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NDSC CRIMINAL JUSTICE DATA INITIATIVE

YEAR 1 WRAP REPORT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The past decade has elevated the urgent need for police reform, brought to the forefront by high-profile police killings and movements like #BlackLivesMatter. To better understand conceptions of public safety and support the growing public interest in criminal justice reform, the USC Price Center for Social Innovation partnered with Microsoft and the USC Safe Communities Institute to launch the NDSC Criminal Justice Data Initiative in the spring of 2019. The project featured three main components —

- A community engagement process that included stakeholder convenings and listening sessions to understand how law enforcement and community representatives think about public safety and use data in their work
- Public safety data collection, aggregation and dissemination at the neighborhood level, and
- Storytelling that pairs data analysis with narrative-based insights into public safety trends across Los Angeles County neighborhoods

This report provides an overview of the project strategy along with key findings from analysis of listening sessions and public safety data, including arrests, stops by police, and calls for service.

KEY FINDINGS

- People of color across all neighborhoods — especially people who identify as Black — are stopped at higher rates by the police than other groups. Across the City, Black Angelenos are stopped and arrested three times as often as White and Latino Angelenos.
- Listening session participants expressed the harmful psychological impact of racial profiling by law enforcement and the lack of investments in community programs, education, and health services, particularly in South Los Angeles.
- Across the city of Los Angeles, civilian-initiated contact with the police, measured through calls for service, has steadily increased over the last decade. By contrast, police-initiated contact with civilians, measured through vehicle and pedestrian stops, decreased drastically in the beginning of the decade and then rose slightly after 2016.
- From 2011 – 2018, LAPD consistently stopped more people in South Los Angeles than other parts of the city.
- While definitions of public safety differed largely among stakeholder groups, almost all agreed that it includes intangible elements such as community belonging, connectedness, and opportunities to thrive and be free.

The Neighborhood Data for Social Change (NDSC) platform, a project of the USC Price Center for Social Innovation, is a free, publicly available online resource for civic actors in Los Angeles County to learn about their neighborhoods. The interactive mapping platform provides neighborhood-level data across ten different policy areas ranging from health to housing to education, and engages Angelenos through monthly training sessions and data stories written in partnership with local organizations. When the platform launched in 2017, it included a limited set of public safety data on Part I Violent and Property Crimes as well as Part II Crimes.

In the spring of 2019, the USC Price Center partnered with Microsoft and the USC Safe Communities Institute to launch the NDSC Criminal Justice Data Initiative, a pilot project to collect, aggregate, and disseminate additional public safety indicators on the NDSC platform, including arrests, stops by police, and calls for service from community members. These indicators were chosen through a process of engaging law enforcement agencies, community residents, and local non-profits on their data needs and definitions of public safety.

INFORMATION IN THE DECADE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

The Initiative began at the end of a decade that elevated the urgent need for reform across many parts of the criminal justice system. Although tensions between police and communities of color have existed for over century in the United States, the widespread availability of camera phones and movements like #BlackLivesMatter beginning in 2013 brought issues of violence and racial discrimination at the hands of law enforcement into the internet mainstream. Prison reform appeared in both the Democratic and Republican party platforms for the first time in the 2016 election.¹ California, which has one of the country's largest prison systems, passed a number of bi-partisan bills in recent years to end cash bail and the prosecution of children as adults.² However, recent protests in cities around the world in response to the killing of George Floyd and many others by law enforcement clearly indicate that much more is needed in the way of police and justice reform to earn public trust.

