

# NEW YORK CITY CRIME SURVIVORS

# SPEAK

A CITYWIDE SURVEY  
OF VICTIMS' VIEWS ON  
SAFETY AND JUSTICE





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New York City is the safest big city in America. Many — but not all — serious crimes have declined since their early COVID increases, as have crimes in the subway. Yet, people remain concerned and often feel a sense of disorder.

As the city strives to maintain positive momentum and consider the best ways to address public safety, it is essential to consider the experiences and perspectives of victims and survivors of crime. This happens rarely nationwide — New York City can and should be different. If new approaches to safety and justice do not consider the experiences or incorporate the voices of survivors, the responses to crime may fail to deliver the safety solutions New York City deserves.

To inform the urgent debate on crime policy, in May of 2024, Alliance for Safety and Justice and the Independent Rikers Commission commissioned a New York City Survey of Victims' Views. This report describes the findings from this survey and points to opportunities for further research and reform to advance policies that align with the needs and perspectives of victims.

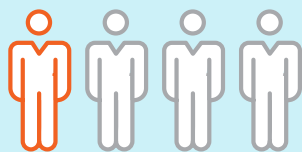
The results provide insight regarding victims' perhaps surprising views on safety and justice policy. Contrary to what many expect to be the position of victims of crime, the vast majority of crime survivors in New York City support public safety solutions and changes to the justice system that focus on violence prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation over incarceration. Meanwhile, many crime victims in New York City continue to lack access to adequate victims' services in the aftermath of crime. These views should help shape policy as the City and its State partners develop an agenda for improved public safety, including plans to close Rikers Island and replace it with a more effective and safe system.

# KEY FINDINGS

## VICTIMS' EXPERIENCES

- While crime impacts people from all walks of life in New York City, **the impact of victimization is not borne equally**. Demographically, victims of crime are more likely to be young people, people of color, people from low-income communities, LGBTQ people, people with disabilities, and people with records.
- **More than half (51%)** of NYC victims who had experienced violent crime in the last decade wanted to relocate as a result of their experience with crime, but more than six in 10 (61%) of those who wanted to were unable to do so.
- **Nearly one in 5** victims of violence (**19%**) lost a job or were demoted when they needed time off in the aftermath.

**MORE THAN ONE IN FOUR** victims of violent crime feared losing housing or were evicted as a result of crime.



- Victims of violent crime were **nearly four times as likely to say they would have wanted but did not receive emergency or temporary housing as they were to have received it** (32% would have wanted but didn't receive vs. 9% received).
- **94% of victims of violent crime** did not report receiving compensation from New York State's victim compensation program.

- **Less than a third (29%)** of victims of any crime and **only 37% of violent crime victims** reported receiving any mental health support or counseling.
- Victims were nearly six times as likely to **say they would have wanted but did not receive a facilitated process to speak to the person who harmed them as they were to have had that opportunity** (28% would have wanted but didn't receive vs. 5% received).

# 4x

**VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME WERE FOUR TIMES AS LIKELY TO SAY THAT THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM WAS VERY UNHELPFUL** as they were to say it was very helpful.

- Victims were most likely to say that family or friends (62%) and a hospital or healthcare provider (29%) were top sources of support, while only 14% selected police and 8% selected prosecutors' offices as significant sources of help.



## VICTIMS' VIEWS ON PUBLIC SAFETY POLICY

### THREE OUT OF EVERY FOUR VICTIMS SUPPORT EXPANDING ALTERNATIVES TO

**INCARCERATION** such as diversion, mental health and drug treatment, and restorative justice when thinking about people held in local jails like Rikers Island awaiting trial.

INVEST MORE IN  
ALTERNATIVES TO  
INCARCERATION



- **By a 4 to 1 margin**, victims think incarceration **generally worsens mental illness and increases the safety risk** when people leave incarceration rather than improves mental health and decreases the safety risk.

- **Nearly 9 in 10** crime victims in New York City (86%) support moving people who have mental illness and addiction issues into secure treatment facilities rather than jail, when thinking about people held in local jails like Rikers Island awaiting trial.
- **More than 9 in 10** crime victims (91%) support speeding up trials so people charged with crimes and crime victims wait less time for cases to be resolved.
- **Two out of 3** crime victims (65%) support housing people awaiting trial in smaller jails near courthouses.
- **Mental health and substance use treatment and violence prevention and youth programs** were the most popular investments victims preferred to **improve public safety**. Investing in increased arrests, longer sentences, and expanding prisons and jails received the least support.
- Crime victims were 37% more likely to prefer **rehabilitating people who commit crimes over punishing people** who commit crimes.

**BY A NEARLY TWO TO ONE MARGIN, CRIME VICTIMS** prefer shorter incarceration sentences and spending more on prevention/rehabilitation over prison and jail sentences that keep people incarcerated for as long as possible.

✓ **SHORTER SENTENCES**  
✓ **SPENDING ON PREVENTION**



✓ **INCARCERATED FOR  
AS LONG AS POSSIBLE**



## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Protecting victims and survivors of crime, promoting public safety and just outcomes are the most important functions of New York City's justice system. It is therefore essential to consider the experiences and perspectives of crime survivors when determining safety and justice policy.

As of today, there is inadequate information from people hurt by crime and violence to help guide safety policy in New York City. The most comprehensive information currently available about victims is the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics. The NCVS is an annual data collection from a nationally representative sample of more than 150,000 U.S. households and nearly 240,000 people aged 12 and older. The annual NCVS report is an invaluable resource. However, none of the nation's 50 states conduct annual state-level analyses of victimization or regularly survey victims, nor is city-level data available. This is a profound gap in information needed to inform public policy.

To ensure public safety policy can be informed by up-to-date input from victims, in May of 2024, Alliance for Safety and Justice and the Independent Rikers Commission commissioned a study of crime victims who live in New York City to understand their views and preferences. A representative sample of 1,800 people across New York City was contacted, and from that pool 1,296 people who had been victimized by crime or violence were surveyed about their experience with, and expectations of, the criminal justice system, as well as their own priorities regarding public safety policy. 93% were registered voters.

This report is a summary of the study's findings.



# WHO ARE CRIME VICTIMS?

Crime impacts people from all walks of life in New York City. About half of New Yorkers (51%) surveyed reported that they had experienced a property crime in the last decade. More than 1 in 3 New Yorkers surveyed (39%) reported having been the victim of a violent crime or attempted act of violence sometime in the last ten years. About half of New Yorkers reported having experienced identity theft — someone using or trying to use their personal or financial information.\*

## Survivors of violent crime are at greater risk of experiencing repeat victimization

National data indicate that one of the strongest predictors of victimization is having previously been a victim of crime.<sup>1</sup> This is known as repeat victimization. The New York City Survey of Victims' Views found that repeat crime victims bear a sharply disproportionate share of the impact of crime and violence. People who have been the victim of a violent crime are more than three times as likely to report having been victimized five times or more in the last decade than victims of other crime (21% vs 6%).

## Violence is concentrated and unequal

While victimization affects every demographic group, the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), other national studies, and the New York City Survey of Victims' Views show the impact of violence is not borne equally. Communities most harmed by concentrated cycles of crime are also often the least supported by the criminal justice system. People with low incomes, people of color, people with disabilities, people who are LGBTQ, people who are unhoused, and people with records are significantly more vulnerable to becoming victims of violent crime.

