



WINNIPEG POLICE SERVICE

REPORT TO THE WINNIPEG POLICE BOARD

TO: Chair, Winnipeg Police Board

FROM: Chief Gene Bowers

SUBJECT: 2024 Use of Force Report

DATE: May 23, 2025

RECOMMENDATION

That this report be received as information by the Winnipeg Police Board.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications within this report.

BACKGROUND

The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) requires that the Service establish and maintain written procedures on the use of force that guide the decisions of members. In addition, the CALEA standards require that all police members authorized to carry weapons receive appropriate training and pass mandatory recertification on safe handling and proper usage of weapons and control tactics. Less than lethal weapons and weaponless control techniques require recertification on a biennial basis, while firearms and Conducted Energy Weapons (CEW) proficiency must be recertified annually. Written reports and administrative reviews are required whenever force is used and firearms or Conducted Energy Weapons are discharged or presented to coerce compliance.

The Service provides this Report to the Winnipeg Police Board and the public for information, context and transparency.

DISCUSSION

The authority of Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) members to use force is established by the *Criminal Code of Canada*. Police Officers are issued lethal (i.e. firearms) and intermediate weapons, whereas Auxiliary Cadets and Central Processing Officers are issued intermediate weapons only. The WPS requires each member to complete qualification training before being issued weapons, with annual recertification training for CEW and firearms and biennial recertification training for intermediate weapons. Classroom lectures accompany all hands-on training on the decision-making framework in the Service's procedures for the use of force to ensure members are aware of their obligations to act within the legal authorization provided by the *Criminal Code*. While the WPS Professional Standards Unit carefully investigates complaints of excessive force received by the Service, the Independent Investigation Unit of Manitoba investigates cases where use of force results in a serious injury or the loss of life.

Reporting Use of Force

In all cases where force is used, except during training purposes, a Use of Force Report is required. The report allows for independent review and assessment by experts as to whether the force application was reasonable and necessary given the totality of circumstances. It also allows the Service to identify trends and opportunities for improvement through training, equipment or procedural updates. The statistical data in the tables of this report are subject to regular review and reclassification. Minor changes may occur over time; however, historical statistics are not revised retroactively.

The WPS dispatched events totaled 239,903 in 2024. Within these events, 968 reported incidents resulting in either the application of force or the presentation of a weapon by police members to gain compliance. Members resolved 99.6% of all dispatched events without using force or displaying a weapon. For context, in 2024, there was approximately one Use of Force Report for every 248 dispatched events.

5-Year Comparison of Use of Force Reports

Year	Dispatched Calls for Service	Use of Force Reports	Percentage of Use of Force Encounters
2019	231,668	858	0.37%
2020	241,795	741	0.31%
2021	234,058	696	0.30%
2022	234,212	784	0.33%
2023	247,373	863	0.35%
5-year average	237,821	788	0.33%
2024	239,903	968	0.40%

*Review of reports and classifications is an on-going process which may result in minor variations over time.

The number of Use of Force Reports is dictated by interactions in the field. As such, these numbers are determined by the behaviour of subjects and their willingness to comply with members. In 2024, both the number of reports and the percentage of dispatched events for service were higher than the 5-year average.

5-Year Comparison of Assaultive and Violent Resistance

Year	Defensive Resistance	Active Aggression	Aggravated Active Aggression
2019	72.27%	47.36%	18.21%
2020	69.95%	51.75%	21.02%
2021	71.53%	47.93%	20.74%
2022	72.05%	48.59%	20.64%
2023	69.76%	47.74%	21.67%
5-year average	71.11%	48.67%	20.05%
2024	70.87%	49.90%	22.42%

The table above shows the frequency of each type of resistance recorded in a Use of Force Report. A single report may document multiple levels of resistance and corresponding control measures.

In 2024, Defensive Resistance, Active Aggression and Aggravated Active Aggression increased from the prior year, while only Defensive Resistance fell below the 5- year average. Members faced situations where Aggravated Active Aggression accounted for 22.42% of the overall aggression. These types of encounters are volatile and carry the risk of death or grievous bodily harm to members, the subjects and potential bystanders. The increase has largely been attributed to encounters with individuals exhibiting the effects of methamphetamine. Individuals under the influence of methamphetamine often have a high tolerance to pain and are far less responsive to de-escalation techniques, including verbal and physical.

Types of Control Used

The *Criminal Code*, policy and procedure as well as training dictate that members regulate their actions based on the threat level presented by a subject and that the minimum level of force required to gain compliance be used. In the vast majority of calls, tactical communication and member presence are sufficient to restore order or gain compliance.

