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Police-reported crime statistics in Canada, 2012

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The following symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| . | not available for any reference period |
| .. | not available for a specific reference period |
| ... | not applicable |
| 0 | true zero or a value rounded to zero |
| 0 ^s | value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded |
| P | preliminary |
| r | revised |
| X | suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the <i>Statistics Act</i> |
| E | use with caution |
| F | too unreliable to be published |
| * | significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$) |

Police-reported crime statistics in Canada, 2012: highlights

- Just under 2 million criminal incidents were reported to police in 2012, about 36,000 fewer than in 2011, a decline primarily due to decreases in non-violent crimes.
- After peaking in 1991, the police-reported crime rate—which measures the volume of criminal incidents reported to police—has generally declined. In 2012, it reached its lowest level since 1972.
- The Crime Severity Index (CSI), which takes into account the volume and seriousness of police-reported crime, was down for the ninth consecutive year. Both the violent Crime Severity Index and the non-violent Crime Severity Index declined in 2012.
- In 2012, 543 homicides were reported in Canada, 55 fewer than in 2011. As a result, the homicide rate fell to its lowest level since 1966. However, 11 more attempted murders and 21 more other offences causing death were reported in 2012 than in 2011.
- The rate for most violent offences was down in 2012 with the largest decreases recorded for major sexual assaults, homicide, robbery, assaults on a peace officer, and indecent or harassing phone calls.
- Offences causing death other than homicide, as well as extortion, violent firearm offences, and sexual offences against children were among the few violent offences that rose in 2012.
- The police-reported rates for most non-violent *Criminal Code* offences were also down in 2012. In contrast, the rates of terrorism-related incidents, identity fraud, and arson rose. The rates for most federal statute violations also rose in 2012.
- Police-reported youth crime also decreased in 2012. Both the youth accused rate and the youth CSI were down for the third consecutive year.
- Both the crime rate and the CSI were highest in the territories. Among the provinces, the highest police-reported crime rates and CSIs were generally reported in the Western provinces.
- Most provinces reported lower crime rates in 2012 than in 2011. Only New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and the territories saw increases in their police-reported crime rates and CSIs.
- Kelowna had the highest police-reported crime rate in 2012, and Regina recorded a higher CSI than any other census metropolitan area (CMA). Toronto recorded the lowest crime rate while Québec recorded the lowest CSI among CMAs.
- Winnipeg had the highest violent CSI in 2012, followed by Saskatoon and Thunder Bay. Thunder Bay reported the highest homicide rate, followed by Winnipeg.

Police-reported crime statistics in Canada, 2012

by Samuel Perreault

Crime has many consequences, not only for its victims and their relatives and friends, but also for society as a whole. As well, all levels of government devote many resources to provide policing, court, correctional, and victim services (Zhang 2013; Zhang 2011). In addition, the level of crime in a community is related to its residents' level of well-being (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada 2013) and overall health (Pittman et al. 2012). Therefore, the importance of tracking changes in the nature and extent of crime to identify and develop strategies to combat crime is generally recognized (United Nations 2013).

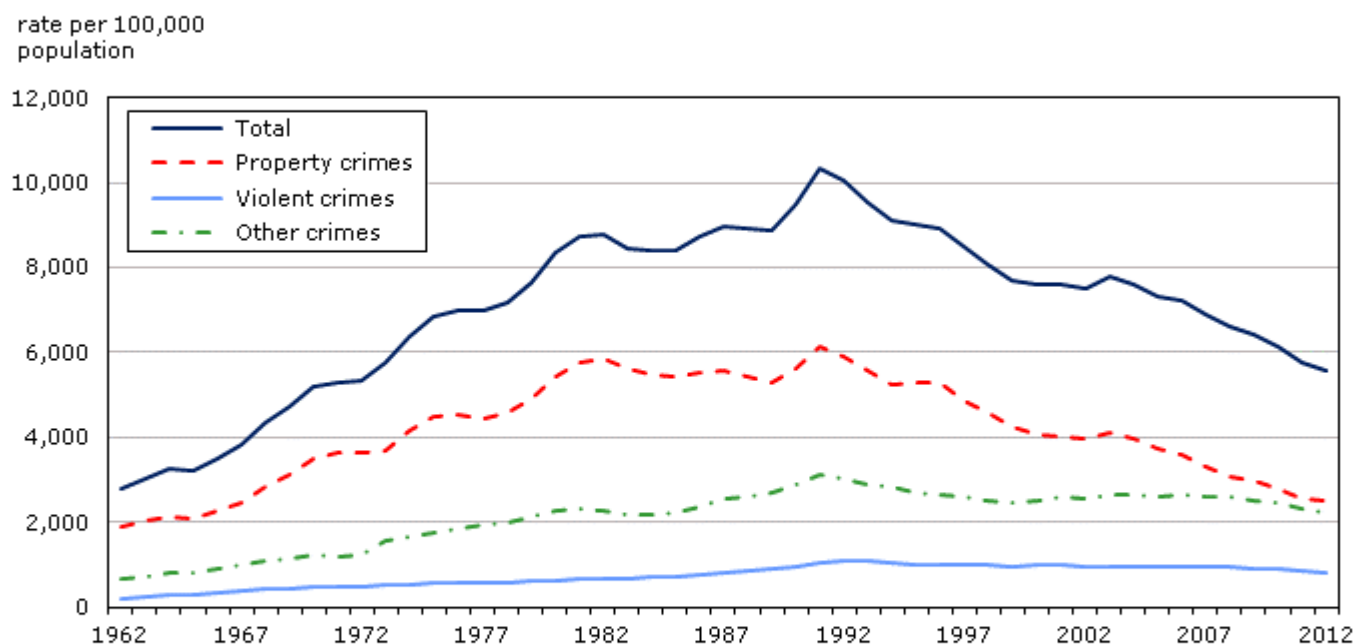
Since 1962, Statistics Canada has been conducting the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey, which collects information on all criminal incidents reported to, and substantiated by, Canadian police services.¹ The UCR Survey is one of the two main sources of national data on crime, the other being the General Social Survey on victimization, whose next cycle will be in 2014. Together, both surveys provide a relatively complete picture of crime in Canada.

This *Juristat* article presents findings from the 2012 UCR Survey.² It explores trends in the volume and severity of police-reported crime at the national, provincial/territorial, and census metropolitan area levels. It also takes a closer look at trends in specific offences, such as homicide, sexual assault and break-ins, and in youth crime.

Police-reported crime rate in Canada continues to fall

The police-reported crime rate, which measures the volume of crime per 100,000 population, continued to decline in 2012, down 3% from 2011. After peaking in 1991, the police-reported crime rate has generally declined and, in 2012, it reached its lowest level since 1972 (Chart 1).

Chart 1
Police-reported crime rates, Canada, 1962 to 2012



Note: Information presented in this chart represents data from the UCR Aggregate (UCR1) Survey, and permits historical comparisons back to 1962. New definitions of crime categories were introduced in 2009 and are only available in the new format back to 1998. As a result, numbers in this chart will not match data released in the new UCR2 format. Specifically, the definition of violent crime has been expanded. In addition, UCR1 includes some different offences in the 'Other' crimes category.

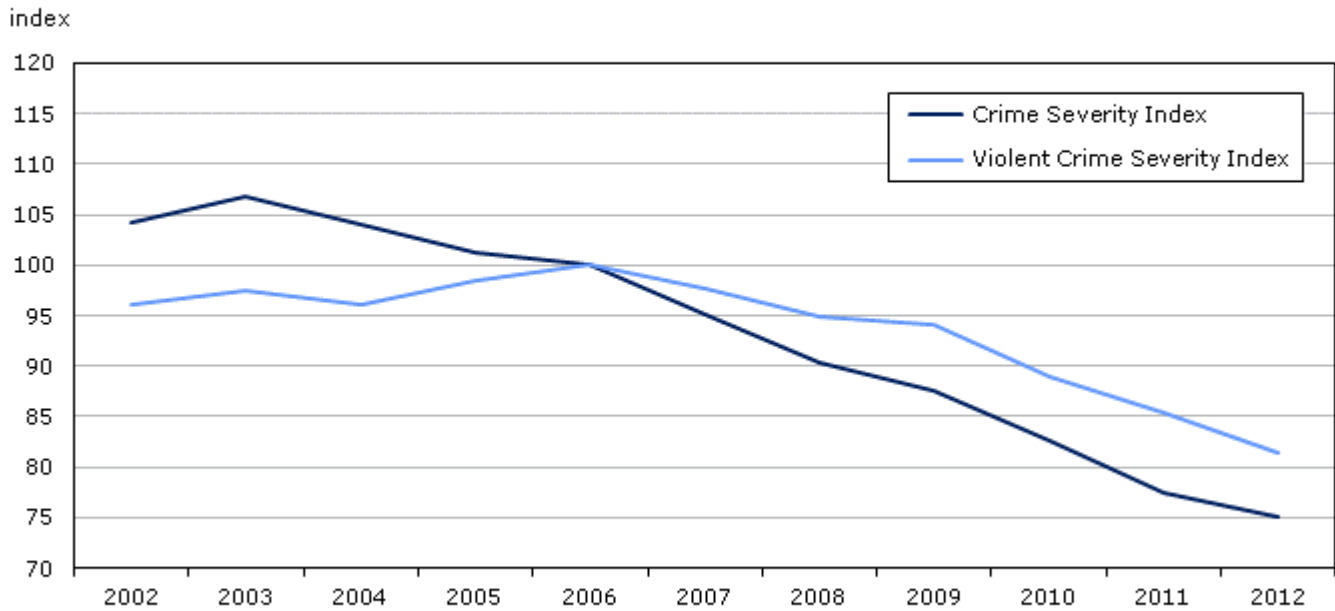
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Nearly 2 million criminal incidents were reported to Canadian police services in 2012, about 36,000 fewer than in the previous year (Table 1a). As was the case in 2011, the decline was primarily due to decreases in non-violent crimes such as mischief (-10,256), break-ins (-5,538), disturbing the peace (-5,185), theft of motor vehicle (-4,521) and possession of stolen property (-4,301). In 2012, there was also a decrease in some of the most frequent violent crimes, such as common assault (-3,103) and robbery (-2,110).³

In addition to the police-reported crime rate, which measures the **volume** of crime per 100,000 population, the **severity** of police-reported crime is measured using the Crime Severity Index (CSI). In calculating the CSI, each offence is assigned a weight based on its seriousness—that is, the severity of the sentences handed down by the courts. For example, a homicide will have a higher weight than an assault.

