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Youth Self-Reported Delinquency, Toronto, 2006

by *Josée Savoie*

Highlights

- Over one-third (37%) of Toronto students in grades 7 to 9 reported having engaged in one or more delinquent behaviours in their lifetime, through either acts of violence, acts against property or the sale of drugs.
- Violent behaviour was twice as prevalent among boys (30%) than among girls (15%). Boys were also slightly more likely than girls to report delinquent behaviour against property (30% versus 26%).
- Toronto students reported committing approximately 115,000 delinquent acts during the 12 months preceding the survey.
- Adults were often unaware of youth delinquent behaviour. Less than half (42%) of youth who had reported committing at least one type of delinquent act in their lifetime stated that their most recent act had been discovered by parents, teachers, police or other individuals. Almost two-thirds of those whose act had been discovered indicated they had been punished.
- Delinquent behaviour was significantly more prevalent among youth who reported having consumed alcohol and drugs, and who indicated having little parental supervision.
- Over 40% of youth indicated that they had been victimized at least once during the 12-month period preceding the survey. Delinquent youth were more likely to report incidents of victimization (56%), compared with 36% of youth who had not engaged in delinquent behaviour.



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Introduction

This *Juristat* contains the first highlights of the International Youth Survey (IYS). It is the Canadian version of the International Self-Reported Delinquency Study that was conducted in over 30 countries in 2006. This survey addresses several questions and issues that are closely linked to youth delinquency and will allow for international comparisons on such issues. In Canada, the survey was conducted with the Toronto District School Board and certain private schools. More than 3,200 youth in grades 7 to 9, representing 60,900 students, participated during the spring of 2006.

The report examines the prevalence of various delinquent behaviours and analyzes acts of violence and acts against property separately. The report also examines risk factors for youth delinquency, such as alcohol and drug use, the quality of parent-youth relationships, parental supervision and delinquent friends. The prevalence of youth victimization is also examined.

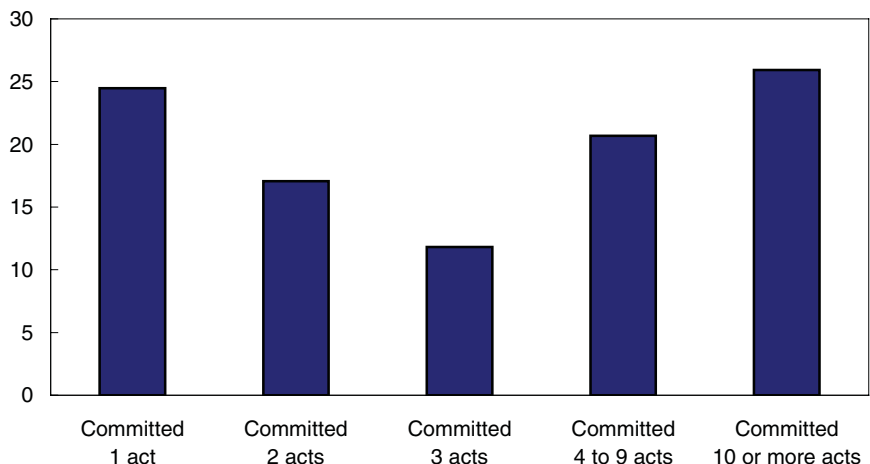
Prevalence of delinquent behaviour

Over one-third of young persons report having engaged in at least one type of delinquent behaviour in their lifetime

According to the International Youth Survey, over one-third (37%) of students in grades 7 to 9 in Toronto reported having engaged in one or more delinquent behaviours in their lifetime, through either acts of violence, acts against property or the sale of drugs (Table 1). The lifetime prevalence was higher among boys (41%) than among girls (32%).

Figure 1

Just over half of Toronto delinquent youth committed no more than three acts in the year preceding the survey



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, International Youth Survey, Toronto, 2006.

During the 12 months preceding the survey, 1-in-5 youth reported committing at least one delinquent act and it was found that delinquent behaviour was more prevalent among youth in higher grades. Eighth- and ninth-graders were most likely to exhibit

Text box 1

Definitions

Delinquent behaviour: Delinquency as defined in this report refers to all behaviours explicitly set out in the *Criminal Code* of Canada, whether engaged in by individuals aged 12 to 17 or by persons 18 years and older. As such, this definition does not cover statutory delinquency, such as truancy, nor does it include alcohol or drug use. This definition supports more direct comparison with other sources of data on youth delinquency, including those of other countries which took part in this survey.

Delinquency, as defined for the purposes of this analysis, comprises two major components among those targeted by the survey. The first component covers all forms of violent behaviour, delinquency involving property and selling drugs, or acting as a go-between for the sale of drugs. This first component refers essentially to a traditionally held view of delinquency. Unless otherwise noted, the term “delinquency” used throughout the report refers to this first component.

The second component covers all behaviours related to Internet criminal activity and behaviour deemed to be deviant, such as visiting pornographic Internet sites and sending pornography over the Internet. Internet delinquency is dealt with separately in this report (see Text box 2).

An analysis of internal consistency, a technique used to compare data to determine the extent of the relationship between a data element and the set of elements to which it belongs, shows that the various questions that are used to define traditional delinquency are strongly dependent. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for all 13 elements is 0.92, which indicates a very high level of internal consistency.

Violent delinquency: Violent delinquency is measured using five questions: Have you ever snatched a purse, bag or something else from a person? Have you ever carried a weapon, such as a stick, chain or knife (not a pocket knife)? Have you ever threatened somebody with a weapon or threatened to beat them up to get money or other things from them? Have you participated in a group fight on a school playground, a football stadium, in a street, or in any other public place? Have you ever intentionally beaten up someone, or hurt them with a stick or knife, so badly that they had to see a doctor? Overall, these questions show high internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.86.

Delinquency involving property: Delinquency involving property is measured using the following seven questions: Have you ever damaged something on purpose, such as a bus shelter, window, car, seat on a bus or train? Have you ever stolen something from a store? Have you ever broken into a building with the purpose of stealing something? Have you ever stolen a bicycle? Have you ever stolen a motorbike or car? Have you ever stolen something out of or from a car? Have you ever set fire on purpose to a mailbox, garbage can, building, or car (not on your own property)? The Cronbach alpha coefficient for this definition of delinquency against property was also 0.86.

Drug-related delinquency: There was one question on drug-related delinquency: Have you ever sold any (soft or hard) drugs or acted as a middleman or go-between? In this report, using alcohol or (hard or soft) drugs is not therefore considered a delinquent behaviour but rather a risk factor. The consumption of alcohol and drugs is not considered a crime under the Canadian *Criminal Code*.

