

Subject: Crimes Against Person Assaults Analysis

**FY 2023 Proposed Budget
Budget Work Session Follow-up**

4/4/2022

The following information is provided in response to a request made by Mr. de Ferranti at the work session on 03/01/2022, regarding the following question:

Simple assaults have increased in Calendar Year 2021. What is the number of simple assaults last year and this year? What crimes are included in simple assaults? Please provide information on these increases so the Board can better understand the increases.

Definition of Simple Assault and the Types of Assaults

A simple assault is a class 1 Misdemeanor (the most basic assault charge in Virginia) which occurs when a person tries to commit a battery or attempts to place someone in fear of immediate injury by menacing them. Unlike a battery, an assault does not require any actual physical contact with another person whereas a battery, oftentimes also referred to as “assault and battery,” must always involve a physical act. An aggravated assault is much more severe and is defined as an unlawful attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. An aggravated assault is usually accompanied by the use of a weapon or by means likely to produce death or great bodily harm.

Simple Assault Increase during 2021: Analysis of where these are occurring, times of day, days of week, types of incidents, etc.

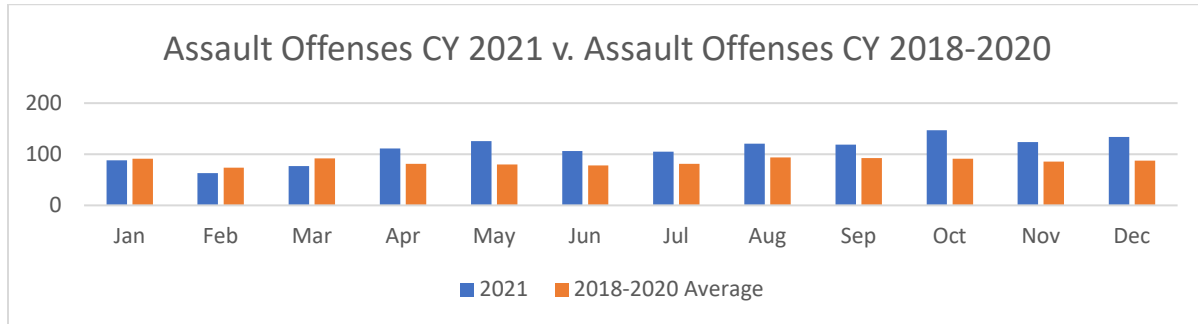
There was a significant increase in simple assaults, aggravated assaults, and intimidation offenses in Calendar Year (CY) 2021 (1,321) when compared to CY 2020 (1,099), and these numbers represented further increase from the prior CYs 2019 (1,073) and 2018 (913). The Police Department reviewed CY 2021 assaults against the average of the previous three calendar years to identify any patterns or divergences. Data shows that aggravated assaults increased 45% over the previous three-year-average and simple assaults increased 36.4%. This increase was particularly noticeable during the third (Q3) and fourth (Q4) quarters of 2021. Comparing the 2021 Q3 and Q4 to the trailing three-year-average Q3/Q4, aggravated assault increased by 73.6% in 2021, and simple assault increased by 47.7%.

Most assaults, both simple and aggravated, tend to be occur between Friday and Sunday. However, assaults are unlikely to occur between the hours of 0300 and 0900 throughout the week. The late night and early morning hours of Friday, Saturday, and Sunday saw increased assaults when compared to the other days of the week. Weekday assaults tend to stay at consistent volumes from the hours of 1000 to 2300, whereas weekend assaults saw an increase during the hours 1700 through 0300.

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In CY 2021, the big difference in assault behavior was that Friday through Sunday saw significant increases in activity. Specifically, Sundays in CY 2021 recorded 72 more assaults than the previous three-year average. Similarly, Saturdays in CY 2021 saw 70 more assaults than the previous three years, and Fridays saw 61.7 more assaults than average.

Seasonally, CY 2021 was unusual in that the first three months had below average assaults, but the next nine months all were above average as shown in the chart below.



The data by assault shows that not one specific charge is driving the increase in assault offenses. However, there are two offenses that comprised the bulk of these offenses. In CY 2021, 46.9% of assaults were simple assault and another 23.5% were assault and battery of a family member. These figures are similar to the previous three-year averages of 41.6% and 24.9%, respectively.

The five geographic locations, or Police beats, where most assaults occur are as follows: Rosslyn – Ballston Corridor (23 and 24), Columbia Pike and Green Valley (35 and 37) and Crystal City (49). The areas that had previously high concentrations of assault offenses within those beats continued to experience increased levels of assaults in CY 2021.