



# Police Firearm Discharges (2007–2022) and Displays (2019–2022)

## INTRODUCTION

Each year, Policing and Security Branch (PSB) collects summary data from police agencies in BC on the number of police firearm discharge incidents, including if the discharge resulted in injury or death.

Since 2019, the data request has included questions about police firearm displays, where an officer drew their firearm and displayed it to, or pointed it at, a person but did not discharge the firearm. This included questions about the perceived emotional state of the subject. The 2020 data request introduced new questions about general occurrence (GO) reports recorded by police agencies in BC. A GO report is typically written when officers are involved in an operational policing response to an incident.

This report presents a summary of police firearm discharge data from 2007-2022 and a summary of police firearm display data for 2019-2022. This report also presents 2022 firearm discharge and display data in relation to data on GO reports.

The firearm discharge and display data presented in this report include operational incidents involving a person. Excluded from analyses are firearm discharges involving animals (for humanitarian or self-defence reasons) and accidental firearm discharges in a non-operational context (e.g., while cleaning a gun). Injuries and deaths included in this report only include those caused by a police firearm.

Firearm use is attributed to the police agency that was in command of the incident in which the firearm use occurred. This may be a different police agency from where the involved officer was employed. Examples of this may be incidents involving seconded police officers, integrated emergency response teams, or requests for assistance from other police agencies.

In addition to public reporting, PSB uses the information collected from police agencies about the use of force to monitor compliance with provincial policing standards and identify priorities for further study, standards, or training. The information is also used by police agencies to inform local training and policies.

## SUMMARY

- In Canada, firearms are classified as a lethal force option and may only be displayed or discharged towards a person when the officer believes on reasonable grounds that their life or the life of another person is in danger.<sup>1</sup>
- Firearm use by police officers in BC is rare. In 2022, BC police agencies reported 2,682 firearm displays and 26 firearm discharge incidents. The rate of firearm discharges was 0.012 per 1,000 GO reports, which corresponds to 0.002% of all GO reports. Firearm displays had a GO report rate of 2.06 per 1,000, higher than for discharges but still rare, corresponding to 0.21% of all GO reports ([Table 1](#)).
- Consistent with past data, in 2022 more than 99% of police firearm use in BC was display only. The data suggest that firearm displays are generally very effective in generating compliance without being discharged.
- The subject was listed as perceived to be an emotionally disturbed person (EDP)<sup>2</sup> in 19% of firearm displays in 2022 ([Table 4](#)), similar to the proportions in 2021 (18%) and 2020 (17%).

<sup>1</sup> Specifically, in the *Criminal Code of Canada*, s. 25(1) authorizes police to use as much force as reasonably necessary in the administration or enforcement of the law and s. 25(3) clarifies that legal protections for police using lethal force only apply if the police believe “on reasonable grounds that it is necessary for the self-preservation of the person or the preservation of any one under that person’s protection from death or grievous bodily harm.”

<sup>2</sup> EDP figures are based on whether the subject was perceived by the officer to be, and recorded by the officer as, an emotionally disturbed person (EDP). As counts of EDP subjects are reflective of an officer’s perception and records, they may not be completely reflective of the actual number of EDP subjects. The term “emotionally disturbed person” in the police records management system is defined as “a subject who appears to be mentally unstable and who might pose a threat to an investigator, him/herself, or others.” As of October 23, 2022, the term “person in crisis” has replaced “emotionally disturbed persons” within the RCMP Subject Behaviour and Officer Response reporting system.

## Police Firearm Discharges (2007–2022) and Displays (2019–2022)

- From 2019 to 2020, the number of firearm displays increased by 455. In 2021, 44 fewer firearm displays were reported than in 2020. 2022 saw an additional 444 displays year over year ([Table 4](#)).
- From 2007 to 2021, the number of police firearm discharge incidents reported to PSB per year ranged from 5 to 29 ([Table 3](#)), averaging 13 incidents per year. In 2022, there were 26 police firearm discharge incidents in BC reported to PSB, nine more than in 2021, higher than the historical average, and the highest reported figure since 2009 ([Table 3](#) and [Figure 1](#)).
- From 2007 to 2021, there was an average of fewer than four deaths per year (range of 0 to 8) and an average of just over four persons injured per year (range of 1 to 9) by police firearm discharges ([Figure 1](#)). In 2022, 14 people were killed and 10 people were injured as a result of police gunshot wounds. This is higher than the 5 deaths and 9 persons injured in 2021, well above the historical average for deaths and injuries, and the highest reported annual count for both deaths and injuries since tracking began.
- In the past three years, almost all incidents included a subject believed to be armed, and in 2022 all subjects were considered to be armed ([Table 2](#)). 2022 stands out in that incidents mostly involved subjects who were also armed with firearms. However, not all incidents with firearm-wielding subjects resulted in death or injury.
- Trends in police-involved shootings appear to extend to other jurisdictions. In RCMP's national 2022 Police Intervention Options Report, they identified 2022 figures represented both the highest rate of officer-involved shootings in the last 13 years as well as the highest rate of RCMP officers being shot at in the last 13 years.<sup>3</sup>
- Prior to 2020, there were no clear trends in police firearm discharges when considered in isolation or when compared to trends in other data available to PSB. The number of discharges, deaths, and injuries have fluctuated annually, and because the number of incidents each year is relatively small, the fluctuations are even more pronounced when expressed as percentage changes. 2022 seems to represent a spike in incidents, injuries, and deaths, on a similar scale to figures reported in 2009. 2009 appeared to be an isolated spike. Based on cases currently listed by the [Independent Investigations Office of BC \(IIO\)](#), which investigates police-related incidents resulting in serious harm or death, there were 9 fatal police-involved shooting incidents in 2023. If that figure does not change, it would be lower than the number reported in 2022 but would still be the second highest firearm death count since 2007 ([Figure 1](#)). A tally compiled by The Canadian Press identified 85 police-involved shootings nationally between January 1 and December 15, 2023, higher than historical averages, but lower than the 94 police-involved shootings identified in 2022.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> 2022 Police Intervention Options Report (RCMP, 2024). <https://rcmp.ca/en/corporate-information/publications-and-manuals/2022-police-intervention-options-report>

