



City of Vancouver

Report on Sexual Assault Incidents

For periods covering
January – August
2008 – 2010

Submitted Date: September 14, 2010

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
A word about PRIME Browsing	5
Today’s Data, Unfounded Incidents, The Bottom Line	6
City of Vancouver Sexual Assaults	7
Breakdown by District.....	10
District 1: Central Business District, Entertainment District	11
District 1: West End, Davie Street Village	14
District 4: Kitsilano, West 4 th Ave	16
District 4: Fairview	19
Unknown Locations.....	22
District 2: Downtown Eastside	23
Report Summary	26



Executive Summary

Earlier in 2010, the VPD’s Planning Research and Audit Section released statistics that indicated Sexual Assaults (UCR Codes 1310, 1320 and 1330) had increased 18% from 2009 to 2010 for the months of January to June. While this statistic is correct, it is based on incidents that were *reported*, rather than incidents that *occurred* during the period in question. Statistics based on reported date tend to inflate the actual crime situation, as they include historical and other data that may not have occurred in the period of study.

This report regenerates the statistics over three years (2008 – 2010) for the months of January to August, using incident *occurred* date, to portray an accurate picture of what sex crimes recently took place on the street. After removing unfounded incidents (that is, the victim admits to being untruthful), the results were as follows.

	“Occurred” Founded Incidents (SCU records)	% change
2008	235	n/a
2009	249	Up 6%
2010	273	Up 9.6%

The Bottom Line: Founded sexual assault incidents in the City of Vancouver increased by 6% in 2009 and by 9.6% in 2010.

Non-penetration sexual assaults (i.e. a grope, grab or kiss) exceeded those of penetration sexual assaults, and increased 24% in 2010. The majority of sexual assaults in the city were committed by a stranger to the victim; stranger attacks rose by 16% in 2010. The most vulnerable age group in the city are those 25 years and older, while the 19 – 24 year age group is also at risk. Sexual assaults occurred mainly during the late evening and early morning hours, with a variation in days of the week. This can be said of all areas where an increase occurred.

Sexual assaults with no mention of alcohol involvement exceeded alcohol involved assaults for the past three years. Alcohol involved assaults increased by 25% in 2010. Where alcohol was involved, a related licensed premise was mentioned between 31 and 43% of the time over the last 3 years.



District 1 experienced an increase in sexual assaults in 2009 (21.6%) and in 2010 (up 29%). The Central Business District showed the largest increase in the City (24% in 2009, and 32% in 2010). The Entertainment District, accounted for about half of all D1 Central Business District sexual assaults in 2009 and 2010. Where alcohol was involved in Central Business District assaults, a licensed premise was mentioned between 59 to 100% of the time (100% in 2009).

In 2010, the West End neighbourhood of District 1 experienced an increase in sexual assaults (28%). The Davie Street Village area accounted for 56 – 72% of these incidents. Alcohol involvement increased 100% in 2010, although the numbers are relatively low. Where alcohol was involved, a licensed premise was mentioned 33 – 50% of the time.

The Kitsilano and Fairview neighbourhoods of District 4 showed increases in sexual assaults from 2009 to 2010 (40% and 50%, respectively). The West 4th area showed the highest concentration with several gropings by stranger suspects on the street. These incidents are under continued investigation by the Sex Crimes Unit. The remaining incidents in the West 4th area do not form part of a trend and are not a concern to public safety. While alcohol involved sexual assaults increased in Kitsilano and Fairview, they do not make up the majority of incidents. In general, licensed premises are mentioned 25 – 33 % of the time in these incidents.

Over the last three years, 24 sexual assaults occurred at “unknown locations”. Approximately 50% of these can be explained by intoxicated victims who fraternize with unknown male parties and are subsequently assaulted.

While District 2 did not experience an increase in 2010, there was a 43% increase in sexual assault incidents in 2009. In the Downtown Eastside, penetration-type assaults prevailed, along with stranger attacks. The most at risk age group in the DTES are over 25 year olds. Assaults occurred in the late evening, early morning hours. Incidents involving alcohol spiked, but remained less than non alcohol related incidents. Where alcohol was involved in the DTES, licensed premises were mentioned 29-38 % of the time.



A word about PRIME Browsing

Earlier in the year 2010, the Vancouver Police Department’s Planning, Research and Audit Section produced statistics regarding crime rates in Vancouver. It was revealed that sexual assaults (UCR codes 1310, 1320, and 1330) had increased from 2009 to 2010 by 18% (for the months of January to June).

The Planning, Research and Audit Section acquires such percentages by “browsing” in PRIME, using the Statistics Canada protocol, meaning that these queries are based on date *reported*, rather than date *occurred*. While there is nothing inherently incorrect with this method (it is effective at demonstrating police workload), it does not necessarily reflect an actual picture of recent crime taking place on the street – it is not a statistic that is accurate for *tactical* (the here and now) purposes.

A quick demonstration, browsing Sex Assault UCR Codes 1310, 1320, 1330:

	Browse using date incident Reported	% change	Browse using date incident Occurred	% change
2009	221	Up 17.2%	198	Up 7.1%
2010	259		212	

January to June

Note, statistics have changed slightly since the PR&A report

As we can see, a significant statistical difference can occur, depending on how the browses are carried out in PRIME. For the purpose of this report we will focus on incidents that *occurred*, not the incidents that were reported in the specified time frame. After all, an incident may be reported today, but may have occurred a few days, months, years, even decades ago. We are looking for a *tactical picture* of what has recently occurred with regard to sexual assaults in Vancouver. We want to answer the questions, “Is there an immediate threat to the public?” and “What tactical response can we employ to decrease the incidences of sexual assault in our City?”



Today's Data

It is now September 2010, so using our comparison of "Reported" versus "Occurred" browses, we will look at the sexual assault data again. To be consistent, we will compare the same months over three years, January to August of 2008, 2009 and 2010.

	Browse using date incident Reported	% change	Browse using date incident Occurred	% change
2008	300	n/a	272	n/a
2009	318	Up 6%	290	Up 6.6%
2010	360	Up 13%	302	Up 4.1%

January to August

Unfounded Incidents

In the last three years, approximately 10-15% of Sexual Assault incidents were discovered to be unfounded. Usually this is when the victim is found to be untruthful during the investigative process, and a sexual assault did not take place. For the purpose of this analysis, we have also removed the unfounded incidents. So now our statistics look like this:

	"Occurred" Founded Incidents (SCU records)	% change
2008	235	n/a
2009	249	Up 6%
2010	273	Up 9.6%

January to August

Note, as time passes, more incidents could be deemed unfounded through the investigative process

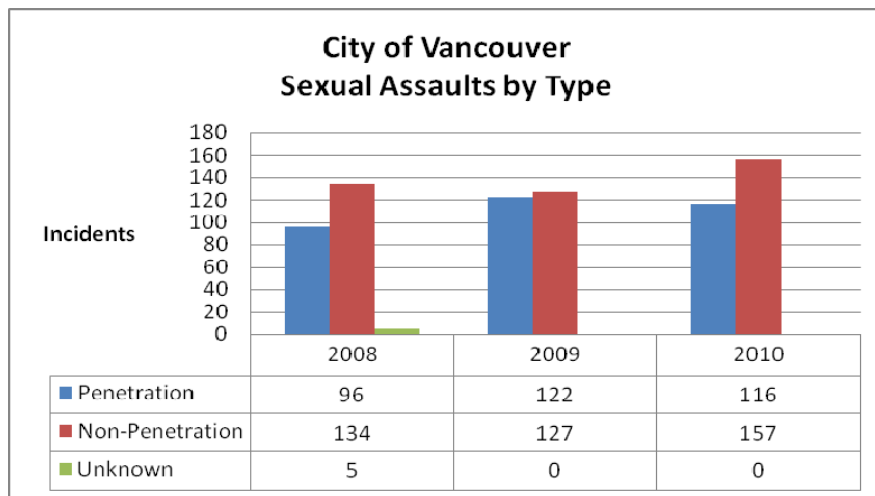
The Bottom Line

During the months of January to August, legitimate sexual assault incidents in Vancouver have increased 6% from 2008 to 2009, and 9.6% from 2009 to 2010.

