



Bureau of Justice Statistics

Characteristics of Drivers Stopped by Police, 1999

43,800,000 contacts with police, 1999

19,277,000 drivers stopped

24,550,400 nontraffic contacts

3,990,300 more than once

9,889,100 for speeding

1,272,300 searched

Involving force

139,300 traffic stops

282,400 nontraffic contacts

100,000 considered excessive

221,100 considered excessive

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Characteristics of Drivers Stopped by Police, 1999

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March 2002, NCJ 191548

U.S. Department of Justice

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BJS statisticians Erica Leah Schmitt, Patrick A. Langan, and Matthew R. Durose wrote this report. Tom Hester edited and produced the report.

Numerous people made possible the development and administration of the Police-Public Contact Survey. Staff from the U.S. Census Bureau facilitated the final construction of the questionnaire, managed the field aspect of the data collection, processed the data, and provided the estimation specifications.

In addition, a panel of the American Statistical Association met to review and discuss the survey procedures and questionnaire and subsequently issued a report on its recommendations. Assembled by Mark Cohen, Vanderbilt University, the advisory group included the following scholars: James Lynch, American University Professor of Justice, Law and Society; James Fyfe, Temple University Professor of Criminal Justice; Dennis Kenney, Director of Research at the Police Executive Research Forum; Stephen Mastrofski, George Mason University Professor of Administration of Justice; and Joel Garner, Director of the Joint Center for Justice Studies.

At the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Lee Giesbrecht and David Banks advised BJS analysts in use of the 1995 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police, as well as other law enforcement executives and scholars, provided comments on the survey procedures and questionnaire.

Data presented in this report can be obtained from the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data at the University of Michigan, 1-800-999-0960. Data in the archive can be accessed through the BJS website.

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Foreword

The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 mandates an annual report on the topic of police use of excessive force. In partial response to the mandate, the Bureau of Justice Statistics initiated the Survey of Police-Public Contact in 1999.

In the national study U.S. residents age 16 or older were asked about any face-to-face contacts they may have had with police during 1999. The survey was carried out to document how many residents have such contacts, what the nature of these contacts was, whether police used force at any time during the contact, and (if so) whether the resident considered the force to be "excessive."

Based on interviews with a sample of 80,543 persons (representing just over 209 million residents nationwide), the survey found that 1 in 5 Americans had a face-to-face contact with police in 1999. Many of these contacts occurred when people went to police to report a crime, to get help, or to let police know about a problem in their neighborhood.

Among the different reasons why residents had contact with police, the most frequent one was traffic stops. This report examines in some detail the incidence and prevalence of traffic stops and the role of traffic stops in understanding use of force contacts between citizens and law enforcement officers.

Traffic stops accounted for fully 52% of all police contacts in 1999. An estimated 19.3 million residents — or about 1 in 10 licensed drivers — were pulled over by police while driving a motor vehicle. Just over half of all traffic stops were for speeding.

Of all the drivers stopped, 54% were ticketed, 6.6% were searched, 3% were arrested, seven-tenths of 1% (an estimated 139,300 stopped drivers) had some type of force used against them by police, and one-half of 1% (an estimated 100,000 stopped drivers) had "excessive" force used against them.

In addition to traffic stops, the survey also asked respondents about any police use of force which they experienced in other, non-traffic contacts with police. According to the survey, police had used some type of force against an estimated 421,700 persons. The 421,700 consisted of 139,300 against whom the force occurred during a traffic stop (33% of the total), plus 282,400 against whom the force occurred during some other type of contact (such as reporting a crime to police, being a witness to or involved in a crime, and so forth).

Police had used "excessive" force against 321,000 persons, as estimated from survey results. The 321,000 consisted of 100,000 against whom the "excessive" force occurred during a traffic stop (31% of the total), plus 221,000 against whom the force occurred during some other type of face-to-face contact.

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Highlights

General characteristics of drivers stopped by police in 1999

- The 1999 U.S. population totaled 209.4 million persons age 16 or older. An estimated 89% of the population, or 186.3 million, were licensed drivers. Also in 1999, 19.3 million drivers age 16 or older, or 10.3% of all licensed drivers, were stopped by police.
- Among drivers age 16-24, blacks (17.1%) did not differ significantly from either whites (20.1%) or Hispanics (15.5%) in the probability of being stopped. White drivers age 16-24 were somewhat more likely than their Hispanic counterparts to be pulled over.
- The average number of stops was greater for young black males (2.7) than young white males (1.7) and marginally greater than for young Hispanic males (1.8).

Drivers' opinions of the legitimacy of the stops

- Both blacks (74.0%) and Hispanics (81.6%) were less likely than whites (86.0%) to feel they were stopped by police for a legitimate reason.
- Of drivers stopped more than once, whites (84.4%) were more likely than both blacks (70.2%) and Hispanics (70%) to feel the stop was legitimate.
- Among male drivers age 16-24, blacks (75.7%) were not significantly less likely than whites (83.2%) or Hispanics (76.0%) to feel the stops were legitimate.

Reason for traffic stop

- Few drivers were not informed of the reason for being stopped by police. No significant differences were found between white (1.5%), black (2.0%), or Hispanic (1.2%) drivers in the likelihood of being informed by the officer of the reason for the traffic stop.
- Males stopped for speeding were more likely to be ticketed (70.3%) than females (66.5%).
- Drivers age 16-24 who were stopped for speeding were ticketed (73.6%) more often than drivers over 24 (66.8%).
- Among drivers stopped for speeding, blacks (75.7%) and Hispanics (79.4%) were more likely than whites (66.6%) to be ticketed.

Searches conducted by police during traffic stops

- In 1999, 6.6% of traffic stops involved a search of the driver, the vehicle, or both.
- Police were more likely to conduct a search of the vehicle and/or driver in traffic stops involving black male drivers (15.9%) or Hispanic male drivers (14.2%), compared to white male drivers (7.9%).
- Of the nearly 1.3 million searches of vehicles and/or drivers conducted following traffic stops in 1999, 37% were accompanied by an arrest of the driver.

Police use of force in traffic stops and in other situations

- Approximately 422,000 persons age 16 or older said the police used or threatened to use force against them at least once during 1999.
- Traffic stops accounted for 139,000 police use of force incidents, 33% of the 422,000 incident total.
- Of the 139,000 force contacts that occurred during a traffic stop, the majority involved a male driver (98.2% of those contacts). Males accounted for 81.4% of the remaining 282,00 force contacts that occurred at times other than a traffic stop.
- Persons under 25 were involved in just over half of all force contacts with police in 1999.
- Most (76.1%) of the 422,000 people involved in a police use of force incident said the force was excessive.

Characteristics of drivers stopped by police

The 1999 U.S. population totaled 209.4 million persons age 16 or older (see Appendix A). An estimated 89% of the population, or 186.3 million, were licensed drivers (table 1).

Also in 1999, 19.3 million drivers age 16 or older were stopped by police.

Driver gender

The 186.3 million licensed drivers were almost evenly split among males (50.4%) and females (49.6%).

By contrast, of the 19.3 million drivers stopped in 1999, 60.8% were male and 39.2% were female.

Driver age

Persons over 24 years of age were the majority of licensed drivers (85.5%), as well as the majority involved in a traffic stop (73.5%).

Driver race/ethnicity

Whites were 76.7% of licensed drivers and 77% of drivers stopped by police in 1999. Blacks were 9.8% of licensed drivers, but 11.6% of stopped drivers, while Hispanics accounted for 9.9% of licensed drivers and 8.4% of stopped drivers. An additional 3.6% of licensed drivers were persons of other races, who were also 3% of drivers stopped by police.

Driver gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Young white males (those age 16-24) were 5.2% of licensed drivers and 12.3% of the 19.3 million drivers pulled over by police (table 2). Young black males accounted for 0.8% of licensed drivers and 1.6% of traffic stops, while young Hispanic males were 1.1% of licensed drivers and 2% of stopped drivers. Young males of other races formed 0.4% of persons with a license and 0.6% of drivers involved in a traffic stop.

