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# Stop and Frisk, but in a Pandemic: Data Confirms Black New Yorkers Targeted for Social Distancing Violations at Higher Rates



Anne Branigin  
Today 4:00PM • Filed to: NYPD

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Photo: John Minchillo (File AP Photo)



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“Police officers made at least 120 arrests and issued nearly 500 summonses for social-distancing violations between March 16 and May 5,” [the New York Times](#) reports. “Citywide, black people make up 68 percent of those arrested on charges of violating social-distancing rules, while Hispanic people make up 24 percent.”

As was reported earlier by [WCBS](#), just 7 percent of those arrested for poor social distancing practices were white.

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More detail on the violations was released Friday afternoon. Out of 374 social distancing summons specifically citing health code violations and Mayor Bill de Blasio’s executive order, 304 were given to black and Latinx people. The data was released by the NYPD.



**Ashley Southall**  
@AshleyAtTimes

**BREAKING:** 304 out of 374 social distancing summonses in New York City went to Black and Hispanic people, according to data from the NYPD.

1,252 10:27 AM - May 8, 2020

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The numbers appear to validate what many had suspected for weeks—that black New Yorkers were being over-policed compared to white residents. According to the most recent Census, black people comprise a quarter of the city’s population, while Hispanics and Latinx make up 27.5 percent.

Over the last few weeks, as reports of arrests suggested major discrepancies in the ways majority black and brown neighborhoods were being policed, some public officials and criminal justice advocates have likened the social-distancing arrests to “stop-and-frisk,” the unconstitutional practice of arresting mostly black and Latinx men and boys with little to no cause. The practice is most associated with the NYPD during former-Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s tenure.

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De Blasio has long been a public critic of stop-and-frisk and pushed back against the comparison to the Times on Thursday.

“What happened with stop-and-frisk was a systematic, oppressive, unconstitutional strategy that created a new problem much bigger than anything it purported to solve,” he said. “This is the farthest thing from that. This is addressing a pandemic. This is addressing the fact that lives are in danger all the time. By definition, our police department needs to be a part of that because safety is what they do.”

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Later, once the Times story went live, de Blasio addressed the discrepancies in arrests publicly.

“Most people practice social distancing, with only hundreds of summonses issued over 6 weeks,” the mayor wrote. “But the disparity in the numbers does NOT reflect our values.”

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**Mayor Bill de Blasio**

@NYCMayor

Saving lives in this pandemic is job one. The NYPD uses summonses and arrests to do it.

Most people practice social distancing, with only hundreds of summonses issued over 6 weeks. But the disparity in the numbers does NOT reflect our values.

We HAVE TO do better and we WILL.

**The New York Times**

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## *Scrutiny of Social Distancing Policing as 35 of 40 Arrested Are Black*

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The disparities in social distancing arrests garnered much public scrutiny this week after several high-profile arrests drew outrage online.

Earlier in the week, the NYPD deflected on whether race was an issue in the arrests.

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“The common denominator here is starting with a lack of compliance,” said NYPD Commissioner Dermot Shea, according to Gothamist. “Every incident is unique and has to be examined under the lens of the circumstances of that particular incident.”

But for others viewing the videos on social media, there was another clear common denominator: the fact that the offenders are black. The racial disparity was especially stark considering many New Yorkers took to city streets and parks last weekend.



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Many on social media contrasted the disturbing arrest videos with images of NYPD officers handing out masks to people at city parks. In the latter pictures, all of the recipients appeared to be white.



.@NYPDShea also addressed the video at the press briefing, saying the use of a punch does not indicate excessive force and that in fact a punch is an "escalation technique" taught at the police academy.



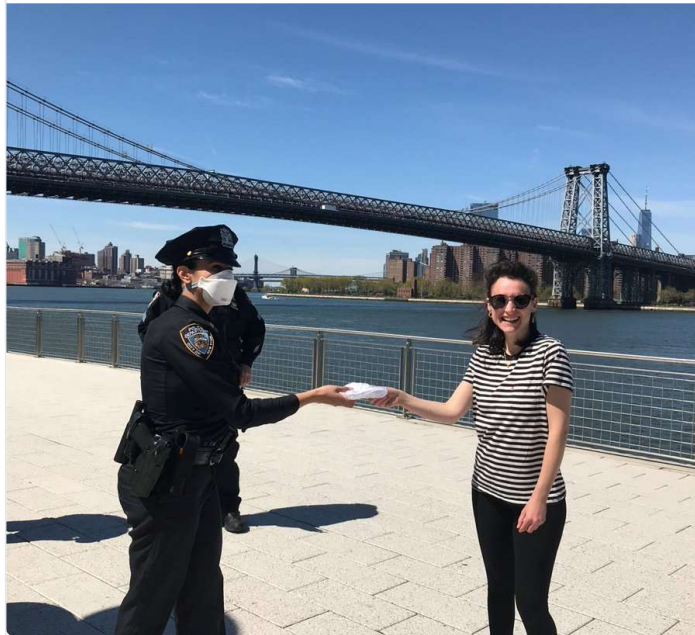
 **Rebecca Kavanagh**  
@DrRJKavanagh

Neither the mayor nor the police commissioner seemed concerned about the incident, the main message being, obey the police or you will be met with physical force. Kinda different tone from the "no mask no problem" vibe shown here.  
[twitter.com/NYPDnews/statu...](https://twitter.com/NYPDnews/status...)

**NYPD NEWS** @NYPDnews

No mask? No problem.

This park-goer in Domino Park didn't have a mask, no problem, our task force officers were more than happy to provide her with one.



218 9:52 AM - May 5, 2020

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far, the only prosecutor in the city to release statistics on its social-distancing arrests. There, the racial discrepancies were even more pronounced than they were citywide:

In the borough, the police arrested 40 people for social-distancing violations from March 17 through May 4, the district attorney's office said.

Of those arrested, 35 people were black, four were Hispanic and one was white.

More than a third of the arrests were made in the predominantly black neighborhood of Brownsville. No arrests were made in the more white Brooklyn neighborhood of Park Slope.

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New York Congressman Hakeem Jeffries, who represents Brooklyn, also drew the comparison between the social-distancing arrests and the city's infamous stop-and-frisk policies. With black communities already suffering disproportionately from the coronavirus itself, as well as from unemployment and hunger brought on by the pandemic, Jeffries said the added vulnerability to arrests presented "a toxic combination."

As Jeffries told the Times, "We can't unleash a new era of overly aggressive policing of communities of color in the name of social distancing."

**Anne Branigin**  Posts  Email  Twitter

Staff writer, The Root.

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