



# Juristat

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## MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT IN CANADA – 2001

*By Marnie Wallace*

### HIGHLIGHTS

- The rate of motor vehicle thefts increased in 2001 (+5%) for the first time in five years, and now stands 10% higher than a decade ago.
- The national increase in motor vehicle thefts over the past decade was led by sharp increases in specific geographic areas, which could not be offset by the moderate decreases reported elsewhere in the country. Since 1991, motor vehicle theft rates have doubled in London and Hamilton, tripled in Regina, and more than quadrupled in Winnipeg, resulting in a large increase in theft rates in Manitoba and Saskatchewan in particular.
- Canada ranked fifth highest of seventeen countries for risk of car theft in the 1999 International Crime Victimization Survey. Canada shared its fifth place ranking with Sweden, with 1.6% of the population being a victim of car theft.
- While cars remain the most commonly stolen vehicle, the rate of trucks, including sport utility vehicles, being stolen is growing quickly with an increase of 59% over the past decade.
- Parking lots are the most common location from which motor vehicle thefts occur, followed by streets, and single homes, including garages and driveways. Together these locations account for 87% of all motor vehicle thefts.
- Nearly one quarter of all vehicles stolen in 2001 were never recovered. Vehicles that are not recovered are often connected to organized theft rings that steal vehicles for resale, either in Canada or abroad, or for parts.
- Motor vehicle thefts are characterized by relatively low clearance rates. In 2001, 13% of all vehicle theft incidents were “solved” by police, which is similar to other property crimes such as break-ins which had a clearance rate of 16%.
- The rate of youths 12 to 17 years of age charged with motor vehicle theft increased in 2001 for the second consecutive year, though the rate remained 35% lower than a decade ago. Youths account for 42% of all persons charged with this crime.
- The rate of thefts from motor vehicles increased (+1.3%) for the first time in ten years in 2001. Audio equipment was the item most likely to be stolen from inside a motor vehicle.



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## INTRODUCTION

Thousands of Canadians are forced to deal with motor vehicle theft each year. Often, vehicles are stolen out of the relative safety of the owner's own driveway. Stolen vehicles can become involved in police chases that may end in injury or even death. The loss, damage, and danger connected to motor vehicle theft has raised the concern of Canadians, and led to the creation of numerous police and public anti-auto theft task forces and action groups across the country.

Each year motor vehicle thefts cost Canadians approximately \$1 billion: \$600 million in insurance premiums, \$250 million in police, health care and court systems costs, and further millions of dollars in correctional services expenses (Insurance Bureau of Canada, 2002).

This *Juristat* provides a profile of motor vehicle theft in Canada, including trends over the past decade, characteristics of thefts, and of persons accused of motor vehicle theft. The report also examines international data, methods and prevalence of organized crime in Canadian auto theft, and recent auto theft prevention programs and strategies.

Motor vehicle theft consists of taking, or attempting to take, a vehicle without the owner's authorization. A motor vehicle is defined as a car, truck, van, bus, recreational vehicle, semi-trailer truck, motorcycle, construction machinery, agricultural machinery or other land-based motorized vehicle such as an all-terrain vehicle, a go-kart, a dune buggy or a snowmobile.

## TRENDS IN MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT

### First rise in motor vehicle theft in five years

There were 170,213 motor vehicle thefts reported to police in Canada in 2001, translating to a rate of 548 thefts per 100,000 population. The rate of motor vehicle thefts increased in 2001 (+5%) for the first time in five years (Table 1 and Figure 1).

Since 1991, the rate of all other property crimes in Canada has decreased 38%, yet motor vehicle thefts have risen by 10% over the same time period. In 1991 motor vehicle theft accounted for 8% of all property crimes. By 2001 that portion had risen to 14%.

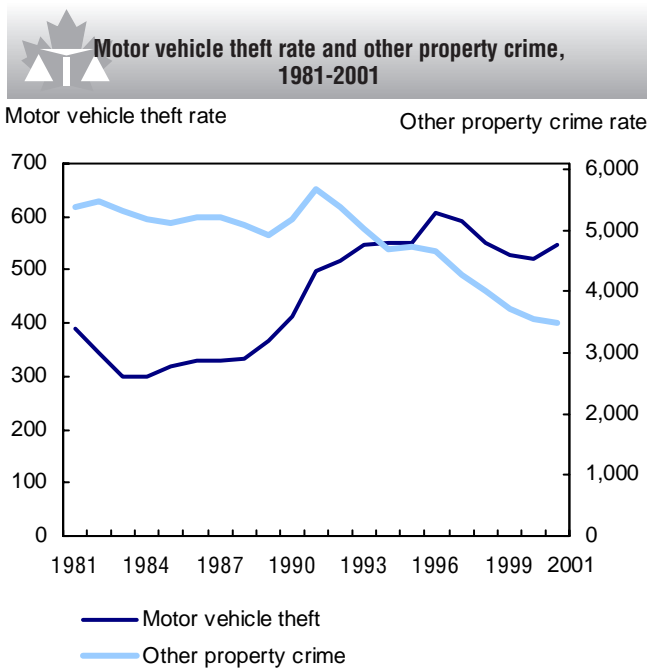
The national increase in motor vehicle thefts over the past decade was led by sharp increases in highly concentrated geographic areas, which could not be offset by the moderate decreases reported elsewhere in the country. Over the past ten years, motor vehicle theft rates have doubled in London and Hamilton, tripled in Regina, and more than quadrupled in Winnipeg, resulting in a large increase in theft rates in Manitoba and Saskatchewan in particular (Table 2 and Table 3).

### Manitoba has highest theft rate for fifth year in a row

Provincially, rates ranged from 119 per 100,000 population in Newfoundland and Labrador to 1,148 in Manitoba (Table 2 and Figure 2). Newfoundland and Labrador has exhibited the lowest rate of motor vehicle thefts in the country for more than twenty years. The highest rate has occurred in Manitoba for eight of the last ten years. This is primarily due to the high rates of motor vehicle theft in Winnipeg.