Table 1. Characteristics of stopped drivers compared to characteristics of licensed drivers, 1999: Gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Gender, age, and race/ethnicity	Drivers age 16 or older stopped by police in 1999		Licensed drivers in the United States	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	19,277,002	100.0%	186,322,014	100.0%
Gender				
Male	11,721,808	60.8%	93,807,374	50.4%
Female	7,555,194	39.2	92,210,068	49.6
Age				
16-19	2,031,789	10.5%	11,177,552	6.0%
20-24	3,082,015	16.0	16,115,497	8.7
25-29	2,477,904	12.8	16,924,648	9.1
30-34	2,249,807	11.7	18,658,151	10.0
35-39	2,275,797	11.8	21,493,378	11.6
40-44	2,171,066	11.3	21,032,615	11.3
45-49	1,593,418	8.3	18,586,382	10.0
50-54	1,220,709	6.3	15,475,569	8.3
55-59	872,848	4.5	11,829,563	6.4
60-64	495,099	2.6	9,219,126	5.0
65-69	352,208	1.8	7,946,495	4.3
70-74	242,294	1.3	7,153,913	3.9
75 or older	212,046	1.1	9,715,425	5.2
Age				
16-24	5,113,805	26.5%	27,081,987	14.5%
25 or older	14,163,197	73.5	159,313,319	85.5
Race/ethnicity				
White	14,846,114	77.0%	142,767,917	76.7%
Black	2,231,801	11.6	18,134,397	9.8
Hispanic	1,615,088	8.4	18,298,101	9.9
Other race	583,999	3.0	6,708,204	3.6

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

Sources: Data on licensed drivers in the U.S. are estimated from the U.S. Department of Transportation's 1995 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey; all other data are from the BJS 1999 Police-Public Contact Survey.

Table 2. Characteristics of stopped drivers compared to characteristics of licensed drivers, 1999: Combined categories of gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Gender, age, and race/ethnicity	Drivers age 16 or older stopped by police in 1999		Licensed drivers in the United States	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	19,277,002	100.0%	186,322,014	100.0%
Males age 16-24	3,188,375	16.5%	13,956,728	7.5%
White	2,370,955	12.3	9,752,869	5.2
Black	302,620	1.6	1,522,862	0.8
Hispanic	389,739	2.0	1,994,316	1.1
Other race	125,062	0.6	709,722	0.4
Males age 25 or older	8,533,433	44.3%	79,455,735	42.6%
White	6,558,127	34.0	61,407,387	33.0
Black	1,025,076	5.3	7,440,523	4.0
Hispanic	704,852	3.7	7,070,674	3.8
Other race	245,378	1.3	2,990,658	1.6
Females age 16-24	1,925,429	10.0%	13,299,365	7.1%
White	1,453,078	7.5	9,307,657	5.0
Black	226,148	1.2	1,564,859	0.8
Hispanic	193,881	1.0	1,757,112	0.9
Other race	52,322	0.3	632,085	0.3
Females age 25 or older	5,629,764	29.2%	79,545,810	42.7%
White	4,463,955	23.2	62,841,061	33.7
Black	677,957	3.5	7,749,022	4.2
Hispanic	326,616	1.7	6,045,510	3.2
Other race	161,237	0.8	2,840,768	1.5

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

Sources: See table 1.

Likelihood of drivers being stopped

Nationwide, 19.3 million drivers — 10.3% of the 186.3 million licensed drivers — were pulled over by police at least one time in 1999 while driving a motor vehicle (table 3). Of the 19.3 million drivers stopped by police in 1999, approximately 4 million were pulled over 2 or more times. These 4 million drivers made up 2.1% of the total number of licensed drivers in the United States.

Driver gender

Males (12.5%) were more likely than females (8.2%) to be stopped at least once, and males (2.9%) were also more likely than females (1.4%) to be stopped more than once.

Driver age

Compared to drivers over age 24 (8.9%), those 16 to 24 (18.9%) had a greater overall likelihood of being pulled over by police and a greater likelihood of being stopped more than once (6% of drivers age 16-24 versus 1.5% of those over 24).

Driver race/ethnicity

Black drivers were somewhat more likely than white drivers to be stopped

Racial differences in traffic stops may not signal racial profiling

To form evidence of racial profiling, the survey would have to show (all other things being equal) —

Blacks and/or Hispanics were no more likely than whites to violate traffic laws,

and

Police pulled over blacks and/or Hispanics at a higher rate than whites.

Because the survey has information only on how often persons of different races are stopped, not on how often they actually break traffic laws, analysis of data from the 1999 Police-Public Contact Survey cannot determine whether or to what extent racial profiling exists.

Table 3. Of all licensed drivers, percent stopped at least once and more than once, 1999: Gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Gender, age, and race/ethnicity	Number with driver's license	Drivers stopped at least once in 1999		Drivers stopped more than once in 1999	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	186,322,014	19,277,002	10.3%	3,990,339	2.1%
Gender					
Male	93,807,374	11,721,808	12.5%	2,707,738	2.9%
Female	92,210,068	7,555,194	8.2	1,276,828	1.4
Age					
16-24	27,081,987	5,113,805	18.9%	1,631,304	6.0%
25 or older	159,313,319	14,163,197	8.9	2,351,091	1.5
Race/ethnicity					
White	142,767,917	14,846,114	10.4%	2,984,069	2.1%
Black	18,134,397	2,231,801	12.3	546,791	3.0
Hispanic	18,298,101	1,615,088	8.8	366,625	2.0
Other race	6,708,204	583,999	8.7	87,016	1.3

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.
Sources: See table 1.

at least once (12.3% of blacks versus 10.4% of whites). Blacks were significantly more likely than both Hispanics (8.8%) and drivers of other races (8.7%) to be stopped at least once. There was also some indication that black drivers (3.0%) were more likely than both white drivers (2.1%) and Hispanic drivers (2%) to be stopped more than once.

Driver gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Among persons age 16-24 —

- blacks (17.1%) did not differ significantly from either whites (20.1%) or Hispanics (15.5%) in the probability of being stopped (table 4)

- whites (20.1%) were somewhat more likely than Hispanics (15.5%) to be pulled over

- no significant differences by race were found in the probability of being stopped more than once.

Among persons over age 24 —

- blacks (11.2%) were significantly more likely than whites (8.9%) to be pulled over and somewhat more likely than Hispanics (7.8%)(table 4)

- blacks (2.2%) were significantly more likely than Hispanics (1.3%) and somewhat more likely than whites (1.5%) to be stopped more than once by police.

Table 4. Of all licensed drivers, percent stopped at least once and more than once, 1999: Combined categories of race/ethnicity and age

Age and race/ethnicity	Number with driver's license	Drivers stopped at least once in 1999		Drivers stopped more than once in 1999	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	186,322,014	19,277,002	10.3%	3,990,339	2.1%
16 to 24					
White	19,057,926	3,824,033	20.1%	1,189,274	6.2%
Black	3,096,493	528,768	17.1	206,220	6.7
Hispanic	3,775,546	583,620	15.5	195,513	5.2
Other race	1,332,156	177,384	13.3	40,621	3.0
25 or older					
White	123,710,589	11,022,082	8.9%	1,796,599	1.5%
Black	15,144,107	1,703,033	11.2	340,607	2.2
Hispanic	13,208,655	1,031,468	7.8	170,192	1.3
Other race	5,923,112	406,615	6.9	46,354	0.8

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.
Sources: See table 1.

Among *male* drivers over age 24 —

- blacks (13.8%) were more likely than whites (10.7%) and Hispanics (10%) to be stopped by police in 1999 (table 5)

- blacks (3.2%) were more likely than whites (2%) and somewhat more likely than Hispanic (1.8%) to be stopped more than one time.

