



DEPARTMENT OF
CRIMINOLOGY AND
CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Unpacking Crime Trends: Conceptual Frameworks, Lessons Learned and Neighborhood Level Patterns

Prepared for: Crime Rates during the Pandemic: A Workshop

By

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Annual Review of Criminology

Bringing Crime Trends Back
into Criminology: A Critical
Assessment of the Literature
and a Blueprint for Future
Inquiry

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Conceptual framework

1. Changes in Social Controls
 - a. Increases in social controls or constraints
 - i. Examples: growth in immigration or imprisonment



Conceptual framework

2. Changes in criminal propensities and motivations

- a. Changes in the capacity for self-control (i.e., impulsivity and sensation seeking)
- b. Changes in motivation
 - i. Examples: increased economic opportunities or aging population



Conceptual framework

3. Changes in criminogenic settings and situations

a. Changes in social and physical settings

i. Stabilization of illicit and secondary markets or reduction in substance use



Lessons learned

1. The importance of offense type
 - a. Particularly important to separate property from violent crimes and if possible disaggregate among violent and property crimes
2. Patterns often depend upon data source
 - a. Example of rape and aggravated assault trends
3. Demographic patterning of trends
 - a. Age is particularly important
 - i. sex and race shape magnitude



Lessons learned

4. Important subnational heterogeneity

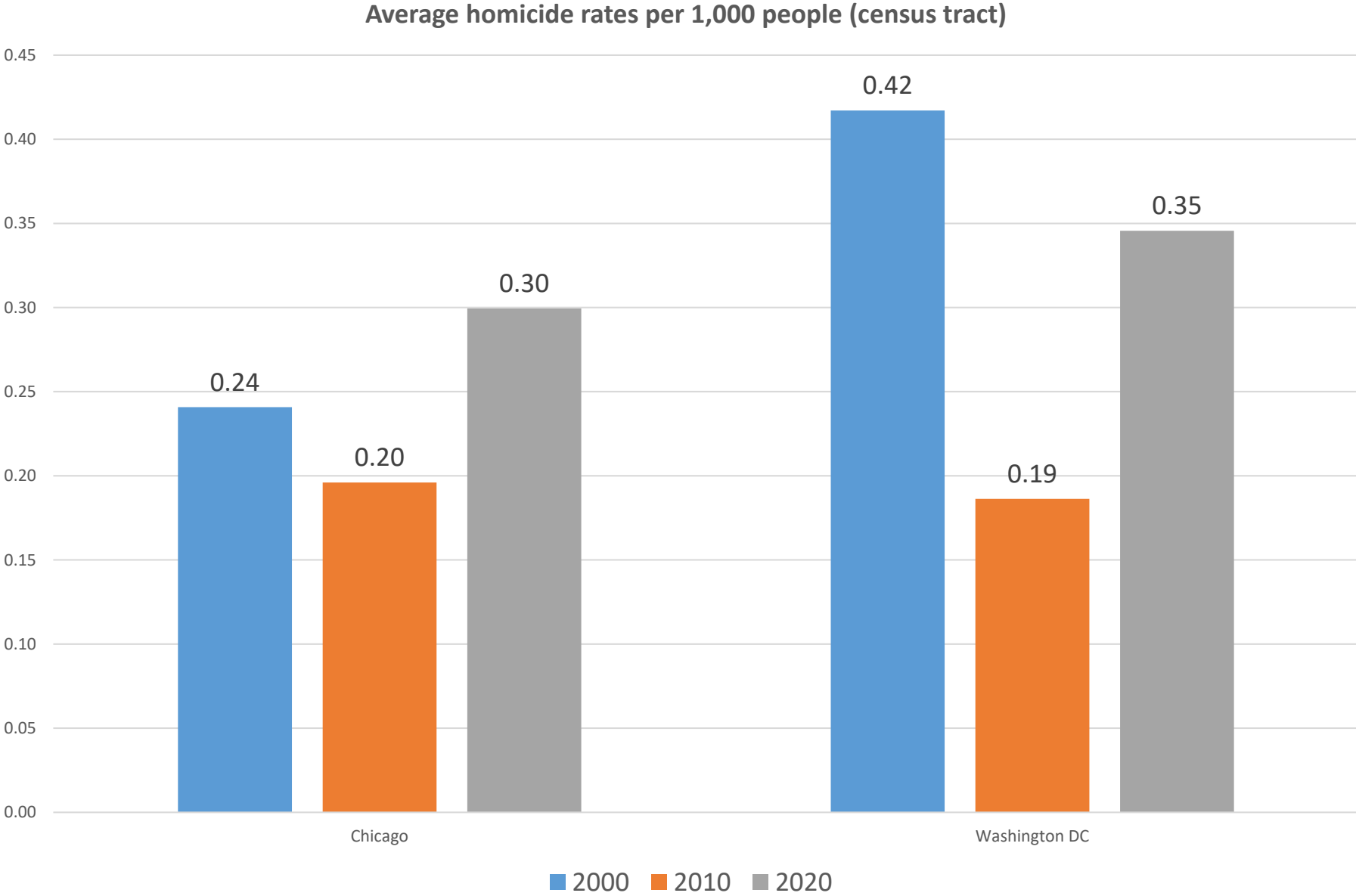
- a. Thinking about cities, how do they map onto national trends?
- b. How is the crime drop experienced at the neighborhood level?

