



BURLINGTON POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT

April 2024



IT WAS "TOTALITY" AWESOME!





Apr 19, 2024 – all data preliminary & subject to change



ARSON AT SENATOR SANDERS'S OFFICE

On Friday April 5, 2024, a perpetrator set fire to the office vestibule of United States Senator Bernie Sanders on Church Street. The arsonist was recorded on security video spraying a liquid near the outer door of the office and then lighting the area with a handheld lighter. A blaze quickly began while the suspect fled via a staircase.

No one was injured in the fire, and the Senator was not in the office at the time, but members of his staff were. The fire caused significant damage to the vestibule, but, as with the arson the BPD experienced at our headquarters at One North Avenue in November 2023, the sprinklers resulted in even more property destruction.

Burlington detective Eric Kratochvil worked with our partners at the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to identify Shant Soghomonian, 35, also known as Michael Soghomonian. Police arrested him in Shelburne less than 48 hours after the crime.

On April 18 a federal grand jury returned an indictment Soghomonian with using fire to damage the offices of United States Senator Bernard Sanders. He is currently detained pending further proceedings. If convicted, Soghomonian faces a maximum possible penalty of not less than 5 years and not more than 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.





25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Earlier this month we wished Corporal Taylor a happy retirement after 25 years of service with the Burlington Police Department.

Corporal Taylor joined the BPD in 1998; his last day was April 6, 2024. Throughout his career, Corporal Taylor served as a uniformed patrol officer, an airport officer, and a longtime firearms instructor. In May 2009, Corporal Taylor was one of four officers assigned to the first-ever fully staffed Street Crimes Unit deployment.

During his career, Corporal Taylor received a number of recognitions both internally from the BPD and externally from other law-enforcement partners and community members. Corporal Taylor was awarded the Lifesaving Award in 2002, a Certificate of Recognition for outstanding performance during a 2003 firearms training cycle, and a Letter of Commendation in 2009 from the BPD.

We sincerely thank Corporal Taylor for all the hard work, dedication, and contributions he has made over the years.





NATIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATORS WEEK

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Every year during the second full week of April, telecommunications professionals within the public safety industry are recognized. Our ECS team, for Emergency Communications Specialists, are the first line of response and do stressful, rewarding work for our community.

