

CORE PATROL REPORT

A Summary of Hamilton Police Service

2023 Core Patrol Survey Responses

Prepared by

Hamilton Police Service Crime Information and Analysis Unit



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POLICE SERVICE**
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Executive Summary

Report Objectives: This report was guided by four objectives. These include:

1. Describe Hamilton Police Service's Core Patrol pilot project,
2. Describe crime in the Core Patrol Area,
3. Provide a summary of results from the *Core Patrol Initiative Survey* of downtown businesses, conducted by HPS in Fall 2023,
4. Outline the next steps for the Core Patrol pilot project in 2024.

Core Patrol: Hamilton Police Service's (HPS) Core Patrol is a pilot project involving increased walking patrols in the downtown area with a mandate to enhance public safety in the downtown core through proactive patrols and community engagement. The pilot project was developed in response to community requests for additional police presence in the downtown area due to a perceived lack of safety in the area. The goal of these additional focused patrols is to prevent crime and increase community member feelings of safety via regular, proactive officer presence.

Core Patrol Crime Statistics: Citizen-initiated calls for service in the Core Patrol Area decreased by 11% from 2022 to 2023. They are also lower year-to-date, with 17% fewer calls for service from January to May 2024 compared to the same time period in 2023. Occurrences in the Core Patrol Area decreased by 7% from 2022 to 2023, and have remained stable in 2024 year-to-date compared to 2023. In contrast, the cumulative harm score for occurrences in the Core Patrol Area has increased for the prior three years, going up by 15% from 2021 to 2022, 2% from 2022 to 2023, and 3% in 2024 year-to-date compared to 2023 year-to-date.

Survey of Core Businesses: In Fall 2023, Core Patrol officers and HPS cadets distributed invitations to complete the *Core Patrol Initiative Survey* to businesses with storefronts within the Core Patrol area. Responses were captured between August 15th and September 8th, 2023. A total of 109 respondents completed the survey, representing a minimum of 69 unique businesses.

Survey Results: A majority of respondents (70%) reported either feeling unsafe or very unsafe downtown. Feelings varied by time, with fewer respondents reporting feeling unsafe or very unsafe when they arrive at work than when they leave work.

Themes Identified in Open-Ended Responses: A qualitative analysis was conducted to identify themes in the open-ended question responses. Five themes were identified, including police presence, social disorder, physical disorder, crime, and harassment. Most respondents that explicitly mentioned police presence in their open-ended responses were in favour of additional police presence downtown. However, four respondents were not. In terms of crime and disorder, both property and violent crime were mentioned by respondents. Notably, however, disorder was mentioned much more frequently. Over 80% of respondents that answered the open-ended questions mentioned some type of social or physical disorder in their responses. This included homelessness, panhandling, visible drug and alcohol use, mental health issues, public urination and defecation, outdoor sleeping, the presence of needles, and garbage.

Next Steps: Overall, findings of the survey point to community members generally feeling unsafe downtown and wanting increased police presence. Since completing the survey, HPS has used the findings to identify evidence based practices that can be implemented to address community concerns

downtown. The first evidence based practice HPS has adopted for the Core Patrol pilot project is directed walking patrols of high crime areas. HPS's Crime Information Analysis Unit has created a Core Patrol dashboard to guide this work. Additional next steps include (1) fostering police-community relationships and partnerships downtown via HPS's revamped Problem Oriented Policing process, and (2) conducting a follow-up *Core Patrol Initiative Survey* in Fall 2024.

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In 2023, the Hamilton Police Service (HPS) began a pilot project of dedicated walking patrols in the downtown core. The following report provides a description of the background and mandate of this Core Patrol pilot project. To support and guide the pilot project, HPS conducted a survey of downtown business owners and employees in Fall 2023. This survey data was analyzed and the findings are presented in this report, along with a summary of HPS reported crime and calls-for-service in the Core Patrol Area. The report concludes by providing the next steps for the Core Patrol pilot project for the remainder of 2024.

Core Patrol Background and Mandate

Hamilton Police Service's (HPS) Core Patrol is a pilot project of increased walking patrols in the downtown area with a mandate to enhance public safety in the downtown core through proactive patrols and community engagement. The pilot project was developed in response to community requests for additional police presence in the downtown area due to a perceived lack of safety in the area.

Some of these requests were highlighted on April 27th, 2023, during the Hamilton Police Service Board deputations from the International Village Business Improvement Area (BIA), Downtown Hamilton BIA, Denningers Limited, and GW Thompson Jeweller & Pawn Broker. During their deputations, the presenters voiced a desire for increased police presence in the downtown area. As noted by Emily Walsh, Executive Director, Downtown Hamilton BIA:

While we very much appreciate our crime managers and the work that they do with our respective BIAs, the crime manager program itself is not as effective as it could be. A deep understanding of the community and strong relationships with stakeholders and community members are crucial aspects of this role ... A dedicated officer with less competing responsibilities and more time allotted to community policing could cultivate a more effective system of communication with our BIAs and our members.

Emily Walsh, Downtown Hamilton BIA [22:32]

Similar concerns were raised during the Denninger's and GW Thompson Jeweller & Pawnbroker deputation:

[T]he social issues in the downtown core are not going to disappear in the short term. As businesses we have to continue to operate, and this is about the safety and health of our customers and our staff. Our staff feel safer with the increased police presence we've had the last six to seven weeks, and we thank the police for this. We are requesting a more permanent presence of police in the downtown business core and a reinstatement of the beat cop that we used to have

Mary A-Z, Denningers [39:38]

Denninger's supported their request with results from an anonymous internal survey they conducted with their staff. Their survey had a 78% response rate, representing 31 employees. Results of this survey showed that:

- 80% of staff agree or strongly agree that security and safety in our downtown core streets impact their feeling of safety in the workplace;
- 73% do not feel safe walking in their own parking lot after dark;

- 63% of staff have had to call 911 while on shift due to an incident involving a member of the public;
- 87% of staff either agreed or strongly agreed that they would feel safer at work if there were more foot patrol officers, and;
- 84% of staff either agreed or strongly agreed that they would like more police presence in the downtown core.

