



OFFICE OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY ATTORNEY
JOHN J. CHOI, COUNTY ATTORNEY

Non-Public-Safety Traffic Stop Changes in Ramsey County



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Establishing the Changes



Rationale

- Discretionary minor equipment stops lead to racial inequities and damage relationships between the community and police - Black drivers in Ramsey County were nearly four times more likely than white drivers to be pulled over and nine times more likely to have their vehicle searched.
- Can put residents and officers at unnecessary risk and rarely turn up contraband.
- Shift limited resources to situations that are most likely to present a public safety threat.



Changed Policies or Practices

- Roseville
- Ramsey County Attorney
- Saint Paul Police Department
- Maplewood Police Department
- St. Anthony Village Police Department



Roseville Policy August 1, 2021*

...officers will **concentrate on moving violations** and other traffic issues that are an immediate concern to public safety or create a dangerous condition...non-public safety or traffic enforcement solely based on equipment violations creates disproportionate impacts with communities of color and undermines law enforcement legitimacy. **Absent other factors, the Roseville Police Department will not enforce equipment violations**, expired registration, or other non-moving violations that do not create a public safety concern or dangerous condition.

To protect the constitutional rights and safeguard the protection of all of our communities, **officers will not search a vehicle stopped for a minor traffic offense solely based on consent** and absent any other articulable reason or legal justification.

*Began as a directive in 2017.



RCAO Policy Announced September 8, 2021

Ramsey County Attorney will decline to prosecute cases stemming from:

1. "Non-public-safety" traffic stops, stops based solely on certain minor equipment or registration infractions with **exception for danger to public safety or a dangerous condition**; or
2. The result of searching a vehicle based solely on consent, without any articulable suspicion.



RCAO Policy Announced September 8, 2021

Minor Equipment Infractions

- Vehicle registration
- License plate illumination
- Muffler excess noise violations
- Windshield prohibitions, such as cracked windshields or objects hanging from the rear-view mirror
- Window tint or other restrictions on glazed windows
- Headlights, signal lights or rear lamp violations, unless both headlights or rear brake lights are nonfunctioning

Impact of the Changes



Jared Fishman
Executive Director
Justice Innovation Lab

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Data Visualization Engineer
Justice Innovation Lab

Research

Justice Innovation Lab (JIL) investigated Ramsey County traffic stop data to examine the extent, if any, to which changed policies and practices affected use of non-public-safety traffic stops by the police, and what the impact has been on racial disproportionalities in traffic stops.



