

# Racial Disparities in Stops by the Metropolitan Police Department: 2020 Data Update

ACLU Analytics & ACLU of the District of Columbia

This is an update to the June 16, 2020 report published by the ACLU-DC and ACLU Analytics, *Racial Disparities in Stops by the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department*. The original report<sup>1</sup> analyzed five months of data collected pursuant to the Neighborhood Engagement Achieves Results (NEAR) Act on stops conducted by the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) from July 22, 2019 to December 31, 2019. This update analyzes the stops conducted by MPD between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020.

The 2020 stops data show that MPD continues to disproportionately stop and search Black people in the District. The stark racial disparities present in the 2019 stops data **have not changed**. The 2020 data, like the 2019 data, support community members' repeated assertions that MPD's stop practices unfairly overpolice the Black community and require serious scrutiny and structural change.

## Background

Under the NEAR Act, MPD is required to keep extensive records on every stop its officers conduct. For over three years, MPD refused to implement this statute until a court ordered compliance as a result of a lawsuit by the ACLU-DC, Stop Police Terror Project D.C., and Black Lives Matter D.C. MPD then published data covering stops conducted from July 22, 2019 to December 31, 2019. In our June 16, 2020 report, ACLU-DC and ACLU Analytics analyzed the data from this five-month period and concluded that MPD disproportionately stopped and searched Black people.

In March 2021, following another lawsuit by the ACLU-DC over MPD's refusal to disclose any stop data for 2020, MPD finally published data collected pursuant to the NEAR Act for stops conducted from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020. This update analyzes these records—80,698 total stops made in 12 months.<sup>2</sup> By way of comparison, our analysis of the

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<sup>1</sup> Available at [https://www.acludc.org/sites/default/files/2020\\_06\\_15\\_aclu\\_stops\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://www.acludc.org/sites/default/files/2020_06_15_aclu_stops_report_final.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> At the outset, we note that MPD reported a total of 81,020 total stops. We removed all 322 “harbor” stops from this analysis and analyzed the remaining 80,698 stops. Harbor stops, which refer to stops made in D.C. waterways, composed less than half of a percent of the total stops and were not directly comparable with other stops. All harbor stops had as their justification “boating violation” or “safety inspection,” categories not cited as the reasons for any other category of stop. Moreover, harbor stops did not generate any tickets, warnings, or arrests. Nor did they lead to any searches of individual's persons or property or to seizures of any items. The unique nature of these stops led us to exclude them. We also removed harbor stops from our analysis of the 2019 data.

five-month period in 2019 covered 62,611 total stops. It should be noted that during the COVID-19 public health emergency, the average number of stops per week decreased.

**What the 2020 Data Show: More of the Same**

**I. MPD continues to disproportionately stop and search Black people.**

The findings in this update are clear: MPD continues to disproportionately stop and search Black people in the District. In 2020, Black people made up roughly 46% of the D.C. population, but 74.6% of the people stopped. This is a slight increase from our original report, which found that between July 22, 2019 and December 31, 2019, Black people composed 46.5% of the D.C. population but 72% of the people stopped.

Meanwhile, in 2020, non-Hispanic white people made up only 12.5% of stops despite composing roughly 36.6% of D.C.’s population. This is on par with the 2019 data, which showed that non-Hispanic white people made up only 14.1% of stops despite composing roughly 37.1% of the population.

**Table 1: Black People Are Still Disproportionately Stopped and Searched by MPD.**

<i>Category</i>	<i>2019 Data</i>	<i>2020 Data</i>	<i>Difference</i>
Stops Overall	72% Black	74.6% Black	+2.6%
Stops that led to no warning, ticket, or arrest	86.1% Black	86.5% Black	+0.4%
Searches that led to no warning, ticket, or arrest	91.1% Black	90.7% Black	-0.4%

The data further suggest that the link between stops and race is more than correlational. 86.5% of the stops, and 90.7% of the searches, that resulted in no warning, ticket, or arrest, were of Black people. These figures are virtually identical to the 2019 figures—86.1% and 91.1%, respectively. These stops and searches are the ones mostly likely to arise from innocent conduct, and it is therefore deeply disturbing that Black people, once again, almost certainly make up the vast majority of individuals subjected to stops or searches despite not violating the law.

The following tables break down these stops by ethnicity.

**Table 2: Black People Experienced the Majority of Stops that Led to No Ticket, Warning, or Arrest.**

<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>2019 Data</i>	<i>2020 Data</i>	<i>Difference</i>
	% of Stops	% of Stops	
Black	86.1%	86.5%	+0.4%
Hispanic	5.7%	5.3%	-0.4%
White	5.5%	5.6%	+0.1%
Asian	0.5%	0.4%	-0.1%
Multiple	0.2%	0.1%	-0.1%
Other/Unknown	2.0%	2.1%	+0.1%

**Table 3: Black People Experienced the Majority of Stops that Led to No Ticket, Warning, or Arrest in Which the Individual Was Searched.**

<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>2019 Data</i>	<i>2020 Data</i>	<i>Difference</i>
	% of Stops	% of Stops	
Black	91.1%	90.7%	-0.4%
Hispanic	4.5%	4.4%	-0.1%
White	2.4%	2.8%	+0.4%
Asian	0.3%	0.2%	-0.1%
Multiple	0.2%	0.1%	-0.1%
Other/Unknown	1.5%	1.8%	+0.3%

Furthermore, the 2020 data continue to show that Black people are disproportionately likely to be stopped in almost every police district in D.C. The only exception is the Sixth District, where Black people were roughly 93% of the people stopped, but also roughly 93% of the population. Everywhere else, Black people were stopped at a significantly higher rate than their share of population. MPD’s report on the 2020 data noted that many traffic stops were of individuals who reside outside of the District, but we could not confirm that conclusion

because the state in which a stopped driver’s vehicle was registered was not included in the publicly available NEAR Act data.

