

Have Racial Disparities in Law Enforcement Stops Narrowed?

March 17, 2026

Magnus Lofstrom, Brandon Martin, and
Luciana Susanto



PPIC

PUBLIC POLICY
INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA

RIPA is part of California's efforts to address racial disparities in criminal justice outcomes

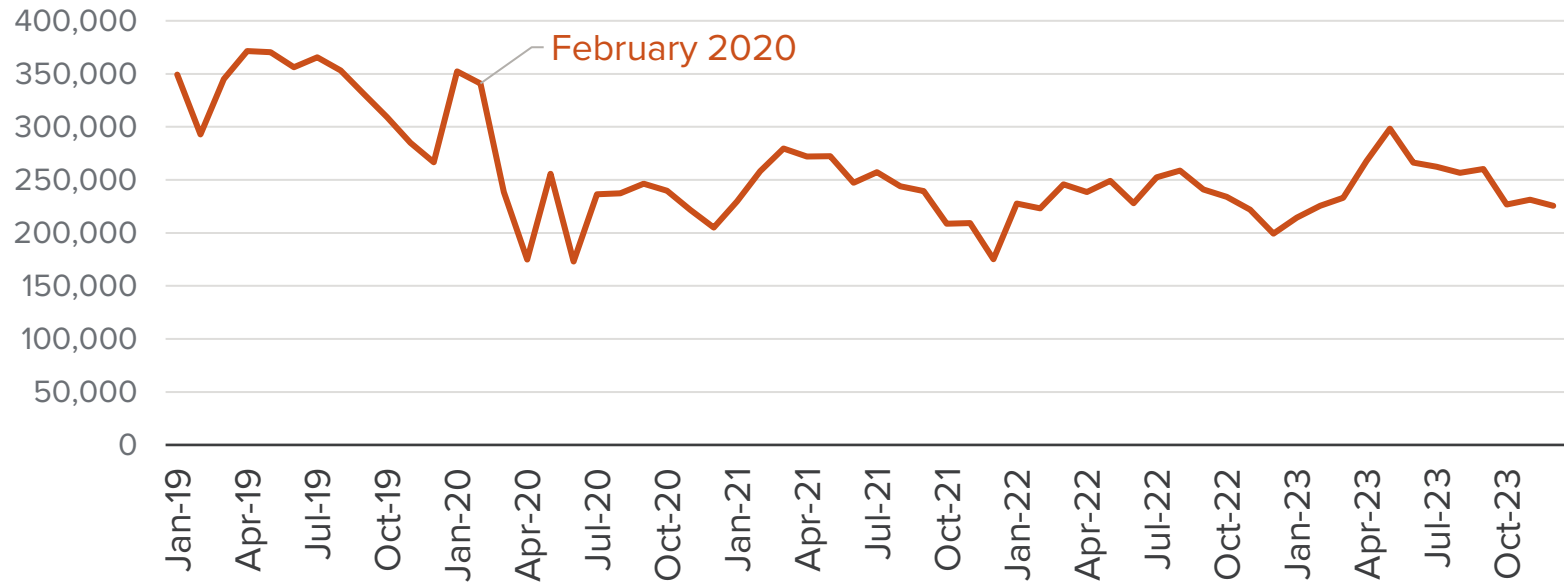
- The Racial and Identity Profiling Act (RIPA), enacted in 2015, is one of several recent reforms
- RIPA requires law enforcement to collect perceived demographic and other data for all pedestrian and traffic stops
 - Rolled out in waves starting in 2018 (to all agencies in 2023)
- The law also requires officer training on racial and cultural differences
- A RIPA board is tasked with working to eliminate racial and identity profiling

What can we learn from RIPA data about changes in racial disparities?

- Ours is the first research to examine whether racial disparities in law enforcement stops have decreased, as the law intended
 - Descriptive report aimed at monitoring and understanding possible changes in racial/ethnic disparities—not an evaluation of RIPA
- We analyzed 15.5 million stops from 2019 to 2023 by the state’s 15 largest law enforcement agencies
 - California Highway Patrol, eight police and six sheriff’s departments
 - Changes in likelihood of each racial/ethnic group being stopped and the experiences that follow
 - Changes in racial disparity in what happens during a stop and the likelihood of officer searches and other actions

