

# Crime & Safety Transformed:

A Balanced Approach to Modern Policing



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# Executive Summary

Last year, only 26%<sup>1</sup> of adults in the U.S. had a great deal of confidence in the police. This is a problem, as multiple studies<sup>2</sup> link distrust in police to higher crime rates, particularly homicide. At the same time, **75% of Americans<sup>3</sup> 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

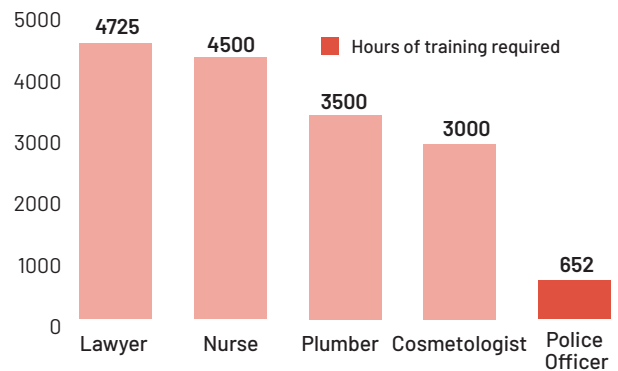
Police officers need to be trained for all types of scenarios. Yet, **American police officers receive some of the least training** in the developed world.

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

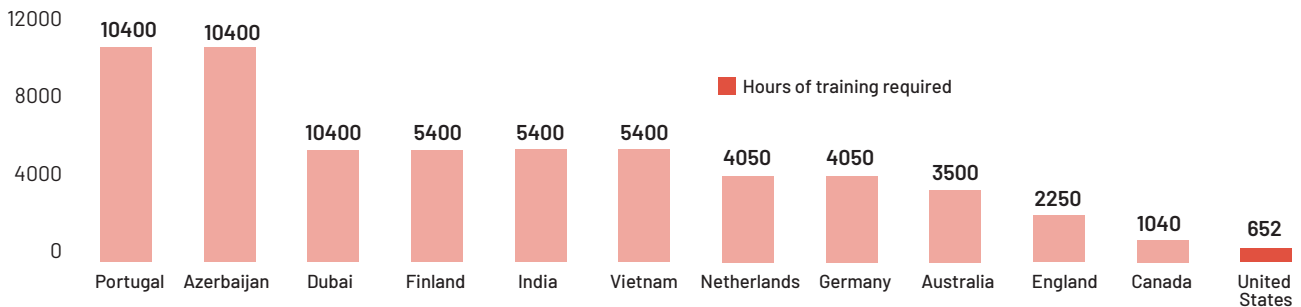
On average, an American police officer receives far less<sup>4</sup> training than police in other developed countries. Additionally, basic police training often **neglects de-escalation and civil rights/procedural justice training**.

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



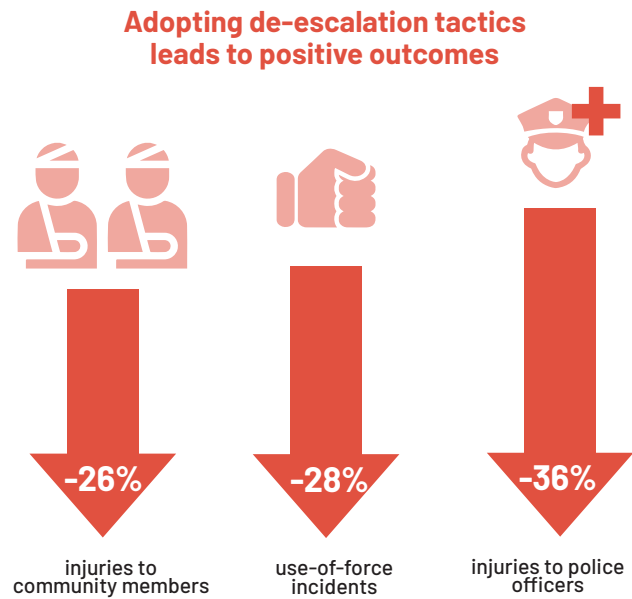
Research shows that incorporating de-escalation tactics into a police department's training is associated<sup>5</sup> with 26% fewer injuries to community members, 28% fewer use-of-force incidents, and 36% fewer injuries to police officers.

