

PART II

Crime in Nova Scotia

5. Crime Rates

Before presenting monetary estimates, all GPI modules begin with trends in underlying social, economic and environmental indicators. These are the fundamental benchmarks of social progress or decline, and economic costs are assumed to be proportional to trends in these physical indicators. In other words, the costs of crime generally rise if crime rates go up. As crime rates fall, society and households tend to realize savings that can be invested in activities that enhance welfare. However, as in the preceding unpaid work modules and the natural resource accounts that will follow this report, the cost estimates are secondary, derivative values based on underlying trends that must be described first.

There are four major qualifications that must be borne in mind in relating the data presented in this chapter with the cost estimates that follow. *First*, it is possible, as dictatorships have demonstrated, to lower crime rates through police-state measures and draconian punishments. In such a case, crime rates would fall even as costs rise.

It is assumed for the purposes of this report, that civil liberties and basic safeguards of human freedoms remain constant over time, and that this precludes any diminution of human rights for the sake of fighting crime. In other words, the principle of “proportionality” – that the sentence matches the seriousness of the crime – is maintained, and principles of due process are not curtailed. Without this assumption, it is possible that crime rates and crime costs could move in opposite directions. There is evidence that this is in fact occurring in the United States of America, where lower crime rates in recent years are matched by higher rates of incarceration. Here we advance the hypothesis, which remains to be tested, that a growing gap between crime rates and crime costs may indicate movement towards a more repressive society.

Second, a fear of crime may raise costs through increased defensive expenditures, even though this fear may not be directly proportional to actual trends in crime rates. This may occur in several ways. For example, if the amount of criminal activity remains constant while population increases, particularly in urban areas, then the crime *rate* (measured as incidents per 100,000 population) will go down even though the public does not perceive the decrease.

Or there may be a time lag. Crime rates in Canada rose rapidly through the 1970s and 1980s and then began to drop in the 1990s. But public perceptions, fears and defensive expenditures in the 1990s may still be responding more vividly to the trends of the previous two decades than to current trends.

Third, official crime rates are dependent on public reporting rates, the discretion and capacity of police officers to respond to complaints, and changes in the social and political climate.¹ All three elements have varied over time, particularly in sensitive areas

¹ Jim Hackler & Kim Don. “Estimating System Biases: Crime Indices that permit Comparisons across Provinces”, *Canadian Journal of Criminology*, April 1990, Vol. 32, No. 2, Page 244 and 247.

like domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse. A 1996 survey found that Canadians report just over half of all criminal incidents.

Certainly official crime rates *understate* the actual incidence of crime, and, because of increased reporting rates for certain categories of crime over time, they also *overstate* the rate of increase in crime. In other words, the official statistics cannot be taken too literally, either as representations of the actual rates of victimization or of trends in crime rates over time.

Victim surveys have the advantage of accounting for both reported and unreported crimes. Unfortunately, there have been only three national victim surveys in Canada since 1981, and there is insufficient information to estimate with any precision the percentage of the dramatic increase in official crime rates since 1962 that is attributable to higher reporting rates. The best estimate we have from victimization surveys is that overall reporting rates have increased from 42% in 1981 to 52% in 1996. Please see the discussion in chapter 4, on the difficulties in assessing the official rates of crime increase accurately.

Though conservative cost estimates are based on the official crime rates described in this chapter, reference will also be made to victim surveys to develop a more comprehensive estimate of crime costs. Canadian victim surveys in 1988 and 1993 revealed increased reporting rates in 1993 for most crime categories, which may affect the trends presented in this chapter.² As mentioned, victimization surveys are conducted too infrequently, however, to determine with certainty the degree to which trends in the official crime rates are influenced by reporting rates or by changes in police responses.

The most important qualification to the data in this section, therefore, is that they reflect only police-reported crime rates. While the chance of being a crime victim in Canada in 1996, according to these official rates, was one in 11, surveys reveal that fully one in four Canadians was actually victimized in 1996, and that only half of criminal acts are actually reported to police.³ The emphasis on police-reported crime rates therefore produces significantly more conservative results than would the use of victim surveys. This chapter therefore examines the extent to which crime “officially” impacts Nova Scotia. The real extent and impact of crime is clearly much greater, though there is evidence that the gap between reported and unreported crimes is narrowing.

Despite these qualifications, changes in crime rates are still relatively reliable indicators of trends in crime costs. Since crime rates have increased in the last four decades, correlations between the data in this chapter and the unit costs that follow will allow

² Statistics Canada, *An Overview of the Differences between Police-Reported and Victim-Reported Crime, 1997*, catalogue no. 85-542-XPE, pages 9-11 and see Appendix.

³ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, “Criminal Victimization: An International Perspective,” *Juristat*, catalogue no. 85-002-XPE, volume 18, no. 6, pages 3-4; and Statistics Canada, Roinson, David, Frank J. Porporino, William A. Millson, Shelly Trevethan and Barry MacKilley, “A One-Day Snapshot of Inmates in Canada’s Adult Correctional Facilities,” *Juristat*, catalogue no. 85-002, volume 18, no. 8, page 2

relative assessments of the savings that would have accrued if crime costs and losses had been maintained at previous levels. From a policy perspective this provides an important economic motivation for renewed efforts to reduce the level of criminal activity in the province.

The *fourth* qualification is that overall crime rate statistics make no distinction between the nature and type of crimes. For this reason, the following sections have included some disaggregated data by crime category. This is important in comparing Nova Scotia to the other provinces. Thus the overall official crime rate in Nova Scotia is 98% of the national average, up from 66% 25 years ago, and the composite official violent crime rate actually exceeds the national average. However, Nova Scotia has only 63% of the Canadian crime rate for *serious* violent crimes, just 82% of the overall property crime rate, and less than half the rate for motor vehicle theft.

This indicates that a sizeable portion of the registered increase in police-reported crimes in the province has been in common and minor assaults. This is the category most susceptible to fluctuations in reporting rates. In other words, the criminal code crime rate must be used with caution, and examined more closely to determine relative changes over time in particular crime categories.

5.1 Criminal Code Violations⁴

In determining the true costs of crime, it is necessary to understand the official crime rate. The official crime rate is the number of criminal code violations reported to police per 100,000 population. Criminal code violations are violent crimes, property crimes, impaired driving offences, drug offences, and “other” crimes. Mischief makes up 45 per cent of the total for “other” crimes. 1962 is taken as the starting date for all time series in this study, because official crime statistics have been standardized by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics since that date. Earlier statistics are more unreliable and many of the reporting categories are not comparable.