Suzy Braithwaite, Executive Director of the International Village BIA summarized the downtown BIA's requests, noting:

Our ask today is for two things. Firstly, increase focus on the heart of downtown core, to support businesses, property owners, and their customers. Especially after having faced two years of lockdowns that they are recovering from. And secondly, a full-time beat officer, similar to the one we had with Kevin Beda back in 2015. His weekly check-ins with the BIA fostered a positive working relationship with BIA staff and the Boards of Management that we've since not had. Our businesses had a direct line to his cell phone so we could reach out to him if needed. He took the time to get to know all the business owners and staff by name, and they felt fully supported by the police. Eight years later they continue to ask for a beat officer like Kevin. If any request is to stand out today, it is this – please reinstate a beat officer in the two downtown BIAs from MacNab Street to West Avenue. Both BIAs have continuously been asking this for years.

Suzy Braithwaite - Executive Director, International Village BIA [24:02]

However, there was not unanimous agreement about the desire for increased police presence in downtown Hamilton. Councillor Cameron Kroetsch raised a concern at the meeting about the potential impact on neighbourhood residents should police presence downtown be increased:

I am concerned, deeply concerned, about the beat cop process, the beat cop outlook, from a neighbourhood perspective. These businesses don't exist in isolation. Yes, there can be targeted services to support businesses and their needs, sure thing, and that's the conversation we're having here. But we know we have a long history in this city of issues of carding, other kinds of things. We've heard from lots of community members who don't feel safe in the beat cop type scenario. And so I'm very mindful of that. And I hear a lot of that feedback from residents on a regular basis. So I have to make sure that I'm thinking about that feedback as well.

Councillor Cameron Kroetsch [45:53]

As a result of the cumulative feedback provided to HPS, a "Core Patrol" pilot project was developed, featuring dedicated patrol officers working in Hamilton's downtown. Importantly, these patrols were not designed to engage in any practice similar to carding¹. Rather, the goal of these additional focused patrols is to prevent crime and increase community member feelings of safety via regular, proactive officer

¹ For the past seven years, since January 2017, Hamilton Police Service has not engaged in carding. Carding, also known as a street check, occurs when a police officer asks someone for personally identifying information in certain circumstances. On January 1, 2017, Ontario Regulation 58/16: Collection of Identifying Information in Certain Circumstances – Prohibitions and Duties came into effect. This regulation limited the use of carding.

presence. This presence is intended to foster positive relationships with all downtown community members, including neighbourhood residents, visitors, and business owners.

Core Patrol Area and Activities

The Core Patrol area includes all streets within the boundaries of Wellington St and Bay St, from the east to west, and Cannon St and Hunter St, from the north to south. The Core Patrol area is overviewed in Figure 1 below.

Initial patrols in the pilot project began on June 25th, 2023 with two officers assigned to walk the Core Patrol area Mondays through Fridays from 9:00am to 5:00pm. In January 2024, Core Patrol shifted its schedule to provide additional coverage on Saturdays. The current schedule is a rotating three week cycle with the following patrol times:

	Days	Times
Week 1	Monday to Thursday	8:00am to 6:00pm
Week 2	Tuesday to Friday	8:00am to 6:00pm
Week 3	Wednesday to Saturday	8:00am to 6:00pm

During their shifts, Core Patrol officers conduct proactive patrols throughout the downtown area, respond to calls for service, engage in enforcement activities, engage in conversations with people downtown, and attend community events.

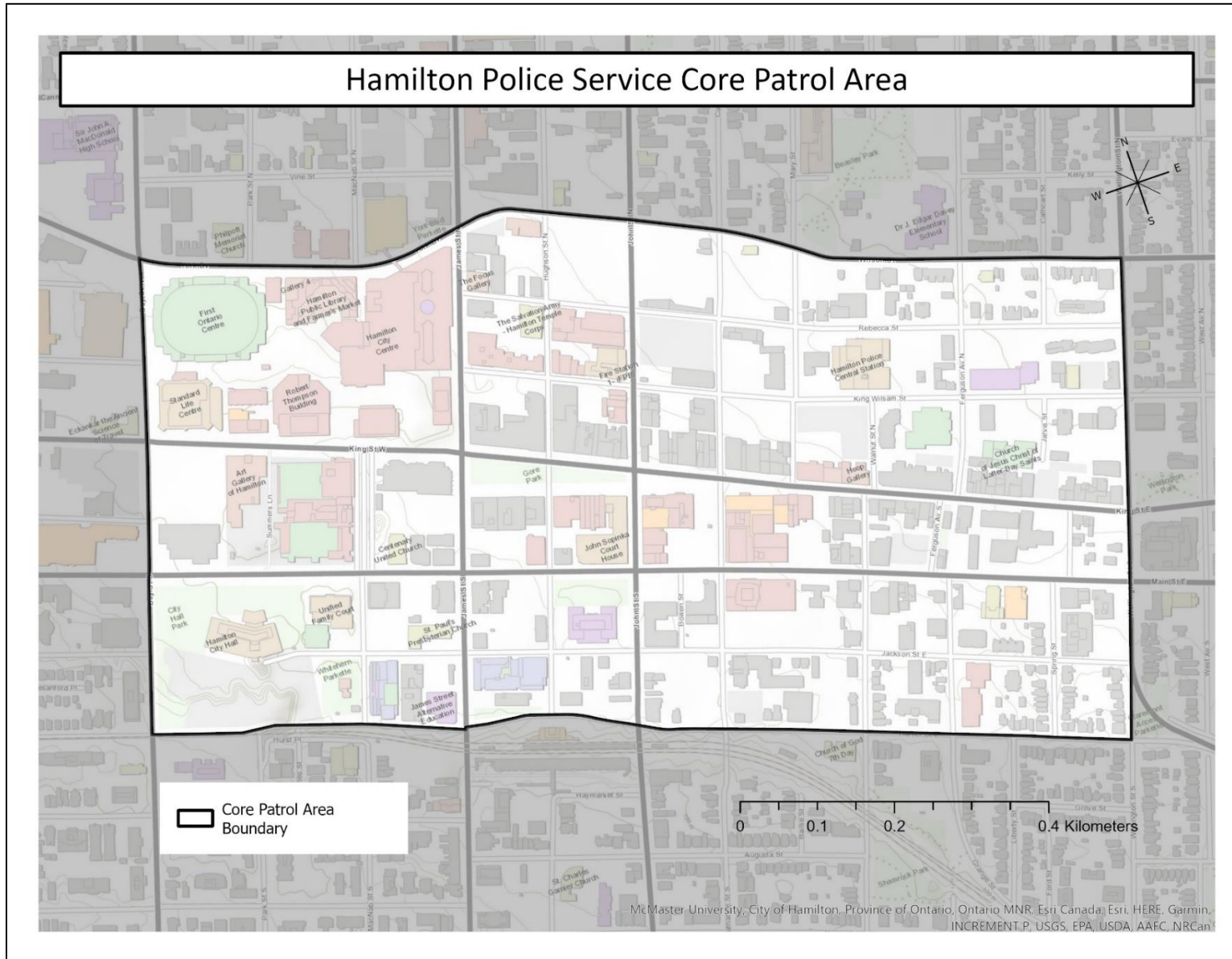
Example community events that Core Patrol members attended include:

