

St. Louis Park Police Department



2021 Annual Report on Use of Force

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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. The use-of-force policy is reviewed annually and updated as required to meet standards set by state law and the Police Officer Standards and Training Board model policies. All St. Louis Park police officers receive training on applicable updates as well as extensive annual training on the policy. 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 2021. 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.

Kinetic Energy Projectile (KEP): The KEP is a less-than-lethal projectile device which may be deployed as an additional law enforcement tool to reduce the likelihood of injury to officers and subjects. It should be used to control and / or apprehend combative subjects when deadly force is not justified or when attempts to subdue a subject by verbalization or hard, empty hand control has been, or is likely to be, ineffective, or when an officer has a reasonable expectation that it will be unsafe to approach within contact range of a given subject.

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

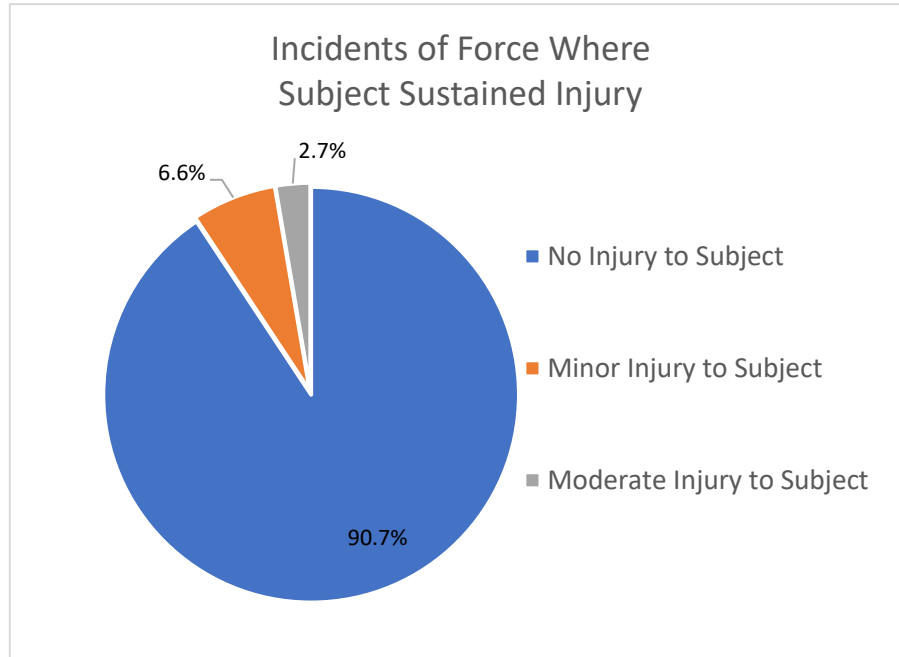
Service Weapon Deployed: When an officer discharges their service weapon at an individual to protect themselves or another from death or great bodily harm.

