

**Bellingham Police Department  
Use of Force Statistics  
March 2021**

*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

<b>Total number of use of force incidents:</b>	<b>11 / 0.21%</b>	<b>YTD 33 / 0.24%</b>
• Incidents involving one officer:	0	YTD 2 / 6%
• Incidents involving more than one officer:	11 / 100%	YTD 31 / 94%

According to the city's Computer-Aided Dispatch information from March 1<sup>st</sup> through March 31<sup>st</sup> of this year your Bellingham Police officers responded to 5233 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 **0.21%, or around two-tenths of one percent** of incidents in March resulted in your officers using lawful force against a citizen. (13996 calls this year)

## Incident origin:

• Call for service from 911	9 / 82%	YTD 30 / 91%
• Self-initiated by officer(s)	2 / 18%	YTD 3 / 9%

Put into perspective with the previous information this means that in all 5233 calls for service that your police officers responded to in the month of March, only two times did an officer's self-initiated contact result in one of your officers using lawful force against a citizen.

In numbers: **0.038%, or around four one-hundredths of one percent.**

## Reason for use of force:

• Active resistance to lawful commands	10 / 91%	YTD 20 / 61%
• Actively aggressive	0	YTD 9 / 27%
• Assaultive	1 / 9%	YTD 4 / 12%
• Life-threatening	0	YTD 0

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

• Barricaded	0	YTD 1 / 3%
• Fled on foot	3 / 27%	YTD 6 / 18%
• Hiding	3 / 27%	YTD 3 / 9%
• Physical resistance	9 / 82%	YTD 29 / 88%
• Refuse lawful commands	11 / 100%	YTD 32 / 97%

### Officers' Force Response

• Physical control(s)	25 / 227%	YTD 67 / 203%
• Physical impact(s)	0	YTD 0
• TASER display	1 / 9%	YTD 2 / 6%
• Verbal command	25 / 227%	YTD 73 / 221%
• Weapon pointing	0	YTD 0
• Restraints	1 / 9%	YTD 1 / 3%
• Less Lethal Shotgun	0	YTD 1 / 3%
• Less Lethal Shotgun display	0	YTD 0
• K9 application	2 / 18%	YTD 3 / 9%
• TASER usage	1 / 9%	YTD 1 / 3%
• Vascular Neck Restraint	0	YTD 0
• Chemical Irritant	0	YTD 1 / 3%
• Pursuit Immobilization Technique	0	YTD 0
• Firearm	0	YTD 0
• Impact Weapon	0	YTD 0

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, verbal commands were disregarded by citizens in 11 of the 11 incidents (100%) wherein lawful force was used by your officers. Citizens were more likely to offer physical resistance to lawful commands after that. 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 **0.21%, or around two-tenths of one percent** of incidents in March resulted in your officers using lawful force against a citizen, so your police department using force to accomplish lawful objectives is a rarity.



<b>Injuries to Officers:</b>	<b>2 / 18%</b>	<b>YTD 7 / 21%</b>
<b>Officers Transported to Hospital:</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>YTD 0</b>
<b>Median Age of Citizen:</b>	<b>33 years</b>	
• Youngest 22, Oldest 67		
<b>Median Age of Officer:</b>	<b>37 years</b>	
• Youngest 24, Oldest 51		

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	7 / 64%	YTD 23 / 70%
• Black or African American	2 / 18%	YTD 6 / 18%
• American Indian	0	YTD 1 / 3%
• Hispanic	1 / 9%	YTD 2 / 6%
• Asian	1 / 9%	YTD 1 / 3%

#### **Race of Officer**

• White	31 / 282%	YTD 104 / 315%
• Black or African American	0	YTD 1 / 3%
• East Indian	0	YTD 0
• Hispanic	0	YTD 2 / 6%
• Asian	0	YTD 3 / 9%

#### **Resident of Whatcom County / Bellingham?**

• Yes	10 / 91%	YTD 32 / 97%
• No	1 / 9%	YTD 1 / 3%

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 March 91% of citizens that your officers used lawful force on were residents of either Whatcom County or the City of Bellingham.

However, do not forget that in the month of March your officers used lawful force in only **0.21%, or around two-tenths of one percent** of incidents. So, these incidents are truly outliers and thus may not adhere to population demographics. For example, two persons of black ancestry had lawful force used against them in order to achieve lawful objectives in March, or **0.04%, or around four one-hundredths 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   | 7 / 64% | YTD 25 / 76% |
| • Female | 4 / 36% | YTD 8 / 24%  |

### Gender Identification of Officer

- |          |           |               |
|----------|-----------|---------------|
| • Male   | 26 / 236% | YTD 94 / 285% |
| • Female | 5 / 45%   | YTD 16 / 48%  |

### Considerations for Citizen's Actions

- |                                 |         |              |
|---------------------------------|---------|--------------|
| • Alcohol use perceived         | 5 / 45% | YTD 14 / 42% |
| • Mental health issue perceived | 6 / 55% | YTD 16 / 48% |
| • Drug use perceived            | 1 / 9%  | YTD 3 / 9%   |
| • Combination                   | 3 / 27% | YTD 8 / 24%  |
| • Nothing perceived             | 2 / 18% | YTD 8 / 24%  |

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 Deputy Chief Don Almer at 360-778-8641 or [dalmer@cob.org](mailto:dalmer@cob.org).