



South Yorkshire  
**POLICE**

# How SYP applies powers and uses force

January 2026

## Foreword

South Yorkshire Police aims to deliver an excellent police service to support safer communities.

Our effectiveness and efficiency in achieving this depends, in part, on the public's trust and confidence in us.

If we are to increase public trust and confidence, we must be honest, open, and accountable – which involves publishing our data.

Whilst policing data is published nationally and readily available online, it is important that we provide locally known context which helps our communities understand our challenges and what we are doing to overcome them.

This document sets our data on Stop and Search, Use of Force, Use of Taser, Mental Health, Missing Persons incidents and demographics, against data from other sources and academic research to provide this context.

The data sets represent one moment in time – our recording, presentation, and scrutiny of data is constantly evolving. With that in mind, further work is in progress focussing on the relationship between demographics and demand, and how we can make data dynamically available to our communities for ongoing scrutiny.

## Definitions

This report references numerous measures, which are detailed and explained here:

### Population Rate

$$\text{Population Rate (per 1000)} = \left( \frac{\text{The number of times a Black person is recorded}}{\text{Number of Black residents of South Yorkshire}} \right) \times 1000$$

For example, in the case of Stop and Search:

$$\text{Population Rate (per 1000)} = \left( \frac{\text{The number of times a Black person is recorded as searched}}{\text{Number of Black residents of South Yorkshire}} \right) \times 1000$$

### Arrest per suspect (per 1000)

$$\text{Arrest per suspect} = \left( \frac{\text{Number of Arrested Suspects}}{\text{Total Number of Suspects}} \right) \times 1000$$

### Use of Taser per arrest (per 1000)

$$\text{Use of Taser per Arrest} = \left( \frac{\text{Number of use of force forms where Taser has been used}}{\text{Total number of arrests}} \right) \times 1000$$

### Relative Likelihood (RL)

Relative Likelihood (RL) compares metrics of different groups. e.g. the population rates of crime, or stop and search.

$$\text{RL} = \left( \frac{\text{Population Rate for Black Population}}{\text{Population Rate for all other groups}} \right)$$

This measure is based on Race Equality Unit's (formally the Racial Disparity Unit) methodology. <sup>1</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/using-relative-likelihoods-to-compare-ethnic-disparities/using-relative-likelihoods-to-compare-ethnic-disparities>

Numbers are typically based on the number of incidents. For example, a suspect can be suspected of committing multiple crimes, which are considered individual incidents of crimes. Therefore two incidents with the same Black suspect would be counted as two incidents with a Black suspect.

# Stop and Search

## Introduction

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act, the Misuse of Drugs Act, the Firearms Act, and other legislation enables the police to stop and search members of the public if they have reasonable grounds to suspect they are carrying a stolen or prohibited item. A positive outcome is where the search results in a caution, community resolution, summons / postal requisition, cannabis or khat warning, or penalty notice for disorder.

The sensitivities surrounding stop and search are recognised: “Some of the most intrusive and contentious police powers are those that allow the police to use force and to stop and search people. Some view stop and search as a valuable tool in the fight against crime, while others argue that its use has little effect on crime rates and can in fact increase disorder. For some, particularly Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic people, it can reinforce the perception that there is a culture of discrimination within the police.”<sup>1</sup>

Since 2023, South Yorkshire Police has worked with independent groups, made up of community representatives, to review and evaluate stop searches, which are randomly selected but reflect the ethnic make-up of the county’s population. Officers’ Body Worn Video footage (BWV) is viewed, and relevant contextual information is shared.

