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# Characteristics of Drivers Stopped by Police, 2002

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Drivers in the United States totaled 192.7 million persons in 2002, or about 89% of the 215.5 million U.S. residents age 16 or older. Approximately 16.8 million, or 8.7%, of those drivers were stopped by police at least once that year. These traffic stops include stops of all kinds of motor vehicles — motorcycles, buses, and private and commercial cars and trucks — and both personal and business travel. These findings come from the 2002 Police-Public Contact Survey (PPCS).

## Driver characteristics

### *Driver gender*

The 192.7 million residents who represent the U.S. driving population were evenly divided between males and females (table 1). By contrast, of the 16.8 million drivers stopped by police in 2002, males (60.8%) were more likely than females (39.2%) to be among those stopped.

### *Driver age*

Young drivers were more likely to be pulled over by police than older drivers. One measure of this difference is that young drivers age 16 to 24 were a

## Highlights

- In 2002 an estimated 8.7% of drivers age 16 or older were stopped by police, representing nearly 17 million of the 193 million drivers in the United States.
- Males were more likely than females to be pulled over by police, and young drivers were more likely than their older counterparts to be stopped.
- White drivers were more likely than both black and Hispanic drivers to be stopped by police for speeding. Subsequent to being stopped for speeding, blacks (78%) and Hispanics (85%) were more likely than whites (70%) to receive a ticket.
- Among traffic stops of young male drivers in 2002, 11% were physically searched or had their vehicle searched by police. Among these young male drivers who were stopped, blacks (22%) and Hispanics (17%) were searched at higher rates than whites (8%).
- Of the estimated 329,000 drivers who were both searched and arrested during a traffic stop, police found evidence of criminal wrongdoing in approximately 20% of cases.
- In 2002 an estimated 45.3 million people had a face-to-face contact with police; of these, 1.5% indicated police used or threatened force during the contact.
- Drivers stopped by police (1.1%) were less likely than persons who had other types of face-to-face contacts with police (1.7%) to indicate police used or threatened force against them.
- Among drivers involved in a traffic stop who also indicated police used or threatened force against them, 87% characterized the force as excessive.

larger percentage (26%) of drivers stopped by police than they were of drivers in the United States (15.3%).

### Driver race/Hispanic origin

In 2002 whites, blacks, and Hispanics were stopped by police at similar rates. Specifically, each group represented approximately the same percentage of stopped drivers as they did of drivers in the United States. For example —

- whites were 76.2% of U.S. drivers and 76.5% of drivers stopped by police
- blacks were 10.5% of persons who drive and 11% of stopped drivers
- Hispanics accounted for 9.7% of drivers and 9.5% of stopped drivers.

Drivers of other races were a smaller percentage of stopped motorists (2.9%) than of the driving population (3.6%).

### Driver gender, age, and race/Hispanic origin

Young white male, young black male, and young Hispanic male drivers were all more likely to be pulled over by police than their older counterparts. Each of these groups of younger male drivers was a larger percentage of drivers stopped by police in 2002 than of the U.S. driving population (table 2).

#### Racial differences in traffic stops may not signal racial profiling

To form evidence of racial profiling, survey findings would have to demonstrate (all other things being equal) —

Blacks and/or Hispanics were no more likely than whites to violate traffic laws,

and

Police pulled over blacks and/or Hispanics at a higher rate than whites.

Because the survey has information only on how often persons of different races are stopped, not on how often they actually break traffic laws, analysis of data from the 2002 Police-Public Contact Survey has no basis for determining whether or to what extent racial profiling exists.

**Table 1. Characteristics of drivers stopped by police compared to characteristics of drivers in the United States, 2002: Gender, age, and race/Hispanic origin**

Demographic characteristic	Drivers stopped by police in 2002		Drivers in the United States	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	16,783,467	100.0%	192,687,190	100.0%
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	10,210,452	60.8%	96,291,891	50.0%
Female	6,573,016	39.2	96,387,512	50.0
<b>Age</b>				
16-19	1,653,563	9.9%	12,125,184	6.3%
20-24	2,707,711	16.1	17,301,693	9.0
25-29	1,999,671	11.9	16,268,499	8.4
30-34	1,765,379	10.5	18,303,679	9.5
35-39	1,976,042	11.8	19,890,322	10.3
40-44	1,737,807	10.4	21,720,402	11.3
45-49	1,497,266	8.9	19,868,465	10.3
50-54	1,214,760	7.2	17,018,579	8.8
55-59	859,629	5.1	13,609,756	7.1
60-64	599,061	3.6	10,324,572	5.4
65-69	313,104	1.9	8,317,154	4.3
70-74	208,994	1.2	7,028,204	3.6
75 or older	250,480	1.5	10,867,718	5.6
<b>Age</b>				
16-24	4,361,274	26.0%	29,434,855	15.3%
25 or older	12,422,193	74.0	163,245,009	84.7
<b>Race/Hispanic origin</b>				
White	12,842,254	76.5%	146,779,643	76.2%
Black	1,852,086	11.0	20,260,621	10.5
Hispanic	1,595,872	9.5	18,619,405	9.7
Other race	493,256	2.9	7,000,729	3.6

Note: Detail may not add to total due to estimation procedures.

