

Saint Paul Police Department

Police Use-of-Force Incidents

Summary Report

2016 – 2021

Chief Todd Axtell

Dear Community Partners,

In February 2019, the Saint Paul Police Department published its first ever use-of-force report covering the years 2016 and 2017. At that time, I reported that the department would continue to publish reports that captured use-of-force incidents in subsequent years.

As part of my ongoing commitment to transparency, I am pleased to present this publication of the combined 2016-2021 use-of-force report.

Among the detailed data included in this report are the number of times force was used, types of force used, demographics of those involved in use of force incidents, injuries as a result of force, firearm discharges and excessive force complaints.

Notable within this data is the low percentage of injuries sustained by individuals involved in use-of-force incidents with our officers. I believe this outcome is the result of restraint, good judgment and strong teamwork shown by our officers during incidents when force is necessary. While our continued training and policy developments certainly play a crucial role in these data points, the heart of this data points to the fact that our Saint Paul Police Officers are committed to delivering trusted service with respect each and every day.

And we could not do this work without the support of our community. Thank you for your continued trust and support of our officers. I am grateful for our Saint Paul community and the way that we continue to work together to strengthen the safety of our city.

Respectfully,



Todd Axtell
CHIEF OF POLICE

The Saint Paul Police Department (SPPD) is committed to providing trusted service with respect each and every day. Our department understands that in order to continue building trust with the community, we must also be committed to transparency.

This report is reflective of that commitment to transparency. The data included in this report were sourced from multiple areas within the SPPD and did not previously exist in this format.

Key findings of this report include:

- Subjects of force were not injured in 90 percent of cases in 2021. The SPPD believes this low rate of injury is due to a combination of factors, including training in de-escalation and the use of multiple officer tactics as a method to minimize injury to subjects and officers.
- Officers responded to 240,104 incidents in 2021 and physical force resulted in 575 of those interactions. This can be reduced to one physical use-of-force incident occurring in every 417 interactions, or 0.24 percent of the time.
- Canine apprehensions that resulted in a bite steadily declined from 36 in 2016 to 0 in 2021.

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INTRODUCTION

Report Overview

Police use of force continues to be one of the most important national and local discussion topics between police departments and the communities they serve.

Chief Todd Axtell directed the publication of the first report following numerous police and community meetings in 2018. The communities served by the SPPD made their voices heard clearly and asked to know more about police use of force.

Until the publishing of the first report in 2019, the SPPD had not previously reported, in detail, facts and circumstances of police use-of-force incidents.

This report builds on the previously reported summary data for all use-of-force incidents in 2016 and 2017, where any level of force was used above handcuffing an unresisting person, and now includes 2018 through 2021 data.

Saint Paul Police Department

The SPPD was established in 1854 as the first police department in the State of Minnesota. In 2021, the department had an authorized strength of 620 sworn police officer positions. The department serves the capital city of the state of Minnesota, a city of more than 310,000 residents. The city is a metropolis of residential, commercial, and business and is proud of its high standard of living.

In the fall of 2020, the SPPD launched the EPIC (Ethical Policing is Courageous) training program. The program is a first-of-its-kind peer intervention program designed to teach officers how to intervene successfully – regardless of rank or seniority – to prevent misconduct. The program, which involves eight hours of discussion, video analysis and interactive scenarios, has been completed by every officer in the department. EPIC builds on the department’s overall training program, which is focused on ensuring officers have the skills, knowledge and commitment to build trust through excellence, deliver exceptional service, and treat everyone with the utmost respect. In addition to the EPIC program, officers participate in moral courage training, implicit bias training and crisis intervention team training.

Committed to Transparency

Chief Todd Axtell was appointed as Saint Paul’s Chief of Police by then-Mayor Chris Coleman on June 23, 2016. Chief Axtell immediately committed the department to transparency and to engaging the public at historic levels. Since his appointment, the department has worked toward delivering on this assurance of increased transparency. True to his pledge, Chief Axtell and his administration released 15 years of traffic stop data in 2017 and every year following that. The data were collected based on a 2001 agreement between the Saint Paul NAACP and the SPPD, but the data was not previously published.

