



Trust Through Transparency

Lake Worth Police Department 2023 Annual Report



2023 RACIAL PROFILING REPORT & COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Submitted to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) in compliance with Texas CCP Article 2.131 - 2.138

Excellence in Service and Protection

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lake Worth Police Department strictly prohibits racial profiling and requires that every person our members come in contact be treated in a fair, impartial, equitable and objective manner in accordance with law, and without consideration of their individual demographics. Accordingly, the department is pleased to present the following information to the Lake Worth City Council regarding our compliance with Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Article 2.132 on racial profiling. This report analyzes all motor vehicle stop data in 2023 to ensure that Lake Worth Police officers are policing in a constitutionally prescribed manner.

During 2023, Lake Worth Police officers made a total of 4,594 motor vehicle stops - a 23% decrease from 2022 (Figure 1). Officers generally stop vehicles for an observed traffic violation and are unable to tell the race and ethnicity of the driver until they approach the vehicle. Data collected in 2023 indicates that only 2.76% of the time did officers know the race of the driver before they initiated a traffic stop (Figure 2).

Occasionally, officers ask drivers for permission to search their vehicle when they have suspicion of finding contraband or evidence of a crime. Drivers are free to deny permission for these searches. A total of 63 discretionary searches were approved by drivers in 2023 and accounted for only 1.37% of all of department traffic stops.

The department received zero citizen complaints regarding biased policing in 2023. The analysis provided by this report indicates that Lake Worth Police Officers are using traffic enforcement to reduce traffic crashes and interdict criminal activity in a manner consistent with bias-free 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 practice bias-free policing.

In January of 2023, an internal audit was conducted on the data used to produce this report. Because data is collected using multiple systems, it is important to audit the data to ensure accuracy in reporting. The internal audit concluded that the data presented herein was consistent across all data platforms (Enclosure 4).

The racial profiling report submitted to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) is included in this report as Enclosure 1 and provides the racial profile data that the department is required to submit to the Lake Worth City Council in accordance with Article 2.132 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure.

BACKGROUND

Traffic safety is one of the primary responsibilities of police departments. In 2022, Texas experienced 4,481 traffic-related deaths (a .36% decrease from the previous year)¹ compared to 2,391 homicides². 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.

Every day, criminals travel to and around Lake Worth. The effective enforcement of traffic laws allows officers to investigate and intercede in other criminal activities. Active traffic enforcement is one of the reasons Lake Worth remains one of the safest cities in Tarrant County.

With the understanding that traffic enforcement is a primary function of the police, it is also imperative that we ensure our enforcement efforts are within the requirements of the law and Constitution of the State of Texas and the United States. 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 agencies to conduct a comparative analysis to:

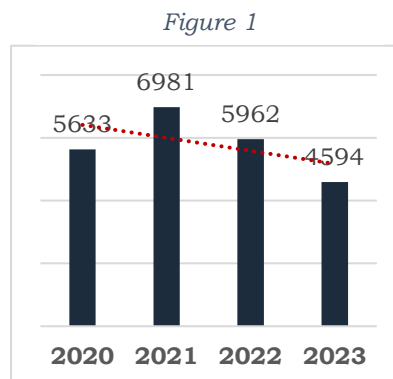
- Evaluate and compare the number of motor vehicle stops, within the jurisdiction, of persons who are recognized as racial or ethnic minorities and persons who are not recognized as racial or ethnic minorities;
- Examine the disposition of motor vehicle stops made by officers employed by the department, categorized according to the race or ethnicity of the affected persons, as appropriate, including any searches resulting from stops within the jurisdiction; and
- Evaluate and compare the number of searches resulting from motor vehicle stops within the jurisdiction and whether contraband or other evidence was discovered in the course of those searches;
- Have a policy prohibiting racial profiling (Enclosure 3);
- 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).

¹ Texas Department of Transportation, *Motor Vehicle Crash Facts Calendar Year 2022*
https://ftp.txdot.gov/pub/txdot-info/trf/crash_statistics/2022/01.pdf

