

# REIMAGINING COMMUNITY SAFETY

## Sacramento County

### FINDINGS

**SCSO deputies disproportionately stop Black people for traffic violations, reasonable suspicion and “consensual” searches compared to other racial groups.**

In 2019, SCSO stopped Black people for equipment violations (e.g., defective brake lights) at a rate **nearly 5.5 times higher** than for white people. Deputies stopped Black people for non-moving violations (e.g., invalid registration) at a rate **nearly 5 times higher** than for white people.

**More than two-thirds (68%) of the 4,242 hours SCSO deputies logged enforcing traffic violations in 2019 were spent on non-safety related infractions** such as equipment and non-moving violations that have little impact on community safety.

**SCSO deputies spend a considerable amount of time on traffic stops that result in a warning or no action.**

In 2019, nearly 3 of every 4 hours spent enforcing traffic violations led to a warning or no other action.

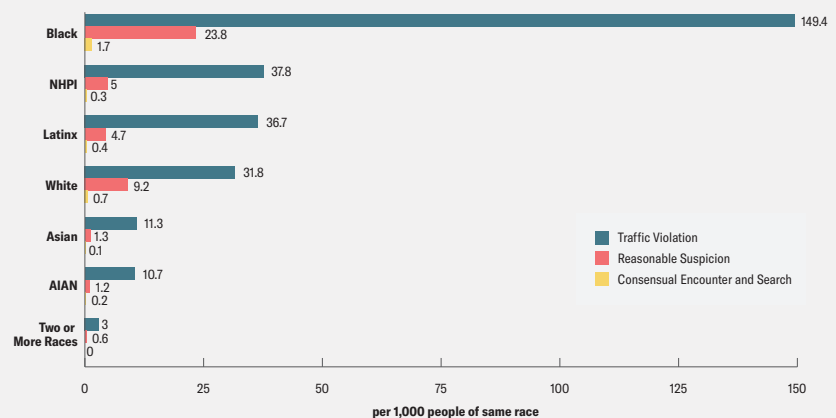
Communities are safe when every person is healthy, secure, and supported. **Reimagining Community Safety: Sacramento County** highlights policy changes the Sacramento County Sheriff’s Office (SCSO) and the Sacramento County District Attorney’s Office can make in collaboration with community members to transform the county’s approach to community safety.

An analysis of 2019 stop data collected under California’s Racial and Identity Profiling Act (RIPA) found that when Sacramento sheriff’s deputies conducted traffic stops, they spent significant time enforcing non-safety related traffic violations—such as a defective taillight or invalid registration—that pose little risk to community safety. Law enforcement officers often use such stops as a “pretext” to look for evidence of criminal activity when they don’t have reasonable suspicion a crime has been committed or probable cause for a search.

Furthermore, the data reveal racial disparities in traffic enforcement—SCSO deputies were most likely to stop Black people for traffic violations, a disturbing finding given the number of high-profile police killings of Black people during traffic stops.

In 2020, Sacramento County leaders declared racism a public health crisis. It’s time for them to act. This report identifies strategies to improve community safety and reduce systemic racial inequity in the county’s criminal legal system.

Stop Rates by Race and Stop Reason



Data source: Catalyst California’s calculations based on AB 953 data requested by ACLU of Southern California (2019); U.S. Census 2020. Data note: AIAN=American Indian or Alaska Native, alone or in combination. NHPI=Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, alone or in combination. Excludes request for service calls.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

