Breaking the Frame?
Remaking the criminal justice system in New York City

May 2019

The City of New York
Office of the Mayor

NYC Criminal Justice
crime
an action that violates the law. Crimes can go unreported, be reported to the
police, or police can observe a criminal act. Crimes that are reported to or
observed by police are counted as measures of criminal activity. The majority
of crimes are categorized as misdemeanors (punishable by up to one year in
local jail) or felonies (punishable by one year or more in a state prison).

- **Index crimes:** Select felony crimes used to measure crime rates
  within and across jurisdictions and over time; includes violent
  crimes of murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault and
  property crimes of burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft.

enforcement
Police activity in response to crime. not every crime results in an arrest. Some
crimes remain unreported and some remain unsolved. If the police suspect a
person has committed a crime, they may issue that person a summons, requir-
ing a future appearance in court, or they may custodialy arrest the person,
taking them into police custody.

jail
The New York City jail system, which holds people awaiting trial, serving
a city sentence, or awaiting parole violation hearings, is run by the NYC
Department of Correction, and includes jails on Rikers Island, Manhattan,
Brooklyn, and the Bronx.

- **Admission to jail:** the event of entering jail. Over the course of a
  year, most people enter (and leave) only once, but others enter
  multiple times.

- **Average Daily Population:** the average number of people held
  in New York City jails on any given day of a specified time period
  (usually a month or a year)

- **Average Length of Stay:** the average number of days people
  leaving jail were held prior to their release

- **Groups of people held in jail:**
  - Detained pretrial, awaiting the resolution of their court case
    - **Violent felony detainee:** a person charged with a violent
      felony offense, defined by the New York State Penal
      Code 70.02, in which a prison sentence of more than
      one year may be issued

    - **Nonviolent felony detainee:** a person charged with a
      felony not included in New York State Penal Code 70.02,
      in which a prison sentence of more than one year may be
      issued

    - **Misdemeanor detainee:** a person charged with a
      misdemeanor, in which a jail sentence of 15 to 365
      days may be issued

  - Serving a **city sentence** after pleading or being found guilty and
    sentenced to a jail term

  - Awaiting a **state technical parole violation** hearing

  - For other reasons, such as awaiting a transfer to a state prison,
    or for outstanding warrants or other court holds
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Letter from the Director
Slowly, then all of a sudden, New York City’s justice system has experienced a fundamental shift in the way in which it operates. By all traditional measures – crime, incarceration, enforcement – what is occurring in this city is different in scale and dimension from the rest of the nation. These traditional markers of the justice system put in new relief questions that confront us now with urgency: Have we reached the limits of what the traditional structures of the criminal justice system can produce in safety? If yes, what other approaches should we use?

Over the past five years the number of people entering jail has fallen by almost half, with reductions that have quadrupled in pace since the beginning of this administration five years ago. Police are arresting, summoning and stopping fewer people and judges are using release more and jail less, even as crime continues to decline. To the extent jail holds up a mirror to the functioning of the rest of the criminal justice system, it is significant that New York City’s incarceration rate today is the lowest by far of any large American city.

The most telling marker of all in this transformation of New York has been the changing behavior of New Yorkers themselves. Among other crime declines, murders stand out, dropping 89% since 1990 to a rate that is a fraction of other big cities.

If New York City is safer, even as the use of arrest and jail is dropping, is there a path from rules enforced by the justice system alone, to rules participated in by each of us — driving a virtuous cycle of civic peace? Among the things our own history has taught us is that the touch of the criminal justice system can cause harm as much as repair. The research and our fellow New Yorkers tell us that the overuse of jail and enforcement can contribute to a vicious cycle of offending. And the jury is still out on the degree to which incapacitation reduced crime and how high a price we paid in trust.

We live these findings every day: as a city, we are still addressing how 700,000 stops a year in mainly Black and Latinx neighborhoods and the heavy rate of incarceration among these same communities engendered a deep cynicism about the fairness of the law and its application.

At the same time, we have some hard, if emerging proof, that there is another way to create an organic and durable peace. In neighborhoods most afflicted with violence across the city, community groups are employing violence interrupters, jobs programs and other strategies that have reduced shootings 30% more than in comparable neighborhoods. In 15 housing developments that have borne the brunt of violent crime, a regular convening with residents, city agencies and non-profits to identify and solve problems has produced crime reductions that have outpaced other developments. In parks and city streets, where care has been taken to create vibrant public spaces, crime has also dropped.

