

Policing Mental Illness in Burnaby: Analysis of Calls for Service

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Overview

- A series of small studies were conducted using police data from the City of Burnaby, British Columbia, and other lower mainland police agencies.

Examined the impact that calls for service involving persons with mental health issues has on police resources in the City of Burnaby.

Background

- 174 US Police Depts. (population over 100,000) found 7% of all police contacts – investigations and complaints – involved a person believed to have a mental illness (Reuland, Schwartzfeld & Draper, 1998).
- Approximately 5% of all police dispatches or encounters involve person with mental health problems, and, approximately half of police encounters that involve people with mental illness result in transport or referral to services (Livingston, 2011).

Background

- Vancouver Police, captured data over 16 day period in September 2007, and found in 31% of all calls where police attended involved at least one person with mental health issues (Bates, 2008).

Economic Analysis – 90 Police Officers
Equivalent

Background

- Vancouver Police anecdotally report significant increase in violence toward police by persons with mental health issues – or more accurately, with concurrent issues.
- Consistent with sentiment of Police Services across Canada.

The Revolving Door of Mental Health

Research Study

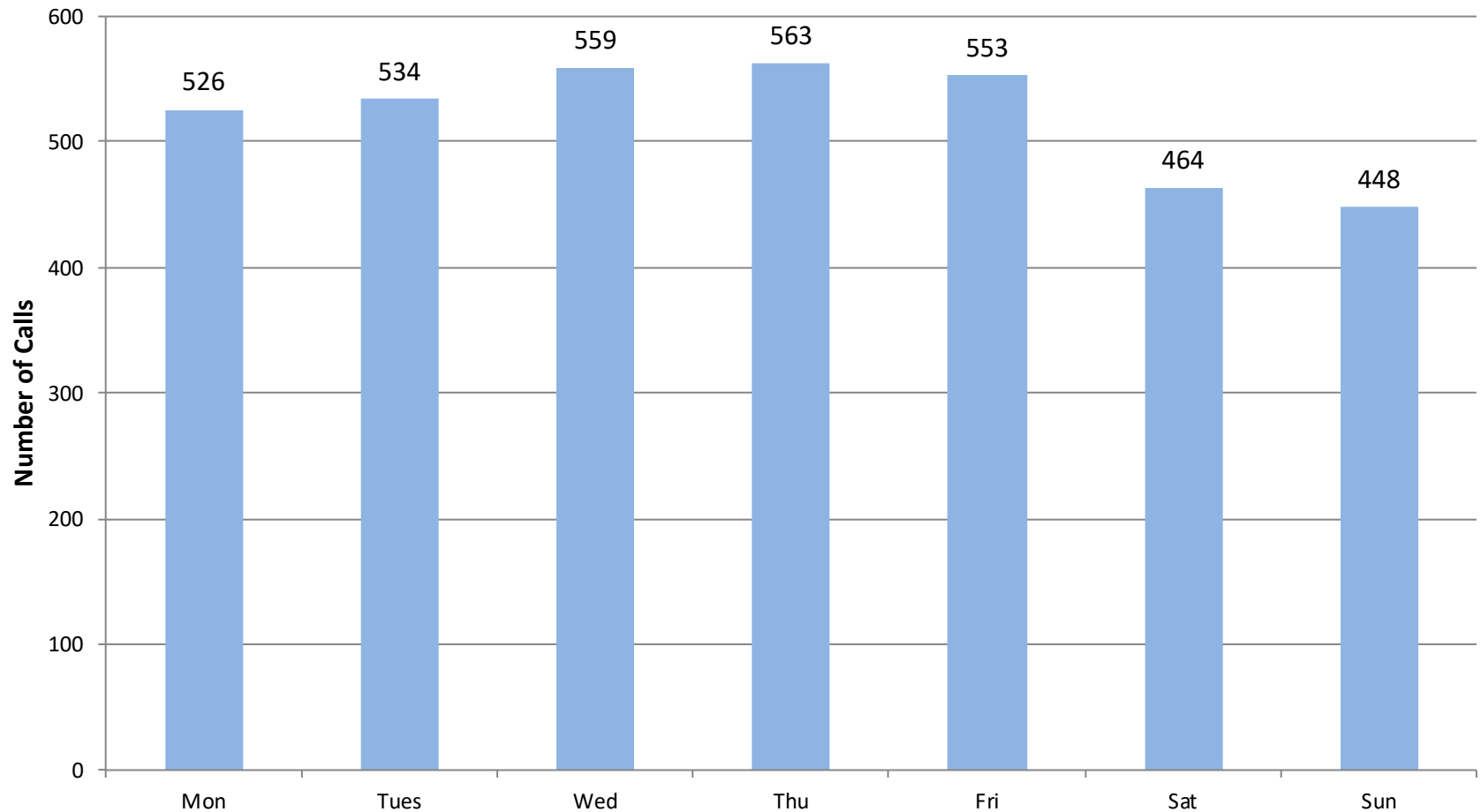
- Two separate, but complementary studies
- Assumptions:
 - If a person was identified as an Emotionally Disturbed Person (EDP) in one police file, that status was carried to other police files

