

Justice Analysis Review

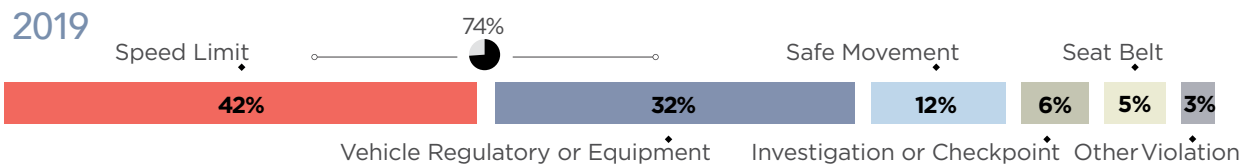
A PUBLICATION OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE ANALYSIS CENTER

North Carolina Traffic Stop Reporting Program Series: Part 2

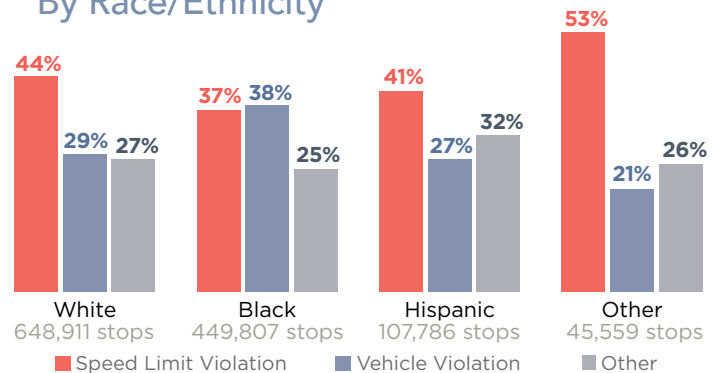
As highlighted in Part 1 of the North Carolina Traffic Stop Reporting Program Series ([July 2020](#)), speed limit, vehicle regulatory and vehicle equipment violations account for 69% of all reported stops from 2009-19. This part of the series will take a closer look at traffic stops based on the purpose of the stop and the action taken by law enforcement. Concentration is on the 2019 traffic stops, with noted changes from 2009.¹

Purpose of Traffic Stops

Speed limit and vehicle regulatory or equipment stops comprised 74% of all reported traffic stops in 2019. The 'Safe Movement' category includes Stop Light/Sign Violations and 'Other Violation' includes Driving While Impaired.



2019 Purpose of Traffic Stop By Race/Ethnicity



The purpose of 2019 traffic stops varied by the race/ethnicity of the driver.²

- White, Hispanic, and drivers of other races were stopped most often for speed violations. Black drivers were stopped more for vehicle regulatory or equipment violations.
- A larger portion of Hispanic drivers (32%) were stopped for purposes other than speed or vehicle violations than the remaining race/ethnicity groups.

**FROM 2009-19
THE NUMBER OF
TRAFFIC STOPS
DECREASED
13%**

| | |
|-------------|------------------|
| 2009 | 1,436,964 |
| 2019 | 1,252,063 |

Over the 11-year period, stops for vehicle equipment increased 6% and vehicle regulatory violations increased 5%.

¹ Traffic Stop data includes submissions in the SBI database <https://trafficstops.ncsbi.gov> as of April 16, 2020. The purpose of this analysis is to provide statewide data about traffic stops. No causal or explanatory analysis was conducted. Variation in policies and practices across jurisdictions affect traffic stops.

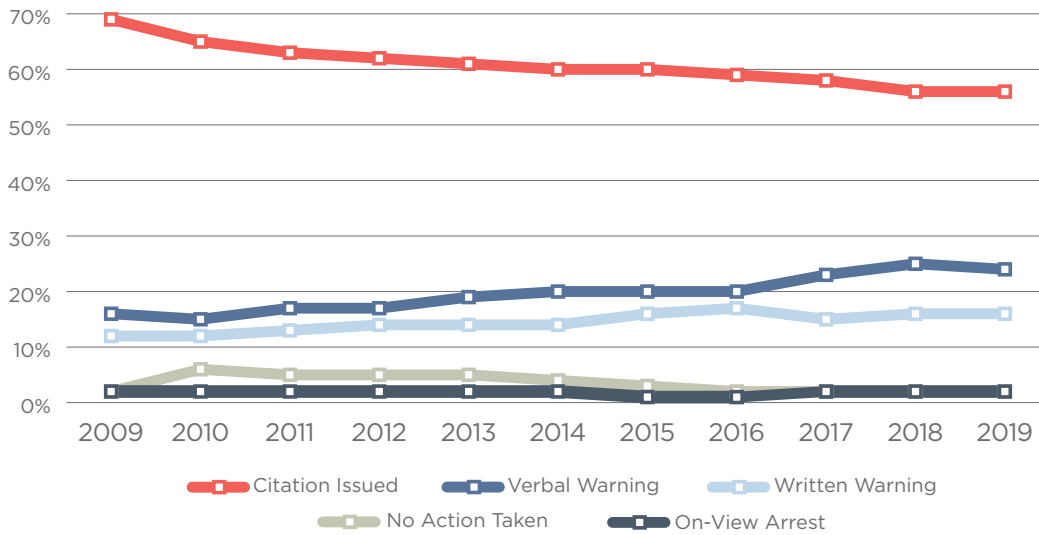
² For analysis purposes, the traffic stop data element for ethnicity was used to identify a category for Hispanic drivers, in any racial group. The July 2020 JAR presented rates by population, which was not available with a comparable breakdown for Hispanic.

