

Austin Police Department

Officer-Involved Shootings: 2000-2014



Prepared by the Austin Police Department
Research and Planning Unit
May 1, 2015

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 the outcome in situations that have led to officer-involved shootings in the past.

Overview

This report reflects all officer-involved shootings that occurred from 2000 through 2014 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 74 officer-involved shooting incidents in Austin during this timeframe, involving 93 officers and 79 suspects.

The report is organized into three sections:

- Incident characteristics
- Officer characteristics
- Suspect characteristics

Sources

Versadex; APD Special Investigations Unit; APD Training Academy; APD Professional Standards; APD Human Resources; City of Austin Planning and Development demographics data; Austin Community College Police; Austin Park Police; Travis County Sheriff's Office; Travis County Constable; US Marshall; Texas Alcohol and Beverage Commission; Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; Granger Police; Jonestown Police.

Notable Findings

This report contains the following noteworthy findings:

- More than one-third (34%) of the officer-involved shootings occurred in the **Edward and Frank** sectors.
- Slightly fewer than half of the incidents (41%) **occurred at night** and the vast majority (84%) **occurred outside**.
- Over half of the incidents (55%) **occurred in the street or a parking lot**.
- The most common reason for **initial officer contact** was a disturbance call (15%).
- The **most common suspect weapons** were guns (50%) followed by vehicles (28%).
- Over half of the incidents (57%) involved one or more of the following factors: **drugs, alcohol, or mental illness**.
- A total of **sixteen officers were injured**, including two who were shot non-fatally.
- **One-third of the suspects were killed** (33%), and an additional 38% were injured.
- Nearly half of officers (45%) had between **2 and 5 years of law enforcement experience** at the time of the incident.
- **Most officers (77%) were no-billed by a grand jury**, the district attorney declined to present to a grand jury for another 9%, and only 2 officers were indicted.
- **Slightly more than one-third of the suspects were Black** (35%), 32% were White and 29% were Hispanic.
- Most suspects (62%) were **between the ages of 20 and 39**.
- Suspects had been **arrested on average five times** prior to the incident.

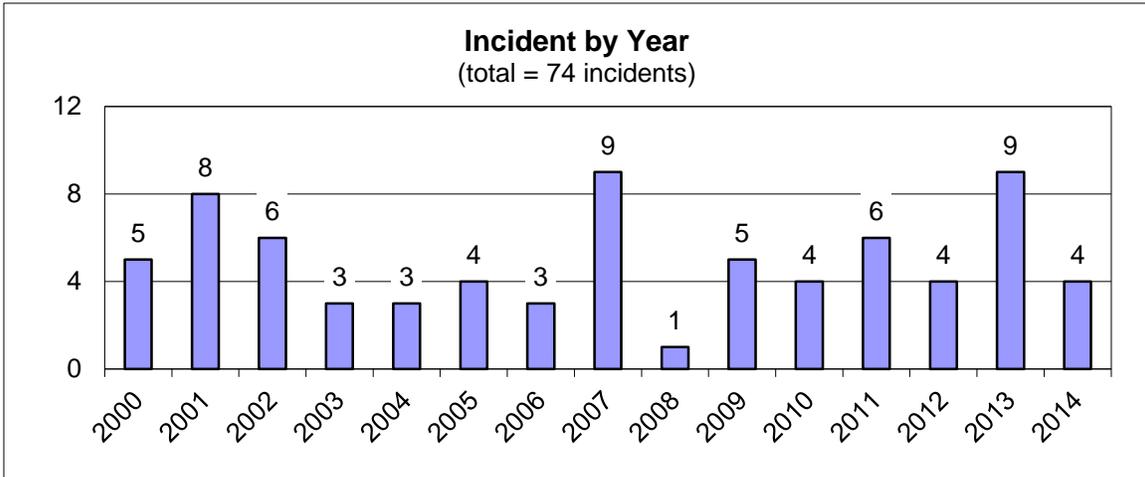
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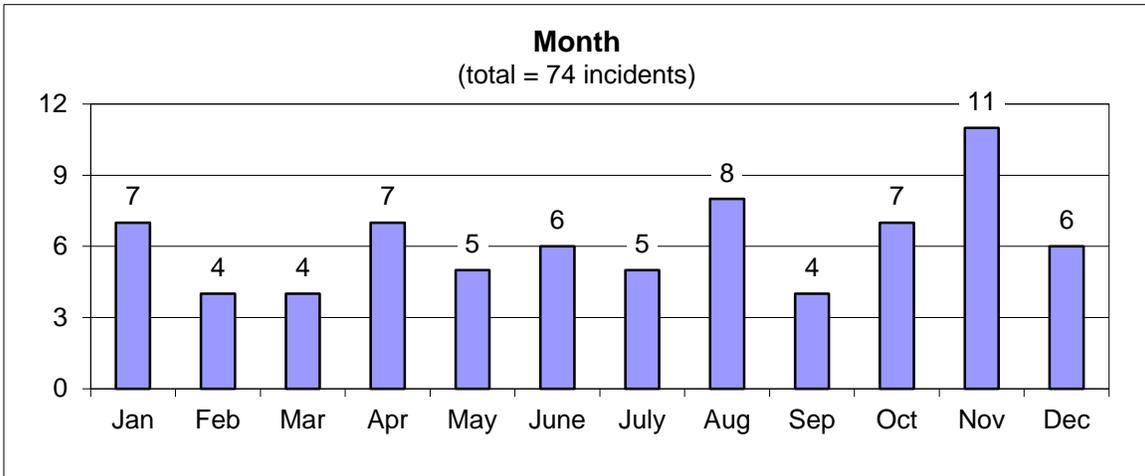
Incident Characteristics

Timing

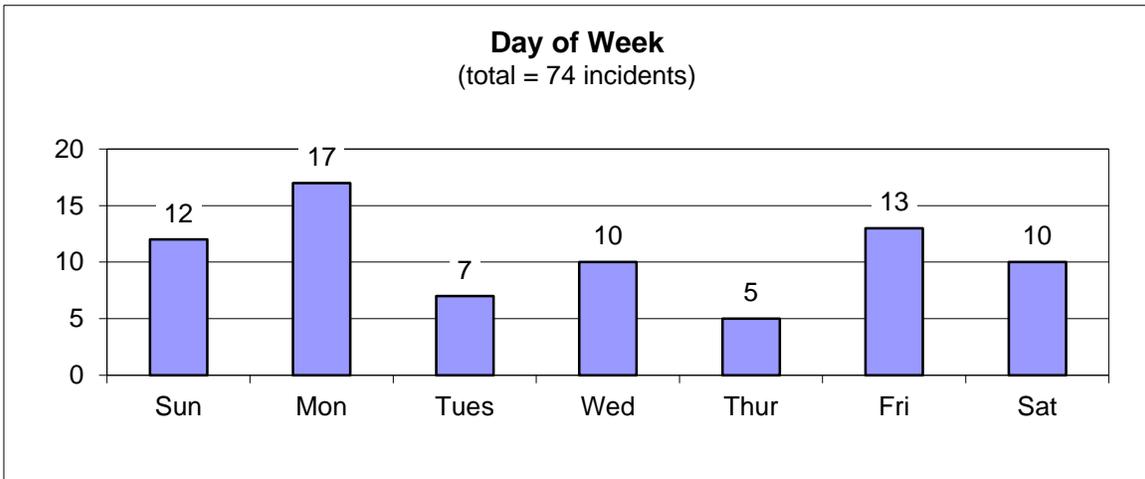
During the years 2000 – 2014, Austin experienced 74 officer-involved shootings. Peak years included 2007 and 2013 (nine shootings). The average was five shootings per year.



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



Monday was the most common day for officer-involved shootings.