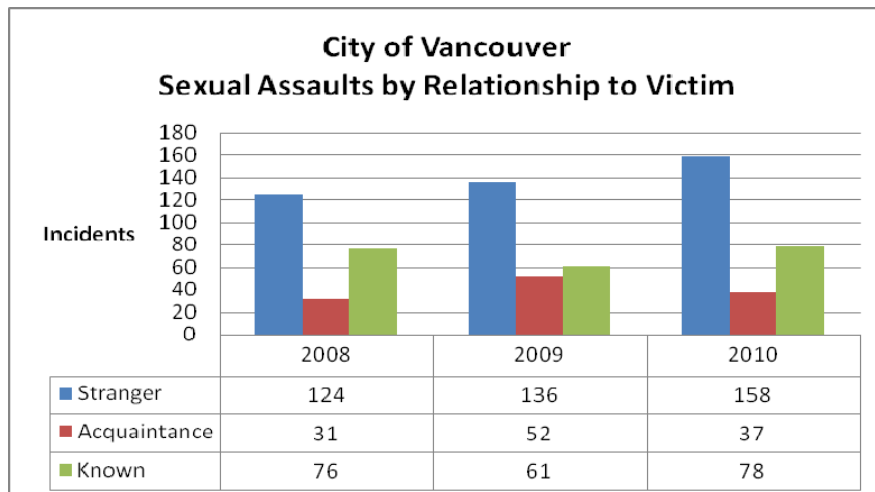


The remainder of this report will identify spatially and temporally the areas of increase, as well as suggest some of the possible drivers affecting the occurrence of sexual assaults in Vancouver. It is important to remember that this report examines three UCR Codes: 1310 (Aggravated Sexual Assault), 1320 (Sexual Assault with a Weapon or Causing Bodily Harm), and 1330 (Sexual Assault). Furthermore, throughout this report, the data presented contains statistics for the months of January to August, for the years 2008, 2009, and 2010.

City of Vancouver

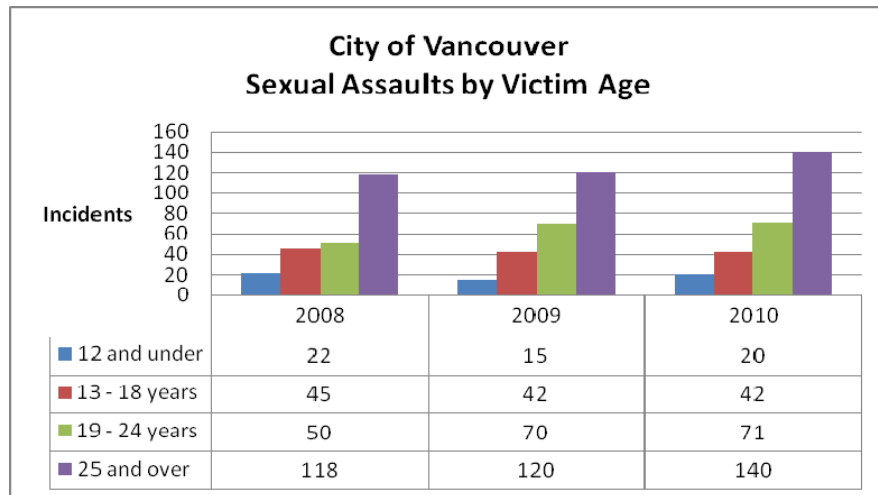


Non-penetration sexual assaults (i.e. a grope, grab or kiss) in the City of Vancouver increased 24% from 2009 to 2010, while penetration-type sexual assaults remained fairly constant. Conversely, gropings decreased from 2008 to 2009, while penetration-type assaults increased. Stranger attacks in the city climbed at a steady rate for the last three years.

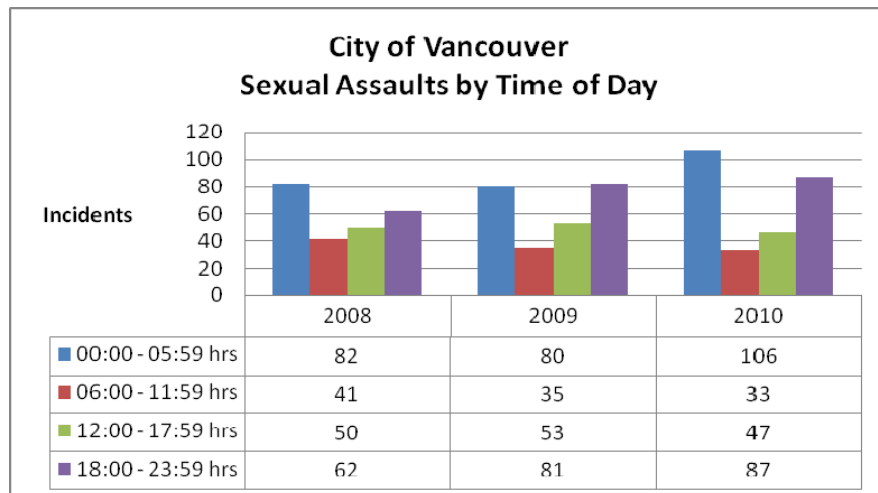




The most vulnerable victim age group in the City of Vancouver with regard to sexual assaults is over 25 years old. The second most vulnerable group is the 19 – 24 year category.

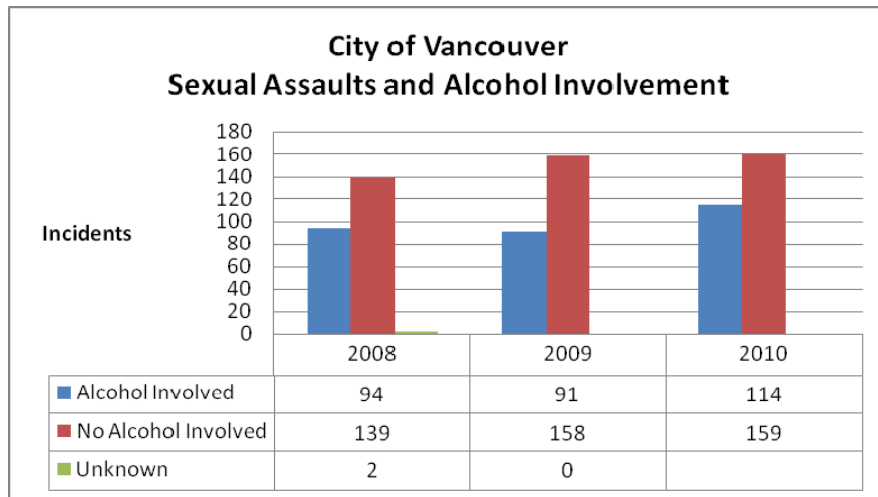


As we will see throughout this report, sexual assaults usually take place in Vancouver during the late evening and early morning hours. Days of the week vary, with the exception of the D1 Central Business District (discussed later).

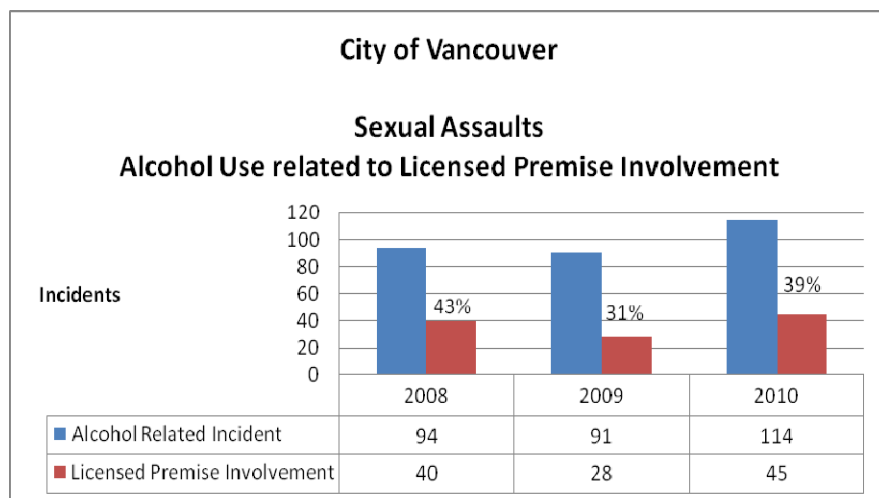




Alcohol involvement is likely a factor driving sexual assault incident increases, however for the last three years there have been more incidents where alcohol has not been a factor. The alcohol use factor increased by 25% in the City from 2009 to 2010.



