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Amy Farrell
Northeastern University

Jack McDevitt
Northeastern University

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RHODE ISLAND TRAFFIC STOP STATISTICS 2004-2005 FINAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared by:

Dr. Amy Farrell
Associate Director, Institute on Race and Justice

Dean Jack McDevitt
Director, Institute on Race and Justice

April, 2006

Northeastern
UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE ON RACE AND JUSTICE

INTRODUCTION

Addressing questions about the existence of racially biased traffic enforcement practices is one of the most challenging issues facing law enforcement today. Police and community members in Rhode Island have been struggling to understand and measure the extent of any biased based policing since June 2000, when the state legislature first required all law enforcement agencies to collect data on the demographics of individuals who are stopped during routine traffic stops. Following the release of the first comprehensive report on traffic stop statistics in June 2003, a number of important conversations occurred throughout the state about how to address and combat racial profiling, both real and perceived. The collection of additional data on traffic stops was believed to be essential in evaluating whether or not such efforts helped reduce racial disparities in stops or stop outcomes. The Rhode Island Racial Profiling Prevention Act of 2004 required police to prohibit the practice of racial profiling and ordered all municipal local law enforcement agencies and the State Police to collect demographic data on all routine traffic stops from October 1, 2004 through September 30, 2005. The data collected during this year were transmitted to the Rhode Island Justice Commission for the purpose of an external study of all traffic stop statistics. The present report provides a comprehensive analysis of the 288,483 traffic stops made in Rhode Island during the study period.

The traffic stop data presented in this report offer an opportunity for community members and law enforcement to assess racial disparities in stop and post-stop activity for all jurisdictions across the state. The purpose of this study was to determine whether law enforcement agencies in Rhode Island engaged in racially disparate traffic enforcement practices and identify areas of progress that have been made since the first traffic stop statistics report which was released in 2003. The present report also suggests strategies for law enforcement and community members to continue to use information on traffic enforcement to address concerns about racial profiling.

The 2004-2005 report is divided into three components. First, a brief overview of the major findings is presented in this document. Second, the Full Report describes general patterns of traffic stops, identifies racial disparities in traffic stops and examines racial disparities in post-stop outcomes. Finally, the Technical Report provides detailed information about the construction of the driving population estimate, offers descriptions road survey methodologies and findings, and presents very detailed information on race and traffic stop activity for each agency in the study.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

As with most racial profiling studies, the Rhode Island traffic stop study relied upon law enforcement officers to self-report all information about traffic stops. This process required officers to take a little extra time during the course of a traffic stop (approximately one minute) to carefully complete a Scantron data collection card. Throughout both the original study and the present study, data were closely audited to help ensure that all traffic stop data collection cards were completed accurately for the required stops. Agencies were notified of the proportion of their traffic stop data card missing information on a monthly basis and were encouraged to take steps to prevent missing information. Throughout the course of the second study, missing data were reduced to a negligible level for most agencies.

At the outset of the second study, there was concern that officers might be reluctant to make traffic stops as a result of the re-instated data collection program. Statewide, however, stops increased dramatically. Overall, monthly traffic stops increased 20% from the first study to the second study (24,040 per month in the second study compared to 19,796 in the original study). Across the state, 31 communities increased their average monthly traffic stops between the first and second study. The high numbers traffic stops observed in the present study demonstrates the commitment of law

enforcement officials to take the study seriously and helps provide confidence that the results described in the present study are reflective of routine traffic enforcement patterns.

FINDINGS

Since the original study was released in 2003, many law enforcement officials and communities have worked diligently to understand and attempt to reduce identified racial disparities in traffic stops and searches. There are numerous reasons why disparities between stops and estimates of driving demographics may change between the two studies including both residential and driving population changes, operational adjustments, training and changing personnel. Ultimately, changes in the level of disparity between the two studies should not be interpreted as a definitive test of any of these efforts, rather these results provide more information upon which agencies and their communities can continues discussion.

Some important findings from the current study include:

- Statewide in 2004-2005, 80.7% of drivers stopped were white, 8.0% Black, 8.8% Hispanic, 2.0% Asian, 0.1% Native American and 0.4% Other Races. In total, 19.3% of all stops in the present study were of non-white drivers.

- The driving population estimate (DPE) used in the original study has been employed in the present study as a comparative benchmark against which to evaluate the demographics of traffic stops. Additional road survey tests were conducted in 2004-2005 to continue to validate the accuracy of the DPE as a benchmark against which to compare traffic stops (see Technical Report, Section 2 for a description of the road survey methodology and findings for 2004-2005).

