

An aerial, top-down view of a city map, likely London, rendered in a vibrant green color. The map shows a dense network of streets and a winding river. Scattered across the map are several small, realistic human figures in various poses and outfits, suggesting a busy urban environment. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

# Violent crime in London – part two

Police and Crime Committee

**LONDON ASSEMBLY**

## Police and Crime Committee



The Police and Crime Committee examines the work of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and investigates issues relating to policing and crime reduction in London.

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## Introduction

### *Violence trends over the last year*

The Committee launched its investigation into violent crime in response to rises in violence in 2020 and 2021. Levels of violence in London have fluctuated, with steep declines seen during the capital's COVID-19 lockdowns (as with all crime), but rising again as restrictions were lifted.

Whilst there was an initial rise in violent incidents following the lifting of restrictions with a steep rise in May 2021 and another rise in June 2021, the number of incidents fell between July and August 2021. As at the end of August 2021, rates of violence against the person in London were 7.1 per cent lower than at the end of August 2020 (19,195 and 20,608 offences respectively); and 2.9 per cent higher than at the end of August 2019 (19,195 and 18,647 offences respectively).<sup>1</sup>

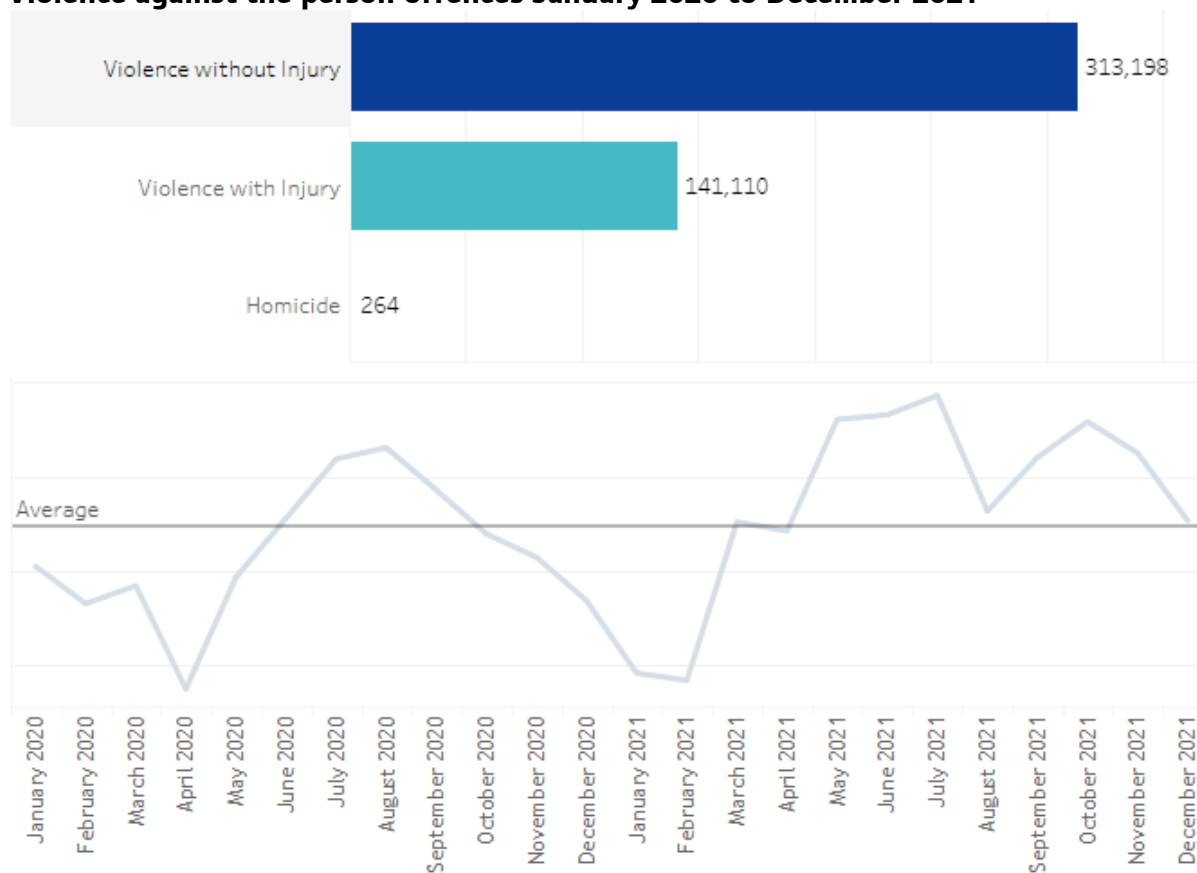
In this context, the Committee was concerned about a potential rise in violent crime in the summer of 2021, coinciding with the cessation of all major restrictions in London. It is recognised that levels of violence did not rise in the way some anticipated, and that is to be commended. The Committee would like to express its gratitude to the contributions the Metropolitan Police Service (the Met) and the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), in partnership with others such as the London boroughs and the third sector, made in stemming violence in the summer of 2021.

