

Performance Audit of SDPD Overtime

Why OCA Did This Study

The City of San Diego (City) spent more than \$50 million on police overtime last year and has spent more than was budgeted on overtime for 10 of the last 11 fiscal years. The San Diego Police Department (SDPD) faces tension between the cost of overtime and the struggle to hire and retain more officers. Limiting officers' overtime hours might reduce costs, but could mean fewer officers are available to address public safety needs.

Therefore, we conducted a performance audit with four objectives:

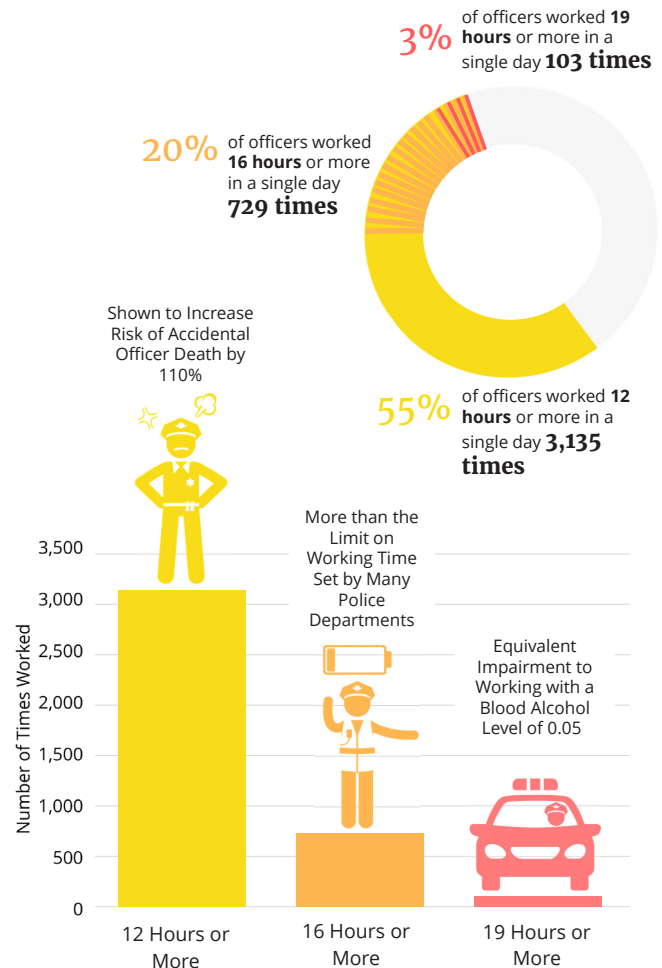
1. Determine if SDPD's overtime policies are in line with best practices.
2. Determine if SDPD's overtime policies are followed.
3. Determine if SDPD's overtime costs are in line with comparable police agencies.
4. Determine what factors contribute most to SDPD overtime costs and if there are opportunities to reduce costs.

What OCA Found

Finding 1: To ensure officers are available to respond to the public, SDPD does not limit overtime, risking fatigued officers.

- Officer fatigue can lead to accidents, injuries, and reduced cognitive performance and communication abilities. **Many police departments limit total hours worked** per day or per week to reduce officer fatigue.
- In contrast, **SDPD does not limit excessive overtime**. SDPD encourages officers to take an 8-hour break between shifts, but it is **an informal policy that is not enforced**.
- Despite SDPD's lack of overtime limits, most SDPD officers do not work excessive overtime. However, 50 officers each worked more than 1,000 hours of overtime last fiscal year. In addition, **a few officers worked more than 2,000 hours of overtime, averaging nearly 90 hours of total work per week, every week of the year** in FY2023.
- We also found **960 officers worked 12 or more hours in a single day at least once** in April 2023.

Exhibit 4: In April 2023, a Significant Portion of SDPD Officers Worked More Hours in a Single Day Than Best Practices Recommend



Source: OCA generated based on payroll data from SAP, research in the National Institute of Justice Journal and FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, and policies from comparable cities.

- Although rare, we found examples of officers working **16-hour or longer days with fewer than 8 hours off between shifts** for multiple days in a row.
- We found **daily or weekly limits on overtime would likely reduce total overtime hours by less than 3 percent in a year**. This would reduce the risks of officer fatigue while having relatively minimal operational impacts.
- **SDPD does not prioritize overtime shifts based on need**, creating the risk that more critical assignments go unfilled while officers sign up for less critical shifts.

