

Police-Public Contact Survey interviewed U.S. households about their face-to-face interactions with law enforcement officers

BJS conducted a pilot test of the PPCS in 1996 as a supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The 1996 survey was administered to determine whether the NCVS could serve as a useful method for collecting data on contacts between U.S. residents and the police and to obtain preliminary estimates on this topic. The pilot survey revealed that about 21% of the public experienced face-to-face contact with a police officer at least once during 1996. Survey findings helped to inform the development of an improved questionnaire. In addition to the pilot study, a panel of law enforcement experts reviewed and provided recommendations on the survey procedures and questionnaire.

A revised version of the PPCS was fielded in 1999 among a national sample nearly 15 times as large as the 1996 pilot sample. The 1999 survey included a more detailed set of questions about traffic stops by police, which was the most frequent reason for contact with police. The 1999 survey yielded estimates similar to those in the 1996 survey on the prevalence and nature of contacts between the public and the police.

Since 1999, the PPCS has been administered every 3 years (in 2002, 2005, and 2008) as a supplement to the NCVS. During the survey, U.S. residents age 16 or older were asked whether they had a face-to-face interaction with a law enforcement officer during the 12 months prior to their interview. Survey respondents who said they had face-to-face contact with police were asked to describe the nature and outcome of that contact. Persons who reported more than one instance of face-to-face contact during the year were asked to describe the most recent occurrence.

Contact with police excluded contact by telephone or written correspondence, contact with private security guards, social contact, or contact that occurred because of employment or volunteer work that brought the respondent into regular contact with police. In addition, members of the household who were living in an institution at the time of the interview—for instance, incarcerated persons—were excluded from the PPCS sample. Such exclusions may affect the findings because contact with police leading to incarceration would involve more serious outcomes.

This report summarizes the results of the 2008 PPCS and provides comparative analysis with findings from the surveys conducted in 2002 and 2005. (See *Methodology* for information on the reasons for limiting certain comparisons to these 3 years.) The findings are based solely on the personal accounts of the PPCS respondents. Official police records on contacts between police and the public were not used in the study. Data collected and described in the

report cannot provide a sufficient basis to infer a causal relationship between characteristics of the respondent and police behavior.

In comparisons described in the text, an explicit or implied difference indicates that BJS conducted tests of statistical significance, and the difference was significant at the 95% confidence level or above. Certain differences were not significant at or above the 95% level, but were significant at the 90% confidence level. The terms “somewhat,” “some indication,” “some evidence,” or “slightly” refer to differences significant at the 90% level. (See *Methodology* for more information on confidence intervals and statistical significance tests.)

Number of persons who had contact with police declined between 2002 and 2008

In 1999, an estimated 20.9% of U.S. residents age 16 or older experienced face-to-face contact at least once with a police officer. About the same percentage of contact between police and residents (21.0%) occurred in 2002. About 19.1% of residents had face-to-face contact with police in 2005, a decrease from the percentage who had police contact in 2002. In 2008, the percentage of residents who experienced contact with police further decreased to 16.9%.

Overall, about 5.3 million fewer residents had face-to-face contact with police during 2008, compared to the total number who had contact in 2002 (table 1). An estimated 45.3 million residents age 16 or older had police contact in 2002, while about 40.0 million had contact with the police in 2008.

TABLE 1
Number of U.S. residents age 16 or older who had contact with police, by reason for contact, 2002, 2005, and 2008

Reason for most recent contact	Number (in thousands)			Difference in contacts, 2002–2008	
	2002	2005	2008	Number (in thousands)	Percent change
Total	45,279	43,658	40,015	-5,264	-11.6%
Traffic-related contacts	23,894	24,621	23,708	-186	-0.8%
Driver during traffic stop	16,783	17,920	17,663	880	5.2
Passenger during traffic stop	1,218	1,238	1,146	-72	-5.9
Traffic accident	5,892	5,463	4,898	-993	-16.9
Other contacts	21,385	19,037	16,307	-5,078	-23.7%
Resident reported crime/problem to police	11,960	10,356	8,345	-3,615	-30.2
Police provided assistance or service	3,265	2,720	2,506	-758	-23.2
Police investigating crime	2,615	2,430	2,257	-359	-13.7
Police suspected resident of wrongdoing	1,158	1,231	1,014	-144	-12.4
Other reason*	2,388	2,299	2,185	-203	-8.5

Note: Data are based on the resident's most recent contact with police in 2002, 2005, and 2008. See appendix table 1 for standard errors. Detail may not sum to total because of rounding.

*Includes a small percentage of cases in which the reason for contact was unknown.

While the second most common reason for contact with police during this period continued to be reporting a crime or problem, the percentage of all contacts that occurred for this reason decreased from 26.4% in 2002 to 23.7% in 2005 and 20.9% in 2008 (table 2). Nearly 12 million residents said their most recent contact in 2002 was to report a crime or problem to police, compared to about 8.3 million (or 30.2% fewer) residents in 2008. The decline in these contacts accounted for about 3.6 million (69%) of the 5.3 million fewer contacts residents had in 2008 compared to 2002. The drop in the number of residents reporting crimes or other problems to police was consistent with findings from the NCVS that showed a decline in criminal victimization during this period. Between 1999 and 2008, the violent crime rate declined by 41%, and the property crime rate fell by 32%.¹

¹*Criminal Victimization, 2008*, NCJ 227777, September 2009 (<http://www.bjs.gov>).

TABLE 2
Reason for contact among U.S. residents age 16 or older who had contact with police, 2002, 2005, and 2008

Reason for most recent contact	2002	2005	2008
Total	100%	100%	100%
Traffic-related contacts	52.8%	56.4%	59.2%
Driver during traffic stop	37.1	41.0	44.1
Passenger during traffic stop	2.7	2.8	2.9
Traffic accident	13.0	12.5	12.2
Other contacts	47.3%	43.6%	40.8%
Resident reported crime/problem to police	26.4	23.7	20.9
Police provided assistance or service	7.2	6.2	6.3
Police investigating crime	5.8	5.6	5.6
Police suspected resident of wrongdoing	2.6	2.8	2.5
Other reason*	5.3	5.3	5.5
Number of residents with police contact (in thousands)	45,279	43,658	40,015

Note: Data are based on the resident's most recent contact with police in 2002, 2005, and 2008. See appendix table 2 for standard errors. Detail may not sum to total because of rounding.

*Includes a small percentage of cases in which the reason for contact was unknown.