Research shows that Americans still have widely differing views on policing and the system as a whole, particularly across racial lines. A 2016 survey by Pew found that 75% of White Americans thought that police use the right amount of force in each situation and treat racial and ethnic groups equally. By comparison, just over a third of Black Americans thought the same.³ One explanation for this marked divide in opinion about policing and criminal justice could be a lack of data and information. Police departments are not required by federal law to report data on their activities to the FBI or to the public, and in 2016, under 60% of police departments reported arrest data to the FBI.⁴ Additionally, the Trump Administration's elimination of police reforms put in place by the Obama Administration, including the use of consent decrees to bring federal oversight of troubled police departments, has eroded support from Black communities who feel agencies that practice racial profiling, use excessive force and other forms of unconstitutional policing are free to do so without impunity.⁵

¹ Camhi, N. (2016, August 01). *Criminal Justice Reform Has Made it into Both Party Platforms. That's a Big Deal*. Retrieved July 10, 2020, from <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/criminal-justice-reform-has-made-it-both-party-platforms-thats-big-deal>

² Staff, R. S., & Sholkoff, R. (2018, December 02). 'A major step forward': California passes criminal justice reforms in 2018. Retrieved July 10, 2020, from <https://www.dailycal.org/2018/11/29/a-major-step-forward-california-passes-criminal-justice-reforms-in-2018/>

³ Stepler, R. M. (2020, May 30). *The Racial Confidence Gap in Police Performance*. Retrieved July 10, 2020, from <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/09/29/the-racial-confidence-gap-in-police-performance/>

⁴ Neusteter, R., & O'Toole, M. (2020, July 09). *Vera Institute*. Retrieved July 10, 2020, from <https://www.vera.org/publications/arrest-trends-every-three-seconds-landing/arrest-trends-every-three-seconds/overview>

⁵ Mcmanus, H. D., Cullen, F. T., Jonson, C. L., Burton, A. L., & Burton, V. S. (2019). *Will Black Lives Matter to the Police? African Americans' Concerns about Trump's Presidency*. *Victims & Offenders*, 14(8), 1040-1062. doi:10.1080/15564886.2019.1671288

Given the growing public interest in criminal justice reform and the lack of uniform standards around public safety data, the NDSC Criminal Justice Data Initiative was launched to provide reliable, current data to help inform evidence-based policymaking in Los Angeles County. The project aims to facilitate informed and constructive dialogue between law enforcement, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and independent civic actors as they seek to develop new strategies to improve collaboration and trust between law enforcement and the communities that they serve.

PROJECT STRATEGY & PARTNERS

The NDSC Criminal Justice Data Initiative had three strategic components:

- Community engagement, including stakeholder convenings and listening sessions
- Data collection, aggregation, and dissemination
- Data storytelling

Key project partners included:

- Microsoft
- USC Safe Communities Institute
- Community Coalition
- Los Angeles Police Department
- Santa Monica Police Department
- USC Department of Public Safety
- City of LA Gang Reduction & Youth Development
- SLATE-Z
- Para Los Ninos
- Coalition for Responsible Community Development
- Los Angeles School Police Department
- Urban Peace Institute
- USC Office of Civic Engagement
- Los Angeles Housing and Community Investment Department

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder Convenings & Listening Sessions

The Initiative hosted a number of gatherings to engage public safety professionals, community-based organizations, and researchers, for the purpose of grappling with the issue of public safety data.

The first convening, held in August 2019, aimed to introduce the project to community representatives and law enforcement representatives to hear how these stakeholder groups understood public safety and used data to inform their work. The event featured a panel of local government, nonprofit and law enforcement representatives as well as facilitated roundtable discussions with approximately 70 attendees, including students, faculty, police officers, elected officials, and community-based organizations.

The second convening, held in January 2020, was a listening session with 19 attendees from a diverse collection of law enforcement agencies, community groups, and local government agencies from across Los Angeles County, to share initial results of the data collected from the Los Angeles Police Department.

The third convening was a virtual listening session held in March 2020 with 16 attendees. Community Coalition, a local place-based nonprofit in South Los Angeles, co-hosted the forum, inviting community members to help frame the interpretation of public safety data specific to the South Los Angeles neighborhood.

