2017 District of Columbia Crime Statistics: Analysis and Recommendations

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MMC 6936- Professor Skelton

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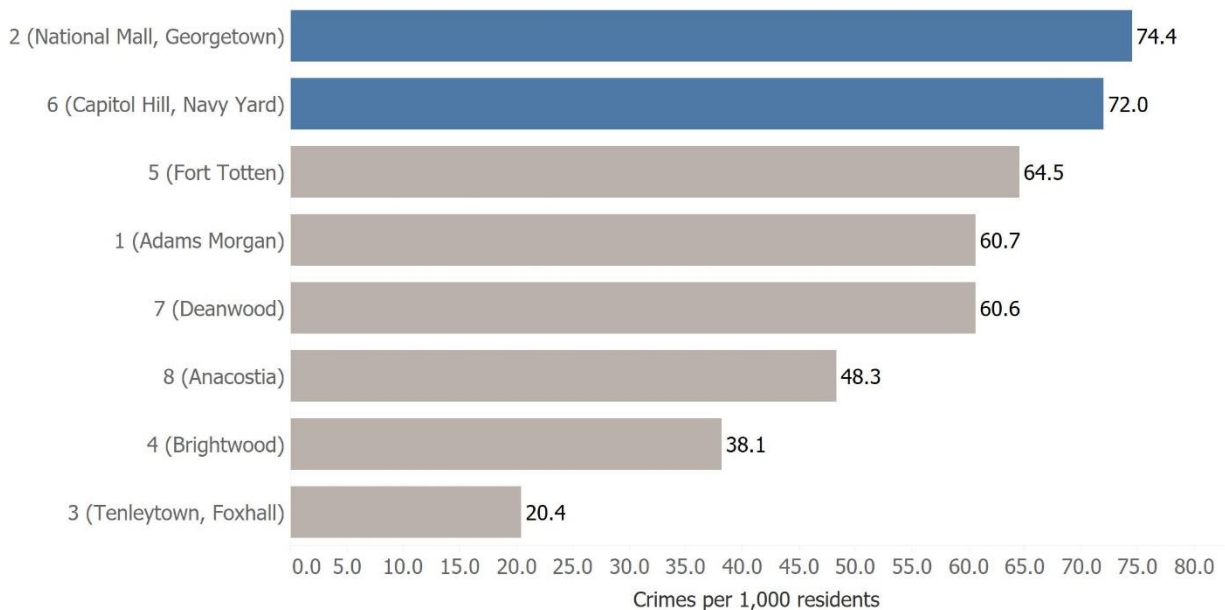
Intended Audience: This data memo is directed to the Washington, DC Mayor's Office for Mayor Muriel Bowser to review. The mayor has asked the DC Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) to conduct research into crime in the District in 2017 and provide recommendations to improve safety and decrease crime across DC. Additionally, in an effort to increase tourism, some attention will be focused on areas of higher tourism. This report will also be distributed to high ranking officials in the police department including the Chief of Police Peter Newsham and to the eight council members who each represent a ward.

Data Limitations and Methodology: This report includes a broad analysis of crime in Washington, DC for the year of 2017, and recommendations to improve safety and police presence across the District. The recommendations are based on data analysis from reported crime provided by the MPD, and supplemental data including ward boundaries and population data by the DC Government. It is important to note that the crime data is limited to crime incidents that were reported and recorded in the Analytical Services Application database. Not all instances of crime are reported to the MPD, but the data presented in this data memo is accurate and consistent with data from prior years.

