

Austin Police Department

Officer-Involved Shootings: 2008-2017



Prepared by the Austin Police Department
Research and Planning Unit
May 2018

Background

This analysis is conducted to better understand the characteristics of officer-involved shootings in APD's jurisdiction. Ultimately, the report may assist in identifying how training and/or procedures might be revised to improve APD's response in officer-involved shooting situations.

Overview

This report reflects all officer-involved shootings that occurred from 2008 through 2017 in Austin. It includes incidents in which APD or non-APD officers fired their weapons within the city of Austin as well as incidents in which APD officers fired their weapons outside the city of Austin.

Officer-involved shootings are defined as:

- an incident in which an officer fired his/her firearm intentionally at a subject;
- an incident in which an officer fired his/her firearm unintentionally and struck a subject; or
- an incident in which an officer used a less-lethal firearm, struck the subject, and contributed to the subject's death.

There were 57 officer-involved shooting incidents in Austin during this timeframe, involving 80 officers and 59 subjects.

The report is organized into three sections:

- Incident characteristics
- Officer characteristics
- Subject characteristics

Sources

Versadex; APD Special Investigations Unit; APD Training Academy; APD Professional Standards; APD Human Resources; Austin Park Police; Travis County Sheriff's Office; U.S. Marshals Service; Texas Alcohol and Beverage Commission.

Special thanks to the following law enforcement agencies for providing comparison data from their jurisdictions: Albuquerque PD; Baltimore PD; Charlotte-Mecklenburg PD; Columbus Division of Police; Dallas PD; Denver PD; El Paso PD; Fort Worth PD; Fresno PD; Honolulu PD; Houston PD; Indianapolis Metropolitan PD; Jacksonville SO; Louisville Metro Police Department; Memphis PD; Metropolitan Nashville PD; Oklahoma City PD; Portland Police Bureau; San Antonio PD; San Diego PD; San Jose PD; Seattle PD; Tucson PD; Metropolitan Police Department – Washington DC.

Notable Findings

This report contains the following noteworthy findings:

- There are, on average, 6 officer-involved-shooting incidents per year.
- Half of the incidents occurred in the eight hour period from midnight to 7:59 a.m.
- Half of the incidents occurred in either a **parking lot** or on a **street**.
- The most common reason for initial officer contact was a **disturbance call** (18%).
- **Most officers (61%) were informed by dispatch before arriving on scene that the subject was armed.**
- The **most common weapons used by subjects** were guns (63%).
- **Ten officers were injured** (14% of total).
- **More than half of the subjects were killed** (56%), and an additional 27% were injured.
- It was most common for officers to have **between two and five years of law enforcement experience** at the time of the incident (41%).
- Most subjects (66%) were **between the ages of 20 and 39**.
- **Almost half of the subjects were White** (48%), 31% were Black and 20% were Hispanic.
- Austin experienced **34% fewer shootings** (by subject) than the average for other US cities of comparable size.

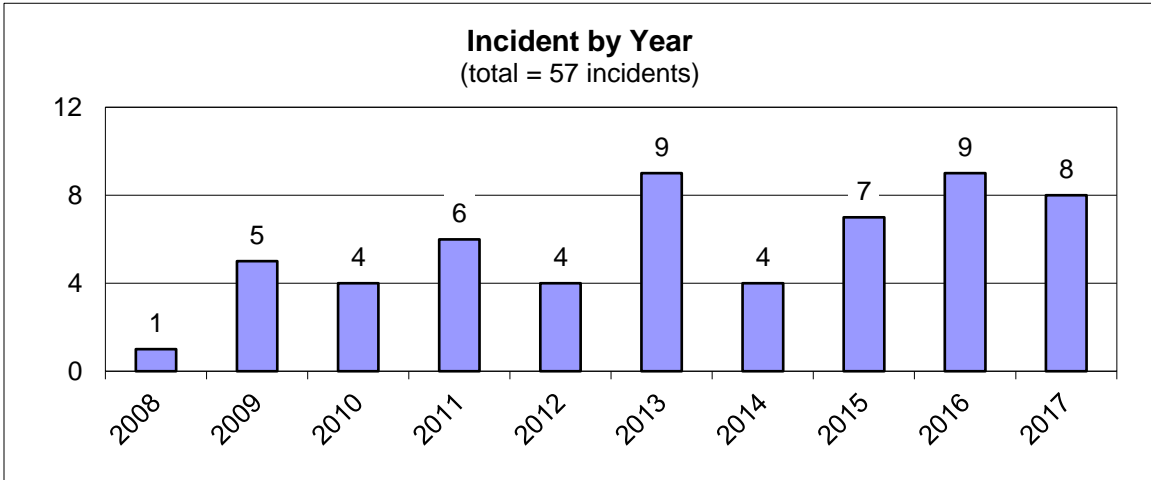
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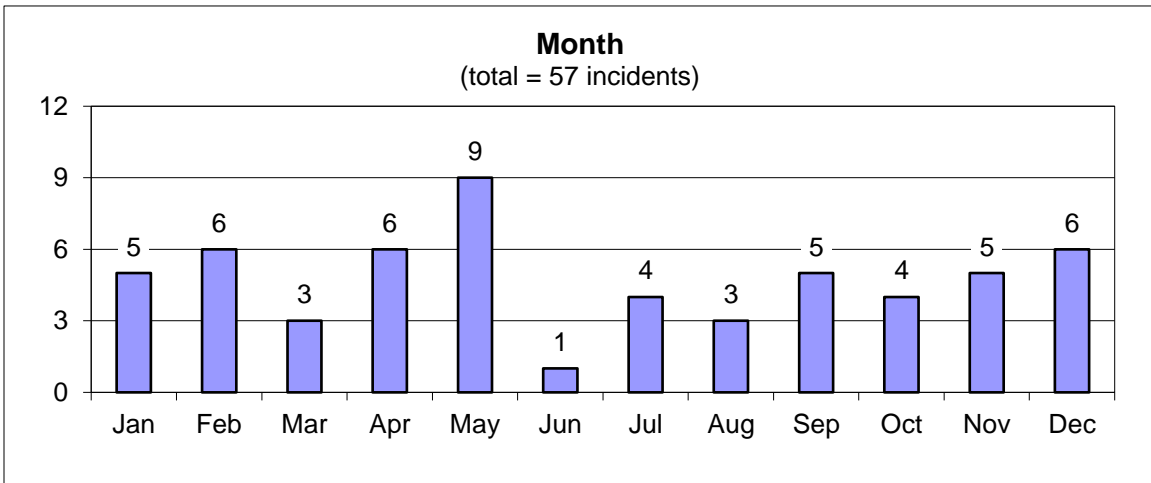
Incident Characteristics

Timing

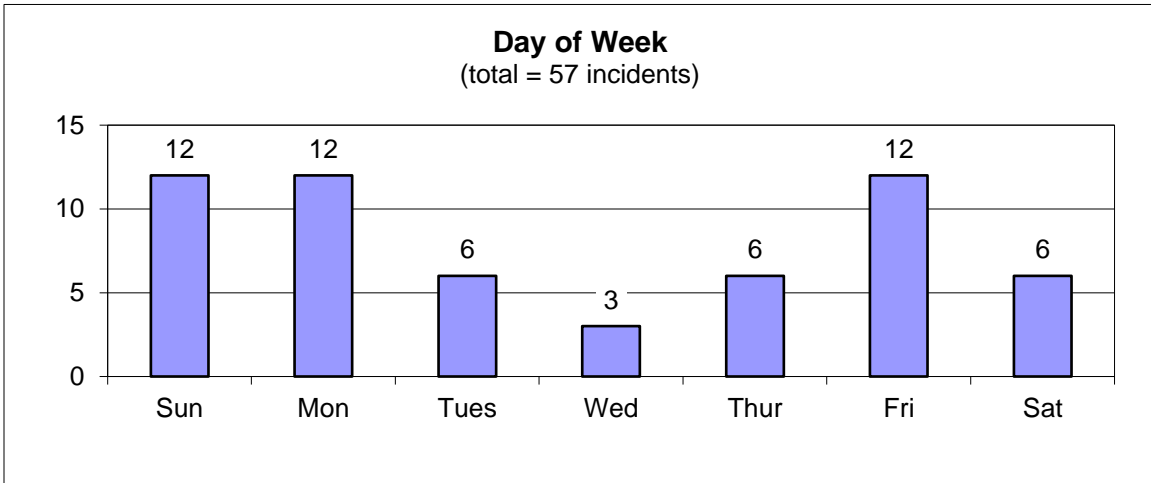
During the years 2008 – 2017, Austin experienced 57 officer-involved shootings. The average was six shootings per year.



