What is Use of Force?

- Use of force involves physical actions by an officer towards a suspect
  - Typical examples includes grabbing and placing a a suspect's hands behind their back to put them in handcuffs, while the suspect is actively attempting to prevent you from doing so, or and grabbing a suspect's shirt to stop them from fleeing.
  - Legal Use of Force is limited to the amount necessary to stop an action or to affect an arrest
  - Defined in Article 35 of the New York State Penal Law
  - Applies to police and citizens alike

- Bethlehem police do not use chokeholds
  - Regulated under Article 121 of the New York State Penal Law
  - Citizens may not legally use chokeholds either

What is our Use of Force Policy?

- Bethlehem's Use of Force Policy:
  - Is consistent with NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services model policies
  - Is consistent with State law
  - Meets all State accreditation standards
  - Is available on the Town website

- Key elements of the Use of Force Policy include:
  - Non-physical actions are always emphasized – use of force is the last option, never the first
  - Officers must start at lowest possible level, and move to stronger actions only as required
  - Brandishing a firearm or taser are now considered uses of force

- All use of force incidents are documented and reviewed
  - Anytime a Use of Force incident occurs, a Bethlehem Police Use of Force Form is completed and forward to the officer's immediate supervisor for review. The report is then reviewed by a Division Commander, and finally by the Chief of Police.

How often do Bethlehem police use force?

Use of Force incidents are extremely rare

Some numbers (annual averages 2015-2019)

22,000 average # of incidents handled each year. These range from property checks to murders, and just about everything imaginable in between.

16,000 average # of these incidents that likely involve interactions with community members (about 6,000 don't, like property checks and clearing traffic hazards).
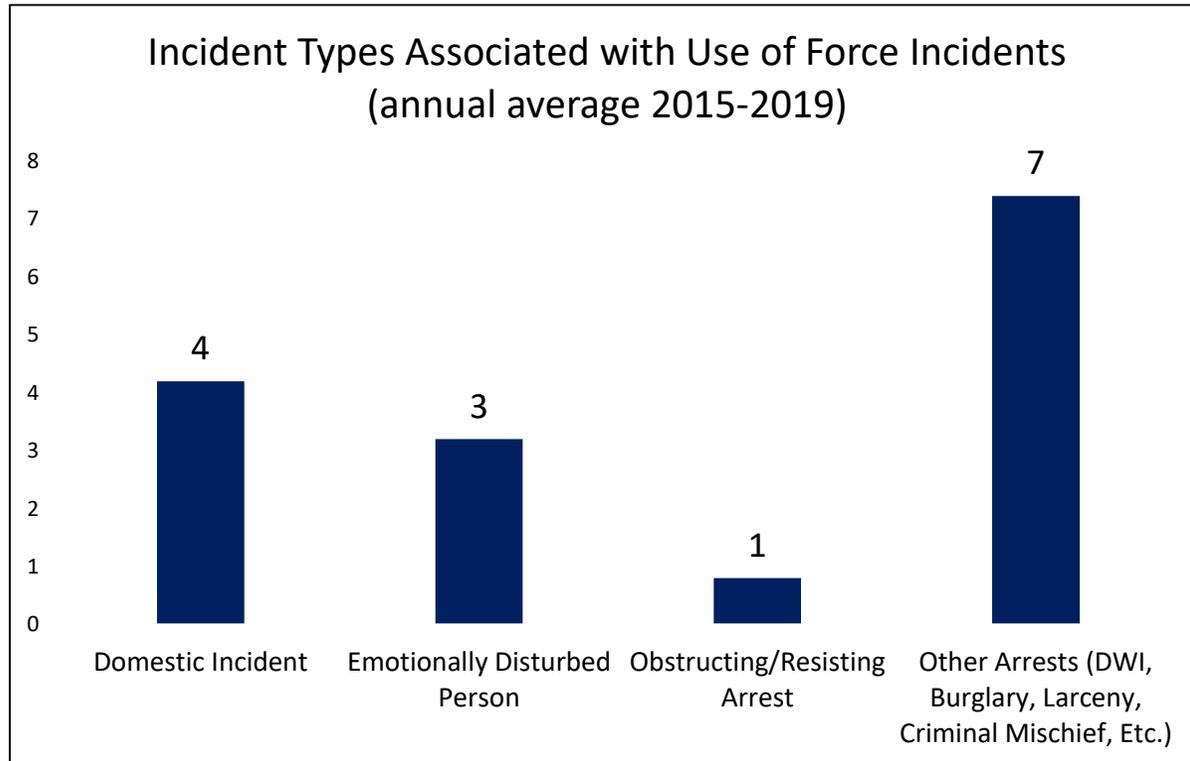
16 average # of Use of Force incidents each year.

