

Crime & Safety Transformed:

A Balanced Approach to Modern Policing



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Executive Summary

Last year, only 26%¹ of adults in the U.S. had a great deal of confidence in the police. This is a problem, as multiple studies² link distrust in police to higher crime rates, particularly homicide. At the same time, **75% of Americans³ support fully funding the police** to make our communities safer.

Every American should be free to live in a safe community in which police and citizens have respect and empathy for each other. We can accomplish this by uniting law enforcement with the people they serve so that **every American – regardless of background – can live the American Dream.**

“Every American should be free to live in a safe community in which police and citizens have respect and empathy for each other.”

To reform the police and unite communities, Americans must:



Invest in **enhanced training**



Increase the **number of police officers**



Adopt **community policing**



Build trust through **transparency and accountability**



Increase **officer pay**

Reform #1

Invest in enhanced training

Summary

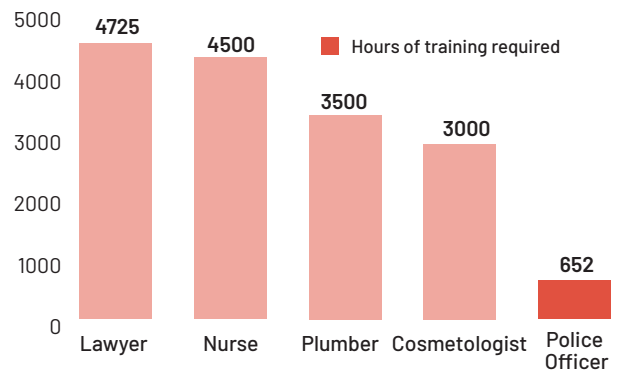
Police officers need to be trained for all types of scenarios. Yet, **American police officers receive some of the least training** in the developed world.

Investing in enhanced training can reduce officer complaints and help reduce the need to use force.

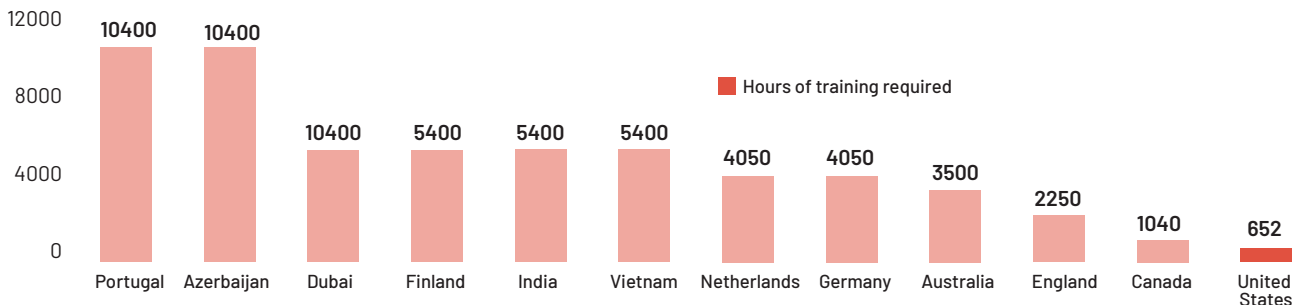
On average, an American police officer receives far less⁴ training than police in other developed countries. Additionally, basic police training often **neglects de-escalation and civil rights/procedural justice training**.

De-escalation training changes the focus from physically fighting crime to cooling situations to stop a potential threat before force is necessary.