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 understand<sup>6</sup> **the protections it guarantees**. In fact, police academies dedicate a mere 3.21%<sup>7</sup> 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 hiring<sup>8</sup> 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 beats<sup>9</sup> for serious threats<sup>10</sup> or traffic accidents, **crime increases in unpatrolled areas.**

Research<sup>11</sup> also shows that **placing officers at crime "hot spots" reduces serious crime in those areas.** In fact, adding 10-17 officers<sup>12</sup> 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 research<sup>13</sup> and older studies<sup>14</sup> 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 receive<sup>15</sup> 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

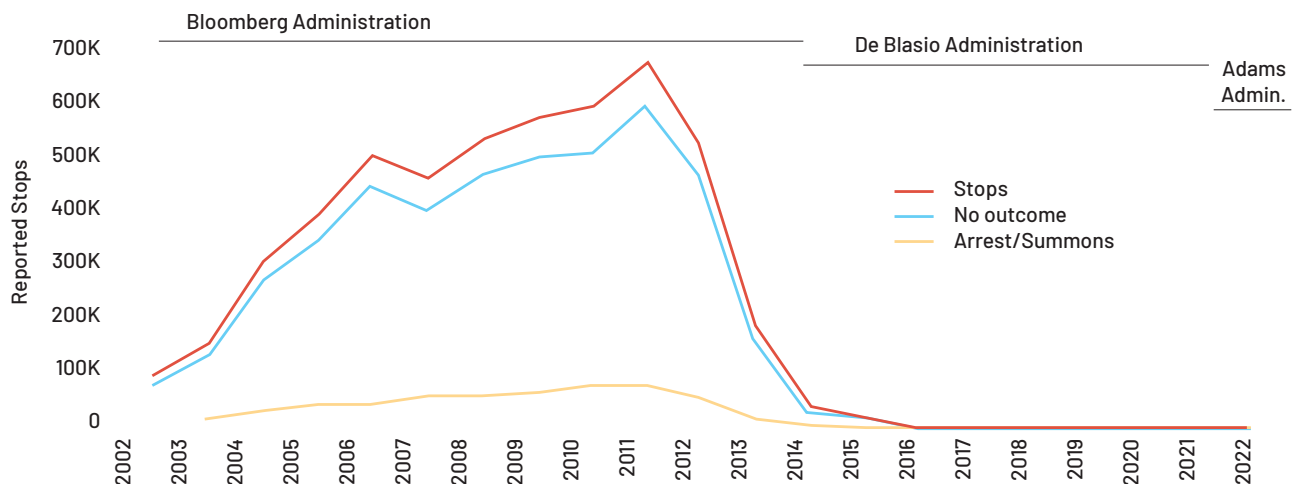
### Summary

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 illegal<sup>16</sup> 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 stopped<sup>17</sup> 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 innocent<sup>18</sup>.

### Stop-and-Frisk over time in New York City





With proactive policing, each additional police officer results<sup>19</sup> 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 policing<sup>20</sup> 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 solution<sup>21</sup> 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 attitudes<sup>22</sup> 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**<sup>23</sup>.

*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 Index<sup>24</sup> 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 continue<sup>25</sup> to employ<sup>26</sup> 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 found<sup>27</sup> to tamper with recording devices and other forms of evidence – with no consequences.

Additionally, in nearly half of the states, laws redact<sup>28</sup> 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

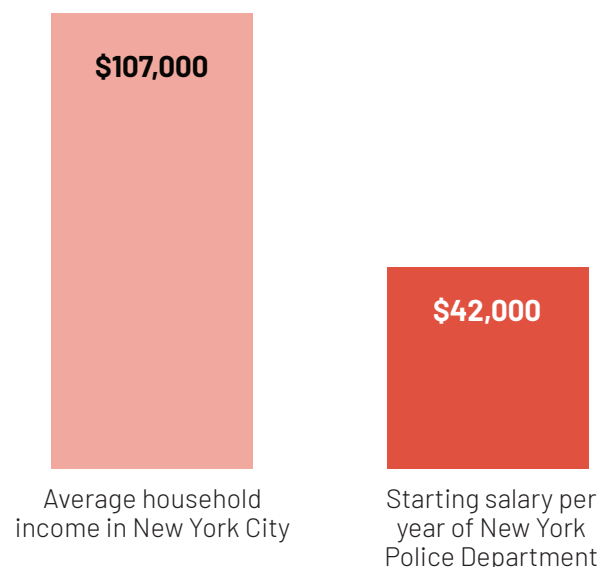
**Police officers are some of America's greatest heroes, yet they are not paid like the critical, highly-trained professionals they are.** On top of this, they are forced to work overtime which discourages good candidates, leads to officer fatigue and creates the risk of injury.

*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 earned<sup>29</sup> around \$66,020 per year, which is more than a third higher<sup>30</sup> than the national median of \$48,769 for all occupations. Yet, **many officers earn poverty-level wages** with some making a mere<sup>31</sup> \$20,000 per year. That forces many to work overtime<sup>32</sup> to make ends meet.

