



LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE REPORT

2021

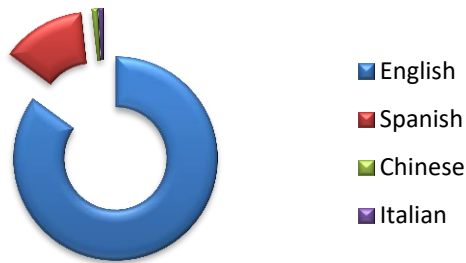
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30 Yaphank Avenue, Yaphank, New York 11980
Prepared by the Office of the Police Commissioner

A Message from the Language Access Coordinator

Thank you for taking an interest in the Suffolk County Police Department's Language Access Program. As we begin to put the pandemic behind us I am happy to report that our commitment to language access has remained strong throughout, and we have achieved new heights in providing quality language assistance to the residents of Suffolk County.

The position of Language Access Coordinator (LAC) was instituted in 2014 as part of sweeping changes made within the Department to meet the goals set out in our Agreement with the United States Department of Justice.¹ As the LAC, I help develop language access policy and engage in strategic planning regarding the provision of language access services to persons with limited English proficiency (LEP). I am also the custodian of the Department's Language Access Plan and oversee all aspects of its maintenance and implementation.

Languages Spoken at Home



average.² Mandarin, Cantonese, and Italian are the next most prevalent in Suffolk County, but each represent less than 1% of the total population. These figures have remained fairly constant for several years, and we are hopeful that the recent census will bring fresh insights in the near future.

As you will see in the next few pages, we have made significant progress over the last 6 years in providing competent and consistent language assistance, and a peek at the first quarter statistics for 2022 indicate we are on track to do even better this year.

Lieutenant Brian Loughlin
Commanding Officer
Community Relations Bureau

¹ https://suffolkpd.org/portals/18/scpd_pdfs/infoandpolicies/DOJAgreement.pdf

² DataUSA. (2018). Suffolk County, NY-Diversity-Non-English Speakers. Retrieved from <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/suffolk-county-ny>.

The Language Access Plan

The Department first issued a Language Access Plan (LAP) in 2013 at the direction of Suffolk County Executive Order #10-2012. That plan was soon expanded and then adopted into the Department's Rules and Procedures.³ In its present form the LAP:

- Informs the public of all language assistance services available to them
- Explains how LEP populations are identified and served
- Details the responsibilities of each level of command in providing language assistance services
- Gives precise instruction to line officers regarding when and how to provide language assistance services
- Establishes robust audit and compliance protocols
- Outlines language training curricula and the process of language skills certification

The LAP is designed to adapt to the changing needs and demographics of the County. It was built to allow flexibility in the deployment of language assistance services within well-defined parameters. It also serves as a reference document for all issues related to language access for both the Department and the public.⁴

The LAP is available on the Department's website in seven languages.⁵ It is reviewed and updated every Fall and re-issued the following Spring. No new additions were made during 2021.

Translation of Vital Documents

Since the inception of the LAP, the Department has identified certain documents within its system of records as "vital". These are documents which convey information of legal significance, without which core police services cannot be effectively rendered.

Vital Documents include forms such as "Family Offense Assistance & Court Procedures" (PDCS-7109p); "How to obtain a Police Report" (PDCS-8100i); and "Crime Victim Information Report" (PDCS-8105b). Also designated 'vital' are many policies, procedures and informational materials such as "Arrest of Non-U.S. Citizens and

³ Suffolk County Police Department Policy #333.

⁴ The U.S. DOJ has characterized the LAP as a "strong", "comprehensive" and "solid" policy https://suffolkpd.org/portals/18/scpd_pdfs/infoandpolicies/DOJCompliance1_19_2017.pdf

⁵ https://suffolkpd.org/Portals/18/scpd_pdfs/formsandreports/LAP.pdf

Persons with Dual Citizenship Procedure” (Policy 414); “Hate Crimes” (Policy 319); Bias Free Policing (Policy 401); and the “Suffolk County Traffic and Parking Violations Bureau” informational pamphlet. In addition to these documents, other materials are also translated and provided to LEP individuals and communities at events and upon request.

Twelve forms are currently available in multiple languages and over 40 documents, policies and guides are available in Spanish.⁶

Community Awareness

The Department conducts numerous education and awareness programs about language assistance services throughout the County every year. Most programs are delivered locally at venues such as churches, schools, libraries, police facilities, and advocacy centers. These programs inform members of the LEP community where and how they can engage the police in whatever language they are most comfortable using. Bilingual Department members and telephonic interpretation services are available at all of these events. During 2021 some of these meetings were held entirely in Spanish at certain venues.

In addition to live presentations, the Department disseminates print media throughout the County describing its language access resources. For example, members of the Community Relations Bureau distribute a five point “Did You Know” postcard which highlights an individual’s right to language services, and notifies them that a request for language services will not result in any inquiries about their immigration status.

The Department has also increased its outreach via social media and has grown the followership of its Spanish language Facebook page to over 5000.⁷ The LAC and CRB also meet regularly with advocates and community groups to solicit a broad range of information, including the availability and quality of language assistance.

Language Proficiency Certification

Personnel assigned to CRB facilitate the certification of all Department Authorized Interpreters (DAI), and Bilingual Officers through Language Line Solutions. To date, the

⁶ <https://suffolkpd.org/Forms-and-Reports>

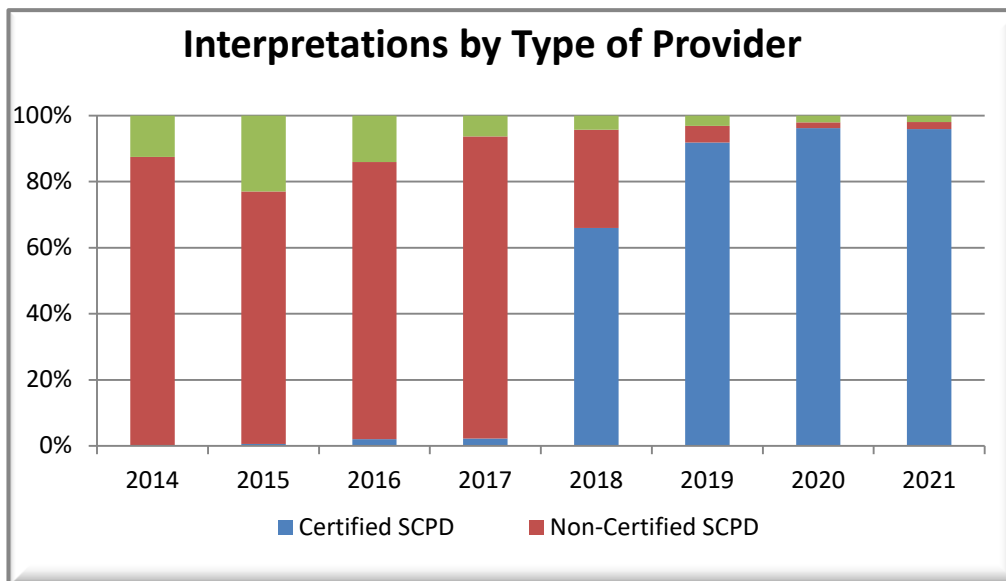
⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/SuffolkPDEspanol/>

Department has certified forty-five (45) DAIs⁸, and one hundred and seventy-one (171) sworn Bilingual Members.⁹

In addition to In-Service certifications, the Department has also hired a total of one hundred and six (106) police officers from the Spanish-Speaking civil service list since 2013, comprising just over 10% of all new hires.

