

May 2015

## Uniformly Overbudget: Tracing Police Overtime Spending & Staffing Since 1996

The Mayor's 2016 executive budget anticipates \$424 million in police officer overtime expenditures for the New York Police Department (NYPD) next year, an amount most likely insufficient given that comparable expenditures have averaged \$515 million over the previous three years. For the current year, the department is on pace to incur about \$550 million in uniformed police overtime costs, or about \$115 million (26 percent) more than originally allocated when the budget was adopted last June. IBO estimates that the NYPD's budget will ultimately need an additional \$50 million annually from 2015 through 2019 to fully cover police overtime costs (all references to years are fiscal years).

Some advocates of increasing the number of the city's uniformed police force say that the cost of hiring new officers could partially be offset by a reduced need for overtime spending. Since its all-time high of about 40,300 in 2000, the number of officers has generally trended downward until leveling off at about 35,000 over the past 10 years. But a review of force size and overtime spending over the past two decades shows that the relationship between the ups and downs in the number of officers and changes in overtime spending are not always consistent. Beyond the number of officers, how officers are deployed as well as other factors such as unplanned events contribute to overtime spending.

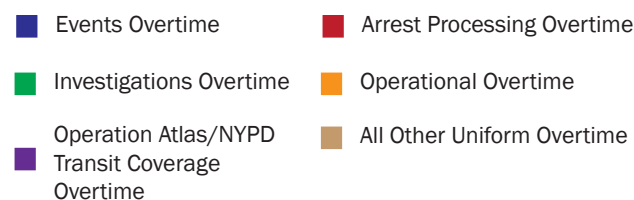
### Major Categories of Police Overtime, 2009-2014.

Uniformed NYPD overtime is a major component of police spending, averaging about 18 percent of base pay over the period from 2009 through 2014. Detailed information on activities that resulted in overtime is provided by the department on a quarterly basis.

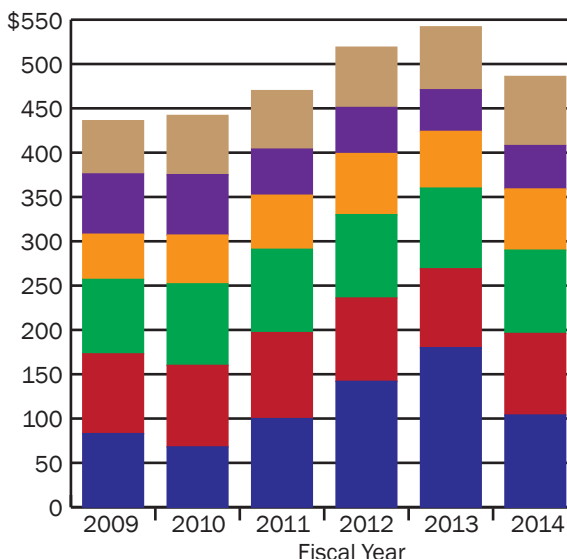
Although spending on most categories of police overtime was relatively stable from 2009 through 2014, events overtime has been particularly volatile. Events overtime means officers are called in to work otherwise unscheduled

tours to cover recurring annual parades and festivals as well as unplanned events such as emergencies and

**Categories of Police Uniformed Overtime, 2009-2014**



Dollars in millions



SOURCES: New York Police Department; Financial Management System  
NOTES: **Events overtime** includes both planned and unplanned events.

**Arrest processing overtime** is earned when an officer makes a new arrest during a regular tour of duty but then must remain available while the criminal complaint is processed; this category also includes overtime earned by officers who appear in court as witnesses on days in which they are otherwise not scheduled to work. **Investigations overtime** arises from deployments of police involved in activities such as stakeouts and wiretaps. **Operational overtime** is used to account for situations in which an officer's regular tour is extended while covering demonstrations, fires and other emergencies. **Operation Atlas/NYPD transit coverage overtime** stems from terrorism-prevention activities.