The Committee published its Part One report on 8 October 2021. This focused on the actions taken by the Met, and by various organisations working across London, to reduce violence, following the Committee's meeting in June. This Part Two report is focused on the meeting held in October 2021 with the Mayor's VRU, which leads the Mayor's response on tackling violence in London.

Violence against the person continued to rise in September and October 2021, with 20,380 offences recorded in September and 20,933 in October. This represents a 3.32 per cent rise compared to the previous 12 months. This reflects an overall consistent rise in the number of non-injury violence against the person offences – 11,953 offences in October 2018 rising to 14,371 in October 2021 with a steep fall from August 2020 to a low of 11,344 offences in February 2021. Over the 12-month period to October 2021 this represented a 6.61 per cent rise. Non-injury violence against the person offences include assault that extends to racially or religiously aggravated assault without injury, and modern slavery. An increase in reporting of these offences may well have contributed to this overall rise in the sub-offence category. In contrast, violence against the person with injury offences fell by 2.45 per cent for the 12-month period to October 2021. However, offences fell in both November (to 20,495 offences) and December (to 19,055). The December fall represented a 7 per cent fall on the previous month; but over the 12-month period to December 2021, this represented a 6 per cent increase in offences.

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<sup>1</sup> Violent crime offences include: homicide, violence with injury and violence without injury (see: [Metropolitan Police Crime Data Dashboard](#)).

Violence against the person offences January 2020 to December 2021<sup>2</sup>

There also remain pervasive and concerning trends of particular types of violent crime in the capital, with recent events typifying the problem. For example, although homicides overall remain stable, there was a significant number of teenage homicides in London in 2021. At the end of December there were 30 teenage homicides, an all-time high for London (the previous high being 29 in 2008). The vast majority of victims were young Black men, with the youngest being just 14 years old.<sup>3</sup> Of the 30 deaths, 27 were stabbed, two were shot and one died in an arson attack. This represents a quarter of the year's total 122 homicides in London, despite teenagers making up only 8 per cent of London's population.

*Role of the VRU*

The Committee was keen to ensure its investigation into violent crime examined the role and work of the Mayor's VRU. The VRU is a major contributor to the campaign against violence and, since its inception in 2018, has received considerable support from the Mayor and from central Government.

Since its inception the VRU has received £7 million each year from the Government, topped up by funding from the Mayor; and it has commissioned and implemented multiple interventions across the capital. The VRU's work programme for 2021-22 has been allocated £10.69 million using £7 million of Home Office funding, topped up by £3.69 million from the Mayor.<sup>4,5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Met police Crime Dashboard, [violence against the person offences](#)

<sup>3</sup> BBC News, [London teen homicides: How killings broke 2008 record](#), 31 December 2021

<sup>4</sup> MOPAC Decision PCD 945, [VRU 2021-22 funding programme](#), 16 March 2021

<sup>5</sup> MOPAC Decision PCD 1000, [VRU work programme funding \(part 2\) for 2021-22](#), 22 June 2021



## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the VRU publishes comparisons with the other VRUs on its web pages so that Londoners can easily compare the performance of London's VRU with all other VRUs. This should be done by 1 June 2022.

### Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the VRU writes to us detailing its current and future approaches to the key issues it identified of:

- tackling long-term funding for programmes, which the Committee recommends includes putting in place and publishing a plan to mitigate the risk of a significant change in funding from year to year to enable it to sustain longer-term programmes;
- the need to evaluate all programmes;
- and the challenge around complexity of partnership-working on delivery of programmes;

by 30 June 2022.

### Recommendation 3

The VRU should commission specific research to examine the underlying factors driving the over-representation of Black Londoners as victims of homicide in London.

### Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the VRU targets programmes at the communities most impacted by violence.

### Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the VRU should publish information relating to the timeline, nature, target audience, outcomes and impact of these initiatives. In addition, the VRU should publish the full suite of KPIs for each initiative. This information should be available on the VRU web pages and provided in performance reports by 1 September 2022.

### Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the VRU develops and leads a Vision Zero-style campaign, by the end of September 2022, to reduce the number of homicides in London. This should be supported by an action plan and a commitment to report regularly on progress against the campaign.



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## Recommendation 7 – to the Metropolitan Police Service

**The Committee notes the VRU’s evidence that young Londoners have raised concerns about the sharing of knife imagery online by the Met. The Committee recommends that the Met ceases sharing such images in line with the motion passed by the London Assembly at its plenary meeting on 2 December 2021.<sup>6</sup>**

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<sup>6</sup> London Assembly, [Plenary meeting agenda](#), 2 December 2021

## Key findings

### The Violence Reduction Unit's strategic focus and direction

The VRU has now been operating for over two-and-a-half years, with strong partnership arrangements and a wide range of interventions located in every London borough.

It has an extensive range of programmes, and the Committee has heard from some of these that show promise, as set out in our report published in October 2021.<sup>7</sup>

It is clear that the VRU is now in a different phase of its maturity as an organisation. As a more established organisation, there now needs to be greater emphasis on the evaluation of the VRU's impact. At the Committee's meeting in October 2021, Lib Peck, Director of the VRU, conceded that there needed to be more focus on evaluation, stating: "There is a longer-term question about how we [the VRU] really unpack the causes of violence and how we measure and quantify all of that preventative work."<sup>8</sup> The Committee would argue that this "longer-term question" identified by Lib Peck should be front and centre of the VRU's work right now.

The VRU must identify best practice in its programmes, and initiatives that achieve the best outcomes for young Londoners; and publish this information. At present, the Committee is unclear whether the VRU has strategies and systems in place to identify that best practice. For example, in response to a Committee question regarding the measurement of the impact of VRU programmes on early-years outcomes, Lib Peck told the Committee:

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*"We probably have not done quite enough, I think, at the moment to point to a programme we could tangibly talk about the impact of."*<sup>9</sup>

**Lib Peck, Director, VRU**

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Furthermore, at our meeting, the Committee heard limited evidence that the VRU is using best practice from other VRUs across the country to inform its work. The VRU confirmed that it would send the Committee an overview of the performance of all 19 VRUs (including London's VRU) as assessed against the Home Office's three Key Performance Indicators (KPIs); this was received by the Committee in November 2021.<sup>10</sup> Whilst the Committee recognises that the specific differences of London as a capital city with a very diverse and large population can limit comparisons with other VRUs, it still considers this to be a worthwhile exercise.

### Recommendation 1

**The Committee recommends that the VRU publishes comparisons with the other VRUs on its web pages so that Londoners can easily compare the performance of**

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<sup>7</sup> London Assembly, [Approaches to tackling violent crime in London](#), 8 October 2021

<sup>8</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee meeting](#), 7 October 2021

<sup>9</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee meeting](#), 7 October 2021

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Lib Peck to Police and Crime Committee, Actions from 7 October meeting, 30 November 2021

**London's VRU with the others around the country. This should be done by the end of May 2022.**

The VRU faces many strategic challenges over the next few years. The Committee heard some of the key issues identified by Lib Peck at its 7 October 2021 meeting:

- long-term funding for programmes – the VRU has plans to manage and mitigate the risk of continuity of funding it receives from central Government and the Mayor, so that it is able to plan and sustain long-term interventions
- the need to evaluate all VRU programmes and initiatives
- the complexity of partnerships in London, with the 32 boroughs; the Met's 12 Basic Command Units; health partnerships; and other partnership structures that bring challenges to delivering successful programmes.

