

# Policing in California

November 4, 2021

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Supported with funding from Arnold Ventures



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# Our research on policing in California

- Racial disparities in criminal justice are a pressing issue for state and nation
  - Most notably between Black and white residents
- Policing at center of recent concerns, especially use of force
- Data can inform policy, identify strategies for safely reducing disparities
  - Examine differences across race/ethnicity in interactions with law enforcement
  - Assess limitations and examine existing data on police use of force and misconduct

# Racial Disparities in Law Enforcement Stops

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# CA has mandated that police collect stop data

- Racial and Identity Profiling Act (RIPA) stop data
  - All vehicle and pedestrian stops
    - A "stop" is any detention of a person by a police officer, or any officer interaction in which the officer conducts a search
- Close to 4 million stops conducted in 2019 by the state's 15 largest law enforcement agencies

# Data include demographic info and stop context

- Context includes
  - Reason for stop
  - Actions taken by the officer
  - Enforcement
- Demographic information is as *perceived* by the officer, and reported after the stop

# We examine disparities in various stop outcomes

- Likelihood of a search
- Likelihood of discovery of contraband or evidence (such as weapons, property, and drugs) in searches
- Likelihood of various levels of enforcement
- Likelihood of experiencing an intrusive action and/or use of force
- Focus on differences between Black and white Californians
  - Report includes analysis of racial disparities across additional groups

## Disparities may reflect bias and/or context

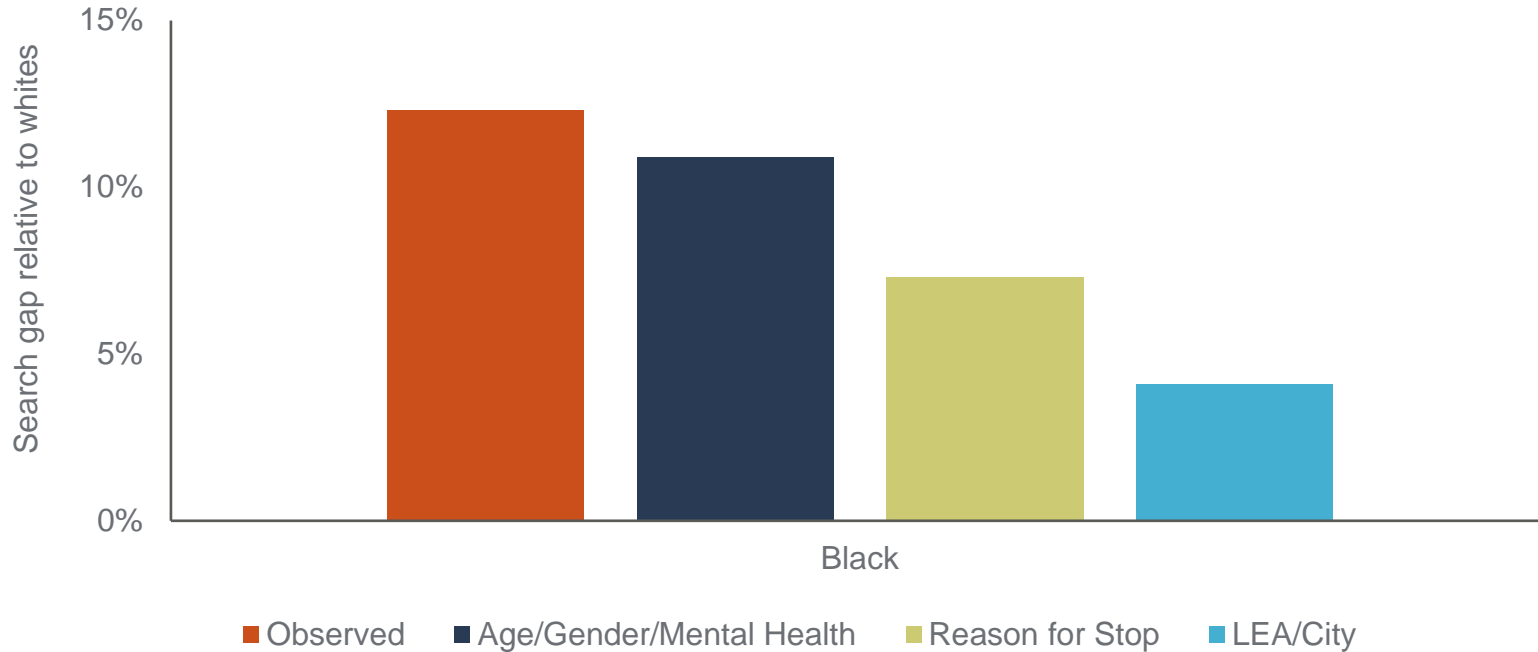
- Evidence of bias exists in many occupations and settings, including criminal justice and policing
- Other factors may also explain differences in stop experiences — some are included in the RIPA data
  - Contraband
  - Officer observed suspicious behavior (traffic vs. reasonable suspicion)
  - Individual has an outstanding warrant for an arrest
  - Differences across jurisdictions (policing and/or crime challenges)