In 2002, 2005, and 2008, more than half of residents reported that their most recent contact with police was the result of a traffic stop or accident. The most common reason for police contact all 3 years was a person driving a vehicle that police stopped. Overall, the portion of all contacts that occurred as the result of being a driver in a traffic stop increased from 37.1% in 2002 to 41.0 in 2005 and 44.1% in 2008.

Among residents age 16 or older in 2002, the rate of contact that occurred to report a crime or other problem was 5.5% (table 3). This rate decreased to 3.5% in 2008. The rate of contact with police for being a person driving a vehicle that police stopped was 7.8% in 2002 and 7.5% in 2008. The difference between these percentages was not statistically significant.

TABLE 3
Percent of U.S. residents age 16 or older who had contact with police, by reason for contact, 2002, 2005, and 2008

Reason for most recent contact	2002	2005	2008
Total	21.0%	19.1%	16.9%
Traffic-related contacts	11.1%	10.8%	10.0%
Driver during traffic stop	7.8	7.9	7.5
Passenger during traffic stop	0.6	0.5	0.5
Traffic accident	2.7	2.4	2.1
Other contacts	9.9%	8.3%	6.9%
Resident reported crime/problem to police	5.5	4.5	3.5
Police provided assistance or service	1.5	1.2	1.1
Police investigating crime	1.2	1.1	1.0
Police suspected resident of wrongdoing	0.5	0.5	0.4
Other reason*	1.1	1.0	0.9
Number of residents age 16 or older (in thousands)	215,537	228,085	236,512

Note: Data are based on the resident's most recent contact with police in 2002, 2005, and 2008. See appendix table 3 for standard errors. Detail may not sum to total because of rounding.

*Includes a small percentage of cases in which the reason for contact was unknown.

Overall, there was no discernable statistical difference between the number of persons whose most recent contact was as a driver in a traffic stop in 2002 (16.8 million) and 2008 (17.7 million) (table 4). While the difference between the number of male drivers stopped by police in 2002 and 2008 was not statistically significant, the number of female drivers stopped by police increased nearly 12% during this period. The number of white and black drivers stopped by police during their most recent contact did not increase between 2002 and 2008. Among Hispanic drivers, the number of residents stopped by police increased nearly 28%.

A decline in the number of persons whose most recent contact with police was to report a crime or other problem between 2002 and 2008 was found among both males and females. White, black, and Hispanic residents also experienced a drop in the number of face-to-face contacts that occurred from reporting a crime or problem during this period.

TABLE 4
Number of U.S. residents age 16 or older who had contact with police, by demographic characteristics and reason for contact, 2002 and 2008

Demographic characteristic	Driver during traffic stop				Resident reported crime/problem to police			
	Number (in thousands)		Difference in contacts, 2002–2008		Number (in thousands)		Difference in contacts, 2002–2008	
	2002	2008	Number (in thousands)	Percent change	2002	2008	Number (in thousands)	Percent change
Total	16,783	17,663	880	5.2%	11,960	8,345	-3,615	-30.2%
Sex								
Male	10,210	10,330	119	1.2%	5,232	3,665	-1,567	-29.9%
Female	6,573	7,333	760	11.6	6,727	4,679	-2,048	-30.4
Race/Hispanic origin								
White ^a	12,842	12,933	91	0.7%	9,202	6,379	-2,823	-30.7%
Black/African American ^a	1,852	1,845	-8	-0.4	1,347	713	-634	-47.1
Hispanic/Latino	1,596	2,038	442	27.7	1,072	837	-234	-21.9
Other ^{a,b}	493	710	217	44.0	339	314	-25	-7.4
Two or more races ^a	~	137	~	~	~	102	~	~
Age								
16–17	487	331	-156	-32.1%	292	182	-110	-37.6%
18–24	3,874	3,547	-327	-8.5	1,449	1,122	-327	-22.6
25–34	3,765	4,122	357	9.5	2,466	1,597	-869	-35.2
35–44	3,714	3,620	-94	-2.5	3,050	1,665	-1,385	-45.4
45–54	2,712	3,042	330	12.2	2,457	1,792	-665	-27.1
55–64	1,459	1,978	520	35.6	1,142	1,209	68	5.9
65 or older	773	1,024	251	32.5	1,104	777	-327	-29.6

Note: Data are based on residents whose most recent contact with police in 2002 or 2008 occurred as the result of being a driver in a traffic stop or reporting a crime or problem.

~Not applicable. The 2002 PPCS did not separately identify persons of two or more races.

^aExcludes persons of Hispanic origin.

^bIncludes American Indians, Alaska Natives, Asians, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders.

Males had contact with police at higher rates than females

The percentage of males experiencing face-to-face contact with police was higher than the percentage of females in 2008 (table 5). Among residents age 16 or older, persons ages 18 to 24 experienced the highest percentage of police contact in 2008. White residents experienced a higher rate of contact with police than black and Hispanic residents in 2008. These differences were consistent with findings from the 2002 and 2005 surveys.

In 2005 the racial categories changed from previous years of the PPCS to separately identify persons of other races (American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Asians, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders) and those of any race indicating two or more races. In 2005 and 2008, the PPCS found that whites were more likely than Asians, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders to have contact with police. Whites did not have a higher rate of police contact than American Indians and Alaskan Natives in 2005 or in 2008.

Similar patterns were found in the demographic composition of persons who had contact with police in 2002, 2005, and 2008. Males accounted for just over half of all persons who had contact with police during these three years (table 6). White residents made up about three-quarters of contacts, and black residents made up about 1 out of 10 persons who had police contact. Hispanic residents also accounted for about 1 out of 10 persons who had contact with police in 2002, 2005, and 2008.

TABLE 5

Percent of U.S. residents age 16 or older who had contact with police, by demographic characteristics, 2002, 2005, and 2008

Demographic characteristic	2002	2005	2008
Total	21.0%	19.1%	16.9%
Sex			
Male	23.0%	21.2%	18.5%
Female	19.2	17.2	15.5
Race/Hispanic origin			
White*	22.1%	20.3%	17.8%
Black/African American*	19.3	16.5	14.2
Hispanic/Latino	17.5	15.8	15.0
Other*	16.2	15.3	14.0
American Indian/Alaskan Native*	~	25.7	22.1
Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander*	~	14.4	13.0
Two or more races*	~	27.4	21.0
Age			
16–17	20.8%	20.7%	13.2%
18–24	31.7	29.5	24.9
25–34	25.2	23.2	21.2
35–44	23.1	20.5	18.8
45–54	20.3	19.0	16.7
55–64	15.6	14.6	13.4
65 or older	9.7	8.4	8.2
Number of residents age 16 or older (in thousands)	215,537	228,085	236,512

Note: See *Methodology* for the distribution of the number of police contacts and the U.S. population. See appendix table 5 for standard errors.