99.9%
of police interactions with community members do not result in Use of Force incidents
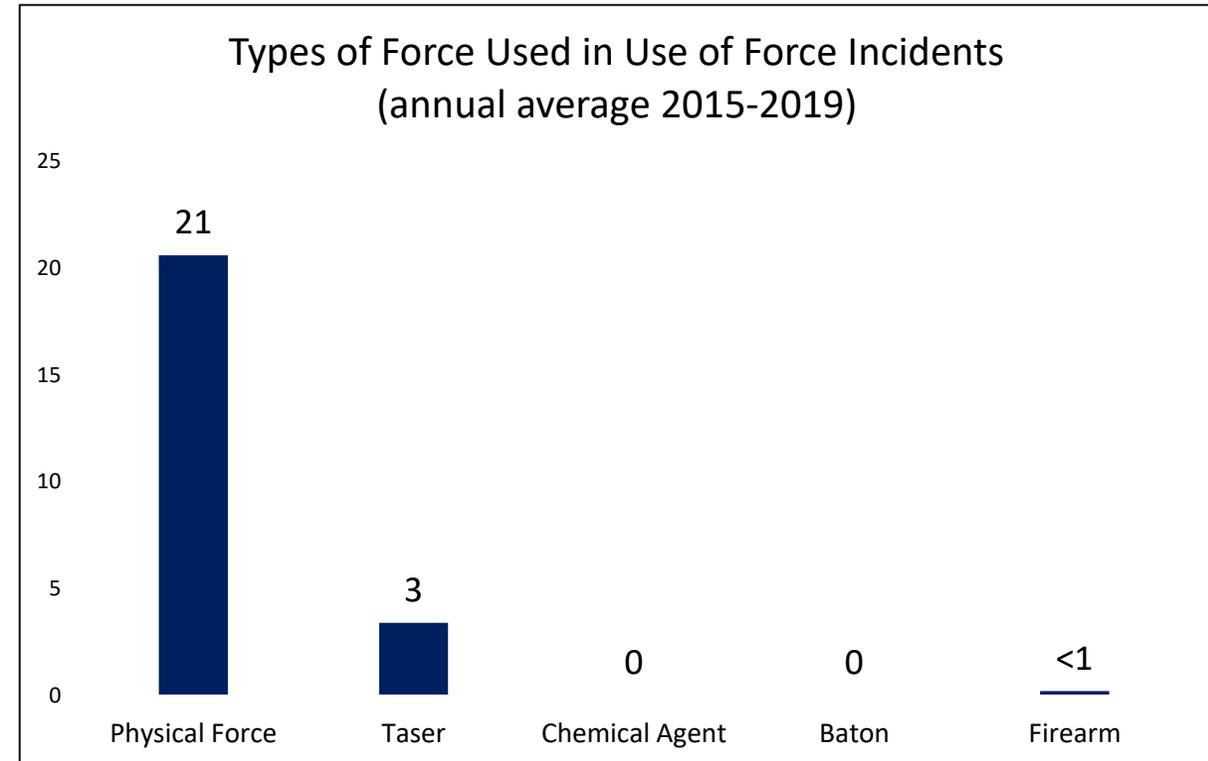(16 out of 16,000 incidents)

What do we know about Use of Force Incidents?

