

RACIAL PROFILING: THE FACTS

(Prepared by the ACLU-RI)

- In 2003, an analysis by Northeastern University of two years' worth of traffic stops data collected by police departments across the state found that African-American and Latino drivers were not only more likely than white drivers to be stopped by police, but also more than twice as likely as white drivers to be searched.
- A second analysis released in 2006 by Northeastern University of more recent data continued to find that African-American and Latino drivers were more likely than white drivers to be stopped, and more than twice as likely to be searched, even though white drivers were more likely to be found with contraband when searched.
- An even more recent analysis conducted at URI of RI State Police traffic stops found that "there continues to be racial and ethnic disparity in the stops made by Rhode Island State Police" and that there is "substantial evidence of racial and ethnic disparity in discretionary searches by the Rhode Island State Police."
- Looking a little more closely at Northeastern University's 2006 report broken down by police department, here is some what the statistics showed:
- In 37 of 39 jurisdictions, police stopped non-whites more often than what would be statistically likely according to the driving population.
- In thirteen of those jurisdictions, the disparities in how non-whites were treated increased, "some quite substantially," from the first two-year study.
- 34 of 35 police departments that searched any vehicles with black or Hispanic drivers searched them more often than vehicles of white drivers. In 22 of these jurisdictions, the number of searches conducted was sufficient enough for the disparities to be deemed statistically significant by Northeastern University.
- Seven of the twenty-two police departments that conducted a statistically significant number of searches during the final year of the study stated unequivocally that racial profiling did not occur within their jurisdictions. Yet, six of those departments searched minority drivers more than twice as often as white drivers, and at a ratio greater than the statewide average