- 1) **Grey Cup Street Festival** – The festival took place in the downtown core over 4 days in November 2023. Core Patrol officers were active in the King William St and James St areas as well as in the hotel district. Working with other Grey Cup support teams, Core Patrol brought their expertise and knowledge of the area to make it a safer place for everyone.
- 2) **Gore Park events** – Core Patrol regularly attended the Downtown Hamilton BIA Summer Promenade in summer 2023 while it was hosted in Gore Park.
- 3) **Canadian Country Music Awards** – Up to and including the awards, Core Patrol officers were active in the hotel district as well as at First Ontario Centre to ensure the safety of visitors to our city.
- 4) **Supercrawl** – Portions of Supercrawl take place within the Core Patrol boundary. In September 2023, members of Core Patrol increased police visibility at this event, the city’s largest annual festival with over 275,000 attendees last year².
- 5) **RBC Canadian Open** – Core Patrol staffing will be increased in June 2024 in anticipation of an influx of out of town visitors attending the RBC Canadian Open professional golf tournament. This increased presence will be focused on the entertainment and hotel districts of the Core Patrol area.

Core Patrol officers have also engaged in proactive work to address community concerns. For instance, Core Patrol officers attended the Hamilton GO Station on Hunter Street East and conducted a walk through with Metrolinx management. During this walk, officers learned of the issues facing staff and patrons at this location. The officers then used this information to develop

² Information obtained from Supercrawl website on May 30th, 2024 at <https://supercrawl.ca/about/>

Figure 1. Map of Hamilton Police Service Core Patrol Area



Problem Oriented Policing Project *All Aboard* to help address ongoing issues and community member concerns at the GO Station.

Since its inception in June 2023, the Core Patrol team has responded to 409 calls for services³. Of these, 67% were citizen generated and 33% were officer generated. The team has also arrested 90 people a total of 125 times - 18 individuals have been arrested 2 or more times. Additionally, they have laid 253 charges, of which 236 were Criminal Code charges, 14 were Controlled Drug and Substances Act charges, and 2 were provincial statutes. One charge had no type listed. Finally, the team has also issued 33 tickets.

Core Patrol Area Crime Statistics

Below we provide a summary of Calls for Service and Occurrence Events that have happened in the Core Patrol Area from 2019 to 2024 year-to-date (May 31).

Calls For Service

There were 40,926 citizen-initiated⁴ Calls for Service (CFS) in the Core Patrol Area between January 1, 2019 and May 31, 2024. Tables summarizing the trends are presented below.

CFS increased 2% in 2022 compared to the prior year, and then decreased 11% in 2023 compared to 2022 (see Figure 2 and Figure 5). The 2024 year-to-date (YTD) totals also show a decreasing trend as highlighted by the higher totals observed for 2023 and the 5-year-trend (see Figure 6). The 2024 YTD total is 17% lower than it was the same time last year.

The top 15 CFS types that showed the largest decreases in 2023 compared to 2022 are CMB Theft Report (-220%), Person in Crisis (-63%)⁵, Disturbance Premise (-35%), and Subject Stop (-31%). The top 3 CFS types - Trespasser, Assist Ambulance, and Traffic Stop - stayed consistent from 2022 to 2023.

Occurrence Events

There were 18,392 total occurrences in the Core Patrol Area between January 1, 2019 and May 31, 2024. The occurrences in the Core Patrol Area increased by 9% from 2021 to 2022 and then decreased 7% from 2022 to 2023. This mirrors the pattern in Calls for Service. The current 2024 trend would suggest that the same decreases in occurrence events will continue (see Figure 5 below). The 2024 YTD total is equal to that for 2023.

In 2022, the top 3 occurrence events all saw large increases compared to the year prior. Specifically, Fail to Comply Probation increased by 16%, Shoplifting \$5,000 or Under increased by 55%, and Theft Under or equal to \$5000 increased by 33%. In 2023, the top 15 occurrence events mostly decreased compared to 2022, with the exception of Suspicious Circumstances (+17%), Trespass to Property Act (+23%), Court Custodial Sentence (+20%), Assault – With a Weapon/Cause Bodily Harm (+21%), and Mischief to Property – Under or equal to \$5,000 – Motor Vehicle (+18%).

³ The accomplishments presented in this paragraph are accurate as of May 29th, 2024. Activities occurring after this date are not captured here.

⁴ Police initiated Calls for Service are excluded from this summary.

⁵ The internal process for coding Person in Crisis calls changed during the comparison time period. This decrease is likely due to that coding change.

Occurrence Harm Score

The final metric we use to assess crime in the Core Patrol Area is harm. HPS has implemented a harm score value based on occurrence type, or on UCR (Uniform Crime Reporting) Codes attached to the occurrence (where they have been added). This parallels the approach used by Statistics Canada when calculating the Crime Severity Index. The harm score is a numeric metric aimed at capturing the overall harm of an incident, weighting more severe types of occurrences higher than less severe ones. For example, a robbery would be assigned a much higher harm score than a mischief.

The cumulative harm score for occurrences in the Core Patrol Area increased by 15% from 2021 to 2022. It increased again from 2022 to 2023 by 2%. Year-to-date, the 2024 total harm in the Core Patrol Area has increased by 3% compared to 2022. The large spike in March 2024 (see Figure 4), can be attributed to one homicide and three street robberies. The top 3 harm score occurrence events are Street Robbery, Break and Enter – Business, and Fail to Comply Probation. In 2022, the largest increases in harm score compared to 2021 observed in the top 15 occurrence types were for Shoplifting \$5,000 or Under (+55%), Assault – Level 1 (+40%), and Theft Under or equal to \$5,000 (+33%). In 2023, the largest increases in harm score compared to 2022 were for Break and Enter – Other (+80%), Fraud Under \$5,000 (+35%), and Break and Enter – Residence (+38%). Of note, these three occurrence events decreased the year prior.

