Traffic Stop Data Collection

Primary Documents Reviewed:
How to Correctly Collect & Analyze Racial Profiling Data
Report Prepared by The CNA Corporation for the US Department of Justice

Primary Methodology: Literature Review 20 published reports (3 million records of police stops from more than 700 law enforcement agencies), Sampling of Agencies, Expert Interviews

Collecting, Analyzing and Responding to Stop Data: A Guidebook for Law Enforcement Agencies, Government and Communities
Center for Policing Equity & Policing Project

Examples of Questions for Consideration CNA Cooperation page 54 (used during study)**:**

- Why is your department collecting data/what made you decide to do this?
- What types of data are you collecting/plan to collect?
- How are you recording the information? What is the technical process?
- How much is it costing in terms of money and time?
- Who's responsible for collecting, recording and maintaining the data?
- What group will be responsible for evaluating the data?
- Who will release information derived from the data?
- What specific questions do you want answers for?
- What answers are you expecting to find?
- What are your plans to disseminate the information learned?
- What actions do you foresee resulting from the information/answers gained?
- What happens if the data shows you completely unexpected results?

An Example of Findings & Recommendations from CNA Corporation based on their analysis (for full conclusions visit page 2):

- **Data collection and evaluation** is an **appropriate way to address the concerns of racial profiling.** Anecdotal evidence is an unreliable tool with which to make policy decisions.
- **The partnership between operational police expertise and external researchers should be established before the data collection begins.** This will allow police to have input on operational constraints, and researchers to have input on what data will be required to reach conclusions. If the wrong data are collected, the best analysis in the world will be unable to reach useful or valid conclusions.
- There should be **clear guidelines** on how information on racial profiling should be used–who will own it, who will be responsible for using it, how confidentiality can be maintained, and how frequently reports should be generated and released.
- Data collection and analysis **can be costly,** so if data collection is mandated, it **should also be funded**. Without funding, competing needs that are more directly related to traditional law enforcement will almost always have higher priority.

- **All parties should understand that examining traffic stops is unlikely to address the finer nuances of defining racial profiling**. There is not as yet an accepted, official definition of racial profiling, much less an operational definition that describes exactly what data should be collected, how they should be collected,and what type of analytical results would definitively identify racial profiling. Until a basic overall definition is specified, the examination of data to determine the existence or extent of racial profiling will, of necessity, be open to interpretation by various stakeholders. Participants felt that it was critically important for all parties to reach an agreement on an official definition of racial profiling.

Measuring Race: Considerations (pg 35- CNA Cooperation)

Despite the central place that the race of the person stopped or searched plays in this literature, there is **little agreement on how to measure race or ethnicity and what to do with incidents where the race or ethnicity is unknown or not recorded.** Within these reports, there are sometimes differences in how race is measured in population statistics from the census bureau and in stop and search data from police records.

Most data collection efforts record the race of the person after the stop is made. It is interesting to consider that for some (unknown) proportion of stops, officers may not know the race of the person until after the stop has been made.

Some studies have attempted to conduct independent traffic surveys to record the race of drivers at certain times (day and night) and places (intersections, streets), but the results have been varied.

When officers are unable to determine race prior to the stop, it is more difficult to determine that the stop is based on the racial biases of the individual office.

Example of Data Collected

Appendix C pg 52 *Collecting, Analyzing and Responding to Stop Data*	**Perceived Race or Ethnicity of Person Stopped (select all that apply)** • **Asian** • **Black/African American** • **Hispanic/Latino(a)** • **Middle Eastern or South Asian** • **Native American** • **Pacific Islander** • **White** *(FYI: CNA: Pg 26 Race categories vary by agency)*

Collection Methodology Considerations

Collecting, Analyzing and Responding to Stop Data (pg 22)

Methodology	Strengths	Concerns
In-Car Computer (onboard mobile data computers, MDC)	Auto-Population of Forms Ease of Data Entry Process Automatic Error Check	Not Practical for all Units Cost System Compatibility
Smartphone/Tablet	Faster roll-out Increased mobility Data collection processing speed	Public Perception Dead zones Screen Size (phone)
Paper Form	Not subject to 'tech issues' Simple to create & distribute	Time to transfer data Human Error Printing costs

**Themes Identified that may Impact Data Collection to Consider-
CNA Cooperation page 69**

Theme 1: Some police department leaders, perhaps in conjunction with local politicians, make decisions on whether, and how, to collect data with input from certain stakeholders *(some police rank-and-file officers feel disenfranchised because data collection decisions are reached without consulting all those involved).*

Theme 2: Data collection and evaluation can be viewed as unfunded mandates. The departments report that they lack the resources and expertise needed to support a robust data collection and analysis effort. In this context, resources may consist of funding, or of computer capabilities to record information. Expertise may refer to lack of computer or analytical expertise.

Theme 3: An important issue is whether police departments should conduct the evaluations and analyses or contract them out. First, few departments have internal personnel with the expertise and background to perform analytical evaluations. Second, departments may feel that by contracting out the evaluation and analysis of the data collected, they will present the image of objectivity. There is a fear that if they do their own evaluations, community members and the press will not trust the reported results.

Theme 4: Some officers who go out and do the work resent data collection and evaluation for a number of reasons.

Other Considerations:

- Baltimore has a contact receipt that includes Citizen's race (pg 75 CNA Cooperation)