Among *female* drivers over age 24—

- whites (7.1%) and blacks (8.7%) were more likely than Hispanics (5.4%) to be pulled over at least once

- blacks (8.7%) were more likely to be stopped than whites (7.1%)

- the likelihood of being stopped more than once during 1999 did not differ significantly between the races.

Average number of traffic stops

Police stopped an estimated 19.3 million drivers at least once in 1999, and some of the 19.3 million were stopped more than once. The 19.3 million drivers experienced altogether 27 million traffic stops during the year (table 6). On average, 1.4 traffic stops per stopped driver occurred in 1999.

The average number of stops was —

- greater for males (1.5) than females (1.3)

Gender, age, and race/ethnicity	Number in 1999		Average number of stops per driver
	Drivers age 16 or older stopped by police	Traffic stops (in millions)	
Total	19,277,002	27.0	1.4
Gender			
Male	11,721,808	17.6	1.5
Female	7,555,194	9.8	1.3
Age			
16-24	5,113,805	8.7	1.7
25 or older	14,163,197	18.4	1.3
Race/ethnicity			
White	14,846,114	20.7	1.4
Black	2,231,801	3.5	1.6
Hispanic	1,615,088	2.2	1.4
Other race	583,999	0.7	1.2

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

Table 5. Of all licensed drivers, percent stopped at least once and more than once, 1999: Combined categories of gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Gender, age, and race/ethnicity	Number with driver's license	Drivers stopped at least once in 1999		Drivers stopped more than once in 1999	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	186,322,014	19,277,002	10.3%	3,990,339	2.1%
Males age 16 to 24	13,956,728	3,188,375	22.8%	1,087,236	7.8%
White	9,752,869	2,370,955	24.3	756,335	7.8
Black	1,522,862	302,620	19.9	156,455	10.3
Hispanic	1,994,316	389,739	19.5	142,644	7.2
Other race	709,722	125,062	17.6	33,642*	4.7*
Males age 25 or older	79,455,735	8,533,433	10.7%	1,621,352	2.0%
White	61,407,387	6,558,127	10.7	1,219,812	2.0
Black	7,440,523	1,025,076	13.8	239,868	3.2
Hispanic	7,070,674	704,852	10.0	130,398	1.8
Other race	2,990,658	245,378	8.2	29,200	1.0
Females age 16 to 24	13,299,365	1,925,429	14.5%	542,971	4.1%
White	9,307,657	1,453,078	15.6	433,017	4.7
Black	1,564,859	226,148	14.5	50,657	3.2
Hispanic	1,757,112	193,881	11.0	52,736	3.0
Other race	632,085	52,322	8.3	7,011*	1.1*
Females age 25 or older	79,545,810	5,629,764	7.1%	737,499	0.9%
White	62,841,061	4,463,955	7.1	580,314	0.9
Black	7,749,022	677,957	8.7	100,338	1.3
Hispanic	6,045,510	326,616	5.4	40,174	0.7
Other race	2,840,768	161,237	5.7	17,252*	0.6*

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding. *Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases. Sources: See table 1.

- greater for 16-24 year-olds (1.7)
- greater for young black males (2.7) than young white males (1.7)
- marginally greater for young black males (2.7) than young Hispanic males (1.8) (table 7).

Table 7. Traffic stops, 1999: Combined categories of gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Gender, age, and race/ethnicity	Number in 1999		Average number of stops per driver
	Drivers age 16 or older stopped by police	Traffic stops (in millions)	
Total	19,277,002	27.0	1.4
Males age 16 to 24	3,188,375	5.7	1.8
White	2,370,955	4.0	1.7
Black	302,620	0.8	2.7
Hispanic	389,739	0.7	1.8
Other race	125,062	0.2	1.5
Males age 25 or older	8,533,433	11.9	1.4
White	6,558,127	8.5	1.3
Black	1,025,076	1.5	1.5
Hispanic	704,852	0.9	1.3
Other race	245,378	0.3	1.2
Females age 16 to 24	1,925,429	2.9	1.5
White	1,453,078	2.2	1.5
Black	226,148	0.3	1.4
Hispanic	193,881	0.3	1.4
Other race	52,322	0.1	1.3
Females age 25 or older	5,629,764	6.8	1.2
White	4,463,955	5.4	1.2
Black	677,957	0.9	1.3
Hispanic	326,616	0.4	1.2
Other race	161,237	0.2	1.1

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

Driver opinion on being stopped

An estimated 84% of drivers stopped by police, or 16.2 million drivers, felt they were pulled over for a legitimate reason (table 8). While the majority of drivers felt the police were justified in stopping them, opinion was not uniform across different segments of the population.

Driver gender

Males (82.3%) were less likely than females (87.3%) to feel the stop was for a legitimate reason.

Males who were stopped once (83.7%) were more likely to feel the stop was legitimate than males stopped more than one time during 1999 (78.2%).

Driver opinion on being stopped did not differ significantly for females stopped once (87.2%) and females stopped more than once (87.7%).

Driver age

The percentage of drivers who felt they were stopped for a legitimate reason did not differ significantly between those 16-to-24 years of age (83.5%) and those over 24 (84.6%).

Drivers under age 25 and stopped multiple times (78.2%) were less likely than drivers over 24 (83.5%) to feel the stop was legitimate.

Among persons age 16-24 —

- drivers stopped once (86.2%) were more likely to feel the stop was legitimate than those stopped more than one time (78.2%).

Table 8. Driver opinion on being stopped, 1999: Gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Gender, age, and race/ethnicity	Percent of stopped drivers who felt they had been stopped in 1999 for a legitimate reason		
	All drivers stopped	Drivers stopped one time	Drivers stopped two or more times
Total	84.3%	85.1%	81.3%
Gender			
Male	82.3%	83.7%	78.2%
Female	87.3	87.2	87.7
Age			
16-24	83.5%	86.2%	78.2%
25 or older	84.6	84.8	83.5
Race/ethnicity			
White	86.0%	86.5%	84.4%
Black	74.0	75.1	70.2
Hispanic	81.6	84.9	70.0
Other race	84.6	85.0	84.4

Among persons over age 24 —

- the opinion of drivers stopped once (84.8%) did not differ significantly from those stopped two or more times (83.5%).

Driver race/ethnicity

Both blacks (74.0%) and Hispanics (81.6%) were less likely than whites (86%) to feel they were stopped by police for a legitimate reason. Drivers of other races (84.6%) were not less likely than whites to feel the stop was legitimate.

There was no significant difference in driver opinion between blacks stopped once (75.1%) and blacks stopped more than once (70.2%).

Of drivers stopped one time —

- blacks (75.1%) were less likely than whites (86.5%), Hispanics (84.9%) and drivers of other races (85%) to report feeling that the stop was legitimate.

Of drivers stopped more than once —

- whites (84.4%) were more likely than both blacks (70.2%) and Hispanics (70%) to feel the stop was legitimate
- drivers of other races (84.4%) were somewhat more likely to report that the stop was legitimate than black (70.2%) drivers.

Driver gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Among male drivers age 16-24 —

- blacks (75.7%) were not significantly less likely than whites (83.2%) or Hispanics (76.0%) to feel the stop was legitimate (table 9)

- a marginally greater percentage of whites (83.2%) felt the stop was legitimate than Hispanics (76%)

- Hispanics stopped more than one time (62.7%) were somewhat less likely to feel the stop was legitimate than whites (78.7%).

Among male drivers over age 24 —

- the opinions of blacks (73.1%) did not differ significantly from Hispanics (79.4%)

- whites (84.3%) were significantly more likely to feel the stop was legitimate than blacks (73.1%)

- whites (84.3%) had a somewhat better opinion of the traffic stop than Hispanics (79.4%)

- black (68%) and Hispanic (65.3%) drivers stopped two or more times were less likely to feel the stop was legitimate than white drivers (83.5%) stopped two or more times.

