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CRIME IN MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS, 1991-1995

by *Tim Leonard*

Highlights

- While many Canadians believe that large cities have higher crime rates than smaller cities or rural areas, crime statistics show otherwise. In 1995, Canada's 24 largest metropolitan areas accounted for 61% of the population and also for 61% of the crime reported to police.
- Large cities tend to have lower rates than smaller cities and towns for certain offences: sexual assault, common assault and weapons offences. Conversely, certain types of crimes exhibit higher rates in large cities: robbery, breaking and entering, motor vehicle theft and prostitution.
- Vancouver had the highest crime rate among the nine largest metropolitan areas (over 500,000 population), ranking highest for homicide, arson, weapons offences, break and enter and prostitution in 1995. Despite these high rates, a number of offences have declined from 1991 to 1995.
- The cities of Québec and Calgary reported the lowest crime rates in 1995 among the largest metropolitan areas. While Québec has historically displayed low rates, Calgary has experienced major declines in most offences since 1991.
- Among the 15 metropolitan areas with a population between 100,000 and 500,000, Regina reported the highest rates for attempted murder, weapons offences, breaking and entering, motor vehicle theft and prostitution in 1995. Thunder Bay also had high rates for several offences, while Sherbrooke and St. John's generally reported the lowest rates.
- Youth crime is not just a large urban phenomenon. In 1995, 57% of Canadian youths (aged 12-17) lived in the 24 major metropolitan areas but accounted for only 55% of all youths charged with a criminal offence.



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INTRODUCTION

Many Canadians believe that there is more crime in a large city than in a small city or rural community. However, statistics do not support this perception. Even though a greater number of crimes do occur in large cities, it is relative to the number of people living in those cities. In 1995, 61% of Canadians lived in 24 major metropolitan areas¹ (cities that have at least 100,000 people), and 61% of Canada's 2.6 million *Criminal Code* violations occurred within these metropolitan areas. Thus, a proportionate amount of crime occurred within the big cities as it did outside.

Another commonly held perception is that violent crime, in particular, tends to occur in major metropolitan areas rather than in smaller towns. Once again, the data do not support this notion. In fact, in 1995, 58% of violent crime occurred in the 24 biggest cities, which accounted for 61% of the population.

A third perception is that Canada's larger cities, Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver, have higher crime rates than other large Canadian cities. As will be shown, this is not necessarily the case.

The 1993 General Social Survey surveyed Canadians about their fear of crime. Almost half (46%) of the Canadian population felt that the level of crime in their neighbourhoods had recently increased (Gartner & Doob, 1994: 14). People said this in spite of Statistics Canada releasing statistics for Canada in 1993 that showed crime rates were decreasing. This finding suggests that people's perceptions may not necessarily relate to the official levels of crime reported in their cities. This *Juristat* will also attempt to examine this notion.

Canadians are concerned about youth crime. A lot of this concern is a result of the youth crime rate jumping 130% from 1986 to 1995 for violent offences. However, the majority of this increase can be attributed to the 173% rise in "common assault" rates, the least serious type of violent offence. When examining all *Criminal Code* violations (not just violent ones), the youth crime rate has only increased 5% since 1986. This report addresses this issue by examining youth crime rates for all major metropolitan areas.

New Approach to Urban Crime Analysis

In the traditional approach to urban crime analysis, crime statistics have been released by individual municipal police force. While useful for showing the differences between police forces, this type of analysis has one major limitation: variations in the composition of the areas being policed are not taken into account. For example, Montréal and Vancouver police forces patrol very different jurisdictions. Data from the Montréal police force represent 29 municipalities having a mixture of urban and suburban environments, while data from the Vancouver police force reflect mostly the urbanized core of the greater Vancouver area. As suburban areas generally have lower crime rates than urban centres, any differences in the mix of urban/suburban areas policed by various police forces can result in artificial differences in crime rates.

In response to this concern, the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) has adopted the Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) as the standard geographical unit for the reporting of urban crime data. A CMA represents an urbanized core of at least 100,000 population and includes adjacent urban and rural areas that have a high degree of economic and social integration. Since more than one police force is often responsible for enforcing the law within the boundaries of a CMA, the CCJS has organized the crime data to fit within the boundaries of a CMA (refer to Methodology section for greater detail). The terms "CMA" and "city" are used interchangeably throughout this report.

¹ There are 25 CMAs in Canada, but due to mapping difficulties between police jurisdictions and the geographical boundaries of the CMA, Oshawa has been excluded from the analysis.

Crime Rates

CMA's compared to non-CMA's

As mentioned in the *Introduction*, there was an equal proportion of *Criminal Code* offences reported in large urban centres (CMA's) as opposed to small cities, towns, and rural communities (non-CMA's). The rates for specific offences, however, are quite different for CMA's and non-CMA's (see Table 1). In 1995, CMA rates were notably higher than non-CMA rates for attempted murder, robbery, breaking and entering, motor vehicle theft and prostitution. However, non-CMA rates were higher for such offences as sexual assault, common assault, weapons and explosives offences, and impaired driving.

Offences Under Analysis

The offences selected for analysis were chosen for three reasons: consistency in reporting to police, high public interest, and/or a large enough number of occurrences at the CMA level for analysis. The 12 offences included are homicide, attempted murder, robbery, sexual assault, major assault, minor assault, arson, weapons and explosives, breaking and entering, motor vehicle theft, prostitution, and impaired driving.

Larger CMA's compared to smaller CMA's

In 1995, of the 18 million Canadians living within a CMA, 80% lived in the nine largest CMA's (a population of 500,000 or more). These larger CMA's also accounted for nearly 80% of all crime. Thus, crime occurred in larger and smaller CMA's in equal

Crime rates represent the number of actual incidents reported to police per 100,000 population. Note that for incidents involving multiple offences, only the most serious offence in the incident is counted. Thus when an offence is being discussed, that offence was the most serious offence in that incident. As a result, there is an undercounting of less serious offences.

Crime rates are an imperfect measure of the extent of crime. Many factors can affect crime rates, particularly the following: reporting of offences by the public to the police; the impact of new initiatives (e.g., community-based policing and new legislation); and quality control procedures that affect the reporting of offences to Statistics Canada by the police (refer to Hendrick (1996: 2-3) for more detail). Crime victimization surveys such as Statistics Canada's General Social Survey are often seen as an alternative to official crime statistics. The difference between the rates of unreported and reported crime is estimated to be considerable. The 1993 General Social Survey estimated that 90% of sexual assaults, 68% of other assaults, and 53% of robberies in that year were not reported to police (Johnson, 1996: 3).