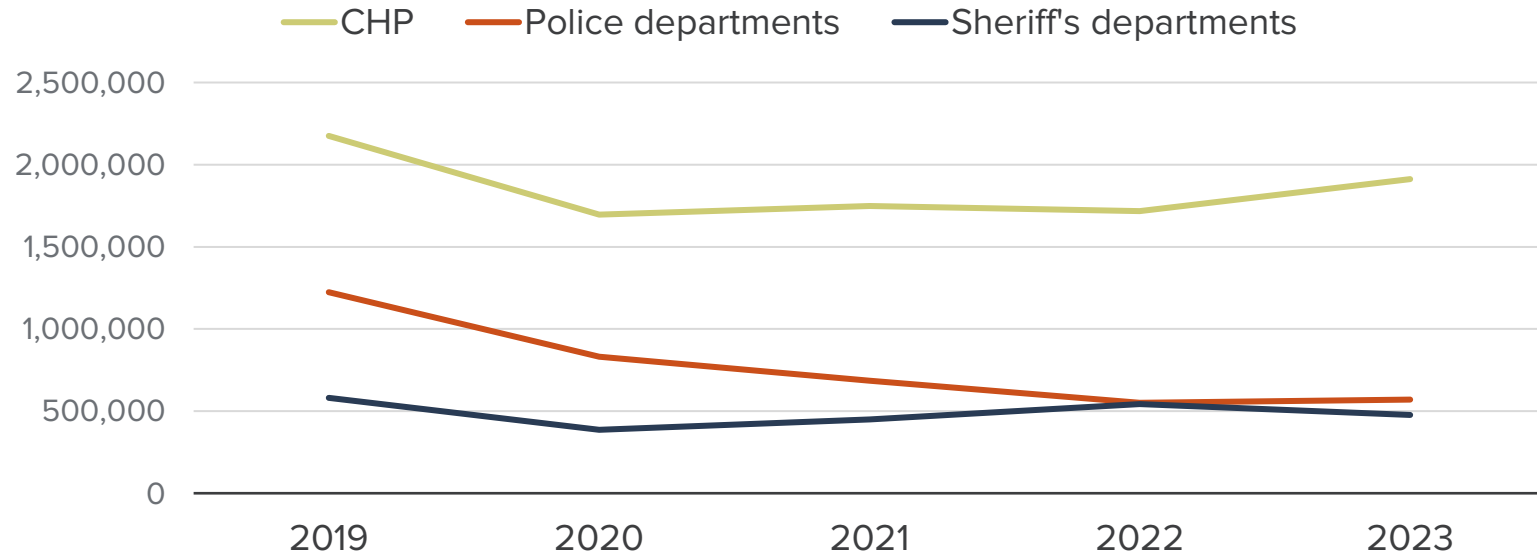
After plunging at the onset of COVID, stops remained 1 million below pre-pandemic levels

