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# Justice at a Crossroads in New York City

## Studying Crimes in New York City Using the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)

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**DATA COLLABORATIVE FOR JUSTICE**  
**AT JOHN JAY COLLEGE**  
**STRENGTH IN NUMBERS**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The vision for this report came from Jeremy Travis, Senior Fellow at the Columbia Justice Lab and President Emeritus of John Jay College. He partnered with Preeti Chauhan, Professor of Psychology and former Executive Director of the [Data Collaborative for Justice](#) (DCJ) to analyze New York City crime and enforcement trends through 2017. Travis presented the findings in a landmark lecture at New York Law School titled, [Trends in Crime and Justice: Reflections on the New York City Story, 1980-2017](#). In the years since 2017, the City experienced the COVID-19 pandemic; a coinciding rise in violent crime; statewide reforms to bail, discovery, and parole; and ongoing efforts to close the notorious Rikers Island jails. In this context, Travis approached DCJ with the idea of expanding the earlier analysis to include additional metrics and an updated tracking period.

Besides producing this report examining crime victimization trends based on findings from the annual National Crime Victimization Survey, we completed a parallel report based on official records of crime, enforcement, and incarceration. A single executive summary covering key findings from both reports is available at our [project landing page](#).

We thank Erica Bond, Rebecca Atkinson, Mindy Bockstein, Jennifer Lorenzo, Iva Stojanovic, Katharine Huffman, Jael Henry, Nik Sibley, Jordyn Davis, Sarah Monaghan, and Krystal Rodriguez for their partnership in planning [two events](#) in May 2025 featuring our research and related topics concerning the future of New York City's criminal legal system.

## **STUDYING CRIMES IN NYC USING THE NCVS**

**This study relies on data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) and presents trends from 1996 to 2022 in crime victimization, rates at which victims report crimes to the police, confidence in the police, and victims' use of services in New York City.**

This is one of two studies falling under the umbrella of the Crossroads Project. Its goal is to trace New York City's trends in crime victimization, enforcement, incarceration, and racial disparities from the 1990s to the early 2020s in the hopes that empirical data over a long timeframe might provide a much-needed perspective capable of informing future policy. Both of the two resulting reports and a joint executive summary may be found at the [project landing page](#).

### **What is the NCVS, and why is it important for studying crime?**

Crime data for cities and communities across the country relies primarily on criminal complaints reported to local police agencies. The many crimes that victims never report to law enforcement are omitted. However, by collecting data directly from crime victims, the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) can provide estimates of both reported and unreported crime.

The NCVS is the world's largest and oldest national victimization survey (Xie, Lynch, & Lauritsen, 2025). It has provided information on the criminal victimization of the U.S. household population for over 50 years (1973 to present). It surveys persons aged 12 years or older from a nationally representative sample of U.S. households randomly selected from a stratified multistage cluster sampling design, with the goal of getting an accurate and representative count of crime victimization in the United States (Cantor, 2025).

The U.S. Census Bureau administers the interviews for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). The primary information from the NCVS includes nonfatal violent crimes (rape or sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault) and household property crimes (i.e., burglary, motor vehicle theft, and other types of theft), both reported and not reported to the police. Therefore, the estimates for nonfatal violence crimes are by persons, and the estimates for property crimes are by households.

The NCVS data is an important complement to the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Summary program and the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). The UCR and NIBRS databases, which rely on crimes reported to the police, are often used to follow crime trends by policymakers, journalists, and the general public, and to guide public safety decision making. **But nationwide, the NCVS shows that more than 50% of crimes are NOT reported to the police (Xie, Ortiz Solis, & Chauhan, 2024).** This is known as the dark figure of crime and shows that relying on police-recorded crimes provides an incomplete picture of crime trends (Lynch & Addington, 2007).

The NCVS also provides critical information such as why the crime was not reported to the police. Much information in the NCVS is not available from the UCR summary program or NIBRS, such as the circumstances of crimes based on the victims' descriptions, the consequences of the victimizations, the victims' responses to victimization, and their interaction with the criminal justice or victim service systems or lack thereof. These data are critical to policymakers as they think of responses to crime and how to enhance public safety.

### **How was the NCVS used in the present study?**

**Although the NCVS is typically used to assess victimization patterns for the nation as a whole, the data can be used to study New York City victimization trends.** This is because the New York City's population base is greater than 5 million and there are fewer concerns regarding identification of victims within the data and unstable estimates (too small of a population may provide volatile estimates). A small body of research has used the NCVS data for local crime analysis including for Chicago, Los Angeles, Dallas, and Houston (Rezey & Lauritsen, 2023; Xie, Ortiz Solis, & Chauhan, 2024). Other research has examined New York City data (Langan & Durose, 2009; Xie, Ortiz Solis, & Chauhan, 2024) but the analyses was more limited in the scope and did not extend to 2022.

Our study examines the NCVS data in New York City from 1996 to 2022 by nonfatal violence and property crimes. We also assess whether these crimes were reported to the police and, if not, what proportion were not reported because the victims believed the police would not help (a proxy for public confidence in the police). Next, we examine what proportion of victims of violence used victim services, regardless of whether the crime was reported to the police or not. Lastly, we compare New York City to the nation as a whole and to other cities with a population over one million. The analyses are also conducted by race/ethnicity with the caution that the sample size may be too small for reliable estimates. This is the first study to unpack New York City victimization data in this way.

Table 1 presents the average number of interviews conducted in New York City annually from 1996 to 2022, compared to the number of interviews for the United States and other cities with populations exceeding one million. The sample size decreases when the data is disaggregated by race/ethnicity, which is a limitation of the NCVS as smaller sample sizes result in larger standard errors of estimates, reducing the results' precision. To further assist with this issue, a data point in this report for a specific year is a three-year moving average. Three-year moving averages produce more reliable estimates because the annual count of violent incidents in a single city tends to be small. The three-year average violence rate in 1997 is the average violence rate from 1996 to 1998, and so on.