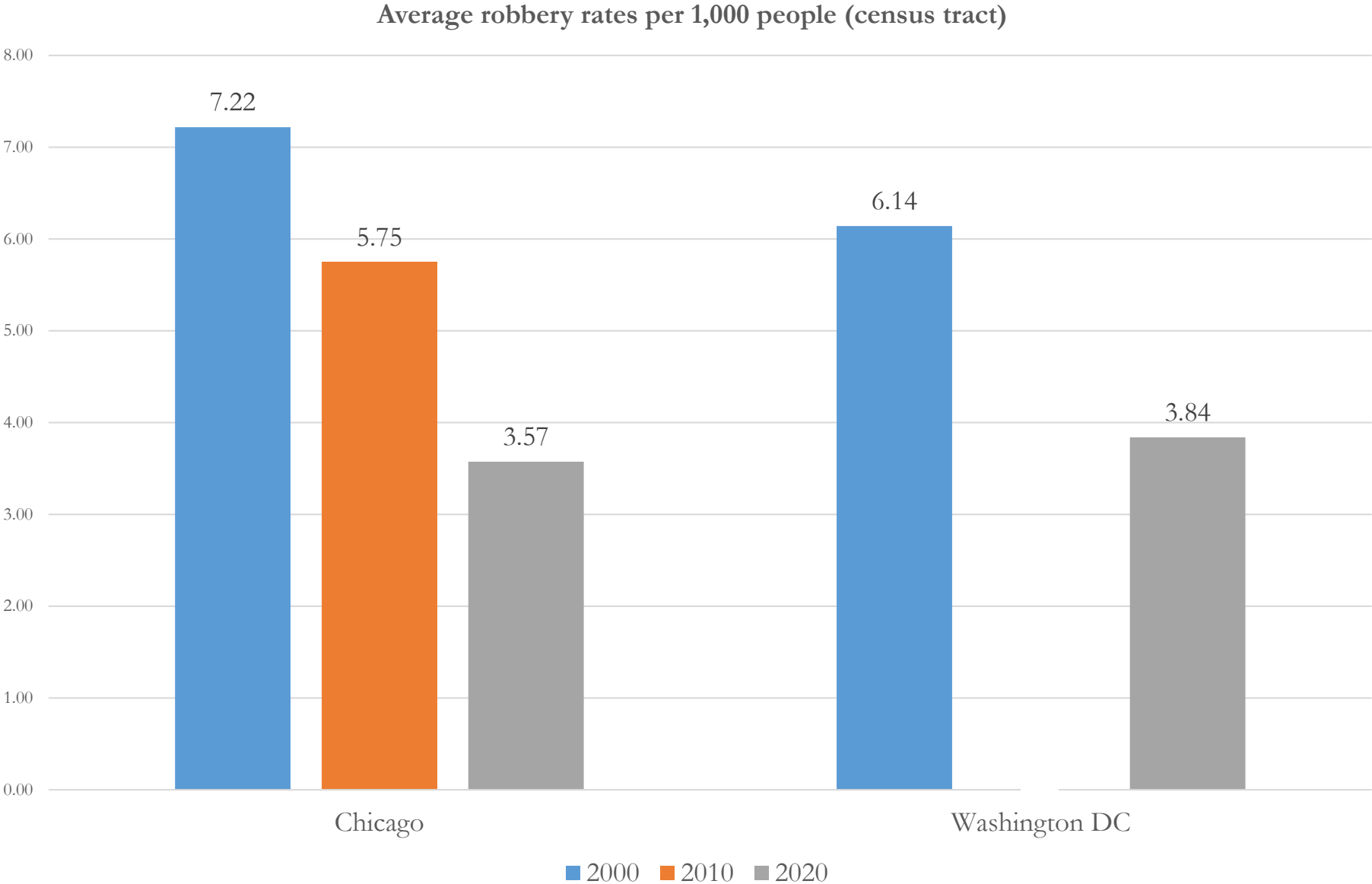


Drilling down to the Neighborhood Level

The cases of Chicago and Washington DC from 1999-01 to 2010-2013 to 2018-2021