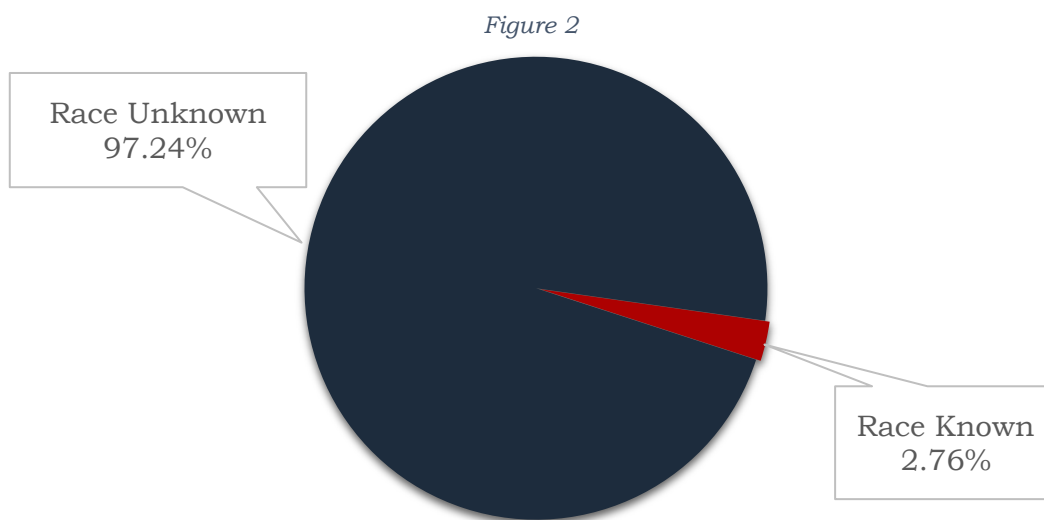
² National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/homicide_mortality/homicide.htm

However, the law makes no suggestion of how to analyze or interpret this data.³ Without some form of analysis, the raw data is of questionable value. The true purpose of this analysis and reporting is to determine if Lake Worth Police Officers are treating one group of people differently than others based on race or ethnicity.

During 2023, Lake Worth Police Officers made a total of 4,594 motor vehicle stops - a 23% decrease from 2022 (Figure 1). The reduction in vehicle stops is attributable to the temporary disbanding of the department's traffic unit which, due to staffing, was not operational in 2023. In previous years, the traffic unit accounted for approximately 35% of the department's total traffic stops. Looking ahead, department leaders plan to reestablish the traffic unit in Spring of 2024 as long as staffing levels can be maintained at sufficient levels.



When a stop is made, the law requires officers to indicate whether they were aware of the driver's race before the stop. Data collected in 2023 indicates that officers knew the race of the driver before they initiated a traffic stop only 2.76% of the time (Figure 2). 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.



³ U.S. Department of Justice
<https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/bja/184768.pdf>

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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 2023, officers issued more warnings than citations.

Approximately 2,895 warnings were issued compared to 1,624 citations. The representation of minority drivers among those stopped could differ greatly from their representation in the residential census. Naturally those driving on the road, particularly major thoroughfares, could differ from those who live in the neighborhood. As a result, social scientists now disregard comparisons to the census for assessing racial bias.^{4,5} However, the 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 and comparatively summarized below in Figures 3-4.

Figure 3

	COLW Population ²	2023 Traffic Stops ³
White ¹	67%	66%
Hispanic / Latino ¹	31%	19%
Black ¹	1%	14%
Asian/ Pacific Islander ¹	<1%	1%
Alaska Native/ American Indian ¹	<1%	<1%
Other/ Two or More Races ¹	<1%	
¹ Figures rounded to the nearest whole number. +/- ~1%		
² Based on 2020 Data USA & 2019 CityData.com		
³ 2023 LWPD Racial Profiling Report		

Figure 4

	COLW Population ²	2023 Traffic Stops ³
Male ¹	47%	66%
Female ¹	53%	34%
¹ Figures rounded to the nearest whole number. +/- ~1%		
² Based on 2020 Data USA & 2019 CityData.com		
³ 2023 LWPD Racial Profiling Report		

⁴ National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, *Racial Profiling and Traffic Stops*
<https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/racial-profiling-and-traffic-stops#note2>

⁵ Ridgeway, Greg, and John MacDonald, "Methods for Assessing Racially Biased Policing," in *Race, Ethnicity, and Policing: New and Essential Readings*, ed. Stephen K. Rice and Michael D. White, New York: NYU Press, 2010: 180–204.