Table 9. Driver opinion on being stopped, 1999: Combined categories of gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Gender, age, and race/ethnicity	Percent of stopped drivers who felt they had been stopped in 1999 for a legitimate reason		
	All drivers stopped	Drivers stopped one time	Drivers stopped two or more times
Total	84.3%	85.1%	81.3%
Males age 16 to 24	81.8%	85.4%	75.9%
White	83.2	85.9	78.7
Black	75.7	81.6	70.4
Hispanic	76.0	83.4	62.7
Other race	86.5	88.4	81.5*
Males age 25 or older	82.5%	83.1%	79.8%
White	84.3	84.5	83.5
Black	73.1	74.4	68.0
Hispanic	79.4	82.5	65.3
Other race	81.4	80.9	85.5*
Females age 16 to 24	86.2%	87.4%	82.7%
White	88.3	88.7	87.0
Black	71.0	77.1	42.0*
Hispanic	87.1	90.3	78.4
Other race	83.1	87.5	43.4*
Females age 25 or older	87.6%	87.1%	91.3%
White	89.3	88.9	91.8
Black	75.5	73.6	85.5
Hispanic	89.0	88.1	95.2
Other race	88.1	88.1	100.0*

*Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

Reason for traffic stop

Drivers not informed of reason for traffic stop

A relatively small percentage of stopped drivers (1.6%) said that police did not give them a reason for pulling them over (table 10).

Driver gender

The percentage of males and females (1.6% each) who were not given a reason for the traffic stop did not differ.

Driver age

A slightly larger percentage of drivers age 25 or older (1.7%) were not informed of the reason for the stop than drivers under 25 (1.2%).

Driver race/ethnicity

No significant differences were found between white (1.5%), black (2.0%) or Hispanic (1.2%) drivers in the likelihood of being informed of the reason for the traffic stop.

Table 10. Of drivers stopped, percent not given a reason for the traffic stop, 1999: Gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Gender, age and race/ethnicity	Drivers age 16 or older stopped by police in 1999	Drivers not given a reason for the traffic stop	
		Number	Percent
Total	19,277,002	306,901	1.6%
Gender			
Male	11,721,808	189,349	1.6%
Female	7,555,194	117,545	1.6%
Age			
16-24	5,113,805	63,084	1.2%
25 or older	14,163,197	243,889	1.7%
Race/ethnicity			
White	14,846,114	229,512	1.5%
Black	2,231,801	45,213	2.0%
Hispanic	1,615,088	18,926*	1.2*
Other race	583,999	13,313*	2.3*

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

*Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

Driver opinion and reason for traffic stop

In the 1999 survey, stopped drivers were asked whether, in their opinion, they had been stopped for a legitimate reason. Survey results indicate that driver opinion on the legitimacy of the traffic stop often depended on the reason the police gave for stopping the vehicle.

Drivers stopped for speeding (51.2% of all stopped drivers) and drivers pulled over for a record/roadside check (11.5% of stopped drivers) were more likely to say they felt the traffic stop was legitimate (89.7% and 89.1%, respectively) than drivers stopped for other reasons.

Drivers stopped for a vehicle defect (11.4% of traffic stops) were less likely to feel the stop was legitimate (84.4%)

than those stopped for speeding or a record/roadside check.

Persons pulled over for some other traffic offense (seat belt violation, illegal turn, running a red light, etc.) constituted 22.7% of drivers stopped. These drivers were less likely (73.1%) than those stopped for speeding, a record/roadside check, or a vehicle defect to hold the opinion that the stop was legitimate.

Relatively few drivers (3.2%) reported "Other" as the reason for the stop, which includes those who stated that police were providing a service, police were investigating a crime, they were being harassed by police, and other miscellaneous reasons. A smaller percentage of drivers in this category (57.5%) felt the traffic stop was legitimate.

Reason police gave for traffic stop	Percent	Drivers who felt traffic stop was legitimate
Total	100.0%	84.3%
Speeding	51.2%	89.7%
Roadside/record check	11.5	89.1
Vehicle defect	11.4	84.4
Other traffic offense	22.7	73.1
Other	3.2	57.5

Speeding

The majority of drivers (51.2%) reported speeding as the reason they were stopped by police in 1999 (table 11). These 9.9 million drivers constitute 5.3% of the 186.3 million licensed drivers in the United States.

Of the 9.9 million drivers stopped for speeding —

- males constituted 58.6% of stopped speeders, and females were 41.4%

- drivers age 16-24 were 27.9% of stopped speeders, and those over age 24, the remaining 72.1%

- white drivers accounted for 80.5% of persons stopped for speeding; blacks, 9.8%; and Hispanics, 6.9%. (These findings are not shown in a table.)

Driver gender

Of the Nation's 93.8 million male drivers, 6.2% were stopped for speeding. That percentage is greater than the 4.4% of the Nation's 92.2 million female drivers.

Female drivers pulled over by police were more likely to report that speeding was the reason for the traffic stop than stopped male drivers. Of the 7.5 million female drivers stopped by police, more than half (54.1%) said speeding was the reason. This percentage is greater than the figure for the 11.7 million male drivers stopped by police (49.4% or 5.8 million).

Driver age

Of the 27.1 million licensed drivers between ages 16 and 24, 10.2% were stopped for speeding. That percentage is greater than the 4.5% of the 159.3 million licensed drivers age 25 or older.

Table 11. Drivers who reported speeding as reason for traffic stop, 1999: Gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Gender, age and race/ethnicity	Speeding reported as reason for traffic stop	Drivers age 16 or older stopped by police in 1999	Percent of drivers stopped for speeding	Number with driver's license	Percent of licensed drivers stopped for speeding
Total	9,889,102	19,277,002	51.2%	186,322,014	5.3%
Gender					
Male	5,790,573	11,721,808	49.4%	93,807,374	6.2%
Female	4,087,360	7,555,194	54.1	92,210,068	4.4
Age					
16-24	2,756,341	5,113,805	53.9%	27,081,987	10.2%
25 or older	7,124,088	14,163,197	50.3	159,313,319	4.5
Race/ethnicity					
White	7,957,517	14,846,114	53.7%	142,767,917	5.6%
Black	968,602	2,231,801	43.4	18,134,397	5.3
Hispanic	679,952	1,615,088	42.1	18,298,101	3.7
Other race	266,304	583,999	45.6	6,708,204	4.0

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

Younger drivers were more likely to report being stopped for speeding than drivers over 24. Of the 27.1 million drivers under 25, 5.1 million were pulled over by police in 1999. Of the 5.1 million stopped drivers, 53.9% (2.8 million) said speeding was the reason. This percentage is greater than the comparable figure for stopped drivers over age 24 (50.3% of the 14.2 million stopped drivers, or 7.1 million).

Driver race/ethnicity

Of the 18.3 million licensed drivers who are Hispanic, 3.7% were stopped for speeding. That percentage is less than the 5.6% of the 142.8 million licensed white drivers and the 5.3% of the 18.1 million licensed black drivers in the United States.

Of the 14.8 million white drivers stopped by police, 53.7% gave "speeding" as the reason. That percentage is greater than the 43.4% of the 2.2 million black drivers stopped, and marginally greater than the 42.1% of the 1.6 million Hispanic drivers stopped.

Driver gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Among drivers age 16-24 —

- Of the 9.8 million younger white male drivers, 12.6% were stopped for

speeding. That percentage does differ significantly from the 9.8% of the 9.3 million younger white female drivers stopped for speeding.

- White female drivers stopped by police (62.5%) were more likely to report being stopped for speeding than stopped white male drivers (51.7%)

- White male drivers (12.6%) had a greater likelihood of being stopped for speeding than Hispanic male drivers (7.9%). This difference also exists for white female drivers (9.8%) compared to Hispanic female drivers (5.3%)

- White male (51.7%) and white female (62.5%) drivers stopped by police were more likely than their respective Hispanic male (40.3%) and Hispanic female (48.1%) counterparts to report speeding as the reason for being stopped.

