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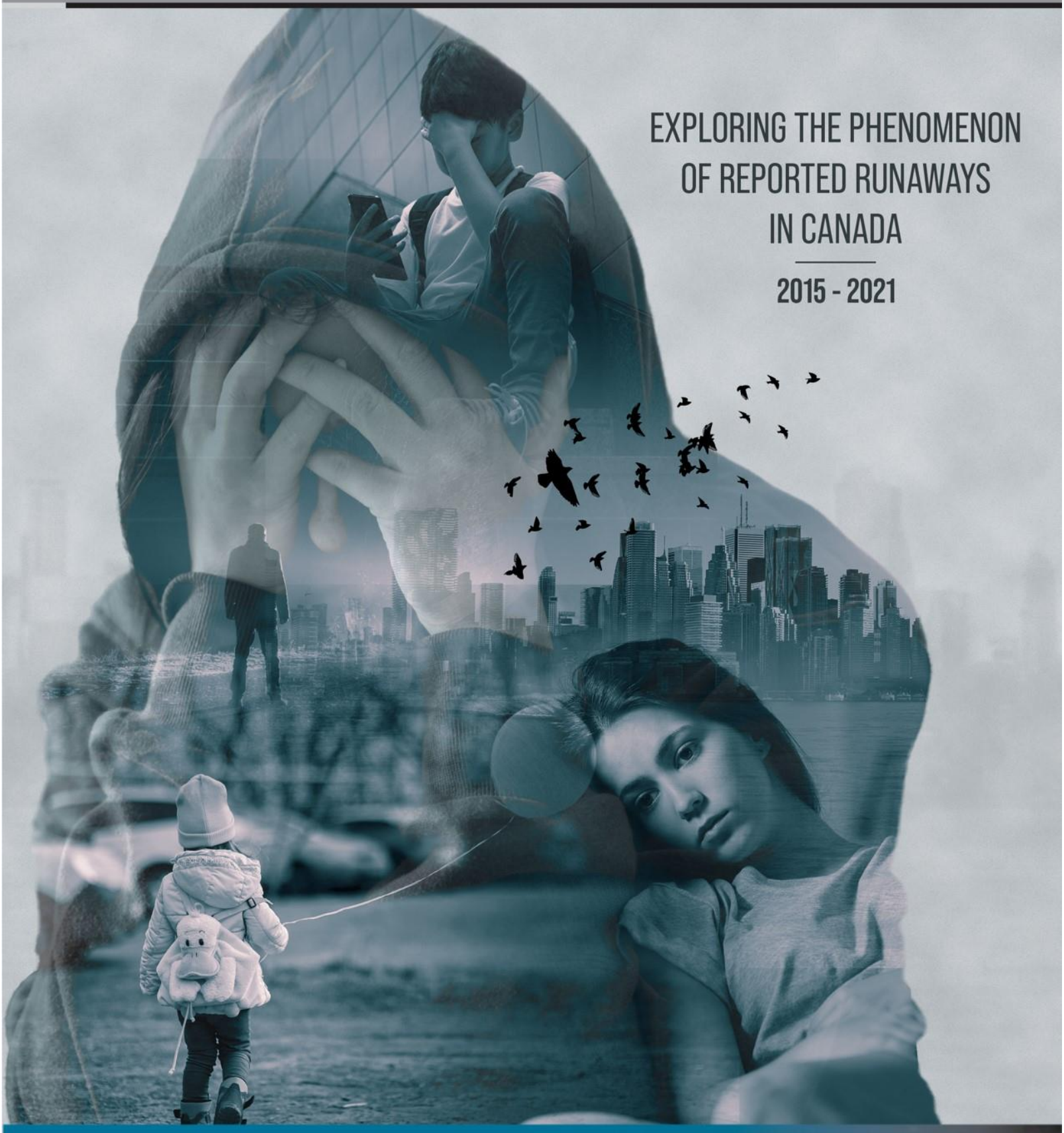

EXPLORING THE PHENOMENON OF REPORTED RUNAWAYS IN CANADA

2015 - 2021

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR MISSING PERSONS AND UNIDENTIFIED REMAINS

Royal Canadian Mounted Police | Gendarmerie royale du Canada

Canada

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Contents

1 Abstract

Persons identified as runaways and persons who go missing repeatedly represent a large proportion of reported missing person occurrences in Canada. This report examines the number of these cases in Canada between 2015 and 2021. It establishes a definition for the occurrences of interest and a means for classifying individual subjects according to the number of times they have been reported missing (*no previous history*, *repeat and habitual/chronic*). The data set is examined in relation to a series of variables: history, age, sex, biological affinity, location, time to resolve, and time of year. This information can be used to inform prevention and investigative strategies, to develop evidence-informed police practices and policies, and to identify future areas of study.

Significant findings supported by this study include the following:

1. During the period 2015-2021, 88% of all missing persons occurrences in Canada were either classified as Runaway in police systems or involved someone who went missing once or more in that period.
2. Although the majority of individual subjects in the study ran away only once in the sample time frame (73%), they accounted for only 40% of all occurrences, while the other 27% (*repeat* or *habitual/chronic*) accounted for 60% of the occurrences.
3. Although the split in the number of runaway occurrences between male and female individuals is reflective of the split in the general population, when examined by age group, female individuals represent the majority in occurrences for teens and young adults but male individuals are the majority for occurrences for adults and older adults. Occurrences for children are split almost evenly between female and male.
4. Teens make up 69% of *habitual/chronic* missing individuals even though teens account for only 32% of the overall sample. Female individuals have an overall higher representation in the habitual/chronic category than male individuals.
5. Compared to their representation in the Canadian population, Black and Asian populations are significantly underrepresented in this runaway sample while Indigenous people are overrepresented. Indigenous women and girls in Canada make up 4% of the total female population, but in this sample, they account for 30% of the runaway occurrences involving female individuals.
6. Occurrences involving *repeat* and *habitual/chronic* runaways are more common in provinces with large urban centres than occurrences involving individuals with *no previous history*. Additionally, the habitual/chronic category alone provides more than half the runaway occurrences in Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia.

7. In Manitoba, 71% of the occurrences involving *habitual/chronic* runaways involve female individuals, 87% of which are Indigenous, an overrepresentation as compared to the Canadian population. In British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Yukon the occurrences involving *habitual/chronic* runaways are also predominantly female individuals, but in Quebec and New Brunswick they are predominantly male.
8. On a per capita basis, Winnipeg Police Service had the most runaway occurrences, followed by Vancouver Police Department, Calgary Police Service, Surrey RCMP and Saskatoon Police Service. Winnipeg and Saskatoon in particular have significantly higher rates than other agencies for teen, female and Indigenous runaways. Winnipeg Police Service accounted for 12% of the runaway occurrences in this study sample, the highest for that age group for all police services.
9. 70% of all resolved runaway occurrences were resolved within 3 days of the person being reported missing and 95% of all resolved runaway occurrences were resolved within 30 days. Resolve rates are slightly higher for occurrences involving children, habitual/chronic runaways, or Indigenous persons. Resolve rates are not significantly different between the sexes.
10. The overall number of runaways in Canada decreased slightly during the years of the study (2015-2021). COVID had a significant effect as noted in another NCMPUR report[1], but the downward trend was happening before COVID exaggerated it.
11. Institutions give rise to more *habitual/chronic* runaway occurrences than other types of locations from which people go missing. The majority of one-time runaways are reported missing from home, while the majority of the *habitual/chronic* runaways are reported missing from institutions.

The current findings also confirm ambiguities and lack of consistency surrounding missing persons classifications which negatively impact data quality. It also identifies other issues with collected data and supports the need for quality control if these labels are to guide police risk assessment and response. Similar conclusions found in past research suggest that these findings are indicative of broad police data issues.

[1] For access to this NCMPUR Report, please visit: Canada's Missing

2 Introduction

2.1 Who is a runaway?

This report focusses on persons of any age classified as runaways in the police report, and on those who repeatedly go missing even if not designated as runaways. Definitions of what constitutes a runaway differ across law enforcement agencies, as well as other countries and various research studies. To some, the term *runaway* may imply a motive or volition that should not be applied to everyone who goes missing more than once, but since the term is entrenched in usage for the majority of those who go missing more than once, it will be used in this study as a term for the broad category of subjects included in this study's sample. The statistics in this report do not distinguish between persons running to or from something, persons forced to flee something/someone, and the various motivations behind these, but uses the broadest definition of *runaway* possible.

Every year in Canada, around 70,000 occurrences of missing persons are reported to the police (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2020), and in a given year as many as 49,000 individual subjects will go missing more than once. Many missing persons are categorized as runaways in police systems, including in the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC), the information-sharing service used by police across Canada. In 2021, over 31,000 children (persons under the age of 18) were reported missing, 72% of which were categorized as runaways in CPIC. Some of those who go missing more than once are not entered in the system as runaways, and some of those categorized as runaways go missing only once, making it difficult to define the group of interest from the data.

According to the CPIC manual, a *runaway* is "a subject (person under the age of 18) who ran away from home or substitute home care (e.g. foster home, group home, Children's Aid Society home/shelter)*"* (Canadian Police Information Centre, 2018, p.519). A subject may be defined as *running away* based on a history of running away voluntarily or because of some particular circumstances leading to the subject's disappearance (Canadian Police Information Centre, 2018; Ministry of Justice and Attorney General, 2010). A similar definition is also seen in research conducted by Shalev-Greene & Hayden (2014); Sowerby & Thomas (2017); and Hutchings, Browne, Chou, & Kerry (2019).

The designation of *runaway* is one of many choices for the Probable Cause field that can be entered for an incident in CPIC. Only one Probable Cause can be entered. The choices are not necessarily exclusive and so the operator must choose the best fit. The fact that the CPIC definition limits the use of *runaway* to persons under 18 does not prevent agencies from using that Probable Cause for persons of all ages, although for adults *Wandered Away/Lost* may be a more appropriate Probable Cause in some cases. This ambiguity presents a limitation when collecting and reporting statistics on *runaways* in Canada.

In 2018, National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains (NCMPUR) began a CPIC Data Integrity Review after noticing several inconsistencies in the Missing Children/Persons and Unidentified Remains (MC/PUR) Database. The review aimed to examine whether there were inconsistencies in reports of runaway individuals. The review examined a sample of 350 runaway subjects which were randomly selected between June 1 2014 and October 30 2017. The review found that 63% of all subjects who appeared to be runaways by virtue of the fact they had repeated instances, had different probable causes listed for their occurrences instead, specifically *Unknown* and *Other* (NCMPUR, 2019). In CPIC, the probable cause of *Unknown* "should only be used in cases where the police agency has no previous record on the missing person; that is, the person has never run away, walked out or wandered off before, and must be recorded under HISTORY as A - No Previous History" (CPIC, 2018, p.519). Further, "there is insufficient background information to enable coding the record under any of the other causes" (CPIC, 2018, p.519). In CPIC, the Probable Cause of *Other* includes "youths who have not returned to a detention home or other institution housing young offenders" (CPIC, 2018, p.519). Thus, those who run away from detention homes or other forms of institutional housing are not always categorized as runaways in CPIC.

As such, studying runaway individuals based exclusively on Probable Cause of *Runaway* in CPIC will result in skewed numbers. To ensure the sample for this study included a larger portion of those who should be considered *runaway* individuals, this study considered additional indicators. Further details are discussed in the methodology section.

Police, policy-makers, researchers, and others have stressed that established, more standardised definitions can assist in alleviating inaccuracies and inconsistencies in police data on missing persons (Pfeifer, 2006; Hayden, Shalev & Green, 2018; Duncan, 2020; Huey, Ferguson & Kowalski, 2020; Epstein, 2021, as cited in Ferguson & Picknell, 2022). Proper categorization is particularly important since an individual who has run away or who has multiple missing reports can be identified through risk assessment as requiring greater urgency because of the recurrent pattern of missingness. In those cases, there is an increasing concern for the individual's health and well-being due to the heightened chances of exposure and experiencing harm (Ferguson & Picknell, 2022).

2.2 Why study runaways?

Unlike some other countries, Canada does not centrally collect data that would reveal certain life situations and vulnerability factors that have impact on reported missing persons. That being said, it is important to recognize some of these factors prior to presenting the results of this study, to better understand why so many reported occurrences fall into this category each year, particularly those involving youth.

Part of this study included a literature review (available separately upon request) that identified the following points:

- Many repeat missing persons are vulnerable adults and youths who have experienced significant emotional and mental health problems;
- Many have histories of family conflict, poverty, abuse, neglect in home environments, significant emotional and mental health problems, substance abuse problems, and conflict with the law;
- Repeat missing incidents are likely to occur when there has been inadequate support or intervention from public services and the reason for running away is not being addressed;
- While on the run, youth are exposed to many risks, often live high-risk lifestyles, and often do not seek help;
- Youth runaways are in even more danger due to the pattern of their running behaviour, which increases the probability of being victimized and/or becoming involved in a criminal lifestyle; and,
- Runaway incidents may also be indicators of intention to self-harm or attempt suicide.

2.3 Purpose

Literature exploring the vulnerabilities and risk factors associated with runaway individuals has revealed potential areas of intervention for law enforcement and policymakers. These findings demonstrate the importance of understanding the current landscape in Canada for runaway individuals. This study examines the occurrences of runaways in Canada both in terms of prevalence and in connection to other factors. It also draws upon research that has aimed to further understand the motivations behind youth running away in order to prevent these occurrences in the first place. The presented findings are intended to inform law enforcement and the public about the nature of repeat runaway incidents by the same individual, and to inform future practices in mitigating this common phenomenon in Canada.

3 Methodology

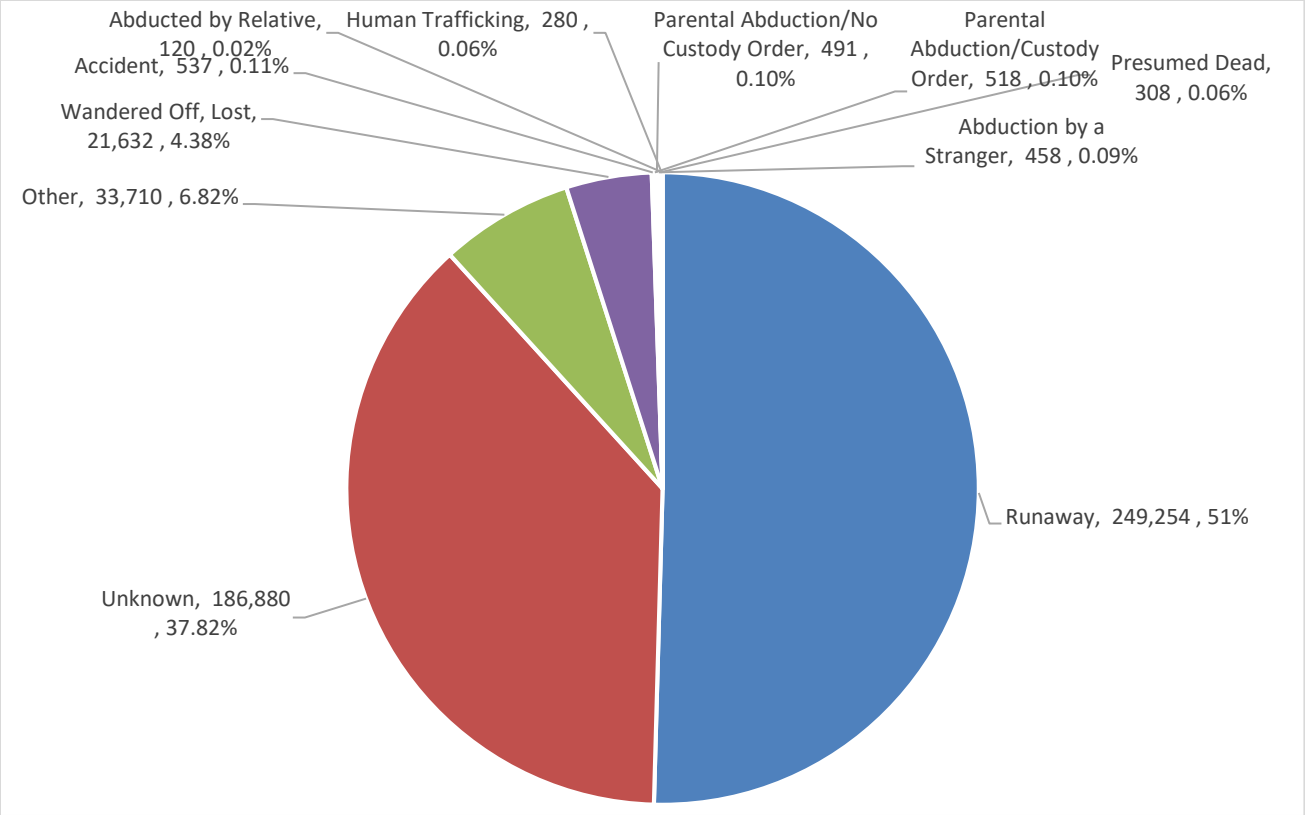
3.1 The Data

In 2014, the NCMPUR launched the national Missing Children/Persons and Unidentified Remains (MC/PUR) Database[2]. This includes a web-based application that provides the necessary data and tools to coordinate a national approach to understanding missing persons and unidentified remains investigations. MC/PUR is the core tool used by NCMPUR for information collection, analysis and publication to assist investigators in resolving occurrences (RCMP, 2013; Government of Canada, 2014). Every missing person and body entry on CPIC is received by MC/PUR.

The statistical analysis in this report has been prepared using data extracted from MC/PUR on January 31, 2022 concerning cases of missing persons in Canada which occurred between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2021[3]. The following figure shows the breakdown of occurrences by Probable Cause for the period of the extract.

[2] Thus 2015 was the first calendar year for which a full set of data exists in MC/PUR for statistical purposes.
[3] 'Occurred' means that the Date Last Seen was in the time period of interest. This is independent of the date it was actually reported or the date the entry was put on CPIC.

Figure 1: Missing Persons Occurrences in Canada by Probable Cause 2015-2021



Review of MC/PUR entries established that CPIC Probable Cause is not a comprehensive nor dependable field because it is often subjective and not consistently completed nor maintained on CPIC. The law enforcement members who enter the data need to select which Probable Cause category is the best fit for a specific missing person. As a result, there may be inconsistencies due to these categories not being properly defined, leaving it up to each police service and even every individual police officer to determine and assign based on personal interpretation (Pfeifer, 2006, Huey, 2009 as cited in Ferguson & Picknell, 2022). For this reason, incidents also tagged with the Probable Causes *Unknown* and *Other* were selected for this study as they were found by past research to also contain runaway individuals. As for the Probable Causes beyond *runaway*, *Unknown* and *Other*, those were considered unlikely to include runaways except in error. They also constitute a small portion of the total occurrences overall, and so data was not extracted for occurrences where those Probable Causes were selected.

When the term *runaway occurrences* is used in the following sections of the report to refer to the extracted data set of interest, this includes all occurrences of missing persons with *Runaway*, *Other* and *Unknown* Probable Causes, unless otherwise specified. Ultimately, the extract from MC/PUR yielded a sample of 469,713 occurrences. After discarding occurrences that were

clearly in error or not applicable, the final sample was comprised of 469,701 missing persons occurrences relating to 185,961 individual subjects.

For this study, the following variables were extracted and examined in relation to each other:

Variables
Probable Cause
History
Age
Sex[4]
Biological Affinity
Missing from[5]
Rural vs Urban Setting
Reporting Agency
Resolved cases
Open versus closed occurrences
Time of year
Vulnerability factors
Location runaway individual ran from
Location runaway individual ran to

History, which distinguishes *no previous history*, *repeat* and *habitual/chronic* missing persons, is also known to be neither comprehensive nor dependable since it is under-reported in CPIC and not consistently used (Ferguson & Picknell, 2022). To address the inconsistencies in the way the History field is used in CPIC practice, subject keys were generated using the missing person's name and date of birth (DOB) to identify multiple occurrences for the same person. This allowed the study to substitute a more reliable Sample History calculated from the subject keys, as described in Section 5.

In addition to statistics derived from the data extracted from MC/PUR, a review of academic literature in the field of youth and adult runaways was completed. The results of these studies provide further findings as well as contextual insights to better understand the complexities of *repeat* runaways in Canada. The report *An Examination of Youth and Adult Runaways* is available upon request.

[4] *Sex* refers to the biological categorization of individuals based on primary sexual characteristics at birth (Government of Canada, 2019). In contrast, gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions and identities of individual (Government of Canada, 2019; Government of Canada, 2021). Sex was used as a variable in this report, as the individual's gender is not available in the Missing Children/Persons and Unidentified Remains (MC/PUR) database.
[5] Missing from refers to the last known location of the missing youth.

