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Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics



Statistics Canada – Catalogue no. 85-002-XIE, Vol. 28, no. 2

Firearms and Violent Crime

by Mia Dauvergne and Leonardo De Socio

Highlights

- Police reported 8,105 victims of firearm-related violent crime in 2006. The rate of firearm-related victimization remained stable for the fourth consecutive year.
- The large majority of police-reported violent crimes do not involve a firearm. In 2006, a firearm was used against 2.4% of victims of violent crime. Physical force and threatening behaviour were much more common, accounting for three-quarters of all victimizations.
- As with the overall trend, the rates of firearm-related crime among major crime categories, such as homicide, attempted murder and robbery, have remained stable in recent years.
- Victims of robbery and assault accounted for about three-quarters of the total number of firearm-related victimizations in 2006. Although the incidence of attempted murder and homicide was much lower, a firearm was used against approximately one-third of victims of these offences, substantially higher than the proportions of robbery (14%) and assault (1%).
- Similar to the trend in violent crime in general, firearm-related violent crime rates were higher in western Canada than in the east. The 2006 rates reported in Saskatchewan and Manitoba were 2 to 3 times higher than those in Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick.
- The rates of firearm-related violent crime in 2006 were highest in the larger census metropolitan areas of Vancouver, Winnipeg and Toronto and lowest in the smaller areas of Trois-Rivières and Sherbrooke.
- The rate of youth accused of firearm-related violent crime increased in 3 of the past 4 years. Year-to-year fluctuations in the rate of youth accused were driven primarily by incidents of firearm-related robberies.
- Persons convicted of a firearm-related violent offence were sentenced to an average of 4.2 years in prison, double the average custodial sentence length for those convicted of a non-firearm violent offence.



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ISSN 0715-271X

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	Single issue	Annual subscription
United States	CAN\$6.00	CAN\$78.00
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February 2008

Published by authority of the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada

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Introduction

Firearm-related violent crime has received considerable attention in recent years. In October 2007, the federal government's Speech from the Throne identified "tackling crime", particularly violent crime involving firearms, as one of its five key priorities.

Using data from Statistics Canada's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) and Homicide Surveys, this *Juristat* examines the prevalence of firearm-related violent crime in Canada at the national, provincial/territorial and census metropolitan area levels. It presents the incidence and trends in overall firearm violence and the characteristics of those offences most often committed with a firearm. It also compares the incidence of firearm-related homicide in Canada to that in other countries. Finally, data from the Integrated Criminal Courts Survey is used to compare court processing and sentencing outcomes between firearm and non-firearm violent offences.

Firearm use in violent crime stable

The vast majority of violent crime in Canada is not committed with a firearm. According to 2006 data reported by police to the UCR Survey, most violent crime (75%) was committed by physical force or threats, without the use of any weapon. Weapons were used against 18% of victims of violent crimes, with knives (6.2%) and clubs or blunt instruments (3.0%) being the most common. A firearm was used against 2.4% of all victims (Table 1).

Police reported 8,105 victims of firearm-related violent crime in 2006, representing a rate of 27.5 per 100,000 population. Robbery (49%) and assault (29%) were the most common violations, accounting for about three-quarters of the total number of firearm-related violent victimizations.

While attempted murder and homicide represented a small number of all firearm-related crime, these offences were much more likely to be committed with a firearm compared to robbery and assault. Approximately one-third of victims of attempted murder (36%) and homicide (31%) had a firearm used against them, compared to 14% of robbery victims and 1% of victims of assault (Chart 1).

Trend data show that the rate of firearm use in violent crime has remained stable since 2003 (Chart 2). The overall rate of firearm-related violent crime was driven primarily by the use of handguns, which have accounted for about two-thirds of all firearm-related violent crimes each year since 1998.

Not only has the overall firearm-related violent crime rate remained stable in recent years, but the use of firearms to commit specific violent offences, such as homicide, attempted murder, robbery, forcible confinement and assault has also remained stable when compared to previous years.

Homicides committed with a firearm stable over past ten years

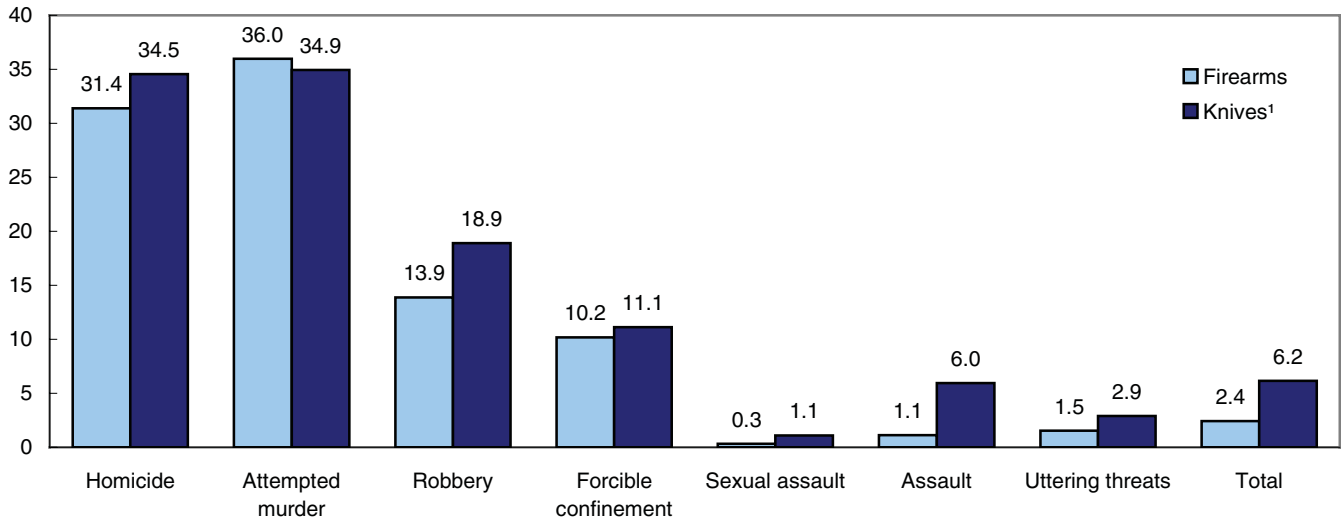
There were 190 homicides committed with a firearm in 2006, accounting for 31% of the total number of homicides. The rate of 0.6 victims per 100,000 population was 16% lower than in 2005 and the same as the previous 10-year average.