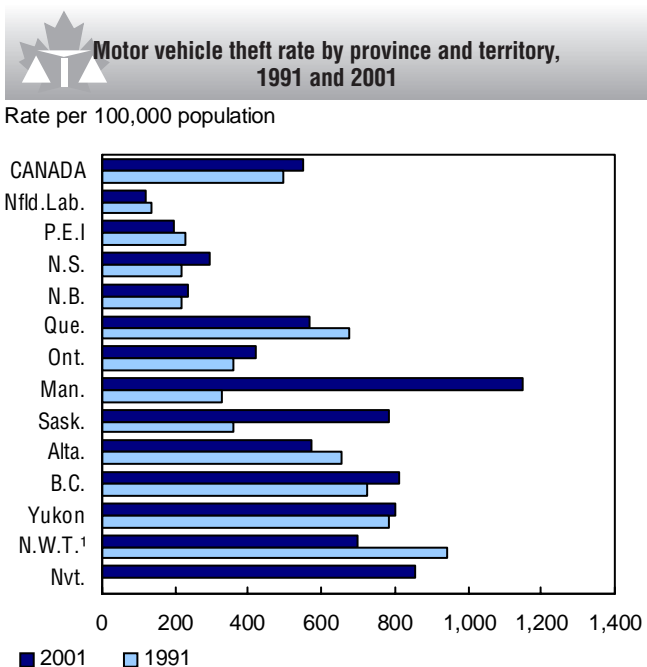
**Rate per 100,000 Population** – The previous *Juristat* concerning motor vehicle theft in Canada, written in 1996, utilized the number of registered motor vehicles to calculate a rate of thefts per 100,000 registered vehicles. However, in 1999 changes were made to the annual Survey of Road Motor Vehicle Registrations, making data prior to 1999 incomparable to data in the years that followed. As this eliminated the possibility of long term data analysis, this *Juristat* has returned to rates of motor vehicle thefts calculated per 100,000 population.

Figure 1



Note: Rates are per 100,000 population.  
Source: UCR Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

Figure 2



<sup>1</sup> Nunavut officially came into being as a Territory of Canada on April 1, 1999. For 1991 the figures used include Nunavut as defined before April 1, 1999.  
Source: UCR Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

Seven provinces experienced increases in rates of motor vehicle thefts in 2001. The largest increase (+23%) was seen in Prince Edward Island. However, even with this increase, the rate of motor vehicle thefts in PEI was second lowest in the country. Other large increases were reported in Alberta and British Columbia, at 15% and 13% respectively. The three provinces showing a decline in the rate of motor vehicle thefts in 2001 were Nova Scotia (-4%), Québec (-1%) and Newfoundland and Labrador (-1%).

**Winnipeg records highest rate among nine largest metropolitan areas**

Of the nine largest census metropolitan areas<sup>1</sup> Winnipeg had the highest rate of motor vehicle thefts, at 1,581 per 100,000 population (Table 3). Vancouver's rate (1,149) was also well above the national rate. Only three census metropolitan areas reported rates lower than the national average in 2001. These were Ottawa (488), Toronto (370) and Quebec (290).

The largest decrease (-12%) was reported in Ottawa. The only other decreases were seen in Montreal (-3%) and Calgary (-1%). The largest increase occurred in Edmonton, with a rate 39% higher than one year ago. This CMA however, has seen a decrease (-9%) in the rate of motor vehicle thefts over the past decade.

When looking at all 25 census metropolitan areas across the country, rates ranged from a low of 183 motor vehicle thefts per 100,000 population in St. John's to a high of 1,996 in Regina. Winnipeg's rate of 1,581 was the second highest. The high rates of theft in these two areas can be attributed to high incidences of youth offending. In Winnipeg in particular, a pattern has formed in which youth who began offending for the purpose of joyriding in the mid 1990s remain active, and have since been joined by younger offenders as well<sup>2</sup>. Victoria reported a 55% increase in the rate of motor vehicle thefts in 2001, but the rate remains only 6% higher than it was ten years ago.

The wide variation in rates among Canadian cities can be explained by a number of factors. Location may render a city more susceptible to motor vehicle theft. For instance, port cities such as Vancouver may have high rates of theft because of the ease with which vehicles can quickly be exported out of the country after being stolen. Other factors that may make a city more or less vulnerable to motor vehicle theft include police and community reaction to crime, or current social and economic conditions within the city.

Taking all CMAs together, 2001 saw a 4% increase in the rate of motor vehicle thefts over the previous year and a 6% increase over a decade ago.

**Surrey has highest theft rate of all 7 forces in the Vancouver CMA**

In many instances, a single CMA will comprise a number of individual police forces. A closer examination of police forces

<sup>1</sup> A census metropolitan area (CMA) is a large urban core (over 100,000 population) together with adjacent urban and rural areas that have a high degree of economic and social integration.  
<sup>2</sup> Winnipeg Police Service's stolen auto unit.

can give a more detailed picture of where motor vehicle thefts are occurring in Canada (Table 3b). For example, seven separate forces police the Vancouver CMA, and result in a combined rate of motor vehicle theft of 1,149 per 100,000 population. However, when the CMA is broken down by police service the rates range from a low of 450 in Delta to a high of 2,033 in Surrey. Similarly, the Toronto CMA's low rate of motor vehicle theft (370) is a result of a higher rate within the boundaries of Metro Toronto (438), and lower rates from the York Regional (335) and Peel Regional (250) police services.

### Canada ranks fifth highest of 17 countries for risk of car theft

In 1999, Canada's General Social Survey (GSS) focused on victimization and public perceptions of crime and the justice system. The previous GSS on Victimization had been conducted in 1993. In 1999, telephone interviews were conducted with approximately 26,000 people, aged 15 and over, living in the 10 provinces. Those respondents who had been a victim of a crime in the previous 12 months were asked for detailed information on each incident. Between 1993 and 1999 the GSS estimated an increase in motor vehicle theft, however the results were not statistically significant.

A number of recent reports have compared crime rates across various countries. Seventeen industrialized countries took part in the 1999 International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS), which measured victimization in relation to 11 different offences<sup>3</sup>. The survey measured car theft and motorcycle theft separately which ranked first and fourth, respectively, as the most serious offences as ranked by victims (Besserer, 2001). Car and motorcycle theft had the highest rates of reporting to police of all eleven offences.

