

## INTRODUCTION

This report presents 2023 data across a range of different force options<sup>1</sup> for police in BC. The data and analyses cover both displays and discharges (e.g., pointing and firing of weapons). More detailed data and analyses of specific force options, including agency-specific data and trend analyses across years, can be found in additional reports available on [BC's crime, police, and police resource statistics web site](#).

The analyses in this report are based on aggregate use-of-force data reported to Policing and Security Branch (PSB) by all BC police agencies. Due to other competing priorities the St'atl'imx Police Service 2023 information was unavailable at the time this report was produced and is not included. It's important to note that the method for counting displays and applications varies between different force options included in this report. Further details are available in this report's subsequent section, [Key Definitions and Data Qualifiers](#).

This data is collected by PSB through an annual request, which PSB is continually revising and adjusting in efforts to capture the total overall use of force in BC. As of 2019, PSB 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". As of the 2020 request, PSB included new fields for general occurrence (GO) reports, intended to provide context to the use-of-force data. GO reports are written when officers are involved in an operational policing response to an incident. Specific definitions and procedures vary between agencies. GO report data do not represent all interactions with police – only those for which a GO report was written. PSB is continually revising and adjusting the annual request in efforts to capture the total overall use of force in BC. As of the 2022 and 2023 request for data, PSB began collecting information on applications of Physical Control-Hard (PC-H), Physical Control-Soft (PC-S), specialty munitions and weapons of opportunity (or improvised weapons), in keeping with the reporting requirements detailed in *BC Provincial Policing Standard* (BCPPS) [1.7.2 Reporting and Investigation Following the Use of Force](#).

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.

## ANALYSIS SUMMARY

- Most operational policing responses in BC are carried out without the use of force. Police agencies across BC reported 6,376 uses of force in 2023 (weapon displays and discharges) for a rate of 4.75 uses of force per 1,000 GO reports, which corresponds to about 0.5% of all GO reports ([Table 1](#)). This is a decrease of 3.3% from 2022 (4.81). The rate by discharges is 0.93 per 1k GO report, whereas the rate of displays is 3.82. The rate of total use involving an emotionally disturbed person (EDP) is 1.04.
- In this publication, firearm displays are counted based on the number of officers who displayed their firearm (without discharge) per subject in an incident. As a result, a single incident can involve multiple firearm displays. Naturally, due to this counting method, firearm displays are the most frequently reported force option, followed by CEW display, similar to previous years ([Table 1](#) and [Figure 1](#)).
- All force options had more displays than applications, except for OC spray and baton use, where discharges represented 78% and 94%, respectively, in 2023 ([Table 1](#)).
- In 2023, 24 firearm incidents were reported to PSB, of those incidents 9 people died and 7 people were injured from police gunshot wounds. This is a decrease of 8% compared to 2022, which had 26 incidents. Firearm displays increased by 4% from 2022 figures and have increased considerably (+53%) since firearm display reporting began in 2019. The proportion of firearm displays to an EDP subject has remained consistent at 17-18% since 2019.
- In 2023, PC(H) was applied to 1,565 subjects and PC(S) was applied to 1,163 subjects. Subjects that were recorded as appearing under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs encompassed roughly half of the subjects where force was applied for both PC(H) (51%) and PC(S) (49%). That data suggests that EDP subjects were more frequently in PC(S) incidents (43%) than incidents where PC(H) was applied (26%) ([Table 4](#)).

<sup>1</sup>The specific force options analyzed include the use of firearms, extended range impact weapons, oleoresin capsicum spray, batons, and conducted energy weapons, as well as deployments of police service dogs (PSD) with a PSD bite.