- Use of Force incidents stem from a variety of call types, but domestic incidents and emotionally disturbed persons are the most common

- Use of Force incidents rarely go beyond physical force
- Over 5 years, a firearm was only brandished once

Incident Types Associated with Use of Force Incidents
(annual average 2015-2019)

Incident Type	Value
Domestic Incident	4
Emotionally Disturbed Person	3
Obstructing/Resisting Arrest	1
Other Arrests (DWI, Burglary, Larceny, Criminal Mischief, Etc.)	7

NOTE: The 5-year average for suspects is 15.6 incidents, which rounds to 16 incidents in total. For incident types, the individual numbers round down, so the total above looks one short.
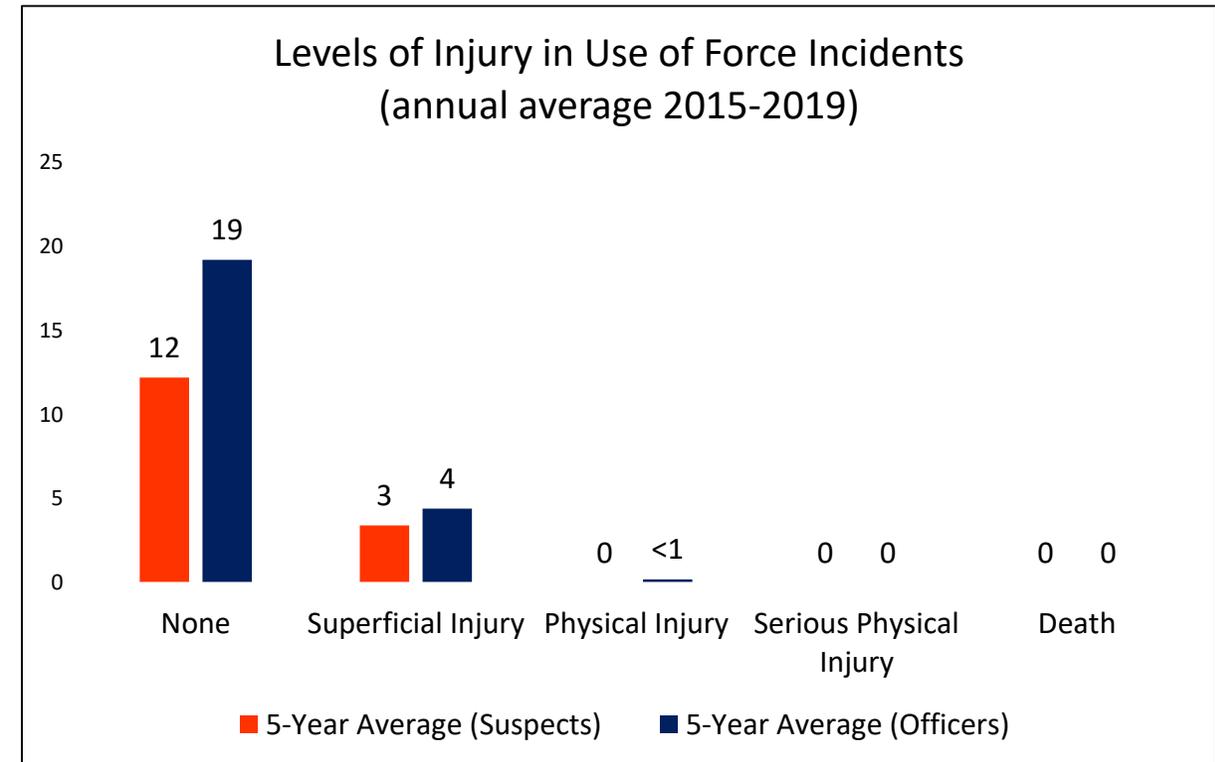
Types of Force Used in Use of Force Incidents
(annual average 2015-2019)

Type of Force	Value
Physical Force	21
Taser	3
Chemical Agent	0
Baton	0
Firearm	<1

NOTE: In some incidents, multiple types of force are used. When this happens, each is documented, so the Types of Force used can be more than the Use of Force incidents.