Key Findings

Wards with greater tourism have higher per capita crime rates:

Areas of Washington, D.C. where tourists frequent have the highest per capita crime rates in 2017

Ward	Crimes per 1,000 residents
2 (National Mall, Georgetown)	74.4
6 (Capitol Hill, Navy Yard)	72.0
5 (Fort Totten)	64.5
1 (Adams Morgan)	60.7
7 (Deanwood)	60.6
8 (Anacostia)	48.3
4 (Brightwood)	38.1
3 (Tenleytown, Foxhall)	20.4

Crimes per 1,000 residents

Note: Population numbers are taken from 2010 Census data and are compared with 2017 crime data from the DC Metropolitian Police Department.
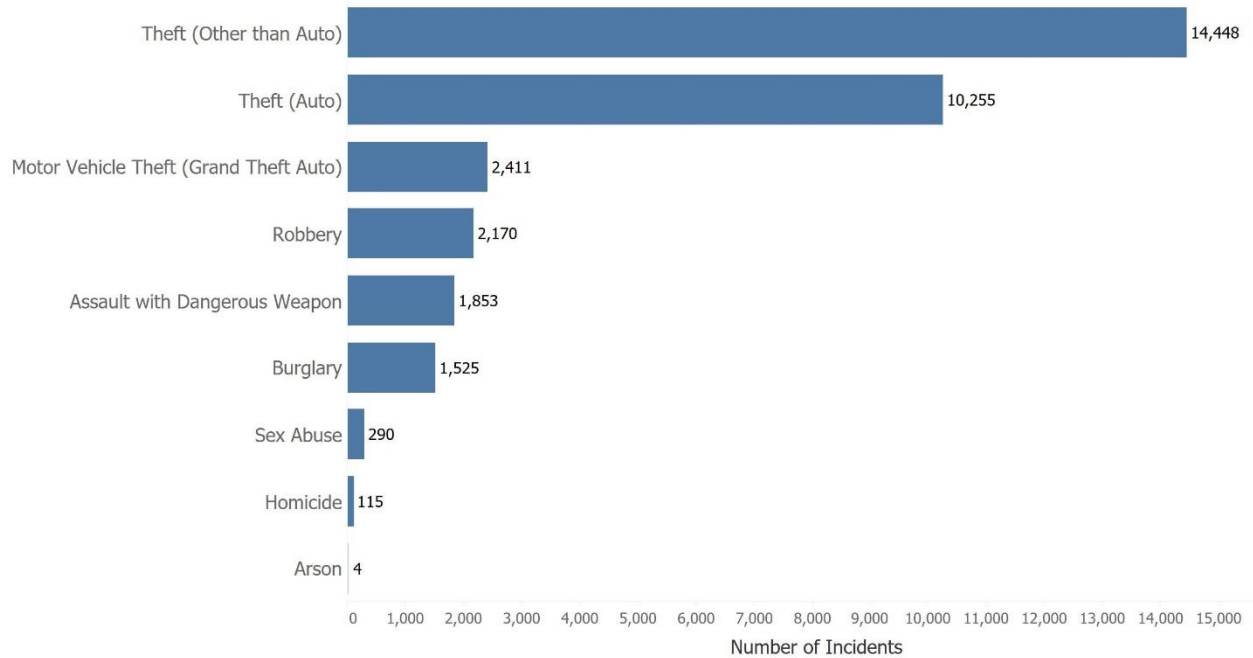.

Washington, DC is divided into eight different wards and the boundaries for each ward are redrawn every ten years from population data provided by the U.S. Census. Each of the wards has between 70,000 and 80,000 residents. In looking at reported crime rates across the eight wards in 2017, wards that typically see greater rates of tourism have the highest per capita crime rates. These areas, Wards 2 and 6, came out at top with 74.4 and 72 crimes per 1,000 residents respectively. Within these areas are popular attractions such as the National Mall, Georgetown and Capitol Hill neighborhoods, and the Navy Yard district. The numbers decrease steadily with Ward 3 coming in at only 20.4 crimes per 1,000 residents. Across all eight wards, the mean is 55 crimes per 1,000 residents leaving only three wards which fall below this number. It is important to note that the per capita crime rates in these wards may be slightly skewed due

to crimes happening to visitors versus residents and the per capita rate is calculated against population numbers for residents.