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**Table 1.**  
**Sample Size of the NCVS in New York City and Other Areas**

Average number of interviews conducted yearly (1996-2022)	USA	Other cities ≥ 1 million	New York City	NEW YORK CITY BY RACE/ETHNICITY				
				White (non-Latino)	Black (non-Latino)	Latino	Asian/Pacific Islander (non-Latino)	Others
<b>HOUSEHOLD INTERVIEWS</b> <i>(sample size for estimating household property crime rates)</i>	99,928	4,456	2,277	996	511	505	252	13
<b>PERSON INTERVIEWS</b> <i>(sample size for estimating violent crime rates)</i>	172,238	7,472	3,822	1,564	805	925	509	20

Notes: A household's race/ethnicity is determined by the race/ethnicity of the person owning, buying, or renting the dwelling (called the "reference person" in the NCVS). A person's own race/ethnicity is used to determine the race/ethnicity of the person interviewed.

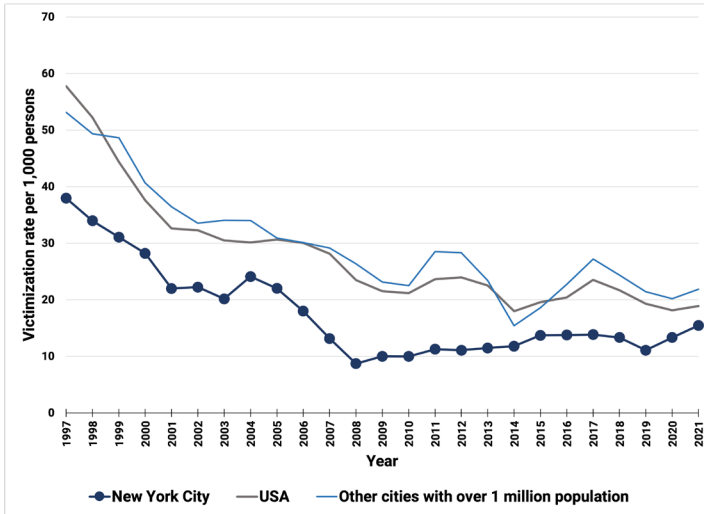
### Five Key Insights from the NCVS Data in New York City

**First, New York City has experienced a decline in crime and has been relatively safe for residents, as indicated by the nonfatal violence and property crime victimization rates since the late 1990s** (Figure 1). Similar to the UCR estimates, New York City had a drop in both nonfatal violence and property crimes. Nonfatal violence victimization rate was 61% lower in 2021 (15 victimizations per 1,000) compared to 1997 (38 victimizations per 1,000). Property crime victimization rate was 38% lower in 2021 (100 victimizations per 1,000) compared to 1997 (161 victimizations per 1,000).

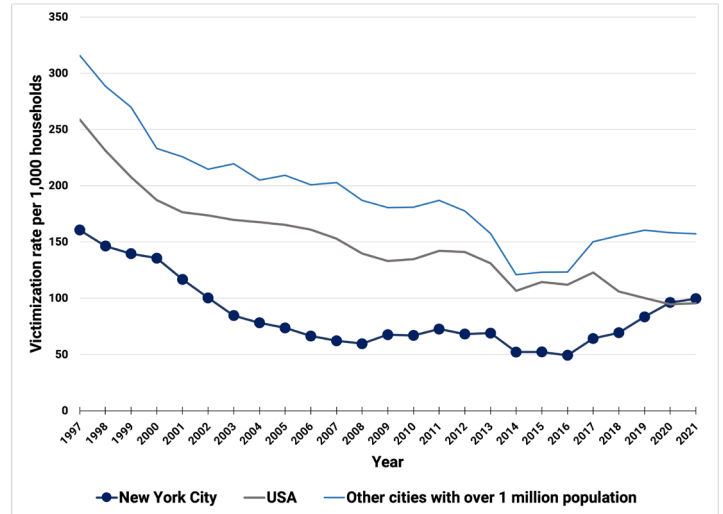
## STUDYING CRIMES IN NYC USING THE NCVS

**Figure 1. Victimization Rates in New York City: NCVS 1996-2022**

**Figure 1.a. Total Nonfatal Violence (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**



**Figure 1.b. Total Household Property Crime (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**



**Second, the safety benefit of New York City, compared to other cities, has diminished somewhat over time.** Although New York City has experienced less crime than other cities, this gap has narrowed over time. In 1997 in New York City, there were 15 fewer violent victimizations per 1,000 persons compared to other large cities; this difference decreased to 7 fewer victimizations in 2021. For household property crimes, in 1997, there were 155 fewer victimizations per 1,000 households in New York City compared to other cities and this decreased to 57 fewer victimizations in 2021. The lower rates in property crime is statistically significant when compared to other cities. This is not the case for violent crimes but may be due to smaller sample.

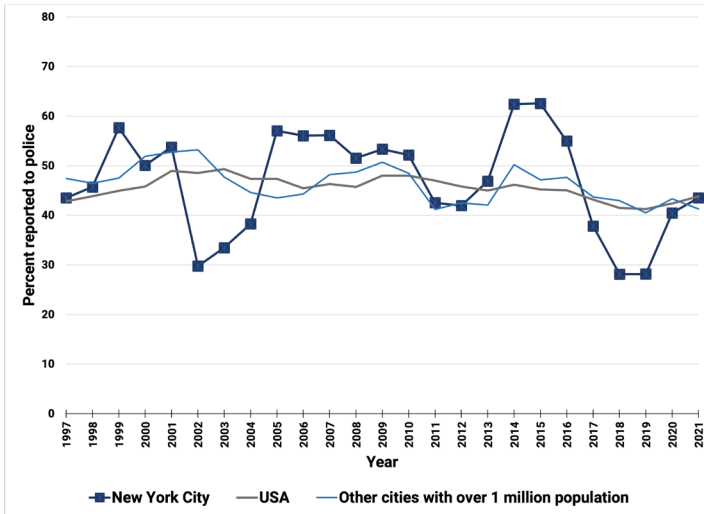
**Third, more than 50% of crimes in New York City are never reported to the police, and the crime reporting rates, especially those of household property crimes, have declined over time** (Figure 2). On average, during the late 1990s (represented by data points from 1997 to 2000), 49% of all violent crimes were reported to the police. The police notification by violent crime victims declined to 35% by the end of the study period (represented by data points from 2018 to 2021), though there were some fluctuations over time, with the most reporting happening from 2014 to 2016 and the least from 2018 to 2019. The decline in police notification was more visible among victims of serious violence (rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault), as seen in the right top panel of Figure 2, with the least reporting happening from 2018 to 2019, though the small number of cases limits the estimates' precision. With regard to property crimes, in the late 1990s, 31% of property crimes were reported to the police; this dropped to a low of 21% by the end of the study period (represented by data points from 2018 to 2021).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Note that because of sample size limitations, the annual difference in reporting rates between New York City and other cities may not be statistically significant. When the data are pooled across years, however, the reporting rate of household property crime is statistically significantly lower in New York City compared to the national average and the rate of other cities. The difference in the pooled reporting rate of violent crimes between New York City and the national average (or the rate of other cities) is not statistically significant.