The department also published a website comparing programming, priorities and initiatives with former President Barack Obama’s “Final Report on 21st Century Policing” and created an interactive online version of the police department policy manual for the public. Each of these initiatives included an online tool making it possible for members of the public to provide feedback to the department on its performance, policies and procedures.

The department formally adopted and launched a body-worn camera (BWC) program in 2018, requiring all sworn police officers to wear a BWC while providing police services. The department publishes quarterly reports on its BWC program, which can be viewed online on the department’s website, <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/police>

Use-of-Force Complaints

The SPPD investigates all complaints against officers involving the use of police force. Complaints can be received from the public or initiated internally by the department.

There are many ways the public can make a complaint about police use of force. Complaints can be filed with several non-government groups that have partnered with the SPPD, with the City of Saint Paul Office of Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity or directly with the SPPD.

All excessive force investigations are reviewed by the Police Civilian Internal Affairs Review Commission (PCIARC). The PCIARC is a body of Saint Paul residents selected by the Mayor of Saint Paul and confirmed by a majority vote of the City Council.

The role of the PCIARC is to evaluate the complaint and the documented investigation and make recommendations to the chief of police on 1) whether the police action violated policy and, if so, 2) what disciplinary action they believe is warranted.

The PCIARC is provided unrestricted access to all materials related to an incident. This includes all police reports and other documentation, audio and video evidence and all investigative documents and materials.

The below table represents complaint data and final outcomes of excessive force complaints received between 2016-2021.

Excessive Force Complaints						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Complaints	7	0	4	2	1	2 *
Sustained	1	0	0	0	0	1
Policy Violation	1	0	0	0	0	1

(*) of the 2 excessive force complaints received in 2021, one was submitted by a person outside of SPPD (external), and one was submitted by an employee within SPPD (internal).

Data reflect incident occurrence date and not the date of the filed complaint. You can find a detailed account of all complaints filed against members of the police department at the below link:

<https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/human-rights-equal-economic-opportunity>

Use-of-Force Reporting

The SPPD requires every officer to notify a supervisor and file a police report and a use-of-force report for every use of force above unresisted handcuffing.

A supervisor is required to respond to the location and interview both the officer and the person on whom force was used. The supervisor evaluates the incident to ensure the force application and the decision leading up to the application were within department policy.

Use-of-Force Oversight

The SPPD has established several oversight measures to ensure incidents involving police use of force meet all department expectations.

Beyond the initial response and inquiry of the front-line supervisor, unit commanders are required to review each incident during which physical force was used within their command. These incidents are then presented and reviewed by the department's use-of-force committee, whose members represent the senior leadership of each of the three patrol districts and the training unit. The committee is chaired by the deputy chief of the operations division.

As a second measure of checks and balances, the department's internal affairs unit also reviews use-of-force incidents for potential policy violations. If any possible policy violations are identified, a formal investigation is initiated.

Use-of-Force Data

Throughout the years documented in this report, the SPPD used a record management system (RMS) implemented in 2001. The functionality of this system met the record and data needs of the time in which it was designed.

In more recent years, there was, and continues to be, significant evolution in policing and the interest in understanding policing trends. The RMS used in previous years did not have the capacity to adequately collect or report on these evolving trends.

In 2020, the SPPD successfully transitioned into a new report writing system that collects more comprehensive data as it relates to the types of crimes and people with whom our officers come into contact. In September 2021, the SPPD began transitioning officers' use-of-force reporting from the previous software system to the new RMS system. As a result, the 2021 data included in this report are a

combination of data from both the previous software and the newly implemented RMS reporting. The reportable data are presented in a summary format.

Department Policies

The SPPD revised its use-of-force policy in April of 2018 and posted this policy online. The department hosted several public meetings to discuss the policy so that community members could share their ideas, input and concerns. The department collected more than 100 feedback points and incorporated dozens of them into the updated policy.

The foundation of the revised policy was built on the principles within the articles of the U.S. Constitution, and both state and federal law. Policy development was also guided by former President Obama's "Final Report on 21st Century Policing."

The revised policy captures many new elements not present in earlier policies. It includes more language focused on de-escalation and speaks specifically to when an officer can use deadly force.

The revised policy also places a greater emphasis on protecting the sanctity of life, de-escalation and includes guidelines to help officers determine the appropriate level of force based on observed behavior.

