Homicide in Canada, 2016

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In Canada and other countries, the homicide rate is often considered as a benchmark for levels of violent activity. Homicides remain a rare occurrence in Canada, accounting for less than 0.2% of violent crimes reported by police in 2016, yet their occurrence can negatively impact feelings of safety within communities. While Canada reported a small decrease in the homicide rate in 2016, some areas of Canada saw an increase in homicides involving gangs and firearms.

In 2016, police reported 611 homicide victims in Canada, 2 more than the previous year. Despite an increase in the number of homicide victims, the homicide rate (1.68 per 100,000 population) decreased by 1% from the previous year, the result of growth in Canada's population.
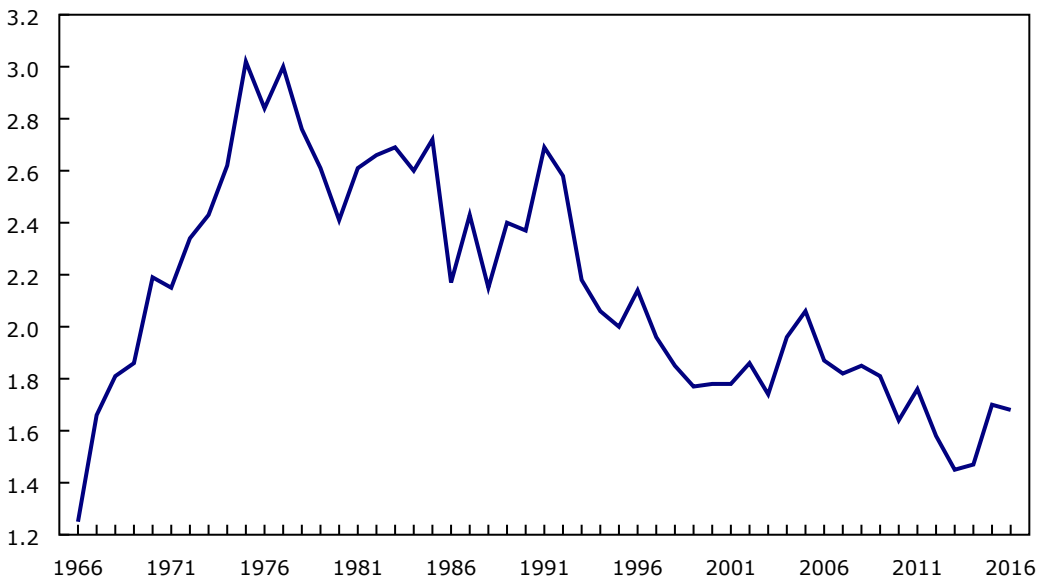
Even though there have been year-to-year fluctuations in Canada's homicide rate, it has generally been declining over the last few decades. The rate of homicides in 2016 was 44% lower than the peak rate recorded in 1975. In the shorter term, the rate in 2016 was similar to the previous 10-year average, at 1.69 homicides per 100,000 population.

Declines in the number and rate of homicides have also been observed in other countries, such as the United States, England and Wales, and Australia. In their most recent report, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reported a decrease in the global homicide rate from 1995 to 2012.

Detailed information on the Canadian context is provided in the *Juristat* article released today, "Homicide in Canada, 2016."

Chart 1
Homicides

rate per 100,000 population

Note(s): Excludes 329 victims killed in the Air India incident in 1985. Populations are based upon July 1 estimates from Statistics Canada, Demography Division.
Source(s): Data on homicide are available back to 1961 in CANSIM table 253-0001.

Small change in national rate, but notable variations across provinces

While there was little change in the national homicide numbers, there were variations among the provinces, with Alberta (-17), Quebec (-12) and British Columbia (-10) reporting notably fewer homicides in 2016. At the same time, Ontario (+32) and Saskatchewan (+10) reported the largest increases in the number of homicides.

As a result of noteworthy increases over the last two years, Saskatchewan's 54 homicides in 2016 marked its highest number since the inception of the Homicide Survey in 1961 and its highest rate in 39 years. The increase in 2016 was partially due to eight more gang-related homicides, defined as homicides that are a consequence of activities related to organized crime groups or gangs. Saskatchewan's homicide rate for 2016 (4.69 homicides per 100,000 population) was also highest of all provinces.

Although Manitoba and Alberta both recorded a decrease in their provincial homicide rates compared with 2015, they still reported the second-and third-highest rates among the provinces. Manitoba had a rate of 3.19 homicides per 100,000 population, while Alberta's rate was 2.73 per 100,000 population.

Ontario reported 206 homicides in 2016, an increase of 32 compared with 2015. With 1.47 homicides per 100,000 population that year, Ontario's homicide rate increase by 17% and was the fifth highest homicide rate among the provinces. The increase in Ontario in 2016 can be partly attributed to more gang-related homicides that year.

While increases were observed in other parts of the country, Quebec, with 67 homicides, reported the province's lowest homicide rate (0.80 per 100,000 population) since the Homicide Survey began collection in 1961. Among provinces reporting at least one homicide, Quebec also had the lowest rate. Newfoundland and Labrador (1.32) and Nova Scotia (1.37) reported the second-and third-lowest rates. Prince Edward Island reported no homicides in 2016.

Thunder Bay, Edmonton and Regina had the highest homicide rates among the census metropolitan areas

More than half (18 of 33) of Canada's census metropolitan areas (CMAs) recorded a lower homicide rate from the previous year.

The CMAs of Victoria and St. Catharines–Niagara reported the largest decreases in their homicide rates. There were also decreases in Kingston, Greater Sudbury and Trois-Rivières, as there were no homicides reported in those CMAs in 2016.

With eight homicides, resulting in a rate of 6.64 homicides per 100,000 population, Thunder Bay recorded the highest rate of all CMAs. Edmonton, with 47 homicides and a rate of 3.39 per 100,000 population, and Regina, with eight homicides and a rate of 3.23 per 100,000, had the next highest rates.

The increase in the number of homicides in Ontario was mainly due to increases in Toronto and Ottawa. Toronto, with 96 homicides, reported 14 more than the previous year and a rate increase of 14.7%. Ottawa reported 24 homicides in 2016, 17 more than in 2015. This amounted to 2.37 homicides per 100,000 population, triple the rate of 2015.

For both these CMAs, more gang-related homicides were a contributing factor to the 2016 increase.

Increase in gang-related homicides

Police reported 141 gang-related homicides in 2016, 45 more than in 2015. These represented almost one-quarter of the year's homicides for which the police knew whether or not the incident was the consequence of activities related to organized crime groups or street gangs.

This was the second consecutive year that the number and rate of gang-related homicides increased. In 2016, the gang-related homicide rate was the highest since peaking in 2008. From 2009 to 2014, the rate had been declining.

The overall increase in gang-related homicides was mainly due to increases in Ontario (+24) and British Columbia (+10). Increases in those provinces were mostly related to increases in Toronto (+21), Vancouver (+6) and Ottawa (+5). Together, these three CMAs accounted for 42% of all reported gang-related homicides in 2016.

The rise in Saskatchewan's total number of homicides was also partly the result of an increase in gang-related homicides (+8). Of the 53 homicides in Saskatchewan where it was known whether or not it was gang-related, 25% or 13 homicides were gang-related, compared with 11% in 2015. Of the 13 gang-related homicides in Saskatchewan in 2016, more than half occurred outside the CMAs of Saskatoon and Regina.

Firearm homicides increase for third year in a row

For the third consecutive year, there was an increase in both the number and rate of firearm-related homicides in Canada. In 2016, there were 223 firearm-related homicides reported, 44 more than the previous year. This represents a rate of 0.61 firearm-related homicides per 100,000 population, the highest rate since 2005.

In 2016, 54% of firearm-related homicides were related to gang activity. This compares with 43% in the previous year, and represents the highest proportion since 2009.

The largest increases in the number of gang-related homicides committed with a firearm were reported in Ontario (+22) and British Columbia (+12), with the majority of these occurring in Toronto and Vancouver. With a total of 30, Toronto saw 18 more gang-related homicides committed with a firearm than in 2015. Vancouver's count increased by 6, to 16.

Homicide rate for Aboriginal females down 31% from the previous year

There were 142 homicides in 2016 where the victim was identified by police as Aboriginal. This compares with 148 in 2015 and represents a 7% decrease in the rate.