Does the path to a durable peace then lie in the hands of every New Yorker, through each neighborhood and joined to the arterial structure of supports that government can provide? Perhaps this approach will and has already ignited the virtuous cycle that will ensure our safety.
Executive Summary
With crime, enforcement, and incarceration all dropping to record lows in 2018, this Justice Brief describes the criminal justice trends happening within New York City over the past five years and examines the drivers of this transformation. It suggests that we are turning the corner into a new way of creating safety, rooted in neighborhoods, reaching beyond the singular reliance on criminal justice structures to approaches that, among other things, create vibrant public spaces and invest in human development.

**Crime and Arrests Have Declined**
- New York City is the safest large city in the U.S.
- Violent crime is down 17% since 2013
- Arrests are down 37% since 2013

**The City's Jail Population Has Plummeted**
- The jail population hit a 40-year low in 2018
- The number of people entering jail annually has declined by 46%
- The number of people held in jail daily has declined by 30%

**Five Significant Changes Drove the Reductions in the Jail Population**
- New Yorkers are committing fewer crimes
- Police are arresting fewer people
- Judges and prosecutors are diverting more people, leading to fewer jail admissions
- Court actors – including judges, prosecutors, and defenders – have resolved the oldest cases in the system
- Judges are sentencing fewer people to jail

**New Ways of Creating and Maintaining Safety Have Emerged**
- Innovative, community-based work across the City, from re-designing neighborhood spaces to leading regular problem-solving sessions that bring together residents, government agencies,
SECTION ONE

Key Trends 2013-2018

Something important is happening in New York City that has the potential to fundamentally remake the way we think about and create safety. With crime, enforcement, and incarceration all dropping to record lows, the outline of what may be a new way of ensuring the peace is emerging. In this paradigm, it is possible that a lighter touch throughout the justice system is making room for other approaches: the importance of informal networks within neighborhoods, the power of changes in the physical environment, and the effectiveness of investments in work and play, among others.

This Justice Brief provides, first, an overview of the basic trends in crime, enforcement and incarceration that define the hydraulics of the criminal justice system. It then looks, through the lens of the city’s jails, at how the system has changed, as deprivation of liberty reflects one of the most severe consequences of criminal justice involvement. Finally, it outlines how the changing behavior of many have affected these results and what that might mean for our forward path both inside and outside the formal justice structures.
While many cities in the United States have benefited from dropping crime rates over the last three decades, New York City is unusual in the steepness and durability of its crime decline and, importantly, the accompanying dramatic reductions in both police enforcement (arrests, summonses, and stop and frisk) and in the use of incarceration. This section outlines the key trends in these three areas.

In 2018, the NYC murder rate was at its lowest level since 1990, falling by 89% (compared to—47% nationally). Since 2013, the NYC murder rate has fallen by 14%, while the national murder rate increased by 11% over the same time period. Like the murder rate, index and violent crime rates in NYC have also fallen substantially since 2013, both down 17%. Nationally, the index crime rate fell by 15% and the violent crime rate remained unchanged since 2013.

MURDER RATE: USA AND 5 LARGEST CITIES, 1985-2018

Source: FBI UCR. Note: See data appendix for underlying numbers used throughout this report.
Enforcement Has Declined

Low-level police enforcement has declined. Neither summonses nor stop and frisks have an effect on the jail population, but they are important measures of police activity.

Source: NYPD Compstat.
Incarceration Has Declined

While crime and enforcement rates have both been falling, so too has the City’s use of jail. In 2018, the jails held fewer than 8,000 people for the first time since September 1980. It is a rate of incarceration last seen in 1978—a 40 year low—at a time when the city’s crime rate was over 4 times what it is today.

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**NYC JAIL INCARCERATION RATE COMPARED TO LARGE US CITIES**

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<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NYC</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>245</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>289</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>480</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NYC JAIL INCARCERATION RATE**

New York City’s current jail incarceration rate is 136 per 100,000 adults, a rate closer to the incarceration rate of European countries than to New York State and United States’ rates.

