

**MEASURE**

# **PUBLIC SAFETY VISION 2020**

## **EVIDENCE-INFORMED SOLUTIONS**

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29 July 2020 | Paulette Blanc, Janis Bookout, Meme Styles, Nathaniel Falck, Anup Pandey, Rakhi Agrawal

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### **WHAT IS 'MEASURE©'?**

MEASURE© is an Austin-based, not-for-profit public education and research organization seeking to improve community agency functionality and address community needs through data-driven advocacy, research, and public information. Our mission is to use data and education to mobilize communities to eliminate social disparities.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the data and trends in spending on police and some of the outcomes that have resulted. In addition, this report presents findings of non-police interventions and explores ideas for public safety improvements. The solutions provided in this report are not an exhaustive list and only serves as a **starting point** for developing a plan for shaping public safety of the future.

Major findings in data and trends:

- Analysis of national data shows that **lower police spending does not lead to higher crime rates.**
- From 2013- June 30, 2020, **41% of persons killed by police in Austin showed signs of "mental illness"** (more than twice the national average and highest among the largest 15 cities).
- APD's and the 911 system are not currently equipped to handle mental health crises. APD has a history of escalation in these situations.
- Two reputable studies have called for increased funding for existing and proven programs which integrate mental health crisis response with the 911 system. More funding is required for this implementation.

Solutions:

- Evidence shows that changes in policies and funding allocation can make a significant difference.
- Public investments in community-based programs have shown success in improving public safety

## HOW MEASURE DEFINES PUBLIC SAFETY

MEASURE© recognizes public safety and its applied metrics as holistically facilitating community engagement to improve community relations and decrease community harm. MEASURE defines public safety as mainly happening locally, while incorporating the frameworks and understandings of research development at the state and national levels - for MEASURE, public safety is, **“a radical systems approach to the protection of life, health and property: whereby the system is a unit, totally dependent on each component resulting in the obviation of danger to the public and the restorative, community-healing required to undo institutional racism.”** Public safety goes beyond just enforcing laws; it is foundational to community wellness by proactively seeking to reduce harm. Public safety happens by the people and for the people, based in partnership between the

public and institutions as mutual stakeholders in maintaining safe and functional communities.

## DATA AND TRENDS

### Methodology

Our team of researchers and data scientists evaluated data from three data sources aggregated into one database. Data from the Mapping Police Violence database, population data from the U.S. Census Bureau, and standardized police spending data from the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. The data looked at people killed by police between 2013 and 2019, crime rates between 2013 and 2019, and city dollars spent on police per capita between 2013 and 2017. The unit for per capita spending is dollars per person per year. The per capita spending includes an allocation of county and state spending for residents of that city, in addition to city spending, which is a complex calculation done by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.<sup>1</sup> Our analysis is based on averages over the seven-year time period of 2013-2019. Additionally, evidenced-based reports and recommendations on public safety programs locally and nationally were reviewed.

### **Austin Is No Exception to National Trends on Police Violence, And It's Getting Worse, Not Better.**

When assessing police violence trends from 2013-2019, a comparison of the 78 most populous U.S. cities and the average city dollars spent on police per capita to the number of people killed by police per 1 million, showed that an increase in spending did not correlate with a decrease in people killed by police (See Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> This suggests that spending more on police departments, perhaps on additional training, won't reduce the number of people killed by police.

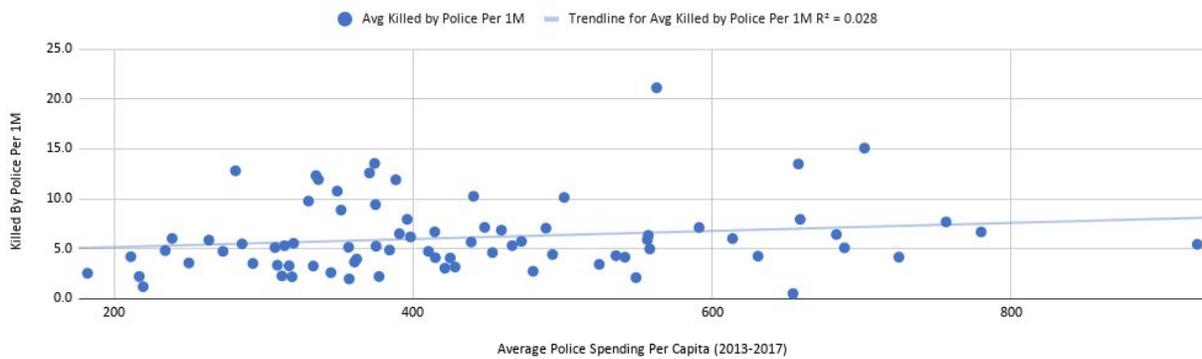
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<sup>1</sup> Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. (n.d.). Access FiSC Database. Retrieved July 19, 2020, from <https://www.lincolnst.edu/research-data/data-toolkits/fiscally-standardized-cities/search-database>

