



Stop-and-Frisks Still on Pace to Reach 600,000 for Second Consecutive Year

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A report from the Center for Constitutional Rights details the human impact of stop-and-frisk incidents, which a spokesperson for the CCR says are technically on pace to reach over 600,000 for the second consecutive year.

Inappropriate touching, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and police brutality are among the few humiliating threats posed by stop-and-frisk searches conducted by New York City Police, and fear has become a way of life for some of those who have been frisked, the report says.

The report estimates that by the end of 2012 the number of stop-and-frisk incidents will reach 700,000 in New York City.

“The use of stops and frisks has grown at an astounding rate – a more than 600 percent increase over the past ten years,” the report said.

“The number of stops in 2011 was the largest on record and 2012 is on track to be higher still, with over 203,500 stops in the first three months alone – an average of 2,200 stops per day.”

Roughly 685,000 stop and frisk searches were conducted in 2011.

But as Politic365 reported before, the number of stop-and-frisk searches were down 34 percent from the first quarter of 2012.

A spokesperson for the Center for Constitutional Rights could not say whether the CCR’s projection of 700,000 incidents would come to fulfillment.

“They’d have to do more than 400,000 in the last six months to get to 700,000,” the spokesperson said, adding that the NYPD is “technically” on pace to reach over 600,000 this year.

However, he did say that the combination of public pressure, lawsuits, and court decisions “definitely had an effect on the way the police department was conducting its stop-and-frisk program.”

Stop-and-frisk, a well-established but controversial practice within the New York Police Department, begins with a police officer’s suspicion of an individual and then detaining the person.

Next, after the person is detained, the police officer performs a pat-down on the individual.

But what makes this practice so controversial is that the stop-and-frisks largely effect blacks and latinos, the report shows.

“Black and Latino people are consistently and intentionally stopped at a hugely disproportionate rate: nearly 85 percent of all stops,” according to the report.

It continues: “These alarming statistics speak volumes on their own – the overwhelming racial disparity and the low rate of law arrests or discovery of contraband that result from stops and frisks raise serious questions about the purpose or usefulness of this practice.”

Also, by law NYPD officers can only stop a person if they have “reasonable suspicion” that a person is about to commit a crime or has committed a crime.

And NYPD can conduct such searches only if they suspect a person is “armed and dangerous.”

But the report says that many of the stops-and-frisks are illegal and the “weapons and contraband yields from stops and frisks hovered around only 1.14 percent – a rate no greater than would be found by chance at random check points.”

The report, which heavily relies on interviews with New York residents to make its case, explains that criminal convictions often compounds NYC residents’ goals of personal advancement.

Because of subsequent arrests on people that may be living in public housing, or on immigrants seeking legal immigrations, or on New York residents with a job, many people risk losing their housing benefits, or have their ability to move forward on the path to citizenship stifled, or risk unemployment if they missed work because of an arrest, respectively.

Some interviewees said that since the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, the number stop-and-frisks searches on Muslims, Arab, and South Asian have increased.

Targets of stops-and-frisks have also included the LGBT community, many of whom are suspected by police to be sex workers or prostitutes.

‘They’re more fearful against the police than the folks in the neighborhood’

Additionally, many interviewees in communities of color felt as if they were “living under siege” as many stop-and-frisks incidents aren’t limited to the outdoors.

Many stop-and-frisks occur indoors: in apartment hallways, apartment stairwells, and apartment elevators. They also occur outside apartment buildings.

They also can happen when a person is walking on the street, at a park, in the subway, at a corner store, or while driving.

To avoid more trouble in police encounters, many New York residents have turned to carrying ID or mail to prove they live at a nearby address. Others have turned to carrying pay stubs to “prove that they have legitimate sources of income.”

And others have avoided walking on the street and driving altogether and turned to taking public transportation.

Residents are often told that they were stopped because they lived in a “high-crime” area – “despite a Supreme Court ruling declaring it unconstitutional to stop and frisk a person simply for being in a so-called high-crime neighborhood.”

Some interviewees have indicated that they were stopped and frisked in order to prevent a crime.

“They’re there to say that I’m about to rob somebody and try to arrest me for it, over and over again,” one male interviewee said.

One interviewee described NYPD as an “occupying army,” another saw NYPD tactics as a “militarized form of policing” and another described life as “kind of like an occupation.”

One man expressed that he feels like he lived in “an occupied zone” and “likened being in his neighborhood to being in an “outside prison.” Others have said that it feels like living in a “war zone.”

And rather than feeling protected by the police, many residents felt in need of protection from the police, with some interviewees noting that this feeling has not always been the case.

“I think the main job of the police is protecting the community, and what they’re doing is just bullying us,” one female interviewee said.

The report indicates that several people have likened the NYPD to a gang and felt as if the police were above the law, and expressed that measures to ensure accountability need to be revamped.