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- Subjects were scored as perceived to be emotionally disturbed person<sup>2</sup> (EDP) in 22% of all uses of force in 2023 ([Table 1](#)). The data suggest that EDP subjects may be over-represented in certain force options. In 2023, EDP subjects made up a higher proportion of force applications (35%) than displays (19%), particularly in applications of OC Spray (95%), extended range impact weapons (33%) and batons (55%) ([Table 1](#)).
- The records management system also includes a field for noting whether a GO report is mental health related. Of the 1,341,920 GO reports that police agencies recorded in 2023, 99,341 had the mental health flag selected, constituting 7.3% of all GO reports ([Table 2](#) and [Table 3](#)). Caution must be used when comparing proportions of EDP subjects of use of force to the proportion of GO reports with the mental health flag/component selected. The lower proportion of mental health flags may reflect an underutilization of the mental health flag in GO reports, as it is not a mandatory field and agency practices differ from one another.

## OVERALL SUMMARY TABLES

See [Key Definitions and Data Qualifiers](#) for more detailed information about the variables presented in the below tables.

**Table 1: Use of Force by Weapons and EDP Subjects, 2023**

	Total	Firearms <sup>3</sup>	ERIWs	OC Spray	Batons	CEWs	Specialty Munitions	Improvised Weapons	PSD
<b>Total Overall Uses</b>	6,376	2,923	874	200	47	1,337	77	151	767
Discharges <i>Total Uses percentage</i>	1,252 20%	24 1%	183 21%	187 94%	36 77%	377 28%	77 -	151 -	217 28%
Displays <i>Total Uses percentage</i>	5,124 80%	2,899 99%	691 79%	13 7%	11 23%	960 72%	N/A -	N/A -	550 72%
EDP Subject Total Uses <i>Total Uses percentage</i>	1,392 22%	513 18%	256 29%	56 28%	12 26%	456 34%	22 29%	28 19%	49 6%
EDP Subject Discharges <i>Total Discharges percentage</i>	434 35%	10 2%	84 33%	53 95%	6 50%	182 40%	22 -	28 -	49 -
EDP Subject Displays <i>Total Displays percentage</i>	958 19%	503 98%	172 67%	3 5%	6 50%	274 60%	N/A -	N/A -	N/A -

**Note 1:** All force options are the sum of uses of firearms, extended range impact weapons (ERIWs), oleoresin capsicum (OC) spray, batons, and conducted energy weapons (CEWs), as well as apprehensions where the police service dogs (PSDs) were a significant factor, with a bite (discharge) or by display.

**Note 2:** The counting method for each force option is by number of subjects or number of apprehensions with a PSD bite, **except** firearm displays. For more information, see [Key Definitions and Data Qualifiers](#).

**Note 3:** 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.

**Note 4:** Collection of Specialty Munitions and Improvised Weapons discharges began in 2023.

<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."

<sup>3</sup> This figure reflects the total number of times an officer either drew their firearm and displayed it to, or pointed it at, a subject. This does not represent the total number of subjects a firearm was displayed to.

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**Table 2: General Occurrence (GO) Reports by Police Agency, 2020-2023**

POLICE AGENCY *															
	AB	CS	DE	NE	NW	OB	PM	SA	STP	TP	VA	VI	WV	RCMP	BC Total
<b>2020</b>	34,318	4,092	26,678	6,193	17,363	4,158	6,722	29,721	2,488	15,151	109,712	36,501	10,211	1,053,981	1,357,289
<b>2021</b>	39,084	4,051	30,037	5,375	17,508	4,017	6,269	28,796	2,555	15,528	104,601	36,072	10,472	1,070,892	1,375,257
<b>2022</b>	36,746	3,929	25,056	5,621	16,626	3,985	5,831	24,458	2,065	15,297	103,305	34,929	11,002	1,011,847	1,300,697
<b>2023</b>	40,493	4,058	24,407	5,688	18,240	3,908	6,069	24,910	N/A	14,058	110,565	33,130	10,599	1,045,795	1,341,920