Taken together, the above statistics suggest that the *volume* of crime in the Core Patrol area is either decreasing or stable, but that *harm* of the crime in the area is increasing.

Figure 2. Calls For Service by Month, 2019 to 2024 YTD (May 31)

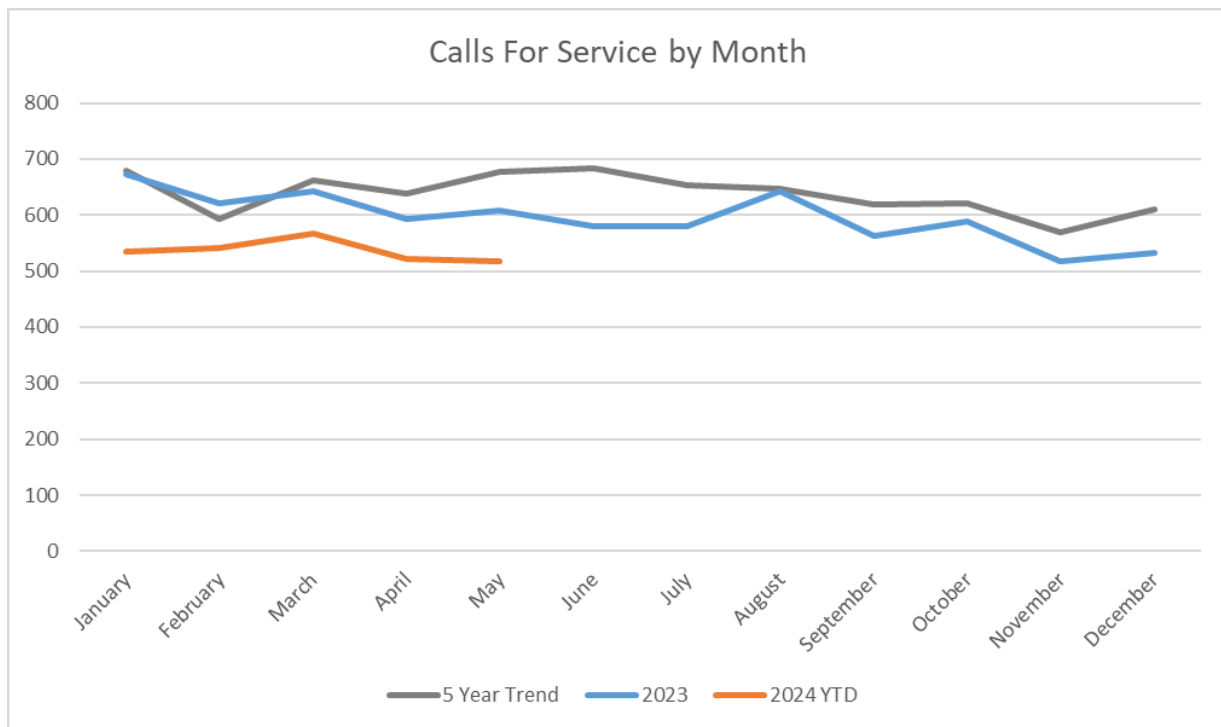


Figure 3. Occurrence Events by Month, 2019 to 2024 YTD (May 31)

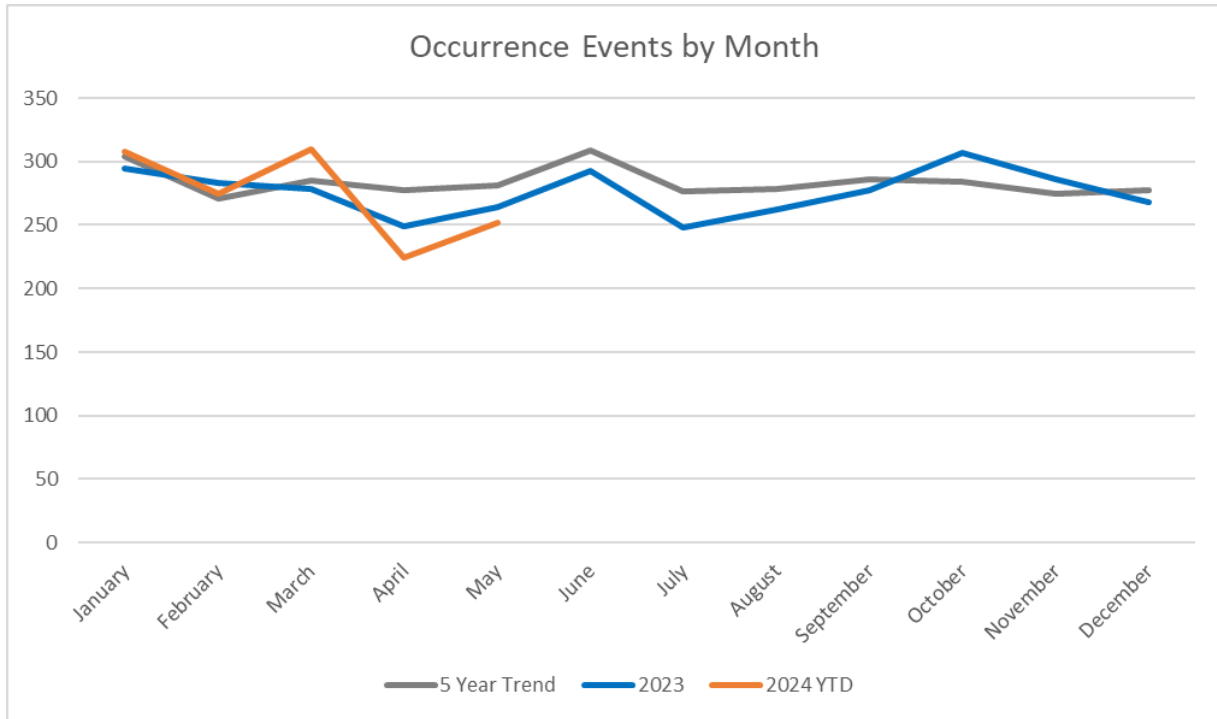


Figure 4. Occurrence Event Harm Scores by Month, 2019 to 2024 YTD (May 31)

