RIPA AD HOC – FINAL REPORT

SONOMA COUNTY COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments

We sincerely thank Maskaly Analytics and Research Group for their invaluable contributions to this report. We are particularly grateful to Jon Maskály, Ph.D., whose expertise and dedication were instrumental in authoring much of the content and conducting the analysis. Dr. Maskály's work has significantly enhanced the depth and quality of this report, and we sincerely appreciate his commitment to advancing equitable and data-informed policing practices.

We also thank the police agencies and public safety groups who engaged with us throughout this process. Their willingness to share insights, experiences, and best practices provided invaluable context and guidance for this report. Their contributions were essential in shaping a comprehensive understanding of current practices and opportunities for improvement.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Community Advisory Council (CAC) has worked proactively to better understand the community's concerns regarding the work of the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office (SCSO). Through research and analysis conducted by the CAC's RIPA Ad Hoc Committee, this report comprehensively analyzes racial and ethnic disparities in traffic and pedestrian stops conducted by the SCSO in 2022.

The findings in this report are based on data reported by the SCSO under the Racial and Identity Profiling Act (RIPA) of 2015, which mandates California law enforcement agencies to collect and submit data on stops to monitor and address racial and identity profiling.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Disparities in Stops

Most individuals stopped by the SCSO were perceived as White (52.6%), followed by Hispanic/Latino (37.2%) and Black/African American (5.7%). While White individuals made up the largest share of stops, the data revealed significant disparities for Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American individuals, who were stopped at rates disproportionate to their share of the population.

Traffic violations accounted for most stops (71.5%), disproportionately impacting Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American individuals. White individuals, by contrast, were more frequently stopped for reasonable suspicion or other non-traffic-related reasons.

2. Search Rates

Based on their representation in stop data, White individuals were searched at slightly higher rates, while Hispanic/Latino individuals were searched less frequently. There were no significant differences in the rate of searches among racial and ethnic groups nor the rate of consent being requested or granted. This suggests that disparities in search rates reflect broader patterns in stop practices rather than targeted bias in search decisions.

3. Contraband Findings

Contraband was discovered in approximately 9.6% of all stops conducted. Analysis showed no significant racial or ethnic differences in contraband hit rates, indicating that the likelihood of finding contraband was consistent across groups.

Contraband discovery rates were significantly higher when deputies requested and obtained consent to search, suggesting that discretionary searches may rely on contextual factors that enhance their effectiveness.

4. Disparity and Relative Disparity Indexes

The analysis revealed significant racial disparities. Black/African American individuals were disproportionately stopped compared to their population share, and Hispanic/Latino individuals were overrepresented in traffic stops.

5. Data and Reporting Gaps

The analysis identified significant challenges in the consistency and completeness of RIPA data collection. A key concern was the discrepancy between the number of stops reported and the number of arrests, suggesting potential gaps in recordkeeping. Additionally, only a small percentage of calls for service (CFS) resulted in RIPA records, raising concerns about underreporting and the accuracy of the data. These issues highlight the need for more substantial processes to ensure comprehensive and reliable data collection, which is critical for meaningful analysis and accountability.

Research conducted by the RIPA Ad Hoc Committee highlighted inconsistencies across jurisdictions in how RIPA data is collected, stored, shared, reviewed, analyzed, and used. Factors contributing to these inconsistencies include (1) variations in data collection methods, such as the use of different applications and software; (2) differences in how data is submitted; (3) variations in agency policies governing data practices; and (4) the flexibility allowed under DOJ requirements. These factors can result in varying interpretations of the data once collected, further complicating efforts to identify trends or ensure accountability.

The findings from the 2022 RIPA data analysis underscore the urgent need for action to address disparities in law enforcement practices, enhance data integrity, and rebuild trust between the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office and the communities it serves. These insights reveal opportunities for systemic improvements beyond compliance, aiming to create a more equitable and transparent approach to policing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations provide a roadmap for implementing meaningful changes, informed by the findings and grounded in best practices for accountability, transparency, and community engagement.

1. Develop and enforce a RIPA-Specific data collection policy:

Work with the CAC to implement a comprehensive policy focused on RIPA data collection and reporting. Include training and accountability mechanisms to ensure accuracy, consistency, and compliance with state requirements.

2. Strengthen reporting and broaden data analysis:

Conduct routine audits and cross-reference RIPA records with other applicable data sources (e.g., calls for service, arrest data, Body-Worn Camera [BWC] footage, and police reports) to ensure timely and accurate submission of stop data. Broaden the scope of analysis to include all relevant data sources, enriching efforts to identify and address biased policing. Address discrepancies through improved processes, training, and inter-departmental collaboration.

3. Enhance transparency and commit to data-driven decision-making:

Take ownership of reviewing and correcting errors in collected data. Invest in tools for real-time access and analysis of RIPA and other relevant data to improve quality control and operational transparency. Share insights with the community to foster trust and accountability. Use findings to inform equitable policy reforms and strengthen community trust.

This analysis is a crucial first step in understanding the SCSO's policing practices and addressing potential biases. Further data-driven decision-making and policy reforms are needed to ensure equitable policing and improvements in community trust.

Looking ahead, the CAC and this Ad Hoc are optimistic about the SCSO’s efforts to implement positive changes around RIPA. By working with the SCSO, we believe we can build stronger partnerships to ensure these measures are practical and sustained, helping avoid future issues and enhance the safety of the entire Sonoma County community.

ABOUT THE DATA

The data used in this report are publicly available through the California Department of Justice's Open Data Portal (available at this link). The data were accessed on November 14, 2024, and reflect the available data on that day. The data are in separate tables based on the county where the encounter occurred.

The California Department of Justice (DOJ) plays a critical role in overseeing the collection, submission, and analysis of RIPA data. The Racial and Identity Profiling Advisory (RIPA) Board, established within the DOJ, is tasked with monitoring and addressing racial and identity profiling by law enforcement in California. The Board analyzes data collected by law enforcement agencies statewide to identify trends, promote transparency, and recommend strategies for equitable policing.

The DOJ has established detailed technical specifications and uniform reporting practices to ensure consistency and accountability. Law enforcement agencies must collect specific data for each stop, including the date, time, location, perceived demographics of the individual stopped, the reason for the stop, actions taken, and the outcome.

The RIPA Board's reports analyze stop data collected by law enforcement agencies across California. Due to the significant time required for agencies to submit data, for the Department of Justice to validate and analyze it, and for the Board to prepare a comprehensive report, there is an inherent delay between data collection and publication. As such, the most recent data available for thorough analysis when writing this report was from 2022, released in 2024. This timeline ensures the data is accurate and reliable while allowing for meaningful insights and actionable recommendations to address racial and identity profiling.

Agencies are required to submit this data electronically using one of three methods:

- Direct entry via the DOJ's Stop Data Collection System,
- Automated submission through integrated agency systems, or
- Secure file transfers.

While agencies have flexibility in collecting the data – using either electronic or manual methods – the submission process must adhere to the DOJ's strict electronic reporting requirements. This approach ensures that data is submitted securely and consistently across jurisdictions. These uniform standards are essential to producing reliable data for meaningful analysis and fostering accountability in law enforcement practices.

Using the table from Sonoma County, all records for Originating Agency Identifier "CA0490000 (Sonoma Sheriff)," "CA0490700 (Sonoma PD)," and "CA0491300 (Windsor Police Department)," as these are the unique identifiers for the locations where SCSO provides policing services. The records from these agencies were exported to create a working data set. The publicly available data are shown with numeric values for the variables. The value labels for all variables were assigned using the data dictionary provided by the California Department of Justice (available at the link).

Overall, 5,979 RIPA records reported on 5,630 stops of the public reported by the SCSO during 2022. It is important to note that a single RIPA record is generated for each stop, encompassing information on all the people subjected to the stop within a single record. The data from the California Department of Justice splits from multiple people within the same stop into separate rows of data for easy analysis.

Most stops (n = 5,333, 94.7%) involved only one person, although the number of persons engaged in each stop ranged from 1 to 6 persons.

The values for the Agency and the number of persons involved in each stop are presented in Figure 1.

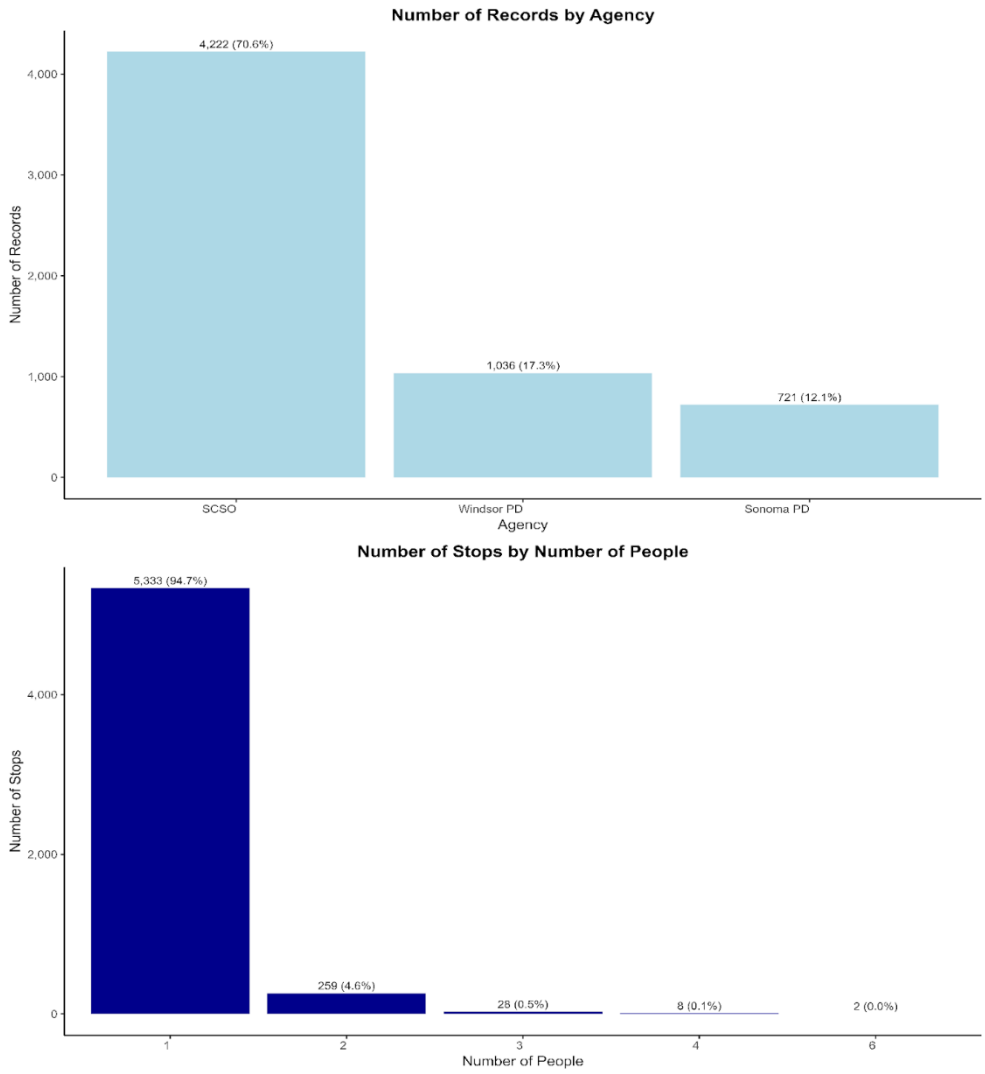

Figure 1. Location of Records by Agency and Number of Persons Involved in Stops.

RACIAL/ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONS STOPPED BY SCSO in 2022

In the initial data, eight racial/ethnic groups describe the person who SCSO stopped. The racial/ethnic categorization is based on the SCSO personnel's perception of the person's race/ethnicity at the time of the stop rather than an objective representation of the person's race/ethnicity.

The California Department of Justice intentionally designed the measure to capture the perceived race/ethnicity of the person rather than the objective race/ethnicity, as the perception of the SCSO personnel is likely to influence the behavior. Because the California Department of Justice requires a response, no records have missing race/ethnicity data.

Figure 2 shows the eight racial/ethnic categories and the number of people identified as belonging to a particular racial/ethnic group. The race/ethnicity of the people stopped represents data from the RAE_FULL data field, which provides slightly different estimates than if the individual race/ethnicity variables are tabulated (e.g., RAE_ASIAN) because persons who are identified as multiracial have multiple racial/ethnic identities listed.

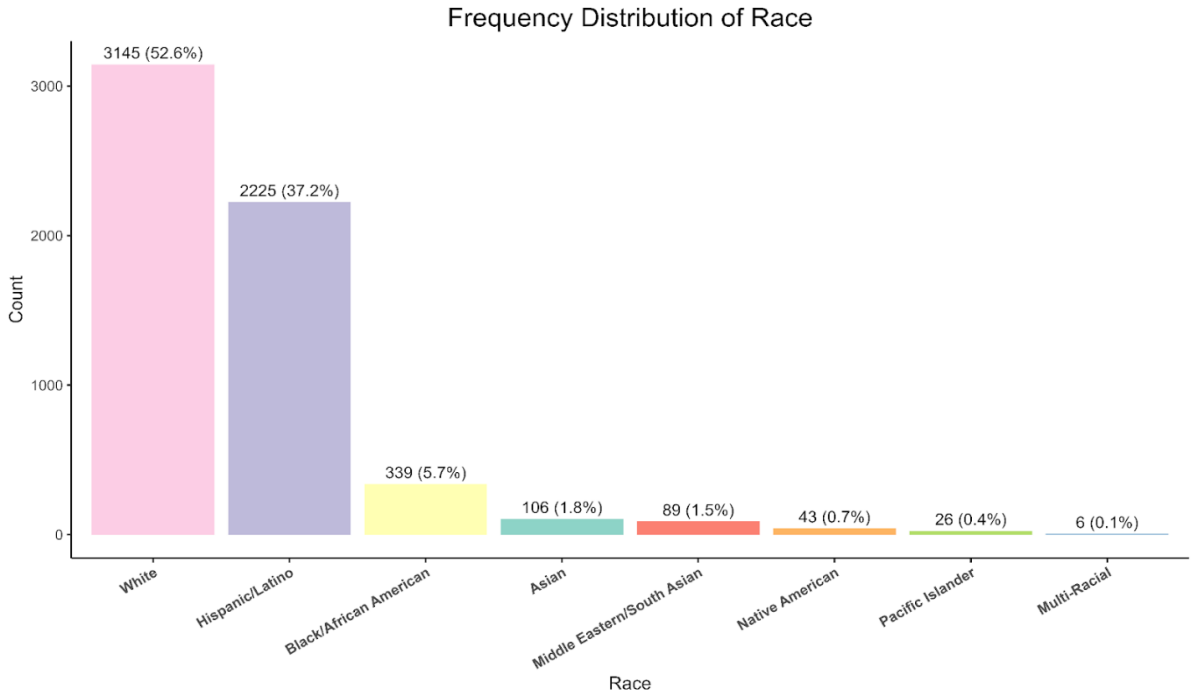

Figure 2. Distribution of Race/Ethnicity in 2022 SCSO RIPA Records

Overall, the majority (52.6%) of the people stopped by SCSO in 2022 were racially/ethnically identified as White. The next most frequently identified race/ethnicity was Hispanic/Latino (37.2%), followed by Black/African American (5.7%), Asian (1.8%), and Middle Eastern/South Asian (1.5%). The remaining racial/ethnic groups comprised less than 1% of the reported stops by SCSO personnel in 2022.

There are two critical considerations for subsequent analyses. One consideration revolves around the operationalization of race/ethnicity, and the other is methodological. The operational problem centers on the differences between the racial/ethnic categories depicted in the RIPA data compared to the data available for benchmarks (i.e., U.S. Census Bureau) used to calculate potential disparities. Specifically, the U.S. Census Bureau only reports on data for the following race/ethnicities: 1) Black or African American, 2) American Indian or Alaska Native, 3) Asian, 4) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 5) White, and 6) Another race.

Additionally, the U.S. Census Bureau allows us to determine if a person is of Hispanic/Latino origin and if the person identifies as multiracial. This is problematic as not all Census race/ethnicity categories align with those reported in RIPA. For instance, people of South Asian descent are categorized as Asian by the Census Bureau, whereas those of Middle Eastern descent are typically classified as White. Given the combined categorization of South Asian and Middle Eastern, we cannot reliably separate these groups into appropriate racial/ethnic groups as distinguished by the Census Bureau.

The methodological consideration centers on the small number of people in some racial/ethnic groups. Specifically, relatively few Asian, Middle Eastern/South Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, and Multiracial people are identified in the SCSO stop records. The small numbers of people in these racial/ethnic categories present a potential problem with using standard statistical tests (i.e., $\chi 2$) that require no more than 20% of the cells to have expected counts of less than 5 (see generally: McHugh, 2013). Our assessment of subsequent analyses suggests that all analyses end up with more than 50% of the cells having expected counts of less than 5 when all racial/ethnic groups are included.

There are two potential solutions to this problem. The first is to use more complex statistical tests (e.g., Exact Tests or log-linear models). However, alternative methods requiring increased computational power can be difficult to reproduce without additional statistical training and are more difficult to explain (see generally: Watson, 2014). The second solution is to combine racial/ethnic categories to increase the count and reduce the number of cells with low expected counts. While this was a common practice in social science research in the past, research suggests that this may be problematic, especially for groups that do not have the same experiences with the criminal justice system (see generally: Yanow, 2003).

Because we cannot solve these data limitations, we will present the data for all racial/ethnic groups; however, we will only highlight and focus on Black or African American, Hispanic/Latino, and White in any subsequent tests where statistical significance assessments are made. Further, we will consistently highlight that caution should be taken when drawing conclusions based on these groups' small number of observations when presented in any subsequent analysis. The distribution of the reduced racial/ethnic groups is presented in Figure 3.

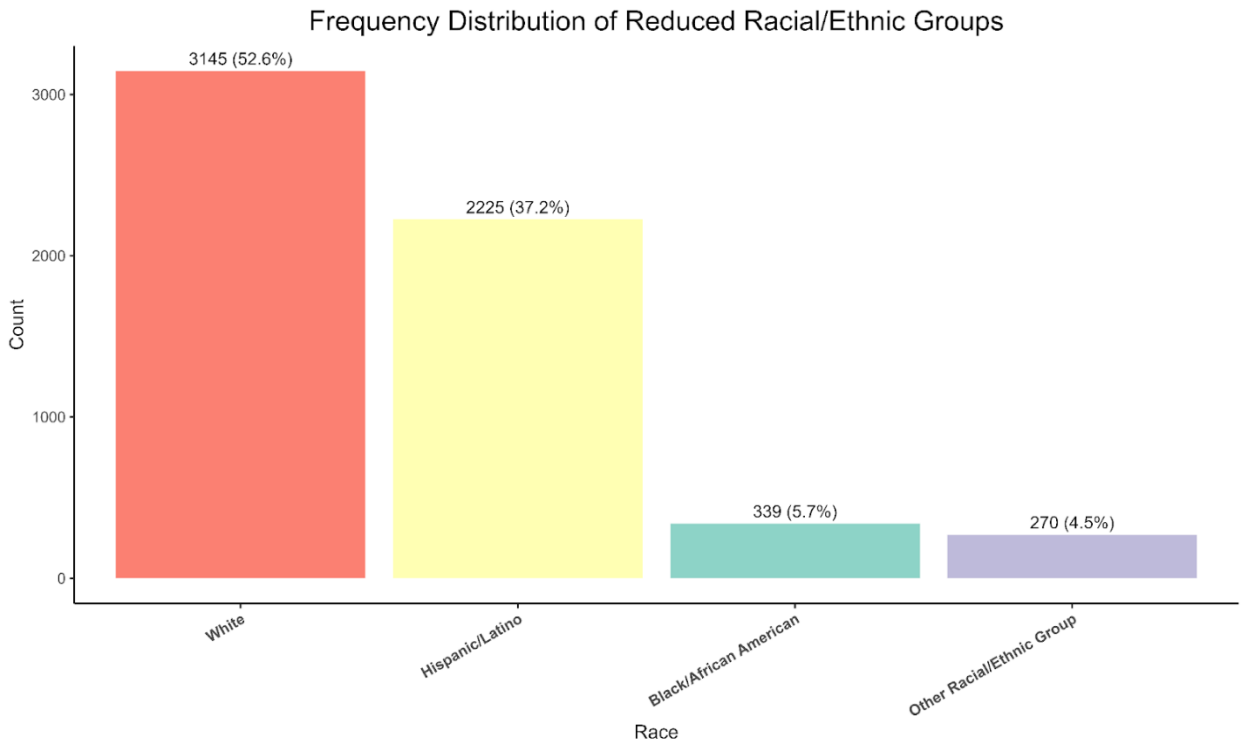

Figure 3. Distribution of Reduced Racial/Ethnic Groups in 2022 SCSO RIPA Records

RACIAL/ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN REASON FOR CONTACT BY SCSO in 2022

SCSO can report eight possible reasons for stopping a person under the REASON_FOR_STOP variable. Only seven of these reasons were selected by SCSO personnel in the 2022 data. The only category not used by SCSO in the 2022 records was "Possible conduct under the Education Code." The categories and the number of stops for each are shown in Figure 4.

