

Incorporating Community Voices in Analyzing Public Police Data in California



PILLARS
OF THE COMMUNITY

PRESENTERS:

April 17th, 2025

Mitchelle Woodson (she/hers), Pillars for the Community

Chauncey Smith (he/him), Catalyst California

Elycia Mulholland Graves (she/hers), Catalyst California

Jennifer Zhang (she/hers), Catalyst California



Purpose: To show barriers to using publicly available data and why data analysis should be developed in collaboration with community-based organizations.

Outcome: Participants understand the importance of community-engaged research to create impactful stories that accurately reflect community members' lived experiences.

Process

- Introductions and grounding
- Project overview
- Discussion Activity
- Q&A
- Conclusion
- Resources

Introductions

Mitchelle Woodson,
Pillars of the
Community



Chauncey Smith,
Catalyst California



Elycia Mulholland
Graves,
Catalyst California



Jennifer Zhang,
Catalyst California



Grounding

Some of the topics presented include discussions about police violence and racial injustices that can be triggering or difficult to hear.

Equity Problems in Open Data Access

Who “owns” the data
(i.e., controls how it can
be used)?

Who has the technical
skills and time to analyze
data?

Who gets to verify the
accuracy of the data
collected?

Project Overview



Who has ownership?

Who has the technical skills and time?

The Partnership

- Catalyst California partnered with Pillars of the Community for this project.
- Pillars of the Community has deep roots in the Southeast San Diego community. They have been providing legal services and advocacy support to its community for years.
- Catalyst California provided data and analytical support to the report to best serve Pillars of the Community's advocacy needs.
- Pillars gathered video testimonials from Southeast San Diego community members to include in the report.
- Catalyst California and Pillars of the Community did an in-person presentation to share the final report and brainstorm alternatives to policing.

Who has ownership?

Who has the technical skills and time?

Barriers to Data Access

- **Law enforcement agencies often mask the extent of their racial biases by making data inaccessible.**
 - We submitted a public records request to the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) to determine whether there were additional stops related to gang enforcement by officers beyond those assigned to gang enforcement in the RIPA data. The request and an appeal were denied.
 - Because SDPD refused to provide the data, available data on stops that resulted in a field interview card were analyzed as a proxy for identifying gang profiling activities. This was combined with stories from impacted community members to reveal the extent of SDPD's extremely harmful gang profiling.

Who has ownership?

Who has the technical skills and time?

The Data

The Racial and Identity Profiling Act (RIPA) was formed as part of AB 953 (Weber, 2016).

- Beginning July 1, 2018, law enforcement agencies, starting with the eight largest agencies, will begin collecting stop data, for individuals stopped by police and consensual encounters that resulted in a search, and reporting the information to the Department of Justice.
- Data elements collected include demographic information of the stopped individuals that is perceived by the officer.

Who has ownership?

Who has the technical
skills and time?

Who gets to verify the
accuracy?

The Data

- They must collect and report data on:
 - The **date and time** of the stop
 - Officer perceptions of the person's **race, age, gender, disability status, English fluency**
 - The original **reason why the officer conducted the stop**, such as traffic violation, reasonable suspicion, consensual encounter/search, probation/parole, truancy investigation
 - **Officer actions during stop**, such as whether a person was searched, detained, removed from vehicle, or handcuffed, or whether the officer used a weapon
 - The **result of the stop**, such as no action/result, a warning, citation for infraction, an arrest with or without warrant

Who has ownership?

Who gets to verify the accuracy?