<sup>2</sup> 78 cities: Anaheim, Anchorage, Arlington, Atlanta, Aurora, Austin, Bakersfield, Baltimore, Baton Rouge, Birmingham, Boston, Buffalo, Charlotte, Chesapeake, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Colorado Springs, Columbus, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Durham, El Paso, Fremont, Fresno, Garland, Greensboro, Hialeah, Houston, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Las Vegas, Lincoln, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Louisville, Lubbock, Madison, Memphis, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Nashville, New Orleans, New York, Oakland, Oklahoma City, Omaha, Orlando, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Portland, Raleigh, Reno, Riverside, Rochester, Sacramento, San Antonio, San Diego, San Jose, Santa Ana, Seattle, Spokane, St. Louis, St. Paul, St. Petersburg, Stockton, Tampa, Toledo, Tucson, Tulsa, Virginia Beach, Washington, Wichita

Figure 1. Police Spending Per Capita vs. People Killed by Police

For 78 Most Populous U.S. Cities

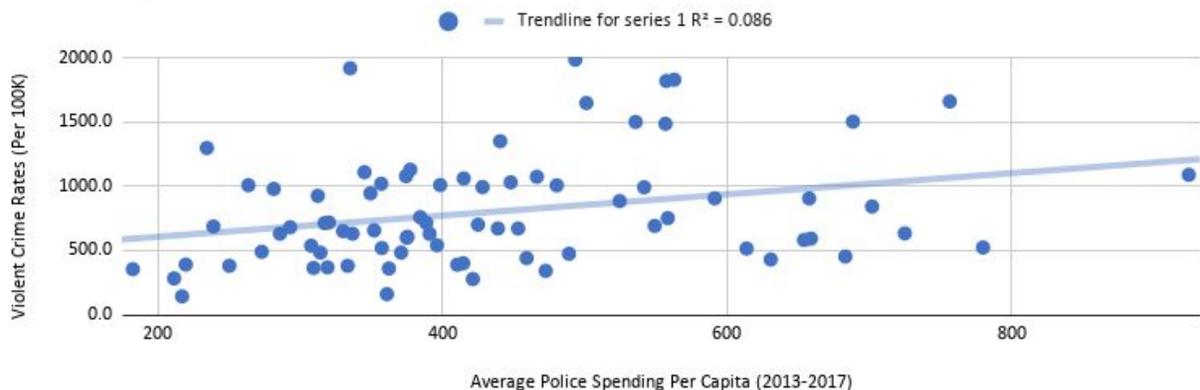


### Lower Police Spending Does Not Lead to Increased Violent Crime.

A common concern in considering reducing police funding is the impact on violent crime rates. However the data does not support that concern. Our analysis compared police spending per capita against violent crime rates for the most populous 78 cities and the findings show that spending less on police is not correlated with increased violent crime (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Police Spending vs. Violent Crime Rates