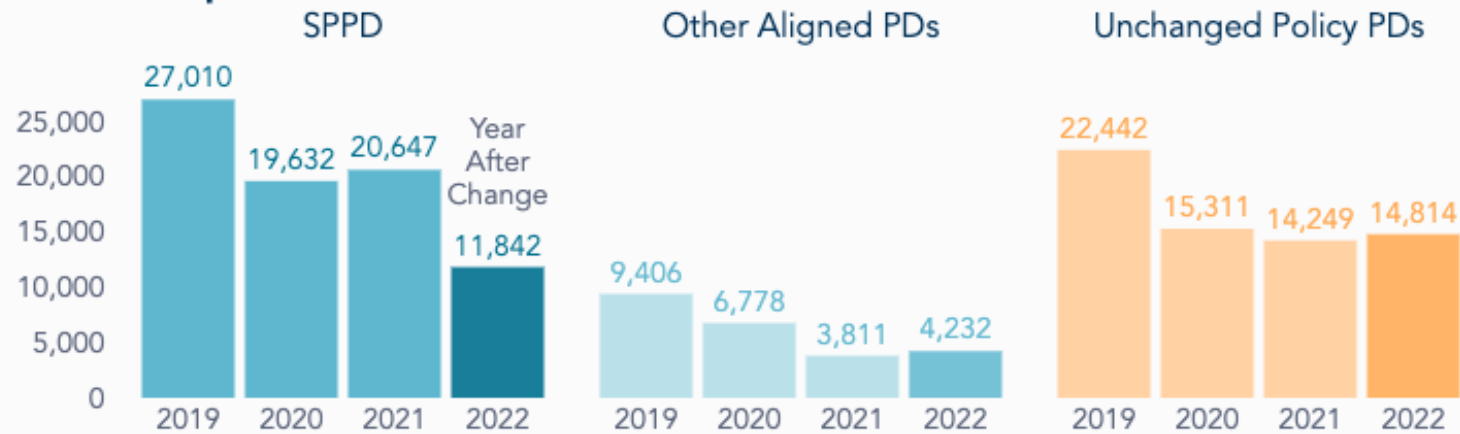
Overall stops and searches

Annual traffic stops and searches over time - all stop types

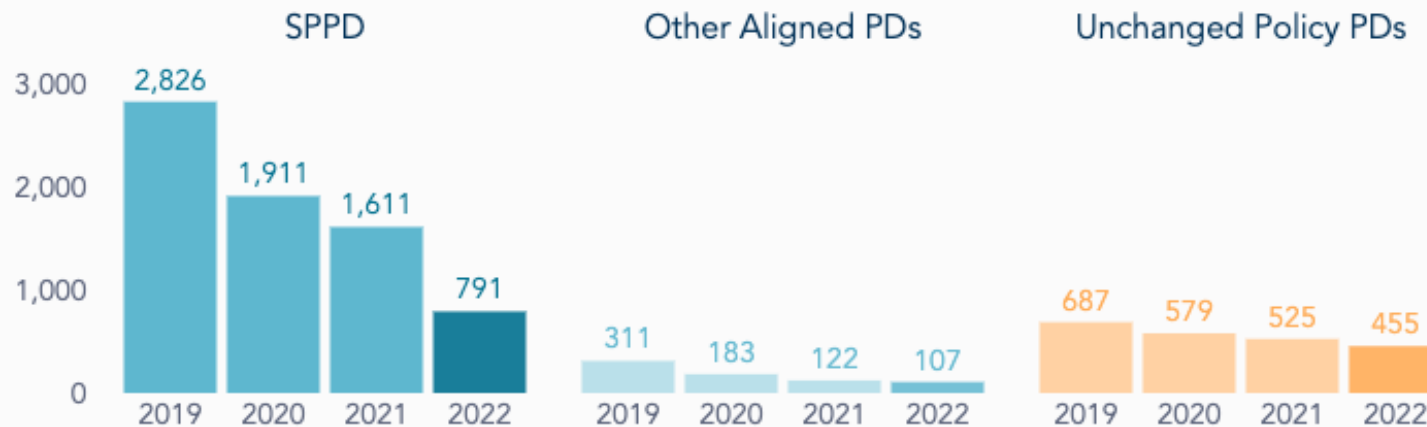
Each bar represents a 12-month period ending August 31st of the year shown

The darker 2022 bar in each group shows the year following change implementation

Stops



Searches



Changes in vehicle equipment stops and searches



Non-public-safety vehicle equipment stops and searches declined the year after change implementation

Percent change in stops and searches from year prior

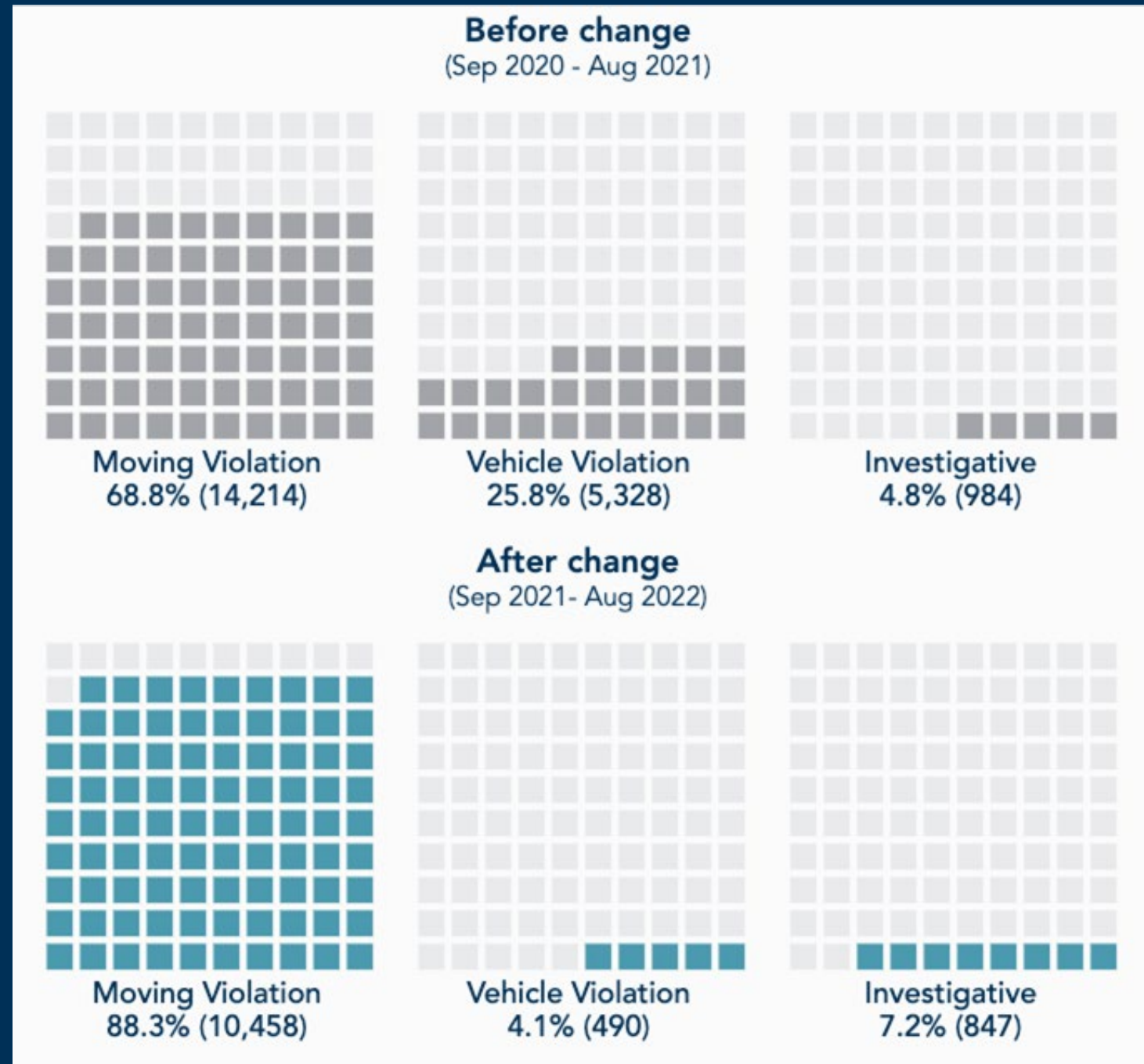
● SPPD ● Other Aligned PDs ● Unchanged Policy PDs

