

ALBERTA CRIME STATISTICS

Official crime statistics provide a useful picture of crime in Alberta, but they often don't tell the entire story. For example, not all crimes are reported to the police, so there is likely more crime than the reported numbers indicate.

The crime rate is a key indicator of social and economic well-being within a society and indicates how many crimes have been reported to the police per 100,000 people.

The crime rate includes all Criminal Code offenses, such as property crime, violent crime and youth crime, but does not include traffic violations or drug offenses.

The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics provides the most current crime statistics. The most current year available is 2005.

The good news was in that year, Alberta's overall crime rate declined. Still, it remained higher than the national average.

While this rate was the lowest of the four western provinces it was still the fourth highest overall.

By the Numbers

Many Albertans are concerned about the criminal justice system's ability to respond effectively to violent crimes, especially because statistics tell us that Alberta's violent crime rate has been higher than the Canadian average for the last 10 years.

Violent crimes include homicide, attempted murder, assault, sexual assault, other sexual offenses, abduction and robbery. Many violent

crimes are committed by people who know each other, particularly those who know each other through illegal activities involving gangs or drugs.

We also know that violent crime is not only a problem in urban areas, but also in many rural areas in Alberta.

In 2005, 59 per cent of violent crimes were committed in areas outside of Edmonton and Calgary, with rates being the highest in areas surrounding Hobbema and Fort McMurray.

Homicide

Homicide, the most serious of all criminal acts, includes first and second degree murder, manslaughter and infanticide.

Impaired driving causing death, dangerous driving causing death, criminal negligence causing death and attempted murder are not included in homicide rates.

In 2005:

- Alberta's homicide rate was 3.3 per 100,000 people; 64 per cent higher than the Canadian average and third highest of all the provinces
- Close to half (44 per cent) of Alberta's 109 homicides were committed outside of the major cities of Edmonton and Calgary.
- Edmonton recorded the highest homicide rate of the nine largest cities in Canada, at a rate of 4.3 per 100,000 people. This was its highest rate since 1981.

Sexual Assault and Other Sexual Offenses

The Criminal Code classifies sexual assaults according to the seriousness of the incident:

- level 1 causes the least physical injury

to the victim;

- level 2 includes sexual assault with a weapon, threats to use a weapon, or causing bodily harm;
- level 3 includes sexual assault that wounds, maims, disfigures or endangers the life of the victim.
- Level 3 sexual assaults are often referred to as aggravated sexual assaults.

Other sexual offenses include such crimes as sexual interference, invitation to sexual touching, sexual exploitation, incest and offenses in relation to juvenile prostitution. It is important to note many sexual offenses are not reported.

In 2005:

- Alberta's sexual assault rate declined by 10 per cent and fell below the Canadian rate for the first time in almost 10 years
- More than half (56 per cent) of the sexual assaults reported in Alberta were committed outside of the major cities of Edmonton and Calgary.
- Internet based sexual exploitation of children and youth allows pedophiles to anonymously contact children and youth, and it also supports the collection and distribution of child pornography.
- Studies suggest that 20 per cent of children and youth who use the Internet have received an unwanted sexual solicitation.

Family Violence

Family violence can include many Criminal Code offenses, such as assault, sexual assault and homicide. Family violence is not a specific offense.

- In 2004, Alberta had the highest rate of spousal assault against women
- From 1975 to 2004, Alberta has generally had the third highest spousal homicide rate of all the provinces.

Youth Crime

Youth crimes include Criminal Code offenses committed by youth who are 12 to 17 years old. They are dealt with under the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Youth under the age of 12 cannot be held criminally responsible. Over the last 10 years, Alberta has generally remained within the top four provinces for the number of youth charged with violent crimes.

In 2005:

- Alberta's overall youth crime rate declined significantly, mostly because of a decline in property crimes
- However, Alberta's youth property crime rate remains the third highest of all the provinces and is 43 per cent higher than the national average
- Alberta had a 33 per cent higher rate than the rest of Canada for youths accused of homicide
- Although the number of youths charged with motor vehicle theft in Alberta was at its lowest in 10 years, the rate remained the third highest

of all the provinces and 27 per cent higher than the national average

- Alberta's rate for youth charged with fraud was the second highest in the country and 52 per cent higher than the national average
- Alberta's rate for youth charged with drug offenses was 6.8 times higher than in 1996, and the third highest of all the provinces.

Property Crime

Property crimes include breaking and entering (residential, business and other), motor vehicle theft, theft, possession of stolen goods and fraud. Mischief (e.g. vandalism, graffiti) and arson are defined as "other Criminal Code offenses" and are not included in property crime rates.

In 2005:

- Alberta's property crime rate was above the Canadian average and the fourth highest of all the provinces
- Alberta's motor vehicle theft rate was third highest of all provinces and significantly higher than the Canadian rate
- Of the 21,231 motor vehicle thefts in Alberta in 2005, almost half (44 per cent) occurred in Edmonton
- Edson, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Leduc, Red Deer and the communities and areas around High Level, Hobbema and St. Paul all recorded motor vehicle theft rates well above the provincial average
- Alberta's fraud rate was well above the Canadian average and the highest of all the provinces

- Edmonton has the highest fraud rate of the nine major cities in Canada
- Banff, Grande Prairie, St. Paul, as well as Hobbema all have higher fraud rates than Edmonton.

Impaired Driving In 2005:

- Alberta's rate of impaired driving causing death was above the national average, despite a significant decline from its 2004 and 2003 rates
- Edmonton's impaired driving causing death rate has declined over the last three years and has remained below the national average since 1996
- Calgary's 2005 impaired driving causing death rate was also above the national average and was up from its 2004 rate.