3.2 General Caveats

Across the missing persons literature, police data quality and accuracy have been noted as a limitation (Nolan et al., 2011, Shalev 2011, Loftin et al., 2015, Duncan, 2020, Huey et al., 2020 as cited in Ferguson & Picknell, 2022). While reviewing the data presented herein, several caveats relating to MC/PUR data should be kept in mind. It is important to note that the numbers from MC/PUR reported in this study are derived from missing person entries on the CPIC database. Therefore, these statistics cover only cases that are reported to police and shared on the national system, and are limited by the quality and type of data that agencies are entering into CPIC, and the techniques used by MC/PUR to compile that data.

It is known that not all missing person incidents are reported as such to police, which has an impact on statistics and thus police response efforts and missing person case closures (Nolan et al., 2011, Pettem, 2013, Loftin et al., 2015, Carmody, 2017, Duncan, 2020 as cited in Ferguson & Picknell, 2022). Lack of reporting is likely most prevalent with runaway incidents which are typically of short duration. Those who might report a person missing may delay, anticipating an inevitable return, or they may be unaware of the incident until it is over.

It is also known that not all missing person cases which do get reported to police are entered onto CPIC. Although most law enforcement agency's policies and procedures adhere to best practices which implore an immediate CPIC entry, many cases are resolved quickly and may be closed before the CPIC entry can be created depending on where it sits in the process. Anecdotally, this could be a large number of incidents (up to 50%) with variations in portion across police agencies. This would adversely affect the runaway statistics and their use in prevention and recidivism programming (Canter & Alison, 2003, Nolan et al., 2011, Loftin et al., 2015, Carmody, 2017 in Ferguson & Picknell, 2022).

In addition, CPIC transactions include *repeat* runways and situations where a single instance of a missing person may be entered and deleted repeatedly by different agencies over a period of time (e.g., an agency removes and re-enters in order to modify an entry, or a person goes missing with the initial report being filed with one police service but the case is eventually transferred to another police service's jurisdiction). MC/PUR uses algorithms in an attempt to identify and eliminate duplicate data and produce more accurate statistics. The use of the subject key to identify *repeat* persons (see Sections 3.1 and 5) is an additional refinement that was used in this study. However, neither MC/PUR nor the techniques used in this study can resolve data errors such as an agency using the same case number for multiple incidents by the same person, or mis-entry of fields on which the study relies such as name, date of birth, or date last seen.

Lastly, an occurrence is considered as belonging to a particular time period based on the reported *Date Last Seen*. The number of missing person subjects reported herein also reflects a point in time and may change as records are added, modified, or flagged as duplicate. The data for this

study was generated on January 31st, 2022. Additional persons may be reported in the future as having gone missing in between 2015 and 2021 but would not be counted in this study because the incident data was entered after the extract generation date.

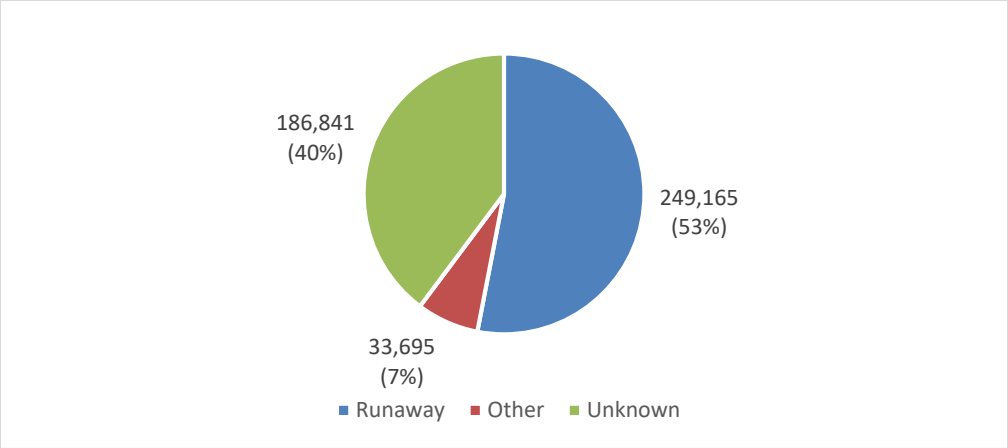
4 Probable Cause

For this study, runaways, as broadly defined, are examined, and in particular the spectrum of one-time runaways versus *repeat* runaways versus habitual/chronic runaways. To do this we first had to identify and categorize these cases from the data available in the sample, while correcting for known problems with the source data.

Between January 1st 2015 and December 31st 2021, there were a total of 469,701 occurrences of missing persons reported in MC/PUR and classified under *Runaway, Unknown* and *Other* as the probable cause of disappearance (see Figure 2 for breakdown). Of these occurrences, 468,250 were concluded and 1,451 were still open as of January 31, 2022. Of the individual subjects in the occurrences classified as *Runaway* (n=59,396), 58% appeared only once in the database while 42% appeared more than once. Of the individual subjects in the occurrences classified as *Unknown* and *Other* 43% had more than one incident in the data set. This suggests that at least half of the cases classified as *Unknown* and *Other* could represent runaway individuals if one assumes that *repeat* missing person incidents are within the definition of runaway[6].

As the basis for this study, all persons identified as *Runaway*, as well as all those identified as *Unknown* and *Other*, were included in the overall sample data set. This included 95% of all missing person reports on CPIC with occurrence dates in the time period.

Figure 2: Study Dataset Occurrences by CPIC Probable Cause



[6] The basis of this assumption is that few of the other Probable Causes are likely to be repeated by an individual.

5 History

In CPIC, runaways can be further classified using the History field. This field can be used to indicate *no previous history* or to identify them as *repeat* runaways if they are subjects who *ran away, walked out, or wandered off once before* (CPIC User Manual, 2018). They can be also classified as *habitual/chronic* runaways if they are subjects who *ran away, walked out or wandered at least twice before*.

Research conducted by Ferguson & Picknell (2022) examined 8,519 missing person cases in Canada from 2014 to 2019, and focused on the number of previous reports (of going missing) as well as previous history. The goal of the study was to understand the differences between *repeat* and *habitual/chronic* runaway individuals in order to help establish clearer definitions for each. Examining the use of the History classification by police, the study found that roughly 9% of missing persons cases in their sample were being misclassified as *no previous history* when they had another incident of being missing. As such, the authors suggest that at least 9% of missing persons cases are misclassified and these numbers are likely higher as they were unable to determine data errors with respect to those being noted as *repeat* or *habitual/chronic*. This includes individuals with *no previous history* being classified as *repeat* or *habitual/chronic*, or those with one to 20 missing events that were classified as having *no previous history*. In addition, those with one previous missing person report were classified as having *no previous history* in 19% of the cases. The Ferguson and Picknell (2022) study in addition to the NCMPUR (2019) data integrity study highlighted above demonstrate that the History field in CPIC may be insufficient in distinguishing if an individual has had previous missing episodes and to what extent. Ferguson and Picknell recommended greater standardization using *repeat* to mean two or three times and *habitual/chronic* to mean anything more.

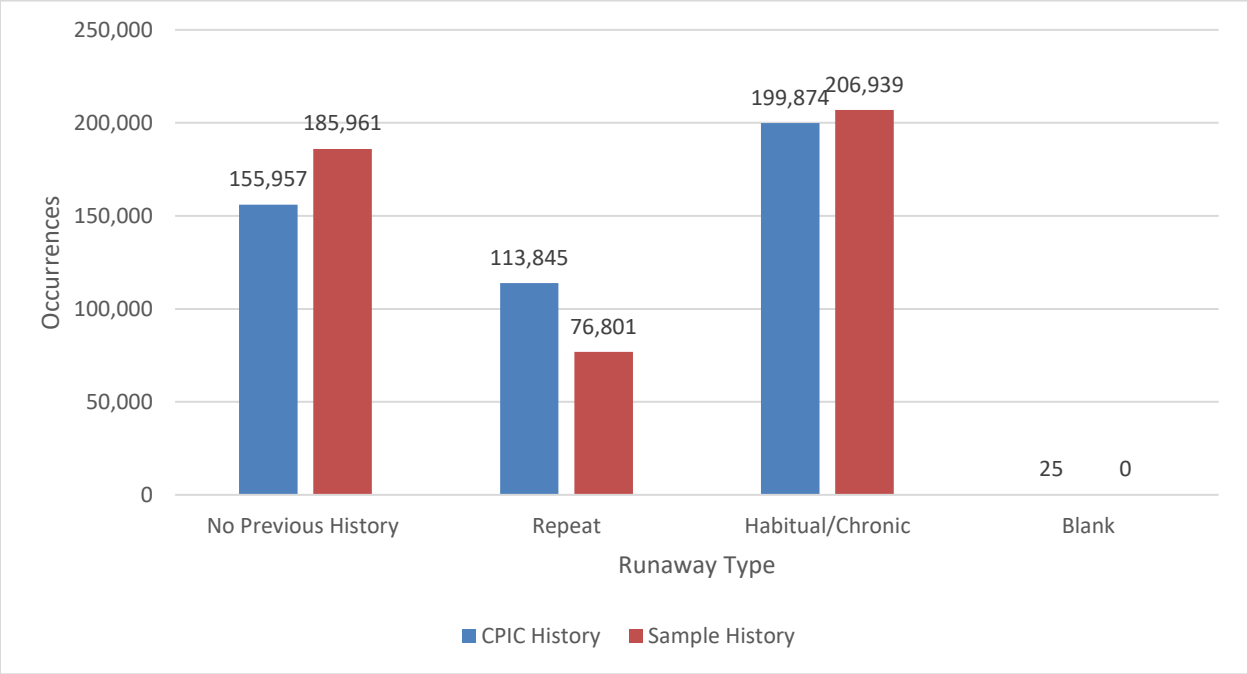
To corroborate the research by Ferguson and Picknell, this study considered two History values from the current sample. The *CPIC History* was the history as entered for this occurrence into CPIC. The *Sample History* was derived using the subject key (see methodology) by counting how many times a subject key appeared in the sample, then assigning the appropriate History class using the Ferguson & Picknell (2021) approach to classifying History[7]. The results contrasting these History variables are shown in Figure 3.

The figure below highlights that there were more occurrences classified as *repeat* according to the CPIC History as compared to the history derived from the actual sample. Fewer were classified as *repeat* and more were classified *no previous history* in the Sample History versus on

[7] An individual with *no previous history* is defined as someone going missing one time, *repeat* runaway individual is defined as someone going missing two or three times and a *habitual/chronic* runaway individual will be defined as going missing four or more times.

CPIC. Some of this could be due to the start date of the sample data set – the Sample History cannot consider occurrences before that may have involved the same person. It could also reflect situations where the person is reported by family to the police as missing only after they have had previous incidents not reported to police, and police are classifying according to the family account and not police experience (data) with the individual. There is also some evidence that those classified by Sample History as *habitual* runaway individuals may be under-classified in CPIC as *repeat* only.

Figure 3: Runaway Occurrences by CPIC History versus Sample History

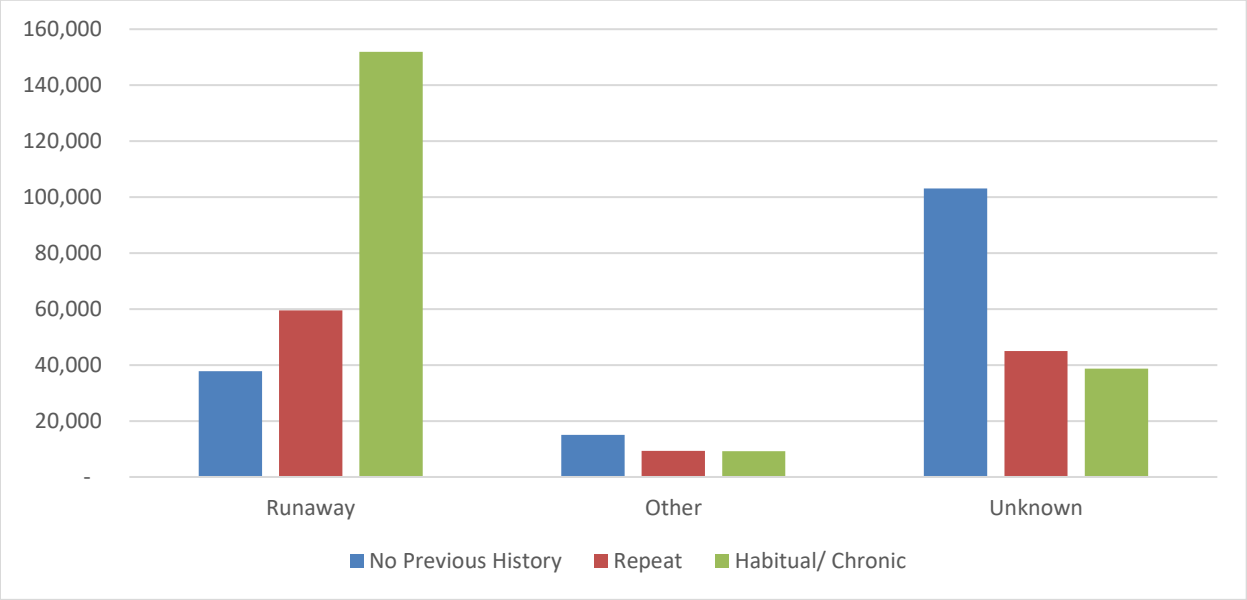


Relying on this understanding of the gaps in this area, this study draws upon definitions for history recommended in Ferguson & Picknell (2022). Specifically, **a *repeat* runaway individual will be defined as someone going missing two or three times and a *habitual /chronic* runaway individual will be defined as going missing four or more times. Furthermore, runaways as a minimum will be considered both those identified as such in CPIC and those identified with probable causes as Unknown or Other yet having gone missing more than once (*repeat* and *habitual/chronic*).**

This study uses data for all three Probable Causes (*Runaway*, *Unknown* and *Other)*, and the Sample History as described above to establish the data set and to distinguish between one-time, *repeat* and *habitual/chronic* missing persons.

Figure 4 below shows the breakdown of the data set according to Probable Cause and Sample History. The Sample History in this figure shows that roughly 44% of missing person occurrences where the Probable Cause is *Runaway*, *Unknown* and *Other* are part of a series of occurrences involving the same individuals habitually (i.e. *habitual/chronic)*, and another 16% involve a *repeat* individual. Together, roughly 60% of missing person occurrences in this sample involve an individual who has been reported missing more than once, with the remainder 40% of missing person occurrences involving individuals who went missing only once.

Figure 4: Runaway Occurrences by CPIC Probable Cause versus Sample History



As can be seen from this, 433,865 occurrences are either categorized as *Runaways* or have an individual with a Sample History of *repeat* or *habitual/chronic*. By the definition used in this study, at least 92% of our sample are thus runaway occurrences, which is 88% of all missing person occurrences in that time period for Canada. The number is likely higher because some of the occurrences categorized as *Unknown* and *Other* could be one-time runaways.

6 Frequency

Overall, the 469,701 occurrences in the sample involved 185,961 individual subjects (according to the subject key).

The number of times any one individual subject in this sample went missing in the 7 years covered by the sample ranged from one time (136,530 people, 73%) to 348 times (one person). Combining this with the data in the last section, this means that 73% of the individual subjects

account for 40% of all occurrences, while the other 27% of the individual subjects account for 60% of the occurrences.

Figure 5 below breaks down the number of individual subjects by Sample History, as defined above, demonstrating that the majority of individual subjects went missing only once in the sample time frame.

Figure 5: Individual Subjects by Sample History[8]

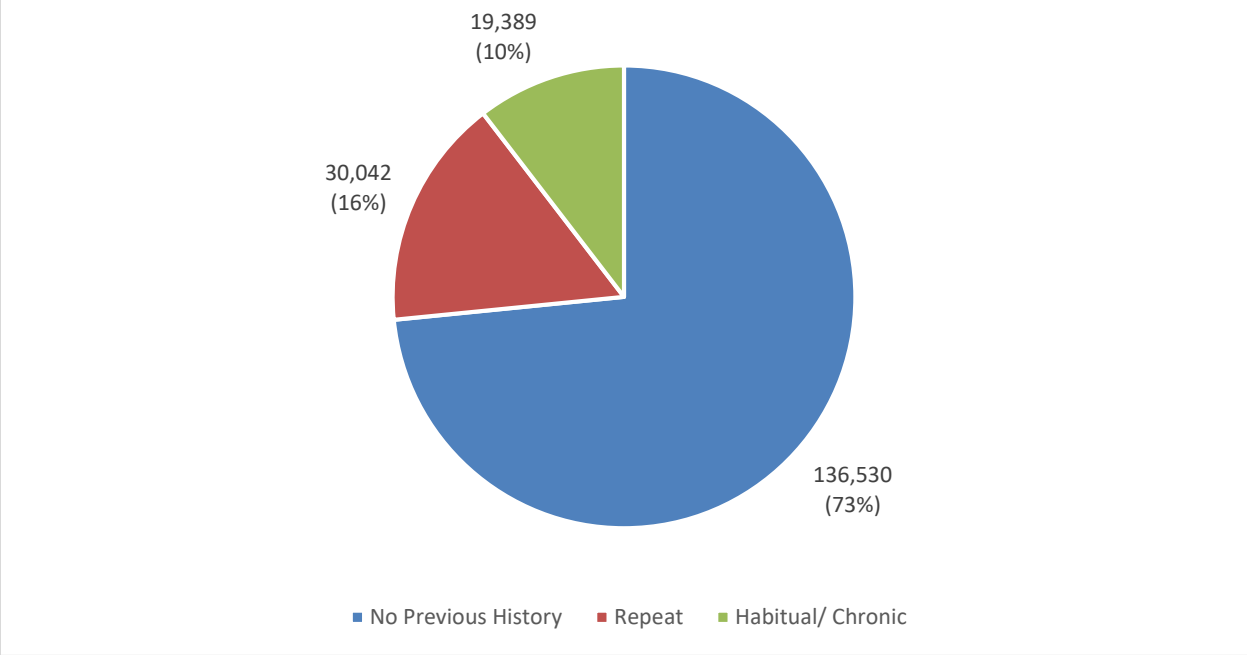
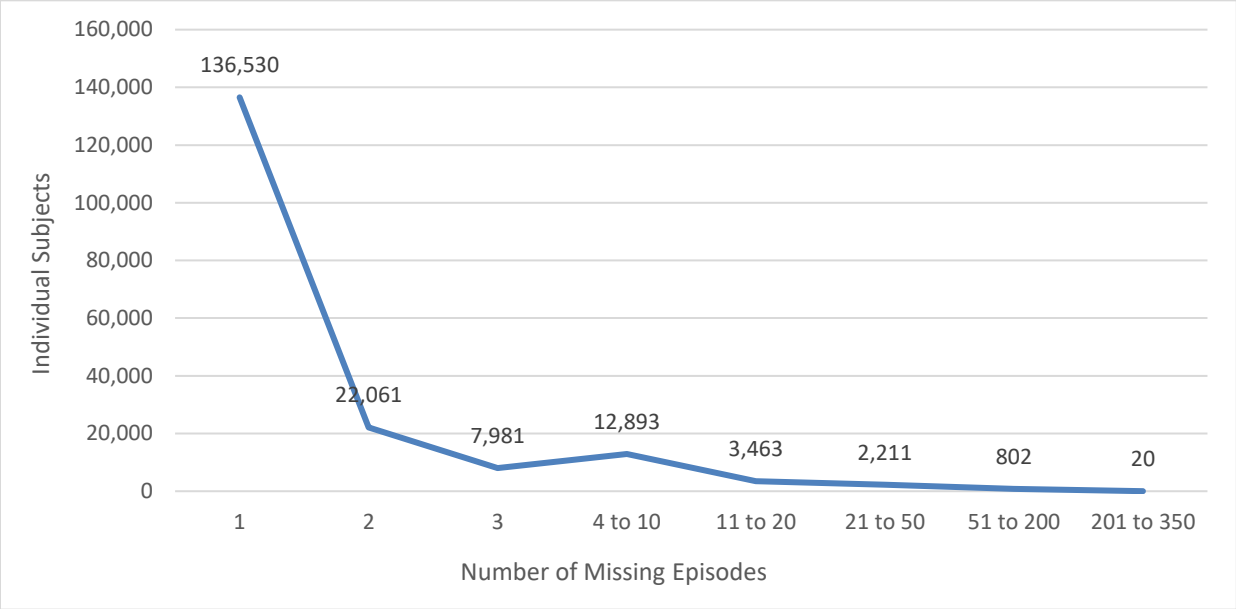


Figure 6 below provides a more detailed overview on the number of times individual subjects went missing during the 7 years covered by the sample. The figure demonstrates that almost 90% of individual subjects in this sample have gone missing three times or less. For those who ran away more than once, the average number of occurrences was 7. Individual subjects who go missing 11 or more times only represent 3% of the sample. As indicated in the caveats, the number of missing occurrences per individual subject is most likely much higher since this study only considers 7 years of a person's life, i.e., occurrences prior to 2015 and after 2021 by these individual subjects were not captured.