Drivers age 16-24 stopped for speeding	Percent of —	
	All drivers stopped	All licensed drivers
Males		
White	51.7%	12.6%
Black	50.6	10.1
Hispanic	40.3	7.9
Females		
White	62.5%	9.8%
Black	64.7	9.4
Hispanic	48.1	5.3

Drivers stopped for speeding who were ticketed

Overall, 54.2% of stopped drivers were issued a ticket. Among drivers stopped for speeding, the percentage ticketed was greater: 68.7% (table 12). This percentage does not necessarily indicate that speeders who were ticketed were actually ticketed for speeding. The 1999 Police-Public Contact Survey did not ask respondents who were ticketed to identify the specific reason for receiving the ticket.

A driver could have been stopped for speeding, yet was ticketed for a different reason, such as a broken headlight or failure to wear a seat belt. The analysis can only determine the reason a ticketed driver was pulled over, not the reason the police had for issuing the ticket.

Driver gender

Males (70.3%) stopped for speeding were more likely to be ticketed than females (66.5%).

Issuing tickets to young male and young female drivers

Overall, male drivers stopped for speeding were more likely to receive a traffic ticket from police than female speeders. However, among drivers age 16 to 24 stopped for speeding, males were not more likely than females to be ticketed.

Among drivers age 16-24 —

- White male speeders (71.2%) were not more likely than white female speeders (72.5%) to be ticketed

Table 12. Of drivers stopped for speeding, percent who were ticketed, 1999: Gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Gender, age, and race/ethnicity	Number of drivers stopped for speeding	Drivers stopped for speeding who were also ticketed	
		Number	Percent
Total	9,889,102	6,793,813	68.7%
Gender			
Male	5,790,573	4,070,773	70.3%
Female	4,087,360	2,718,094	66.5
Age			
16-24	2,756,341	2,028,667	73.6%
25 or older	7,124,088	4,758,891	66.8
Race/ethnicity			
White	7,957,517	5,299,706	66.6%
Black	968,602	733,231	75.7
Hispanic	679,952	539,882	79.4
Other race	266,304	211,445	79.4

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

Driver age

Drivers age 16-24 (73.6%) who were stopped for speeding were ticketed more often than drivers over 24 (66.8%).

Driver race/ethnicity

Black (75.7%) and Hispanic (79.4%) drivers stopped for speeding were more likely than white (66.6%) speeders to be ticketed.

Put another way: Blacks were 9.8% of drivers stopped for speeding but 10.8% of ticketed speeders. Hispanics were 6.9% of those pulled over for speeding but 7.9% of ticketed speeders. Whites were 80.5% of drivers stopped for speeding and 78.0% of ticketed speeders. (These findings are not shown in a table.)

- Black male speeders (81.5%) were not more likely than black female speeders (79.9%) to be issued a ticket.

- Hispanic male drivers (92.4%) stopped for speeding were more likely to be ticketed than Hispanic female speeders (69.1%).

Drivers age 16-24 stopped for speeding	Percent who were ticketed
--	---------------------------

Males

White	71.2%
Black	81.5
Hispanic	92.4

Females

White	72.5%
Black	79.9
Hispanic	69.1

Police searches

Table 13. Of drivers stopped, percent who experienced a search, 1999: Gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Gender, age, and race/ethnicity	Type of search		
	Driver or vehicle	Driver	Vehicle
Total	6.6%	4.3%	5.3%
Gender			
Male	9.4%	6.4%	7.5%
Female	2.3	1.2	1.9
Age			
16-24	10.8%	7.2%	8.9%
25 or older	5.1	3.3	4.0
Race/ethnicity			
White	5.4%	3.5%	4.3%
Black	11.0	8.0	8.5
Hispanic	11.3	7.0	9.7
Other race	6.5	3.2*	5.4

*Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample

During a traffic stop, the police sometimes conduct a search of the vehicle, the driver, or both the vehicle and the driver. In 1999, 6.6% of traffic stops involved a search of the driver, the vehicle, or both (table 13). Of the nearly 1.3 million drivers searched, 35% experienced a search of the vehicle only, 20% experienced a search of the driver only, and the remaining 45% experienced a search of both the vehicle and the driver.

Searching the driver, vehicle, or both

Driver gender

Stopped male drivers (9.4%) were more likely to undergo a vehicle and/or personal search than stopped females (2.3%).

Driver age

Drivers age 16-24 (10.8%) stopped by police were more likely to have their vehicle and/or person searched than stopped drivers over age 24 (5.1%).

Driver race/ethnicity

Stopped black (11%) and stopped Hispanic (11.3%) drivers were more

likely to undergo one or both forms of search than stopped white (5.4%) drivers or drivers of other races (6.5%).

Driver gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Police were more likely to conduct a search of the vehicle and/or driver in traffic stops involving male drivers who were black (15.9%) or of Hispanic origin (14.2%), compared to white male drivers (7.9%). (Not shown in a table.)

Among male drivers age 16-24—

- the percentage of stopped blacks (17.2%) who had their vehicle and/or person searched did not differ significantly from either whites (13.7%) or Hispanics (19.7%) (table 14)

- Hispanic drivers (19.7%) stopped by police were somewhat more likely to undergo one or both forms of search than whites (13.7%).

Among male drivers over age 24 —

- both stopped blacks (15.5%) and stopped Hispanics (11.1%) were more

likely to be searched than stopped whites (5.8%)

- black and Hispanic drivers were 5.3% and 3.7%, respectively, of all drivers stopped by police and accounted for 12.5% and 6.1%, respectively, of drivers who had their vehicle and/or person searched

Drivers over age 24	Percent of—	
	All drivers stopped by police in 1999	All driver or vehicle searches
Males		
White	34.0%	29.9%
Black	5.3	12.5
Hispanic	3.7	6.1

- white drivers were 34% of stopped drivers and 29.9% of those searched.

Searching the driver

Driver gender

Males (6.4%) were more likely than females (1.2%) to be physically searched during a traffic stop (table 13).

Table 14. Of drivers stopped, percent who experienced a search, 1999: Combined categories of gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Gender, age, and race/ethnicity	Type of search		
	Driver or vehicle	Driver	Vehicle
Total	6.6%	4.3%	5.3%
Males age 16 to 24	14.8%	10.1%	12.3%
White	13.7	8.8	11.5
Black	17.2	12.8	11.8
Hispanic	19.7	15.5	18.1
Other race	14.9*	10.8*	12.0*
Males age 25 or older	7.4%	5.0%	5.7%
White	5.8	4.0	4.4
Black	15.5	11.4	12.4
Hispanic	11.1	5.8	8.8
Other race	4.0*	1.1*	2.9*
Females age 16 to 24	4.1%	2.5%	3.3%
White	3.3	2.1*	2.4
Black	4.6*	4.6*	4.6*
Hispanic	7.3*	2.8*	7.3*
Other race	10.0*	5.2*	10.0*
Females age 25 or older	1.7%	0.7%	1.4%
White	1.2	0.4*	1.1
Black	3.4*	1.9*	2.2*
Hispanic	4.1*	2.1*	3.3*
Other race	2.7*	0.0*	2.7*

*Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

Driver age

Drivers age 25 or older stopped by police (3.3%) were less likely to experience a personal search than stopped drivers under 25 years old (7.2%).

Driver race/ethnicity

Stopped whites (3.5%) were less likely to be personally searched than either blacks (8%) or Hispanics (7%).

Driver gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Stopped white male drivers were less likely than their black and Hispanic counterparts to be physically searched during a traffic stop.

Among male drivers age 16-24—

- Stopped Hispanics (15.5%) were significantly more likely to experience a physical search by police than whites (8.8%) (table 14)

- Stopped blacks (12.8%) did not differ significantly from whites (8.8%) or Hispanics (15.5%) in the likelihood of experiencing a personal search

- Stopped Hispanics were 2% of stopped motorists but 7.3% of those who experienced personal searches.

