

ESD.86 Spring 2007  
Weekly Contest #4  
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### **Evaluate police work in New York City:**

New York police stopped a half-million people in 2006, five times more than in 2002. Why? The answer might be that a new system implemented to improve the performance of the police, called CompStat, might be pressing police officers to stop people with no real reason.

The problem with CompStat is that once they started tracking everything in numbers, what was supposed to be a tactic to help solve crimes became a measuring stick by which police authorities were judged. Unfortunately, in the weekly meetings about the CompStat reports that take place in New York city Police headquarters, it is now routine for commanders to be publicly criticized about their "stop-and-frisk" numbers, questioned on why they are not "doing more": "How come you stopped 50 guys two months ago and only 40 last month?", is quoted as an example.

There are reports that the department has become obsessed with statistics, so beholden to the numbers that it is losing the trust of the neighborhoods it is supposed to protect. To reach the "quota" of stops that are needed to avoid being grilled about the number of stops in their precincts, police are now stopping "the guy just hanging out, the guy coming home from work," said a supervisor. "That's because you get guys making stops just to keep the bosses happy. They're forcing us to engage people we wouldn't normally engage."

The numbers, culled from the Stop, Question and Frisk reports, tell that 508,540 people were stopped last year, up dramatically from 97,296 in 2002. But we don't know how many of these people were frisked. And we don't know how many of these stops yielded weapons or drugs. For example, 186,841 people were stopped, at least in part, last year because they showed "furtive movements," one of the listed reasons that would allow an officer to stop someone.

Writing UF-250, the numerical code for Stop, Question and Frisk Reports, has also being linked to having the overtime recognized. "When you make it mandatory to write 250s it creates problems," says a retired sergeant. Only 18 percent of last year's Stop, Question and Frisk forms involved people stopped because they "fit a relevant description."

Sources:

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