[8] The total percentage does not add up to 100% as the percentages are rounded to a whole number.

Figure 6: Individual Subjects per Number of Missing Episodes



Although sometimes it may appear that the same individual subjects are running away habitually/chronically and generating many occurrences, there is no statistical evidence in this report that there is a group of very habitual/chronic runaways who are causing a majority of occurrences. *Repeat* and *habitual/chronic* runaways do have more occurrences overall than those with *no previous history*, but the frequency curve follows a classic exponential decay.

7 Age

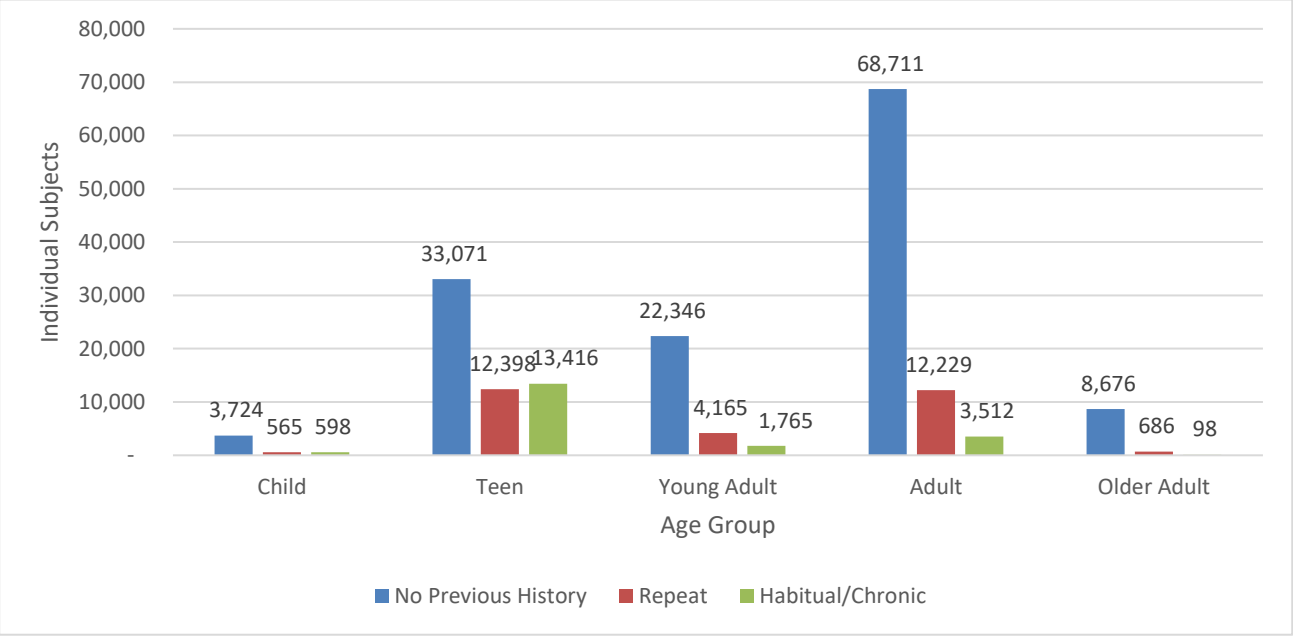
Figure 7 shows the Sample History by Age Group. Typically, missing persons statistics are broken down by child (under the age of 18) and adult (18 years old and over). For the purposes of this report, a finer granularity is used to more accurately present the results. Since the data set spans 7 years, an individual subject may end up with some of the occurrences they are involved in being counted in one age category and others in another, as far as occurrence statistics are concerned which look at each incident separately. For subject statistics in this report, which look at a subject as a single individual subject across all occurrences, the subject is considered to be the age they were at for their earliest occurrence in the data set. As such, a child refers to a person between the ages of 0 and 11, a teen refers to a person between the ages of 12 and 17, a young adult refers to a person between the ages of 18 and 25, an adult refers to a person between the ages of 26 and 64, and an older adult refers to those older than 65.

The results indicate that the *adult* age group constitutes 45% of the individual subjects in this sample and the *teen* age group constitutes 32% of the individual subjects in this sample. When examined by Sample History, the majority of individual subjects for each age groups had *no*

previous history, representing between 56% (teen) and 92% (older adults). The majority of individual subjects for the age groups *child*, *young adult* and *adult* represented between 76% and 81% of *no previous history*. A similar discrepancy between age groups was also seen in the United Kingdom where over 50% of child and youth missing person cases are *repeat* episodes as compared to only 20% for adults (Babuta & Sidebottom, 2020). Furthermore, a Canadian study of municipal data found that youths between the ages of 16 and 17 were responsible for more than half of all *repeat* missing reports in the sample and the majority of adults reported missing were between the ages of 22-29 (40%) (Huey et al., 2020).

Furthermore, when *repeat* individual subjects were examined, the age group *teen* had the most compared to the other age groups with 21% of teen individual subjects falling within this category. This was followed by *young adult* (15%), *adult* (15%), *child* (12%) and *older adult* (7%). These findings suggest that when repeat individual subjects are examined, *teens* and *young adults* are more likely to fall within this category as compared to *children* and *older adults*. When *habitual/chronic* individual subjects were examined, the age group *teen* has had the most compared to the other age groups with 23% of all *teen* individual subjects falling within this category. This was followed by *child* (12%), *young adult* (6%), *adult* (4%) and *older adult* (1%). These findings suggest that when habitual individual subjects are examined, *teens* and *children* are more likely to fall within this category as compared to *adults* and *older adults*. While the reasons for these differences will require additional research, it is important to note that the differences do exist.

Figure 7: Individual Subjects by Sample History and Age Group



8 Sex

CPIC originally defined *Sex* as biological sex but in more recent years has modified that to categorize an individual “based on their physical sex characteristics, their external manifestations of gender” (CPIC, 2018). This is in keeping with modern practices to focus on gender identity versus biological sex, but it is not clear if all the systems and practices that are feeding CPIC have also changed. In addition, older entries may not have been updated in many years. Because of the usefulness in having both biological sex and gender in missing persons investigations, it would be ideal to have both, but at least for now only a single field is provided in CPIC and thus only a single variable is available in the current sample. The confusion about what the data actually represents will persist for some time, but since for the majority of cases the biological sex and gender identity are the same, conclusions can be drawn about the major categories (Planned Parenthood, n.d.). Anything coded as "another gender" is more clearly a gender and not biological sex. Because the number in that group is small, it is not possible to draw any statistically significant conclusions about anything other than male and female missing persons as reported.

The table below demonstrates that there were slightly more runaways overall involving *female individuals* (52 %) as compared to *male individuals* (48%). This finding mirrors the nearly 50% breakdown by sex within the Canadian population in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2021a). Nonetheless, when sex is examined in relation to Sample History classification, differences are observed. The current sample shows how 60% of *habitual/chronic* runaway occurrences involve female individuals as compared to only 40% that involve male individuals. So although the number of occurrences is generally divided between male individuals and female individuals as in the population, female individuals have a heavier representation in the *habitual/chronic* category.

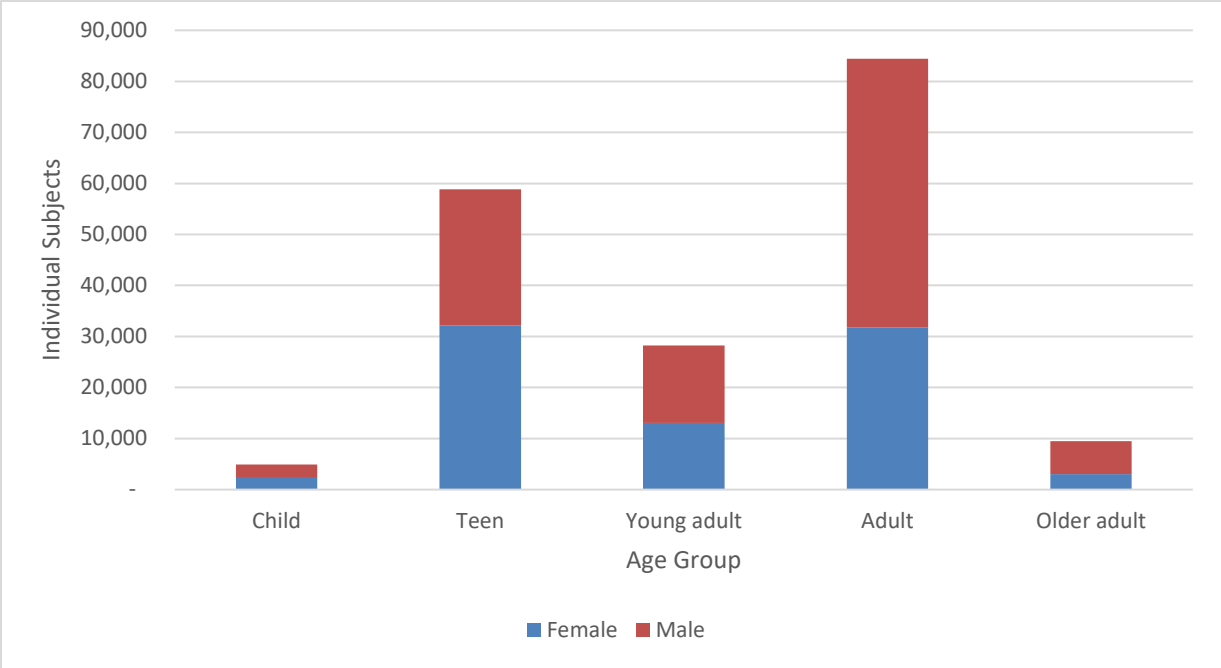
Table 1: Runaway Occurrences by Sex, Age and Sample History[9]

		No Previous History	Repeat	Habitual/Chronic	**Total**
Female	Child	2,257	507	604	3,368
	Teen	32,123	23,448	102,325	157,896
	Young Adult	13,094	4,528	12,069	29,691
	Adult	31,781	10,040	9,055	50,876
	Older Adult	3,032	321	99	3,452
	Total	**82,287**	**38,844**	**124,152**	**245,283**
Male	Child	2,629	595	633	3,857
	Teen	26,707	18,876	66,496	112,079
	Young Adult	15,161	4,406	6,683	26,250
	Adult	52,646	13,216	8,345	74,207
	Older Adult	6,427	789	279	7,495
	Total	**103,571**	**37,882**	**82,436**	**223,889**
	Grand Total	**185,961**	**76,801**	**206,939**	**469,701**

Comparing Sex with Age in Figure 8 below, it can be seen that female individual subjects represent the majority in occurrences for Teens and Young Adults (58% and 53% respectively) but male individual subjects are the majority in occurrences for Adults and Older Adults (59% and 68% respectively). This finding was also seen in a study by Huey, Ferguson & Kowalski (2020) who found that female youth are two-thirds more likely to go missing than male youth. Previous studies have found that for every one missing event involving a male youth, there are almost 13 reports generated for female youth (Statistics Canada, 2018, Collins et al., 1993, Patterson, 2007, as cited in Huey, Ferguson & Kowalski, 2020).

[9] Individuals with a sex identified as other were involved in 529 occurrences excluded from this table, but these occurrences are still part of the Grand Total row.

Figure 8: Individuals Subjects by Sex and Age Group[10]



This suggests that there are factors impacting female runaway individuals differently, particularly young female individuals, causing them to run away more often than their male counterparts. Additional research is necessary to better understand the differences between biological sexes and the phenomenon of runaways.

9 Biological Affinity

Biological Affinity in MC/PUR is derived from two input fields in CPIC: RACE and BIOAFF. The BIOAFF field appears on both Missing and Body entries in CPIC and was introduced in 2010 to provide more granularity than the much older RACE field which only has choices of White and Non-White. Since BIOAFF has not necessarily been added to all older entries, agency systems or practices, there are still many entries in the database for which RACE is available and BIOAFF is not. MC/PUR sets its Biological Affinity attribute from the CPIC BIOAFF field but if that is not available, it will use the RACE field instead. Thus, on MC/PUR, a value of Non-White will appear in Biological Affinity for some individuals, and so it appears in the data used in this study.

Table 2 presents the breakdown of individual subjects by biological affinity and Figure 9 visually represents this data. White individuals account for most individual subjects in this sample, which

[10] 103 individuals with a sex identified as other are not shown this figure.

is expected since this biological affinity accounts for 70% of Canada's overall population; however, it accounts for only 47% of all occurrences, giving them a significant underrepresentation. Similarly, black individuals account for 3.5% of the Canadian population and only 1.5% of individuals in this sample. This underrepresentation is even greater for Asian individuals who account for 18% of the Canadian population but only 0.3% of runaway individuals in this sample. In contrast, Indigenous individuals account for 6% of the Canadian population but 24% of the individuals in the sample, a significant overrepresentation. In another Canadian study on *repeat* runaways in one city, Huey et al. (2020), found that Indigenous adults and youths were also disproportionately represented given they represent only 3% of the city's population chosen for the study but 17% and 19% of the adult and youth reports, respectively.

Table 2: Individuals Subjects by Biological Affinity and Sample History

	No Previous History	Repeat	Habitual/Chronic	Total
Asian	966	81	28	1,075
Black	2,286	364	203	2,853
East Indian	483	41	10	534
Indigenous	11,998	3,767	3,616	19,381
Non-white	30,786	6,995	4,613	42,394
Other	782	90	38	910
Unknown	207	33	12	252
White	65,626	13,995	8,215	87,836
Blank	23,395	4,677	2,654	30,726
Total	**136,529**	**30,043**	**19,389**	**185,961**

Figure 9: Individual Subjects by Biological Affinity and Sample History

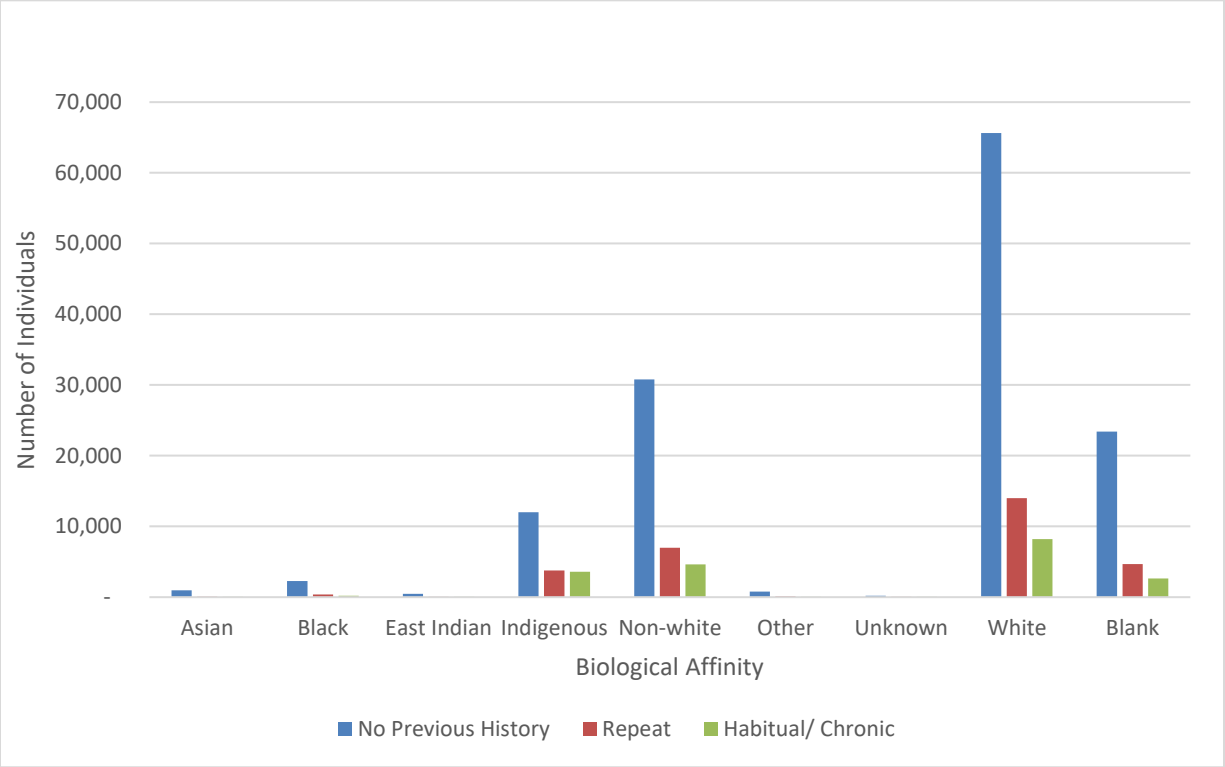
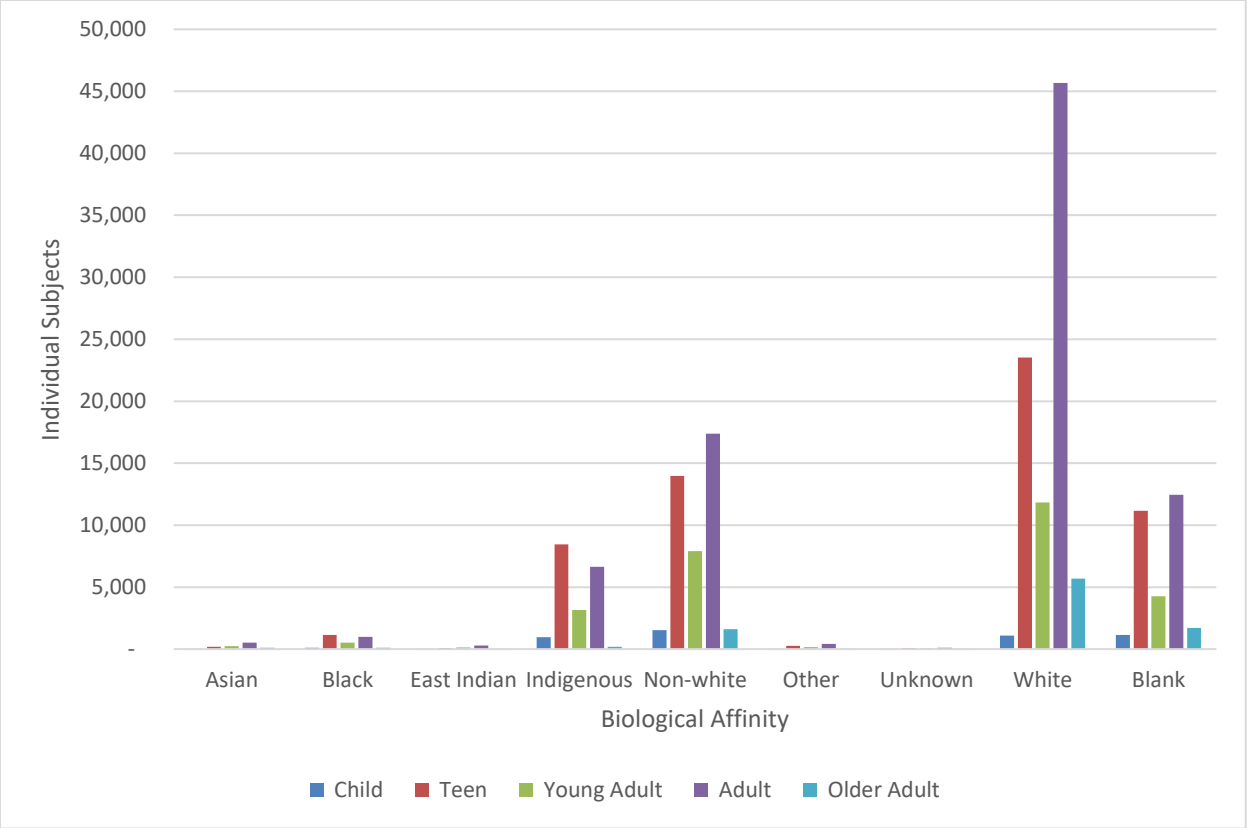


Figure 10 outlines the findings when the Biological Affinity of individual subjects is examined in relation to Age Groups. When examined by each age group, 44% of the Indigenous individuals in this sample involve teens and 5% involve children, as compared to an average of 29% and 2.5% for the remaining biological affinities. Approximately 26% of East Indian individuals in this sample involved young adults and 53% involved adults, as compared to an average of 18% and 42% for the remaining biological affinities. Finally, 9% of Asian individuals in this sample involved older adults as compared to an average of 4% for the remaining biological affinities.

Figure 10: Individual Subjects by Biological Affinity and Age Group[11]



When the relationship between Sample History and Biological Affinity is explored, as shown in Table 3 below, it is seen that for those identified as *repeat runaway* individual subjects and having *no previous history*, the most common Biological Affinity was white (46% and 47% respectively) which is consistent with Canadian population breakdowns, although still overall an underrepresentation.

