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YOUTH VIOLENT CRIME

By Josée Savoie

HIGHLIGHTS

- In 1998, 106,984 youths aged 12 to 17 were charged with a *Criminal Code* offence. One in five youths were charged with a violent crime.
- Despite recent declines, the rate of youths charged with violent crimes is 77% higher than it was a decade ago. For adults, this increase was only 6%.
- Over the past decade, the rate of female youths charged has increased twice as fast (+127%) as for male youths (+65%). This same pattern is also true for adults: the violent crime rate for women has increased 47% compared to a 2% increase for men.
- The violent crime rate of female youths (47 charges per 10,000 female youths) was still only one-third the rate of male youths (131 charges per 10,000 male youths) in 1998. For adults this gap was even wider. The violent crime rate for women was one-sixth that of men.
- For violent crime, two-thirds of female youths were charged with common assault compared to just under half (46%) of male youths. Male youths tended to be involved in more serious violent crimes such as robbery and major assault than female youths.
- There are significant differences in the violent crime rates for youths across the country. In 1998, Prince Edward Island (50 youths charged per 10,000 youths) and Quebec (54) had the lowest rates, while the Northwest Territories (191), Manitoba (153), Yukon (143) and Saskatchewan (134) had the highest rates. However, some of these differences could be explained by different charging practices for youths in place among the jurisdictions.
- Female youths committing violent crime tended to be younger than male youths. For males, the violent crime rate increased gradually with age, peaking at 17. For females, the rate peaked at ages 14 and 15.
- Youths tend to victimize young people of about the same age who are known to them. Six in ten violent crime victims were acquaintances of the accused youth. Over half (52%) of the victims were youths themselves. Only 2% of victims of youth violent crime were aged 55 years and over in 1998.



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Introduction

In recent years, the media have reported several cases of extreme violence involving young offenders between the ages of 12 and 17 years. These highly publicized cases may have contributed to the increased concern of Canadians about violent crime committed by young people and, recently, by female youths.

In the context of these highly publicized cases, the decrease in the level of tolerance of violence and the desire to respond to the concerns of Canadians, some amendments were made in 1995 to the *Young Offenders Act* (YOA) of 1984. Canadian legislators are presently studying the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*. The bill is intended to replace the 1984 YOA. It includes specific provisions to respond to violent crimes by youth.

1995 amendments to the *Young Offenders Act*

The 1995 amendments were intended to address the problem of increased violent crime and the public's perception that sentences were too lenient. The amendments represented a major change in direction: the primary goal became protection of society.

The provisions regarding transfer to adult court were also reviewed. Previously, all youths 14 years and older charged with a serious offence (criminal) could be transferred to an adult court. Now, in addition to that provision, all youths aged 16 and 17 years charged with very serious violent crimes, such as homicide and attempted murder, are automatically transferred to an adult court, unless the person charged can convince the judge during a hearing that the proceedings should take place before a youth court. These amendments also increased the maximum sentences in youth court for first degree murder to 10 years and for second degree murder to seven years.

Youth Criminal Justice Bill

The purpose of this bill is to establish guiding principles to direct the work of judges and other parties in the youth justice system. It clearly states that the principal goal is to protect society by preventing crimes, by imposing sentences that are appropriate and proportionate to the crime committed, and by rehabilitating young persons.

The *Youth Criminal Justice Act* contains provisions to deal differently with first-time young offenders (low-risk non-violent youths) than with violent and repeat offenders. In fact, in the case of first-time young offenders, the use of extrajudicial solutions, such as alternative measures, will be encouraged while the range of offences punishable by the same sentences as for adults will be expanded to respond to violent and repeat offenders. In addition, the age at which a young offender may receive an adult sentence will be lowered to include youths 14 and 15 years and it will be possible to publish the names of young offenders who receive this type of sentence provided the judge does not rule otherwise.

The purpose of this report is to measure the scope of violent crime by female and male youths at the national and provincial levels and in selected metropolitan areas, to determine the degree of change observed between 1988 and 1998, to identify the characteristics of violent crime by youths and to compare it to that of adults and to create a portrait of violent young offenders (male and female) and their victims. To this end, police-reported data from the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey have been used.

This *Juristat* will address the following questions: Are youths more violent than adults? Are female youths becoming more violent? Are there differences in the types of violent crime being committed by male and female youths? How do the characteristics of violent youth crime differ from violent crime committed by adults?

The factors influencing aggressiveness in children are similar to those influencing delinquency

There are certain factors that most experts will agree influence delinquency. Factors that play a crucial role in the development of children include individual characteristics, family, friends, school, and social and economic environment. These factors impact

the lives of young people long before they have their first official run-ins with the law. Research tends to show that young people do not become violent overnight.¹ Indeed, numerous studies have found that violent youths were also the most aggressive children.

The National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), conducted jointly by Statistics Canada and Human Resources Development Canada, looks at the environmental factors that are widely recognized as influencing the development of children, including the aggressiveness component.² The results on aggressiveness of children reveal that the vast majority of children (between 90% and 98%) do not have an aggressiveness problem. According to the results of the first cycle (1994-95), children aged 27 to 29 months are the most aggressive. Indeed, 53% of boys and 41% of girls in this age group were found to bite, hit or kick sometimes or often. However, by age 11, only 14% of boys and 8% of girls displayed such behaviour; it appears that the majority of children benefited from the favourable socialization factors in their environment.

During the second cycle (1996-97), more than four youths in ten aged 12 and 13 years who were surveyed "...reported having threatened to beat someone up or having been in a fight, but with no serious injuries. Far fewer adolescents (6%) reported they were in a fight in which there were injuries that needed care. About 55% of boys reported having been in a fight, twice as high as the rate for girls (27%)."³ Among the youths who had been in a fight without serious injury, slightly more than one in ten indicated that it had happened three or more times over a 12-month period. Youths 10 and 11 years of age who had displayed a higher degree of aggressiveness were four times more likely to have displayed aggressive behaviour at age 12 and 13 years.