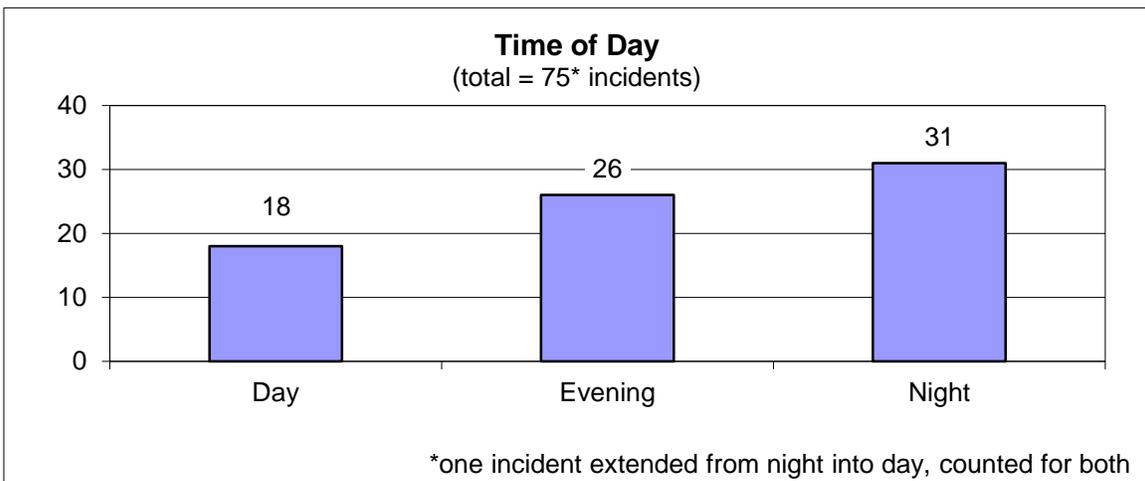


Most incidents occurred at night (41%) and the fewest incidents occurred during the day. Time frames were based loosely on patrol shifts and were defined as follows:

Day: 06:00 - 13:59

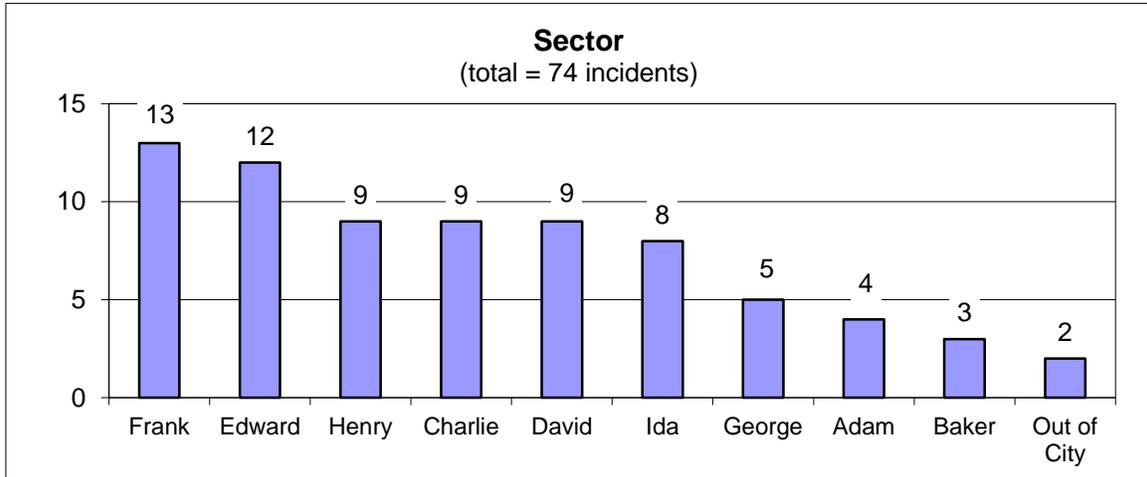
Evening: 14:00 - 21:59

Night: 22:00 - 05:59

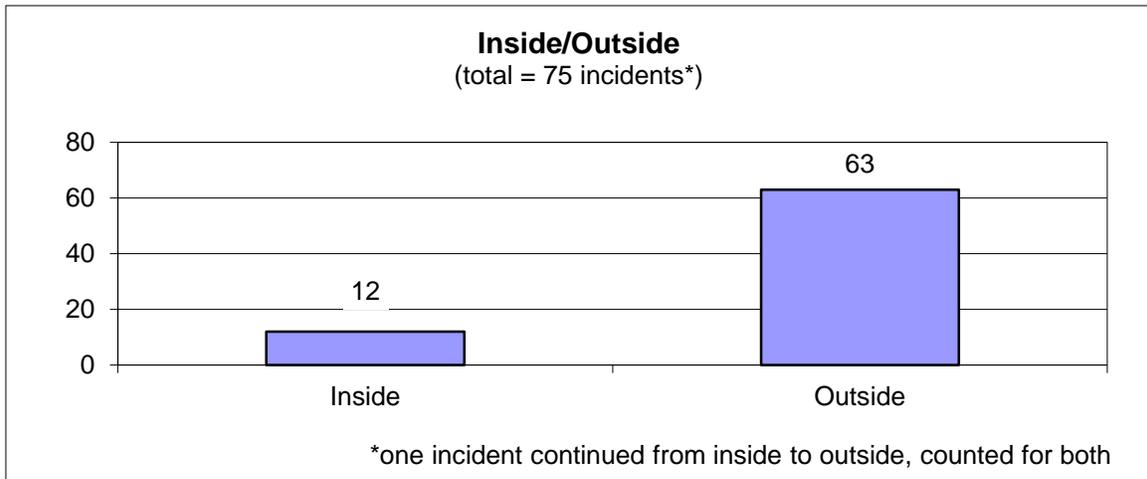


Location

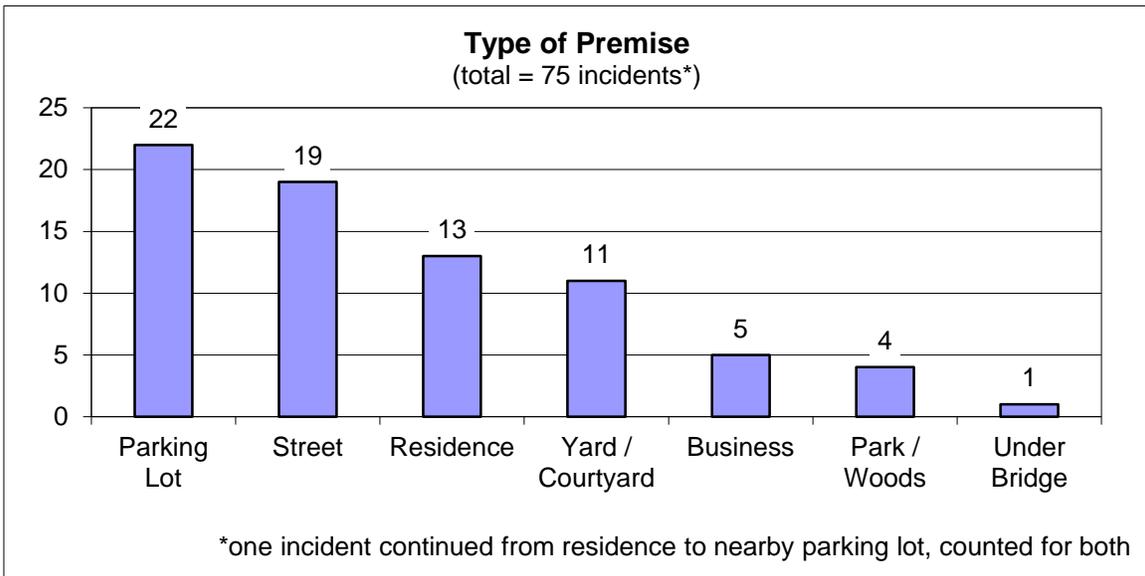
Incidents were more concentrated in the Edward and Frank sectors: together, these two sectors accounted for one-third of all shootings (34%). Two incidents occurred outside of the city. A map showing the location of each incident is provided on page 20.