Drivers age 16- 24	Percent of—	
	All drivers stopped by police in 1999	All driver searches
Males		
White	12.3%	25.0%
Black	1.6	4.7
Hispanic	2.0	7.3

Among male drivers over age 24—

- black drivers (11.4%) were more likely to be personally searched during a traffic stop than either white (4.0%) or Hispanic (5.8%) motorists

- blacks in this age category were 5.3% of all traffic stops and experienced 13.9% of all physical searches; whites were 34% of stopped drivers and 31.8% of those searched.

Drivers over age 24	Percent of—	
	All drivers stopped by police in 1999	All driver searches
Males		
White	34.0%	31.8%
Black	5.3	13.9
Hispanic	3.7	4.9

Searching the vehicle

Driver gender

Stopped females (1.9%) were less likely to have their vehicle searched than males (7.5%) (table 13).

Driver age

Stopped drivers between the ages of 16 and 24 (8.9%) were more likely to experience a vehicle search than drivers over the age of 24 (4%).

Driver race/ethnicity

Stopped blacks (8.5%) and Hispanics (9.7%) were more likely to have their vehicle searched than stopped whites (4.3%). Hispanics were also more likely than drivers of other races (5.4%) to experience a vehicle search.

Driver gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Stopped Hispanic drivers between ages 16 and 24 (14.5%) were more likely than young white drivers (8%) and somewhat more likely than young black drivers (8.8%) to experience a vehicle search.

Among stopped male drivers age 16-24—

- Hispanics (18.1%) were more likely to have their vehicle searched than whites (11.5%)

- no significant differences in the prevalence of vehicle searches were found between white (11.5%) and black (11.8%), nor between Hispanic (18.1%) and black (11.8%) drivers.

Both black (8.4%) and Hispanic (7%) drivers over age 24 were more likely than white (3.1%) drivers over 24 to have their vehicle searched.

Among stopped male drivers over age 24 —

- white drivers (4.4%) had their vehicles searched less frequently than both black (12.4%) and Hispanic (8.8%) motorists

- black and Hispanic drivers were 5.3% and 3.7%, respectively, of drivers pulled over by police, and accounted for 12.5% and 6.0% of vehicle searches.

Drivers over age 24	Percent of—	
	All drivers stopped by police in 1999	All vehicle searches
Males		
White	34.0%	28.1%
Black	5.3	12.5
Hispanic	3.7	6.0

Table 15. Of the total number of persons searched, percent of searches in connection with an arrest, 1999: Gender and age

Gender and age of driver	Total number of searches	Drivers who were searched and arrested	
		Number	Percent
Total	1,272,282	469,472	36.9%
Gender			
Male	1,101,850	413,194	37.5%
Female	173,769	56,649	32.6
Age			
16-24	552,291	162,374	29.4%
25 or older	722,323	306,987	42.5

Searches in connection with an arrest

Of the nearly 1.3 million searches conducted in 1999, 37% were done in connection with an arrest (table 15). Whether the search preceded the arrest or followed it cannot be determined from the survey.

Driver gender

Stopped males who were searched (37.5%) were not more likely than stopped females (32.6%) to be arrested.

Driver age

Stopped drivers age 25 or older (42.5%) who were searched were significantly more likely to be arrested than their younger counterparts (29.4%).

Driver race/ethnicity

Of all drivers searched during a traffic stop, the chance of arrest did not differ significantly between white (37.3%), black (41.5%) and Hispanic (30.8%) drivers (table 16).

Among searched *male* drivers —

- blacks (42.7%) were somewhat more likely than Hispanics (28.8%) to be searched and arrested
- whites (38.0%) who were stopped and searched were not significantly

Table 16. Of the number of persons searched, percent of searches in connection with an arrest, 1999: Combined categories of race/ethnicity and gender

Race/ethnicity and gender	Total number of searches	Drivers who were searched and arrested	
		Number	Percent
Total	1,272,282	469,472	36.9%
White	801,690	299,030	37.3%
Male	705,397	268,051	38.0
Female	100,590	32,792	32.6
Black	245,498	101,882	41.5%
Male	211,104	90,141	42.7
Female	33,452*	11,374*	34.0*
Hispanic	182,505	56,212	30.8%
Male	155,432	44,764	28.8
Female	27,586	11,614*	42.1*
Other race	37,960	10,173*	26.8
Male	28,524*	10,173*	35.6*
Female	9,397*	0*	0.0*

Note: Zero represents no cases in sample.
*Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

less likely to be arrested than blacks (42.7%) or Hispanics (28.8%).

Searches of arrested and nonarrested drivers

In many jurisdictions, police officers are required to search the vehicle, the driver, or both when making an arrest during a traffic stop. Consequently, drivers who were arrested may have experienced a vehicle and/or personal search as a procedural step during the arrest process.

Of all drivers arrested during a traffic stop, 82.7% experienced a vehicle

and/or a personal search (table 17). By contrast, 4.3% of nonarrested drivers were searched by police.

Driver gender

Stopped male drivers, both arrested and nonarrested (88.0% and 6.1%), were more likely to be searched than stopped females (56.6% and 1.5%).

Driver age

Arrested and nonarrested drivers age 25 or older (78.8% and 3.0%) were less likely to be searched than stopped drivers under 25 (91.3% and 7.8%).

Table 17. Of drivers stopped, percent who experienced a search, comparing arrested and nonarrested drivers, 1999: Gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Gender, age, and race/ethnicity	Arrested drivers		Nonarrested drivers	
	Number	Driver or vehicle search	Number	Driver or vehicle search
Total	578,310	82.7%	18,698,692	4.3%
Gender				
Male	480,594	88.0%	11,241,214	6.1%
Female	98,218	56.6	7,456,976	1.5
Age				
16-24	184,097	91.3%	4,929,708	7.8%
25 or older	396,570	78.8	13,766,627	3.0
Race/ethnicity				
White	385,999	80.1%	14,460,115	3.5%
Black	116,054	87.6	2,115,747	6.8
Hispanic	67,834	85.6	1,547,254	8.2
Other race	12,264*	100.0*	571,735	4.9

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.
*Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

Driver race/ethnicity

Among arrested motorists —

- whites (80.1%), blacks (87.6%) and Hispanics (85.6%) did not differ significantly in their likelihood of being searched.

Among nonarrested motorists —

- whites (3.5%) were less likely to undergo a search than blacks (6.8%) and Hispanics (8.2%)

- black *males* (9.9%) and Hispanic *males* (10.6%) were more likely to be searched than white *males* (5.1%) (table 18)

- the likelihood of a black *female* being searched (2.5%) did not differ significantly from the likelihoods for both white and Hispanic *females* (1.1% and 3.2%, respectively).

Table 18. Of drivers stopped, percent who experienced a search, comparing arrested and nonarrested drivers, 1999: Combined categories of race/ethnicity and gender

Gender and race/ethnicity	Arrested drivers		Nonarrested drivers	
	Number	Driver or vehicle search	Number	Driver or vehicle search
Total	578,310	82.7%	18,698,692	4.3%
Male				
White	321,447	86.7%	8,607,635	5.1%
Black	100,905	90.0	1,226,791	9.9
Hispanic	52,540	89.5	1,042,051	10.6
Other race	10,372*	100.0*	360,068	5.2*
Female				
White	65,087	48.7%	5,851,946	1.1%
Black	15,370*	72.1*	888,735	2.5*
Hispanic	15,615*	73.6*	504,882	3.2*
Other race	1,922*	0.0*	211,637	4.4*

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.
*Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

Likelihood of finding criminal evidence in a traffic stop search

During a traffic stop, it is common practice for police to search the driver, vehicle or both when making an arrest. However, few searches uncover criminal evidence, such as illegal weapons or drugs.

Of the nearly 1.3 million drivers searched during a traffic stop, 37% (470,000) were also arrested.

Of the 470,000 drivers who were searched and arrested, criminal evidence was found in 21.5% of the searches conducted.

A significantly smaller percentage (8.6%) of the remaining 800,000 searched drivers who were not arrested said that criminal evidence was found during a vehicle and/or personal search.

