Examining Canadian Municipal Police Budgets: Implications for Defunding the Police

Mélanie Seabrook

PI: Andrew Pinto, Upstream Lab, Unity Health Toronto

Co-investigators: Nicole Balian, Aisha Lofters, Flora Matheson, Braden O’Neill, Akwasi Owusu-Bempah, Nav Persaud

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Outline

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Background

Indigenous and Black populations are disproportionately impacted by police violence.

68% of fatal encounters involve someone with mental illness or addiction.

7.4 Indigenous individuals killed
5.6 Black individuals killed
1 White individual killed

Rationale

Why some doctors want to defund the police

Medical student Sanit Balek knows what it's like to live in fear of the police. A child of Ethiopian refugees, he was chased a dozen times in one year while growing up in northwestern Ontario. Balek says those interactions sent a message: "The police are going to be watching me, and I have to be sure I'm not looking suspicious, so they don't try to harass me today."

Only later, in university, Balek noticed that his white classmates had different experiences. "I was surprised to find out they weren't scared to walk by police," he says.

Now, Balek is co-organizer of Doctors
Research Question

How is law enforcement funded in Canada?

- How do different municipalities fund police services?
- How does police funding compare with other services?
- Is police funding related to crime rates?
Methods

Inclusion:
20 most populous municipalities in Canada
Operational budgets from 2010-2021
Actual expenditures

Data collection:
- Operational budgets
- Police budgets
- Other public service budgets
- Population estimates
- Crime Severity Index (CSI)

Analysis:
Proportion, per capita, $ and % change from previous year
Converted to 2020 CAD (Bank of Canada)
Correlation between police funding and crime rates
Results

Police Services are the biggest 2019 operating budget line item in 14 out of 20 municipalities:
Toronto, Montreal, Peel Region, Calgary, York Region (net budget only), Edmonton, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Waterloo Region, Surrey, Quebec City, Hamilton, and Saskatoon

All gross police budgets have increased since 2010 except Montreal
Largest increase: Edmonton ($207M)

All spending per capita has increased since 2010 except Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, and Halifax

*All results are adjusted for inflation*
Proportions of 2019 Gross Budgets Allocated to Police

- Winnipeg: 26% Police, 74% Other
- Surrey: 23% Police, 77% Other
- Saskatchewan: 21% Police, 79% Other
- Vancouver: 20% Police, 80% Other
- Peel: 19% Police, 81% Other
- Waterloo: 18% Police, 82% Other
- York Region: 16% Police, 84% Other
- Edmonton: 15% Police, 85% Other
- Longueuil: 14% Police, 86% Other
- Calgary & Halifax: 13% Police, 87% Other
- Montreal, Gatineau, Laval & Burnaby: 1% Police, 88% Other
- Toronto & Hamilton: 11% Police, 89% Other
- London: 10% Police, 90% Other
- Ottawa & Quebec City: 8% Police, 92% Other

Largest proportion: Longueuil
Smallest proportion: Peel
Results

Highest per capita: Vancouver ($495.84)

Lowest per capita: Quebec City ($217.05)

*All results are adjusted for inflation*
Ontario 2019 gross budgets

- **Peel**:
  - Police: 41%
  - Other: 19%
  - Housing: 9%
  - Paramedics: 11%
  - Children/Family Services: 4%
  - Social Assistance: 3%
  - Long Term Care: 4%
  - Public Health: 4%
  - Other: 3%

- **Waterloo**:
  - Police: 46%
  - Other: 18%
  - Housing: 12%
  - Paramedics: 7%
  - Children/Family Services: 3%
  - Social Assistance: 7%
  - Long Term Care: 4%
  - Public Health: 4%
  - Other: 3%

- **York Region**:
  - Police: 60%
  - Other: 16%
  - Housing: 5%
  - Paramedics: 4%
  - Children/Family Services: 4%
  - Social Assistance: 7%
  - Long Term Care: 1%
  - Public Health: 5%
  - Other: 4%

- **Hamilton**:
  - Police: 57%
  - Other: 12%
  - Housing: 6%
  - Paramedics: 10%
  - Children/Family Services: 3%
  - Social Assistance: 9%
  - Long Term Care: 2%
  - Public Health: 2%
  - Other: 3%

- **Toronto**:
  - Police: 58%
  - Other: 11%
  - Housing: 10%
  - Paramedics: 9%
  - Children/Family Services: 2%
  - Social Assistance: 2%
  - Long Term Care: 2%
  - Public Health: 6%
  - Other: 2%

- **London**: 61%
  - Police: 10%
  - Other: 1%
  - Housing: 5%
  - Paramedics: 14%
  - Children/Family Services: 2%
  - Social Assistance: 5%
  - Long Term Care: 2%
  - Public Health: 2%
  - Other: 4%

- **Ottawa**: 71%
Results
Per capita spending on public services

Trinity Bellwoods Park sees clash between police, protesters over homeless encampment removal

Liam Casey
The Canadian Press
Published June 22, 2021

For Subscribers

*All results are adjusted for inflation*
Implications

Higher average per capita spending on police services was not associated with larger decrease in crime rates
(Correlation = 0.22)

Understanding how resources are allocated to police is critical:
→ Should be evidence-based to ensure well-being of communities
→ May be time for a re-evaluation of public resource allocation
Conclusion

Goals for this research:
• Increase public and academic understanding of municipal resource allocation
• Lay the groundwork for future research:
  ➢ Context and rationales behind police funding decisions
  ➢ Evaluation of capacity for reallocation of resources
  ➢ Case studies of resource reallocation process

Next steps:
➢ Publication
➢ Knowledge translation
Questions?

Thank you!

Mélanie Seabrook
melanie.seabrook@mail.utoronto.ca
Upstream Lab: upstreamlab@smh.ca
References