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

Response to Resistance Statistics for 2021

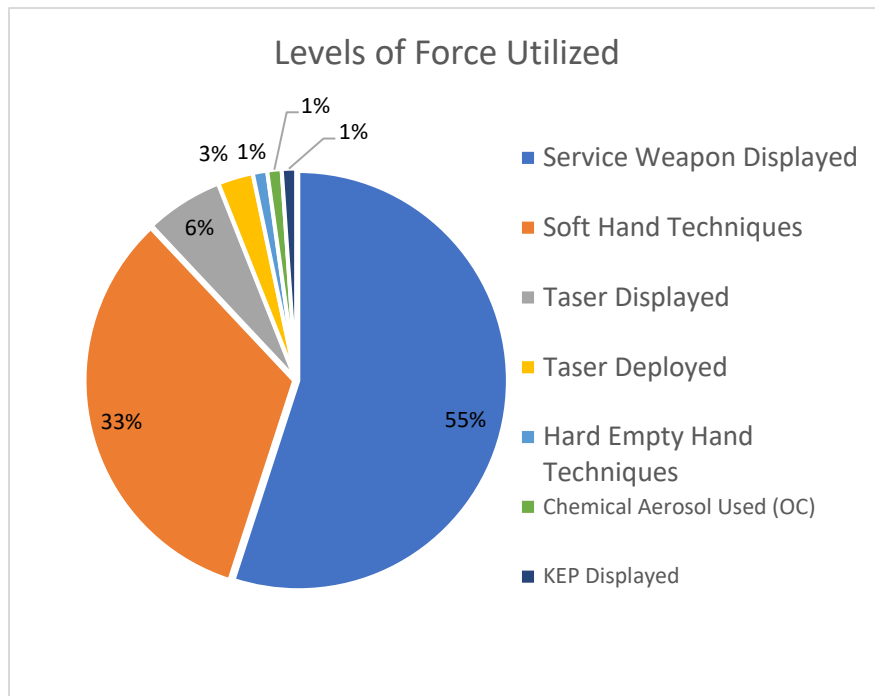
In 2021, the St. Louis Park Police Department responded to 51,620 calls for service and wrote 7,894 reports. Of those calls for service, 140 cases resulted in Response to Resistance reports. This means that in 2021, 0.27% of the total calls for service resulted in some level of force being used. St. 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 2021, 421 Response to Resistance reports were completed for the 140 cases in which force was documented. Of those 421 Response to Resistance reports, there were 183 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 140 cases where force was documented, 166 of the 183 subjects involved reported no injury; twelve sustained minor injuries (abrasions, scrapes, bruises); and five sustained moderate injury (lacerations, puncture wound, K9 bite). Officers were injured eight times, six were reported as minor injuries and two as 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 required 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 140 Response to Resistance cases in 2021, de-escalation strategies were documented 104 times by use of the check box, which amounts to 74% of use-of-force incidents. Some incidents do not allow time for de-escalation strategies or are not conducive to their use. High-risk traffic stops would be an example of those incidents.

About High-Risk Traffic Stops

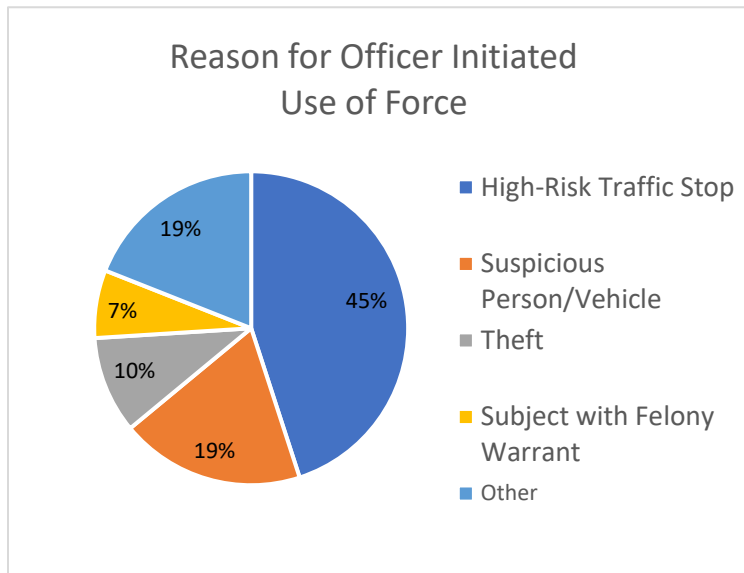
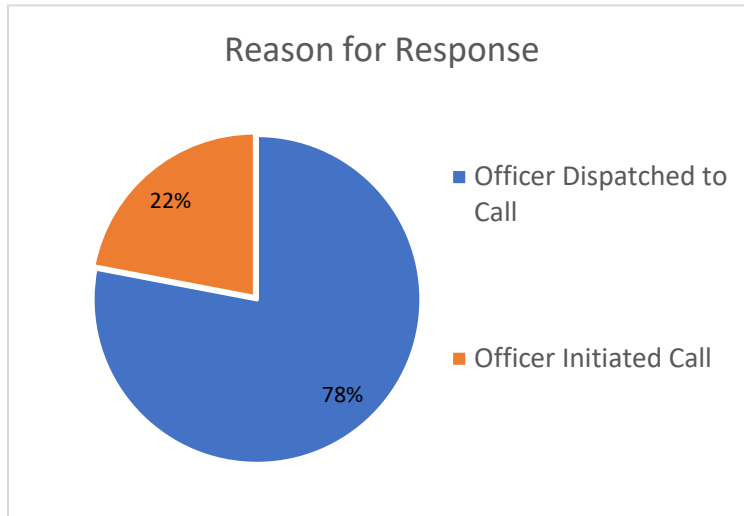
High-risk traffic stops are defined as posing a significant risk to the officer when dealing with the occupants of a motor vehicle. Situations that may fall into this category are known or suspected felons, stolen vehicles, an armed individual, or any potentially dangerous person. In 2021, officers were involved in 33 high-risk traffic stops that resulted in Response to Resistance reports.