A majority of incidents occurred outside (84%), and only 16% occurred inside.

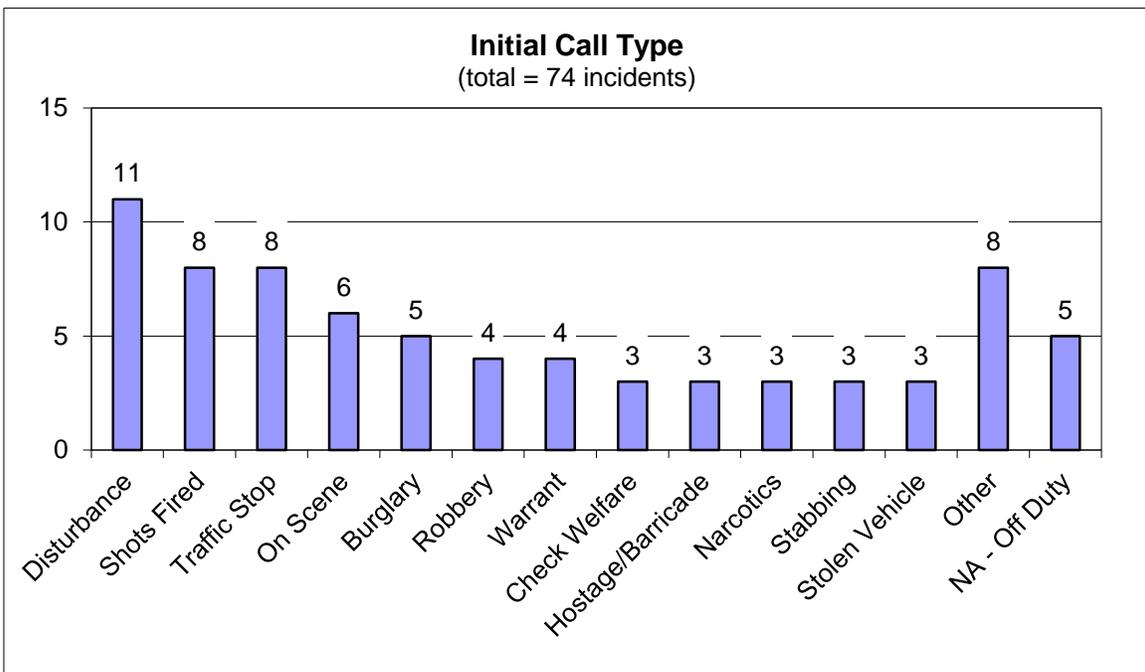


The most common type of premise for an officer-involved shooting was in the street or in a parking lot (55% of incidents), followed by a residence (17%).



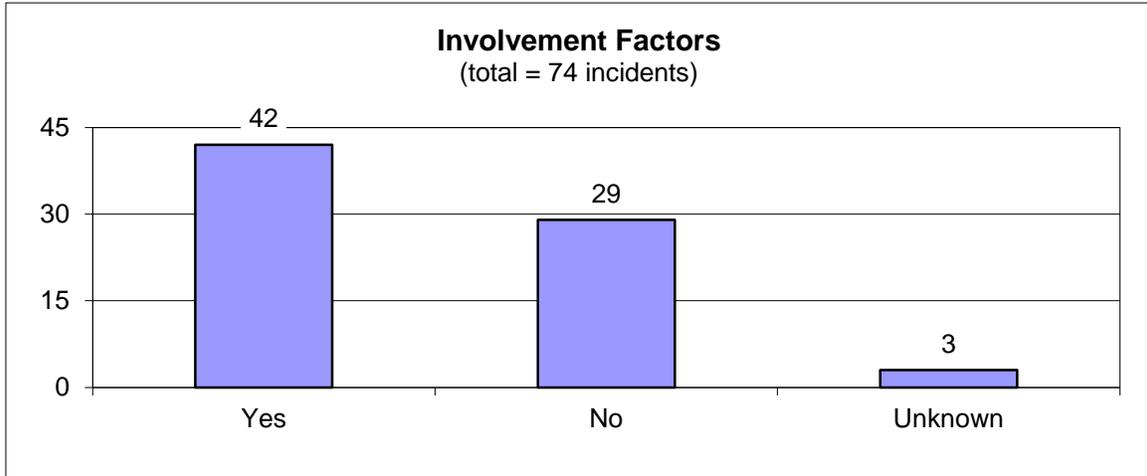
Call Type

Reasons for the initial contact between the officer and suspect(s) varied. Disturbance calls were the most frequent type (15%) of those that ended in an officer-involved shooting. The Other category includes Armed Subject, Pursuit, Suspicious Person/Caller, BOV, and Kidnapping.



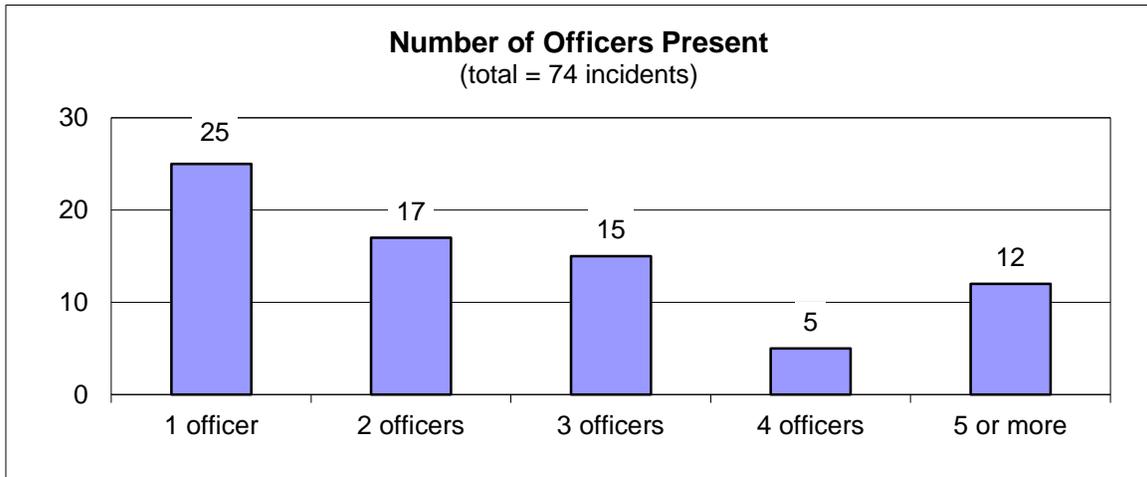
Involvement Factors

Common incident characteristics included suspects who were dealing or using drugs, using alcohol, or had a mental illness. One or more of these factors occurred in 42 (or 57%) of incidents. Only 29 incidents had no known factors. Unknown represents incidents in which suspects fled and it is not known whether any factors were involved.



