Requesting and collecting the data
Marrying academic research
Journalistic use and public access

250 million

33 states / 57 cities
Academic research
100 million traffic stops
Stops

Evidence of bias against black drivers at the stop decision

Black drivers are stopped more often than white drivers, relative to their share of the driving-age population.
But there’s a problem.

The driving-age population of an area doesn’t mean that accurately represents the drivers on the streets.
Other ways to test for disparate impact, bias and discrimination

- Searches
- The result or outcome of the search (hit rate)
- Threshold test
- Veil of Darkness test
Other ways to test for disparate impact, bias and discrimination

- Searches
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Are officers searching minority drivers on the basis of less evidence than whites?
Black and Hispanic drivers are searched on the basis of less evidence.

Black and Hispanic drivers are searched considerably more often than white drivers but found with contraband less often.
The outcome test [Becker, 1957, 1992]

Compares the search success rate (hit rate) across race groups.

*Lower* hit rate for minorities suggests discrimination.
The outcome test

The outcome test can be misleading: can suggest discrimination when there is none, and vice versa.
The threshold test

Statistical test to estimate the minimum level of suspicion that officers require to search drivers of different race groups.

*Lower* search thresholds for minorities suggest discrimination.
The threshold test
A new statistical test for discrimination

The test lets us infer the standard of evidence officers apply when deciding whom to search.

A lower search threshold for one group relative to another indicates discrimination.

The test is based on both the search rate and the search success rate.
The threshold test
Evidence that black and Hispanic drivers are searched on the basis of less evidence than whites
The “veil of darkness” test
Grogger and Ridgeway, 2006

It’s harder to infer the race of a driver at night, when a “veil of darkness” masks one’s race.

If black drivers comprise a smaller fraction of those stopped at night than those stopped during the day, it suggests officers may be discriminating against black drivers.
The “veil of darkness” test
Grogger and Ridgeway, 2006

But driving patterns might also change by time of day.

To account for this possibility, one can use the fact that the sun sets at different times throughout the year.
[ 7 p.m. is dark in the winter but light in the summer. ]
The “veil of darkness” test [ in Texas ]

In aggregate, across our dataset, we see the share of stopped drivers who are black is smaller after dusk than before sunset. This pattern is suggestive of racial profiling. It is also easier to explain to readers.
Going from data to stories

![Graph showing percent of black drivers over minutes before sunset.](image)
Making the data accessible

Since initial release in 2017: trained nearly 200 journalists

Followed with ongoing support for journalists as they analyze data, both locally and nationally.

Working with Big Local News, an effort that collects, processes and shares governmental data that are hard to obtain and difficult to analyze; partnering with local and national newsrooms.
Inside 100 million police traffic stops: New evidence of racial bias

Stanford researchers found that black and Latino drivers were stopped more often than white drivers, based on less evidence of wrongdoing.
Black drivers in America face discrimination by the police

An analysis of nearly 100m traffic stops suggests that many officers treat “driving while black” as a crime
Inside 100 million police traffic stops: New evidence of racial bias

Stanford researchers found that black and Latino drivers were stopped more often than white drivers, based on less evidence of wrongdoing.

Study Finds Racial Bias In Police Traffic Stops And Searches

Black drivers were about 20 percent more likely than whites to be pulled over, according to an analysis of nearly 100 million cases.
Inside 100 million police traffic stops: New evidence of racial bias

Stanford researchers found that black and Latino drivers were stopped more often than white drivers, based on less evidence of wrongdoing.

Researchers studied nearly 100 million traffic stops and found black motorists are more likely to be pulled over

Black drivers in America are 20 percent more likely to be pulled over, according to an analysis of nearly 100 million cases.
Inside 100 million police traffic stops: New evidence of racial bias

Stanford researchers found that black and Latino drivers were stopped more often than white drivers, based on less evidence of wrongdoing.

Resolution On Banning Racial Profiling And The Excessive Use Of Force

Sunday, July 21, 2019

Study Finds Racial Bias In Police And Searches

Black drivers were about 20 percent more likely than whites to be pulled over, according to an analysis of nearly 100 million cases.
Los Angeles Times

Analysis: LAPD searches blacks and Latinos more often

Los Angeles police officers search blacks and Latinos far more often than whites during ... The Times analysis found that across the city, 24% of black drivers and ... test” in collaboration with the Stanford Open Policing Project.

Oct 8, 2019
Inside 100 million police traffic stops: New evidence of racial bias
Stanford researchers found that black and Latino drivers were stopped more often than white drivers, based on less evidence of wrongdoing.