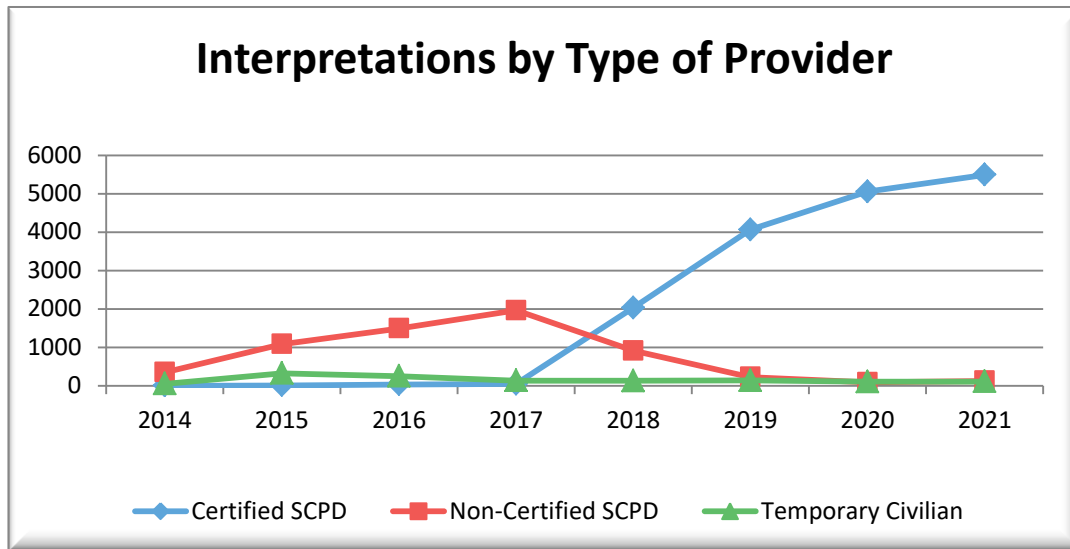
Language Assistance Tracking Database

The Language Assistance Tracking Database (LATD) is the repository for all language assistance records. It began as a storage database in 2014, but has been fully integrated into the Online Reporting System/Incident Reporting System for several years. The Precinct-level oversight program, which allows Precinct commanders to view compliance down to the granular level, relies upon data stored in the LATD. Information in the database also provides valuable perspective on the type and usage of language services throughout the Department. For example, the visualizations below are built on a pull from the database, and display the sea-change which has occurred in the utilization of Department certified personnel to provide language assistance.



⁸ All in Spanish

⁹ 157 Spanish, 4 Polish, 1 Portuguese, 1 Italian, 2 Mandarin, 2 Turkish, 1 Hindi, 1 Russian, one French and 1 Bosnian



How Language Assistance is Provided

When 911 call-takers experience a language barrier, they immediately determine what language the caller is most comfortable using. Since the overwhelming number of LEP individuals in Suffolk County speak Spanish, the Department employs 9 Spanish-speaking Emergency Complaint Operators (ECO) in its call center. When these interpreters are off, or handling other calls, English-speaking ECOs utilize Language Line to communicate with Spanish-speaking callers.

