

I was surprised to learn last week that our Police Chief is advocating for four hundred new police officers in Minneapolis. I was not surprised that the Chief wanted more officers. This has been the norm among all of the Chiefs I have worked with in City Hall over the past 12 years. But I did find the number alarming, especially since he was not requesting it last year and crime rates and other factors don't seem to indicate a need that is that great.

I respect Chief Arradondo, and can understand the Chief's views, and I will be certain to carefully and seriously review his reasoning and thinking on this. Still, I am in a different position than the Chief and my colleagues and I play a different role. We need to think about how we, as a whole, make our communities as safe as possible. If we have a problem not being able to respond to all 911 priority one calls, we should also be looking at what precedes the call and be smart about our investments to actually make a difference and solve problems, rather than just trying to manage them. If, for one example, drug addiction is leading to more 911 calls, we should invest upstream not only to be better able to respond to the calls but to reduce the number of calls. We also need to consider who is best equipped to constructively respond to calls for help. Two of our most successful safety initiatives in recent years have included adding non-police to respond to calls and resolve situations. One involves having a mental health professional co-respond with police and another involved having street outreach workers respond to calls about people experiencing homelessness. Expecting police to have all the time, patience, and skills to deal with every situation may be unrealistic and, in some cases, unwise.

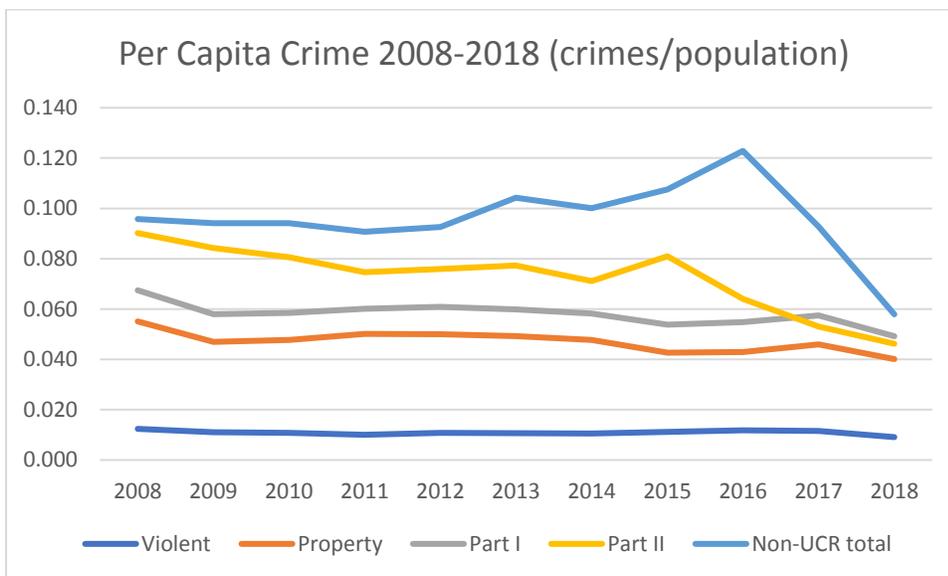
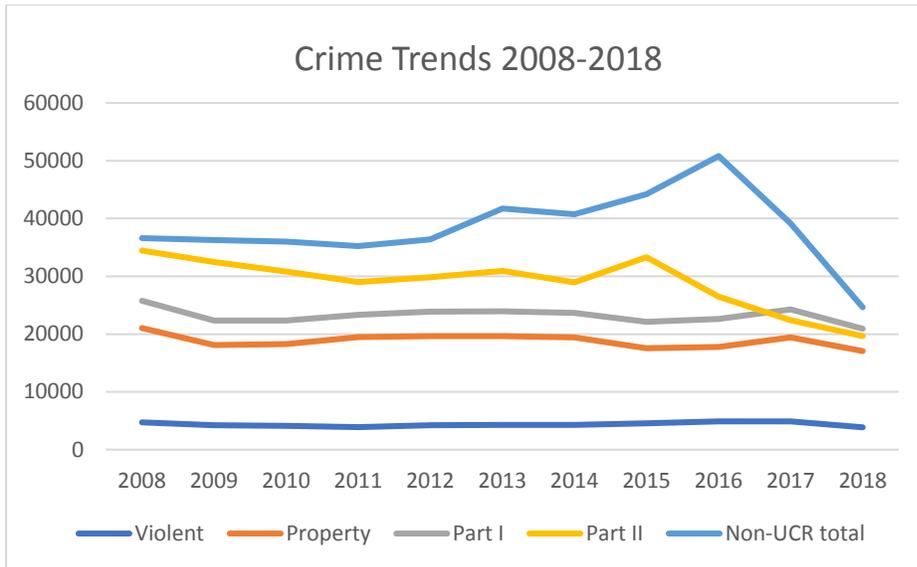
I'm grateful to my colleague Andrew Johnson for bringing up some alternatives to the idea of spending at least 45 million additional dollars per year on 400 new police officers. The question he's asking is a good one: should we send officers out in pairs to every call? (If you haven't yet read his post, it's worth a read: <https://andrewjohnsonmpls.tumblr.com/post/186401877011/an-alternative-to-adding-400-additional-patrol>.) Like him, I don't have a definitive answer. But it's important and meaningful to me that there are several other cities in which one-person squads are the norm.