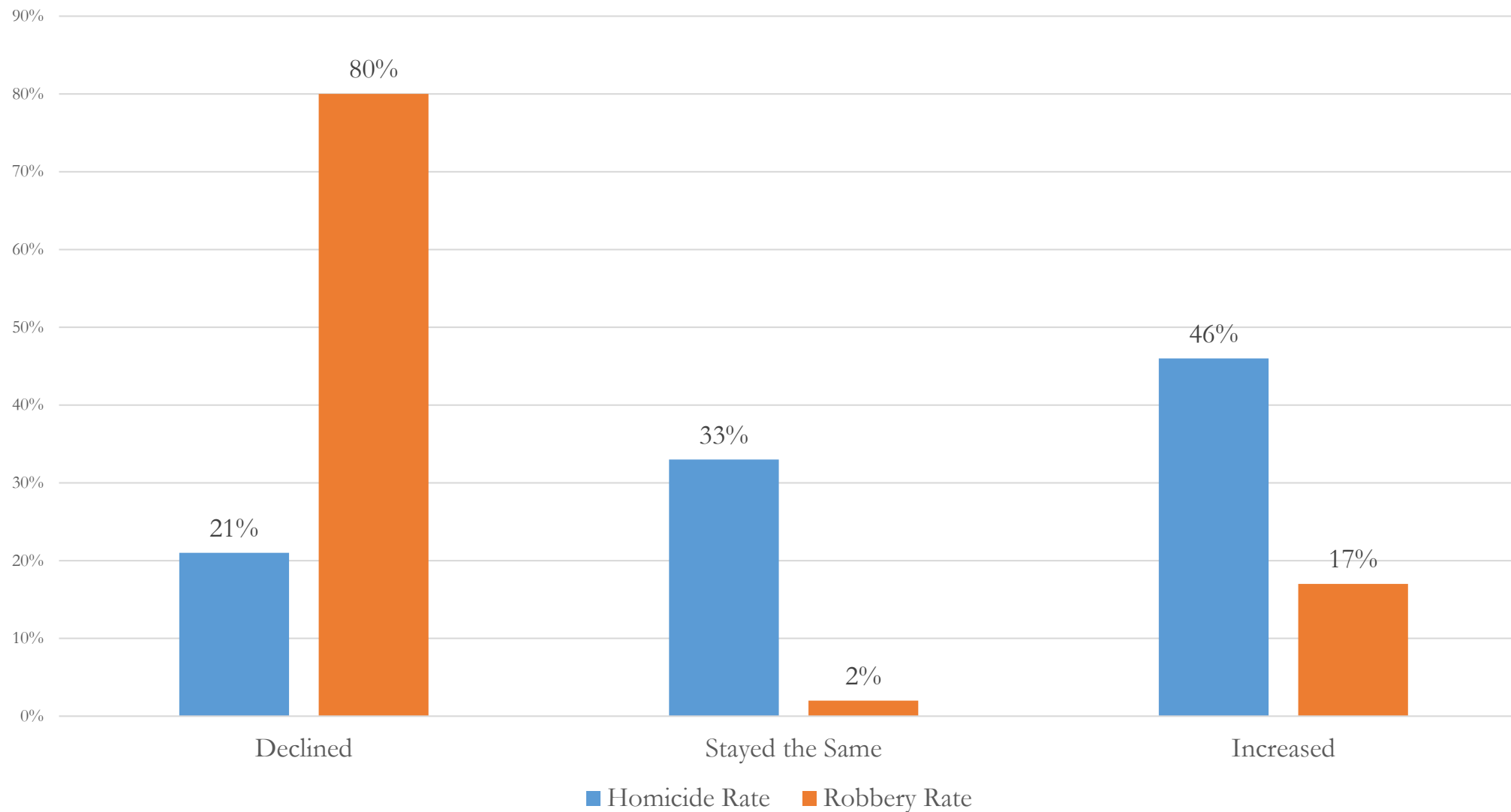
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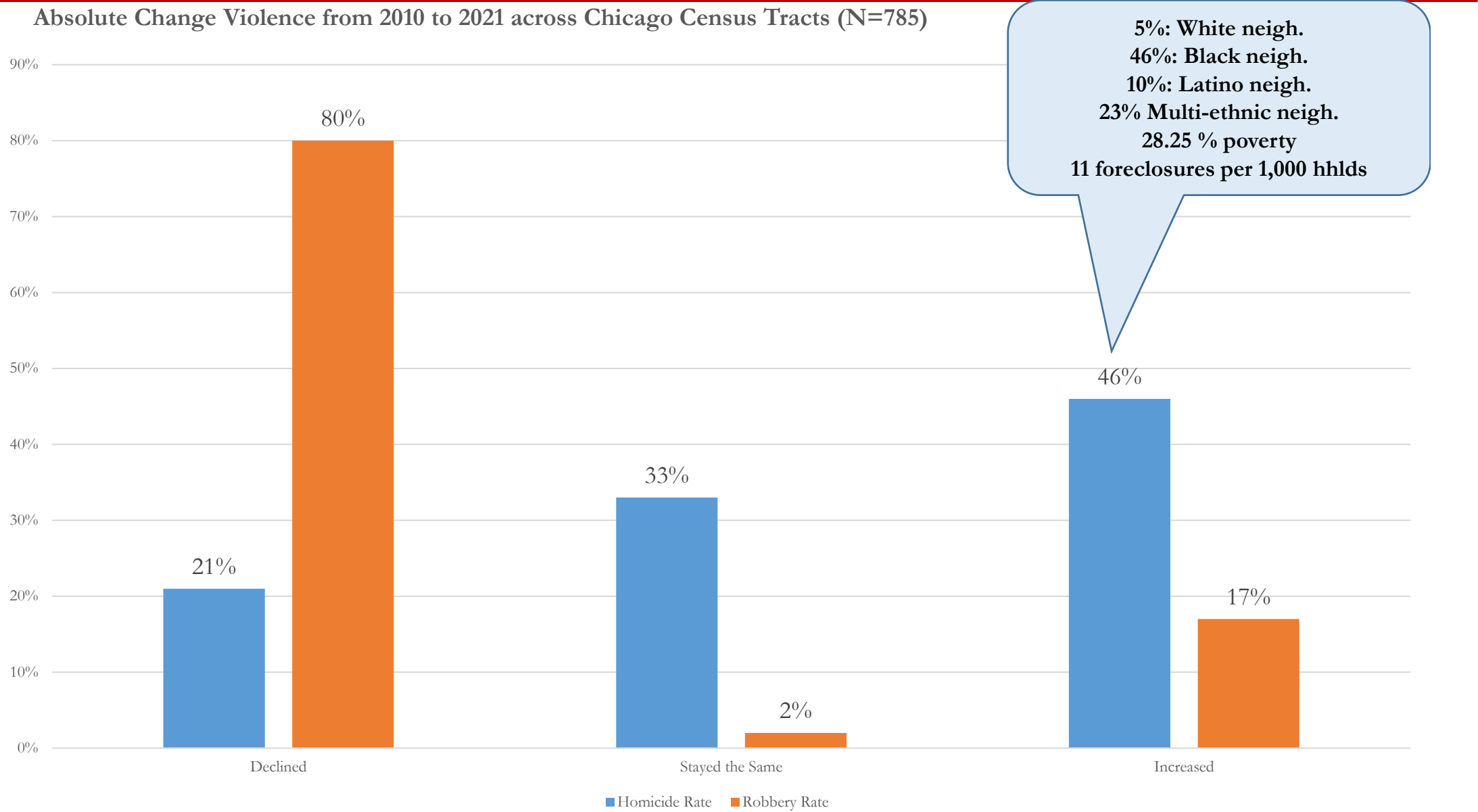






