

Catalogue no. 75-006-X
ISSN 2291-0840
ISBN 978-0-660-78578-3

Insights on Canadian Society

Regional variations in police-reported crime: Comparing Canada and the United States

by Adam Cotter and Maire Sinha

Release date: October 8, 2025



How to obtain more information

For information about this product or the wide range of services and data available from Statistics Canada, visit our website, www.statcan.gc.ca.

You can also contact us by

Email at infostats@statcan.gc.ca

Telephone, from Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the following numbers:

- Statistical Information Service 1-800-263-1136
- National telecommunications device for the hearing impaired 1-800-363-7629
- Fax line 1-514-283-9350

Standards of service to the public

Statistics Canada is committed to serving its clients in a prompt, reliable and courteous manner. To this end, the Agency has developed standards of service which its employees observe in serving its clients. To obtain a copy of these service standards, please contact Statistics Canada toll-free at 1-800-263-1136. The service standards are also published on www.statcan.gc.ca under “Contact us” > “[Standards of service to the public](#).”

Note of appreciation

Canada owes the success of its statistical system to a long-standing partnership between Statistics Canada, the citizens of Canada, its businesses, governments and other institutions. Accurate and timely statistical information could not be produced without their continued co-operation and goodwill.

Published by authority of the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada

© His Majesty the King in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of Industry, 2025

Use of this publication is governed by the Statistics Canada [Open Licence Agreement](#).

An [HTML version](#) is also available.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français.

Regional variations in police-reported crime: Comparing Canada and the United States

by Adam Cotter and Maire Sinha

Overview of the study

Using data from the Uniform Crime Reporting programs in Canada and the United States, this study examines the prevalence of police-reported crime for specific regions within each country and how these patterns may vary between the two countries. Besides examining broader geographic regions, it also compares police-reported crime at more specific levels of geography, namely between urban and rural areas, as well as across the largest metropolitan areas.

- In many ways, regional differences in the level of police-reported crime are similar between Canada and the United States. For instance, higher rates of violent and property crime are found in the Northern region (the three Canadian territories and Alaska) and lower rates in the Atlantic and Central regions.
- In Canada, violent crime rates are lower in large metropolitan areas and highest in smaller, non-metropolitan areas. In the United States, the opposite is true: rates are highest in the largest metropolitan areas.
- In the largest metropolitan areas, the 2023 rates of violent crime in Canada were 40% lower than in the United States, whereas the rates of violent crime in Canada were 89% higher than in the United States in non-metropolitan areas.
- Unlike violent crime, rates of property crime are lowest outside metropolitan areas in Canada and the United States.

Introduction

There are numerous similarities and differences in patterns of police-reported crime in Canada and the United States. A companion study, "[Trends in police-reported crime in Canada and the United States: A comparative analysis](#)," found that both countries have seen long-term decreases in the rates of many violent and property crimes, while they have also seen recent increases in homicide rates, albeit well below the peaks recorded in the 1970s and 1980s.¹ Beyond longer-term trends, the characteristics of many comparable offences are similar between the two countries. However, there are also some notable differences in the trends and the nature of criminal offences. For instance, major assault has been on the rise in Canada, but not the United States, while firearm-related violence remains more common in the United States than in Canada.

The current study builds on another analysis by focusing on geographic variations in police-reported crime in Canada and the United States in 2023.² While national-level statistics reveal important information, different areas face different levels, patterns and realities when it comes to police-reported crime. Many areas share common geographic characteristics but vary in terms of their population, culture, history and other important characteristics that may be associated with different levels or patterns of crime. Using data from the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) programs in the two countries, this study examines how national-level patterns vary for specific regions, highlighting areas where there are notable differences within and between the two countries. In addition, comparisons of police-reported crime are made between urban and rural areas, with particular attention to the largest metropolitan areas.

Regional variations in police-reported crime: Comparing Canada and the United States

Table 1
Police-reported crime rate for comparable offences, Canada and the United States, 2023

Type of crime	Police-reported crime rate			
	Canada		United States	
	number	rate per 100,000 population	number	rate per 100,000 population
Population	39,678,716	...	336,806,231	...
Comparable violent crime¹	99,843	252	1,126,597	334
Homicide ¹	732	1.8	19,252	5.7
Robbery ¹	21,123	53	222,795	66
Major assault ^{1,2}	77,988	197	884,550	263
Comparable property crime	789,664	1,990	6,419,149	1,906
Break and enter	129,564	327	839,563	249
Theft	548,341	1,382	4,512,064	1,340
Motor vehicle theft	111,759	282	1,067,522	317

... not applicable

1. For comparability with the data published in the United States, the number and rate for Canada represent a count of incidents. An incident can involve multiple victims. Data on violent crime in Canada are typically published based on victim counts; for that reason, numbers and rates may differ from other sources.

2. For Canada, this includes attempted murder, aggravated assault (level 3), and assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2), for comparability with the definition of “aggravated assault” in the United States Uniform Crime Reporting Program.

Note: The number and rate of property crimes for Canada are from the Incident-Based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey and may differ from counts based on the aggregate file.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, 2023; and Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, 2023.

National-level crime in 2023 reveals similarities and differences between Canada and the United States

An understanding of the prevalence of selected forms³ of police-reported crime on a national scale provides important context. In 2023, consistent with many historical trends,⁴ rates of comparable violent

crimes—homicide, robbery and major assault⁵—were higher in the United States than in Canada (Table 1). By contrast, the overall rate of property crime—in particular break and enter, and theft—was slightly higher in Canada. The one exception among property crimes was motor vehicle theft, where the rate was lower in Canada.

Beyond prevalence, police-reported data in the two countries show key similarities. For example, among the comparable offence types, major assault is the most common violent offence and theft is the most common property offence, by a wide margin, in each country.

Geographic regions

For the purposes of this study, broad geographic regions were defined based on the east, central or western location of provinces, territories and states (Map 1). This is similar to the approach taken in a previous analysis.⁶

The **Atlantic region** includes the Canadian provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick and the U.S. states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont.

The **Central region** includes the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec and the U.S. states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. The **Midwest** includes the Canadian provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan and the U.S. states of Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota.

