

# RACIAL PROFILING REPORT

2020



### Harris County Sheriff's Office Racial Profiling Report 2020 TCOLE Full Reporting Requirements

This report fulfills the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) Racial Profiling requirements for the Harris County Sheriff's Office as a Full Reporting agency. Per the TCOLE website for Racial Profiling Reports, all agencies that "routinely perform traffic stops or motor vehicle stops" are required to fulfill the requirements for Full Reporting. This annual report covers the reporting period of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 through December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

This report contains two components per TCOLE requirements:

- 1) A statistical analysis of motor vehicle stops compared to the gender and ethnic population of the Harris County Sheriff's Office reporting area
- 2) A listing of all racial profiling complaints and the corresponding resolutions

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Accessed On: February 23, 2021 Link: https://www.tcole.texas.gov/content/racial-profiling-reports



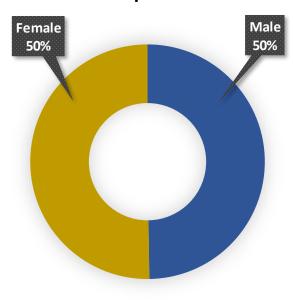
#### **Comparison of Harris County Demographics to HCSO Traffic Stops**

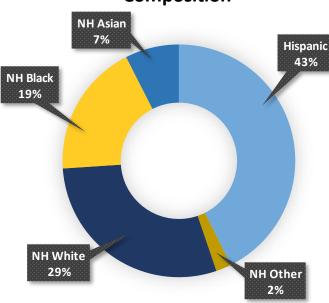
The most recent population estimate for Harris County is just over 4.9 million residents as of July 2019<sup>2</sup> census estimates, which is an increase from the previous 2019 Harris County Budget Management Office estimate of 4.8 million in January 2019<sup>3</sup>. Harris County is not only the third most populous county in the United States, but also noted as one of the fastest growing counties in the past 20-30 years. Harris County has experienced 41% growth since 2000 and 70% growth since 1990.<sup>4</sup> The 2019 population estimate from the Budget Management Office is based on U.S. Census Bureau estimates, Harris County Appraisal District (HCAD) data, and historical trends.<sup>5</sup>

The most recent population estimate available with race/ethnicity and gender variables is dated July 2019 from the Texas Demographic Center<sup>6</sup> which estimated county population at 4,698,655 or 4.7 million. The Texas Demographic Center 2019 data estimates the county's gender composition to be 49.75% male and 50.25% female, which rounds to an even 50/50% split. The racial and ethnic composition of the county is estimated to be 29.16% Non-Hispanic White, 18.57% Non-Hispanic Black, 7.49% Non-Hispanic Asian, 2.14% Non-Hispanic Other, and 42.64% Hispanic.

## Harris County Estimated Population Gender Composition

# Harris County Estimated Population Race/Ethnicity Composition





<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Source: US Census Bureau, "Most of the Counties with the Largest Population Gains since 2010 are in Texas" Accessed on: 02/23/2021 Link:

https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/pop-estimates-county-metro.html

https://budget.harriscountytx.gov/doc/Budget/fy2020/approved\_budget/FY20\_Population\_Report.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Source: Harris County Budget Management Office, "Population Report – 2019" Accessed on: 02/23/2021 Link:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Accessed on: 02/23/2021 Link https://demographics.texas.gov/Data/TPEPP/Estimates/

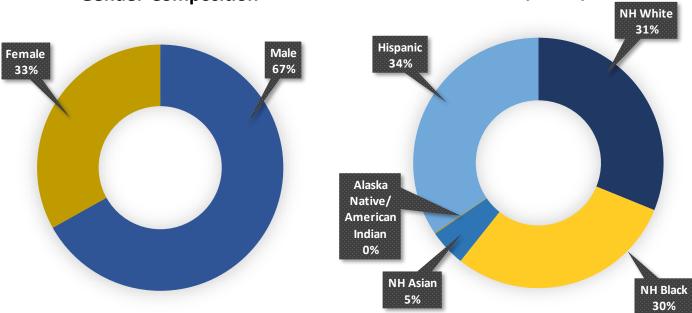


#### **Comparison of Harris County Demographics to HCSO Traffic Stops**

The Harris County Sheriff's Office conducted 108,714 traffic stops in 2020. 66.89% of the traffic stop subjects were male and 33.11% of the subjects were female for the reporting period. The Harris County Sheriff's Office data does not contain an "Other" category like the Texas Demographic Center's data due to a change in TCOLE reporting requirements that does not allow the use of an "Other" category. The Sheriff's Office data does contain the "Alaska Native / American Indian" category which is not present in the Texas Demographic Center data. The racial and ethnic composition of the traffic stop subjects was 31.15% Non-Hispanic White, 29.53% Non-Hispanic Black, 4.74% Non-Hispanic Asian, 0.12% Alaska Native / American Indian, and 34.46% Hispanic.



### **HCSO Traffic Stop Subject Race/Ethnicity Composition**



The percentages of race/ethnicity and gender for subjects of traffic stops by the Harris County Sheriff's Office are not identical to the percentages of those categories for the overall county population, but the presence of differences between the percentages does not intrinsically indicate the presence of bias or profiling. Ridgeway and MacDonald<sup>8</sup> acknowledge that comparing the composition of traffic stop subjects to the population's demographic composition is an imperfect measure of bias because it fails to account for other possible variables that influence the decision to conduct a traffic stop.

