



2015 Annual Report

Missouri Vehicle Stops



Missouri Attorney General - Chris Koster

Executive Summary





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Background

Concerns by the citizens of Missouri and the Missouri legislature regarding allegations of racial profiling by law enforcement prompted the passage of state law Section 590.650, RSMo (2000), which was enacted Aug. 28, 2000. Racial profiling has been defined as the inappropriate use of race by law enforcement when making a decision to stop, search or arrest a motorist.

Missouri's state law requires that all peace officers in the state report specific information including a driver's race for each vehicle stop made in the state. Law enforcement agencies are required to provide the data to the Attorney General, and the Attorney General is required to compile the data and report to the Governor no later than June 1 of each year. The law allows the Governor to withhold state funds for any agency that does not comply with the law. State law requires that all information be reported to the Attorney General's Office by March 1.

The summary of statewide racial profiling data has been provided by Scott H. Decker, professor and director of the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Arizona State University; Richard Rosenfeld, professor in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Missouri-St. Louis; and Jeffrey Rojek, assistant professor in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of South Carolina.





2015 Statewide Summary of Results

Key indicators	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Am. Indian	Other
Population	4,730,501	3,914,998	515,828	139,109	80,677	19,168	60,721
Stops	1,579,488	1,234,389	276,445	31,764	14,349	1,725	11,816
Searches	94,901	66,857	24,260	2,870	386	89	439
Arrests	71,055	48,931	19,101	2,300	332	73	318
State population %	100.00%	82.76	10.90	2.94	1.71	0.41	1.28
Disparity Index	---	.95	1.61	.68	.53	.27	.58
Search rate	6.01	5.38	8.78	9.04	2.69	5.16	3.57
Contraband hit rate	27.94	29.57	24.44	21.08	22.54	29.21	23.70
Arrest rate	4.50	3.94	6.91	7.24	2.31	4.23	2.69

Notes: Population figures are 2010 Census data based on persons 16 and older who designated a single race. Hispanics may be of any race. "Other" includes persons of mixed race or unknown race.

Disparity index = (proportion of stops / proportion of population). A value of 1 represents no disparity; values greater than 1 indicate over-representation; values less than 1 indicate under-representation.

Search rate = (searches / stops) x 100.

Contraband hit rate = (searches with contraband found / total searches) x 100.

Arrest rate = (arrest / stops) x 100.



Statewide Findings

This report summarizes the data from 624 law enforcement agencies in Missouri for 2015.

An additional 56 agencies indicated they made no traffic stops during the year. This represents 97.7% of the 695 law enforcement agencies in the state.

The agencies filing reports recorded a total of 1,579,488 vehicle stops, resulting in 94,901 searches and 71,055 arrests. Table 1 breaks out the stops, searches and arrests by race and ethnic group.¹

Four summary indicators are included in Table 1 that may be useful in assessing racial profiling in traffic stops. The first, termed the “disparity index,” relates each group’s proportion of total traffic stops to its proportion of the driving-age population 16 years old and older.²

A value of 1 on this index indicates that a group’s proportion of vehicle stops equals its population proportion: it is neither “under-represented” nor “over-represented” in vehicle stops. Values above 1 indicate over-representation, and those below 1 indicate under-representation.

For example, the 1,243,389 whites who were stopped accounted for 78.7 percent of all vehicle stops in 2015.

Approximately 82.8% of Missouri’s driving-age population identified as “White.” The value for whites on the disparity index is, therefore, .95 (.783/.828). Whites were stopped, in other words, at slightly below the rate expected based on their fraction of the population age 16 and older from the 2010 Census.

The same is not the case for several other groups. African-Americans represent 10.9 percent of the

population 16 years and older but 17.5 percent of all vehicle stops, for a value on the disparity index of 1.61. This means that African-Americans were stopped at a rate 61 percent greater than expected, based on their proportion of the population of people aged 16 and older.

Hispanics, Asians, American Indians, and persons of mixed or unknown race were stopped at rates well below their proportion of the driving-age population.

The values on the disparity index for the different groups can be compared directly to one another. For example, the likelihood that an African-American motorist was stopped is 1.69 times that of a white motorist (1.61/.95). In other words, African-Americans were 69 percent more likely than whites to be stopped based on their respective proportions of the Missouri driving-age population in 2015.