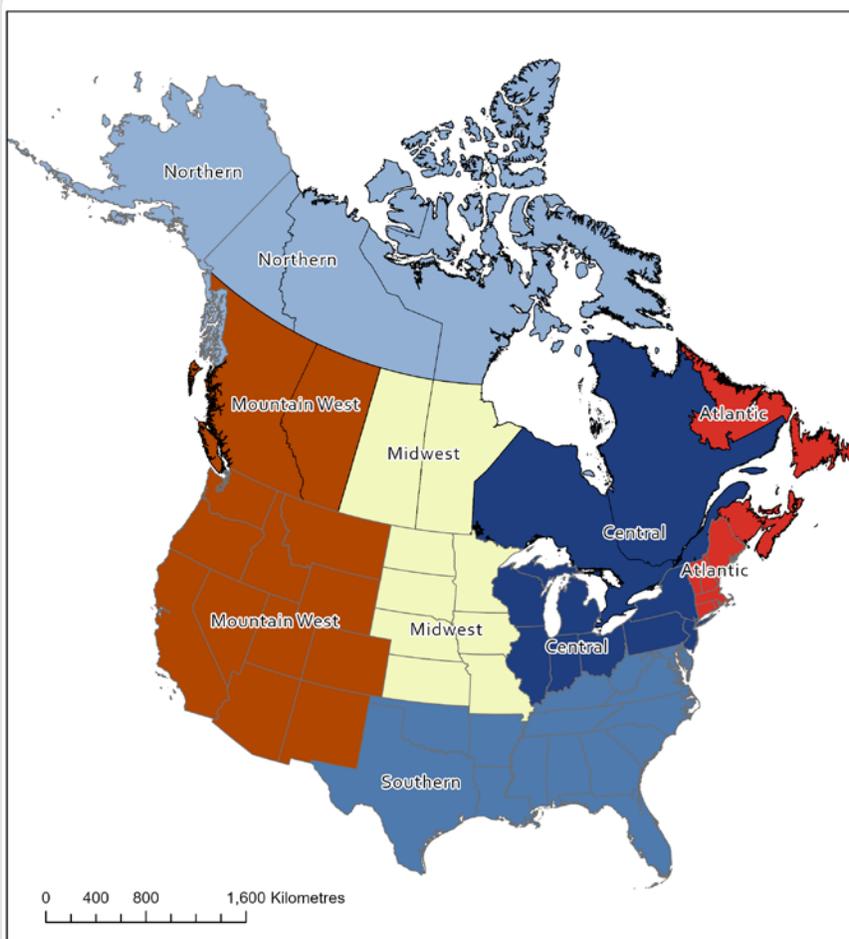
The **Mountain West** includes the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia and the U.S. states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

The **Northern region** includes the Canadian territories of Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut and the U.S. state of Alaska.

The **Southern region** includes the District of Columbia and 16 U.S. states: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

While these areas share some common geographic characteristics, they do not account for many other important similarities and differences that may be relevant to an understanding of police-reported crime. It is worth noting, however, that the regions also tend to be similar in terms of population distribution.⁷

Map 1
Broad geographic regions in Canada and the United States



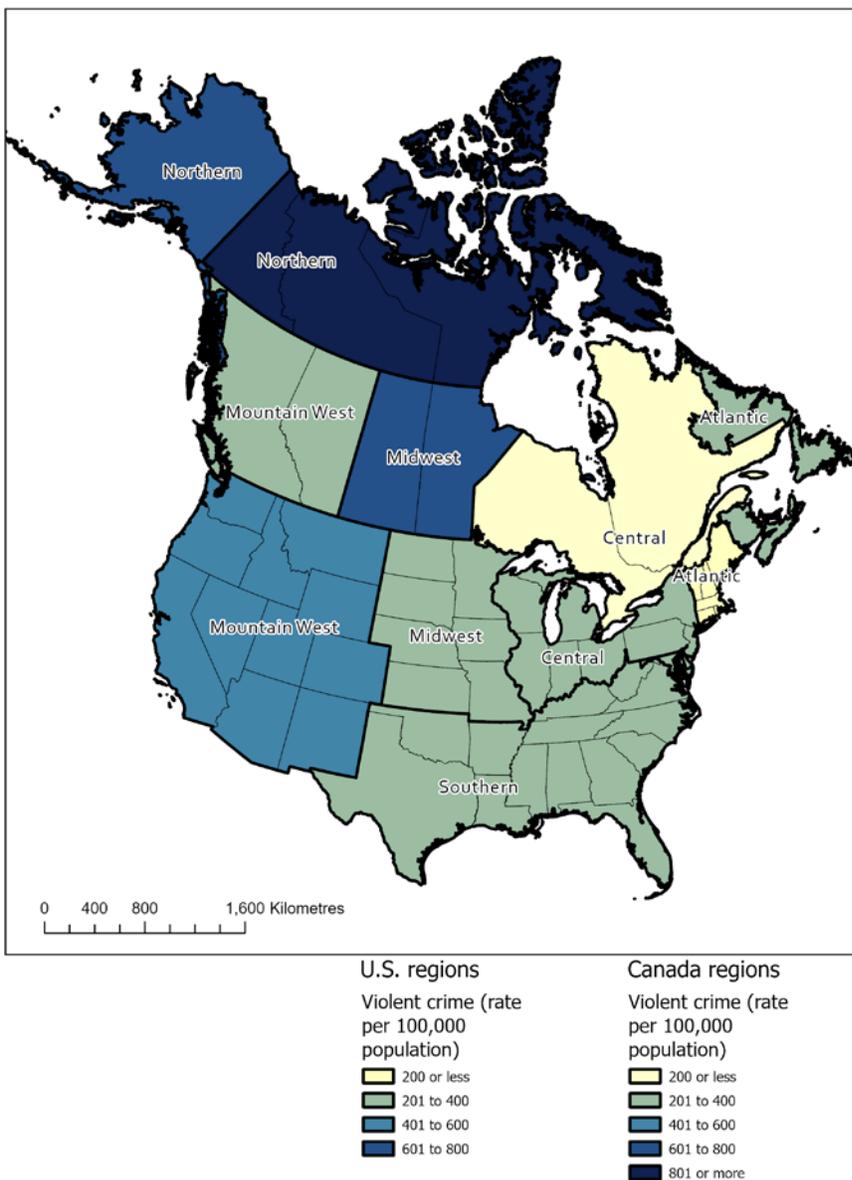
Source: Statistics Canada.

