

LAKE WORTH POLICE DEPARTMENT

2020 RACIAL PROFILING REPORT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lake Worth Police Department is pleased to present information to the Lake Worth City Council regarding our compliance with the State of Texas Racial Profiling Law. This report contains motor vehicle stop data for the calendar year 2020. During 2020, Lake Worth Police Officers made a total 5,633 motor vehicle stops - a 33.9% increase from 2019.

The effectiveness of a law enforcement agency and its officers depends enormously on the relationship the agency has forged with the community it serves. Community-police relationships, like all relationships, must be based on mutual trust and respect to thrive, and seasoned law enforcement personnel know trust and respect are rooted in transparency and accountability. The Lake Worth Police Department takes a proactive role in promoting agency transparency and officer integrity by assessing community-police interactions, providing valuable employee in-service training, and maintaining open lines of public communication.

Officers occasionally ask drivers for permission to search their vehicle when they have suspicion of finding contraband or evidence of a crime, but that suspicion falls short of full probable cause needed for officers to search without consent, (this is a consent search.) Drivers are free to deny permission for these searches. During 2020, there were a total of 56 consent searches requested and approved by drivers.

During 2020, the department received zero citizen complaints regarding bias policing. This analysis indicates that Lake Worth Police Officers are working diligently to reduce traffic crashes and interdict criminal activity in a manner consistent with non-bias policing practices. The department remains committed to 1) continuing our training and outreach activities, and 2) studying our policies and procedures to ensure we continue to adhere to non-bias policing.

BACKGROUND

Traffic safety is one of the primary responsibilities of Police Departments. In 2019, Texas experienced 3,610 traffic-related deaths compared to 1,409 homicides. Reducing these unnecessary deaths is the primary reason police engage in traffic enforcement. However, traffic enforcement is not just about enforcing traffic laws. Stopping vehicles for traffic violations is also one of the primary methods police use to reduce other crimes as well. Criminals who commit other crimes move around Lake Worth in vehicles and stopping vehicles for traffic offenses allows officers to investigate and often intercede in other criminal activities. Active traffic enforcement is one of the reasons Lake Worth remains one of the safest cities in Tarrant County.

Drugs represent **63%**
of contraband found
during searches in 2020.

With the understanding that traffic enforcement is a primary function of the police, it is also imperative that we ensure our enforcement efforts are bias-free. The Lake Worth Police Department has always complied with all parts of the State of Texas Racial Profiling law. Article 2.132 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure prohibits police agencies in Texas from practicing any form of Racial Profiling. The law requires police departments, among other requirements, to:

- Have a policy prohibiting Racial Profiling,
- Provide training to their officers in prohibiting Racial Profiling, and
- Report motor vehicle stop statistics each year to both the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement and the governing body that oversees that particular agency (Lake Worth City Council).

Police departments are also required to report motor vehicle stop statistics including the number of motor vehicle stops by racial group, the number of warnings, citations, arrests, and searches conducted. There is no suggestion of how to analyze or interpret this data. Without some form of analysis, that basic data is of questionable value. The true purpose of this analysis and reporting is to determine if Lake Worth Police Officers are treating minorities differently than their majority counterparts.

The State requires officers to indicate whether they were aware of the driver's race before the stop. Data collected this year indicates that only 0.3 percent of the time did officers know the race of the driver before the stop. Officers most often stop vehicles for an observed traffic violation and are unable to tell the race or ethnicity of the driver until they approach the vehicle on foot.

Texas Commission on Law Enforcement requires agencies to submit a comparative analysis of motor vehicle stops and the jurisdiction's population. That data is submitted in enclosure (1) of this report.

CITATIONS AND WARNINGS

When officers stop a vehicle for a traffic violation, and no other violation is observed or detected, the officer has the discretion to issue a citation for the violation or issue a written or verbal warning. Even if the officer gives only a verbal warning, the officer must still submit specific motor vehicle stop data required for the state report. Officers often use the seriousness or magnitude of the violation and the danger created by the violation in making the decision to issue a citation. In 2020, Officers issued more warnings than citations. Approximately 3,018 warnings were issued compared to 2,615 citations. See figures 1 and 2 below for race and gender percentages.