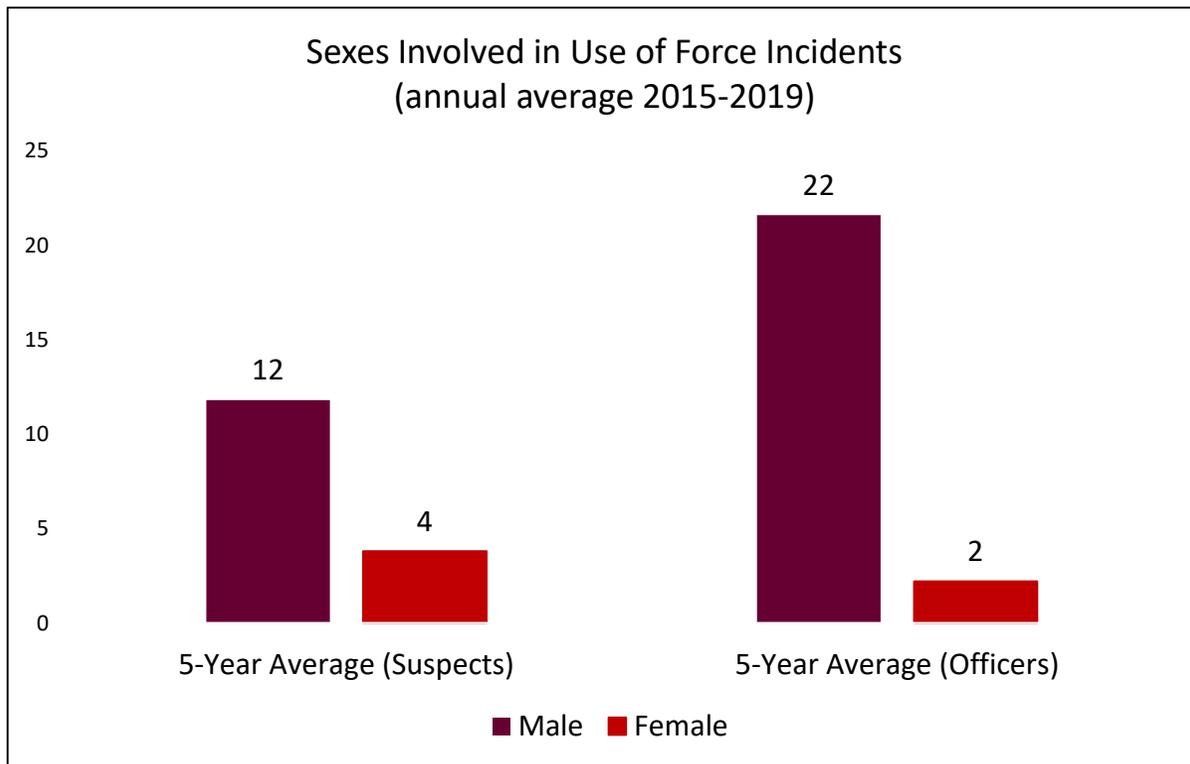# What do we know about Use of Force Incidents?