~Not applicable. The 2002 PPCS did not separately identify persons of other races or those of two or more races.

*Excludes persons of Hispanic origin.

TABLE 6

Characteristics of U.S. residents age 16 or older with and without face-to-face police contact, 2002, 2005, and 2008

Demographic characteristic	With police contact			Without police contact		
	2002	2005	2008	2002	2005	2008
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Sex						
Male	52.8%	53.6%	53.1%	47.0%	47.2%	47.7%
Female	47.2	46.4	46.9	53.0	52.8	52.3
Race/Hispanic origin						
White ^a	76.7%	75.7%	74.9%	72.0%	70.6%	70.2%
Black/African American ^a	11.0	9.7	9.5	12.2	11.6	11.6
Hispanic/Latino	9.3	9.5	10.3	11.6	11.9	11.9
Other ^{a,b}	3.0	4.0	4.3	4.2	5.3	5.3
Two or more races ^a	~	1.1	1.1	~	0.7	0.8
Age						
16–17	3.8%	4.0%	2.8%	3.8%	3.6%	3.8%
18–24	19.1	19.2	18.2	11.0	10.9	11.2
25–34	20.8	21.1	21.7	16.4	16.5	16.4
35–44	22.5	20.3	19.8	19.9	18.7	17.4
45–54	17.6	18.5	18.5	18.4	18.7	18.8
55–64	9.0	10.2	11.4	12.9	14.1	15.0
65 or older	7.1	6.7	7.7	17.6	17.5	17.4
Number of residents age 16 or older (in thousands)	45,279	43,658	40,015	170,258	184,417	196,497

Note: See appendix table 6 for standard errors.

~Not applicable. The 2002 PPCS did not separately identify persons of two or more races.

^aExcludes persons of Hispanic origin.

^bIncludes American Indians, Alaska Natives, Asians, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders.

About a quarter of persons with contact in 2008 had more than one contact during the year

Among persons who had face-to-face contact with police during 2008, about 1 out of 4 (25.1%) experienced contact more than once during the year (table 7). Among the 40.0 million persons who had contact with the police in 2008, nearly 67.0 million encounters occurred with an average of 1.7 contacts per resident who experienced police contact.

A greater percentage of males (26.9%) than females (23.0%) who had police contact in 2008 experienced more than one contact during the year. Among persons who had contact with police in 2008, black residents (28.4%) were somewhat more likely than white residents (24.6%) and more likely than Asian, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders (20.4%) to have multiple contacts. Persons ages 18 to 24 were more likely than older age groups to experience multiple contacts during 2008.

TABLE 7
Number of contacts between police and the public, by demographic characteristics, 2008

Demographic characteristic	Percent who had contact with police—			Average number of contacts per residents who had contact in 2008
	Total	One time	Two or more times	
Total	100%	74.9%	25.1%	1.7
Sex				
Male	100%	73.1%	26.9%	1.7
Female	100%	77.0	23.0	1.6
Race/Hispanic origin				
White*	100%	75.4%	24.6%	1.7
Black/African American*	100%	71.6	28.4	1.6
Hispanic/Latino	100%	74.0	26.0	1.6
American Indian/Alaskan Native*	100%	70.0	30.0	1.4
Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander*	100%	79.6	20.4	1.3
Two or more races*	100%	68.8	31.2	1.7
Age				
16–17	100%	69.0%	31.0%	1.6
18–24	100%	67.3	32.7	1.8
25–34	100%	72.0	28.0	1.7
35–44	100%	74.7	25.3	1.7
45–54	100%	78.0	22.0	1.7
55–64	100%	81.7	18.3	1.6
65 or older	100%	86.8	13.2	1.6

Note: Among residents who had contact with police in 2008, data on the number of contacts were reported for 99.7% of cases. Detail may not sum to total due to rounding. See appendix table 7 for standard errors.

*Excludes persons of Hispanic origin.

A majority of survey respondents said they felt the police acted properly during face-to-face contact

As was the case in 2002 (90.1%) and 2005 (90.4%), the vast majority of residents (89.7%) with police contact during 2008 felt the officer or officers acted properly.² In addition, about 9 out of 10 (91.8%) residents who experienced a contact in 2008 reported that the police were respectful (table 8).

Overall, most white, black, and Hispanic residents who had contact with police felt the officer or officers acted properly. Opinions about police behavior varied across reasons for contact. For instance, persons who police suspected

²Findings come from the 2002 and 2005 Contacts between Police and the Public reports. See *Methodology*.

TABLE 8
Perceptions of police behavior during contact, by reason for contact and race/Hispanic origin of residents, 2008

Reason for contact	Black/African American ^b Hispanic/Latino			
	All races ^a	White ^b	American ^b	Latino
Percent of residents who felt that police acted—				
Respectfully				
All contacts	91.8%	92.7%	87.4%	89.1%
Traffic accident	94.9	95.0	94.6	94.6
Driver during traffic stop	91.6	92.4	86.6	89.8
Resident reported crime/ problem to police	94.1	94.9	93.1	90.8
Police provided assistance or service	95.9	95.6	93.0	98.1
Police investigating crime/ suspected resident of wrongdoing	82.4	84.9	72.8	74.5
Properly				
All contacts	89.7%	90.8%	84.2%	87.2%
Traffic accident	92.6	92.8	91.8	93.4
Driver during traffic stop	90.4	91.7	82.9	89.1
Resident reported crime or problem to police	91.8	92.5	88.9	88.9
Police provided assistance or service	93.9	93.3	95.9	97.8
Police investigating crime/suspected resident of wrongdoing	78.5	82.3	69.6	62.3

Note: Percentages are based on most recent contact with police in 2008. Data on perceptions that police acted respectfully were reported for 98.2% of police contact cases and for perceptions that police acted properly for 98.0%. See appendix table 8 for standard errors.

^aAll races includes estimates for persons identifying with other races or with two or more races, not shown separately.

^bExcludes persons of Hispanic origin.

of wrongdoing or who had contact through a criminal investigation (78.5%) were less likely than those who had contact with police during a traffic accident (92.6%) to feel police behaved properly. Blacks (69.6%) and Hispanics (62.3%) were less likely than whites (82.3%) to believe police acted properly during contacts that occurred because police were investigating a crime or suspected the person of wrongdoing. For those who had contact with police in the context of a traffic accident, no differences were found in the estimated percentage of whites, blacks, and Hispanics who felt the police acted properly.