The long-term trend in firearm-related homicides shows that the rate steadily declined from the 1970s to 1998 and has remained relatively stable since (Table 2). The peak of 1.3 in 1975 was more than double the rate in 2006.

Chart 1

Violent crime by selected offence and type of weapon, 2006

percentage of total victims



1. Knives include other piercing and cutting instruments such as hatchets and razor blades.

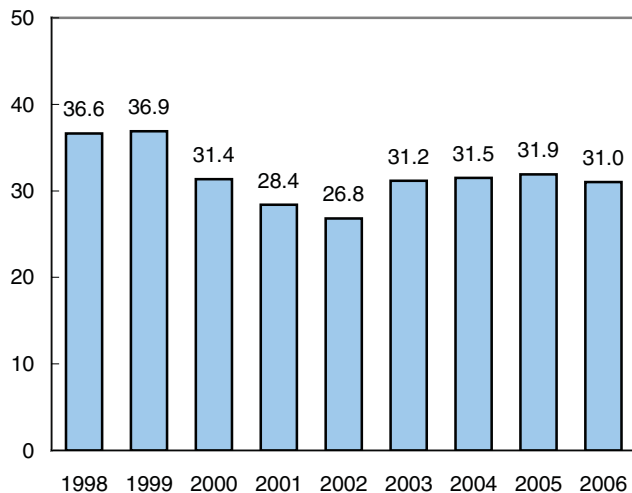
Note: Homicide data reflect 100% coverage; other violent crime data, including total firearm-related violent crime represent 90% of the population of Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide and Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Chart 2

Firearm-related violent crime, 1998 to 2006

rate of victims per 100,000 population



Notes: Crime data reflect victim counts from the UCR2 Trend database representing 51% of the population of Canada. Data is not nationally representative.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey (Trend file).

The decline in the firearm-related homicide rate can be largely explained by a decrease in homicides involving rifles or shotguns (Chart 3). The number of homicides committed with a rifle/shotgun fell from 183 victims in 1975 to 36 victims in 2006, representing an 86% decrease in the rate (from 0.8 to 0.1 per 100,000 population).

The rate of handgun use, however, has remained comparatively stable. Although the number of victims killed with a handgun in 2006 was greater than in 1975, the rate was almost the same in both years (0.33 and 0.38 respectively).

The relative stability in the handgun homicide rate, combined with the steady decrease in the homicide rate involving rifles/shotguns, has resulted in a shift in the most common type of firearm used to commit homicide. Prior to 1990, rifles/shotguns were used far more frequently than handguns; however, in 1991, the use of handguns surpassed rifles/shotguns for the first time. By 2006, three times as many victims were killed by a handgun (108) than by a rifle/shotgun (36) (Table 3).

Throughout the mid-1970s and early 1980s, firearms were consistently the most common type of weapon used to commit homicide. However, the use of firearms gradually decreased, while the use of knives remained comparatively stable over the same time period. Consequently, in 1985, the rate of fatal stabbings (involving a knife or other cutting instrument) overtook the firearm-related homicide rate for the first time. Since then, the most common method to commit homicide has varied annually between firearms and knives.

Text box 1

Surveys used in this *Juristat*

Three different surveys are used in this report. Unless otherwise noted, data from the Homicide and UCR Surveys represent victim counts and data from the ICCS represent case counts.

Homicide Survey

The Homicide Survey is a census of information from police services on all homicides (first degree murder, second degree murder, manslaughter and infanticide) that occur in Canada. Detailed information is available on the characteristics of incidents, victims and accused persons (where applicable). Coverage of the Homicide Survey reflects 100% of the total volume of homicides.

Uniform Crime Reporting Survey

The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey is a compilation of reported crime that has been substantiated through police investigation from all federal, provincial and municipal police services in Canada. There are two versions of the UCR survey used in this report: aggregate and incident-based microdata.

UCR Aggregate Survey

The UCR Aggregate Survey includes the number of reported offences, actual offences, offences cleared by charge or cleared otherwise,

persons charged (by sex and by adult/youth breakdown) and youth not charged. It does not include victim or incident characteristics. Coverage of the UCR Aggregate Survey reflects 100% of the total caseload for all police services in Canada.

UCR Incident-based Survey

The UCR Incident-based Survey is a micro-data survey that captures detailed information on individual criminal incidents reported to police, including the characteristics of victims, accused persons and incidents. Coverage of the UCR Incident-based Survey in 2006 was at 90% of the population of Canada.

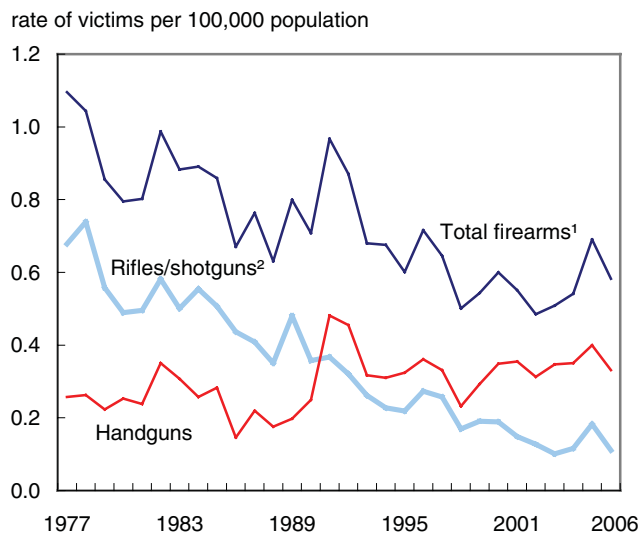
The UCR Trend database is a sub-set of the UCR Incident-based Survey. It contains the same detailed information, but only from police services that have been consistently reporting micro-level information since 1998, thus enabling comparisons to be made over time. The data contained within the UCR Trend database in 2006 represented 51% of the population of Canada.

Integrated Criminal Courts Survey

The Integrated Criminal Court Survey (ICCS) represents a collection of information on the processing of cases through the criminal court system. In 2006, the ICCS represented 98% of the national criminal court caseload.