Internet-related delinquency: Internet-related delinquency includes behaviours defined by the *Criminal Code* as well as other deviant behaviours: Have you ever purposely gone to adult or x-rated sites on the web? Have you ever used the Internet to send pornographic pictures? Have you ever sent e-mail messages intending to harass or frighten the other person? Have you ever done any “hacking” (breaking through security into a web site or a computer account)? Have you ever downloaded music or films from the Internet? Did you think it was illegal (pirated)? The Cronbach alpha coefficient for these behaviours as a whole is 0.85. It should be noted once again that this set of questions represents a component separate from traditional delinquency.

Delinquent youth and prevalence: A delinquent youth is a young person who reported having engaged in one or more types of behaviour included in the definitions of violent, property and drug-related delinquency as defined above.

The lifetime prevalence of delinquent behaviour represents the proportion of youth who reported having engaged in one or more delinquent types of behaviour at least once in their lifetime.

The prevalence over the past 12 months represents the proportion of youth who reported having engaged in one or more delinquent types of behaviour in the 12 months preceding the survey. Prevalence over this period offers the double advantage of avoiding mnemonic deficits related to self-reporting and of nullifying the cumulative effect of lifetime prevalence among the oldest respondents.

delinquent behaviour over the previous 12 months, 22% and 24% respectively. Among seventh graders, the proportion reporting delinquent behaviour during this period was 14% (Table 2). The prevalence of delinquency among boys was highest in grade 8 at 27%, and was highest among girls in grade 9 (20%).

The approximately 11,800 youth who reported engaging in delinquent behaviours during the year prior to the survey reported just over 115,000 separate delinquent acts. The vast majority (91%) of these delinquent acts were committed by just under half of these youth – indicating that a relatively small proportion of youth were responsible for a high number of repeated delinquent acts.

Survey results revealed that few youth engaged in more than one type of delinquent behaviour in their lifetime. More than half of delinquent youth indicated that they had engaged in only one type of delinquent behaviour and a further 25% engaged in two types of delinquent behaviours in their lifetime.

Prevalence of violent delinquent behaviour

Violent delinquent behaviour among Toronto students in grades 7, 8 and 9 was slightly less prevalent than was delinquent behaviour involving property. Just under one-quarter of youth reported taking part in at least one violent incident in their lifetime (Table 1), compared to just over one-quarter who reported participating in delinquent behaviour involving property. About 3% reported that they had been involved in the sale of drugs. The proportion of boys (30%) who self-reported violent delinquent behaviour was double the proportion of girls (15%).

Of all the violent delinquent behaviours measured by the survey, youth most commonly reported participating in group fights (16%) and carrying a weapon such as a stick, chain or knife (10%) during their lifetimes. Other types of violence covered by the survey (including beating up someone or hurting them so badly that they had to see a doctor, stealing a purse or

something else from a person, and beating up someone or threatening them with a weapon in order to get something from them) were rarely reported (2%).

About 13% of youth reported engaging in a violent delinquent behaviour in the past year

About 13% of Toronto youth reported participating in violent delinquent behaviour during the 12 months preceding the survey (Table 2). Youth in grades 8 and 9 were slightly more likely to have reported being involved in a violent delinquent act in the 12 months preceding the survey than were grade 7 students.

The proportion of boys who reported engaging in violent delinquent behaviours during this period was more than twice that of girls – 18% compared to 8%. These boys were responsible for about 72% of all reported violent acts in the year prior to the survey.

Carrying a weapon such as a stick, chain or knife accounted for 6 out of 10 violent delinquent acts during the 12 months preceding the survey

Toronto youth in grades 7 to 9 indicated that they had committed more than 62,000 acts of violence in the 12-month period preceding the survey (Table 3). Two types of acts – carrying a weapon (37,000 acts) and participating in group fights (18,000 acts), accounted for 88% of all violent acts during this period. Other types of violent behaviour surveyed were much less frequent.

However, despite the fact that more incidents of carrying a weapon than participating in group fights were reported, fewer youth reported that they had carried a weapon (3,800) than reported that they had participated in a group fight (5,700) – indicating that many youth who did carry a weapon did so repeatedly. In fact, carrying a weapon was the most commonly-reported repeat offence, with 75% who had carried a weapon reporting that they had done so more than once.

The intensity, or number of times individual youths engaged in a violent delinquent behaviour in the 12 months prior to the survey, varied depending on the type of behaviour. The proportion of youth who reported engaging in a violent delinquent behaviour one time was highest for serious beatings (58%), followed by snatching a bag or purse (42%), and participating in a group fight (39%). About one quarter of youth who reported that they had threatened someone or carried a weapon did so once.

According to the number of violent delinquent acts reported, the intensity of violent delinquent behaviour exhibited by girls was greater than that of boys in cases where something was taken from another person, threats were made or a person was severely beaten. This shows that while delinquency was restricted to fewer girls, those who did engage in such acts were very active.

Few youth reported having engaged in different types of violent acts

Youth did not appear to be inclined to explore different types of violence. Among those Toronto youth in grades 7, 8 and 9 who reported delinquent acts, two-thirds reported committing only one type of violent behaviour over their lifetime. Boys were more versatile than girls in their type of violent behaviour: 72% of girls engaged in one type of violent behaviour compared to 63% of boys.

Delinquent behaviour involving property

Nearly 3 out of 10 youth reported engaging in delinquent behaviour involving property during their lifetime

As indicated earlier, the lifetime prevalence of delinquent behaviour involving property was 28% among Toronto youth in grades 7 to 9 (Table 1). Boys were slightly more likely than girls (30% versus 26%) to report such acts. The prevalence of property-related delinquent behaviour varied, with the highest proportion (22%) of youth reporting that they had ever shoplifted, followed by vandalism (9%), and setting fires (5%). Two percent reported stealing bicycles and 2% stealing something out of a car.

As was the case for violent delinquent behaviours, 13% of Toronto youth in grades 7, 8 and 9 reported committing property-related delinquent acts during the 12-month period preceding the survey. Toronto youth in grades 8 and 9 were more likely to have engaged in delinquent acts against property than those in grade 7.

The prevalence rates for property-related delinquent behaviours for boys and girls were much closer than they were for violent behaviours. At 10%, the 12 month prevalence rate for property-related delinquent behaviours among girls was two-thirds the rate for boys (15%). For violent delinquent behaviours, the prevalence rate for girls was just half the rate among boys.

The relative participation of boys and girls varied depending on the type of offence. For example, males represented over two-thirds of all youth committing acts of vandalism, but just over half of those who reported shoplifting. Stealing something from a store was the property offence with the highest female representation (45%) (Table 2).

