

The Association Between Race and Being Searched During a Traffic Stop



Introduction

- "Despite new attention to racial equity, black drivers are still 63% more likely to be stopped and 115% more likely to be searched during a traffic stop" (Horn, 2020).
- Crime data has never been objective; rather, it has been "weaponized" to exacerbate racial disparities in policing and profiling (Walsh, 2021).
- In one example in the state of Maryland, black drivers made up 63% of searches but only 18% of all drivers on the road. Traffic studies suggest driving habits do not differ by race so this disparity must be due to racial profiling (Todd, 2001).

Results

- <u>Univariate</u>
- **Search:** 96.8% of traffic stops did not result in a search
- **Race:** 80% of traffic stops were with a white driver; 17% were with a black driver
- **Gender**: 37% of stops were with a female driver; 63% were with a male driver.

<u>Bivariate</u>

- A Chi-Squared test of independence showed that the race of a driver was significantly associated with the likelihood of being searched (p<0.001).
- "Police stops and search decisions suffer from persistent racial bias, and point to the value of policy interventions to mitigate these disparities" (Stanford, 2020).
- Post hoc Chi-Square results showed that in the Chi Square test, the relationship between Asian and Indigenous drivers was statistically insignificant while the relationship between all other pairings of race was statistically significant.
- In comparing SearchStatus of the vehicle to the Race of the driver, black drivers have a likelihood of being searched that is 6.7 times higher than asian drivers while white driver have an expected odds of being searched that is only 2.8 times higher than asian drivers (Figure1).



Research Questions

- What is the association between race of a driver and the likelihood that their vehicle will be searched during a traffic stop in Connecticut?
- What is the relationship between race of a driver and likelihood that their vehicle will be searched during a traffic stop after controlling for gender?

Methods

• Sample

 Responses (n=3.1 million) were taken from the 2022 CT Traffic Stops Study. The sample is representative of predominantly white and Democratic able-bodied adults of age 16 and above. This dataset was based on mandated police reporting of individual traffic rather than respondent answers.

Measures

- The **race** of the driver stopped is a categorical variable where W=White, B=Black, A=Asian, I=American Indian.
- Whether or not a vehicle was **searched** is a categorical variable where "Vehicle Searched" is "True" or "False".
- The gender of the driver stopped is a categorical variable where M=male, F=female.

• <u>Mul</u>t

- Gender is a moderator for the association between race of a driver and the likelihood of being searched at a traffic stop (Figure2).
- The gender of a driver (p<0.001) is significantly and positively associated with odds of being searched in a traffic stop. The odds of being searched are expected to increase by a factor of 2.5 if the driver is male, holding all other variables fixed.
- After controlling for gender black drivers have a likelihood of being searched that is 6.6 times more likely than asian drivers; white drivers have a likelihood that is 2.5 times higher than asian drivers.

d of Search by **Gender** and **Race**

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Discussion

- Black drivers have a significantly higher likelihood of their vehicle being searched during a traffic stop than white drivers.
- Male drivers also have a significantly higher likelihood of their vehicle being searched during a traffic stop than female drivers.
- Policy makers in all levels of government, as well as police forces might use this information to identify the prevalence of race and gender based profiling and understanding the need for anti-discrimination training.
- Further research is needed to determine which types of anti-discrimination and anti-profiling training are most effective in reducing these
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