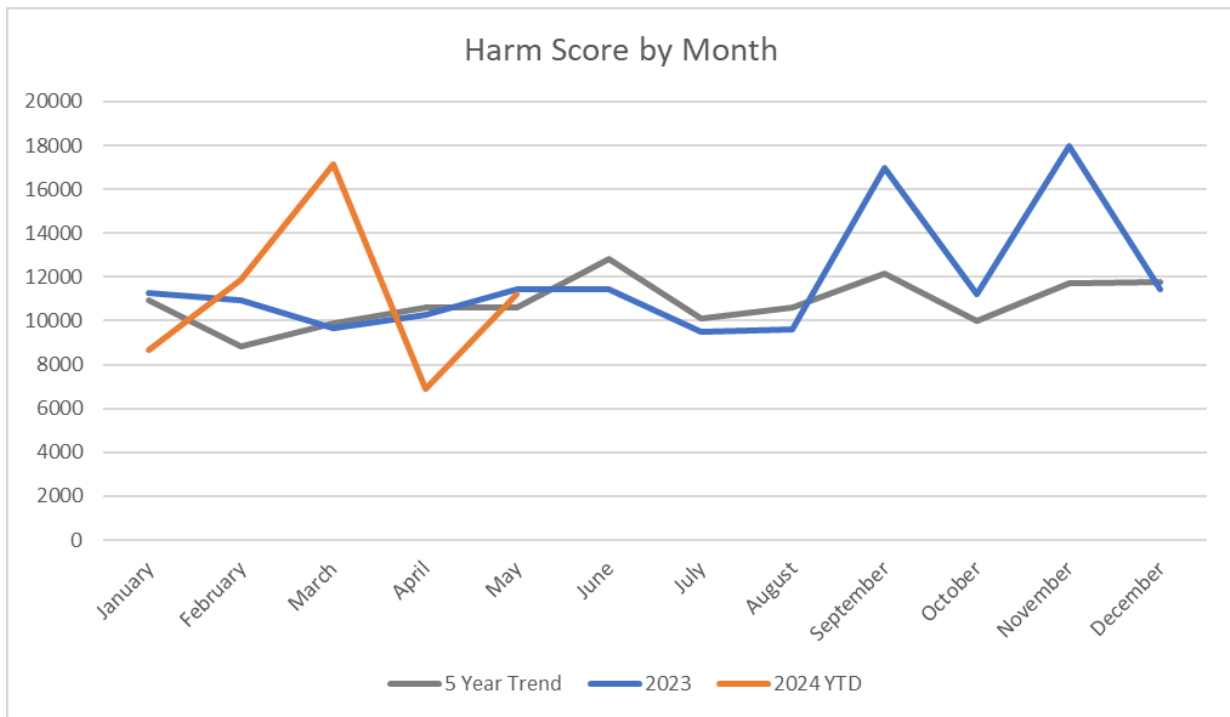


Figure 5. Calls for Service by Year, 2019 to 2024 YTD (May 31)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total	% Change (21-22)	% Change (22-23)
Calls For Service	7857	7589	7763	7894	7141	2682	40926	1.66%	-10.54%

Figure 6. Year-to-Date Calls for Service by Year – January to May

	Jan to May						Total	% Change (22-23)	% Change (23-24)
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024			
Call For Service	3454	3276	3144	3224	3137	2682	18917	-2.77%	-16.96%

Figure 7. Occurrence Event by Year, 2019 to 2024 YTD (May 31)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total	% Change (21-22)	% Change (22-23)
Occurrence Events	4006	2933	3232	3542	3310	1369	18392	8.75%	-7.01%

Figure 8. Year-to-Date Occurrence Event by Year – January to May

	Jan to May						Total	% Change (22-23)	% Change (23-24)
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024			
Occurrence Events	1734	1343	1213	1433	1369	1369	8461	-4.67%	0.00%

Figure 9. Occurrence Event Harm Scores by Year, 2019 to 2024 YTD (May 31)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total	% Change (21-22)	% Change (22-23)
Harm Score	131835.19	118187.8	119222.26	139733.28	141814.65	55803.42	706597	14.68%	1.47%

Figure 10. Year-to-Date Occurrence Event Harm Scores by Year – January to May

	Jan to May						Total	% Change (22-23)	% Change (23-24)
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024			
Harm Score	57144.92	51556.12	42254.37	54353.73	54035.91	55908.98	315254	-0.59%	3.35%

Survey of Core Businesses

To guide the work and enhance the effectiveness of the Core Patrol pilot project, HPS conducted a survey of downtown businesses to determine the safety related concerns of downtown community members. In Fall 2023, Core Patrol officers and HPS cadets distributed invitations to complete the *Core Patrol Initiative Survey* to businesses with storefronts within the Core Patrol area.

109 responses were captured between August 15th and September 8th, 2023, representing a minimum of 69 unique businesses⁶. Between one and six respondents from each business completed the survey. Twenty-four of the 109 respondents opted not to include their business name, so it unknown if these represent additional businesses or additional employee responses from the 69 identified businesses.

Survey respondents were asked a series of questions related to feelings of safety downtown, rating their feelings of safety on a 5-point scale ranging from Very Unsafe to Very Safe. Respondent answers to these questions are summarized below in Figure 11.

The majority of respondents (70%) reported either feeling unsafe or very unsafe downtown. Only 8% of respondents reported feeling safe or very safe. When broken down by time of day and location, safety feelings varied. For instance, fewer respondents reported feeling unsafe or very unsafe while arriving at their business (47%) and while inside their business (37%) than did when leaving their business (62%). These variations in safety feelings may stem from differences in respondent familiarity with certain settings (e.g., employees may be more familiar with the inside of their business than they are outside of it), and differences in feelings of safety during daylight hours and nighttime hours (e.g, respondents may feel less safe downtown when it is dark out than when it is light), as research has shown that both of these factors can have an impact on feelings of safety and fear of crime⁷. Notably, there were no times of day, nor locations, where a majority of respondents felt safe.