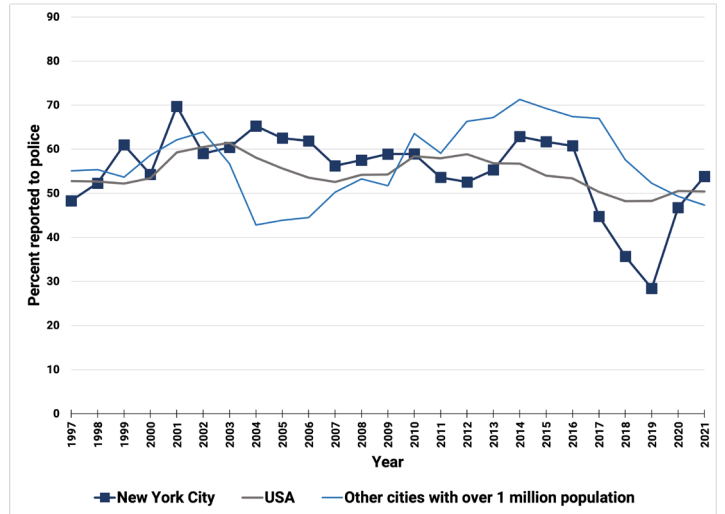
# STUDYING CRIMES IN NYC USING THE NCVS

## Figure 2. Police Notification Rates in New York City: NCVS 1996-2022

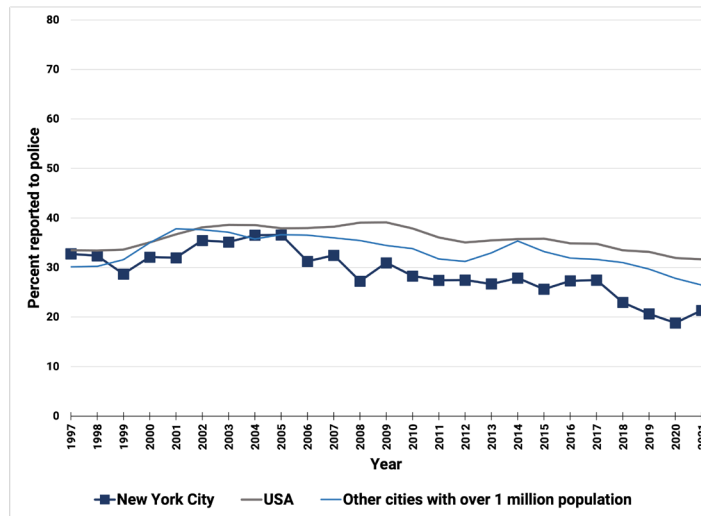
### Figure 2.a. % of Nonfatal Violence Reported to the Police (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)



### Figure 2.b. % of Serious Violence Reported to the Police (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)



### Figure 2.c. % of Property Crime Reported to the Police

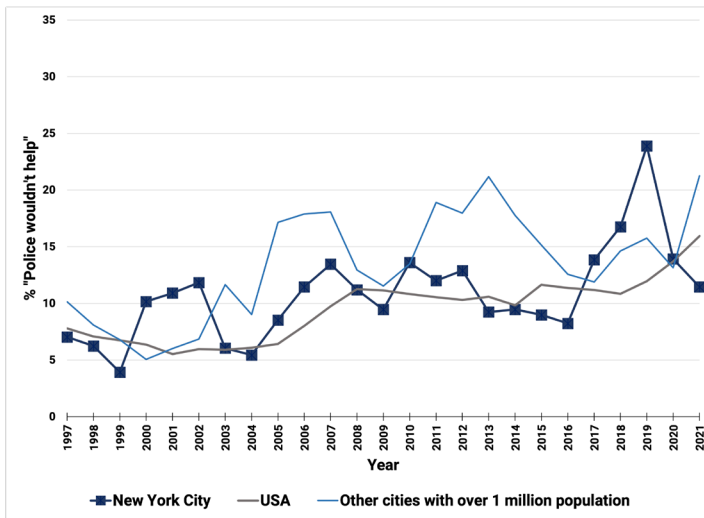


## STUDYING CRIMES IN NYC USING THE NCVS

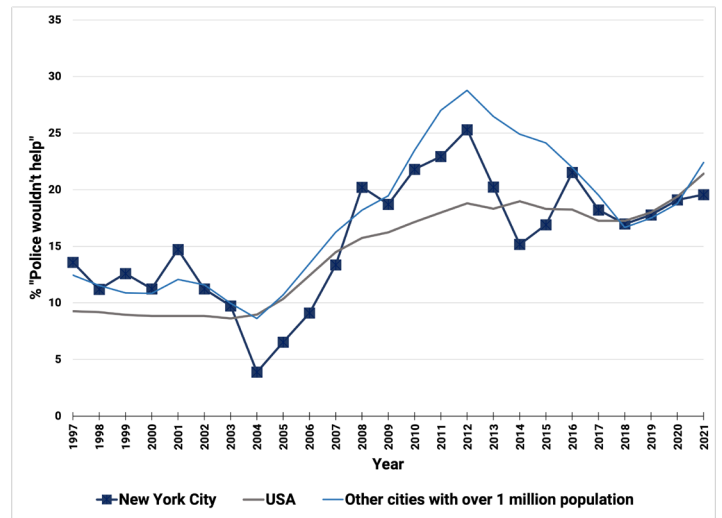
Fourth, victims' confidence in the police has decreased in New York City, as indicated by victims who have increasingly stated that "Police wouldn't help" when asked about why they did not call the police (Figure 3). For violent crimes, in 1997, 7% of victims stated that "Police wouldn't help" as the reason they did not call the police. This more than doubled to 16% by 2021. For property crimes, the corresponding rates were 12% in 1997 and 18% in 2021.

