THE OTTAWA TRAFFIC STOP RACE DATA COLLECTION PROJECT

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The Traffic Stop Race Data Collection Project (TSRDCP) is a landmark study we conducted that disaggregated and analyzed two years of race data collected by the Ottawa Police. This paper outlines the results of the study, which have far-reaching policy implications for the elimination of discrimination in Canadian law enforcement and the establishment of race-neutral justice.

The Traffic Stop Race Data Collection Project (TSRDCP) required Ottawa police officers to record their perception of the driver's race, by observation only, for traffic stops over a two-year period from June 27, 2013 to June 26, 2015. Police participated in the study as part of a human rights settlement agreement between the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) and the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC), in regard to the case of 18-year-old Chad Aiken, an African Canadian who said he was taunted and punched by a police officer who pulled him over while driving his mother's Mercedes-Benz. We released a comprehensive report on the findings from the project on October 24, 2016.

The TSRDCP study represents the largest and most comprehensive undertaking of race based data collection in Canadian policing history. A total of 81,902 records of traffic stops were examined. Each record included complete information on race, sex and age, along with complete information on police districts, reasons for traffic stops and outcomes. The record did not include the time of day or the neighbourhood where the stop occurred. The officers entering the race data reported perceiving the race of the driver prior to the stop in 11.4% of the cases.

This research project addressed three issues:

INCIDENCES OF TRAFFIC STOPS

Do drivers of different race groups have disproportionately high incidences of traffic stops, when compared with their respective driver populations in Ottawa? Research findings showed that:

- The study examines 81, 902 traffic stops where officers recorded their perception of the driver's race: 69.3% White (56,776), 12.3% Middle Easterner (10,066), 8.8%

Black (7,238), 4.7% E. Asian /SE Asian (3,875), 2.7% S. Asian (2,195), 1.9% Other racialized minorities (1,545), and 0.3% Indigenous Peoples (207).

- In Ottawa, Middle Easterner and Black groups, irrespective of their sex and age, are the two race groups with disproportionately high incidences of traffic stops. Middle Easterner Drivers were stopped 10066 times, which constituted about12.3% of the total stops over the two year period. However, these drivers represent less than 4% of the total driving population in Ottawa. This means that Middle Easterner Drivers were stopped 3.3 times more than what you would expect based on their population. Black Drivers were stopped 7238 times, which constituted about 8.8% of the total stops over the two-year period. However, these drivers represent less than 4% of the total driving population in Ottawa. This means that Black Drivers were stopped 2.3 times more than what you would expect based on their population.

- With the exception of Indigenous peoples, men aged 16-24 of all race groups (including White) have disproportionately high incidences of traffic stops. The disproportionalities ranged from 64.21% (E. Asian/ S.E. Asian) to 1100.39% (Middle Easterner).

- Middle Easterner Male Drivers aged 16-24 were stopped 2302 times, which constituted about 2.8% of the total stops over the two year period. However, these drivers represent less than 0.25% of the total driving population in Ottawa. This means that young Middle Easterner male drivers were stopped 12 times more than what you would expect based on their population. Black Male Drivers aged 16-24 were stopped 1238 times, which constituted about 1.5% of the total stops over the two year period. However, these drivers represent less than 0.2%of the total driving population in Ottawa. This means that young Black male drivers were stopped 8.3 times more than what you would expect based on their population. White Male Drivers aged 16-24 were stopped 6172 times, which constituted about 7.5% of the total stops over the two year period. However, these drivers represent about 4.3% of the total driving population in Ottawa. This means that young White male drivers were stopped 1.7 times more than what you would expect based on their population.

REASONS FOR TRAFFIC STOPS

Do racialized minority drivers experience disproportionately high incidences of specific reasons for traffic stops when compared with their White counterparts in Ottawa? Research findings showed that:

- The reason most used by police officers in traffic stops is "provincial and municipal offenses". It was used in 79,603 of the 81, 902 traffic stops (97.19%). Police officers did not utilize "provincial and municipal offenses" for traffic stops in a disproportional manner for any racial minority groups.

- When compared with the White group, "criminal offences" reason has been used disproportionately by police officers for five of the six racialized minority groups. The data is inconclusive about Indigenous peoples with regard to this issue because the number of stops citing "criminal offenses" was too low to draw any conclusions.

