



SASKATOON _____
POLICE SERVICE

TO: Shirley Greyeyes, Chairperson
Board of Police Commissioners

FROM: David Haye
Office of the Chief

DATE: 2024 March 12

SUBJECT: Annual Missing Persons Reporting
January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023

FILE #: 2,007-2

ISSUE:

As part of our annual reporting process the Saskatoon Police Service (SPS) provides statistics on missing persons in Saskatoon including the number of reports, the location of where they were reported missing, the number of habitual runaways, and the proactive steps to prevent people from going missing. This report includes statistical information from January 1st to December 31st, 2023.

RECOMMENDATION:

That this report be received as information.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY:

Goal 2 of the 2023 Business Plan for SPS identifies the need to maintain core policing operations and address community concerns that affect public safety. Some of the underlying conditions that contribute to the high incidence of missing person complaints in our community include addictions, homelessness, mental health, poverty, and racism. Successful missing person investigations involve partnerships with various agencies and community groups that are in contact with and offer support to missing persons.

Strategy 2.4 is specifically focused on reducing the number of habitual runaways and missing persons. This is an ongoing goal that SPS continues to work on throughout the year. SPS continues to work with group homes and Social Services in an attempt to identify why youth run and to connect them with supports where possible. The Service continues to work with Egadz to promoting the Missing Youth Sask App/Risk Assessment Tool which has been approved for use

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by the Ministry of Social Services in group homes city wide. There has been a strong correlation between use of the app in the Egadz operated homes and a decrease in missing person complaints made to SPS.

DISCUSSION:

Throughout the course of this reporting period the Missing Person Unit, with assistance from the Strategic Planning Advisor, compiles various statistics relating to missing person reports in our community. The following report provides the statistics categorically; presenting them in a clear and concise manner while illustrating the nature of missing person investigations in the city of Saskatoon.

General Overview:

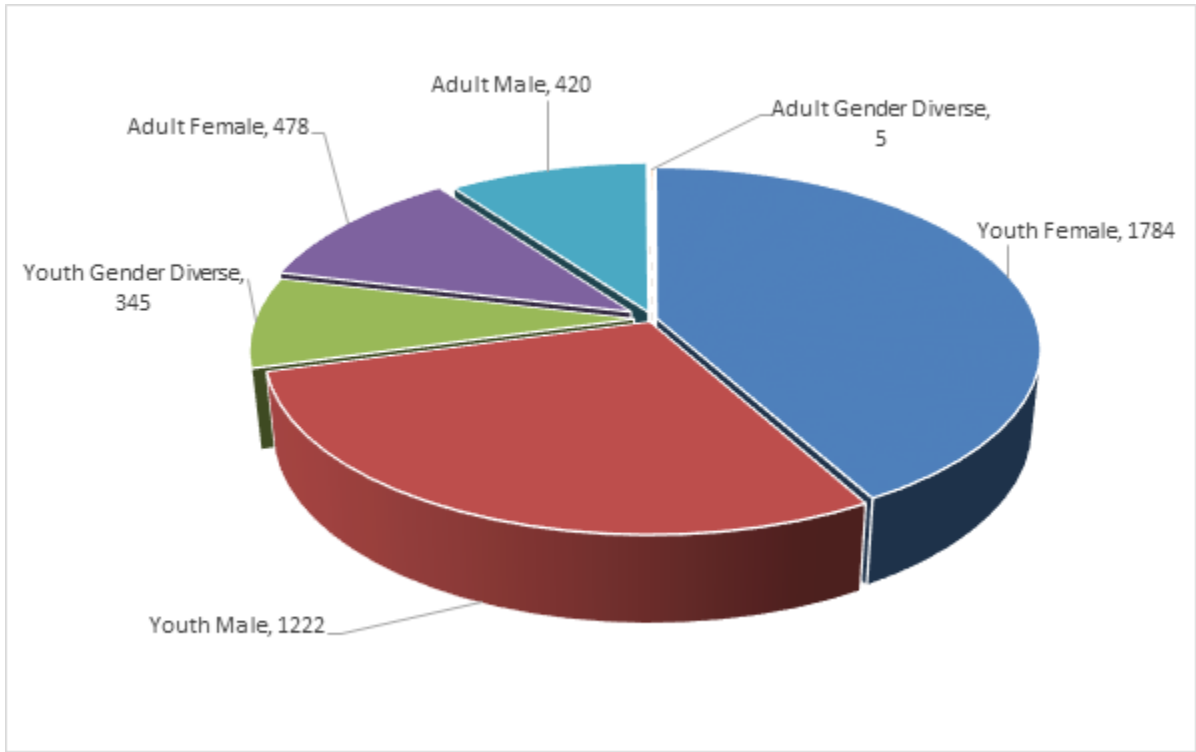
In 2023 the SPS received 4,270 missing person reports. In comparison to 2022 this was an increase of 898 reported missing persons or an increase of 26.6%.

