

The Town of Highland Park

Municipal Court

2023 Data Analysis

The Town of Highland Park Municipal Court requested an analysis of their 2023 court data. In 2015, the Department of Justice (DOJ) issued a report on the court practices of Ferguson, Missouri, which indicated inequitable treatment of minorities within their local judicial system. The findings of the Ferguson report have prompted local municipal courts to analyze and reflect on their own practices with a view toward discover of inequities and proactive actions to correct any areas in need of attention to ensure that people of all races receive equitable treatment under the law.

Thus, the purpose of the analysis Highland Park Municipal Court data is to gather some context on the practices of the court and, where necessary, offer amendments to policies or practices to improve equitable operations.

Municipal Court Data

The data analyzed in this report was provided by Highland Park Municipal Court for the period January-December 2023. The court downloaded their data from the municipal court software system and placed into Excel spreadsheets. The data received was then restructured into a reader-friendly format where a number of formulae and calculations could be written to gather context on the operations of the court.

Since the Ferguson report was about the inequitable racial treatment within the Ferguson court, the analysis of this report is strictly focused on the treatment of races within their court practices. Thus, there is no analysis in this report that disaggregates the data by gender, nor does it disaggregate by resident/non-resident status. Further, since there were very few cases involving Middle Eastern, Native American, and Unknown, there is no analysis conducted specifically with these racial categories. Further, the racial identifier of Not Entered may refer to cases where a parking citation was issued, thus no race was known at the time of the citation. There will be no analysis of the Not Entered cases.

This report is structured in three sections as follows:

1. Cases filed analysis
2. Case disposition analysis
3. Cases outstanding analysis

A summary of findings will be provided at the conclusion of the report.

Note on Racial Nomenclature—In the data provided by Highland Park Municipal Court, there were a number of different ways to refer to the races. For example, in some data Whites were referred to as Caucasian, and in other data as Whites. Likewise, some data referred to Blacks, and some data referred to as African American. In order to simplify the analysis contained in this report, the following racial identifications will be used:

1. White
2. Black
3. Hispanic
4. Asian
5. Middle Eastern
6. Native American
7. Unknown

Cases Filed Analysis

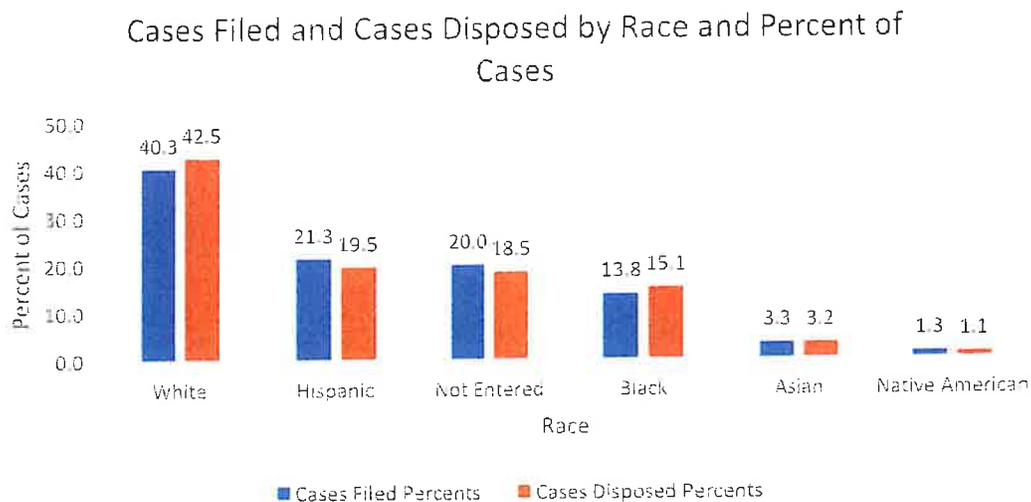
To begin, a simple comparison was made between cases filed and cases disposed within the 2023 calendar year. These variables were disaggregated by race and placed into a structured table that also allowed for calculation of the percentages that each race represent in cases filed and cases disposed.