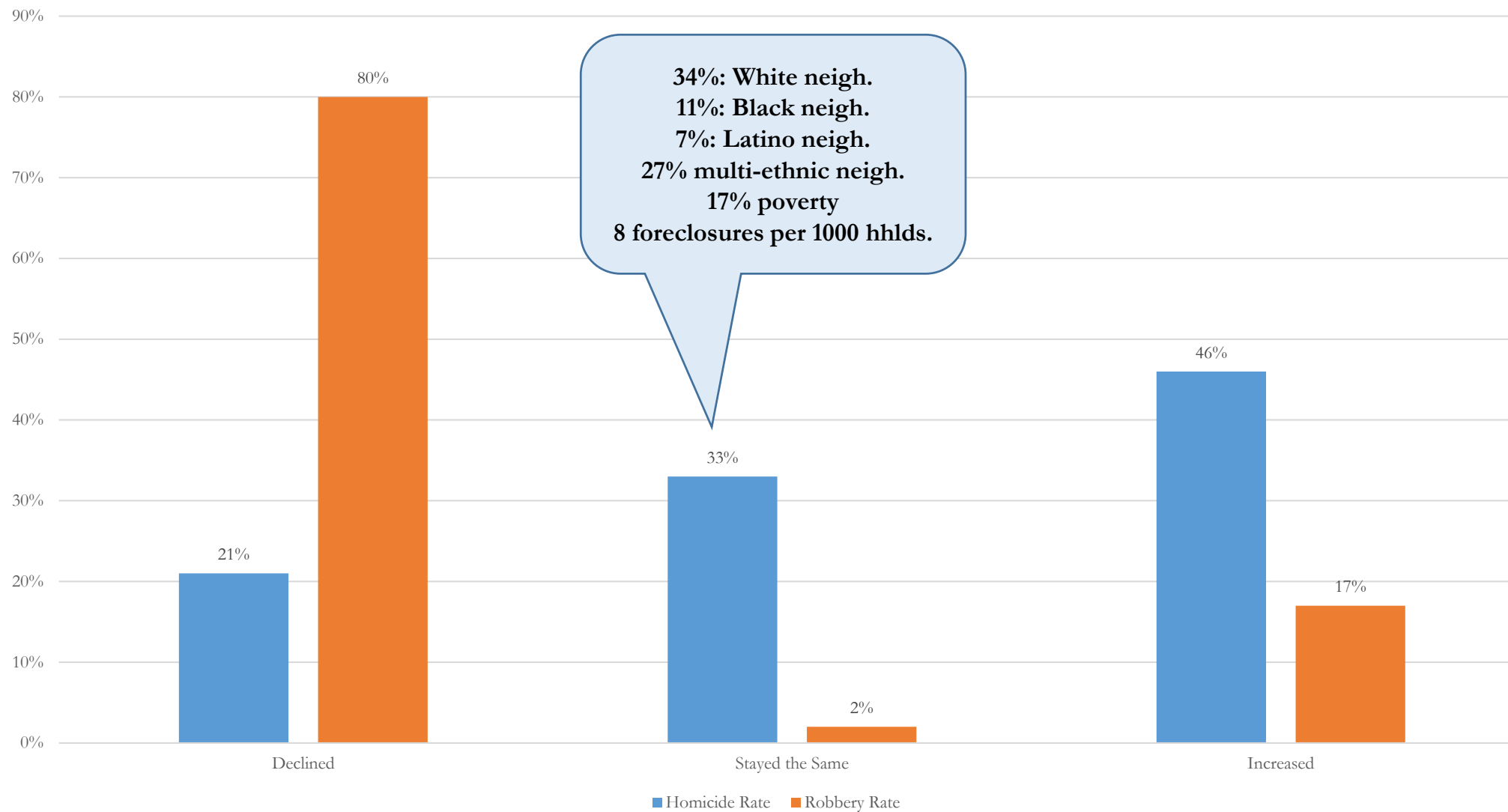
Absolute Change in the Homicide or Robbery Rate from 2010 to 2021 across Chicago Census Tracts
(N=785)





