

Analyzing Crime Trends in Toronto: Insights from the Police Annual Statistical Report*

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September 27, 2024

This paper analyzes crime trends in Toronto using the Police Annual Statistical Report from 2014 to 2023. Data from Open Data Toronto is used to evaluate crime distributions across different categories and regions. Analysis reveals that some areas, particularly in divisions such as D13 and D32, report the highest number of property-related crimes like auto theft. Suburban areas also illustrate rising trends in specific crime subtypes. These findings can help optimize policing strategies and public safety resource allocations.

Table of contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Data	2
2.1	Reported Crimes Dataset	2
2.2	Data Cleaning and Transformation	3
2.3	Broader Context and Ethical Considerations	3
2.4	Graphical Representation and Tables	4
3	Results	9
3.1	Crime Distribution by Year	9
3.2	Crime Types by Division	9
3.3	Clearance Rates	10
4	Discussion	10
5	Conclusion	13

*Code and data are available at: <https://github.com/YizheChenUT/Analyzing-Crime-Trends-in-Toronto-Insights-from-the-Police-Annual-Statistical-Report.git>

1 Introduction

Crime and public safety are critical concerns for urban environments like Toronto. Understanding the nature and distribution of crimes helps policymakers and law enforcement agencies allocate resources and develop effective crime prevention strategies. This paper examines Toronto’s crime patterns over the past decade, using the Toronto Police Annual Statistical Report to evaluate different types of crimes across the city’s divisions (Gelfand 2022).

Our analysis covers from 2014 to 2023 and focuses on two main crime categories: Crimes Against Property and Crimes Against the Person. We explore how incidents vary by division and examine clearance rates (resolved cases) to evaluate the effectiveness of law enforcement strategies. By highlighting regional crime trends, this paper provides insights into public safety concerns that can shape future policies.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the data and the steps taken to clean and transform it for analysis. Section 3 discusses the results of the study, focusing on crime distribution trends by year, types of crimes by division, and clearance rates for different crime types. Section 4 interprets the findings in the broader context of urban crime trends and offers insights for future research. Finally, Section 5 concludes the paper by summarizing key takeaways and recommending strategies for crime prevention and law enforcement improvement in Toronto.

2 Data

The data used in this analysis was obtained from the Open Data Toronto portal (Gelfand 2022). Data was cleaned and analyzed using the language R (R Core Team 2023). The data set includes reported incidents categorized by type, division, and year across Toronto, covering the period from 2014 to 2023. The data collection is a key resource for tracking public safety, and its availability promotes transparency in policing efforts. However, the dataset also raises ethical concerns, particularly around data privacy. Although anonymized, the geospatial breakdown could still enable the identification of patterns in specific communities, potentially stigmatizing certain areas.

2.1 Reported Crimes Dataset

The dataset includes multiple fields related to crime, such as:

Crime Category: Broad crime categories like “Crimes Against Property” and “Crimes Against the Person”.

Crime Subtype: Specific types of crimes (e.g., “Auto Theft”, “Break & Enter”).

Division: The Toronto Police divisions where crimes occurred.

Incidents Reported: The total number of reported incidents.

Incidents Cleared: The number of resolved cases.

2.2 Data Cleaning and Transformation

To prepare the dataset for analysis, I performed a thorough cleaning process using the janitor package (Firke 2023), which removed duplicates and corrected entry errors. Given the size and complexity of the dataset, we also used dplyr (Wickham et al. 2019) to filter, arrange, and group data based on specific crime subtypes and divisions. Figure 1 illustrates the breakdown of crimes across different divisions from 2014 to 2023.

