

Shooting Surge Beginning to Slow Across New York City

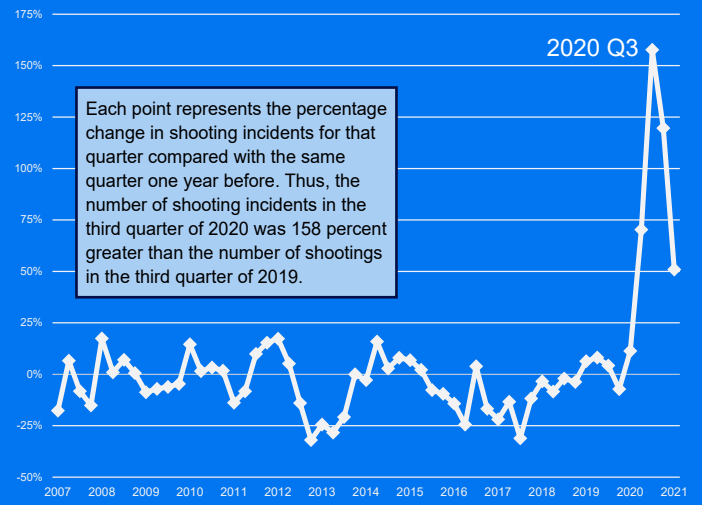
by Jeffrey A. Butts and Richard Espinobarros

Many cities in the United States experienced increased gun violence during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 and 2021. New York City was among the first urban areas affected by the pandemic, and shootings surged. Police reported 167 shooting incidents across the City in the first quarter of 2020 (January-March). Shootings more than doubled to 361 during the second quarter (April-June 2020), and by the third quarter (July-September 2020), police reported 634 separate shooting incidents.

Some of the increase was unsurprising. Gun violence follows a seasonal pattern. Shootings tend to increase in Spring and Summer before falling through Winter. Researchers try to account for this seasonal variation. One way is to compare shootings in a specific quarter with the same quarter in a previous year. These adjusted trends reveal encouraging results.

Shootings in New York City grew sharply in 2020 and remained elevated in 2021, but the degree of increase may be in decline. The number of shootings in the third quarter of 2020 was 158 percent higher than the same quarter in 2019. By the first quarter of 2021, shooting incidents were just 50 percent higher than the first quarter one year before. Quarterly comparisons varied, with Queens and Staten Island showing the most promising trends.

Annualized Percentage Change in Shootings Citywide by Quarter



Source: Shooting incident data compiled by New York City Police Department, disseminated on the NYC Open Data Portal, and analyzed by John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Shooting incidents count the number of times people were hit by gunfire in New York City regardless of how many individuals were involved in each incident. Data for the number of individual shooting victims are also available from NYPD but not presented here.

Annualized Percentage Change in Shooting Incidents Across NYC Boroughs, Adjusted by Calendar Quarter (2007 – 2021)

