



# Juristat

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics

Statistics Canada – Catalogue no. 85-002-XPE Vol. 21 no. 11



## CRIME COMPARISONS BETWEEN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

by Maire Gannon

### Highlights

- A comparison of police-reported crime rates between Canada and the United States for 2000 shows that the U.S. has much higher rates of violent crime, while Canada generally has higher rates of property crime. Despite differences in rates, trends in crime between the two countries have been quite similar over the past twenty years.
- In Canada, there were 542 homicides in 2000 resulting in a national rate of 1.8 homicides per 100,000 population. By comparison, there were 15,517 homicides in the U.S., resulting in a rate (5.5) three times higher than Canada's.
- Both countries have seen a decline in the number of homicides during the past decade, particularly in the U.S. Twenty years ago, the American homicide rate was about four times that of Canada.
- Similarly, the aggravated assault rate in the U.S. was more than double the Canadian rate in 2000. The U.S. also showed a higher rate of robbery (65% higher) than Canada. About 41% of robberies in the U.S. involved a firearm, compared to 16% in Canada.
- Canada reported higher rates for three of the four comparable property offences. There were about 30% more break-ins and motor vehicle thefts per capita in Canada than the U.S. in 2000. While Canada has had a higher rate of break-ins since the early 1980s, the motor vehicle theft rate has only surpassed the American rate over the last five years. The arson rate in Canada was 40% higher than in the U.S., while the U.S. reported 11% more thefts per capita than Canada.
- In examining arrest/charge data, the U.S. had much higher rates for drug offences, impaired driving and prostitution.
- The report also compares crime rates among the nine largest metropolitan areas in each country. With the exception of Boston, the remaining eight large American metropolitan areas had homicide rates much higher than any of the nine largest Canadian metropolitan areas. Conversely, Vancouver and Winnipeg reported higher rates of break-ins and motor vehicle thefts than any of the nine American metropolitan areas.



**Ordering and subscription information**

**All prices exclude sales tax**

This product, Catalogue no. 85-002-XPE, is published as a standard printed publication at a price of CDN \$10.00 per issue and CDN \$93.00 for a one-year subscription.  
ISSN 0715-271X

The following additional shipping charges apply for delivery outside Canada:

	Single issue	Annual subscription
<b>United States</b>	CDN \$ 6.00	CDN \$ 78.00
<b>Other countries</b>	CDN \$ 10.00	CDN \$ 130.00

This product is also available in electronic format on the Statistics Canada Internet site as Catalogue no. 85-002-XIE at a price of CDN \$8.00 per issue and CDN \$70.00 for a one-year subscription. To obtain single issues or to subscribe, visit our Web site at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca), and select Products and Services.  
ISSN 1209-6393

December 2001

Published by authority of the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada.  
© Minister of Industry, 2001

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior written permission from Licence Services, Marketing Division, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0T6.

**Note of appreciation**

Canada owes the success of its statistical system to a long-standing partnership between Statistics Canada, the citizens of Canada, its businesses and governments. Accurate and timely statistical information could not be produced without their continued cooperation and goodwill.

**Standards of service to the public**

Statistics Canada is committed to serving its clients in a prompt, reliable and courteous manner and in the official language of their choice. To this end, the agency has developed standards of service which its employees observe in serving its clients. To obtain a copy of these service standards, please contact your nearest Statistics Canada Regional Reference Centre.

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American national Standard for Information Sciences – Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48 – 1984.



## INTRODUCTION

Globalization, along with the corresponding growth of information technology has led to an increased need and demand for accurate and reliable cross-national crime comparisons. The demand is especially great between Canada and the United States, since these nations are geographically proximate and share similar social and economic experiences.

One way to measure crime levels in Canada and the United States is to examine police reported data. Although both countries administer national Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) programs, these two programs use different offence definitions, as well as techniques used to record and count crime. A recent Statistics Canada study examined the comparability of offence definitions, classifications, and scoring rules between Canada and the United States and found that seven offence-level crimes and three accused-level crimes could be reliably compared, with some minor modifications or caveats (see Box 1).<sup>1</sup>

This *Juristat* provides a cross-national analysis of Canadian and American crime rates and presents trend analysis on the comparable offences. It can be argued that crime rates should not be compared at the national level, as Canada and the United States have very different regional variations in crime, as well as varying socio-demographic and economic characteristics. Therefore, in addition to national comparisons, this report makes comparisons for various regions and metropolitan areas.

The focus of this analysis is on aggregated counts of offences gathered from the Canadian and American aggregate UCR programs. Both programs have virtually full coverage<sup>2</sup> of police agencies and follow similar scoring rules. Information will also be presented from the Homicide surveys. Please refer to the methodology section for a more detailed discussion on these data sources.

## NATIONAL CRIME RATE COMPARISON

Crime rate comparisons in this report involve the analysis of offence-level crimes. The term “offence”, “crime”, or “crime rate” refers to the total police-reported actual incidents.

### Total Crimes

The different number of offences collected in the two aggregate UCR programs (106 in Canada and 8 in the U.S.) prevents direct comparison of the American and Canadian total crime rates. However, it is possible to group together the comparable offences to indicate overall crime patterns. These offences include both violent crimes (homicide, aggravated assault, robbery) and property crimes (break and enter, motor vehicle theft, theft, arson). Minor modifications have been made for aggravated assault and arson to allow for comparability between the two countries.

Based on the selected violent crimes, the United States has a much higher violent crime rate than Canada. Taken together, the U.S. rates for homicide, aggravated assault and robbery are double the rates in Canada in 2000 (474 incidents per 100,000 versus 233) (Figure 1). While the rate for comparable property crimes is similar in both countries, Canada has higher rates than the U.S. for break and enter, motor vehicle theft, and arson (Figure 2).

<sup>1</sup> See Gannon, M. June 2001. Feasibility Study on Crime Comparisons between Canada and the United States. Catalogue no. 85-F0035XIE. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

<sup>2</sup> The American UCR survey has approximately 87% coverage. See Methodology section.

