

St. Louis Park Police Department



2020 Annual Report on Use of Force

Michael Harcey, Chief of Police

3015 Raleigh Av. S.
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

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Introduction

The St. Louis Park Police Department is committed to providing a safe community through quality service, community partnerships and professionalism. In July 2020, at the request of the St. Louis Park City Council, we provided an overview to council members of the police department's use of force policy. The city council agreed with the police department's proposal to form a workgroup to work with police staff on updating the use-of-force policy to comply with the newly legislated model policy. The workgroup included volunteers from the city's police advisory and human rights commissions and the multicultural advisory committee.

Workgroup recommendations were incorporated into the final revised use-of-force policy that was adopted and implemented by the police department. All St. Louis Park police officers completed training on the new use-of-force policy by the Dec. 15, 2020, deadline required by the Minnesota Police Accountability Act. The entire use of force policy can be found on our website at www.stlouispark.org/police.

The following policy introduction was developed by the work group as the guiding principles for our officers use of force decisions:

Every person has the right to be free from excessive use of force by officers acting under the color of law. In accordance with our mission and values as an agency, we are committed to building and maintaining partnerships with the community we serve, to transparency, to fundamental fairness, to treating everyone with respect and dignity and to listening to the voices of the community.

Sworn law enforcement officers have been granted the extraordinary authority to use force when necessary to accomplish lawful ends. It is the policy of this law enforcement agency to ensure officers respect the sanctity of human life when making decisions regarding use of force. Officers shall treat everyone with dignity and without prejudice. Officers shall use only that amount of force that reasonably appears necessary given the facts and circumstances perceived by the officer at the time of the event to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement purpose, and to protect the safety of others and the officer.

Officers should exercise special care when interacting with individuals with known or perceived physical, mental health, developmental, or intellectual disabilities as an individual's disability may affect the individual's ability to understand or comply with commands from peace officers.

The following report was completed for the purpose of reviewing the St. Louis Park Police Department's use of force for the year 2020. The data collected for this report was generated from the department's response to resistance reports and a manual review of cases involving force. This report will be used to identify trends in the use of force by agency personnel to evaluate potential training modifications, equipment needs or policy revisions.

When force is used, police officers are required to complete a Response to Resistance report (RRR). This report is required any time force is used beyond routine handcuffing. This standard is much higher than that of many police departments across the country that require only documenting the use of force when there is an incident involving injury to the subject of the force.

The Response to Resistance report as well as any related body-worn or in-car camera video is reviewed by the duty supervisor. The duty supervisor is required to evaluate whether the officer's actions complied with St. Louis Park Police Department Policy and State law. As a form of checks and balances, all Response to Resistance reports are further reviewed by two command staff members.

Use of Force Definitions

De-escalation: Taking action or communicating verbally or non-verbally during a potential force encounter. De-escalation is an attempt to stabilize the situation and reduce the immediacy of the threat so that more time, options, and resources can be called upon to resolve the situation without the use of force, or with reduced force. De-escalation may include the use of such techniques as command presence, verbal persuasion, dialogue, advisements, warnings and tactical repositioning.

Verbalization: Making conversation or issuing commands, orders or directions, given with the intention of informing, educating and controlling.

Soft Hand Techniques: Non-injury producing, weaponless control methods.

Chemical Aerosol: non-lethal aerosol sprays.

Hard Empty Hand Techniques: When an officer uses strikes to create temporary dysfunction, or a physical takedown for the purpose of gaining control of a combative individual.

Electronic Control Device - Taser Displayed: When an officer points their Taser at an individual but does not discharge the Taser.

Electronic Control Device - Taser Deployed: When an officer discharges their Taser at an individual to gain control of them.

Impact Weapon: Less-than-lethal option, such as a projectile or baton, that is intended to create temporary dysfunction in order to gain control. The Kinetic Energy Projectile (KEP) is considered a less-than-lethal option.

Service Weapon Displayed: A firearm is displayed by an officer or is pointed at an individual.