- Table 1 provides a breakdown of the differences between the demographics of stops and the demographics of the estimated driving population for the 2004-2005 study. Understanding the need to interpret these results cautiously, in 14 communities (36% of the communities in the state) the absolute differences in non-white stops compared to the driving population estimate was reduced more than 1%. In 13 communities the disparities increased, some quite substantially, and in 12 communities the absolute difference in non-white stops to DPE disparity is negligible (1% or less).

- After being stopped, statewide 2.9% of white drivers and 5.9% of non-white drivers were subject to a discretionary search, defined as all searches except searches incident to a lawful arrest. In 22 of the 39 agencies studied, non-whites are significantly more likely than whites to be subjected to a discretionary search. Statewide, the odds of a non-white motorists being searched are roughly twice that of a white driver being searched (Table 2).

- Twenty-nine municipal agencies (74% of the municipal agencies in the state) and two Barracks of the State Police reduced their disparity between white and non-white discretionary searches between the first and second study (Table 2). This change represents a dramatic improvement in the discretionary search practices within the State of Rhode Island and reflects the commitment of law enforcement officials to reducing disparities. As indicated later in this report, disparities in search rates are a consistent sources of concern for members of the minority community nationally. Racially disparate search practices still exist in some communities and more work may need to be done to address these problems, however, the changes described in this report make clear the power that agencies have to make improvements once they are provided with detailed information about potential problems.

- To address concerns about whether or not inventory searches should be considered a discretionary search, a second discretionary search category was created to include all searches except those searches incident to a lawful arrest *or* the inventory of a vehicle. Using this broader definition, statewide 1.8% of white drivers were subject to an extra discretionary search compared to 4.0% of non-white drivers. Even in this more restricted set of searches, non-white drivers are twice as likely to be searched as white drivers.

- Since the original 2001-2003 study, discretionary searches of both white and non-white drivers have generally become more productive. In the original study, 23.5% of whites and 17.8% of non-whites were found with contraband. In the present study, white contraband hit rates went up to 26.5% and non-whites rates improved to 22.3% (Table 3). These statistics suggest that since the initial report police agencies in many communities in Rhode Island have engaged in more strategic or targeted search practices yielding higher hit rates.

- As searches overall became more productive, the disparity between white and non-white productivity has also narrowed. In the original study the disparity between non-white and white contraband found statewide was 5.7%. In the present study the disparity has been reduced to 4.2%. Though these changes may seem like small steps, they reinforce the idea that as agencies make their searches more efficient (e.g. increase their overall hit rate) they likely will decrease racial disparities in search outcomes (Table 3).

- In eleven communities the disparity between white and non-white search rates has gone down at the same time that productivity of searches, particularly non-white searches, has gone up. Much may be learned from those agencies that increase productivity of searches while decreasing racial disparity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The present report provides stakeholders with comprehensive information about traffic stop demographics, trends and patterns across a number of years. Such information can be used by law enforcement officials and community members to closely examine areas where disparities persist, recognize the areas of positive change, and continue to develop and refine strategies to reduce disparities in the future. The following recommendations may help guide communities in effectively addressing concerns about racial disparities in traffic stop practices.

- Law enforcement officials should continue to closely examine and address internal practices or actions of individual officers that may cause the types of disparate stop patterns observed in this study. In departments identified as having racial disparities in either stop or search practices, supervision and monitoring programs should be established or refined to help determine whether such disparities are the result of wide-spread institutional practices or the actions of a smaller number of individual officers.

- In order to evaluate success of changes made to reduce or prevent disparities, law enforcement agencies should develop traffic stop information systems to help monitor traffic stop enforcement on an ongoing basis. The work of the Rhode Island Police Chief's Association provides a positive starting point for the development of routine traffic stop monitoring systems.

- In each jurisdiction, law enforcement officials should meet with members of their community to review and discuss the information from this report to address questions and enhance trust.

