

Innovative Practices in Traffic Enforcement Equity and Engagement

By: Ken Barone, Associate Director

Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, UConn

Brief History of Connecticut Reforms

- **1999:** Connecticut enacts The Alvin W. Penn Racial Profiling Prohibition Act (Public Act 99-198)
- **2012:** Connecticut makes major reforms to the law
- **2013:** Requires all 107 police agencies to begin electronically collecting and reporting traffic stop data.
- **2015:** First study was published
- **2016-Present:** 7 statewide studies annually.

Why Traffic Stop Data?

- On average, Connecticut law enforcement agencies conduct approximately **550,000** traffic stops a year.
 - The total number of traffic stops has been significantly impacted since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Traffic stops are the most common encounter police have with the public.**
- Issues of race and traffic stops brought to the forefront

Fundamental Questions to Address

- Do racial and ethnic **disparities** exist in traffic stop data?
- What are the **factors** driving the disparities that are identified?
- What **interventions** are most effective at reducing/eliminating racial and ethnic disparities and also improving roadway safety?

The Connecticut Model - Four Phases

- Phase 1: **Continuous data** collection
- Phase 2: **Empirical analysis** of the data
- Phase 3: **In-depth analyses** for identified high-disparity agencies, including an officer-level analysis.
- Phase 4: **Community forums and conversations**

The Preponderance of the Evidence Approach

- Advantages of Connecticut's approach
- Guide for policymakers and policing administrators
- No single method is able to fully capture all dimensions of disparity.
- Our approach helped build stakeholder confidence in the findings.

Departmental Intervention

- Each year, all 107 departments are evaluated
- Those identified as high-disparity are invited to an in-depth analysis with researchers.
- What are the factors contributing to racial and ethnic disparities in traffic stop data for departments identified in the annual analysis?
- **There is not a one size fits all approach.**

Community and Stakeholder Input

- Public forums are conducted in communities with high disparity agencies.
 - Researchers **present findings**
 - Police administrators are invited to provide **comment/feedback**
 - **Thoughtful discussion** occurs between the public, police, and researchers about the findings and next steps.

Intervention Success Stories

- Since 2015, Connecticut has conducted 9 statewide studies.
- 32 municipal police agencies and 5 State Police Troops were identified as “high disparity agencies.”
- Interventions were conducted in all agencies.
- Success stories: Newington, and Hamden

Slow and Steady Wins the Race

- The last three calendar year statewide reports have shown **significant reductions** in racial and ethnic disparities statewide.
- Far **fewer departments** are being identified as “high disparity agencies.”

State Highway Safety Offices are Critical to Program Success

- Connecticut Department of Transportation's Highway Safety Office.
 - The 1906 program provides the critical support to maintain our program.
- It is possible to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in traffic enforcement and improve roadway safety at the same time.
- State Highway Safety Offices play a **critical role** in understanding this research and disseminating effective enforcement techniques to their law enforcement partners.

Other Program Benefits

- The accumulation of a rich dataset is now available with 92 million data points from 4 million traffic stops.
- We consistently look for win-win solutions during our departmental interventions (i.e., improved roadway safety and reduced disparities).
- Our research has been able to substantially contribute to the ongoing conversation about traffic safety in Connecticut.

Research Highlights worth Noting

- No evidence that participation in Highway Safety Office safety programs contributes to statewide or departmental disparities.
- Racial and ethnic disparities are significantly decreased when law enforcement primarily focuses on safety-related violations
 - Examples: speeding, distracted driving, following too close, traffic light violation

Conclusions

- The section 1906 program has been critical to the success in Connecticut.
- Coordinated state and national data collection and analysis is essential to help advance equity in traffic enforcement.
- Good data will allow you to identify the strategies that reduce fatalities, injuries, and disparities, all at the same time.

Thank you!

- For more information, please visit www.ctrp3.org
- Email: ken.barone@uconn.edu

The screenshot shows the website for the Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project. The header includes the project name, navigation links for 'THE PROJECT', 'ANALYSIS & REPORTS', and 'EVENTS', and a search icon. The main content area features a large video player with a torn-paper effect. The video title is 'RACIAL PROFILING HAS HISTORICALLY OCCURRED, & CONTINUES TO OCCUR THROUGHOUT AMERICA.' Below the title is a mission statement: 'The Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project's mission is to bring together community stakeholders and law enforcement to identify and address racial and ethnic disparities in traffic enforcement.' At the bottom left of the video player are two buttons: 'OUR MISSION' and 'ABOUT THE PROJECT'. The video player interface includes a play button, a progress bar showing 00:50, and the Vimeo logo.

CONNECTICUT RACIAL PROFILING PROHIBITION PROJECT

THE PROJECT ▾ ANALYSIS & REPORTS ▾ EVENTS ▾

RACIAL PROFILING HAS HISTORICALLY OCCURRED, & CONTINUES TO OCCUR THROUGHOUT AMERICA.

The Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project's mission is to bring together community stakeholders and law enforcement to identify and address racial and ethnic disparities in traffic enforcement.

OUR MISSION ABOUT THE PROJECT

00:50 vimeo