Table 1-Cases Filed and Cases Disposed Disaggregated by Race

Race/Ethnicity	Cases Filed	Cases Filed Percents	Cases Disposed	Cases Disposed Percents
White	1,768	40.3	1,673	42.5
Black	605	13.8	593	15.1
Hispanic	935	21.3	769	19.5
Asian	145	3.3	127	3.2
Middle Eastern	1	0.0	5	0.1
Unknown	1	0.0	1	0.0
Native American	59	1.3	43	1.1
Not Entered	876	20.0	727	18.5
Total	4,390	100	3,938	100

From this table, Whites represents 40.3% of all cases filed and 42.5% of all cases disposed. Hispanics account for 21.3% of cases filed and 19.5% of cases disposed. This is followed by Blacks, which comprise 13.8% of cases filed and 15.1% of cases disposed. It is easier to see the proportionality of these data when displayed graphically on the chart below. From this table, it is apparent that the majority of cases involved Whites, followed by Hispanics, and then Blacks. The table also indicates that there is relatively proportional representation between cases filed and cases disposed, meaning that the two variables essentially tell the same narrative about racial distribution. Thus, this does not indicate any inequity between the treatment of races.

Figure 1-Cases Filed and Disposed by Race and Percent



Case Disposition Analysis

In this section, the disposition of cases, disaggregated by race, is analyzed. This year, the municipal court disposed of 3,938 cases, as noted in Table 1. Here, the methods of disposition are examined across racial distributions. The data provided by the court indicates that there are two general venues for case disposition—that is, **disposition by court appearance** and **disposition by appearance at the court window**. These will be reviewed separately.

Case Disposition by Court Appearance

The first venue of disposition analyzed is that of court appearance. Of the 3,938 cases disposed this year, 930 were disposed through court appearance. Thus, 23.6% of all dispositions were done through court appearance. When disaggregating the dispositions by race, 20.4% of White cases, 34.4% of Black cases, 23.9% of Hispanic cases, and 26.8% of Asian cases were disposed by court appearance. Thus, Blacks were more likely than other races to make disposition through court appearance. The table below displays the raw data on disposition by court appearance.

Table 2-Disposition by Court Appearance

Disposition through Court Appearance													
Race	Cases Disposed	Total Cases with Court Appearances	Cases Closed by the Court	Cases Dismissed Completion of Defensive Driving Course	Cases Dismissed by Prosecutor	Cases Dismissed by Judge	Cases Dismissed (Juveniles/Minors)	Cases Compiled Dismissal (3J)	Cases Compiled Dismissal (3P)	Not Guilty (DX)	Dismiss Alcohol Awareness Completed (DT)	DA Dismissed/Deferred Completed	Cases DI/Dismiss (Proof Insurance)
White	1,673	342	163	40	38	8	25	27	26	3	2	8	2
Black	593	204	123	13	23	6	7	5	17	3	0	4	3
Hispanic	769	184	117	5	26	2	2	6	19	2	0	4	1
Asian	127	34	15	4	6	2	1	2	4	0	0	0	0
Middle Eastern	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Native American	43	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Not Entered	727	163	101	0	42	5	0	4	7	4	0	0	0
Total	3,938	930	520	63	135	23	35	44	74	12	2	16	6

Of the 930 court appearance dispositions, 520, or 55.9% were simply closed by the court. Disaggregating that variable by race, 47% of Whites cases, 60% of Black cases, 64% of Hispanic cases, and 44% of Asian cases, were listed at closed by the court. Thus, Hispanics had the highest rate of simple court closures, followed by Blacks, Whites, and Asians, respectively. There is a notable disparity in cases dismissed by defensive driving course. Hispanics had only five (5) cases so dismissed, compared to 40 White cases.

Overall, the raw data on court appearance dispositions seems relatively proportional when examined by each race. In the following table, the same data above is converted into percentages. Doing so normalizes the data which facilitates an easier comparison among races.