Of significance, this follows 2022 where total reports increased by 15.7%.

In 2023 youth reports accounted for a disproportionate increase of 775 incidents or 86% of the total increase. **Eloped Mental Health Patients** are those individuals that have left a hospital or psychiatric unit against medical advice and without being discharged. The following chart shows the comparative numbers from 2022 to 2023:

	Youth	Adult	Eloped Patients	Grand Total
2023	3,351	903	16	4,270
2022	2,576	780	16	3,372
Difference	775	123	0	898
% Change	30.1%	15.8%	0.0%	26.6%

Breakdown of Missing Person Subjects by Age and Gender, 2023



	Female	Male	Gender Diverse	Grand Total
Youth (under 18)	1,784	1,222	345	3,351
Adult	478	420	5	903
Grand Total	2,262	1,642	350	4,254

Reported Missing Persons:

In the 2023 reporting period there were 4,254 missing persons, not including the eloped mental patients. Of the 4,254 missing persons, 2,262 (53%) were female, 1,642 (39%) were male and 157 (8%) were gender diverse. Police received 3,351 youth missing persons reports in 2023 which accounted for 79% of all reported missing persons.

Female Youth

Female youth (under 18 years old) represented 42% of all reported missing persons.

Male Youth

Male youth (under 18 years old) represented 29% of all reported missing persons.

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Gender Diverse Youth

There were 345 missing person reports for youth that identified as Gender Diverse. Gender Diverse youth accounted for 8% of all reported missing persons.

Habitual Missing Persons:

A **Habitual Missing Person** is an individual who has been reported missing two or more times within a specific period. In this reporting period habitual missing persons accounted for 3,281 missing person reports or 77% of all missing person reports. 389 of the 1,328 individuals reported missing in 2023 were habitual.

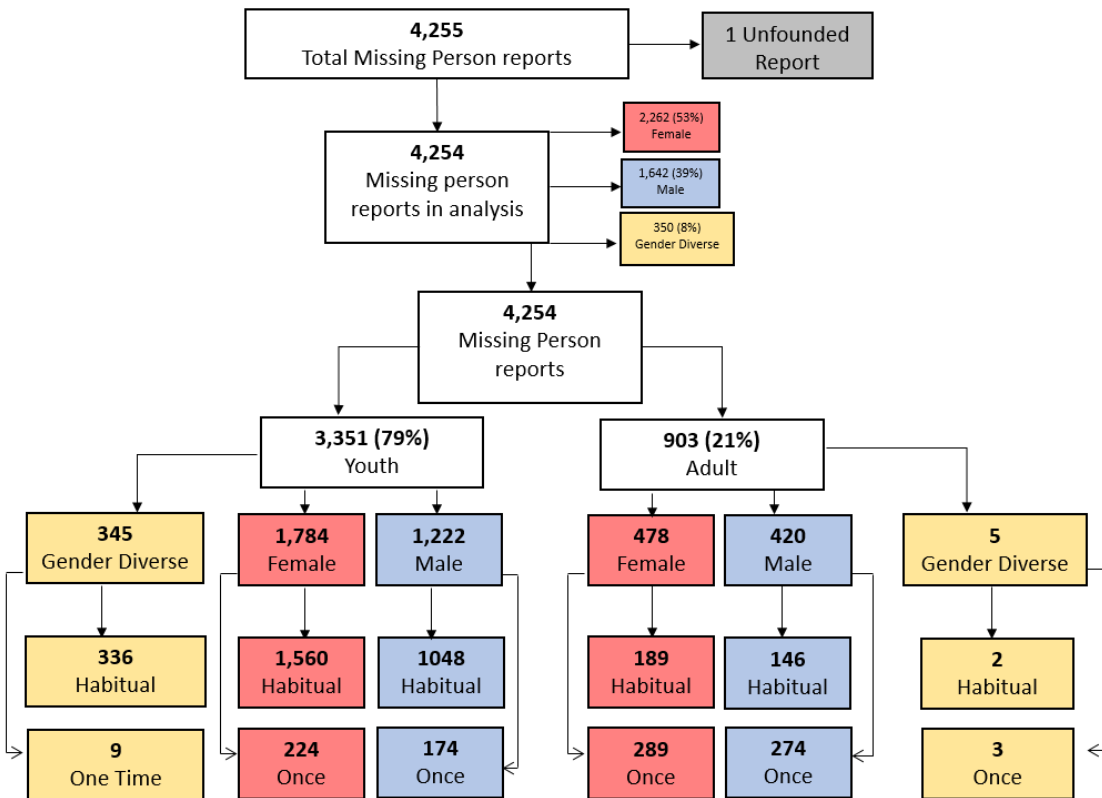
Female youth comprised the largest portion of habitual missing persons, accounting for 1,560 reports. In comparison, male youth comprised the second largest proportion of habitual missing persons, accounting for 1,048 reports. Gender diverse youth accounted for 336 of missing person reports. **In total the 2,944 habitual missing youth reports accounted for 88% of all missing youth reports and 69% of all missing person reports in 2023.**

