

BC Police Firearm Use, 2024

INTRODUCTION

Each year, Policing and Security Branch (PSB) collects summary data from police services in BC on the number of police firearm discharge incidents, including whether the discharge resulted in injury or death. In Canada, firearms are classified as a lethal force option and may only be displayed or discharged toward a person when the officer believes on reasonable grounds that their life or the life of another person is in danger. Provincial standards governing police firearm use are set out in the BC Provincial Policing Standards (BCPPS) [1.1.1 Firearms and Ammunition](#) and [1.1.2 Firearms Training and Qualification](#).

Since the 2020 data request, PSB has included questions about police firearm displays, where an officer draws their firearm and displays it to, or points it at, a person without discharging it. The request also introduced questions about general occurrence (GO) reports recorded by police services in BC, which are typically written when officers are involved in an operational policing response to an incident. These additions allow reporting on both displays and discharges within the 2020–2024 period and provide context for calculating use-of-force ratios relative to operational activity.

This report presents a summary of police firearm discharge and display data from 2020–2024. 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 displays are counted by the number of times an officer displayed a firearm to a subject without discharging it. Firearm discharges are counted by the number of firearm discharge incidents. Further details are available in this report's subsequent section, [Key Definitions and Data Qualifiers](#).

In addition to public reporting, PSB uses the information collected from police services 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 services to inform local training and policies. Surrey Police Service assumed policing jurisdiction in November 2024 and submitted data corresponding to that period. As this represents a partial reporting period, their data have been excluded from this report, however review of their data shows nothing unusual or concerning.