Monthly number of stops



The decrease in police department stops is especially notable

Annual number of reported stops

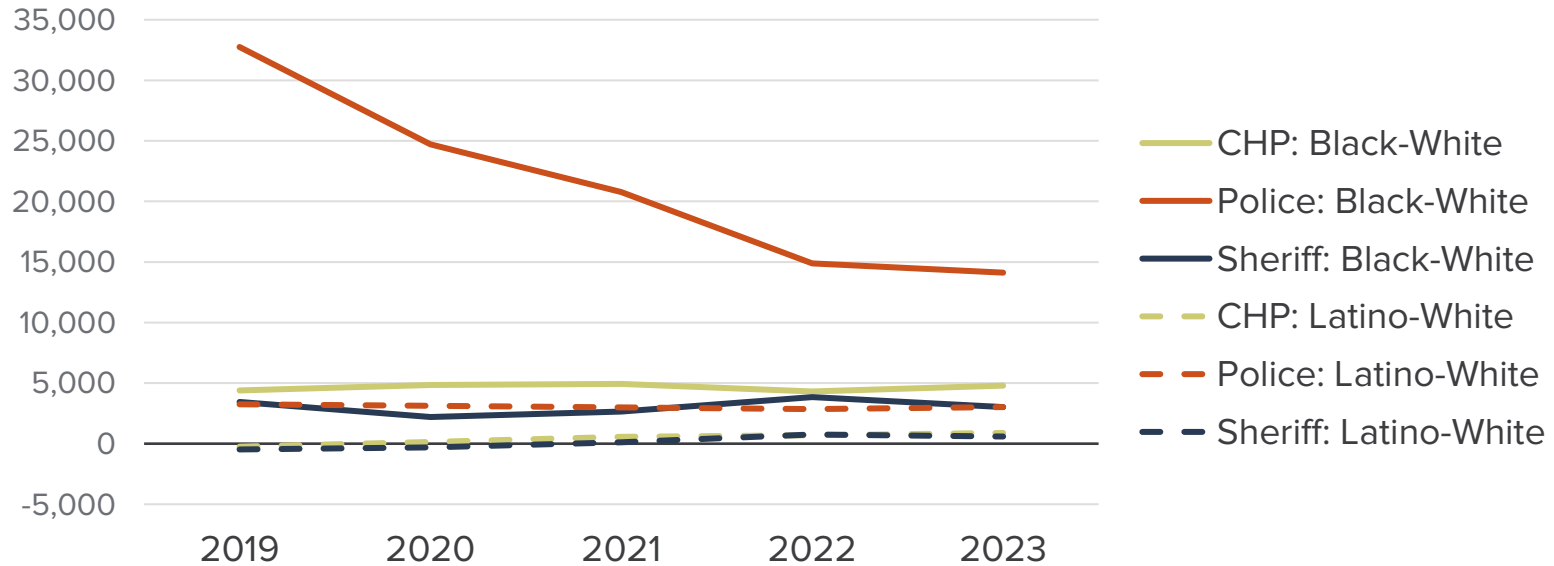


Notable changes in stop outcomes and experiences

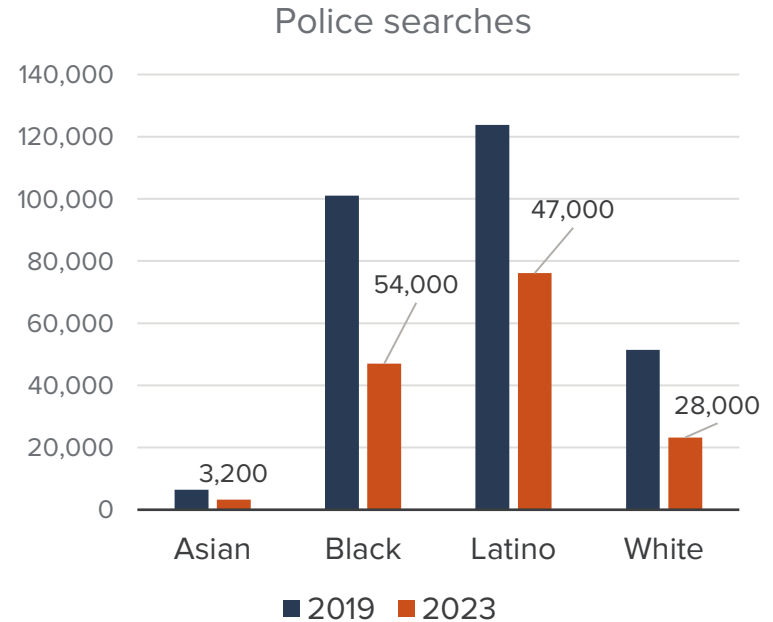
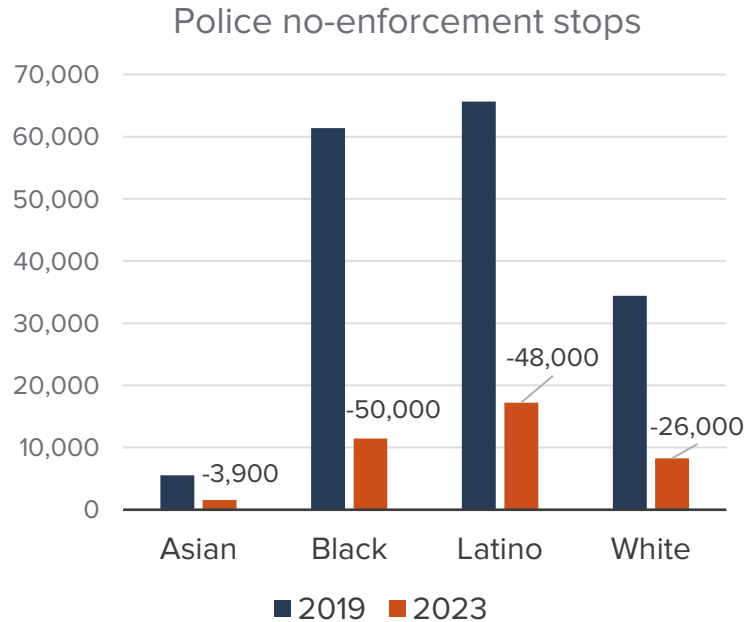
- Fewer stops led to 142,000 fewer searches for contraband
- The overall share of stops involving searches decreased
 - Search rate and discovery rate increased in stops made by police
- Share of stops with no enforcement dropped from 8% to 4%
 - Decrease in no-enforcement stops across agency types
 - Sharpest decreases are in police departments (14% to 7%)
- Fewer stops led to fewer intrusive experiences, but the *share* of stops involving such experiences increased