There were 337 habitual missing adults in 2023 accounting for 37% of all missing adult reports and 8% of all missing person reports.

The following table provides specifics on the gender and age classification of habitual missing person incidents:

Gender	Age Group	Habitual (2x or more)	One Time	Total
Female	Youth (Under 18)	1,560	224	1,784
	Adult	189	289	478
Male	Youth (Under 18)	1,048	174	1,222
	Adult	146	274	420
Gender Diverse	Youth (Under 18)	336	9	345
	Adult	2	3	5
Grand Total		3,281	973	4,254

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Locations:

In this reporting period, missing person reports were generated from 887 different addresses in Saskatoon. The top 10 most common addresses for missing person reports comprised 46.3% of missing person reports.

Top 10 Most Frequent MP Locations	Number of MP Reports	% of Total MP Reports
Location 1	565	13.3%
Location 2	359	8.4%
Location 3	203	4.8%
Location 4	177	4.2%
Location 5	174	4.1%
Location 6	141	3.3%
Location 7	101	2.4%
Location 8	90	2.1%
Location 9	86	2.0%
Location 10	72	1.7%
Total of Top 10 Locations	1,968	46.3%

Eloped Mental Health Patients:

The Saskatoon Health Region (Royal University Hospital, Dube Center, City Hospital and St. Paul’s Hospital) reported 16 calls for service relating to eloped mental health patients. The majority of these calls for service came from Royal University Hospital and the Dube Center.

Eloped mental health patient reports were unchanged from 2022.

Long Term Missing Person Investigations:

The SPS currently has 19 long-term missing person investigations. All of these investigations are open investigations. Long-term missing person files remain open until the individual is located allowing for ongoing review and the submission of new information for investigative follow-up. Of the 19 missing person investigations, 14 are male and 5 are female. Further to that, 11 are Caucasian (4 females, 6 males), 5 are Indigenous (1 female, 4 males), 2 are Middle Eastern (both males) and 1 is African American/Jamaican (male).

During 2023, the Missing Person Task Force Sergeant continued to work with the National Center for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains (NCMPUR). NCMPUR is operated by the RCMP and assists law enforcement with their missing persons and unidentified remains investigations. In 2023 NCMPUR assisted the SPS with an analysis of open investigations and provided a number of recommendations which were received by the Missing Person Task Force Sergeant.

NCMPUR offers a number of services to law enforcement. Of the 19 long-term missing person investigations SPS has engaged NCMPUR services on all but one of the files. One of the main services offered to law enforcement by NCMPUR is the National Missing Person DNA Program. Biological samples were submitted to NCMPUR in order to generate DNA profiles of the missing person and or family members in an attempt to help identify remains found in Saskatchewan and or across the country. During the course of the year, the Missing Person Task Force Sergeant submitted 1 file to NCMPUR to have DNA profiles generated and continues to work with families on those files where DNA has not been submitted. Of the 19 long term files DNA has now been submitted on 13 files and is awaiting approval on two additional submissions. Of the remaining four investigations investigators are attempting to receive approval from family members on two while two other families have refused to participate.

All of the long-term missing person investigations have been entered into the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police website for public access (<http://www.sacp.ca/>) and Crime Stoppers.

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Historic Missing Persons		
	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
Eddie Burwell	31	February 2, 2018
Aaron Wuttunee	58	September 5 th , 2019

Saskatchewan Missing Person Partnership (SMPP)

The Missing Person Task Force Sergeant continues to participate as an active member of the Saskatchewan Missing Person Partnership (SMPP).

