



# City of Cambridge Police Department

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Christine A. Elow  
Police Commissioner

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City Manager

**TO:** Director James Mulcahy

**DATE:** January 31, 2025

**FROM:** Anna Wilhelm

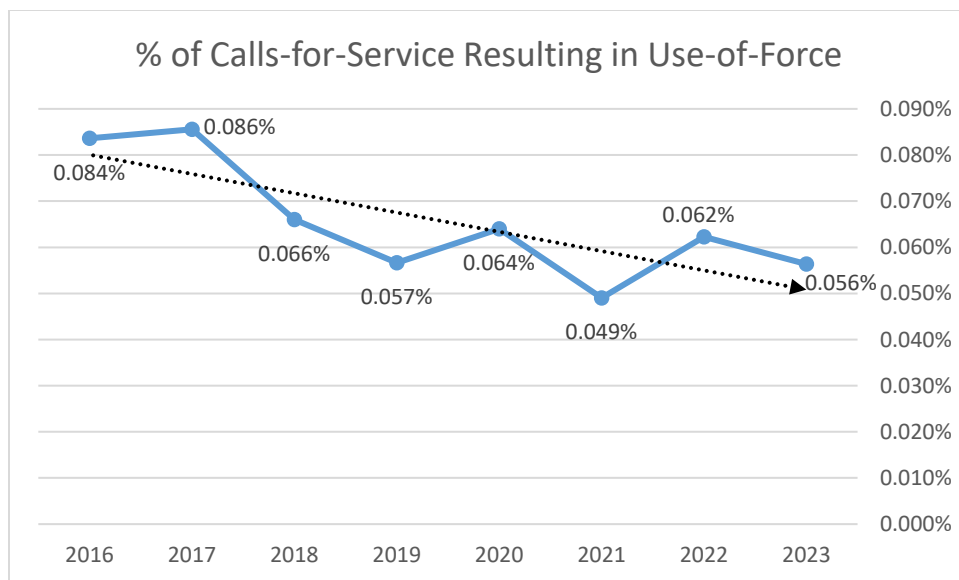
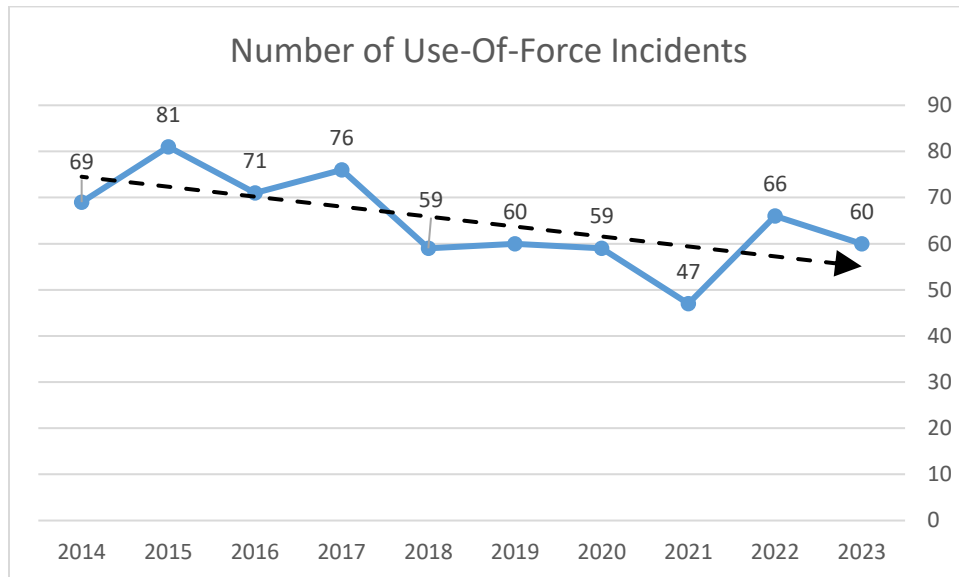
**REF:** AU2024-006

**SUBJECT:** Use of Force – 2023 Annual Report

*The following report represents a review and analysis of the use-of-force incidents that department personnel were involved in throughout calendar year 2023. Department policy requires all use-of-force incidents be reviewed at numerous supervisory levels with final approval by the Police Commissioner. All incidents where force was used were found to be justifiable and appropriate for the situation in accordance with department policy and the Use of Force Standards promulgated by the Peace Officers Standards and Training Commission found in 555 CMR 6.00.*

## OVERALL SUMMARY

In 2023, there were sixty (60) incidents in which officers used force. In comparison to sixty-six (66) incidents in 2022, this is a nine percent (9%) decrease in use-of-force incidents. The percentage of calls-for-service resulting in a use-of-force incident also decreased from 0.062% to 0.056% while the total calls-for-service increased from 106,027 in 2022 to 106,414 in 2023. Documented incidents of Assault & Battery on a Police Officer decreased from forty-four (44) in 2022 to thirty-two (32) in 2023, a twenty-seven percent (27%) decrease, with officers using force in fifty-nine percent (59%) of those incidents. The charts below show an overall decrease in total-use-of use of force incidents over the past ten years and in the percentage of calls resulting in the use of force since 2016.



