

September 2025

SCPD DATA REPORT

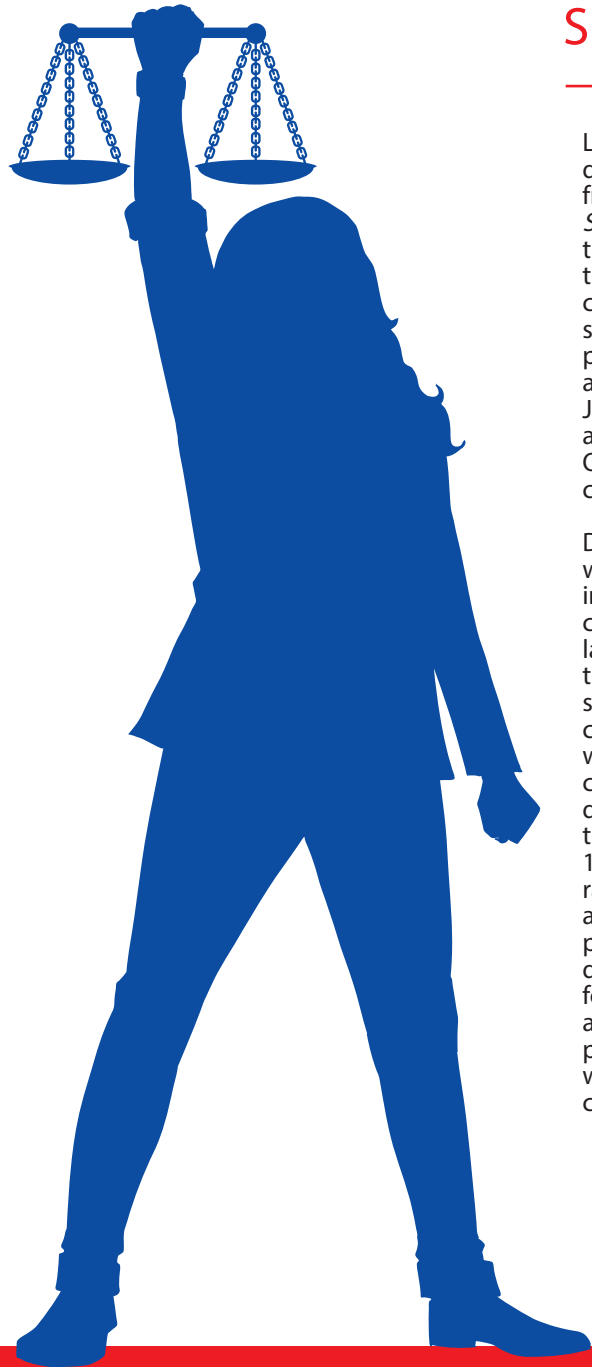
A LatinoJustice PRLDEF Report

By Andrew Case



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Summary of SCPD Data Report

LatinoJustice PRLDEF and Milbank LP dedicated a portion of the fees received from the settlement of *Plaintiffs 1 – 21 v. Suffolk County* to hire an independent third-party data scientist to review the traffic stop data that has been collected pursuant to the terms of the settlement agreement. A request for proposals was circulated, nearly a dozen applications were reviewed, and Dr. Jessica Tyler, a data scientist who works at the Harris County Public Defenders Office in Houston, TX, was selected to conduct a review.

Dr. Tyler was asked to determine whether the data suggested that information was being accurately collected and reported. During the lawsuit, Plaintiffs' expert had warned that the data collection methods were so inadequate that fewer conclusions could be drawn from the data than would be the case had it been robustly collected. Dr. Tyler was asked, should the data be sufficiently reliable, to evaluate the data to see whether they provided 1) evidence of disproportionate stop rates based on a driver's Latino ethnicity, and 2) evidence of disproportionate post-stop police actions based on a driver's Latino ethnicity. If Dr. Tyler found evidence of disproportionate action, she was asked to apply potentially relevant tests to determine whether the disproportionate rates could be explained.



Data Quality

Dr. Tyler found the data quality was much improved from prior years. Of over 150,000 entries, there were only a few hundred that were duplicates or internally inconsistent. The impact of these entries was minimal and had no impact on Dr. Tyler's ability to analyze the data.

However, Dr. Tyler's report found, as Dr. Michael Smith's report had found during the litigation, that SCPD fails to provide adequate information about passengers. Although it contains information about whether a passenger was in the vehicle, all information about searches and post-stop information is coded specifically to the driver. The settlement agreement requires the SCPD to identify whether police action was taken against each occupant of a vehicle, and to report specific information about "any occupants against whom police action is taken." Dr. Tyler demonstrates that the SCPD has not done so.