The highest number of homicides involving an Aboriginal victim was reported in Saskatchewan (36), followed by Alberta (31) and Manitoba (27). Among these three provinces, the rate of homicide for Aboriginal people was highest in Saskatchewan (18.88 per 100,000 Aboriginal people), a 17% increase from the previous year.

The homicide rate for Aboriginal people was similar within and outside of CMAs. In 2016, the rate of homicides involving an Aboriginal victim was 8.69 per 100,000 Aboriginal people living within CMAs, compared with a rate of 7.87 for those living outside of CMAs.

With respect to Aboriginal female victims of homicide, police reported 29 victims in 2016, compared with 41 in 2015. As a result, the homicide rate for Aboriginal females declined 31%, from 4.79 per 100,000 Aboriginal females in 2015 to 3.30 in 2016. Despite the decrease, the homicide rate for Aboriginal females in 2016 was five times that of non-Aboriginal females (3.30 per 100,000 Aboriginal females, compared with 0.69 per 100,000 non-Aboriginal females).

Proportion of female homicide victims previously reported as "missing" is down from the previous year

In 2016, there were 50 victims on record as a missing person at the time their homicide became known to the police. This represents 8% of all homicides and is 14 fewer victims than the previous year. The overall proportion of victims previously reported as missing did not differ whether the victim was Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal (8% each).

In 2016, 10% of Aboriginal female victims were on record as a missing person at the time their homicide became known to police, compared with 17% the year before. For non-Aboriginal female victims, this was true for 13% in 2016, compared with 19% the year before. For males, 7% of Aboriginal victims were on record as a missing person in 2016, as were 6% of non-Aboriginal victims. These figures were similar to 2015.

Table 1
Homicides, by province and territory

	2015[r]		2016	
	number of victims	rate[1]	number of victims	rate[1]
Canada	**609**	**1.70**	**611**	**1.68**
Newfoundland and Labrador	3	0.57	7	1.32
Prince Edward Island	1	0.68	0	0.00
Nova Scotia	12	1.27	13	1.37
New Brunswick	11	1.46	11	1.45
Quebec	79	0.96	67	0.80
Ontario	174	1.26	206	1.47
Manitoba	47	3.63	42	3.19
Saskatchewan	44	3.89	54	4.69
Alberta	133	3.18	116	2.73
British Columbia	97	2.07	87	1.83
Yukon	1	2.67	4	10.67
Northwest Territories	5	11.30	3	6.75
Nunavut	2	5.47	1	2.70

[r]   revised
1.   Rates are calculated per 100,000 population using revised July 1 population estimates from Statistics Canada, Demography Division.
Source(s):   CANSIM table **253-0001**.

Table 2
Homicides, by census metropolitan area

	2015[r]		2016	
	number of victims	rate[1]	number of victims	rate[1]
Canada	**609**	**1.70**	**611**	**1.68**
Census metropolitan area, total[2]	389	1.55	417	1.63
Non-census metropolitan area, total[3]	220	2.06	194	1.80
Census metropolitan area[4]				
Thunder Bay	3	2.48	8	6.64
Edmonton	38	2.80	47	3.39
Regina	9	3.72	8	3.23
Abborsford–Mission	3	1.63	6	3.22
Winnipeg	22	2.72	25	3.14
Saskatoon	10	3.21	10	3.12
Halifax	8	1.91	12	2.82
Brantford	0	0.00	4	2.73
Kelowna	4	2.06	5	2.54
Ottawa[5]	7	0.70	24	2.37
Saint John	3	2.35	3	2.35
Calgary	40	2.78	33	2.24
St. John's	2	0.97	4	1.93
Peterborough	1	0.81	2	1.62
Vancouver	47	1.87	41	1.61
Hamilton	7	0.93	12	1.58
Toronto	82	1.35	96	1.55
London	8	1.57	8	1.55
Saguenay	1	0.60	2	1.20
Kitchener–Cambridge–Waterloo	6	1.11	6	1.09
Montréal	47	1.16	42	1.02
Sherbrooke	1	0.51	2	1.00
Oshawa	2	0.46	4	0.93
Barrie	3	1.40	2	0.92
Gatineau[6]	1	0.31	3	0.91
Windsor	6	1.81	3	0.90
Guelph	2	1.53	1	0.76
Moncton	2	1.28	1	0.64
Victoria	8	2.18	1	0.27
St. Catharines–Niagara	7	1.55	1	0.22
Québec	2	0.25	1	0.12
Trois-Rivières	2	1.28	0	0.00
Kingston	3	1.81	0	0.00
Greater Sudbury	2	1.21	0	0.00

