



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on December 29, 2009

New York City Murder Rate at All-time Low

New York City is headed for a record-low number of murders in 2009, according to the New York Times for December 28. As of December 27, 461 murders had been committed, nearing the current lowest record of 496 in 2007.

New York is not alone in experiencing a decline in violent crime. The FBI's crime statistics for the first half of 2009 show that the murder rate is down 10 percent nationwide relative to the first half of 2008. But New York is exceeding this average, with a 19-percent drop in homicides that works out to six murders per 100,000 people. Large cities like Baltimore, Chicago, and New Orleans all had much higher rates.



The way the New York police classify homicides does have an effect on the yearly totals, in some cases lowering it, and in others causing it to go up. Justifiable homicides, or those due to negligence, are not added to the total. There were at least five deaths that fit those categories in 2008, but the 2009 number has not yet been made available.

On the other hand, when the victims of past crimes died in 2009, their deaths were added to the murder total. There were 16 such victims who passed away in 2009. For instance, James Crawford, age 65, died in October, but his death was deemed related to injuries he suffered from an assault in 1965. William Jenkins, age 67, died of multiple infections while in the hospital, but the New York medical examiner attributed the infections to the paralysis Jenkins suffered from a gunshot wound in 1960.

Out of the 461 murders, 283 of them were committed with a gun wielded by someone the victim knew. The other murders were carried out by various methods including, but not limited to, the following: 90 were by stabbing, 28 were by blunt instrument, 16 were by asphyxiation, and one was by use of an automobile.

Given the predominance of firearms as the murder weapon of choice, New York Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly credits the drop in homicides to Mayor Michael Bloomberg's effort to keep illegal guns out of the city. Kelly stated that 90 percent of the guns confiscated in relation to crime come from outside the state. The commissioner also pointed to the police program of stopping people on the streets to question and sometimes frisk them as having led to 7,000 weapons being seized, including 800 guns.

"We have a policy of engagement, and I think it's working," Kelly said. "We believe young people, who may have a gun, think twice before they take it out on the street."

The statistics do defy the conventional wisdom that the current bad economy and high unemployment should be leading to an increase in crime. New York itself faces a \$4.1 billion budget deficit, so it is both surprising and fortunate that the city's police force has shrunk with the crime rate. The number of



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New York police officers is about 34,000, down from 40,800 in 2001, and further reductions may be in store.

“The mantra of, ‘Do more with less’ is certainly a very important principle in the Police Department,” Commissioner Kelly said. “And these numbers show it.”

Photo of Mayor Michael Bloomberg: AP Images



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