

# An Analysis of Complaints against the RCMP in British Columbia\*

A 15-Year Review: 1994 – 2008

Darryl Plecas, Jennifer Armstrong, Lisa Tassone, Irwin M. Cohen, and Amanda V. McCormick  
Centre for Criminal Justice Research  
School of Criminology and Criminal Justice  
University of the Fraser Valley



\*A report prepared for Operations Strategy Branch, "E" Division, Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

June 2010

# An Analysis of Complaints against the RCMP in British Columbia

## A 15 Year Review: 1994-2008

2010

Authors: Darryl Plecas  
Jennifer Armstrong  
Lisa Tassone  
Irwin M. Cohen  
Amanda V. McCormick

© No part of this publication may be used or reproduced in whole or in part, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher. To obtain permission, contact the Centre for Public Safety and Criminal Justice Research at 33844 King Road, Abbotsford, British Columbia, V2S 7M8.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

An analysis of complaints against the RCMP in British Columbia [electronic resource] : a 15 year review: 1994-2008 / Darryl Plecas ... [et al.].

Includes bibliographical references.  
Electronic monograph in PDF format.  
ISBN 978-0-9876843-1-8

1. Royal Canadian Mounted Police--Corrupt practices. 2. Police--Complaints against--British Columbia. I. Plecas, Darryl Blair II. Centre for Public Safety and Criminal Justice Research

## Introduction

This report is in response to a request from the E Division Operations Strategy Branch of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to conduct a statistical review of complaints by the public against the RCMP in British Columbia. Specifically, the request was to describe the nature and extent of complaints against the RCMP in British Columbia, as well as the associated handling of complaints against the RCMP by either the RCMP or the Commission for Public Complaints against the RCMP (CPC). When a member of the public wishes to make a complaint against an RCMP officer, they can do so either directly to the RCMP or to the CPC. As part of this report, analyses will be conducted to determine whether there were any substantial differences in the nature and extent of complaints made to the RCMP or the CPC and whether there were any substantial differences in the outcomes, the amount of time it took to resolve complaints, and the level of satisfaction with the outcome between these two bodies.

The data used to conduct the review was drawn from the electronic files of E Division's Professional Standards Unit as this unit holds files on all complaints against the RCMP in British Columbia. The files, being in electronic form, facilitated the ability of the authors to construct an anonymized database of complaints over a 15 year time period (1994-2008). Electronic files for 2009 were also available, but since a large proportion of these files had not yet been concluded, they were excluded from this current review.

The database was designed in order to provide information on when the complaint was made, where the complaint originated from, the nature of the complaint, whether the complaint was lodged with the RCMP or the CPC, how complaints were handled, their outcome, and the characteristics of both complainants and the RCMP employees involved. Overall, the report analysed 19,093 allegations associated to 12,063 separate complaints, involving 10,778 individual complainants and 7,959 individual RCMP members and other employees over a 15-year period.

As will be demonstrated throughout this report, complaints, especially substantiated complaints, against individual RCMP officers and other employees of the RCMP were remarkably uncommon when considered against the fact that the RCMP in British Columbia respond to more than 1,000,000 calls for service each year. According to the data to be presented, it can be expected that an RCMP officer working in British Columbia, on average, would be the subject of a substantiated complaint only once for every nine years of service. Further, regardless of the outcome of the complaint and the nature of the complaint, the vast majority of complainants were satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, particularly when it came to complaints lodged with the RCMP as compared to complaints lodged with the CPC.

## Results

In order to understand the key issues associated with complaints against the RCMP, it is important to identify how many complaints were typically lodged by the public in any given year. As demonstrated in Table 1, while the range for the number of complaints lodged against the RCMP was at as low as 633 in one year and as high as 1,199 in another it might appear to suggest that there were significant fluctuations in the number of complaints over a 13 year period<sup>1</sup>. However, when considering the number of calls for service that the RCMP responded to in any given year or the number of contacts that RCMP officers and employees had with the public each year, the number of complaints actually amount to extremely minor fluctuations (less than one half of 1% of all calls for service). Moreover, over this period of time, the overall population of British Columbia has grown as has the number of contacts the RCMP has had with the public.