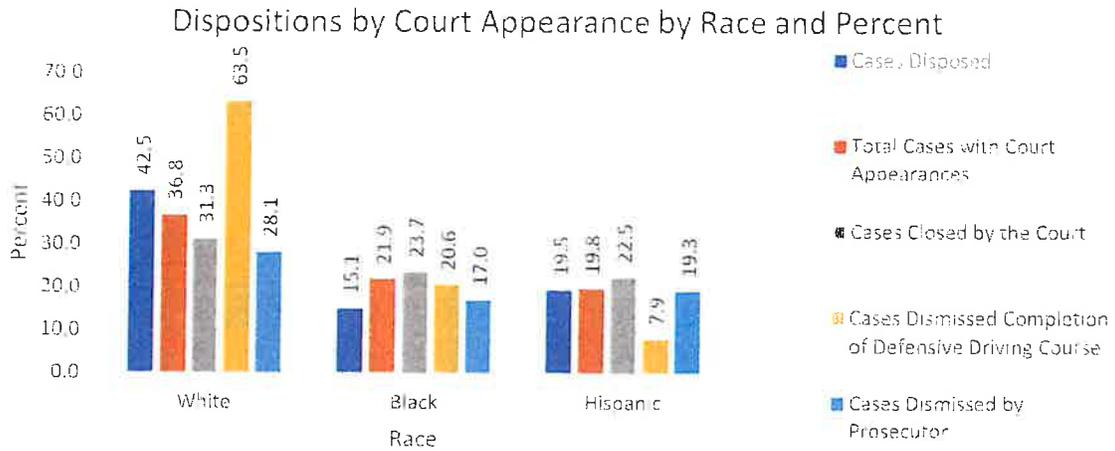
Table 3-Disposition by Court Appearance displayed in Percentages Disaggregated by Race

Disposition through Court Appearance Percentages by Race													
Race	Cases Disposed	Total Cases with Court Appearances	Cases Closed by the Court	Cases Dismissed Completion of Defensive Driving Course	Cases Dismissed by Prosecutor	Cases Dismissed by Judge	Cases Dismissed (Juveniles/Minors)	Cases Compiled Dismissal (3J)	Cases Compiled Dismissal (3P)	Not Guilty (DX)	Dismiss Alcohol Awareness Completed (DT)	DA Dismissed/Deferred Completed	Cases DI/Dismiss (Proof Insurance)
White	42.5	36.8	31.3	63.5	28.1	34.8	71.4	61.4	35.1	25.0	100.0	50.0	33.3
Black	15.1	21.9	23.7	20.6	17.0	26.1	20.0	11.4	23.0	25.0	0.0	25.0	50.0
Hispanic	19.5	19.8	22.5	7.9	19.3	8.7	5.7	13.6	25.7	16.7	0.0	25.0	16.7
Asian	3.2	3.7	2.9	6.3	4.4	8.7	2.9	4.5	5.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Middle Eastern	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Unknown	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Native American	1.1	0.3	0.2	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Not Entered	18.5	17.5	19.4	0.0	31.1	21.7	0.0	9.1	9.5	33.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

With the data normalized into percentages, the comparison between races and disposition types is easier to understand and, where needed, to discover any anomaly. In the first column, the overall case disposition distribution is displayed for each race. Then, each subsequent column may be compared to the overall distribution to note where there are fluctuations in the rates. For example, Whites represent 42.5% of all court appearance dispositions, but 63.5% of Defensive Driving Course dismissals. That is, Whites represent more than their proportion of Defensive Driving Course dismissals. Likewise, Hispanics represents 19.5% of all dispositions, but only 7.9% of Defensive Driving Course dismissals. Thus, Hispanics represent less than their portion of Defensive Driving Course dismissals. Such a disparity does not necessarily translate into any systemic concern, rather it is merely pointing out how mild disparities in the data are noticeable when normalizing the data for analysis.

In the following chart, the proportions for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics for all disposed cases, dispositions by court appearance, and three of the most common dispositions are displayed. Thus, it is easier to see where data is proportionate as well as noticing those areas noted above that appear somewhat disproportionate.

