

CUOMO

for

MAYOR

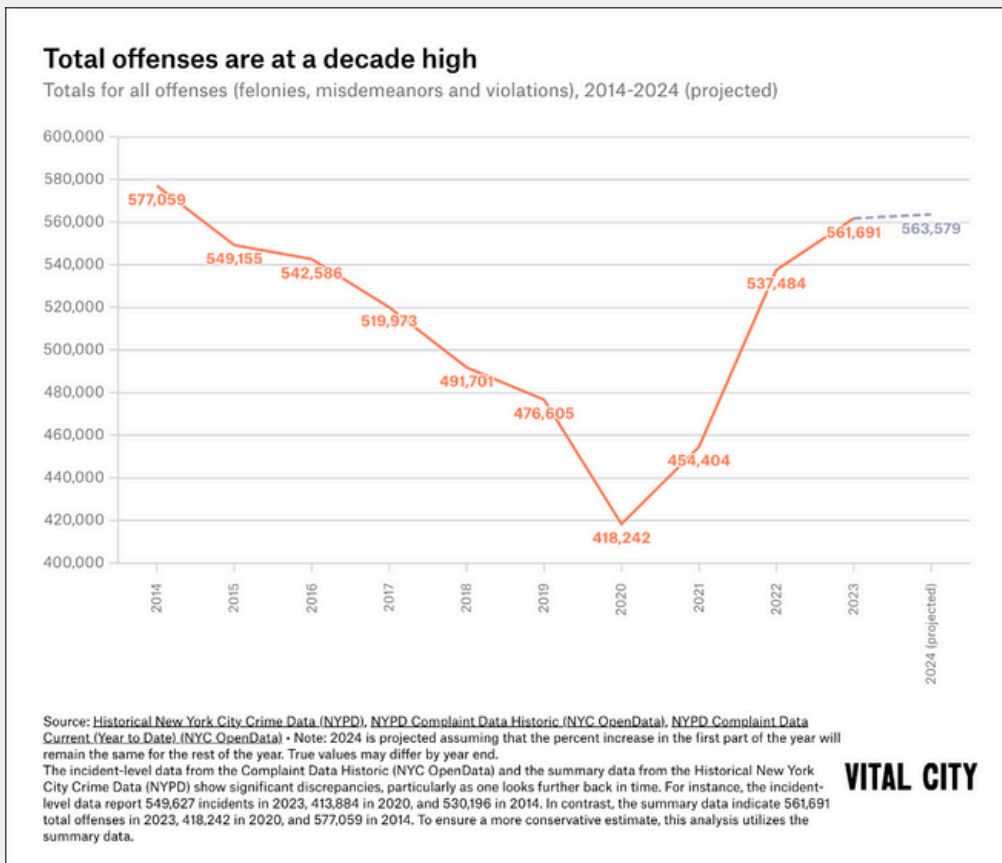
Public Safety

Introduction

Crime and disorder have increased significantly since the onset of the COVID pandemic. Restoring people’s confidence in the safety of their neighborhoods and civility in the subways and the streets is a precondition for achieving the progress the city must make in many other areas.

The city’s 2023 rates of violent crime (murders, rapes, felony assaults, and robberies), shootings, and property crime (burglary, grand larceny, and grand larceny of a motor vehicle) were all more than 20% higher than in 2019.[1] Although crime rates fell somewhat in 2024, they are still well above pre-pandemic levels.

Even more telling in terms of people’s loss of confidence in the sense of safety in the city is the alarming increase in total offenses, including felonies, misdemeanors, and violations, which were approximately 18% higher in 2023 than in 2019.



[1] <https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/articles/the-state-of-crime-in-new-york-city-at-midyear-2024>

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As noted by the editors of Vital City, a leading New York-based think tank on criminal justice matters:

“These high-volume offenses can shape New Yorkers’ perceptions of quality of life. They influence how safe people feel walking down their streets or riding the subway, how secure they consider their neighborhoods, and ultimately, how they perceive the city they call home. While significant focus understandably remains on the major crimes, it is these offenses that have a profound impact on the everyday experiences of residents.” [2]

The challenge is to not only push down homicides, shootings, and other violent crimes, but also to make visible progress on restoring the sense of order that, for most New Yorkers, is what it means to feel safe.

At the same time, reducing crime and disorder cannot mean returning to the days of Rudolph Giuliani or the practice of widespread Stop and Frisk, which even Mayor Bloomberg has acknowledged went too far.[3]

Instead, we need to balance toughness and discipline in policing with regaining the trust of communities by treating them with respect and ensuring the civil rights of our citizens. One of the most important factors in the increase in crime and growing disorder on our streets is the decline in the size of the police force. The NYPD has experienced an unprecedented level of attrition in the police force, with roughly 10% of the NYPD retiring or quitting the force in 2024. Despite this level of attrition, Police Academy classes in 2024 were initially canceled before being partially restored.[4] The net result is that the size of the police force today is smaller than it was three decades ago, even though the city is larger and the NYPD is responsible for more functions than it was then.[5]

To make matters worse, the number of police officers in the precincts doing actual policing has been eroded by the growth of the central police administration and the diversion of police to other non-essential activities that are not their traditional responsibilities. It took a new police Commissioner, appointed nearly three years into the Adams administration, to reassign 500 police officers not doing patrol work to return to their regular roles.[6]

[2] Ibid.

[3] Speaking at a church in 2019, Mayor Bloomberg said: “I want you to know that I realize back then I was wrong.... "The fact is, far too many innocent people were being stopped while we tried to do that. The overwhelming majority of them were black and Latino." https://abc7ny.com/michael-bloomberg-stop-and-frisk-new-york-city-mayor/5703247/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

[4] "NYPD ‘headcount’ faces record lows not seen in decades – 200 cops leaving each month : data", by Dean Balsamini, New York Post, May 18, 2024

[5] <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/City-Government/NYC-Independent-Budget-Office-IBO-Full-Time-Positi/uaj7-9szf/data>. It should be noted that prior to 1995, roughly 4000 officers in NYPD Transit and 3000 Housing Authority Police were reported separately, although today they are part of the NYPD officer count.

