



Center on Quality Policing

A RAND INFRASTRUCTURE, SAFETY, AND ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

Racial Disparities in the New York Police Department's Stop, Question, Frisk Practices

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The Press and Public Raised Questions About NYPD's Pedestrian Stops in 2006

- Is 500,000 too many stops?
- Why did 89% of the stops involved nonwhites?
- Why were black and Hispanic suspects frisked more often than whites (45% v. 29% of stops)?
- Why were whites 70% more likely than blacks to have a weapon found on them?

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500,000 Stops Is Unusually High, But NYC Is Unusual

- Projection of national averages to NYC predicts 250,000 to 330,000 stops per year
- However, New York is different than the nation in key respects
 - 50% more officers per capita than the national average
 - 18% of the NYPD stops were due to calls for service
 - High volume of pedestrian traffic
 - Violent crime rate 40% larger than the national average
- In 2006, 470,000 crime complaints and 790,000 arrests and court summons

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An Example Why the Raw Numbers Do Not Give the Full Story

Neighborhood	A	B
Racial composition	900 nonwhite 100 white	300 nonwhite 700 white
Overall composition	60% nonwhite, 40% white	

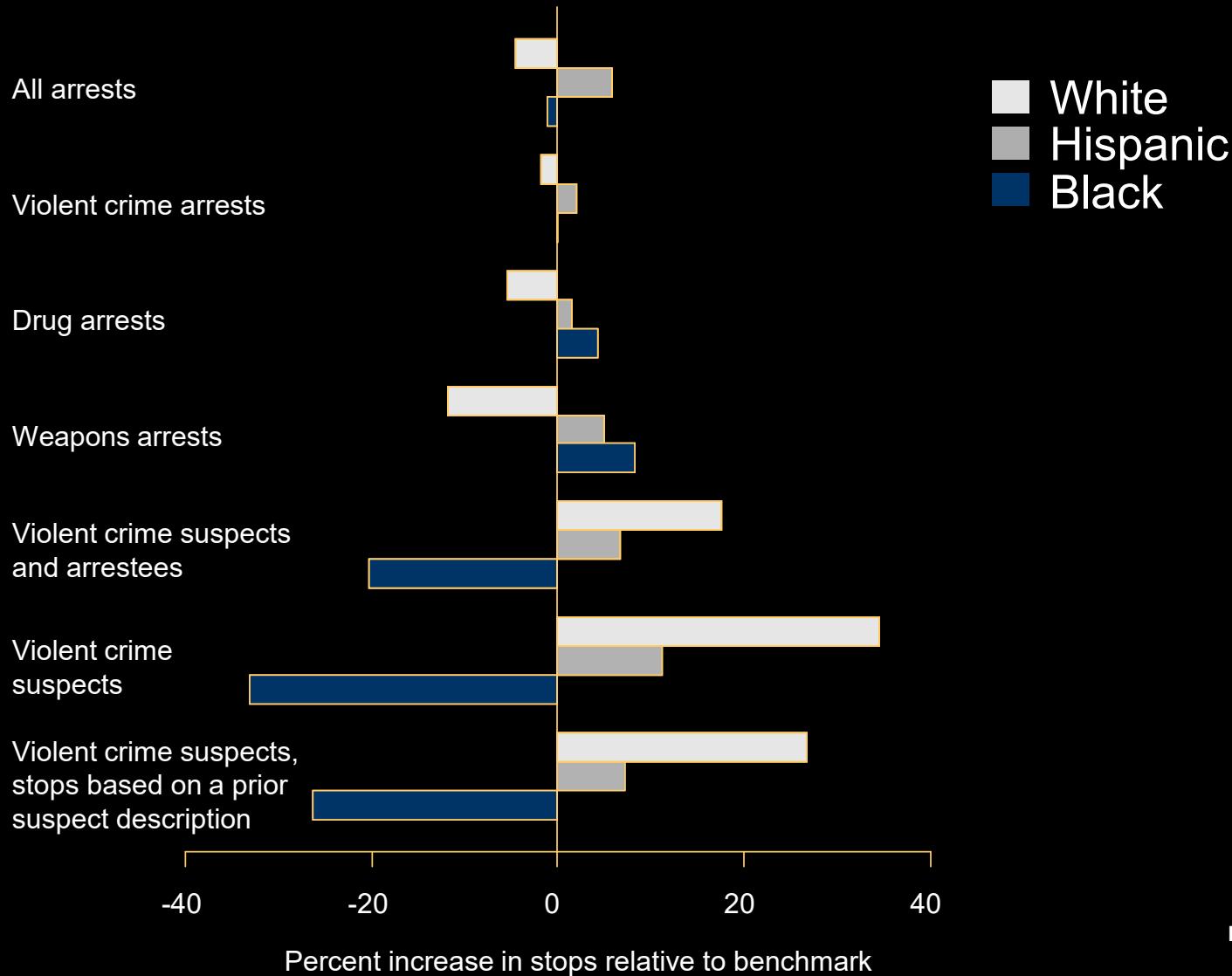
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Neighborhood	A	B
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Overall composition	60% nonwhite, 40% white	
Stops made	80	20
Expected stop composition	72 nonwhite 8 white	6 nonwhite 14 white

