

More Policing **LESS MURDER**

**LELDF analysis reveals
increased policing is linked
to lower homicide rates
across 15 major U.S. cities**

MAY 2025



FINDINGS ACROSS 15 U.S. CITIES:

- Murders surged 54% during post-Floyd De-Policing period (May 2020 to 2021/2022)
- Arrests & stops plummeted nearly 40% before rebounding
- As arrests and stops rose (+37% from lows), homicides declined (-32% from highs)
- More policing is linked to fewer homicides in most cities
- Murders remain high in cities that have yet to re-police

Introduction

Following the George Floyd unrest of the summer of 2020, homicides spiked in large American cities while police pulled back. That decline in police activity exacerbated the growing violent and serious crime problem as demoralized law enforcement made fewer arrests and stops. Emboldened criminals re-offended and crime clearance rates plummeted to historic lows. Faced with anti-police rhetoric and policies, experienced law enforcement fled the profession, and few were willing to join the policing ranks as recruits.

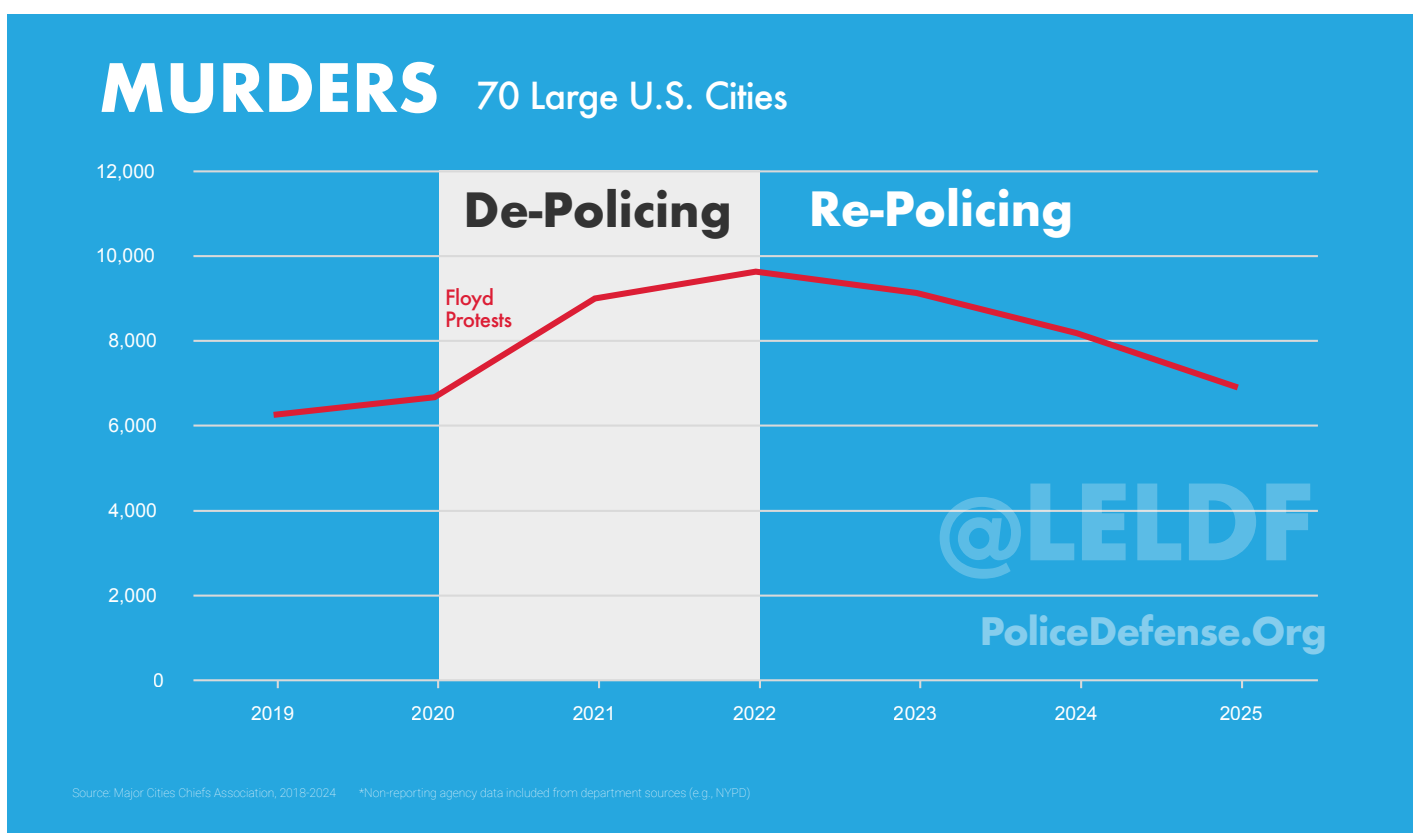


National Trends: 70 Large U.S. Cities

During this period of “de-policing,” homicides rose dramatically—up 44% across 70 of the largest US cities between 2019 and 2021. Nationwide, the CDC recorded over 26,000 homicides in 2021—10,000 more than a decade earlier. Most of those “excess” killings occurred in large urban centers where de-policing took hold. As the public recoiled at the growing carnage, many local and state officials who had previously supported the “Defund the Police” agenda and espoused anti-law enforcement sentiments reversed course while others met with electoral defeat. These shifts in opinion and policy resulted in re-policing

that empowered law enforcement to crack down on crime through proactive policing. Cops began to make arrests and stops at increasing rates—and murders fell.

Across 70 of the largest cities, murders fell by 32% from 2021 to 2024—nearing pre-Floyd levels. That successful turnaround owes significant credit to re-policing—as proactive policing made a comeback, driving down crime.



POLITICO November 5, 2024

California voters approve **tough-on-crime** ballot initiative

Vox

September 27, 2021

Murders are spiking. Police should be part of the solution.



Pew Research Center October 26, 2021

Growing share of Americans say they want more spending on police in their area

A Closer Look at 15 Major Urban Areas

This study of 15 large cities shows that as arrests and stops rose, murders declined. Overall, the sooner police activity (arrests and stops) began to recover from their post-Floyd slide, the earlier murder numbers began to drop. Commensurately, the sharper the increase in police activity the greater the fall in homicides across the 15 cities.

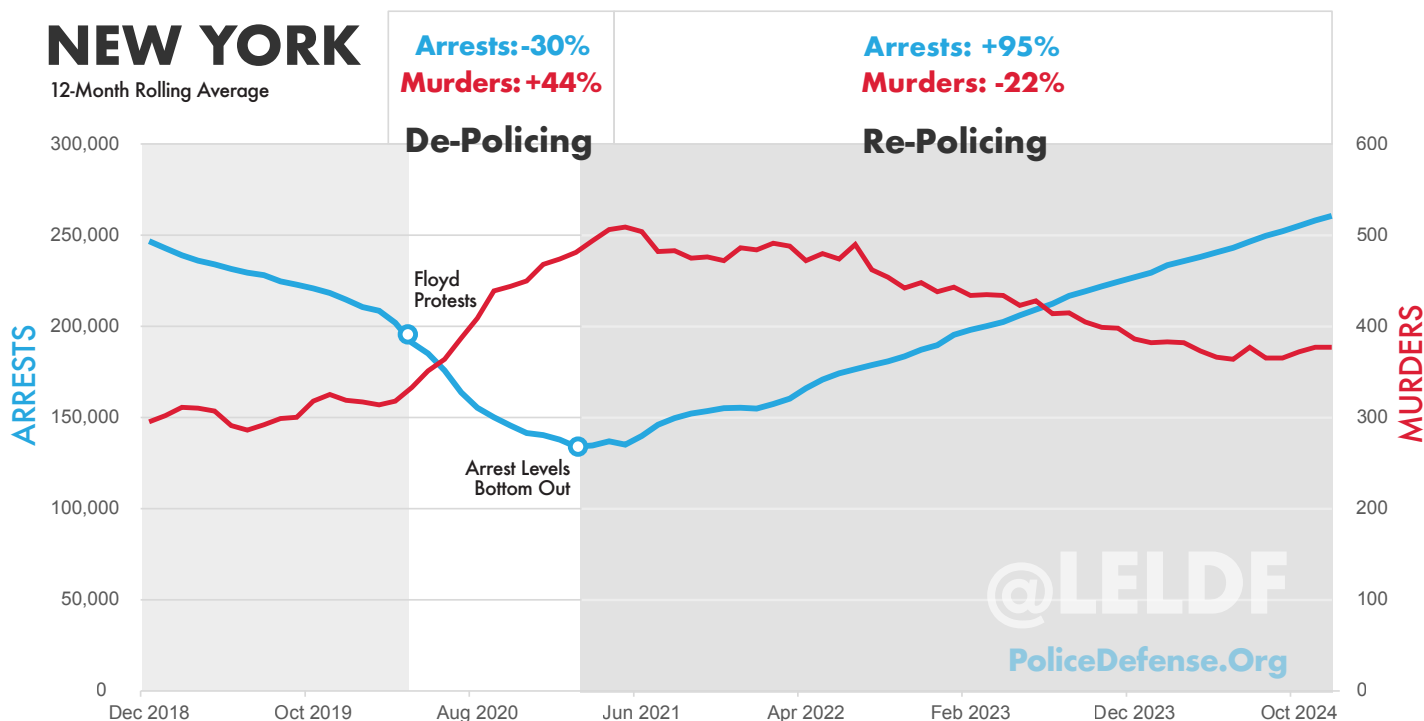
SELECTED CITIES:

Austin	Houston	Philadelphia
Baltimore	Los Angeles	Phoenix
Chicago	Minneapolis	Portland
Dallas	New Orleans	Seattle
Fort Worth	New York	Washington, DC

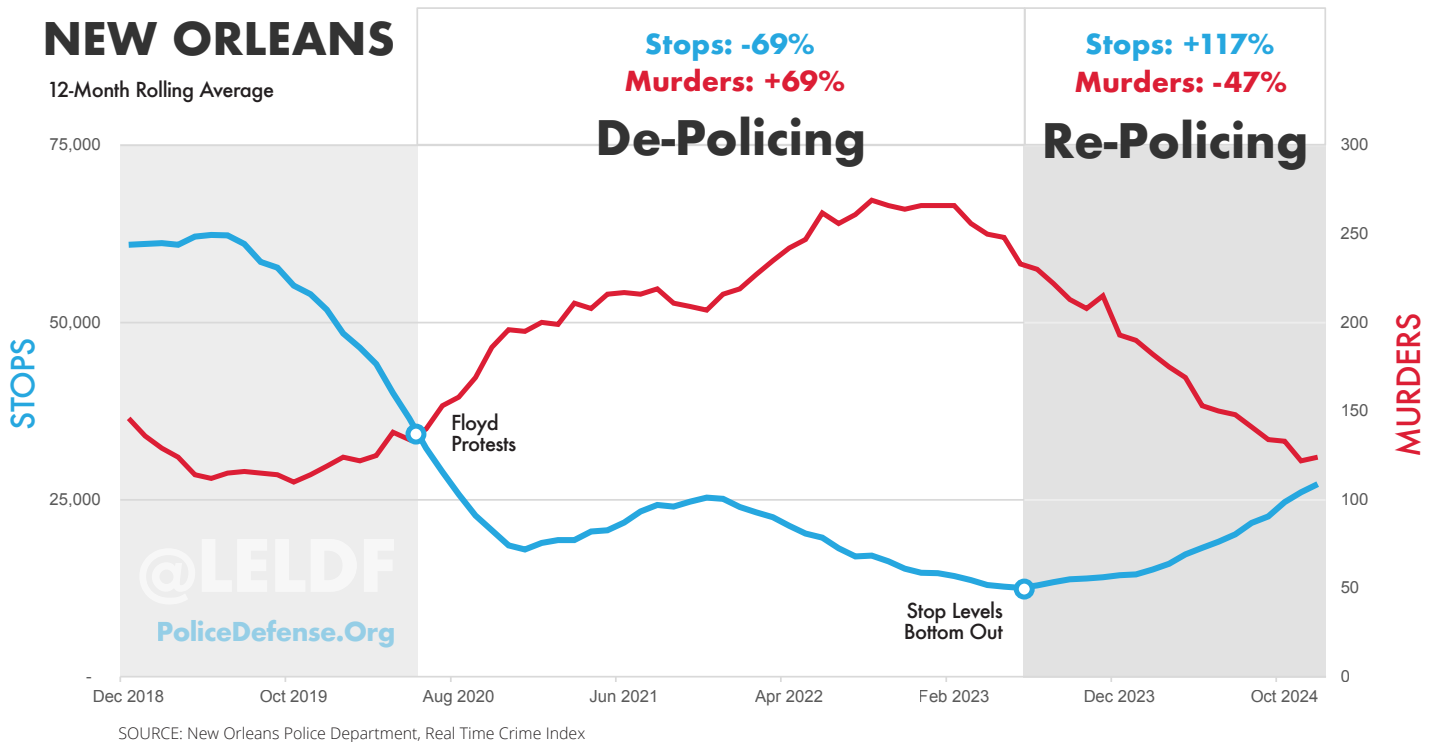
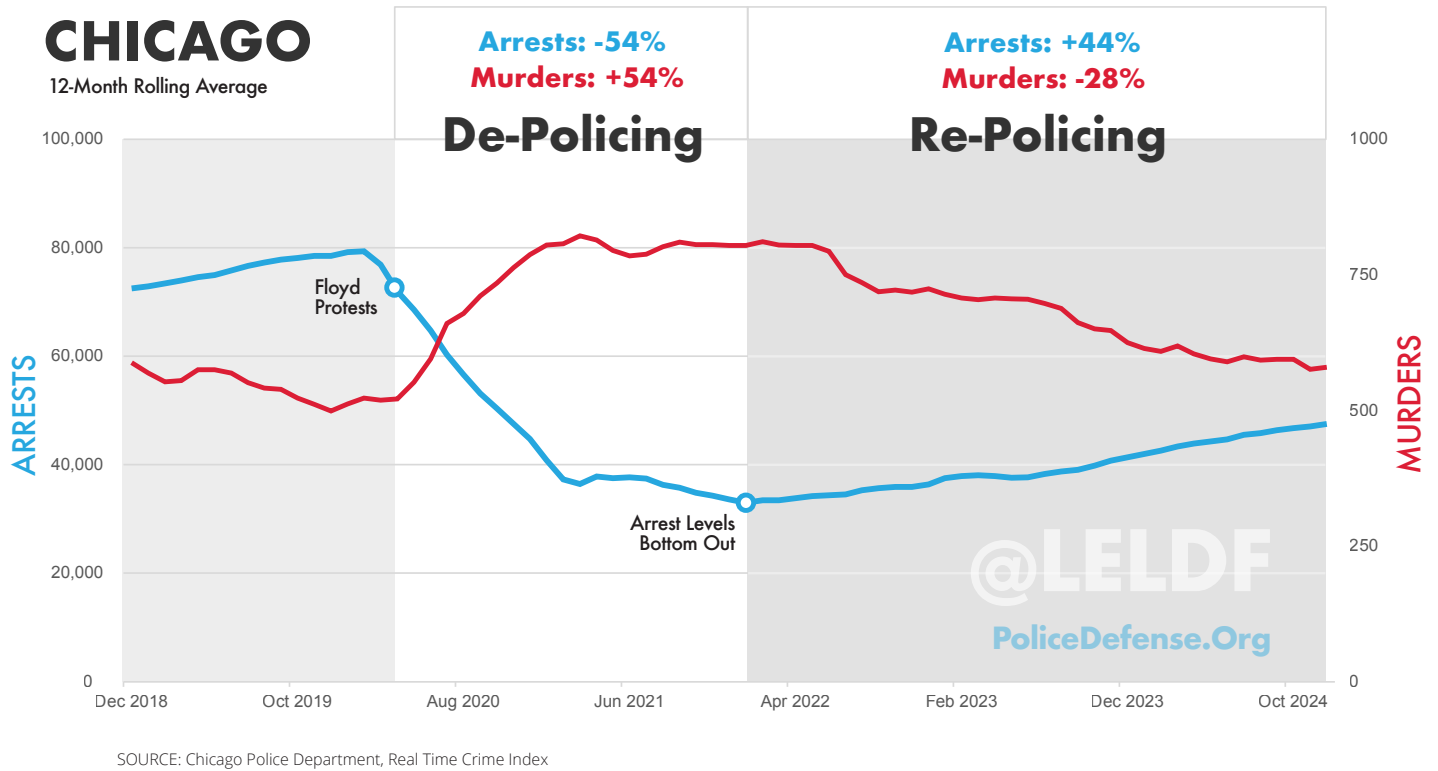
METHODOLOGY: This study compiled monthly homicide figures for America's largest cities by population and crime volume and identified police enforcement datasets covering arrests and stops. Fifteen cities had comparable data available for the 2018–2024 period. The murder and arrest (or stop) figures were analyzed month by month to identify the periods of lowest arrests and highest murders using a 12-month rolling average to smooth out seasonal effects. A Pearson correlation was then calculated to assess the statistical relationship between these trends over time. In a few cases, such as Austin, early-period arrest data was missing for several months, requiring minor adjustments to the rolling averages.