**Table 2. Characteristics of drivers stopped by police compared to characteristics of drivers in the United States, 2002: Combined categories of gender, age, and race/Hispanic origin**

Demographic characteristic	Drivers stopped by police in 2002		Drivers in the United States	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	16,783,467	100.0%	192,687,190	100.0%
<b>Males age 16 to 24</b>	2,703,210	16.1%	15,220,111	7.9%
White	1,938,873	11.6	10,338,108	5.4
Black	252,828	1.5	1,736,157	0.9
Hispanic	422,964	2.5	2,482,500	1.3
Other race	88,545	0.5	659,388	0.3
<b>Males age 25 or older</b>	7,507,242	44.7%	81,067,748	42.1%
White	5,782,132	34.5	62,258,493	32.3
Black	811,825	4.8	7,922,346	4.1
Hispanic	665,271	4.0	7,792,027	4.0
Other race	248,014	1.5	3,092,184	1.6
<b>Females age 16 to 24</b>	1,658,064	9.9%	14,213,642	7.4%
White	1,270,378	7.6	10,125,260	5.3
Black	188,725	1.1	1,676,328	0.9
Hispanic	158,791	0.9	1,826,776	0.9
Other race	40,170	0.2	575,921	0.3
<b>Females age 25 or older</b>	4,914,951	29.3%	82,170,336	42.6%
White	3,850,871	22.9	64,054,219	33.2
Black	598,707	3.6	8,919,530	4.6
Hispanic	348,846	2.1	6,514,042	3.4
Other race	116,527	0.7	2,670,295	1.4

Note: Detail may not add to total due to estimation procedures.

## Likelihood of drivers being stopped

The likelihood of being pulled over in 2002 did not differ among white (8.7%), black (9.1%), and Hispanic (8.6%) drivers.

Race/Hispanic origin	Drivers in the United States	Drivers stopped by police in 2002	
		Number	Percent
White	146,779,643	12,842,254	8.7%
Black	20,260,621	1,852,086	9.1
Hispanic	18,619,405	1,595,872	8.6

Among both male and female drivers, younger drivers age 16 to 24 were more likely than drivers age 25 or older to be stopped by police (table 3). In addition —

- young white male drivers (18.8%) were more likely than their older counterparts (9.3%) to be stopped by police
- among Hispanic males, younger drivers were pulled over at higher rates (17%) than older drivers (8.5%).

No real difference in the probability of being stopped was found between younger (14.6%) and older (10.2%) black male drivers.

## Driver opinion on being stopped

An estimated 83.7% of drivers stopped by police, or about 14 million drivers, felt they were pulled over for a legitimate reason (table 4). While the majority of drivers felt the police were justified in stopping them, opinion was not uniform across different segments of the population.

### Comparing estimates from the 1999 and 2002 surveys

In 1999 the Police-Public Contact Survey found that 10.3% of licensed drivers were stopped by police. In 2002 the survey found that 8.7% of drivers in the United States were pulled over by police. Due to changes

**Table 3. Of all drivers in the United States, percent stopped by police in 2002: Combined categories of gender, age, and race/Hispanic origin**

Demographic characteristic	Drivers in the United States	Drivers stopped by police in 2002	
		Number	Percent
Total	192,687,190	16,783,467	8.7%
<b>Males age 16 to 24</b>	15,220,111	2,703,210	17.8%
White	10,338,108	1,938,873	18.8
Black	1,736,157	252,828	14.6
Hispanic	2,482,500	422,964	17.0
Other race	659,388	88,545	13.4
<b>Males age 25 or older</b>	81,067,748	7,507,242	9.3%
White	62,258,493	5,782,132	9.3
Black	7,922,346	811,825	10.2
Hispanic	7,792,027	665,271	8.5
Other race	3,092,184	248,014	8.0
<b>Females age 16 to 24</b>	14,213,642	1,658,064	11.7%
White	10,125,260	1,270,378	12.5
Black	1,676,328	188,725	11.3
Hispanic	1,826,776	158,791	8.7
Other race	575,921	40,170	7.0
<b>Females age 25 or older</b>	82,170,336	4,914,951	6.0%
White	64,054,219	3,850,871	6.0
Black	8,919,530	598,707	6.7
Hispanic	6,514,042	348,846	5.4
Other race	2,670,295	116,527	4.4

Note: Detail may not add to total due to estimation procedures.

Young male drivers were less likely than other stopped drivers to feel they were pulled over for a legitimate reason. Among these young male drivers, blacks (57.9%) were less likely than both whites (81%) or Hispanics (81%) to feel the stop was legitimate.

**Table 4. Driver opinion on being stopped by police, 2002: Combined categories of gender, age, and race/Hispanic origin**

Demographic characteristic	Percent of stopped drivers who felt they had been stopped for a legitimate reason
Total	83.7%
<b>Males age 16 to 24</b>	79.3%
White	81.0
Black	57.9
Hispanic	81.0
Other race	88.0
<b>Males age 25 or older</b>	83.5%
White	85.7
Black	70.3
Hispanic	81.7
Other race	80.3
<b>Females age 16 to 24</b>	85.3%
White	86.8
Black	79.4
Hispanic	78.0
Other race	92.6
<b>Females age 25 or older</b>	85.9%
White	87.2
Black	79.1
Hispanic	84.4
Other race	81.9

to the survey instrument, these two estimates are based on different denominators. Because of this difference in the denominators, these two estimates of the likelihood of drivers being stopped by police are not directly comparable. See Methodology on page 10 for more information.

### Drivers not informed of reason for traffic stop

A relatively small percentage of stopped drivers (2.1%) indicated police did not give a reason for pulling them over (table 5). No differences were found by gender or age in whether police informed drivers of the reason for being stopped.