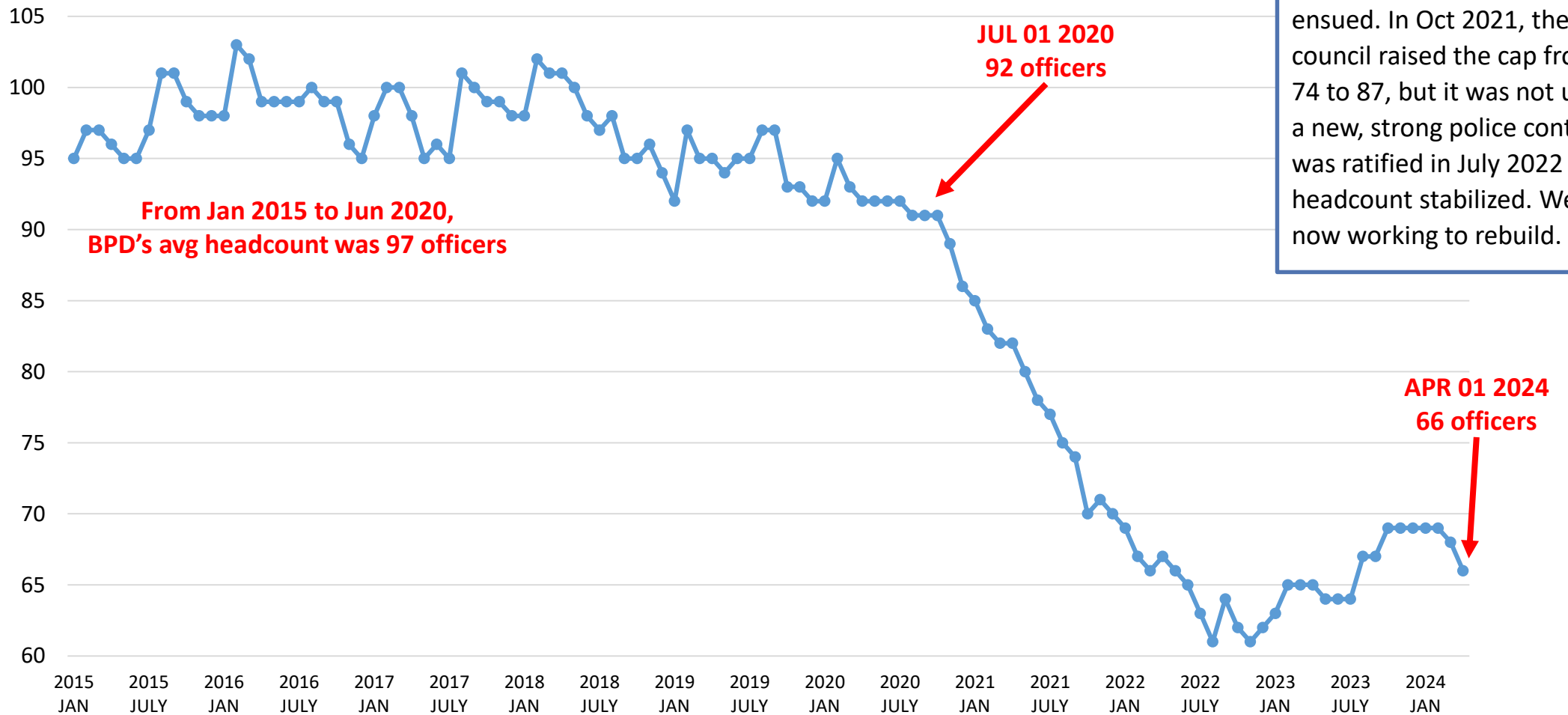
Over the past few years, we weathered a staffing crisis in our Emergency Communications Center, or ECC. Both the BPD and the Burlington Fire Department are dispatched from the BPD ECC. Allotted 14 full-time dispatchers, the team had fallen to four at its low point. We've worked hard to rebuild and currently have 10 ECS employees, plus the Emergency Communications Manager, Larry Barbeau.





BPD SWORN OFFICER HEADCOUNT, 2015-2024

TOTAL SWORN HEADCOUNT, as of the first of each month, month-by-month



In June 2020, the Burlington City Council voted to reduce, by attrition, the BPD's authorized headcount from 105 to 74. An officer exodus ensued. In Oct 2021, the council raised the cap from 74 to 87, but it was not until a new, strong police contract was ratified in July 2022 that headcount stabilized. We are now working to rebuild.



65 TOTAL, 59 AVAILABLE

As of April 15 2024, we are authorized for 87 sworn officers. Of those 87, we have 65. Of those 65, 59 are able to be deployed as solo officers, or “effective.”

minus 6 injured, light, military, VPA, etc. = 59
minus 15 supervisors = 44
minus 10 detectives = 34
minus 7 airport officers = 27
minus 3 special assignments = 24

24 officers on Patrol

In addition to sworn patrol officers, we have 6 Community Service Officers (CSOs) and 6 Community Support Liaisons (CSLs).





PUBLIC SAFETY ROLES UNIQUE TO BPD

Public safety is more than police. When sworn-officer staffing began to fall, we created the 2021 Public Safety Continuity Plan. That plan augmented an existing non-sworn role:

- **Community Service Officers** (CSOs),

These are unarmed, unsworn officers who answer quality-of-life calls for service. BPD currently has six employees in the role, and **the budget allots us 11 CSOs and one CSM** (or Community Service Manager). The role is also a stepping stone to becoming a police officer.

**BPD
currently
has 6 CSOs
and 6 CSLs**

The 2021 Public Safety Continuity Plan also created:

- **Community Support Liaisons** (CSLs)

These are embedded social workers with expertise in mental health, substance use disorder, and homelessness. BPD currently has five employees in the role, and **the budget allots us six CSLs and one CSS** (or Community Support Supervisor). The CSLs are the core of our new CAIP division (Crisis, Advocacy, Intervention Programs).