Criminal evidence	Drivers who were searched			
	Arrested drivers		Nonarrested drivers	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	469,472	100.0%	802,810	100.0%
Evidence found	100,936	21.5%	69,042	8.6%
No evidence found	368,536	78.5	733,768	91.4

Police use of force

In addition to gathering information on contacts between the police and the public during motor vehicle stops, the 1999 Police-Public Contact Survey also gathered data regarding other face-to-face contacts with police. Other face-to-face contacts include situations in which both the respondent contacted the police and the police contacted the respondent. A respondent may have contacted the police to report a crime or to ask for assistance, among other reasons. The police may have initiated contact with a respondent to investigate a crime, serve a warrant, or disseminate crime prevention information, among other reasons.

Based on survey findings, nearly 44 million people had some type of face-to-face contact with police during 1999 (table 19). Of that 44 million, 19.3 million were drivers in a traffic stop, and 24.5 million were involved in other forms of contact with police. (Those who had both types of contact were counted as stopped drivers in this report.)

One purpose of the survey was to gather information about police use of force during both traffic stops and other face-to-face contacts between the police and the public. Specifically, respondents were asked whether the police officer(s) used or threatened to use force against them. Of the nearly 44 million people who had a face-to-face contact with police, approximately 1% said that police used force during the encounter (hereafter, "use of force" includes force and threat of force).*

*1 in 5 force encounters involved a threat only.

Table 19. Of all face-to-face contacts with police, percent reporting that force was used or threatened during the contact, 1999

Type of contact with police	Total face-to-face contacts with police	Force by police used or threatened	
		Number	Percent
Total	43,827,419	421,714	1.0%
Traffic stop	19,277,002	139,327	0.7
Other	24,550,417	282,387	1.2

Table 20. Force used or threatened by police, comparing traffic stops to other face-to-face contacts with police, 1999: Gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Gender, age, and race/ethnicity	All contacts with police involving force	Force used or threatened by police			
		Drivers in traffic stops		Other face-to-face contacts with police	
		Number	Percent of all contacts	Number	Percent of all contacts
Total	421,714	139,327	33.0%	282,387	67.0%
Gender					
Male	366,533	136,805	37.3%	229,728	62.7%
Female	55,181	2,522*	4.6*	52,659	95.4
Age					
16-24	233,132	67,682	29.0%	165,450	71.0%
25 or older	188,582	71,645	38.0	116,937	62.0
Race/ethnicity					
White	248,539	85,187	34.3%	163,352	65.7%
Black	95,440	32,186*	33.7*	63,254	66.3
Hispanic	65,530	21,954*	33.5*	43,576	66.5
Other race	12,205	0*	0.0*	12,205*	100.0*

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding. Zero represents no cases in sample.

*Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

A smaller percentage of persons who were drivers involved in a traffic stop reported that police used force against them than persons involved in other face-to-face contacts with police. Of the 19.3 million drivers involved in a traffic stop, 0.7% said police used force against them, compared to a larger percentage (1.2%) of the 24.5 million persons who had other face-to-face contacts with police.

Approximately 422,000 persons age 16 or older said the police used or threatened to use force against them at least once during 1999 (table 20). Force involving a driver during a traffic stop accounted for 33% of all police use of force incidents; force occurring during other (nondriver) face-to-face encounters accounted for the rest (67%).

Use of force during traffic stops

Driver gender

Of the 422,000 force contacts, 367,000 involved males. Of the total number of males who said that force was used against them, more than a third (37.3%) said the incident occurred during a traffic stop. Traffic stops accounted for a much smaller percentage (4.6%) of the 55,000 force contacts involving females.

Driver age

Of the estimated 189,000 persons age 25 or older who said force was used against them in 1999 during a contact with police, 38% said the incident occurred during a traffic stop. Traffic stops accounted for 29% of the 233,000 force contacts involving younger drivers (ages 16 to 24). The difference between the two age categories is not significant.

Driver race/ethnicity

Approximately a third (34.3%) of the 249,000 force contacts involving whites took place during a traffic stop, based on when respondents were drivers. This does not differ significantly from the percentage for blacks (33.7% of the 95,000 force contacts involving blacks occurred during a traffic stop) or for Hispanics (33.5% of the 66,000 force contacts involving Hispanics occurred during a traffic stop).

Use of force during traffic stops and other face-to-face contacts

Based on respondent reports, police used or threatened force against approximately 139,000 drivers during a traffic stop in 1999 (table 21). An additional 282,000 persons are estimated to have experienced force during other types of face-to-face contacts with police.

Driver gender

Males made up 53% of all those with at least one face-to-face contact with police in 1999. That same year 87% of all police use-of-force incidents also involved a male. Of the 139,000 force contacts against a driver estimated to have occurred during a traffic stop, the majority involved a male driver (98.2%). Males accounted for 81.4% of the 282,000 cases of force occurring outside of traffic stops.

Driver age

Of the 139,000 drivers estimated to have had force used against them during a traffic stop, 48.6% involved persons under age 25. Similarly, the same age group accounted for 58.6% of the 282,000 force contacts which occurred during other face-to-face contacts with police.

Overall, younger persons age 16-24 were approximately a quarter of all persons estimated to have face-to-face contact with police in 1999. However, younger persons were about half of all contacts with police involving force.

Persons age 25 or older were neither more nor less likely to be involved in force incident when stopped by police than during a nontraffic contact. This age group accounted for 51.4% of the force contacts involving drivers during a traffic stop and 41.4% of persons in incidents of force occurring during other contacts with police in 1999.

Driver race/ethnicity

White drivers were involved in 61.1% of the 139,000 force contacts which occurred during a traffic stop. Whites also accounted for 57.8% of the 282,000 force contacts which occurred during other contacts with police. In total, whites were 78.2% of persons who had a face-to-face contact with police in 1999 and were 58.9% of those persons who experienced force.

Black persons were 10.6% of all contacts with police in 1999 and accounted for 22.4% of all persons who indicated that police used force against them. Just over 8% of police-public contacts involved a person of Hispanic origin, and these same persons were involved in 15.5% of all force contacts with police in 1999. Of both blacks and Hispanics who experienced force, the force was not more likely to occur during a traffic stop than during other types of contact with police.

Table 21. Force used or threatened by police, 1999: Gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Gender, age, and race/ethnicity	Persons having face-to-face contact with police in 1999			
	Percent	Percent of all persons experiencing police use of force	Percent of drivers in traffic stops experiencing police use of force	Percent of persons with nontraffic contact experiencing police use of force
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Gender				
Male	52.8%	86.9%	98.2%	81.4%
Female	47.2	13.1	1.8*	18.6
Age				
16-24	23.5%	55.3%	48.6%	58.6%
25 or older	76.5	44.7	51.4	41.4
Race/ethnicity				
White	78.2%	58.9%	61.1%	57.8%
Black	10.6	22.6	23.1*	22.4
Hispanic	8.1	15.5	15.8*	15.4
Other race	3.1	2.9	0.0*	4.3*
Estimated number	43,827,419	421,714	139,327	282,387

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

Zero represents no cases in sample.

*Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

Table 22. Of all face-to-face contacts with police, percent reporting that police used excessive force, 1999

Type of contact with police	Total face-to-face contacts with police	Persons reporting force by police was excessive	
		Number	Percent
Total	43,827,419	321,028	0.7%
Traffic stop	19,277,002	99,956	0.5
Other	24,550,417	221,072	0.9

Use of excessive force

In the 1999 survey, persons who said they had a contact with police in which force was used were asked whether,

in their opinion, the force used was "excessive." Of the estimated 43.8 million persons who had a face-to-face contact with police, 0.7% said that police had used what they felt was excessive force (table 22). About half of 1% of the 19.3 million drivers involved in a traffic stop in 1999 felt they had excessive force used against them. The likelihood of experiencing a force contact which was considered "excessive" was higher for persons involved in other types of face-to-face contact with police (0.9%).