When asked which safety-related incidents they experienced in and around their businesses, 75% of respondents reported seeing people drinking or using illicit drugs, 73% reported loitering, 68% reported experiencing panhandling, and 65% reported seeing drug paraphernalia. Additionally, 52% reported experiencing vandalism, 51% theft, and 43% graffiti. Finally, in terms of more serious victimization, 36% reported experiencing assault in or around their business, 27% reported experiencing burglary, and 17% reported experiencing robbery. These findings are summarized in Figure 12 below.

Themes in Open-Ended Responses

Survey participants were also asked to respond to a number of open ended questions. Sixty-three respondents elected to answer the question “Please share any additional comments, suggestions, or feedback related to the Core Patrol initiative or safety in downtown Hamilton,” while 75 answered the question “Were there any specific safety concerns or incidents affecting your customers?”. A qualitative thematic analysis⁸ was conducted on these answers to identify themes in the data. The analysis resulted in the identification of five themes, summarized below. A selection of quotations are included to provide

⁶ The downtown BIA website currently lists 504 businesses in its directory, which captures businesses both at the street level and above.

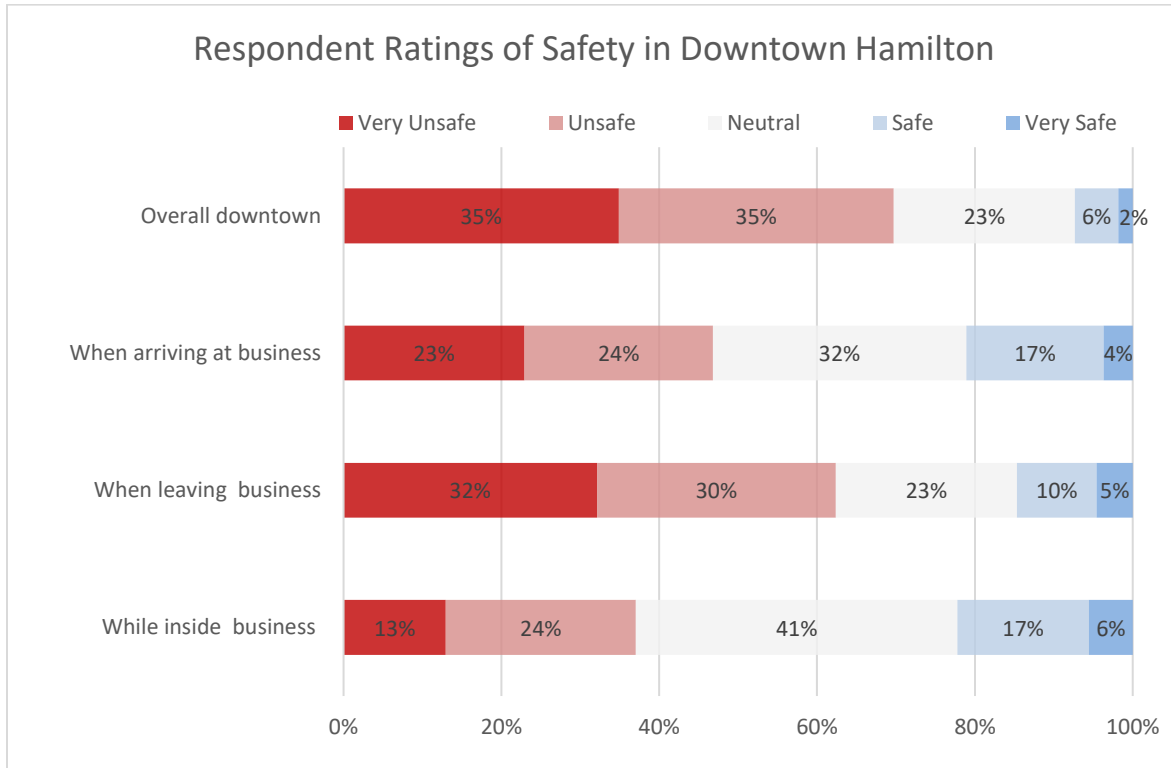
⁷ Lorenc, T., Petticrew, M., Whitehead, M., Neary, D., Clayton, S., Wright, K., Thomson, H., Cummings, S., Sowden, A., & Renton, A. (2013). Fear of crime and the environment: systematic review of UK qualitative evidence. *BMC Public Health*, 13(496). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-13-496>

⁸ Kiger, M.E. & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher*, 42(8), pg 846-854. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2020.1755030>

context and additional details about participant feelings related to each theme. Some quotes are repeated under multiple theme headings as they contain statements relevant to more than one theme.

Please note, all quotations are presented verbatim, exactly as they were entered by participants. Quotes have not been modified except (1) where noted by ellipses (...) to denote where extraneous words were omitted, and (2) where square brackets are used to anonymize respondents by masking the name of their business with [location]. For this reason, a number of quotes in the sections below contain typos or spelling errors.