Violent crime is highest in the Northern region, in Canada and the United States

Considering crime statistics using these broad geographic regions illuminated other insights that may be obscured when examining data at the national level alone. In 2023, for Canada and the United States, the highest rates of violent crime were found in the Northern region, among the territories (1,361 per 100,000 population) and Alaska (608)—areas where the absolute number of police-reported incidents and the population are relatively smaller. Likewise, the lowest violent crime rates in both countries were recorded in the Central (193 in Canada and 291 in the United States) and Atlantic (201 and 194, respectively) regions (Map 2; Table 2).

Depending on the region, the country with the higher rate of comparable violent crime varied. For example, in the Central and Mountain West regions—the two most populous regions in Canada, accounting for 87% of its total population—rates in Canada were lower than their regional counterparts in the United States. However, violent crime rates were higher in Canada for the other regions, particularly the Midwest and Northern regions, compared with their U.S. equivalents.

Map 2
Rates of violent crime, by geographic region, Canada and the United States, 2023



Sources: Statistics Canada, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, 2023; and Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, 2023.

Regional variations in police-reported crime: Comparing Canada and the United States

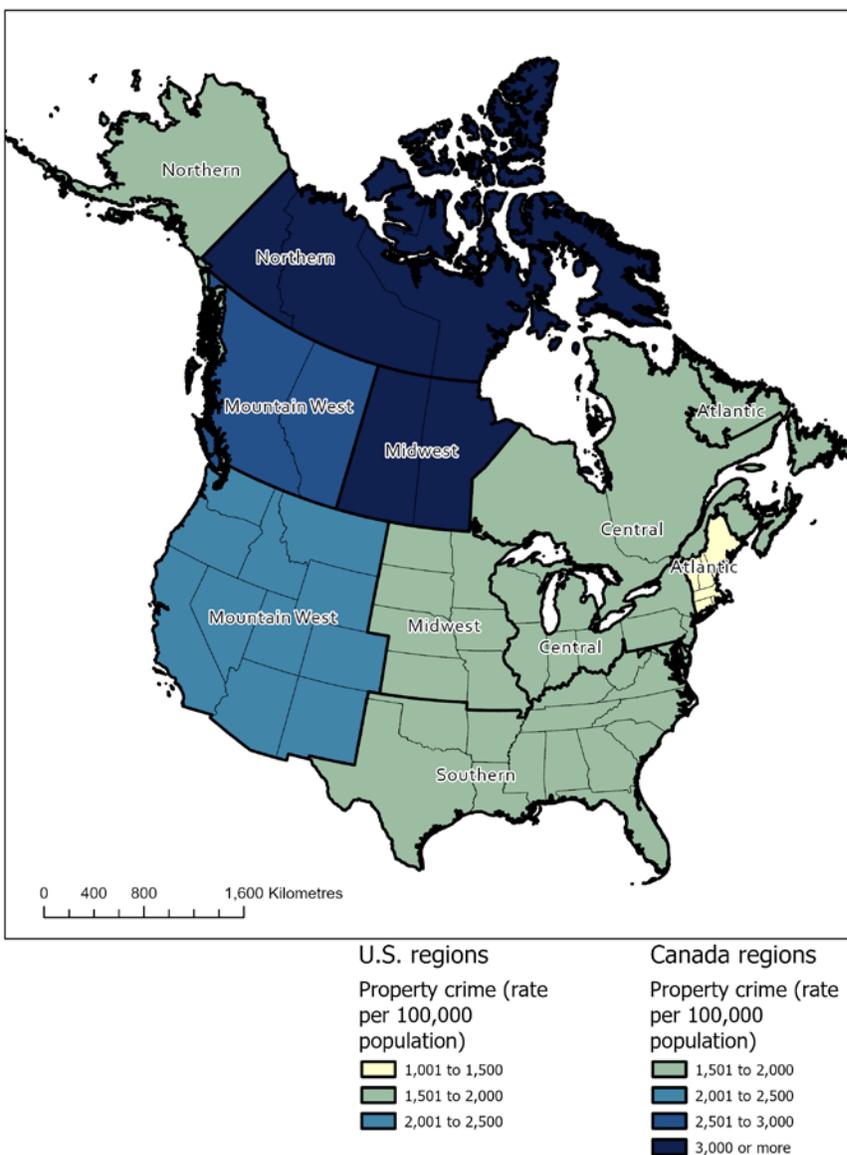
Similar to violent crime, property crime rates in the Central and Atlantic regions of Canada (1,658 and 1,887 per 100,000 population, respectively) and the United States (1,626 and 1,223, respectively) were the lowest, relative to other regions (Map 3). In Canada, the rate of comparable property crimes was highest in the Northern region (3,597), followed by the Midwest (3,065). In the United States, the Mountain West region recorded the highest rate (2,328), followed by the Northern region (1,877).

Within each of the five broad geographic regions (see the [Geographic regions](#) box), overall property crime rates were higher in regions in Canada than the United States. However, the magnitude of the difference in rates among regions varied considerably (Table 2).

Violent crime follows different trends in metropolitan areas in Canada and the United States

Beyond broad regional geographic differences, crime also varies between and within urban, suburban and rural areas. Although urban, suburban and rural areas are diverse, varying in levels of remoteness, local economy, demographics and even population size—all of which may affect levels of police-reported crime—looking at these areas at the aggregate level reveals some insights.

Map 3
Rates of property crime, by geographic region, Canada and the United States, 2023



Sources: Statistics Canada, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, 2023; and Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, 2023.