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 140 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 140 cases involving force, 31 were self-initiated. Fourteen of those were a result of a high-risk traffic stop. Only one of the officer-initiated cases in 2021 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:

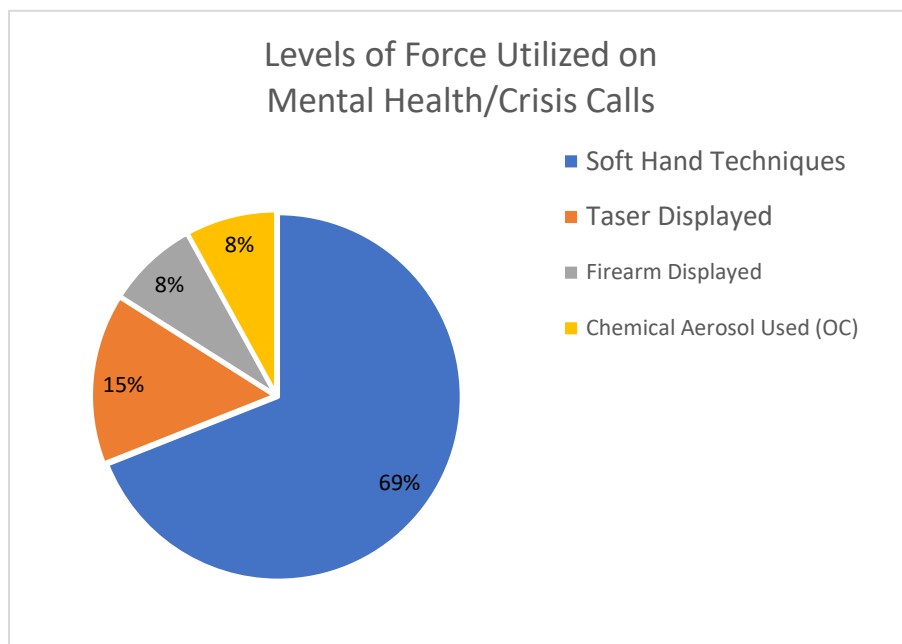
- High-Risk Traffic Stops 14
- Suspicious Persons or Vehicle 6
- Theft 3
- Subjects with Felony Warrants 2
- Other 6



