



**HAMILTON
POLICE SERVICE**

COMMITMENT TO EQUITABLE SERVICE

**A Race and Identity-Based
Data Strategy
June 2025 Update**



1. Introduction

On March 28, 2025, the Hamilton Police Service (HPS) launched its Race and Identity-Based Data (RIBD) Strategy in partnership with the Community Advisory Panel (CAP). The Strategy represents a Service-wide commitment to advancing equitable and accountable policing, grounded in transparency, community collaboration, and the *Anti-Racism Act, 2017* (ARA). While meeting ARA requirements for the collection and analysis of race-based data, the RIBD Strategy also aims to foster a culture of continuous improvement by using evidence and community input to identify systemic barriers, build public trust, and strengthen relationships with Hamilton residents. The first phase of the Strategy focuses on use of force, a priority identified through engagement with CAP members and the broader community. This focus recognizes both historical and ongoing concerns about racial disparities in policing outcomes, particularly for Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities.

This report has two purposes. First, it outlines the framework for measuring the success of the RIBD Strategy, consistent with the *Anti-Racism Data Standards* (ARDS). Second, it provides an update on work completed to date, including preliminary findings from the analysis of use of force incidents and the collaborative processes developed with the CAP. Through a deliberate, methodologically rigorous, and community-informed approach, HPS aims not only to meet its legal obligations, but to demonstrate leadership in advancing racial equity and accountability in public safety.

This report represents the first in a planned series under the RIBD Strategy. It lays the foundation for future reporting that will expand to additional outcomes and deeper analysis. In the months ahead, HPS will continue to work with the CAP to explore patterns across other policing interactions, incorporate advanced statistical modeling, and refine insights to support long-term systemic change.

At its core, the RIBD Strategy is not just about meeting compliance requirements—it reflects a broader shift in how HPS approaches race-based data. This work is driven by a commitment to institutional learning, public accountability, and continuous improvement. By centering community priorities and pairing data with dialogue, the Strategy aims to build a more equitable foundation for public safety in Hamilton.

2. RIBD Strategy Foundations: Legal Requirements and Measuring Progress

The *Anti-Racism Act, 2017* (ARA) established Ontario's commitment to eliminating systemic racism within public sector organizations. Under the *Act*, the collection and analysis of race-based data are required to identify, monitor, and respond to racial inequalities. In 2018, Ontario introduced the *Anti-Racism Data Standards* (ARDS), which provide technical direction for race-based data collection, analysis, and reporting.

A **minimum requirement** under the ARDS is the calculation of racial disproportionality and racial disparity indices. These indices assess whether different racial groups experience unequal outcomes across public services, including policing. The ARDS emphasize that disproportionality and disparity analyses are diagnostic tools. They are mandatory for identifying potential areas of concern, but they are not, on their own, proof of systemic discrimination. Instead, they **highlight patterns that may warrant further, deeper investigation through statistical modeling, qualitative analysis, and/or organizational review.**

What is a Disproportionality Index?

A disproportionality index measures the over- or under-representation of a racial group in a program, service, or outcome—relative to that group's share of an appropriate benchmark population. In the context of policing, it typically compares the racial composition of individuals involved in use of force incidents against the racial composition of a benchmark population, such as the city's general population or a subset like individuals arrested or apprehended.

A disproportionality index is calculated as:

$$\text{Disproportionality Index} = \frac{\% \text{ of racial group among use of force subjects}}{\% \text{ of racial group in benchmark population}}$$

An index of 1.0 means the group is proportionally represented. An index above 1.5 suggests notable over-representation, while an index below 0.5 suggests notable under-representation—both thresholds indicating areas that may warrant further examination. For example, if a racial group represents 5% of Hamilton's overall population but accounts for 15% of use of force subjects, the disproportionality index would be:

$$\text{Disproportionality Index} = \frac{15\%}{5\%} = 3.0$$

This indicates that the racial group is involved in use of force incidents at more than three times their share of the city's population, pointing to a potentially significant pattern requiring deeper investigation.

What is a Disparity Index?

After identifying whether groups are over- or under-represented using disproportionality indices, another step is to compare across groups by calculating a disparity index. A disparity index measures how much more or less likely one group is to experience an outcome compared to a reference group—typically subjects perceived to be White in the context of policing analysis.

A disparity index is calculated as:

$$\text{Disparity Index} = \frac{\text{Disproportionality Index of a Group}}{\text{Disproportionality Index of Reference Group}}$$

As with the disproportionality index, an index value of 1.0 indicates no difference between groups. Values above 1.5 suggest a meaningful disparity that may warrant further investigation, while values below 0.5 suggest notable under-representation relative to the reference group. For example, if a group's disproportionality index is 3.0 and the disproportionality index for the reference group (White individuals) is 0.85, the disparity index is calculated as:

$$\text{Disparity Index} = \frac{3.0}{0.85} = 3.53$$

This means the group is experiencing the outcome at nearly four times the rate of the reference group relative to their population share.

How Disproportionality and Disparity Indices Should Be Interpreted

Disproportionality and disparity indices are **diagnostic tools and considered the minimum requirement** for any race-based analysis under the ARDS.¹ They are designed to flag areas that warrant further investigation, but do not, on their own, confirm

¹ See Ontario *Anti-Racism Data Standards*, Standard 29 (Government of Ontario, 2018). Available at: <https://www.ontario.ca/document/data-standards-identification-and-monitoring-systemic-racism/analyses-information-collected>

systemic discrimination—especially when outcomes, such as use of force, depend heavily on situation-specific factors. Thresholds guide interpretation. Following ARDS guidance and broader sector practices, indices greater than 1.5 indicate over-representation and suggest the need for deeper review. However, caution remains essential. For example, when group sizes are small—fewer than 25 subjects—even minor changes in the number of incidents can cause disproportionality indices to shift noticeably from year to year, making trends harder to interpret with confidence.

The Hamilton Police Service recognizes that reducing disparities in policing outcomes requires an accountable, informed, and evolving approach—particularly in a field where race-based analysis remains an emerging area of practice. Rather than relying solely on disproportionality or disparity calculations, HPS is committed to pairing these foundational metrics with more purposeful, context-sensitive analyses that are guided by community engagement and institutional self-reflection. Consistent with the ARDS and recommendations from organizations such as the *Ontario Human Rights Commission*, this approach seeks to examine situational dynamics, organizational practices, and systemic factors in order to better understand and address the root causes of racial inequalities in policing.

