



TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Police Chief Mike Zaro

THROUGH: John Caulfield, City Manager

DATE: AUGUST 11, 2020

SUBJECT: USE OF FORCE AND DEMOGRAPHICS

ATTACHMENTS:

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This memo is in response to a recent inquiry from Councilmember Brandstetter about uses of force with demographic data, specifically deadly uses of force. Although Councilmember Brandstetter only asked for information on deadly force, I recognize that there is a general interest in demographic data as it relates to all police use of force so that is included in this memo, as well.

As a reminder, the term “use of force” describes a wide spectrum of efforts used by law enforcement to gain compliance from an unwilling subject. The Lakewood Police Department uses force very infrequently. Historically, our annual reports have shown that force is used in less than 1% of all calls for service and in approximately 5% of all arrests. Additionally, most uses of force typically occur at the lower end of the force spectrum, such as an arm bar or counter joint technique.

This memo contains data on all uses of force for 2017, 2018, 2019, and the first half of 2020 (charts 1-4). As deadly use of force is an infrequent occurrence, I used 10 years of data for those incidents. I know that in discussing race as it relates to use of force, the question of disproportionality often comes up, i.e., is a disproportionate amount of force used against people of color. When we talk about evaluating rates of use of force, it’s important that we compare the correct numbers.

Comparing the percent of use of force on suspects identified as “White” to the total “White” population in Lakewood is not the most accurate comparison because force is not indiscriminately used on every White person in the general population. Use of force is generally reserved for people who are subject to physical arrest. With that in mind, the below charts were created to compare the rates of use of force by race to the rates of arrest by race. Categories of race were limited to White, Black or African-American, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian and Unknown.

There is no doubt that people of color are disproportionately represented in the American criminal justice system (arrests) as compared to the general population, but that is a larger sociological discussion that I am not equipped to answer nor was this memo intended to address.

What the data does show is that LPD has used a relatively equal proportion of force to arrests across all races. Looking at the average rates over the 3 ½ years, there is no more than a 2% difference between arrests and use of force rates in all racial categories (chart 5). We see similar ratios in deadly uses of force, particularly among White and Black or African American subjects (chart 6).