Table 1

Rates of Selected Offences by Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA's), 1995

CMA's	Population	Homicide	Attempted Murder	Robbery	Sexual Assault	Major Assault	Common Assault	Arson	Weapons and Explosives	Breaking and Entering	Motor Vehicle Theft	Prostitution	Impaired Driving
CANADA	29,606,097	2.0	3.1	102	95	176	601	45	59	1,320	552	24	341
All CMA's	17,912,804	2.1	3.5	149	72	175	536	43	41	1,380	682	38	216
All Non-CMA's	11,693,293	1.9	2.7	30	131	178	702	48	87	1,227	351	3	534
Larger CMA's (500,000 +)													
Total	14,245,132	2.2	3.7	169	67	171	524	42	38	1,372	730	41	196
Toronto	4,338,374	1.7	2.8	139	63	170	528	24	41	859	445	44	138
Montréal	3,328,339	2.3	6.2	220	46	154	425	59	17	1,507	832	41	188
Vancouver	1,826,832	3.5	3.7	253	87	208	732	70	66	2,441	1,117	68	170
Ottawa-Hull	1,026,884	2.7	3.5	116	84	135	571	43	42	1,657	840	13	238
Ontario part	774,773	3.1	4.3	132	90	128	632	42	47	1,724	994	15	153
Québec part	252,111	1.6	1.2	68	66	154	384	46	27	1,449	366	5	499
Edmonton*	882,940	2.2	1.4	112	111	195	488	34	53	1,236	607	50	358
Calgary	828,516	2.1	1.3	104	68	165	388	25	42	1,170	636	21	311
Québec	695,203	0.6	2.6	105	40	90	327	42	8	1,304	437	22	317
Winnipeg	676,501	2.4	5.0	273	62	275	533	34	59	1,534	1,183	30	177
Hamilton	641,543	2.6	2.6	81	98	164	778	42	33	992	972	37	147
Smaller CMA's (100,000-499,999)													
Total	3,667,672	1.4	2.7	71	91	190	581	44	52	1,413	499	27	292
Kitchener	417,882	0.7	1.0	47	66	103	387	25	32	978	467	27	262
St. Catharines-Niagara	416,474	0.2	2.9	54	72	135	386	84	58	1,477	424	39	184
London	412,624	0.7	1.2	63	81	140	641	40	71	1,387	863	20	279
Halifax	342,771	1.8	3.2	75	97	204	758	37	64	1,215	281	50	265
Victoria	311,184	1.9	4.2	131	130	200	869	62	77	1,381	414	3	290
Windsor	286,230	2.8	1.0	55	81	133	574	48	49	785	377	20	341
Saskatoon	219,922	1.4	5.0	134	126	325	624	30	44	2,008	515	29	403
Regina	198,688	1.5	9.6	122	124	374	481	15	82	3,146	1,106	118	350
St. John's	177,258	2.3	-	23	173	472	649	29	42	800	138	1	324
Chicoutimi-Jonquière	167,228	0.6	1.2	35	42	127	411	41	9	1,513	329	1	318
Sudbury	166,344	2.4	1.8	67	110	208	736	45	59	1,663	673	11	201
Sherbrooke	148,039	-	6.1	67	26	69	232	36	34	1,575	545	-	315
Trois-Rivières	143,022	1.4	0.7	70	35	115	277	44	22	1,136	499	34	432
Thunder Bay	130,887	3.8	3.8	77	96	312	1,273	72	73	1,906	553	19	352
Saint John	129,119	2.3	-	27	132	133	531	42	13	1,025	151	4	267

Rates are calculated based on 100,000 population.

- nil or zero

* The crime statistics for Edmonton are preliminary.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.
 Statistics Canada, Census and Demographic Statistics, Demography Division as of July 1st 1995.

proportions. Again, there were differences for specific offences. In 1995, larger CMAs had higher rates for homicide, attempted murder, robbery, motor vehicle theft and prostitution; while smaller CMAs had higher rates for sexual assault, weapons and explosives offences, and impaired driving.

Larger CMAs (500,000 plus in population)

Toronto has a relatively low crime rate

Even though Toronto is Canada's largest metropolitan area, Toronto's rates for specific offences were generally below both the larger CMA average and the national average.

From 1991 to 1995,² Toronto has had a very low rate among the larger CMAs for the following offences: homicide, arson, breaking and entering, motor vehicle theft, and impaired driving. Further, during this time period, Toronto's rates have dropped for a number of offences: weapons and explosives offences (-69%), prostitution (-56%), homicide (-33%), major assault (-29%) and attempted murder (-28%).

The CMA of **Ottawa-Hull** is divided across two provincial boundaries, Ontario and Québec (see Table 1). Data for 1995 show differences in crime between the two provinces within Ottawa-Hull. For nine of the 12 selected offences, the Ontario portion had much higher rates.

Vancouver has the highest crime rate

In 1995, no other larger CMA had as high a crime rate as Vancouver. Vancouver had the highest rates for the following offences: homicide, arson, weapons and explosives, breaking and entering, and prostitution. Vancouver's rate was ranked either second or third highest for attempted murder, robbery, sexual assault, major assault, common assault and motor vehicle theft. Vancouver's rates for homicide, robbery, breaking and entering, and prostitution were nearly double or more than double the national rate.

Despite these high rates, a number of offences have declined over the last five years: impaired driving (-57%), prostitution (-27%), attempted murder (-18%), sexual assault (-17%), major assault (-14%) and homicide (-10%); only the motor vehicle theft rate experienced an increase (+8%).

Québec and Calgary have the lowest crime rates

Québec and Calgary generally had the lowest crime rates among the larger CMAs. In 1995, Québec's rate was ranked as either the lowest or second lowest for the offences of homicide, sexual assault, major assault, common assault, weapons and explosives, and motor vehicle theft. Calgary's rates were low for attempted murder, robbery, common assault, arson, and prostitution. Both CMAs' rates were at or below the national rate for nearly all offences; the only rate that was higher was for motor vehicle theft in Calgary.

² CMA crime data are only available beginning in 1991. Although the impact is minimal for this report, Metro Toronto police did change their counting procedures for incidents as of 1992. Therefore, comparisons to 1991 data for Toronto should be interpreted with caution.