Table 1: Racial Disparities in STOPS Compared to the Driving Population Estimate for all Jurisdictions, 2001-2003 to 2004-2005

	% Non-White Driving Pop. Estimate (DPE)	# of Valid Stops 2001-2003	% Non-White Stops	Absolute Difference	Ratio	Number of Valid Stops 2004-2005	Non-White Stops, 2004-2005	Absolute Difference	Ratio	Difference between Study 1 and 2
Barrington	5.2%	2,941	4.9%	-0.3%	0.94	2,760	5.5%	0.3%	1.06	0.6%
Bristol	6.0%	9,146	4.5%	-1.5%	0.75	6,481	4.3%	-1.7%	0.72	-0.2%
Burrillville	2.8%	3,628	2.1%	-0.7%	0.75	2,638	3.6%	0.8%	1.29	1.5%
Central Falls	51.4%	5,070	57.6%	6.2%	1.12	4,451	60.6%	9.2%	1.18	3.0%
Charlestown	3.7%	3,830	5.9%	2.2%	1.59	2,488	7.0%	3.3%	1.89	1.1%
Coventry	3.6%	6,488	3.6%	0.0%	1.00	6,645	4.5%	0.9%	1.25	0.9%
Cranston	14.0%	8,906	29.3%	15.3%	2.09	9,859	30.6%	16.6%	2.19	1.3%
Cumberland	5.9%	9,531	15.2%	9.3%	2.58	6,335	12.6%	6.7%	2.14	-2.6%
East Greenwich	6.3%	2,858	9.1%	2.8%	1.44	3,601	9.2%	2.9%	1.46	0.1%
East Providence	14.9%	21,866	21.6%	6.7%	1.45	15,417	24.8%	9.9%	1.66	3.2%
Foster	3.8%	1,362	15.8%	12.0%	4.16	1,023	10.5%	6.7%	2.76	-5.3%
Glocester	2.6%	5,942	4.0%	1.4%	1.54	3,442	2.7%	0.1%	1.04	-1.3%
Hopkinton	3.7%	4,540	6.6%	2.9%	1.78	3,378	8.4%	4.7%	2.27	1.8%
Jamestown	3.1%	733	6.4%	3.3%	2.06	1,294	8.7%	5.6%	2.81	2.3%
Johnston	6.4%	12,638	12.5%	6.1%	1.95	9,686	17.9%	11.5%	2.80	5.4%
Lincoln	7.0%	7,994	23.2%	16.2%	3.31	2,260	20.4%	13.4%	2.91	-2.8%
Little Compton	2.3%	3,814	3.1%	0.8%	1.35	1,845	3.1%	0.8%	1.35	0.0%
Middletown	10.1%	5,278	12.4%	2.3%	1.23	6,323	8.6%	-1.5%	0.85	-3.8%
Narragansett	4.3%	5,775	8.0%	3.7%	1.86	4,868	6.9%	2.6%	1.60	-1.1%
New Shoreham	2.6%	773	6.0%	3.4%	2.31	390	4.6%	2.0%	1.77	-1.4%
Newport	12.0%	21,917	12.8%	0.8%	1.07	8,211	13.7%	1.7%	1.14	0.9%
North Kingstown	7.7%	8,606	8.9%	1.2%	1.16	9,260	8.6%	0.9%	1.12	-0.3%
North Providence	10.8%	10,747	25.8%	15.0%	2.39	6,876	24.0%	13.2%	2.22	-1.8%
North Smithfield*	6.6%	6,379	14.7%	8.1%	2.23	3,080	22.4%	15.8%	3.39	7.7%
Pawtucket	24.4%	33,933	22.8%	-1.6%	0.93	15,626	30.7%	6.3%	1.26	7.9%
Portsmouth	6.2%	10,790	8.3%	2.1%	1.34	6,400	9.3%	3.1%	1.50	1.0%
Providence*	32.2%	16,375	56.3%	24.1%	1.75	14,636	55.1%	22.9%	1.71	-1.2%
Richmond	4.0%	2,002	7.4%	3.4%	1.85	1,636	6.1%	2.1%	1.53	-1.3%
Scituate	3.1%	3,322	7.4%	4.3%	2.39	2,224	5.1%	2.0%	1.65	-2.3%
Smithfield	5.2%	10,376	10.4%	5.2%	2.00	6,826	8.8%	3.6%	1.69	-1.6%
South Kingstown	8.7%	29,464	7.0%	-1.7%	0.80	15,964	10.9%	2.2%	1.25	3.9%
State Police	15.1%	94,508	20.3%	5.2%	1.34	60,483	23.2	8.1%	1.54	2.9%
Tiverton	3.2%	7,020	2.6%	-0.6%	0.81	4,579	5.9%	2.7%	1.84	3.3%
Warren	4.1%	6,310	6.5%	2.4%	1.59	4,739	6.4%	2.3%	1.56	-0.1%
Warwick	9.5%	29,784	11.4%	1.9%	1.20	16,415	13.2%	3.7%	1.39	1.8%
West Greenwich	3.4%	3,288	5.3%	1.9%	1.56	1,126	6.2%	2.8%	1.82	0.9%
West Warwick	7.9%	7,137	9.5%	1.6%	1.2	3,985	9.8%	1.9%	1.24	0.3%
Westerly	5.5%	8,158	7.5%	2.0%	1.36	2,621	8.4%	2.9%	1.53	0.9%
Woonsocket	14.6%	8,354	30.4%	15.8%	2.08	7,527	25.1%	10.5%	1.72	-5.3%