Blacks (4.5%) were more likely than whites (1.8%) and somewhat more likely than Hispanics (2.3%) to indicate police did not give them a reason for being stopped.

### Drivers stopped for speeding

The chances that a driver in the United States will be pulled over by police for speeding are relatively low. In 2002, 4.8% of the 192.7 million drivers in the United States indicated police stopped them for speeding.

Among stopped drivers, however, speeding was the leading reason for being pulled over by police in 2002, cited by more than half (54.8%) of stopped drivers (table 6).

#### Driver gender

Of all the Nation's drivers, males (5.6%) were more likely than females (4%) to be stopped by police for speeding.

Among all drivers stopped by police, female drivers (58.2%) were more likely than male drivers (52.6%) to indicate speeding was the reason for the stop.

#### Driver age

Of all the Nation's drivers, younger drivers (8.5%) were more likely than older drivers (4.1%) to be stopped by police for speeding.

Among all drivers stopped by police in 2002, younger drivers (57.6%) were slightly more likely than older drivers (53.8%) to report police stopped them for speeding.

#### Driver race/Hispanic origin

Of all the drivers in the United States, whites (5%) were more likely than Hispanics (3.8%) and somewhat more likely than blacks (4.4%) to be pulled over by police for speeding.

Among drivers stopped by police, whites (57.2%) were more likely than both blacks (48%) and Hispanics (44.3%) to indicate speeding was the reason for the stop.

#### Driver gender, age, and race/Hispanic origin

Of the 10.3 million young white male drivers in the United States, 10.9%

were stopped for speeding compared to 8.5% of the 10.1 million young white female drivers. Among drivers stopped by police, young white male drivers (58.3%) were less likely than their female counterparts (67.6%) to indicate speeding as the reason for the stop.

Drivers age 16 to 24	Percent stopped for speeding of —	
	Drivers stopped by police	Drivers in the United States
<b>Males</b>		
White	58.3%	10.9%
Black	36.9	5.4
Hispanic	43.8	7.5
<b>Females</b>		
White	67.6%	8.5%
Black	50.3	5.7
Hispanic	45.2	3.9

**Table 5. Of drivers stopped by police in 2002, percent not given a reason for the traffic stop: Gender, age, and race/Hispanic origin**

Demographic characteristic	Drivers stopped by police in 2002	Drivers not given a reason for the traffic stop	
		Number	Percent
Total	16,783,467	350,916	2.1%
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	10,210,452	221,909	2.2%
Female	6,573,016	129,041	2.0
<b>Age</b>			
16-24	4,361,274	123,432	2.8%
25 or older	12,422,193	227,540	1.8
<b>Race/Hispanic origin</b>			
White	12,842,254	227,665	1.8%
Black	1,852,086	83,232	4.5
Hispanic	1,595,872	37,446	2.3
Other race	493,256	3,238*	0.7*

Note: Detail may not add to total due to estimation procedures.

\*Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

**Table 6. Drivers who reported speeding as the reason for the traffic stop, 2002: Gender, age, and race/Hispanic origin**

Demographic characteristic	Speeding reported as reason for traffic stop	Drivers stopped by police in 2002		Drivers in the United States	
		Number	Percent stopped for speeding	Number	Percent stopped for speeding
Total	9,199,342	16,783,467	54.8%	192,687,190	4.8%
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	5,371,919	10,210,452	52.6%	96,291,891	5.6%
Female	3,827,423	6,573,016	58.2	96,387,512	4.0
<b>Age</b>					
16-24	2,512,659	4,361,274	57.6%	29,434,855	8.5%
25 or older	6,686,683	12,422,193	53.8	163,245,009	4.1
<b>Race/Hispanic origin</b>					
White	7,350,541	12,842,254	57.2%	146,779,643	5.0%
Black	889,547	1,852,086	48.0	20,260,621	4.4
Hispanic	707,437	1,595,872	44.3	18,619,405	3.8
Other race	251,817	493,256	51.1	7,000,729	3.6

Note: Detail may not add to total due to estimation procedures.

Among the Nation's drivers, white females age 16 to 24 (8.5%) were more likely than their black (5.7%) and Hispanic (3.9%) counterparts to indicate speeding as the reason for being stopped.

Among young male drivers in the United States, whites (10.9%) were more likely than both blacks (5.4%) and Hispanics (7.5%) to indicate they were stopped for speeding.

Of drivers stopped by police, white males age 16 to 24 (58.3%) were more likely than black (36.9%) and Hispanic (43.8%) males in the same age group to report speeding as the reason for being stopped.

### Drivers stopped for speeding who were ticketed

Drivers stopped for speeding were more likely to be ticketed than other stopped drivers. According to *Contacts between Police and the Public: Findings from the 2002 National Survey*, 58.6% of all drivers stopped by police were ticketed. Among drivers stopped for speeding, 72.5% were ticketed (table 7).

The percentage of ticketed speeders does not necessarily indicate that those speeders who were ticketed by police were actually issued a ticket for speeding. The 2002 PPCS did not ask respondents who were ticketed to identify the specific reason for receiving the ticket. A driver stopped for speeding could have been ticketed for a different reason, such as a broken headlight or failure to wear a seat belt. The analysis can only determine the reason a ticketed driver was pulled over, not the reason the police had for issuing the ticket.

### Driver gender

Males (74.8%) stopped for speeding were more likely than females (69.3%) to be ticketed.

### Driver age

Younger drivers (74.4%) and older drivers (71.8%) stopped for speeding were about equally likely to receive a ticket.