Raw Numbers Indicate Racial Disparities Even When Policing Is Fair

Neighborhood	A	B
Racial composition	900 nonwhite 100 white	300 nonwhite 700 white
Overall composition	60% nonwhite, 40% white	
Stops made	80	20
Expected stop composition	72 nonwhite 8 white	6 nonwhite 14 white
Overall stop composition	78% nonwhite, 22% white	

Different External Benchmarks Support Different Conclusions About Bias in Pedestrian Stops



All External Benchmarks Are Imperfect, Some More Imperfect Than Others

- **Census data**
 - Pro: Easy to compute and might represent who is on the street
 - Con: Does not represent rates of criminal participation
- **Arrest rates**
 - Pro: Should be reflective of participation in criminal activity
 - Con: Arrests do not just occur in situations documented in UF250s. If there is bias then arrests will also have a racial bias
- **Criminal suspect descriptions**
 - Pro: Reflects the public's reporting of individuals that have committed crimes and might be a proxy for criminal participation
 - Con: Victimless crimes are less likely to be reported. Does not necessarily reflect who is on the street

Internal Benchmark Matches the Officer's Stops on Time, Place, and Context

Stop Characteristic	Officer (%)
Month	
January	3
February	4
March	8
...	
Day of the week	
Monday	13
Tuesday	11
Wednesday	14
...	
Time of day	
[12–2 a.m.]	11
...	
(8–10 p.m.)	23
(10 p.m. –12 a.m.]	17
Patrol borough	
Brooklyn North	100
Precinct	
A	98
B	1
C	1
Outside	96
In uniform	99
Radio run	1

Internal Benchmark Matches the Officer's Stops on Time, Place, and Context

Stop Characteristic		Officer (%)	Internal Benchmark (%)
Month	January	3	3
	February	4	4
	March	8	9
	...		
Day of the week	Monday	13	13
	Tuesday	11	10
	Wednesday	14	15
	...		
Time of day	[12–2 a.m.]	11	11
	...		
	(8–10 p.m.]	23	23
	(10 p.m. –12 a.m.]	17	17
Patrol borough	Brooklyn North	100	100
Precinct	A	98	98
	B	1	1
	C	1	0
Outside		96	94
In uniform		99	97
Radio run		1	3

Internal Benchmark Analysis Identified Officers With Unusual Stop Patterns

Officer	Black (%) Benchmark	Outlier probability
86	55	97
85	67	62
77	56	86
75	51	78
64	20	98

- In addition, 9 officers stopped fewer black suspects relative to similar stops made by other officers

Ten Officers Stop Disproportionately More Hispanic Suspects Than Their Peers

Officer	Hispanic (%) Benchmark	Outlier Probability
86	52	72
80	43	83
48	24	65
44	21	65
43	20	65
42	23	59
29	10	77
22	3	>99
14	2	>99
Excluding low discretion stops		
	38	71

- **3 officers stopped fewer Hispanic suspects relative to similar stops made by other officers**

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White and Nonwhite Pedestrians Are Stopped in Different Contexts

Stop Feature	Stopped Pedestrians	
	White (N = 5,547)	Nonwhite (unadjusted) (N = 31,716)
Crime suspected (%)	Burglary	15
	CPW	9
	Drugs	5
	Trespass	6
	Grand larceny	9
	Robbery	5
Precinct (%)	1	6
	6	9
	7	8
	9	14
	14	20
	17	8
Time of day (%)	[12–4 a.m.]	24
	(4–8 a.m.)	8
	(8 a.m.–12 p.m.)	11
	(12–4 p.m.)	16
	(4–8 p.m.)	20
	(8 p.m.–12 a.m.)	21
Location (%)	Housing	4
	Transit	22
Male (%)		88
Type of ID (%)	Physical	64
Radio run (%)	Yes	21