For 78 Most Populous U.S. Cities

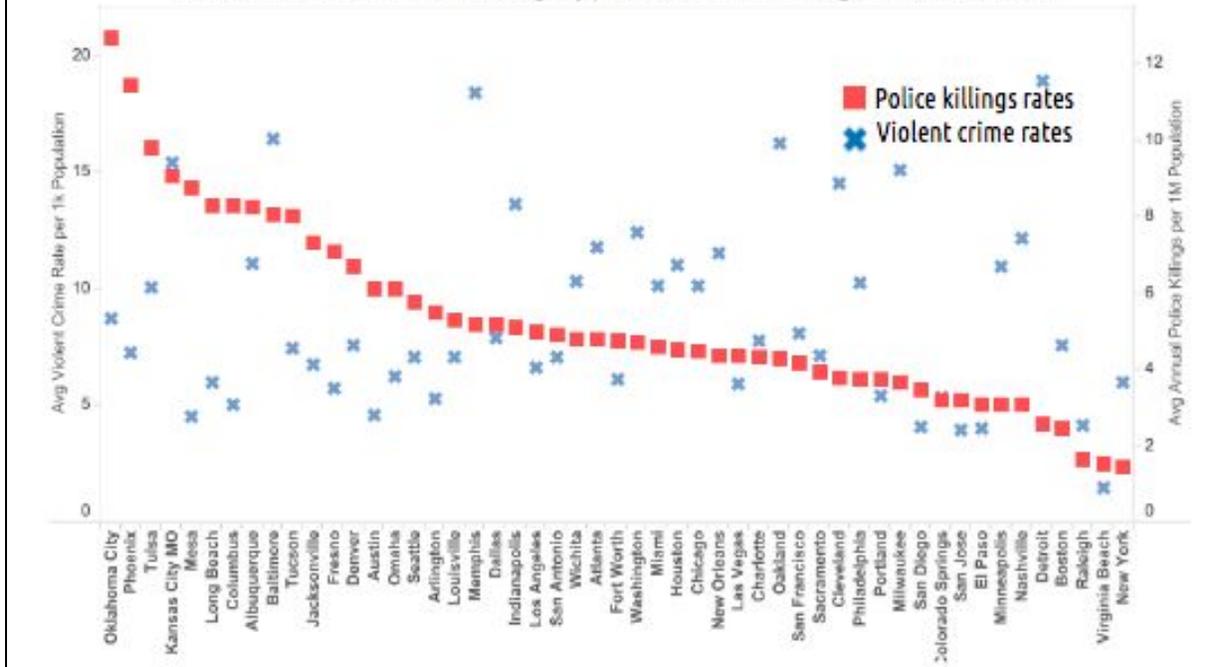


Independent analysis from MappingPoliceViolence.org has similar findings.<sup>3</sup> The following visualization from mappingpoliceviolence.com shows that police violence cannot be explained by levels of violent crime.

<sup>3</sup> Mapping Police Violence. (2020). Mapping Police Violence. Retrieved July 27, 2020, from <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/>

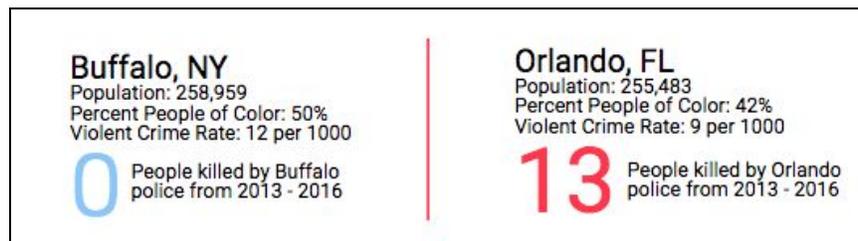
## Levels of violent crime in US cities do not determine rates of police violence.

*Violent crime rates and rates of killings by police in America's 50 largest cities, 2013-2018*



Source: [Mappingpoliceviolence.com](http://Mappingpoliceviolence.com)

Additionally, when comparing Buffalo and Orlando makes a similar case-based argument.



Source: [Mappingpoliceviolence.com](http://Mappingpoliceviolence.com)

## APD's Response to Mental Health Crisis and Use of Force Policies Contribute to Negative Outcomes

Austin had the highest rate among the largest 15 cities. Between January 1, 2013 and June 30, 2020, 41% of the people killed by police had a known mental illness, which was over twice the national average of 19% (See Table 1).

