

MONITORING POVERTY AND WELL-BEING IN NYC

Spotlight on Policing:

---

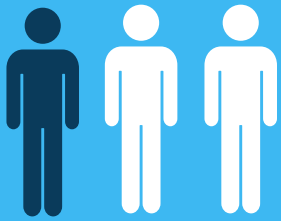
**DESPITE THE END OF  
STOP-AND-FRISK, BLACK  
NEW YORKERS CONTINUE  
TO BE OVER-POLICED**

---

Matthew Maury, Lily Bushman-Copp, Sophie Collyer, Sonia Huq,  
Kahlen Washington, Christopher Wimer



# KEY FINDINGS



Police stopped **A THIRD** of all Black New Yorkers<sup>1</sup> or their household members over a **36-month** period.

36 MONTHS

The police are **TWICE AS LIKELY** to stop Black New Yorkers or members of their household (18%) compared to white New Yorkers (9%) over a **12-month** period.



**18% VERSUS 9%**

12 MONTHS



Black New Yorkers are as likely to **REPORT MULTIPLE STOPS WITHIN THEIR HOUSEHOLD** as white New Yorkers are to report **ANY STOP** over a **36-month** period.

36 MONTHS



For white New Yorkers, where one lives affects the chances that they are stopped by police. **FOR BLACK AND HISPANIC NEW YORKERS, NEIGHBORHOOD POVERTY LEVEL MAKES LITTLE TO NO DIFFERENCE, and race remains the salient factor.**

**POLICE ARE MORE LIKELY TO STOP BLACK NEW YORKERS LIVING IN LOWER-POVERTY NEIGHBORHOODS** than white or Hispanic New Yorkers in higher-poverty zip codes.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup>In this report we refer to Black non-Hispanic and white non-Hispanic New Yorkers as Black and white New Yorkers, respectively.

<sup>2</sup>This is not to be confused with the "high-poverty" neighborhood definition used by the U.S. Census Bureau and in previous Poverty Tracker reports. Due to a lack of sample size, we turned to a broader definition. We rank ordered zip codes based on their poverty rate, and those that were in the top 20th percentile of this distribution (i.e., with the highest poverty rates) were classified as "higher-poverty zip codes." Zip codes that did not fall into this group were classified as lower-poverty zip codes.

---

# Introduction

In the weeks and months following mass protests over the brutal killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers, state legislatures have introduced more than one hundred bills and resolutions regulating police use of force and increasing oversight and transparency.<sup>3</sup> Many jurisdictions have announced plans to entirely restructure their police departments and move towards community-based public safety programs.<sup>4</sup> Cities like New York and Los Angeles have announced cuts to police department budgets<sup>5</sup> in addition to enacting other reforms limiting use of force.<sup>6</sup> As these policies are designed and implemented, the Poverty Tracker can provide a window into how these changes are impacting communities on the ground in New York City.

The New York City Police Department (NYPD) has come under fierce scrutiny for its practices and disparate treatment of New Yorkers based on race. But this is by no means the first time the NYPD has been forced to confront the way it polices city residents. During Michael Bloomberg's tenure as mayor, millions of New Yorkers were stopped and searched by the police in a controversial practice called "stop-and-frisk." While stop-and-frisk has been used outside of New York City and was used by the NYPD well-before Mayor Bloomberg took office, the practice grew substantially under his administration. In fact, the number of stops multiplied sevenfold, peaking at 685,724 in 2011, with more than five million reported stops over the course of his three terms.<sup>7</sup> The vast majority of those stopped during this period were Black or Hispanic and had not committed a crime.

While the de Blasio administration has a stated goal of reducing racially biased stop-and-frisk encounters, results from the Poverty Tracker show that police continue to stop Black New Yorkers at alarmingly disproportionate rates compared to white New Yorkers. The Poverty Tracker offers a look at certain aspects of policing in our own community and finds that racial disparities are still prevalent today.

---

<sup>3</sup>Li, W., & Lodhi, H. (2020, June 18). Which States Are Taking on Police Reform After George Floyd? Retrieved June 30, 2020, from <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/06/18/which-states-are-taking-on-police-reform-after-george-floyd>

<sup>4</sup>Solender, A. (2020, June 09). Minneapolis To Disband Police Department. Retrieved June 30, 2020, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewsolender/2020/06/07/minneapolis-votes-to-disband-police-department/>

<sup>5</sup>Sanchez, R. (2020, June 14). Police reforms quickly take hold across America. It's only just getting started. Retrieved June 30, 2020, from <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/14/us/george-floyd-national-police-reforms/index.html>