It should be remembered that the disparity index is a gauge of the likelihood drivers of a given race or ethnic group are stopped based on their proportion of the residential population 16 and older, not on the population of motorists on the state’s streets, roads and highways. A group’s share of the residential population 16 and older may or may not be similar to its proportion of drivers in the reporting area, and when there is a large discrepancy between the two numbers, the disparity index will be skewed.

When this occurs, it may largely be due to the fact that motorists are often stopped in municipalities, counties, or even states in which they do not reside. For example, a county may have a very low percentage of African-American residents, but a higher percentage of African-American motorists passing through the county due to the location of a state or federal highway. If local law enforcement stops some number of African-American motorists passing through the county, the number of stops

1 Hispanics may be of any race. About 1 percent of the population designated two or more races. These persons are included in the “Other” category along with persons of unknown race.

2 The population totals in the table are from the 2010 Census.



may be highly disproportionate to the number of African-American county residents—resulting in a high disparity index—but less disproportionate to the actual number of African-Americans who drive through the county. Because no data is available for the racial demographics of motorist traffic, it cannot be calculated for purposes of this report.

A second indicator that can be used to assess racial profiling is the “search rate,” or the number of searches divided by the number of stops (x 100). In this report, searches include both searches of drivers and searches of the vehicle and property within.

The search rate for all motorists who were stopped is 6.01 percent. Asian drivers were searched at a rate well below the statewide average, while African-Americans and Hispanics were searched at rates above the statewide average.

Like the stop rates, the search rates for the different groups can be compared directly with one another. African-Americans were 1.68 times more likely to be searched than whites (8.76/5.38). Hispanics were 1.67 times more likely than whites to be searched (9.04/5.38).

The reasons for conducting a search and the outcome of the search (such as finding contraband) should be considered when making comparisons across groups.

Some searches are conducted with the consent of the driver, or because the officer observed suspected contraband in plain view, had reasonable suspicion that an individual may possess a weapon, or other reasons. These searches may or may not result in an arrest.

Other searches are conducted incident to arrest, which means that there is no other reason given for the search other than arrest. Searches are almost always performed when there is an outstanding arrest warrant, whether or not contraband may be present.

The third summary indicator, the “contraband hit rate,” reflects the percentage of searches in which contraband is found. Contraband was found in 27.9 percent of all searches conducted in 2015. There is some variation, however, in the contraband hit rate across race and ethnic groups.

The contraband hit rate for whites was 29.6 percent, compared with 24.4 percent for African-Americans and 21.1 percent for Hispanics. This means that, on average, searches of African-Americans and Hispanics are less likely than searches of whites to result in the discovery of contraband. This difference may result in part from the higher arrest rates for African-Americans and Hispanics—if there is an arrest, there will be a search whether or not the arresting officer suspects the subject has contraband.

The “arrest rate” is the fourth summary indicator included in Table 1 that may be useful for assessing racial profiling. Just under 5 percent of all vehicle stops resulted in an arrest (71,055/1,579,488). The probability of arrest varies across racial and ethnic groups.

Approximately 6.9 percent of the stops of African-Americans and 7.2 percent of the stops of Hispanics resulted in arrest, compared with about 3.9 percent of the stops of whites.

There are two appendices to this year’s report. Appendix A presents the vehicle stop analysis using the statewide proportions of race and ethnicity, rather than those for each jurisdiction.

This year’s report compares the 2015 disparity index to the disparity indexes for 2000 through 2014.³ These comparisons are presented in Appendix B.

For each agency, the disparity index for each racial or ethnic group is presented for 2000-2015. For the state as a whole, the key indicators generally show small changes between the years 2014 and 2015.

³ Caution should be used when comparing 2000 to subsequent years, especially for smaller agencies, because the 2000 figures are based on only four months of traffic data, while those for subsequent years are based on the full calendar year.



The search rate (the percentage of stops in which a search is conducted) decreased between 2014 and 2015 for white, African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian drivers. The arrest rate for African-Americans decreased (from 7.90 percent to 6.90 percent) and decreased for Hispanics (from 8.19 percent to 7.20 percent) between 2014 and 2015.