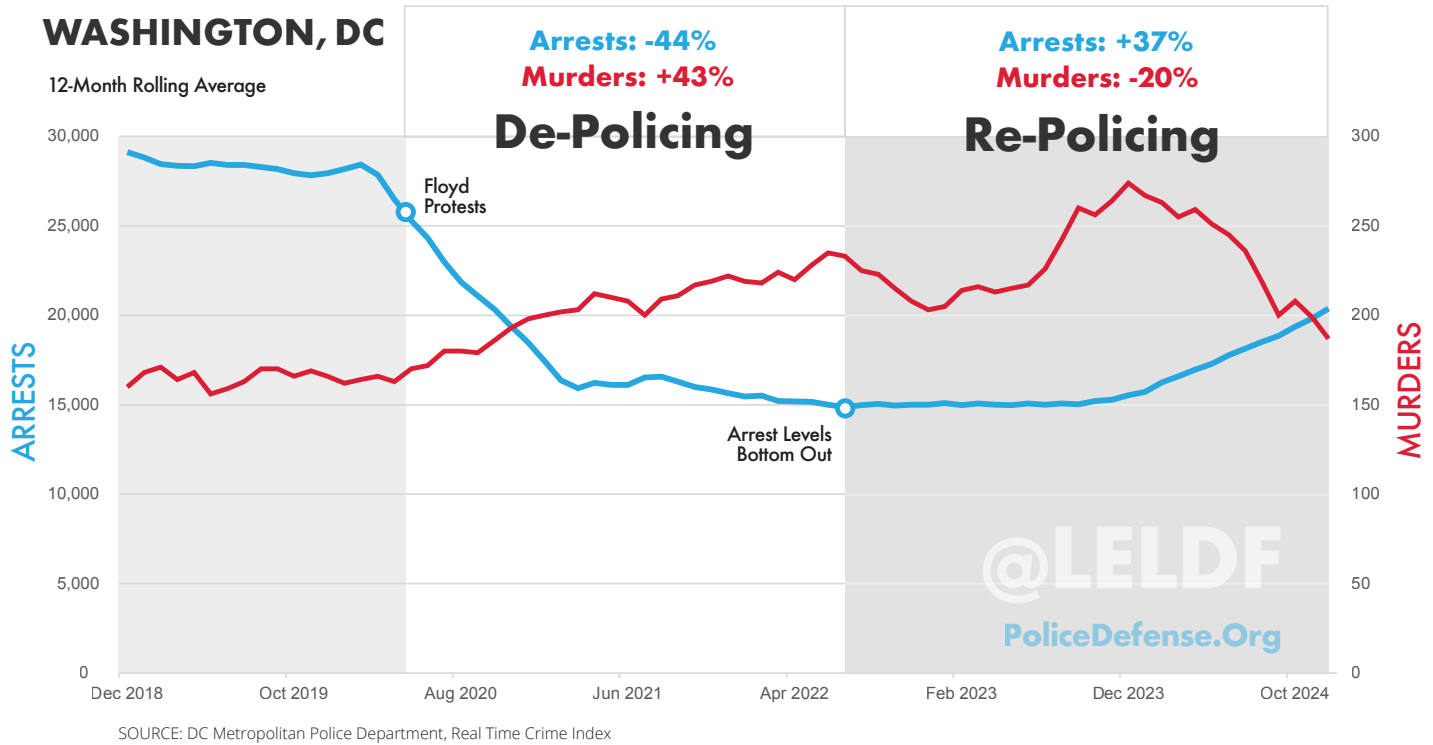
STUDY GROUP 1: Strong Re-Policing, Steep Murder Drops

Four cities saw robust re-policing coincide with significant and rapid declines in homicides: **New York, Chicago, New Orleans and Washington, DC.** Each city's murder rate is approaching or has fallen below its pre-Floyd levels as arrests have climbed. Notably each city's arrest totals bottomed out at the homicide peak. While Washington, DC's depressed arrest levels were unchanged for the extended period of rising homicides (2022–2023), murders only declined in 2024 as arrests increased.



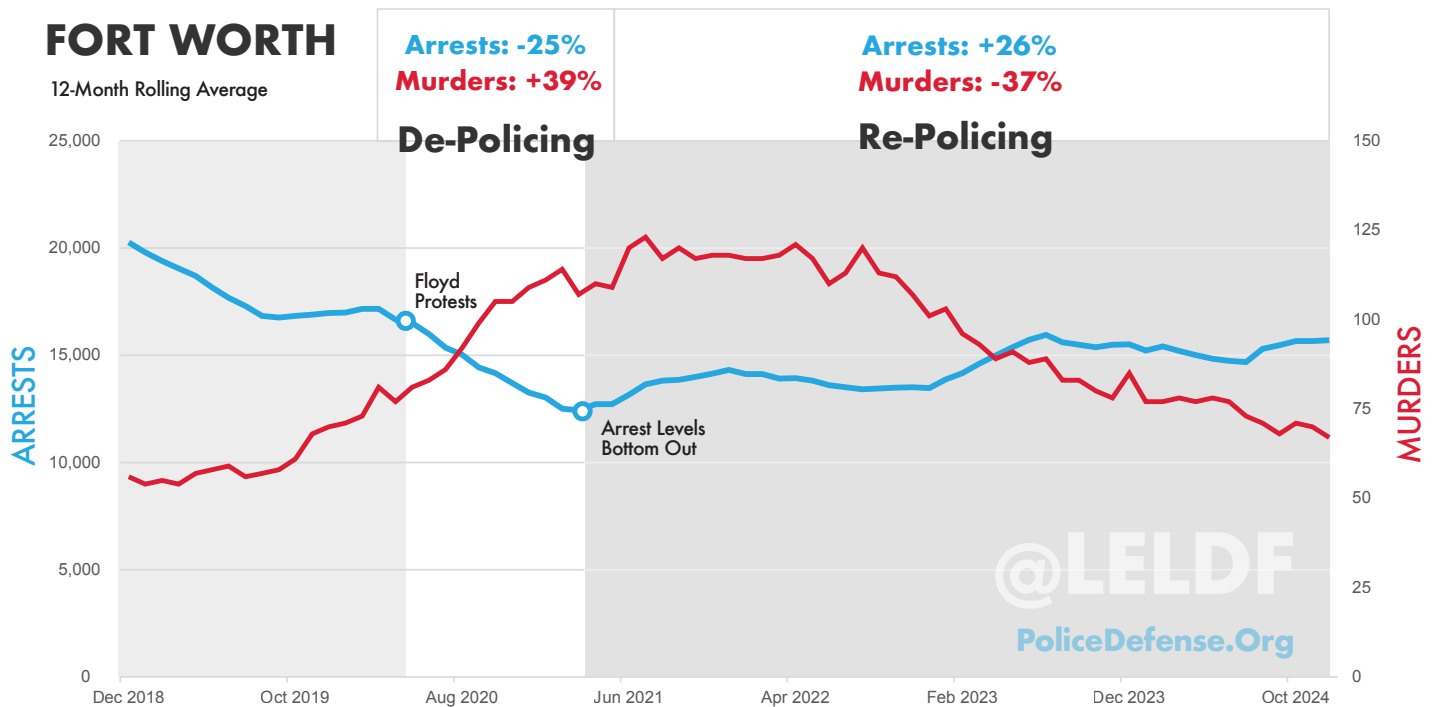
SOURCE: New York City Police Department (NYPD), Real Time Crime Index