**BOX 1 – Comparability of Offences in the Canadian and American UCR programs\***

Crime	Definitional and Scoring Rule Differences	Impact
<b>Offence Level Crimes</b>		
Homicide	No differences	Nil
Aggravated Assault	The American definition is broader than Canada's. Along with aggravated assault, it also includes assault with a weapon and attempted murder.	The Canadian crime categories of aggravated assault, assault with a weapon, and attempted murder were combined.
Robbery	There are differences in the level of offence seriousness for robbery.	Minor
Break and enter	There are differences in classifications and scoring of recreational units, hotel rooms, and storage.	Minor
Motor vehicle theft	Farm equipment and construction equipment are excluded in the American category.	Minor
	Unlike the American UCR survey, Canada scores multiple motor vehicle thefts from a car dealership as one offence.	Minor
Theft	Recreational units, such as trailers, are excluded in the Canadian category.	Minor
Arson	Negligent burning and possession of arson paraphernalia are excluded in the American survey.	Minor
	The American UCR survey does not follow the most serious offence rule for this offence, and as a result, 3% of the difference in arson rates is due to this scoring variation.	Three percent of arson incidents were subtracted from the U.S. total.
<b>Accused Level Crimes</b>		
Drug violations	Canada generates more subcategories of drug offences than the U.S.	The Canadian subcategories of trafficking and production were collapsed into one offence to compare the sale/manufacture of drugs.
Impaired driving	The act of refusing a breathalyzer test is not scored as a separate offence in the U.S. but is often grounds for arrest for impaired driving.	Minor
	The Canadian definition contains more offences.	The Canadian offence of "impaired driving causing bodily harm or death" was excluded.
	State blood/alcohol level requirements, at times, differ from the Canadian legal limit.	Minor
Prostitution	The act of prostitution is not illegal in Canada, whereas it is generally prohibited in the U.S. However, the Canadian prohibition of acts surrounding prostitution make it practically impossible to legally engage in prostitution.	Minor

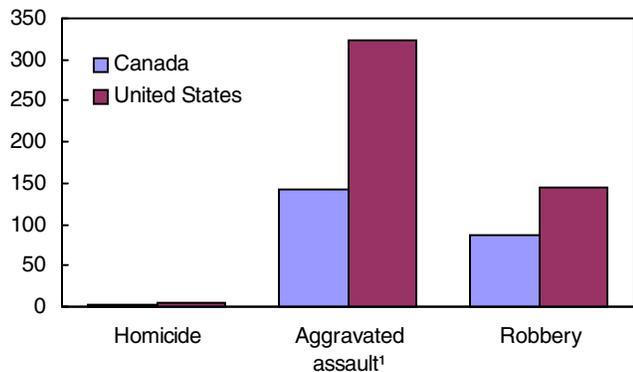
\* The American crime of forcible rape was non-comparable to the Canadian definition of sexual assault, and accordingly, this offence was excluded from the analysis.

**Source:** Gannon, M. June 2001. *Feasibility Study on Crime Comparisons between Canada and the United States*. Catalogue no. 85-F0035X1E. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

Figure 1

**Rates of comparable violent crimes, Canada and the United States, 2000**

Rate per 100,000 population



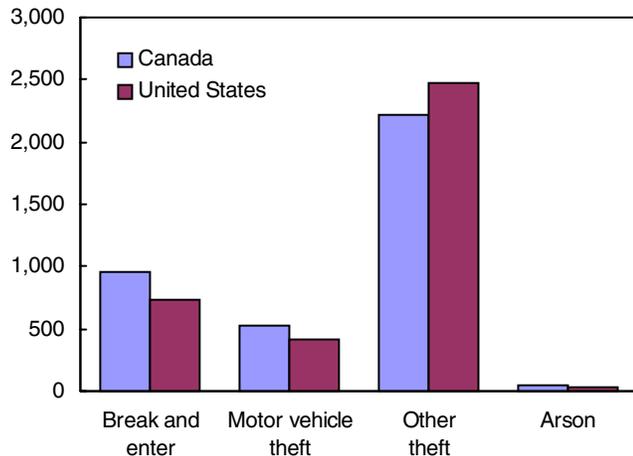
<sup>1</sup> For comparison purposes, the Canadian category includes attempted murder, assault with a weapon, and aggravated assault.

Source: Uniform Crime Reporting program, CCJS; Uniform Crime Reporting program, FBI.

Figure 2

**Rates of comparable property crimes, Canada and the United States, 2000**

Rate per 100,000 population



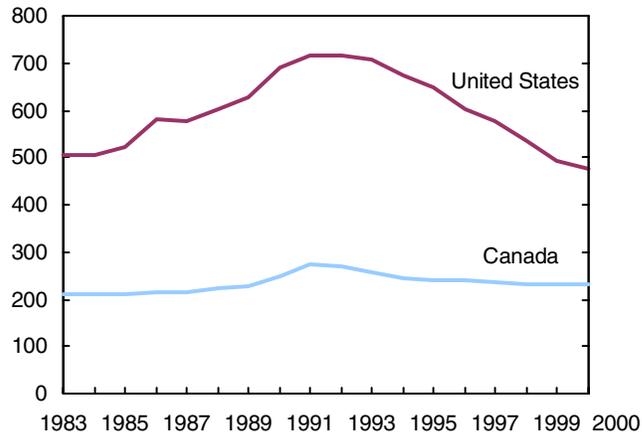
Source: Uniform Crime Reporting program, CCJS; Uniform Crime Reporting program, FBI.

Crime rates in both countries have followed very similar trends over the past twenty years (Figure 3 and Figure 4).<sup>3</sup> After peaking in 1991, both Canadian and American rates have generally been declining. According to a study conducted by the British Home Office, these decreases in police-reported crime contrast the trends in a number of other nations surveyed, including members of the European Union, as well as non-European countries.<sup>4</sup> Between 1989 and 1999, the volume of crime increased in 18 of the 25 countries surveyed.

Figure 3

**Rates of violent crime<sup>1</sup>, Canada and the United States, 1983-2000**

Rate per 100,000 population



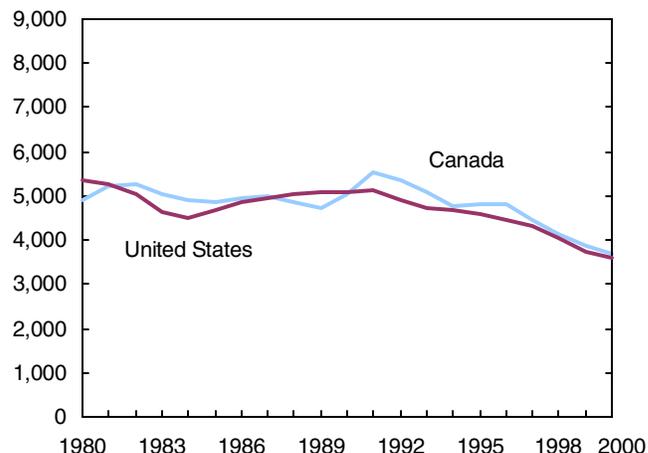
<sup>1</sup> Violent crime includes homicide, aggravated assault, and robbery. For comparison purposes, the Canadian category of aggravated assault includes attempted murder, assault with a weapon, and aggravated assault. Trend analysis starts in 1983 due to the reclassification of Canadian assault categories in 1983.

