**In High-Crime Areas, Still Too Few Police**
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Despite Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s highly promoted efforts at concentrating additional police patrols in the city’s most dangerous neighborhoods, many crime-ridden police districts still have fewer officers patrolling their streets than far safer areas of the city have, according to recent data obtained by The Chicago News Cooperative.

The data included officer-assignment data for all 9,400 Chicago police officers, as well as almost 1,000 detectives — information that the city has steadfastly declined to make public.

The analysis found that the distribution of patrol officers among the city’s 25 police districts does not correlate to the places where crime rates are highest.

The 5th police district, which includes the Roseland and Pullman neighborhoods on the Far South Side, has 266 patrol officers, four fewer than the 270 officers in the 12th district on the gentrified Near West Side, the data showed.

But the 5th district experienced 1,049 violent crimes in the first eight months of this year, while the 12th district recorded 341 violent incidents during the same period, according to police department records.

Many predominantly black districts on the South and West Sides had more than three or four murders, rapes, armed robberies or assaults for every beat officer assigned to work within their boundaries during that period.

That contrasted drastically with 10 districts, mostly in more affluent sections on the North Side, where there were one or two such crimes for every officer.

Many City Council members and neighborhood activists have long campaigned for a police department reorganization that would put more officers in high-crime neighborhoods. Told of the deployment data analysis, they said the results vindicated their demands.

“It basically validates the need for redeployment and reallocation,” said Alderman Anthony Beale, whose 9th Ward is largely in the 5th district.

Beale said this week that he would call for Council hearings on staffing levels in police districts. He said he had unsuccessfully sought deployment statistics from the police for years.

“Putting the most police in the areas with the most crime — it’s just that simple,” said the Rev. Marshall Hatch, whose New Mount Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church is in a West Side police district with the second-lowest proportion of police officers to violent crimes.

Lt. Maureen Biggane, a spokeswoman for the police department, said officials were in the process of “right-sizing the department” and had focused initial redeployment efforts on the highest-crime districts. The debate over how best to deploy police officers has raged for decades, with representatives of more tranquil corners of the city successfully blocking repeated attempts to shift greater resources away from their neighborhoods to the most violent districts.
The topic has become especially heated as City Hall’s budget problems have worsened in the past few years. Even after the planned closing of three district stations, the police department would remain by far the largest component of the budget.

Police spending is slated to drop by 4.4 percent in 2012, to about $1.26 billion out of the total city budget of $6.28 billion.

During economic boom times, former Mayor Richard M. Daley promised and delivered expansion of the police ranks. When the city’s budget deficits grew, the Daley administration allowed the police force to dwindle.

In 2008, officials reluctantly confirmed that they had been forced to renege on Daley’s vow to hire new officers, and police academy classes ceased training cadets. Retirements and other attrition quickly drove down the count of sworn officers on the payroll.

Since his inauguration in May, Emanuel and his new police superintendent, Garry McCarthy, have faced reality. In presenting his 2012 budget proposal, Emanuel said he would delete more than 1,200 perennally unfilled officer positions from the books “to end the charade of carrying hundreds of police officer vacancies without actually hiring them.”

While acknowledging that they will have a smaller force than the Daley administration once commanded, Emanuel and McCarthy are as leery as Daley was of moving officers from safe neighborhoods to higher-crime areas. Instead, City Hall’s new leaders say they have shifted personnel from the specialized units that Daley built up and reassigned them as beat officers in districts across Chicago.

Emanuel said he had transferred more than 1,000 officers “to beat patrols in our neighborhoods,” removing them from desk jobs and special units.

“Every police district across our city received additional officers,” Emanuel told aldermen in his budget speech on Oct. 12. “Those districts with the most crime got the biggest increases, as it should be.”

Biggane, the police spokeswoman, said eight high-crime districts had benefited from the first redeployment wave, involving 500 officers, and other parts of the city have since received additional patrols.

But the Emanuel administration has declined to provide documentation of those moves. The new administration has adhered to longstanding policies of the Daley administration, whose officials denied Freedom of Information Act requests by contending that public disclosure of documents detailing officer deployment levels would compromise security.

The Chicago News Cooperative recently obtained a list of the unit assignments for the 10,300 sworn Chicago police department employees from a police source who requested anonymity because the department leaders have declined to release it.

The records described the unit assignments as of early October and appeared to reflect the vast majority of the recent personnel moves ordered by the Emanuel administration.
Most of the detectives were assigned to one of the department’s five area headquarters, while about 2,400 of the police officers were either assigned directly or detailed to specialized units, including the narcotics section and the internal affairs division.

It was impossible to deduce from the data exactly where the officers in specialized units were working. The list also did not include supervisors.

The other 7,000 police officers, representing a majority of the department’s sworn members, were each assigned to patrol beats in one of the 25 districts. The number of officers in each district ranged from a low of 191 in the 23rd district to 386 in the 7th district.

A comparison of the beat deployment figures with department statistics for property crimes and violent crimes in each district this year shows:

- Four districts — the 25th, 8th, 6th and 4th — had higher ratios of both property crimes and violent crimes per officer than the citywide average.

- The highest ratios of property crimes to beat officer counts were in the 14th, 8th and 25th districts, each of which reported at least 15 property crimes per patrol officer in the year’s first eight months.

- The lowest proportion of violent crimes to officers was in the 1st district, which covers downtown Chicago, followed by the 19th district on the North Side.

- The 4th district, in the city’s southeast corner, had the largest gap between staffing level and violence, with 4.05 violent crimes per officer.

The 4th district covers most of the 7th Ward, whose alderman, Sandi Jackson, praised Emanuel for adding officers to areas of greater need, despite tight budget constraints. But asked about the Chicago News Cooperative findings, Jackson replied: “There is absolutely a disparity. We are not where we would want to be ideally.”

Some experts say the reaction of aldermen in apparently underserved districts, though politically astute, would not lead to the wisest policies for fighting crime.

“It is reasonable and rational to expect that there should be more officers in areas with more crime,” said Arthur Lurigio, a professor of psychology and criminology at Loyola University. “But there is no evidence that would necessarily be the case.”

Lurigio said saturating areas with officers often merely pushed criminals to other places that then witnessed a spike in violence.

Still, the city should deploy its police officers based on a formula that would account not only for crime rates but also for average response times to service calls, said Wesley Skogan, professor of political science at Northwestern University’s Institute for Policy Research.
“This is Chicago, so everybody wants more and nobody wants to give up officers,” Skogan said. “Emanuel should use his crisis clout and allocate police resources based on workload.”