The nation's largest force, New York Police Department, offers a starting salary<sup>33</sup> of \$42,000 per year, which is **less than 40% of the average household income<sup>34</sup>** 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 decline<sup>35</sup> in applicants** and an increase in officers quitting early. Increasing officer pay and professionalism will attract smarter, more capable applicants, especially as new generations prioritize<sup>36</sup> flexible hours when looking for a job.

**A higher wage improves police performance** by cutting down on officer fatigue which measurably<sup>37</sup> increases the risk of officers getting hurt, puts public safety at risk and opens the door for expensive lawsuits resulting from avoidable accidents.

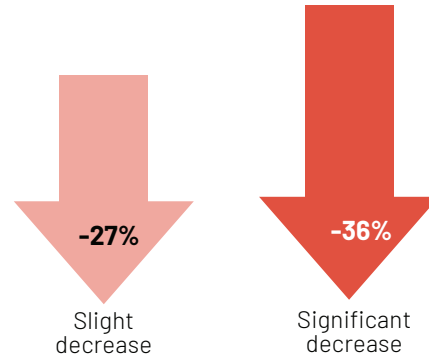
### Police performance declines sharply when officers lose arbitrations



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 study<sup>38</sup> found that officers who get paid more make more arrests while news reports<sup>39</sup> indicate poorly-paid officers do not perform as well on the job. Research also indicates that **poverty itself leads<sup>40</sup> to worse decision-making.**

Pay raises could also lead to more responsibility in a system of "robust, internal self-regulation" for police, according<sup>41</sup> to the University of North Dakota Associate Professor of Law Steven R. Morrison.

## Opportunities for Reform



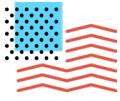
**Increase officer salaries** to attract and retain talented candidates, which will improve performance



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



**Raise police standards** along with pay



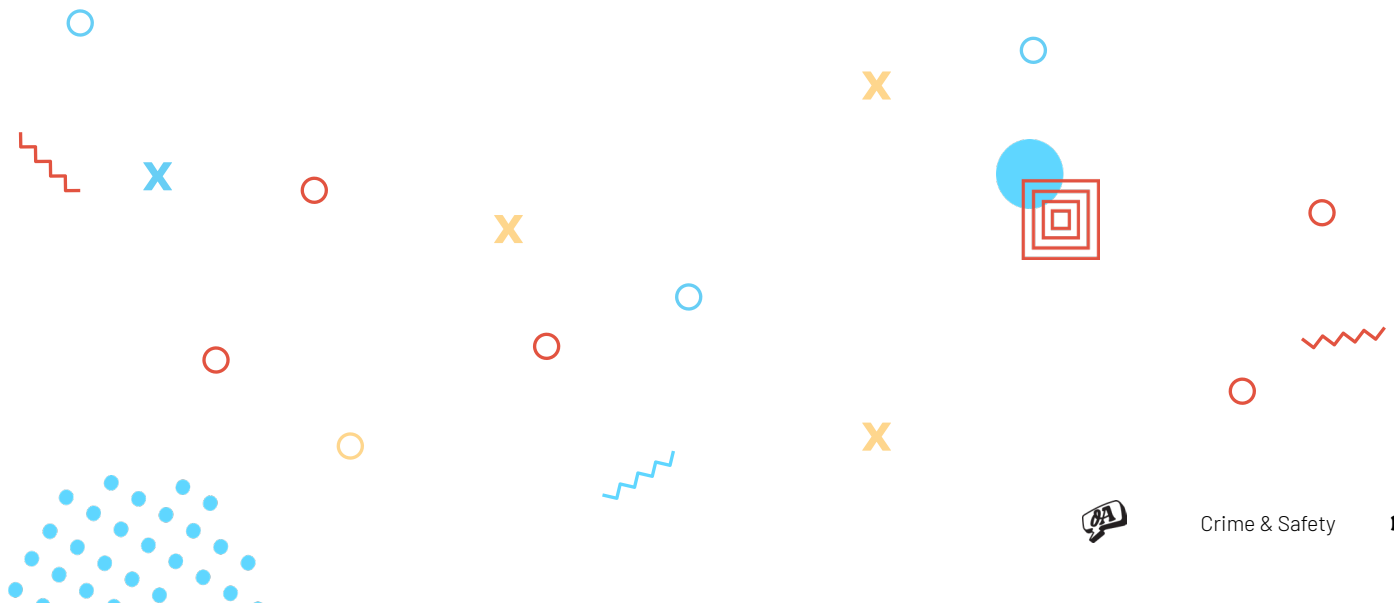
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