The Data

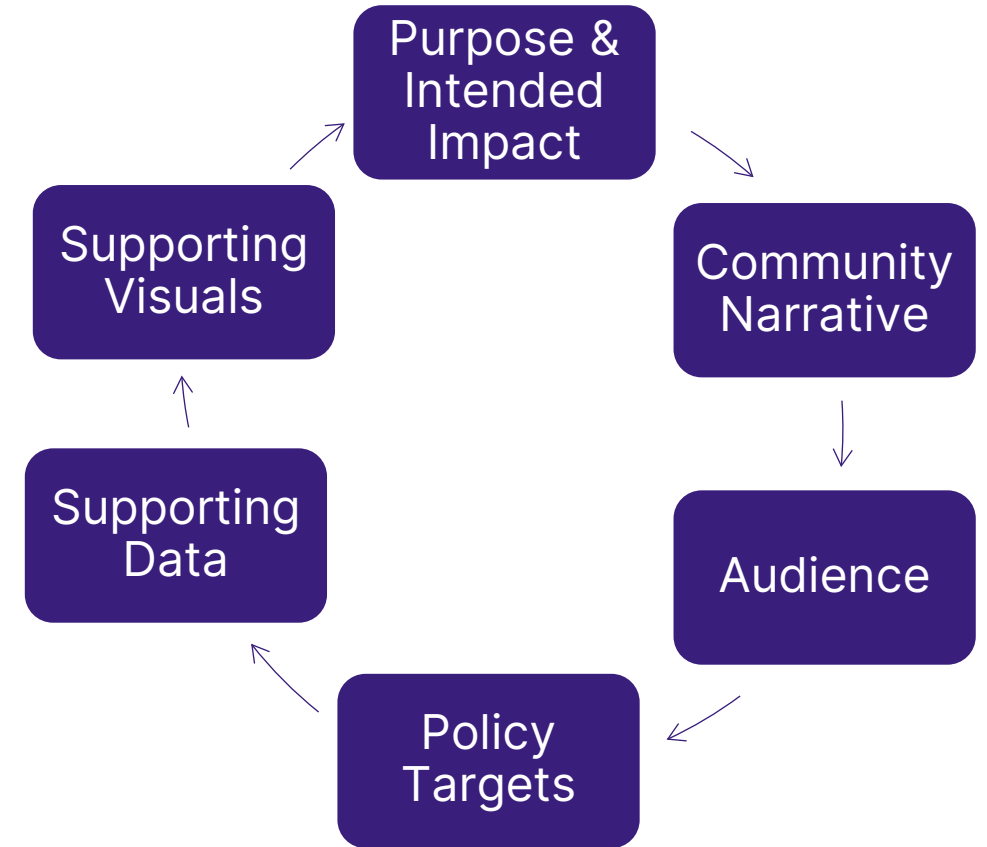
RIPA data is based on officers' reporting on what occurs during stops and their perceptions of the people they stop. This is the standard in the field because racial profiling is based on officers' perceptions, irrespective of whether they are accurate. Thus, community members' lived experiences during these stops are not fully reflected, including verification of officer actions taken during the stop.

Who has ownership?

Who gets to verify the accuracy?

Analysis & Report Process

- Included an intentional process that weaves together stories, data, and compelling visuals to move policies and audiences.
- In practice, we collectively:
 - Identified the purpose, core narrative, and audience
 - Explored the data and findings through multiple rounds of verification with Pillars of the Community
 - Decided on visuals and findings that supported community narratives and policies



Who has ownership?

Who gets to verify the accuracy?

Analysis & Report Process

- Used a whiteboard tool to create report mock-up

SUPPORTING POINTS

Such racially biased stops harm the community and undermine community safety.

[Community quote/video]

Narrative: When searches are conducted as a part of gang profiling, they are largely ineffective and biased.

Low hit/discovery rate for officer-initiated stops (SDPD-wide stops)

Also low hit/discovery rate for FI card stops by race (FI card stops)

Narrative: Southeast community members have had their wellbeing and safety harmed by gang enforcement stops.

[Community quote/video]

LEAD WITH STORIES

SUPPORTIVE DATA

SUPPORTIVE VISUALS

KEY MESSAGE

NARRATIVE THROUGH-LINE:
Gang enforcement stops criminalizes communities of color, especially Southeast San Diego by falsely labeling community members as gang members. This routine practice inflicts devastating racially biased harms, undermines community safety, and wastes tremendous public dollars.