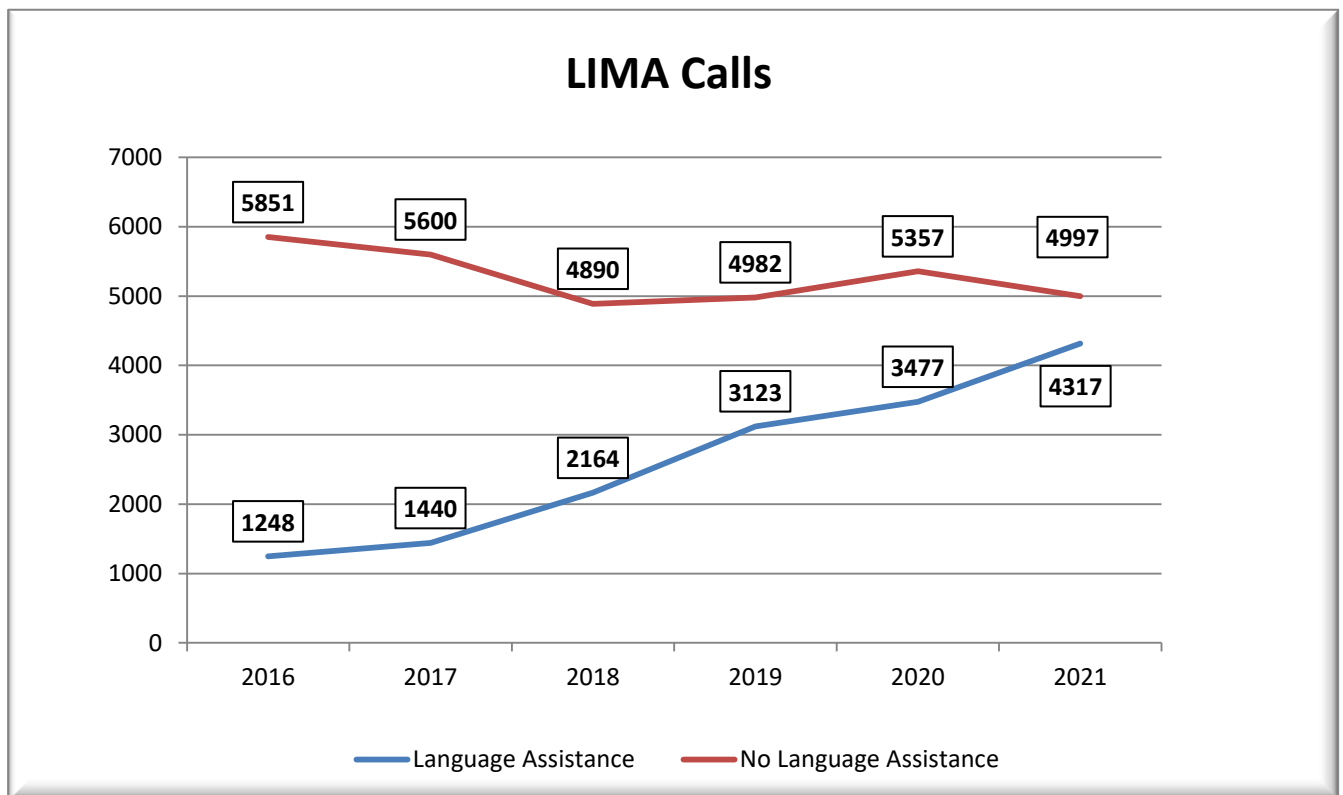
If language assistance is required to communicate with the caller, the ECO designates the incident with an “L”. In the phonetic alphabet “L” is sounded out as “LIMA”, hence these calls for service are referred to as “LIMA calls”. All dispatched calls are broadcast over the police radio system and simultaneously sent to the assigned officer’s mobile computer. Whenever an officer receives a LIMA call, that officer, along with every other officer and supervisor listening to the same radio channel, becomes aware that the call might require language assistance. When the responding officer arrives on scene he or she determines exactly what assistance is required.

Frequently, calls which are designated LIMA by the 911 ECO, do not in fact require any language assistance when the officer arrives on scene. This occurs for a variety of reasons. Persons calling 911 are often in distress, and even those who have command of the English language may default to their native tongue. ECOs also tend to err on the side of caution and designate calls as “LIMA” whenever they encounter any hesitancy in a caller’s English. At the scene, the party requiring police service is sometimes not the LEP person who called 911. Also, it is not uncommon for 911 callers to leave the scene

altogether before an officer arrives. Finally, requests for medical assistance (“Aided Cases”) which are dispatched as LIMA calls do not require language assistance in the field unless the responding officer must provide police services.¹⁰

It is also important to note that not every phone call placed to 911 results in a dispatched call for service. Certain incidents, such as traffic accidents, structure fires, loud and/or large disputes and fireworks can generate many duplicate calls from passersby. These duplicate calls are all combined (“voided”) into a single incident number which is then dispatched to officers in the field. None of the duplicate calls that are designated “LIMA” before they are voided receive any language assistance, which can skew the data set.