Assumptions with respect to missing data.

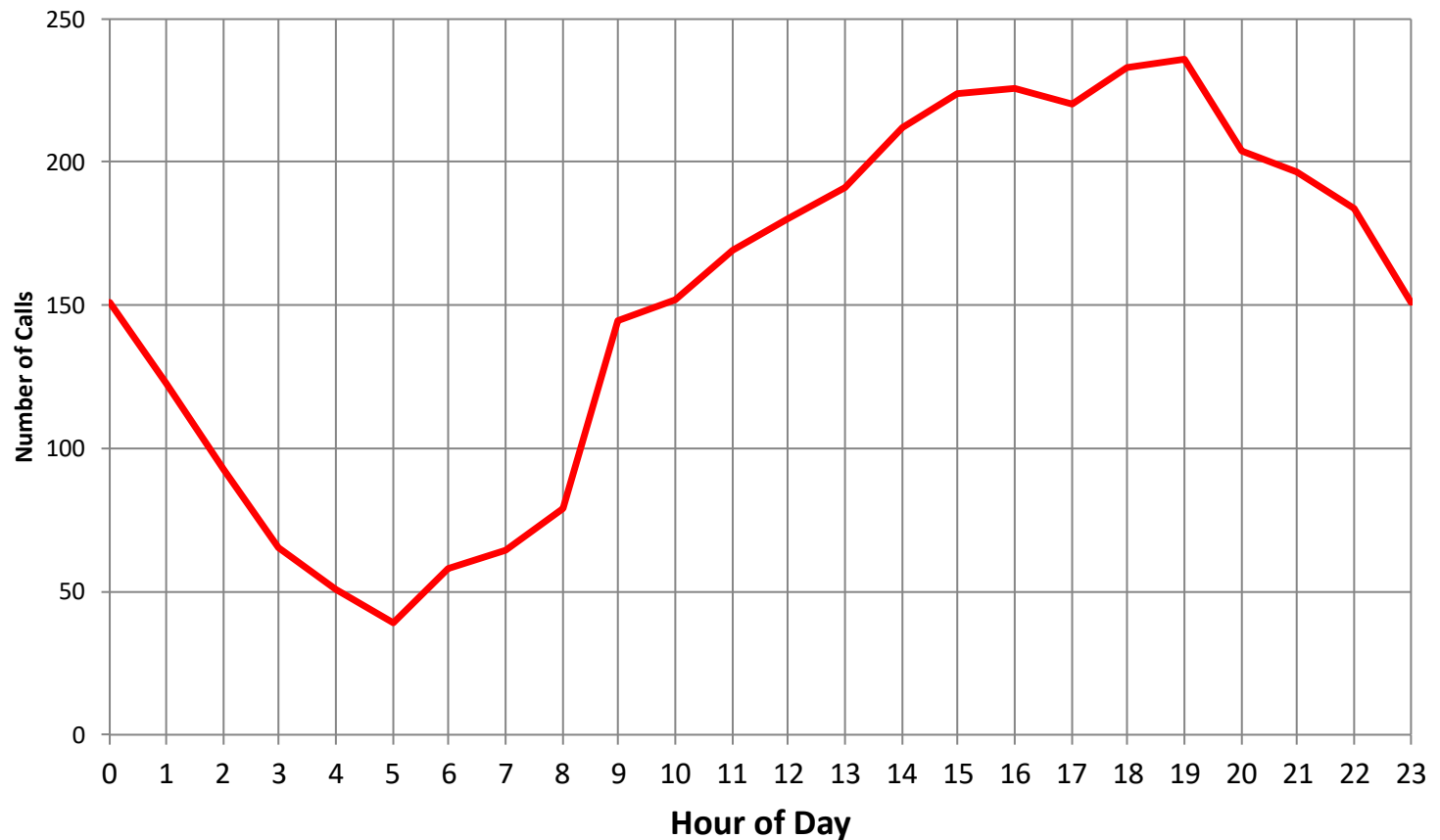
Study One

- Police indicated calls for service increased significantly on the opening of a new Mental Health facility in the city.
- Utilized police data 2008 – 2010. All calls for service classified or coded as Mental Health Act
- Temporal and Spatial patterns, and Subject Characteristics

Mental Health Calls by Day of Week: Burnaby Police 2008-2010 (N=3647 calls)