OUTLINE MOCKUP

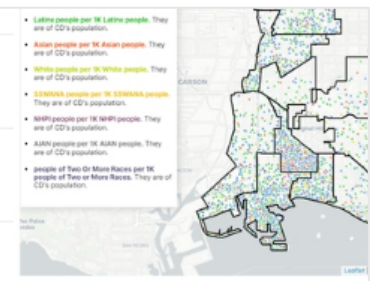
[Open with topline video or quote from community member]

CONTEXT

Falsely documenting people as gang members is a longstanding practice of law enforcement in SDPD

Critique/debunk normative assumptions that means to be a gang member

Gang Documentation and Database Problem



Who has ownership?

Who has the technical skills and time?

Who gets to verify the accuracy?

Analysis & Report Process

- Technology used:
 - Created report mock-up in Conceptboard
 - Data downloaded and stored in a cloud-hosted PostgreSQL database through a set of relational tables
 - Data analyzed and visualized in R Studio
 - Data analysis methodology and visuals shared via Git/GitHub repository
 - Report built on organizational website with embeds hosted on GitHub pages



Incorporating Community Stories

- Pillars of the Community collected over 16 videos
- Videos were organized throughout the report connecting to relevant points and data.
- Each section of the report highlighted at least one community story



Discussion Activity

We are going to be sharing video testimonials from community members in Southeast San Diego paired with a data statistic from the RIPA data for SDPD.

As you are watching the video and viewing the statistic, please think about the following prompts:

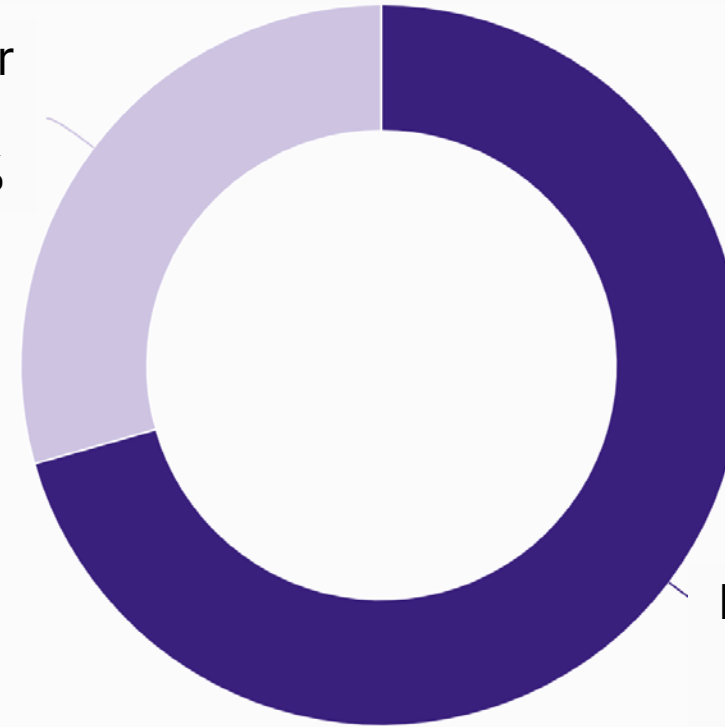
1. How does each method of information make you feel?
2. Which method tells a more compelling story?
3. Which method promotes equitable storytelling and how?

Example 1

Stop data show that amongst all people searched by SDPD in 2022, officers failed to find evidence of a crime over 70% of the time.

Most searches SDPD conducts yield no evidence or contraband

Contraband or
Evidence
Found: 29.4%



No Contraband
or Evidence
Found: 70.6%

Catalyst California's calculations based on City of San Diego's Police Stop Data (2022), catalystcalifornia.org, 2023. Analysis for all officer-initiated stops.