# We seek an “apples to apples” comparison

- We adjust for differences in plausible factors and contexts across racial/ethnic groups
  - We estimate differences for an individual of given-age, gender, and context, adjusting for agency-level differences
  - As data do not capture all relevant factors and are reported by officers, estimates are not causal, and do not represent estimates of police bias



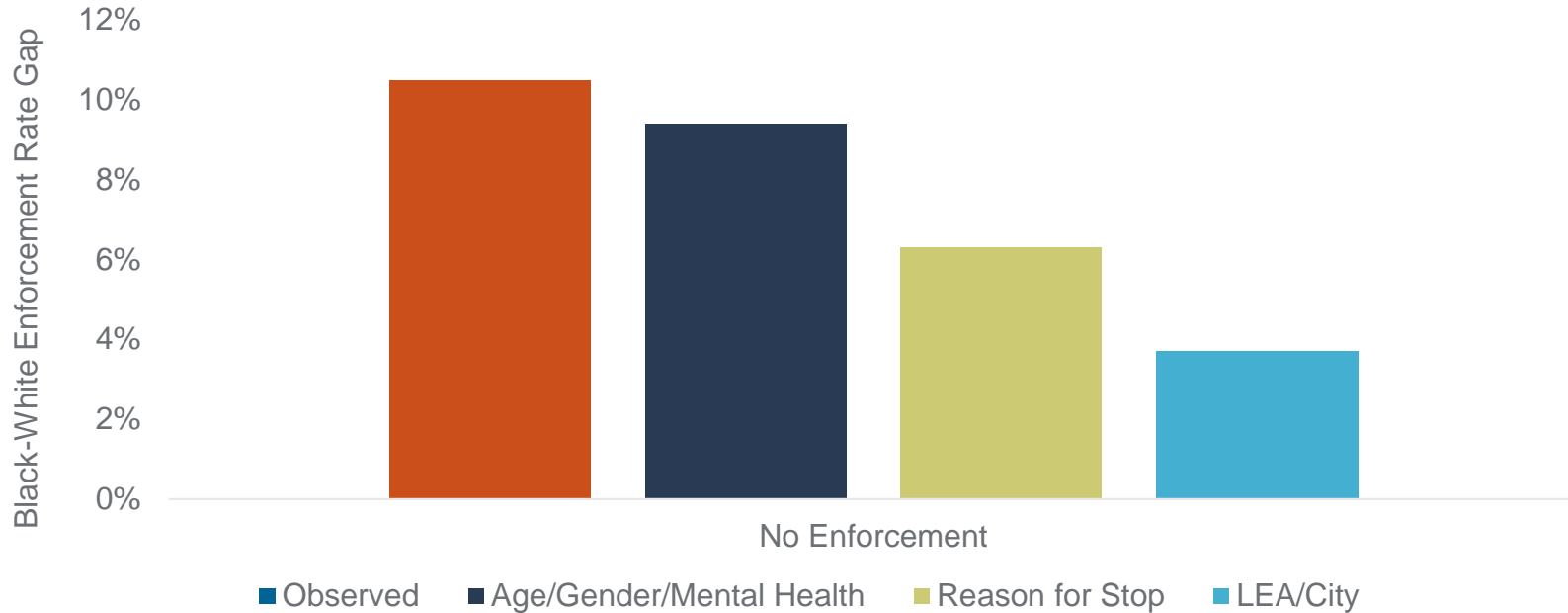
# Search disparities narrow when adjusting for personal traits and stop context



