Equitable Traffic Enforcement: Targeted Strategies for Change

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Brief History of Connecticut Reforms

- **1999**: Connecticut enacts The Alvin W. Penn Racial Profiling Prohibition Act (Public Act 99-198)

- **2012**: Connecticut makes major reforms to the law

- **2013**: Requires all 107 police agencies to begin electronically collecting and reporting traffic stop data.

- **2015**: First study was published

- **2016-Present**: 8 statewide studies annually.

Why Traffic Stop Data?

- On average, Connecticut law enforcement agencies conduct approximately **550,000** traffic stops a year.

- **Traffic stops are the most common encounter police have with the public.**

- Issues of race and traffic stops brought to the forefront

Early challenges:

- Design an analytical system that can be replicated annually in a **fiscally challenging environment.**

- Build a model that will **improve** the relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Increase **trust** in policing.

  - During the 1990s and 2000s, research conducted across the country often led to reduced trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Fundamental Questions to Address

- Do racial and ethnic **disparities** exist in traffic stop data?

- What are the **factors** driving the disparities that are identified?

- What **interventions** are most effective at reducing/eliminating racial and ethnic disparities and also improving roadway safety?

The Connecticut Model - Four Phases
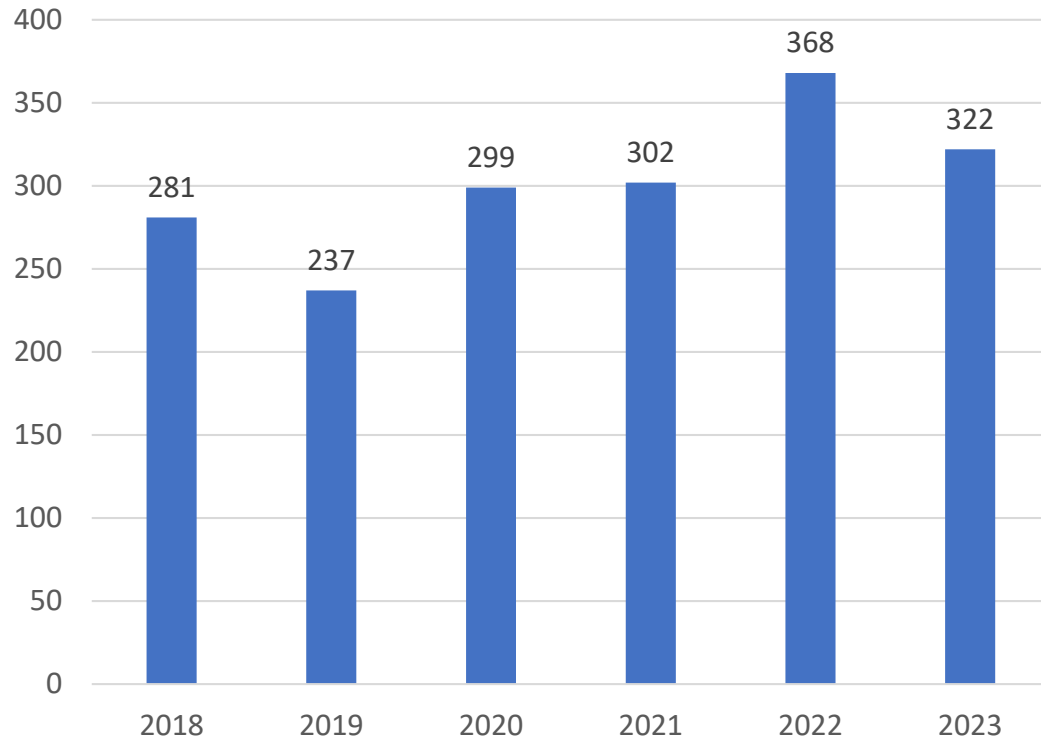
- Phase 1:   **Continuous data** collection
- Phase 2:   **Empirical analysis** of the data
- Phase 3:   **In-depth analyses** for identified high-disparity agencies, including an officer-level analysis.
- Phase 4:   **Community forums and conversations**
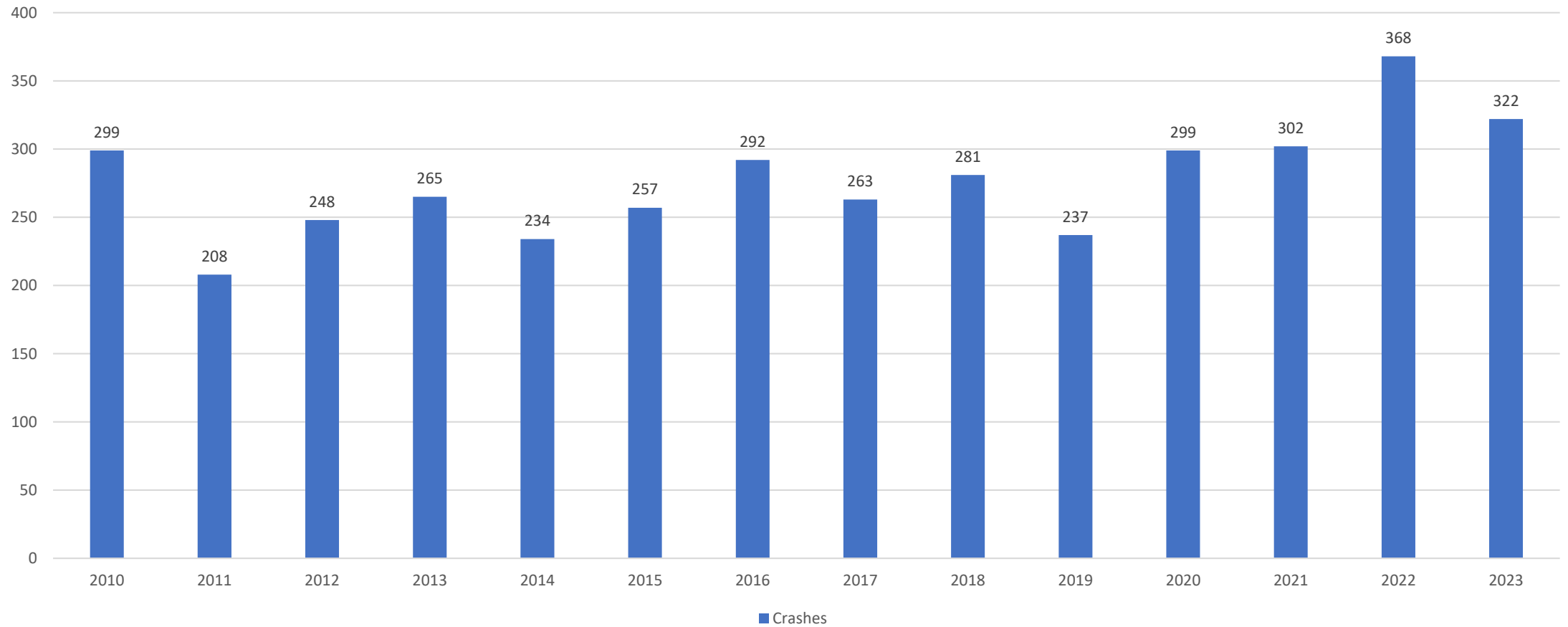
Traffic Crashes by Year (CT)
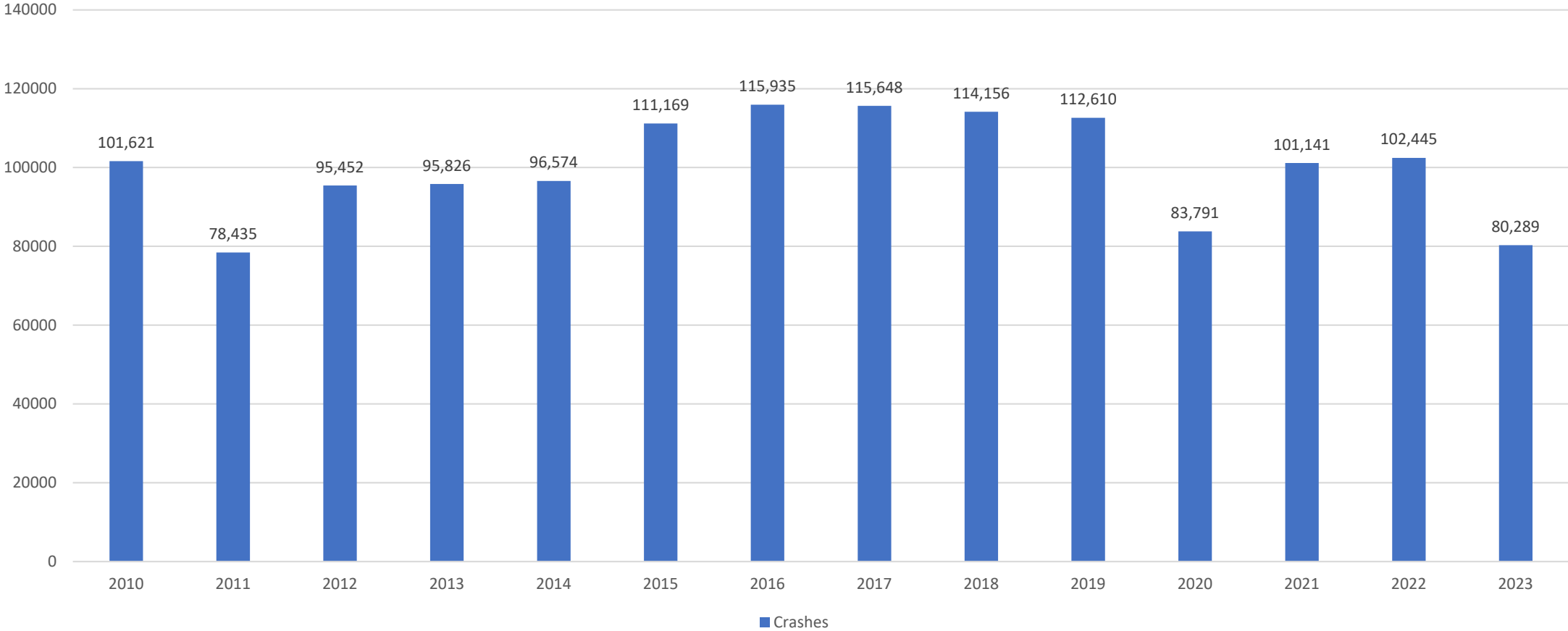
Roadway Fatalities on the Rise