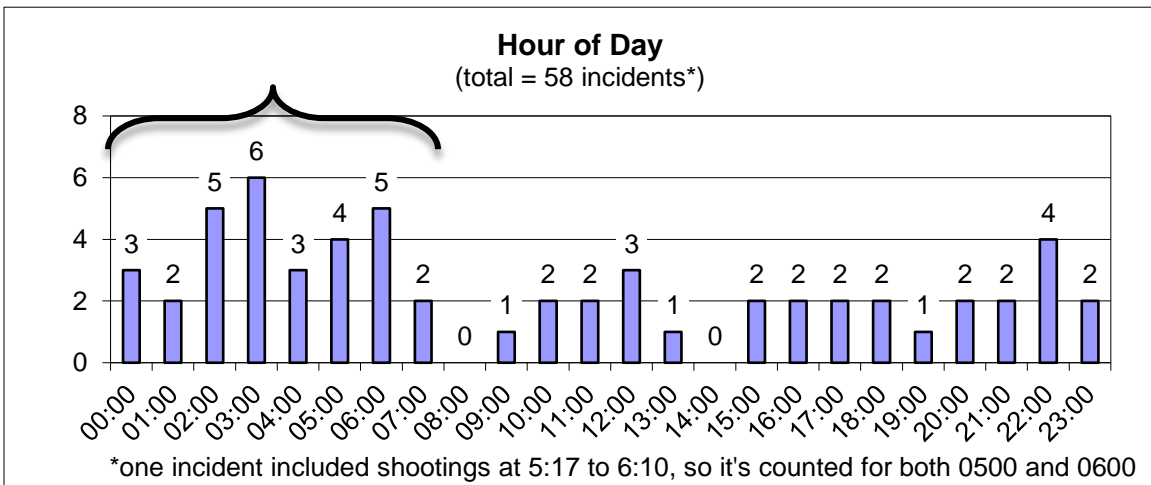
May was the month with the most officer-involved shootings.



Sunday, Monday, and Friday are the most common days for officer-involved shootings. Wednesday was the least common day.

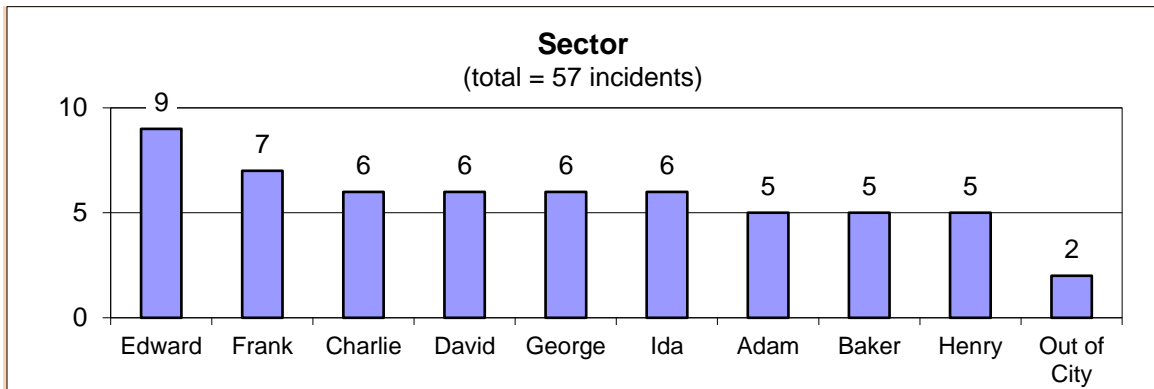


Half of the incidents occurred in the eight hour period from midnight to 7:59 a.m.

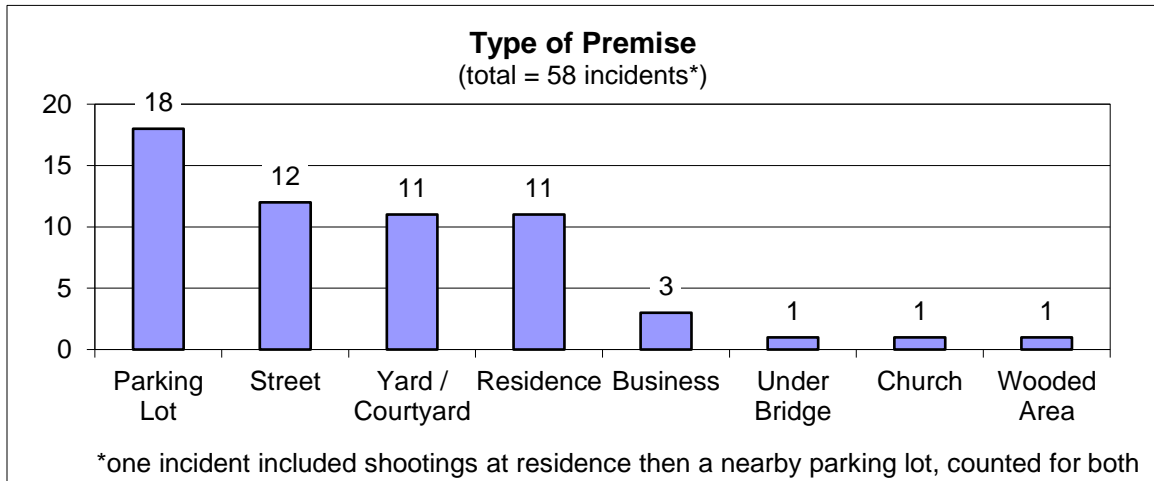


Location

Incidents were most commonly in Edward sectors. Two incidents occurred outside of city limits. A map showing the location of each incident is provided on page 20.