The official police-reported crime rate in Nova Scotia has more than quadrupled since 1962, and more than tripled in Canada as a whole.⁵ In 1962 the chances of being a crime victim in Nova Scotia were one in 49, counting only police-reported crimes. In 1997 they were one in 12.⁶ In other words, according to the official statistics, the chances of being a

⁴ See chapter 3.1 for definition of criminal code offences. This section includes all categories of criminal code violation: violent crimes, property crimes, drug offences, criminal code traffic offences (principally impaired driving), “other” (including obstruction of justice), and violation of federal statutes.

⁵ Crime incidents are from Statistics Canada, *CANSIM Database*, matrix 2200, “Crimes by Actual Offences, Canada, Provinces and Territories, by Year”; population statistics used to calculate changes in the crime rate over time are from Statistics Canada, *CANSIM Database*, matrix 1, “Quarterly Estimates of Population for Canada, Provinces and Territories”.

⁶ These figures are derived by dividing the number of criminal incidents by the population. However, this does not necessarily mean that one in 12 *people* is a crime victim, since one person may be victimized

crime victim are now four times greater than 35 years ago (Table 5.1 and Charts 5.1 and 5.2. The crime rate in Table 5.1 has been derived using population data and criminal code incidents. See Appendix for more detail.)

As mentioned, these figures must be discounted to reflect higher reporting rates for common assaults and other categories of crime. Victimization surveys indicate that reporting rates have increased in the last 20 years from 42% in 1981 to 52% in 1996.⁷ While this change accounts for only a portion of the official crime rate increase, it indicates the magnitude of the discount necessary to assess the real rate of crime increase.

When unreported crimes are included, Statistics Canada reports that one in four Canadians were victims of crime in 1996, almost identical to the United States victimization rate and in line with the average among industrialized countries.⁸ Statistics Canada's General Social Survey similarly found that 24% of Canadians were victims of crime in 1993.

Nova Scotia victim surveys conducted by Corporate Research Associates (CRA) for the N.S. Department of Justice found that victimization rates declined from one in seven in 1992 to one in ten in 1999. In 1996 the Nova Scotia victimization rate for police-reported crimes was one in 11.8, compared to one in 6.7 for all crimes, a reporting rate of 56% compared to the national average of 52%. In 1997 the Nova Scotia victimization rate for police-reported crimes was one in 12.1 compared to one in 8.3 for all crimes, a reporting rate of 69%.⁹

This may possibly indicate that the gap between reported and unreported crimes is narrowing in the province. Since CRA surveys only about 400 Nova Scotians each year and since the survey has a 10% margin of error, however, not too much confidence can be placed in this apparent trend at this stage. Nevertheless it bears watching, and may eventually provide important information about changes in reporting rates.

Though crime has been rising at a faster rate in Nova Scotia than nationally, overall crime levels are still slightly below the Canadian level because they were so much lower a generation ago. In 1972, Nova Scotia crime rates were only two-thirds the national average. In 1997, they were 98% of the Canadian average (Chart 5.3). Throughout Canada, crime rates have dropped since peaking in 1991, when the chances of being a crime victim were one in 10. In Canada, the crime rate has fallen by 18% since 1991, and

several times in a year. The authors wish to thank John Turner, Chief, Policing Services Program, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, for his clarification of this issue (personal communication, 6 April, 1999).

⁷ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization: An International Perspective", *Juristat*, catalogue no. 85-002-XPE, volume 18, no. 6, 1996.

⁸ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization: An International Perspective", *Juristat*, catalogue no. 85-002-XPE, volume 18, no. 6

⁹ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization: An International Perspective", *Juristat*, catalogue no. 85-002-XPE, volume 18, no. 6; *Macleans*, 2 January, 1995; Nova Scotia data provided by Paul Smith, N.S. Department of Justice.

in Nova Scotia by 15.5%. National crime rates have continued to fall steadily for each of the last seven years, but they have leveled off since 1994 in Nova Scotia.

The rate of increase in the Nova Scotia criminal code crime rate between 1962 and 1997 has been fifty per cent greater than nationwide, producing a gradual convergence towards the national average. Among the provinces, Nova Scotia has experienced the third largest increase in the criminal code crime rate. Only fellow Maritime Provinces New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have suffered larger increases in crime. All three provinces are still below the national crime rate average, but they are catching up rapidly. As noted above, however, this increase appears to be confined mostly to common assaults and minor crimes. Serious violent crimes in Nova Scotia still occur at less than two-thirds the national rate.

In terms of the social asset of a peaceful and secure society, Nova Scotia and the other Atlantic provinces enjoyed an important “comparative advantage” a generation ago over the rest of the country. In absolute terms, particularly in relation to serious violent crimes, that advantage still exists. But *relatively speaking*, over time, that asset and the quality of life associated with it have eroded significantly in the last 30 years, as the overall crime rate has begun to catch up to the national average. From the perspective of market statistics like GDP per capita, in which this region has lagged, “convergence” is conventionally regarded as desirable and as a sign of progress. From the perspective of the Genuine Progress Index, convergence is more questionable if quality of life advantages are undermined.

It must be emphasized again that the rates of increase cited here do not account for higher reporting rates. While higher crime rates may be seen as a symptom of a declining quality of life, higher reporting rates may indicate the opposite trend, since they can signify reduced social tolerance for violence and other previously “acceptable” harmful behaviour like domestic and spousal abuse. From that perspective, the degree to which higher official crime rates can be accounted for by increased reporting rates may also indicate movement towards a more “civil” society.¹⁰

The caveat here is that there is no evidence that reporting rates have increased faster in the Maritime provinces than in the rest of Canada. Therefore the convergence of crime rates and the more rapid rate of increase in crime rates in the Maritimes must still be taken as a sign of eroding advantage. Compared to the rest of Canada, the region is still safer, more peaceful and more secure, especially when differences in serious crimes are considered. However, the advantage is significantly less marked than it was 30 years ago.

¹⁰ The authors are indebted to Dr. Don Clairmont, criminologist, Department of Sociology, Dalhousie University, and Paul Smith, Coordinator of Research and Planning, N.S. Department of Justice, for their assistance in identifying and analyzing this apparent paradox, personal communications March 17 and 18, 1999.

5.1.1 Crime and the Business Cycle

As Charts 5.1 and 5.2 illustrate, crime rates are correlated with the business cycle, and thus with employment trends. Crime rates rose during the recessions of the early 1980s and early 1990s as unemployment rates rose. The crime rate fell during the business cycle upturn as employment rates recovered. But when the long-term trend is examined, unemployment rates and crime rates have never recovered to their pre-recession levels, with each decade's average rate higher than the previous one. Thus, Nova Scotians were four times as likely to be a crime victim in 1997 than in 1962, and three times as likely to be unemployed. When the crime rate increase is discounted to reflect higher reporting rates, the actual rate of increase in unemployment rates and crime rates is probably very close. Table 5.4 and Chart 5.10 below illustrate the correlation quite graphically.