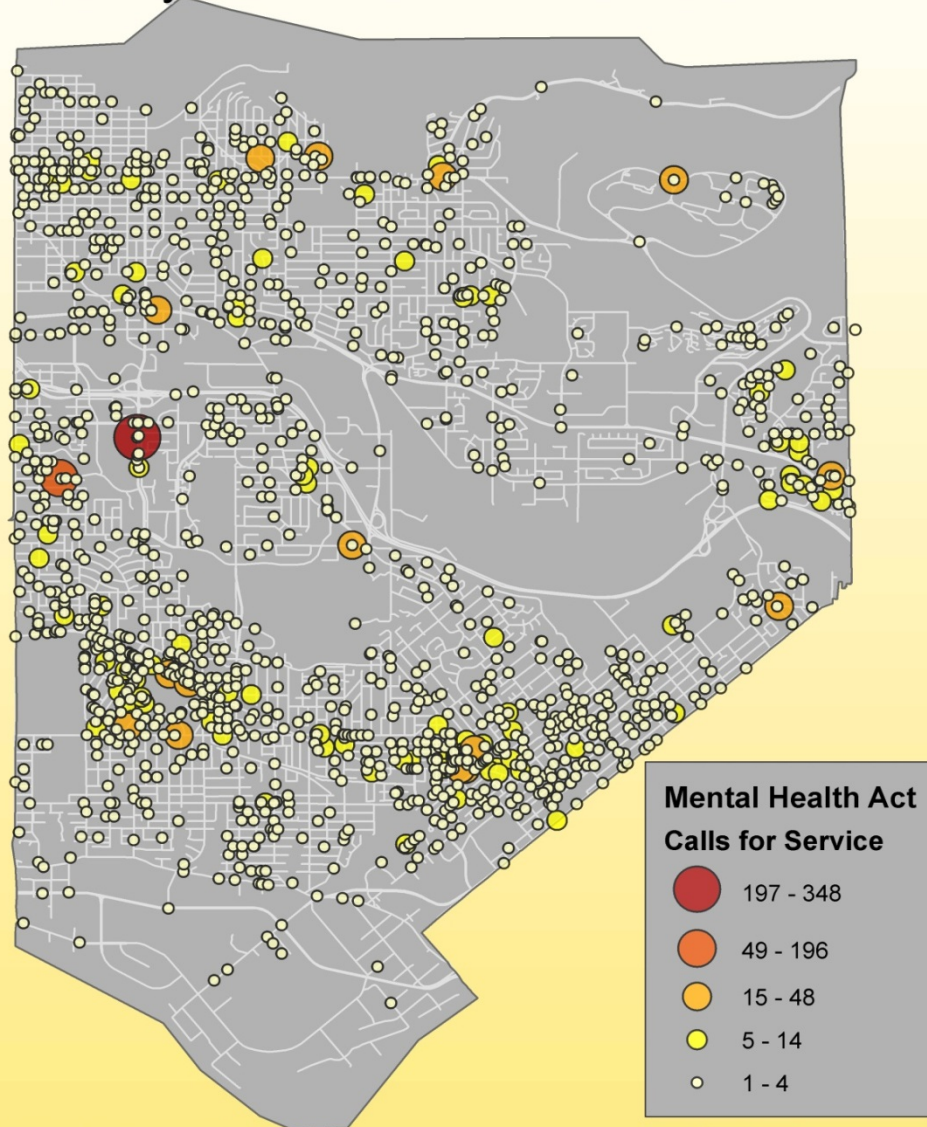


Time of Day of Mental Health Calls: Burnaby Police 2009-2010

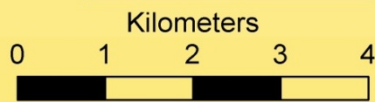




Mental Health Calls for Service: Burnaby Police Detachment 2008 - 2010