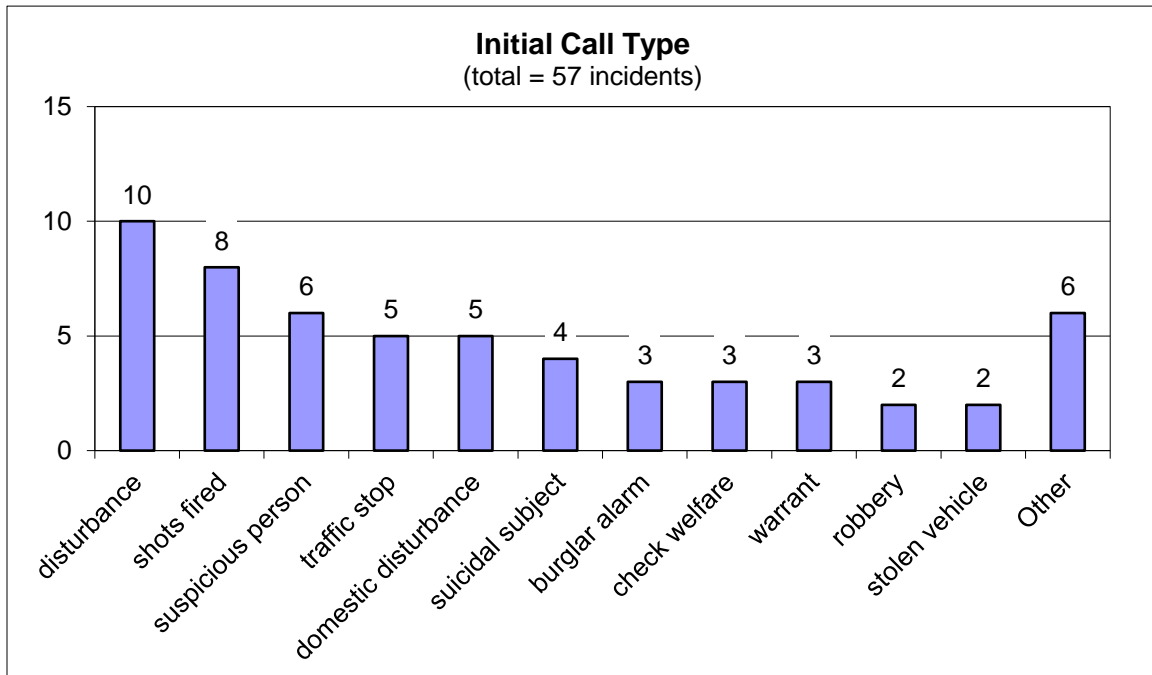


Half of the incidents (52%) occurred in either a parking lot or on a street.

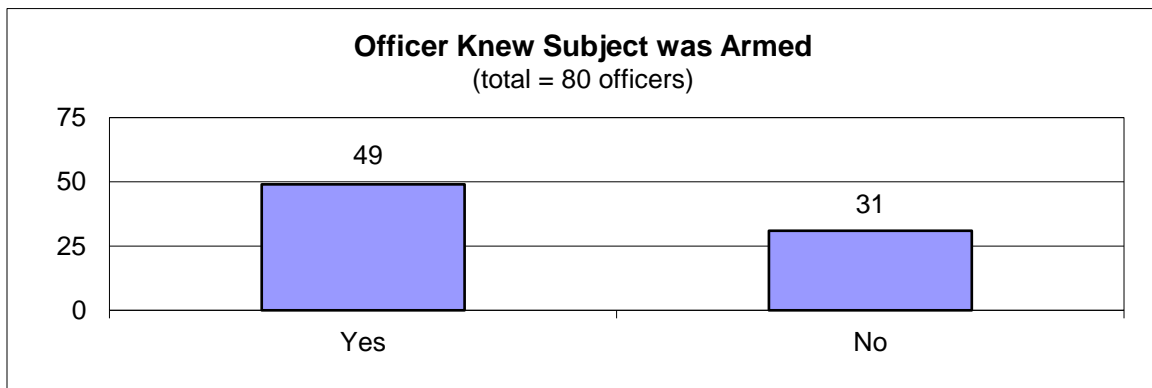


Call Type

Reasons for the initial contact between the officer and subject(s) varied. Disturbance calls were the most frequent type (18%) that ended in an officer-involved shooting. The Other category includes: aggravated assault, flagged down by victim of leaving-the-scene crash, stabbing, narcotics, robbery suspect vehicle, and nature unknown

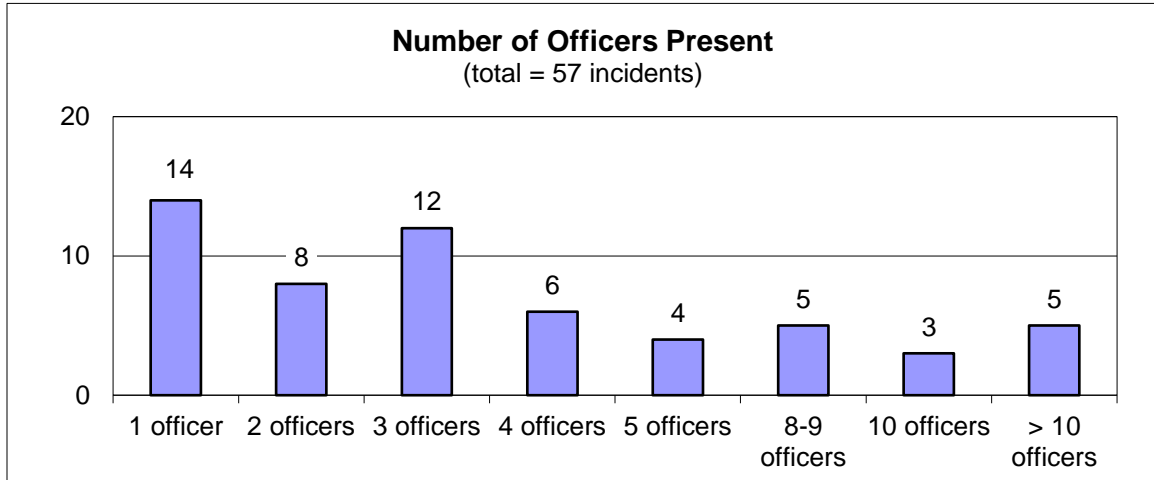


The majority of officers (61%) were informed by the dispatcher – before arriving on scene – that the subject was armed.



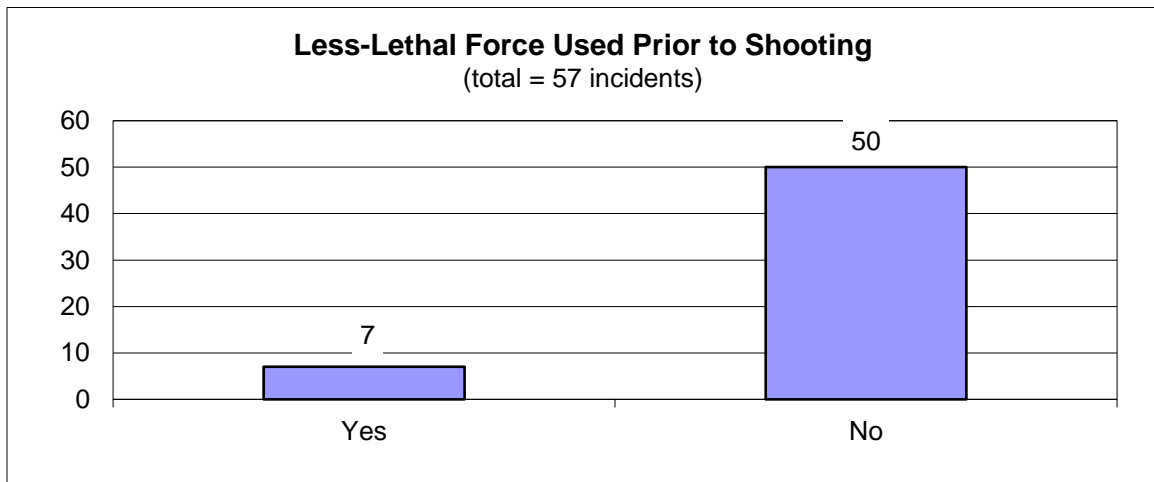
Police Presence

When incidents are examined by total number of officers present, the most common scenario (75% of incidents) was for more than one officer to be present during the shooting.