Where alcohol was a contributing factor in Vancouver sexual assaults, licensed premise establishments were mentioned between 31 and 43% of time.



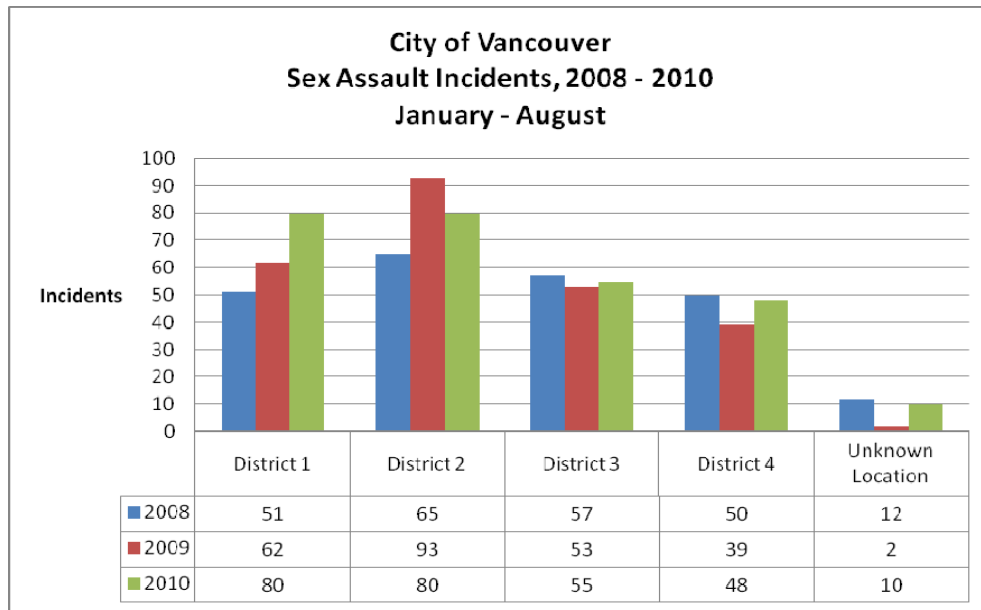


Breakdown by District

The chart below outlines the statistical changes in each District (founded incidents) and highlights problem areas. We see here recent problems in District 1, District 4, and “unknown” locations, along with less recent problems in District 2. Note – unknown locations are given a separate category, as the victim cannot recall where the incident took place.

	D1	% change	D2	% change	D3	% change	D4	% change	Unknown Location	% change
2008	51	n/a	65	n/a	57	n/a	50	n/a	12	n/a
2009	62	Up 21.6%	93	Up 43%	53	Down 7%	39	Down 22%	2	Down 83%
2010	80	Up 29%	80	Down 14%	55	Up 3.7%	48	Up 23%	10	Up 400%

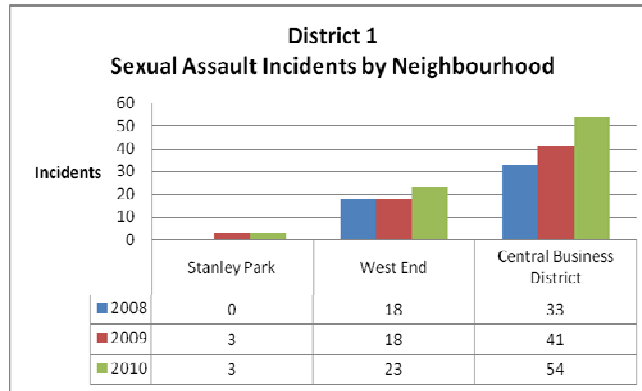
January to August





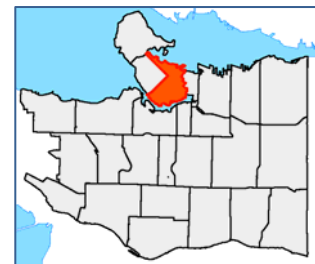
District 1

This report places a heavy emphasis on District 1, the area with the highest and steadiest increase in sexual assault incidents from 2008 to 2010. We know from our previous table that founded sexual assault incidents increased 21.6% from 2008 to 2009, and increased 29% from 2009 to 2010. The breakdown of incidents by D1 neighbourhood is shown below.

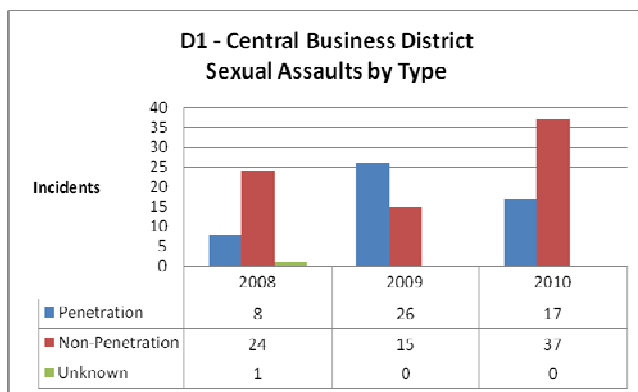


District 1 - Central Business District

The most change occurred in the D1 Central Business District. Details of these changes are shown below.



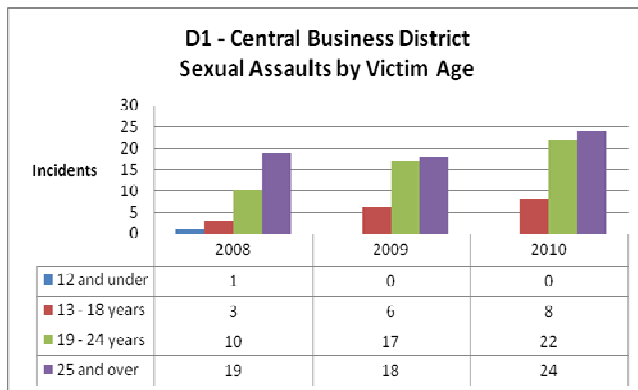
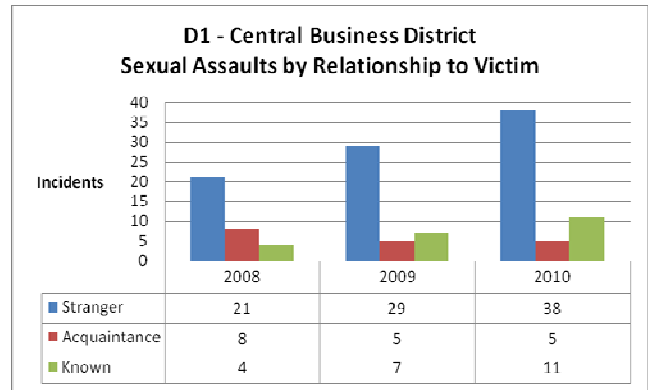
2008	2009	2010
33	41	54
	Up 24%	Up 32%



Incidences of non-penetration sexual assault (i.e. a grope, grab or kiss) have increased from 2009 to 2010. The percent increase is calculated at 147%. Incidences of penetration sexual assault spiked in 2009, but decreased in 2010.