**Figure 3. Percentages of Crimes in Which Victims Did Not Call the Police Because "Police wouldn't help": NCVS 1996-2022**

**Figure 3.a. % of Violent Crime Victims Stating "Police Wouldn't Help" (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**



**Figure 3.b. % of Property Crime Victims Stating "Police Wouldn't Help" (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**



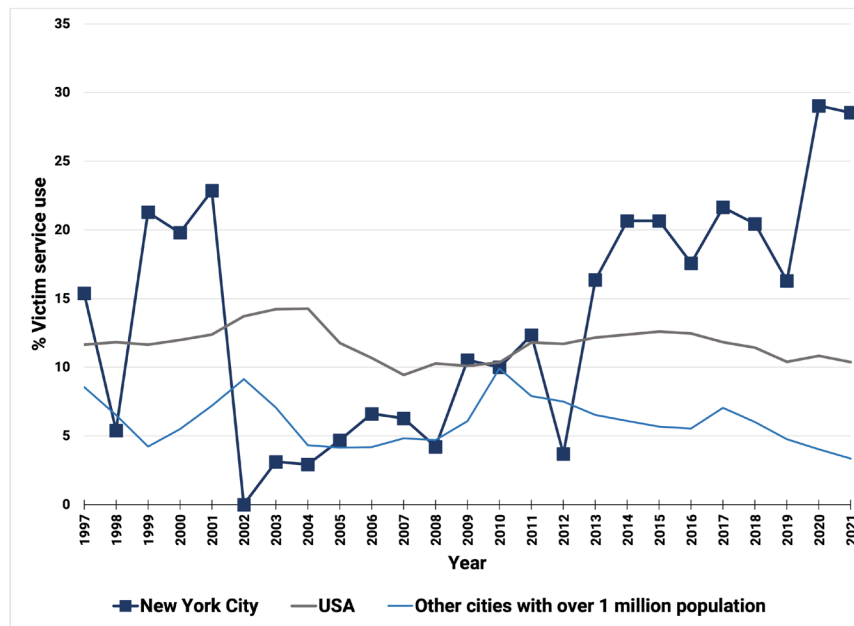


## STUDYING CRIMES IN NYC USING THE NCVS

Fifth, among people victimized by serious violence (rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault), use of victim services declined from the late 1990s to 2002 and then gradually rose thereafter—reaching close to 30% for the first time in 2020 and 2021 (Figure 4). In the last two years measured, the reported use of services was seven times higher in New York City than in other cities. Note that due to the limited number of cases, the data should be interpreted with caution.

**Figure 4. Victim Service Use by Serious Violence Victims: NCVS 1996-2022**

**% of Serious Violent Crime Victims Using Victims Services  
(NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**



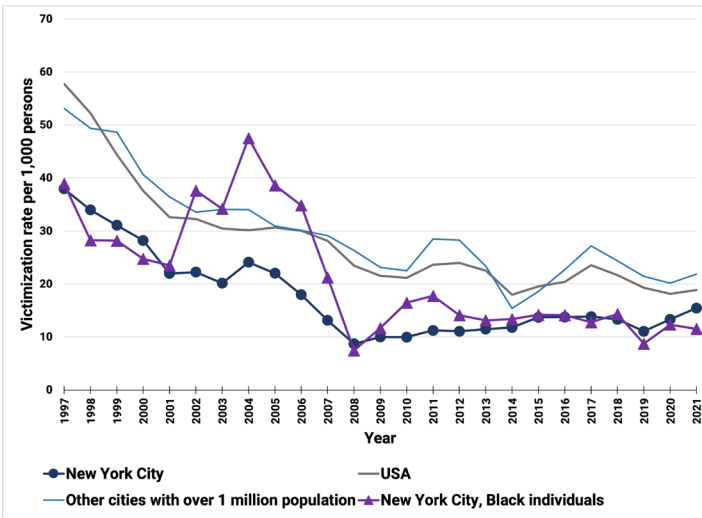
### A Note About Racial/Ethnic Data in the NCVS New York City Data

The NCVS is designed to measure victimization for the nation as a whole. As a consequence, there are limited NCVS data in New York City to study racial/ethnic-specific patterns of victimization. With data limitations in mind, we present victimization patterns of different racial/ethnic groups in New York City (non-Latino Black, Latino, non-Latino White, and non-Latino Asian/Pacific Islander) in Appendices A through D. The graphs are intended for illustration purposes only, rather than an attempt to establish precise estimates. Because the NCVS sample of each racial/ethnic group is relatively small, it would be desirable to collect more New York City victimization data through local victimization surveys.

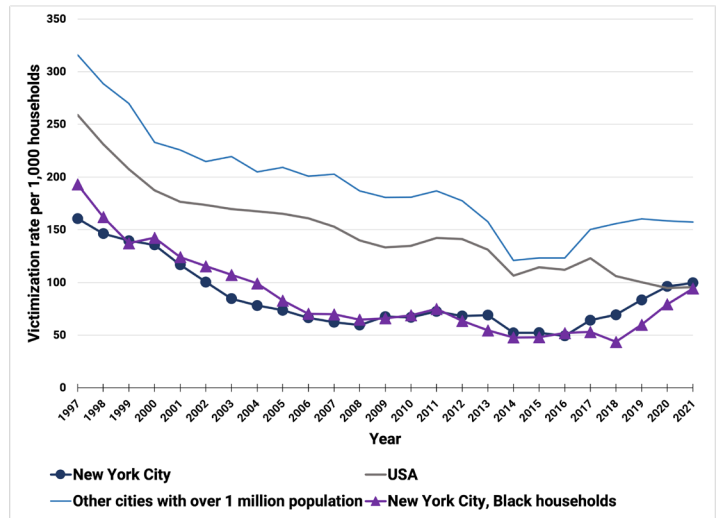
# Appendix A. Crime Victimization Patterns of non-Latino Black Residents in New York City: NCVS 1996-2022

