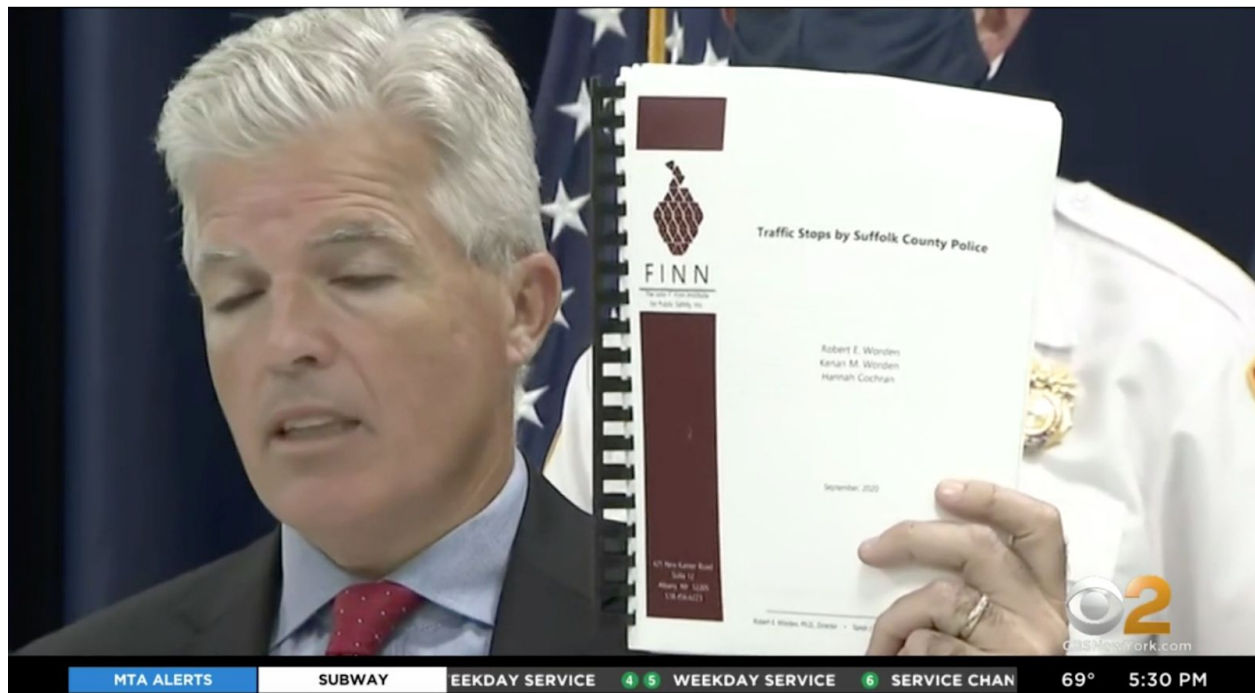


Reforms Coming To Suffolk County Police Department After Independent Study Finds Bias In Traffic Stops



HAUPPAUGE, N.Y. (CBSNewYork) — The [Suffolk County Police Department](#) admits its traffic stops are biased.

On Tuesday, it released the findings of an independent study and promised that reforms are coming, CBS2's Andrea Grymes reported.

If you're Black or Hispanic and driving through Suffolk, chances are you'll get pulled over for more routine traffic stops than your white counterparts. That's according to a new report [County Executive Steve Bellone](#) and [Police Commissioner Geraldine Hart](#) just released.

“There’s certainly, as you can see, disparity in the numbers and that’s concerning to us. We don’t want anyone to feel that they’re not being treated fairly,” Hart said.

The department commissioned the year-long, independent study from the John F. Finn Institute for Public Safety in Albany.

It analyzed more than 130,000 traffic stops between March 2018 and March 2019 from data provided by the Suffolk County Police Department.

FLASHBACK: [Residents Want Citizens Complaint Review Board To Look Into Suffolk County Police Officer Accused Of Excessive Force](#)

The goal was to find out if bias was a factor in those routine stops.

County officials say the findings show it was.

“Let me be clear — these disparities are unacceptable to me,” Bellone said.

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Suffolk officials say the 81-page report found when compared to whites:

- Hispanics are 32% more likely to be ticketed and 16% more likely to be arrested.
- Blacks are more than twice as likely to have their vehicle searched and 59% more likely to be arrested.

The [Suffolk Patrolmen's Benevolent Association](#) released a statement saying in part, "A myriad of factors impact statistics. We decline to comment on the conclusions reached with data not yet shared with our organization."

"Suffolk County needs to bring itself kicking and screaming into the 21st century and realize that so many of its community are in need of unbiased policing," civil rights attorney Fred Brewington said.

Grymes asked Brewington, "An officer might say, 'I didn't look at the driver. I looked at them running a stop sign or speeding or something like that. What would you say to an officer who thinks that way?'"

"Well, I think we then need to deal with the issues of implicit bias," Brewington said.

Suffolk officials say that bias often pops up after the stop, when officers decide whether to ticket the driver or give them a warning.

Bellone talked about implicit bias training for officers. Hart said the department will be working with the Department of Justice and outside experts to come up with more solutions and reforms.