There was one officer-involved shooting which resulted in the death of Cambridge resident, Sayed Faisal. Following the fatal officer-involved shooting, a standard use-of-force review was completed by the officer's supervisor as well as a separate review by the Professional Standards Unit (PSU). Additionally, a judicial inquest was conducted by Judge John Coffey at the request of the Middlesex District Attorney's Office. The City of Cambridge also contacted the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) to review the officer-involved shooting and the department's current use-of-force policies and training. Both the Inquest and the PERF report have been made available to the public on the Cambridge Police Department website.

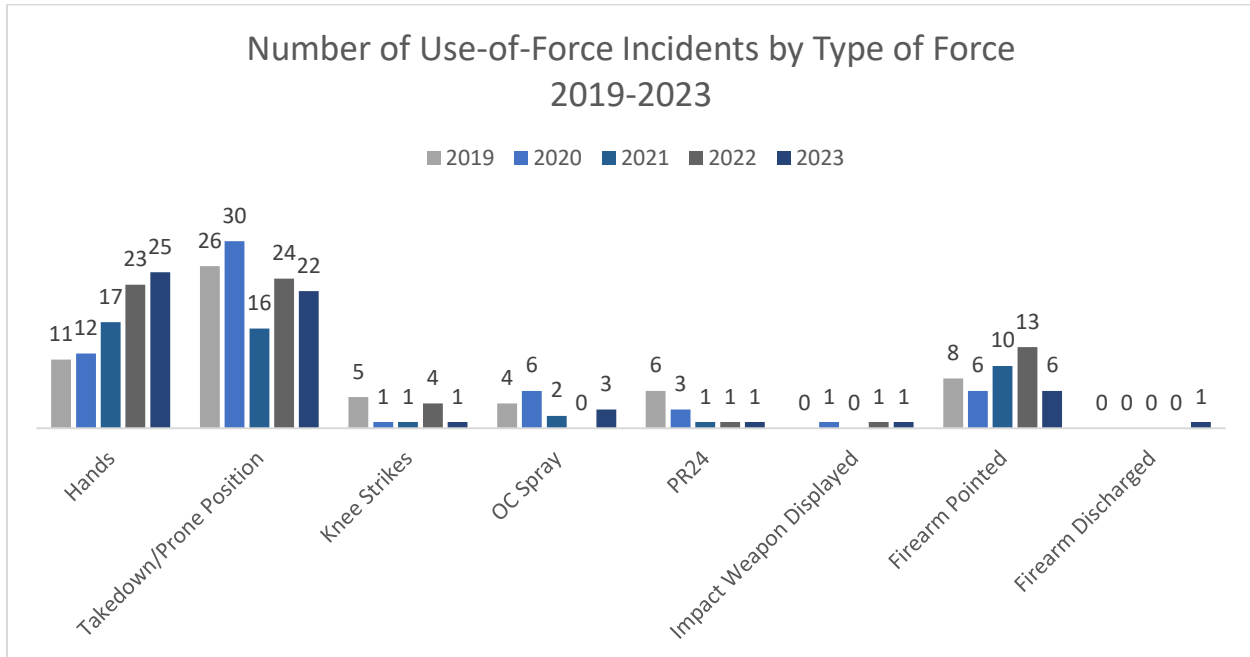
The analyses below will discuss more in depth the types of force used, services rendered at the time force was used, officers involved in these incidents, demographics of the subjects of the use-of-force, and any injuries sustained during use-of-force incidents in 2023.

### **TYPE OF FORCE USED**

The following data represents the greatest type of force used in each incident. In some instances, multiple kinds of force were used during a single incident (e.g. use of hands and placing an individual in a prone handcuffing position) and, to alleviate any overlap or double counting, the greatest type of force used during each incident was documented and used in this analysis.