Figure 11. Respondent Ratings of Safety in Downtown Hamilton



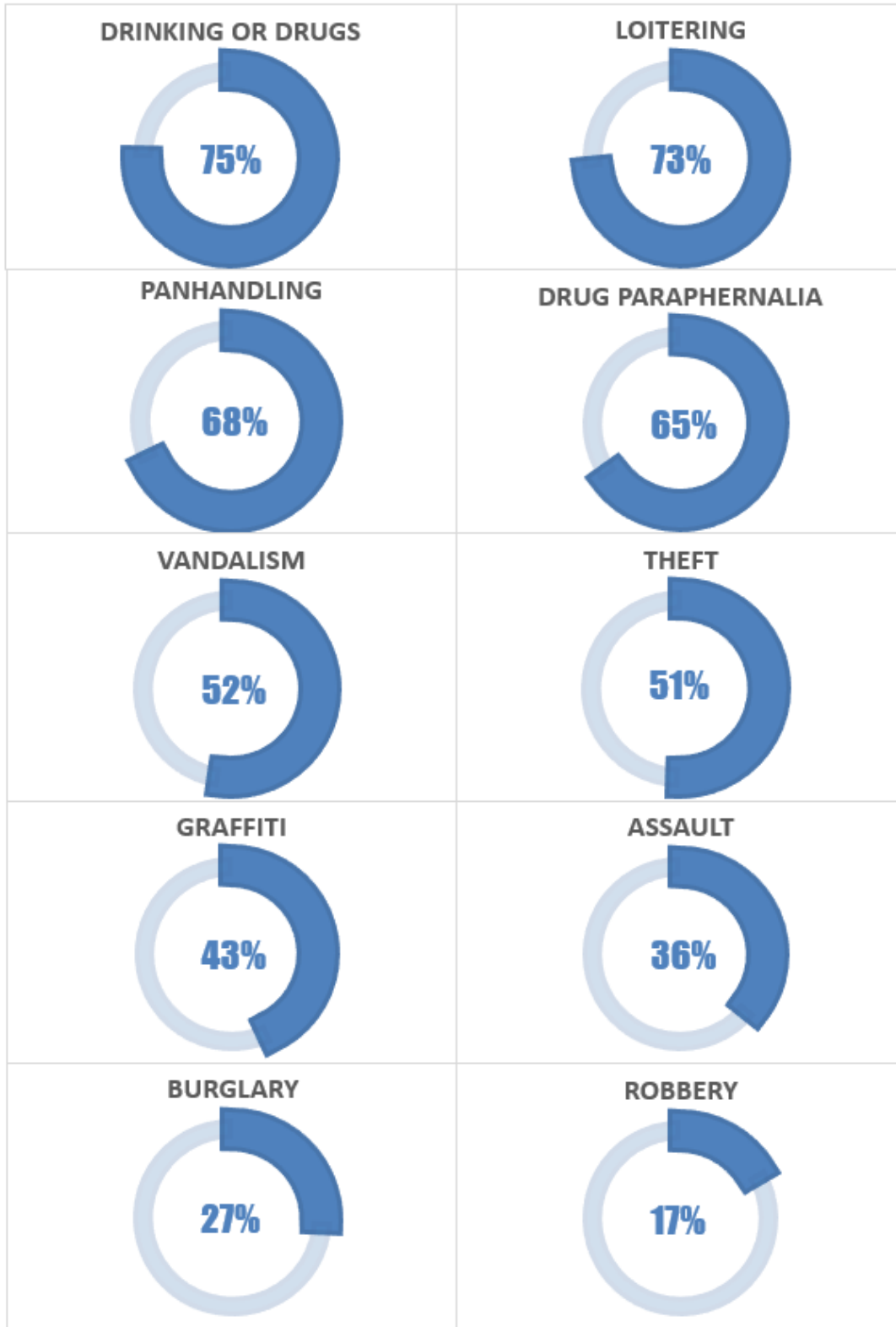
Police Presence

The first theme identified in the responses was *Police Presence*. In total, there were 27 question responses that explicitly mentioned police presence. Most responses (85%) that mentioned police presence were of the opinion that increased police presence was warranted. Example responses include:

We would like to see a more visible presence on a daily basis
Respondent 105

Jackson Square and surrounding areas needs more patrol officers. People in the mall and on the streets are volatile and unpredictable. I personally fear for my safety most days.
Respondent 85

Figure 12. Percent of Respondents Reporting They Had Experienced Various Types of Safety Incidents In and Around Their Business, By Incident Type



The amount of homeless or drug addicted people in this area has become a big concern. Discarded needles in my parking lot daily. People doing drugs in the open on the street or on my premises. Police need to increase their presence in the neighborhood

Respondent 99

Often times when arriving to open to the [location] we have sleeping at front of branch when asked to leave they become aggressive. Would love to see a larger police presence in Gore park to assist with this.

Respondent 53

I think having more of a police presence in the area specifically when it gets dark earlier would make all the store employees in the area feel safer walking to their vehicles.

Respondent 106

We need more officers in our area.

Respondent 43

Jackson square needs constant police patrol inside and outside including roof top. There is a lot of illegal drug use, gatherings of intimidating men and constant harassment, assaults and threats. Please help me feel safe while I work because at it stands I absolutely do not feel safe at all

Respondent 72

Hoping this program will improve things for the downtown core. I think this is very needed, as I haven't felt safe down here in years. Where I live and where I work. Thank you guys for coming up with a plan

Respondent 89

There has been a history of the department giving us regular patrol and then canceling the program... this is not something that should be start and stop. An area like downtown Hamilton needs constant police presence if there is to be permanent improvement in actual safety and the perception of safety.

Respondent 2

Notably, not all respondents who mentioned police presence believe that an increase is necessary downtown. Four of the twenty-seven responses mentioning police presence were explicitly *not* in support of additional police in the area. Three respondents questioned whether additional police presence would have an impact:

It is useless to contact the Police. When they arrive they always say "there is nothing we can do". If they can do nothing, why do we pay their salaries? What purpose do they serve?

Respondent 11

I think that safety in the downtown core is more linked to lack of affordable housing. Social supports and the opioid crisis. I'm not confident that the presence of core patrol will deter folks in crisis.

Respondent 24

Police don't do anything if you call. No one bothers to call down here as police do absolutely nothing.

Respondent 67

Another respondent noted that increased police downtown would make them feel *less* safe, rather than more.

I and other employees in the core feel less safe by the presence of police. I would prefer any and all funding for the "Core Patrol" be redirected to social services, including housing, treatment, and social workers.

Respondent 23

Social Disorder

The second theme identified in the open-ended question responses was *Social Disorder*. This included concerns about homelessness, panhandling, visible drug and alcohol use, mental health issues, public urination and defecation, and outdoor sleeping. When asked what specific safety concerns or incidents were affecting their customers, over 80% of respondents (61 out of 75) included some mention of social disorder related issues in their response. Example responses include:

Clients are consistently harassed by unfortunate individuals around the business and they told us they don't feel safe stepping outside the premises or walk to nearby streets due to the illegal activities occurring around the premises like drugs, drinking, harassment and aggressive behaviors

Respondent 37

Underhoused individuals either under the influence or experiencing a mental health challenge wandering in either to ask for something or scope out the place for potential shoplifting. This has understandably made people uneasy but also has impacts them if I have to stop helping them to address the concern/kick someone out

Respondent 54

Homeless drug addict always around threatening people.

Respondent 72

Threatening, throwing objects, banging/smashing windows, using drugs, urinating/defecating, vandalism, loitering.