## Local data

In South Yorkshire, during 2023/2024, 5.5 White people were searched per 1,000 population compared to 15.4 Black people per 1000 population. Approximately one third of all searches resulted in a positive outcome:

Force	Population			All searches		
	#	#	%	Search Rate	Positive Outcomes (PO)	Positive Outcome Rate
WHITE	1,206,059	6,596	63%	5.5	2,212	34%
ASIAN	79,119	780	7%	9.9	258	33%
BLACK	33,985	525	5%	15.4	191	36%
MIXED	30,454	302	3%	9.9	124	41%
OTHER	25,388	211	2%	8.3	82	39%
NOT STATED	-	2,013	19%	-	383	19%
OTHER THAN WHITE	168,946	1,818	17%	10.8	655	36%

Data period: April 2023 to March 2024

## Scrutiny

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act requires an officer to identify themselves; state the purpose of their search; identify the police station they work from etc. Adherence to these prescribed features and locally set criteria is measured internally and externally. Assessments show similarities across

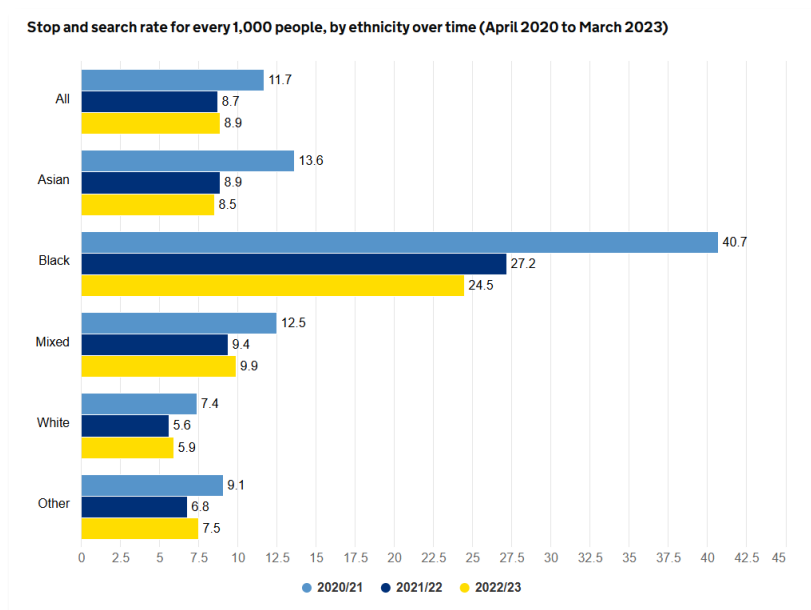
<sup>1</sup> <https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publications/disproportionate-use-of-police-powers-a-spotlight-on-stop-and-search-and-the-use-of-force/>

searches.

The assessment process also requires a more subjective view upon whether the officer communicated clearly, asking were they respectful and did they behave professionally. Again, assessments show similarities across searches with no significant differences between the ethnic groups.

## National data

Across the country, 5.9 White people are searched per 1,000 compared to 24.5 Black People<sup>2</sup>.



## Use of Force

### Introduction

Use of Force refers to physical tactics used by police officers to prevent crime and disorder and to detain those who are causing harm. Force is most commonly used against individuals who are subsequently arrested.

There are, however, instances when the use of force does not precede an arrest e.g. when a person's mental health poses a risk to themselves or the public. When reasonable, force can be used during stop and search encounters, but these don't always result in an arrest. The definition of 'reasonable' is based on the circumstances - for example, if an individual may be in possession of a weapon, at risk of fleeing, or causing harm. The rational for using force must be considered and justified by an officer.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/crime-justice-and-the-law/policing/stop-and-search/latest/>

<https://www.college.police.uk/app/stop-and-search/legal/legal-application>.

Officers are trained to effectively and efficiently apply forceful tactics based on dynamic risk assessment of the circumstances they find themselves in. Use of Force is usually captured on Body Worn Video and recorded. These are subject to both internal and external scrutiny through structured panels.

## Local data

This table lists our uses of force from the most common type to the least common:

Tactic Used	ASIAN			BLACK			OTHER			WHITE		
	Volume	%	RL Ratio	Volume	%	RL Ratio	Volume	%	RL Ratio	Volume	%	RL Ratio
Tactical Communications	377	40%	1.1	612	37%	1.0	156	41%	1.1	5871	38%	1.0
Unarmed Skills	148	16%	0.8	296	18%	1.0	60	16%	0.8	2952	19%	1.1
Handcuffing (compliant)	253	27%	1.3	319	19%	0.9	95	25%	1.2	3170	20%	0.9
Handcuffing (non-compliant)	72	8%	0.8	158	10%	1.0	28	7%	0.8	1476	9%	1.1
Ground restraint	24	3%	0.5	96	6%	1.2	13	3%	0.7	760	5%	1.1
Limb / Body restraints	14	1%	0.5	52	3%	1.1	10	3%	0.9	441	3%	1.1
Other/improvised	14	1%	0.7	46	3%	1.3	9	2%	1.1	345	2%	1.0
Taser	18	2%	1.0	33	2%	1.1	6	2%	0.9	280	2%	0.9
Firearms drawn	11	1%	3.4	12	1%	2.1	0	0%	0.0	48	0%	0.4
PAVA	1	0%	0.2	12	1%	1.6	0	0%	0.0	76	0%	1.1
Dog	7	1%	1.8	9	1%	1.3	2	1%	1.3	59	0%	0.6
Spit Guard	4	0%	1.0	10	1%	1.6	4	1%	2.7	57	0%	0.6
Baton	5	1%	2.2	3	0%	0.7	0	0%	0.0	40	0%	1.0
Shield	0	0%	0.0	1	0%	2.0	0	0%	0.0	5	0%	1.0

**Data notes**

- Use of force = all use of force forms
- RL ratio = % tactic use / % other groups
- Ethnicity = ethnic appearance (officer defined)

Relative Likelihood Ratio > 1.25 (Orange)  
Relative Likelihood Ratio < 0.8 (Blue)

The most common tactic used against all ethnic groups is tactical communications - at around 40%, followed by unarmed skills, and handcuffing (compliant and non-compliant).

Tactical communications is, in fact, a measure of officers' verbal communications and engagement with an individual and/ or to de-escalate a situation.

Unarmed skills include 'escorting individuals, distraction strikes with hands/feet and pressure point and joint locks'.

This summary can be found on gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-use-of-force-statistics-april-2023-to-march-2024/police-use-of-force-statistics-england-and-wales-april-2023-to-march-2024>. This page also provides national data on the use of force.

The least commonly reported tactics are: use of the spit guard, baton, and shield - which each account for less than 1% across the groups.

Within South Yorkshire Police, there is higher confidence in the recording of more forceful tactics and lower confidence in the reporting of less forceful tactics – such as compliant handcuffing.

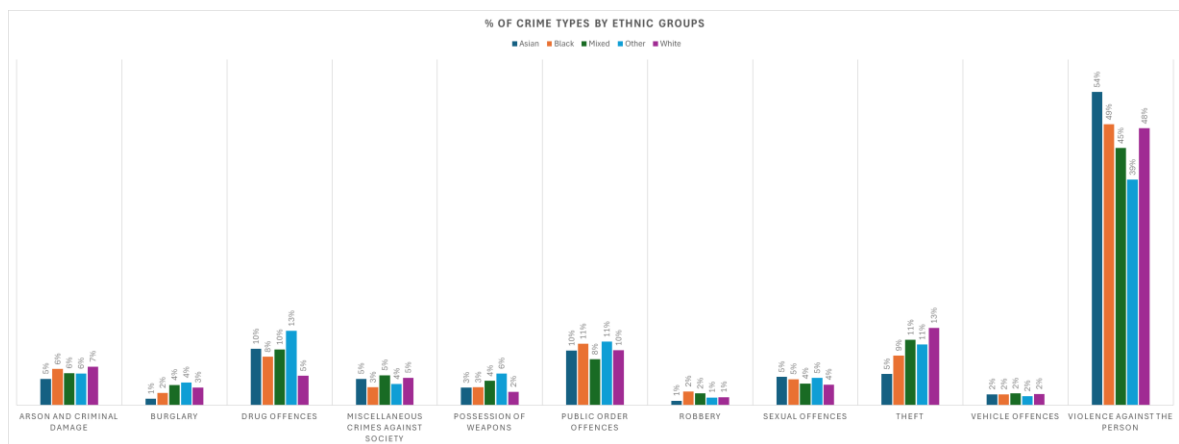
NOTE: Following a recent piece of work to ensure that all uses of force are

properly recorded, there have been significant improvements in recording across all tactics.