As with the questions raised by others of my colleagues (notably Fletcher, Ellison, and Cunningham) during the Public Safety committee, the underlying question seems to be: can we improve outcomes without spending tens of millions of dollars more on police every year? Could we send half as many officers to many calls? Could we send someone other than police officers to some of the calls, or to step in after a police response to allow them to return to being a first response to priority calls? Have we done the due diligence to rule out every other way to improve outcomes before spending tens of millions of dollars on new police officers? We are actively studying this, through the 911 study that CM Johnson has successfully gotten underway.

Here's the obvious concern: 400 new police officers will cost a lot of money. The numbers I've seen have ranged from \$45M-\$60M per year. This is just for the personnel costs and does not reflect all of the upgrades we would have to make to infrastructure like buildings and vehicles to accommodate such a large increase in police. One way to look at this is that it's an increase of at least 25% over current funding levels, if not quite a bit more.

It is very clear that crime has not increased 25%. My office has looked through MPD's crime statistics (available here: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/police/statistics/index.htm>) and found that crime is significantly down from a decade ago, across the board. Violent crime is down **18%**, property crime down **19%**, Part I crime is down **19%**, Part II crime is down an impressive **43%**.

When you factor in the growth of the city, these results get more pronounced, not less. Per capita violent crime fell by **25%** over the last decade, property and Part I crime both fell by **27%**, Part II crime fell by **49%**. So growth in population is not, in itself, driving more crime, nor in itself a reason for more police. A person living in Minneapolis was significantly less likely to be a victim of a crime last year than in 2008. Perhaps we have been successful in some of our “upstream” efforts over the past decade to address crime and violence as preventable public health problems.



These are numbers to celebrate, not alarms sounding about the need for more police officers.

Another way to understand just how much money \$45-60M per year is in Mpls is to consider what else we invest in with that amount of money. For one example, we run an entire fire department for \$69M/year. Another example: the increase in spending for 400 new police officers would be around the annual budgets of the Health Department and Regulatory Services **combined** (\$24M+\$27.5M=\$51.5M).

It is impossible for me to see how 400 new cops would provide greater value than all of the programs run by Health and Regulatory Services. Just a few of those programs: housing inspections, animal care and control, lead and healthy homes, environmental services, food inspection, asthma prevention, and opioid crisis response. Many of these are exactly the sort of upstream interventions that I believe we need to invest in more in order to reduce crime and the number of 911 calls.

But is the Mpls Police Department dramatically understaffed, compared to other cities of our size? The best, most comprehensive information I have indicates strongly that we are not. According to Governing Magazine, we have a higher ratio of police officers to residents than both the average and median for cities in our size bracket. (<https://www.governing.com/gov-data/safety-justice/police-officers-per-capita-rates-employment-for-city-departments.html>)

Sworn officers per 10,000 people in Minneapolis: **20.8** (Governing has this at 20.3, but this reflects the Chief's number of 888 sworn officers divided by our current population of 423,403). The average for cities in our size bracket (200,000-500,000 people) is **18.7**, and the median is **16.9**. The same holds true for total personnel: Minneapolis has **25.4** police personnel per 10,000 people, while the average for our size city is **24.5**, and the median is **21.1**.

It is clear to me that many people in our communities do not support the idea of adding significantly more police officers before we take steps to improve the interactions between police and residents, especially people of color. It is clear to me that we have not yet taken those steps. The last information I have seen shows clear racial disparities in proactive stops. We just paid out \$20 million to the family of a victim of a police shooting. There have been two more police shootings since that incident.

I understand that Mayor Frey and Chief Arradondo have a theory of change that goes something like this: by providing **more** police, each officer will have more capacity to build relationships with communities, which will lead to the perception in the community of **better** police. Before we increase the number of sworn officers, I believe that we need to take concrete steps and show real, tangible progress towards having **better** police. Simply providing more officers, without addressing the systemic divisions between police and community, will not lead to better outcomes. It will be a waste of resources that could better improve public safety if they were spent in other ways.

Lastly, I believe that we would all be better off if more policymakers had an oversight role over the police department. If there is a goal that the department is not meeting – such as responding to every 911 priority one call – I would welcome the opportunity to dig into ways, such as CM Johnson's idea, to better meet that goal. When the only power the Council has to impact the behavior and success of this department – uniquely among all of the departments working hard for the people of our city – is the power of the purse, we will continue to find ourselves having these kinds of unconstructive debates. It's time to change the Charter to allow more policymakers to take responsibility for setting policy and overseeing this critically important and costly department.