

Reducing Gun Violence in New York City

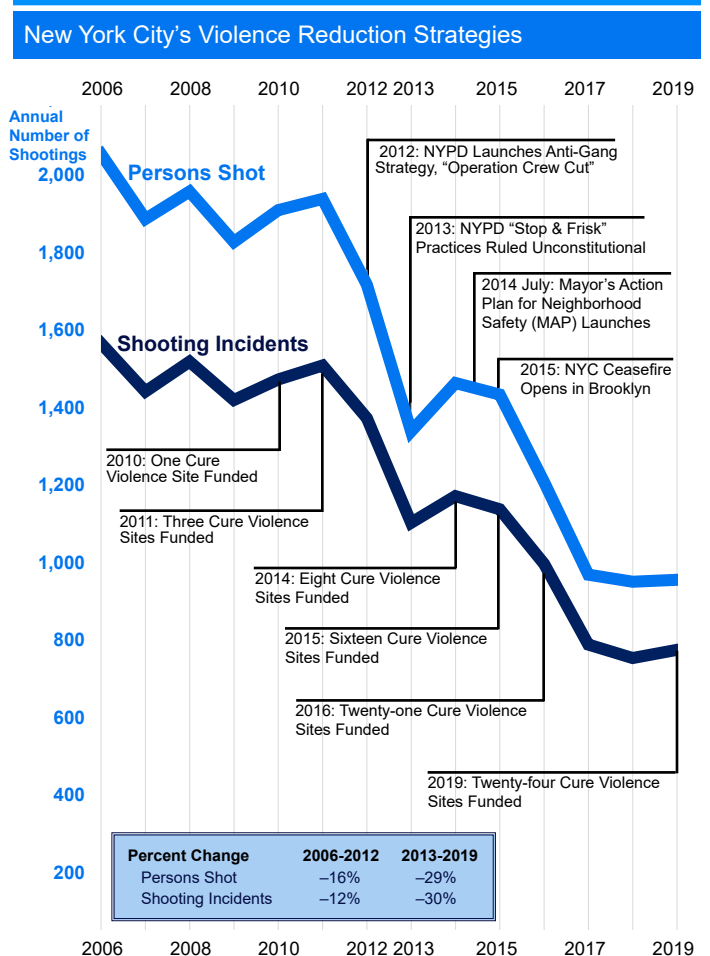
by Jeffrey A. Butts and Sheyla A. Delgado

Most large American cities experienced falling violent crime rates in recent decades. New York City was second only to San Diego in the scale of its decline. The murder rate in New York fell 53 percent between 2006 and 2018 (the most recent year with complete FBI data).

How did this happen? It is not possible to attribute such changes to one or two factors alone, but New York City launched an array of **initiatives** since 2010, expanding investments in communities and providing new support for the most disadvantaged and marginalized neighborhoods of the city. The **Cure Violence** model came to New York in 2010 and by 2019 programs were operating in 24 areas. Officials launched the **Mayor's Action for Neighborhood Safety** in 2014 and the program now operates in 15 public housing communities across all five boroughs of the City.

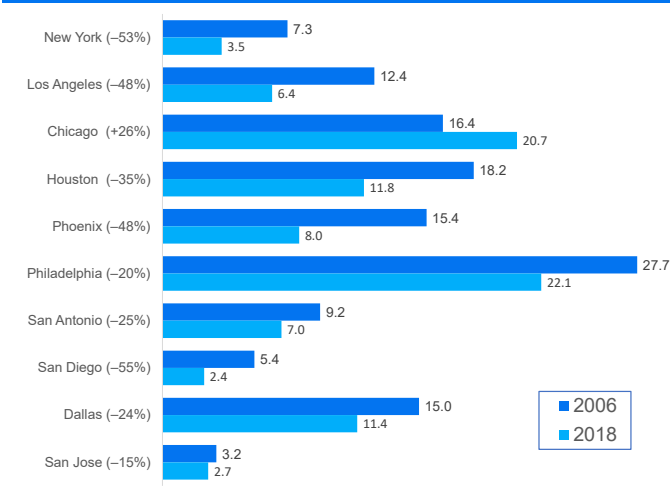
Specialized policing efforts were introduced as well, of course, including the gang take-down strategy known as **Operation Crew Cut** launched in 2012, and a focused deterrence program called **Ceasefire**, which opened in Brooklyn 2015. On the other hand, NYPD practices in the now notorious "stop, question & frisk" program were **ruled unconstitutional** and scaled back, with apparently **minimal effect** on crime. Many of the City's new initiatives tapped the energy of the community and nonprofit sector.

The City's new initiatives may have been particularly effective in reducing gun violence, which also plummeted more than 50 percent between 2006 and 2019. Crime incidents involving guns dropped 51 percent, from 1,566 to 775, while the number of people injured by gunfire declined 53 percent from 2,055 to 956. As New York City's approach to reducing gun violence became more diverse and inclusive, it may have relied less on traditional policing tactics. Causal relationships are difficult to identify in complex and multi-part initiatives, but New York City's falling rate of gun violence through 2019 suggests that recent community initiatives may have helped to sustain previous gains.



Note: Graphic includes many, but not all NYC initiatives designed to reduce gun violence.
Source: Shooting data compiled by New York City Police Department, disseminated on the NYC Open Data Portal, and analyzed by John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

Homicides per 100,000 Population in 10 Largest U.S. Cities



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Crime in the United States, 2006 & 2018. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation.