



# Strategies & Considerations for Providing a More Equitable Crisis Continuum for People of Color in the U.S.

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NASMHPD COMMISSIONERS' CALL

AUGUST 19, 2021

# Introduction

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- People of Color in the U.S. face barriers to healthcare access and quality as a result of historic, structural, and institutional racism, as well as implicit and explicit bias from individuals.
- These barriers impact the availability, the accessibility, and the quality of crisis services for People of Color.
- The goal of this paper is to identify strategies that State Behavioral Health Authorities and providers can implement to start to reduce these barriers to care, while improving the availability, accessibility, and quality of crisis services.

# Acknowledgements

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# Alignment of Sociopolitical Climate with Funding and Programmatic Opportunities

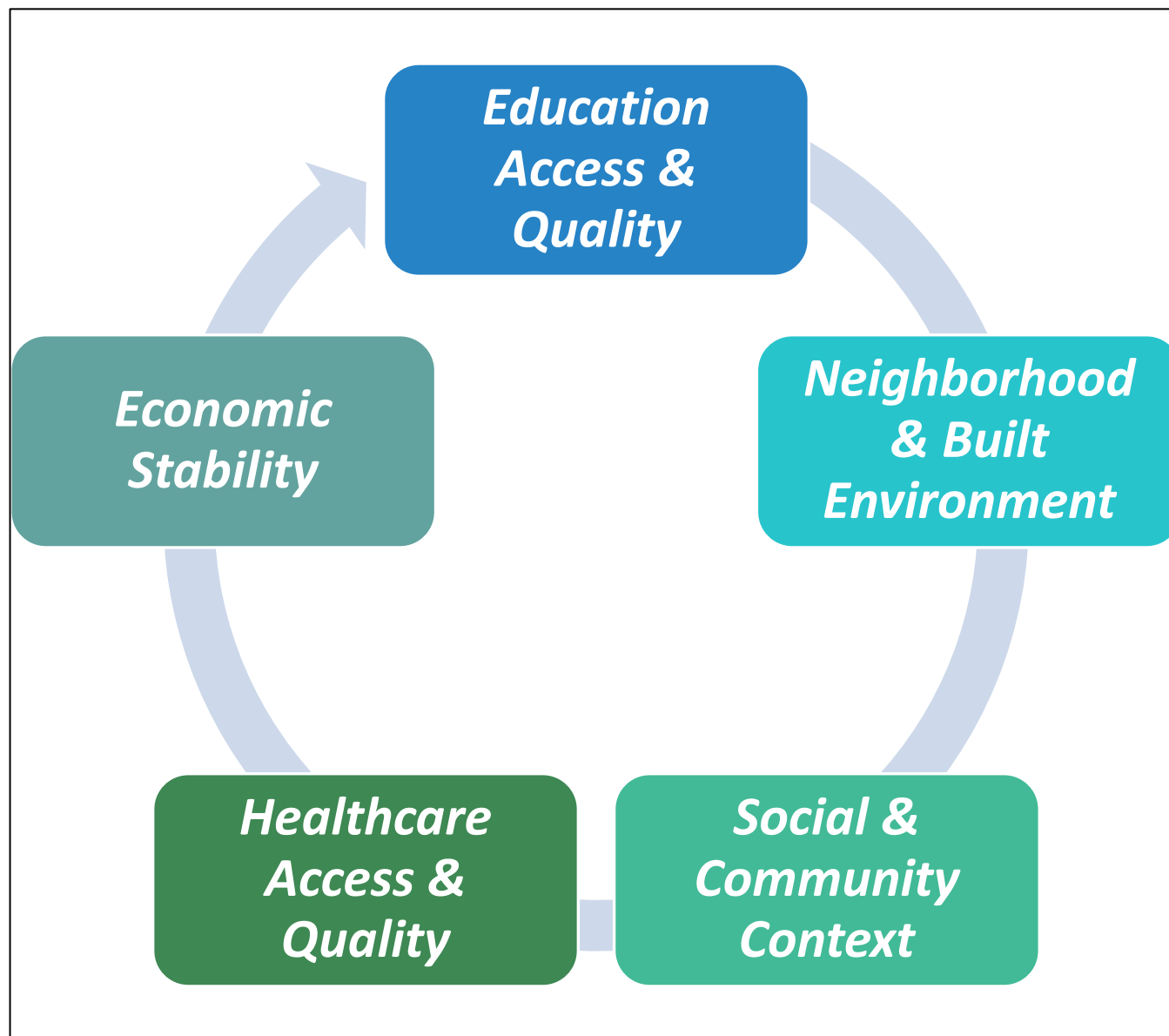
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- Sociopolitical Climate
  - Police Shootings and Black Lives Matter Movement
  - President Biden's Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government
- Funding Opportunities:
  - American Rescue Plan
  - Mental Health Block Grant Set Aside for Crisis Services
- Programmatic Opportunities:
  - 988

## *Social Determinants of Health:*

The conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health and quality of life risks and outcomes.

Source: CDC, 2018  
[Social Determinants of Health | CDC](#)



# Social Determinant of Health: Healthcare Access and Quality

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Healthcare Access and Quality refers to the connection between an individual's ability to access health and behavioral healthcare services, as well as their level of literacy related to their own health/behavioral health and health/behavioral healthcare systems.

# Strategy: Enhance the Crisis Continuum

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- Crisis Hotlines
- Mobile Crisis Response Teams
- Crisis Stabilization Facilities
- Culturally Sensitive Follow-Up Care

# Strategy: Partner with Community Leaders

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- **Problem:** There is a lack of trust or relatability among communities of color of the mental health crisis system
- **Strategy:** Gain trust and respectability by partnering with trusted community organizations such as:
  - Churches
  - Boys and Girls Clubs
  - Historically Black Colleges and Universities



# Strategy: Improve the Role of Law Enforcement in Crisis Service Response

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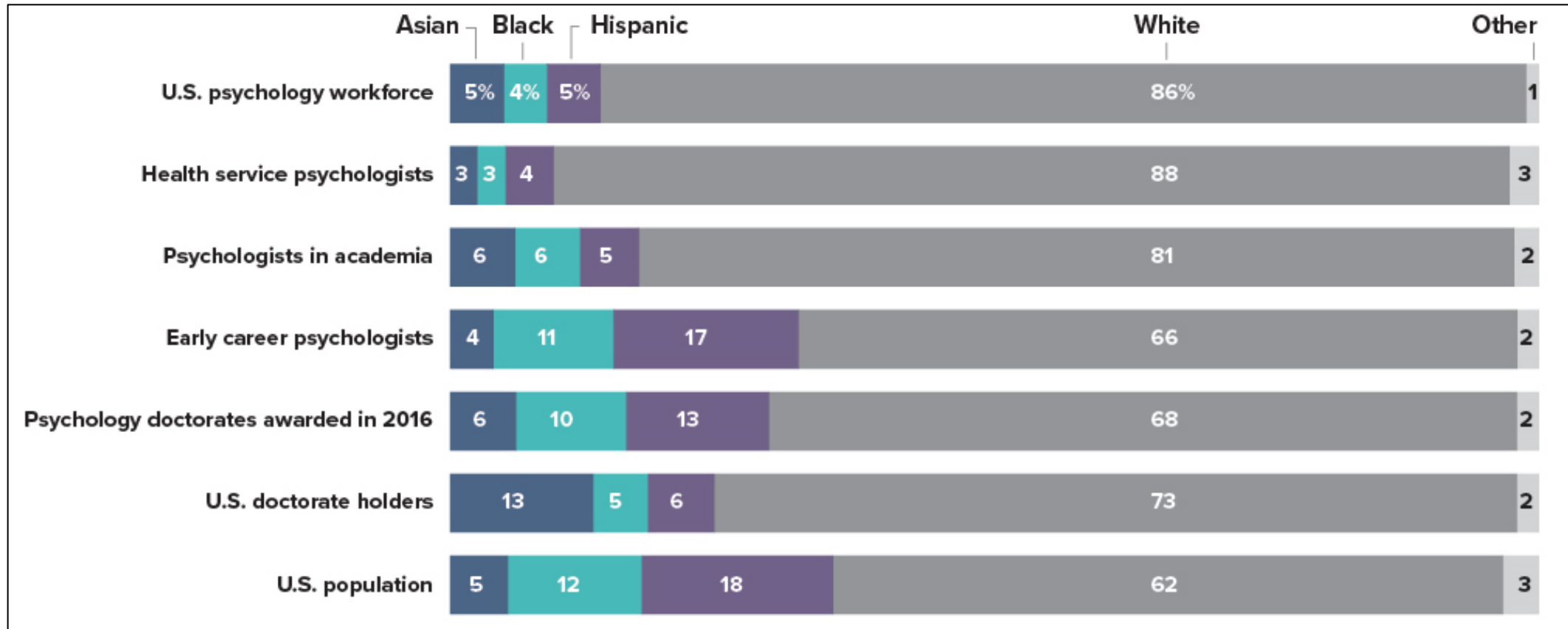
- **Problem:** Law enforcement are often over-used and under-prepared to respond effectively and safely to mental health crises, resulting in traumatic, sometimes devastating, crisis response and a mistrust of the system.
- **Strategies:**
  - Give law enforcement and behavioral health crisis providers the resources they need to effectively and safely respond to crises
  - Train law enforcement in the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) model to effectively respond to and triage crisis situations
  - Equip law enforcement with technology to facilitate how they respond to crisis situations
  - Train law enforcement and the Court system on the Sequential Intercept Model to divert people from jail/punitive interventions
  - Embed crisis response in the 911 system to reduce over-reliance on law enforcement (e.g., Harris County)
  - Co-responder models (e.g. Harlem)

# Strategy: Market the Availability of Crisis Services to Diverse Populations

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- **Problem:** Individuals may be unaware that crisis services exist, and there is often a misconception of what crisis services can do among under-represented communities.
- **Strategies:**
  - Tailor marketing toward individual communities, both in platform and in messaging
  - Partner with trusted community leaders and influencers to promote awareness on social media platforms. Allow your partners to craft the message in their own words for maximum effectiveness

# Strategy: Recruit and Retain a Representative and Culturally Competent Workforce



# Strategy:

## Recruit and Retain a Representative and Culturally Competent Workforce

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- Invest in incentives that attract people of color to the workforce, such as scholarships, childcare, and housing and community supports (e.g., Oregon)
- Increase use of peers
- Train organization on the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS)
- Ensure that providers provide trauma-informed care so that they can provide services that recognize historical and current traumas experienced by people of color
- Partner with HBCUs and other local colleges universities for internship programs and career paths post-graduation (e.g., Oregon)

# Strategy: Improve Diagnostic and Level-of-Care Determination Processes

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- Problem: people of color are disproportionately diagnosed with schizophrenia, psychosis, oppositional defiant disorder, and ADHD compared to White people.
- Strategies:
  - Train clinicians in the CLAS Standards, how to recognize their internal bias, and how to provide services using a strengths-based approach
  - Use standardized assessments (e.g., LOCUS, ANSA, CALOCUS, CANS) to avoid misdiagnoses

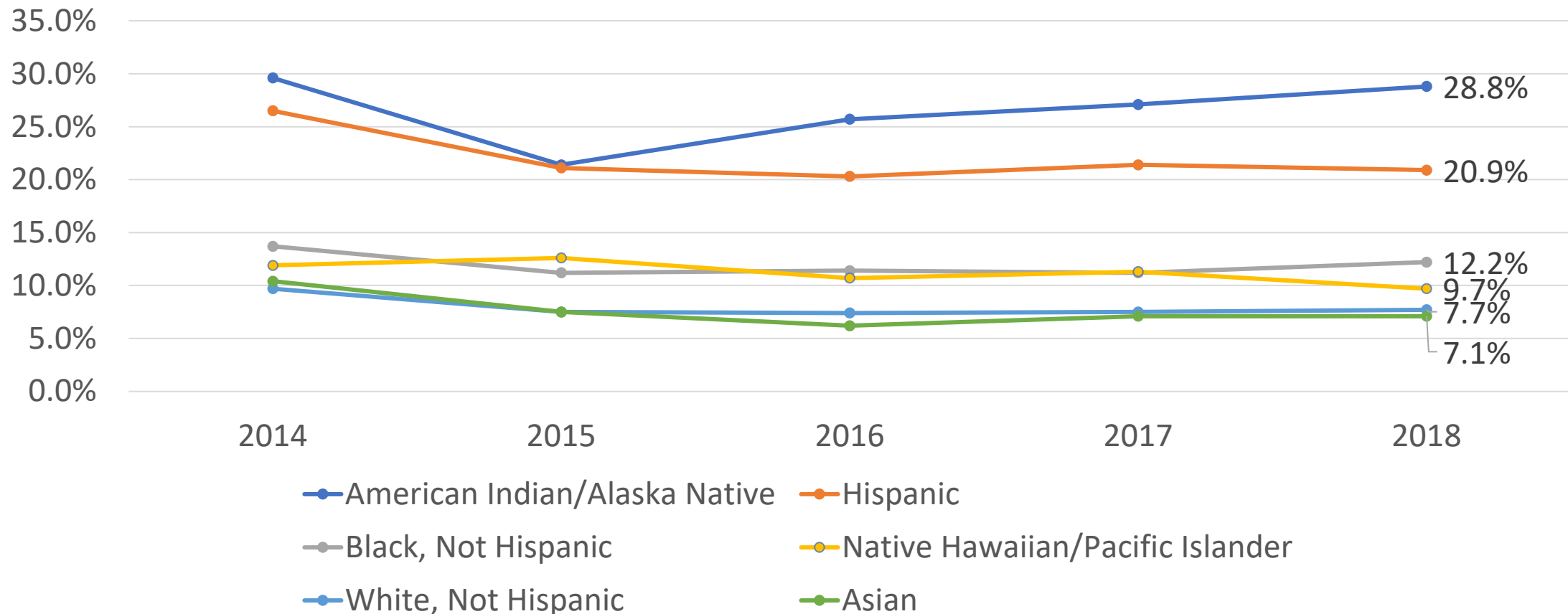
# Strategy: Improve Transparency and Equality in Crisis Services through Data Collection and Outcomes Monitoring

