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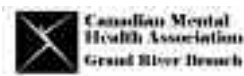
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Community Safety & Crime Prevention Council
Because a connected community is a safer community



YOUTH CRIME

FACT SHEET CANADA



YOUTH CRIME IS DECREASING.

- In 2005, the youth crime rate dropped 6%. Youth violent crime dropped 2%, while youth property crime was down 12%.¹
- In 2004/2005, 1,300 young people *on average* were in custody on any given day, down 16% from 2003/2004 and down 50% since the YCJA came into effect.⁸
- The proportion of apprehended youths who are charged by police has dropped from 56% in 2002 to 43% in 2005.¹

MOST YOUTH CRIME IS NON-VIOLENT.

- Around 75% of all youth crime is non-violent.⁶
- Minor assaults account for more than half of the violent crimes committed by youth.
- An Ontario study found that 94% of youth crime stories in the media were about violent offences but less than 25% of Ontario's youth court cases actually involved violent crime.⁶
- In 2003/04, the largest proportion of young persons on probation had committed property offences (42%).²
- A small minority of youth commit violent crimes. Most violent offences occur between friends or acquaintances, not adults or strangers as is commonly perceived.³
- Homicides and other serious crimes committed by youth are **very rare** and yet they are portrayed as a growing trend. In reality, the opposite is true.⁶
- In 2005, there were a total of 658 homicides committed in Canada, 65 of which were committed by youth aged 12 to 17.¹⁶

HARSHER PUNISHMENTS DO NOT PREVENT CRIME.

- 111 Canadian studies on the effects of criminal justice sanctions found that harsher punishments do not deter repeat offences. In fact, harsh punishment led to a 3% increase in recidivism among all groups of offenders, including youth.⁶
- A U.S. study found that youths transferred to adult criminal court are more likely to re-offend than young people who remain in juvenile courts.⁶
- Placing offenders who are lower risk with offenders who are higher risk reinforces criminal behavior in both groups. It further disrupts their support networks and other attributes that decrease risk for crime such as school, friendships, employment, and family.⁹

The chances of being a victim of crime was highest among people aged 15 to 24.

YOUTH ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIMES.

- In 2004, the chances of being a victim of crime was highest among people aged 15 to 24. The risk steadily declined as age increased. Young people are 1.5 times more likely to be victims of crime than people aged 24 to 34 and 19 times more likely than seniors aged 65 and older.⁴
- One-fifth of all violent crimes reported to a set of 122 police services in 2003 were committed against children and youth aged 17 and under.⁸

5-10% of teens aged 15-19 account for as much as 50-70% of all juvenile offences

MOST YOUTH RECEIVE AN UNJUSTIFIED BAD NAME.

- ³/₄ of Canadians perceive that violent crimes and property crimes committed by youth, as well as school-based violence, are increasing.¹¹ But youth offences have been decreasing over the past seven years.¹²
- It is estimated that 5% to 10% of teens aged 15 to 19 account for as much as 50% to 70% of all juvenile offences in Canadian communities.¹⁴
- A small minority of young people, approximately 1 in 10, become involved with the young offender system each year.³
- Young people were less likely to describe police in positive terms; many youth, just under 50%, report feeling that they are treated unfairly by police.⁵

MOST YOUTH ARE ACTIVE IN SCHOOL, RECREATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND/OR VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS WITH GOALS OF STAYING INVOLVED.

- Young people are becoming more active in community life. Between 1996/97 and 2003, there was a 41% increase in the participation of youth aged 15 to 19 in voluntary organizations or associations.⁷
- In 2004, 65% of 15-19 year olds contributed on average 127 volunteer hours per year and 43% of 20 to 24 year olds contributed on average 161 volunteer hours per year to non-profit organizations, charities, recreation and direct support for other individuals.¹⁰
- In 2003, 35% of immigrant youth, aged 15-24, were volunteers for a non-profit or charitable organization.⁷
- Youth aged 15 to 24 are most likely to help others directly.¹⁰
- 71% of youth aged 15 to 24 donated money in 2004 and each of these youth donated on average \$129 per year.¹⁰
- High school graduation and student participation in post-secondary education are both increasing. In 2002, 77% of young adults aged 20 to 24 had achieved some post-secondary education – up from 72% in 1994. And only 11% of youth aged 20 to 24 had less than a high school education, down from 14% in 1994.⁷

It costs \$95,826.37 to imprison a young person for a year.

- Among students aged 10 to 15 in 2000, 88% aspired to post-secondary education, with 40% hoping for a university degree and 28% aspiring to more than one degree.⁷
- In 2005, 66% of young people, aged 15 to 24, participated in the labour force.¹³
- A sense of belonging to one's community is associated with higher levels of health. 72% of youth aged 12-19 felt a sense of belonging to their community.⁷

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IS THE KEY TO CRIME PREVENTION.

- Crime costs Canadians \$59 billion each year.¹⁴
- Social interventions can have positive benefits within three years, with reductions in crime of 25% to 50% within 10 years.¹⁴
- It costs, on average, \$95,826.37 to imprison a young person for a year. That money could be used to fund a full years' worth of recreational activities and equipment for almost 50 youth. Recreation provides opportunities for youth to form supportive relationships, build self-esteem and develop valuable skills; all benefits that help reduce their risk of becoming involved in crime.¹⁵
- Given the important financial, social and personal costs of crime, investments in crime prevention through social development make economic and social sense.¹⁴