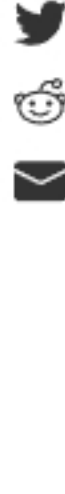


Nassau Police Say “Non-Residents” Are Causing Racial Disparity In Enforcement — Data Suggest Otherwise

BY CHARLES LANE

FEB 4, 5:20 PM • 20 COMMENTS



LEONARD ZHUKOVSKY/SHUTTERSTOCK

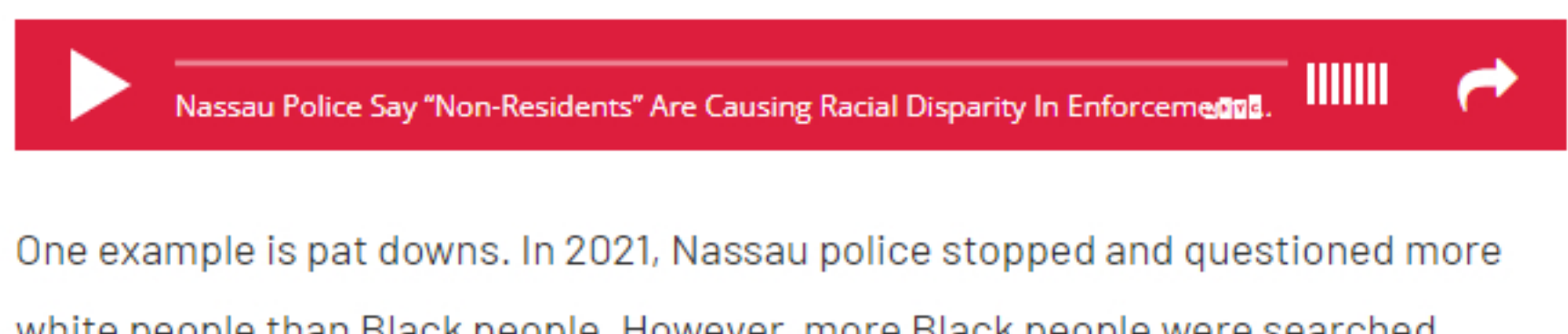
It was an unprecedented release of data compared to what the Nassau County Police Department typically makes available. Late last month, the public got a detailed look at [arrest numbers, traffic stops, pat downs, and other police interactions](#) — revealing sharp racial disparities in law enforcement.

Just under half of this Long Island county's population identifies as non-white — including Black, Latino, Asian and other categories. And yet, according to the new topline arrest data, those demographic groups made up a full two-thirds of people arrested by Nassau police.

At a [hearing last week](#), Nassau County Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder told local lawmakers it was “unfair” to draw conclusions about the arrest data because 35% of those arrested came from outside the county, which includes neighboring parts of New York City and Suffolk County.

“They’re not part of the county of Nassau,” Ryder told lawmakers. “They came here to commit some kind of criminal act.”

But an analysis of the data by WSHU and WNYC/Gothamist found that racial disparities persisted independent of whether the person who was stopped, summonsed, or arrested lived in Nassau County or elsewhere, providing a more granular view into how police interact with the public than the raw data offers.



One example is pat downs. In 2021, Nassau police stopped and questioned more white people than Black people. However, more Black people were searched during those stops — 33% — compared to white people, who were only searched 23% of the time. Those figures are independent of whether the people were Nassau County residents or not.

Field Interviews Leading To Pat Downs

Nassau Police conducted more field interviews with white people, but search Black people more frequently.

	Field Interviews 2021		Pat Downs 2021	
	#	% of total	#	% of Race Total
Black	957	32%	315	33%
Hispanic/Latino	740	24%	204	28%
White	1,127	37%	254	23%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	11	0%	1	9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	140	5%	24	17%
Other	24	1%	5	21%
Unknown	29	1%	2	7%
Nassau Total	3,028	100%	805	27%

Table: Charles Lane/WSHU • Source: Nassau County Police • Created with Datawrapper

Another example: who Nassau police decided not to arrest. The past four years have been marked by a large drop in arrests overall — 37% — for both Nassau County residents and those coming into the county from elsewhere. But no matter where people resided, that decline was larger for white people, who saw a 45% decrease in overall arrests. Whereas arrests of Black people only dropped 33% and just 28% for Latinos.