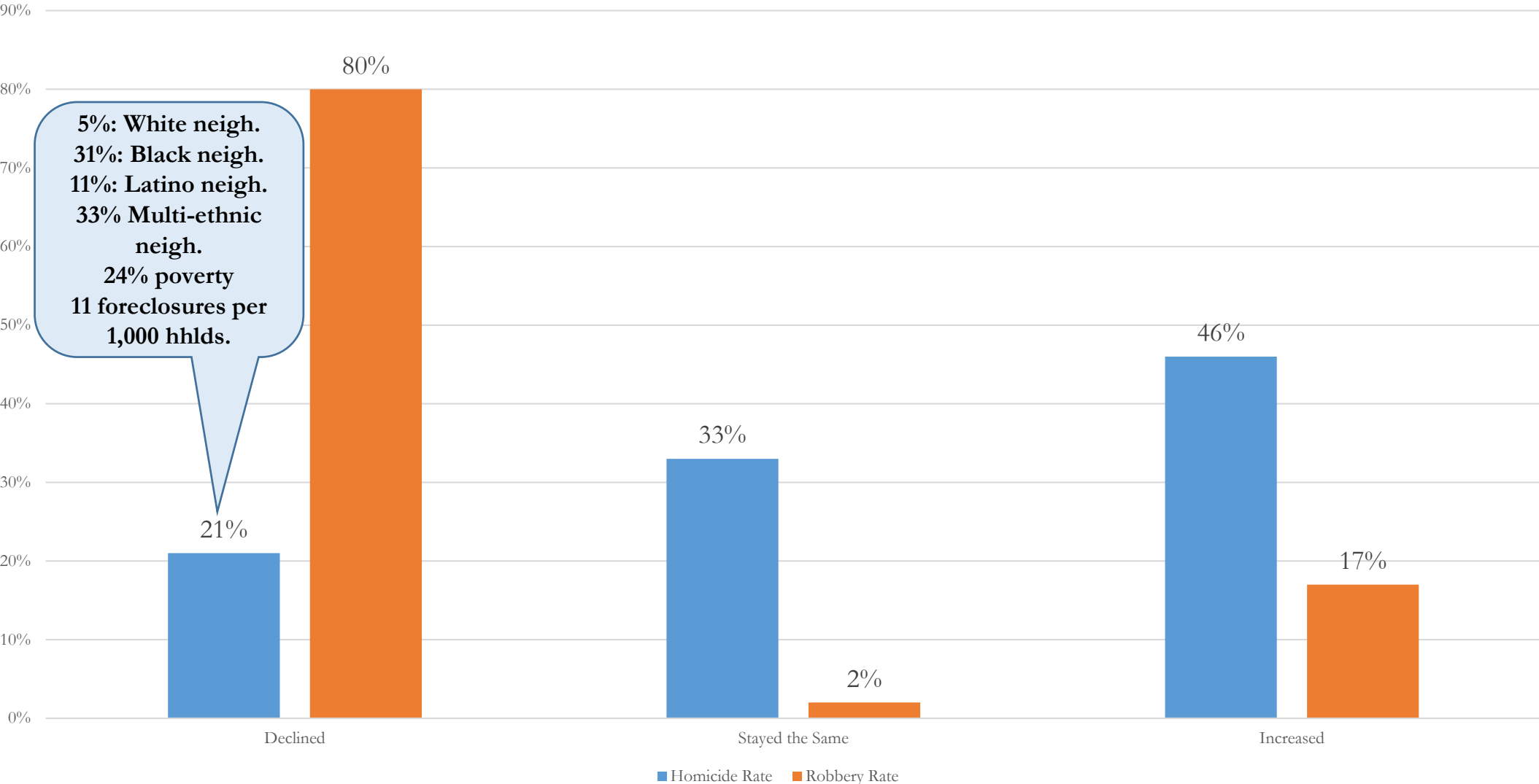


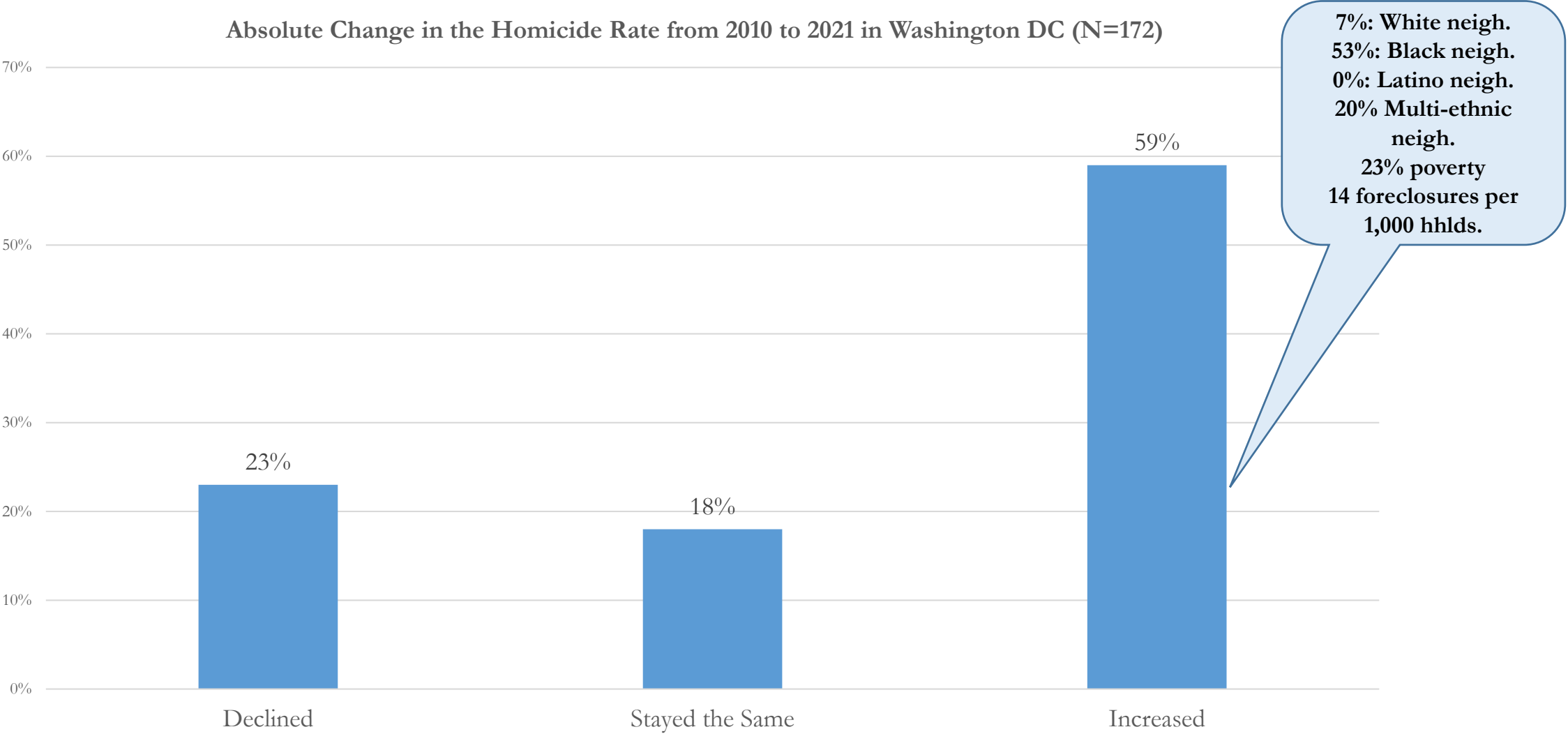