Chart 3

Firearm-related homicide by type of firearm, 1977 to 2006



1. Total firearms include handguns, rifles/shotgun, sawed off rifles/shotguns, fully automatic firearms, firearm-like weapons (such as pellet guns, nail guns and starter pistols) and unknown type of firearm.
2. Excludes sawed-off rifles/shotguns.

Note: Homicide data reflect victim counts from the Homicide Survey representing 100% of the national volume of homicide.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

Not only have firearm-related homicides declined, but Canadian health statistics indicate that all deaths due to firearms have fallen in recent years, from 878 in 2000 to 754 in 2004 (the latest year for which figures are available). Moreover, most firearm-related deaths result from suicide, not homicide. In 2004, three out of every four firearm-related deaths were due to suicides; homicides accounted for 20% and 5% were classified as accidents, undetermined intent or legal intervention.¹

Canada's firearm homicide rate lower than the United States but higher than Australia and England and Wales

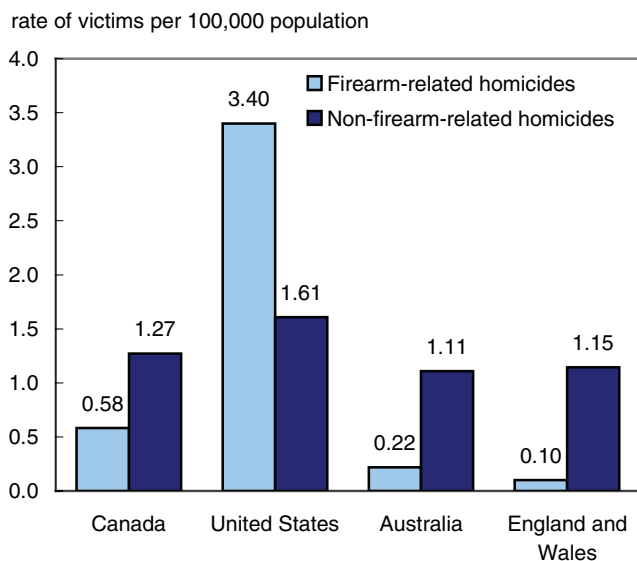
This section compares Canada's firearm-related homicide rates to those in the United States, Australia, and England and Wales. The crime of homicide is selected for two reasons. First, unlike other crimes, the definition of homicide tends to be fairly consistent across nations, thus enabling international comparisons. Second, because of its severity, homicide is more likely than any other crime to be known to police and to be the subject of thorough investigation. Thus, a census of detailed homicide data, including the type of weapon used to commit the offence, is available from each of the four countries. Whether the rates of other firearm-related violent crimes, such as attempted murder or robbery, would show the same pattern as homicide is unknown.

1. Data extracted from the Canadian Vital Statistics Death Database, Health Statistics Division available from CANSIM tables located on the Statistics Canada website (www.statcan.ca).

Overall homicide rates are highest in the United States, followed by Canada, Australia, and England and Wales. While non-firearm homicide rates are similar between the four countries, the rates of firearm-related homicides are quite different (Chart 4). In 2006, Canada's firearm-related homicide rate (0.58) was nearly six times lower than the United States (3.40), but about three times higher than the rate in Australia (0.22) and six times higher than the rate in England and Wales (0.10). Firearms accounted for about one-third (31%) of all homicides in Canada, approximately two-thirds (68%) in the U.S., 16% in Australia and 7% in England and Wales.

Chart 4

Homicide by method for selected countries, 2006



Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey; Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; Australian Institute of Criminology; and England & Wales Home Office.

All four countries reported that handguns were the most common type of gun used in the commission of firearm-related homicides. In 2006, handguns were responsible for 75% of all firearm-related homicides in the United States, 57% in Canada, 47% in Australia and 44% in England and Wales.

Canadian homicide data from 2003 to 2006 indicate that where registration status was known, 7 in 10 firearms used to commit homicide were reported by police to be unregistered.² Among persons accused of homicide, 27% were found to possess a valid firearms license. Data from Australia show that most firearms used to commit homicide are unlawfully held by accused persons (Mouzos, 2000).

Other violent crimes committed with a firearm also stable

The rates of other types of violence in Canada, including firearm-related attempted murder, robbery, forcible confinement and assault have also remained stable in recent years. The rate of attempted murder with a firearm has consistently hovered at about 1 victim per 100,000 population each year since 1998 (the first year of available data). As with homicides, the most common weapon used to commit attempted murder varied each year between firearms and knives. Among the total number of attempted murders reported by police in 2006, 276 (36%) were committed with a firearm, 7 in 10 of which were handguns.

Data on firearm-related robberies show that the rate has been relatively stable since 2001 following sharp declines throughout the 1990s (Table 2). The rates of firearm-related robbery reported by police in recent years were at their lowest levels since the late 1970s.

In 2006, 14% of all victims of robbery faced a firearm, usually a handgun. A knife or other type of weapon was used in just over one-quarter (27%) of robberies, while no weapon (eg. threat or physical force) was used in almost half of robberies (Table 1). While robberies with other types of weapons also declined during the 1990s, this decrease was less than the decline in robberies with a firearm (Chart 5).

About one in ten victims of forcible confinement (unlawfully confining, imprisoning, forcibly seizing or kidnapping a person) in 2006 were held at gunpoint (417 victims), usually with a handgun. The rate of forcible confinement committed with a firearm has remained stable at approximately 2.0 victims per 100,000 each year since 1998. While the overall incidence of forcible confinement has been steadily rising since the early 1990s, the increase is due to the number of victims held by physical force rather than a firearm.