Drop In Arrests

Nassau Police arrested fewer people since 2018, yet the drop was larger for white people than non-white people.

	Arrests 2018		Arrests 2019		Arrest 2020		Arrests 2021		Dr fr 20 20
	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	
White	6,219	38%	5,192	35%	2,524	35%	3,400	33%	-4
Black	5,509	34%	5,136	35%	2,598	36%	3,656	36%	-3
Hispanic/Latino	3,584	22%	3,470	24%	1,700	23%	2,577	25%	-2
Asian/Pacific Islander	568	3%	789	5%	397	5%	605	6%	
American Indian/Alaskan Native	NA		NA		NA		30	0%	
Other	307	2%	84	1%	31	0%	1	0%	-10
Unknown	236	1%	17	0%	3	0%	3	0%	-9
Nassau Total	16,423		14,688		7,253		10,272		-3
NYS Total	394,175		356,709		255,592		NA		-3

Table: Charles Lane/WSHU • Source: Nassau County Police • Created with Datawrapper

Insensitive Distraction

Ryder did not offer an explanation for these disparities during his testimony at the legislative hearing.

His insistence that they are being driven by people from outside Nassau County has raised concerns among advocates for police reform, including civil right lawyer Fred Brewington, who said Ryder’s language insinuates that people of color are outsiders to the community.

“That statement is the declaration of ignorance,” Brewington said. “Coming out of Suffolk County or them coming from Queens or Brooklyn, that somehow their nefarious because of their race — it’s ridiculous”

“It doesn’t matter where they’re from. That’s a distraction,” said County Legislator Carrié Solages, a Democrat from Valley Stream, NY. “More Blacks are being exposed to and responsible for fees, fines, and tax.”



➡ Nassau County Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder speaks as Bruce Blakeman, the newly sworn-in county executive, looks on. (Charles Lane/WSHU)

Ryder defended his police department’s track record by pointing to traffic summonses. Data show that 37% of summonses went to white drivers while only 20% went to Black drivers.

“The number is not that far out of whack,” Ryder said in his testimony to lawmakers.

But the more detailed analysis by WSHU and WNYC/Gothamist shows that, on average and independent of where people live, white drivers received fewer tickets per stop (1.7) compared to Black drivers (2.3 tickets per stop) and Latino drivers (2.4 tickets per stop).

Summonses Per Driver

On average, Nassau Police gave more summonses per non-white driver than per white driver.

	People Stopped	Total Summonses	Summonses Per Person
Hispanic/Latino	7,684	18,674	2.4
Other	1,292	3,127	2.4
Black	7,379	16,870	2.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	3,317	6,983	2.1
White	13,147	21,804	1.7
American Indian/Alaskan Native	16	24	1.5
Company	2,489	14,225	5.7
Nassau Total	35,324	81,707	2.3

Table: Charles Lane/WSHU • Source: Nassau County Police • Created with Datawrapper

“It’s very clear that the over policing of Black and Latino communities has as a whole not really improved,” said Meena Roland Oberdick, a legal fellow with Latino Justice. “That’s concerning given how much attention is given to this issue.”


The Nassau County Police Department did not respond to multiple messages requesting clarification.

Joseph Giacalone, a retired NYPD Detective Sergeant and professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, said more information is needed before making firm conclusions about racial bias in policing. The question, he said, is whether there are other reasons that explain the disparities in pat-downs, arrests, and traffic stops.

“If you’re picking out a precinct or an area that has a high crime rate and high victimization rate that is mostly minority, then the answer to that question is no. But if you have people of color who are being stopped in white neighborhoods ... and they’re being picked out because of their skin color, then absolutely,” Giacalone said.

Several community groups and lawmakers in Nassau County — including Solages, the Valley Stream legislator — have asked for additional numbers and more frequent releases of data to provide an even clearer picture of how the police department is conducting itself.

“There has been a level of increasing transparency,” Solages said, “but no real accountability yet.”



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