There was one (1) firearm discharge in 2023 resulting in the department's first fatal use-of-force incident in over twenty (20) years. Incidents in which an officer pointed their firearm decreased from thirteen (13) incidents in 2022 to six (6) in 2023. A review of each pointed firearm incident in 2023 revealed two (2) felony stops of stolen motor vehicles, one (1) individual armed with a knife, one (1) firearm present at the scene of a violent felony, one (1) incident involving officers responding to the report of a shooting to find suspects in possession of multiple BB guns, and one (1) incident in which officers responded to the report of a person with a gun to find the suspect in possession of a pepper ball pistol.

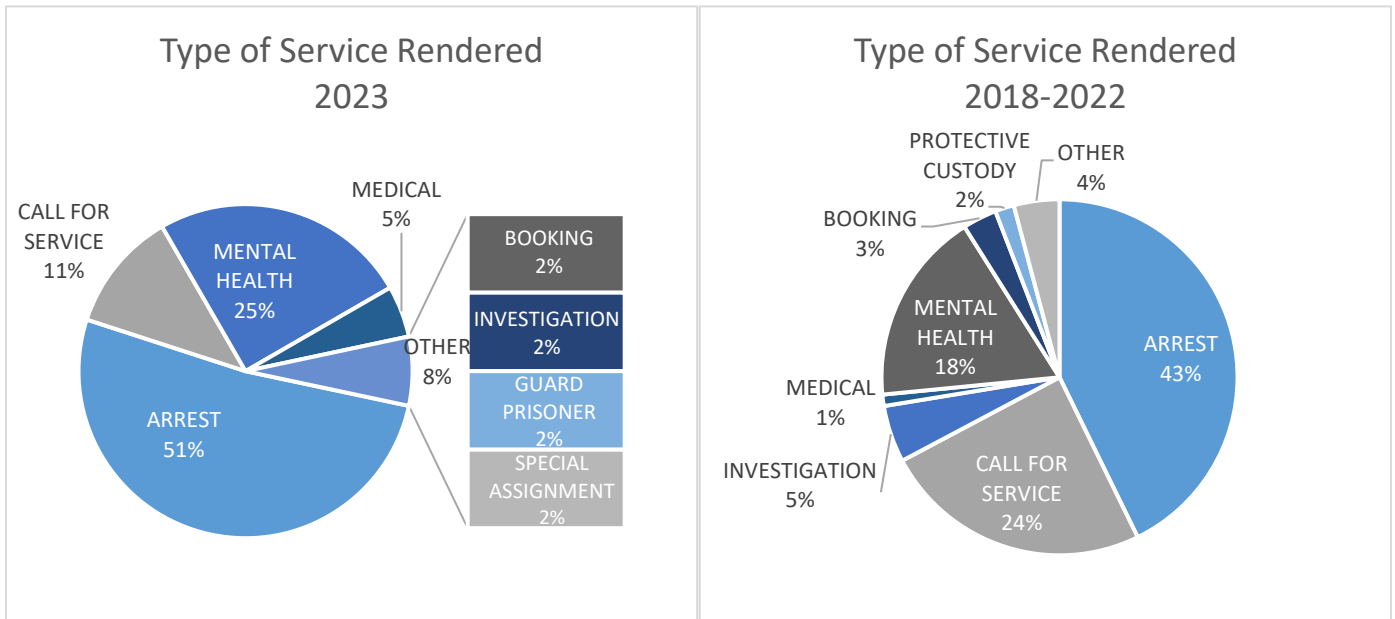
In 2023, the most common type of force used was Hands, followed by Takedown/Prone Position. The use of OC spray increased from zero (0) incidents in 2022 to three (3) in 2023 while knee strikes decreased from four (4) incidents in 2022 to one (1) in 2023. Officers' use of the PR24 remained consistent with 2022 at (1) incident, similarly the 40mm Less Lethal Impact System, referred to as "impact weapon" in the chart below, was displayed once. The 40mm Less Lethal Impact System was discharged for the first time since implementation during the officer-involved shooting, however, the discharge is not represented in the chart below since a greater type of force was used during the incident.