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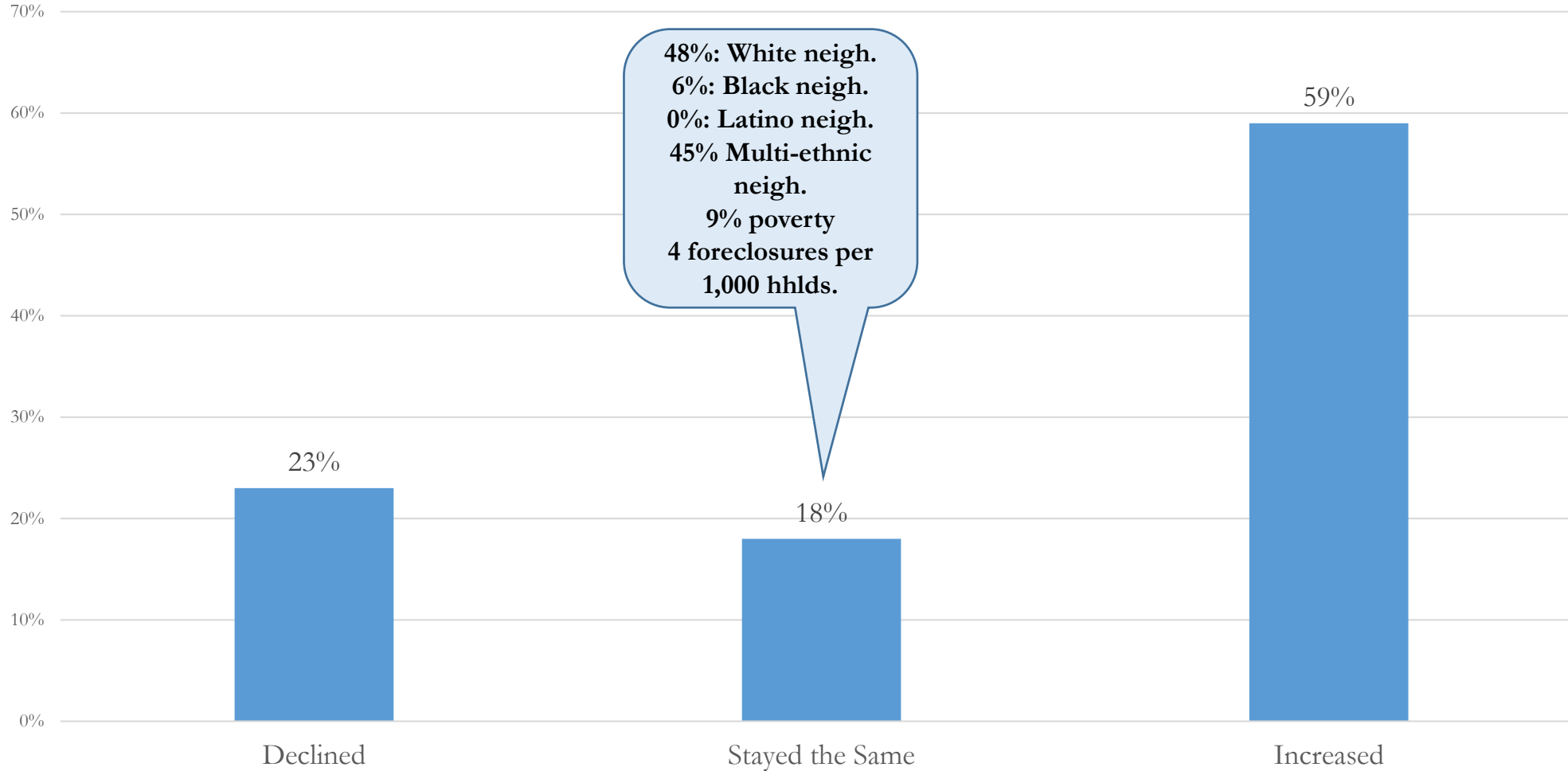