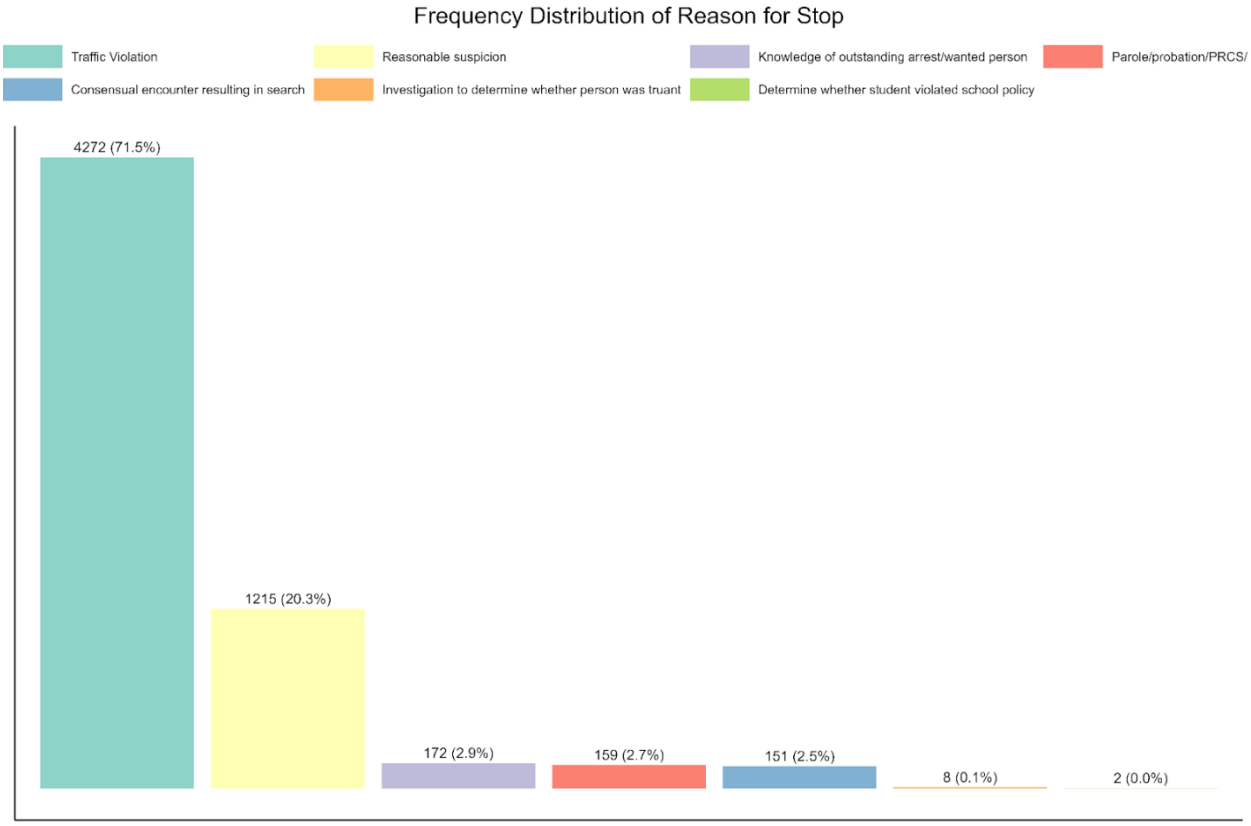

Figure 4. Distribution of Reason for Stop in 2022 SCSO RIPA Records

Most people stopped by SCSO were stopped for traffic violations (71.5%) of all records, followed by reasonable suspicion (20.3%), with all other categories seeing less than 3% of the records. Again, because of the limited number of reasons for the remaining categories makes it methodologically and conceptually challenging to assess what is occurring individually within those categories. As such, we combine the remaining categories to give a cleaner presentation of the data and the analyses below. In Figure 5, we present the number of persons, using the reduced racial/ethnic groups, who were stopped for the reduced reasons described. Subsequent analyses indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between ($\chi^2 = 80.47$, df = 4, $p < .001$) between the reduced racial/ethnic identity of the person stopped and the reason for the stop – although the magnitude of the effect is small (Cramer's V = 0.08).

The data indicates that more persons who are African American or Black and Hispanic/Latino are stopped for traffic violations than would be expected given the implied relationships in the data (i.e., the relationship expected from the χ^2 analysis), and fewer Whites are stopped than expected given the distribution. Additionally, fewer Hispanic/Latino persons are stopped for reasonable suspicion than would be expected. Finally, more Whites are stopped for other reasons and reasonable suspicion than would be expected given the distribution.

In sum, the results indicate that while a person's reported race/ethnicity has a statistically significant effect, the effect is modest. The results suggest that persons of color—notably African Americans or Black and Hispanic/Latinos—are overrepresented in vehicle stops and Whites in other types of stops.

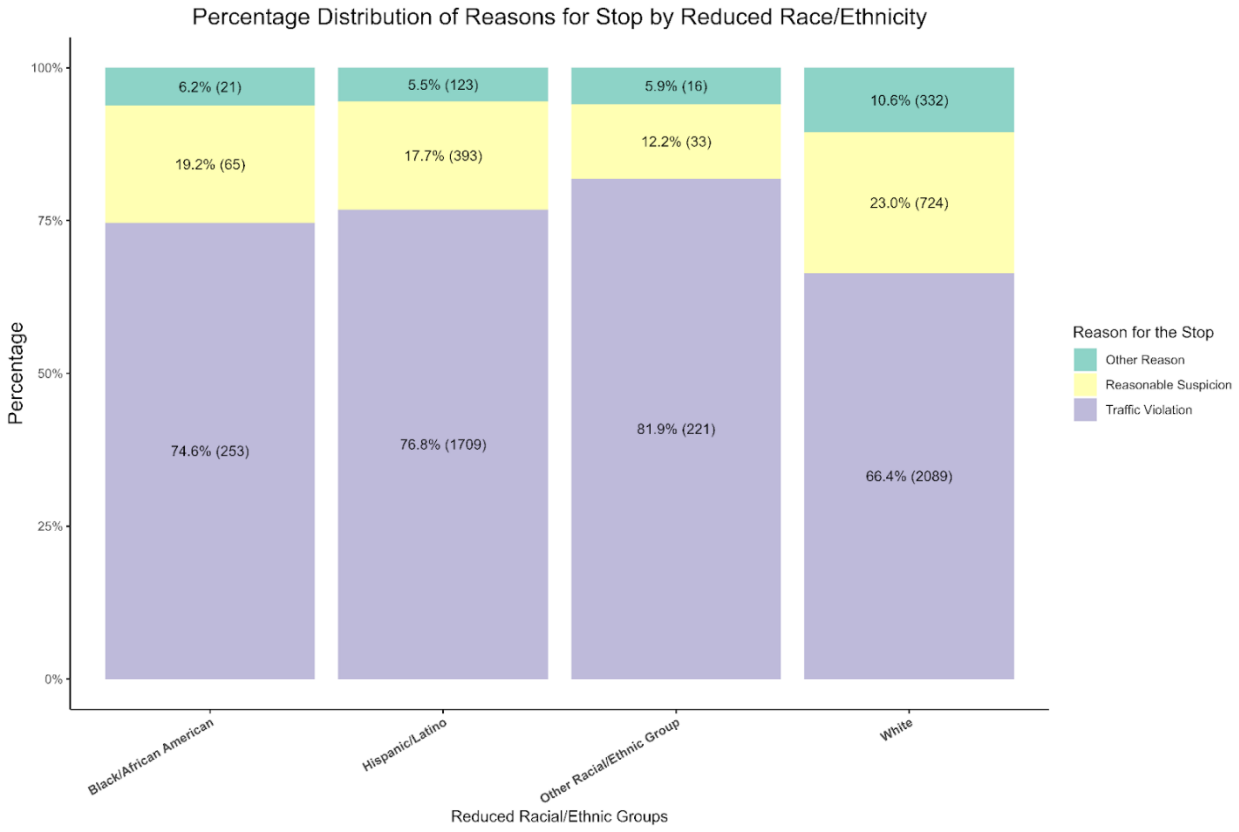

Figure 5. Simplified Reason for Stop for Reduced Racial/Ethnic Groups for SCSO 2022 RIPA Data

We look deeper into the potential racial/ethnic differences associated with the reason for the stop by looking specifically at the reason provided for the most frequent type of stop – traffic stops. The data are presented in Figure 6.

Again, we see a statistically significant relationship between the stopped person's race/ethnicity and the reported violation for those stopped for traffic stops ($\chi^2 = 14.54$, df = 4, $p < .001$). The magnitude of the effect is relatively modest (Cramer's V = 0.04).