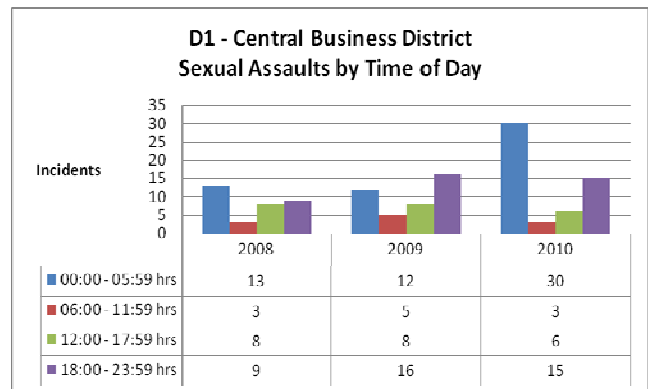


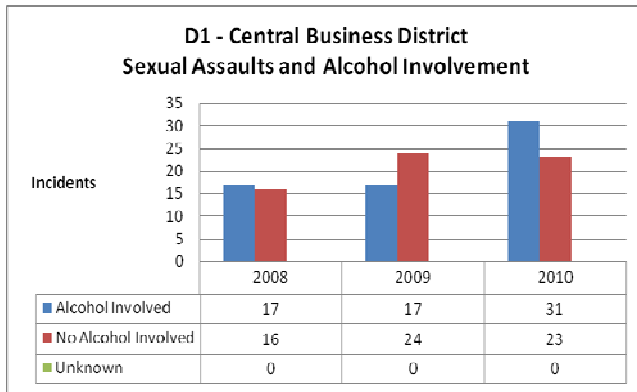
Of concern, sexual assaults committed by a stranger to the victim have steadily increased from 2008 to 2010. While attacks from a known suspect are also increasing, the numbers are relatively small. Acquaintance attacks are relatively stable over time.



Victims of sexual assault in the D1 Central Business District tend to be around the age of 19 years and over. The 19 – 24 age group has shown a steady increase of victimization over the last two years, and the over 25 age group also remains high.

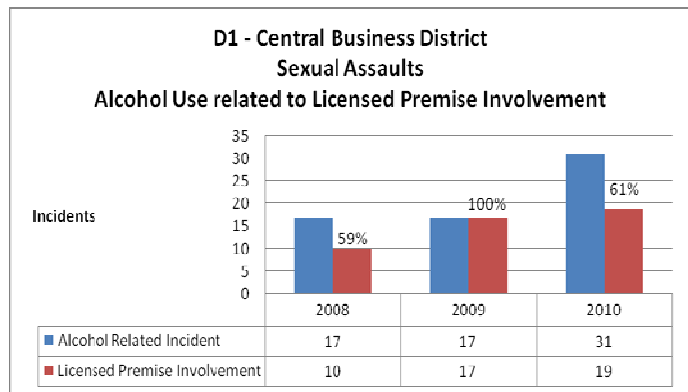
Sexual assaults that occurred after midnight spiked in 2010. Incidents that occur between 18:00hrs and midnight showed the second highest activity. Sexual assault activity appears to spike on Fridays (not shown here), although occurrences based on days of the week are fairly constant.





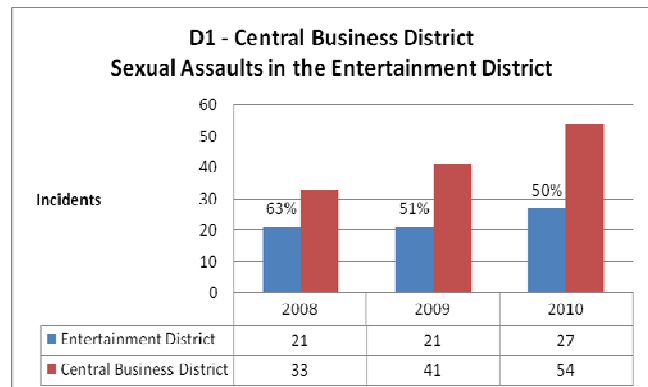
Another increase from 2009 to 2010 is the factor of alcohol involvement (either by the victim, suspect or both) in sexual assault incidents. This is perhaps due to the high density of licensed premises in the D1 Central Business District.

Licensed premises (bars, nightclubs, etc) in the Entertainment District (an area discussed later) are often mentioned in incidents of sexual assault. For example, the incident may have taken place there, or the victim and stranger initially came into contact at such a location. In the D1 Central Business District, the statistics are volatile.



In 2009, alcohol-related incidents had a licensed premise mentioned 100% of the time. This figure appears to be an anomaly, as the figures for all of District 1 and the entire City of Vancouver generally show a low indication of a relationship (between 31 – 43%). This could however, be a result of a licensed premise being omitted from police incident reports.

Entertainment District: A presumable factor driving the increase in D1 Central Business District sexual assaults is the prevalence of bars and nightclubs in the downtown core - the “Entertainment District”, bounded by Pender, Hornby, Pacific, and Richards Streets. From 2008 to 2010, between 50 – 63% of founded D1 sexual assaults occurred within the Entertainment District. While the numbers themselves are increasing, the percentage in proportion to the entire D1 Central Business District shows a slight decrease.





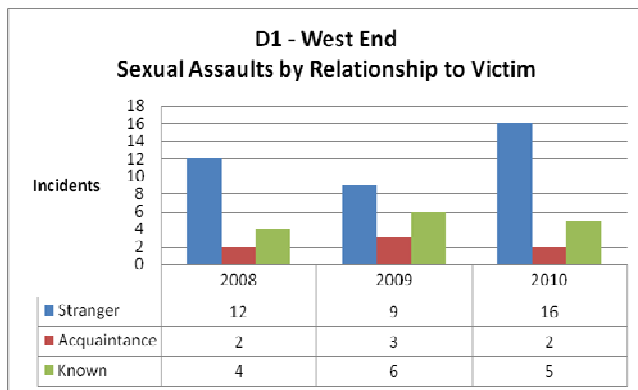
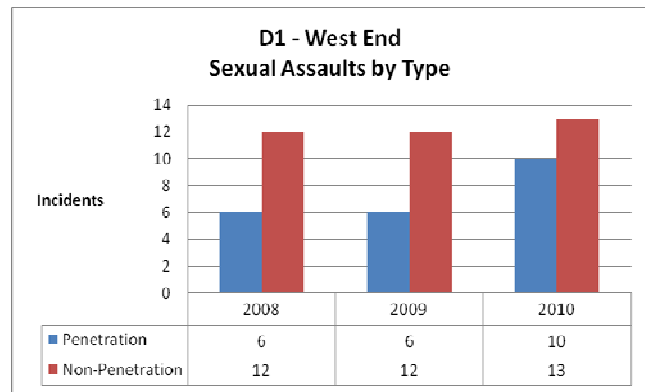
District 1 – West End

The West End also experienced an increase in sexual assault activity from 2009 to 2010. Although the numbers themselves are lower than the D1 Central Business District, the trends for the most part are the same. Founded sexual assaults in the West End remained constant from 2008 to 2009, and increased by 28% from 2009 to 2010.



2008	2009	2010
18	18	23
	No change	Up 28%

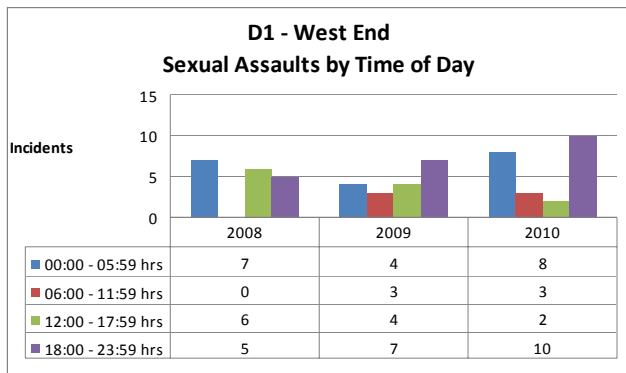
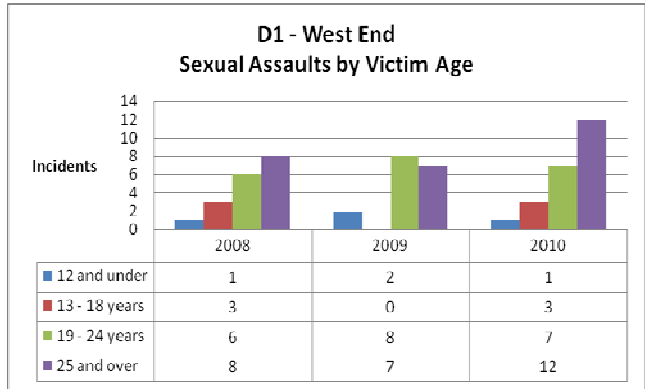
In 2008 and 2009, incidents of non-penetration sexual assaults (i.e. a grope, grab or kiss) were 50% higher than penetration incidents. In 2010, both types of incidents increased, and the percentage of groping-type assaults was 30% higher than penetration assaults.