While this correlation between crime and unemployment holds *relatively* for trends over time within provinces, it cannot be proven at an absolute level. Within Canada, the provinces with the highest unemployment rates have historically had the lowest crime rates. Newfoundland, in particular, with the highest unemployment rate and consistently the lowest crime rate in the country, defies a simplistic causal link between these factors.

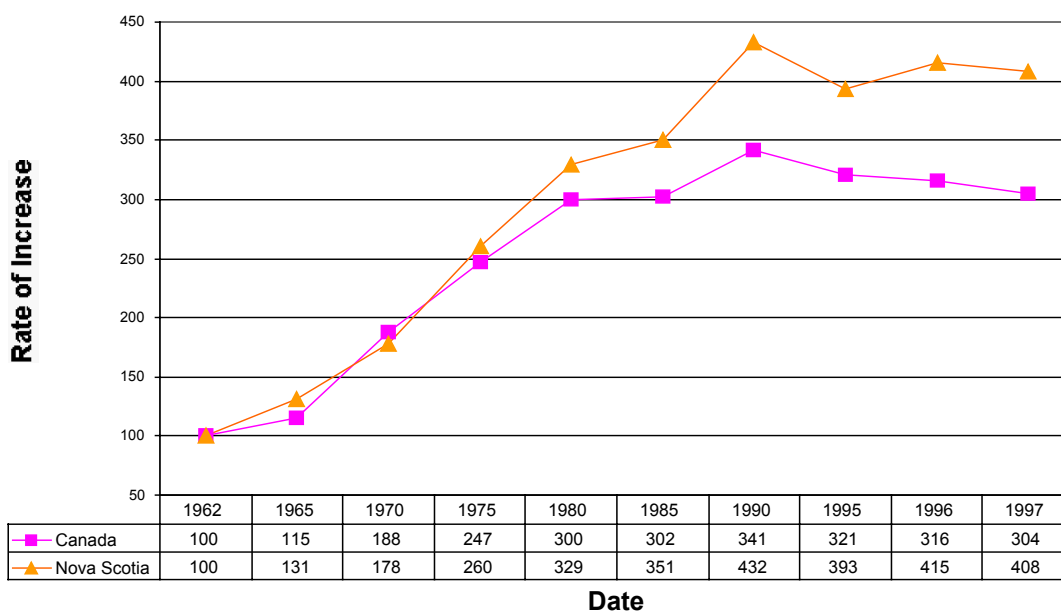
Furthermore, the overall standard of living and consumption level of Canadian households is considerably higher than it was in the 1960s when crime rates were considerably lower, so it is also clear that the crime rate is not a simple function of living standards. In fact, it has been suggested that crime may rise in times of prosperity when there is more available to steal, when property is easier to replace, and when levels of guardianship decline. At such times, the levels of *relative perceived* deprivation may also be higher. An analyst in the N.S. Department of Justice's Policy, Planning and Research Division points out that the boom period 1911-14 also produced some of the highest crime rates in Canadian history.¹¹

¹¹ Personal communication, 26 March, 1999.

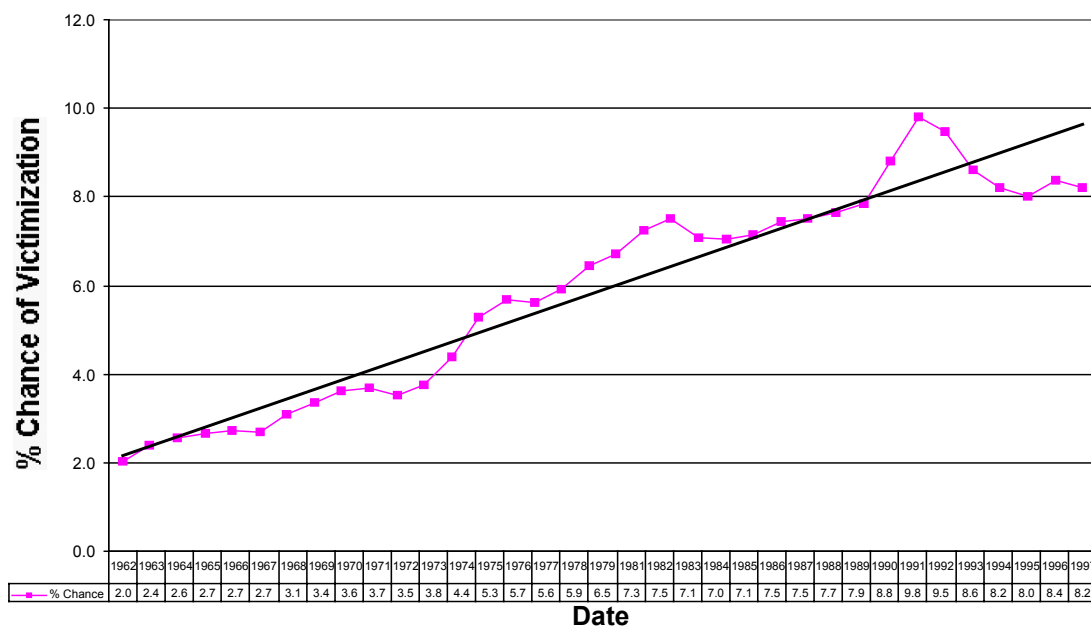
**Table 5.1: Criminal Code Crime Rate per 100,000 Population,
Canada and Nova Scotia, 1962 – 1997**