**Table 4: Black People Were Disproportionately Likely to Be Stopped in Almost Every Police District in 2020.**

<i>District</i>	<i>% of Population Who Are Black</i>	<i>% of Stops That Were of Black People</i>
1D	27.38%	75.6%
2D	7.53%	43.5%
3D	27.68%	61.2%
4D	51.93%	68.2%
5D	63.66%	81.8%
6D	92.79%	93.3%
7D	89.35%	95.3%

These results demonstrate that the disparities in stops do not simply arise from the greater police presence east of the Anacostia River (a reality that is troubling in and of itself).

Racial disparities in “non-traffic stops”<sup>3</sup> in 2020 were similar to the disparities that arose in that context in 2019. In 2019, 86% of people stopped outside of the traffic context were Black, while only 5.6% were white. In 2020, these numbers remained virtually identical: 86.7% of non-traffic stops were of Black people while only 5.5% were of white people.

Furthermore, in 2020, Black people continued not only to be stopped more frequently than white people, but also endured more intrusive stops. Overall, Black people made up over 90.5% of those who experienced a search or pat-down of their person or property. As compared to white people who were stopped, Black people who were stopped were 5.06

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<sup>3</sup> The dataset that we received from MPD did not stipulate which stops were traffic-related and which stops were not. To make this distinction, our team made some assumptions based on the available data. The dataset bracketed stops into four distinct types: “Harbor” (which we omitted), “Ticket Only,” “Non-Ticket,” and “Ticket and Non-Ticket.” Given that nearly all of the stop reasons associated with “Ticket Only” stops in the dataset were related to traffic violations or infractions, we labeled all such stops as “traffic stops.” We also labeled as “traffic stops” all “Non-Ticket” stops where the “stop reason” made reference to the word “traffic” and did not lead to a search or arrest. If a traffic stop led to a search, seizure, or arrest, we labeled this stop a “traffic stop that escalated,” since the original stop was at least in part made ostensibly for traffic-related infractions. Additionally, all “Ticket and Non-Ticket” stops were labeled as traffic stops that escalated. All “Non-Ticket” stops where traffic was not mentioned were labeled as “non-traffic.”

times as likely to undergo a pat-down or search of their person and 3.67 times as likely to undergo a pat-down or search of their property. Despite these disparities, the difference between weapons recovered after searches of Black people, as compared to white people, was negligible and not statistically significant— 6.7% of white people searched had weapons seized, compared with only 8.5% of Black people who were searched.

Virtually the same was true for the 2019 data. Our original report found that Black people made up over 90% of those who experienced a search or pat-down of their person or property, and that the difference in weapon recovery was insignificant: 4.6% of white people searched had weapons seized, compared with only 6.4% of Black people who were searched.

## **II. Black Youth Continue to Face a Vastly Greater Risk of Experiencing Police Stops than White Youth.**

The 2019 data revealed the vast majority of people under 18 who were stopped were Black. The same held true in 2020. For the five-month period in 2019, nearly 89% of youth under 18 stopped were Black. In 2020, nearly 89.1% of youth stopped, or 8 out of 9 individuals, were Black. Black youth were stopped at approximately 11.9 times the rate of their white peers, based on their respective percentages in the D.C. population. The numbers are even more jarring for Black boys, who were stopped at 13.4 times the rate of white boys.

Similar to what the 2019 data showed, Black youth under 18 also experienced more searches as compared to white youth in 2020. For example, whereas only 7 white youth underwent a search of their person in 2020, 1,021 Black youth endured such an experience. Like searches of adults, only a small share of searches of Black youth (8.5%) uncovered weapons. This is similar to the rate in the 2019 data.

## **III. MPD's Stop and Frisk Tactics Continue to Be Ineffective in Removing Weapons from the Streets.**

Finally, the data continue to show that stopping individuals is not an effective method of removing weapons from the streets. Despite claims by MPD that stops are crucial to removing guns from the streets, the percentage of stops leading to the seizure of a weapon of any kind remain low—1.22% of all stops in 2020 as compared to 0.8% of all stops in the five-month 2019 period. With respect to guns, the numbers are even lower: only 1.0% of all stops and 2.2% of all non-traffic stops led to the recovery of a firearm in 2020. These numbers are akin to the findings from the 2019 data, which showed that 0.6% of all stops and 1.6% of non-traffic stops led to the recovery for a firearm.

Some stops didn't lead to a search, or the officer neglected to record a search, but even among stops that led to a search, only 6.7% led to the seizure of a gun and 8.4% led to the seizure of a weapon. These numbers are not significantly different from the seizure figures from 2019. During the five-month period in 2019, only 5% of stops that led to a search led to the seizure of a gun and 6.4% of these stops led to the seizure of a weapon.

MPD asserted that its stops resulted in the recovery of 1,605 guns. When we reviewed the data, we found that officers only reported recovering 1,071 weapons of any type. Even if MPD's assertion was correct, it would not alter the fact that, **in the vast majority of stops, no weapon was found.**

Meanwhile, based on MPD's data on the length of stops, detentions that failed to result in a warning, ticket, or arrest cost taxpayers a collective 5,504 hours of officer time between January 1, 2020 and December 30, 2020.

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## Conclusion

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This update confirms the conclusions from our original report continued to hold true in 2020. In 2020, as in 2019, almost three-quarters of the stops in the District were of Black individuals—a glaring racial disparity. The overpolicing of Black communities is a critical and urgent issue, as has been made clear by the ACLU-DC and grassroots communities for years. The ACLU-DC calls on the District to act now to address these disparities.