Still, the average number of complaints made per year over the 13 year period from 1996 to 2008 was 830 complaints. Further, the average number of complaints per year, when considering only the last five years of the study period was 781 or 6% below the 13 year average. In effect, given the increase in British Columbia's population, the increase in police contacts with the public, and the increase in the number of officers and employees in the RCMP from 1994 to 2008, one would expect to see a substantial increase in the number of complaints over time, rather than the minor fluctuations presented in Table 1.

---

<sup>1</sup> The authors refer to a 13 year period for the calculation of a yearly average here because electronic files were not available for all of the complaints lodged in these years for the years 1994 and 1995.

**Table 1**  
**Number of Incidents Involving Complaints Against 'E' Division RCMP**

Year	# of Incidents
1994	143
1995	275
1996	864
1997	1069
1998	1199
1999	1162
2000	921
2001	906
2002	844
2003	781
2004	699
2005	633
2006	707
2007	866
2008	1002
<b>Overall Per Year</b>	<b>805</b>

In terms of where the complaints against the RCMP originated from, as demonstrated in Table 2, there was a slight over-representation of complaints in the Southeast and North Districts of the province, and a corresponding under-representation in the Lower Mainland District. Again, while there was some fluctuation year over year, it is fair to say that this difference remained relatively constant over time. However, it is not immediately clear why there was this over-representation of complaints from the Southeast and the North Districts.

**Table 2**  
**Incidents of Complaints by District (1994 - 2008)**

District	% of Total	% of Total Calls for Service
Lower Mainland	41	48
Southeast	23	20
North	19	15
Island	17	17

**Notes:**

1. All figures rounded.
2. Calls for service calculation based on the average number of calls per service per year from 1998 through 2008.

As mentioned above, the individual complainant decides whether to lodge their complaint with the RCMP or with the CPC. As demonstrated in Table 3, nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) of all the complaints over the 15 year study period were lodged with the CPC. Calculating an average for the last five years of the study period, the percentage of cases lodged through the CPC increased slightly to just more than two-thirds (68 per cent). Interestingly, the proportion of complaints lodged with the CPC increased to 71% and 80% in 2007 and 2008 respectively, suggesting that complainants may be becoming more comfortable using the CPC than the RCMP when lodging a complaint against the RCMP. Still, it is possible that these two years simply represented fluctuations, as the proportion of complaints that went through the CPC was also 71% in 1998.

**Table 3**  
**The Proportion of Complaints against the RCMP Lodged With the RCMP and the CPC**  
**(1994 - 2008)**

Year	% Lodged With RCMP	% Lodged With CPC
1994	51	49
1995	32	68
1996	37	61
1997	37	63
1998	29	71
1999	35	65
2000	38	62
2001	39	61
2002	37	63
2003	56	44
2004	36	64
2005	40	60
2006	37	63
2007	29	71
2008	20	80
<b>Overall Average</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>64%</b>

**Notes:**

1. n = 12,063
2. All figures rounded.
3. Excludes eight cases lodged with the Attorney General of British Columbia.

Critical to the issue of complaints against the RCMP is the degree to which files are properly investigated and concluded to the satisfaction of the public and the police. As demonstrated by Table 4, as of the Fall of 2009, when this database was created, all complaint files lodged with either the RCMP or the CPC against the RCMP between 1994 and 2002 had been concluded. Moreover, nearly all complaints lodged in 2003 had been concluded and large proportions (90 per cent and higher) of all complaints in 2004 and 2005, regardless of whether the complaint was lodged with the RCMP or the CPC, were concluded. As expected, given the amount of time passed, and the average amount of time needed to conclude a complaint file (see Table 5), smaller proportions of complaints from 2006, 2007, and 2008 were concluded, but again, the proportion of files concluded for 2007 and 2006 was very high.

