



## **Officer-Involved Shootings in Anchorage 1993 – 2013**

Prepared for the  
Anchorage Police Department

by

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JC 1402

December 11, 2013


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Printed in the United States of America

This project was funded by the Anchorage Police Department. Points of view in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Anchorage Police Department.

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## Contents

Executive summary.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Investigation of officer-involved shootings and current policy.....	2
Investigation of incidents.....	2
Policy.....	3
Data source and limitations.....	4
Source.....	4
Limitations of the data.....	5
Temporal and spatial characteristics.....	6
Officer-involved shootings by year and location.....	6
Day of week and time of day.....	7
Situational characteristics.....	10
Why officers were on scene.....	10
Weapon use by citizen.....	10
Number of citizens and number of officers.....	11
Injuries to citizens, officers, and bystanders.....	12
Citizen resistance.....	12
Types of weapons used by police.....	13
Number of shots fired by police.....	14
Officer characteristics.....	15
Age and years of experience.....	15
Officer rank and duty assignment.....	16
Officer race/ethnicity and gender.....	16
Citizen characteristics.....	17
Age.....	17
Race and gender.....	18
Mental illness and drug use.....	19
Warrants and suspicion of other crimes.....	19
Prior record.....	20
Summary.....	20
Appendix A: Variables Collected.....	22

## Executive summary

This report describes situational, officer, and citizen characteristics of the 45 officer-involved shootings in Anchorage for the period 1 Jan 1993 through 11 May 2013 as recorded in Anchorage Police Department criminal investigation files. An “officer-involved shooting” is defined as an incident in which a sworn employee of the Anchorage Police Department purposefully discharged a firearm at a human being. There were 45 such incidents during the study period.

Data for this report was derived from investigation case files produced by the Anchorage Police Department at the time of the incident. The report has three limitations:

1. The data can be used to *describe*, but not to *explain*, officer-involved shootings;
2. The data reflect the views of officers involved or near the scene of the shooting, with no independent investigation completed by project staff for this report;
3. The report describes rare events, the patterns of which are difficult (or impossible) to distinguish from random chance.

The average number of officer-involved shootings per year was 2.14 during the study period, with a range from zero to five. Officer-involved shootings were generally north of Tudor Road and located near a major street.

Combining the situational, officer, and citizen characteristics detailed in this report, it is possible to describe the “typical” officer-involved shooting over the past 20 years. The incident occurred between 12:00am midnight and 7:00am on a weekday. Officers responded to the scene after a citizen call regarding a disturbance or aggravated assault. Most incidents involved one citizen and one or two officers. The citizen possessed and threatened to use or attempted to use a weapon. Officers discharged a department-issued semi-auto pistol between one and three times. The citizen sustained one or more gunshot wounds; officers were not injured.

Officers were typically white, male, at the rank of Officer, and in the middle of their careers with 4-9 years of experience. Compared to the 2012 Anchorage population, citizens involved were disproportionately minority, male, and under 30 years old. Many citizens were under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. Half of citizens involved were suspected of other crimes and most had at least one conviction for a misdemeanor or felony before the officer-involved shooting incident.

The report below is intended to provide an overall picture of the officer-involved shootings during the past two decades. While it cannot explain such events given the limitations of the data source, there is no other comprehensive source of aggregate officer-involved shooting data in Anchorage. This report is therefore a first step toward a better understanding of officer use of force in Anchorage.

## **Introduction**

In a work now considered a classic in policing research, Egon Bittner (1970) contends that the *use of force* is the defining element of the police role. The key difference between police and other service providers — social workers, doctors, and the like — is that police are the only institution in society given a general grant of authority to use coercive force. This is key to understanding the police role in modern society. As Bittner writes, police respond to extraordinary events: “something-that-ought-not-to-be-happening-and-about-which-somone-had-better-do-something-now!” Even so, the use of force by police is a justifiably controversial topic. Both the public and police seek to better understand incidents in which force is used. This report is a first step toward a better understanding of the use of force by Anchorage Police Department officers.

The report describes officer-involved shooting incidents in Anchorage during the period 1 January 1993 through 11 May 2013. An “officer-involved shooting” is defined as an incident in which a sworn employee of the Anchorage Police Department purposefully discharged any firearm with the intent of stopping a human being while acting under color of law. This includes firing at vehicles when the intent is to stop the vehicle. Not included in this definition are accidental discharges or discharge of firearms at animals. This report does not provide any determination regarding the appropriateness of any particular officer-involved shooting. The purpose of this study is to collect and report facts as recorded by the Anchorage Police Department.

## **Investigation of officer-involved shootings and current policy**

### ***Investigation of incidents***

The Anchorage Police Department Detective Division investigates officer-involved shootings. Regardless of the outcome of the incident, the incident scene is secured and processed as if it were a homicide. This is done after any immediate threat to officer and/or public safety is contained and first aid is provided to any injured parties. Officers directly involved in the incident are separated and interviewed by detectives as quickly as practicable. Because each officer-involved shooting could result in criminal charges against the officer, officers are afforded the same legal rights as any criminal suspect, including the right to legal counsel. In recent years, interviews with officers often occur within 24-48 hours after the incident. The officer’s weapon is entered into evidence, checked by a department armorer for proper function, and test fired. Officers near the immediate scene of the shooting, but who were not directly involved in the shooting, file supplemental reports that are added to the investigation file.

The Department of Law oversees the investigation, including responding to the scene of the shooting. The Department of Law also determines whether the officer(s) violated Alaska law. Like many other states, Alaska law provides vague guidance to police. Alaska Statute 11.81.370 states that the use of force by a police officer is justified “when and to the extent that the officer reasonably believes it is necessary to make an arrest, to terminate an escape or

attempted escape, or to make a lawful stop.” Consistent with *Tennessee v. Garner* (471 U.S. 1 (1985)), Alaska police officers are legally justified in using deadly force when the officer reasonably believes that the person to be arrested: 1) has committed or attempted a felony using force; 2) has or is attempting to escape custody while in possession of a firearm; or 3) may otherwise endanger life or inflict serious physical injury if not arrested without delay.

The standard used today is *objective reasonableness* — would a reasonable officer believe the level of force to be reasonable (*Sheldon v. City of Ambler*, 178 P.3d 459 (Alaska 2007); see also *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989)). In general, courts examine the nature of the alleged offense, resistance offered by the citizen, the harm likely to result to the citizen from the force used, alternative means available for resolving the dispute, the degree of control officers have over the citizen, and how many officers are present on scene. These factors are considered within the context of the facts of the incident and produce general guidelines. However, few bright line rules exist for police. For example, it is less reasonable to use force against a handcuffed citizen than one who is not handcuffed. Yet there are circumstances where substantial force may be reasonably used against a handcuffed person who is aggressively resisting police officers.

In addition to investigative oversight, the Department of Law’s role is to determine whether officer(s) involved in the shooting will be prosecuted for a criminal violation such as homicide or assault in connection with the incident. In Alaska and nationwide, these prosecutions are exceedingly rare. During the study period, no Anchorage Police officer was charged with a crime in connection with an officer-involved shooting.

