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# First Nations People Bear the Brunt of NSW Police Use of Force

Police in New South Wales are using force against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at a vastly disproportionate rate compared to non-Indigenous people.

New data obtained by Redfern Legal Centre (RLC) via state freedom of information laws revealed that in the past four years NSW police used force in 28,826 events (from 2019-18 to 2021-22).

A disproportionate number of use of force events – about 45% (13,161 events) – were against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: 15 times the NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, which is 3.4% (Australian Bureau of Statistics - 2022).

## Key findings:

- The disproportionate use of force against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been slowly and steadily increasing over the four-year period, from 44 – 47%.
- Meanwhile, the use of force overall declined over a three-year period from 2018-19, falling 3% from 2018-19 to 2019-20 and a further 12% from 2019-20 to 2020-21. There was an increase of 3% from 2020-21 to 2021-22.
- Arm restraint and wrist locks were the most common use of force recorded, followed by ground wrestle and takedowns.

## Comments by Samantha Lee, senior solicitor at Redfern Legal Centre:

“The immense disproportionate use of force against First Nations people is appalling. In 2021-22 almost half of NSW police use of force events involved a First Nations person.”

“The use of force is a systemic problem. It requires a systemic solution. The NSW Police Commissioner must address the use of force against First Nations people at all levels of the NSW Police Force, from recruitment to corporate reporting.”



“These figures, and other statistics about the policing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, should be collected at a national level and used to inform Closing the Gap reporting which aims to overcome the entrenched inequality faced by too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people so that their life outcomes are equal to all Australians.

“The disproportionate impact of policing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people goes to the heart of the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system.”

### NSW Police statistics: Use of force

	Event reported financial year			
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Events where Police used force	7,777	7,526	6,656	6,867
Percent change	-	-3%	-12%	+3%

Identifying as ATSI	Event reported financial year			
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
No	4,380	4,156	3,616	3,636
Yes	3,439	3,397	3,074	3,251
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,819</b>	<b>7,553</b>	<b>6,690</b>	<b>6,887</b>
Percent identifying as ATSI	44%	45%	46%	47%

### Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC) – Review of NSW Police Force Use of Force Reporting

A recent LECC report into the use of force by NSW Police found: “Overall the dataset suggests there is a widespread under reporting of the use of force on COPS.” (Page 7)

The report also found inconsistencies in the recording of Taser use and firearms. (Page 25).

Click to access the LECC’s [Use of Force Report](#).

**RLC Police Accountability Solicitor Samantha Lee is available for interview.**

**For media enquiries call 0418 491 459.**