



# USE OF FORCE REPORT

**2021**



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# INTRODUCTION

The following is a use-of-force analysis for the Salt Lake City Police Department (SLCPD) for calendar year 2021. The SLCPD is constantly striving to take a data-driven approach to policing. Reviewing use-of-force incidents allows the department to examine patterns or trends that may indicate training needs, equipment upgrades, policy modifications, and exceptional work conducted by officers.

Here are a few points to note when reading this analysis. First, while there were 985 incidents during 2021 where force was used, some of the plots and data within this report add up to values greater than 985. This is because in many of the 985 use-of-force incidents during 2021, more than one officer on scene needed to use force to resolve the incident in accordance with department policy and procedures and Utah State law.

Second, officer-involved shootings are not included in this analysis. Occurrences of officer-involved shootings are included in the annual Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies<sup>1</sup> (CALEA®) use-of-force analysis, which takes place in July under the fiscal year calendar. The annual CALEA® analysis also includes additional information regarding use-of-force, such as time of day, injuries, and other useful data points.

Third, in any analysis, decisions must be made regarding presenting the data. For example, there was one reported use-of-force incident where a flashlight was used as a baton. Rather than keeping one category specifically for flashlights as a type of force used, it was collapsed into the baton category. These categorization decisions are outlined in this report's Appendix for transparency.

Fourth, in any data-based analysis, missing data is always an issue. Very little information was missing from SLCPD officers' use-of-force reports during 2021, and missing data appears to be a function of data entry error. Regardless, missing data is noted throughout the analysis when relevant.

Finally, in early 2022, SLCPD identified inconsistencies with the use-of-force data automatically posted on the agency's public data portal. Working with the city's Information Management Services (IMS), SLCPD discovered a systematic issue in the software coding developed by IMS for the department that bridged use-of-force data to the SLCPD public portal. The error resulted in miscounts when gathering the agency's use-of-force data and then translating it to the public portal. An analysis of the extent of that issue is provided in this report, showing that the incorrect numbers reported on the agency's data portal were minimal in nature. Regardless, actual numbers going back to 2018 are provided and compared to the publicly posted numbers.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- SLCPD used force in 0.57% of all handled calls in 2021.
- There were 154 fewer instances of use-of-force in 2021 than would be expected when taking increases in calls handled, arrests, resisting arrest and assault on police officer cases into account (a decrease of 13.52% below the expected value).

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1 <https://www.calea.org/>

- The vast majority of use-of-force during 2021 involved physical force, with the next most common type of force used being a WRAP Restraint<sup>2</sup>. Weapons were rarely used by SLCPD.
- The average subject involved in a use-of-force incident during 2021 was a 34-year-old white male.
- Incorrect numbers reported on the agency's use-of-force data portal were minimal in nature. Correct numbers are provided.

## ANALYSIS

### *Number of Use-of-Force Events in 2021*

Use-of-force is defined in SLCPD policy as applying physical techniques or tactics, chemical agents, or weapons to another person. This definition of force does not include when individuals allow themselves to be searched, escorted, handcuffed, or restrained. Under this definition, reportable uses of force include but are not limited to:

1. All take-downs, pressure points, and joint locks.
2. Any use of a baton or any other type of instrument that is used as an impact weapon.
3. Any use of a Conducted Energy Device (Taser), including the use of a warning arc.
4. Any use of a WRAP Restraint or similar control device.
5. Any use of pepper spray.
6. Any use of Specialty Impact Munitions (e.g., bean-bag rounds, etc.).
7. Personal weapons, such as hands and feet.
8. When a member draws a firearm and acquires a target (i.e., person).

It should be noted that a department use-of-force report, which requires supervisor approval, is required any time someone resists being placed in handcuffs, meaning an officer has to forcibly move the person's wrists or arms or forcibly maneuver the person's body so handcuffs can be applied. This type of force encompasses much of the physical force reported in this analysis, even though strikes are not being delivered. Based on reports from the field, officers tend to err on the side of caution in these circumstances and report 'borderline' use-of-force cases (i.e., even very slight subject resistance).

With the above definition in mind, there were 985 separate use-of-force incidents during 2021.

In 2021<sup>3</sup>, SLCPD officers handled a total of 172,536 calls for service. When considering the total number of use-of-force events and the number of calls handled during 2021, officers used force in 0.57% of all calls handled during 2021.

While SLCPD constantly strives to reduce use-of-force occurrences, use-of-force is a reality of all police work. With a 0.57% rate of occurrence, community members and stakeholders should consider the possibility of having reached or being close to a global minimum.