DATE	INCIDENTS CANADA	POP.(000s) CANADA	CRIME RATE CANADA	INCIDENTS NOVA SCOTIA	POP.(000s) NS	CRIME RATE NOVA SCOTIA	CANADA 1962=100	NOVA SCOTIA 1962=100	NS AS A % OF CANADA CRIME RATE
1962	514986	18583	2771	15187	746	2036	100	100	73
1963	572105	18931	3022	17953	751	2391	109	117	79
1964	626038	19290	3245	19446	755	2576	117	127	79
1965	628418	19644	3199	20123	756	2662	115	131	83
1966	702809	20015	3511	20547	756	2718	127	133	77
1967	784568	20378	3850	20529	760	2701	139	133	70
1968	897530	20071	4472	23702	767	3090	161	152	69
1969	994790	21001	4737	26128	775	3371	171	166	71
1970	1110066	21297	5212	28278	782	3616	188	178	69
1971	1166458	22026	5296	29518	799	3694	191	181	70
1972	1189805	22285	5339	28213	804	3509	193	172	66
1973	1298551	22560	5756	30701	814	3772	208	185	66
1974	1456885	22875	6369	36102	820	4403	230	216	69
1975	1585805	23209	6833	43814	828	5292	247	260	77
1976	1637704	23518	6964	47574	837	5684	251	279	82
1977	1654020	23796	6951	47110	841	5602	251	275	81
1978	1714297	24036	7132	49942	846	5903	257	290	83
1979	1855271	24277	7642	55020	851	6465	276	318	85
1980	2045399	24593	8317	57355	855	6708	300	329	81
1981	2168201	24900	8708	62085	856	7253	314	356	83
1982	2203668	25202	8744	64636	862	7498	316	368	86
1983	2148633	25456	8441	61665	871	7080	305	348	84
1984	2147657	25702	8356	61933	880	7038	302	346	84
1985	2174175	25942	8381	63372	888	7136	302	351	85
1986	2277749	26204	8692	66510	892	7456	314	366	86
1987	2368956	26550	8923	67427	896	7525	322	370	84
1988	2390007	26895	8886	68906	900	7656	321	376	86
1989	2425936	17379	8861	71254	907	7856	320	386	89
1990	2627193	27791	9453	80365	913	8802	341	432	93
1991	2899888	28120	10309	90008	918	9837	372	483	95
1992	2847981	28542	9978	87646	925	9475	360	465	95
1993	2735626	28941	9452	80207	931	8615	341	423	91
1994	2646209	29251	9047	76572	934	8198	326	403	91
1995	2639654	29606	8916	75095	938	8006	322	393	90
1996	2644893	29672	8828	78810	931	8463	319	416	96
1997	2530354	30004	8433	77696	936	8298	304	408	98

**Chart 5.1: Criminal Code Crime Rate Comparison,
Nova Scotia and Canada Rates of Increase, 1962-1997 (1962=100)**



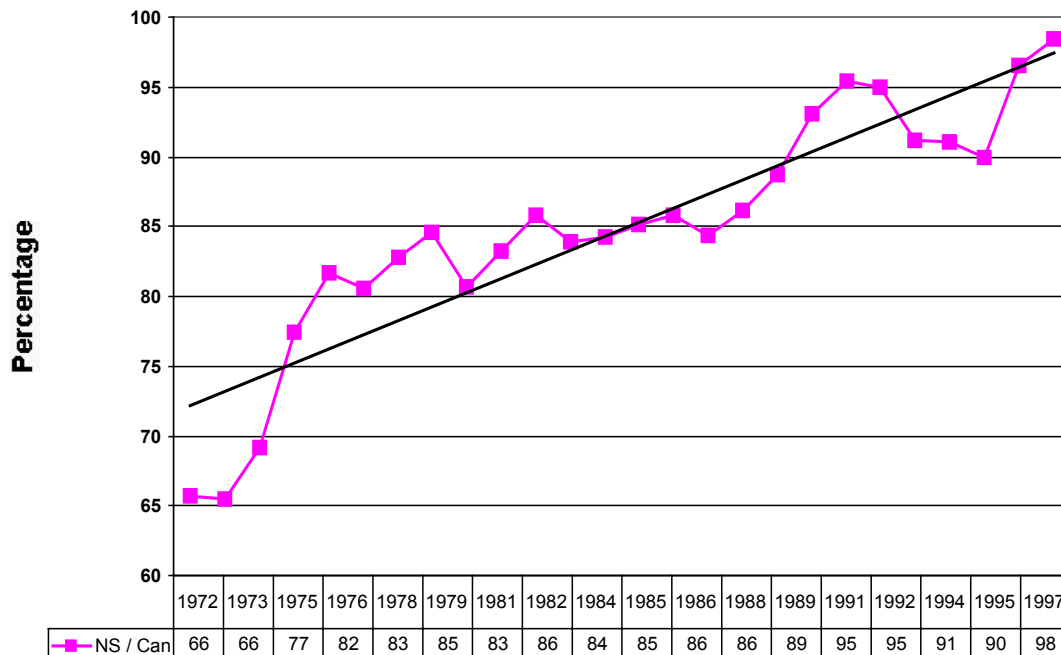
**Chart 5.2: The Percentage Chance of Becoming a Victim of Crime¹²
Police Reported Crimes, Nova Scotia, 1962-97**



* NOTE: As explained in chapter 4, part of the apparent increase in crime can be explained by higher reporting rates, especially for common assaults. Official police-reported crime statistics therefore overestimate the actual increase in crime, and these figures should not be taken completely literally.

¹² See footnote on this issue in Section 5.1 above. Percentages derived by dividing crimes by population.

Chart 5.3: Criminal Code Crime Rate Comparison, Nova Scotia as a Percentage of Canada, 1972-1997



5.2 Trends in Violent Crime

The overall trends described above conceal significant differences between different categories of crime. In Nova Scotia, violent crime has risen at a faster rate than property crime, and the violent crime rate in the province, as officially defined, now exceeds the national average. However, if we look more closely, we find that the crime rate for serious violent crimes is still well below the national average, at less than two-thirds the Canadian rate. In fact, all four Atlantic provinces still have considerably less serious violence than the rest of the country.

A regression analysis conducted by the Policy, Planning and Research Division at the Nova Scotia Department of Justice found that 78% of the increase in the violent crime rate is due to the increase in common assaults.¹³ As discussed in section 2.5.2 above, that increase itself is probably due largely to increased reporting rates, particularly for spousal abuse and domestic violence, and to a lower social tolerance level for minor violent

¹³ N.S. Department of Justice, Policy, Planning and research Division, personal communication, 17 March, 1999.

offences. The 1996 International Crime Victimization Survey found that sexual assault and assault had the lowest reporting rates among crime categories.¹⁴

While data on reporting rates are not currently published by province, it would be interesting to find out whether reporting rates for common assaults are higher in the Atlantic provinces than in the country as a whole. If so, it might demonstrate a more civil society in the region, at least in the sense of a lower tolerance level for violence. Some evidence that this is the case may be gleaned from the 1999 Corporate Research Associates victimization survey

Because the differences between these two data sets are quite marked, we have presented below both the overall official violent crime rates, and also a comparative analysis of more serious violent crimes, where reporting rates are less likely to have changed over time. According to the first data set, based on official statistics, the violent crime rate in Nova Scotia has risen substantially to surpass the national average. According to the second data set, which examines only serious violent crimes, Nova Scotia remains well below the national average, indicating both that common assaults constitute the major portion of the increase and that higher reporting rates for minor violent offences are likely to explain a significant part of the increase.

