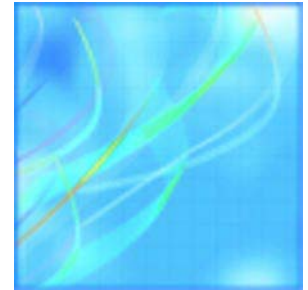


Measuring Crime in Canada: Introducing the Crime Severity Index and Improvements to the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey



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2009

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April 2009

Catalogue no. 85-004-X

ISSN 1918-9664

Frequency: Irregular

Ottawa

La version française de cette publication est disponible sur demande (n° 85-004-X au catalogue).

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Symbols

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- . 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 *Statistics Act*
- E use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published

Acknowledgments

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This report has benefited from the input and comments of many participants. In particular the authors gratefully acknowledge the contributions of Asma Alavi, Krista Collins, Karelyn Davis, Bradley Fetter, Amanda Halladay and Dawn Tapper of the Household Survey Methods Division, Tim Leonard and Michael Symonds formerly of the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS), members of the Crime Severity Index Working Group, members of the Police Information and Statistics Committee of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, members of the CCJS Academic Advisory Committee, our federal-provincial-territorial partners on the CCJS Liaison Officers Committee and the staff of CCJS.

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Executive summary

This report introduces the Crime Severity Index, a new tool for measuring police-reported crime in Canada that for the first time tracks changes in the severity of crime, not just volume. The report also examines how crime is measured in Canada, as well as recent improvements to statistics on crime that are gathered from the police.

The Crime Severity Index is the first major change to the reporting of police-reported crime statistics since the collection of these data began in the early 1960s. It is designed to measure change in the overall seriousness of crime from one year to the next, as well as relative differences in the seriousness of crime across the country.

The Index is an additional tool which can be used to further enhance our ability to understand the evolving nature of crime in Canada.

Introduction

By its very nature, crime is difficult to measure. Where there is no obvious or immediate victim, crimes can go undetected. Many crimes are not reported, most often because victims do not think they are important enough to bring to the attention of police.

Further, it is not just the amount of crime occurring that is of interest, but also factors such as its changing nature and the impact it has on individuals, families and communities. This makes it virtually impossible for any one statistic or source of information to adequately address all aspects of the issue.

In Canada, as in many other countries, the nature and extent of crime is monitored using two distinct sources of information. The first comes from crimes that are reported by police through the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) survey, which began collecting data in 1962. The second source is victimization data collected through the General Social Survey since 1988. Its main objective is to collect data on the experiences of Canadians with crime.

The first section of this report introduces a new measure of police-reported crime, the Crime Severity Index. The second section discusses the strengths and limitations of police-reported data and victimization data and presents an historical overview of crime trends as measured by these two instruments. The third outlines recent changes to police-reported crime statistics, including the way certain offences are counted and improvements to the way these statistics are displayed.

Section 1

The Crime Severity Index

Each year, Statistics Canada reports on the number and type of criminal incidents coming to the attention of police. This annual report analyses changes in police-reported crime rates across the country. To facilitate comparisons among geographic areas as well as over time, police-reported crime has traditionally been expressed as a rate per 100,000 population.

The traditional “crime rate” provides information on the number of police-reported incidents that have occurred for a given population. It measures the volume of crime coming to the attention of the police. The rate is simply a count of all criminal incidents reported to and by police divided by the population of interest. Each criminal incident, regardless of the type or seriousness of the offence, counts the same in the rate. For example, one homicide counts the same as one act of mischief.

A new, additional tool has now been developed for measuring police-reported crime in Canada. The Crime Severity Index will, for the first time, enable Canadians to track changes in the severity of police-reported crime from year to year. It does so by taking into account not only the change in volume of a particular crime, but also the relative seriousness of that crime in comparison to other crimes.

The Crime Severity Index helps answer such questions as: is the crime coming to the attention of police more or less serious than before; and, is police-reported crime in a given city or province more or less serious than in Canada overall?

The new Index does not replace, but rather complements, existing measures of crime. It provides a different way of looking at crime and addresses some of the limitations of the traditional crime rate.

1.1 The background

In 2004, the Police Information and Statistics Committee of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police asked Statistics Canada to create a new

measure of police-reported crime that would address the limitations of the traditional crime rate.

The traditional crime rate is heavily influenced by fluctuations in high-volume, less serious offences. This is because each offence reported by police, regardless of its seriousness, carries exactly the same weight in calculating the crime rate.

About 40% of police-reported crime in Canada comes from two relatively less serious offences: thefts under \$5,000 and mischief. Any change in the number of these offences reported by police will have a significant impact on the overall crime rate.

If the number of minor thefts and mischief both decrease in a given year, the crime rate is likely to decline, even with significant increases in more serious crimes such as murder and break-ins. In other words, because of their relatively low volume, more serious crimes have little impact on changes in the overall crime rate.

Variations in reporting crimes have long been a fundamental limitation of using police-reported data to understand trends and make comparisons among jurisdictions. Victimization data have consistently shown that reporting to police is related to the seriousness of the offence. Less-serious offences, which dominate the crime rate, are more likely to go unreported to police.¹ In turn, these offences are not always reported consistently by police to Statistics Canada. These reporting issues have had an impact on the comparability of crime rates among provinces, territories and police services.

The traditional crime rate does not provide information on the overall seriousness of crimes reported by police. Historically, changes in the seriousness of police-reported crime have been assessed by reviewing offence-specific crime rates. However, it is difficult to create an overall picture of trends in crime severity using this approach.

1. Gannon, M. and K. Mihorean. 2005. “Criminal victimization in Canada, 2004.” *Juristat*. Vol. 25, no. 7. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002. Ottawa.

The Crime Severity Index was designed in collaboration not only with the police, but also with provincial and territorial justice partners and academics across the country.² A working group was given a mandate to create a measure that would provide a more meaningful indicator of change in police-reported crime from year to year, and which would enhance the comparability of crime statistics at the provincial, territorial and municipal level by taking into account the relative seriousness of each offence.

1.2 Designing the Crime Severity Index

The principle behind the Crime Severity Index was to have more serious crimes carry a higher weight than less serious crimes. As a result, changes in more serious crimes would have a greater impact on the Index than on the traditional crime rate.

This would reduce the impact of high-volume, less serious offences and allow the Index to better reflect changes in the incidence of more serious crimes. It would also minimize the impact of differences in the way the public and police in various jurisdictions report high-volume, less-serious crimes, thereby improving comparisons among provinces and municipalities.

The first step in the development of the Index was to find a way to assess the relative seriousness of crimes. Any such measure had to meet specific criteria. Namely, it had to be as empirical and objective as possible. It also had to be based on existing data, easy to update over time, and easy to understand. Further, the Index was to include all reported crimes, unlike the traditional crime rate which excludes traffic and drug offences as well as Federal Statutes.

2. The Working Group consists of members from the following organizations: Statistics Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ontario Provincial Police, Sûreté du Québec, Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, Toronto Police Service, Ottawa Police Service, Winnipeg Police Service, Victoria Police Service, Saint John Police Service, Justice Canada, New Brunswick Department of Public Safety, Quebec Ministry of Public Security, Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Alberta Department of Justice, University of Ottawa, University of Waterloo and University of Manitoba.

3. For further information on these surveys refer to the data sources in Appendix A.

4. For more information on the calculation of the Crime Severity Index and its weights, refer to the Crime Severity Index Methodological Paper which is forthcoming.

5. For certain rare or new violations, courts sentencing data are not available. In these cases, a proxy weight is used which is calculated from similar offence types with the same maximum penalty in the *Criminal Code*.

6. To calculate the average sentence length, an outlier treatment method is used to remove a small number of extreme and highly influential sentences which may be due to unique court cases or data quality issues.

A detailed review of criminological literature provided a number of existing approaches for determining the relative seriousness of different crimes. Various options were explored: including only a subset of the most serious crimes; using information on public perceptions of crime; looking at the financial cost of crime; and, using maximum penalties outlined in the *Criminal Code*. However, none of the existing methodologies met all the criteria set out.

In the search for another approach, it became apparent that data collected from Statistics Canada's surveys of adult and youth criminal courts³ met all the criteria for defining a measure of relative seriousness. Canada is one of the few countries that collects extensive sentencing data from the court system.

The underlying premise of sentencing is that more serious crimes will receive more serious punishments from the courts. Thus, the relative seriousness of each type of criminal offence can be determined by using objective sentencing data. These data already exist and are collected regularly, so updates can be made to the measure of relative seriousness over time.

1.3 How the Index is calculated

The Crime Severity Index tracks changes in the severity of police-reported crime by accounting for both the amount of crime reported by police in a given jurisdiction and the relative seriousness of these crimes. It tells us not only how much crime is coming to the attention of police, but also about the seriousness of that crime.

To do this, each type of offence is assigned a seriousness "weight".⁴ The weights are derived from actual sentences handed down by courts in all provinces and territories.⁵ More serious crimes are assigned higher weights, less serious offences lower weights.

The specific weight for any given type of offence consists of two parts. The first component is the incarceration rate for that offence type. This is the proportion of people convicted of the offence who are sentenced to time in prison. The second component is the average (mean) length of the prison sentence, in days, for the specific type of offence.⁶

Offences that tend to be subject to incarceration upon conviction are generally considered more serious than those that are not. Further, more serious

crimes generally receive longer custodial sentences. The incarceration rate is multiplied by the average sentence length to arrive at the final seriousness weight for each type of offence reported by police.

Each occurrence of a particular offence is assigned the same weight regardless of the specific outcome of any individual case. For example, all robberies reported by police carry the same weight in the Index, regardless of the specific characteristics of each incident.

The weights are calculated using the five most recent years of available sentencing data. This ensures that there is a large amount of data available on which to base the weights. It also minimizes the impact of any fluctuations for low-volume offences. For the data released in this report, weights are based on the period 2002/2003 to 2006/2007.

Table 1 provides examples of the specific weights based on court data for this period. The importance of the weights is not so much in their exact value for each offence, but rather in the relative differences between them. For example, an incident of murder would receive a weight 1,000 times higher than an incident of possession of cannabis.

The weights will be updated every five years to ensure that they reflect any changes in sentencing patterns or new legislation. It is not necessary to update them each year as trends in court data do not tend to change substantially from year to year.

To calculate the actual Crime Severity Index, the number of police-reported incidents for each offence is multiplied by the weight for that offence.⁷ All weighted offences are then added together and divided by the corresponding population total.

Finally, to make the Index easier to interpret, the Index is standardized to “100” for Canada (a system that is similar to the Consumer Price Index), using 2006 as a base year.

7. The Crime Severity Index is calculated using Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey data. For the period from 1998 to 2007 Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey data are not available for all respondents. In order to report this level of detail for police services still reporting to the aggregate Uniform Crime Reporting Survey over this time, a process of imputation was applied to derive counts for violations that do not exist on their own in the aggregate survey. For approximately 80% of the aggregate offence codes, there is a 1:1 mapping with a new Incident-based violation code. For violations where this was not the case, such as the aggregate ‘other’ *Criminal Code* category, it was necessary to estimate (impute) this figure using the distribution of ‘other’ *Criminal Code* offences from existing Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey respondents.

Challenges of using sentencing data as a measure of offence seriousness

Statistics Canada collects sentencing data from both youth and adult courts across the country. When it was decided that these sentencing data were the best available empirical measure of offence seriousness for the Crime Severity Index, the limitations of these data were also recognized. Examples of some of the challenges posed by the courts data include:

Time served on remand– Time served in remand – the amount of time an accused person spends in jail prior to sentencing – is not directly collected by the courts surveys. Although the length of time served in remand is generally factored into the sentence by judges, it cannot be determined from the survey data if the full sentence has been recorded (including days spent in remand) or if just the additional time to be served has been recorded (excluding days spent in remand).

Repeat offenders– The previous criminal record of an accused person is known to be a significant factor in sentencing; however, data on recidivism is not available from the courts surveys.

Conditional sentences– Conditional sentences, also called “deferred custody” for youth, were treated as “non-incarceral” in the model, similar to sentences of probation or fines, even though the *Criminal Code* considers them to be a sentence of incarceration. This was done because no systematic and objective system exists for determining relative seriousness among different types of sentences.

Life sentences– Life sentences in Canada are a custodial sentence for the rest of the natural life of the accused. As such, life sentences cannot be accurately measured in terms of days as it depends on a number of factors specific to the individual. For research purposes it is generally agreed to be quantified as 25 years, which represents the longest parole eligibility for an individual sentenced to life. Following parole, the accused remains under supervision for the remainder of their natural life. Life sentences thus were assigned a value of 25 years for the purposes of the Crime Severity Index weighting model.