### Driver race/Hispanic origin

Among drivers stopped for speeding, police were more likely to ticket blacks (77.5%) and Hispanics (84.5%) than whites (70.3%).

### Police searches

During a traffic stop the police sometimes conduct a search of the vehicle, the driver, or both the vehicle and the driver. In 2002, 5% of traffic stops involved a search of the driver, the vehicle, or both (table 8). This 5% figure in 2002 represents a decrease from 1999, when an estimated 6.6% of traffic stops resulted in some kind of search.<sup>3</sup>

### Searching the driver, vehicle, or both

Police conducted approximately 838,000 searches of drivers and vehicles in 2002. Black (10.2%) and Hispanic (11.4%) drivers stopped by

police were more likely than white (3.5%) drivers to be physically searched or have their vehicle searched.

Demographic characteristic	Percent of drivers stopped by police who experienced a driver or vehicle search in 2002
White	3.5%
Black	10.2
Hispanic	11.4

Search rates for young black male and young Hispanic male drivers did not change between 1999 and 2002. Approximately 1 in 5 young black male and young Hispanic male drivers stopped by police were searched in 1999, as well as 2002.

Among drivers stopped in 2002, young black and young Hispanic males were more likely than young white males to be searched. Approximately 21.7% of young black male stopped drivers and 16.8% of young Hispanic male stopped drivers had their vehicle and/or person searched, compared to 8.2% of young white male stopped drivers.

Among stopped male drivers age 25 or older, blacks (13.8%) and Hispanics (12.9%) were more likely to be searched than whites (4%).

<sup>3</sup>See *Characteristics of Drivers Stopped by Police, 1999*, NCJ 191548, March 2002.

**Table 7. Of drivers stopped for speeding by police in 2002, percent who were ticketed: Gender, age, and race/Hispanic origin**

Demographic characteristic	Number of drivers stopped for speeding	Drivers stopped for speeding who were also ticketed	
		Number	Percent
Total	9,199,342	6,669,561	72.5%
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	5,371,919	4,015,895	74.8%
Female	3,827,423	2,653,666	69.3
<b>Age</b>			
16-24	2,512,659	1,870,092	74.4%
25 or older	6,686,683	4,799,469	71.8
<b>Race/Hispanic origin</b>			
White	7,350,541	5,168,819	70.3%
Black	889,547	689,583	77.5
Hispanic	707,437	597,984	84.5
Other race	251,817	213,175	84.7

Black and Hispanic male drivers age 25 or older were 4.8% and 4%, respectively, of all drivers stopped by police but accounted for larger percentages — 13.1% and 10.3%, respectively — of drivers who had their vehicle and/or person searched.

Demographic characteristic	Drivers age 25 or older as a percent of—	
	All drivers stopped by police in 2002	All driver or vehicle searches
Males		
White	34.5%	27.4%
Black	4.8	13.1
Hispanic	4.0	10.3

White male drivers age 25 or older were a smaller percentage of all searches (27.4%) than of drivers stopped by police in 2002 (34.5%).

### Searching the driver

Young male drivers age 16 to 24 (9%) were more likely than their older counterparts (4.1%) to experience a physical search by police (table 8).

Among these young stopped male drivers, no real difference was found between blacks (21.2%) and Hispanics (15.5%) in their likelihood of being physically searched, while both groups were more likely than young white male stopped drivers (6.1%) to experience a personal search.

Young male drivers experienced disproportionately high rates of personal searches by police. Young white, black and Hispanic male drivers were 11.6%, 1.5% and 2.5%, respectively, of stopped motorists but were 19.5%, 8.7% and 10.8%, respectively, of drivers who experienced personal searches.

Demographic characteristic	Drivers age 16 to 24 as a percent of—	
	All drivers stopped by police in 2002	All driver searches
Males		
White	11.6%	19.5%
Black	1.5	8.7
Hispanic	2.5	10.8

Among stopped male drivers age 25 or older, blacks (10%) and Hispanics (8.8%) were more likely than whites (2.9%) to be personally searched.

Black and Hispanic male drivers age 25 or older were 4.8% and 4%, respectively, of all traffic stops but accounted for larger percentages — 13.1% and 9.5%, respectively — of all physical searches. By contrast, older white male drivers were 34.5% of stopped drivers but a smaller 27.4% of personal searches.

Demographic characteristic	Drivers age 25 or older as a percent of—	
	All drivers stopped by police in 2002	All driver searches
Males		
White	34.5%	27.4%
Black	4.8	13.1
Hispanic	4.0	9.5

### Searching the vehicle

Among young stopped male drivers, Hispanics (14.9%) were more likely to have their vehicles searched than whites (6.8%).

Among older stopped male drivers, whites (3.1%) had their vehicles searched less frequently than both blacks (10%) and Hispanics (11.5%).

Black and Hispanic male drivers age 25 or older were 4.8% and 4%, respectively, of drivers pulled over by police, but accounted for 11.8% and 11.4% of vehicle searches.

