New Report Provides a Roadmap to Police-Free Safety

All across the U.S., and particularly within Black, Latine/x, and Indigenous communities, we have now made the police the first responders to an incredibly broad set of community problems. They have become our first option, and often our only option, when something goes wrong. As a result, from 1980 to 2017, spending on the police in the U.S. increased by 230%, from $56 billion to $185 billion (in 2023 dollars).

Nevertheless, there is a fundamental mismatch between the police skill set—which is centered around the use of violence—and what is needed to effectively address the problems they are often tasked to address. Thus, by having the police respond to issues that they are not well-suited to handle, our public safety and crisis responses are frequently ineffective at meeting residents' urgent needs and addressing root causes in

order to break cycles of crime and violence. The excessive and misguided reliance on the police is also perhaps best characterized by the consistent, severe, and needless harm it causes, the systemic racism it perpetuates, and the resources it consumes that could have been invested in life-giving and effective community safety strategies.

Divest/Invest Data
A Project of the Social Movement Support Lab

This report, *Alternatives to Policing: How Cities are Advancing Community Safety by Taking a Multidisciplinary Approach* by Communities United, Movimiento Poder, Reimagine Richmond, and the Social Movement Support Lab is intended to support efforts to replace our current systems of mass criminalization and incarceration with "systems of community care" that advance authentic forms of safety and healthier, more equitable communities.

<u>**SUMMARY**</u>

Section One of this report explores the massive design failure within our current public safety system. It features an analysis of over four million 911 calls for service to police in 2022 from eight cities: Chicago, Los Angeles, Denver, Baltimore, Phoenix, Cincinnati, Richmond, and Nashville. The data reveals a severe misalignment between what residents need from their public safety systems and what they actually receive. For example:

- The overwhelming majority of calls were unrelated to urgent safety needs. In Baltimore, for example, only 363 of the 1.6 million calls were classified as "emergency." Meanwhile, 81.7% of the calls were identified as "low priority" or "non-emergency."

- Only 4% of the calls across the eight cities were for what the FBI classifies as violent offenses or reports of gunshots.
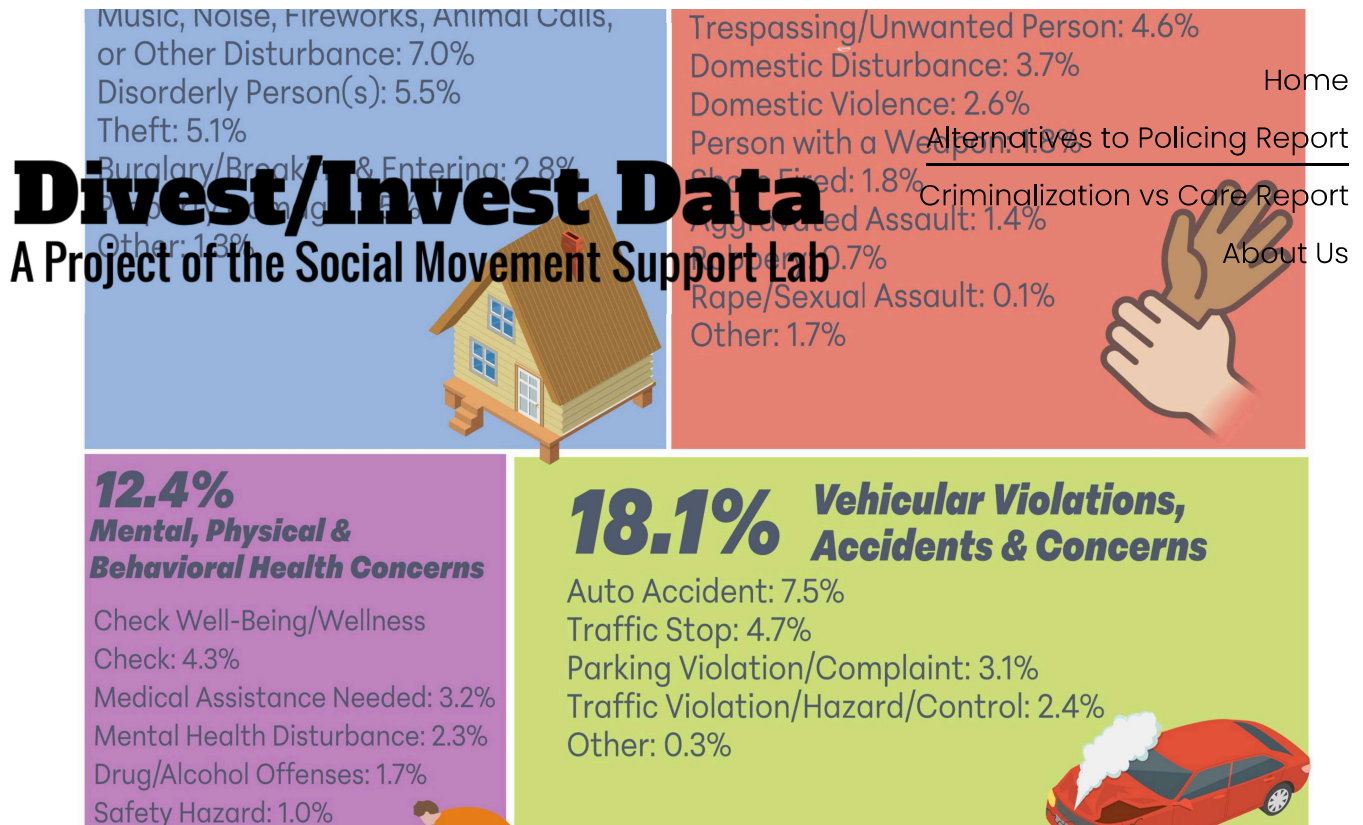
- Over 36% of the calls (1.4 million) were focused on low-level or health-related incidents such as traffic, folks passing out due to mental or physical health issues, noise of the people hanging out, loud music or fireworks, or other noise complaints.