There will, in fact, be three indexes – an overall Crime Severity Index, a Violent Crime Severity Index and a Non-violent Crime Severity Index – similar to the structure of the traditional crime rate.

The overall Crime Severity Index includes all *Criminal Code* and federal statute offences. The Violent Crime

Severity Index includes all violent offences,⁸ while the Non-violent Crime Severity Index includes everything that does not fall into the category of violent offences.

Each index can be calculated at the national, provincial/territorial and census metropolitan area⁹ levels, as well as for individual police services and detachments.

By design, the specific Crime Severity Index value in a given jurisdiction depends on its mix of crimes and their relative seriousness. If a jurisdiction has a high proportion of less serious, and hence lower-weighted, offences, it will have a lower Index value. Conversely, a jurisdiction with a high proportion of more serious crimes will have a higher Index value.

1.4 Understanding crime trends with the Crime Severity Index

It is important to understand a few things before comparing the Crime Severity Index and the traditional crime rate. First, one can only compare trends in police-reported crime indicated by these two measures. The specific levels of police-reported crime provided by each measure are not directly comparable.

Secondly, the Crime Severity Index is expressed as a standardized measure, meaning it has been adjusted to equal 100 in the base year (2006). On the other hand, the crime rate is expressed as the number of crimes per 100,000 population. As such, all graphs showing the two measures appear with two separate axes, one for the crime rate and another for the Crime Severity Index.

Comparisons between the overall crime rate and the Crime Severity Index between 1998 and 2007 provide interesting insights into trends in overall police-reported crime (Chart 1.1 and Table 2¹⁰). During that period, the crime rate decreased by 15%, while the Crime Severity Index dropped even further (21%). It should be noted that while drugs, traffic offences and Federal Statutes are all excluded from the traditional crime rate, they are included in the Crime Severity Index.

8. The definition of violent crimes has been expanded to include some offences which were not included in the past. This change is detailed in Appendix C of this report.

9. A census metropolitan area is defined as one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a large urban area (known as the urban core). A census metropolitan area must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more must live in the urban core.

10. Coverage of the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey in the years prior to 1998 was limited, making it impossible to calculate the Crime Severity Index before this year.

Thus, not only was the volume of police-reported crime in Canada declining during this period, but overall, crimes coming to the attention of police were less serious in nature. Further, the severity of crime, as reported by police, declined at a faster rate over this decade than did the number of crimes reported.

In most years, the crime rate and Index moved in the same direction. However, between 1999 and 2002, they did not. During this period, there was virtually no change in the amount of overall crime reported to police, as indicated by a stable crime rate. However, the Crime Severity Index dropped by 6%.

During this time, the volume of several serious crimes fell significantly, such as break-ins (-16%) and robbery (-11%). At the same time, there was an increase in reported incidents of mischief (+3%), which is a high-volume, but relatively less serious offence.

The conclusion is that between 1999 and 2002, the amount of overall crime reported by police remained stable, but there was a drop in the severity of crime coming to the attention of the justice system. This example demonstrates how the Crime Severity Index better reflects changes in more serious offences, while the crime rate reflects the overall volume of crime coming to the attention of police.

In Table 3, data clearly show the differences between the two series. Theft under \$5,000 accounts for 26% of all crimes in the crime rate. Weighting these crimes for seriousness in the Crime Severity Index effectively decreases their contribution by slightly more than half, to 12%. Conversely, breaking and entering, a high-volume offence that carries an above-average seriousness weight, makes up about one-quarter of the Index's weighted volume, compared with 10% in the crime rate. Robberies contribute 1% of the crime rate, but 11% of the Index.

Separate severity indexes have been created for violent and non-violent crimes. Comparing the rates and indexes for these types of crimes further demonstrates the utility of each source of information for understanding trends in police-reported crime.

For example, the violent crime rate rose between 1998 and 2000, then declined afterwards (illustrated by Chart 1.2). This indicates that the volume of violent crimes reported by police has been falling since 2000. Meanwhile, the Violent Crime Severity Index indicates that the severity of violent

crimes reported by police remained relatively stable during the period.

Of particular interest is the period between 2004 and 2006 when the violent crime rate and Violent Severity Crime Index moved in different directions. During this period, the violent crime rate declined slightly despite increases in most serious violent crimes, including attempted murder (+22%), level 3 assault (+20%), level 2 assault (+12%) and robbery (+10%). The drop in the violent crime rate was driven by a decline in level 1 assault, the least serious form of assault, but a high-volume offence. Conversely, the Violent Crime Severity Index rose 4% during this period, reflecting increases in more serious violent crimes.

Data in Table 4 show the relative contributions of crimes comprising the Violent Crime Severity Index and the violent crime rate. While level 1 assaults, the least serious form of assault, account for the largest share (about 40%) of the violent crime rate, they comprise only 9% of the Violent Crime Severity Index.

Robbery comprises the largest share of the Violent Crime Severity Index (40%), but a much lower share of the violent crime rate (8%). Homicide accounts for 8% of the Violent Crime Severity Index, compared with less than 1% of the violent crime rate.

In terms of non-violent crime, trends in the two measures were similar between 1998 and 2007 (Chart 1.3). However, the 18% decline in the rate of non-violent crimes was less than the 26% decline in the Non-violent Crime Severity Index. This shows that the more serious non-violent crimes were dropping at a faster rate than the less serious offences.

For example, breaking and entering, which has an above-average weighted seriousness, fell by 40% over this time, while theft under \$5,000, with a lower-than-average weighted seriousness, dropped 26%.

Data in Table 5 show the relative contribution of crimes comprising the Non-violent Crime Severity Index and the non-violent crime rate. The largest contributor to the Index was breaking and entering, accounting for 35%, while it comprised only 13% of the non-violent crime rate.

Theft under \$5,000 was the largest contributor of all crimes to the non-violent crime rate (32%), but comprised only 17% of the Non-violent Crime Severity Index. The impact of other less serious non-violent

crimes is also minimized in the Non-violent Crime Severity Index. For example, the contribution of mischief to the Index was only half of its contribution to the rate.

1.5 Provinces and territories

The Crime Severity Index is also a tool for measuring the increase or decrease in the severity of crime over time in any given jurisdiction, such as provinces and territories, and for comparing the seriousness of crime among jurisdictions.

Over time, police-reported crime rates have generally been higher in the west and north than in eastern and central regions of the country. This is also true for crime severity, as measured by the new Crime Severity Index (Chart 1.4 and Table 6). There are, however, some important differences when comparing jurisdictions using the two measures of police-reported crime.

First, as illustrated by Chart 1.4, the Crime Severity Index in the three territories is much closer to the indexes for the provinces than is the crime rate.

Crime rates in the three territories are about 60% to 230% higher than the crime rate for the highest province. In terms of the Index, the gap is much smaller. Crime Severity Indexes for all three territories are only about 15% to 100% higher than the Index for the highest province.

This suggests there is less difference between the provinces and territories in the severity of crime reported to police than in the amount of crime being reported. The reason is the mix of crimes reported in the North. A higher proportion of less serious crimes are reported in the territories than in the rest of Canada. For example, mischief accounts for 29% of all reported crimes in the three territories combined, nearly twice the proportion of 15% for the provinces overall.

In 2007, Saskatchewan had the highest Crime Severity Index among the provinces. Its severity index value for 2007 was 165, compared with 95 for Canada as a whole. This indicates that the severity of police-reported crime in Saskatchewan was about 75% higher than for the entire nation.

Crime severity in Saskatchewan, however, dropped by 7% between 1998 and 2007. Manitoba and British Columbia, the provinces with the next highest Crime Severity Index values, also experienced drops in crime severity between 1998 and 2007 (-3% and

-22% respectively). In all three provinces, the declines occurred predominantly between 2003 and 2007.

Ontario and Quebec have had the lowest police-reported crime rates in recent years. When the severity of crime is considered, however, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick have the lowest Index scores. While there may be less crime coming to the attention of police in Ontario and Quebec after adjusting for population differences, reported crime in these provinces is relatively more serious than in Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick.

Chart 1.5 illustrates differences between the provinces in violent crime. Violent crime rates in the western and northern regions tend to be higher than those in eastern and central Canada. Again, however, territorial values for the Violent Crime Severity Index are much closer to the provinces than violent crime rates. And again this is due to the mix of violent crimes in the North. The territories have a higher proportion of less serious violent crimes, such as level 1 assault, than the provinces.

While Saskatchewan has the highest violent crime rate among the provinces, Manitoba has a slightly higher Violent Crime Severity Index value. This is due to the high proportion of serious violent crimes, such as robbery and level 2 and 3 assaults, reported in Manitoba. The severity of violent crime in Manitoba was 12% higher in 2007 than it was in 1998.

Chart 1.6 compares the provinces and territories in terms of their non-violent crime rates and their non-violent Crime Severity Indices. Non-violent crime rates tend to be higher in the western and northern regions of Canada. The same is true for the severity of non-violent crime. In 2007, Saskatchewan had the highest Non-violent Crime Severity Index value among the provinces, at 163, followed by Manitoba (141). The lowest Non-violent Crime Severity Index values were in Ontario (70), Prince Edward Island (72) and New Brunswick (72).

1.6 Census metropolitan areas

The Crime Severity Index is also a useful tool for comparing the severity of crime among large metropolitan areas (Chart 1.7 and Table 7).

In 2007, the severity of crime was highest in Regina. It had a Crime Severity Index of 189, nearly twice

the national average of 95. Crime severity in Regina was, however, down 18% from 1998. Regina was followed by Saskatoon (159) and Winnipeg (153). Saskatoon saw a drop of 12% in overall crime severity since 1998 due mostly to a 51% decrease in break-ins. On the other hand, the Crime Severity Index in 2007 was lowest in Toronto, Saguenay and Québec (all at 66), and Kitchener and Trois-Rivières (both at 69).

In terms of violent crime a somewhat different pattern emerged, as illustrated by Chart 1.8. Index values for violent crime in the many large metropolitan areas in central Canada were closer to average. In Toronto, the Violent Crime Severity Index was 95, virtually equal to the national average. The severity of violent crime was above average in Montreal (108).

The Crime Severity Index can be used to point out unusual regional characteristics of crime. In general, crime is less severe in the Atlantic Provinces than for Canada as a whole. But this does not necessarily hold for the country's largest metropolitan areas. In 2007, all three metropolitan areas in Atlantic Canada had Index values above the national average of 95: Saint John (107), Halifax (106) and St. John's (100). This indicates that police-reported crime in these cities tends to be of a more serious nature than in central Canada where the severity of crime in many central Canadian metropolitan areas was below average.

In some Western metropolitan areas, values for the Violent Crime Severity Index were lower than their overall Index values. For example, Victoria had an overall Crime Severity Index value of 109, well above the national average. However, its Violent Crime Severity Index value of 81 was well below the national average. This indicates that while the severity of crime was relatively high in Victoria in 2007, the proportion of serious violent crimes was relatively low.

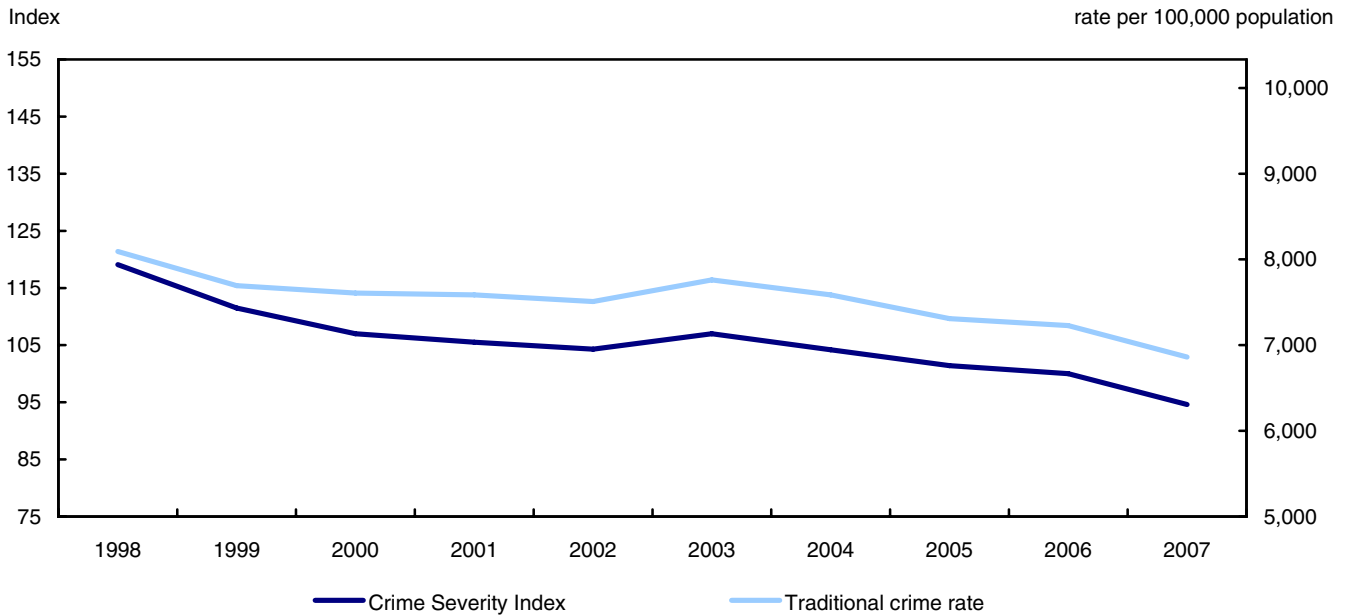
1.7 Summary

This analysis has demonstrated how the Crime Severity Index is a useful additional tool for analyzing crime trends in Canada. The Index addresses not only the amount of crime coming to the attention of police, but also the severity of this crime. In addition, it shows whether crime in general is relatively more or less serious than in previous years, and it helps in determining if reported crime is more or less serious in one jurisdiction than in another.