### International Victimization

Percentage of population that was a victim of car theft in 1999

Country	Percent
England & Wales	2.6
Australia	2.1
France	1.9
Poland	1.7
Canada	1.6
Sweden	1.6
Northern Ireland	1.5
Denmark	1.4
Portugal	1.2
Scotland	1.0
Belgium	0.8
Finland	0.5
Netherlands	0.5
Spain	0.5
U.S.A	0.5
Switzerland	0.4
Japan	0.1

**Source:** *Criminal Victimization in 17 Industrialised Countries: Key Findings from the 2000 International Crime Victims Survey.* (Wetenschappelijk onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum, The Netherlands).

The ICVS ranks participating countries according to the percentage of the population that has been a victim of a certain crime in the reference year. The table of International Victimization shows the risk of being a victim of car theft in all 17 participating countries. Canada ranked fifth highest, along with Sweden, with 1.6% of the population being a victim of car theft in 1999. England and Wales ranked highest, while Japan was lowest.

### Canada follows international trends

Police reported data can also be compared across countries. The Home Office in Britain has produced an annual bulletin since 1993 which compares police reported data for a number of offences across 39 different countries. The report uses data supplied by statistical contacts in each country. Most recently, data were released concerning the period from 1996 to 2000. While definitions of offences vary between countries and make absolute comparisons between the recorded crime levels in different countries misleading, comparisons of trends are still possible (Table 4).

Over the years 1996 to 2000, 14 countries reported decreases in the number of motor vehicle thefts reported to police. Canada had the eleventh largest decline, at 11%. Increases over that four-year period were seen in 17 countries, with the largest in Austria (+49%).

A comparison of Canada's motor vehicle theft rate to that of the United States, shows that Canada's rate surpassed the U.S. rate in 1996, and has remained higher in the years that followed (Gannon, 2001). In 2000 the Canadian rate was 26% higher than the American rate<sup>4</sup>. Preliminary data for 2001 indicate that, as in Canada, the American rate of motor vehicle theft also increased (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002).

## CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT

### One in six motor vehicle thefts occur from driveways and garages

Parking lots were the most popular location for motor vehicle thefts in Canada in 2001, accounting for 41% of all thefts. The next most popular location was streets (30%), while a further 16% of motor vehicle thefts occurred at single homes, including driveways and garages.

More motor vehicle thefts occurred between the hours of 6 a.m. and noon than during any other 6-hour period in the day<sup>5</sup>. Theft between these hours accounted for 38% of all motor vehicle

<sup>3</sup> The 11 offences are car theft, burglary, robbery, motorcycle theft, assault, sexual assault, theft personal property, attempted burglary, bicycle theft, theft from a car, and car vandalism.

<sup>4</sup> The American definition of motor vehicle theft does not include farm equipment or construction equipment, where the Canadian definition does. These two categories, however, account for less than 1% of all stolen motor vehicles, and therefore would have only a very slight impact on the rate.

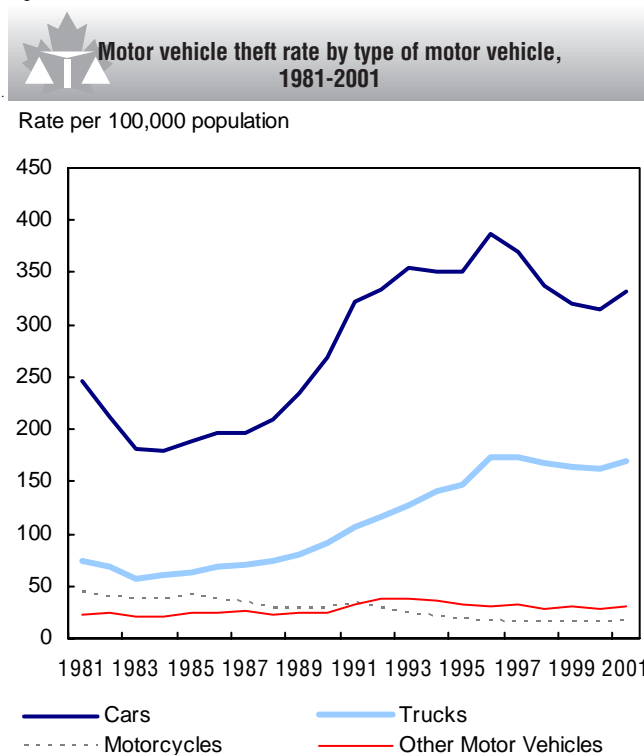
<sup>5</sup> See description of UCR2 survey coverage in methodology section.

thefts, compared to 23% between midnight and 6 a.m., 20% between noon and 6 p.m. and 19% between 6 p.m. and midnight. Of all the motor vehicle thefts that occurred from single homes/houses, almost half (48%) were between the hours of 6 a.m. and noon.

**Cars still at the highest risk of being stolen**

In 2001 cars accounted for 60% of all motor vehicles stolen. A further 31% were trucks, vans, buses and recreational vehicles, 3% were motorcycles, and the final 6% were all other motorized vehicles (snowmobiles, tractor-trailers, construction equipment). This breakdown has changed somewhat over the past ten years, with the proportion of stolen cars decreasing and the proportion of stolen trucks (including vans and SUVs) increasing. The rate of trucks being stolen has increased 59% (Table 3) in the past decade, from 107 to 170 per 100,000 population. This increase illustrates the growing popularity of sports utility vehicles as a target for theft.

Figure 3



Source: UCR Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

The Vehicle Information Centre of Canada releases data each year on the model of vehicles being stolen most frequently<sup>6</sup>. Of all 1999-2000 model vehicles, the two-door Hyundai Tiburon (FX) had the highest theft frequency record, followed by the two-door Acura Integra and the two-door Honda Civic Si. In contrast, the models with the lowest theft frequency record were the Toyota Tundra four wheel drive V8, the Buick Park Avenue, and the Mercury Sable Wagon (Vehicle Information Centre of Canada, 2002).

**Motive**

There are generally four main motives for committing theft of a motor vehicle (Vancouver Police Department, 1999):

- The first, commonly referred to as 'joyriding', tends to be a crime of opportunity. This occurs when a vehicle is stolen with no purpose other than to ride around in it and then leave it somewhere when the ride is over. In these cases the vehicle is often recovered within a two-day period, and near the location from which it was stolen.
- The second motive for stealing a motor vehicle is to use it for the purpose of transporting the thief from one specific location to another. Once the thief has arrived at their intended destination, the motor vehicle will be abandoned.
- Third, motor vehicles are often also stolen for the purpose of transporting people to and from the scene of a crime, usually robbery, break and enter or drug trafficking. Once the crime has been committed, the stolen vehicle is abandoned, often after having been damaged.
- Finally, motor vehicles are stolen as part of commercial theft, primarily by organized crime. Vehicles can either be resold as a whole or dismantled and sold as parts.

