Stops by Syracuse Police, 2006-2009

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- Not-for-profit research organization
- Conduct research on and for criminal justice agencies
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Analyzing Racial Bias in Policing

- Syracuse is one of many cities whose police collect stop data
- All confront thorny issues in drawing inferences from those data
- Describing the population of people who are stopped is straightforward
- Drawing conclusions about bias is far more challenging

The Analytical Challenge
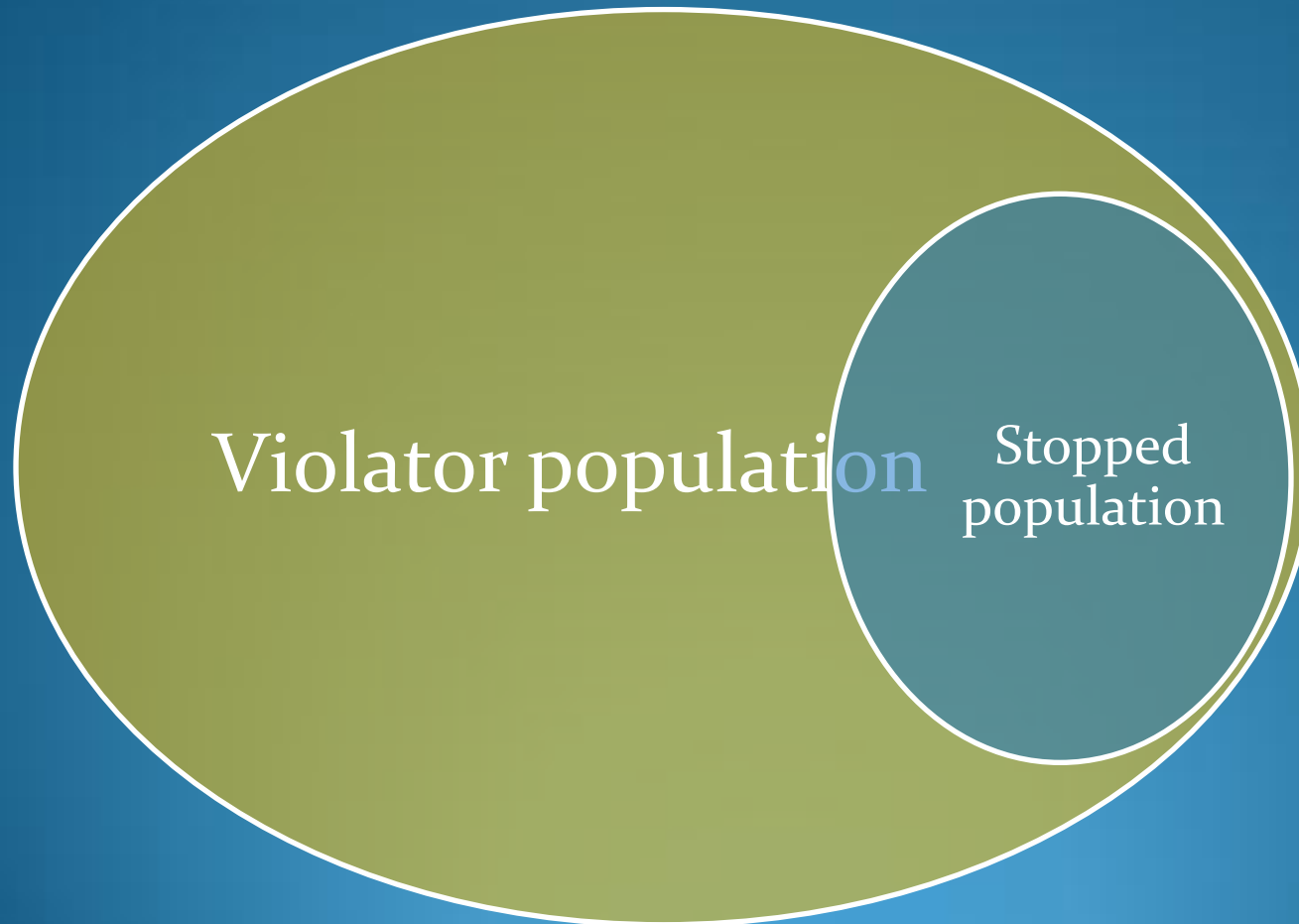
Benchmarks

- Census data on the residential population
- Licensed drivers
- Drivers involved in crashes
- "Rolling surveys" of speeders
- The "available population"
- Victims' descriptions of offenders