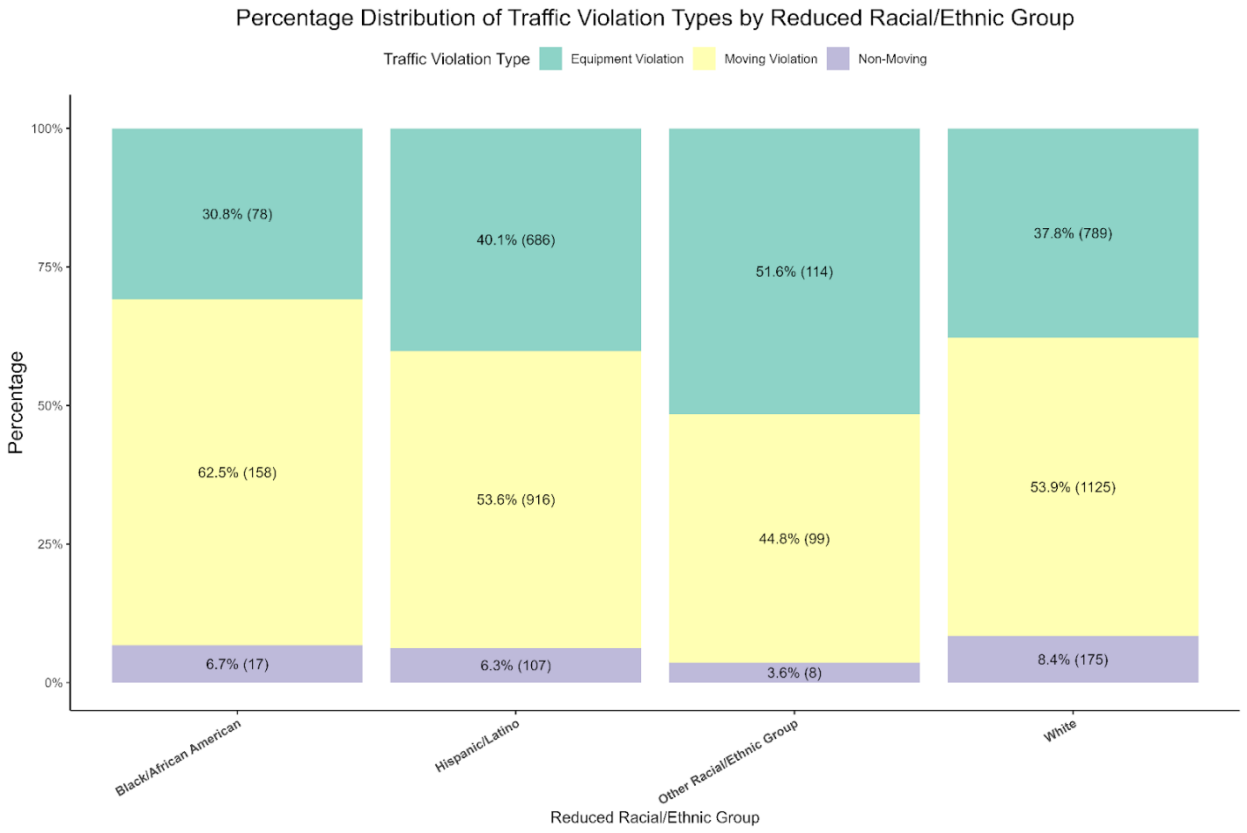

Figure 6. Distribution of Traffic Violation Types by Reduced Racial/Ethnic Groups

A closer inspection of the data reveals that persons identified as Hispanic/Latino are stopped more frequently for equipment violations than would be expected. Conversely, those who are identified as African American or Black are stopped more frequently for moving violations than would be expected. Finally, Whites are stopped more frequently for non-moving violations than expected. This suggests that while there are statistically significant differences, given that the magnitude of the effect is relatively small, those differences are rather slight.

In Figure 7, we examine the rate of traffic stops by reason for the stop (i.e., equipment violation, moving violation, non-moving violation) that resulted in a particular action (no action, warning, citation, arrest) being taken by the SCSO deputy for each of the reduced racial/ethnic groups. The results indicate that there are significant differences in some categories. Specifically, persons identified as Hispanic/Latino are significantly more likely to receive a citation for equipment violations ($\chi^2 = 10.53$, df = 2, $p < .01$) and

for moving violations (χ^2 = 5.99, df = 2, p < .05) than would be expected by the distribution. Although the magnitude of the effect is modest for each (Cramer's V = 0.08 and 0.05, respectively), the reason for these differences is unclear from the data.

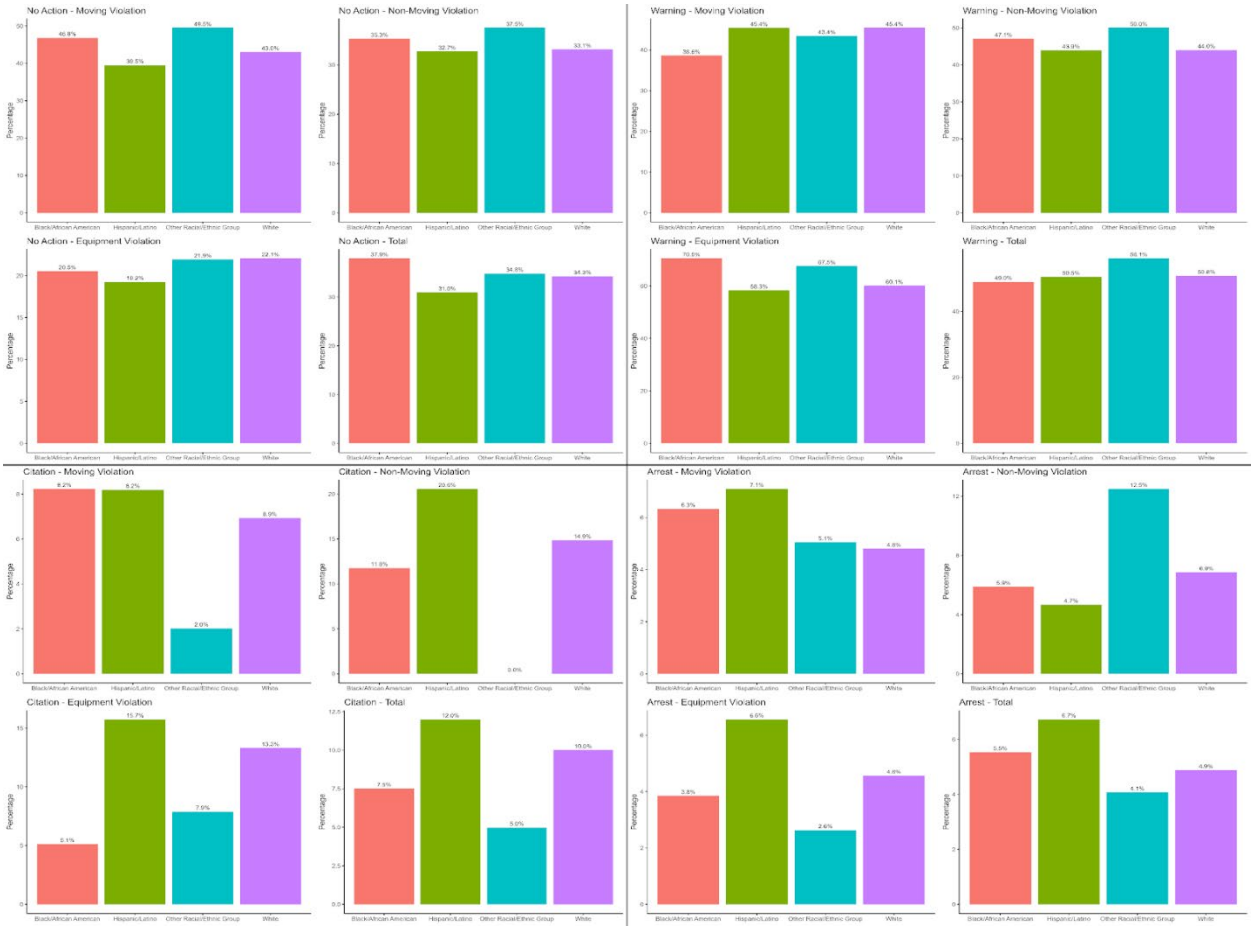

Figure 7. Rates of Various Outcomes for Traffic Stops by Reduced Racial/Ethnic for 2022 data

ASSESSING RACIAL DISPARITIES IN CONTACTS WITH SCSO in 2022

This report examines racial and ethnic disparities in the stops reported by the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office (SCSO) in 2022. A disparity refers to a measurable difference in outcomes for a racial or ethnic group compared to its proportion in the overall population. Importantly, disparities are factual observations – they show differences in the data without making assumptions about the reasons behind them.

It's essential to distinguish between disparity and discrimination. Disparity describes differences in outcomes, while discrimination involves intentional or unintentional bias by the individuals or system in question. For example, a disparity could show that one group is stopped more often than another, but it does not explain why. Discrimination, on the other hand, refers explicitly to unfair treatment based on bias.

With the data available, we cannot assess the motivations or potential biases of SCSO deputies. Instead, this report focuses on identifying and analyzing disparities in stop records to understand patterns across racial and ethnic groups. Additional data, such as the race or ethnicity of drivers involved in traffic crashes or the geographic location of stops, could help refine these analyses. However, this data was not provided or available for this study.

To assess disparities, we use benchmarks – estimates of the population likely to encounter SCSO deputies. These benchmarks help contextualize observed outcomes against the demographics of the population. This report uses two benchmarks, each with unique strengths and limitations.

1. **Sonoma County Population Benchmark:** Based on 2023 estimates from the American Community Survey, this benchmark assumes that Sonoma County's racial and ethnic composition reflects the population most likely to interact with SCSO deputies. Given the county's geographic layout, as illustrated in Figure 8, it is reasonable to assume that SCSO deputies may encounter individuals from any area within Sonoma County.
2. **Regional Weighted Population Benchmark:** This benchmark incorporates population data from Sonoma, Mendocino, Lake, Napa, and Marin counties to account for people traveling through Sonoma County during daily activities. By proportionally weighting the populations of these five counties, it attempts to capture the broader pool of individuals who may interact with SCSO deputies.

These benchmarks provide context for understanding disparities, highlight the inherent challenges in estimating the population at risk of stops, and offer complementary perspectives on the potential patterns observed in the stop data.

