



SASKATOON POLICE SERVICE

TO: Jo Custead, Chairperson
Board of Police Commissioners

FROM: Troy Cooper
Office of the Chief

DATE: 2021 March 08

SUBJECT: Annual Missing Persons Reporting
January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020

FILE #: 2,007-2

ISSUE:

The Board of Police Commissioners has requested the Saskatoon Police Service (SPS) provide annual statistics on missing persons in Saskatoon including the number of missing persons, the location of where they were reported missing, the number of habitual runaways, and proactive steps to prevent people from going missing. This report includes statistical information from January 1st to December 31st, 2020.

RECOMMENDATION:

That this report be received as information.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY:

Maintain core policing operations and address community concerns that affect public safety.

Implement strategies with a focus on reducing the number of habitual runaways and missing persons.

DISCUSSION:

Throughout the course of this reporting period the Missing Person Unit with the assistance of the Planning and Research Unit has continued to identify patterns in the types, frequencies and issues regarding who, where, and when missing person files are reported to the Saskatoon Police Service. The following report breaks down those statistics categorically; presenting them in a

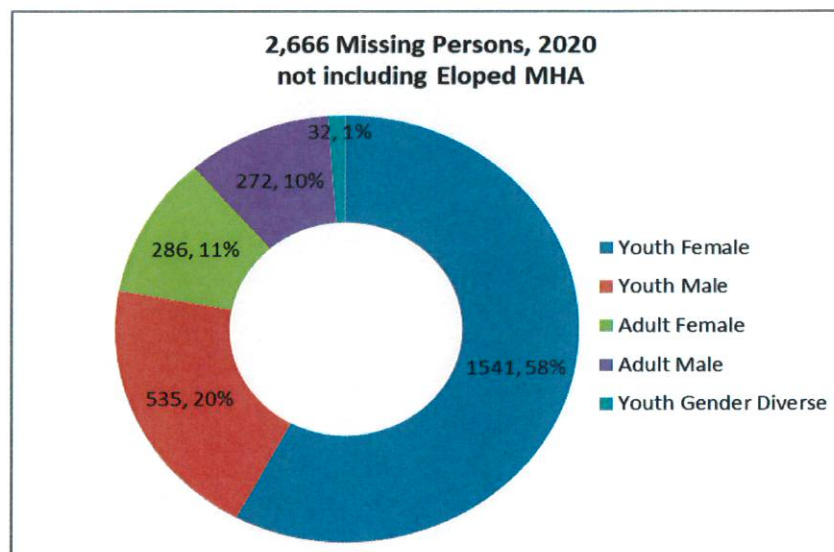
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clear and concise manner illustrating the nature of missing person investigations in the city of Saskatoon.

GENERAL OVERVIEW:

In 2020 the Saskatoon Police Service received 2683 missing person reports. In comparison to 2019 this is a reduction of 582 reported missing persons. The reduction in the number of reported missing persons was consistent across the three reporting categories of Youth, Adults and Elopel Mental Health Patients. The following are the comparative numbers from 2019 to 2020:

	Youth	Adults	Eloped Patients	Total
2020	2108	558	17	2683
2019	2489	657	119	3265
+/-	-381	-99	-102	-582



REPORTED MISSING PERSONS:

In the 2020 reporting period, the majority of the reported missing persons (76%) were youth between the age of 10 and 18 years old. Female Youth continue to be reported missing significantly more than any other statistical category and were more likely to be reported missing numerous times throughout the year (habitual). Youth under the age of 10 years old only accounted for 3% of reported missing youth.

Female Youth

In this reporting period, 1541 Female Youth (under 18 years old) were reported missing to the Saskatoon Police Service, accounting for 58% of all reported missing persons. The majority of the Female Youth reported missing (62%) were between the ages of 15 and 18 years of age. Female Youth between the ages of 10 and 14 years old accounted for 35% of the Female Youth reported.

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Male Youth

In this reporting period 535 Male Youth (under 18 years old) were reported missing to the Saskatoon Police Service. Male youth accounted for 20% of all reported missing persons.