In contrast, for occurrences with individuals identified as *habitual/chronic runaway*, the most common Biological Affinity was Indigenous (38%), highlighting again the overrepresentation in the current sample and a more frequent appearance as *habitual/chronic* runaways than persons of other biological affinities. This demonstrates a need for additional research to explore factors leading to more *habitual/chronic* runaway behaviour among Indigenous individuals.

Table 3 also shows that when Biological Affinity is examined in relation to Sex it can be seen that the majority of Indigenous individuals involved in runaway occurrences are female (66%).

[11] One individual was excluded from this figure as the age listed in MC/PUR was an error.

Specifically, Indigenous women and girls in Canada make up 4% of the total female population[12], but in this sample, they represent 30% of the occurrences involving female individuals.

Table 3: Individual Subjects by Biological Affinity, Sex and Sample History

		No Previous History	Repeat	Habitual/Chronic	**Total**
Asian	Female	419	32	7	458
	Male	547	49	21	617
	Total	**966**	**81**	**28**	**1,075**
Black	Female	976	161	109	1,246
	Male	1,308	203	94	1,605
	Total	**2,284**	**364**	**203**	**2,851**
East Indian	Female	161	19	7	187
	Male	322	22	3	347
	Total	**483**	**41**	**10**	**534**
Indigenous	Female	6,584	2,285	2,215	11,084
	Male	5,404	1,479	1,399	8,282
	Total	**11,988**	**3,764**	**3,614**	**19,366**
Non-White	Female	13,348	3,361	2,485	19,194
	Male	17,427	3,630	2,126	23,183
	Total	**30,775**	**6,991**	**4,611**	**42,377**
Other	Female	282	33	19	334
	Male	500	57	19	576
	Total	**782**	**90**	**38**	**910**
Unknown	Female	93	18	3	114
	Male	114	15	9	138
	Total	**207**	**33**	**12**	**252**
White	Female	25,522	6,242	3,930	35,694
	Male	40,062	7,745	4,280	52,087
	Total	**65,584**	**13,987**	**8,210**	**87,781**
Blank	Female	10,312	2,272	1,392	13,976
	Male	13,074	2,403	1,259	16,736
	Total	**23,386**	**4,675**	**2,651**	**30,712**
Grand Total		**136,455**	**30,026**	**19,377**	**185,858**[13]

[12] This information was retrieved from Statistics Canada (2021b).
[13] The total in this table is lower than the total number of individuals in other tables as it excludes 103 individual who's sex is *other*.

10 Provincial Differences

The following figure and table provides the data for runaway occurrences by province and territory. The runaway classification *no previous history* represents the largest portion of occurrences in a number of provinces: Alberta (50%), New Brunswick (55%), Yukon (62%), Prince Edward Island (63%), Northwest Territories (72%) and Nunavut (92%). In these provinces, individuals most commonly run away once and then not again (for the timeframe examined). In the three largest provinces with the biggest urban centres, there is also a large percentage of runaway occurrences with persons that have *no previous history*, but that category is less than the *repeat* and *habitual*/*chronic* categories combined: Quebec (43%), British Columbia (45%) and Ontario (45%). In contrast, the *habitual*/*chronic* classification alone is seen in the largest portion of occurrences in Saskatchewan (50%), Nova Scotia (51%), Newfoundland and Labrador (52%) and Manitoba (73%). The findings of this research indicate that, for its size, Manitoba has a significant runaway population, most of whom fall into the *habitual/chronic* category.

Figure 11: Runaway Occurrences by Province and Sample History

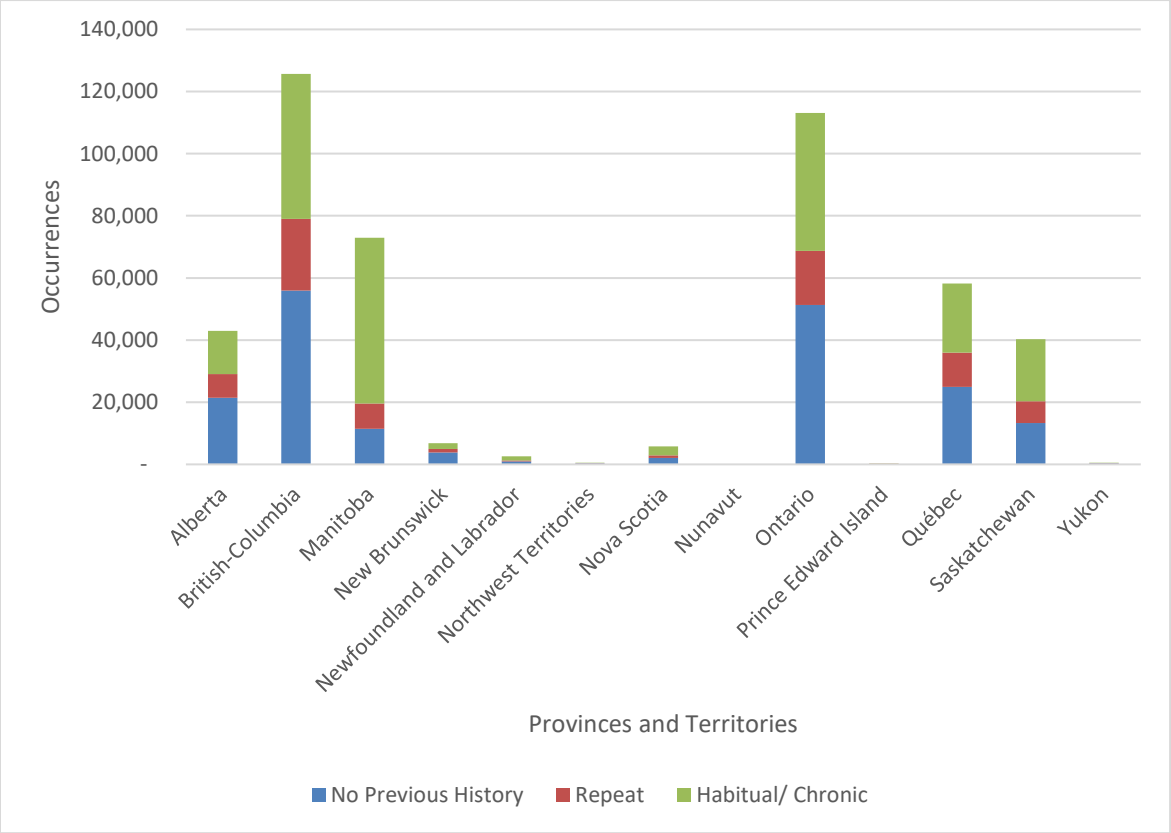


Table 4: Runaway Occurrences by Province and Sample History[14]

	No Previous History	Repeat	Habitual/ Chronic	**Total**
Alberta	21,474	7,589	13,904	42,967
British Columbia	55,948	23,023	46,660	125,631
Manitoba	11,402	8,145	53,376	72,923
New Brunswick	3,779	1,205	1,837	6,821
Newfoundland and Labrador	961	317	1,358	2,636
Northwest Territories	342	84	50	476
Nova Scotia	2,042	820	2,959	5,821
Nunavut[15]	22	1	1	24
Ontario	51,294	17,424	44,388	113,106
Prince Edward Island	133	36	41	210
Québec	24,916	11,047	22,233	58,196
Saskatchewan	13,258	7,000	20,024	40,282
Yukon	365	110	108	583
Total	**185,936**	**76,801**	**206,939**	**469,676**

Table 5 below breaks down the occurrences involving *habitual/chronic* runaways by province and sex. In Section 7 it was noted that overall occurrence numbers were nearly evenly split between male and female individuals, but that occurrences involving *habitual/chronic* runaways were more likely to involve female individuals (60%). The differences are even more significant when broken down by province. The table below indicates that for occurrences involving *habitual/chronic* runaway individuals, some provinces have even higher female ratios: British Columbia (62%), Saskatchewan (64%), Yukon (67%) and Manitoba (71%). In other provinces, the occurrences involving female *habitual/chronic* runaways are in the minority: Quebec (34%) and New Brunswick (36%).

[14] It is important to note that 25 occurrences in the sample are not accounted for in this table as their occurrence location was listed as something other than a Canadian province (i.e. other country or American state).
[15] Nunavut is an outlier in this analysis as there is *no previous history* for 92% of occurrences, and *repeat* and *habitual/chronic* runaway histories were identified for 4% of occurrences.

Table 5: Habitual/Chronic Runaway Occurrences by Province and Sex[16]

	Female		Male	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Alberta	8,236	7%	5,639	7%
British Columbia	28,918	23%	17,667	21%
Manitoba	38,001	31%	15,361	19%
New Brunswick	657	1%	1,180	1%
Newfoundland and Labrador	724	1%	634	1%
Northwest Territories	27	0%	23	0%
Nova Scotia	1,722	1%	1,237	2%
Nunavut[17]	0	0%	1	0%
Ontario	25,400	20%	18,890	23%
Prince Edward Island	23	0%	18	0%
Québec	7,624	6%	14,593	18%
Saskatchewan	12,748	10%	7,157	9%
Yukon	72	0%	36	0%
Total	**124,152**		**82,436**	

Table 6 below further breaks down the *habitual/chronic* occurrence numbers for province and sex, by biological affinity. In Manitoba with the highest ratio of occurrences involving female *habitual/chronic* runaways, 87% of those are Indigenous, an overrepresentation as compared to the overall Canadian population for Indigenous female individuals (6%[18]). Saskatchewan and Alberta also have high ratios of Indigenous female individuals in occurrences involving *habitual/chronic* runaways.

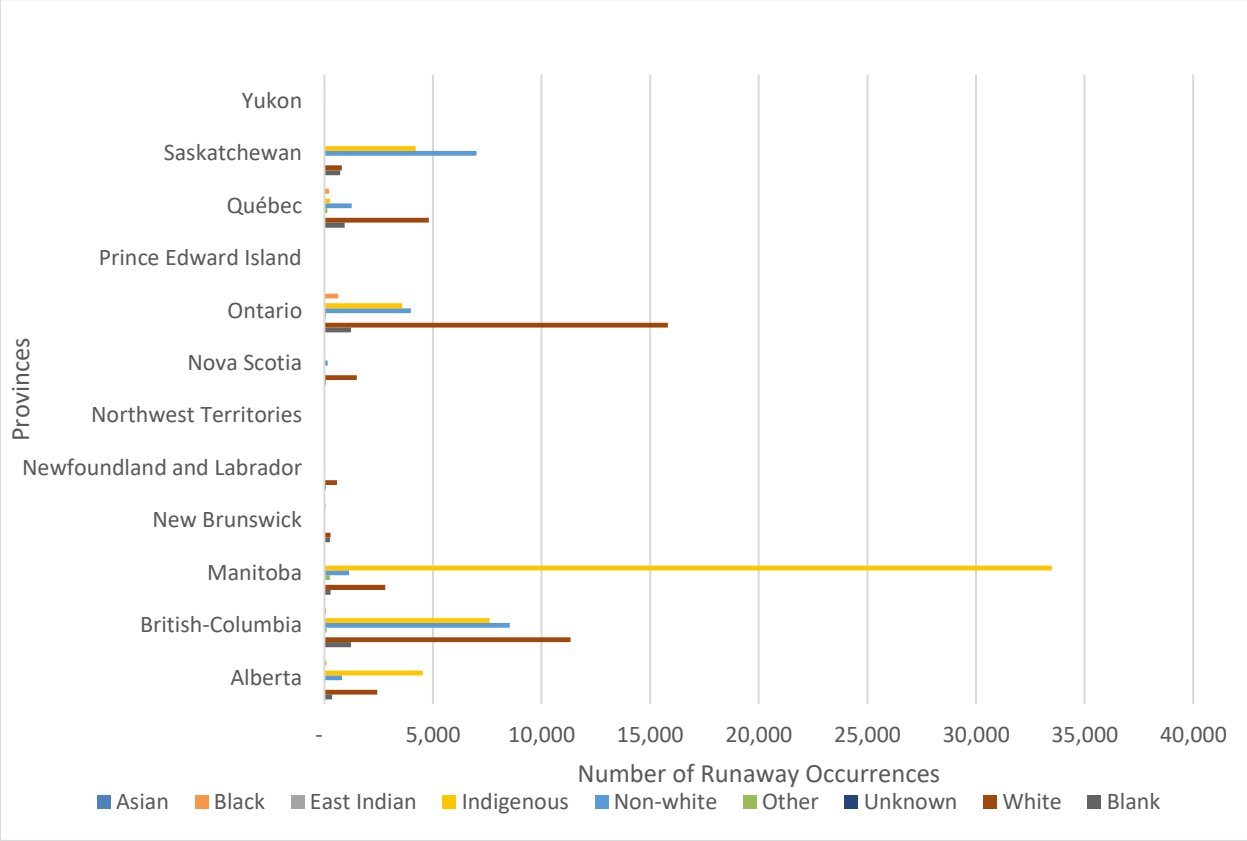
[16] The column comparing sex listed as *other* and provinces has been removed due to the small representation of the sample.
[17] Nunavut is an outlier in this analysis as there is *no previous history* for 92% of occurrences, and *repeat* and *habitual/chronic* run away histories were identified for 4% of occurrences.
[18] This information was retrieved from Statistics Canada. (2021b).

Table 6: Habitual/Chronic Runaway Occurrences involving Female Individuals by Province and Biological Affinity

	Asian	Black	East Indian	Indigenous	Non-White	Other	Unknown	White	Blank	**Total**
Alberta	1	98		4,521	820	3	2	2,437	354	8,236
British-Columbia	1	81	19	7,613	8,541	101	2	11,338	1,222	28,918
Manitoba			1	33,498	1,145	258	19	2,797	283	38,001
New Brunswick		62		26	21	10	1	277	260	657
Newfoundland and Labrador				39	31			585	69	724
Northwest Territories				12	4	2			9	27
Nova Scotia				10	152		5	1,487	68	1,722
Ontario[19]	26	634	32	3,581	3,979	76	38	15,808	1,226	25,400
Prince Edward Island								12	11	23
Québec	16	209	3	248	1,257	138	6	4,811	936	7,624
Saskatchewan		3		4,206	7,006			806	727	12,748
Yukon				29	3			19	21	72
Total	**44**	**1,087**	**55**	**53,783**	**22,959**	**588**	**73**	**40,377**	**5,186**	**124,152**

[19] Nunavut is an outlier in this analysis as there is *no previous history* for 92% of occurrences, and *repeat* and *habitual/chronic* runaway histories were identified for 4% of occurrences.

Figure 12: Habitual/Chronic Runaway Occurrences involving Female Individuals by Province and Biological Affinity



The table below outlines runaway occurrences by province, along with sample history, sex, biological affinity and age group. From Table 7, of the occurrences involving female, Indigenous, *habitual/chronic* runaway individuals, it can be seen that 88% of occurrences in Manitoba involved teenagers. These findings support the observation that teenage, female, Indigenous individuals make up a larger portion of those running away habitually in Manitoba than that group appears in the general population[20]. A possible explanation would be that they

[20] Data on the number of Indigenous teen female individuals living in Manitoba is not available, but Statistics Canada (2023) reports that teenage girls (aged 10-19) represent 6% of the population of Manitoba and Indigenous girls and women represent 9% of the population Manitoba. Even without the full statistics, it is clear that the finding in this report is an overrepresentation of this group.

are more likely to be exposed to or face violence as compared to non-Indigenous people (Roudometkina & Wakeford, 2018).

Table 7: Habitual/Chronic Runaway Occurrences involving Female Indigenous Individuals by Province and Age Group

	Child	Teen	Young Adult	Adult	Older Adult	**Total**
Alberta	25	3,505	483	508		4,521
British Columbia	110	5,430	1,447	621	5	7,613
Manitoba	154	29,344	3,425	575		33,498
New Brunswick	2	23	1			26
Newfoundland and Labrador		39				39
Northwest Territories		10	1	1		12
Nova Scotia		10				10
Ontario	10	3,112	233	226		3,581
Québec	1	189	8	50		248
Saskatchewan	94	3,887	162	63		4,206
Yukon		15	12	2		29
Grand Total	**396**	**45,564**	**5,772**	**2,046**	**5**	**53,783**

Table 8 provides a breakdown by provinces and territories for persons under 18 who went missing more than once, in rates per 100,000 population. The middle column shows that Québec (13%), Ontario (24%) and Manitoba (25%) have the largest numbers of *repeat* and *habitual/chronic* under-18 runaways in Canada. However, when the population of those provinces is considered, Manitoba and Saskatchewan have the highest number of occurrences per capita in contrast to the other provinces. Specifically, Manitoba has the highest number of under-18 runaway occurrences per 100,000 with 17,278 occurrences, followed by Saskatchewan (8,703/ 100,000 occurrences).

Table 8: Repeat and Habitual/Chronic Occurrences by Province and rate per 100,000 for children (Ages 0-17)

	Population under 18 as of July 1, 2021[21]	# of occurrences (% of total occurrences) involving <18s	# of occurrences per 100,000 persons under 18
Alberta	973,877	16,205 (8%)	1,664
British-Columbia	873,990	34,670 (16%)	3,967
Manitoba	309,218	53,426 (25%)	17,278
New Brunswick	135,835	2,440 (1%)	1,796
Newfoundland and Labrador	84,245	1,551 (<1%)	1,841
Northwest Territories	10,659	78 (<1%)	732
Nova Scotia	165,821	3,064 (1%)	1,848
Nunavut	14,415	2 (<1%)	14
Ontario	2,750,101	50,573 (24%)	1,839
Prince Edward Island	29,864	59 (<1%)	198
Québec	1,601,448	27,980 (13%)	1,747
Saskatchewan	272,298	23,698 (11%)	8,703
Yukon	8,399	119 (<1%)	1,417
Total	**7,230,170**	**213,865 (100.00%)**	**3,311 (average)**

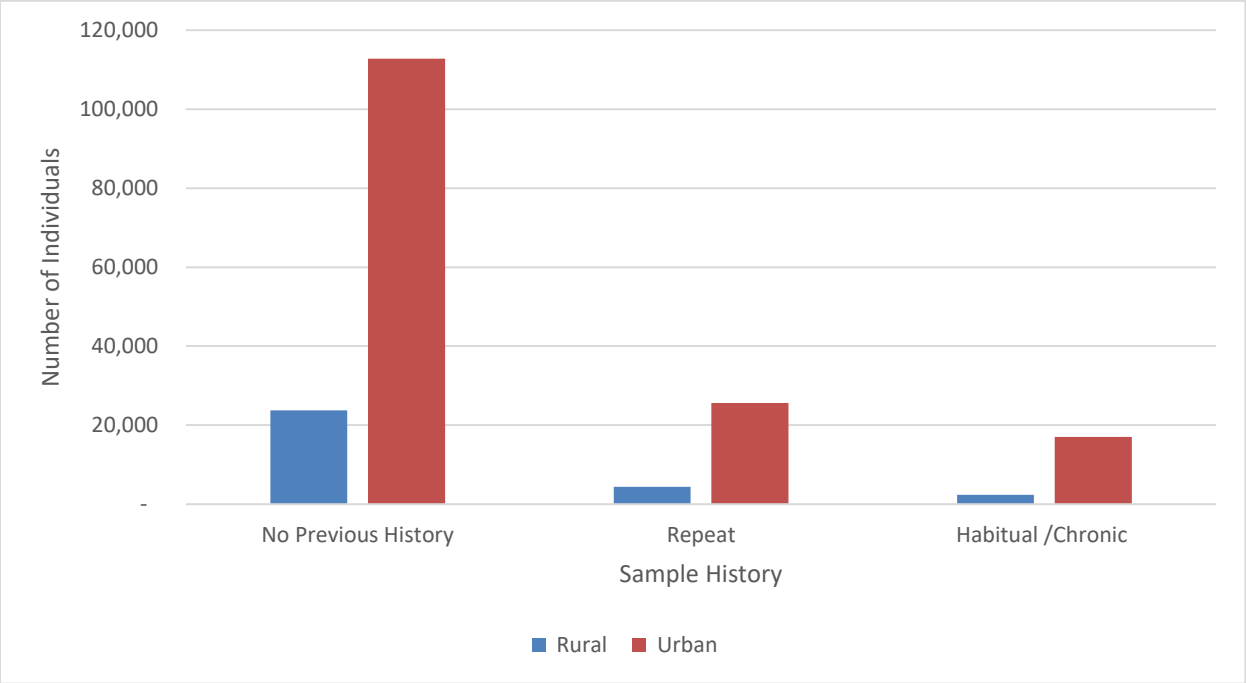
11 Rural versus Urban Settings

The following section highlights the number of occurrences by type of runaway and whether the jurisdiction of the investigating police is considered rural or urban. The latter categorization was generated based on the agency code associated with the occurrence in MC/PUR. An agency is any entity recognised by MC/PUR from its CPIC Originating Agency Identifier (ORI) code, and includes each RCMP detachment, SQ detachment, OPP detachment, and most municipal and independent police forces in Canada. In this study, *rural* areas are described as areas with less than 30,000 people, and *urban* centres are areas with more than 30,000 people residing there[22]. In the roughly 1000 *agencies* recognized in MC/PUR, roughly 76% can be classified as rural.

