

A National Analysis of Racial Profiling and Factors Affecting the Likelihood of Traffic Stops for African Americans

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(ABSTRACT)

The unequal treatment of racial minorities by police is by no means a new concept. The debate over racial profiling centers on two questions. Does racial profiling actually occur? If so, is racial profiling being used and is profiling a legitimate tool of law enforcement? There are those who debate whether race is or is not a factor in police discretion and there are those who argue that race is a factor that is appropriate for use in profiling. The purpose of this research is to determine whether race is a significant factor in the likelihood of being involved in a traffic stop. In addition to race, other variables, such as gender and age, are explored as possible control variables. This is done by analyzing data collected by the Bureau of Justice Statistics' "Contact between Police and the Public" national survey. By examining several dependent variables that also may be associated with traffic stops, this study determines whether there is or is not a disparity in treatment by race, and whether this is consistent with the alleged purposes of using race in criminal profiles.