White and Nonwhite Pedestrians Are Stopped in Different Contexts

Stop Feature	Stopped Pedestrians	
	White (N = 5,547)	Nonwhite (unadjusted) (N = 31,716)
Crime suspected (%)		
Burglary	15	7
CPW	9	11
Drugs	5	3
Trespass	6	9
Grand larceny	9	14
Robbery	5	11
Precinct (%)		
1	6	5
6	9	7
7	8	12
9	14	12
14	20	28
17	8	3
Time of day (%)		
[12–4 a.m.]	24	18
(4–8 a.m.]	8	6
(8 a.m.–12 p.m.]	11	10
(12–4 p.m.]	16	21
(4–8 p.m.]	20	23
(8 p.m.–12 a.m.]	21	21
Location (%)		
Housing	4	14
Transit	22	36
Male (%)	88	91
Type of ID (%)	Physical	56
Radio run (%)	Yes	13

Reweighting Stops of Nonwhite Pedestrians Aligns the Distribution of Stop Features

Stop Feature	Stopped Pedestrians		
	White (N = 5,547)	Nonwhite (adjusted) (N = 9,781)	Nonwhite (unadjusted) (N = 31,716)
Crime suspected (%)	Burglary	15	15
	CPW	9	10
	Drugs	5	5
	Trespass	6	7
	Grand larceny	9	10
	Robbery	5	5
Precinct (%)	1	6	5
	6	9	7
	7	8	12
	9	14	12
	14	20	28
	17	8	3
Time of day (%)	[12–4 a.m.]	24	23
	(4–8 a.m.]	8	8
	(8 a.m.–12 p.m.]	11	11
	(12–4 p.m.]	16	16
	(4–8 p.m.]	20	23
	(8 p.m.–12 a.m.]	21	21
Location (%)	Housing	4	14
	Transit	22	36
Male (%)		88	91
Type of ID (%)	Physical	64	56
Radio run (%)	Yes	21	13

When Compared with Similar Stops Outcomes Show Small Racial Disparities

Outcome	White (%)	Black (%)	Hispanic (%)	All Nonwhite (%)
Frisked	29.3	33.5	32.8	32.6

- Comparison between stopped white pedestrians and similarly situated nonwhite pedestrians
 - Focuses on the contexts in which white pedestrians are stopped
 - Accounts for the time, place, reason for the stop, result of radio run, and numerous other factors

When Compared with Similar Stops Outcomes Show Small Racial Disparities

Outcome	White (%)	Black (%)	Hispanic (%)	All Nonwhite (%)
Frisked	29.3	33.5	32.8	32.6
Searched	6.4	7.2	6.7	6.7
Summon issued	5.7	4.8	5.5	5.2
Arrested	4.8	5.4	5.1	5.1
Force used	14.5	16.2	15.4	15.7

- Comparison between stopped white pedestrians and similarly situated nonwhite pedestrians
 - Focuses on the contexts in which white pedestrians are stopped
 - Accounts for the time, place, reason for the stop, result of radio run, and numerous other factors

Stops Like Those In Which Black Pedestrians Are Stopped Show No Disparities

Outcome	Black (%)	Hispanic (%)	White (%)	Nonblack (%)
Frisked	45.5	44.3	42.1	43.3
Searched	6.6	6.4	6.5	6.4
Summon issued	5.7	6.0	6.7	6.3
Arrested	4.0	3.7	4.3	3.9
Force used	21.3	20.6	20.2	20.4

- Comparison between stopped black pedestrians and similarly situated nonblack pedestrians

Staten Island Showed Larger Disparities Than Other Boroughs

Outcome	White (%)	Black (%)	Hispanic (%)	All Nonwhite (%)
Frisked	20.3	29.2	24.5	26.2
Searched	4.8	8.1	4.6	6.1
Summon issued	4.7	3.3	4.7	4.0
Arrested	4.0	6.9	4.1	5.4
Force used	10.1	13.5	12.0	12.4

- Analysis compares white suspects stopped in Staten Island to similarly situated nonwhite suspects

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“Hit rates” From Searches and Frisks Were Similar Across Racial Groups

Outcome	Reference Group (%)	Comparison Racial Groups (adjusted) (%)	
	White	Black	Hispanic
Any contraband	6.4	5.7	5.4
Weapon	1.2	0.9	1.1
		Black	Hispanic
Any contraband		3.3	3.2
Weapon		0.7	0.7
			White
			3.8
			0.8

- The raw numbers had suggested much larger disparities
 - Black 3.3%, Hispanic 3.4%, and white 6.4%
 - These differences are mostly due to differences in time, place, and reason for the stop

Recommendations

- The NYPD should review the boroughs with the largest racial disparities in stop outcomes
- NYPD should identify, flag, and investigate officers with out-of-the-ordinary stop patterns
- The UF250 should be revised to capture data on use of force
- Officers should clearly explain to pedestrians why they are being stopped
- New officers should be fully conversant with stop, question, and frisk documentation policies
- NYPD should consider modifying the audits of the UF250



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