<sup>6</sup>Marcus, C. (2020, June 18). NYC Council committee on public safety passes police reform bills including chokeholds. Retrieved June 30, 2020, from <https://www.nydaily-news.com/news/politics/ny-city-council-public-safety-committee-passes-police-reform-bills-20200618-lkzaapnImjd4fj6kjfchj2xmy-story.html>

<sup>7</sup>Southall, A., & Gold, M. (2019, November 17). Why 'Stop-and-Frisk' Inflamed Black and Hispanic Neighborhoods. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/17/nyregion/bloomberg-stop-and-frisk-new-york.html>

## The Poverty Tracker

Launched in 2012, the Poverty Tracker surveys a representative sample of New Yorkers every three months, providing critical information on the dynamics of poverty and other forms of disadvantage in the city. In addition to measures on poverty and disadvantage, the Poverty Tracker collects a wealth of information on other topics such as police stops and discrimination faced by New Yorkers.

---

# Findings

The Poverty Tracker study provides a rich source of data, collected between 2015 and 2019,<sup>8</sup> on experiences of police stops over time, as reported by a representative sample of New York City adults. At each survey, respondents are asked, “Have you or anyone in your household been stopped by the police in the past three months?”

The Poverty Tracker finds:

**Black New Yorkers and their household members are twice as likely as white New Yorkers to be stopped by the police.**

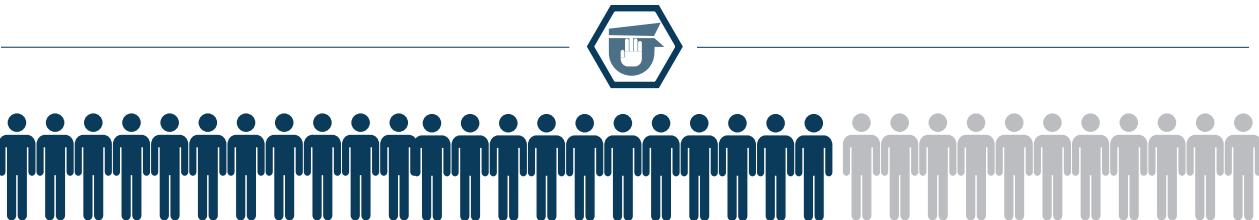


Figure 1 shows the percent of New Yorkers by race who reported that someone in their household was stopped by the police over a 12-month period,<sup>9</sup> highlighting that police are twice as likely to stop Black New Yorkers or their household members (18%) as white New Yorkers (9%).<sup>10</sup>

## Interpreting the Data:

At each quarterly survey, the Poverty Tracker asks respondents, “Have you or anyone in your household been stopped by the police in the past three months?” In the survey, respondents are asked to report on interactions with the police that they interpret as a stop. This interpretation may be different from the metrics reported by the NYPD. The NYPD’s measure of police stops captures “level three” encounters, which they describe as “any encounter between a civilian and a uniformed member of the service in which a reasonable person would not feel free to disregard the officer and walk away.” NYPD guidelines state that a level three encounter should occur “only when a police officer has an individualized reasonable suspicion that the person stopped has committed, is committing, or is about to commit a felony or Penal Law misdemeanor.” More information on level one, two, and three encounters can be found in the *NYPD patrol guide*.