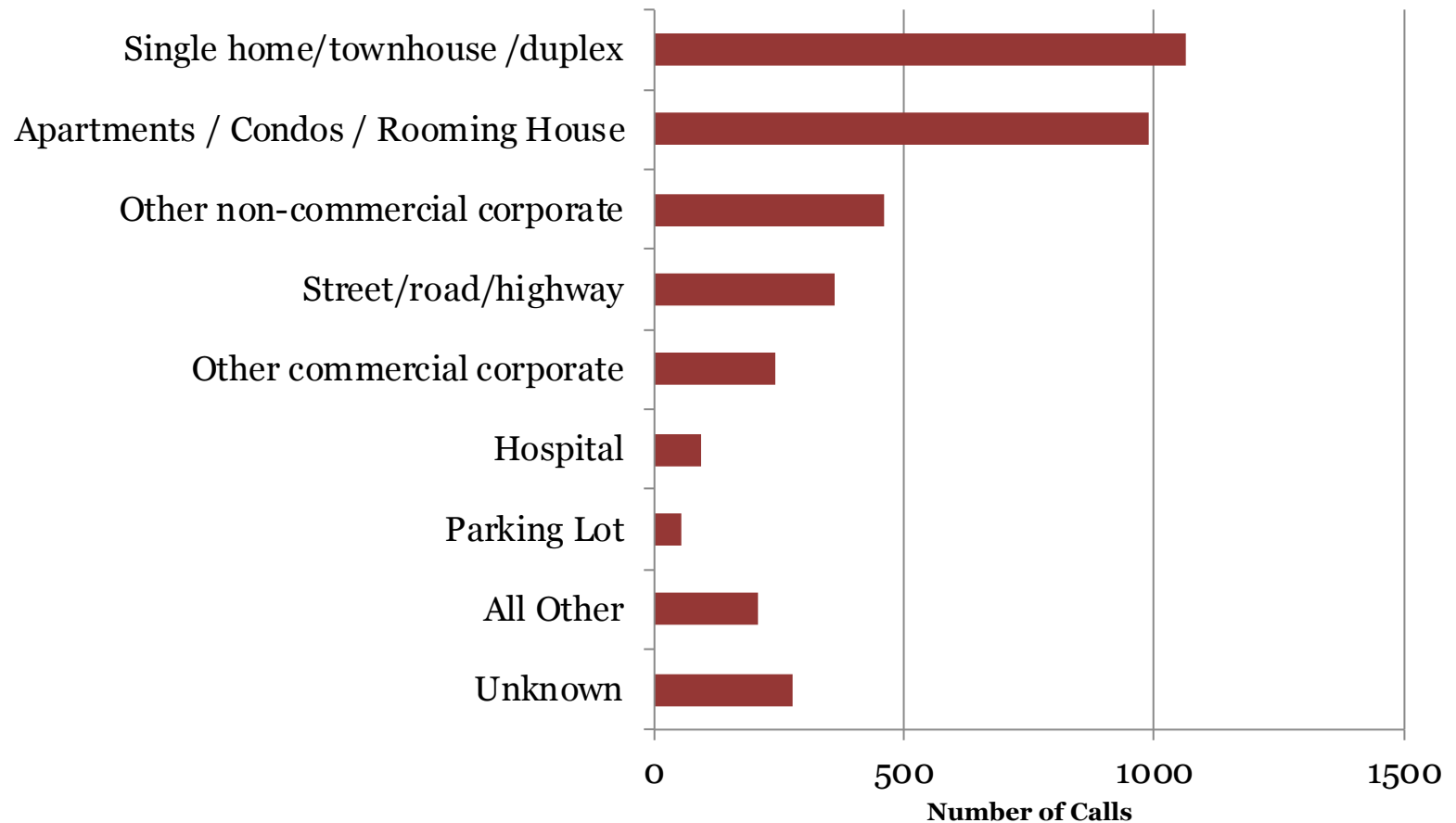
Sources:
Calls for Service: Burnaby RCMP PRIME Data
Roads and Municipality: GIS Innovations 2007
Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 10N
R. Bent, G. Farrell, Y. Lok, J. LeBeau, K. Wuschke 2011