The Crime Severity Index has a number of strengths. It better reflects trends in more serious crimes because it takes into account the relative seriousness of offences. Serious crimes have a greater impact on the Index than they do on the crime rate. It also improves the

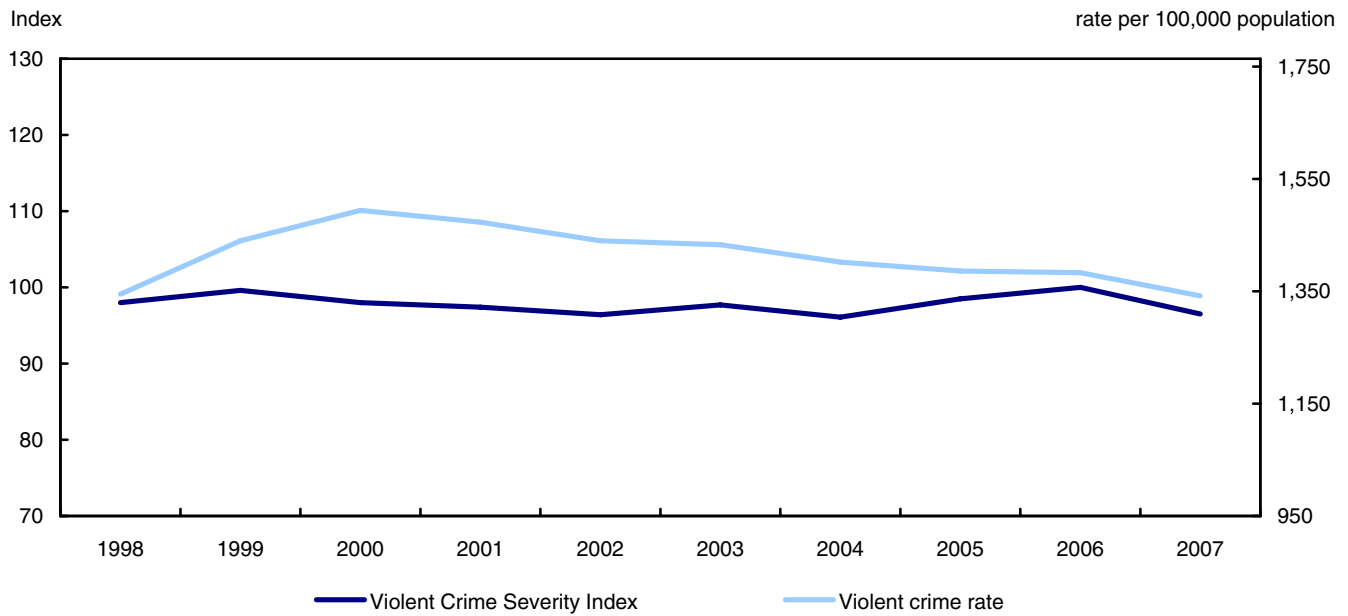
comparison of trends in crime among police services, provinces/territories and municipalities by reducing the impact of differences in the way less serious offences are reported.

Chart 1.1
Overall Crime Severity Index and traditional crime rate, Canada, 1998 to 2007



Note(s): The crime rate does not include traffic offences, drugs, or other federal statutes.
Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Aggregated Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

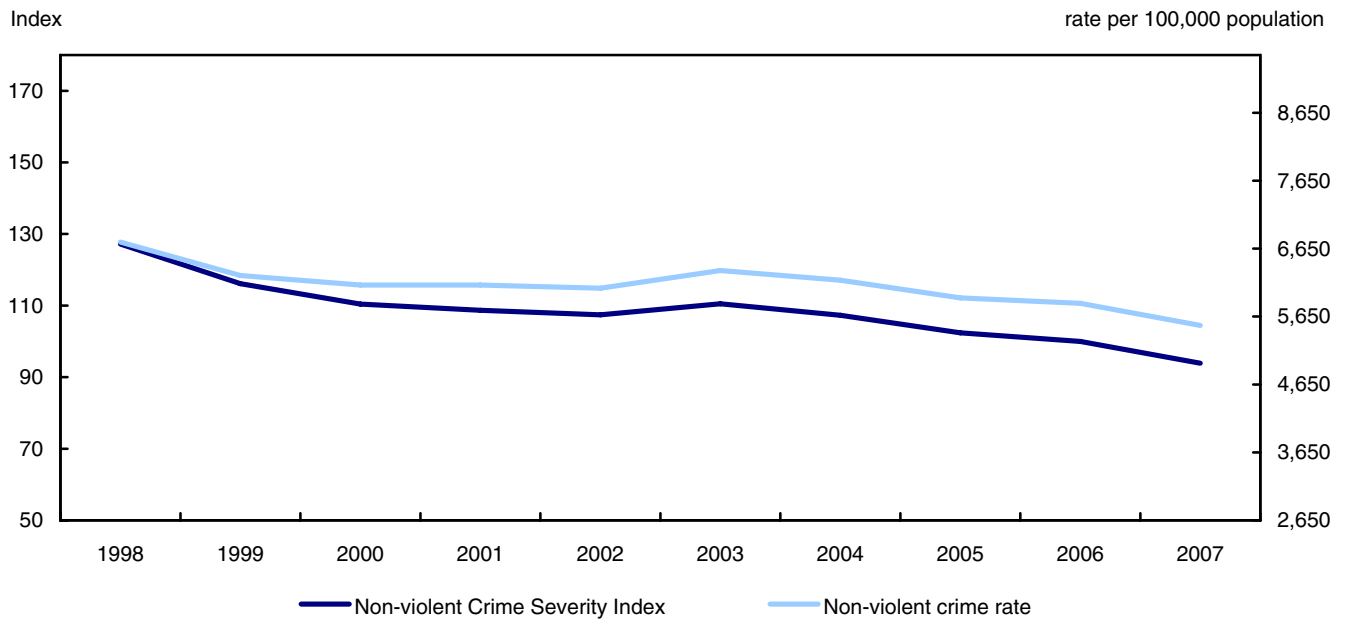
Chart 1.2
Violent Crime Severity Index and violent crime rate, Canada, 1998 to 2007



Note(s): The violent crime rate has been expanded to include a number of offences not previously included in the violent crime rate, including uttering threats, criminal harassment and forcible confinement. For further details on this revision please refer to Appendix C of this report.

Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Aggregated Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

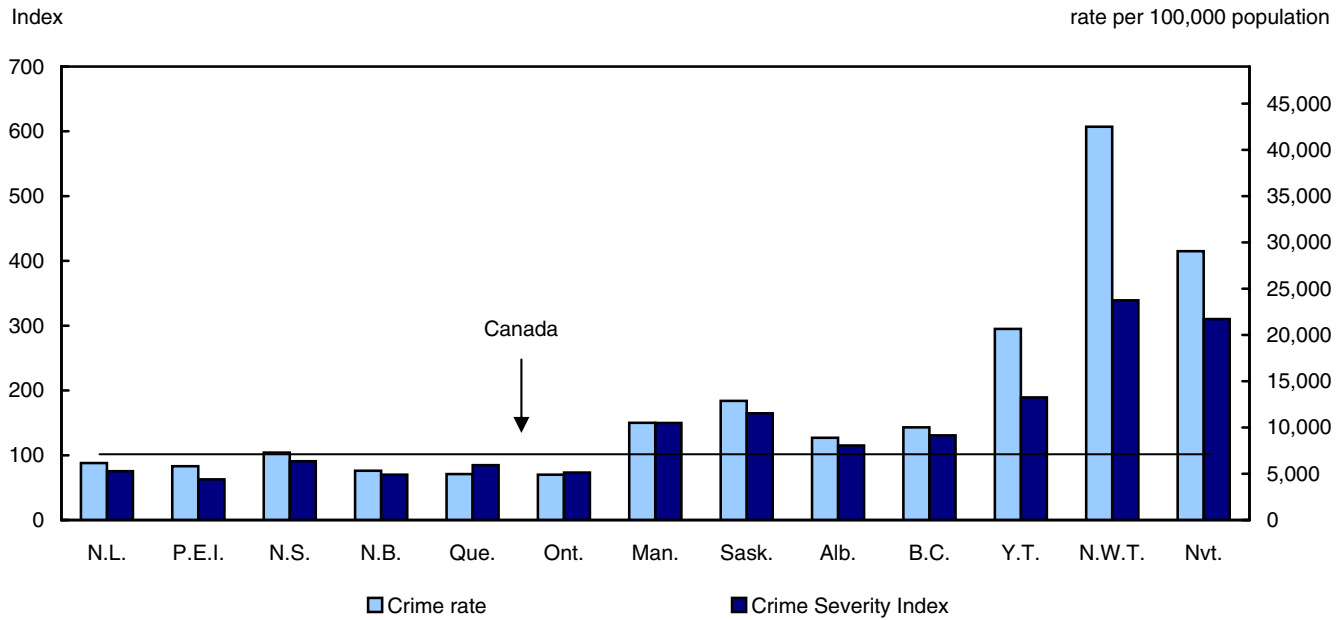
Chart 1.3
Non-violent Crime Severity Index and non-violent crime rate, Canada, 1998 to 2007



Note(s): The non-violent crime rate includes only property and other *Criminal Code* offences.

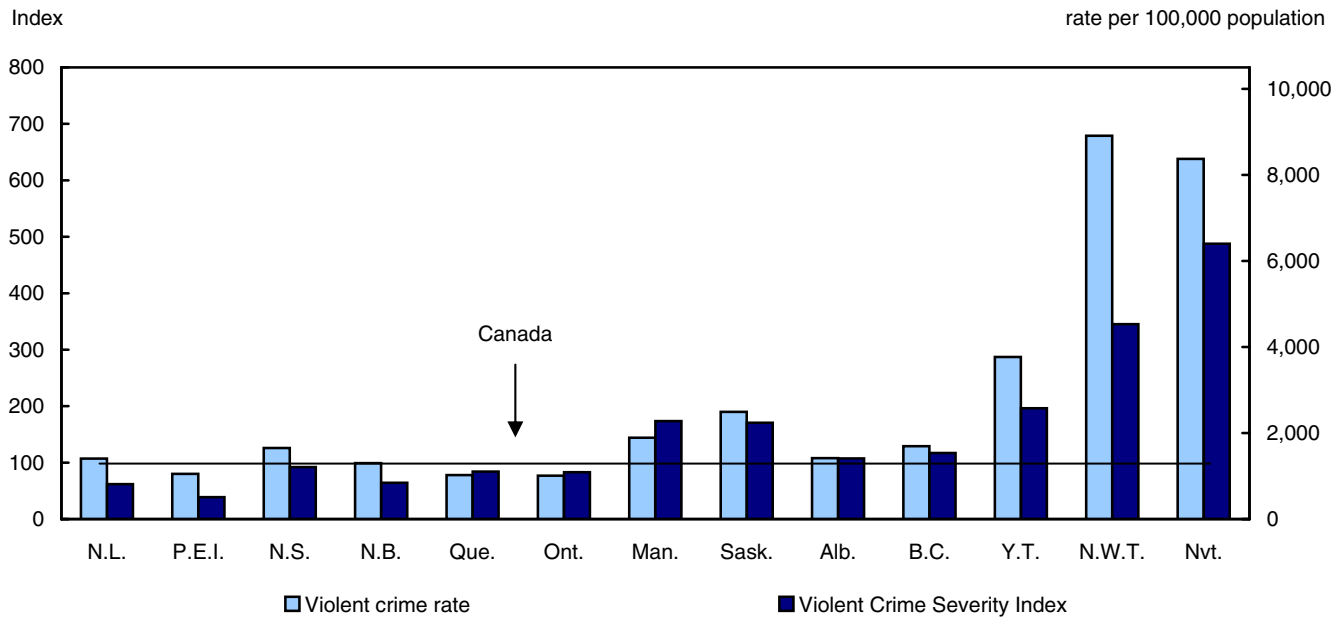
Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Aggregated Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Chart 1.4
The Crime Severity Index versus the traditional crime rate, provinces and territories, 2007