The Committee agrees that these are fundamental issues facing the VRU as it operates over the coming months and years.

**Recommendation 2**

**The Committee recommends that the VRU writes to us detailing its current and future approaches to the key issues it identified of: tackling long-term funding for programmes; the need to evaluate all programmes; and the challenge around complexity of partnership-working on delivery of programmes by 30 June 2022.**

*Gaps in existing research and evidence base*

Decisions about the strategic direction of the VRU's activity must be driven and underpinned by evidence. The Committee welcomes the VRU piloting approaches to reducing violence and is keen to ensure that, particularly when significant sums of Londoners' money are allocated to VRU programmes, there is a solid evidence base supporting their objectives.

The VRU's own Strategic Needs Assessment, commissioned in 2018, showed that there were a number of gaps in understanding the underlying factors driving violence in London, such as micro pathways and precursors to homicide. Steve Bending, Head of Policy and Commissioning at the VRU, told the Committee:

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*"It is fair to say that there were some things where there were gaps and it [the Strategic Needs Assessment] recommended additional research into understanding the micro pathways and the precursors to homicide, which is an area that we are doing a piece of work around, looking at three years of homicides to have a greater understanding around that."*<sup>11</sup>

**Steve Bending, Head of Policy and Commissioning, VRU**

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The Committee acknowledges that the VRU has commissioned additional research on homicides in London, recommended as part of its Strategic Needs Assessment, and that there is a balance to strike between the need to expedite the work and the need to be thorough in the research.<sup>12</sup> The VRU indicated that the additional research will examine the different homicide rates

<sup>11</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee meeting](#), 7 October 2021

<sup>12</sup> Mayor's Questions, [VRU strategic needs assessment](#), 21 January 2020

between Black Londoners and non-Black Londoners; and that the VRU will share these findings once the research has been published.

However, the Committee is not convinced that this research will provide the sufficient focus needed to explore the factors driving the over-representation of Black Londoners in homicides in the capital.

### **Recommendation 3**

**The Committee recommends that the VRU commissions specific research to examine the underlying factors driving the over-representation of Black Londoners as victims in homicides in London.**

### **Measuring performance and impact in the Violence Reduction Unit**

Since its creation, London's VRU has been measured solely against three KPIs, devised and set by the Home Office:

- injuries with weapons for under-25s
- robberies
- homicides.

The government holds all 19 VRUs in England and Wales to account through the same three KPIs. In two of the three KPIs (injuries with weapons for under-25s, and robberies), London's VRU is performing better when compared with 2018. Regarding rates of homicide in London, performance is static, with Lib Peck stating to the Committee that the VRU is "broadly in keeping with 2018".<sup>13</sup>

In addition, the VRU has maintained that each of its programmes and initiatives has a set of KPIs, to which each programme is held accountable.

It is acknowledged that the Government's KPIs offer one lens through which VRU performance can be measured. However, it is the Committee's view that, without a comprehensive framework, it is not possible to measure and reflect the cumulative impact of the VRU on outcomes for young people, which is fundamental to the evaluation of the effectiveness of London's VRU.

Consequently, the Committee has taken a long-standing interest in the development of a comprehensive performance framework for the VRU. The Committee believes a comprehensive framework would bring together the different moving parts of the VRU, and allow Londoners to understand its impact in a clear and transparent way.

The Committee is concerned that the VRU has still not published a performance framework, despite the overwhelming importance of such a framework, and despite repeated assurances from the VRU that one would be published.

**The Committee requests that the comprehensive performance framework is published by 30 June 2022.**

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<sup>13</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee meeting](#), 7 October 2021

*Understanding those with whom the VRU engages*

In stemming violence in London, it is crucial that the VRU reaches the young Londoners who need the intervention most. With improved data on the demography of Londoners most impacted by violence, both as perpetrators and victims, there is also a need for the VRU to ensure it is monitoring the impact of its outreach with different audiences.

