

[T]he goal isn't to make arrests; it's to make connections. [In the past], instead of engaging community members, the force emphasized 'zero tolerance' and 'hot spot' policing. [However], zero tolerance-hot spot policing wasn't driving crime down; it was making it harder to solve crimes. When you're doing zero-tolerance policing, who are you picking up and who are you alienating? Your residents, your victims, and your witnesses.

—Chief Cathy L. Lanier, *Governing Magazine* (July 2012)

SOME ADDITIONAL THINGS TO CONSIDER...

1. According to the report, “The Committee seeks to be part of a city that can embrace the safest, healthiest and most effective ways to solve public safety and social policy challenges.”
2. According to the report, “While there are about as many African Americans aged 18 or older (47.6%) as there are adult whites (42%) living in this city, eight of 10 adults arrested for crime in Washington are African American.”

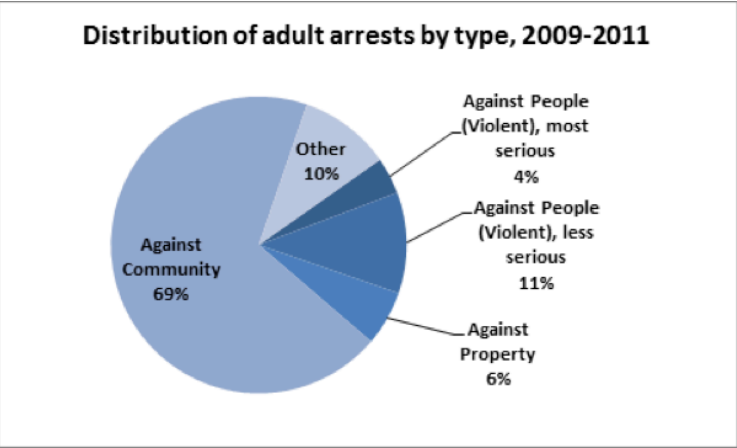
These numbers can certainly serve as starting point for constructive discussions among concerned members of the community, law enforcement, and other city leaders. But again, those discussions should include further examination of the many different factors that influence crime and arrest, prior to drawing firm conclusions as to the reasons why one group is not proportionate to the other.

Comparison of racial proportions alone is not sufficient for examining this important issue. We are not aware of any agreement among community members, criminal justice professionals, or academics that says that arrest rates should match the racial proportion of residents of a city. The idea that the demographics of arrests should match the resident population only seems to apply to race, as police are rarely questioned about why we don't arrest more women or senior citizens. It's also important to remember that nearly two out of every 10 people arrested in DC are residents of other states and do not live within the city and the majority of arrestees do not live in the police district in which they are arrested.

3. According to the report, “More than 19 out of 20 arrests in Washington, D.C. were for nonviolent offenses.”

The WLC report downplays the seriousness of the arrests in the analysis and incorrectly calls the arrests studied “non-violent” arrests. WLC removed the arrests for crimes for the most serious violent offenses: homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, but the remaining categories of arrests include some violent and many serious charges.

- » 15% of all the arrests were violent crimes against people – 4% were the most serious charges that were omitted from the analysis (homicide, rape, robbery & aggravated assault), and 11% were less serious crimes against people, including other assaults and sex offenses.
- » 6% were crimes against property – ranging from the most serious (like burglary, arson, theft, unauthorized use of a vehicle) to less serious (vandalism, destruction of property).
- » The majority of arrests (69%) are crimes against the community. This includes serious charges, such as weapons possession, prostitution and commercialized vice, drugs (20%), and fugitives, as well disorderly conduct, traffic, vending, liquor laws, etc. This is not surprising as the majority of police workload relates to addressing community concerns.



4. In a footnote on page 7 of their report, the authors mention that the arrest data included other agencies, but that the report chose to refer to all arrests as “MPD arrests.”

It is important to note that for all arrests, 13 percent are made by other law enforcement agencies. This is higher for traffic violations (19% are other agencies) and disorderly conduct/alcohol offenses (18%).

5. The report suggests that the police are targeting African-American members of the community for minor offenses.

In no way has the department prioritized minor arrests over serious crime. Our officers are called upon to deal with many types of circumstances and scenarios. Of our sworn members, 77 percent are assigned

to the Police Districts. These members deal primarily with the crimes that we see happening on the street and many of their interactions and arrests are driven by calls for service made by members of the community. We see a significant difference in calls for service for drugs in various parts of the city. For instance, a recent report from the ACLU compared marijuana arrests in PSA 204 (Woodley & Cleveland Park) with PSA 602 (Deanwood). In 2010, the number of marijuana arrests in PSA 204 was equal to the number of calls for service for drug complaints. In contrast, we received twice as many calls for drugs complaints in PSA 602 as we made arrests.

PSA	Marijuana Arrests*	Drug Calls for Service
204	12	12
602	249	518

\*Possession, Possession with Intent to Distribute, and Distribution

6. According to the report, “While there were significant disparities in drug arrests between the two groups, national drug use survey data shows little disparity in drug use between whites and African Americans.”

