

Introduction

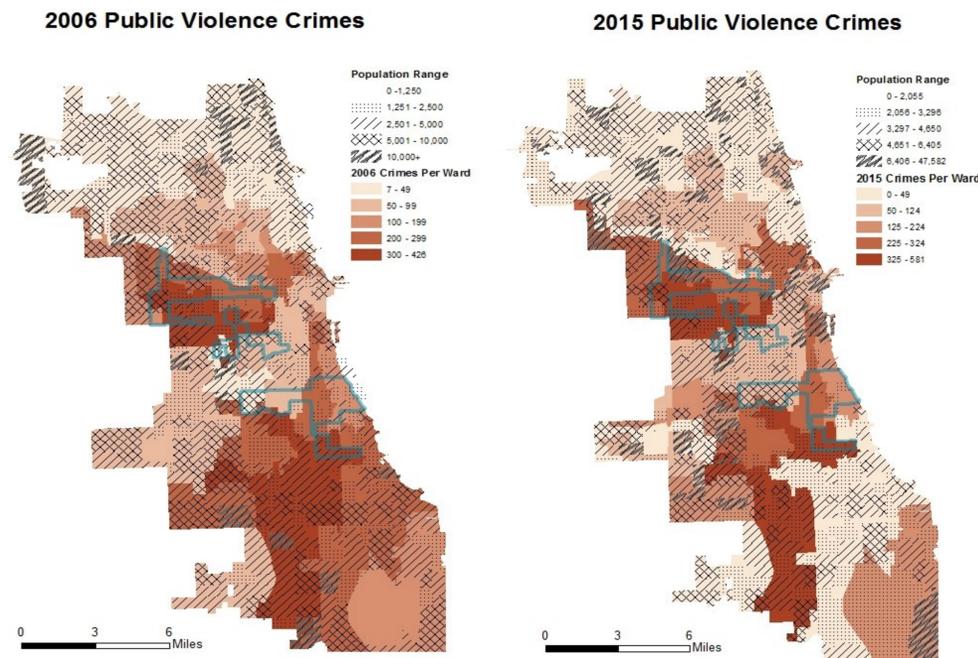
In 1996, the City of Chicago initiated an Empowerment Zone Program (EZ) initiative within the city's most disenfranchised and violent neighborhoods. The Program was designed to create jobs and "empower" six of America's most impoverished urban and rural areas. Three "clusters" were selected to comprise the zone. They include 14 square miles of Chicago's South Side and West/Lower-West Sides.

The EZ Coordinating Council primarily sought to implement long-term improvements in the zone, primarily to reduce crime by improving neighborhood infrastructure, education, health and human services, and employment for community members. By 2000, the City of Chicago had spent \$27 million on the EZ Program.

In the current climate of Chicago's gun violence epidemic and nationwide attention to police brutality, I sought to assess the success of programs that circumvent the role of the Chicago Police Department. The history of segregation in Chicago is profound, and in 2016 Chicago ranks as America's third most segregated city. Crime-reduction strategies that focus on community-building and neighborhood infrastructure, rather than heavy-handed policing are of immediate importance.

Thus I wanted to assess whether the Empowerment Zone Program appeared a viable strategy to model, based on its success of reducing crime. Relatively little information is available on the program since 2000, when an assessment of the impact on EZ business development deemed the results as of 2000 "disappointing" and that "there was much room for improvement" despite the average grade given by 1997 federal authorities. In the report, the effect on crime as not discussed. In short, I intend to examine the change in crime within empowerment zones, despite population shifts, and in the context of violence and population shifts city-wide.

Citywide Change in Crime & Population: 2006 to 2015



Results

Ultimately, my primary maps of the Empowerment Zones demonstrate that the Empowerment Zones have not made the positive, long-term impact on crime and security. Not only has public violence crime increased in some wards, but wards that have seen a decrease in population have also seen an increase in public violence crimes. However, some wards demonstrate a decrease in crime. Of the wards that saw a decrease, three also had decreasing populations, and one cluster of three wards became a single ward by 2014, thus affecting population.

The majority of wards included in the Empowerment Zones saw very little shift in crime despite both increases and decreases in population. The 2006 and 2015 Public Violence Crime maps demonstrate that public violence crime neither uniformly increased nor decreased. In the North, South and Southwest Sides, public violence crime largely decreased, and in some wards did so despite increases in population. However, these maps make apparent that public violence crimes in the Empowerment Zones were either stagnant or increased, unlike many of their surrounding neighborhoods. Ultimately, the final map illustrates that in the majority of areas within the Empowerment Zone where population decreased between 2000 and 2014, crime increased between 2006 and 2015.