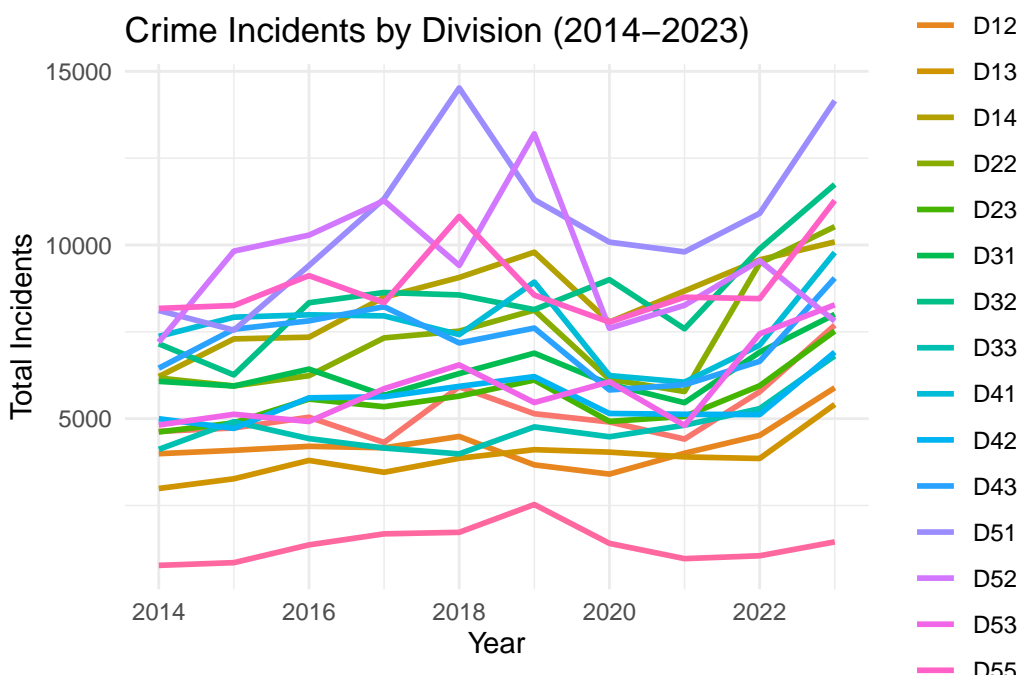


Figure 1: Total Crimes across Different Divisions

2.3 Broader Context and Ethical Considerations

The crime data used in this report exists within a broader societal context, involving both ethical and statistical issues. Ethically, the publication of crime statistics is a double-edged sword. While transparency in crime reporting helps the public and policymakers make informed decisions, there are concerns that reporting on crime rates by division may reinforce stereotypes or unjustly stigmatize certain neighborhoods.

From a statistical view, ensuring the accuracy of reported crimes is vital for maintaining public trust. Misreporting or underreporting of crimes, either by victims or authorities, can skew the perception of public safety and crime trends. The dataset itself does not account for unreported crimes, which is a limitation that should be considered when interpreting the results. Further, as crime rates fluctuate over time, the consistency of data collection methodologies is essential for making accurate year-over-year comparisons.

2.4 Graphical Representation and Tables

To have a better understanding of crime trends, Figure 1 and Figure 2 below present detailed graphical representations of the actual data, generated using ggplot2 (Wickham 2016). The graphs highlight crime distributions across divisions and time periods, avoiding the use of summary statistics to give a more detailed view of crime trends. Table 1, created using the gt package (Iannone et al. (2024)), provides a tabular summary of crime data by year and division.

