average of 508 hours and 637 for municipal PDs.⁴³

This training process imposes substantial burdens on PPB. Even under optimal conditions, up to two years can pass between when an officer is hired and when he takes to the streets. But the centralized training facility, with its limited spots, can extend the process. “Every agency in the state of Oregon, Coos Bay, Beaverton, Hillsboro, any agency that wants to have a certified police officer is going to send them down to Salem for 16 weeks—and all of our agencies are trying to vie for those 40 spots that are open,” a PPB personnel officer told local news in 2021.⁴⁴ In its 2022 annual report, the bureau complained that “it continued to have a large number of officers who either hadn’t been trained or were in the training process. Many were included in the backlog in attending the Basic Academy.”

In short, Portland’s staffing problem is not merely a function of short-run dissatisfaction. Substantial challenges in bringing people on board compound those issues.

Can Portland Reverse the Staffing Crisis?

Portland’s police staffing problem is long-standing and shows no sign of abating. Portland needs roughly 1,128 officers to reach the median staffing rate of other major cities (see Figure 4). That figure means 337 more officers relative to the end of 2022, or 327 more than the number reported by PPB in July 2023.⁴⁵ And the city would need those officers to be available to do the work of policing—patrolling, investigating, and keeping the city safe. As of July 2023, PPB reports just 288 officers on patrol, below even the levels depicted in Figure 5. Plainly, some sort of decisive action is needed.

To its credit, Portland has taken steps to try to address its staffing problems. As mentioned previously, it has lowered its education requirement and has committed to aggressive hiring, including rehiring retired officers.⁴⁶ That commitment includes increasing pay: as of 2022, PPB offered the highest pay of any police department in the state, partly the result of a generous new union contract signed that year.⁴⁷ New hires to PPB can now earn \$79,456 per year, plus a one-time bonus of \$5,000. Lateral hires make between \$92,144 and \$113,131.⁴⁸ By way of comparison, median household income in Portland was \$78,476 as of 2021.⁴⁹

Paying more is, of course, one way to attract new candidates. And the city should be willing to spend within its means to bring on the talent it needs. But salary bumps will go only so far. One barrier is that while Portland pays more than other jurisdictions in Oregon, it also costs more.



Portland's Police Staffing Crisis

Median rent in Portland is about 12% higher than the statewide figure and 24% higher than in Eugene, the state's next-largest city. In other words, Portland must pay more than other jurisdictions because it costs more to live in or near Portland.

A further complication is the national environment for police hiring. Amid a historically tight labor market, police departments across the country are struggling to hire officers, and responding with pay bumps and recruitment bonuses.⁵⁰ This is partly because of the flight from policing, particularly in big-city departments, since the Floyd protests. More generally, it is because low unemployment rates will bid up compensation, increasing the attractiveness of non-policing jobs and making it easier for disgruntled cops to leave—current and would-be cops have better options than if the labor market were slacker.

To get substantial hiring benefits from higher pay alone, then, Portland will likely need to substantially increase officer pay—a daunting prospect for a city forced to budget with a rapidly shrinking tax base in mind.⁵¹ Federal funding—for example, through the U.S. Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program—could help overcome fiscal constraints, as could state funding. But to have real impact, Portland must consider additional options.

One way to resolve this issue is “civilianization,” which is permitting civilians to do jobs currently done by sworn officers. As of July 2023, PPB had 802 sworn members (of all ranks), of whom 535 were officers. Of the officers, 123 were “non-patrol,” meaning that they were tasked with some responsibility that kept them off the streets.⁵² To the most practical extent possible, PPB and civilian leadership should consider which and how many of those roles can be transferred to civilians, with an eye toward freeing up officers to walk the beat and answer calls.

PPB should also evaluate its hiring standards, although none of them are obviously and onerously high. A modicum of driving competency, for instance, should be required for police officers. And allowing police officers with a recent history of marijuana use to access federal background-check resources is a federal policy decision, beyond the reach of local policymakers. Instead, the city might successfully reduce the processing time involved in hiring officers by increasing the number of employees working on processing. Insofar as this job requires few or no sworn officers to be done correctly, expanding hiring capacity could also be an opportunity for expanding civilian employment.

