

Response to Resistance by the Woonsocket Police Department 2023

Analysis and Recommendations

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I. Introduction

Per Woonsocket Police Department (WPD) Policy 300.01 (IV)(G)(F), this report presents an annual analysis of all reported uses of force by officers. This report is intended to provide an overview of the incidents involving the use of force, as well as to identify trends or training issues that should be addressed.

The information in this report was obtained from all officer-completed Response to Resistance (RTR) forms for the calendar years 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023. According to policy (General Order [300.01 Response to Resistance](#)), an RTR report is required from any officer who employed force when the following have occurred:

- A. The use of force results in death, injury, or an allegation of injury to a person.
- B. The drawing of a firearm on a person for obtaining and/or maintaining control of that person.
- C. A lethal force or a less-lethal force weapon is used on a person.
- D. Incidents in which officers employ any type of strike, blow, or takedown upon a person.

II. The Rate of Response to Resistance Incidents in Woonsocket

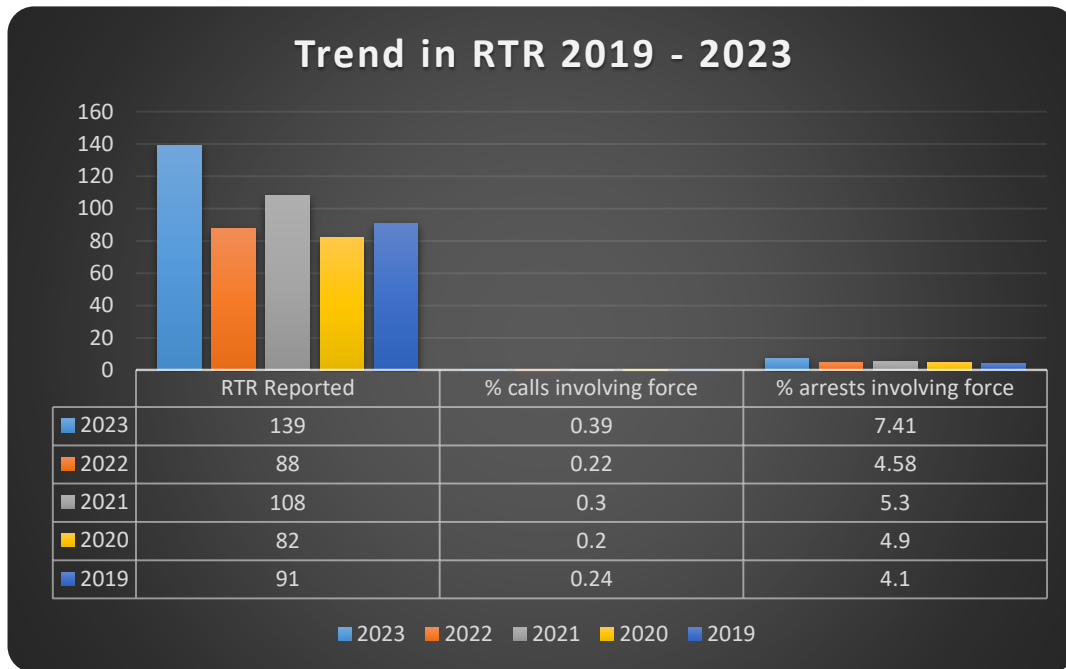
Reportable use of force incidents markedly increased for 2023. The department saw an increase of thirty-three (33) high-risk traffic stops, possibly in large part due to the installation of Flock ALPR cameras.

According to data collected, Woonsocket Police officers use force in a very small percentage of their encounters with citizens. In 2023, WPD officers used force in less than 1% of all recorded encounters with citizens, and just over 7% of all arrests. Both rates are far lower than the estimated national rate of 2% per encounter and 20% of arrests (Hickman & Piquero, 2009; BJS, 2018). In 2023, Woonsocket police officers used force in 1 out of every 259 calls for service and 1 out of every 13 arrests. Both statistics are higher than the previous year but still well below the national average.