Figure 2-Variou Dispositions by Court Appearance Disaggregated by Race and Percent



Case Disposition by Appearance at Court Window

The second venue of disposition is that of appearance at the court window. These are cases where, rather than make a formal court appearance, subjects have opted to resolve their cases administratively through a court clerk at the window.

Of the 3,938 cases disposed this year, 3,008 were disposed through appearance at the court window. Thus, 76.3% of all dispositions were done through appearance at the court window. When disaggregating the dispositions by race, 49.2% of White cases, 52.2% of Black cases, 69.1% of Hispanic cases, and 44.1% of Asian cases were disposed by appearance at the court window. Thus, Hispanics were more likely than other races to dispose of their case by appearance at the court window. The raw data for dispositions at the court window are displayed in the following table.

Table 4- Disposition through Court Window

Disposition through Window											
Race	Cases Disposed	Total Cases with Window Appearances	CL - Closed/Pd with Clerk	D2- Dismissed DSC	3W - Compliance Dismissal by Clerk	DA- Dismiss Deferred Completed	DI- Dismiss had Insurance	DL - Compliance Dismissal*	PW- Purged Warrants	DZ- Dismissed after Appeal	DC- Dismiss by Complainant
White	1,673	1,331	655	133	81	429	5	0	28	0	0
Black	593	389	203	23	15	100	3	0	45	0	0
Hispanic	769	585	404	17	27	89	7	0	41	0	0
Asian	127	93	41	19	6	24	1	0	2	0	0
Middle Eastern	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0
Unknown	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Native American	43	40	13	3	5	19	0	0	0	0	0
Not Entered	727	564	547	0	2	15	0	0	0	0	0
Total	3,938	3,008	1,864	195	136	676	16	0	121	0	0

Of the 3,008 court window dispositions, the majority of them (1,864) were closed by the simple payment of fines. Thus, 61.9% were closed by payment of a fine. Disaggregating that variable by race, 49% of Whites cases, 52% of Black cases, 69% of Hispanic cases, and 44% of Asian cases, were closed by payment of a fine at the court window. Thus, Hispanics had the highest rate of fine payments, followed by Blacks, Whites, and Asians, respectively. The second most common disposition at the court window is dismissal by a deferred completion, which accounted for 676 total dispositions or 23% of all court window dispositions. In that variable (dismissal by deferred completion), there is some disparity among the races, where 32% of Whites cases, 26% of Black cases, 26% of Asian cases were dismissed by this method, but only 15% of Hispanic cases were dismissed this way. When we put these two most common dispositions together (paid fine and dismissed by deferred completion) however, the higher representation of Hispanics in fine payments is offset by the lower representation of Hispanics in deferred completions. Collectively, these two methods of court window dispositions indicate a relatively even racial treatment.

Overall, the raw data on court window appearance dispositions seems relatively proportional when examined by each race. In the following table, the same data above is converted into percentages. As noted earlier, doing so normalizes the data which facilitates an easier comparison among races.

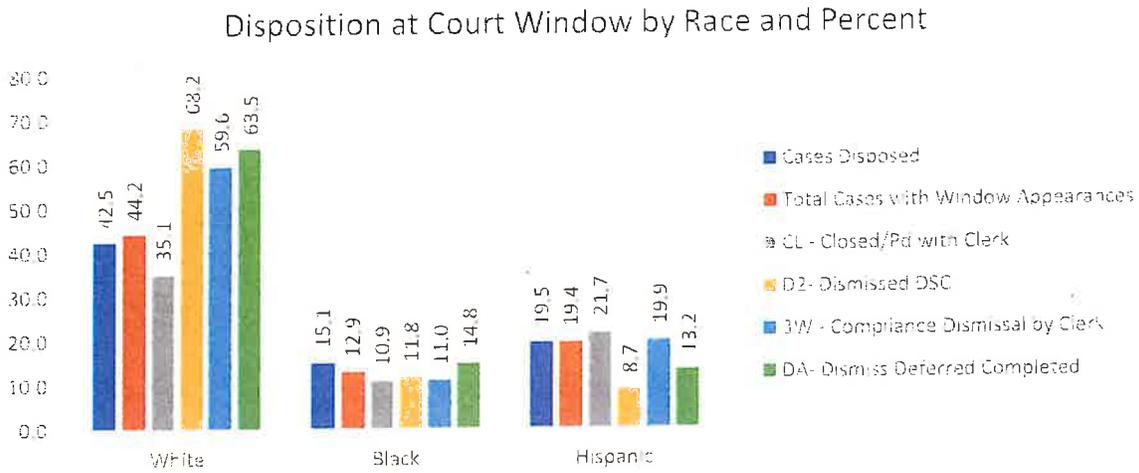
Table 5-Disposition by Court Window Percentages by Race