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- **Problem:** Lack of trust in mental health care system by people of color, and an inability to make quality improvement changes due to a lack of information.
- **Strategies:**
  - Although demographic data can be difficult or impossible to collect during a crisis, demographic data can be collected following initial crisis response during scheduling for follow-up appointments
  - Call centers can use caller-id technology to collect phone numbers of callers, which can then be cross-walked with other databases to determine callers' information

# Strategy: Improve Accessibility to Crisis Services by Reducing Financial Barriers

% Under Age 65 Uninsured by Race, 2014-2018



# Strategy: Improve Accessibility to Crisis Services by Reducing Financial Barriers

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- **Strategies:**

- Many crisis and supportive services are provided by non-profit clinics that receive funding from state or local entities and completely cover the costs of services. In these instances, promote that these services are available free of charge to members of the community.
- Use Medicaid waivers to expand coverage to uninsured populations and to provide equitable access to care (e.g., Oregon)



# Social Determinant of Health: Social and Community Context

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Social and community context refers to “the connection between characteristics of the contexts within which people live, learn, work, and play, and their health and wellbeing.” Included within this

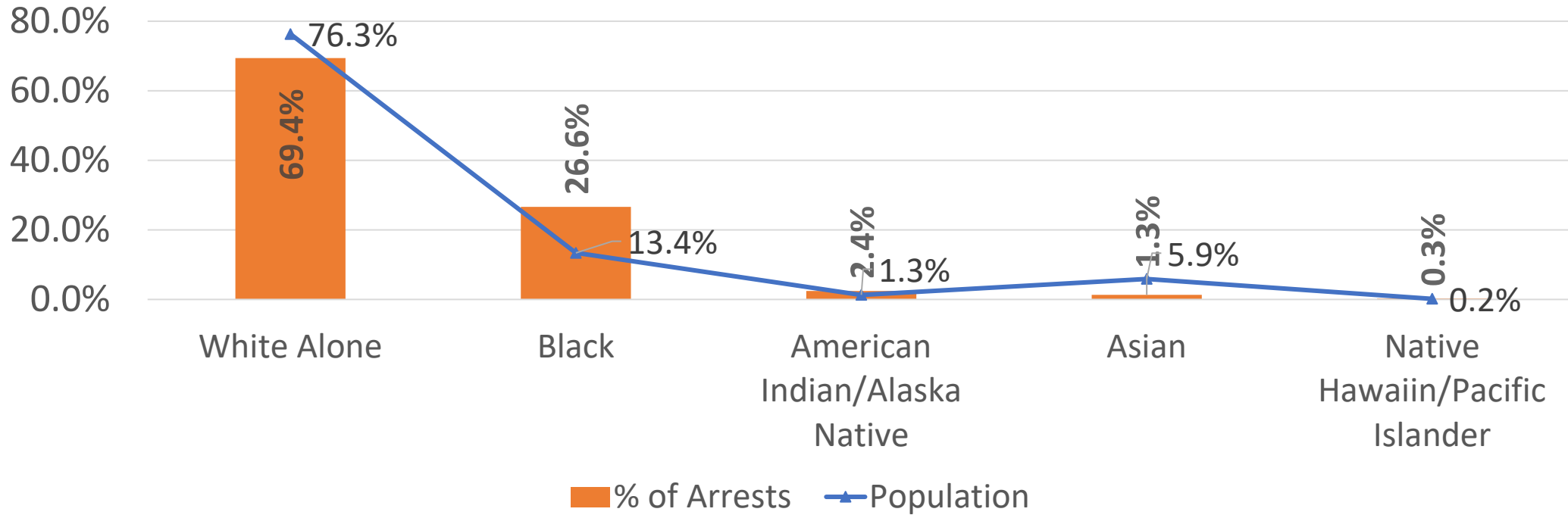
# Strategy: Understand and Address Stigma in Diverse Communities

