

Violent Crime in Canada

FACT SHEET

August 8, 2008

In 1993, 42% of Canadians reported their victimization to police — by 2004, that number had dropped to 34%

Between 1962 and 2007, the violent crime rate per 100,000 went from 221 to 930, an increase of 320%

● Putting things in perspective

The violent crime rate in Canada has gone down slightly in recent years from a peak in the early 1990s. For instance, in the year 2007, the violent crime rate fell 3%, marking its lowest point since 1989. It is, however, important to put this decrease in perspective. Between 1962 and 2007, the violent crime rate in Canada per 100,000 went from 221 to 930, **an increase of 320%**.

Statistics Canada's *Crime Statistics in Canada, 2007*, says that violent crime has reached a "near 20-year low". The shocking red line in Chart 1 below puts this "low" in perspective. Statistics Canada also provides this information on the most serious forms of assault:

*Assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm increased for 7 years in a row and by 2006 was at the highest rate for this offence since it was introduced into the *Criminal Code* in 1983. Between 1998 and 2007, this offence increased 32.3%.

* Aggravated assault increased by 18.6% between 1998 and 2007.

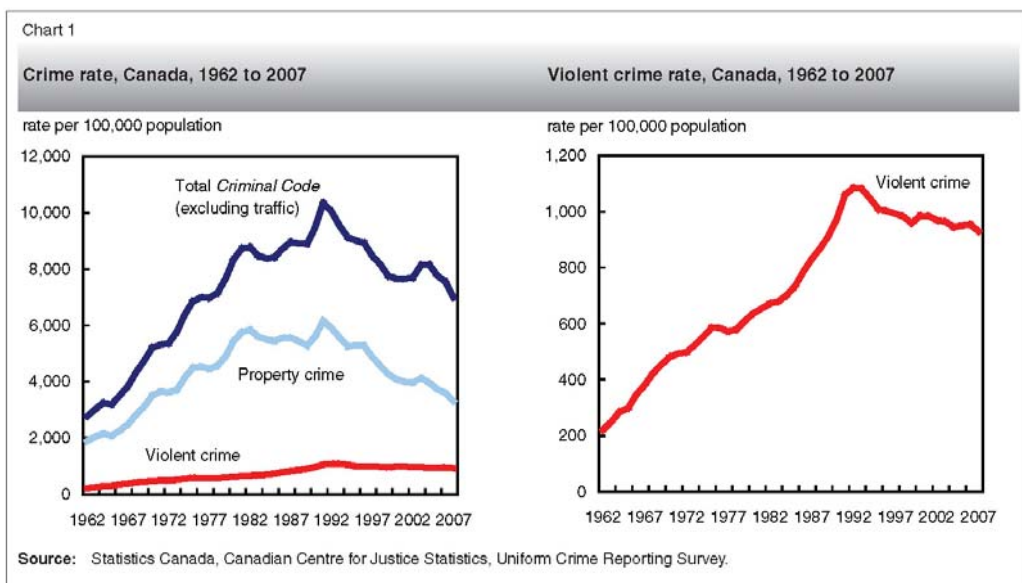
● Factors to consider

Many factors influence crime rates, including the number of people in the high crime age group (15 to 25). According to the Canadian Council on Social Development, the number of people in that age group dropped by 18% in 1991, which corresponds with the crime rate starting to fall as indicated in Chart 1 below. (Source: *Crime Prevention Through Social Development*)

Something else to consider. The federal government did victimization surveys in 1988, 1993, 1999 and 2004. In 1993, 42% of Canadians reported their victimization to police, in 1999, 37% reported to police, and by 2004, the number had dropped to 34%. Has violent crime really decreased in recent years, or is it that fewer Canadians are reporting these crimes?

● Additional information

For detailed analysis and expert insight, read *2006 Crime Stats Analysis—Time for the Truth* by Scott Newark, former Special Counsel and Vice-chair of Ontario's Office for Victims of Crime, posted in the Research Section at www.thefreeradical.ca.



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Violent Youth Crime

- Youth violent crime has doubled since 1987

A report on youth crime released by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics in May 2008 (for 2006) stated that youth violent crimes have increased 30% since 1991. While the overall violent crime rate declined 4% in the last ten years, violent crime among youth rose 12% in the same period.

Youth homicide rates have risen 41% since 1997. Quoted in the *Globe and Mail*, youth justice expert Dr. Nick Bala of Queens University called this trend "worrisome" — something of an understatement.

In Chart 11 below, reproduced from Statistics Canada's *Crime Statistics in Canada, 2007*, the figures indicate that violent youth crime has **doubled since 1987**. It is the blending of property and violent crimes that results in the much touted "decrease" in youth crime.

Staff Sgt. Dave Saunders, head of Youth Programs for the Toronto Police, says the numbers offer only a glimpse at the reality because, "Youth are very uncomfortable reporting crime. There are many victims who are suffering in silence."

Saunders says there are three distinct trends in Toronto: the growth of gang-type or group violence, the rapid escalation to weapons in a conflict, and an increase in female violence.

- Violence is more intense and brutal

In addition to the rising numbers, youth crime experts believe that teen violence is more intense and escalates faster. Sally Spencer, Executive Director of Youth Assisting Youth, a peer-mentoring program for at risk youth in Toronto and York Region says, "The severity of what is happening is definitely on the rise."

Ray Corrado, a criminologist at Simon Fraser University, says, "What strikes me as a researcher is an apparent increase in the brutality."

Sibylle Artz, an expert in youth violence at the University of Victoria agrees, and says there is a consensus among many people who deal with youth directly. "They all tell the same story, that they have this experience of this being more brutal, more extreme," she says.

Experts say teen violence escalates far faster, is more intense, and involves groups, girls and weapons more than ever before.

‘ *The severity of what is happening is definitely on the rise.*

SALLY SPENCER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
YOUTH ASSISTING
YOUTH
TORONTO (2004)