Large drop in crime in Alberta's CMAs

Offence	Calgary	Edmonton
Homicide*	-17%	-26%
Attempted murder*	+46%	-52%
Robbery	-30%	-41%
Sexual assault	-28%	-29%
Major assault	-45%	-19%
Common assault	-28%	-29%
Arson	-39%	-12%
Weapons and explosives	-32%	-26%
Breaking and entering	-33%	-41%
Motor vehicle theft	-22%	-26%
Prostitution	-82%	-11%
Impaired driving	-63%	-54%

Note: Percentages represent the change in rates from 1991 to 1995

* The small number of homicide and attempted murder incidents are prone to wide fluctuations over time.

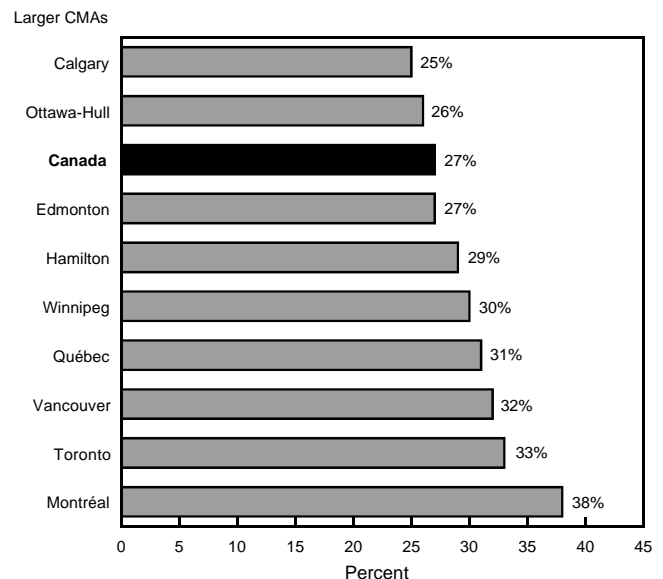
From 1991 to 1995, Québec has consistently reported low crime rates. Calgary, however, has not always had such low crime rates. During the five year period, Calgary's rate declined for all offences except attempted murder. Edmonton also experienced dramatic declines in its rates. A recent study points to increases in private security and new crime prevention practices (such as community-based policing) as the main reasons for the declining crime rate in Edmonton (Kennedy & Veitch, 1997: 66).

Fear is not necessarily related to crime rates

Among the larger cities, Montréal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver residents reported higher than average levels of fear in 1993. The 1993 General Social Survey measured fear of

Figure 1a

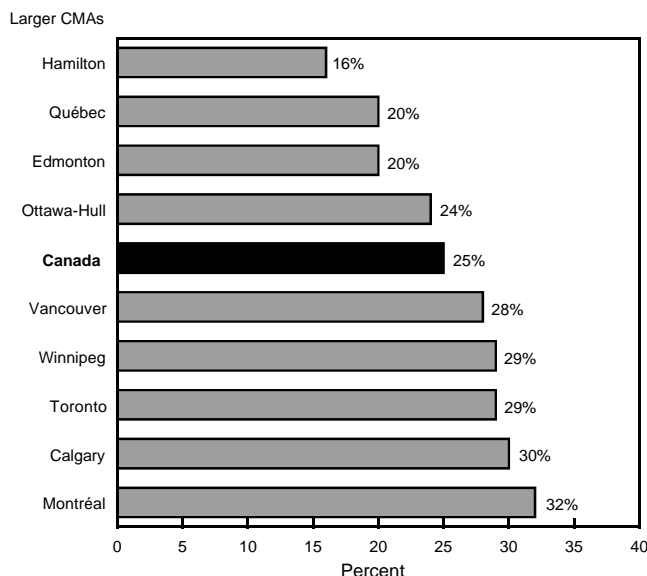
Percentage of population aged 15 years and over who feel unsafe walking alone in their area after dark by larger CMA, 1993



Source: The 1993 General Social Survey.

Figure 1b

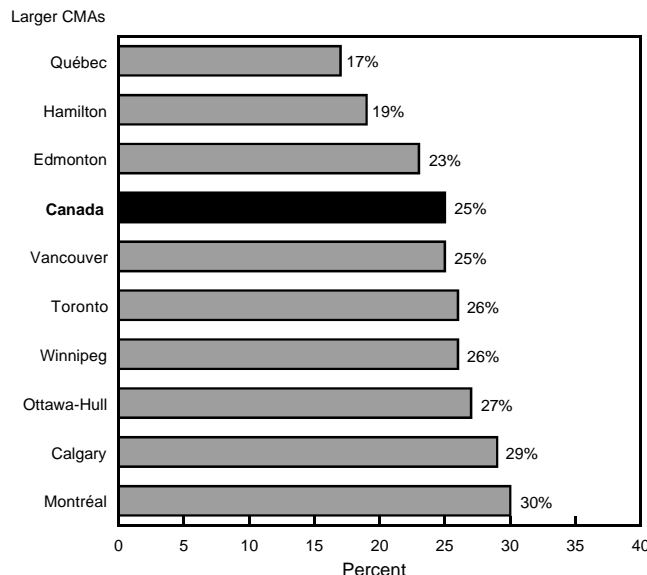
Percentage of population aged 15 years and over who are worried while waiting for public transportation by larger CMA, 1993



Source: The 1993 General Social Survey.

Figure 1c

Percentage of population aged 15 years and over who feel worried when home alone by larger CMA, 1993



Source: The 1993 General Social Survey.

crime using three criterion: feeling unsafe walking home alone in their area after dark (Figure 1a); being worried while waiting for public transportation (Figure 1b); and, being worried while at home alone after dark (Figure 1c). All four cities scored above the national average for each measure.

According to crime statistics, the higher level of fear experienced by people living in Toronto is not justified. For nearly every offence examined in 1993, Toronto had a lower rate than the average rate for larger CMAs. The fear felt by Toronto residents may have been associated more with the sheer number of criminal occurrences and the resulting media coverage rather than the crime rate.

Residents of Vancouver, however, may have been justified in their feelings of fear. Vancouver's crime rate was higher than the larger CMA rate for 10 of the 12 offences examined. Montréal and Winnipeg, which have higher than average levels of fear, had average levels of crime; some offences were above the larger CMA rate and others were below. Thus, fear is not highly associated with crime rates but, rather, is based on the perceived risk of victimization (Ferraro, 1996).