A. Overview of Response to Resistance – Woonsocket Police Department 2019 - 2023

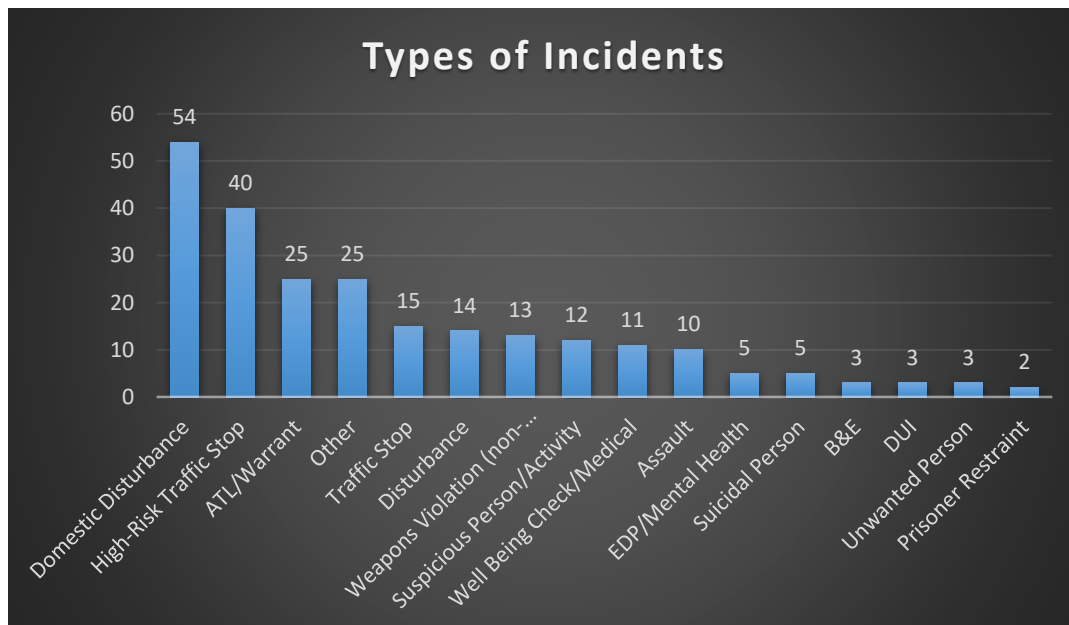
	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
RTR Incidents	139	88	108	82	91
Calls for Service	36,061	39,453	33,552	41,389	37,778
Arrests	1,875	1,920	2,024	1,670	2,225
Calls per R2R Incident	259.43	448.33	310.67	504.74	415.14
Arrests per R2R Incident	13.49	21.82	18.74	20.37	24.45
% of Calls involving R2R	0.39%	0.22%	0.32%	0.20%	0.24%
% of Arrests involving R2R	7.41%	4.58%	5.34%	4.91%	4.09%

B. Trend in Response to Resistance 2019 – 2023



- WPD officers continue to use force at a considerably lower rate than the estimated national average of 2% of calls and 20% of arrests.

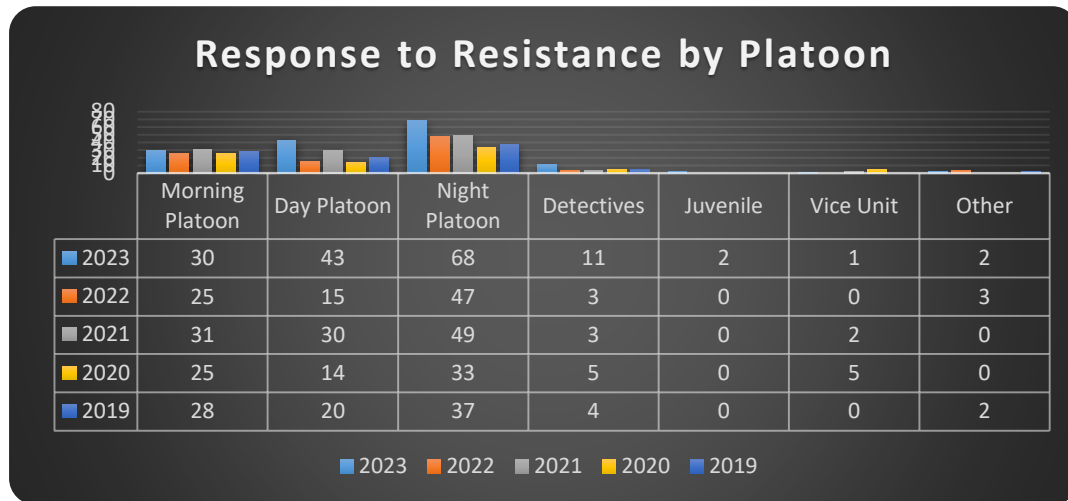
III. Types of Incidents



- Domestic Disturbance continues to be the leading incident type to result in response to resistance.