Counting only police-reported crimes, in 1997 the chances of being a victim of violent crime were one in 93 in Nova Scotia and one in 102 nationwide, compared to one in 415 and one in 452 respectively in 1962.¹⁵ In other words, according to the official statistics, the chances of being a victim of violent crime in the province have gone up 445% since 1962 (Table 5.2 and Charts 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6).¹⁶ Since 1962, Nova Scotia has suffered an increase in violent crime in 28 out of 35 years, according to the official police-reported statistics.

Among the provinces Nova Scotia now has the fourth highest rate of violent crime in the country after Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, and the highest rate east of Winnipeg, when reported common assaults are included. It is 20% higher than in Ontario and 40% higher than in Quebec.

In the last 20 years violent crime in Nova Scotia has been increasing at twice the national rate, according to the official statistics. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Nova Scotia rate of violent crime averaged 16% below the national rate. Since 1992, the Nova Scotia rate of violent crime has been 8% higher than the national rate. The convergence has been

¹⁴ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization: An International Perspective," *Juristat*, catalogue no. 85-002-XPE, volume 18, no. 3, 1996.

¹⁵ Statistics Canada, *CANSIM Database*, matrices 2200 and 1. The figures are derived by dividing the number of criminal incidents by the population. This does not necessarily mean that one in 93 people is a victim of violent crime, since one person may be victimized several times in a year. The authors wish to thank John Turner, Chief, Policing Services Program, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, for his clarification of this issue (personal communication, 6 April, 1999).

¹⁶ As noted above, some of the increase may be explained by increased reporting rates for some categories of crime, such as sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse.

sharpest in the last 12 years, with the Nova Scotia rate of violent crime rising steadily from 79% of the national average in 1986 to 110% in 1997 (Chart 5.7).

Serious violent crimes present a very different picture. Counting only homicide, robbery, sexual assault categories 1 and 2 (comparable to the U.S. definition of forcible rape), and assault category 3 (comparable to the U.S. definition of aggravated assault), Nova Scotia has only 63% of the Canadian crime rate, a ratio that has remained fairly constant in recent years.

Compared to the United States, Nova Scotia has only one-sixth the crime rate for serious violent crimes (Chart 5.8). The United States has 3.5 times as many homicides per 100,000 people as Nova Scotia, and five times as many robberies.

Examining each category of serious violent crime separately, Canada as a whole also still ranks well below the United States. The crime rate for forcible rapes is 10% that in the U.S. Aggravated assaults (with a weapon or causing bodily harm) are at one-third the U.S. level, and robberies are at 40% the U.S. rate.¹⁷ By contrast, victimization surveys, which include both reported and unreported crimes in all categories, indicate that the overall chance of being a crime victim is almost the same in Canada as in the U.S.¹⁸

Among the serious violent crimes, sexual assault is the most likely to be more widely reported today than 35 years ago, and thus the most susceptible to uncertainties as to whether increases in officially reported rates are due to higher rates of victimization or higher reporting rates. By contrast, homicide is always reported, and robbery is also unlikely to change dramatically over time due to changes in reporting rates. In fact, a comparison between the 1981 seven-city Canadian Urban Victimization Survey and the 1988 and 1993 victim surveys in the General Social Survey indicates no clear trend in reporting rates for robbery over time, with an apparent drop in reporting rates followed by a slight increase (see tables 11.1 and 11.2, chapter 11).

The small number of annual homicides makes it necessary to examine averages over several years, in order to correct for unusual fluctuations in particular years. Looking at six-year time periods, it is apparent that the Nova Scotia homicide rate has risen slightly from about 90% of the national average in the 1960's to a rate almost identical with the national average in the 1990's. Over the 35 years, and starting from a lower base, the

¹⁷ Government of Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Investment Marketing Division, *Canada Business Facts 1996*, page 47, citing Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1996; U.S. Department of Justice, *Crime in the U.S. 1994*; and F.B.I., *Uniform Crime Reports, 1995*.

¹⁸ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization: An International Perspective," *Juristat*, catalogue no. 85-002-XPE, volume 18, no. 6, pages 3-4. It should be noted that comparisons of overall *reported* crime rates with the United States are not possible, both because of significant differences in definitions of particular categories of crime, and because reporting rates are believed to be vastly different. Only those crime categories where comparable definitions are possible and where reporting rates are not believed to be very different (mostly serious violent crimes and motor vehicle theft) are used for comparative purposes in this report.

Nova Scotia homicide rate has gone up by 80%, while the national rate has increased by 60% (Table 5.3).

Even in reporting homicide rates, interpretation of the official statistics can be misleading. According to the most recently released Canadian statistics, as reported in *The Globe and Mail*, Halifax had the second highest rate of homicides among Canadian cities for 1997.¹⁹ Though appearing high by Canadian standards, the Halifax homicide rate (3.15 per 100,000) was still only one-third that in U.S. cities (9 per 100,000).²⁰ For 1997 alone the Canadian rate was 1.7 and the Nova Scotia rate 2.3 per 100,000.

However, the year a homicide is reported does not mean that this is the year the crime occurred. A closer examination of the 1997 data, which appear to indicate a higher Nova Scotia homicide rate, reveals that five of the homicides reported in 1997 actually occurred in 1981.²¹ For this reason, averaging rates over longer periods will certainly yield more accurate and comparable results. Thus, for the six-year period 1992-1997, the Canadian and Nova Scotia murder rates were almost identical at 1.91 and 1.88 per 100,000 respectively.

The crime rate for robbery in Nova Scotia is less than half the Canadian average. While the Nova Scotia robbery rate is the highest among the Atlantic provinces, all four Atlantic provinces remain significantly below the Canadian rate, with Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island at 12% and New Brunswick at 20% of the Canadian average (Chart 5.9). It can be argued that, since reporting rates and social attitudes towards minor violence and common assault have less influence on these results, the provincial comparison of robbery rates is a more accurate reflection of serious crime incidence in the country. Certainly, since robbery directly affects the business climate, the comparison indicates a significant advantage for the Atlantic provinces in terms of the costs of doing business.

Nevertheless, the inter-provincial comparison is no cause for complacency. Throughout the country, there has been an alarming increase in the incidence of robbery, and Nova Scotia is no exception to this trend. Again averaging the crime rates over 6-year time periods to even out unusual annual fluctuations indicates that robbery rates have increased by 350% nationwide and by nearly 300% in Nova Scotia between 1962-67 and 1992-97 (Chart 5.10). While not as dramatic as the 450% officially reported increase in violent crime, which includes common assaults, this increase in robberies does indicate a significant erosion in social peace and personal security that is not as attributable to reporting rates as the change in common assaults.