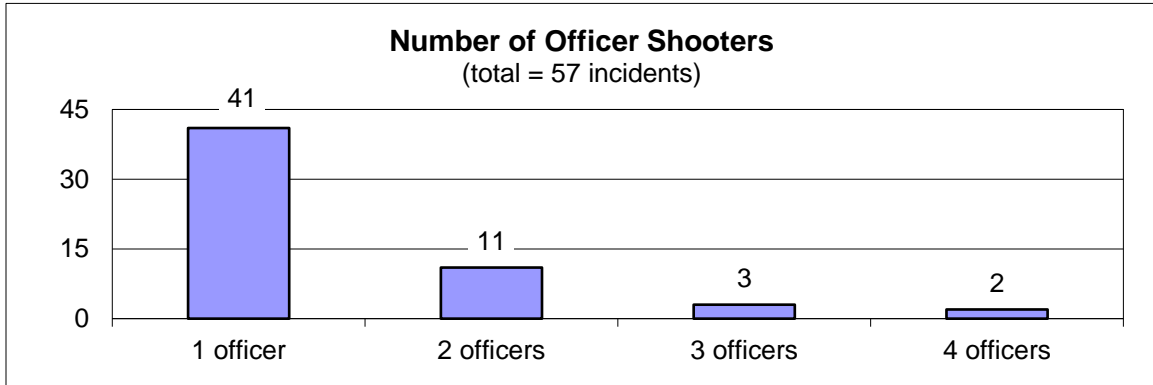
Less-Lethal Force

Less-lethal force was used by APD prior to using a firearm in seven incidents. Less-lethal force includes: weaponless (e.g., pressure points, hand/leg strike), OC (“pepper”) spray, Taser, impact weapon (e.g., baton), or K9 (police dog). Taser use was most common (five of the seven incidents).

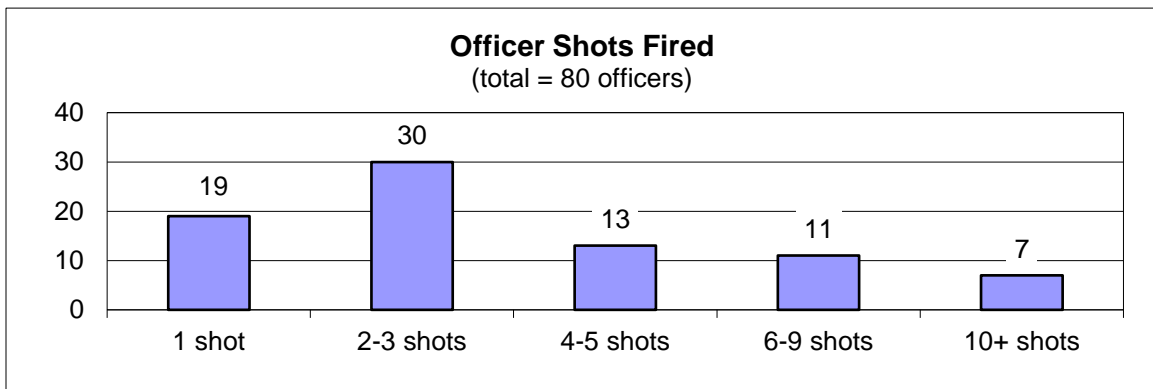


Shots Fired and Hits

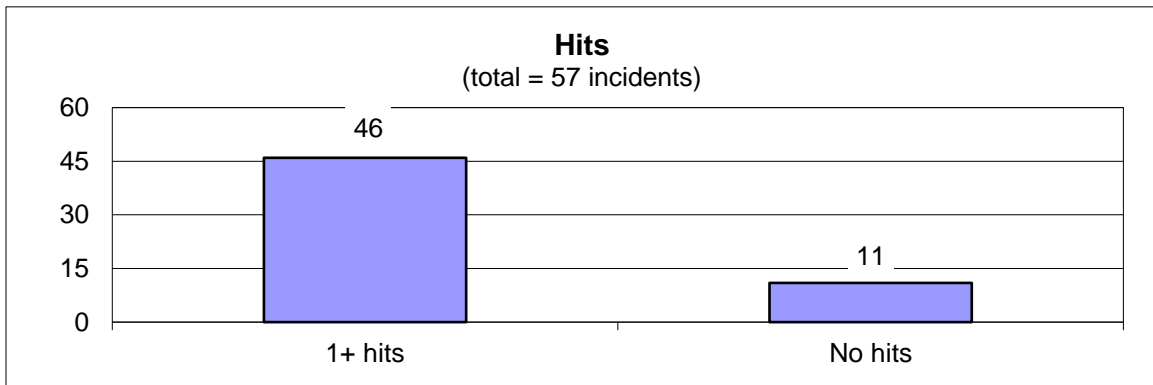
Looking at number of officers shooting in each incident, regardless of how many officers were present at the scene, it was most common that only one officer was the shooter (72% of incidents).



It was most common for officers to shoot 2-3 times (38%).

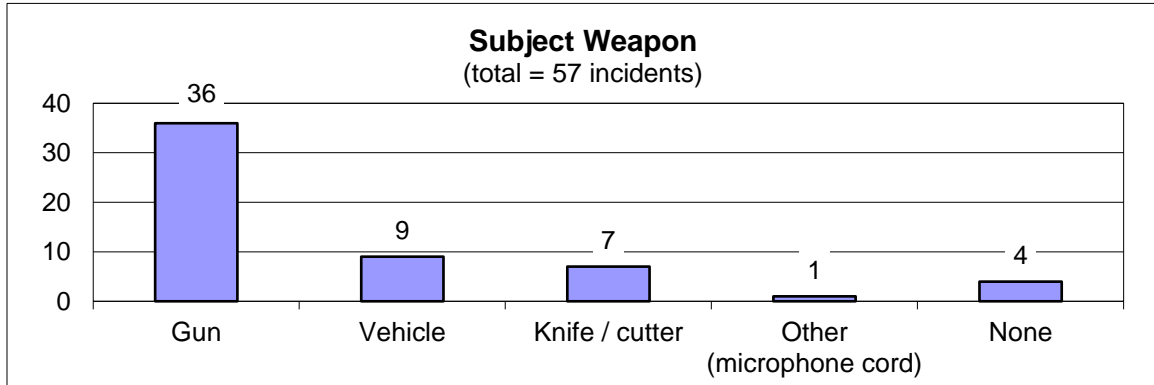


In 81% of incidents, at least one of the fired shots hit the subject.



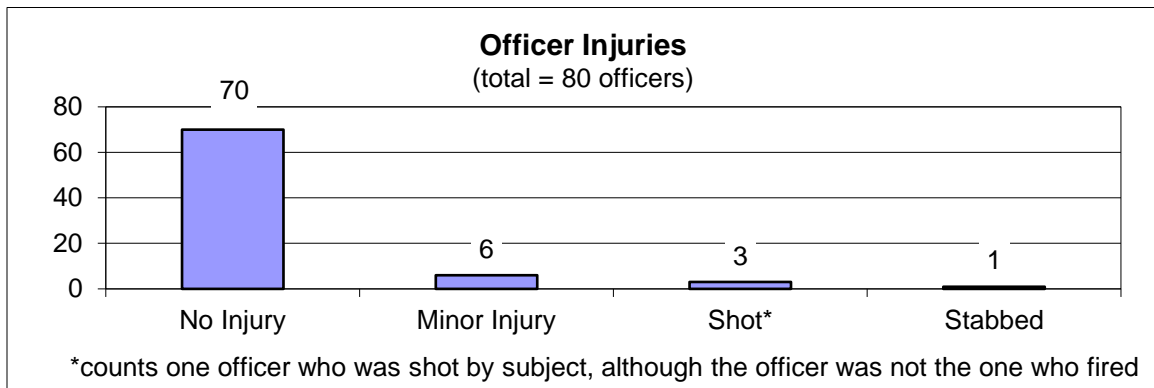
Subject Weapon

Guns (including handguns, rifles, shotguns, and air pistols) were used in the majority of the incidents (63%). The next most used weapons were vehicles (16%). One subject used both a gun and a vehicle as a weapon, but it was only counted it as a gun below.