Annually, Destination DC releases their Visitor Statistics report for Washington, DC which includes visitor numbers, hotel demand, visitor spending, and tax revenue. The report for 2017 will not be available until fall 2018, but in the report from 2016, DC saw a record setting 22 million visitors. This number has been steadily increasing every year since 2009 and is predicted to continue to increase by 2 to 3% each year through 2020. The National Park Service, which oversees the monuments on the National Mall, saw an estimated 33.8 million visitors, up 1% from 2015 and the Smithsonian saw a 3.9% increase in visitors in their museums on the National Mall. The information from this report confirms that tourism numbers are on the rise and is primarily focused in Wards 2 and 6.

Theft is the highest reported crime in Washington, DC:

Theft is the highest reported crime across Washington, D.C. in 2017

Category	Number of Incidents
Theft (Other than Auto)	14,448
Theft (Auto)	10,255
Motor Vehicle Theft (Grand Theft Auto)	2,411
Robbery	2,170
Assault with Dangerous Weapon	1,853
Burglary	1,525
Sex Abuse	290
Homicide	115
Arson	4

Note: Theft (Other) is defined as all theft excluding auto theft items, which is its own category. Motor Vehicle Theft is theft of any self-propelled, motor driven vehicle.
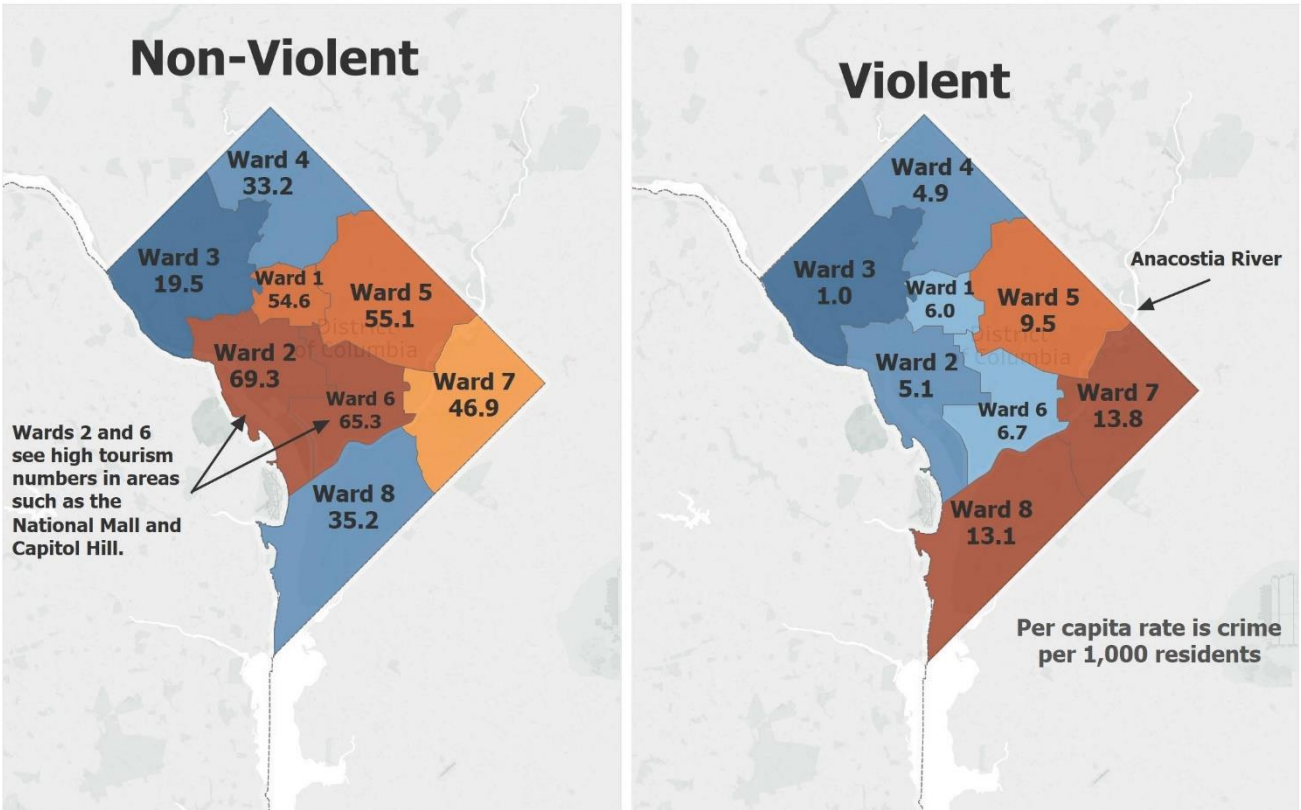
In 2017, there were 33,071 reported crimes logged into the MPD Analytical Services Application database. Crimes are categorized into one of nine different categories. Over three-quarters of all crime reported in 2017 involved theft in some form. These crimes include, but are not limited to, stealing items out of a car, grand theft auto, pick-pocketing, and embezzlement. This is a significant number and one to not be overlooked. Instances of property crime or petty theft are often crimes of opportunity (to be discussed further in a later section) and it is not surprising that these are the most reported crimes. More violent crimes such as sex abuse and homicide occur but not in as high numbers.

