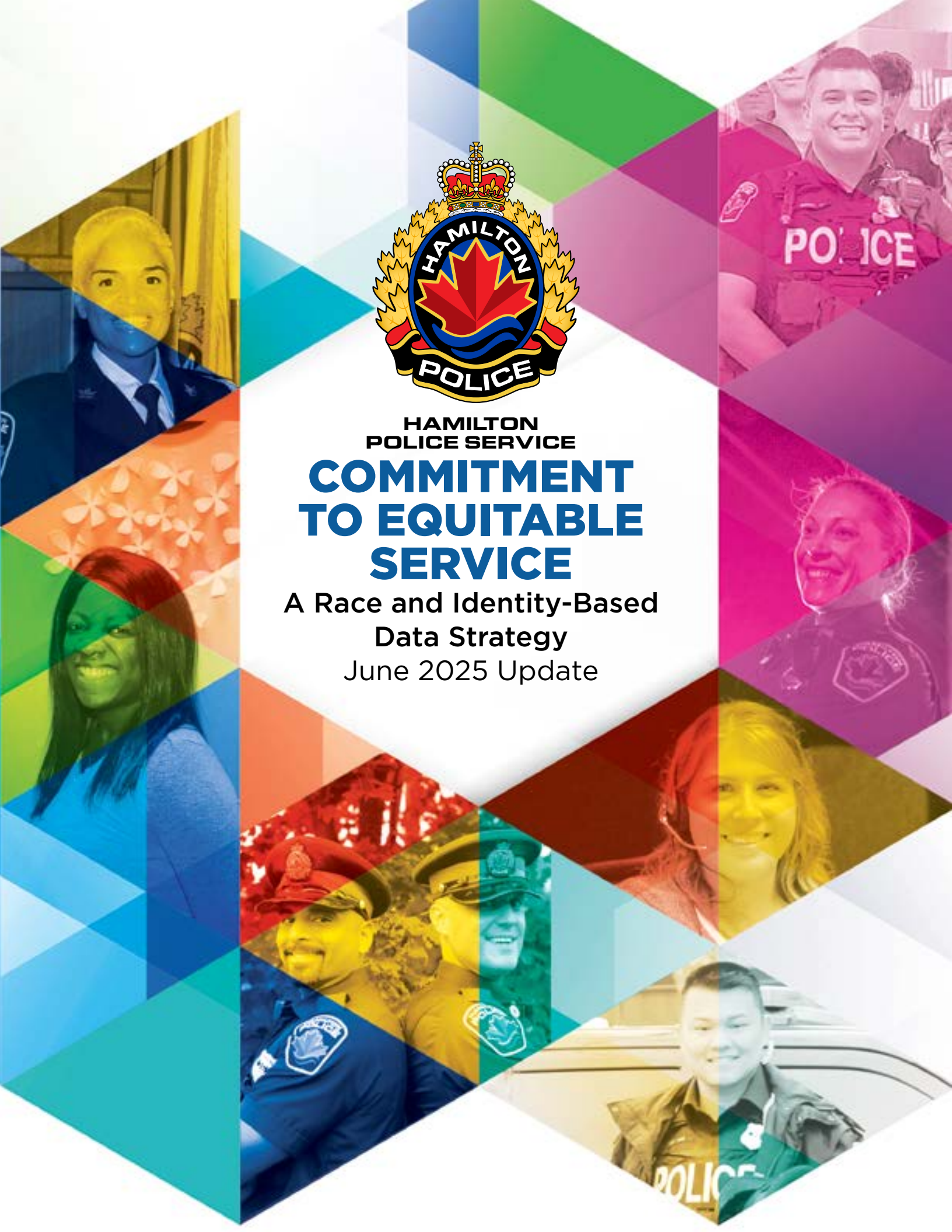**HAMILTON
POLICE SERVICE**

COMMITMENT TO EQUITABLE SERVICE

A Race and Identity-Based Data Strategy

June 2025 Update

WHY THIS WORK MATTERS

Hamilton Police Service (HPS) wants to make sure everyone in Hamilton is treated fairly and respectfully. In March 2025, HPS launched its **Race and Identity-Based Data (RIBD) Strategy**. This plan helps police collect and study information about how race and identity affect people's interactions with police. The main goal is to build trust and reduce unfair treatment, wherever it arises. HPS is doing this work with the help of community members from different backgrounds and lived experiences.

