



CONTACT BETWEEN THE POLICE AND THE PUBLIC

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CONTACTS BETWEEN POLICE AND THE PUBLIC

In April 2005, the Bureau of Justice Statistics released the report *Contacts between Police and the Public: Findings from the 2002 National Survey*. The findings come from the Police-Public Contact Survey, conducted in 2002. The following data and graphic were taken from the report.

- About 21 percent of all persons 16 and older had at least one face-to-face contact with a police officer.
 - Per capita, the rate of police-resident contact for Whites was about 15 percent higher than for Blacks, and about 26 percent higher than for Hispanics.
 - The rate of police-resident contact was about 20 percent higher for males than for females.

- Of those who had police contact, nearly 59 percent reported that their most recent contact was initiated by police.
 - The most common reason for police contact was being the driver of a motor vehicle that was pulled over by police. This accounted for 37 percent of police-resident contacts (see below for more detailed information).
 - About 25 percent indicated that the reason for police-resident contact was to report a crime or other problem.
 - Nearly 3 percent of those persons having contact with police were arrested.
 - 90 percent of those who had contact with the police felt the officer acted properly.

	Contact with police	
	Number	Percent
Total	45,278,884	100%
Type of contact		
Police-initiated	26,483,794	58.5%
Not police-initiated*	18,795,090	41.5
Reason for contact		
Traffic accident	5,891,645	13.0%
Driver during traffic stop	16,783,467	37.1
Passenger during traffic stop	1,218,470	2.7
Reported crime or problem to police	11,959,548	26.4
Police provided assistance or service	3,264,503	7.2
Police were investigating crime	2,615,255	5.8
Suspected of something by police	1,158,167	2.6
Other reason	2,387,828	5.3

Note: Detail may not add to total because of rounding.
 *Includes contact initiated by the resident or someone other than the police, such as a family member or acquaintance of the resident.

- Nearly 17 million police-resident contacts were made in traffic stops. Of these:
 - 61 percent were male.
 - 76 percent were White, 11 percent were Black, 10 percent were Hispanic.
 - Of the driving population, the likelihood of being stopped by police did not differ significantly between White, Black, and Hispanic drivers. 8.7 percent of the White driving population was pulled over; 9.1 percent of the Black driving population was pulled over; and 8.6 percent of the Hispanic driving population was pulled over.
 - The primary reason for the traffic stop was for speeding (55 percent), followed by a check for vehicle registration (12 percent), a burned headlight (9 percent), and a stop sign/stoplight violation (7 percent).

- Police issued a ticket to 59 percent of all stopped drivers. Police conducted a search of the driver/vehicle on 5 percent of stopped drivers.
 - Force was threatened or used on slightly over 1 percent of drivers.
 - Police were more likely to carry out a search on a male (7 percent) than a female (2 percent); a Black (10 percent) or Hispanic (11 percent) than a White (4 percent).
 - 84 percent of drivers felt they were stopped for a legitimate reason, and 88 percent felt the police had behaved properly during the stop.
- A small percentage (1.5 percent) of all contacts with police involved force or the threat of force.
 - Blacks (3.5 percent) and Hispanics (2.5 percent) were more likely than Whites (1.1 percent) to experience police threat or use of force during the contact.
 - Force was used against a higher percentage of individuals age 16-29 (2.5 percent) who came into contact with police than persons over age 29 (0.9 percent).
 - Characteristics of contacts involving force:
 - 42 percent of the contacts involving force were characterized as ‘pushed’ or ‘grabbed’.
 - 19 percent of forceful contacts involved police pointing a gun at the resident.
 - 14 percent who experienced force were injured as a result of the police action.
 - 24 percent of residents verbally assaulted or verbally threatened the officer during the incident.
 - About 75 percent of those residents involved in forceful contacts described the contacts as excessive.
 - About 87 percent of those residents involved in forceful contacts felt that the police acted improperly. Less than 20 percent took formal action (filing a complaint or lawsuit).

To view the full report, *Contacts between Police and the Public: Findings from the 2002 National Survey*, go to the BJS web site: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/cpp02.pdf>