

Driving While Black and Brown:

The Case for Banning Racially Biased
Traffic Stops in Sacramento





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Based on 2023-2024 Sacramento PD RIPA Stop Data

ACLU ANALYTICS

MAY 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following report analyzes traffic stop data from 2023-2024 provided by the Sacramento Police Department (SPD). This data is collected pursuant to the Racial Identity and Profiling Act of 2015 (RIPA) which requires law enforcement agencies to report data to the Attorney General's Office on all vehicle and pedestrian stops; and citizen complaints alleging racial and identity profiling. RIPA further prohibits racial and identity profiling by law enforcement. The analysis reveals troubling racial disparities in SPD's traffic stops and searches.

Topline findings:

- Black people make up 12% of Sacramento residents but made up 33% of all SPD traffic stops. Black drivers were 3.1 times more likely to be stopped than white drivers;
- 70% of Black drivers were stopped for equipment or non-moving violations, meaning most Black drivers were stopped for reasons that have little to do with traffic safety;
- During these disproportionate equipment and non-moving stops, Black drivers were disproportionately searched, compared to white drivers;
- Black drivers were significantly overrepresented in traffic stops made for an alleged traffic violation unrelated to urgent traffic safety needs (e.g. window obstruction) and under-represented in traffic stops for an alleged urgent traffic safety violation (e.g. speeding);
- Black and Latino drivers were respectively 2.1 and 1.5 times more likely to be searched during a traffic stop than white drivers; and
- Across all searches, 90% resulted in no items seized.

The resulting analysis leads to the ACLU’s recommendation that Sacramento ban its police department from conducting these biased stops and searches.

TRAFFIC STOPS

The Sacramento Police Department made 46,076 traffic stops in 2023-2024 – 21,972 in 2023 and 24,104 in 2024 – according to data the department provided to the state’s Racial and Identity Profiling Advisory (RIPA) Board. ¹

Black drivers were vastly overrepresented in traffic stops from 2023-2024 compared to their share of the population in Sacramento, making up 33% of stops but only 12% of the city’s population. Black drivers were 3.1 times more likely to be stopped than white drivers, according to the ratio of stops to population.

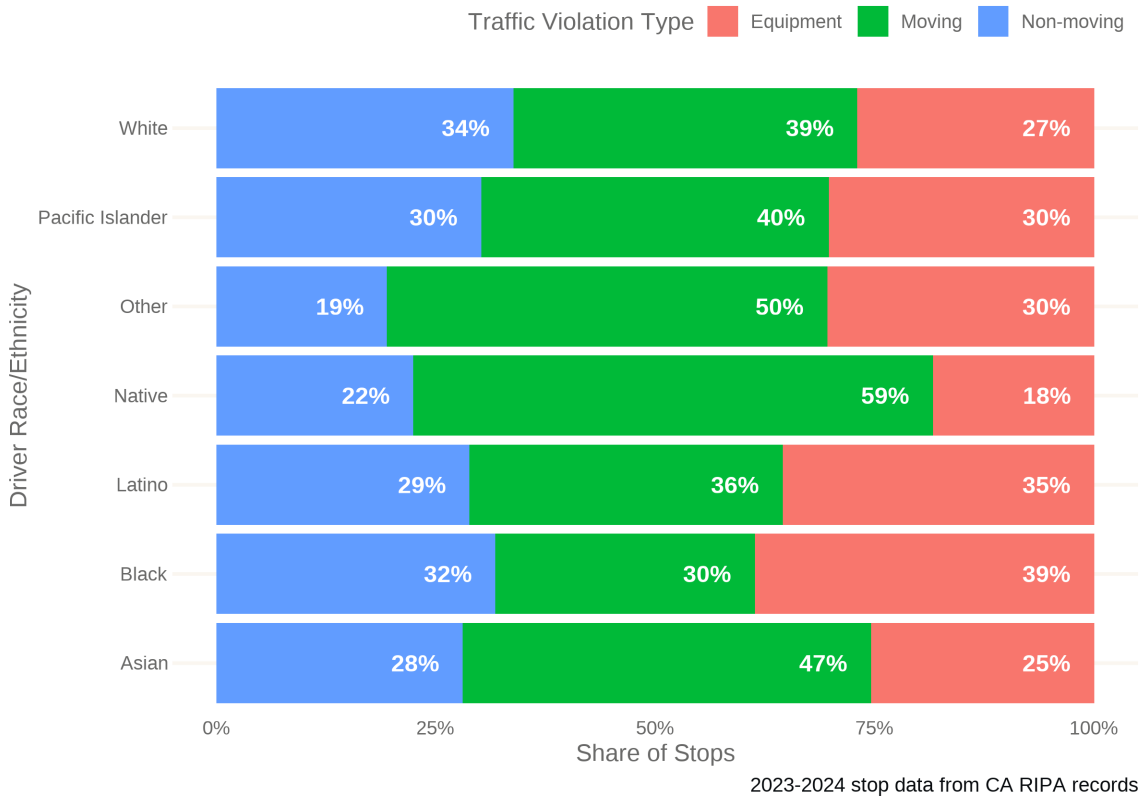
Share of all stops by drivers' race/ethnicity			
Race/ethnicity	# of stops	Share of stops	Share of population
Asian	2,845	6%	19%
Black	15,120	33%	12%
Latino	12,677	28%	29%
Native	49	0%	1%
Other	2,372	5%	5%
Pacific Islander	308	1%	2%
White	12,705	28%	32%

