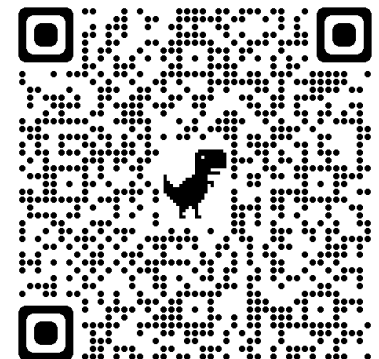


Crime and Public Safety in Georgia's Cities

Report to GMA Board of Directors
September 2022

Scan QR code for these slides.



Georgia Monument That Some Called Satanic Damaged by Bomb

A rural Georgia monument has been bombed, damaging one of four granite panels that some people have dubbed "America's Stonehenge."

By [Associated Press](#) | July 6, 2022, at 12:31 p.m.



The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

[Local News](#) [Georgia Politics](#) [Things To Do](#) [Opinion](#) [Sports](#) [EPaper](#) [Newsletters](#)

Police: Owner, wife, grandson shot dead in robbery at Coweta gun range



NEWS

'We Need More Help:' Judges Requested as Georgia Caseloads Escalate

Atlanta No. 3 in U.S. for highest homicide jump during COVID, study finds



CRIME

Savannah Mayor Van Johnson: After 2 weeks of City Market shootings, curfew is 'still on our mind'



[Will Peebles](#)

Savannah Morning News

Published 6:49 a.m. ET July 6, 2022 | Updated 9:40 a.m. ET July 6, 2022

Police: Driver found shot in Rome car crash, murder suspect identified

By FOX 5 Atlanta Digital Team | Published July 4, 2022 | Rome | FOX 5 Atlanta

3 fatal shootings in 4 days: Latest victim's name released



Most Read

Woman arrested in Augusta Mall armed robbery



Evans teacher accused of improper conversation with former student



Fort Valley cops investigate weekend shooting death of Houston County teen

BY JOE KOVAC JR.

AUGUST 22, 2022 12:11 PM



Bibb County Coroner on 2022 homicides, 'I believe it's anger and conflict.'

Rome man faces 3 counts of murder; investigation continues into triple homicide in Paulding County

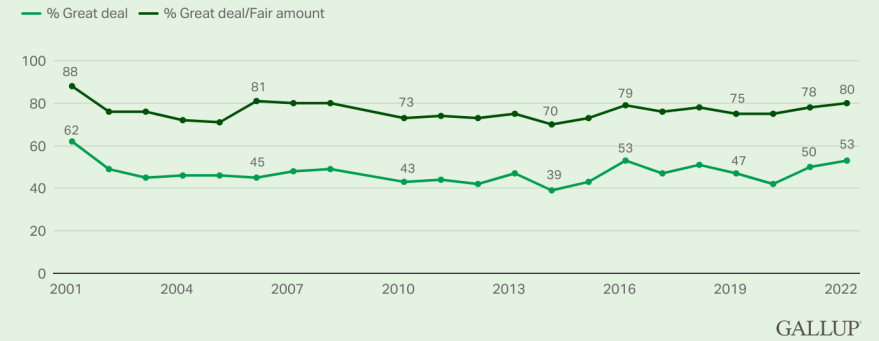
From staff reports Apr 10, 2022

LOCAL NEWS

Brutal and Bizarre: Perry man sentenced to two consecutive life sentences after killing mother and stepfather

Americans' Worry About Crime and Violence in the U.S.

I'm going to read a list of problems facing the country. For each one, please tell me if you personally worry about this problem a great deal, a fair amount, only a little or not at all: Crime and violence.



After couple found dead in Waycross home, son of woman and his wife charged with felony murder: GBI

A woman says her nephew, who's accused of killing the couple, called her and told her that they were dead



Valdosta Daily Times

Wednesday, August 24, 2022 | E-Paper



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AP

Robbery victim who fatally shot 7-year-old guilty of murder

Aug 19, 2022 Updated Aug 19, 2022

Second Homeless Man Killed in Less Than Year in Georgia City

Police in northeast Georgia say a homeless man shot and killed another resident of the same Gainesville homeless camp on May 13.

By [Associated Press](#) | May 28, 2022, at 10:21 a.m.

GEORGIA · Published April 19, 2022 8:37am EDT

Georgia gun shop triple murder suspect was ex-customer; stolen weapons recovered

Georgia authorities revealed suspect Jacob Christian Muse was a former customer at the family-owned Lock, Stock & Barrel Shooting Range

Mental health calls take toll on police

By Asia Ashley aashley@cnhnews.com Aug 21, 2022

The Atlanta
Journal-Constitution

[Local News](#) [Georgia Politics](#) [Things To Do](#) [Opinion](#) [Sports](#) [EPaper](#) [Newsletters](#)

Kemp commits \$100 million more in federal COVID-19 money to law enforcement



POLITICS

By James Salzer, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

16 hours ago

Crime and Public Safety in Georgia Cities

- City leaders are reporting increased crime levels
- Metro, rural, large, small cities are all impacted
- At the same time, local governments are having difficulty recruiting and retaining public safety employees, police and fire

Crime and Public Safety in Georgia Cities

- GMA surveyed cities in July/ August to get the latest data on crime and public safety staffing
- 110 complete responses; 360 city police departments (includes consolidated governments); 30% response rate (277 cities provide fire services directly)
- Responses primarily provided by police and fire chiefs or law enforcement staff
- Not intended to replace formal/ official GBI/ FBI data, but to provide a snapshot of what cities are seeing to document what we hear anecdotally