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

**Table 3: GO Reports with Mental Health Flag/Component by Agency, 2020-2023**

POLICE AGENCY *															
	AB	CS	DE	NE	NW	OB	PM	SA	STP	TP	VA	VI	WV	RCMP	BC Total
<b>2020</b>	3,572	85	1,476	883	661	56	658	631	59	871	13,192	1,004	427	69,446	93,021
<b>2021</b>	3,856	161	2,094	716	728	50	599	1,046	54	945	12,628	3,480	598	72,706	99,661
<b>2022</b>	4,233	162	1,712	828	466	46	647	944	88	878	11,820	2,817	531	69,104	94,276
<b>2023</b>	4,053	187	1,813	732	995	57	387	2,613	N/A	925	12,327	2,507	610	70,804	98,010

**Table 4: Total Use of Force in Relation to GO Reports for BC Police, 2023**

	Overall	Involving EDP Subjects
<b>Rate of Use of Force per 1,000 GO Reports</b>	4.75	1.04
<b>Rate of Discharges</b>	0.93	0.32
<b>Rate of Displays</b>	3.82	0.71

**Note 4:** Total use of force includes all uses of firearms, ERIWs, OC spray, batons, CEWs, Specialty Munitions, improvised weapons and PSD apprehensions.

**Note 5:** Rates are rounded to the nearest 0.01, which may affect calculations.

**Table 5: Total Physical-Control Use of Force by Police Agency, 2023**

POLICE AGENCY *															
	AB	CS	DE	NE	NW	OB	PM	SA	TP	VA	VI	WV	RCMP	BC Total	
PC(S) applied	4	4	5	0	73	1	14	24	93	654	190	16	85	1,163	
Effective rate <sup>4</sup>	75%	100%	100%	-	77%	100%	81%	75%	78%	70%	82%	75%	82%	74%	
EDP Subjects <sup>5</sup>	1	2	4	0	77	1	5	11	30	270	74	6	15	496	
Subject under infl. <sup>6</sup>	2	3	6	0	38	0	7	10	40	332	77	3	49	567	
PC(H) applied	196	3	11	3	33	0	9	11	60	768	138	20	313	1,565	
Effective rate	89%	n/a	100%	67%	100%	-	89%	100%	88%	93%	95%	100%	85%	91%	
EDP Subjects	38	3	2	2	11	0	2	5	18	240	30	6	50	407	
Subject under infl.	102	2	4	2	19	0	5	6	28	370	57	3	197	795	

**Note 6:** PC(S) refers to techniques that are control oriented and have a lower probability of causing injury. They may include restraining techniques, joint locks and non-resistant handcuffing. PC(H) refers to physical techniques that are intended to impede a person's behaviour or to allow application of a control technique; and have a higher probability of causing injury. They may include empty hand strikes such as punches and kicks.

**Note 8:** Effective rate refers to how many times PC(H) and PC(S) were considered effective in generating compliance from the subject.

<sup>4</sup> Officer-reported effectiveness rates are calculated by total effective applications / (total effective applications + total ineffective applications).

<sup>5</sup> As counts of EDP subjects are reflective of an officer's perception and records, this figure should be used with caution.

<sup>6</sup> Subjects who are perceived to be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. This is reflective of an officer's perception and records; this figure should be used with caution.