Vehicle Equipment Violations



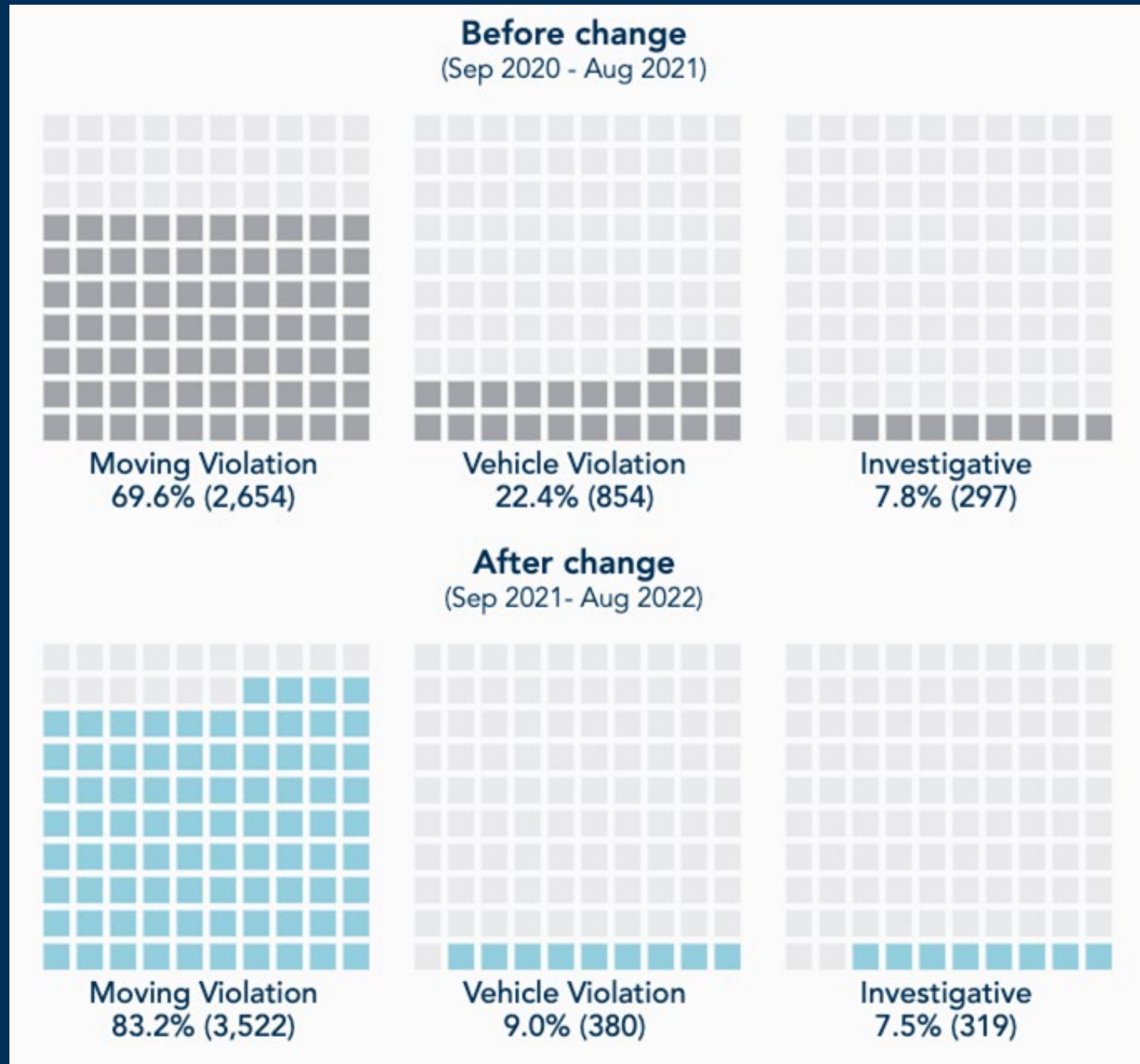
SPPD

Count and percent of traffic stop types before and after change implementation.