Definitions

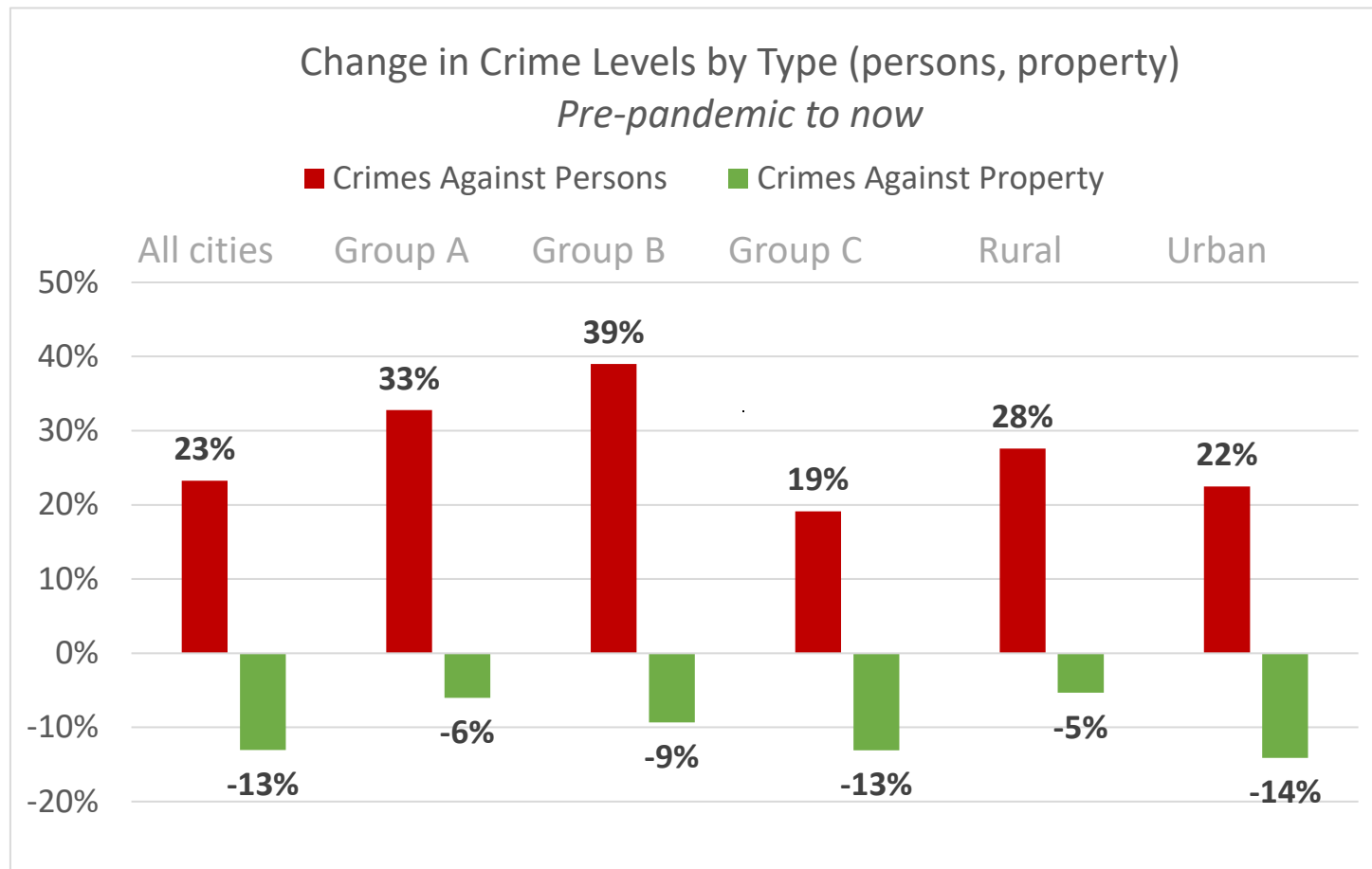
Reference	Definition
All cities	Responding surveys
Group A Small	Cities with population < 10,000
Group B Medium	Cities with population 10,000-24,999
Group C Large	Cities with population 25,000+
Rural	Cities located in a rural county*
Metro	Cities located in a metro county*
Pre-pandemic	June 1, 2019-May 31, 2020
First year of pandemic	June 1, 2020-May 31, 2021
Second year of pandemic	June 1, 2021-May 31, 2022

*As designated by the 2020 Census. See [CVIOG Rural Georgia in Focus presentation](#).

Crime in Georgia Cities

Responses to GMA Survey

Between pre-pandemic and now, violent crimes against persons such as homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault have increased across the board by about **23%**.

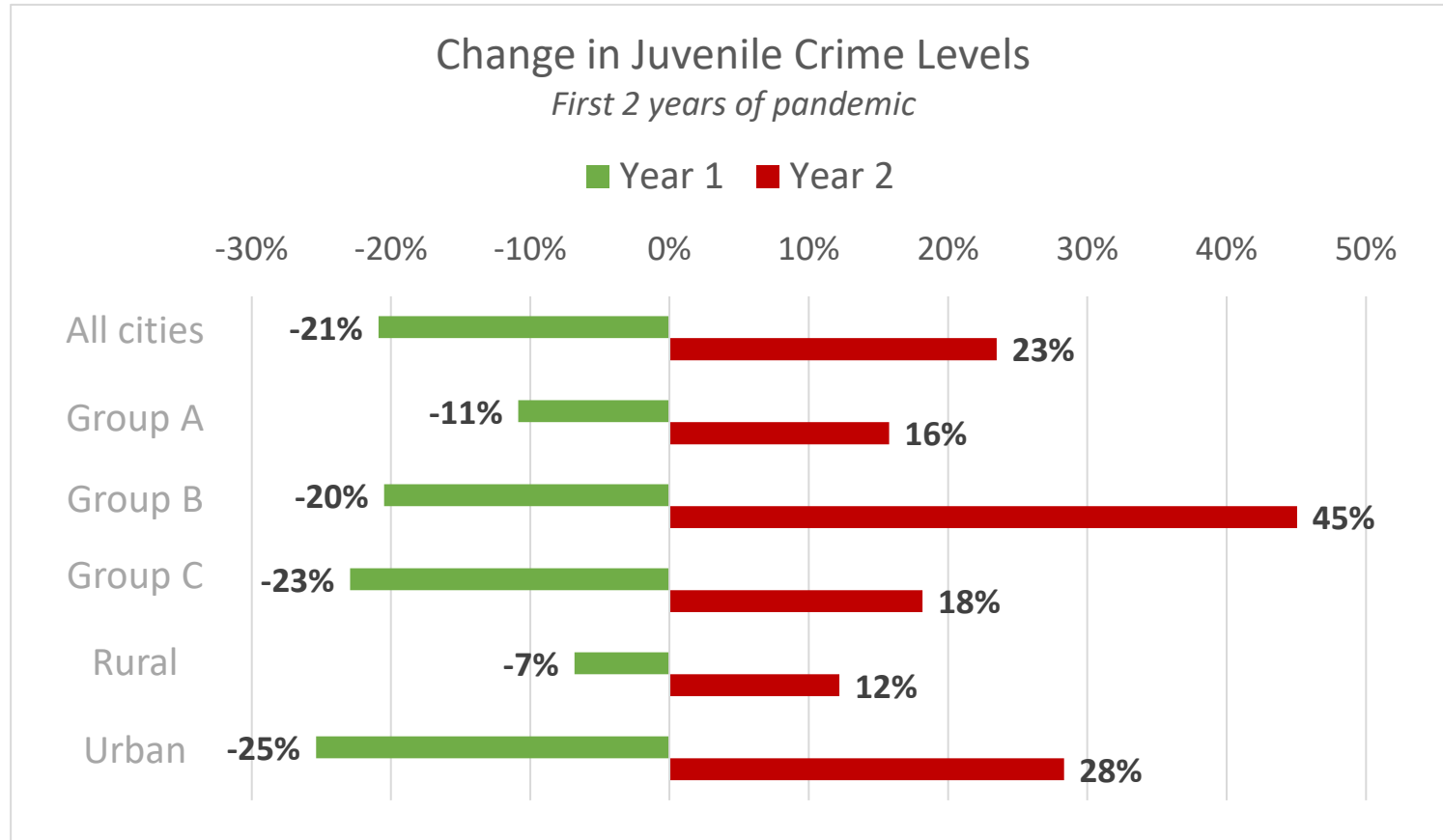


Not every city reported data for each time period or each crime type (persons, property, juvenile)

Between the pre-pandemic period and now, crimes against property such as motor vehicle theft, burglary, arson, larceny-theft have fallen across the board by about **13%**.