Understanding and Selecting Benchmarks

A critical part of interpreting disproportionality and disparity indices is the choice of a **benchmark population**. A benchmark provides the baseline against which a group's representation in an outcome—such as a use of force incident—is compared. Without a clear and appropriate benchmark, it is impossible to assess whether groups are over- or under-represented relative to expectations. In policing, two common types of benchmarks are typically used:

1. **General Population Benchmark:** Based on census data, such as the 2021 Hamilton Census, this benchmark offers a broad societal lens by comparing the city's overall demographics to the demographics of individuals involved in policing outcomes.
2. **Enforcement Contact Benchmark:** Based on individuals arrested or apprehended by police. This benchmark focuses on those who have already had direct contact with police, providing a context-sensitive point of comparison.

Both benchmarks are valuable, but each has its own strengths and limitations. **The general population benchmark** draws from widely available Statistics Canada data and is easy to understand, but it also reflects broader social inequalities—such as poverty, housing, and access to health care—that influence patterns of police contact. While these factors extend beyond the direct control of police services, they are not beyond collective responsibility. Addressing these upstream drivers of disparity requires ongoing collaboration between HPS and its partners in health, housing, social services, and education. The general population benchmark also includes individuals who may never come into contact with police, which can make it more difficult to isolate the specific impact of police actions from broader social conditions.

By contrast, **the enforcement contact benchmark** narrows the focus to individuals who have already interacted with police, offering a more direct comparison for evaluating treatment during those encounters. However, this benchmark also has limitations. It does not reflect the systemic factors that influence who comes into contact with police, nor does it account for why individuals were arrested or apprehended—such as the type of incident, perceived resistance, or threat level. Recognizing these limitations, HPS uses both benchmarks in its RIBD Strategy to provide a more balanced and contextually grounded view of potential disparities. This approach aligns with ARDS Standard 30, which directs organizations to select benchmarks appropriate to the outcome and to clearly explain their rationale.²

² See *Ontario Anti-Racism Data Standards*, Standard 30.

In light of the potential gaps in these two measures, **HPS chose to use both types of benchmarks to generate a broader range of insights for its initial RIBD analyses.** The general population benchmark assesses broad societal differences in police contact, while the enforcement benchmark focuses on whether use of force outcomes are equitable once contact has occurred. This dual-benchmark approach provides both societal and system-specific insights. It also reflects guidance from the Ministry of the Solicitor General, which has noted that no single, ready-made benchmark fully captures the complexity of policing outcomes. In line with ARDS Standard 30—which requires public sector organizations to select benchmarks appropriate to the outcome and to explain their rationale—HPS’s strategy is designed to balance methodological rigour with practical relevance.³

Figure 1 illustrates the different drivers of disparity that can affect policing outcomes, including both external social conditions

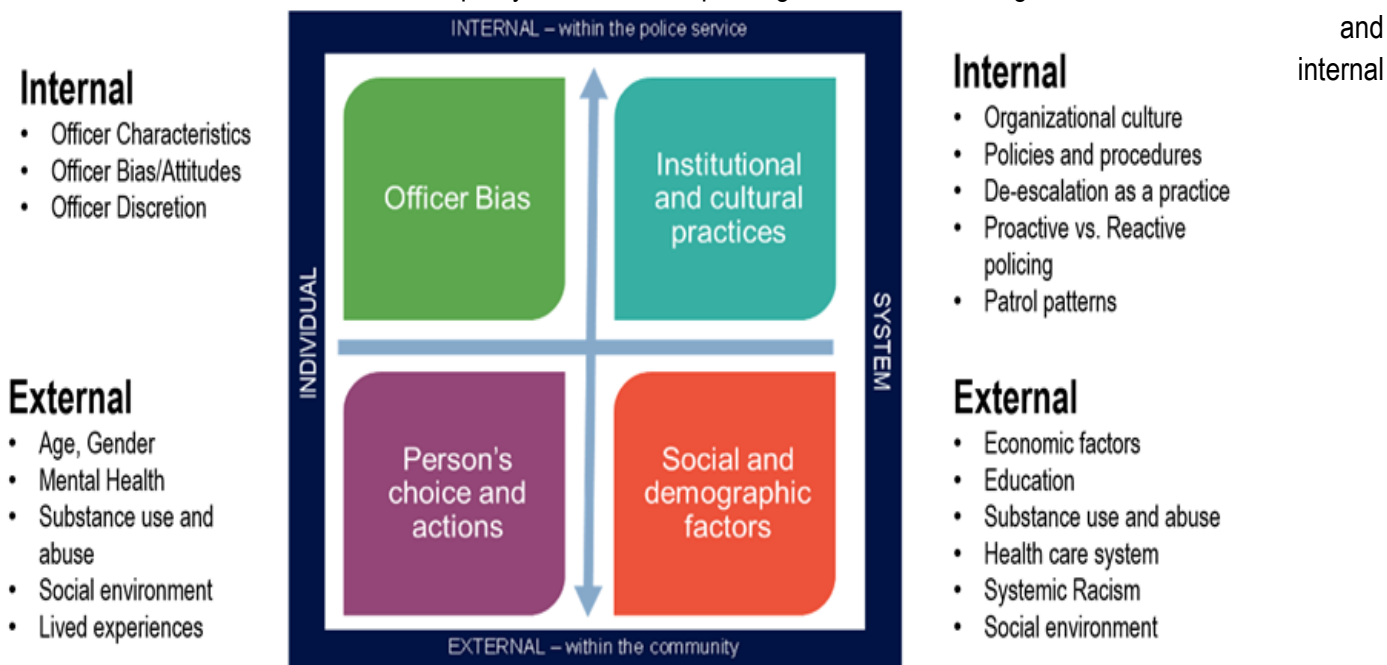


Figure 1. Drivers of Disparity in Use of Force

organizational practices. External factors—such as poverty, housing instability, education access, and community-level crime rates—exist largely outside the control of police but shape the broader context in which policing occurs. Internal factors, by contrast, stem from within the police organization itself, including operational policies, officer decision-making, resource allocation, and training. Understanding the distinction between these drivers is critical: external conditions may influence who comes into contact with police, while internal practices shape how those encounters are managed. HPS’s analysis is designed to account for both dimensions when interpreting disproportionality and disparity findings.

Contextualizing Racial Disparities: Analyzing Multiple Factors

While disproportionality and disparity indices are essential **diagnostic tools**—and a minimum requirement under the ARDS—they offer only a partial view of the systemic dynamics at play. These indices show whether racial groups are over- or under-represented in use of force incidents, **but they do not account for why force was used, or whether different levels of force were applied based on the situation.** In practice, community members, the CAP, and the internal project team have

³ See *Ontario Anti-Racism Data Standards*, Standard 30.

raised important questions that require a deeper level of analysis—questions that demand consideration of multiple, interacting factors.