# Rates of All Uses of Force by Race Compared to Rates of Arrest by Race

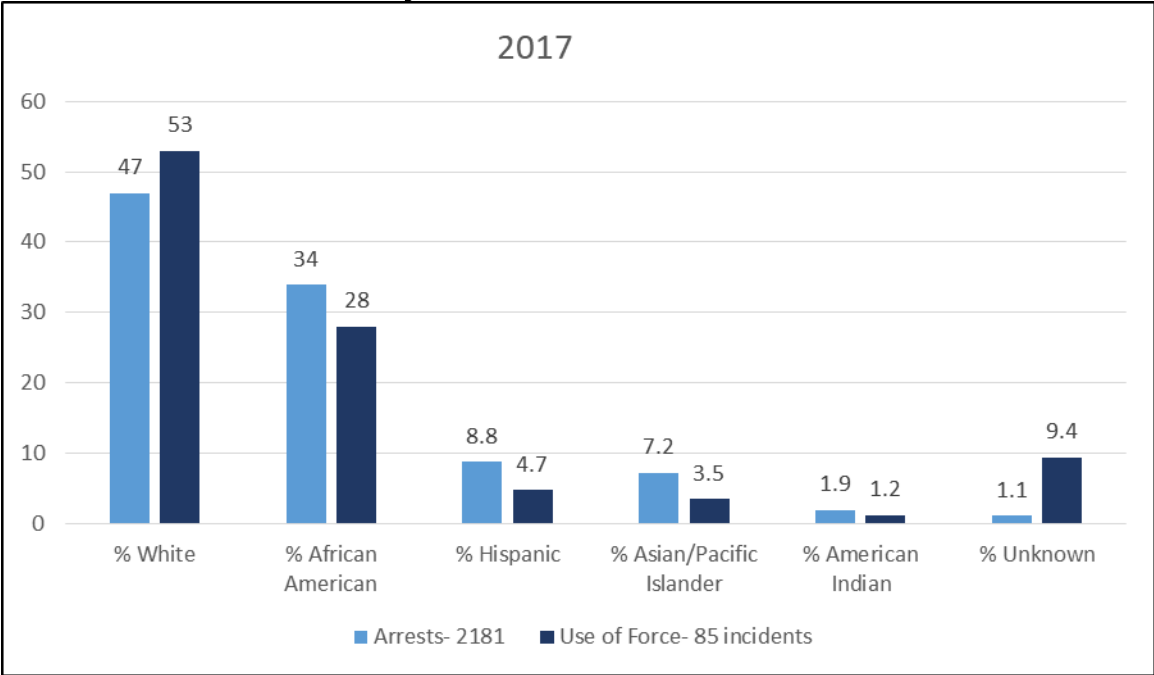


Chart 1

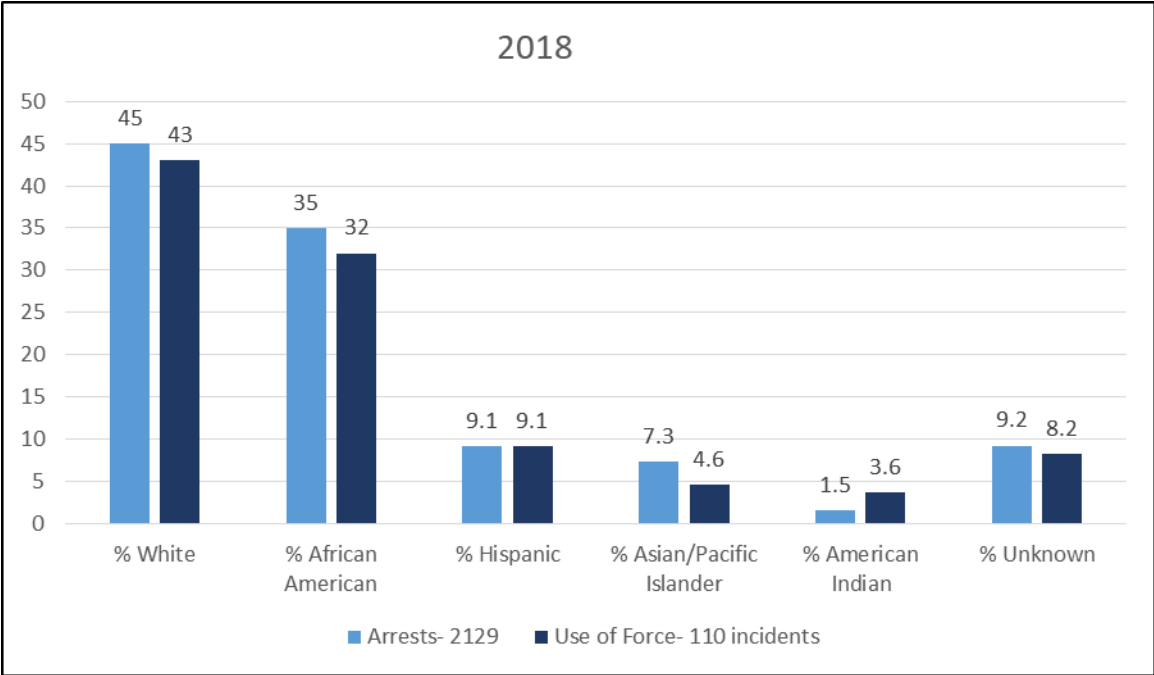


Chart 2

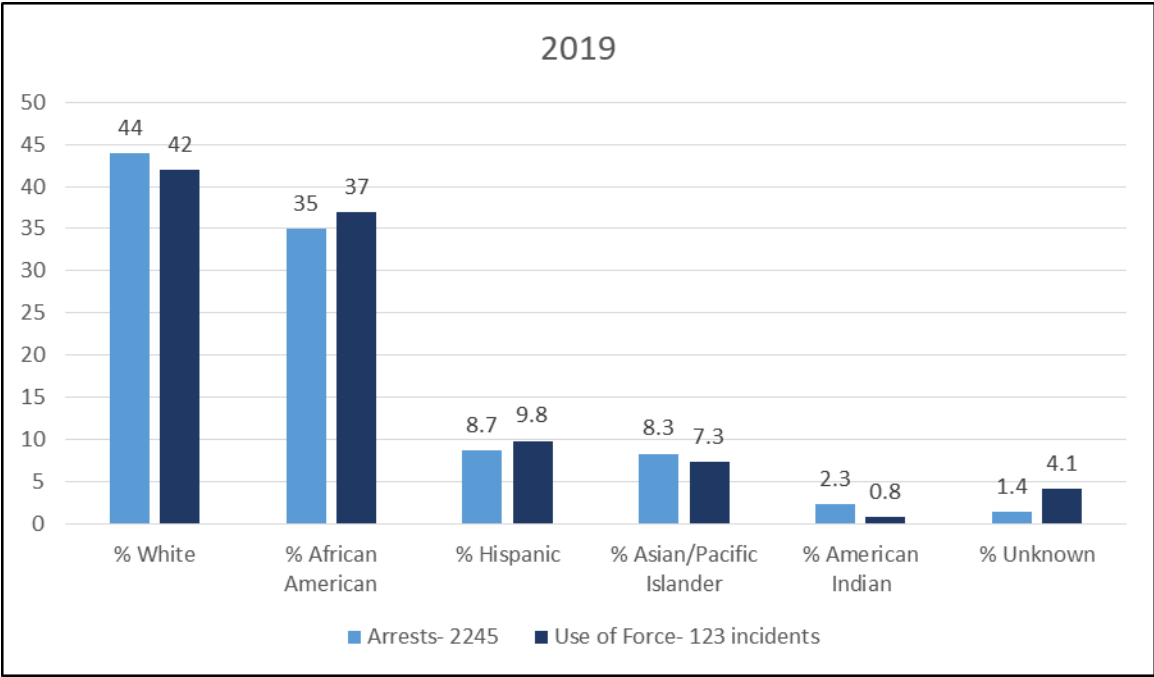


Chart 3

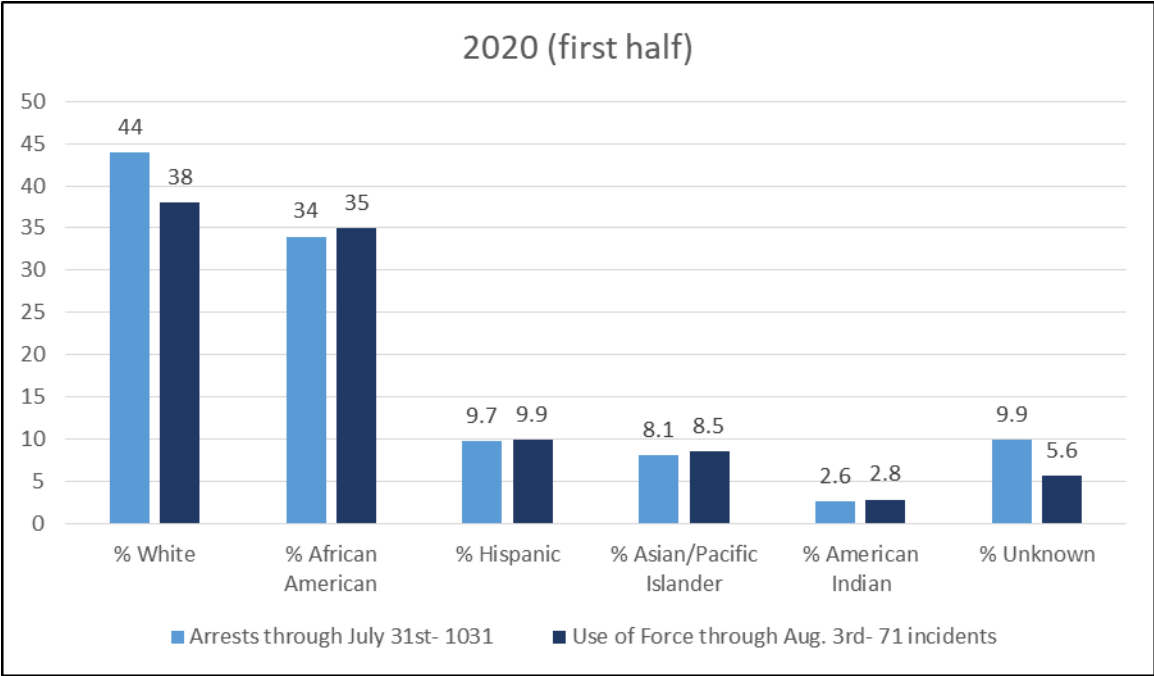


Chart 4

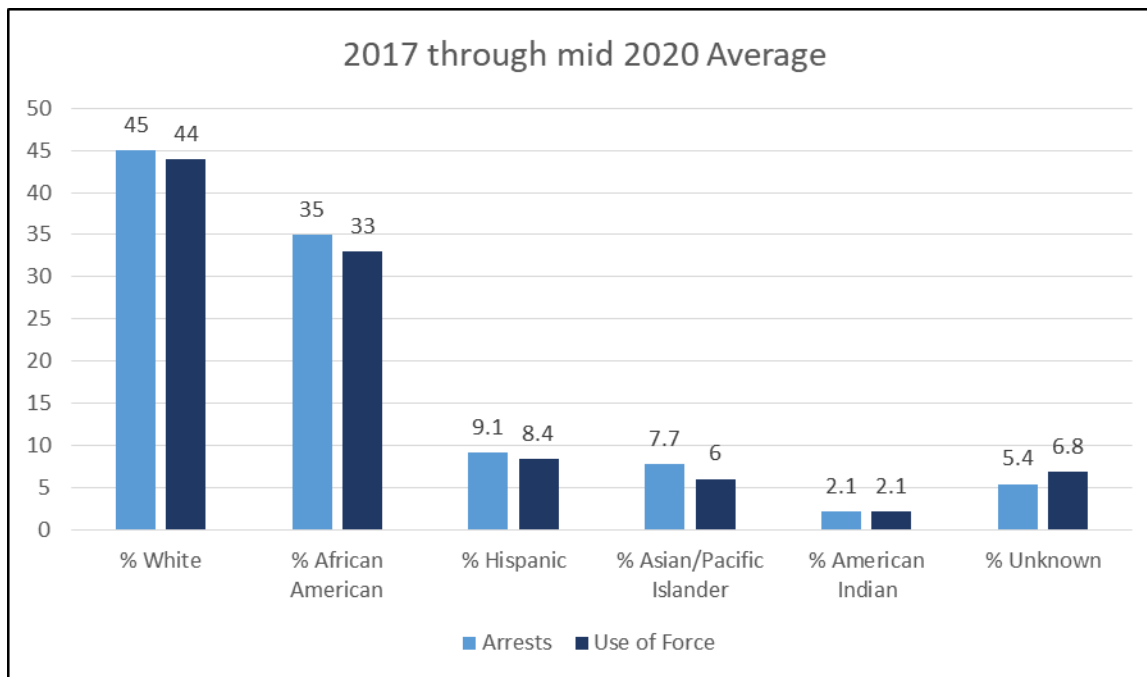


Chart 5

## Use of Deadly Force

Deadly force is defined as that force which is likely to result in death or serious physical injury. Over the last 10 years we have had 16 incidents involving officers' use of deadly force. 10 of those were fatal and 6 were non-fatal. 13 of those incidents occurred in the City of Lakewood while 3 were in other jurisdictions (a shooting after a vehicle pursuit into Tacoma, a Metro SWAT incident in Fife, and a shooting that occurred while investigating suspicious circumstances during the officer's commute home).

As noted previously, in reviewing the rates of deadly force used by race (chart 6), we find similar percentages as those in general use of force, particularly in White and African-American subjects.

We also looked at whether the subjects were armed or not and with what type of weapon. Chart 7 shows that 9 were armed with functional firearms, three were in possession of realistic looking replica or toy firearms, one was armed with a knife, one was unarmed but mimicked pointing a firearm with his cellular phone, and one was unarmed but claimed to be armed during events leading up to the shooting. The final incident is still under investigation.

Councilmember Brandstetter also asked about policy changes as a result of any of these incidents. Our policies are continuously under review and any use of force is reviewed for potential changes to policy or training.

Given the length of time this data spans, I am unable to find specifically what policy changes were made as a result of a specific incident. Given how recent the incident was, I can tell you that several changes were made to SWAT procedures after the incident in Fife. Beyond that, I am unable to accurately identify policy changes associated with a specific incident.