Report: Washington State Patrol singles out Native American ...
That was the last time the WSP conducted a substantive analysis of the race and ... The traffic-stop data was obtained by Stanford researchers through a ... and researchers through the university's Open Policing Project.
3 weeks ago
Investigation: Blacks, black neighborhoods most likely to be traffic stop targets in Ohio’s 3 biggest cities

By Max Londberg and Lucia Walinchus | December 18, 2019

Investigation: Blacks, black neighborhoods most likely to be traffic stop targets in Ohio’s 3 biggest cities

By Max Londberg and Lucia Walinchus

Video by Michael Nyerges

Reporters from the nonprofit newsroom Eye on Ohio, The Cincinnati Enquirer and researchers from Stanford University’s Big Local News program examined police stops to assess how the three largest communities in Ohio use public safety
And from stories to impact

CINCINNATI

Cincinnati Councilmember Introduces Motion to Study Racial Disparity in Traffic Stops in Response to Eye on Ohio/Enquirer Story

By Eye on Ohio Staff | December 27, 2019

On Friday, Cincinnati City Councilmember Jeff Pastor introduced a motion to examine police practices after an investigation by the Ohio Center for Investigative Journalism.

INDIAN COUNTRY

STATE WILL STUDY BIAS IN SEARCHES BY WASHINGTON STATE TROOPERS

JASON BUCH March 16, 2020

WITH CROSSCUT, INDIAN COUNTRY TODAY, WENATCHEE WORLD
Explore the data, tutorials and code
Tips for how to write about policing efforts

- Don’t assume discrimination when you see differences in stops. Do more digging first.
- Check for disparities
- Check for disparate impact
- Examine whether bias could be at play - Veil of Darkness test
- And investigate whether that bias is an indicator of discrimination
Expanding beyond police stops
More journalism organizations are sharing data along with stories.

In 2019, USA TODAY led a national effort to publish disciplinary records for police officers. George Floyd's death has renewed calls for transparency.

John Kelly, and Mark Nichols, USA TODAY
Updated 6:48 a.m. PDT June 11, 2020
More journalism organizations are sharing data along with stories.

In 2019, USA TODAY led a national effort to share police shooting records for police officers. George Floyd's death made the push for transparency clear.

John Kelly, and Mark Nichols, USA TODAY
Updated 6:48 a.m. PDT June 11, 2020

1,000 people have been shot and killed by police in the past year

Updated July 29, 2020

Read about our methodology ➔ Download the data ➔ Submit a tip ➔
Big Local News data-sharing reduces siloed efforts

Allows for private projects shared with specific uses

Open projects available to anyone on the platform

Plus, archiving with the Stanford Digital Repository for permanence
Resources for finding data and documents

911 and 311 calls

Even tracking the volume of calls can mean a story.

Source: presentation by Mary Jo Webster/Minneapolis Star-Tribune
Resources for finding data and documents

Court settlements available through public records requests

Police misconduct and Use of Force records

Who are cops employing? **BJS survey data** of about 3,500 local law enforcement agencies

That and plenty more at the **National Archive of Criminal Justice Data**, plus experts for interviews.

Audits of police agencies (**Federal Audit Clearinghouse**)

Resources for finding data and documents

The California Reporting Project, a newsgathering collaboration, has worked to request and analyze records from law enforcement agencies to report on use of force and misconduct cases around the state, with a focus toward community-engaged and impactful journalism.
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Making progress on policing records

Today, New York and California now make disciplinary records a matter of public record.

In these 23 states, and the District of Columbia, a police officer’s disciplinary history is mostly unavailable through public records requests.

In some cases, all public employee personnel files are exempt from disclosure. In others, police departments withhold records under a general privacy exemption.

Laws in New York, and California now make use of force and misconducts records public.
Reporting on red light cameras

In 2014, WTSP reported on how government officials and a contractor had made millions in fines by shortening yellow lights at intersections with red-light cameras. The investigation spurred a state investigation and a change in state law.
Reporters found one suburban officer who reviewed and approved 41 tickets in 59 seconds. His boss, the chief, had more than 400 instances where he assessed and approved a citation in 2 seconds or less.
License Plate Readers

*Voice of San Diego:*

“SDPD audited its employees’ use of license plate reader data during roughly six week stretches *in the fall of 2016* and *the summer of 2017*. During both periods, SDPD staff failed to enter a reason they were accessing the database nearly half of the time.

In 2016, SDPD users didn’t enter a reason for their search in 258 instances out of the 496 times they used the system, or about 51 percent of the time.

In 2017, SDPD staff didn’t enter a reason 238 times out of the 500 times they used the system, or about 47 percent of the time.”