<sup>4</sup> CBC, 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/expert-says-number-of-police-shootings-in-canada-spectacularly-unrelenting-1.7071775>

# Police Firearm Discharges (2007–2022) and Displays (2019–2022)

## TOTAL FIREARM USE

Table 1: Total Firearm Use in Relation to General Occurrence (GO) Reports, 2020-2022

	2020	2021	2022
<b>GO Reports</b>	<b>1,357,302</b>	<b>1,375,212</b>	<b>1,300,697</b>
<b>Total firearm use</b>	<b>2,290</b>	<b>2,255</b>	<b>2,708</b>
Firearm discharges	8	17	26
Firearm displays	2,282	2,238	2,682
<b>Rate of firearm use per 1,000 GO reports</b>	<b>1.69</b>	<b>1.64</b>	<b>2.08</b>
Rate of firearm discharges	0.006	0.012	0.020
Rate of firearm displays	1.68	1.63	2.06

Table 2: Firearm Incident Details (2022)

	2020	2021	2022
Total Firearm Discharge Incidents	8	17	26
Intermediate Weapon also used <sup>5</sup>	4	6	7
<b>Subject Characteristics</b>			
EDP	3	7	10
Subject believed to be armed	7	15	26
<i>Firearm</i>	4	4	15
<i>Edged weapon</i>	2	5	6
<i>Other</i> <sup>6</sup>	1	6	5
<b>Subject Outcomes</b>			
Firearm-related injuries	3	9	10
Firearm-related deaths	3	5	14
<b>Officer Outcomes</b>			
Officer injuries proximal to firearm incident <sup>7</sup>	1	3	9
Officer fatalities proximal to firearm incident	0	0	1

<sup>5</sup> Identified use of an Intermediate Weapon (e.g. Conducted Energy Weapon, Extended Range Impact Weapon, Police Service Dog, Baton, etc.) within the context of a firearm incident.

<sup>6</sup> "Other" arms include situations where a subject was noted to have driven at an officer in a way that presented a chance of harm, as well as other weapons (e.g. bear spray and improvised weapons).

<sup>7</sup> Officer injury and fatality counts include both firearm and non-firearm sources. For 2022, this includes a multi-officer incident that resulted in six injuries.