Source: Uniform Crime Reporting program, CCJS; Uniform Crime Reporting program, FBI.

Figure 4

**Rates property crime<sup>1</sup>, Canada and the United States, 1980-2000**

Rate per 100,000 population



<sup>1</sup> Property crime includes break and enter, motor vehicle theft, and theft.

Source: Uniform Crime Reporting program, CCJS; Uniform Crime Reporting program, FBI.

<sup>3</sup> The offence of arson is excluded from the trend analysis, since the United States does not generate trend data for this offence due to yearly fluctuations in police reporting to the FBI.

<sup>4</sup> Barclay, G., C. Tavares, and A. Siddique. 2001 (May). International comparisons of criminal justice statistics, 1999. Issue 6/01. England and Wales: British Home Office.

## Violent Crimes

### Homicide rate is three times higher in U.S.

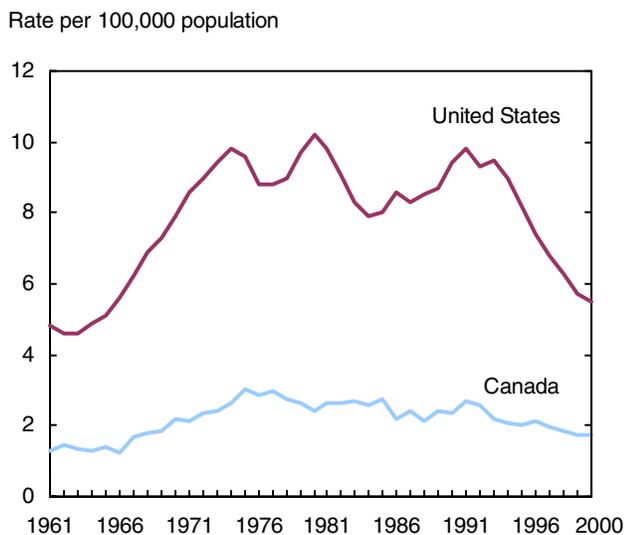
In 2000, the Canadian homicide rate was about one-third that of the American rate. There were 542 homicides reported by police in Canada for a rate of 1.8 per 100,000 population, compared to 15,517 homicides in the U.S., for a rate of 5.5 per 100,000 population.

One in three Canadian homicides involved the use of firearms, compared to two in three in the U.S.<sup>5</sup> Some researchers have suggested that the availability of firearms may explain the difference in levels of homicide.<sup>6,7</sup>

The proportion of homicides committed by strangers was slightly higher in the United States (23% compared to 17% in Canada).<sup>8</sup> However, in both countries, homicides were far more likely to be committed by someone known to the victim than by a stranger. Acquaintances committed 51% of homicides in Canada and 54% in the United States. In the remaining homicides (32% in Canada and 23% in the U.S.), the victims were killed by a family member.

Both Canadian and American homicide rates climbed steadily from 1961 to the mid-1970s (Figure 5). However, while the Canadian homicide rate has generally been declining since 1975, the American rate did not begin to consistently drop until the early 1990s. The difference between the two countries peaked in 1980, when the American rate was four times the Canadian rate. However, the large decline seen in the U.S. since 1991 (44%) parallels the drop in the Canadian rate over the past 25 years.

Figure 5  
 Rates of homicide, Canada and the United States, 1961-2000



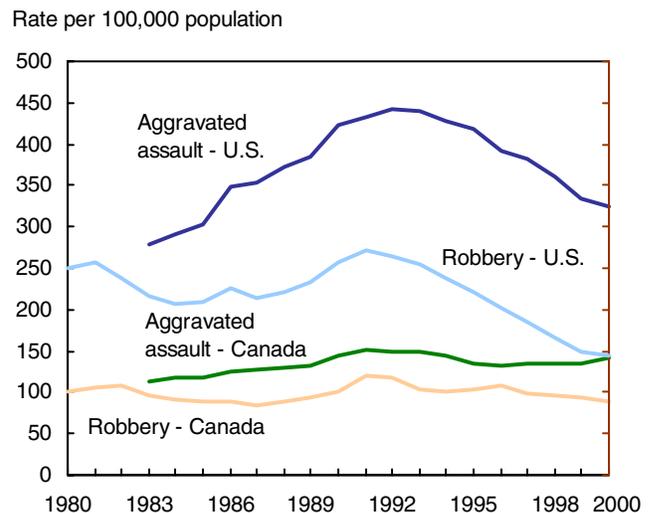
Source: Uniform Crime Reporting program, CCJS: Uniform Crime Reporting program, FBI.

### Aggravated assault rate more than double in the U.S.

To make the American and Canadian categories of aggravated assault comparable, it was necessary to collapse three Canadian offences into one: attempted murder, assault with a weapon, and aggravated assault. This aggravated assault category represents the most serious form of assault, including actual and potential infliction of severe bodily harm.<sup>9</sup>

In 2000, Americans were much more likely than Canadians to be victims of aggravated assault. The U.S. rate of 324 aggravated assaults per 100,000 population was more than double the Canadian rate (143 assaults). However, the U.S. continued their downward trend with a 3% decrease, while Canada experienced an increase of 7% after seven years of relative stability (Figure 6).

Figure 6  
 Rates of aggravated assault<sup>1</sup> and robbery, Canada and the United States, 1980-2000



<sup>1</sup> Trend analysis of aggravated assault starts in 1983 due to the reclassification of Canadian assault categories in 1983. For comparison purposes, the Canadian category of aggravated assault includes attempted murder, assault with a weapon, and aggravated assault.

Source: Uniform Crime Reporting program, CCJS: Uniform Crime Reporting program, FBI.

<sup>5</sup> Data for homicide characteristics come from the national homicide surveys. The Canadian survey has 100% coverage, compared to 82% coverage in the U.S. survey.