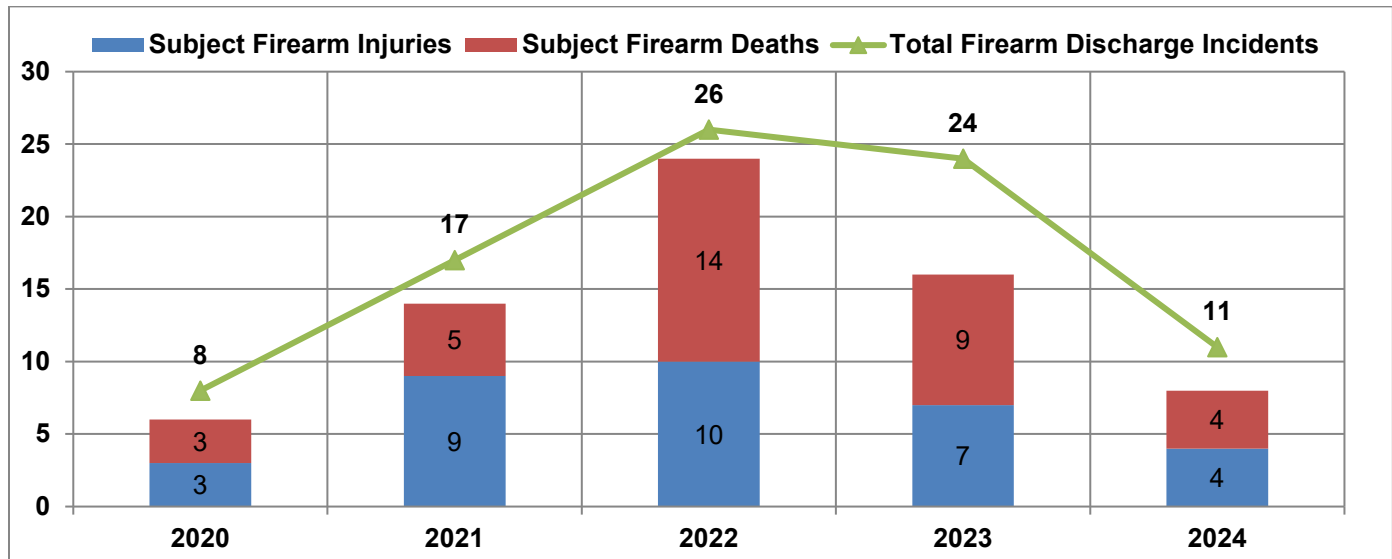
FIREARM ANALYSIS SUMMARY

- Consistent with previous years, 99% of police firearm use in BC are displays. In 2024, BC police services reported 3,143 firearm displays and 11 firearm discharge incidents. ([Table 1](#)).
- Firearm discharge incidents remain relatively rare in BC. The discharge rate is 0.008 per 1,000 reports (approximately 1 in 118,000), while the display rate is 2.42 per 1,000 reports (about 1 in 413) ([Table 1](#)).
- The provincial firearm display rate rose overall from 1.68 (2020) to a peak of 2.42 (2024). After a small dip in 2021, display counts increased year-over-year through 2024. GO report volumes decreased overall from 2020 to 2024, which means displays occurred more frequently relative to operational activity ([Table 1](#)).
- In 2024, the subject was perceived to be a person in crisis (PIC)/emotionally disturbed person (EDP) in 17% ([Table 5](#)) of firearm displays, which is similar to the proportions in previous years.
- In most of the firearm discharge incidents (10 out of 11, or 91%), the officer believed the subject was armed. Of those believed to be armed, 5 or 50% were believed to be armed with a firearm ([Table 2](#)).
- To get a sense of frequency of firearm use, GO reports are incorporated to get a rate of firearm display per 1,000 GO reports for each police service. The police services with the highest firearm display rates are Abbotsford (10.73), Vancouver (10.73) and Victoria (7.04) ([Table 6](#)).
- From 2020 to 2024, police firearm discharges in BC averaged 17 per year, with annual counts ranging from 8 in 2020 to a peak of 26 in 2022. Elevated numbers continued in 2023 with 24 discharges, before moderating to 11 in 2024 ([Table 3](#) and [Figure 1](#)).
- From 2020 to 2024, police firearm discharges in BC resulted in an average of 7 deaths and 7 injuries per year. Deaths ranged from 3 in 2020 to a peak of 14 in 2022, while injuries ranged from 3 in 2020 to a peak of 10 in 2022. Elevated numbers continued in 2023 (9 deaths, 7 injuries), before moderating in 2024 (4 deaths, 4 injuries). Due to the annual number of discharges, deaths, and injuries being relatively small, year-to-year fluctuations can appear large when

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expressed as percentage changes. The elevated levels observed in 2022 and 2023 represent a spike, followed by a decline in 2024 ([Figure 1](#)).

Figure 1: Police Firearm Injuries, Deaths, and Discharges in BC, 2020–2024



DATA TABLES

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

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
GO Reports	1,357,302	1,375,212	1,300,697	1,344,001	1,298,714
Total Firearm Uses	2,290	2,255	2,708	2,925	3,154
Firearm discharges	8	17	26	24	11
Firearm displays	2,282	2,238	2,682	2,901	3,143
Rate of Firearm Use per 1,000 GO Reports	1.69	1.64	2.08	2.17	2.43
Rate of firearm discharges	0.006	0.009	0.015	0.013	0.008
Rate of firearm displays	1.68	1.63	2.06	2.16	2.42

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Table 2: Firearm Discharge Incidents Details

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Firearm Discharge Incidents ¹	8	17	26	24	11
Number of Subjects involved ²	12	20	32	22	12
Intermediate Weapon also used ³	4	6	7	9	6
Subject Characteristics					
PIC/EDP	3	7	8	10	3
Subject believed to be armed ⁴	7	15	26	22	10
↳ Firearm	4	4	15	11	5
↳ Edged weapon	2	5	6	5	6
↳ Other ⁵	1	6	5	9	1
Injuries and Deaths					
Subjects' Firearm Injuries	3	9	10	7	4
Subjects' Firearm Deaths	3	5	14	9	4
Officers' Firearm Injuries	1	0	9	6	4
Officers' Firearm Deaths	0	0	1	1	0
Third Party Injuries proximal to Incident	0	0	0	0	0
Third Party Deaths proximal to Incident	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3: Police Firearm Discharge Incidents by Police Service, 2020–2024

POLICE SERVICE*															
	AB	CS	DE	NE	NW	OB	PM	SA	STP	TP	VA	VI	WV	RCMP	BC Total
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	0	1	2	0	1	17	24
2024	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	8	11

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

¹ Firearm Discharge incidents include both intentional and unintentional firearm discharges.

² Subject counts can involve zero subjects (accidental), multiple subjects, or an unknown number of subjects.

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 Subjects can be reported with multiple weapons; totals by weapon may exceed the "believed to be armed" count.

⁵ "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 weapons of opportunity).