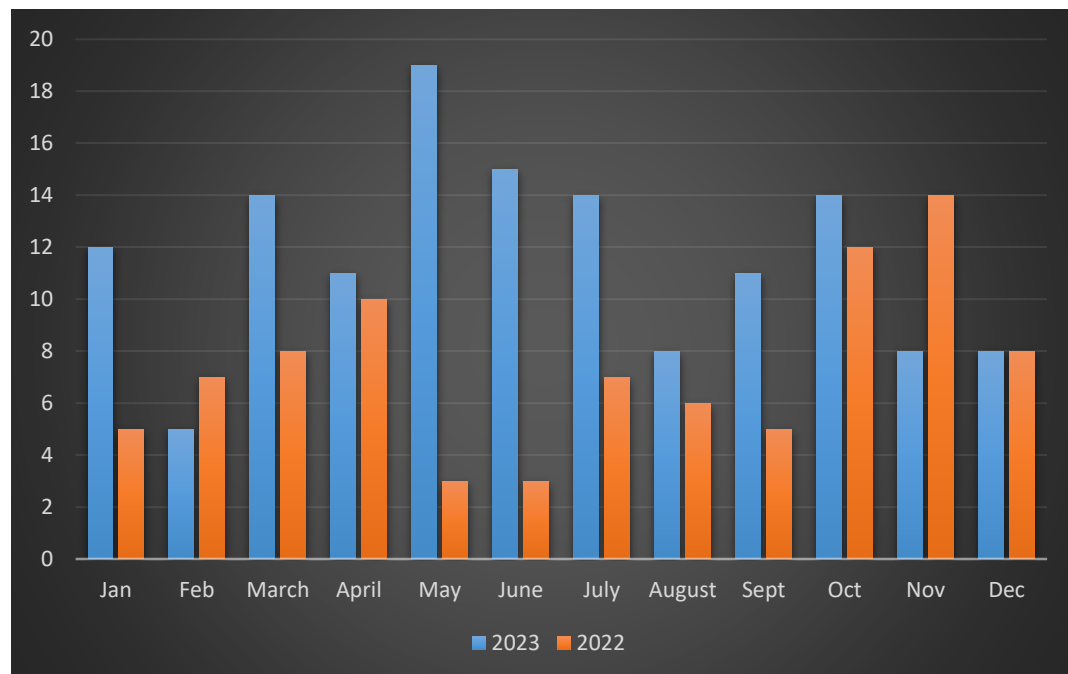
- High-Risk Traffic Stops saw an increase of thirty-three (33) incidents.

IV. Response to Resistance by Platoon 2019 - 2023



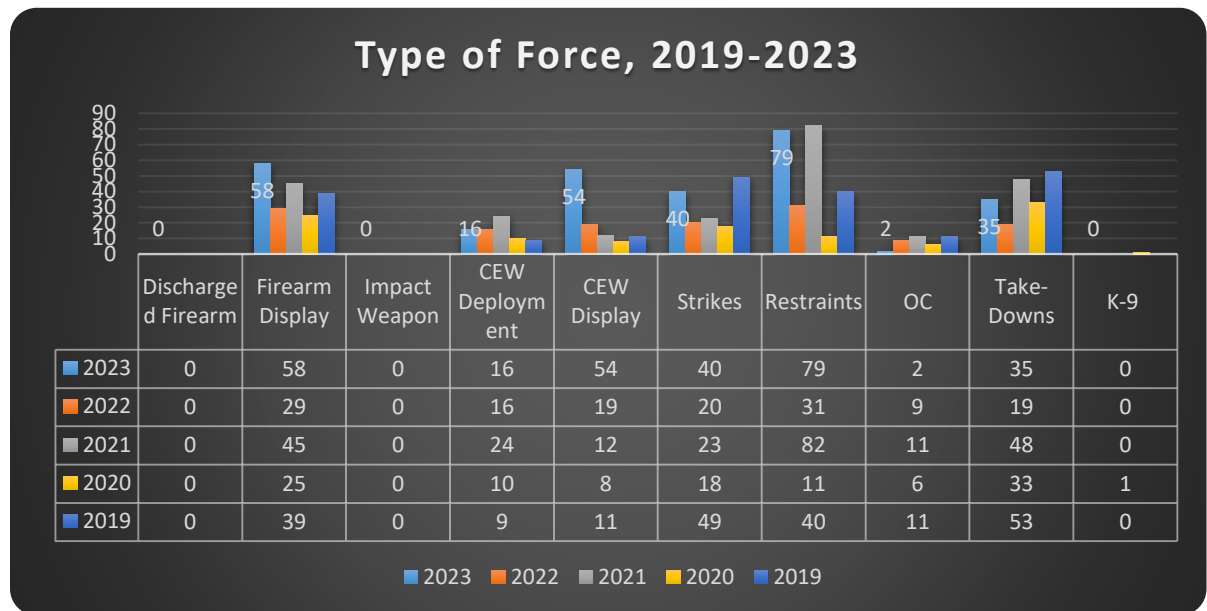
- RTR instances remain consistent across assignments when comparing them to arrest numbers. The Day Platoon saw the most significant increase over the other units. RTR incidents occur predominantly among uniform personnel.
- The “Other” category includes two incidents from Operations personnel.