DATA COLLECTION, AGGREGATION AND DISSEMINATION: KEY FINDINGS

Defining Public Safety

When asked to define what public safety meant to them, event and listening session participants provided a range of answers and experiences that varied depending on their occupation and neighborhood of residence. Figure 1 below displays their answers in word cloud format. Definitions from law enforcement officers shared common themes of protection from harm, teamwork, and transparency. By contrast, definitions from local government and nonprofit representatives focused more on topics like health and wellbeing, community investment, economic opportunity, and built environment. South Los Angeles residents reflected on their communal experience with police and the criminal justice system and shared themes like the criminalization of poverty, racial profiling, and the desire for investments in community programs rather than police.

While these stakeholder groups defined certain aspects of public safety differently, some common themes also emerged across all groups. In various ways, law enforcement officers, community residents, and local government/nonprofit representatives all expressed the shared idea that public safety also includes intangible elements like community belonging, connectedness, and opportunities to thrive and be free. This common piece of understanding allowed for productive and respectful conversations among listening session participants who shared few other similarities when reflecting on what public safety meant to them. However, it also presented a challenge for project staff, as it is difficult to conceptualize measuring ideas like belonging, connectedness and freedom at the neighborhood level, much less finding a reliable and comprehensive data source to do so.

FIGURE 1 PUBLIC SAFETY DEFINITIONS FROM LISTENING SESSIONS



Given that many aspects of community-defined public safety are difficult to measure, the Price Center focused on collecting and aggregating the data that was available across jurisdictions, including the categories of Arrests, Stops and Calls for Service. The Price Center also incorporated listening session feedback on the importance of providing context around data visualizations, disaggregating data by race/ethnicity wherever possible, and ensuring that local police departments are collecting and reporting data in the same way so that it can be accurately compared across geographies.

The following sections detail key findings from the data that was collected, analyzed and disseminated from the Los Angeles Police Department.

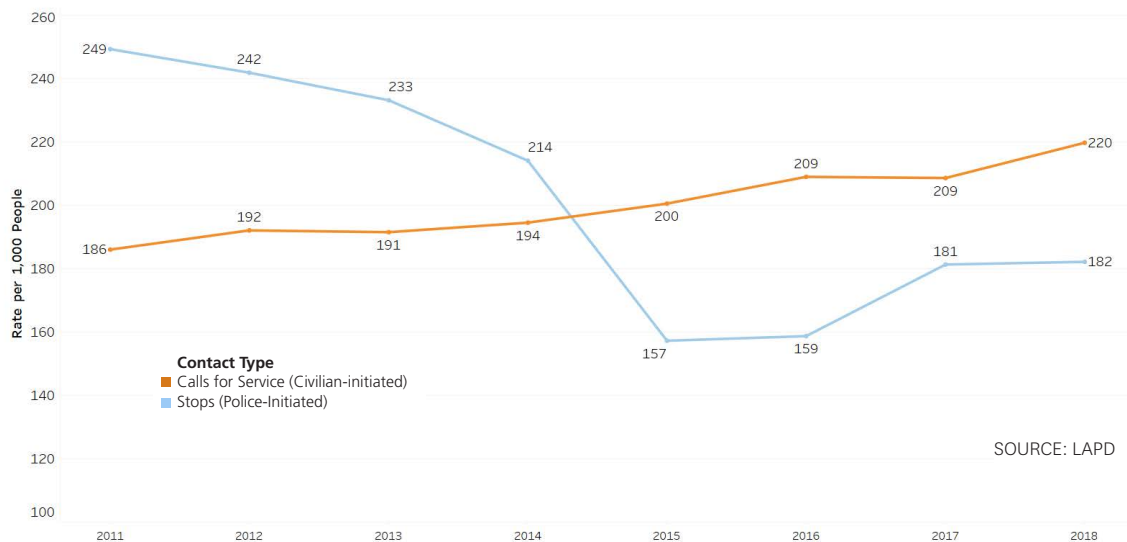
Civilian and Police-Initiated Contact

One way to measure community-police interactions is by considering who is initiating contact and how often that contact is happening. Two variables detailing these interactions include:

- **Calls for service:** defined as the number of 911 emergency calls made by community residents per 1,000 people in the resident population, can be used as a proxy for **civilian-initiated contact** to the police.
- **Stops:** defined as the number of police stops of a vehicle or pedestrian per 1,000 people in the resident population, are the most common way that **police directly initiate** contact with civilian and can be used to measure police-initiated contact with the community.