[6]“Tisch Shakes Up N.Y.P.D. Staff and Orders 500 Officers Back to Key Roles” by Maria Kramer, New York Times, December 19, 2024 –

<https://nypost.com/2024/04/20/us-news/mayor-adams-restores-half-of-next-years-nypd-classes-adding-1200-to-depleted-ranks/>

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Despite the decline in headcount, the Adams administration canceled five NYPD training classes in connection with the city budget in 2024 as part of budget cuts, although two classes have since been restored.[7] Increasing the size of the police force is necessary to reduce crime and obtain a sense of order in the city – although increasing the size of the police force must be only part of a broader strategy.

The increase in crime and public disorder in New York City since 2019 is the result of a complex combination of economic, social, and governmental challenges. These challenges – especially the sense of disorder – are connected with rising homelessness combined with serious mental illness and substance abuse, as well as the mass influx of asylum-seekers and illegal migrants that began in 2022.

These problems are exacerbated by changes in the nature of office work, which by reducing levels of commuting and pedestrian activity, makes the subway system more vulnerable to disruptive passengers and contributes to increased retail theft, both of which increase the feeling that the quality of life in the city is deteriorating as the sense of disorder rises. Changes to the criminal justice system have also contributed to the problem. When the public senses that, too often, those who commit crimes are subject to few or even no consequences even for serious and violent crimes, it breaks down the social fabric of the city.

These problems did not arise overnight. Fixing them will require focus combined with discipline and accountability. Andrew Cuomo's public safety strategy involves getting back to the basics of policing and crime prevention, including the NYPD and NYPD Transit police fully staffed (at roughly the levels of the Dinkins administration after its Safe Streets/Safe Cities initiative), deployment of officers in a strategy of community policing that makes their presence felt in neighborhoods coupled with precision policing that focuses on the relatively small number of individuals and locations that are responsible for a high percentage of serious crime, and low tolerance for smaller offenses that invite more serious violations. This public safety strategy also recognizes that while more and better policing is the indispensable element in reducing crime and disorder, other parts of government can also play an important role. Every city agency should be engaged in a coordinated effort to address these problems, embracing policies such as a much stronger mental health system, access to supportive housing, a more effective education system and more job opportunities in high crime areas.

[1]<https://nypost.com/2024/04/20/us-news/mayor-adams-restores-half-of-next-years-nypd-classes-adding-1200-to-depleted-ranks/>

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In the realm of public safety, as with other aspects of New York City government, the primary issue is not the lack of good plans and ideas. Rather, it is the need for effective execution of those plans, as well as strong and focused leadership that commands the respect of the Police Department and gains the trust of the community.

Andrew Cuomo has the experience, the impatience with the status quo, and the toughness to get this job done. He will have no higher priority as mayor than keeping the citizens of New York safe.

Gubernatorial Record

Prevention and Enforcement

As governor, Andrew Cuomo maintained a strong focus on improving public safety, while at the same time championing reform measures that protected civil liberties.

For example, in 2012, Governor Cuomo passed legislation creating the All Crimes DNA Database, which expanded New York State's DNA collection to include samples from individuals convicted of nearly all crimes, both felonies and misdemeanors.[8] Prior to this, DNA collection in New York was limited to those convicted of certain violent crimes or felonies.

The expanded DNA database aimed to enhance public safety by solving crimes more effectively, including cold cases, and to prevent crimes by aiding law enforcement in identifying repeat offenders. Governor Cuomo's bill had the support of New York's 62 district attorneys, 58 sheriffs and 400 police chiefs, who said that collecting DNA from misdemeanor offenders would both help them identify violent criminals and, in some cases, exonerate people who are wrongly accused.

The All Crimes DNA Database is particularly important in helping to solve cases of sexual assault and rape. Complementing this initiative, Governor Cuomo also cleared up the backlog of untested rape kits, providing funding to process these critical pieces of evidence and implementing a 20-year storage requirement to preserve them. This measure ensures survivors have time to decide whether to pursue their cases and that evidence remains available for potential future investigations.

[8] <https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/news/2013/may/15/new-york-creates-all-crimes-dna-database/>

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To strengthen support for victims, Governor Cuomo introduced multiple reforms, including the Sexual Assault Survivors' Bill of Rights, which provides transparency and assures survivors access to case updates. Additionally, legislation extended the statute of limitations for reporting sexual offenses, including the Child Victims Act, which allowed survivors of child abuse to bring civil claims long after the abuse occurred.

In addition, Governor Cuomo provided additional funding to the Unified Court System in New York to improve operations and help clear backlogs, including an additional \$46 million in the FY 21 Budget to deal with backlogs related to the COVID pandemic.

Subway Safety

In 2019, Governor Cuomo directed the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to hire 500 additional uniformed officers to patrol New York City's subways and buses. This initiative, which was aimed at addressing rising concerns over fare evasion, assaults on transit workers, and overall public safety within the transit system was opposed by number of progressive politicians and at least two of Mayor de Blasio's appointees to the MTA board.

The issue of safety on New York City's subway system is so important that it deserves to be treated separately from the broader issue of public safety. He will be releasing his plan for Subway Safety next week.

Gun Control

Following the horrific shooting at Sandy Hook elementary school in 2013, Governor Cuomo enacted the strongest gun control law of any state in the nation. The NY SAFE Act (Secure Ammunition and Firearms Enforcement) Act of 2013 included background checks for all gun sales, restrictions on assault weapons, limits on magazine capacities, and mental health provisions aimed at preventing firearm access by individuals deemed to be a danger to themselves or others.

In 2014, Governor Cuomo extended New York State's efforts to reduce gun violence through the Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) Initiative, which provided targeted funding and resources to support evidence-based strategies in high-crime areas. The initiative focused on reducing shootings and firearm-related homicides by deploying evidence-based strategies, such as hot-spot policing, focused deterrence, crime prevention through design of the physical environment (e.g., effective use of lighting), and street outreach.