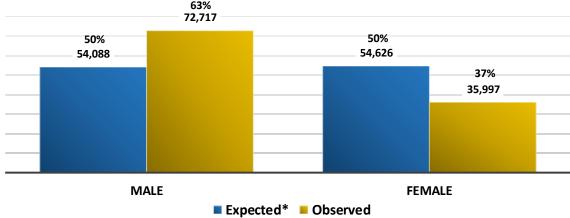
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Accessed On: February 28, 2020 Link: https://www.tcole.texas.gov/content/racial-profiling-reports

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Ridgeway, G. & MacDonald, J. (2010). Methods for Assessing Racially Biased Policing. In S. Rice & M. White (Eds.), *Race, ethnicity, and policing: New and essential Readings* (NYU Press, pp. 180-204)



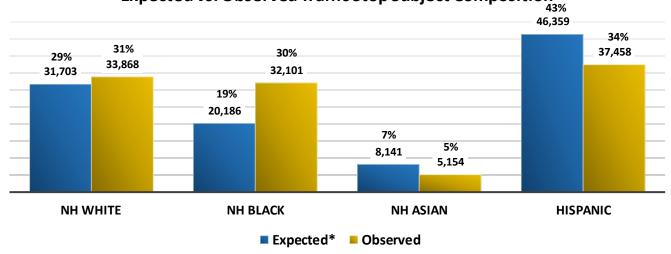
#### **Comparison of Harris County Demographics to HCSO Traffic Stops**





There may be reasons other than bias that would explain why men represent 13% more of the traffic stop subjects than the general population. Comparing subjects of traffic stops to the population does not account for behavioral differences. Are men more likely to drive in Harris County than women? Are men more likely to engage in driving behavior that would result in a traffic stop (such as speeding, "weaving" in and out of lanes between traffic, etc.)? Are men more likely to fit the description of crime suspects and therefore be more likely to be pulled over by deputies?

**Expected vs. Observed Traffic Stop Subject Composition** 



Another example is that deputies may be directed to engage in proactive crime reduction behavior (which can include traffic stops) in neighborhoods with higher numbers of calls for service and higher crime rates, which may disproportionately include neighborhoods with higher concentrations of people of color. 2020 was also affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic, which likely had an effect on who was out in public. The differences between the expected and observed values could represent the composition of essential workers in Harris County who are more likely to be driving, which cannot be captured by a comparison of county demographics to traffic stop demographics.

<sup>\*</sup> Expected values use the percentage for a category found in the population applied to the total number of traffic stops. Using Males as an example, the "Expected" value is 54,088 because that is 49.75% of total traffic stop subjects by HCSO while "Observed" reflects the actual number of Males (72,717) subject to a traffic stop.



#### **Note About Contraband Finding Resulting in Arrest**

The Harris County Sheriff's Office did not collect data for arrests resulting from the discovery of contraband during the stop. This is not a required field for the 2020 Racial Profiling Report submission to TCOLE. This field WILL be required for the 2021 submission, and the Harris County Sheriff's Office has already implemented data collection to report this section next year.

The Harris County Sheriff's Office followed the recommendation from Lt. Gary Connella from TCOLE in how to fill out this section of the statistics reporting for TCOLE. Per Lt. Connella, all race/ethnicity columns for 'Yes' (indicating an arrest was made as a result of discovering contraband during the stop) were filled out with zeros in order for the statistics to be accepted by the submission website.

#### **Note About Harris County Traffic Stop Data**

The Harris County Sheriff's Office traffic stop statistics submitted through the TCLEDDS Racial Profiling page are generated from an automated reporting tool through the Superion RMS. This standardized report is prepared by Harris County Universal Services each year to fulfill the TCOLE reporting requirements. There is a fraction of a percent of the data that has missing values that must be manually adjusted in order to fulfill the TCOLE reporting requirements. For the 2020 reporting period, the amount of records that were manually adjusted varied between 27-81 records depending on the category out of 108,714 total records. The Harris County Sheriff's Office keeps a detailed record of how the records are adjusted to comply with the TCOLE submission requirements.



#### **Racial Profiling Complaints and Resolutions**

This portion of the report contains information provided by the Harris County Sheriff's Office Internal Affairs Division, Office of the Inspector General Bureau. The Harris County Sheriff's Office received six (6) complaints of Racial Profiling for incidents involving traffic stops, person stops, and calls for service responses. All of the concluded investigations found no substantiation to the racial profiling complaints; three (3) investigations are still ongoing and have not reached a resolution at the time of this report.

#### Case 1

Origin of Complaint: Traffic Stop

Resolution: Unfounded

#### • Case 2

o **Origin of Complaint**: Call for Service

o Resolution: Unfounded

#### Case 3

Origin of Complaint: Traffic Stop

Resolution: Unfounded

#### Case 4

o **Origin of Complaint**: Call for Service

o Resolution: Still Under Investigation

#### Case 5

Origin of Complaint: Call for Service

o **Resolution**: Still Under Investigation

#### Case 6

Origin of Complaint: Traffic Stop

o **Resolution**: Still Under Investigation