Black-white disparities in likelihood of being stopped by police officers narrowed noticeably

Stop rate gaps (per 100,00 residents)



The biggest drops in police stops leading to no enforcement and searches were of Black Californians

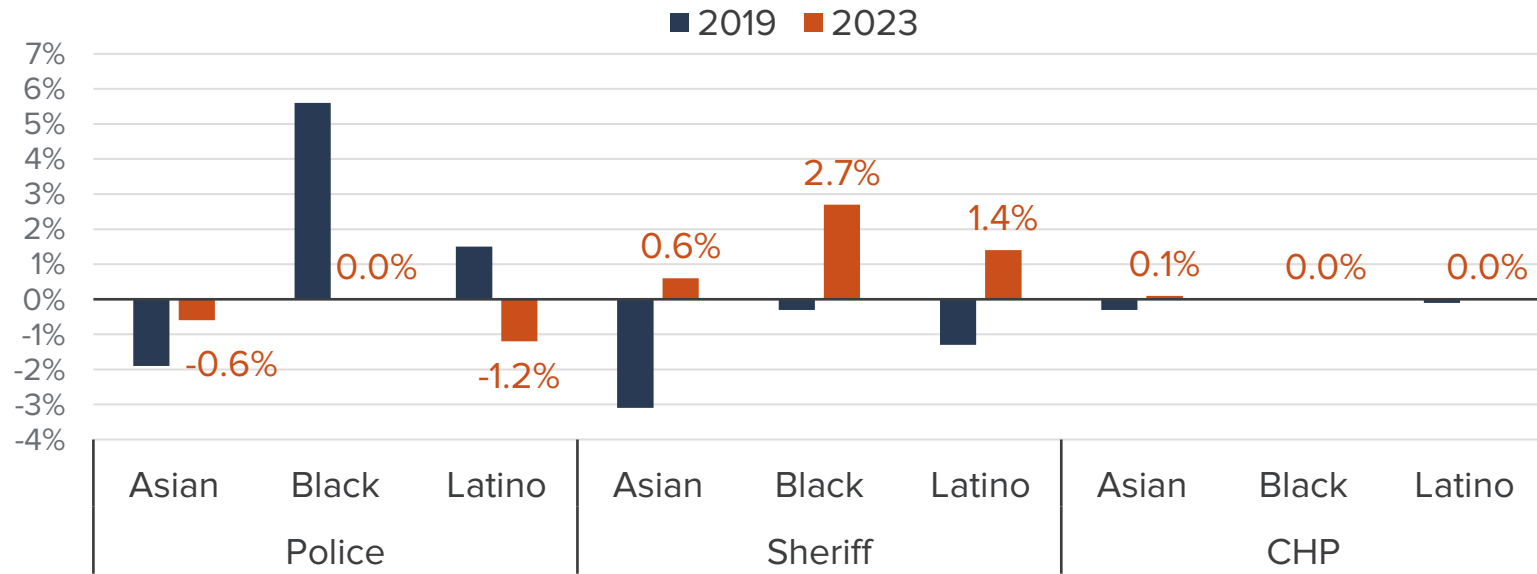


We examined changes in racial disparities in experiences and outcomes during stops

- To examine differences across race/ethnicity, we made statistical adjustments to account for key factors such as:
 - Other demographic characteristics, and disabilities
 - Context (including reasons for stops and calls for service)
 - Specific law enforcement agency and nearest city
- We analyze changes in stop outcomes separately by law enforcement agency groups
 - CHP, police departments, and sheriff's departments