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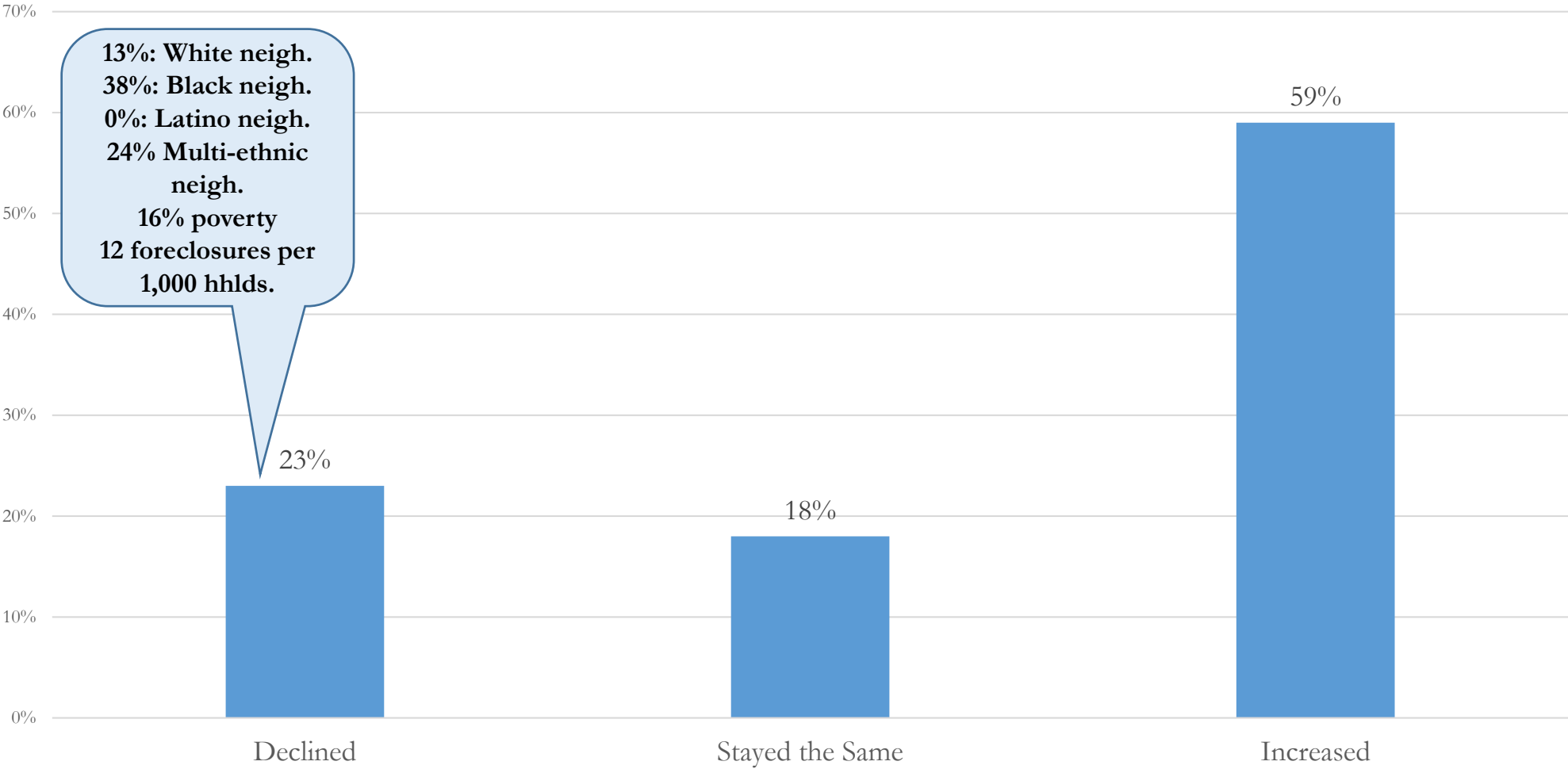