The trends in juvenile crimes – those committed by individuals under age 18 – are quite alarming. Comparing just the pre-pandemic period to now would mask the year-on-year trends.

The first year of the pandemic showed a **21% drop** in juvenile offenses.



However, in the last 12 months, juvenile crimes rose by **23%** for all cities and increased in every subgroup, erasing the previous period's drop and indicating a return to pre-pandemic levels and possibly higher.

What some cities are experiencing

“Majority of our cases are related to **drugs, DUI and other traffic cases**. The population is increasing with the building of 80 more apartments and over 300 homes.” – Lake Park

“During the hardest times of Covid-19 within our jurisdiction we did notice an **uptick in crime while businesses were shut down and employment limited**. We have also noticed an **uptick in Juvenile crime** which our department has started working with programs such as the Boys and Girls club and other after school programs in an attempt to curb such crimes.” – Newnan

“While we provide 24-hour police coverage of our city, we were impacted with **numerous events outside the normal aspect of policing** such as shortage of manpower due to positive Covid-19 cases in our department, CDC guidelines of social distancing and preventive measures with a short budget for a small city and area businesses being shut down.” – Cave Spring

“Although our city shows low numbers of violent crimes for the past 3 years, we have noticed a rise in **drug offenses, entering automobile thefts, and theft by taking** offenses that have been on the rise.” – Claxton

Public Safety Challenges in Georgia Cities

Responses to GMA Survey

Notes on Turnover Rate



Employee turnover rate formula

$$\frac{\text{Employees who left}}{(\text{Employees @ beginning} + \text{Employees @ end}) / 2} \times 100 = \text{Employee Turnover Rate}$$

CC-BY 2021 with attribution link to <https://www.getguru.com/templates/employee-turnover-rate>

Police turnover has two essential components:

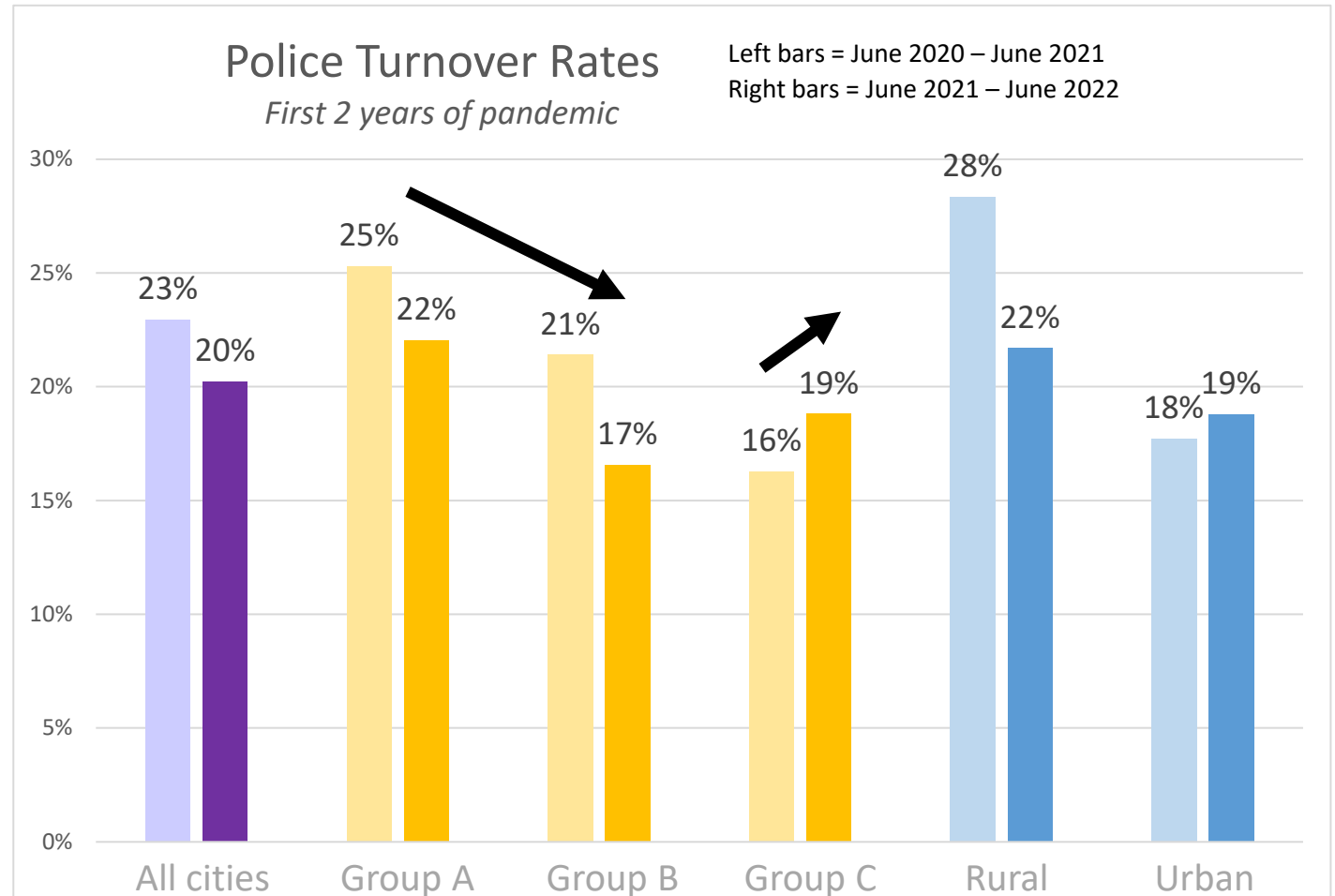
- Number of separations – officers fired, resigned, retired, other reason
- Average size of police force

Police Turnover during COVID Pandemic

Between the first 2 years of the pandemic:

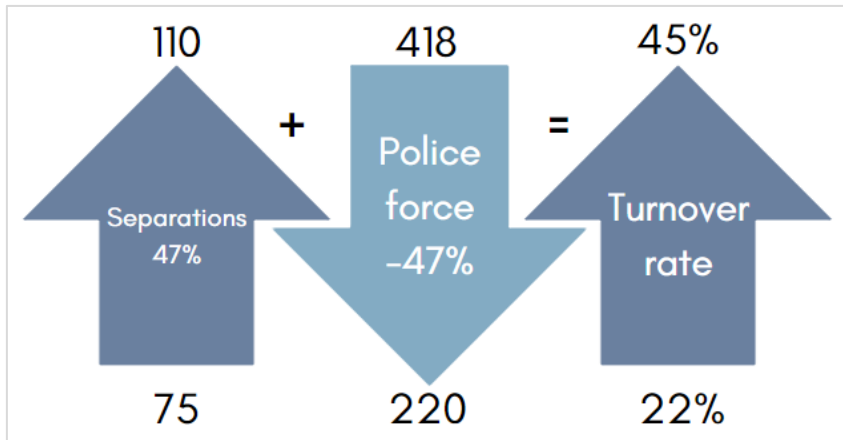
Small and mid-sized cities, as well as rural cities, saw a **decrease** in turnover rates on average.

