

Contacts between Police and the Public in Utah

A Survey of Contacts in 2006 and 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present study is designed to replicate for Utah the findings of a national survey on contacts between police and the public conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), United States Department of Justice, in 2002 and again in 2005.

- 2,892 residents of Utah at least 16 years of age were telephoned by a private survey firm and asked questions about contacts they had with the police during the last year.

- The sample includes:

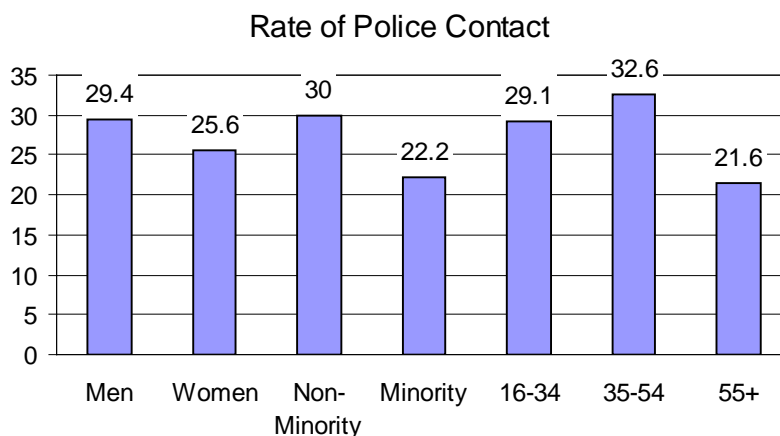
- 1,625 women and 1,267 men
- 998 racial or ethnic minority respondents
- Average age 47.7 years

| Race/ Ethnicity | |
|------------------------|-------|
| White, not Hispanic | 65.5% |
| Hispanic | 18.2% |
| African American | 4.2% |
| Asian American | 2.7% |
| Pacific Islander | 1.8% |
| Native American | 2.6% |
| Other or Multiple | 5.0% |

All Contacts

- 27% of the respondents reported a face-to-face contact with the police in the last year compared with 19% in the national survey. 45% of these contacts were police-initiated.
- The overall rate of reported contact was higher for men—29% compared to 26% of women. Men also had a higher rate of police-initiated contacts—15% of men vs. 10% of women.
- Non-minorities reported a higher contact rate than minorities—30% for non-minorities vs. 22% for minorities. The difference was reduced for police-initiated contacts—13% for non-minorities compared to 11% for minorities.
- While individuals 35-54 years of age had the highest overall rate of contact, the youngest age group (16-34 years olds) had the highest rate of police-initiated contacts.

Figure 1



Type of Contact

- The most common reason for a contact was reporting a problem to the police—11% of Utah respondents said they reported a problem, which is almost twice the national rate.
- The next most common reason for a Utah contact was as a driver in a traffic stop—6% of the Utah respondents reported they were a driver in a traffic stop compared to a national rate of 9%.
- Demographic characteristics and type of contact:
 - Men were more likely to be the driver in a traffic stop and more than three times as likely to be contacted by the police as part of a criminal investigation.
 - Non-minority individuals were more likely to be the driver in a traffic stop than minorities, and were more likely to report a problem to the police. Minorities, however, were more than twice as likely to be contacted on suspicion of a crime.
 - 35 to 54 year olds had a higher rate of traffic stops, reporting a problem to the police, and contact during a criminal investigation. 16 to 34 year olds were four times as likely as the other age groups to be contacted on suspicion of a crime.
 - Among the 16 to 34 year olds, non-minority respondents were more than twice as likely to be the driver in a traffic stop. On the other hand, minority respondents in the 16 to 34 old age group were almost three times as likely to report a contact in which they were a criminal suspect than the non-minority respondents of a similar age.

Figure 2

Figure 3

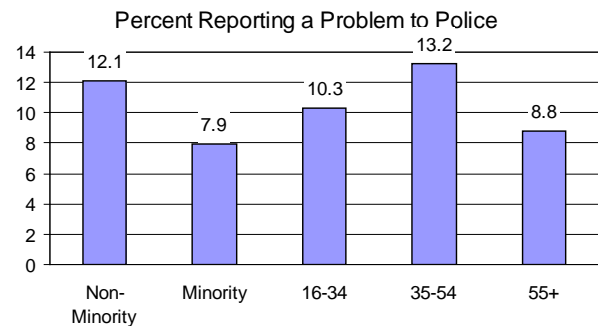
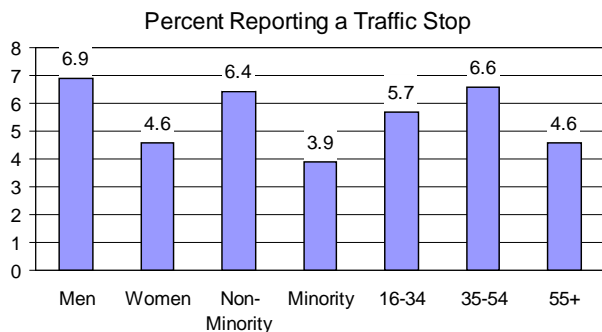
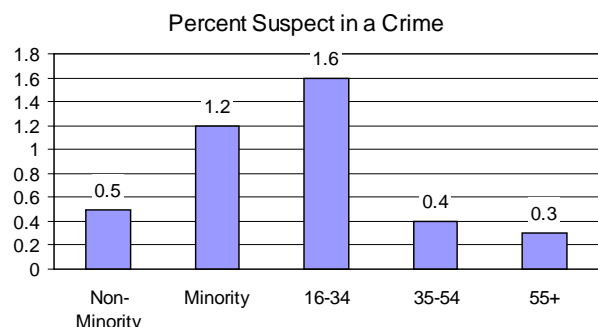
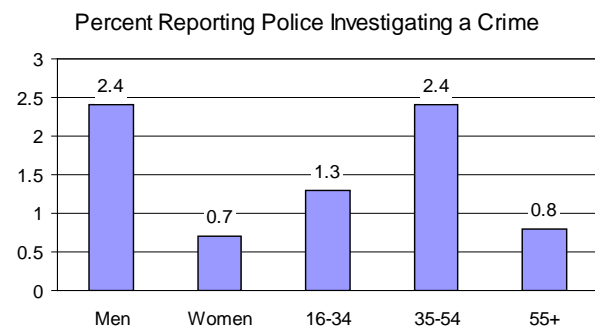


