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“WOKE” UP, AMERICA!

Violence besets poor neighborhoods. So why should the well-off care?



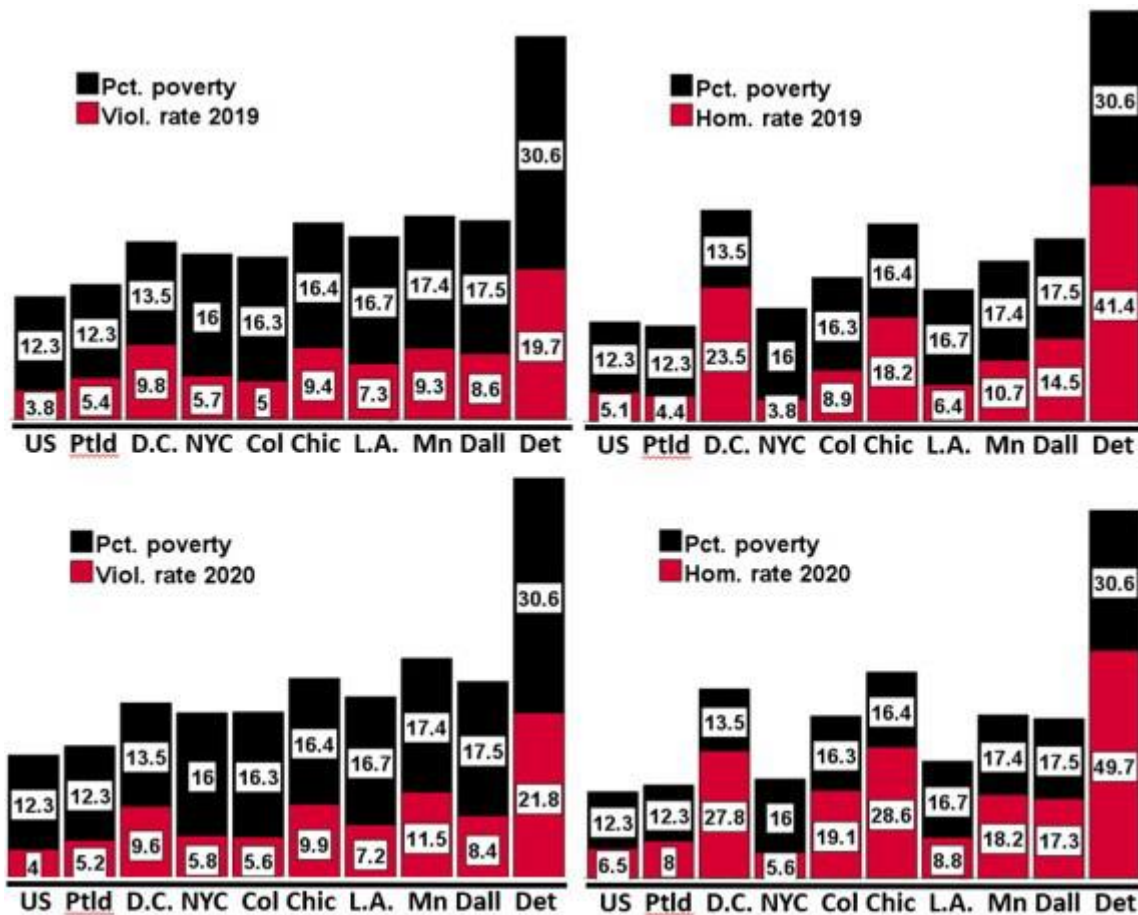
For Police Issues by Julius (Jay) Wachtel. “In 2020, the United States witnessed a nearly 30% increase in the murder rate – which is the largest increase in the 60 years that the FBI has been keeping records. And 77% of those homicides were committed with a firearm.” Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco’s [October 6th. address](#) to the Major Cities Chiefs Association actually began with the grim recap of a recent series of shootings of Federal law enforcement officers, including the killing of a DEA agent.