**Table 4**  
**Proportion of Complaint Files Against the RCMP Concluded by the RCMP and CPC**

Year	% RCMP Concluded	% CPC Concluded
1994	100	100
1995	100	100
1996	100	100
1997	100	100
1998	100	100
1999	100	100
2000	100	100
2001	100	100
2002	100	100
2003	100	98
2004	97	94
2005	95	90
2006	86	79
2007	89	80
2008	71	56
<b>Overall</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>92%</b>

**Notes:**

1. N = 12,063
2. All figures rounded.

Central to the issue of the proportion of complaint files concluded by the RCMP and the CPC is the average amount of time required to conclude a file. As demonstrated in Table 5, on average, the RCMP concluded a complaint file in 132 days compared to 253 days for the CPC. One possible explanation for why the CPC took nearly twice as long to conclude a file was, as mentioned above, the CPC handled approximately two-thirds of the complaints, while the RCMP only handled one-third. This larger number of files may have contributed to the increase in time it took the CPC to conclude a complaint file. Notwithstanding this possible explanation, it is important to recognise that, with few exceptions, since 2001, there was a general increase in the amount of time it took to conclude complaint files for both the RCMP and the CPC, and this occurred over a period of time in which the number of complaints either decreased or basically held steady. It is also important to note that it is not appropriate to consider the average number of days to conclude a file in both 2007 and 2008 because of the large proportion of files that had not been concluded from these years which would likely drive the average much higher than the average reported in Table 5.

**Table 5**  
**Average Number of Days Taken to Conclude a Complaint File**

Year	Cases Lodged With RCMP	Cases Lodged With CPC
1994	223	279
1995	249	237
1996	89	146
1997	86	221
1998	78	214
1999	100	225
2000	221	281
2001	121	281
2002	122	299
2003	147	317
2004	183	390
2005	165	351
2006	186	299
2007	93	224
2008	87	172
<b>Overall</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>253</b>

**Notes:**

1. n = 11,275
2. All figures rounded.

Another important issue is the specific types of allegations associated to complaints. As one complaint can involve more than one allegation, the approximately 12,000 complaints over the 15 year time period generated approximately 19,000 allegations; an average of 1,273 allegations per year. To facilitate a comprehensive analysis of the nature of these allegations, all allegations were grouped into one of sixteen categories (see Table 6). The four types of allegations that made up the largest proportion of allegations over the 15 year time period were: neglect of duty (22 per cent or 285 per year); improper attitude (20 per cent or 256 per year; oppressive conduct (14 per cent or 176 per year); and use of force (14 per cent or 173 per year). In effect, these four categories of allegations comprised 70% of all allegations over the 15 year time period. When considering just the last five years of the study period, no category of allegation had a substantial increase from the 15-year average. In fact, oppressive conduct had a large decrease, on average, over the past five years compared to the 15-year average (-36 per cent).

**Table 6**  
**Number and Type of Allegations Associated to Complaints Lodged**  
**Within 'E' Division RCMP**  
**(Yearly Average 1994 - 2008)**

Type of Allegation	15 Year Average	Last 5 Year Average	% Difference
<b>Neglect of Duty</b>	285	297	+4
<b>Improper Attitude</b>	256	274	+7
<b>Oppressive Conduct</b>	176	113	-36
<b>Use of Force</b>	173	182	+5
<b>Improper Arrest</b>	85	84	-1
<b>Irregular Procedures</b>	84	81	-4
<b>Service</b>	44	20	-55
<b>Statutory Offence</b>	37	20	-46
<b>Mishandling Property</b>	32	33	+3
<b>Improper Search of Premises</b>	25	26	+4
<b>Improper Search of Vehicle/Person</b>	18	18	0
<b>Irregular Driving</b>	17	18	+6
<b>Irregular Evidence</b>	15	12	-20
<b>Use of Firearm</b>	12	10	-17
<b>Policy</b>	11	7	-36
<b>Equipment</b>	3	1	-67
<b>Overall Average Per Year</b>	<b>1,273</b>	<b>1,184</b>	<b>-7</b>
<b>Notes:</b>			
1. n = 19,093			