Shoplifting accounted for more than half of all property-related delinquent acts reported by youth

Students reported committing about 47,000 delinquent acts involving property during the 12 months prior to the survey. This is much lower than the number of violent acts reported over the same period (Table 3).

Of the property-related delinquent behaviours covered by the survey, incidents of shoplifting and vandalism during the previous 12 months were most frequently reported by youth (Table 3). Grade 7, 8 and 9 students in Toronto reported committing over 25,000 acts of shoplifting, almost 12,000 acts of vandalism and over 5,400 incidents of arson. Auto theft and breaking and entering were reported less frequently by Toronto youth.

About two-thirds of youth who reported that they had shoplifted, vandalized something, or stolen a vehicle stated that they had done so more than once. Lower proportions of youth reported repeating other property-related delinquent behaviours. The intensity of delinquent behaviour involving property in the previous 12 months was higher for boys than it was for girls for almost all types of behaviours surveyed.

The majority of youth tended to engage in only one type of property-related delinquent act

As was the case with delinquent behaviours involving violence, few youth had engaged in more than one type of act against property during their lifetime. A majority, 70%, reported committing only one type of delinquent behaviour involving property. Girls (72% of whom reported involvement in only one type of property-related delinquency) were less versatile than boys (63%).

Characteristics of youth committing delinquent acts

Half the youths engaged in their first delinquent behaviour before the age of 12

Half of the delinquent youths in grades 7 to 9 indicated having engaged in their first delinquent behaviour before the age of 12, though there was some variation for certain types of behaviours. For example, youth tended to be slightly older when they participated in either drug-related delinquent behaviours or motor vehicle theft for the first time and slightly younger when they first shoplifted. There is little difference between the sexes with respect to the age at which delinquent behaviour first occurs (Table 4).

Many studies have shown that the odds of re-offending are greater for people who commit crimes at a younger age. Research conducted by Carrington, Matarazzo, and deSouza (2005), using referrals before Canadian courts, has shown that offenders who began their court career with an incident occurring at age 12 had an average of 7.9 referred incidents, whereas those whose first referred incident occurred at age 21 had an average of only 1.2 incidents.

Youth acted out in the company of their peers

In the majority of instances, youth were with other people when they participated in delinquent acts. In fact, 92% of youth who participated in arson also reported that they were with other people when they set fire to property. This proportion was 81% for youth who reported vandalizing property, and 80% for those who reported breaking and entering. Among violent delinquent behaviours, 70% reported being in the company of others when they threatened somebody, and 60% were with others when they intentionally beat someone up.

Adults were often unaware of youth delinquent behaviour

In many cases, parents, teachers, police and other individuals were unaware of youth delinquent behaviour. According to the survey, 42% of Toronto youth in grade 7, 8 or 9 who had reported at least one of delinquent act in their lifetime stated that their most recent act had been discovered by another person.

Nearly two-thirds of all youth who reported that their last delinquent behaviour was discovered also stated they were punished either by their parents, a teacher, the police or another person.

Text box 2

Prevalence of Internet-related delinquent and deviant behaviour

More than one-third of Toronto youth in grades 7, 8 or 9 engaged in delinquent or deviant behaviour while using the Internet

During the 1990s, increased access to information and communication technologies was a priority for the different levels of government in Canada. Results from the 2000 General Social Survey show that 90% of individuals aged 15 to 17 had access to a computer and an Internet connection at home. This widespread access to technology has led to initiatives to ensure the security of the children and youth who use it.

The International Youth Survey examines Internet use by youth, specifically, the inappropriate use of the Internet. Youth in grades 7 to 9 were asked the following questions: Have you ever purposely gone to adult or x-rated sites on the Internet? Have you ever used the Internet to send pornographic pictures? Have you ever sent e-mail messages intending to frighten or harass the other person? Have you ever done any hacking? Have you ever downloaded music or films from the Internet illegally?

Survey results show that Internet-related delinquency is the most common form of delinquency among youth with just over one-third of youth indicating that they had engaged in Internet-related delinquent behaviour in their lifetime. The proportion of boys (42%) who admitted to Internet-related delinquency was greater than the proportion of girls (29%).

About 14% of youth reported that they had illegally downloaded music or movies during their lifetime and about 13% indicated that they had hacked into a computer by breaking through security into a website or a computer account. Sending harassing e-mails was reported by 7% of Toronto youth.

With respect to deviant Internet behaviour, 20% of all youth reported purposely accessing adult sites, while 3% had sent pornographic pictures over the Internet.

The proportion of youth who reported engaging in one of these types of behaviour at least once during the previous 12 months was 22%. The prevalence of Internet-related delinquent behaviour was the highest for boys in grade 9 (35%), while the highest 12-month prevalence rate for girls was in grade 7 (10%).

Text box 2 – continued

Prevalence of deviant and delinquent behaviours related to the Internet

	Lifetime prevalence			Prevalence over the last 12 months		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Purposely going to adult or X-rated sites on the web						
number	8,820	3,240	12,060	7,050	1,890	8,940
percent	28	11*	20	23	7*	15
Sending pornographic pictures over the Internet						
number	1,200	320 ^E	1,530	980 ^E	F	1,170
percent	4	1 ^{E*}	3	3 ^E	F	2
Sending e-mail messages intending to harass or frighten the other person						
number	1,610	2,630	4,240	930	1,300	2,240
percent	5	9*	7	3	5*	4
Any “hacking”, including breaking through security into websites or computer accounts						
number	5,080	2,800	7,880	3,530	1,390	4,920
percent	16	10*	13	11	5*	8
Downloading music or films from the Internet illegally						
number	5,140	3,220	8,360	4,860	2,980	7,840
percent	16	11*	14	16	10*	13
Total						
number	12,710	8,340	21,050	8,225	4,925	13,150
percent	42	29*	36	26	17*	22

^E use with caution (the coefficient of variation is between 16.6% and 33.3%)

^F too unreliable to be published (the coefficient of variation is higher than 33.3%)

* There is a significant difference compared to male youth (Pearson’s chi square, p<.000).

Notes: Figures include all youth that reported a delinquent behavior; the same youth can be accounted for more than one delinquent behavior. However, totals calculate each youth only once. Figures are rounded at about 10. In addition, figures may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, International Youth Survey, Toronto, 2006.

