



For Immediate Release  
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## Police Complain About the Time it Takes to Investigate Domestic Violence During COVID-19 Women's Crisis Organization Seeking Accountability for Disturbing Opinions in VPD COVID 19 Statistical Report delivered to Vancouver Police Board

**Vancouver, BC** – On October 27, 2020, the Vancouver Police Department released a new [report](#) with crime statistics for the first nine months of the year. The report compares January to September 2020 to the same time period in 2019. The report will be tabled at the next meeting of the Vancouver Police Board, today, Thursday, October 29.

According to Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS), the report included comments that could be interpreted as opinions that could give insight in the organizational culture on policing gender-based violent crime at the Vancouver Police Department (VPD). They point to the Violent Crimes section, where sexual violence statistics were described as "positive results" and consider this characterization completely incorrect because it is well established that sexual violence is rarely reported to the police. Citing to the lack of reports to have some relationship to systemic failures in the criminal legal system and these failures are anything but "positive". Later in the report there is recognition that "Sexual offences are often reported historically..." which is in direct opposition to the VPD notion of "positive results".

During the same reporting period, BWSS responded to increased calls to their crisis line from victims of sexual violence as compared to the same period in the previous year.

According to the VPD statistics they received 4.6% increase in domestic violence calls which is somewhat consistent with what has been seen all around the world during the coronavirus pandemic. However, the report included troubling commentary that domestic violence files are "are very time-consuming for patrol officers..." which begs the question, when is it appropriate for an agency responsible for law enforcements that purports to care about victims safety to provide an opinion such as this?

It continues, "...often consuming an entire shift". When there is no information on how much it takes investigating other forms of criminal activity. BWSS notes that this is the only comment made in the entire report on investigated crimes.

"This comment contributes to the societal and systemic shaming women often report experiencing when they try to leave abusive or violent relationships" said Beata Maksimowski Women's Support Worker at BWSS, "Women often share that not only their abusers, but various systems (such as the criminal justice system) make them feel as

though they are a burden to others when reaching out for help and trying to access safety, or that they are unworthy of help. The Vancouver Police Department making such a comment alongside their statistic outlining increases in intimate partner violence contributes to the issue of harmful and inadequate systemic response to gender-based violence”.

BWSS believes that this kind of value judgment from VPD to the Vancouver Police Board provides a clear indication that there’s been an erosion in police response to gender based violence in Vancouver.

During the COVID 19 pandemic, women BWSS has worked with who chose to report domestic violence to the police describe having difficulty reaching the police, getting call backs from the police and lack of status of the report. Moreover, on a daily basis the BWSS crisis team shares, in virtually every instance, they have to advocate on behalf of women for an effective response from police. In the experience of BWSS the advocacy from their team goes on longer than an “entire shift”.

“In the 1990s BWSS worked with VPD to establish the first police domestic violence unit in Canada, it’s astonishing in 2020, that they would table a report with comments such as this as a reflection of their work under the coronavirus pandemic when it has been well established that women are profoundly impacted by social isolation measure required by public health officials”, says BWSS Executive Director Angela Marie MacDougall. “It appears that more women have been seeking a community-based response and not the police. For instance, BWSS saw a 415% increase compared to last year during the same period”.

Currently, there are advocacy groups seeking racial justice have tabled a request that the Vancouver Police Board reduce funding to the Vancouver Police Department and reinvest that in community-based response.

More from the report

An analysis of 2020 violent crime incidents shows that:

- the number of homicides is higher than last year – 14 in 2020 versus nine in 2019;
- Sexual offences reported in 2020 decreased 5.2% versus 2019 (for offences that occurred in 2020 compared to those that occurred in 2019, sexual offences decreased by 14.1%)
- the most serious assaults – assault with a weapon, assault causing bodily harm, and aggravated assault – have increased by 14.1 percent over the previous year, while all assaults increased by nearly two percent;
- anti-Asian hate crime incidents have increased by 138 per cent;
- sexual offences reported to police have decreased by 5.2 percent;
- robberies have decreased by 6.1 percent; and
- assaults against police officers have gone up 47 percent and over the past five years assaults against police officers have increased 86 percent.

-30-

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***Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS)***

*A feminist voice against violence and oppression, BWSS is a strong, dynamic organization that provides support and advocacy for women who have experienced abuse, as well as community education and training about violence against women. Part of a global feminist anti-violence movement, our long-term goal is the elimination of all violence against women and girls. For more information, visit us at [www.bwss.org](http://www.bwss.org) and connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).*