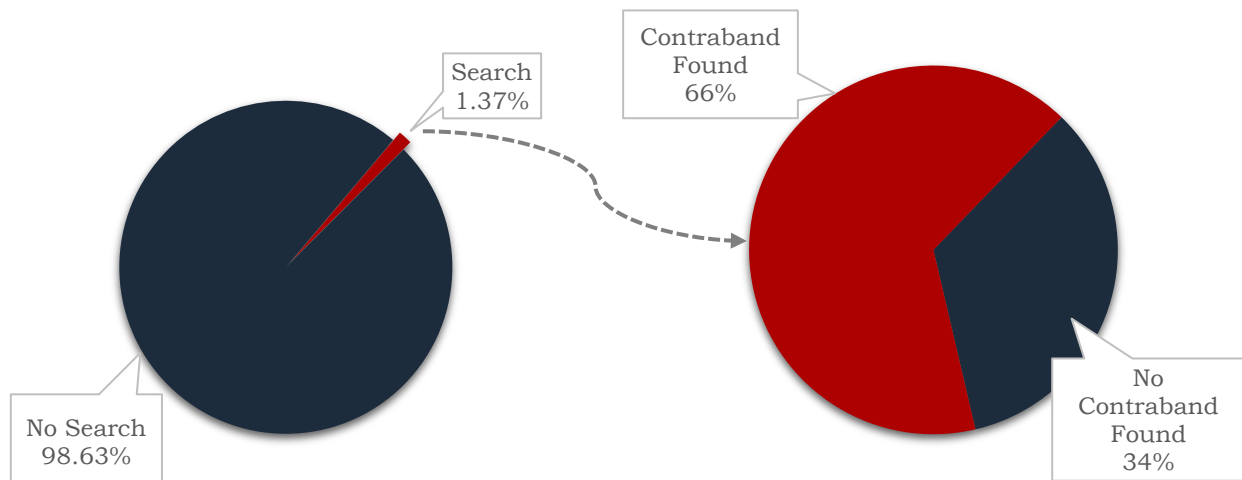
SEARCHES

Officers are required to search all individuals arrested and detainees whom the officer believes presents a danger to the officer or others. Additionally, officers must conduct a search when contraband is in plain view for the officer to see, when they have articulable probable cause, and anytime an officer has a person's vehicle towed. These searches are considered "non-discretionary" and account for 75% of all searches. Of the non-discretionary searches conducted by Lake Worth Police Officers in 2023, 56% of those searched were Caucasian, 18% were Hispanic, 25% were African American, and <1% were Asian/ Pacific Islander or Alaska Native/ American Indian.

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 2023, there were a total of 63 discretionary searches requested and approved by drivers.

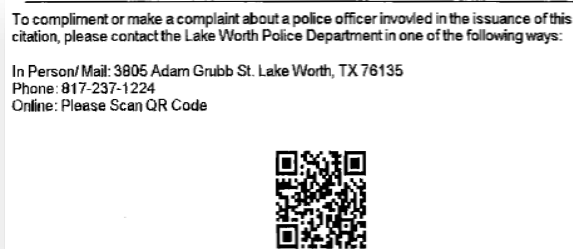
Consent searches can be an indicator of biased-based policing. The discretionary (consent requested) searches make up only a very small portion of all motor vehicle stops. As indicated in Figure 4 below, consent to search was given in less than 1.37% of traffic stops. Of those, 86% were Caucasian, 9% were Hispanic, and 5% were African American. Illegal contraband was found approximately 66% of the time.

Figure 4



COMPLAINTS

Figure 5



As required by Article 2.132 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, the Lake Worth Police Department provides public education relating to the department's compliment and complaint process. Instructions on how to file a complaint are listed on each citation and warning (Figure 5).

Additionally, complaints can be made online via the police department's online services portal and paper copies are available in the lobby of the police department. Previous years' racial profiling reports and the department's policy and procedure manual are also available online for public viewing.



The Lake Worth Department strives to provide training and leadership to ensure that our officers engage in constitutional policing and is committed to the prevention of any form of bias-based policing. Officers receive in-depth instruction in the police academy, roll-call briefings, and during in-service training on the importance of bias-free policing, the law governing racial profiling, and the department's policy on racial profiling (Enclosure 3). In addition to our training efforts, police supervisors are required to conduct random video reviews of motor vehicle stops each month. In 2023, supervisors did not observe any indication of bias-based policing during this review process.

The department received no citizen complaints regarding biased policing in 2023. This analysis indicates that Lake Worth Police officers are working diligently to reduce traffic crashes and interdict criminal activity in a manner consistent with bias-free policing practices.

SUMMARY

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. 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.

The Lake Worth Police Department continues to strive for bias-free enforcement of the laws. This report shows that during 2023, the department was successful in doing so. We are committed to working with our community and other professionals to ensure the continued delivery of the highest levels of police service possible. Any person with 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
- (4) – LWPD Data Audit Memorandum