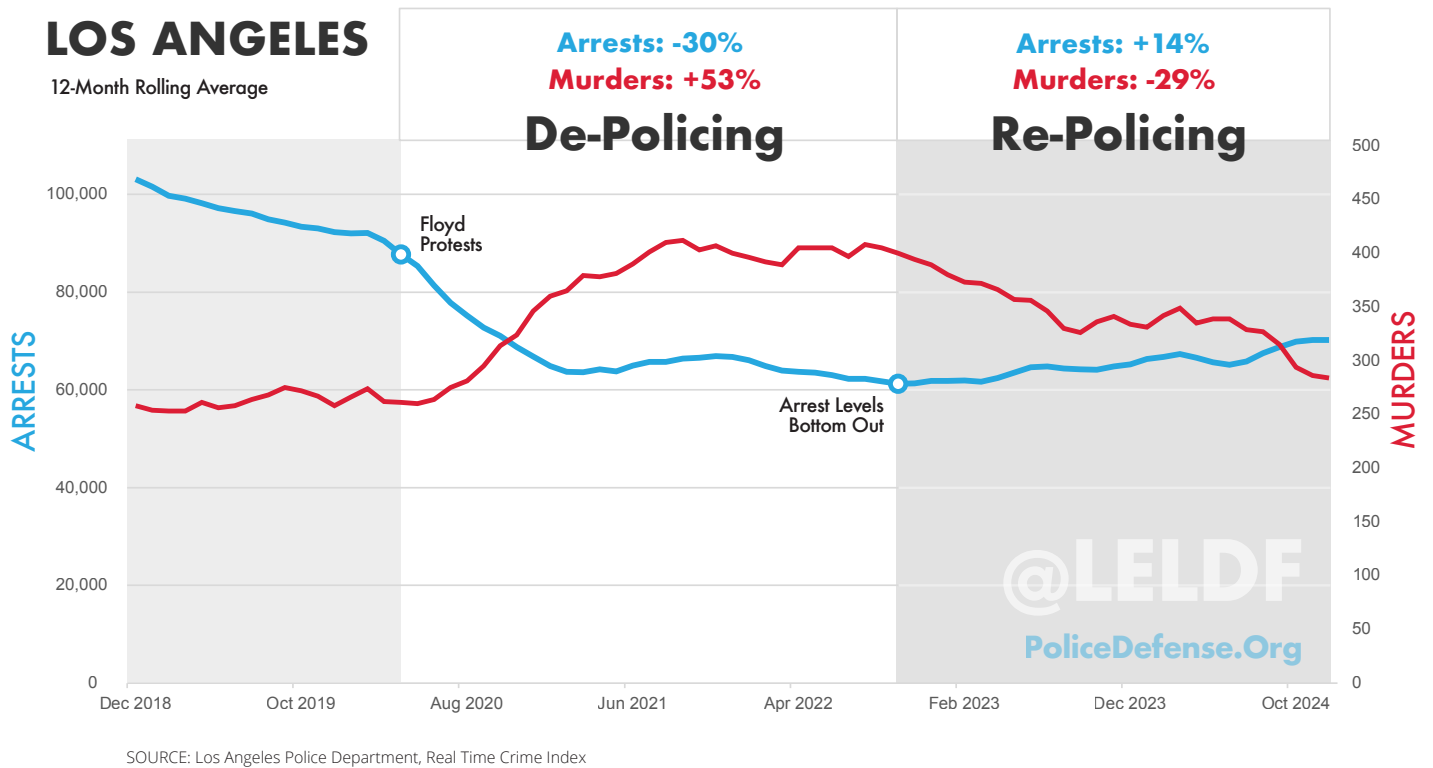
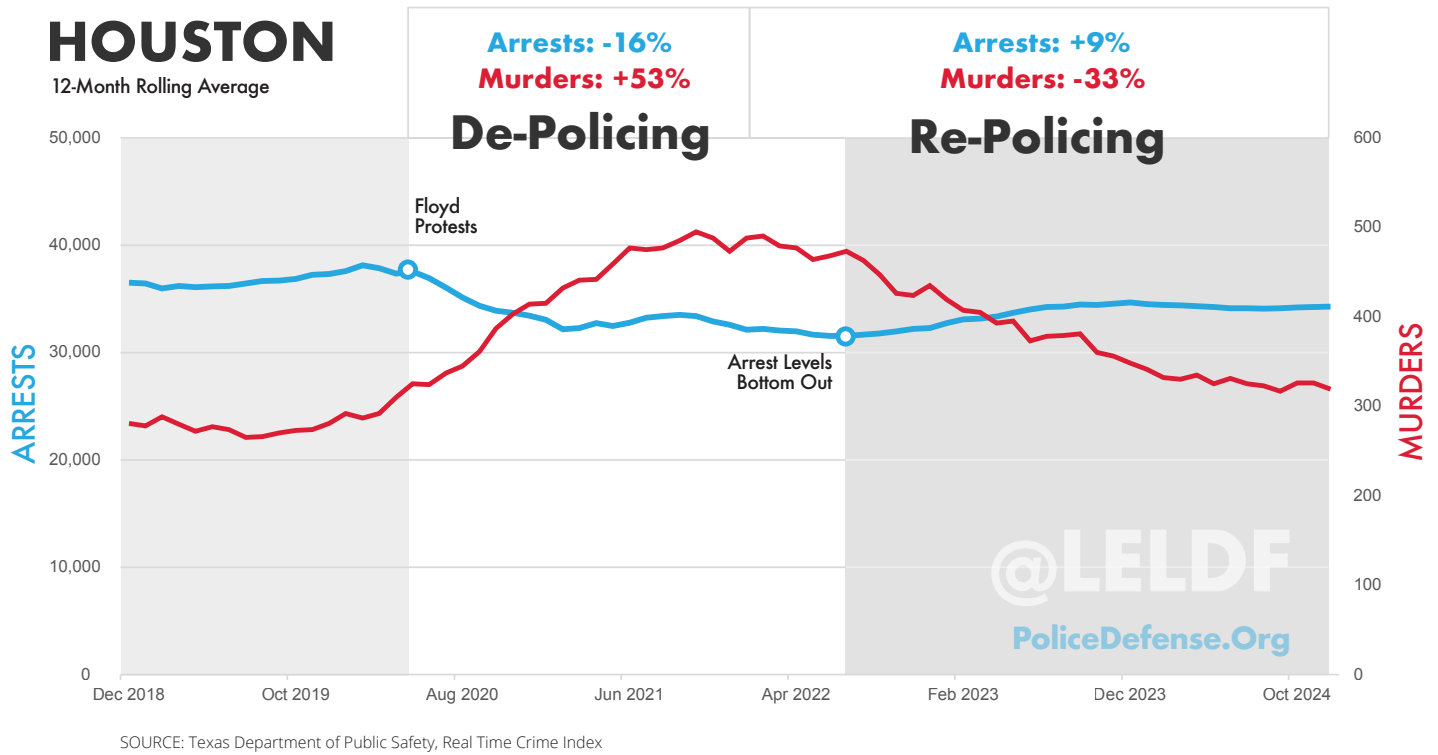