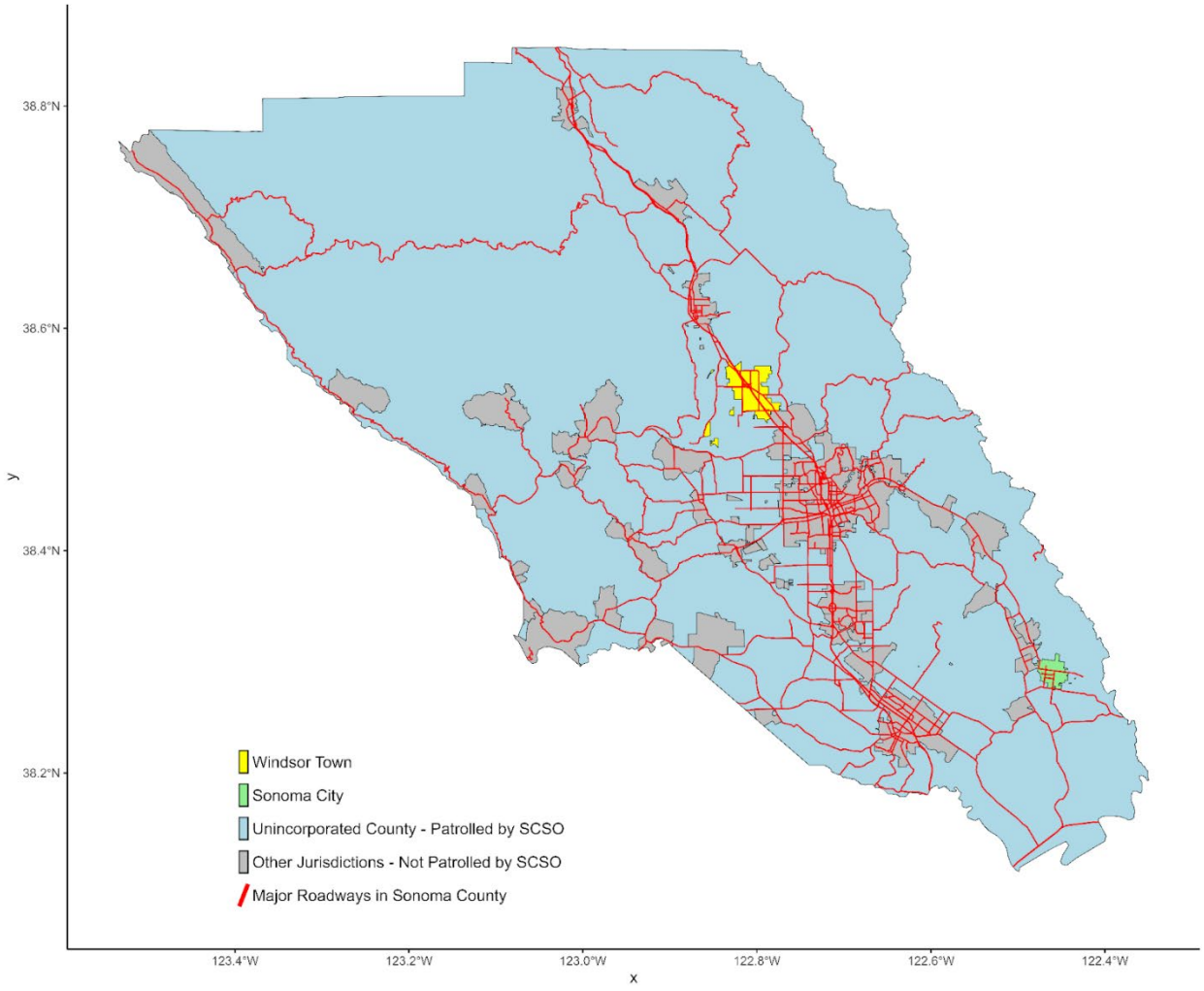

Figure 8. Geographic Areas of Responsibility for SCSO and Other Subunits within Sonoma County

There are two steps to assessing the disparity within the data. The first is calculating a Disparity Index. The Disparity Index is calculated using the following formula:
Disparity Index = Proportion of Stops for GroupiBenchmarked Value of Proportion of Population for Group$_i$.

The values of the Disparity Index will range between 0 and ∞. Values near 1 depict parity in the stops. In other words, a Disparity Index value near 1 would mean that approximately the same proportion of persons of a particular racial/ethnic group (i.e., Group$_i$) were stopped by SCSO relative to the composition of the benchmarked population. Values less than 1 represent a significant underrepresentation of the group relative to their presence in the benchmarked population. Values over 1 represent an overrepresentation of the racial/ethnic group relative to the benchmarked population. For instance, a group with a Disparity Index value of 1.75 would be overrepresented by 1.75 times its presence in the benchmarked population.

The Relative Disparity Index (RDI) value is the second step in assessing disparity. The RDI is a secondary step in the analysis that allows us to see the gap for a particular racial/ethnic group relative to another.

Given the concerns about racial/ethnic bias in the criminal justice system, we use the reference group as White. The formula for the RDI is:
Relative Disparity Index RDI= Disparity Index for GroupiDisparity Index for Whites

The interpretation of the RDI value is substantively like that for Disparity Indexes, except that the reference becomes how much more or less $Group_i$ is relative to Whites in the benchmarked population. Using both benchmarks, we estimate Disparity Index values for the total stops as well as each type of stop (e.g., traffic stops, reasonable suspicion, and others). The nature of these contacts could influence how much discretion a deputy has about the person with whom they are interacting (e.g., deputies respond to calls for service from the public). The Disparity Index values and Relative Disparity Index values are presented in Figure 9.

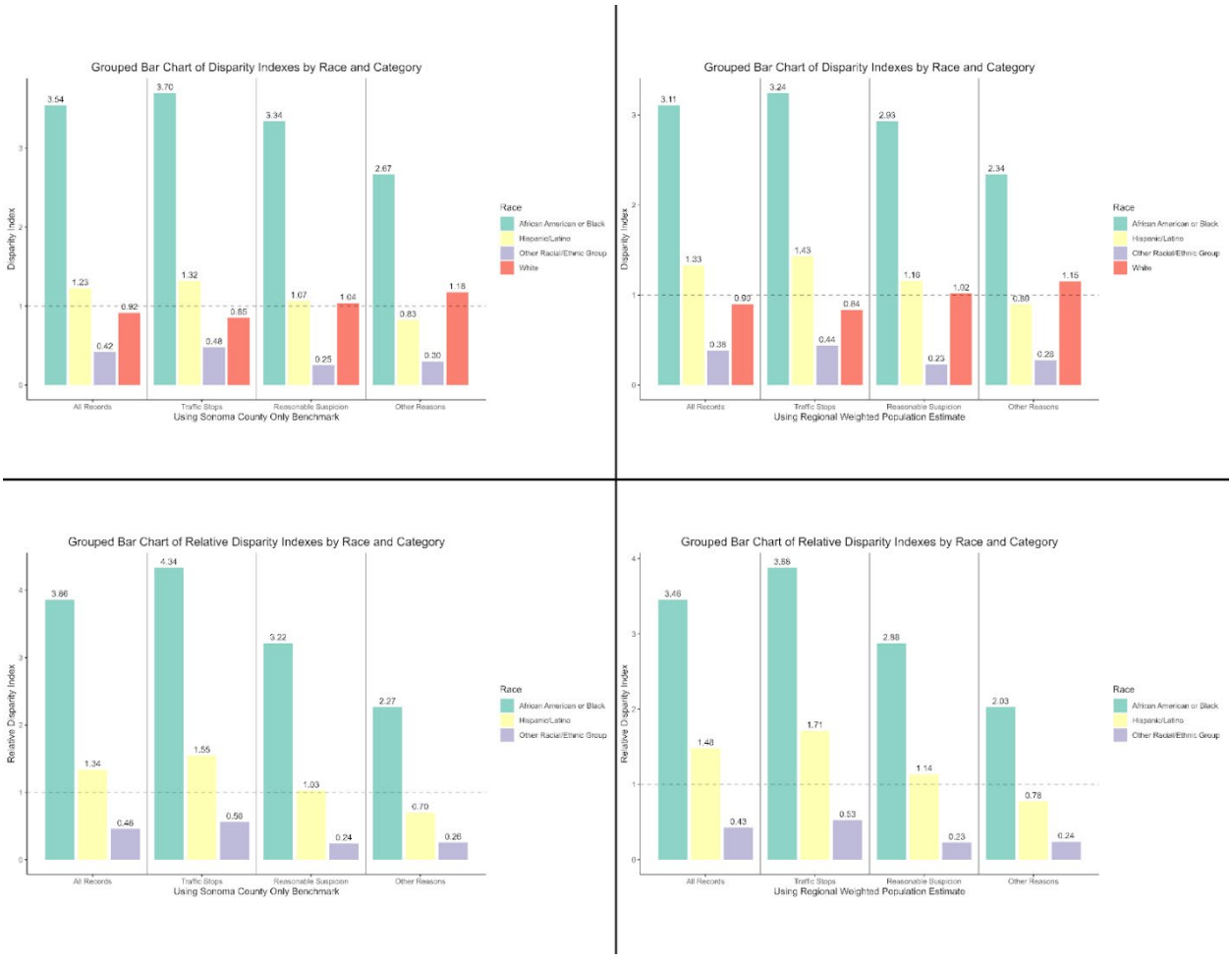

Figure 9. Disparity Index and Relative Disparity Index Estimates for Various Stop Types in 2022

The top left panel of Figure 9 shows the Disparity Index values using the Sonoma County-only population benchmark. The results suggest that persons identified as African American or Black are significantly overrepresented in all stop types relative to the proportion of the Sonoma County population. The only other racial/ethnic group that shows an overrepresentation in the data are persons identified as Hispanic/Latino for traffic stops, although to a substantially lesser extent than for persons identified as African American or Black. Whites are consistently represented in approximate numbers to the proportion of Whites in the Sonoma County population. Finally, those identified as members of other racial/ethnic groups are substantially underrepresented in the data relative to the population proportion.

However, caution should be taken when interpreting this finding for two reasons. First, the data represents a combination of racial/ethnic groups, and the data may mask significant differences. Second, the number of records with a person identified as a member of other racial/ethnic groups is relatively small. Thus, the estimated Disparity Index values have potential statistical instability (i.e., the numbers could change dramatically with only a few more observations). The data from the top right panel show the estimates using the regional weighted population estimates, and the results are substantively like those using only the Sonoma County population estimates.

The bottom panels of Figure 9 show the Relative Disparity Index (RDI) values for each racial/ethnic group. Again, these estimates indicate the relative disparity between a particular racial/ethnic group and Whites. The data suggests that those identified as African American or Black are substantially more likely to appear in all types of records produced by SCSO in 2022. Additionally, the data reveal that persons who are identified as Hispanic/Latino are similarly overrepresented relative to Whites – although to a substantially lesser degree than African Americans or Blacks. The degree of overrepresentation for both racial/ethnic groups is largely insensitive to the benchmark that is used. This suggests that estimating these groups' magnitude and relative disparity is not sensitive to either of the benchmarks used here.