To simplify its use, the base index was set at 100 for 2006 for Canada (see Text box 1 for more details on the two measures). In 2012, the CSI for Canada was 75.0, down 3% from 2011 and 25% from 2006, the base year. It was also the ninth consecutive decrease since 2003 (Table 1b and Chart 2).

Chart 2
Police-reported Crime Severity Indexes, 2002 to 2012



Note: The base index was set at 100 for 2006 for Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Text box 1
Measuring police-reported crime

Canada has two complementary ways of measuring police-reported crime: the traditional crime rate, used since 1962, and the Crime Severity Index (CSI), for which data have been calculated back to 1998. Both measures take into account the **volume** of police-reported crime, but the CSI also measures the **severity** of crime.

The traditional **police-reported crime rate** is calculated by dividing the number of **criminal incidents** reported to police by the population and is usually expressed as a rate per 100,000 population. A criminal incident consists of one or more related offences that are committed during a single event and are reported to and substantiated by police. In addition, violent criminal incidents are generally counted separately for each victim. For example, an assault on three victims at the same time and location is counted as three incidents of assault.

In the UCR Survey, police services can report up to four offences per incident.⁴ However, only the most serious offence in an incident is used for the purposes of calculating the crime rate and the CSI.⁵

Counting only the most serious offence in an incident results in better historical comparisons and better comparisons between police services. Only in the late 1980s did police services begin to progressively report on more than one offence per criminal incident. Reporting for the most serious offence is still, to date, more consistent across police services.

However, counting incidents based on the most serious offence rather than individual offences results in some offences being slightly underrepresented. This has little or no effect on serious violent offences, such as homicide, sexual assault and aggravated assault. However, some, but not all, minor offences are less likely to be the most serious offence when occurring with other offences and, therefore, being included in the calculation of crime rates.

Text box 1 (continued)

Measuring police-reported crime

The exceptions are *Criminal Code* traffic offences which are always treated as separate incidents (e.g., an impaired driving incident combined with a cannabis possession offence would be considered as two separate incidents). That said, *Criminal Code* traffic offences, as well as federal statute violations are not included in the calculation of the overall police-reported crime rate.

One limitation of the traditional police-reported crime rate is that it can easily be affected by variations in very common but less serious crimes. For example, a sharp decline in incidents in which the most serious offence is theft of \$5,000 or under, which account for about one-quarter of all criminal incidents, may cause the police-reported crime rate to decrease even if the number of more serious incidents, such as homicides or robberies, increases.

The **Crime Severity Index (CSI)** minimizes the impact of this limitation; that is, high volume but less serious incidents driving changes in the police-reported crime rate. The CSI is calculated by assigning a weight to each type of offence based on the custody sentences handed down by the courts for each type of offence.⁶ The more severe the average sentence, the higher the weight assigned to the offence. For example, a more serious crime such as homicide will have a greater weight in the CSI than will the offence of mischief. The CSI covers all offences, including traffic violations and drug offences.

To calculate the CSI, the volume of offences is multiplied by the weight. These results are then added up and divided by the population, and then divided by the results for the base year, 2006, and multiplied by 100. In other words, the CSI for the base year 2006 is set at 100 for Canada.

In addition to the overall CSI, a violent Crime Severity Index (which measures only violent crime) and a non-violent Crime Severity Index (which measures only non-violent crime) are calculated. Each of these indexes is also available for crimes committed by youth.

To adjust to changes in sentencing patterns, *Criminal Code* and other federal statutes, the weights are updated every five years. The most recent update was carried out in 2013 and applies to 2011 and 2012 data presented in this report.

For more information on the CSI, see *Measuring Crime in Canada: Introducing the Crime Severity Index and Improvements to the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey* (Wallace et al. 2009), *The Methodology of the Police-Reported Crime Severity Index* (Babyak et al. 2009) and *Updating the Police-Reported Crime Severity Index Weights: Refinements to the Methodology* (Babyak et al. 2013).

Almost all provinces recorded lower police-reported crime rates

For almost all provinces, the police-reported crime rate and the CSI declined in 2012. The largest decrease in the police-reported crime rate was in Saskatchewan (-7%), followed by Ontario (-4%). The CSI declined most sharply in Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador (-5% for both) (Table 2a and Table 2b).

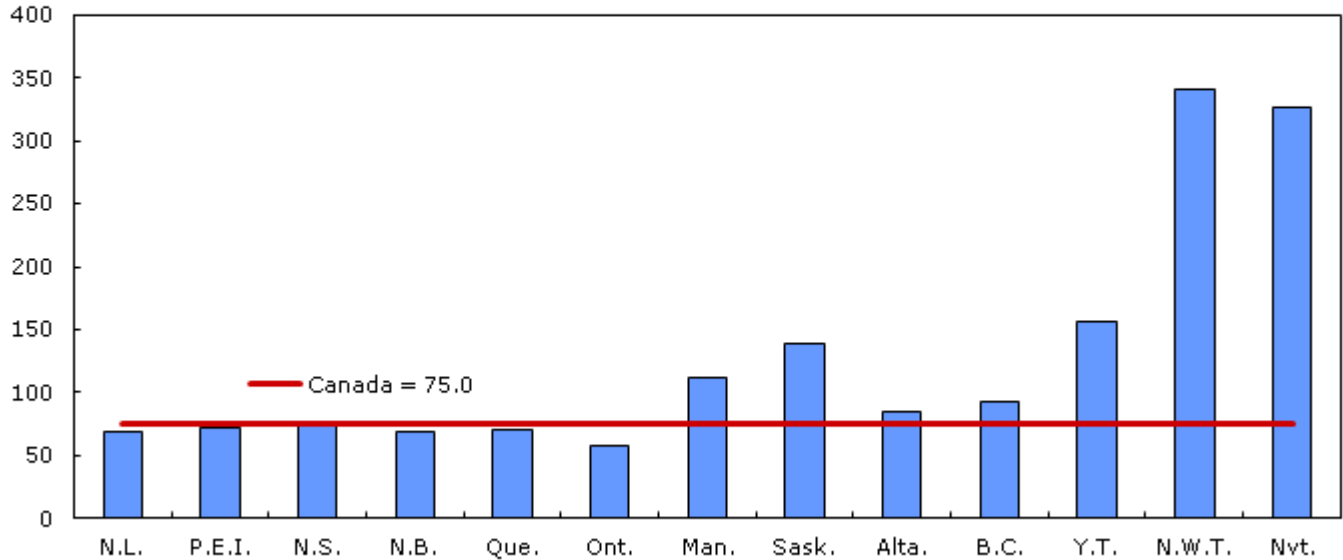
For most provinces, these declines are the continuation of a trend that started years ago. All provinces, except Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador, have seen their CSIs generally decrease since at least 2004. In the territories, however, the trend is slightly different: only Yukon has recorded a decrease in its CSI over the last decade.

New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island were the only provinces that recorded higher police-reported crime rates and CSIs in 2012 compared to the previous year. Crime severity also increased slightly in the three territories.

Despite the decrease in its police-reported crime rate and CSI, Saskatchewan remained the province with the highest crime rate and CSI in 2012. Only the territories reported higher crime rates and CSIs (Charts 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7).

Chart 3
Police-reported Crime Severity Index, by province and territory, 2012

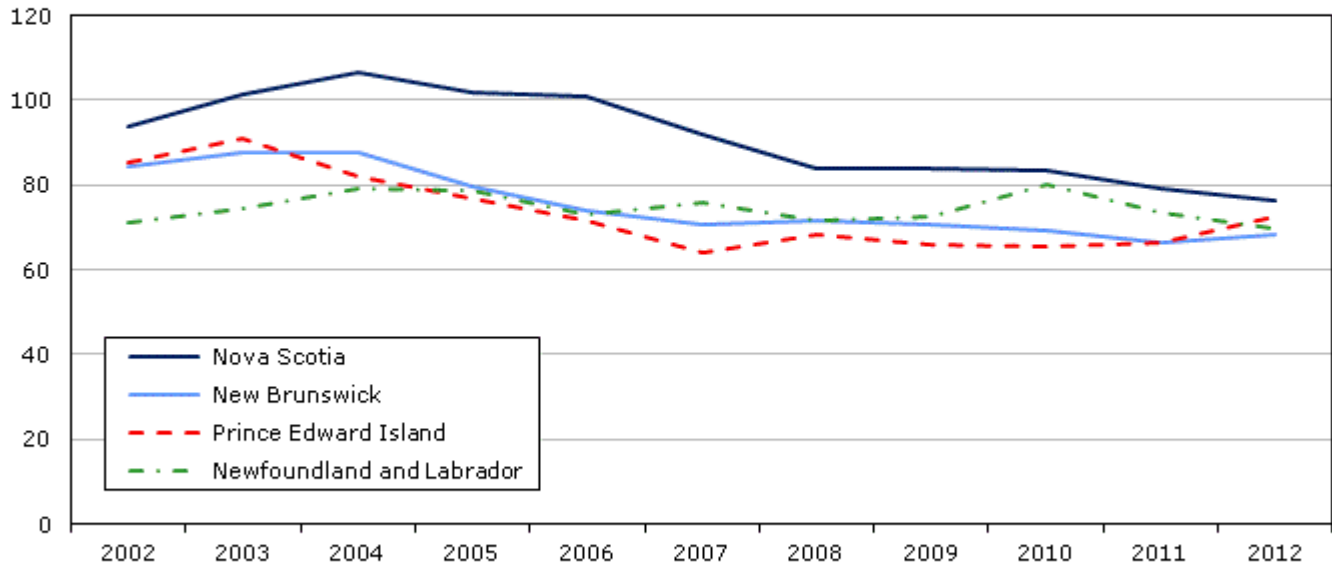
Crime Severity Index



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Chart 4
Police-reported Crime Severity Index, Atlantic provinces, 2002 to 2012

