



Juristat

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics

Statistics Canada – Catalogue no. 85-002-XPE, Vol. 23, no. 10



Adult criminal court statistics, 2002/03

by *Adriana Ciccone McCutcheon*¹

Highlights

- In 2002/03, adult criminal courts in ten provinces and territories (not including Manitoba, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut) processed 467,500 cases involving approximately 1,042,500 charges.
- The mean elapsed time from first to last appearance for cases completed in adult criminal court was more than 6 months (194 days) in 2002/03.
- Some offences take longer to resolve than others, such as homicide (336 days), sexual assault (309 days), other sexual offences (318 days) and drug trafficking (263 days). The shortest mean elapsed times in 2002/03 occurred for the offence of unlawfully at large (103 days).
- The accused was found guilty in 60% of cases heard in 2002/03, and 3% were acquitted. One-third (34%) of cases were either stayed, withdrawn, dismissed or discharged, and 3% were otherwise terminated by the court (e.g., decisions of not criminally responsible, waived out of province/territory, Charter arguments or accused was found unfit to stand trial).
- A term of probation was the most frequently imposed sanction (46% of guilty cases). A term of imprisonment was imposed in 35% of cases, and a fine was imposed in 33% of cases.
- The proportion of cases sentenced to prison varies across the country. In 2002/03, the highest incarceration rate was in Prince Edward Island, where 59% of guilty cases resulted in a term of imprisonment, while the lowest incarceration rate was in Nova Scotia, where prison was imposed in 23% of cases.
- The number of cases processed in 2002/03 represents a 6% increase over the previous year for eight jurisdictions. These jurisdictions are Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Yukon. The 2002/03 fiscal year marks the second consecutive increase in the number of cases heard following a long downward trend in the number of cases processed by adult criminal courts. Overall, there has been a 5% increase since 1998/99.
- The average number of charges per case in 2002/03 was 2.2 for the eight jurisdictions. The proportion of cases with three or more charges has increased from 17% of all cases in 1994/95 to 23% in 2002/03.

1. *Analyst, Courts Program.*