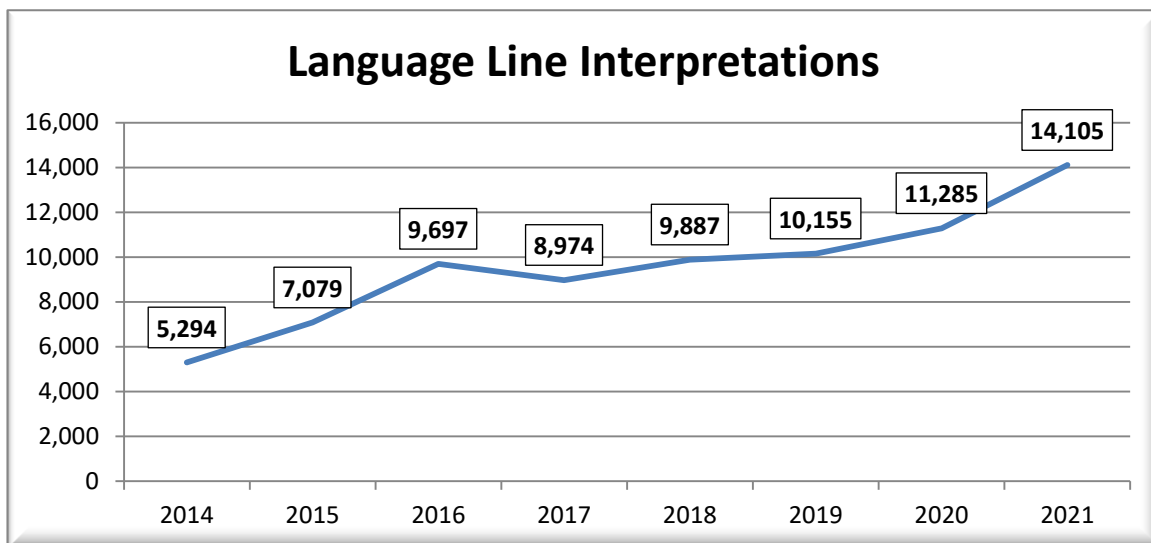
In 2021 approximately 9314 LIMA calls were dispatched by the 911 call center. Of those calls, approximately 4317 actually required some form of language assistance.



Officers delivering those language assistance services always seek in-person interpreters first as a matter of policy. When an interpreter is not available, officers then utilize the Language Line telephonic service.

¹⁰ Police units are dispatched with Fire and Rescue units simultaneously on aided calls to ensure rapid response.

Use of Language Line increased along with overall interpretations in 2021 with a record number of calls made.¹¹



