

# Youth crime in Canada, 2014

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Overall, Canadian youth aged 12 to 17 were more than twice as likely to be accused of a police-reported crime in 2014 than people aged 25 years and older. However, rates of individuals accused of crime in 2014 were highest among young adults aged 18 to 24.

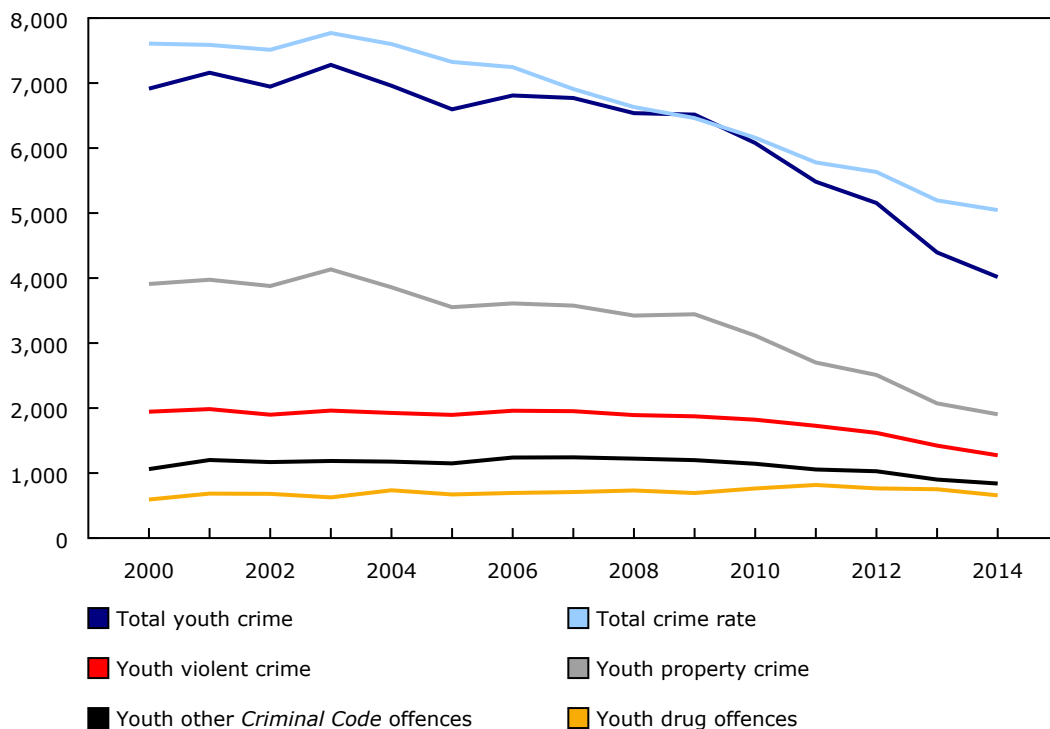
In total, there were almost 101,000 youth aged 12 to 17 accused of *Criminal Code* offences (excluding traffic violations) reported by police in 2014, resulting in a youth crime rate of 4,322 per 100,000 youth. This was lower than the rate of 5,428 per 100,000 population posted by 18- to 24-year olds, but well above the rate of 2,048 per 100,000 population for those aged 25 and older. While youth aged 12 to 17 made up 7% of the Canadian population, they accounted for 13% of individuals accused of crime by police.

## Youth crime declining more rapidly than crime in general

The police-reported youth crime rate has long been on a downward trend, declining over the past two decades after peaking in 1991. In fact, the youth crime rate has fallen 42% since 2000, a steeper drop than the 34% decrease recorded for the overall crime rate. The decline over this time period was largely the result of a 51% decrease in the rate of youth accused of property crime, particularly theft of \$5,000 and under, and breaking and entering.

**Chart 1**  
**Trends in youth crime, by offence type**

rate per 100,000 population



**Note(s):** Youth crime is the rate of youth aged 12 to 17 accused of *Criminal Code* offences (excluding traffic violations). The total crime rate is the rate of incidents of *Criminal Code* offences (excluding traffic violations) reported by police. Rates are calculated on a 100,000 population basis. Populations are based on July 1 estimates published by Statistics Canada. Rates in this chart are based on data from the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey and differ slightly from the rates in the report's tables and analysis.