Note(s): The crime rate does not include traffic offences, drugs, or other federal statutes.
Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Aggregated Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

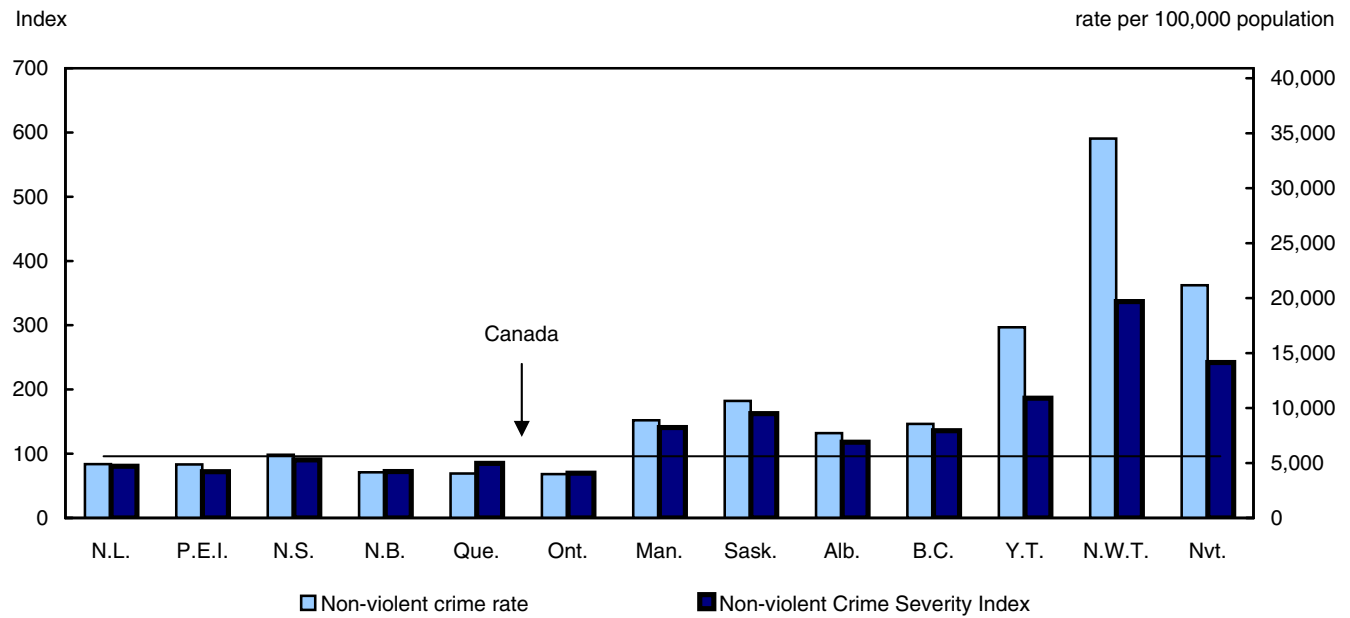
Chart 1.5
The Violent Crime Severity Index versus the violent crime rate, provinces and territories, 2007



Note(s): The violent crime rate has been expanded to include a number of offences not previously included in the violent crime rate, including uttering threats, criminal harassment and forcible confinement. For further details on this revision please refer to Appendix C of this report.
Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Aggregated Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

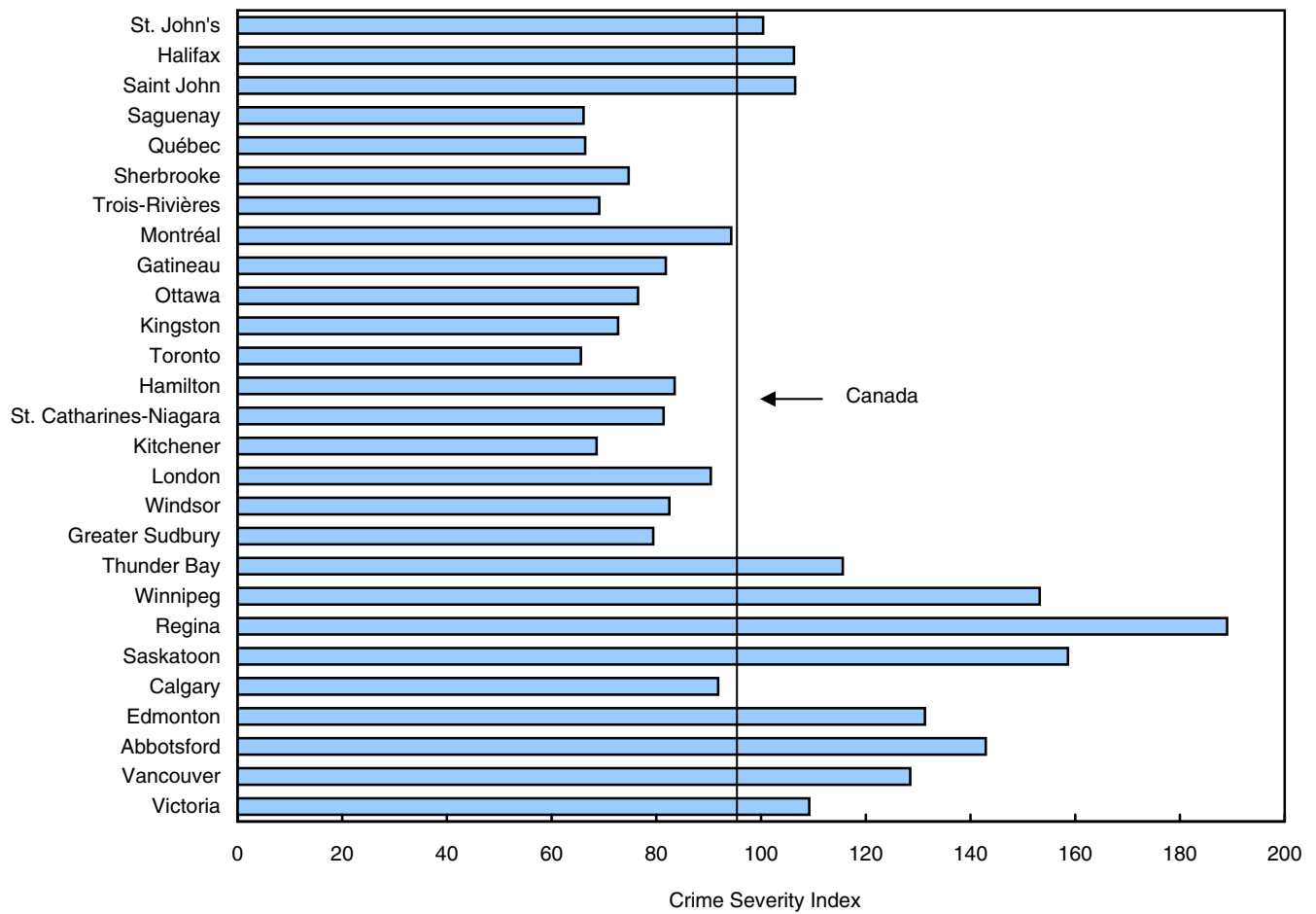
Chart 1.6

The Non-violent Crime Severity Index versus the non-violent crime rate, provinces and territories, 2007



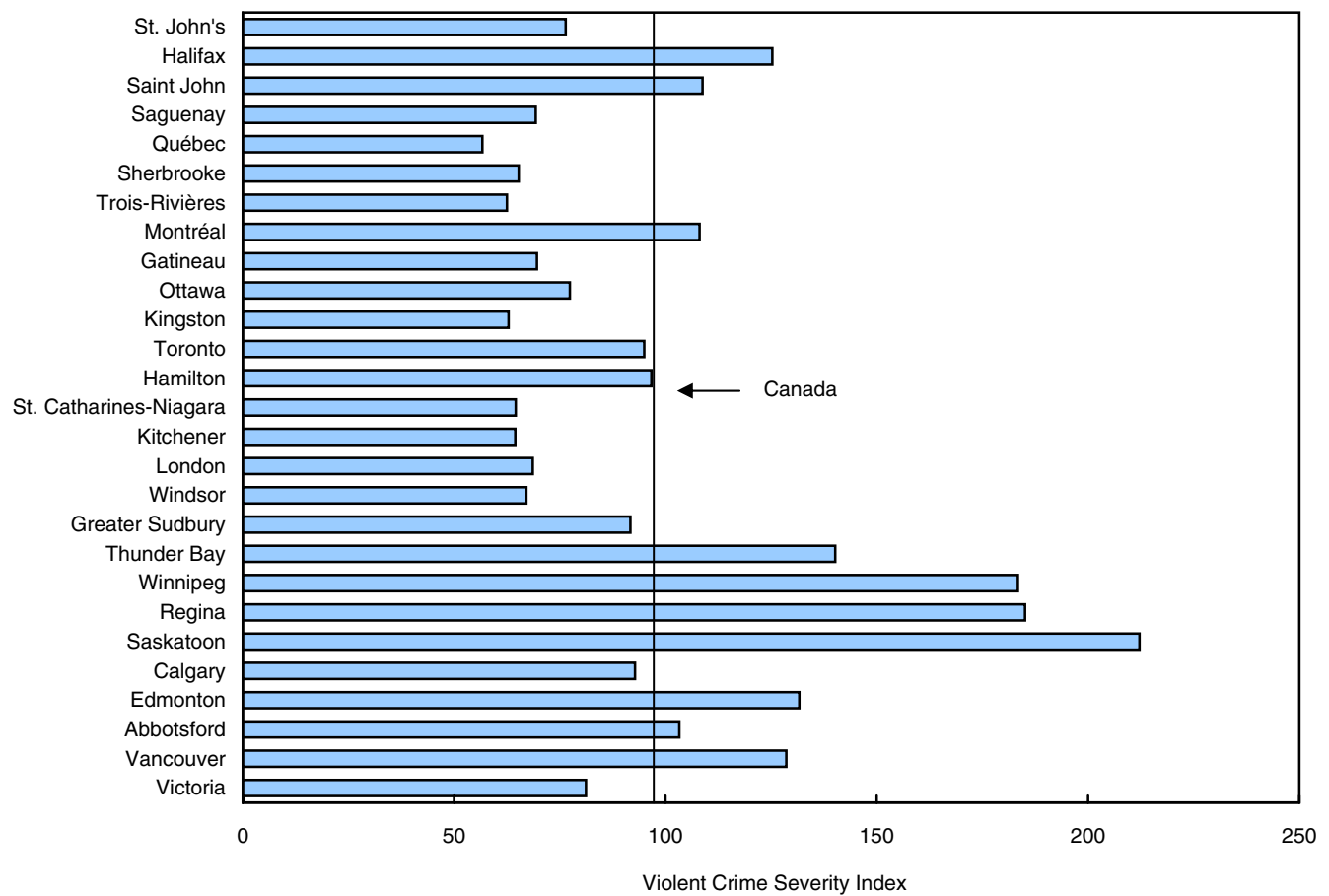
Note(s): The non-violent crime rate includes all *Criminal Code* offences except violent crimes. It excludes traffic offences, drug offences and Federal Statutes.
Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Aggregated Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Chart 1.7
Crime Severity Index, census metropolitan areas, 2007



Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Aggregated Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Chart 1.8
Violent Crime Severity Index, census metropolitan areas, 2007



Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Aggregated Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Section 2

Comparing police-reported crime statistics and victimization data

In Canada, as in many other developed countries, crime is measured using a combination of both police and victim-reported information (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2008; Kershaw, 2009). Individually each source has its strengths and limitations. Together, they provide a much more robust measure of the extent and impact of criminal activity in Canadian society.

Since 1962, Statistics Canada, in co-operation with the policing community, has been collecting police-reported crime data annually through the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey. Over time and in conjunction with advances in technology, the UCR survey has progressed from an aggregate to an incident-based data source.

Until the late 1980s, the UCR provided aggregate counts of the number of incidents reported to police and the number of persons charged by type of offence. With the advent of microdata reporting, the UCR has become an “incident-based” survey, collecting in-depth information about each criminal incident. The type of information collected includes the age and sex of victims and accused persons, the relationship between them, the location and time at which a crime took place, the presence or use of a weapon, and any injuries received by the victim.