2023-2024 stop data from CA RIPA records, 2023 population data from Census Bureau

Moving violations accounted for only 30% of stops of Black drivers in Sacramento in 2023-2024. Thus, equipment and non-moving violations together accounted for over 70% of stops of Black drivers, even though these stops are less directly related to traffic safety. In other words, compared to all other groups, Black drivers had the lowest share of moving violations.

¹ The data does not provide a unique identifier for the driver stopped, so we cannot say how many unique drivers were stopped. All analysis herein is at the level of unique stops rather than unique drivers for this reason, which is why we compare stops by race to the population, taken from 2023 Census data (American Community Survey 5-year estimates for the City of Sacramento).

Black drivers had a lower share of moving violations

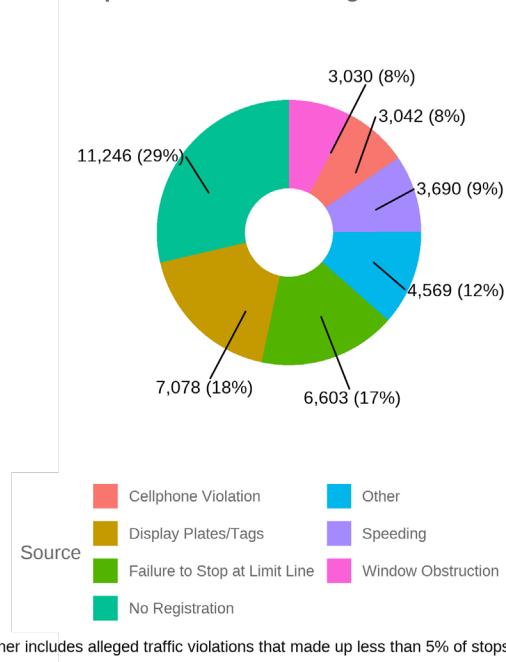


If a traffic violation was the alleged reason for a traffic stop, the data includes the Vehicle Code section(s) that the officer input as the reason for the traffic stop. Between the two available sets of codings for traffic violations from the CA Office of the Attorney General, we were able to identify the alleged Vehicle Code violations associated with 39,258 (85%) of the stops.²

Of the traffic violations we were able to identify by name, those accounting for the greatest number of stops are the following: No Registration for 11,246 (29%) stops, Display Plates/Tags for 7,078 (18%) stops, Failure to Stop at Limit Line for 6,603 (17%) stops, Other for 4,569 (12%) stops. The breakdown of stops by identifiable alleged traffic violation is shown in the plot below.