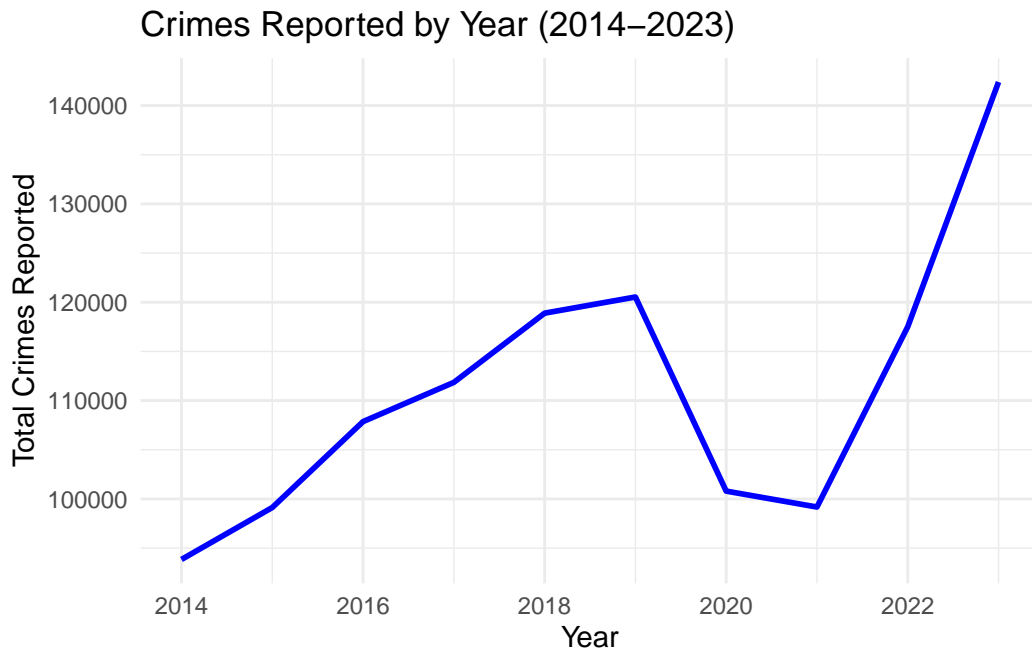


Figure 2: Total Crimes by Year

Table 1: Total Crimes by Year and Division

Crime Incidents by Year and Division (2014-2023)

Police Division	Total Crimes Reported
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2014	
D11	4633
D12	3990
D13	2988
D14	6211
D22	6169
D23	4615
D31	6073
D32	7155
D33	4114
D41	7368
D42	4997
D43	6452
D51	8115
D52	7203
D53	4816
D55	8174
NSA	775
2015	
D11	4731
D12	4087
D13	3268
D14	7296
D22	5941
D23	4878
D31	5939
D32	6259
D33	4912
D41	7921
D42	4719
D43	7574
D51	7547
D52	9823
D53	5125
D55	8257
NSA	853
2016	
D11	5041
D12	4202
D13	3797
D14	7345

D22	6236
D23	5563
D31	6426
D32	8336
D33	4426
D41	7989
D42	5599
D43	7815
D51	9408
D52	10283
D53	4917
D55	9117
NSA	1365
<hr/>	
2017	
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D11	4314
D12	4161
D13	3455
D14	8496
D22	7324
D23	5344
D31	5672
D32	8632
D33	4153
D41	7958
D42	5630
D43	8223
D51	11328
D52	11276
D53	5862
D55	8340
NSA	1682
<hr/>	
2018	
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D11	5916
D12	4486
D13	3858
D14	9065
D22	7519
D23	5648
D31	6297
D32	8561
D33	3985

D41	7420
D42	5929
D43	7178
D51	14521
D52	9411
D53	6547
D55	10822
NSA	1727
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2019	
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D11	5141
D12	3669
D13	4106
D14	9792
D22	8125
D23	6111
D31	6885
D32	8139
D33	4762
D41	8931
D42	6210
D43	7608
D51	11303
D52	13201
D53	5463
D55	8557
NSA	2528
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2020	
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D11	4904
D12	3403
D13	4036
D14	7780
D22	6134
D23	4921
D31	5995
D32	9001
D33	4478
D41	6240
D42	5148
D43	5825
D51	10082
D52	7602

D53	6061
D55	7779
NSA	1408
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2021	
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D11	4411
D12	4004
D13	3898
D14	8677
D22	5781
D23	5064
D31	5459
D32	7587
D33	4810
D41	6050
D42	5125
D43	5976
D51	9801
D52	8264
D53	4805
D55	8496
NSA	969
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2022	
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D11	5774
D12	4518
D13	3852
D14	9573
D22	9472
D23	5947
D31	6912
D32	9888
D33	5287
D41	7116
D42	5117
D43	6650
D51	10910
D52	9549
D53	7441
D55	8455
NSA	1051
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2023	
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D11	7693
D12	5888
D13	5409
D14	10087
D22	10528
D23	7521
D31	8001
D32	11742
D33	6808
D41	9783
D42	6914
D43	9047
D51	14152
D52	7809
D53	8276
D55	11280
NSA	1451

3 Results

3.1 Crime Distribution by Year

The dataset reveals fluctuating crime rates between 2014 and 2023. Property crimes such as auto theft have shown consistent increases, while personal crimes, such as sexual violations, remain relatively stable.