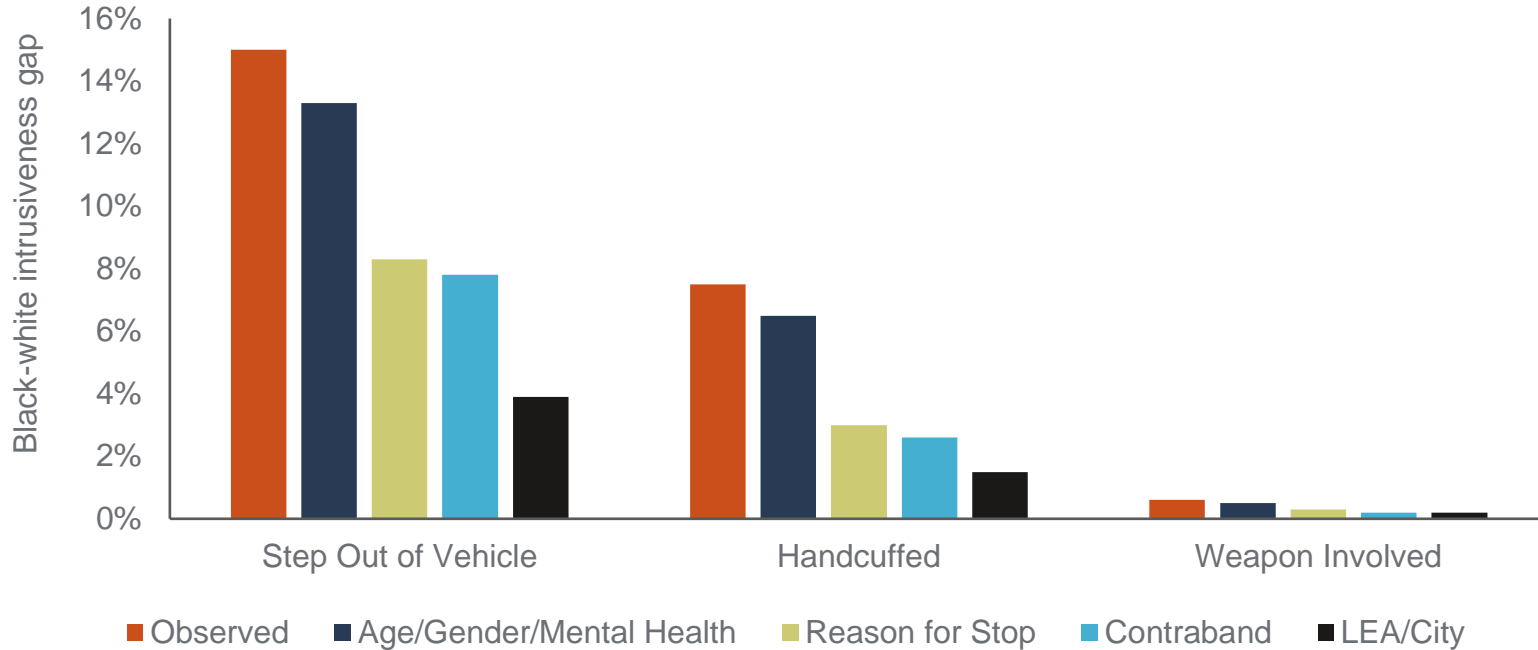
# Contraband/evidence found in fewer searches of Black individuals than white



