

# Adult criminal court statistics, 2014/2015

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There were more than 328,000 cases completed in adult criminal courts in Canada in 2014/2015, down 13% from the previous year. This was the fifth consecutive annual decline, as well as the lowest number of completed adult criminal court cases reported in a decade. At the same time, the rate of adults charged by police continued its decade-long downward trend in 2014/2015.

The number of completed adult criminal court cases decreased throughout the entire country. Quebec reported a decrease of nearly 20,000 completed cases (-25%), which was the largest decline in the country, and the largest contributor to the national totals. Adding to the total were declines of over 10,000 cases in both Ontario (-9%) and Alberta (-21%).

A flow chart summarizing the movement of completed cases through the adult criminal court system in 2014/2015 can be found in the new *Juristat* article "[Adult criminal court statistics in Canada, 2014/2015](#)", released today.

The number of completed cases declined for all offence types in 2014/2015. A large contributor to this overall drop was the decline in impaired driving cases. This downward trend was also noted in police-reported impaired driving statistics in recent years. There were over 11,000 fewer impaired driving cases completed in 2014/2015 compared with 2013/2014, a decrease of 26%. This was largely the result of fewer impaired driving cases in Quebec (-6,919), Alberta (-2,533), Ontario (-828) and British Columbia (-659).

Large decreases were also observed in the number of completed cases involving failure to comply with a court order (-13%), common assault (-13%) and theft (-9%).

In 2014/2015, five *Criminal Code* offence types made up close to half (48%) of all completed adult criminal court cases. These included theft (10%), impaired driving (10%), failure to comply with a court order (10%), common assault (9%) and breach of probation (9%). This was the first time in 10 years that impaired driving was not the most common offence.

Continuing a trend seen over the past decade, more than 6 in 10 (63%) cases completed in adult criminal court in 2014/2015 resulted in a guilty finding. Another 32% of cases were stayed, withdrawn, dismissed or discharged, 4% of cases were acquitted, and the remaining 1% of cases received another type of decision, such as the accused was found not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder.

Probation, either on its own or in combination with another type of sentence, was the most common type of sentence in 2014/2015, at 43% of all guilty cases. The median length of probation was 365 days (one year).

Custodial sentences were imposed in just over one-third (37%) of guilty adult criminal court cases in 2014/2015, the majority (88%) of which received a sentence of six months or less. About 3% of individuals received a custody sentence of two years or more. The median length of custody was 30 days (one month).

The amount of time it takes from an individual's first court appearance to the final decision can vary according to a number of factors inherent to a case (such as the number of accused, the number and types of charges, the number of court appearances, whether an accused has legal representation, and whether a preliminary inquiry was requested and/or held). Case processing times are also influenced by the availability of court resources (judges and lawyers), case management practices, and differences in the structure and operations of courts, which can vary across the country.

In 2014/2015, the median amount of time from an individual's first court appearance to the completion of their case was 121 days, down from 127 days in 2013/2014. Over 9 in 10 (91%) adult criminal court cases were completed in less than 18 months. The remaining 9% of cases took between 18 and 30 months to complete (6%), or 30 months or longer to complete (3%).



### Note to readers

The statistical trends presented in this report reflect, among other things, the progress made by the federal, provincial and territorial governments in establishing and implementing a variety of practices and initiatives to improve the efficiency of the Canadian justice system. These initiatives influence the volume of cases and the processing of those cases before the courts. It is impossible to identify a specific initiative as the source of the changes observed in the statistical trends; but rather, the trends reflect the cumulative impact of these initiatives combined.

Adult criminal court cases that involve more than one charge are represented by the most serious offence. A **completed case** is defined as one or more charges against an accused person or company that were processed by the courts at the same time and received a final decision.

The data presented in this article are drawn from the adult portion (people 18 years and older) of the Integrated Criminal Court Survey. In 2014/2015, information was unavailable from superior courts in Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan as well as municipal courts in Quebec. Superior court data reported to the survey in 2014/2015 represented less than 1% of all completed cases.

### Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3312](#).

The *Juristat* article "[Adult criminal court statistics in Canada, 2014/2015](#)" ([85-002-X](#)) is now available.

Additional data are available upon request.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).