Disposition through Window Percentages by Race											
Race	Cases Disposed	Total Cases with Window Appearances	CL - Closed/Pd with Clerk	D2- Dismissed DSC	3W - Compliance Dismissal by Clerk	DA- Dismiss Deferred Completed	DI- Dismiss had Insurance	DL - Compliance Dismissal*	PW- Purged Warrants	DZ- Dismissed after Appeal	DC- Dismiss by Complainant
White	42.5	44.2	35.1	68.2	59.6	63.5	31.3	0.0	23.1	0.0	0.0
Black	15.1	12.9	10.9	11.8	11.0	14.8	18.8	0.0	37.2	0.0	0.0
Hispanic	19.5	19.4	21.7	8.7	19.9	13.2	43.8	0.0	33.9	0.0	0.0
Asian	3.2	3.1	2.2	9.7	4.4	3.6	6.3	0.0	1.7	0.0	0.0
Middle Eastern	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.1	0.0	0.0
Unknown	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Native American	1.1	1.3	0.7	1.5	3.7	2.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Not Entered	18.5	18.8	29.3	0.0	1.5	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0

As with the earlier disposition data, here the data is normalized into percentages, making the comparison between races and disposition types easier to understand and, where needed, to discover any anomaly. In the first column, the overall case distribution is displayed for each race. Then, each subsequent column may be compared to the overall distribution to note where there are fluctuations in the rates. Overall court window disposition distributions show that Whites and 44.2% of court window dispositions. Likewise, Blacks represent 15.1% of all court appearance dispositions and 12.9% of court window dispositions. Hispanics represent 19.5% of all dispositions and a nearly identical 19.4% of court window dispositions. Finally, Asians represent 3.2% of all dispositions and 3.1% of court window dispositions.

As with court dispositions noted earlier, court window dispositions of dismissal by Driver Safety Course (DSC) shows some disparity. At the court window, Whites accounted for 68% of DSC dispositions and Hispanics accounted for 9% of DSC dispositions. These figures indicate Whites are slightly overrepresented and Hispanics slightly underrepresented in this variable. But, as stated above, such a disparity does not necessarily translate into any systemic concern, rather it is merely pointing out how mild disparities in the data are noticeable when normalizing the data for analysis. The following chart displays both the proportions of overall dispositions and court window dispositions, as well as the most common court window dispositions.

Figure 3-Various Dispositions at Court Window Disaggregated by Race and Percent



Cases Outstanding Analysis

In this section, the outstanding cases, disaggregated by race, are analyzed. This year, the municipal court reports a total of 5,291 cases that remain outstanding. Here, the classifications by which cases remain outstanding are examined across racial distributions. The following three tables present the raw data on outstanding cases.