**Source(s):** Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (3302).



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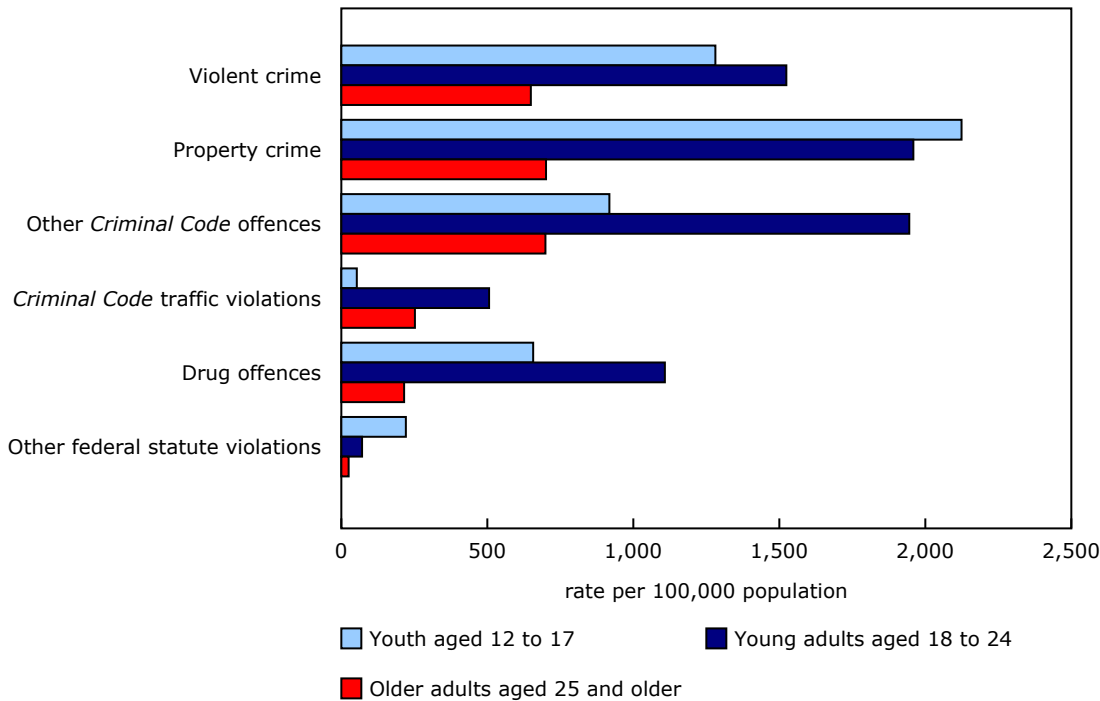
Canada

## Youth crime tends to involve relatively minor offences

For the most part, police-reported youth crime involved relatively minor offences. The most frequent criminal offences committed by youth in 2014 were theft of \$5,000 and under (960 offences per 100,000 youth), mischief (574) and common assault (546). All of these offences were also among the most frequent violations committed by adults. The rate of cannabis possession among youth was also high, at 531 per 100,000 youth, as were the combined rates of youth accused of offences related to the administration of justice and violations under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (YCJA) (565 and 207 respectively).

The rates of many minor crimes were highest among youth. In particular, the rate of individuals accused of property crimes such as breaking and entering or theft was highest among youth aged 12 to 17, while violent crime was more common among young adults aged 18 to 24. Among all police-reported criminal offences, rates of individuals accused were higher for youth than for adults in incidents of theft of \$5,000 and under, breaking and entering, sexual assault level 1 and sexual violations against children.

**Chart 2**  
**People accused of selected offences, by age group of accused and by offence type, 2014**



**Note(s):** Rates are calculated on a 100,000 population basis for each age group. Populations are based on July 1 estimates published by Statistics Canada. Data exclude accused aged over 89.  
**Source(s):** Incident-based Crime Reporting Survey (3302).

## Youth drug crime primarily cannabis-related

In 2014, there were approximately 15,300 youth accused of drug offences under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*, a rate of 657 per 100,000 youth. This was about three times the rate for older adults aged 25 and older (215), but lower than the rate for young adults aged 18 to 24 (1,108). The highest rates of cannabis offences were recorded for youth aged 17, 18 and 19. However, crime related to other drugs, such as cocaine or heroin, was highest among young adults, especially those aged 20 to 24.