Once again, stranger attacks prevailed in the West End, decreasing in 2009 and increasing in 2010.

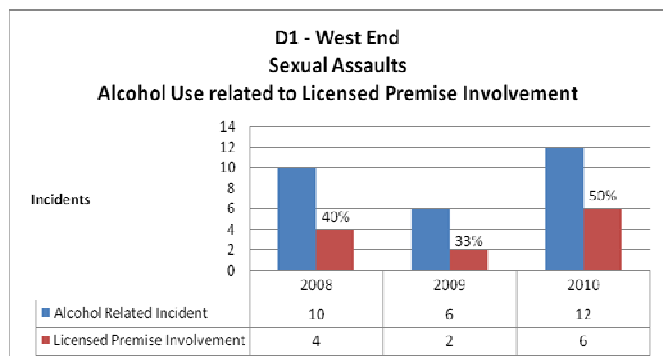
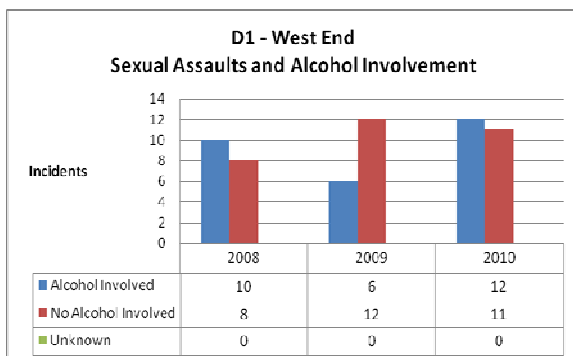


The most at risk age group in the West End are the 19 – 24 year and the over 25 year categories.



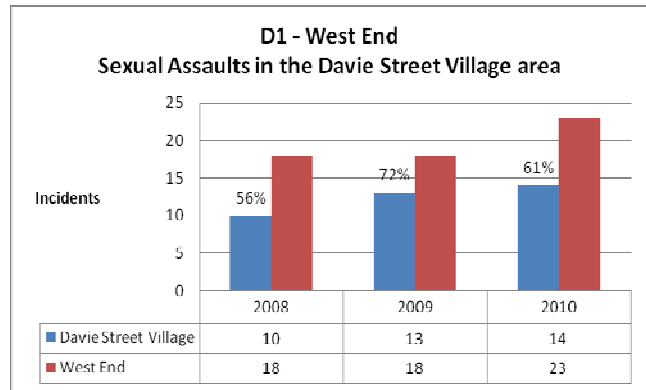
Sexual assaults in the West End varied by time of day, but still displayed generally larger numbers in the late evening, early morning hours.

Although incidents involving alcohol increased from 2009 to 2010, the non-alcohol related incidents were also high (almost the same amount in 2010). Where alcohol was a contributing factor in West End sex assaults, licensed premise establishments were mentioned between 33 and 50% of time.



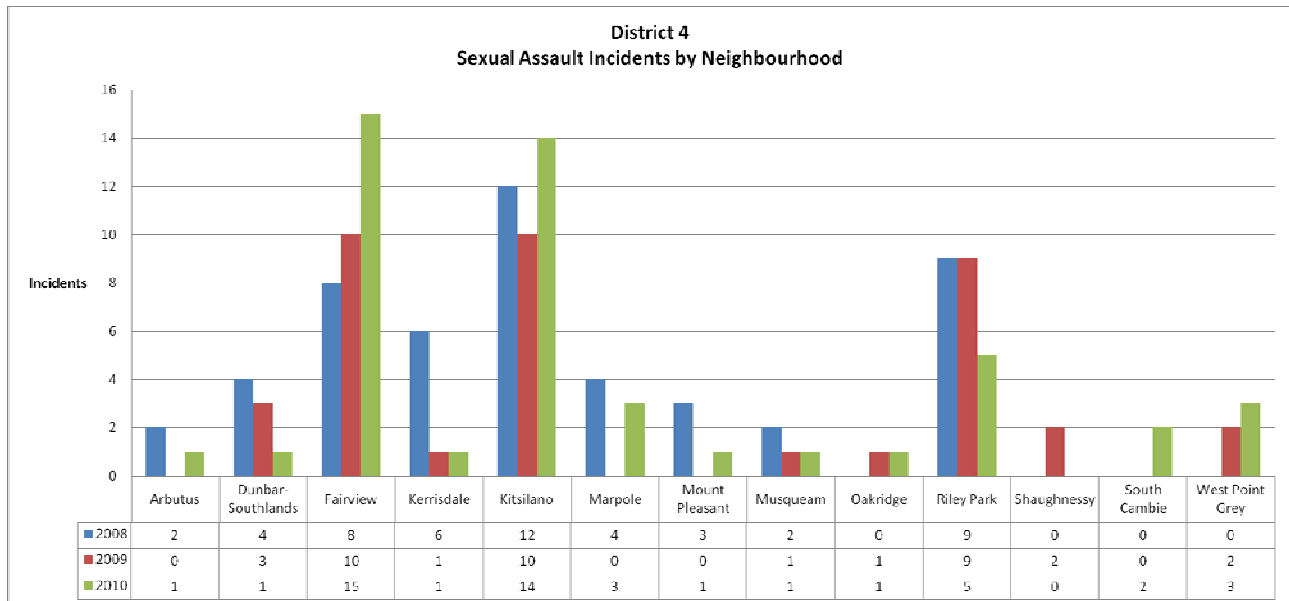


Davie Street Village area: Sexual assaults in the Davie Street Village area (bounded by Denman, Burrard, Pacific and Nelson streets) ranged between 56 – 72 % (proportional to the West End) over the last two years. Between 2009 and 2010 the proportional number of Davie Street Village assaults decreased, while the number of incidents increased slightly.



District 4

District 4 experienced some positive and negative changes in its sexual assault statistics. From 2008 to 2009, incidents decreased by 22%, but then rose again in 2010 by 23%.



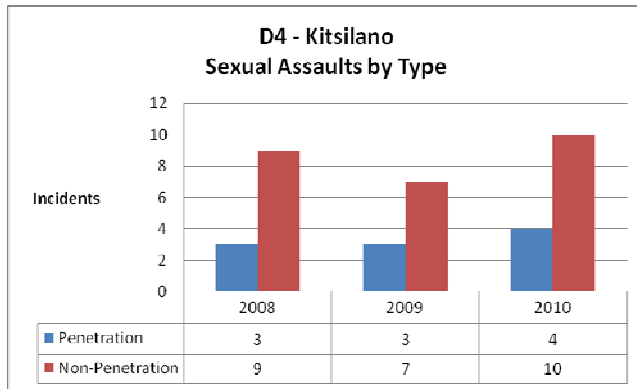


District 4 - Kitsilano

The area most affected in District 4 was Kitsilano. It is important to note however, that the overall numbers (as opposed to percentages) for Kitsilano are relatively low.