Drivers age 25 or older	Percent of—	
	All drivers stopped by police in 2002	All vehicle searches
Males		
White	34.5%	26.3%
Black	4.8	11.8
Hispanic	4.0	11.4

### Searched drivers who were also arrested

Police searched an estimated 838,000 drivers in 2002. Of these searched drivers, 39.3% were also arrested (table 9). About half of these 329,000 searched and arrested drivers were searched *after* police arrested them,

**Table 8. Of drivers stopped, percent who experienced a search, 2002: Combined categories of gender, age, and race/Hispanic origin**

Demographic characteristic	Type of search		
	Driver or vehicle	Driver	Vehicle
Total	5.0%	3.6%	4.0%
<b>Males age 16 to 24</b>			
White	10.7%	9.0%	8.4%
Black	8.2	6.1	6.8
Hispanic	21.7	21.2	12.2*
Other race	16.8	15.5	14.9
<b>Males age 25 or older</b>			
White	7.1*	7.1*	3.4*
Black	5.8%	4.1%	4.5%
Hispanic	4.0	2.9	3.1
Other race	13.8	10.0	10.0
	12.9	8.8	11.5
	2.3*	0.0*	2.3*

Note: Total includes female drivers. Because of relatively small sample sizes, data for female drivers are not shown by gender, age, and race/Hispanic origin.  
\*Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

while more than a third were searched *prior* to being arrested. About a tenth of stopped drivers did not know whether the search or the arrest occurred first (not in a table).

### Driver gender

Male drivers who were searched by police (39%) were about as likely as searched females (41.6%) to be arrested.

### Driver age

Drivers age 25 or older (45%) who were searched by police were more likely to be arrested than their younger counterparts (31.3%).

### Driver gender and race/Hispanic origin

Among drivers who were stopped and searched, no measurable differences were found in the likelihood of arrest among white, black, and Hispanic male drivers. (See Methodology section for information on significance testing.)

## Searches of arrested and nonarrested drivers

In many jurisdictions police officers are required to search the vehicle, driver, or both when making an arrest during a traffic stop. Consequently, arrested drivers may have experienced a vehicle and/or personal search as a procedural step during the arrest process.

Of the 448,000 drivers arrested during a traffic stop, 73.8% experienced a vehicle and/or personal search (table 10). A smaller percentage of nonarrested drivers were searched (3.1%).

### Driver gender

Among stopped drivers who were arrested, males (75.2%) and females (66.8%) were searched at similar rates. Of stopped drivers who were not arrested, males (4.5%) were more likely than females (1.1%) to be searched.

### Driver age

Among drivers arrested by police in 2002, no difference was found between younger (77.3%) and older (72.2%) drivers in their likelihood of experiencing a personal or vehicle search.

Among nonarrested drivers, younger drivers (5.6%) were more likely to be searched than older drivers (2.2%).

### Driver race/Hispanic origin

Among arrested motorists, no measurable difference was found between whites, blacks, and Hispanics in their likelihood of being searched. (See Methodology section for information on significance testing.)

Among nonarrested motorists —

- Blacks (5.9%) and Hispanics (8.8%) were searched at higher rates than whites (2.1%).
- Hispanics (8.8%) were searched at somewhat higher rates than blacks (5.9%).
- Among males, blacks (9.1%) and Hispanics (10.9%) were more likely

**Table 9. Of the total number of persons searched, percent of drivers who were also arrested, 2002: Gender, age and race/Hispanic origin**

Demographic characteristic	Total number of searches	Drivers who were searched and arrested	
		Number	Percent
Total	837,809	329,347	39.3%
<b>Male</b>	722,627	281,467	39.0%
White	388,531	158,997	40.9
Black	166,497	77,630	46.6
Hispanic	157,379	45,574	29.0
<b>Female</b>	116,462	48,443	41.6%
White	65,401	35,596	54.4
Black	23,864*	9,861*	41.3*
Hispanic	24,620*	2,972*	12.1*
<b>Age</b>			
16-24	345,741	108,132	31.3%
25 or older	492,081	221,426	45.0

Note: Detail may not add to total due to estimation procedures. Drivers of other races not shown separately. Total includes "other races."

\*Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

**Table 10. Among arrested and nonarrested drivers, percent who experienced a search, 2002: Gender, age, and race/Hispanic origin**

Demographic characteristic	Arrested drivers		Nonarrested drivers	
	Number	Driver or vehicle search	Number	Driver or vehicle search
Total	448,094	73.8%	16,335,373	3.1%
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	373,664	75.2%	9,836,788	4.5%
Female	74,071	66.8	6,498,945	1.1
<b>Age</b>				
16-24	142,816	77.3%	4,218,458	5.6%
25 or older	305,294	72.2	12,116,899	2.2
<b>Race/Hispanic origin</b>				
White	259,783	75.1%	12,582,470	2.1%
Black	106,540	81.6	1,745,546	5.9
Hispanic	82,230	59.5	1,513,642	8.8

Note: Detail may not add to total due to estimation procedures. Drivers of other races not shown separately. Total includes "other races."

**Table 11. Among arrested and nonarrested drivers, percent who experienced a search, 2002: Combined categories of race/Hispanic origin and gender**

Gender and race/Hispanic origin	Arrested drivers		Nonarrested drivers	
	Number	Driver or vehicle search	Number	Driver or vehicle search
Total	448,094	73.8%	16,335,373	3.1%
<b>Male</b>				
White	215,605	74.1%	7,505,401	3.1%
Black	89,121	84.1	975,532	9.1
Hispanic	69,207	66.6	1,019,028	10.9
<b>Female</b>				
White	43,991	80.0%	5,077,257	0.6%
Black	17,193*	66.3*	770,239	1.8*
Hispanic	12,986*	22.7*	494,651	4.4*

Note: Detail may not add to total due to estimation procedures. Drivers of other races not shown separately. Total includes "other races."

\*Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

than whites (3.1%) to be searched (table 11).

