

Checkpoint 3 Analysis

The Freedom Donkeys

Q1: Bar Chart Race (Number of officer/civilian allegation reports in each Category per Year)?

This question helped us gain insight into whether attempts at police reform have been successful over the past few years and how different problems may have sprung up over time. From both charts, we can see right away that “Operations/Personnel Violations” is the top category for most years, and usually by a wide margin. We can see the charts also show that “Use of Force” has remained a problem in police conduct throughout the past two decades. The prevalence of these two issues fits with what we have come to expect from the PD; use of force is always a hot debate topic and operations violations can encapsulate much smaller issues like owing money to the city (probably the reason for its high ranking throughout the years).

Additionally, drug/alcohol abuse has continued to be a major source of police discipline throughout the past two decades (one of the Top 5 contributors). However, on the police side, we see more complaints that have to do with internal issues such as “Conduct Unbecoming” and “Lockup Issues”. On the other hand, as expected, top civilian complaint categories include items like “False Arrest” and “Illegal Search”. There is also less of a gap between operations violations and the other categories up until the year 2015. Part of this could be due to the fact that some complaints that have been filed in recent years have not yet come to fruition or been made public.

From these charts, it is not clear if police reform tactics have been very effective. Partially because of the lack of data in recent years, but we can see how the complaints have changed and we can see clear trends in what complaints have been more prevalent over the past twenty years. This could inspire future change and pull a focus towards trying to lower these complaints. It might also be interesting to re-run the chart with newer data in 5 or 10 years to observe if the addition of any information will yield a more significant conclusion, especially with police departments undergoing heavy public scrutiny. Additionally, it would be helpful to look at the differences between the “Operations/Personnel Violations” complaints for civilians and officers and observe if they focus on different things or if civilian complaints in this category are more serious than the department complaints.

Q2: Zoomable Circle Packing? (Number of officers disciplined together (within the same complaint report via data_allegations.crid?))

One trend we noticed across all the decades was that operation personnel violations were the most common reason for disciplinary action. In the 1990-2000 decade there was a violation resulting in 108 officers being disciplined, in 2000-2010 there were 64 officers disciplined for “indebtedness to the city”, and in the 2011-2018 decade there was a violation that resulted in 26 officers being disciplined. It seems that whenever a large number of officers are disciplined together, it is the result of operations violations, not more severe offenses such as use of force or drug/alcohol abuse. These types of disciplines are not trying to be solved by police reform, so it makes sense that they continue to be apparent throughout the past few decades.

Another trend we are noticing is that within complaint reports with 2 parties, a large portion of the reports have one officer with a larger number of disciplines paired with another officer with relatively few disciplines. Some examples of this in the visualization are CRIDs 1050702, 1082951, 1044664 and

1073789 (all in 2011-2018). These types of situations are especially concerning because given the information we learned from Prof. Pappachristos, we know that officers associated with others that have a high number of complaint reports are more likely to end up in complaint reports in the future. One future development may be to watch out for these situations in the future, where an officer with a low number of disciplines is paired with a higher disciplined officer. We should watch out for trends in the number of these bubbles and ensure that as few of them as possible happen.

One change we can make to get better data from this visualization is to divide the discipline count by the allegation count to get the portion of sustained allegations for a given officer. This might help us understand whether officers who have a large number of disciplines have simply been around for a very long time or are actually being disciplined more often than their colleagues.