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N.J. crime plummets as cops pull back during coronavirus crisis

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Crime in New Jersey is down 25% compared to last year amid a statewide lockdown to guard against the coronavirus, law enforcement officials report.

Shootings have also dropped by 18% during the first three months of the year, according to Col. Patrick Callahan, acting superintendent of the State Police.

The overall decrease may be partially prompted by some police departments purposely not enforcing some low-level offenses, and the state attorney general's recommendation that cops delay filing some criminal charges. Newark reported a sharp drop in police stops the week after the governor first closed many businesses.

But the decrease could help departments affected by the pandemic. One hundred and sixty three law enforcement officers have the coronavirus, the State Police said Sunday. More than 1,200 are quarantined and more than 1,400 are "out for other reasons."

Experts said there was no looming officer shortage, and there are about 36,000 full-time officers overall, according to recent State Police data.

In other ways, Garden State cops' workload remains the same.

A total of 114 people have died on New Jersey roads this year as of Friday, according to State Police data. That's only two less than last year, and more than in 2018. The number of fatal crashes also increased slightly.

Some emergency call centers have also not seen any drop.

Parts of Bergen and Cape May recorded slight increases in the number of 911 calls made in March, according to call center directors.

Non-emergency calls, which can include requests for information, even spiked in Cape May. There were a little more than 3,000 administrative calls at one center during March of last year, an official said, compared to close to 4,000 so far this year.

Experts also say that disasters can cause domestic violence to increase.