Fatal Crashes by Year
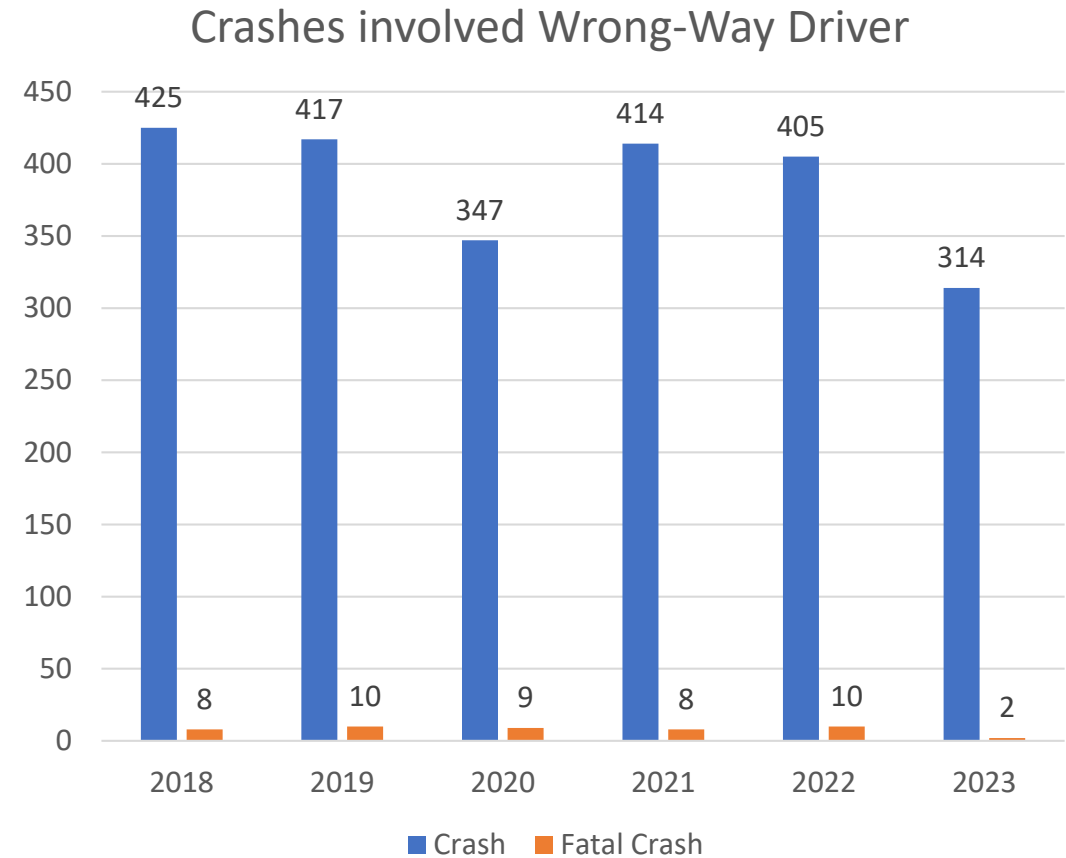

- 31% increase in fatal crashes since 2018 and a 55% increase since 2019 (pre-COVID).

Fatal Traffic Crashes by Year

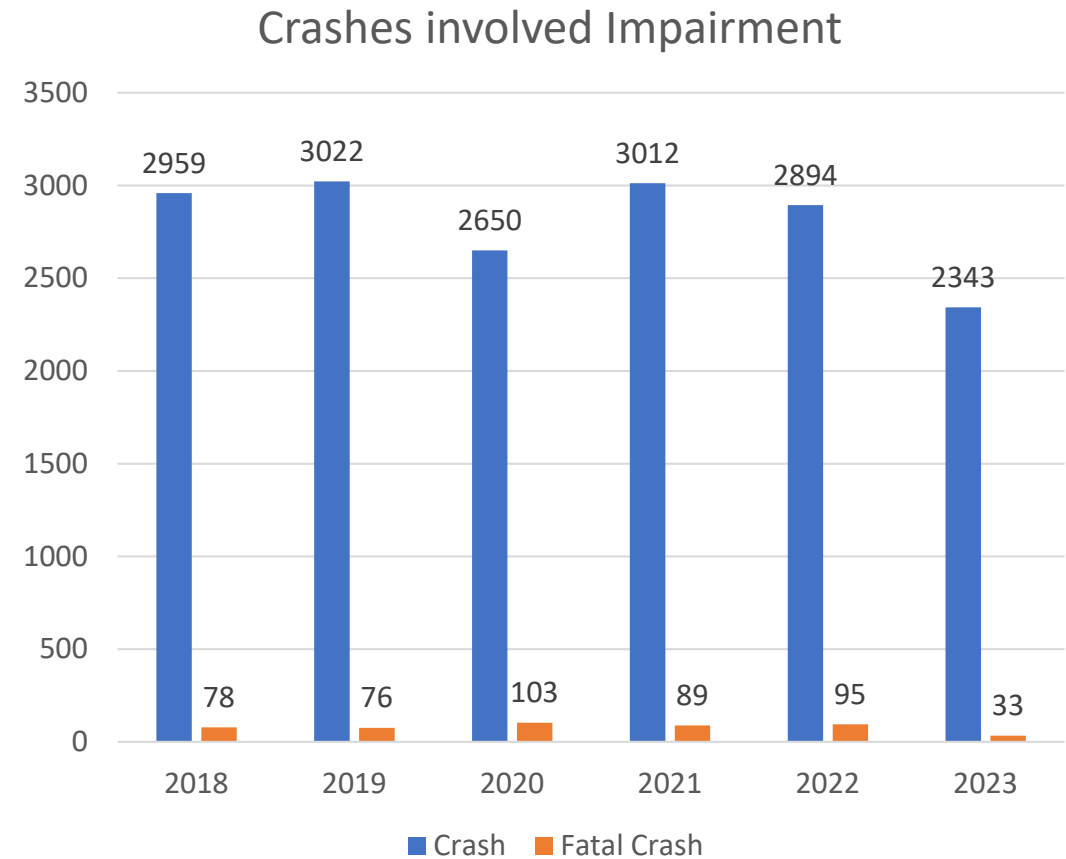| Year	Crashes
2010	299
2011	208
2012	248
2013	265
2014	234
2015	257
2016	292
2017	263
2018	281
2019	237
2020	299
2021	302
2022	368
2023	322

Wrong-Way or Wrong-Side Crashes in the News

- Since 2018, 2,322 crashes have resulted from a wrong-way driver or driver on the wrong side of the road.

- At least 47 people have been killed as a result.
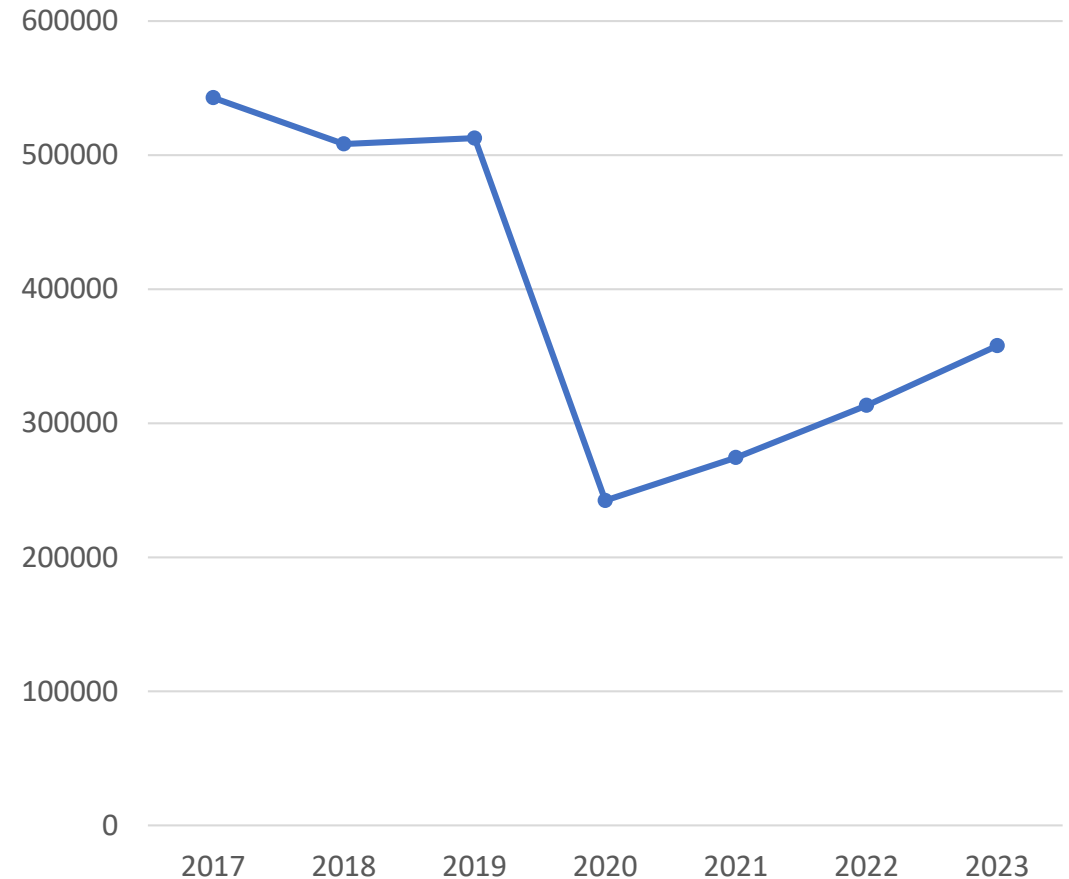
Crashes involved Wrong-Way Driver

Year	Crash	Fatal Crash
2018	425	8
2019	417	10
2020	347	9
2021	414	8
2022	405	10
2023	314	2

■ Crash ■ Fatal Crash

Fatal Crashes-Impaired Increase

- Since 2018, 16,880 crashes have resulted from impairment.
- At least 474 people have been killed as a result.

Crashes involved Impairment

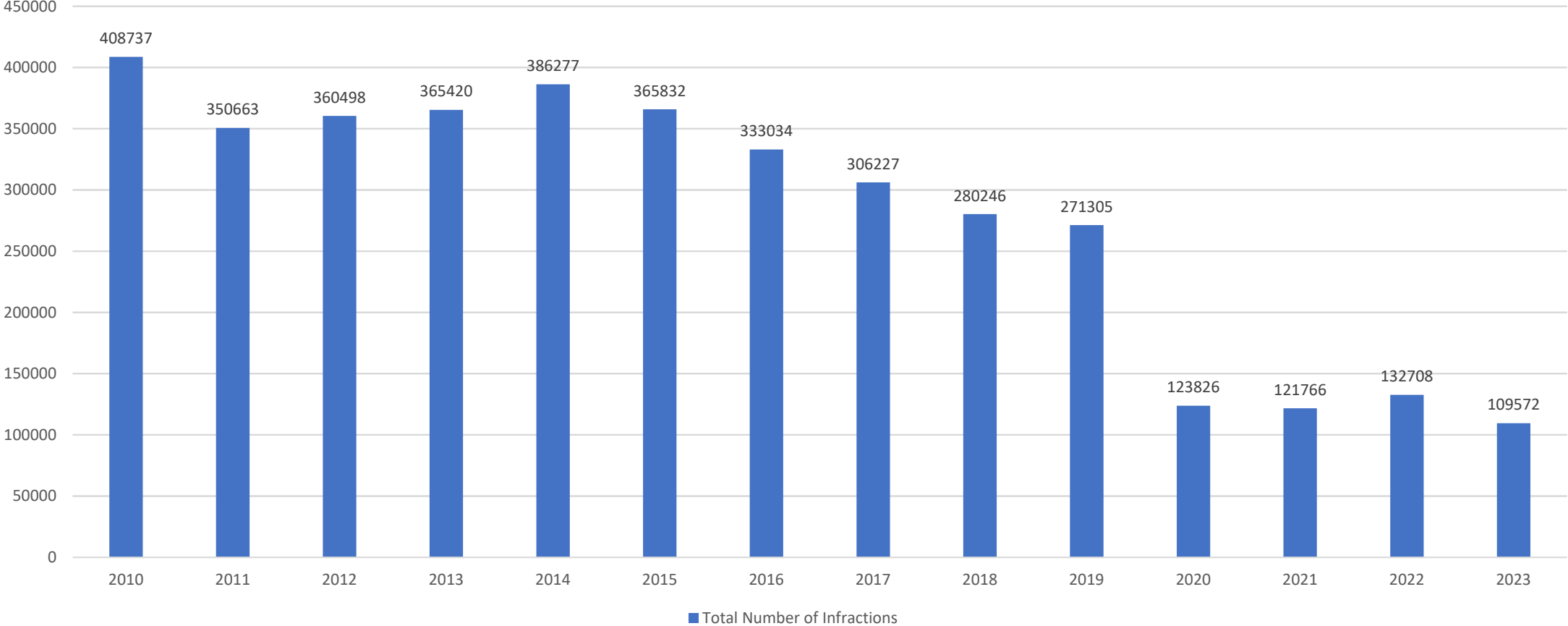| Year	Crash	Fatal Crash
2018	2959	78
2019	3022	76
2020	2650	103
2021	3012	89
2022	2894	95
2023	2343	33

Traffic Enforcement has decreased since 2019

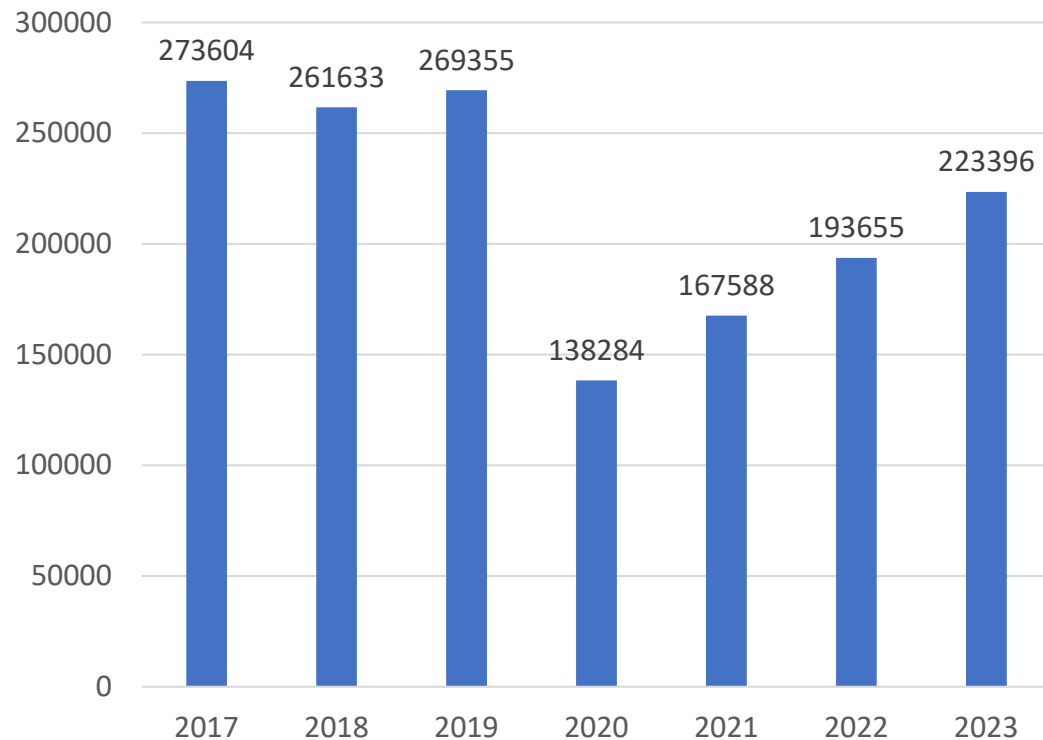- Traffic enforcement decreased by 53% in 2020 compared to the previous calendar year.
  - Statewide enforcement increased by 12% in 2021, compared to 2020, but remained 46% below the 2019 stop total.
  - Statewide enforcement increased by 14% in 2022, compared to 2021, but remained 39% below the 2019 stop total.
  - Statewide enforcement increased by 14% in 2023, compared to 2022, but remained 30% below the 2019 stop total.