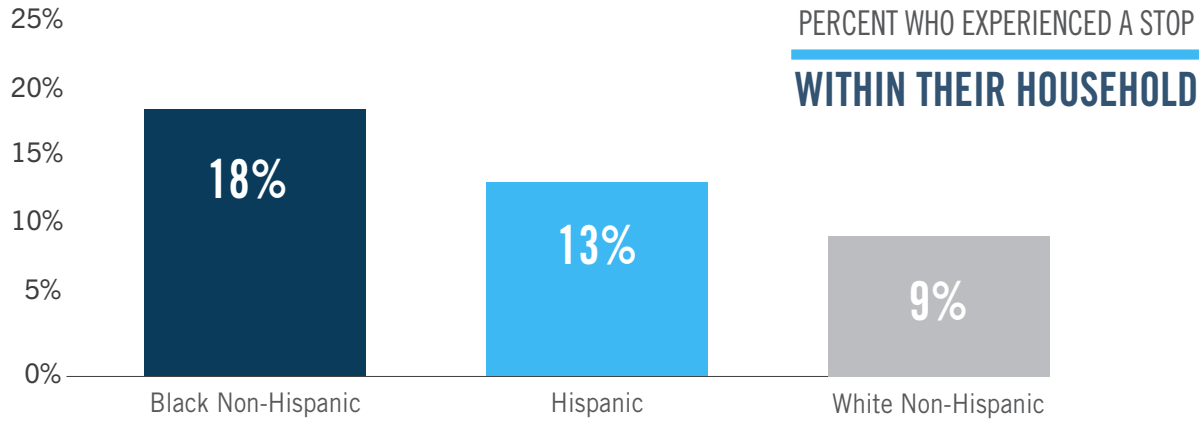
---

<sup>8</sup>Learn more about the study from our website (<https://www.povertycenter.columbia.edu/poverty-disadvantage-in-new-york-city>) and our latest annual report ([https://www.robinhood.org/uploads/2020/02/PT\\_2019\\_ANNUAL\\_2.21.pdf](https://www.robinhood.org/uploads/2020/02/PT_2019_ANNUAL_2.21.pdf))

<sup>9</sup>To calculate whether there was a stop in a 12-month period, we looked at four quarterly surveys collected within a 12-month period that each asked if a respondent or anyone in their household was stopped by police in the three months prior. If someone reported a stop in any of these four surveys, they were deemed as having a police stop within their household in the prior twelve months. This was calculated for three different 12-month periods, of which we took the average.

<sup>10</sup>While Black individuals are twice as likely to say someone was stopped by police, their households are only 7% to 25% larger than households of white respondents. When controlling for household size we find Black New Yorkers remain more likely to report that someone in their household was stopped by police.

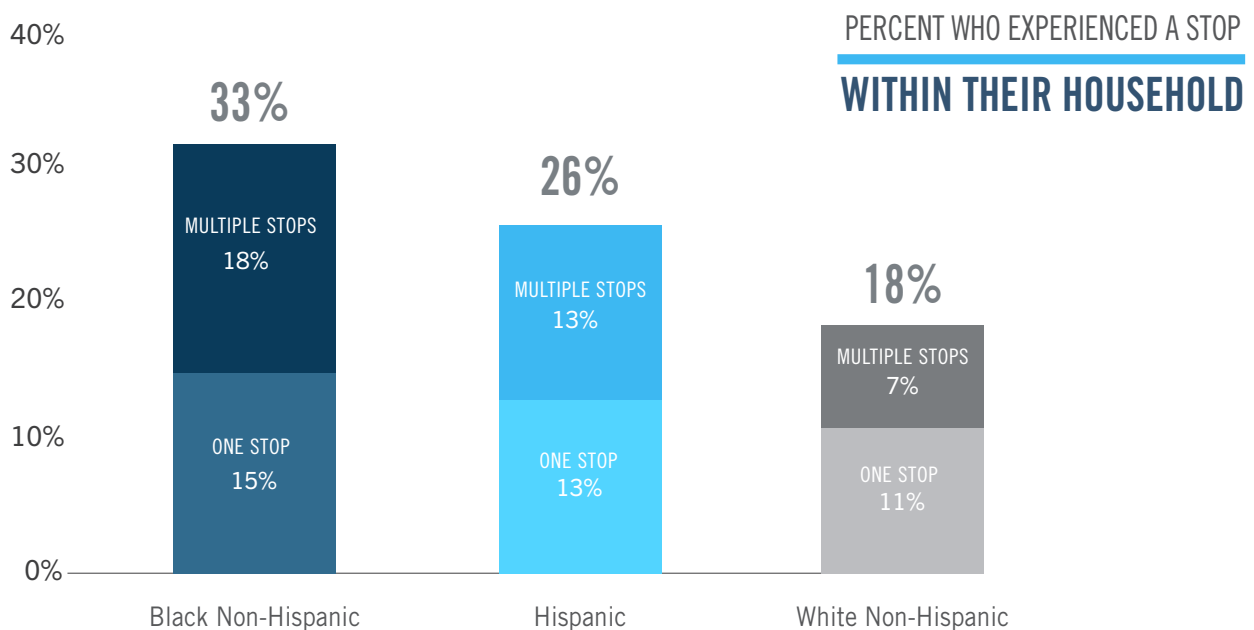
Figure 1 Police stops among New Yorkers by race

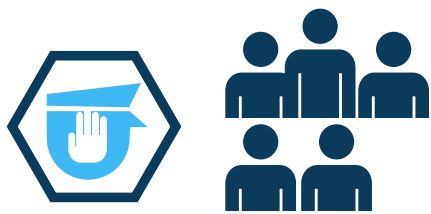


**One in three Black New Yorkers report that the police stopped someone in their household at least once over a 36-month period.**

The longitudinal structure of the Poverty Tracker allows us to examine whether or not these racial disparities change over time. Figure 2 shows the percent of New Yorkers who reported that someone in their household was stopped over a 36-month period. We find that a third of Black New Yorkers reported at least one police stop within their household over 36-months, compared to a quarter of Hispanic New Yorkers, and 18% of white New Yorkers.