V. Response to Resistance by Month 2022-2023



VI. Type of Force Used

The Department's reporting system does not employ a hierarchical method (coding by highest force type used), rather it provides the total for all force types used. This results in a greater total number of force types used than the total of Responses to Resistance incidents.



- Strikes include open hand, closed fist, kick, and knee
- Restraint techniques include wrist locks, arm bars, pressure points, etc.
- CEW deployment includes discharge and drive-stun

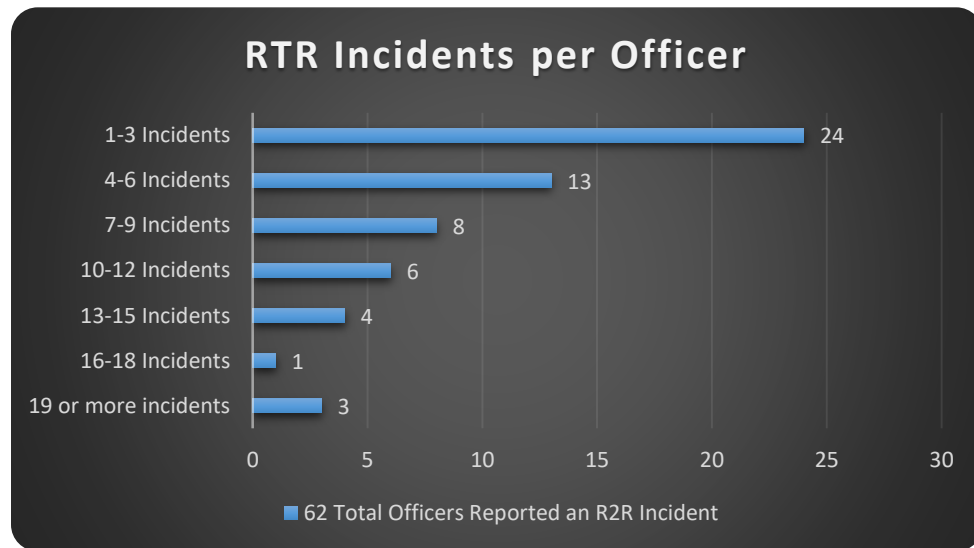
VII. Officer Characteristics

A. Officer Experience at the Time of the RTR Incident



- A total of 62 Officers reported R2R incidents in 2023.
- Exp. year totals were rounded up. Persons with less than 1 year (counted as 1).

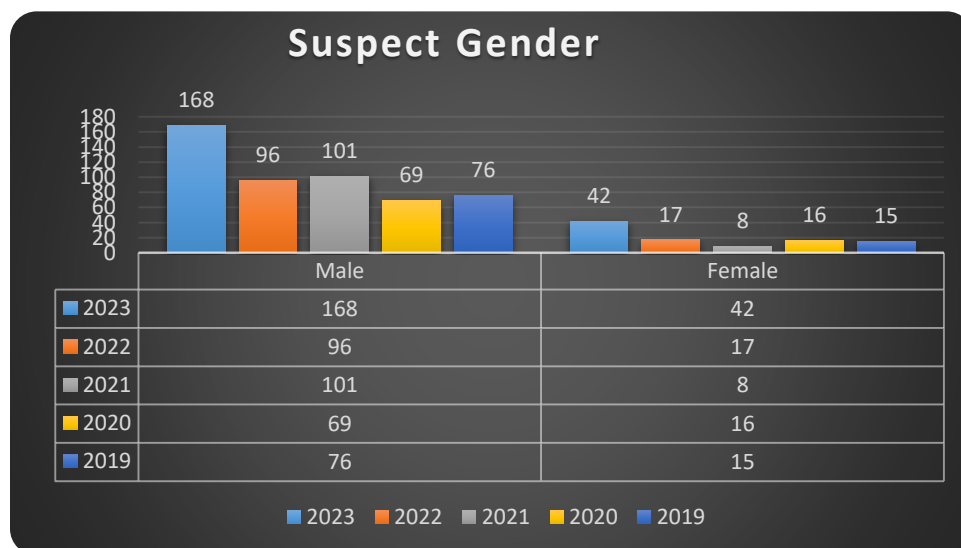
B. Response to Resistance Incidents per Officer - 2023



- Sixty-two (62) officers were involved in a reportable force incident in 2023.
- More than half of the officers (45) had between one (1) and six (6) incidents.
- Thirteen officers reported ten (10) or more incidents. These numbers were consistent with the number and type of arrests made by each of these officers.