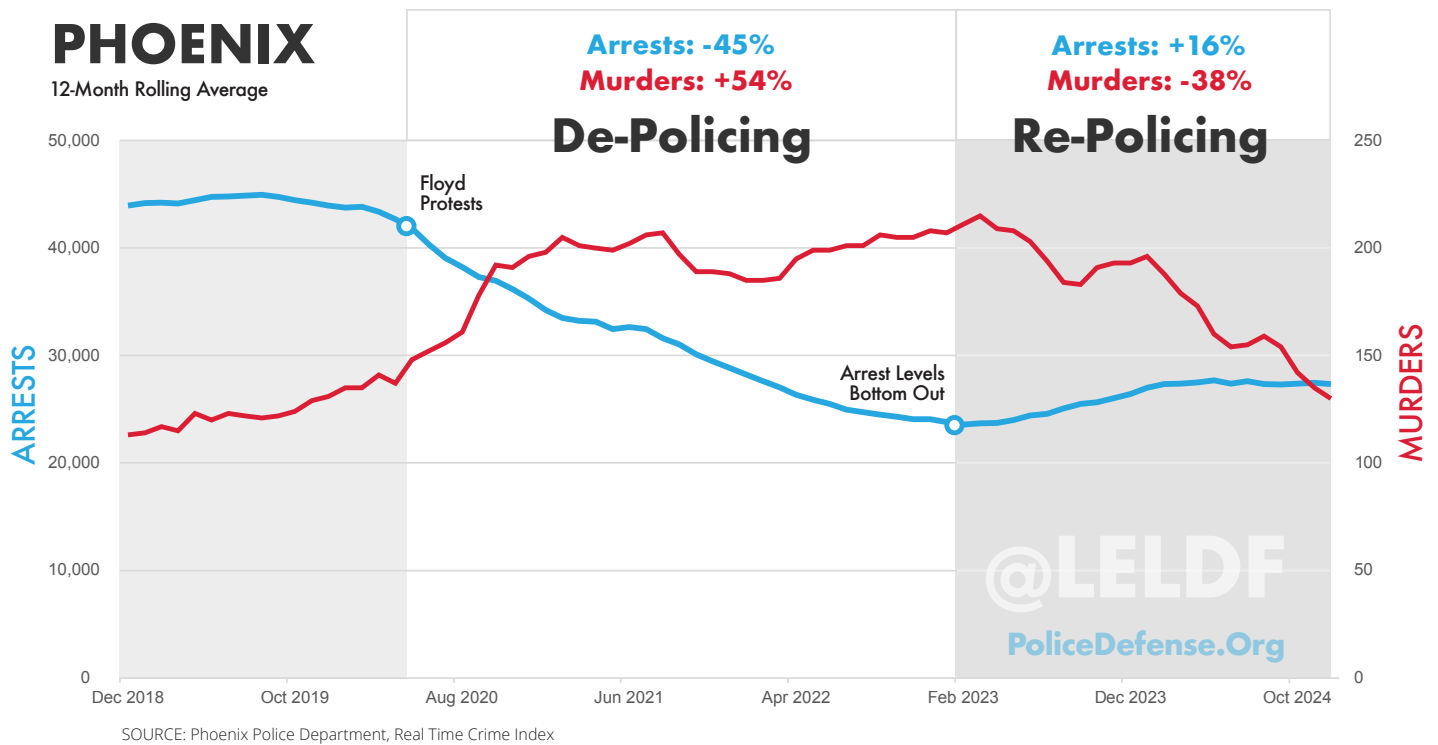


STUDY GROUP 2: Slow but Steady Improvement

In **Fort Worth, Houston, Los Angeles, and Phoenix**, re-policing has occurred more slowly, but the downward homicide trend has closely tracked the increase in arrests. In each of the four cities, re-policing was initially modest but as it accelerated, homicide numbers began to fall at an increasing rate so that murder rates are now at or below pre-Floyd levels.

