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Blue States Spend 33% More on Policing



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For years, Republicans have struck political gold by accusing Democrats of “defunding the police.” And for many voters, those accusations have stuck. In 2022, 48% of voters believed that the Democratic party supports defunding the police. But the data tells a different story.

Using the 2021 Annual Survey of State and Local Government Finances from the US Census Bureau, we analyzed police spending in all 50 states, dividing them into two categories – the 25 blue states that voted for Joe Biden in 2020 and the 25 red states that voted for Donald Trump. We found that Biden-voting **blue states spent 33% more money per capita on policing than Trump-voting red states**. In 2021, blue states on average spent \$453.67 per resident on policing while red states only spent \$341.37 per resident.

Many of the states accused of “defunding the police,” like California, New York, and Illinois, actually spent the most on policing.

- California spent the most on policing at \$634.53 per resident.
- New York spent the third most at \$539.92.
- Illinois came in sixth place at \$471.26.
- Eight out of 10 states spending the most on policing are blue states, joined by red states Alaska and Florida. And those blue states aren't just blue, they're the bluest of states—California, New York, Maryland, Illinois, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Minnesota.

Blue States Spend More on Policing

State	Highest Per Capita Spending	State	Lowest Per Capita Spending
CA	\$634.53	ID	\$281.20
AK	\$553.46	SD	\$273.80
NY	\$539.92	SC	\$271.98
MD	\$510.72	MS	\$268.26
FL	\$486.10	UT	\$266.81
IL	\$471.26	WV	\$263.04
NV	\$465.96	ME	\$257.33
NJ	\$454.98	IN	\$251.02
RI	\$451.53	AR	\$241.49
MN	\$450.42	KY	\$232.18

Source: Author's calculations based on US Census data.



In 2021, states on average spent \$406.68 per resident on policing. Out of the 25 red states, 23 spent less than the national average. About half of blue states spent more or the same and half spent less than the national average. High crime states like Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama aren't investing in policing at the same level as blue states. Mississippi came in the 44th spot out of 50, spending 34% less than the national average. Louisiana did a bit better, coming in 27th place

spending 15% less than the national average. Alabama took the 39th spot, spending 29% less than the average. **Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell's home state of Kentucky came in dead last**, spending 43% less than the national average. For perspective, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer's home state of New York came in third place, spending 33% more on policing than the average state and 173% more than Minority Leader Mitch McConnell's home state. And it's not because there's more crime in New York—quite the opposite. Kentucky's 2021 homicide rate was double New York's, 9.0 compared to 4.5.

It's ironic that Republicans accuse Democrats of defunding the police when their states are the ones spending the least on policing.