Required hours of training in other professions



Hours of police training required in other countries



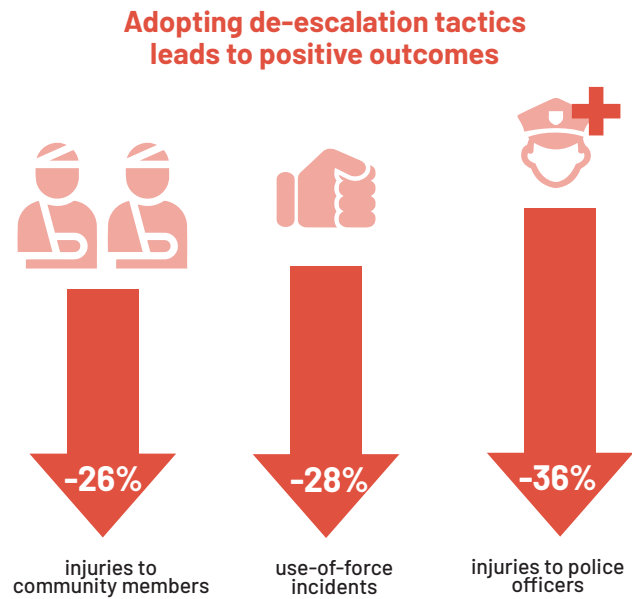
Research shows that incorporating de-escalation tactics into a police department's training is associated⁵ with 26% fewer injuries to community members, 28% fewer use-of-force incidents, and 36% fewer injuries to police officers.

Fewer negative interactions with the public means **communities build trust** while fewer police injuries mean officers can continue to **patrol their communities and further reduce crime**.



While every police officer swears to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States, a large majority of police officers don't understand⁶ **the protections it guarantees**. In fact, police academies dedicate a mere 3.21%⁷ of all training hours to ethics or judicial rights training.

Civil rights training, in which officers understand their limitations as law-enforcements personnel, can reduce the need to use force and also decrease officer complaints.

For example, a training program in Chicago that focused on procedural justice resulted in a **10% reduction in complaints** against the police and a **6.4% reduction in the use of force** against civilians over a two-year period.



Opportunities for Reform

-  **Adopt de-escalation training programs** to ensure police officers exhaust all reasonable avenues before resorting to physical force.
-  **Adopt civil rights and procedural justice training** to ensure that officers respect the rights of the community members they serve while reducing complaints against police departments.

Reform #2

Increase the number of police officers

Summary

Having **more officers results in fewer crimes**, so it's troubling that police departments are hiring⁸ at a slower rate than the average of all U.S. jobs.

Adding police officers will give departments the manpower they need to combat crime, especially in criminal "hot spots."

Whenever officers leave their assigned beats⁹ for serious threats¹⁰ or traffic accidents, **crime increases in unpatrolled areas.**

Research¹¹ also shows that **placing officers at crime "hot spots" reduces serious crime in those areas.** In fact, adding 10-17 officers¹² to a police department is enough to prevent one murder, while reducing other violent crimes.

Crime increases in unpatrolled areas

Research shows that a 10% decrease in police presence in a given location results in a 7% increase in crime



Adding
10-17 OFFICERS
=
1 LIFE SAVED

“Having more officers results in fewer crimes, so it’s troubling that police departments are hiring at a slower rate than the average of all U.S. jobs.”

As departments hire officers, they should prioritize **candidates with degrees**, since both new research¹³ and older studies¹⁴ show that college-educated officers may perform better, as they are less likely to resort to verbal and physical force than those without degrees.

Officers with degrees receive¹⁵ fewer complaints, which means cities pay fewer claims and defend themselves against fewer lawsuits – which **saves communities money**.

Research shows that officers with degrees receive fewer citizen complaints

Officers who’ve graduated from college are almost **40% less likely to use force**.



College-educated police officers are almost **30% less likely to fire their weapons** in the line of duty.

Officers with at least a two-year degree are **40% less likely to lose their jobs** due to misconduct.