## Suspects

Suspects of crime who are identified as such may go on to be charged, or released facing no further action. This section provides greater context on our use of force data.

The below chart shows suspects of crime types by ethnic groups. For example, for Drug Offences, 5% of incidents were associated to a White suspects, compared to 10% of incidents which were associated to Asian suspects.



Ethnicity	Number of Suspects					Per 1000 pop.					Relative Likelihood				
	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other	White	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other	White	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other	White
ARSON AND CRIMINAL DAMAGE	66	83	46	21	2021	1.0	3.1	2.1	1.0	1.9	0.5	1.7	1.2	0.5	1.2
BURGLARY	16	30	29	15	921	0.2	1.1	1.4	0.7	0.9	0.3	1.3	1.6	0.9	1.3
DRUG OFFENCES	141	119	80	49	1531	2.1	4.2	3.7	2.4	1.4	1.4	2.8	2.4	1.5	0.5
MISCELLANEOUS CRIMES	65	44	43	15	1432	1.0	1.6	2.0	0.7	1.3	0.7	1.2	1.5	0.5	1.1
POSSESSION OF WEAPONS	44	44	35	21	703	0.7	1.6	1.6	1.0	0.6	0.9	2.3	2.4	1.5	0.6
PUBLIC ORDER OFFENCES	137	151	66	42	2877	2.0	5.3	3.1	2.0	2.7	0.8	2.0	1.1	0.8	0.9
ROBBERY	11	34	17	5	412	0.2	1.2	0.8	0.2	0.4	0.4	3.2	2.1	0.6	0.8
SEXUAL OFFENCES	71	64	32	18	1101	1.1	2.3	1.5	0.9	1.0	1.0	2.2	1.4	0.8	0.8
THEFT	78	122	94	40	4018	1.2	4.3	4.4	1.9	3.7	0.3	1.2	1.2	0.5	1.5
VEHICLE OFFENCES	27	27	17	6	588	0.4	1.0	0.8	0.3	0.5	0.7	1.8	1.5	0.5	1.0
VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PERSON	785	690	372	151	14458	11.7	24.3	17.3	7.3	13.4	0.9	1.8	1.3	0.5	0.9
Grand Total	1442	1414	831	383	30062	21.5	49.8	38.7	18.5	27.8	0.8	1.8	1.4	0.7	0.9

Data period: Jan to June 2024

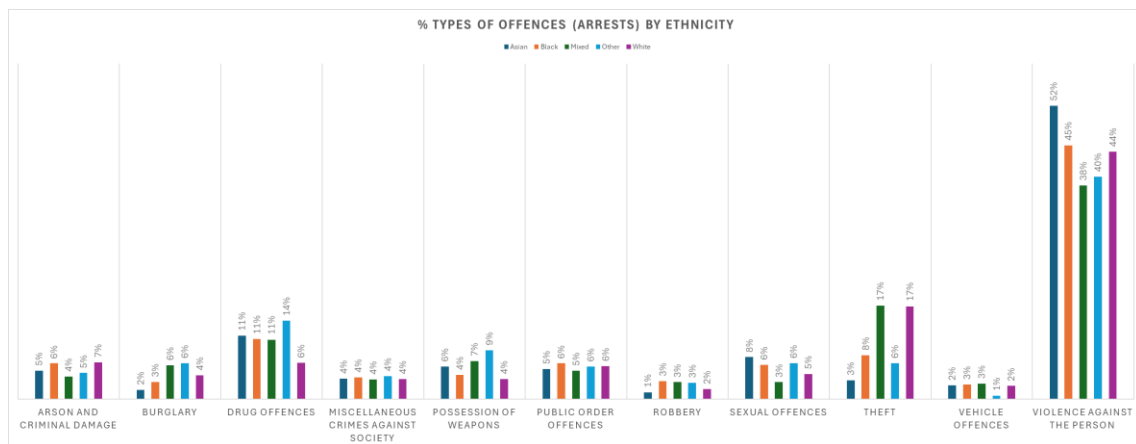
The above table shows the self-defined ethnicity of suspects, where provided, against specified crime types. Although certain crime types are lower in occurrence, overall there is a measured difference in the number of people of Black and Mixed ethnicity being recorded as a suspect of a crime in South Yorkshire.