The NLSCY show that aggressive children are more likely to live in a low socio-economic stratum,⁴ where there is unemployment, high levels of family violence, and ineffective parenting skills. It appears that aggressive children also display other behavioural problems, such as hyperactivity. The survey results also revealed that there is a socio-economic gradient for aggressive physical behaviour that is evident beginning at 3 years of age and which does not change with age. It follows that learning to control one's own behaviour before reaching school age may be an important factor in school success, adapting to the work environment and health. Aggressiveness can be a major impact in school dropout rates, unemployment, depression, anxiety and criminal activity.

In summary, the factors likely to influence criminal behaviour in youths are very similar to the factors that influence aggressive behaviour in children. However, it is not possible to determine from the research definitive links between aggressiveness in children and delinquency, even though several parallels can be drawn. The upcoming NLSCY surveys should provide clarifications on youths in these risk situations.

Trends in youth violent crime

Youths commit proportionally less violent crime than adults

The number of youths aged 12 to 17 years charged with a *Criminal Code* offence reached 106,984 in 1998. Of those, 21% were charged with violent crimes, 51% with property crimes and 29% with other *Criminal Code* offences (Table 1). Adults showed a proportionally higher involvement in violent crime than youths, as violent crimes accounted for 30% of all adults charged. Youths aged 12 to 17 years account for approximately one in six persons charged with violent offences.

Despite recent declines, youth violent rate is much higher than a decade ago

The rate of youths charged with violent crimes fell marginally (-1%) in 1998 for the third consecutive year (Figure 1). It now stands at 90 youths charged per 10,000 youths aged 12 to 17 years. Despite recent decreases, the rate of youths charged with violent crimes remains considerably higher (+77%) than it was a decade ago. The rate of youths accused of, but not

Key terminology and definitions

Violent crime: includes murder, attempted murder, common assault, aggravated and other types of assault, sexual assault, other sexual offences, abduction and robbery.

Charged: refers to an incident where formal charges were laid by police.

Not charged: refers to an incident where an accused was identified but, for a variety of reasons, a formal charge was not laid.

Accused: includes youths identified by police as being suspects in a criminal case; equals the total of youths charged and not charged.

Rate: Rates are expressed per 10,000 youths aged 12 to 17. The use of rates makes it possible to eliminate variations due to differences in populations.

See the Methodology section for more detail on the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

¹ See among others: Loeber Rolf and David P. Farrington (1998). "Never too Early, Never too Late : Risk Factors and Successful Interventions For Serious Violent Juvenile Offenders", *Studies on Crime and Crime Prevention*, 7(1), 7-30.
Cullen, Francis T., John Paul Wright, Shayna Brown, Melissa M. Moon, Michael B. Blankenship and Brandon K. Appelgate (1998). "Public Support for Early Intervention Programs : Implications for a Progressive Policy Agenda", *Crime and Delinquency*, 44(2), 187-204.
Tremblay, Richard E., et al. "Do children in Canada become more aggressive as they approach adolescence?" *Growing up in Canada: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth. N° 89-550-MPF, No. 1, Ottawa, November 1996.*

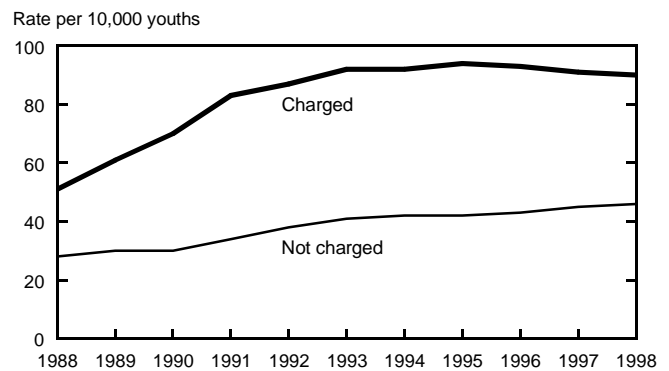
² See *Growing up in Canada: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth. N° 89-550-MPF, No.1, Ottawa, November 1996.*

³ *Statistics Canada. « National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth : transition into adolescence » The Daily. Ottawa : 6 juillet 1999, page 3.*

⁴ Defined by education, professional status and household income.

Figure 1

Youths Accused of Violent Crime, Canada, 1988 to 1998



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, CCJS.

Table 1



Distribution Of Youths And Adults Charged By Major Crime Category, Canada, 1998

	Persons Charged		
	Youths 12 to 17 years	Adults 18 years and over	
Violent Crimes	Number	22,145	113,127
	% of total Criminal Code	21	30
Property Crimes	Number	54,047	140,639
	% of total Criminal Code	51	37
Other Criminal Code Offences	Number	30,792	127,674
	% of total Criminal Code	29	33
Total Criminal Code¹	Number	106,984	381,440
	% of total Criminal Code	100	100

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

Note: Percentage may not add to 100% due to rounding.

¹ Excluding traffic offences

charged with, violent crimes has also been climbing steadily since 1988, increasing 61%. (See box *Measuring youth crime rates*.)

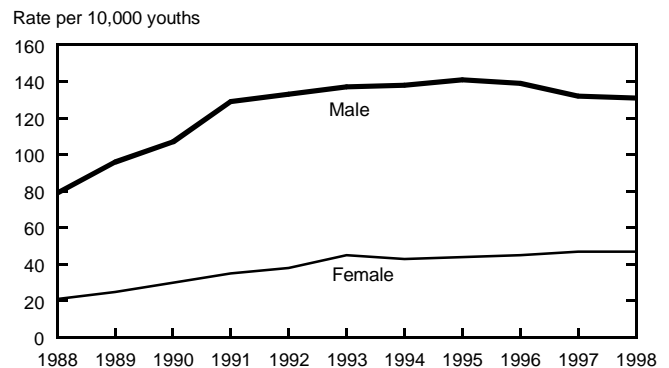
The increase in youth violent crime is much greater than the increase for adults. The adult violent crimes rate has increased only 6% since 1988 (from 46 adults charged per 10,000 in 1988 to 49 adults charged per 10,000 in 1998).