This is particularly relevant as recent data has shown that homicides in London disproportionately impact young Black Londoners.<sup>14</sup> The Committee believes this issue underlines the need to ensure that any VRU programme is reaching those Londoners who are most likely to be impacted by violence.

**Recommendation 4**

**The Committee recommends that the VRU targets programmes at the communities most impacted by violence.**

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<sup>14</sup> *i News*, [Teenager homicides 2021: London sees deadliest year in a decade, with 28 teens killed](#), 28 November 2021

## Improving transparency

Since its inception, the VRU has increased its profile and reach in London, and this is welcomed by the Committee. However, the Committee believes there is room for further improvement in the VRU's approach to transparency. At present, there is limited information available describing each of the VRU's initiatives, and it is difficult to assess the geographical spread of services across London; who they are reaching; and what impact they are having. The Committee is concerned that the VRU is unable to determine which initiatives are working and which ones are not and believes more transparency and information is needed.

### Recommendation 5

**The Committee recommends that the VRU should publish information relating to the timeline, nature, target audience, outcomes and impact of these initiatives. In addition, the VRU should publish the full suite of KPIs for each initiative. This information should be available on the VRU web pages and provided in performance reports by 1 September 2022.**

#### *Developing new campaigns and initiatives*

In the past, London has developed targeted campaigns to tackle pernicious trends that emerge across the capital. For example, the Mayor and TfL launched 'Vision Zero', a campaign to raise awareness of, and reduce, the number of deaths on London's roads each year.<sup>15</sup> The campaign has forced different parts of the organisation to work together in a strategic and coordinated way to drive down deaths. The Committee believes the same approach can and should be taken to reduce the shockingly high number of homicides in London.

Lib Peck agreed in principle that a similar campaign should be developed to tackle this issue. She stated:

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*"I have run a lot of campaigns in my time, and I think there is a value in a campaign because it embodies an aspiration. It is something you should aim for."*<sup>16</sup>

**Lib Peck, Director, VRU**

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Whilst acknowledging the VRU's view that setting a target of zero homicides in London would be "unrealistic", the Committee believes a Vision Zero-style campaign to reduce homicides is needed to take a laser-like approach to tackle the issue.

### Recommendation 6

**The Committee recommends that the VRU develops and leads a Vision Zero-style campaign, by the end of September 2022, to reduce the number of homicides in London. This should be supported by an action plan and a commitment to report regularly on progress against the campaign.**

The Committee is concerned about the Met's approach to sharing images of knives on social media. The Committee believes that, despite the good intentions of the Met, the sharing of

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<sup>15</sup> Transport for London, [Vision Zero for London](#)

<sup>16</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee meeting](#), 7 October 2021

knife images online risks encouraging young Londoners to equip themselves with larger and more lethal knives. Lib Peck confirmed the VRU's agreement that it was an issue shared by many young people. She stated:

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*“One of the things that is really important is the narrative around violence. We need to shift that, and part of that is the imagery. Yes, we get very consistent feedback from it. I am really keen to advocate on behalf of the young people that I come into contact with about the importance of not using knife imagery ... It is something I raised some time ago now, but it is something that consistently comes through from young people. Given that we are putting young people at the heart of what we are doing, then absolutely we need to be out there and advocating the policy change that they want to see.”<sup>17</sup>*

**Lib Peck, Director, VRU**

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### **Recommendation 7 – to the Metropolitan Police Service**

**The Committee notes the VRU's evidence that young Londoners have raised concerns about the sharing of knife imagery online by the Met. The Committee recommends that the Met ceases sharing such images in line with the motion passed by the London Assembly at its plenary meeting on 2 December 2021.<sup>18</sup>**

#### *Securing longer-term, sustainable funding*

London's VRU has benefited from annual funding from the Mayor, in addition to annual grants from the Home Office. The additional funding has enabled the VRU to expand its scope and reach in London through a range of commissioned services.