Drivers in 2008 were stopped by police at rates similar to those in 2002 and 2005

In 2008, an estimated 17.7 million persons age 16 or older indicated that their most recent contact occurred as a driver pulled over in a traffic stop (table 9). These contacts include stops of all kinds of motor vehicles—for example, motorcycles, buses, and private and commercial cars and trucks—being used for both personal and business travel.

Of the estimated 209.2 million who drove during 2008, the 17.7 million drivers stopped by police represented 8.4%—nearly 1 out of 12 drivers. An additional 1.7 million individuals were stopped by police at some point during

the 12-month period, but had experienced more recent contact in a different context. In total, an estimated 9.2% of all drivers, about 19.3 million, were stopped at least once by police in 2008.

Overall, drivers in 2008 (8.4%) were stopped by police at a rate similar to that of 2002 (8.8%) and 2005 (8.8%). A greater percentage of male drivers (9.9%) than female drivers (7.0%) were stopped by police during 2008. Drivers between the ages of 16 and 29 had a greater likelihood than other age groups of being pulled over by police. These differences were consistent with findings from the 2002 and 2005 surveys. White (8.4%), black (8.8%), and Hispanic (9.1%) drivers were stopped by police at similar rates in 2008. White, black, and Hispanic drivers were also stopped at similar rates in 2002 and 2005.

In 2008 white drivers (8.4%) were more likely than Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander drivers to be stopped (6.3%), but somewhat less likely than American Indian or Alaskan Native drivers (12.6%) to be stopped by police. The likelihood of being stopped by police in 2005 did not differ significantly among white drivers (8.9%), American Indian or Alaskan Native drivers (11.9%), and Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander drivers (7.9%).

TABLE 9

Drivers stopped by police, by demographic characteristics, 2002, 2005, and 2008

Demographic characteristic	Number of drivers stopped by police during most recent contact (in thousands)			Percent of all U.S. drivers ^a		
	2002	2005	2008	2002	2005	2008
Total	16,783	17,920	17,663	8.8%	8.8%	8.4%
Sex						
Male	10,210	10,982	10,330	10.6%	10.8%	9.9%
Female	6,573	6,938	7,333	6.9	6.9	7.0
Race/Hispanic origin						
White ^b	12,842	13,510	12,933	8.8%	8.9%	8.4%
Black/African American ^b	1,852	1,638	1,845	9.2	8.1	8.8
Hispanic/Latino	1,596	1,815	2,038	8.6	8.9	9.1
Other ^b	493	773	710	7.1	8.2	7.0
American Indian/Alaskan Native ^b	~	98	140	~	11.9	12.6
Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander ^b	~	675	570	~	7.9	6.3
Two or more races ^b	~	184	137	~	12.6	7.9
Age						
16–19	1,654	1,561	1,299	13.7%	13.3%	11.0%
20–29	4,707	4,959	4,850	14.1	13.7	13.0
30–39	3,741	3,842	3,678	9.8	10.2	9.8
40–49	3,235	3,732	3,460	7.8	8.8	8.4
50–59	2,074	2,396	2,605	6.8	6.8	7.0
60 or older	1,372	1,431	1,772	3.8	3.6	4.1

Note: Detail may not sum to total due to rounding. See appendix table 9 for standard errors.

~Not applicable. The 2002 PPCS did not separately identify persons of other races or those of two or more races.

^aSee *Methodology* for information on the U.S. driving population.

^bExcludes persons of Hispanic origin.

Speeding was the reason for about half of all traffic stops

The PPCS includes a detailed set of questions for respondents whose most recent contact with police occurred as a driver in a traffic stop. When drivers were asked what reason the officer gave for the traffic stop, the most frequent reason was exceeding the speed limit, cited by about half of drivers stopped in 2002 (54.8%), 2005 (53.7%), and 2008 (50.2%) (table 10). About 1 in 10 drivers were stopped for vehicle defects, such as a burned out headlight or a loud muffler, in 2002 (9.3%), 2005 (9.5%) and 2008 (12.0%).

Most drivers pulled over by police believed they were stopped for a legitimate reason

An estimated 84.5% of drivers pulled over by police in 2008 felt they had been stopped for a legitimate reason (table 11). More than 80% of stopped drivers in 2002 (84%) and 2005 (86%) also believed police had a legitimate reason for pulling them over in a traffic stop.³

In 2008, about 73.8% of black drivers believed police had a legitimate reason for stopping them compared to 86.3% of white and 82.5% of Hispanic drivers. Opinions also varied across reasons for traffic stop. Overall a higher proportion of drivers stopped for speeding (90.0%) believed they were stopped for a legitimate reason compared with those stopped for a vehicle defect (82.6%). These proportions varied by race and Hispanic origin. An estimated 78.7% of black drivers stopped for speeding felt they were pulled over for a legitimate reason, compared to 88.7% of Hispanic and 91.8% of white drivers. Among traffic stops for vehicle defects, black drivers (60.7%) were less likely than Hispanic (84.3%) and white (86.8%) drivers to feel they were pulled over for a legitimate reason.

³Findings come from the 2002 and 2005 Contacts between Police and the Public reports. See *Methodology*.

A majority of stopped drivers were issued a traffic ticket

An estimated 26.7% of stopped drivers received either a written (17.0%) or verbal (9.7%) warning during the traffic stop (table 12). Police issued a traffic ticket to 55.4% of the drivers and arrested 2.6%. No enforcement action was taken for approximately 15.3% of stopped drivers, meaning they did not receive a verbal or written warning nor were they ticketed or arrested.

Police ticketed the majority of drivers stopped for speeding (68.6%), a seat belt violation (70.3%), an illegal lane change (52.7%), or a stop light or stop sign violation (58.4%). By comparison, the majority of drivers stopped during a roadside sobriety check reported having no enforcement action taken (68.5%).

TABLE 10
Reasons police gave drivers for traffic stop, 2002, 2005, and 2008

Reason for traffic stop	Percent of stopped drivers		
	2002	2005	2008
Total	100%	100%	100%
Speeding	54.8%	53.7%	50.2%
Vehicle defect	9.3	9.5	12.0
Record check	11.5	10.6	6.3
Roadside sobriety check	1.3	2.2	2.1
Seatbelt violation	4.4	4.7	4.1
Illegal turn or lane change	4.9	5.7	6.6
Stop sign/light violation	7.1	7.2	8.6
Other reason*	6.7	6.5	10.0
Number (in thousands)	16,234	17,254	17,151

Note: Data on reason for traffic stop in 2002 were reported for 96.9% of traffic stop cases, in 2005 for 96.3%, and in 2008 for 97.1%. Detail may not sum to total due to rounding. See appendix table 10 for standard errors.