ASSESSING RACIAL DISPARITIES IN THOSE SEARCHED by SCSO in 2022

We assessed the decisions of SCSO deputies to report searching a person or vehicle during the stop. Due to the relatively limited number of searches conducted, we cannot segment these analyses by the type of encounter with SCSO. Figure 10 shows the percentage of records indicating that a search occurred, the percentage of those who were asked for consent, and the percentage of those who gave permission. The results suggest that there are statistically significant differences in the rate of searches among the racial/ethnic groups ($\chi^2 = 19.19$, df = 2, $p < .001$), and the magnitude of the effect is modest (Cramer's V = 0.06).

A closer inspection of the data reveals that significantly more persons identified as White are searched than expected, given the distribution. In contrast, fewer persons identified as Hispanic/Latino are searched than expected. There are no significant differences between those identified as African American and those identified as Black. While the differences in the counts, which the statistical test assesses, are substantial, the results shown for the search rates in Figure 10 reveal that the rates are relatively consistent across racial/ethnic groups. There are no significant differences in the rate of persons who were asked for consent by racial/ethnic group ($\chi^2 = 1.05$, df = 2, $p > .05$) nor for the rate of consent given ($\chi^2 = 0.40$, df = 2, $p > .05$).

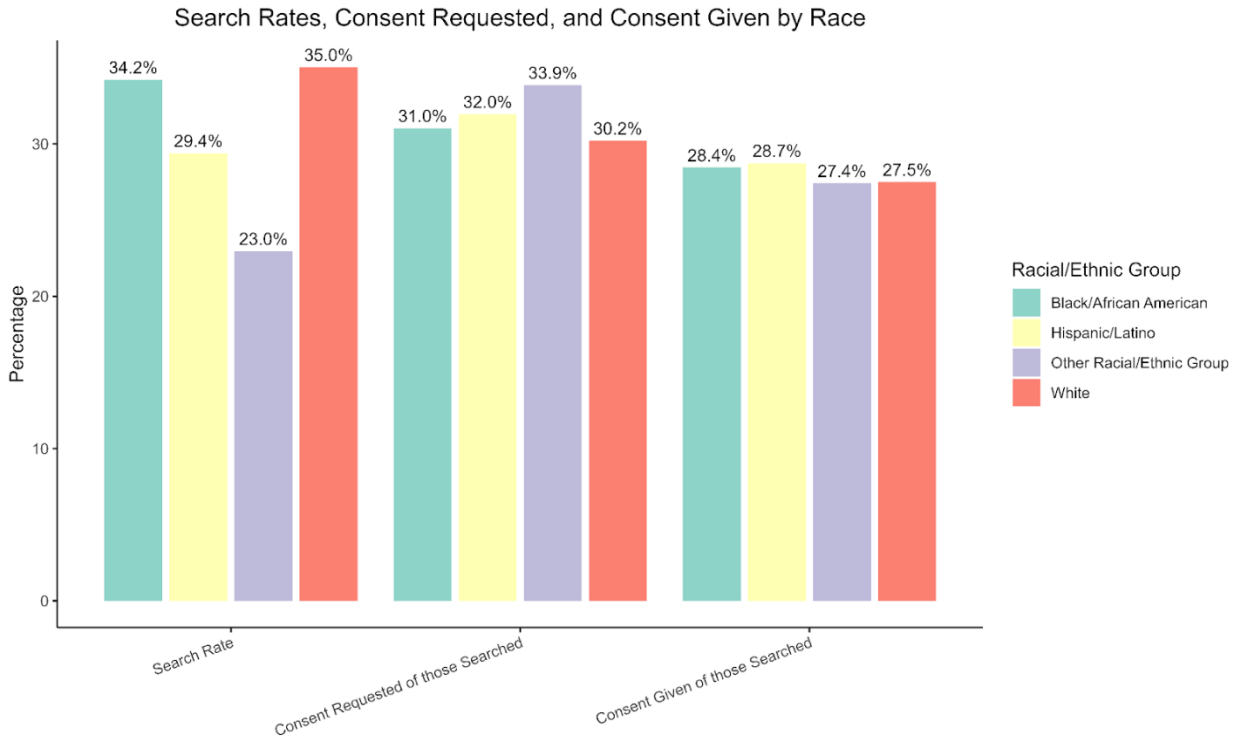

Figure 10. Search and Consent Rate by Racial/Ethnic Group in 2022

Out of an abundance of caution, we present the Disparity Index values and Relative Disparity Indexes for these same actions by racial/ethnic group in Figure 11.

The results from these analyses largely confirm the results shown in Figure 10. Notably, all racial/ethnic groups, apart from the other racial/ethnic groups, have about equal representation in the searches given the racial/ethnic distribution in the data. In other words, the rate at which people are searched is commensurate with the proportion of the race/ethnicity in the stop records.

Similarly, the RDI values reaffirm this point. However, there is an important nuance to this point. While there are no substantial differences in the racial/ethnic groups in the decision to search relative to the proportion stopped, there is a considerable overrepresentation of certain racial/ethnic groups in the stops relative to the proportion in the population.

The implication is that while members of each racial/ethnic group have the same likelihood of being searched as persons identified as White, some racial/ethnic groups still disproportionately bear the burden of searches by SCSO because some groups are overrepresented in the stop data. With the current data, we cannot determine whether there are viable explanations for these differences. Still, additional data (e.g., officer narratives and locations) could enable further exploration of potential explanations.

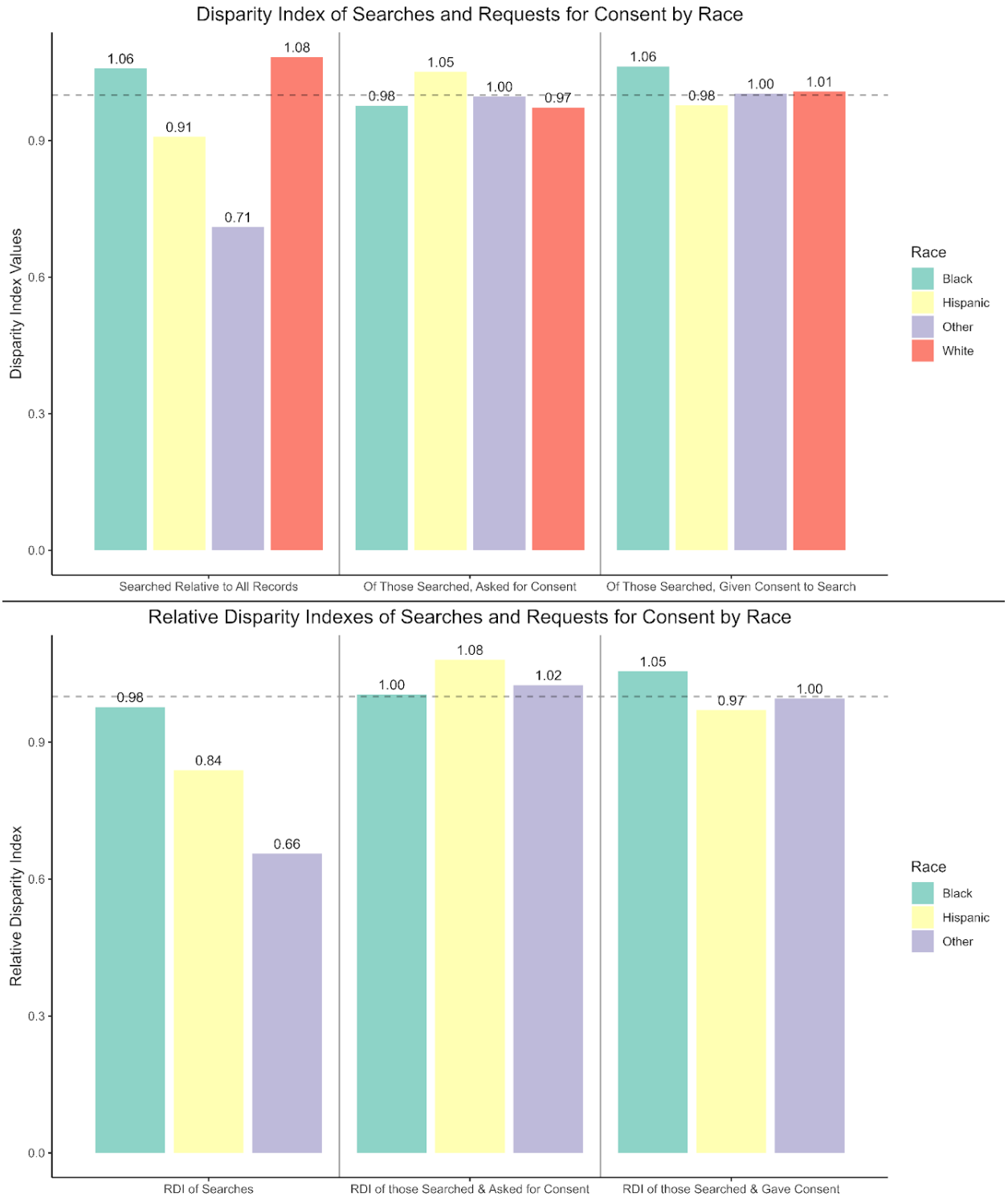

Figure 11. Disparity Indexes and Relative Disparity Indexes for Various Search Metrics by Race/Ethnicity in 2022

ASSESSING RACIAL DISPARITIES IN CONTRABAND HIT RATES by SCSO in 2022

In this section, we assess "hit rates" of contraband of SCSO deputies as reported in the records. The hit rate refers to the proportion of searches that yield contraband. Several hit rates are essential to consider. First is the general hit rate, which is the percentage of all records that report discovering contraband. As shown in the left set of bars in Figure 12, there is no significant difference in the generalized hit rate by racial/ethnic group ($\chi^2 = 0.46$, df = 2, $p > .05$).

Another important finding from these bars is that while it is rare for SCSO deputies to report finding contraband in the stop reports, it is not exceptionally rare: reporting finding contraband in one in every 10 stop reports. And this rate is relatively consistent across racial/ethnic groups.

Similarly, there are no significant differences in the hit rate by race/ethnicity of those who are searched ($\chi^2 = 5.74$, df = 2, $p > .05$), nor those who are searched and asked for consent ($\chi^2 = 0.71$, df = 2, $p > .05$), nor for those who are searched and consent to the search ($\chi^2 = 0.52$, df = 2, $p > .05$).