The new policy also contains a new visual model that illustrates levels of responses matched to subject actions.

The policy is online for the public to view and the web page solicits electronic feedback from the public.

You can find the policy on the police department's website: www.stpaul.gov/departments/police

The use-of-force incidents reported in this document took place under both the previous version of the policy and the current one. Changing trends resulting from the policy revision will be reported in future documents.

Use-of-Force Training

To be eligible for licensure as peace officers by the State of Minnesota, officers must complete educational and hands-on training required by the Minnesota Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Board, as well as pass the state's Peace Officer Licensing Exam. In addition to these state requirements, SPPD officers begin their careers in a 20-week police academy, during which they receive approximately 140 hours of use-of-force training. After the police academy, officers receive quarterly use-of-force training in addition to annual in-service training.

Officers are required to demonstrate both understanding and proficiency of department policies and accepted practices. These include appropriate use-of-force techniques, firearms training, de-escalation and other related topics.

Officer training places a heavy emphasis on using time and distance to de-escalate situations whenever possible, and using multiple officer tactics so that fewer potentially injury-causing techniques are required.

As stated earlier in this report, officers are also taught to identify and recognize subject behaviors in order to determine appropriate responses.

USE-OF-FORCE FINDINGS

Use-of-Force Incidents

There are several distinct ways to report use-of-force data that include the **number of incidents** the SPPD responded to when force was used, the **number of force actions** taken by officers, the **number of officers** who used force and the **number of persons** subjected to police force.

This report individually captures each of these areas for each year for the reader to evaluate. Visual representations were added to improve understanding of the data.

Number of Incidents

Saint Paul police officers responded to 269,852 incidents in 2016 and physical force resulted in 453 of those incidents. This can be reduced to one physical use-of-force incident occurring in every 589 police interactions, or 0.17 (17 one-hundredths) percent of the time.

Saint Paul police officers responded to 301,196 incidents in 2017 and physical force resulted in 423 of those incidents. This can be reduced to one physical use-of-force incident occurring in every 710 police interactions, or 0.14 (14 one-hundredths) percent of the time.

Saint Paul police officers responded to 298,492 incidents in 2018 and physical force resulted in 382 of those incidents. This can be reduced to one physical use-of-force incident occurring in every 781 police interactions, or 0.13 (13 one-hundredths) percent of the time.

Saint Paul police officers responded to 292,765 incidents in 2019 and physical force resulted in 426 of those incidents. This can be reduced to one physical use-of-force incident occurring in every 687 police interactions, or 0.14 (14 one-hundredths) percent of the time.

Saint Paul police officers responded to 276,718 incidents in 2020 and physical force resulted in 545 of those incidents. This can be reduced to one physical use-of-force incident occurring in every 507 police interactions, or 0.20 (20 one-hundredths) percent of the time.

Saint Paul police officers responded to 240,104 incidents in 2021 and physical force resulted in 575 of those incidents. This can be reduced to one physical use-of-force incident occurring in every 417 police interactions, or 0.24 (24 one-hundredths) percent of the time.

Number of Officers Using Force

The table below highlights what was noted in the use-of-force training section: “Officer training places a heavy emphasis on using time and distance to de-escalate situations whenever possible, and using multiple officer tactics so that fewer potentially injury-causing techniques are required.” As a result, the table below highlights a shift towards increased multiple officer tactics, including multiple officer take-downs, which has allowed officers to resolve incidents with fewer injuries to both subjects and officers.

Number of Officers Using Force in Each Incident						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1 officer	296	271	241	252	256	220
2 officers	116	106	106	117	188	219
3 officers	33	38	30	39	60	75
4 officers	7	6	4	14	23	36
5 or more officers	1	2	1	4	18	25
Total	453	423	382	426	545	575

Types of Physical Force

The SPPD collects data on the physical force techniques used by officers. There were 755 in 2016, 758 in 2017, 700 in 2018, 742 in 2019, 1043 in 2020, and 1317 in 2021.

Most force actions involved control holds, escorts, resistive handcuffing, and taking subjects to the ground. Officers are trained to, whenever possible, control subjects using multiple-officer techniques rather than strikes or other potentially injury causing techniques.