[r] revised
1. Rates are calculated per 100,000 population using revised July 1 population estimates from Statistics Canada, Demography Division.
2. Includes six homicides committed in a correctional institution in 2016.
3. Includes five homicides committed in a correctional institution in 2015 and 2016.
4. A census metropolitan area (CMA) consists of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a major urban core. A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the urban core. To be included in the CMA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the central urban area, as measured by commuting flows derived from census data. A CMA typically includes more than one police service.
5. Ottawa refers to the Ontario part of the Ottawa–Gatineau CMA.
6. Gatineau refers to the Quebec part of the Ottawa–Gatineau CMA.
Source(s): CANSIM table **253-0004**.

Table 3
Homicides victims, by Aboriginal identity and sex, 2014 to 2016

	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal	
	number	rate[1]	number	rate[2]
2014				
Total homicide victims[3]	**120**	**7.30**	**396**	**1.17**
Male homicide victims	90	11.11	276	1.65
Female homicide victims	30	3.60	120	0.70
2015				
Total homicide victims[3]	**148**	**8.76**	**455**	**1.34**
Male homicide victims	107	12.83	321	1.90
Female homicide victims	41	4.79	134	0.78
2016				
Total homicide victims[3]	**142**	**8.19**	**460**	**1.34**
Male homicide victims	113	13.20	341	2.00
Female homicide victims	29	3.30	119	0.69

1. Rates are calculated per 100,000 Aboriginal population, by sex.
2. Rates are calculated per 100,000 non-Aboriginal population, by sex.
3. Total homicide victims excludes persons where the Aboriginal identity was reported as unknown by police (e.g., 1% of victims in 2016).
Note(s):   Complete data on Aboriginal identity are available for male victims starting in 2014 and for female victims starting in 1980.
Source(s):   CANSIM table **253-0009** and CANSIM table **253-0010**.

Sustainable Development Goals

On January 1, 2016, the world officially began implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — the United Nations' transformative plan of action that addresses urgent global challenges over the next 15 years. The plan is based on 17 specific sustainable development goals.

The release "Homicide in Canada, 2016" is an example of how Statistics Canada supports the reporting on the Global Goals for Sustainable Development. This release will be used in helping to measure the following goal:

Component of Statistics Canada catalogue no. 11-001-X

Note to readers

The data presented in this article are drawn from the 2016 Homicide Survey, which collects police-reported information on the characteristics of all homicide incidents, victims and accused persons in Canada. The Homicide Survey began collecting information on all murders in 1961 and was expanded in 1974 to include all incidents of manslaughter and infanticide. Although details on these incidents are not available prior to 1974, counts are available from the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey and have been included in the historical aggregate totals.

There are cases where homicides become known to police months or years after they occurred. These incidents are counted in the year in which they become known to police. New information pertaining to the detailed information on homicides that has already been reported to Statistics Canada is updated annually, as is information on accused persons.

Due to revisions to the Homicide Survey database, annual data reported by the Homicide Survey prior to 2015 may not match the annual homicide counts reported by the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR). Data from the Homicide Survey is appended to the UCR database each year for the reporting of annual police-reported crime statistics.

Information on persons accused of homicide is only available for solved incidents (that is, where at least one accused has been identified). For incidents involving more than one accused, only the relationship between the victim and the closest accused is recorded.

For the purposes of the Homicide Survey, Aboriginal identity includes those identified as First Nations persons (either status or non-status), Métis, Inuit, or an Aboriginal identity where the Aboriginal group is not known to police. Non-Aboriginal identity refers to instances where the police have confirmed that a victim or accused person is not identified as an Aboriginal person.

Available in CANSIM: tables 253-0001 to 253-0010.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3315.

The *Juristat* article "Homicide in Canada, 2016" (**85-002-X**) is now available.

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**) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; **STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca**).