**Figure A1. Black Residents' Victimization Rates**

**Figure A1.a. Total Nonfatal Violence (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**

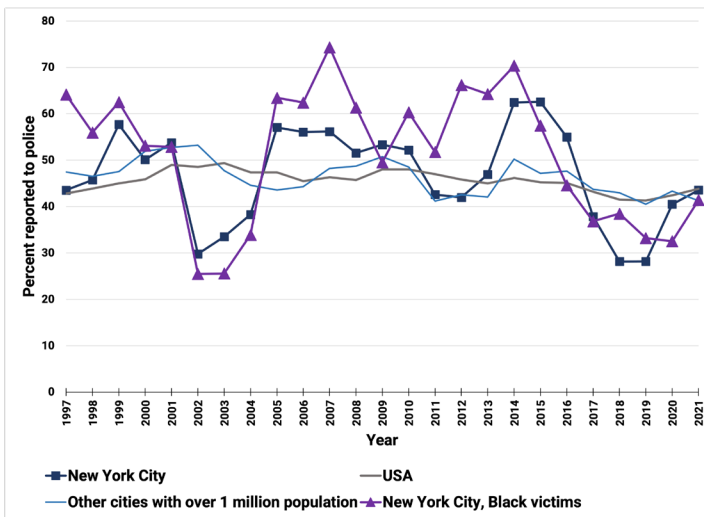


**Figure A1.b. Total Household Property Crime (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**

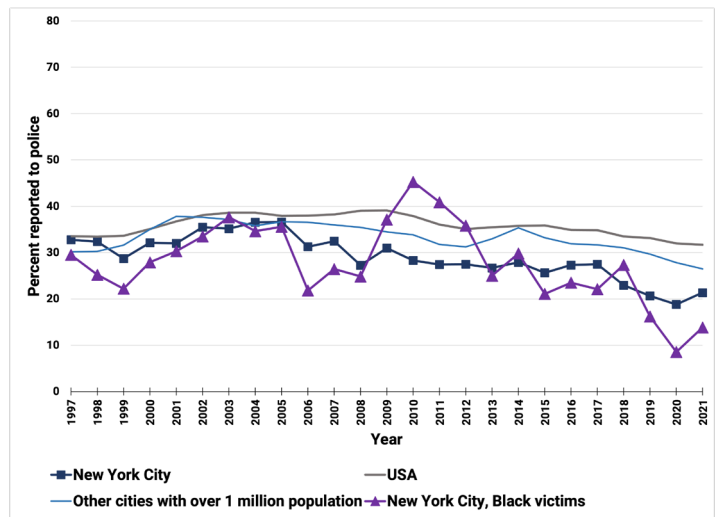


**Figure A2. Black Victims' Police-Notification Rates**

**Figure A2.a. % of Nonfatal Violence Reported to the Police (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**

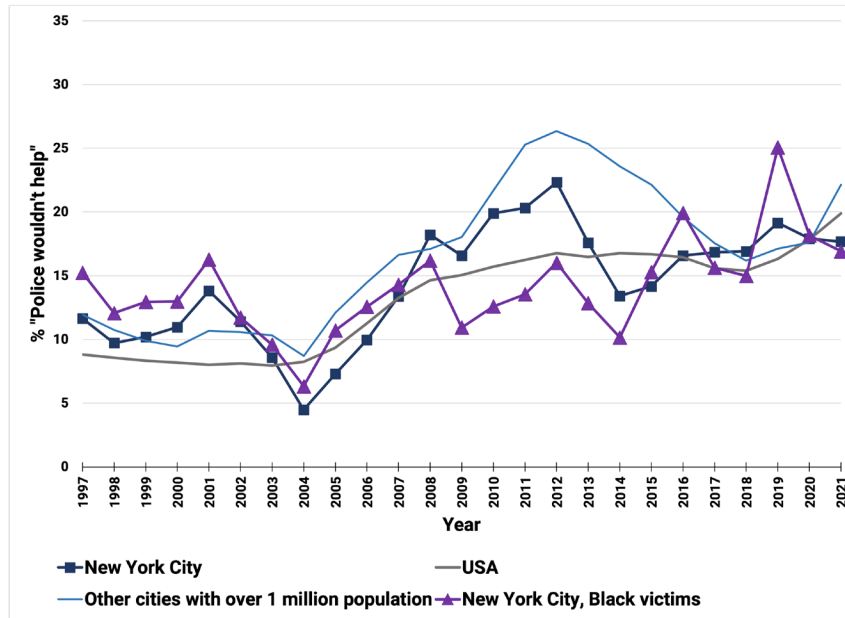


**Figure A2.b. % of Property Crime Reported to the Police (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**



**Appendix A. Crime Victimization Patterns of non-Latino Black Residents in New York City: NCVS 1996-2022**

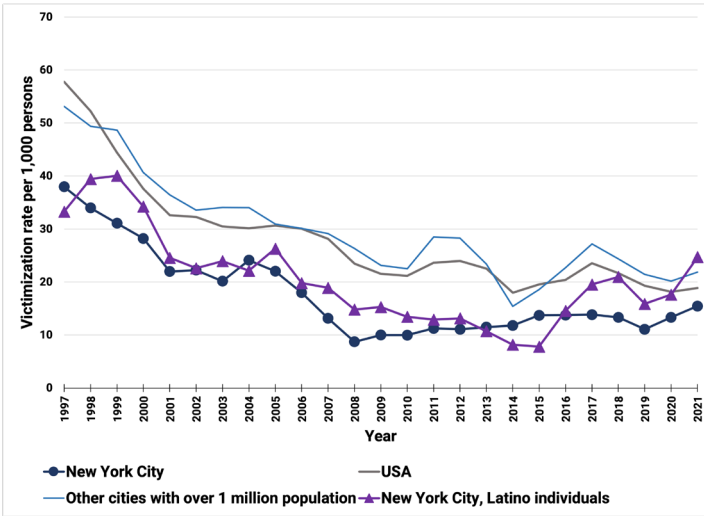
**Figure A3. Black Victims' Perceptions of the Police**  
**% of Victims Stating "Police Wouldn't Help"**



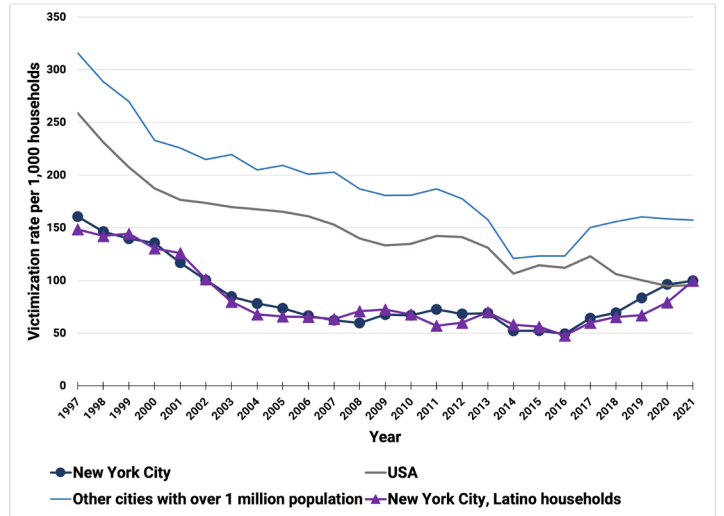
# Appendix B. Crime Victimization Patterns of Latino Residents in New York City: NCVS 1996-2022