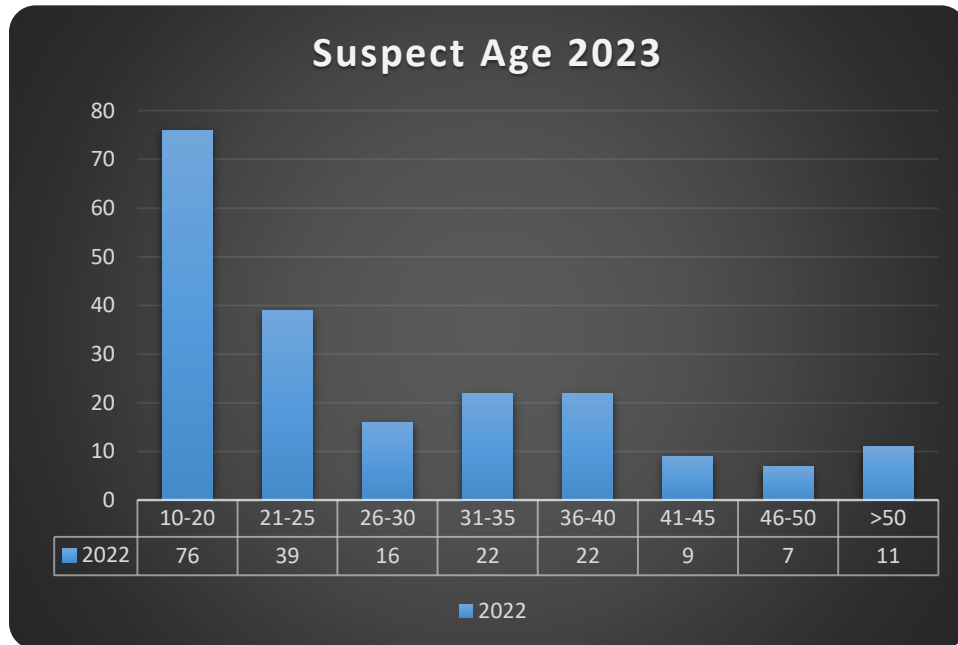
VIII. Suspect Characteristics

A. Gender



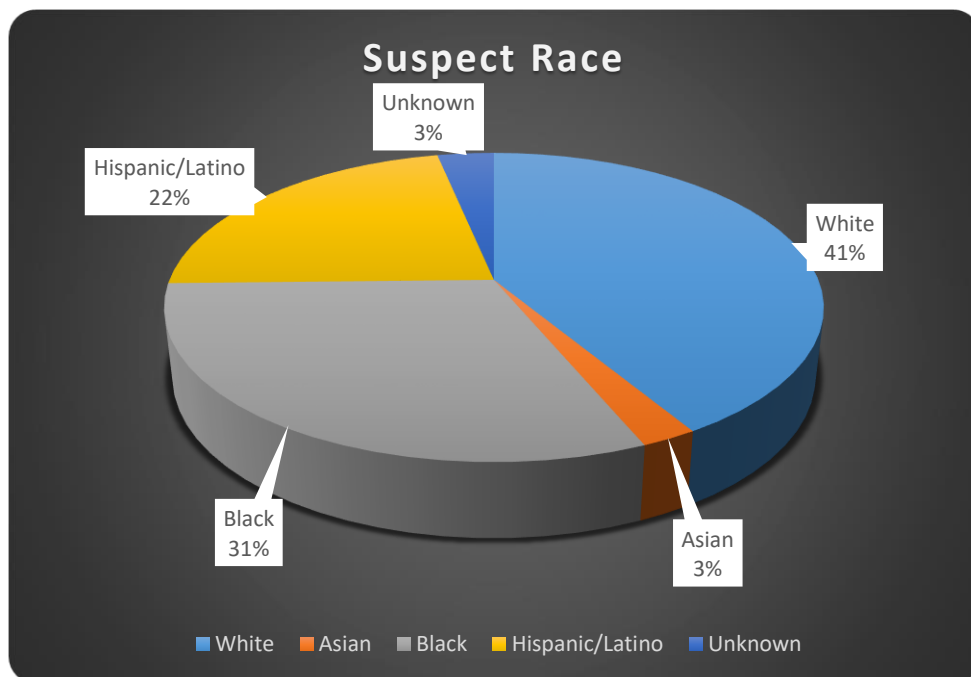
- Suspects continue to be predominantly male.