In the absence of hard data, it is tempting to use the comparative increases in official crime statistics for robbery and all violent crime to hypothesize that one-third of the increase in crime is likely attributable to changes in reporting rates, while the other two-

¹⁹ *The Globe and Mail*, 28 October, 1998, page A3.

²⁰ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization: An International Perspective," *Juristat*, catalogue no. 85-002-XPE, volume 18, no. 6, page 5.

²¹ N.S. Department of Justice, Policy, Planning and Research Division, personal communication, 17 March, 1999.

thirds denotes an actual diminution of personal security. However, more research is clearly needed to ascertain the viability of this hypothesis, and in particular to examine the degree to which reporting rates account for the increased incidence in officially reported common assault. The authors did not have the time to pursue this question further at this stage.

As noted in chapter 4, University of Alberta criminologists Jim Hackler and Kim Don, writing in the *Canadian Journal of Criminology*, recommend the construction of a “recording index” in which the crime rate for less serious, “screenable” assault offences is divided by the robbery crime rate, for which reporting variations are less likely. While their recommendation is designed to identify differences in the discretionary recording practices of different police departments, the same logic might be applied to variations over time within a particular jurisdiction.²²

An analyst in the Policy, Planning and Research Division, Nova Scotia Department of Justice, cautions that “robbery” itself includes several very different categories of crime: robbery with threat, with violence, and with the use of weapons (“armed robbery”). Reporting rates may in fact differ for these different types of robbery, with the more serious likely to have higher reporting rates.²³

What is perhaps most remarkable about the trends in Chart 5.10 is the degree to which robbery rates appear to follow the business cycle and, in particular, the unemployment rates. Both in Canada and in Nova Scotia and, indeed, in almost all provinces, the robbery rates peaked during the recessions of the early 1980’s and early 1990’s, easing off as employment rates rose.

Just as the average overall unemployment rate has been higher in each decade, never quite returning to pre-recession levels, so robbery rates have also increased steadily each decade as well. As Canadian unemployment rates rose from an average of 4% in the late 1960s to 6.7% in the 1970s to 9.3% in the 1980s to an average of 10% between 1992 and 1997, robbery rates rose correspondingly from 34 per 100,000 in the 1960s to 68, 93 and 106 per 100,000 in each of the succeeding decades. The Nova Scotia progression follows a similar trend, as do most other provinces (Table 5.4).²⁴

It should be noted that the high correlation between robbery rates and unemployment rates is only true relatively speaking, when examining a particular provincial or a national trend over time. Social and cultural factors clearly play a major role as well in determining crime levels, and no claim can be made that an absolute level of unemployment is likely to produce a certain rate of robbery. Thus Newfoundland, for

²² Hackler, Jim, and Kim Don, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta, Edmonton, “Estimating System Biases: Crime Indices that Permit Comparison Across Provinces,” *Canadian Journal of Criminology*, April, 1990, pages 243-264.

²³ Personal communication, 26 March, 1999.

²⁴ Unemployment rates from Statistics Canada, *Estat Database*, and *Canadian Economic Observer*, *Historical Statistical Supplement*, catalogue no. 11-210-XPB; robbery rates from Statistics Canada, *CANSIM Database*, matrix 2200.

example, consistently has the lowest robbery rate and the lowest overall crime rate in the country, and also has the highest unemployment rate. However, within each province over time, there is a significant enough correlation between unemployment rates and robbery rates, even to the extent of following temporary short-term fluctuations in the business cycle, that the relationship warrants serious attention.

Table 5.2: Violent Crime Rate per 100,000 Population

Date	Incidents Canada	Pop. (000s) Canada	Violent Crime Rate Canada	Incidents NS	Pop.(000s) NS	Violent Crime Rate, NS	1962=100 Canada	1962=100 Nova Scotia	NS as % of Canada Crime Rate	Yearly % Increase, NS	% Increase in Comparison To 1962, NS
1962	41026	18583	221	1804	746	242	100	100	110		
1963	47229	18931	249	2021	751	269	113	111	108	11.3	11.3
1964	54769	19290	284	2539	755	336	129	139	118	25	39.1
1965	58780	19644	299	2549	756	337	135	139	113	0.3	39.4
1966	69386	20015	347	2783	756	368	157	152	106	9.2	52.2
1967	77614	20378	381	2723	760	358	172	148	94	-2.7	48.2
1968	87544	20071	436	2991	767	390	197	161	89	8.8	61.3
1969	95084	21001	453	3232	775	417	205	172	92	6.9	72.5
1970	102358	21297	481	3391	782	434	218	179	90	4	79.3
1971	108095	22026	491	3505	799	439	222	181	89	1.2	81.4
1972	110468	22285	496	3294	804	410	224	169	83	-6.6	69.4
1973	117760	22560	522	3492	814	429	236	177	82	4.7	77.4
1974	126053	22875	551	3664	820	447	249	185	81	4.2	84.8
1975	135424	23209	583	3918	828	473	264	195	81	5.9	95.7
1976	136935	23518	582	4095	837	489	263	202	84	3.4	102.3
1977	135745	23796	570	4076	841	485	258	200	85	-0.9	100.4
1978	138972	24036	578	4401	846	520	262	215	90	7.3	115.1
1979	147528	24277	608	4437	851	521	275	215	86	0.2	115.6
1980	155864	24593	634	4742	855	555	287	229	88	6.4	129.3
1981	162228	24900	652	4793	856	560	295	231	86	1	131.5
1982	168646	25202	669	4914	862	570	303	236	85	1.8	135.7
1983	172315	25456	677	5115	871	587	306	243	87	3	142.8
1984	179397	25702	698	5161	880	586	316	242	84	-0.1	142.5
1985	189822	25942	732	5203	888	586	331	242	80	-0.1	142.3
1986	204917	26204	782	5509	892	618	354	255	79	5.4	155.4
1987	219381	26550	826	5902	896	659	374	272	80	6.7	172.4
1988	232606	26895	865	6352	900	706	391	292	82	7.1	191.9
1989	248579	27379	908	7034	907	776	411	321	85	9.9	220.7
1990	269503	27791	970	7830	913	858	439	355	88	10.6	254.6
1991	296962	28120	1056	9108	918	992	478	410	94	15.7	310.3
1992	307512	28542	1077	10130	925	1095	485	452	102	10.4	352.9
1993	310201	28941	1072	9874	931	1061	485	438	99	-3.2	338.6
1994	303398	29251	1037	10187	934	1091	469	451	105	2.8	351
1995	294603	29606	995	10239	938	1092	450	451	110	0.1	351.4
1996	291437	29672	982	10548	931	1133	444	468	115	3.8	368.4
1997	296737	30004	989	10153	936	1084	448	448	110	-4.3	348.4