[21] Information retrieved from Population estimates on July 1st, by age and sex
[22] The definition of rural and urban were developed using the Statistics Canada's definitions of population centres as a guide (Statistics Canada, 2022).

The figure below (Figure 13) demonstrates that the majority of runaway individual subjects in the current study took place in urban settings, regardless of sample history. When the total number of individual subjects for each sample history category were examined, it was found that *habitual/chronic* runaway individual subjects represent only 8% of those running away from rural areas. This is likely because of the locations of institutions such as group homes in urban settings, as well as more services, attractions or lifestyles to attract an individual to go missing.

Figure 13: Individual Subjects by Rural/Urban and Sample History



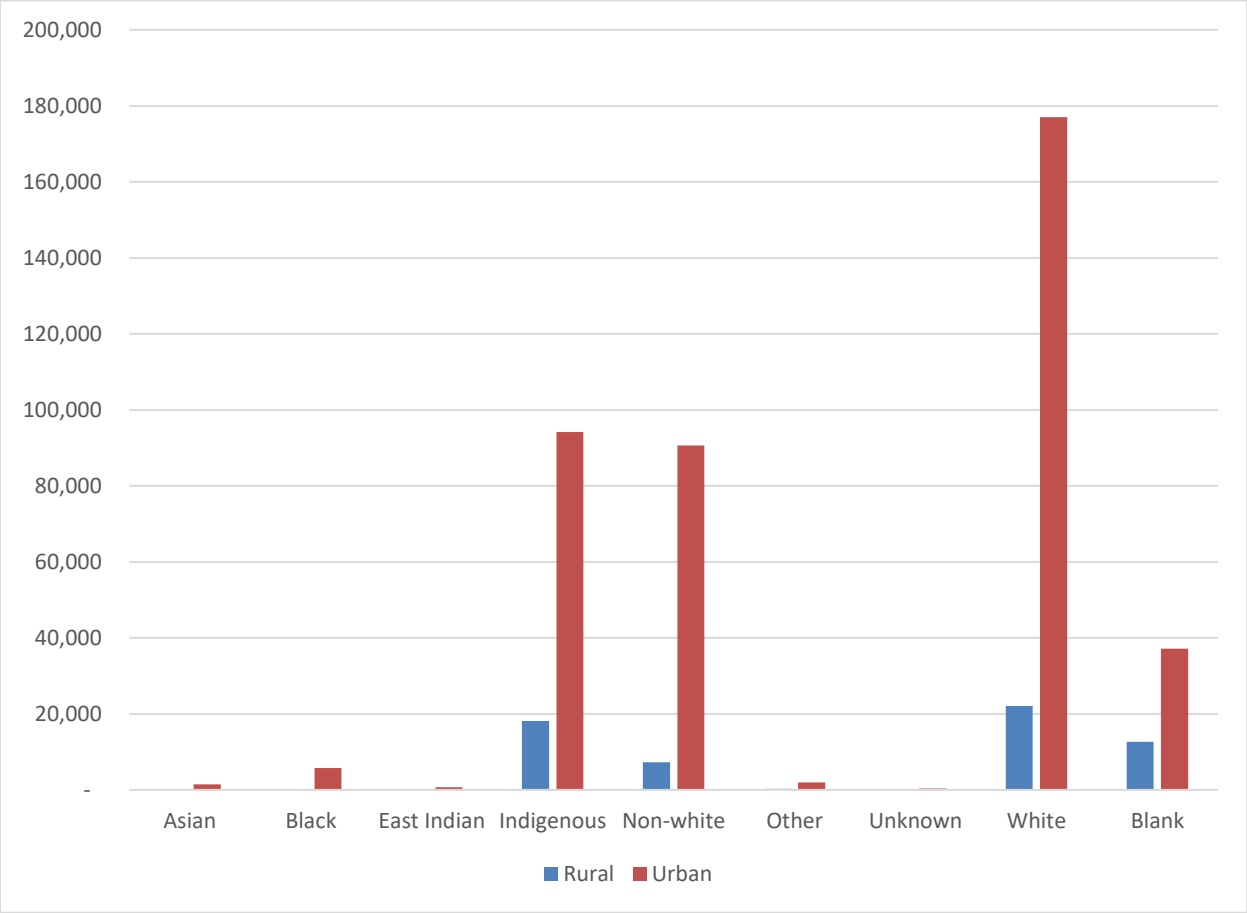
When rural/urban differences are examined by Age Group and Sex (Table 9 below), the numbers for *children* and *young adults* were consistent with typical representation in the general totals. For *teenagers* who ran away in rural settings, however, 61% were female individuals, which is about 10% higher than the ratio of total female runaways in this study. For *adults and older adults* running away in rural settings, more are male (62% and 70% respectively). These findings are slightly higher than the general ratios discussed earlier, suggesting that the male dominance in these age groups is even more pronounced in rural settings. Thus in rural settings, *teen* runaways are more often female, and *adult* runaways are more often male, compared to the general totals.

Table 9: Runaway Occurrences by Rural/Urban, Age and Sex Group

		Female	Male	Other	**Total**
Rural	Child	468	481	-	949
	Teen	20,184	12,615	10	32,809
	Young Adult	3,675	3,501	5	7,181
	Adult	6,930	11,156	3	18,089
	Older Adult	481	1,123	-	1,604
	Total	**31,738**	**28,876**	**18**	**60,632**
Urban	Child	2,900	3,376	1	6,277
	Teen	137,712	99,464	426	237,602
	Young Adult	26,016	22,749	32	48,797
	Adult	43,946	63,051	51	107,048
	Older Adult	2,971	6,372	1	9,344
	Total	**213,545**	**195,013**	**511**	**409,069**
Grand Total	**245,283**	**223,889**	**529**	**469,701**	**245,283**

When Biological Affinity was examined in relation to the type of setting, the figure below shows that occurrences involving individuals with biological affinities of Asian, Black, East Indian and Non-White occurred in urban settings more than 90% of the time. Only occurrences involving Indigenous or White individuals or unspecified biological affinities showed a higher amount of occurrences in rural settings, although the greatest number was still urban. Specifically, occurrences for those biological affinities took place in urban settings between 89% and 75% of the time, and in rural settings the remaining 11% and 25%. It is possible that these findings reflect population dispersions by biological affinity in Canada and so additional research should examine this finding in relation to census data.

Figure 14: Runaway Occurrences by Rural/Urban and Biological Affinity



12 Top Reporting Agencies

The table below lists the populations of the cities they cover for the five top reporting agencies, and calculates the number of runaway occurrences per 100,000 population per year. These *top reporting* agencies are those with more runaway occurrences per capita than any others.

In a Canadian report from the board of police commissioners, it was found that the majority of people reported missing during a six-month period (April 1 to September 30, 2018) in Saskatoon were *habitual/chronic* young runaways, especially girls (Giles, 2018). Specifically, in that study, of the 1,693 reported missing persons, 1,346 (80%) were youth, 64% of which were girls, and 93% of these girls were found to have been missing two or more times prior.

Similar findings are noted in the current study. When looking at the number of occurrences per capita, some variability is noted between the top reporting agencies. Notably, Winnipeg Police Service has the most runaway occurrences reported (n=54,358, 12% of this sample) and runaway rate per capita (1,035.9 per 100,000 per year) as compared to all the other police services and/or detachments that are identified in MC/PUR. This is closely followed by Saskatoon Police Service (1,003.8 per 100,000).

Table 10: Runaway Occurrences by Top Reporting Agency and Sample History per capita

	City Population[23]	Total # of occurrences for Agency (7-year sample) (%)	Runaway Rate Per 100,000 population per year
Winnipeg Police Service (MB)	749,607	54,358 (12%)	1,035.9
Vancouver Police Department (B.C.)	662,248	30,998 (7%)	668.7
Calgary Police Service (AB)	1,306,784	19,145 (4%)	209.3
Surrey RCMP Detachment (B.C.)	568,322	18,775 (4%)	471.9
Saskatoon Police Service (SK)	266,141	18,701 (4%)	1,003.8

Table 11 (below) demonstrates runaway occurrences by Top Reporting Agency and Sex. The table notes that Winnipeg and Saskatoon Police Services have higher ratios of female to male runaways than the overall sample. Specifically, they have 66% and 62% female runaways as compared to the overall sample, where female runaways represent 52%.

[23] The populations are based on the 2021 Federal Census for each city and was retrieved from Statistics Canada (2021).

Table 11: Runaway Occurrences by Top Reporting Agency and Sex

Female			Male		
Top Reporting Agency	# of Occurrences	% of occurrences for agency	Agency	# of Occurrences	% of occurrences for agency
Winnipeg Police Service (MB)	35,750	*66%*	Winnipeg Police Service (MB)	18,608	34%
Vancouver Police Department (BC)	15,475	*50%*	Vancouver Police Department (BC)	15,504	50%
Saskatoon Police Service (SK)	11,642	*62%*	Service de police de la Ville de Montréal (QC)	11,301	61%
Surrey RCMP Detachment (BC)	9,900	*53%*	Calgary Police Service (AB)	9,418	49%
Calgary Police Service (AB)	9,668	51%	Toronto Police Service (ON)	9,200	52%

As shown in Figure 12, the majority of occurrences that Winnipeg Police Service handled involved Indigenous individuals (83%), which is higher than their representation in this sample (27%) as well as much higher than their representation in the Canadian population (6%) and even their representation in the Winnipeg population (12%) (Statistics Canada, 2022; Statistics Canada, 2021c). For Saskatoon Police Service, the majority of their occurrences involved non-white individuals (who may be largely Indigenous) (78%) which is higher than their representation in the entire sample (23%). Additional research is required to understand these results, but they do illustrate that there are certain centres and police services where runaways, in particular *habitual/chronic* runaways, are a more common issue than for other police services. Although the Toronto Police Service is not among the five police agencies with the most reported missing person occurrences per capita, it has the overall highest number of occurrences in Canada involving individuals identified as Asian, Black, East Indian, *Unknown* and *Other*.

Figure 12: Runaway Occurrences by Top Reporting Agency and Biological Affinity

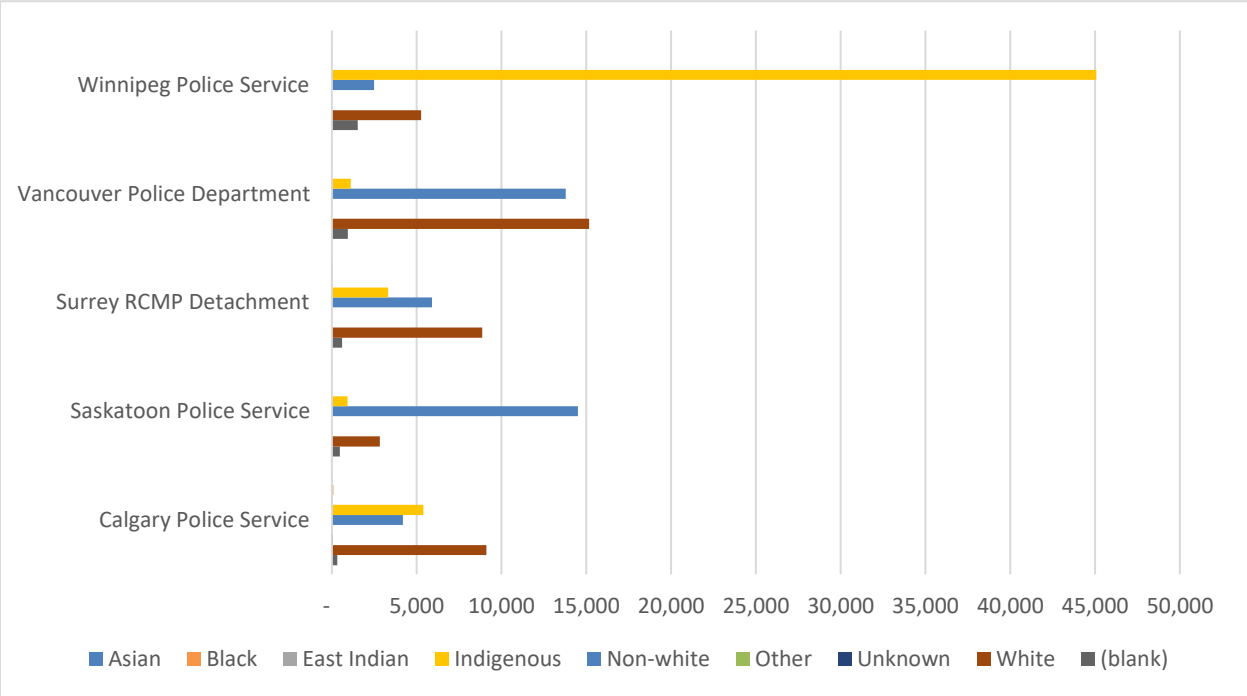


Table 13 presents the reporting agencies with the highest number of occurrences in each Age Group. Winnipeg Police Service accounted for 17% of all reported missing teen occurrences in Canada during the timeframe selected for this study, Saskatoon Police reported the most missing children, with 14% of all reports for that age group. Vancouver Police Department alone is responsible for 13% of all missing adult occurrences in Canada (anyone over the age of 18).

Table 13: Runaway Occurrences by Top Reporting Agency and Age Group

Age Group	Top Reporting Agency	# of occurrences in sample	% of total occurrences for that age group
Child	Saskatoon Police Service (SK)	979	14%
Teen	Winnipeg Police Service (MB)	44,836	17%
Young Adult	Vancouver Police Department (BC)	5,731	10%
Adult	Vancouver Police Department (BC)	18,226	15%
Older Adult	Vancouver Police Department (BC)	1,405	13%

13 Resolving cases

The following tables and figures highlight the time taken to resolve the occurrences in the current sample. The sample for this variable consisted of closed occurrences only and excluded some where record keeping errors precluded them from being used (i.e. the conclusion date recorded as being before the date last seen), resulting in 468,238 resolved occurrences. The time taken to resolve an occurrence was calculated as the difference in days between the Date Last Seen and the date the occurrence was resolved. The date of resolution used in this report is for the most part the date the occurrence was removed from CPIC. In some cases, this may occur days after a person has actually returned, depending on how quickly this is reported to police and the efficiency of the closing procedure. The Date Last Seen is used as the date the person went missing and is independent of the date that the person was reported missing to police, or the date the CPIC entry was created.

It must be noted that the caveats previously explained in Section 3.2 about under-reporting and occurrences that never get entered on CPIC have a greater influence on the number of resolved cases: the number of cases for runaways that are resolved within the first day or even hours is much higher than shown here.

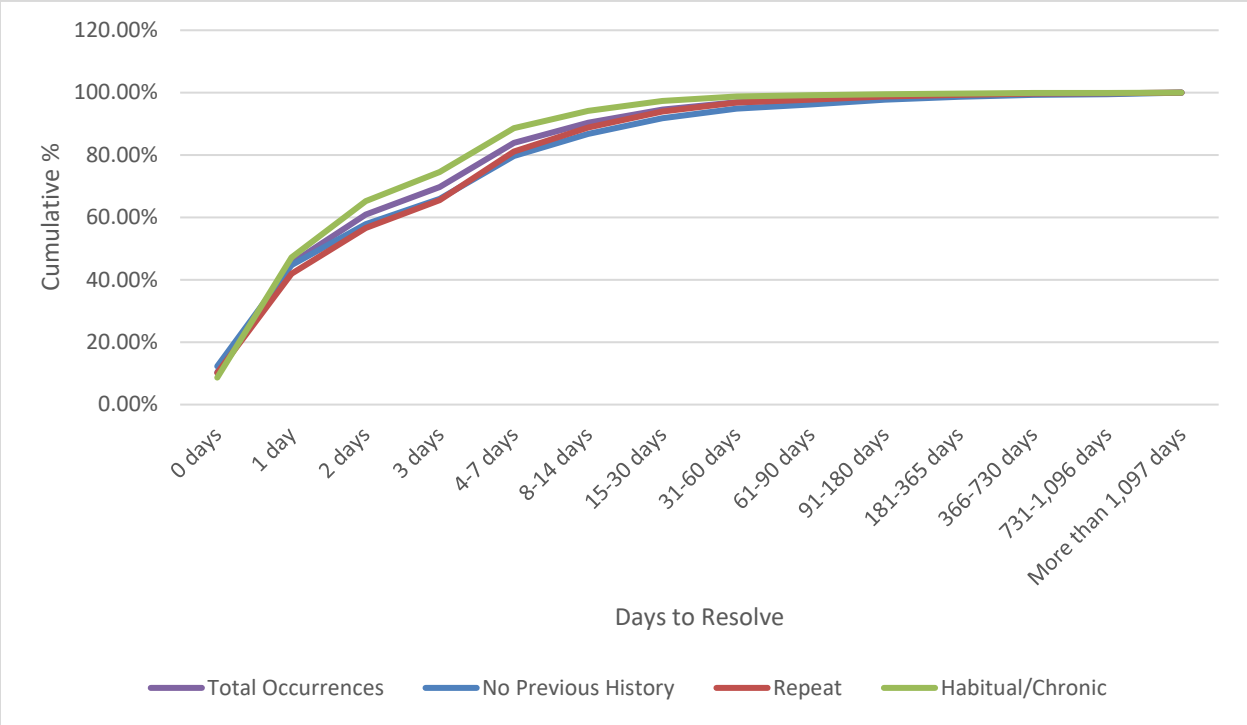
Table 14 and Figure 15 present the findings for the runaway occurrences by the Time to Resolve and Sample History. This shows that 70% of all resolved runaway cases were resolved within 3 days of the person reported missing. By 30 days, 95% of all runaway occurrences were resolved. When Time to Resolve is examined in relation to the Sample History it is seen that the

occurrences for individuals with *no previous history* and *repeat* runaways were resolved within 3 days in 66% of cases, as compared to 75% for *habitual*/*chronic* runaway individuals. This slightly higher resolve rate is maintained along the whole resolution rate curve. This table and figure show that the more habitual/chronic the runaway behaviour is for an individual, the quicker the case is likely to be resolved. A possible explanation for this is that those individuals who are likely to engage in running away as a frequent coping mechanism have less intent on staying away for a long time, or previous experience indicates where to look for them. The numbers are also affected by the large number of habitual/chronic missing persons cases that involve individuals who are late for curfew from group homes. Notably, Sowerby & Thomas's (2017) study suggests police acknowledge some degree of complacency in dealing with *repeat* missing cases, especially involving youths considering the sheer number of missing episodes reported to police services each day. This appears to be balanced by factors driving shorter episodes, with the result that these cases appear to be resolved faster than average.