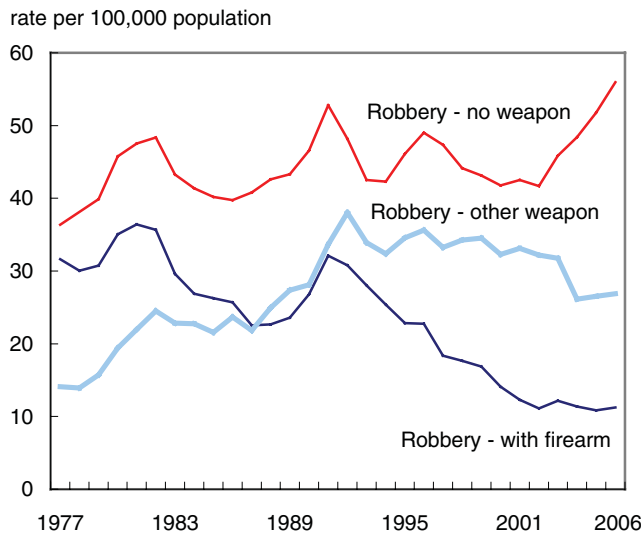
Assaults comprise the majority of crime that is categorized as violent. In 2006, about two-thirds (63%) of all violent crime were assaults, usually minor assaults in which there was no injury caused to the victim. There were about 2,400 assaults committed with a firearm, accounting for about 1% of all assaults. The rate of assaults involving a firearm has remained very consistent over time, at an average of 6.6 victims per 100,000 from 1998 to 2006.

The risk of other violent crimes being committed with a firearm, such as sexual assault, abduction, extortion, criminal harassment and uttering threats, is low. In 2006, a firearm was used against 1% of all victims of these types of violent offences.

2. Depending on the year, anywhere from about half to two-thirds of firearm registration information is reported by police to the Homicide Survey as "unknown", usually because the firearm was not recovered or because investigations were on-going at the time of the survey. The following analysis refers only to those homicides in which the firearm registration status was known to police. This information should be interpreted with caution as these data are not representative of all firearm-related homicides in Canada.

Chart 5

Robbery by type of weapon, 1977 to 2006



Note: Robbery data reflect incident counts from the UCR Aggregate Survey representing 100% of the national volume of robbery.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting (Aggregate) Survey.

Other weapon-related offences increase

In 1999, the UCR Survey began collecting information on weapon-related offences pertaining to the unlawful possession, storage and trafficking of firearms and other regulated weapons. There were nearly 23,000 incidents in 2006 involving at least one of these types of violations, most of which included a violation for illegal possession of a weapon (89%). Trend data show that the rate of incidents involving administrative weapon offences increased by 33% from 1999 to 2006. Some of this increase may be due to the inception of new legislation in 2003 requiring all firearms (including non-restricted shotguns and rifles) to be registered with the Canadian Firearms Registry.

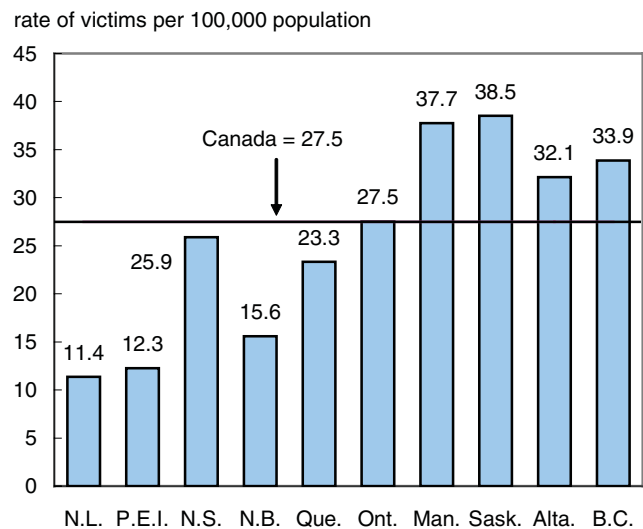
Another type of violation involving firearms pertains to theft. In 2006, there were over 3,100 incidents during which at least one firearm was reported stolen, about half (47%) of which were taken during the course of a break and enter, usually in a residence. Among the total number of firearms stolen, three-quarters were rifles or shotguns (73%) and 8% were classified as restricted weapons (such as handguns); the remaining percentage were other types of firearms. Other than two years of increase in 2002 and 2003, incidents involving stolen firearms have been generally stable since 1998.

Rates of firearm violence highest in the west

Generally speaking, violent crime rates tend to be higher in western Canada than in the central or eastern part of the country. The 2006 rates of firearm-related violent crime mirrored this pattern, with Saskatchewan (38.5) and Manitoba (37.7) reporting rates that were two to three times higher than those in Newfoundland and Labrador (11.4), Prince Edward Island (12.3) and New Brunswick (15.6) (Chart 6). The rates of firearm-related violence in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut were substantially higher than those in the provinces.

Chart 6

Firearm-related violent crime by province, 2006



Notes: Crime data reflect victim counts from the UCR2 Survey representing 90% of the population of Canada. Data from British Columbia represent 34% of the population and are not provincially representative.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

With the exception of robbery, the lowest rates of firearm-related crime were reported in eastern Canada (Table 4). The rate of firearm-related robbery, however, was highest in Nova Scotia (14.2). Driving this provincial high was Halifax, where almost 90% of the province's firearm-related robberies occurred and whose rate was the highest of all census metropolitan areas (CMAs).³ The high rates in Nova Scotia are a fairly recent phenomenon. Over the previous 10 years, rates have generally been highest in Quebec and British Columbia for this offence.

3. A census metropolitan area (CMA) refers to a large urban core (at least 100,000 population) combined with adjacent urban and rural areas that have a high degree of economic and social integration. Rates reflect at least 85% coverage for all CMAs other than Vancouver whose rate is based upon 46% of the population.

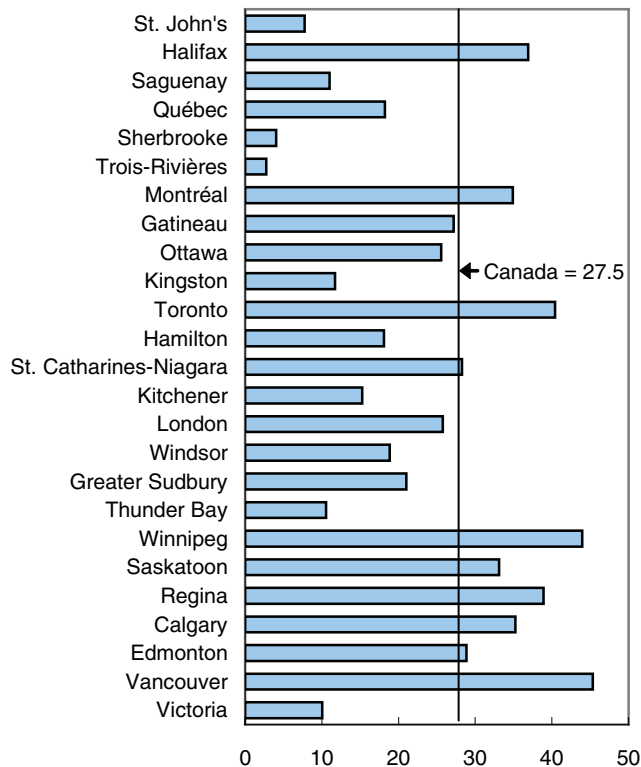
Highest rates of firearm violence in Vancouver, Winnipeg and Toronto