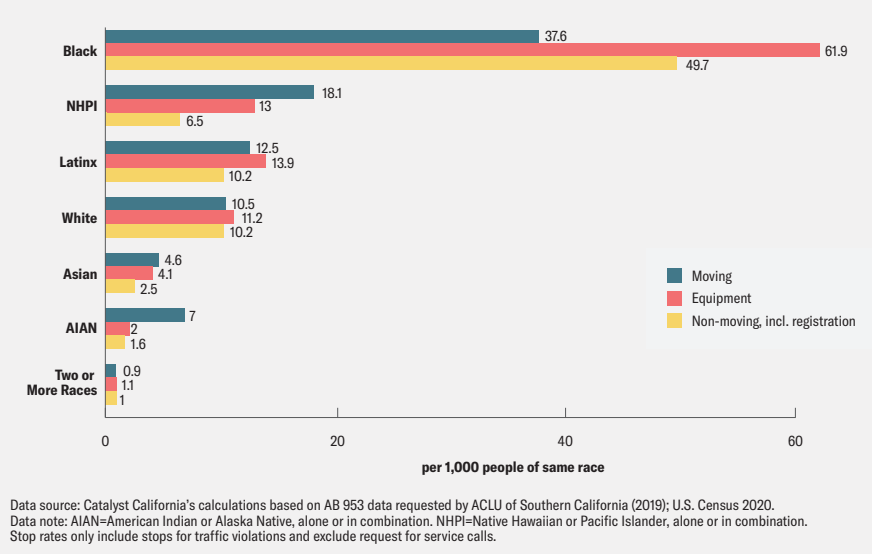
**Stop Enforcing Non-Safety Related Traffic Violations That Can be Used for Racially Biased Pretextual Stops:** Police often use non-safety related traffic violations as an excuse to search for evidence of criminal activity when they don't have reasonable suspicion a crime has been committed or probable cause for a search. Since these minor offenses generally pose little risk to community safety, they could be managed through non-law enforcement safety programs. The Sacramento County District Attorney's Office should decline to file charges stemming from a pretext stop or search where the traffic stop had no independent probable cause or other legal justification.

**Fund Community Organizations and Programs:** Sacramento County leaders can improve community safety by investing in local organizations that work to reduce interactions between the public and law enforcement, including groups that provide emergency mental health services, distribute food, and offer free vehicle brake light repair.

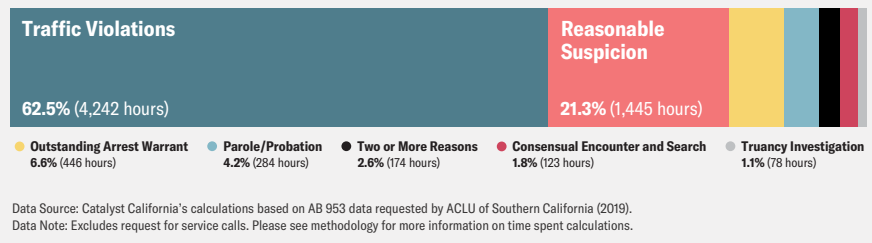
### Increase the Sacramento County Public Defender's Budget:

In the 2023-24 fiscal year, the Sacramento County Public Defender's Office received \$62 million, about half the funding allocated to the district attorney's office. With equitable funding, the public defender could hire additional staff, improve services to address recidivism, support incarcerated individuals with mental health care needs, and reduce jail overcrowding.

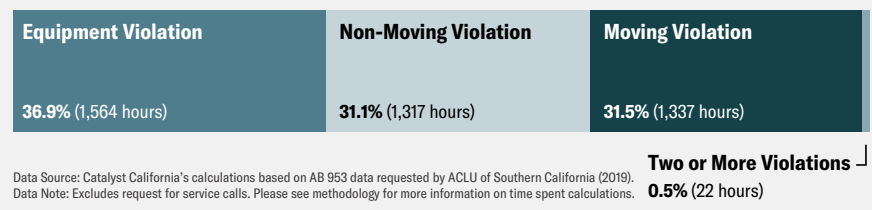
### Stop Rates by Race and Traffic Violation Type



### Percent of Time Spent on Stops by Stop Reason (Sacramento County Sheriff)



### Percent of Time Spent on Traffic Violations by Violation Type



This fact sheet includes highlights from a report jointly produced by Catalyst California (formerly Advancement Project California) and the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California, December 2023.

For more information, see the full report **Reimagining Community Safety: Sacramento County** at [www.aclunc.org/sacramento-safety-report](http://www.aclunc.org/sacramento-safety-report).