When police-reported data were first collected, it was generally felt that most crimes were being reported to police. Over time, however, criminologists began to realize that many crimes never come to the attention of the police. Hence, the term the ‘dark figure’ of crime was introduced. To collect data on this “dark figure” of crime – incidents that do not come to the attention of the criminal justice system – it is necessary to turn to surveys of the general population as a data source.

Since 1988, data on criminal victimization in Canada have been collected from a random sample of the general public about every five years, through the General Social Survey. The most recent data available are for 2004; the next victimization survey is being

conducted in 2009. The survey asks Canadians aged 15 and older about their experiences of being a victim of crime.

Data from this survey cover eight separate criminal offences. They address the nature of the criminal victimization, the impact and consequences of crime to the victim, the extent of reporting to the police and the use of informal and formal victim services.

Each of these data sources provides a particular understanding of crime in Canada. Police-reported data have historically been used to calculate crime rates for comparison across various geographic regions. These rates reflect the volume of crime coming to the attention of the criminal justice system, and they are a reliable measure of trends in more serious crimes that are generally well-reported to police.

These data provide key information for police-reported crime analysis, resource planning and program development for the policing community. Municipal and provincial governments use the data to help make decisions about the distribution of police resources and to compare with other departments and provinces.

Victimization data, in turn, provide valuable insight into Canadians’ experiences with crime and whether or not these experiences are reported to the police. These data have been used to better understand Canadians’ fear of crime, their perceptions of crime and the functioning of the criminal justice system.

According to victimization data, in 2004, about two-thirds of the criminal incidents experienced by Canadians were not reported to police. The most common reason cited for not reporting was that the incident was not considered important enough. Victimization data also provide a wealth of contextual information gathered directly from victims, including details about their experiences with crime, their social and economic backgrounds and the after-effects of crime.

Neither of these sources on its own is able to provide a complete picture of criminal activity in Canada.

Police-reported data capture only those crimes reported to and by police. Many factors can influence police-reported crime statistics: how the public reports crime to police; how crimes are reported by police to Statistics Canada; and, new initiatives such as new legislation or policies that may change police enforcement practices. Police-reported data are less effective at measuring trends in minor offences. Victimization data indicate that these less serious types of crimes are often under-reported.

Victimization surveys typically do not include information from the entire population, such as people under the age of 15 and individuals not living in a household, such as those who are living in an institution or who are homeless. These household surveys do not cover crimes against businesses, and are not able to cover all types of crime. They rely on respondents to remember and report incidents accurately. This type of survey is also relatively expensive. Finally, due to the sample size, there are limitations to the type of provincial and sub-provincial analysis that can be done.

Police-reported and victimization data are complementary sources that together provide a more comprehensive picture of criminal activity in Canada. While differences in the methodology between these surveys prevent direct comparison, trends can be compared for four of the eight offences studied by the GSS: sexual assault, physical assault, residential breaking and entering, and motor vehicle theft.

Between 1999 and 2004, for both the victimization and the police-reported surveys, there was no change in rates of physical assault or motor vehicle theft. While there was no change in rates for self-reported sexual assaults, police-reported sexual assaults dropped by 8%. This decrease was mainly the result of declines in level 1 sexual assaults, which represents the majority of all sexual assaults recorded by police.

It is important to note that sexual assaults are the most under-reported offence to the police. In 2004, only 8% of sexual assault incidents came to the attention of the police.

Looking at residential break-ins provides some indication of the potential impact a change in reporting can have on police-reported statistics. The rate of breaking and entering incidents dropped from 1993 to 1999 and again from 1999 to 2004, according to police-reported data. Data from the victimization survey indicate there was no statistically significant change in the rate of breaking and entering between 1993 and 1999. However, there was a statistically significant decline from 1999 to 2004. The magnitude of the drop between 1999 and 2004, however, was somewhat greater in the police-reported data (26% vs. 19%).

We also know from the victimization survey that reporting of break-ins to police has been on a downward trend since 1993: 68% of incidents were reported in 1993, 62% in 1999 and just over half (54%) in 2004. This change in reporting of residential break-ins may help explain the difference in magnitude of the drops between the two surveys.

There is room for improvement in the ways in which crime is measured. As we improve and add to the tools used to measure crime, our understanding of the nature and extent of crime in Canada improves. One limitation of victimization data is that they are currently collected every five years, while police-reported data are available annually.

This difference in timing presents some challenges in arriving at a more comprehensive picture of crime. Efforts are underway as part of a separate study to determine the feasibility of increasing the frequency of the victimization survey.

Section 3

Improvements to police-reported crime data

3.1 Counting police-reported crimes

In the late 1980s, Statistics Canada began collecting in-depth information about each criminal incident coming to the attention of police through a new version of the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey known as the UCR2. Police services across the country have gradually been adopting this new survey as their records management systems have become capable of collecting and providing this level of detail.

By 2007, virtually all police services in Canada were providing incident-based crime data on the nature of criminal incidents, accused persons and victims. There are now nearly 200 separate criminal offence categories covered by the UCR2.

The greater availability of incident-based data has made it possible to address some of the limitations associated with the way particular criminal offences have historically been counted. Two offences, namely counterfeiting and robbery, have been most affected. A summary of these changes and their impacts are outlined below. Further details on these changes and those made to other offence counts can be found in Appendix B of this report.

3.1.1 Counterfeiting

The purpose of the UCR2 survey is to collect data on crimes reported to and substantiated by police services in Canada. For much of the past decade, Statistics Canada has been collecting counterfeiting data not only from police services, but also from the RCMP's Bureau of Counterfeit and Document Examinations.

Recent experience has shown that many of the incidents coming from the Bureau of Counterfeiting and Document Examination have likely been detected by merchants or banking institutions following a financial transaction. These incidents have neither

come to the attention of, nor been substantiated by, police services.

Further, in many of these incidents, counterfeit bills have been passed unwittingly by individuals. It is important to note that passing a counterfeit bill without knowing it is not genuine does not constitute a criminal act under the *Criminal Code*. To correct the disconnect between the way counterfeiting data are currently being collected and the objective of the UCR2 Survey, a change has been made to the way counterfeiting offences are counted.

The UCR Survey will now only count counterfeiting incidents submitted directly by police services and, more specifically, only those incidents where an accused person was identified. This would ensure that counterfeiting bills detected by financial institutions and those passed unwittingly by individuals would not be included in crime counts (Table 8).

This change, displayed in Chart 3.1 below, results in much lower counts of police-reported incidents of counterfeiting over the past 10 years. On average, the number of counterfeiting incidents dropped by about 97% in the years to which the adjustments were applied, from 1998 to 2007. The trend in the revised counterfeiting rate shows much greater stability over the past decade than did the previously published rate. The large increases originally published between 2001 and 2004 are no longer present in the revised counterfeiting rate.

3.1.2 Robbery

A change has also been made to the way in which robbery incidents are counted to bring this offence into line with the way in which other violent offences are counted. While all other violent crimes are counted according to the number of victims involved regardless of the number of distinct incidents that had occurred, robbery offences were counted according to the number of incidents that had taken place. For instance, if three people were assaulted at the same time and place by the same perpetrator, that would be counted as three assaults. However, if three people

were robbed at the same time and place by the same perpetrator, that would be counted as only one robbery.

Until recently it was not possible to separate incidents where multiple victims were involved in a robbery from incidents where a number of people were simply present while a robbery occurred, such as in a retail store or a bank. Using the detailed UCR2 data now available, victims can be better identified. This means that robberies can be treated like all other violent crimes, with each victim counting as one robbery.

This change to robbery counts, illustrated in Chart 3.2, has resulted in an increase of about 12% annually in the number of reported robbery incidents for the period from 1998 to 2007. This has resulted in more robberies and a higher rate overall, but absolutely no change in the trend over the past 10 years.

3.1.3 Impact of these changes on the overall crime rate

To reflect the changes in offence counts, revisions have been made to the historical crime rate series dating back to 1998¹ and are illustrated in Chart 3.3. While some year-over-year impacts can be seen, such as in 2002 and 2004, the overall trend in the national crime rate between 1998 and 2007 is very similar after the revisions.

The revised rate shows a 7% drop in the police-reported crime rate over this period, while previously published data showed a 6% decline.

1. Coverage of the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey in the years prior to 1998 was limited, making it impossible to apply these revisions back any further in time.

3.2 Reporting crime statistics

Now that virtually all police services in Canada are reporting to the UCR2 survey, more information than ever is available on crimes coming to the attention of police. This new information is being introduced into the standard data tables that Statistics Canada releases to the public each year.

These tables will feature more-detailed offence categories and improved crime categories. For example, the category of violent crime will now be broadened to include a number of distinct violent offences that previously had to be combined into an “other crimes” category, such as criminal harassment and uttering threats.

It is not uncommon for a number of criminal offences to occur at the same time and in the same place; in other words, as part of one incident. To avoid over-counting, crime rates are calculated based on the most serious offence in an incident. In the past, only the most serious offence in an incident was recorded by police.

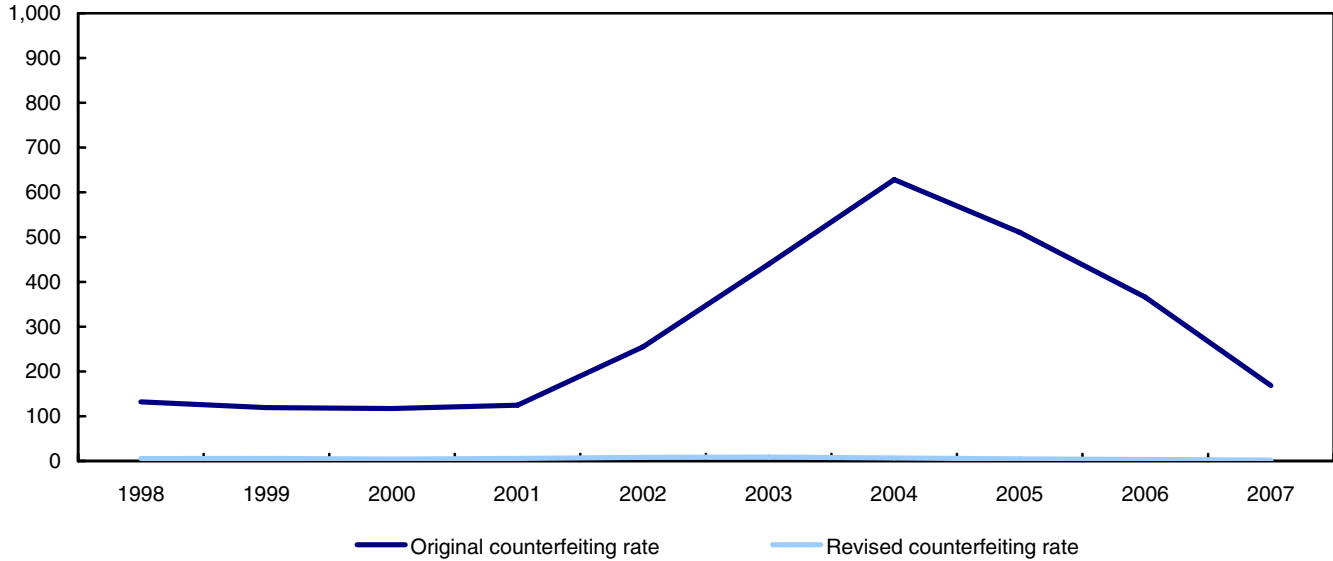
Now, police services can send up to four different offences for each incident. This allows for a better understanding of the multiple types of offences that may occur in any one incident. As such, tables can be produced showing offence counts as only the most serious offence in an incident or as any offence in the incident.

The UCR2 survey also collects information on each victim in a violent incident. This allows for the counting of both the number of violent incidents reported by police and also the number of victims of violent incidents coming to the attention of police.

These improvements to reporting are further outlined in Appendix C of this report.