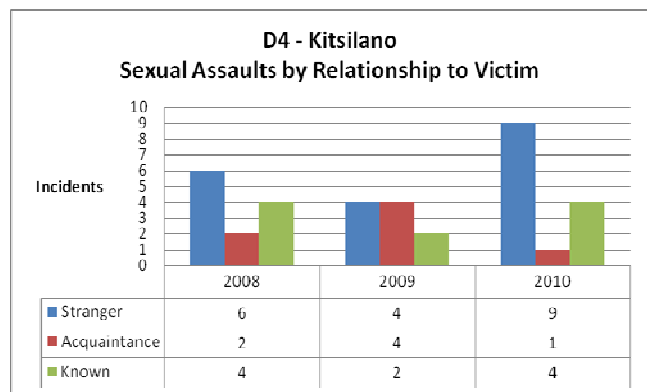


2008	2009	2010
12	10	14
	Down 17%	Up 40%



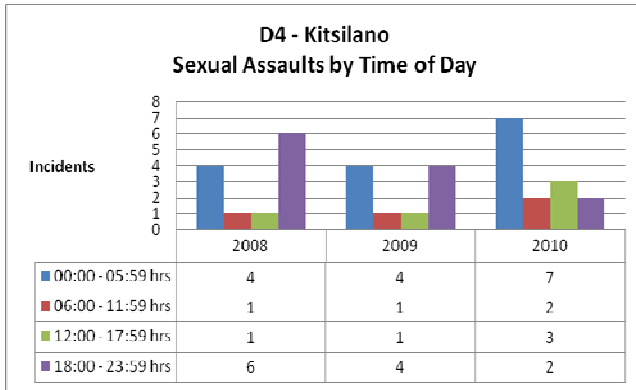
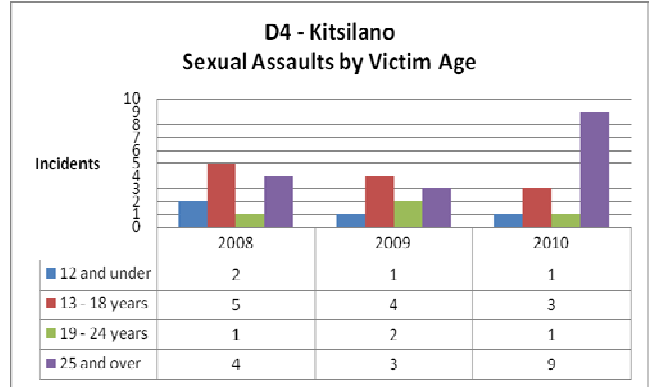
In the Kitsilano area, incidences of non-penetration sexual assault (i.e. a grope, grab or kiss) were higher in proportion to penetration sexual assaults. This is consistent for the last three years.

Stranger attacks in Kitsilano decreased in 2009, but climbed again in 2010.





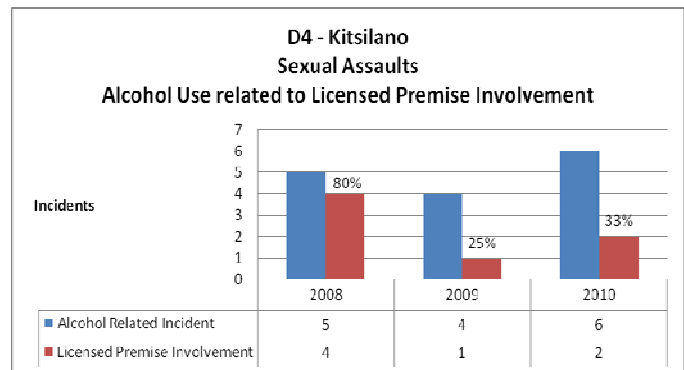
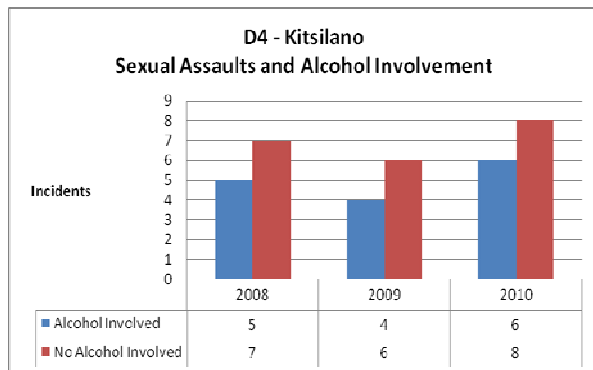
Over the three years, the 13 – 18 age group and the over 25 age group were the most at risk, particularly in 2010 for the over 25 age group.



Sexual assaults in Kitsilano occurred mainly during the late evening, and early morning hours.

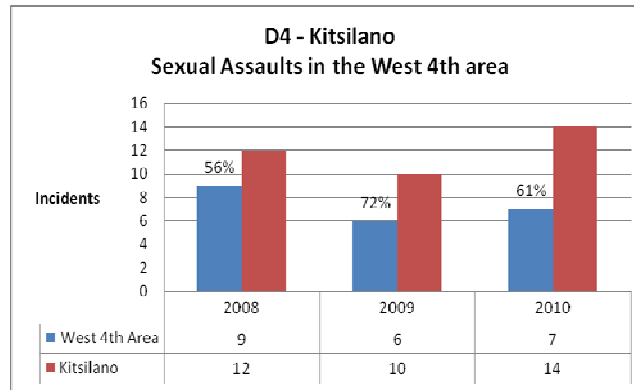
Alcohol involvement increased slightly from 2009 to 2010, but in each year remains lower than incidences with no alcohol involvement. Where alcohol was a contributing factor in Kitsilano sex assaults, licensed premise establishments were mentioned between 25 and 80% of time (80% in 2008, but has decreased since). In general however, licensed premises were mentioned between 25-41% of the time in the entire area of District 4.

Note once again that all numbers here are relatively small.





West 4th Avenue area: The highest concentration of founded sexual assaults in Kitsilano appear to be concentrated in an area geographically bounded by Cornwall, Burrard, West Broadway and MacDonald streets/avenues. For our purposes we will call this the West 4th Avenue area.



At least 9 of the above 22 (total for all three years) incidents in the West 4th Area involve an unknown male suspect grabbing or attempting to fondle a female victim while walking on the street. Two incidents of concern in July 2010 occurred minutes apart from each other, with the same modus operandi. VPD's Sex Crime Unit is currently investigating these incidents. The remaining incidents essentially stand on their own (i.e. incidents of family abuse, or suspect is known to the victim) and do not form part of a trend in this area, or an immediate concern to public safety.

District 4 - Fairview

The Fairview neighbourhood of District 4 experienced an increase in founded sexual assault incidents from 2008 to 2010, despite its low numbers.

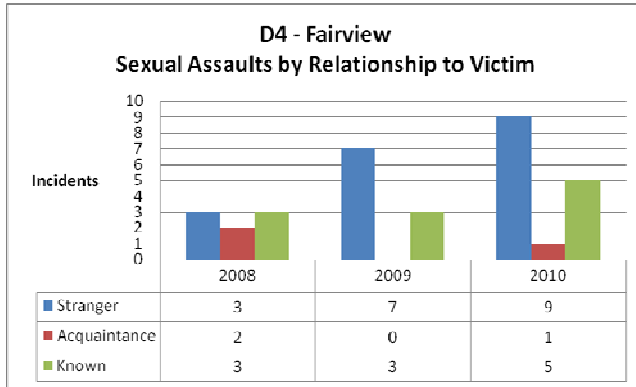
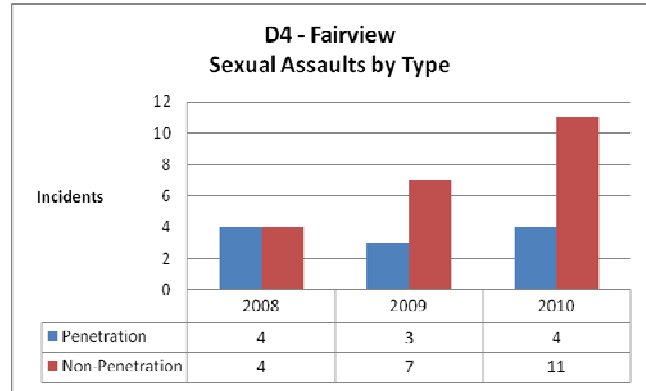