Mental Health/Crisis Calls

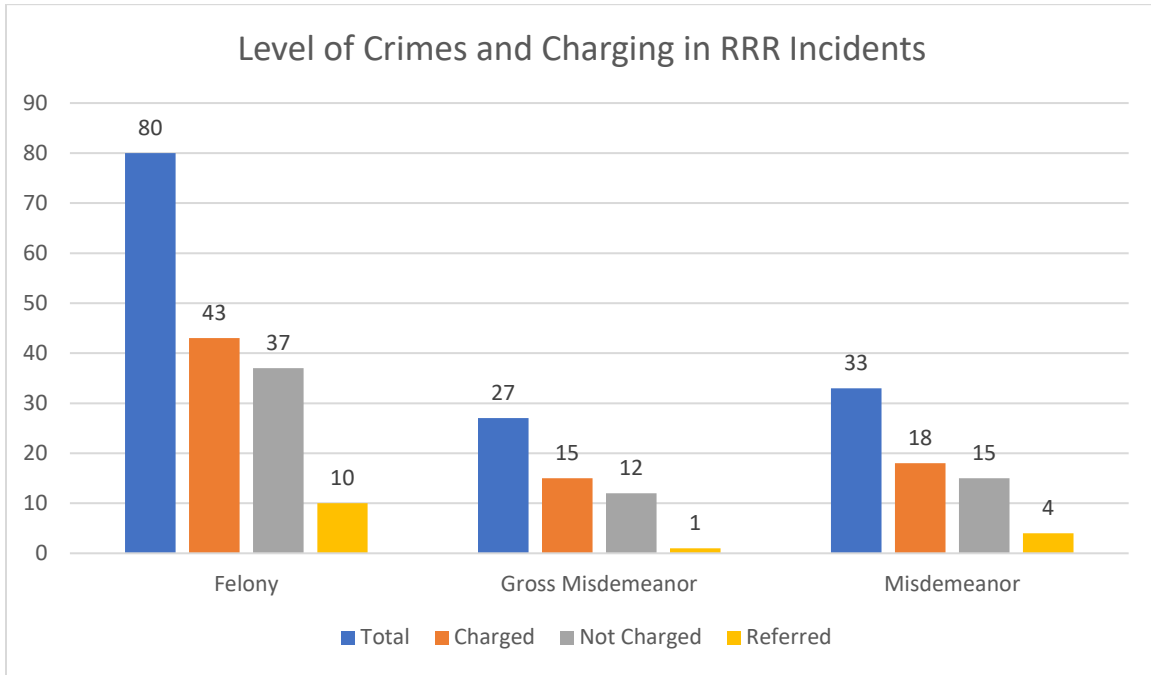
In 2021, St. Louis Park police officers responded to 545 calls related to mental health, of which 182 were crisis/mental health/suicide calls, and 363 were welfare checks. Of those 545 calls, 13 (2.4%) resulted in Response to Resistance reports where officers used Soft Hand Techniques nine times, displayed the Taser twice, displayed a firearm once and deployed chemical aerosol spray (OC) once. In incidents where force was used on Mental Health/Crisis calls, only one subject suffered a minor injury. Of the 13 cases, five 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 an effort to further address mental health concerns in the community, the St. Louis Park Police Department has partnered with the Hennepin County Criminal Justice Behavior Health Initiative. 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 2021, the St. Louis Park Police Department made 377 referrals to the Hennepin County Criminal Justice Behavior Health Initiative.



Charging data

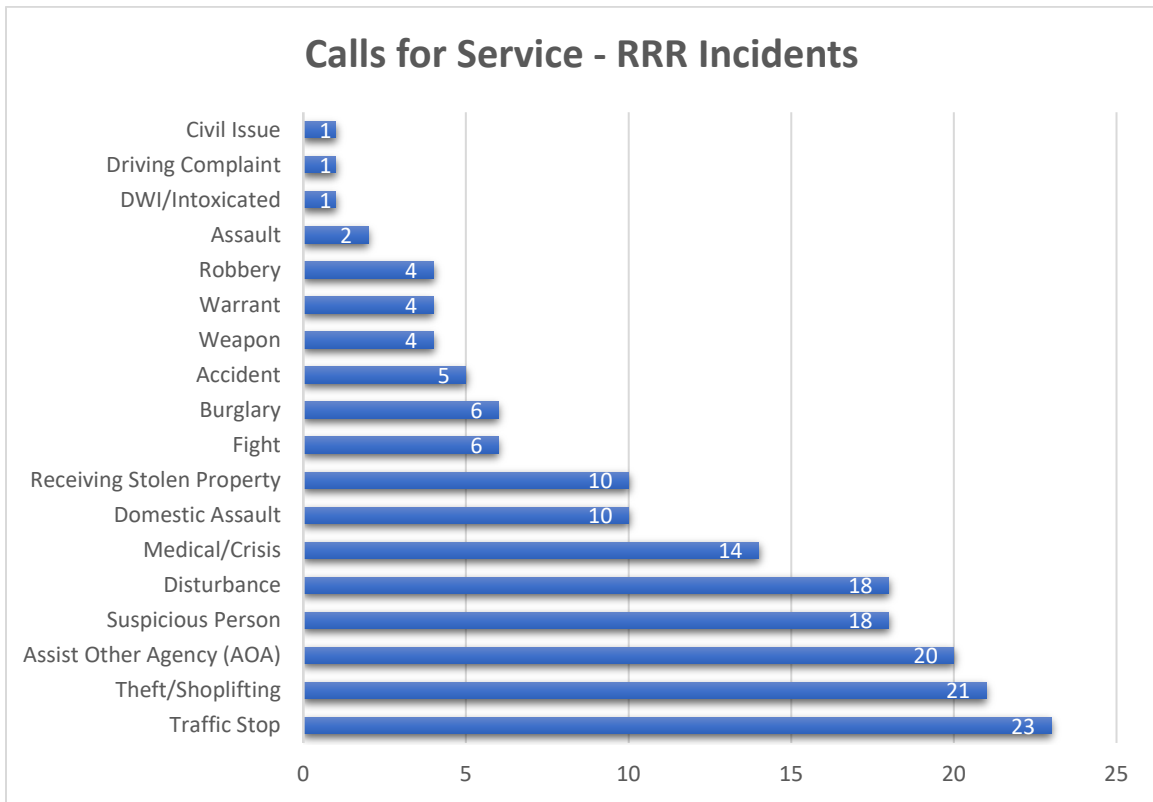
In 2021, 140 cases resulted in completion of Response to Resistance reports. Of those cases, subjects were charged with crimes in 69 cases – 46% of the number of cases involving Response to Resistance reports. Mental Health/Crisis Calls are not included in the totals reported below.