An allegation and a complaint can be resolved in several ways. Regardless of whether the complaint was lodged with the RCMP or the CPC, all complaints were resolved formally or informally, terminated, or withdrawn. Tables 7 and 8 provides the results of an analysis into how complaints were resolved through the RCMP and the CPC. In considering this data, the general finding was that, with some minor exceptions, the majority of allegations lodged with either the RCMP or CPC were resolved formally. Furthermore, both the RCMP and CPC resolved a substantial proportion of allegations informally, on average 29% and 23% respectively. In addition, the RCMP had a lower proportion of allegations withdrawn (5 per cent compared to 9 per cent) or terminated (7 per cent compared to 11 per cent) than the CPC.

With respect to the four largest categories of allegations, the RCMP resolved formally a slightly larger proportion of neglect of duty (60 per cent compared to 52 per cent) and oppressive conduct (57 per cent compared to 55 per cent) allegations compared to the CPC, while the CPC resolved formally a slightly larger proportion of improper attitude (47 per cent compared to 43 per cent) and use of force (69 per cent compared to 68 per cent) allegations compared to the RCMP.

**Table 7**  
**How Complaints Within 'E' Division RCMP were Resolved**  
**RCMP Lodged Complaints Only**  
**(1994 - 2008)**

Type of Allegation	% Informal	% Formal	% Withdrawn	% Terminated
Neglect of Duty	26	60	5	7
Improper Attitude	48	43	5	4
Oppressive Conduct	31	57	4	8
Use of Force	20	68	7	5
Improper Arrest	21	68	6	5
Irregular Procedures	28	58	6	6
Service	38	45	7	9
Statutory Offence	5	83	6	5
Mishandling Property	18	71	2	9
Improper Search of Premises	30	63	3	3
Improper Search of Vehicle/Person	29	56	7	7
Irregular Driving	43	48	4	5
Irregular Evidence	14	69	-	14
Use of Firearm	36	60	4	-
Policy	40	49	3	9
Equipment	39	48	4	8
Average Overall	29%	59%	5%	7%

**Table 8**  
**How Complaints Within 'E' Division RCMP were Resolved**  
**CPC Lodged Complaints Only**  
**(1994 - 2008)**

Type of Allegation	% Informal	% Formal	% Withdrawn	% Terminated
Neglect of Duty	25	52	9	13
Improper Attitude	35	47	9	9
Oppressive Conduct	23	55	7	15
Use of Force	14	69	8	9
Improper Arrest	17	64	9	10
Irregular Procedures	22	57	10	11
Service	29	47	9	15
Statutory Offence	4	77	5	14
Mishandling Property	20	54	11	15
Improper Search of Premises	24	56	11	9
Improper Search of Vehicle/Person	24	57	10	9
Irregular Driving	32	42	18	8
Irregular Evidence	16	59	6	20
Use of Firearm	21	62	6	11
Policy	34	51	2	12
Equipment	28	55	14	3
Average Overall	23%	57%	9%	11%

When considering the different types of allegations and how they were resolved, there were important differences in how long it took to both the RCMP and the CPC to resolve the complaint. While the aforementioned trend of CPC taking longer to resolve allegations than the RCMP continued, as demonstrated in Tables 9 and 10, as expected, both the RCMP lodged complaints and the CPC lodged complaints took longest when the allegations were resolved formally. Considering all the allegations, RCMP lodged complaints that were resolved formally took, on average, 194 days to conclude compared to 340 days when the allegations were lodged with the CPC. For the RCMP, the resolution type which took the next longest amount of time were those allegations that were withdrawn (111 days); however, it was allegations that were terminated (239 days) which took next longest for CPC lodged complaints. While informal resolutions took the shortest amount of time for RCMP lodged allegations (65 days), withdrawn

allegations took the shortest amount of time (193 days) for CPC lodged complaints (see Tables 9 and 10). For the most part, this pattern held true regardless of the type of allegation.