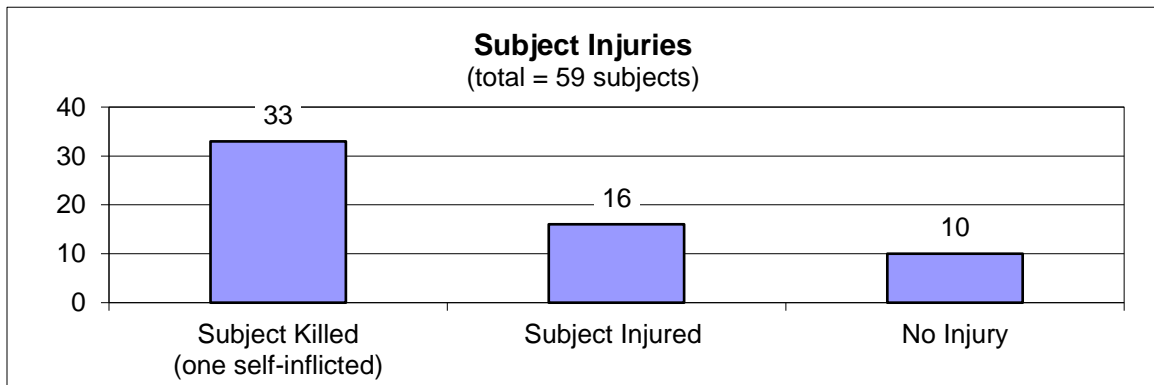


Injuries

Of the officers involved in shooting incidents, the majority (86%) were not injured. Of those injured, most sustained only a minor injury. With one exception noted below, only shooting officers' injuries are included in chart. No officers were killed during OIS incidents.



More than half of the subjects were killed (56%), and an additional 27% were injured.

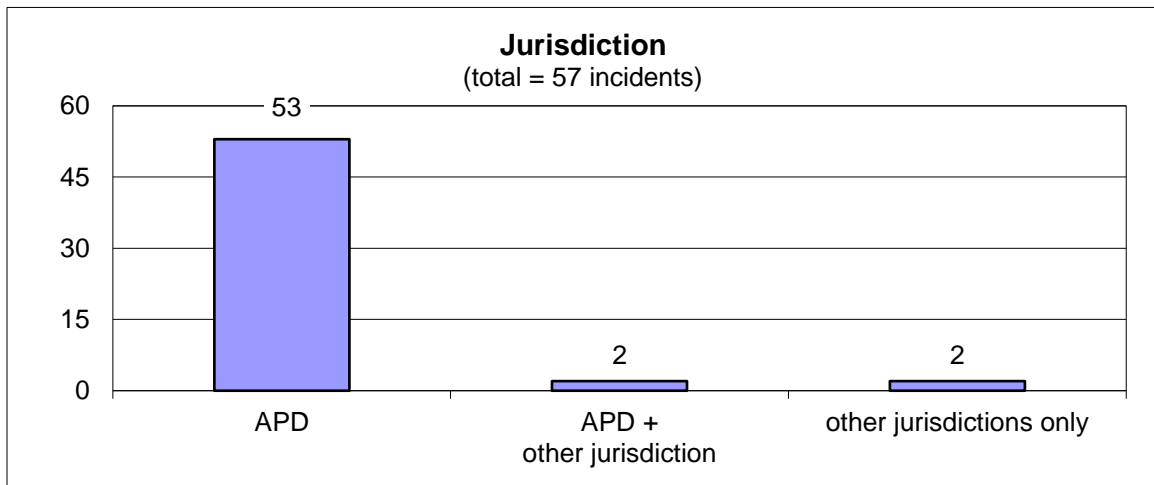


Officer Characteristics

The 57 officer-involved shootings that occurred in Austin from 2008 through 2017 involved 80 officers.

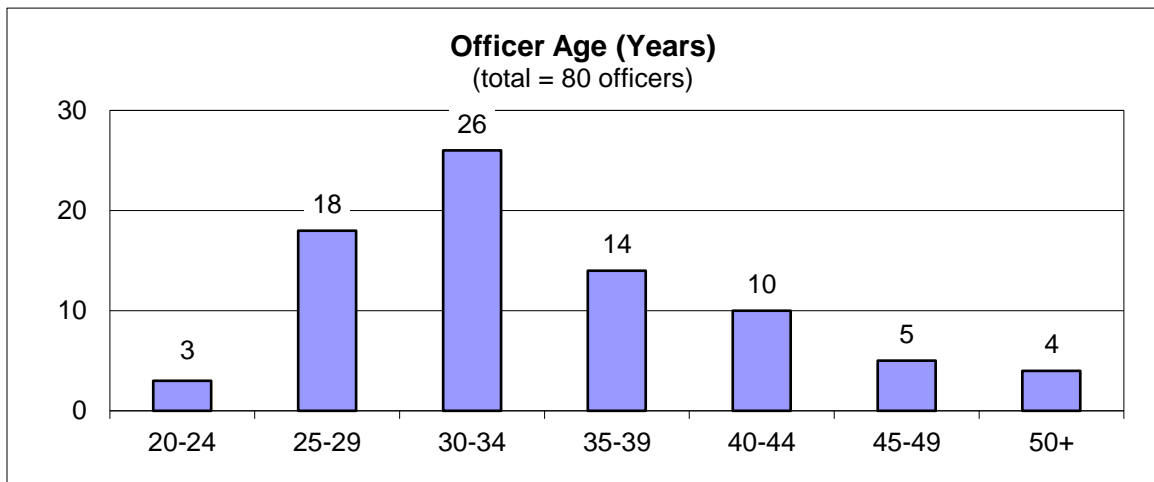
Department

Most shootings involved APD officers only (93% of incidents). Two incidents involved only officers from other jurisdictions, including Texas Alcohol and Beverage Commission, Travis County Sheriff's Office, and the U.S. Marshals Service.