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The GIVE Initiative focused on areas outside of New York City with high rates of gun violence, such as Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Albany. GIVE encouraged a coordinated response to gun violence between police departments, district attorneys, probation departments, and community-based organizations.

The GIVE Initiative has shown positive results, with participating police departments reporting a 25% reduction in shooting incidents with injury and a 33% decrease in the number of people killed as of October 29, 2023, compared to the previous year. [9]

Governor Cuomo also recognized the value of “violence interrupter” programs aimed at reducing gun violence by intervening in conflicts before they escalate. Violence interrupter programs employ individuals often former gang members or those with connections to high-risk communities, who use their relationships and understanding of local dynamics to mediate disputes and de-escalate tensions. Violence interrupter programs were part of Governor Cuomo’s cross-sectoral Vital Brooklyn initiative launched in 2018, and in 2021 was the centerpiece of a gun violence disaster emergency declaration, which took an all hands approach and allocated additional funding to violence interrupter programs and community-based anti-violence organizations with expediency to reflect the emergency nature of the sudden rise in violence across the State.

Criminal Justice Reform

Public Safety also demands confidence in the criminal justice system. The widespread practice of “Stop and Frisk” undermined confidence in the police, especially in Black and Brown communities, a lack of trust that persists even today. In 2011, more than 680,000 people were stopped and frisked in New York City, although only about 10 percent of these encounters resulted in arrest or summons. Ultimately, a federal court in 2013 found the policy to be discriminatory and mandated significant reforms in the practice. Even so, crime continued to decline for the next six years, suggesting that benefits of the practice did not justify the harm it caused.

As governor, Andrew Cuomo pursued a number of policies designed to address inequities within the criminal justice system while always emphasizing the importance of public safety.

[9] <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/central-ny/public-safety/2024/01/05/give-initiative-nework>

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Governor Cuomo believed that the systematic incarceration of 16- and 17-year-olds in adult prison increased recidivism and further incarceration, so he championed the Raise the Age law to move 16- and 17-year-olds out of the adult prison system while ensuring that they were placed in secure facilities with rehabilitative services. It is important to note that this legislation was both negotiated and enacted with bi-partisan support as the State Senate was then controlled by the Republican Party and the Assembly was controlled by the Democratic Party. At the time of the enactment of this Raise the Age legislation in 2017, New York was one of only two states (the other being North Carolina) in the nation that tried 16- and 17-year-olds in the adult criminal justice system and sentenced them to adult prisons.

Under Raise the Age, the State has established specialized youth courts for certain crimes, empowered probation officers who have experience with youth to assist in adjusting cases and created dedicated juvenile detention facilities. Experts believe that the Raise the Age law has resulted in a reduction of the rate of recidivism and incarceration among these offenders and expanded access to rehabilitative services.

One aspect of the Raise the Age implementation that has arisen is that a significant percentage of cases that are referred by probation to the New York City Corporation Counsel for presentation of a petition in Family Court are not pursued. This is causing a large number of cases to simply disappear off the docket, thereby losing the ability to track these offenders – this must be rectified.

Another criminal justice reform enacted during Governor Cuomo's time in office was the Bail Reform legislation included in the State Budget in 2019. Bail Reform was a response to the reality that too many people – mostly Black and Brown – were being sent to Rikers Island for months at a time just because they were too poor to make bail, which could be set on virtually any crime at any level, with little recourse for the accused. At the same time, wealthier white people arrested for the same crime could walk out the door immediately because they had the necessary resources to afford bail. The system was economically and racially biased and patently unfair.

Governor Cuomo originally sought to allow judges to take into account the dangerousness of the accused in setting bail but was unsuccessful in having this included in the 2019 Bail Reform law. Although the legislature declined to enact a dangerousness standard, in 2020, 2022 and 2023, the State enacted several amendments to the 2019 Bail Reform law that were designed to increase the latitude judges had to impose bail. These changes restored flexibility to judges to use their discretion to protect the community, as described below:

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2020 Amendments:

- ▶ The amendments expanded the list of bail-eligible offenses, including certain domestic violence charges, sex trafficking charges, money laundering charges and repeat offenses involving harm to a person or property and crimes resulting in death. Additionally, they clarified the spectrum of additional conditions available to judges and prosecutors to impose in response to a charge which are non-monetary conditions, including mental health or substance abuse treatment.
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▶ 2023 Amendments:

Removal of the "Least Restrictive Means" Standard: The requirement for judges to impose the "least restrictive" conditions necessary to ensure a defendant's return to court was eliminated. This change aimed to provide judges with greater flexibility in setting bail and pretrial conditions.

Judges and prosecutors need to be more forceful in utilizing tools given to them through the significant modifications that have been made to the original Bail Reform law. There is no excuse for District Attorneys not to pursue charges for bail-eligible crimes afforded to them under the law or the frequent release by judges of repeat offenders of violent crimes who could be detained under existing bail laws.

Finally, New York State's Discovery reform, also enacted in 2019, aimed to enhance fairness in criminal proceedings by ensuring defendants had timely access to evidence. Prior to the reform, New York operated under a "blindfold" law, allowing prosecutors to withhold evidence until the eve of a trial. This practice often left defendants inadequately prepared, undermining the fairness of the judicial process. Discovery reform has also been the subject of further recalibrations. In 2020, Governor Cuomo enacted targeted reforms to address concerns, by granting additional time to deliver discovery materials, creating additional protection for witnesses, and allowing additional time for discovery to be filed if there is evidence that is exceptionally voluminous or unable to be obtained on the required timeline that was not in the prosecutor's possession. Additionally, in 2020 and 2021, a fund totaling \$80 million was allocated to help address technology and other infrastructure needs of district attorney's offices across the state related to Discovery implementation.

