

Annual Vehicle Stops Data Analysis

“Do police officers engage in racial profiling? This is the million-dollar question being asked...by researchers, police administrators, court officials, citizen groups, and individual citizens across the country”¹. While the term, racial profiling, is relatively new, concern over racial bias in decision-making by police is not and follows from historically “tense” relations between police and minorities. The Rule of Law which underlies a democratic form of government and, therefore, democratic policing strategies, is based on the presumption that, unless specified under the law, individual characteristics such as age, ethnicity, economic and socio-demographic characteristics of individuals should not be taken into account in the administration of justice. Biased policing occurs when “... (Intentionally or unintentionally) personal, societal, or organizational biases and/or stereotypes are applied in the decision-making processes in the administration of justice.”² Racially biased policing is only one form of bias in the administration of justice. “Racially biased policing occurs when the police inappropriately consider race or ethnicity in deciding with whom and how to intervene in an enforcement capacity”.³ Racial profiling is a form of bias within policing and includes “...any police action that relies on the race, ethnicity or national origin of an individual rather than the behavior of an individual or information that leads the police to a particular individual who has been identified as being, or having been, engaged in criminal activity”⁴

Racial profiling and the larger category of biased policing have a number of specific consequences. Those most significant consequences are:

- Hinders police effectiveness by eroding public confidence and trust and interferes with strong police and community partnerships;
- Hinders police effectiveness by leading police to believe that only “certain people” commit crimes;
- Violates federal and civil statutes; and
- It is a form of discrimination and is therefore, wrong.

The Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD) initiated the practice of collecting and analyzing vehicle stops information in 2004. Data from vehicles stops were analyzed in 2004, 2005 and 2006. The department re-initiated the analysis of vehicle stops information in January 2013 and reports from 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 have been completed. These analyses assess patterns in vehicle stops made by police officers as a means of addressing biased-policing. The findings from this analysis are not meant to be information from which a conclusion can be drawn concerning the presence or absence of biased-policing and/or racial profiling within an agency or unit within an agency. The methodological issues related to determinations of the presence or absence of biased-policing are significant and no set of data or research design can conclusively determine the presence or absence of inappropriately based

¹ R. Engel, 2008, ‘A Critique of the “Outcome Test” in Racial Profiling Research, Justice Quarterly, Vol. 25, Issue 1, pp. 1-36.

² Ronald Davis, National Organization of African American Law Enforcement Executives

³ Police Executive Research Forum and National Organization of African American Law Enforcement Executives

⁴ Ramirez, et.al., Department of Justice, 2000

policing decisions and actions. The information contained in these reports is to be used as a management tool for review by agency leadership and policy-makers. The purpose is to provide law enforcement leadership with information that will stimulate further analysis, thought and queries that will prompt more effective policing within Metro Louisville. It is part of a multi-faceted approach to addressing biased policing as suggested by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and developed through the Police Executive Research Forum. The components include:

- Accountability and supervision
- Policies prohibiting biased policing
- Recruitment and hiring
- Education and training
- Minority community outreach, and
- Data collection and analysis⁵.

The Louisville Metro Police have implemented several other strategies, designed to address biased policing, these include: accountability and supervision related to ensuring that human and civil rights practices are inherent in all police activities and practices, specific policies prohibiting violations of human and civil rights to include a prohibition of biased policing, basic and in-service diversity training for police officers and civilian employees which includes training on implicit bias and procedural justice, implementation of a vehicle stops information database which includes the required completion of a form containing information related to the nature of the stop and characteristics of the driver, policies that make completion of this form mandatory, initial and "refresher" training related to the purpose and manner in which to complete this form, and the analysis of the vehicle stops data as a means of reviewing the nature of stops and forms of potentially biased responses by police officers. Lastly, the department deployed Wearable Video in 2015. This will affect trust, legitimacy as well as provide transparency to vehicle stops. The extent of the influence of these video recordings will not be evident until 2016 and, in future years, may provide an additional means of randomly assessing the nature and quality of the police and civilian interaction during these stops.

The practice of data collection reflects "...accountability, openness, and sound management"⁶ among police agencies. There are, however, pros and cons to the data collection and it must be reiterated and clearly understood that no form of data collection currently in existence can prove or disprove the existence of biased decision-making within an agency.

The 2013 and 2014 Vehicle Stops Reports can be found on the LMPD Web Page at <https://louisvilleky.gov/government/police/lmpd-transparency>.

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⁵ Fridell, et.al., Police Executive Research Forum, 2001

⁶ Fridell, et.al., Police Executive Research Forum, 2001, p. 115