According to an analysis from the National Center for Victim Research, overall, Black people in the United States have faced serious violent victimization at a rate that is 1.5 to 2 times the rate among white people, Latino people at a rate 1.2 to 1.5 times as high, indigenous people 2.4 times as high, and people of multiple races at 4.1 times the rate for white people.<sup>2</sup> Vulnerability to deadly violence is even more disproportionate — in 2020, Black people represented 14 percent of the U.S. population but more than half of all homicide victims.<sup>3</sup>

The US Department of Justice also indicates the annual rate of violent victimization among people with family incomes below \$15,000 was nearly three times the rate of those with family incomes of \$75,000 or more in 2023.<sup>4</sup>

\* Victims of violent crime includes people who have been violently victimized themselves, and New Yorkers who reported having lost a loved one to homicide, known as homicide co-victims (7% of respondents). Respondents were not asked for the location of crime they had experienced, nor whether it took place in New York City. See methodology for more detail.

Young people of color from low-income communities are hurt by crime at even higher rates. According to one analysis of data from the US Department of Justice's National Crime Victimization Survey, young low-income men of color living in cities face some of the highest annual rates of violent victimization in the nation - this group's vulnerability to violent victimization is 15 times higher than that of older, higher-income white women living outside of cities.<sup>5</sup>

U.S. Department of Justice data also indicate that lesbian and gay people face violent victimization at rates twice as high as heterosexual people, and transgender people are 2.5 times as likely to experience violent victimization as people who are not transgender.<sup>6</sup> And, the annual rate of violent victimization nationally against people with disabilities is nearly four times the rate of violence against people who are not disabled.<sup>7</sup>

## THE NEW YORK CITY SURVEY OF VICTIMS' VIEWS ASKED ABOUT VIOLENT VICTIMIZATION EXPERIENCES IN THE LAST TEN YEARS AND FOUND:

- **People of color** surveyed were 21 percent more likely than white respondents to report having experienced violent crime in the last decade (41% vs. 34%).
- **People who earn less than \$25,000/year** were 22 percent more likely than people who earn more than \$100,000/year to report experiencing violent crime (45% v. 37%).
- **People of color with incomes of less than \$50,000** surveyed were 29 percent more likely than white people with incomes greater than \$50,000 to report having experienced violent crime in the last decade (44% vs. 34%).
- **People who were under age 35** were 72 percent more likely to report being the victim of a violent crime in the last decade than people aged 45 or older (50% vs. 29%).
- **When taking age and race together, the disparities become more stark** — Black survey respondents under age 45 were more than twice as likely to report having been a victim of a violent crime than white survey respondents over age 45 (52% vs. 24%).
- **People who identify as disabled or chronically ill** were 35 percent more likely than people who did not identify as disabled or chronically ill to report experiencing violent crime in the last 10 years (50% v. 37%).
- **LGBTQ people** surveyed were nearly 40 percent more likely than straight and cisgender people to report having experienced violent crime (50% v. 36%).
- **Six in 10 respondents who identified as trans or nonbinary (60%)\*** reported experiencing a violent victimization in the past 10 years.
- **More than 9 in 10 people with a conviction record (91%)** had been a victim of any crime in the last decade. People who said they had a past conviction were 54% more likely than people who did not report having a past conviction to say that they had been a victim of a violent crime in the last 10 years (57% vs. 37%).





# WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF CRIME ON VICTIMS?

Being a victim of crime is both a common experience and an experience that can have long-term consequences, including severely detrimental impacts on survivors' financial, physical, and physiological wellbeing. With proper support, these consequences can be addressed and people harmed by crime and violence can recover and thrive.

However, without appropriate recognition or support, survivors can experience long-term and debilitating costs, such as higher levels of depression, anxiety and symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Unless crime victims receive help in dealing with this trauma, they are at an increased risk of substance-abuse, worsening mental and physical health, difficulty with school, work, and relationships, and further violent victimization.<sup>8</sup>

In the New York City Survey of Victims' Views, respondents reported experiencing a wide range of impacts. Supporting victims to recover from these impacts is crucial for wellbeing and safety.

## Crime Affects Feelings of Safety for Victims

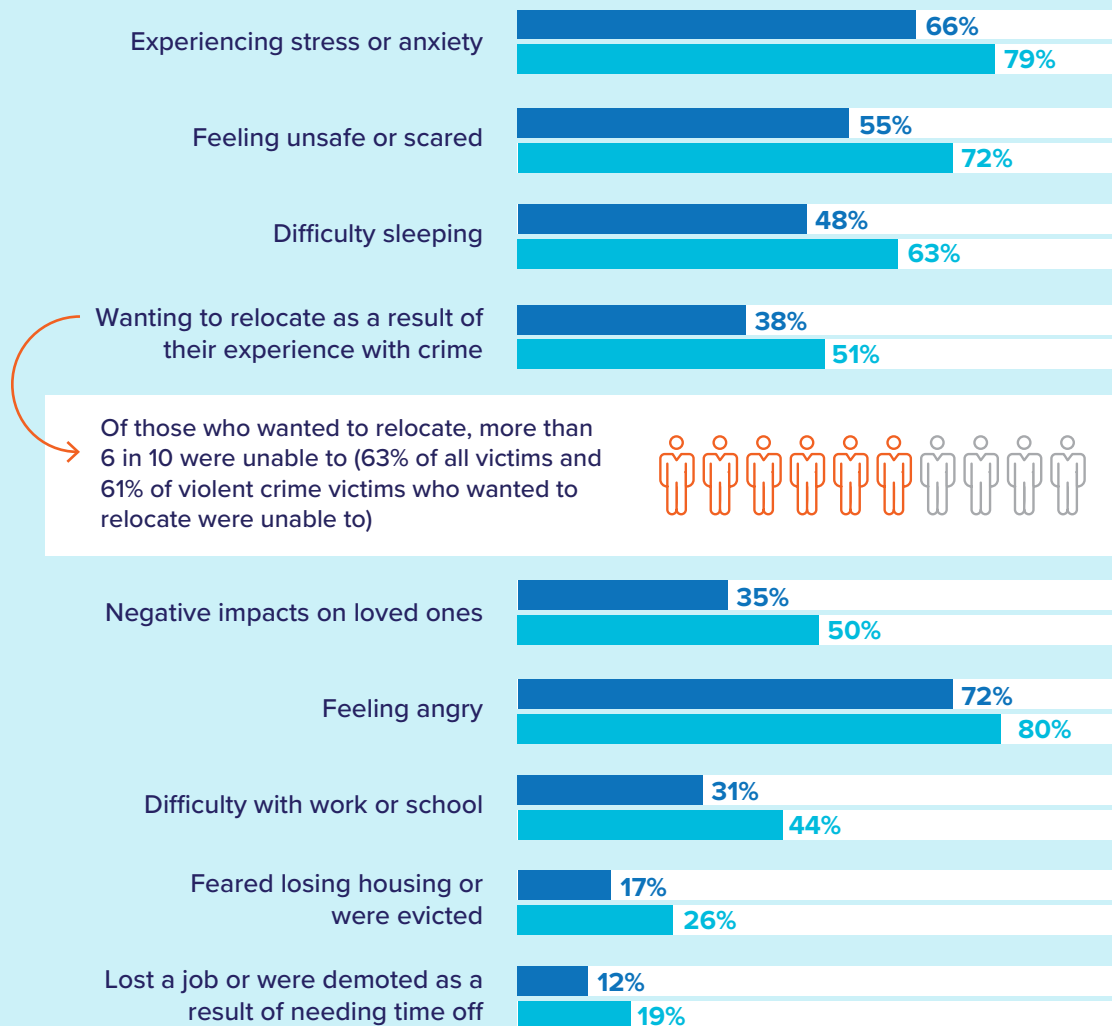
The New York City Survey of Victims' Views found that while **the vast majority of New Yorkers surveyed (70%) — including crime victims (65%) — report feeling safe in their neighborhoods**, people who have been victimized by crime are more likely than people who have not been victims to report feeling unsafe. Of people surveyed, a third of victims of any crime (34%) report feeling unsafe where they live in New York City, compared to 17 percent of New Yorkers who had not been a victim of any crime in the last 10 years. Additionally, victims of violent crime were twice as likely as other crime victims to report feeling unsafe in their communities. Four in 10 victims of violent crime (42%) reported feeling unsafe where they live (25% somewhat unsafe and 16% very unsafe) compared to only one in five of those (21%) who had experienced other types of crime (15% somewhat unsafe, 6% very unsafe).