Figure 2 below shows civilian and police-initiated contact rates for the City of Los Angeles from 2011 to 2018. While civilian-initiated contact steadily increased, police-initiated contact decreased drastically in the beginning of the decade and then rose slightly after 2016. Listening session participants offered several explanations for these trends, including that civilian may be calling police for non-crime related instances or that the slight increase in calls for service could be related to the slight increase in crime across the city.

FIGURE 2 Civilian & Police-Initiated Contacts City of Los Angeles, 2011-2018



When viewed through the lens of community connectedness, increasing civilian-initiated contact could indicate that communities feel an increasing sense of trust in the police to address issues as they arise. Communities with above average rates of calls for service tend to have more Black and Latino residents than the city average and signs of community disinvestment like higher rates of severe rent burden and unemployment.⁶ Based on listening session dialogue, an equally likely explanation is that increasing calls for service is an indication of lack infrastructure that would allow a community to thrive and feel safe, independent of any indication of trust or in law enforcement.

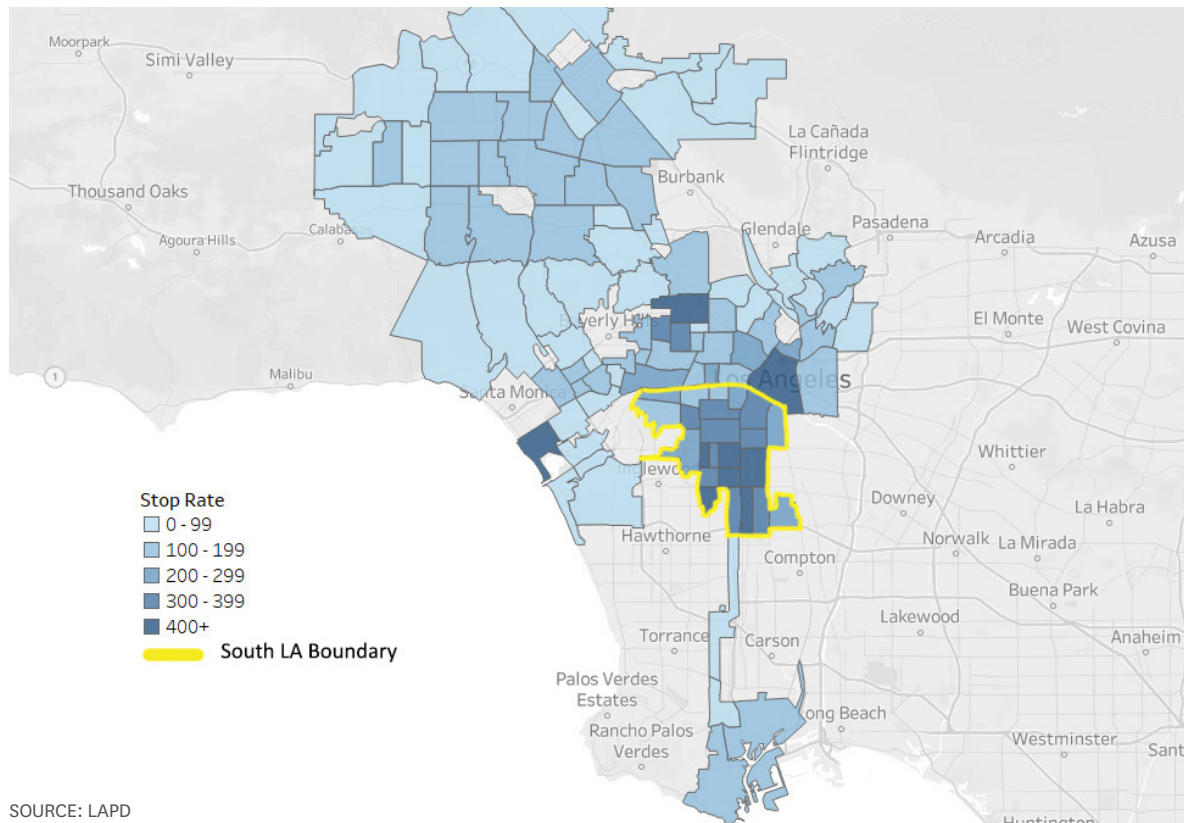
⁶ U.S. Census Bureau (2018). 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved from <https://data.myneighborhooddata.org/>

