



Press Release

Assessing Calls to Defund the Police

ANDREW EVANS | SEPTEMBER 29, 2020

Recent calls to reform the police have included various proposals to “defund” local police forces. In new research, AAF’s Director of Human Welfare Policy Tara O’Neill Hayes examines the state of police funding and the potential impact of diverting some resources away from local law enforcement agencies. While many communities are under-resourced, reducing funding for police could have a number of negative consequences, she notes.

Her central points:

- Given that 97 percent of police budgets is spent on salaries, pensions, and benefits, any decrease in police funding will necessarily result in a decrease in the number of officers employed;
- The wide variation between cities in funding and staffing levels indicates that it is difficult to tell if cities’ police forces are staffed at appropriate levels, although any universal cut is certain to leave some cities understaffed and would likely reduce the diversity of some cities’ police forces; and
- While spending on police forces has grown over the last 30 years, it has grown in line with spending on other potential priorities such as health care and education, and overall spending on health care and education is already far greater than spending on police.

[Read the Research](#)