



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, 2021 to December 31, 2021

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, 2021.

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.

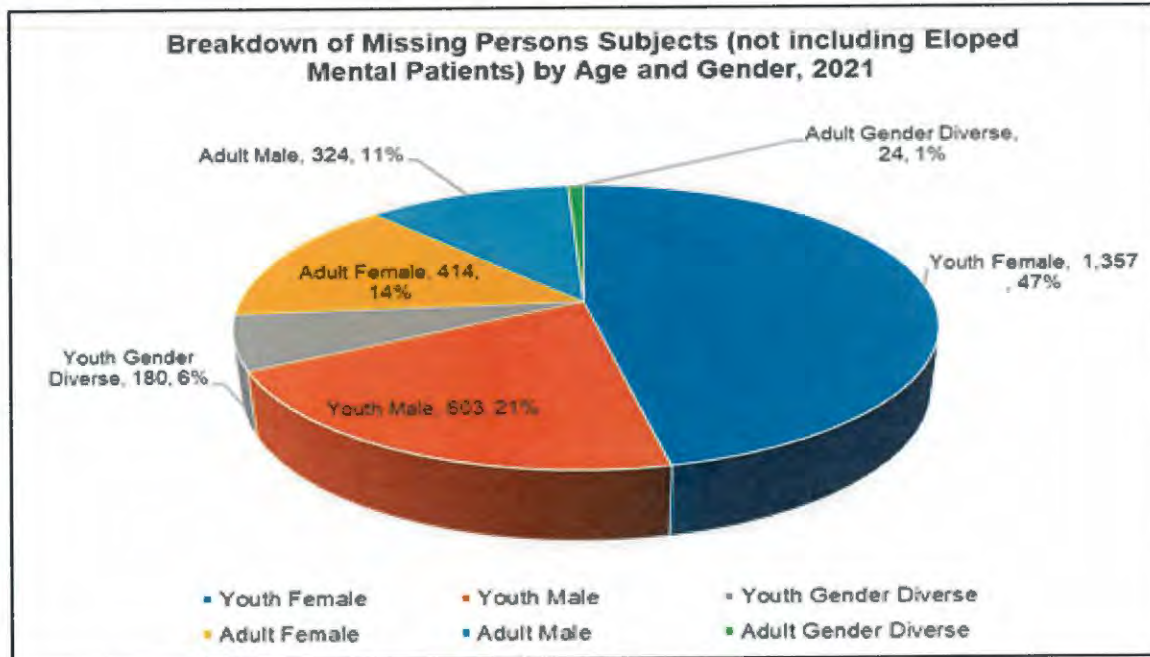
DISCUSSION:

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 SPS. The following report breaks down those statistics categorically; presenting them in a clear and concise manner illustrating the nature of missing person investigations in the city of Saskatoon.

GENERAL OVERVIEW:

In 2021 the SPS received 2912 missing person reports. In comparison to 2020 this is an increase of 229 reported missing persons. The increase in the number of reported missing persons was observed in two of the three reporting categories of Youth and Adults with Eloped Mental Health Patients seeing a decrease during the last year. The following are the comparative numbers from 2020 to 2021:

	Youth	Adult	Eloped Patients	Total
2021	2,140	762	10	2,912
2020	2,108	558	17	2,683
Difference	32	204	-7	229



	Female	Male	Gender Diverse	Grand Total
Youth (under 18)	1,357	603	180	2,140
Adult	414	324	24	762
Grand Total	1,771	927	204	2,902

REPORTED MISSING PERSONS:

In the 2021 reporting period, the majority of the reported missing persons (47%) 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

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numerous times throughout the year (habitual). Youth under the age of 10 years old only accounted for 2.5% of reported missing youth.

Female Youth

In this reporting period, 1357 female youth (under 18 years old) were reported missing to the SPS, accounting for 47% of all reported missing persons. The majority of the female youth reported missing (46%) were between the ages of 15 and 18 years of age. Female youth between the ages of 10 and 14 years old accounted for 34% of the female youth reported.

Male Youth

In this reporting period 603 male youth (under 18 years old) were reported missing to the SPS. Male youth accounted for 21% of all reported missing persons.