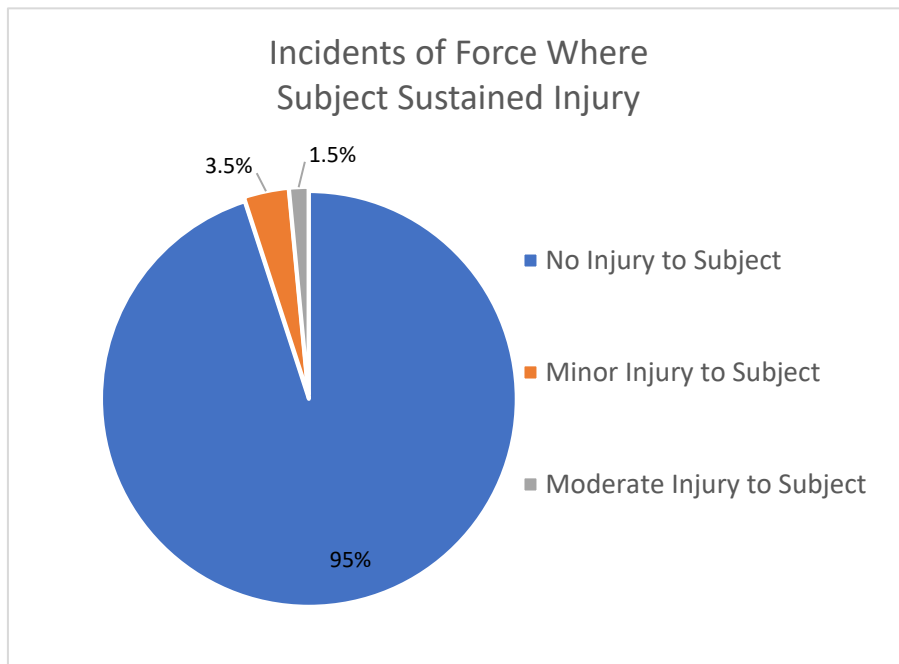
Service Weapon Deployed: When an officer discharges their service weapon at an individual to protect themselves or another from death or great bodily harm.

Deadly Force: Any force that could potentially result in death or great bodily harm.

Response to Resistance Statistics for 2020

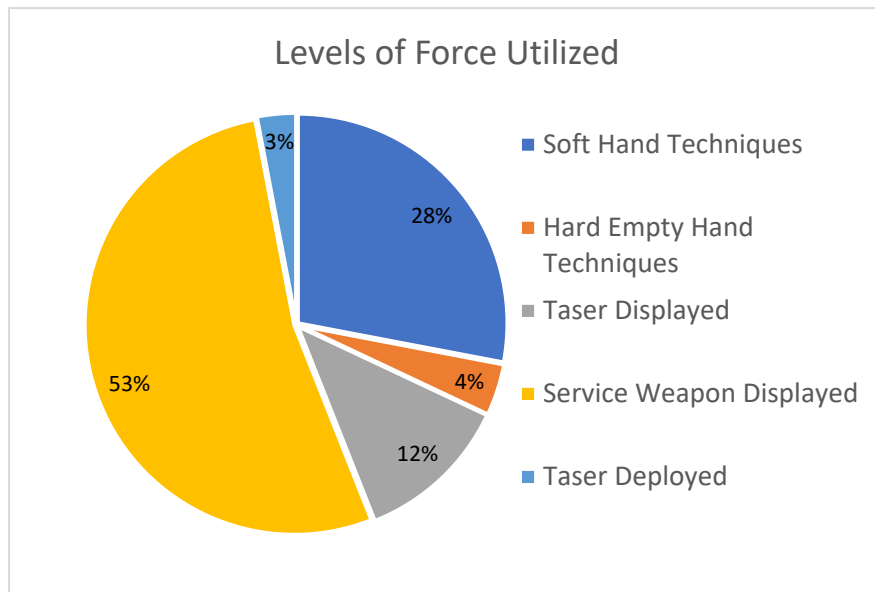
In 2020, the St. Louis Park Police Department responded to 50,668 calls for service and wrote 7,607 reports. Of those calls for service, 150 cases resulted in Response to Resistance reports. This means that in 2020, 0.296% of the total calls for service resulted in some level of force being used. St. Louis Park Police Department Policy requires that every officer involved in the use of force incident is required to complete a Response to Resistance report. Therefore, some incidents in which multiple officers responded or involved multiple subjects may contain multiple Response to Resistance reports. In 2020, 521 Response to Resistance reports were completed for the 150 cases in which force was documented. Of those 521 Response to Resistance reports, there were 208 unique individuals that were subject to force.

When evaluating use of force incidents, it's important to track injuries sustained by both the subject and the officer to gauge effectiveness and identify possible training or policy issues. Of the 150 cases where force was documented, 198 of the 208 subjects involved reported no injury; seven sustained minor injuries (abrasions, scrapes, bruises); and three sustained moderate injury (lacerations, puncture wound, K9 bite). Officers were injured 23 times, 20 of which were reported as minor injuries and three moderate injuries.



Levels of Force Used

The St. Louis Park Police Department's Response to Resistance report is designed to provide data on the level of force used on a subject. The report tracks the force option used based on a use of force options that include verbal commands, soft empty hand techniques, hard empty hand techniques, Taser displayed, service weapon displayed, Taser deployed and service weapon deployed. For purposes of this analysis, the highest level of force used during the incident is reported.



De-escalation

A check box in the case information section of the police report was added in 2018 to allow tracking of incidents where officers use de-escalation strategies. Officers are instructed to check this box each time they use de-escalation strategies and to further document their de-escalation efforts in their report. Officers are also required to document de-escalation strategies in their Response to Resistance report. Of the 150 Response to Resistance cases in 2020, de-escalation strategies were documented 43 times by use of the check box, which amounts to 29% of use-of-force incidents. It was discovered that this check box was being under-utilized and was made a mandatory field when officers complete any report on January 1, 2021. This will make tracking of officer's de-escalation efforts more accurate and complete for 2021. It should also be noted that, of the remaining 107 cases, 22 (21%) were high-risk traffic stops requiring immediate commands with little or no time for the use of de-escalation strategies. Read more about high-risk traffic stops in the next section.

About High-Risk Traffic Stops

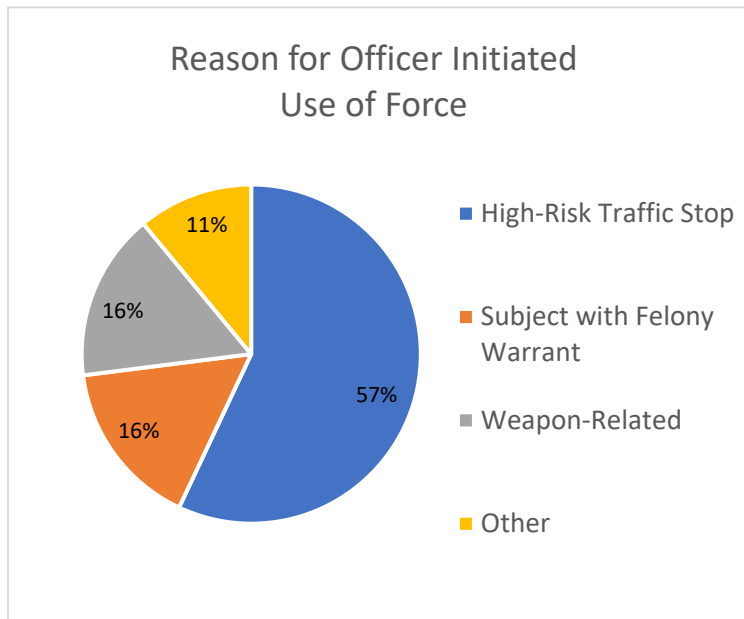
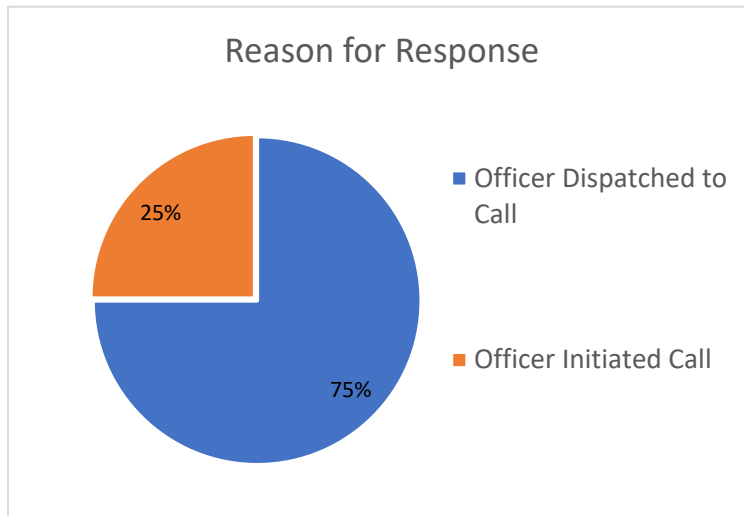
High-risk traffic stops are defined as posing a significant risk to the officer when dealing with the occupants of a motor vehicle. Situations that may fall into this category are known or suspected felons, stolen vehicles, an armed individual, or any potentially dangerous person.

When a police officer has a reasonable belief that a motor vehicle to be stopped contains an individual(s) falling into one of the above-listed categories, the officer must employ a set of tactics substantially different from those used in a routine traffic stop. The officer's reasonable belief can be based on the officer's observations, official communications, and other sources of reliable information. Due to the dangerous nature of high-risk stops, it is a nationally recognized training standard to have a firearm at a ready position or pointed in the direction of the suspect vehicle. The goal of a high-risk traffic stop is to detain or arrest dangerous or potentially dangerous individuals in the safest manner possible for everyone involved. All high-risk traffic stops require a Response to Resistance report to document why the firearm was pointed in the direction of the suspect vehicle.

Self-Initiated Cases Involving Force

During an analysis of the 150 cases that involved some level of force, it's valuable to review if those cases were initiated by officers or if they were a response to a call for service. Out of the 150 cases involving force, 38 were self-initiated. Twenty-two of those were a result of a high-risk traffic stop. Only one of the officer-initiated cases in 2020 resulted in minor injury to the subject, i.e., scrapes/abrasions. Below is a breakdown of the officer self-initiated traffic stops/contacts where force was used:

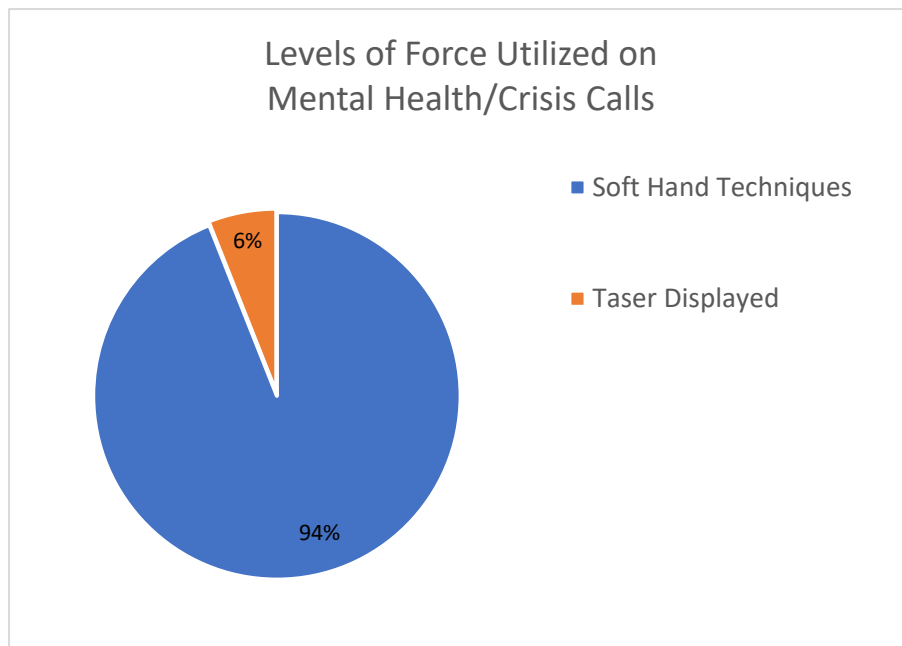
- High-Risk Traffic Stops 22
- Subjects with Felony Warrants 6
- Weapons-Related 6
- Other 4