**Table 1. Percentage of Police Killings Involving "Mental Illness"**

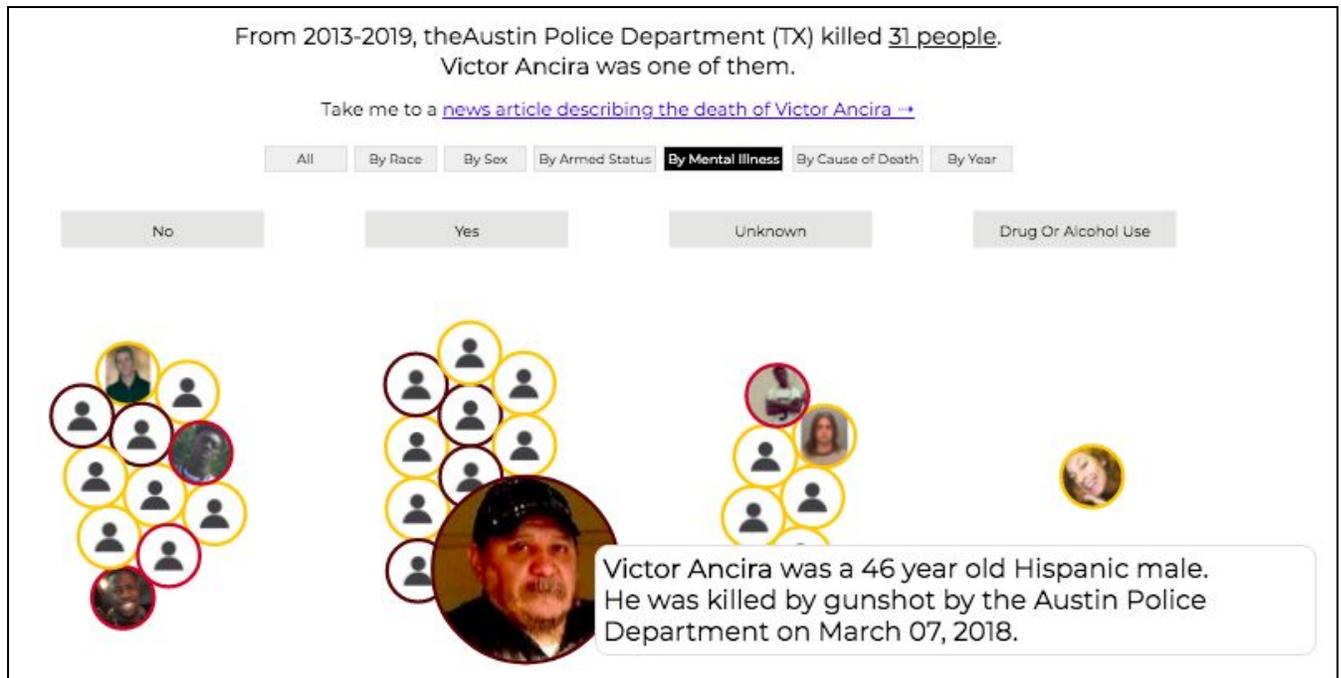
City	Average Population (2013-2020)	Violent Crime Rate Per 1K	% of Police Killings where Victim shows signs of "Mental Illness" (2013-2020*)
<b>Nation</b>	<b>322,540,000</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>19%</b>
New York	8,418,068	6.0	26%
Los Angeles	3,946,611	6.6	14%
Chicago	2,714,333	10.0	7%
Houston	2,284,751	11.0	10%
Phoenix	1,606,722	7.2	10%
Philadelphia	1,574,164	10.3	8%
San Antonio	1,483,443	7.1	15%
San Diego	1,396,993	4.1	31%
Dallas	1,313,005	7.9	12%
San Jose	1,021,989	3.9	32%
<b>Austin</b>	<b>932,809</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>41%</b>
Jacksonville	878,222	6.7	20%
Columbus	866,061	5.0	14%
Indianapolis	859,778	13.6	6%
Charlotte	840,922	8.1	29%

Data sources:

[1. Mapping Police Violence](#)

[2. 2010- 2019 U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division](#)

\* As of June 30, 2020



Source: [Mapping Police Violence](#)

When an Austin resident makes a 911 call regarding a person behaving erratically, in many cases, APD officers who are untrained in mental health response are sent to the scene. Complicating this scenario is APD's use of force training, which does not include de-escalation as integral to use of force.