INCIDENT VOLUME



YEAR-TO-DATE 04/15

Incidents in 2024 are up 9% compared to 2023. BPD is addressing more incidents with fewer patrol officers—50% fewer, actually. As a result, of the 7,598 incidents in 2024 so far, 886 have been “stacked”—i.e., 12%. And 484 have been referred to online reporting, or 6%.

	YTD INCIDENTS (as of 04/15)	%Δ
2019	7,456	100%
2020	7,124	↓5%
2021	4,949	↓31%
2022	5,265	↑6%
2023	6,955	↑32%
2024	7,598	↑9%
	Δ 2019 to 2024:	↑2%

It should be noted that not all incidents are crimes. They are more accurately “calls for service.” As shown on the previous slide, there are more than 100 categories of incident. The fact that incidents are up does not necessarily mean that crime is up; as the next slide shows, some categories of criminal incident are up and some are not.



THE PRIORITY RESPONSE PLAN

PRIORITY 1	High priority.
PRIORITY 2	Middle priority. (*) = situationally dependent; some may be Priority 1 or Priority 3.
PRIORITY 3	Low priority. Response may be delayed based on officer availability; may receive a CSO response.

With staffing down and incident volume up, the BPD had to create the Priority Response Plan. It husbands resources while remaining true to our duty to prioritize our **NEIGHBORS' PHYSICAL SAFETY** and their sense of safety. **The Plan goes into effect when two or fewer sworn police officers are available for response; when that happens, Priority 2 and Priority 3 incidents get "stacked" and do not receive an in-person response.** When three or more officers are available, they are dispatched to all incidents regardless of Priority category.

Incidents labeled "CSO" or "CSL" initially receive a response from a CSO or CSL, rather than a sworn officer, unless the incident evolves in a way that changes its category or requires a sworn officer.

Incidents labeled "ONL" (for "Online Only") are to be diverted to an online reporting function. Note that larcenies and retail thefts are NOT supposed to be online reports.

Additionally, during daytime weekday hours when DSB detectives are available, **DSB will handle untimely deaths.**

911 Hangup	Cruelty to Animals	CSO	Illegal Dumping	CSO	Robbery
Airport AOA Violation	Custodial Interference *		Impeding a Public Officer		Runaway
Airport Duress Alarm	Disorderly Conduct *		Impersonation of a Police Officer *		Runaway Apprehension
Airport PHASE	Disorderly Conduct by Elec Comm	ONL	Inciting a Felony		Search
Alarm *	Disturbance		Intoxication	CSO	Search Warrant
Alcohol Offense	DLS		Investigation - Cold Case		Service Coordination
Animal Problem	Domestic Assault - Felony		Juvenile Problem *		Sex Offender Registry Violation
Arrest on Warrant	Domestic Assault - Misd		Kidnapping		Sexual Assault
Arson	Domestic Disturbance		Larceny - from a Building		Sheltering/Aiding Runaway
Assault - Aggravated	Drugs		Larceny - from a Motor Vehicle		SRO Activity
Assault - Simple	Drugs - Possession		Larceny - Other		Stalking
Assist - Agency	Drugs - Sale		Larceny from a Person		Stolen Vehicle
Assist - Car Seat Inspection	DUI		Lewd and Lascivious Conduct		Subpoena Service
Assist - K9	Eluding Police		Lockdown Drill		Suicide - Attempted
Assist - Motorist	Embezzlement	ONL	Mental Health Issue *		Suspicious Event *
Assist - Other	Enabling Consumption by Minors		Minor in Possession of Alcohol		Theft of Rental Property
Assist - Public	Encampment Outreach	CSL	Missing Person		Theft of Service
Background Investigation	Encampment Policy	CSL	Motor Vehicle Complaint	CSO	Threats/Harassment *
Bad Check	Escape		Neighbor Dispute	CSL	Traffic
Bar / Liquor License Violation	Extortion	ONL	Noise	CSO	Trespass *
Bomb Threat	False Info to Police		Obstruction of Justice		TRO/FRO Service
Burglary *	False Pretenses	ONL	Operations		TRO/FRO Violation
CHINS	False Public Alarms		Ordinance Violation - Other	CSO	Unlawful Restraint
Community Outreach	False Swearing		Overdose		Untimely Death
Compliance Check	Fireworks	CSO	Parking	CSO	Use of Elec Comm to Lure a Child
Computer Crime	Foot Patrol		Possession of Stolen Property		Uttering a Forged Instrument
Contributing to Delinquency of Minor	Forgery	ONL	Prescription Fraud	ONL	Vandalism
Counterfeiting	Found/Lost Property	CSO	Prohibited Acts		VIN verification
Crash - Fatality	Fraud	ONL	Property Damage	CSO	Violation of Conditions of Release *
Crash - Injury to person(s)	Fugitive From Justice		Reckless Endangerment *		Voyeurism *
Crash - LSA *	Graffiti Removal		Recovered Property	CSO	Weapons Offense
Crash - Non-Investigated	Hindering Arrest		Resisting Arrest		Welfare Check *
Crash - Property damage only	Homicide		Retail Theft		
Cruelty to a Child	Identity Theft	ONL	Roadway Hazard		