**Table 9**  
**Average Number of Days Taken to Resolve a Complaint**  
**RCMP Lodged Complaints Only**  
**(1994 - 2008)**

Type of Allegation	Informal	Formal	Withdrawn	Terminated
Neglect of Duty	69	171	159	115
Improper Attitude	69	149	74	113
Oppressive Conduct	82	201	113	158
Use of Force	64	193	114	147
Improper Arrest	61	166	133	232
Irregular Procedures	68	155	241	218
Service	67	251	65	52
Statutory Offence	77	210	130	206
Mishandling Property	66	197	105	62
Improper Search of Premises	51	157	154	47
Improper Search of Vehicle/Person	73	159	228	174
Irregular Driving	52	165	44	58
Irregular Evidence	52	178	-	53
Use of Firearm	28	258	20	-
Policy	75	168	193	89
Equipment	80	320	4	61
<b>Average Overall</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>108</b>

**Table 10**  
**Average Number of Days Taken to Resolve a Complaint**  
**CPC Lodged Complaints Only**  
**(1994 - 2008)**

Type of Allegation	Informal	Formal	Withdrawn	Terminated
Neglect of Duty	166	305	224	178
Improper Attitude	185	325	226	208
Oppressive Conduct	172	329	255	258
Use of Force	230	358	196	425
Improper Arrest	213	346	188	355
Irregular Procedures	178	315	252	312
Service	167	320	235	242
Statutory Offence	243	394	167	363
Mishandling Property	168	349	167	212
Improper Search of Premises	205	357	144	167
Improper Search of Vehicle/Person	174	371	190	144
Irregular Driving	293	324	151	210
Irregular Evidence	205	323	321	189
Use of Firearm	183	386	453	116
Policy	224	312	117	312
Equipment	349	326	97	135
<b>Average Overall</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>239</b>

It is extremely important to keep in mind that not all allegations or complaints made by the public against the RCMP were founded or substantiated. As demonstrated in Table 11, a slight majority of allegations lodged with the RCMP (56 per cent) and the CPC (51 per cent) were found to be substantiated. While there were differences depending on the type of allegation, with few exceptions, the CPC generally substantiated a smaller proportion of allegations when compared to the RCMP. It was also interesting to note that when considering the top four categories of allegations, the RCMP substantiated a majority of neglect of duty (58 per cent), oppressive conduct (56 per cent), and use of force (65 per cent) allegations, while the CPC substantiated a majority of oppressive conduct (53 per cent) and use of force (61 per cent) allegations (see Table 11). Of note, the allegation type which had the highest proportion substantiated by the RCMP was statutory offence allegations (84 per cent); however, this only involved a very small number of substantiated allegations (16 allegations). This allegation type was also the one that had the highest proportion (76 per cent) substantiated by the CPC.

**Table 11**  
**Proportion of Allegations Associated to Substantiated Complaints Lodged**  
**Within 'E' Division RCMP Per Year**  
**(1994 - 2008)**

Type of Allegation	% of Allegations Lodged With RCMP that were Substantiated	% of Allegations Lodged With PCP that were Substantiated	Total Number of Substantiated Allegations
Neglect of Duty	58%	47%	139
Improper Attitude	42%	44%	109
Oppressive Conduct	56%	53%	95
Use of Force	65%	61%	109
Improper Arrest	64%	58%	52
Irregular Procedures	57%	55%	47
Service	44%	47%	20
Statutory Offence	84%	76%	30
Mishandling Property	66%	49%	17
Improper Search of Premises	59%	52%	14
Improper Search of Vehicle/Person	52%	52%	10
Irregular Driving	47%	39%	8
Irregular Evidence	66%	57%	9
Use of Firearm	58%	60%	7
Policy	49%	51%	5
Equipment	48%	55%	2
<b>Overall Average Per Year</b>	<b>227 or 56%</b>	<b>403 or 51%</b>	<b>630 or 53%</b>
<b>Notes:</b>			
1. All figures are rounded.			