<sup>6</sup> Zimring, F.E. and G. Hawkins. 1997. *Crime is Not the Problem: Lethal Violence in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Lewis, C. 1999. "Police records of crime" pp. 43-64 in G. Newman (ed.) *Global Report on Crime and Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>8</sup> Unknown relationships have been excluded from both Canadian and American surveys. The percentage of unknown relationships is slightly higher in the U.S., since 37% of all U.S. homicides are unsolved, compared to 26% in Canada.

<sup>9</sup> Assault level 1, the least serious form of assault and the most frequently reported category of violent crime in Canada is excluded, since the American UCR survey captures only arrest information on this offence.

### Robbery rate 65% higher in U.S.

Canada and the United States define robbery as stealing or attempting to steal with force or the threat of force.<sup>10</sup> In Canada, there were 27,012 robbery incidents reported for 2000, representing a rate of 88 per 100,000 population. The U.S. robbery rate was 65% higher (145 robberies per 100,000 population). The differences in the robbery rate between the two countries are even more pronounced if one examines the rate of robberies committed with a firearm. In 2000, 41% of U.S. robberies were committed with a firearm compared to 16% in Canada. This translates into 60 firearm robberies per 100,000 U.S. population, which is over four times the Canadian rate of 14.

Over the past ten years, the difference between Canadian and American robbery rates has narrowed considerably (Figure 6). This is largely due to the sharp decline in the U.S. robbery rates from 1991 to 2000 (-47%). A smaller drop was reported by Canada during this time (-26%). In 2000, the American rate declined 4%, while the Canadian rate decreased 7%.

## Property Crimes

### Canada's break and enter rate higher than U.S.

Canada reported a break and enter (B&E) rate of 954 per 100,000 population in 2000, 31% higher than the American rate (728). The difference in the rate between the two countries has been about the same over the past decade (Figure 7). However, for most of the 1980s, the Canadian and American rates of break and enter were very similar. In the period from 1989 and 1991, the Canadian rate jumped by 21% and the American rate fell slightly (2%). Since 1991, both countries have reported decreases, including a 9% drop in Canada for 2000 and a 5% decline in the United States.

#### Types of B&Es

In Canada, police reported that thieves broke into 572 residences per 100,000 population, compared to a rate of 474 in the U.S. As residential B&Es account for 60% of all Canadian B&Es and 65% of American ones, it is not surprising that trends in residential rates are very similar to the overall trends. After peaking in 1991 at a rate of 880 residential B&Es per 100,000 population, the Canadian rate has declined 35%. Similarly, the U.S. experienced a substantial drop (-43%) in rates of residential break and enters over the past decade.

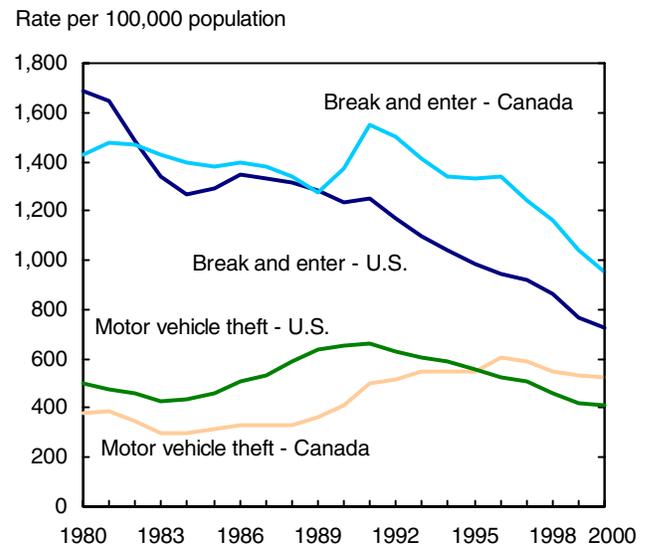
In 2000, Canadian police reported 383 non-residential break-ins (e.g., businesses and private structures) per 100,000 population. This is 50% higher than the American rate of 254.

### Canada's motor vehicle theft rate 26% higher than U.S.

In 2000, Canada's police reported a rate of 521 motor vehicle thefts per 100,000 population, 26% higher than the rate of 414 in the U.S. This difference was primarily due to the fact that Canadians were twice as likely as Americans to experience thefts of trucks, minivans or sports-utility vehicles (163 incidents per 100,000 versus 79 incidents). Over the last decade, this category of vehicle has grown from 22% to 31% of all vehicles stolen in Canada. A smaller increase was reported in the U.S.

Figure 7

**Rates of break and enter and motor vehicle theft, Canada and the United States, 1980-2000**



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting program, CCJS: Uniform Crime Reporting program, FBI.

(15% to 19%). The increasing popularity of trucks cannot explain the Canada-U.S. difference, as truck sales have been growing at approximately the same rate in both nations over this time.<sup>11,12</sup> In 2000, the rate of thefts of cars, the most common type of vehicle stolen in both Canada and the United States, was virtually the same between the two countries.

In general, motor vehicles are stolen for joy-riding, to commit another crime, or for re-sale by organized crime groups. The proportion of stolen vehicles that are never recovered is a good indicator of the number of vehicles stolen by organized theft rings.<sup>13</sup> In Canada and the United States, about one in three vehicles were never found by authorities.<sup>14</sup>

The Canadian motor vehicle theft rate first surpassed the U.S. rate in 1996 (Figure 7). Despite annual decreases since then, including a 2% decline in 2000, the Canadian rate has remained higher than the U.S. rate. The U.S. reported the same decrease (2%) as Canada in 2000. However, American rates have been falling for the past ten years.

<sup>10</sup> Both surveys record incidents with no violence or threat of violence, such as pick-pocketing, as thefts.  
<sup>11</sup> *Distributive Trades*, Statistics Canada. 2001. New Motor Vehicle Sales Survey.  
<sup>12</sup> *Bureau of Transportation Statistics, U.S. Department of Transportation. 2001 (April). National Transportation Statistics, 2000. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.*  
<sup>13</sup> Clarke, R.V. and P. Harris. 1992. "Auto theft and its prevention" *Crime & Justice: A Review of Research*. 16, published under the direction of Michael Tonry. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.  
<sup>14</sup> Data for Canada come from the Insurance Crime Prevention Bureau (Toronto, Canada), 1999. Data from the United States come from the 2000 Summary UCR program.

