



VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT 2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

MESSAGE

from the chief

WELCOME TO THE 2021 ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT.

The pandemic helped us recognize more than ever the importance of community. We have relied on one another to help us through this challenging time – our friends, our families, our neighbours, our community leaders, and our public health and elected officials. In this report, you will read about our partnerships with community members – volunteers, business owners and staff, and citizens – to address crime and quality of life issues.

It will likely surprise no one that hate crime continued to rise this year – 68.4% higher than the pre-pandemic three-year average between 2017 and 2019. Anti-Asian hate crime incidents alone increased by 575% when comparing 2021 to the same pre-pandemic period.

Following a drop in violent crime in 2020, we saw an increase in 2021. Homicides dropped from 21 to 18, and robberies by 3.9%, but all other types were up – including sexual assaults by 9.6%.

As a result of the pandemic, there were fewer people and cars in the downtown core, which resulted in a drop in certain property crimes. Break-ins were down 26.3% and theft from autos by 27.3%.

With the exception of driving while prohibited, which was down 19.3%, all other types of traffic-related crime was up. Impaired driving rose 13%, failing or refusing to provide a breath or blood sample was up 25.7% – likely due to an increase in arrests by our newly formed Impaired Driving Enforcement Team. Driving while impaired is no less dangerous than it ever was.

Sadly, 22 people died in traffic fatalities in 2021, up from eight people in 2020.

Effective and responsive policing often involves pivoting to new methods and directions, as well as reallocating officers and resources to where they are needed most. In September, the Neighbourhood Response Team was formed to deal with rising crime in the downtown core. The 42-day initiative brought increased foot and bicycle patrols to the hardest hit areas, and identified and targeted chronic offenders. The team took over 1400 calls, seized 210 weapons, and helped ensure the safety of more than 300 vulnerable people.

Project Arrow was another example of concentrating resources where they are needed most. The project was run twice during 2021, and you can read about the results in this report.



As Chief, I am not only responsible for public safety in Vancouver, I am responsible for the safety and well-being of the officers and civilian professionals who work for this Department.

I'm sad to report that assaults on Vancouver Police officers rose by 14.1% in 2021, making what can be an extremely challenging job that much more challenging.

At the VPD, we recognize the toll that policing can take on our staff and we have support systems in place. Our Critical Incident Stress Management Teams, both sworn and civilian professionals, offer peer support following traumatic events. Our Peer Support Team provides ongoing mentorship and emotional support to officers and their families. We have a Physical Health & Performance Team that works with staff to prevent and recover from injuries, and assist them with strength and conditioning. Our Inclusive Workplace Committee is addressing any barriers that our staff face by identifying and eliminating the impact of bias and discrimination, and promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion through leadership and accountability.

We take care of our people so they can take care of you.

Lastly, the increasingly complex nature of police investigations, combined with a significant number of public safety issues, ranging from the ongoing Lower Mainland gang conflict to hundreds of protests annually to the concerning number of stranger attacks, puts a significant strain on police resources and our budget.

We will continue to advocate for adequate resourcing and build our community partnerships to help ensure the safety of all Vancouverites.

CHIEF ADAM PALMER
VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

CRIME

CRIMINAL OFFENCES	NUMBER OF INCIDENTS 2020	NUMBER OF INCIDENTS 2021	2020 RATE /1,000 POP	2021 RATE /1,000 POP	% CHANGE (RATE)
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VIOLENT CRIME	5,777	5,866	8.25	8.46	2.5%
Culpable Homicide	21	18	0.03	0.03	-13.4%
Attempted Murder	9	9	0.01	0.01	1.0%
Sexual Offences	587	637	0.84	0.92	9.6%
Assaults	4,561	4,632	6.52	6.68	2.5%
Robbery	599	570	0.86	0.82	-3.9%