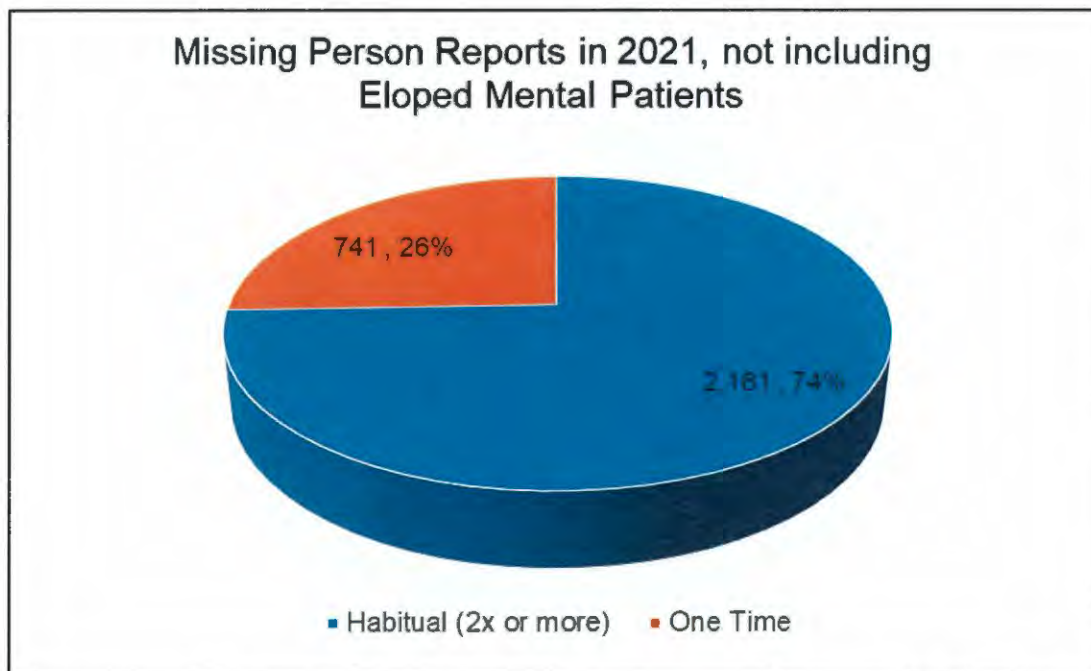
Gender Diverse Youth

In this reporting period 180 youth identifying as Gender Diverse were reported missing. Gender Diverse youth accounted for 6% of all reported missing persons. 6% of missing person subjects that identified as Gender Diverse were youth.

Adults

In this reporting period 762 adults were reported missing accounting for 26% of all reported missing persons. In this reporting period 414 adult females were reported missing and 324 adult males were reported missing. There were 24 adult missing person subjects that identified as Gender Diverse.

HABITUAL MISSING PERSONS



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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 2161 missing person reports. Habitual missing youth accounted for 65% of all missing person reports in 2021.

Female youth comprised the largest proportion of habitual subjects, accounting for 1220 (42%) missing person reports. The 10 most frequently reported female youth accounted for 339 missing person reports. The 2 most frequently reported female youth were reported 100 times in 2021. In this reporting period there were 42 female youth who were reported missing 10 or more times in 2021.

In comparison, male youth comprised the second largest proportion of habitual subjects, accounting for 488 (17%) missing person reports. There were 18 male youths that were reported 10 or more times in 2021.

Adult females are more likely to be habitual subjects than male, but combined habitual adults account for only 276 (10%) missing person reports.

Of the 204 missing person reports that were identified as Gender Diverse, one individual was responsible for 38 out of 204 reports and 17 gender diverse individuals were habitual in 2021.

LOCATIONS

In this reporting period, missing persons were reported to the SPS from 725 different addresses. The top 20 most common addresses for missing person reports comprised 60% of the missing person calls. All 20 locations are comprised of government and private care facilities.

Top 20 most frequent MP locations	Number of Missing Person reports	% of Total MP Reports
Location 1	355	12.2%
Location 2	206	7.1%
Location 3	125	4.3%
Location 4	123	4.2%
Location 5	122	4.2%
Location 6	90	3.1%
Location 7	87	3.0%
Location 8	80	2.8%
Location 9	80	2.8%
Location 10	67	2.3%
Location 11	67	2.3%
Location 12	62	2.1%
Location 13	57	2.0%
Location 14	42	1.4%

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Location 15	39	1.3%
Location 16	30	1.0%
Location 17	28	1.0%
Location 18	26	0.9%
Location 19	23	0.8%
Location 20	23	0.8%
Sum of top 20 locations (20)	1,732	59.7%
Remaining locations (705)	1,170	40.3%
Total (725)	2,902	100.0%

The top three reporting addresses accounted for 23.6% of all missing person reports. All three addresses are associated to facilities which provide short term supports to female youth.