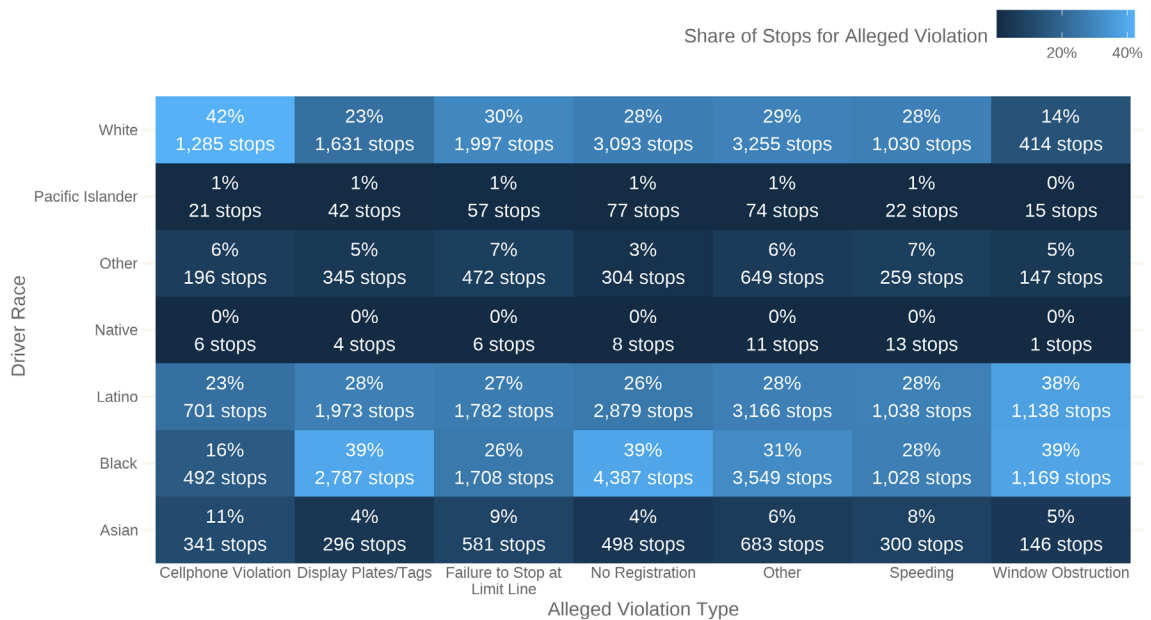
² See full list of codings on pages 45-50 of [the 2022 RIPA stop data appendix](#) and [the CIBRS codings](#) from the CA OAG.

Stops with identifiable alleged traffic violation



Black drivers were overrepresented in traffic violation allegations that were not directly related to an urgent traffic safety need: display plates/tags, no registration (i.e. expired or missing tags), and window obstruction. Meanwhile, Black drivers were under-represented in stops directly related to urgent traffic safety: cellphone violations, failure to stop at limit line, and speeding.

Black drivers were stopped more for non-safety than safety-related alleged violations



2023-2024 stop data from CA RIPA records

Latino drivers were overrepresented in stops for alleged window obstruction, one of the violations not directly related to urgent traffic safety. Latino drivers made up 38% of stops for alleged window obstruction despite comprising 28% of all stops in 2023-2024.

SEARCHES DURING TRAFFIC STOPS

In 2023-2024, the Sacramento Police Department made 5,399 searches during traffic stops. Black and Latino drivers were significantly more likely to be searched across stops. Among stopped drivers, Black drivers were 2.1 times more likely to be searched than a white driver, and Latino drivers were 1.5 times more likely to be searched than a white driver.