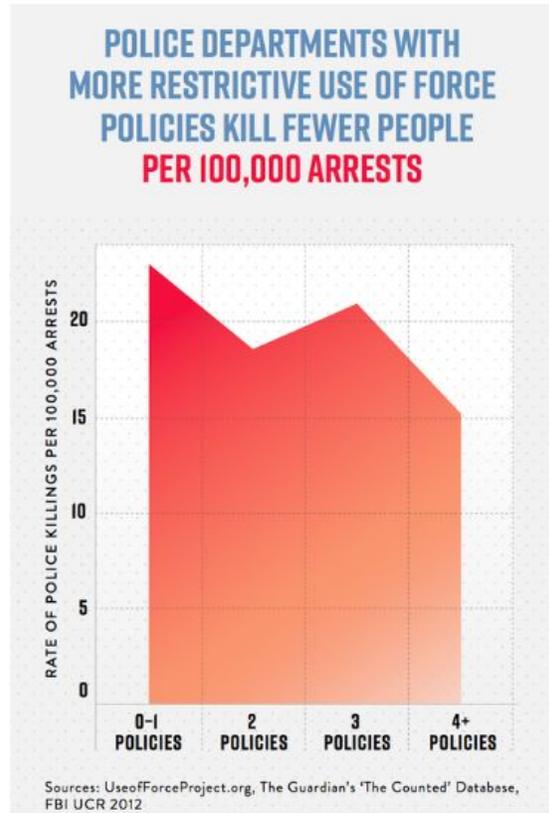
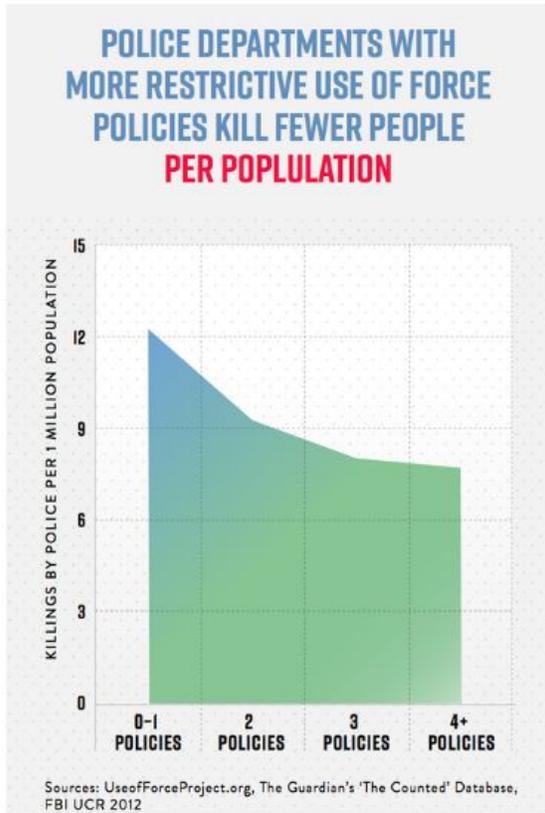
According to the Use of Force Project, more restrictive use of force policies are correlated to fewer people killed by police.

A September, 2019 [report](#) from the Human Rights Clinic of University of Texas School of Law called Austin's approach to mental health calls a violation of human rights standards.<sup>4</sup>

"Officers' failure to use de-escalation techniques is recorded in incident reports involving mental health-related police shootings in Austin and was a major finding of shortcoming in training in the Audit. The Audit concluded these tragedies were due to shortcomings in training and mental health partnerships as well as a lack of alternative methods of dealing with mental health-related calls. 34 This framework concurs

<sup>4</sup> University of Texas School of Law Human Rights Clinic, & Austin Community Law Center. (2019, September 24). Human Rights Framework Regarding Austin Police Department Mental Health Related Shootings. Retrieved from [https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/974416\\_2c21309f10ee4909a267afa4bbf93a1f.pdf](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/974416_2c21309f10ee4909a267afa4bbf93a1f.pdf)

with these findings and uses the information provided to assess how the shortcomings violate international human rights standards.”



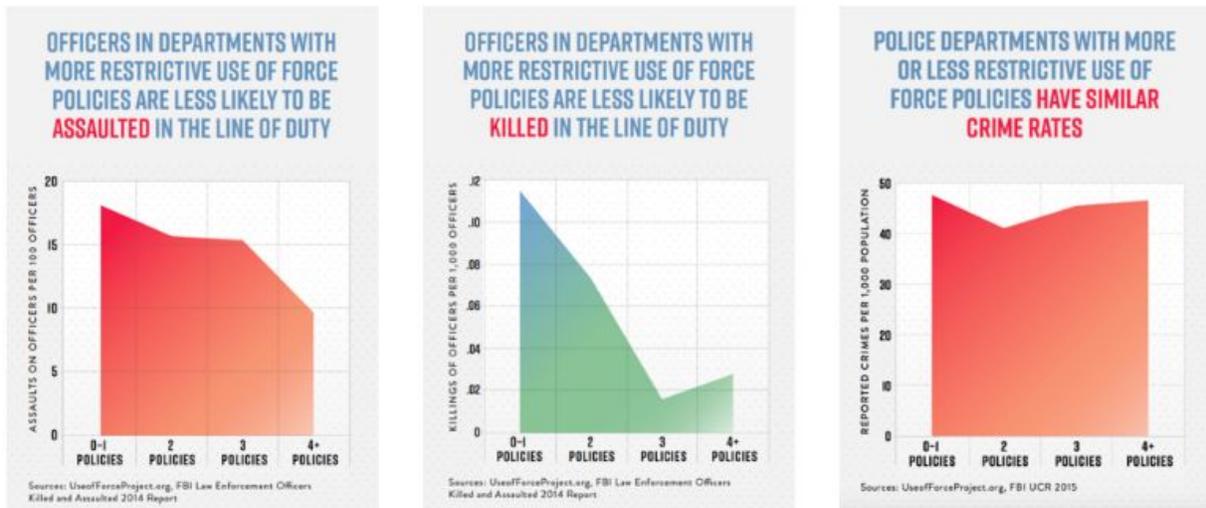
Source: [useofforceproject.org](http://useofforceproject.org)