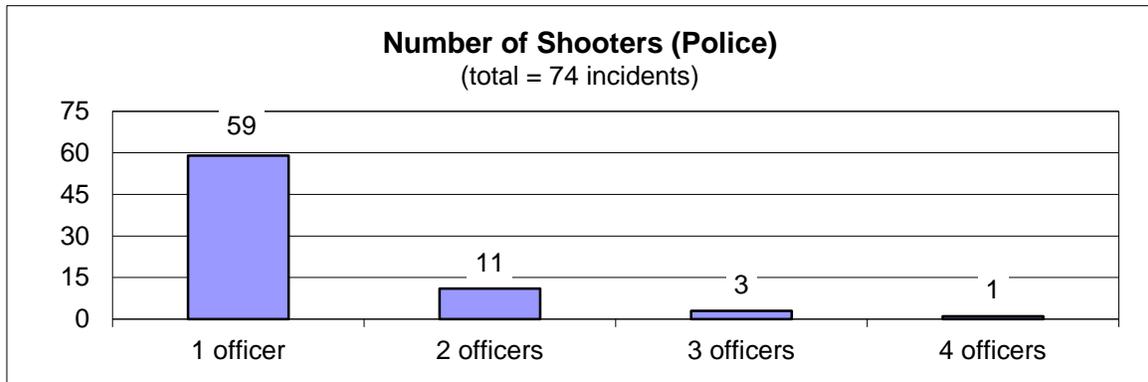
Police Presence

When incidents are examined by total number of officers present, the most common scenario (34% of incidents) was for only one officer to be present during the shooting. For 77% of incidents, three or fewer officers were present during the shooting.

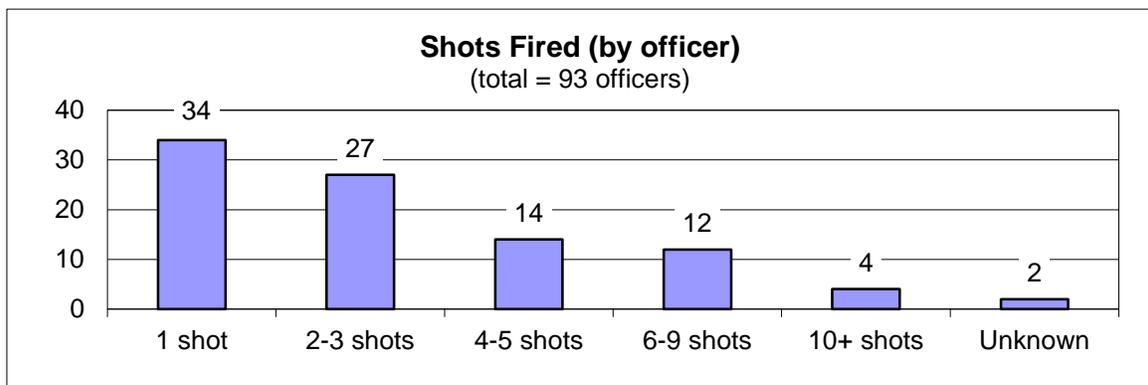


Shots Fired and Hits

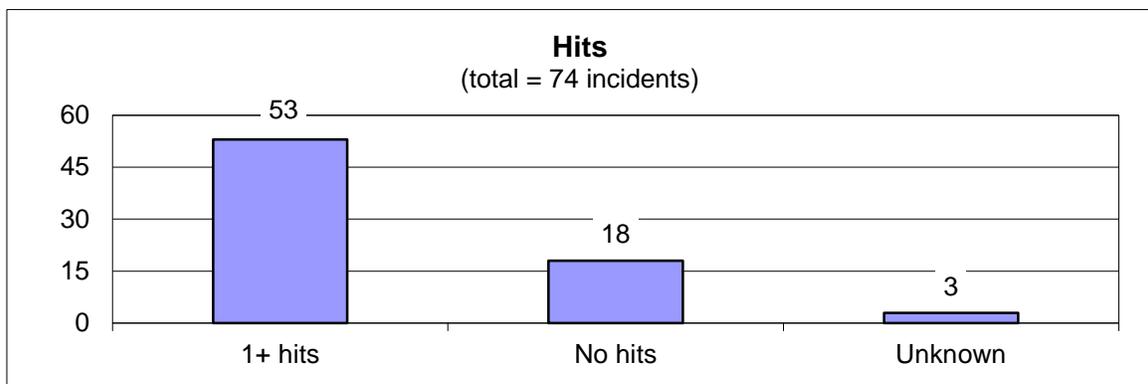
Looking at number of officers shooting, regardless of how many officers were present at the scene, it was most common that only one officer was the shooter (80% of incidents).



It was most common for officers to shoot just one time (37%). "Unknown" represents non-APD officers for whom we did not have accurate enough info to report.

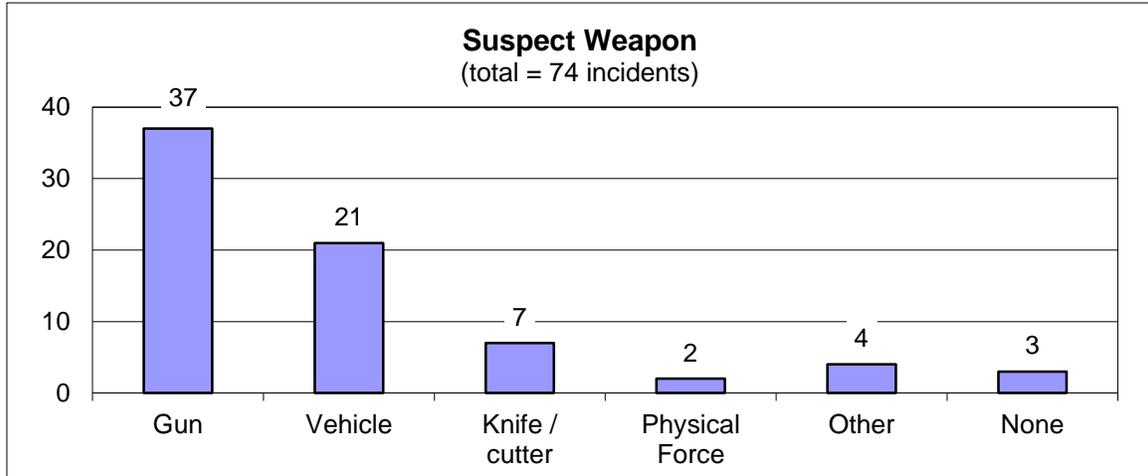


In 72% of incidents, one of the fired shots hit the suspect. "Unknown" represents incidents in which the suspects fled and it is not known whether they were injured.



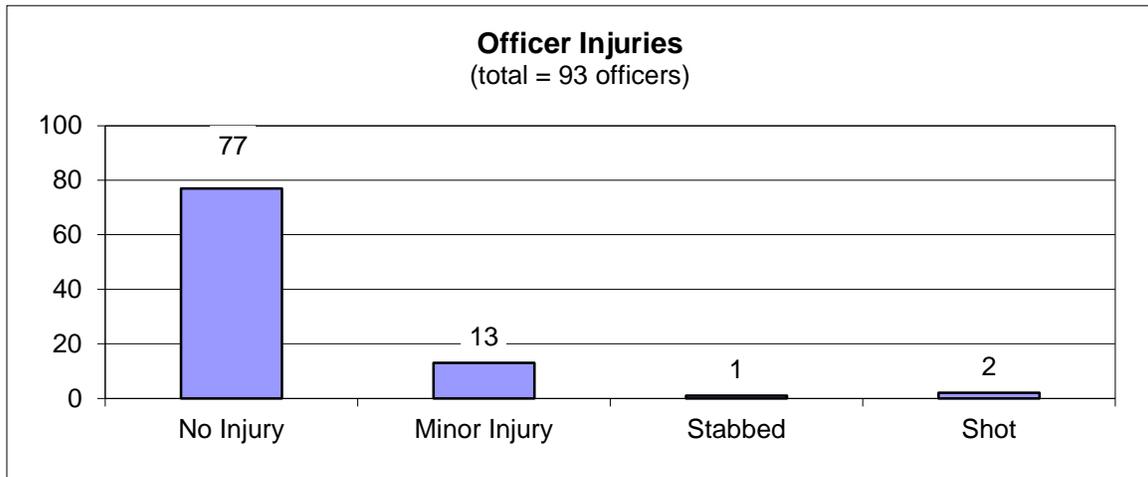
Suspect Weapon

Guns (including handguns, rifles, shotguns, and air pistols) were the most common weapons, used in half of the incidents (50%). The next most used weapons were vehicles (28%) and knives or other cutting instruments (9%). The Other category includes hammer, microphone cord, radio face plate, and broken bottle.

