

Executive Summary: New York City Needs a Stronger Vision for Effective, Accountable Policing

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani campaigned on a new approach to public safety, promising to “relieve the excessive burden we’ve placed on police officers” and allow officers “to focus on serious crimes.” But the city plans to hire 580 more officers and surge officers into communities this summer, while low-level arrests have already skyrocketed, highlighting the need for a new, proactive policing vision to deliver safety, justice, and accountability. Vera’s recently published report outlines that includes five things this vision should include:

1. Focus on serious crime, faster response times, and case clearance rates

- **Focus on serious crime.** While the city grows its civilian response services, the NYPD should aim to limit the kind of low-level arrests that may not further public safety, instead prioritizing de-escalation and facilitating connections to service providers and community-based organizations where appropriate.
- **Improve response times.** NYPD response times are significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels. Faster response times help the public feel safer, while possibly reducing crime and increasing clearance rates. Vera estimates that civilian responders could have handled 34 percent of 911 calls in 2025.
- **Raise clearance rates.** While the NYPD’s homicide clearance rate is on par with the national average, its overall clearance rate has remained relatively stable in recent years. Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson credits the city’s 13-year high homicide clearance rate to optimizing and growing its detective bureau.

2. Use evidence-informed strategies in deploying law enforcement

Instead of a “flood the zone” approach, the city’s policing should reflect evidence-based approaches that reserve police resources for issues they are best suited to address. One is problem-oriented policing, which involves using data and community input to identify safety priorities and design proactive solutions. Another is focused deterrence, which uses law enforcement knowledge and enforcement capacity, alongside community-based strategies, to identify and minimize the risk of individuals engaging in violence.

3. Recruit and train in keeping with these priorities

To optimize its existing headcount, the NYPD should invest in employing civilians for specific functions that do not require officers’ expertise so that officers can be redeployed on patrol and other critical functions. Additionally, the NYPD must regularly reinforce procedural justice and de-escalation training alongside a culture that promotes a “guardian” approach to policing. Finally, the NYPD should implement individualized coaching and professional development to promote officer resiliency, learning, and growth.

4. Support officer well-being

For officers to be at their best protecting the public, the city must protect their well-being. The city should begin by making sure that shift scheduling is conducive to officer well-being, including managing mandated overtime and recently mandated 12-hour shifts. Further, the city should evaluate the NYPD’s mental health assistance offerings for gaps and deficiencies in treatment options and availability.

5. Invest in a community safety workforce to enable scaling up civilian response strategies

The well-documented shortage of case managers, peer specialists, case coordinators, and other community safety professionals poses an operational risk to Mayor Mamdani’s Office of Community Safety. Expanding this much-needed workforce requires new mechanisms for providing training, ongoing staff professional development, and credentials, as well as living wages. Finally, the city will need to invest in a **911 call center** system and workforce that can ensure that each situation receives the right first responder.