Regional variations in police-reported crime: Comparing Canada and the United States

Table 2
Police-reported crime rate for comparable offences, by geographic region, Canada and the United States, 2023

Type of crime	Atlantic ¹		Central ²		Midwest ³		Mountain West ⁴		Northern ⁵		Southern ⁶	
	Canada	United States	Canada	United States	Canada	United States	Canada	United States	Canada	United States	Canada	United States
Population	2,521,966	15,159,777	24,210,808	88,969,779	2,591,361	21,763,244	10,223,914	76,728,261	130,667	733,406	...	130,125,290
Comparable violent crime⁷	5,057	29,406	46,685	258,721	17,657	65,516	28,665	314,202	1,779	4,459	...	452,015
Homicide ⁷	30	411	338	4,442	126	1,076	227	3,873	11	62	...	9,368
Robbery ⁷	674	4,852	10,440	61,894	4,300	8,608	5,605	72,592	104	568	...	73,643
Major assault ^{7,8}	4,353	24,143	35,907	192,385	13,231	55,832	22,833	237,737	1,664	3,829	...	369,004
Comparable property crime	47,577	185,441	401,311	1,446,466	79,424	404,468	256,652	1,786,590	4,700	13,769	...	2,558,453
Break and enter	8,601	18,366	55,827	161,989	19,163	49,622	44,788	261,302	1,185	1,830	...	343,930
Theft	34,710	144,283	277,955	1,067,436	48,915	285,299	183,793	1,154,023	2,968	9,959	...	1,833,981
Motor vehicle theft	4,266	22,792	67,529	217,041	11,346	69,547	28,071	371,265	547	1,980	...	380,542
	rate per 100,000 population											
Comparable violent crime⁷	201	194	193	291	681	301	280	409	1,361	608	...	347
Homicide ⁷	1.19	2.71	1.40	4.99	4.86	4.94	2.22	5.05	8.42	8.45	...	7.20
Robbery ⁷	27	32	43	70	166	40	55	95	80	77	...	57
Major assault ^{7,8}	173	159	148	216	511	257	223	310	1,273	522	...	284
Comparable property crime	1,887	1,223	1,658	1,626	3,065	1,858	2,510	2,328	3,597	1,877	...	1,966
Break and enter	341	121	231	182	739	228	438	341	907	250	...	264
Theft	1,376	952	1,148	1,200	1,888	1,311	1,798	1,504	2,271	1,358	...	1,409
Motor vehicle theft	169	150	279	244	438	320	275	484	419	270	...	292

... not applicable

1. For Canada, this includes Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. For the United States, this includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont.

2. For Canada, this includes Quebec and Ontario. For the United States, this includes New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin.

3. For Canada, this includes Manitoba and Saskatchewan. For the United States, this includes Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota.

4. For Canada, this includes Alberta and British Columbia. For the United States, this includes Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming, California, Oregon and Washington.

5. For Canada, this includes Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. For the United States, this includes Alaska.

6. There is no geographical area comparable to the Southern United States in Canada. For the United States, this includes Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas.

7. For comparability with the data published in the United States, the number and rate for Canada represent a count of incidents. An incident can involve multiple victims. Data on violent crime in Canada are typically published based on victim counts; for that reason, numbers and rates may differ from other sources.

8. For Canada, this includes attempted murder, aggravated assault (level 3), and assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2), for comparability with the definition of "aggravated assault" in the United States Uniform Crime Reporting Program.

Notes: The number and rate of property crimes for Canada are from the Incident-Based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey and may differ from counts based on the aggregate file. Regions are based on the continental United States.

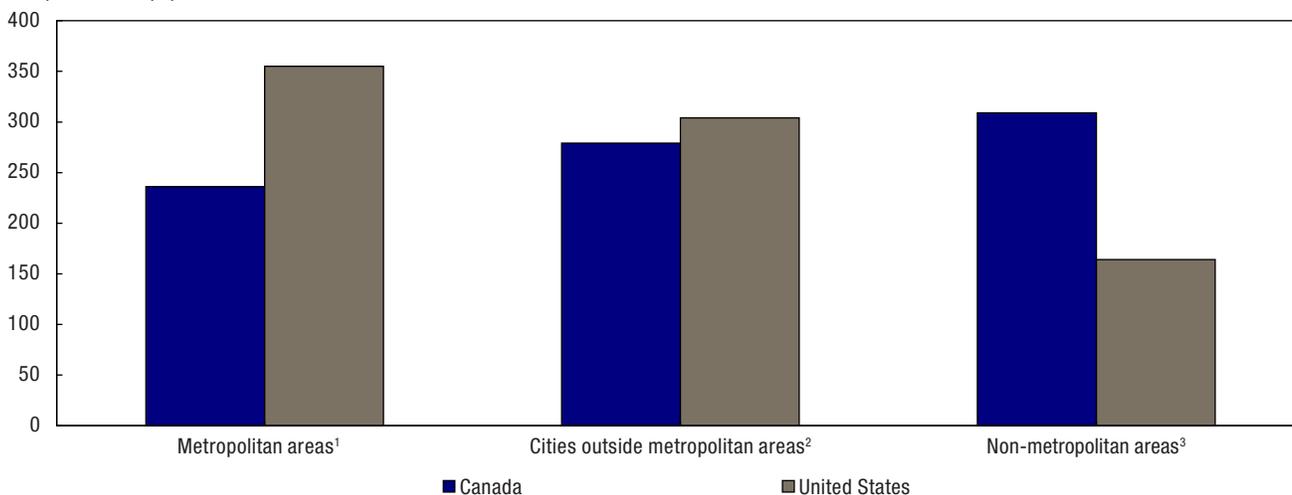
Sources: Statistics Canada, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, 2023; and Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, 2023.

Regional variations in police-reported crime: Comparing Canada and the United States

Chart 1

Police-reported violent crime for comparable offences, by geographic area, Canada and the United States, 2023

rate per 100,000 population



1. In Canada, this refers to census metropolitan areas (CMAs). A CMA consists of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a central core. A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000, of which 50,000 or more live in the central core. To be included in a CMA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the core, as measured by the percentage of commuters established from previous census data on place of work. In the United States, the term metropolitan areas refers to metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs). An MSA is a geographic entity based on a county or a group of counties with at least one urbanized area with a population of at least 50,000 and adjacent counties with economic ties to the central area. The economic ties are measured by commuting patterns.