Law Enforcement Action Taken as a Result of Traffic Stops

The results of traffic stops include non-punitive outcomes (warnings or no action), citations and arrests by law enforcement.

Traffic stops resulted in a citation being issued in more than half of the stops throughout the period from 2009-19.

Actions Taken in 2009-19 Traffic Stops



Citations and arrests for the driver were the result of the majority (58%) of traffic stops reported in 2019; citations were issued for 56% of stops and 2% ended in an arrest.

STOPS RESULTING IN CITATIONS OR ARRESTS

2009 **71%**

2019 **58%**

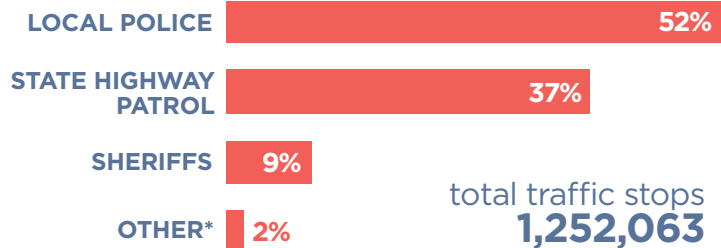
28% REDUCTION in citations over the 11-year period

NON-PUNITIVE ACTIONS INCREASED FROM 2009-19

VERBAL WARNINGS INCREASED **35%**

WRITTEN WARNINGS INCREASED **12%**

Law Enforcement Agencies Reporting Traffic Stops in 2019

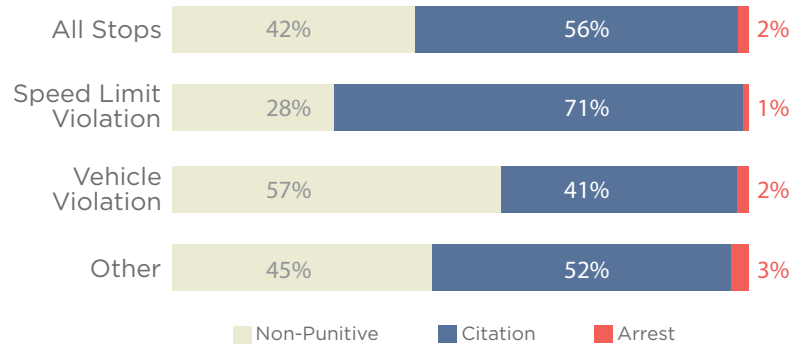


*Hospitals, university police and other state agencies

Purpose of 2019 Traffic Stops and Action Taken

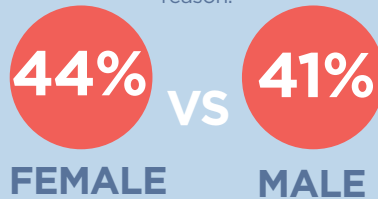
Actions taken during traffic stops varied based on the purpose of the stop. In 2019, more than half of all stops (56%) resulted in a citation. Traffic stops for a speed violation resulted in a citation 71% of the time. Vehicle regulatory or equipment violation was the only category to have the majority (57%) of stops result in non-punitive actions.

Actions By Purpose of Stops

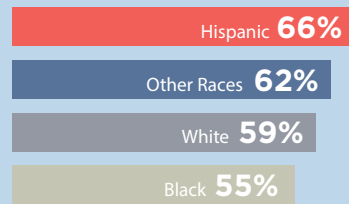


Actions taken during 2019 traffic stops vary based on gender and race/ethnicity of the driver³

Traffic stops for female drivers resulted in a non-punitive action more often than male drivers, when stopped for any reason.



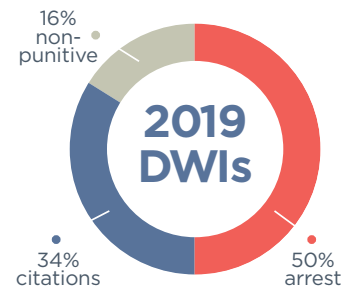
Traffic stops by race resulting in citations or arrests



Traffic stops for Driving While Impaired

LESS THAN 1% OF ALL STOPS EACH YEAR

DECREASED FROM
2009 **12,682** → 2019 **4,164**



³ Statistically significant at ≤ 0.001 .