Crime Severity Index

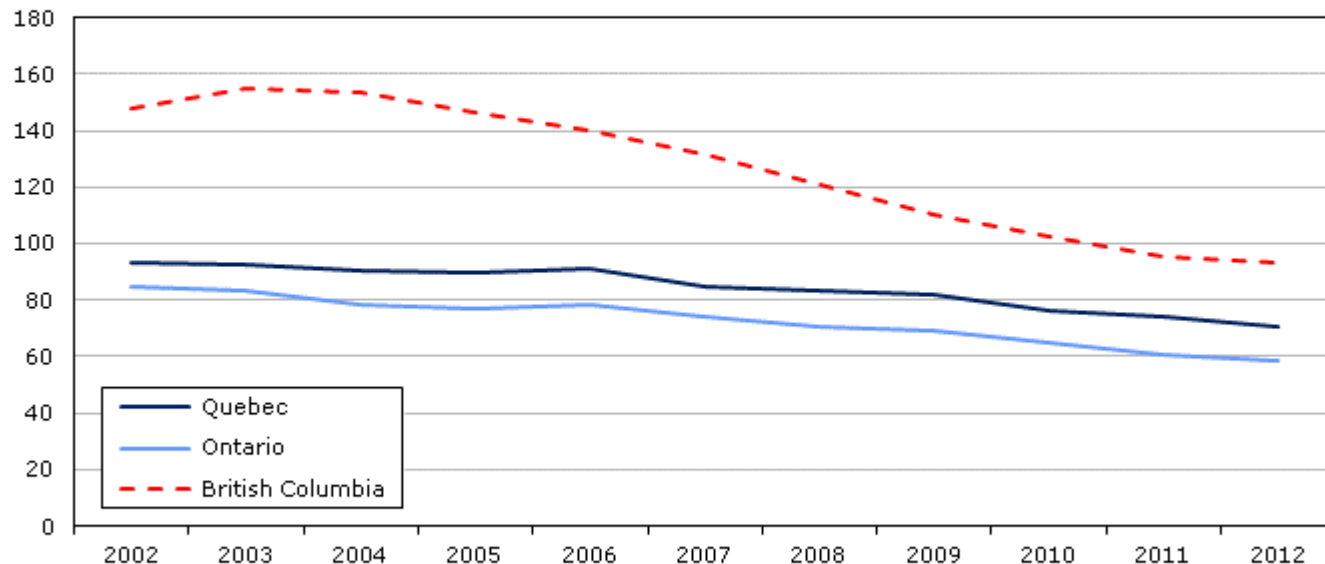


Note: The base index was set at 100 for 2006 for Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Chart 5
Police-reported Crime Severity Index, Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia, 2002 to 2012

Crime Severity Index

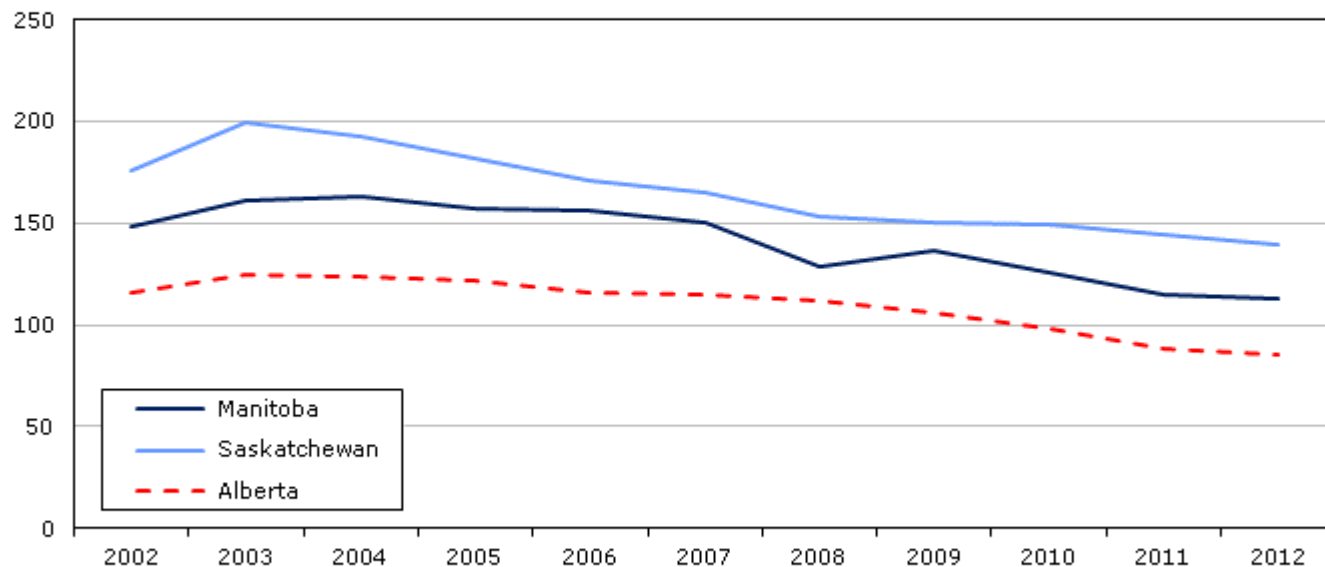


Note: The base index was set at 100 for 2006 for Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Chart 6
Police-reported Crime Severity Index, Prairie provinces, 2002 to 2012

Crime Severity Index

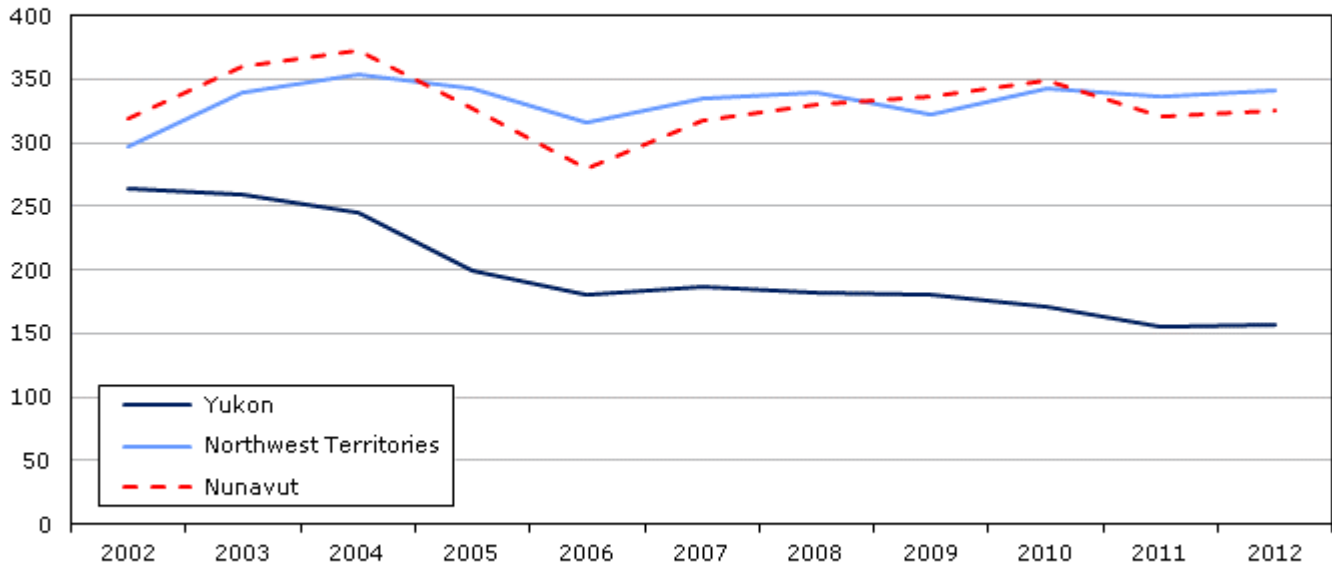


Note: The base index was set at 100 for 2006 for Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Chart 7
Police-reported Crime Severity Index, Territories, 2002 to 2012

Crime Severity Index



Note: The base index was set at 100 for 2006 for Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Text box 2

Factors affecting police-reported crime statistics

Several factors may have a cumulative impact on police-reported crime statistics. To be included in the UCR Survey, crimes first have to be reported to police. Hence, the number of crimes recorded by police depends largely on Canadians’ willingness to report incidents for which they are victims or witnesses. According to the 2009 General Social Survey on Victimization, 31% of crimes in the year preceding the survey were reported to police (see Text box 3 for more information about the General Social Survey and reporting to police).