*Includes other reasons for traffic stops, such as reckless driving, improper cell phone usage, and following too closely.

TABLE 11
Drivers' perceptions of traffic stop legitimacy, by race/Hispanic origin and reason for stop, 2008

Reason for traffic stop	Percent of drivers who perceived they were stopped for a legitimate reason			
	All races ^a	White ^b	Black/African American ^b	Hispanic/Latino
All reasons	84.5%	86.3%	73.8%	82.5%
Speeding	90.0%	91.8%	78.7%	88.7%
Vehicle defect	82.6	86.8	60.7	84.3
Record check	89.1	91.6	83.5	82.4
Roadside sobriety check	76.9	73.8	100.0!	78.5!
Seatbelt violation	84.7	84.7	86.6	79.0
Illegal turn or lane change	75.4	72.9	72.3	85.3
Stop sign/light violation	71.3	73.9	66.9	57.5
Other reason ^c	74.7	75.8	64.6	81.3
Number (in thousands)	16,598	12,212	1,666	1,932

Note: Data on reason for traffic stop and whether driver felt stop occurred for a legitimate reason were reported for 93.9% of traffic stop cases. All reasons includes stopped drivers who did not report the reason for the traffic stop, not shown separately. See appendix table 11 for standard errors.

! Interpret data with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

^aAll races includes estimates for persons identifying with other races or with two or more races, not shown separately.

^bExcludes persons of Hispanic origin.

^cIncludes other reasons for traffic stops, such as reckless driving, improper cell phone use, and following too closely.

Police were equally likely to issue tickets to males (55.9%) and females (54.9%) during a traffic stop (**table 13**). Males (3.5%) were more likely than females (1.4%) to be arrested following a traffic stop, whereas females were somewhat more likely to receive a written or verbal warning.

A greater percentage of black (4.7%) than white (2.4%) drivers were arrested during a traffic stop. Black drivers (58.3%) were somewhat more likely than white drivers (53.1%) to be ticketed during a stop. An equal percentage of Hispanic (2.6%) and white (2.4%) drivers were arrested following a traffic stop, while a greater percentage of Hispanic drivers (62.9%) than white drivers (53.1%) received

a ticket. In addition, a greater percentage of white drivers (11.2%) received a verbal warning from police, compared to Hispanic (4.5%) and black (6.0%) drivers.

Drivers ages 20 to 29 were more likely than drivers age 50 or older to be ticketed by police during a traffic stop. Drivers ages 20 to 29 (4.4%) were also more likely than drivers ages 40 to 49 (1.5%), 50 to 59 (1.3%), and drivers age 60 or older (1.5%) to be arrested during a traffic stop. Due to sample size limitations, further analysis could not be done on police enforcement actions during traffic stops sorted by reason for stop and drivers' race, sex, and age demographics.

TABLE 12

Enforcement actions taken by police during traffic stops, by reason for stop, 2008

Reason for traffic stop	Number (in thousands)	Percent of drivers who were—					
		Total	Arrested	Ticketed	Issued a written warning	Given a verbal warning	Allowed to proceed with no enforcement action
All reasons	17,596	100%	2.6%	55.4%	17.0%	9.7%	15.3%
Speeding	8,586	100%	1.3%	68.6%	14.4%	11.0%	4.6%
Vehicle defect	2,061	100%	3.4	36.3	28.3	14.1	17.9
Record check	1,076	100%	1.6!	23.9	8.8	4.7	61.1
Roadside sobriety check	367	100%	9.1!	14.7	5.4!	2.3!	68.5
Seatbelt violation	707	100%	1.7!	70.3	13.1	4.4!	10.5
Illegal turn or lane change	1,137	100%	4.0!	52.7	24.0	7.4	11.9
Stop sign/light violation	1,462	100%	1.4!	58.4	23.7	8.5	8.0
Other reason*	1,697	100%	6.6	40.6	18.3	9.4	25.0

Note: Data on the types of enforcement actions taken by police were reported for 99.6% of traffic stop cases. All reasons includes stopped drivers who did not report the reason for the traffic stop, not shown separately. Detail may not sum to total due to rounding. See appendix table 12 for standard errors.

! Interpret data with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

*Includes other reasons for traffic stops, such as reckless driving, improper cell phone usage, and following too closely.

TABLE 13

Enforcement actions taken by police during traffic stops, by demographic characteristics of drivers, 2008

Demographic characteristic	Number (in thousands)	Percent of drivers who were—					
		Total	Arrested	Ticketed	Issued a written warning	Given a verbal warning	Allowed to proceed with no enforcement action
Total	17,596	100%	2.6%	55.4%	17.0%	9.7%	15.3%
Sex							
Male	10,287	100%	3.5%	55.9%	16.4%	9.0%	15.3%
Female	7,309	100%	1.4	54.9	17.8	10.6	15.3
Race/Hispanic origin							
White ^a	12,873	100%	2.4%	53.1%	17.7%	11.2%	15.6%
Black/African American ^a	1,841	100%	4.7	58.3	14.8	6.0	16.2
Hispanic/Latino	2,034	100%	2.6	62.9	15.0	4.5	15.0
Other ^{a,b}	710	100%	0.9!	65.0	15.7	7.5!	10.8
Two or more races ^a	137	100%	4.2!	74.4	12.7!	2.4!	6.2!
Age							
16–19	1,294	100%	2.1%!	56.7%	21.2%	9.2%	10.7%
20–29	4,840	100%	4.4	57.1	15.5	9.3	13.5
30–39	3,665	100%	2.9	60.9	15.4	7.7	13.1
40–49	3,452	100%	1.5	54.8	18.2	9.3	16.3
50–59	2,587	100%	1.3!	50.9	17.6	12.3	18.0
60 or older	1,758	100%	1.5!	46.4	17.7	12.1	22.4

Note: Data on the types of enforcement actions taken by police were reported for 99.6% of traffic stop cases. Detail may not sum to total due to rounding. Separate statistics on the racial categories that make up the other race category are not shown due to too few sample cases to obtain reliable estimates. See appendix table 13 for standard errors.

! Interpret data with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

^aExcludes persons of Hispanic origin.

^bIncludes American Indians, Alaska Natives, Asians, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders.