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While there was unquestionably a need to reform New York's antiquated Discovery laws, in the time since resources of prosecutors have been strained, and, in some instances, dismissals have been granted based upon technicalities and not the strength of the case. Governor Cuomo supports the further refinement of the discovery process by streamlining evidence requirements, increasing time limits for special motions, and giving judges the discretion to impose sanctions other than case dismissal where justice requires.

Policing Reform and Accountability

In the days after the death of George Floyd in 2020, Governor Cuomo strongly criticized the de Blasio administration for tolerating a level of rioting in New York City, while stating unequivocally that George Floyd was murdered and that his death was a call to action to reform police departments throughout the State and the nation.

Governor Cuomo responded to the issues highlighted by the George Floyd incident by issuing Executive Order (“EO”) 203, which was aimed at driving police reform and increasing accountability to the community across New York State. The order required every local government with the police force in New York to adopt a plan to reform and modernize their police practices as a condition of future State funding. EO 203 was designed to have police agencies review their current policies and practices, addressing racial bias and disproportionate policing of communities of color.

In response to New York State's EO 203, a number of cities across the state implemented successful initiatives aimed at enhancing trust through community engagement, increased transparency through comprehensive reporting of use-of-force incidents, and changes designed to reduce excessive force incidents, and not a single locality's state funding was jeopardized.

New York City adopted a number of reforms that created greater accountability, more transparency, and a shift of resources toward community-based safety solutions. These reforms included ending qualified immunity for police officers in cases of civil rights violations, requiring the NYPD to issue quarterly reports on traffic and vehicle stops, and allowed the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) to investigate police officers with a history of bias and racial profiling.^[10] That said, New York City took a dangerous step further – with the support of its then Mayor Bill de Blasio, Comptroller Scott Stringer, Public Advocate Jumaane Williams and City Council members, including Brad Lander— unilaterally cutting \$1 billion dollars of NYPD funding, which Governor Cuomo vehemently opposed, then and now.

[10] New York City Council. "Council Votes on Legislation to Increase Police Accountability and Reimagine Public Safety." New York City Council, March 25, 2021.

A Plan to Make New York Safer and More Respectful of Others

As mayor, Andrew Cuomo would implement a comprehensive plan to make New York safer and reduce the sense of disorder that now prevails. The foundational strategies of this plan include the following:

- ▶ Increase the size of the police force by 15% – i.e., 5,000 police officers
- ▶ Restore subway safety
- ▶ Revitalize our police deployment strategy based on community policing and precision policing
- ▶ Crackdown on nuisance and quality-of-life crimes
- ▶ Strengthen ability for involuntary commitment in severe cases of mental illness
- ▶ Reform Discovery laws and provide resources to prosecutors for compliance, press for judges to utilize the full extent of their discretion for recidivist cases
- ▶ Use innovative technology to make the city safer

Increase the Size of the Police Force by 15% or 5000 Additional Officers

Despite a rise in crime and disorder and increased demands on the police since the year prior to the Covid pandemic, the size of the NYPD has been declining, from 36,461 officers in 2019 to 34,100 officers as of January 2025.

Andrew Cuomo's plan to increase of the police force by 5,000 officers, or 15%, would bring the force level to approximately 39,000 officers, just above the 38,438 target for the NYPD (including Transit and Housing police) of Mayor Dinkins's Safe Streets/Safe City initiative in the early 1990s. This higher force level would enable better public safety and would almost pay for itself by reducing the need for mandatory overtime, which is both costly and contributes to officer attrition.

A larger police force means the city will have enough officers to intensively staff areas of the city, such as the Eighth Avenue corridor between Penn Station and Times Square and the Roosevelt Avenue stretch in Queens which have been described as "urban crime zones."

A larger police presence is a deterrent to crime, improves response rates to 911 calls and gives the police the resources they need to solve crimes. Expanding the police force will also facilitate community policing initiatives, where officers build relationships with residents, as well as supporting specialized units such as those focused on gun violence, domestic violence, or mental health crisis intervention.

The cost of expanding the police force can be covered at least in part by reducing overtime. In 2024, the NYPD spent approximately \$1 billion on overtime, far exceeding its initial budget allocation[11]. Cutting overtime in half would nearly cover the cost of hiring 5,000 additional officers. At least as important as the fiscal benefits of reducing overtime, the larger police force would reduce the level of mandatory overtime, which is one of the leading complaints that lead to the very high level of attrition the NYPD is now experiencing.[12]

Perhaps the biggest barrier to increasing the size of the police force is recruitment and retention of police officers. The first order of business for a new administration is to improve the morale of the police. The new Mayor and Police Commissioner must begin by listening closely to officers to understand their real concerns.

[11] https://www.latintimes.com/nyc-mayor-eric-adams-defends-nypd-officers-record-1-billion-overtime-pay-2024-572692?utm_source=chatgpt.com

[12] <https://gothamist.com/news/nypds-rank-and-file-voice-growing-job-dissatisfaction-john-jay-survey-finds>

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Addressing these concerns is the key to reversing the recent trend of high attrition of police officers due to retirement or leaving before retirement age. In 2023, more than 2,500 officers left the force, a more than 40% increase in the attrition rate since 2018.[13] The number of officers resigning before reaching the 20-year service mark for full pensions rose from 509 in 2020 to 1,040 in 2023, a 104% increase.[14] The 2,634 new officers hired in 2024 (up from about 2,300 officers hired in 2023)[15] is likely to barely increase the size of the police force at the current rate of attrition.

Reaching the goal of 39,000 NYPD and NYPD Transit officers demands steps that will lead to reduced attrition.

A recent study by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York identified many of the factors leading to increased police attrition, which is a national phenomenon. Among the first orders of business for new administration should be to improve police morale. Higher job satisfaction and better compensation were linked to lower turnover intentions. Importantly, the study noted the linkage between higher job satisfaction and higher levels of officer job autonomy, such as independent decision-making models offered by the type of community and problem-oriented policing strategies we discuss below.[16]

The John Jay College study found quality-of-life concerns to be among the greatest factors leading to officer dissatisfaction. The NYPD has a pilot program for 10- and 12-hour work days designed to give cops longer stretches of time off and cut down on overtime, a strategy which has proved popular in other professions such as nursing.