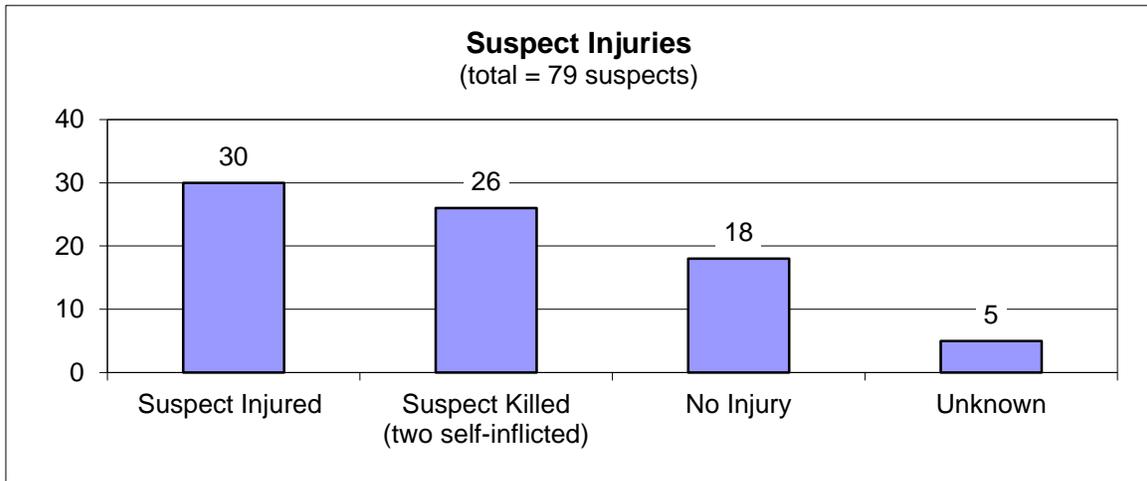


Injuries

Of the 93 officers involved in shooting incidents, the majority (83%) were not injured at all. The percentage of officers who were injured was 17%. Of these, 14% sustained only a minor injury, while the remaining were stabbed or shot, although none fatally. Minor injuries include scrapes/abrasions and a broken finger.



Of the 79 suspects involved, one-third died as a result of the incident (33%), and an additional 38% were injured. "Unknown" represents suspects who fled and it is not known whether they were injured.

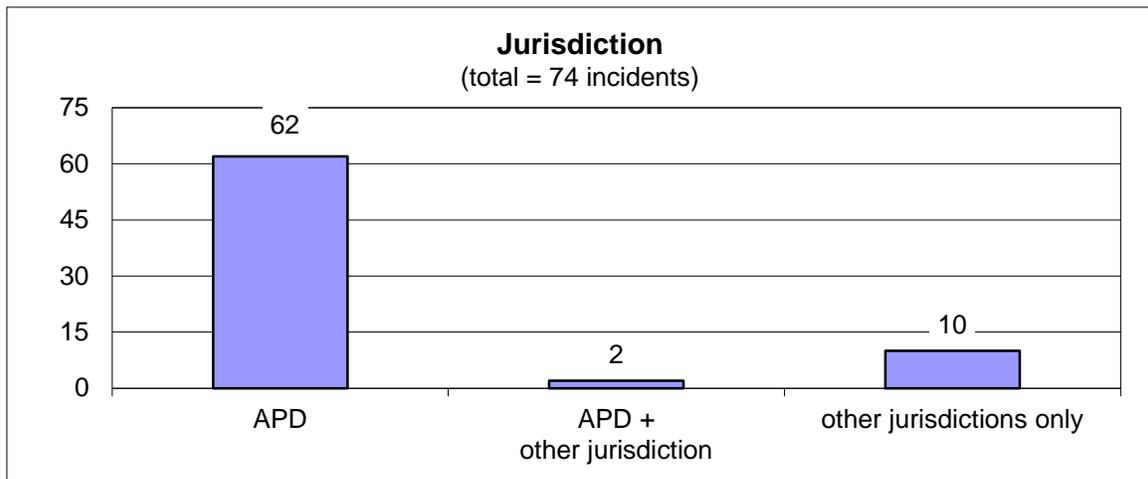


Officer Characteristics

The 74 officer-involved shootings that occurred in Austin from 2000 through 2014 involved 93 officers.

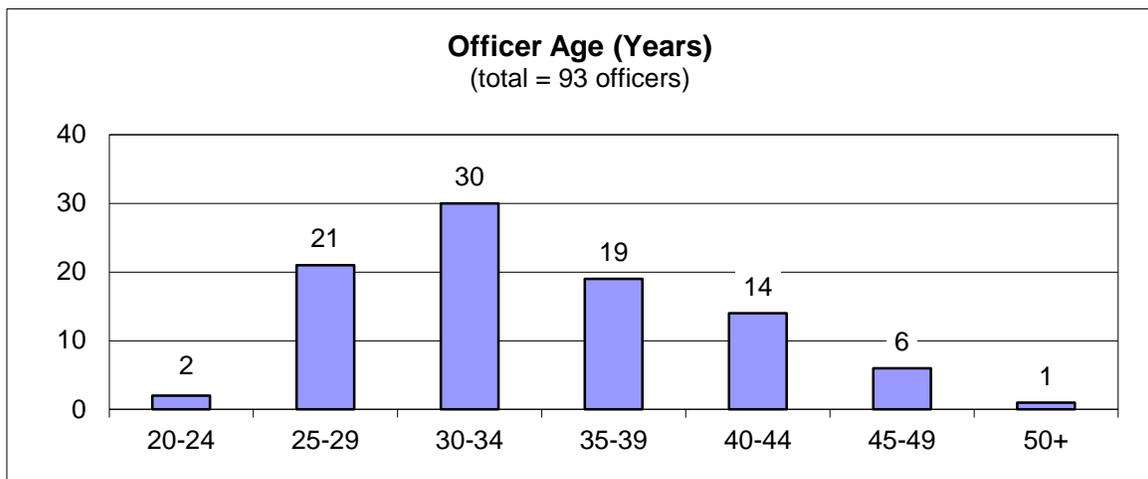
Department

Most shootings involved APD officers (64 incidents). Ten incidents involved only officers from other jurisdictions, including City of Austin Park Police, Texas Alcohol and Beverage Commission, Travis County Sheriff's Office, Travis County Constable, US Marshal, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Granger Police, Jonestown Police, and Austin Community College Police.