Risk factors and youth delinquency

The following analysis looks at certain characteristics of IYS respondents and their relationship to delinquency as reported in the last 12 months. Risk factors are characteristics that are associated with a greater likelihood of youth delinquency. However, the presence of a risk factor does not necessarily mean that an individual will engage in delinquent or deviant behaviour. Furthermore, links among the factors examined and delinquency are not necessarily causal in nature. The various factors are considered separately and do not take into account the relative impact of all factors.

The socio-demographic environment of delinquent youth differed slightly from that of non-delinquent youth

The socio-demographic characteristics of young Toronto IYS respondents were quite similar to those of the overall Toronto population (see Text box 4). For example, one-third of young respondents were foreign-born, more than two-thirds had parents who were foreign-born, one-third mentioned speaking a language at home other than English, and one in five was from a lone-parent family.

The prevalence of delinquent behaviour reported by foreign-born youth was lower than it was for their Canadian-born peers: 15% versus 23%. There was no significant difference in the prevalence of delinquency between Canadian-born children

of immigrant parents (22%) and Canadian-born children whose parents were not immigrants (24%). The prevalence of delinquency was lower among youth who spoke a language other than English at home than it was among youth who did speak English at home (15% versus 23%).

Among different family types, the prevalence of delinquent behaviour was lowest among respondents who were living with both parents (18%) at the time of the survey and significantly higher among those from lone-parent families (25%) and step families (35%) (Table 5).

The majority of Toronto youth in grades 7, 8 and 9 indicated that their parents were employed. Delinquent behaviours were found to be less prevalent for youth whose parents did not have a job; 17% when the mother was not employed and 14% when the father was not employed (compared to 21% when the mother was employed and 20% when the father was employed). While these results may suggest that parental supervision may be a factor at play, more complex analysis is required to isolate this influence.

The small minority of students who did not get along with their parents reported higher levels of delinquency

A strong majority (over 95%) of Toronto youth in grades 7 to 9 reported getting along well with their parents. Delinquent behaviours were significantly more prevalent for the youths

who reported not getting along well with their parents. Over one third of youth who reported that they did not get along with their mother or their father had engaged in delinquent behaviour in the last 12 months. Among those youth who reported that they did get along well with at least one of their parents, about 20% had engaged in delinquent behaviour in the past year (Table 5).

Delinquent behaviour was relatively rare among youth who reported that their parents always knew who they were with when they went out: 12% of youth in this situation had engaged in delinquent behaviour in the past 12 months. In comparison, over half (56%) of youth who reported that their parents rarely or never knew who they were with had engaged in delinquent behaviours (Table 5).

The prevalence of delinquent behaviour was highest among youth who had reported drug consumption

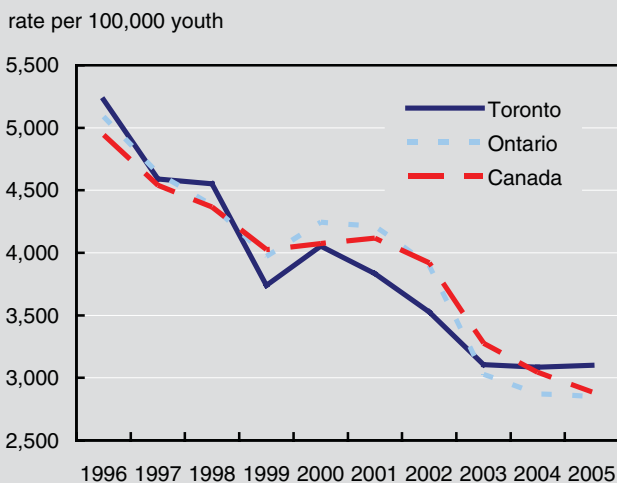
Drug and alcohol consumption appear to be among the most important risk factors in the prevalence of youth delinquency. The prevalence of delinquent behaviour during the previous twelve months among youth who reported having used drugs was 60%, compared to 16% of youths who had never consumed drugs. Among youth who reported consuming alcohol, 35% reported delinquent behaviour, compared to 9% for those who had never consumed alcohol.

**Text box 3
Police data and youth delinquency**

Young Canadians aged 12 to 17 who come into contact with police services may be formally charged or processed through other means. In 2005, Toronto police brought charges against more than 5,600 youth for offences under the *Criminal Code*. The number of youth processed through other means was much lower (2,020). The number facing

Text box Figure 1

Rate of youth charged, as reported by police, 1996 to 2005



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, 2006.

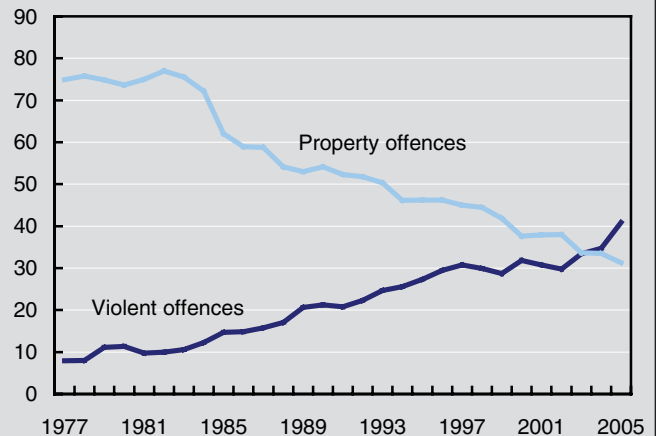
The rate of Toronto youth aged 12 to 17 charged declined steadily over the second half of the 1990s to reach a record low in 2004: 3,085 per 100,000 youth aged 12 to 17. Police services in Ontario and Canada overall recorded a similar trend (Text box figure 1). However, this general decrease in the rate of youth charged did not apply to all offence categories under the *Criminal Code*. Overall, rates of charges against violent youth were on the rise in Toronto (1,268 per 100,000 youth in 2005). Conversely, property-related charges against youth continued to drop (970 per 100,000 youth in 2005).

alternative measures was probably underestimated since not all police services keep complete records on the youth involved. Such incidents relate to less serious types of crimes given that the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* only supports the use of alternative measures (e.g. no other action, informal warning by police, referral to community programs, formal caution by police or the Crown, or referral to an extrajudicial sanction program) in the case of non-violent or minor offences.

Text box Figure 2

Youth crime trend changing, Toronto, 1977 to 2005

percentage of all *Criminal Code* charges



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, 2006.

The number of violent offences as a share of overall youth crime in Toronto has clearly been on the rise since 1977, and Toronto police have reported that the number of such crimes has surpassed that of property offences for the second year in row. Since 1977 (Text box figure 2), property offences had been consistently more numerous. At the national and provincial levels, police departments have been apprehending a growing number of youth aged 12 to 17 in relation to violent incidents over the past 30 years. Policies and practices, and the public's perception and tolerance of youth misconduct may influence the rate at which offences are reported to the police.