Figure 2 Number of police stops among New Yorkers over a 36-month period

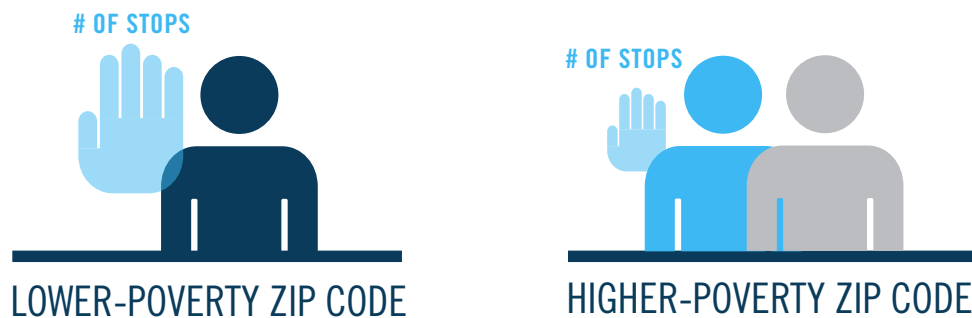




Nearly **20%** of Black New Yorkers report multiple police stops within their household over the course of 36-months, which is equal to the share of white New Yorkers who report *any* stop over the same period.

Figure 2 also highlights that racial disparities are even greater when we consider how many times household members are stopped over a 36-month period. A larger share of Black New Yorkers report multiple stops within their household than report a single stop. Additionally, we see that Black New Yorkers are just as likely to experience multiple stops (within their household) as white New Yorkers are to experience any stops at all.

**While higher-poverty neighborhoods are disproportionately policed, police are more likely to stop Black New Yorkers living in lower-poverty neighborhoods than white or Hispanic New Yorkers living in higher-poverty neighborhoods.**



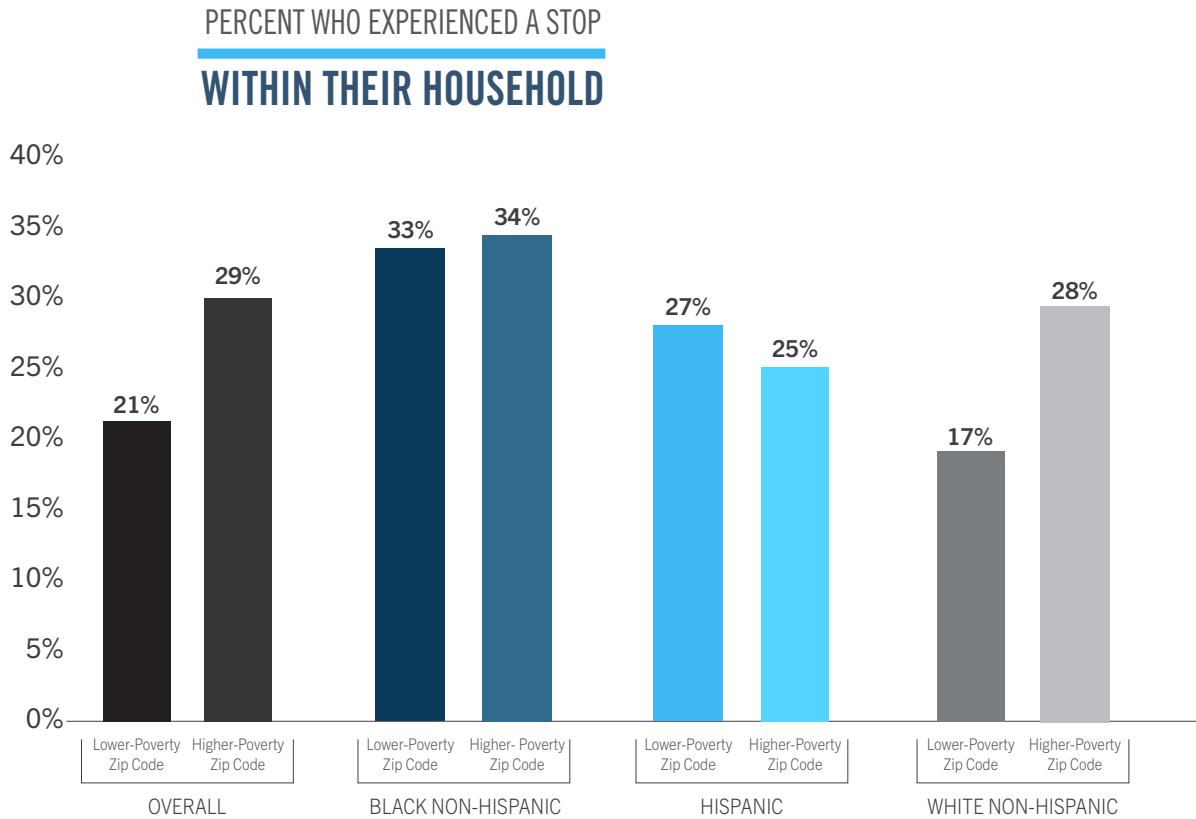
While it is clear there are racial disparities in who the police stop, Figure 3 shows racial disparities between those living in higher-poverty and lower-poverty zip codes.<sup>11</sup> While we find that for white New Yorkers, where one lives affects the chances that they are stopped by police, for Black and Hispanic New Yorkers, neighborhood poverty level makes little to no difference and race remains the salient factor. In fact, Black New Yorkers living in lower-poverty zip codes are more likely than white or Hispanic New Yorkers living in higher-poverty zip codes to be stopped by the police. These findings highlight that while those living in low-income areas are in general disproportionately stopped by police, white New Yorkers benefit from living in wealthier areas while Black and Hispanic New Yorkers do not. The fact that Black New Yorkers are stopped as frequently in lower-poverty neighborhoods as in higher-poverty neighborhoods is strong evidence against the argument that Black people are more likely to be stopped because they are more likely to live in high-crime areas which are more heavily policed. Furthermore, using Poverty Tracker data, we find that after controlling for crime levels [in the public use microdata area the subject lives in] race remains a salient predictor of being stopped.<sup>12&13</sup>