The Anchorage Police Department Internal Affairs Division also reviews each incident. This review has two objectives: 1) to determine if the officer(s) violated departmental policy or procedure; and 2) to identify potential deficiencies in the department’s overall response to the incident. This review is comprehensive and includes officer tactics, training, and supervision; communication protocols; command and control procedures for critical incidents; crime scene processing; and investigative procedure. Officers found to have violated policy or procedure may be subject to administrative sanctions including additional training, suspension, reduction of rank, or termination of employment. Organizational remedies include updating policies and procedures, evaluation of existing training for officers and supervisors, and development of new training for officers and supervisors. Results of these internal reviews are not generally made public and were not made available for this study.

## **Policy**

As a result of the internal review process, the Anchorage Police Department has conducted an intensive review of its use of force policy and procedure, including contracting with an outside consultant, Eric Daigle, a nationally-known expert on use of force law and policy. As of this writing, this review is ongoing and has resulted in a series of proposed revisions to the existing policies and procedures. Both the existing policy and the proposed revision include language regarding the general circumstances under which officers are authorized to use force. The following is language from the revised General Order describing the conditions under which officers are authorized to use force:

It is the policy of the Anchorage Police Department to provide clear procedures to sworn members regarding the use of force in the performance of their duties. The safety of innocent persons and officers is of paramount importance.

The main responsibility of the officers of the Anchorage Police Department is to protect the life and property of the citizens. In compliance with applicable law, members shall use only the amount of force necessary and reasonable to control a situation, effect an arrest, overcome resistance to arrest, or defend themselves or others from harm. When force is necessary, the degree of force employed should be in direct relationship to the amount of resistance exerted, or the immediate threat to officers or others. We must take into account that there is a compelling public interest that the officers authorized to exercise the use of force do so in an objectively reasonable manner and in a way that does not violate the civil rights guaranteed by our Constitution and applicable law.

Officers who use excessive force of unjustified force degrade the confidence of the community that they serve, undermine the legitimacy of police authority, and hinder the Department's ability to provide effective law enforcement services to the community.

Officers who use excessive or unauthorized force shall be subject to discipline, possible criminal prosecution, and/or civil liability. Use of force is only authorized when it is objectively reasonable and for a lawful purpose. Accordingly the Anchorage Police Department will thoroughly review and/or investigate all uses of force by members to assure compliance with all legal requirements and this policy.

Thus, it is the policy of the Anchorage Police Department that officers use “only the amount of force necessary and reasonable to control a situation” and that force must be “in direct relationship to the amount of resistance” or the “immediate threat to officers or others.” Similar language is common in the policies of other police departments throughout the United States.

## **Data source and limitations**

### ***Source***

There were 45 officer-involved shootings during the period 1 January 1993 through 11 May 2013. Criminal investigation case files were provided for these incidents. One officer involved shooting that occurred in 2013 was still under investigation at the time of data collection and has not been included.

Data for this report was derived from criminal investigation case files written and compiled by Anchorage Police Department officers for each officer-involved shooting. The case files included the crime scene narratives written by police officers immediately after the incident, transcripts of interviews with officers and witnesses, and lists of property entered into evidence. Some files included supplemental information such as transcripts of radio traffic and/or 911 dispatch transcripts. Investigative files did not contain official determinations regarding the incident.

Specific details of each incident were extracted from paper copies of these investigative files and entered into a database by legal interns provided by the Municipality of Anchorage

Legal Department. The resultant database is the only comprehensive source for data regarding officer-involved shootings in Anchorage. The author had complete access to the case files and provided quality assurance for the data entry clerks by reviewing each case file and performing data consistency checks.

Information was collected regarding three categories of information: 1) the situation, 2) the citizens, and 3) the officers involved in the incident. *Situational* variables included the date, time, address, and the reason officers were at the location. *Citizen* variables included whether the citizen was armed, weapon type if armed, age, race, gender, and whether the citizen was known to be suspected of other crimes by the officers on scene. *Officer* variables included years employed by APD at the time of the incident, age, race, gender, rank, and whether the officer was in uniform at the time of the incident. A list of variables collected and operational definitions for each variable appears in Appendix A: Variables Collected.

### ***Limitations of the data***

It is important to state three limitations of these data at the outset. First, the data cannot *explain* why officer-involved shootings occur. Instead, these data can be used to *describe* incidents in which a shooting occurred. Readers are strongly cautioned against making causal inferences based on these descriptions. Causality can only be determined using data that includes incidents that *could have* resulted in an officer-involved shooting but *did not*. There are many more such incidents than there are officer-involved shootings. For example, the Anchorage Police Department responded to more than 200 assaults with a weapon *each year* from 2000-2012. Over the same time period, there were 33 officer-involved shootings.

Second, the primary data sources are police officer reports and transcripts of interviews with police officers. The complete investigative file was made available to the research team, including all crime scene reports, witness and officer statements, and supplemental reports. The interviews ask detailed questions about the sequence of events leading up to the shooting. Where multiple officers are present during the incident, policy requires officers involved in the shooting be interviewed separately. The sequence of events reported by multiple officers was generally in agreement, with minor differences in memory or perception consistent with accounts of stressful events. In no case were the fundamental facts in dispute. Where there were non-police witnesses, witness interview transcripts were available. The basic facts found in officer reports and interviews were not disputed by witnesses in any of the cases examined. However, the fact remains that the data source largely represents the perceptions of the police present or involved in the incident. This project did not engage in an independent investigation of the facts, nor were police or civilian witnesses interviewed by project staff.

Finally, officer-involved shootings are extraordinarily rare. There were 45 Anchorage Police Department officer-involved shootings over the 20-year period under study (1993-2013). It can be difficult to identify meaningful patterns for rare events. This is especially true for year-over-year changes given the small number of officer-involved shootings each year. Other apparent patterns (e.g., geographic clustering) are also less meaningful when the time span between events is considered.



## Temporal and spatial characteristics

### *Officer-involved shootings by year and location*

There were 45 Anchorage Police Department officer-involved shootings over the entire study period, with a range of zero to five per year. The average number of shootings per year is 2.14, with substantial variation across years.

Table 1 shows the number of shootings each year and the percent change from the previous year. The large variation in percent change is due to the small number of shootings each year and demonstrates one of the issues in analyzing rare events – a small number of incidents can lead to a large percentage change. While the maximum number of shootings occurred in 2012 (5), other years have seen similar counts: there were four officer-involved shootings in 2000 and 2004.

**Table 1: Officer-involved shootings by year, 1993-2013**

Year	Number of officer-involved shootings	Percent change from previous year
1993	2	–
1994	1	-50%
1995	1	0%
1996	0	-100%
1997	0	–
1998	3	–
1999	1	-67%
2000	4	300%
2001	3	-25%
2002	2	-33%
2003	2	0%
2004	4	100%
2005	0	-100%
2006	3	–
2007	3	0%
2008	0	-100%
2009	3	–
2010	2	-33%
2011	2	0%
2012	5	150%
2013*	4	-20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	–

\*Note: Includes data through 11 May 2013

The locations of officer-involved shootings varied, but were generally north of Tudor Road – 32 shootings (71%) occurred north of Tudor Road. Officer-involved shootings are typically located near a major street. Shootings were split into two decades (1993-2002 and 2003-2013) for the purpose of the maps in Figure 1 and Figure 2. Given the long period of time between officer-involved shootings, any apparent clustering of officer-involved shootings should be interpreted carefully. Shootings that are geographically close to one another are often separated by long periods of time.

