

# Community Equity Priority #9

**Use and expand non-punitive responses to mental health and all crises. These responses should rely less on police where possible. People should be allowed to decide or contribute to decisions about their own care.**



Trauma-informed practices in response to people experiencing mental health crises or engaging in substance use keep communities safe and save lives. Reducing reliance on law enforcement for crises helps increase safety and prevents the criminalization of those struggling with mental distress or substance use.

## Prevalence of Serious Psychological Distress (2023)

Serious Psychological Distress (SPD) refers to the condition of people not being able to function due to challenging feelings or experiences.

**8%** of all adults in NYC experienced SPD. **Nearly 1 in 4** adults age 18-44 experienced SPD.

- ◆ People of color are more likely to have SPD than White people.



- ◆ The rate of SPD is higher in neighborhoods with
  - primarily Black and Latinx residents **(11-14%)** vs. fewer Black and Latinx residents **(3-5%)**
  - higher levels of poverty **(11%)** vs. without poverty **(7%)**
- ◆ LGBTQ+ people have higher rates of SPD than non-LGBTQ+ people.



Data Source: NYC DOHMH - The State of Mental Health of New Yorkers (2023)

## Community Voice

Law enforcement can retraumatize populations. Social workers, credible messengers, and other mental health professionals should be put in place. Law enforcement also need better training on handling crisis.

42 Year Old, Queens

## Mental Health Crises and the Criminal Legal System

Adults with SPD are **2x** more likely to have ever been incarcerated than adults without SPD.

Interactions between the NYPD and emotionally distressed community members have often been violent, causing physical and mental harm.

**15,000** total NYPD responses to monthly mental health crisis calls in 2022

**36%** increase in the number of violent interactions during mental health crises from 2017 to 2024

**1,306** total violent encounters between the NYPD and people in mental health distress in 2024

**986** total violent encounters between the NYPD and people in mental health distress involved physical violence in 2024

## Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training

NYPD Officers receive CIT training since 2015, but the program continues to face implementation challenges.

Program paused in 2020

Lack of oversight of program

**55%** of uniformed officers received virtual training instead of in-person training

**40,960** training hours (2023) **-55%** **18,616** training hours (2024)

## Shift to Public Health Response

**98%** of 7,417 people felt respected and treated with courtesy by B-HEARD responders

**641** community members (2023) **-39%** **391** community members (2024) served by the Co-Response team (NYPD & Health Department)

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