### U.S. theft rate higher than Canada

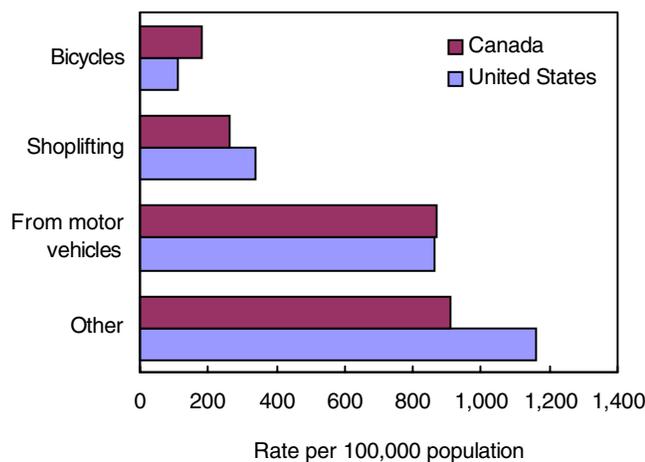
In comparison to Canada, the United States reported 11% more thefts per 100,000 population. An examination of trends reveals that, prior to 1994, Canada reported higher rates of theft than the U.S. Since 1991, these two nations have experienced general declines in total thefts with the Canadian rate dropping faster than the American rate (-37% versus -23%). Both countries reported a 3% drop in 2000.

#### Types of Theft

The United States reported higher rates for two of the four theft types (Figure 8). For the largest theft category, the U.S. rate of “other” thefts, such as pick-pocketing and purse snatching, was 1,160 incidents per 100,000 population, 28% higher than the Canadian rate (909). Police data also indicated that the U.S. rate of shoplifting was 30% higher than in Canada. On the other hand, Canada had a 65% higher rate of stolen bicycles. The rates of theft from motor vehicles were virtually identical between the two countries (870 incidents per 100,000 in Canada versus 864 in the U.S.).

Figure 8

 Rates of theft, by type Canada and the United States, 2000



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting program, CCJS; Uniform Crime Reporting program, FBI.

### Arson rates higher in Canada

Arson involves the burning or the attempt to burn property with or without the intent to defraud. In 2000, the Canadian rate of arson was 41% higher than the American rate. Canada recorded 45 incidents per 100,000 population, compared to the American rate of 32.<sup>15,16</sup>

### Regional Analysis

As there is considerable variation in the distribution of police-reported crime within Canada and the United States, it is important to account for intra-national variation in crime rates.

To facilitate this comparison, comparable provinces/territories and states were grouped into six regions: Atlantic, Central, Mid-West, Mountain/West, North, and South (See Methodology). The Southern region was not created for Canada, due to the lack of a comparable region.<sup>17</sup>

In general, comparable violent and property crimes in the U.S. and Canada tend to increase from east to west. The mid-west experienced the highest crime rates within Canada, while the mountain/west had higher rates in the U.S.

Similar to the overall cross-national patterns, the U.S. recorded higher rates than Canada for homicide, aggravated assault, and robbery in most geographic regions (Table 1). Exceptions to this pattern include higher homicide rates in northern Canada and higher rates of aggravated assault and robbery in the Canadian mid-west.

Canadian homicide rates were higher in the north, whereas U.S. homicide rates were highest in the central and mountain/western region. Within each country, aggravated assaults were highest in the north and lowest in the Atlantic regions. While robbery rates were lower in both Atlantic and northern regions of Canada and the United States, the mid-west region of each country showed very different patterns. The Canadian mid-west had highest robbery rates, while the American mid-west experienced one of the lowest rates of robbery.

For all regions, break and enter rates were higher in Canada. Northern and mid-western regions of Canada reported the highest rates of B&E, while the mountain/west reported the highest rates in the U.S. Although there are generally higher rates of motor vehicle thefts in Canada, the rate of motor vehicle theft was higher in the American Atlantic states than the Canadian Atlantic provinces.

### Metropolitan Analysis

Another way to examine intra-national crime variations is to look at urban crime. In Canada, major metropolitan areas are known as Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs), which can be defined as metropolitan areas having an urbanized core of at least 100,000 population with surrounding urban and rural areas which have a high degree of economic and social integration. The United States employs a similar concept, Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs).

Average crime rates have been calculated for the two largest population groups: 500,000 and over and 250,000 to 499,999.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Adjustments were made to the American arson rates to account for the fact that the rate is driven upward 3% by the omission of the hierarchy rule. Refer to methodology on the hierarchy rule. Also, the American rate of arson was adjusted for the under-coverage for this offence. In 2000, 76% of U.S. police agencies submitted 12 months of arson data to the FBI.  
<sup>16</sup> Trend data are not available for this offence, due to yearly fluctuations in U.S. survey coverage.  
<sup>17</sup> The state of Hawaii was also excluded from the regional comparison, due to the lack of a geographically comparable region in Canada.  
<sup>18</sup> An analysis of metropolitan areas with a population of 100,000 to 249,999 was not done, as half of the American MSAs in this population category are located in Texas. As such, an average rate would not be representative of the smaller MSAs in the U.S.

Table 1

**Rates of criminal incidents by region, 2000<sup>1,2</sup>**

	Atlantic <sup>3</sup>		Central <sup>4</sup>		Mid-west <sup>5</sup>		Mountain/West <sup>6</sup>		Northern <sup>7</sup>		Southern <sup>8</sup>		National Average	
	Canada	U.S.	Canada	U.S.	Canada	U.S.	Canada	U.S.	Canada	U.S.	Canada	U.S.	Canada	U.S.
Homicide	1.4	2.3	1.6	5.1	2.6	4.1	2.0	5.2	6.0	4.3	-	6.7	1.8	5.5
Aggravated Assault	93	238	124	272	301	229	157	343	403	405	-	382	143	324
Robbery	32	82	84	163	127	82	105	144	43	78	-	147	88	145
Break and enter	725	502	869	581	1,381	628	1,113	728	2,185	622	-	912	954	728
Motor vehicle theft	222	344	477	367	895	296	625	526	652	375	-	410	521	414
Theft	1,714	1,823	1,816	2,146	2,671	2,577	3,349	2,423	2,981	2,686	-	2,848	2,224	2,475

<sup>1</sup> Rates are calculated per 100,000 population.  
<sup>2</sup> Due to state variations in the survey coverage of arson, this offence is excluded from the analysis.  
<sup>3</sup> The Atlantic provinces include Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. For the United States, the Atlantic states include Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.  
<sup>4</sup> The Central provinces include Quebec and Ontario. The American central states include Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.  
<sup>5</sup> The mid-Western provinces include Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The American states include Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota.  
<sup>6</sup> The Mountain/Western provinces include Alberta and British Columbia. The American states include Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.  
<sup>7</sup> The Northern region includes 3 Canadian territories: Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, and the American state of Alaska.  
<sup>8</sup> There are no Canadian provinces/territories that are geographically comparable to Southern United States. Southern states include Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. Also included is the District of Columbia.  
**Source:** Uniform Crime Reporting program, CCJS; Uniform Crime Reporting program, FBI

In 2000, 49% of the Canadian population and American population lived in a metropolitan area with a population of 500,000 or more. Eight percent of Canadians and Americans lived in a metropolitan area with 250,000 to 499,999 residents.