# Overall Use of Force by BC Police, 2023

## OVERALL SUMMARY CHARTS

Figure 1: BC Police Use of Force Discharges by Weapon, 2019-2023

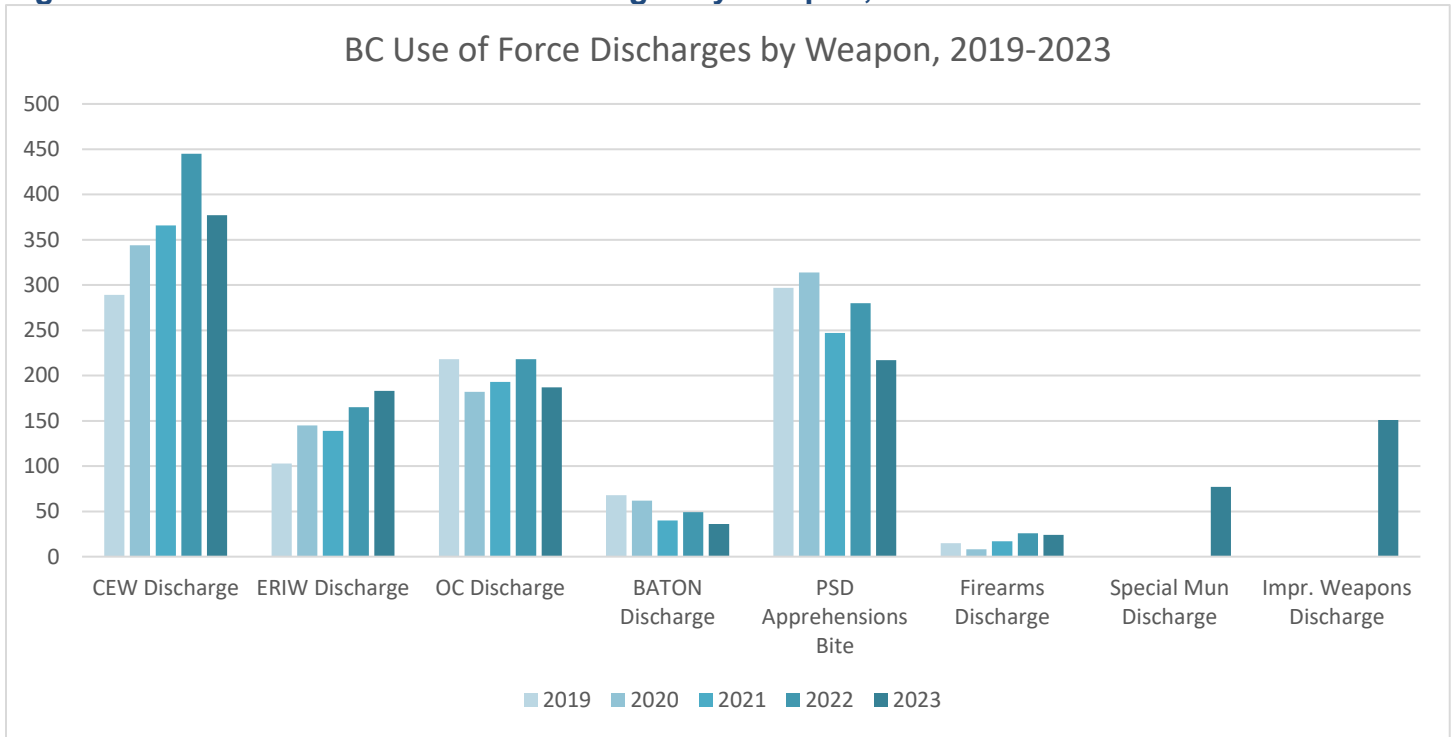
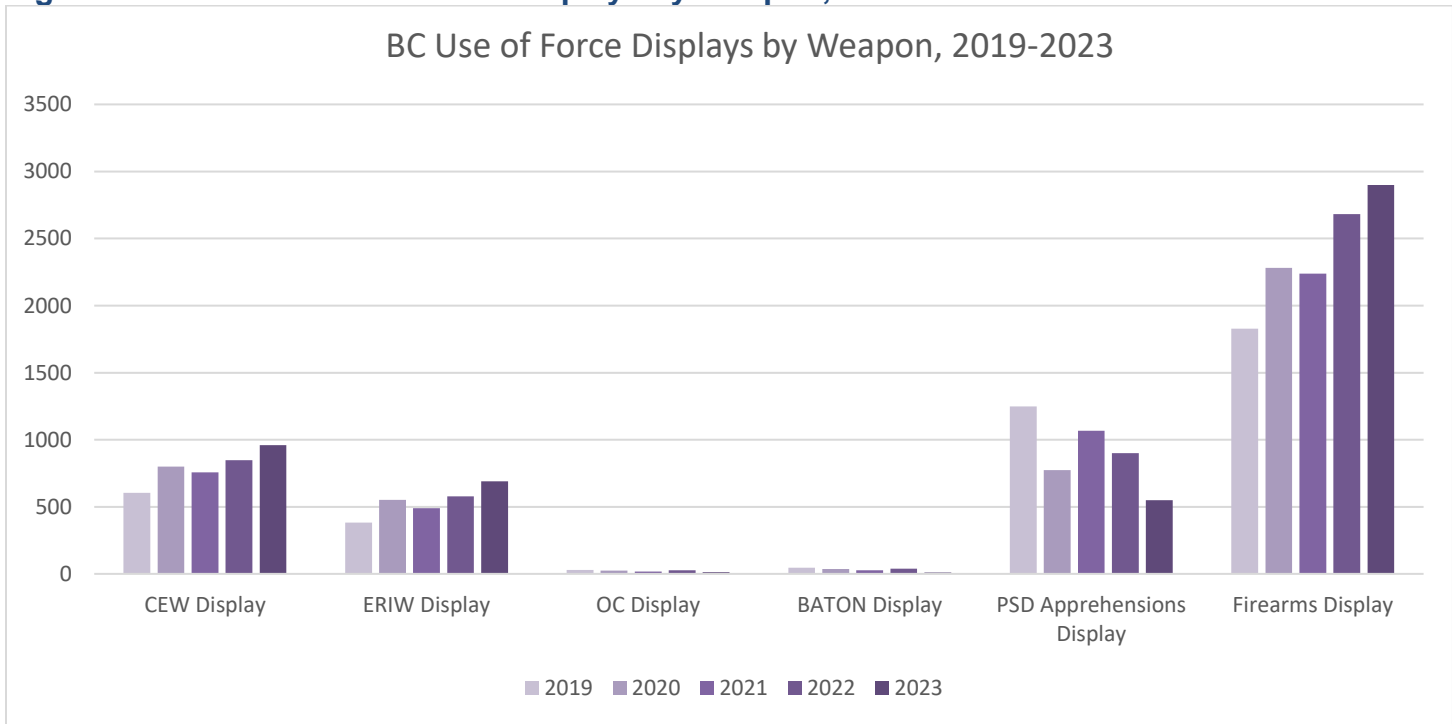