PROPERTY CRIME	34,303	28,733	49.00	41.45	-15.4%
Break and Enter	4,814	3,512	6.88	5.07	-26.3%
Theft of Motor Vehicle	886	861	1.27	1.24	-1.9%
Theft from Auto	9,888	7,115	14.13	10.26	-27.3%
Theft (Over/Under \$5K)	9,625	9,077	13.75	13.09	-4.8%
Possession of Stolen Property	378	315	0.54	0.45	-15.9%
Fraud	2,980	2,705	4.26	3.90	-8.3%
Arson	309	350	0.44	0.50	14.4%
Mischief (Over/Under \$5K)	5,423	4,798	7.75	6.92	-10.7%

OTHER CRIME	6,608	5,643	9.44	8.14	-13.8%
Offensive Weapons	994	792	1.42	1.14	-19.5%
Other Criminal Code	5,614	4,851	8.02	7.00	-12.7%

TOTAL CRIME	46,688	40,242	66.70	58.05	-13.0%
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DRUGS	1,154	977	1.65	1.41	-14.5%
Cannabis	30	22	0.04	0.03	-25.9%
Cocaine	276	210	0.39	0.30	-23.2%
Fentanyl	355	283	0.51	0.41	-19.5%
Heroin	82	38	0.12	0.05	-53.2%
Methamphetamine	223	176	0.32	0.25	-20.3%
Other	188	248	0.27	0.36	33.2%

TRAFFIC	1,174	1,241	1.68	1.79	6.7%
Dangerous Operation of MV	132	138	0.19	0.20	5.6%
Impaired Operation of MV	620	694	0.89	1.00	13.0%
Fail/Refuse Breath/Blood Sample	94	117	0.13	0.17	25.7%
Fail to Stop/Remain at Scene	84	97	0.12	0.14	16.6%
Driving while Prohibited	244	195	0.35	0.28	-19.3%

BY THE

	NUMBER OF INCIDENTS 2019	NUMBER OF INCIDENTS 2020	2020 RATE /1,000 POP	2021 RATE /1,000 POP	% CHANGE
OTHER	8	22	0.01	0.03	177.7%
TRAFFIC FATALITIES	8	22	0.01	0.03	177.7%
CALLS FOR SERVICE	241,611	226,552	345.15	326.80	-5.3%

	2020	2021
POPULATION	700,015	693,235

For more information on our data disclaimers and limitations, please refer to:
[VPD.ca/crime-statistics](https://vpd.ca/crime-statistics)

Data run on 2022/02/07.
Rate change not presented for counts less than or equal to five.
These statistics are produced using the “most serious offence method.”
Note: Small baseline offence numbers make large percentage changes.
Numbers are subject to change due to ongoing investigations or reclassifications of incidents.

SURE BE B W D N 2021

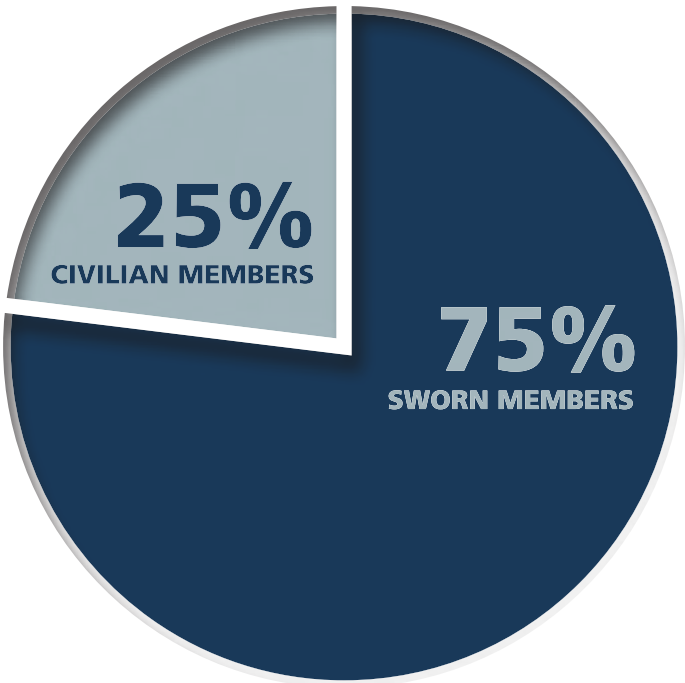
SUMMARY

FINANCIAL SUMMARY	2020	2021	% CHANGE
	(\$1,000)	(\$1,000)	
Budget	\$314,367	\$323,597	2.9%
Actual Costs	\$314,343	\$334,152	6.3%
UNDER / (OVER) BUDGET	\$24	(\$10,555)	