Similar to the rates for the total population, the United States reported higher rates of homicide, aggravated assault, robbery, and thefts in urban centres with populations over 500,000, as well as those with populations 250,000 to 499,999 (Table 2). On the other hand, Canadian CMAs within the two population groups experienced more break and enters and motor vehicle thefts per capita than American MSAs.

Urban level analysis can also involve examining crime rates for specific metropolitan centres. The analysis below examines

crime rates for the nine largest metropolitan areas in Canada and the United States (Table 3).<sup>19</sup>

With exception of Boston, all American metropolitan areas had much higher homicide rates (ranging from 7.2 to 10.6 homicides per 100,000 population) than the nine Canadian CMAs (ranging from 1.0 to 2.5). Washington D.C. reported the lowest aggravated assault rate among the American MSAs, with a rate only 4% lower than the highest ranking Canadian CMA (Winnipeg). The second lowest American aggravated assault

<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that the nine major U.S. metropolitan areas are not representative of U.S. metropolitan areas with populations 500,000 and over. These nine cities have lower rates of break and enter and theft but higher rates of homicide, aggravated assault, robbery, and motor vehicle theft.

Table 2

**Average rates for metropolitan areas by population group, 2000<sup>1,2</sup>**

	Population 500,000 or more		Population 250,000 to 499,999		National Rate	
	Canada (9 CMAs)	U.S. (81 MSAs)	Canada (7 CMAs)	U.S. (62 MSAs)	Canada	U.S.
Homicide	1.8	6.4	1.4	4.4	1.8	5.5
Aggravated assault	156	365	122	284	143	324
Robbery	138	197	74	108	88	145
Break and enter	931	740	940	788	954	728
Motor vehicle theft	652	543	485	334	521	414
Theft	2,330	2,562	2,557	2,752	2,224	2,475

<sup>1</sup> Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population.  
<sup>2</sup> Due to U.S. metropolitan variations in the UCR coverage of arson, this offence is excluded from the analysis.  
 CMA= Census Metropolitan Area  
 MSA= Metropolitan Statistical Area  
**Source:** Uniform Crime Reporting program, CCJS; Uniform Crime Reporting program, FBI.

Table 3



**Offence Rates for Nine Major Canadian and American Metropolitan Areas, 2000<sup>1,2</sup>**

	Population	Homicide	Aggravated assault	Robbery	Break and enter	Motor vehicle theft	Theft
<b>Canadian Metropolitan Areas</b>							
Toronto	4,751,408	1.7	157	107	553	365	1,692
Montréal	3,480,342	2.1	152	173	1,195	800	2,068
Vancouver <sup>3</sup>	2,048,823	2.0	164	187	1,430	1,058	4,415
Calgary	952,960	1.7	132	105	814	580	2,616
Edmonton	944,194	2.0	180	134	986	539	2,559
Ottawa <sup>4</sup>	822,933	1.0	123	96	690	558	1,835
Québec	689,654	1.7	76	70	925	230	1,771
Winnipeg	681,146	2.5	276	251	1,228	1,425	2,779
Hamilton	671,679	1.3	144	86	815	698	1,832
<b>Canada</b>	<b>30,750,087</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>2,224</b>
<b>American Metropolitan Areas</b>							
Los Angeles	9,534,500	10.6	607	298	636	674	1,726
New York	9,111,706	7.8	474	372	453	428	1,785
Philadelphia	5,079,925	8.1	350	270	507	492	2,199
Washington	4,904,313	7.4	265	171	452	484	2,223
Detroit	4,510,292	10.6	472	229	735	919	2,280
Houston	4,172,584	7.7	433	242	960	645	2,724
Boston <sup>5</sup>	3,573,108	2.1	..	106	408	426	1,640
Dallas	3,412,490	8.5	377	252	1,081	747	3,146
Phoenix <sup>6</sup>	3,235,892	7.2	354	170	1,111	1,010	3,524
<b>U.S.</b>	<b>281,421,906</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>2,475</b>

<sup>1</sup> Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population.

<sup>2</sup> Major American metropolitan areas represent the nine most populous Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) generated by the FBI.

These MSAs are not necessarily the largest according to the U.S. Census Bureau, since MSAs must have at least 75% reporting to the FBI and the central city/central cities must have submitted all 12 months of crime data to be included in the FBI reports.

<sup>3</sup> From September to December 2000, as a result of labour action, there was a decrease in thefts reported to Vancouver Police.

<sup>4</sup> Ottawa represents the Ontario part of the Ottawa-Hull CMA.

<sup>5</sup> Data for aggravated assault are not available.

<sup>6</sup> Phoenix is tenth most populous MSA. The ninth major MSA (Riverside-San Bernadino, CA; population 3,252,772) is excluded from the presentation, since the urban core has a population of 657,962, compared to the city of Phoenix which has a population of 1,300,786.

Source: Uniform Crime Reporting program, CCJS; Uniform Crime Reporting program, FBI

rate (Philadelphia) was 27% higher than Winnipeg. The robbery rate for Boston, the lowest of the American metropolitan areas, fell in the middle of the nine Canadian CMAs, while the highest-ranking American MSA (New York) surpassed the highest Canadian rate (Winnipeg) by 48%.

Three Canadian CMAs (Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Montreal) experienced more break and enters per capita than any of the nine American cities. Rates of break and enter in four American cities (Boston, Washington, D.C., New York, and Philadelphia) placed below all the major Canadian CMAs. For motor vehicle theft, Winnipeg and Vancouver had higher rates than the nine American MSAs, while both Québec and Toronto had lower rates than any of the American metropolitan areas.