Table 2: Difference in White and Non-White DISCRETIONARY SEARCHES for All Jurisdictions, 2001-2003 Compared to 2004-2005

Jurisdiction	% White 2001-2003	% Nonwhite 2001-2003	Disparity 2001-2003	% White 2004-2005	% Non-White 2004-2005	Disparity 2004-2005	Change in Disparity
Full State	3.6	8.9	5.3*	2.9	5.9	3.0*	-2.3
SP – All Barracks	2.1	3.6	1.5*	1.9	3.6	1.7*	0.2
SP – Chepachet	0.8	3.1	2.3*	0.8	3.6	2.8*	0.5
SP - Hope Valley	4.5	3.4	-1.1*	2.5	4.5	2.0*	3.1
SP – Lin. Woods	1.6	3.8	2.2*	1.3	2.2	0.9*	-1.3
SP – Wickford	1.1	2.5	1.4*	2.1	5.6	3.5*	2.1
SP- Portsmouth	2.0	5.2	3.2*	3.3	1.9	-1.4*	-4.6
Barrington	0.9	0.0	-0.9	0.8	0.0	-0.8	0.1
Bristol	9.3	19.2	9.9*	5.2	10.4	5.1*	-4.8
Burrillville	3.5	8.8	5.3	3.9	10.5	6.6*	1.3
Central Falls	11.4	11.7	0.3	4.2	5.7	1.4*	1.1
Charlestown	1.5	5.0	0.5	1.4	4.6	3.1*	2.6
Coventry	4.5	5.0	0.5	2.6	4.0	1.4	0.9
Cranston	7.7	10.3	2.6*	3.4	4.4	1.0*	-1.6
Cumberland	4.6	7.7	3.1*	1.9	3.5	1.6*	-1.5
East Greenwich	4.1	10.3	6.2*	6.4	9.7	3.2*	-3.0
East Providence	10.3	15.9	5.6*	5.6	8.7	3.0*	-2.6
Foster	3.3	4.1	0.8	1.3	0.0	-1.3	-2.1
Glocester	2.5	5.8	3.3*	1.5	0.0	-1.5	-4.8
Hopkinton	3.4	4.8	1.4	2.0	5.3	3.2*	1.8
Jamestown	1.5	8.0	6.5*	1.6	3.6	1.9*	-4.6
Johnston	1.1	4.2	3.1*	1.6	3.0	1.4	-1.7
Lincoln	3.1	5.1	2.0*	2.3	3.0	0.7	-1.3
Little Compton	2.5	3.2	0.7	3.1	0.0	-3.0	-3.7
Middletown	3.8	4.5	0.7	1.8	2.2	0.4	-0.3
Narragansett	2.0	5.9	3.9*	1.9	2.1	0.2	-3.7
New Shoreham	1.9	5.0	3.1	1.6	5.6	3.9	0.8
Newport	1.9	5.0	3.1	1.7	4.1	2.4*	-0.7
North Kingstown	2.5	5.3	2.8*	1.8	3.8	1.9*	-0.9
North Providence	5.3	10.4	5.1*	2.1	4.5	2.4*	-2.7
North Smithfield	3.9	12.2	8.3*	5.3	9.6	4.2*	-4.1
Pawtucket	0.8	2.9	2.1*	0.5	1.2	0.7*	-1.4
Portsmouth	5.0	8.5	3.5*	2.8	3.7	0.8	-2.7
Providence	14.8	20.8	6.0*	8.7	13.5	4.8*	-1.2
Richmond	2.1	3.8	1.7	2.9	4.0	1.1	-0.6
Scituate	3.7	11.4	7.7*	1.9	4.4	2.4	-5.3
Smithfield	2.9	6.2	3.3*	1.1	1.7	0.6	-2.7
South Kingstown	0.7	2.1	1.4*	0.6	1.3	0.7*	-0.7
Tiverton	2.1	13.3	11.2*	4.5	4.1	-0.4	-11.6
Warren	5.0	10.8	5.8*	3.4	11.6	8.1*	2.3
Warwick	4.8	9.9	5.1*	5.9	9.9	4.0*	-1.1
West Greenwich	2.9	2.4	-0.5	4.3	7.1	2.8	3.3
West Warwick	4.2	7.9	3.7*	4.3	7.4	3.1*	-0.6
Westerly	4.3	7.9	3.6*	2.7	3.2	0.4	-3.2
Woonsocket	9.3	18.7	9.4*	5.2	8.6	3.3*	-6.1