Level of crime	Total	Charged	Not Charged	Referred to Another Agency
Felony	80	43	37	10
Gross Misdemeanor	27	15	12	1
Misdemeanor	33	18	15	4
Total	140	76	64	15
Assist Other Agency*	14	Unk	Unk	Unknown Charges Through Other Agencies
Mental Health/Crisis*	13	2	11	HC Criminal Justice Behavior Health Initiative

* Call types included in above totals.

Call Types for RRR Incidents*

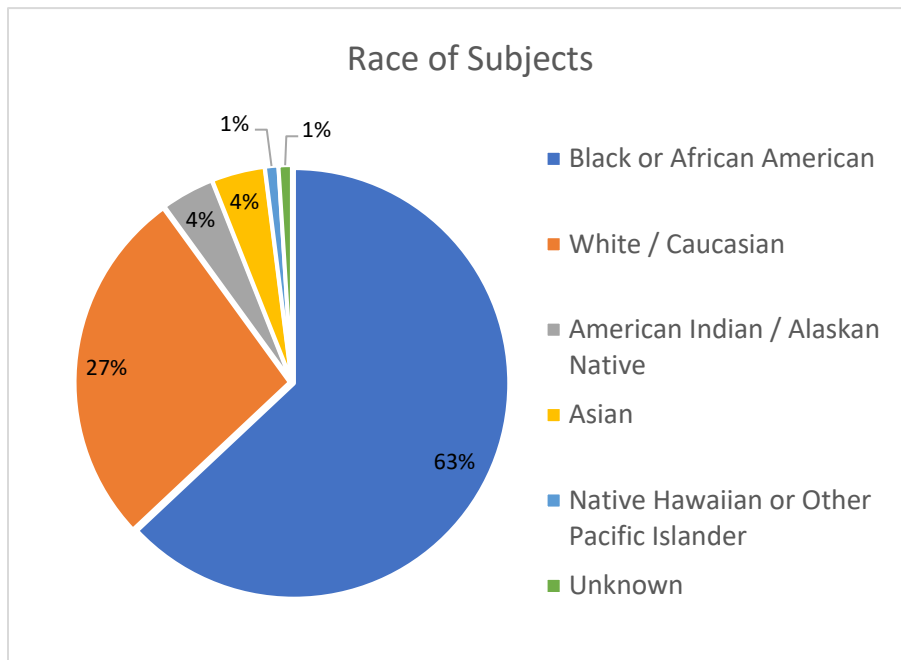


*Some incidents may contain more than one call type.

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 140 cases, 421 Response to Resistance reports listed 183 unique individuals subject to force. The following race data was collected:

- Black or African American 114
- White/Caucasian 50
- American Indian 8
- Asian 8
- Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 2
- Unknown 1



In 109 of the 140 cases, officers were dispatched to the incident and responded based on a citizen complaint. Thirty-one officer self-initiated calls in 2021 resulted in the use of force on 45 subjects. Of those 45 individuals, 34 were Black or African American, seven were white, three were Asian, and one was Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. In these 45 cases, there was one report of minor injury to the subject, i.e., scrapes/abrasions/bruising.