

The Personal Security Index, 2003

by the Canadian Council on Social Development

Physical Safety Highlights

Although property crime rates have fallen substantially over the last decade, hitting their lowest rate in 25 years, Canadians feel increasingly worried about property crime in their neighbourhoods. Canadians have also become slightly more concerned about violent crime over that period, although the most serious forms of violent crime have decreased slightly since 1997, and decreased substantially since 1991. Research shows that the fear of crime – particularly violent crime – is disproportionate to the true risk of being victimized and that fear can be a negative factor in peoples' lives, often unnecessarily restricting their social activities.

- The overall incidence of property crime has been declining steadily since 1992. In 2001, it dropped to 4,043 property crimes per 100,000 population – the lowest rate in more than 25 years.
- Nonetheless, the proportion of Canadians who feel that their neighbourhoods are very safe from property crime has been steadily *decreasing* for the last three years (from 68% in 2000 to 65% in 2002), and the proportion who say their neighbourhoods are unsafe from property crime has been increasing, from 10% in 1999 to 13% in 2002.
- One type of property crime that has been increasing is car theft. This year, for the first time, the rate of motor vehicle theft exceeded the rate for residential break and enter – a stark contrast to 1982, when the residential break and enter rate was more than double the rate for motor vehicle thefts.
- The violent crime rate for the most serious kinds of violent crime decreased slightly between 1997 and 2001, from 14.6 violent crimes per 100,000 population in 1997 to 13.3 violent crimes per 100,000 population in 2001. This rate is significantly lower than it was in 1991, when the rate was 21.9 per 100,000.
- The vast majority of Canadians (72%) reported feeling very safe from violent crime in 2002, but this figure was 5 percentage points lower than five years earlier (77% in 1998).