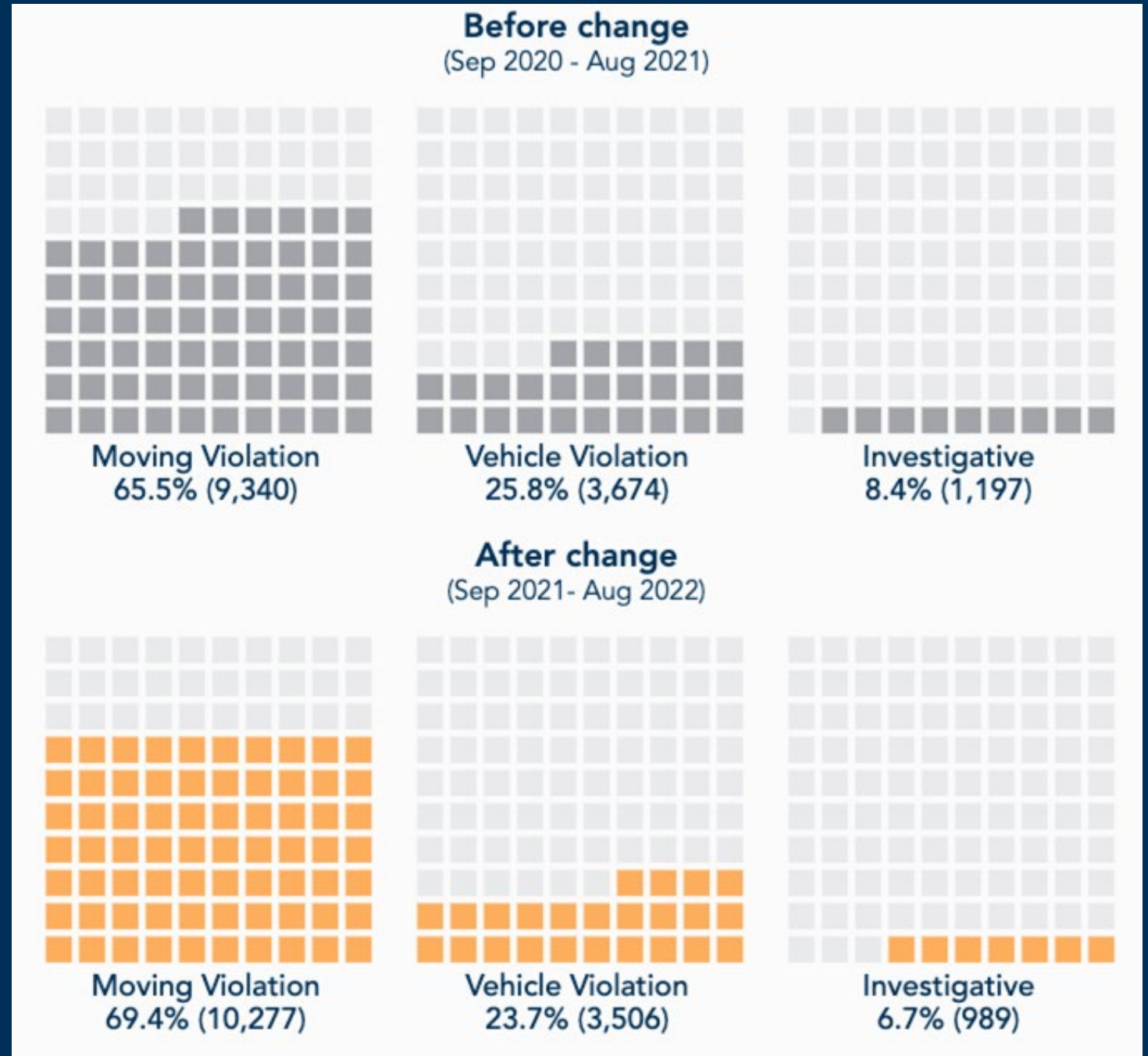
Other aligned PDs

Count and percent of traffic stop types before and after change implementation.



Unchanged policy PDs

Count and percent of traffic stop types before and after change implementation.

