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**DON'T “DIVEST” – INVEST!**

***Stripping money from the police is foolish.  
So is ignoring the plight of poverty-stricken neighborhoods.***

For *Police Issues* by Julius (Jay) Wachtel. George Floyd’s legacy has reached Oregon. After admitting that being white has unfairly worked to his advantage, [Mayor Ted Wheeler pledged](#) to take funds from the police and other city departments and use them to invest in economically disadvantaged areas. He also urged a rethinking of law enforcement’s role and warned that some police units would lose funding. Among them is the department’s [violence reduction team](#), which has been in operation since 2019. According to one of its operatives, [the squad investigated 426 shootings last year](#). Among these were a number of inter-gang battles involving multiple shooters.

Portland also got [a new chief, Jack Lovell](#). A veteran African-American officer, he pledged to “better align” public and officer views of how policing ought be done. With [thirty-six homicides in 2019](#) and [“an unprecedented wave”](#) of twenty-three shootings during the first ten days of 2020, he clearly faces a tough task. Still, outgoing chief Jamie Resch (a white female) described him as “the exact right person at the exact right moment.” She hopes that his influence as well as the redirected funds will help stem the violence that besets Portland’s poor areas.

Where *does* Portland stand, violence wise? According to the [UCR](#), its 2018 crime rate, 5.2/1,000, is about on par with New York City. While that’s considerably higher than the U.S. overall (3.7), it’s nonetheless much better than the 7.2 posted by Minneapolis, that other city we’ll talk about. Still, as essays in our [“Neighborhoods”](#) section have repeatedly argued, when it comes to crime it’s not really about cities: it’s about places *within* cities. And

Person	Assault Offenses	9,103
	Homicide Offenses	35
	Human Trafficking Offenses	25
	Kidnapping/Abduction	47
	Sex Offenses	695
	Sex Offenses, Nonforcible	25
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9,930</b>
Property	Arson	258
	Bribery	3
	Burglary	4,190
	Counterfeiting/Forgery	813
	Embezzlement	160
	Extortion/Blackmail	30
	Fraud Offenses	3,470
	Larceny Offenses	24,588
	Motor Vehicle Theft	6,553
	Robbery	995
	Stolen Property Offenses	95
	Vandalism	6,288
<b>Total</b>	<b>47,443</b>	
Society	Animal Cruelty Offenses	32
	Drug/Narcotic Offenses	1,725
	Gambling Offenses	0
	Pornography/Obscene Material	70
	Prostitution Offenses	48
	Weapon Law Violations	669
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,544</b>

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Portland (pop. 654,741) has plenty of those, with [ninety-four neighborhoods](#) in seven districts. Using neighborhoods as the unit of analysis, let's compare!

Our information came from three sources. For crime, we turned to [2019 police data](#) (see above right). In that year Portland reported 59,917 criminal incidents. All but 1,754 were coded for neighborhood. Eliminating neighborhoods with low population counts or those whose Census data was unavailable left 87 neighborhoods with a total population of 611,124. We coded each neighborhood for population and percent in poverty using [2017 Census estimates](#) assembled by the *Portland Monthly*, and for race using [2010 Census figures](#) reported by the City of Portland.

Correlation analysis was applied to examine relationships between poverty, crime rates (no. of crimes per 1,000 pop.) and the percent of black and white residents. The below table displays the Pearson “r” that quantifies the relationships. This statistic ranges from -1 to +1. Zero depicts no relationship; -1 a perfect “negative” relationship (as one variable goes up, the other goes down, in lockstep), and +1 a perfect “positive” relationship (both variables go up and down in lockstep.)