### Likelihood of finding criminal evidence in a traffic stop search

Of the nearly 838,000 searches conducted following a traffic stop in 2002, about 1 in 10 uncovered criminal evidence, such as illegal weapons or drugs (not in a table). Approximately 329,000 drivers who were searched were also arrested. Of these searches in conjunction with an arrest, the search turned up evidence of criminal wrongdoing in about 20% of cases.

Criminal evidence	Drivers who were searched			
	Arrested drivers		Nonarrested drivers	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	329,347	100.0%	508,462	100.0%
Evidence found	66,602	20.2%	32,505*	6.4%*
No evidence found	262,745	79.8	475,957	93.6

\*Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

### Police use of force

In addition to gathering data on contacts between police and the public during traffic stops, the 2002 PPCS also collected information on other face-to-face contacts with police. Other face-to-face contacts include situations in which the respondent contacted police (for instance to report a crime or to ask for assistance) as well as situations in which police initiated contact with the respondent (for instance to investigate a crime, serve a warrant, or disseminate crime prevention information).

Survey findings indicate an estimated 45.3 million people had a face-to-face contact with police during 2002 (table 12). Of that 45.3 million, 16.8 million were drivers in a traffic stop, and 28.5 million were involved in other forms of contact with police.

One purpose of the PPCS was to gather information about police use of force during both traffic stops and other face-to-face contacts between police and the public. Specifically, respondents were asked whether the police officer(s) used or threatened to use force against them. Of the nearly 45.3 million people who had a face-to-face contact with police, approximately 1.5% indicated police used or threatened force during the contact (hereafter, "use of force" includes force and threat of force).

Drivers stopped by police (1.1%) were less likely than persons who had other types of face-to-face contacts with police (1.7%) to indicate police used or threatened force against them.

### Use of force during traffic stops

Approximately 664,500 persons age 16 or older had force used or threatened against them by police at least once during 2002 (table 13). About a quarter of these force contacts involved a driver during a traffic stop.

#### Driver gender

An estimated 520,000 males were threatened with force or had force used against them by police in 2002. About a third (31.2%) of these males were drivers in a traffic stop.

#### Driver age

For both younger and older persons against whom force was used or threatened, about the same proportion of force contacts involved a driver during a traffic stop (26.5% and 30%, respectively).

### Driver race/Hispanic origin

For whites, blacks and Hispanics who experienced police use of force, no differences were found in the proportion of force contacts that occurred during a traffic stop. (See Methodology section for information on significance testing.)

**Table 12. Among persons age 16 or older who had contact with police in 2002, percent whose contact involved police use of force, by reason for contact**

Reason for contact	Number of persons with police contact	Contacts with police in which force was used or threatened	
		Number	Percent
Total	45,278,884	664,458	1.5%
Drivers in traffic stops	16,783,467	188,822	1.1%
Other contacts	28,495,417	475,636	1.7

**Table 13. Reason for contact with police among persons age 16 or older whose contact involved police use of force in 2002: Gender, age, and race/Hispanic origin**

Demographic characteristic	Number of persons against whom force was used or threatened	Contacts with police in which force was used or threatened			
		Drivers in traffic stops		Other contacts	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	664,458	188,822	28.4%	475,636	71.6%
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	520,178	162,309	31.2%	357,869	68.8%
Female	144,281	26,513*	18.4*	117,768	81.6
<b>Age</b>					
16-24	298,088	78,942	26.5%	219,146	73.5%
25 or older	366,370	109,880	30.0	256,490	70.0
<b>Race/Hispanic origin</b>					
White	373,847	96,375	25.8%	277,472	74.2%
Black	172,658	49,247	28.5	123,411	71.5
Hispanic	102,670	37,724	36.7	64,946	63.3
Other race	15,284*	5,477*	35.8*	9,807*	64.2*

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

\*Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases.



## Use of force during traffic stops and other face-to-face contacts

Police used or threatened force against an estimated 189,000 drivers during a traffic stop in 2002 (table 14). An additional 476,000 persons experienced force during other types of face-to-face contacts with police.

### Driver gender

Males were more likely than females to have reported police used or threatened force against them. In 2002 males were 53% of all persons with police contact but 78% of those who experienced force by police.

Males accounted for a slightly larger percentage of traffic stop force contacts (86%) than other contacts involving police use of force (75.2%).

### Driver age

Younger persons were more likely than older persons to experience force during a contact with police. The percentage of young people involved in a force incident (44.9%) was almost twice as high as their percentage of all contacts with police in 2002 (22.9%). By comparison, their older counterparts accounted for a smaller percentage (55.1%) of force incidents compared to their percentage of all contacts with police (77.1%).

Young people were not more likely to indicate that force was used or threatened against them during a traffic stop (41.8%) than during other face-to-face contacts with police (46.1%).

### Driver race/Hispanic origin

Whites were less likely than blacks and Hispanics to have force used or threatened against them. In 2002 whites were 76.7% of persons who had contact with police and 56.3% of persons who had force used against them.

**Table 14. Demographic characteristics of persons age 16 or older whose contact involved police use of force in 2002, by reason for contact**

Demographic characteristic	With police contact	Percent of persons — Against whom force was used or threatened		
		Total	Drivers in traffic stops	Other contacts
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	52.8%	78.3%	86.0%	75.2%
Female	47.2	21.7	14.0*	24.8
<b>Age</b>				
16-24	22.9%	44.9%	41.8%	46.1%
25 or older	77.1	55.1	58.2	53.9
<b>Race/Hispanic origin</b>				
White	76.7%	56.3%	51.0%	58.3%
Black	11.0	26.0	26.1	25.9
Hispanic	9.3	15.5	20.0	13.7
Other race	3.0	2.3*	2.9*	2.1*
Estimated number	45,278,884	664,458	188,822	475,636

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.  
\*Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases.

