



## NYPD's Stop-and-Frisks Reach Record Highs

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The NYPD conducted 684,330 stops in 2011, the highest number on record since the City Council started collecting stop-and-frisk data in 2002. Twelve percent of the stops resulted in an arrest or summons, and one in every 666 stops resulted in an arrest for possession of a firearm.

As with previous years, 87 percent of those stopped were black or Latino. Police spokesman Paul Browne said the racial breakdown of stop-and-frisks reflects the racial breakdown of criminal suspects — the vast majority of whom are black or Latino, according to the department.

In an email, Browne said blacks made up 53 percent of the stop subjects and were 66 percent of the violent crime suspects in 2011. In 2010, blacks were stopped 54 percent and were 66 percent of the violent crime suspects. For Hispanics, 34 percent were stop subjects and 26 percent were violent crime suspects in 2011. In the previous year they made up 33 percent of stopped subjects and 26 percent of violent crime suspects.

But critics of stop-and-frisk counter that comparing the racial breakdown of violent crime suspects to the racial breakdown of stop-and-frisks is a disingenuous argument.

“You gotta ask — well, how many of these stop-and-frisks are based on description of a suspect?” asked Donna Lieberman, executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, at a press conference in front of City Hall on Tuesday. “Very few of them are based on description of a suspect.”

According to the police department’s own report analyzing the reasons for its stops in the fourth quarter of 2011, only 16.5 percent of individuals stopped were stopped because the individual fit “a relevant description.”

Darius Charney of the Center for Constitutional Rights, which is suing the city and police department for racially profiling individuals during stop-and-frisks, said data from the lawsuit shows the crime suspect race was unknown in nearly 40 percent of all crime complaints made to the NYPD in 2009 and 2010.

Critics of the police also say stop-and-frisks are an inefficient way to get illegal guns off the street, arguing that gun buy-back programs actually yield a higher number of firearms.

When asked to confirm whether that was true, Browne responded, "There's a big difference between a grandmother surrendering a gun and someone illegally carrying a concealed weapon."

Meanwhile, some city officials say it's up to the mayor to reform the police and demand independent oversight of the department.

"I'm calling on Mayor Bloomberg to step out of the shadow of Commissioner Kelly and lead on this issue," said Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer at Tuesday's press conference, adding that the police "has become overzealous in its procedures."

Other criminal justice reform advocates had less hope in the current administration.

"It's clear that only a significant shift in the city's police climate or a change in the leadership of city government and the NYPD will bring about urgently needed reforms," said Robert Gangi, director of the Police Reform Organizing Project at the Urban Justice Center.

As stop-and-frisk-numbers continue to rise, crime rates in the city have plateaued. The police department has long defended its policy as an important tool that has reduced violent crime in the city. "Stops save lives," Browne wrote in his email. "Over the past 10 years, there were 5,430 murders in New York City, compared to 11,058 in the decade before Mayor Bloomberg took office. That's a remarkable achievement — 5,628 lives saved — attributable to proactive policing strategies that included stops."

However, no academic study has conclusively proven stop-and-frisk directly cuts down nonviolent crime.

In March 2002, Police Commissioner Ray Kelly issued an internal order, commanding the department to follow a policy against racial profiling, which he defined as "the use of race, color, ethnicity or national origin as the determinative factor for initiating police action." But Charney said during depositions for the racial profiling lawsuit against city, some high-ranking police officials admitted that they did not know an explicit policy against racial profiling existed.