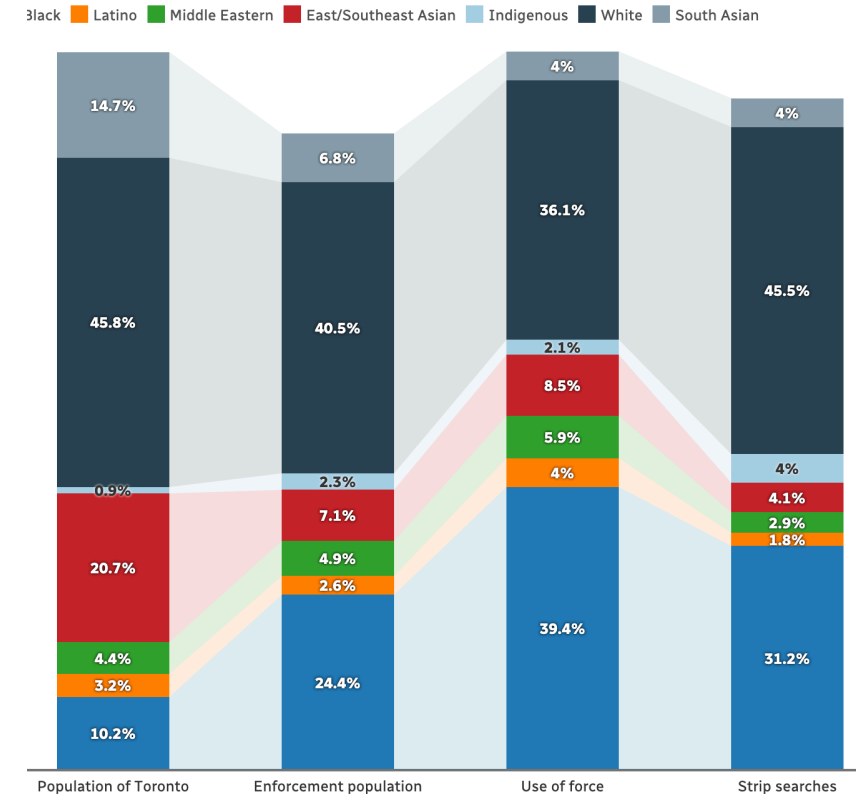# The Toronto Use of Force Data

- In June, 2022, the Toronto Police Service released data on use of force and race.

- Black people were overrepresented by a factor of **2.2** times in enforcement actions compared to their share of the population. Indigenous people were overrepresented by a factor of **1.6** and Middle Eastern people were overrepresented by a factor of **1.3**.

- Black people were **2.3** times more likely to have firearms pointed at them when they were **not** perceived to be in possession of any weapons. White people were 1.4 times more likely to have less than lethal force utilized by police when they **were** perceived to be in possession of weapons.

- Black people were overrepresented in use of force incidents across most call types. In the case of a violent call for service Black people were overrepresented by a factor of **1.2**. But when it came to person in crisis calls they were overrepresented by a factor of **1.9**.

- The strip search data also showed racial disparities.

representation of various race groups in Toronto Police Service data. Where columns do not add to 100%, race for those people is not known.

Legend: Black | Latino | Middle Eastern | East/Southeast Asian | Indigenous | White | South Asian

	Population of Toronto	Enforcement population	Use of force	Strip searches
South Asian	14.7%	6.8%	4%	4%
White	45.8%	40.5%	36.1%	45.5%
East/Southeast Asian	20.7%	7.1%	8.5%	4.1%
Indigenous	0.9%	2.3%	2.1%	4%
Middle Eastern	4.4%	4.9%	5.9%	2.9%
Latino	3.2%	2.6%	4%	1.8%
Black	10.2%	24.4%	39.4%	31.2%

The Data Picture

- The data gathered by TPS is consistent with data on the use of force in Ontario gathered by Scot Wortley, Ayobami Laniyonu, and Erick Laming in 2020.

- Similarly, national data analyzed by Scot Wortley, Akwasi Owusu-Bempah, Erick Laming, and Carae Henry (2021) shows significant racial disparities in use of force, with Black people without a weapon being more likely to be killed by police without than white people with a weapon. This data is discussed in the *Defunding the Police: Defining the Way Forward for HRM* report.

- Data shows use of force incidents increasing nationally, with more incidents occurring, as well as more severe incidents with increased force.

The Importance of Use of Force Data

- "Police use of force is a **crucially important issue**. It directly engages with issues of public safety and the safety of law enforcement officers. However, when done improperly, police use of force can cause the unnecessary death or serious injury of civilians, undermine public trust in the police, and compromise the legitimacy of the entire criminal justice system. Finally, police use of force can erode social cohesion and contribute to radicalization, riots and other social control issues. **Unfortunately, despite its importance, police use of force has been subject to surprisingly little empirical research—especially in the Canadian context**."

- "Law enforcement's traditionally conservative, risk adverse approach to data collection and dissemination has significantly impeded Canadian research on use of force. This study is no exception. It is quite possible that high quality use of force data, as well as data on other sensitive policing issues, will never be widely released to academics and the general public, **unless police services are compelled to do so by government legislation**" (Wortley et al, 2021)

Problems with the TPS data

- While the data showed the presence of significant racial bias and serious use of force issues, the data was explicitly not to be used to discipline officers, identify officers with repeated use of force incidents, nor reveal the names of officers to the public.

- It is not uncommon for officers with prior use of force incidents to be involved in escalating violent encounters.

The Wortley/Bryan Recommendations

- The Wortley Report (2019) makes 53 recommendations street checks, data collection on police stops, and improving police-community relations.

- Timothy Bryan's report (2022) on the Collection of Race-Based Police Data in Nova Scotia expands upon these recommendations.

- However, the recommendations concern the gathering and regulation of data in the context of police stops.

Photo: Sean Dev

Why these Recommendations Must Be Expanded Upon

- Restricting the gathering of data to police stops misses the broader context in which many interactions with police occur.

- For example, many reports from residents of African Nova Scotian communities detail excessive use of weaponry, ERT, violent entry, and other intimidation tactics in executing warrants.

- Strip searches are not included in police stop data, and form a significant site of trauma and abuse of power.

- We also lack data on police involvement in mental health incidents.

- Other data gaps include use of appearance notices, use of warnings vs. charges, etc, and racial disparities.

- Use of force data in particular must be gathered in a robust manner – combining it with other police stop data may make this data less clear.

Photo: Sean Dewitt

Role of the BOPC

- Recommendation 4.2 in the Bryan Report reads:
  - The Department of Justice should ensure the public release of raw de-identified data as well as analysis of data from jurisdictions across the province, on an annual basis in a way that protects confidentiality and privacy.
- This responsibility can and does fall under the jurisdiction of the BOPC.
- The BOPC must take an active role in overseeing the policies on how data is collected, analyzed, and released and training around the management of this data.
- The BOPC should take an active role in ensuring collection of data, including race-based data, on use of force.
- This should include policies around the use of this data to discipline officers and ensure public safety is upheld by removing officers found to be committing violence/racial bias.

Why Data Collection on Race Must Be a Priority

- "The results of this examination [of racial disparities in arrest statistics] are disturbing…Furthermore, the data indicate that a great deal of police activity **involves people experiencing mental health issues.** Indigenous, Black and Arab/West Asian people are also significantly over-represented in these types of police interactions…Regardless of the cause, the over-representation of Indigenous, Black and other people of colour in police statistics is a problem that can no longer be ignored. Both government and police officials must make the reduction of racial disparities a priority (Wortley, 2021). "