It also needs to be acknowledged that compensation issues play a role in the recruitment and retention of police officers. Although the NYPD offers after 5.5 years current base salary of \$121,589, the starting salary of \$58,580 may be inhibiting recruitment in light of other professional opportunities, including alternatives in municipalities in which the job of policing is easier than it is in New York City.

Another challenge involves resignations of officers before they reach retirement age. In 2022, more than 1,200 officers resigned before reaching five years of service. The city needs to better understand why so many officers are resigning and, to the extent that compensation is the major cause, address policies such as expanded step increases for years of service that could reverse this trend.

[13] <https://www.nycpba.org/news-items/post/2023/nypd-cops-leave-force-in-alarming-rate-over-2-500-turned-in-badges-so-far-in-2023/>

[14] <https://www.nycpba.org/news-items/post/2023/nypd-cops-leave-force-in-alarming-rate-over-2-500-turned-in-badges-so-far-in-2023/>

[15] <https://gothamist.com/news/nypds-rank-and-file-voice-growing-job-dissatisfaction-john-jay-survey-finds>

[16] Mass exodus? Police officer turnover intention and organizational commitment in New York City commitment in New York City Kenneth M. Quick DeSales University Kevin T. Wolff CUNY John Jay College

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This high attrition rate increases the strain on the remaining officers through mandatory overtime and other stresses, leading to a vicious cycle in which new hiring cannot even keep pace with attrition. A larger full-time force would reduce the need for mandatory overtime, improved work life balance, and address frustrations that arise from insufficient resources to do the job properly.

Restore Subway Safety

Ensuring that subway riders feel safe and are, in fact, safe is an urgent policy priority that is a prerequisite to improving the quality of life in New York in many areas. According to a survey conducted by the Citizens Budget Commission, in 2023, fewer than half of all New Yorkers reported feeling very safe or somewhat safe on the subway during the day, down from 86% in 2008 and 82% in 2017, and only 22% of New Yorkers feel that the subways are safe at nighttime.[17]

This perception reflects the reality that the subways have indeed become less safe since the pandemic. As described in an op-ed by Nicole Gelinas in August 2024:

▶ In the first six months of 2024, compared with the same months of 2019, violent felonies — murder, rape, robbery, assault — were 16% higher. Adjust for post-COVID ridership, and violent felony numbers are worse. In the first six months of 2024, trains carried nearly 585 million passengers; that’s 69% of the ridership in the same period in 2019, which was nearly 844 million. Violent incidents per million rides have risen to 0.83, lower than the peaks reached during the worst of the pandemic, but 67% higher than in 2019.”[18]

The New York City-based organization, Vital City, recently published in depth information regarding subway crime.[19] Among other findings, Vital City found that subway assaults have tripled since 2009. It noted that “violence is heavily concentrated in particular spaces and at particular times. Although “half of all violent subway crimes took place at just 30 of New York City’s 472 stations,” Vital City found that in 2023 “the highest per-rider risk of violent crime occurred at smaller, lower-ridership stations, particularly during late-night and early-morning hours.”

[17] CBC Resident Survey, March 2024; “New York’s Promising Experiment in Making the Subways Safer,” New York Times, August 14, 2024, by Nicole Gelinas

[18] Ibid.

[19] <https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/articles/just-the-facts-on-new-york-city-subway-crime>

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Other important findings from Vital City were that violent-crime recidivism in the subways has doubled since the onset of COVID; and that “among individuals in the top decile of overall subway arrests who also had a history of subway violence in 2023, 80% have documented mental health issues.”[20]

As noted above, the issue of subway safety is so important to New York City that Andrew Cuomo will be presenting a separate plan dedicated to improving subway strategy, which will be released in the week following the release of this general Public Safety plan.

Revitalize Our Police Deployment Strategy in Conjunction With Community Planning

Possessing a strong understanding of the community is critical to addressing the growing sense of disorder in New York. As the journalist Errol Louis has written, “Public safety requires cops who work with community members to enforce the mostly unwritten rules about what will and won’t be tolerated.” [21]

A larger police force will only be effective in reducing crime and disorder if it is deployed effectively and in a way that combines traditional community policing, precision policing, and non-police interventions that increase neighborhood safety. As Mayor, Andrew Cuomo will work with local stakeholders and the NYPD to develop local Community and Precision Policing Plans that meet the different needs of particular areas.

This approach is born from Andrew Cuomo’s experience that one size does not fit all. Planning efforts in a range of areas are most successful when they take into account the interest in particular characteristics of different communities and neighborhoods. Andrew Cuomo followed this approach in 2020, when his administration required each municipality to develop its own local police reform plans under EO 203.

Community Policing

Community policing is a strategy with such a long history in New York that it has become more of a slogan than a policy. One way to define how community policing can be revitalized in New York is to look at similar cities that are focusing on this strategy. Philadelphia, for example, has issued a comprehensive Public Safety Plan (PPD) that offers a modern-day description of what a revitalized community policing and precision policing strategy entails:

[20] Ibid

[21] <https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/articles/the-unwritten-rules>

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▶ “Over the past decade, we have focused heavily on discussing what our “officers cannot do” instead of considering what we want our “officers to do.” This is our opportunity to rethink what we mean by proactive and community policing, which has been the backbone of every effective policing strategy. This includes proactive stops, based upon reasonable suspicion, regular foot beats, voluntary and intentional engagement with the community, business security checks, SEPTA security checks, and “park and walks” where officers park their patrol cars and walk among the community to build relationships.” [22]

Many of the 5,000 additional police officers under Andrew Cuomo’s plan will be visible to people in their neighborhoods, deterring street crime and antisocial activity. In addition to controlling overtime, this increase in the size of the NYPD will be supported through savings from reforms to administrative processes within the NYPD.