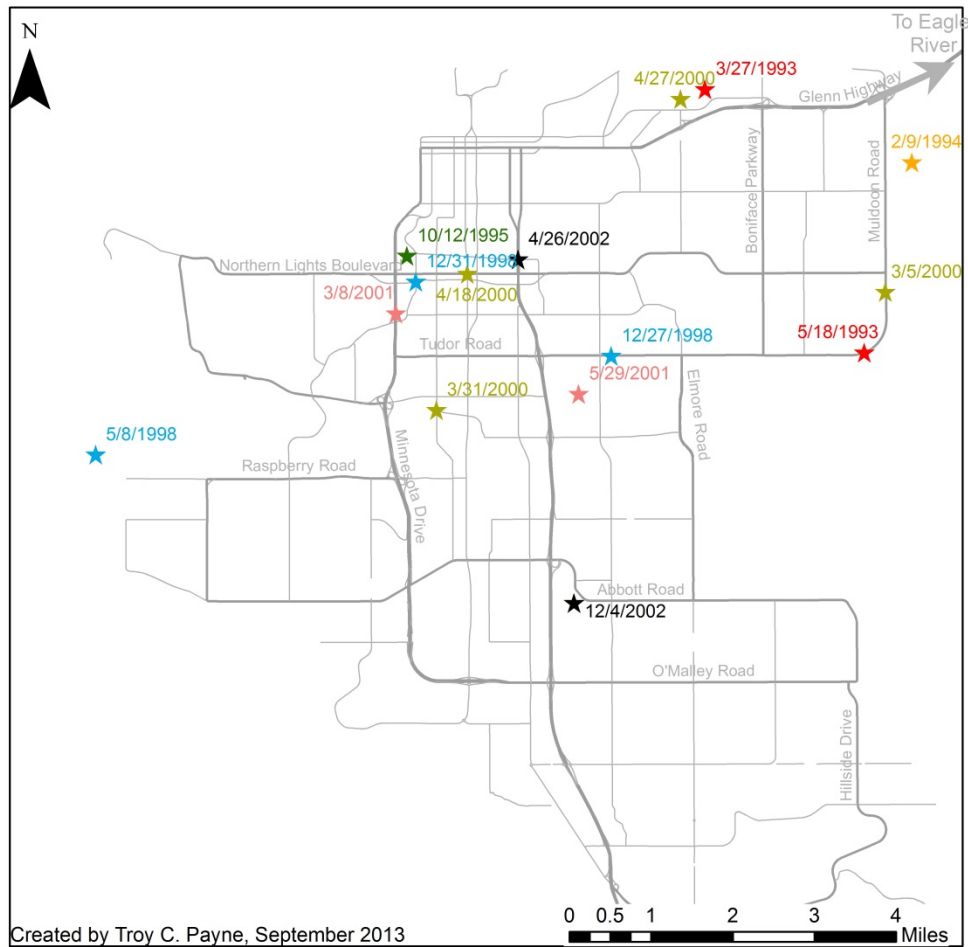
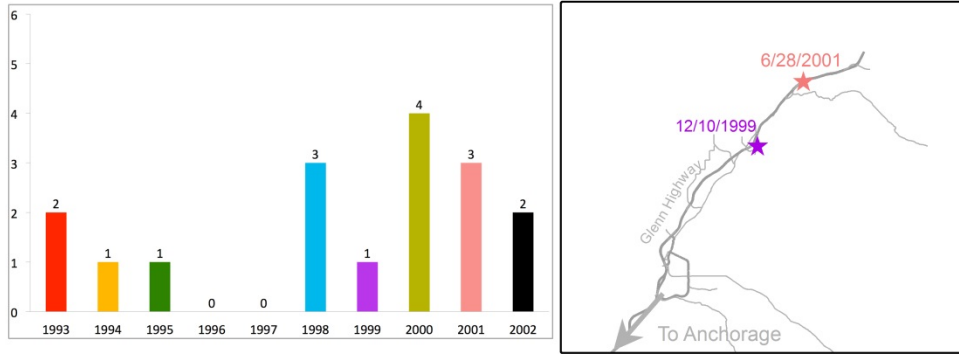
### ***Day of week and time of day***

Table 2 is a heat map showing the day of week and time of day of officer-involved shooting incidents. Day of week and time of day combinations with higher numbers of officer-involved shootings appear in red. Times with no officer-involved shootings appear in green. The most common times for officer-involved shootings were 4:00 am on Monday and Tuesday, and between 10:00 am and 12:00 pm on Thursday. Wednesday and Thursday between 12:00am midnight and 7:00 am also saw a relatively large number of officer-involved shootings. As with other characteristics of officer-involved shootings in Anchorage, it is not possible to determine if there is a true day of week and time of day pattern due to the rarity of the event.

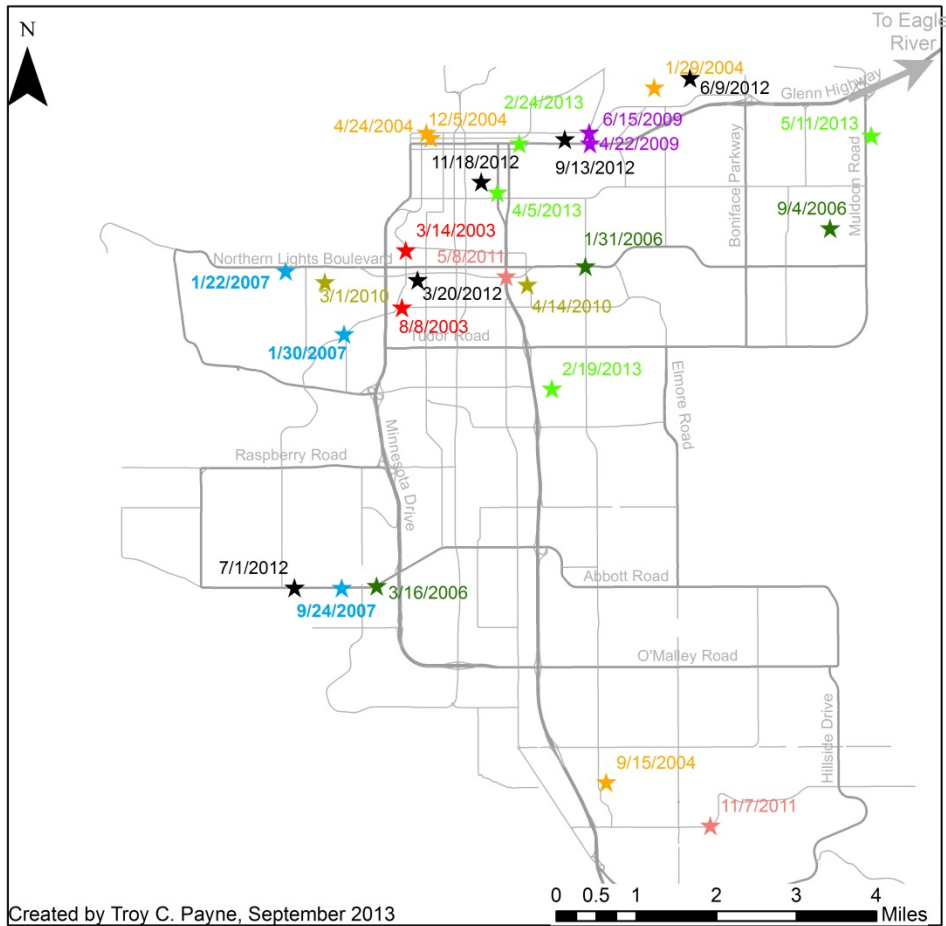
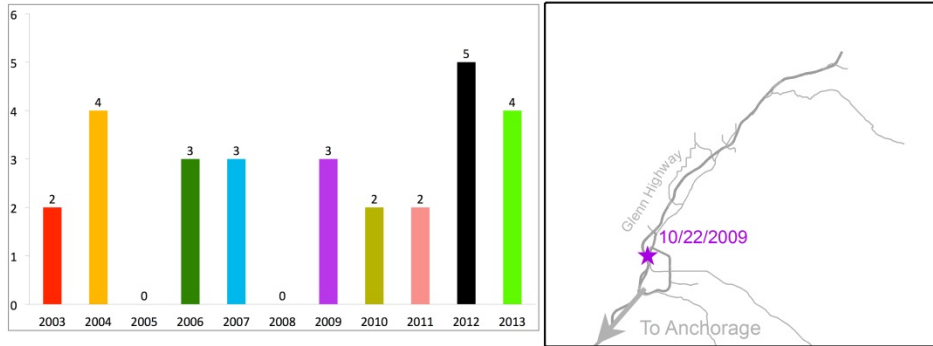
**Table 2: Day of week and time of day heat map of officer-involved shootings in Anchorage, 1993-2013 (n=45)**

