

Researchers study COVID-19 and its impact on crime in Vancouver, Canada

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Violent crime in Vancouver, Canada rose in the city's poorer regions during the first year of the pandemic while wealthier neighborhoods saw thefts rise, according to a new study published in the *Journal of*

Experimental Criminology.

The study of the city's [crime patterns](#) during the pandemic's first year suggests that in poorer regions, a greater focus on [social assistance](#), rather than increased policing, is a critical during trying times like pandemics.

"During the pandemic we found that overall, crime tends to increase more in marginalized areas within the city," says study lead Martin Andresen, a professor in the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University.

Violent crimes increased in poorer neighborhoods

Researchers found that [violent crimes](#), including arson, assault, robbery and weapon-related offenses increased in the poorer areas of Vancouver (Downtown, Strathcona, Mount Pleasant) and decreased in wealthier neighborhoods.

The researchers note that besides experiencing an increase in crime, the more disadvantaged neighborhoods also experienced significant COVID-19-related job loss.

Theft-related crimes increased in wealthier neighborhoods

Thefts from vehicles rose in wealthier, single-family home neighborhoods such as Kitsilano, Kerrisdale, Oakridge and Killarney. They also found that theft-related crime in the central business district downtown and surrounding areas decreased as businesses were closed or employees worked from home.

Methods and data

The study tracks 10 types of crime across Vancouver's 22 neighborhoods. The researchers analyzed open-source data from the Vancouver Police Department and neighborhood level data from the City of Vancouver's Open Data Portal from March 1, 2020 to February 28, 2021.

They also used [census data](#) from Statistics Canada to study how socioeconomic factors including income, education level, average rent or property value impacted the number of crimes committed in a particular neighborhood.

Other variables considered included the number of single-parent families, residential turnover (the percentage of people who have moved in the previous year and within five years), percentage of young males (aged 15-24) and the percentage of single persons living in a particular area.

They suggest that policymakers should consider providing additional help that addresses the roots of [crime](#) rather than over-policing marginalized neighborhoods, especially during pandemics or other disaster situations.

"We need to provide more social supports to these populations, particularly given that they are more impacted by social restrictions and associated job losses," says Andresen.

More information: Martin A. Andresen et al, In a world called catastrophe: the impact of COVID-19 on neighbourhood level crime in Vancouver, Canada, *Journal of Experimental Criminology* (2022). [DOI: 10.1007/s11292-021-09495-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-021-09495-6)

Provided by Simon Fraser University

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