**Figure B1. Latino Residents' Victimization Rates**

**Figure B1.a. Total Nonfatal Violence (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**

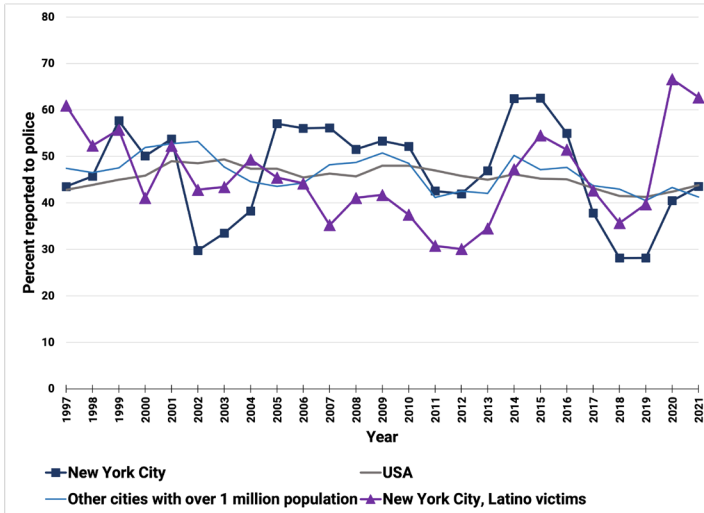


**Figure B1.b. Total Household Property Crime (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**

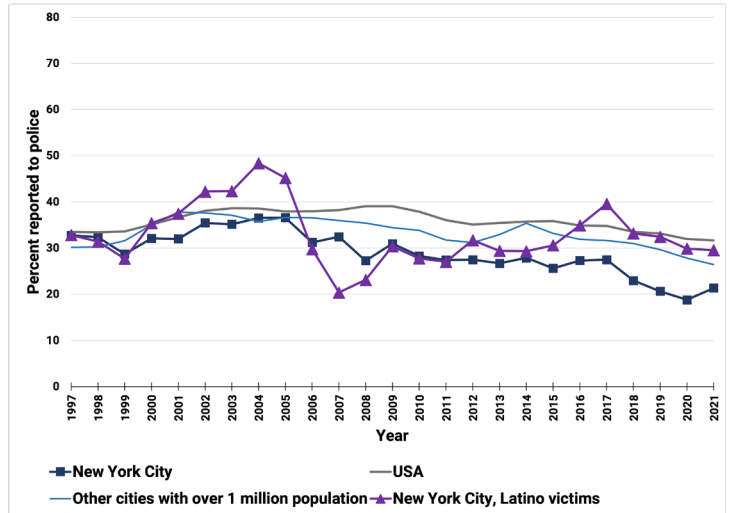


**Figure B2. Latino Victims' Police-Notification Rates**

**Figure B2.a. % of Nonfatal Violence Reported to the Police (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**

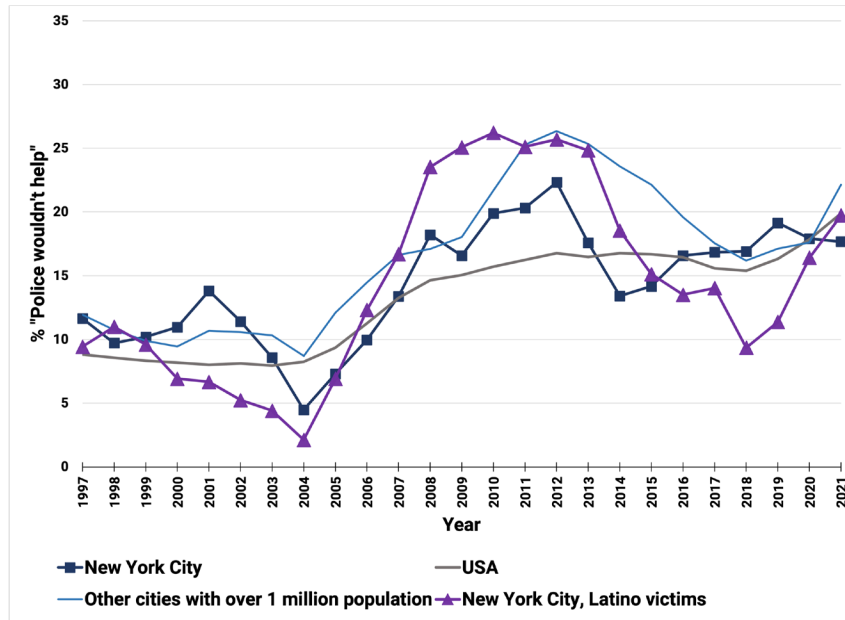


**Figure B2.b. % of Property Crime Reported to the Police (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**



**Appendix B. Crime Victimization Patterns of Latino Residents in New York City: NCVS 1996-2022**

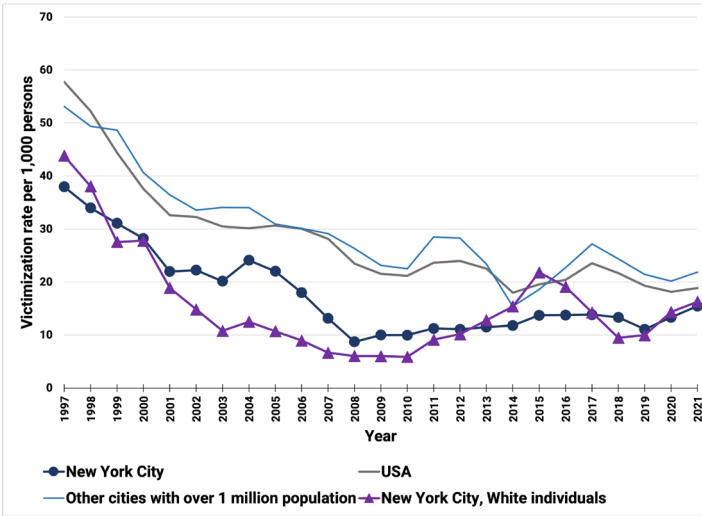
**Figure B3. Latino Victims' Perceptions of the Police**  
**% of Victims Stating "Police Wouldn't Help"**