Although the data below vary from year to year, an increase was seen in the 2020 and 2021 data. As the department reviewed this increase, we found that a contributing factor was the department's use of multiple officer take-downs. Specifically, the data collection for multiple officer take-downs includes force recorded for each officer involved in the take-down (where 3 officers are involved in a single take-down, there will be 3 reportable use of force "types.") While the increased use of these methods led to higher use of force numbers in 2020 and 2021, they have also resulted in fewer injuries sustained during incidents.

Use of Force Types						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
ASR	85	73	47	54	64	57
Body/Escort Hold	205	189	138	125	167	218
Canine	36	19	6	0	2	0
EZ Leg Restraint*	NA	NA	2	19	22	28
Handcuff/Restraint w/Resistance	108	107	97	80	152	250
Hard Empty Hand	56	33	4	27	15	18
Impact Weapon ASP/Other	10	5	1	1	1	3
Leg/Knee Strike	64	48	28	26	19	19
Less Lethal	2	2	1	6	5	8
Multiple Officer Takedown	0	23	68	67	139	95
Pepperball*	NA	NA	NA	16	16	18
Pressure Points	11	9	3	8	4	3
Rear Sentry Takedown	18	15	3	1	9	7
Single Officer Takedown	0	38	90	115	129	92
Soft Empty Hands	116	152	124	165	267	376
Spit Prevention Device*	NA	NA	4	2	8	11
Takedown**	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	92
Taser	43	45	84	30	24	22
Vehicle	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	754	758	700	742	1,043	1,317

(*) indicates a new use-of-force technique available to officers during this time range

(**) indicates a category new to 2021 data, due to the transition of software programs that occurred mid-year

Subject Injury

Officers are required to report subject injury in each use-of-force incident, which is also evaluated by the responding supervisor. Most cases showed the subject received either no injury or a minor injury. The department requires an injury be recorded if the subject complains of any pain even if no injury can be observed.

Subject Injury Data						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Dog Bite	34	19	6	0	3	0
Laceration	3	1	0	0	0	0
Minor	75	82	50	61	69	59
Possible Internal	0	1	0	0	0	0
Major Injury	1	0	0	0	1	0
Unknown	0	2	0	0	0	0
No Injuries	388	348	340	413	515	539
Total Incidents	501	453	396	474	588	598

Officer Injury

The below table depicts data related to the number of officers injured during incidents.

Officer Injury Data						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total	23	39	23	18	32	55

Month of Occurrence Data

The below table depicts data related to the months in which force incidents occurred.

Month						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
January	35	35	39	35	33	67
February	53	28	32	29	40	39
March	37	34	29	37	30	59
April	37	30	32	30	53	40
May	53	32	24	40	37	58
June	37	47	32	38	30	55
July	38	38	43	35	52	42
August	30	34	21	41	48	49
September	46	33	29	32	53	54
October	36	44	37	47	61	45
November	19	37	35	32	56	32
December	32	31	29	30	52	35
Total	453	423	382	426	545	575

Call Types

The below table depicts the types of calls that officers responded to during which force was used.

Original Call Type						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Non-Domestic Assault Crime	57	50	43	61	87	49
Auto or Vehicle Theft	13	18	16	18	23	18
Burglary	16	14	14	9	19	15
Criminal Damage to Property	8	6	9	9	10	12
Death Investigations	0	4	0	0	6	1
Disturbance Crimes	48	47	23	44	46	89
Domestic Assault/Family Matters	42	40	43	49	58	70
Drug Crimes	33	19	22	33	24	15
Driving Under the Influence	5	6	7	8	15	7
Fraud Related Crimes	7	3	2	4	1	2
Other Non-Violent Crimes/Investigations	46	29	52	25	39	105
Obstructing a Legal Process	57	68	32	29	49	18
Robbery	9	4	4	6	11	9
Sex Offense	1	4	1	4	4	3
Theft Related Crimes	21	21	6	0	28	9
Traffic Violations/Accidents	8	5	19	24	4	27
Warrants	19	21	18	22	14	14
Weapons Calls	19	14	20	23	35	35
Medical/Persons in Crisis	44	50	51	48	72	77
Total	453	423	382	426	545	575

DEMOGRAPHICS

Officer Demographics

The below tables depict data collected on October 31, 2021.