With regard to decreasing police-initiated contact, listening session participants noted that the passage of laws like Prop 47 in 2014, which revised the classification of most nonviolent property and drug crimes from felonies to misdemeanors, may have led to shifts in police culture away from stops and prosecution for low-level offenses and more towards rehabilitation and health services. Similarly, the passage of Prop 57 in 2016, which allowed for parole consideration for nonviolent felons, led to an increase in parolees in the community and may be partially responsible for the increase in stop rates at the end of the decade.

Variations by Geography and Race

While stop rates have been decreasing on average across the City of Los Angeles, certain neighborhoods have seen the opposite trend. South Los Angeles, outlined in yellow in Map 1 below, has had a history of tense relations with LAPD,⁷ including several historically significant community uprisings in protest of police mistreatment in the 1960s and 1990s.

MAP 1 Police-Initiated Contact by Neighborhood City of Los Angeles, 2018



SOURCE: LAPD

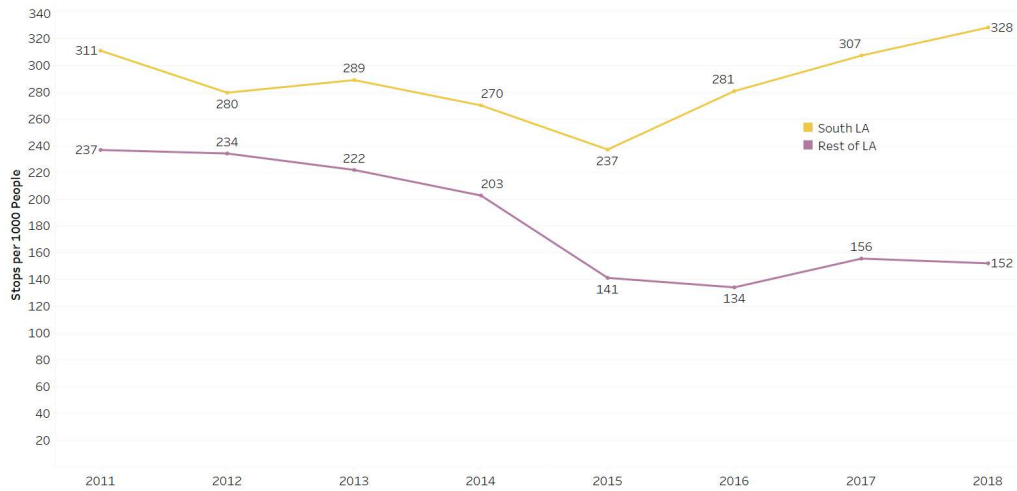
The area is home to just over 777,000 people, 66% of whom identified as Latino and 28% of whom identified as Black according to 2018 American Community Survey estimates. Community Coalition, the organization who co-facilitated the listening session focused on South Los Angeles, has worked for decades to take a holistic approach to documenting and improving public safety outcomes in South Los Angeles, including the closing of liquor stores and implementation of summer programming for youth in the community.⁸ The trends in stops and arrests add an important element to the existing public safety data and reform efforts in this community.

⁷ Reft, R. (2020, June 11). *A Tale of Two Commissions: Watts, Rodney King and the Politics of Policing*. Retrieved July 10, 2020, from <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/a-tale-of-two-commissions-watts-rodney-king-and-the-politics-of-policing>

⁸ Choi, J. H. (Ed.). (2011). *Leading Change From Within: 20 Years of Building Grassroots Power in South Los Angeles [Pamphlet]*. Los Angeles, CA: Community Coalition.