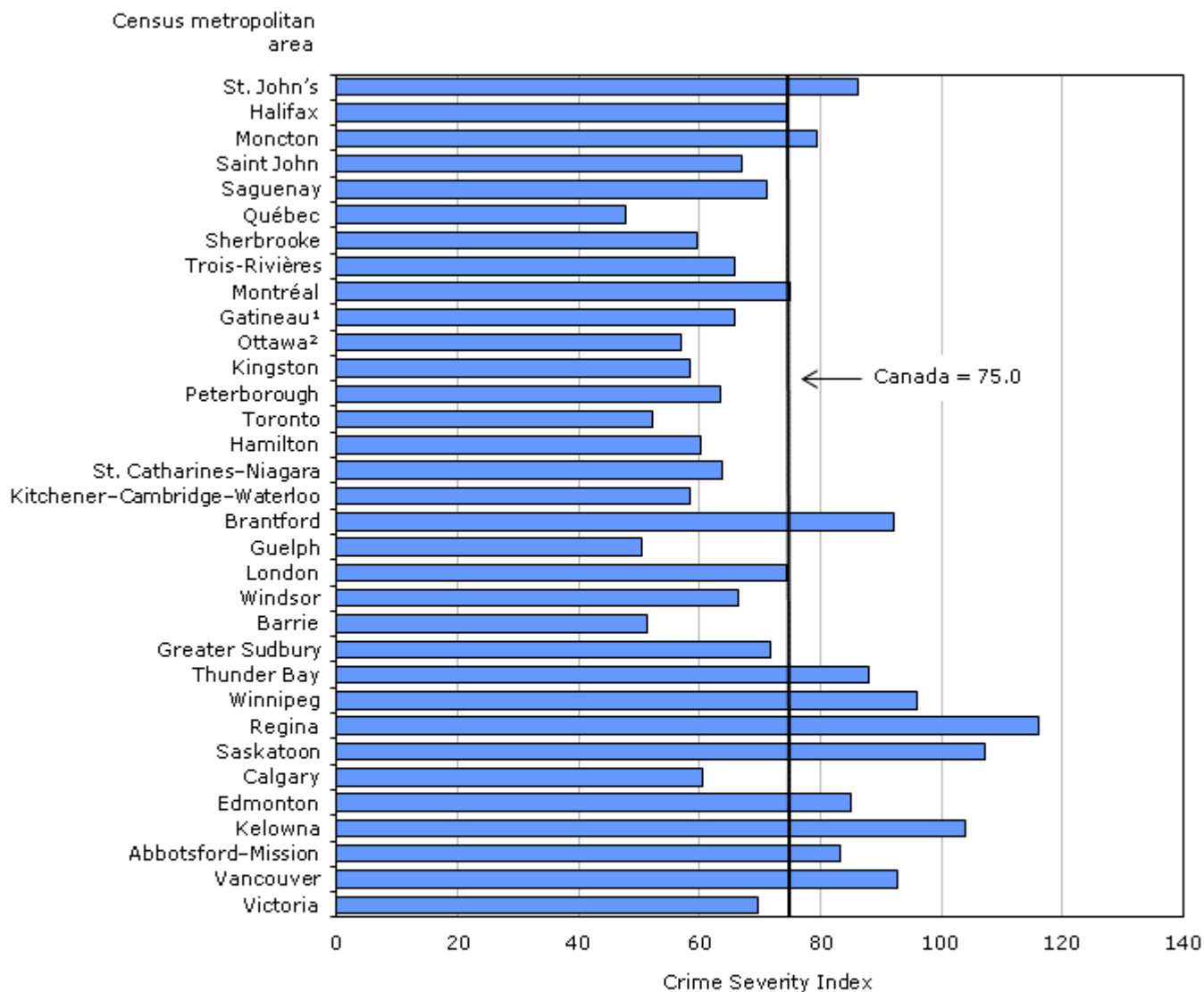
Differences in police services’ priorities, policies, procedures and enforcement practices will also have an effect, as will the availability of resources. For example, statistics for crimes such as impaired driving, prostitution and drug offences can be notably affected by police service priorities and operations. Some police services may also make greater use of municipal bylaws or provincial statutes for minor offences such as mischief and disturbing the peace.

In addition, social and economic factors can have an impact on the volume of crime in a society or a particular sector. In particular, crime rates can be affected by age demographics (Stevens et al. 2013; Carrington 2001), economic conditions (Andresen 2012; Phillips 2012; Pottie-Bunge et al. 2005), neighbourhood characteristics (Quick 2013; Charron 2011; Savoie 2008), the emergence of new technologies (Wall 2010; Nuth 2008) and Canadians’ attitudes toward crime and risky behaviour (Mishra 2009; Ouimet 2002).

Most census metropolitan areas report lower crime rates and CSIs in 2012

After recording the highest overall police-reported crime rate for the previous four years, Regina ranked second among census metropolitan areas (CMAs) in 2012. Regina's crime rate declined 10% from 2011, while Kelowna's rose 6%, resulting in this city having the highest rate among CMAs in 2012 (Table 3). With regard to crime severity, however, Regina remained the highest among CMAs, despite dropping 6% from the previous year (Table 4 and Chart 8).

Chart 8
Police-reported Crime Severity Index, by census metropolitan area, 2012



1. Gatineau refers to the Quebec part of the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA.

2. Ottawa refers to the Ontario part of the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA.

Note: The Oshawa census metropolitan area (CMA) is excluded from this chart due to the incongruity between the police service jurisdictional boundaries and the CMA boundaries. Police-reported statistics may be affected by differences in the way police services deal with minor offences. In some instances, police or municipalities might chose to deal with some minor offences using municipal by-laws or provincial provisions rather than *Criminal Code* provisions. The base index was set at 100 for 2006 for Canada.

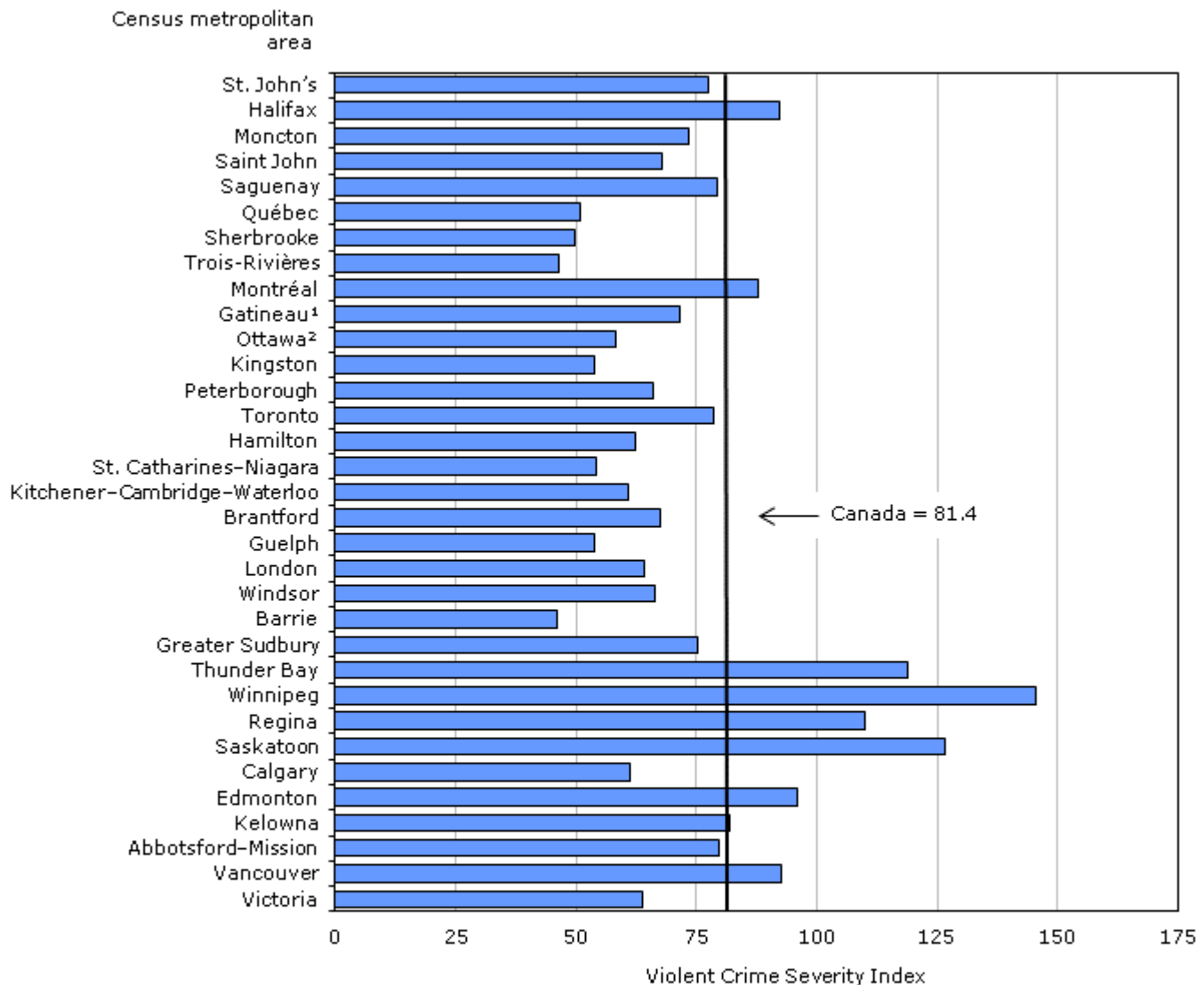
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Toronto reported a 7% decrease in its police-reported crime rate in 2012, and was the CMA with the lowest overall crime rate for the sixth consecutive year. Québec’s rate was second lowest, and recorded the lowest CSI.

Most CMAs saw lower CSIs in 2012. Only Moncton, Windsor, Kelowna, Guelph, St. Catharines–Niagara, Gatineau and Brantford had higher CSIs than in the previous year.

Looking at violent crime, Winnipeg reported the highest violent Crime Severity Index, followed by Saskatoon and Thunder Bay (Chart 9).