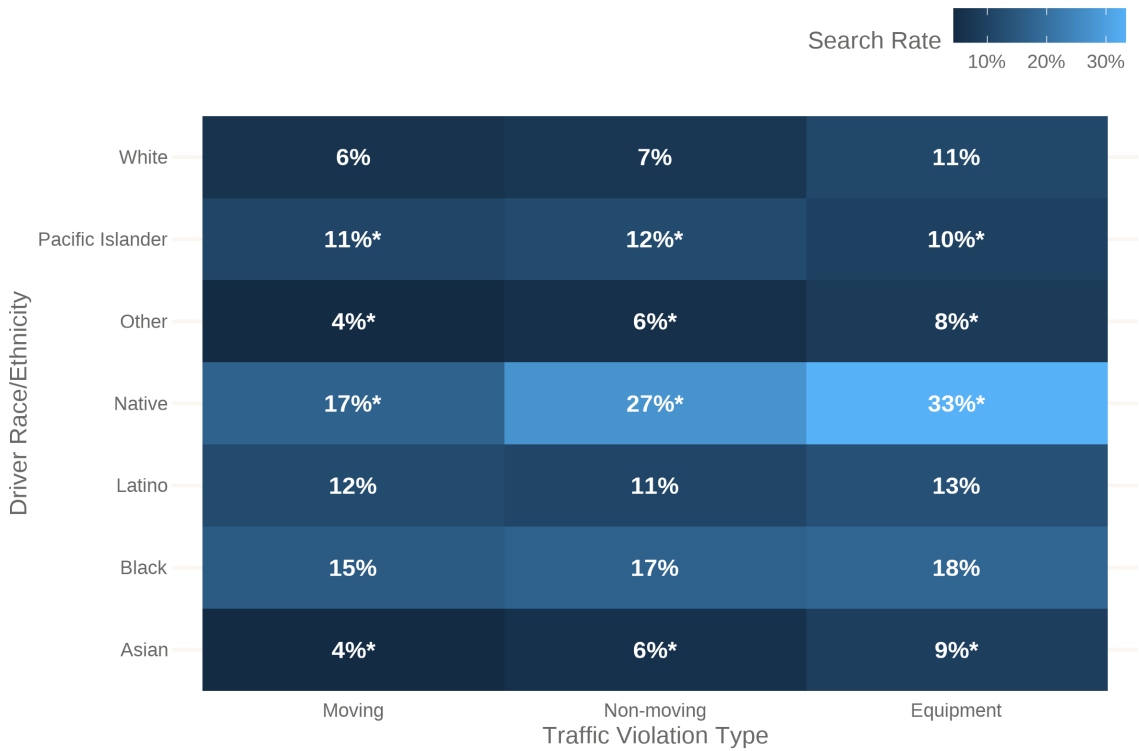
Search rate by stopped drivers' race/ethnicity		
Race/ethnicity	# of searches	Search rate
Asian*	168	6%
Black	2,534	17%
Latino	1,518	12%
Native*	11	22%
Other*	138	6%
Pacific Islander*	33	11%
White	997	8%

2023-2024 stop data from CA RIPA records

The * indicates the group comprises less than 5% of stops

By race, search rates were the most disparate for drivers searched due to non-moving violations and equipment violations; two categories where enforcement is most discretionary and least directly related to traffic safety. The search rate was 17% for Black drivers, compared to 11% for Latino and 7% for white for non-moving violations. For equipment violations, the search rate was 18% for Black drivers, compared to 13% for Latino and 11% for white drivers.

Search rates differed most for non-moving violations



2023-2024 stop data from CA RIPA records
 The * indicates the group comprises less than 5% of stops of that type

Of traffic stops where the alleged traffic violation was available in the data, the rates of searches and search outcomes are shown in the table below. Stops that were caused by alleged window obstruction violations (a reason not directly related to traffic safety) had the highest search rate and also the highest rate of no result (meaning no resulting citation, warning, or arrest).

Searches and outcomes by alleged traffic violation type

	Drugs Seized Rate Of Searches	Firearm Seized Rate Of Searches	No Result Rate Of Searches	No Result Rate Of Stops	Search Rate
Window Obstruction (n=3,030)	5.0%	3.3%	46.8%	37.0%	21.8%
Speeding (n=3,690)	3.4%	2.7%	40.9%	23.7%	8.1%
Other (n=11,387)	6.4%	1.8%	19.6%	27.9%	14.6%
No Registration (n=11,246)	5.7%	1.6%	36.6%	31.7%	12.4%
Failure to Stop at Limit Line (n=6,603)	6.3%	2.0%	32.1%	23.8%	6.9%
Display Plates/Tags (n=7,078)	5.7%	0.9%	35.6%	35.2%	12.8%
Cellphone Violation (n=3,042)	0.0%	0.0%	17.6%	10.0%	0.6%

Limited to stops where the alleged traffic violation made up at least 5% of stops

The most common alleged violation for a traffic stop in 2023-2024 was expired or missing registration. For “No Registration,” 11,246 people were stopped, and 3,565 people were subjected to a stop without ultimately receiving any warning, citation, or arrest. Of those 11,246 people stopped for “No Registration” in this two year period, only 79 stops resulted in drugs seized and 22 resulted in a firearm seized.

