

Biased Policing Data Collection Update

March 2004

The Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (CCJJ) is responsible for reviewing the data collected by local law enforcement agencies pertaining to racial profiling. The data collected for this updated analysis is a snapshot of all record lookups that occurred during the month of March 2004. This snapshot provides a current look at the status of the data contained in the racial profiling dataset.

A few changes have occurred since CCJJ's initial report, which examined data through the middle of 2003. The data presented below does include Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office, Salt Lake City Police Department, and all of the agencies in Weber County. Data was missing from these agencies for CCJJ's initial report. Additionally, after discussions with the information technology staff at the Utah Department of Public Safety (DPS), CCJJ has decided to allow the response of "other" in the purpose of record lookup to be considered a valid response. Although there are lingering concerns officers could use the "other" code for traffic or pedestrian stops, because officers have to enter additional data when "other" is selected, we believe there is minimal likelihood officers would use this option with regularity. Finally, after discussing the electronic flow of racial profiling data with DPS staff, it was discovered some transactions were being duplicated which was artificially reducing compliance with the recording of purpose of lookup, officer race, and officer gender. As of the first week of April 2004, this process has been adjusted to curtail it from occurring in the future.

The table below provides a snapshot of transactions that were recorded in the racial profiling database housed at the Utah Department of Public Safety.

Biased Policing Data - March 2004

	Known		Unknown	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Gender of Officer	139,562	89.6%	16,202	10.4%
Race of Officer	110,561	71.0%	45,203	29.0%
Race of Subject	80,975	52.0%	74,789	48.0%
Purpose of Lookup	128,034	82.2%	27,730	17.8%

To briefly summarize the data in the table above, with the adjustments previously mentioned, the percentage of reporting of the race of the officer, the gender of the officer, and the purpose of the lookup have improved dramatically. The reporting of the race of the subject, although improved, is still present in only half of the cases. It is important to understand that data regarding the race of the subject comes directly from the subject's driver's license. Drivers are not required to identify their race when completing an application for their license. It is optional. As stated in CCJJ's initial report, the race of the subject is the cornerstone of any analysis of racial profiling. It is also generally agreed that the race and gender of the officer running the transaction is not critical to an analysis of racial profiling. Readers should review CCJJ's initial report, as well as reports from the [General Accounting Office, U.S. Department of Justice](#), and the [Police Executive Research Forum](#), to get a more complete understanding of data elements that can be collected to provide a clearer understanding of the status of racial profiling within a community.