

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. 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.¹

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. PSB also has collected data on officers' perceptions of subjects as an emotionally disturbed person (EDP). 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". EDP figures are based on whether the subject was perceived by the officer to be, and recorded by the officer as, an EDP, they may not be completely reflective of the actual number of EDP subjects. As of October 23, 2022, the term "person in crisis" has replaced "emotionally disturbed persons" within the RCMP reporting system. 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 2007-2023 and a summary of police firearm display data for 2019-2023. This report also presents 2020-2023 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. Due to other competing priorities the Stl'at'imx Tribal Police (STP) Service 2023 information was unavailable at the time this report was produced and is not included.

FIREARM ANALYSIS SUMMARY

- Firearm use by police officers in BC is rare when compared to the number of interactions with public. In 2023, BC police agencies reported 2,899 firearm displays and 24 firearm discharge incidents. The rate of firearm discharges was 0.018 per 1,000 (1k) GO reports, which corresponds to 0.002% of all GO reports. Firearm displays had a GO report rate of 2.16 per 1k, higher than for discharges but still rare, corresponding to 0.22% of all GO reports ([Table 1](#)).
- Consistent with previous years, in 2023, 99% of police firearm use in BC was display only. The data suggests that firearm displays are generally very effective in generating compliance without being discharged.
- In 2023, the subject was perceived to be EDP in 17% of firearm displays ([Table 4](#)), which is similar to the proportions in previous years.
- In 2023, while RCMP has the highest volume of firearm displays, this is likely due to their jurisdiction and agency size. To get a sense of frequency of firearm use, GO reports are incorporated to get a rate of firearm per GO report for each agency. The agencies with the highest rate of firearm displays per 1k GO are Abbotsford with 10.64, followed by Vancouver with 10.54 and Transit with 7.47 ([Table 5](#)).

¹ 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."

Firearm Use of Force by BC Police, 2023

- Abbotsford is leading in the display ratio per officer. As seen in [Figure 2](#) and [Figure 3](#), Abbotsford firearms display rates are increasing each year. Abbotsford reported that changes in their reporting processes and training initiatives contributed to an increase in use of force. Prior to 2020, technical issues with their reporting system may have led to underreporting. Additionally, in 2021, enhanced training and clarification of reporting requirements resulted in more consistent and comprehensive reporting, particularly in incidents involving multiple officers.
- From 2007 to 2022, the number of police firearm discharge incidents reported to PSB per year ranged from 5 to 29 ([Table 3](#)), averaging 14 incidents per year. In 2023, there were 24 police firearm discharge incidents in BC reported to PSB, two less than in 2022 but higher than the historical average ([Table 3](#) and [Figure 1](#)).
- From 2007 to 2022, there was an average 4.5 deaths per year (range of 0 to 14) and an average of 4.5 persons injured per year (range of 1 to 10) by police firearm discharges ([Figure 1](#)). There was record high numbers in 2022, 14 people were killed and 10 people were injured as a result of police gunshot wounds. Although in 2023, the number of persons killed (9) and injured (7) by police firearms decreased they are higher than the historical average.
- In 2023, most incidents (92%) the officer believed the subject was armed ([Table 2](#)) however the weapon was a firearm in 11 (46%) of the 24 discharge incidents. Not all incidents involving firearm-wielding subjects resulted in death or injury, and in some cases, police used lethal force in response to subjects armed with a knife or improvised weapon.
- In RCMP's national 2023 Police Intervention Options Report² highlighted trends in police-involved shootings in BC and other RCMP jurisdictions. While the record high officer-involved shootings in 2022 did decrease in 2023, they identified that the E Division (BC) 2023 figures represented nearly half (47% or 15) of all RCMP's officer-involved shooting occurrences in Canada. It is important to note that the RCMP polices a larger portion of British Columbia than other provinces, which contributes to the higher number of officer-involved shootings in the BC Division.
- 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. The years of 2022 and 2023 seems to represent an uptick in incidents, injuries, and deaths, on a similar scale to figures reported in 2009, which was an isolated spike (see [Figure 1](#)).