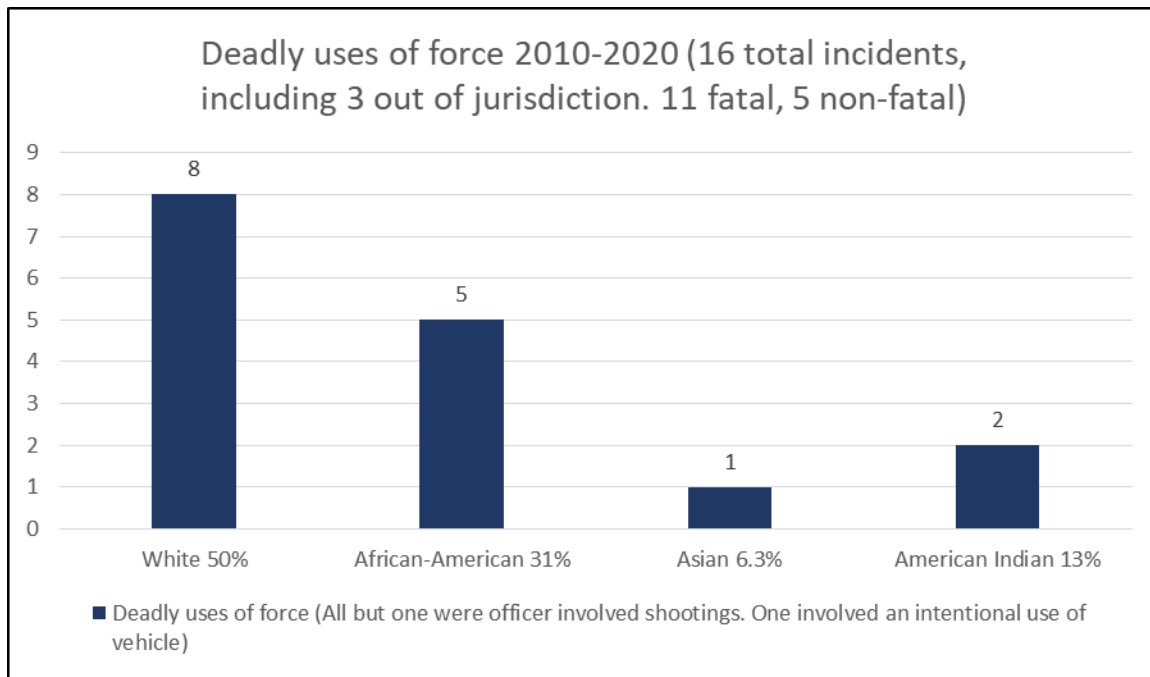


Chart 6

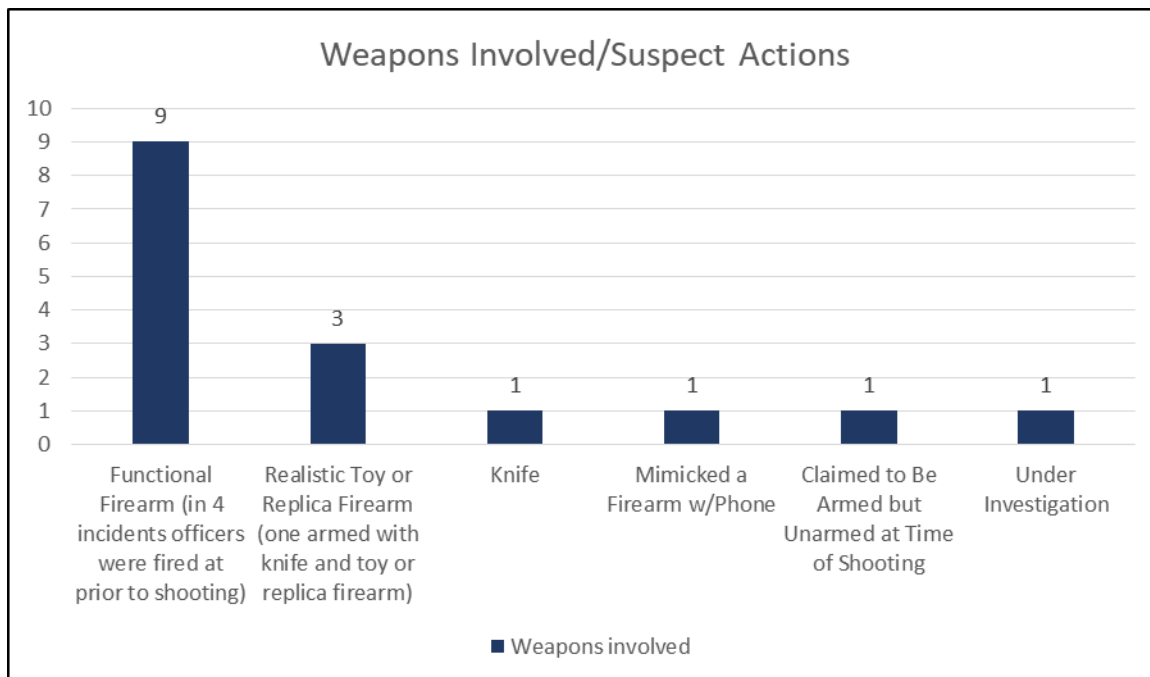


Chart 7