Violent crime by female youths has risen faster than violent crime by male youths

In the past decade, the rate of female youths charged with violent crimes has risen twice as fast (+127%) as that of male youths (+65%). This trend is also evident for adults, where women have shown a much larger increase in violent crime (+47%) since 1988 than men (+2%). Nevertheless, the rate of female youths charged with violent crimes (47 per 10,000 female youths) is still only one-third the rate of males (131) in 1998 (Figure 2). For adults, the violent crime rate for women (13 charges per 10,000 women) was one-sixth that of men

Figure 2

Youths Charged with Violent Crimes, by Sex, Canada, 1988 to 1998



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, CCJS.

Measuring youth crime rates

Youths who run afoul of the law can be charged by police or can be dealt with in other ways. The decision to proceed with charges depends on a number of factors, including the youth's eligibility for a diversion program. The *Young Offenders Act* stipulates that the purpose of an alternative measure (AM) program is to avoid subjecting youths to judicial proceedings, provided certain conditions are met. Generally, referral to an AM program is done before charges are laid and is limited to first-time offenders. Further, the police can choose to resolve an incident involving a youth informally by giving him a warning or discussing the incident with his parents when the accused is a first-time offender who has committed a minor offence. Consequently, charge rates depend on the degree to which AMs are used, the fact that referral to an AM program can be made before or after charges are laid, and the extent to which cases are settled informally. Charge rates are not, therefore, a perfect indicator of the level of criminal activity by youth, particularly in terms of assessing relatively minor offences committed by first-time offenders.

With the increasing use of diversion for first-time non-violent offenders, it is important to also examine the trend in youths not formally charged. Data on youths who have not been charged are available from several jurisdictions and can be used to provide a complementary picture of the scope of youth crime.

Table 2



Comparison Of Male And Female Violent Crime for Youths and Adults, Canada, 1998

	Persons Charged			
	Youths 12 to 17 years		Adults 18 years and over	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
			%	
Homicide	0.3	0.0	0.4	0.4
Attempted Murder	0.4	0.1	0.5	0.4
Aggravated Sexual Assault	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
Sexual Assault with Weapon	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0
Sexual Assault	8.2	0.8	7.7	0.8
Common Assault	45.9	67.3	59.6	64.9
Assault with weapon/causing bodily harm	19.7	16.0	16.9	20.1
Aggravated Assault	1.5	1.1	1.5	1.6
Abduction	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.6
Robbery	18.5	9.2	5.8	3.4
Other Violent Crimes	5.2	5.4	7.0	7.7
Crimes Of Violence -Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Persons Charged With Violent Crimes	16,493	5,652	97,490	15,637

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

(86). The rates for youths and adults should not be compared as the adult rate includes elderly persons who have very low involvement in crime.

Recent declines in the overall rate of youths charged with violent crimes can be attributed entirely to a decrease in the rate of male youths. That rate dropped 2% drop in 1996, 5% in 1997 and 1% in 1998. In contrast, the rate of female youths charged has continued to rise, climbing 2% in 1996, 5% in 1997 and remaining stable in 1998.

Violent crime actually accounted for a greater proportion (23%) of female youth crime than male youth crime (20%). For adults, violent crime accounted for 23% of crime committed by women, but 31% of all crimes committed by men.

Assault represents the most frequent violent crime, especially among female youths

For violent crime as a whole, common assault and major assault accounted for more than 84% of the female youths charged and 68% of the male youths charged (Table 2). The majority of charges against female youths were for common assault (67%), which is the least serious type of assault. For male youths, common assault represented only 46% of the charges for violent crimes. The percentage of common assault charges for adult females is very similar to that for female youths. However, for adult males, common assault accounted for 60% of the

Common assault: - includes Level 1 assaults defined in the *Criminal Code*. These are the least serious types of assault and include pushing, slapping, punching and threatening.

Major assault: - includes the more serious types of assault listed in the *Criminal Code*, including assault with a weapon, or causing bodily harm (Level 2) and aggravated assault (Level 3).

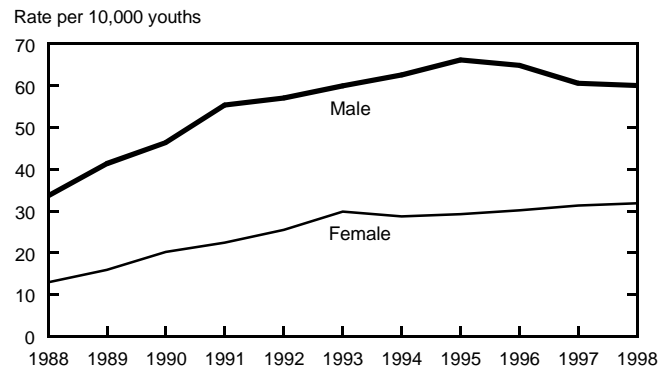
charges for violent crime, a percentage significantly higher than for male youths. Male youths are proportionally more involved in robbery (18%) and major assault (21%) than adult males (6% and 18%, respectively). Table 2 also shows that conversely, youths are proportionally less involved in homicide, attempted murder and kidnapping than adults.