* = statistically significant at .05 level

Table 3: Productivity for White and Non-White Discretionary Searches, 2001-2003 Compared to 2004-2005

Jurisdiction	White Discretionary Searches		Non-White Discretionary Searches			
	Contraband Found 2001-2003	% Contraband Found 2004-2005	Contraband Found 2001-2003	% Contraband Found 2004-2005	% Non-White minus % White Contraband 2001-2003	% Non-white minus % White Contraband 2004-2005
Total Statewide	23.5	26.50	17.8	22.3	-5.7	-4.2
All State Police	14.8	29.7	13.9	22.0	-0.9	-7.7
Barrington	30.0	52.6	0.0	0.0	-30.0	N/A
Bristol	22.0	14.4	33.3	10.7	11.3	-3.7
Burrillville	8.2	32.6	33.3	11.1	25.1	-21.5
Central Falls	5.0	20.9	7.8	14.1	2.8	-6.8
Charlestown	37.0	51.6	25.0	12.5	-12.0	-39.1
Coventry	16.4	16.1	16.7	25.0	0.3	8.9
Cranston	12.3	24.1	22.0	20.0	9.7	-4.1
Cumberland	42.2	16.2	30.2	39.3	-12.0	23.1
East Greenwich	28.6	10.2	34.4	0.0	5.8	-10.2
East Providence	34.4	39.5	26.1	35.2	-8.3	-4.3
Foster	44.4	72.7	0.0	0.0	-44.4	N/A
Glocester	21.2	56.3	0.0	0.0	-21.2	N/A
Hopkinton	36.7	27.1	20.0	23.1	-16.7	-4.0
Jamestown	33.3	55.6	0.0	33.3	-33.3	-22.3
Johnston	13.8	13.7	7.7	9.4	-6.1	-4.3
Lincoln	29.3	22.5	12.1	14.3	-17.2	-8.2
Little Compton	39.1	80	50.0	0.0	10.9	N/A
Middletown	31.2	29.3	9.1	10.0	-22.1	-19.3
Narragansett	48.5	51.8	20.0	28.6	-28.5	-23.2
New Shoreham	33.3	33.3	100.0	100.0	66.7	66.7
Newport	26.2	20.2	16.7	22.0	-9.5	1.8
North Kingstown	19.6	17.1	27.8	17.2	8.2	0.1
North Providence	23.8	37.5	9.2	18.8	-14.6	-18.7
North Smithfield	19.3	4.0	4.7	4.5	-14.6	0.5
Pawtucket	36.1	22.4	23.8	30.2	-12.3	7.8
Portsmouth	18.8	20.6	22.2	0.0	3.4	-20.6
Providence	23.1	34.5	18.6	24.7	-4.5	-9.8
Richmond	31.2	35.6	0.0	75.0	-31.2	39.4
Scituate	16.1	0.0	9.1	0.0	-7.0	N/A
Smithfield	20.2	27.3	11.1	20.0	-9.1	-7.3
South Kingstown	56.0	51.9	46.7	39.1	-9.3	-12.8
Tiverton	20.0	35.4	37.5	27.3	17.5	-8.1
Warren	19.1	16.7	6.2	8.8	-12.9	-7.9
Warwick	16.4	14.6	10.4	12.6	-6.0	-2.0
West Greenwich	36.1	50	50.0	60.0	13.9	10.0
West Warwick	32.9	18.1	27.8	28.6	-5.1	10.5
Westerly	38.4	41.5	30.0	28.6	-8.4	-12.9
Woonsocket	16.6	22.7	15.3	19.5	-1.3	-3.2

N/A = No non-white searches