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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## B.C. Human Rights Commissioner launches inquiry into police use of force

Vancouver B.C. – B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner has launched an inquiry to quantify the use of force by police against racialized people and people with mental health issues in B.C. The inquiry builds on the Commissioner's 2021 report, *Equity is Safer*, which revealed a disturbing pattern of discrimination in policing in the province.

Among the public in B.C. and many other jurisdictions, concern has grown in recent years that police use of force disproportionately affects racialized communities and people experiencing mental health issues. But while available information suggests that force is used more frequently and with greater severity against these groups, there is currently no comprehensive data quantifying the impacts in B.C. The Commissioner's inquiry into police use of force will present the data collected and make recommendations to address any concerns arising about systemic discrimination.

"There is a direct connection between equity and community safety. Systemic discrimination erodes the foundation of trust between communities and law enforcement, jeopardizing the safety of all residents," said Commissioner Kasari Govender. "This inquiry aims to better understand who is at the receiving end of use of force by police, whether any disproportionate impact revealed amounts to systemic discrimination and what can be done to address any equity issues that emerge. As I have said before, 'we cannot act on what we do not know.'"

The Commissioner's earlier report, [Equity is Safer: Human Rights Considerations for Policing Reform in British Columbia](#), was developed as a submission to the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act (SCORPA). Based on expert analysis of data from five police jurisdictions, *Equity is Safer* described how Indigenous and Black people, as well as other racialized groups, are either grossly or significantly overrepresented in arrest and chargeable incident statistics. It also noted a great deal of police activity involves people experiencing mental health issues, in which Indigenous, Black and Arab/West Asian people are also significantly overrepresented.

"We know from our earlier work and from listening to racialized people from across B.C. that potential disparities in policing activities demand monitoring and action," stated the Commissioner. "The role of the Commissioner's Office is to shine a light on inequities and address them directly to ensure justice for all. That is what this inquiry seeks to do."

More information about the inquiry can be found on the Commissioner's website at [bchumanrights.ca/use-of-force](https://bchumanrights.ca/use-of-force).

## Media contact

To request an interview with Commissioner Kasari Govender, please contact [media@bchumanrights.ca](mailto:media@bchumanrights.ca) or 604-306-7369.

## Media kit

[Visit our media kit](#) for images of Commissioner Kasari Govender, pronunciation guidance, bios and more.

## About BCOHRC

BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner exists to address the root causes of inequality, discrimination and injustice in B.C. by shifting laws, policies, practices and cultures. We do this work through education, research, advocacy, inquiry and monitoring. Learn more at: [bchumanrights.ca](http://bchumanrights.ca)

## About the Commissioner

B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner, Kasari Govender, started her five-year term on Sept. 3, 2019. As an independent officer of the Legislature, Commissioner Govender is uniquely positioned to ensure human rights in B.C. are protected, respected and advanced on a systemic level. Her work through BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner centres listening deeply to British Columbians to inform educational materials, policy guidance, public inquiries, interventions, community-based research and more that protects marginalized communities, addresses discrimination and injustice and upholds human rights for all.

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