² 2023 Police Intervention Options Report (RCMP, 2024). <https://rcmp.ca/en/corporate-information/publications-and-manuals/2023-police-intervention-options-report/#8>

Firearm Use of Force by BC Police, 2023

TOTAL FIREARM USE

Table 1: Total Firearm Use in Relation to General Occurrence (GO) Reports (2019-2023)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
GO Reports	N/A	1,357,302	1,375,212	1,300,697	1,341,920
Total firearm use	1,842	2,290	2,255	2,708	2,923
Firearm discharges	15	8	17	26	24
Firearm displays	1,827	2,282	2,238	2,682	2,899
Rate of firearm use per 1,000 GO	N/A	1.69	1.64	2.08	2.18
Rate of firearm discharges	N/A	0.006	0.012	0.020	0.018
Rate of firearm displays	N/A	1.68	1.63	2.06	2.16

Note 1: Collection of GO Reports data began in 2020.

Note 2: Firearm discharges are counted by number of police incidents with a firearm discharge

Note 3: Firearm displays are counted by number of officers who displayed their firearm, not by the number of subjects displayed to.

Table 2: Firearm Incident Details (2019-2023)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Firearm Discharge Incidents	15	8	17	26	24
Intermediate Weapon also used ³	5	4	6	7	9
Subject Characteristics					
EDP	3	3	7	10	10
Subject believed to be armed	14	7	15	26	22
<i>Firearm</i>	9	4	4	15	11
<i>Edged weapon</i>	2	2	5	6	5
<i>Other</i> ⁴	3	1	6	5	9
Subject Outcomes					
Firearm-related injuries	4	3	9	10	7
Firearm-related deaths	3	3	5	14	9*
Officer Outcomes					
Officer injuries proximal to firearm incident ⁵	1	1	3	9	6
Officer fatalities proximal to firearm incident	0	0	0	1	1

* This figure includes two deaths from incidents that are currently under investigation and is subject to change.

³ 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.

⁴ "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. vehicle, bear spray and improvised weapons).

⁵ 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.