# CRIME IS A TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE IMPACTING ECONOMIC AND PHYSIOLOGICAL WELL BEING

VICTIMS OF CRIME SURVEYED IN NYC REPORT THE FOLLOWING IMPACTS ARISING FROM THEIR VICTIMIZATION...

● VICTIMS OF ANY CRIME

● VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME



These kinds of consequences are especially prevalent among repeat victims. For example, 85% of victims who had experienced five or more crimes in the last decade reported experiencing stress or anxiety, 73% had difficulty sleeping, and nearly a third (29%) lost a job or were demoted due to taking time off.



# IS THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM MEETING VICTIMS' NEEDS?

The criminal justice system's mandate is to protect public safety while respecting the rights of both victims and people accused of crimes. This is envisioned to include the investigation and prosecution of crime, as well as facilitating victim access to medical, emotional, and economic recovery.

Without recovery help, the consequences of crime can have severe and long-term impacts on victims' personal, familial, and professional lives. Despite this crucially important role, very few crime survivors in NYC report that the justice system was responsive to their needs.

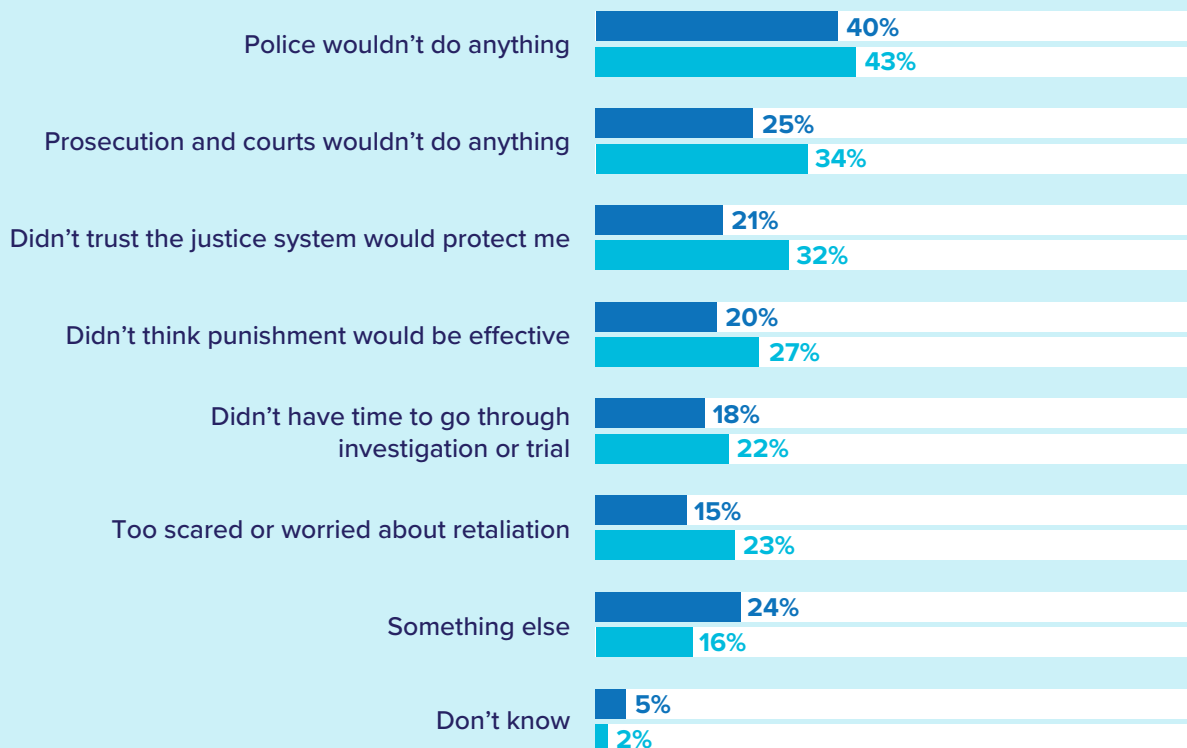
## Very Few Victims Trust the Justice System

Many crime victims in NYC express low expectations of the criminal justice system's ability to investigate and prosecute crime. This is expressed, in part, by the frequency of victims choosing to not report crime. When asked about the most serious crime that they had experienced in the last decade, about half of NYC victims surveyed overall (52%) and half of victims of violent crimes (50%) said that they did not report the crime to law enforcement. This is consistent with national reporting rates for violent crime, which have not changed significantly over the last decade — data from the National Crime Victimization Survey indicate that in both 2013 and 2023, approximately 53% of violent crimes went unreported nationally.<sup>9</sup>

## FOR WHAT REASONS DID YOU DECIDE NOT TO REPORT THAT CRIME TO LAW ENFORCEMENT?

● VICTIMS OF ANY CRIME

● VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME



**THERE ARE MANY REASONS VICTIMS DO NOT REPORT CRIME, INCLUDING FEAR THAT DOING SO WILL MAKE THEM LESS SAFE.**

*I would say the reason people don't [report] is because of the feeling of, are they not going to do anything or are they going to take it and blow it way too much out of proportion, giving a drastic sentence for something that doesn't deserve that."*

— YOUNG ADULT SURVIVOR OF VIOLENCE

*I think the reason why most victims wouldn't report it is that things can get out of hand. The criminals, or the one that's doing the bad, can attack [victims] after hearing that they were the one who reported. And not every time, but there's confidentiality with the police that's lost."*

— YOUNG ADULT SURVIVOR OF VIOLENCE

*I feel like race plays a big part in that [not reporting]. Say you're a victim of color, and the perpetrator is somebody that is more privileged than you — say it's a white person. Because you're a person of color, then they [law enforcement] might disregard your issue or think that you have a misunderstanding of the situation and overlook it, or might not go in depth with it, and then you won't get your deserved justice."*

