

Bethlehem police use of force report

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police July 15, 2020

 Latest in a series of posts about the Bethlehem Police 

Bethlehem Police Department Report On The Use Of Force

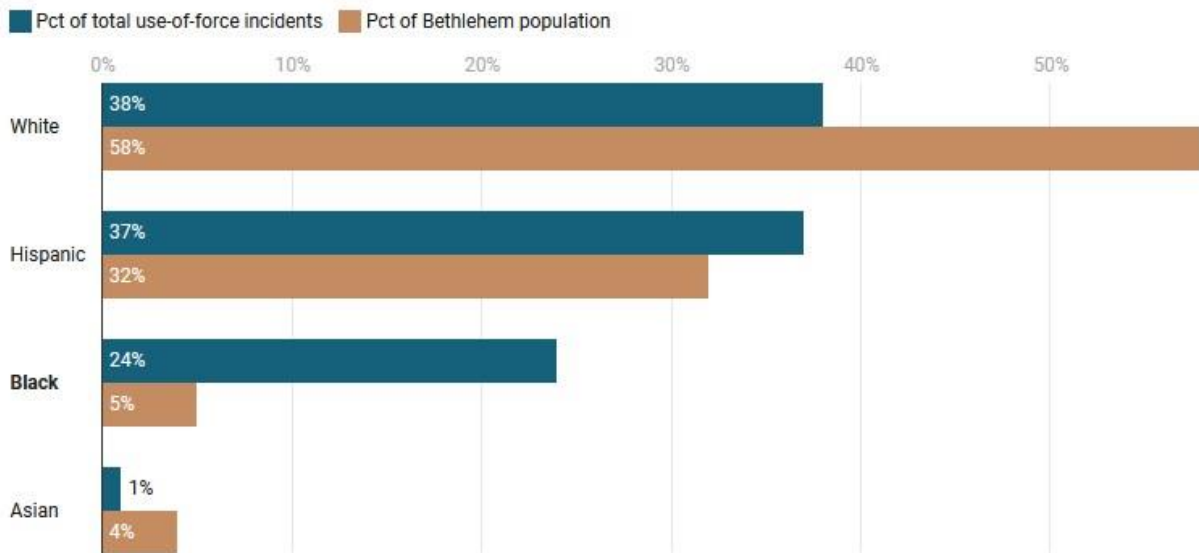
Gadfly's been browsing this report this morning and finds an easy-to-read format. He invites you to do likewise and see what you can see. Always go to the primary sources.

(See also: [Policing in the City of Bethlehem Report: 2019](#))

from Christina Tatu, "Bethlehem police release report on officers' use of force." Morning Call, July 14, 2020.

Use of force by Bethlehem police

2015-2019 incidents by race and ethnicity



Compares racial groups representation in use-of-force incidents to their representation in the city population. Note: residency of arrestees was not reported.

Chart: Eugene Tauber/The Morning Call • Source: Bethlehem Police, 2018 American Community Survey • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

For the first time, Bethlehem police have publicly released a report detailing how often officers resorted to force, including deadly force; the race of those subjected to force; and information about how incidents involving force are reported and investigated.

“We have a very comprehensive and restrictive use-of-force policy and that report shows you that when officers do use force in Bethlehem it’s documented and it’s reviewed to see if it’s in compliance with the department policy,” DiLuzio said.

As for race, 35% of force cases involved white people and 65% involved non-white people between 2010-2019. In that period, there were 444 incidents of force involving Hispanic individuals, 400 involving white people, 276 involving Black people and eight involving Asian and other ethnicities, the report says.

According to Census Bureau population estimates from 2018, whites make up about 58% of Bethlehem’s population; Hispanics, 32%; Blacks, 5%; and Asians, 4%.

From December 2016 through 2019, there were 8,113 arrests, 434 of which involved some type of force. In 236 incidents, subjects were taken to the ground, and in 63 incidents a Taser was used.

During this time, there were also 25 incidents that involved deadly force, though there were no police shootings during this time. The report defines deadly force as an officer pointing a gun at a subject while giving commands.

Use of force rose between 2014 and 2019, which the department attributes to the adoption of a more comprehensive policy that requires officers to submit reports when a subject is taken to the ground during an arrest.

Police had 143 encounters in 2019 that used some type of force. In 98 of those incidents, force was used to make an arrest, out of 2,639 arrests

last year. In the department's other uses of force, 12 times it was used as self-defense and 15 times it was used to defend another, the report says.

There were 18 incidents when force was used to take a person into custody for mental health issues or to stop the person from hurting themselves.

A report is required whenever an officer uses force, including discharging a firearm or taking an action that results in injury, regardless of whether a weapon is used.

When force is used, footage from dash cameras and body cameras and other documentation are reviewed by the department's Professional Standards Division. The review also involves interviews and testing of equipment.

If an officer is found to be in violation of state or federal law, the investigation is turned over to the district attorney. If the officer is in violation of any department directives, retraining or discipline may be required, the report says.

The report did not say whether there have been violations of the department's use of force policy. DiLuzio said that since he took over as chief in 2014, there haven't been any incidents of excessive force, but there has been occasional technical issues where an officer failed to use a defensive tactic in the correct way.

There were two such incidents in 2019. In both cases, the officers were sent for training, DiLuzio said. "Bethlehem, like other communities, does have its share of issues. No one community or agency is perfect. There is always room for communication and learning on both sides of any issue," DiLuzio wrote in the report. He believes Bethlehem police use force at a lower rate, thanks to the department's accreditation standards and the department's policy.