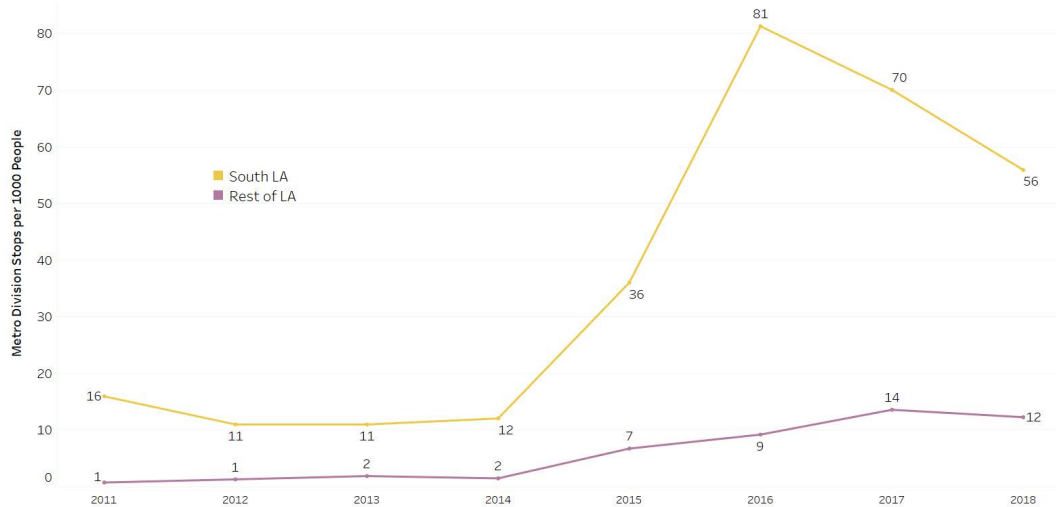
As shown in Figure 3 below, while LAPD has consistently stopped more people in South Los Angeles than other parts of the city, the rate of stops began to increase sharply in 2015 while remaining roughly the same across the rest of the city. South Los Angeles residents who participated in the third listening session noted the harmful psychological impact of disproportionately high police interactions in their community, and expressed the need for a proportional investment in education and health services to increase neighborhood safety.

FIGURE 3 Police-Initiated Contact South LA vs. the Rest of LA, 2011-2018



In South Los Angeles, several different divisions within LAPD were making stops over the course of the decade. In early 2016, LAPD doubled the size of its Metropolitan (Metro) Division, the specialized crime fighting unit that includes the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team, citing increases in crime.⁹ As shown in Figure 4 below, stops by Metro Division officers significantly and disproportionately increased in South Los Angeles as compared to the rest of the city following the division's expansion. The Metro Division was downsized in 2019 after Community Coalition and other local advocacy organizations highlighted racial disparities in the unit's practices.¹⁰

FIGURE 4 Police-Initiated Contact by the Metro Division South LA vs. the Rest of LA, 2011-2018