2. In Canada, this refers to census agglomerations (CAs). A CA consists of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a central core. A CA must have a core population of at least 10,000. To be included in a CA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the core, as measured by the percentage of commuters established from previous census data on place of work. In the United States, the term cities outside metropolitan areas refers to micropolitan statistical areas, which are similar to metropolitan statistical areas except that the urban clusters are smaller, with populations from 10,000 to 49,999.

3. In Canada, this refers to areas outside census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations. In the United States, this refers to urban populations not located within a metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area, as well as rural areas.

Notes: Comparable violent crime includes homicide, robbery and major assault. See Text box 2. For comparability, the rate represents the number of incidents per 100,000 population, which may differ from other sources that are based on the number of victims.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, 2023; and Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, 2023.

Crime is often perceived as a more acute problem in larger urban areas. While this is reflected in the overall volume of crime, rates tend to be higher outside the largest population centres in Canada after accounting for the size of the population.⁸

Notably, police-reported crime does not appear to follow the same pattern in the United States.

In 2023, metropolitan areas⁹—home to 75% of the population in Canada and 86% in the United States—recorded the lowest violent crime

rate in Canada (236 per 100,000 population) but the highest in the United States (355) (Chart 1). In cities outside metropolitan areas,¹⁰ the violent crime rates were more similar (279 in Canada and 304 in the United States).

Regional variations in police-reported crime: Comparing Canada and the United States

Table 3
Police-reported crime rate for comparable offences, by geographic area, Canada and the United States, 2023

Type of crime	Geographic area									
	Metropolitan areas ¹									
	Population of 1 million or more		Population less than 1 million		Total		Cities outside metropolitan areas ²		Non-metropolitan areas ³	
	Canada	United States	Canada	United States	Canada	United States	Canada	United States	Canada	United States
	number									
Population Comparable	18,442,104	138,744,378	11,218,178	149,566,824	29,660,282	288,311,202	4,197,016	19,166,718	5,821,418	27,436,975
violent crime⁴	42,230	526,070	27,894	497,213	70,124	1,023,283	11,709	58,353	18,009	44,961
Homicide ⁴	293	8,346	195	8,689	488	17,035	98	1,048	146	1,169
Robbery ⁴	11,050	122,018	7,404	94,317	18,454	216,335	1,645	4,680	1,024	1,780
Major assault ^{4,5}	30,887	395,706	20,295	394,207	51,182	789,913	9,966	52,625	16,839	42,012
Comparable property crime	377,395	3,031,213	237,401	2,819,956	614,796	5,851,169	88,440	367,033	86,428	200,947
Break and enter	50,282	358,327	39,102	379,239	89,384	737,566	16,124	55,056	24,056	46,941
Theft	264,424	2,074,681	173,824	2,026,563	438,248	4,101,244	63,004	282,956	47,089	127,864
Motor vehicle theft	62,689	598,205	24,475	414,154	87,164	1,012,359	9,312	29,021	15,283	26,142
	rate per 100,000 population									
Comparable violent crime⁴	229	379	249	332	236	355	279	304	309	164
Homicide ⁴	1.6	6.0	1.7	5.8	1.6	5.9	2.3	5.5	2.5	4.3
Robbery ⁴	60	88	66	63	62	75	39	24	18	6
Major assault ^{4,5}	167	285	181	264	173	274	237	275	289	153
Comparable property crime	2,046	2,185	2,116	1,885	2,073	2,029	2,107	1,915	1,485	732
Break and enter	273	258	349	254	301	256	384	287	413	171
Theft	1,434	1,495	1,549	1,355	1,478	1,423	1,501	1,476	809	466
Motor vehicle theft	340	431	218	277	294	351	222	151	263	95

1. In Canada, this refers to census metropolitan areas (CMAs). A CMA consists of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a central core. A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000, of which 50,000 or more live in the central core. To be included in a CMA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the core, as measured by the percentage of commuters established from previous census data on place of work. In the United States, the term metropolitan areas refers to metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs). An MSA is a geographic entity based on a county or a group of counties with at least one urbanized area with a population of at least 50,000 and adjacent counties with economic ties to the central area. The economic ties are measured by commuting patterns.

2. In Canada, this refers to census agglomerations (CAs). A CA consists of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a central core. A CA must have a core population of at least 10,000. To be included in a CA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the core as measured by the percentage of commuters established from previous census data on place of work. In the United States, the term cities outside metropolitan areas refers to micropolitan statistical areas, which are similar to metropolitan statistical areas except that the urban clusters are smaller, with populations from 10,000 to 49,999.

3. In Canada, this refers to areas outside census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations. In the United States, this refers to urban populations not located within a metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area, as well as rural areas.

4. For comparability with the data published in the United States, the number and rate for Canada represent a count of incidents. An incident can involve multiple victims. Data on violent crime in Canada are typically published based on victim counts; for that reason, numbers and rates may differ from other sources.

5. For Canada, this includes attempted murder, aggravated assault (level 3), and assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2), for comparability with the definition of "aggravated assault" in the United States Uniform Crime Reporting Program.

Notes: The number and rate of property crimes for Canada are from the Incident-Based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey and may differ from counts based on the aggregate file. In 2023, data were not published for all metropolitan statistical areas in the United States. Among others, 3 of the 10 largest metropolitan areas in the United States—Los Angeles, Chicago and Atlanta—were not included in the 2023 tables. This exclusion should be kept in mind when making comparisons.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, 2023; and Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, 2023.

