

Re-contact with police among accused persons living in rural areas of the Canadian provinces, 2014 to 2023

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Among a cohort of individuals who had contact with police as an accused person in 2014, two-thirds (67%) of those living in rural areas of the provinces had re-contact with police during the nine-year follow-up period.

It is well documented that a small subset of people—commonly referred to as repeat or chronic offenders—is responsible for a disproportionately large share of crime. The *Juristat* article "[Patterns of re-offending among accused persons living in rural areas of the Canadian provinces, 2014 to 2023](#)," released today, explores re-contact with police among a cohort of individuals living in the Canadian provinces who were accused of committing a police-reported criminal offence in 2014.

Using data from the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, the article examines key dimensions related to re-contact with police, with a focus on accused persons living in rural areas. Previous research has shown that police-reported crime is higher in rural areas than in urban areas, and this *Juristat* article examines whether patterns in re-offending contribute to this gap.

Two-thirds of accused persons living in rural areas have re-contact with police during the nine-year follow-up period

There were 436,915 individuals living in the provinces who came into contact with police as an accused person for at least one violent, property or other *Criminal Code* (excluding traffic) offence that was reported by police in 2014. One-quarter (25%) of the cohort lived in a rural area at the time of their initial contact with police.

From 2014 to 2023, two-thirds (67%) of the rural cohort had at least one re-contact with police as an accused person, compared with 57% of the urban cohort. The difference between rural and urban areas was driven by the higher proportion of accused persons living in the rural North who had re-contact with police (77%). The proportion of accused persons living in the rural South who had re-contact (61%) was considerably lower.

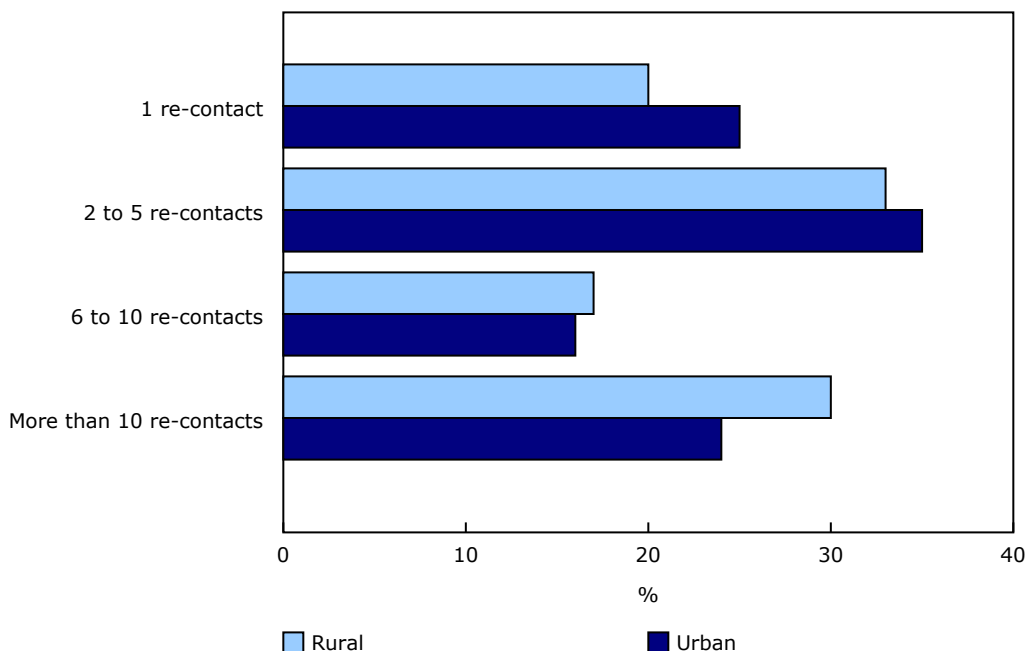
Among accused persons living in rural areas who have at least one re-contact with police, almost one in three persons have more than 10 re-contacts

Among accused persons living in rural areas who had at least one re-contact with police from 2014 to 2023, one in five persons (20%) had 1 re-contact, 33% had 2 to 5 re-contacts, 17% had 6 to 10 re-contacts and 30% may be classified as chronic offenders who had more than 10 re-contacts with police (Chart 1). Notably, nearly 4 in 10 accused persons living in the rural North (37%) had more than 10 re-contacts, compared with 25% of those living in the rural South. Around one-quarter (24%) of accused persons living in urban areas had more than 10 re-contacts with police.