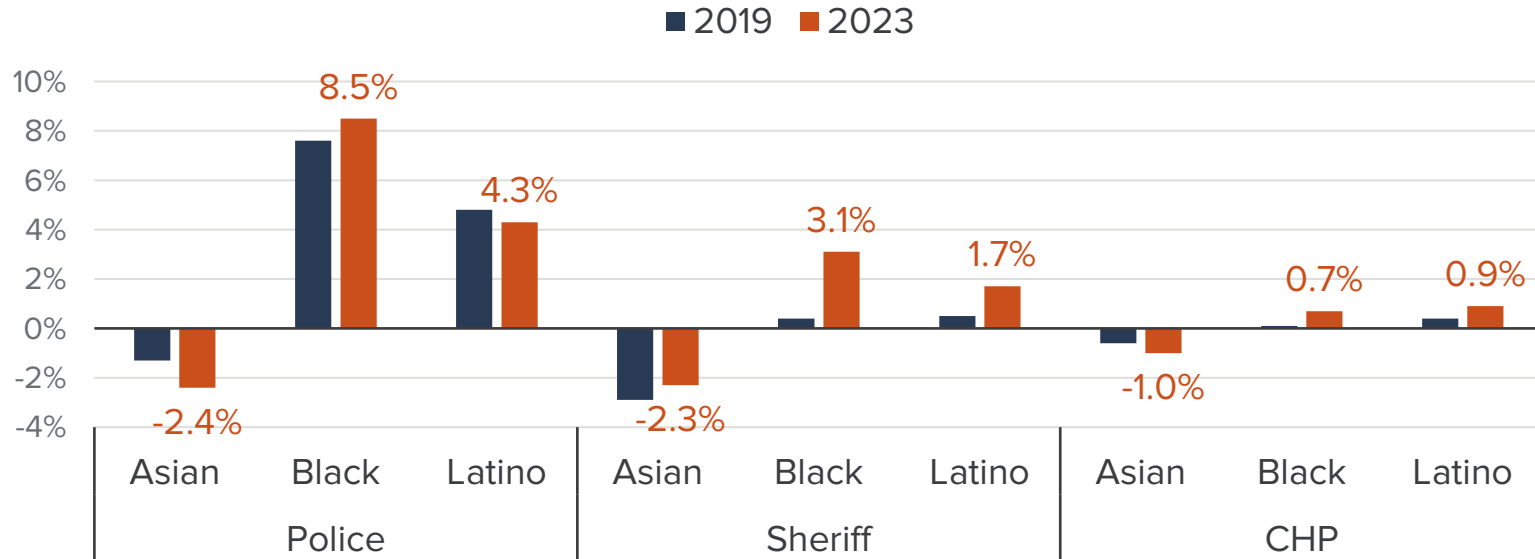
In police and CHP stops, Black and Latino Californians no longer more likely than whites to see no enforcement

No enforcement disparity (PoC-White)



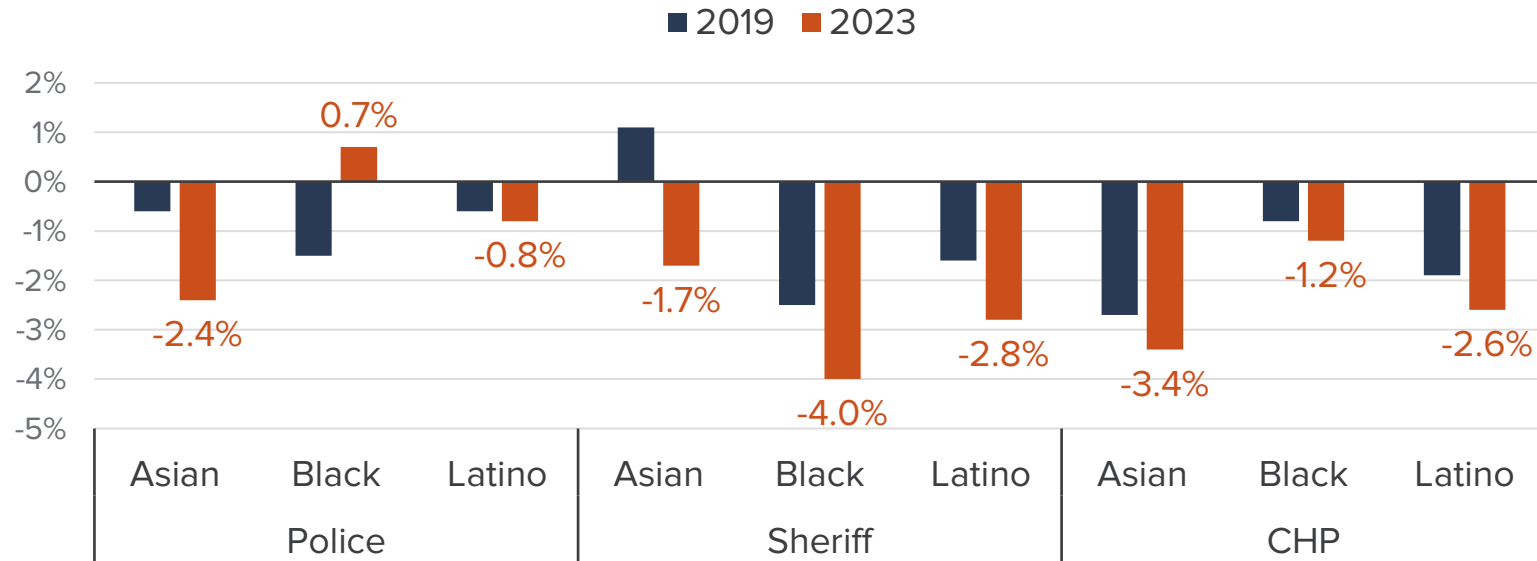
Black and Latino Californians still more likely to be searched than whites; Asians remain less so