We recognise that some of these crime types, such as Possession of Weapons, are commonly detected by Stop and Search. When officers search a member of the public and find illegally carried items, this results in the recording of both a Stop and Search and arrest. Thus, police activity influences this data.

## Arrests and Use of Force

On arrest, it is anticipated that, at minimum, handcuffs will be applied to a compliant suspect and, therefore, force will be used. The following data looks at the number of arrests i.e. the number of suspects arrested and taken into custody.

The below chart shows arrests for crime types by Ethnic groups. The crime type can affect the type of force used. For example, if someone is being violent and aggressive towards a victim and/ or members of the public, they pose a risk of harm which officers are expected to use force to mitigate. **From the number of people arrested, it is possible to consider the number of arrests and the use of force used.**



Suspects per 1000 population	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Ethnic Group</th> <th>ASIAN</th> <th>BLACK</th> <th>MIXED</th> <th>OTHER</th> <th>WHITE</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Suspects per 1000 Pop</td> <td>21.5</td> <td>49.8</td> <td>38.6</td> <td>18.4</td> <td>27.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Relative Likelihood</td> <td>0.8</td> <td>1.8</td> <td>1.4</td> <td>0.7</td> <td>0.9</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Ethnic Group	ASIAN	BLACK	MIXED	OTHER	WHITE	Suspects per 1000 Pop	21.5	49.8	38.6	18.4	27.7	Relative Likelihood	0.8	1.8	1.4	0.7	0.9
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	When comparing use of force per arrest for the ethnic groups, these are practically proportional. Please note, for smaller usage of force, numbers are subject to variation. On occasion, it is possible to have multiple officers involved in the use of force against one individual due to the nature of the situation.
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Once suspects are identified, there is no significant difference between the arrest rate for the ethnic groups. During the arrest of suspects, the use of force overall is proportionate across ethnic groups.

### **National data**

We have been unable to source any national data which can be directly compared to our local data set.

## **Use of Force - Taser**

### **Introduction**

'Taser' is a brand of Conducted Energy Devices (CEDs) which has been licensed for use by police forces in England and Wales since 2003. The College of Police describes CEDs as follows:

“A CED is a less lethal weapon system designed to temporarily incapacitate a subject through use of an electrical current that temporarily interferes with the body's neuromuscular system and produces a sensation of intense pain. It is one of a number of tactical options available when dealing with an incident with the potential for conflict. CEDs will not be routinely used to police public order or public safety events but may be used as an option to respond to circumstances within the operation. The use of CED ranges from the physical presence of a drawn device through to the application of electrical discharge to a subject. Even before a CED is drawn, the mere visibility of an overtly carried holstered device may serve a deterrent value.”

The “Use of Taser” refers to a broad range of tactics involving a CED:

Drawn: Taser is drawn by an officer

Aimed: Taser is drawn by an officer and aimed at a subject

Arced: Taser is drawn by an officer, aimed at a subject, and activated but not fired – this demonstrates its' functionality, with visible electricity.

Red Dot: Taser is drawn by an officer, aimed at a subject, and a 'red dot' (laser) is projected on to the subject to show they are being aimed at

Firing: The Taser is drawn by an officer and fired at the subject (sometimes referred to as 'discharged')

