

Bellingham Police Department
Use of Force Statistics
January 2018

Bellingham

POLICE

Washington State Accredited Agency

Your Bellingham Police Department maintains a commitment to our community by respecting the people we serve, acting with integrity and demonstrating accountability to those that we serve.

As entrusted guardians of our community, our interactions in the performance of our official duties sometimes brings us into conflict with members of society that fail to heed our community's wishes for order and peace. It is the policy of your police department that your officers may only use that amount of force that is objectively reasonable and necessary in the performance of their legal duties. Your police department's use of force policies are consistent with the laws of the United States and the State of Washington. Your police department also strives to have policies that are consistent, with identified "best practices," and contemporary scientific discovery and application.

The components for constitutional policing are training, policy and supervision. Your police department maintains the highest standards and attention to all three areas and will continue to be an agency that serves its community with commitment, vision and values.

SECTION ONE: Incident Information

Total number of use of force incidents:	28 / 0.51%
• Incidents involving one officer:	0
• Incidents involving more than one officer:	28 / 100%

According to the city's Computer-Aided Dispatch information from January 1st through January 31st of this year, your Bellingham Police officers responded to a total of 5515 calls for service. These calls for service also included officer-initiated activities where an officer contacted someone, performed a traffic stop or witnessed an incident and were investigating further.

For fans of numbers, this means that **0.51%, or around one-half of one percent** of incidents in January resulted in your officers using lawful force against a citizen.

Incident origin:	
• Call for service from 911	25 / 89%
• Self-initiated by officer(s)	3 / 11%

Put into perspective with the previous information this means that in all 5515 calls for service that your police officers responded to in the month of January, only **three times** did an officer's self-initiated contact result in one of your officers using lawful force against a citizen.

In numbers: **0.054%, or five one-hundredths of one percent.**

Reason for use of force:	
• Active resistance to lawful commands	19 / 68%
• Actively aggressive towards officers	6 / 21%
• Assaultive towards officers	2 / 7%
• Life threatening situation	1 / 4%

Your police officers are allowed by law to use force in the discharge of their duties.

As the information above has already shown, your police officers very rarely have to use force to accomplish their lawful objectives. The reasons listed above show that some citizens do not wish to submit to officers' lawful authority. How the citizens resist lawful actions of your officers is detailed hereafter, along with officers' responses.

Citizen Resistance

Officers' Force Response

A citizens' resistance to lawful commands can take more than one form; sometimes your officers' response to these situations necessitates finding a solution that safely resolves the situation. For example, a citizen may refuse a lawful command, then flee on foot and ultimately resist physically when located. For that one incident, three specific items are documented. In the same manner, one of your officers may give a lawful verbal command. When that lawful command is disregarded, the officer may need to employ a physical control technique such as tackling a fleeing citizen. Thus, two specific items are documented.

Of note, your officers noted that for this particular data set, citizens in 26 of the 28 incidents (93%) disregarded verbal commands wherein your officers used lawful force. Citizens were more likely to flee after that, or offer physical resistance to lawful commands. Your officers used authorized physical controls like grabbing arms for handcuffing or holding folks from fleeing far more than deploying other modalities of force like TASERS or physical strikes.

In addition, do not forget that **0.51%, or around one-half of one percent** of incidents in January resulted in your officers using lawful force against a citizen, so your police department using force to accomplish lawful objectives is a rarity.

Day of Week

Sunday	2 / 7%
Monday	3 / 11%
Tuesday	6 / 21%
Wednesday	2 / 7%
Thursday	4 / 14%
Friday	4 / 14%
Saturday	7 / 25%

Time of Day

0620	1 / 4%
1020	5 / 18%
1620	9 / 32%
2020	8 / 29%
0300	5 / 18%

SECTION TWO: Involved Persons' Information

The data presented in this section will provide information on the citizens involved in your police department's use of force incidents, along with information on your police officers involved in those incidents.

Injuries to Citizens due to Officers' force:**6 / 23%**

- Abrasions, punctures

For the month of January, your officers used lawful force **0.51%, or around one-half of one percent** in the incidents they responded to. Of the 5515 incidents your officers responded to, only six of those contacts resulted in any kind of notable injury to a citizen; in this case abrasions to the citizens' skin and small punctures.

In numbers: **0.11%, or around one-tenth of one percent** of incidents responded to by your officers resulted in an injury from your officers using lawful force against a citizen.

Citizens Transported to Hospital:**12 / 46%**

As noted above, your officers noted that in twelve incidents where lawful force was used on citizens the citizens were transported to St. Joseph's Hospital for medical care. Nine citizens appeared to be having a mental health issue that posed a danger to themselves or others; your police department strives to have mental health issues handled by the hospital, not the jail, and thus the citizen was taken to the hospital by your officers for the appropriate care. Two were required by the jail and one was at a medic's request (K9 application).

Injuries to Officers: 4 / 15%

Officers Transported to Hospital: 0

Median Age of Citizen: 30 years

- Youngest 20, Oldest 55

Median Age of Officer: 36.5 years

- Youngest 21, Oldest 59

Median ages were determined to be the best descriptor in these two categories, as the reader can gain a better appreciation for the more-likely ages rather than having an average age be skewed by outliers.

In addition, this information serves as a good reminder to the fact that your officers encounter folks from all age ranges in the performance of their official duties and sometimes encounter unlawful resistance from citizens, both younger and older.

Race of Citizen

- White 21 / 75%
- American Indian 4 / 14%
- Hispanic 2 / 7%
- Black 1 / 4%

Race of Officer

- White 62 / 86%
- East Indian 6 / 8%
- Hispanic 3 / 4%
- Black 1 / 1%

Resident of Whatcom County / Bellingham?

- Yes 28 / 100%
- No 0

Statistical analysis of police use of force often has a discussion component concerning the population demographics of the involved citizens. The reader is cautioned to remember that from a statistical basis, comparing outlying events to population demographics often will not give the reader an accurate assessment of the situation.

For example, in the month of January 100% of the citizens that your officers used lawful force on were residents of either Whatcom County or the City of Bellingham and not visiting from another locale. Thus, a simple analysis would be to see whether race demographics for January corresponds with race demographics of the City of Bellingham.

However, do not forget that in the month of January your officers used lawful force in only **0.51%, or around one-half of one percent** of incidents. So these incidents are truly outliers and thus may not adhere to population demographics. For example, four persons of American Indian ancestry had lawful force used against them in order to achieve lawful objectives in January, or **0.07%, or less than one-tenth of one percent** of the responses to incidents by your police department that month; this is nowhere near the city demographic.

Gender Identification of Citizen

- Male 22 / 79%
- Female 6 / 21%

Gender Identification of Officer

- Male 62 / 86%
- Female 10 / 14%

Considerations for Citizen's Actions

- Alcohol use perceived 11 / 25%
- Mental health issue perceived 11 / 25%
- Drug use perceived 10 / 23%
- Combination 9 / 20%
- Nothing perceived 3 / 7%

This information was provided by your police department to better inform the community we serve about use of force incidents. Your officers are empowered by the laws of the United States and the State of Washington to lawfully use force when objectively reasonable and necessary. This authority is viewed as an awesome responsibility to our community and your officers wish to be transparent so that our community understands that, although a statistical rarity, sometimes your officers have to lawfully gain compliance in the performance of their official duties.

Future information will also display the year-to-date information so that the community maintains a trusting relationship towards their police department in the topic of police use of force.

Should you have any questions, comments or concerns please do not hesitate to contact Lieutenant Don Almer at 360-778-8641 or dalmer@cob.org.