ELOPED MENTAL HEALTH PATIENTS

The Saskatoon Health Region (Royal University Hospital, Dube Centre, City Hospital, and St. Paul's Hospital) reported 10 calls for service relating to Eloped Mental Health Patients. The majority of these calls for service originated from Royal University Hospital and Dube Centre.

There was a decrease in reported eloped mental patients in 2021, down from 17 the previous year.

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.

As 2021 came to an end, the Missing Person Unit reviewed the investigative plans that were previously identified and will be worked on in 2022 now that COVID restrictions are coming to an end. As these plans are developed further, the Missing Person Family Liaison member from Victim Services will be called upon to help provide the families with the necessary support.

During the second half of 2021, DNA evidence was submitted to NCMPUR (National Center for Missing Person and Unidentified Remains) to generate family profiles to possibly help identify remains found in Saskatchewan or from across the country.

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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
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 2021 the Missing Person Unit utilized these judicial tools in one missing person investigation.

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Saskatchewan Missing Persons Partnership (SMPP)

The Missing Person Task Force Sergeant continues to participate as an active member of the Saskatchewan Missing Person Partnership. The partnership was rebranded in 2021 to take on the title of Saskatchewan Missing Person Partnership. “The name has been updated to reflect the focus on support and response for missing people within Saskatchewan.” The SMPP 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 SMPP engages with families of missing persons to better understand their needs and organizes and promotes Missing Persons Week within Saskatchewan.

In 2021 due to continued COVID restrictions SMPP postponed Missing Person Week to the week of September 19 to 25, 2021 and the majority of activities and interactive events continued to be on-line and the theme was “What We Can Do.” There is a hope that in 2022 Missing Person Week can return to in person events along with a social media component. This shift to a social media platform proved to be very effective in highlighting missing person investigations and supports available throughout the province.

Missing Persons Week

The SPS, 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.
- **“What We Can Do” / September 19-25, 2021**
The Missing Person Unit in cooperation with the Public Affairs Section re-posted stories about our long term missing person files and provided information about walks and gatherings that families were doing to bring attention to their missing loved ones. The service also highlighted one of the files of a youth that had been reported missing multiple times and through the use of social media was able to reach out to this youth and found out she was wanting help. The youth was brought into Operation Runaway that SPS Missing Person officers are a part of with Egadz and other community partners.

PROACTIVE INITIATIVES

Community Collaboration

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

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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 SPS, 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.

During this reporting period, Operation Runaway was able to return to in person meetings and discussions with the youth that access their help. Members of the Missing Person Unit started attending the weekly meetings with staff at EGADZ and other community partners.

Relationship Building

The Missing Person Unit in 2021 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, Confederation and Market Mall), Canada Border Services, Friendship Inn, Lighthouse staff and White Buffalo 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. During 2021, the Ministry of Social Services continued to move forward on a project to create a “Risk Assessment Document” that would be used by staff at the different homes that would be completed whenever a youth left. The goal of the assessments is to help reduce the number of calls to service when the youth aren’t identified at risk. The hope is that this program can be implemented in 2022. Missing Person investigators were able to reach out to case workers on multiple occasions throughout 2021 to discuss options and to develop plans on how to best deal with youth who had a dramatic increase in being reported missing. The ultimate goal of these meetings was to determine why the sudden increase in events and how to reduce the number of calls for the youths.

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

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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.

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 2021 the Missing Person Unit continued with its 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, updated 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.

During 2021 the Missing Person Task Force Sergeant and Public Affairs worked on several media releases for some higher profile missing person investigations and the social media approach taken during Missing Persons Week in September.

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 HUB 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.

During 2021, the Missing Person Unit corresponded with the HUB unit to try and obtain family information on several habitual missing youth. This interaction was necessary as it allowed the sharing of information that assisted the Missing Person Unit in locating the subjects and then trying to help the families get the resources they need to correct the situation.

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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 continues to refer cases to the Vice Unit and ICE Unit for assistance. The goal of the referral is the safety of the youth. There were several youths that were identified during the reporting period to be at risk that were made known to the Vice Unit for their information or for possible follow up investigations.

Guns and Gang 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 Gang 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.

During the last couple months of 2021, the Missing Person Unit became involved in an investigation into a possible child abduction that involved the crossing of international borders. As a result of this investigation, members had to become familiar with a number of different Acts and work with different organizations to help facilitate the return of the child. This investigation prompted members of the Missing Person Unit to start having conversations with the SPS Legal Department to help develop policy on how to properly conduct these investigations and what exactly our role is in them.

SPS Policy and Procedures will continue to develop and evolve in order to conduct proper investigations and maintain the safety of the community we serve.

CONCLUSION:

The SPS 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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