In non-metropolitan areas,¹¹ however, the rate of comparable violent crimes was close to twice as high in Canada (309) as in the United States (164). Robbery and major assault rates were higher in the non-metropolitan areas of Canada than in

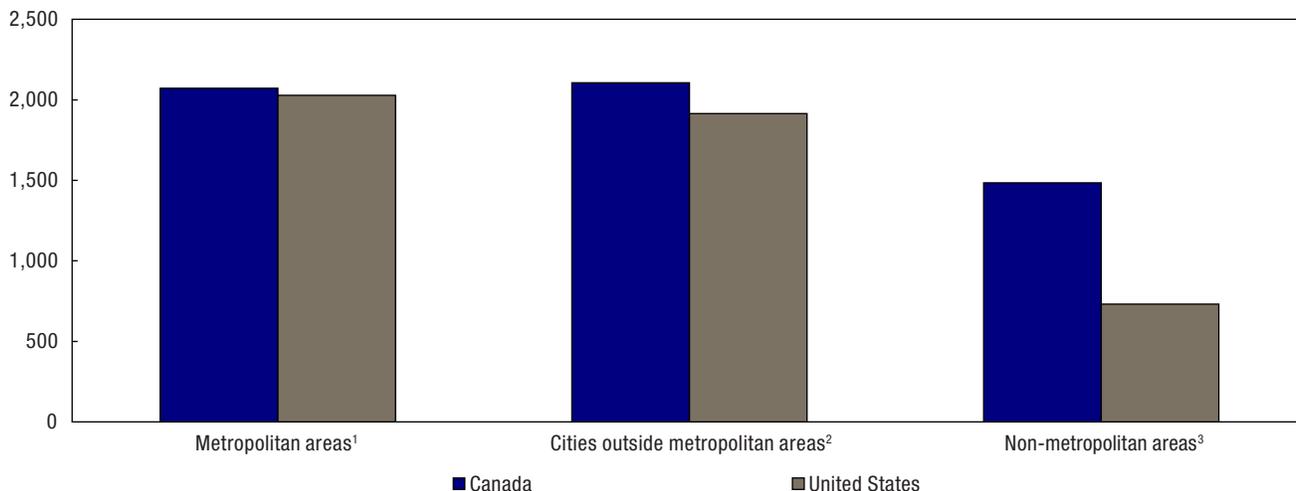
those of the United States. However, similar to findings at the national level, the homicide rate was 41% lower (2.5 incidents per 100,000 population in non-metropolitan Canada versus 4.3 in the United States) (Table 3). It is important to

note that a larger proportion of the population in Canada (15%) lived in areas outside metropolitan areas or smaller cities, compared with the United States (8%).

Chart 2

Police-reported property crime for comparable offences, by geographic area, Canada and the United States, 2023

rate per 100,000 population



1. In Canada, this refers to census metropolitan areas (CMAs). A CMA consists of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a central core. A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000, of which 50,000 or more live in the central core. To be included in a CMA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the core, as measured by the percentage of commuters established from previous census data on place of work. In the United States, the term metropolitan areas refers to metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs). An MSA is a geographic entity based on a county or a group of counties with at least one urbanized area with a population of at least 50,000 and adjacent counties with economic ties to the central area. The economic ties are measured by commuting patterns.

2. In Canada, this refers to census agglomerations (CAs). A CA consists of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a central core. A CA must have a core population of at least 10,000. To be included in a CA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the core, as measured by the percentage of commuters established from previous census data on place of work. In the United States, the term cities outside metropolitan areas refers to micropolitan statistical areas, which are similar to metropolitan statistical areas except that the urban clusters are smaller, with populations from 10,000 to 49,999.

3. In Canada, this refers to areas outside census metropolitan areas and census agglomeration. In the United States, this refers to urban populations not located within a metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area, as well as rural areas.

Notes: Comparable property crime includes break and enter, theft, and motor vehicle theft. See Table 4.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, 2023; and Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, 2023.

Unlike violent crime, the rate of comparable property crimes—break and enter, theft, and motor vehicle theft—was consistently higher in urban, suburban and rural Canada than similar geographies in the United States. However, it varied from marginally higher (+2%) in metropolitan areas, to 10% higher in cities outside metropolitan areas, to more than twice as high in areas outside metropolitan areas and cities (Chart 2). In Canada and the United States, rates of comparable property crimes were lowest in non-metropolitan areas (1,485 and 732 per 100,000 population, respectively).

Notably, the rate of motor vehicle theft was 16% lower in metropolitan areas in Canada than in the United States (294 versus 351 per 100,000 population). In other areas and for other types of comparable property crime, rates were on par or higher in Canada.

Violent crime is generally lower in Canada's largest metropolitan areas

In 2023, there were 49 metropolitan areas with a population of 1,000,000 or more and for which data were submitted: 6 in Canada and 43 in the United States.¹² Combined, these

areas included more than 4 in 10 of those living in Canada (46%) and the United States (41%).¹³

On the whole, levels of crime were lower in major metropolitan areas in Canada than similarly sized metropolitan areas in the United States and smaller areas within Canada (Table 3). For instance, the rate of comparable violent crime was 40% lower in Canada, while property crime was 6% lower.

More specifically, nearly all offence types included in this analysis were less prevalent in Canada than in the United States, when focusing only on metropolitan areas with a population

Regional variations in police-reported crime: Comparing Canada and the United States

of 1,000,000 or more. This ranged from theft, where the rate was 4% lower, to homicide, where the rate was 74% lower. Break and enter was the exception to this pattern; it was 6% higher in Canada's largest metropolitan areas than those in the United States.

Conclusion

Besides similarities in national police-reported crime patterns, this study found that regional patterns are often similar. In 2023, violent and property crime rates were lowest in the Central and Atlantic regions for both countries. Across all regions, Canada consistently had higher rates of property crime, while more regional differences existed for violent crime, with some

Canadian regions being higher than the equivalent region in the United States and some being lower.

An even more nuanced picture emerges when looking at differences between and within urban, suburban and rural areas of different sizes. For violent crime, Canada and the United States had opposite patterns, with metropolitan areas recording the lowest violent crime rate in Canada and the highest in the United States. For property crime, the pattern was the same for two countries—areas outside metropolitan areas and cities consistently had the lowest rates.

While this study focused on broad geographical differences and variations associated with

population size, future work could further contextualize results by looking more specifically at other characteristics of these areas, such as the age of the population or its economic profiles. Additionally, future work could take advantage of the introduction of the National Incident-Based Reporting System in the United States to explore patterns in the age and gender of victims of violent crime, for example, beyond overall prevalence.

