

The Regional Municipality of York Police Services Board

Public Board Meeting
October 5, 2022

Report of the Chief of Police

Statistics Canada 2021 Crime Severity Index and Weighted Clearance Rate Overview

1. Recommendation

That the Board receive this annual report for information, pursuant to Police Services Board Crime, Call and Public Disorder Analysis Policy No. 02/00-5.

2. Summary

Every year, York Regional Police provides police-reported crime data to the Police Services Board that highlights statistics from the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics (CCJCSS), a division of Statistics Canada. The crime data they release use two complementary methods of measuring crime; traditional incident-based crime rates and crime severity indices. This report is focused on the Crime Severity Indices (CSI) and related Weighted Clearance Rates (WCR) for Total Crime, Violent Crime and Non-violent Crime. It includes an overview of York Region results and those of other national and provincial police jurisdictions. The report format has been enhanced from previous annual reports with additional information and a five-year trend analysis.

A detailed report of York Regional Police incident-based crime and clearance data was presented to the Board in May 2022, reflecting the volume of crime reported to police. The CSI and WCR measures contained herein better reflect trends in more serious crimes because they take into account both the volume and relative seriousness of offences. Examining these measures provides a broader understanding of the impact of crime and level of community safety and well-being.

The Statistics Canada 2021 CSI and WCR measures indicate that York Regional Police continues to be one of the safest large policing jurisdictions in the country. The data analysis shows the following:

- The 2021 CSI for York Regional Police marginally increased for Total Crime, but is consistent with the five-year average.
- The 2021 Violent CSI increased more significantly, but is only slightly higher than the five-year average.
- The Non-violent CSI for 2021 remained almost the same, and is only slightly lower than the five-year average.
- Amongst national comparators, York Region has the lowest 2021 Violent CSI and the second lowest Non-violent and Total CSI.
- Amongst provincial comparators, York Region has the second lowest 2021 Violent CSI and the third lowest Total CSI and Non-violent CSI.
- For all three CSI measures of Total Crime, Violent Crime and Non-violent Crime, York Region values are 30 percent lower than Ontario and 50 percent lower than Canada.
- The 2021 WCR for York Regional Police remained the same for Total Crime, increased for Violent Crime, and decreased slightly for Non-violent Crime.
- Across Canada and Ontario, all three WCR measures show a declining five-year trend.

3. Background

Police services in Canada are required to respond to crime scenes, investigate incidents and report them to the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics. The criminal incidents reported to police and those that come to the attention of York Regional Police are submitted monthly to the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics.

CRIME REPORTING METHODOLOGY

Uniform Crime Reporting

In Canada, police services across the nation gather information on criminal incidents using the incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) survey methodology developed by Statistics Canada in 1962. An incident is considered to be the set of connected events which usually constitute an occurrence report and may contain one or more violations of the law along with their victims and accused. The Uniform Crime Reporting survey methodology allows reporting of four serious offences in a criminal incident. To provide better comparability, Statistics Canada report only the most serious offence of each submitted incident, but the York Regional Police Annual Statistical Report includes all four as a more accurate representation of crime volume. This 2021 Crime Severity Index and Weighted Clearance Rate overview report is based on all criminal incidents reported to Statistics Canada from January to December of 2021 by municipal, provincial and federal police services.

Crime Severity Index

The Crime Severity Index (CSI) is a measure of police-reported crime that reflects the relative seriousness of individual offences and tracks changes in crime severity over time. The CSI measures both the volume and severity of crimes reported to police. At the request of the policing community, the index was introduced by Statistics Canada in 2009 in collaboration with police services, the justice system and academics, to address limitations of the traditional crime rate.

In the CSI computation process, each crime is assigned a weight depending on its seriousness. The weight assigned to an offence is based on its incarceration rate and average prison sentence length from the criminal courts. The weights are updated every five years using court system outcomes. The most recent update on weights was completed in 2018 and applied to the 2019 datasets. Unlike the traditional crime rate, all *Criminal Code* offences including criminal traffic violations are included in the CSI. The CSI addresses the limitations of traditional crime statistics that are driven by high volume, but relatively less serious offences. It complements the volume-based method of reporting crime rates to give a broader picture of crime in our communities.

The CSI is available for three separate indices: Total Crime, Violent Crime and Non-violent Crime. The Violent CSI is comprised of all police-reported violent violations such as crimes against persons, and the Non-violent CSI is comprised of all police-reported property violations, other *Criminal Code* violations, other federal statute violations, drug violations and *Criminal Code* traffic violations.

Crime Severity Indices are standardized to 100 to facilitate comparisons across police services and against the national and provincial averages. CSI scores below 100 imply that the police service has a lower crime rate compared to other police services, and a CSI score above 100 indicates a more serious crime rate compared to other police services.

Weighted Clearance Rate

Statistics Canada also introduced Weighted Clearance Rate (WCR) measures in 2009 to enhance comparability of police clearance rates. The WCR measures the percentage of police-reported criminal incidents that are cleared, weighted by crime severity. Clearance rate weights are assigned based on the same principle as the CSI, where a more serious offence will have a higher 'weight' than less serious offences. WCR measures are also available for Total Crime, Violent Crime and Non-violent Crime.

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT AND COMPARABILITY

The global COVID-19 pandemic which began in early 2020 continues to have a significant impact on Canada's economy, health care system and society in general. The York Regional Police operating environment substantially changed with the declaration of a pandemic state of emergency in Ontario. Various policies were enacted to contain the spread of the virus, changing how people socialize, interact, work and learn. Varying levels of restrictions remained in 2021 as people in Ontario experienced several waves of COVID-19. Each

province had varying levels of restrictions in place at different times throughout 2020 and 2021.