According to Figure 3, There was a sharp increase in crimes against property in 2023, reaching the highest number of incidents reported during the 2014-2023 period, with over 100,000 incidents. Crimes against the person maintained a relatively stable trend from 2014 to 2023, consistently reporting between 20,000 and 25,000 incidents annually. Traffic-related criminal code violations showed a decline from 2018, especially during 2020, where the number of reported incidents dropped below 15,000. Other categories, including “Controlled Drugs and Substances Act” and “Other Federal Statute Violations”, remained consistently low over the years, each with less than 5,000 incidents reported annually.

3.2 Crime Types by Division

Different divisions across Toronto report varying types of crimes. Divisions located in more urbanized areas, show higher concentrations of property crimes, such as auto theft and break-ins. At the same time, suburban areas report a higher frequency of violent crimes.

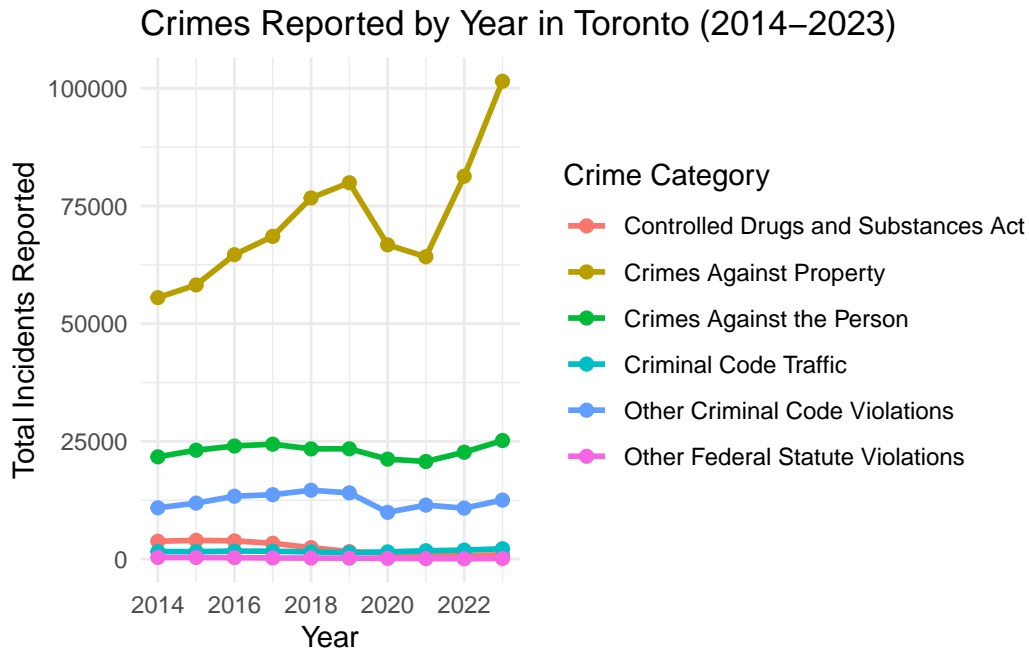


Figure 3: Crimes Reported by Year

Based on Figure 4, 32 Division reports high rates of auto theft than other divisions. 12 Division and 53 Division show large number reports in break-ins and residential thefts, especially in apartment.

3.3 Clearance Rates

Clearance rates, which reflect the number of resolved cases, vary widely between divisions. Many divisions report low clearance rates for property crimes, particularly auto theft, which remains a challenge for law enforcement.

As illustrated by Figure 5, the overall clearance rate for property crimes remains low, with less than 10% of auto theft cases being resolved in most divisions. Crimes against persons, such as assault and sexual violations, generally have relatively high clearance rates, particularly in suburban areas.