Robbery drops by 28% in Montréal but jumps 40% in Winnipeg

In 1995, Montréal's robbery rate had dropped 28% from 1991 while Winnipeg's rate had increased by 40% (Figure 2a). At the national level, the robbery rate has dropped 14% since 1991. Six of the nine larger cities reported substantial decreases in their robbery rates from 1991 to 1995 (Figure 2b). Winnipeg, Vancouver and Montréal have consistently had the highest robbery rates since 1991.

Ottawa-Hull's breaking and entering rate increases by 15%

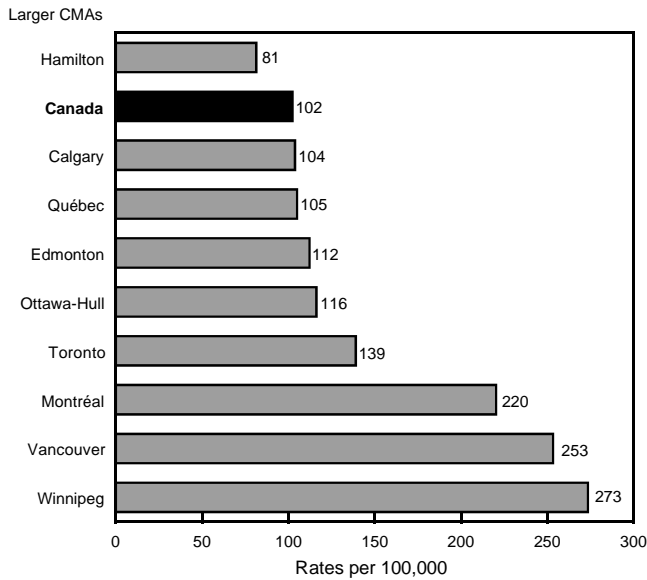
Vancouver has had the highest rate of breaking and entering since 1991, while Toronto and Hamilton have had the lowest rates (Figure 3a). From 1991 to 1995, Ottawa-Hull was the only large CMA to report a notable increase in rates of breaking and entering, despite a national decline of 15%. In fact, only the Ottawa portion (+30%) of the Ottawa-Hull CMA increased while the Hull portion (-20%) actually decreased over this time period. Edmonton's and Calgary's rates have dropped 41% and 33%, respectively (Figure 3b).

Motor vehicle theft is the only rate to increase nationally

Motor vehicle theft was the only offence among the 12 offences examined to have increased nationally (+11%) between 1991 and 1995. Winnipeg had the highest rate in 1995 followed closely by Vancouver (Figure 4a). Québec and Toronto have consistently had the lowest rates for motor vehicle theft. Winnipeg and Hamilton reported dramatic increases in their motor vehicle theft rates over this time, up 218% and 154%, respectively. Despite this trend, motor vehicle theft rates have decreased for Edmonton, Calgary, Montréal and Québec (Figure 4b).

Figure 2a

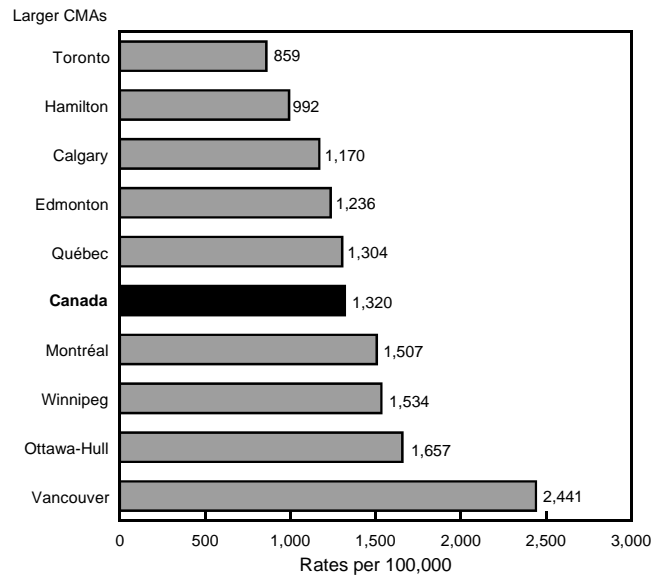
Robbery rates for larger CMAs, 1995



Source: UCR Survey.

Figure 3a

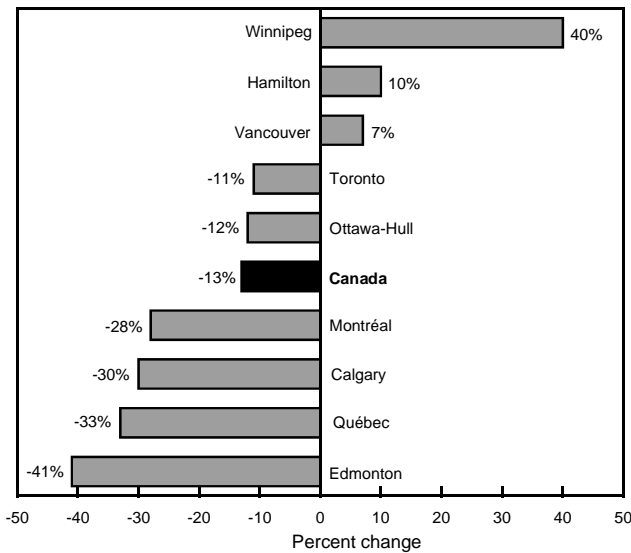
Breaking and entering rates for larger CMAs, 1995



Source: UCR Survey.

Figure 2b

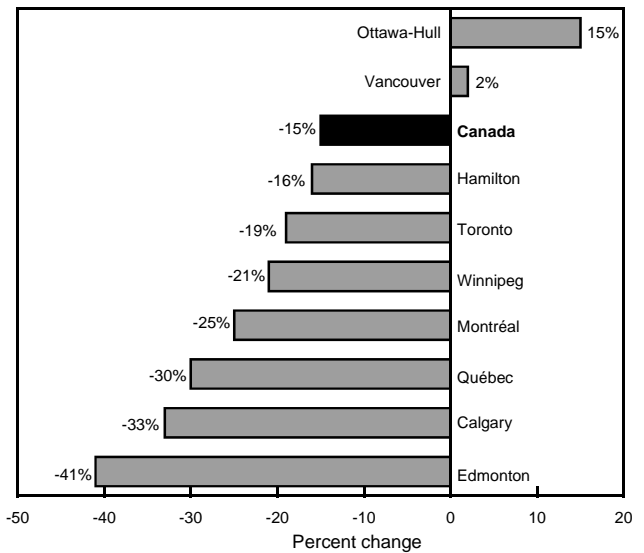
Percentage change in robbery rates for larger CMAs from 1991 to 1995



Source: UCR Survey.