Table 14: Runaway Occurrences by Time to Resolve in Days and Sample History, Frequency (%)

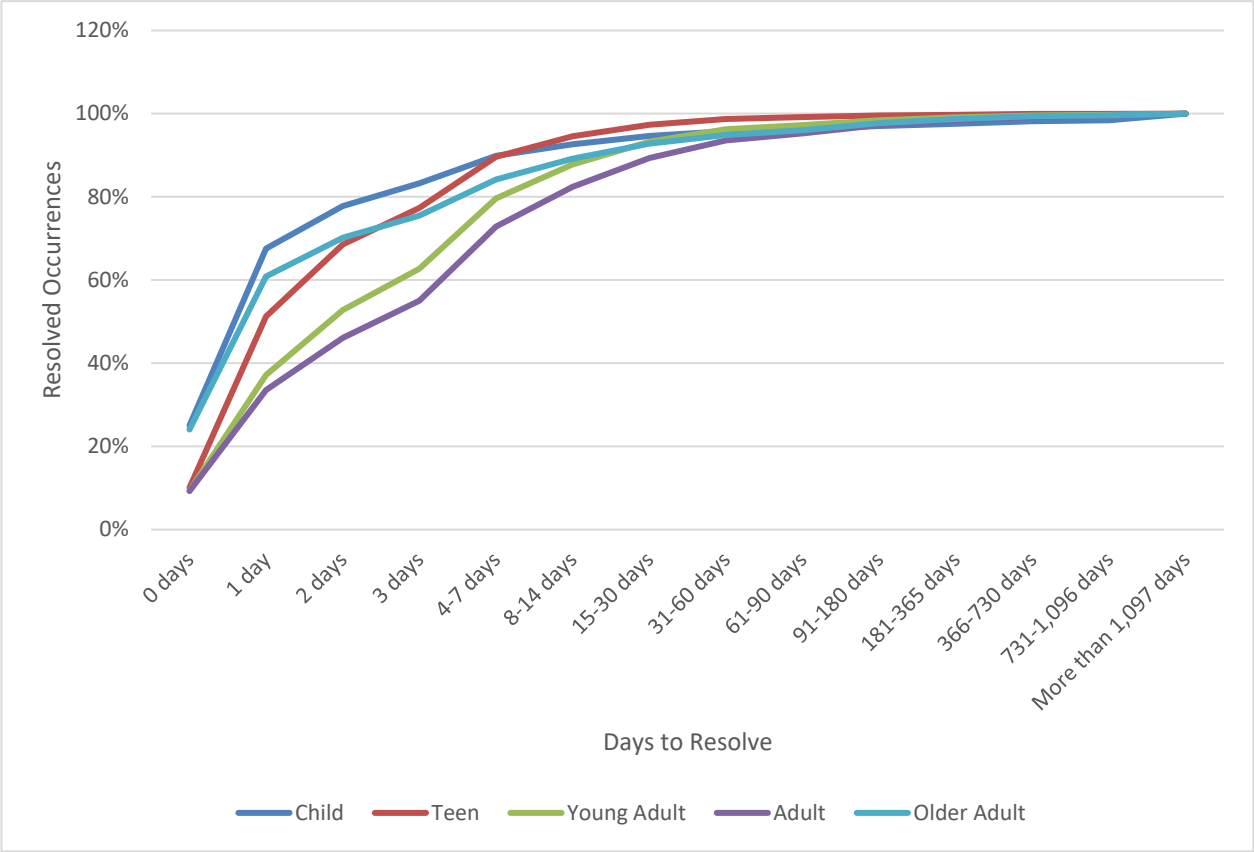
	No Previous History	Repeat	Habitual/Chronic	**Total**
0 days	22,680 (12%)	7,779 (10%)	17,898 (9%)	48,357 (10%)
1 day	59,845 (32%)	24,364 (32%)	79,728 (39%)	163,937 (35%)
2 days	24,341 (13%)	11,255 (15%)	37,261 (18%)	72,857 (16%)
3 days	15,037 (8%)	6,812 (9%)	19,379 (9%)	41,228 (9%)
4-7 days	25,279 (14%)	11,985 (16%)	29,011 (14%)	66,275 (14%)
8-14 days	13,060 (7%)	5,856 (8%)	11,571 (6%)	30,487 (7%)
15-30 days	9,355 (5%)	3,961 (5%)	6,461 (3%)	19,777 (4%)
31-60 days	5,769 (3%)	2,167 (3%)	2,990 (1%)	10,926 (2%)
61-90 days	2,368 (1%)	754 (1%)	874 (<1%)	3,996 (1%)
91-180 days	2,840 (2%)	805 (1%)	721 (<1%)	4,366 (1%)
181-365 days	1,660 (1%)	383 (<1%)	308 (<1%)	2,351 (1%)
366-730 days	1,240 (1%)	333 (<1%)	446 (<1%)	2,019 (<1%)
731-1,096 days	391 (<1%)	81 (<1%)	57 (<1%)	529 (<1%)
More than 1,097 days	876 (<1%)	118 (<1%)	140 (<1%)	1,134 (<1%)
Total	**184,741 (100%)**	**76,653 (100%)**	**206,845 (100%)**	**468,239 (100%)**

Figure 15: Runaway Occurrences by Time to Resolve in Days and Sample History (in cumulative percentage)



When examined by Age Group (Figure 16 below), occurrences involving children had the highest resolve rate, with 83% resolved within 3 days of the child reported missing. This is followed by occurrences involving *teenagers* (77%), *older adults* (70%), *young adults* (63%) and then *adults* (55%). This demonstrates that occurrences involving children are resolved faster than other age groups. Possible explanations include the priority placed on missing children cases, less mobility and less ability for the young to go far alone, and faster decisions to return. Additional research is required to explore these possible explanations.

Figure 16: Runaway Occurrences by Time to Resolve in Days and Age Group (in cumulative percentage)

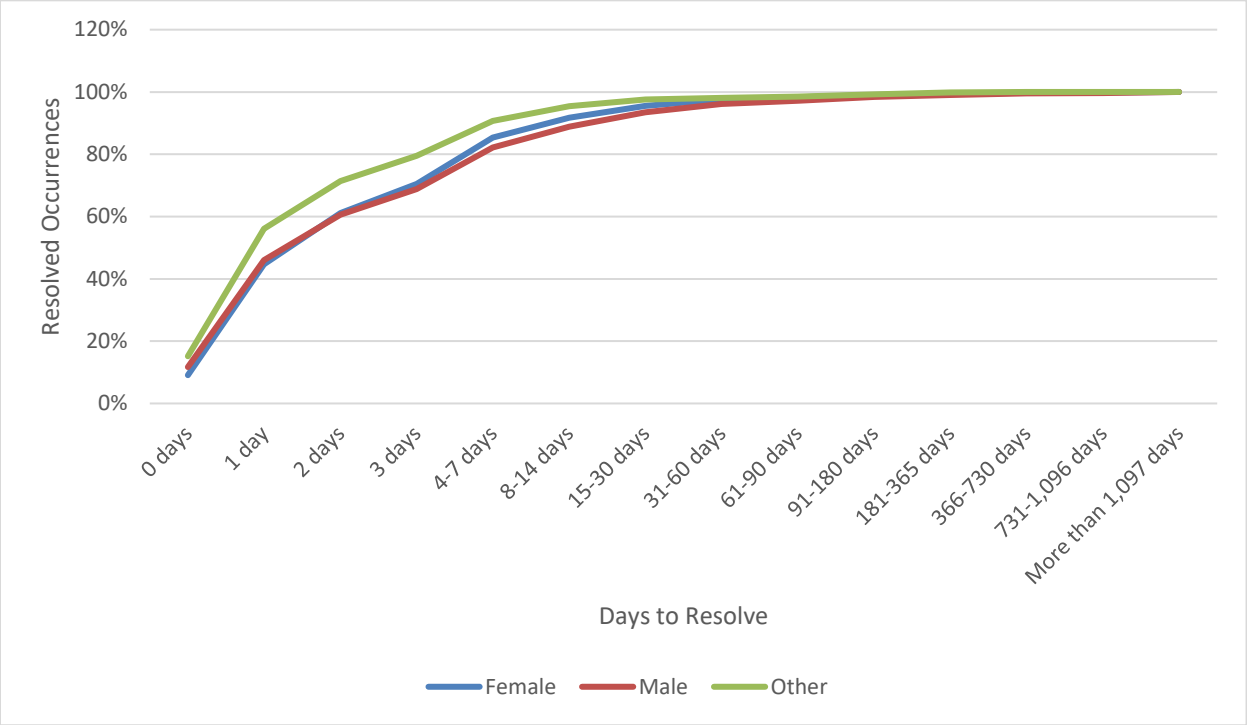


When resolve rates are examined against sex, it is seen in the Table 15 below that occurrences involving individuals with their sex listed as *Other* are resolved quicker than occurrences involving female or male individuals, as demonstrated by the findings in Figure 17, although the numbers are so few this may not be statistically notable. Further, fewer occurrences involving female individuals were resolved in the first day as compared to those involving male individuals. This switches after 2 days, where occurrences involving female individuals were resolved quicker than those with male individuals. It is unclear why there are these slight differences between occurrences involving female and male individuals or whether these are significant, since the curves are so close.

Table 15: Runaway Occurrences by Time to Resolve in Days and Sex

	Female	Male	Other	**Total**
0 days	22,244 (9%)	26,033 (12%)	80 (15%)	48,357 (10%)
1 day	87,120 (36%)	76,601 (34%)	216 (41%)	163,937 (35%)
2 days	40,288 (16%)	32,488 (15%)	81 (15%)	72,857 (16%)
3 days	22,933 (9%)	18,252 (8%)	43 (8%)	41,228 (9%)
4-7 days	36,347 (15%)	29,869 (13%)	59 (11%)	66,275 (14%)
8-14 days	15,610 (6%)	14,852 (7%)	25 (5%)	30,487 (7%)
15-30 days	9,438 (4%)	10,328 (5%)	11 (2%)	19,777 (4%)
31-60 days	4,964 (2%)	5,959 (3%)	3 (1%)	10,926 (2%)
61-90 days	1,754 (1%)	2,240 (1%)	2 (<1%)	3,996 (1%)
91-180 days	1,729 (1%)	2,633 (1%)	4 (1%)	4,366 (1%)
181-365 days	910 (<1%)	1,438 (1%)	3 (1%)	2,351 (1%)
366-730 days	871 (<1%)	1,147 (1%)	1 (<1%)	2,019 (<1%)
731-1,096 days	201 (<1%)	328 (<1%)	-	529 (<1%)
More than 1,097 days	440 (<1%)	694 (<1%)	-	1,134 (<1%)
Total	**244,849 (100%)**	**222,862 (100%)**	**528 (100%)**	**468,239 (100%)**

Figure 17: Runaway Occurrences by Time to Resolve in Days and Sex (in cumulative percentage)

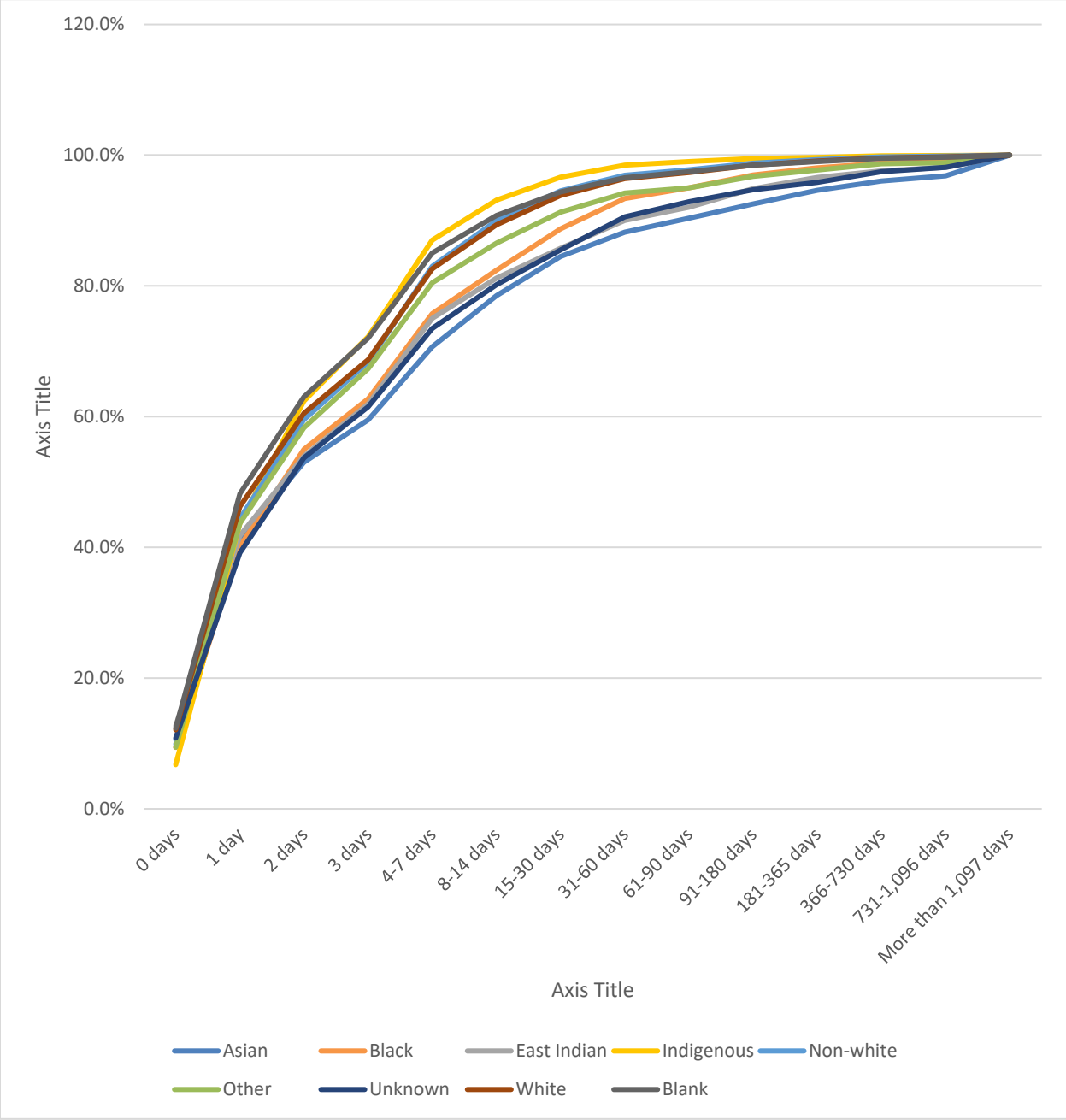


When time to resolve is examined by biological affinity, Table 16 and Figure 18 shows that occurrences involving individuals with their biological affinity listed as *Indigenous* are resolved the quickest as compared to occurrences involving individuals with their biological affinity listed as *Asian* which took the longest. The differences between the *Indigenous* and *Asian* occurrences are most notable between 3 and 365 days, where Indigenous occurrences appear to be resolved slightly quicker. After a year, the differences in resolve rates between the biological affinities continue to narrow.

Table 16: Runaway Occurrences by Time to Resolve in Days and Biological Affinity

		Asian	Black	East Indian	Indigenous	Non-white	Other	Unknown	White	Blank
0 days		150 (11%)	545 (9%)	89 (13%)	7,565 (7%)	9,650 (10%)	205 (9%)	47 (11%)	23,976 (12%)	6,130 (12%)
1 day		434 (31%)	1,786 (31%)	204 (29%)	41,414 (37%)	33,689 (35%)	746 (34%)	123 (28%)	67,743 (34%)	17,798 (36%)
2 days		168 (12%)	858 (15%)	85 (12%)	20,950 (19%)	14,780 (15%)	318 (15%)	63 (15%)	28,265 (14%)	7,370 (15%)
3 days		92 (6%)	451 (8%)	56 (8%)	11,023 (10%)	8,587 (9%)	197 (9%)	34 (8%)	16,327 (8%)	4,461 (9%)
4-7 days		158 (11%)	755 (13%)	92 (13%)	16,589 (15%)	14,317 (15%)	286 (13%)	52 (12%)	27,557 (14%)	6,469 (13%)
8-14 days		111 (8%)	384 (7%)	43 (6%)	6,837 (6%)	6,807 (7%)	132 (6%)	29 (7%)	13,299 (7%)	2,845 (6%)
15-30 days		85 (6%)	367 (6%)	32 (5%)	3,965 (4%)	4,467 (5%)	103 (5%)	23 (5%)	8,939 (5%)	1,796 (4%)
31-60 days		53 (4%)	269 (5%)	30 (4%)	2,018 (2%)	2,297 (2%)	64 (3%)	22 (5%)	5,090 (3%)	1,083 (2%)
61-90 days		30 (2%)	96 (2%)	14 (2%)	641 (1%)	841 (1%)	17 (1%)	10 (2%)	1,895 (1%)	452 (1%)
91-180 days		31 (2%)	113 (2%)	20 (3%)	504 (<1%)	973 (1%)	38 (2%)	8 (2%)	2,187 (1%)	492 (1%)
181-365 days		30 (2%)	65 (1%)	12 (2%)	202 (<1%)	513 (1%)	21 (1%)	5 (1%)	1,230 (1%)	273 (1%)
366-730 days		20 (1%)	41 (1%)	7 (1%)	266 (<1%)	430 (<1%)	21 (1%)	7 (2%)	970 (<1%)	257 (1%)
731-1,096 days		11 (1%)	12 (<1%)	4 (1%)	36 (<1%)	103 (<1%)	4 (<1%)	3 (1%)	279 (<1%)	77 (<1%)
More than 1,097 days		45 (3%)	59 (1%)	13 (2%)	88 (<1%)	162 (<1%)	25 (1%)	8 (2%)	577 (<1%)	157 (<1%)
Total		**1,418 (100%)**	**5,801 (100%)**	**701 (100%)**	**112,098 (100%)**	**97,616 (100%)**	**2,177 (100%)**	**434 (100%)**	**198,334 (100%)**	**49,660 (100%)**

Figure 18: Runaway Occurrences by Time to Resolve in Days and Biological Affinity (in cumulative percentage)



Minimal differences were observed between reporting agencies, and rural and urban occurrences in terms of time to resolve. As such, those tables and figures have not been included in this report.

14 Open versus closed occurrences

In this sample, 1,451 occurrences remained open as of the sampling date. Due to the date the data was extracted from the database, all of these open occurrences had been open for at least one month (Jan 1 – Jan 31st 2022). Since the sample does not contain any open cases that have been open less than 30 days, all insights about open cases pertain to *long term* open cases only[24]. When examining these against each of the variables covered in earlier sections, it is clear that cases which remain open for more than 30 days have different characteristics than the overwhelming majority that are resolved.

No tables or figures were included in this report that compare open and closed occurrences due to the large volume of tables and figures required to cover all the variables examined. The results are discussed in this section and the tables and figures can be obtained upon request. Beginning with findings related to Sample History, the majority of open occurrences (84%) had *no previous history*. This differs from the general sample, which found that the majority of cases (44%) were labelled as *habitual/chronic* whereas only 39% had *no previous history*. This demonstrates that the subjects prone to multiple incidents are much less likely to be involved in incidents that remain open than people who go missing once. It is important to note that while most individuals who run away several times do eventually return, some do not and the assumption they will is not valid for an individual case.

When occurrence status is examined by Age Group, it is found that the majority of open occurrences in this sample involve a*dults* (65%). In contrast, *teenagers* (58%) are involved in the majority of the closed occurrences. This suggests that adults (or adult runaways) are more likely to stay missing or to be missing for a longer period of time than teenagers. It is possible that adults have the means and influencing factors to stay away longer or permanently in contrast to teenagers who may run away temporarily or on a short-term basis.

When open and closed occurrences were examined by Sex, it was found that the majority of subjects in open occurrences are *male*, (70%) an overrepresentation and in contrast to concluded cases where male individuals represent only 48%. Since there is roughly a 50/50 split in the

[24] See caveats about the sample data not representing very short term cases accurately.

number of female individuals versus male individuals in the Canadian population overall, and in the general numbers within the sample (Section 7), the high percentage of open cases involving male individuals is notable. It suggests that female individuals are more likely to return or to return in a shorter time period than male individuals. It is possible that there are other factors involved, such as greater representation of male individuals in occupations such as hunting and fishing or in risk-taking adventures. In Section 7 it was seen that female individuals are more likely to be involved in *habitual/chronic* behaviour and this would correlate with the current finding since *habitual/chronic* behaviour includes returning. Additional research is necessary to understand the factors causing these differences between the sexes in terms of which cases get resolved.

Finally, when the province of the occurrence was examined, *Ontario* was found to have the largest portion of open occurrences (n=522)[25], representing 37%. In contrast, *British Columbia* had the most concluded occurrences representing 27% (n=125,335). When examined per capita, it was found that Yukon had the highest number of open occurrences per capita with 20.81 per 100,000 as compared to the total sample population with a rate of 4 per 100,000. It is important to note that Yukon had 9 open occurrences during this time, and has the second smallest population of all the provinces and territories, so this finding may not be statistically significant. When closed occurrences were examined, it was found that *Manitoba* had the most closed occurrences per 100,000 with 5,233. This is followed by *Saskatchewan* which had 3,406 missing person occurrences per 100,000. A possible explanation for this finding is that Manitoba, followed by Saskatchewan, has the highest portion of *habitual/chronic* runaway individuals in this sample, which were shown earlier as more likely to be resolved.

When examined by province, the majority of open occurrences took place in *urban* settings (75%), which is below the ratio of urban occurrences in the entire sample (87%). The percentage of closed occurrences (87%) that took place in an *urban* setting is perfectly aligned with the overall urban ratio. This suggests that occurrences in urban settings are more likely to be resolved than occurrences in rural settings. A possible explanation for this finding is that urban police services may have more resources or perhaps it has more to do with the types of occurrences (see section 8) most common in urban settings (i.e. *habitual/chronic* runaways).

[25] For the open occurrences, there were 1,427 that were assigned a province or territory in Canada, and 25 occurrences were excluded as they took place outside of Canada.

15 Trends by Year

Table 17 and Figure 19 outlines the runaway occurrences by year, which demonstrates that 2017 had the most runaway occurrences in the seven years of data studied (16%), particularly *habitual/chronic* runaways representing 48% of runaways that year. The years 2020 and 2021 saw a notable reduction in runaways, as noted in a previous NCMPUR report, which examined the impact of COVID-19 on missing person occurrences (NCMPUR, 2021).[26] In general, there has been a steady decrease in the number of runaways since 2017, and a steady decrease since 2015 in runaways involved in only one runaway incident (*no previous history*). It is unclear why there were the most reported cases in 2017 as compared to other years and so, additional research is necessary to understand policy and social changes that may have influenced this.