Mental Health/Crisis Calls

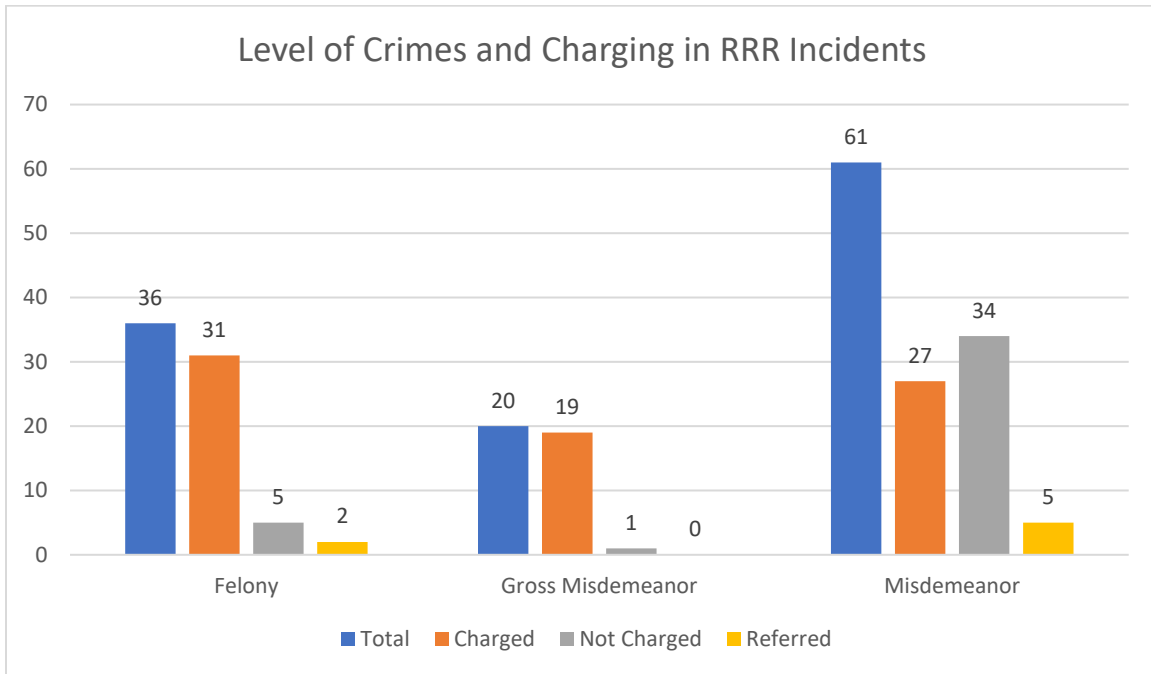
In 2020, St. Louis Park police officers responded to 1,654 calls related to mental health, of which 388 were crisis/mental health/suicide calls, and 1,266 were welfare checks. Of those 1,654 calls, 17 (1.0%) resulted in Response to Resistance reports where officers used Soft Hand Techniques 16 times and displayed the Taser once. In all incidents where force was used on Mental Health/Crisis calls, the subject was not injured. Of the 17 cases, 11 resulted in a health and welfare hold on the subject. A health and welfare hold enables an officer to require a subject to be evaluated by a mental health professional.

In 2018, the police department participated in a strategic planning process, as a result, one of our strategic initiatives is to address mental health concerns in the community. This effort has led to our work with the Hennepin County Criminal Justice Behavior Health Initiative, a partnership with Hennepin County and the Hopkins Police Department. As part of the initiative a Hennepin County licensed social worker works directly with police officers in St. Louis Park. Officers and the social worker partner to effectively address the needs of community members who may have mental health, substance, medical and other social service needs. In 2020, the St. Louis Park Police Department made 232 referrals to the Hennepin County Criminal Justice Behavior Health Initiative.