2008	2009	2010
8	10	15
	Up 25 %	Up 50%



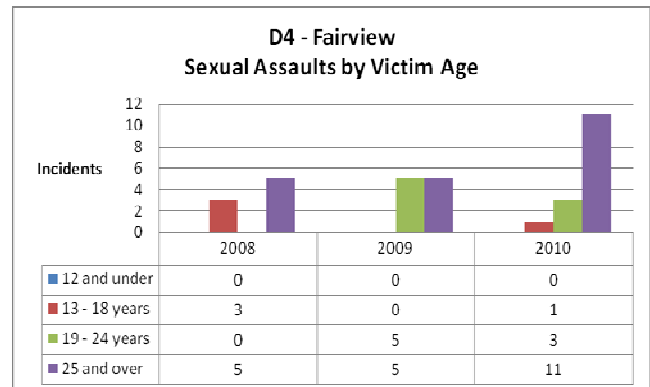
Note once again that all numbers here are relatively small.

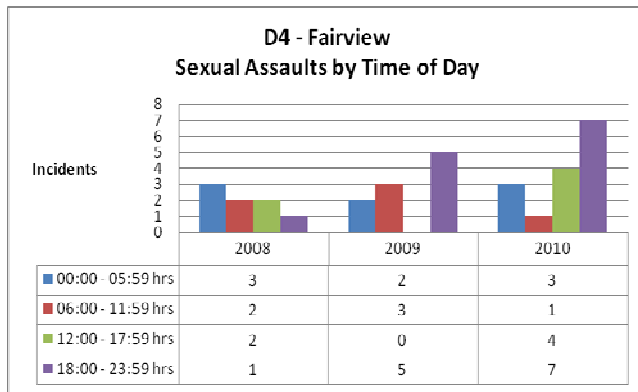
Non-penetration sexual assaults (i.e. a grope, grab or kiss) increased steadily since 2008, and occurred more often than penetration sexual assaults.



Stranger attacks are on the rise in the Fairview neighbourhood.

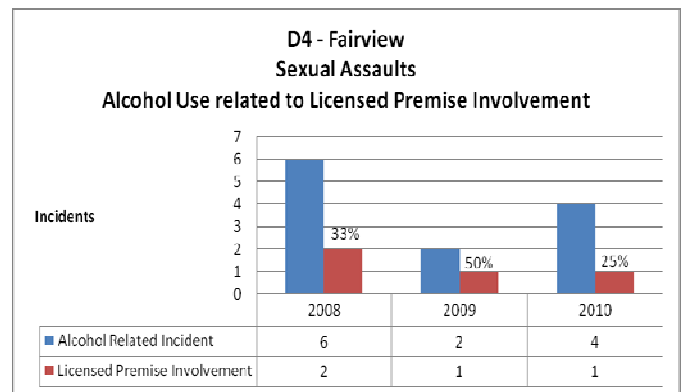
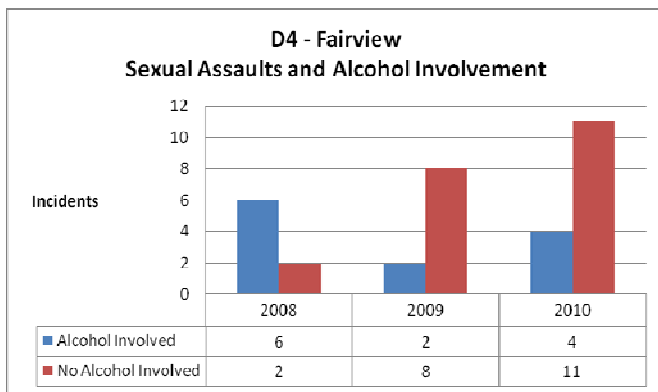
The age group most vulnerable in the Fairview neighbourhood is 25 years and older.





Founded sexual assaults occurred mainly during the early morning and late evening hours.

Alcohol involvement increased slightly, although the numbers remain low. Incidents not involving alcohol increased steadily over the three years. Where alcohol was a contributing factor in Fairview sex assaults, licensed premise establishments were mentioned between 25 - 50% of time.

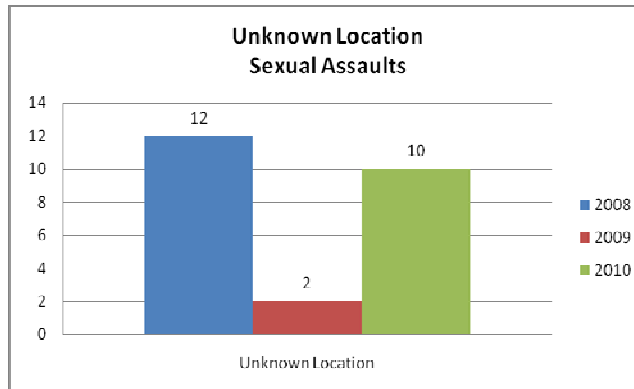




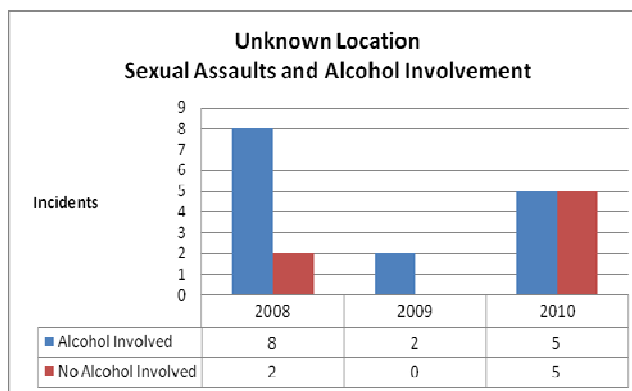
Unknown Locations – a quick review

“Unknown location” sexual assaults consist of a multitude of circumstances, and in the last three years have accounted for 0.08% to 5% of all founded sexual assaults in Vancouver. So why is the location unknown? Sometimes the victim was intoxicated, and does not remember the assault. Other times, the victim may be unfamiliar with the city and not know where the incident occurred. On occasion an assault is reported either by the victim or a third party, but a victim is never found.

2008	2009	2010
12	2	10
	Down 83%	Up 40%



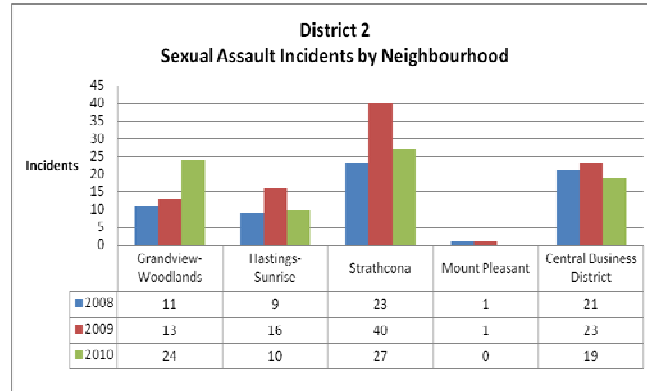
These types of assaults tend to be higher in the penetration-type category, and have an equal amount of stranger and “known” suspects. Alcohol is not always a factor as we can see from the chart below. Age groups vary in these types of sexual assaults, with a small emphasis on the 13 – 18 year and the over 25 year age groups. Upon review of all 24 sexual assaults, it is estimated that approximately 50% of these incidents are a result of the female victim becoming intoxicated, seeking the company of a male party while in a compromised state, and subsequently being sexually assaulted. Some of the incidents involve victims with mental health issues. Many victims advised that they could not remember whether sex was consensual.