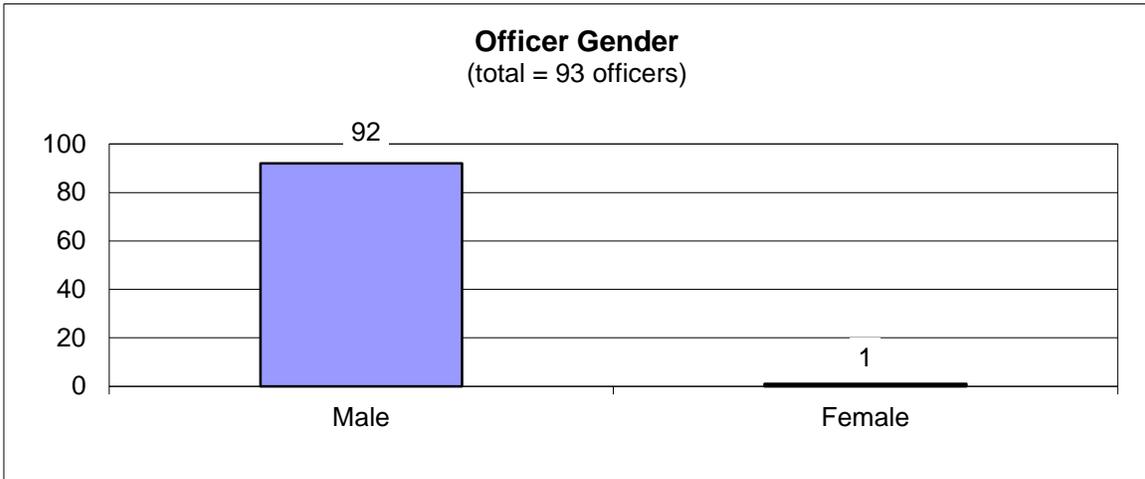


Demographics

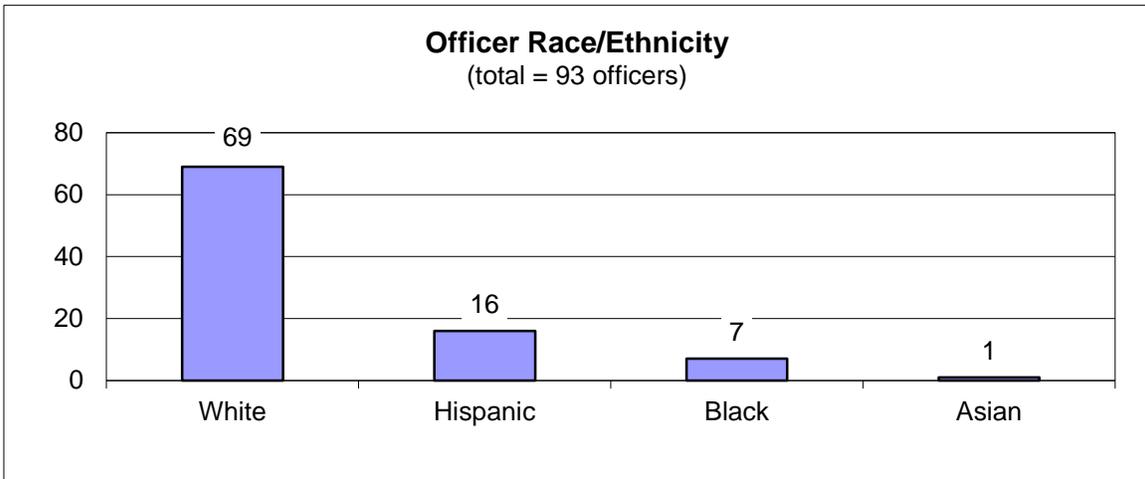
About one-third of officers (32%) were between the ages of 30-34 at the time of the officer-involved shooting. The average officer age was 34 years old.



All but one of the officers involved in shootings were male (99%). As context, in April 2015 APD's sworn population was 90% male and 10% female.

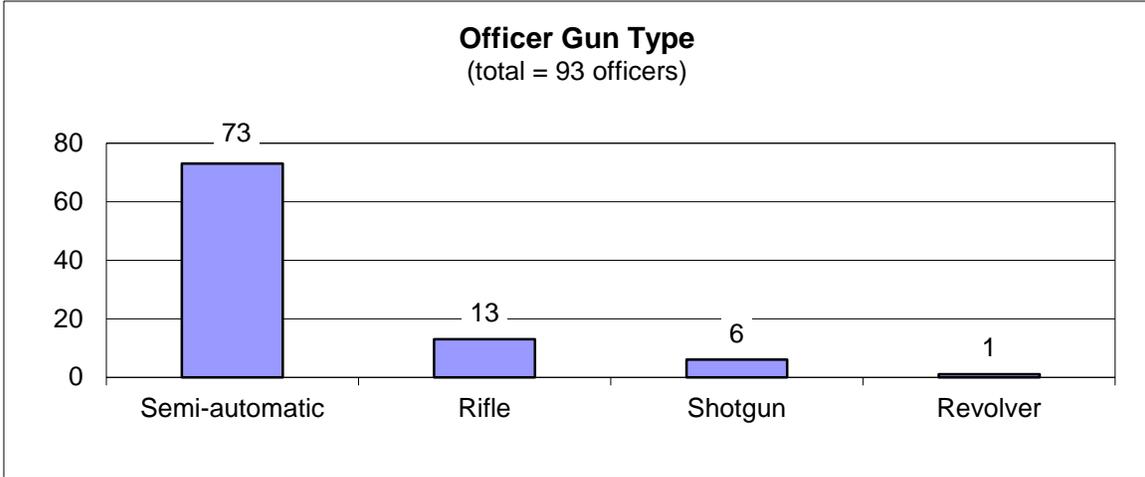


Most officers involved in shootings were White (74%), 17% Hispanic, 8% Black, and 1% Asian. As context, in April 2015 APD's sworn population was 69% White, 20% Hispanic, 9% Black, and 2% Asian.

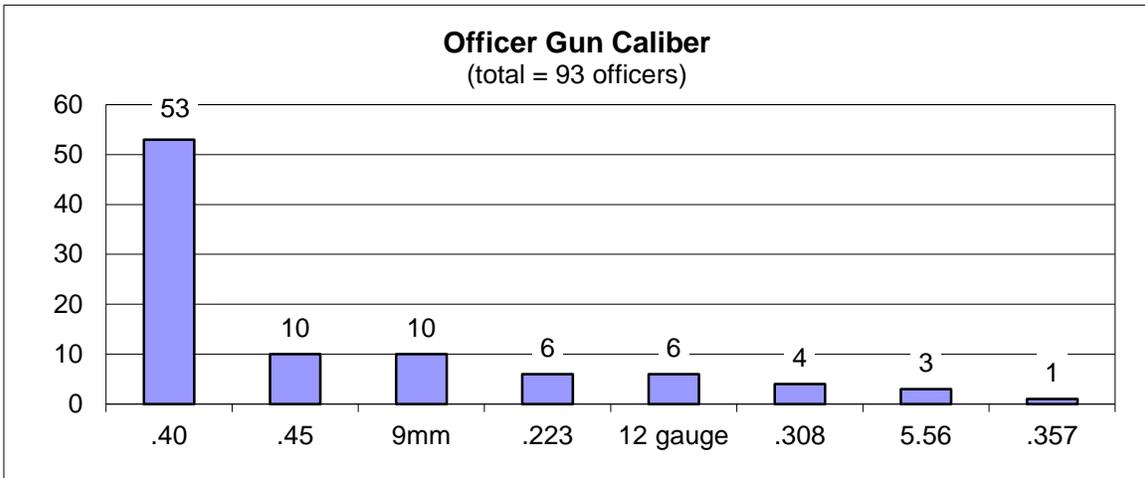


Weapon

Most officers involved in shootings fired a semi-automatic gun (78%).