An important consideration to remember is that according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics in their 2016 Criminal Victimization report, which compiles survey results from individuals impacted by crime, it is estimated that only around 36% of non-violent property crime and 42% of violent crime is reported to police. The 2017 report will not be available until later this year but based on trends from previous years and the information from the MPD reported crime data, theft is the highest reported crime in DC, but the numbers may be higher than what is reported.

<u>Non-violent crimes are higher per capita in tourism areas whereas violent crime rates are</u>

<u>higher in wards east of the Anacostia River:</u>

Areas with large tourism see higher rates of non-violent crimes.
Wards 2 and 6 have the highest rates of non-violent crime per capita.

Non-violent crime rates per capita contrast with violent crime rates per capita across the eight DC wards. As referenced earlier, wards with greater tourism have a higher per capita crime rate. When non-violent and violent crimes are filtered out from each other, interesting new findings appear. Non-violent crimes include theft, arson, burglary, and motor vehicle theft and violent crimes include homicide, sex abuse, assault with a dangerous weapon, and robbery. Wards 2 and 6 still have higher per capita crime rates with non-violent crimes but have low numbers when only violent crimes are filtered.

Wards 7 and 8, which are east of the Anacostia River, have starkly higher rates of violent crimes averaging at 13.8 and 13.1 crimes per 1,000 residents respectively. These wards are often
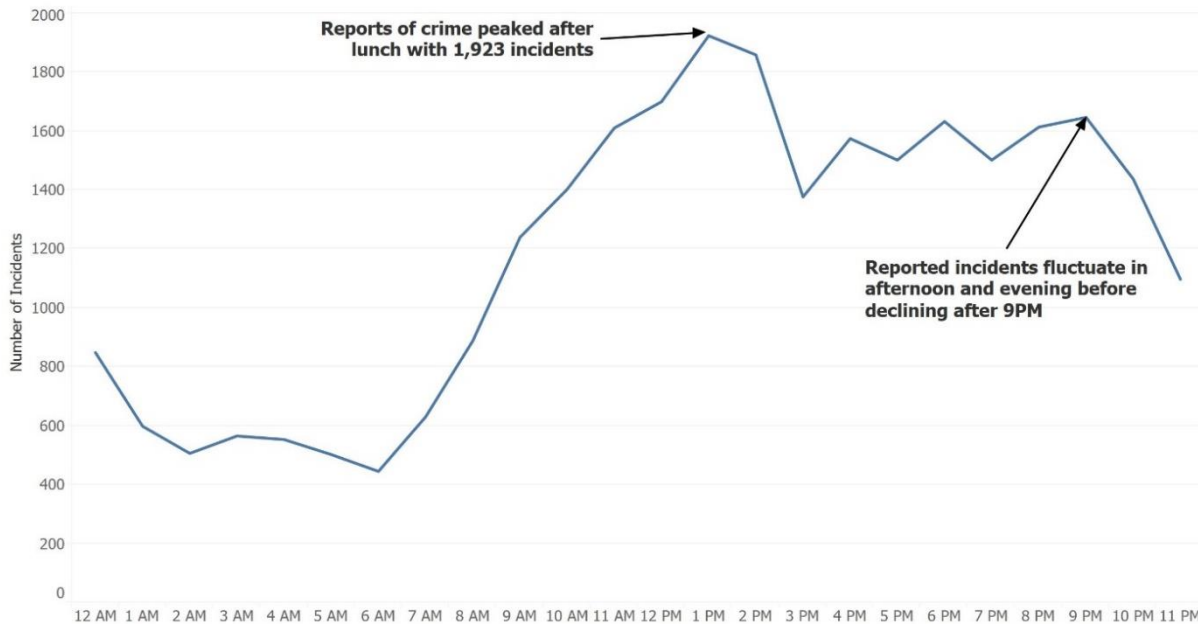
under-served and struggle with higher poverty and unemployment rates. In a 2015 study by the Urban Institute, which analyzed economic needs and challenges faced by residents, 75% of Washington, DC's most challenged neighborhoods fell east of the Anacostia River in Wards 7 and 8. Additionally, a 2017 ward snapshot released by DC Action for Children looked at the demographics, economic well-being, health, family and community, and education status across DC and in each ward and compared the data from previous years to measure change. While the median family income and child poverty rates are improving across Washington, DC, these rates are flat or declining in Wards 7 and 8. The information presented in these reports, in combination with the crime data, show a possible correlation between economic status and violent crimes.