- The vast majority of the calls for service result in police not doing anything to address community needs (e.g., not being able to locate the cause of the 911 call) or engaging in activities unrelated to criminal activity that could likely be performed more effectively by non-police personnel.

This analysis demonstrates that by relying so heavily on armed police who specialize in the use of force to address everything from noise complaints to serious violent crime, we are missing out on obvious opportunities to advance community well-being.

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Fight/Assault/Threat/Battery: 6.9%

Music, Noise, Fireworks, Animal Calls, or Other Disturbance: 7.0%
Disorderly Person(s): 5.5%
Theft: 5.1%
Burglary/Break-In & Entering: 2.8%
Other: 1.3%

Trespassing/Unwanted Person: 4.6%
Domestic Disturbance: 3.7%
Domestic Violence: 2.6%
Person with a Weapon: 1.3%
Shots Fired: 1.8%
Aggravated Assault: 1.4%
Robbery: 0.7%
Rape/Sexual Assault: 0.1%
Other: 1.7%

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12.4%
Mental, Physical & Behavioral Health Concerns

Check Well-Being/Wellness Check: 4.3%
Medical Assistance Needed: 3.2%
Mental Health Disturbance: 2.3%
Drug/Alcohol Offenses: 1.7%
Safety Hazard: 1.0%

18.1% **Vehicular Violations, Accidents & Concerns**

Auto Accident: 7.5%
Traffic Stop: 4.7%
Parking Violation/Complaint: 3.1%
Traffic Violation/Hazard/Control: 2.4%
Other: 0.3%

Section Two examines the 50 largest U.S. cities and the vast collection of initiatives they have underway to create viable alternatives to police intervention that more effectively address community needs. Key findings include:

- 44 of the 50 cities have an alternative 911 emergency response program, 34 have non-police-centered violence intervention programs, 30 have health-centered responses to public safety issues, and 21 have "civilianization" initiatives (in which unarmed city employees handle incidents that had previously been addressed by police officers). Overall, a remarkable 48 of the 50 cities have at least one program or initiative within those four categories.

- These alternatives to police intervention are being implemented in every region of the country, in traditionally "liberal" cities and in traditionally "conservative" cities, under both Democratic and Republican leadership.

- When taken as a whole, these alternatives to police intervention are handling nearly every kind of call for service that police receive. In fact, for more than 90% of the 911 calls, there are already alternatives underway within major U.S. cities. In other words, these cities are collectively creating a blueprint for police-free safety.

Section Three of the report uses the alternatives to policing being developed in cities across the country to develop a multidisciplinary problem-solving approach to meeting community safety needs. Unlike the simplistic one-size-fits-all system currently used throughout the U.S., Customized Community Safety (CCS) recognizes that different

types of calls require different types of responses and responders. Rather than just having police on patrol throughout the community, CCS uses a variety of trained professionals with a diverse set of skills available to respond to and, more importantly, prevent crime and violence, by taking advantage of the specialists available across multiple fields and deploying them within a comprehensive and narrowly-tailored system of community care. CCS is responsive to community needs and would more effectively address crime and violence by:

- tackling root causes

- minimizing harm

- promoting healing and compassionate care for everyone involved

- providing meaningful accountability

- enhancing community health, well-being, and equity; and

- promoting authentic forms of safety and freedom.

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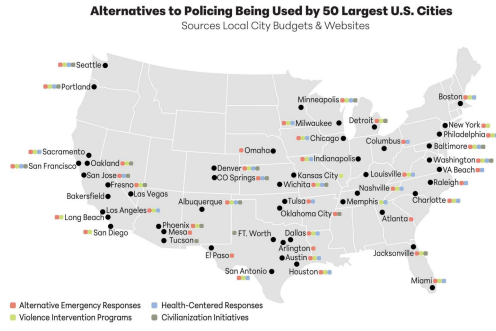## A Project of the Social Movement Support Lab

Download the report **here**.

Alternatives to Policing Being Used by 50 Largest U.S. Cities
Sources Local City Budgets & Websites

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