— YOUNG ADULT SURVIVOR OF VIOLENCE

## Many Victims Do Not Receive Help to Recover

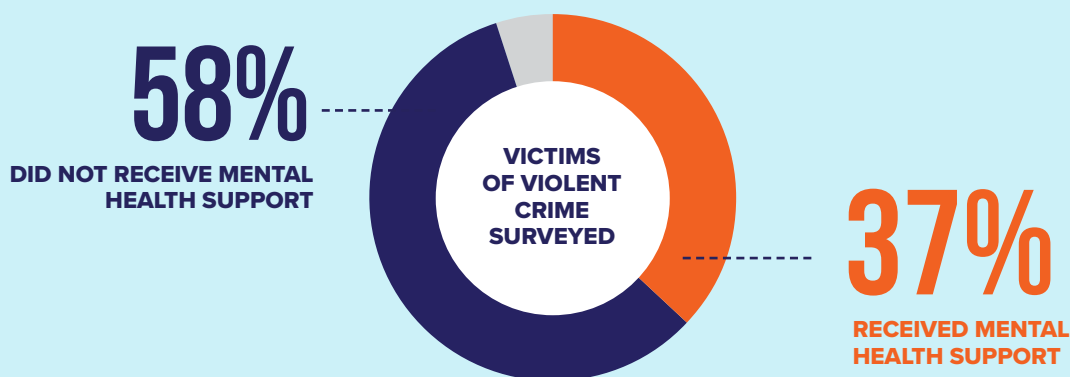
Every state has a victim compensation program created to provide financial reimbursement to victims for expenses that resulted from a violent crime, such as medical costs, lost wages, counseling, or funeral costs. Yet among New York City crime survivors surveyed, for every 1 violent crime victim who received help from New York State's victim compensation program, 9 victims of violent crime would have wanted but did not receive help from the program (54% vs. 6%). Only 6% of victims of violent crime reported ever receiving compensation from New York State's victim compensation program.

For many crime victims, counseling and mental health support is key to recovering from their experience. However, fewer than 1 in 3 victims of any crime (29%) and just over 1 in 3 victims of violent crime surveyed (37%) ever received counseling or mental health support following a victimization.

Another basic need for many victims is help planning for their safety. However, the New York City Survey of Victims' Views found that for every 2 victims of violent crime who said that they received help planning for their safety, there were 5 victims who would have wanted but did not receive this help (17% vs. 43%).

Additionally, many crime victims are interested in and benefit from alternative approaches to accountability like restorative justice, which include the opportunity to speak with the person who harmed them. However, for every 1 victim of violent crime in New York City who had engaged in such a process, nearly 4 victims said that they would have wanted to but never had the option to do so (8% vs. 31%).

### ONLY 37% OF VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME SURVEYED EVER RECEIVED COUNSELING OR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOLLOWING A VICTIMIZATION

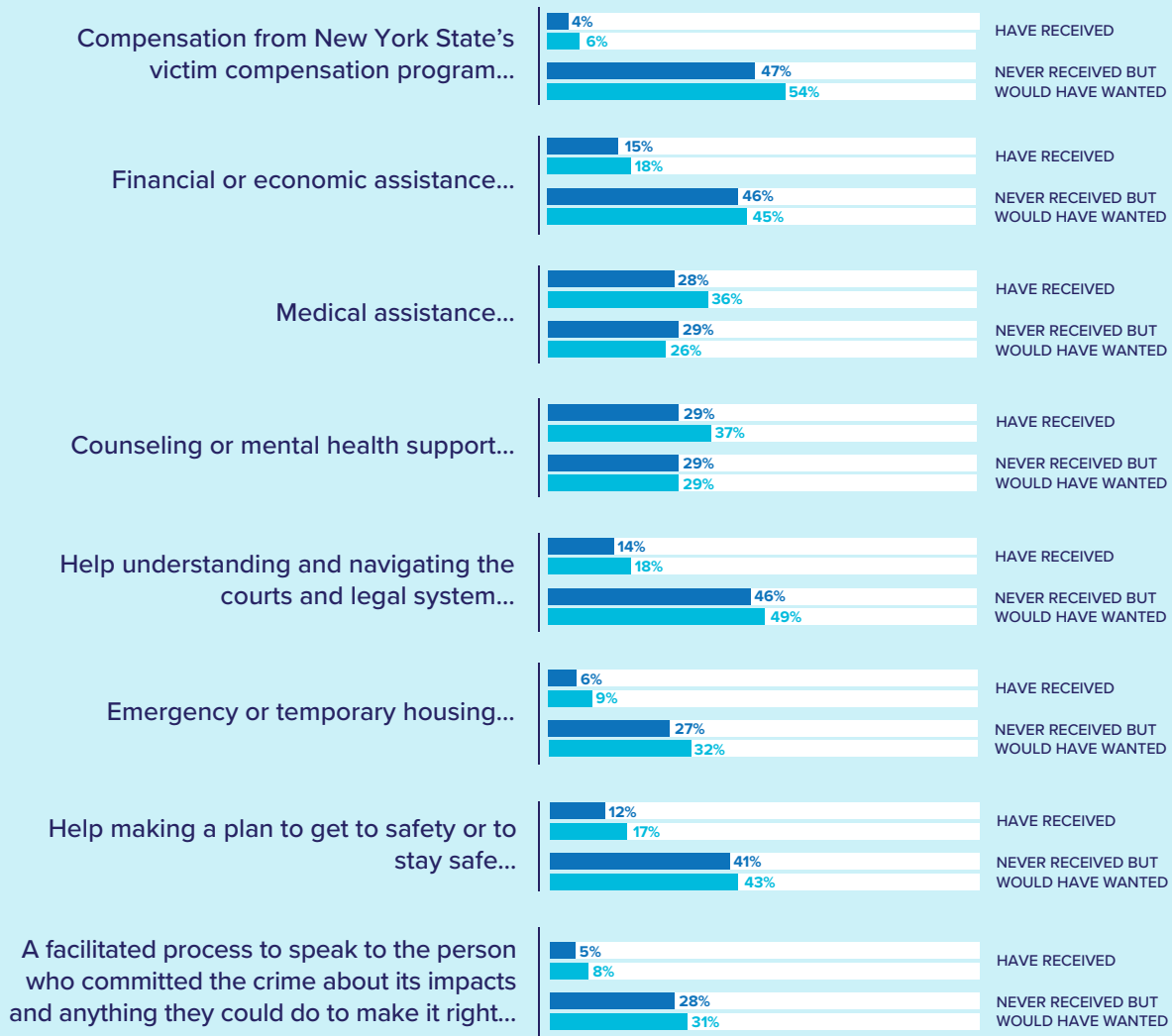




## TYPES OF SUPPORT RECEIVED BY VICTIMS OF CRIME

● VICTIMS OF ANY CRIME

● VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME



**VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS WERE NEARLY 4X AS LIKELY TO HAVE WANTED BUT NOT RECEIVED EMERGENCY OR TEMPORARY HOUSING AS THEY WERE TO HAVE RECEIVED IT**

*"It's difficult, because you're in a dangerous situation, you want to move somewhere right away so you don't die — in my experience anyway. There should be emergency housing, even if it's temporary, for a month, so I can put money away for a move. I was being financially abused, too, my money was being stolen, I was being bullied, so it was very difficult for me to save up money to leave."*