Delinquency rates higher with the presence of delinquent friends

The majority of youth who participated in the survey stated they had a group of friends. Delinquent behaviours were more prevalent in youth who mentioned spending most of their free time with friends, in comparison to those who indicated spending most of their free time alone or with their family (Table 6). Those who had older friends, delinquent friends, or groups of friends who committed illegal acts or tolerated them also had higher rates of delinquent behaviours.

Delinquent behaviours were also more prevalent among youth who mentioned spending a large amount of time with their group of friends in public places such as a park, the street, a mall or the neighbourhood: 27%. In comparison, the delinquency rate was 11% for youth who did not spend much time in those places. Such places may be less likely to be under the supervision of parents or other adults.

Gang membership is higher among youth who engage in delinquent behaviour

Self-reporting of gang membership does not necessarily signify that the activities of the gang are illegal. The prevalence of delinquent behaviours among youths in grades 7 to 9 who reported belonging to a gang was more than double (45%) the prevalence of those who reported that their circle of friends was not a gang (20%).

Prevalence of youth victimization

Studies have shown that children and youth who have been victimized are often likely to suffer from depression and have low self-esteem. These children may show aggressive or self destructive behaviour, and are at greater risk of engaging in delinquent or deviant behaviour, whatever their relationship to the perpetrator of the violence (Health Canada, 2004; Hotton, 2003; Sprott and Cesaroni, 2002).

Two out of 5 youth reported being victimized in the 12-month period preceding the survey

The IYS includes questions on youth’s experience of victimization in the previous 12 months. Respondents were asked to share their experience of incidents of bullying at school, assaults requiring medical assistance, threats of extortion, and thefts of which they have been victims. Over 40% of grade 7 to 9 Toronto students reported having been victimized at least once in the 12 months preceding the survey (Table 7).

About 28% stated that they had been victims of a theft and 21% were victims of bullying at school.¹ Over 5% of young respondents reported having received threats of extortion and, more rarely, having been hit so violently that medical attention was required (3%). Over two-thirds (67%) of victimized youth stated they had been subjected to only one type of victimization while less than one-third (29%) said they had experienced only two types.

Boys were slightly more likely than girls to have been victimized

Forty-three percent of boys stated they had been victimized, while a slightly lower proportion of girls (38%) indicated the same. This was the case for all victimization types except bullying incidents, where the prevalence for girls was higher (Table 7).

Repeated victimization most common among bullying victims

Similar to how delinquency intensity is defined, in this report, victimization intensity is measured according to the number of times a young person was a victim of a specific type of incident. Victimization intensity was significantly higher for incidents of bullying. Two-thirds of all youth who were bullied were victims of such incidents more than once. The intensity of bullying varied greatly with 16% of young persons having been bullied on more than 12 occasions over the 12-month period preceding the survey.

In cases where youth had been hit so violently that they required medical attention, 60% of youth reported that one such incident had occurred. In cases of theft or attempted theft with threats, respondents said they been victimized on one occasion in about half the cases (52% and 49% respectively).

Delinquent youth were more likely to be victimized

Youth who reported that they had engaged in traditional types of delinquency at least once in the previous 12 months were more likely to report having been victimized over the same period: 56% of delinquent youth had been victimized compared to 36% of non-delinquent youth. Similar results were found for the different types of delinquency and for both boys and girls.

Reporting to police was low among victimized youth

Despite the number of youth who reported that they had been victimized, repeatedly in some instances, very few report their incidents to the police (14%). Data from the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) also showed that reporting to police was low among victims between the ages of 15 and 19. Furthermore, in the majority (53%) of incidents that came to the attention of the police, it was someone other than the victim who had reported the incident, according to the GSS. The main reasons given by victims for not reporting an incident were that it was not important enough (36%) or that it was dealt with in another way (20%).

IYS data indicate that filing a police report was most common among youth who required medical attention after being hit (25%). Filing a police report was least frequent in the case of bullying events, occurring at a rate of 6%. Rates at which attempted thefts with threats and actual thefts were reported were relatively similar (18% and 14% respectively). These

1. This proportion is quite similar to the national-level results of the 2002 Health Behaviour in School-Age Children Study conducted on a sample of 11-, 13-, and 15-year-olds.

Text box 4

Growing up in Toronto, growing up in a diverse environment

Numerous studies have recognized that the urban environment, socio-economic conditions and demographic characteristics of our communities have an impact on the dynamics of risk and protection factors in relation to youth delinquency and social exclusion. The following paragraphs attempt to place the IYS survey results in context by briefly setting out a demographic and socio-economic portrait of the city of Toronto.^{1,2,3}

Toronto is Canada's largest city. According to 2001 Census data, Toronto's population was 2,480,000 which represented 8% of Canada's population. Toronto's population density was 3,939 inhabitants per square kilometre. The median age of Toronto residents was 37 years, similar to the national median age. Children and youth aged 17 and under accounted for 20% of the overall figure.

Toronto attracts more immigrants than any other Canadian city. Immigrants made up 49% of the city's population, 21% of whom came to Canada between 1991 and 2001. Similarly, visible minorities represented 43% of the city's population.

Toronto is no exception to the national trend towards income polarization that has taken place in large Canadian cities over the past 20 years. As a result, there has been a concentration of employment income along with a marginal rise in family income in the higher income neighbourhoods, while employment income has dropped and unemployment rates have risen in the lower income areas. The 2001 median income of Toronto families (\$54,399) was below that of its metropolitan region (\$63,700) and the country as a whole (\$55,016).

Research conducted by the United Way of Greater Toronto and the Canadian Council on Social Development (2004) shows a high concentration of lone-parent families in the lower income neighbourhoods. These organizations have found that 1-in-3 lone-parent families lives in these neighbourhoods. In 2001, Toronto's share of lone-parent families (19.7%) outranked those of the overall metropolitan area (16.4%) and the country as a whole (15.6%). The median income of lone-parent households (\$32,920) was half that of two-parent families (\$61,092). In 2001, the percentage of children aged 0 to 14 years living in the city core (17.5%) was comparatively lower than the figure for the overall census metropolitan area (19.6%). However, within the urban core, children were overrepresented (21.9%) in the lower income neighbourhoods.

In 2001, the share of occupants who owned their own homes was far less in the City of Toronto (about 51%) than it was in the overall metropolitan area (63%). According to the *Poverty by Postal Code* report, home affordability has dropped among renters. Indeed, 43.2% of all tenants and over 47% of those living in lower income neighbourhoods used over 30% of their disposable income for housing.