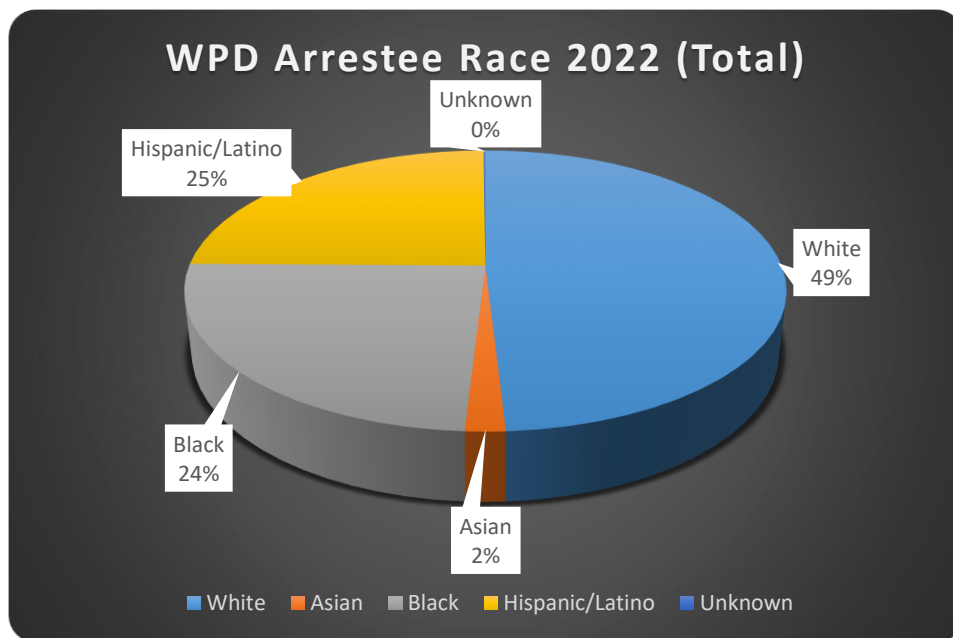
B. Age



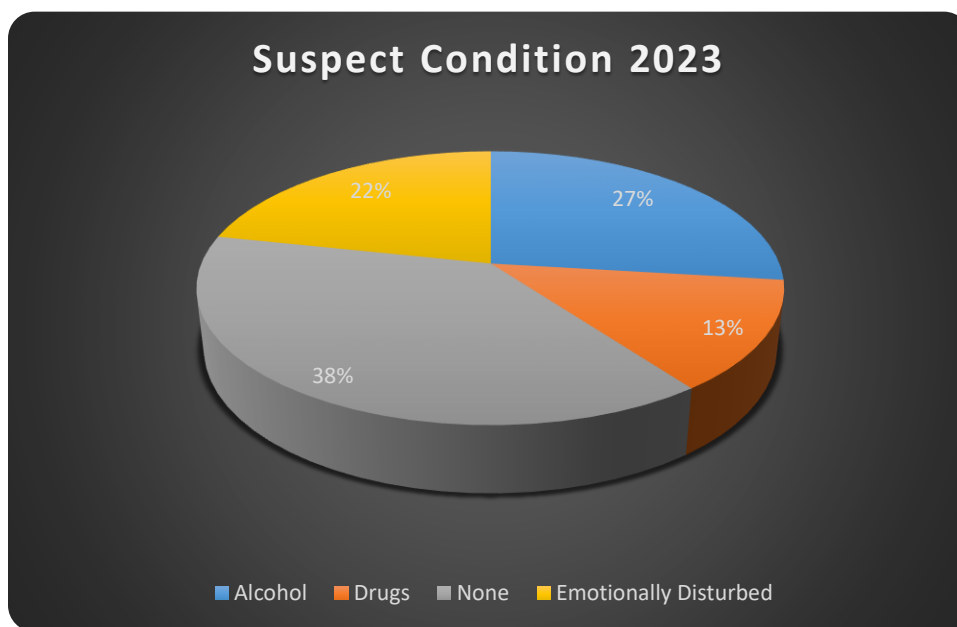
- Most suspects ranged between teenagers to 30 years old.