Opportunities for Reform



Increase the number of police officers to combat crime



Hire police officers with college degrees to reduce complaints against the departments



Offer tuition assistance and other college incentives to recruit new police officers

Reform #3

Adopt community policing

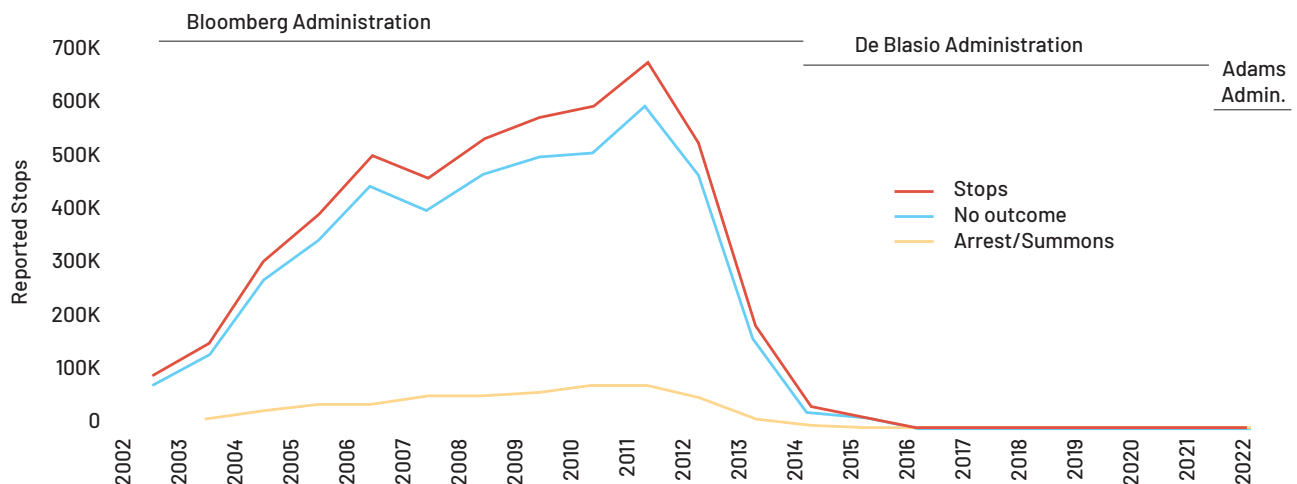
Summary

The “broken windows” theory suggests that cracking down on non-violent and low-level crimes can prevent more serious ones from taking place. Instead, it **has failed to reduce crime and led to illegal¹⁶ policing tactics** that break community trust.

Community policing will help restore trust in law enforcement which in turn will make it easier for officers to do their duty.

Using the broken windows theory, **the NYPD illegally stopped¹⁷ more than two million people since 2001** under “Stop and Frisk” – and from 2003 to 2013, more than 90% of them were found to be innocent¹⁸.

Stop-and-Frisk over time in New York City



With proactive policing, each additional police officer results¹⁹ in seven to 22 additional arrests for “quality of life” offenses. Those serve to erode the trust between police and citizens, especially in low-income and Black and Latino communities.

Meanwhile, community policing²⁰ ensures the public – represented by community leaders, private businesses, media outlets and nonprofits – and police departments work together to increase public safety and the overall quality of life. **This empowers everyone to be heard and builds a sense of community pride** in every American.

Study finds community-oriented policing improves attitudes toward police

Research conducted in partnership with the New Haven Police Department



A single, positive, nonenforcement-related encounter **enhanced the legitimacy of police officers** and **increased people’s willingness** to cooperate with the police



Residents continued to report **improved attitudes toward police** 21 days after the initial door-to-door visits

The solution²¹ to declining trust in police “is simply to work closely with community groups –and not merely as a short-term recruiting effort, but as a constant, broad-based effort to build strong relationships of trust.” Every **positive non-enforcement interaction** between the police and members of the community **improves attitudes²² toward the police**, which makes their jobs easier.

Opportunities for Reform

-  **Put an end to “proactive policing”** which has resulted in illegal policing and alienated trust in the police
-  **Adopt the community policing model** which increases non-enforcement engagement with communities and restores respect for law enforcement

Reform #4

Build trust through transparency and accountability

Summary

As law enforcement officers have the power of life and death in their hands, there's no aspect of government that citizens should be more interested in understanding. Yet, **law enforcement agencies lack transparency**²³.