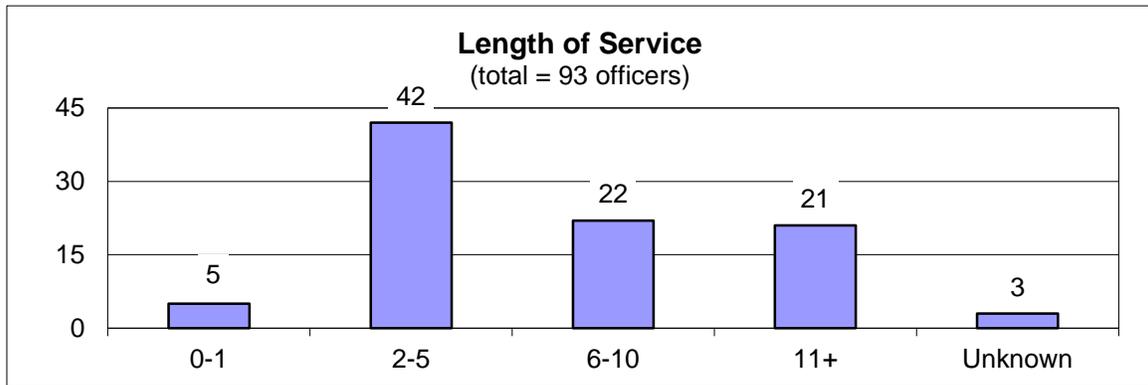


The caliber used most frequently in officer-involved shootings was .40 (used by 57% of officers), followed by .45 and 9mm (each used by 11% of officers).

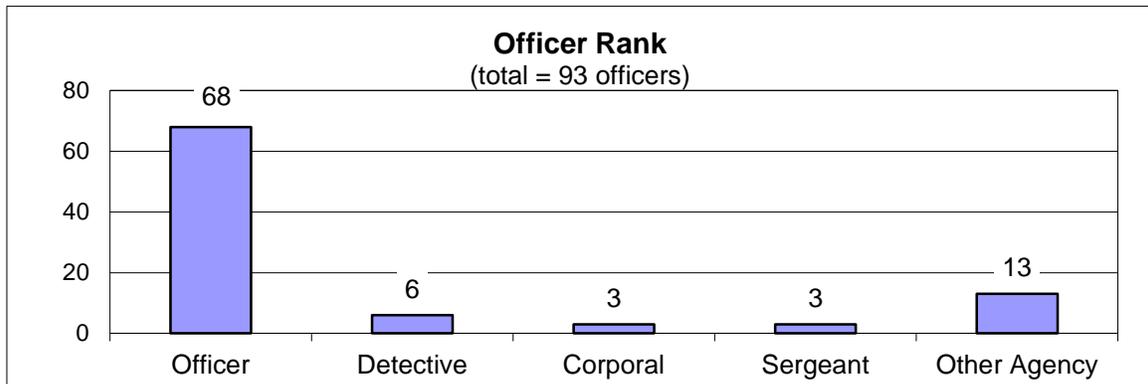


Experience and Prior Involvement

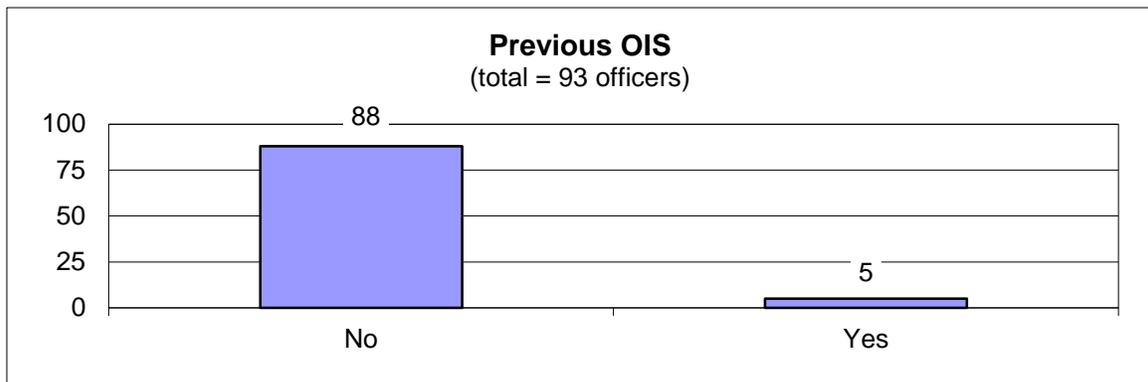
In terms of experience, most officers (45%) had between two and five years of law enforcement experience at the time of the officer-involved shooting. This includes years of experience at APD as well as other departments. Some jurisdictions could not provide this information.



Only 13% of those involved were ranked detective, corporal, or sergeant with APD at the time of the shooting. All others were officer rank or with other agencies.

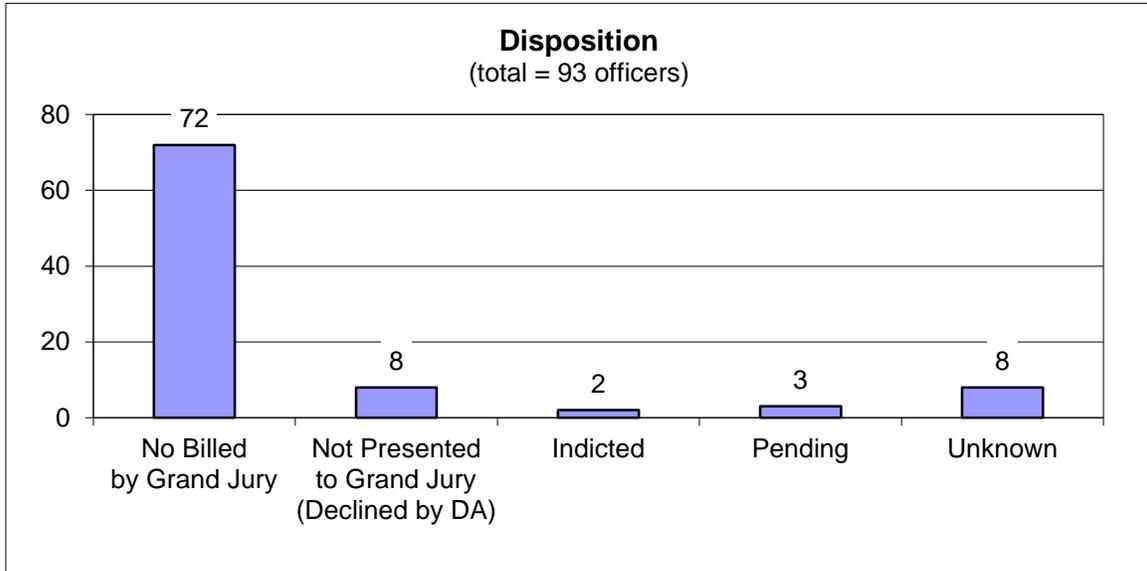


Most officers (95%) had never been involved in an officer-involved shooting in Austin during this time period prior to the event.



Disposition

The majority of officers (77%) were cleared by grand jury “no bill.” In eight cases (9%), there was an insufficient basis to present the case to the grand jury. Unknown cases include investigations that involved or were conducted by other agencies.