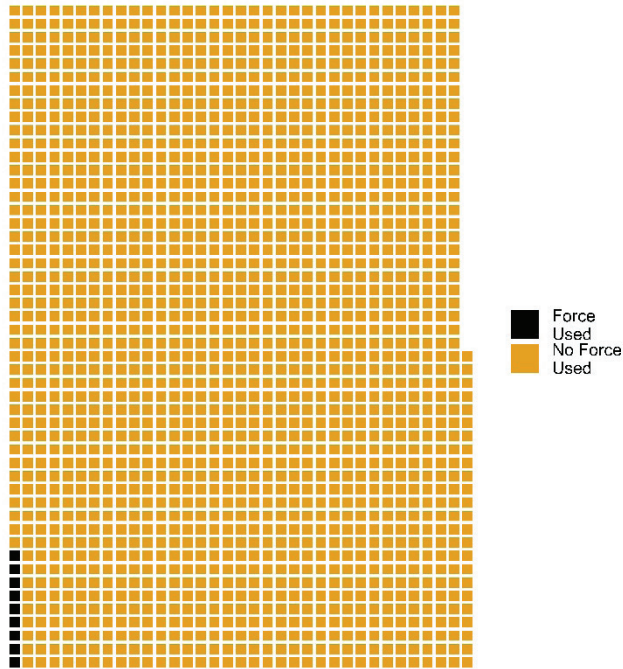
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2 A temporary restraining device that safely immobilizes the body and restricts a person's ability to kick or do harm to oneself and others.

3 Salt Lake City Police Department CompStat & Analysis Unit

Figure 1

Force used in 0.57% of all Calls in 2021



Scale = 1/100

The average number of officers involved during 2021 use-of-force incidents, when rounding, was two.

Table 1

Use-of-Force Events	Average Number of Officers Involved
985	2

The department provides annual training and has policies and procedures that attempt to increase officer numbers at a scene to decrease the amount of force needed. The idea is the more officers present at a location, the less likely a person will engage in behavior that necessitates use-of-force. While current staffing levels are below authorized levels, the average number of officers present during a use-of force incident was two. This indicates SLCPD officers practice appropriate tactics and officer safety by typically having two officers at a scene when force is utilized. Perhaps, a further increase in the number of officers present at a scene would further reduce the number of use-of-force incidents by SLCPD. However, this is currently not plausible given the staffing challenges the department experienced during 2020, 2021 and 2022.

**Use-of-Force from 2020 to 2021**

Beyond the *total* number of use-of-force events during a given year, another important metric to consider is increasing or decreasing *trends* in use-of-force events from year to year. In 2020, there was a total of 917 use-of-force events. Compared to the 985 use-of-force events in 2021, a simple between-year comparison indicates a roughly 7% increase in use-of-force events. However, this is a naïve way to evaluate any year-to-year trend and misanalyses the nuanced factors at play.

Factors contributing to a fluctuation in the number of use-of-force incidents include changes in the underlying number of circumstances in which force may need to be used. As officers are exposed to more events where force may need to be used, an increase in the number of instances where force *is* used should be expected. A more on-point question is whether use-of-force changed in expected proportion to observed changes in related factors. Three primary factors contributing to a fluctuation in the number of use-of-force incidents include the number of arrests made, the number of calls handled, and the number of resisting arrest and assault on police officer cases.

Suppose we assume SLCPD officer patterns in using force did not change between 2020 and 2021. In that case, we can estimate how many times force should have been used in 2021 by considering the percent change in each of the above-identified categories. The below equation provides an estimate of the number of instances of use-of-force one would expect in 2021 if it is assumed SLCPD officers used force in the same manner as they did in 2020.

$$UOF_{\text{expected}} = UOF_{2020} \times \text{Arrests}_{\%change} \times \text{Calls}_{\%change} \times \text{Resist, Assault PO}_{\%change}$$

Table 2 provides the percentage change in arrests, calls handled, and resisting and assault on police officer cases from 2020 to 2021.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 2**

	2020	2021	Percent Change
<b>Arrests</b>	4,940	5,171	+4.68%
<b>Calls Handled</b>	169,131	172,536	+2.01%
<b>Resisting Arrest/Assault on Police Officer Cases</b>	447	520	+16.33%

As previously stated, changes in the three factors identified above should be expected to cause a change in the number of reported use-of-force incidents. The question is, by how much? The product of the previously defined equation is below.

$$UOF_{\text{expected}} = UOF_{2020}^{917} \times \text{Arrests}_{\%change}^{1.0468} \times \text{Calls}_{\%change}^{1.0201} \times \text{Resist, Assault PO}_{\%change}^{1.1633}$$

$$UOF_{\text{expected}} = 1,139$$

In sum, if we consider the increased number of arrests, the increase in calls handled, and the rising cases of resisting arrest/assault on police officers from 2020 to 2021, we would have expected SLCPD officers to have 1,139 instances of use-of-force in 2021 under the assumption that officers were approaching use-of-force in the same manner as they did in 2020.

However, in actuality, SLCPD had 985 instances of use-of-force. This number translates to 154 **fewer** instances of use-of-force than would be expected given the above assumptions (13.52% below the expected value).

This outcome speaks to SLCPD’s commitment to advancing use-of-force policy and de-escalation tactics<sup>5</sup>. Further, this speaks even more to officers facing dangerous circumstances while employing these techniques.

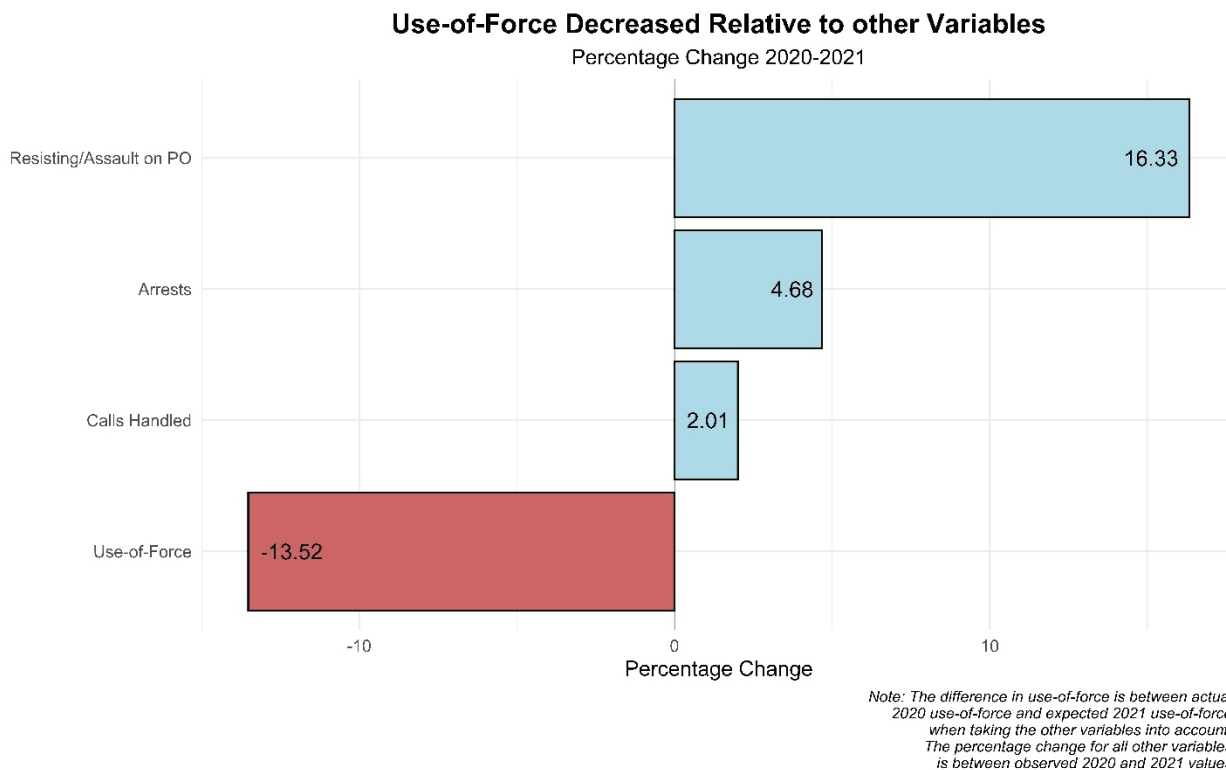
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4 Salt Lake City Police Department CompStat & Analysis Unit

5 De-escalation may include the use of such techniques as command presence, advisements, warnings, verbal persuasion, use-of-force continuum options, and tactical repositioning.



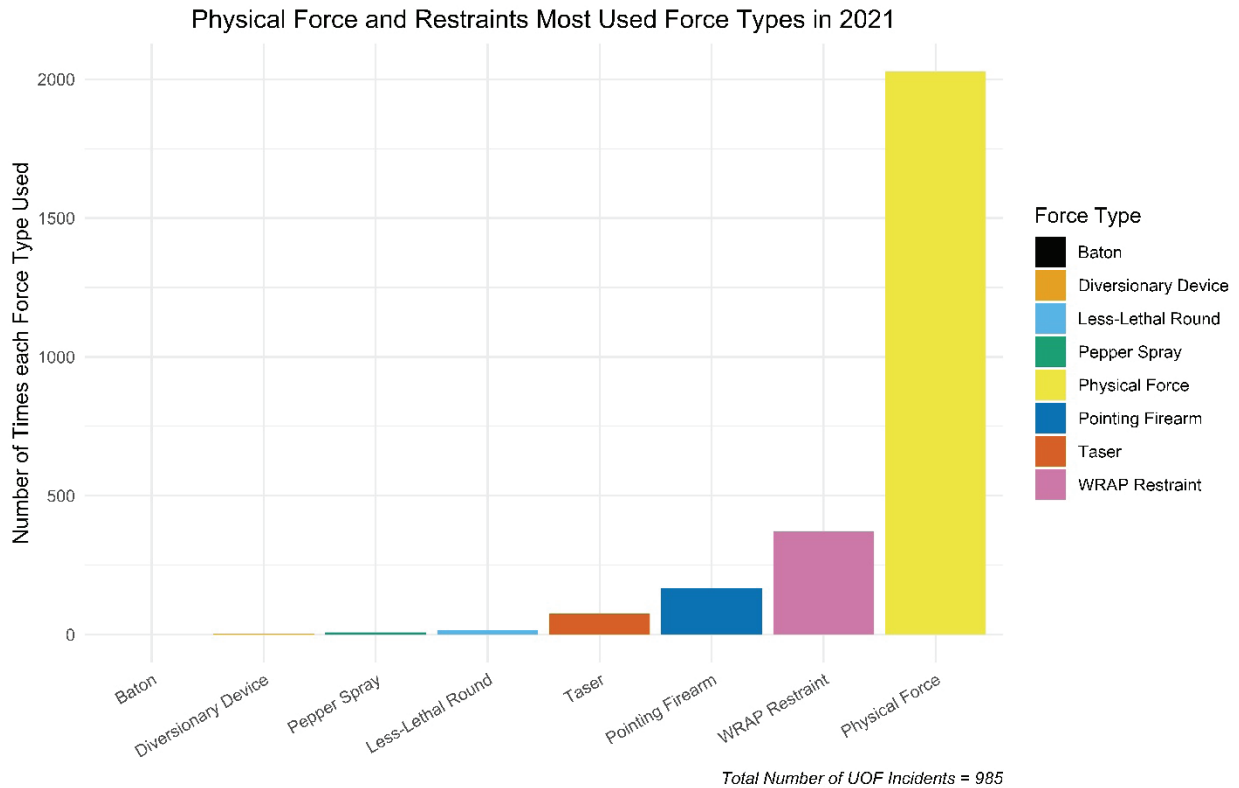
Figure 2



**Type of Force Used**

Figure 3 displays the overall frequency by which different types of force were used during 2020. Again, while there were 985 use-of-force events during 2021, the following analysis looks at how many times individual types of force were used. Suppose four officers used physical force during one incident. Then the use of physical force would be represented four times in the below analysis even though physical force was used during just one incident. Analyzing the data in this manner provides a more nuanced understanding of how often different types of force are being used by individual officers rather than individual incidents.

Figure 3



The vast majority of use-of-force during 2021 involved physical force, with the next most common type of force used being a WRAP Restraint. Keeping in mind that many of the uses of physical force are an officer forcing someone’s arms behind their back to be handcuffed, the fact remains that weapons were rarely used by SLCPD during use-of-force incidents in 2021.<sup>6</sup>

Further, the fact that the second most used type of force is a WRAP Restraint speaks to SLCPD officers’ de-escalation tactics and prioritization of officer safety and community safety. The use of a WRAP Restraint is meant to reduce the need to use more severe force types, protecting both the subject and officers<sup>7</sup>.

It is also important to note the “Pointing Firearm” category listed in Figure 3 references only the display and pointing of the firearm. These firearm cases are often due to “high-risk stops” with occupied recovered stolen vehicles. In these instances, firearm displays occur while the suspects are safely taken into custody. Other instances that may result in firearm displays include searching buildings for suspects, encountering an individual armed with a dangerous or deadly weapon who ultimately decides not to use it after an officer’s firearm is displayed, and other instances where a subject is reported to be or believed to be armed.

6 Due to data limitations, one cannot easily determine how many physical force cases involve force to place someone in handcuffs versus higher levels of physical force being used.

7 Under SLCPD Policy, a minimum of two officers is required to safely apply the WRAP Restraint system.

Table 3 provides the values for each force type in tabular form.