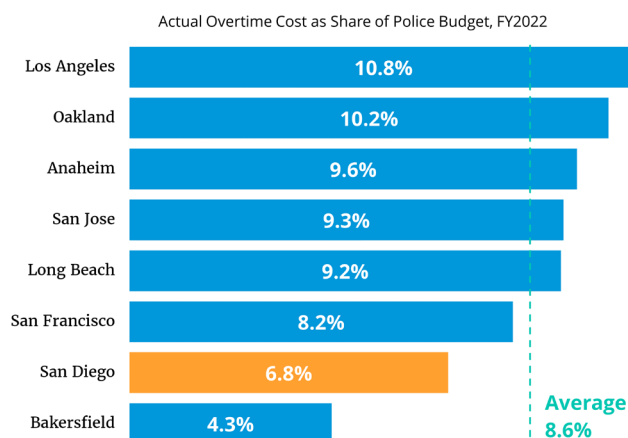
Finding 2: While SDPD overtime spending is in line with other police departments, more civilian positions could help reduce overtime costs and improve response times.

- SDPD overtime costs are primarily driven by staffing needs. As SDPD struggles to hire and retain officers, **it uses overtime meet the City's public safety needs.**
- SDPD response times have largely increased since FY2019, **even with increased overtime, meaning overtime alone is unlikely to fully address SDPD's needs.**
- Hiring more civilian employees who do administrative work and respond to lower-risk calls may reduce overtime, improve response times, and decrease department expenditures.
- SDPD can strengthen its analysis on how many civilian positions would be necessary to maximize resources.** Our analysis shows that one type of civilian position could respond to about 13 percent of SDPD's calls.
- SDPD overtime spending is regularly overbudget, but SDPD and the Department of Finance say they are working to budget more accurately. **SDPD overtime costs were below average for large cities in California in FY2022.**

Finding 3: Overall, SDPD overtime tracking and authorization is accurate.

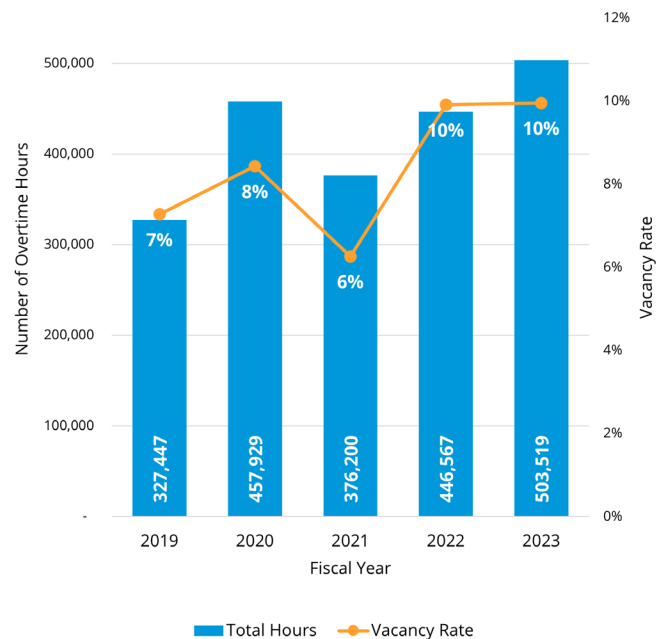
- In a random sample of overtime shifts from May 2023, we found that **100 percent of sampled shifts had the required overtime authorization form submitted and the forms contained accurate, required information.**

Exhibit 15: SDPD Overtime Spending Was Below the Average for Large Cities in California in FY2022



Source: OCA generated based on publicly accessible city budgets and budget proposals.

Exhibit 11: The Officer Vacancy Rate at SDPD Has Generally Increased, While the Overtime Increased by More Than 50 Percent



Source: OCA generated based on payroll, personnel, and budget data from SAP.

What OCA Recommends

We made 4 recommendations to SDPD. Key recommendations include:

- SDPD should require that officers **take an 8-hour break between shifts.**
- SDPD should **prioritize its overtime allocation**, potentially through a central overtime function, then determine if it should **set a limit on the maximum number of hours officers can work in a day or a rolling week** using available research on officer fatigue.
- Once SDPD has set a work hours limit, it should enable notifications to ensure the total number of hours officers work in a day or rolling week **do not exceed any limits** set by SDPD policy.
- SDPD should analyze how many Police Investigative Service Officers or similar civilian positions would be necessary to **maximize resources.**

SDPD agreed to all 4 recommendations.

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