Established by the Government of Saskatchewan in 2005 the SMPP is a unique, collaborative approach between community agencies, Indigenous groups, police agencies, search and rescue, and government ministries. The SMPP is chaired by the Ministry of Justice and aims to share education and awareness resources to prevent people from going missing, help coordinate policies and legislation and to support agencies that provide services for families of missing persons.

The meetings held at the beginning of the year focus on planning for Missing Persons Week that occurs at the beginning of May. Other examples of topics discussed during 2023 included the Missing Youth Sask App, and a presentation that focused on ethical and legal considerations surrounding the sharing of personal information in alert systems.

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Missing Person Week was May 1-7. The theme was “Honouring the Missing and Supporting Their Families” and was a combination of in person and on-line events. The shift to a social media platform during the pandemic proved to be very useful in bringing attention to the week and therefore it will continue to play an important role in getting information out to the families and to the general public.

Missing Persons Week

Representatives from the SPS attended the opening news conference in Regina and accompanied families on the Walk to Honour the Missing from Wascana Place to the Missing Persons Oak Tree.

SPS Victim Services (VS) was successful in securing provincial funding under the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Community Response Fund to host a conference entitled “Supporting Hope – empowering our community”. The conference was hosted at Wanuskewin Heritage Park on May 4 & 5 by SPS VS, targeting frontline workers with a focus on working with and supporting families of the missing. The conference was exceptionally well received.

The Saskatoon Police Service conducted and contributed to online events that brought attention to missing person investigations. They included but were not limited to:

May 2, 2023: Highlighting the Never Seen Again episode featuring Mackenzie Trottier from Paramount+ in Canada
<https://fb.watch/qMlrullfB/>

May 4, 2022: Highlighting Megan Gallagher’s family
<https://fb.watch/qMICfioApG/>

May 5, 2022: Drawing attention to Missing Children’s Day
<https://fb.watch/qMm4XxEdVa/>

Proactive Initiatives:

Community Collaboration

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

The SPS collaborates routinely with community organizations, some of which include Salvation Army, Hope Restored Canada, Quint Saskatoon, Sanctum Group, St. Mary’s Emergency Shelter, Saskatoon Tribal Council, YWCA, Egadz, John Howard Society, Eagle’s Nest, Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service, Prairie Harm Reduction, Ranch Ehrlo and CUMFI.

Operation Runaway

Operation Runaway was developed in the spring of 2017 as an interagency community partnership initiated by Egadz, in collaboration with the SPS, Ministry of Social Services,

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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 2023, members of the SPS Missing Person Unit continued to attend and participate weekly in the Operation Runaway “circle” meetings. This involvement has enhanced police relationships with habitually missing youth and has improved inter-agency cooperation. In addition, Missing Person Unit members have been able to refer at-risk youth to this program, which is a crucial first step for connecting youth with supports and creating opportunities that strengthen self determination.

Following a successful test project in the Egadz operated My Homes efforts are being made to have other group homes adopt the Missing Youth Sask App, which is a risk assessment tool to assist workers navigate the decision-making process in relation to whether to report a youth missing. The SPS Missing Persons Unit travelled across Saskatchewan in 2023 with representatives from Egadz and the Ministry of Social Services to advocate the use of the Missing Youth Sask App as a means of ensuring risk is properly assessed in care homes, improving the quality of reports made to police and reducing the incidence of habitual runaway reports.

In early 2024 the Missing Person Task Force Sergeant attended a meeting with the MSS and various group home leadership in Saskatoon urging them to consider adopting the App. Between 2021 and 2023 the My Home locations using the App have experienced a reduction of 227 reports (41.3%) while overall habitual youth missing person incidents have increased by 55.8% during the same period.

Relationship Building

The Missing Person Unit continued to reach out to and build relationships with a number of community organizations and businesses such as Egadz Outreach Workers, Ministry of Social Services, the Lighthouse, Friendship Inn, Saskatoon Food Bank, Chokecherry Studios and the Bridge. Investigators also continued to build relationships with Canada Border Services Agency, US Customs and Border Protection, US Dept of Homeland Security, Interpol and various Canadian police agencies. Collaboration with these organizations has proven to be invaluable when it comes to locating 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. The position has been instrumental in helping forge positive relationships with the families of missing persons and helping to facilitate open and honest communication between the families and investigators. During 2023, Victim Services provided assistance to families in a number of active investigations as well as our historical investigations. As noted above, Victim Services hosted a workshop during Missing Persons Week.