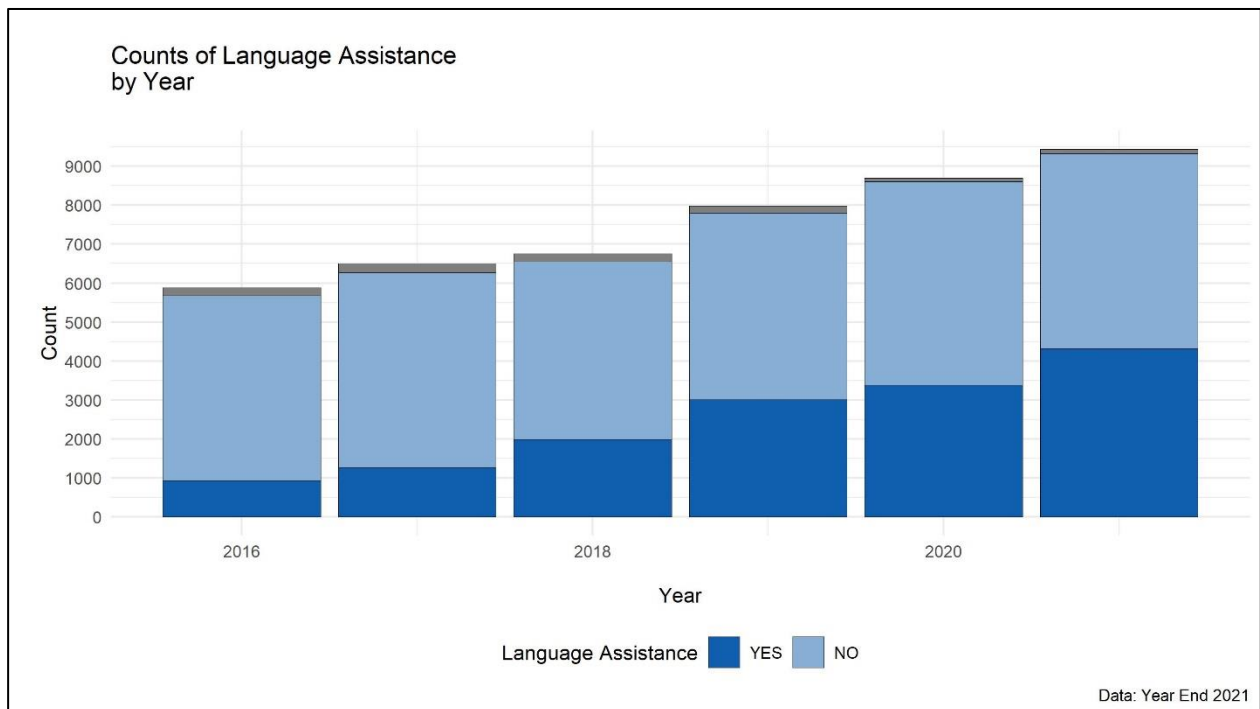
Monitoring the Delivery of Services

After the interpretation protocols were firmly set in place and the certification of personnel was underway, the Department began to look at compliance statistics. In 2018 the Commissioner's Office, with assistance from the Language Access Coordinator, authored the first "LIMA Reports" using data culled from the LATD. These reports were sent to the command staff at each Precinct and informed supervisors of their unit's overall compliance compared to other units and the Department as a whole. During 2018, the reports were expanded to include information identifying individual officers and specific reasons for which language services were not rendered. Finally, a methodology developed in one Precinct was deployed Department-wide in 2019, and then incorporated into official policy in the 2019 and 2020 updates to the LAP.¹²

Oversight protocols now require the Precinct commanding officer (CO), or designee, to report to the Chief of Patrol and explain the measures taken to address any deficiencies identified in the LIMA Reports. These efforts have had a demonstrable effect on the provision and reporting of language assistance.

¹¹ Language Line statistics include the use of Language Line by ECOs in the E911 center.

¹² :Lexipol, "Limited English Proficiency Services", 333.

