



Portland Police Bureau
 Tom Potter, Mayor
 Rosanne M. Sizer, Chief of Police
 1111 SW 2nd Avenue
 Portland, OR 97204
www.portlandpolice.com

Stops Data Collection

Message from the Chief

The Portland Police Bureau released its 2004 and 2005 traffic stops data, and is encouraging community members to review the information and work together with police to develop community policing strategies. The Bureau recognizes that the data does not tell the full story about police-community relations; our community members do.

Nationally, experts in this field have found that the data itself does not answer many questions about the problem of racially biased policing. They do, however, say that the data can be helpful in creating police-community dialogue on how to better serve the community.

“You don’t learn a neighborhood best by answering only 9-1-1 calls. Officers who work alongside neighborhood leaders and small business owners build relationships to best serve people living and working in our communities,” said Chief Rosanne Sizer.

“We want to further extend ourselves to the community – particularly communities of color – in order to restore and build trust. In the end, the data may prompt action but does not in and of itself provide the solutions we all seek.”

“Over the next few weeks, I will be attending community meetings to gain feedback from citizens

on this topic. I encourage community members to be involved in problem solving activities and to participate in ride-alongs with officers. There will also be opportunities for citizens to attend the cultural competency training at officer in-service.”

Collecting traffic stops data

The Police Bureau began collecting data on traffic stops and person stops in 2001, after recommendations from the Bureau Blue Ribbon Panel on Racial Profiling and after state legislation encouraged police agencies to do so. The 2001 data report was issued in 2002. In 2002 and 2003 the Bureau resolved data collection issues with its officers who do not have access to a mobile computer (for example, traffic motorcycle officers) and clarified the data categories.

The 2001 data included both person and traffic stops. Since that time, most agencies across the country have focused on traffic stops. The 2004 and 2005 data have been released in 2006 and focused on traffic stops data.

Major findings from the data

When an officer completes a traffic stop, he/she is required to submit the following information

Citywide Number of Traffic Stops

Driver's Perceived Race/Ethnicity	2004 Traffic Stops	2005 Traffic Stops	2000 Census: Age 18 or older
	Percent	Percent	Percent
African-American	13%	13%	6%
Asian	4%	4%	6%
Hispanic/Latino	8%	9%	6%
Native American	<1%	<1%	1%
White	71%	68%	79%
Unknown/other	4%	5%	<1%
Multiracial	-	-	3%
Total	80,073 (100%)	79,419 (100%)	

on the stop: race/ethnicity, gender and age (adult or juvenile) of the driver; type of incident; reason for the stop; search results; and outcome of the stop.

In general, there were no key differences in the data between 2004 and 2005. In 2005, there were 79,419 traffic stops: 13 percent were African American, 4 percent were Asian, 9 percent were Hispanic/Latino, less than 1 percent were Native American and 68 percent were White. Five percent were unknown/other.

The percentage of each race/ethnicity stopped was compared against the percentage of each race/ethnicity who are 18 and older as counted in the 2000 U.S. Census. (With the Portland police data, only 2 percent were noted as being persons under 18.)

The American Community Survey publishes projections that update population figures between the census years. From 2000 to 2004, they estimate that the Hispanic/Latino citywide residential population of Portland increased by 2 percent, and the White population decreased by 2 percent. This comparison of people stopped to persons in the population is made to determine if any group is overrepresented, and to what extent the group is overrepresented.

Citywide, African Americans were the most overrepresented, with Hispanic/Latinos also overrepresented. Asian and White drivers were underrepresented. Native Americans were slightly underrepresented.

Of the total number of stops for 2005, 13 percent were of drivers who were African American, although African Americans make up 6 percent of the total population 18 and older. Hispanic/Latinos made up 9 percent of the 2005 stops and 6 percent of the total population 18 and older.

Data were also divided into the geographic area where the stop was made, to examine any differences among the Bureau's five precincts. The precinct data showed the African Americans were overrepresented in all five precincts; Hispanic/Latinos were overrepresented in four of five precincts; Asians were underrepresented in four of five precincts; and Whites were underrepresented in all five precincts. The total number of stops made for Native Americans was too low to draw statistical comparisons at the precinct level.