Chart 3.1
Counterfeiting rate before and after adjustments, Canada, 1998 to 2007

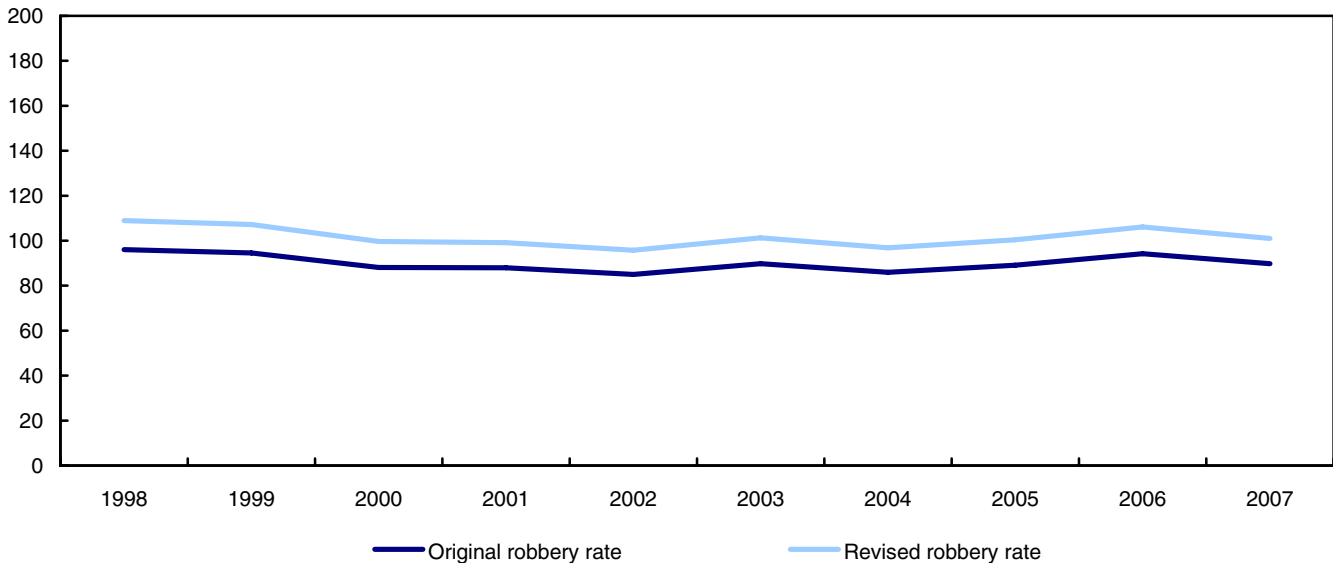
rate per 100,000 population



Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Aggregate Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Chart 3.2
Robbery rate before and after adjustments, Canada, 1998 to 2007

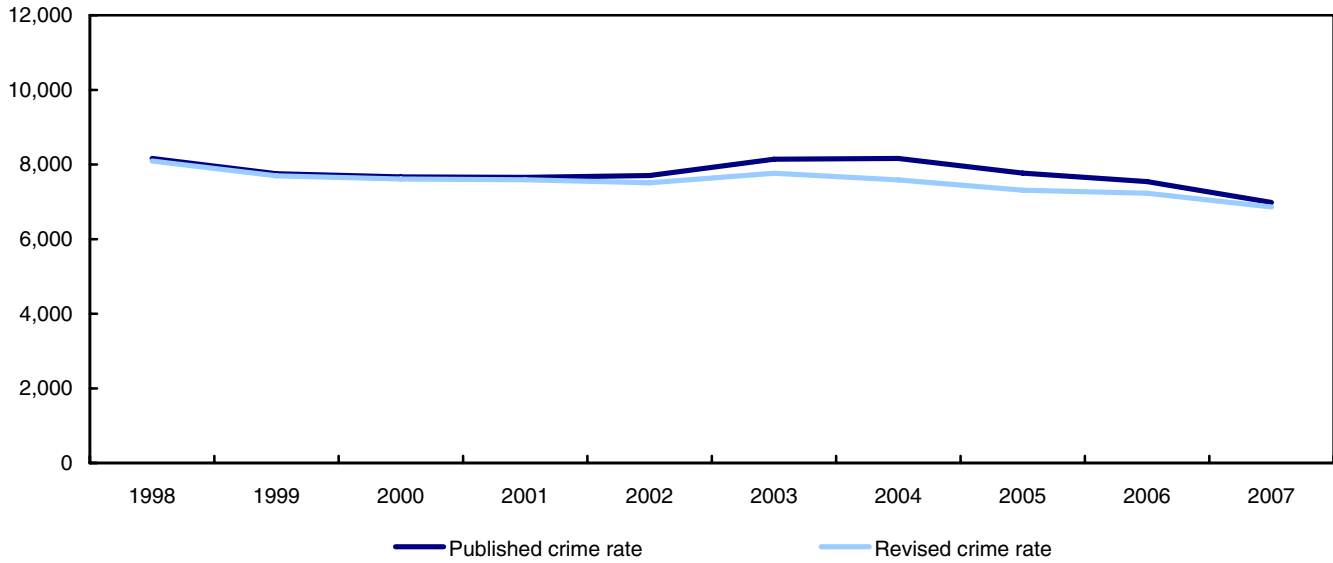
rate per 100,000 population



Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Aggregate Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Chart 3.3
Crime rate before and after adjustments, Canada, 1998 to 2007

rate per 100,000 population



Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Aggregate Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Section 4

Conclusion

Measuring the nature and extent of crime involves the use of multiple measurement tools. In Canada, and around the world, both victimization data and police-reported data are used to provide an idea of how much crime is occurring, and how much of that crime comes to the attention of the justice system. Both data sources have their strengths and limitations, but together they are able to give us a better understanding of crime trends and the impact of crime on our country and communities.

This report has introduced a third measurement tool, which will track changes not just in the volume of crime, but also in the seriousness of crime. The Crime Severity Index was developed by Statistics Canada in collaboration with its justice-related partners in an effort to address some fundamental limitations of the current police-reported crime rate.

The Index uses police-reported data to combine the concepts of how much crime is occurring in a given jurisdiction with how serious that crime is. Using court sentencing data, the Index creates a system of weights that are assigned to each offence; more serious offences receive higher weights, and less serious

offences receive lower weights. This helps reduce the impact of high-volume less-serious offences, which tend to be subject to reporting differences both to and by the police.

As an analytical tool, the Crime Severity Index enables us to answer questions such as: is crime overall becoming relatively more or less serious; or, is crime in one jurisdiction more or less serious than in another jurisdiction? It was always possible to examine trends in individual offences, but until now it has been difficult to summarize those results into an overall picture.

Furthering our understanding of crime in Canada comes not only from adding to the measurement tools available to us, but also from improving what we already have. This report has also outlined changes that have been made to the way certain offences are counted in police-reported crime data, and to the way that police-reported crime is being disseminated by Statistics Canada.

These improvements, along with the addition of the Crime Severity Index to our existing measurement tools, give Canadians a more complete picture of the nature and extent of crime in their cities, provinces/territories and country.

Statistical tables

Table 1
Examples of weights for the Crime Severity Index

	Weight number
Offence	
Murder 1 st and 2 nd degree	7,042
Manslaughter	1,822
Attempted murder	1,411
Sexual assault - level 3	1,047
Discharging firearm with intent	988
Sexual assault - level 2	678
Robbery	583
Assault - level 3	405
Using firearm in commission of an offence	267
Sexual assault - level 1	211
Breaking and entering	187
Luring a person under 18 via computer	172
Theft over \$5,000	139
Fraud	109
Weapons possession	88
Theft of a motor vehicle	84
Assault - level 2	77
Average weight 1	69
Counterfeiting currency	69
Uttering threat to person	46
Criminal harassment	45
Theft under \$5,000	37
Mischief	30
Assault - level 1	23
Fail to appear	16
Disturb the peace	9
Cannabis – possession	7

1. The average weight is a mean calculated using data from all Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey violations.

Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Policing Services Section.

Table 2
Crime rate and Crime Severity Index values, Canada, 1998 to 2007

	Total		Violent		Non-violent	
	Crime rate ¹	Crime Severity Index	Crime rate	Crime Severity Index	Crime rate ²	Crime Severity Index
1998	8,092	119.1	1,345	98.0	6,747	127.2
1999	7,694	111.5	1,440	99.6	6,254	116.1
2000	7,607	107.0	1,494	98.0	6,113	110.4
2001	7,586	105.5	1,473	97.4	6,113	108.7
2002	7,508	104.3	1,440	96.4	6,068	107.4
2003	7,761	107.0	1,433	97.7	6,328	110.5
2004	7,587	104.2	1,402	96.1	6,185	107.3
2005	7,310	101.4	1,386	98.5	5,924	102.4
2006	7,228	100.0	1,383	100.0	5,844	100.0
2007	6,862	94.6	1,342	96.5	5,520	93.9
	percent					
Percentage change 1998 to 2007	-15.2	-20.6	-0.2	-1.5	-18.2	-26.2

1. The crime rate consists of all *Criminal Code* offences excluding traffic. It also excludes drug offences and all federal statutes.

2. The non-violent crime rate includes only property and other *Criminal Code* offences.

Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Aggregated Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Table 3
Offences making the largest contributions to the Crime Severity Index versus the crime rate

	Contribution to the Crime Severity Index	Contribution to the traditional crime rate ¹
	percent	
Breaking and entering	24.9	10.2
Theft under \$5,000	12.4	25.6
Robbery	11.2	1.5
Theft of a motor vehicle	7.1	6.5
Mischief	6.4	16.6
Fraud	5.5	3.9
Sexual assault - level 1	2.5	0.9
Assault - level 1	2.4	7.9
Assault - level 2	2.4	2.4
Homicide	2.3	0.0

1. Traditional crime rate excludes *Criminal Code* traffic offences, drugs, and other federal statutes.

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

Table 4
Offences making the largest contributions to the Violent Crime Severity Index and the violent crime rate

	Contribution to the Violent Crime Severity Index	Contribution to the violent crime rate
	percent	
Robbery	39.6	7.5
Sexual assault - level 1	9.0	4.7
Assault - level 1	8.6	40.6
Assault - level 2	8.5	12.2
Homicide	7.9	0.1
Uttering threat to person	7.3	17.7
Forcible confinement or kidnapping	4.3	1.0
Assault - level 3	2.8	0.8
Attempted murder	2.3	0.2
Criminal harassment	1.6	4.2

Note(s): The violent crime rate has been expanded to include a number of offences not previously included in the violent crime rate, including uttering threats, criminal harassment and forcible confinement. For further details on this revision refer to Appendix C of this report.

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

Table 5
Offences making the largest contributions to the Non-violent Crime Severity Index and the non-violent crime rate

	Contribution to the Non-violent Crime Severity Index	Contribution to the non-violent crime rate ¹
	percent	
Break and enter	34.7	12.7
Theft under \$5,000	17.4	31.8
Theft of a motor vehicle	9.9	8.0
Mischief	9.0	20.6
Fraud	7.7	4.9
Disturb the peace	0.8	6.4

1. The non-violent crime rate includes only property and other *Criminal Code* offences.

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

Table 6
Crime rate and Crime Severity Index values, Canada and the provinces, 2007

	Total		Violent		Non-violent	
	Crime rate ¹	Crime Severity Index	Crime rate	Crime Severity Index	Crime rate ²	Crime Severity Index
Newfoundland and Labrador	6,375	75.3	1,482	61.8	4,893	80.5
Prince Edward Island	5,976	62.8	1,107	38.9	4,869	72.0
Nova Scotia	7,490	90.8	1,741	92.0	5,748	90.3
New Brunswick	5,521	70.0	1,365	64.2	4,156	72.2
Quebec	5,119	84.7	1,078	84.1	4,041	85.0
Ontario	5,062	73.3	1,066	83.1	3,995	69.6
Manitoba	10,868	149.9	1,986	173.6	8,882	140.7
Saskatchewan	13,270	164.7	2,623	170.5	10,647	162.5
Alberta	9,214	115.0	1,498	107.5	7,715	117.9
British Columbia	10,334	130.6	1,778	117.1	8,556	135.7
Yukon	21,320	189.2	3,969	196.2	17,351	186.5
Northwest Territories	43,903	339.2	9,396	345.1	34,508	336.9
Nunavut	29,997	310.3	8,829	487.7	21,168	242.0
Canada	6,862	94.6	1,342	96.5	5,520	93.9

1. The crime rate consists of all *Criminal Code* offences excluding traffic. It also excludes drug offences and all federal statutes.