Americans need to know what's happening in police departments to be able to trust them—and trust is essential.

Currently, the Justice Department's National Decertification Index²⁴ lists **more than 30,000 former police officers** who are deemed ineligible to serve. However, it does not track officers who have been accused of misconduct. As a result, police departments continue²⁵ to employ²⁶ officers with **dangerous and even criminal records**.



Since 2006, at least **1,881 police officers** have been fired from **37** of the nation's largest departments for behavior that betrayed the public's trust



One officer **sexually abused a 19-year-old** in his patrol car



One officer **challenged a handcuffed man to fight** for a chance to be released



One officer **shot and killed** an unarmed man

Those three were among the **451** who successfully appealed and won their jobs back

Police departments disclosed the reasons for rehiring officers in less than half of the 451 cases




Rehired - Reason is:



While technology helps weed out misconduct, many officers have been found²⁷ to tamper with recording devices and other forms of evidence – with no consequences.

Additionally, in nearly half of the states, laws redact²⁸ police officers' identities and disciplinary records when media submit public records requests. No one is tracking how often departments fire or reinstate officers nationwide "**Some firings receive local publicity, but many go unreported**".

Opportunities for Reform

-  **Require states to report officers they fire to the National Decertification Index** to track police officers who try to avoid consequences by switching jurisdictions
-  **Punish officers who tamper with evidence**
-  **Make discipline and use-of-force data public** to ensure bad police officers cannot jump jurisdictions to avoid penalties

Reform #5

Increase officer pay

Summary

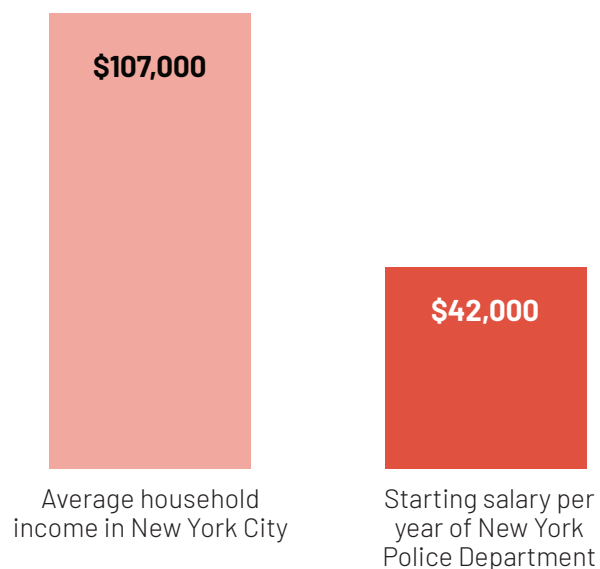
Police officers are some of America's greatest heroes, yet they are not paid like the critical, highly-trained professionals they are. On top of this, they are forced to work overtime which discourages good candidates, leads to officer fatigue and creates the risk of injury.

Appropriately compensating officers as salaried professionals can improve policing by improving the quality of applicants, boosting performance and raising standards.

In 2021, most law enforcement officers earned²⁹ around \$66,020 per year, which is more than a third higher³⁰ than the national median of \$48,769 for all occupations. Yet, **many officers earn poverty-level wages** with some making a mere³¹ \$20,000 per year. That forces many to work overtime³² to make ends meet.

The nation's largest force, New York Police Department, offers a starting salary³³ of \$42,000 per year, which is **less than 40% of the average household income³⁴** of \$107,000 in New York City.

The starting salary of the nation's largest force, New York Police Department, is less than half the average household income in New York City.



Over the last decade, **police departments have seen a decline³⁵ in applicants** and an increase in officers quitting early. Increasing officer pay and professionalism will attract smarter, more capable applicants, especially as new generations prioritize³⁶ flexible hours when looking for a job.

A higher wage improves police performance by cutting down on officer fatigue which measurably³⁷ increases the risk of officers getting hurt, puts public safety at risk and opens the door for expensive lawsuits resulting from avoidable accidents.