Table 17: Runaway Occurrences by Date Last Seen and Sample History[27]

	No Previous History	Repeat	Habitual/ Chronic	**Total**
2015	23,621	32,418	12,623	68,662
2016	31,994	27,460	11,305	70,759
2017	35,557	27,569	11,662	74,788
2018	32,739	26,602	10,939	70,280
2019	31,382	26,479	11,470	69,331
2020	27,481	21,704	9,280	58,465
2021	24,011	22,032	9,383	55,426
Total	**206,785**	**184,264**	**76,662**	**467,711**

[26] Report can be retrieved here
[27] 1,990 occurrences were excluded as they occurred outside of the sample period of 2015 to 2021.

Figure 19: Runaway Occurrences by Occurence Year and Sample History[28]

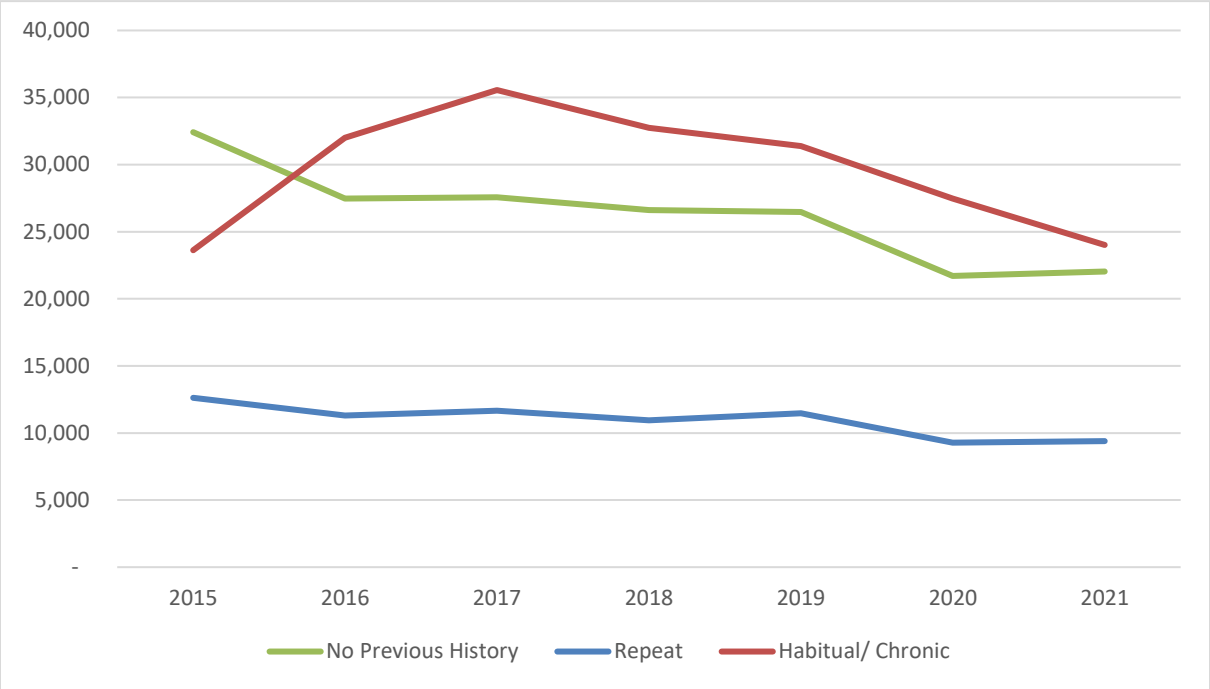


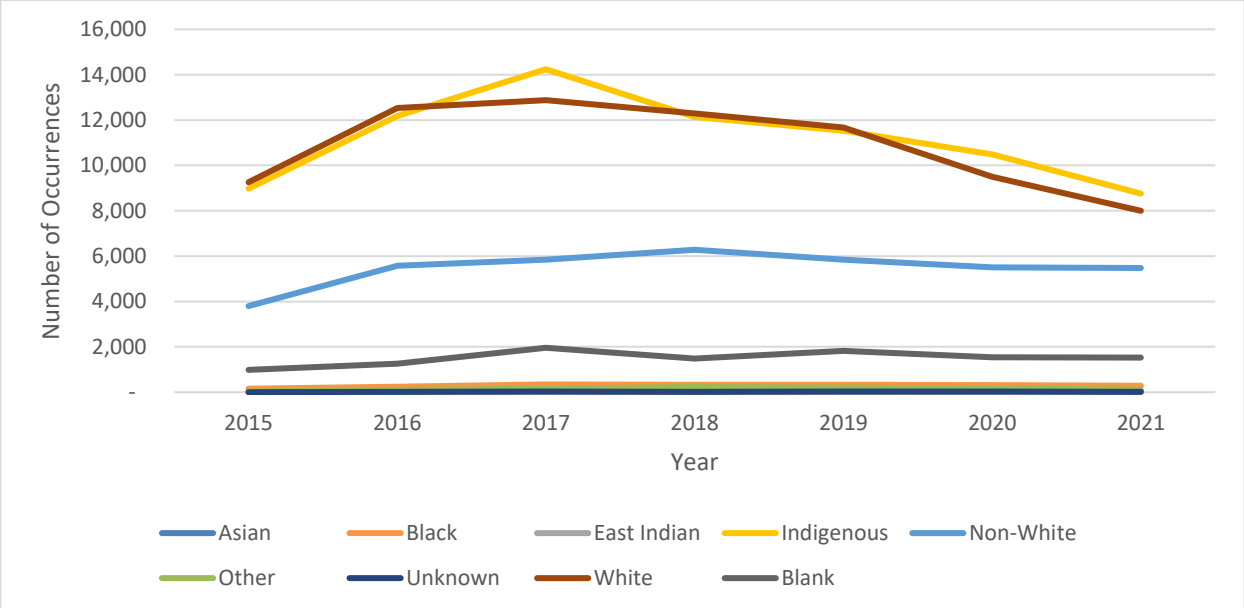
Table 18 and Figure 20 (below) outline *habitual/chronic* runaway occurrences when broken down by biological affinity and year. It demonstrates that after 2017, the number of occurrences decreased for all biological affinities, with the exception of those identified as *East Indian*. Occurrences involving individuals identified as Asian had the largest decrease (62%) during this time period as compared to the other biological affinities. This was followed by Unknown (55% decrease) and then Indigenous (39% decrease).

[28] 1,990 occurrences were excluded as they occurred outside of the sample period of 2015 to 2021.

Table 18: Habitual/Chronic Runaway Occurrence by Year and Biological Affinity[29]

	Asian	Black	East Indian	Indigenous	Non-White	Other	Unknown	White	Blank
2015	6	162	1	9,101	3,906	27	2	9,405	1,011
2016	19	236	7	12,238	5,543	107	19	12,559	1,266
2017	47	350	11	14,192	5,881	163	29	12,921	1,963
2018	16	322	7	12,145	6,276	232	20	12,245	1,476
2019	35	320	22	11,496	5,849	191	31	11,614	1,824
2020	31	314	28	10,445	5,446	170	26	9,487	1,534
2021	18	291	26	8,713	5,442	108	13	7,886	1,514
Total	**172**	**1,995**	**102**	**78,330**	**38,343**	**998**	**140**	**76,117**	**10,588**

Figure 20: Habitual/Chronic Runaway Occurrences by Year and Biological Affinity[30]



[29] 154 occurrences were excluded as they occurred outside of the sample period of 2015 to 2021.
[30] 154 occurrences were excluded as they occurred outside of the sample period of 2015 to 2021.

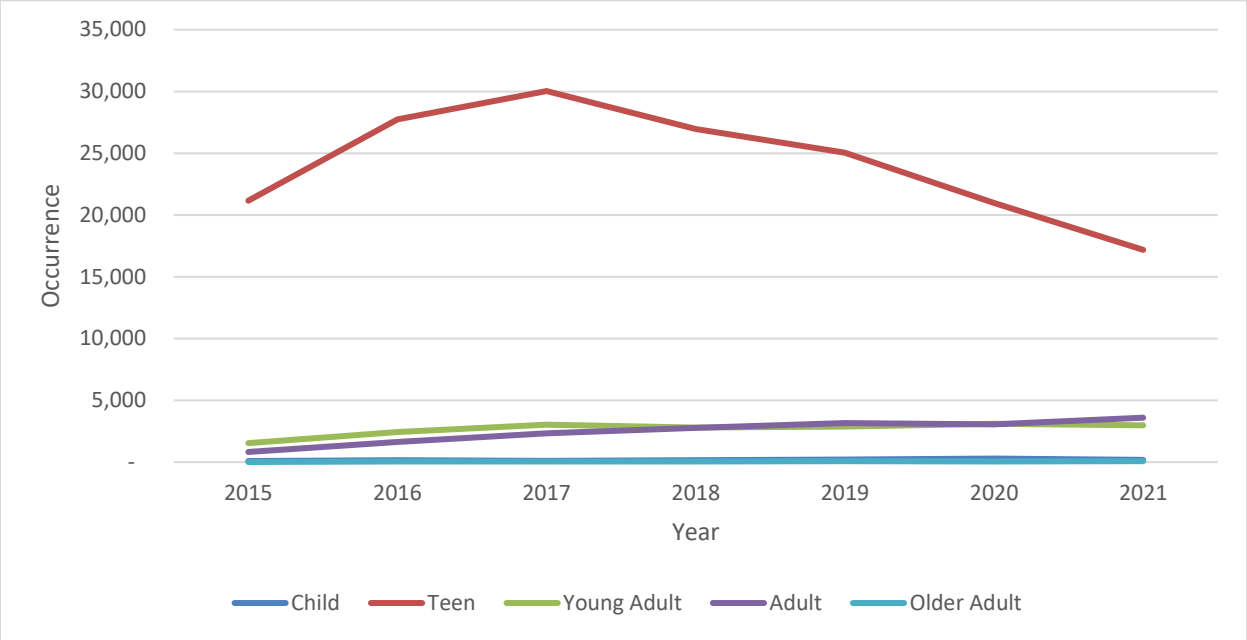
Additionally, when *habitual/chronic* runaway occurrences were examined by Age Group (see Table 19 and Figure 21) below), 2017 had the most occurrences involving *teenagers* as compared to the other years. When the changes to the number of occurrences between 2015 and 2021 were examined, all age groups increased in the number of occurrences, with the exception of *teenagers* (see figure below). The number of occurrences in the *teenager* age group decreased overall by 23% between 2015 and 2021, but increased between 2015 and 2017 by 30% and then decreased between 2017 and 2021 by 75%. The other age groups increased between 2015 and 2021, with minimal decreases during that time frame.

Table 19: Habitual/Chronic Runaway Occurrences by Year and Age Group[31]

	Child	Teen	Young Adult	Adult	Older Adult	Total
2015	88	21,164	1,537	823	9	23,621
2016	154	27,726	2,430	1,635	49	31,994
2017	112	30,031	3,018	2,336	60	35,557
2018	148	26,957	2,794	2,779	61	32,739
2019	210	25,047	2,887	3,163	75	31,382
2020	287	20,971	3,102	3,069	52	27,481
2021	175	17,179	2,990	3,595	72	24,011
Total	**1,174**	**169,075**	**18,758**	**17,400**	**378**	**206,785**

[31] 154 occurrences were excluded as they occurred outside of the sample period of 2015 to 2021.

Figure 21: Habitual/Chronic Runaway Occurrences by Year and Age Group[32]



For runaway occurrences with *no previous history* and *repeat* runaway occurrences, the year with the highest number of occurrences was 2015. A possible explanation for the *no previous history* numbers being higher for 2015 stems from the creation of MC/PUR, which occurred in 2014. It is possible that many individuals missing in 2015 have a previous history of being reported missing prior to the creation of the database, but that information is not available to the sample, since that data has not been historically added to MC/PUR.

16 Time of year

The table and figure below outline the findings for runaway occurrences by month during which the individual was last seen. Findings suggest that during the month of *June*, individuals ran away slightly more as compared to the other months. Specifically, there were 43,444 occurrences in June, representing 9% of all occurrences, as compared to February, the month with the lowest number of occurrences (33,048 occurrences [7%]). A possible explanation for this small difference is that the summer months in Canada are more amenable to running away in contrast to the winter, due to the warmer weather. During the warmer weather, individuals would require less means as compared to the winter (i.e. warm clothes, warm place to stay, etc.). Given the

[32] 154 occurrences were excluded as they occurred outside of the sample period of 2015 to 2021.

high number of runaways who are teens, the school cycle may also be a factor. Additional research should be undertaken to explore this further with the possible use of return interviews, to gain an understanding of where people run away to during the winter versus summer months.

Overall, the first four months of the year (Winter) account for 31% of the occurrences and the second four months (Spring/Summer) account for 36%, but it is not clear if this is statistically significant beyond the weather hypothesis. When examined in the figure below, it is clear that while there is a slight increase during the summer months, the number of occurrences remains relatively stable throughout the year.

Table 20: Runaway Occurrences by Month Last Seen and Sample History

	No Previous History	Repeat	Habitual/ Chronic	**Total**
January	14,778	5,846	15,045	35,669 (8%)
February	13,184	5,541	14,323	33,048 (7%)
March	14,691	6,199	16,451	37,341 (8%)
April	14,800	6,506	16,501	37,807 (8%)
May	16,794	7,162	18,739	42,695 (9%)
June	17,194	7,176	19,074	43,444 (9%)
July	16,929	6,754	19,021	42,704 (9%)
August	16,599	6,730	18,747	42,076 (9%)
September	16,123	6,530	17,956	40,609 (9%)
October	16,294	6,894	18,366	41,554 (9%)
November	14,626	6,076	16,935	37,637 (8%)
December	13,949	5,387	15,781	35,117 (7%)
Total	**185,961**	**76,801**	**206,939**	**469,701** (100%)

Figure 22: Runaway Occurrences by Month Last Seen and Sample History

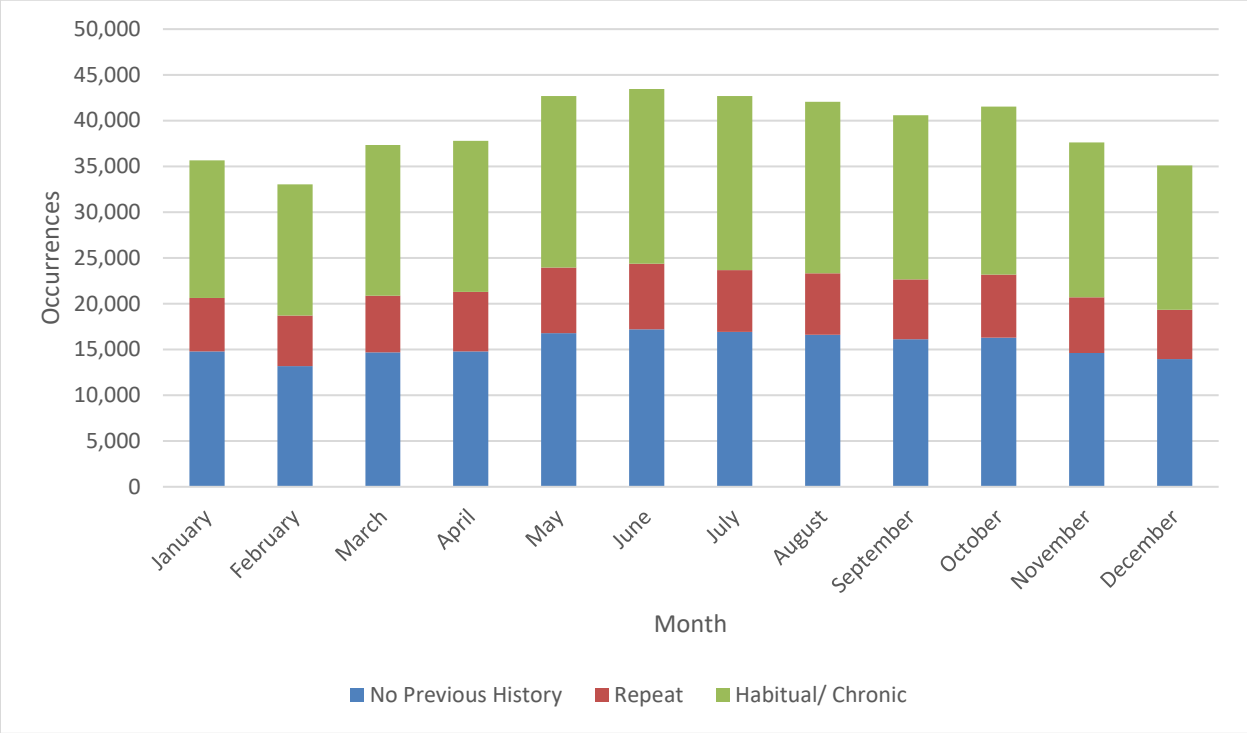
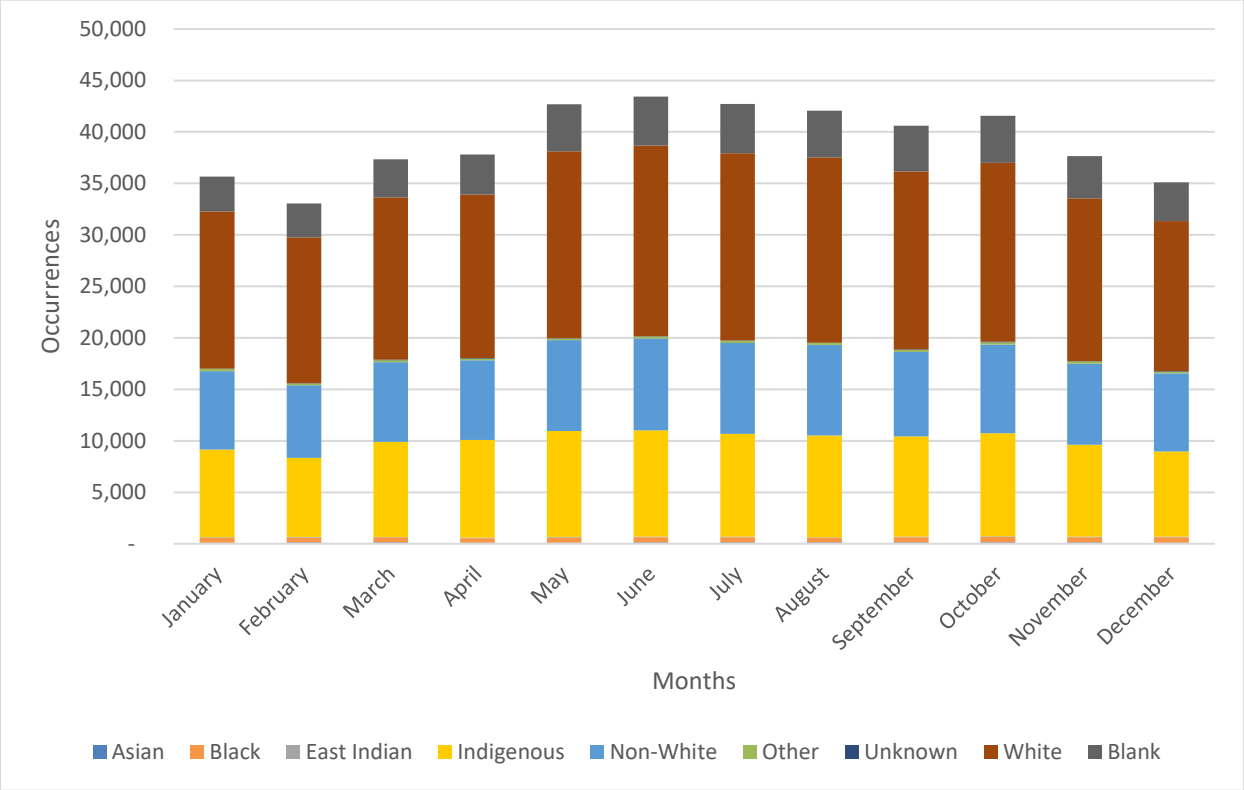


Table 21 presents the findings for runaway occurrences by Biological Affinity. This table outlines slight differences by Biological Affinity but in general supports the findings of Figure 23 that most occurrences took place in June. Similar to Sample History, the summer months are marked with a slight increase in occurrences, followed by a decrease in September, a slight increase in October, and an all time low in February. In general, there does not appear to be any difference for a particular Biological Affinity regarding what time of year they go missing.