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- **Problem:** Stigma related to mental health services is often significant and pervasive in communities of color.
  - The thought that our peoples' "story is one of perseverance and resilience; after all, we survived slavery, surely we can survive 'sadness' or 'anxiety.'"
  - The feeling that our communities are "exempt from mental health issues."
  - Stigma is perpetuated when someone becomes institutionalized or incarcerated.
- **Strategies:**
  - Critical to understand how each culture perceives mental health and mental health treatment.
  - Reframe the system from one that is punitive to one that is rehabilitative.
  - Remove stigmatizing language (e.g., "mental health" to "mental wellness")
  - Engage with community partners and promote services through marketing campaigns to normalize the conversation around mental health

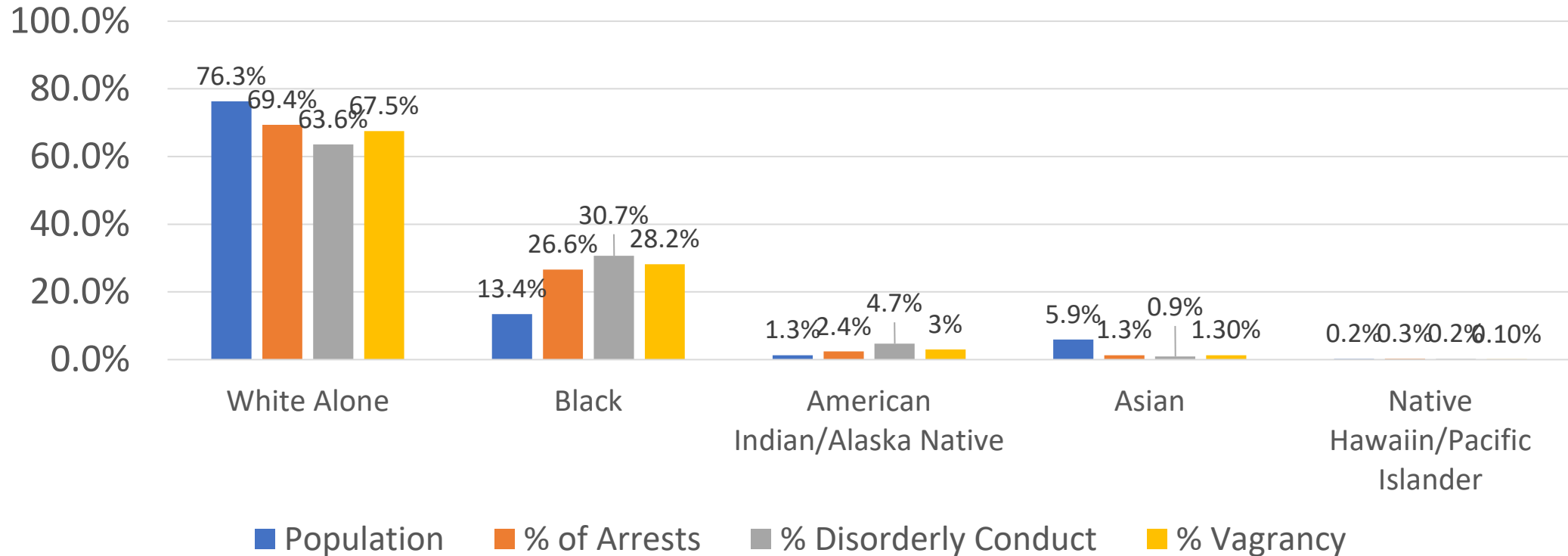
# Strategy: Reduce Incarceration

Percentage of Arrests Compared to Overall Population by Race, 2019



# Strategy: Reduce Incarceration

## Arrests by Race and Charge, 2019



# Strategy: Reduce Incarceration

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- This can be achieved through many of the strategies already discussed, including:
  - Creating a more robust crisis continuum that reduces reliance on law enforcement
  - Equip law enforcement with the training and tools they need to effectively respond to crisis for when they are involved in crisis response
  - Use the Sequential Intercept Model to divert individuals from the court system and punitive consequences to more restorative services.

# Strategy:

## Leadership from the SMHA

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- Leverage funding opportunities from the American Rescue Plan and the Mental Health Block Grant 5% Set Aside for Crisis Services to make equitable improvements.
- Create an office of diversity and inclusion within the SBHA to guide improvements in equity
- Use data and outcomes monitoring to hold providers and offices accountable for equity

# Thank you!

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