About 5% of drivers were searched during traffic stops

During a traffic stop, police sometimes conducted a search for illicit drugs, open containers of alcohol, stolen property, or other evidence of criminal wrongdoing. In about 5% (870,000) of the traffic stops documented in the 2008 PPCS, police conducted a search of the driver, the vehicle, or both (table 14). The 2008 PPCS data show that—

- Police were more likely to conduct a search of the vehicle or driver in traffic stops with male drivers (7.4%) than female drivers (1.6%).
- Black drivers (12.3%) were about three times as likely as white drivers (3.9%) and about two times as likely as Hispanic drivers (5.8%) to be searched during a traffic stop.
- Drivers ages 20 to 29 (9.0%) were more likely than drivers ages 30 to 39 (4.5%), 40 to 49 (2.5%), or 50 to 59 (2.5%), and drivers 60 or older (1.6%) to be physically searched or have their vehicle searched.

TABLE 14
Stopped drivers who were searched by police,
by demographic characteristics, 2002, 2005, and 2008

Demographic characteristic	2002	2005	2008
Total	5.0%	4.7%	5.0%
Sex			
Male	7.1%	6.7%	7.4%
Female	1.8	1.5	1.6
Race/Hispanic origin			
White ^a	3.5%	3.6%	3.9%
Black/African American ^a	10.2	9.5	12.3
Hispanic/Latino	11.4	9.1	5.8
Other ^{a,b}	2.9!	4.5!	2.1!
Two or more races ^a	~	7.9!	8.6!
Age			
16–19	8.9%	9.8%	7.0%
20–29	6.6	7.9	9.0
30–39	6.4	3.3	4.5
40–49	3.4	3.2	2.5
50–59	1.5	2.2	2.5
60 or older	--	0.2!	1.6

Note: Data on whether police searched a stopped driver or vehicle in 2002 were reported for 98.2% of traffic stops, in 2005 for 96.2%, and in 2008 for 99.5%. Persons of Hispanic origin were excluded from all other race categories. See appendix table 14 for standard errors. Separate statistics on the racial categories that make up the other race category are not shown due to too few sample cases to obtain reliable estimates.

! Interpret data with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

~Not applicable. The 2002 PPCS did not separately identify persons of other races or those of two or more races.

--Less than 0.05%

^aExcludes persons of Hispanic origin.

^bIncludes American Indians, Alaska Natives, Asians, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders.

The 2002 and 2005 surveys also found that about 5% of stopped drivers were searched by police during the traffic stop. Among drivers stopped by police in 2002 and 2005, males were more likely than females and blacks and Hispanics were more likely than whites to be searched during a traffic stop.

About 1 out of 10 searches conducted during traffic stops uncovered illegal items

Among the estimated 870,000 searches of the driver, vehicle, or both in 2008, about 187,000 were searches only of the driver, 226,000 were searches only of the vehicle, and 458,000 were searches of both the driver and the vehicle (table 15). An estimated 57.7% of driver-only (driver physically searched, frisked, or patted down by police) and 60.0% of vehicle-only searches were consent searches. About 50.8% of searches of both the driver and vehicle were conducted with consent. Consent searches occurred because either the officer asks permission to perform a search and the driver then granted it, or the driver volunteered to allow the officer to conduct a search.

TABLE 15
Type of search conducted by police during traffic stop and
the outcome, 2008

Characteristic of search	Driver only	Vehicle only	Both driver and vehicle
Total	100%	100%	100%
Type of search			
With consent	57.7%	60.0%	50.8%
Without consent	42.3	40.0	49.2
Outcome of search			
Criminal evidence found	2.1%!	1.6%!	14.3%
No criminal evidence found	97.9	98.4	85.7
Driver's perception of legitimacy			
Search perceived as legitimate	36.1%	20.7%!	21.7%
Search perceived as not legitimate	63.9	79.3	78.3
Number (in thousands)	187	226	458

Note: Data on whether the driver consented to the search were reported for 100% of driver-only searches, 100% of vehicle-only searches, and 94.6% of both driver and vehicle searches. Data on whether evidence was found were reported for 100% of driver-only searches, 96.0% of vehicle-only searches, and 98.9% of both driver and vehicle searches. Data on whether the driver felt that police had legitimate reason for search were reported for 84.2% of driver-only searches, 92.0% of vehicle-only searches, and 91.3% of both driver and vehicle searches. In the "both driver and vehicle" column, drivers who consented to one type of search but not the other were classified as a search without consent. Drivers who experienced a search of both driver and vehicle and felt police had a legitimate reason for one search but not the other were classified as search perceived as not legitimate. See appendix table 15 for standard errors.

! Interpret data with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

Searches conducted without consent may occur because the police officer fails to ask permission before conducting the search, the officer asks but the driver refuses, or the search is conducted as a result of an arrest. Among drivers searched and arrested during a traffic stop, about 42.8% were searched after the arrest, and 57.2% were searched before the arrest (not shown in table).

An estimated 2.1% of driver-only searches and 1.6% of vehicle-only searches conducted in 2008 discovered evidence of criminal behavior (e.g., drugs, illegal weapons, open containers of alcohol, or other illegal items). When both the driver and vehicle were searched, evidence was uncovered about 14.3% of the time. Evidence was discovered in an estimated 8.4% of searches of a vehicle, driver, or both (not shown in table).

No comparisons of the number of searches that yielded criminal evidence were made between drivers of different gender, age, and race categories, as many of the samples on which the separate categories were based were too small to form reliable estimates.

Approximately 1 out of 5 drivers (20.7%) who had only their vehicle searched believed police had a legitimate reason to do so. An estimated 36.1% of drivers who had only their person searched and 21.7% of individuals who had both their person and vehicle searched indicated that police had a legitimate reason to do so.

Most searches conducted during a traffic stop occurred at night

Overall, a larger percentage of traffic stops documented in the 2008 PPCS occurred during the day (67.3%) (6 a.m. to 6 p.m.) than at night (32.7%) (6 p.m. to 6 a.m.) (table 16). However, a majority of traffic stops involving a search (59.7%) or an arrest (68.1%) occurred at night. Among drivers who experienced the use or threat of force by police during a traffic stop, the percentage of stops that occurred at night (60.5%) was slightly larger than the percentage of daytime stops (39.5%).

Males, blacks and younger persons were more likely to have a contact with police in 2008 that resulted in the use of force

An estimated 776,000 persons experienced force or the threat of force by police at least once in 2008 (table 17). This total represented an estimated 1.9% of the approximately 40.0 million people experiencing face-to-face police contact during 2008. The 2008 PPCS included detailed questions about use-of-force incidents, including the types of force police might have used and whether the respondent thought the amount of force used or threatened was excessive. Respondents who reported more than one contact during 2008 were asked about the use or threat of force by police during their most recent contact that year.