Analyzing multiple factors alongside race provides a more complete picture of what may be driving disparities in use of force. This approach goes beyond basic comparisons by considering the full context of each incident—such as whether a weapon was present, the type of call, and whether de-escalation was attempted. By examining these factors together, we can assess, for instance, whether race continues to be associated with different outcomes even when the situations share similar characteristics. This approach recognizes the uniqueness of each encounter. Each incident involves a distinct set of circumstances, shaped by the actions of all individuals involved, the environment, and the information available at the time. This complexity has directly informed HPS's approach to analysis—underscoring the need to move beyond surface-level comparisons and consider the full context in which use of force incidents occur.

In future reports under the RIBD Strategy, HPS plans to expand its analysis to include this more detailed approach. While disproportionality and disparity indices help identify patterns, analyzing multiple contributing factors will support a deeper understanding of when and how racial disparities arise. This aligns with ARDS guidance under Standard 32, which encourages public organizations to move beyond basic statistics—particularly when notable differences are identified—to better interpret the potential causes of racial inequalities.⁴

The goal is not to replace disproportionality and disparity measures, but to build on them. By considering the broader context—including social conditions and internal operational practices—HPS aims to move from identifying surface-level trends to understanding what may be driving them. This reflects the Strategy's commitment to evidence-based improvement, community accountability, and a more meaningful understanding of racial equity in policing outcomes.

Consistent with Standard 32, HPS will continue to draw on the insights of its Community Advisory Panel to support the analysis and interpretation of findings. Advisory committees play a vital role in ensuring diverse perspectives—including lived experience, subject-matter expertise, and community priorities—are reflected in how race-based data is understood and acted upon. Further discussion of this approach is included below.

3. Community Advisory Panel (CAP) Engagement and Question Generation

From the outset, the HPS RIBD Strategy emphasized that community voice must play a central role not only in interpreting race-based data, but in shaping the very questions asked of it. In alignment with the ARDS and reflecting the HPS' broader commitment to transparency and collaboration, the Community Advisory Panel (CAP) was established to support all phases of the Strategy. The CAP is composed of 10 diverse members, including representatives from Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities, as well as youth and individuals with experience in social services, academia, advocacy, and community organizing. Their contributions are grounded in both lived experience and subject-matter expertise.

Engagement with the CAP ensures that the RIBD Strategy is not simply a technical exercise, but a meaningful opportunity to surface community priorities, identify structural challenges, and develop actionable insights. Following the identification of use of force as the Strategy's first operational priority, CAP members collaborated over several sessions to design the core questions for this phase of the analysis. The process began with a review of the academic and policy literature, highlighting what is currently known about racial disparities in police use of force both in Canada and in comparative contexts.

Building on this discussion, CAP members generated a series of key questions grounded primarily in their lived experience, community knowledge, and expertise. While the panel reviewed relevant academic and policy literature, the questions were shaped most directly by the concerns and priorities CAP members brought forward from their own communities. Over multiple

⁴ See *Ontario Anti-Racism Data Standards*, Standard 32.

meetings, they refined and prioritized the questions based on their relevance, clarity, and potential to drive meaningful change. This process was structured around three key stages:

1. **Question Generation:** CAP members worked together to generate questions informed by their lived experiences, expertise, and understanding of community needs. The aim was to identify what the data should highlight — not just what was easy to measure.
2. **Refinement:** Grouped similar questions and clarified wording to ensure the final questions were actionable, measurable, and aligned with available data.
3. **Prioritization:** The CAP assessed each question based on criteria including community impact, technical feasibility, data quality, and alignment with the Strategy's equity goals. This resulted in a focused, community-driven set of priorities for this phase of work.

These questions reflect a range of community concerns about racial equity in policing, particularly with regard to the use of force. Each question is rooted in lived experience and shaped by evidence, and together they aim to provide a clearer understanding of when, how, and for whom use of force occurs in Hamilton. While the findings are grounded in available data, they are also intended to prompt further dialogue, deeper inquiry, and thoughtful action.

The prioritized questions include:

1. Are HPS officers more likely to employ force against individuals perceived to be from particular identity groups—such as Black, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, South Asian, Latinx, or younger individuals?
2. Do racialized individuals experience higher levels of force? Do disparities persist even when we account for the circumstances surrounding each incident?
3. Are racialized individuals more or less likely to experience de-escalation efforts prior to force being applied?
4. Are some areas of Hamilton more likely to experience higher levels or types of force?
5. Are officer characteristics (e.g., years of experience) associated with the likelihood or severity of force?
6. Are there particular subject attributes that are associated with use of force beyond race and identity?
7. Of all the calls for service, what are the characteristics of the subject of those calls?

These questions reinforce the importance of examining not just whether disparities exist, but why they occur. Each question implicitly points to the need to consider multiple, intersecting factors—such as perceived race, subject behavior, officer experience, location, and the presence or absence of de-escalation—when analyzing use of force outcomes. **As discussed in the previous section, HPS's next phases of analysis will incorporate these variables to better understand how different elements interact and contribute to disparities.** This approach reflects the Strategy's commitment to evidence-informed decision-making, and to ensuring that community-identified questions are answered with both depth and accountability.

In addition to the CAP, HPS established an Internal Project Team in early 2024 to ensure that operational insights and organizational realities are fully integrated into the development and interpretation of race-based data analyses. Composed of sworn and civilian members from various units—ranging from front-line operations and custody to training, records, and strategic initiatives—the Internal Project Team provides critical perspectives from within the Service.

Following the CAP's development of key questions, the Internal Project Team was convened to review the Strategy's direction and provide feedback. During a dedicated session in May 2025, members affirmed the importance of the CAP's questions and expressed strong support for the overall analytical framework. They also identified additional variables of interest that

could further strengthen the analysis, including officer race, officer gender, as well as officer workload indicators (e.g., number of shifts, hours worked, or calls attended).

These suggestions underscore the importance of considering not only subject characteristics and incident context, but also officer-specific factors that may shape outcomes. The Internal Project Team's contributions complement those of the CAP by embedding practical knowledge and internal accountability into the Strategy's design. Together, the CAP and Internal Project Team help ensure that the RIBD Strategy remains grounded in both community expectations and institutional realities—strengthening the relevance, feasibility, and impact of this work moving forward.

4. HPS Use of Force Data

Use of force was identified as the first operational priority of the RIBD Strategy. Both historical patterns and ongoing concerns about racial disproportionalities in the use of force—particularly among Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities—made this a natural focus for the first phase of analysis. Concerns about use of force are deeply rooted in lived experiences, intergenerational trauma, and high-profile incidents across Canada, the United States, and internationally. Within the Hamilton context, community members, advocacy organizations, and CAP representatives have consistently emphasized the need for greater transparency and accountability regarding racial disparities in policing outcomes, especially those involving physical interventions.