Population: 1996-1998 data is from *The Daily*, September 24, 1998. All other data is from Cansim 1998-2, 10F0007XCB, Matrix 599

Chart 5.4: Violent Crime Rate, Nova Scotia and Canada, 1962-1997

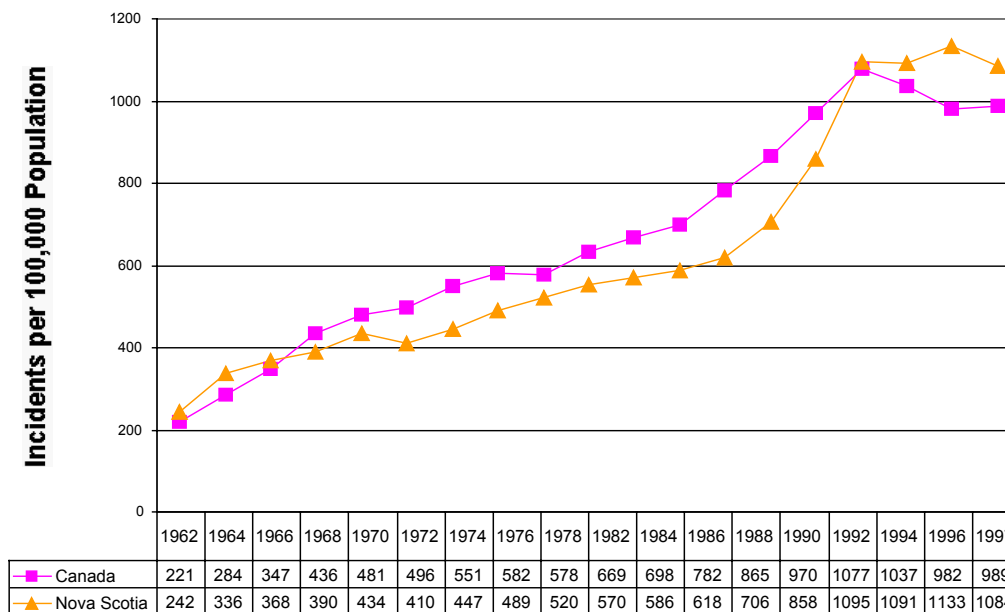
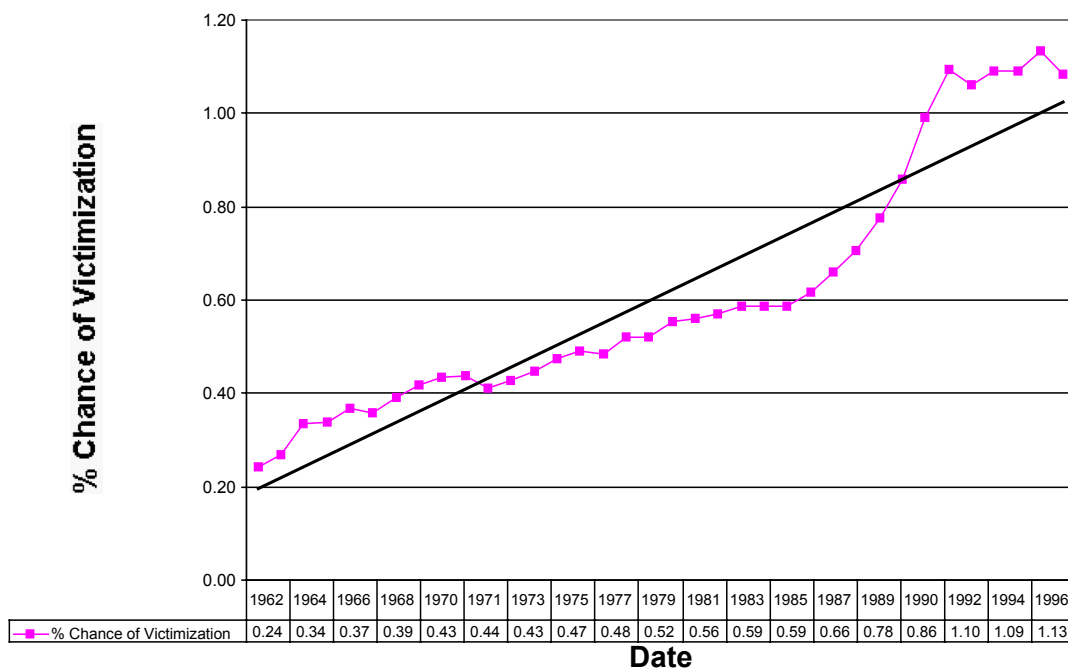


Chart 5.5: The Percentage Chance of Being a Victim²⁵ of Violent Crime in Nova Scotia, 1962-1997



²⁵ See footnote on this issue in Section 5.2 above. Percentage derived by dividing crimes by population.

Chart 5.6: Nova Scotia Violent Crime Rate as Percentage of the Canada Violent Crime Rate (Canada = 100%)