Common assault is largely responsible for the increase in youth violent crime

If common assault is excluded from total violent crime, the increase in youth violent crime since 1988 falls to 61% compared to 77% when common assault is included. This finding is especially interesting in the case of female youths

Figure 3

Youths Charged with Common Assault, by Sex, Canada, 1988 to 1998



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, CCJS.

where the increase in violent crime, excluding common assault, is 95% (the increase is 127% with common assault); for male youths, the increase in violent crime, excluding common assault, is 55% (the increase is 65% with common assault).

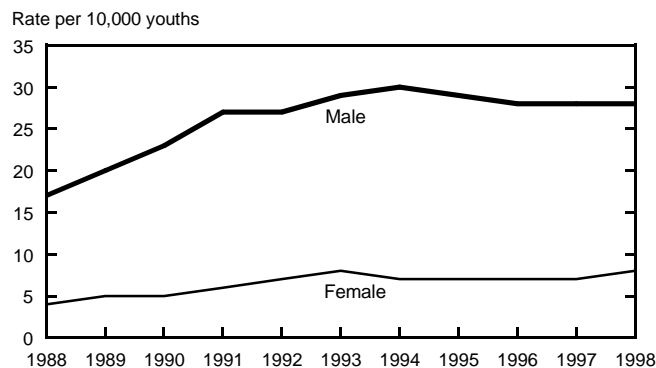
Various hypotheses can be put forward to explain the increase in the rate of youths charged with common assault. The first refers to the “zero tolerance” strategies implemented extensively since the early nineties in order to deal with violence in schools. These “zero tolerance” strategies may have led to increased reporting to police of incidents involving youths aged 12 to 17 years that would previously have been dealt with informally, or even resolved, by school principals.⁵ A second hypothesis involves a decrease in the tolerance of violence in all its forms by the population in general resulting in a generalized increase in reporting of such offences to police.

Major assault has also contributed to the increase in youth violent crime

Major assault⁶ has also contributed, to a lesser degree, to the increase in youth violent crime. Charge rates for major assault nevertheless remain significantly below those for common assault (Figure 4). The rate of youths charged with aggravate assault has doubled since 1988 for both female and male youths. However, the rate of female youths charged with major assault still remains relatively low. As with common assault, the rate of female youths charged with major assault represented less than one-third that of male youths in 1998.

There has been little change in major assault as a percentage of total violent crime by youths since 1988. In fact, there has

Figure 4



* Includes level 2 and 3.

Source: Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, CCJS.

⁵ See Stevenson, Kathryn, Jennifer Tufts, Dianne Hendricks and Melanie Kowalski. A profile of youth justice in Canada. Catalogue no. 85-544-XPE, Ottawa : Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1998.

⁶ Includes level 2 and 3 assaults.

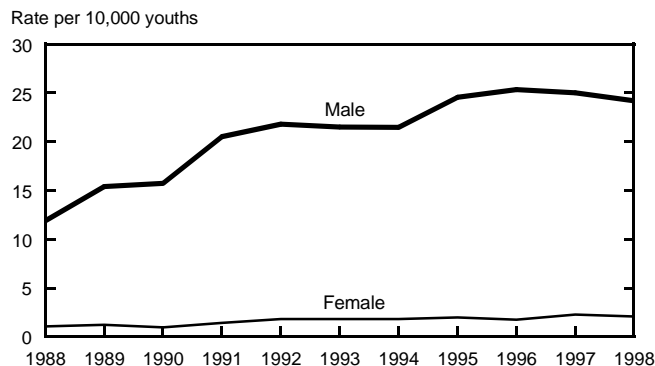
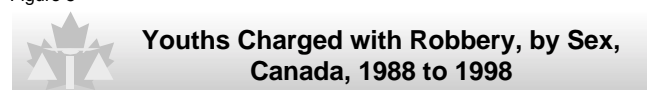
⁷ Includes level 1 sexual assault (this level includes the least bodily harm to the victim); level 2 sexual assault (with a weapon, threatening to use a weapon, or inflicting bodily harm); and, level 3 aggravated sexual assault (injury, mutilation, disfigurement or endangering the life of the victim).

been only a marginal decrease in the percentage of female youths charged with major assault (from 20% in 1988 to 17% in 1998), while the percentage of major assault by male youths has remained stable at 20% since 1988. The relative percentage of aggravate assault in total violent crime is similar for both adults and youth.

Compared to adults, youths are proportionally more involved in robberies

Over the past ten years, the rate of youths charged with robbery has more than doubled, climbing from 7 youths charged per 10,000 youths in 1988 to 15 in 1998. Once again, the increase in the rate of female youths charged for robbery (176%) was substantially higher than for males (103%) (Figure 5). However, in 1998, the rate of female youths charged for this type of crime still represented only one-sixth the rate of males.

Figure 5



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, CCJS.

Youths accounted for over one-third (36%) of all persons charged with robbery, the highest proportion of youths for any violent offence. Ten years ago, youths represented just 21% of all persons charged with robbery. Robbery accounted for one in six youth violent crimes, compared to one in twenty adult violent crimes.

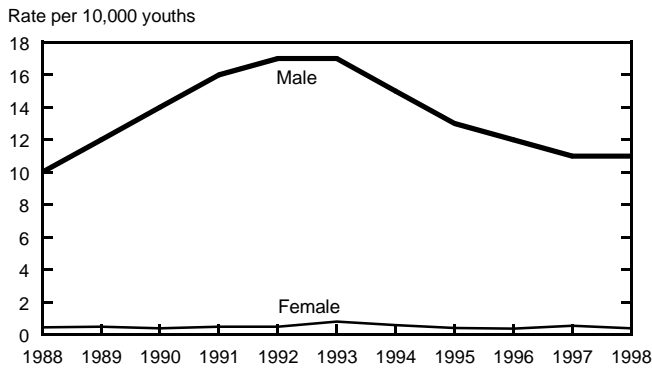
The number of youths charged with sexual assault fell for the fifth straight year

In 1998, 1,438 youths aged 12 to 17 years were charged with sexual assault:⁷ of that number, 1,390 were males. These figures show that female youths are rarely charged with sexual assault: the same holds true for adult females. In 97% of incidents involving charges against youths for sexual assault, the offence was a level 1 sexual assault. This was also the case with sexual assault charges against adult males.