SELECTED VALCOUR INCIDENTS, YTD AS OF APRIL 15

	Assault - Agg	Assault - Simple	Burglary	Crash w Injury or Fatal	Disorderly Conduct	Domestic Assault*	Domestic Disturb	Gunfire	Larceny (all)**	Mental Health Issue	Overdose	Robbery	Sexual Assault	Stolen Vehicle	Traffic
2019	9	41	18	20	29	25	105	1	106	240	14	5	19	16	744
2020	12	39	27	16	36	13	171	3	133	263	33	3	21	18	612
2021	9	33	21	21	14	7	133	3	190	243	28	2	14	16	308
2022	17	34	53	25	27	12	144	3	205	260	31	7	9	55	208
2023	6	46	44	31	20	17	124	1	319	264	103	2	7	103	154
2024	18	44	46	21	14	7	131	5	309	244	67	2	9	55	355

* = combines incidents categorized as “Domestic Assault – Felony” and “Domestic Assault – Misdemeanor”

** = combines incidents categorized as “Larceny from a Person,” “Larceny – from a Building,” “Larceny – from Motor Vehicle,” and “Larceny – Other”

NOTE: All categories shown year-to-date, through April 15 of their respective year

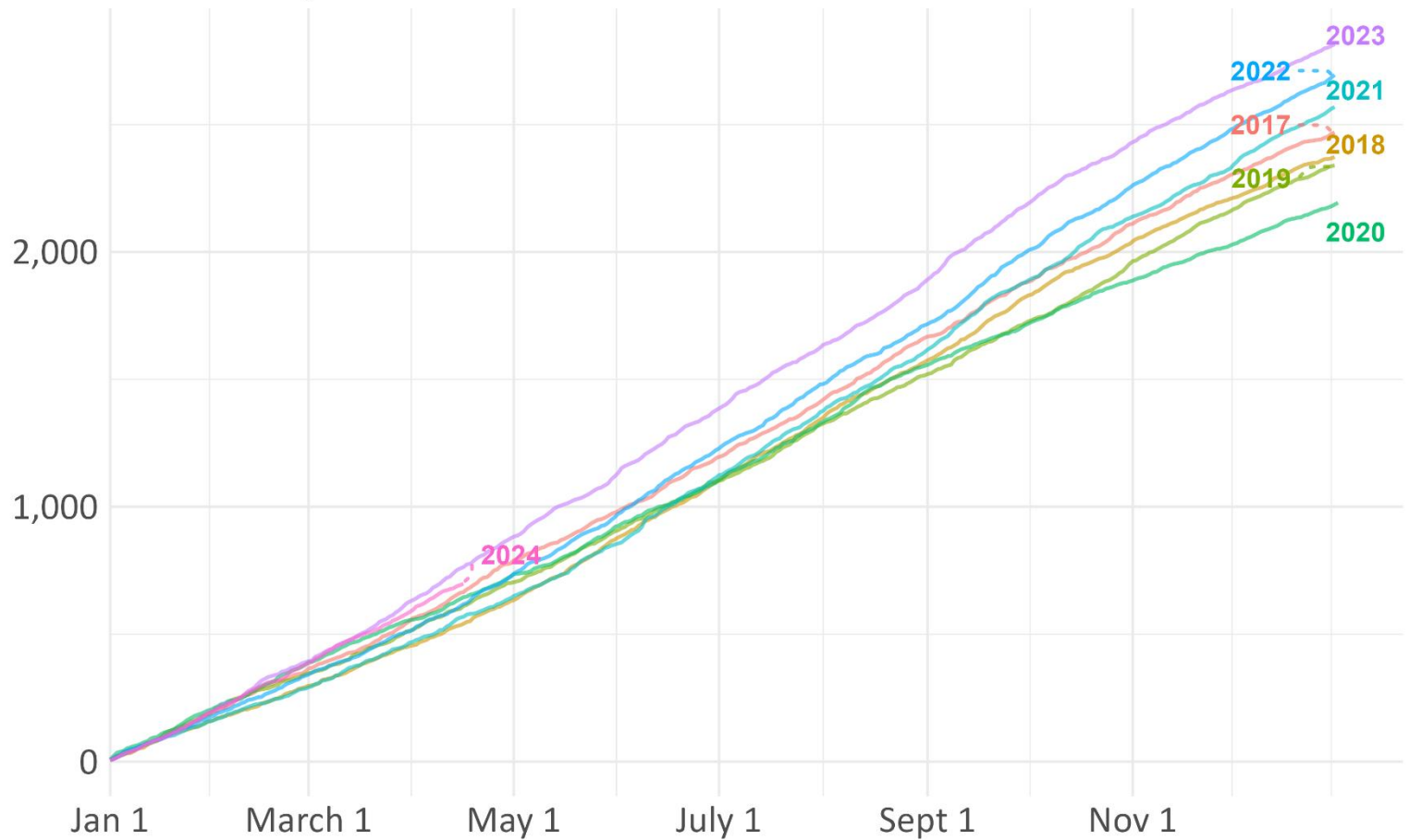
NOTE: These data are derived from Valcour incidents. Valcour is the BPD’s computer-aided dispatch and records-management system. Incidents are initially categorized by dispatch according to the information provided by a caller; the category may be changed by the officer who responds to the scene and/or the detective who takes the case. Offense data and/or NIBRS data may differ.