		Pov	PerRate	PropRate	SocRate	TotRate
Pov	Pearson Correlation	1	.464**	.461**	.435**	.463**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	87	87	87	87	87
PctBlack	Pearson Correlation	.232*	-.007	.015	-.031	.009
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.948	.891	.773	.937
	N	87	87	87	87	87
PctWhite	Pearson Correlation	-.450**	-.073	-.077	-.046	-.075
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.500	.479	.675	.489
	N	87	87	87	87	87

- Poverty and crime (first row): Moderately strong, statistically significant positive correlations between poverty and crime, meaning they tend to go up and down together. (Two asterisks mean that the probability the statistic was generated by chance is less than one in a hundred.)
- Poverty and race (first column): Moderate positive relationship between blacks and poverty, also statistically significant (one asterisk means the probability the statistic was generated by chance is less than five in one-hundred.) And a moderately strong, statistically meaningful negative relationship between whites and poverty. Clearly, blacks are somewhat more likely to live in poor areas, and

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whites are moderately less likely to do so.

- Race and crime: No relationship.

Using total crime rate (TT rate), this table compares the ten most peaceful neighborhoods (top) with the ten most seriously stricken by crime (bottom).

Neighborhood	Pop.	Pct. Pov.	Pct. Black	Pct. Wht	TT crime	Pers. rate	Prop. rate	Soc. rate	TT rate
Pleasant Valley	12743	16.9	1.4	85.4	361	0.1	22.4	0.0	0.6
Crestwood	13916	7.3	0.6	89.7	35	0.2	2.3	0.0	2.5
Collins View	10027	9.2	1.1	90.1	39	0.7	3.2	0.0	3.9
Marshall Park	1358	5.0	0.4	94.3	14	0.7	9.6	0.0	10.3
Cathedral Park	24107	16.5	5.8	78.3	277	1.4	10.0	0.2	11.5
Arnold Creek	2811	3.2	0.4	92.4	36	1.4	11.0	0.4	12.8
Hayhurst	5978	8.6	1.2	90.3	96	3.0	12.9	0.2	16.1
Ardenwald	2010	9.2	1.2	91.8	39	2.0	16.4	1.0	19.4
Ashcreek	5337	7.5	1.4	89.6	109	3.4	16.3	0.7	20.4
Alameda	5622	6.9	4.1	93.8	123	2.0	19.9	0.0	21.9
Hazelwood	25183	20.7	3.4	77.3	3993	23.5	126.2	8.9	158.6
Parkrose	5870	13.1	8.3	70.9	975	29.8	126.7	9.5	166.1
Old Town/Chinatown	7057	15.3	9.1	77.3	1563	70.7	104.0	46.8	221.5
Hollywood	2022	16.6	6.8	84.3	480	22.7	208.2	6.4	237.4
Pearl	7124	16.2	3.6	84.4	1716	25.3	202.4	13.2	240.9
Eliot	3851	23.8	34.6	51.3	1333	39.5	298.9	7.8	346.1
Creston-Kenilworth	1488	20.7	3.1	77.6	624	65.9	335.3	18.1	419.4
Lloyd	2124	25.3	6.4	80.3	1560	102.2	601.7	30.6	734.5
Centennial	1344	29.7	2.2	80.7	1828	311.8	982.1	66.2	1360.1
Downtown	1811	32.8	6.3	76.3	4069	408.1	1711.2	127.6	2246.8

Blacks comprise a very small proportion of the city's population (5.8 percent, according to a [2019 Census estimate](#)) and only a tiny slice of the economically better-off neighborhoods. Here are the correlations if we only consider the twenty neighborhoods at crime's polar extremes:

		Pov	PerRate	PropRate	SocRate	TotRate
Pov	Pearson Correlation	1	.778**	.817**	.743**	.809**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	20	20	20	20	20
PctBlack	Pearson Correlation	0.392	0.070	0.142	0.087	0.127
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.087	0.771	0.551	0.715	0.595
	N	20	20	20	20	20
PctWhite	Pearson Correlation	-.657**	-0.280	-0.334	-0.291	-0.323
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	0.232	0.150	0.214	0.165
	N	20	20	20	20	20

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As one would expect, whites are far less likely to live in the poorest areas (-.657\*\*, seventh row). And check out the magnitude of those r's on the first row. When we cull out the criminally middle-of-the-road places, the statistical relationship between crime and poverty becomes truly formidable.