TABLE 16
Actions taken by police during traffic stops, by time of day, 2008

		Percent of drivers stopped—								
Actions taken by police during traffic stops	Number (in thousands)	Total	During the day				At night			
			All daytime contacts*	6 a.m.–noon	Noon–6 p.m.	Day, time unknown	All nighttime contacts*	6 p.m.–midnight	Midnight–6 a.m.	Night, time unknown
All stops	17,479	100%	67.3%	22.3%	41.3%	3.7%	32.7%	24.3%	8.0%	0.5%
Police searched the driver/vehicle	866	100%	40.3%	13.7%	24.4%	2.2% !	59.7%	34.4%	25.0%	0.4% !
Police arrested the driver	454	100%	31.9	16.5	15.4	--	68.1	35.7	32.5	--
Police used or threatened force	160	100%	39.5	4.7 !	28.3	6.5 !	60.5	37.6	22.9 !	--

Note: Data were based on most recent contact with police in 2008. Data on time of day of traffic stop were reported for 98.9% of all stops, for 99.4% of searches, for 97.1% of arrests, and for 98.3% of stops involving the use or threat of force by police. Detail may not sum to total due to rounding. See appendix table 16 for standard errors.

! Interpret data with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

--Less than 0.05%.

*Includes cases in which the specific time was unknown.

TABLE 17
U.S. residents age 16 or older who experienced the use or threat of force by police at any time during the year, 2005 and 2008

U.S. residents age 16 or older	2005	2008
Number of residents (in thousands)—		
Who had police contact	43,491	39,914
Experiencing use/threat of force at any time during the year	997	776
Percent of residents who experienced use/threat of force by police among those who had police contact	2.3%	1.9%

Note: Data on residents who experienced the use/threat of force by police at any time during 2005 were reported for 99.6% of police contact cases and in 99.7% for 2008. In the 2002 PPCS, data were not collected on the total number of residents who experienced the use/threat of force by police at any time during the year. Respondents were asked only about whether police used or threatened force during their most recent contact in 2002. See appendix table 17 for standard errors.

During 2008, about 574,000 persons age 16 or older had force used or threatened against them during their most recent contact with police (table 18). This estimate represents about 1.4% of those persons who reported face-to-face contact with police in 2008. The difference between the percentages of contacts involving police use of force in 2002 (1.5%), 2005 (1.6%), and 2008 (1.4%) were not statistically significant.

Males were more likely than females to have force used or threatened against them during their most recent contact with police during 2002, 2005, and 2008. Blacks were more likely than whites or Hispanics to experience use or threat of force in 2008. In 2002 and 2005, blacks and Hispanics were more likely than whites to experience the use or threat of force during contact with police. Individuals between the ages of 16 and 29 were more likely than those age 30 or older to experience contact that resulted in force or the threat of force in 2002, 2005, and 2008. Due to sample size limitations, analysis could not be done on the likelihood of experiencing force according to the reason for the contact and race, sex, and age differences.

Most persons who experienced force felt it was excessive

Residents who experienced a police contact that involved force were asked if they felt any of the physical force used or threatened against them was excessive. The PPCS did not define excessive for the respondent. Most (74.3% or about 417,000) people whose most recent contact with police in 2008 involved force or the threat of force thought those actions were excessive (table 19). Among persons who had a contact that involved force or the threat of force in 2008, no differences were found in the percentage of white, black, and Hispanic individuals who described the incident as excessive.

More than half of police use-of-force incidents involved the police pushing or grabbing the individual

Survey respondents who said they experienced the use or threat of force by police in 2008 were asked to describe the incident. Some respondents reported that more than one type of force was used by police. Among respondents who

TABLE 18
Contacts with police in which force was used or threatened, by demographic characteristics, 2002, 2005, and 2008

Demographic characteristic	Residents experiencing use or threat of force during most recent contact					
	Number (in thousands)			Percent ^a		
	2002	2005	2008	2002	2005	2008
Total	664	716	574	1.5%	1.6%	1.4%
Sex						
Male	520	514	390	2.2%	2.2%	1.8%
Female	144	202	184	0.7	1.0	1.0
Race/Hispanic origin						
White ^b	374	406	347	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%
Black or African American ^b	173	183	130	3.5	4.3	3.4
Hispanic/Latino	103	105	68	2.5	2.6	1.6
Other ^{b,c}	15!	3!	19!	1.1!	0.2!	1.1!
Two or more races ^b	~	19!	11!	~	4.0!	2.4!
Age						
16–19	152	168	78	3.6%	4.0%	2.4%
20–19	230	271	253	2.1	2.5	2.5
30–39	117	135	122	1.2	1.6	1.5
40–49	95	66	61	1.0	0.7	0.8
50–59	50	39	33!	0.8	0.6	0.5!
60 or older	21!	38	27!	0.4!	0.8	0.6!

Note: Table is based on the resident's most recent contact with police that year. Data on use of force by police during most recent contact in 2002 were reported for 99.3% of police contact cases, in 2005 for 99.6%, and in 2008 for 99.8%. Detail may not sum to total due to rounding. See appendix table 18 for standard errors. Separate statistics on the racial categories that make up the other race category are not shown due to too few sample cases to obtain reliable estimates.

! Interpret data with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

~Not applicable. The 2002 PPCS did not separately identify persons of two or more races.

^aSee *Methodology* for distribution of U.S. population who had contact with police.

^bExcludes persons of Hispanic origin.

^cIncludes American Indians, Alaska Natives, Asians, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders.

had force used or threatened against them, an estimated 76.6% reported that police threatened to use force during the incident (table 20). An estimated 75.5% of police-use-of-force incidents involved the officer or officers shouting at the respondent. About half (53.5%) of the police-use-of-force cases involved the respondent being pushed or grabbed by police. About 1 out of 4 (25.6%) respondents who reported that force was used or threatened during the contact said police pointed a gun at them.

Among persons who experienced the use or threat of force by police and characterized it as excessive, about 60% were pushed or grabbed by police. The police kicked or hit the respondent during an estimated 17.2% of incidents involving the threat or use of excessive force.

Overall, about 3 out of 4 (74.3%) persons who experienced the use or threat of force in 2008 felt it was excessive

TABLE 19
Persons who felt the threat or use of force against them by police was excessive, by demographic characteristics, 2008

Demographic characteristic	Percent who felt force was excessive
Total	74.3%
Sex	
Male	76.2%
Female	70.6
Race/Hispanic origin	
White*	72.8%
Black/African American*	70.0
Hispanic/Latino	78.9
Age	
16–29	69.6%
30 or older	80.8

Note: Table is based on the residents most recent contact with police in 2008. Data on police use of excessive force in 2008 were reported for 97.5% of use-of-force cases. The total includes estimates for persons identifying with other races or with two or more races, not shown separately. See appendix table 19 for standard errors.