Overall crime rates decreased in Washington, DC in 2017 from 2016. In a brief year end of the year snapshot, the MPD reported that all violent crime decreased by 22% and non-violent crime decreased 9% for a total of an 11% total decrease overall. This information is vital to illustrate that all crime is decreasing in DC and current and future efforts can continue to reduce crime.

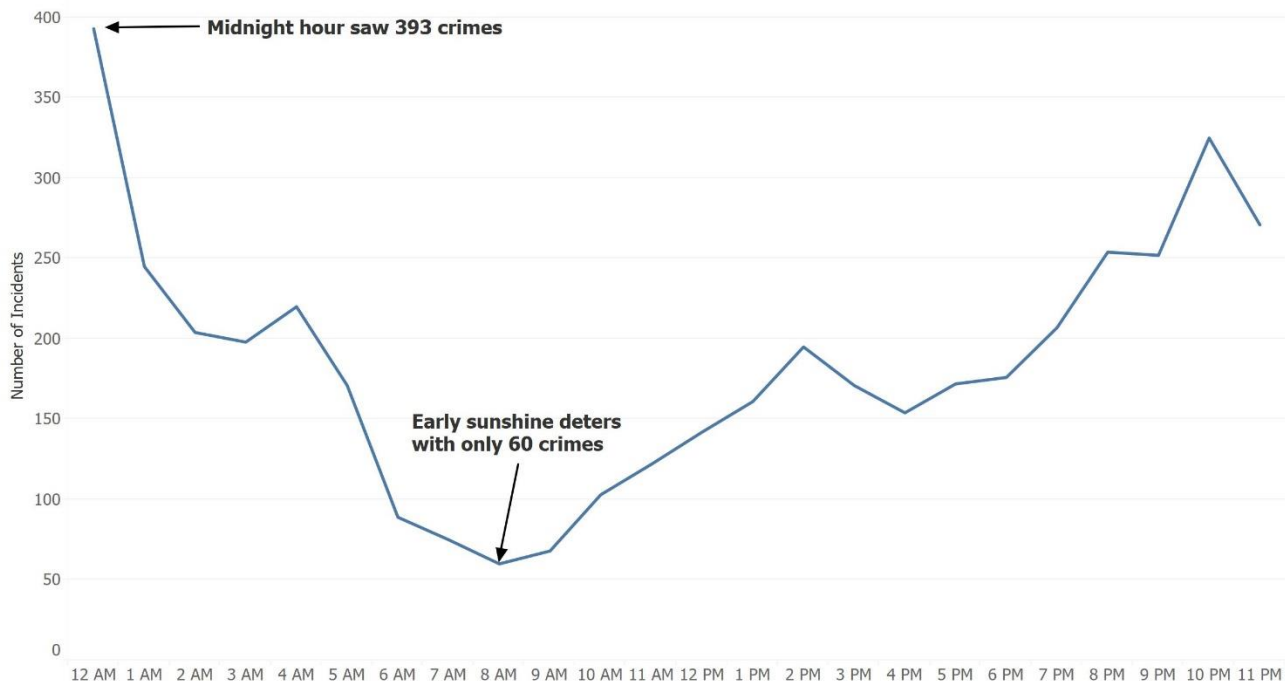**<u>Non-violent and violent crimes peak at opposite times during the day</u>**