Hour of Day	Day of the Week							Total Incidents
	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
Midnight to 0359	2			2	2	2	1	9
0400 to 0659	1	3	3	2	2	1		12
0700 to 0959		1	1		1			3
1000 to 1259			2		3		1	6
1300 to 1559	1		1					2
1600 to 1859		1				1		2
1900-2159	2				2	1	1	6
2200-2359	1	1		1		1	1	5
<b>Total Incidents</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>45</b>

**Figure 1: Officer-involved shooting locations in Anchorage 1993-2002**



**Figure 2: Officer-involved shooting locations in Anchorage 2003-2013**

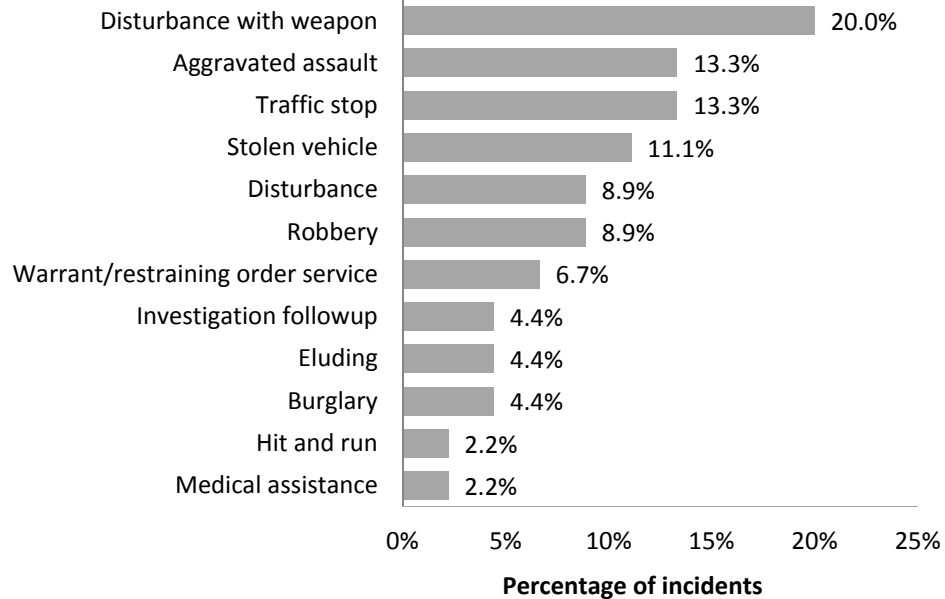


## Situational characteristics

### *Why officers were on scene*

Nearly three-quarters (71%) of the 45 officer-involved shootings were subsequent to a citizen call for service. Thirteen (29%) were proactive actions on the part of officers, usually a traffic stop. The most common reason police were at the scene of the incident was a disturbance with a weapon, followed by aggravated assault, traffic stops, and stolen vehicles. Many of the situations in which officers used firearms were inherently dangerous, either because the citizen involved was reported to have a weapon, or because a felony was suspected. Figure 3 shows the distribution of these call types across the 45 cases.

**Figure 3: Reason officer was on scene in officer-involved shootings in Anchorage, 1993-2013 (n=45)**



### *Weapon use by citizen*

A weapon was used by a citizen in every incident. Table 3 shows the distribution of weapon types. The two most common weapons used by citizens were handguns and vehicles, each with 37 percent of the incidents. In three cases, citizens had a simulated weapon such as a BB or pellet gun that was visually similar to a firearm. In most cases, the citizen not only had a weapon but either threatened to use or attempted to use the weapon. In 87 percent (39) of the incidents, there was a verbal or non-verbal threat made by the citizen to use a weapon. In 82 percent (36) of the incidents, the citizen made an attempt to use the weapon to harm officers or other citizens, including attempts to hit officers with vehicles.

Many of the incidents involving vehicles as weapons were the result of citizens attempting to elude police. The typical vehicle incident involved a citizen vehicle that had been blocked by police vehicles. Officers then exit their patrol cars and approach the citizen vehicle. The citizen then attempts to flee by ramming the police vehicles and pushing them out of the way. In the process, officers are at great risk of being pinned between vehicles. These events

unfold very quickly, with officers having imperfect information regarding the position of other officers on the scene. In many of these cases, officers discharged their weapons at vehicles in an effort to stop the vehicle and protect other officers that were perceived to be in harm's way.

The Anchorage Police Department has recently changed its policy regarding deadly force directed at vehicles. During most of the study period, officers who fired on vehicles with the intent of stopping the vehicle (e.g., by puncturing tires) were acting within policy. The current policy discourages firing on vehicles when the vehicle is the only weapon. Even under the changed policy, which took effect in mid-2013, officers may be justified when firing at vehicles in the future. In one 2004 case, for example, a driver collided with several vehicles downtown after the bars closed, causing multiple serious injuries. At one point, the driver was traveling on the sidewalk. According to police and witness interview transcripts, the driver was a clear danger to officers, pedestrians, and drivers in the area. In such a circumstance, where a driver is a clear deadly threat, officers may determine that the risk to the community is great enough to justify the use of deadly force.

**Table 3: Weapon types used by citizens in officer-involved shooting in Anchorage, 1993-2013 (n=45)**

<b>Weapon Type</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Vehicle	18	40.0%
Handgun	17	37.8%
Long gun	4	8.9%
Simulated weapon	3	6.7%
Knife	2	4.4%
Blunt object	1	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### ***Number of citizens and number of officers***

Only three incidents involved more than one citizen in the immediate encounter. Incidents typically involved a small number of officers as well, with a few exceptions. There are two measures of the number officers – each is based on their degree of involvement in the incident. The first is the number of officers who discharged firearms. The second is the total number of officers near the scene at the time of the shooting, including officers who did not fire their weapons. The typical incident had four or fewer officers near the scene at the time of the shooting. Most commonly, one or two officers discharged their weapons. There was no clear pattern or change in the number of officers on scene or involved in the shooting over time.