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Reflections

Example 2

In 2022, SDPD subjected 1,100 people to stops resulting in field interviews in the Southeastern Division compared to only 171 people in the Northwestern Division. More White and affluent people reside in the Northwestern Division.

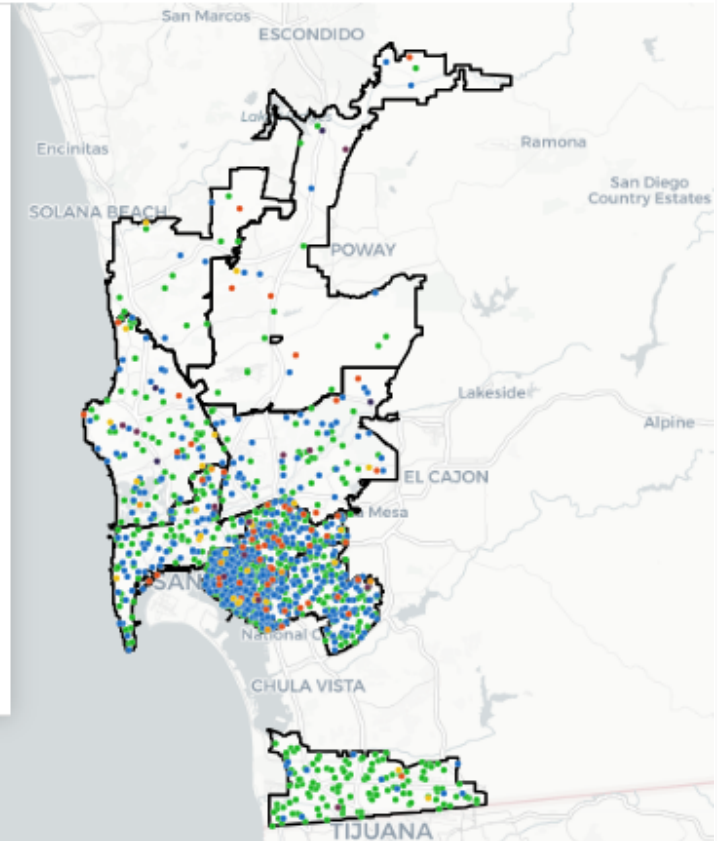
SDPD disproportionately conducts field interviews for people of color in the Southeastern and Central Division

Please click on a San Diego police division to see stop data below.

Southeastern Division (Division 4)

SDPD Officers conducted field interviews on:

- 549 people they perceived as Black, or 19.4% of Black people they stopped.
- 405 people they perceived as Latinx, or 11.0% of Latinx people they stopped.
- 42 people they perceived as Asian, or 10.2% of Asian people they stopped.
- 4 people they perceived as AIAN, or 25% of AIAN people they stopped.
- 7 people they perceived as NHPI, or 13.2% of NHPI people they stopped.
- 4 people they perceived as SWANA/SA, or 3.6% of SWANA/SA people they stopped.
- 8 people they perceived as Multiracial, or 21.6% of Multiracial people they stopped.
- 82 people they perceived as White, or 9.6% of White people they stopped.





