

OVERLOOKED IN PLAIN SIGHT:

DOCUMENTING POLICE VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS OF COLOR

INTRODUCTION

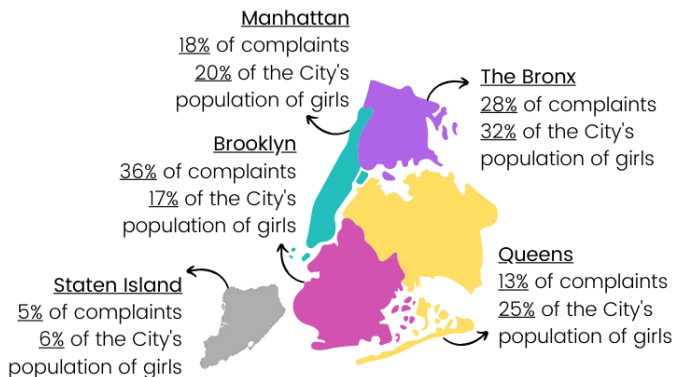
In July 2020, [ProPublica](#) released records from the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB), specifically, closed cases of every active-duty NYPD police officer who has at least one substantiated misconduct allegation against them. **ProPublica's database includes 1,083 cases where the complainant was a girl or young woman aged 24 and under, spanning from 1999 to 2019.**

GGE offers the following **not** as a recommendation for gender-responsive policing, but rather to shift the public consciousness around the everyday violence of policing, particularly framing policing as a kind of concentrated gender-based violence.

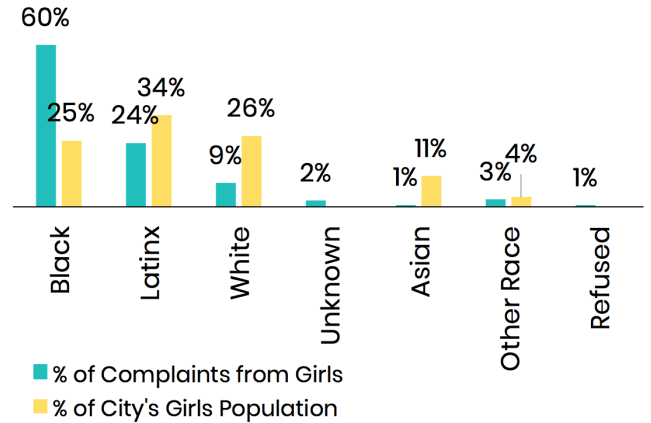
Our analysis can always be found at the intersections, and we center those who are most marginalized. The data indicate what many have always known, that police misconduct lands disproportionately on communities of color. It also tells a story about the painful experiences of Black girls that are often overlooked in conversations around racial and gender equity. This brief points to an urgent need for divestment from policing and to make reparations for far too many young people in the City of New York who have been harmed.

PART I – DISPARITIES

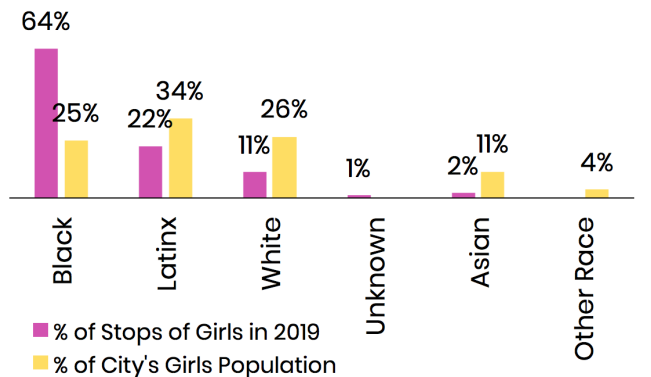
To begin, Brooklyn-based policing was overrepresented in the data, as compared to the population of girls in each borough:



Of the 1,083 cases, Black girls represented 60%, while representing only 25% of all girls age 24 and under living in New York City, per Department of City Planning data:

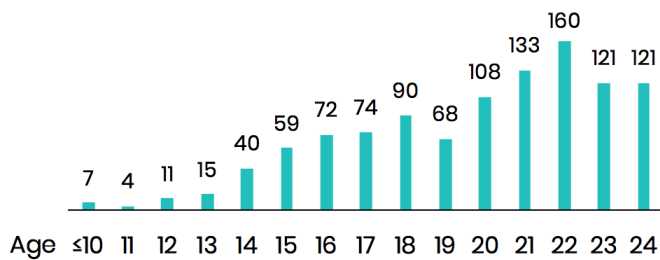


To be clear, the full scope of police harassment of Black girls and girls of color cannot be captured in the form of CCRB complaints. As one other data-based example, the NYPD's [2019 reporting](#) on Stop & Frisk includes over 500 cases of police stops of girls age 24 and younger – where girls of color as young as 11 were stopped by police and labeled in the NYPD's reporting as “aggressive.”



Such racialized terminology dehumanizes girls of color, and harkens to other labels laden with misogynoir, including “[incorrigible](#)” and the “angry Black woman” trope. The NYPD relies on those same stereotypes and the [adultification of Black girls](#) and other girls of color to justify their violence.

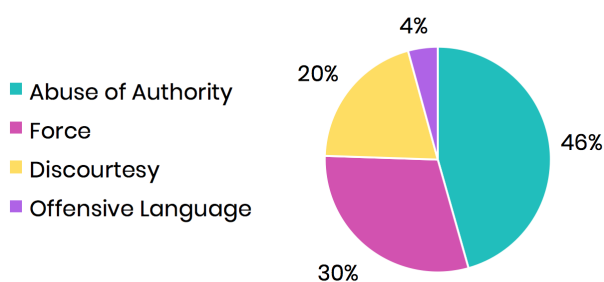
The youngest girl represented in the data was identified as 8 years old – a Black girl reporting a search in central Harlem under the CCRB complaint category “Abuse of Authority.” Distribution of complaints across girls’ ages was as follows:



PART II – COMPLAINTS

The CCRB has jurisdiction to investigate complaints that fall under four categories of police misconduct: Force, Abuse of Authority, Discourtesy, and Offensive Language. Abuse of Authority, the most frequent misconduct allegation for girls and all people in the database, includes cases of sexual misconduct and sexual harassment. In one substantiated case, an 18-year-old Black girl in East New York reported being strip-searched, an instance instigated by police through a “moving violation.” It is through the everyday policing practices like this example that gender-based violence becomes state-sanctioned and normalized.

In another substantiated case of abuse of authority, a 13-year-old Latina in the Rockaways reported “interference with recording,” resulting in her receiving a criminal court summons. This case represents what many young girls of color experience as police suppression and criminalization of efforts to resist police violence.



Across all FADO categories, the most common allegations included physical force (23%), word (19%), threat of arrest (6%), refusal to provide name or shield number (5%), and stop (5%).

Under “offensive language,” incidents include reports of references to gender, race, ethnicity, physical disability, and sexual orientation. In one substantiated case of a 14-year-old Black girl in Canarsie reporting offensive language by gender, the outcome for the 42-year-old officer, who at that time had 13 years on the job, was “formalized training.” The incident also included a complaint of physical force that was closed as unsubstantiated. One year after the case was closed, the officer was named in the [Daily News](#) following his own arrest for assaulting a woman identified as his girlfriend.

