

COMMUNITY SAFETY ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Kelowna Community Safety Plan

**Prepared by:
Canadian Municipal Network
on Crime Prevention**

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**CANADIAN MUNICIPAL
NETWORK ON CRIME
PREVENTION**

Together for Safer Canadian Cities

**RÉSEAU MUNICIPAL
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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The City of Kelowna is partnering with the Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention to develop a Community Safety Plan (CSP). Increasing community safety and well-being for people living in Kelowna requires a collective approach to issues such as poverty and inequality as well as services for those struggling with mental illness, substance use challenges, and homelessness. While this will go a long way to help address community safety in the long run, these efforts should be balanced with more immediate interventions to prevent and reduce harms.

Community Safety Assessment

Generally, developing a CSP includes looking at what currently exists and is working well to support community safety as well as identifying challenges and needs to be met. To do so, conducting a community safety assessment is a vital step. It is important to include quantitative and qualitative data sources in this process because in combination they can provide a more holistic understanding of local risks and protective factors.

Quantitative Data (Data Collection and Analysis)

Quantitative data and analysis involve the identification, collection, and analysis of indicators related to community context, demographics, crime and disorder, health and well-being, perceptions of safety, risk factors, as well as impact and economic costs of various local issues. The use of quantitative data is an important part of community safety assessments as they can “powerfully convey the dimensions of a particular problem or issue, providing answers to questions about what and how much is happening”.

Qualitative Data (Community Consultations)

Qualitative data supporting the development of Kelowna’s CSP was collected through community consultations (May 2021). Consultations help to develop a better understanding of the perspectives and experiences of various groups in Kelowna, particularly those who tend to be more marginalized or experience more challenges related to community safety and crime prevention.

The goals of engaging with the community are to:

- Inform the planning process
- Understand how people think and feel about safety
- Ensure that needs / priorities of the community are addressed in the plan

Recognizing that certain groups may not feel comfortable or safe engaging with staff from the City of Kelowna or from CMNCP given that they may not have a pre-established trusting relationship, consultations were led by local partners and/or service providers who already work with and deliver services to that specific group. A “Do-It-Yourself” Guide was provided to the facilitator, providing an outline of the objectives and questions for the engagement.

The key themes identified through the quantitative data analysis and community consultations conducted to date are outlined below.

Quantitative Data Findings

Key Themes

Unemployment	Increased unemployment between 2019 and 2020, which can be attributed to impacts of COVID-19.
Housing Precarity	There is a higher housing precarity among renters in Kelowna compared to the provincial average. A higher number of renters are spending at least 30% of their income on shelter.
Homelessness	Homelessness is growing in Kelowna, particularly among youth.
Transportation	The rate of people who regularly take public transportation is significantly lower in Kelowna compared to the rest of Canada. The majority of residents take a private vehicle to work. Transportation is seen as an important issue in Kelowna.
Mental Health	Most residents in Kelowna report positive mental health, but there has been an increase in mood and anxiety disorders in the past decade. Furthermore, the incidence of children and youth hospitalized for mental health disorders is higher in Kelowna than in British Columbia and Canada.
Substance Use	The number of individuals who reported having experienced or witnessed an overdose is slightly lower in Kelowna than the provincial average. However, the rate of drug toxicity deaths is higher in the Okanagan than in BC and is trending upward in 2020 and 2021.
Children in Care	The rate of Indigenous children in care is higher than the rate of non-Indigenous children in care. However, numbers are consistently declining for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children.
Youth Assistance	The number of youth claiming income assistance within six months of youth-on-youth agreements is somewhat higher in Kelowna than BC average. Only a small number of youth receive income assistance. This number is lower among Indigenous populations.
Sense of Belonging	The overall sense of community and belonging among Kelowna residents are generally positive but have decreased in the past few years. More people are indicating that their quality of life declined in the past 5 years due to increases in homelessness, substance use, and lack of safety across the city.
Crime Rate	Crime rates declined between 2008 and 2018 but are still an area of concern as the crime severity index, violent crime severity index, and non-violent crime severity index have all increased.
Property Crime	Rates of property crime increased in 2019. They then declined in 2020, likely due to COVID-19 restrictions (i.e., lockdowns and stay-at-home orders).
Hate Crime	Rates of hate crime in Kelowna increased between 2014 and 2018 but remain lower than elsewhere in the province.
Victimization	A high number of individuals reported having experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in public.