2. The non-violent crime rate includes only property and other *Criminal Code* offences.

Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Aggregated Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Table 7
Crime rate and Crime Severity Index values, census metropolitan areas, 2007

	Total		Violent		Non-violent	
	Crime rate ¹	Crime Severity Index	Crime rate	Crime Severity Index	Crime rate ²	Crime Severity Index
Largest census metropolitan areas						
Winnipeg	9,682	153.2	1,369	183.4	8,313	141.6
Edmonton	9,524	131.3	1,343	131.7	8,181	131.1
Vancouver	9,011	128.5	1,478	128.6	7,533	128.5
Montréal	5,581	94.3	1,088	108.1	4,492	88.9
Calgary	6,166	91.8	876	92.8	5,290	91.5
Hamilton	6,824	83.5	1,442	96.7	5,382	78.4
Ottawa	5,399	76.6	890	77.4	4,509	76.2
Québec	4,439	66.4	982	56.7	3,457	70.2
Toronto	4,278	65.6	1,036	95.0	3,243	54.2
Smaller census metropolitan areas						
Regina	11,851	189.0	1,871	185.1	9,980	190.5
Saskatoon	11,623	158.6	2,115	212.2	9,507	138.0
Abbotsford	10,185	142.9	1,492	103.3	8,693	158.2
Thunder Bay	8,876	115.6	1,966	140.2	6,910	106.1
Victoria	9,213	109.2	1,408	81.2	7,805	120.0
Saint John	8,337	106.5	2,258	108.8	6,079	105.6
Halifax	8,000	106.3	1,873	125.3	6,128	99.0
St. John's	7,363	100.4	1,561	76.4	5,802	109.6
London	7,187	90.4	1,009	68.6	6,177	98.7
Windsor	6,119	82.5	1,032	67.1	5,086	88.4
Gatineau	5,689	81.8	1,265	69.6	4,423	86.5
St. Catharines-Niagara	5,614	81.4	986	64.6	4,628	87.9
Greater Sudbury	5,539	79.4	1,143	91.7	4,396	74.6
Sherbrooke	4,785	74.7	827	65.3	3,959	78.3
Kingston	5,931	72.7	1,282	62.9	4,649	76.4
Trois-Rivières	4,464	69.1	882	62.5	3,582	71.6
Kitchener	4,857	68.6	779	64.5	4,078	70.2
Saguenay	4,364	66.1	1,155	69.3	3,209	64.8

1. The crime rate consists of all *Criminal Code* offences excluding traffic. It also excludes drug offences and all federal statutes.

2. The non-violent crime rate includes only property and other *Criminal Code* offences.

Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Aggregated Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Table 8
Robbery, counterfeiting and other *Criminal Code* offences, before and after adjustments, Canada, 1998 to 2007

	Robbery		Total violent crime		Counterfeiting		Total other <i>Criminal Code</i> offences		Total <i>Criminal Code</i> offences excluding traffic	
	Original	Revised	Original	Revised	Original	Revised	Original	Revised	Original	Revised
	number									
1998	28,963	32,855	296,166	300,058	39,830	1,601	787,089	762,691	2,461,156	2,440,650
1999	28,740	32,593	291,327	295,180	36,265	1,709	765,523	744,548	2,356,831	2,339,709
2000	27,037	30,582	302,098	305,643	35,937	1,360	798,283	777,510	2,352,768	2,335,540
2001	27,284	30,756	305,186	308,658	38,674	1,737	827,689	804,335	2,374,811	2,354,929
2002	26,662	30,036	303,946	307,320	79,970	2,523	867,017	802,692	2,417,444	2,356,493
2003	28,437	32,084	305,667	309,314	139,267	2,763	968,276	844,711	2,579,172	2,459,254
2004	27,495	30,990	302,147	305,642	201,108	2,183	1,038,825	852,296	2,610,971	2,427,937
2005	28,798	32,437	306,687	310,326	165,014	1,517	996,670	844,892	2,510,461	2,362,322
2006	30,752	34,641	311,419	315,308	119,405	1,147	977,154	870,656	2,462,641	2,360,032
2007	29,600	33,304	306,559	310,262	55,517	697	901,638	858,090	2,302,900	2,263,053
	percent									
Percentage change 1998 to 2007	2.2	1.4	3.5	3.4	39.4	-56.5	14.6	12.5	-6.4	-7.3

Note(s): Data in this table refer to offence groupings used in the Aggregate Uniform Crime Reporting Survey. Refer to Appendix C for more information.

Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, revised data from the Aggregate Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Table 9
Count of incidents as most serious violation and as any violation, Canada, 2007

	Offence as most serious in incident	Offence as any violation in incident	Percent increase over most serious count
	number		percent
Total - all violations	2,192,656	2,507,036	14.3
Total <i>Criminal Code</i> violations (including traffic)	2,086,628	2,369,476	13.6
Total <i>Criminal Code</i> violations (excluding traffic)	1,966,528	2,235,593	13.7
Total violent <i>Criminal Code</i> violations	350,437	393,095	12.2
Homicide	519	519	0.0
Other violations causing death	69	69	0.0
Attempted murder	618	624	1.0
Sexual assault - level 3 - aggravated	108	111	2.8
Sexual assault - level 2 - weapon or bodily harm	330	433	31.2
Sexual assault - level 1	17,374	17,916	3.1
Sexual violations against children	250	524	109.6
Assault - level 3 - aggravated	2,835	3,148	11.0
Assault - level 2 - weapon or bodily harm	42,672	45,281	6.1
Assault - level 1	142,302	152,686	7.3
Assault police officer	6,497	8,021	23.5
Other assaults	2,741	4,396	60.4
Firearms - use of, discharge, pointing	1,192	2,775	132.8
Robbery	27,735	28,091	1.3
Forceable confinement or kidnapping	3,888	4,026	3.5
Abduction	348	376	8.0
Extortion	1,153	1,247	8.2
Criminal harassment	14,992	15,394	2.7
Uttering threats	59,489	78,583	32.1
Threatening or harassing phone calls	22,071	23,880	8.2
Other violent <i>Criminal Code</i> violations	3,254	4,995	53.5
Total non-violent <i>Criminal Code</i> violations	1,616,091	1,842,498	14.0
Breaking and entering	209,843	214,906	2.4
Possess stolen property	30,201	42,232	39.8
Theft of motor vehicle	131,797	134,183	1.8
Theft over \$5,000 (non-motor vehicle)	15,851	20,382	28.6
Theft under \$5,000 (non-motor vehicle)	518,550	575,923	11.1
Fraud	81,534	82,873	1.6
Mischief	330,330	368,612	11.6
Arson	11,501	11,959	4.0
Counterfeiting	9,525	9,610	0.9
Weapons violations	13,777	25,352	84.0
Child pornography	1,244	1,327	6.7
Prostitution	4,091	4,724	15.5
Disturb the peace	83,797	90,285	7.7
Administration of justice violations	146,003	209,279	43.3
Other non-violent <i>Criminal Code</i> violations	28,047	50,851	81.3
Total <i>Criminal Code</i> traffic violations	120,100	133,883	11.5
Impaired driving	70,508	78,142	10.8
Other <i>Criminal Code</i> traffic violations	49,592	55,741	12.4
Total federal statute violations	106,028	137,560	29.7
Possession - cannabis	40,117	48,343	20.5
Possession - cocaine	9,534	12,782	34.1
Possession - other <i>Controlled Drugs and Substances Act</i> drugs	8,272	11,185	35.2
Trafficking, production or distribution - cannabis	13,458	16,852	25.2
Trafficking, production or distribution - cocaine	9,559	9,994	4.6
Trafficking, production or distribution - other <i>Controlled Drugs and Substances Act</i> drugs	5,602	7,062	26.1
<i>Youth Criminal Justice Act</i>	7,147	15,075	110.9
Other federal statutes	12,339	16,267	31.8

Note(s): Data in this table are from respondents to the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey in 2007 only and therefore will not match numbers from either the Aggregate Uniform Crime Reporting Survey or the Aggregated Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Table 10
Incident and victim counts, offences against the person, Canada 2007

	Incident count ¹	Victim count	Victim count as a percent increase over incident count
	number		percent
Homicide	519	552	6.4
Other violations causing death	69	82	18.8
Attempted murder	617	797	29.2
Sexual assault - level 3 - aggravated	108	126	16.7
Sexual assault - level 2 - weapon or bodily harm	330	367	11.2
Sexual assault - level 1	17,374	19,085	9.8
Sexual violations against children	250	254	1.6
Assault - level 3 - aggravated	2,834	3,434	21.2
Assault - level 2 - weapon or bodily harm	42,670	51,258	20.1
Assault - level 1	142,298	156,247	9.8
Assault police officer	6,497	8,160	25.6
Other assaults	2,739	3,271	19.4
Firearms - Use of, discharge, pointing	1,192	1,244	4.4
Robbery	27,735	32,530	17.3
Forcible confinement or kidnapping	3,888	4,668	20.1
Abduction	348	429	23.3
Extortion	1,153	1,294	12.2
Criminal harassment	14,992	16,535	10.3
Utter threats	59,489	64,823	9.0
Threatening or harassing phone calls	22,068	22,150	0.4
Other violent Criminal Code violations	3,254	3,731	14.7
Total violent crimes	350,424	391,037	11.6

1. Incident counts in this table do not match incident counts in Table 9 due to methodological differences in matching incident and victim records from the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Note(s): Data in this table are from respondents to the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey in 2007 only and therefore will not match numbers from either the Aggregate Uniform Crime Reporting Survey or the Aggregated Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

List of incident-based violent crimes versus aggregate violent crimes

Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey - violent crimes

Murder 1st degree
Murder 2nd degree
Manslaughter
Infanticide

Criminal negligence causing death

Other related violations causing death

Attempted murder

Conspire to commit murder

Sexual assault - level 3

Sexual assault - level 2

Sexual assault - level 1

Other sexual violations

Sexual interference

Invitation to sexual touching

Sexual exploitation

Incest

Anal intercourse

Bestiality - commit or compel or incite

Corrupting morals of a child

Luring a person under 18 via computer

Voyeurism

Assault - level 3

Assault - level 2

Assault - level 1

Unlawfully causing bodily harm

Trap, likely to or causing bodily harm

Discharge firearm with intent

Using firearm or imitation in commission of offence

Pointing a firearm

Assault against peace or public officer

Criminal negligence causing bodily harm

Assaults - other

Forcible confinement or kidnapping

Hostage-taking

Trafficking in persons

Abduction under 14, not parent or guardian

Abduction under 16

Removal of children from Canada

Abduction under 14, contravening custody order

Aggregate Uniform Crime Reporting Survey - violent crimes

Murder 1st degree
Murder 2nd degree
Manslaughter
Infanticide

Attempted murder

Sexual assault - level 3

Sexual assault - level 2

Sexual assault - level 1

Other sexual violations, including:

- Sexual interference
- Invitation to sexual touching
- Sexual exploitation
- Incest
- Anal intercourse
- Bestiality - commit or compel or incite

Assault - level 3

Assault - level 2

Assault - level 1

Unlawfully causing bodily harm, including:

- Trap, likely to or causing bodily harm
- Discharge firearm with intent

Assault against peace or public officer

Assaults - other

Abduction under 14, not parent or guardian

Abduction under 16, including:

- Removal of children from Canada
- Abduction under 14, contravening custody order

Abduction under 14, by parent or guardian
Robbery

Robbery of firearms

Extortion

Intimidation justice system participant or a journalist

Intimidation - other

Criminal harassment

Harassing phone calls

Uttering threat to person

Abduction under 14, by parent or guardian
Robbery

Total violent crimes = 442,702

Total violent crimes = 310,262

Note: Violations appearing in bold exist in the Incident-based version of the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, but were not distinct offences, or were not considered to be violent crimes, in the Aggregate version of the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, revised data from the Aggregate Uniform Crime Reporting Survey and Aggregated Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

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Appendix A

Data sources

The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey

The UCR Survey was developed in 1962 with the cooperation and assistance of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. UCR survey data reflect reported crime that has been substantiated through police investigation from all federal, provincial and municipal police services in Canada. There are currently two levels of detail collected by the UCR Survey:

Aggregate UCR Survey

The aggregate UCR survey includes the number of reported offences, actual offences, offences cleared by charge or cleared otherwise, persons charged (by sex and by an adult/ youth breakdown) and those not charged. It does not include victim or incident characteristics. Coverage of the UCR Survey in 2005 was at 99.9% of the caseload of all police services in Canada.

Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey

The incident-based UCR2 survey captures detailed information on individual criminal incidents reported to police, including characteristics of victims, accused persons and incidents. Police services switch over from the aggregate to the incident based survey as their records management systems become capable of providing this level of detail. In 2007, 153 police services in all provinces and territories supplied data for the complete year to the UCR2 survey and represented approximately 94% of the population of Canada.

The coverage provided by these services in the 2007 database is distributed as follows: 41.0% from Ontario, 24.7% from Québec, 11.1% from Alberta, 8.4% from British Columbia, 3.7% from Manitoba, 3.2% from Saskatchewan, 3.0% from Nova Scotia, 2.4% from New Brunswick, 1.6% from Newfoundland and Labrador, 0.4% from Prince Edward Island, and approximately 0.1% from each of the 3 territories (Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut).

Adult Criminal Court Survey

The purpose of the Adult Criminal Court Survey (ACCS) is to provide a national database of statistical information on the processing of cases through the adult criminal court system. The survey consists of a census of *Criminal Code* and other federal statute charges dealt with in adult criminal courts. The ACCS represents approximately 90% of the national adult criminal court caseload.

Adult criminal courts in ten provinces and three territories report to the Integrated Criminal Court Survey (ICCS) and the ACCS. Reporting jurisdictions include: Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. In addition, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Alberta, British Columbia, the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut reported superior court data to the ICCS/ACCS. These thirteen jurisdictions represent approximately 98% of the national adult criminal court caseload.