**Table 4: Number of officers near the scene and number of officers who discharged firearms in officer-involved shootings in Anchorage, 1993-2013 (n=45)**

Number of Officers Near The Scene	Number of Officers Who Discharged Firearms				Total Incidents
	One Officer	Two Officers	Three Officers	Four Officers	
One Officer	6	–	–	–	<b>6</b>
Two Officers	6	5	–	–	<b>11</b>
Three Officers	5	4	2	–	<b>11</b>
Four Officers	1	3	2	1	<b>7</b>
Five Officers	2	1	2	–	<b>5</b>
Six Officers	–	1	–	–	<b>1</b>
Nine Officers	1	–	–	–	<b>1</b>
Eleven Officers	–	1	–	–	<b>1</b>
Fifteen Officers	–	2	–	–	<b>2</b>
<b>Total Incidents</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>45</b>

### ***Injuries to citizens, officers, and bystanders***

There were a total of 48 citizens involved in the 45 shootings. Three-quarters of these (75%) sustained some type of injury during the encounter with police. The most common citizen injury was one or more gunshot wounds. Table 5 shows the distribution of these injuries.

**Table 5: Citizen injuries in officer-involved shooting in Anchorage, 1993-2013 (n=48)**

Type of Injury	Frequency	Percent
Gunshot wound — fatal	17	35.4%
Gunshot wound – non-fatal	15	31.3%
Lacerations/contusions	4	8.3%
No injury	12	25%
<b>Total citizens</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Of the 77 officers directly involved in the 45 shooting incidents, six sustained an injury. Three of these injuries were non-fatal gunshot wounds, including one officer who was injured by a ricocheting bullet fragment. The remaining three injuries were lacerations and contusions. Officers directly injured bystanders in just one incident, where passengers in a vehicle fired on by officers were grazed by bullets. In two other incidents, citizens caused injury to bystanders<sup>1</sup> during the police-citizen encounter. Both of those incidents involved vehicle collisions.

### ***Citizen resistance***

Even when citizens were obviously armed, officers generally discharged their weapons only when there was an *immediate* threat according to officer and witness accounts. Where

<sup>1</sup> These injury counts *do not* include the victims of violent crimes committed by the citizen before officers arrived.

possible, police attempted to negotiate and end the encounter without deadly force. This is consistent with policy and training within the Anchorage Police Department.

Citizen resistance was common in officer-involved shooting incidents. Table 6 shows the most serious type of citizen resistance during the encounter. Nearly half (49%) of the 48 citizens involved either pointed a firearm or made a threat with a potentially deadly weapon such as a knife. Another 27.1 percent attempted to hit officers or bystanders with a vehicle. The three citizens who did not resist police were passengers in a vehicle driven by a citizen who attempted to elude police by ramming police vehicles or attempting to run over police officers.

**Table 6: Most serious citizen resistance during encounter (n=48)**

Type of Citizen Resistance	Frequency	Percent
Pointed weapon or made other non-verbal threat	23	47.9%
Attempted or hit persons with vehicle	13	27.1%
Refused to obey officer commands	4	8.3%
Fired on officers	3	6.3%
None	3	6.3%
Fleeing	2	4.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Types of weapons used by police

In the 45 cases included for this study, at least one officer discharged a semi-automatic pistol, patrol shotgun, or rifle. Table 7 shows weapon types used by the 77 officers during these incidents. Pistols were split into two groups: 1) those issued by the police department, and 2) weapons personally owned by the officer<sup>2</sup>. Sixty-eight percent of officers discharged a pistol; 32 percent of officers discharged a long gun. The most common caliber fired by officers during incidents was .45ACP, with a variety of other pistol (9mm, .40 S&W, 10mm), shotgun (12ga shot and slugs), and rifle (.223, .308) calibers used as well.

**Table 7: Types of weapons used by officers in officer-involved shootings in Anchorage, 1993–2013 (n=77)**

Type of Weapon	Frequency	Percent
Issued semi-auto pistol	44	57.1%
Personally owned semi-auto pistol	8	10.4%
Shotgun	10	13.0%
Patrol rifle	13	16.9%
Sniper rifle	2	2.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

<sup>2</sup> Officers are required to train and qualify with the weapon they carry on duty, regardless of whether it is department-issued or personally-owned. Personally-owned weapons must be approved by a department armorer. Officers are required to train and qualify separately for pistols, shotguns, and rifles.



## **Number of shots fired by police**

It was not always possible to determine the exact number of shots fired from available reports for a number of reasons. First, personally owned weapons have differing magazine capacities. Even relatively common weapons have a large variety of magazine capacities. Second, even when officers carry department-issued weapons, the number of rounds in each magazine may vary. Officers have the choice of several Glock pistol models of slightly varying calibers and magazine capacities. Department policy also allows officers to decide whether to carry a fully loaded magazine or a less-than-fully loaded magazine — some weapon systems exhibit fewer malfunctions with a less-than-fully loaded magazine. Officers may also change magazines when it is safe to do so, which can lead to multiple magazines being used during an incident. Determining the number of rounds discharged therefore cannot be determined by simply subtracting the number of live rounds entered into evidence from the magazine capacity.

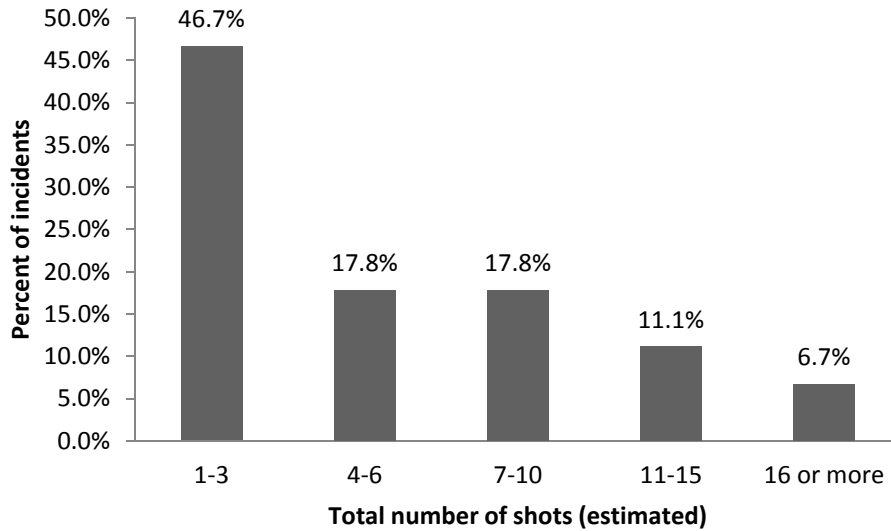
Spent shell casings and fired bullets were generally recovered on scene, but a close reading of the files strongly suggested that the number of shell casings entered into evidence was not a reliable indicator of the number of shots fired. This is to be expected. As a practical matter, it is difficult to recover 100 percent of spent shell casings or fired bullets from the scene of a shooting. Moreover, policy requires that the officer's weapon be test fired, with the resultant spent shell casing and fired bullet entered into evidence as well. With the information provided to the research team, it was often difficult to separate these test firings from ammunition components recovered on the scene.