Austin’s Use of Force Policies:

Use of Force Policy	Requires De-Escalation	Has Use of Force Continuum	Bans Chokeholds and Strangleholds	Requires Warning Before Shooting	Restricts Shooting at Moving Vehicles	Requires Exhaust All Other Means Before Shooting	Duty to Intervene	Requires Comprehensive Reporting
Austin	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Red	Blue	Red
Bakersfield	Red	Red	Red	Blue	Red	Red	Blue	Red
Baltimore	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Red	Blue	Blue	Blue
Baton Rouge	Red	Blue	Blue	Blue	Red	Blue	Blue	Red

Source: [useofforceproject.org](http://useofforceproject.org) (as of 2015)

The data also shows that restrictive use of force policies protect police officers as well as the community.



Source: [useofforceproject.org](http://useofforceproject.org)

## EVIDENCE-INFORMED PUBLIC SAFETY SOLUTIONS

### Comprehensive Human-Centered Mental Health Care

Persons experiencing mental health crises can find themselves interacting with law enforcement that can ultimately result in their death.<sup>5</sup> Benefits of providing comprehensive human-centered mental health care services can be measured in the avoided costs of criminal and juvenile justice involvement, homelessness, reduced burden on healthcare systems, and more.<sup>6</sup> City officials can invest in non-police programs and solutions that address these issues, reduce harm, and keep people safe (see Table 2).

A [report](#) from Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute for Texas, in May of 2019, made several key recommendations for improvement based on analysis of 911 calls (see Table 3). However, as the Austin Chronicle reported on July 17:

“A year later, none of the recommendations have been fully implemented, although the Austin Police Department, Austin-Travis County EMS, Integral Care, and other agencies have made some progress on each. The COVID-19 pandemic sidetracked many efforts,

<sup>5</sup> City of Austin Office of Police Oversight. (2020, June). 2018 Officer-Involved Shooting Report. Retrieved from

[https://joplin3-austin-gov-static.s3.amazonaws.com/production/media/documents/2018\\_OIS\\_Report.pdf](https://joplin3-austin-gov-static.s3.amazonaws.com/production/media/documents/2018_OIS_Report.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Hogg Foundation. (2016, July). Policy Brief: The Texas Mental Health Workforce: Continuing Challenges and Sensible Strategies. Retrieved from

[https://hogg.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2016\\_policybrief\\_workforce.pdf](https://hogg.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2016_policybrief_workforce.pdf)

and some require more funding than has yet been available; about half of the total \$5.3 million needed for the plan should be allocated in FY 21.”<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, this month, Austin Justice Coalition released a report with support from AH Analytics showing the amount of time spent on calls by category.<sup>8</sup> The report begins to illuminate areas in which the budget could be cut. In a recent email announcement of the report, Sukyi McMahan, Board Chair Austin Justice Coalition said, “We estimate that the two-thirds of call response time that could be saved is roughly the equivalent of 180 officers... If we aggressively invest in alternatives right now, while the police academy is on hold and no new officers can be added anyway, then in the near term the city will see our existing officers more focused on solving crime while homelessness, mental illness, physical illness and trauma are addressed by professionals with specialized training in those areas.”