When police pursue a stolen vehicle and the driver attempts to flee, the consequences can be serious. One report indicates that between 1991 and 1997, almost half of the vehicles stopped after police pursuits in Ontario were stolen, and that when the pursued vehicle was driven by a person aged 25 or under, the chase resulted in property damage, injuries, and death 72% of the time (National Committee to Reduce Auto Theft, 2000).

Further serious injury or death can occur when a thief attempts to steal a vehicle while the driver is still inside. The crime that has come to be known as 'car jacking' occurs when someone robs, or attempts to rob, a victim of his or her vehicle. What makes this a robbery, rather than a theft, is the presence or threat of violence to the victim. Some examples of the prevalence of this crime include 72 incidents reported by the Toronto Police in 2001, and 26 reported by Vancouver Police in the last 9 months of the same year.

**Organized Crime and Motor Vehicle Theft**

According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, organized motor vehicle theft is a significant problem in Canada. Recent model sport-utility and luxury cars are often stolen for resale within Canada or abroad, while older model cars are usually stolen for parts (Insurance Bureau of Canada, 2002). A recent study undertaken by the Insurance Bureau of Canada found that the average age of vehicles in theft claims has increased every year since 1993, and now stands at 7.4 years. Older vehicles are now more likely to be the targets of theft than newer vehicles (Insurance Bureau of Canada, 2002b).

Cars that are stolen for resale within Canada are often subjected to Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) switching. This scheme occurs when car thieves buy a salvaged car in order

<sup>6</sup> Vehicle Information Centre of Canada (2001), *How Cars Measure Up*. [www.vic.com/english/MeasureUp.htm](http://www.vic.com/english/MeasureUp.htm) (accessed August 30, 2002).



to receive its title and vehicle identification number. They then steal the same model car and place the VIN from the salvaged vehicle onto the stolen vehicle. (Finn, 2000). The vehicle is generally then transported to a different province and resold.

Vehicles that are stolen for resale outside of Canada are generally left with their true VINs, loaded into shipping containers, and sent abroad with false export documents (Insurance Bureau of Canada, 2001). The Insurance Crime Prevention Bureau in Canada and the National Insurance Crime Bureau in the United States have launched the North American Export Committee initiative to combat the export of stolen vehicles within North America, with the help of representatives from the policing community and Customs. Vehicles destined for export are being recorded in a database that is available to all stakeholders, in order to identify stolen vehicles before they leave the country (Insurance Bureau of Canada, 2001). Many stolen vehicles are not exported to the United States, however, but rather pass through Canada's largest ports on their way to European, African, and Asian destinations (Martiniuk and Mazzilli, 2001).

A report by Transport Canada indicates that organized crime rings recruit youths to steal cars in order to protect the upper levels of organized crime. In this way, motor vehicle theft can often act as a gateway for youth to enter into a life of organized crime (National Committee to Reduce Auto Theft, 2000).

Recently, in some large cities incidents have occurred in which an accused has broken into a private home in order to steal the keys to a luxury car or sport utility vehicle that is parked in the driveway overnight, then driven away with the vehicle. In many cases, having the keys is the easiest and most effective means of bypassing computerized anti-theft devices. These stolen vehicles generally exit the country within a few days to be resold overseas, or undergo VIN switching for sale within Canada.<sup>7</sup>

When a vehicle is stolen for its parts it is generally taken to a secure building nearby, also known as a "chop shop", to be dismantled either completely or partially. In order to deal in stolen parts, thieves must have the requisite infrastructure, land and labour for processing vehicles and their parts (Grant and Grabosky, 2001). Once stolen, parts can be resold, used to replace worn or damaged parts, used to rebuild wrecked vehicles, or used in the upgrade of vehicles. In many instances, stolen parts re-enter the legitimate market, as they are sold to legitimate business owners who may or may not know that the parts came from a stolen vehicle (Grant and Grabosky, 2001).

Many researchers and car theft investigators use the number of stolen vehicles "never recovered" as an indicator of the number of vehicles stolen as part of commercial theft committed by organized crime rings. This number tends to underestimate the actual number of professional theft incidences, by counting vehicles that have been stripped and burnt as "recovered" and, therefore, a measure of opportunistic crime. In reality it is more likely that these vehicles were taken by professional thieves for the sale of parts (Gant and Grabosky, 2001).

According to the Insurance Crime Prevention Bureau, the proportion of stolen vehicles "not recovered" in major Canadian cities in recent years has remained around 25%. This supports data from a sub-set<sup>8</sup> of respondents to the most recent version of the Incident Based UCR2 Survey, which shows that 24% of stolen vehicles in 2001 were not recovered.

Of those stolen vehicles that were recovered, most had been damaged in some way. Excluding cases in which the condition of the vehicle was unknown, in 2001, only one quarter of all

<sup>7</sup> Toronto auto theft squad.

<sup>8</sup> There were 115 respondents to the 2.1 version of the Revised UCR Survey in 2001.



### Vehicle Theft Clearance Rates by province/territory, 2001

	No. of vehicle thefts, 2001	Cleared by charge	Cleared Otherwise	Total Cleared
		%	%	%
<b>Canada</b>	<b>170,213</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>12.2</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	634	22.6	6.2	28.7
Prince Edward Island	272	17.6	4.4	22.1
Nova Scotia	2,755	10.2	4.5	14.7
New Brunswick	1,765	12.6	4.8	17.3
Quebec	42,054	6.5	3.0	9.5
Ontario	50,067	8.0	7.4	15.3
Manitoba	13,206	9.6	1.8	11.4
Saskatchewan	7,986	14.8	5.4	20.2
Alberta	17,467	10.8	6.1	16.8
British Columbia	33,242	3.8	2.2	6.0
Yukon	239	11.3	14.2	25.5
Northwest Territories	285	19.6	9.5	29.1
Nunavut	241	11.2	6.6	17.8

Source: UCR Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

recovered vehicles were found completely undamaged. Slightly over 2% of recovered vehicles had some parts or accessories missing. A further 69% of recovered vehicles had suffered some damage, while 4% of recovered vehicles had been completely destroyed, most through burning.