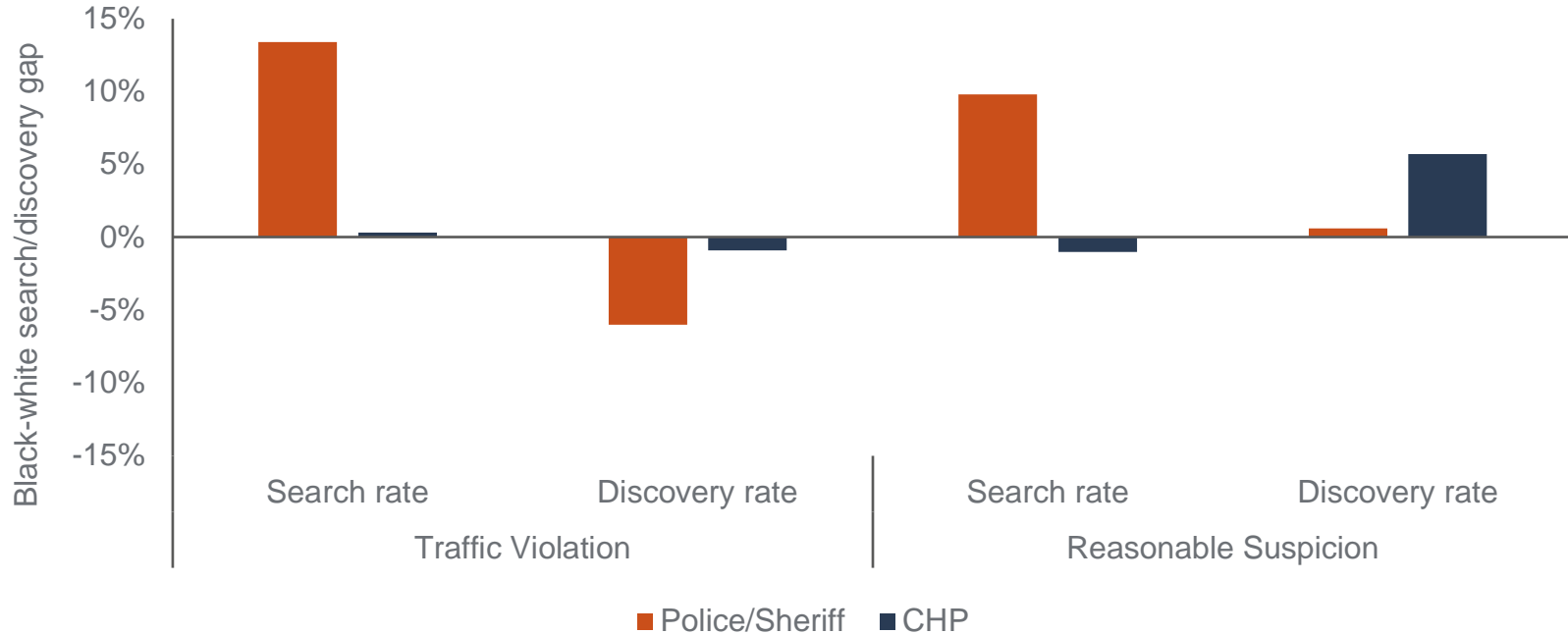
# Adjusting for context and enforcement rates across agencies reduces racial gaps



# Black Californians are more likely than white to experience greater intrusiveness



# Black-white gaps are greatest in traffic stops made by local law enforcement agencies



# Summary

- RIPA data show notable racial inequities in law enforcement interactions
- Police racial bias may contribute to inequities, but other factors are relevant
  - Context, type of agency, and jurisdiction
  - Still, inequities remain after adjusting for such factors
- Greatest disparities are in traffic stops made by police and sheriff's departments

# Conclusions

- Data-driven research can inform discussions of and efforts to reduce racial disparity in policing
  - Concerns historically voiced by communities of color about inequities
  - Some disparities may be driven by officer challenges and responsibilities when making stops

# Conclusions

- Lower discovery rates and higher shares of stops that do not lead to enforcement suggest a disproportionate share of “unproductive” stops of Blacks
  - To what extent can traffic stops, especially by local law enforcement, be safely reduced?
  - A closer examination could reduce risks and injuries to officers and citizens, and reduce racial disparities