Adam Cotter is a senior analyst with the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics at Statistics Canada, and Maire Sinha is a senior analyst with the Centre for Social Data Development and Insights at Statistics Canada.

Considerations and comparability between police-reported data from Canada and the United States

Police-reported data capture only the incidents that are officially reported and recorded by police. This means that the data are not necessarily reflective of the full scope or extent of crime. Levels of reporting are not the same for all offences and vary depending on many factors.

As such, variations in the levels of police-reported crime could be related to changes or differences in the reporting behaviour of the general public over time or between groups.

Not only are police-reported data dependent on incidents being reported, they can also be affected by police reporting and recording. It is also important to consider differences in criminal legislation that can influence comparability between offences and groupings.

In comparing criminal offences between two countries with their own statistical programs, it is important to highlight definitional and scoring differences. Within the two Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) programs, definitions of criminal offences sometimes vary. In Canada, offences recorded by the UCR Survey align with [Criminal Code of Canada](#) definitions. In the United States, the UCR Program is based on a set of standardized offences that were created to provide national uniformity in crime reporting, because, unlike Canada, there are various state and local penal codes.

The national UCR programs have scoring rules. Both programs count only the most serious offence committed in each incident. The most serious offence classification in Canada is based on the designated maximum penalties set out in the *Criminal Code*, while the United States uses a hierarchical scale itemizing the different seriousness of specific offences. In most cases, the ranking is similar between the two countries; however, there is one notable difference. For major assault, two of the three Canadian offences that compose this derived category—attempted murder and aggravated assault (level 3)—rank higher in seriousness than robbery. By contrast, the broad U.S. category of aggravated assault always ranks below robbery. This difference has the potential to inflate the Canadian category of major assault when compared with the U.S. category. However, the degree is likely minimal, as these two offences account for a small proportion of the major assault category (e.g., 6% in 2023).

In addition, both UCR programs have detailed scoring rules for specific offences to facilitate uniform recording at the national level. The scoring rules are similar between the two countries, though differences exist. The table below presents offence definitions for the comparable offences to highlight some key differences between the two national UCR programs.

Table 4
Offence definition and scoring rule differences between the Uniform Crime Reporting programs in Canada and the United States

Offence type	Canada—definition (Criminal Code [CC] section)	United States—definition (Uniform Crime Reporting manual)	Definitional difference and potential impact
Homicide	<p>Murder and manslaughter: CC section 229: “(a) where the person who causes the death of a human being (i) means to cause his death, or (ii) means to cause him bodily harm that he knows is likely to cause his death, and is reckless whether death ensues or not; (b) where a person, meaning to cause death to a human being or meaning to cause him bodily harm that he knows is likely to cause his death, and being reckless whether death ensues or not, by accident or mistake causes death to another human being, notwithstanding that he does not mean to cause death or bodily harm to that human being; or (c) if a person, for an unlawful object, does anything that they know is likely to cause death, and by doing so causes the death of a human being, even if they desire to effect their object without causing death or bodily harm to any human being.”</p>	<p>Homicide: “The willful (nonnegligent) killing of one human being by another.”</p>	No substantive difference.
Major assault	<p>Aggravated assault: CC section 268: (1) “Every one commits an aggravated assault who wounds, maims, disfigures or endangers the life of the complainant.”</p> <p>Assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm: CC section 267: Every one who, “in committing an assault (a) carries, uses or threatens to use a weapon or an imitation thereof, (b) causes bodily harm to the complainant, or (c) chokes, suffocates or strangles the complainant.”</p> <p>Attempted murder: CC section 239: “Every person who attempts by any means to commit murder.”</p>	<p>Aggravated assault: “An unlawful attack on one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. This type of assault is accompanied by the use of a weapon or by means likely to produce death or great bodily harm.”</p>	The rate of aggravated assault in Canada may be minimally inflated (compared with that in the United States) because of the 2019 CC expansion of assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm, which now includes choking, suffocation and strangling. This expanded definition of aggravated assault is somewhat broader than the definition in the United States.
Robbery	<p>Robbery: CC section 343: “Every one commits robbery who (a) steals, and for the purpose of extorting whatever is stolen or to prevent or overcome resistance to the stealing, uses violence or threats of violence to a person or property; (b) steals from any person and, at the time he steals or immediately before or immediately thereafter, wounds, beats, strikes or uses any personal violence to that person; (c) assaults any person with intent to steal from him; or (d) steals from any person while armed with an offensive weapon or imitation thereof.”</p>	<p>Robbery: “The taking or attempting to take anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person or persons by force or threat of force or violence and/ or by putting the victim in fear.”</p>	No substantive difference.
Break and enter	<p>Breaking and entering: CC section 348: (1) “Every one who (a) breaks and enters a place with intent to commit an indictable offence therein, (b) breaks and enters a place and commits an indictable offence therein, or (c) breaks out of a place after (i) committing an indictable offence therein, or (ii) entering the place with intent to commit an indictable offence therein.”</p> <p>Breaking and entering to steal firearm: CC section 98: “(1) every person commits an offence who (a) breaks and enters a place with intent to steal a firearm located in it; (b) breaks and enters a place and steals a firearm located in it; or (c) breaks out of a place after (i) stealing a firearm located in it, or (ii) entering the place with intent to steal a firearm located in it.”</p>	<p>Burglary—breaking and entering: “The unlawful entry of a structure to commit a felony or a theft.”</p>	The rate of break and enter in Canada may be minimally inflated (compared with that in the United States) because of the 2008 CC expansion of break and enter. It now includes specific provisions for breaking and entering to steal a firearm, and, within this provision, the definition of “place” for these specific CC provisions (section 98) now includes motor vehicles, unlike other types of break and enters. This expanded definition of break and enter is somewhat broader than the definition in the United States.