Chart 9
Police-reported Violent Crime Severity Index, by census metropolitan area, 2012



1. Gatineau refers to the Quebec part of the Ottawa–Gatineau CMA.

2. Ottawa refers to the Ontario part of the Ottawa–Gatineau CMA.

Note: The Oshawa census metropolitan area (CMA) is excluded from this chart due to the incongruity between the police service jurisdictional boundaries and the CMA boundaries. Police-reported statistics may be affected by differences in the way police services deal with minor offences. In some instances, police or municipalities might chose to deal with some minor offences using municipal by-laws or provincial provisions rather than *Criminal Code* provisions. The base index was set at 100 for 2006 for Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

The CMAs of St. John's and Moncton recorded the highest rates of violent crime, despite violent CSIs (77.3 and 73.4 respectively) that were below the national average of 81.4. The police-reported crime rates in these CMAs were driven by a relatively high number of common assaults. Since these offences are considered less serious than most other violent crimes, they carry less weight in the calculation of the violent CSI (Table 5).

Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver all report declines in their crime rates and CSIs

While the three largest CMAs (Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver) are home to more than one-third (35%) of Canada's population, they accounted for slightly more than one-quarter of the crimes reported by police in Canada in 2012. Of the three, only Vancouver had an overall police-reported crime rate higher than the national average.

These three CMAs recorded declines in their police-reported crime rates in 2012, led by Toronto (-7%). Toronto's CSI (52.1) was also well below those for Montréal (75.1) and Vancouver (92.7) and was the fourth lowest among all CMAs in Canada. Montréal's CSI was similar to the national average, while Vancouver's CSI was the fifth highest in the country.

Violent crime

The police-reported violent crime rate declined in 2012, down 3% from 2011 to 1,190 incidents per 100,000 population. Canadian police services reported about 415,000 violent incidents, about 9,000 fewer than in 2011 (Table 1a). The police-reported violent crime rate was at its lowest level since 1987 (Chart 1).

Most types of violent crime decreased between 2011 and 2012. Offences causing death other than homicide,⁷ as well as extortion, firearm offences and sexual violations against children, were among the few types of violent crime whose rate increased in 2012 (Table 6).

Among the provinces, Saskatchewan had the highest violent crime rate in 2012, despite reporting the largest decrease from 2011. Ontario had the lowest rate. All provinces and territories except Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, and Nunavut recorded declines in their police-reported violent crime rates.

The overall severity of violent crime, as measured by the violent CSI, also declined in 2012 (Table 1b). The violent CSI rose between 2002 and 2006 and then began to decrease. By 2012, it was nearly 20% lower than in 2006.

The violent CSI was down in every province except Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island (Table 2b). Despite the increase, Prince Edward Island continued to record the lowest violent Crime Severity Index among the provinces while the violent CSI was greatest in Manitoba.

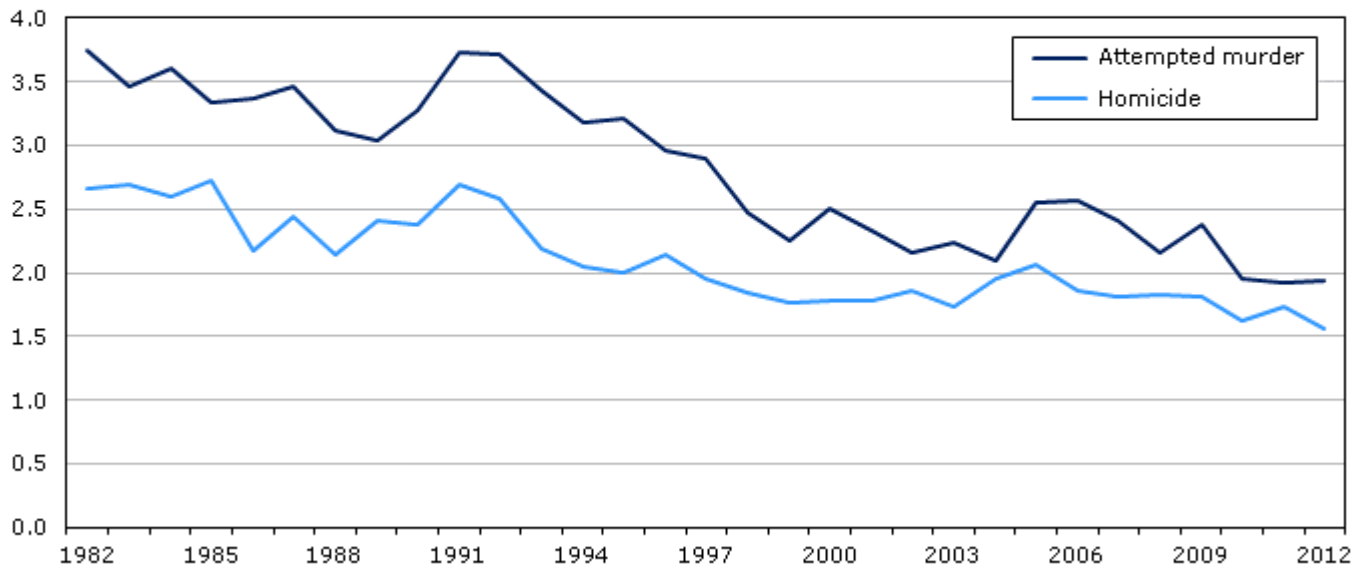
Similar to the overall crime rate, violent crime rates and violent CSIs were higher for the territories than for the provinces. All territories recorded a decrease of either its violent crime rate or its violent CSI. Yukon, the territory with the lowest violent crime rates and CSI, recorded a decrease in both measures.

Canada records its lowest homicide rate in more than 40 years

Police reported 543 homicides in 2012, 55 fewer than in 2011. As a result, the homicide rate fell 10%, to 1.56 per 100,000 population, its lowest level since 1966. In contrast, there were 11 more incidents of attempted murder than in 2011 and an additional 21 other violations causing death (Chart 10).

Chart 10
Attempted murder and homicide, police-reported rates, Canada, 1982 to 2012

rate per 100,000 population

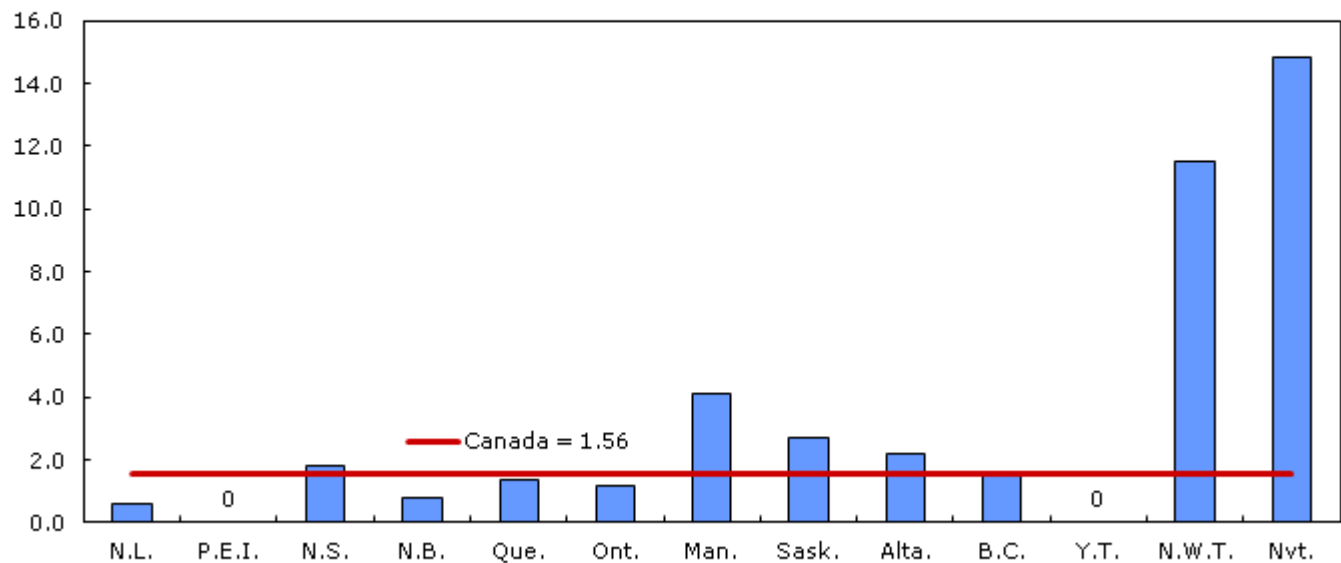


Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

The decrease in the number of homicides was more pronounced in Western Canada. Together, Alberta (-24), British Columbia (-16), and Saskatchewan (-9) were responsible for most of the decline in 2012. Nevertheless, homicide rates remained lower in Eastern Canada. Every province east of Manitoba, except Nova Scotia, recorded a homicide rate that was below the national average (Table 7 and Chart 11).

Chart 11
Homicide, police-reported rate, by province and territory, 2012

rate per 100,000 population



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Downward trend in police-reported sexual assaults continues

About 21,900 sexual assaults were reported to police in 2012, about 60 fewer than in the previous year. This relatively modest decline is primarily due to a decrease in major sexual assaults (levels 2 and 3) (Table 6).

However, the number of sexual assaults reported by police likely understates the actual number of sexual assaults that occurred in Canada in 2012. According to 2009 victimization data from the General Social Survey, the vast majority of sexual assaults are never reported to police (Perreault and Brennan 2010).

For the second consecutive year, the number of sexual offences against children increased slightly (+3%). These crimes include violations specific to children, such as sexual interference, invitation to sexual touching, sexual exploitation, and luring a child via a computer.⁸ Police reported nearly 4,000 such offences in 2012 (Table 6).