1. When this analysis was performed, the 2006 Census data were not available at this level of aggregation. Data from the 2001 Census were therefore used.
2. In this report, the city of Toronto is taken to mean the census subdivision.
3. A detailed profile of the socio-economic conditions in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area is available from Heisz, 2005.

results are consistent with those of the GSS and show that incident severity has an impact on the likelihood of reporting an incident of victimization.

Summary

Initial highlights of the International Youth Survey, Toronto, show that over their lifetimes, 37% of youth in grades 7 to 9 reported engaging in delinquent behaviour, and that more youth were involved in property-related delinquent behaviour than were involved in violent behaviour. Overall, delinquent behaviour was more prevalent in higher grade levels and higher among boys than girls. Half of the delinquent youths in grades 7 to 9 indicated having engaged in their first delinquent behaviour before the age of 12.

These preliminary results show that delinquent behaviour was significantly more prevalent among students in grades 7, 8 and 9 who reported consuming alcohol and drugs, who indicated having little parental supervision and who were living in a step-, or blended family at the time of the survey. Delinquent behaviour also increased significantly with the presence of delinquent friends. Further analysis would be required in order to identify whether these risk factors have an independent effect on the probability of delinquent behaviour.

Youth often committed delinquent acts in the company of others, most often their peers. Delinquent behaviour was often not discovered by adults. However, when delinquent behaviour was discovered, two-thirds of the time it was punished by parents, teachers or police officers.

This report presents initial highlights of the International Youth Survey. Future analysis of the impact of various risk factors and correlates of delinquency will enable us to better understand the underlying dynamics of the prevalence of delinquency. Such analysis will also need to take into account youth's school and community environments.

Methodology

Measurement of youth delinquency

Two major data sources are traditionally used in Canada to measure the extent of criminal activity: surveys of police services such as the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey, and victimization surveys such as the General Social Survey (GSS). However, the two aforementioned surveys gather little information on risk and protection factors for youth delinquency. The 2006 International Youth Survey (IYS) carried out by Statistics Canada is meant to fill this gap. The main objective of the IYS, therefore, is to measure the prevalence and incidence of various types of delinquent behaviours among youth in industrialized countries. Other objectives of the IYS are to review the variability and correlates of self-reported youth delinquency and to provide detailed data in support of national policy development.

Sampling and response rate

The target population for the survey consisted of students in grades 7, 8, and 9 attending schools in the Toronto census subdivision. Schools in the Toronto Public School Board and private schools were eligible for selection. Students in

specialized schools were excluded from the target population.² The population actually surveyed differs very slightly, in that students in very small classes (10 or less) were excluded from selection.

The sampling frame was a stratified cluster sampling frame. Schools were first stratified by grade and geographic area, and a sample of schools was selected in each stratum systematically with probability proportional to size, where the size measure was identified as the number of students in the grade. This strategy was meant to provide for adequate representation of the various Toronto neighbourhoods and therefore of the city's demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

Statistics Canada interviewers visited selected schools to obtain consent from the principal. If consent was granted, the interviewer listed the classes and randomly selected one class in the desired grade. Students in the selected class were given consent forms for their parents to sign, and only students for whom parental consent was obtained were permitted to participate.

Data collection took place in April and May 2006. A paper-and-pencil questionnaire was administered to all students in the same class in a classroom session, much like a test environment. The classroom sessions were conducted by Statistics Canada interviewers.

There were 210 classes selected, 5 of which were determined to be out-of-scope, meaning that the school did not contain the grade for which it was selected. The breakdown of the 205 in-scope classes is as follows: 70 grade 7 classes, 69 grade 8 classes, and 66 grade 9 classes.

Of the 205 in-scope classes, 177 participated in the survey, resulting in a class response rate of 86% (89% for grade 7, 84% for grade 8, and 86% for grade 9). Within these classes, a total of 3,290 questionnaires were completed from a total of 4,553 listed students, yielding a student response rate of 72% (72% for grade 7, 74% for grade 8, and 70% for grade 9).

The overall response rate is obtained by multiplying the class response rate with the student response rate. For the IYS, the overall response rate is 62% (64% for grade 7, 62% for grade 8, and 60% for grade 9).

Students in grades 7 to 9 each accounted for 33% of the final respondent sample. Boys and girls took part in the survey in roughly equal proportions. Respondents' ages varied from 12 to 17 years. Overall, 21% were 12-year-olds, 34% were 13-year-olds, while 32% were 14-year-olds. Those aged 15 and older made up the remaining 13%.

2. During the planning phase, the Toronto Catholic District School Board declined to participate and therefore is not part of this study.

Data limitations

The IYS offers one way to estimate the full extent of criminal activity and victimization of a sample of youth, whether or not it was brought to the attention of the police because it collects information on all delinquent behaviours and victimizations reported by these youth.

Unreported youth delinquency can be considerable. The rate of crimes committed by youth and counted by police may vary according to a large number of factors, including the public's willingness to report crime, actual recording of incidents by police as well as amendments to laws, policies and enforcement practices. For example, incidents not reported to police by victims are not included in official crime statistics. Similarly, cases reported to police but deemed to be unfounded after investigation are also excluded from official crime data. For this reason, self-reporting surveys generally produce considerably higher rates of delinquency prevalence than do crime statistics from police services.

Despite the advantages of self-reported delinquency surveys, they are not without their limitations. First of all, it is presumed that respondents will accurately describe incidents. Secondly, youth at high risk for delinquency may be underrepresented in the survey frame (high schools), as some young persons may be away from school on the day of the survey while others may have dropped out of school. In fact, school absenteeism data suggest that the level of absenteeism was higher among delinquent youth on the day of the survey.

Results are based on a sample and are therefore subject to sampling error. They might have been slightly different if the entire population had participated in the survey. The difference between a sample-based estimate and figures on the entire population is referred to as the "sampling error of the estimate." In this report, the coefficient of variation (CV) is used to measure sampling error. Estimates with a high CV (above 33.3%) have not been published because they are considered unreliable. In such cases, the letter "F" appears in figures and data tables. Any estimate with a CV that ranges from 16.6% to 33.3% must be used with caution and is identified by the letter "E." With respect to the IYS sampling design and sample size, an estimate of a given proportion of the total population expressed as a percentage is expected to vary from the actual proportion by no more than 0.8 percentage points 19 times out of 20.