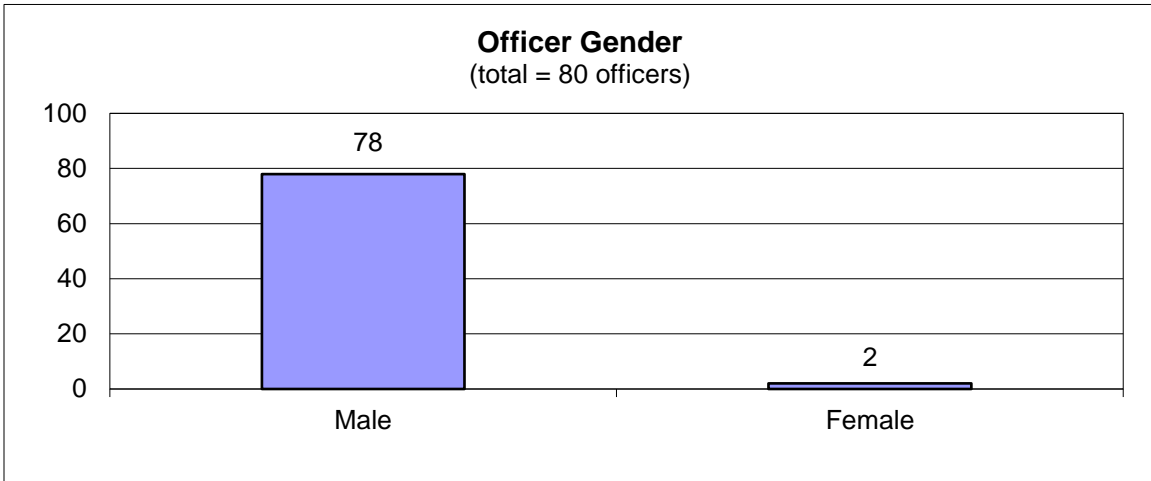


Officer Demographics

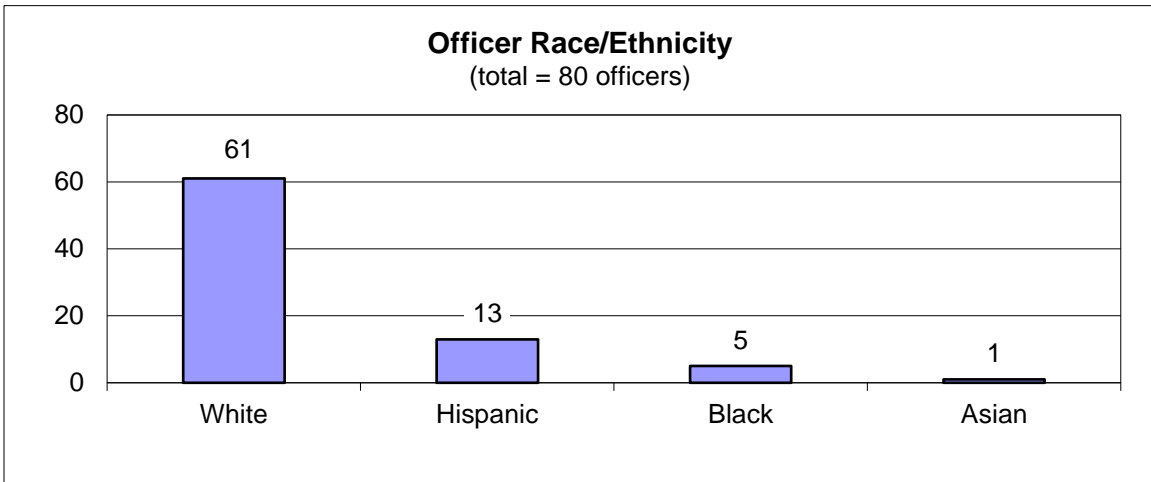
One-third of officers (33%) were between the ages of 30-34 at the time of the officer-involved shooting.



All but two of the officers involved in shootings were male (98%). For context, in December 2017 APD's sworn population was 90% male and 10% female.

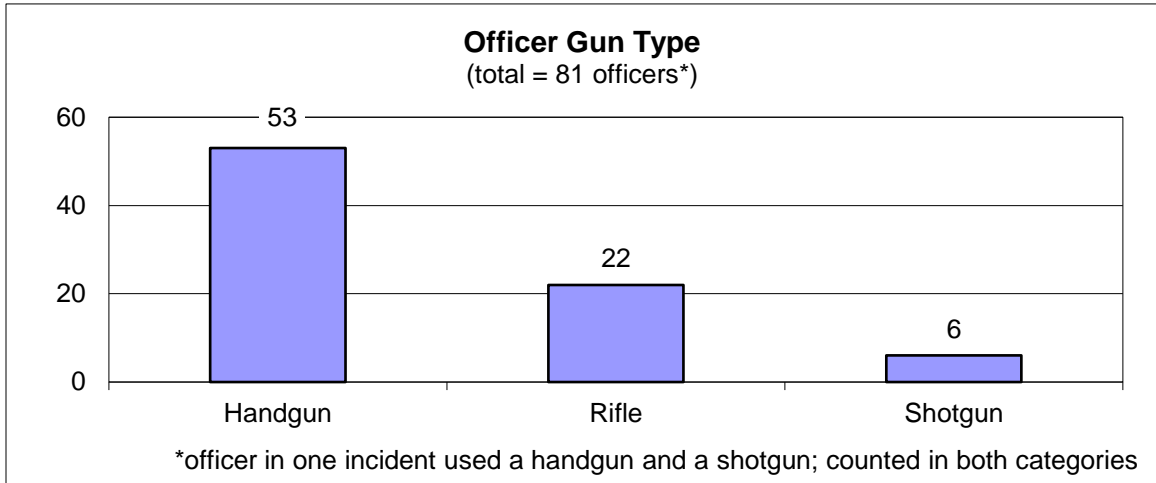


Most officers involved in shootings were White (76%), followed by 16% Hispanic, 6% Black, and 1% Asian. For context, in December 2017 APD's sworn population was 69% White, 20% Hispanic, 8% Black, and 3% Asian.

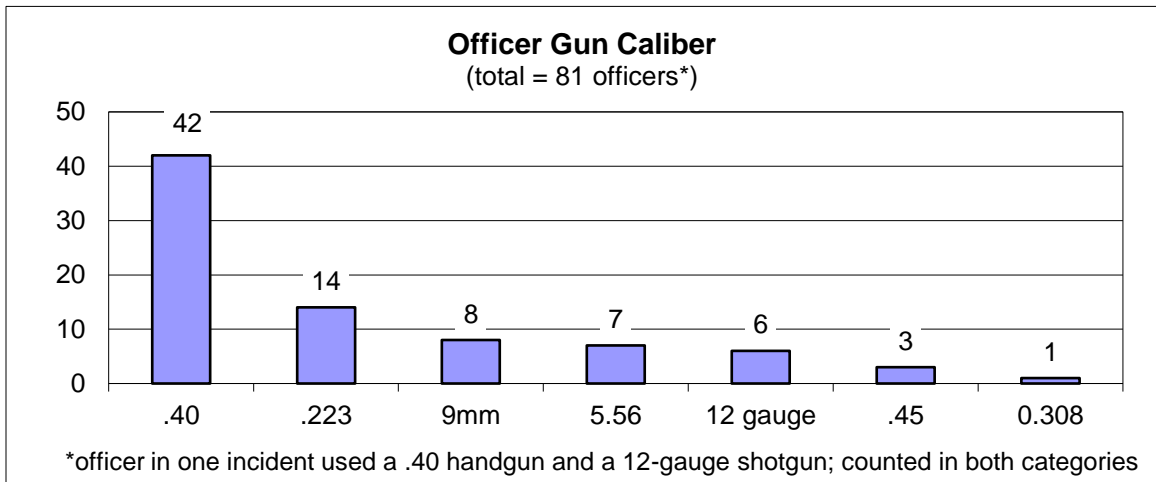


Weapon

Most officers involved in shootings fired a semi-automatic handgun (65%).

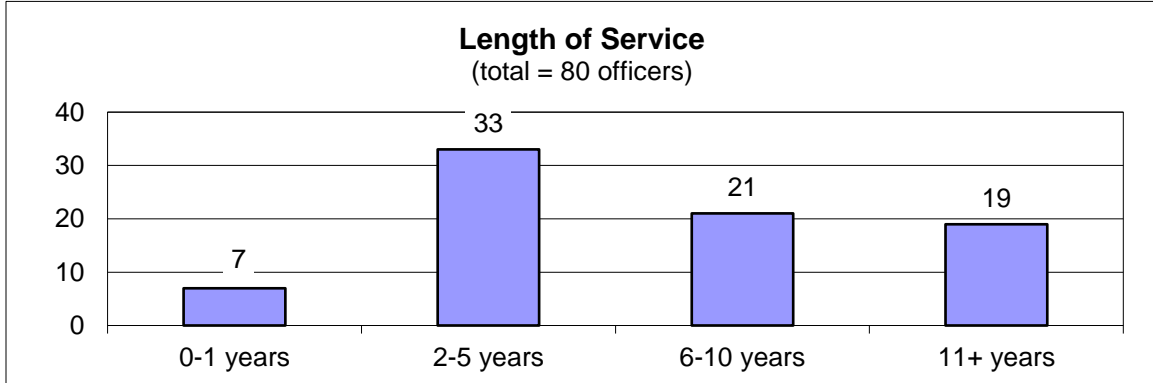


The caliber used most frequently in officer-involved shootings was .40 (used by 52% of officers).