This year marks the first time in sixteen years the VPD is over budget, which is a result of City Council’s decision to hold the VPD’s 2021 budget at 2020 levels and the City of Vancouver’s change to not fund the recurring, routine, mid-year budget adjustments..

For more details, visit:
<https://vancouverpoliceboard.ca/about/financial-statements/>

AUTHORIZED STRENGTH	2020	2021	% CHANGE
VPD Sworn Members	1,348	1,348	0.0%
VPD Civilian Members	411.5	441.5	7.3%
TOTAL POSITIONS	1,760	1,789.5	1.7%







PROJECT *Arrow*

“

Our staff were scared and felt nervous with the rise in violence,” says David Sullivan, owner of the IGA at Robson and Richards. “We were catching between eight to ten thieves a day.”

Healthy retailers, restaurants, and cafes are a lifeblood for safe neighbourhoods. They are meeting places, employers, and neighbourhood hubs where community members gather to socialize, shop, and obtain fundamental services in a safe and healthy economy. They serve as your teenager’s first employer, as your favourite restaurant to meet family and friends, and as a way for thousands of our fellow citizens to make ends meet when the cost of living seems to be always on the rise.

So, when small businesses aren’t safe, neither are the people they serve.

Fueled in part by pandemic pressures, 2021 opened with an alarming increase in violent shoplifting incidents and retail robberies, primarily in the downtown core and West End. Business owners, employees, and security staff found themselves being threatened and assaulted while just trying to make a living.

While the vast majority of retail thefts – even those involving violence – are never reported to police, by the end of 2020, VPD had seen a 260 per cent increase in reports of shoplifters carrying weapons like bear spray, knives, needles, and guns. As the calendar flipped to 2021, it was clear more action was needed.

“Our staff were scared and felt nervous with the rise in violence,” says David Sullivan, owner of the IGA at Robson and Richards. “We were catching between eight to ten thieves a day.”

The VPD responded to community concerns with Project Arrow, a month-long initiative to target violent thieves and prolific offenders.

Working in lockstep with retailers, staff, and store security, VPD set out to target violent and prolific offenders, to restore a sense of safety amongst the retail community, and to reduce the frequency of violent shoplifting incidents throughout the city. Neighbourhood police officers visited small businesses to listen to their concerns and to share advice on how to deter thieves. Frontline patrol officers and specialized investigative teams worked to identify offenders and develop strategies to apprehend them.

In just 30 days, Project Arrow investigators responded to 250 incidents that otherwise would have gone unreported. They made 130 arrests and recommended 268 new criminal charges to Crown counsel. They recovered and returned more than \$37,000 in stolen merchandise, and took 35 weapons off the streets. They arrested 45 offenders, who were either wanted or were breaching their bail conditions when they were arrested.

“Not only were my employees thankful to have the police there to make arrests, but they felt safe,” added Sullivan, whose family-owned business was one of the city’s hardest hit by the violent shoplifting epidemic.

While Project Arrow had an immediate impact on crime in the downtown core by suppressing violent shoplifting and robberies at many small businesses, it also pushed some criminals into other neighbourhoods, including Mount Pleasant, Kerrisdale, and Renfrew-Collingwood.

VPD responded with several new initiatives, including one in November 2021 that concentrated on violent shoplifting. It resulted in 195 additional arrests – 30 of which were repeat offenders – and 330 new criminal charges. Officers recovered more than \$75,000 in merchandise, and seized 35 more weapons.



CITIZENS' *Police Academy*

“

You get an inside look at policing that you don't get anywhere else as a citizen. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

EDDY ELMER EMBODIES EVERYTHING that makes Vancouver special. He advocates for the vulnerable, stands up against inequality, empowers people to take active roles in their communities, and strives to better understand other peoples' points of view.