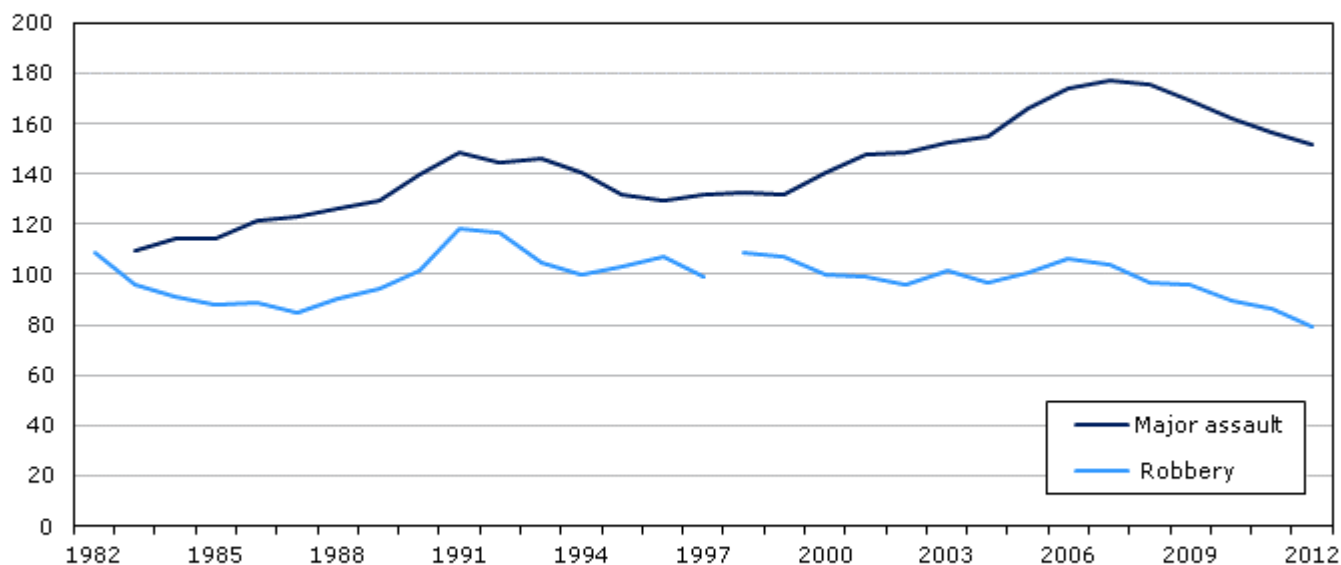
Major assaults decline in 2012 yet remain higher than a decade ago

Assault is the most common form of violent crime in Canada, accounting for more than one-half of all police-reported violent offences. Assaults are divided into three levels on the basis of severity with level 3 being the most severe. In 2012, police reported more than 223,000 level 1, 2 and 3 assaults, about 10,600 assaults against a peace officer, and nearly 3,000 other types⁹ of assaults (Table 6).

All types of assault were down in 2012 compared to the previous year. The largest decrease was in the rate of assaults against a peace officer (-8%). Despite these decreases, the rates of major assault (levels 2 and 3) and assault against a peace officer remained higher than 10 years ago (Table 6 and Chart 12). However, the rate of level 1 assault, which is less serious but much more frequent, was nearly 20% lower than it was 10 years earlier.

Chart 12
Major assault (levels 2 and 3) and robbery, police-reported rates, Canada, 1982 to 2012

rate per 100,000 population



Note: Trend data for major assault began in 1983, when legislation affecting the classification of assault came into effect. Revisions have been applied to robbery data back to 1998. As a result, there is a break in the data series between 1997 and 1998.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Most provinces and territories recorded declines in their rates of major assault in 2012. Only Nunavut and Newfoundland and Labrador recorded higher rates. Among the provinces, Saskatchewan and Manitoba had the highest major assault rates while Prince Edward Island recorded the lowest rate (Table 7).

Robbery, one of the most serious and most frequent types of violent crime, also fell in 2012 and reached its lowest level in more than 30 years. The decrease was driven by large drops in Quebec (-15%) and Alberta (-11%) and, more specifically, in Montréal (-18%) and Calgary (-23%).

Non-violent crime

Severity of police-reported non-violent crime continues to decrease

Most police-reported criminal incidents in 2012 involved non-violent offences (Chart 1 and Table 1a), as has been the case since the collection of national police-reported crime statistics began in 1962. In 2012, property and other *Criminal Code* offences accounted for about four-fifths (79%) of police-reported *Criminal Code* incidents (excluding traffic offences). Theft of \$5,000 or under, mischief and offences related to the administration of justice, such as breach of probation or fail to comply with order, made up almost two-thirds (64%) of the non-violent crimes reported by police.

The rate of police-reported property offences fell 3% in 2012, its ninth consecutive decrease. In 2012, the rate of property offences was about half what it was in the early 1990s. The non-violent Crime Severity Index was also down by 3% in 2012, the ninth consecutive annual decline (Table 1b).

Despite reporting the largest decline in the rate of property crime in the country, Saskatchewan (-9%) had the highest property crime rate and the highest non-violent CSI among the provinces in 2012. Only the territories had higher property crime rates and non-violent CSIs (Table 2a and Table 2b).

Ontario and Quebec were the only two provinces with police-reported non-violent crime rates below 3,000 incidents per 100,000 population. Ontario recorded the lowest non-violent CSI, followed by Quebec and New Brunswick.

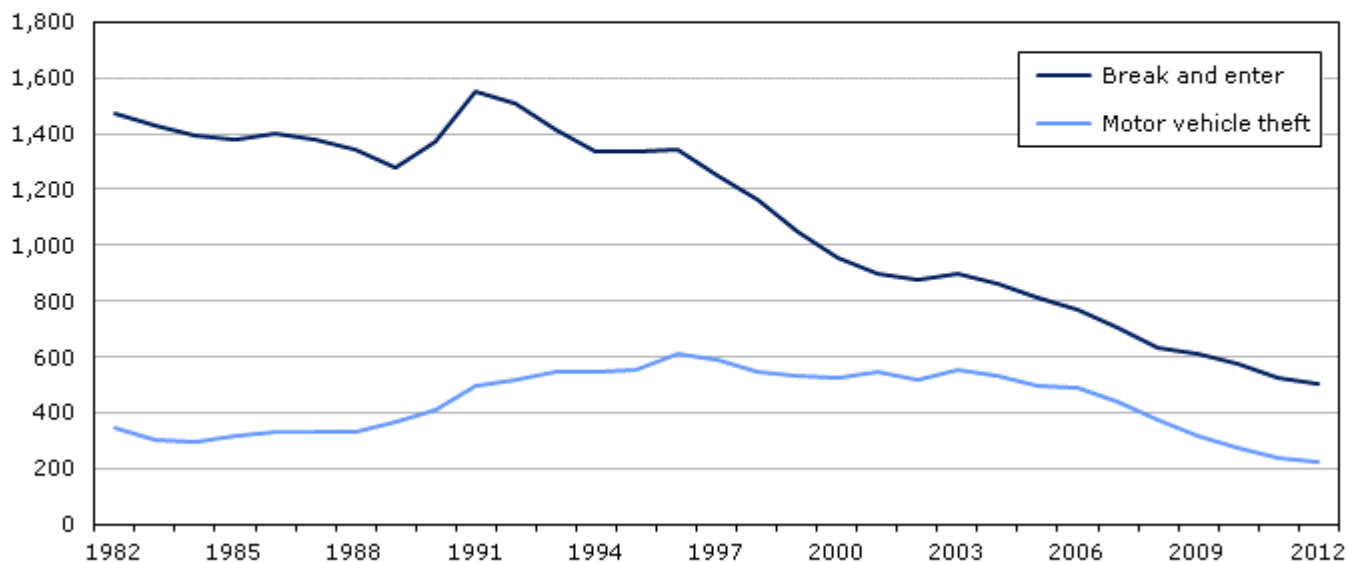
Break-ins and motor vehicle thefts continue to decline

Break and enter and motor vehicle theft are two of the most common police-reported offences in Canada. Every year in Canada, there is on average about one break-in every three minutes and one motor vehicle theft every seven minutes. However, these two types of offences have declined sharply in recent years. This trend continued in 2012, with about 5,500 fewer break-ins and 4,500 fewer motor vehicle thefts than in 2011. The rate of break and enter was 43% lower in 2012 than 10 years earlier and the motor vehicle theft rate was 57% lower (Table 6 and Chart 13).

Chart 13

Break and enter and motor vehicle theft, police-reported rates, Canada, 1982 to 2012

rate per 100,000 population



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

In 2012, the decline in the rate of break and enter was greatest in Newfoundland and Labrador and the Northwest Territories (-11% for both), followed by Quebec (-9%). The rate of motor vehicle theft declined in most provinces. However, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, as well as Yukon and Nunavut, all recorded increases in their rates of both break-ins and motor vehicle theft (Table 7).

More police-reported incidents of identity fraud

In January 2010, new legislation dealing with identity theft and identity fraud in Canada came into force. In 2012, police services reported 12,739 incidents of identity theft or identity fraud, about 700 more, or 5% more, than in 2011. During the same period, police reported about an additional 700 incidents of fraud other than identity fraud compared to 2011 (Table 6). The identity fraud rate varied substantially across the country, from 70 incidents per 100,000 in Quebec to 46 in British Columbia and 10 or fewer in Newfoundland and Labrador, Nunavut and Manitoba.

Increase in police-reported terrorism-related incidents

In 2001, the Canadian government passed a number of laws in an effort to combat terrorism (*Anti-terrorism Act, S.C. 2001, c.41*). These laws specifically prohibit, for example, participating in any activity of a terrorist group, perpetrating a hoax regarding terrorist activities or facilitating a terrorist activity (for a complete list of offences, see Table 6).

