

Co-offending in Canada, 2011

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Co-offences are crimes that are committed by two or more accused. In 2011, 11% of crimes solved by police in Canada were co-offences. In total, 8% were pair crimes, involving two accused, and 3% were group crimes, involving three or more accused.

The number of offences committed by multiple accused has gradually declined over time, which coincides with a drop in police-reported crime rates overall. The prevalence of co-offending decreased 2.3% between 1995 and 2006 and has remained relatively stable since that time.

Most co-offences reported by police in 2011 were pair crimes. In all, 76% of co-offences were committed by two accused, with the remaining 24% involving three or more accused. Co-offences rarely involved large groups, as less than 2% of co-offences involved six or more accused.

Females were more likely than males to have committed offences in pairs or groups in 2011 (27% versus 21%). But, more than half (54%) of co-offences were committed by all-male groups, while 33% were committed by mixed-sex groups. All-female groups constituted the accused in 12% of co-offences. This was due, in large part, to the fact that most of those accused of an offence in 2011 were male.

Participation in co-offending was most common among youth aged 12 to 17 and decreased with age. In 2011, 44% of accused youth committed an offence in a pair or group, compared with 19% of adult accused.

Most co-offences were committed by all-adult groups, as most people accused of an offence in 2011 were 18 years of age and older. More than two-thirds (65%) of co-offences were committed by all-adult groups, while 22% were committed by groups exclusively composed of youth. The remaining 13% of co-offences were committed by groups that included both youth and adults.

Co-offending was most common among drug and property related crimes. Pair and group crime was highest among incidents of drug trafficking, production and importation/exportation, robbery, arson and counterfeiting.

Co-offences tended to be more serious in nature compared with offences committed by an individual. Crimes committed by pairs or groups were more likely to have involved the use of a firearm or weapon and to have resulted in an injury to the victim.

Note to readers

The data presented in this article are drawn from the 2011 Uniform Crime Reporting Survey. This report includes only those incidents that were cleared by police — that is, for which at least one accused person was identified — because the identification of the accused person(s) is necessary for the classification of the incident as a lone offence, pair offence or group crime.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3302.

The Juristat article "Co-offending in Canada, 2011" (85-002-X), is now available. From the *Browse by key resource* module of our website under *Publications*, choose *All subjects*, then *Crime and justice*, and *Juristat*.

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