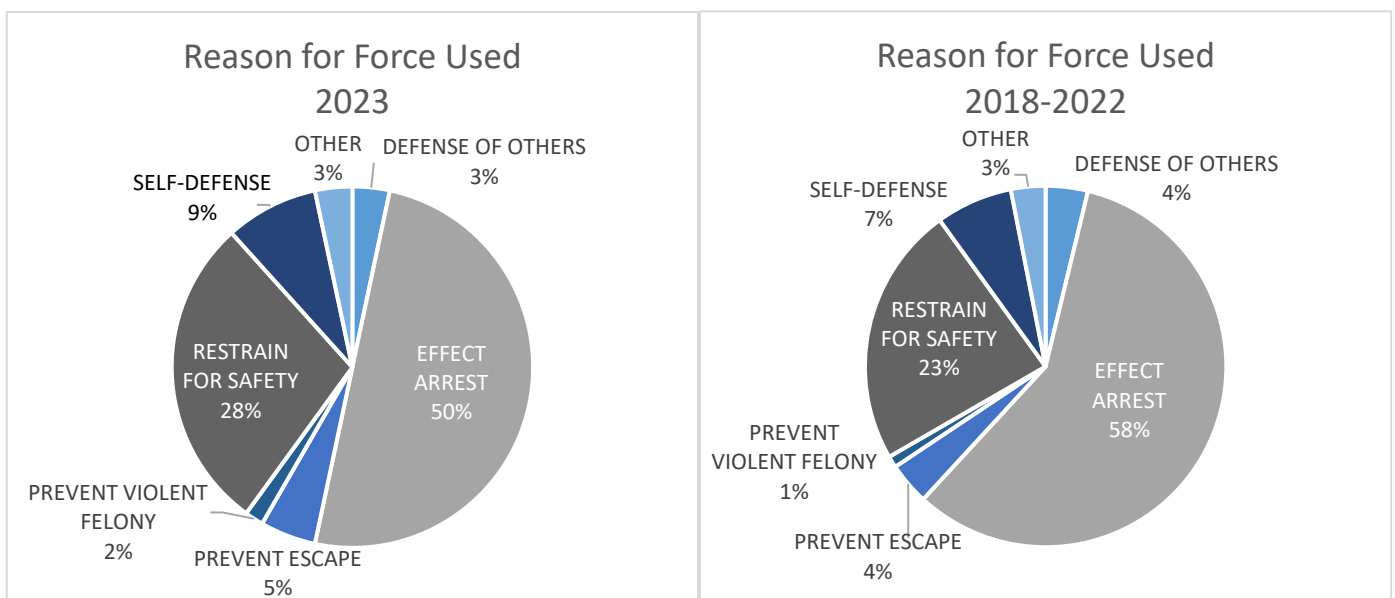
## SERVICE RENDERED

When completing a use-of-force review, supervisors are required to input both the service rendered at the time of the use-of-force and the reason for the use-of-force. The service rendered and reason for force are required fields completed using a drop-down list of options chosen at the supervisor's discretion. Service rendered refers to what the officers were doing at the time of the use-of-force incident and the reason for force refers to why the officers used force. It is worth noting there are limitations to the current software used to log and review use-of-force incidents and there may be more than one possible type of service rendered or reason for force per incident.

The largest portion of use-of-force incidents occurred while officers were conducting an arrest with fifty-one percent (51%) of incidents, followed by mental health interactions making up twenty-five (25%) of incidents. Additional types of service rendered include miscellaneous calls-for-service with eleven percent (11%), medical calls with service at five percent (5%), and "other" with eight percent (8%), containing one (1) incident each of booking, investigation, guarding of a prisoner, and special assignment.



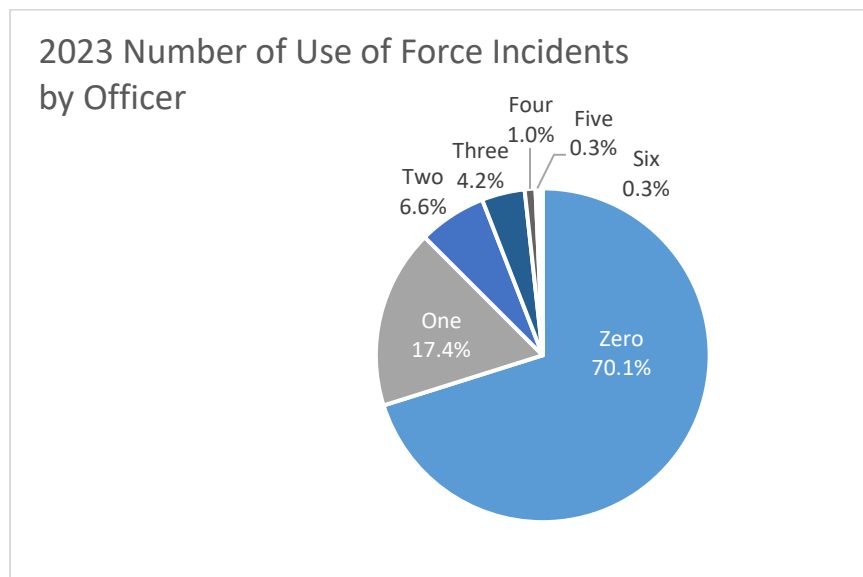
Of the total number of use-of-force incidents, the reason for force in fifty percent (50%) of the incidents was to effect an arrest. The second most common reason force was used was to restrain for safety with twenty-eight (28%) of the 2023 use-of-force incidents. Other reasons for force include self-defense, prevent escape, defense of others, prevent violence, and “other.” Of the two (2) incidents categorized as “other”, both involved the officer pointing a firearm; one officer pointed their firearm at the suspects of a reported shooting and the other pointed their firearm at an individual who opened the door wielding a knife when officers were responding to the call of a disturbance.