Firearm Use of Force by BC Police, 2023

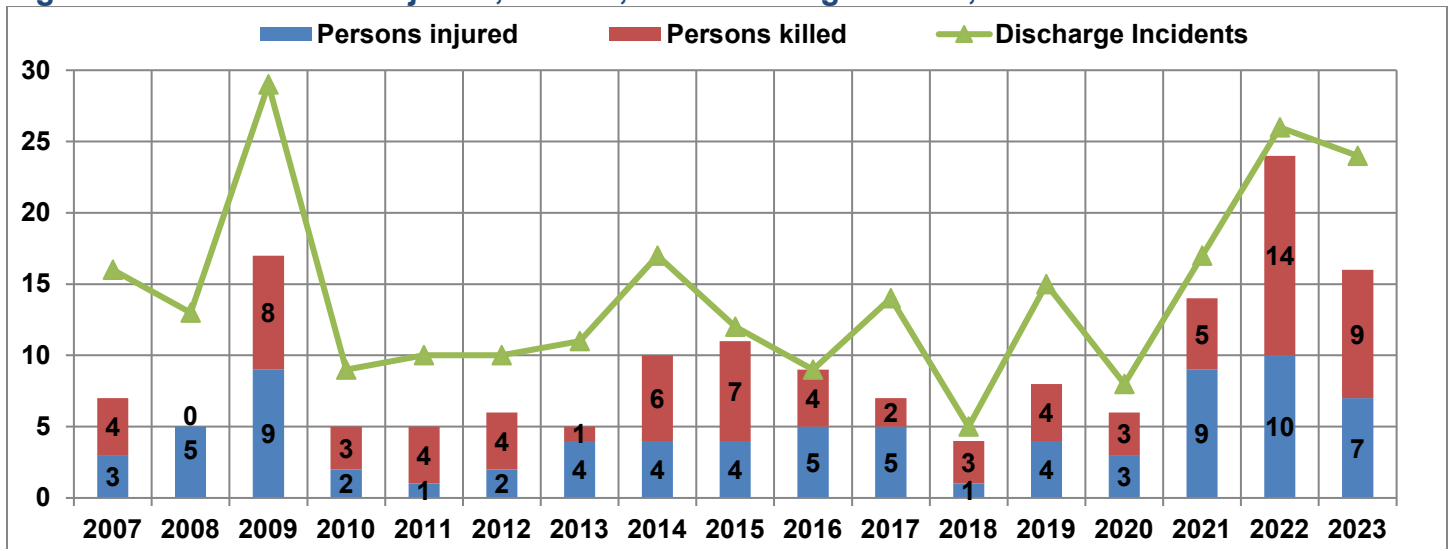
FIREARM DISCHARGES

Table 3: Police Firearm Discharge Incidents in an Operational Setting by Agency, 2007–2023

	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
2023	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	N/A	1	2	0	1	17	24

*Police Agencies: Abbotsford (AB), Central Saanich (CS), Delta (DE), Nelson (NE), New Westminster (NW), Oak Bay (OB), Port Moody (PM), Saanich (SA), St'at'i'mx Tribal Police Service (STP), Transit Police (TP), Vancouver (VA), Victoria (VI), West Vancouver (WV) Police Departments and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

Figure 1: Police Firearm Injuries, Deaths, and Discharges in BC, 2007–2023



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.

2023: Persons-killed figure includes two people from incidents that are currently under investigation and is subject to change.

Firearm Use of Force by BC Police, 2023

FIREARM DISPLAYS

Table 4: Police Firearm Displays Against a Person, by EDP Status, 2019–2023

		POLICE AGENCY*														BC Total
		AB	CS	DE	NE	NW	OB	PM	SA	STP	TP	VA	VI	WV	RCMP	BC Total
2019	Total	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
	Non-EDP	78	6	35	4	37	2	15	8	2	23	426	93	27	759	1,515
2020	Total	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
	Non-EDP	145	2	58	1	58	0	22	30	1	40	655	129	41	707	1,889
2021	Total	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
	Non-EDP	151	4	66	4	57	2	8	33	4	69	659	158	21	607	1,826
2022	Total	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
	Non-EDP	299	1	67	4	60	5	24	46	2	42	803	92	16	719	2,180
2023	Total	431	0	79	2	109	2	14	55	0	105	1165	127	10	800	2,899
	EDP	65	0	32	2	19	2	4	14	0	16	223	25	9	92	503
	Non-EDP	366	0	47	0	90	0	10	41	0	89	942	102	1	708	2,396

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

Note 4: Firearm displays are counted based on the number of officers who displayed a firearm for each subject involved in a police incident.