The best available measure of the number of shots fired comes from the officer interview transcripts. This measure is flawed as well, however, and provides only an estimate. Officers are typically under tremendous stress during an officer-involved shooting. Their memory of precise details such as the number of rounds fired may be wrong. In cases with more than two officers near the immediate scene of the shooting, officers often did not have direct line of sight with all of their colleagues, making confirmation of these estimates difficult.

For this report, we used the highest estimate of the number of shots fired by each officer, as reported in the interview transcript. Where possible, we corroborated each officer's estimate with other information in the file, such as interviews with multiple officers. Officers reported a range (e.g., two or three shots) in some cases; the difference between the high and low estimates of shots fired was generally fewer than 5 rounds.

An estimated total of 275 shots were fired by 77 officers in the 45 incidents. There was considerable variation in the number of shots fired. In nearly half (46.7%) of incidents, the total number of shots fired was three or fewer. Only three incidents (6.7%) had more than 15 shots fired by police.

**Figure 4: Estimated number of shots fired by police officers in officer-involved shooting incidents in Anchorage, 1993–2013 (n=45)**

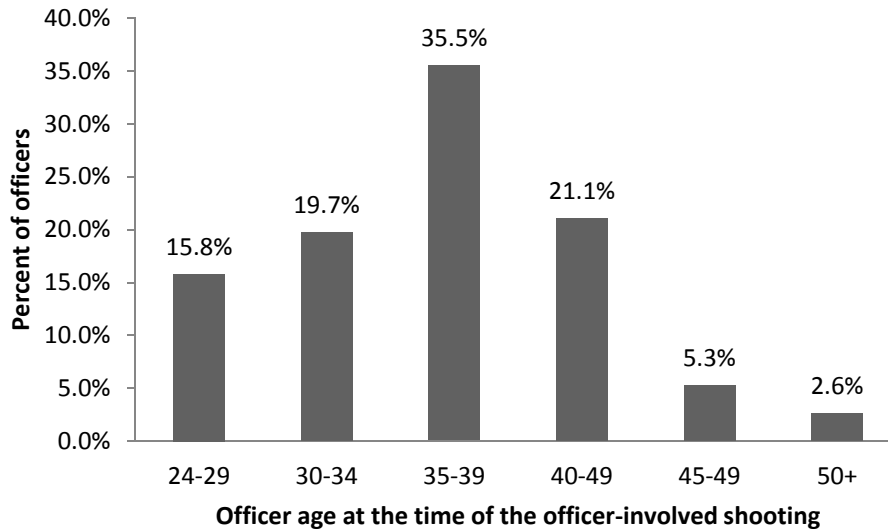


## Officer characteristics

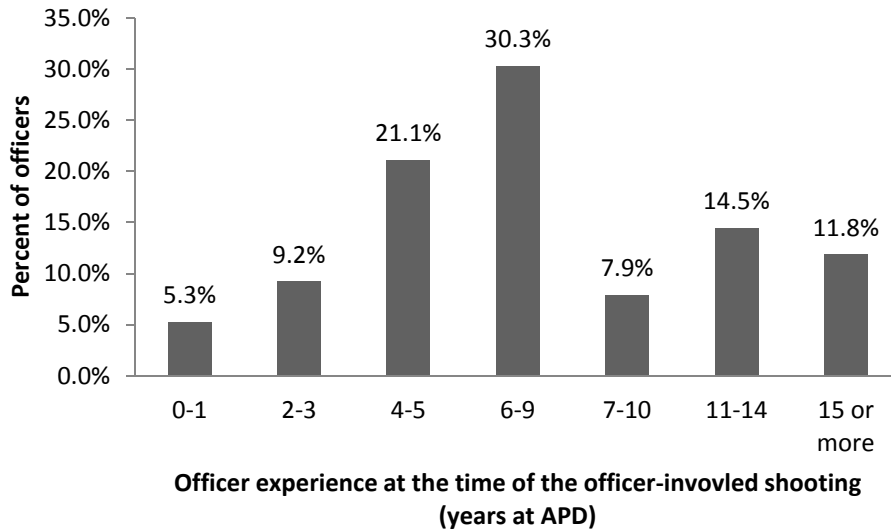
### *Age and years of experience*

There were 77 officers involved in the 45 incidents. The mean age of officers at the time of the incident was 36.5 years, with a range from 24-54 years. The average experience with the Anchorage Police Department at the time of the incident was 8.7 years, with a range of 0.2 years to 28.1 years. Figure 5 shows the distribution of age; Figure 6 shows the distribution of officer experience.

**Figure 5: Officer age at the time of the officer-involved shooting (n=77)**



**Figure 6: Officer experience at the time of the officer-involved shooting (n=77)**



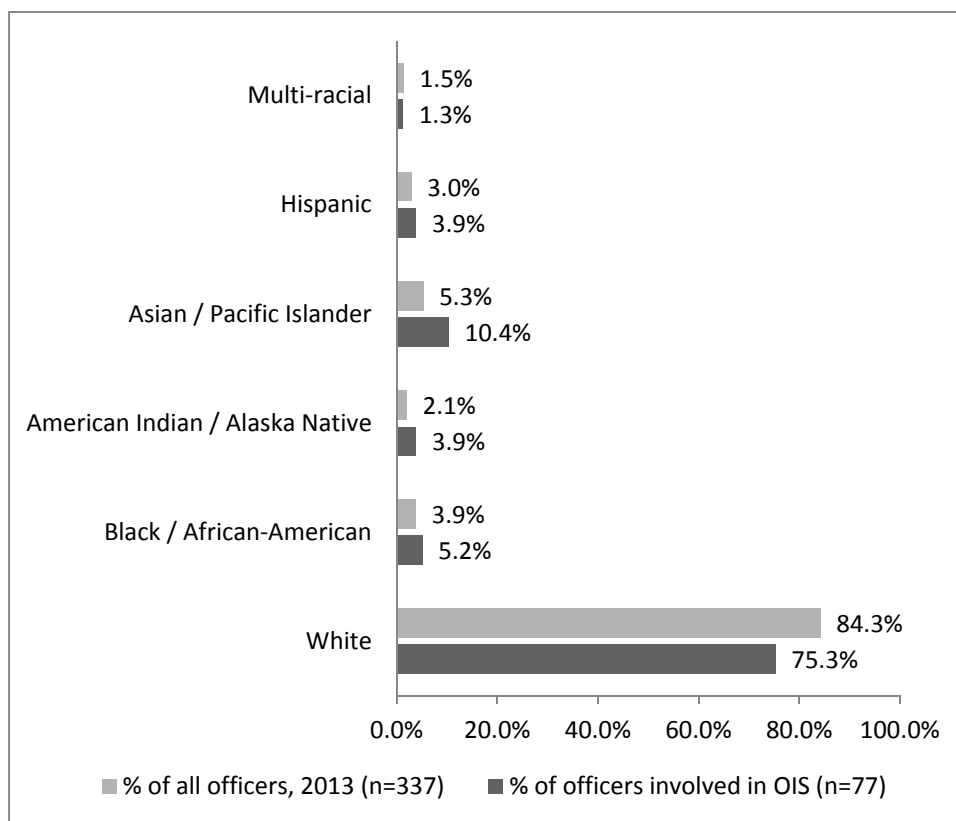
### ***Officer rank and duty assignment***

Eighty-four percent (65) of the officers involved held the rank of Officer at the time of the incident, with the remainder split between sergeants and detectives. Two-thirds of officers were assigned to patrol at the time of the incident, with few officers on special assignments. Ten officers (12.9%) were either part of a dedicated Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team at the time of the incident or had a dual assignment as patrol and SWAT. Two officers were off-duty at the time of the shooting and were responding to calls for assistance. One officer was in the last phase of field training at the time of the incident.