One clear bottleneck to increasing the number of *active* sworn officers is the amount of time and energy that PPB officers must dedicate to training. If specific components of the state or city basic training program can be shortened—while still preserving vital elements of the training process—that will free up man-hours dedicated to patrol. PPB could almost certainly safely reduce the length of its field training period—much longer than the national average—which would free up officers to operate solo, as needed.

In addition to shortening trainings, PPB could try to increase the number of people trained at any one time. Indeed, the state academy is pushing a \$6.4 million plan that would add night classes and increase class capacity by 50%.⁵³ But Portland still needs to compete with the rest of the state's departments for training, even though it is by far the state's largest city. One longer-term option might be for the city to seek a waiver from Salem to operate its own academy. PPB already has a police training complex, which it could expand to suit the needs of the department.⁵⁴ The costs are likely to be substantial, but PPB could defray them in the long run by offering training services to nearby departments (assuming, of course, that PPB is up to speed on its own training needs).

A last solution requires not spending but political will: restoring officer trust in civilian leadership. Departing officers, after all, said that they felt “under-supported” by city government.⁵⁵ A comprehensive effort on the part of the mayor and city council to clearly communicate their



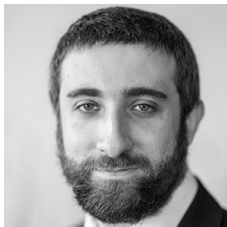
support for police officers and their belief in the value of police work should be more or less free, notwithstanding the political risk that it may pose in a highly progressive city. Leaders also need to take steps to ensure that arrests lead to prosecution and incarceration: many departing officers blamed Multnomah County's progressive district attorney Mike Schmidt for creating an environment in which their work appeared purposeless.⁵⁶

Conclusion

For decades, Portland was seen as an urban success story. Unlike populations of other major cities, which have stagnated since the 1950s, Portland's population boomed, fueled by rapid economic growth and a hip culture epitomized by its "Keep Portland Weird" slogan.⁵⁷ But in 2020, after 15 years of continuous population growth, the pattern reversed. The city lost nearly 3% of its population between April 2020 and July 2022.⁵⁸ Today, Portland is among the fastest-shrinking cities in the United States.⁵⁹ Asked why they are leaving by *Willamette Week*, former residents cite "high taxes and a growing sense of danger."⁶⁰ These problems risk reinforcing each other, as declining population erodes the tax base and further reduces the city's capacity to control public disorder. Without intervention, a once-vibrant city could fall victim to this vicious cycle, hollowed out by its own inaction.

Yet, as this report has documented, Portland lags far behind other cities in its capacity to address public safety concerns because of its critical understaffing problems. These problems are long-standing, but the city willfully exacerbated them when it decided to slash its policing budget, becoming one of the handful of cities in the nation to give in to the wildly unpopular demands of the "defund the police" movement.

The time to reverse course and to arrest the problem is now. To his credit, Mayor Wheeler has already taken steps to improve conditions. If he is to be successful, he will need the full support of civilian leadership—which will also need to give up any remaining commitment to anti-cop politics. Further investment in expanding policing capacity—in hiring, in training, and in the number of cops available to walk the beat—is an absolute must if the city wants to restore its former glory.



About the Author

Charles Fain Lehman is a fellow at the Manhattan Institute, working primarily on the Policing and Public Safety Initiative, and a contributing editor of City Journal. His work has appeared in outlets including the Atlantic, the Wall Street Journal, National Affairs, and National Review. He has discussed public safety policy before the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and at colleges including Carnegie Mellon and Cornell. He is a 2023–24 Robert Novak fellow with the Fund for American Studies. Prior to joining the Manhattan Institute in 2021, Charles was a staff writer at the Washington Free Beacon. Charles is originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and now lives outside Washington, D.C., with his wife and son.