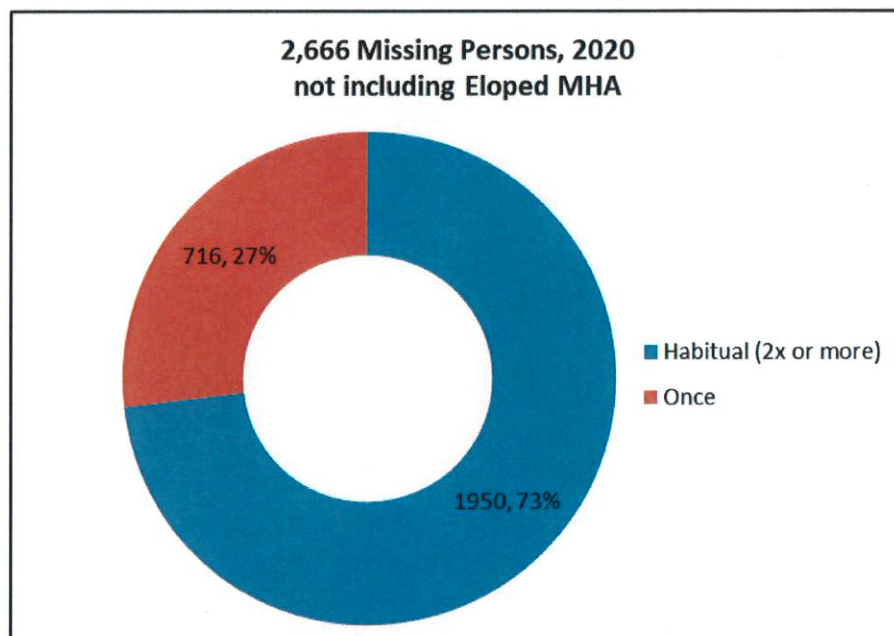
Gender Diverse Youth

In this reporting period 32 Youth identifying as Gender Diverse were reported missing. Gender Diverse Youth accounted for 1% of all reported missing persons. All missing person subjects that recognized as Gender Diverse were Youth.

Adults

In this reporting period 558 adults were reported missing accounting for 21% of all reported missing persons. In this reporting period 286 Adult Females were reported missing and 272 Adult Males were reported missing.

HABITUAL MISSING PERSONS:



A habitual missing person constitutes an individual who has been reported missing as a missing person subject two or more times within a specific period.

In this reporting period habitual subjects accounted for 1,950 missing person reports. The top 20 habitual missing youth accounted for 25% of all missing person reports in 2020.

Female Youth comprised the largest proportion of habitual subjects, accounting for 1,369 (51%) missing person reports. The 10 most frequently reported Female Youth accounted for 418 missing person reports. The top 2 most frequently reported Female Youth accounted for over 50 missing person reports each. In this reporting period there were 22 Female Youth who were reported missing more than 20 times in 2020.

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In comparison, Male Youth comprised the second largest proportion of habitual subjects, accounting for 400 (15%) missing person reports. The 10 most frequently reported Male Youth accounted for 170 missing person reports. In this reporting period there were only 12 Male Youth who were reported missing more than 10 times in 2020.

Adult Females are more likely to be habitual subjects than male, but combined habitual adults account for only 149 (5%) missing person reports.

All but one of the Gender Diverse missing person subjects were habitual. One Gender Diverse subject was reported missing more than 20 times in 2020.

LOCATIONS:

In this reporting period, missing persons were reported to the SPS from 710 different addresses. The top 20 most common addresses for missing person reports comprised 57 % of the missing person calls. All 20 locations are comprised of government and private care facilities.

Top 20 most frequent MP locations	Count of Missing Person reports	% of Total MP reports
Location 1	395	14.8%
Location 2	201	7.6%
Location 3	114	4.3%
Location 4	107	4.0%
Location 5	98	3.7%
Location 6	86	3.2%
Location 7	73	2.7%
Location 8	68	2.6%
Location 9	58	2.2%
Location 10	48	1.8%
Location 11	39	1.5%
Location 12	37	1.4%
Location 13	36	1.4%
Location 14	32	1.2%
Location 15	31	1.2%
Location 16	23	0.9%
Location 17	18	0.7%
Location 18	17	0.6%
Location 19	14	0.5%
Location 20	13	0.5%
Sum of top 20 locations (20)	1,508	57%
Remaining locations (690)	1,154	43%
Total (710)	2,662	100%

In this reporting period, missing Female Youth accounted for the majority (58%) of all missing person calls for service. This percentage is also reflected in the reporting addresses. The top three reporting addresses accounted for 26.7 % of all missing person reports. All three addresses are associated to facilities which provide short term supports to female youth.

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ELOPED MENTAL HEALTH PATIENTS:

The Saskatoon Health Region (Royal University Hospital, Dube Centre, City Hospital, and St. Paul's Hospital) reported 17 calls for service relating to Eloped Mental Health Patients. The majority of these calls for service originated from Royal University Hospital and Dube Centre.