The absence of data from some superior court jurisdictions may result in a slight under-estimation of the severity of sentences imposed across Canada. The reason for this is that some of the most serious cases, which are likely to result in the most severe sanctions, are processed in superior courts. Similarly, the absence of superior court data

from certain jurisdictions may result in a slight underestimation of case elapsed times across Canada. Again, this is due to the most serious cases being processed in superior courts. More serious cases involve a defence election, may involve a preliminary inquiry, and jury selection, and therefore may require more appearances and take more time to complete. While these limitations are important, comparisons from one year to another are possible if the reporting jurisdictions used in the comparison are held constant.

The analysis in this report regarding offences in court is based on the most serious offence. When a case has more than one charge, it is necessary to decide which charge will be used to represent the case (since a case is identified by a single charge). In such multiple-charge cases, the “most serious decision” rule is applied. Decisions are ranked from the most to the least serious as follows: 1) guilty, 2) guilty of a lesser offence, 3) acquitted, 4) stay of proceeding, 5) withdrawn, dismissed and discharged 6) not criminally responsible 7) other, 8) transfer of court jurisdiction. In cases where two or more offences have resulted in the same decision (e.g., guilty), the “most serious offence” rule is applied. All charges are ranked according to an offence seriousness scale, which is based on the average length of prison sentence imposed on guilty charges between 1994/1995 and 2000/2001. If two charges are tied according to this criterion, information about the sentence type (e.g., prison, probation, and fine) is considered. If a tie still exists, the magnitude of the sentence is considered.

The most serious sentence rule applies where more than one sentence is associated with the most serious offence in a case. Sentences are ranked from most to least serious as follows: Prison, conditional sentence, probation, fine, and other (restitution, absolute or conditional discharge, suspended sentence, other).

Youth Court Survey

The Youth Court Survey (YCS) is a census of *Criminal Code* and other federal statute offences heard and completed in youth court for persons aged 12 to 17 years (up to the 18th birthday) at the time of the offence.

Appendix B

Changes to counting rules for select offences

Counterfeiting

The change to the way in which counterfeiting information is tabulated and presented is intended to correct a disconnect between the way counterfeiting data are currently being collected and the mandate of the UCR Survey, which is to collect data on those crimes reported to the police. For the past few years the UCR Survey has accepted data related to counterfeiting not just directly from police services, but also from other sources including the RCMP's Bureau of Counterfeiting and Document Examination. This Bureau is a laboratory associated with the RCMP but is not itself a police service, nor does it undertake enforcement activities.

A change in process—by which the Bank of Canada could submit suspected counterfeit bills directly to the Bureau without police agency involvement—led to concerns that without supplementary information the UCR Survey may under-count the number of counterfeiting incidents in Canada. In order to address this, a change was made to the UCR survey in order to allow additional incidents of counterfeiting to be reported to the CCJS directly from the RCMP Bureau.

The result of this change was a significant increase in the number of counterfeiting incidents. On average, counterfeiting counts at the national level prior to the change were around 12,000 incidents per year. After the change, counts ranged from a low of 80,000 to a high of 200,000 between 2002 and 2007. Counterfeiting became one of the highest-volume offences in the UCR survey. As the volume of counterfeiting can fluctuate quite a bit from year-to-year, this offence began to have a significant impact on the trend of overall crime rates from 2002 to 2007.

In recent years, the CCJS has been involved in further consultation with police services which has brought to light a disconnect between the way in which counterfeiting is currently being counted and the mandate of the UCR Survey. Ultimately, counterfeiting detected by merchants or banking institutions after a financial transaction had taken place without any direct involvement by a police agency is outside the scope of the UCR Survey- which is to collect data on crimes reported to and substantiated by the police.

Further, in many incidents, counterfeit bills are passed unwittingly by individuals. It is actually the making of counterfeit money or the possession and/or passing of a counterfeit bill or coin with knowledge that it is not genuine which constitutes a criminal or illegal act under the *Criminal Code*. Passing a counterfeit bill without knowing it is counterfeit is not really a crime and so it should not be counted by the UCR Survey.

Based on these two factors it was decided that the UCR Survey would only count counterfeiting incidents submitted directly by police services and, more specifically, only those incidents where an accused person was identified. This would ensure that counterfeiting bills detected by financial institutions and those passed unwittingly by individuals would not be included in crime counts.

The result of this change was a large decrease in the number of counterfeiting incidents, and overall crime counts, over the past 10 years (see Table 8). On average the number of counterfeiting incidents dropped by about 97% in the years to which the adjustments were applied, from 1998 to 2007. This also has had an impact on the overall crime rate during this same period, by lowering it from what was originally published (see Section 3.1 for a brief analysis of the impact of this and other changes on crime trends).

Robbery

Robbery is the second offence that has undergone a change in the way it is counted in the UCR Survey. In the past, robbery offences were counted differently than other violent crimes. While all other violent crimes are counted according to the number of victims involved regardless of the number of distinct incidents that had occurred, robbery offences were counted according to the number of incidents that had taken place. For instance, if three people were assaulted at the same time and place by the same perpetrator, that would be counted as three assaults. However, if three people were robbed at the same time and place by the same perpetrator, that would be counted as only one robbery.

The decision to count robbery this way dates back to the origins of the survey in the 1960s and was based on the knowledge that individuals were not always the intended victim in a robbery, which could cause some confusion in terms of what police services should be counting. For instance, a bank or retail store could be robbed and regardless of the number of employees or customers present, if no cash or personal belongings were taken directly from them, they had not actually been victims of the robbery. The original aggregate version of the UCR Survey could not ensure that everyone present during these types of incidents was not being counted individually, which would artificially inflate the number of robberies. As a result, the decision was made to count robberies based on the number of distinct incidents reported by police, rather than the number of victims present.

With the introduction of the UCR2 Survey, it is now possible to distinguish between cases in which multiple victims were actually robbed, and cases in which a number of people were simply present when an establishment was robbed. As a result, robberies will now be counted like all other violent crimes, with each victim counting as one robbery. In the case of a location being robbed, only one incident will be counted.

The change in the way robbery is counted has a notable impact on the volume of robberies over the past 10 years. Between 1998 and 2007 robbery counts will now be approximately 12% higher each year than was originally published. In turn, the count of overall violent crime will now be about 1% higher each of those years than what was originally published (Table 8), as robbery accounts for approximately 1 in 10 violent crimes.

Beyond the offence of robbery, it should be noted that there are also a few, relatively new, violations for which a similar change in counting also applies - most notably, uttering threats and criminal harassment. Under the original version of the UCR Survey, these offences fell within the general category of "Other *Criminal Code*" offences which only allowed for counts of the number of incidents reported by police. Appendix C of this report describes how certain offences are now being included in the category of "offences against the person" rather than "Other *Criminal Code*" offences. The impact of the change in counting for these offences is much less than for robbery, resulting in a 6% increase in overall counts to this category each year over the same 10-year time period from 1998 to 2007.

Appendix C

Improvements to the reporting of crime statistics

Police-reported crime statistics extracted from the UCR survey have been released in much the same format since 1962. The only changes have come from the introduction of new offences resulting from the passing of new legislation. Now, with virtually all police services responding through the UCR2 microdata survey, it is possible to introduce new detailed information into the standard tables released each year. There are three main improvements being made to the way in which police-reported crime statistics will be released in the future.

More detailed offences and improved crime categories

Not only does the UCR2 Survey collect more detailed offences, it is also able to improve upon the larger grouping of offences, known as offence categories. The historical violent crime offence category is revised to include a number of offences which were previously considered to be “Other *Criminal Code*” offences, but which have a clear component of targeting and impacting individual victims. These offences include:

- Criminal harassment
- Sexual offences against children
- Forcible confinement or kidnapping
- Extortion
- Uttering threats
- Threatening or harassing phone calls

Since the revised category includes a broader number of distinct offences, the total number of incidents for this category will be higher than what has been released historically in the “List of incident-based violent crimes versus aggregate violent crimes”. Chart 1 shows a similar flat trend over the past 10 years for both measures. However, the revised violent crime rate experienced large increases in 1999 and 2000 which were not seen in the original series. These increases were the result of large increases in uttering threats and criminal harassment, both of which were included in the “Other *Criminal Code*” section of the original aggregate version of the UCR Survey.

Ability to count all offences in an incident, not just the most serious

It is not uncommon for a number of offences to occur at the same time and in the same place. This combination of offences occurring at the same time is defined as one “incident” in the UCR survey. According to UCR scoring rules, only the most serious offence in an incident, as determined by the maximum penalties allowed by the *Criminal Code*, should be counted.

An illustration of this type of situation could be that someone breaks into a home (break and enter), finds the homeowner inside and takes his wallet at gunpoint (a robbery), then pushes the victim to the floor and kicks him (an assault), before fleeing the scene. Three distinct offences have taken place, but the robbery (the most serious offence in this scenario) is the only offence that will be counted in overall crime counts. This rule helps ensure

consistency and comparability in terms of how police services report incidents, both over time and among various services.

In the aggregate version of the UCR survey, the only offence in a particular incident which would be reported to the UCR survey would be the most serious. In the new UCR2 microdata survey, police services can send up to four different offences for each incident. While the robbery would still be counted as the most serious offence in the scenario above, and hence, the incident would continue to be classified as a robbery for the purposes of overall crime counts, the offences of assault and break and enter would now also be recorded as secondary offences.

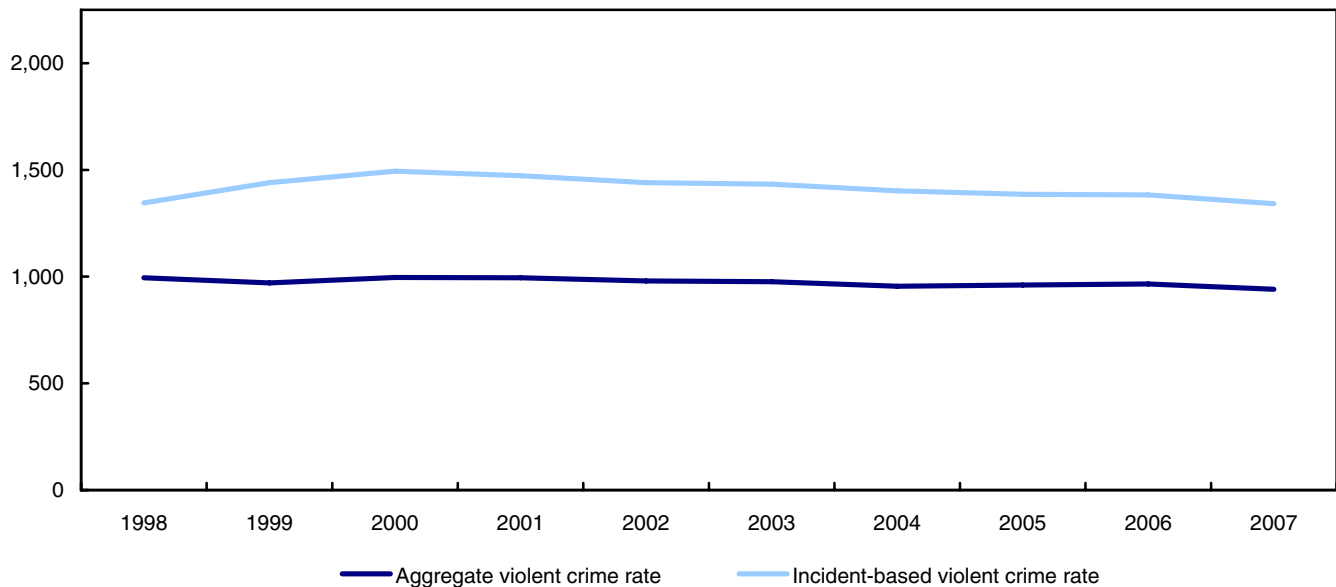
Now that this additional information is being collected by the UCR 2 microdata survey, it is possible to show not just counts of offences when they occur as the most serious offence but also as secondary offences. Table 9 shows that certain offences occur relatively more frequently than others as secondary offences. For instance, for firearms and other weapons offences, there were almost an equal number reported as secondary violations as there were as most serious violations in an incident.

Ability to show both incident and victim counts for violent incidents

The UCR2 microdata survey also collects information on each victim in a violent incident. This allows for the reporting of violent incidents either by the number of incidents or the number of victims. The difference between the two counts can be seen in Table 10. In total, in Canada in 2007, there were 350,424 violent incidents involving 391,037 victims. Among the most common offences with multiple victims were assaults against police officers and attempted murder.

Chart 1
Aggregate violent crime rate and incident-based violent crime rate, Canada, 1998 to 2007

rate per 100,000 population



Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Aggregated Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey and Aggregate Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.