4 Discussion

The results of this analysis show clear trends in crime patterns across Toronto. Downtown areas are significantly affected by property crimes like auto theft and break-ins, driven by dense population and high economic activity. Suburban areas, however, report more violent crimes,

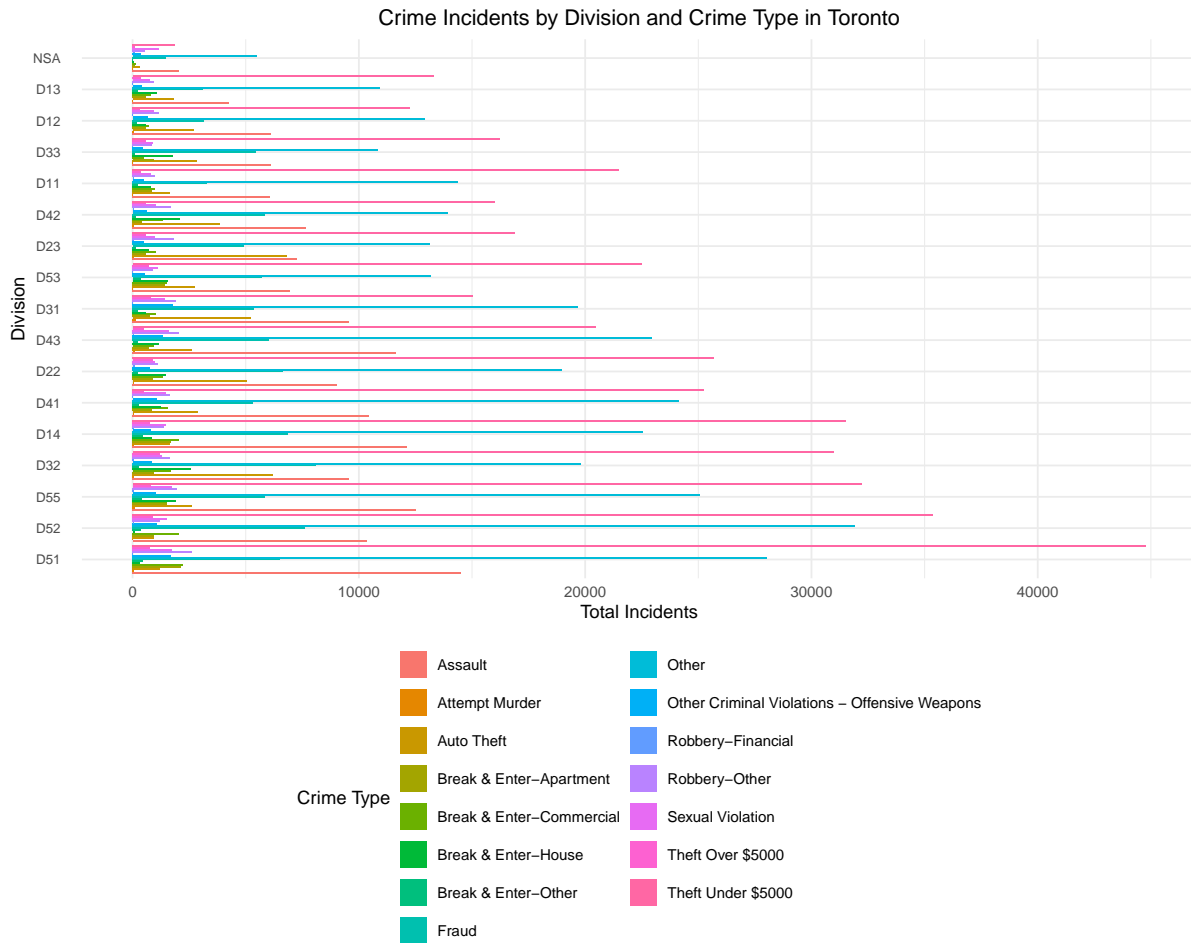


Figure 4: Crimes by Division and Crime Type

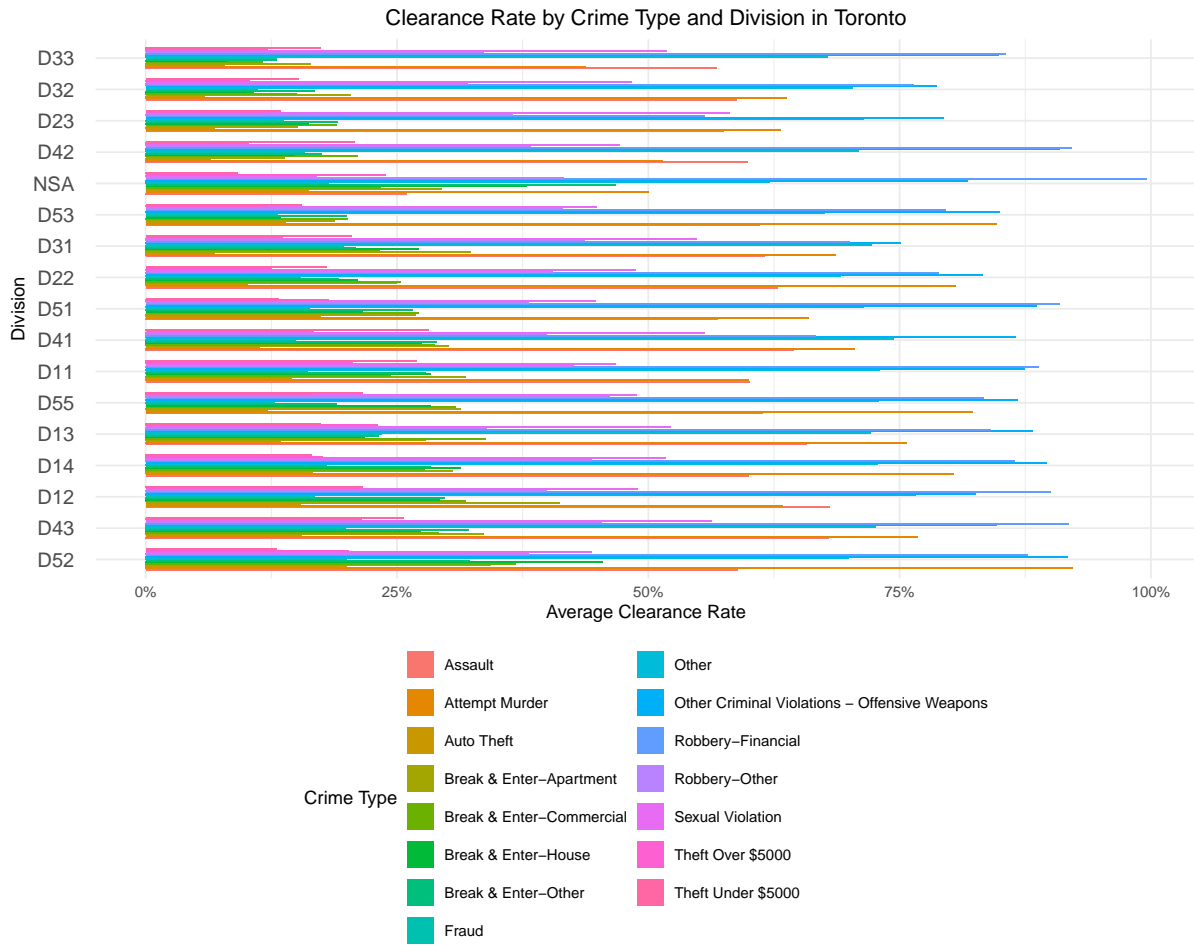


Figure 5: Clearance Rate by Crime Type

which may be influenced by socio-economic factors such as income inequality and access to social services (Mohammadi et al. 2022).

The data also highlights the gap between reported incidents and the number of cleared cases. Low clearance rates for property crimes, particularly auto theft, suggest the need for more effective crime prevention measures. Increasing surveillance and expanding the capacity of law enforcement agencies in high-crime areas may help address this issue.

Further research into socio-economic factors driving these trends is necessary. For example, regions with higher rates of poverty and unemployment may experience more violent crimes. Additionally, strategies like community policing and public engagement in high-risk areas may prove effective in reducing crime rates and improving clearance rates.

5 Conclusion

This paper analyzed crime trends in Toronto using the Police Annual Statistical Report from 2014 to 2023. The findings demonstrate significant varieties in crime distribution across Toronto's police divisions, with property crimes being more concentrated in downtown areas and violent crimes more prevalent in suburban regions. These insights are critical for shaping future crime prevention policies and ensuring the effective allocation of related resources.

Further research should explore the socio-economic factors influencing these trends, including whether community engagement can help lower crime rates in high-risk areas.

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