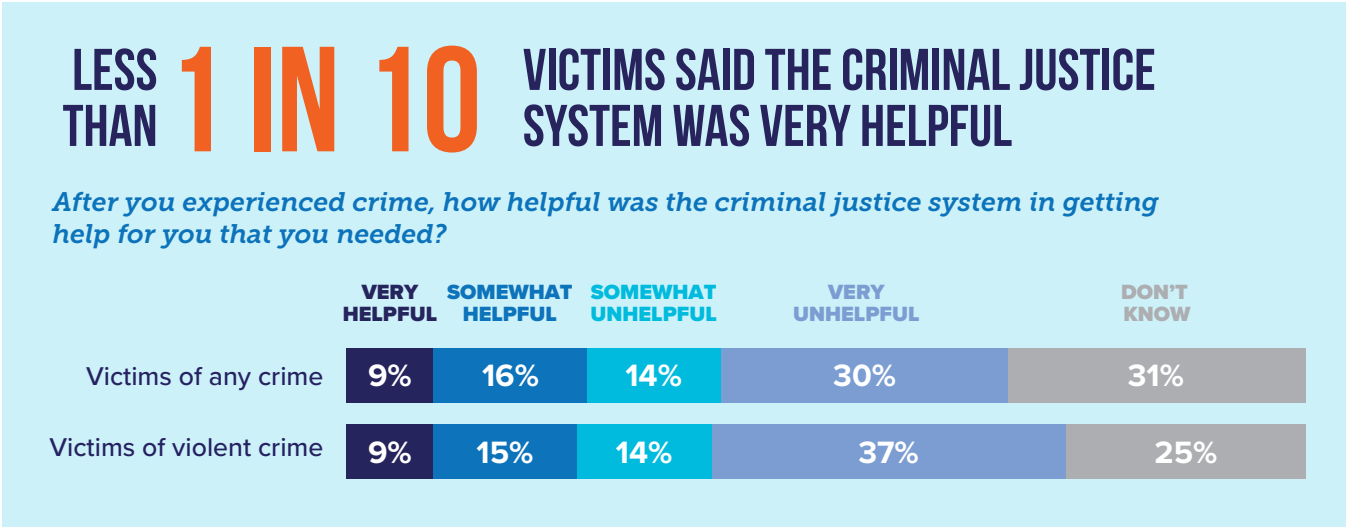
— DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVOR

*"Relocation gives you a space to breathe, and gives you help to plan your next steps. Those next steps right after a traumatizing event are super critical because most of the time people give up, [planning next steps] seems so daunting that [victims] go right back to the traumatizing situation."*

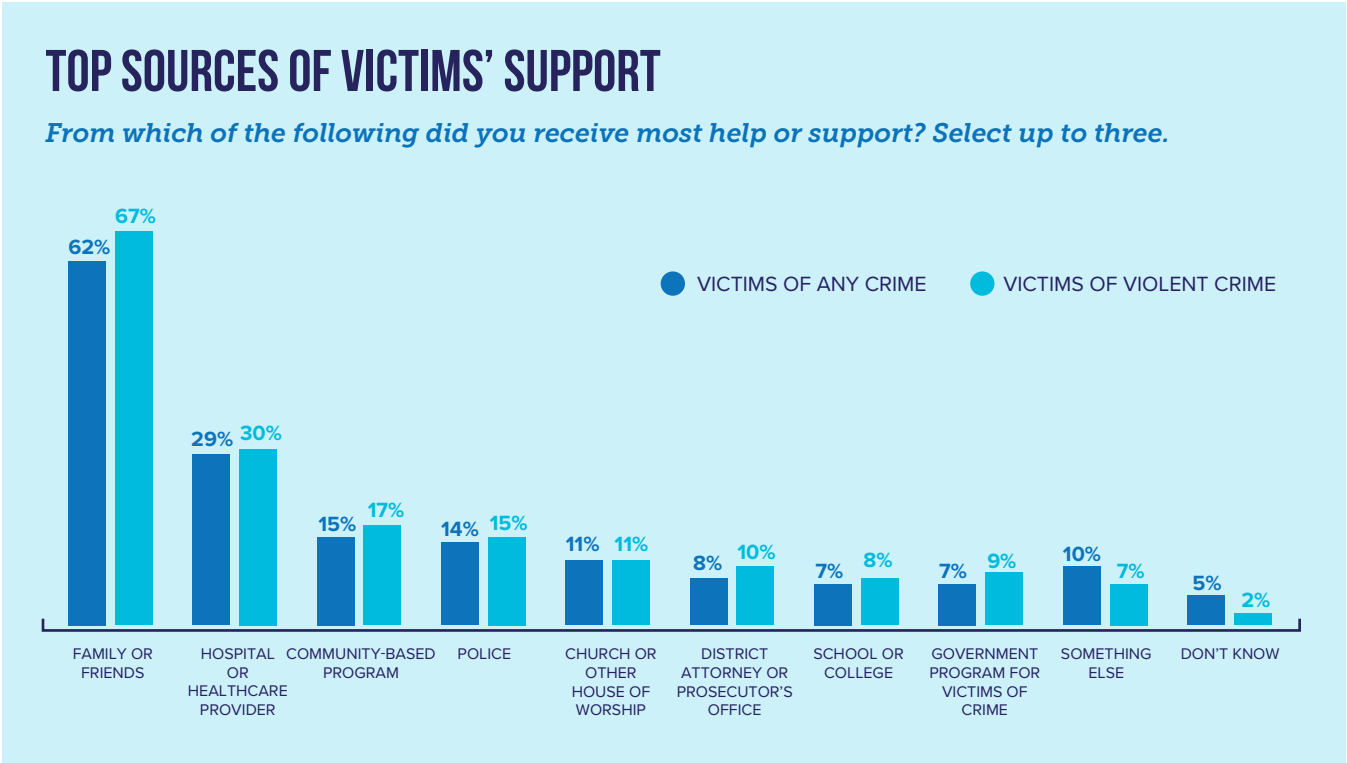
— DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVOR

# Few of Those Who Receive Help Get It Through the Criminal Justice System

Agencies within the criminal justice system were far less likely to be cited as a source of support. Fewer than 1 in 10 victims (9%) said that the criminal justice system was very helpful in getting help for them that they needed — and **victims of violent crime were 4 times as likely to say that the criminal justice system was very unhelpful** as they were to say it was very helpful (37% very unhelpful vs. 9% very helpful).



When victims did receive support in the wake of crime, it most often was provided by family or friends (62 percent) or hospital and health care providers (29 percent).





# WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES OF VICTIMS ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY POLICY?

Over the past decade, New York City has made significant strides laying the foundation for a more effective approach to public safety beyond incarceration alone. The City has invested in drug and alcohol treatment, diversion programming, alternatives to incarceration and re-entry initiatives. There has been an increasing willingness by the Courts to utilize effective community supervision in lieu of confinement, as well as State legislative changes to support new approaches to public safety. Today, the number of people incarcerated in New York City's jails is at just over 6,400 people<sup>10</sup> — down over 70% from its high of 22,000 people incarcerated in the early 1990s,<sup>11</sup> and 11% lower than it was five years ago.<sup>12</sup> While the city has made strides in improving public safety, major gaps remain in programs essential to prevent crime and increase safety, particularly for people with serious mental illness.