In addition, Dr. Tyler noted that the data in the public-facing "dashboard" on SCPD's transparency hub does not match the data in the full dataset. While the difference is small (the dashboard is missing 0.7% of the records in the dataset) the lack of consistency is concerning.

In addition to recommending adding passenger data, Dr. Tyler recommended including the time a stop started and concluded, instead of asking officers to estimate the length of a stop. This would improve data accuracy.

"While Latinos make up only 22% of the residents of Suffolk County, they make up 29% of those stopped by the SCPD"

Disparities in Stops by Race

The data confirm that Latinos are stopped disproportionately to their demographic representation in Suffolk County. While Latinos make up only 22% of the residents of Suffolk County, they make up 29% of those stopped by the SCPD. Because Census data is not an ideal comparator, Dr. Tyler performed additional analysis.

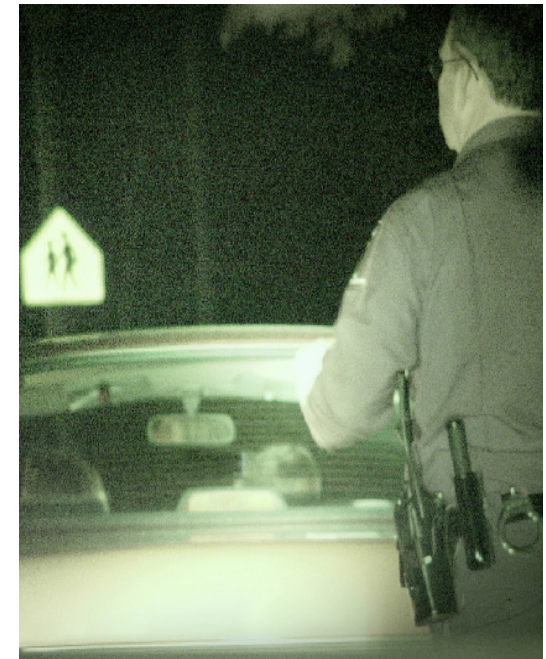
Dr. Tyler performed the so-called "veil of darkness" test on the data. This test evaluates stop data based on time of day, proposing as a hypothesis that if stop rates are caused by individual officers stopping people based on observed racial characteristics, those rates will differ depending on whether daylight allows officers to see the driver's race. While the veil of darkness test here did not identify individual officer observation as the cause of the disparity, that does not mean that the racial disparity has an innocent cause. Most racial profiling is now traced to deployment—if there are more officers patrolling Latino neighborhoods then Latino drivers will be stopped more often for the same conduct. In addition, the veil-of-darkness theory has been held inappropriate to apply to racial profiling of Latinos, since Latino identity is not always readily determinable.

The fundamental problem of analyzing racial disparities in traffic stops is that no one has ever discovered a sufficient "baseline" to measure against.

We do not have data on the racial makeup of drivers on a particular road

at a particular time against which to compare the stop rates.

For that reason, analysis of post-stop outcomes is a more reliable measure of racial disparities in law enforcement actions.



Post Stop Outcomes

The Report found significant disparities in post-stop outcomes for Latinos. Moreover, because the data are robust, analysis of post-stop outcomes can be conducted based on benchmarks internal to the data. For example, because the SCPD captures the reason for a stop, Dr. Tyler was able to compare post-stop outcomes for Latino and white drivers stopped for the same reasons.

This analysis showed that Latinos were more likely than white drivers to receive a summons as opposed to a warning when stopped for the same reason and were issued more summonses than white drivers for the same type of stop. Most notably, the “hit rate” when the SCPD searched Latinos was lower than the “hit rate” when officers searched white drivers. Although 31% of the searches of white drivers or their vehicles resulted in a “hit”, only 24% of the searches of Latinos or their vehicles did, suggesting that officers used a lower level of suspicion to search Latino drivers.

When compared to non-Latino drivers, Latino drivers were asked to leave their vehicles more often but were handcuffed less frequently when asked to leave their vehicles, indicating they were likely asked to leave their vehicles when they were not in fact engaging in disruptive behavior more frequently.

Latino ethnicity increased the odds of getting a summons in lieu of a warning for nearly every category of stop reason: 80% for Cell/Text stops, 44% for Equipment Failures, 70% on Moving Violations, 63% on Other Moving Violations, over two-fold on Red Light stops, 32% on Registration stops, 59% on Seat Belt stops, 72% on Speeding, and 61% on Stop Light stops.

Concerns about the data quality in past years makes comparisons over time challenging. But even with the less accurate data, prior analyses showed that Latino drivers received more summonses per stop and were stopped for longer periods than white drivers. Now that the data is more reliable, we will be able to compare the SCPD’s progress in future years to see if it can and will implement strategies to reduce these disparities.





Report Summary by Andrew Case



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