**Clearance rates down across the country**

Motor vehicle theft rates are characterized by relatively low clearance rates. In 2001, 13% of all vehicle theft incidents were “solved” by police, which is similar to other property crimes such as break-ins which had a clearance rate of 16%. Motor vehicle theft clearance rates across the country have decreased over the past decade.

In 2001, of the 170,213 incidents of motor vehicle theft, 8% were cleared by a charge being laid, and 5% were cleared “otherwise”. An incident is cleared “otherwise” when the police have identified at least one accused and there is sufficient evidence to lay a charge in connection with the incident, but the accused is processed by other means. This could occur for many reasons, including that the police department has used discretion and decided not to lay a charge, or the accused has been diverted into an alternative measures program.

Clearance rates for motor vehicle thefts vary across the country, ranging from a high of 29% in Newfoundland and Labrador to a low of 6% in British Columbia.

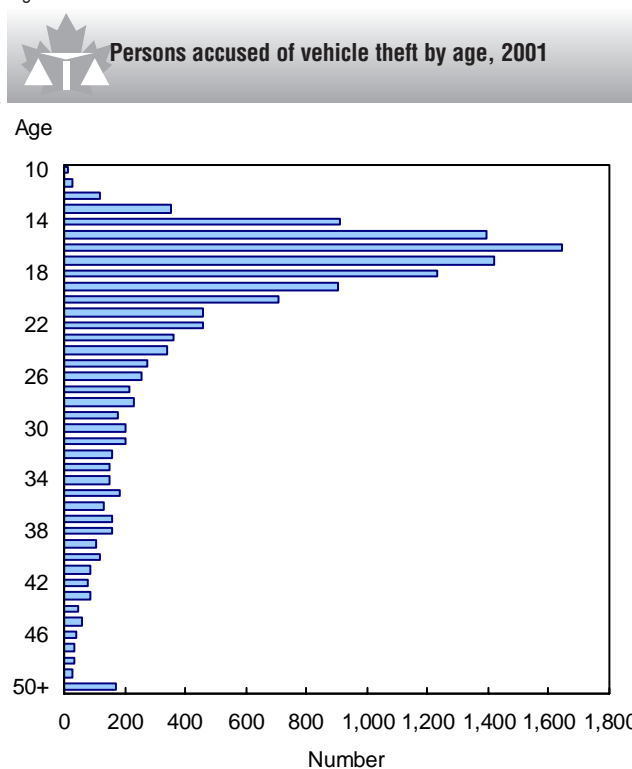
**PERSONS CHARGED WITH MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT**

**Youths account for nearly half of all persons charged with motor vehicle theft**

The rate of youths aged 12 to 17 charged with motor vehicle thefts increased in 2001 for the second year in a row. While the rate was 35% lower than it was ten years ago, youths still accounted for nearly half (42%) of all persons charged with this crime. When taking into account all persons accused of motor vehicle theft in 2001, not only those who were charged, three-quarters were under the age of 25 (Figure 4).

Motor vehicle theft is a predominantly male offence. Males represented 88% of all persons charged with motor vehicle theft in 2001. However, the proportion of females has been increasing steadily for more than twenty years. In 1981, 5% of all persons charged were female, by 1991 that number had increased to 7%, and by 2001 to 12%. This figure is still much lower than for overall property crimes, with females accounting for 23% of all persons charged. Among the provinces, the proportion of females charged ranged from a low of 4% in Quebec to a high of 20% in Manitoba.

Figure 4



Source: Incident Based UCR2 Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

**THEFT FROM MOTOR VEHICLES**

**Theft from motor vehicles increases for the first time in ten years**

Theft from motor vehicles includes the theft of items inside a vehicle, or vehicle accessories and parts (such as hubcaps, tires, or license plates). The rate of thefts from motor vehicles increased slightly (+1.3%) in 2001, the first increase in ten years (Table 5). The 2000 rate was the lowest since 1978.

British Columbia had the highest rate (1,968 thefts from motor vehicles per 100,000 population) of all the provinces. New Brunswick had the lowest rate, at 313.

Compared to ten years ago, thefts from motor vehicles have decreased substantially (-37%). All ten provinces have experienced declines over this time period, with the largest being in New Brunswick (-52%) and Alberta (-48%). The overall decline may be partly attributable to the increasing sophistication of vehicle anti-theft devices.

The item most likely to be stolen from a motor vehicle in 2001 was audio equipment<sup>9</sup>. These were taken in 20% of all thefts from motor vehicles. Personal accessories, such as clothing or luggage, accounted for 14% of the items stolen from motor vehicles in 2001, and a further 12% were vehicle accessories such as hubcaps or hood ornaments.

<sup>9</sup> Data is from the UCR2 Survey.

## PREVENTION

### Anti-theft devices are becoming more popular

There are a number of measures that can be taken by vehicle owners and manufacturers to help prevent motor vehicle theft, including the use of steering wheel locking devices, alarms, etchings, ignition kill switches, fuel kill switches, gearshift locks, tire or wheel locks, hood locks, or vehicle tracking systems.

In 1998 the Vehicle Information Centre of Canada (VICC) introduced North America's first scientific standard for measuring the effectiveness of vehicle theft deterrent systems. The standard was developed in conjunction with car manufacturers, after-market anti theft device manufacturers, consumer representatives, police, insurers and the Insurance Bureau of Canada Investigative Services Division. The new standard requires deterrent systems to be passively armed (requiring no driver intervention), to be disarmed using many possible key codes and, when activated, cut off many vehicle systems such as the fuel pump, the ignition and the starter motor (Insurance Bureau of Canada, 2002).

Studies conducted by the VICC suggest that passive electronic immobilizers could decrease the incidence of car theft by as much as 70% and decrease the cost of theft by at least 50% (Insurance Bureau of Canada, 2002). Many vehicle manufacturers incorporate VICC approved anti-theft devices in their vehicles, and three after-market deterrent systems have also been approved by the VICC for those cars that do not come already equipped with them.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada indicates that while nearly half of all new motor vehicles sold in Canada are equipped with VICC approved anti-theft systems, most Canadians do not have anti-theft devices in their vehicles. Of those who do, 36% have car alarms, 26% have kill switches, and 21% have some form of steering lock such as The Club (Insurance Bureau of Canada, 2000).