**NYC’S DECLINING INCARCERATION RATE**

(rates per 100,000 adults)

- 1978: 136
- 1980: 160
- 1991: 407
- 2013: 199
- December 2018: 136
- Jail pop at 5,000: 85

Source: Average jail populations published online via county websites; https://www.prisonpolicy.org/global/2018.html. Note: NYC incarceration rate reflects the local jail population while other rates include the populations of all people incarcerated across local jail, state prison, and federal facilities.
SECTION TWO

Changes in NYC Jail 2013-2018

Perhaps more than any other criminal justice system point, New York City’s use of jail has undergone a radical transformation over the past five years. The number of people entering jail annually has declined by 46% and the number of people held in jail daily has declined by 30%. Jails are less frequently being used to hold those charged with misdemeanors and fewer people are experiencing short, disruptive jail stays.
New York City’s jail population has plummeted

The composition and rate of reduction in NYC’s jail population has changed dramatically in five years. The number of people in New York City’s jail on any given day over the past five years dropped three times faster than in the preceding 13 years.

- In December of 2013, there were 11,478 people in City jails. At the end of 2018, there were 7,959 people in City jails – a 30% drop in five years and the most significant five-year drop since the 1970s.

- In 2018, there were an average of 3,300 fewer people in city jails on any given day than in 2013.

- Through the first quarter of 2019, the population has continued to fall by 11%. On April 27, 2019, the daily population was 7,535 (the lowest number since July 1980).

Source: MOCJ analysis of DOC data.
Admissions to Jail have Fallen by 46% since 2013

Although annual admissions to jail have been falling steadily for over a decade, they fell 22% in the last year, more than three times faster than the average annual reduction in the last decade.

Overall admissions* to jail are down by 46% (-37,000 admits), but some declines are outpacing others.

- City sentenced admissions are down 72% since 2013 (over 9,000 admits)
- Misdemeanor admissions are down 56% (over 13,000 admits)
- Nonviolent felony admissions are down 43% (over 7,900 admits)
- Violent felony admissions are down 23% (over 3,100 admits)
- Technical parole admissions are down by 10% (420 admits)

*The term “admissions” signifies the event of entering jail, and is not meant to refer to the individual who is entering. Over the course of each year, some people enter only once while others enter multiple times. Source: MOCJ analysis of DOC data.
The Use of Jail is Shifting in Important Ways

These declines are driven by changing enforcement (large drops in people arrested on misdemeanor charges), and increasing use of diversion, in particular the City’s Supervised Release program, which offers judges an option to divert from jail people charged with misdemeanors and nonviolent felonies.

While changing enforcement and increased diversion have decreased the number of people entering jail for misdemeanor and nonviolent felony charges, other charges, influenced by decreasing crime, have impacted the daily jail population to a greater degree. These declines are most evident in the daily number of people held on robbery, drug, assault and murder charges. Compared to 2013, there were over 2,000 fewer people in jail every day on these charges alone.

At the same time, these enforcement and diversion shifts have resulted in fewer people staying for very short periods of time. The number of people spending fewer than 30 days in jail is down by 53% since 2013, a decline of 29,477 admissions.

Source: MOCJ analysis of DOC data.
In 2018, NYC jails were populated by those held:
- awaiting trial (75%),
- serving city sentences (12%),
- awaiting a state technical parole violation hearing (8%);
- for other reasons (5%)

### AVERAGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN JAIL IN NEW YORK CITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Jail population 2013</th>
<th>Jail population 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violent Felony Detainees</td>
<td>4,565</td>
<td>3,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonviolent Felony Detainees</td>
<td>2,940</td>
<td>2,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misdemeanor Detainees</td>
<td>1,070</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Sentenced</td>
<td>1,750</td>
<td>1,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Technical Parole Violator</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Warrants, State Holds)</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MOCJ analysis of DOC data.
Steep Declines in Particular Groups

There is one notable exception: State Technical Parole Violators:

On average, this group increased by 9% from 2013 to 2018.
State law forbids state technical parole violators, who have not committed any new criminal offense, from leaving City jails until their parole hearing concludes, a process overseen by the state. Often, state parole violators remain in jail much longer than people without parole violations. View the State Parolees Fact Sheet.