C. Race



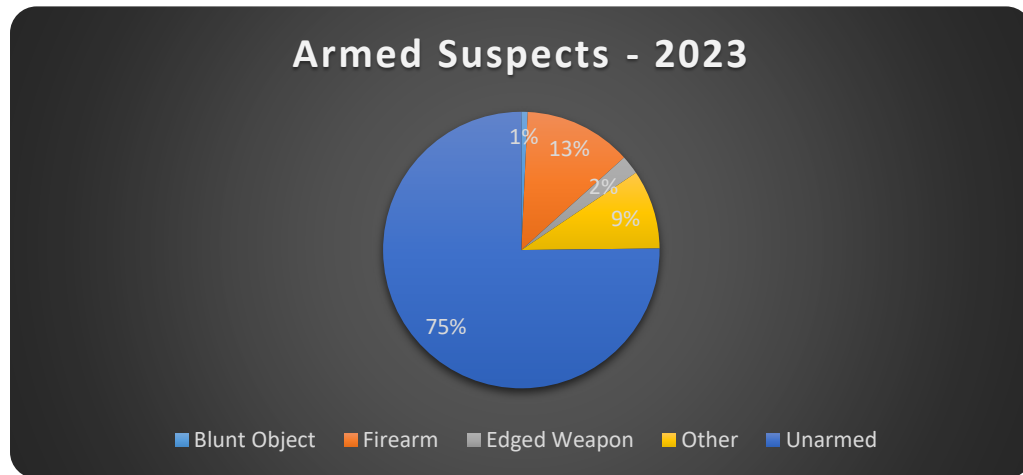


D. Condition



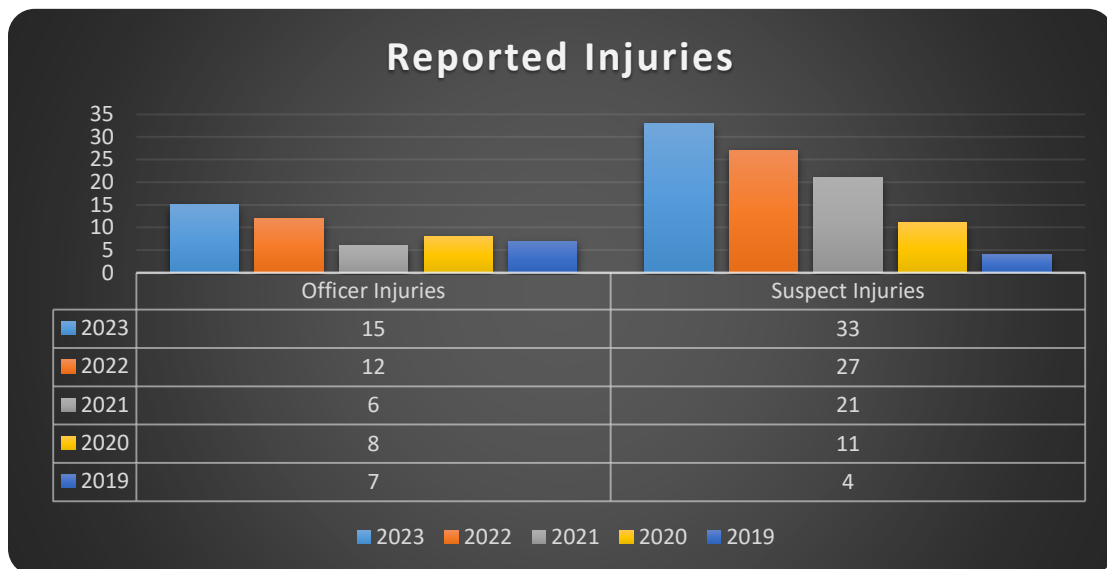
- According to statistics collected at the time of arrest, 62% of suspects were under the influence of alcohol, or drugs or suffering from mental/emotional events before arrest.
- Further study is required to validate this statistic as there may be an input error with the new reporting system. Historically, this number is in the 50-60% range.

E. Armed Suspects



- In 2023, 25% of suspects were found to be armed.

IX. Reported Injuries, 2019 - 2023



- Injuries to suspects were minor, mostly consisting of abrasions, minor cuts, CEW prongs, etc.
- All injuries to officers were minor and non-incapacitating.
- Department policy mandates that suspects with no apparent injury but claim to be injured receive medical attention. Additionally, all suspects subjected to CEWs are transported to the hospital regardless of injury.
- Though the number of injuries for both officers and suspects rose in 2023, the percentage of officer and suspect injuries dropped by 2% and 6% respectively.