Endnotes

- ¹ “Portland Homicides, 2023,” *The Oregonian*; “Shooting Incident Statistics,” Portland.gov.
- ² Simon Gutierrez, “City of Portland Struggling with Rampant Property Crime,” KPTV, Nov. 15, 2022.
- ³ Charles Fain Lehman, “This Is Your City on Fentanyl,” *City Journal*, Aug. 6, 2023.
- ⁴ This observation is not novel. See, e.g., Lucas Manfield, “Portland Ranks 48th Among 50 Big Cities for Cops per Capita,” *Willamette Week*, Sept. 28, 2022.
- ⁵ Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime Data Explorer, accessed Dec. 12, 2022.
- ⁶ David Weisburd and Malay K. Majimundar, eds., *Proactive Policing: Effects on Crime and Communities* (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2018).
- ⁷ “Portland Police Bureau Faces Staffing Issues,” KGW News, Dec. 31, 2019.
- ⁸ Jeff Thompson, “Portland Police Create Timeline, Map of Civil Disturbances and Riots,” KGW8, Aug. 20, 2020.
- ⁹ Kirk Johnson and Sergio Olmos, “After a Year of Protests, Portland Is Ready to Move On. But Where?” *New York Times*, June 9, 2021.
- ¹⁰ “Portland Police Bureau Budget Details and Changes: FY 2019–20 and FY 2020–21,” Portland City Budget Office.
- ¹¹ Lucas Manfield, “Rise of Violent Crime in Portland Outpaced Country in 2021,” *Willamette Week*, Oct. 8, 2022; “Portland Homicides, 2023.”
- ¹² Nigel Jaquiss and Aaron Mesh, “Black Portlanders Are More Likely to Be Murdered than Their Peers in Cities Better Known for Crime,” *Willamette Week*, Aug. 11, 2021.
- ¹³ Alicia Victoria Lozano and Gabe Gutierrez, “Portland, Ore., Leaders Walk Tightrope Between Calls to Defund Police, Escalating Violence,” NBC News, June 27, 2021.
- ¹⁴ Minyvonne Burke, “Portland Police Officers Resign en Masse from Crowd Control Unit After Officer Is Indicted,” NBC News, June 18, 2021.
- ¹⁵ Jonathan Maus, “Police Chief’s Reorganization Plan Leaves No Officers on Traffic Duty,” *BikePortland* (blog), Dec. 15, 2020.
- ¹⁶ Wright Gazaway, “Portland, Oregon Is One of Few Major American Cities Without Police Traffic Enforcement,” KATV, Nov. 9, 2022.
- ¹⁷ Simon Gutierrez, “Families Left Frustrated as Portland Police Staffing Issues Impact Overdose Investigations,” KPTV, Feb. 15, 2023.
- ¹⁸ “Portland Police Bureau Annual Report 2021,” Portland Police Bureau (PPB), 2022.



Portland's Police Staffing Crisis

- ¹⁹ Dan Springer, “Portland Aims to Fight Crime with More Unarmed Park Rangers; No New Cash for Police,” Fox News, Apr. 9, 2021.
- ²⁰ Shane Dixon Kavanaugh, “Why Portland Has Fewer Cops Now than Any Point in Past 30 Years,” *The Oregonian*, Nov. 7, 2021.
- ²¹ “Portland Police Facing Hiring Challenges,” *Portland Tribune*, Nov. 12, 2021.
- ²² Sara Cline, “Portland Among U.S. Cities Adding Funds Back into Police Departments,” Associated Press, Nov. 18, 2021.
- ²³ Jeff Gianola, “Mayor Wheeler on Drug Markets, Police Staffing,” KOIN 6 News, May 19, 2023; “Police Hiring Moves to High Gear,” *Portland Observer*, Mar. 24, 2022.
- ²⁴ Gianola, “Mayor Wheeler on Drug Markets.”
- ²⁵ Charles Fain Lehman, “Modernize the Criminal Justice System: An Agenda for the New Congress,” Manhattan Institute, Apr. 20, 2023.
- ²⁶ At least according to the figures reported annually to the FBI. But this is prima facie plausible: in the 1950 census, the city reported 379,063 people; in the 1980 census, the figure was 369,300. By 1990, it had risen to 436,960. Census figures obtained from Steven Ruggles et al., “IPUMS USA: Version 12.0 [dataset]” (Minneapolis: IPUMS, 2022).
- ²⁷ Kristine de Leon, “Portland 6th Fastest-Shrinking Big City in America Since 2020, Census Estimates Show,” *The Oregonian*, May 19, 2023.
- ²⁸ The data were initially returned as five Excel files, both containing employee-day-level data. Four of the files covered the years 2017 through 2020 and included all sworn employees; the last file covered 2021 and 2022 combined and included only officers. To compare them, I filter only for officers and select only officers assigned to a specific precinct. Data files are available through Github (https://github.com/CharlesFainLehman/PPB_UDARs).
- ²⁹ “Portland Police Bureau Annual Report 2022,” PPB, 2023.
- ³⁰ Maxine Bernstein, “Overworked, Overwhelmed and Burned Out: Why Portland Cops Say They’re Leaving in Doves,” *The Oregonian*, Apr. 4, 2021.
- ³¹ Dan Tilken and Amanda Arden, “This Is Anarchy: PPB Fighting Crime, Resignations,” KOIN 6 News, Nov. 9, 2021.
- ³² Wright Gazaway, “Portland City Leaders at Odds over Staffing Levels Within Police Bureau,” KTVL, July 1, 2021.
- ³³ “PERF Survey Shows Steady Staffing Decrease over the Past Two Years,” Police Executive Research Forum, 2022.
- ³⁴ “Portland Police Bureau Faces Staffing Issues”; Simon Gutierrez, “Portland Police Bureau Hiring Standards Contribute to Staffing Shortage,” KPTV, Nov. 14, 2022.
- ³⁵ Gutierrez, “Portland Police Bureau Hiring Standards.”
- ³⁶ “History of the Police Bureau,” Portland.gov.