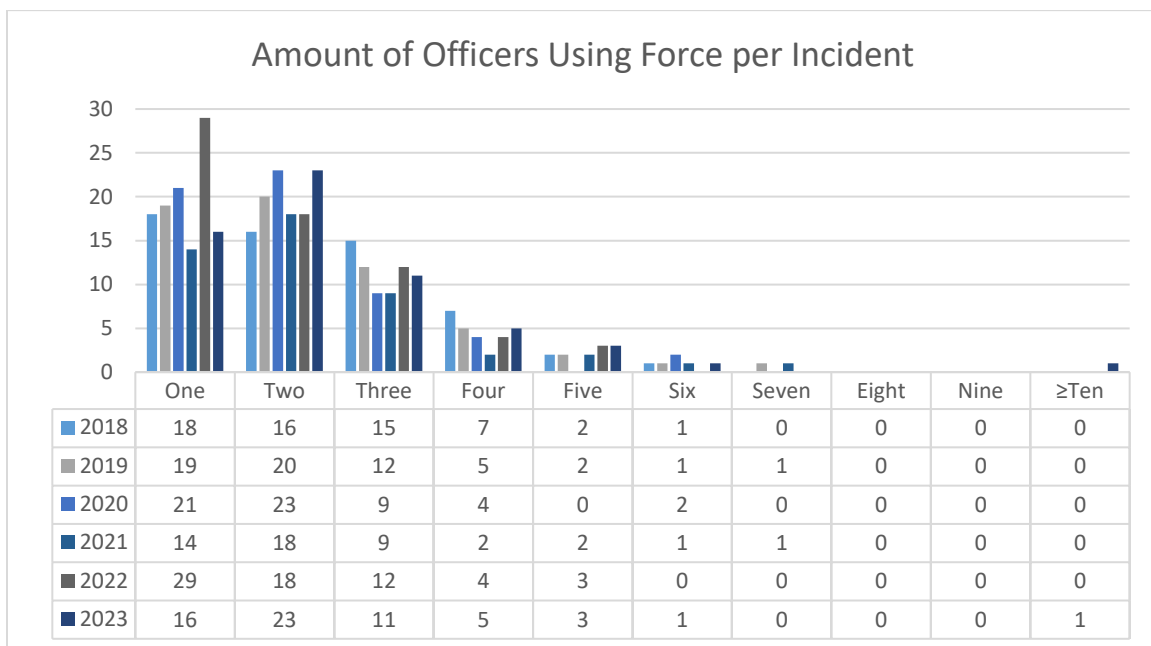
There were a total of fifteen (15) mental health interactions which resulted in force. The reason for force in eleven (11) of those was to restrain for safety. The remaining four (4) incidents were categorized as self defense, prevent violent felony, prevent escape, and effect arrest. Although one incident lists the reason for force used as effect arrest, no arrest was made and the individual involved was transported to the hospital for a mental health evaluation. All incidents in which force was used during a mental health interaction resulted in the involved party being transported to the hospital, fourteen (14) for a mental health evaluation and one (1) for injuries sustained as a result of force that resulted in death.

### **OFFICERS INVOLVED**

In 2023, eighty-six (86) officers used force, representing thirty percent (30%) of all sworn officers. This is a twelve percent (12%) increase from seventy-seven (77) officers in 2022, which was also a twelve percent (12%) increase from 2021 when sixty-nine (69) officers used force. Of the eighty-six (86) officers, thirty-six (36), or forty-two percent (42%), used force in two or more incidents, which is a slight decrease from the forty-five (45%) of officers who used force in multiple incidents in 2022. The most a singular officer used force in 2023 was six (6) times, with the officer going hands-on in three (3) incidents and pointing their firearm in three (3) incidents. Another officer used force five (5) times in 2023, using hands once, takedown/prone position three (3) times, and pointing their firearm once. The chart below outlines the number of use-of-force incidents by officer in 2023.