According to police-reported data, terrorism-related incidents remain extremely rare in Canada. In 2012, police reported 114 such incidents,¹⁰ less than one incident per 100,000 population (Table 6). Nevertheless, this was nearly double the number of incidents reported in the previous year. The increase was largely due to an additional 62 hoax terrorism incidents that occurred in Quebec in 2012 compared to 2011.¹¹

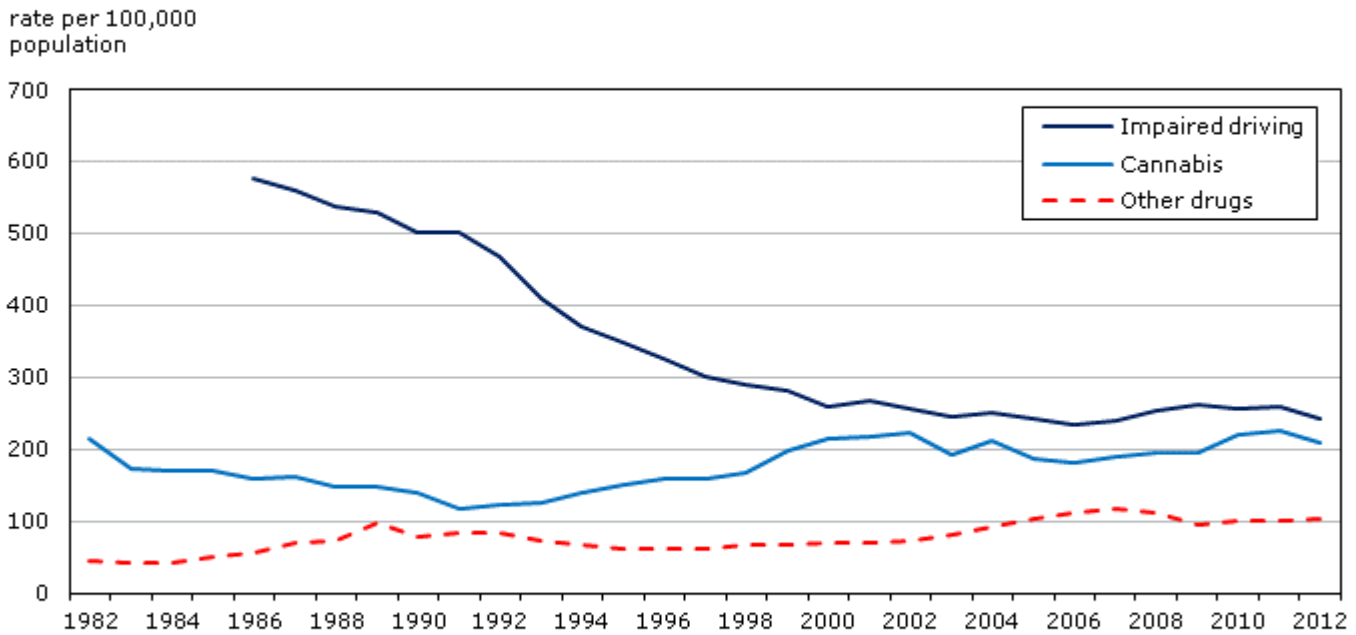
Of the 114 terrorism-related incidents reported in 2012, 11 were cleared by police—in other words, solved—at the time the data were submitted to Statistics Canada. Of the 11 cleared incidents, three resulted in formal charges being laid or recommended by police against a total of eight accused persons.

Cannabis-related incidents down, but other drug-related incidents up

Unlike the *Criminal Code* violations discussed in previous sections, drug-related offences in Canada fall under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*. In 2012, police reported more than 109,000 drug-related incidents, representing a rate of 314 incidents per 100,000 population (Table 6).

Overall, fewer drug-related incidents were reported in 2012 than in 2011. The decline was due primarily to a decrease in cannabis-related incidents, which accounted for two-thirds of all drug-related incidents reported by police (Chart 14). In contrast, nearly all types of other drug offences increased. The largest increase in police-reported drug offences in 2012 was in cocaine possession (+5%), although over the previous 10-year period, the rate of possession of drugs other than cannabis and cocaine rose most, up 89%.

Chart 14
Drug offences and impaired driving, police-reported rates, Canada, 1982 to 2012



Note: Includes alcohol and/or drug-impaired operation of a vehicle, alcohol and/or drug-impaired operation of a vehicle causing death or bodily harm, failure or refusal to comply with testing for the presence of alcohol or drugs and failure or refusal to provide a breath or blood sample.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

British Columbia, which was the province reporting the highest overall rate of drug offences in recent years, had about 2,000 fewer cannabis-related incidents in 2012. On the other hand, the rate of cocaine-related offences in Saskatchewan has more than doubled over the past two years. As a result, Saskatchewan had the highest overall rate of police-reported drug offences in 2012, followed by British Columbia.

Nevertheless, British Columbia continued to report the highest rates for some specific drugs, such as cannabis, heroin and ecstasy offences. It also had the second highest rate of methamphetamine (crystal meth) incidents, behind Quebec, but well above the other provinces. Overall, rates of drug-related offences were generally higher in the territories than in the provinces (Table 7).

Decline in impaired driving incidents

After generally rising over the previous five years, both the number and rate of impaired driving decreased in 2012 (Chart 14). However, the number of drug-impaired driving incidents continued to climb, reaching nearly 2,000 in 2012, or 2% of impaired driving incidents. The impaired driving rate increased in the three territories, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador though declined in the other provinces.

The decrease in the overall impaired driving rate was primarily due to a large decline in British Columbia (-24%) (Table 7). In 2011, the introduction of the Immediate Roadside Prohibition (IRP) in British Columbia provided an alternative method for police to proceed with penalties for impaired drivers and may account for some of the change reported between 2011 and 2012. There was also a notable decrease in Prince Edward Island (-33%) after Charlottetown altered how they treat calls from the public regarding impaired driving which accounts for the decrease at the municipal and provincial levels for 2012.

Text box 3

Ways of measuring crime in Canada: Police-reported data and the GSS on victimization

Canada has two main sources of national data on crime: the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey, and the General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization, which was last conducted in 2009. The GSS on victimization is administered every five years to a sample of Canadians, aged 15 and over. One of the advantages of the GSS on victimization is that it captures crimes that are not reported to police. However, it collects information about only a subset of offences (i.e. sexual assault, robbery, assault, breaking and entering, motor vehicle theft, theft and vandalism) and excludes crimes against businesses.

While both surveys measure crime, there are significant methodological and conceptual differences between them. As a result, direct comparisons of the data findings from the two surveys are not recommended (for further information, see Wallace et al. 2009). However, comparing trends from the two surveys can provide information on changes in the pattern of crimes reported to police. For instance, for a number of offences, namely assault, robbery, motor vehicle theft and mischief, both surveys show similar trends over the period from 1999 to 2009. In contrast, the GSS data showed an increase in theft and no change in break-ins and sexual assault, whereas the UCR Survey recorded declines in those offences over the same 10-year period.

These differences may be partly due to Canadians' propensity to report certain crimes. While the GSS data indicate that reporting rates to police have remained steady for most offences from 1999 to 2009, reporting rates to police fell 12 percentage points for break and enter, 11 percentage points for household property theft, and 7 percentage points for theft of personal property. For sexual assault, the sample size was too small to yield a reliable estimate of the reporting rates for each cycle.

Among victims reporting to the GSS, 36% said they did not report the incident mainly because they did not consider it to be important enough, 19% said they did not report the incident mainly because they felt the police could not have done anything about it; 15% said the incident had been dealt with in another way. For more information about the results of the 2009 GSS on Victimization, see "Criminal victimization in Canada, 2009" (Perreault and Brennan 2010).

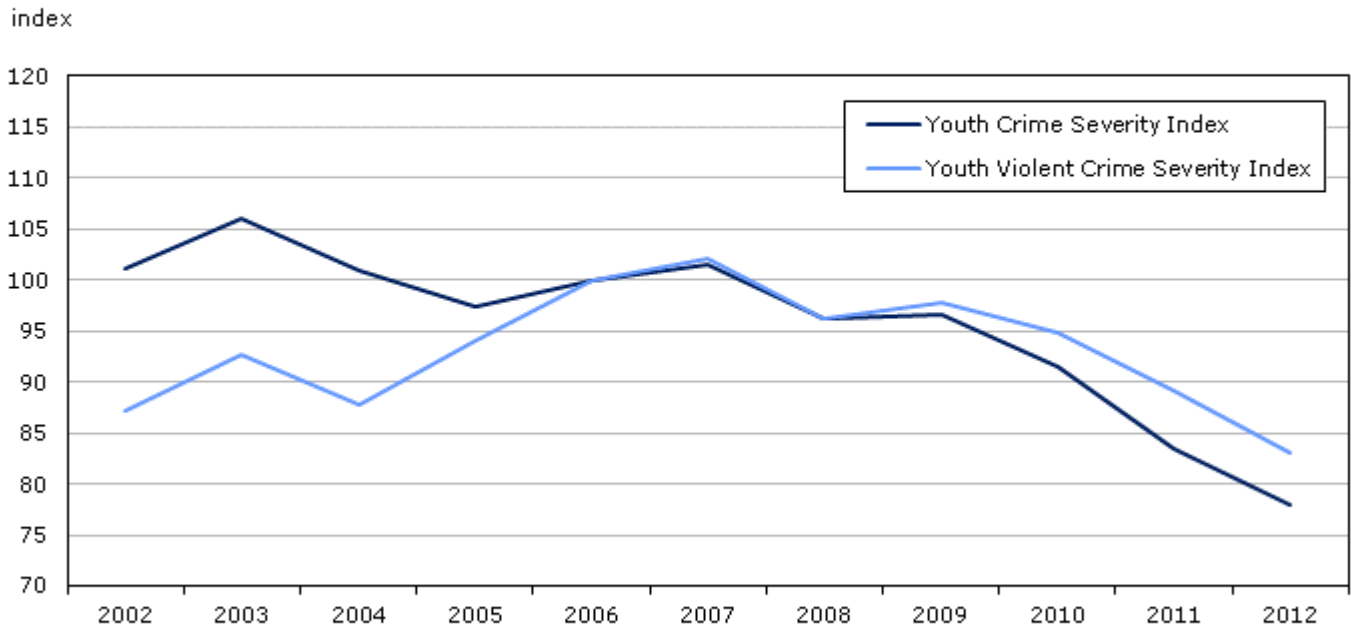
Youth crime

Police-reported youth accused rate and the youth Crime Severity Index down for the third consecutive year

Among all persons accused by police in 2012, over 125,000 were aged 12 to 17 years, representing a rate of 5,224 accused per 100,000 youths (Table 8a). However, this rate may be an underestimate since any rate that is based upon age of the accused persons does not take into account offenders who were not identified by police.¹²

In 2012, the police-reported youth accused rate was down 7% from 2011, and more than 20% from 2009. The decrease was seen for both violent and non-violent crime. The youth Crime Severity Index was also down for the third consecutive year (Table 8b and Chart 15).