Figure 1

	City Population ²	2020 Traffic Stops ³
White ¹	69%	58%
Hispanic / Latino ¹	26%	28%
Black ¹	1%	13%
Asian/ Pacific Islander ¹	1%	1%
Alaska Native/ American Indian ¹	<1%	<1%
Other/ Two or More Races ¹	<2%	

¹Figures rounded to the nearest whole number. +/- ~3%

²Based on 2018 Data USA & 2019 CityData.com

³2020 LWPD Racial Profiling Report

Figure 2

	City Population ²	2020 Traffic Stops ³
Male ¹	47%	65%
Female ¹	53%	35%

¹Figures rounded to the nearest whole number. +/- ~1%

²Based on 2018 Data USA & 2019 CityData.com

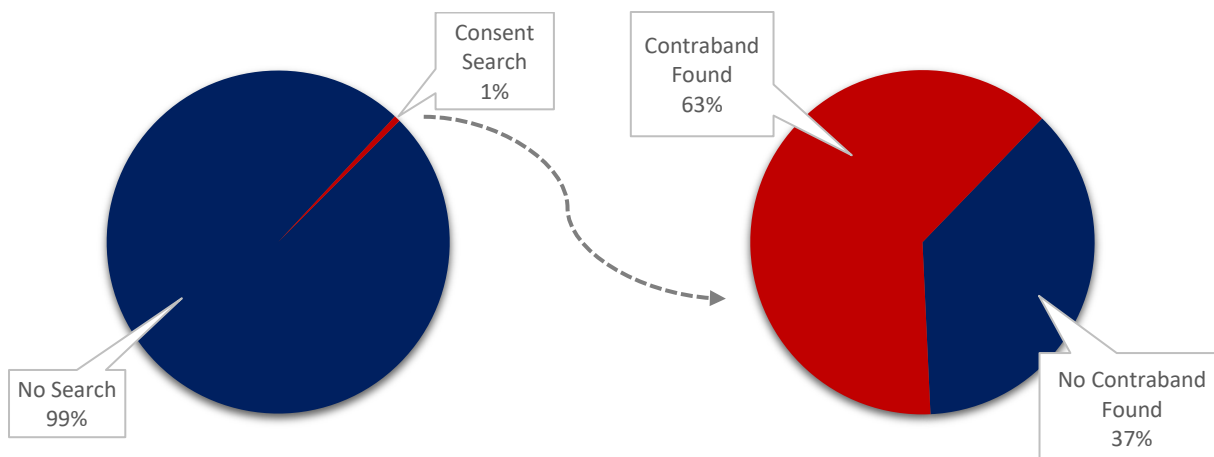
³2020 LWPD Racial Profiling Report

SEARCHES

Because officers are required to search anyone that may be arrested or who the officer believes presents a danger to the officer or others, some searches are “Non-Discretionary”. If an arrest is made as required by law, officers must conduct a search of the person before taking them to jail. Officers have no choice in conducting these searches.

Discretionary searches, usually requiring the consent of the person being searched are the ones that most likely can be abused by officers. The discretionary (Consent Requested) searches make up only a very small portion of all motor vehicle stops (approximately 1%).

Figure 3



FILING COMPLAINTS

Discrimination in any form, including racial profiling, is strictly prohibited and the department will take immediate and appropriate action to investigate allegations of discrimination. Any person who believes he or she has been stopped, searched, inappropriately ticketed or arrested based on racial, ethnic or national origin profiling should file a complaint.

Instructions on how to file a complaint are listed on the front of each citation and warning. Copies of the complaint form are available online via the police department's website and paper copies are available in the lobby of the police department.

SUMMARY

The Lake Worth Police Department continues to strive for bias-free enforcement of the laws. This report shows that during 2020, we were successful in doing so. We are committed to working with our community and other professionals to ensure continued appropriate policing. Persons have questions regarding this report, should contact the Lake Worth Police Department.

ENCLOSURES

- (1) – TCOLE Racial Profiling Submission;
- (2) – Brazos Racial Profiling Report;
- (3) – LWPD Racial Profiling and Bias Reduction Policy