## COMPARISON OF ARREST RATES FOR DRUG VIOLATIONS, IMPAIRED DRIVING, AND PROSTITUTION

The recording of drug violations, impaired driving, and prostitution is typically the result of pro-active policing rather than reporting to police. Also, data for these crimes can be

influenced by police use of alternative measures at the pre-charge level. Therefore, statistics for these crimes reflect as much the level of police enforcement and discretion as the actual behavioural patterns.

### BOX 2 – Defining Arrest and Charge Data

The American UCR program uses the term “arrest”, while the Canadian program uses the term “charge” to refer to the number of offenders identified by police. Although the element of charge is not a requirement in either survey, American and Canadian police must consider the person “chargeable”. In the American UCR, this means that arrested persons have received a citation or summons or have been detained pending criminal charges. Persons charged in Canada have been recommended to be charged by police or formally charged.

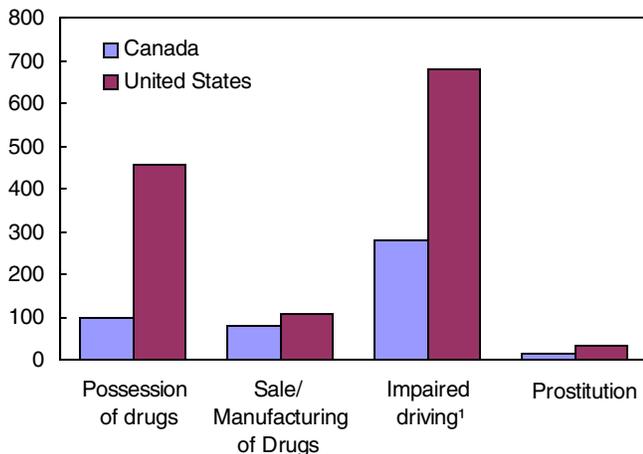
It should be noted that U.S. data on drug violations, impaired driving, and prostitution were not available at the offence-level.

For the three offences examined, the U.S. had much higher arrest/charging rates than Canada (Figure 9). Combined, the American rate of arrest for drug offences, impaired driving, and prostitution was nearly two and a half times greater than the rate of persons charged with these offences in Canada.

Figure 9

**Rates of persons charged with/arrested for selected offences, Canada and the United States, 2000**

Rate per 100,000 population



<sup>1</sup> Rates are calculated on the basis of persons aged 16 and over (potential drivers).  
 Source: Uniform Crime Reporting program, CCJS: Uniform Crime Reporting program, FBI.

**Arrests for drug possession much higher in the U.S.**

In general, police can charge an individual with either drug possession or drug supply offences (e.g., trafficking and production). Both countries recognize this distinction in their UCR aggregate programs. Drug possession is a stand-alone category in the surveys, while the Canadian categories of trafficking and production<sup>20</sup> have been combined to mirror the American category of sale/manufacture.

Charges for drug possession account for just over half (56%) of all drug offences in Canada, compared to 4 out of 5 (81%) drug offences in the U.S. In 2000, drug possession represented an approximate rate of 454 arrests per 100,000 Americans, much higher than the Canadian rate of 100.

The cross-national difference for supply offences is less dramatic. For the sale and production of drugs, police in United States arrested 107 individuals per 100,000 population, 39% higher than the rate of 77 persons charged per 100,000 population in Canada.

In all, the rate of persons charged/arrested for drug violations was three times higher in the United States. This crime gap differs from the situation twenty years ago, when Canadian and American rates were virtually identical (Figure 10). Since 1980, the American rate has sharply increased (+117%), while the Canadian rate, despite increasing in recent years, has dropped 29%.

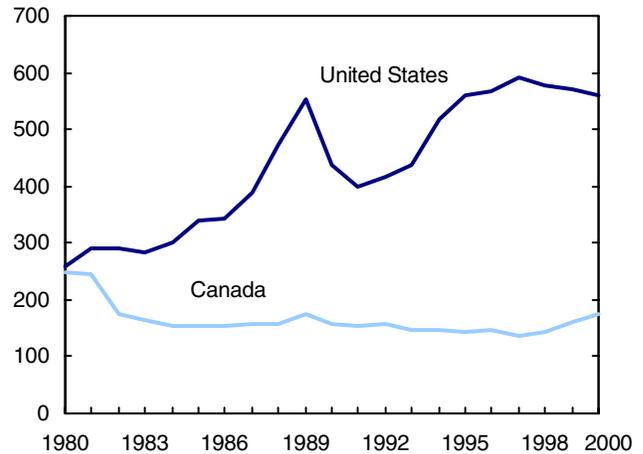
**U.S. has much higher arrest rate of impaired driving**

Impaired driving can be defined as the impaired operation of a vehicle caused by alcohol or drugs. Police in the U.S. arrested

Figure 10

**Rates of persons charged with/arrested for drug offences, Canada and the United States, 1980-2000**

Rate per 100,000 population



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting program, CCJS: Uniform Crime Reporting program, FBI.

679 individuals per 100,000 people aged 16 and over (population of potential drivers). In comparison, Canadian police charged 277 persons per 100,000 population aged 16 years and over. Some of the cross-national difference may reflect variations in enforcement practices, as impaired driving charges arise from both responsive and preventative action by the police.

Although males in both countries account for the large majority of persons charged with impaired driving, the proportion of females charged is slightly higher in the United States. In 2000, females accounted for 16% of total persons accused in the U.S., compared to 12% in Canada.

**Prostitution arrest rate higher in the U.S.**

While prostitution is generally illegal in the United States, the Canadian *Criminal Code* only proscribes the acts surrounding prostitution. However, given that the Canadian prostitution offences, including communicating for the purposes of buying and selling sexual services, make it practically impossible to legally engage in prostitution,<sup>21</sup> it is possible to compare prostitution between the two countries. Prostitution may also include keeping a bawdy-house, pandering, detaining and transporting persons for immoral purposes.

<sup>20</sup> For heroine, cocaine, and other drugs, production and importation are grouped together in the Canadian survey. The inclusion of importation does not distort comparison, as this subcategory accounts for only 0.8% of all drug charges.

<sup>21</sup> Lowman, J. 1998 "Prostitution Law Reform in Canada" in *Institute of Comparative Law (ed.) Toward Comparative Law in the 21st Century*. Tokyo: Chuo University Press.