As co-chair of the City of Vancouver 2SLGBTQ+ Advisory Committee, Eddy is particularly interested in improving public safety and relationships between police and the city's 2SLGBTQ+ community. In February 2021, Eddy enlisted in the VPD Citizens' Police Academy to help foster better understanding and communication between police officers and the diverse communities they serve.

“The public has a lot of gaps in knowledge about real-world policing and, unfortunately, they fill in these gaps by what they see on TV, the movies, or social media,” says Eddy. “Knowing why police do what they do in various situations helps to restore some public trust — because it's hard for people to have faith in what they don't understand.”

For more than two decades, the Citizens' Police Academy has been giving community leaders an inside look at the Vancouver Police Department, and policing in general, thanks to funding from the Vancouver Police Foundation. Participants attend workshops to learn more about the law, public safety issues, and why police sometimes have to use force when making arrests. They get a first-person glimpse at real-world policing by meeting frontline officers, joining them in the field, and discussing often misunderstood issues that tend to affect relationships between police and the communities they serve. They also share their perspectives, and the perspectives of their communities, to help police officers better understand how to better serve and meet their needs.

“I was incredibly impressed by the amount and variety of information we were exposed to and the activities we participated in,” adds Elmer, who attended presentations to learn more about criminal investigations, active deadly threats, the Women's Personal Safety Team, and Out on Patrol — a peer support organization for 2SLGBTQ+ police officers.

“For me, as a gay man, it's very heartening to see other people from my community represented in policing,” says Elmer.

Few people truly understand the split-second decisions police officers face when encountering someone with a weapon who is intent on hurting themselves or others. It was eye-opening for Eddy to experience these pressures first-hand by participating in realistic use-of-force scenarios at the Citizens' Police Academy.

“I consider myself a pretty quick thinker, but when I was faced with the scenario, I found myself a bit stunned, and it took me too long to decide how to react. This made it crystal clear to me how much training officers go through in order to overcome this inertia and make decisions where every single second counts,” he says.

“You get an inside look at policing that you don't get anywhere else as a citizen. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

For more information on the Citizens' Police Academy, please visit [VPD.ca/Community](https://vancouver.ca/vpd/ca/).



Graffiti Removal PROJECT

I volunteer at the community policing centre because it is a chance for me to do something different and to give back to the community.”

WHILE GANG VIOLENCE, robberies, and unprovoked assaults against the vulnerable generate the headlines, less violent crimes like graffiti and vandalism contribute just as much to people feeling unsafe in their communities. These seemingly minor crimes, if left to fester, breed more crime, disorder, and urban decay that tears at the fabric of our neighbourhoods.

Few places have been impacted more by these urban challenges than Chinatown, where merchants, residents, and visitors endured a prolific spike in graffiti, and a corresponding increase in hate incidents, throughout the pandemic. In 2021 alone, graffiti complaints to Vancouver Police shot up nearly 300 per cent, despite still being one of the most under-reported crimes in the city. Community members, including some who have lived and worked in Chinatown for generations, watched as important cultural icons were defaced and hurtful messages were scrawled on windows, doors, and walls. Their insult and demoralization was often magnified when, after investing valuable time and money to paint over the hurtful graffiti, within days they'd wake up only to find it had returned.

As the graffiti spread from Chinatown to Strathcona and Hastings-Sunrise, community members stepped up to reclaim their embattled neighbourhoods. The Hastings Sunrise Community Policing Centre found its graffiti removal program suddenly in high demand.

“Graffiti devalues our property and drives away customers,” says Mindy Zhou, the owner of Infinity Publishing, who learned of the graffiti removal program from her local business improvement association.

Launched 20 years ago, the Hastings Sunrise Community Policing Centre's graffiti-removal team consists of volunteers who deploy into their community to erase vandalism by cleaning, scrubbing, and painting over walls, windows, and other pieces of property that have been damaged by vandals. They work closely with the East

Village Hastings North Business Improvement Association, which represents hard-working small business owners and employers who would otherwise have to pay to have the graffiti removed.