The number of Eloped Mental Health Patients was significantly less than in 2019 (117) and is likely attributed to the COVID Pandemic and increased security measures at all the health facilities.

LONG TERM MISSING PERSON INVESTIGATIONS:

The SPS currently has 18 long term missing person investigations. All of these investigations are open investigations.

In 2020 the Missing Person Unit was moved within the Major Crime Section. This restructuring allowed for a renewed focus on our historical missing person investigations. In January a review of our historic missing person investigations was conducted by the Missing Person Task Force Sergeant. The goal of the review was to identify investigative avenues that were previously unexplored.

At the conclusion of this review new tasks were identified and investigative plans were developed for several of the historic investigations with the hope of advancing the files. The Missing Person Family Liaison was included in this process with the goal of reconnecting with the families and providing them with supports. Unfortunately, these investigative plans were hampered by COVID restrictions. Several investigative plans have been postponed to 2021.

All long term missing person investigations have been entered into the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police website for public access (<https://www.sacp.ca/>). As well, all long term missing person cases are being entered on the National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains website.

Historic Missing Persons		
Name	Age When Missing	Missing Since
Kathleen Johnston	26	October 20, 1953
William Gill	23	December 21, 1981
Peter McKay	5	December 31, 1986
Marc April	26	January 31, 1987
Andrew Wiebe	40	January 11, 1988
Shirley Lonethunder	25	December 20, 1991
William Krowchuk	52	July 9, 1998
Antoine Medzech	67	December 13, 2002
Darlene Anderson	44	November 6, 2006

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Ricky Riopel	48	December 25, 2008
Hamza Al-Sharief	23	December 14, 2011
Kenneth Fehr	51	November 27, 2012
Ali Rizvi	45	June 23, 2014
Kandice Singbiel	33	July 28, 2015
Jordan Walker	21	December 2, 2015
Adhliea Johnson	35	March 16, 2016
Desmond Fischer	27	June 25 th , 2018
Aaron Wuttunee	58	September 5 th , 2019

The Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Amendment Act

On March 15, 2019 the amendments to *The Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Act 2009* came into effect. The amendments to the act addressed the concern that when a person is reported missing and there is no reason to suspect a crime, police cannot rely on the *Criminal Code* to access personal information of persons reported missing. This could stall a missing person investigation. The amendments allowed for law enforcement agencies to:

- Obtain a search order where a missing minor or vulnerable person is believed to be in a building;
- Access a broader range of records including global positioning tracking records, employment records and school records;
- Access information about a person who might be in the company of a missing minor or vulnerable person; and
- Emergency demand for records where certain criteria are met.

In 2020 the Missing Person Unit utilized these judicial tools in 8 separate missing person investigations.

Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons (PPCMP)

The Missing Persons Task Force Sergeant participated as an active member of the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons (PPCMP). The PPCMP, is made up of community, government, police and Indigenous organization representatives. They work collaboratively to prevent people from going missing and to improve responses and supports when people do go missing. The PPCMP engages with families of missing persons to better understand their needs and organizes and promotes Missing Persons Week within Saskatchewan.

In 2020 due to COVID restrictions PPCMP postponed Missing Person Week to the fall of 2020 and the focus of the week was moved from in person events to social media events centered on the theme of **“You Are Not Alone”**. This shift to a social media platform proved to be very effective in highlighting missing person investigations and supports available throughout the province. As a result of this shift to a social media platform, the Saskatoon Police Service expanded our involvement in this Committee to include representation by our Public Affairs Section on the PPCMP Communications Sub-Committee.

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Missing Persons Week

The Saskatoon Police Service despite the COVID restrictions participated and contributed to several events that brought attention to missing person investigations. The following events included:

- **Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police (SACP) Missing Person Web Page**

<https://www.sacp.ca/missing-persons.html>

The Missing Person Unit provided updates and biographies of our current long term missing person cases to the SACP Missing Person web page.

- **Calling Home Ceremony and Feast / May 5, 2020**

The Saskatoon Police Service in partnership with the Saskatoon Tribal Council hosted the Calling Home Ceremony, Honoring Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. This year the Feast was canceled as a result of COVID restrictions but a smaller ceremony was held in front of the SPS at the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Monument. Aspects of the ceremony were socially distanced and parts were virtual.

