

# Pierce County deputies disproportionately use force against Black and Native residents, report finds

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By [Amanda Zhou](#)

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Pierce County Sheriff's deputies disproportionately use physical force against Black and Native American or Alaska Native residents, an initial report shows.

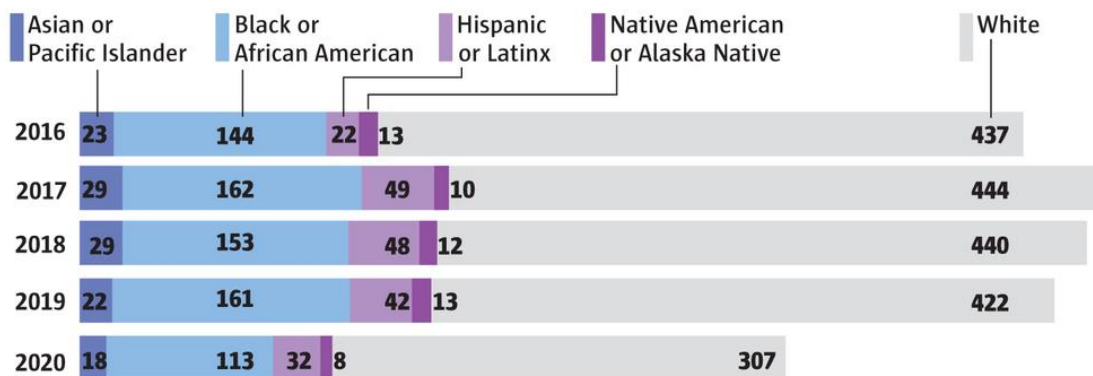
The [initial report](#) was produced by a Criminal Justice Work Group, including members from the Pierce County's Prosecuting Attorney's Office, the executive's office, the Clerk of the Superior Court and the sheriff's office.

The report noted that because the Native American and Alaska Native population is already the smallest, further subdividing it would introduce a substantial variation.

While Black residents make up 7% of the Pierce County Sheriff's Department's service population, the report found that Black residents experienced 23.3% of total physical use of force incidents. White residents, who make up about 72% of the population, represented 64.4% of physical use of force incidents.

## Annual uses of force by race

Black residents in Pierce County Sheriff's Department service area only make up 7% of the population but represent about 23% of total physical uses of force.



Source: Pierce County Criminal Justice Work Group

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In other words, Black residents experienced force about 5.6 times as much as white residents.

Disproportionality was greatest for Black residents between 18 and 25 years old. Out of all the incidents in which deputies used force against a minor, Black children made up 40% of those incidents.

Native American or Alaska Native residents experienced force 2.3 times as often as white residents. Hispanic and Asian residents were found to experience force at about the same rate as white residents, the report said.

The report was commissioned by the Pierce County Council after [an emergency resolution in June 2020](#) to review Pierce County's law and justice systems.

The analysis included more than 3,000 use of force incidents between 2016 and 2020, ranging from nonphysical tactics like verbal commands to hand strikes to stun guns and lethal force.

The department reports nearly 1,000 use of force incidents each year. The most common physical uses of force were control tactics or strikes from a hand, stun gun and "vascular neck restraint." (The report noted a Washington law prohibiting the use of neck restraints went into effect in July).

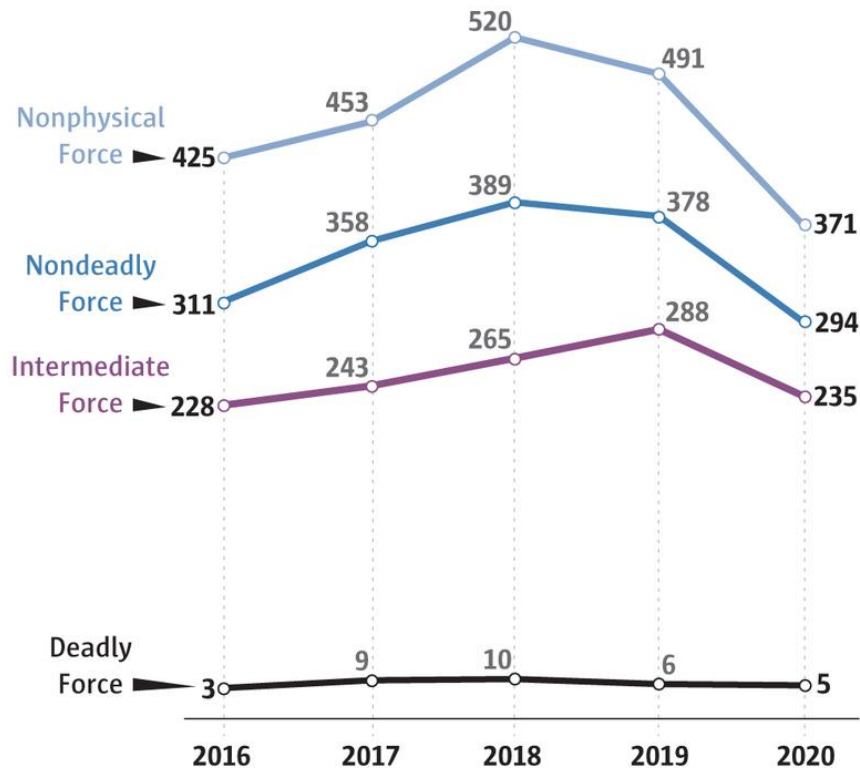
Use of a firearm, vehicle ramming and other deadly measures occur about six to seven times a year, the report found.

The three most common justifications deputies cited for using force were resisting arrests, noncompliance and a combative subject.

The introduction to the report said there was not enough information to determine whether the analyzed incidents were "inappropriate to the circumstances confronting deputies."

## Pierce County uses of force over time

Nondeadly force can include leg restraints and intermediate force can include stun guns and hand strikes.



Source: Pierce County Criminal Justice Work Group

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The Pierce County Sheriff's Department's jurisdiction includes unincorporated Pierce County, University Place and Edgewood.

The report said the biggest gap in the analysis was missing context from dashboard or body cameras on the interactions that led to force. Negotiations with the Pierce County Deputy Sheriff's Guild have delayed the implementation of body cameras, according to [the Tacoma News Tribune](#).

The Pierce County Criminal Justice Work Group recommended independent reviews of use of force, beginning with uses of force involving minors. In the future, the group is expected to analyze information and submit reports on how charges are filed, on mental health and substance treatment diversion programs and on trials and sentencing.

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