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OPINION

Higher rape stats are due to better reporting [Login](#)



(Luiz C. Ribeiro for New York Daily News)



By **JESSICA TISCH** and **SALONI SETHI**
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New York City remains the safest big city in America. Overall major crime decreased 14.5% in February — the third straight month of double-digit drops. Transit crime was down 15.1%, and the city broke a 30-year record for the fewest number of shootings for the first two months of the year.

In fact, every single crime category saw reductions, save one: compared to February 2024, reported rapes increased nearly 22% last month.

This statistical increase speaks to the unique nature of sex crimes — which have been widely underreported for years. Survivors are often reluctant to come forward, due to stigma and fear that the systems designed to support them will let them down. According to the [National Violence Resource Center](#), 81% of women and 43% of men experience some form of sexual harassment or assault in their lifetimes. But only 25% of all sexual assaults were reported to police in 2018.

Clearly, more must be done to earn the trust of survivors. This begins with empowering and encouraging them through reformed policies, social services, and legal resources in New York City. It may be counterintuitive, but increased reporting of sex crimes, reflected in higher stats, is a sign that our work to address sexual and gender-based violence is making a real difference. More survivors coming forward reflects that they are not only aware of their rights but also have a growing level of trust that the systems designed to support them will provide some measure of justice and accountability.

The [NYPD's Special Victims Unit](#) has undergone a major overhaul to prioritize healing and encourage more reporting. SVU detectives now take sex crime reports in every borough at each of the city's five Family Justice Centers, run by the [Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence](#). Survivors using these centers to seek services from trusted advocates can now also file a police report in the same safe space.

The NYPD has also created online tools that allow survivors to securely report a sex crime, access services, request U or T visas for crime victims, and obtain police reports. And the NYPD continuously enhances training for SVU investigators, to conduct these sensitive cases with the highest standards of professionalism, empathy, and trauma-informed care.

We also support new legislation. [The Rape is Rape Act](#), beginning in September 2024, modernized New York's definition of rape to be more inclusive. Previously, state law defined rape as nonconsensual sexual intercourse that required penetration. Now, the state defines rape as nonconsensual vaginal contact. Anal and oral sexual contact, which were previously charged differently, are now also included in the expanded definition of rape. The NYPD received extensive training to implement this law. So far this year, reported attacks directly tied to the Rape is Rape Act climbed to nearly 17%, up from nearly 7% in 2024. We expect the percentage to grow.

Together, these efforts increase reporting. Research from [Yale University's Tobin Center for Economics](#) shows the number of reported sexual assaults in the U.S. rose by 9% in the six-month period after the #MeToo movement started in 2017. And we know that survivors may come forward months, or even years, after a rape. In fact, nearly one-quarter of the rapes reported to the NYPD in 2024 happened between 1967 and 2023 — a more than 50-year window. More survivors are accessing city resources in the aftermath of sexual assault and we want anyone who has been violated to know that a police report can be taken even years later.

We also need to do more to inform survivors of their rights when it comes to sexual assault within relationships. Last year, 95% of rapes were committed by an acquaintance. Furthermore, 42% of reported rapes were related to domestic violence — an increase from recent years. To shift the culture surrounding sexual violence, our outreach efforts must make this truth clear: intimate partner rape is rape. A prior or ongoing relationship never justifies sexual violence — consent can be withdrawn at any time.

More reporting is critical to holding people who commit sexual assault accountable, preventing others from suffering similar crimes, and providing some measure of justice to those who have endured such deeply harmful acts of intimate violence. We encourage all survivors to keep coming forward and make their voices heard. And when they do, New York City is committed to providing the resources and support they need to heal.

Remember: You are never alone.

Tisch is NYPD commissioner. Sethi is commissioner of the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence.



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