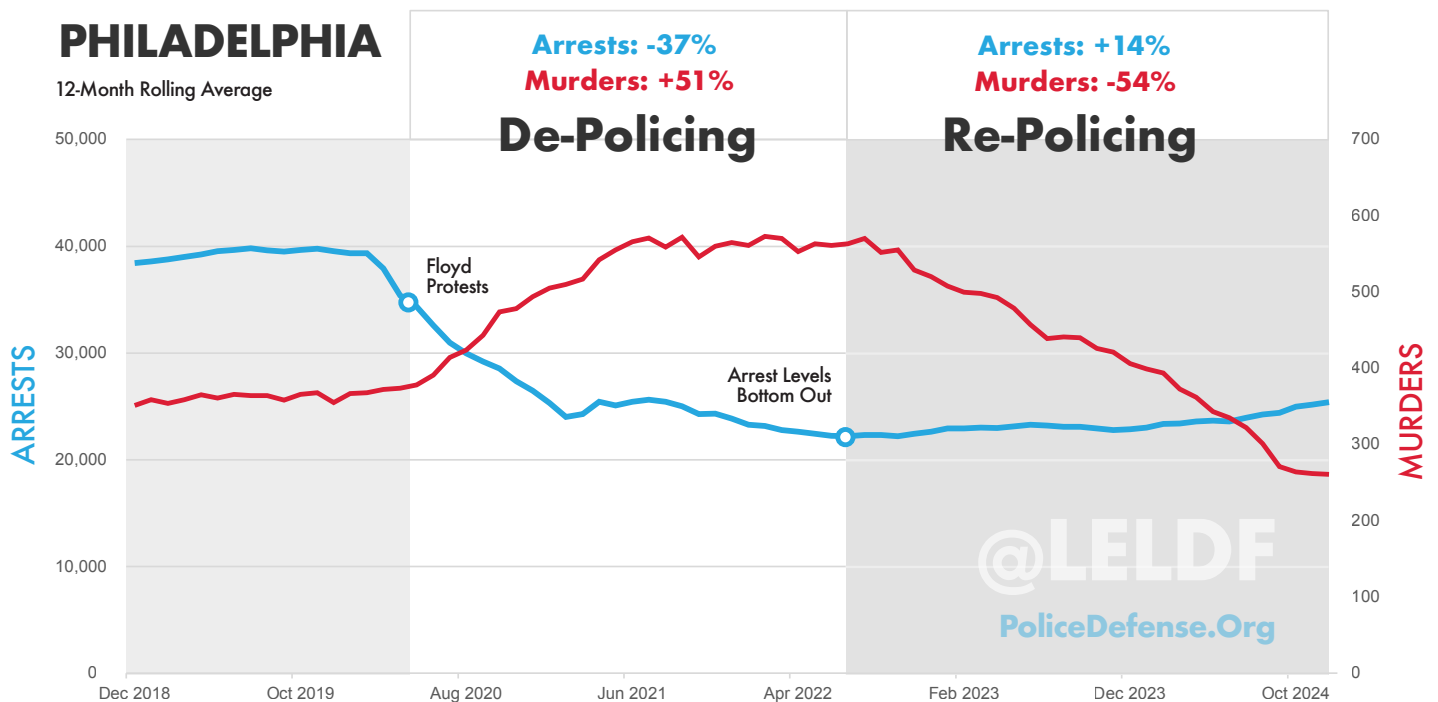


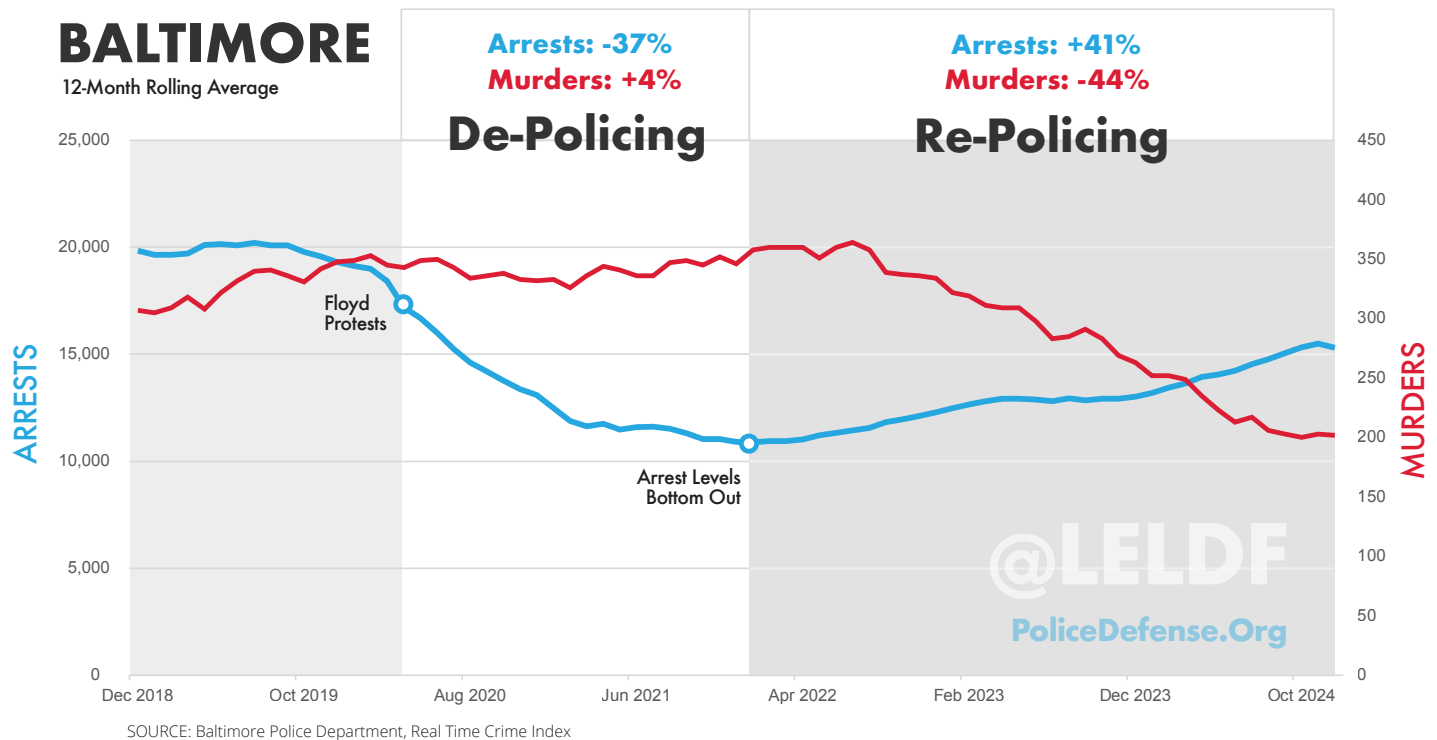
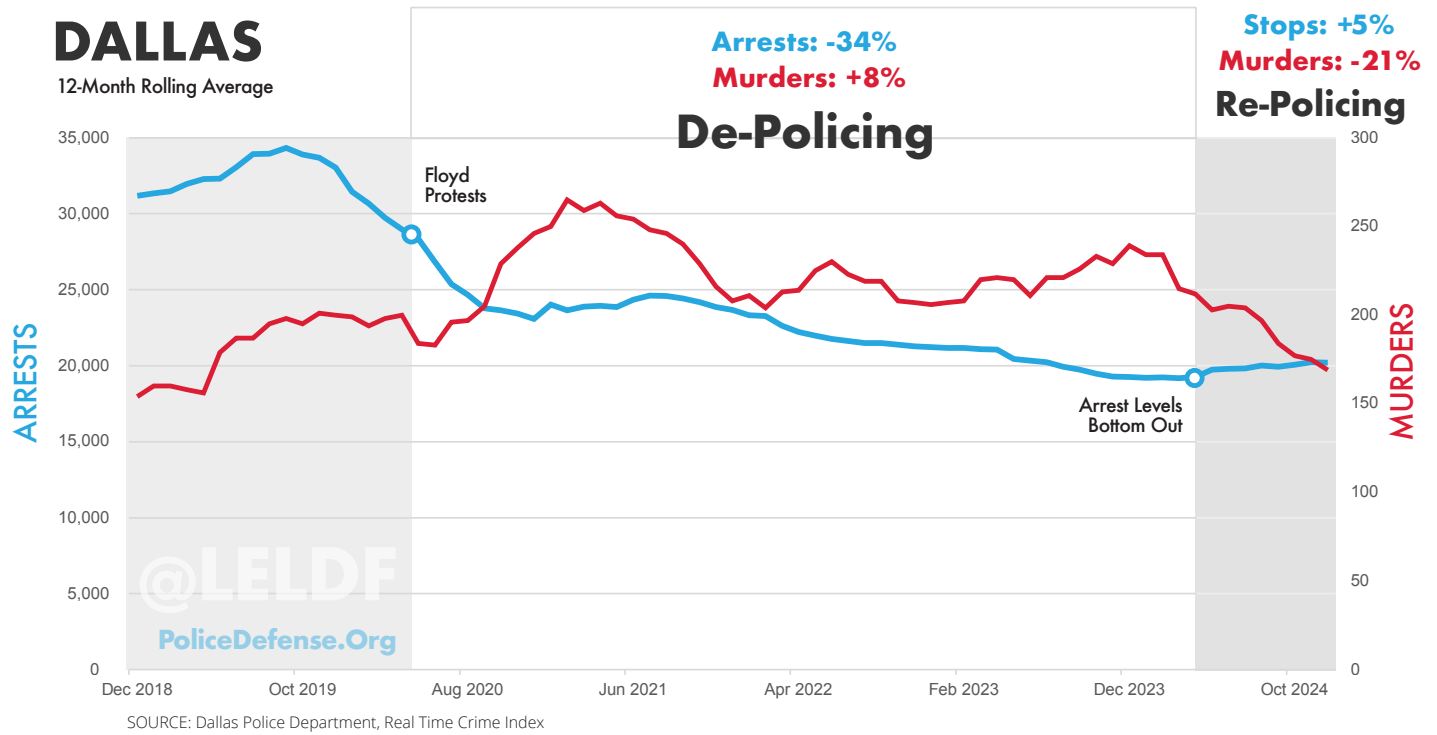