With nearly 2,000 victims, Toronto experienced the highest number of victims of firearm-related violent crimes in 2006, as well as the highest proportion of violent crimes involving firearms (4.1%). However, when controlling for differences in populations, the firearm victimization rate was slightly higher in both Vancouver (45.3 victims per 100,000 population) and Winnipeg (43.9) than in Toronto (40.4). The smaller CMAs of Regina (38.9) and Halifax (36.9) rounded out the five highest rates in the country (Chart 7).

Chart 7

Firearm-related violent crime by census metropolitan area (CMA), 2006

rate of victims per 100,000 population



Notes: Crime data reflect victim counts from the UCR2 Survey representing 90% of the population of Canada. Population estimates have been adjusted to correspond to police boundaries and to include only those police services reporting to the UCR Survey. Rates reflect at least 85% coverage for all CMAs other than Vancouver whose rate is based upon 46% of the population. Excludes the following CMAs: Saint John, Oshawa and Abbotsford.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

The lowest firearm-related violent crime rates were found in the smaller CMAs of Trois-Rivières (2.7), Sherbrooke (4.1) and St. John's (7.8). Hamilton (18.1) and Québec (18.2) were the only large CMAs to report rates that were below the national average (27.5).

There was some geographical variation when looking at specific offences (Table 5). Edmonton, for example, reported the highest rate for firearm-related homicide in 2006, while Abbotsford was highest in each of the preceding four years.⁴ For attempted murder with a firearm, rates were highest in Greater Sudbury (2.5) where, along with Calgary, Toronto and London, a firearm was used to commit 6 in 10 attempted murders. As mentioned earlier, with nearly triple the national rate (11.3), Halifax (30.4) stood out as the CMA with the highest rate of firearm-related robberies in 2006.

Youth accused of violent crime with a firearm increases

Youth (age 12 to 17 years) accused of committing a violent offence are more likely than adults to use a firearm. In 2006, police reported 1,287 youth accused of a firearm-related violent offence, accounting for 2.8% of all youth accused of violence. This was higher than the proportion of adults who had committed a violent firearm offence (1.8%).

The rate of youth accused of a firearm-related violent crime increased in 3 of the past 4 years, following a 19% decrease between 1998 and 2002. The 2006 rate was 32% higher than in 2002 and at its highest point since 1998 (the first year of available data). The overall firearm-related violent crime rates for youth were driven primarily by robberies, which comprised about half of all violent crimes committed with a firearm by youth.

The 2006 rates of youth accused of a firearm-related violent crime in Toronto (96.2) and Saskatoon (91.6) were well above the national average (55.5) and higher than all other CMAs. At 2.0 per 100,000 youth, the rate in Québec was the lowest.

The 2006 overall youth homicide rate was at its highest point since recording began in 1974; however, the rate of youth accused of committing homicide with a firearm (0.4) was in-line with previous years.

Processing of firearm-related violent offences

Police clearance rates (i.e., the rate of solved crime) differ depending on whether an incident is committed with a firearm. In 2006, about half of all violent crimes committed with a firearm

4. It is important to note that while comparisons between CMAs are based upon rates that account for differences in population, the number of firearm-related crimes is relatively low in many areas. For example, while the 2006 firearm-related homicide rate in Abbotsford was the second highest among all CMAs, the rate was based on 2 victims.

Text box 2

Canada's firearm regulations

In Canada, firearms essentially fall into one of three categories: prohibited, restricted or non-restricted. In general, prohibited firearms include assault pistols, short-barreled handguns and combat shotguns, and are only permissible for certain exempted personnel such as military or peace officers. Most handguns are classified as restricted firearms, while rifles and shotguns normally fall within the category of non-restricted.

In order to own or possess a firearm or to purchase ammunition, an individual must hold a valid firearms license under the *Firearms Act*. An applicant must undergo screening provisions which include the completion of a multi-page form with a variety of questions concerning the applicant's personal and criminal history, personal references, and a mandatory 28-day waiting period.

All firearms falling within the restricted firearms category were made subject to registration requirements in 1934. In 2003, new legislation required all firearms (including non-restricted shotguns and rifles) to be registered with the Canadian Firearms Registry. As of March 2007, nearly 2 million individuals in Canada held valid firearms licenses for almost 7 million registered firearms – 92% for non-restricted firearms, 5% for restricted firearms and 3% for prohibited firearms. Between December 1, 1998 and December 1, 2006 about 20,000 firearms licenses were refused or revoked due to such reasons as court ordered prohibitions, potential risks to self or others, the applicant's history of violence, providing false information, mental illness and drug offences. During the same time period, more than 1 million registered firearms have been exported, destroyed or deactivated (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2007).

Firearm regulations in the United States, Australia, and England and Wales

Firearm regulations and licensing requirements in other countries having similar social, economic and demographic characteristics differ from those in Canada. In the United States, for example, regulations pertaining to gun registration, permit requirements, waiting periods and background checks are state-specific and therefore vary across the country (Open Society Institute, 2000). Most states do not have licensing or registration requirements for any type of firearm, including handguns, assault weapons and rifles/shotguns (Open Society Institute, 2000). Further, about three-quarters of all American states have provisions that grant ordinary citizens the "right to carry" a concealed weapon (Wellford, Pepper & Petrie, 2004). According to the International Crime Victimization Survey conducted in 2000, 33% of American respondents reported keeping at least one firearm in their home compared to 17% of Canadians, 11% of Australians and 3% of households in England and Wales (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2000).