X. Use of Force Complaints Received, 2019 - 2023

- **2023** – The Office of Professional Standards received one (1) complaint for excessive force. After an internal investigation, officers were exonerated of all allegations.
- **2022** – Professional Standards received two (2) force-related complaints. After an internal investigation, one was deemed unfounded as no reportable force was used. The other investigation involved one incident in which there were three complainants. Officers were exonerated largely due to video evidence submitted by the complainants.
- **2021** – Professional Standards received three (3) force-related complaints. After an investigation, two (2) were closed by exonerating the officer(s) involved. The third complaint was deemed unfounded because it was determined that a use-of-force situation never occurred.
- **2020** – Professional Standards received one (1) complaint alleging “excessive force.” After a thorough review, officers were exonerated of any wrongdoing.
- **2019** – Professional Standards received six (6) complaints alleging “excessive force.” After a thorough review of each complaint, none were sustained. All cases were deemed to comply with current Department policy and training.

XI. RTR Reporting and Administrative Review

- The department’s Professional Standards unit consists of an Internal Affairs Lieutenant, a Training Lieutenant, and an Accreditation Sergeant. This unit serves as the reviewing body of all the Response to Resistance incidents. The unit personnel have attended specialized training in reviewing police use of force reports. When necessary, Professional Standards will consult with the department’s use of force training cadre regarding trained techniques.
- The department uses LEFTA System’s FACTS application for RTR reporting and tracking. This system has proved efficient and gives key personnel real-time monitoring of force incidents to identify trends before they become a concern.
- The Woonsocket Police Department participates in the National Use-of-Force Data Collection program.

XII. Analysis

The number of force incidents rose sharply in 2023. The city has employed the use of Flock automated license plate readers (ALPR). Due to this, a large increase in stolen vehicles and wanted person detection has occurred. As such, when officers find these vehicles, a high-risk motor vehicle stop is initiated. In 2023 officers initiated thirty-three (33) more high-risk stops over the previous year. Most if not all these stops result in officers drawing their firearms and a required RTR report.

Additionally, Woonsocket has seen a large increase in gang violence and weapons offenses, specifically firearms. Suspects were armed with a firearm in thirty-four (34) RTR

incidents in 2023. There were no suspects armed with firearms in 2022. Department members have made a concerted effort to curb this activity and apprehend the offenders. With a history of carrying and using firearms, encounters with these suspects often give rise to the prudent officer displaying their duty weapon or Taser to gain compliance. Officers displaying their firearms saw a 100% increase while Taser “Red Dot Compliance” rose 184% over the previous reporting period. All such incidents are specified as reportable uses of force requiring an RTR report. It is noteworthy that through investigative efforts, several arrest warrants were executed in November on the primary suspects responsible for the gun violence. In November and December, the RTR rate dropped below the 2022 rate.

Despite the large increase, the rate of force used by officers of the Woonsocket Police Department continues to be significantly less than the estimated national average of force used by police officers across the country. The Department should continue to make training on the use of force, procedural criminal justice, ethics, and reporting procedures a top priority.

While taking call volume and arrest numbers into account, force incidents appear to be evenly spread across the Uniform Division. As to be expected, force incident numbers among other divisions or units remain far lower than the Uniform Division.

Injuries to officers and suspects rose over the previous year. All were minor. When reviewing the force options utilized in incidents that result in injury, 48% involved takedowns, and 26% involved a “hands-on” technique such as blows, strikes, or kicks. It is recommended that the department resume biannual training on such force options.

There were two (2) RTR incidents found to be out of policy in 2023. Both were determined to be a training issue and were addressed by the Training Lieutenant. It is important to note that neither involved force that was objectively unreasonable or resulted in any injury.

Several officers were flagged with an Early Intervention warning for having several RTR incidents within a short period. This appeared to be a result of “False Flags.” This sometimes occurs when proactive officers make frequent felony arrests such as the violent crime previously discussed. All incidents were found to be within policy and training guidelines. A review by their supervisors found no concerns or patterns in their conduct.

This shortcoming in the Early Intervention System (EIS) was addressed by LEFTA Shield last year with the implementation of a new system that greatly reduces these “False Flags.” Professional Standards implemented the changeover to the new system about midyear.

References

Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2022) "*Contacts between the Police and the Public, 2020.*" Retrieved from: [Contacts Between Police and the Public, 2020 - Statistical Tables | Bureau of Justice Statistics \(ojp.gov\)](#)

Hickman, M., Picquero, J. (2009). *Toward a National Estimate of Police Use of Nonlethal Force*. Retrieved from: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1745-9133.2008.00528.x/abstract>