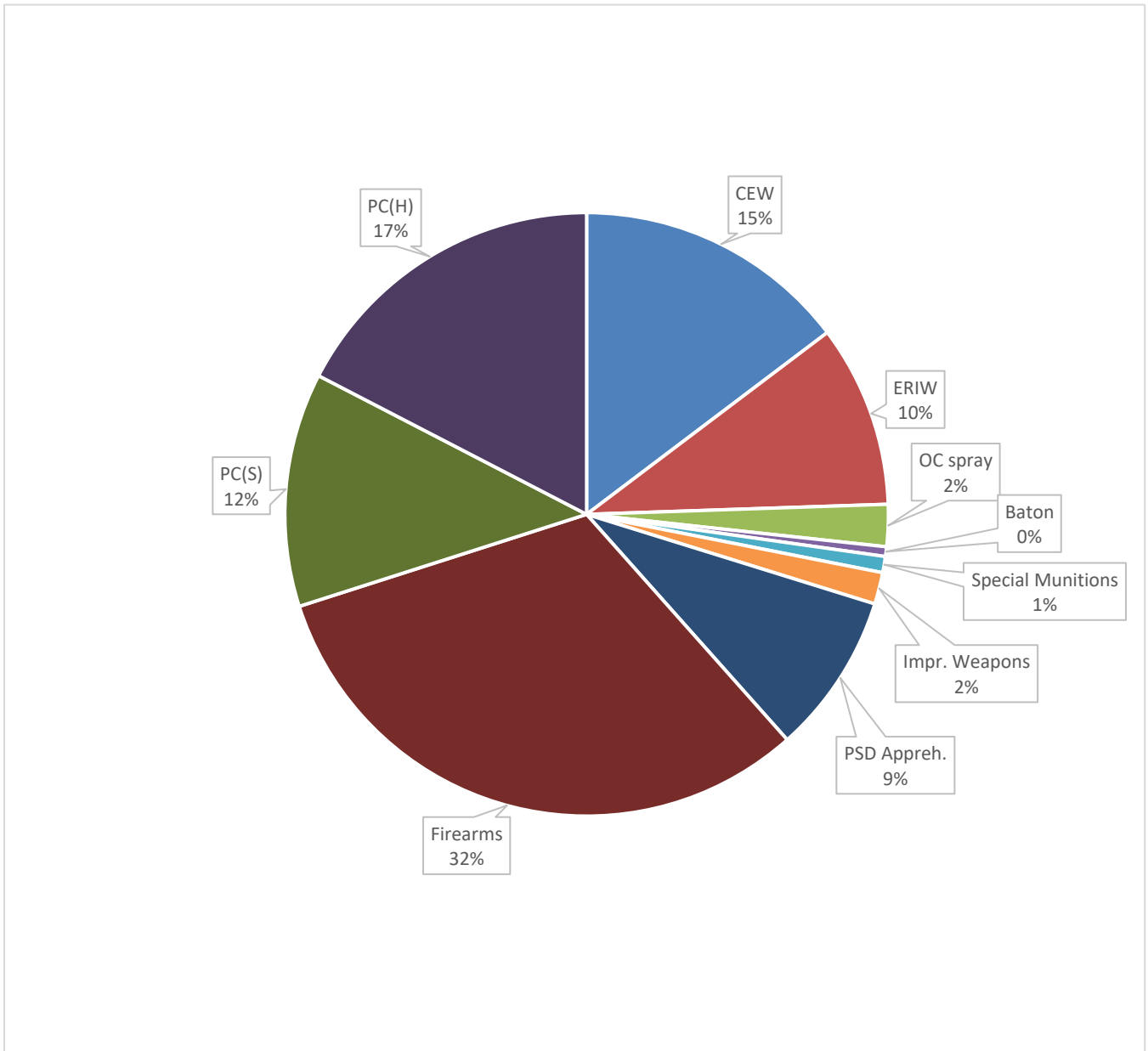
Figure 2: BC Police Use of Force Displays by Weapon, 2019-2023