A reasoned determination of the existence of racial profiling in a community requires a comprehensive evaluation of the full range of information compiled in the agency reports. This brief summary of selected indicators for the state as a whole is intended to encourage those local evaluations and dialogue.

Table 2. Agencies that did not submit reports by March 1, 2016 as required by state law

Appleton City Police Department	Camden Point Police Department	Chaffee Point Police Department	Country Club Hills Police Department
East Lynne Police Department	Eminence Police Department	Kimmswick Police Department	Lowry City Police Department
Marquand Police Department	Miramiguoia Police Department	Morley Police Department	Mosby Police Department
Parma Police Department	Sparta Police Department	Waverly Police Department	

Table 3. Agencies that submitted incomplete reports

Lilbourn Police Department



Table 4. Agencies that reported no stops (many contract out vehicle stops to other agencies)

Altenburg Police Department	Atlanta Police Department	Berger Police Department	Bevier Police Department
Birmingham Police Department	Bland Police Department	Bunker Police Department	Clarksburg Police Department
Clarksdale Police Department	Clarkson Valley Police Department	Cool Valley Police Department	Cowgill Police Department
Dellwood Police Department	Dudley Police Department	Eolia Police Department	Fairfax Police Department
Fisk Police Department	Florissant Valley Community College	Forest City Police Department	Gainesville Police Department
Galena Police Department	Gilman City Police Department	Golden City Police Department	Hale Heights Police Department
Hayti Heights Police Department	Holland Police Department	Hurley Police Department	Irondale Police Department
Jackson County Drug Task Force	Jennings Police Department	Lake Annette Police Department	Latour Police Department
Mayview Police Department	Missouri Department of Revenue	Mokane Police Department	Montrose Police Department
Naylor Police Department	New Melle Police Department	Norborne Police Department	Novinger Police Department
Olympian Village Police Department	Paris Police Department	Pasadena Park Police Department	Sheldon Police Department
St. George Police Department	St. Louis Community College at Forest Park	St. Louis Park Rangers	Tallapoosa Police Department
Theodosia Police Department	Uplands Park Police Department	Walker Police Department	Westwood Police Department
Wildwood Police Department	Williamsville Police Department	Windsor Police Department	Wyatt Police Department



Analysis by Attorney General Koster

This report represents the sixteenth annual analysis of vehicle-stops data in Missouri, and the eighth conducted since I became attorney general. The data reported by 623 law enforcement agencies across the state indicate 1,579,488 vehicles were stopped in 2015. Demographic information about last year's stops can be compared with corresponding data going back to 2000 on the attorney general's website at www.ago.mo.gov.

The overall number of stops reported in 2015 decreased slightly from the previous year, as did the disparity index for African-American drivers—from 1.66 in 2014 to 1.61 in 2015. However, the figure remains substantially higher than the 1.27 index calculated in 2000. The disparity index for Hispanic drivers increased slightly last year—from .62 in 2014 to .68 in 2015. Both African-Americans and Hispanics continue to have search and arrest rates significantly higher than white drivers even though white drivers are more frequently found to have contraband.

The annual vehicle stops report was not intended to establish a causal relationship between race and the disparate enforcement of traffic laws or to provide final answers to serious concerns about racial profiling, but rather to spur conversation and foster changes in policy. Yet the statute authorizing the report has been amended only twice in 16 years, once in 2001 to repeal the annual sensitivity training requirement, and again in 2004 to exempt lawfully conducted sobriety checkpoints from reporting requirements.

It is time for the General Assembly—which ordered the collection of vehicle stop data 16 years ago—to decide how to make the annual vehicle stops report more meaningful. The General Assembly should solicit suggestions from the relevant stakeholders—including law enforcement, local governments, and representatives from the communities they serve—regarding measures to improve the report. Revisions could include changes in the type of data collected and to strengthen the penalties for individual departments that fail to participate in the reporting process.

My administration has encouraged greater engagement between law enforcement and minority communities. We hosted multiple Roundtables on Representative Policing. Chief Dotson and I have spoken at numerous school assemblies throughout St. Louis to encourage more minority students to consider careers in law enforcement. But these are just first steps. If there is to be any meaningful change in response to the growing disparity indices identified over the last decade and a half, the Legislature must act.





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