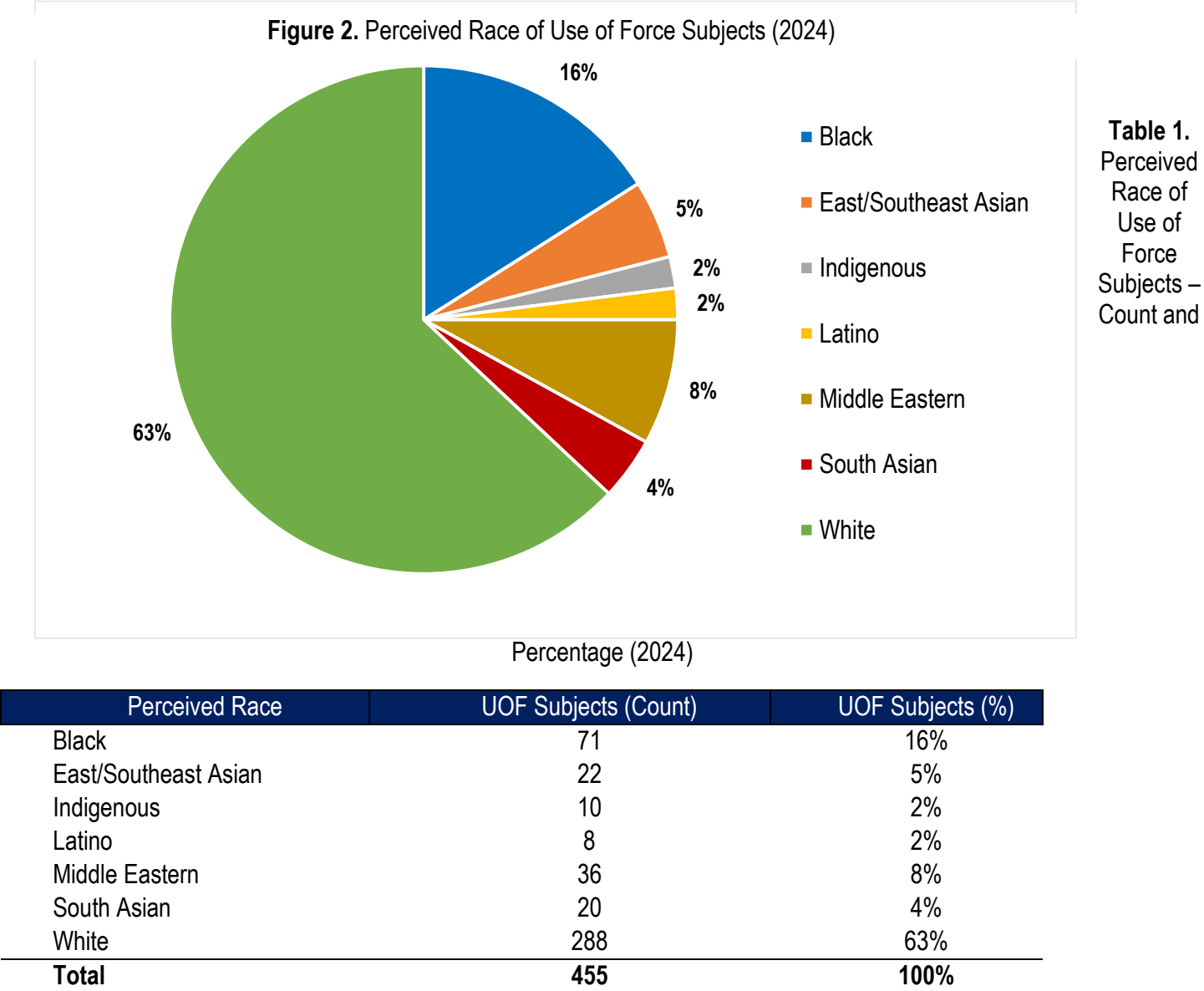
To monitor and analyze use of force events, HPS systematically collects detailed information through mandatory use of force reports. These reports must be completed whenever an officer applies physical force beyond compliant handcuffing, draws or uses a weapon, or where a subject suffers injury during police interaction. Reports capture a range of critical variables, including situational context, subject and officer characteristics, type of force used, perceived subject behaviour, injuries sustained, and perceived race of the subject. This structured data collection forms the foundation for analyzing use of force patterns and measuring progress under the RIBD Strategy. The race-based data collection process is guided by the *Anti-Racism Act*, 2017 and the ARDS, which prescribe both the required data elements and standardized collection methods. To comply with these requirements, all Ontario police agencies, including HPS, submit standardized Use of Force Reports electronically to the Ministry of the Solicitor General.

Notably, race is recorded based on officer perception—not self-identification—to capture the role that perceived race may play in officers' assessments during critical moments. Officers' perceptions may be informed by observable features such as skin colour, hair texture, facial features, voice, accent, attire, or contextual information from dispatch or prior encounters. The use of perception-based race data, as mandated by the *Anti-Racism Act*, is intended to reflect how race is understood and acted upon by officers during real-time interactions. It focuses on officer perception at the time force is used, recognizing that biases—whether conscious or unconscious—operate at the level of perception, not formal identity confirmation.

This approach supports a key goal of the RIBD Strategy: identifying how perceived race may influence policing outcomes. However, it also requires careful interpretation. Officers' perceptions may not always align with individuals' self-identified race, and social narratives, stereotypes, and implicit biases can shape racial perceptions in complex ways. HPS acknowledges these limitations. Throughout its analysis and reporting, the Service remains committed to clearly communicating that findings are based on perceived race, ensuring transparency and encouraging thoughtful, informed engagement with the results. Together, this evolving system of data collection—grounded in the *Anti-Racism Act* and standardized across Ontario—forms the operational backbone for analyzing use of force outcomes under the RIBD Strategy.

5. 2024 Use of Force Trends

Figure 2 presents the racial composition of individuals involved in police use of force by the Hamilton Police Service in 2024, based on officers' perceptions at the time of the incident. Table 1 provides the same information in tabular form. Out of a total of 455 subjects, 71 were perceived to be Black (16%), 22 East/Southeast Asian (5%), 10 Indigenous (2%), 8 Latino (2%), 36 Middle Eastern (8%), 20 South Asian (4%), and 288 White (63%). While these figures provide a snapshot of the perceived race of individuals involved in use of force incidents, they do not answer whether police use force equitably across racial groups in similar situations. As shown in **Figure 2** and **Table 1**, some racialized groups appear more frequently among use of force subjects relative to others, but this alone does not confirm over- or under-representation. To evaluate potential disparities, these figures **must first be compared to appropriate benchmark populations**—such as Hamilton's general population or the subset of individuals arrested or apprehended by police—which is the focus of the next section.