5-Year Comparison of Control Used

Year	Soft Empty Hand Control	Hard Empty Hand Control	Intermediate Weapons	Deadly Force presented or deployed
2019	74.45%	40.96%	35.12%	19.25%
2020	76.82%	40.84%	35.71%	18.33%
2021	77.97%	38.77%	33.76%	21.32%
2022	79.36%	40.26%	37.82%	23.33%
2023	77.87%	39.17%	39.98%	23.75%
5-year average	77.29%	40.00%	36.48%	21.20%
2024	77.79%	39.98%	41.74%	18.18%
Incidents (out of 968)	753	394	404	176

The table above shows a comparison of controls used, detailing the frequency by way of a percentage and count for each category of control as recorded within a Use of Force Report. Incidents may include more than one control option in either escalating and de-escalating order. As such, table totals are greater than one hundred percent for each year. In 2024, when compared to the 5-year average, the use of soft empty hand control and intermediate weapons increased, while hard empty hand control and deadly force presented or deployed decreased.

The Deadly Force presented or deployed category refers to incidents where members used their firearms to gain compliance, but did not necessarily discharge them. In 2024, firearms were used to coerce compliance in 18.18% of use of force incidents, with the vast majority of these instances involved only the presentation of a service pistol to gain compliance from a subject.

5-Year Comparison of Intermediate Weapons

Year	Intermediate Weapons Deployment					
			Conducted Energy Weapon			
	OC Spray	ASP Baton	Presented/ Coerce	Probes Deployed	Push Stun	Canine Bite
2019	10	10	94	154	26	9
2020	8	12	94	124	25	11
2021	3	6	85	117	21	5
2022	10	10	106	129	30	9
2023	22	19	95	176	31	6
5-year average	11	11	95	140	27	8
2024	7	4	221	216	87	12

In 2024, the Conducted Energy Weapon (CEW) was used 524 times, this is an increase from the 5-year average (262). The CEW remains the most used intermediate weapon and most effective level of control, with the least likelihood of causing injury, compared to physical control techniques.

5-Year Comparison of Police Member Involved Shootings

Year	Member Involved Shooting	Fatalities
2019	5	2
2020	5	4
2021	0	0
2022	6	3
2023	3	3
5-year average	4	2
2024	6	4

The six police member involved shootings in 2024 is higher than both the prior year and the 5-year average. As required by law, all such shootings are investigated by the Independent Investigation Unit of Manitoba.

5-Year Reported Injuries

Year	Use of Force Reports	Members injured	Percentage Injured	Subjects injured	Percentage Injured
2019	858	88	10.26%	253	29.49%
2020	741	88	11.88%	192	25.91%
2021	696	73	10.49%	170	24.43%
2022	784	82	10.46%	165	21.05%
2023	863	88	10.20%	203	23.52%
5-year Average	788	84	10.66%	197	25.00%
2024	968	80	8.26%	195	20.14%

In 2024, both the number of members and subjects injured during physical conflicts, as well as the injury rates per use of force event, decreased compared to the 5-year averages.

Complaints Related to Use of Force

In 2024, the Professional Standards Unit did not receive any use of force complaints not meeting the legislative criteria to refer to the Independent Investigation Unit (IIU). This is similar to the prior year and below the 5-year average. The public can submit formal complaints to the Law Enforcement Review Agency (LERA) for an independent investigation. The outcomes of investigations by both LERA and the IIU are published separately from this report.

5-Year Professional Standards Unit – Excessive Force Allegation Dispositions

Type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	5-Year Average	2024
Abandoned	1	1	0	3	0	1.0	0
Crown Opinion- No charge	0	0	1	0	0	0.2	0
Informal Resolution	0	0	0	2	0	0.4	0
Not Sustained	1	0	0	0	0	0.2	0
Unfounded	1	1	0	0	0	0.4	0
Proper Conduct	0	2	0	0	0	0.4	0
Insufficient Evidence	0	2	1	0	0	0.6	0
Total	3	6	2	5	0	3.2	0

Officer Safety Unit Initiatives

The Officer Safety Unit (OSU) is responsible for providing use of force training within the Service. A 99.6% rate of resolving dispatched events without physical force indicates training is effective and reinforces the importance of de-escalation tactics.

An area in which de-escalation has become especially relevant involves people experiencing signs and symptoms of mental health issues. As a result, the OSU has placed more emphasis on training scenarios involving de-escalation of a person in crisis, including collaborative training events with the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service. This emphasis on persons in crisis has always been and will continue to be included in basic training for Recruits, Cadets and Central Processing Officers alike. In keeping with the commitment to emphasize this element of training, it has also become part of senior member recertification training. This will reinforce the techniques of utilizing lower levels of force before resorting to higher levels of force when a person in crisis is encountered.

In 2024, the OSU successfully rolled out the new Taser 7 replacing the discontinued Taser X2 model. The new Taser offers design improvements, including a close-range optimized cartridge and improved probes enabling safer and more effective deployment of this intermediate weapon.

The OSU continues to review use of force reports, seek member feedback, interact with outside agencies, and evaluate new equipment to be progressive in the type and amount of training provided to Service members.

Gene Bowers
Chief of Police