**Note 9:** Most weapon displays are counted by the number of subjects displayed to. Firearm Displays appear higher as they are counted by number of officers that displayed their firearm.

# Overall Use of Force by BC Police, 2023

Figure 3: BC Police Use of Force Proportions by Intervention Option, 2023



**Note 10:** Figure 3 includes firearm display totals which can appear inflated as it is counted by number of officers that displayed their firearm, unlike the other categories which are counted by number of subjects displayed to.

## KEY DEFINITIONS AND DATA QUALIFIERS

Use-of-force data is inherently complex and difficult 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. Factors such as officer actions, subject resistance, and situational dynamics all contribute to the complexity, making it difficult to draw straightforward conclusions from the data.

Many police departments conduct their own use-of-force analysis and make the findings available to the public on their websites. These reports often include statistics, trends, and context to help communities understand how and when force is used. By sharing this data, agencies aim to promote transparency, accountability, and informed discussions about policing practices. However, the level of detail and methodology used in these analyses can vary between departments.

Previously, this publication included more information on injuries related to use-of-force incidents; however as police officers have limited knowledge of the extent and impact of injuries at the time of completing their reports, this information may not always be accurate or complete. To gain a more thorough understanding, readers are encouraged to refer to organizations specifically established to monitor and review injuries resulting from police use of force, such as the Independent Investigations Office (IIO) and the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner (OPCC). The IIO have a defined injury threshold and a well-established process for assessing and investigating incidents, ensuring a more comprehensive and independent review of injury outcomes.