Reports of non-violent and violent crimes show inversely opposite trends.

Non-Violent crimes steadly increase throughout morning

In 2017, non-violent crimes in DC steadily increased from around 6:00AM and peaked at 1:00PM with 1,923 incidents reported at this time. In the afternoon through early evening, reports fluctuated, rising and falling before declining after 9:00PM. Reported incidents remained low in the late evening to early morning hours. As individuals wake-up and start their day, more tourists and residents are walking and exploring the District which allows more crimes of opportunity to occur (i.e. - pick-pocketing, property crimes when the homeowner is away for work, etc.). In the late evening and early morning, there are less people outside and fewer are awake to report crime.
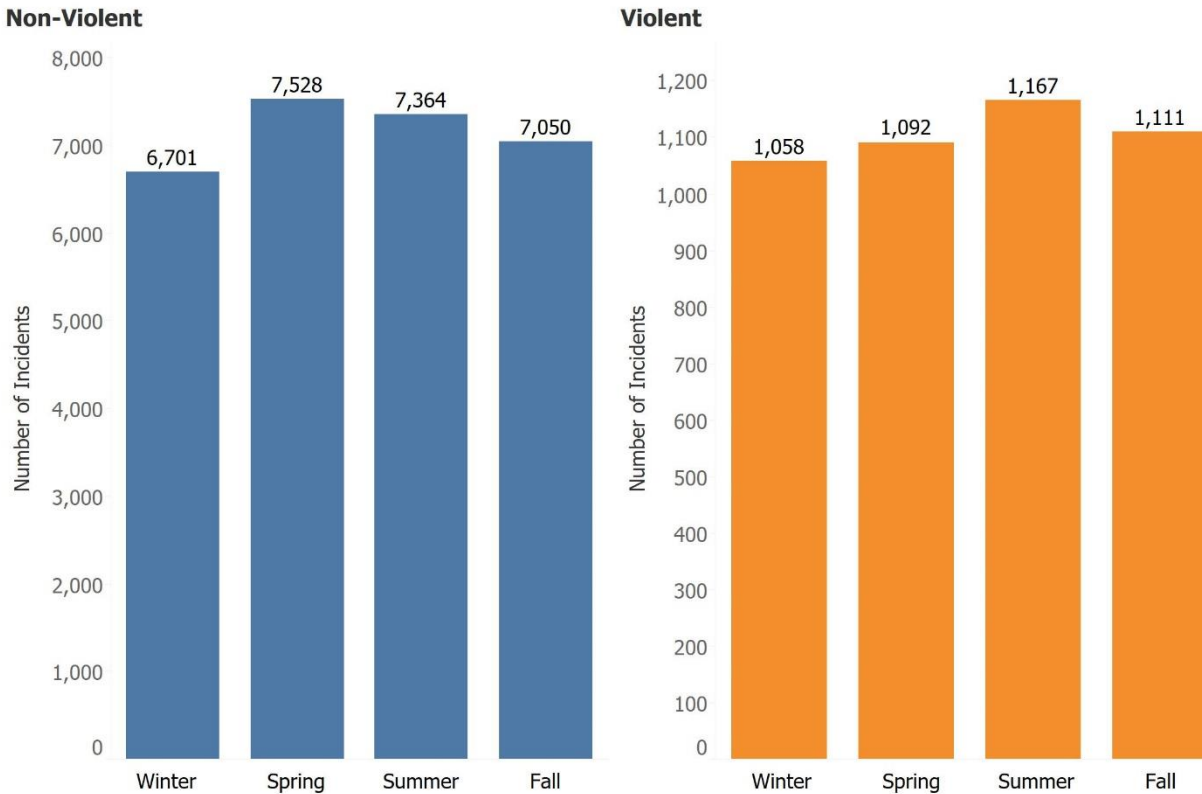
Violent crimes peak during overnight hours