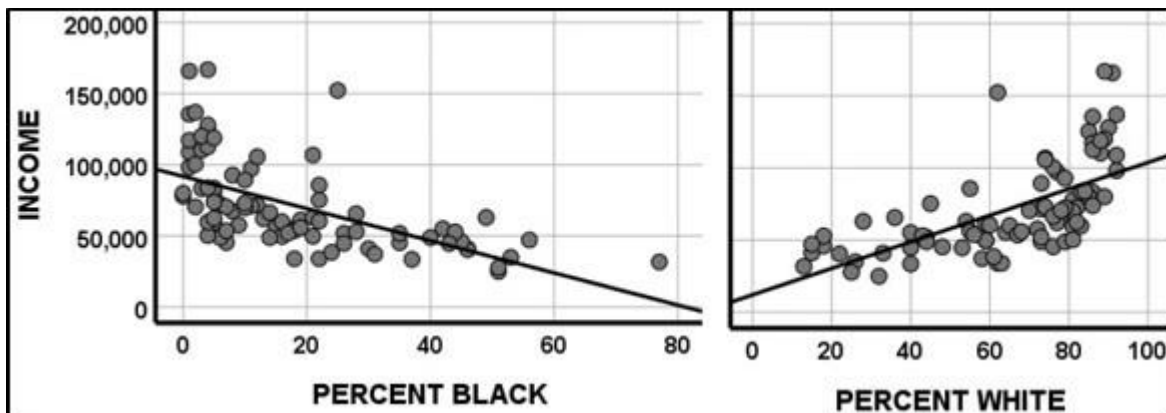
So what about that city whose police department is in the nation's crosshairs? We mean, of course, Minneapolis, where a never-to-be-forgotten video depicts an experienced cop dispassionately (and, ultimately, fatally) [pressing his knees against a helpless man's neck](#). From "Open Minneapolis," an official website, we downloaded violent crime information (MPD UCR codes 1, 3, 4 and 5) for the one-year period ending June 3, 2020. Three other sources – [Minnesota Compass](#), "Niche" and [City-Data.com](#) –

were used to code each neighborhood for median family income, racial distribution and violent crime rate per 1,000 population. After some culling our dataset comprised 85 Minneapolis neighborhoods where 3,749 violent crimes had taken place.

		INCOME	VIOL RATE
INCOME	Pearson Correlation	1	-.475**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	85	85
PCT BLACK	Pearson Correlation	-.591**	.659**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
	N	85	85
PCT WHITE	Pearson Correlation	.638**	-.722**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
	N	85	85

We again used correlation analysis. The table on the left depicts the pertinent relationships. As one would expect, crimes of violence have a meaningful, statistically significant negative relationship with income – as one goes up, the other goes down.

Check out those strong, statistically significant relationships between race and income. Again, they're in the anticipated directions: positive for whites (both go up and down together) and negative for blacks (as one goes up the other goes down.) Here are the graphs. Each "dot" is a neighborhood. Catch the pronounced slope of those trend lines!



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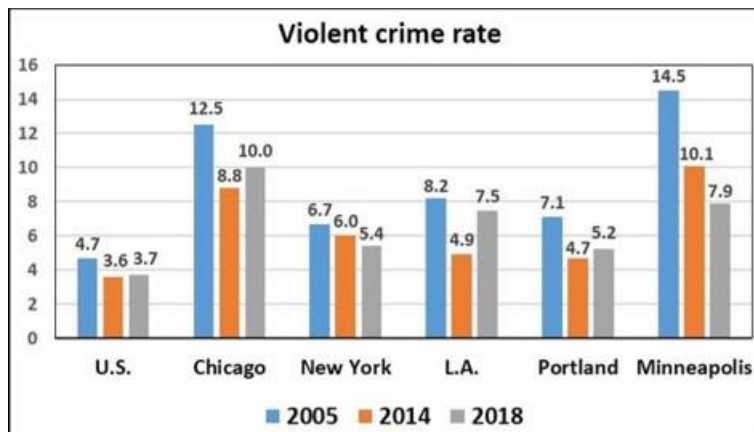
But who needs *r* statistics and graphs? Check out another comparo between neighborhoods at crime's extremes. For Minneapolis it's between the four least violent neighborhoods and the four most:

NEIGHBORHOOD	POP	TT VIOL CR	VIOL CR RATE	PCT BLK	PCT HISP	PCT WHT	INCOME
Camden Industrial	30729	8	0.3	35.0	8.0	44.0	51761
ECCO	2453	2	0.8	1.0	1.0	92.0	108841
Fulton	6355	5	0.8	2.0	1.0	92.0	136824
Linden Hills	7727	6	0.8	4.0	1.0	90.0	127961
Folwell	5742	152	26.5	46.0	6.0	33.0	40938
East Phillips	4253	135	31.7	30.0	30.0	15.0	41012
Downtown West	8084	339	41.9	22.0	4.0	60.0	60383
Hawthorne	4717	199	42.2	46.0	10.0	22.0	40378

Keeping in mind that population sizes differ, the data tells an obvious and very compelling story. Look at the income column. Check out the behavior that accompanies each entry. Then imagine policing the neighborhoods in the lower tier.

Indeed, imagine policing *Minneapolis*. [A story in the Star-Tribune](#) about a recent shooting that left one dead and eleven wounded goes on to mention a “surge” of violence that followed the killing of George Floyd, with more than ninety shot in less than thirty days. Considering that twenty-six Minneapolitans have been murdered so far this year ([last year's toll](#) to date was a relatively “measly” fifteen) police chief Medaria Arradondo's lament about a “public health crisis” seems hardly an exaggeration.

According to 2019 Census estimates, 14.9 percent of [Portland's](#) 654,701 inhabitants live in poverty. With 429,606 residents, [Minneapolis](#) has a poverty rate of 19.9 percent, fully one-third worse. That difference is clearly reflected in our analysis. And as we alluded to, in the cities' UCR crime rates. Here is a six-way comparo:



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What to do? As our “neighborhoods” section has harped on for years, what we *really* need is a “Marshall Plan” for America’s chronically poor neighborhoods. Unless we make major efforts – job training, employment and social counseling, drug and alcohol rehab, childcare, tutoring, affordable housing, and so on – their residents will forever remain locked in crime’s embrace.

So where’s that investment going to come from? President Trump’s re-election promise of “a new deal for black America” has long faded into obscurity. Municipal budgets and politics being what they are, poor neighborhoods are essentially left to fend for themselves. Yes, there have been some valiant private efforts. Portland’s “unprecedented wave” of gunplay is being tackled by “We Are the Caution,” a *Facebook* campaign that addresses the misuse of social media to foment violence. It’s the brainchild of two former gang members who created “Men Building Men,” a nonprofit that seeks to steer young men away from the streets.

In the meantime, loose talk about “defunding” the police continues. Portland seems in a far better position to yank money from the cops than Minneapolis. Yet that 2014-2018 uptick in violence, as well as its more recent experiences, give cause for alarm. Even so, latest word is that its police budget of about \$240 million, which had been set for a small increase, *will instead be slashed* by \$15 million.

But violence-stricken Minneapolis has an even better idea: “dismantle” the police *altogether*. A brainchild of the city council, the plan proposes to have unarmed social service teams do what’s needed. That approach (it’ll supposedly take a year to finalize the details) is opposed by the mayor, who would rather “reform” the cops. Ditto, the business community, which worries about the chaos that would engulf a badge-free city. Skepticism has even been voiced by some of the affluent, progressively-oriented residents of the city’s “Powderhorn Park” area, who reacted to the killing of George Floyd by pledging to never again call the police.

Then, sure enough, “stuff” began to happen.