Precision policing

Community policing and precision policing complement each other: community policing builds the long-term trust and partnerships necessary for sustained safety, while precision policing addresses more immediate issues of preventing or solving crime. Precision policing zeroes in on geographical hotspots and specific individuals that are responsible for the majority of criminal activity. Precision policing also can take advantage of new capabilities made possible by technology innovations. For example, drug dealers can be traced based on the fact that they returned to a specific open-air drug market, facilitating the ability to clean up these hotspots.

Precision policing works because much of the crime in New York City is driven by a small percentage of the population and in concentrated geographic areas. NYPD Chief of Crime Control Strategies, Michael Lipetri, has said that “less than 1% [of people] are responsible for a lion’s share of the shootings across the city.” [23] This pattern extends beyond violent crime, as evidenced by the 327 people were responsible for nearly one third of shoplifting arrests in New York City in 2022.[24]

[22] “100 Day Report, prepared in response to Mayor, Cherrrell L. Parker’s Executive Order No. 1-24”

[23] <https://cbcny.org/research/not-undercover>

[24] Hurubie Meko, 327 People Arrested 6,000 Times: A Small Number of Shoplifters Commit Thousands of New York City Thefts." The New York Times, April 15, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/15/nyregion/shoplifting-arrests-nyc.html>.

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The recently appointed Police Commissioner, Jessica Tisch, has described how the NYPD should focus on specific street segments and portions of neighborhoods that are experiencing spikes in crime. This strategy, which Commissioner Tisch describes as a “hyper local, data driven policing model” is a good example of a precision policing strategy.[25] By concentrating resources on this small percentage of offenders, the NYPD can significantly impact overall crime rates without over-policing entire communities, leading to fewer arrests but a decrease in crime. Precision policing has demonstrated its effectiveness across various cities, including Philadelphia, which has seen significant reductions in gun violence and homicides since the renewed focus on this strategy.[26] [27]

These local plans can build on the best aspects of the NYPD’s Neighborhood Safety Teams, which have been piloted in five high-crime areas, and the City’s existing Neighborhood Coordination Officers. These local plans will be coordinated by a Community Partnerships Bureau led by a new Deputy Commissioner. The Community Partnerships Bureau will work with other City agencies’ initiatives that address nuisance crime reduction and quality-of-life issues.

Precision policing is a key to combating a surge in criminal recidivism. During her 2025 State of the NYPD address, Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch, between 2018 in 2024, the number of individuals arrested three or more times in the same year increased by 61% increase in the case of burglary, 83% percent for robbery, and 146% in the case of felony assault.[28] Both robbery and felony assault are bail-eligible crimes, so the fact that such high recidivism rates exist suggests that there are other causes within the criminal justice system that need to be addressed.

Crackdown on Nuisance and Quality-of-Life Crimes

The erosion of respect for the rules of the social compact has a corrosive effect on crime and disorder. Two areas of nuisance and quality-of-life crimes bear special mention: retail theft and the out-of-control presence of e-bikes and mopeds on sidewalks and bike lanes.

The Adams administration has belatedly recognized the connection between low-level offenses in the quality-of-life, with Police Commissioner Tisch announcing a new Quality of Life unit within the NYPD to address low-level offenses.[29]

[25] "2025 State of the NYPD", January 30, 2025.

[26] Allan Domb, "Why Crime in Philadelphia is Plummeting," Philadelphia, July 29, 2024, <https://www.phillymag.com/news/2024/07/29/crime-in-philadelphia-plummeting/>.

[27] Chantelle Lee, "How Philadelphia Managed the Biggest Drop in Gun Violence of Any Major City," Time, June 13, 2024, <https://time.com/6988557/philadelphia-biggest-drop-gun-violence/>.

[28] <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/006-25/transcript-mayor-adams-nypd-commissioner-tisch-crime-down-2024>

[29] "2025 State of the NYPD", January 30, 2025.

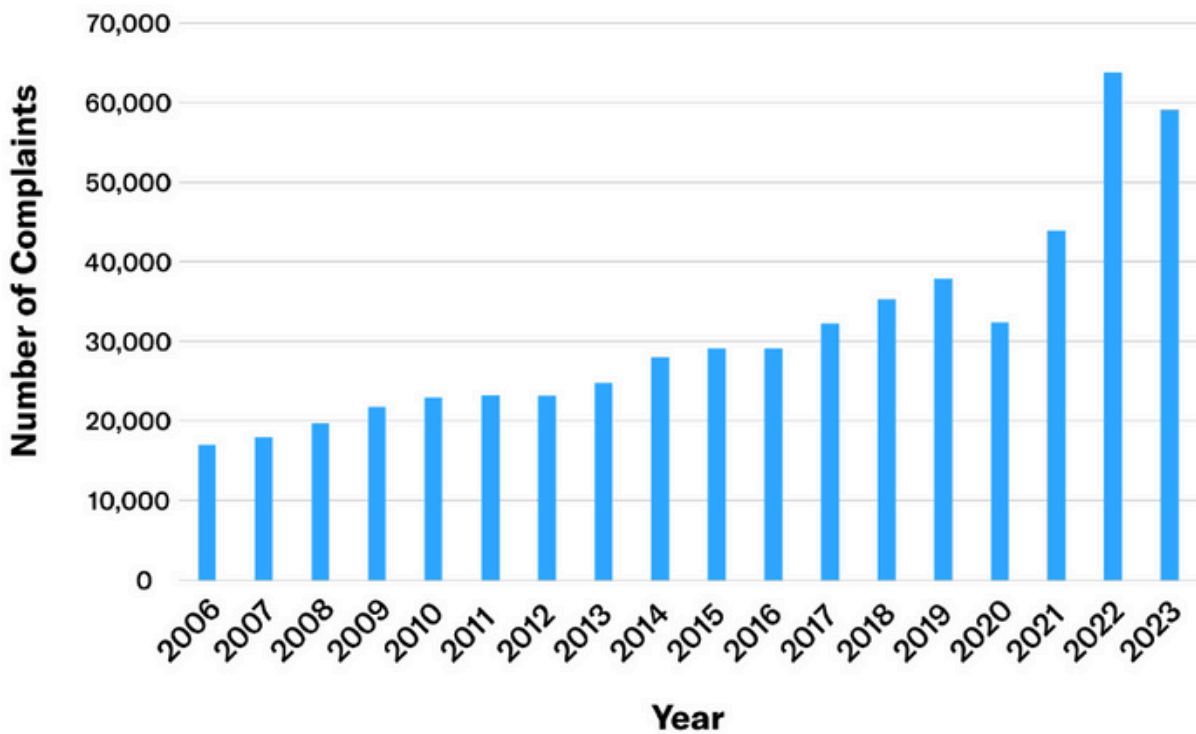
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Retail Theft