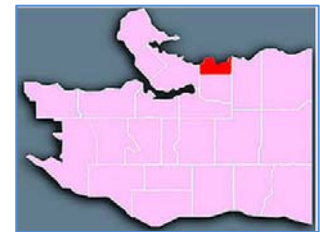
District 2

District 2 experienced a large rise in founded sexual assault incidents in 2009. From 2008 to 2009, incidents increased by 43%, but then fell in 2010 by 14%.



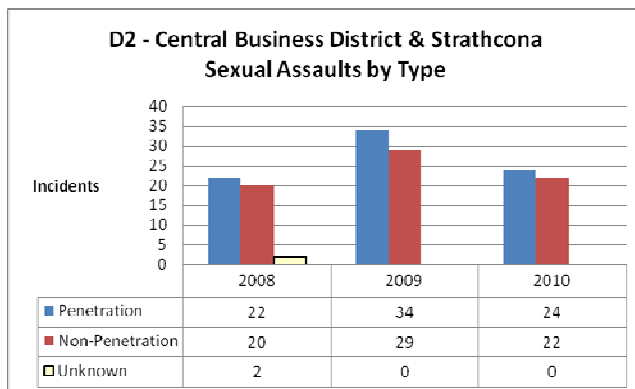
District 2 – The Downtown Eastside (DTES) area D2 Central Business District, and Strathcona

While District 2 has five neighbourhoods, the most concentration of sexual assaults over the years has been in a neighbourhood known as the Downtown Eastside which is bounded by Cambie, Clark and Venables streets along with the waterfront to the north. This area encompasses most of the incidents in the D2 Central Business District and Strathcona, so we will look at these two neighbourhoods combined.



	2008	2009	2010
Incidents	44	63	46
Change		Up 43%	Down 27%

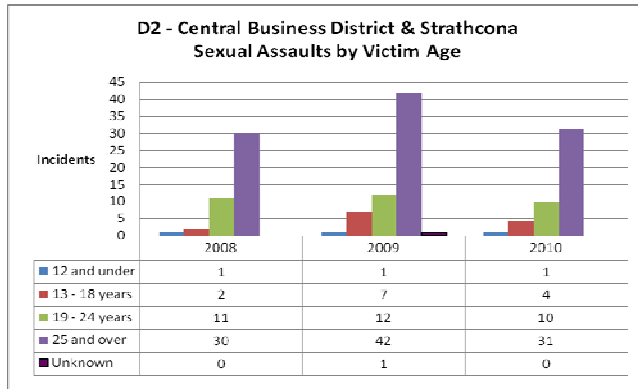
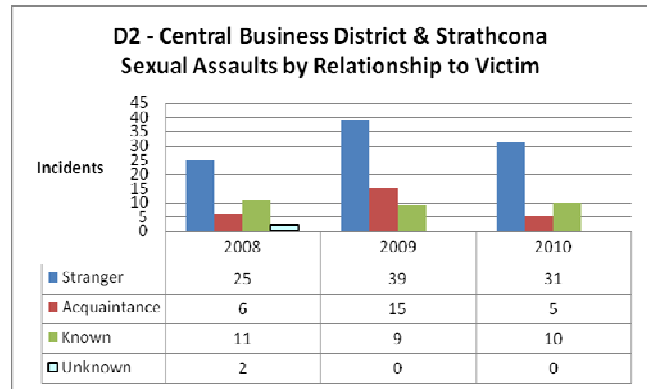
Central Business District & Strathcona combined



Penetration-type sexual assaults in the Downtown Eastside exceeded groping-type assaults only slightly over the last three years. Both categories spiked in 2009 and decreased in 2010.

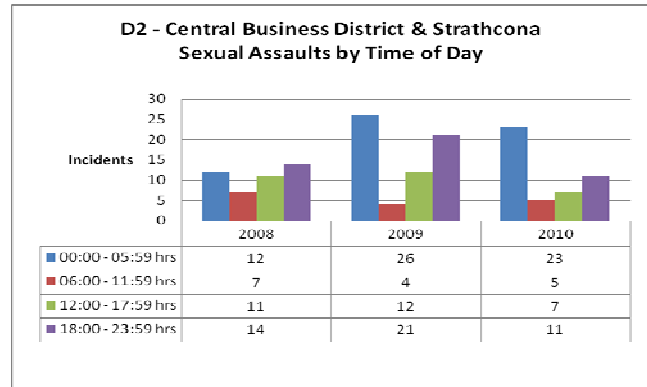


Stranger attacks prevailed in the last three years in these two neighbourhoods, while incidents involving acquaintances and known suspects remained fairly steady.



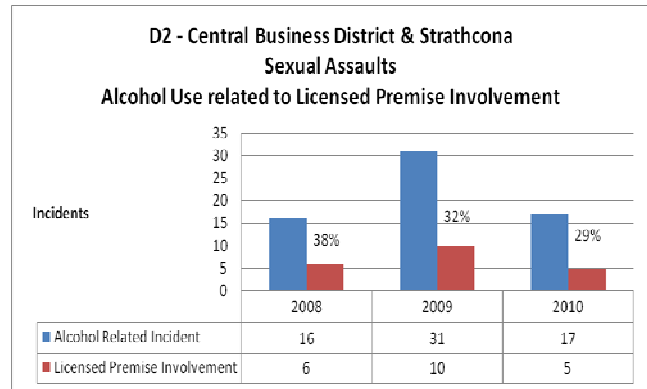
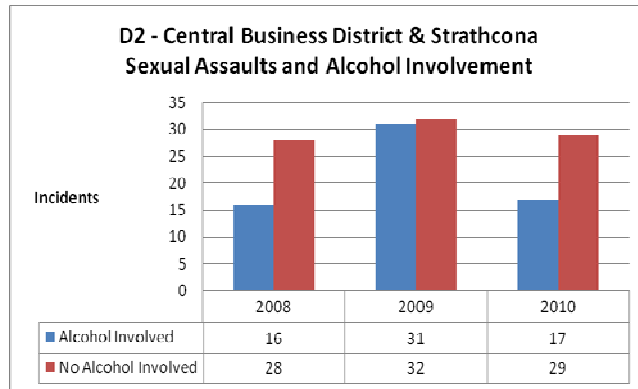
The age group most at risk in the last three years is the over 25 category. 19-24 year olds were also at risk but to a much lesser degree.

Sexual assaults in the Downtown Eastside area tended to occur in the late evening and early morning hours.





Incidents involving no alcohol exceeded incidents involving alcohol in each of the past three years. In 2009 the numbers were almost equal. Where alcohol was a contributing factor in sex assaults, licensed premise establishments were mentioned between 29 and 38% of time. This closely matches the overall percentages in District 2 of 29 – 39%.





Summary

- Incidents of non-penetration sexual assaults (i.e. a grope, grab or kiss) are on the rise in Vancouver.
- Most of the assaults are committed by strangers to the victim.
- The most vulnerable age groups are those over 25 years and the 19 – 24 age group.
- Sexual assaults occur mainly during the late evening, early morning hours.
- Alcohol, in some capacity, is involved in about 31 - 43% of sexual assault incidents over the last three years.
- Where alcohol was mentioned, between 31 and 43% of these incidents mentioned the involvement of a licensed premise.
- The District 1 Central Business District showed the highest and steadiest increases in sexual assaults between 2008 and 2010.
- About half to two thirds of sexual assaults in the D1 Central Business District occurred in an area known as the “Entertainment District”.
- An increase also occurred in District 4, mainly in the Kitsilano and Fairview neighbourhoods. The West 4th Avenue area of District 4 showed a high concentration of incidents, some of which were stranger groping attacks on the street. All of the District 4 figures are relatively low.
- 24 incidents of sexual assault occurred at an “unknown” location in Vancouver over the last three years. Approximately 50% of these involved alcohol intoxication and lowered victim defenses.
- While District 2’s numbers decreased in 2010, they showed a 43% increase in 2009. The Downtown Eastside area showed the most concentration of incidents. Penetration assaults and stranger attacks prevailed, and the vulnerable age group were those over 25 years.