Meanwhile, large cities saw an **increase** in turnover.



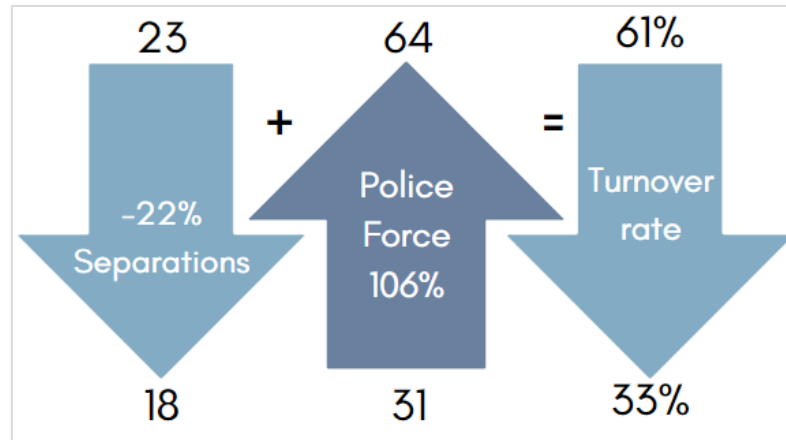
What's behind the turnover rate?

Some cities face severe and serious challenges with turnover due to an increase in separations and/or downsizing of their police force. Others have seen improvements. For example, in the first 2 years of the pandemic:



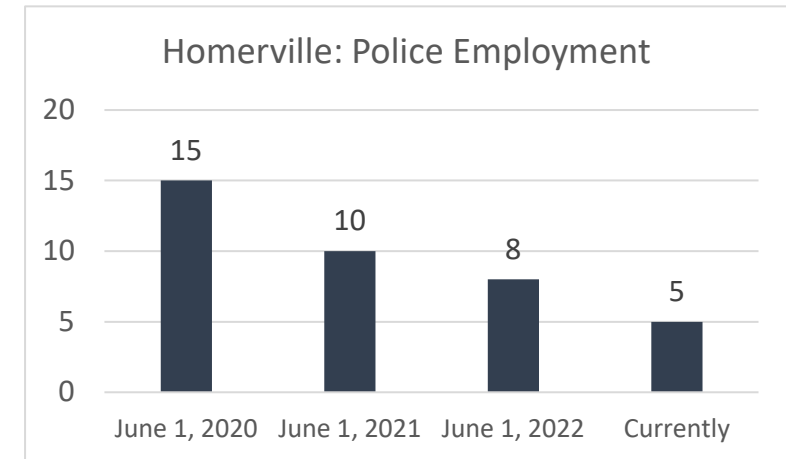
Macon-Bibb County*

More separations and a smaller police force led to a **higher** turnover rate.



Union City

Fewer separations and a larger police force led to a **lower** turnover rate.



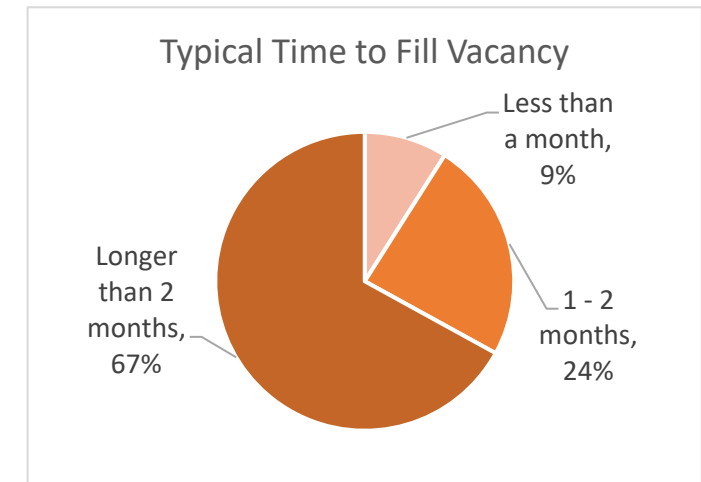
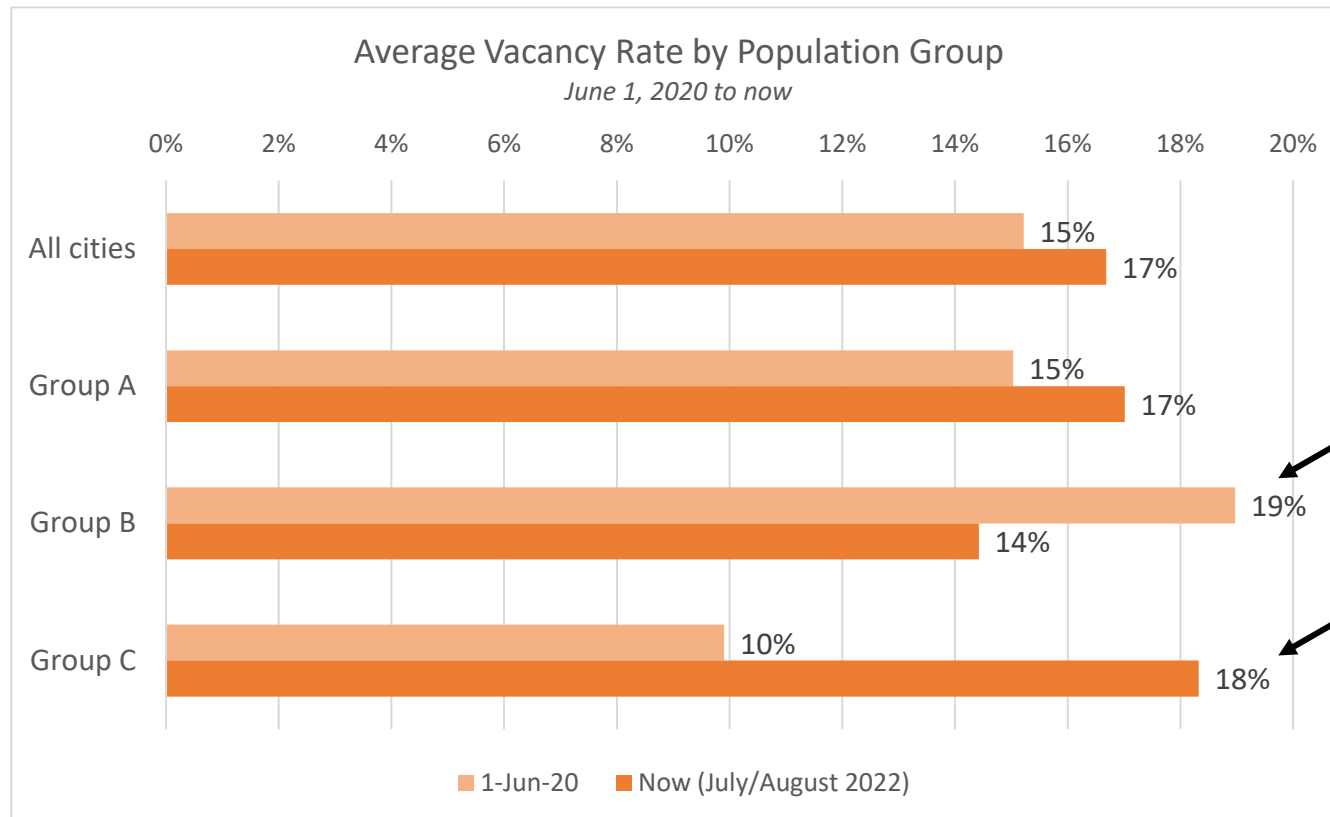
Homerville