By contrast, blacks were 11% of police-public contacts but 26% of force contacts, and Hispanics were 9.3% of police-public contacts but 15.5% of contacts involving police use of force.

White persons were as likely to indicate that force was used or threatened against them during a traffic stop (51%) as during other face-to-face contacts with police (58.3%).

A similar percentage of blacks were involved in traffic stop force contacts (26.1%) as other contacts involving police use of force (25.9%).

### Conduct of persons who had contact with police and the likelihood police used force

Approximately 706,000 persons age 16 or older indicated they argued with, cursed at, insulted, or verbally threatened the police at some point during the contact. An estimated 22.8% of persons who engaged in one or more of these behaviors also reported that police used or threatened to use force against them (table 15). The data cannot determine whether the person's conduct led to or was in response to the use or threat of force by police.

Drivers involved in traffic stops who argued with, cursed at, insulted, or verbally threatened the police were less likely (15.3%) to have force used against them than persons involved in other nondriver contacts with police who behaved in this manner (26.7%).

**Table 15. Among persons age 16 or older who argued with, cursed at, insulted, or verbally threatened the police in 2002, percent whose contact involved police use of force, by reason for contact**

Reason for contact	Number who argued with, cursed at, insulted, or verbally threatened police	Percent who reported police used or threatened force
Total	706,156	22.8%
Drivers in traffic stops	242,661	15.3%
Other contacts	463,495	26.7

## Use of excessive force

Overall, about three-quarters (75.4%) of persons who experienced force felt the physical force used or threatened against them was excessive (table 16). Drivers who had force used against them during a traffic stop (87%) were more likely to report that the force was excessive than persons who experienced force during other types of contacts with police (70.8%).

Of all persons who had contact with police in 2002, approximately 1.1% indicated police used or threatened to use excessive force against them (table 17). The percentage of persons who felt police used excessive force did not differ by the type of contact. Among drivers stopped by police, about 1% reported that police used or threatened excessive force. Similarly, excessive force was reported by 1.2% of persons involved in other contacts with police.

**Table 16. Among persons age 16 or older whose contact involved police use of force in 2002, percent who felt the force used or threatened was "excessive," by reason for contact**

Reason for contact	Number of persons against whom force was used or threatened	Contacts with police in which force used or threatened was excessive	
		Number	Percent
Total	664,458	500,806	75.4%
Drivers in			
traffic stops	188,822	164,255	87.0%
Other contacts	475,636	336,551	70.8

**Table 17. Among persons age 16 or older who had contact with police in 2002, percent whose contact involved police use of excessive force, by reason for contact**

Reason for contact	Number of persons with police contact	Contacts with police in which force used or threatened was excessive	
		Number	Percent
Total	45,278,884	500,806	1.1%
Drivers in			
traffic stops	16,783,467	164,255	1.0%
Other contacts	28,495,417	336,551	1.2

## Methodology

The 2002 PPCS was conducted as a supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). During the last 6 months of 2002, the NCVS sample consisted of 93,410 individuals age 16 or older. About 18% of the NCVS sample, or 16,500 individuals, were excluded from the 2002 PPCS as non-interviews or as proxy interviews.

Of interviews excluded from the survey, 13,618 were classified as NCVS non-interviews. Non-interviews include respondents not available for the PPCS interview, those who refused to participate in the PPCS, and non-English speaking respondents (PPCS interviews, unlike NCVS interviews, are only conducted in English). The remainder were the 2,882 excluded proxy interviews. A proxy interview may be conducted when a person is unable, for physical, mental, or other reasons, to participate. BJS staff determined that proxy interviewees would have difficulty describing the details of any contacts between police and the sampled respondent, and the decision was made to exclude all proxy interviews.

In total, the PPCS failed to interview 16,500 persons and interviewed 76,910; this translates into an 82% response rate among individuals eligible for the PPCS, compared to an overall response rate of 87% for the NCVS. Among the PPCS interviews conducted, 25,993 (34%) were in person and 50,917 (66%) were by telephone. The PPCS sample, after adjustment for nonresponse, weights to a national estimate of 215,536,780 persons age 16 or older in 2002.

### *Comparing estimates from the 1999 and 2002 surveys*

While both the 1999 and 2002 studies found about 1 in 10 drivers were stopped, these estimates are not directly comparable due to changes to the survey instrument between 1999 and 2002 in the measurement of the

number of drivers. Most notably, the denominator used to calculate the likelihood of being stopped by police was "licensed drivers" in 1999, as estimated by the U.S. Department of Transportation's 1995 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey. However, in 2002 the denominator was changed to "drivers in the United States," as estimated directly from responses to newly added questions included in the 2002 Police-Public Contact Survey. The denominator change was made to account for all persons who drive, licensed and not licensed, to better approximate the number of persons at risk of being stopped by police. Excluded from the new denominator were licensed drivers who indicated they never drive.