Perhaps the most important result of the complaint process is the degree to which the complainant was satisfied with the outcome. An analysis was undertaken to determine the proportion of complainants who were satisfied with the outcome based on the nature of the allegation and the way in which the allegation was resolved. Moreover, a comparison was conducted between allegations lodged with the RCMP and those lodged with the CPC. As demonstrated in Tables 12 and 13, for both the RCMP and the CPC, with very few exceptions, all complainants were satisfied when the allegation was resolved informally, and an overwhelming majority (97 per cent for RCMP lodged allegations and 99 per cent for CPC lodged allegations) were satisfied when the complaint was withdrawn. Perhaps not surprising,

the lowest levels of satisfaction were with complaints that were terminated (87 per cent for RCMP lodged allegations and 69 per cent for CPC lodged complaints). Of note, the levels of satisfaction for both formally resolved complaints and those terminated were higher for complaints lodged with the RCMP. Furthermore, when considering the four most frequent allegation categories, while the proportion of complainants who were satisfied with the outcome, regardless of how the allegations were resolved, was extremely high (ranging from 90 per cent to 95 per cent for RCMP lodged allegations and 81 per cent to 86 per cent for CPC lodged complaints), satisfaction levels were consistently higher among those who lodged their complaints with the RCMP than with the CPC. A further analysis determined that a complainant's satisfaction was not statistically significantly related to how long it took to resolve the complaint – regardless of the nature of the allegation.

**Table 12**  
**Percentage of Complainants Satisfied With Outcome of Complaints Lodged With RCMP**  
**(1994 - 2008)**

Type of Allegation	Informal	Formal	Withdrawn	Terminated	Combined
<b>Neglect of Duty</b>	100	85	98	82	90
<b>Improper Attitude</b>	100	90	100	91	95
<b>Oppressive Conduct</b>	100	89	97	87	93
<b>Use of Force</b>	100	91	100	93	94
<b>Improper Arrest</b>	100	87	100	86	91
<b>Irregular Procedures</b>	100	90	100	81	93
<b>Service</b>	100	75	100	85	87
<b>Statutory Offence</b>	100	94	100	93	94
<b>Mishandling Property</b>	100	84	100	100	90
<b>Improper Search of Premises</b>	100	91	67	100	94
<b>Improper Search of Vehicle/Person</b>	100	95	100	100	97
<b>Irregular Driving</b>	98	90	100	86	94
<b>Irregular Evidence</b>	100	83	-	33	77
<b>Use of Firearm</b>	100	94	100	-	96
<b>Policy</b>	100	91	100	83	94
<b>Equipment</b>	100	82	100	100	91
<b>Overall</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>92%</b>
<b>Notes:</b>					
1. All figures rounded.					

**Table 13**  
**Percentage of Complainants Satisfied With Outcome of Complaints Lodged With CPC**  
**(1994 - 2008)**

Type of Allegation	Informal	Formal	Withdrawn	Terminated	Combined
Neglect of Duty	99	73	99	63	82
Improper Attitude	99	71	98	71	86
Oppressive Conduct	100	75	98	67	81
Use of Force	99	80	100	79	86
Improper Arrest	100	75	99	73	83
Irregular Procedures	99	74	99	84	84
Service	100	75	100	71	84
Statutory Offence	100	77	100	65	78
Mishandling Property	100	80	97	77	86
Improper Search of Premises	100	68	100	59	80
Improper Search of Vehicle/Person	100	82	100	60	88
Irregular Driving	100	71	100	83	86
Irregular Evidence	100	80	100	54	83
Use of Firearm	100	80	100	54	83
Policy	97	68	100	67	79
Equipment	100	81	100	75	86
Overall	100%	75%	99%	69%	83%