## Notes on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.

# Police Use of Force and Misconduct in California

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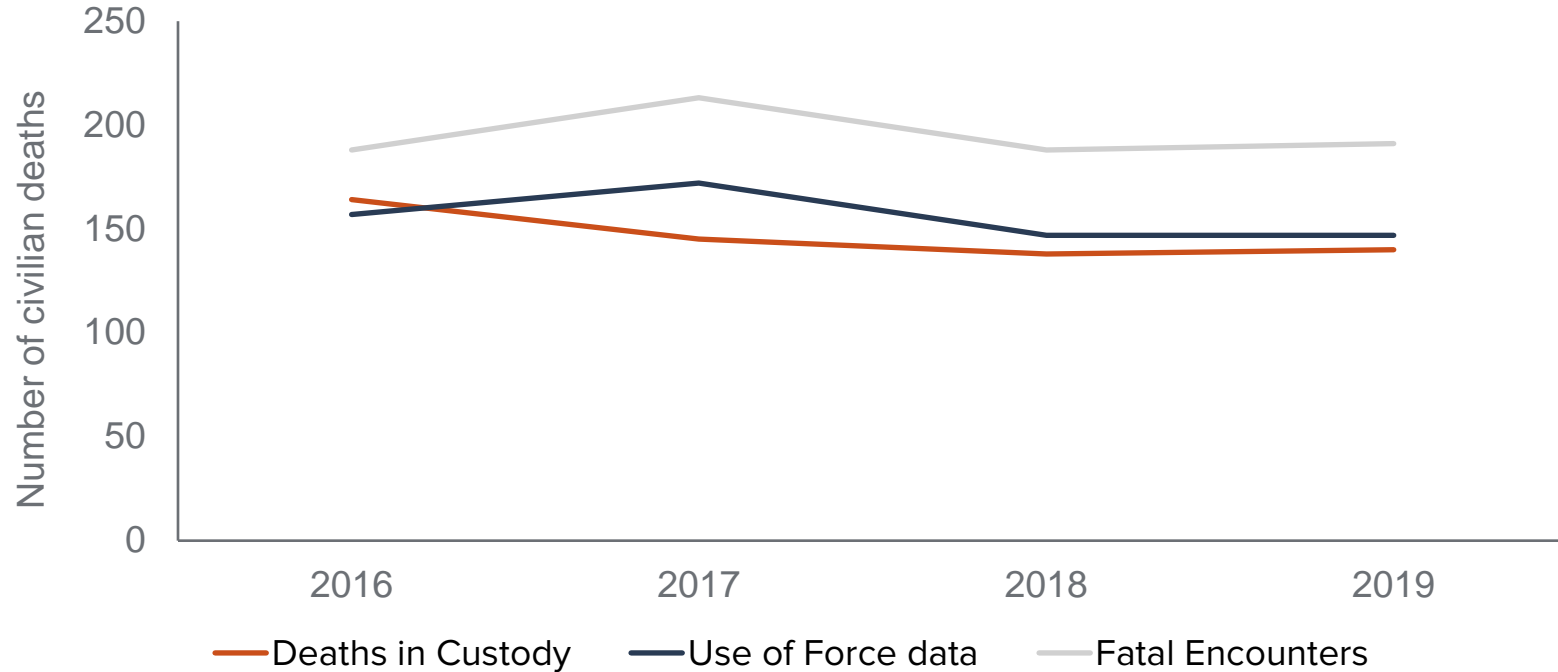
# Public scrutiny over police use of force and misconduct has grown

- Recent state reforms aim to improve transparency and accountability
- Use of force and misconduct differ, but both:
  - May affect trust in law enforcement
  - Should be documented and monitored
  - Are the focus of policy discussions
- What do the existing data tell us?
- How can data better inform policy and practice?