PART III – OFFICERS

566 individual officers were identified across those 1,083 total complaints, where 27 officers had five or more complaints, and one officer had 13 complaints. 231 NYPD commands were represented in the data:

Top Commands	#
Criminal Intelligence Section	56
Warrant Section	45
Critical Response Command	21
75th Precinct – East New York	20
46th Precinct – Central, Western Bronx	17

Reporting also includes precincts, which helps identify the neighborhoods where girls are most often reporting being targeted:

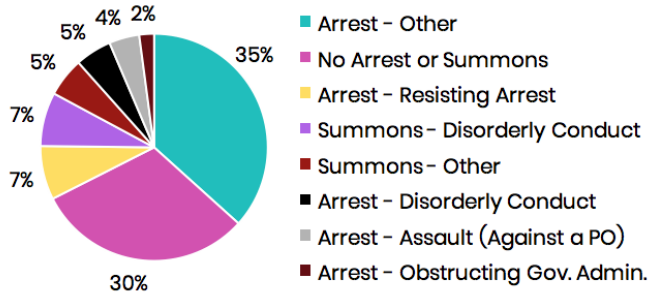
Top Precincts	#
75th – East New York	73
44th – Southwest Bronx	51
73rd – Brownsville	40
32nd – Northeastern Harlem	40
81st – Bed-Stuy, Stuyvesant Heights	38
79th – Bedford Stuyvesant	37

PART IV – OUTCOMES

For each case, the outcome of the incident, as it impacted the young person, is listed. In one substantiated complaint, an 11-year-old Latina reported a chokehold in the southwest Bronx, a “force” category incident that culminated in **her** arrest.

Documents obtained by **Univision** tell of a more detailed [narrative](#) where the Lieutenant pushed her while questioning her, whereafter she sought shelter at a nearby barbershop. He subsequently chased her, swung her face down into the ground, then used a chokehold. Also according to these documents, while charges were recommended by the CCRB, the NYPD issued [no punishment](#).

Distribution of outcomes for girls was as follows:



These outcomes categories utilize hyperbroad, discretionary consequences, like “disorderly conduct,” or reflect an escalation of police interventions, like “resisting arrest.”

On average, 313 days passed from when a complaint was filed to when a case was closed, representing many days of waiting for many girls who also were being forced to defend themselves against charges within the criminal or juvenile legal system simultaneously.

The NYPD’s reasons for the initial police contact included reports of domestic disputes, reports of noise disturbances, and to “assist ACS or other agency.”

Top NYPD Contact Reasons	#
PD Suspected Violation/Crime - Street	321
Other	171
PD Suspected Violation/Crime - Building	96
Report of a Dispute	69
PD Suspected Violation/Crime - Auto	50

In one substantiated case, a 16-year-old Black girl was pepper-sprayed in northwest Brooklyn following a report of a noise disturbance.

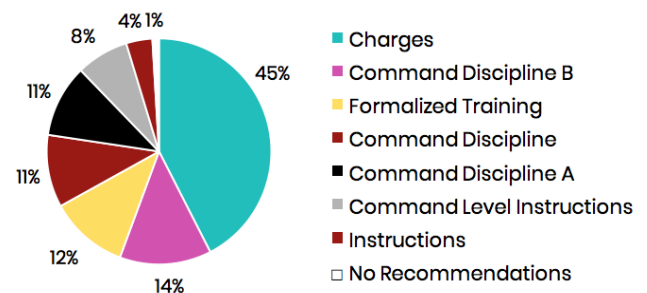
The details of this case are outlined in the [CCRB’s June Youth Report](#), offering a narrative where young girls in conflict outside of school following dismissal were responded to with uniformed and plainclothes officers, **where one officer punched a young girl in the face while she was in handcuffs.** This incident clearly illustrates the dangers of police as first-responders and the outsourcing of police as responders to all issues, especially when in proximity to the pedagogical resources of a school building.

In that case, while the CCRB recommended Command Discipline B (carrying a maximum weight of 10 lost vacation days), the Police Commissioner imposed Command Discipline A (carrying a lesser maximum weight of 5 lost vacation days). According to this logic, police violence resulted in an increase in potential working days, or an increase in opportunities for police to interact with young people in an enforcement role.

“Dispositions” describe the outcomes that follow the CCRB fully investigating cases, where the NYPD ultimately has discretion and can choose to ignore CCRB recommendations.