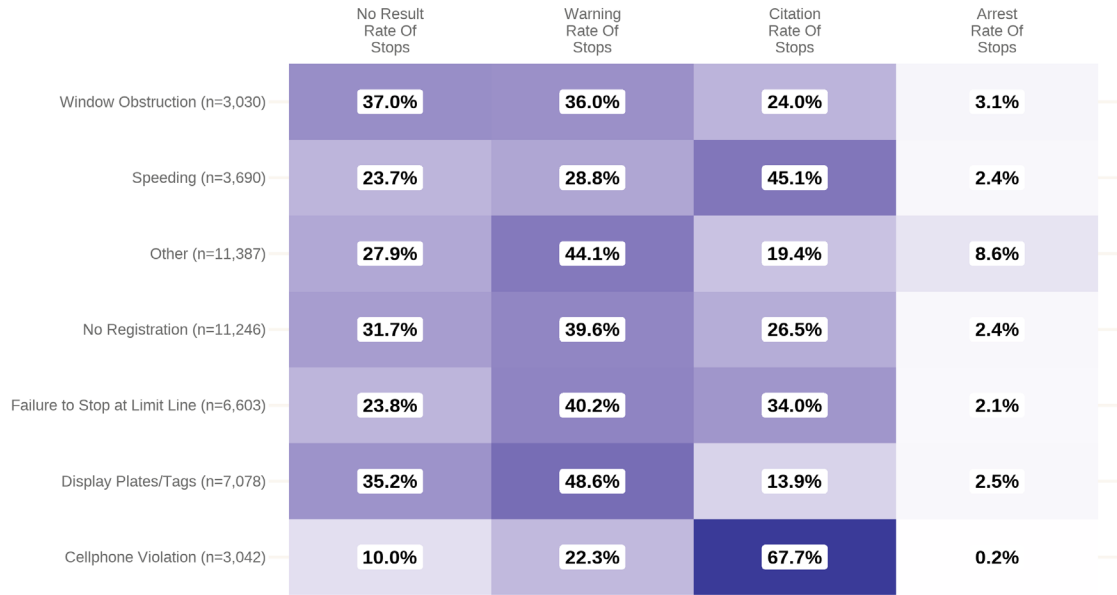
Searches and outcomes by alleged traffic violation type

	People Stopped	People Searched	Stops With No Resulting Warning, Citation, or Arrest	Searches With Drugs Seized	Searches With Firearm Seized
Window Obstruction	3,030	662	1,120	33	22
Speeding	3,690	298	875	10	8
Other	11,387	1,662	3,173	107	30
No Registration	11,246	1,393	3,565	79	22
Failure to Stop at Limit Line	6,603	458	1,571	29	9
Display Plates/Tags	7,078	909	2,491	52	8
Cellphone Violation	3,042	17	305	0	0

Limited to stops where the alleged traffic violation made up at least 5% of stops

A significant share of stops did not result in a warning, citation, or arrest. More than 1 in 3 stops resulted in no warning, citation, or arrest for stops made for alleged window obstruction and display plates/tags. Meanwhile, stops for alleged reasons more directly related to traffic safety like speeding and cellphone violations had much higher rates of resulting warnings and citations.

Stops and outcomes by alleged traffic violation type



Limited to stops where the alleged traffic violation made up at least 5% of stops

SEIZURE OF PROPERTY/CONTRABAND

In 2023-2024, 90% of all searches conducted by SPD during a traffic stop resulted in no items seized. Across all racial groups, the share of searches with no items seized was on par with the share of the searched population.