STUDY GROUP 3: De-Policing Prior to Floyd

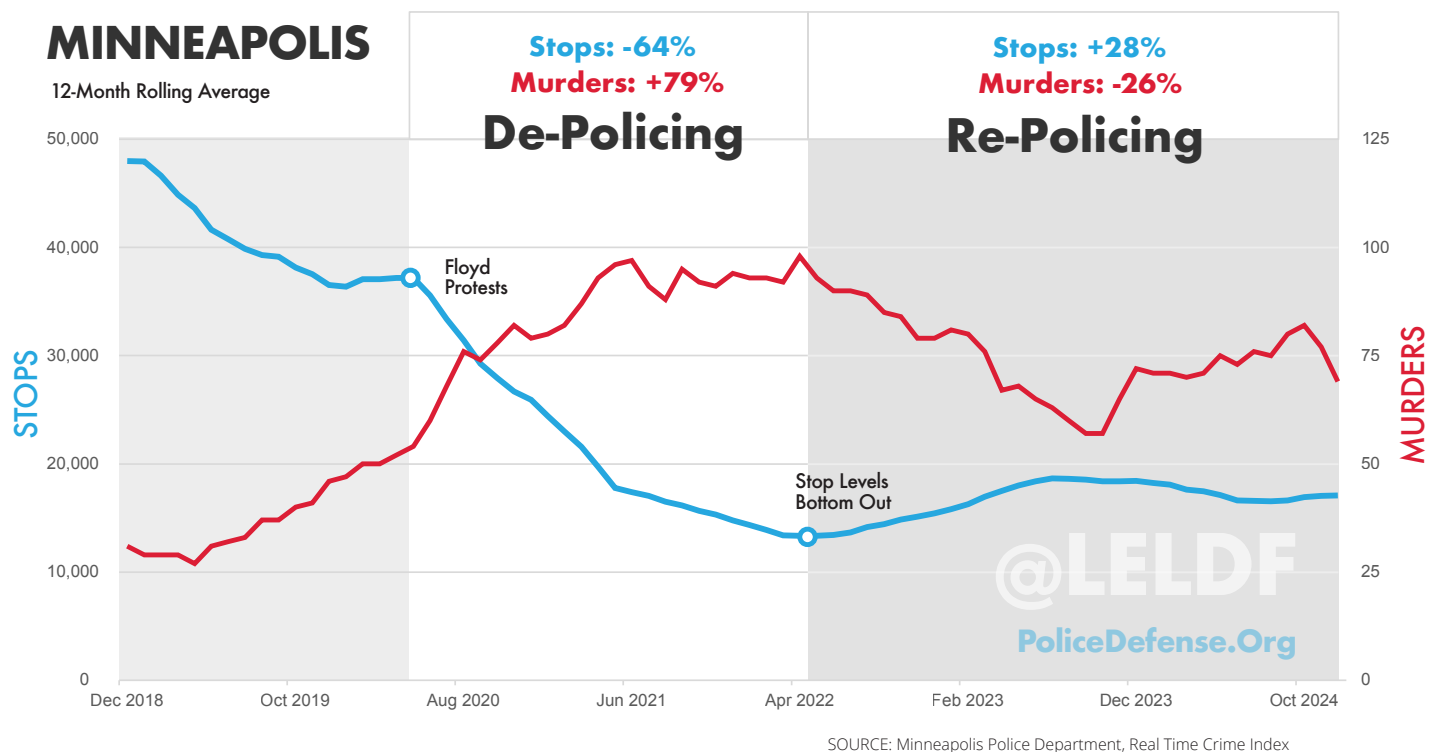
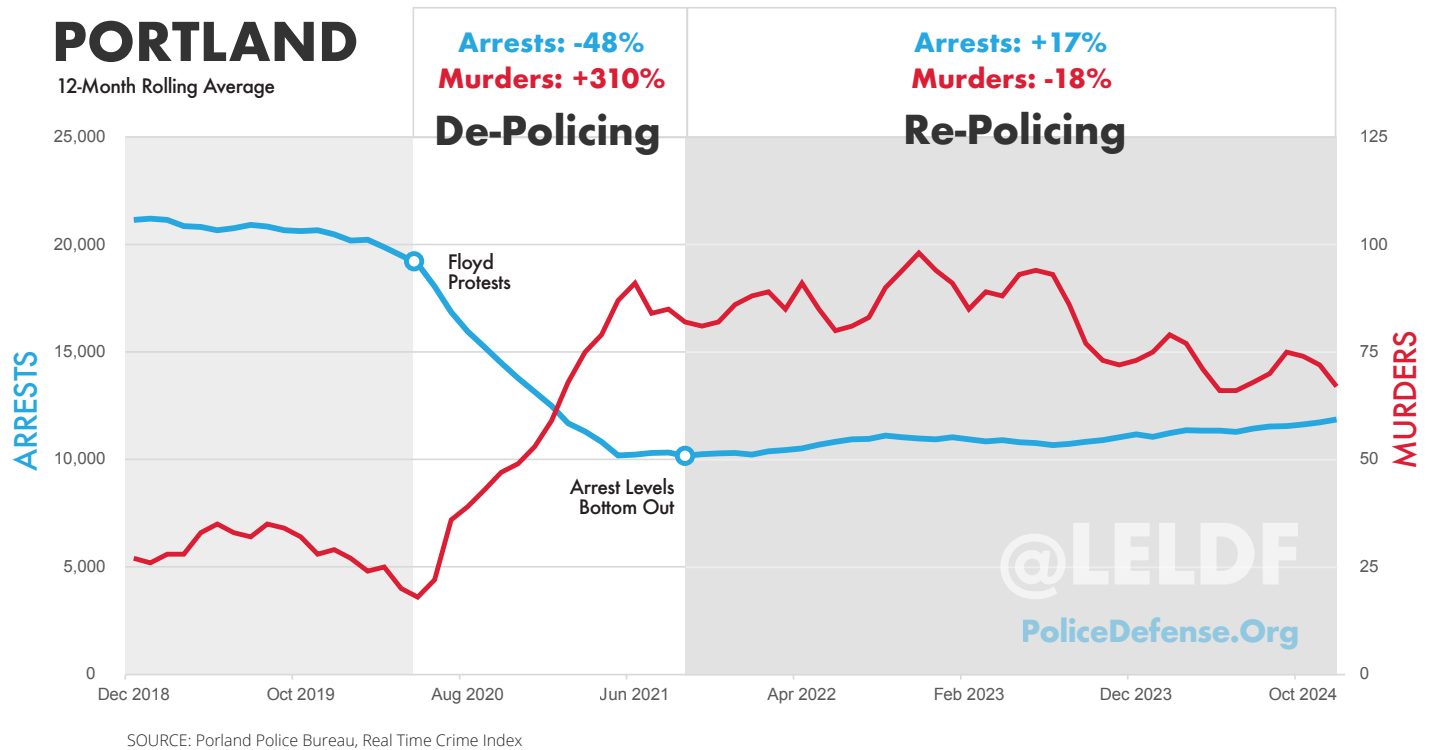
The murder rate in **Philadelphia** rose by 50% from 2014 to 2019¹ after the election of a progressive mayor in 2016 and anti-police prosecutor² in 2017. Similarly, in **Dallas**, after a progressive prosecutor took office in 2019 who announced more lenient policies, violence surged—with the murder rate rising 34% between 2018 and April 2020. The governor of Texas twice sent state police into the city to supplement the local police.³ **Baltimore**, which saw de-policing and a 65% homicide spike in 2015, did not experience a post-Floyd rise but its killings did plummet when re-policing took effect beginning in 2022⁴.