Chart 1

Number of re-contacts with police as a person accused of crime, by rural and urban area, provinces, 2014 to 2023



Note(s): This chart reflects unique people, according to the number of times they came into contact with police as an accused person for a criminal offence from 2014 to 2023, excluding the initial contact. Based on individuals who had at least one contact with police as an accused person in relation to a violent, property or other *Criminal Code* (excluding traffic) offence in 2014. Rural and urban areas are based on the residential address of the accused at the time of the initial contact with police in 2014. An accused person lives in a rural area if they live outside of a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration (see Note to readers). When address information for the accused person was missing or unknown, the address of the responding police service was used. Excludes data from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's Canadian Police Centre for Missing and Exploited Children and the Canadian Forces Military Police Group. Percentages may not total 100% because of rounding.

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

Chronic offenders in rural areas have an average of 27 contacts with police

From 2014 to 2023, 21,435 accused persons living in rural areas had more than 10 re-contacts with police, accounting for 574,060 total contacts during this period. This translates to an average of 27 total contacts (including the initial contact) with police per accused person. In other words, one-fifth (20%) of the rural cohort was responsible for 68% of all of the rural cohort's contacts with police. In comparison, the average total contacts with police among accused persons living in urban areas with more than 10 re-contacts was 25.

Two in five accused persons living in rural areas have re-contact with police within one year of the initial contact

Time to re-contact—a metric that measures the elapsed time between an individual's initial contact with police and their first re-contact—can provide insights into the timing and frequency of re-offending. From 2014 to 2023, two in five accused persons living in rural areas (41%) had re-contact with police within one year of the initial contact and, of this proportion, 59% had more than five re-contacts within the year. Notably, two-thirds (67%) of accused persons living in the rural North who had re-contact within one year had more than five re-contacts during this period, compared with 53% of those living in the rural South.

In comparison, a smaller proportion (35%) of accused persons living in urban areas had re-contact within the first year, with half (51%) having five or more re-contacts.

Majority of accused persons who have re-contact have at least one re-contact for a violent crime

Among accused persons who had re-contact with police from 2014 to 2023, 74% of those living in rural areas and 67% of those living in urban areas had at least one re-contact for a violent offence. The proportion of accused persons who had re-contact for a violent offence was higher in the northern regions of both rural (78% of accused persons in the North compared with 72% in the South) and urban (72% in the North compared with 67% in the South) areas of the provinces.

Note to readers

Using data from the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, this analysis explores re-contact with police among a cohort of individuals who had contact with police as an accused person in 2014.

There are several ways to define rural and urban areas. In this analysis, an accused person is classified as either rural or urban based on whether they resided inside or outside a [census metropolitan area](#) or [census agglomeration](#) at the time of their initial contact with police, rather than by the police service that reported the incident. When address information for the accused person was missing or unknown, the address of the responding police service was used as a proxy. It is possible that individuals may have moved to a different province or to the territories at some point during the follow-up period.

*For the purpose of this analysis, a **contact** is defined as an official intervention with police as an accused person in relation to a criminal incident. To be considered in scope for this analysis and included in the cohort, the initial intervention must have been for a violent crime, property crime or other Criminal Code (excluding traffic) offence that was reported by police from January 1, 2014, to December 31, 2014. Charges may or may not have been laid or recommended by police for these incidents. For accused persons with multiple in-scope police contacts in 2014, the contact with the earliest date was selected. If there were multiple incidents reported on the same day, the initial contact was chosen based on the violation, Crime Severity Index and charge status. It is possible that an accused person may have had additional contact with police prior to the initial incident in 2014 and after the follow-up period ended. While re-contact data provide valuable insight into the number—or volume—of police-reported criminal offences committed by the same person within a specific reference period, it is important to note that police-reported data capture only incidents that come to the attention of police. As such, they likely underestimate the true prevalence of re-offending.*

*A **re-contact** refers to any subsequent contact with police (that is, an incident resulting in a new charge being laid or recommended, or an incident that was cleared by other means) for violent, property and other Criminal Code (excluding traffic) offences following the initial contact with police in 2014. Individuals were followed for exactly nine years after the initial reported incident (that is, if the initial incident was reported by police on January 1, 2014, any subsequent contacts with police until January 1, 2023, were in scope for the analysis).*

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3302](#).

The article "[Patterns of re-offending among accused persons living in rural areas of the Canadian provinces, 2014 to 2023](#)," is now available as part of the publication *Juristat* ([85-002-X](#)). The infographic "[Re-contact with police among accused persons living in rural areas of the Canadian provinces, 2014 to 2023](#)" ([11-627-M](#)) is also released today.

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; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).