Table 6-Outstanding Cases (A)

Outstanding Cases											
Race	Total Pending through Court *	1J - Deferred by Judge	1P - Deferred by Prosecutor	2J - DSC by Judge	2P -DSC by Prosecutor	CA -Continued Appearance	1W - Deferred by Clerk	2W -DSC by Clerk	1C - Deferred requested by Mail	2C - DSC requested by Mail	X
White	1,391	12	15	5	7	2	35	36	31	8	3
Black	1,795	2	5	2	0	1	6	5	10	2	4
Hispanic	1,531	2	4	0	0	0	5	5	12	0	0
Asian	78	1	1	0	0	0	3	6	2	3	0
Middle Eastern	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Native American	43	1	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0
Not Entered	436	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Total	5,291	19	28	7	7	3	52	52	56	14	9

Table 7-Outstanding Cases (B)

Outstanding Cases												
Race	4J - Ext to pay by Judge	AJ - Deferred Disposition	AP - Appeal	C1 - Continuance for Compliance	C2 - Continuance to Request DSC	C3 - Continuance for Plea	C4 - Continuance to Request Deferred	CD - DSC	CS - Community Service Ordered	EA - Extension to Appeal	EX - Ext to pay	IA- Initial Appearance
White	0	0	61	27	8	27	52	0	1	13	3	504
Black	0	0	27	35	16	56	85	0	6	6	4	748
Hispanic	0	0	27	22	1	37	43	0	3	5	6	579
Asian	0	0	4	3	3	3	4	0	1	0	1	19
Middle Eastern	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Native American	0	0	3	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	19
Not Entered	0	0	2	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	1	400
Total	0	0	125	90	29	126	187	0	11	24	15	2,271

Table 8-Outstanding Cases (C)

Outstanding Cases										
Race	MB - MVBA Collection	OM - Outstanding Omni	PC - Pending Collections	PH - Preliminary Hearing	PP - Payment Plan	PT - Pre-Trial Hearing	SC - Show Cause Hearing	SH - Show Cause	TR - Trial	TM - Theme
White	313	147	0	50	21	3	2	0	5	0
Black	526	204	0	35	9	1	0	0	0	1
Hispanic	418	236	0	69	54	2	1	0	0	0
Asian	10	11	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Middle Eastern	9	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Native American	9	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Not Entered	6	1	0	12	0	0	0	0	2	0
Total	1,292	604	0	167	86	6	3	0	8	1

Although there were over 5,000 outstanding cases, nearly 80% of all outstanding cases were due to one of three classifications—Initial Appearance, MVBA Collection, and Outside Omni. Since most of the other classifications for outstanding cases contain small samples, they are not analyzed.

Among the Initial Appearance classification, Whites accounted for 22.2%, Blacks 32.9%, Hispanics 25.5%, and Asians 0.8%. Among the classification of MVBA Collection, Whites accounted for 24.2%, Blacks 40.7%, Hispanics 32.4%, and Asians 0.8%. Among the Outstanding Omni classification, Whites accounted for 24.3%, Blacks, 33.8%, Hispanics 39.1%, and Asians 1.8%.

Each of these classifications appear relatively proportional when compared to one another.

Summary and Recommendations

The Town of Highland Park Municipal Court submitted a full year of raw data for analysis. Three areas were reviewed—cases filed, case dispositions, and outstanding cases. When analyzing the data, disaggregated by race, there does not appear to be any evidence that the court is operating with any noticeable inequity among any race. The data appears proportional to each race in cases filed, disposed, and outstanding. As noted earlier, one noticeable disparity appears in the Driver Safety Course (DSC) disposition, both in court appearance and at the court window. The disparity shows Whites mildly overrepresented and Hispanics mildly underrepresented in that disposition. However, there may be any number of hidden factors that contribute to that disparity which do not rise to the level of inequitable treatment.

In summary, the analysis of the 2023 data indicates that the court appears to be operating with fairness and equity among all races.

Regarding recommendations, we suggest that simple racial identifiers be used in the software that produces the tables for analysis and that these identifiers should remain uniform across all tables. As an example of that which was noted earlier, we recommend referring to white people simply as Whites rather than having two identifiers (Caucasian or White). Thus, listed below are the recommended simple and uniform identifiers for the races.

1. White
2. Black
3. Hispanic
4. Asian
5. Middle Eastern
6. Native American
7. Unknown

While this is a robust analysis of one year's worth of data, we recommend annual analysis in order to establish baselines in the data which will provide the opportunity to understand any trends or anomalies that may emerge in subsequent years.