Table 21: Runaway occurrences by Month Last Seen and Biological Affinity

	Asian	Black	East Indian	Indigenous	Non-White	Other	Unknown	White	Blank
January	107	474	56	8,505	7,636	209	29	15,248	3,405
February	122	494	51	7,660	7,055	162	38	14,177	3,289
March	124	496	52	9,213	7,763	186	47	15,770	3,690
April	105	434	66	9,478	7,737	164	45	15,881	3,897
May	115	473	72	10,283	8,849	155	28	18,128	4,592
June	122	504	58	10,317	8,937	174	30	18,548	4,754
July	121	524	64	9,956	8,847	202	32	18,185	4,773
August	123	466	52	9,889	8,797	167	36	17,991	4,555
September	137	484	69	9,744	8,196	201	60	17,276	4,442
October	132	528	63	9,999	8,634	221	38	17,376	4,563
November	129	501	60	8,927	7,850	217	29	15,839	4,085
December	119	509	65	8,278	7,588	158	34	14,604	3,762
Total	**1,456**	**5,887**	**728**	**112,249**	**97,889**	**2,216**	**446**	**199,023**	**49,807**

Figure 23: Runaway Occurrences by Month Last Seen and Biological Affinity



When examined by age group and urban versus rural settings, it was found that all age groups and both settings went missing more in June as compared to other months. This suggests that time-of-year is not uniquely influenced by the other variables, and that generally speaking, June is the most common month to go missing, regardless of other variables.

When examined by occurrence status, *December* had the most open occurrences (12% of them) which is skewed by the fact that the extract was made at the end of January. *June* had the most concluded occurrences (9%). An even distribution would be 8%. It was also found that 99.8% of the occurrences that took place in June had been concluded and 0.3% remained open, whereas for those starting in December, 99.5% were concluded and 0.4% remained open; again probably influenced by when the data extract was taken. While there is slight variability in open/concluded occurrence distribution between the months, it can be seen that it is fairly even.

17 Locations People Run From

Reliable and up-to-date numbers on where *repeat* and/or *habitual/chronic* runaways run away from are currently lacking in Canada. However, it has been suggested that juveniles who run away from residential or foster care are more likely to run away repeatedly than juveniles who run away from home (Babuta & Sidebottom, 2018; Benoit-Bryan, 2013 as cited in Gambon & Gewirtz O'Brien, 2020; Sidebottom, Boulton, Cockbain, Halford & Phoenix, 2020; Hutchings et al., 2019). In fact, it is reported that nearly half of the children and youth in care have gone missing at some point in their lives, in contrast to 10% of young people living with their family (Babuta & Sidebottom, 2018). For adults, the locations frequently reported include hospital settings (Bonny, Almond & Woolnough, 2016) and mental health facilities (Hayden & Shalev Greene, 2018 as cited in Huey et al., 2020), due to a vast array of interrelated social and/or health problems. Similarly, in a study that analyzed five years of Canadian municipal police records of closed *repeat* missing persons files, it was found that the most common location types for adults to go missing from are hospitals and shelters, and for youths, group homes (Huey et al., 2020). These locations accounted for 71% of all reports for adults and 69% for youth in that study. One explanation provided: these locations either (1) provide the impetus for them to leave or (2) have surveillance procedures in place to notify the police when an individual has gone missing (p.371). As noted by those authors, positive results could be achieved by completing such research and targeting these locations for prevention efforts, as well as those most at risk within these spaces.

As extant literature has found, being placed under a foster care setting places a youth at a heightened risk of running away (Latzman, Gibbs, Feinburg, Kluckman, & Aboul-Hosn, 2019). While foster care homes are supposed to provide youth with a safe and stable setting, violations of standards of care, the inability to meet the youth's needs, caretaker intolerance, and the youth's refusal to stay in a foster setting often hinder this from happening (Latzman et al., 2019). Distrust among youth runaways and the foster care system is a prevalent issue, especially in light of "draconian"[33] policies that exacerbate this distrust (Watkins, 2018).

Further research has established a significant link between foster care runaway episodes and trafficking victimization, with 7% of youth who have at least one runaway episode alleging a

[33] Draconian refers to severe (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). In this context, the author is describing that distrust towards the foster care system stems from its severe policies.

human trafficking victimization while on the run (Latzman et al., 2019). Young runaways placed in family-foster care settings were 1.48 times more likely to experience human trafficking than runaway youth from congregate care.[34] This is consistent with broader literature on human trafficking, where youth runaways who experienced human trafficking victimization were more likely to be female and younger than youth who reported no human trafficking allegations over the duration of their runaway status (Latzman et al., 2019).

Although this study did not have a rich enough data set to examine the situations people run from with the same thoroughness of the research cited above, this study did consider the data captured in CPIC for where the missing person was missing from. The tables and figures below show the various locations from where runaway individuals run away, as captured in CPIC. It is important to note that the *Missing From* field is not mandatory in CPIC, and observation indicates it is not consistently completed even when present.

This study groups the *Missing From* choices in CPIC into the following Location Groups:

- Institutions, which includes CPIC values for child care service, detention centre, elder care, other institutions[35] and youth centre
- School/work, which includes school, work or work-related
- Recreational, which includes a vacation and shopping plaza/mall
- Home, which includes family residence and foster home
- Other[36], which includes other, disaster and those left blank

Table 22 and Figure 24 below outline the occurrences for children (those under 18 years of age) by location the individual went missing from and sample history. For children with *no previous history*, this research found that the most common *missing from* location was *home* (64%). For children who ran away repeatedly the most common *missing from* location was *home* (48%), followed by *institutions* (40%). For children who ran away *habitually/chronically* 61% went *missing from institutions*.

[34] A care setting in which residents are placed under 24 hour supervision (Latzman et al., 2019).
[35] *Other institutions* is defined to include "an institution for the mentally ill, mentally or physically disabled; hospital, sanatorium, or chronic care (geriatric) facility; home for unwed mothers, Children's Aid Society home/shelter or youth group home" (CPIC Manual, 2018, p. 520)
[36] *Other* is defined to include "youths who have not returned to a detention home or other institution housing young offenders" (CPIC manual, 2018, p.519).

Table 22: Runaway Occurrences by *Missing From* Location Groups and Sample History for Children (Ages 0-17) [37]

	No Previous History	Repeat	Habitual/Chronic	**Total**
Institutions	13,499 (10%)	17,293 (13%)	103,254 (77%)	134,046 (100%)
School/ Work	4,500 (45%)	2,135 (21%)	3,414 (34%)	10,049 (100%)
Recreational	623 (36%)	313 (18%)	772 (45%)	1,708 (100%)
Home	40,507 (35%)	20,848 (18%)	52,753 (46%)	114,108 (100%)
Other	4,643 (26%)	2,891 (16%)	10,192 (57%)	17,726 (100%)
Total	**63,772 (23%)**	**43,480 (16%)**	**170,385 (61%)**	**277,637 (100%)**

[37] The numbers may vary depending on the quality and accuracy of the information entered on CPIC. 'Missing From' is not a mandatory field in CPIC.

Figure 24: Runaway Occurrences by *Missing From* Location Groups and Sample History for Children (0-17 years old)

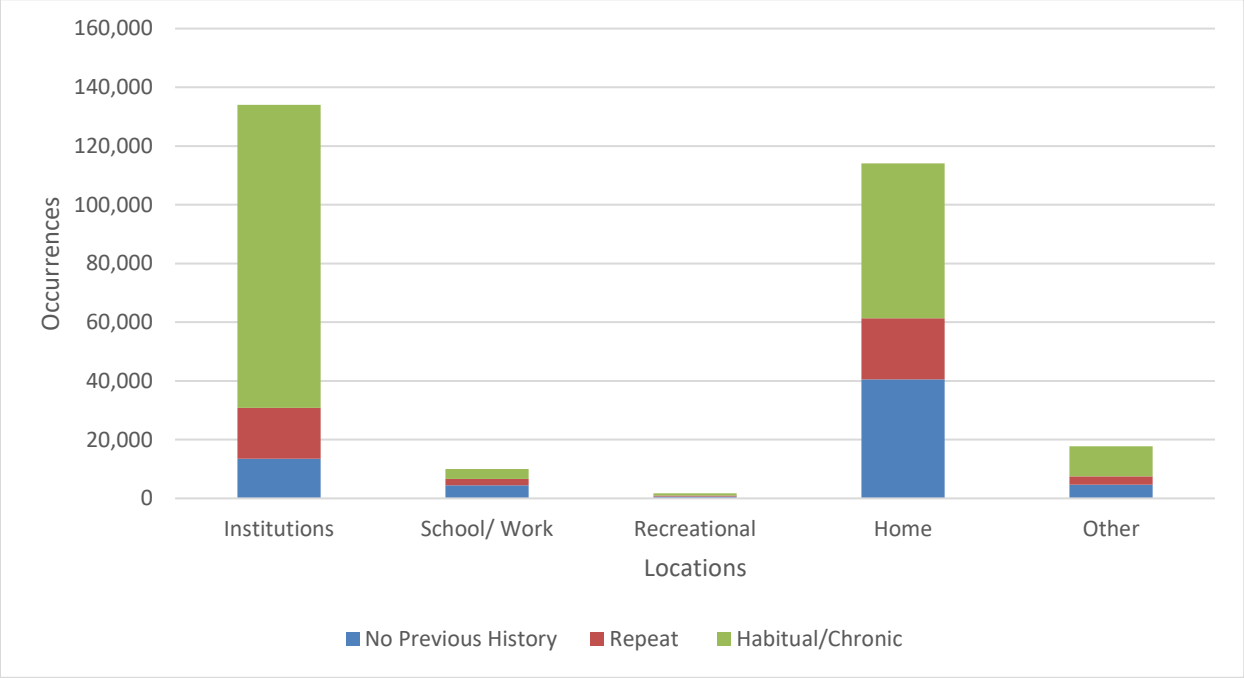


Table 23 and Figure 25 below outline the occurrences involving adults (age 18 and up) by location the individual went missing from and Sample History. For adults with *no previous history*, the most common *missing from* location was *home* (52%), followed by *other* (23%). For adults who ran away repeatedly, the most common *missing from* location was institutions (37%), followed by *home* (35%). For adults who ran away *habitually/chronically*, the most common *missing from* location was *institutions* (53%), followed by *home* (28%). Anecdotally, the top five reporting agencies indicate that institutional reporting policies and habitual/chronic runaways are a significant part of their case load.

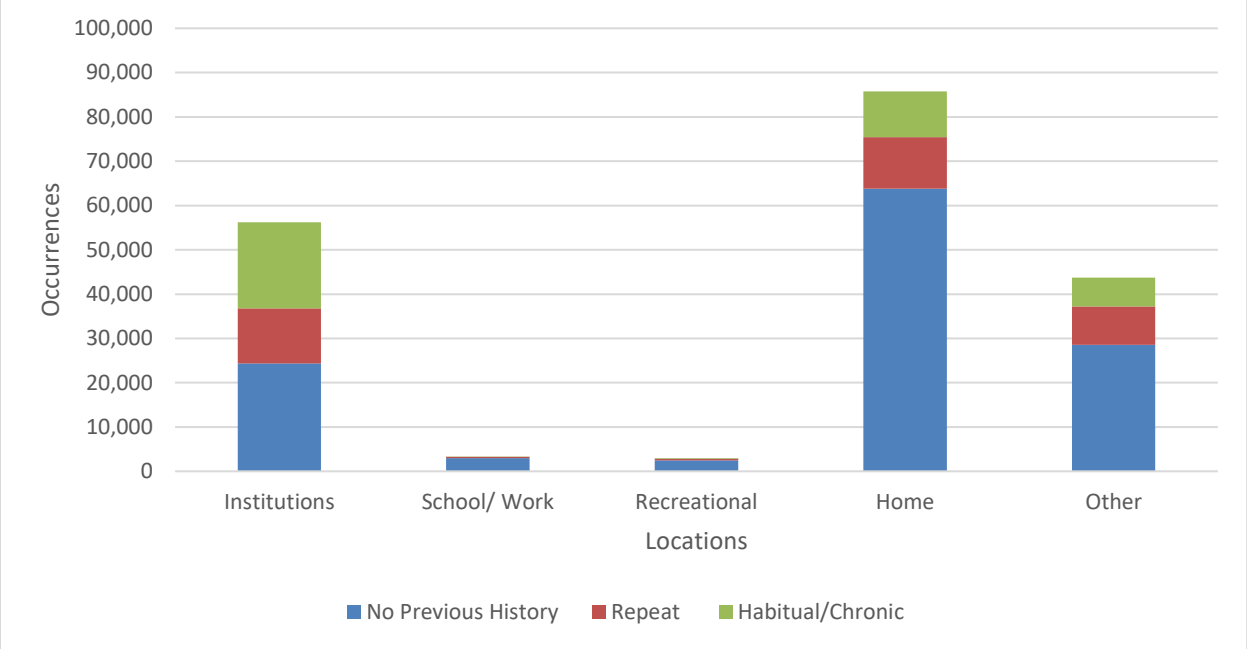
Thus, for the different Sample History groups, the numbers for adults demonstrate the same characteristics as statistics for children: the majority of *one-time* runaways tend to be leaving home, while *habitual/chronic* runaways are leaving institutions.

Table 23: Runaway Occurrences by *Missing From* Location Groups and Sample History for Adults (Ages 18 and older) [38]

	No Previous History	Repeat	Habitual/Chronic	**Total**
Institutions	24,330 (43%)	12,463 (22%)	19,426 (35%)	56,219 (100%)
School/ Work	2,971 (89%)	277 (8%)	93 (3%)	3,341 (100%)
Recreational	2,493 (83%)	347 (12%)	169 (6%)	3,009 (100%)
Home	63,831 (74%)	11,585 (14%)	10,343 (12%)	85,759 (100%)
Other	28,563 (65%)	8,649 (20%)	6,523 (15%)	43,735 (100%)
Total	**122,188 (64%)**	**33,321 (17%)**	**36,554 (19%)**	**192,063 (100%)**

[38] These numbers may vary depending on the quality and accuracy of the information entered on CPIC. 'Missing From' is not a mandatory field in CPIC.

Figure 25: Runaway Occurrences by *Missing From* Location Groups and Sample History for Adults (18 years and older)



17.1 Locations Persons Run To

Knowing where a young *repeat* and *habitual/chronic* runaway is running to could provide significant insight into the phenomenon of repeatedly running away. Young runaways tend to run away to avoid dealing with some issue and thus, they may run to a friend's or extended family member's house or to the streets (Babuta & Sidebottom, 2018; Crosland & Dunlap, 2015). Babuta & Sidebottom (2018) found that children who went missing repeatedly tend to travel shorter distances in comparison to those who go missing once. While this information provides insight into the distance travelled by runaway children, there is still a gap in terms of where young *repeat* and/or *habitual/chronic* runaways specifically run to. The CPIC-derived statistics available in this study do not contain any information about where a person ran to, even for concluded cases. It is hoped that in the future, Missing Person Return Support Discussions will be more uniformly implemented in Canada and information from such will be able to inform further research. The NCMPUR Best Practices recommend a return interview be conducted for every missing person located (NCMPUR, 2022).

18 Conclusions

Findings of this study include the following:

1. This study considers runaways as those who are classified with a probable cause of Runaway in police systems plus those who are classified with probable causes Other and Unknown who have had more than one incident. Under this definition, this study shows that runaways constitute at least 88% of all missing person occurrences in Canada from 2015-2021.
2. Although the majority of individual subjects in the study went missing only once in the sample time frame (73%), they accounted for 40% of all occurrences (*no previous history*), while the other 27% subjects accounted for 60% of the occurrences (*repeat* or *habitual/chronic*). There is no statistical evidence that there is a group of very habitual/chronic runaways who are causing a majority of occurrences.
3. Almost 90% of missing persons in this study had gone missing three times or fewer between 2015 and 2021. For those who ran away more than once (the 27% above), the average number of occurrences was seven (7).
4. Although the split in the number of runaway occurrences between male individuals and female individuals is reflective of the split in the general population, female individuals are the majority in occurrences for teen and young adults but male individuals are the majority for occurrences for adults and older adults. In rural settings, these majorities are even more noticeable.
5. Teens make up 69% of *habitual/chronic* missing individuals even though teens account for only 32% of the overall sample. Female individuals have an overall higher representation in the *habitual/chronic* category than male individuals.
6. Compared to their representation in the Canadian population, Black and Asian populations are significantly underrepresented in this runaway sample while Indigenous people are overrepresented.
7. Indigenous women and girls in Canada make up 4% of the total female population, but in this sample, they represent 30% of the runaway occurrences involving female individuals.

8. In provinces with large urban centres (British Columbia, Ontario, Québec), occurrences involving *repeat* and *habitual/chronic* runaways are more common than those involving individuals with *no previous history*. The *habitual/chronic* category provides more than half the runaway occurrences in Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia.
9. In Manitoba 71% of the occurrences involving *habitual/chronic* runaways involve female individuals, 87% of which are Indigenous, an overrepresentation as compared to the overall Canadian population. In British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Yukon the occurrences involving *habitual/chronic* runaways are also predominantly female individuals, but in Quebec and New Brunswick they are predominantly male.
10. On a per capita basis, Winnipeg Police Service had the most runaway occurrences, followed by Vancouver Police Department, Calgary Police Service, Surrey RCMP and Saskatoon Police Service. Winnipeg and Saskatoon in particular have significantly higher rates than other agencies for teen, female and Indigenous runaways.
11. At the top for specific age groups, Winnipeg Police Service accounted for 17% of all reported missing teen occurrences in Canada during the timeframe selected for this study, Saskatoon Police had 14% of all children occurrences, and Vancouver Police Department alone is responsible for 13% of all missing adult runaway occurrences in Canada.
12. 70% of all resolved runaway occurrences were resolved within 3 days of the person going missing and 95% of all resolved runaway occurrences were resolved within 30 days.
13. Occurrences involving children had the fastest resolve rate, with resolve rates dropping slightly the older the subject. Occurrences involving *habitual/chronic* runaways get resolved at a slightly faster rate than others, as do occurrences involving Indigenous persons.
14. Resolve rates are consistent between the sexes.
15. The overall number of runaways in Canada decreased slightly during the years of the study (2015-2021). COVID had a significant effect as noted in another NCMPUR report, but the downward trend was happening before COVID exaggerated it. In particular, occurrences involving persons with *no previous history* decreased the most, and there was a slight decrease in the number of occurrences involving *habitual/chronic* and *repeat* individuals.
16. Although slightly more runaway occurrences occurred over summer months, it is not clear that this is statistically significant.

17. Institutions give rise to more *habitual/chronic* runaway occurrences than other types of locations from which people go missing. The majority of one-time runaways are leaving home, while the majority of the *habitual/chronic* runaways are leaving institutions. Anecdotally, the top five reporting agencies indicate that institutional reporting policies and habitual/chronic runaways are a significant part of their case load.

Missing person investigations can be lengthy and require front-loading resources, as well as diligent oversight. Resource allocation is particularly important because police agencies are expected to perform several tasks within a limited time frame, and often without proper oversight, due to the vast amount of cases they are tasked with (Smith & Shalev Greene, 2015; as cited in Ferguson & Soave, 2021). Some solutions have been proposed. Ferguson & Soave (2021) claim that by "using social media to aid in missing person's investigations, police agencies could lessen the strains they produce, as the public can function to help resolve certain cases in a timely manner, saving resources and time, which can then be used more effectively for difficult to solve cases or other police matters" (p.872). The study by Huey et al., (2020) also offers preliminary support for the view that we need to consider the spatial dimensions of *repeat* missing incidents. Notably, this study "uncovers ten addresses in the City from which this data was derived that account for 45% of all adults and 52% of all youth missing person reports. Even more striking, our data suggest that targeting these top five locations for adults and youths could reduce the volume of *repeat* missing events by 71% for adults and 67% for youths" (p.369). This shows how missing persons generally "do not go missing at random or from arbitrary locations, but rather from select addresses that house certain types of spaces that vulnerable people are most likely to inhabit" (p.370). "Just as crime concentrates in particular spaces and among specific offenders, missing incidents also concentrate in particular spaces and among particular people" (p.370). As such, this spatial analysis could be replicated in every major city in Canada which could significantly reduce the number of *repeat* runaways each year. Focusing prevention efforts on these high-risk places, and the individuals who go missing from them could have a deterrent effect.

Despite the limitations mentioned in this report, the current study and analysis advance the literature and knowledge in this area in various meaningful ways:

1) It describes the demographic characteristics of *repeat* and *habitual/chronic* missing adults and youths in Canada between 2015 and 2021;
2) It details the vulnerability factors of Canadian missing persons, including the physical areas most commonly involved in these occurrences;
3) It recognizes issues with current missing persons data in Canada and ways to mitigate them; and,

4) It provides an overview of available data related to missing persons in Canada to the academic community, law enforcement and the public.

The RCMP's National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains is staying up to date on new literature on this topic and committed to identifying data-driven mitigation strategies to inform prevention and investigative efforts as well as evidence-informed police practices and policies.

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