The drop in turnover rate from 80% to 44% can be explained by fewer separations but mostly by the significant reduction in police force.

*Data is from the Sheriff's Office

Vacancy

The average vacancy rate of all cities increased slightly from **15%** to **17%** between June 1, 2020 and now. Large cities in particular saw a high rise in vacancy rates. Mid-sized cities actually saw a decrease in vacancy rates since June 1, 2020.

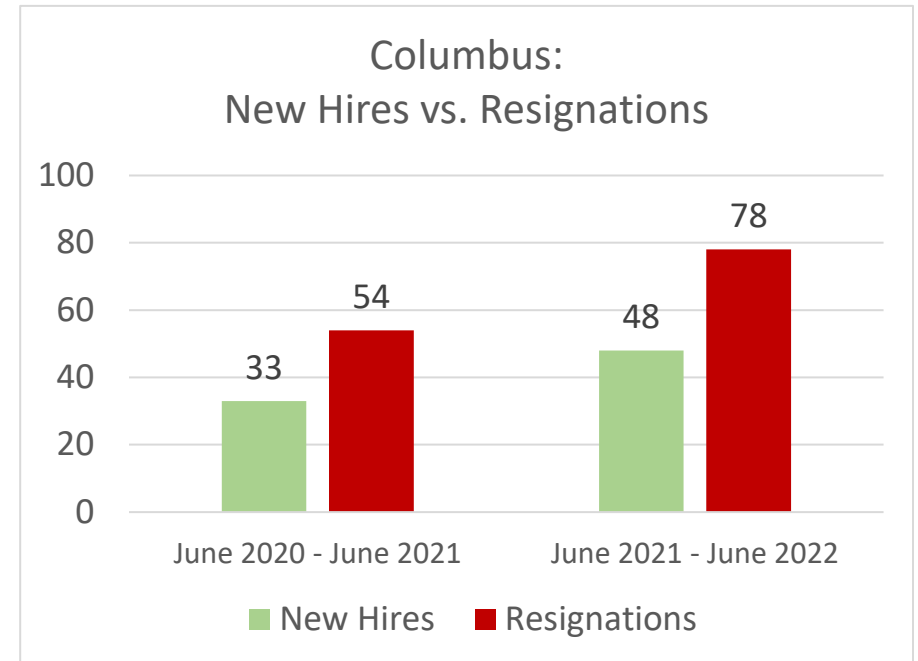


Over **two-thirds** of cities said it takes longer than 2 months to fill a vacancy.

Vacancy

As with turnover, each city's situation is unique. For example:

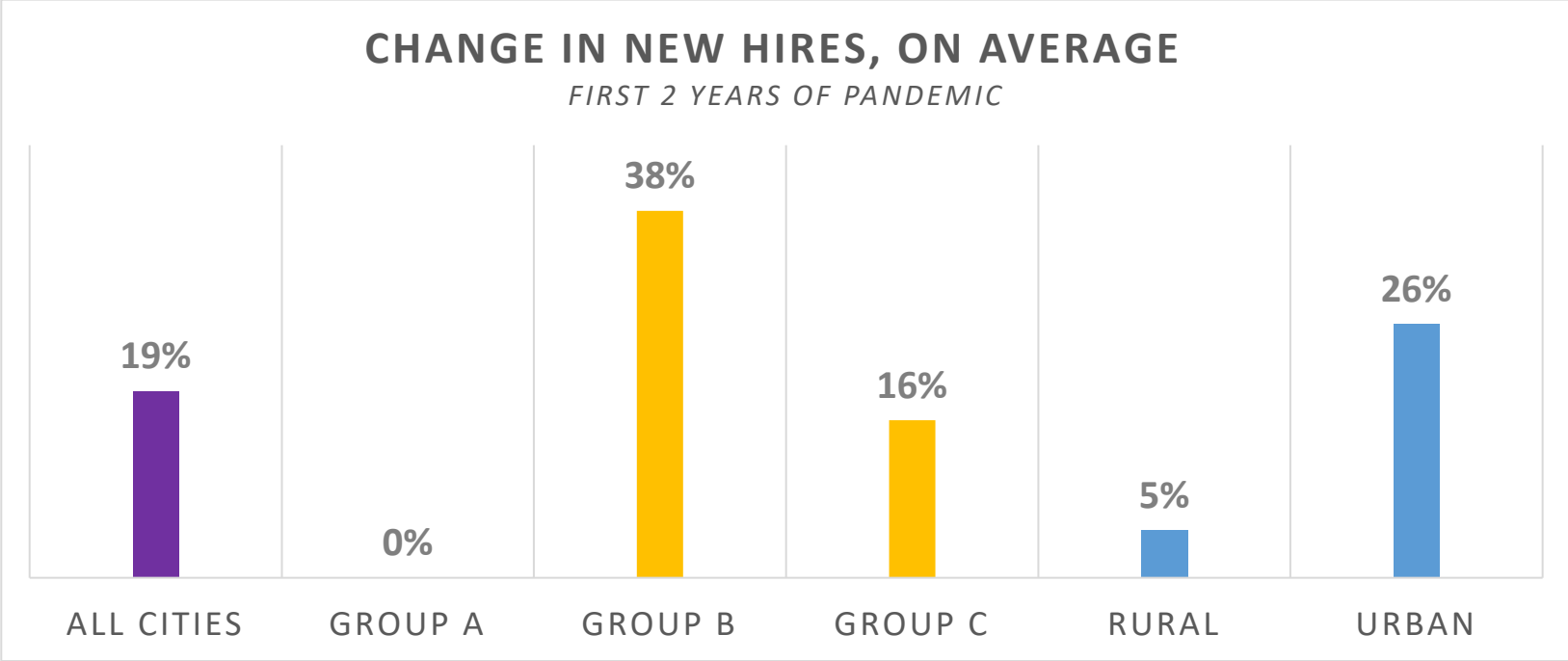
- In Columbus, the vacancy rate increased from **11%** to **29%**. This may be due to the number of resignations exceeding the number of new hires.
- In Auburn, the vacancy rate dropped from **25%** to **10%**, but due to several voluntary resignations, the City had to hire more officers to fill new and pre-existing gaps in their police force of 20.