Violent crime did increase in 2020, and in many places quite dramatically. This table displays poverty, violent crime (murder and non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, aggravated assault) and homicide data for eight cities featured in recent Police Issues essays: [Chicago](#), [Columbus](#), [Dallas](#), [Detroit](#), [Los Angeles](#), [Minneapolis](#), [New York City](#), and [Portland](#). (In November we added a ninth, the District of Columbia.) They appear in order of percent of residents in poverty according to the [2019 ACS](#). Number of violent crimes and homicides in 2019 are from the [UCR](#), and for 2020 they’re from the [Crime Data Explorer](#) (violence and homicide rates are both calculated per 100,000 pop.)

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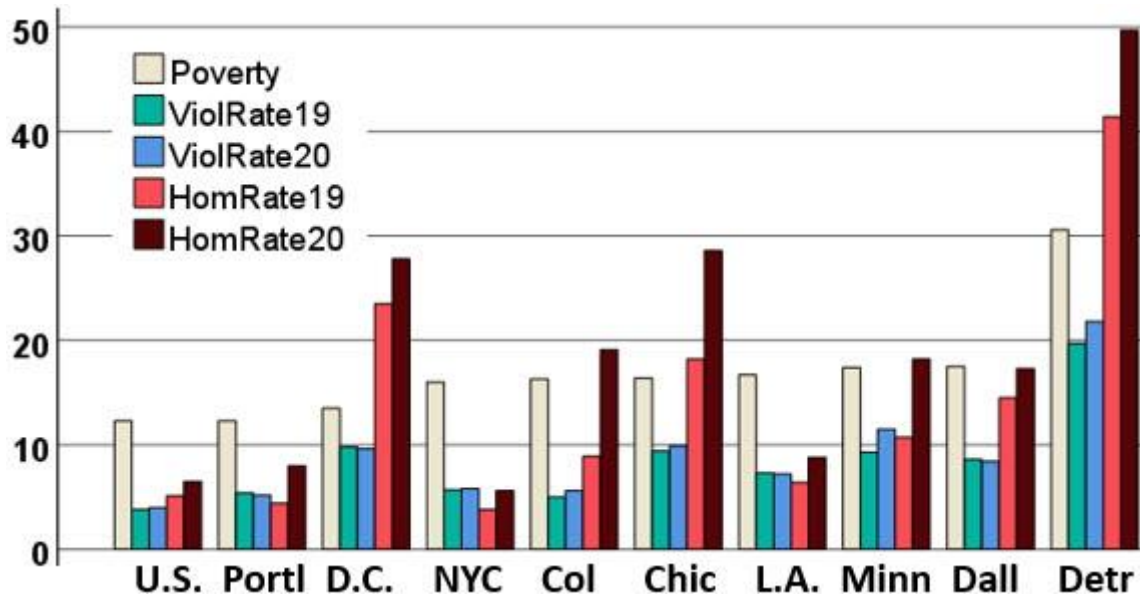
	Pov	Pop19	Pop20	Viol19	Viol20	VRT19	VRT20	Hom19	Hom20	HRT19	HRT20
U.S.	12.3					380.8	398.5			5.1	6.5
Portland	12.3	662114	662941	3606	3465	544.6	522.7	29	53	4.4	8.0
D.C.	13.5	705749	712816	6896	6828	977.1	957.9	166	198	23.5	27.8
NYC	16	8379043	8300377	47821	47959	570.7	577.8	319	468	3.8	5.6
Columbus	16.3	906120	911383	4561	5064	503.4	555.6	81	174	8.9	19.1
Chicago	16.4	2707064	2693598	25532	26583	943.2	986.9	492	771	18.2	28.6
L.A.	16.7	4015546	4000587	29400	28882	732.2	721.9	258	351	6.4	8.8
Minn.	17.4	431016	435116	3990	5025	925.7	1154.9	46	79	10.7	18.2
Dallas	17.5	1363295	1363028	11764	11514	862.9	844.7	198	236	14.5	17.3
Detroit	30.6	663502	659616	13040	14370	1965.3	2178.5	275	328	41.4	49.7

Here's the data in graphic form:



While the magnitude of the increases varied from place to place, poorer places generally got the raw end of the deal: they often began with higher rates of violence, and increases – particularly, in homicide – were usually more pronounced:

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Elevated levels of violence persisted into 2021. For example:

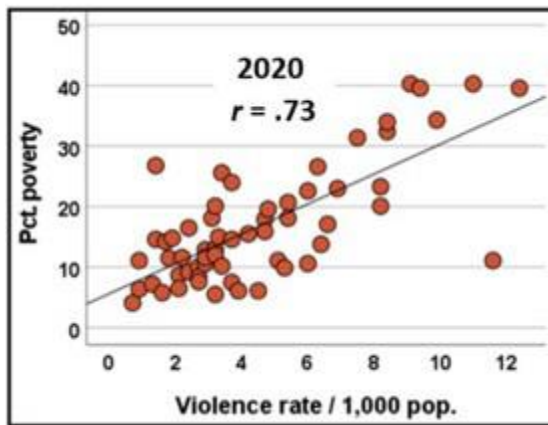
- [Portland](#) reported 40 homicides, 761 robberies and 6,671 assaults between January 1 and September 30, 2020. During the same period this year there were 63 homicides (a 58 percent increase), 816 robberies and 7,100 assaults. Police attribute [the sharp increase in murder](#) to budget cuts, a loss of officers and the disbandment of a specialized unit due to concerns about discriminatory policing.
- [New York City](#) recorded 374 homicides, 9,980 robberies and 16,173 felony assaults from January 1 through October 10, 2020. During that period this year there were (again) 374 homicides, 9,976 robberies and 17,412 felony assaults.
- [Chicago](#) reported 623 murders and 6,091 robberies from January 1 through October 13, 2020. During that period this year there were 639 murders and 5,760 robberies.
- [Los Angeles](#) recorded 265 homicides, 6,233 robberies and 14,248 aggravated assaults from January 1 through October 9, 2020. This year's corresponding toll came in at 307 homicides, 6,266 robberies and 15,548 aggravated assaults.
- [D.C. suffered 201 homicides in 2021 as of Nov. 23](#). That's 11% more than during the same period in 2020, when there were 179. Even when compared with full years, it's the greatest number of murders since 2003, when there were 248. It's *more than twice as many* as in 2012, when there were 88 murders, and 42 percent more than in 2017, when the homicide count was 116.

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But our concern isn't about differences *between* cities. Instead, it's about disparities *within*. Best we can tell, the middle-class neighborhood where my wife and I reside has been free of violent crime, or any property crime of consequence, for, um, *thirty years*. Many of our readers can probably boast likewise. To be sure, drive a couple miles one way or the other and things can get gloomy. And that's within the same city. Say that a Martian criminologist lands on our block and asks whether violence and economic conditions are linked on the Earth, as they are on its planet. How would we respond?

Well, we could refer to our lead table and cite U.S. poverty and homicide rates. Or, say, New York City's. Job done! But either response would mislead. As essays in our [Neighborhoods special section](#) have long argued, the risk of victimization depends on *where*. In the end, *neighborhoods* – the places where we live – are what *really* “counts” (see, most recently, [“The Usual Victims”](#)).

Consider the Big Apple. New York City's [Furman Center](#) collects poverty and “serious” crime data for each of the city's “community districts” (i.e., neighborhoods). Serious violent crimes include “most types of assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, murder (including non-negligent manslaughter), rape,



District	Poverty	Viol
Tottenville	4.1%	0.7
Queens Village	5.5%	3.2
Upper East Side	5.8%	1.6
Financial District	6.1%	3.9
Greenwich / SoHo	6.1%	4.5
Brownsville	34.3%	9.9
Hunts Pt./Longwood	39.6%	9.4
Mott Haven/Melrose	39.6%	12.4
Belmont/East Tremont	40.3%	9.1
Morrisania/Crotona	40.3%	11

and robbery.” Both vary widely among the city's 59 districts. Poverty ranges between 4.1 and 40.3 percent, while in 2020 “serious violent crime” went between 0.7 and 12.4 per thousand population. We used the Center's data to generate the scattergram (each “dot” represents a community district) and its accompanying table. They indicate that within New York City, violence and poverty increase and decrease pretty much in sync. This relationship is confirmed by a sizeable “r” statistic (its value can range from zero, meaning no relationship between variables, to one, a lock-step association.)