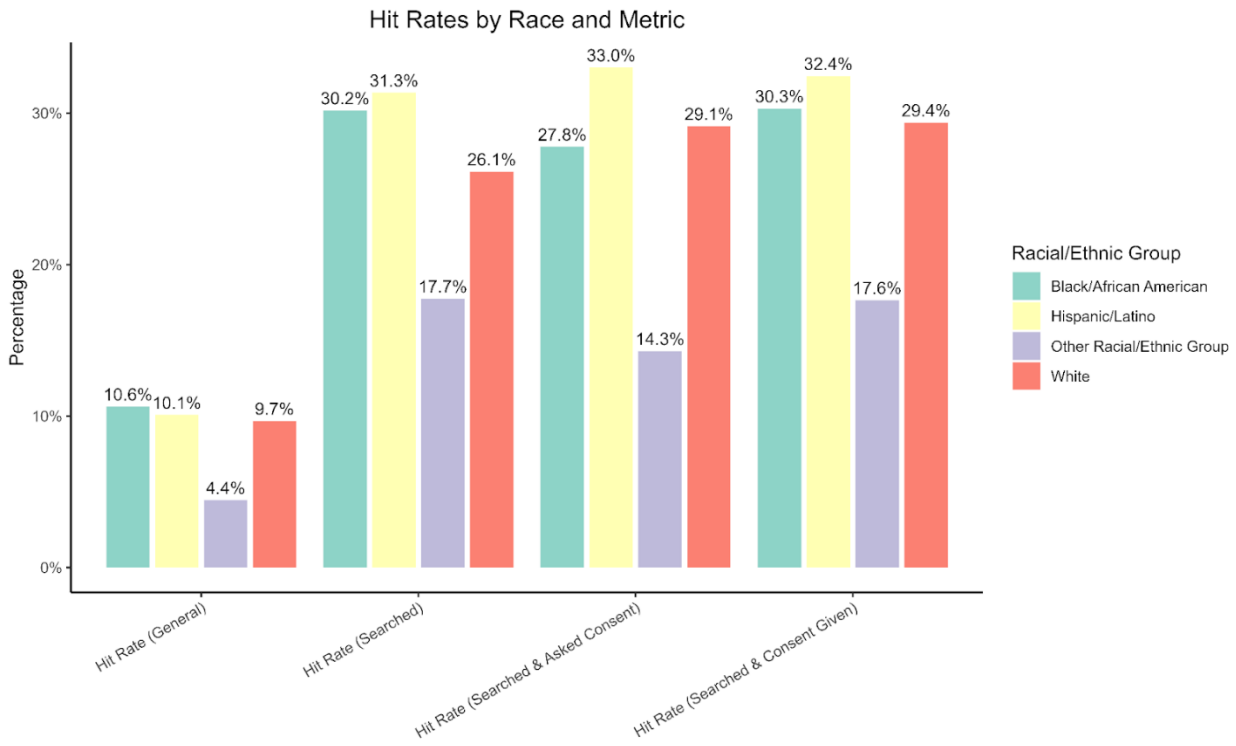

Figure 12. Hit Rates Metrics by Racial/Ethnic Group for 2022

However, Figure 12 provides an important takeaway. While SCSO deputies report finding contraband in approximately 9.6% of all stops, this number increases to 27.9% of stops (2.91 times greater). It is still higher when they ask for consent and are given permission to search. This suggests that SCSO deputies

may be using contextual clues during the stop to serve as the basis for the search. We cannot determine whether these factors are objectively reasonable with the current data.

Moreover, we present the Disparity Indexes and RDI values for the hit rates in Figure 13. The data indicates marginal differences in the hit rates for contraband by racial/ethnic group. Specifically, we see that persons identified as African American or Black and Hispanic/Latino are slightly more likely to be reported as having contraband than are Whites – for the general hit rate. However, persons identified as White and those identified as Hispanic/Latino have the same Disparity Index value when SCSO deputies reported searching the person.

A similar trend is seen when looking at the RDI values at the bottom of Figure 13. Those identified as African American or Black are more likely to have SCSO report contraband being found generally, and those who are searched are persons identified as White. Whereas the RDI values for those identified as Hispanic/Latino show parity with persons identified as White.

We note three things about these analyses. First, we do not discuss the effects of the other racial/ethnic groups, although they are presented. Secondly, we do not show the figures for those who were asked for consent and gave consent in the Disparity Index or RDI values. This decision is driven by the number of persons in these categories becoming so small that a single additional person would substantially change the interpretation of the Disparity Index and RDI values. Given the sensitivity of these findings, we omit discussing them, though we present them for consistency. We do not split the data into types of stops for the same reason. The number of records is relatively small, and each additional factor included in the data makes it more challenging to maintain stability in the estimates.

Finally, we present information on the type of contraband that was reportedly seized by SCSO personnel in the records. This information is shown in Figure 14. There are differences in the types of contraband seized from persons identified as members of racial/ethnic groups. The data would suggest that some racial/ethnic groups are reported to have different types of contraband seized because of the stop. It is still too early to determine if these results are meaningful, given the small numbers for some racial/ethnic groups. Still, they could show the rationale for differences in deputy stops and search behaviors. Additional analysis would be required to determine if these results are meaningful representations of intended actions (e.g., seeking to disrupt violent crime or drug markets) or pseudo-random occurrences based on deputies' decisions.

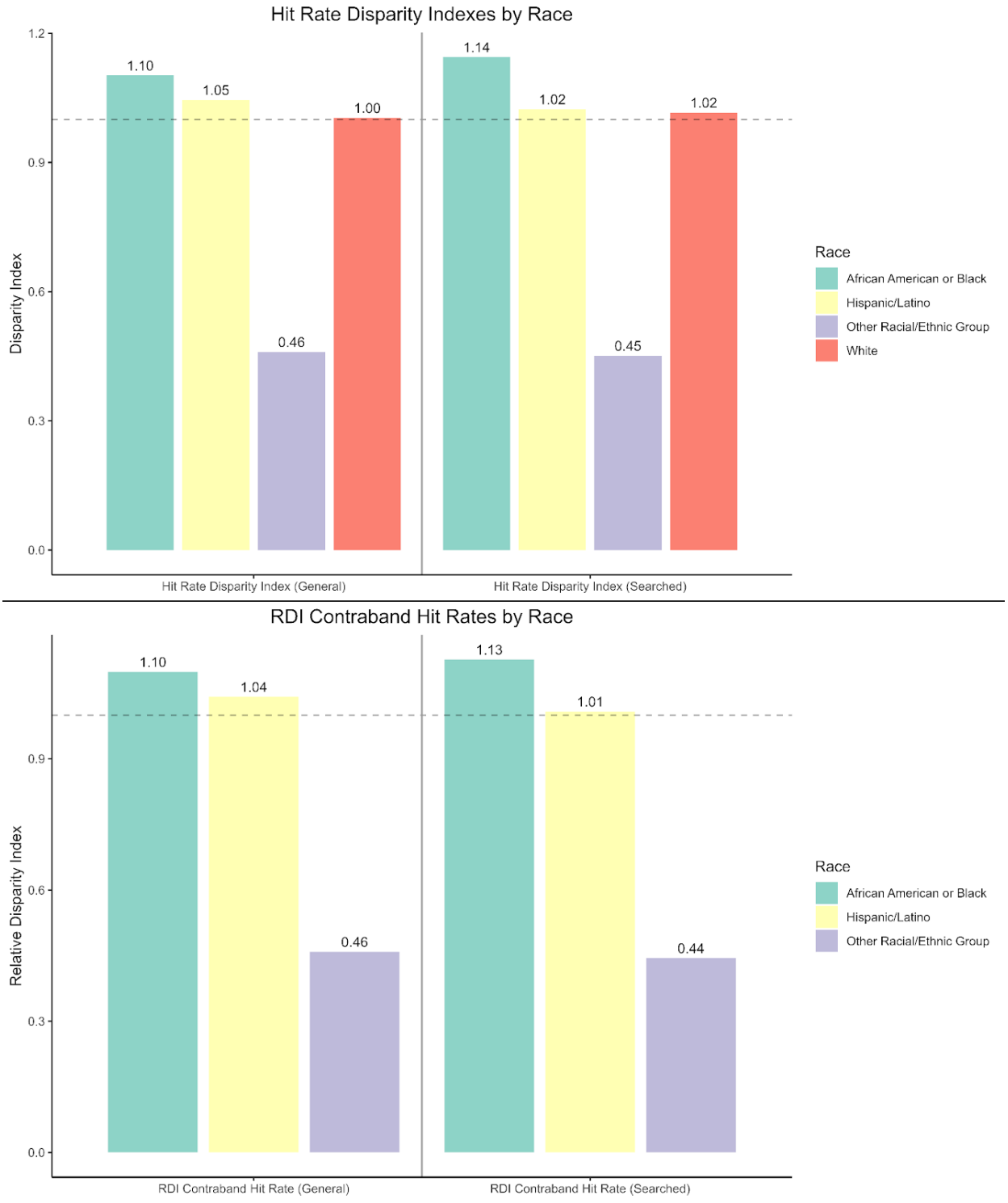

Figure 13. Disparity Indexes and RDI Values for Hit Rates in 2022

Summary Table of Contraband Found

Race	Firearm (%)	Ammunition (%)	Weapon (%)	Drugs (%)	Alcohol (%)	Money (%)	Drug Paraphernalia (%)	Stolen Property (%)	Cellphone (%)	Vehicle (%)	Contraband (%)
Black/African American (n = 36)	16.0	8.0	12.0	28.0	4.0	8.0	28.0	0.0	4.0	0.0	20.0
Hispanic/Latino (n = 224)	6.9	2.8	6.9	44.8	7.6	0.0	24.1	5.5	2.1	0.0	12.4
Other Racial/Ethnic Group (n = 12)	28.6	0.0	14.3	28.6	0.0	0.0	28.6	0.0	28.6	0.0	28.6
White (n = 304)	3.7	1.8	13.7	49.3	4.6	0.9	26.5	5.0	2.3	0.9	9.1

This table shows the percentage of individuals, by race (n = count), who were found with each type of evidence.

Figure 14. Percentage of Records Indicating Type of Contraband Seized by Racial/Ethnic Group in 2022

FUTURE DATA COLLECTION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

While the results from the analyses in this report are a start toward ensuring that SCSO is providing consistent policing services to all members of the Sonoma County community, future reports can be enhanced in quality and meaning.