Total Number of Infractions Issued

Bar chart titled "Total Number of Infractions Issued" showing yearly values:

Year	Total Number of Infractions
2010	408737
2011	350663
2012	360498
2013	365420
2014	386277
2015	365832
2016	333034
2017	306227
2018	280246
2019	271305
2020	123826
2021	121766
2022	132708
2023	109572

Total Number of Warnings Issued

- Warnings (both written and verbal) have increased as a percentage of all stops conducted. For example, in 2019, warnings made up 52% of all stops. In 2020, warnings increased to 57% of all stops, 61% in 2021, and 62% in 2023.

- Although stops are down across all categories, police are much more likely to issue a warning today compared to 2019.

What is/should be the primary goal of traffic enforcement?

Don't Shy Away from Good Traffic Enforcement

- Racial and ethnic disparities are significantly decreased when law enforcement primarily focuses on safety-related violations
  - Examples: speeding, distracted driving, following too close, traffic light violation
- No evidence that participation in Highway Safety Office safety programs contributes to statewide or departmental disparities.
- It is possible to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in traffic enforcement and improve roadway safety at the same time.

Intervention Success Stories

- Since 2015, Connecticut has conducted 9 statewide studies.

- 33 municipal police agencies and 5 State Police Troops were identified as "high disparity agencies."

- We have also conducted 4 statewide studies in Rhode Island and identified 12 agencies with statistical disparities.

- Interventions were conducted in all agencies.
    - These interventions included an officer-level analysis

- Success stories: Newington, Waterbury, Hamden

Importance of Communicating Data to the Community

- Public forums are conducted in communities with high disparity agencies.
  - Researchers **present findings**
  - Police administrators are invited to provide **comment/feedback**
  - **Thoughtful discussion** occurs between the public, police, and researchers about the findings and next steps.

Other Program Benefits

- In CT alone, we have accumulated a rich dataset with more than 100 million data points from 4.5 million traffic stops.

- We consistently look for win-win solutions during our departmental interventions (i.e., improved roadway safety and reduced disparities).

- Our research has been able to substantially contribute to the ongoing conversation about traffic safety in Connecticut.

Noteworthy Research Highlights

- No evidence that participation in Highway Safety Office safety programs contributes to statewide or departmental disparities.
- Racial and ethnic disparities are significantly decreased when law enforcement primarily focuses on safety-related violations
  - Examples: speeding, distracted driving, following too close, traffic light violation
- Between 2017 and 2021, drivers arrested for DUI were 16 times more likely to be stopped for a moving violation than any other offense.
  - For every 1,000 drivers stopped for a moving violation, 26 were arrested for DUI compared to less than 2 drivers for every 1,000 stopped for an equipment or administrative offense.
  - During the same period- police in CT spent an average of 12,000 hours stopping cars for low-level equipment and administrative offenses.
    - Police spent the same number of hours stopping cars for cell phone, traffic control signal, and stop sign violations combined.

2017 to 2021 DUI Arrests per 1,000 stops

Reason for Stop	Total Stops	# DUI Arrests	DU I per 1,000 stops
Speeding	621,273	1223	2
Defective Light	182,536	564	3
Moving Violation	160,138	4237	26
Administrative Offense	43,687	139	3
Display of Plate	61,011	64	1
Window Tint	26,302	23	1
Cell Phone	169,660	52	0
Registration Violation	191,159	156	1
Traffic Control Signal	148,044	402	3
Stop Sign	161,729	257	2
STC Violation	137,833	42	0
Total	1,903,372	7,159	4

Slow and Steady Wins the Race

- The last three calendar year statewide reports have shown **significant reductions** in racial and ethnic disparities statewide.

- Far **fewer departments** are being identified as "high disparity agencies."

- Recent evaluation of Connecticut's interventions highlighted a **24% reduction** in racial and ethnic disparities with no impact on crashes or crime.

Conclusions

- Coordinated state and national data collection and analysis is essential to help advance equity in traffic enforcement.

- Good data will allow you to identify the strategies that reduce fatalities, injuries, and disparities, all at the same time.