The WLC cites findings from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health as a benchmark for the racial analysis of drug arrests in Washington, DC. However, the report does not mention that there is greater variation in drug use based on education and even higher based on employment, than on race.

2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health Illicit Drug Use During Past Month and Past Year		
Race		
	Black	White
Past Month	9.9%	8.7%
Past Year	15.5%	14.7%
Education		
	College Grad	Did Not Finish H.S.
Past Month	5.4%	11.1%
Past Year	10.9	16.6%
Employment		
	Employed Full-Time	Unemployed
Past Month	8.0%	17.2%
Past Year	14.1%	26.8%

January 2012				
Ward	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
1	49,252	44,952	4,300	8.7
2	49,361	46,906	2,455	5.0
3	54,034	52,614	1,420	2.6
4	44,310	40,644	3,666	8.3
5	37,016	31,934	5,082	13.7
6	43,685	39,239	4,446	10.2
7	35,979	29,948	6,031	16.8
8	31,325	23,528	7,797	24.9

Table 1: 2012 District of Columbia Unemployment Rate by Ward

Source: DC Department of Employment Services,  
Office of Labor Market Research and Information

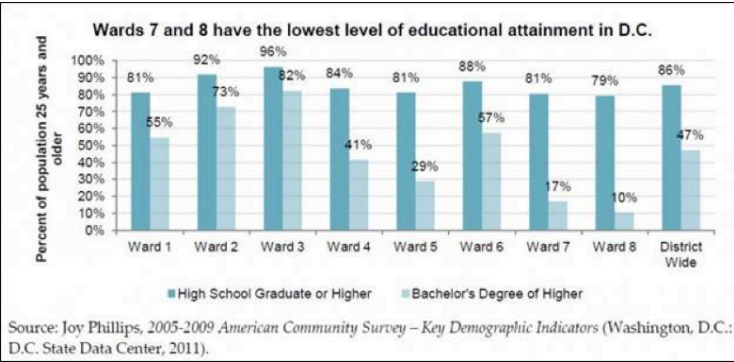


Table 2: Educational Attainment by Ward

Source: The Education of D.C.: How Washington D.C.'s investments in education can help increase public safety; Justice Policy Institute.

7. The report states that there are negative impacts of an arrest and that it can have “lasting impacts on an individual’s ability to return to school, get and keep a job, find housing, and maintain his or her social and economic standing.”

As I have stated previously, as the police chief, I am as interested in vibrant, healthy communities as I am in safe neighborhoods. And having large portions of the population hindered in finding gainful employment because of minor arrests weakens the fabric of our communities. Nevertheless, minor offenses such as vandalism, vending violations, and marijuana possession are crimes under the D.C. Code, and MPD officers are sworn to uphold the law. While we do not make the laws, we do our best to enforce them fairly and impartially.

It should be noted that for lower-level arrests such as marijuana possession, MPD focuses on diversion opportunities for juveniles without criminal records. The department is strongly committed to supporting

D.C. youth so that they do not end up in the criminal justice system for a minor transgression.

Additionally, pursuant to DC Regulations, if an employer comes to us seeking information about a specific individual, we will only release information with the permission of the individual, for arrests in the past 10 years leading to convictions or those for which collateral was forfeited.

In Closing

We are committed to working with advocacy organizations and our community partners on this important issue. We look forward to being a part of discussions with the community. MPD prides itself on providing high quality police services to all members of the community, and we will continue to carry out that important mission.



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
Metropolitan Police Department  
300 Indiana Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20001



DCPolice



@DCPoliceDept



OfficialDCPolice

If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the conduct of an officer, you may contact the Office of Police Complaints at [202] 727-3838. The Office of Police Complaints is an independent District of Columbia government agency which reviews and resolves complaints of misconduct filed by citizens against Metropolitan Police Department officers.

TAKING ANOTHER LOOK:



Race and Arrests in the District of Columbia

A response to the Washington Lawyer’s Committee Report on Racial Disparities in Arrests in the District of Columbia

THE TRADITIONAL MENTALITY that

success is measured by a high number of arrests does not work in D.C. Officers have **developed new approaches** to situations, rather than being arrest oriented. This approach began to **build trust** among all segments of the community. [T]he department’s philosophy to **reduce violent crime** has paid off tremendously. The officers have garnered trust within the community.

–Chief Cathy L. Lanier, *Police Chief Magazine* [March 2012]

The Washington Lawyers’ Committee has looked at an important issue, and drawn some thoughtful preliminary conclusions. The criminal justice system and academia have long examined the complex relationship between arrest rates and certain variables such as race, poverty, education, and employment.

I believe that the most important factor in our success in decreasing violence in the District has been strengthening the relationship between police and the community. With that said, MPD agrees with the Committee’s conclusion that more research needs to be done to examine these trends. MPD also agrees and welcomes the recommendation for further in depth discussion on these important issues to determine their impact on public safety in the District. I am committed to maintaining the strong community trust that we have developed over the past seven years of my tenure.