Racial Disproportionalities in Use of Force Incidents:

To begin assessing the equity of use of force outcomes, Hamilton Police Service compared the racial composition of individuals involved in use of force incidents in 2024 against two benchmark populations: **the general population of Hamilton** (based on the 2021 Census) and **individuals arrested or apprehended by police in 2024**. The use of these population

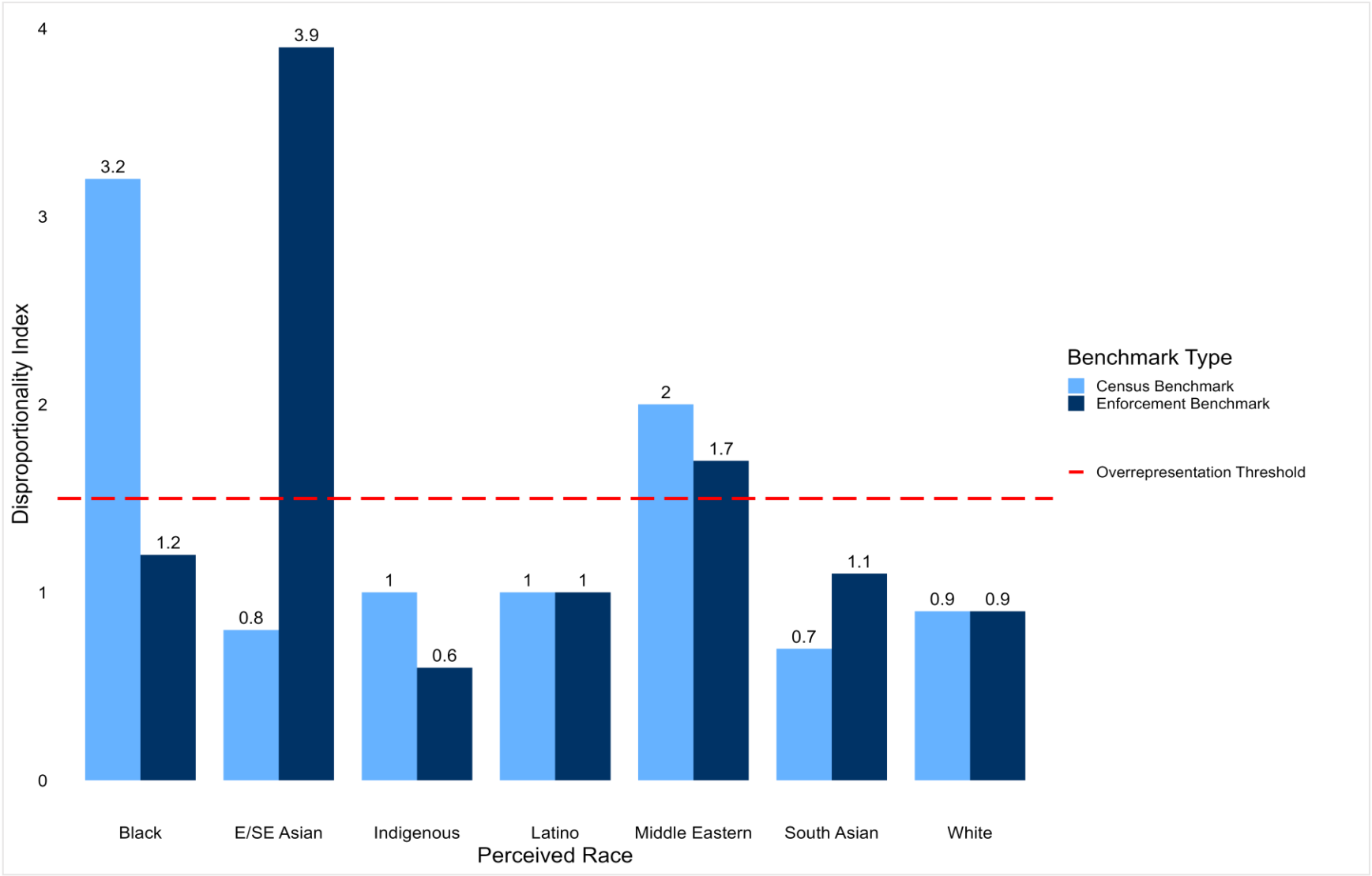
groups in calculating the disproportionality and disparity indexes serves as a diagnostic tool, as required by the *Ontario Anti-Racism Data Standards*, to alert organizations when further investigation is needed.

As shown in **Table 2** and **Figure 3**, the choice of benchmark meaningfully affects how disparities are interpreted. Using the general population as a benchmark, various racialized groups appear over-represented. Individuals perceived to be Black accounted for 16% of use of force subjects despite comprising 5% of Hamilton's population, resulting in a disproportionality index of 3.2. Those perceived to be Middle Eastern made up 8% of subjects but 4% of the population (DI = 2). These figures suggest that, relative to their share of the general population, some groups experienced use of force at higher rates.

Table 2. Use of Force by Perceived Race: Population Benchmarks, Enforcement Benchmarks, and Disproportionality Indices (2024)

Perceived Race	Census (%)	Arrests/Apps (%)	UOF Subjects (Count)	UOF Subjects (%)	DI (Census)	DI (Arrests/Apps)
Black	5	13	71	16	3.2	1.2
E/SE Asian	6	1	22	5	0.8	3.9
Indigenous	2	3	10	2	1	0.6
Latino	2	2	8	2	1	1
Middle Eastern	4	5	36	8	2	1.7
South Asian	6	4	20	4	0.7	1.1
White	74	72	288	63	0.9	0.9

Figure 3. Comparison of Disproportionality Indices (2024)



However, when enforcement-based contact is used as the benchmark—focusing only on those arrested or apprehended by police in 2024—several disparities shift. The disproportionality index for those perceived to be Black decreases to 1.2, indicating that while disproportionality remains, they are less pronounced once police contact is accounted for. For individuals perceived to be East/Southeast Asian, enforcement-based disproportionalities appear more prominent; however, **nearly half of these incidents in 2024 occurred in the context of warrant-focused enforcement projects**. This concentration of activity contributed to the elevated rates of force following police contact for this group. Individuals perceived to be Middle Eastern remain over-represented across both benchmarks, while other groups show closer alignment.