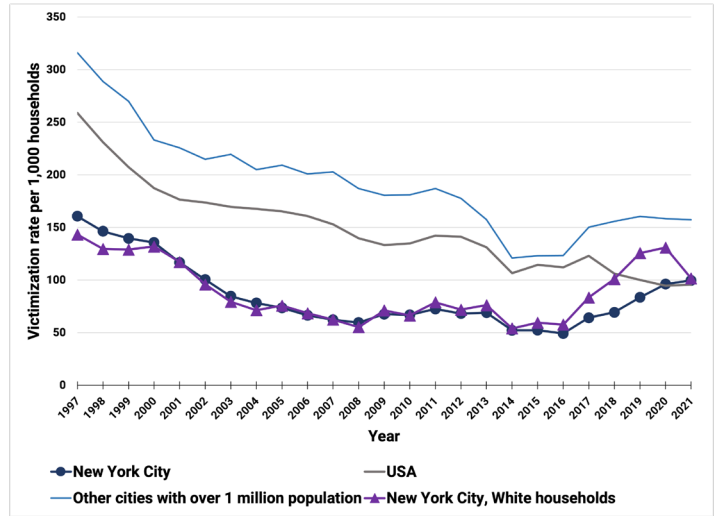
# Appendix C. Crime Victimization Patterns of non-Latino White Residents in New York City: NCVS 1996-2022