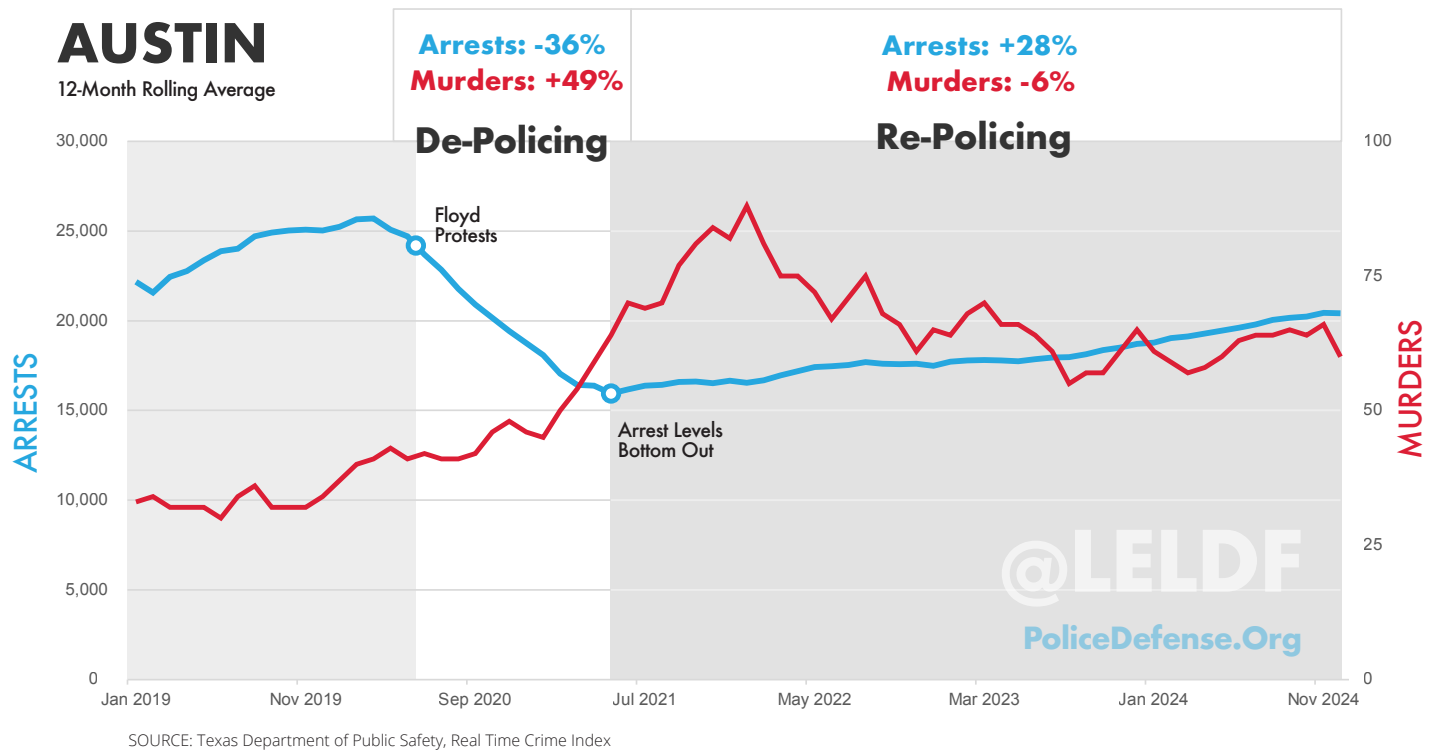




STUDY GROUP 4: Slow Recovery, Persistent Killings

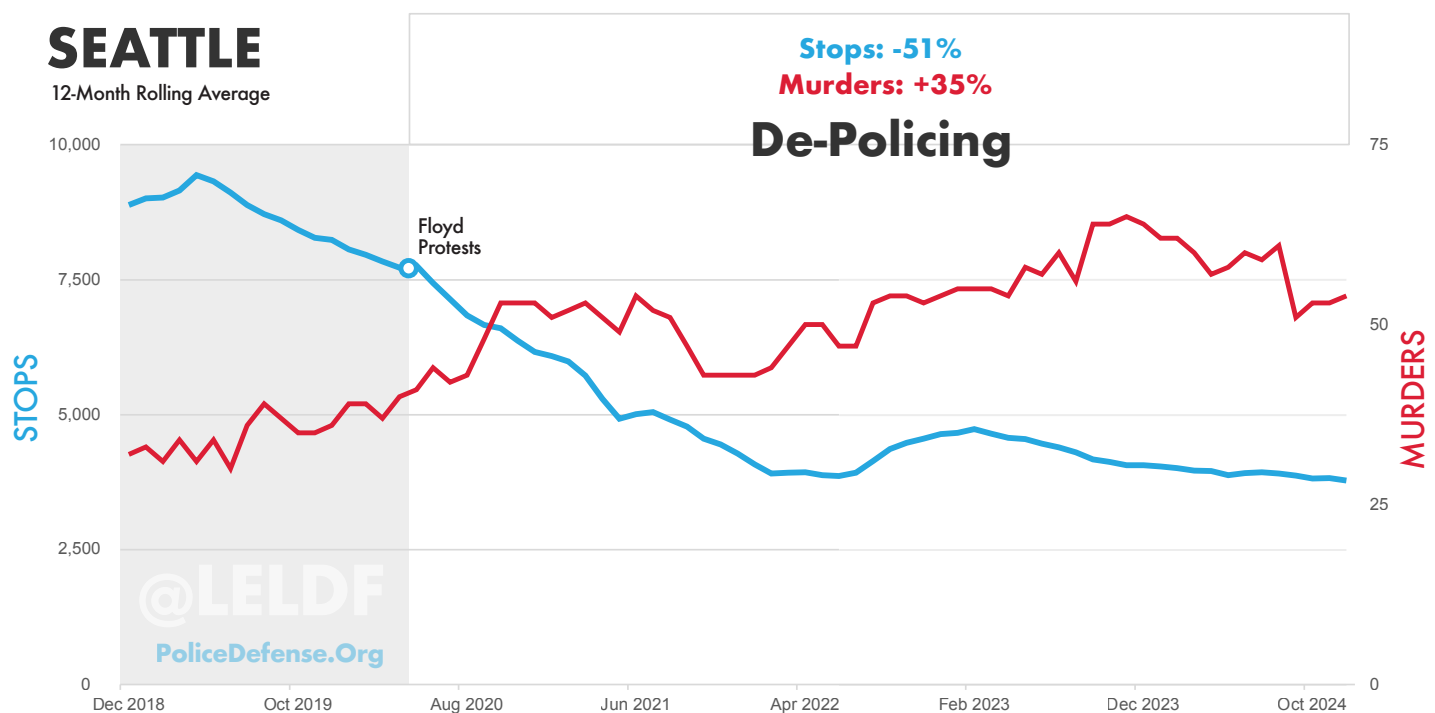
Portland, Minneapolis, and Austin—cities that became bywords for the ‘Defund the Police’ movement—experienced some of the most dramatic murder increases due to de-policing. Each has pulled back from the brink to a limited extent and begun to re-police. Limited enforcement yielded predictable results: elevated homicide rates.





STUDY GROUP 5: No Recovery

Every one of the 15 cities has seen its homicide numbers drop since 2021—except **Seattle**. It is also the only city that did not see any increase in police enforcement. Seattle police make 60% fewer stops than they did in 2019 while the murder rate is 50% higher. The city's experience provides a useful, if tragic, counterfactual that proves the impact of re-policing on murders.



Conclusion

Over the 2018–2024 period, this study finds a strong link between de-policing and rising murder rates, and conversely, between re-policing and falling homicides across the 15 cities examined. The statistically significant correlation (based on the Pearson coefficient) suggests that increased police activity—measured through arrests and stops—contributes to reduced violence, echoing findings from other researchers.

However, the re-policing effect was not universal. A few major cities, such as Seattle, never saw a return to heightened police activity and consequently did not experience a decline in homicides. In other cases, such as Dallas and Philadelphia, the effects were more limited, as local policy decisions (including the election of progressive prosecutors) led to sharp drops in police activity and surging murder rates even before the summer of 2020.

The lesson is clear: **while de-policing kills, re-policing can save lives.**

Endnotes

1. Corey Davis, “Philadelphia ends 2019 with 356 homicides, the most since 2007,” 6ABC Action News, January 1, 2020, <https://6abc.com/murder-rate-philadelphia-homicide-homicides-in/5802150/>;
2. Alan Feuer, “He Sued Police 75 Times. Democrats Want Him as Philadelphia’s Top Prosecutor,” New York Times, June 17, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/17/us/philadelphia-krasner-district-attorney-police.html>;
3. Jolie McCollough, “Gov. Abbott is sending state police to help combat violent crime in Dallas. A similar effort last year proved controversial,” Texas Tribune, November 18, 2020, <https://www.texastribune.org/2020/11/18/texas-greg-abbott-dallas-state-police>
4. Brooke Conrad, “Baltimore homicide numbers are dropping more than in other areas of the country. Law enforcement experts explain why,” Baltimore Sun, January 8, 2025, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/2025/01/07/baltimore-homicide-numbers-are-dropping-more-than-in-other-areas-of-the-country-law-enforcement-experts-explain-why/>

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