POPULATIONS FALLING FAST

-65% in people held pretrial with bail less than $2,000
The number of people held in jail pretrial on low bail has fallen by 65% since 2013, from 963 to 336. These individuals often only spend a few days in jail. View the Bail Fact Sheet.

-53% in young adults (18-21-year-olds) in custody
The number of young adults ages 18-21 in jail on any given day has declined by 53%, from 1592 in 2013 to 744 in 2018. Given the research findings of the criminogenic effects of jail, decreasing the number of young adults now may further reduce the jail population in the future. View Jail in New York City: Evidence-Based Opportunities for Reform.

-36% women in custody
The number of women in custody has decreased by 36% since 2013, from 823 to 528. While the number of incarcerated women continues to climb nationwide, in New York City we are seeing the opposite trend.

Source: MOCJ analysis of DOC data.
Since 2013, jail admissions are down across all boroughs, but the Bronx (-56%) and Manhattan (-51%) have had the highest declines. In the last year alone (2017-2018), Manhattan reduced admissions by 27% and the Bronx reduced admissions by 26%.

When looking at the 2018 rate of admissions for each borough, Manhattan is admitting people to jail at higher rates than other boroughs.

Manhattan also continues to admit the most people to jail every year specifically for felony drug, theft, burglary, and weapons cases and misdemeanor theft cases.
While total admissions fell by 46% since 2013, Black and Latinx people are still admitted to jail much more frequently than White people.

**RACE/ETHNIC BREAKDOWN OF NYC POPULATION**

- **White**: 32% of NYC population; 9% of 2018 jail admissions; 8% of daily jail population
- **Black**: 22% of NYC population; 52% of 2018 jail admissions; 54% of daily jail population
- **Latinx**: 29% of NYC population; 32% of 2018 jail admissions; 33% of daily jail population
- **Asian**: 15% of NYC population; 2% of 2018 jail admissions; 1% of daily jail population
- **Other**: 2% of NYC population; 0% of 2018 jail admissions; 0% of daily jail population

When looking at the daily jail population, the race/ethnicity composition has remained fairly stable over time, with Black and Latinx individuals comprising 87% of the population.

**REDUCTIONS IN JAIL ADMISSIONS OF BLACK, LATINX, AND WHITE INDIVIDUALS WERE FAIRLY SIMILAR, FALLING BY 45-48% FROM 2013 TO 2018.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2,325</td>
<td>2,095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1,050</td>
<td>950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>7,130</td>
<td>3,895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx</td>
<td>26,250</td>
<td>13,895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>43,755</td>
<td>22,560</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When looking at the daily jail population, the race/ethnicity composition has remained fairly stable over time, with Black and Latinx individuals comprising 87% of the population.

New York City’s criminal justice system has undergone a massive shift over the past five years, with changes happening at every level. The causes and effects are complex, but this section identifies five specific behavior changes that have produced historic results. These changes, including New Yorkers committing fewer crimes, police arresting fewer people, judges and prosecutors diverting more people from jail, courts clearing the oldest cases from the system, and judges sentencing fewer people to jail terms, have resulted in the smallest jail population in 40 years and an overall fairer, more proportionate criminal justice system.
The criminal justice landscape in New York City has shifted in five significant ways in the last five years.

- New Yorkers are committing fewer crimes
- Police are arresting fewer people
- Judges and prosecutors are diverting more people, leading to fewer jail admissions
- Court actors – including judges, prosecutors, and defenders – have resolved the oldest cases in the system
- Judges are sentencing fewer people to jail

Each of these changes, as detailed in the coming pages, have had a significant effect on the City’s jail population.

**In December 2018, there were approximately 3500 fewer people in jail on any given day, as compared to December 2013. These reductions are attributed to the following:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME DISTRIBUTION OF CHANGES AND EFFECT ON DAILY JAIL POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2013</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer Crimes (-16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer Arrests (-26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Pretrial Diversion (-34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldest Cases Cleared (-10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer Jail Sentences (-14%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Since their peak in 1990, murders have fallen by 89%. Across the board, reports of crime have plummeted since the 1990s. In 1990, there were 100,280 robberies, more than ALL index crime combined in 2018 (95,883 index crimes).