The rate of male youths charged with sexual assault dropped for the fifth consecutive year (-3%) (Figure 6). These decreases follow a 64% increase between 1988 and 1993. The relative incidence of sexual assault offences is the same for youths and adults: sexual assault charges represented 8% of male youths charged and 8% of adult males charged with violent crimes in 1998.

Figure 6

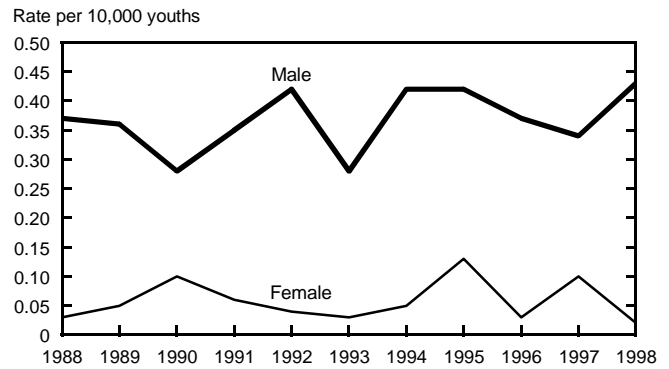
 **Youths Charged with Sexual Assault*, by Sex, Canada, 1988 to 1998**



* Includes level 1, 2 and 3.
Source: Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, CCJS.

Figure 7

 **Youths Charged with Homicide, by Sex, Canada, 1988 to 1998**



Source: Homicide Survey, CCJS.

An average of 51 youths charged with homicide each year

In 1998, the rate of youths charged with homicide rose 3% (Figure 7). A total of 56 youths were charged with homicide, representing 13% of all persons charged with this crime. On average, 51 youths per year have been charged with homicide over the past ten years. However, this figure has varied widely from a low of 36 in 1993 to a high of 67 in 1995. Females accounted for 13% of all youths charged with homicide between 1988 and 1998, very close to the proportion for adults (12%).

⁸ Data for the Northwest Territories includes Nunavut throughout this Juristat.

Provincial and major metropolitan area comparisons

The youth violent crime rate varies widely across Canada

The level of violent crime by youths varies widely from one region of the country to another; the Atlantic provinces and Quebec reporting rates below the national average, and Ontario and the western provinces reporting higher rates (Figure 8). In 1998, Prince Edward Island (50) and Quebec (54) had the lowest rates, while the Northwest Territories⁸ (191), Manitoba (153), Yukon (143) and Saskatchewan (134) had the highest rates.

Table 3

 **Youths Charged With Violent Crimes, By Sex, Provinces/Territories, 1998**

	Number of Youths Charged			Rate per 10,000 Youths			% Change 1988-1998		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
									%
Newfoundland	260	79	339	103	32	68	92	289	114
Prince Edward Island	49	11	60	80	18	50	65	115	68
Nova Scotia	468	134	602	122	36	80	164	300	184
New Brunswick	348	147	495	110	49	80	94	203	117
Québec	2,532	481	3,013	88	18	54	35	96	42
Ontario	6,973	2,377	9,350	150	54	103	68	120	79
Manitoba	1,010	475	1,485	202	100	153	74	116	85
Saskatchewan	829	469	1,298	167	100	134	99	183	124
Alberta	1,817	619	2,436	136	49	93	70	84	73
British Columbia	2,089	802	2,891	127	52	91	50	132	67
Yukon	36	7	43	233	48	143	...	...	...
Northwest Territories ¹	82	51	133	224	154	191	...	...	...

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey. Annual Demographic Statistics, 1998 report, produced by Statistics Canada, Demography Division. Population updated postcensal estimates for 1998.

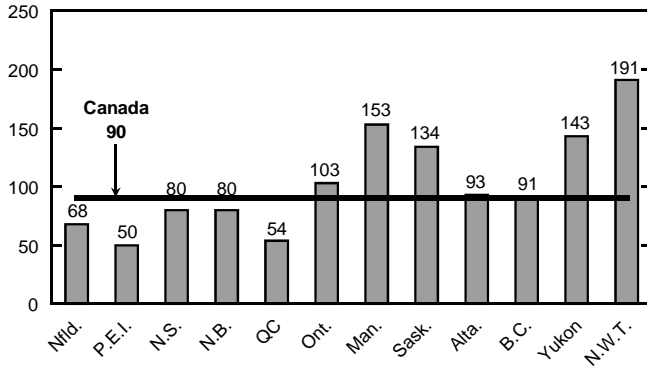
¹ Includes Nunavut

... Due to small numbers, the % change figures for Yukon and the Northwest Territories are not appropriate

Figure 8

Youths Charged with Violent Crimes, Province/Territory, 1998

Rate per 10,000 youths



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, CCJS.

Despite their high rates, Yukon and the Northwest Territories have experienced the smallest increases in violent crime since 1988. The largest increases occurred in the Atlantic provinces (with the exception of Prince Edward Island) and in Saskatchewan (see Table 3).

It is difficult to determine the extent to which variations in charge rates from coast to coast reflect a real difference in the level of crime or differences in practices and policies of the justice system in each province and territory. There is no question, however, that part of the difference between jurisdictions is attributable to variations in the use of alternative measures. For example, Quebec refers most accused young offenders to alternative measures programs before they are charged, while the opposite is true in Yukon and Ontario where youths are normally referred to alternative measures programs after being charged.⁹

Proportion of youths charged who are female also varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction

The percentage of female youths charged in relation to the total number of youths charged with violent crimes also varies across Canada (Figure 9). Quebec (16%), Yukon (16%) and Prince Edward Island (18%) have the lowest percentage of female youths charged. The Northwest Territories (38%), Saskatchewan (36%) and Manitoba (32%) have highest.