Firearm policy in Australia was revamped following a 1996 incident in Tasmania in which a man armed with military-style, semi-automatic rifles killed 35 people and injured another 18. The new legislation banned self-loading and pump-action rifles/shotguns, implemented a nationwide gun licensing and registration system, and introduced tighter requirements for firearm ownership (Phillips, Park & Lorimer, 2007). Handguns, for example, were made available only to gun collectors and bona-fide members of an approved pistol club (Gun Control Australia, 2007).

Gun laws in England and Wales are some of the most stringent in the western world. Following the 1998 school shootings of 16 kindergarten children in Dunblane, Scotland, the United Kingdom passed legislation that banned civilian possession of all handguns, without exception (Livingston, 2007). Permits for other types of firearms, such as rifles and shotguns, became more restricted and are now only granted to those involved in certain legitimate employment categories or for sporting-related reasons (Home Office, 2004).

were cleared by police compared to three-quarters of violent crimes that were not committed with a firearm. A recent study of the factors affecting homicide clearance rates found that incidents involving firearms were almost three times more likely to be unsolved compared to other homicides (Dauvergne and Li, 2006).

Court processing and sentencing outcomes also differ depending on whether the case involves a charge for a firearm-related offence.⁵ According to data collected by the Integrated Criminal Courts Survey, adults accused of a violent offence involving the use of a firearm were slightly less likely to plead guilty than those accused of the same offence without a firearm. In 2005/2006, a guilty plea was entered in 79% of violent cases where the most serious offence had been committed with a firearm compared to 86% of violent cases where the offence had not been committed with a firearm. This difference may be related to the existence of a mandatory minimum penalty of four years imprisonment for these offences when a firearm is used.

Adult court cases involving violent offences committed with a firearm tend to take longer to resolve than those that do not involve a firearm. In 2005/2006, the elapsed time in court from first appearance to last appearance was, on average, 326 days for firearm-related violent offences (as the most serious offence in a case) and 276 days for violent offences where a firearm had not been used. This difference may be due to the lower proportion of guilty pleas for cases involving violent firearm offences; cases that proceed to trial are known to take longer in the court system.

Sentencing outcomes also vary depending on firearm involvement. In 2005/2006, persons convicted of a firearm-related violent offence were sentenced to an average of 4.2 years in prison, more than double the average custodial sentence length for those convicted of a non-firearm violent offence.⁶

Summary

The rates of overall firearm-related violent crime have been stable since 2003. Most violent offences, including homicide, attempted murder, robbery, forcible confinement and assault follow a similar pattern. Longer-term data, available for homicide and robbery, show that the rates of these two offences gradually declined throughout the past three decades with recent levels well below those reported in the 1970s. While the incidence of firearm-related violent crime is relatively low, those that are committed with a firearm most often involve a handgun.

5. The following offences were used in all court-based comparisons: manslaughter, criminal negligence causing death, attempted murder, causing bodily harm with intent, aggravated sexual assault, sexual assault, robbery, kidnapping, hostage-taking and extortion. These ten crimes are identified within the *Criminal Code* as unique offences when committed with a firearm. As such, it is possible to examine differences based upon whether or not a firearm was used in the commission of these offences.
6. Average custodial sentence lengths may be under-estimated as time in custody prior to sentencing is sometimes taken into consideration when imposing a sentence. However, the extent to which this time influences the sanction imposed is not available from the ICCS.

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Table 1

Violent crime by selected offence and type of weapon, Canada, 2006

Type of offence	Firearm		Knife ¹		Club/blunt instrument		Other weapon ²		Total weapon	
	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage
Homicide ³	190	31.4	209	34.5	50	8.3	39	6.4	488	80.7
Attempted murder ⁴	276	36.0	268	34.9	27	3.5	64	8.3	635	82.8
Robbery ^{4,5}	3,948	13.9	5,375	18.9	1,068	3.8	1,208	4.2	11,599	40.8
Forcible confinement ^{4,6}	417	10.2	456	11.1	113	2.8	230	5.6	1,216	29.7
Sexual assault ^{4,7}	65	0.3	211	1.1	51	0.3	273	1.4	600	3.1
Assault ⁴	2,388	1.1	12,681	6.0	8,349	3.9	17,878	8.4	41,296	19.4
Uttering threats ⁴	757	1.5	1,423	2.9	453	0.9	821	1.7	3,454	7.0
Criminal harassment ⁴	41	0.2	55	0.3	30	0.2	386	2.3	512	3.1
Total⁴	8,105	2.4	20,707	6.2	10,163	3.0	21,243	6.3	60,218	17.9

	Physical force		Threat/no weapon		Total no weapon		Unknown		Total	
	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage
Homicide ³	86	14.2	1	0.2	87	14.4	30	5.0	605	100.0
Attempted murder ⁴	30	3.9	66	8.6	96	12.5	36	4.7	767	100.0
Robbery ^{4,5}	12,373	43.5	847	3.0	13,220	46.5	3,611	12.7	28,430	100.0
Forcible confinement ^{4,6}	2,249	54.9	95	2.3	2,344	57.2	537	13.1	4,097	100.0
Sexual assault ^{4,7}	15,442	80.7	101	0.5	15,543	81.3	2,984	15.6	19,127	100.0
Assault ⁴	159,701	74.9	835	0.4	160,536	75.3	11,272	5.3	213,104	100.0
Uttering threats ⁴	5,496	11.2	36,392	74.2	41,888	85.4	3,713	7.6	49,055	100.0
Criminal harassment ⁴	1,948	11.8	12,150	73.7	14,098	85.5	1,879	11.4	16,489	100.0
Total⁴	198,947	59.2	51,968	15.5	250,915	74.7	24,754	7.4	335,887	100.0

1. Knife includes other piercing and cutting instruments such as hatchets and razor blades.
 2. Other weapon includes all weapons that do not belong in another category such as fire, explosives and poison.
 3. Homicide data reflect victim counts from the Homicide Survey representing 100% of the national volume of homicides.
 4. Attempted murder, robbery, forcible confinement, sexual assault, assault, uttering threats, criminal harassment and total violent crime data reflect victim counts from the UCR2 Survey representing 90% of the population of Canada.
 5. Total firearm-related robbery counts presented in Tables 1 and 3 represent victim counts from the UCR2 Survey whereas Tables 2, 4 and 5 represent incident counts from the UCR Aggregate Survey. Victim counts are greater than incident counts as there can be multiple victims associated with the same incident.
 6. Forcible confinement includes kidnapping.
 7. Sexual assault includes levels 1, 2 and 3. This category does not include other sexual offences such as invitation to sexual touching, sexual exploitation or incest.
- Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey and Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Table 2