However, securing multi-year funding has been challenging, and this continues to pose a long-term risk to the future delivery of VRU services. At the Committee's meeting, the VRU described the impact of a lack of multi-year funding:

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*“That does present us [with] a challenge because we cannot afford for commissioned services to fall off a cliff edge and we have to manage that.”<sup>19</sup>*

**Steve Bending, Head of Policy and Commissioning, VRU**

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The Committee welcomes the news that the VRU has made representations to the government on this matter through the Mayor's submission to the 2021 Spending Review. The Committee also notes and welcomes the Government's commitment to multi-year funding in its Spending Review, which will help a longer-term approach to funding of programmes by the VRU. However, the Committee recognises the potential risks to sustained funding for the VRU; and believes the VRU should be developing a plan to mitigate the risks posed by a significant change in funding from year to year.

### **Included in Recommendation 2**

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<sup>17</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee meeting](#), 7 October 2021

<sup>18</sup> London Assembly, [Plenary meeting agenda](#), 2 December 2021

<sup>19</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee meeting](#), 7 October 2021, page 37

**The Committee recommends that the VRU puts in place and publishes a plan to mitigate the risk of a significant change in funding from year to year to enable it to sustain longer-term programmes by 30 June 2022.**



## **Conclusion**

Violent crime remains a pernicious and pervasive threat to Londoners, for whom it remains a key priority and concern.

Through its programmes and initiatives, the VRU is testing new ways of preventing young Londoners from committing acts of violence, and it is encouraging to know that levels of violent crime have not risen as anticipated following the cessation of all major COVID-19 restrictions.

However, there are ongoing challenges posed to London's VRU as it seeks to deliver successful programmes to prevent and tackle violence in the capital; and to identify which programmes work. It is critical that Londoners understand the impact of the VRU's contribution; and can readily access information on its work and identify who is being successfully engaged in its programmes. In order to do this, the VRU needs to make evaluation front and centre of its approach now and over the coming years, and it needs to promote and enhance transparency in every service it commissions.

The Committee looks forward to receiving a response to its findings and recommendations from the VRU by **1 April 2022**.

## Other formats and languages

If you, or someone you know needs this report in large print or braille, or a copy of the summary and main findings in another language, then please call us on: 020 7983 4100 or email [assembly.translations@london.gov.uk](mailto:assembly.translations@london.gov.uk)

### Chinese

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### Vietnamese

Nếu ông (bà) muốn nội dung văn bản này được dịch sang tiếng Việt, xin vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi bằng điện thoại, thư hoặc thư điện tử theo địa chỉ ở trên.

### Greek

*Εάν επιθυμείτε περίληψη αυτού του κειμένου στην γλώσσα σας, παρακαλώ καλέστε τον αριθμό ή επικοινωνήστε μαζί μας στην ανωτέρω ταχυδρομική ή την ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση.*

### Turkish

Bu belgenin kendi dilinize çevrilmiş bir özetini okumak isterseniz, lütfen yukarıdaki telefon numarasını arayın, veya posta ya da e-posta adresi aracılığıyla bizimle temasa geçin.

### Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਸੰਖੇਪ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਉਪਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਡਾਕ ਜਾਂ ਈਮੇਲ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

### Hindi

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज का सारांश अपनी भाषा में चाहिए तो उपर दिये हुए नंबर पर फोन करें या उपर दिये गये डाक पते या ई मेल पते पर हम से संपर्क करें।

### Bengali

আপনি যদি এই দলিলের একটা সারাংশ নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে ফো করবেন অথবা উল্লেখিত ডাক ঠিকানায় বা ই-মেইল ঠিকানায় আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

### Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کا خلاصہ اپنی زبان میں درکار ہو تو، براہ کرم نمبر پر فون کریں یا مذکورہ بالا ڈاک کے پتے یا ای میل پتے پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

### Arabic

الوصول على ملخص لهذا المستند بلغتك،  
فرجاء الاتصال برقم الهاتف أو الاتصال على  
العنوان البريدي أو عنوان البريدي  
الإلكتروني أعلاه.

### Gujarati

જો તમારે આ દસ્તાવેજનો સાર તમારી ભાષામાં જોઈતો હોય તો ઉપર આપેલ નંબર પર ફોન કરો અથવા ઉપર આપેલ ટપાલ અથવા ઈ-મેઇલ સરનામા પર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

## Connect with us

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