A study conducted by the Department of the Solicitor General of Canada in 1998 found that the factor most influencing the decision of police officers to charge an accused young offender is the seriousness of the crime.¹⁰ The differences among provinces noted above could partially be explained by differences in the mix of violent offences among female youths in these

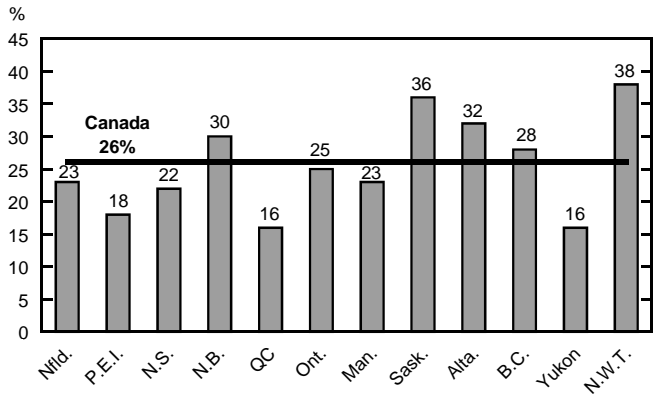
⁹ See "Alternative Measures for Youth" by Melanie Kowalski, Juristat, vol. 19, no. 8.

¹⁰ See Factors affecting police diversion of young offenders: A statistical analysis by Peter Carrington; Report to the Solicitor General of Canada.

¹¹ The data used throughout this section are from a sample of police services reporting to the Revised UCR Survey. See the Methodology section for further details.

Figure 9

Female Youths as a Percentage of Youths Charged with Violent Crimes, 1998



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, CCJS.

provinces. For example, female youths showed a higher proportion of charges for robbery in Saskatchewan and Manitoba than other jurisdictions (Table 4).

Winnipeg has highest rate of youth violent crime

Over the past three years, the youth violent crime rate has declined in the majority of the largest census metropolitan areas (CMAs) (Table 5). Only Montréal, Ottawa and Hamilton reported minor increases. Among the nine largest CMAs, the rate of youths charged for violent crimes was highest in Winnipeg (156 youths charged per 10,000 youths) and lowest in Québec (40).

Winnipeg also had the highest percentage of female youths charged with violent crimes (32%) among the nine CMAs. The lowest percentage of female involvement was reported in the two Quebec metropolitan areas: Montréal (15%) and Québec (17%). These observations are equally valid for adults, with the exception of Vancouver, which has the lowest percentage of adult females charged with violent crimes.

Once again it should be noted that part of the difference between jurisdictions is attributable to variations in the use of alternative measures, as well as differences in local policies and practices with respect to dealing informally with young offenders.

Characteristics of violent young offenders¹¹

Violence peaks for female youths at a younger age than for male youths

Violent crime appears to peak in female youths at a younger age than in male youths. Figure 10 shows that the peak age for violent young offenders is 15 to 17 years. There are, however, some variations by gender: the rate of male youths accused of violent crimes increases with age, peaking at 17 years, while female accused peak at 14 and 15 years.

Table 4

Youths Charged With Selected Violent Crimes By Sex, Provinces / Territories, 1998

		Number of Youths Charged	Common Assault	Major Assault ¹	Robbery	Other Violent Crimes	Total
		number	%	%	%	%	%
Newfoundland	male	260	60	18	8	14	100
	female	79	77	11	0	11	100
Prince Edward Island	male	49	59	10	12	18	100
	female	11	...	...	...	...	...
Nova Scotia	male	468	47	20	16	18	100
	female	134	64	19	6	11	100
New Brunswick	male	348	60	16	5	19	100
	female	147	76	8	4	12	100
Québec	male	2,532	42	20	24	14	100
	female	481	67	16	9	8	100
Ontario	male	6,973	49	22	16	13	100
	female	2,377	73	17	6	4	100
Manitoba	male	1,010	38	22	25	15	100
	female	475	53	23	17	7	100
Saskatchewan	male	829	45	20	17	18	100
	female	469	58	17	18	7	100
Alberta	male	1,817	41	23	21	15	100
	female	619	66	16	11	7	100
British Columbia	male	2,089	44	22	20	14	100
	female	802	64	19	11	6	100
Yukon	male	36	50	17	6	27	100
	female	7	...	...	...	...	...
Northwest Territories	male	82	44	11	5	40	100
	female	51	76	10	0	14	100

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

¹ Includes assault with weapon/causing bodily harm (level 2) and aggravated assault (level 3).

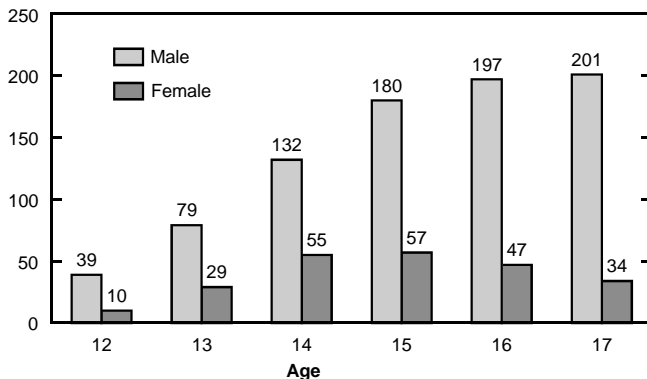
² Includes Nunavut

... Figures not appropriate or not applicable

Figure 10

Youths Charged of Violent Crimes, by Age and Sex, 1998

Rate per 10,000 youths



Source: Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, CCJS.