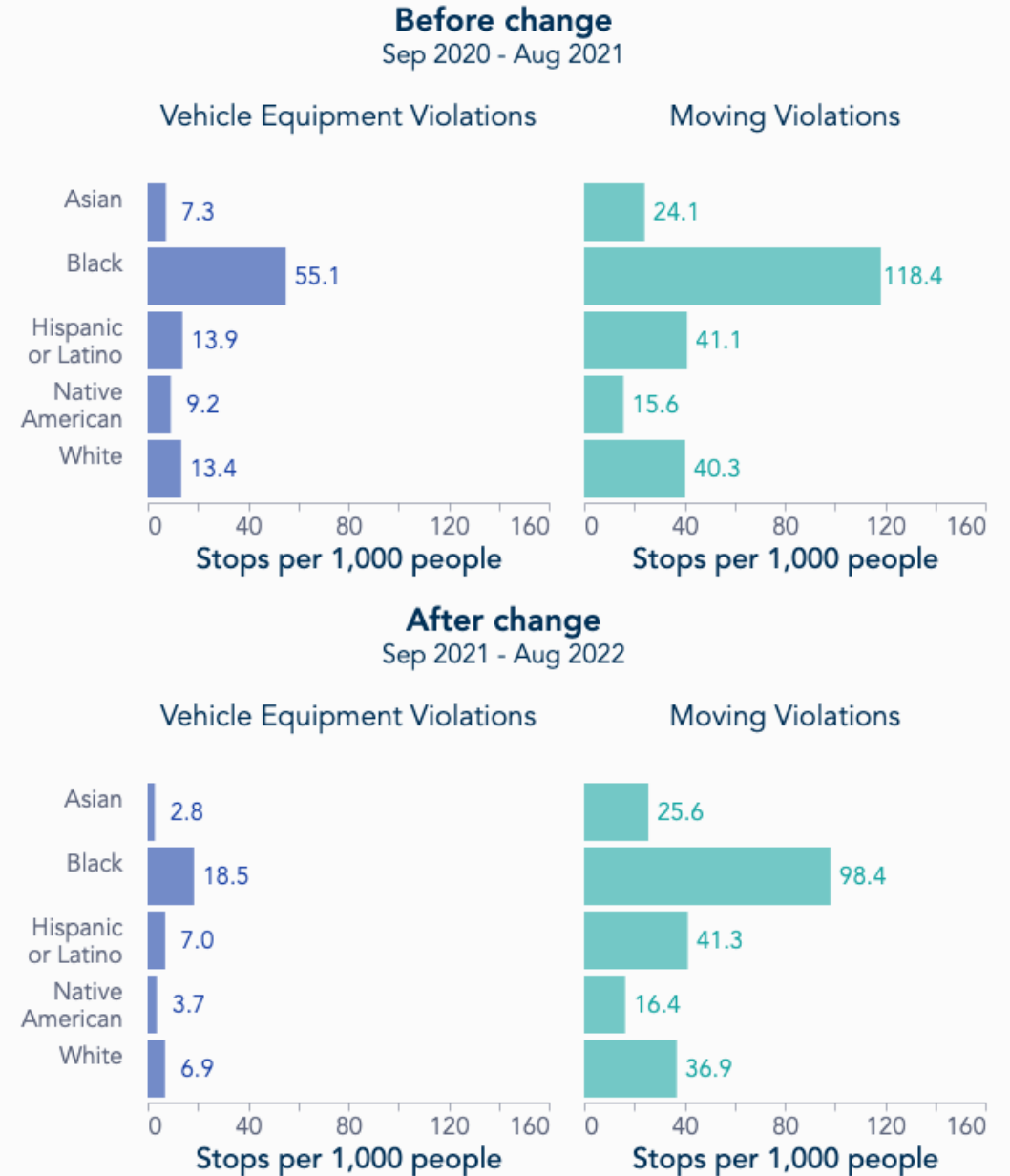


Traffic stops by race

Traffic stops per capita for vehicle equipment violations and moving violations, before and after change implementation.



Stops per capita decreased for vehicle equipment violations in Ramsey County following change implementation