Search rate disparity (PoC-White)



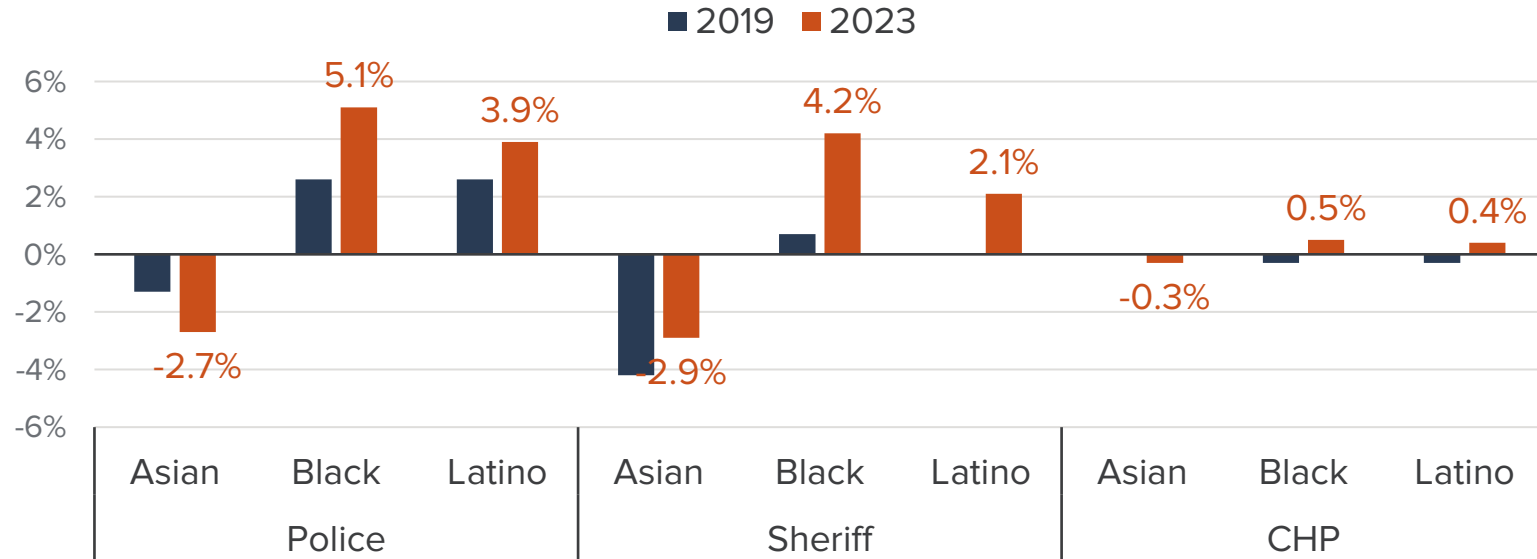
Police searches of Black individuals became more likely to yield contraband than searches of whites

Discovery rate disparity (PoC-White)



The likelihood of some intrusive experiences increased for Blacks and Latinos compared to whites

Curbside detention disparity (PoC-White)



Key takeaways

- Fewer stops means fewer intrusive and risky encounters
- Changes in stops by police departments are consistent with stops becoming more selective and productive
- Black-white disparities in the likelihood of being stopped by police departments decreased, but notable disparities remain
- Analysis does *not* reveal broad and meaningful decreases in racial disparities in experiences *during* stops
 - Important exception: likelihood of being stopped without any enforcement in the jurisdictions of the eight police departments

Recommendations

- Evaluate officer training aimed at reducing racial disparities and identify effective approaches
- Assess reasons for decreases in stops and possible unintended consequences
- Ensure the completeness of RIPA reporting and the fidelity of the data