### General Occurrence (GO) Reports

A GO report is typically written when officers are involved in an operational policing response to an incident. Specific requirements beyond the policies of the Police Records Information Management Environment (PRIME-BC) may vary by agency. PRIME-BC is the records management system used by all police agencies in BC. Numbers of GO Reports in this report are intended to reflect all GO reports extracted from PRIME-BC for the requested year by all agencies in BC. As such, figures may include counts that some agencies may typically exclude, such as records that may not involve reportable occurrences as per PRIME-BC or agency policies. When able, agencies provided the number of 'reportable' GO reports, which excludes unfounded, assistance, information and prevention records.

### General Occurrence Reports with the Mental Health Flag

GO reports with the mental health flag represent only GO reports where the mental health study flag translation was selected and as such, the number of mental health flags likely underestimates the prevalence of incidents that involved persons with mental health concerns. A lower number may reflect an underutilization of the mental health flag in GO reports, as it is not a mandatory field and agency practices may differ.

For example, the flag data would not include GO reports that **did not** record any mental health concerns at all. As well, the flag data would not include GO reports where the flag was **not** selected and the mental health concern was noted elsewhere, such as in another field, another report, or in an agency-specific template. Some agencies respond to this request with counts from their agency-specific template.

This counting method is intended to ensure consistency between agencies' mental health figures, and the mental health flag was determined to be the most practical and reliable way for agencies to extract their data on the number of incidents involving persons with mental health concerns.

### Use-of-Force Data

The data in this report include numbers on police operational use of firearms, extended range impact weapons (ERIWs), oleoresin capicum (OC) spray, batons, conducted energy weapons (CEWs), and police service dogs (PSDs) apprehensions (appreh). Data includes discharges/applications and displays.

Data for different force options are combined in this report and are comparable, even though different force options may be counted in different ways in these publications. The following outlines counting methodologies:

- Firearm discharges are presented by number of police incidents with a firearm discharge;

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- Firearm displays and PSD applications are presented by number of officers who used the force option per subject of the force option in a police incident; and
- All uses of ERIWs, OC spray, batons, specialty munitions, weapons of opportunity or improvised weapons, as well as CEW discharges and displays, are presented by number of subjects of the force option in a police incident.
- Physical control-Soft (PC(S)) refers to techniques that are control oriented and have a lower probability of causing injury. They may include restraining techniques, joint locks and non-resistant handcuffing. Agencies are required to report only those uses of physical control-soft that resulted in injury to either the officer or subject. These are counted by the number of subjects applied to.
- Physical control-Hard (PC(H)) refers to physical techniques that are intended to impede a person's behaviour or to allow application of a control technique; and have a higher probability of causing injury. They may include empty hand strikes such as punches and kicks. Agencies are required to report all uses of physical control-hard and they are counted by the number of subjects applied to.
- Officer-reported effectiveness rates or "Effective rate" refers to how many times PC(H) and PC(S) were considered effective in generating compliance from the subject. This is calculated by total effective applications / (total effective applications + total ineffective applications). The sum of effective counts may differ from the total applied, while total applied are counted by number of subjects, effective is counted by the number of times an officer's use was considered effective.

Use of force may be attributed to a different police agency from where the involved officer was employed in some cases, such as incidents involving seconded police officers, integrated emergency response teams, or requests for assistance from other police agencies.

### Use-of-Force Data and Perceived Emotional State of Subject

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/her/themself, or others." As of October 23, 2022, the term "person in crisis" has replaced "emotionally disturbed persons" within the RCMP reporting system. Data on emotional state are based on whether the subject was perceived by the officer to be, and recorded by the officer as, an EDP. As counts of EDP subjects are reflective of an officer's perception and what the officer recorded in the use-of-force report, counts may not be completely reflective of the actual number of EDP subjects.