[“Fix Those Neighborhoods!”](#) described large disparities in poverty and violence within New York City and Los Angeles in 2020. We contrasted the per/100,000 murder

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rates of the Big Apple's wealthy Upper East Side (pop. 220,000, poverty 7.2%, murder rate 0.5) and its struggling Brownsville district (pop. 86,000, poverty 29.4%, murder rate 29.1). We also compared affluent West Los Angeles (pop. 228,000, poverty 11.3%, murder rate 1.8) with the impoverished 77th. Street area (pop. 175,000, poverty 30.7%, murder rate 27.4).

Those inequalities persisted into this year. Between January 1 and October 17, 2021, NYPD's well-off 19th. precinct, which covers the Upper East Side, [posted two killings](#) (one more than last year), yielding a murder rate of 0.9/100,000. In contrast, the 73rd. precinct, which handles Brownsville, [logged fourteen homicides](#). While that's better than the twenty-two killings it recorded at that point in 2020, its murder rate, 16.3, was still eighteen times higher than its wealthy competitor's.

Not much changed in Los Angeles, either. LAPD's been screaming bloody (murder) about the city's 2021 increase in homicide, [which is greatly burdening](#) its beleaguered detectives. What the newspaper article *didn't* mention is that West L.A. doesn't need their help: as of October 16, [none of its 228,000 residents](#) have been murdered this year. *Not one*. Meanwhile the economically distraught 77th. Street area (pop. 175,000) posted *forty-four* killings, yielding a rate of 25.1.

Neighborhood	Pop	Pov	Person crimes	Rate
Arnold Creek	2,811	3.2	4	1.42
Alameda	5,622	6.9	8	1.42
Crestwood	1,488	7.3	1	0.67
Ashcreek	4,383	7.5	17	3.88
Hayhurst	5,978	8.6	9	1.51
Downtown	11,170	32.8	494	44.23
Centennial	7,386	29.7	318	43.05
Lloyd	2,124	25.3	152	71.56
Eliot	3,851	23.8	141	36.61
Creston-Kenilworth	8,242	20.7	64	7.77

[“Don't Divest – Invest!”](#) compared Portland's ten most prosperous neighborhoods with the ten most stricken by poverty. Using [Portland Police Bureau crime data](#) for 2021 (Jan. 1 through September 30), and neighborhood population and poverty figures from [Portland Monthly](#), we compared crimes against person rates between the five most prosperous neighborhoods and the five least. Check out that table on the left. As one would

expect, poverty and crime lined up most convincingly

We could go on, but the point's obvious. In our country's many poverty-stricken neighborhoods, things are harkening back to the violence-ridden years of the crack epidemic. So why hasn't America embarked on that [“Marshall Plan”](#) *Police Issues* keeps yakking about? As we've repeatedly implored, “a concerted effort to provide poverty-stricken individuals and families with child care, tutoring, educational opportunities,

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language skills, job training, summer jobs, apprenticeships, health services and – yes – adequate housing could yield vast benefits.”

Last December John Jay’s [The Crime Report](#) actually published one of our rants. They even entitled it “[Memo to Joe Biden](#)”! Alas, your faithful blogger never heard from the White House. We recently deduced the reason. According to the very “woke” *The New York Times*, [unless President Biden’s “social safety net” bill is substantially shrunk](#) it will go nowhere. With that in mind, Senator Joe Manchin (D – W.Va.) offered an obvious fix: “Limit access to every program in the ambitious measure to only those Americans who need it most.” Makes sense, right? Not to Democratic Rep. Mikie Sherrill, who represents a prosperous area of New Jersey. Instead of limiting child care benefits to families that earn *no more than twice* a state’s median income, her recent amendment extended the proposed benefit to nearly everyone. Why? Because of an apparently widespread concern among “Blues” that unless the upper-crust gets its cut, even the “wokest” voters might defect to the “Reds”.

Hmm. Anyone still up for that “Marshall Plan”? Nah, we didn’t think so.