Table 3

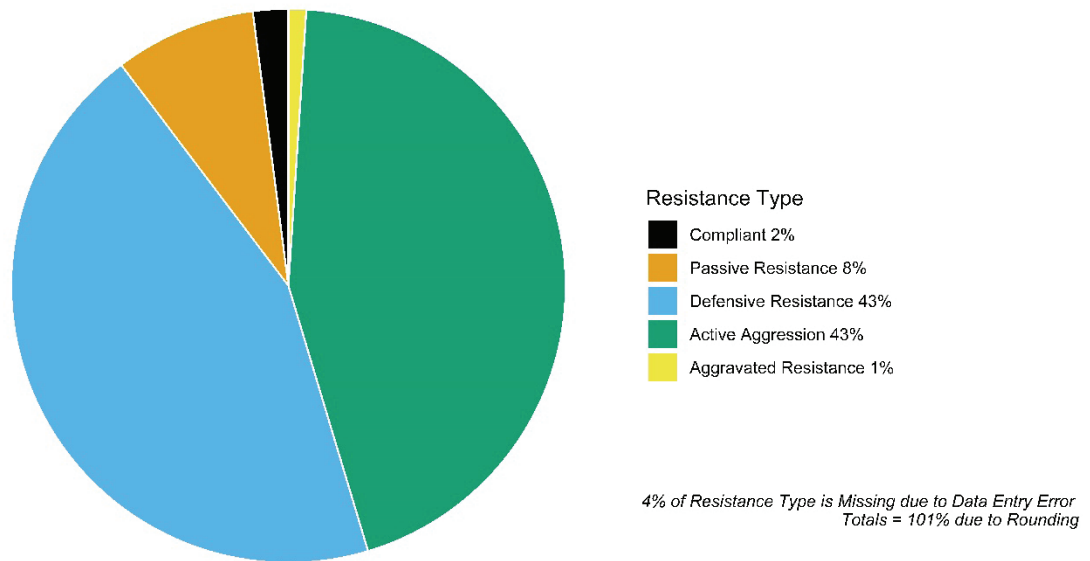
	Number of Uses
Baton	1
Diversionsary Device	4
Pepper Spray	8
Less-Lethal Round	17
Taser	76
Pointing Firearm	168
WRAP Restraint	371
Physical Force	2,027

**Type of Resistance**

A substantial amount of research supports the concept that use-of-force is determined by situational factors such as a subject’s demeanor, actions, aggressive behavior, intoxication, etc., rather than any personal characteristic of the subject.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, it is essential to examine what types of resistance were involved in use-of-force situations. Please note that subjects can change their resistance level multiple times throughout a use-of-force incident. The percentages reported below reflect the highest level of resistance experienced across use-of-force events.

Figure 4

Active Aggression and Defensive Resistance the most Prevalent Resistance Type in 2021



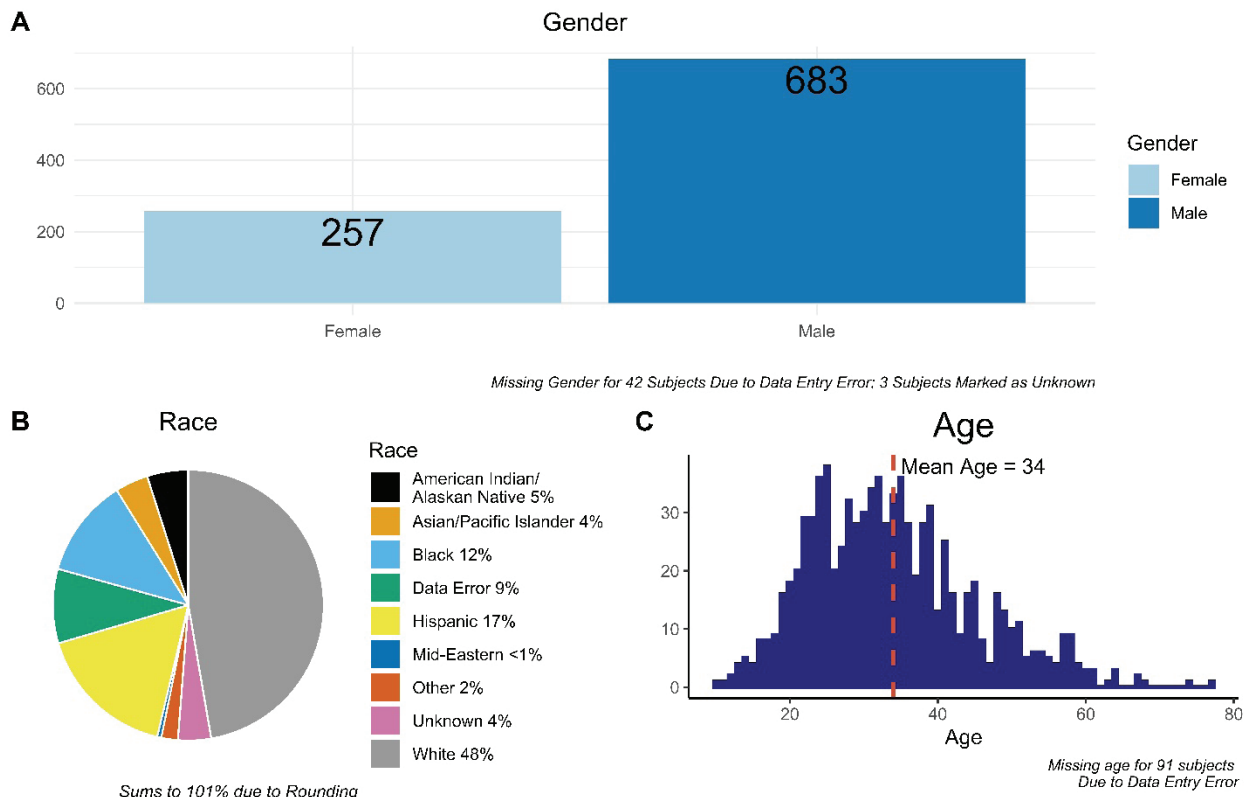
8 Bolger, C.P. (2015). Just following orders: A meta-analysis of the correlates of American police officer use of force decisions. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 40(3), 466-492.

