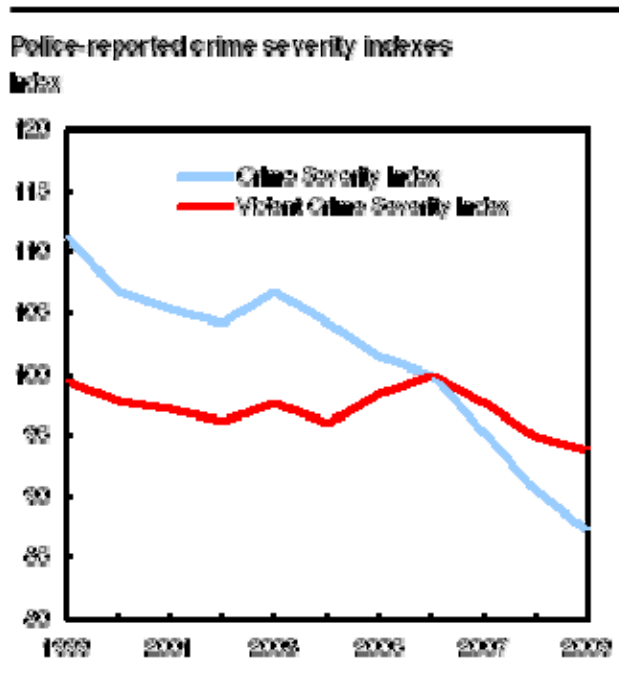


Police-reported crime statistics

July 20, 2010
Statistics Canada

Police-reported crime in Canada continues to decline. Both the volume and severity of police-reported crime fell in 2009, continuing the downward trend seen over the past decade.



Nearly 2.2 million crimes were reported to police in 2009, about 43,000 fewer than in 2008. Overall, three property crimes accounted for the majority of this drop: 17,000 fewer motor vehicle thefts, 10,000 fewer mischief offences and 5,000 fewer break-ins.

The crime rate, a measure of the volume of crime reported to police, fell 3% in 2009 and was 17% lower than a decade ago.

The Crime Severity Index (CSI), a measure of the seriousness of police-reported crime, declined 4% in 2009 and stood 22% lower than in 1999.

Violent crimes, which range in seriousness from harassing phone calls to homicide, accounted for about 1 in 5 crimes in 2009. Police-reported violent crime in Canada is also declining, but to a lesser extent than overall crime.

Police identified about 165,000 youth aged 12 to 17 accused of a criminal offence in 2009. Both the number of crimes and the seriousness of crimes

committed by youth have generally been declining since 2001, including a slight drop in 2009.

However, youth violent crime is higher now than a decade earlier. Both the volume and severity of youth violent crime were about 10% higher in 2009 than in 1999.

Crime severity highest in Northern and Western Canada

The drop in police-reported crime severity in 2009 was consistent across most of Canada with the only increases reported in Manitoba and Nunavut.

Police-reported crime was most serious in the territories and the western provinces, which has been the case for the past decade. CSI values in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories were twice as high as any of the provinces.

Saskatchewan reported the highest CSI among the provinces, followed by Manitoba, British Columbia and Alberta.

Among census metropolitan areas (CMAs), police-reported crime severity was highest in the western centres of Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg. Calgary was the only western CMA below the national average.

The Toronto CMA reported a 4% decline in crime severity in 2009. Its Crime Severity Index was third lowest, behind Guelph and Québec.

Slight decline in violent crime

Police reported about 443,000 violent crimes in 2009, about 4 in 10 of which were minor assaults. Rates for many violent crimes fell in 2009, including serious assault, sexual assault and robbery.

However, some violent crimes did increase. There were 806 attempted murders in 2009, 85 more than in 2008. Increases were also reported in the rate of extortion, firearms offences and criminal harassment.

There were 610 homicides in 2009, about the same as the previous year. The homicide rate has been relatively stable for the past decade and well below the peak during the mid-1970s.

Manitoba reported the highest homicide rate among the provinces for the third consecutive year. Among census metropolitan areas, Abbotsford–Mission, with nine homicides, reported the highest homicide rate for the second year in a row.

Break-ins and vehicle thefts continue to decline

Break-ins have been steadily declining since peaking in the early 1990s, including a 4% drop in 2009. Police reported just over 205,000 break-ins in 2009, of which 6 in 10 were residential.

Motor vehicle thefts dropped substantially for the second year in a row, down 15%. There were about 108,000 motor vehicle thefts in 2009, an average of 300 stolen vehicles each day.

Impaired driving increases for third year in a row

Following 25 years of general decline, impaired driving offences increased for the third consecutive year, up 3% in 2009.

In July 2008, new legislation came into effect enabling police to conduct mandatory roadside testing and assessment of suspected drug-impaired drivers. Of the 89,000 incidents of impaired driving in 2009, just over 1,400 were reported by police to have been drug-impaired driving.

In addition, about 98,000 drug offences came to the attention of police in 2009, half of which were for possession of cannabis. The rate of drug offences declined 6%, primarily due to a drop in cocaine offences. Cannabis offences remained relatively stable.

Note to readers

This release is based on a *Juristat* article that presents information on trends in the volume and severity of overall, violent and non-violent police-reported crime at the national, provincial/territorial, census metropolitan area and municipal levels.

The police-reported crime rate and the Crime Severity Index (CSI) are complementary measures of crime. The crime rate measures the volume of crime reported to the police, while the Crime Severity Index measures the seriousness of crime reported to the police.

In the calculation of the police-reported CSI, each offence is assigned a weight, derived from sentences handed down by criminal courts. The more serious the average sentence, the higher the weight for that offence. As a result, more serious offences have a greater impact on changes in the Index. This year, for the first time, a youth Crime Severity Index has been developed.

Data are drawn from the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, a census survey of all crime known to, and substantiated by, police services. These crime statistics conform to a nationally-approved set of common crime categories and definitions and have been systematically reported by police services and submitted to Statistics Canada each year since 1962.

As a complementary measure of crime, Statistics Canada also releases victimization data from the General Social Survey (GSS) every five years. Data from the 2009 GSS are scheduled for release in the Fall of 2010.