Chart 15
Police-reported youth Crime Severity Indexes, Canada,
2002 to 2012



Note: The base index was set at 100 for 2006 for Canada.

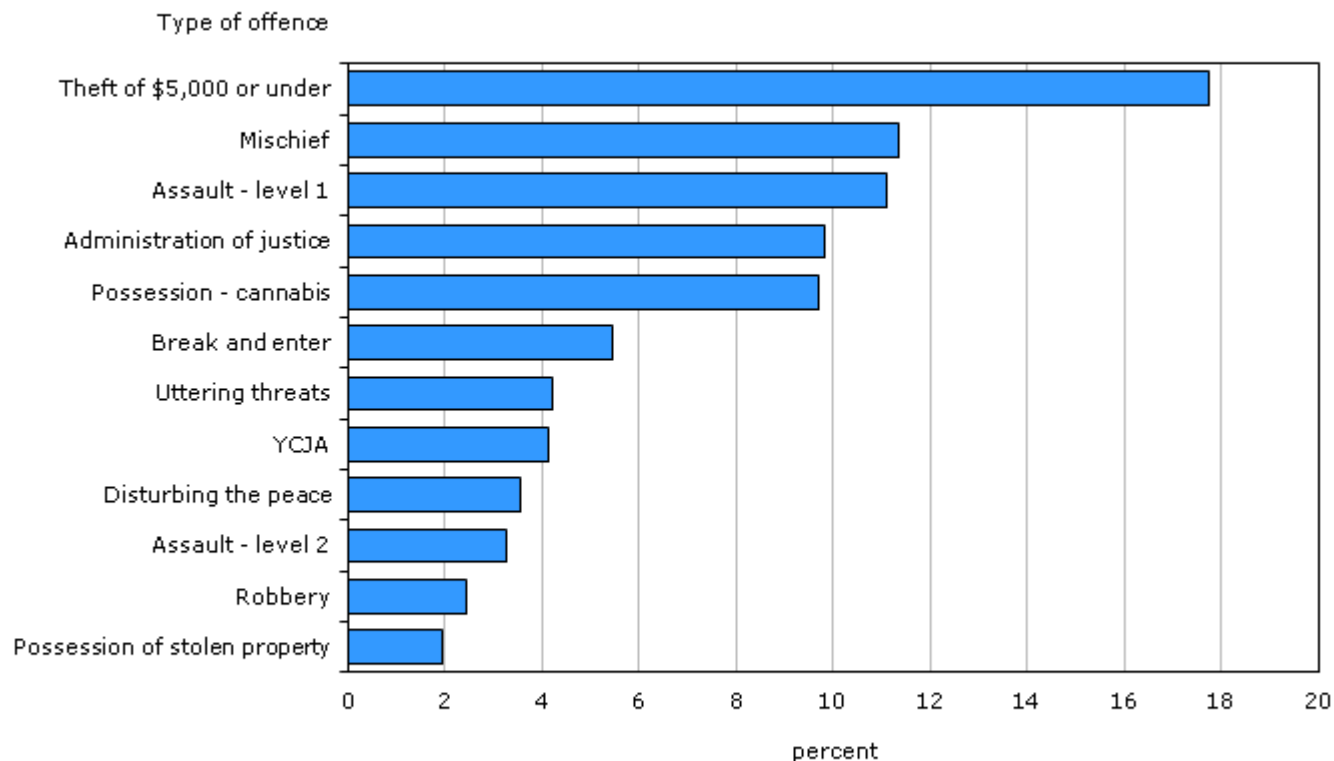
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

The youth accused rate and the youth CSI declined in almost every province and territory. Only Prince Edward Island and Yukon saw increases in their youth crime rates and youth CSIs in 2012. The Northwest Territories and Nunavut also saw their youth CSIs increase, although their youth crime rates declined (Table 9 and Table 10).

Most crimes committed by youth are non-violent

The majority of accused youth in 2012 were involved in non-violent incidents. The most common type of youth crime was theft of \$5,000 or under. More specifically, 18% of youth accused of a *Criminal Code* (excluding traffic violations) or federal statute offence were accused of theft of \$5,000 or under, usually shoplifting (Chart 16).

Chart 16
Youth accused of crime, by selected offence, Canada, 2012



Note: Includes *Criminal Code* offences (excluding traffic offences) and other federal statute violations, such as drug offences and *Youth Criminal Justice Act* violations.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Level 1 assault was the most common type of violent offence committed by youth in 2012. Approximately one out of eight accused youth (11%) was accused in connection with an incident of Level 1 assault. Uttering threats (4%) was the second most common violent youth offence. In addition, youth accused rates were down sharply in 2012 for some of the most serious violent crimes, particularly major assaults (levels 2 and 3) (-10%) robbery (-8%) and homicide, of which 12 fewer were reported in 2012 (Table 10).

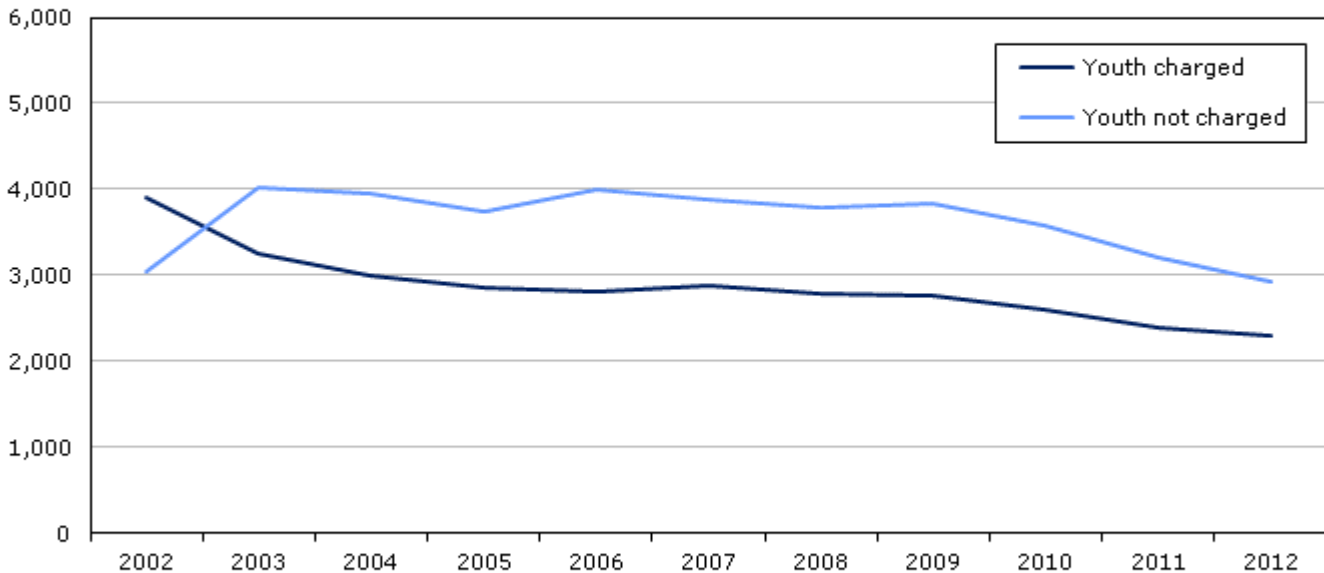
Other relatively common offences committed by youth were mischief (11%), administration of justice violations (10%) and cannabis possession (10%).

Less than half of accused youth are formally charged by police

The number of accused youth includes both youth who were formally charged by police and youth who were dealt with by other means. Historically, more youth were formally charged than not charged. However, the trend reversed in 2003, the same year the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* came into force. Since then, the number of youth dealt with by other means has been higher than the number formally charged. Since 2009, however, the difference has narrowed slightly (Chart 17). In 2012, 44% of youth accused were formally charged.

Chart 17
Youth accused of crime, by clearance status, Canada, 2002 to 2012

rate per 100,000 youth



Note: Youth not charged includes youth diverted from the formal criminal justice system through the use of warnings, cautions, and referrals to community programs.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Summary

Overall, both the volume and the severity of crime declined in 2012. The decrease was observed in most provinces. Only New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and the territories recorded increases between 2011 and 2012 in their crime rates and CSIs.

There were declines in both the numbers and the rates for most offences. In particular, in 2012, Canada reached its lowest homicide rate in more than 40 years. That said, offences causing death other than homicide were up, as were extortion, identity fraud, terrorism-related offences and arson. Slight increases were also seen in violent firearms offences, sexual offences against children, attempted murder and non-cannabis drug offences.

Youth crime was also down in 2012. Both the youth accused rate and the youth CSI declined for a third consecutive year. Half of the youth accused of crime were accused of theft of \$5,000 or under, mischief, level 1 assault or cannabis possession.