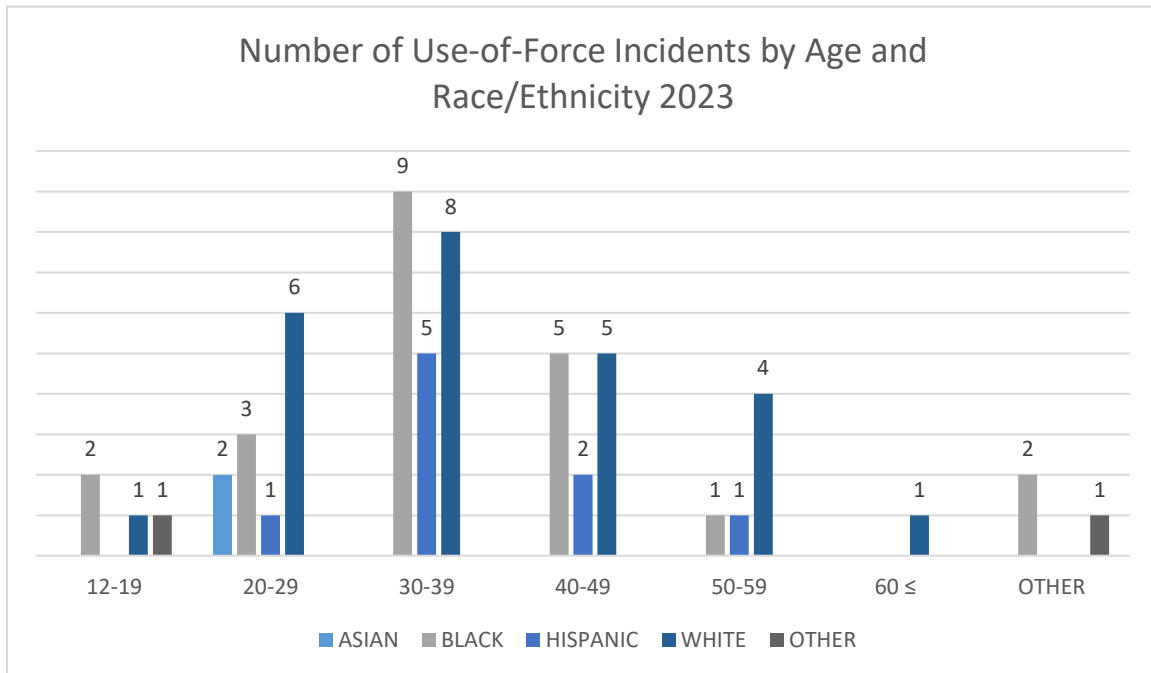
Also relative to the number of incidents in which an officer used force is the number of officers using force in an incident. The below chart indicates the number of officers that used force during each incident from 2018 to 2023. It is worth noting this analysis only counts the officers that used force and does not include officers that responded to the scene but did not use force. There was one incident during which eleven (11) officers used force on six (6) known individuals and two (2) unknown individuals while performing crowd control at a protest. The following types of force were used: Hands, Takedown/Prone Position, and OC Spray. This was the only protest officers responded to in 2023 where force was used. The chart below breaks down how many officers used force per incident from 2018 to 2023.



## DEOMGRAPHICS

Fifty-seven (57) of the sixty (60) use-of-force incidents can be broken down by the subject's age, race and gender. Of the three (3) other incidents, there were two (2) instances of force used on multiple individuals. In one (1) incident, an officer responding to the report of a shooting pointed their firearm at a group of Black males, ages 19-23. As a result of the range of ages falling into two age groups, the age will be tallied as "other." The second incident in which force was used on multiple individuals involved eleven (11) officers using varying levels of force against eight (8) individuals of different age, gender, and race, and will be categorized as "other" for all data points. In the third incident, the suspect, identified only as a Black male, fled from the stop of a stolen