**Notes:**  
1. All figures rounded.

One of the important features of the CPC is that it is independent of the RCMP. In addition, as mentioned above, although the public can lodge a complaint with either the RCMP or the CPC, in cases where a complaint was lodged with the RCMP, but the complainant was not satisfied with the resolution, the CPC has the authority and mandate to review the file. As demonstrated in Table 14, regardless of the nature of the allegation, all complaints that were resolved informally by the RCMP and reviewed by the CPC had that resolution supported by the CPC. Moreover, with the exception of a few allegations of oppressive conduct, all RCMP lodged allegations that were withdrawn also had that resolution supported by the CPC. A similarly large proportion of complaints resolved formally (91 per cent) or terminated (93 per cent) were supported by the CPC review. In considering the most common allegation categories, virtually all of the outcomes were supported by the CPC, ranging from a low of 91% for neglect of duty

allegations to a high of 97% for improper attitude. Overall, these findings indicated that the CPC, an independent body with a lot of experience dealing with complaints against the RCMP, overwhelmingly supported the ways in which the RCMP resolved complaints lodged against them over the 15 year time period of this study.

**Table 14**  
**Percentage of Time CPC Supported RCMP Findings**  
**(1994 - 2008)**

Type of Allegation	Informal	Formal	Withdraw	Terminated	Combined
<b>Neglect of Duty</b>	100	88	100	82	91
<b>Improper Attitude</b>	100	93	100	91	97
<b>Oppressive Conduct</b>	100	92	97	94	95
<b>Use of Force</b>	100	94	100	93	96
<b>Improper Arrest</b>	100	90	100	86	93
<b>Irregular Procedures</b>	100	92	100	89	95
<b>Service</b>	100	79	100	92	90
<b>Statutory Offence</b>	100	97	100	87	96
<b>Mishandling Property</b>	100	87	100	100	91
<b>Improper Search of Premises</b>	100	86	100	100	98
<b>Improper Search of Vehicle/Person</b>	100	95	100	100	97
<b>Irregular Driving</b>	100	94	100	100	97
<b>Irregular Evidence</b>	100	86	-	50	82
<b>Use of Firearm</b>	100	94	100	-	96
<b>Policy</b>	100	94	100	83	96
<b>Equipment</b>	100	91	100	100	96
<b>Overall</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>94%</b>

For the most part, those who lodged a complaint against the RCMP did so only once. In effect, over four-fifths (85 per cent) of complainants only lodged one complaint over the 15 year time period of this study. Moreover, eight individuals lodged two complaints, three people lodged three complaints, and one person lodged more than 10 complaints.<sup>2</sup> Approximately two-thirds (65 per cent) of complainants were male; however, there were no statistically significant differences between male and female complainants in terms of the type of allegation laid, the manner in which the allegations were resolved, or the level of satisfaction with the outcome.

In terms of the characteristics of the 7,959 RCMP officers and employees who were the subject of at least one complaint, 85% were male, 73% were Constables, 13% were Corporals and 6% were Sergeants (see Table 15). On average, the subject of the complaint had 11 years of service.

**Table 15**  
**Characteristics of Subjects of Complaints**  
**(1994 - 2008)**

Characteristic	Subjects
% Male	85
% Years of service	11
% Constables	73
% Corporal	13
% Sergeant	6
% Staff Sergeant	3
% Officer	2
% Other	3

**Notes:**

1. "Other" consists largely of civilian members.

As demonstrated in Table 16, of those RCMP members who had a complaint lodged against them at some point in their career over the 15 years of the study, a slight majority (55 per cent) of RCMP members had only one complaint lodged against them, while a much smaller proportion (17 per cent) received two complaints. While one in ten members had three complaints, only 11% of members had received four or more complaints. The largest number of complaints lodged against one member was 37 complaints.

---

<sup>2</sup> There was also one person who lodged four complaints, one who lodged five complaints, and one who lodged six complaints.

