Suspect Citizens
What 20 Million Traffic Stops Tells us About Policing and Race

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Who gets stopped, who gets searched?

• 1999 law mandated confirmation or refutation of the “DWB” allegation. It can clearly be confirmed. The state has never done so.
• Our data: 20 million stops (all of them) from 2002 to present.

• Stops: Blacks 63 percent more likely than whites, by population.
• But blacks drive 16 percent less. So about 95 percent more likely, by driving habits
• Searches: Among those stopped, blacks are 115 percent more likely to be searched (2.35 % for whites, 5.05% for blacks)

• So: a double whammy: 95 percent more risk of stop, 115 percent more risk of search, given a stop. Double, then double again. Search rates per stop about 2x, search rates per population: 4x.
Differential Likelihood of Stop
Note: disparities under-estimated by 16 percent.

Whites, population v. stops share
Blacks, population v. stops share
Odds of search by age, race, gender
Search rates by time of day

**Male Drivers**

- White Men
- Black Men
- Hispanic Men

**Female Drivers**

- White Women
- Black Women
- Hispanic Women
Fish out of water? Only a penalty for blacks, not whites.
The math is terrible: 88 percent of searches fail to lead to arrest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11,623,064</td>
<td>6,261,948</td>
<td>1,515,192</td>
<td>20,026,586</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stops</td>
<td>186,959</td>
<td>242,882</td>
<td>42,912</td>
<td>480,509</td>
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<tr>
<td>Searches</td>
<td>66,770</td>
<td>80,823</td>
<td>9,399</td>
<td>159,370</td>
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<tr>
<td>Search and Contraband</td>
<td>22,038</td>
<td>31,584</td>
<td>3,523</td>
<td>57,839</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contraband and Arrest</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Search Rate (%)</td>
<td>35.71</td>
<td>33.28</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>33.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contraband Rate per Search (%)</td>
<td>11.79</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>8.21</td>
<td>12.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contraband + Arrest per Search (%)</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruitless Search Rate (e.g. Searches w/o Arrest)</td>
<td>88.21</td>
<td>87.00</td>
<td>91.79</td>
<td>87.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contraband seizures are typically trivial: Ounces of contraband seized
Reforms can be effective: Fayetteville example

Calls for service: Up

Crime: Down
Some conclusions

• Use of the vehicle code for criminal investigation is:
  • Extremely inefficient (leads to very few significant contraband hits, only 12% arrested after search)
  • Racially biased
  • Generative of tremendous community mistrust, in those communities being targeted.
  • However, it is invisible and perhaps unbelievable in those communities not being targeted. Hence its political value.

• Implicit bias as well as institutional procedures are at the core of these patterns. “High crime” areas have mostly law-abiders...

• Simple institutional reforms can dramatically reduce disparities and the mistrust these may be expected to generate.