<https://www.facebook.com/SaskatoonPolice/posts/3055291121160797>

- **“You Are Not Alone” / September 13 – 19, 2020**

The Missing Person Unit in cooperation with the Public Affairs Section created a seven part video series for Missing Person Week that highlighted the various sections of the Police Service that support and conduct our missing person investigations including those members who support the loved ones of the missing. At the conclusion of Missing Person Week PPCMP reported that the SPS media campaign (Starting with Chief Coopers message) consistently had over 8000 daily views.

https://www.facebook.com/watch/122212177802054/784318892398123/?_tn=-UC-R

PROACTIVE INITIATIVES:

Community Collaboration

The Saskatoon Police Service continues to work collaboratively with community organizations that provide essential care homes and residences within Saskatoon and work together on the issue of persons “missing from care”.

The Saskatoon Police Service daily collaborates with community organizations that include the Salvation Army, YWCA, Egadz, John Howard Society, Saskatoon Tribal Council, Eagle’s Nest, Quint Saskatoon, and Sanctum Group.

Operation Runaway

As previously reported Operation Runaway was developed in the spring of 2017 as an interagency community partnership initiated by EGDAZ, in collaboration with the Saskatoon Police Service, Ministry of Social Services, Saskatoon Health Authority Mental Health and Addiction Services, and other community supports. The project was intended to provide an integrated, supportive, and client-centered approach to assist youth who are reported missing or are running away.

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In this reporting period, Operation Runaway was heavily restricted as a result of COVID. Members of the Missing Person Unit for the first two months of 2020 attended weekly voluntary meetings with runaway youth. These meetings were suspended until the fall of 2020 where virtual meetings were then established.

Relationship Building

The Missing Person Unit in 2020 reached out and developed relationships with the following community organizations and businesses: Child Find Saskatchewan, Egadz Outreach Workers, Oskapios Outreach, Community Safety Officers, City of Saskatoon Public Library staff members, Private and Public Liquor store managers, Saskatoon Transit, Mall Security (Midtown, Center, and Confederation), Canada Border Services, Friendship Inn and Lighthouse staff.

The Missing Person Unit continues to have a strong and open relationship with the Ministry of Social Services liaising regularly with workers and supervisors in an open exchange of information and ideas.

The media in Saskatoon continues to be very supportive. They receive multiple requests from our Service to broadcast the names and pictures of missing persons.

Missing Person Family Liaison

Saskatoon Victim Services continues to support our investigations and the families of the missing through the Missing Person Family Liaison position. This position has been instrumental in forging strong relationships with the families of missing persons, and facilitating open and honest communication between the families and the investigative team.

SPS INTERNAL COLLABORATION:

The Missing Person Unit in addition to conducting investigations to locate missing persons also review each case and assess the individual circumstances surrounding the person being reported missing. If through our investigation additional risks or concerns are identified we will reach out to other sections of the Saskatoon Police Service for assistance and their expertise. The following are circumstances that have resulted in our collaboration with other SPS units.

Major Crime Investigations

Each missing person report that is received by the Saskatoon Police Service, has the potential to escalate into a Major Case investigation. This can take the form of an Amber Alert/child abduction, homicide, kidnapping, or suspicious missing person. In January of 2020 the Missing Person Unit and Missing Person Task Force Sergeant were restructured and moved within the Major Crime Section. This restructuring allowed for better and more responsive communication between our front line missing person investigators and our Major Crime Detectives in cases where missing person investigations have escalated to more serious investigations. This reorganization also has allowed for experienced homicide detectives to assist in historic suspicious missing person investigations.

In 2020, six missing person investigations evolved into four separate homicide investigations, one suspicious missing person investigation, and one Amber Alert/Child abduction investigation.

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The reorganization of the Missing Person Unit into the Major Crime Section has also allowed for Missing Person Family Liaison to be integrated earlier in our missing person investigations in addition to supporting the families of our long term missing persons.

Patrol Missing Persons Constables

In 2020 several new Patrol Constables were assigned to the Missing Person Task Force. The Patrol Missing Person Constable is responsible for investigating the initial missing person report.

In 2020 the Missing Person Unit formalized an annual In-Service Training Module for the Patrol Missing Person Constables. The purpose of this training is to provide our front line officers assigned to missing person investigations with consistent and timely training. This training provides them with investigative best practices, tools to assist their investigations and they are educated on the supports that the community can provide to assist their investigations.