PRIORITY 1 INCIDENTS

Priority 1 incidents have been climbing steadily over the past few years. Last year's total was significantly affected by the huge increase in overdose. So far 2024 is a bit lower than 2023, which was the highest in nearly a decade.

BPD Priority 1 Incidents



Data through 04/15/2024



TRAFFIC

The City of Burlington’s 2023 **Annual Report** is expected to be released in the coming month, and will provide a deep dive into data around the volume of incidents and offenses, traffic stops, arrests, and uses of force.

Traffic stops are down nearly 90% from the high a decade ago. Enforcement is an important tool to address unsafe driving behavior, but across the country, traffic stops have also been a source of concern with regard to disparities and stop outcomes.

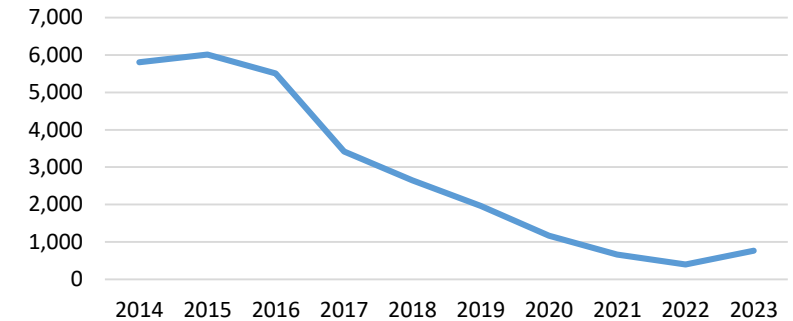
VEHICLE SEARCHES		
	WHITE	BLACK
2016	78	34
2017	49	22
2018	26	15
2019	7	0
2020	8	2
2021	1	3
2022	1	0
2023	1	0

In Burlington, vehicle searches presented a particular problem. Although black drivers made up less than 10% of the driving population, they were more likely to be subject to searches. Through internal emphasis and training, we significantly decreased the number of searches along with overall stops, and eliminated the disparity.