Meanwhile, crime concerns remain prominent in New Yorkers' minds, even as a mixed reality exists. Statistics tell part of the story. Murders, reported shootings, burglaries, and grand larcenies are all down from their COVID-era increases, while assaults remain stubbornly high.<sup>13</sup>

Conditions in the jails on Rikers Island also continue to run counter to New Yorkers' safety priorities. Amid long-neglected, decrepit buildings, violence and dysfunction are pervasive. In the first six months of 2024, the city reported 147 slashings or stabbings in the complex.<sup>14</sup> More than 8 in 10 people incarcerated (85%) are awaiting trial. 1,300 people (1 in 5) have been incarcerated for over a year waiting for their day in court.<sup>15</sup> Over half of those incarcerated (56%) are receiving mental health treatment,<sup>16</sup> and approximately 20% have a serious mental illness.<sup>17</sup> Too many leave worse off than when they entered.

All this is costing the city precious dollars — it costs over \$507,000 to incarcerate one person for a year on Rikers Island.<sup>18</sup>

In this context, and as the legal deadline to close Rikers lies on the horizon in August 2027, this survey asked a comprehensive and representative group of people hurt by crime and violence what they prefer the city focus on as it relates to safety and justice policy — a key and critical constituency to inform the city's public policy considerations moving forward.

# WHEN IT COMES TO PUBLIC SAFETY, WHICH TWO OF THESE ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO FUND?

## MOST POPULAR: MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE USE TREATMENT, VIOLENCE PREVENTION, REENTRY

### Expanding mental health and substance use treatment



### Expanding violence prevention and youth programs



### Expanding job and housing options for people leaving jail or prison



## MODEST SUPPORT: POLICE OFFICERS, TRAUMA RECOVERY SERVICES

### Increasing the number of police officers



### Expanding crisis response and trauma recovery services



## LEAST POPULAR: INCREASED ARRESTS, LONGER SENTENCES, AND EXPANDING PRISONS AND JAILS

### Increasing law enforcement arrests



### Making prison and jail sentences longer



### Expanding prisons and jails





When thinking specifically about people awaiting trial while held in local jails like Rikers Island, **3 IN 4 SURVIVORS SUPPORT ALTERNATIVES SUCH AS DIVERSION, MENTAL HEALTH AND DRUG TREATMENT, AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE OVER INCARCERATION.**

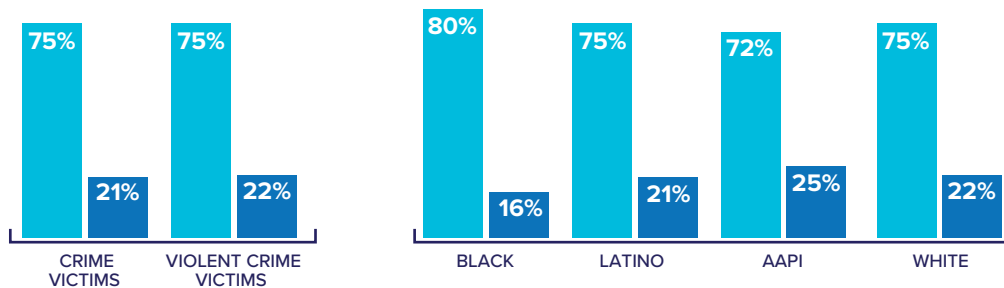


*Survivors also overwhelmingly support solutions that are connected to the City's plan to close the jails on Rikers Island, including speeding up trials (more than 9 in 10) and moving people with mental illness into secure treatment facilities (nearly 9 in 10).*

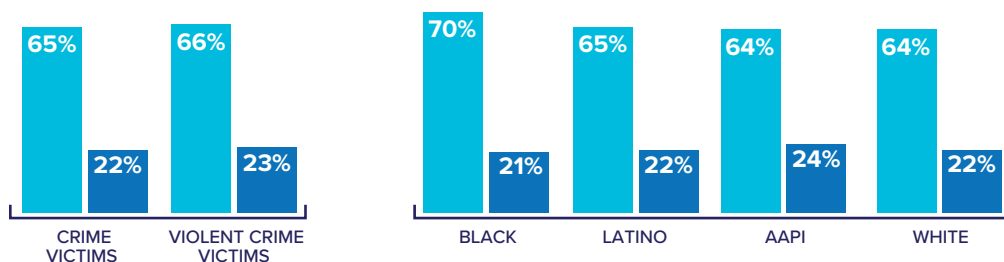
*Thinking specifically about people awaiting their trial while held in local jails like Rikers Island, do you support or oppose....*

● SUPPORT ● OPPOSE

➤ **Expanding alternatives to incarceration such as diversion, mental health and drug treatment, and restorative justice**



➤ **Housing people awaiting trial in smaller jails near courthouses**

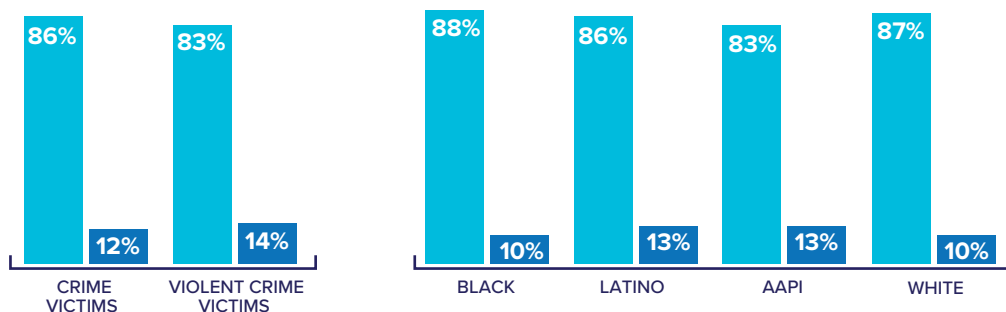




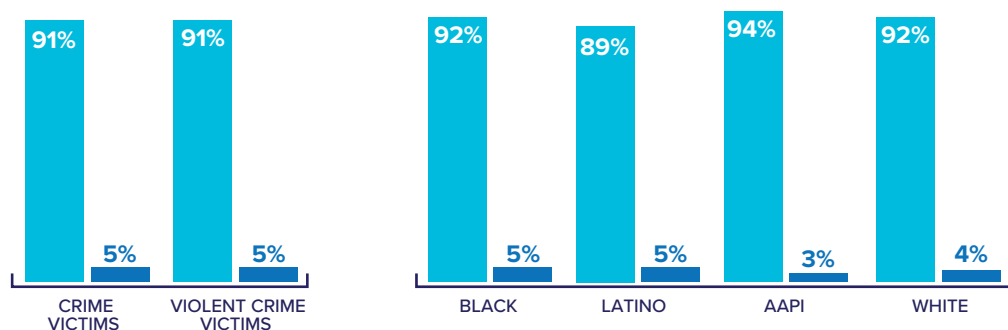
**(CONTINUED) Thinking specifically about people awaiting their trial while held in local jails like Rikers Island, do you support or oppose....**