Firearm-related homicide and robbery, Canada, 1977 to 2006

Year	Firearm-related homicide ¹			Firearm-related robbery ²		
	Number	Rate ³	% of all homicides	Number	Rate ³	% of all robberies
1977	260	1.1	36.6	7,507	31.6	38.5
1978	250	1.0	37.8	7,203	30.1	36.6
1979	207	0.9	32.8	7,439	30.7	35.6
1980	195	0.8	32.9	8,594	35.1	35.0
1981	199	0.8	30.7	9,040	36.4	34.4
1982	248	1.0	37.2	8,954	35.6	32.9
1983	224	0.9	32.8	7,505	29.6	30.9
1984	228	0.9	34.2	6,886	26.9	29.5
1985	222	0.9	31.5	6,789	26.3	29.8
1986	175	0.7	30.8	6,710	25.7	28.8
1987	202	0.8	31.4	5,960	22.5	26.5
1988	169	0.6	29.3	6,072	22.7	25.1
1989	218	0.8	33.2	6,439	23.6	25.0
1990	196	0.7	29.7	7,426	26.8	26.4
1991	271	1.0	35.9	9,006	32.1	27.1
1992	247	0.9	33.7	8,736	30.8	26.3
1993	195	0.7	31.1	8,038	28.0	26.8
1994	196	0.7	32.9	7,361	25.4	25.4
1995	176	0.6	29.9	6,692	22.8	22.1
1996	212	0.7	33.4	6,737	22.8	21.2
1997	193	0.6	32.9	5,486	18.3	18.5
1998	151	0.5	27.1	5,324	17.7	18.4
1999	165	0.5	30.7	5,122	16.8	17.8
2000	184	0.6	33.7	4,323	14.1	16.0
2001	171	0.6	30.9	3,818	12.3	14.0
2002	152	0.5	26.1	3,483	11.1	13.1
2003	161	0.5	29.3	3,856	12.2	13.6
2004	173	0.5	27.7	3,645	11.4	13.3
2005	223	0.7	33.6	3,508	10.9	12.2
2006	190	0.6	31.4	3,671	11.3	12.0

1. Homicide data reflect victim counts from the Homicide Survey representing 100% of the national volume of homicides.

2. Robbery data reflect incident counts from the UCR Aggregate Survey representing 100% of the national volume of robberies. Total firearm-related robbery counts presented in Tables 1 and 3 represent victim counts from the UCR2 Survey whereas Tables 2, 4 and 5 represent incident counts from the UCR Aggregate Survey. Victim counts are greater than incident counts as there can be multiple victims associated with the same incident.

3. Rates are calculated per 100,000 population.

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

Table 3

Firearm-related violent crime by selected offence and type of firearm, Canada, 2006

Type of firearm	Homicide ¹		Attempted murder ²		Robbery ^{2,3}		Total ²	
	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage
Handgun	108	56.8	188	68.1	3,253	82.4	5,100	62.9
Rifle/shotgun	36	18.9	47	17.0	194	4.9	844	10.4
Sawed-off rifle/shotgun	24	12.6	9	3.3	212	5.4	378	4.7
Fully automatic firearm	2	1.1	12	4.3	62	1.6	176	2.2
Firearm-like weapon ⁴	2	1.1	20	7.2	227	5.7	1,607	19.8
Unknown type of firearm	18	9.5	.	.	.	.	.	.
Total	190	100.0	276	100.0	3,948	100.0	8,105	100.0

. not available for any reference period

1. Homicide data reflect victim counts from the Homicide Survey representing 100% of the national volume of homicides.

2. Attempted murder, robbery and total violent crime data reflect victim counts from the UCR2 Survey representing 90% of the population of Canada.

3. Total firearm-related robbery counts presented in Tables 1 and 3 represent victim counts from the UCR2 Survey whereas Tables 2, 4 and 5 represent incident counts from the UCR Aggregate Survey. Victim counts are greater than incident counts as there can be multiple victims associated with the same incident.

4. Firearm-like weapon includes pellet guns, nail guns, starter pistols, etc.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey and Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Table 4

Firearm-related violent crime for selected offences by province and territory, 2006

Province/territory	Firearm-related homicide ¹			Firearm-related attempted murder ²			Firearm-related robbery ³			Total firearm-related violent crime ²		
	Number	Rate ⁴	% of all homicides	Number	Rate ⁴	% of all attempted murders	Number	Rate ⁴	% of all robberies	Number	Rate ⁴	% of total violent crime
Newfoundland and Labrador	4	0.8	57.1	2	0.4	28.6	11	2.2	9.2	58	11.4	1.1
Prince Edward Island	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	17	12.3	1.3
Nova Scotia	5	0.5	31.3	5	0.5	12.2	133	14.2	16.8	242	25.9	1.8
New Brunswick	2	0.3	28.6	3	0.4	37.5	31	4.1	14.0	106	15.6	1.6
Quebec	34	0.4	36.6	49	0.6	20.0	781	10.2	11.2	1,775	23.3	2.2
Ontario	66	0.5	33.7	148	1.2	48.8	1,609	12.7	14.6	3,455	27.5	2.9
Manitoba	8	0.7	20.5	6	0.5	27.3	134	11.4	6.2	425	37.7	2.0
Saskatchewan	10	1.0	25.0	13	1.3	28.3	93	9.4	6.3	379	38.5	1.7
Alberta	32	0.9	33.3	37	1.1	56.1	352	10.4	11.2	1,071	32.1	2.6
British Columbia ⁵	29	0.7	26.9	10	0.7	41.7	523	12.1	11.0	497	33.9	2.8
Yukon	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	1	3.2	5.6	9	28.8	0.9
Northwest Territories	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	1	2.4	6.7	35	83.6	1.2
Nunavut	0	0.0	0.0	3	9.7	75.0	2	6.5	16.7	36	117.0	1.5
Canada	190	0.6	31.4	276	0.9	36.0	3,671	11.3	12.0	8,105	27.5	2.4

1. Homicide data reflect victim counts from the Homicide Survey representing 100% of the national volume of homicides.

2. Attempted murder and total violent crime data reflect victim counts from the UCR2 Survey representing 90% of the population of Canada.