Retail theft has exploded since the pandemic, with the number of shoplifting incidents had increased roughly 60% higher than in 2019.[30] This increase in the number of shoplifting incidents is one reason that the city’s retail sector has been shrinking significantly with retail employment more than 10% below pre-pandemic levels.[31]

Figure 1

New York City Annual Retail Theft Complaints



[30] “Deciphering Retail Theft Data: Implications and Actions for Policymakers,” by John Hall, Manhattan Institute, July 2024

[31] “NYC’s Stalled Retail Recovery,” by Jonathan Bowles and Charles Shaviro, Center for an Urban Future, June 2023 – <https://nycfuture.org/research/nycs-stalled-retail-recovery>

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Retail theft not only reinforces the sense of disorder in the City, it too often results in violence. As described by a Manhattan Institute white paper:

▶ “New York City data reinforce the troubling trend of shoplifting becoming more violent. The NYPD tracks “shoplifting gone bad” incidents, categorized as robberies involving force or threat of force. These incidents nearly doubled between 2019 and 2022, and while they dipped slightly in 2023, they remain 75% higher than pre-pandemic levels. This documented rise in violence, which is forcing retailers to adapt their operations, provides a clearer picture for policymakers about the true scale of the problem.”[32]

The strategy for combating retail theft is clear, though it is difficult and requires strong leadership to reverse the perception that shoplifting is part of the “new normal” of city life. This strategy includes focusing on the following factors: the small number of habitual offenders who commit a disproportionate amount of shoplifting theft; more rigorous investigations to identify patterns and enable the police to be more proactive; increased prosecutions that distinguish between first-time offenders and chronic thieves or organized crime rings and which send the message that serial offenders will be sentenced to jail.

In addition to targeting shoplifters themselves, the city needs to do a better job of disrupting the fencing networks and resale channels, which range from street sales to online networks. The city’s Nuisance Abatement Program enables the city to take civil action against properties involved in illegal activities, including fencing. In addition, online platforms should be held accountable. The NYPD should work with e-commerce sites to crack down on listings suspected of selling stolen goods or require a seller verification process.

E-Bikes and other traffic violations

Incidents involving e-bikes are becoming increasingly common. In 2023, e-bikes were involved in 75% of bicycle-related fatalities and over 7,200 people were injured in e-bike or scooter accidents, including a staggering 494 pedestrian injuries. This figure only reflects reported incidents, meaning the true number may be even higher.[33]

[32] “Deciphering Retail Theft Data: Implications and Actions for Policymakers,” at page 8.

[33] “More than 7,200 people were injured this year in an e-bike or scooter accident,” ABC7 New York, accessed December 2, 2024, <https://abc7ny.com/e-bike-e-scooter-accident-7-on-your-side-investigates/14085755/>.

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In addition to the risks faced by pedestrians, e-bike riders – most of whom are workers making deliveries for the major food delivery apps – are also highly vulnerable. A 2022 report from the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection revealed that 26 delivery workers had died in vehicle crashes in the city since 2020, making it one of the most dangerous jobs in the area.[34] Los Deliveristas Unidos estimates that 65,000 workers in New York City make deliveries using e-bikes,[35] although some estimates of the number of workers are even higher.

Much of the problem associated with e-bikes can be attributed to structural problems in the food delivery business. Based on the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) regulations, a delivery worker is paid only for the time that they have accepted a trip, and until it is completed in the app. Therefore, a worker is incentivized to accept trips, and travel longer distances, because it maximizes their time being paid the higher rate. The platforms meanwhile have all of the data on trips and are able to establish the length of time the platform believes it should take to travel the distance. In practice, this often means that delivery workers are using e-bikes that travel well above the speed limit and often behave recklessly to set the amount of time for the delivery.

Andrew Cuomo believes that DCWP minimum payment regulation should be revised to eliminate inappropriate incentives to dangerous use of e-bikes. In addition, one of the most effective ways to stop the reckless use of e-bikes on sidewalks and bike lanes is to make the delivery app companies financially responsible for any damages caused by riders making deliveries on their behalf.

The City Council should adopt the legislative proposal which would require all e-bikes and e-scooters to be registered with the New York City Department of Transportation, including devices not currently mandated for registration by the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles. Registered e-vehicles would need to display an identifying number on a visible plate affixed to the vehicle, facilitating easier identification and enforcement. The platform apps would be required to record the registration number when assigning a delivery job to a delivery worker.

[34] New York City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, "Pay Rate for App-Based Restaurant Delivery Workers in NYC," November 2022, <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dca/downloads/pdf/workers/Delivery-Worker-Study-November-2022.pdf>.

[35] (<https://www.bicycling.com/culture/a46599429/nyc-bike-delivery-workers-vs-big-tech/>)

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Improving Physical Environment to Reduce Crime

Neighborhoods can also be made safer from crime and with less potential for lower-level offenses simply by improving the physical environment. The technical name for this strategy is called Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). There is now strong evidence that CPTED initiatives such as improving lighting, increasing the availability of trees and green space, restoring vacant lots, enhancing the effectiveness of street lighting and improving networks of video surveillance cameras have a measurable impact on reducing crime.