**Table 16**  
**Number of Times a Complaint Has Been Made Against an RCMP Member**  
**(1994 - 2008)**

# of Complaints	% of Members
One	55
Two	17
Three	10
Four	6
Five	4
Six	3
Seven	1
Eight	1
Nine	1
Ten or more	2

**Notes:**

1. Includes only members who had been the subject of at least one complaint.

When considering those members who had either a substantiated or an unsubstantiated complaint lodged against them through the RCMP or the CPC, and in further support for the findings presented in Table 16, the data clearly demonstrated that members were rarely the subject of a complaint. In effect, officers who had one year of experience were, on average, likely to have 1.3 substantiated or unsubstantiated complaints lodged against them (see Table 17). However, the number of complaints decreased with each year of service, and this trend was similar for both male and female members. In other words, as members' years of experience increased, the small number of complaints against them decreased.

As demonstrated by Table 17, a female member with five years of service, on average, would have .55 complaints per year, while her male counterpart would have .54 complaints per year. By 10 years of experience, a female member could expect to receive .30 complaints per year and her male counterpart could expect .36 complaints per year. Finally, a female member with 25 years of experience could expect to receive .07 complaints per year and her male counterpart would be the subject of .12 complaints per year. Again, these results included both substantiated and unsubstantiated complaints. In sum, keeping in mind that there were approximately, on average, 5,800 RCMP members working in British Columbia in a given year<sup>3</sup>,

---

<sup>3</sup> RCMP E Division provided data on how many officers and employees they had from 2001 to 2008. The average was 5,842 with a low of 5,326 in 2001 and a high of 6,706 in 2008.

and taking into account that there were, on average, 630 substantiated complaints each year, it can be assumed that an RCMP member would receive one substantiated complaint against them for every nine years of service.

**Table 17**  
**Average Number of Times an RCMP Member is the Subject of a Complaint Annually**  
**Considering Years of Service by Gender**

<b>Current Years of Service</b>	<b>Female Officer</b>	<b>Male Officer</b>
1	1.31	1.32
2	.81	.76
3	.64	.63
4	.56	.59
5	.55	.54
6	.40	.49
7	.38	.48
8	.40	.40
9	.34	.37
10	.30	.36
11	.26	.32
12	.26	.33
13	.21	.29
14	.17	.25
15	.17	.23
16	.16	.23
17	.22	.16
18	.22	.14
19	.11	.15
20	.13	.15
21	.20	.12
22	.11	.13
23	.16	.12
24	.25	.13
25	.07	.12

## Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent and nature of complaints against the RCMP in British Columbia, to identify any trends or patterns in the complaints, to examine how complaints were dealt with, and to identify any differences between RCMP lodged complaints and CPC lodged complaints. The analysis of the data resulted in several important conclusions.

While recent high profile cases of police misconduct might lead the public to believe that there has been a sharp increase in the number of complaints lodged against the police, the data simply does not support this conclusion. Rather, while there has been a small increase over the past few years in the number of incidents involving complaints against the RCMP in British Columbia, three of the past five years have had below average numbers of complaints.

Moreover, the years with the highest number of complaints were 1997 through to 1999. In effect, while there were year-to-year fluctuations in the number of complaints, there was no indication of a trend towards an increase in substantiated complaints against the RCMP.

While many might question the logic of having the RCMP investigate complaints made against it, it is important to remember that approximately two-thirds of complaints against the RCMP were lodged with the CPC and not the RCMP. However, in those cases where the allegations were lodged with the RCMP, the data clearly demonstrated that not only did the RCMP conclude a complaint substantially faster than the CPC, regardless of the nature of the allegation or the outcome, but the complainant was satisfied more often in instances of complaints resolved by the RCMP than in comparable complaints handled by the CPC. In a majority of cases, complaints were resolved formally. Moreover, in only rare instances were RCMP lodged complaints resolved in such a way that the resolution was not supported by the CPC when they reviewed the file.

Finally, given the number of contacts that RCMP officers have with the public every day, substantiated complaints against the RCMP were very rare and the more years of service that an officer had, the less likely they were to have a substantiated or even an unsubstantiated complaint lodged against them. Moreover, those who did have a complaint lodged against them typically only had this happen to them once. The most common allegations lodged against the RCMP were neglect of duty, improper attitude, oppressive conduct, and use of force. In effect, a member of the RCMP, on average, is going to have one complaint lodged against for every nine years of service.