The American arrest rate for prostitution is three times greater than the Canadian rate (31 arrests per 100,000 population versus 13 persons charged per 100,000 population). Females accounted for 62% of the accused in the United States, compared to just over half (52%) of all persons charged in Canada. The historic predominance of females accused in prostitution-related offences has decreased since the mid-1980s, when approximately two-thirds (65%) of accused in the U.S. and 59% in Canada were females. This shift in the distribution of the sex of the accused may indicate changes in enforcement practices, in that some police agencies may be charging more men in an effort to hold customers more accountable for their participation in the sex trade. Also, the replacement of the Canadian solicitation law with the communication law in 1985 more clearly targets both clients and prostitutes.

## METHODOLOGY

### 1. Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Aggregate Program, Canada

The Canadian Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) is an annual program, administered by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada. The survey records summary crime information on the number of incidents reported to police, as well as the number of persons charged. In 2000, the program had virtually 100% coverage of police agencies.

The aggregate UCR survey classifies incidents according to the most serious offence in the incident (generally the offence that carries the longest maximum sentence under the *Criminal Code* of Canada). In categorizing incidents, violent offences always take precedence over non-violent offences. As a result, less serious offences are under-represented by the UCR survey.

### 2. Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Summary Program, United States

The American Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) survey is an annual program, coordinated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the United States. The program records summary crime information on the number of incidents reported to the police, as well as the number of arrests. In 2000, the program covered 87% of all police agencies. To represent full coverage, the FBI estimates missing police reports at the agency level. Specifically, the volume of crime in non-reporting agencies is calculated based on the known offences of similar police agencies. Unless otherwise mentioned, all analyses in this report are based on these estimated survey counts.

The summary UCR program classifies incidents according to the "hierarchy rule". If an incident contains more than one offence, only the most serious offence is counted. Seriousness is determined by the location of an offence on the hierarchical scale. (For more information, refer to the UCR Handbook.<sup>22</sup>) Less serious offences are under-represented by the UCR survey.

### 3. UCR Regional Analysis: Grouping provinces/territories and states

To facilitate intra-national comparisons at the regional level, regions were created within Canada and the United States based on geographic location from East to West, as well as Northern and Southern extremes. The development of these regions benefited from the FBI's geographical divisions for the U.S.<sup>23</sup> Using the nine FBI divisions, the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics created five distinct regions in the United States which could be considered geographically comparable to Canadian provinces. These regions included Atlantic, Central, Mid-West, Mountain/West, and South. The state of Alaska was pulled from the FBI's divisions to compare with the Canadian territories, forming the sixth and final region: the North.

The state of Hawaii was excluded from the regional analysis due to the lack of comparable Canadian provinces and the region of the South was created for the U.S., even though a comparable region could not be created for Canada.

Since most U.S. regions contained more than one state, the development of comparable Canadian regions also involved grouping provinces/territories. Below are the particular state and provincial/territorial configurations for the six regions created for the purpose of this report.

The *Atlantic region* includes the Canadian provinces of Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick and the U.S. states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

The *Central region* includes the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec and the U.S. states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

The *Mid-west* includes the Canadian provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan and the U.S. states of Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

The *Mountain/West* includes the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia and the U.S. states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

The *North* includes the Canadian territories of Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut and the U.S. state of Alaska.

The *South* includes the District of Columbia and 18 U.S. states: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

<sup>22</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Justice. 1984. Uniform Crime Reporting Handbook. Washington, D.C.: Federal Bureau of Investigation.

<sup>23</sup> For a listing of these divisions, see Crime in the United States 2000, Uniform Crime Reports. 2001. Washington: FBI, Department of Justice.

**4. Homicide Survey, Canada**

The Homicide Survey has collected police-reported data on homicide incidents since 1961, including characteristics of victims and accused. In 2000, these data represented 100% of all reported homicides.

**5. Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR), United States**

The Supplementary Homicide Report has collected police-reported data on homicide incidents since the 1960s, including characteristics of victims and accused. In 2000, these data represented 82% of all reported homicides.

## Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics

For further information, please contact the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 19th floor, R.H. Coats Building, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0T6 at (613) 951-9023 or call toll-free 1 800 387-2231. To order a publication, you may telephone (613) 951-7277 or fax (613) 951-1584 or internet: [order@statcan.ca](mailto:order@statcan.ca). You may also call 1 800 267-6677 (Canada and United States) toll-free. If you order by telephone, written confirmation is not required.

### Recent Juristat Releases

#### Catalogue 85-002-XPE

##### 1999

- Vol. 19 No. 12 Justice Spending in Canada
- Vol. 19 No. 13 Youth Violent Crime

##### 2000

- Vol. 20 No. 1 Adult Criminal Court Statistics, 1998/99
- Vol. 20 No. 2 Youth Court Statistics, 1998/99 Highlights
- Vol. 20 No. 3 Adult Correctional Services in Canada, 1998-99
- Vol. 20 No. 4 The Justice Factfinder, 1998
- Vol. 20 No. 5 Crime Statistics in Canada, 1999
- Vol. 20 No. 6 Alternative Measures in Canada, 1998-99
- Vol. 20 No. 7 Sentencing of Young Offenders in Canada, 1998/99
- Vol. 20 No. 8 Youth Custody and Community Services in Canada, 1998-99
- Vol. 20 No. 9 Homicide in Canada – 1999
- Vol. 20 No. 10 Criminal Victimization in Canada, 1999
- Vol. 20 No. 11 Criminal Harassment
- Vol. 20 No. 12 Public Attitudes Toward the Criminal Justice System
- Vol. 20 No. 13 Break and Enter, 1999

##### 2001

- Vol. 21 No. 1 Canada's Shelters for Abused Women, 1999-2000
- Vol. 21 No. 2 Adult Criminal Court Statistics, 1999/00
- Vol. 21 No. 3 Youth Court Statistics, 1999/00
- Vol. 21 No. 4 Problem Behaviour and Delinquency in Children and Youth
- Vol. 21 No. 5 Adult Correctional Services in Canada, 1999-00
- Vol. 21 No. 6 Children Witnessing Family Violence
- Vol. 21 No. 7 Spousal Violence after Marital Separation
- Vol. 21 No. 8 Crime Statistics in Canada, 2000
- Vol. 21 No. 9 Homicide in Canada – 2000
- Vol. 21 No. 10 Sentencing in Adult Criminal Courts, 1999/00