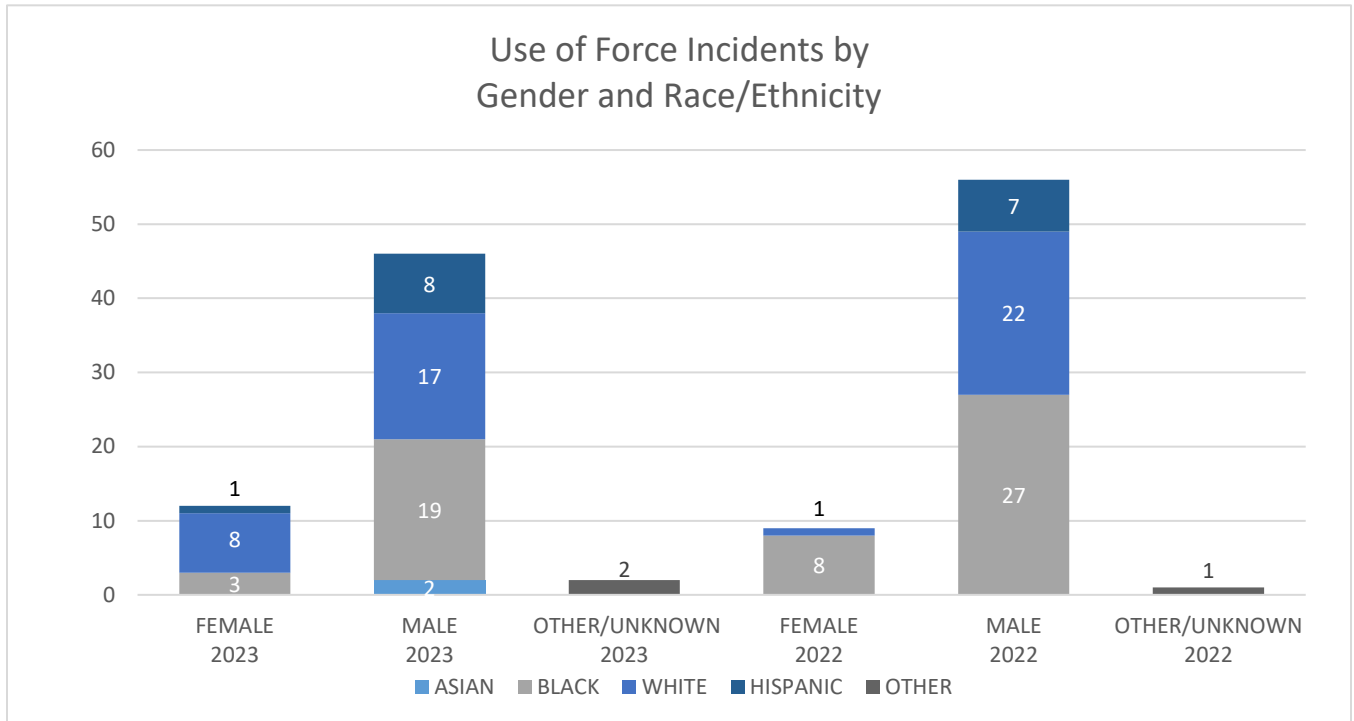
motor vehicle after officers had pointed their firearms at him and will therefore be categorized as “other” for age.



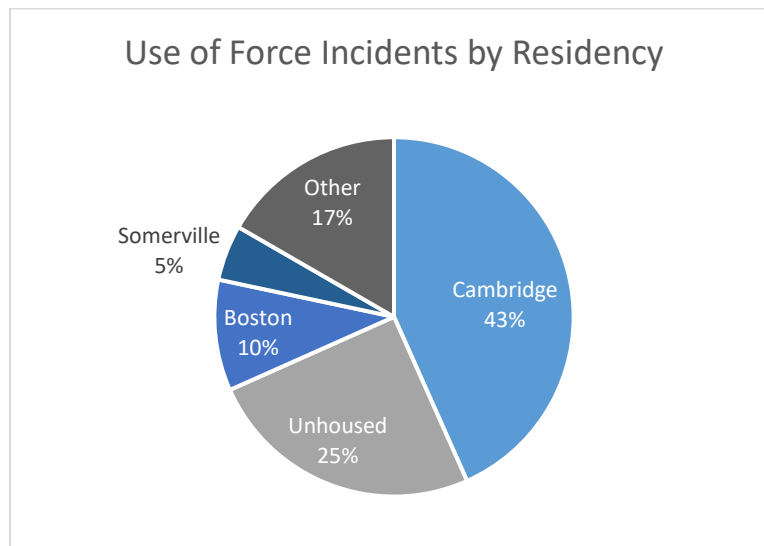
Of the four (4) incidents involving use-of-force on juveniles, there were two (2) mental health related incidents, one (1) medical call for service, and one (1) arrest, representing seven percent (7%) of all use-of-force incidents. Three (3) of the juveniles were restrained for safety and transported to the hospital following the incident, two (2) for mental health evaluations and one (1) for the suspicion of being under the influence of drugs. One (1) juvenile was placed under arrest with the use of hands-on force for defense of others and charged with one (1) count of Assault and two (2) counts of Assault & Battery on a Police Officer.