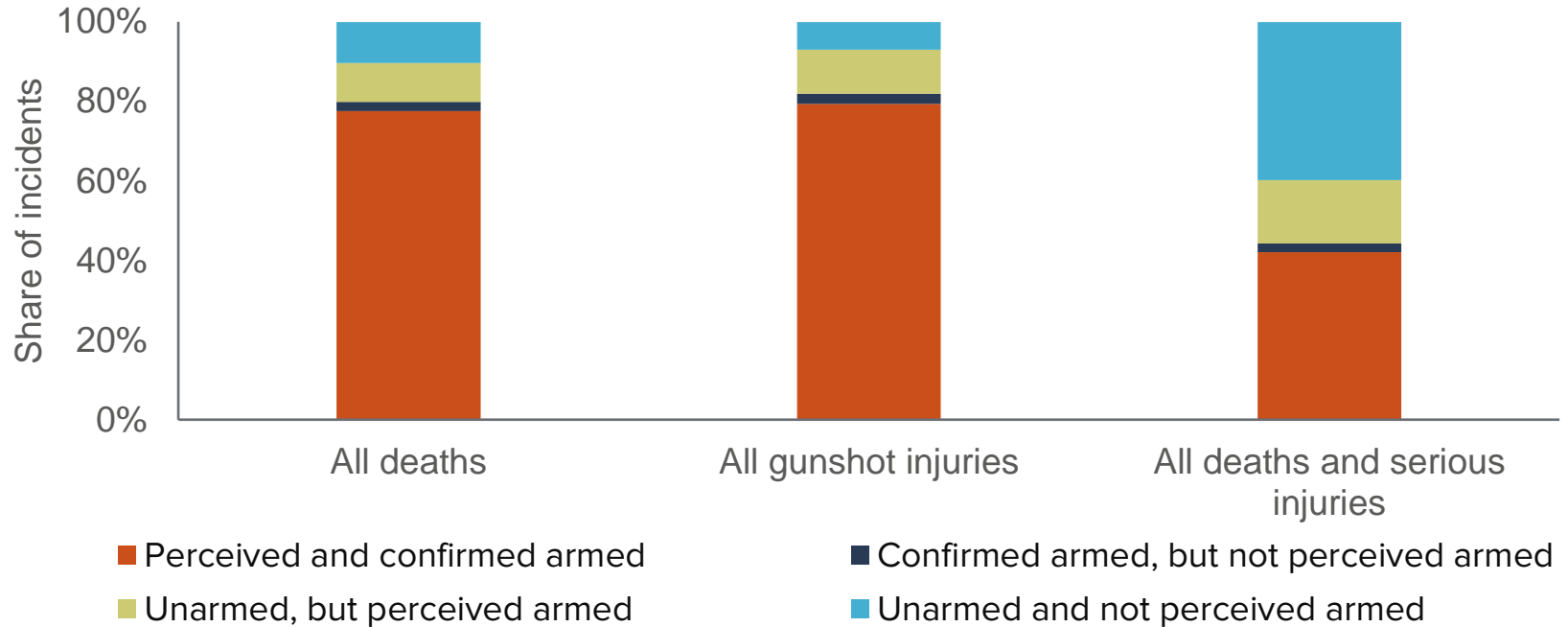
# Understanding the available data

- Civilian deaths from police interactions
  - CA Department of Justice (DOJ) Use of Force data
  - CA DOJ Deaths in Custody
  - Fatal Encounters (crowdsourced)
- Non-fatal, serious injuries
  - CA DOJ Use of Force data
  - Hospital discharge data
- Misconduct
  - Arrests of police officers

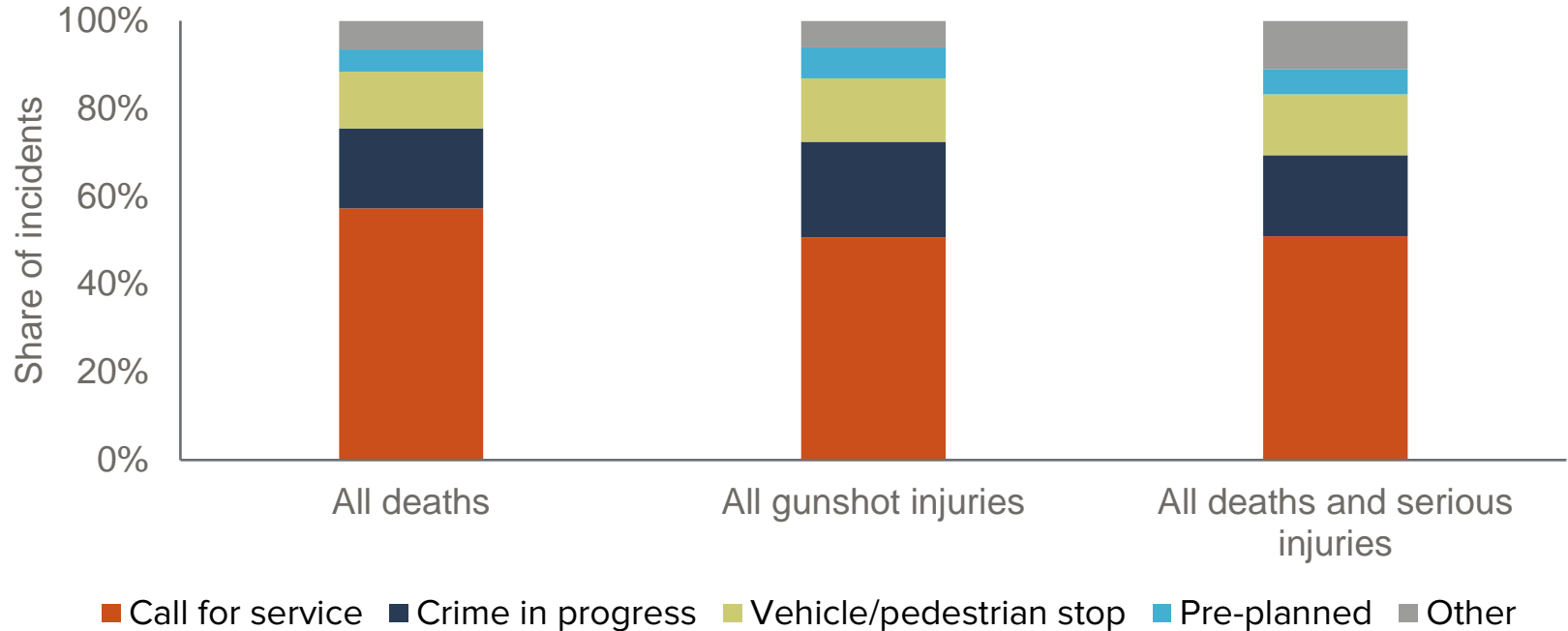
# About 195 civilians die in police encounters each year