The first focus of this work is on **police use of force**—when police use physical measures or tools, like batons, OC spray (pepper spray), Conducted Energy Weapons (CEW), or firearms in response to a situation. Use of force was chosen because many people, especially from Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities, have raised concerns about how and when force is used.

HOW THIS WORK IS BEING DONE

1. Working with the Community

HPS established the **Community Advisory Panel (CAP)** to help guide this work. It is made up of 10 diverse residents, including a youth representative and members from Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities. Together, they bring experience in community organizing, social services, education, research, and advocacy. Engaging with the CAP provides a strong platform for including diverse community perspectives in the RIBD Strategy. Members contribute their understanding of systemic racism and their expertise in areas like data analysis, policy, and frontline work.

Together, they:

- Decide what questions police should try to answer.

- Help shape how the data is analyzed and shared.

- Work to make sure the police listen to the community's concerns.

2. Collecting and Studying the Data

Police are required to collect information every time they use certain types of force. This includes who was involved, what happened, and why force was used. Officers also record how they perceived a person's race at the time. This helps show whether those perceptions may affect decisions during high-risk situations. Police then use something called **disproportionality** and **disparity indices** to see if some groups experience force differently than others..

WHAT ARE DISPROPORTIONALITY AND DISPARITY INDICES?

- A Disproportionality Index looks at whether a group experiences police outcomes—like use of force—more often than expected based on their share of the population.

  - Example: If a group makes up 5% of the population but 15% of people who had force used on them, that's a disproportionality index of 3.0.

- A Disparity Index compares one group's experience to another group, usually comparing to people perceived as White.

These tools help spot patterns, but they don't explain why things happen. That's why HPS is working to understand the full story behind the numbers.

KEY FINDINGS (2024)

- People perceived to be Black made up 16% of use of force cases but 5% of Hamilton's population (disproportionality index of 3.2). When looking at arrests and apprehensions, they made up 13% of those cases (disproportionality index of 1.2).

- People perceived to be East or Southeast Asian made up 5% of use of force cases but only 1% of those arrested or apprehended (disproportionality index of 3.9). This was often related to warrants executed as part of special police projects.

- Rates for Indigenous, Latino, and South Asian persons were closer to their share of the population but still changed from year to year. For example, those perceived to be Indigenous represented 2% of both the population and use of force cases (disproportionality index 1.0). Those perceived to be Latino made up 2% of the population and 2% of use of force cases (index 1.0). People perceived to be South Asian made up 6% of the population but 4% of use of force cases (index 0.7).

PRIORITIZED COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

The CAP worked with HPS to develop important questions to guide future work. Some of these questions include:

- Are police more likely to use force against people from certain racial or identity groups, like Black, Indigenous, or younger individuals?
- Do people from racialized groups experience higher levels of force? Do disparities persist even when we account for the circumstances surrounding each incident
- Are police more or less likely to attempt de-escalation before using force with different groups?
- Are there parts of Hamilton where force is used more often?
- Does an officer's experience affect how often or how much force is used?

HPS is using these questions to guide future research and improvements.

UNDERSTANDING THE DATA AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

This report is just the first step. While disproportionality and disparity indices help identify patterns, they don't explain why these patterns exist. That's why HPS will expand future analysis to study **multiple factors together**, not just race alone.

This deeper analysis will explore, for instance:

- Whether a weapon was present during the incident.
- What was involved in the type of call police responded to (e.g., mental health, criminal offence, public safety).
- Whether officers attempted verbal communication before using force.
- The behaviour of the person involved and how serious the situation was.
- Officer characteristics like years of experience and training.

By looking at all these factors together, HPS will better understand whether race is still linked to different outcomes when situations are similar. This approach will help answer the critical question: Are disparities explained by what's happening in the moment, or are there deeper patterns that need to be addressed?

WHAT'S NEXT?

HPS will:

- Work closely with the Community Advisory Panel to explore why these patterns happen.
- Study police incidents in more detail, including factors like mental health, weapons, and officer behaviour.
- Look at ways to improve police training and policies related to the use of force, if needed.

The goal is to move beyond just numbers and work toward real solutions that make policing more fair and respectful for everyone in Hamilton.