As shown in Figure 4, in nearly half (43%) of the use-of-force incidents in 2021, SLCPD officers experienced active aggression from the subject. Defensive resistance (e.g., fleeing, resisting handcuffing, barricading – see Appendix) was the highest experienced resistance level in another 43% of cases.

### Gender, Race, Age

When considering gender, race, and age, the average subject that force was used on in 2021 was a 34-year-old white male. These three categories are broken down further below.

Figure 5



### Gender

As indicated in Panel A of Figure 5, 70% of use-of-force incidents in 2021 involved a male subject and 26% involved a female subject. The remaining is 4% unknown due to data entry errors are the subject’s gender being marked as “unknown.”

### Race

Race and use-of-force is a charged topic that many people care about deeply. Discussing race and use-of-force is made even more difficult because there is no agreed-upon benchmark for an ‘appropriate’ statistic for use-of-force as a function of race. However, what is largely agreed upon by the U.S. Department of Justice and subject matter experts is simply using census data to make simple comparisons between percentages of different races and stop rates, use-of-force rates, or rates of

other police-community member interactions is inappropriate.

Much like when examining age and gender with use-of-force rates, using census data often fails to provide an effective data analysis benchmark or baseline because, while census data shows the percentage of people by race residing in a particular area, it does not provide crucial data regarding omitted variables such as the behavioral, geographical, or societal influences that go into a dynamic use-of-force (or any other police-community member interaction) scenario.<sup>9 10 11 12</sup>

With the above in mind, as visualized in Panel B of Figure 5, most use-of-force incidents involved White individuals (48%). Following the category of White individuals were the categories of Hispanic (17%), Black (12%), Data Entry Error (9%), American Indian/Alaskan Native (5%), Asian/Pacific Islander (4%), Unknown (4%), Other (2%), and Mid-Eastern (<1%).

## Age

The average age of a subject was 34 years old.

## Inconsistency Identified with the Public Data Portal

In early January 2022, SLCPD identified an inconsistency with the use-of-force data automatically posted on the agency's public data portal. Working with the city's IMS, SLCPD discovered a systematic issue in the software coding developed by IMS for the department that bridged use-of-force data to the SLCPD public portal. The error resulted in miscounts when gathering the agency's use-of-force data and then translating it to the public portal.

Below, Figure 6 shows the SLCPD portal-reported and actual values across all four years of the data portal's time series (2018- November 2021). As one can see, overall trends are very similar leading up to the end of 2021. This changed in the latter part of 2021 when a significant deviation began.

- 
- 9 McMahon, J., Garner, J., Davis, R., & Kraus, A. (2002). *How to correctly collect and analyze racial profiling data: Your reputation depends on it!* U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
  - 10 Fridell, Lorie A. (2004). *By the numbers: A guide for analyzing race data from vehicle stops*. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum.
  - 11 Tregle, B., Nix, J., Alpert, G. P. (2019). Disparity does not mean bias: Making sense of observed racial disparities in fatal officer-involved shootings with multiple benchmarks. *Journal of Criminal Justice* (42)1, 18-31.
  - 12 Shjarback, J. & Nix, J. (2020). Considering violence against police by citizen race/ethnicity to contextualize representation in officer-involved shootings. *Journal of Criminal Justice* 66, 1-10.

