



For Immediate Release

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A Decade of SPPD Data Show Hispanics & Blacks Stopped & Arrested At a Disproportionately High Rate in a City Largely Absent of Violent Crime

South Pasadena Police Department (SPPD) arrests Black and Hispanic people at a rate that's disproportionate to the number of the two populations residing in the city, finds an analysis by Occidental College researchers of almost ten years of police dispatch and arrest data obtained by Care First South Pasadena.

The report—*Dispatch and Arrest Trends in South Pasadena*—will be presented at an open community forum at:

Policing Whom? A Close Look at South Pasadena Policing

7 p.m., Monday, August 15

Choi Auditorium, Occidental College

1600 Campus Road

Los Angeles, CA 90041

Note: Space is limited and COVID protocols will apply. Please RSVP by emailing carefirstsouthpas@gmail.com or online [here](#). Zoom link will be provided after registration.

While 20 percent of the city's residents from 2012 through 2020 were Hispanic and just 3 percent Black, 54 percent of people SPPD arrested in the city were Hispanic and 12 percent were Black over that time.

The overwhelming number of arrests did not involve violent crimes, but traffic violations (29%), outstanding warrants, drug and alcohol crimes (15%), and mostly minor property crimes (12%).

"Decisions made by the city about how to police the nonviolent offenses that make up the bulk of the South Pasadena Police Department's work have profound implications for the lives of the city's Black and Hispanic residents," concluded lead Occidental College researchers Seva Rodnyansky and Jorgen Harris in the report.

Rodnyansky, Assistant Professor of Urban and Environmental Policy at Occidental College, and Harris, Assistant Professor of Economics, analyzed more than 100,000 SPPD dispatch records

spanning the period of 2016-2021 and thousands of arrest records spanning the period 2012-2021. Local social justice group Care First South Pasadena obtained the records through the California Public Records Act.

The Occidental research team analyzed the data on a strictly statistical basis. Care First hypothesizes that racially biased police stops and poverty, disproportionately borne by Hispanics and Blacks, may be driving the racial and ethnic disparities found in arrests.

“We hope that this report will highlight the need for more transparency at SPPD and the city,” said Ella Hushagen, a Care First member who played an instrumental role in obtaining the data. “Care First calls on the city to examine what is driving racial and ethnic disparities in arrests in the upcoming independent assessment of SPPD.”

“We also hope it will start a constructive community dialogue over the disparity in arrests of Hispanics and Blacks, as well as the role of the police and other, better and more cost-effective approaches to maintaining public safety,” said Helen Tran, another Care First member who played a key role in obtaining the data.

For instance, the data show arrests are down 50 percent over the period 2012-2021 and dispatches are down 20 percent since 2017. Also, about 10 percent of dispatches involve welfare checks or calls related to unhoused and suspicious individuals.

Tran notes this should prompt debate about whether it’s still appropriate for the city to spend \$10.7 million—about one-third of the city’s annual general fund budget—on police or if the city should increase social services expenditures, which today account for only \$4 million, or 13% of the city’s annual general fund budget.

“A better balance, including enhanced services for the unhoused and programs to enhance cost of living affordability and treat people with drug addiction, mental illness, and other behavioral challenges often associated with poverty, may be more helpful in reducing property and violent crime than investing so heavily in policing,” said Alexander Aquino-Kaljakin, a Care First member.

“The city hasn’t shown evidence that SPPD is actually preventing crime here. What we know with more certainty is the police respond after the fact. Moreover, SPPD’s annual report shows that only 10% of the reported crimes last year were solved,” added Omari Ferguson, a Care First member.

The Occidental data analysis report shows much of what police deal with are calls about minor shoplifting at local merchants, particularly chain grocery stores, and reports of suspicious people who don’t fit the profile of the city’s neighborhoods.

Property crimes, for instance, were dominated by thefts—with Vons grocery store being the single location to which police were most frequently dispatched—followed by thefts from motor vehicles.

The data show that arrests for serious or violent crime occur very infrequently, and overall, arrests declined in the past ten years. Violent crimes represented just 6% of arrests. Fewer than 1 in 300 dispatches resulted in felony arrests and less than 1 in 600 involved arrests for violent crimes. The data also show that arrests for both violent and non-violent crimes fell from 2012, the high water mark in the years examined in the analysis, to a record low in 2021, which researchers said was in line with neighboring Los Angeles city.

Indeed, today, nearly half of SPPD's time appears to be taken up by routine traffic stops and parking enforcement (23% of dispatches), investigating reports of suspicious activity and disturbances (13%), providing emergency and non-emergency services on and off the road (6%), conducting welfare and other checks (4%), and responding to building alarms (5%).

The researchers found only 12% of dispatches involved investigating crimes or responding to criminal activity.

“Overall, the data paint a debatable picture about the effectiveness of the city's policing model and raise questions about how wisely taxpayer funds are being directed by city management and the City Council,” concluded William Kelly, a Care First member. “We hope the report will prompt the city to explore, particularly in the upcoming assessment of SPPD, how to best use taxpayer money to enhance safety and services for all.”

RSVP for our August 15 community forum **Policing Whom? A Close Look at South Pasadena Policing** by emailing carefirstsouthpas@gmail.com or online [here](#).

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Care First South Pasadena is a coalition of residents working to reimagine public safety and reallocate city dollars to reflect our community's priorities. We came together in the summer of 2020 after George Floyd's murder and amid a global pandemic with a desire for a more just and inclusive community. Find us at carefirstsouthpasadena.com and on Instagram [@carefirstsouthpas](#).