“Going by the broken window theory, if there is no one there to do something about a small tag, that small tag is going to get bigger and bigger,” says Sampson Hsieh, a Graffiti Removal Team leader who is also a VPD civilian professional. “That’s why it’s really important that we have these graffiti teams out there to show that someone does care, and is doing something to make the community better.”

For Mindy Zhou, having a team of volunteers to help remove unsightly graffiti gave her peace of mind and allowed her to refocus on her customers and employees.

“The team is super-efficient, they do a great job, and they are understanding,” says Zhou. “They know how agonizing it is for us when we keep getting tagged over and over again.”

The success and longevity of the Hastings Sunrise Community Policing Centre's program depends on difference-makers like Sampson Hsieh, who has personally dedicated more than 1500 hours of his time volunteering to remove graffiti in his community.

“I volunteer at the community policing centre because it is a chance for me to do something different and to give back to the community,” says Hsieh. “I decided to lead the Saturday graffiti team specifically because my community needed a little help at the time, as the pandemic brought a lot of uncertainty. Hopefully, this in turn inspires more people to do something good – no matter how small it might be. If everyone does a little bit, it quickly adds up to a lot of good being done out there.”

Learn more about volunteering with our community policing centres at [VPD.ca/join-us/volunteer-opportunities](https://vpd.ca/join-us/volunteer-opportunities).



WOMEN'S *Personal Safety Team*

“

The most important thing I learned was that you need to practice, practice, practice until the moves become automatic.”

WHETHER IN MARPOLE OR MOUNT PLEASANT,

Kits or Kerrisdale, everyone deserves to feel safe in their neighbourhoods. But with stories of hate, violent robberies, and unprovoked attacks all around in 2021, combined with other pandemic pressures, many people understandably started feeling less safe than they used to.

While nobody should ever have to change the way they live because another person makes them feel unsafe, we're also big believers that small shifts in mindset and a bit of preparation can go a long way toward helping people take control of their personal safety.

That's where the Women's Personal Safety Team comes in.

Since 2013, the volunteers of VPD Women's Personal Safety Team have worked to educate, inspire, and empower women throughout Vancouver by leading community workshops that teach participants how to recognize threats and fight back in the event they are attacked. Through the years, hundreds, if not thousands, of people have taken their classes and learned their easy-to-use, easy-to-remember tactics.

But as the pandemic raged on in 2021, so too did stories of violent crime. Soon Vancouver would see the number of unprovoked stranger attacks rise to more than four a day, with sex assaults increasing 10 per cent and anti-Asian hate incidents continuing at an unnerving rate. It's no surprise that these issues led to more demand than ever for the volunteers of the Women's Personal Safety Team.

But with pandemic restrictions and provincial health orders prohibiting people from getting together inside, the Team was no longer able to host indoor workshops like they'd done for the previous eight years. Rather than fold up, they adapted to adversity. They moved their workshops from rec centres and town halls to Zoom, hosting 28 virtual workshops for more than 1,200 people during the calendar year.

As someone who uses public transit as her primary means of transportation – often travelling to work very early in the morning or late at night – Pat knew very well the anxiety that can be triggered when someone makes you feel unsafe. Since attending a virtual workshop, she now has a different perspective. Pat crosses the street to avoid groups of people at night, gets off the SkyTrain early if she feels concerned about her safety, and is ready to get physical if that's what it takes to get some safety.

“The most important thing I learned was that you need to practice, practice, practice until the moves become automatic,” says Pat. “In a dangerous situation, you may need to act before your mind catches up to what is happening.”

Most importantly, the Team helped Pat realize there's no half-measures when it comes to personal safety.


“When you elbow someone, you really have to mean business,” she says.


For more information on the Women's Personal Safety Team and their upcoming workshops, please go to [VPD.ca/Crime Prevention and Safety](https://vancouver.ca/crime-prevention-and-safety). Funding for the workshops is provided by the Vancouver Police Foundation.






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