Officer Race						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Asian	51	59	61	69	66	59
Black	25	37	38	41	40	38
Hispanic	22	26	29	30	28	26
Native American	4	7	8	8	8	7
Two or More Races	34	33	30	32	31	28
White	460	463	459	456	433	403
Total	597	625	625	636	606	561

Officer Gender						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Female	95	94	90	94	90	84
Male	502	531	535	539	516	477
Total	597	625	625	636	606	561

Force Incident by Police District						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
West	151	141	105	123	136	140
Central	140	162	133	154	212	253
East	162	119	143	149	197	181
OOC	0	1	1	0	0	1
Total	453	423	382	426	545	575

Subjects of Force

The below table depicts demographic data collected from use of force incidents.

Subject Race and Gender						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Asian	27	33	26	42	41	45
Female	0	4	2	3	9	3
Male	27	29	24	39	32	42
Black	249	222	216	271	329	332
Female	46	52	41	64	53	69
Male	203	170	175	207	276	263
Hispanic	34	41	16	26	37	34
Female	2	7	4	3	3	10
Male	32	34	12	23	34	24
Native American	4	11	6	6	18	11
Female	2	4	4	2	8	4
Male	2	7	22	4	10	7
Unknown	34	17	25	15	19	40
Female	10	3	7	4	3	14
Male	22	14	16	10	7	21
Unknown	2	0	2	1	9	5
White	153	128	107	109	131	133
Female	30	23	24	37	34	39
Male	123	105	83	72	97	94
Other	0	1	0	5	6	3
Male	0	0	0	5	3	3
Other	0	1	0	0	3	0
Total	501	453	396	474	581	598

Subject Age Data

In 2021, 66 percent of the subjects were between the ages of 20-40.

Subject Age Data						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
10 to 14	20	23	19	22	22	12
15-17	34	61	42	44	39	33
18-19	43	25	21	29	28	24
20-29	189	161	148	156	202	184
30-39	108	96	89	120	157	211
40-49	42	42	41	52	63	60
50-59	24	24	21	21	32	33
60 and older	6	6	4	6	10	10
Unknown	35	15	11	24	28	31
Total	501	453	396	474	581	598

FIREARMS POINTING

Firearms Pointing

Although the pointing of a firearm is not a physical application of force, the SPPD does consider the action a reportable use of force.

Officers documented incidents during which they pointed a firearm in the direction of another person. This did not include times when officers merely unholstered their firearm or carried it in the “low ready” position when subjects may have been present.

Firearms are used during times when officers are searching for potentially dangerous suspects of crimes who could be armed, when conducting high-risk felony traffic stops and other times when it is reasonable to affect the arrest of a subject.

Considerable training is provided to officers related to safe weapons handling, including that officers do not place their fingers inside the trigger guard of any weapon until a decision is made to discharge their firearm.

In 2016, officers pointed department issued weapons at subjects 457 times. Five officers discharged their firearms in 2016, during the course of two incidents.

In 2017, officers pointed department issued weapons at subjects 491 times. Four officers discharged their firearms in 2017, during the course of two incidents.

In 2018, officers pointed department issued weapons at subjects 600 times. Two officers discharged their firearms in 2018, during the course of one incident.

In 2019, officers pointed department issued weapons at subjects 599 times. One officer discharged their firearm in 2019, during the course of one incident.

In 2020, officers pointed department issued weapons at subjects 572 times. Four officers discharged their firearms in 2020, during the course of three incidents.

In 2021, officers pointed department issued weapons at subjects 461 times. No officers discharged their firearms in the direction of a person in 2021.

The SPPD fully understands the impact of pointing a firearm at a subject, which is why the department chooses to document and review these incidents as reportable force incidents.

Monitoring firearm pointing is not an industry standard because many departments do not consider firearms pointing to be a reportable use of force. However, the SPPD monitors and reviews every instance of firearm pointing.

Calls for Service	
2016	269,799
2017	300,610
2018	298,492
2019	292,765
2020	276,718
2021	240,104

Firearms Pointing Incidents	
2016	457
2017	491
2018	600
2019	599
2020	572
2021	461

Percentage of Incidents	
2016	0.17%
2017	0.16%
2018	0.20%
2019	0.20%
2020	0.21%
2021	0.19%