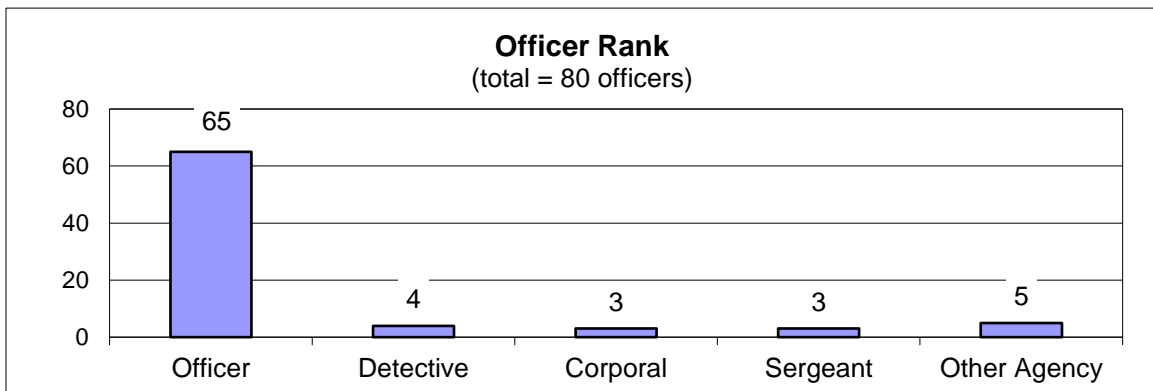


Experience and Prior Involvement

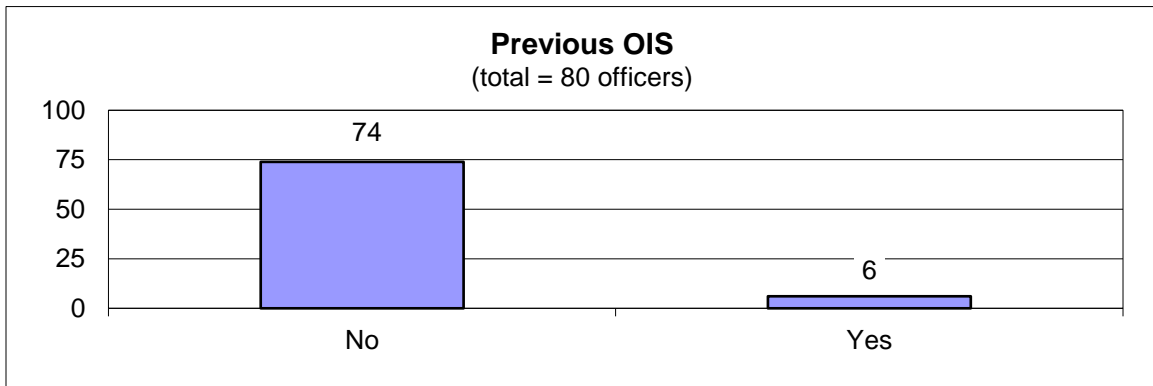
In terms of experience, officers most commonly had between two and five years of law enforcement experience at the time of the officer-involved shooting (41%). This includes years of experience at APD as well as other departments.



The majority (81%) of officers involved held the rank of APD officer.

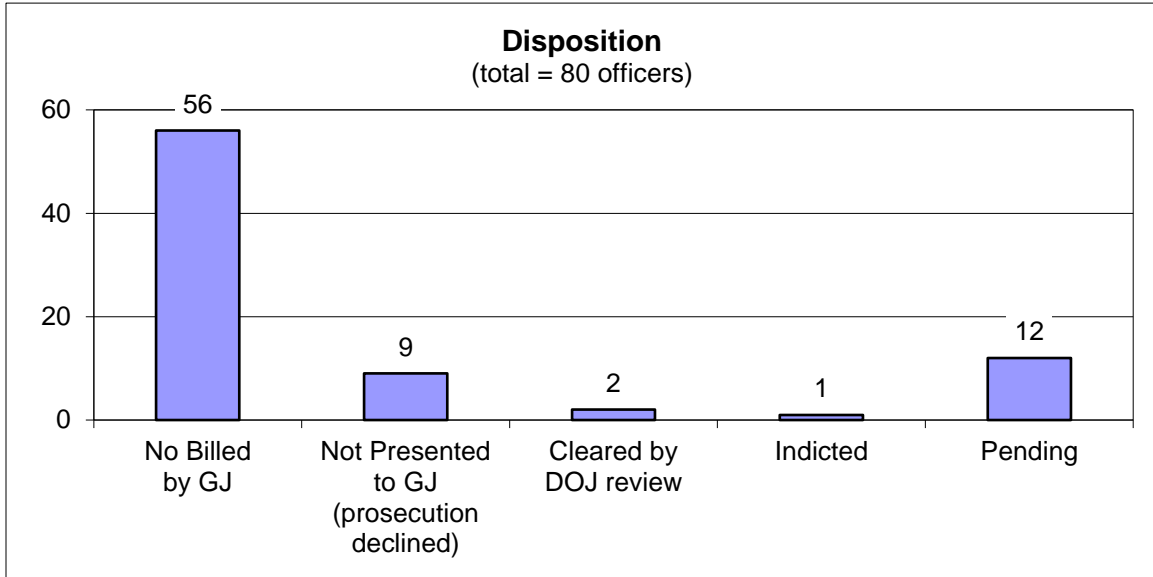


Most officers (93%) had not been involved in a prior officer-involved shooting in Austin since 2000.



Disposition

The majority of officers (81%) were not indicted by a grand jury (either no-billed by grand jury or not presented by the DA). Prior to 2017, Travis County's district attorney's office presented every OIS case to a Grand Jury as a policy. However, in 2017 the policy changed and the DA declined several cases.