Figure 6

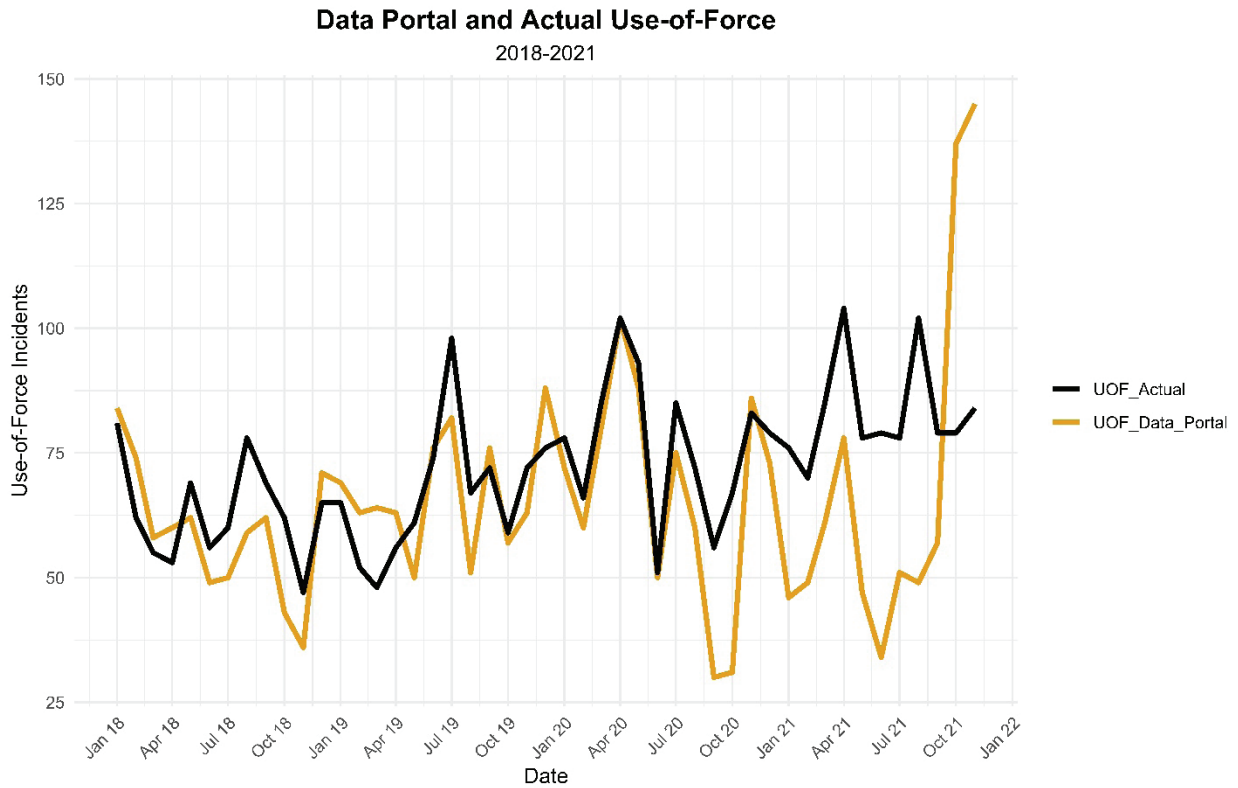


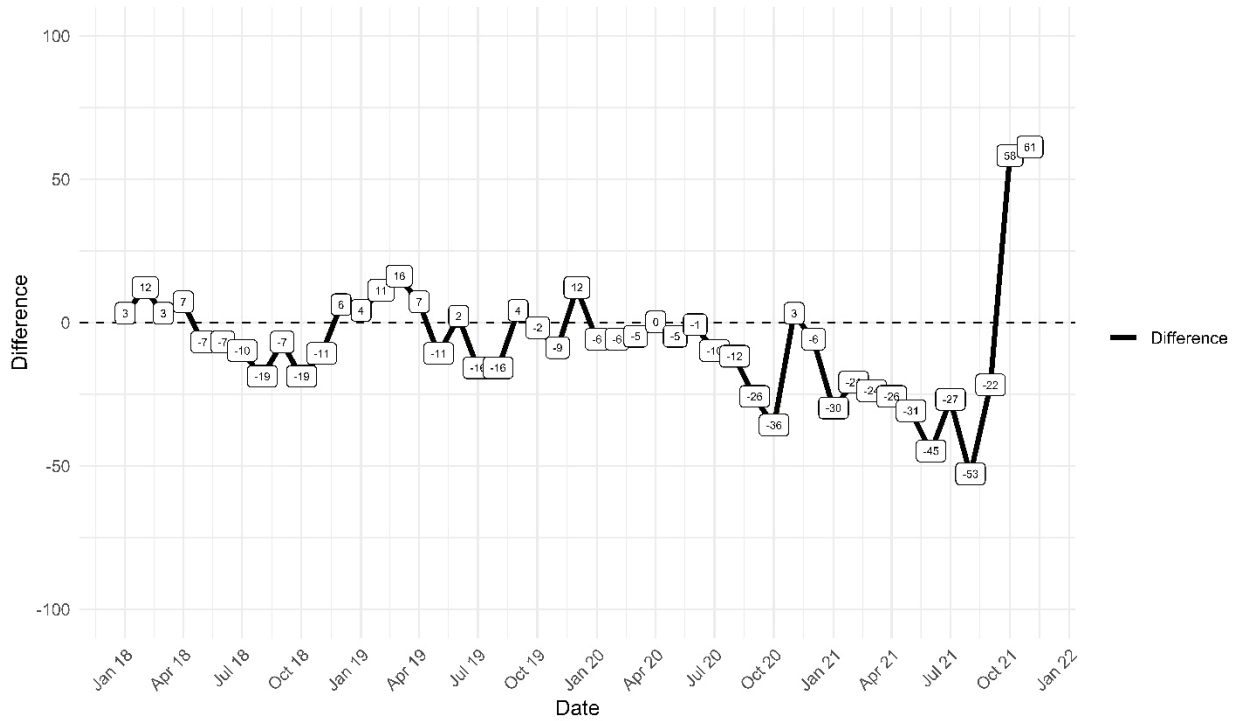
Figure 7 better illustrates this, as it visualizes the absolute difference between the portal values and the actual values for each month. The mean monthly difference between portal values and actual values from January 2018 through November 2021 is -6.74.