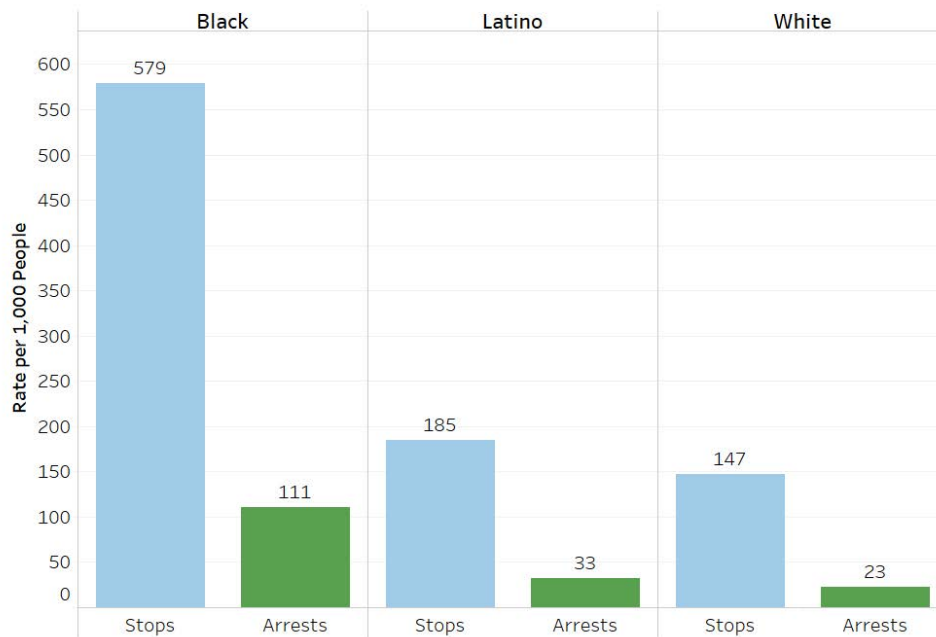


⁹ History of the Metro Division. (n.d.). Retrieved July 10, 2020, from http://www.lapdonline.org/metropolitan_division/content_basic_view/6359

¹⁰ Chang, C., & Poston, B. (2019, February 07). Garcetti orders LAPD to scale back vehicle stops amid concerns over black drivers being targeted. Retrieved July 10, 2020, from <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-garcetti-lapd-metro-20190206-story.html>

While residents in South Los Angeles have higher rates of police-initiated contact than other parts of the city, **people of color across all neighborhoods — especially people who identify as Black — are stopped at higher rates by the police than other groups. Across the City, Black Angelenos are stopped and arrested three times as often as White and Latino Angelenos.** Figure 5, below, shows stop and arrest rates by race/ethnicity, averaging data from years 2011 to 2018 and accounting for the relative size of each racial/ethnic group.

FIGURE 5 Stop and Arrest Rates by Race/Ethnicity City of Los Angeles, 2011-2018 (Average)



DATA STORYTELLING

In addition to convenings and data analysis, the Price Center also collaborated with key partners to produce a series of data stories about the issue of public safety in Los Angeles County. Pairing precise data with rich narrative, beautiful photos, and interactive maps and visualizations, data stories reveal the trends, challenges, and opportunities facing Los Angeles communities. They are published on a monthly basis through our media partner KCET as a part of the larger Neighborhood Data for Social Change (NDSC) project and cover a range of issue areas and community solutions.

In November 2019, the first public safety data story was published as a part of the NDSC Criminal Justice Data Initiative. The story covered youth arrests and the negative impact of the juvenile justice system on future opportunities for young people. The story details how the juvenile arrest rate across Los Angeles dropped from 45 (per 1,000) in 2011 to 12 (per 1,000) due to new police tactics to divert young people away from, rather than into, the juvenile justice system.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The pilot year of the NDSC Criminal Justice Data Initiative came at the end of a decade of intense focus and debate on criminal justice reform and highlighted the complexity of defining and measuring public safety. Partners shared a common understanding of certain intangible elements of safety in their community, and ironically those elements were some of the most difficult to measure using data. However, partners across Los Angeles County expressed that despite being an incomplete measure of public safety, neighborhood data on police-community interactions, particularly when disaggregated by type of interaction and the race/ethnicity of community members, was still a valuable source of information and an important piece of conversations on criminal justice reform.

The USC Price Center for Social Innovation is excited to announce a second year of partnership with Microsoft and Safe Communities Institute for the NDSC Criminal Justice Data Initiative. During this upcoming year, communities across the United States will continue to grapple with questions of the meaning of public safety and the role of law enforcement in their neighborhoods. The Price Center will continue to host conversations in our own community and examine how data can be used to paint a richer understanding of public safety that includes community health and built environments in addition to community-police interactions. Additionally, the Price Center will continue to expand the geographies covered in policing data to include additional law enforcement jurisdictions.

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