Distribution of the CCRB’s recommendations for girls’ substantiated cases was as follows:



In another substantiated case, a 16-year-old Black girl in Harlem reported offensive language by gender when police intervened to “assist ACS or other agency.” There is a connection here between the simultaneous need to end police violence with the need to end family regulation and the ways that other City agencies cooperate with policing to punish girls of color.

CONCLUSION

Police violence against girls of color remains under-examined and under-documented. While we use the words “police violence” we nonetheless encourage a shift in the public consciousness to recognize and acknowledge violence as inherent to policing.

In late June, the NYPD [Patrol Guide](#) was updated to include the new policing position “Youth Coordination Officer” (YCO) as part of the NYPD’s new [Youth Strategy](#). Those officers are tasked with patrolling areas “frequented by youth,” “coordinat[ing], guid[ing] and develop[ing] youth programs,” and “visit[ing] schools and confer[ing] with school principals.” Especially given the egregious cases outlined in the ProPublica database, **we strongly condemn these efforts to extend police presence into the everyday lives of young people.** Neighborhood policing and this youth strategy are being used to bolster the legitimacy of the police especially as they are undermined by current uprisings.

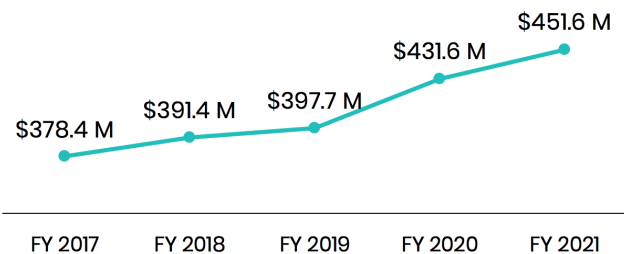
Often overlooked in the conversation about police violence are the stories of survivors of sexual violence committed by police. While the data focused primarily on FADO complaints, girls and gender-expansive young people across New York City have experienced [sexual assault](#) and harassment committed by [police in their schools and communities](#) – a reality almost entirely absent from public discourse. While School Safety Agents, for example, fall under the NYPD’s Internal Affairs Bureau rather than CCRB jurisdiction, GGE’s [School Girls Deserve](#) Participatory Action Research Project includes testimonials of pervasive harm from the presence of School Safety Agents. Reporting sexual harassment and violence is incredibly difficult, let alone in instances of reporting police to the police.

While the stories we lift up from the database highlight the CCRB’s substantiated cases of violence against girls of color, we want to make clear that this in no way indicates that we do not believe the other young people who have come forward with complaints of police misconduct, where the outcome may have been “unsubstantiated” or “truncated.”

For the database as a whole, 24% of all cases were substantiated, while for girls in the database, substantiations made up just 20%.

We know that all too often, the burden of proof for police misconduct remains extraordinarily high. We also know that many young people never come forward and report to the CCRB, likely because they have witnessed instances where police commit violent acts against people of color and evade accountability.

At the time of the release of ProPublica’s database, young people are grappling with a [City budget](#) that prioritizes policing over education and wellness.



School Policing Spending, by Adopted Budget Year

Source: Mayor’s Office of Management & Budget, Supporting Schedules

The newly adopted budget for Fiscal Year 2021 allows new school police officers to be hired, but imposes a complete hiring freeze for educators, counselors, and school staff. At a time when students face tremendous emotional and mental health needs, schools are being resourced strictly to surveil and punish students rather than foster trust-building and healing.

The data analyzed in this brief makes clear that policing is inherently violent, misogynistic, trans-antagonistic, and does not create safety for marginalized youth.

Survivors of gender-based violence are often young people and students – their safety and healing necessitates police-free schools and major investments in their liberatory education.

ABOUT GIRLS FOR GENDER EQUITY

Girls for Gender Equity (GGE) is a Brooklyn-based intergenerational advocacy organization, engaging cisgender and transgender girls of color and gender non-conforming youth of color. GGE centers Black girls in the movement to achieve gender and racial equity. Since 2001, GGE has committed to the optimal development of our communities through a combination of direct service, policy change, community organizing, and culture change work.

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