Police performance declines sharply when officers lose arbitrations



The per capita **number of crimes cleared by arrest** are **12 X HIGHER** in the months following arbitration when arbitrators ruled **in favor of the police officers**, relative to when arbitrators ruled for the municipal employer.

Over the last decade, the number of people applying to become police officers declined

Sixty-three percent of agencies that responded to PERF's survey said the number of applicants for police officer positions had decreased, either significantly (36%) or slightly (27%).



One study³⁸ found that officers who get paid more make more arrests while news reports³⁹ indicate poorly-paid officers do not perform as well on the job. Research also indicates that **poverty itself leads⁴⁰ to worse decision-making.**

Pay raises could also lead to more responsibility in a system of "robust, internal self-regulation" for police, according⁴¹ to the University of North Dakota Associate Professor of Law Steven R. Morrison.

Opportunities for Reform



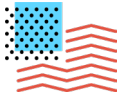
Increase officer salaries to attract and retain talented candidates, which will improve performance



Eliminate hourly pay for officers to avoid officer fatigue, which leads to worse decision-making



Raise police standards along with pay



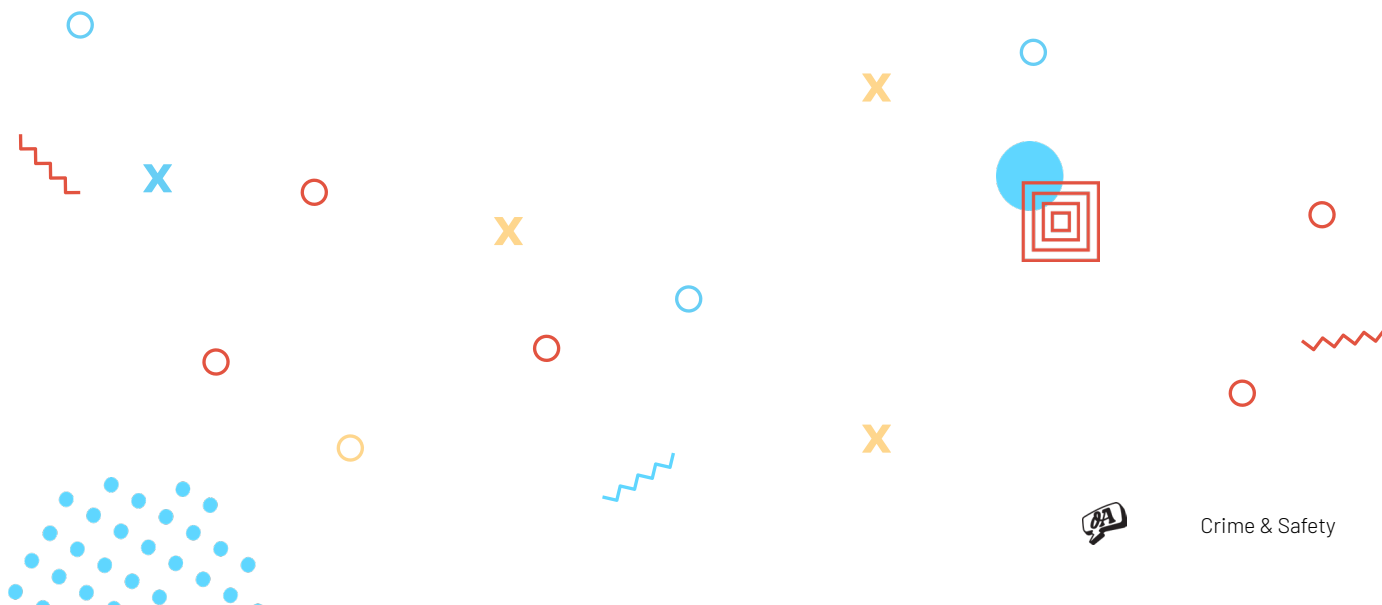
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