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Table 4: Police Firearm Displays (by Subjects) by Police Service, 2024

POLICE SERVICE*															
	AB	CS	DE	NE	NW	OB	PM	SA	STP	TP	VA	VI	WV	RCMP	BC Total
2024	309	4	87	4	73	4	17	43	0	59	902	190	32	770	2,494

Table 5: Police Firearm Displays (by Officer Times) by PIC/EDP and Police Service, 2020–2024

POLICE SERVICE*																
		AB	CS	DE	NE	NW	OB	PM	SA	STP	TP	VA	VI	WV	RCMP	BC Total
2020	Total	181	5	71	2	88	0	23	35	6	47	794	148	54	828	2,282
	PIC/EDP	36	3	13	1	30	0	1	5	5	7	139	19	13	121	393
2021	Total	186	4	87	10	73	2	9	36	16	69	804	186	26	748	2,238
	PIC/EDP	35	0	21	6	16	0	1	3	12	0	145	28	5	141	412
2022	Total	340	1	97	6	83	6	32	71	2	51	988	105	17	883	2,682
	PIC/EDP	41	0	30	2	23	1	8	25	0	9	185	13	1	164	502
2023	Total	431	0	79	2	109	2	14	55	2	105	1165	127	10	800	2,901
	PIC/EDP	65	0	32	2	19	2	4	14	1	16	223	25	9	92	504
2024	Total	455	4	87	3	106	5	25	60	0	78	1163	235	21	901	3,143
	PIC/EDP	91	1	21	1	30	0	8	16	0	12	207	37	3	118	545

Table 6: Police Firearm Display Rate per 1,000 GO Reports, 2020-2024

POLICE SERVICE*															
	AB	CS	DE	NE	NW	OB	PM	SA	STP	TP	VA	VI	WV	RCMP	BC Total
2020	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
2021	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
2022	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
2023	10.64	0.00	3.24	0.35	0.71	0.51	2.31	2.21	0.96	7.47	10.54	3.83	0.94	0.76	2.16
2024	10.73	1.05	4.23	0.47	5.74	1.36	4.56	2.46	0.00	5.77	10.73	7.04	2.30	0.89	2.42

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

Note: GO Report data for individual police services can be found in the Police Use of Force in BC, 2024 publication.



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KEY DEFINITIONS

Person in Crisis (PIC) / Emotionally Disturbed Person (EDP): Refers to an individual who appears to be mentally unstable and may pose a risk to themselves, others, or responding officers. As of October 23, 2022, the RCMP has replaced the term “Emotionally Disturbed Person” with “Person in Crisis” in its reporting systems. This designation reflects the officer’s perception at the time of the incident and how the subject was recorded in the police records management system.

Firearm Discharge: The act of firing a firearm at a person. Only operational incidents are included. Discharges toward animals (for humanitarian or self-defence reasons) or accidental discharges in a non-operational context are excluded.

Firearm Display: The act of drawing a firearm and displaying it to, or pointing it at, a person, without discharge.

General Occurrence (GO) Report: A report typically written when officers are involved in an operational policing response to an incident. GO counts are used to provide context and ratios for use-of-force reporting.

DATA QUALIFIERS

Use-of-force data is inherently complex to quantify due to the vast variability in incidents. Each event is unique, ranging from a single officer using one type of force on one subject to multiple officers engaging with multiple subjects, each potentially using different levels and types of force. This variability creates significant challenges in standardizing reporting and analysis, leading to differences in counting and classification.

In this report, Firearm discharges are counted by the number of firearm discharge incidents and not the number of subjects or officers. Firearm displays are counted by the number of times an officer displayed a firearm to a subject without discharging it. In 2024, police services were asked to provide counts of the total number of unique subjects who had a firearm displayed toward them. This measure differs from “Officer displays” which counts each officer’s display within an incident. Collecting subject-based counts allows for better comparability with other force options that are reported by subjects.

Firearm use may also be attributed to a different police service from where the involved officer was employed. Examples of this include incidents involving seconded police officers, integrated emergency response teams, or requests for assistance from other police services. Variations in operational deployment, officer discretion, and local policies may also impact reported use counts and associated ratios across jurisdictions.

Each incident is unique, therefore data should be interpreted with caution. Factors such as subject behaviour, officer response, situational dynamics, and reporting differences all influence the counts. These figures provide a summary of operational trends but do not capture all qualitative factors involved in each event.