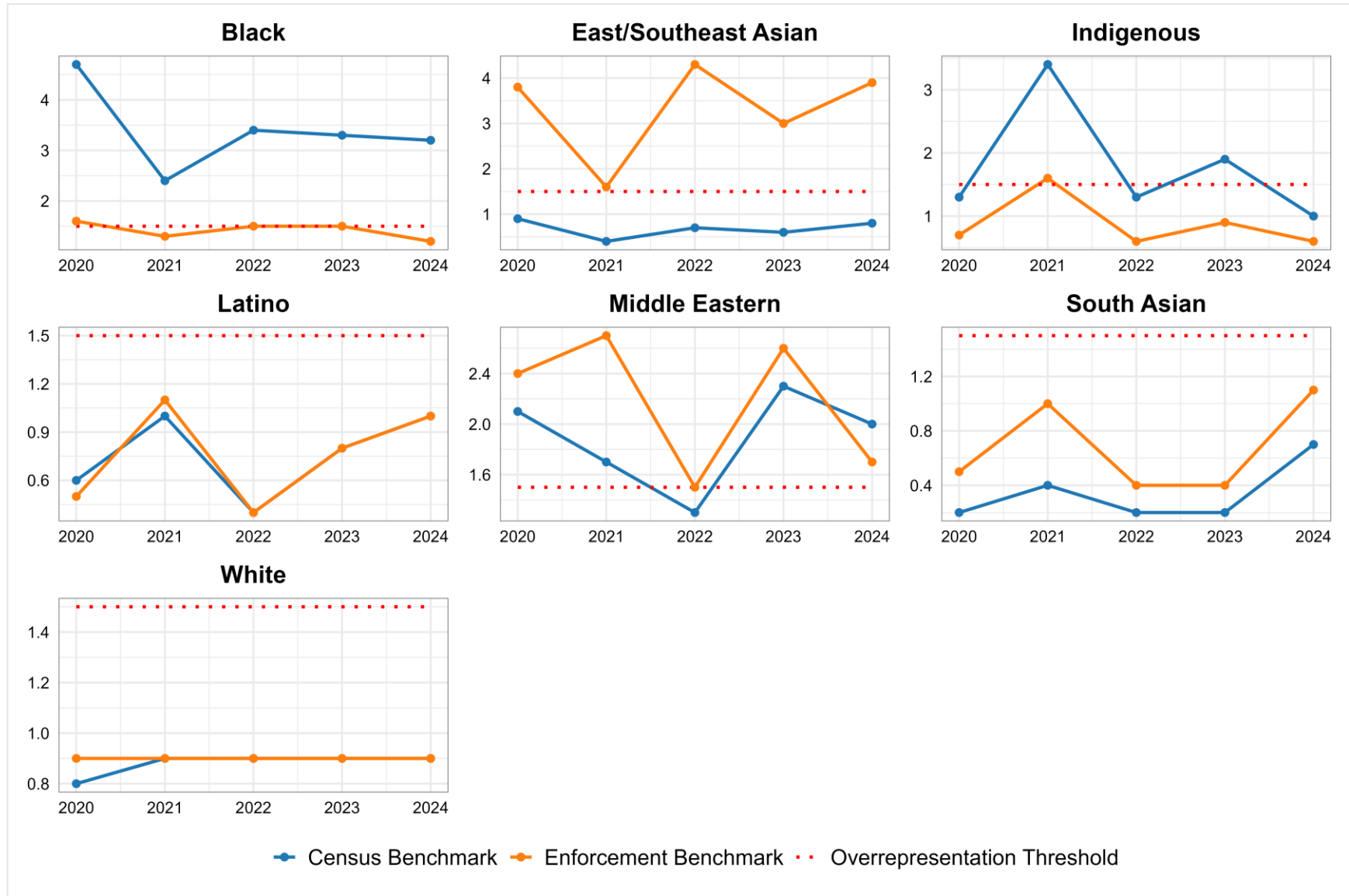
Figure 4 illustrates changes in racial disproportionality indices from 2020 to 2024, using the aforementioned benchmarks. This side-by-side approach helps distinguish between disparities that may be shaped by broader societal conditions and those that emerge specifically in the context of police encounters. From 2020 to 2024, population-based disproportionality indices remained consistently elevated for individuals perceived to be Black and Middle Eastern, with values above 1.5 in most years—indicating over-representation in use of force incidents relative to their share of the general population. When enforcement-based benchmarks were applied, disproportionality indices generally decreased. This suggests that disproportionality observed at the population level may reflect broader societal conditions and upstream factors influencing who comes into contact with police, rather than force outcomes alone. These findings point to the need for deeper, contextual analysis to better understand how individual, situational, and systemic factors intersect—an area that will be explored more fully in the next phase of the RIBD Strategy.

East/Southeast Asian individuals exhibited a consistent divergence between benchmarks. Their population-based indices remained near or below 1.0, while enforcement-based indices ranged from 1.6 to 4.7—pointing to disproportionately higher rates of force once contact occurred. As highlighted, this pattern reflects, in part, the influence of targeted police initiatives. In reviewing 2024 occurrences involving East/Southeast Asian individuals, warrants were identified as the incident type in 45% of cases where force was used. This suggests that specific enforcement projects focused on high-risk crime groups may contribute to elevated enforcement-based disproportionality for this group.

Racial *Disparities* in Use of Force Incidents: A Closer Look at Relative Differences

Whereas **disproportionality indices** compare a group's representation in use of force incidents to their share of a benchmark population, disparity indices go one step further—they **express this relationship relative to a reference group**, in this case individuals perceived to be White. A disparity index above 1.0 indicates that a group experiences use of force at a higher rate than White individuals, after adjusting for the same benchmark. This provides a clearer view of differences and relative inequities, particularly when used to compare outcomes across multiple racial groups. As shown in Figure 5 (2024) and Figure 6 (2020–2024), the interpretation of disparities once again depends on the choice of benchmark. When the general population is used as the comparator, disparity indices for several groups remain elevated. In 2024, individuals perceived to be Black had a population-based disparity index of 3.6, and those perceived to be Middle Eastern and Indigenous had indices of 2.2 and 1.1 respectively. These values indicate that these groups experienced use of force at rates higher than White individuals, relative to their representation in the broader population.

Figure 4. Trends in Disproportionality Indices (2020–2024) by Perceived Race and Benchmark Type.



When the enforcement benchmark is used—comparing rates of force only among those arrested or apprehended—disparities often decline but remain notable in specific cases. In 2024, individuals perceived to be East/Southeast Asian had the highest enforcement-based disparity index (4.3), indicating that once contact occurs, this group experiences force at rates significantly higher than White individuals. This pattern has been consistent across the five-year period and highlights a disparity that is not apparent using population benchmarks alone.

Black individuals also exhibit elevated enforcement-based disparity indices throughout the 2020–2024 period, ranging from 1.3 to 1.9. While these values indicate a higher representation of force relative to White individuals among those who had police contact, they generally hover near the over-representation threshold of 1.5. This suggests that the evidence of racial disparity in use of force for Black individuals is stronger when using general population comparisons, and somewhat less pronounced when examining outcomes within the subset of individuals already involved in enforcement actions.