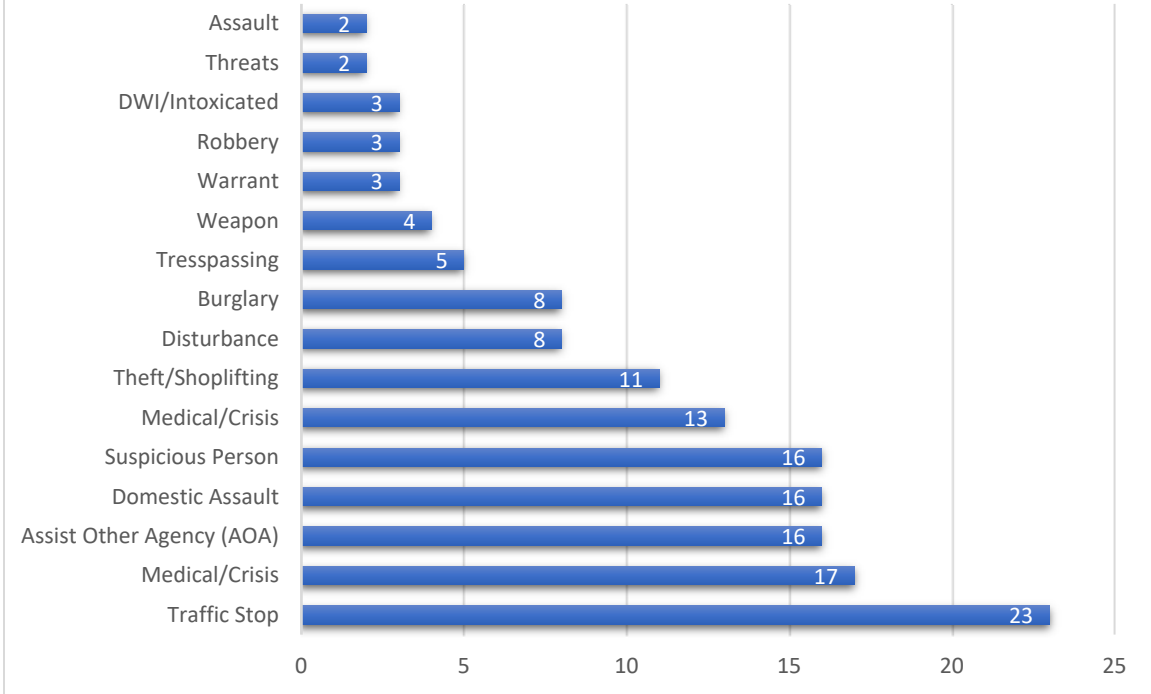
Charging data

In 2020, 150 cases resulted in completion of Response to Resistance reports. Of those cases, subjects were charged with crimes in 69 cases – 46% of the number of cases involving Response to Resistance reports. Mental Health/Crisis Calls are not included in the totals reported below.



Level of crime	Total	Charged	Not Charged	Referred to Another Agency
Felony	36	31	5	2
Gross Misdemeanor	20	19	1	0
Misdemeanor	61	27	34	5
Assist Other Agency	16	Unk	Unk	Unknown Charges Through Other Agencies
Mental Health/Crisis	17	N/A	N/A	HC Criminal Justice Behavior Health Initiative
Totals	150	77	37	7

Calls for Service - RRR Incidents

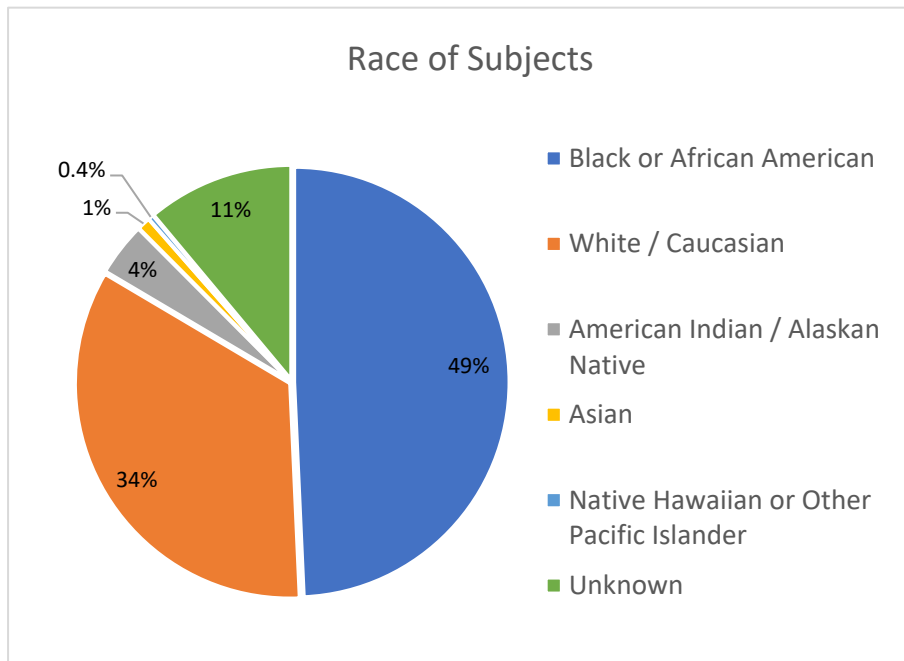


Race Data

The St. Louis Park Police Department does not collect race data on all calls for service or on all police reports. However, race is recorded on a booking record during the arrest process and is required on the Response to Resistance report. Of the 150 cases, 521 Response to Resistance reports listed 208 unique individuals subject to force. The following race data was collected:

- Black or African American 102
- White/Caucasian 70
- American Indian 9
- Asian 3
- Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 1
- Unknown 23

In 16 of the cases where race is reported as unknown, St. Louis Park police officers were dispatched to assist other agencies and race data wasn't available for the Response to Resistance report.



In 112 of the 150 cases, officers were dispatched to the incident and responded based on a citizen complaint. Thirty-eight officer self-initiated calls in 2020 resulted in the use of force on 71 subjects. Of those 71 individuals, 37 were Black or African American, 19 were white, seven were unknown, five were American Indian / Alaskan Native, two were Asian and one was Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. In these 38 cases, there was one report of minor injury to the subject, i.e., scrapes/abrasions.