Figure 3b

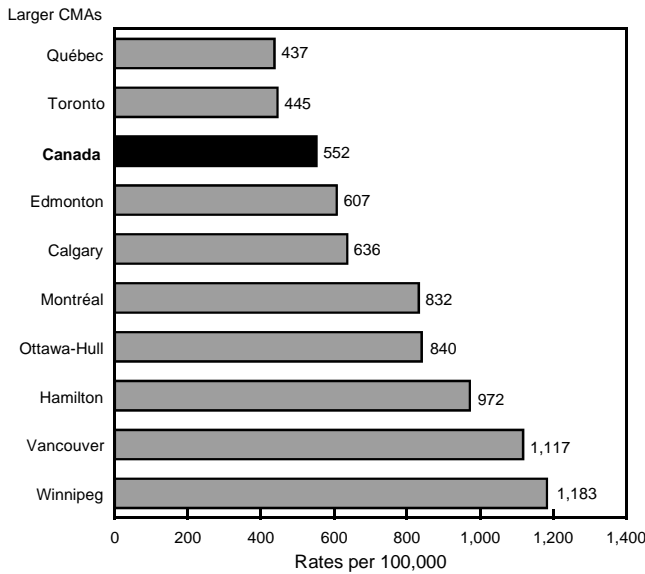
Percent change in breaking and entering rates for larger CMAs from 1991 to 1995



Source: UCR Survey.

Figure 4a

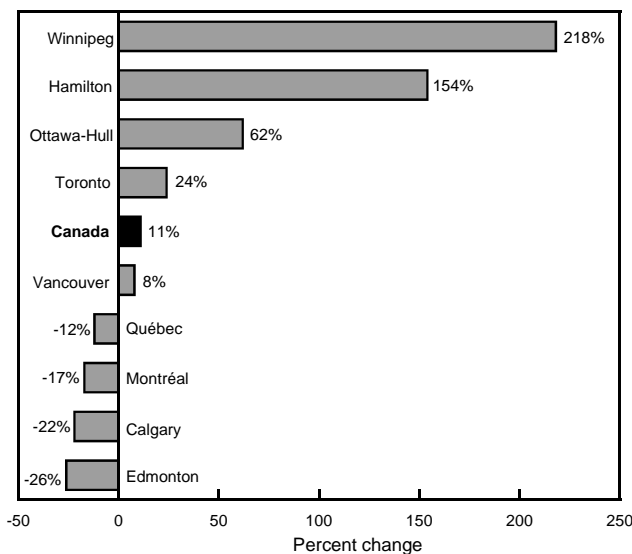
Motor vehicle theft rates for larger CMAs, 1995



Source: UCR Survey.

Figure 4b

Percent change in motor vehicle theft rates for larger CMAs from 1991 to 1995



Source: UCR Survey.

Smaller CMAs (100,000 to 499,999 population)

Regina and Thunder Bay have highest crime rates

Among the 15 smaller CMAs, Regina had the highest rates in 1995 for attempted murder, weapons and explosives offences, breaking and entering, motor vehicle theft and prostitution. Regina held the second highest rate for major assault, third highest for robbery, fourth for impaired driving, and fifth for sexual assault. Regina did, however, have the lowest arson rate.

Since 1991, Regina has reported consistently high rates for attempted murder, breaking and entering, and prostitution. These offences were often two to four times higher than the national rate. Motor vehicle theft (+87%) and weapons and explosives offences (+80%) have increased significantly during this period.

In 1995, Thunder Bay also reported high crime rates for all offences except prostitution. Thunder Bay's rates for homicide and common assault were about double the national rate. The rates, however, for impaired driving (-35%), attempted murder (-30%), major assault (-21%), arson (-18%) and sexual assault (-15%) have fallen substantially during the same time period.

According to crime statistics, Sherbrooke is a safe place to live

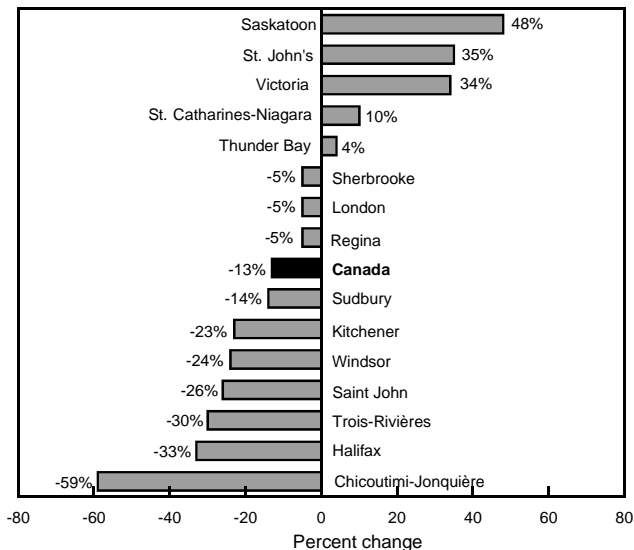
Sherbrooke and St. John's had the lowest crime rates of all smaller CMAs. From 1991 to 1995, Sherbrooke's rates were low for homicide, sexual assault, major assault, common assault and prostitution. Similarly, St. John's had low rates, but for different offences: attempted murder, robbery, breaking and entering, motor vehicle theft and prostitution. However, St. John's also held the highest rates for sexual assault and major assault during this period.

Robbery rates declining in two-thirds of smaller CMAs

In accordance with the national decline in robbery rates, 10 of the 15 smaller CMAs reported lower robbery rates in 1995 than in 1991; the largest decrease occurred in Chicoutimi-Jonquière (-59%). Robbery rates for Saskatoon, St. John's and Victoria, however, have increased by a substantial margin. Although St. John's robbery rate jumped by 35% over the five year period, this city still had the lowest rate in 1995; Saskatoon and Victoria had the highest (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Percentage change in robbery rates for smaller CMA's from 1991 to 1995



Source: UCR Survey.