The trend of reported violent crime offenses is opposite with reports of violent crime peaking in the midnight hour before declining (with a slight uptick at 4:00AM) until 8:00AM. From this point, violent offenses slowly rise, with occasional falls, throughout the day.

<u>Reports of non-violent and violent crimes follow national seasonal trends:</u>

Reported crime incidents in 2017 were found to be higher in the spring and summer months compared to the fall and winter. Due to higher tourism numbers in the warmer months, this data is not surprising.

Incidents of non-violent and violent crimes follow national seasonal trends

| Non-Violent | | | | Violent | | | |

Seasonal trends among non-violent and violent crimes follow national trends. The U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics published a special report in June 2014 which highlights seasonal patterns in criminal victimization trends. The report tracks seasonal variations in non-violent and violent crimes from 1993-2010 in the United States. In 2017 Washington, DC saw a higher rate of non-violent property crimes in the spring and summer which is consistent with national seasonal patterns. Violent crimes have more variation in national seasonal trends, depending on the offense. Simple assault typically peaks in the fall

while most crimes such as sexual assault, domestic abuse, and crimes involving a dangerous weapon peak in the summer. Washington, DC had a higher rate of violent crimes in the summer and fall seasons, following the trends outlined in the special report.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the data, the following recommendations are suggested.

1) **Increase police presence in Wards 2 and 6 during spring and summer seasons.**

Wards 2 and 6 had the highest overall crime rate per capita in 2017 and the highest per capita rate for non-violent crimes. Non-violent crime in Washington, DC increased during the spring and summer seasons which is the busiest time of year for tourism in the area. With popular tourist attractions such as the National Mall, Navy Yard and Capitol Hill neighborhoods, uniformed police presence should be increased to act as a deterrent for crimes of opportunity. Additionally, an increase in patrol units from 6:00AM to 2:00PM is recommended due to non-violent crime being reported in higher numbers during this time frame. If a crime is reported, having more police units nearby will allow a quicker response time.

2) **Install more CCTV cameras in Wards 2 and 6 to deter crimes of opportunity.**

In addition to more uniformed police presence, more closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras should be installed in Wards 2 and 6 to better monitor high traffic tourist areas and to help deter crimes of opportunity such as pick-pocketing. Washington, DC has over 150 permanent and neighborhood CCTV cameras across all eight wards. The DC Council and Mayor's Office should work in combination with the MPD Command Information Center and DC Office of Planning to look at where current cameras are located, ensure they are functioning correctly, and identify areas where a new camera should be installed.

3) **Increase patrol units in Wards 7 and 8 to help monitor areas with higher violent crime rates.**

Current patrol routes should be reevaluated and modified to allow greater patrolling and more units to be deployed in Wards 7 and 8 which have higher violent crime rates per capita.

4) **Develop a community engagement program to better serve Wards 7 and 8 to reduce the violent crime rate over time.**

Wards 7 and 8 suffer from higher than average unemployment rates, lower annual household income, and higher poverty rates compared to other wards in DC, as outlined by the 2015 Urban Institute study. The DC Mayor's Office should work with other agencies to develop community engagement programs to offer literacy classes, job skills training, and opportunities to help those with prior criminal records transition into the workforce. Additionally, programs should be developed that target youth and keep them engaged in school and in the community. The eventual outcome of this program is to see a decrease in violent crime rates in Wards 7 and 8 and to also decrease poverty and unemployment rates and raise annual household income.