The limitations of the data presented in this report should be acknowledged. Crime data from different policing jurisdictions, even standardized Uniform Crime Reporting statistics, should be compared and interpreted with caution. Crime data is not an indicator of overall police workload, and clearance rates do not reflect overall police effectiveness. Various factors affect comparability and the findings of this report are only one component of assessing the overall crime picture in York Region.

Crime and clearance data for every policing jurisdiction can be influenced by:

- organizational priorities, available resources and allocation
- substantive factors, such as victim or complainant reporting rates
- legal, such as offence definitions and interpretations
- statistical factors, such as Uniform Crime Reporting scoring methodology changes and internal counting rules
- reporting differences for less serious crimes both by the public and by the police
- population composition, for example, racial and ethnic makeup, age and gender profile, and family structure
- internal practices such as investigator coding and report validation processes
- crime type; for example, local or multi-jurisdictional and violent or non-violent
- crime complexity and solvability, such as organized or non-organized
- variances in service delivery models, such as in-person police response versus alternative service delivery options available

4. Analysis

The 2021 Crime Severity and Weighted Clearance Overview report is prepared by comparing Crime Severity Index and Weighted Clearance Rates for Total Crime, Violent Crime and Non-violent Crime. The measures are analysed with trends for other police services of similar size and backgrounds.

NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL COMPARISONS

The crime statistics measures of York Regional Police have been compared to nine national police jurisdictions and nine provincial police jurisdictions that serve the largest and most similar populations. The select nine national comparator police jurisdictions that serve a population of more than 700,000 are Toronto, Montreal, Peel, Calgary, York, Ottawa, Edmonton, Winnipeg and Durham. The select nine provincial comparator police jurisdictions that serve over 500,000 people include Toronto, Peel, York, Ottawa, Durham, Halton, Waterloo, Hamilton and Niagara.

The indicators for Total Crime, Violent Crime and Non-violent Crime in York Region are also compared with the average of the comparator police jurisdictions in Ontario and the average of the comparator police jurisdictions in Canada.

Crime Severity Index Results

Appendices 1-3 display the Crime Severity Indices of Total Crime, Violent Crime and Non-violent Crime of select police jurisdictions in Ontario and Canada. For the categories of Violent Crime and Total Crime, York Region CSI scores marginally increased in 2021 from 2020, however, the Non-violent CSI score remained the same as 2020.

Data provided in Appendix 1 shows that the Total CSI for York Regional Police is 22.2 percent lower than the average CSI of the nine largest police jurisdictions in Ontario, and 40.0 percent lower than the average of the nine largest police jurisdictions in Canada. The Violent CSI and Non-violent CSI shows a similar pattern. It is also observed that for all three crime severity indices of Total Crime, Violent Crime and Non-violent Crime, the York Region scores are 30 percent lower than the total Ontario score and 50 percent lower than the overall score for Canada.

Appendix 2 provides details of the CSI values for the nine select national comparators from 2017-2021, as well as their 2020-2021 variances, five-year variances, and five-year averages. The data tables and charts demonstrate that among the national jurisdictions with a population over 700,000, York has the lowest (best) score in 2021 for the Violent CSI and the second lowest for the Total CSI and Non-violent CSI. For the five-year variances, York has the second highest percentage increase for the Total CSI, and third highest percentage increase for both the Violent and Non-violent CSI.

Appendix 3 includes the CSI values for the nine select provincial comparators for the last five years, as well as one-year and five-year variances and five-year averages. Amongst these provincial jurisdictions with populations over 500,000, York has the second lowest (best) score in 2021 for the Violent CSI and third lowest score for the Total CSI and Non-violent CSI. However, when looking at the five-year variances, York Region has the second highest percentage increase for the Total CSI, and third highest percentage increase for the Violent CSI and Non-violent CSI.

Weighted Clearance Rate Results

Weighted Clearance Rates for the same national and provincial comparators are provided in Appendices 1-3. In 2021, the WCR for York Regional Police increased for Violent Crime, remained the same for Total Crime, and decreased for Non-violent Crime. Weighted Clearance Rates for Non-violent Crime decreased in 2021 across Canada. Declining clearance rates for cybercrime and fraud are driving this trend, as the volume of reported incidents has increased and their investigations are becoming more complex.

Appendix 1 shows that all three 2021 WCR measures for York Regional Police are higher (better) than the average of Ontario and Canada's nine largest jurisdictions and for the overall Canada WCR. They are consistent with the overall Ontario WCR.

Appendices 2-3 show details of the WCR in the nine select national and provincial comparators for the last five years, from 2017-2021. Although the Weighted Clearance Rates for York Regional Police have been declining in recent years, they remain consistent with the

trends seen in other police services across the country. In 2021, York's weighted clearance rates are among the top three nationally and among the top four provincially.

5. Financial

There are no financial implications.

6. Conclusion

When examined together with internal crime statistics, the statistics produced by the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics provide a greater understanding of York Region crime trends and community well-being. We will continue to review the annual crime data released by the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics and Statistics Canada in order to assist us with the development and review of our policing priorities, operational strategies and crime prevention programs.

Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request

Jim MacSween, M.O.M., B.A.A.
Chief of Police

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Attachments (3) Crime Severity Index PSB Report - Appendix 1
Crime Severity Index PSB Report - Appendix 2
Crime Severity Index PSB Report - Appendix 3