Portland's Police Staffing Crisis

- 37 “Entry Level: Minimum Requirements and Disqualifiers,” JOIN PPB.
- 38 Gutierrez, “Portland Police Bureau Hiring Standards.”
- 39 “Portland Police Facing Hiring Challenges.”
- 40 “Training Division,” Portland.gov.
- 41 Oregon Dept. of Public Safety Standards and Training, “DPSST Use of Force Presentation for the 2020 Joint Committee on Transparent Policing and Use of Force Reform,” Legislative Joint Committee on Transparent Policing and Use of Force Reform, Salem, OR, July 2020.
- 42 Emily D. Buehler, “State and Local Law Enforcement Training Academies, 2018—Statistical Tables,” U.S. Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, July 2021.
- 43 “Training Division,” Portland.gov; Buehler, “State and Local Law Enforcement Training Academies, 2018.” It is not certain that the two figures reported here cover exactly the same activities, so the comparison should be interpreted with caution.
- 44 “Portland Police Facing Hiring Challenges.”
- 45 “Police Staffing Numbers,” Portland.gov, accessed Aug. 15, 2023.
- 46 “Portland Police Bureau Annual Report 2022,” 63.
- 47 “Police Hiring Moves to High Gear”; Maxine Bernstein, “Portland’s City Council Unanimously Approves 4-Year, \$56 Million Contract with Police Union,” *The Oregonian*, Feb. 25, 2022.
- 48 “JOIN PPB,” JOIN PPB.
- 49 “Portland City, Oregon,” U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts.
- 50 Mitch Smith, “As Applications Fall, Police Departments Lure Recruits with Bonuses and Attention,” *New York Times*, Dec. 25, 2022.
- 51 Alex Zielinski, “Portland City Council Passes \$7.1 Billion Budget, Despite Debate over Fee Reductions, Freezes,” Oregon Public Broadcasting, May 17, 2023; Zusha Elinson, “Portland Is Losing Its Residents,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 28, 2023.
- 52 “Police Staffing Numbers.”
- 53 Wright Gazaway, “Oregon Police Training Agency Proposes Plan to Train New Officers More Quickly,” KPIC, June 6, 2023.
- 54 “Training Division.”
- 55 Gazaway, “Portland City Leaders at Odds over Staffing Levels.”
- 56 Tilken and Arden, “This Is Anarchy.”
- 57 Claire Cain Miller, “Will Portland Always Be a Retirement Community for the Young?” *New York Times Magazine*, Sept. 16, 2014.
- 58 U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts.



Portland's Police Staffing Crisis

- ⁵⁹ De Leon, "Portland 6th Fastest-Shrinking Big City in America."
- ⁶⁰ Anthony Effinger, "They Left: Portland Is Losing Some of Its Biggest Fans," *Willamette Week*, Feb. 1, 2023.