The decision as to charge or not charge

The older the youth and the more serious the nature of the offence, the greater the chance that a youth will be formally charged by police (Figure 11). Part of this increase with age in the percentage of youths charged can be explained by the fact that older female and male youths are more likely to be repeat offenders, while first-time offenders enjoy a certain degree of tolerance from the various parties in the justice system. The type of violent crime committed might also be a factor, since tolerance and the seriousness of the offence go hand in hand.

Victims of youth violence are most often of similar age and known to their assailant

Figure 12 shows that over half (52%) of victims of violent crimes committed by youths are other youths. Children younger than 12 years account for 11% of the victims, while adults account for the remaining 37% of the victims. Youths preying on the elderly is a relatively rare occurrence: only 2% of victims of youth violent crime in 1998 were 55 years of age or over.

Table 5

Youths Charged With Violent Crimes By Sex, Census Metropolitan Areas, 1998

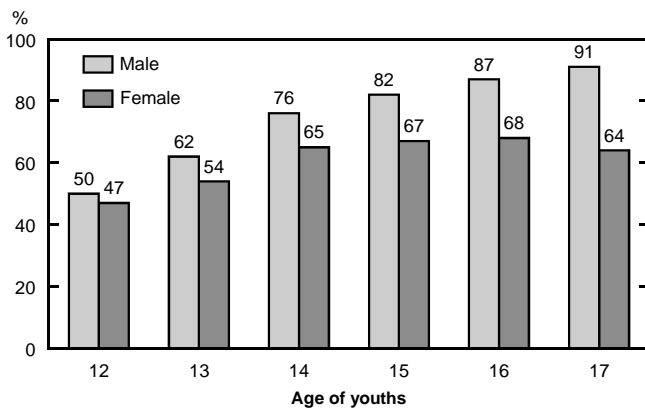
	Population Youths 12 to 17 years	Total		Male Youth		Female Youth	
		1998 rate ¹	% change in rate 1996-1998	1998 rate ¹	% change in rate 1996-1998	1998 rate ¹	% change in rate 1996-1998
CMA Total Population 500,000+							
Toronto	341,820	105	-8	161	-11	45	2
Montréal	241,748	76	9	126	8	23	16
Vancouver	144,950	71	-16	105	-20	35	-2
Edmonton	80,234	98	-7	143	-10	52	1
Calgary	75,090	104	-26	163	-23	43	-36
Ottawa (the Ontario part of the Ottawa-Hull CMA)	61,088	73	7	116	10	27	-1
Winnipeg	52,064	156	-13	207	-13	102	-11
Hamilton	51,447	88	3	125	-4	48	26
Québec	49,338	40	-3	65	-4	14	7
CMA Total Population 100,000 - 499,999							
Thunder Bay	54,795	215	17	253	11	175	27
Kitchener ²	43,557	87	5	131	3	40	8
St. Catharines-Niagara ²	38,667	55	0	76	4	32	-11
London	34,154	144	11	198	15	88	3
Halifax	26,201	59	-43	59	-64	58	50
Windsor	23,710	119	57	177	54	58	66
Victoria	21,916	145	-2	208	1	78	-9
Hull (the Quebec part of the Ottawa-Hull CMA)	20,364	71	22	116	31	25	-7
Saskatoon	19,689	174	3	202	-11	145	32
Regina	18,007	172	13	210	-3	131	54
St. John's	15,379	78	-28	118	-33	37	3
Chicoutimi-Jonquière ³	15,337	26	-16	42	-25	9	128
Sudbury	13,360	109	4	140	14	77	-11
Sherbrooke	11,761	44	40	66	26	21	114
Trois-Rivières	10,916	60	-7	104	-10	13	7
Saint John	10,250	145	8	228	4	61	32

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre For Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey. Annual Demographic Statistics, 1998 report, produced by Statistics Canada, Demography Division. Population final postcensal estimates for 1996, updated postcensal estimates for 1998.

- ¹ Rates are calculated on the basis of 10,000 youths aged 12 to 17 years by sex.
- ² The population of Kitchener and St. Catharines-Niagara CMA's were adjusted in 1996-1998 to follow policing boundaries.
- ³ The population of Chicoutimi-Jonquière was adjusted in 1998 to follow policing boundaries.

Figure 11

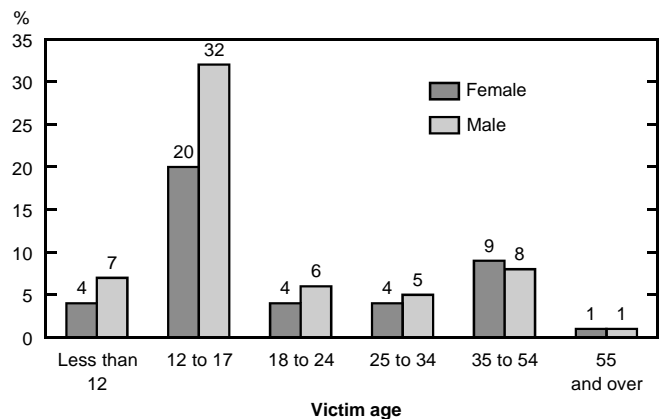
Youths Charged as a Proportion of Total Youths Accused*, by Age and Sex, 1998



* Sample of 169 police services.
Source: Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, CCJS.

Figure 12

Age and Sex of Victims of Violent Crimes Committed by Youths, 1998



Note: Percentage may not add to 100% due to rounding.
Source: Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, CCJS.

Table 6



Relationship Of The Accused To The Victim¹, 1998

Relationship to the victim	Accused			
	Youths 12 to 17 years		Adults 18 years and over	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
				%
Family member	15	20	42	38
Close friend	4	5	8	7
Acquaintance	59	63	28	37
Stranger	22	12	23	18
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre For Justice Statistics, Revised Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Note: This table reflects only those cases where there was one accused and one or more victims. Cases where there are multiple accused do not lend to this type of analysis.