### Irreparable vehicles get “branded”

Another preventative measure in place in some Canadian jurisdictions is “branding”. Under this program, the status of stolen and salvaged vehicles is recorded on registration documents and other relevant forms such as used-vehicle information packages, in order to discourage the misuse of vehicle information numbers (VINs) and to facilitate the tracking of vehicle ownership. Any vehicle that is branded as “irreparable” can never be put back on the road, so that its VIN becomes useless to thieves. Vehicles branded as “salvage” can only be returned to the road if they are rebuilt to provincial standards and re-branded accordingly. Currently vehicles are being “branded” in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. In Ontario the process is voluntary (Insurance Bureau of Canada, 2001).

### Parts marking

A third measure that can help discourage motor vehicle theft is parts marking (National Committee to Reduce Auto Theft, 2000). Vehicle identification numbers are engraved on very few body parts (fender, hood, and doors), making it difficult to

track stolen parts. Increasing the number of vehicle parts that are marked with a vehicle identification number can discourage theft of motor vehicles for the resale of parts. A number of jurisdictions, including Manitoba Public Insurance, encourage vehicle owners themselves to engrave the VIN on various parts of their vehicles, particularly on windows.

A study commissioned by the National Institute of Justice in the U.S. attempted to determine the effectiveness of parts labeling in reducing automobile thefts. In response to legislation introduced throughout the 1980s and 1990s, American automobile manufacturers had developed anti-theft labels and begun to affix them to vehicle parts that were considered to be at high risk of being stolen. While three-quarters of automobile theft investigators involved in the study reported that parts labeling aided officers in arresting individuals who steal or sell stolen parts and vehicles, they remained divided about whether parts labeling deterred actual theft of vehicles (Finn, 2001). However, it was felt that parts labeling does clearly increase the thieves' cost of doing business, as they must either take more time in selecting vehicles with unmarked parts, or accept less money from chop shop operators who must spend extra time removing the labels from the parts.

The study concluded that any effective form of parts labeling must take the form of manufacturers stamps in order to be effective, as labels can be more easily removed or counterfeited. Investigators cited seats and airbags most often as requiring marking in order to deter automobile theft (Finn, 2001).

### Police initiated anti-theft programs

Another anti-crime program that has emerged in some Canadian jurisdictions involves police leaving cars, known as bait cars, in high auto-theft areas in the hopes that they will be stolen. The vehicles are usually equipped with a number of special systems, including discreet audio and visual recorders to obtain solid evidence for prosecution. If a bait car is stolen the police are able to track its movement using a global positioning system and remotely disable the vehicle, allowing for the arrest of the thieves (Blue Line, 2002).

Finally, a number of jurisdictions in Canada have encouraged vehicle owners to affix a visible sticker on their car window, which asks police to stop the car when it is being driven between certain hours and check the driver's identification. The hours are usually between midnight and 6:00 a.m. since that is when owners are least likely to be driving their vehicles. This time frame accounts for 23% of all motor vehicle thefts in Canada. In Manitoba this is part of the Combat Auto Theft (CAT) Program, which has been in effect since 1990.

## METHODOLOGY

**Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey** - The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, in co-operation with the policing community, collects police-reported crime statistics through the UCR Survey. The UCR survey produces a continuous historical record of crime and traffic statistics reported by every police agency in Canada since 1962. UCR data reflect reported crime that has been substantiated through police investigation.



Information collected by the survey includes the number of criminal incidents, the clearance status of those incidents and persons-charged information. The UCR survey is considered to be a summary or aggregate type census, with data available for nearly 100 separate criminal offences. The number of motor vehicle thefts and thefts from motor vehicles presented in this Juristat are based on the results of this survey.

**Revised UCR (UCR2) Survey** - In 1984, the UCR survey was redeveloped to expand the information collected. This new survey, called the Revised UCR survey, is a micro data survey that allows detailed examinations of accused and victim characteristics, as well as characteristics of the incident itself. Information in this Juristat on specific ages of accused persons, the status of accused persons (i.e. charged versus not charged), location and time of incidents and property type stolen is based on the results of this survey. In 2001, there were 154 police agencies reporting to the Revised UCR. The incidents contained in the 2001 database were distributed as follows: 40% from Ontario, 31% from Quebec, 10% from Alberta, 5% from British Columbia, 5% from Manitoba, 5% from Saskatchewan, 2% from Nova Scotia, 1% from New Brunswick, and 1% from Newfoundland & Labrador. Data from this non-representative sample accounted for 59% of the national volume of crime.

**2000 International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS)** – The ICVS is a survey on criminal victimization that has been conducted in over 60 countries since its inception in 1989, including industrialized and developing countries. The operation and development of this survey is overseen by an international working group of criminologists. In Canada, interviews were completed with 2,074 randomly selected persons aged 16 years or older for the survey's most recent cycle. Interviews took place by telephone and asked respondents about their experiences with crime during 2000, their feelings of safety, security measures taken, their reasons for reporting or not reporting to police, and their perception of the justice system.

**General Social Survey (GSS), Cycle 13 Victimization (1999)** – The GSS is an annual survey that monitors changes in Canadian society and provides information on specific policy issues of current or emerging interest. Each year the survey focuses on a one of a variety of regular topics. In 1988, 1993, and 1999 the survey focused on victimization. The objectives of the survey are to provide estimates of the incidence of eight offence types, to examine factors related to the risk of victimization, victims' willingness to report crimes to the police, reasons for not reporting, and to measure public perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system. In 1988 and 1993, approximately 10,000 Canadians aged 15 years and older were interviewed. In 1999 the sample size was increased to approximately 26,000 in order to allow for more detailed analysis of small populations and crimes that occur less frequently.