The number of drivers stopped by police was also estimated differently. In 1999, respondents were asked whether they had been a driver stopped by police at any time during the previous 12 months. Any respondent who had been pulled over in a traffic stop was then included in the count of the number of drivers stopped by police, regardless of whether the traffic stop was their most recent contact with police. In 2002, the survey was changed so that respondents were asked only about their *most recent* contact with police during the previous 12 months. Respondents whose most recent face-to-face contact was not a traffic stop, but who had been pulled over by police earlier in the year, were not included in the count of the number of drivers stopped by police. Due to this change in the survey, the estimated number of drivers stopped by police was smaller in 2002 than in 1999. Estimates of the characteristics of drivers stopped by police, such as the percentage of drivers searched or ticketed, were unaffected by these changes, and remain comparable between 1999 and 2002.

*Statistical significance*

In comparisons indicated in the text, an explicit or implied difference indicates a test of significance was conducted, and the difference was significant at the .05-level. Certain differences were not significant at the .05-level but were significant at the .10-level. The terms "somewhat" and "slightly" refer to differences significant at the .10-level. The report also indicates that some comparisons were not different, meaning the difference between the two estimates was not significant at either the .05- or .10-levels.

*Racial designations*

Regarding racial designations given in the report, "white" refers to non-Hispanic whites, "black" refers to non-Hispanic blacks, and "other races" refers to non-Hispanics in the "other races" category. White Hispanics, black Hispanics, and Hispanics of "other races" are categorized in the report under the heading "Hispanic."

Due to small samples and concerns about confidentiality, the report does not provide separate statistics on each racial category that makes up "other races" (Asians, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, and Alaska Natives).

**Other BJS reports on police-public contacts**

Each of the following publications are available on the BJS website.

*Police Use of Force: Collection of National Data*, November 1997;  
<<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/puof.htm>>

*Contacts between Police and the Public: Findings from the 1999 National Survey*, February 2001;  
<<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/cpp99.htm>>

*Characteristics of Drivers Stopped by Police, 1999*, March 2002;  
<<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/cdsp99.htm>>

*Contacts between Police and the Public: Findings from the 2002 National Survey*, April 2005;  
<<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/cpp02.htm>>

**Appendix A. Of the U.S. population, the percent and number of drivers in the United States, 2002: Gender, age, and race/Hispanic origin**

Demographic characteristic	U.S. population ages 16 or older	Drivers in the United States*	
		Percent	Number
Total	215,536,780	89.4%	192,687,190
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	103,988,719	92.6%	96,291,891
Female	111,548,061	86.4	96,387,512
<b>Age</b>			
16-19	16,261,872	74.6%	12,125,184
20-24	19,385,232	89.3	17,301,693
25-29	17,745,202	91.7	16,268,499
30-34	19,564,855	93.6	18,303,679
35-39	21,108,221	94.2	19,890,322
40-44	23,048,576	94.2	21,720,402
45-49	21,110,999	94.1	19,868,465
50-54	18,156,612	93.7	17,018,579
55-59	14,751,339	92.3	13,609,756
60-64	11,253,813	91.7	10,324,572
65-69	9,398,824	88.5	8,317,154
70-74	8,296,482	84.7	7,028,204
75 or older	15,454,753	70.3	10,867,718
<b>Age</b>			
16-24	35,647,104	82.6%	29,434,855
25 or older	179,889,676	90.7	163,245,009
<b>Race/Hispanic origin</b>			
White	157,373,713	93.3%	146,779,643
Black	25,694,070	78.9	20,260,621
Hispanic	23,955,183	77.7	18,619,405
Other race	8,513,815	82.2	7,000,729

Note: Detail may not add to total due to estimation procedures.  
\*Includes licensed and unlicensed drivers who operate a motor vehicle a few times a year or more.

**Appendix B. Of the U.S. population, the percent and number of drivers in the United States, 2002: Combined categories of gender, age, and race/Hispanic origin**

Demographic characteristic	U.S. population ages 16 or older	Drivers in the United States*	
		Percent	Number
Total	215,536,780	89.4%	192,687,190
<b>Males age 16 to 24</b>	17,919,721	84.9%	15,220,111
White	11,407,314	90.6	10,338,108
Black	2,378,850	73.0	1,736,157
Hispanic	3,349,506	74.1	2,482,500
Other race	784,051	84.1	659,388
<b>Males age 25 or older</b>	86,068,998	94.2%	81,067,748
White	64,672,062	96.3	62,258,493
Black	9,153,201	86.6	7,922,346
Hispanic	8,806,507	88.5	7,792,027
Other race	3,437,228	90.0	3,092,184
<b>Females age 16 to 24</b>	17,727,383	80.2%	14,213,642
White	11,292,437	89.7	10,125,260
Black	2,682,633	62.5	1,676,328
Hispanic	2,954,116	61.8	1,826,776
Other race	798,197	72.2	575,921
<b>Females age 25 or older</b>	93,820,678	87.6%	82,170,336
White	70,001,900	91.5	64,054,219
Black	11,479,385	77.7	8,919,530
Hispanic	8,845,054	73.6	6,514,042
Other race	3,494,338	76.4	2,670,295

Note: Detail may not add to total due to estimation procedures.  
 \*Includes licensed and unlicensed drivers who operate a motor vehicle a few times a year or more.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics is the statistical agency of the U.S. Department of Justice. Jeffrey L. Sedgwick is Director. Erica L. Smith and Matthew R. Durose, BJS Statisticians, wrote this report. Jessica Keating assisted with verification. Carolyn C. Williams edited the report. Jayne Robinson prepared the report for final printing.

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This report in portable document format and in ASCII and its related statistical data and tables are available at the BJS World Wide Web Internet site:  
 <<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/>>.

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