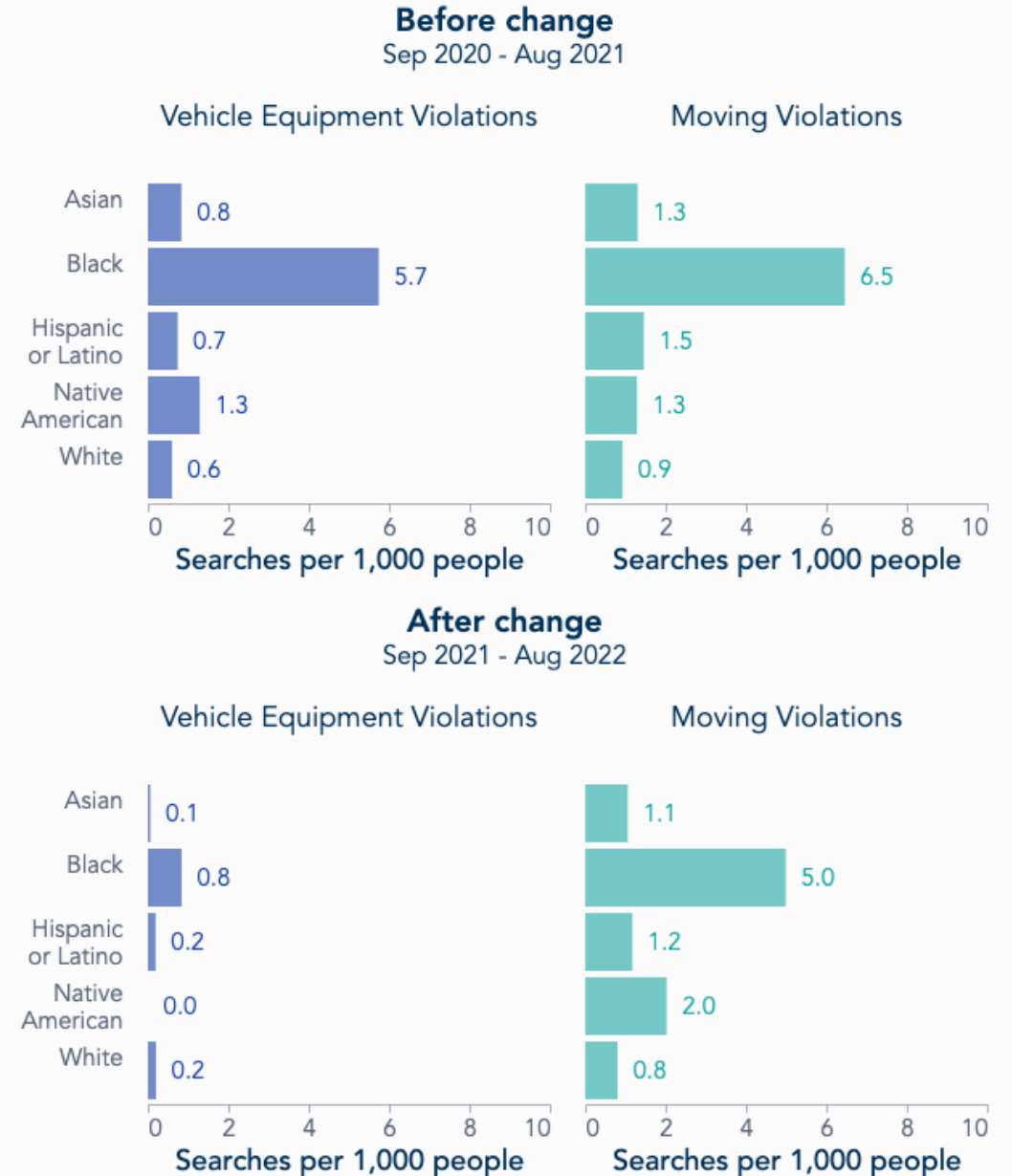


Traffic searches by race

Traffic searches per capita for vehicle equipment violations and moving violations, before and after change implementation.



Searches per capita decreased for vehicle equipment violations in Ramsey County following change implementation



Impact on crime

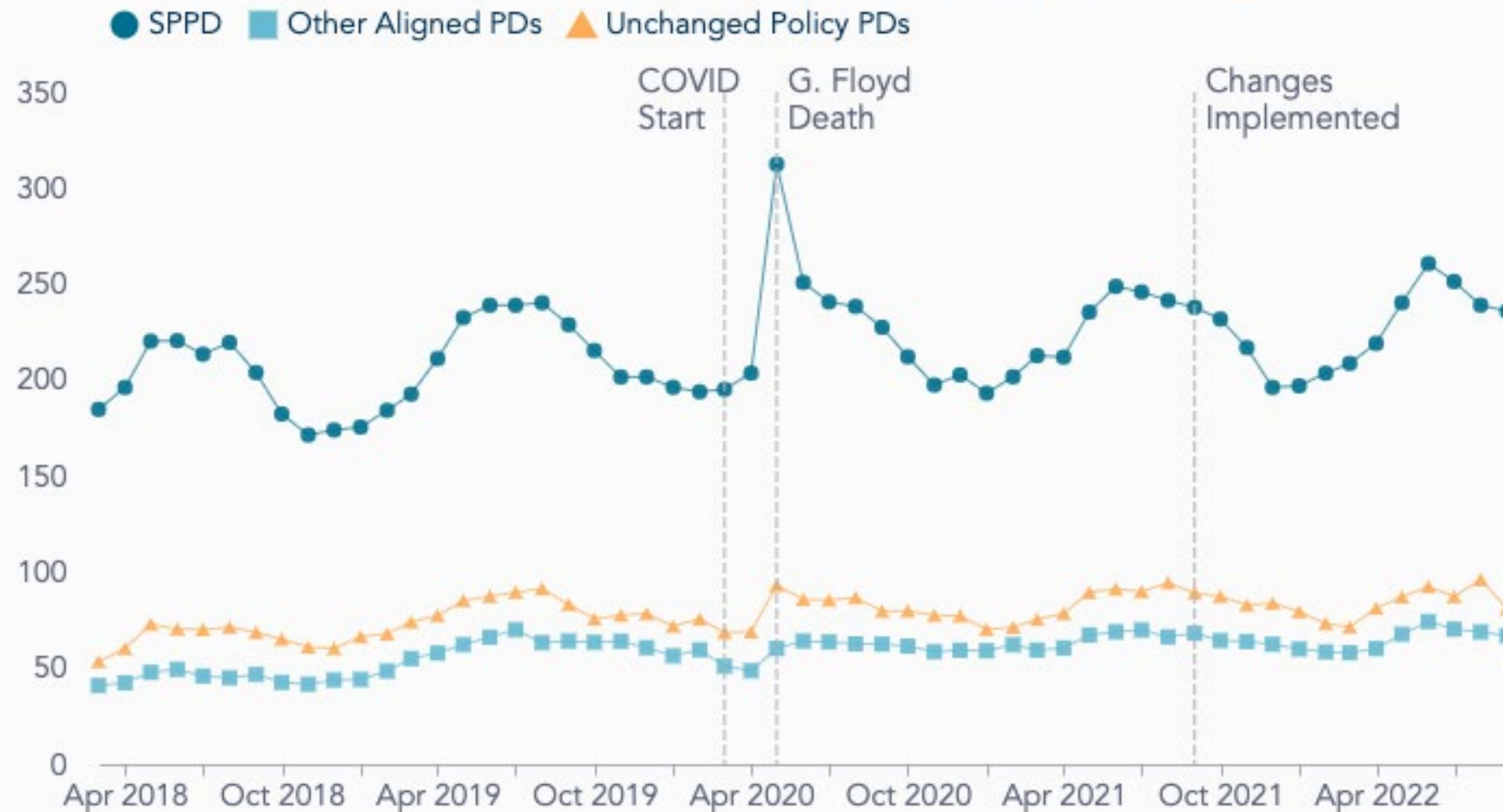
JIL also analyzed available data on 911 calls and firearm seizures to examine the potential impact of the policy on crime rates.