Share of no items seized by searched drivers' race/ethnicity		
Race/ethnicity	Share of no items seized	Share of searched population
Asian*	3%	3%
Black	47%	47%
Latino	28%	28%
Native*	0%	0%
Other*	3%	3%
Pacific Islander*	1%	1%
White	18%	18%

2023-2024 stop data from CA RIPA records

The * indicates the group comprises less than 5% of stops

The rate of searches with no items seized was not significantly different for Black, Latino, and white drivers, despite Black and Latino drivers being searched at much higher rates.

Rate of no items seized by searched drivers' race/ethnicity			
Race/ethnicity	# of searches	# of no items seized	Rate of no items seized
Asian*	168	153	91%
Black	2,534	2,286	90%
Latino	1,518	1,365	90%
Native*	11	7	64%
Other*	138	123	89%
Pacific Islander*	33	30	91%
White	997	876	88%

2023-2024 stop data from CA RIPA records

The * indicates the group comprises less than 5% of stops

STOP RESULTS

Across all traffic stops in Sacramento in 2023-2024, 28% of stops had “no result”, meaning they did not result in a warning, citation, or arrest. Moreover, 32% of searches during traffic stops had no result. Black drivers were overrepresented in no result stops compared to their share of stopped drivers, while white drivers were underrepresented.

Share of no-result stops by stopped drivers' race/ethnicity		
Race/ethnicity	Share of no-result stops	Share of stopped population
Asian	5%	6%
Black	37%	33%
Latino	27%	28%
Native*	0%	0%
Other	5%	5%
Pacific Islander*	1%	1%
White	25%	28%

2023-2024 stop data from CA RIPA records

The * indicates the group comprises less than 5% of stops

The rate of stops that did not result in a warning, citation, or arrest (aka “no result stops”) was the highest for Black drivers at 32% and elevated for Latino drivers (28%) and drivers of another race (28%).

Rate of no-result stops by stopped drivers' race/ethnicity			
Race/ethnicity	# of stops	# of no-result stops	Rate of no-result stops
Asian	2,845	671	24%
Black	15,120	4,788	32%
Latino	12,677	3,521	28%
Native*	49	13	27%
Other	2,372	671	28%
Pacific Islander*	308	96	31%
White	12,705	3,340	26%

Rate of no-result stops by stopped drivers' race/ethnicity			
Race/ethnicity	# of stops	# of no-result stops	Rate of no-result stops
2023-2024 stop data from CA RIPA records			
The * indicates the group comprises less than 5% of stops			

The prevalence and distribution of warnings did not differ significantly by the driver's race/ethnicity.

White drivers had the highest share of citations relative to their share of stopped population. Black drivers were underrepresented in citations relative to their share of the stopped population.

Share of citations by stopped drivers' race/ethnicity		
Race/ethnicity	Share of citations	Share of stopped population
Asian	8%	6%
Black	25%	33%
Latino	28%	28%
Native*	0%	0%
Other*	5%	5%
Pacific Islander*	1%	1%
White	33%	28%

2023-2024 stop data from CA RIPA records
The * indicates the group comprises less than 5% of stops

Black drivers had the lowest rate of citations despite being stopped and searched more than all other racial groups by the Sacramento Police Department.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

These findings are damning and paint a clear picture that the Sacramento Police Department is using minor traffic violations as pretext to stop and search Black and Latino drivers. **Sacramento should adopt a policy that prohibits its police department from conducting many of the above-listed stops and searches due to their demonstrated use as a pretext to stop and search Black and Brown drivers for reasons unrelated to the stop and provide little to no traffic safety benefits.**

These disparate traffic stops result in disparate searches that have very little likelihood of finding contraband and low levels resulting action (e.g. citation or arrest). This pattern and practice of racially disproportionate stops and searches by SPD is a violation of civil rights laws and the core constitutional principle of equal protection under the law. It is also a wasteful use of City resources and police officers' time. These biased traffic stops and searches do not directly improve traffic safety and continue the shameful legacy of racial profiling and its deadly consequences in the United States.

ACLU

Northern California