Citywide, the rates of violent crime reported to NYPD, which include murder, robbery, rape, and felony assault, are down 17% since 2013, and have declined across all boroughs.

*Total shootings as of 1993. NYPD does not have shooting data prior to this year, as shootings were recorded as felony assaults.

Source: NYPD CompStat, FBI-UCR, NYPD Compstat}
Change #1: New Yorkers Committing Fewer Crimes

Though not counted in NYPD’s violent crime rate, the number of shootings every year are an important measure of crime and safety. The top ten precincts with the highest number of shootings in 2018 had 312 shootings, just eight more then the number in Brownsville only in 1993 (304). Despite the dramatic reductions, eight of the 10 precincts with the most shootings in 1993 also had the most shootings in 2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1993 Precinct</th>
<th>Numbers of Shootings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brownsville (73rd)*</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East New York (75th)*</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedford Stuyvesant (79th)*</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Crown Heights (77th)</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bushwick (83rd)</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Flatbush (67th)*</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mott Haven (40th)*</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Concourse (44th)</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bronx (46th)*</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedford Stuyvesant (81st)</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2018 Precinct</th>
<th>Numbers of Shootings/ Rank from 1993</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brownsville (73rd)*</td>
<td>47 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Flatbush (67th)*</td>
<td>39 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Concourse (44th)</td>
<td>38 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mott Haven (40th)*</td>
<td>34 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East New York (75th)*</td>
<td>32 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedford Stuyvesant (79th)*</td>
<td>30 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morrisania (42nd)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Brooklyn-Souther Crown Heights (71st)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedford Stuyvesant (81st)</td>
<td>23 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bronx (46th)*</td>
<td>22 (9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 8 Precincts appear on Top 10 lists in both 1993 and 2018

**SHOOTINGS IN NYC, 1993-2018**

Source: NYPD CompStat
Change #2: Police Arresting Fewer People

Arrests decline because there is less crime. Felony arrests, which result in a jail admission about 25% of the time, have fallen 9% since 2013. And misdemeanor arrests, which result in a jail admission around 8% of the time, have fallen by 41% since 2013. Additionally, police now have the ability to issue criminal summonses for offenses that would have led to arrest in the past.

Arrests decline because of policy changes. In November 2014 and again in September 2018, NYPD changed its policy with regard to marijuana enforcement. Although today very few people are jailed on marijuana-related charges, the enforcement changes have been dramatic. Arrests for marijuana are down 73%. View the Marijuana Fact Sheet.

MARIJUANA ARRESTS BY ADMINISTRATION

Sources: NYPD Compstat; MOCJ Analysis of 2018 Computerized Criminal History data provided by DCJS
Note: 2013-2018 marijuana arrests include only PL 221.10 01
Change #3: Courts Diverting More People from Jail

These dramatic declines in jail admissions can partially be explained by falling crime and fewer arrests. But not entirely. While misdemeanor arrests have fallen by 41% since 2013, misdemeanor jail admissions dropped by 56%. And while felony arrests have fallen by 9% since 2013, non-violent felony jail admissions have dropped by 42%.

The citywide diversion program, Supervised Release, has taken over 11,200 people from March 2016 to December 2018. Additionally, in 2018 judges set money bail in fewer cases than in the past. View the Summons Reform Fact sheet, View the Supervised Release Scorecard.

MONTHLY PRE-TRIAL ADMISSIONS AND SUPERVISED RELEASED DOCKET

Source: MOCJ analysis of DOC data; MOCJ.
The length of time that people spend in jail, particularly for pretrial detainees who make up around three-quarters of the jail population, is a significant driver of the size of the jail population. Reducing length of stay in jail requires significant cooperation and coordination among a number of different entities, including the courts, mayoral agencies, state corrections, district attorneys and defense attorneys.

The vast majority of those in jail for longer than one year are detained pretrial and charged with violent felony offenses. The most common charges are murder and attempted murder. Since 2015, prosecutors, defenders, and judges have worked to clear the oldest cases in the system, resulting in a 23% decrease in the number of people in jail for over one year.

Though the number of people in jail for over one year has decreased, the average length of stay for people leaving jail has increased by 34% since 2013. This is due largely to huge decreases in people spending fewer than 30 days in custody, which causes the length of stay to rise. From 2013 to 2018, the number of people spending fewer than 30 days in custody declined by 53%.