# Police Firearm Discharges (2007–2022) and Displays (2019–2022)

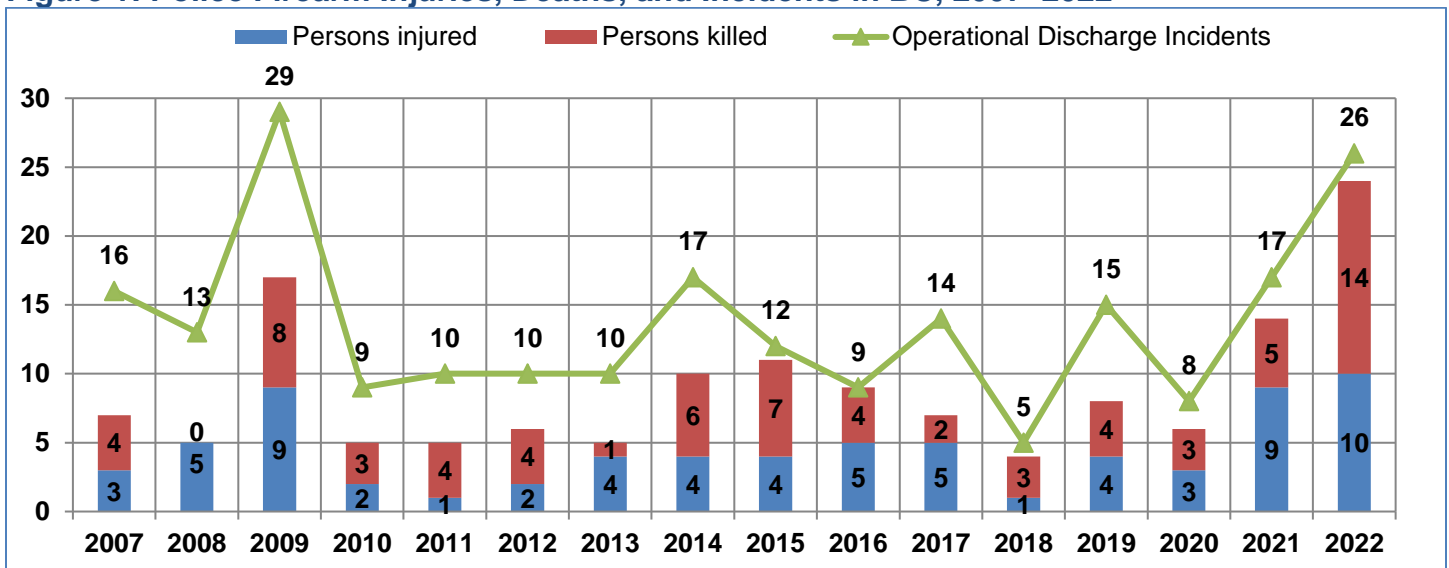
## FIREARM DISCHARGES

Table 3: Police Firearm Discharge Incidents in an Operational Setting by Agency, 2007–2022

	POLICE AGENCY *														BC Total
	AB	CS	DE	NE	NW	OB	PM	SA	STP	TP	VA	VI	WV	RCMP	
2007	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	12	16
2008	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	13
2009	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	23	29
2010	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	8	9
2011	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	7	10
2012	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	8	10
2013	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	9	10
2014	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	1	0	10	17
2015	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	11	12
2016	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	5	9
2017	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	12	14
2018	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
2019	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	13	15
2020	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	8
2021	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	12	17
2022	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	5	0	0	19	26

\*As follows: Abbotsford (AB), Central Saanich (CS), Delta (DE), Nelson (NE), New Westminster (NW), Oak Bay (OB), Port Moody (PM), Saanich (SA), St'at'imx Tribal Police Service (STP), Transit Police (TP), Vancouver (VA), Victoria (VI), and West Vancouver (WV) Police Departments.

Figure 1: Police Firearm Injuries, Deaths, and Incidents in BC, 2007–2022



Note: Figure 1 only includes injuries and deaths caused by a police firearm.

2015: Persons-killed figure includes two people who died after being shot by police, who had also sustained other life-threatening injuries.

2016: Persons-injured figure includes one incident counted as an injury where a person was shot by police but died from another injury.

2017: Persons-killed figure includes an incident where a person died after being shot by police but had also sustained other life-threatening injuries.

2018: Persons-killed figure includes an incident where a person fatally shot himself at the same time as being fatally shot by police.

2019: Persons-killed figure includes two people from an incident involving a hostage situation where the subject was shot and killed by officers, and in the course of this action, the hostage was accidentally struck by police bullets and subsequently died of the injuries.



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## FIREARM DISPLAYS

Table 4: Police Firearm Displays Against a Person, by EDP Status, 2019–2022

		POLICE AGENCY*														BC Total
		AB	CS	DE	NE	NW	OB	PM	SA	STP	TP	VA	VI	WV	RCMP	
2019	<b>Total</b>	88	7	41	4	42	3	17	12	2	26	533	119	33	900	1,827
	EDP	10	1	6	0	5	1	2	4	0	3	107	26	6	141	312
	EDP N/L	78	6	35	4	37	2	15	8	2	23	426	93	27	759	1,515
2020	<b>Total</b>	181	5	71	2	88	0	23	35	6	47	794	148	54	828	2,282
	EDP	36	3	13	1	30	0	1	5	5	7	139	19	13	121	393
	EDP N/L	145	2	58	1	58	0	22	30	1	40	655	129	41	707	1,889
2021	<b>Total</b>	186	4	87	10	73	2	9	36	16	69	804	186	26	748	2,238
	EDP	35	0	21	6	16	0	1	3	12	0	145	28	5	141	412
	EDP N/L	151	4	66	4	57	2	8	33	4	69	659	158	21	607	1,826
2022	<b>Total</b>	340	1	97	6	83	6	32	71	2	51	988	105	17	883	2,682
	EDP	41	0	30	2	23	1	8	25	0	9	185	13	1	164	502
	EDP N/L	299	1	67	4	60	5	24	46	2	42	803	92	16	719	2,180

\*As follows: Abbotsford (AB), Central Saanich (CS), Delta (DE), Nelson (NE), New Westminster (NW), Oak Bay (OB), Port Moody (PM), Saanich (SA), St'lall'imx Tribal Police Service (STP), Transit Police (TP), Vancouver (VA), Victoria (VI), and West Vancouver (WV) Police Departments.

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