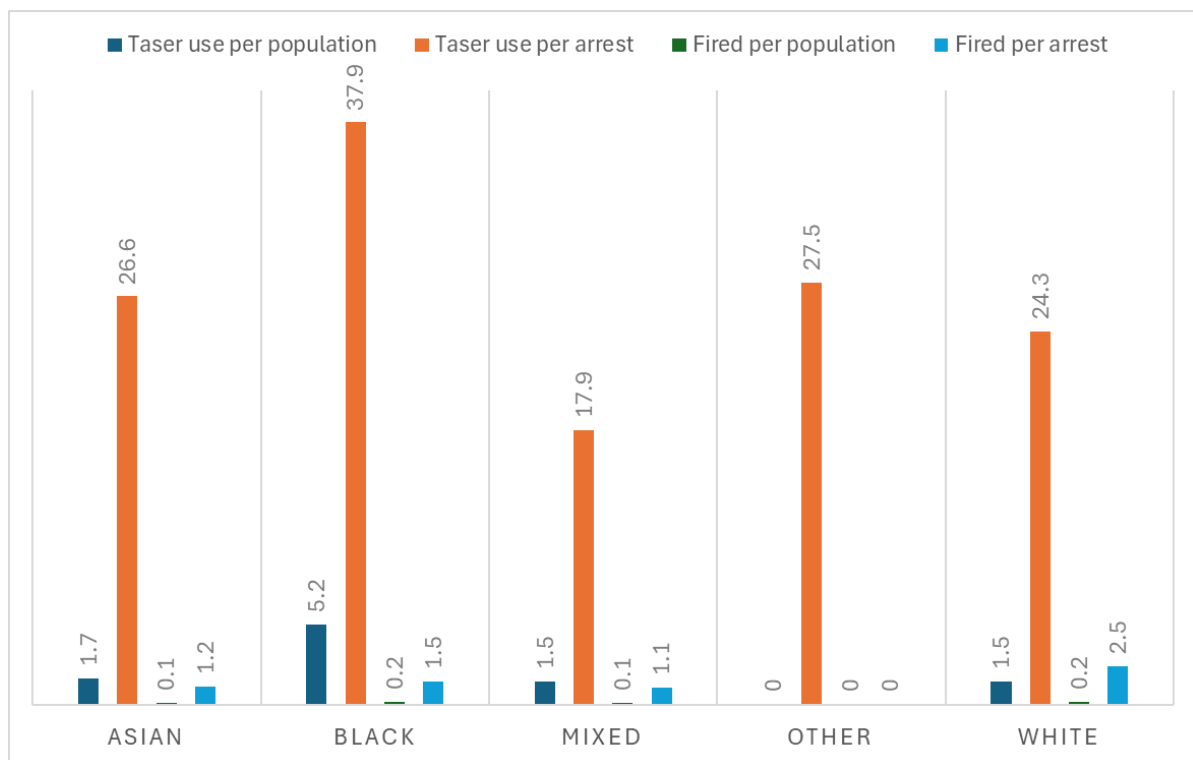
It is, therefore, possible for multiple records against one instance e.g drawn, aimed, and red-dot would be recorded as three uses.

This analysis focuses on the number of times a Taser was used in any capacity – from drawn to fired. For example, if an officer simply drew their Taser, this is classed as 1 x ‘Use of Taser’. If an officer first drew their taser and then aimed it, this is also classed as 1 x ‘Use of Taser’, as the officer in question resorted to using their taser in that situation.

Before an officer discharges a Taser, they are required to firstly declare that they are carrying a Taser and secondly declare that they plan to discharge it before doing so.

## Local data

The below table, similar to those presented under Suspects and Use of Force, breaks down the use of taser in terms of population and arrests. This data period is April 2021 and June 2024. All rates are per 1000.



The use of taser per 1000 population, as well as per arrest, appears to be the highest for Black ethnic groups. Using the population rates, the use of taser against Black ethnic groups is 3.4x higher than for all other groups.

Tasers are only used by officers during incidents to mitigate an identified risk or to detain a subject.

The firing of a taser during an arrest is highest for White ethnic groups. For the use of a taser in any capacity, only 4%, 4%, 6%, 0%, and 10% of usages against Asian, Black, Mixed, Other and White ethnic groups, respectively, resulted in the firing of the taser. Based on comparisons of these

percentages, White people are 2.7x more likely than all other groups to have a taser fired at them.

It should be noted that separate research by our dedicated analyst shows the decision to use a taser is based on the circumstances and the cooperation of individuals.

### **National data**

Home Office statistics for 2021/22 showed that nationally, Black people were approximately five times more likely than White people to have Taser used against them (compared to 3.4 times locally) when looking at the population rates. The extent and nature of ethnic disproportionality in police use of Taser is measured and understood primarily via these Home Office statistics. There has also been an extensive amount of academic research in the use of taser, published online by Keele University on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023 and can be found The findings can be read [here](#).