### ***Officer race/ethnicity and gender***

Seventy-five percent of officers (58 officers) involved in shooting incidents were white. The next most frequent race of officers in shooting incidents is Asian or Pacific Islander, with 10.5 percent (8 officers). In 2013, 84.3 percent of the department's sworn employees were white; the next most common race/ethnicity is Asian or Pacific Islander, with 5.3 percent of the department's 337 sworn staff at the time of this report. Only three officers involved in shooting incidents were female (3.8%). In 2013, 13.9 percent of the department's sworn employees were female.

**Figure 7: Race/ethnicity of all APD officers and officers in officer-involved shootings in Anchorage, 1993–2013**



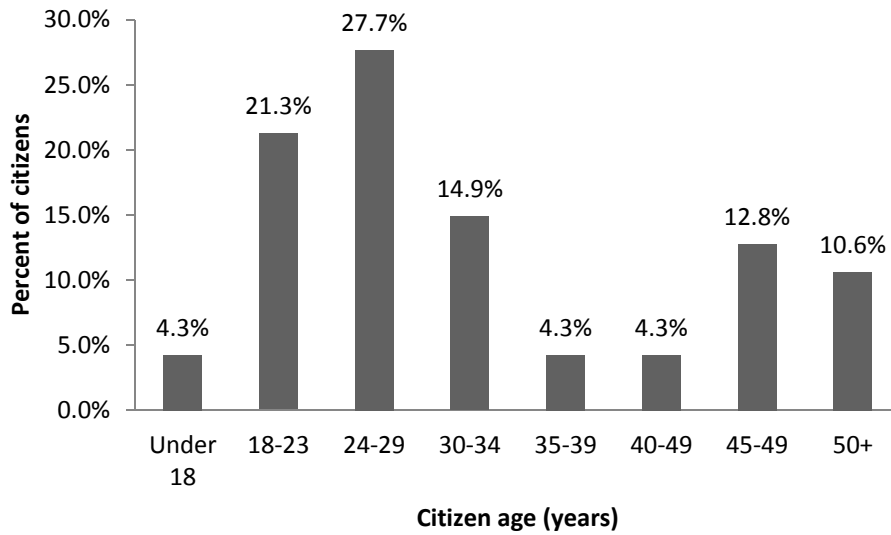
## Citizen characteristics

Police-citizen encounters that result in shootings often escalate quickly. Age, race, mental illness status, warrants and suspicion of other crimes, and prior record may not have been known to the officer at the time of the shooting. As with the other data in this report, the following comes from the case files compiled after the shooting. With the exception of warrants and suspicion of other crimes, which were generally known to the officer at the time, the extent to which officers were able to ascertain citizen characteristics before the shooting is unknown.

### *Age*

The 45 incidents involved a total of 48 citizens. The average age of these citizens was 33 years, with over half (53.2%) under the age of 30. Just two citizens were juveniles (under the age of 18) at the time of the incident. Figure 8 shows the distribution of citizen ages.

**Figure 8: Citizen age at the time of the incident (n=48)**



### ***Race and gender***

Only three (6.3%) of the 48 citizens fired on by police were female. Over half (55%) of the 47 citizens fired on by police were white, with African-American citizens representing another 19.1 percent. Compared to the U.S. Census Bureau 2012 population estimates for Anchorage, white, Hispanic, and Asian citizens are under-represented in officer-involved shooting incidents, while African-American and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander citizens are over-represented.

Table 8 shows the race of the Anchorage population and citizens involved in officer-involved shooting incidents, along with the difference in percentages. A negative number in the difference column represents under-representation of the group in officer-involved shootings relative to the population of Anchorage; a positive number represents over-representation.

**Table 8: Race/ethnicity of citizens in officer-involved shootings (1993-2013) compared to Anchorage population, 1993–2013**

Citizen Race	Citizens in Officer-Involved Shootings		Anchorage Population (2012)	Difference
	Number	Percent		
White	27	56.3%	67.0%	-10.8%
African-American	9	18.8%	6.2%	12.6%
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	8.3%	8.1%	0.2%
Asian	2	4.2%	8.7%	-4.5%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	4	8.3%	2.2%	6.1%
Hispanic	2	4.2%	8.2%	-4.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>			

## ***Mental illness and drug use***

Both mental illness and drug use impair a citizen's ability to understand and comply with officer commands. Unfortunately, citizen mental illness and drug use were difficult to evaluate from the files made available. The files often did not include information on the mental state of the citizens involved. When clear evidence of mental illness or drug use was present in the files provided to the research team, it was recorded. However, there may have been citizens who were using drugs or were mentally ill at the time of the incident who are not identified as such in the data available.

There was clear evidence of either alcohol or drug use (or both) for nearly half of the 48 citizens (22, or 45.8%). The most common drug used was alcohol; alcohol was used alone in eight cases. Next was marijuana, used alone in five cases. Methamphetamine was used in four cases. Opiates were used in three cases. Cocaine was used in two cases. Two other citizens were known to have long-standing drug addictions, but it was unclear whether they were under the influence of drugs at the time of the incident.

Some form of mental illness was noted in 10 of the cases. The most common form of mental illness noted was depression and suicidal ideation. In eight cases, the citizen was noted to be suicidal by family, or officers reported the citizen was suicidal (e.g., the citizen told or asked officers to shoot). In one case, the citizen was reported to be bipolar. In another, the citizen gave disordered and nonsense responses to officer communication which appeared to be indicative of mental illness rather than drug use according to officer accounts of the incident. Officers were typically unaware of the mental illness history of citizens before arriving on the scene, or this awareness was not noted in the interview transcripts and reports.

## ***Warrants and suspicion of other crimes***

Half of the citizens in officer-involved shooting incidents had active warrants or were suspected of crimes that occurred before the incident that led to the shooting as noted in the investigation file. Twenty-four of the citizens (50.0%) were either wanted for or suspected of committing crimes at some time before officers arrived on scene. Often, these crimes were the reason for the initial police call for service. Table 9 shows the distribution of warrants and suspicion of crimes that occurred before officers arrived at the scene. Only the most serious warrants and suspicion are shown; citizens may have been wanted for other crimes. Over one quarter of citizens were suspected of either violent or property crimes at the time of the incident. Another 14.9 percent had an active warrant at the time of the incident.

