

NDSC Criminal Justice Data Initiative: CIVILIAN AND POLICE INITIATED CONTACT

The [Neighborhood Data for Social Change](#) (NDSC) platform, a project of the [USC Price Center for Social Innovation](#), is a free, publicly available online resource for civic actors in Los Angeles County to learn about their neighborhoods. In the spring of 2019, the USC Price Center partnered with Microsoft and the [USC Safe Communities Institute](#) to launch the [NDSC Criminal Justice Data Initiative](#), a pilot project to collect, aggregate, and disseminate additional public safety indicators on the NDSC platform, including arrests, stops by police, and calls for service from community members. These indicators were chosen through a process of engaging law enforcement agencies, community residents, and local non-profits on their data needs and definitions of public safety through a series of convenings and listening sessions. A summary on civilian and police-initiated contact is shared below.

KEY FINDINGS: CIVILIAN AND POLICE-INITIATED CONTACT

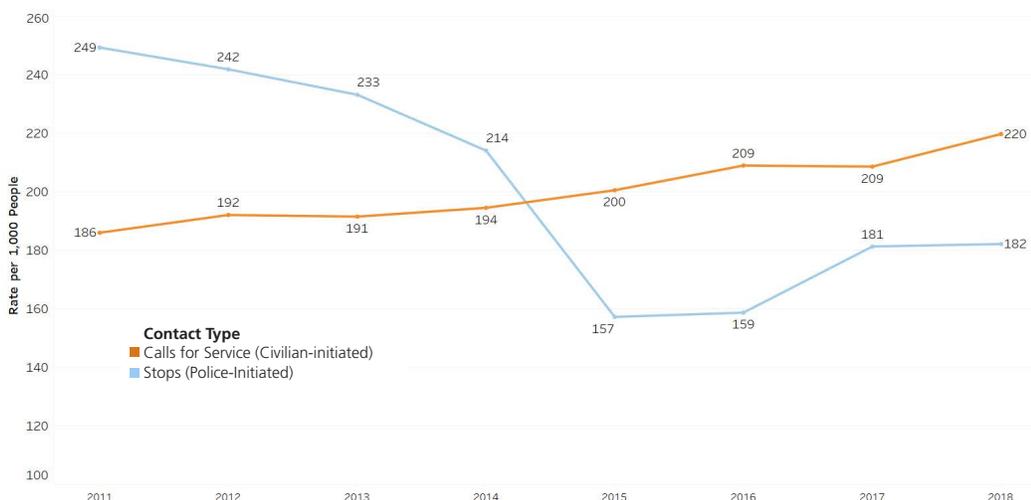
One way to measure community-police interactions is by considering who is initiating contact and how often that contact is happening. Two variables detailing these interactions include:

Calls for service: defined as the number of 911 emergency calls made by community residents per 1,000 people in the resident population, which can be used as a proxy for civilian-initiated contact to the police.

Stops: defined as the number of police stops of a vehicle or pedestrian per 1,000 people in the resident population, which are the most common way that police directly initiate contact with civilians and can be used to measure police-initiated contact with the community.

Figure 1 below shows civilian and police-initiated contact rates for the City of Los Angeles from 2011 to 2018. While civilian-initiated contact steadily increased, police-initiated contact decreased drastically in the beginning of the decade and then rose slightly after 2016.

FIGURE 1 CIVILIAN & POLICE-INITIATED CONTACTS City of Los Angeles, 2011-2018



SOURCE: LAPD

When viewed through the lens of community connectedness, increasing civilian-initiated contact could indicate that communities feel an increasing sense of trust in the police to address issues as they arise. Communities with above average rates of calls for service tend to have more Black and Latino residents than the city average and signs of community disinvestment, such as higher rates of severe rent burden and unemployment.¹ Based on listening session dialogue, an equally likely explanation is that increasing calls for service indicates a lack of infrastructure that would allow a community to thrive and feel safe, independent of any indication of trust in law enforcement.

With regard to decreasing police-initiated contact, listening session participants noted that the passage of laws like Prop 47 in 2014, which revised the classification of most nonviolent property and drug crimes from felonies to misdemeanors, may have led to shifts in police culture away from stops and prosecution for low-level offenses and more towards rehabilitation and health services. Similarly, the passage of Prop 57 in 2016, which allowed for parole consideration for nonviolent felons, led to an increase in parolees in the community and may be partially responsible for the increase in stop rates at the end of the decade.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau (2018). 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved from <https://data.myneighborhooddata.org/>