“Being in close proximity to two large county law enforcement agencies, hiring is a challenge.” - Auburn

New Hires

The average number of new hires in all cities increased by **19%** over the first 2 years of the pandemic. Small rural cities have not increased new hires as much as mid-sized, large and urban cities.



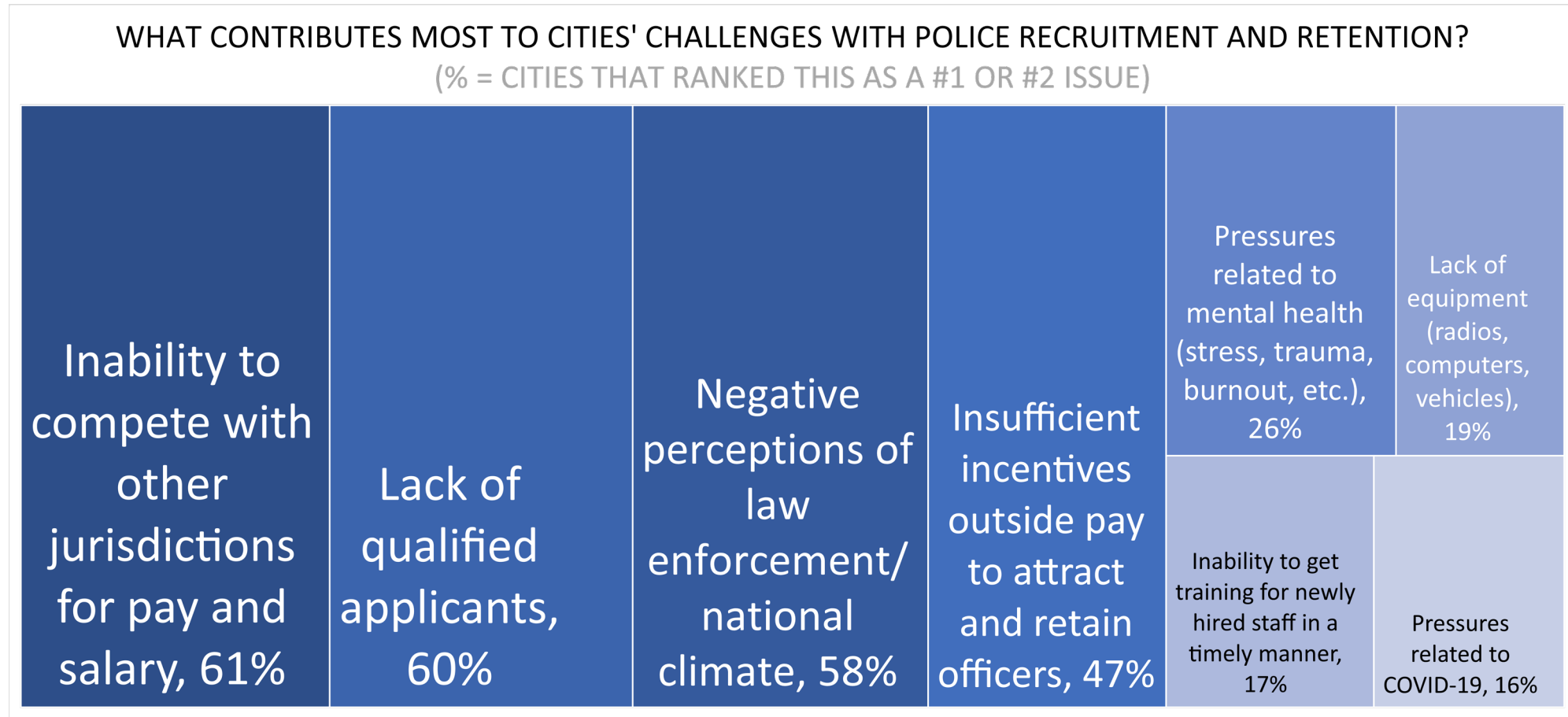
One question we might ask...

Why has the average vacancy rate (10% → 18%) among large cities increased even while they are hiring more?

	Average Number of New Hires					
June 1, 2020 – June 1, 2021	5.7	2.7	6.6	15.5	3.4	8.0
June 1, 2021 – June 1, 2022*	6.8	2.7	9.1	18.0	3.5	10.1