Veil-of-Darkness Method

- Applied in analyses in Oakland and Cincinnati
- Assumes that in darkness officers are less able to detect motorists' race prior to a stop
- Stops after twilight are the benchmark
- Focus on the "inter-twilight" period
- Racial bias in stops would appear as a higher likelihood that African-Americans would be stopped during daylight than in darkness
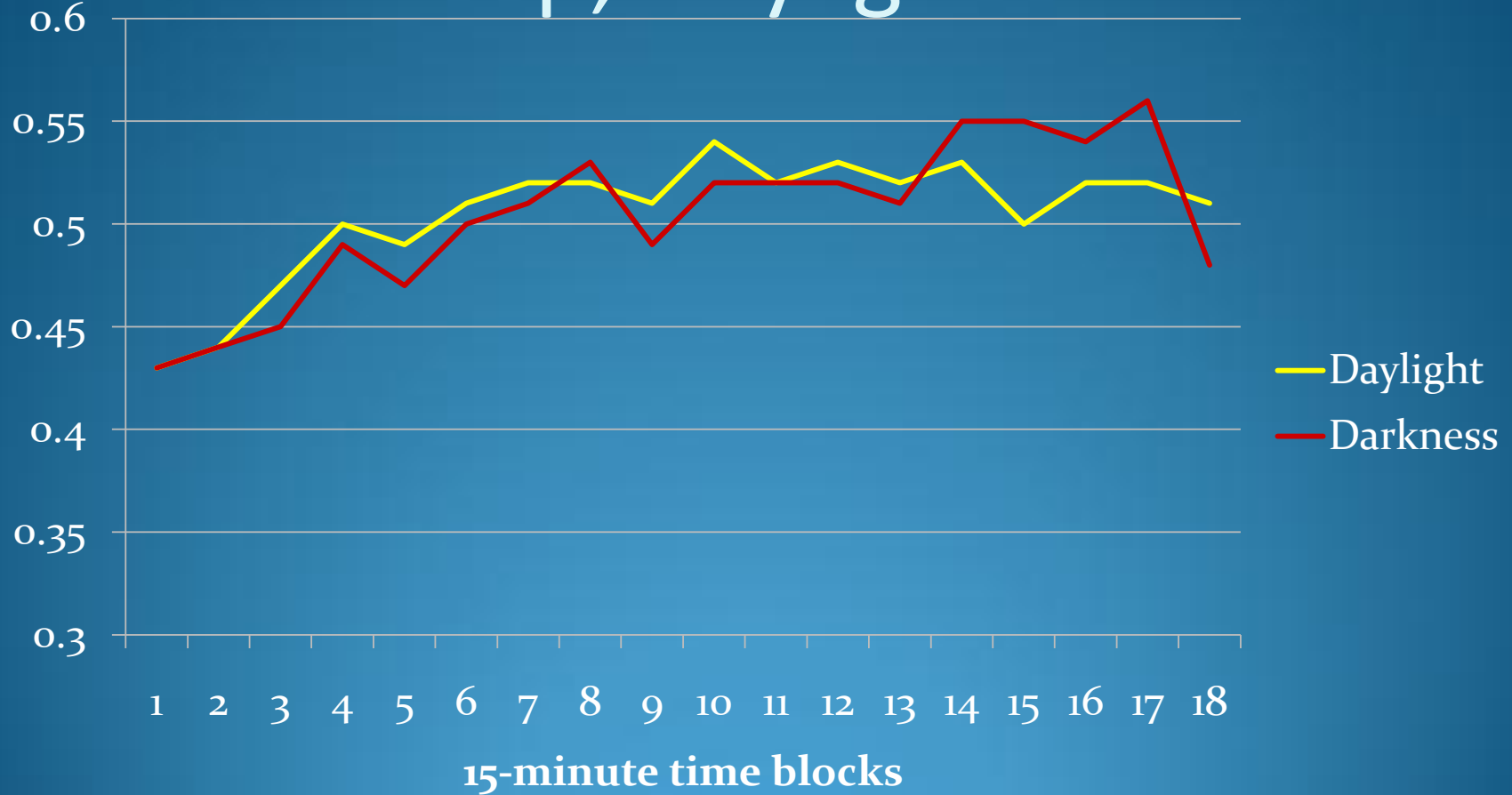
The Analysis

- Data sources: Form 67s, arrest records, 2006-2009
- Vehicle stops only
- Examine the who, where, when, why of stops
- Concentrate mainly on the "inter-twilight" period: 5:02 p.m. to 9:23 p.m.