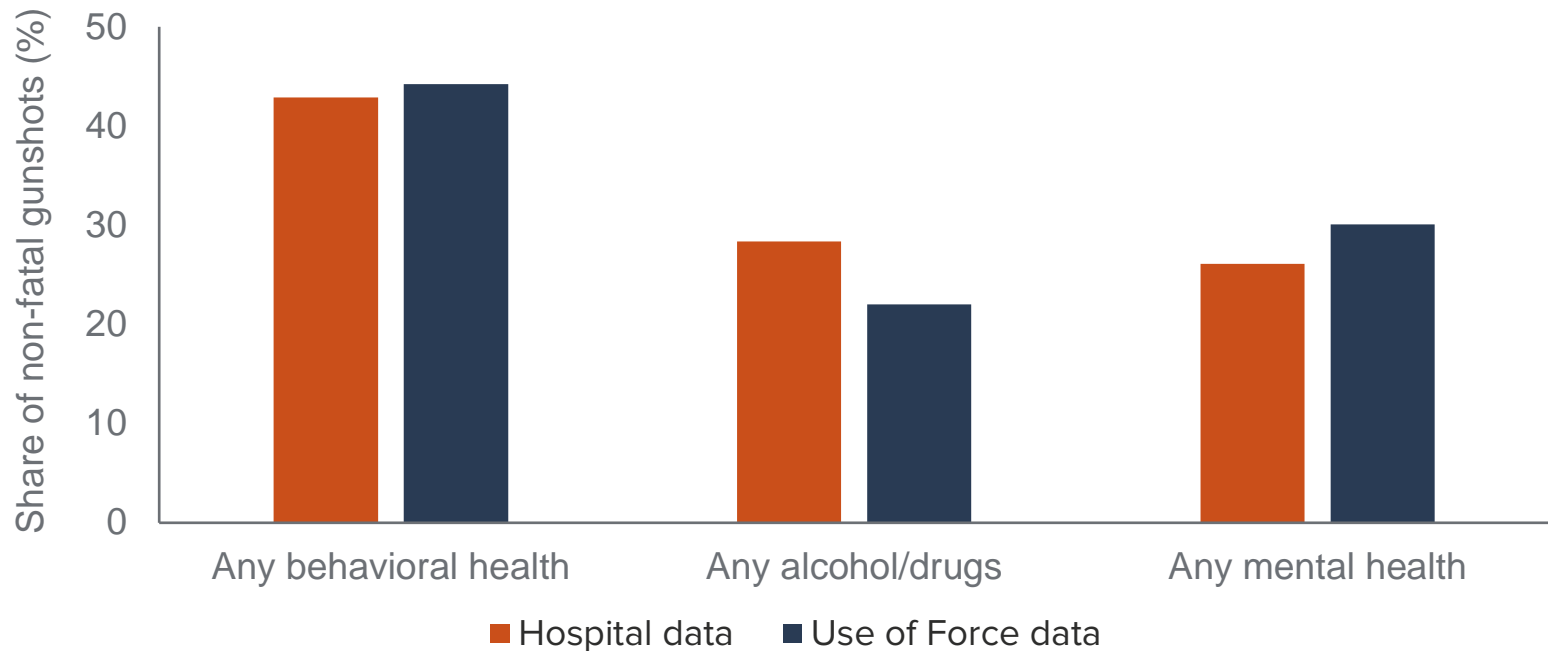
# In the vast majority of fatalities and gunshot injuries, civilian was armed