*Excluding Macon-Bibb County

Contributing Factors to Workforce Challenges

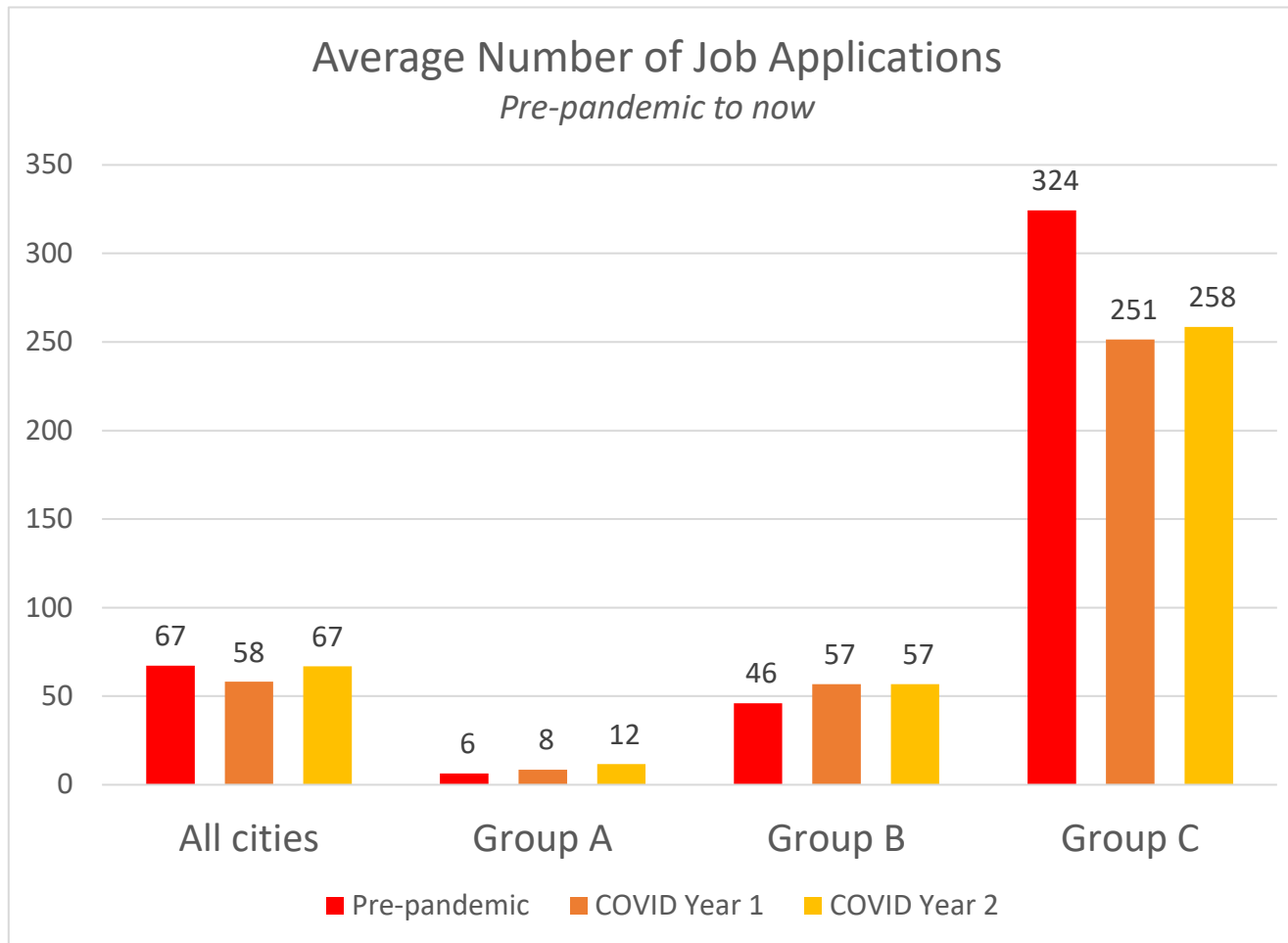


Contributing Factors to Workforce Challenges

WHAT CONTRIBUTES MOST TO CITIES' CHALLENGES WITH RECRUITMENT OF OTHER PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL LIKE FIREFIGHTERS AND EMS?
 (% = CITIES THAT RANKED THIS AS A #1 OR #2 ISSUE)

<p>Inability to compete with other jurisdictions for pay and salary, 69%</p>	<p>Lack of qualified applicants, 65%</p>	<p>Insufficient incentives outside pay to attract and retain officers, 49%</p>	<p>Pressures related to mental health (stress, trauma, burnout, etc.), 30%</p>	<p>Lack of equipment (radios, computers, vehicles), 23%</p>
			<p>Pressures related to COVID-19, 23%</p>	<p>Inability to get training for newly hired staff in a timely manner, 17%</p>

Contributing Factors to Workforce Challenges



The number of job applications, on average, fell by **13%** in the 1st year of COVID but climbed back up in the 2nd year.

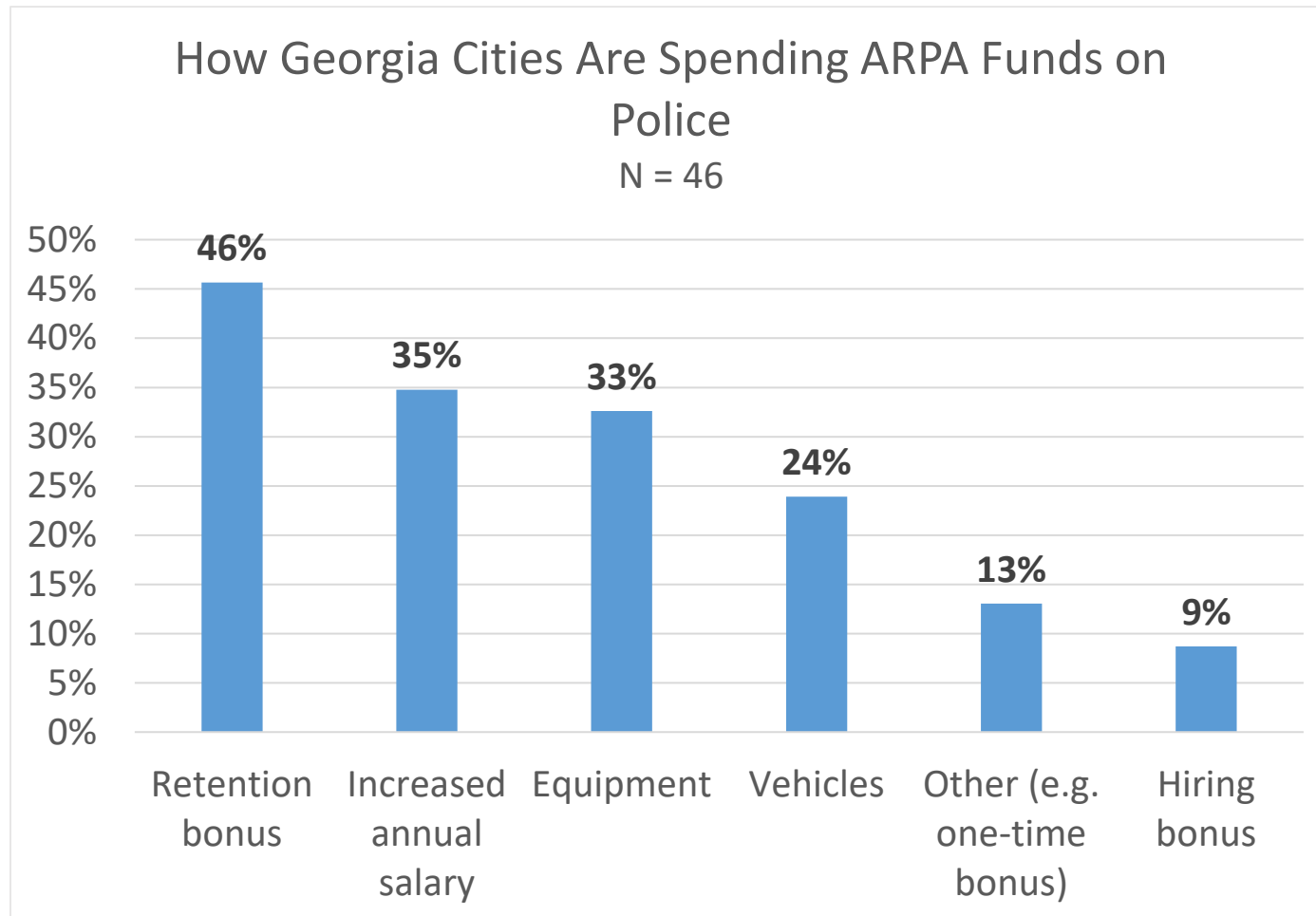
Small and mid-sized cities have seen an increase in job applications, on average, while large cities have seen a drop and not much recovery since the 1st year of COVID.

Contributing Factors to Workforce Challenges

- Regardless of city size, public safety makes up a significant percentage of the budget

	Public Safety Share of Total Government Expenditures, on average
All cities	33%
Group A (< 10,000)	32%
Group B (10,000-24,999)	40%
Group C (25,000+)	38%

How are cities responding to workforce challenges?



