

JURISDICTION

SAN FRANCISCO POLICE DEPARTMENT (SFPD)



Police can search half a million to one million mug shots.



It's unclear if officers are required to have reasonable suspicion to run a search.



SFPD required vendor companies to submit their algorithms to accuracy testing and meet accuracy thresholds.



The San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) purchased an Automatic Biometric Identification System (ABIS) in 2010. ABIS is a multi-biometric system that includes face recognition capabilities. SFPD can search between half a million to one million mug shots (005501, 005543). It is unclear if reasonable suspicion is required for SFPD to run a search, or if SFPD can search for witnesses and bystanders. SFPD has no publicly available policy governing when it is appropriate for police to use face recognition, and provided no such policy in response to our request. It is possible that it does not exist.

During the contracting process for its multi-biometric system, SFPD included requirements that vendor companies submit their face recognition algorithms to accuracy testing and that their algorithms meet specific accuracy thresholds. The Request for Proposal (RFP) states that on-site tests will be conducted and that “[a]fter system acceptance, accuracy tests will continue to run on a regular basis to reconfirm system performance and detect any degradation” (005557).

African Americans are likely overrepresented in the system; they are arrested at a rate 185% higher than their share of the city population.

The SFPD system uses an algorithm provided by 3M Cogent (005591).

Sources and Notes: San Francisco Police Department, State of California Department of Justice Office of the Attorney General, U.S. Census (*Last updated: September 2016*). Scorecard methodology can be found in the appendix. Numerical citations, e.g. (123456) refer to official records available online at www.perpetuallineup.org.