Firearm Use of Force by BC Police, 2023

Table 5: Police Firearm Display Ratios by Agency, 2019-2023

		AB	CS	DE	NE	NW	OB	PM	SA	STP	TP	VA	VI	WV	RCMP	BC Total
2019	Display Rate Per 1000 GOs	2.56	1.71	1.54	0.65	2.42	0.72	2.53	0.40	0.80	1.72	4.86	3.26	3.23	0.85	1.35
	Display Rate Per Officer ⁶	0.41	0.30	0.21	0.22	0.37	0.13	0.33	0.07	0.14	0.14	0.40	0.48	0.42	0.12	0.18
2020	Display Rate Per 1000 GOs	5.27	1.22	2.66	0.32	5.07	0.00	3.42	1.18	2.41	3.10	7.24	4.05	5.29	0.79	1.68
	Display Rate Per Officer	0.85	0.22	0.37	0.11	0.78	0.00	0.44	0.21	0.43	0.26	0.59	0.59	0.68	0.11	0.22
2021	Display Rate Per 1000 GOs	4.76	0.99	2.90	1.86	4.17	0.50	1.44	1.25	6.26	4.44	7.69	5.16	0.77	0.70	1.63
	Display Rate Per Officer	0.88	0.17	0.45	0.56	0.65	0.07	0.17	0.22	1.14	0.38	0.60	0.75	0.10	0.10	0.22
2022	Display Rate Per 1000 GOs	9.25	0.25	3.87	1.07	4.99	1.51	5.49	2.90	0.97	3.33	9.56	3.01	1.55	0.87	2.06
	Display Rate Per Officer	1.61	0.04	0.50	0.33	0.73	0.22	0.62	0.43	0.14	0.28	0.73	0.42	0.22	0.11	0.26
2023	Display Rate Per 1000 GOs	10.64	0.00	3.24	0.35	5.98	0.51	2.31	2.21	N/A	7.47	10.54	3.83	0.94	0.76	2.09
	Display Rate Per Officer	2.01	0.00	0.41	0.10	0.96	0.08	0.27	0.33	N/A	0.57	0.80	0.50	0.13	0.10	0.26

⁶ Display Rate per officer is calculated using the total number of displays and the authorized strength of a police agency through the [Police Resources in BC Publication](#)

Firearm Use of Force by BC Police, 2023

Figure 2: Police Firearm Display Ratio per 1,000 GO Reports by Agency, 2019-2023

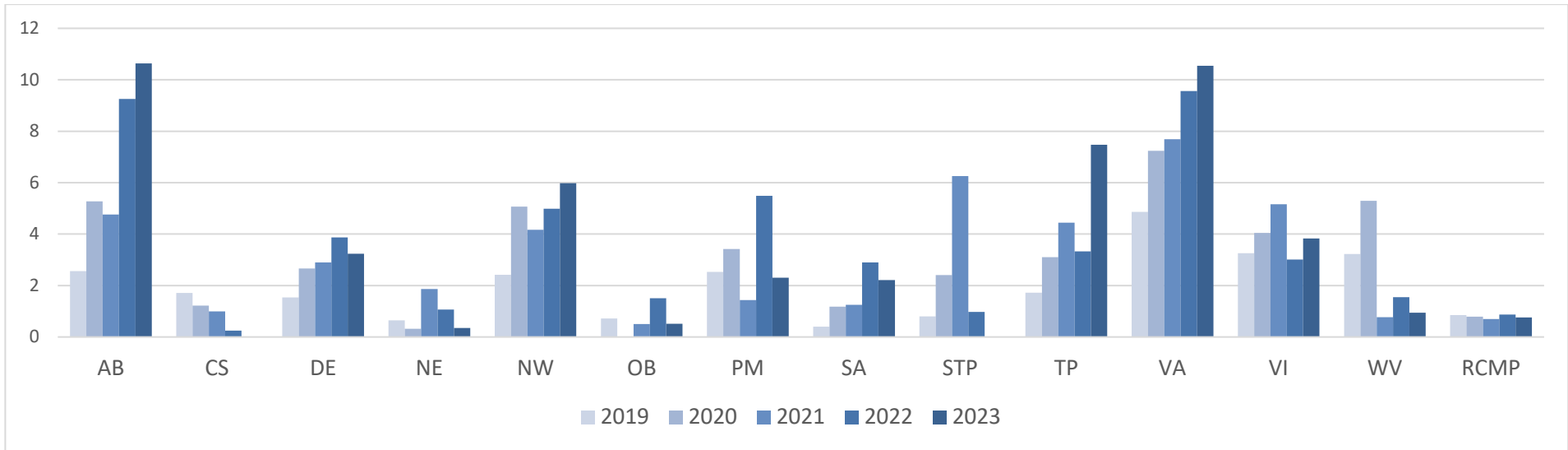


Figure 3: Police Firearm Display Ratio per Officer by Agency, 2019-2023