This section provides suggestions for future data collection, analysis, and policy recommendations based on its findings.

Ensure Compliance with Reporting Requirements for RIPA

Given the available public information, there are significant concerns about whether all the SCSO activities that should result in a stop report being generated are occurring. Specifically, there are two concerns from publicly available data. First, the RIPA records analyzed indicated that only 837 of the records were in response to a call for service (CFS). However, publicly available reports indicate that there were nearly 30,000 CFS during the fiscal year 2021-2022. Not all CFS will require the generation of a stop report. Assuming the number of CFS is consistent for 2022, we expect more than 3% of CFS to generate a RIPA record. A report analyzing the Culver City, California RIPA data for 2023 found that 19% of records were associated with a CFS.

However, a more direct comparison reveals likely gaps in the generation of stop records. Specifically, we see significant inconsistency in the reporting numbers by plotting the number of arrests reported in the RIPA data to the number of arrests reported by SCSO. These differences are inconsistent across the jurisdictions patrolled by SCSO. We acknowledge that not all arrests are necessarily going to generate a stop report record (e.g., a person turning themselves in at the jail). However, the magnitude of the differences, presented in Figure 15, reveals problems. At this point, we cannot determine if the issue is that deputies are not entering all the stop records appropriately or something else.

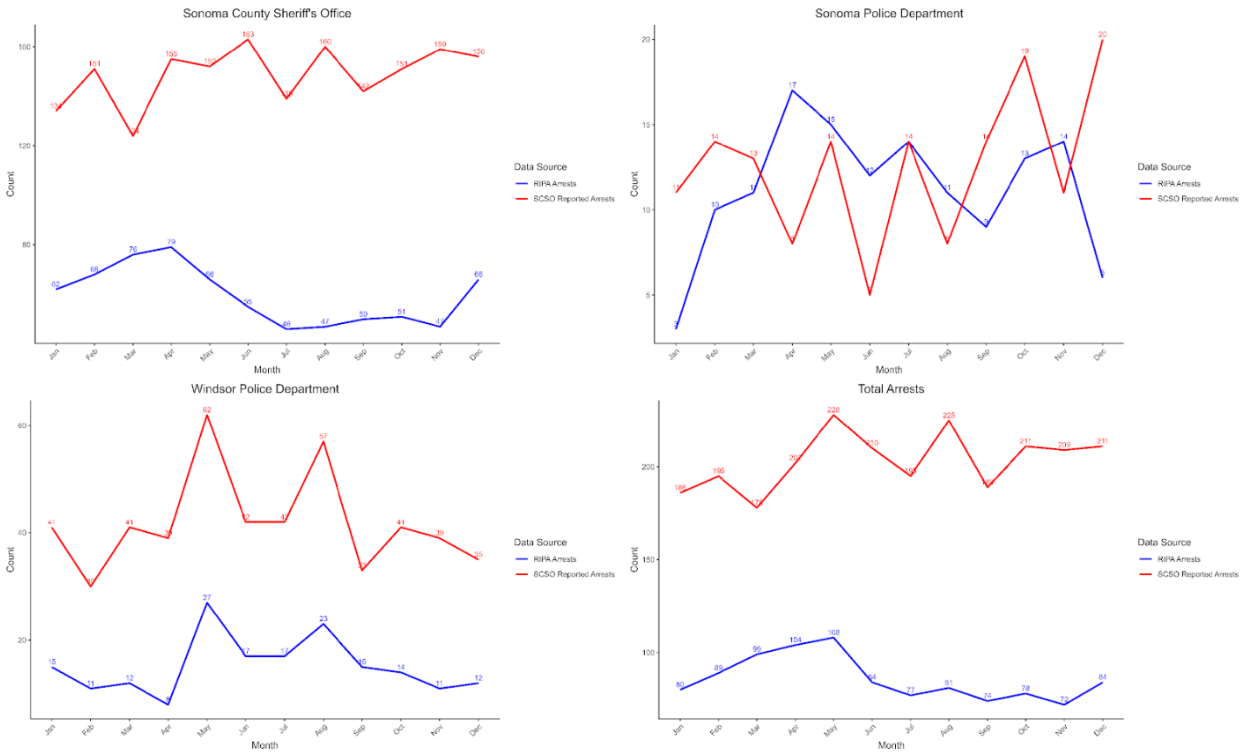

Figure 15. Comparing Arrests Reported by SCSO to Arrests Reported in RIPA Records for 2022

Ensure Consistency and Quality of Reports

A related issue that could also explain the differences in the number of arrests reported in the RIPA data compared to those reported by SCSO is the quality and consistency of the reported action in the reports. There is additional evidence of inconsistencies in the data. For instance, in the 2022 data, SCSO deputies reported that 35 persons were taken for a psychiatric hold because of the stop. However, only 16 (45.7%) of those people were identified as having a mental health disability at the time of the stop. It is improbable that SCSO deputies would inappropriately place someone who did not have a mental health disability on a psychiatric hold. Instead, the likely explanation for this finding is that SCSO deputies do not accurately and consistently report the data on stop forms.

It is unclear who, if anyone, at SCSO looks at and approves the reports before they are submitted to the California Department of Justice. This could be a byproduct of the data entry system that SCSO currently employs, related to the need for policy revisions, or both. If SCSO deputies submit the RIPA records directly to the California Department of Justice, the organization cannot review the data before submission.

Other agencies, such as the Bakersfield Police Department (BPD), provide a model for improving data quality and accountability. BPD utilizes Veritone, an AI-powered data collection platform developed in collaboration with the DOJ, to streamline reporting processes and ensure data accuracy. Officers

complete RIPA reports directly on mobile devices, and administrative staff review and correct each report before submission to the DOJ. Additionally, BPD conducts periodic audits by cross-referencing CAD records with submitted RIPA reports to identify and address any gaps in reporting. These practices demonstrate how proactive measures can enhance the reliability and consistency of RIPA data. Assuming SCSO seeks to be transparent and accountable to its community and use the data to make operational and organizational decisions, it should ensure that the data is a complete and accurate representation of the interaction between SCSO and the community. The messier and noisier the data is, the more difficult it is for the organization to make changes to improve the quality of the police services provided.

To address these inconsistencies, periodic audits of RIPA data should be conducted to ensure accuracy and completeness. Validating RIPA data against other sources, such as police reports or body-worn camera footage, could help identify and resolve discrepancies. Leveraging new technologies to automate parts of this validation process could further improve efficiency and reliability, reducing the burden on staff while enhancing the data quality.

Ensure Consistent Analysis of the Data

It is unclear if SCSO is using the RIPA data, which it is mandated to collect and report to the California Department of Justice for its purposes. A great deal of effort goes into collecting the required data, and the organization is well-positioned to use that data to look for patterns and trends, make operational and organizational changes, and improve the law enforcement services provided to the community. However, we can find no publicly available evidence that the organization is analyzing this data.

Given the other challenges identified with the data, SCSO may be unable to access its data without requesting it directly from the California Department of Justice. This is likely because the organization uses a direct submission system for the stop records. Suppose the organization wants to improve the data quality and capitalize on its use. In that case, it must be able to access that data in semi-real time.

Many vendors provide services to collect data from line-level staff, allowing it to be reviewed, returned for corrections, and accessed more easily by the organization in near real-time. Investing in this sort of solution, or using the current system's capabilities if available, would go a long way to assisting. Additionally, having access to cleaner data in a timelier fashion would allow the organization to begin analyzing the data at intervals of its choosing to ensure the data reflects the direction the organization is trying to move.

To fully leverage the collected data, the SCSO must adopt targeted strategies to address these challenges. By implementing the following measures, the agency can ensure that the data is accurate, accessible, and actionable, laying the foundation for meaningful operational improvements and stronger community trust.

Automate Data Entry: SCSO should continue leveraging the CAD system to auto-populate RIPA data, minimizing manual errors and improving reporting efficiency. This approach would streamline data collection while ensuring accurate submission to the DOJ.

Retain Submitted Data: To strengthen internal analysis, SCSO should retain a copy of all submitted RIPA data. Maintaining this information would allow the agency to independently assess policing trends and identify potential areas for improvement within the community.

Invest in Data Analysis Expertise: SCSO should hire a dedicated data analyst to collaborate with policy staff. This role would help integrate data insights into policy creation and ensure effective monitoring of policy implementation. A data analyst could also support periodic audits to validate data accuracy and consistency, fostering greater transparency and accountability.

Ensure Adequate Policy, Training, and Accountability

Lastly, we highlight the potential need for training and policy modification. A review of the SCSO Policy Manual, available publicly online, does not address the requirements for RIPA. While there could be a policy that is not publicly available, it seems unlikely, given the comprehensive nature of the Policy Manual that is available. Instead, the organization needs to develop a policy, train staff, and then appropriately and consistently hold deputies accountable for deviating from it.

As enacted in California Government Code 12525.5, the RIPA regulation states that law enforcement organizations must collect this data. As such, beyond the good practice of analyzing the data for the sake of the relationship with the community, the organization could potentially be in jeopardy of violating the RIPA requirements if the deputies do not report the required information. The best way to gain compliance is by developing policies that clearly define everyone's obligations and articulate the rationale, training deputies for proficiency, and appropriately holding them to account for deviating from the organization's expectations.

RIPA data collection also provides an invaluable opportunity to address disparities in policing by offering evidence of potential biases tied to racial and identity profiling practices. Beyond compliance, SCSO should view this process as a chance to demonstrate full transparency to the community. By openly sharing findings and conducting self-analysis of policies and practices, the agency can foster trust while identifying and addressing areas for improvement. Transparency supports accountability and strengthens the relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

CONCLUSION

This report represents a critical step toward understanding and addressing racial and ethnic disparities in law enforcement practices by the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office. By analyzing the 2022 RIPA data, the CAC's RIPA Ad Hoc has highlighted areas of concern and opportunities for systemic improvement. The recommendations outlined in this report emphasize the importance of data integrity, transparency, and accountability in fostering equitable policing practices.

Implementing these measures requires collaboration between the SCSO, the community, and oversight bodies. The insights gained from this analysis should guide policy changes and serve as a foundation for rebuilding trust and ensuring fair treatment for all members of the Sonoma County community. As we progress, sustained efforts and ongoing assessments will be essential in creating a safer, more inclusive environment for everyone.