SPS INTERNAL COLLABORATIONS:

The Missing Person Unit in addition to conducting investigations to locate missing persons also reviews each case and assesses the individual circumstances surrounding the person being reported missing. If through investigation additional risks or concerns are identified other sections of the Service are contacted for assistance and their expertise.

Major Crime Investigations

Each missing person report that is received by the Service has the potential to escalate into a major case investigation. During the course of 2023, the Missing Person Unit called upon members of the Major Crime Section to assist with two missing persons investigations. These investigations remain with the Major Crime Section. The Major Crime Section also continues to actively investigate a number of other incidents that began as missing person reports.

Patrol Missing Person Constables

There were four to eight patrol members assigned as Missing Person Constables on each of the four shifts and they were responsible for conducting the initial missing person investigations. The Patrol Missing Person Constables received in-service training provided by the Missing Person Unit at the beginning of the calendar year. The training developed investigative skills, enhanced knowledge of effective risk assessments and provided education on available community resources. Throughout the year, Missing Person Unit members provided ongoing support and guidance to Patrol Missing Person Constables during complex investigations and offered mentoring on best practices.

Public Relations and Strategic Communications

During 2023, the Public Relations and Strategic Communications Section assisted the Missing Person Unit with numerous media requests for public assistance and also in working with the various media outlets in the city. In 2023 there were 115 media releases issued for missing persons. Alert fatigue is an ongoing concern for investigators and SPS continues to evaluate the criteria and policy for issuing a media release.

The Public Relations and Strategic Communications Section also helps prepare the social media content/approach to be taken during Missing Person Week.

In December 2023 the SPS released a 5-part podcast that explored the life and disappearance of Kandice Singbeil as an investigative tool in the ongoing investigation into the 2015 disappearance of Kandice. As of February, 2024, the podcast had nearly 50,000 downloads.

Saskatoon HUB

In cases where missing person investigations were concluded and there continued to be an acute elevated risk identified for individuals and/or families, the Missing Person Unit made referrals to HUB. HUB continued to be a valuable asset in providing an immediate and coordinated mobilization of resources that target factors such as addictions, mental health concerns, housing, absent education plan, need for income assistance or criminal justice system matters.

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Police and Crisis Team (PACT)

On top of the high volume of calls that PACT responded to for people suffering from mental health and addictions crises, they were also invaluable partners to the Missing Person Unit. PACT initiated missing person investigations after identifying vulnerable people that otherwise may have gone unreported. Through information sharing agreements, lifestyle history, risk and protective factors, and family and other supports were identified, resulting in numerous missing people being located. Finally, PACT provided follow-up support for individuals that were located and found to have continued concerns for their welfare.

VICE and Integrated Child Exploitation (ICE) Sections

The Missing Person Unit investigators are trained in the use of social media as an investigative tool. Investigators use this knowledge to reach out to and communicate with those that are missing, especially the youth. During some of the investigations, youth have been identified as being sexually exploited or appear to be at risk for sexual exploitation and or human trafficking. These cases are then referred to the appropriate units (for example ICE, Sex Crimes, Vice-Human Trafficking) for their continued investigations.

The SPS Vice and Human Trafficking Unit also participates in Operation No Go which is a collaborative multi-agency approach to assisting persons who are involve or at risk of being involved in sexual exploitation or human trafficking.

The Missing Person Unit interacts with all departments within the Service. The Missing Person Unit will either request the assistance of other units that may possibly have contact with missing persons due to their situations or other units/departments may come and request our assistance in trying to identify people.

CONCLUSION:

2023 saw an unprecedented increase in missing person reports to the SPS. These increases are being driven primarily by youth and habitual youth reporting. However, SPS continues to make positive strides in regards to the relationships and infrastructure required to successfully conclude missing person investigations. The Missing Person Unit will continue to work closely with our community partners and other agencies to ensure investigations are conducted as effective and efficiently as possible. We will place added emphasis on reducing the number of habitual runaways and other missing persons through continued collaboration and innovative initiatives.

Written by: Sgt Aaron Moser, Missing Person Task Force
Reviewed by: S/Sgt Doug McNeil, Interpersonal Violence
Insp. Richard Bueckert, Investigative Services Division
A/Supt. James Oliver, Criminal Investigations Division
Approved by: David Haye, Chief of Police