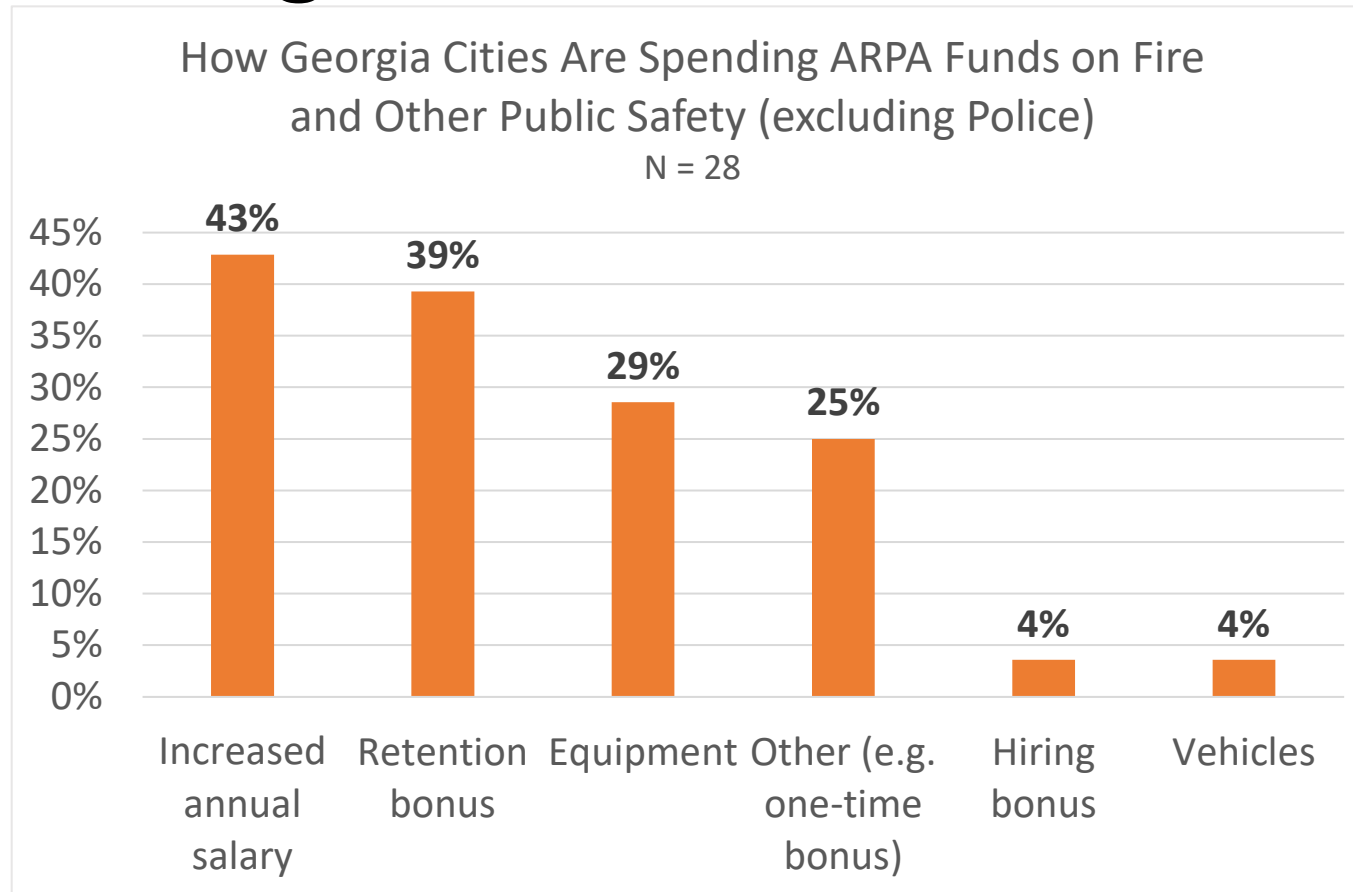
46 cities (**42%**) indicated that they are spending or proposing to spend their local ARPA funds on police.

Most common expenses:

- Retention bonuses
- Salary increases
- Equipment

“Currently considering funding of a wellness room, co-responder program and evidence room reconfiguration.” - Marietta

How are cities responding to workforce challenges?



28 cities (**25%**) indicated that they are spending or proposing to spend their local ARPA funds on fire and other public safety, excluding police.

Most common expenses:

- Salary increases
- Retention bonuses

How are cities responding to workforce challenges?

- Reducing retirement benefits
 - Some GMA program enrollees have taken this step or are considering it
 - Our retirement team is urging city officials to remember retirement is an investment in your community
 - An appropriate level of retirement benefit helps the community from an economic standpoint if the employee stays in the area, spends money, keeps children in school system
 - DB plans are a strength cities have that many employers don't offer – DB is a great tool for retention

What some cities are experiencing

“Recruitment of fire/ems personnel in the Metro-Atlanta area is **extremely competitive**. Smaller jurisdictions cannot compete in terms of pay, benefits and career advancement.” – Palmetto

“All agencies are trying to attract applicants and due to the lack of quality applicants **it has become more about how you can recruit from other agencies**” – Perry

“It is very **difficult to get "buy in"** to this occupation of sacrifice. You can make more money in the private sector without the risk and/or sacrifice.” – Cartersville

“We are constantly seeking ways to invest in our officers so that they **feel valued and will want to continue with our agency**. We are currently assessing the agency's pay tables to enable us to remain competitive in our area.” – Cleveland

“Our city council just recently in the last 30 days voted to **increase our entry level salaries** to be very competitive for agencies our size in our area and approved **\$500 housing stipend** if live in the city limits and will pay relocation expenses to a limit.” – Winder

Resources

Gun Violence Archive

<https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/congress/ga>

FBI Crime Data Explorer

<https://crime-data-explorer.app.cloud.gov/pages/explorer/crime/crime-trend>

Crime data visualizations (AH Datalytics)

<https://www.ahdatalytics.com/dashboards/ytd-murder-comparison/>

Council on Criminal Justice “Pandemic, Social Unrest, and Crime in U.S. Cities: Mid-Year 2022 Update”

<https://counciloncj.org/mid-year-2022-crime-trends/>

Neighborhood Nexus articles, blogs, and data dashboards

<https://33n.atlantaregional.com/monday-mapday/crime-rates-in-the-city-of-atlanta-a-deeper-spatial-dive>

Breakout Discussion Suggested Questions

- How would you characterize the crime situation in your city?
- What do you consider to be the biggest crime challenge facing your city?
- What is the prevailing narrative around violence in your community and how are you working to change it, if it's not accurate?
- Share a strategy you've implemented to tackle violence in your community. Which strategies are working and which aren't?
- How have you used municipal agencies outside of police effectively to address violence? What role do you see for other parts of local government – housing departments/agencies, code enforcement, off-duty police, schools, etc. – in ensuring public safety and preventing violence?
- What percentage is police/ public safety of your city's GF budget? Has your Police departments budget increased or decreased in the past 2 years?
- Describe efforts to recruit and retain officers in your city.

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