**Figure C1. White Residents' Victimization Rates**

**Figure C1.a. Total Nonfatal Violence (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**

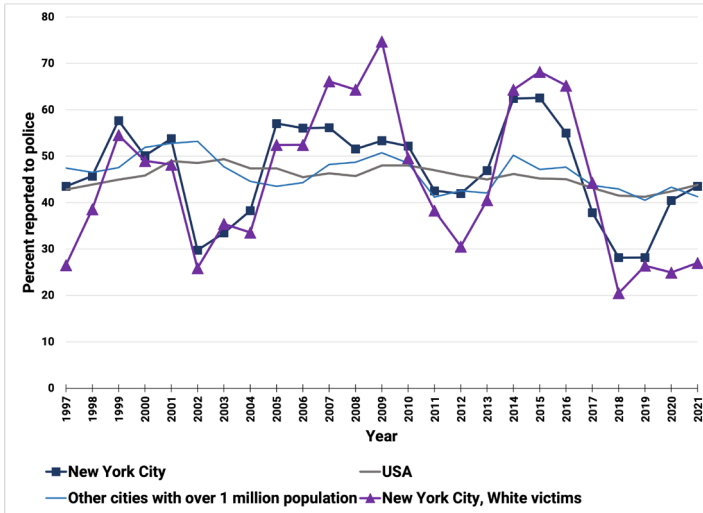


**Figure C1.b. Total Household Property Crime (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**

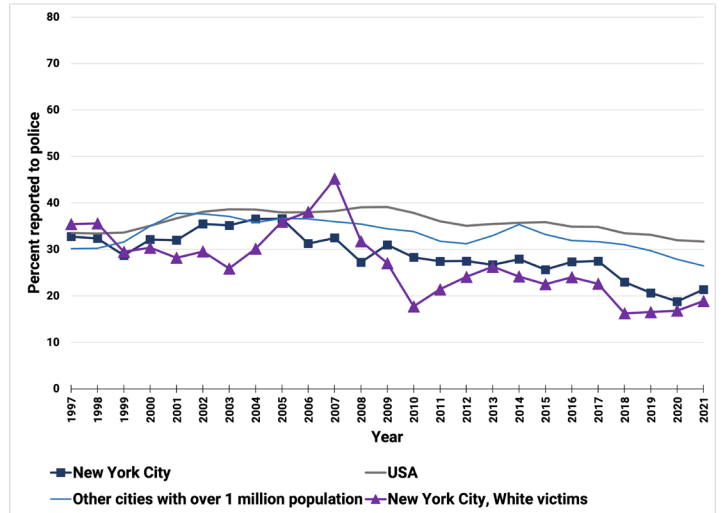


**Figure C2. White Victims' Police-Notification Rates**

**Figure C2.a. % of Nonfatal Violence Reported to the Police (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**

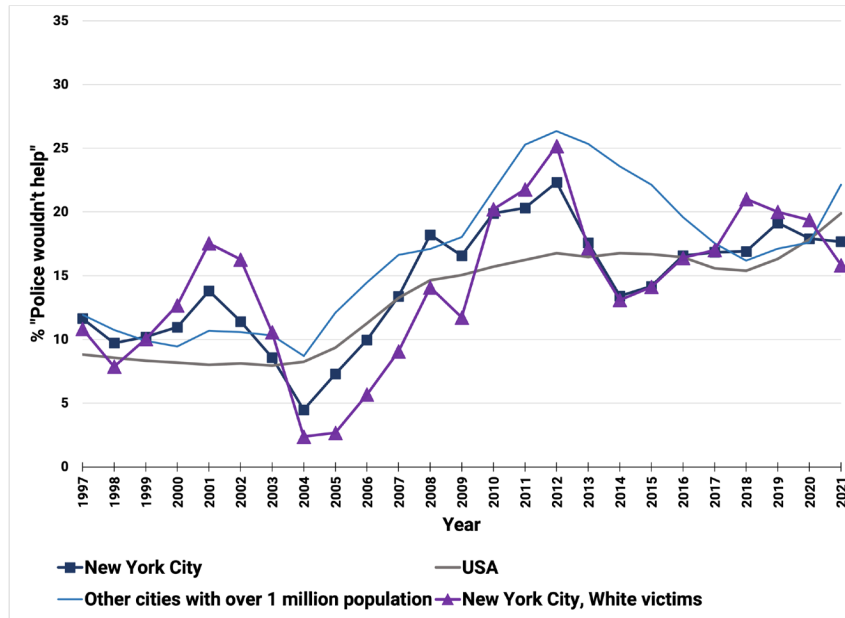


**Figure C2.b. % of Property Crime Reported to the Police (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**



**Appendix C. Crime Victimization Patterns of non-Latino White Residents in New York City: NCVS 1996-2022**

**Figure C3. White Victims' Perceptions of the Police**  
**% of Victims Stating "Police Wouldn't Help"**

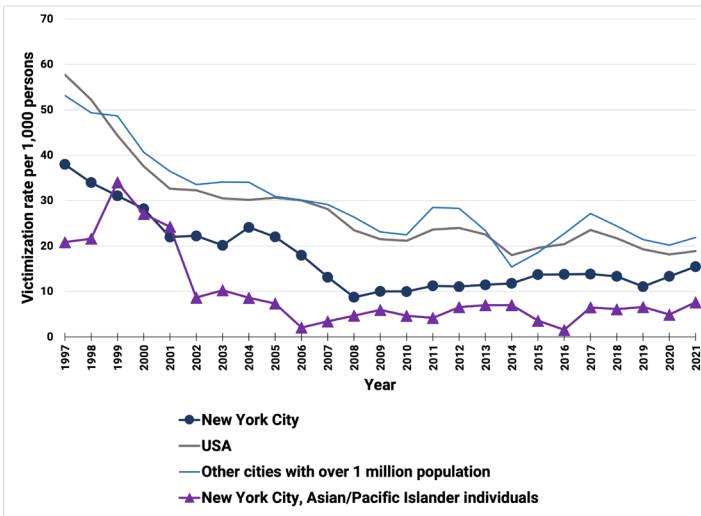


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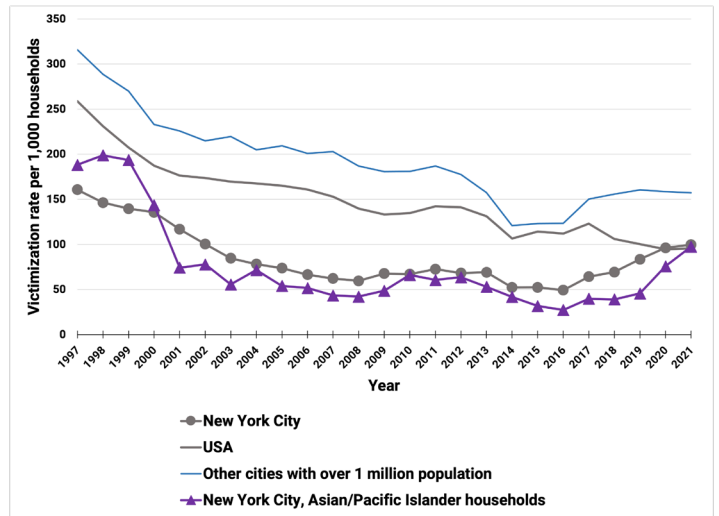
**Appendix D. Crime Victimization Patterns of non-Latino Asian or Pacific Islander Residents in New York City: NCVS 1996-2022**

**Figure D1. Asian or Pacific Islander Residents' Victimization Rates**

**Figure D1.a. Total Nonfatal Violence (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**

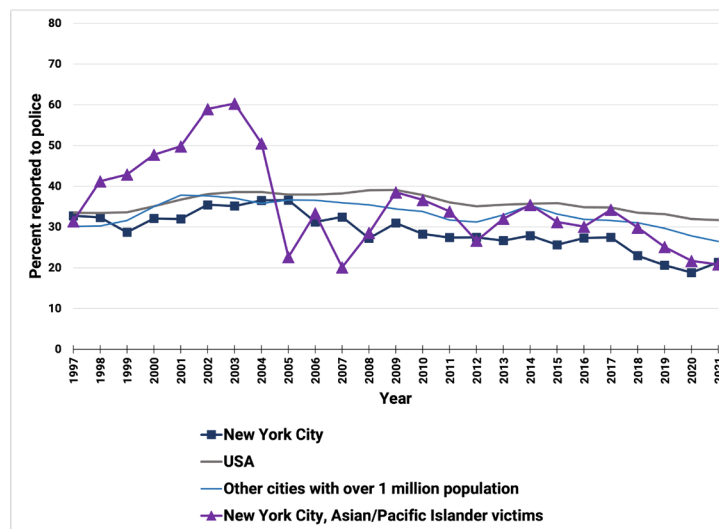


**Figure D1.b. Total Household Property Crime (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**



**Figure D2. Asian or Pacific Islander Victims' Police-Notification Rates**

**% of Property Crime Reported to the Police (NCVS 3 year moving average rates)**

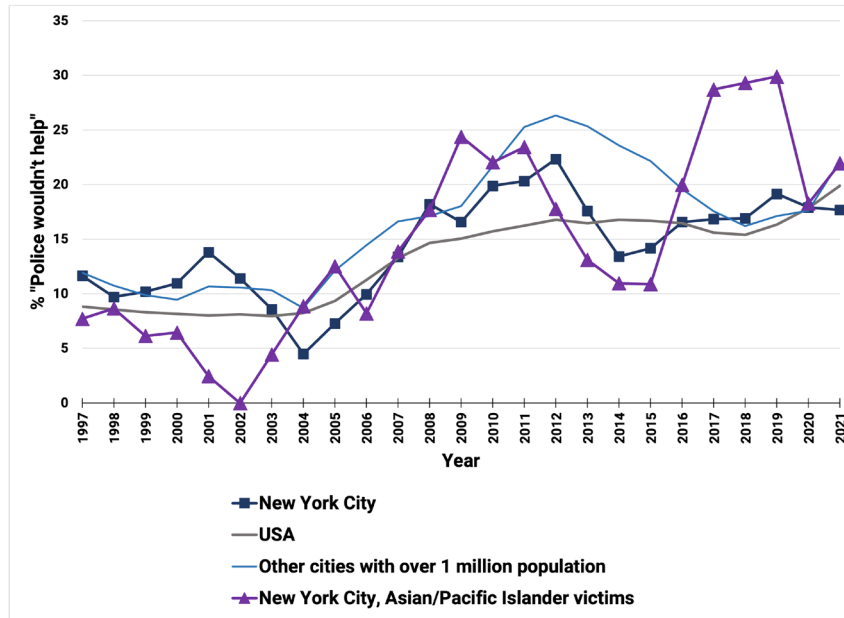


Note: Three-year moving violence reporting rates are not depicted because there were too few violence cases for the estimation.



## Appendix D. Crime Victimization Patterns of non-Latino Asian or Pacific Islander Residents in New York City: NCVS 1996-2022

**Figure D3. Asian/Pacific Islander Victims' Perceptions of the Police**  
**% of Victims Stating "Police Wouldn't Help"**



## **STUDYING CRIMES IN NYC USING THE NCVS**

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