Table. 2 Successful Non-Police Mental Health Interventions		
	Program	
	Expanded Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (EMCOT) <sup>9</sup> Austin, TX	CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) <sup>10</sup> Eugene, OR
Program Model	EMCOT is a real-time co-response for psychiatric crises. Service connects individuals, on a voluntary basis, to community based services and can provide follow-up services for up to 90 days. EMCOT is requested through 911.	Dispatching mental health workers and medics to some 911 calls instead of police in a partnership with a local health services nonprofit. Program has been in place for over 30 years.
Outcomes	<p><b>98.7%</b> diversion from arrests by law enforcement</p> <p><b>93.3%</b> diversion from involuntary placement by law enforcement</p>	<p><b>Saves \$8.5 million</b> in public safety costs annually</p> <p><b>Reduced the likelihood</b> that some <b>911 calls turn violent.</b></p>

<sup>7</sup> Austin Sanders, F. (2020, July 17). Mental Health Crisis Plan Still Lags Behind Austin's Needs. Retrieved from <https://www.austinchronicle.com/news/2020-07-17/mental-health-crisis-plan-still-lags-behind-austins-needs/>

<sup>8</sup> Austin Justice Coalition. (2020, July). Assessment of Austin Police Department Calls for Service. Retrieved from

[https://mcusercontent.com/d111f841bfb43eecc822a6834/files/876f1745-99ec-4b01-a0fb-aecf33ed9cb8/Analysis\\_of\\_Austin\\_Police\\_Department\\_Calls\\_for\\_Service\\_3\\_.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/d111f841bfb43eecc822a6834/files/876f1745-99ec-4b01-a0fb-aecf33ed9cb8/Analysis_of_Austin_Police_Department_Calls_for_Service_3_.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Integral Care. (n.d.). Expanded Mobile Crisis Outreach Team. Retrieved July 19, 2020, from <https://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=302634>

<sup>10</sup> Andrew, S. (2020, July 06). This town of 170,000 replaced some cops with medics and mental health workers. It's worked for over 30 years. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from <https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/05/us/cahoots-replace-police-mental-health-trnd/index.html>

Table 3. Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute for Texas Key Recommendations

1. APD Chief's Mental Health Program and Response Advisory Function Developed Within the Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice Advisory Committee
2. Mental Health Training for Call Takers
3. Mental Health Integrated Dispatch
4. Increased budget for EMCOT, Including Telehealth Expansion
5. First Responder Mental Health Program Recommendations
6. Targeted and Limited Expansion of HOST Activities, Including Collaboration with APD Crisis Intervention Team
7. Community Outreach in Collaboration with NAMI Central Texas

### **Increase the Number and Diversity of Mental Health Professionals**

Being able to address the mental health needs of the city requires an adequate workforce of mental health professionals. The Texas workforce has a shortage of mental health professionals and there is a great need for diversity.<sup>11,12</sup> Increasing the diversity of mental health professionals is necessary as Black and Brown people have disproportionately faced negative outcomes from the systems of policing as reflected in our findings. Furthermore, evidence tells us that health care users who share a culture and race with a provider have better results.<sup>13</sup> Solutions to address this issue could include:

- Student loan repayment for mental health professionals, with targeted efforts for recruiting more Black and Brown professionals
- Increase funding directly to Black and Brown-led mental health and community wellness services and efforts to provide healing justice.

### **Increase Funding for Austin Public Health**

Austin can use an existing infrastructure, Austin Public Health, to establish a more unified approach to mental health care, data collection, and program evaluation. Additional funding to Austin Public Health could provide support for:

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<sup>11</sup> Hogg Foundation. (2016, July). Policy Brief: The Texas Mental Health Workforce: Continuing Challenges and Sensible Strategies. Retrieved from [https://hogg.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2016\\_policybrief\\_workforce.pdf](https://hogg.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2016_policybrief_workforce.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Department of State Health Services. (2014, September). The Mental Health Workforce Shortage in Texas. Retrieved from <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/legislative/2014/Attachment1-HB1023-MH-Workforce-Report-HHSC.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Hoge, M. A., Stuart, G. W., Morris, J., Flaherty, M. T., Paris, M., & Goplerud, E. (2013). Mental Health And Addiction Workforce Development: Federal Leadership Is Needed To Address The Growing Crisis. *Health Affairs*, 32(11), 2005-2012. doi:10.1377/hlthaff.2013.0541

- Mental health hotline and crisis call center
- Family support services
- Domestic violence mitigation and prevention programs
- Immigration legal services
- Data and evaluation support for mental health surveillance data and program evaluation

## **Public Investments in Community-Led Safety Initiatives**

Cities all over the country have developed and implemented programs that are effective in reducing crime by adding or redirecting resources to community services and creating working partnerships between police and community organizations. Typically, this reinvestment has been directed toward strengthening community supervision, expanding treatment options, and equipping law enforcement with additional tools.<sup>14</sup>

[WAGEES- Colorado: Work and Gain Education and Employment Skills \(WAGEES\)](#) program was legislatively created in 2014 to provide support services for people on parole. This program has shown success in the rehabilitation and positive outcomes for formerly incarcerated persons.