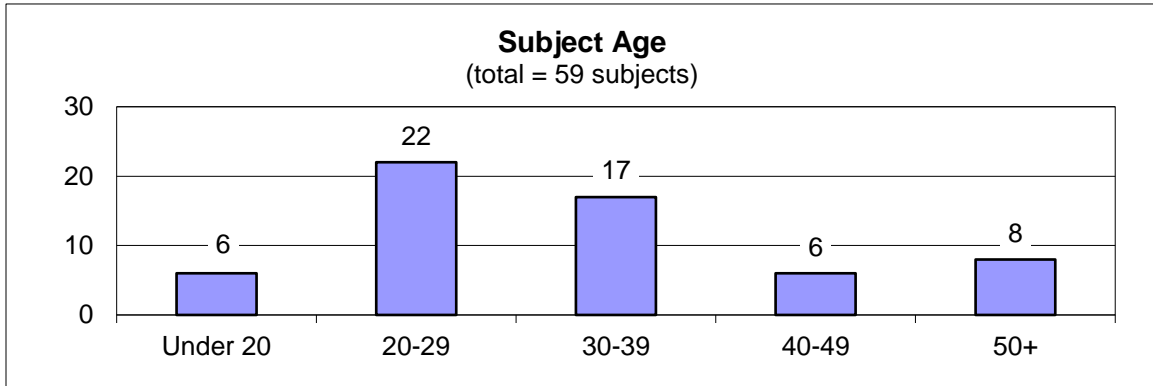


Subject Characteristics

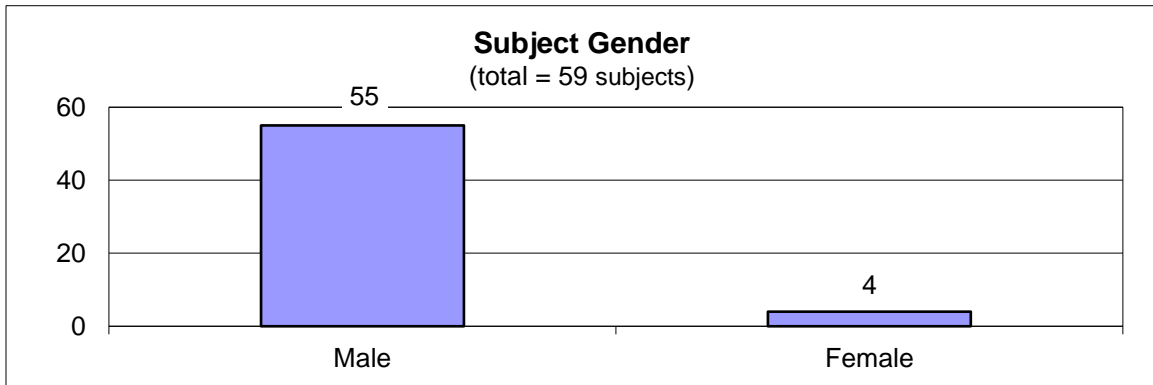
There were 59 subjects involved in the 57 officer-involved shootings that occurred in Austin from 2008 through 2017.

Subject Demographics

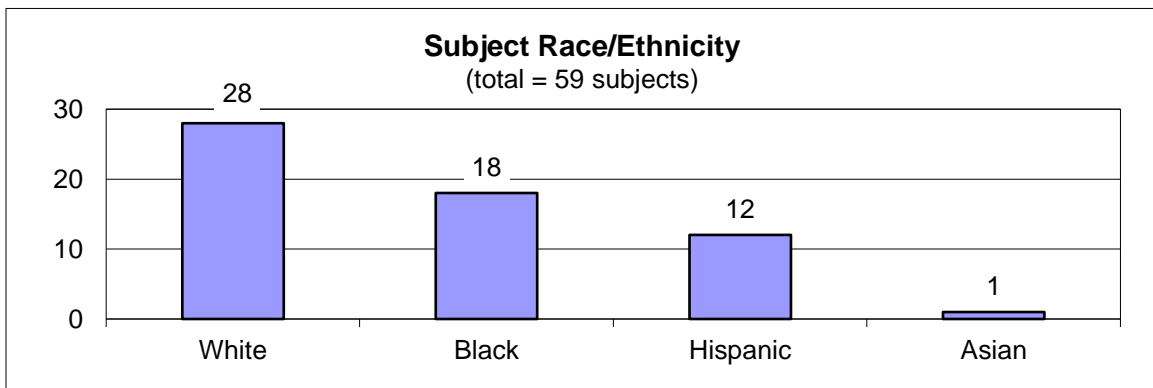
The majority of subjects (66%) were between the ages of 20 and 39 years.



Most of the subjects were male (93%).

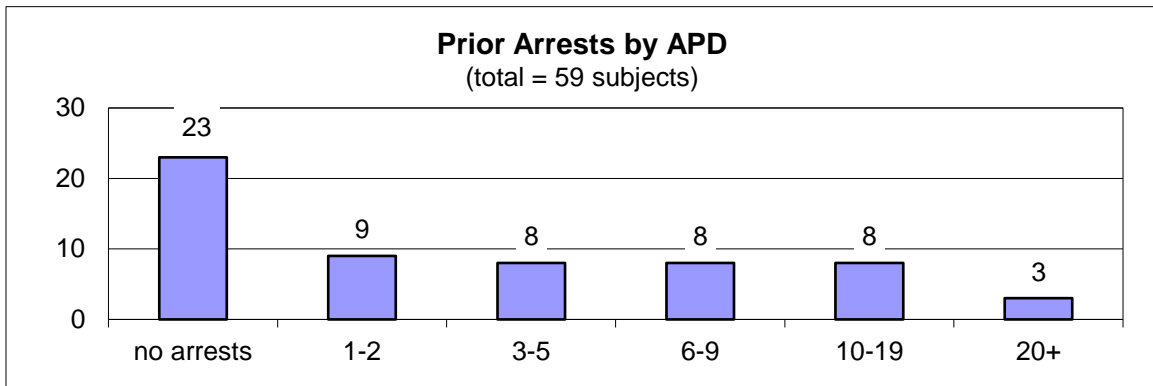


Subjects were most commonly White (48%), followed by 31% Black, and 20% Hispanic.



Criminal History

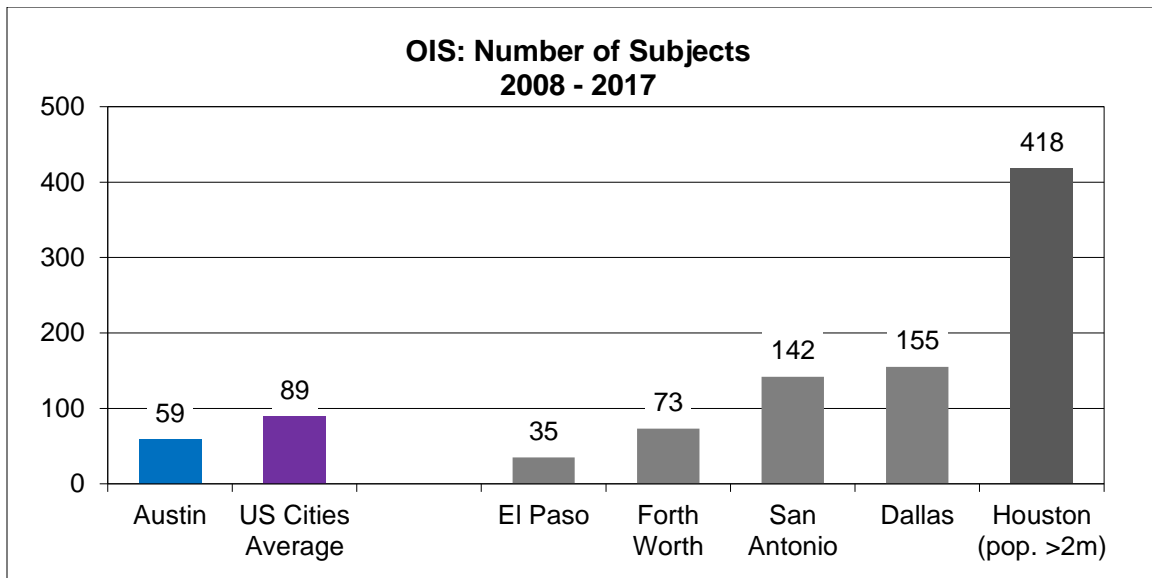
Most subjects (61%) had been arrested at least once by APD prior to the officer-involved shooting.



Comparison to Other Cities

The following summarizes total officer-involved shooting subjects for Austin, and US cities of comparable size (500,000 – 1,500,000 residents) for the years 2008 through 2017. Texas cities in the below chart are shown separately, and all but Houston are also included in the US Cities average.

Cities surveyed had between 32 and 185 OIS subjects for the 10-year period, averaging 89. This makes Austin's count of 59 OIS subjects 34% lower than the average.



Note: Comparison data was gathered and shared with permission from other jurisdictions. The following cities are included in the above "US Cities Average":

- Albuquerque
- Baltimore
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg
- Columbus
- Dallas
- Denver
- El Paso
- Fort Worth
- Fresno
- Honolulu
- Indianapolis
- Jacksonville
- Louisville
- Memphis
- Nashville
- Oklahoma City
- Portland
- San Antonio
- San Diego
- San Jose
- Seattle
- Tucson
- Washington DC

Appendix: Map of Incidents