● SUPPORT ● OPPOSE

**➤ Moving people who have mental illness and addiction issues into secure treatment facilities rather than jail**



**➤ Speeding up trials so that defendants and victims wait less time for case resolution**



*"When you promote alternatives, or allow community-based programs, it allows those that feel like they have nothing to lose, that there's something they can live for — like there's a future, or there's things [that] can change. Some people come from backgrounds where that's all they know, and when you expose them to things like [programming], it promotes room for growth or opportunity for goodness to happen."*

— YOUNG ADULT SURVIVOR OF VIOLENCE

*"I think mental [health] treatment would be really good, because a lot of times, [incarcerated people] being in jail for a really long time doesn't actually solve anything. They're just spending time in jail — they don't heal from anything. And sometimes, they end up coming out worse. If they are suffering from substance abuse, when they come out, they go right back to [using substances] and sometimes it turns worse, and then, their life gets worse. So having [treatment] would be good."*

— YOUNG ADULT SURVIVOR OF VIOLENCE

*"I think it's beautiful if they would be able to shut [Rikers] down and divert all of the funding to smaller prisons or jails that are closer to the courthouses, and for diversion programs, alternative to incarceration programs. A lot of people go to Rikers for makeshift jail or holding. Create those jails, create those holding places, create the alternative to incarceration programs and centers and facilities, because that's what's going to work. And even if it's not perfect, it has got to work better than what Rikers has proven."*

— DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVOR

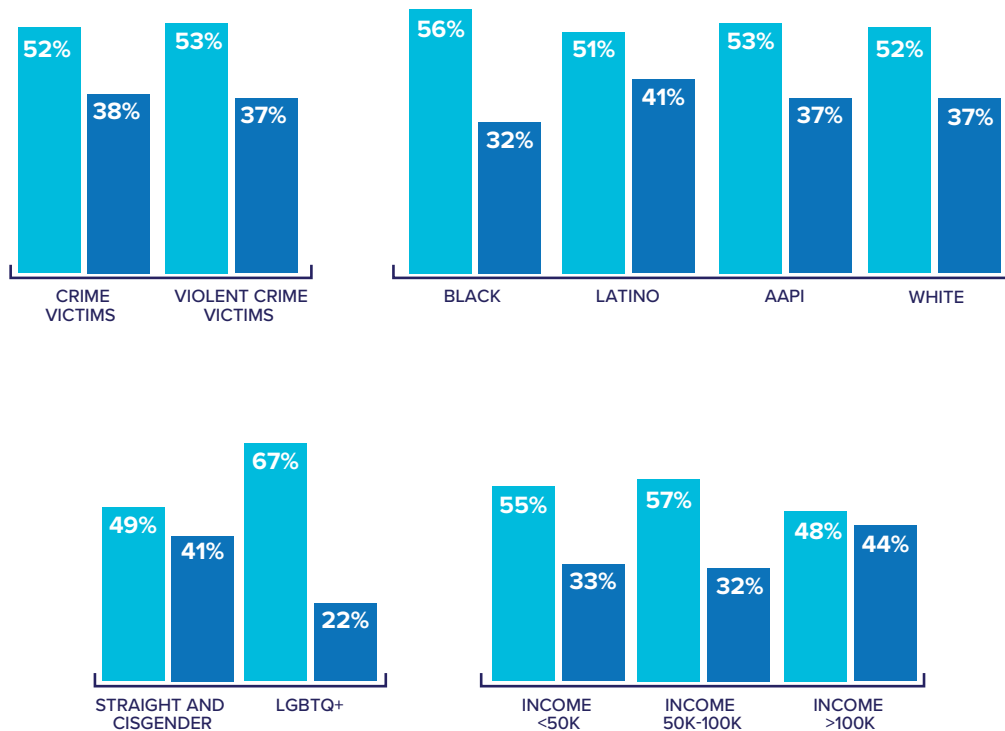
# VICTIMS PREFER A JUSTICE SYSTEM THAT FOCUSES MORE ON REHABILITATION THAN PUNISHMENT

*New York City crime victims were 37% more likely to say that they preferred rehabilitating people who commit crimes than punishing people who commit crimes (52% vs. 38%).*



## Do you think we should be more focused on....

● REHABILITATING PEOPLE WHO COMMIT CRIMES ● PUNISHING PEOPLE WHO COMMIT CRIMES





# VICTIMS PREFER SHORTER INCARCERATION SENTENCES AND MORE SPENDING ON PREVENTION AND REHABILITATION

*By a nearly 2 to 1 margin, victims say that they prefer shorter incarceration sentences and spending more on prevention/rehabilitation over prison and jail sentences that keep people incarcerated for as long as possible (58% vs. 31%).*