Of the estimated 422,000 persons involved in a force contact, most (76.1%) said the force was excessive (table 23). Of the estimated 139,000 drivers who had force used against them during a traffic stop, 71.7% said the force was excessive. Of the remaining 282,000 force contacts that occurred during other contacts with police, 78.3% reported that the force used was excessive.

Table 23. Force used or threatened by police was excessive, comparing traffic stops to other face-to-face contacts with police, 1999

Type of contact with police	Number of persons with force	Persons reporting force was excessive	
		Number	Percent
Total	421,714	321,028	76.1%
Traffic stop	139,327	99,956	71.7
Other	282,387	221,072	78.3

Appendix

Appendix A. Of the U.S. population, the percent and number of licensed drivers, 1999: Gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Gender, age, and race/ethnicity	U.S. population age 16 or older	Percent with driver's license	Number with driver's license
Total	209,350,577	89%	186,322,014
Gender			
Male	100,868,144	93%	93,807,374
Female	108,482,433	85	92,210,068
Age			
16-19	15,967,931	70%	11,177,552
20-24	18,313,065	88	16,115,497
25-29	18,396,356	92	16,924,648
30-34	19,849,097	94	18,658,151
35-39	22,624,608	95	21,493,378
40-44	22,375,122	94	21,032,615
45-49	19,564,613	95	18,586,382
50-54	16,463,371	94	15,475,569
55-59	12,858,221	92	11,829,563
60-64	10,358,569	89	9,219,126
65-69	9,240,111	86	7,946,495
70-74	8,619,172	83	7,153,913
75 or older	14,720,341	66	9,715,425
Age			
16-24	34,280,996	79%	27,081,987
25 or older	175,069,581	91	159,313,319
Race/ethnicity			
White	155,182,518	92%	142,767,917
Black	24,505,942	74	18,134,397
Hispanic	21,276,862	86	18,298,101
Other race	8,385,255	80	6,708,204

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.
Sources: See table 1.

Appendix B. Of the United States population, the percent and number of licensed drivers, 1999: Combined categories of race/ethnicity and age

Age and race/ethnicity	U.S. population age 16 or older	Percent with driver's license	Number with driver's license
Total	209,350,577	89%	186,322,014
16 to 24			
White	22,160,379	86%	19,057,926
Black	4,838,271	64	3,096,493
Hispanic	5,552,273	68	3,775,546
Other race	1,730,073	77	1,332,156
25 or older			
White	133,022,139	93%	123,710,589
Black	19,667,671	77	15,144,107
Hispanic	15,724,589	84	13,208,655
Other race	6,655,182	89	5,923,112

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.
Sources: See table 1.

Appendix C. Of the United States population, the percent and number of licensed drivers, 1999: Combined categories of race/ethnicity and gender

Race/ethnicity and gender	U.S. population age 16 or older	Percent with driver's license	Number with driver's license
Total	209,350,577	89%	186,322,014
White			
Male	75,176,222	95%	71,417,411
Female	80,006,295	90	72,005,666
Black			
Male	11,026,484	81%	8,931,452
Female	13,479,458	69	9,300,826
Hispanic			
Male	10,618,994	87%	9,238,525
Female	10,657,868	74	7,886,822
Other race			
Male	4,046,444	92%	3,722,728
Female	4,338,812	81	3,514,438

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.
Sources: See table 1.

Appendix D. Of the United States population, the percent and number of licensed drivers, 1999: Combined categories of age and gender

Gender and age	U.S. population age 16 or older	Percent with driver's license	Number with driver's license
Total	209,350,577	89%	186,322,014
Male			
16-24	17,230,528	81%	13,956,728
25 or older	83,637,616	95	79,455,735
Female			
16-24	17,050,468	78%	13,299,365
25 or older	91,431,965	87	79,545,810

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.
Sources: See table 1.

Appendix E. Of the U.S. population, the percent and number of licensed drivers, 1999: Combined categories of gender, age, and race/ethnicity

Gender, age, and race/ethnicity	U.S. population age 16 or older	Percent with driver's license	Number with driver's license
Total	209,350,577	89%	186,322,01
Males age 16-24			
White	11,210,194	87%	9,752,869
Black	2,272,928	67	1,522,862
Hispanic	2,849,023	70	1,994,316
Other race	898,382	79	709,722
Males age 25 or older			
White	63,966,028	96%	61,407,387
Black	8,753,556	85	7,440,523
Hispanic	7,769,971	91	7,070,674
Other race	3,148,061	95	2,990,658
Females age 16-24			
White	10,950,185	85%	9,307,657
Black	2,565,343	61	1,564,859
Hispanic	2,703,249	65	1,757,112
Other race	831,691	76	632,085
Females age 25 or older			
White	69,056,111	91%	62,841,061
Black	10,914,115	71	7,749,022
Hispanic	7,954,618	76	6,045,510
Other race	3,507,121	81	2,840,768

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.
Sources: See table 1.

Methodology

Sampling

In 1999 the PPCS respondents included all NCVS respondents age 16 or older, with the questionnaire administered following the NCVS screener and incident forms.

During the last 6 months of 1999 in which interviews were conducted, the NCVS sample consisted of 94,717 individuals age 16 or older. Of these, 10,424, or 11%, were NCVS non-interviews, though someone else in the household was interviewed. In addition to those not interviewed for the NCVS, 986 persons either refused to participate in the PPCS or said they were not available for the interview or the interviewer failed to indicate the specific reason for non-interview.

By far the largest reason for not completing the PPCS in 1999, accounting for 2,764 respondents, was the exclusion of the proxy interviews conducted for the NCVS when a person was unable, for physical, mental, or other reasons, to participate. BJS staff determined that caregivers and other proxy interviewees would have difficulty describing the details of any contacts between police and the sampled respondent.

The PPCS failed to interview 14,174 persons and interviewed 80,543; this translates into an 85% response rate for the PPCS, compared to an overall response rate of 89% for the NCVS. Among the PPCS interviews conducted, 24,829 (31%) were in person and 55,672 (69%) were by telephone.

The PPCS national sample, after adjustment for non-response, weights to a national estimate of 209,350,600 persons age 16 or older. Distributions

by gender, race, ethnicity, and age parallel the resident population projections (middle-series) published by the Census Bureau (http://www.census.gov/population/projections/nation/detail/d1999_00.pdf) reflecting the accuracy of the case-level adjustments to the weights:

Characteristic	Resident population	
	Census Bureau projection	PPCS sample
Gender		
Male	48.2%	48.2%
Female	51.8	51.8
Race/ethnicity		
White	74.1%	74.1%
Black	11.4	11.7
Hispanic	10.2	10.2
White	9.3	9.8
Black	0.6	0.2
Other*	0.3	0.1
Other	4.3	4.0
Age		
16-17	3.8%	3.9%
18-19	3.8	3.8
20-24	8.6	8.7
25-29	8.7	8.8
30-34	9.4	9.5
35-39	10.7	10.8
40-49	19.8	20.0
50 or older	35.3	34.5
Total	210,604,000	209,350,600

*Other includes Asians, Pacific Islanders, Native Hawaiians, American Indians, and Alaska Natives.

Other information on survey methodology

Unless indicated otherwise, differences documented in this report were significant at the .05-level. Certain differences were not significant at the .05-level but were significant at the .10-level. The terms "somewhat" and "marginally" refer to differences significant at the .10-level.

Regarding racial designations given in the report, "white" refers to non-Hispanic whites, "black" refers to non-Hispanic blacks, and "other races" refers to non-Hispanics in the "other races" category. White Hispanics, black Hispanics, and Hispanics of "other races" are categorized in the report under the heading "Hispanic." Due to small samples and concerns about confidentiality, the report does not provide separate statistics on each of the racial categories that make up "other races" (Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Native Hawaiians, and Alaska Natives).

Related reading

Data used in this report were previously used in the BJS report (*Contacts between Police and the Public: Findings from the 1999 National Survey*, NCJ 184957, February 2001).