The majority of force used by officers was on male individuals, totaling seventy-seven percent (77%) of use-of force incidents, while twenty percent (20%), involved force used on women. The remaining three percent (3%) is composed of incidents involving multiple individuals. Fifty-five percent (55%) of use-of-force incidents in 2023 involved a person of color, compared to sixty-five percent (65%) in 2022 and fifty-three percent (53%) in 2021. Below is a breakdown of use-of-force incidents by race/ethnicity in 2023 and 2022.





The residency of the person in which force was used on was included in the statistical analysis for the first time in 2023. Residency was able to be broke up into five categories: Cambridge, Boston, Somerville, Unhoused, and Other. Composing the “Other” category, there were two incidents involving force used on multiple people, one incident in which force was used on an unidentified individual, and one incident each involving force used on residents of the following town/cities: Bradford, Concord, Framingham, Leominster, Norwood, Revere, and Los Angeles, CA. Twenty-five percent (25%) of use-of-force incidents involved unhoused individuals.



## **INJURIES**

In most use-of-force incidents, injuries to the subject or officer were minor in nature with the exception of the fatal officer-involved shooting. Of the sixty (60) incidents, there were nine (9) incidents in which the subject of force incurred an injury. The injuries sustained included abrasions, contusions, lacerations, one instance of broken bones, and one fatal gunshot wound. All injured parties were between the ages of twenty (20) to fifty-three (53) years old, consisting of four (4) White males, two (2) Asian males, two (2) Hispanic males, and one (1) Black male. The types of force used that resulted in injury to the subject included Hands-on force (3), Takedown/Prone Position (3), PR24 (1), OC Spray (1), and Firearm Discharge (1).

In 2023, there were ten (10) incidents of use-of-force in which an officer sustained injuries. Two (2) of those incidents resulted in injury to two (2) officers for a total of twelve (12) total use-of-force related officer injuries. The injuries sustained by officers consisted of bite marks, contusions, abrasions, lacerations, and sprains. As a result of their injuries, six (6) officers were out of work ranging from three (3) days to two (2) months.

## **CONCLUSION**

All use-of-force incidents in 2023 have been found to be justified and within policy upon review due to the department's continued emphasis on training and policy compliance. The report released by PERF in February of 2024 noted the strong and progressive policies regarding use-of-force and use-of-force reporting and highlighted the low percentage of calls that result in force used. In 2023, there was an overall decrease in use-of-force incidents while calls-for-service continued to increase. However, there was an increase in the number of officers that used force and in injuries sustained by both subjects of force and involved officers. Additionally, the department had its first officer-involved fatality in over twenty (20) years.

Following the fatal shooting of Sayed Faisal, an additional internal review of the incident was completed by PSU, a judicial inquest was conducted at the request of the Middlesex District Attorney's Office, and PERF released an independent review of the officer-involved shooting and the department's current use-of-force policies and training. Both the Inquest and the PERF report have been made available to the public on the Cambridge Police Department website in the interest of transparency and the department has remained committed to implementing recommendations

made by PERF. The department has already executed many recommendations in the report, such as sending all officers through the updated Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) de-escalation training. Additionally, the department has begun training officers on deploying multiple 40mm Less Lethal Impact Systems to a scene when previously only one device would be used on scene at a time, providing a layered response to help incapacitate or disarm individuals in dangerous situations where other forms of de-escalation attempts have been unsuccessful. In conjunction, the department has increased the amount of 40mm Less Lethal Impact Systems available to officers, outfitting additional cruisers with the equipment. The City is currently in negotiations with the police unions related to the implementation of body worn cameras (BWC) and has taken steps to secure funding and equipment to outfit officers with BWCs and create a new BWC Unit within the department.

In line with the department's commitment to transparency and procedural justice, the Procedural Justice Dashboard was launched in the summer of 2023, making data on arrests, citations, and summons available to the public on the Cambridge Police Department website. The next year, in August of 2024, the department launched a co-response program as part of the Family & Social Justice Section (FSJS), placing a clinician in a cruiser with an officer to respond to mental health calls in an attempt to reduce mental health related arrests and divert vulnerable populations from the criminal justice system. In addition, the department has been working with the City's new Community Assistant Response and Engagement (CARE) Team, which began responding to limited 911 calls in summer 2024, adding a non-police response to enhance the city's outreach capabilities. The Cambridge Police Department strives towards continuously improving and adapting to the public safety needs of the City of Cambridge in alignment with the four pillars of procedural justice: fairness, voice, transparency, and impartiality.