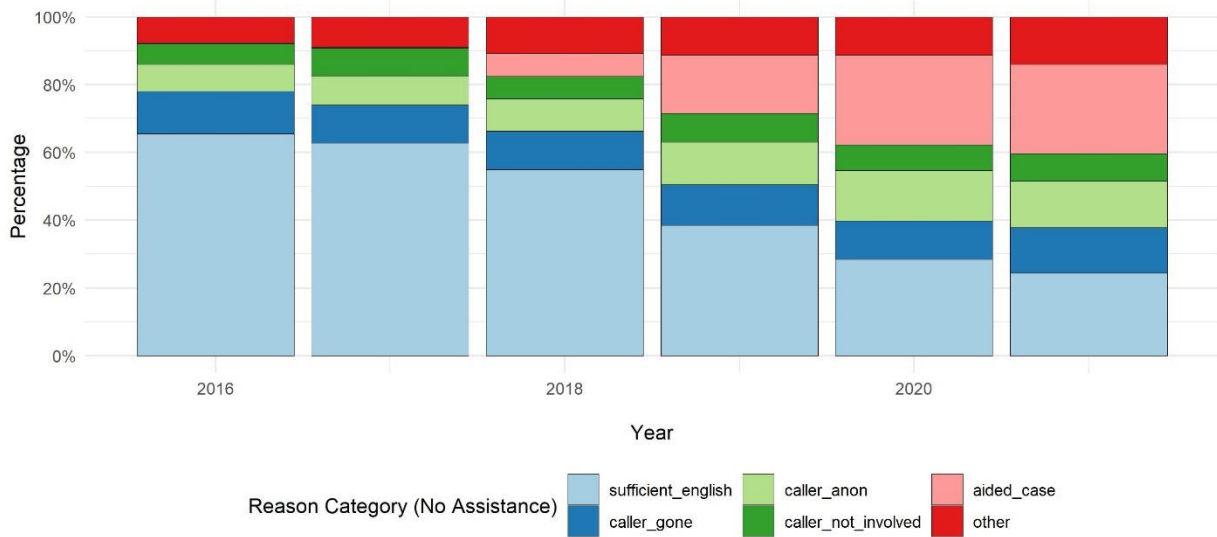


In 2021 the oversight process was further enhanced with the creation of data dashboards. Already in use for tracking and monitoring Hate Crimes, the language dashboard platform will allow Precinct commanders to view language statistics in near real-time, and will eliminate the need for LIMA Reports. The options available on the dashboard will also allow supervisors to construct their own unique visualizations and compare information beyond the limits of the LIMA Reports. For example, a CO may wish to compare all officers assigned to a certain zone over a given period of time, or instead, compare officers in a particular sector to those in an entire zone. Such functionality will provide much greater insight than the limited scope of the static reports.

Audits

In 2021, as in past years, the analysis of LIMA calls was focused on the reason officers determined that language assistance was not necessary after the call had been designated in the 911 center. Particular interest has always been paid to those categorized as “Complainant Spoke Sufficient English”, since that justification could indicate a faulty assessment of a subject’s English proficiency. As more members received training, and oversight measures increased, the overall use of this reason decreased dramatically. As the visualization below illustrates, use of this justification has dropped from over 60% in 2018 to just over 20% in 2021.

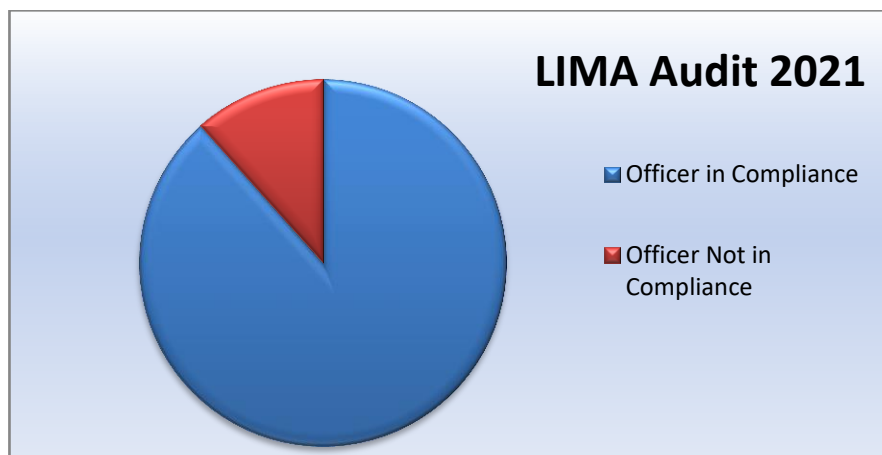
Proportions of 'Reason No' Category by Year



Data: Year End 2021

As encouraging as this compliance trend is, the Department still conducts random audits of LIMA calls to determine the validity of “no” responses. The audits are performed by an investigator assigned to the Internal Affairs Bureau who is a certified DAI in Spanish. The investigator contacts complainants directly and interviews them about the service they received and the responding officer’s conduct. The investigator then reviews the officer’s documentation of the LIMA call, and determines whether or not the officer’s actions were in compliance with policy and protocol.

The audit process is labor-intensive and multiple calls are routinely necessary to reach a single complainant who is willing to participate. In total, 69 LIMA call complainants were reached in 2021. Officers on 60 of those calls were found in compliance with language assistance protocols and policy. Of the 9 who were not, 4 were referred to Internal Affairs for investigation and 5 were counseled by their commanding officer.



2022 Language Assistance Goals

Our goal for the current year is to maintain the upward trend in compliance with language assistance throughout the Department. The significant improvement experienced over the past three years confirms that the Department's training and oversight initiatives are working. We will continue these efforts, leveraging new technologies to increase efficiency as well. In 2022 we will complete the transition from Lima Reports to Tableau© data dashboards, allowing first line supervisors to monitor language assistance in near real time. This is a capability not even envisioned when the LA Program began.

In addition to these planned advances in administration, operationally the LA Program will also experience an infusion of many new Spanish-speaking officers due to increased hiring through 2022.