Figure 4

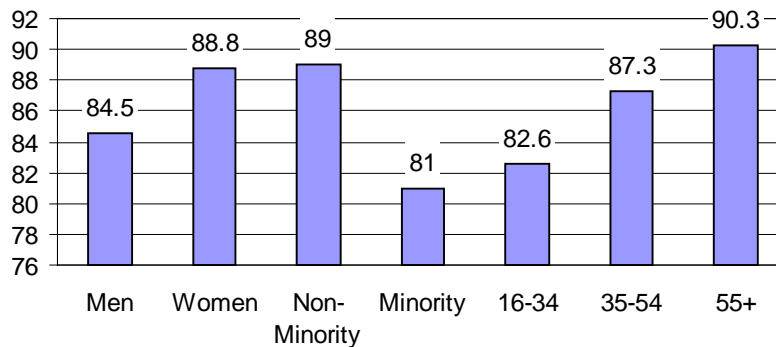
Figure 5



Appropriateness of Police Behavior

- 87% of the Utah respondents who experienced contact with the police reported that the police behaved appropriately compared to the national rate of 90%.
- Police behavior during police-initiated contacts was rated lower than in respondent-initiated contacts—81% gave an appropriate rating for police-initiated contacts versus 92% for respondent-initiated contacts.

Figure 6
 Percent of Contacts Reporting Police Behaved Appropriately

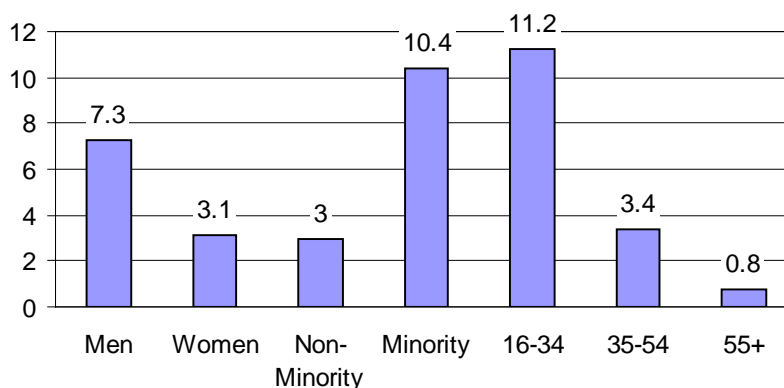


- Police behavior was rated lower overall by minority respondents—81% of minorities vs. 89% of non-minorities said the police behaved appropriately. This was especially true in police-initiated contacts, where 72% of minorities gave favorable ratings compared to 85% for non-minorities.

Arrest

- 40 individuals in the survey reported that they were arrested by the police during the past year (1.3%).
- Men, younger respondents, and minority respondents were more likely to report being arrested. Among 16 to 34 year olds, minority respondents were more than three times as likely to report an arrest as non-minorities of a similar age—more than half of the 40 total arrests were reported by minority 16 to 34 year old respondents.

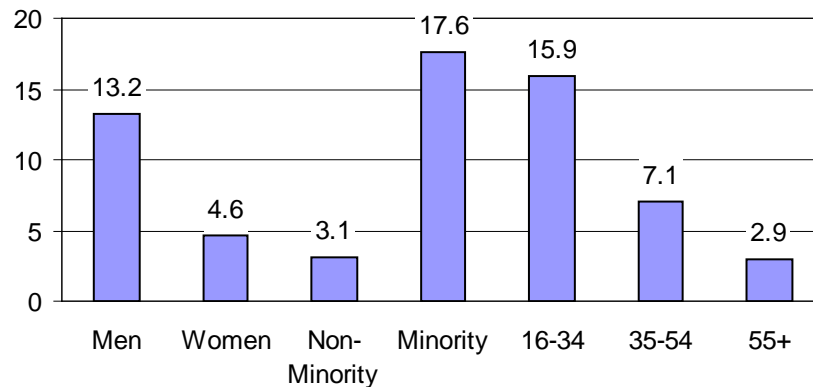
Figure 7
 Percent of Contacts Leading to an Arrest



Police Search

- 8.6% (68 individuals) of those reporting a police contacts said that they were searched by the police (includes person or vehicle searches).
- Men, younger respondents, and minorities were more likely to report being searched. Among 16 to 34 year olds, minority respondents were almost three times as likely to report being searched as non-minority 16 to 34 year olds.

Figure 8
Percent of Contacts Resulting in a Search



Police Use of Force

- 6.8% (53 individuals) of those with a police contact reported that the police used force or threatened to use force during the contact.
- Men, younger respondents, and minorities were more likely to report that the police used force. Within the younger group (16 to 34), minority respondents were more than twice as likely to report that the police used force compared to non-minorities in this age group.
- 72% of the respondents who said that the police used force also said that they felt that the force was excessive. Younger individuals and minority respondents were more likely to report that the police use of force was excessive.

Figure 9
Percent of Contacts Resulting in Use of Force