Windsor's breaking and entering rate is cut in half since 1991

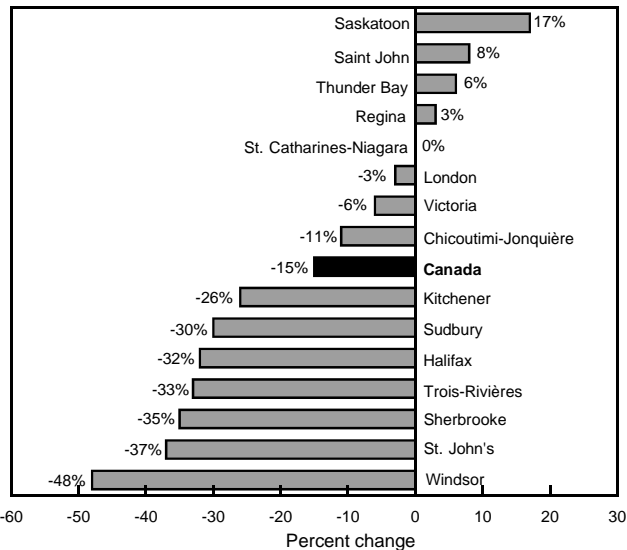
Breaking and entering rates in seven of the 15 smaller CMA's decreased by over 25% from 1991 to 1995. Windsor experienced the most dramatic decrease, falling 48% to the lowest rate of all smaller CMA's in 1995. Saskatoon, Saint John and Thunder Bay reported large increases in their rates, despite the national decline (Figure 6).

Motor vehicle theft more than doubles in London

Regina had the highest rate of motor vehicle theft in 1995, an 87% increase from 1991. London had the largest increase, jumping 144% in the same period. In contrast, Saint John (-56%), St. John's (-43%) and Sudbury (-36%) experienced large decreases in their motor vehicle theft rate. St. John's has had the lowest rate since 1991 (Figure 7).

Figure 6

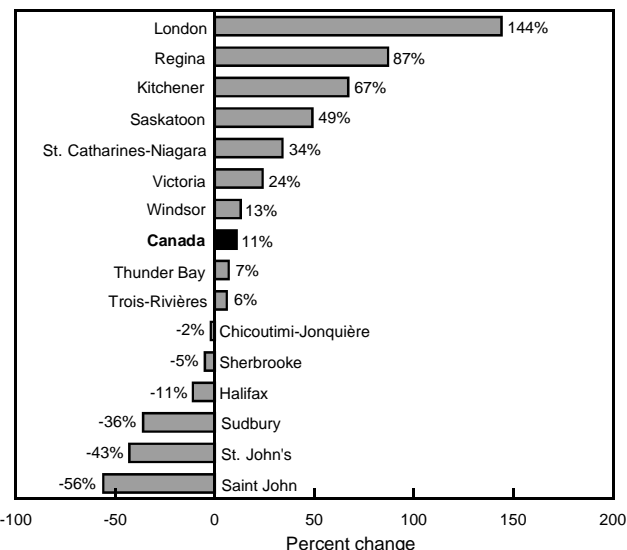
Percent change for breaking and entering rates for smaller CMA's from 1991 to 1995



Source: UCR Survey.

Figure 7

Percent change in motor vehicle theft rates for smaller CMA's from 1991 to 1995



Source: UCR Survey.

Clearance Rates

Clearance rates represent the percentage of actual incidents³ which are "solved"⁴ by the police. Clearance rates are often used as indicators of a police department's effectiveness in solving crime. However, clearance rates are influenced by several factors, such as available police resources and police policies and procedures related to enforcement, that will affect the comparability between CMAs.

Clearance rates are not examined for low volume offences such as homicide and attempted murder; nor those offences where there is virtually always a charge laid (e.g., impaired driving and prostitution). Therefore, the analysis for clearance rates is based on eight offences (see Table 2).

Clearance rates vary a great deal among the CMAs for certain offences. For example, in 1995, the clearance rate for sexual assault ranged from 47% in Edmonton to 72% in Ottawa-Hull; the range was even wider for the smaller CMAs, from 27% in St. John's to 92% in Thunder Bay and Sudbury.

Clearance rates also varied substantially for breaking and entering and motor vehicle theft. Among the larger CMAs, Vancouver police solved 7% of the breaking and entering offences, while Toronto police were able to solve over 20%. Further, Vancouver had the lowest clearance rate for motor vehicle theft at 5%, while Québec's rate was 15%. Among the smaller CMAs, breaking and entering clearance rates ranged from 10% in Sudbury to 22% in London. Saskatoon had the lowest motor vehicle theft clearance rate at 9%, while St. John's and London's rates were highest at 23%.

Clearance rates vary by CMA and by offence

Vancouver, one of the largest cities, had the lowest clearance rates for six of the eight offences examined, and the second lowest for the remaining two. It is interesting to note that Vancouver had the highest crime rate among the larger CMAs. By comparison, Québec and Winnipeg had some of the highest clearance rates for the offences examined.

³ An incident is deemed actual or founded when it is concluded, after the police investigation, that a violation of the law took place or was attempted.

⁴ An incident is "solved" when the police have enough evidence to lay a charge, whether that person was actually charged or "cleared" by other means (e.g., diversion or youth is under 12 years of age).