**SHORTER SENTENCES,  
MORE SPENDING  
ON PREVENTION &  
REHABILITATION**

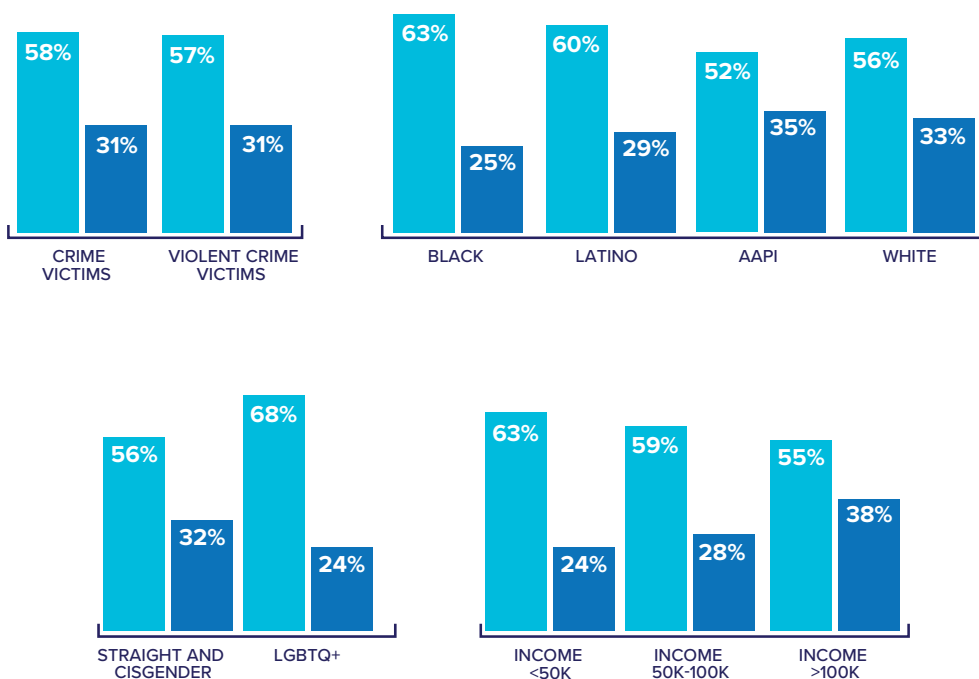


**PRISON & JAIL  
SENTENCES**

## Which do you prefer?

● SHORTER INCARCERATION SENTENCES AND SPENDING MORE ON PREVENTION AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

● PRISON AND JAIL SENTENCES THAT KEEP PEOPLE INCARCERATED FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE



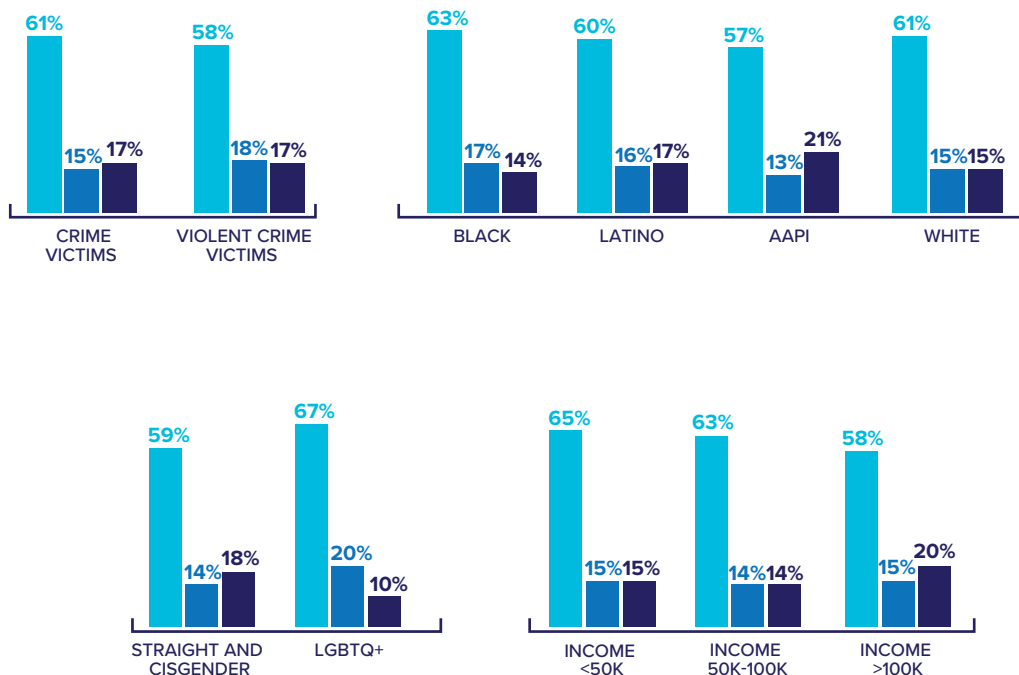
# NEW YORKERS WHO ARE CRIME VICTIMS THINK INCARCERATION GENERALLY WORSENS OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

*By a 4 to 1 margin, victims think that prisons and jails generally worsen mental illness and increase the safety risk when people leave incarceration than improve mental illness and make them less of a safety risk (61% vs. 15%).*



*Thinking specifically about people that commit crimes while struggling with mental illness — do you think that prisons and jails generally...*

- WORSEN THEIR MENTAL ILLNESS AND INCREASE THEIR SAFETY RISK WHEN THEY LEAVE INCARCERATION
- IMPROVE THEIR MENTAL ILLNESS AND MAKE THEM LESS OF A SAFETY RISK WHEN THEY LEAVE INCARCERATION
- DOESN'T HAVE AN IMPACT EITHER WAY



# CONCLUSION

The New York City Survey of Victims' Views is an important move forward in understanding who victims are and what they need to recover from crime. These results paint a different picture than some common assumptions about victims, their views, and what they want from the City's criminal justice system.

Perhaps the most basic response to crime and violence that the justice system can offer is responding to the needs of victims and investigating the crime. The New York City Survey of Victims' Views reveals the gaps in meeting this basic need. Crime is a traumatic experience for most victims, yet too few feel supported by the criminal justice system. Fewer than 1 in 10 victims found the criminal justice system very helpful in getting them the help they needed. Large majorities of crime victims indicate that they have been poorly served by the criminal justice system and favor approaches beyond incarceration and punishment. Many have avoided reporting crime for fear that nothing would come from their report — or, worse, that going to the police would further jeopardize their safety.

Crime victims are disproportionately poor, young, people of color, LGBTQ, and those who are housing insecure. The full toll of crime on their lives includes anxiety, fear for their safety, difficulty sleeping, a desire to relocate from their home, and even difficulties in their relationships, work, or school. Yet, these consequences, which not only can be severely destabilizing but also can perpetuate cycles of crime and violence, too often go unaddressed in New York City.

New Yorkers who are victims also prefer less incarceration, and more investments in prevention and rehabilitation. Victims want to move people with mental illness into secure treatment facilities instead of jails, speed up trials, and house those who cannot safely be released in smaller jails near courthouses — key components of the plan to close the jails on Rikers Island.

Perhaps to the surprise of some, New Yorkers who are victims of violent crime also share these views and demonstrate strong support for shifting the focus of the criminal justice system from punishment to rehabilitation and prevention.

These views should be considered in policy debates around criminal justice.





## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The Independent Rikers Commission and Alliance for Safety and Justice commissioned the New York City Survey of Victims' Views to fill in gaps in knowledge about who crime victims in New York City are, what their experiences are with the criminal justice system, and their views on public policy.

David Binder Research conducted the survey in English and Spanish in May 2024. The research survey was administered both by telephone — landlines and mobile phones — and online. This survey uses a combination of methodologies that are the best practices in survey research today. Namely, using multiple methods of reaching voters to ensure the broadest representation. The survey was administered using random digital dialing — where random phone numbers are called, random digit texting — where random phone numbers are texted, and an online panel of a cross-section of New York adults. United States Census data and election results are used to ensure that respondents are representative of the overall population according to age, gender, race, ethnicity, education, geography, political engagement, and partisanship. This research methodology was also designed to ensure the inclusion of harder-to-reach demographic groups, such as young people and people with less housing stability.

New York City residents ages 18+, all racial and ethnic groups, and all boroughs are represented in these findings. These findings also reflect a diverse array of victimization experiences. Several parts of this report distinguish experiences of violent, property and identity crime. To categorize these experiences, the survey described a number of types of crimes, and asked respondents to indicate if these were crimes that they had personally experienced during the 10-year lookback period. Forced or threatened robbery, physical assault or threatened assault, sexual assault, stalking, attempted murder, human trafficking, or losing a family member or loved one to homicide are classified as experiences of violent crime for the purposes of this report. Theft of property, burglary, and vandalism are classified as property crimes. Someone using or trying to use personal information, credit cards, or financial accounts without the respondent's permission are classified as identity crimes or identity theft.

A common challenge in victimization research is the reluctance of people to discuss their victimization with a researcher. For reasons relating to the social stigma of being a crime victim and associated data collection challenges, it can be difficult to identify sufficient respondents in victimization research. For this reason, the New York City Survey of Victims' Views used a ten-year reference period. However, just as many crimes are not reported to the police, some crime is not reported to researchers. Like other victim surveys, the New York City Survey of Victims' Views likely does not capture the total number of crimes experienced by those surveyed. While David Binder Research informed people that their personal information is kept confidential and used for research purposes only, we anticipate that respondents may have under-reported their victimization in this survey.

The overall margin of error for New York City Survey of Victims' Views is  $\pm 2.3\%$ , while the margin of error for the 1,296 who were crime victims is  $\pm 2.7\%$ , and for the 697 who were violent crime victims is  $\pm 3.7\%$ . The margin of error is larger for subgroups, and small samples of 100 or fewer respondents are indicated (\*).

The Independent Rikers Commission also coordinated four conversations with groups of survivors receiving services through Day One Project and Safe Horizon about public safety issues and the results of this survey, and quotes included in this report come from those conversations.

# ENDNOTES

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