Absolute Change in the Homicide Rate from 2010 to 2021 in Washington DC (N=172)





Absolute Change in the Homicide Rate from 2010 to 2021 in Washington DC (N=172)





Moving forward

- Comprehensive understanding of crime trends requires
 - Conceptual frameworks that are tied to theories of crime and social control
 - An enhanced, targeted and coordinated data infrastructure that includes
 - Ongoing survey data collection on offending that can be connected to neighborhood context to capture demographic, socioeconomic and policing conditions
 - Annual data on crime legal system responses for above neighborhoods
 - Qualitative data collection for the above neighborhoods to understand on the ground dynamics related to crime changes



Moving forward

- While there have been many crime drops, some places and some crime types have dropped little or had an increase
 - Important subnational heterogeneity
- Understanding how crime changes in our society is pressing as it exacts a toll on individuals and their communities, especially those that are racially marginalized
 - “the long reach of violence” Sharkey (2018)



Thank you!



Supplemental slides



Summary Patterns for Homicide Trajectories

Pattern	Trajectories	Percentage of Tracts
<i>Low Declining</i>	3 groups of neighborhoods with the lowest homicide rates that steadily decreased	83.90
<i>Moderate Stable</i>	1 group of neighborhoods with moderate homicide rates that remained unchanged	11.00
<i>High Increasing</i>	1 group of neighborhoods with much higher homicide rates that steadily increased	5.10



Summary Patterns for Burglary Trajectories

Pattern	Trajectories	Percentage of Tracts
<i>Low Declining</i>	2 groups of neighborhoods with the lowest burglary rates that steadily decreased	8.84
<i>Moderate Slightly Declining</i>	3 groups of neighborhoods with moderate burglary rates that decreased slightly	44.6
<i>High Declining</i>	3 groups of neighborhoods with initially high burglary rates that decreased sharply	16.23
<i>High Increasing</i>	4 groups of neighborhoods with initially high burglary rates that increased steadily	30.34



Data: National Neighborhood Crime Study 2

- Collecting Data from 92 Cities for NNCS2
- 18 Cities Provided Yearly Data for 1999-2013
- Sample contains 2,693 tracts

Cities in Sample		
Alexandria, VA	Dayton, OH	Portland, OR
Austin, TX	Fort Worth, TX	San Diego, CA
Carrolton, TX	Kansas City, MO	Simi Valley, CA
Chicago, IL	Long Beach, CA	St. Louis, MO
Cleveland, OH	Madison, WI	St. Petersburg, FL
Dallas, TX	Overland Park, KS	Worcester, MA

Table 1 Implied causal mechanisms for factors highlighted as explanations of the contemporary crime decline

Factor/variable emphasized in crime trends literature	General causal mechanisms		
	Increases in social control	Reduction in criminal propensity/motivation for crime	Reduction in crime from criminogenic settings
Growth in immigration ^a	yes	no	no
Increased community cohesion and stronger social institutions ^b	yes	no	no
Increased government trust ^b	yes	yes	no
Growth in police forces ^c	yes	no	yes
Enhanced policing strategies ^c	yes	yes	yes
Enhanced security measures ^d	yes	yes	yes
Increase in imprisonment ^c	yes	yes	no
Aging population ^c	yes	yes	no
Growth in economic opportunities and performance ^e	yes	yes	yes
Legalization of abortion ^c	no	yes	no
Reduction in lead exposure ^f	no	yes	no
Stabilization of illicit and secondary markets ^{c, e}	no	yes	yes
Reduction in substance use (e.g., crack cocaine and alcohol) ^g	no	yes	yes
Increased time spent in the home and away from public spaces ^{d, g}	no	yes	yes

^aSee, e.g., Sampson (2008), Stowell et al. (2009), and Ousey & Kubrin (2009).

^bSee LaFree (1998, 1999) and Roth (2010).

^cFor a summary of the arguments, see Blumstein & Wallman (2006), Zimring (2007), and Goldberger & Rosenfeld (2008).

^dSee Farrell et al. (2014).

^eFor thorough reviews, see Rosenfeld & Fornango (2007) and Rosenfeld (2009).

^fSee Nevin (2007) and Reyes (2007).

^gSee Farrell et al. (2014).



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burglary