Table 2

CMAs	Robbery	Sexual Assault	Major Assault	Common Assault	Arson	Weapons and Explosives	Breaking and Entering	Motor Vehicle Theft
CANADA	32%	69%	81%	80%	20%	78%	16%	13%
All CMAs	29%	61%	76%	77%	17%	79%	13%	10%
All Non-CMAs	48%	75%	88%	82%	25%	78%	22%	25%
Larger CMAs (500,000 +)								
Total	28%	60%	76%	77%	16%	82%	12%	8%
Toronto	27%	68%	78%	75%	17%	83%	20%	10%
Montréal	30%	63%	80%	82%	15%	75%	12%	9%
Vancouver	21%	49%	66%	72%	12%	76%	7%	5%
Ottawa-Hull	30%	72%	73%	80%	21%	78%	11%	8%
Ontario part	28%	73%	76%	82%	19%	76%	11%	6%
Québec part	42%	65%	64%	74%	27%	88%	13%	21%
Edmonton*	30%	47%	75%	75%	21%	95%	14%	7%
Calgary	32%	58%	79%	80%	17%	90%	12%	10%
Québec	45%	66%	91%	86%	27%	80%	12%	15%
Winnipeg	33%	70%	80%	85%	20%	81%	11%	9%
Hamilton	26%	49%	74%	78%	18%	81%	12%	11%
Smaller CMAs (100,000-499,999)								
Total	37%	64%	76%	77%	19%	73%	14%	19%
Kitchener	35%	72%	86%	80%	14%	67%	11%	12%
St. Catharines-Niagara	33%	72%	86%	83%	13%	82%	16%	13%
London	43%	79%	83%	79%	33%	77%	22%	23%
Halifax	32%	57%	70%	68%	12%	64%	13%	14%
Victoria	42%	55%	80%	75%	19%	76%	13%	14%
Windsor	27%	78%	76%	88%	16%	81%	12%	14%
Saskatoon	31%	38%	63%	58%	15%	77%	11%	9%
Regina	40%	63%	73%	72%	30%	64%	11%	15%
St. John's	49%	27%	58%	59%	27%	52%	18%	23%
Chicoutimi-Jonquière	41%	90%	88%	85%	32%	53%	11%	21%
Sudbury	32%	92%	90%	87%	24%	78%	10%	10%
Sherbrooke	44%	82%	80%	87%	13%	67%	19%	12%
Trois-Rivières	41%	82%	97%	95%	24%	81%	17%	16%
Thunder Bay	44%	92%	90%	89%	13%	72%	14%	20%
Saint John	43%	54%	76%	67%	19%	88%	13%	18%

* The crime statistics for Edmonton are preliminary.

Note: Clearance rates represent the number of incidents cleared over the number of actual incidents.

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

Youth Crime

A great deal of attention has been focused on issues surrounding youth crime. This section will show that youth crime is not uniform across Canada and that, for some CMAs, there are significantly more youths charged with an offence than in other CMAs.

Nearly the same proportion of youth crime occurs inside of the CMA boundaries as outside (see Table 3). In 1995, 57% of Canada's youth population lived in a CMA and 55% of the total youths charged were arrested within a CMA boundary.

There are some differences in the types of crime committed by youths that occur inside of a CMA as opposed to a non-CMA (i.e., small cities, towns, or rural communities). Of the eight offences examined, robbery and major assault were more likely to be committed by CMA youth; while non-CMA youth were more likely to commit a sexual assault offence or a breaking and entering offence. Smaller CMAs showed higher rates than larger

Youth crime can only be measured by the number of youths charged by police.

Youth charge rates represent the number of youths charged by police per 100,000 youths.

Youth charge rates are influenced by several factors, one of which is pre-charge screening practices by the Crown. The Crown decides whether or not the youth should be charged and formally processed through the courts or diverted to an alternative measures program as outlined in the *Young Offenders Act*. Consequently, the youth charge rate is not a perfect indicator of the prevalence of youth crime, particularly with respect to measuring relatively minor incidents (Hendrick, 1996: 14-15). This *Juristat* examines serious offences (except for common assault) in an effort to minimize this effect of diversion.

Homicide, attempted murder and prostitution were excluded for youth due to the low numbers. Impaired driving data are not collected by the UCR Survey for youths.

Table 3

Youth Charge Rates of Selected Offences by Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs), 1995

CMAs	Youth Population (Ages 12-17)	Robbery	Sexual Assault	Major Assault	Common Assault	Arson	Weapons and Explosives	Breaking and Entering	Motor Vehicle Theft
CANADA	2,384,703	148	66	228	481	28	71	780	288
All CMAs	1,351,829	217	47	254	466	26	75	541	274
All Non-CMAs	1,032,874	57	92	194	501	32	65	1,094	306
Larger CMAs (500,000 +)									
Total	1,056,381	239	43	253	443	24	77	469	254
Toronto	311,779	256	62	315	516	14	101	417	183
Montréal	242,553	208	27	174	284	20	28	361	204
Vancouver	131,254	322	30	215	376	21	77	439	309
Ottawa-Hull	77,197	76	48	145	431	45	27	536	161
Ontario part	57,091	79	35	170	375	9	33	424	126
Québec part	20,106	70	85	75	592	149	10	855	259
Edmonton*	74,618	220	66	292	445	23	96	655	170
Calgary	65,790	230	33	360	629	24	138	643	353
Québec	54,500	61	13	94	237	33	9	336	145
Winnipeg	50,929	699	63	520	591	61	230	944	736
Hamilton	47,761	77	27	220	787	31	54	440	580
Smaller CMAs (100,000-499,999)									
Total	295,448	136	60	260	551	33	67	798	347
Kitchener	34,083	65	50	167	572	21	67	643	425
London	32,093	106	50	218	901	53	84	807	654
St. Catharines-Niagara	31,576	76	41	171	380	54	41	785	219
Halifax	25,144	163	119	370	612	28	107	748	330
Windsor	23,165	82	13	160	371	-	65	419	263
Victoria	20,849	422	34	374	595	24	77	624	240
Saskatoon	18,659	225	118	456	525	5	107	1,147	236
Regina	17,409	316	132	442	523	29	75	1,735	936
Chicoutimi-Jonquière	16,769	60	18	78	137	30	-	334	113
St. John's	15,983	44	63	413	651	38	69	951	206
Sudbury	14,031	86	114	356	784	64	71	969	306
Sherbrooke	12,299	106	24	81	138	8	65	496	57
Trois-Rivières	12,040	83	8	83	257	25	-	748	125
Thunder Bay	10,961	192	91	383	949	46	109	1,131	584
Saint John	10,387	48	39	241	780	87	29	789	193

Rates are calculated based on 100,000 youth population.
- nil or zero.

* The crime statistics for Edmonton are preliminary.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.
Statistics Canada, Census and Demographic Statistics, Demography Division as of July 1st 1995.

CMAs for all offences except robbery and weapons and explosives offences.

Youth crime is going in opposite directions in Winnipeg and Calgary

Among larger CMAs, in 1995, Winnipeg had the highest rate of youths charged for six offences: robbery, major assault, arson, weapons and explosives, breaking and entering, and motor vehicle theft. For the other two offences, sexual assault and common assault, Winnipeg had one of the three highest rates. Further, Winnipeg also experienced the largest increases in youth charge rates for a number of offences. From 1991 to 1995, the youth charge rate increased in Winnipeg for robbery (+316%), arson (+139%), theft of motor vehicle (+109%), common assault (+65%), and weapons and explosives offences (+63%). Breaking and entering (-28%) was the only offence in which Winnipeg experienced a large decrease in its youth charge rate.