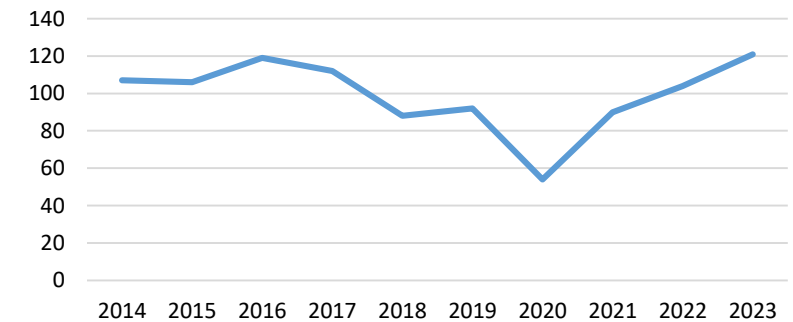
We also improved fairness by making sure that all drivers receive warnings at the same rate. In Burlington, all drivers receive warnings more than 80% of the time.

But we have seen **a potentially troubling increase in disparity in rates of stop**. The demographics of BPD traffic stops have historically been close to the demographics of crashes, which is the best way to determine a city’s driving population. In 2023 there was a notable deviation, shown at right. Chief Murad is concerned about it, and wants to be reflective and responsive to it. The BPD will examine all of 2023’s stops to ensure they met the Department of Justice’s standards for courteous, transparent stops.