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Table 1



**Motor vehicle crimes, Canada, 1981-2001**


Year	Population <sup>1</sup>	Motor Vehicle Theft			Theft from Motor Vehicles		
		Number of thefts	Rate <sup>2</sup>	% change in rate	Number of thefts	Rate <sup>2</sup>	% change in rate
1981	24,820,382	96,229	388	1.2	289,315	1,166	9.5
1982	25,117,424	86,997	346	-10.7	292,453	1,164	-0.1
1983	25,366,965	75,988	300	-13.5	283,357	1,117	-4.1
1984	25,607,555	76,613	299	-0.1	281,497	1,099	-1.6
1985	25,842,590	82,250	318	6.4	283,307	1,096	-0.3
1986	26,100,587	85,585	328	3.0	297,502	1,140	4.0
1987	26,449,888	87,061	329	0.4	318,308	1,203	5.6
1988	26,798,303	89,454	334	1.4	322,517	1,203	0.0
1989	27,286,239	100,208	367	10.0	318,573	1,168	-3.0
1990	27,700,856	114,082	412	12.1	352,675	1,273	9.0
1991	28,030,864	139,345	497	20.7	393,518	1,404	10.3
1992	28,376,550	146,801	517	4.1	390,887	1,378	-1.9
1993	28,703,142	156,685	546	5.5	370,603	1,291	-6.3
1994	29,035,981	159,469	549	0.6	351,385	1,210	-6.3
1995	29,353,854	161,696	551	0.3	350,176	1,193	-1.4
1996	29,671,892	180,123	607	10.2	346,428	1,168	-2.1
1997	29,987,214	177,130	591	-2.7	315,679	1,053	-9.8
1998	30,248,210	165,920	549	-7.1	292,903	968	-8.0
1999	30,499,219	161,388	529	-3.5	278,943	915	-5.5
2000	30,769,669	160,315	521	-1.5	268,030	871	-4.8
2001	31,081,887	170,213	548	5.1	274,314	883	1.3

<sup>1</sup> Population estimates come from the Annual Demographic Statistics, 2001 report, produced by Statistics Canada, Demography Division. Populations as of July 1st: updated postcensal estimates for 2000 and preliminary postcensal estimates for 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Rates are expressed per 100,000 population.

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

Table 2



**Motor vehicle theft by province/territory, 2001**

	Population <sup>1</sup>	Number of thefts	Rate <sup>2</sup>	% change in rate 2000-2001	% change in rate 1991-2001
<b>Canada</b>	<b>31,081,887</b>	<b>170,213</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>10.2</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	533,761	634	119	-1.1	-11.1
Prince Edward Island	138,514	272	196	22.7	-14.7
Nova Scotia	942,691	2,755	292	-4.1	34.9
New Brunswick	757,077	1,765	233	6.8	7.3
Quebec	7,410,504	42,054	567	-1.4	-16.0
Ontario	11,874,436	50,067	422	2.2	17.1
Manitoba	1,150,034	13,206	1,148	11.5	250.0
Saskatchewan	1,015,783	7,986	786	5.2	117.9
Alberta	3,064,249	17,467	570	15.0	-12.5
British Columbia	4,095,934	33,242	812	12.5	12.1
Yukon	29,885	239	800	1.1	1.9
Northwest Territories	40,860	285	698	35.9	...
Nunavut	28,159	241	856	18.5	...

<sup>1</sup> Population estimates derived from the Annual Demographic Statistics, 2001 report, produced by Statistics Canada, Demography Division. Populations as of July 1st: updated postcensal estimates for 2000 and preliminary postcensal estimates for 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Rates are expressed per 100,000 population.

... not applicable

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

Table 3a


**Motor vehicle theft by Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), 2001**

CMA	Population <sup>1</sup>	Number of thefts	Rate <sup>2</sup>	% change in rate 2000-2001	% change in rate 1991-2001
<b>Population 500,000 and over</b>					
Toronto	4,881,392	18,078	370	1.6	3.0
Montréal	3,511,845	27,250	776	-3.2	-22.4
Vancouver	2,078,824	23,882	1,149	9.1	10.9
Calgary	971,532	5,623	579	-0.9	-28.6
Edmonton	956,805	7,208	753	39.3	-8.6
Ottawa <sup>3</sup>	844,969	4,125	488	-11.9	-14.6
Québec	693,064	2,008	290	26.4	-41.4
Winnipeg	684,778	10,828	1,581	11.1	324.7
Hamilton	680,561	5,553	816	17.0	113.4
<b>Population 250,000 to 499,999</b>					
Kitchener <sup>4,5</sup>	456,523	2,443	535	15.0	91.7
St. Catharines-Niagara <sup>5</sup>	427,023	1,740	407	-12.2	28.9
London <sup>5</sup>	383,708	2,713	707	-8.6	99.9
Halifax	359,186	1,832	510	-9.6	61.1
Victoria	318,796	1,129	354	55.1	5.9
Windsor	313,838	1,558	496	12.4	49.4
Gatineau <sup>6</sup>	261,981	789	301	-3.8	-15.3
<b>Population 100,000 to 249,999</b>					
Saskatoon	230,517	1,308	567	-15.2	63.8
Regina	198,125	3,955	1,996	24.7	237.9
St. John's	176,163	322	183	-1.7	-24.2
Sudbury <sup>4</sup>	156,714	900	574	6.1	-45.1
Saint John <sup>5</sup>	147,086	292	199	15.7	-42.4
Sherbrooke <sup>5</sup>	144,970	1,203	830	8.0	44.1
Saguenay <sup>5</sup>	143,445	481	335	-10.7	-0.5
Trois-Rivières	141,535	628	444	-11.6	-6.2
Thunder Bay	124,581	518	416	11.6	-19.5

<sup>1</sup> Population derived from the Annual Demographic Statistics, 2001 report, produced by Statistics Canada, Demography Division. Populations as of July 1st: updated postcensal estimates for 2000 and preliminary postcensal estimates for 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Rates are expressed per 100,000 population.

<sup>3</sup> Ottawa refers to the Ontario part of the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA.


<sup>4</sup> The population for this CMA differs from the population serviced by the police force in table 3b due to an incongruence between policing boundaries and CMA boundaries.

<sup>5</sup> CMA population adjusted to follow police service boundaries.

<sup>6</sup> Gatineau refers to the Quebec part of the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA.