- Similarly, "suspicious activities" reason has been used disproportionately by police officers for four racialized minority group - Indigenous peoples (99.37%), Black (148.40%), Middle Easterner (133.70%), and other racialized minorities (132.78%).

OUTCOMES OF TRAFFIC STOPS

Do racialized minority drivers experience disproportionately high incidences of specific outcome of traffic stops when compared with their White counterparts in Ottawa? Research findings showed that:

- All race groups (including White) have received similar proportions of charges (44.65%) from police officers after traffic stops.

- All race groups (including White) have received similar proportions of warnings (41.29%) from police officers after traffic stops.

- Indigenous peoples (37.77%), Black (47.28%), Middle Easterner (36.84%), and other racialized minorities (28.21%) groups experienced disproportionately high incidences of "final (no action)" outcomes of traffic stops.

CONCLUSIONS

Traffic stop data have constraints and benefits as a means of measuring whether policing in a jurisdiction is racially biased. The limits of social science preclude researchers from drawing definitive conclusions from the data regarding the existence or lack of racial bias.

However, the TSRDCP in its comprehensiveness and scope provides a significant step forward in providing an evidentiary base for rational understanding and action. The report is

highlighted by the finding that Middle Easterner Drivers were stopped 3.3 times, and Black Drivers were stopped 2.3 times their ratios in the driving population of Ottawa. The factual coherence provided by all of the disaggregated race data can be interpreted as at least prima facie evidence of problematic police-minority relations; and supports the call by racialized minority communities for the Ottawa Police Service to closely examine their policies and practices, and take action to address and prevent racial discrimination.

In this respect, the results can serve as a basis for constructive dialogue between police and residents, which can lead to *1)* increased trust and cooperation, and *2)* effective action plans for reform.

The TSRDCP study should be viewed as a pioneering example and template for how the collection of disaggregated race data can be used as a diagnostic tool to help police services, in concert with community stakeholders, set priorities for addressing the problem or perception of racial profiling in modern Canadian cities. The complete report and all supporting data can be found at: https://www.ottawapolice.ca/en/news-and-community/Traffic-Stop-Race-Data-Collection-ProjectTSRDCP.asp

RACE DATA AND TRAFFIC STOPS IN OTTAWA

Police officers recorded their perception of drivers' race in all traffic stops from June 2013 to June 2015. A total of 81,902 traffic stops were examined, with information on the perceived race, sex and age of the driver, reasons for the stops and what the outcome was.

RACE OF DRIVER DISTRIBUTION IN OTTAWA

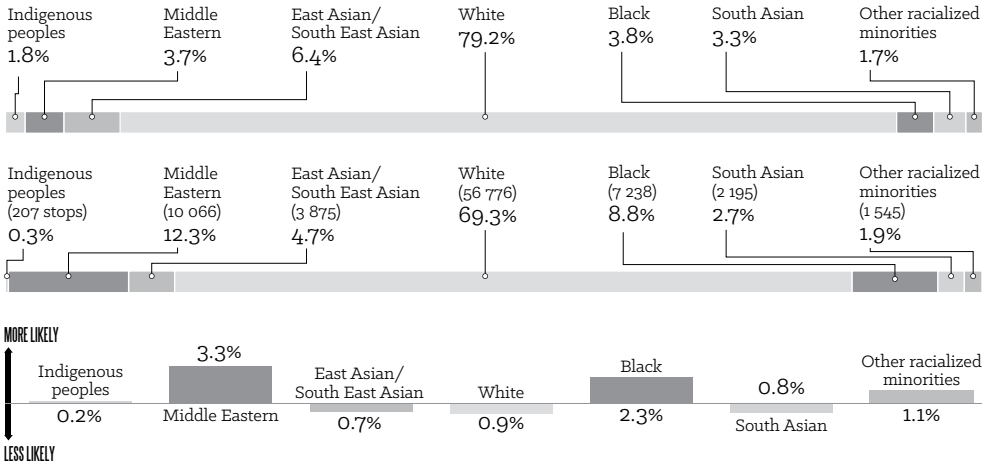
Based on national household survey, 2011

RACE OF DRIVER IN TRAFFIC STOPS

Based on officers' perception of drivers' race in 81,902 traffic stops

WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO BE STOPPED?

Two racial groups have disproportionately high incidence of being pulled over by Police.



Source : Lorne Foster & Les Jacobs, York University, Ottawa Police Service