Total 911 calls from the public

Total 911 call volume follows a seasonal pattern

Daily average 911 calls made by the public, March 2018 - September 2022

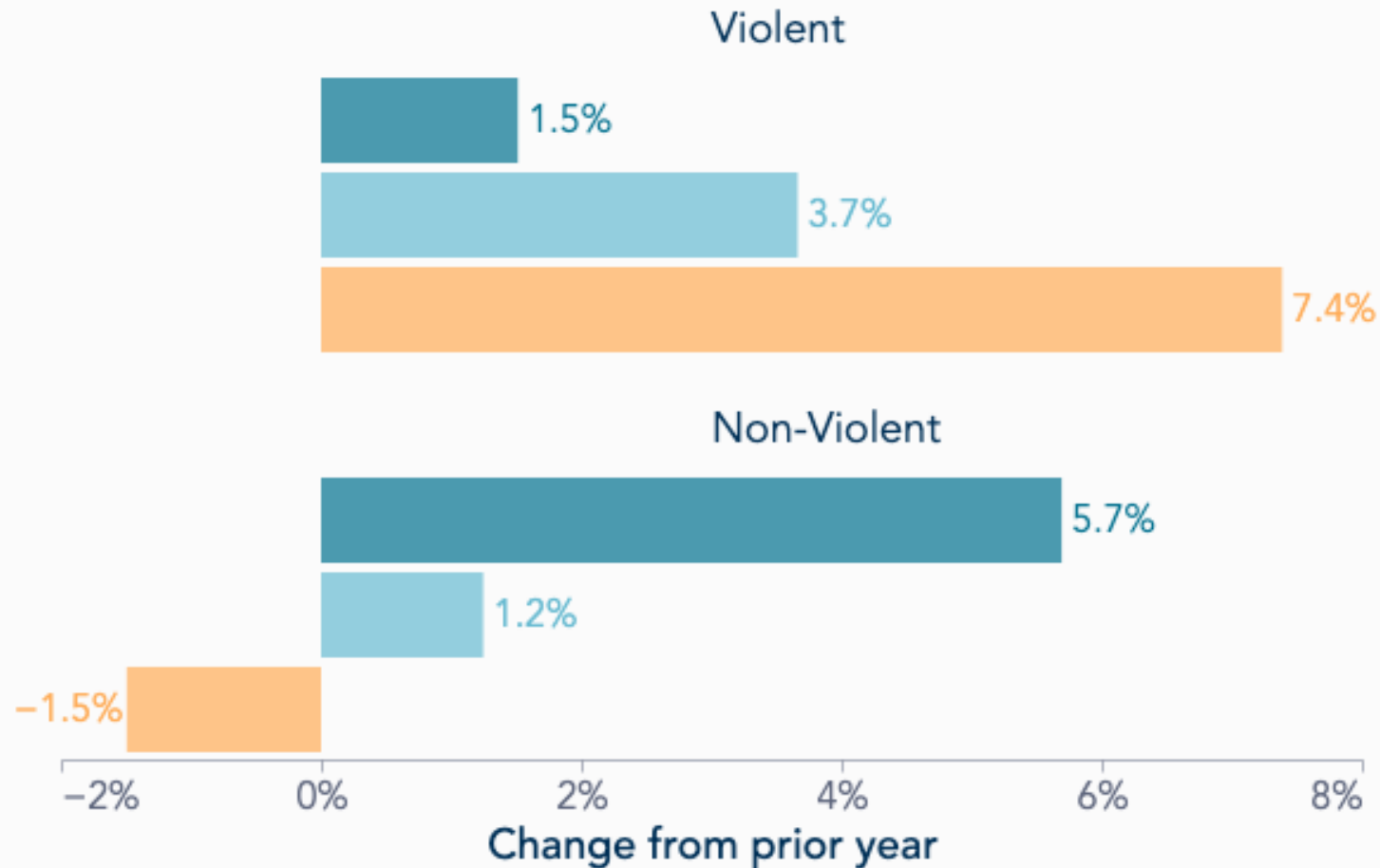


Changes in 911 calls

Violent and non-violent 911 calls after change implementation

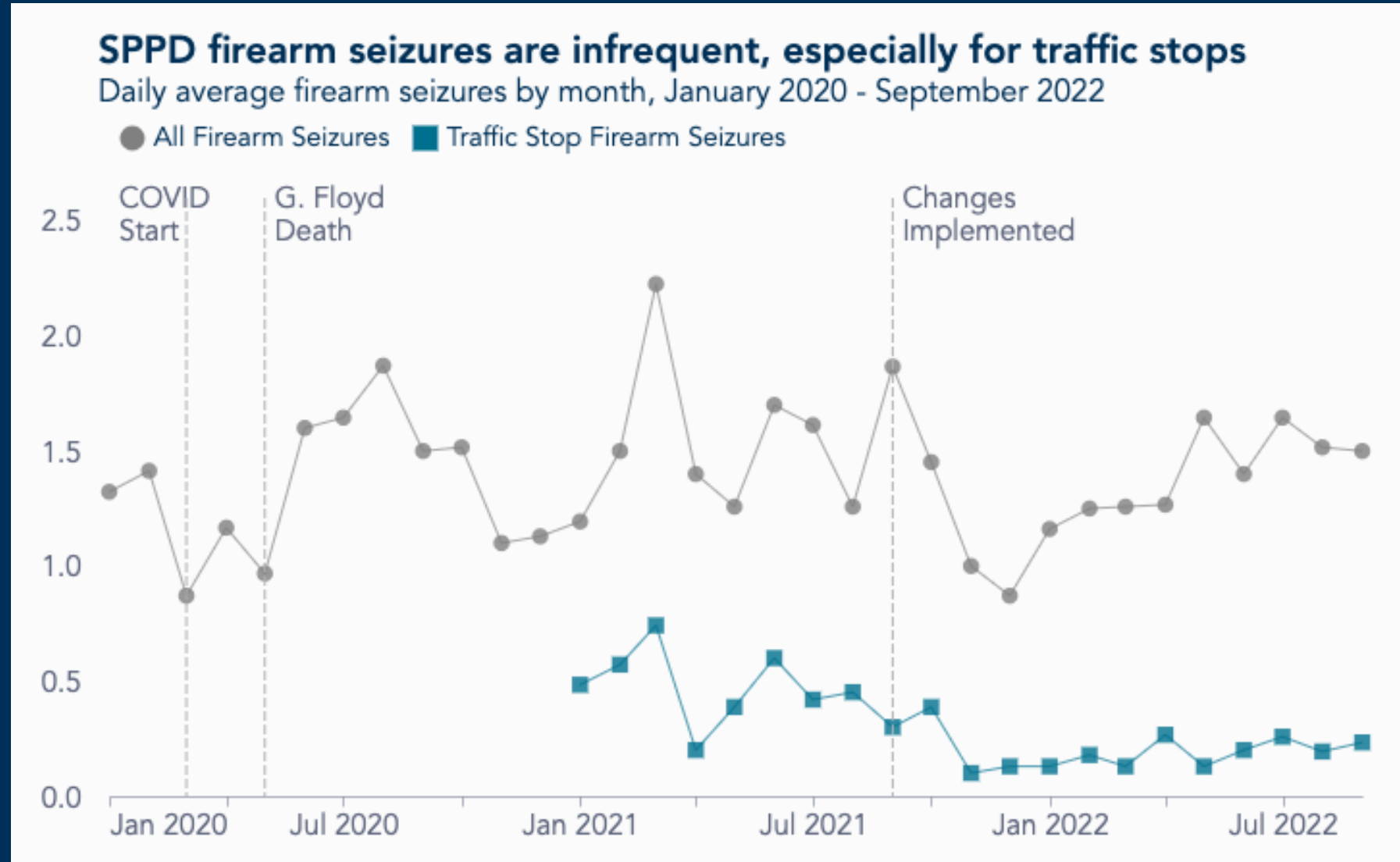
Percent change in recorded crime from prior year

● SPPD ● Other Aligned PDs ● Unchanged Policy PDs



Firearm seizures

The Saint Paul Police Department seized a firearm in **only 0.8% of all traffic stops** between January 2021 and September 2022.





Cases Received by RCAO

	Referred By	Screened	Equip Viol	Referral Charge	Outcome	Charged as Misd/GM
1	St. Anthony	24-Nov-21	Windshield	Fleeing	PROSECUTED	NA
2	Moundsvie	24-Nov-22	Registration	Drugs 5 th and pistol without a permit	PROSECUTED	NA
3	SPPD	19-Jan-22	Window Tint	Possess Firearm - Ineligible	PROSECUTED	NA
4	State Patrol	7-Dec-21	Light	Drugs - 5th Degree	REFUSED	No
5	SPPD	29-Apr-22	Registration	Drugs - 5th Degree	REFUSED	No
6	Moundsvie	5-May-22	Registration	Drugs - 5th Degree	REFUSED	No
7	North St. Paul	26-Jul-22	Registration	Drugs - 4th Degree	REFUSED	Yes - NSP City Attny
8	RCSO	2-Aug-22	Window Tint	Drugs - 5th Degree	REFUSED	No
9	New Brighton	27-Jan-23	Registration	Drugs - 5th Degree	REFUSED	No
10	State Patrol	16-Feb-23	Light	Drugs - 5th Degree	REFUSED	Yes- MPLWD City Attny
11	SPPD	5-Apr-23	Registration	Drugs - 5th Degree	REFUSED	Sent to City Attny, No File Yet
12	New Brighton	3-May-23	Lic Plate Illum.	Carry Rifle Public	REFUSED	Yes - NB City Attny



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Alternatives



LIGHTS ON!

A PROGRAM OF MICROGRANTS

Lights On! partners with law enforcement and auto service providers to replace traffic tickets with repair vouchers.



SAINT PAUL & MINNESOTA FOUNDATION



DIVERSION SOLUTIONS



Alternatives

- Since January 12, 2023 Roseville has sent out 1,469 letters and provided 50 Lights On! coupons.
- Since May 30, 2022 Saint Paul has sent out over 434 letters and provided 14 Lights On! coupons.
- Diversion Solutions has assisted 2 people with renewing license registration.



Acknowledgements



THE GEORGE
WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY

WASHINGTON, DC





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Questions?