Meanwhile, disparity indices for Latino and Indigenous individuals tend to fluctuate across both benchmarks and years, with most values near or slightly above 1.0. For South Asian individuals, enforcement-based disparity indices rise steadily over time—reaching 1.2 in 2024—despite low population-based values in earlier years. This shift suggests that disparities may be emerging or increasing within the context of police contact even when broader population benchmarks show minimal over-representation.

It is important to note that disparity indices offer only a partial view. They do not capture the full context surrounding each incident—such as subject behaviour, presence of weapons, or the use of de-escalation techniques. As such, these indices should be understood as diagnostic tools that help flag patterns of concern, but not as standalone evidence of unequal treatment. To assess whether disparities reflect systemic issues, situational dynamics must also be examined alongside the data.

6. Interpreting Data and Setting a Path Forward for *Future Analyses*

This report reflects a foundational step in the HPS' RIBD Strategy. It presents an initial analysis of the racial distribution of police use of force incidents in Hamilton and demonstrates how benchmark selection—whether based on the general population or individuals with enforcement contact—shapes the interpretation of disproportionalities and disparities.

In 2024, racial disparities in use of force varied across groups and were influenced by the benchmark used. Individuals perceived to be Black were notably over-represented when compared to Hamilton's general population, with a disparity index of 3.6. However, this value decreases to 1.3 when the benchmark is limited to individuals arrested or apprehended, indicating that broader patterns in who comes into contact with police may contribute to the overall disparity.

For those individuals perceived as East/Southeast Asian, enforcement-based disparities were the most pronounced. While this group was not over-represented at the population level, it had the highest enforcement-based disparity index (4.3), suggesting disproportionate force outcomes following police contact. Those perceived to be Middle Eastern consistently showed elevated indices across both

benchmarks, reflecting both contact-level and post-contact differences in outcomes. Disparity indices for Indigenous, Latino, and South Asian individuals were closer to parity but fluctuated across years.

While disproportionality and disparity indices are important starting points—minimum requirements under Ontario’s *Anti-Racism Data Standards*—they are not sufficient on their own. These indices are diagnostic tools: **they indicate whether racial groups are over- or under-represented in a given outcome relative to a benchmark, but they do not explain why those differences exist**. They do not offer insight into the circumstances of each incident, the actions of individuals involved, or the institutional practices that shape enforcement outcomes. In short, they identify potential disparities but cannot uncover their causes.

This limitation is not just technical—it is conceptual. Disproportionality and disparity metrics reduce complex, context-specific encounters to single ratios. They do not account for factors like subject behaviour, threat level, presence of weapons, incident type, or whether de-escalation tactics were used. Nor do they consider officer-level characteristics such as years of experience, or organizational factors like deployment patterns and training. **Without this context, even large disparities cannot tell us whether force was appropriate, avoidable, or influenced by systemic biases.**

As Figure 1 illustrates, disparities in use of force may be driven by both external social conditions and internal police practices. External factors—such as mental health, substance abuse, community crime levels—may influence who comes into contact with police. Internal factors—such as policies, decision-making protocols, resource allocation, and training—determine how those encounters are managed. Disproportionality and disparity indices do not distinguish between these drivers. They cannot tell us whether an over-representation results from societal inequities outside police control or from internal practices that may require process change.

Even benchmark selection—which can affect the interpretation of the data—introduces challenges. Population benchmarks are useful for identifying broad structural inequities but include individuals who may never interact with police. Enforcement-based benchmarks narrow the focus to those already subject to police contact, but reflect earlier discretionary decisions about stops, arrests, and apprehensions. Neither is neutral. Each carries embedded assumptions about what equity means in the context of policing, and both must be interpreted with caution.

Therefore, disproportionality and disparity indices are not endpoints, but entry points—tools that raise questions, not answer them. They help establish a baseline and identify patterns that warrant further scrutiny, but they must be complemented by more robust, contextual analysis.

That is the purpose of the next phase of the RIBD Strategy. Working in close partnership with the CAP, HPS will move beyond basic disproportionality and disparity measures to conduct a more in-depth, contextual analysis of police use of force. This next phase will examine how multiple, intersecting factors might interact to shape use of force outcomes. The goal is not simply to measure disparities, but to better understand their underlying drivers—and to identify where changes to practice or policy may be warranted.

Figure 5. Comparison of Disparity Indices (2024)