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protests. Events overtime climbed 42 percent to reach \$142 million in 2012, stemming in part from Occupy Wall Street (\$22 million) and Hurricane Irene (\$7 million). The following year, events overtime rose another 27 percent to \$180 million, with \$77 million of that total attributable to Hurricane Sandy. In 2014, events overtime fell back to \$104 million, nearly equal its level in 2011.

During the first six months of this year, uniformed police overtime of all sorts totaled \$322 million, \$75 million more than the total for the first half of 2014. Nearly all of the increase was attributable to events overtime, which jumped from \$63 million during the first half of 2014 to \$129 million during the first half of this year. The increase in events overtime was driven by protest activities in New York City stemming from the Eric Garner case on Staten Island as well as the Michael Brown case in Ferguson, Missouri.

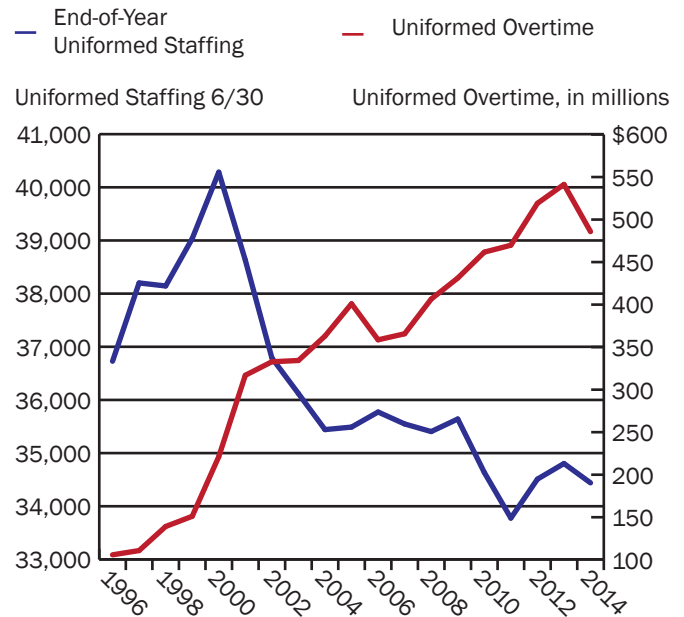
**Trends in Police Overtime and Staffing, 1996-2014.**

Since 1996 annual overtime expenditures for uniformed NYPD personnel have risen in all but two years (2006 and 2014). Spending on overtime from 1996 through 2014 increased at an average rate of about 9 percent a year, more than double the roughly 4 percent rate of increase in base pay and all other personnel costs. In contrast to the steady increase in overtime, police staffing has changed dramatically over the same period, rising steeply to peak at nearly 40,300 in 2000 and then falling to a low of under 34,000 in 2011.

From 1996 through 2001, overtime spending rose at an average rate of 25 percent a year, at the same time police staffing was increasing from 36,278 to 38,630, an average annual increase of about 1 percent. The steep rise in overtime spending in those years was attributable in large part to special enforcement programs such as Operation Condor, an initiative that deployed police officers on overtime for the purpose of proactively addressing offenses ranging from narcotics activities to lower level quality-of-life issues. (Note: fiscal year 2001 concluded prior to the September 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center.)

After 2001, there was a generally inverse relationship between uniformed NYPD staffing and uniformed overtime, with a decline in force size accompanied by continued

**Police Uniformed Staffing vs. Uniformed Overtime Spending, 1996-2014**



NOTE: Excludes overtime expenditures in 2002 and 2003 that were reimbursed by the federal government because they were directly attributable to the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center.  
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increases in annual overtime spending. However, the average annual rate of growth in NYPD uniformed overtime expenditures between 2001 and 2014—as the size of the force generally trended downward—was only about 3 percent, far below the rate of growth exhibited during the late 1990s as the force size was increasing.

While the negative relationship between the size of the police force and overtime spending in the post-2001 period might suggest that the cost of hiring additional officers could be partially offset by overtime savings, the 1996 through 2001 period demonstrates that force size and overtime can simultaneously increase depending on how officers are deployed.

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