Public Affairs Section

In 2020 changes to the SPS Missing Person Policy expanded the duties of the Missing Person Task Force Sergeant to include the role of a media coordinator to ensure communication and collaboration between the Missing Person Unit, Patrol, Major Crime Section and Public Affairs. This coordination was best exemplified in the fall of 2020 where a media strategy was developed in the Aaron Wuttunee missing person investigation. Aaron Wuttunee has been missing since 2019 and was suspected to be homeless in Edmonton. The Missing Person Unit and Public Affairs Section worked with the Edmonton Police Service, Missing Person Unit and Public Affairs Section as well as Edmonton Street Outreach organizations to develop a week long social media, billboard and flyer campaign targeting areas of Edmonton that might result in locating Aaron Wuttunee.

Strengthening Families Unit

In cases where a missing person has a family structure but habitual running away is attributed to issues surrounding family bonding, family communication and family conflict the Missing Person Unit has referred cases to the Strengthening Families Unit to assist the family in developing parenting, communication and life skills. The goal of the referral is to reduce the frequency of the person being reported missing and providing them with an alternative to running away.

Saskatoon HUB

In cases where missing persons habitual reporting is attributed to external factors such as addictions, absent educational plan, need for income assistance or Criminal Justice System issues the Missing Person Unit have referred several cases to H.U.B. to assist the person in obtaining community supports. The goal of the referral is to reduce the frequency of the person being reported missing and providing them with an alternative to running away.

VICE and Integrated Child Exploitation (ICE) Section

The Missing Person Unit investigators are trained in the use of social media as an investigative tool. Investigators use this training daily to communicate with or assist in locating missing persons (especially youth). In some cases youth are identified as being sexually exploited or appear to be at risk to sexual exploitation or human trafficking. The Missing Person Unit have

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referred several cases to the Vice Unit and ICE Unit for assistance. The goal of the referral is the safety of the youth.

Guns and Gangs Unit

In the cases where a habitual missing youth are identified as being recruited by members of a Saskatoon street gang the Missing Person Unit shares this information with the Guns and Gangs Unit supervisor with the intent this unit will educate the youth on the dangers of the gang life style. The goal of the referral is the safety of the youth.

Saskatchewan Police Predictive Analytics Lab (SPPAL)

The Missing Person Unit continues to collaborate with the Saskatchewan Provincial Predictive Analytics Lab, the provincial government and the University of Saskatchewan. One of the Lab's goals is to develop “predictive models that could assist in identifying youth at risk for running [away]; risk factors that could contribute to increased risk; associated patterns like geographical locations to inform the interventions by both police and our community partners; and interventions developed from an analytical finding are intended to be implemented in real world settings, real time.”

Missing Person Policy and Procedure Review

In 2020 a full review of the Saskatoon Police Service, Missing Person Policy was conducted. The purpose of this review was to ensure that our policy reflected the work that was being done to investigate missing persons. The review also allowed our service to examine our policy with regards to the language used and to reflect on the recommendations of the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls. As a result of this review the following notable policy and procedure changes were made in 2020.

- A mandatory Major Case Management file review was included for all missing person investigations that exceeded 30 days. This review would apply the same investigative principles utilized in Major Crime Investigations to missing person investigations.
- Procedures were put in place to monitor the frequency of our habitual missing youth with the goal of identifying any sharp or significant increases in reporting. In the case where a increase is observed the Missing Person Unit now initiates a review of the youth with the Social Services worker and if necessary the Care Home Supervisor.

The purpose of the review is to determine if something has changed with the habitual youth (Gangs, Drugs, and Human Trafficking etc.) that has caused the spike in reporting or if Police, Social Services or the Care Home has initiated an administrative change to the life of the youth to cause the spike. It is hoped that these procedures will reduce the reporting of some of our statistical drivers but to also ensure the youth is not being over policed or ensure that they are not at risk.

In 2020 four individuals were identified using these new procedures. Based on the sharp increase in reporting the Missing Person Unit initiated a review of the youth's circumstances with the Social Worker. In all four cases the increase was attributed to administrative issues and the changes made resulted in a reduction in further missing

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person reports. (In one case the youth has not been reported missing since his case was reviewed and simple changes were made by the Social Worker).

CONCLUSION:

The Saskatoon Police Service continues to make positive strides in regards to missing person investigations and the relationships forged out of those successes. We continue to work closely with our community partners including; group homes, Ministry of Social Services, Saskatoon Tribal Council, and Victim Services, to ensure thorough investigations, and to reduce the overall volume of missing person files.

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Troy Cooper
Chief of Police

Dated: _____ **March 8, 2021**