Four out of five precincts showed similar stops data. Central Precinct data differed the most from the other precincts, primarily due to its larger daytime and visitor population. Central Precinct covers Southwest, Northwest and downtown Portland.

Reasons and outcomes of the stop

Vehicle code violations were the reason for almost all stops for all groups. This includes speeding, failure to obey a traffic control device, etc. When stopped, officers are required to submit data on whether a search was made and what illegal items (such as drugs, weapons, alcohol or contraband) were found, if any.

The search data showed that African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos were more likely to be searched than Whites, and Asians were slightly less likely to be searched. The data also showed that during the searches, officers were less likely to find drugs with African Americans, Asians or Hispanic/Latinos than Whites. The percentage of weapons found was about the same for all groups.

For all groups, the most likely outcome of a traffic stop was to receive a warning: 55 percent of African Americans, 51 percent of Hispanic/Latinos and 53 percent of Whites. About 4 percent of all groups had no enforcement action taken. However, 6 percent of African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos were taken into custody, compared to 2 percent of Asians and 3 percent of Whites.

National perspectives and analysis

In November 2004, the Police Bureau invited Dr. Lorie Fridell, an expert on stops data from the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), to speak with Bureau command staff, community members from the Bureau's nine advisory committees and metro area chiefs and sheriffs.

In her presentation, she described that overrepresentation of minorities in traffic stops is seen nationally. She said that stops data can provide a good foundation for a community discussion on racial disparity in law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

Fridell also encouraged agencies to discuss the outcome of the stop in terms of who is stopped, who is searched and whether or not anything is found in the search.

She described an analogy to a bank loan officer deciding who should get a loan and who shouldn't based on the likelihood that the person will fail to pay back the loan. In that example, if the loan officer is using the same criteria to evaluate everyone – with no bias – then all racial/ethnic groups would fail on their loans at the same rate. However, if African Americans failed on their loans at a lower rate than Whites, it could indicate a bias that the criteria to get a loan are higher for African Americans.

Fridell then applied that same analysis to police stops data. If a police officer is using the same criteria to evaluate everyone about whether to search them or not – with no bias – then all racial/ethnic groups would have illegal items in their possession at the same rate. However, if African Americans had a lower rate of illegal items found than Whites, it could indicate a bias that African Americans are being searched with fewer criteria than Whites.

The data for Portland in 2005 showed that illegal items were found 28 percent of the time when Whites are searched, while illegal items were found 23 percent of the time for African Americans, 23 percent of the time for Hispanic/Latinos and 25 percent of the time for Asians. (See chart below.)

Steps that police are taking

In addition to collecting and analyzing the data, and sharing it in discussions with the community, the Police Bureau has taken several steps to address the issue of racial profiling, many in re-

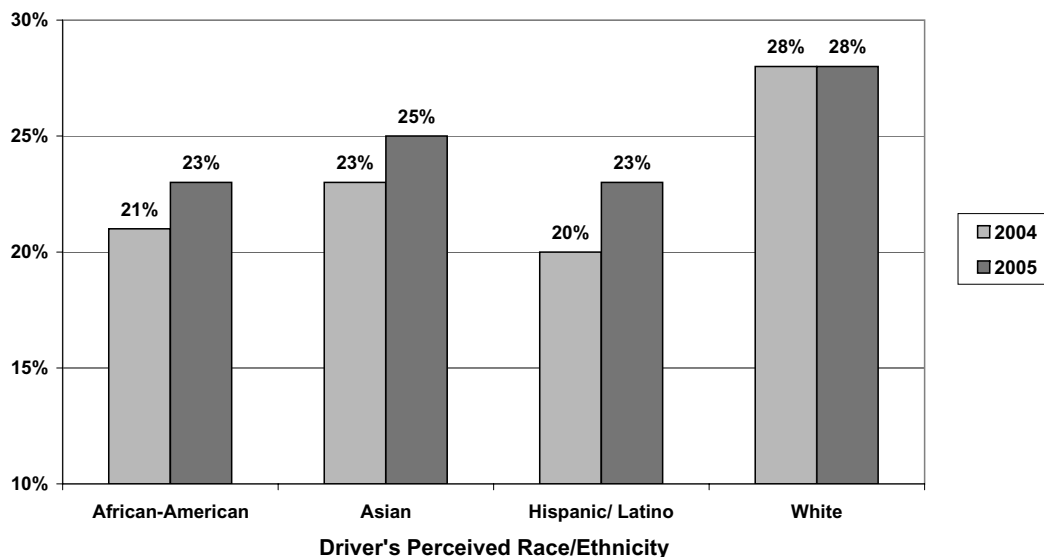
sponse to the recommendations issued by the Blue Ribbon Panel:

Hiring/recruitment: The agency retooled its recruitment efforts with a focus on women and minorities in our local communities. Recruitment activities include a print advertising campaign, Internet site with video, a transit advertising campaign and a partnership with community colleges. The number of minorities who applied to take the exam increased 36 percent from 2004 to 2005 (237 to 322). The number of women and minorities hired as officers also rose in 2005.

Policies: Local area chiefs and sheriffs signed a non-discrimination resolution in 1999, and re-signed it in 2001. In addition, the Police Bureau created a specific policy prohibiting bias-based policing. At the recommendation of community members, the agency also changed its published definition of racial profiling to be consistent with the U.S. Department of Justice. This definition is “any police-initiated action that relies on the race, ethnicity, or national origin rather than the behavior of the individual or information that leads the police to a particular individual who has been identified as being, or having been, engaged in criminal activity.”

Training: As part of the 2004-05 in-service training, officers received classes in cultural competency, serving people with epilepsy and crisis intervention training. As part of the 2005-06 in-service training, officers are completing a course called Perspectives in Profiling, which includes ethical decision-making. This course has generated intense discussion about how and why officers

Percent of Citywide Traffic Stop Searches Resulting in Finding Illegal Items



make the stop decisions they make. The curriculum allows officers to be introspective regarding unconscious biases that may factor in their decision-making.

Measuring community perceptions

In 2005, the Police Bureau conducted its seventh community survey on crime, livability and satisfaction with police services. For the first time, the survey contained questions on citizen perception of police stops. Respondents were asked whether they had been stopped, the reason for the stop and their opinion about whether Portland police use unfair reasons to stop people.

The findings showed that while African Americans gave the highest ratings of unfairness and Hispanic/Latinos also gave ratings of unfairness, the citywide population as a whole perceives a problem with fairness.

Recommendations

The report by independent consultant Campbell DeLong Resources, Inc., concludes with a series of recommendations:

“Regardless of cause, agree that even the perception alone is a major problem. It is very difficult to build deeply effective community partnerships with a community that includes a significant portion of members who don’t trust the fairness of its police department, regardless of the degree of truth behind those perceptions. As such, working to reach agreement about the degree to which negative perceptions of the fairness of Portland Police offic-

ers are currently valid may not be as constructive as simply working on changing the perception itself.

“Unfortunately, it is easy to become mired in a debate about whether the underlying causes predominantly spring from historical issues and everyday misunderstandings; periodically rude, insensitive, or aggressive behavior – by one or both parties; or direct racial profiling and disparate treatment. Our point is simply that this debate need not be settled to commit to new approaches to move the perceptions – new strategies to build stronger neighbor and community partnerships, different methods to communicate about police practices and approaches, trying new supervisory and adult-learning training strategies to increase the percentage of officers with very advanced skills in what has come to be called ‘verbal judo,’ and, of course, vigilance on both individual and institutional indicators that ensure early warning of potential problems.

“In short, it is less important to figure out whose perception is accurate than it is to work on every strategy that may help change the perception. On the one hand, it can certainly be argued that responsibility for solving the problem rests with the whole community. On the other hand, to echo Sir Robert Peel’s principles of policing, we would argue that it rests foremost with those who are paid to give it their full-time attention. Therefore, we recommend that the Portland Police Bureau consider the results of the stop-decision perceptions in this report and develop additional innovations, from the minor to the bold, to move these numbers as well.”

For More Information

The Police Bureau website, at www.portlandpolice.com, contains:

- Summary tables of the 2004 and 2005 stops data including citywide and precinct breakdowns for all data components. This also includes links to national perspectives and analysis.
- The 2005 Community Survey with analysis of community perceptions.
- The 2000 Blue Ribbon Panel on Racial Profiling.

Produced by:
Portland Police Bureau
Planning and Support Division
1111 SW 2nd Avenue
Portland, OR 97204
593-823-0283

www.portlandpolice.com



May 2006