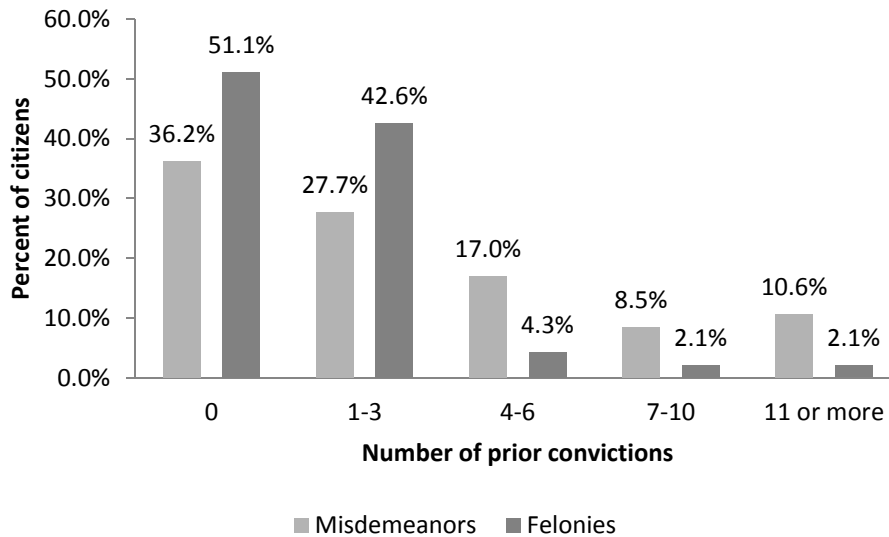
**Table 9: Warrants and suspicion of crimes that occurred prior to officer-involved shooting**

	Frequency	Percent
Violent crime	6	12.5%
Property crime	7	14.6%
Warrant	7	14.6%
Probation violation	1	2.1%
Drug violations	1	2.1%
Hit and run suspect	1	2.1%
DUI	1	2.1%
Not wanted for previous crimes	24	50.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### ***Prior record***

Over two-thirds (69.9%) of citizens had at least one conviction for a crime prior to the incident, according to a search of CourtView by name and date of birth for each citizen. Only convictions (no contest plea, guilty plea, or finding of guilt at trial) for misdemeanors and felonies were counted. Minor offenses such as traffic infractions were not counted.

**Figure 9: Prior convictions of citizens (n=48)**



### **Summary**

Existing police investigation files were coded for a variety of facts related to the 45 officer-involved shootings in Anchorage from 1 January 1993 through 11 May 2013 with the intent of describing those incidents. Data was collected regarding the situation, the citizens involved, and the officers involved in each incident. While each officer-involved shooting is

reported in the news media and discussed in the community immediately after the incident, this is the first effort to describe the collection of events.

It is important to restate the limitations of the data used in this report. First, information was collected only on those incidents during which an officer purposefully discharged a firearm at a human being. This limitation makes causal inferences impossible – this report contains *description*, not *explanation* of events. Second, the primary data sources were police officer reports and interview transcripts. Not every incident had civilian witnesses, but those that did had no basic facts of the incident disputed by witnesses. Still, the data source represents perceptions of the officers present. Finally, officer-involved shootings are a rare event. Apparent patterns in rare events can be due to chance.

With these limitations in mind, we can read across the variables discussed above and describe the “typical” officer-involved shooting over the past 20 years. The typical event occurred between 12:00am midnight and 7:00 am on a weekday. Officers were called to the scene due to a disturbance or aggravated assault. Most incidents involved one citizen and three or fewer officers. The citizen possessed and threatened or attempted to use a weapon. Officers discharged a department-issued semi-auto pistol between one and three times. The citizen sustained one or more gunshot wounds; the officers were not injured.

Officers were typically white, male, held the rank of Officer, were aged 30-39 and had 4-9 years at APD. Compared to the Anchorage population, citizens were disproportionately minority, male, and under 30 years old. Many were under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. Half of the citizens involved were suspected of crimes other than those committed during the police-citizen encounter that lead to the shooting. Most citizens involved in an officer-involved shooting had at least one prior conviction unrelated to the encounter that lead to the officer-involved shooting.

This review of existing data was presented to aid the Anchorage Police Department in its ongoing review of their policies and to help the public better understand the characteristics of officer-involved shootings in Anchorage during the past 20 years. The Anchorage Police Department’s computer-aided dispatch system has recorded over 210,000 citizen calls for service and officer-initiated activities *every year* over the past decade, many of which are inherently dangerous. For example, officers responded to over 4,000 assaults and over 18,000 disturbances in 2012. This project examined a small subset of these incidents – the 45 occasions during which officers discharged a firearm at a human being – and is a first step toward a better understanding of police use of force in Anchorage.



## Appendix A: Variables Collected

Field	Description
<i>Situation</i>	
Case number	APD case number
Incident Date	Date of officer-involved shooting (OIS)
Incident time	Approximate time of OIS
Incident address	Recorded address of OIS
Description of location	Used when address is insufficient, e.g., parking lot of Carrs
Initial call type	Why officers were at location, e.g., investigating robbery, traffic stop, suspect pursuit, etc
Officer initiated?	Was this call initiated by officers or in response to a citizen call for service?
Number of officers on scene at the time of the shooting	Number of officers on scene, where on scene is defined as the immediate police-citizen encounter
Citizen's weapon type	Handgun Long gun Knife Other cutting instrument Blunt object None Simulated weapon Other
Citizen verbally threatened to use weapon?	Did the subject verbally threaten to use a weapon? (yes/no)
Citizen non-verbally threatened weapon use?	Did the subject non-verbally threaten weapon use, e.g., move aggressively? (yes/no)
Bystanders injured?	Were bystanders injured by any party? (yes/no)
Description of bystander injury	Description of bystander injuries, location of gunshot wound (GSW) or other injuries
Notes	Free-form notes field for other information not captured elsewhere

<b>Field</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>For each subject</i>	
Age at time of incident	
Race	Census categories: American Indian / Alaska Native Asian Black / African American Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander White Hispanic Multi-racial
Gender	
Suspected of other crimes?	Was the citizen known by responding officers to have open warrants, match the description of a crime suspect, etc? (yes/no)
Description of wants/warrants/suspicion	Nature of wants/warrants/suspicion of other crimes
Prior misdemeanor convictions	Number of prior convictions (from CourtView)
Prior felony convictions	Number of prior felony convictions (from CourtView)
Drug intoxication?	Was the subject intoxicated on drugs other than alcohol at the time of the shooting? (yes/no)
Description of drug used	What drug(s) were present?
Alcohol intoxication?	Was the subject intoxicated at the time of the shooting? (yes/no)
Mental illness	Were responding officers aware of mental illness issues? (yes/no)
Description of mental illness	Description of mental illness issue known to responding officers before the shooting occurred
Resistance level during incident:	What level of resistance was offered by the subject?
Injured during incident?	Was the subject injured during the OIS?
Description of injury	Description of injury, location of GSW or other injuries.

<b>Field</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>For each officer</i>	
Years of service	Years employed by APD at the time of the incident
Age at time of incident	
Gender	
Race	Census categories: American Indian / Alaska Native Asian Black / African American Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander White
Rank	Officer rank at the time of the incident
Uniform	Was the officer in uniform? (yes/no)
Duty assignment	Assignment at the time of the incident
Weapon type	Issued pistol Personally-owned pistol Shotgun Patrol rifle Sniper rifle
Number of shots fired	Estimate of the number of shots fired. Obtained from officer estimates, corroborated with other information when possible
Injured?	Was the officer injured during the incident? (yes/no)
Description of injury	Description of injury, location of GSW or other injuries