Calgary, on the other hand, has experienced a very different trend. In 1991, Calgary had the highest youth charge rates for six of the eight offences. But by 1995, youth charge rates dropped to such an extent that Calgary no longer had the highest rate for any offence. The following offences declined significantly: breaking and entering (-69%), sexual assault (-66%), arson (-54%), robbery (-50%), weapons and explosives (-48%), and major assault (-46%).

In 1995, Québec had the lowest youth charge rates among the larger CMAs for all offences except arson. This is likely a result of the extensive use of a pre-charge screening practice to an alternative measures program.

Regina and Thunder Bay have high youth crime rates

Among the smaller CMAs, Regina held the highest youth charge rates in 1995 for sexual assault, breaking and entering, and motor vehicle theft; and the second highest for robbery and major assault. Thunder Bay also had high rates for all offences. Chicoutimi-Jonquière, Sherbrooke and Trois-Rivières generally had the lowest youth charge rates; again, this may be due to the province of Quebec's extensive use of diversion (Alternative Measures).

From 1991 to 1995, Victoria experienced dramatic changes in their youth charge rates for several offences⁵: breaking and entering (-42%) and motor vehicle theft (-38%) dropped, while major assault and common assault rates doubled. Thunder Bay encountered a similar pattern as its youth rates decreased for major assault (-24%) and breaking and entering (-22%), but increased for motor vehicle theft (+57%) and common assault (+44%).

Concluding Remarks

This report has largely been a description of the varying crime levels for particular *Criminal Code* offences in the different major metropolitan areas in Canada. However, this report is not able

⁵ Due to low numbers among the smaller CMAs, only major assault, common assault, breaking and entering, and motor vehicle theft offences can be examined over time for youths.

to answer the question of "Why do crime rates differ between CMAs?". Many phenomena not covered in this report may provide some explanations of the varying crime rates. For example, differences in law enforcement practices (e.g., charging practices or use of diversion) may play a major role in explaining the crime levels. But little research has been done in this area. Similar research as conducted by Kennedy and Veitch (1997) for Edmonton is necessary for each of the major metropolitan areas to have a more comprehensive understanding of urban crime.

Methodology

This *Juristat* focuses on crime data reported to the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) survey by police forces located within CMAs. The UCR survey measures criminal incidents which come to the attention of the police, and which are then captured and forwarded to the CCJS according to a nationally-approved set of common scoring rules and definitions. These statistics are commonly referred to as "official crime statistics," and as such, any relationships described in this report should be interpreted as indicative, not definitive.

The geographical boundaries of the CMAs were adjusted slightly to match existing police detachment jurisdictions, without adjusting the official CMA populations where possible. In order to do this, three main issues had to be addressed:

1. **Rural Detachments which are partially in and out of a CMA** - If more than 50% of the rural detachment jurisdiction fell within the boundary of a CMA, then all the crime data for that detachment was included in the CMA total. Conversely, if less than 50%, all crime for that detachment were excluded. The amount of crime from a rural detachment would be a small percentage of the total crime of the CMA.
2. **Central Detachments of Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Ontario Provincial Police and Québec Police Force** - All central detachments that did not have sole responsibility for policing a given location within a CMA were excluded to avoid including data from other regions of the province. As a result, drug offences were not included in this *Juristat* as the RCMP are primarily responsible for drug enforcement and report the majority of drug offences.
3. **Regional Police Forces in Ontario** - The Durham Regional Police, the Halton Regional Police, and the Niagara Regional Police have jurisdictions that overlap more than one CMA in southern Ontario. The proportion of overlap was applied to the crime data to match the jurisdictions to the CMAs. This adjustment was so significant for Oshawa that it severely limited the data's accuracy; thus, Oshawa was excluded from the analysis. The populations of the St. Catharines-Niagara and Kitchener CMAs were increased by 8.1% and 5.7%, respectively, for the purpose of matching police jurisdictions.

The 24 CMAs were divided into two groups: nine CMAs with a population of 500,000 or more, and the remaining 15 CMAs between 100,000 and 500,000. Although it is possible to group all of the CMAs together for analytical purposes, the differences between larger CMAs and smaller CMAs are significant enough to divide the CMAs into two groups. The urbanized core and

suburban areas of a smaller CMA is dwarfed by those of a larger CMA. Urbanization is a major criminological determinant that helps explain the prevalence of crime (Fischer, 1975, 1995; Hartnagel & Lee, 1990). Essentially, the theory proposes that more urbanized centres should exhibit a weakening of informal mechanisms of social control and higher rates of personal disorganisation, crime and disorder (Wirth, 1938). Therefore, the significant differences in city urban structures and population among the 24 CMAs makes for a logical split of the CMAs into two comparative groups.

This *Juristat* focuses on crime rates for selected *Criminal Code* offences from 1991 to 1995. By examining specific offences, a bias is eliminated that is sometimes introduced by only discussing aggregated totals, such as total violent or total property crime. For example, in 1995, common assault offences accounted for 60% of all violent crime. A significant increase in common assault would result in driving the violent crime rate upwards which could be misleading as other violent offences could, in fact, be dropping. For analytical purposes, however,

seven of the 12 offences used in this report are offence groups comprised of several offences that are similar in nature.

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Offence Group	Offences
Homicide	1 st degree murder, 2 nd degree murder, manslaughter, infanticide
Sexual Assault	aggravated sexual assault (level 3), sexual assault with a weapon (level 2), sexual assault (level 1)
Major Assault	aggravated assault (level 3), assault with weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2), unlawfully causing bodily harm, discharge firearm with intent, assault police officer, other assaults
Weapons and Explosives	prohibited weapons, restricted weapons, other offensive weapons, explosive related offences
Breaking and Entering	unlawful entry into a business, residence or other private property structure
Prostitution	keeping a bawdy house, procuring, solicitation, other offences in relation to prostitution
Impaired Driving	impaired operation of a motor vehicle, boat or aircraft, driving with over 80 milligrams of alcohol in 100 millilitres of blood, and failing to provide a breath and/or blood sample when requested by a police officer

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