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Table 1

Lifetime prevalence of delinquent behaviours

	Delinquent youth		
	Male	Female	Total
Violent behaviours			
Snatching a bag, purse or something else from a person			
number	990 ^E	430 ^E	1,410
percent	3 ^E	2 ^{E*}	2
Carrying a weapon, such as a stick, chain, or knife			
number	4,580	1,510	6,090
percent	15	5*	10
Threatening somebody to get money or something else from them			
number	770 ^E	640 ^E	1,410
percent	2 ^E	2 ^{E**}	2
Participating in a group fight in a public place			
number	6,890	3,010	9,910
percent	22	10*	16
Intentionally beating up or hurting someone so badly they needed to see a doctor			
number	850	330 ^E	1,180
percent	3	1 ^{E*}	2
Total lifetime prevalence of violent behaviours			
number	9,310	4,160	13,470
percent	30	15*	23
Property-related behaviours			
Damaging something intentionally			
number	3,790	1,840	5,620
percent	12	6*	9
Stealing something from a store			
number	6,740	6,640	13,380
percent	21	23*	22
Breaking into a building with the purpose of stealing something			
number	320	F	380 ^E
percent	1	F	1 ^E
Stealing a bicycle			
number	1,170	210 ^E	1,390
percent	4	1 ^{E*}	2
Stealing a motorcycle or car			
number	F	F	F
percent	F	F	F
Stealing something out of (or from) a car			
number	770	390 ^E	1,160
percent	2	1 ^{E**}	2
Intentionally setting fire to property (other than your own)			
number	2,070	830 ^E	2,900
percent	7	3 ^{E*}	5
Total lifetime prevalence of property-related behaviours			
number	9,170	7,570	16,740
percent	30	26*	28
Drug-related behaviours			
Selling drugs, or acting as a middleman or go-between			
number	1,050 ^E	470 ^E	1,520
percent	3 ^E	2 ^{E*}	3
Total lifetime prevalence of delinquent behaviours			
number	12,550	9,050	21,600
percent	41	32*	37

^E use with caution (the coefficient of variation is between 16.6% and 33.3%)

^F too unreliable to be published (the coefficient of variation is higher than 33.3%)

* There is a significant difference compared to male youth (Pearson's chi square, p<.000).

** There is a significant difference compared to male youth (Pearson's chi square, p<.025).

Notes: Figures include all youth that reported a delinquent behavior; the same youth can be accounted for more than one delinquent behavior. However, totals calculate each youth only once. Figures are rounded at about 10. In addition, figures may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, International Youth Survey, Toronto, 2006.

Table 2

Last 12 months prevalence of delinquent behaviours by sex and grade

	Delinquent youth						
	Sex			Grade			
	Male	Female	Total	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Total
Violent behaviours							
Snatching a bag, purse or something else from a person							
number	580 ^E	170 ^E	750 ^E	210 ^E	280 ^E	250 ^E	750 ^E
percent	2 ^E	1 ^{E*}	1 ^E	1 ^E	1 ^E	1 ^E	1 ^E
Carrying a weapon, such as a stick, chain, or knife							
number	2,800	990	3,790	850 ^E	1,370	1,570	3,780
percent	9	3 [*]	6	4 ^E	7	8	6
Threatening somebody to get money or something else from them							
number	360 ^E	390 ^E	740 ^E	170 ^E	300 ^E	270 ^E	740 ^E
percent	1 ^E	1 ^{E**}	1 ^E	1 ^E	1 ^E	1 ^E	1 ^E
Participating in a group fight in a public place							
number	4,110	1,570	5,690	1,760	2,040	1,880	5,690
percent	13	5 [*]	9	9	10	9	9
Intentionally beating up or hurting someone so badly they needed to see a doctor							
number	420 ^E	F	560 ^E	170 ^E	190 ^E	F	560 ^E
percent	1 ^E	F	1 ^E	1 ^E	1 ^E	F	1 ^E
Total year prevalence of violent behaviours							
number	5,590	2,380	7,980	2,220	2,970	2,780	7,970
percent	18	8[*]	13	11^{***}	15^{****}	14	13
Property-related behaviours							
Damaging something intentionally							
number	2,130	900	3,030	770 ^E	1,190	1,080 ^E	3,030
percent	7	3	5	4 ^E	6	5 ^E	5
Stealing something from a store							
number	2,660	2,180	4,830	850 ^E	1,680	2,310	4,830
percent	8	8	8	4 ^E	8	11	8
Breaking into a building with the purpose of stealing something							
number	220 ^E	F	230	F	F	F	230 ^E
percent	1 ^E	F	0	F	F	F	0 ^E
Stealing a bicycle							
number	680 ^E	F	710 ^E	F	F	350 ^E	710 ^E
percent	2 ^E	F	1 ^E	F	F	2 ^E	1 ^E
Stealing a motorcycle or car							
number	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
percent	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
Stealing something out of (or from) a car							
number	340 ^E	190 ^E	530 ^E	F	260 ^E	F	530 ^E
percent	1 ^E	1 ^E	1 ^E	F	1 ^E	F	1 ^E
Intentionally setting fire to property (other than your own)							
number	1,300	490 ^E	1,790	340 ^E	760 ^E	690 ^E	1,790
percent	4	2 ^E	3	2 ^E	4 ^E	3 ^E	3
Total year prevalence of property-related behaviours							
number	4,520	2,950	7,470	1,500	2,870	3,100	7,470
percent	15	10[*]	13	8^{***}	15^{****}	15	13

Table 2

Last 12 months prevalence of delinquent behaviours by sex and grade – continued

	Delinquent youth						
	Sex			Grade			
	Male	Female	Total	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Total
Drug-related behaviours							
Selling drugs, or acting as a middleman or go-between							
number	880 ^E	340 ^E	1,220 ^E	F	260 ^E	910 ^E	1,220 ^E
percent	3 ^E	1 ^E	2 ^E	F	1 ^E	4 ^E	2 ^E
Total year prevalence of delinquent behaviours							
number	7,420	4,400	11,820	2,790	4,300	4,730	11,820
percent	24	16*	20	14***	22***	24	20

0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

^E use with caution (the coefficient of variation is between 16.6% and 33.3%)

F too unreliable to be published (the coefficient of variation is higher than 33.3%)

* There is a significant difference compared to male youth (Pearson's chi square, p<.000).

** There is a significant difference compared to male youth (Pearson's chi square, p<.025).

*** There is a significant difference compared to youth in other grades (Pearson's chi square, p<.000).

**** There is a significant difference compared to youth in other grades (Pearson's chi square, p<.025).

Notes: Figures include all youth that reported a delinquent behavior; the same youth can be accounted for more than one delinquent behavior. However, totals calculate each youth only once. Figures are rounded at about 10. In addition, figures may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, International Youth Survey, Toronto, 2006.