Qualitative Data Findings (May 2021)

Q1: What makes people feel safe and happy in their community?

- General sense of community: friendly people, being outside, feeling safe in their neighbourhood
- Beauty of Kelowna – areas that are well-maintained, clean, flowers, shrubs, greenery, free of garbage
- Visible police presence and rapid response time
- Outdoor amenities – parks, green spaces, trails for walking, hiking, biking, beaches, lake, etc.
- Having a safe place to live / stay

Q2: Which areas do people enjoy in Kelowna?

- Parks – City Park, Orchard Park, Stewart Park, etc.
- Beaches and water fronts – Mushroom Beach, City Beach, Sarsons Beach, Mission Creek
- Trails (e.g., Rail Trail, Eagle Trail) for walking, biking, hiking)
- Knox Mountain
- Golf Course
- Vineyards/Wineries
- Parkinson Recreation Centre
- Downtown
- All of Kelowna

Q3: What makes people feel unsafe in their community?

- Many people mentioned feeling unsafe or uncomfortable because of different people out in the streets – homeless people, people doing drugs, asking for money, panhandlers, people checking cars
- Lots of concern around the driving in Kelowna – many people mentioned excessive speeding, unsafe intersections, people blatantly ignoring road rules (stop signs, speed limits), cars with loud mufflers, people driving under the influence, and safety issues with double-sided parking.
- Crime – large emphasis on theft in Kelowna, particularly from homes, backyards, and cars.
- Some women indicated they feel unsafe going out alone in Kelowna, particularly at night.
- Concern about the risk of forest fires and the inability to get out of the area quickly if an evacuation were necessary.

Q4: Which locations in Kelowna do people have safety concerns about?

- Downtown was commonly mentioned, particularly due to its high population of homeless individuals, and people engaging in substance use
- Rutland Area
- Leon Street Area – lots of people hang around there at night
- Orchard Park Mall and surrounding area – washrooms, parkade, etc.
- Airport Way, Pier Mac Way and intersections in the area
- Quail Ridge – lots of thefts, loud and speeding vehicles, unsafe roads

Q5: What ideas or opportunities do people have to increase CSWB in Kelowna?

- Supports and resources to address homelessness and housing
 - More places for homeless people to stay
 - Warmer locations for the winter
 - Security at shelters to people do not have their stuff stolen
 - Should note that some indicated a desire to have places for homeless people and shelters located further away from them (complaints about the existing facilities and the people around them)
- More addictions support and harm reduction – e.g., safe consumption sites,
 - Emphasis on these facilities being outside of the city
- More compassion, understanding, upstream prevention approaches
- Greater bylaw presence and better enforcement of rules
- Greater police presence and more funding for RCMP officers
- Measures to address unsafe streets – traffic calming in areas like Quail Ridge, more traffic lights, reduce noise pollution, steps to address speeding and people ignoring traffic rules, better parking options to avoid double-sided parking
- Address challenges related to scooters, and cyclists – challenges on roads but can endanger pedestrians on sidewalks
- Improved public transit options – build a rapid light rail system from airport to downtown, UBC-O, and other areas
- Supports for marginalized groups, BIPOC, 2SLGBTQ+ and efforts to prevent discrimination
 - Indigenous participants indicated they do not feel safe around police in Kelowna
- Better lighting in certain areas of the city (e.g., alleys, parts of Downtown)
- Community clean up – tidy up areas of Downtown, add recycling bins with public garbage bins, air quality testing, needle disposals, etc.