# Many serious use-of-force incidents start with a call for service

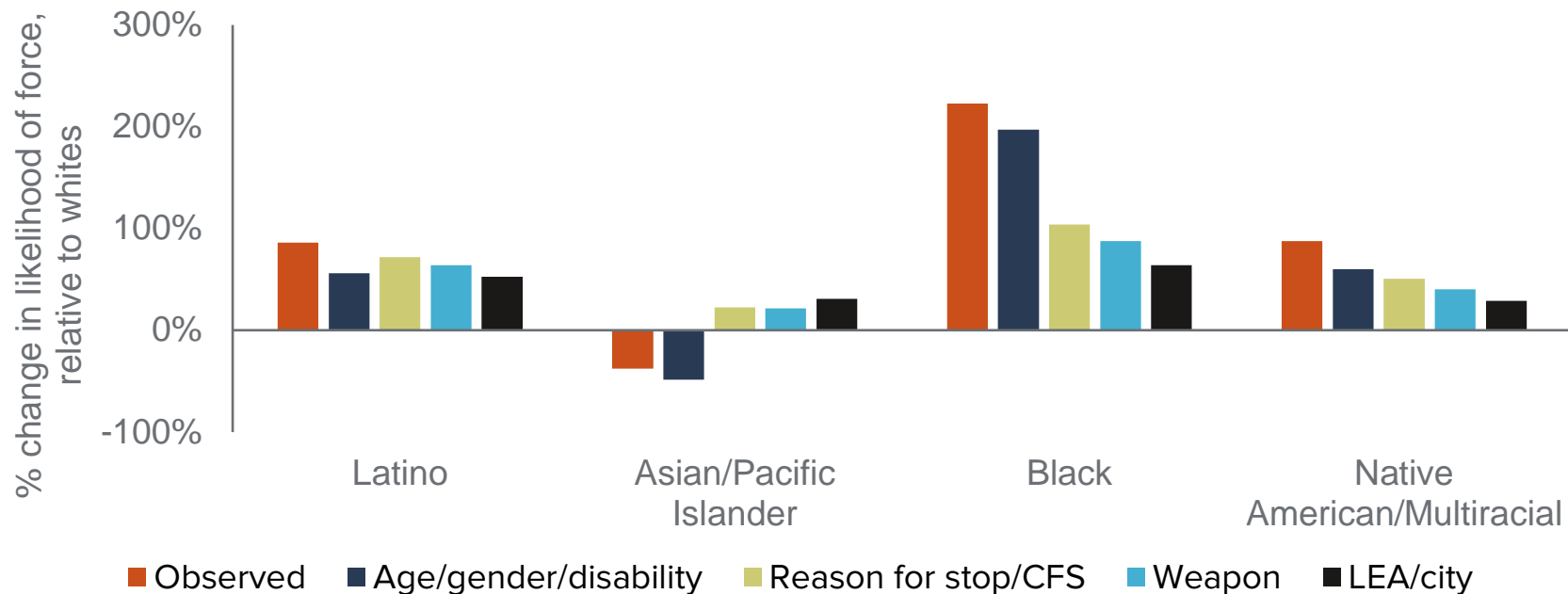


# Behavioral health issues are prevalent





# Black people are overrepresented in police use-of-force incidents



## Information on misconduct is more limited

- Civil, criminal, and employment protections for law enforcement officers
- Prior to SB 2, California was one of three states without a decertification process
- Crowdsourced data on arrests of police officer (2007–2016)
  - Limited to the most serious misconduct

# Assault is the most common reason officers are arrested in California

Total arrests	#	% of total arrests	Official-capacity arrests	#	% of OC arrests
Aggravated assault	85	10	Aggravated assault	36	10
Simple assault	76	9	Forcible rape	33	9
Driving under the influence	75	9	False report/false statement	30	8
Forcible rape	63	8	All other larceny	23	6
Forcible fondling	41	5	Obstructing justice	23	6

Note: Table shows total number and share of arrests of California police officers by top five offense types, from 2007 to 2016.

# Recommendations

- Improve existing data
  - Expand data to include vehicle-related serious injuries or deaths
- Develop public CA DOJ database on police misconduct
- Evaluate reforms for their effect on use of force, public safety, and racial disparities
  - Deadly force standard
  - Initiatives to reduce traffic stops or separate them from policing
  - Pilot programs for mental health

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