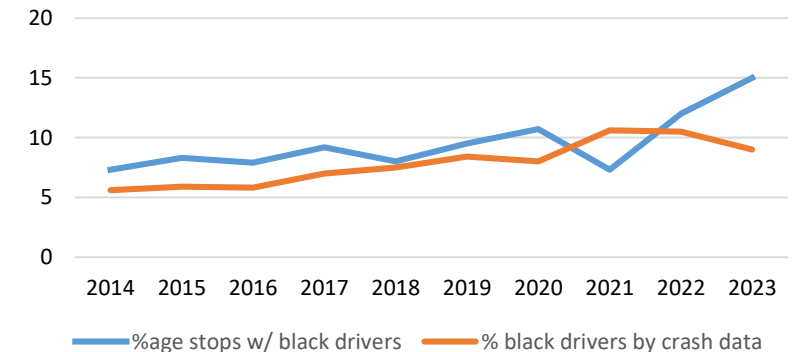
Traffic Stops



Fatal Crash & Crash w/ Injury



Black Drivers, Stops v Crash





USE OF FORCE

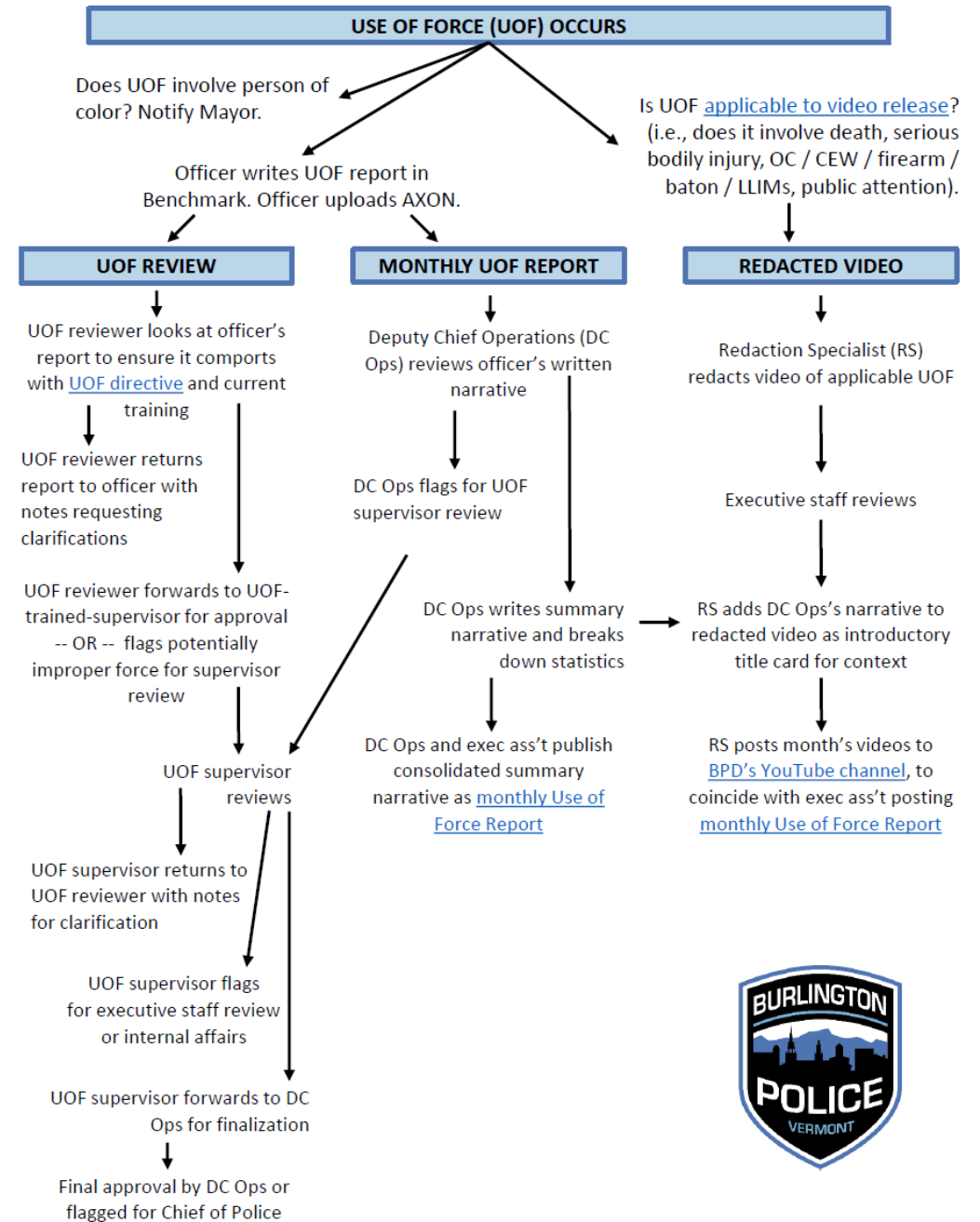
The 2023 Annual Report is also expected to show **an increase in the number of incidents of use of force**. Chief Murad is concerned about this increase, too, and will be reflective and responsive to it.

In Burlington, any action beyond compliant handcuffing is considered a use of force. The BPD examines EVERY SINGLE use of force, and makes descriptions of and data about ALL of them public via the

[Monthly Use-of-Force Reports](#)

No other police department in Vermont does this. The flowchart at right is available online, at the BPD's Transparency & Data page, under "[Use-of-Force Incidents & Info](#)." The online version contains hyperlinks to a variety of sources, like the Statewide Use-of-force Directive.

The Monthly Use-of-Force Reports capture approximately 248 incidents in which force was used in 2023. (This is a different count than the Annual Report, which counts person-incidents. If officers stop a stolen car with four occupants and order them out at gun point, it is one use-of-force incident but four person-incidents.) Nearly 25% of last year's uses of force can be [seen on YouTube](#), where the BPD posts any use of force that includes serious bodily injury or death; or that includes the use of tools like OC spray, conducted electrical weapons, or firearms (including merely pointing firearms); or that occasions significant public concern.





THE BPD IS HIRING!

**\$72,248 to \$79,693
starting pay***

**\$100,000
top pay**

**and a \$15,000
hiring bonus**

- City retirement with 5-year vesting
- Shift differential, weekend, and holiday pay
- **full medical benefits** and wellness incentives
- Retirement after 20 years of service at 50% salary
- Retirement after 25 years of service at 75% salary
- 15-step pay scale for non-supervisory employees
- Overtime can be received as cash or vacation accrual
- **10-hour workday, 4-days-on/3-days-off schedule**
- **Weekends off every other month**
- Yearly education bonus
- Beards and tattoos permitted
- Various **specialty assignments** such as detectives, narcotics, K9, domestic violence prevention, airport
- **Applicant can be a non-U.S. citizen** if applicant is a permanent resident / green-card holder

*depending on experience

www.bpdcareers.com