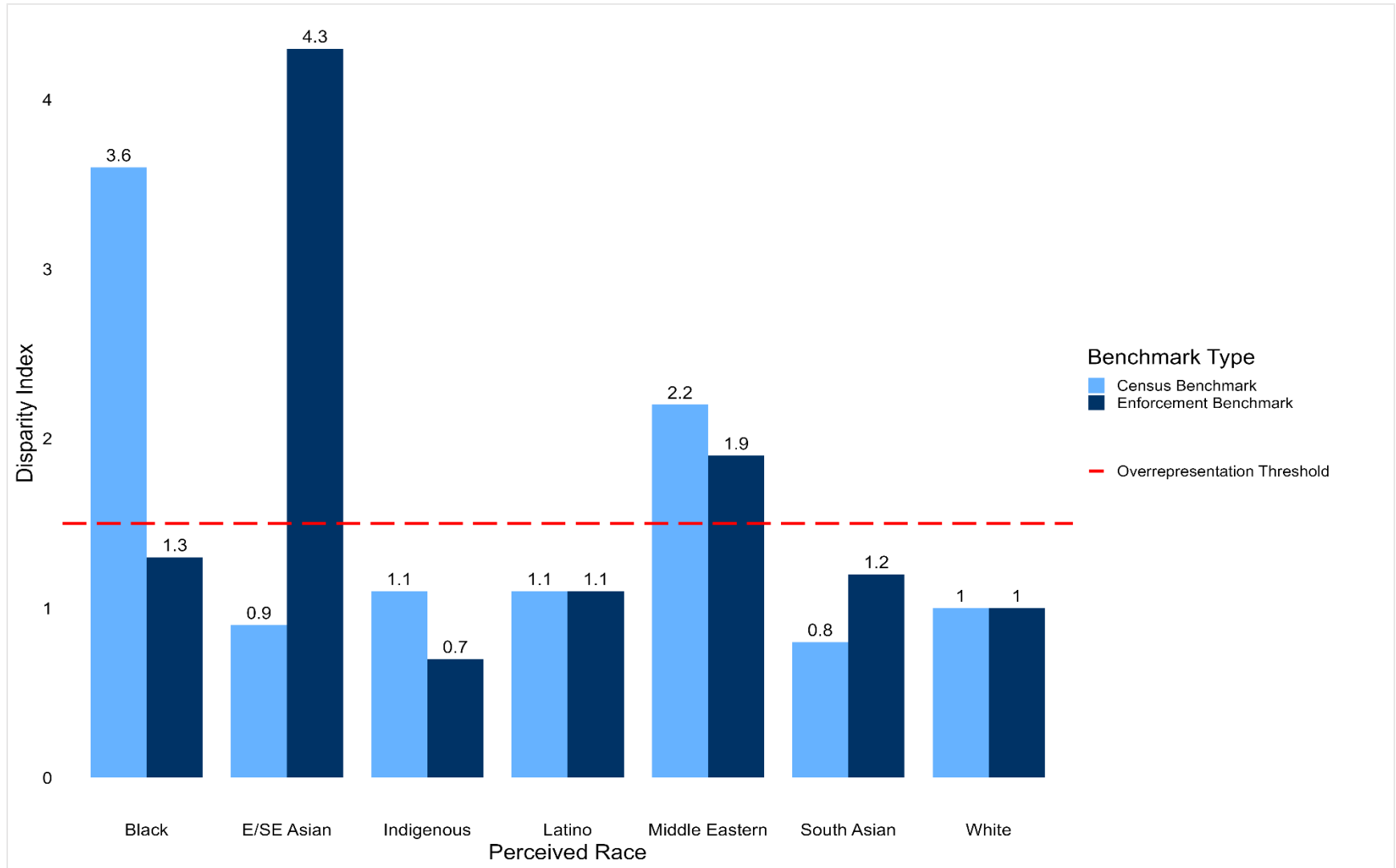
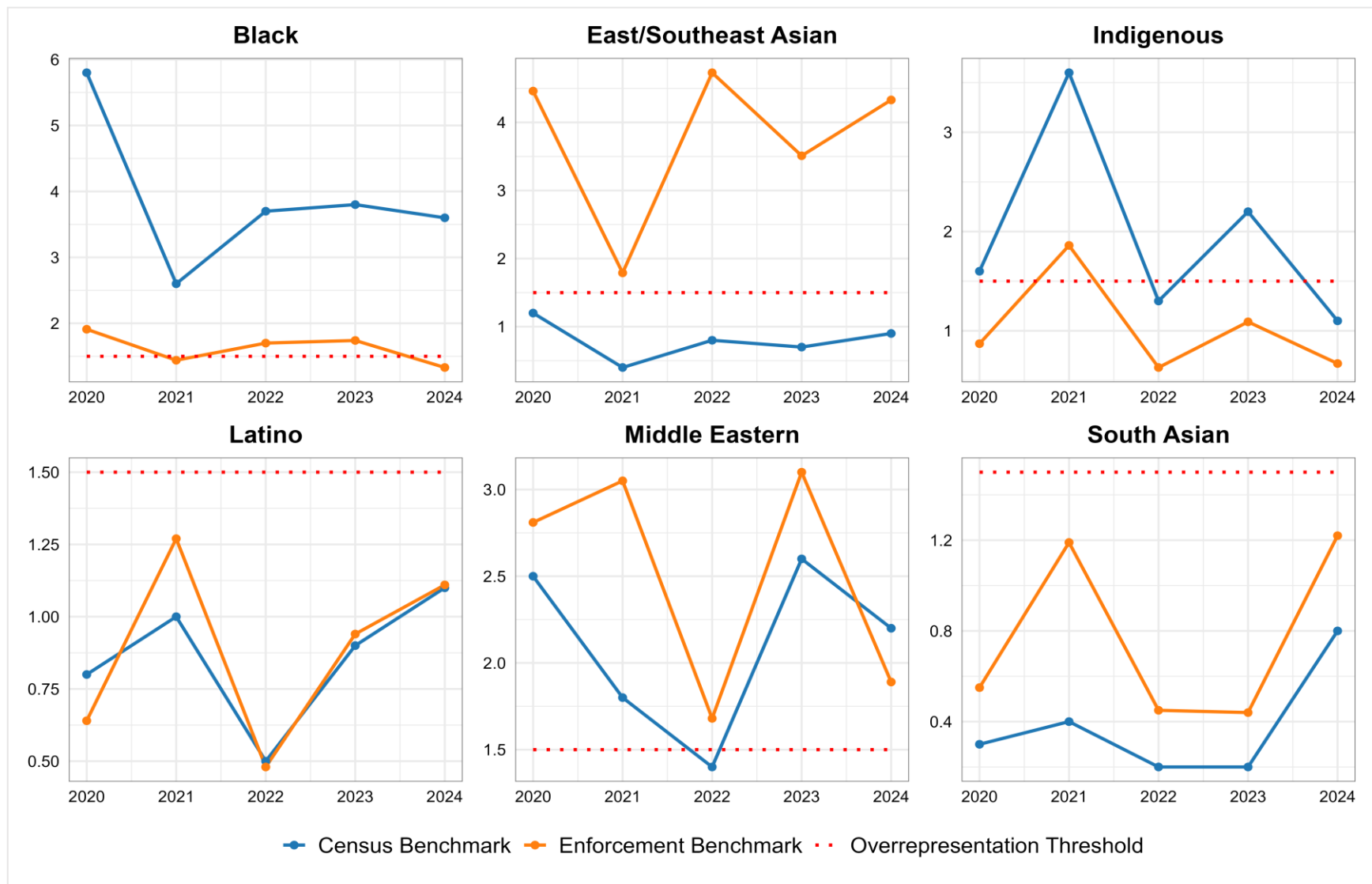


Figure 5. Trends in Disparity Indices (2020–2024) by Perceived Race and Benchmark Type



This direction is directly informed by the CAP's work. Over several months, CAP members collaboratively generated, refined, and prioritized a set of key questions to guide the RIBD analysis. Each question emerged from members' lived experience, expertise, and their careful review of the available data. Together, these questions reflect concerns not only about whether racial disparities exist, but about how, when, and for whom force is used in Hamilton. For instance, the CAP emphasized the need to explore whether racialized individuals experience higher levels of force, whether disparities persist once situational factors are accounted for, and whether de-escalation is applied equitably across groups. Other questions focused on geographic variation in outcomes, the influence of officer characteristics, and the role of specific subject attributes beyond race.

These community-driven priorities are not incidental—they are central to the RIBD Strategy's long-term vision. They move the work toward deeper, more meaningful inquiry that is grounded in both data and dialogue, reinforcing the Strategy's commitment to sustained, community-informed progress. In short, the work ahead will build on this report's baseline findings. But it will also go further—drawing on the questions raised by the community to guide a more nuanced, evidence-informed understanding of racial equity in policing outcomes.