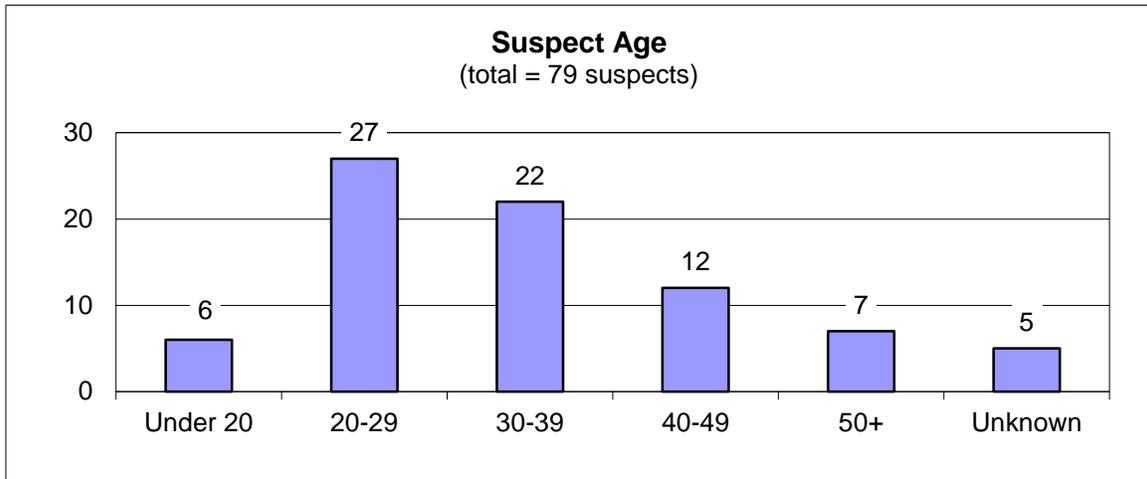


Suspect Characteristics

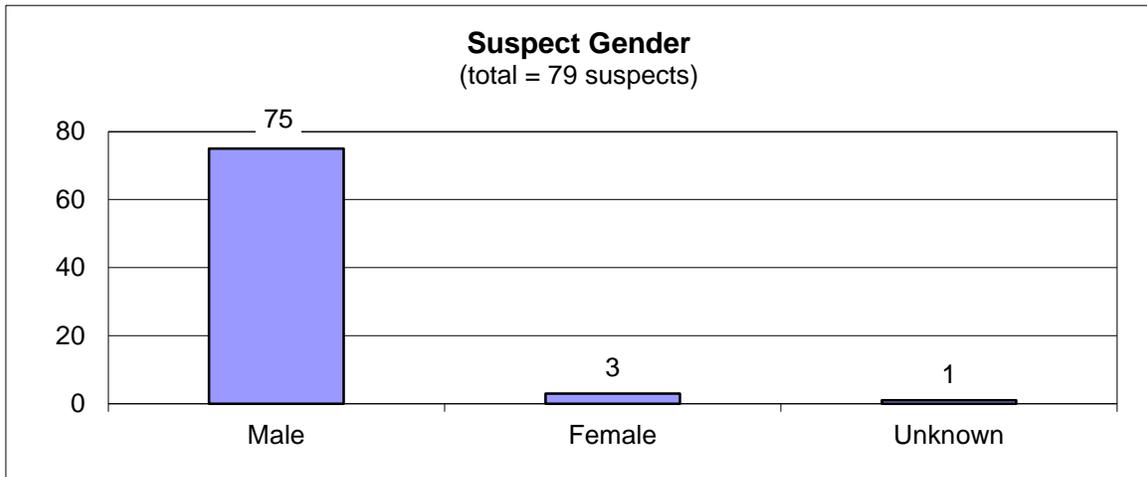
There were 79 suspects involved in the 74 officer-involved shootings that occurred in Austin from 2000 through 2014. Of those 79 suspects, 5 fled and are considered unknown with limited descriptive info available.

Demographics

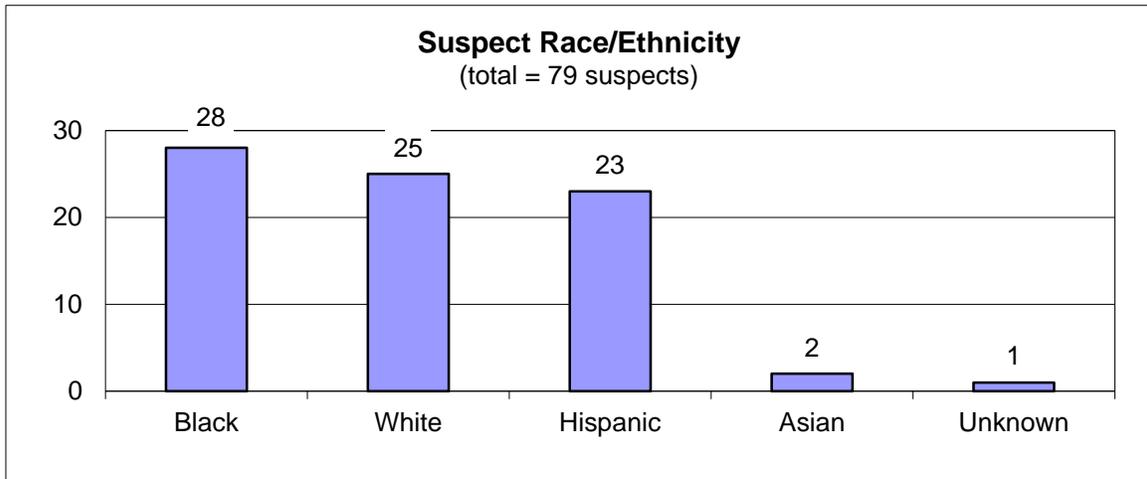
The majority of suspects (62%) were between the ages of 20 and 39 years. The average age was 32 years old.



Most of the suspects were male (95%).

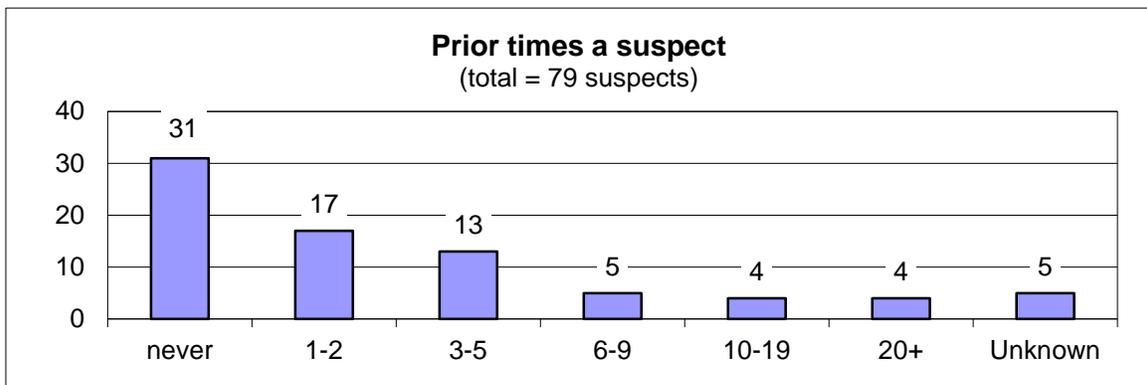
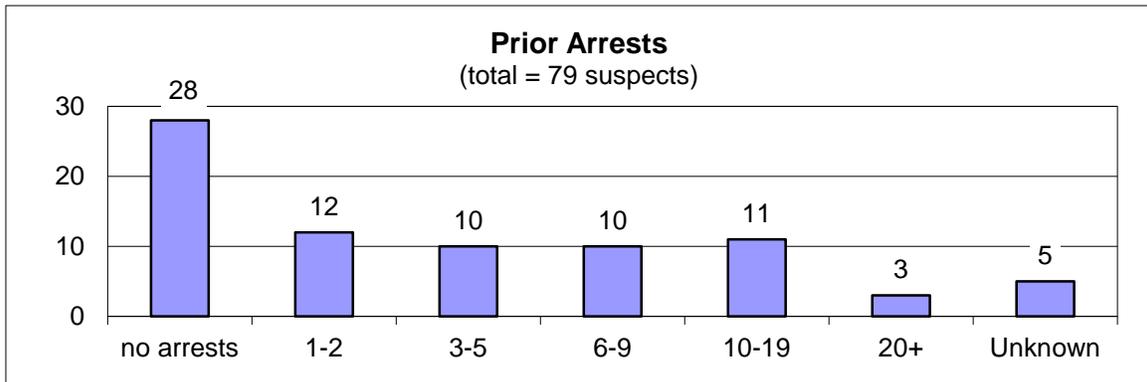


More than one-third of the suspects were Black (35%), 32% White, and 29% Hispanic.



Criminal History

Most suspects (58%) had been arrested at least once prior to the officer-involved shooting. The average suspect had been arrested five times and identified as a suspect four times.



Appendix: Map of Incidents

