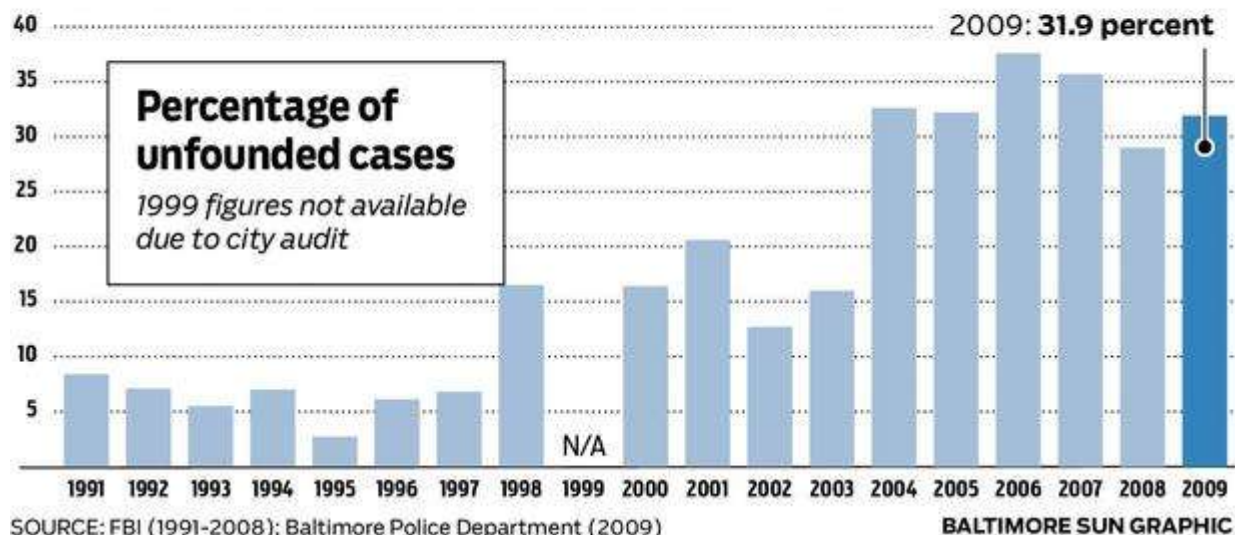


Graphic: Rape cases dismissed

Rape cases dismissed

The city's percentage of rape cases determined to be "false or baseless" has more than tripled since 1991, making Baltimore a national leader in that category.



(June 27, 2010)

Concerned that police departments nationwide fail to fully investigate rapes, a congressional committee scheduled an examination of the issue at a hearing spurred partly by a Baltimore Sun examination of the systemic underreporting of sex crimes.

The Senate Crime and Drugs subcommittee has asked representatives of the Office of Violence Against Women to appear in Washington to discuss the problem, as well as a Pennsylvania woman jailed by police who erroneously accused her of making a false rape report. The Sun reported in July that Baltimore for years led the nation in the percentage of rape cases in which police concluded that the victim was lying, with more than 3 in 10 cases determined to be "unfounded." Other cities have seen disturbingly high percentages of uninvestigated or dropped rape cases in years past, and a women's advocate in Philadelphia pushed for the congressional hearing after the Sun's investigation reignited concerns.

The newspaper's report "made me believe that all of the issues [in other cities] were not just idiosyncratic problems, but that there is likely a chronic and systemic failure in police departments," said Carol E. Tracy, head of the Women's Law Project in Philadelphia. "I think it's important to expose it, and to encourage the federal government, which has very little jurisdiction around this, to nevertheless exercise greater accountability on the data that it does receive."

Tracy's group reviews rape reports marked as unfounded by Philadelphia police. The hearing was authorized by Sen. Arlen Specter, the Pennsylvania Democrat and former prosecutor who heads the Judiciary Committee.

The Sun analysis showed that four out of 10 calls to 911 over a five-year period had not generated a police report, having been dismissed by officers at the scene. Victims have reported being interrogated by detectives about their motives and truthfulness, while others said patrol officers ignored their allegations.