Methods

Population Data for 2010 and 2014 were drawn from the US Census Bureau, Total Population by Census Tracts for Cook County. Chicago was isolated from other Census Tracts. Population Data for 2000 was drawn from the City of Chicago, as a replication of the Distribution of Residents Across the City (as of the 2000 Census) Map. The crime data was drawn from the City of Chicago Data Portal, Crime Data 2001 to Present. Filters were applied so as to separate the years 2006 and 2015, and then to isolate Public Violence Crimes only, those most associated with Public Safety and gun violence. The Empowerment Zone shapefile was drawn from the City of Chicago Data Portal.

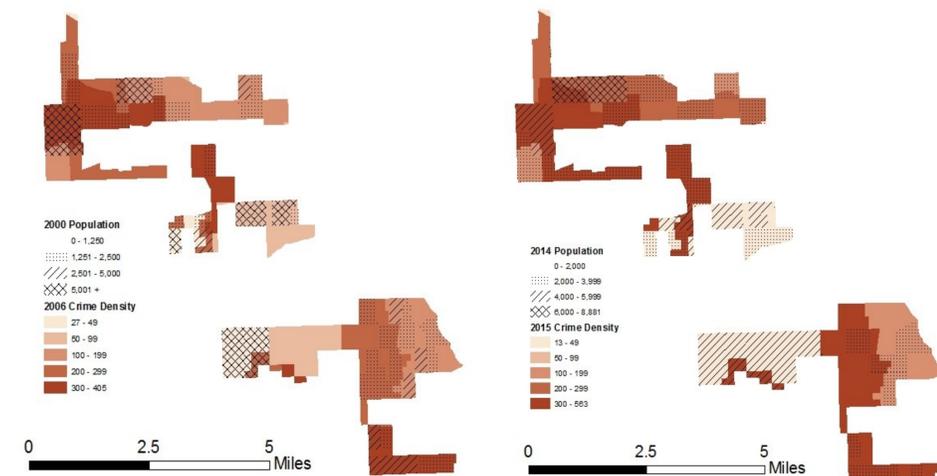
The population data for 2000 was added to a shapefile of Chicago including Census Tracts from the City of Chicago Data Portal. The population data for 2010 was drawn to a TIGER file for Cook County in 2010, and for 2014 to a TIGER file for 2014, both from the US Census Bureau. The Empowerment Zone Shapefile was added to the three resulting

In two new maps, the 2006 and 2015 Crime Data was joined spatially to City of Chicago by Ward maps drawn from the City of Chicago Data Portal. The Population maps for 2000 and 2014 were added to the 2006 and 2015 maps, respectively, and overlain so as to create a representation of citywide changes in population by census tract versus changes in crime by ward. Next, the maps were clipped for empowerment zones. Finally, areas for which crime, and then separately population, had increased, stayed the same, or decreased, between 2006 and 2015 were assigned values. The map highlights those areas in which population decreased over change in population.

Empowerment Zone 2015: Where did Crime Increase Despite Population Decrease Over the Past Decade?



Change in Crime & Population within Empowerment Zones:



Conclusions and Limitations

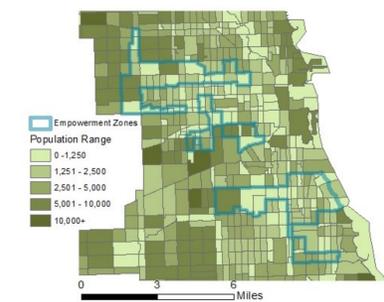
The Empowerment Zone Program has not achieved its aim of long-term reduction in crime and improvement in public safety. That the wards of Chicago allocated as part of the crime-reducing, neighborhood infrastructure-improving program was not only the exception, but the antithesis to a city-wide reduction in crime (excluding gun violence) is evidence of an unsuccessful program. The role of moderate increases in population within the EZ wards are negated by the population decreases in other wards that also saw increasing crime. Thus the increase in crime with the Empowerment Zones cannot be attributed exclusively to increasing population.

However, these results could have been impacted by several factors. First, the inadequacy of several years-worth of data from the City of Chicago Data Portal makes even the data I used suspect. Second, it is possible that the Empowerment Zones have a greater police presence, and as a result more crimes are recorded in those areas than others. Third, due to the data available, my representations of crime and population are not precisely in tandem. The population shown in census tracts and crime by number per ward, so the change in crime does not exactly represent the change in population on the most exact level. Finally, Chicago Wards and Census tracts shifted between 2000 and 2015, which may affect data.

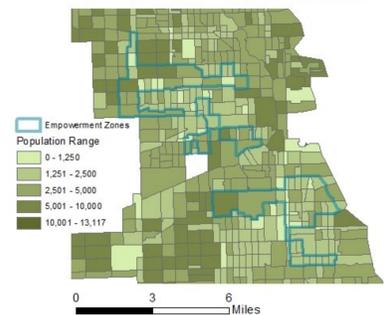
Sources

Spatial Reference: UTM Zone 16 Illinois East
Data Source: City of Chicago Data Portal
US Census Bureau

2000 Population & Empowerment Zone



2010 Population & Empowerment Zone



2014 Population & Empowerment Zone