3. Robbery data reflect incident counts from the UCR Aggregate Survey representing 100% of the national volume of robberies. Total firearm-related robbery counts presented in Tables 1 and 3 represent victim counts from the UCR2 Survey whereas Tables 2, 4 and 5 represent incident counts from the UCR Aggregate Survey. Victim counts are greater than incident counts as there can be multiple victims associated with the same incident.

4. Rates are calculated per 100,000 population.

5. Data for attempted murder and total violent crime from British Columbia represent 34% of the population and are not provincially representative. Data for homicide and robbery represent 100% coverage.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey and Uniform Crime Reporting (Aggregate and UCR2) Survey.

Table 5

Firearm-related violent crime for selected offences by census metropolitan area,¹ 2006

Census metropolitan area (CMA)	Firearm-related homicide ²			Firearm-related attempted murder ³			Firearm-related robbery ⁴			Total firearm-related violent crime ³		
	Number	Rate ⁵	% of all homicides	Number	Rate ^{5,6}	% of all attempted murders	Number	Rate ⁵	% of all robberies	Number	Rate ^{5,6}	% of total violent crime
500,000+ population												
Toronto ⁷	34	0.6	34.3	103	2.1	63.6	995	18.4	15.8	1,993	40.4	4.1
Montréal	25	0.7	48.1	36	1.0	23.5	645	17.4	11.6	1,291	34.9	3.1
Vancouver ⁸	15	0.7	27.3	10	1.0	47.6	408	18.7	12.3	455	45.3	3.3
Calgary	6	0.5	23.1	9	0.8	64.3	133	12.0	11.2	388	35.2	3.9
Edmonton	15	1.4	38.5	6	0.6	50.0	168	15.9	11.3	306	28.9	2.9
Ottawa ⁹	8	0.9	50.0	11	1.2	47.8	138	15.6	16.9	226	25.5	3.6
Québec	0	0.0	0.0	3	0.4	16.7	67	9.2	14.9	132	18.2	1.9
Winnipeg	7	1.0	31.8	4	0.6	36.4	123	16.9	6.2	315	43.9	2.8
Hamilton ⁷	3	0.4	42.9	1	0.2	50.0	111	15.8	14.6	94	18.1	2.0
100,000 to less than 500,000 population												
Kitchener	1	0.2	50.0	3	0.6	37.5	24	4.9	6.5	75	15.3	1.8
London	0	0.0	0.0	9	1.9	60.0	55	11.6	13.2	122	25.8	2.8
St. Catharines-Niagara	1	0.2	25.0	2	0.5	33.3	60	13.8	16.1	123	28.3	3.7
Halifax	3	0.8	50.0	2	0.5	8.0	116	30.4	18.0	141	36.9	2.4
Oshawa ¹⁰	0	0.0	0.0	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Victoria	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	15	4.4	5.9	34	10.0	0.9
Windsor	2	0.6	40.0	4	1.3	50.0	16	4.8	6.9	57	18.9	1.8
Gatineau ¹¹	2	0.7	22.2	2	0.7	50.0	24	8.3	12.2	79	27.2	2.1
Saskatoon	2	0.8	25.0	2	0.8	25.0	39	15.9	6.0	80	33.1	1.7
Regina	2	1.0	22.2	4	2.0	28.6	35	17.5	6.6	78	38.9	2.2
St. John's	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	10	5.5	10.4	14	7.8	0.8
Abbotsford ¹²	2	1.2	66.7	..	..	..	25	15.2	16.6	..	..	..
Greater Sudbury	0	0.0	0.0	4	2.5	57.1	13	8.0	10.8	34	21.0	2.0
Kingston	1	0.7	50.0	0	0.0	0.0	8	5.2	14.0	18	11.7	1.1
Sherbrooke	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	5	3.4	5.0	6	4.1	0.4
Trois-Rivières	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.7	1.6	4	2.7	0.3
Saguenay	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.7	3.7	16	11.0	1.1
Thunder Bay	1	0.8	50.0	0	0.0	0.0	4	3.2	2.9	13	10.6	0.6
Saint John ¹²	0	0.0	0.0	..	..	..	5	5.1	6.2	..	..	..
Canada	190	0.6	31.4	276	0.9	36.0	3,671	11.3	12.0	8,105	27.5	2.4

.. not available for a specific reference period

1. A census metropolitan area (CMA) refers to a large urban core (at least 100,000 population) combined with adjacent urban and rural areas that have a high degree of economic and social integration. A CMA usually comprises more than one police service.
2. Homicide data reflect victim counts from the Homicide Survey representing 100% of the national volume of homicides.
3. Attempted murder and total violent crime data reflect victim counts from the UCR2 Survey representing 90% of the population of Canada.
4. Robbery data reflect incident counts from the UCR Aggregate Survey representing 100% of the national volume of robberies. Total firearm-related robbery counts presented in Tables 1 and 3 represent victim counts from the UCR2 Survey whereas Tables 2, 4 and 5 represent incident counts from the UCR Aggregate Survey. Victim counts are greater than incident counts as there can be multiple victims associated with the same incident.
5. Rates are calculated per 100,000 population.
6. For attempted murder and total violent crime, populations have been adjusted to include only those police services reporting to the UCR2 Survey. Rates reflect at least 85% coverage for all CMAs other than Vancouver.
7. Excludes data from the Halton Regional Police Service and the Durham Regional Police Service due to the incongruity between the police service jurisdictional boundaries and the CMA boundaries.
8. Data for attempted murder and total violent crime in Vancouver represent 46% of the population and include the following police services: Vancouver, Richmond, Delta, New Westminster, West Vancouver and Port Moody. Data for homicide and robbery represent 100% coverage.
9. Ottawa refers to the Ontario part of the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA.
10. Firearm-related data are only available for homicide.
11. Gatineau refers to the Quebec part of the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA.
12. Firearm-related data are only available for homicide and robbery.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey and Uniform Crime Reporting (Aggregate and UCR2) Survey.

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