



# Bureau of Justice Statistics Fact Sheet

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## Traffic Stop Data Collection Policies for State Police, 1999

By  
Kevin J. Strom      Matthew R. Durose  
BJS Statistician      BJS Statistical Assistant

As of midyear 1999, 9 of the Nation's 49 State law enforcement agencies whose primary duties include highway patrol reported requiring officers to record demographic information on the driver or passengers for all traffic stops. Thirty-one State agencies reported collecting specifically racial or ethnic data on drivers who receive traffic-related citations.

In recent years several States have mandated that State police collect demographic information on stopped motorists. California requires that highway patrol officers assigned to drug interdiction duties record the driver's ethnicity when a stop occurs. As of January 2000, State police officers for North Carolina and Connecticut are required to register demographic information during all traffic stops. Other Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies are at various stages of instituting policies to collect data from motorist encounters.

### Demographic information recorded from traffic stops

To better understand practices and policies, the Bureau of Justice Statistics asked State police agencies about the information collected from traffic contacts and violations. Age and gender were the items most commonly recorded from motorist stops (table 1). Race or ethnicity was collected when police officers took the following actions during a traffic stop:

- *Written warning* 12 State police agencies required that the driver's race/ethnicity be collected, including 3 States that collected this information for all passengers.
- *Traffic citation* 31 agencies recorded race/ethnicity if written citations were issued, including 9 that collected these data for all persons in the stopped vehicle.
- *Arrest from a traffic stop* 37 agencies collected the arrestee's race/ethnicity, while 17 recorded the race/ethnicity of all vehicle occupants.

**Table 1. Number of State police agencies collecting demographic data, by type of traffic stop, 1999**

Traffic-related circumstance	Number of States collecting data			
	Age	Gender	Racial/ethnic	Immigration status
Written warnings of traffic violations	24	16	12	1
Driver only	18	11	9	1
All vehicle occupants	6	5	3	0
Citations for traffic violations	40	40	31	1
Driver only	28	28	22	0
All vehicle occupants	12	12	9	1
Arrests arising from traffic stops	41	41	37	4
Arrestee only	23	23	20	3
All vehicle occupants	18	18	17	1
Vehicle/occupant searches	14	14	15	3
Driver only	5	5	6	1
All vehicle occupants	9	9	9	2
Use-of-force encounters	36	36	32	6

- *Search of vehicle or occupants* 15 agencies collected the driver's race/ethnicity if a search was conducted, including 9 that recorded the race/ethnicity of all vehicle occupants. Mississippi, New Mexico, and Indiana also collected the driver's immigration status under these circumstances.
- *Use-of-force encounter from a traffic stop* 32 State agencies collected the drivers' or passengers' race/ethnicity, including 6 that also gathered immigration status.

### Electronic accessibility of demographic records

Among the 37 State police agencies that collected racial/ethnic information on a traffic-related arrest, 23 stored these data electronically (table 2). For those 15 States that recorded racial/ethnic information following a search of the vehicle or occupants, 8 maintained these data in electronic form. About a third of all States have a driver's racial category on or linked to drivers' licenses. Immigration status is included in driver's license files in Florida, Indiana, and Wyoming.

**Table 2. Electronic accessibility of racial/ethnic data collected by State police for traffic stops, by State, 1999**

State	Traffic stops						State	Traffic stops					
	All stops	Written warnings	Citations	Arrests	Searches	Use-of-force		All stops	Written warnings	Citations	Arrests	Searches	Use-of-force
Alaska		✓	✓	✓			Nevada*			✓	✓	■	✓
Arkansas			■	■		■	New Hampshire			■	■	■	■
California*			■	■	■	■	New Jersey	■			■	■	■
Colorado			■	✓		■	New Mexico	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Connecticut				✓		■	New York*				■		
Delaware*			✓	✓		✓	Ohio			✓	✓	✓	✓
Florida			✓	✓	✓	✓	Oklahoma		■	✓	✓		✓
Illinois				✓	✓	✓	Oregon			■	■	■	■
Indiana			✓	✓	✓	✓	North Carolina		■				
Iowa				■	■		Pennsylvania						■
Kansas		■	■	■		✓	South Carolina		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Louisiana			■	■		■	South Dakota		■	■	■	■	■
Maine			■	✓	■	✓	Tennessee		■	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maryland					✓		Texas			✓	✓	✓	■
Massachusetts		✓	✓	✓		■	Utah		✓	✓	✓		
Michigan			■	✓		✓	Virginia*			■	■		■
Minnesota				■			Washington			■	■		
Mississippi*			✓	✓	✓	✓	West Virginia		■	■	■		■
Missouri			✓	✓		✓	Wisconsin			✓	✓		✓
Nebraska	✓	✓	✓	✓		■	Wyoming			✓	✓		■

Note: State police in Alabama, Arizona, Idaho, Kentucky, Montana, Rhode Island, and Vermont did not collect demographic data for traffic stops. Georgia and North Dakota collected age and gender for some traffic stops but not race/ethnicity. Hawaii does not have a formal State police agency. ✓=States storing racial/ethnic data electronically. ■=States collecting racial/ethnic data but not storing those data electronically. \*State does not issue written warnings. Source: 1999 Survey of State Police Agencies