If jail stays of one month or less are excluded, the 2018 average length of jail stay has increased by 6% since 2013, but has fallen by 1% since 2017.

Source: MOCJ analysis of DOC data.
Change #5:
Judges Sentencing Fewer People to Jail

If a defendant either pleads guilty or is found guilty by a judge, he or she is sentenced. Some sentences are non-incarcerative and can include a fine or community-based program. Some, if for less than a year, are served in city jails: 12% of the New York City jail population is serving a sentence of one year or less. Sentences of over one year are served in state prisons.

As result of this intervention and other shifts in the criminal justice landscape, admissions to jail for people sentenced to one year or less have plummeted by 72% since 2013 and by 41% since 2017. Preliminary analysis suggests that this is being driven by reductions in sentences of 30 days or less, corresponding to changing enforcement policies and alternative to incarceration program expansions.

The number of people going to state prison has also declined dramatically, down 41% since 2013. The reductions in the state prison population are due almost exclusively to New York City sending fewer people to prison. 91% of the decline in the New York State prison population is due to fewer New York City residents being imprisoned.

Source: MOCJ analysis of DOC data; MOCJ.
What’s next: Putting the public back in public safety

Over the past few years in New York City, we have gotten used to saying that we can have more safety with less incarceration. The current trends downwards in enforcement also present the question whether we can have more safety with less enforcement. As the space between enforcement and safety narrows, another question emerges: what options beyond enforcement and incarceration could both improve safety and avoid the harms and costs that a justice system, focused on punishment, extracts? This section highlights a few examples already underway in the City that suggest a forward path in building safety from the neighborhood up.
Neighborhood Problem Solving

For the past five years, the Mayor’s Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety (MAP) has worked with neighborhoods, city, and non-profit agencies to enhance safety holistically using physical improvements and expanded opportunities for work and play, as well as strategic coordination of law enforcement and other city resources. MAP, along with decades of research, has shown that a sustainable peace is one where the public has a role in defining and maintaining public safety. In New York City, NeighborhoodStat is the mechanism through which communities and government work in partnership to reduce crime and increase safety and wellbeing. Through NeighborhoodStat resident stakeholder teams meet regularly with city agencies and local community organizations to develop their unique community safety priorities. The City, in turn, responds with resources, transparency and accountability to repair the relationship with communities where trust in government has been broken. The power in this process is its amplification of community voice and the building of both collective efficacy and community cohesion that evidence shows is critical to crime reduction efforts.

Resources to learn more:

Evaluation of MAP: John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Chapter 8 “The End of Warrior Policing” in Patrick Sharkey’s An Uneasy Peace (2018)
Civilianizing Safety

The City’s Office to Prevent Gun Violence oversees the Crisis Management System (CMS) which includes teams of credible messengers who mediate conflicts on the street and connect high-risk individuals to services that can reduce violence. Since 2013, Cure Violence/Case Management System has contributed to a 38% decline in shootings in the 17 precincts where it has been implemented. Programs also produced measurable changes in attitudes, increasing community confidence in law enforcement while reducing the willingness of young men to use violence to settle disputes.

Resources to learn more:

Evaluation of Cure Violence: John Jay College of Criminal Justice
The Office to Prevent Gun Violence in the News
The Power of Place

The power of place: Thriving, healthy communities are ones that include vibrant physical spaces and neighborhood assets. The limitations of an environment, including deteriorating infrastructure, poorly maintained streets, vacant lots and waste management issues, could all negatively affect both the feeling and presence of safety. Several strategies in NYC are using the power of place and neighborhood engagement to create public spaces that invite positive connections. The Neighborhood Activation project worked with two neighborhoods to re-imagine and design public places. View the MOCJ report. Through MAP, neighborhood residents, community partners and city agencies envision and create physical spaces that are activated, well maintained, and invested in, bringing rejuvenated vibrancy into neighborhoods, oftentimes transforming narratives, and creating safe spaces for communities to come together.

Resources to learn more:
Neighborhood Activation Project
Eric Kleinenberg, Palaces for the People (2018)
New York Restoration Project
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#SafeVibrantNYC | #PeaceNYC