That is, on average, the data portal values were an undercount of seven (7) use-of-force events per month.

Figure 7

Difference between Data Portal and Actual Use-of-Force

2018-2021



IMS will partner with SLCPD to increase information flow, transparency and verification to ensure the above described inaccuracies do not occur again and that accurate results are maintained and published. Further, the department is in the process of recruiting and then hiring a Police Data Science and Research Administrator.

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## APPENDIX

As stated in the introduction, decisions must be made regarding presenting the data in any data analysis. While standardized categories are used in SLCPD's USE-OF-FORCE reports, officers can deviate from those categories when necessary. This results in additional values that cannot be cleanly fit into a box. If these additional values are left alone, too many distinct categories remain, thus providing little insight. Further, the agency's report management system requires reporting of race *and* ethnicity. This results in two categories being completed, leaving many combinations of race and ethnicity that do not align with common understandings of race (a total of 39 different combinations). In all of these scenarios, decisions must be made during the data analysis. All of these decisions are provided below to be transparent. Reasonable people may disagree with some of these categorizations. Decisions were made as prudently as possible.

### TYPE OF RESISTANCE

Categorized To	Original
<b>Compliant</b>	None
<b>Passive Resistance</b>	Not Comply w/ Verbal Comm
	Verbal Threats
	Psychological Intimidation
<b>Defensive Resistance</b>	Attempt to Escape/Flee
	Resisting Arrest/Handcuff
	Barricading Self
<b>Active Aggression</b>	Throwing Article/Object
	Displaying a Weapon
	Using hands, fist, feet
	Intent Bleed/Spit on Ofc
<b>Aggravated Resistance</b>	Using Taser/ECW
	Using Edged Weapon
	Directing a Vehicle
	Using Firearm

### FORCE TYPE

Categorized To	Original
<b>Physical Force</b>	Fist or Hands
	Feet
<b>Less-Lethal Round</b>	40 MM Launcher
	FN303
	Less Lethal Shotgun

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<b>Pointing Firearm</b>	Handgun
	SWAT Firearm
	Rifle
	Shotgun
<b>Pepper Spray</b>	ADT [stands for aerosol defense tool]
<b>Taser</b>	CED [stands for conducted energy device]
<b>Baton</b>	Flashlight

**RACE**

<b>Categorized To</b>	<b>Original Ethnicity</b>	<b>Original Race</b>
<b>White</b>	Not of Hispanic Origin	Caucasian/White
		Caucasian/White
	Other	Caucasian/White
	Unknown	Caucasian/White
	Unknown	White
<b>Hispanic</b>	Hispanic	Caucasian/White
	Hispanic	Unknown
	Hispanic	Hispanic
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander</b>	Polynesian/Pacific Islander	Asian/Pacific Islander
	Polynesian/Pacific Islander	Unknown
	Not of Hispanic Origin	Asian/Pacific Islander
		Asian/Pacific Islander
	Unknown	Asian/Pacific Islander
	Other	Asian/Pacific Islander
<b>Unknown</b>	Unknown	Unknown
		Unknown
	Not of Hispanic Origin	Unknown
	Not of Hispanic Origin	
	Other	Unknown
<b>Black</b>	Other	African American/Black
	Not of Hispanic Origin	African American/Black
	Unknown	African American/Black
		African American/Black
		Black

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<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native</b>	Other	American Indian/Alaskan Native
	Not of Hispanic Origin	American Indian/Alaskan Native
	Unknown	American Indian/Alaskan Native
		American Indian/Alaskan Native
<b>Other</b>	Polynesian	African American/Black
	Mid-Eastern	African American/Black
	Polynesian	Caucasian/White
	Mid-Eastern	Asian/Pacific Islander
	Polynesian	American Indian/Alaskan Native
	Hispanic	American Indian/Alaskan Native
	Hispanic	African American/Black
	Other	
	Mid-Eastern	Caucasian/White
<b>Mid-Eastern</b>	Mid-Eastern	Unknown