

Brief Report on the Racialized Nature of Traffic Tickets within New Hampshire 1-1-19 to 5-31-20

Missing Racial Data

Of the 2852 recorded traffic tickets within this dataset, the race column was marked UNK (unknown) 27 times and was left completely blank 904 times. Altogether these account for almost a third of all stops, yet due to the missing information it is impossible to make any definitive statistical claim about these particular stops.

Taken most charitably, this lack of data is simply due to undertrained or mistrained officers. However, considering the scope of how many stops have no racial data recorded, this indicates a wide reaching lack in the ability of officers to understand or approach situations involving race. In this most charitable scenario, officers require a revitalized and expanded training.

There remains the possibility that given the general “whiteness” of New Hampshire’s racial demographics, these stops without racial information could very likely be disproportionately POC, even more so the rest of the dataset. If true, this would be indicative that New Hampshire officers might not be especially experienced or perceptive when it comes to identifying and understanding other races.

The Racial Disparity in NH Traffic Tickets

Of the 1948 traffic tickets that have racial data recorded, 6.4% (123) of them were given to Black people and 5.4% (104) were given to Hispanic people. This is despite the fact that Black and Hispanic people respectively comprise only 1.8% and 4.0% of New Hampshire’s population. Taken together, people of color in New Hampshire comprise 11.8% of all traffic tickets despite comprising only 5.8% of the general population. If everything was just and equal, there would be little to no disparity between these percentages. However, the fact that such a disparity exists shows that, in some way, race plays a part in the likelihood of someone getting pulled over; Black and Hispanic people are more likely to get ticketed in New Hampshire.

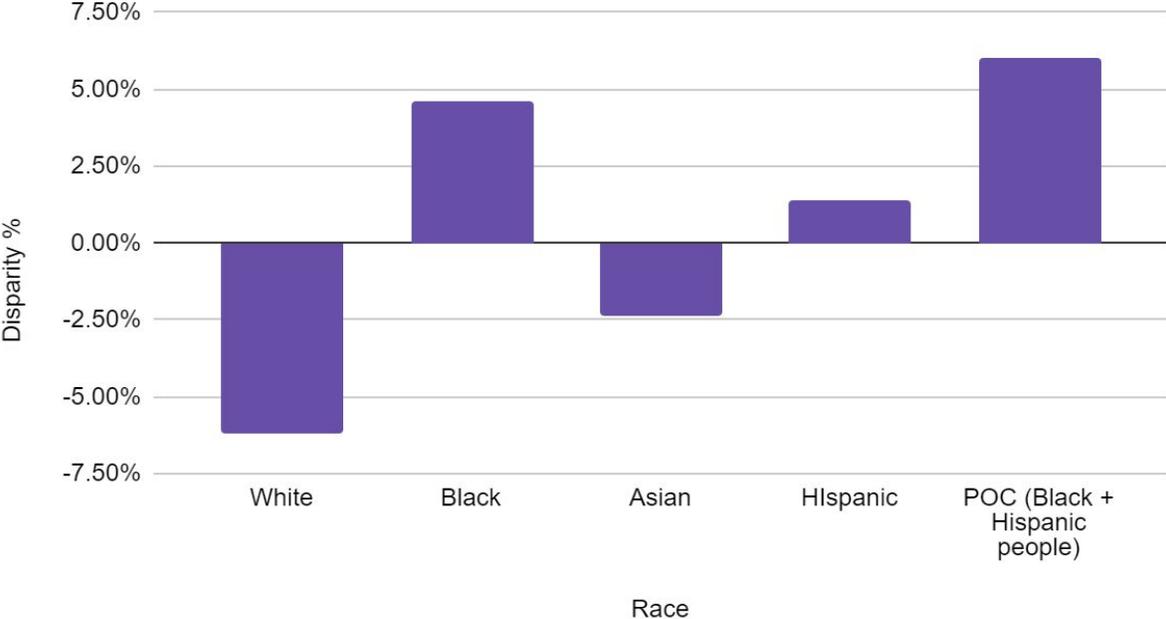
A cynically inclined person might try and point out that since people of color constitute such a small minority of New Hampshire’s population, a “few” extra stops can add up quickly when it comes to disparities. If this were true and these racial disparities were being skewed by small populations, then we would expect other racial groups to be similarly skewed. However, some other racial groups which comprise similarly small percentages of New Hampshire’s population, such as Asian people constituting 3.0% of the population, are actually vastly underrepresented, along with white people, in these traffic stops. Thus, it seems reasonable that POC specifically, that is to say both Black and Hispanic people, are facing a unique challenge and disparity in this particular regard.

Additionally, according to this dataset, POC are stopped for certain offenses at a higher rate than their white counterparts. For example, while “following too closely” was listed as the reason for ~4.3% of all white traffic stops, it was simultaneously the listed reason for ~8.8% of traffic stops against people of color. In this way, some more frivolous or minute reasons for initiating a traffic stop, such as

following too closely, might be used as retroactive ways to justify some officer's biased criminal suspicions against people of color. To clarify, this is not to say these perceptions are necessarily conscious or malicious, but rather that they are present, dangerous, and oppressive.

Ultimately, this dataset merely shows empirically and in a data-driven fashion the unjust reality that many Americans face. This unjust and racialized policing must come to an end, but that can only happen if, at the very least, we work to understand specifically how and why policing is still racialized.

Disparity Between % of Population and % of Traffic Stops



NH Racial Demographics against NH Traffic stops by Race