Table 3

Delinquent behaviours during the last 12 months, by sex

	Male	Female	Total
number of self-reported incidents			
Violent behaviours			
Snatching a bag, purse or something else from a person	1,930	1,510	3,440
Carrying a weapon, such as a stick, chain, or knife	27,720	9,450	37,170
Threatening somebody to get money or something else from them	1,050	1,690	2,740
Participating in a group fight in a public place	13,560	4,140	17,700
Intentionally beating up or hurting someone so badly they needed to see a doctor	590	510	1,100
Total of violent delinquent behaviours	44,850	17,300	62,150
Property-related behaviours			
Damaging something intentionally	9,270	2,700	11,970
Stealing something from a store	15,580	9,530	25,100
Breaking into a building with the purpose of stealing something	520	16 ^E	540
Stealing a bicycle	2,440	27	2,460
Stealing a motorcycle or car	0 ^E	62 ^E	62 ^E
Stealing something out of (or from) a car	740	500	1,240
Intentionally setting fire to property (other than your own)	4,070	1,390	5,460
Total of property-related behaviours	32,610	14,230	46,840
Drug-related behaviours			
Selling drugs, or acting as a middleman or go-between	5,020	1,170	6,190
Total of delinquent behaviours	82,480	32,700	115,180

0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

^E use with caution (the coefficient of variation is between 16.6% and 33.3%)

Note: Figures are rounded at about 10.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, International Youth Survey, Toronto, 2006.

Table 4

Age of onset of delinquent behaviours

	Age of onset							Average age	Median age	Mode age
	Under 10 years	10 years	11 years	12 years	13 years	14 years	15 years and over			
Violent behaviour										
Snatching a bag, purse or something else from a person	17	4	5	20	38	16	0	11.9	13.0	13
Carrying a weapon, such as a stick, chain or knife	11	12	12	24	25	14	2	11.8	12.0	13
Threatening somebody to get money or something else from them	10	11	17	18	41	4	0	11.7	12.0	13
Participating in a group fight in a public place	13	13	17	22	22	12	2	11.6	12.0	12
Intentionally beating up or hurting someone so badly they needed to see a doctor	20	16	11	20	21	12	0	11.2	12.0	13
Property-related behaviours										
Damaging something intentionally	19	13	14	22	25	7	1	11.2	12.0	13
Stealing something from a store	33	15	10	20	16	5	1	10.3	11.0	12
Breaking into a building with the purpose of stealing something	22	6	8	16	38	11	0	11.3	12.0	13
Stealing a bicycle	13	14	22	22	12	16	1	11.4	12.0	12
Stealing a motorcycle or car	0	0	0	49	17	35	0	12.9	13.0	12
Stealing something out of (or from) a car	16	12	15	19	31	5	2	11.4	12.0	13
Intentionally setting fire to property (other than your own)	9	11	18	19	26	18	0	11.9	12.0	13
Drug-related behaviours										
Selling drugs, or acting as a middleman or go-between	2	0	4	11	28	41	15	13.4	14.0	14

0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

Note: Figures may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, International Youth Survey, Toronto, 2006.

Table 5

Prevalence of delinquency by socio-demographic characteristics, last 12 months

Percentage of youth reporting delinquency

Characteristics in percentage

Grade level	
7	14*
8	22*
9	24*
Sex	
Male	24*
Female	16*
Canadian born	
Yes	23*
No	15*
Immigrant parents	
Mother only	20 ^{E*}
Father only	33*
Both parents	18*
Neither parent	24*
Language spoken at home	
English	23*
Other	15*
Family composition	
Two parent family	18*
Single parent family	25*
Step/blended family	35 ^{E*}
Other	24 ^{E*}
Father's employment status	
Employed	20*
Not employed	14 ^{E*}
Mother's employment status	
Employed	21*
Not employed	17*
Quality of the parent-youth relationship	
Get along well with their mother	19*
Did not get along with their mother	36*
Get along well with their father	18*
Did not get along with their father	35*
Quality of parental supervision	
Parents are always aware of whom they were with	12*
Parents are sometimes aware of whom they were with	35*
Parents never aware of whom they were with	56*
Alcohol consumption	
Yes	35*
No	9*
Drug consumption	
Yes	60*
No	16*
Total year prevalence of delinquent behaviours	20

^E use with caution (the coefficient of variation is between 16.6% and 33.3%)

* There is a significant difference (Pearson's chi square, p<.000).

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, International Youth Survey, Toronto, 2006.

Table 6

Prevalence of delinquency and delinquent friends and peers, last 12 months

Percentage of youth reporting delinquency

Characteristic	
With whom do you spend most of your free time?	
Alone	16*
Family	19*
One to three friends	32*
Four or more friends	26*
Do you have delinquent friends?	
Yes	39*
No	8*
About your group	
Which best describes the ages of the people in your group?	
Younger (under 12)	12*
Same age (12 to 15)	20*
Older (16 and over)	42*
Does your group spend much time together in public?	
Yes	27*
No	11*
Are illegal activities accepted by your group?	
Yes	53*
No	15*
Does your group engage in illegal activities together?	
Yes	57*
No	16*
Do you consider your group of friends to be a gang?	
Yes	45*
No	20*
Total year prevalence of delinquent behaviours	20

^E use with caution (the coefficient of variation is between 16.6% and 33.3%)

* There is a significant difference (Pearson's chi square, p<.000).

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, International Youth Survey, Toronto, 2006.

Table 7

Prevalence of victimization over the last 12 months by sex

	Victimized youth		
	Male	Female	Total
Type of victimization			
Someone wanted you to give them money or something else and threatened you if you did not do it			
number	2,230	740	2,970
percent	7	3*	5
Someone hit you violently or hurt you so much that you needed to see a doctor			
number	1,240	640 ^E	1,880
percent	4	2 ^{E*}	3
Something was stolen from you			
number	9,370	7,400	16,770
percent	30	26*	28
You were bullied at school			
number	6,320	6,200	12,520
percent	20	22**	21
Total			
number	13,100	10,690	23,790
percent	43	38*	40

^E use with caution (the coefficient of variation is between 16.6% and 33.3%)

* There is a significant difference compared to male youth (Pearson's chi square, $p < .000$).

** There is a significant difference compared to male youth (Pearson's chi square, $p < .001$).

Notes: Figures include all youth that reported a victimization incident; the same youth can be accounted for more than one type of victimization. However, totals calculate each youth only once. Figures are rounded at about 10. In addition, figures may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, International Youth Survey, Toronto, 2006.

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics

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