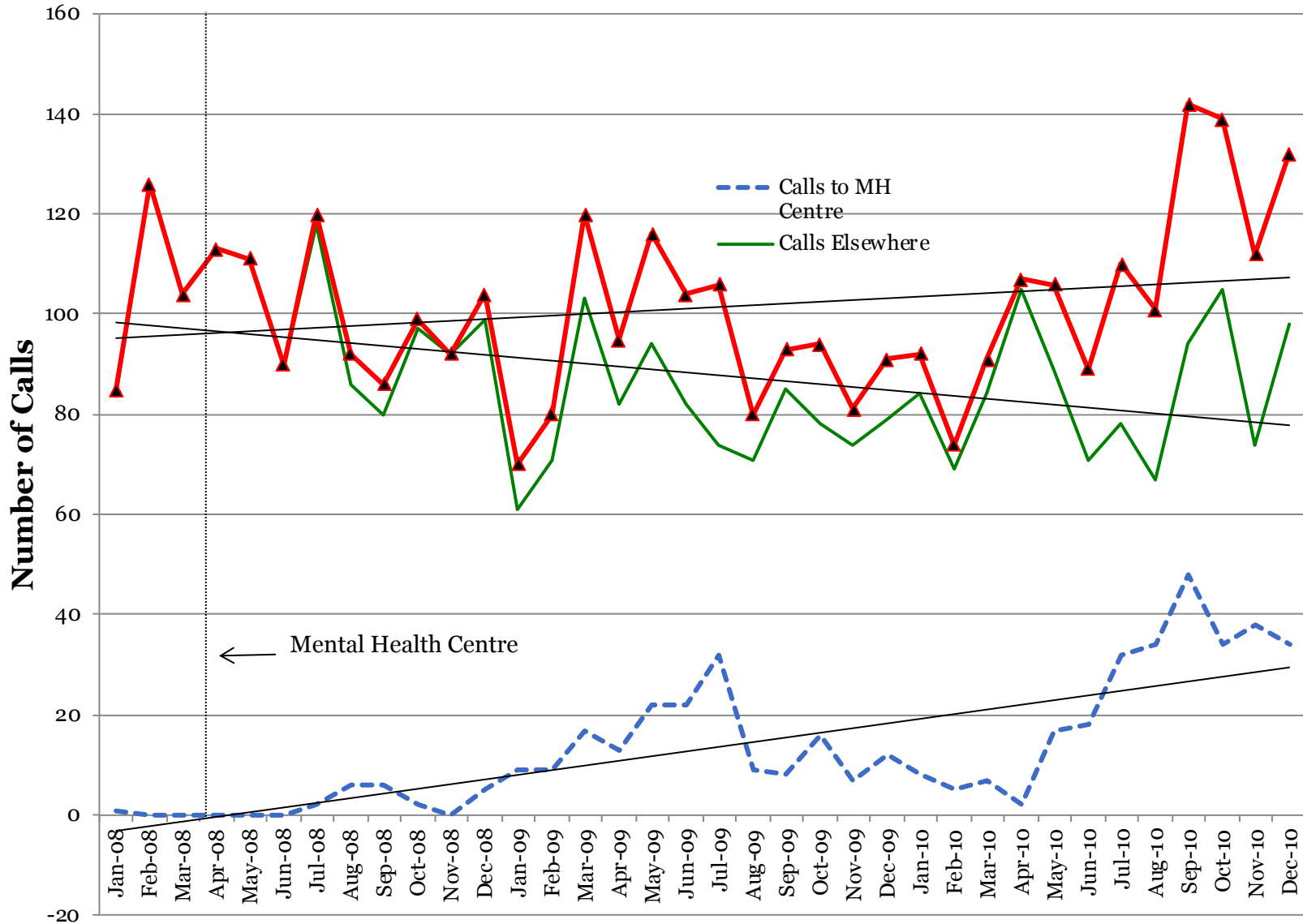


Repeat Calls to the Same Blocks

Calls	Frequency	Blocks	% Calls	% Blocks
1	739	739	20.3	60.4
2	412	206	11.3	16.8
3	291	97	8.0	7.9
4	216	54	5.9	4.4
5	185	37	5.1	3.0
6	78	13	2.1	1.1
7	112	16	3.1	1.3
8	56	7	1.5	0.6
9	81	9	2.2	0.7
10+	1477	46	40.5	3.8
Total	3647	1224	100.0	100.0

Location of Mental Health Calls: Burnaby RCMP 2008-2010





Number of Events: Primary Subjects are Involved

Event Count	No. Primary Subjects	Total Events	% Primary Subjects	% Events
1 to 10	1268	5193	58.8	11.7
11 to 20	338	5039	15.7	11.3
21 to 30	151	3747	7.0	8.4
31 to 40	95	3316	4.4	7.4
41 to 50	75	3359	3.5	7.5
51 to 100	157	10966	7.3	24.6
101 to 200	56	7555	2.6	17.0
over 200	16	5358	0.7	12.0
Total	2156	44533	100.0	100.0

Grouped Charge Counts for Primary Subjects

Number of charges	Number Primary Subjects	Total Charges	% Primary Subjects	% Charges
0	1644	0	76.3	0.0
1	120	120	5.6	3.2
2 to 5	221	710	10.3	19.0
6 to 10	82	630	3.8	16.9
11 to 20	47	693	2.2	18.6
21 to 30	20	488	0.9	13.1
31 to 40	9	310	0.4	8.3
over 40	13	780	0.6	20.9
Total	2156	3731	100.0	100.0

Note: Missing cases = 33.

Municipality of Residence of Primary Subjects		
Municipality	Frequency	% Primary Subjects
Burnaby	2461	69.5
Vancouver	329	9.3
Coquitlam	206	5.8
Surrey	151	4.3
New Westminster	93	2.6
North Vancouver	44	1.2
Richmond	34	1.0
Abbotsford	29	0.8
Delta	24	0.7
Other LMD Cities	95	2.8
Other	76	2.1
Total	3542	100.0

Study One

Key Conclusions:

- Calls highly concentrated in time and space, and in relation to the same persons with mental health issues.
- Significant time/resources required by police on calls, especially if transport to health facility.

Study One - Continued

Key Conclusions:

- Small percentage of subjects accounted for in significant percentage of events.
- No increase in calls due to new MH Facility.