- On the rare occasions where Use of Force was necessary from 2015-2019,
  - Injuries rarely happened
  - Superficial injuries happened, on average, in only 20% of incidents
  - Officers were as likely to be injured as suspects

Levels of Injury in Use of Force Incidents
(annual average 2015-2019)

Legend: ■ 5-Year Average (Suspects) ■ 5-Year Average (Officers)

Category	Suspects	Officers
None	12	19
Superficial Injury	3	4
Physical Injury	0	<1
Serious Physical Injury	0	0
Death	0	0

NOTE: The 5-year average for suspects is 15.6 incidents, which rounds to 16 incidents in total. For levels of injury, the individual numbers round down (12.2 for no injury, and 3.4 for superficial injury), so the total above looks one short.
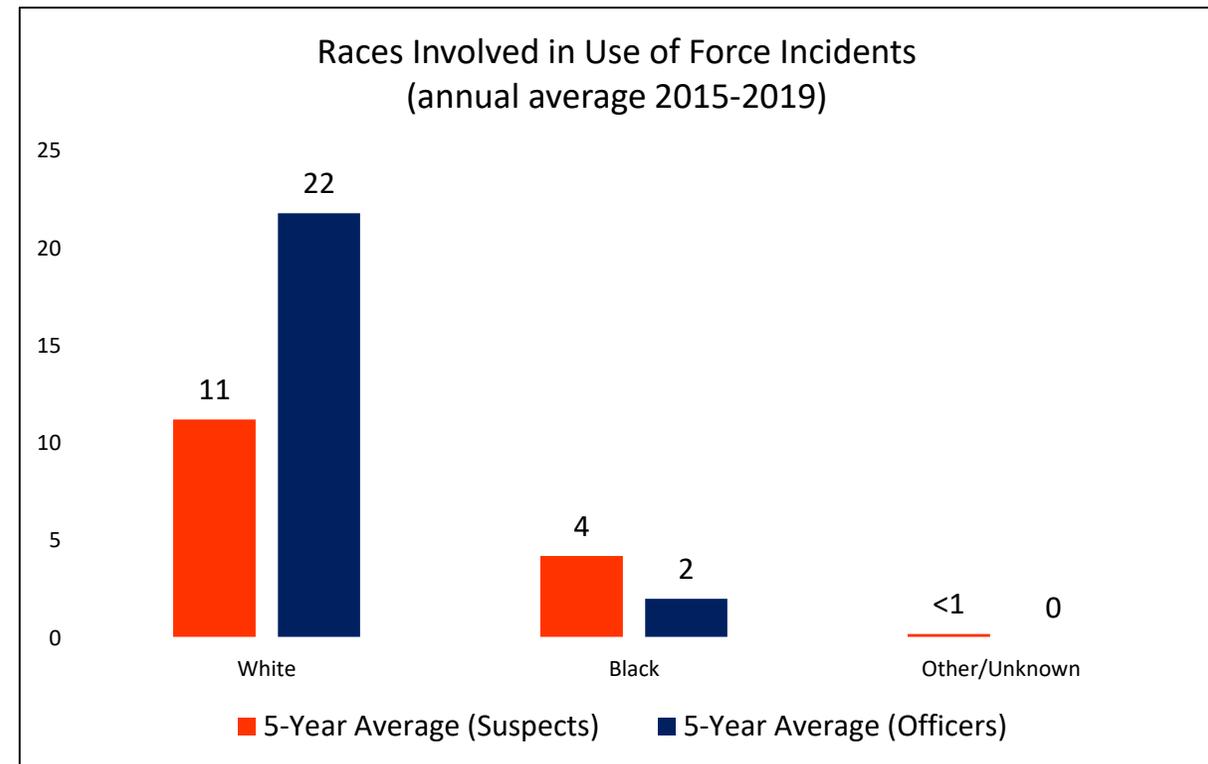
What do we know about Use of Force Incidents?

- Most Use of Force incidents involve male suspects and male officers, but female suspects and officers are involved too

- Most Use of Force incidents involve white officers and suspects, but black suspects and officers are involved too

Sexes Involved in Use of Force Incidents
(annual average 2015-2019)

NOTE: The State system only allows sex to be identified as male, female, or unknown/not reported.

Races Involved in Use of Force Incidents
(annual average 2015-2019)

NOTE: The 5-year average for suspects is 15.6 incidents, which rounds to 16 incidents in total. For race, the individual numbers round down (11.2 for white, 4.2 for Black, and 0.2 for other/unknown), so the total above looks one short.