Table 4
Offence definition and scoring rule differences between the Uniform Crime Reporting programs in Canada and the United States

Offence type	Canada—definition (Criminal Code [CC] section)	United States—definition (Uniform Crime Reporting manual)	Definitional difference and potential impact
Motor vehicle theft	Motor vehicle theft: CC section 333.1: “(1) Everyone who commits theft is, if the property stolen is a motor vehicle, guilty of an offence” [act of stealing vehicle].	Motor vehicle theft: “The theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle.”	The rate of motor vehicle theft in Canada may be minimally inflated (compared with that in the United States) because of the inclusion of thefts of farm and construction equipment, which are not included in the definition in the United States.
Theft	Theft: CC section 322(1): The intentional taking without permission of any inanimate or animate objects. Includes section 334 (a) theft over \$5,000 and (b) theft under \$5,000.	Larceny and theft: “The unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession or constructive possession of another.”	The rate of theft in the United States may be minimally inflated (compared with that in Canada) because of the inclusion of illegal entry into tents and trailers (which is considered break and enter in Canada), along with the inclusion of theft of bulldozers, motorboats, and farm and construction equipment (which is considered motor vehicle theft in Canada).

Sources: Canada: *Criminal Code of Canada*, RSC 1985, and Canadian Uniform Crime Reporting Manual, 2024; United States: Uniform Crime Reporting Program Summary Reporting System User Manual, 2013.

Data sources, methods and definitions

Canada, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey

The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey is a compilation of police-reported crimes that have been reported to federal, provincial and municipal police services in Canada and submitted to Statistics Canada.

The data in this study are from the Incident-based UCR Survey trend file, which collects detailed information on incidents, victims and accused persons and includes police services that have consistently reported data each year since 2009. As of 2024, police services included in the trend file represent approximately 99% of the population of Canada.

For the purposes of this study, violent crime data for Canada are presented as a count of incidents. This method is different from the typical approach to counting and reporting on violent crime, whereby each victim is counted as a unique incident. However, as the data for the United States are reported at the incident level, a similar approach was taken for Canada to improve comparability and avoid inflating the counts and rates for Canada because of methodological differences.

United States, Uniform Crime Reporting Program

The UCR Program is a compilation of police-reported crime submitted voluntarily through the state UCR Program or to the Federal Bureau of Investigation UCR Program directly. This differs from the Canadian UCR Survey, for which it is mandatory for police to submit data.

Data for 2023 from the United States are based on the National Incident-Based Reporting System, which provides details on incidents, as well as separate offences within the same incident. In 2023, over 16,000 police agencies submitted data to the UCR Program, representing 94.3% of the population. Weighting adjustments and estimations are made to ensure that the data are representative of the total population.

All crime and population data at the regional and metropolitan levels for the United States were accessed from the Crime in the United States estimations file, 2023, and are based on the estimated totals from Table 2 (Crime in the United States by Community Type, 2023), Table 4 (Crime in the United States by Region, Geographic Division, and State, 2022-2023), and Table 6 (Crime in the United States by Metropolitan Statistical Area, 2023).

Notes

1. Sinha and Cotter, 2025.
2. While police-reported crime data were released for Canada in July 2025 (*The Daily*—[Police-reported crime statistics in Canada, 2024](#)) and for United States in August 2025 ([FBI Crime Data Explorer](#)), the current study uses 2023 data, as 2024 data were not accessible at the time of analysis.
3. Not all types of crime are recorded the same way in Canada and the United States. There are numerous differences in legislation and definitions that make comparability inappropriate for some offence types. However, certain offences are defined in a similar manner and can generally be compared: homicide, major assault, robbery, break and enter, motor vehicle theft, and theft. See Table 4 and Sinha and Cotter (2025) for more information.
4. Sinha and Cotter, 2025.
5. To be comparable with the U.S. category of aggravated assault, data for this category for Canada combine the offences of attempted murder, aggravated assault (level 3), and assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2). See the box Considerations and comparability between police-reported data from Canada and the United States.
6. Gannon, 2001.
7. For instance, the Atlantic region includes 6% of the Canadian population and 5% of the population in the United States; the Midwest 7% and 6%, respectively; the Mountain West 26% and 23%, respectively; and the Northern region 0.3% and 0.2%, respectively. The primary difference is seen in the Central region, where 61% of the Canadian population is found, compared with 26% of the population of the United States, and in the Southern region, which accounts for 39% of the population of the United States and for which there is no comparable geography in Canada.
8. Cotter, 2025.
9. In Canada, this refers to census metropolitan areas (CMAs). A CMA consists of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a central core. A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000, of which 50,000 or more live in the central core. To be included in a CMA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the core, as measured by the percentage of commuters established from previous census data on place of work. In the United States, the term metropolitan areas refers to metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs). An MSA is a geographic entity based on a county or a group of counties with at least one urbanized area with a population of at least 50,000 and adjacent counties with economic ties to the central area. The economic ties are measured by commuting patterns. For readability, the term metropolitan areas is used in this text to refer to CMAs and MSAs.
10. In Canada, this refers to census agglomerations (CAs). A CA consists of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a central core. A CA must have a core population of at least 10,000. To be included in a CA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the core, as measured by the percentage of commuters established from previous census data on place of work. In the United States, the term cities outside metropolitan areas refers to micropolitan statistical areas, which are similar to metropolitan statistical areas except that the urban clusters are smaller, with populations from 10,000 to 49,999.
11. In Canada, this refers to areas outside census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations, commonly referred to as rural areas in other publications. In the United States, this refers to urban populations not located within a metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area, as well as rural areas.
12. In 2023, data were not published for all metropolitan statistical areas in the United States. Among others, 3 of the 10 largest metropolitan areas in the United States—Los Angeles, Chicago and Atlanta—were not included in the 2023 tables. This exclusion should be kept in mind when making comparisons.
13. For the United States, the percentage calculation excludes the populations of all metropolitan areas that did not report sufficient data to be included in the 2023 publication.

References

Cotter, Adam. 2025. “[Characteristics of police-reported crime in rural areas in the Canadian provinces, 2023.](#)” *Juristat*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

Gannon, Maire. 2001. “[Crime comparisons between Canada and the United States.](#)” *Juristat*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

Sinha, Maire and Adam Cotter. 2025. “[Trends in police-reported crime in Canada and the United States: A comparative analysis.](#)” *Insights on Canadian Society*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 75-006-X.