Respondent 64

The amount of homeless or drug addicted people in this area has become a big concern. Discarded needles in my parking lot daily. People doing drugs in the open on the street or on my premises. Police need to increase their presence in the neighborhood

Respondent 99

Individuals on the streets approaching customers & staff, aggressive panhandling, following/chasing customers & staff, drug paraphernalia on the ground, individuals intoxicated on the streets and coming into the store, increased levels of shoplifting, increased levels of harassment and violence

Respondent 39

Physical Disorder

The third theme of *Physical Disorder* aligned closely with the social disorder concerns highlighted above. Respondents identified the presence of needles, garbage, and human feces as being concerns downtown. Example responses include:

The amount of homeless or drug addicted people in this area has become a big concern. Discarded needles in my parking lot daily. People doing drugs in the open on the street or on my premises. Police need to increase their presence in the neighborhood

Respondent 99

Panhandling, drug dealing, drug use, garbage bags ripped open and contents strewn on street, urinating in doorways

Respondent 105

Homeless people loitering near front entrance. Sometimes obviously under the influence of some sort of substance. Urine or feces on site.

Respondent 7

Crime

Many respondents mentioned instances of either *Property Crime* or *Violent Crime* when elaborating on their concerns. Vandalism, mischief, and theft were most often mentioned with respect to property crimes. Example responses include:

Theft is a major problem as well by means of grabbing and running or by 1 person keeping an employee busy while the other steals.

Respondent 106

There was another incident of two PhD students studying, and someone came by and smashed their laptop. They were minding their own business.

Respondent 78

There were many thefts during business hours and on top of stealing, these thieves would get aggressive, aggressive and verbally abusive that it is scaring our customers.

Respondent 74

With respect to Violent Crime, respondents mentioned threats and incidents of assault, and a number of respondents reported experiencing or witnessing assaults.

One elderly lady offer to purchase food from someone asking for money. The response was the person pushed her over. Her biggest disappointment was that no one helped her up.

Respondent 58

Crack heads set garbage on fire, smoke crack pipes outside of the building, threw crackpipe in our air conditioning unit, broke into our back door, stabbed someone outside our building, aggressively touched employees

Respondent 67

Violence in the store. Customers feel unsafe. Homeless wandering in the mall/store asking for money etc. There was an incident captured on camera on a Friday 2 weeks ago. A customer was actually hit

Respondent 81

There have been multiple times we have seen violent episodes or verbal intimidation towards our staff. We have increased our security Presence to help. Many banned members continue to come in even though they are not allowed.

Respondent 78

Harassment

The final theme that emerged in the data was that of harassment targeted at women. There were several reports of women being followed or sexually harassed.

Homeless men asking for money and being extremely aggressive following women

Respondent 34

We recently had an incident where a member tried to lure young women into a bathroom. The police did respond to this, but similar incidents of sexual harassment has happened and I can understand how some of our customers do not feel safe here.

Respondent 78

I have also had a few occasions when women has come in the shop and asked if they could wait in the shop for a while because they were feeling uncomfortable walking down King Street due to the presence of unstable/aggressive homeless men on the street.

Respondent 41

Next Steps

Overall, findings of the survey point to community members generally feeling unsafe downtown and wanting increased police presence. Perceptions of safety appear to be largely driven by social and physical disorder in the downtown core, in addition to crime victimization. Since completing the survey, HPS has used the findings to identify evidence based practices that can be implemented to address community concerns downtown. These are summarized in the sections below.

Directed Walking Patrols

A scan of research literature identified directed walking patrols to hot spots of crime as a useful strategy for Hamilton's needs, and these have been incorporated into the current operations of the Core Patrol officers. Research has shown that directed police patrols can be an effective means of reducing crime^{9,10,11}. HPS's Crime Information Analysis Unit (CIAU) created a Core Patrol Dashboard to facilitate the implementation of directed patrols to high call for service locations in the downtown where proactive officer presence will have a greater crime prevention impact. This dashboard identifies micro-locations that have experienced a disproportionate volume of crime occurrences and/or crime harm¹² so that officers can ensure they visit these locations during their patrols. Directed walking patrols guided by the use of the Core Patrol Dashboard will continue to be used for the remainder of the Core Patrol pilot project.

Fostering Community Partnerships

To build on the crime prevention benefits of directed walking patrols, the Core Patrol team, and HPS more broadly, will also work with community members downtown to develop plans to address social and physical disorder problems contributing to crime and fear of crime in the downtown area. This approach aligns with several of HPS's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan goals and with research findings which indicate that social and physical disorder can impact fear of crime¹³. Two of HPS's Strategic Plan goals involve *enhancing community engagement* and *strengthening partnerships with community agencies*. Closely aligned with these goals is the third Strategic Plan goal of *revamping HPS's Problem Oriented Policing process*. Problem Oriented Policing is an evidence based process for identifying and addressing crime and safety problems of concern to the community¹⁴. This process involves working closely with community members, local businesses, and other stakeholders, to develop tailored responses that address specific problems the community is facing.

Follow-Up Survey

Finally, a follow-up survey will be conducted to assess the impact of the Core Patrol pilot project. This follow-up survey will provide the data to determine if there have been changes in perceived safety downtown. The survey will also provide HPS with the opportunity to obtain community feedback on the Core Patrol pilot project implementation.

⁹ Braga, A.A., Turchan, B.S., Papachristos, A.V., & Hureau, D.M. (2019). Hot spots policing and crime reduction: An update of an ongoing systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 15, 289-311. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-019-09372-3>

¹⁰ Dau, P.M., Vandeviver, C., Dewinter, M., Witlox, F., & Vander Beken, T. (2023). Policing Directions: A systematic review on the effectiveness of police presence. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 29, 191-225. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10610-021-09500-8>

¹¹ Weisburd, D., Petersen, K., Telep, C.W., & Fay, S.A. (2024). Can increasing preventive patrol in large geographic areas reduce crime? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 1-24. DOI: 10.1111/1745-9133.12665

¹² HPS measures crime harm using the Statistics Canada method for calculating the Crime Severity Index. This method builds on a simple count of the number of crime occurrences by weighting each crime by how serious it is.

¹³ Franklin, T.W., Franklin, C.A., & Fearn, N.E. (2008). A multilevel analysis of the vulnerability, disorder, and social integration models of fear of crime. *Social Justice Research*, 21, 204-227. DOI 10.1007/s11211-008-0069-9

¹⁴ Hinkle, J.C., Weisburd, D., Telep, C.W., & Petersen, K. (2020). Problem-oriented policing for reducing crime and disorder: An updated systematic review and meta-analysis. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1089>