The rate of youth accused in drug offences was 11% higher in 2014 than in 2000. However, most of this increase occurred gradually before the rate peaked in 2011; from 2011 to 2014, youth drug crime fell by 20%. The trends in drug crime have been mainly driven by changes in the rate of youth accused in incidents of cannabis possession, which accounted for about four in five of youth accused of drug offences in 2014.

## Youth less likely to be charged than adults, especially for minor offences

In keeping with the principles and objectives of the YCJA—namely to divert youth away from the formal justice system especially when they are accused of relatively minor offences—48% of youth accused of crime in 2014 were charged by police, compared with 63% of adults.

Among youth accused, charge rates were higher for violent offences (51%). For property offences, 38% of youth accused were charged. Most youth accused of property offences were cleared by means other than a charge, such as warnings and cautions, or referrals to community programs or other extrajudicial sanctions programs under the YCJA. From 2002 to 2003, with the introduction of the YCJA, the proportion of youth accused who were charged by police dropped substantially as more youth were dealt with by extrajudicial measures, especially for less serious offences. In addition, a lower proportion of youth found guilty of criminal offences were sentenced to custody after the introduction of the YCJA.

## About one-fifth of police-reported violent crimes involving youth occur at school

Violent crime and drug offences involving an accused youth were more likely to occur at school than property crimes. About one in five violent crimes (19%) and just over one in four drug crimes (27%) involving an accused youth occurred at school during school hours or during a supervised activity. Among incidents involving an accused youth and occurring at school, cannabis possession and common assault were the most frequent offences. Overall, about 1 in 10 police-reported criminal incidents that involved an accused youth occurred at school during supervised hours.

Some types of police-reported crime involving accused youth tended to occur at certain times during the day. Specifically, violent incidents involving accused youth occurred most frequently at noon hour (between 12 p.m. and 1 p.m.) or shortly after school (between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m.). There was no similar school hour peak for property and drug crimes involving accused youth. Property crimes tended to occur in the late afternoon and drug crimes at night, whether the crime involved an accused youth or not.

### Note to readers

*The report "Youth crime in Canada, 2014" is produced by Statistics Canada's Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. It provides the most current data on the nature and extent of police-reported youth crime in Canada.*

*The report presents information on youth aged 12 to 17 accused in criminal incidents. The report is primarily based on police-reported data gathered by the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey. Similar to the overall crime rate, the **police-reported youth crime rate** comprises violent crime, property crime and other Criminal Code violations. The overall youth crime rate, like the overall crime rate, does not include Criminal Code traffic offences or offences under other federal statutes, such as drug offences or violations specific to the Youth Criminal Justice Act.*

*It is important to note that, unlike the overall police-reported crime rate, which is based on the number of criminal incidents per 100,000 population, the youth crime rate measures the number of individuals aged 12 to 17 accused in a criminal incident per 100,000 youth (both charged and cleared without charge). Similarly, the adult rates in the report are calculated as the number of adults accused per 100,000 population of the relevant adult age group (such as the young adult accused rate per 100,000 young adults).*

*Additional data are from the youth portion of the Integrated Criminal Court Survey. The individuals involved are people aged 12 to 17 at the time of the offence.*

**Table 1**  
**People accused of selected offences, by age group of accused and by offence type, 2014**

	Youth aged 12 to 17	Young adults aged 18 to 24	Older adults aged 25 and older
	rate per 100,000 population		
<b>Total accused of <i>Criminal Code</i> offences (excluding traffic violations)</b>	<b>4,322</b>	<b>5,428</b>	<b>2,048</b>
Violent crime	1,281	1,524	649
Property crime	2,124	1,959	701
Other <i>Criminal Code</i> offences	918	1,945	699
<i>Criminal Code</i> traffic violations	53	506	252
Drug offences	657	1,108	215
Other federal statute violations	221	71	25

**Note(s):** Rates are calculated on a 100,000 population basis for each age group. Populations are based on July 1 estimates published by Statistics Canada.

**Source(s):** Incident-based Crime Reporting Survey (3302).

**Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers 3302, 3312 and 3315.**

The *Juristat* article "[Youth crime in Canada, 2014](#)" (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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