[Reducing barriers to vehicle safety maintenance:](#) Maintaining the operational safety of vehicles on the roads important to public safety. Non-punitive systems can reduce barriers to keeping vehicles operating safely.<sup>15</sup> In addition, traffic stops have been a gateway for racial discrimination for Black and Brown communities.<sup>16</sup> Austin can improve public safety and reduce inequities by adopting the [Lights On program](#), a vehicle repair voucher program, that has shown success in addressing vehicle safety and improving community relations.

## **AREAS FOR ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION**

### **Austin Police Department’s Culture Makes Reform Efforts Futile**

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<sup>14</sup> Sakala, L., Harvell, S., & Thomson, C. (2018, November). Public Investment in Community-Driven Safety Initiatives. Retrieved from [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99262/public\\_investment\\_in\\_community-driven\\_safety\\_initiatives\\_1.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99262/public_investment_in_community-driven_safety_initiatives_1.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> MicroGrants. (n.d.). About - Lights On!: An Innovative Program of MicroGrants. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from <https://www.lightsonus.org/about>

<sup>16</sup> City of Austin Office of Police Oversight, City of Austin Office of Innovation, & City of Austin Equity Office. (2020, January). Joint Report: Analysis of APD Racial Profiling Data. Retrieved from [https://joplin3-austin-gov-static.s3.amazonaws.com/production/media/documents/Final\\_-1.28.2020\\_Racial\\_Profiling\\_Report.pdf](https://joplin3-austin-gov-static.s3.amazonaws.com/production/media/documents/Final_-1.28.2020_Racial_Profiling_Report.pdf)

The [Tatum Report](#) shows evidence of a culture of homophobia and racism that is tolerated by senior officers and ignored through sloppy tracking of disciplinary records. The report also shows avoidance of the issue through delay tactics, and a culture of retaliation. These underlying issues will naturally continue to challenge and undermine any attempts to reform the existing system.

Additionally, a few functions, like forensics, that the Austin Police Department has should be done by an independent agency. In accordance with recommendations from the 2009 National Research Council paper “Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward”, Austin should seek to have an independent forensics division.<sup>17</sup> The report recommends that “...forensic scientists should function independently of law enforcement administrators. The best science is conducted in a scientific setting as opposed to a law enforcement setting.”

### **Austin’s Police Budget Lacks Transparency**

Despite public information requests for raw budget data, MEASURE was not able to evaluate how actual monies were spent compared to budgeted amounts. Initial review of raw data from the 2019-2020 fiscal year showed some puzzling inconsistencies, but without the ability to evaluate a full year’s budget, we were unable to investigate. We recommend an analysis of actual spending to ensure that monies budgeted are spent accordingly.

### **MEASURE is currently conducting a systems of systems analysis of the policing system.**

The Austin Police Department does not operate in isolation. A variety of components within and external to APD impact the overall functioning of the system. This includes the police departments interactions with other departments and entities (systems of their own). Addressing one of these interacting systems without addressing the others may lead to unintended consequences.

### **Community Wellness and Public Safety Task Force**

Building a public safety system that is just and effective will take time and continuous reevaluation. Implemented public safety solutions will continuously need to be revisited and improved and as new problems arise so will the need for new solutions. The task for developing and evaluating our public safety system should be led by the community. Establishing and

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<sup>17</sup> National Research Council; Policy and Global Affairs; Division on Engineering and Physical Sciences; Committee on Science. (2009, February 18). Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward. Retrieved July 31, 2020, from <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/12589.html>

funding a task force, that is community-led, focused on community wellness, restorative justice, trauma-informed care, human-centered interventions, and equity is the beginning of creating a better public safety system. MEASURE recommends the creation of a Community Wellness and Public Safety Task Force to pave the way for a radical public safety system.

## **CONCLUSION**

The data and research have shown that our current systems of policing alone can not prevent or solve all crimes, that they even cause harm, and perpetuate racism. Public safety that goes beyond policing requires collaborative efforts through community partnerships and a radical systems thinking approach. The community and institutional systems must come together to understand the conditions in which crimes exist in order to then come up with solutions. Through community input and data-informed decisions, Austin can have public safety that also maximizes the operational efficiency of our systems. There are short-term, mid-term, and long-term strategies that Austin will need to develop to move forward with a new public safety vision.