3, 403 victims (4 %) are excluded because the relationship with the accused is unknown.

¹ Non-representative sample from 169 police departments, representing 46% of the national volume of crime.

In most instances, young offenders know their victims. In fact, the victim was an acquaintance in more than 60% of incidents involving young offenders, and this applied equally to males and females (Table 6). Slightly more female youths (20%) than male youths (15%) committed a violent offence against a family member. Adults are much more likely to attack a family member than youths (38% for adult females and 42% for adult males). Female youths are also less likely to attack strangers (12%) than male (22%), adult females (18%), and adult males (23%).

Public places most common site of youth violence

According to the data from the Revised UCR survey in 1998, it appears that youths most often commit their violent crimes in public places (35%), followed by in the home or at school (each 24%). Violent crime involving adults is most often committed in the home (60%). There is very little difference based on the gender of the person charged.

Violence in schools

The Revised UCR survey captures information on incidents occurring "at school". However, it is not possible to determine if all these incidents took place during school hours. Data from this survey shows that 10% of all violent incidents involving youths in 1998 were committed on school grounds. Of all crimes committed by youths on school property, one-half (51%) were violent.

It appears that there is a tendency not to formally charge youths involved in incidents occurring in schools as compared to incidents not occurring in schools. Of all violent incidents involving youths in schools, 58% were charged, as compared to 68% in incidents occurring elsewhere.

Table 7



Most Serious Weapon Present During Violent Crime By Age And Sex Of The Accused¹, 1998

	Youths Accused			Adults Accused		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Presence of Weapon during Violent Crimes	15	10	14	13	15	13
Type of weapon						
Firearm	15	3	13	18	3	16
Knife	48	48	48	38	45	39
Club, blunt instrument	28	35	29	35	40	35
Other piercing, cutting instrument	9	14	10	10	12	10
Total - presence of weapon²	100	100	100	100	100	100

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

Note: This table reflects only those cases where there was one accused. Cases where there are multiple accused do not lend to this type of analysis.

¹ Non-representative sample from 169 police departments, representing 46% of the national volume of crime.

² Total may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Weapons present in one in seven violent incidents involving youth

Table 7 reveals that a weapon was present in 14% of violent incidents committed by youths, similar to the proportion for adults (13%). The most common weapon was a knife or other cutting object (48% and 29% respectively). Male youths tended to use knives more frequently than adult males (48% vs 38%); for females, the proportions were more similar between youths and adults. Firearms were reported more often in incidents involving male youths (15%) than female youths (3%). The presence of firearms in incidents involving youths was less important to those involving adults.

Summary

This Juristat has addressed a number of questions relating to youth violence and differences between male and female youths, and youth and adult offenders. The following summarizes the answers to some of these questions.

Between 1988 and 1995, there was a sharp increase in youth violent crime. During this time, female youth violent crime increased twice as fast as male youth violent crime. Since 1995, violent crime rates for male youths have been declining, while those for female youths continue to climb. Despite this trend, the violent crime rate for female youths is still only one-third that of male youths.

Adults show a proportionally higher involvement in violent crime than youths. Violent crimes accounted for 30% of all adults charged compared to 21% for youths.

The involvement of female youths in violent crime diminishes as the severity of the offence increases. The majority of violent crime committed by female youths is common assault, while male youths have higher proportions of major assault and robbery than female youths. Female youths committing violent crime tended to be younger than male youths. For males, the violent crime rate increased gradually with age, peaking at 17. For females, however, the rate peaked at ages 14 and 15.

Youths tend to victimize young people of about the same age who are known to them. Six in ten violent crime victims were acquaintances of the accused youth. Over half (52%) of the victims were youths themselves. Only 2% of victims of youth violent crime were aged 55 years and over in 1998.

Methodology

Uniform Crime Reporting Survey

The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey was developed by Statistics Canada with the collaboration and assistance of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. The UCR survey, which was first introduced in 1962, collects data on crime and traffic violations reported by all police services in Canada. The UCR data therefore reflects reported crimes considered to have foundation based on police investigations.

The UCR survey currently collects data at two levels of detail:

1. UCR (aggregate data)

The UCR survey records the number of incidents reported to police. It includes the number of incidents reported and the number of real incidents, the number of incidents classified by charge, the number of persons charged by gender and their breakdown into youths or adults. It does not include any data on the characteristics of victims.

The UCR classifies incidents according to the most serious of the offences in the individual case (in general, the offence punishable by the longest maximum sentence under the *Criminal Code of Canada*). In classifying crimes, a higher priority is always given to violent crimes than to non-violent crimes. Consequently, less serious crimes are under-represented in the UCR.

The UCR evaluates incidents of violent crimes (except for robbery) differently from other types of crimes. In the case of violent crimes, a separate case is recorded for each victim (for instance, if one person attacks three, three incidents are recorded, but if three people attack one, only one case is recorded). To avoid exaggerating the number of victims, robbery with is always counted as though it was a non-violent crime (for example: the number of persons in a bank during a robbery). In the case of non-violent crimes, one case is recorded (classified according to the most serious crime) for each separate or distinct event.

2. Revised UCR - (incident-based data)

The revised micro-data survey collects detailed information on individual criminal offences reported to the police, including the characteristics of victims, the persons charged and the incident. In 1998, detailed data were collected from 169 police services in six provinces under the UCR II. These data represent 46% of the national volume of crime defined in the *Criminal Code*. The incidents recorded in the 1998 data file are broken down as follows: 41% from Quebec, 35% from Ontario, 12% from Alberta, 8% from British Columbia, 3% from Saskatchewan and 1% from New Brunswick. Except for Quebec, the data are mainly from urban police services. Readers are cautioned that these data are not nationally representative. Continuity with the data from the UCR survey was preserved by converting the incident-based data into global figures at year end.

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