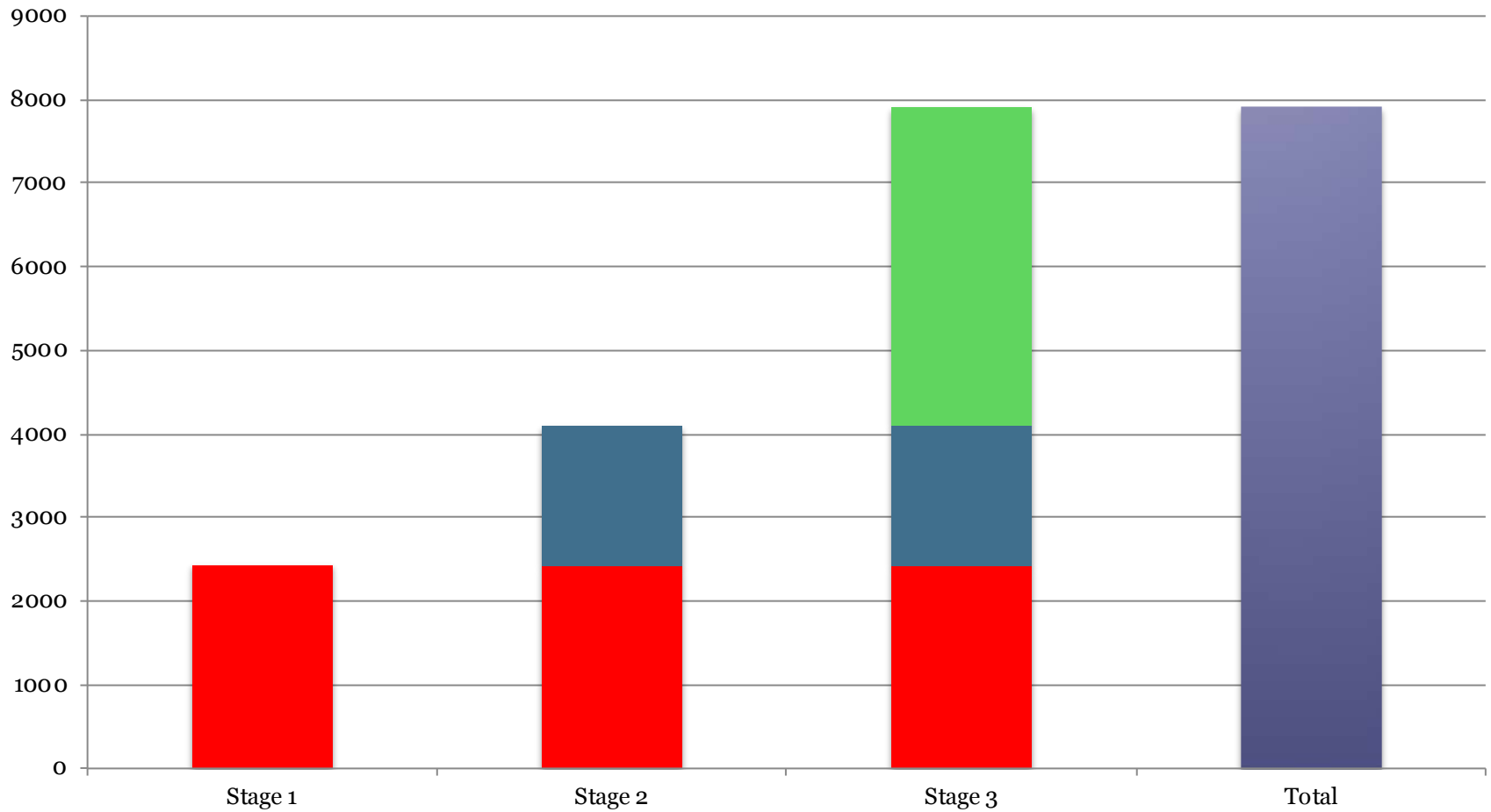
Study Two

- Analyzed 3 years of police data – medium sized Canadian city – Number of police contacts.
- Subjects identified by police – status recorded as EDP (Emotionally Disturbed Person) - Took EDP status on its face value.
- Subject of Police record/contact.

Possible other statuses are: witness, offender, suspect, victim, person in distress, other.

Study Two - Three Main Steps

1. Identification of Mental Health Act Events
1. Identification of additional events, in the city, involving persons identified as EDP
1. Identification of additional events in the city where subject had been identified as EDP in another jurisdiction.



Study Two

Key Conclusions:

- Repeat contacts with certain subjects
- Significant implications for police and other government agencies/ministries, e.g: social assistance, housing and health care

Issues

- Access to data from other agencies simply makes sense, however: there are still many obstacles and barriers, even though acceptable workarounds.
- Incomplete police data entries and inconsistencies on identifying persons with mental health issues.

Future Research

- Retrospective Study – those incarcerated in Forensic Institutions
- Need to look at the complete flow-through of contacts with persons with mental health issues – from contact with police to hospital or health care system, and perhaps courts and corrections.

Future Research

- RCMP and other Police Agencies - completion of Mental Health Act form for all EDP contacts
 - Expect to be rich in detail if properly completed, and completed in all cases.
- Need to look at the complete flow-through of contacts with persons with mental health issues – from police to health care system, and perhaps courts and corrections.

Future Research

- British Columbia Police Plan – Strategies for police to deal with persons with mental health issues.

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