Stops of African-Americans, Daylight and Darkness
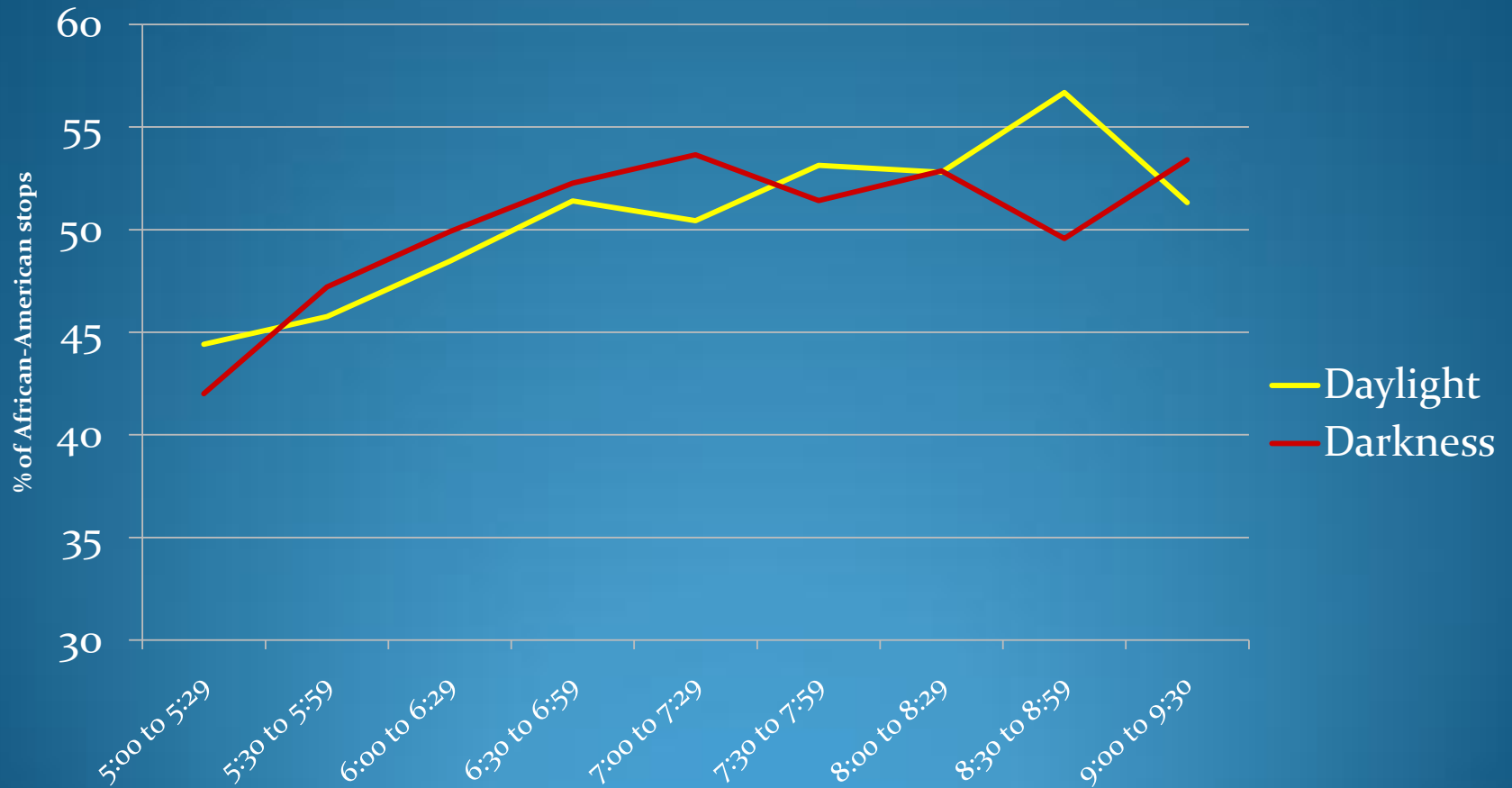
Estimated Probabilities of African-American Stop, Daylight & Darkness

Conclusions

- Weight of the evidence indicates no racial bias in vehicle stops by Syracuse police
- Community perceptions of profiling may arise from several sources
  - A biased pattern of stops
  - Misperceptions rooted in
    - Histories of police-community tensions and negative attitudes toward police
    - Stops conducted in ways that raise citizens' doubts about the legitimacy of the stop