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

Table 3b



**Motor vehicle thefts by police service (populations greater than 150,000), 2001**

Police Service	Population <sup>1</sup>	Number of thefts,	2001 Rate <sup>2</sup>	% Change in rate 2000-2001	% Change in rate 1991-2001
Toronto Police	2,562,235	11,233	438	0.4	0.1
Montreal Police	1,838,474	16,652	906	-6.9	-23.5
Peel Regional Police	999,146	2,498	250	-9.3	-10.4
Calgary Police	899,285	5,486	610	-1.2	-27.7
Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police	800,525	4,007	501	-12.2	-39.9
York Regional Police	778,000	2,606	335	11.1	33.3
Edmonton Police	663,819	6,447	971	43.1	-5.8
Winnipeg Police	631,675	10,665	1,688	11.3	339.8
Vancouver Police	573,154	6,635	1,158	-10.3	25.2
Durham Regional Police	523,013	2,604	498	24.8	57.5
Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police	503,043	5,116	1,017	16.6	128.9
Waterloo Regional Police <sup>3</sup>	456,767	2,434	533	15.0	90.9
Niagara Regional Police	426,912	1,734	406	-12.2	27.7
Halton Regional Police	387,388	1,086	280	24.6	61.2
Laval Police	354,773	3,140	885	-1.0	-12.5
London Police	346,324	2,526	729	-7.8	101.6
Surrey Police	344,620	7,006	2,033	26.8	27.3
Québec Police	273,664	848	310	67.4	-63.0
Windsor Police	212,823	1,387	652	14.2	74.1
Saskatoon Police	205,508	1,237	602	-14.6	61.1
Halifax Regional Police	200,673	1,427	711	-14.8	52.7
Burnaby (R.C.M.P)	193,644	3,014	1,556	9.6	-2.8
Regina Police	185,820	3,841	2,067	25.4	241.2
St. John's (R.N.C)	175,245	322	184	-1.8	-24.6
Richmond (R.C.M.P)	166,809	1,030	617	5.2	-39.0
Greater Sudbury Police <sup>3</sup>	160,198	900	562	6.1	-45.3

<sup>1</sup> Police Service population estimates were derived from 2001 preliminary postcensal population estimates (1996 Census boundaries), Demography Division, Statistics Canada.


<sup>2</sup> Rate per 100,000 population.

<sup>3</sup> The population serviced by this police force differs from the CMA population appearing in table 3a due to an incongruence between policing boundaries and CMA boundaries.

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



Table 4



**Police - reported<sup>1</sup> vehicle thefts<sup>2</sup>, 33 countries, 2000**

Country	No. of vehicle thefts 2000	% change 1996-2000	% change 1999-2000
Germany	127,750	-43	-9
Luxembourg <sup>3</sup>	542	-34	-13
England & Wales	338,796	-27	-10
Cyprus	1,237	-26	29
Italy	243,890	-23	-17
Scotland <sup>4</sup>	26,238	-23	-12
Denmark	33,730	-22	-4
U.S.A.	1,165,559	-16	1
Hungary <sup>5</sup>	14,297	-16	-14
Czech Republic	25,539	-14	-12
Canada <sup>6</sup>	160,315	-11	-1
France	401,057	-10	1
Slovakia	6,073	-9	-15
Belgium	33,395	-1	-7
Slovenia	1,291	3	13
Netherlands <sup>5</sup>	38,320	4	1
Sweden <sup>7</sup>	75,125	5	-4
Norway	23,339	9	12
Japan	309,638	13	8
Australia	139,094	13	7
Spain	134,583	18	-3
Ireland (Eire)	15,964	19	7
Romania	2,149	19	-8
Northern Ireland	10,806	25	6
Finland	26,391	30	-11
Portugal	26,428	32	-6
Latvia	2,932	32	-5
Poland <sup>5</sup>	68,062	34	-9
Estonia <sup>8</sup>	2,322	41	-5
Lithuania	9,006	44	35
Austria	8,601	49	51
New Zealand <sup>8</sup>	21,992	..	-14
Malta	1,051	..	-2

<sup>1</sup> Definitions of offences vary between countries both due to legal differences and statistical recording methods; comparisons may be affected by these differences.

<sup>2</sup> All land vehicles with an engine that run on the road which are used to carry people (including cars, motorcycles, buses, trucks, construction and agricultural vehicles, etc.).

<sup>3</sup> Figures from 2000 onwards are not comparable with previous years as they no longer include offences dealt with by the Judicial Police.

<sup>4</sup> Includes attempts.

<sup>5</sup> Cars only.

<sup>6</sup> Data for 2000 updated as of September 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Includes attempts, preparation and conspiracy to commit an offence.

<sup>8</sup> Taking/conversion of motor vehicles.

.. not available for a specific reference period

**Source:** Barclay, Gordon and Cynthia Tavares, (2002), *International comparisons of criminal justices statistics 2000*. U.K.: Home Office. Based on data from statistical contacts in each country.

Table 5



**Theft from motor vehicles by province/territory, 2001**

Province/territory	Theft from Motor Vehicles				
	Population <sup>1</sup>	Number of thefts,	Rate <sup>2</sup>	% Change in rate 2000-2001	% Change in rate 1991-2001
Newfoundland and Labrador	533,761	1,764	330	33.3	-29.3
Prince Edward Island	138,514	937	676	-9.2	-10.5
Nova Scotia	942,691	6,215	659	-10.1	-44.1
New Brunswick	757,077	2,371	313	-5.8	-52.5
Quebec	7,410,504	43,732	590	-1.6	-35.6
Ontario	11,874,436	85,011	716	5.5	-43.9
Manitoba	1,150,034	10,878	946	12.5	-39.1
Saskatchewan	1,015,783	11,439	1,126	10.4	-9.5
Alberta	3,064,249	30,991	1,011	1.2	-48.3
British Columbia	4,095,934	80,607	1,968	-2.8	-30.4
Yukon Territory	29,885	270	903	6.3	-20.8
Northwest Territories	40,860	87	213	-23.6	...
Nunavut	28,159	12	43	-8.5	...
<b>Canada</b>	<b>31,081,887</b>	<b>274,314</b>	<b>883</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>-37.1</b>

<sup>1</sup> Population estimates derived from the Annual Demographic Statistics, 2001 report, produced by Statistics Canada, Demography Division. Populations as of July 1st: updated postcensal estimates for 2000 and preliminary postcensal estimates for 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Rates are expressed per 100,000 population.  
... not applicable

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

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