

## Physical Safety

*The PSI monitors Canadians' concerns about physical safety by tracking four indicators: the level of violent crime, the level of property crime, and Canadians' perceptions of these types of crime in their own communities.*

### Highlights:

*The hard data from 2001 show that overall, Canadians' physical safety remained essentially unchanged from the year before, as violent crime rates rose and property crimes fell.*

*Violent crime rates rose for the first time in seven years. However, the rate in 2000 was still lower than it was in 1992.*

### Violent crime rates go up

*Research shows that the fear of crime – particularly violent crime – is disproportionate to the true risk of being victimized. But even if people's fear of crime is “not justified,” it nonetheless exists and can be a negative factor in their lives, often unnecessarily restricting their social activities.*

*The PSI includes the most serious forms of violent crime – that is, homicide, attempted murder, aggravated assault, and aggravated sexual assault – because these are the crimes about which Canadians express the greatest concerns and the seriousness of these crimes leads to more reliable and comprehensive reporting.*

### DATA:

- The national violent crime rate increased by 3% between 1999 and 2000 following seven consecutive years of decline. In 2000, the rate rose to 982 violent crimes per 100,000 from 955 per 100,000 in 1999. Despite this increase, the 2000 rate is lower than it was in 1992, at 1,048 per 100,000.
- Six of 10 provinces reported an increase in violent crime: Quebec, PEI, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Newfoundland. The other provinces posted a small drop in their rates.
- As in the previous year, violent crime rates in 2000 were highest in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, where the rate surpassed 1,600 per 100,000 population. Quebec and PEI again recorded the lowest rates in 2000 at slightly more than 700 per 100,000 population.

**PERCEPTION: Are Canadians concerned about violent crime?**

*To gauge Canadians' sense of their physical safety, we asked how they would rate their families' safety in their own neighbourhoods with respect to violent crime.*

- The vast majority of Canadians (71%) reported feeling very safe from violent crime in 2001. However, this figure was down from 74% in 1999 and 2000.
- Regionally, residents of Alberta and the Atlantic Provinces felt the safest, with 83% and 78% respectively.
- Quebec residents were by far the most fearful of violent crime in their neighbourhoods: only 59% reported feeling very safe, down from 64% in 2000.
- Canadians aged 25 to 44 were the most confident: the vast majority (75%) felt their neighbourhoods were very safe from violent crime. Seniors were the least likely to share that sentiment, with only 61% feeling very safe, down from 67% in 2000.
- Men were more likely than women to feel that their neighbourhoods were very safe from violent crime (75% compared to 68%).
- Canadians with higher household incomes were significantly more likely than other Canadians to feel that their neighbourhoods were very safe from violent crime.

**Property crime rates continue to decline**

*Property crimes are unlawful acts with the intent of gaining property, but they do not involve the use or threat of violence. The overall incidence of property crime has been declining since 1992. PSI focuses on two types of property crime that affect people most directly – breaking and entering into a residence and motor vehicle theft.*

**DATA:**

- The overall incidence of property crime decreased in 2000.
- Between 1999 and 2000, the property crime rate decreased in all provinces except Saskatchewan.
- The Atlantic Provinces have the lowest rates of property crime in Canada. Newfoundland shows the lowest incidence, with a rate of 2,411 property crimes per 100,000 population in 2000.
- 37% of people charged with break and entry in 2000 were youth aged 12 and 17. That same age group represented 41% of all persons charged with motor vehicle thefts.

**PERCEPTION: Are Canadians concerned about property crime?**

- A large majority of Canadians (67%) felt their neighbourhood was very safe from property crime, down slightly from 68% in 2000.
- 22% considered their neighbourhood moderately safe and 12% said their neighbourhoods were unsafe.

- Regionally, Alberta and Atlantic Canada had highest proportion of residents who felt very safe from property crime; Quebec had by far the lowest proportion (55%) of residents who felt very safe. BC and Quebec had the highest percentage of residents who felt unsafe.

## Impact of September 11<sup>th</sup> on Canadians' Physical Safety

### PERCEPTION

- In the wake of the tragic events of Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>, only 17% of Canadians reported an increased sense of risk to their physical safety, while 8% reported a decreased risk. Interestingly, younger people were far more likely to report feelings of increased risk: 22% of respondents aged 25 or younger said they felt an increased sense of risk, compared to only 10% among people aged 65 and older.
- The sense of increased risk to physical security after Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> was lowest in Quebec (14%) and highest in Atlantic Canada (24%).

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The information for these fact sheets was excerpted from the report, *The Personal Security Index, 2002*. For more information about the methodology used to calculate the PSI, please consult the full report.