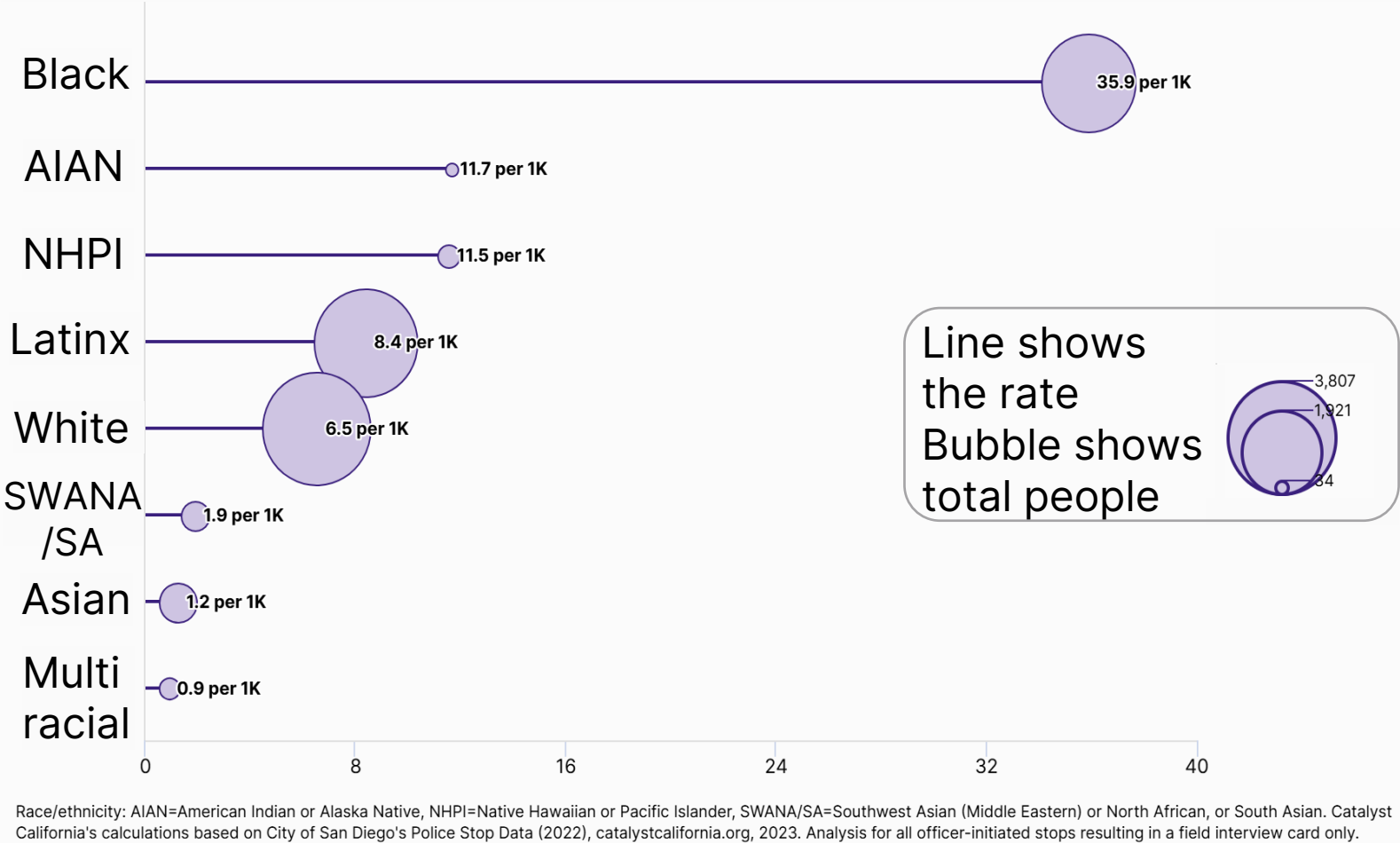
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Reflections

Example 3

Black people were subjected to stops that resulted in a field interview card at a rate five times greater than White people.

SDPD disproportionately subjects Black people to field interviews





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Reflections



Q&A

Conclusion

As public data becomes increasingly available, researchers and data analysts must partner intentionally with communities to account for data equity problems.

Start by asking these equity-based questions:

Who “owns” the data?

Who has the technical skills and time to analyze data?

Who gets to verify the accuracy of the data collected?



Resources

Session Feedback

- Provide us your feedback! ([link](#))

Report Links:

- End Gang Profiling in Southeast San Diego: Data and Stories from Community Members ([link](#))
- GitHub Repository ([link](#))

Data Storytelling Resources:

- Data Storytelling Guide ([link](#))
- How to Meaningfully Visualize Imperfect Race Data ([link](#))



THANK YOU!

For questions, please contact:

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PILLARS
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