<sup>11</sup>We define high-poverty zip codes as those in the top 20th percentile in terms of poverty rate. This is not to be confused with the “high-poverty” neighborhood definition used by the U.S. Census Bureau and in previous Poverty Tracker reports. Due to a lack of sample size, we turned to a broader definition. We rank ordered zip codes based on their poverty rate, and those that were in the top 20th percentile of this distribution (i.e., with the highest poverty rates) were classified as “higher-poverty zip codes.” Zip codes that did not fall into this group were classified as lower-poverty zip codes.

<sup>12</sup> [www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/pumas.html](http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/pumas.html)

<sup>13</sup> These results are consistent with Jeffrey Fagan’s finding that “racial composition predicts stop patterns after controlling for crime, social conditions, and the allocation of police resources” and the Stanford Open Policing Project finding that police stopped and searched Black and Hispanic drivers with less evidence than they used to justify stopping white Drivers.

Figure 3 Police stops among New Yorkers by zip code poverty level



---

# Conclusion

The Poverty Tracker is not designed to track official police stops as defined by the NYPD; instead, we use it to understand individual, household, and community perspectives on how the police impact life in New York City. It is from this perspective that we highlight that despite Mayor de Blasio's commitment to end stop-and-frisk policing, police in New York City still remain more likely to stop Black New Yorkers than white and Hispanic New Yorkers. Findings in this report show that Black New Yorkers are as likely to experience multiple stops within their household in a 36-month period as white New Yorkers are to experience being stopped at all. Additionally, police are more likely to stop Black New Yorkers living in lower-poverty zip codes than white New Yorkers in higher-poverty zip codes.

These findings are especially concerning given the wealth of data showing that Black men are at highest risk of being victims of police violence when they encounter the police; one recent estimate suggests that about 1 in every 1,000 Black men is killed by police.<sup>14&15</sup> As New Yorkers, we must ask why Black people in this city continue to experience such high rates of police contact and what can be done to prevent over-policing communities of color.

As recent events have shown, this problem is not limited to New York City. Across the country, advocates are calling for those in power to reimagine public institutions, policing practices, and our justice system. Instead of investing in police departments, many are calling instead to invest in initiatives such as mental health services, affordable housing, and employment opportunities that increase public safety.

In New York City, the Poverty Tracker shows that racial disparities in police encounters remain stark. As advocates and policymakers work towards reimagining, testing, and implementing new policing policies and practices, we aim to use the Poverty Tracker to monitor how these changes are impacting New Yorkers and their communities.

---

<sup>14</sup>Edwards, F., Esposito, M. H., & Lee, H. (2018). Risk of Police-Involved Death by Race/Ethnicity and Place, United States, 2012–2018. *American Journal of Public Health*, 108(9), 1241-1248. doi:10.2105/ajph.2018.304559

<sup>15</sup>Edwards, F., Lee, H., & Esposito, M. H. (2019). Risk of being killed by police use of force in the United States by age, race–ethnicity, and sex. doi:10.31235/osf.io/kw9cu