CPTED-inspired changes to the built environment are not a substitute for other public safety strategies, but rather an important complement to them. As Mayor, Andrew Cuomo will prioritize CPTED initiatives as an important component of a diversified crime-reduction strategy that strengthens law enforcement and protects communities.

Provide the Resources Needed to De-Bottleneck the Court System

There is an old expression that, “justice delayed is justice denied.” It is also widely understood that certainty of punishment is the most effective way to prevent crime. Both of these goals are undermined by significant bottlenecks in New York City’s court system, resulting in delays and abandonment of cases, particularly for misdemeanors and low-level violations. For example, according to the Neighborhood Initiatives Development Corporation, the average eviction in New York City takes two years to complete.[39] Meanwhile, the number of felony cases in DOC custody that took more than three years to process increased by nearly 180% between 2019 and 2023. [40]

These issues stem from several interconnected factors. The COVID pandemic exacerbated existing challenges, halting court operations and creating a backlog of tens of thousands of pending cases. At the same time, the accelerated Discovery provisions of the 2020 law inadvertently strained court resources by increasing the workload for pretrial supervision and administrative processes. Shortages of prosecutors and judges further strain the system, leaving it unable to process cases efficiently. As of 2024, the state had nearly 120,000 pending cases, with judicial vacancies being a critical bottleneck. Resource allocation practices also prioritize serious felony cases over misdemeanors, leading to extended delays or outright dismissals of less severe offenses.

[39] ABC7 New York. (2024). "New York Squatter Eviction Laws: Years-Long Backlog Has Created 'Housing Court Hell' for New Yorkers on Verge of Bankruptcy." Retrieved from <https://abc7ny.com/post/new-york-squatter-eviction-laws-years-long-backlog-has-created-housing-court-hell-yorkers-verge-bankruptcy/15538259/>

[40] New York City Comptroller. (2023). "Ensuring Timely Trials: Addressing Court Backlogs and Delays in New York City's Criminal Justice System." https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/ensuring-timely-trials/#_edn1

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To address these challenges, several remedies are essential. Appointing and electing more judges and hiring more line prosecutors is necessary to alleviate workforce shortages and improve case processing times. Investments in court technology, such as digital filing and remote hearing capabilities, will streamline proceedings and reduce delays. Expanding diversion programs and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms for minor offenses would help clear dockets, allowing courts to focus on more serious cases. Diversion programs have proven particularly effective in the case of young offenders and drug treatment courts to provide substance abuse treatment as an alternative to incarceration for non-violent drug offenders. [41]

Ensuring we are adequately dealing with recidivists is also a key priority. With data split between OCA, independent elected DA's, NYPD, there is a significant data challenge that with new technology and determination can be overcome. Identifying individuals who are cycling through the courts and ensuring that they have been identified as a person eligible for bail due to their status, not just their crime, will be crucial to restoring a sense of order and justice.

As Mayor, Andrew Cuomo will bring together all stakeholders, including prosecutors, defense attorneys, and advocates, to support the systemic changes that are needed to restore certainty of punishment to those who violate the law while still preserving due process rights of the accused.

Strengthen Ability for Involuntary Commitment in Severe Cases of Mental Illness

Few issues facing New York City are as challenging as the problem of the seriously mentally ill, who frequently are also homeless. Although the absolute numbers are small, it does not take many seriously mentally ill individuals to create a sense of disorder and, in too many tragic cases, to commit serious crimes. The broader challenge of homelessness and the growing mental health crisis in New York City is distinct from the issues of public safety – and we will be addressing them separately. Part of that wider agenda will involve strengthening the ability of the mental-health system to involuntarily commit the small number of the seriously mentally ill who represent a danger to themselves or others or who are incapable of taking care of their basic needs in a way that spreads disorder through neighborhoods and the subway system.

[41] <https://www.nyclu.org/commentary/racial-disparity-across-new-york-truly-jarring>

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Another vital tool in protecting the public from individuals with serious mental illness who pose a risk of harm to others is much greater use by prosecutors and judges of what is known as “Article 730” of the Criminal Procedure Law, which outlines the procedures for assessing a defendant's mental competence to stand trial. In many of the recent horrific incidents involving violent acts by individuals with untreated SMI, the perpetrators had previously been arrested and released numerous times, despite evidence that they were potentially dangerous and might have been found not mentally competent to stand trial if they had been assessed. In that event, the individuals could be held in a forensic psychiatric facility until their underlying condition was addressed sufficiently that the individual could stand trial for their crimes.

Leverage Technology to Make the Safer and the NYPD More Efficient

Technology has profoundly reshaped the way cities like New York address crime and public safety. The city must leverage advanced technology both for frontline actions to both prevent and solve crimes, as well as technology that will make the NYPD more productive and efficient.

For example, expanding surveillance capabilities is vital for both crime prevention and resolution. Tools like license plate readers (LPRs) have proven effective in reducing car thefts and tracking vehicles involved in crimes. Integrating these systems across neighborhoods can enhance citywide monitoring. Additionally, drones offer real-time aerial surveillance during large-scale events or active crime scenes, improving situational awareness without exposing officers to unnecessary risks. Technology can also improve police accountability, such as sensors that automatically activate body cameras when a Taser or firearm is unholstered.

Emergency response efficiency is another critical area. New York’s 911 system, which handles millions of calls annually, can be optimized through technology. Tools like Prepared911 allow dispatchers to access real-time video from callers, enhancing situational awareness and ensuring informed responses. AI-driven call management systems can categorize incidents by priority, enabling a swifter reaction to serious emergencies. Furthermore, predictive analytics can anticipate call surges during events, allowing proactive resource deployment and improving overall response times.

The NYPD should also have a strategic IT roadmap for modernization and administrative efficiency. This includes an information technology infrastructure and governance that removes silos of data and makes it available to decision makers in the form of actionable information.