*Excludes persons of Hispanic origin.

TABLE 20
Types of force used or threatened by police, 2008

Type of force police used or threatened	Percent of contacts with police in which—	
	Force was used or threatened	Excessive force was used or threatened
Pushed or grabbed	53.5%	60.2%
Kicked or hit	12.6	17.2
Sprayed chemical/pepper spray	4.9 !	5.6 !
Electroshock weapon (stun gun)	4.1 !	5.6 !
Pointed gun	25.6	28.4
Threatened force	76.6	84.9
Shouted at resident	75.5	76.6
Cursed at resident	39.1	44.0
Number (in thousands)	574	417

Note: Table is based on the residents most recent contact with police in 2008. Percentages do not sum to total because respondents could have reported that police both threatened and used force or that police used more than one type of force. See appendix table 20 for standard errors.

! Interpret data with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

(table 21). Among those persons involved in situations in which force was actually applied by police (e.g., grabbing, hitting, using chemical spray, or pointing a gun), an estimated 80.6% believed the actions were excessive. Of respondents who reported that police only threatened force during the incident, about 74% felt it was excessive. Among individuals who reported the use or threat of force only involved police shouting or cursing at them, 42.9% felt that those actions were excessive.

Individuals who had contact with police were asked about their behavior during the incident. Among persons experiencing police use or threat of force in 2008, an estimated 21.9% reported that they argued with, cursed at, insulted, or verbally threatened the police (table 22). An estimated 11.6% of those involved in a force incident reported disobeying or interfering with the police. About 5% resisted being handcuffed, arrested, or searched by police.

TABLE 21
Persons who felt police threat or use of force against them was excessive, by type of force used or threatened, 2008

Type of force used or threatened	Contacts with police in which force was used or threatened	
	Number (in thousands)	Percent who felt it was excessive
Total	562	74.3%
Police used force*	344	80.6%
Police only threatened force	141	74.3
Police only shouted/cursed at resident	72	42.9 !

Note: Table is based on the residents most recent contact with police in 2008. Data on use of excessive force by police in 2008 were reported for 97.5% of use-of-force cases. Total includes respondents who did not report the type of force they experienced, not shown separately. See appendix table 21 for standard errors.

! Interpret data with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

*Includes police actions such as grabbing, hitting, using chemical spray, or pointing a gun at the respondent.

TABLE 22
Conduct of residents during police contacts in which force was used or threatened, 2008

Conduct of resident during contact involving force	Percent
Resident—	
Engaged in at least one type of behavior*	28.4%
Argued with, cursed at, insulted, or verbally threatened the police	21.9
Disobeyed or interfered with officer(s)	11.6
Resisted being handcuffed, arrested, or searched	4.8 !
Tried to get away from police	3.4 !
Pushed, grabbed, or hit officer(s)	0.6 !
Number (in thousands)	574

Note: Table is based on the residents most recent contact with police in 2008. See appendix table 22 for standard errors.

! Interpret data with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

*Detail does not sum to total because some respondents reported more than one type of behavior.

Persons police suspected of wrongdoing or who had contact through a criminal investigation represented a relatively large percentage of the force incidents. Individuals police suspected of wrongdoing accounted for 16.6% of the force incidents compared to 2.5% of all contacts (table 23). Persons whose contact occurred during a criminal investigation accounted for 21.6% of force incidents, compared to 5.6% of all contacts.

In 2008, 9.6% of persons who were suspected of wrongdoing by police experienced the use or threat of force (table 24). By comparison, persons who contacted police to report a crime or another problem experienced force or the threat of force less than 1% of the time.

More than half of persons who had force used or threatened against them were searched by police

About 57% of those who had force used or threatened against them by police were searched either before or after the force occurred (table 25). An estimated 10.4% of persons who experienced the use or threat of force reported that police found illegal items, such as drugs or a weapon (not in table).

TABLE 23
Reasons for contact with police in which force was used or threatened, 2008

Reason for most recent contact	Residents who had contact with police	Contacts with police in which force was used or threatened
Total	100%	100%
Traffic-related contacts	59.2%	40.0%
Driver during traffic stop	44.1	27.9
Passenger during traffic stop	2.9	3.7 !
Traffic accident	12.2	8.3 !
Other contacts	40.8%	60.0%
Person reported crime/ problem to police	20.9	9.0
Police provided assistance or service	6.3	5.7 !
Police investigating crime	5.6	21.6
Police suspected resident of wrongdoing	2.5	16.6
Other reason	5.5	7.1 !
Number (in thousands)	40,015	574

Note: Table is based on the residents most recent contact with police in 2008. Detail may not sum to total due to rounding. See appendix table 23 for standard errors.

! Interpret data with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

Among individuals who had force used against them in 2008, an estimated 54.3% were handcuffed and 39.9% were arrested during the incident. The higher percentage of persons handcuffed versus those arrested during force incidents may be an indication that police sometimes used handcuffs to detain people during contact and later released them without making an arrest. Overall, 18.9% of persons who experienced force in 2008 were injured during the incident (not in table).

An estimated 83.9% of individuals who experienced force or the threat of force felt that the police acted improperly. Of those who experienced the use or threat of force in 2008 and felt the police acted improperly, 13.7% filed a complaint against the police.

TABLE 24
Contacts with police in which force was used or threatened, by reason for contact, 2008

Reason for most recent contact	Percent of residents who experienced use/threat of force by police among those who had police contact
Total	1.4%
Traffic-related contacts	
Driver during traffic stop	0.9%
Passenger during traffic stop	1.9 !
Traffic accident	1.0 !
Other contacts	
Resident reported crime/problem to police	0.6%
Police provided assistance or service	1.3 !
Police investigated crime	5.5
Police suspected resident of wrongdoing	9.6
Other reason	1.9 !

Note: Table is based on the residents most recent contact with police in 2008. Data on use of force by police in 2008 were reported for 99.8% of police contact cases. See appendix table 24 for standard errors.

! Interpret data with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

TABLE 25
Police actions during contacts with the public in which force was used or threatened, 2008

Police action during contact involving force	Contacts with police in which force was used/threatened	
	Number (in thousands)	Percent
Searched resident/vehicle*	566	57.1%
Handcuffed resident	570	54.3
Arrested resident	574	39.9

Note: Table is based on the residents most recent contact with police in 2008. Data on whether a resident was searched were reported by residents for 98.3% of use-of-force cases, 99.2% of handcuffed, and 100% of arrested. See appendix table 25 for standard errors.

*Includes searches conducted on the vehicles of drivers stopped by police.