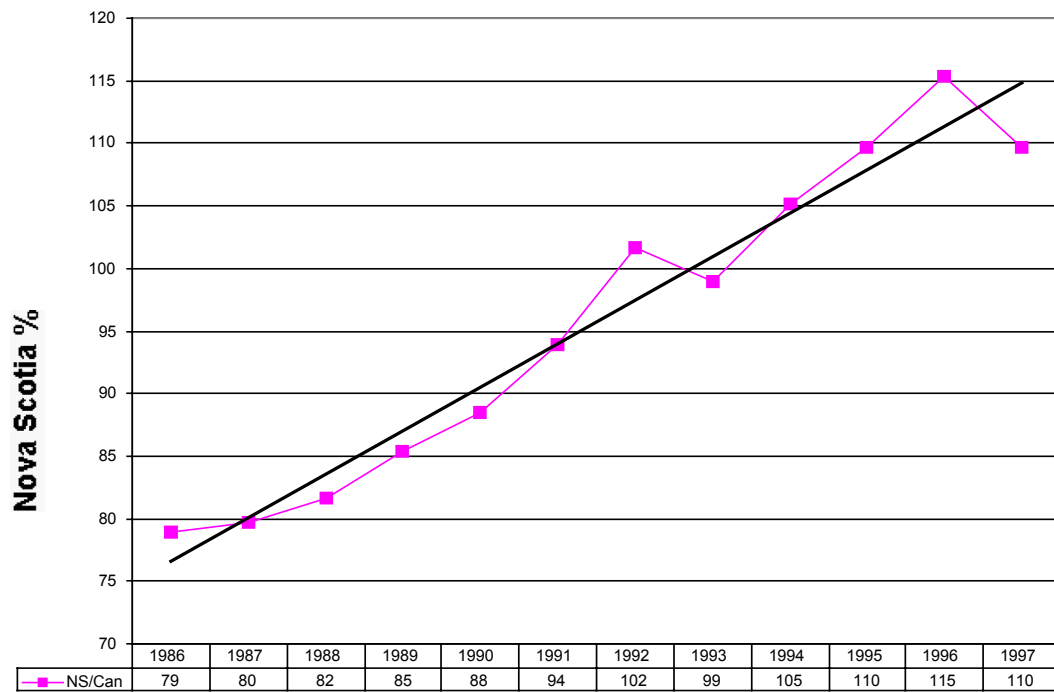


Chart 5.7: Violent Crime Rate, 1962-97

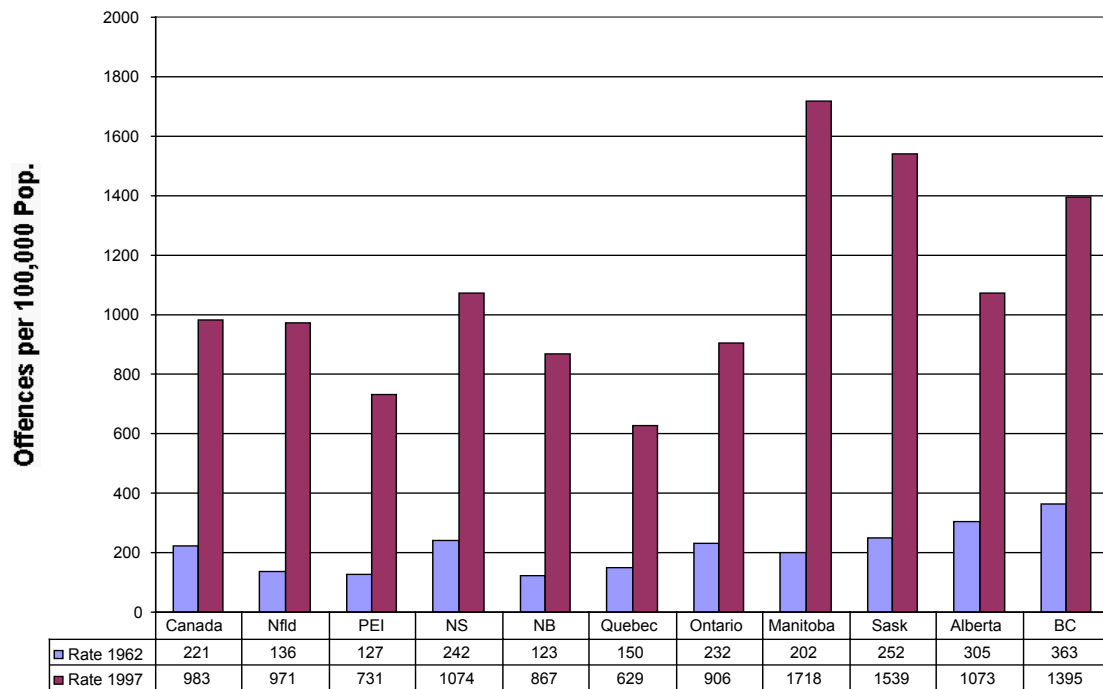
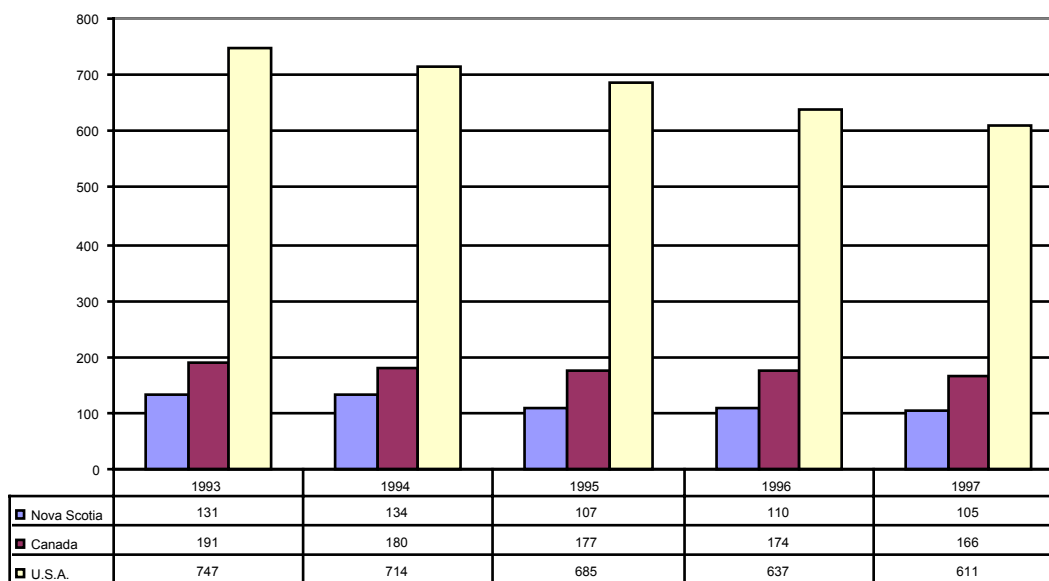


Chart 5.8: Serious Violent Crimes, Nova Scotia, Canada, U.S.A., 1993-1997
(Rate per 100,000 for homicide, robbery, “aggravated assault” (U.S.) / assault (3) (Can.), forcible rape (U.S.) / sexual assault (1) and (2) (Can.)



Sources: Statistics Canada, FBI Crime Statistics, N.S. Department of Economic Development and Tourism. In particular, we are grateful to Mr. John Odenthal, senior policy analyst in the N.S. Department of Economic Development and Tourism, for his assistance in identifying comparable crime categories for purposes of this comparison.

Table 5.3: Increase in Homicide Rate, Canada and Nova Scotia, 1962-67 to 1992-97

	Canada	Nova Scotia
1962-67: Av. Rate /100,000	1.19	1.06
1992-97: Av. Rate /100,000	1.91	1.88
Percentage increase	61%	78%

Chart 5.9: Robbery Crime Rate, Canada and Provinces, 1962 - 1997
(Rate per 100,000 population)

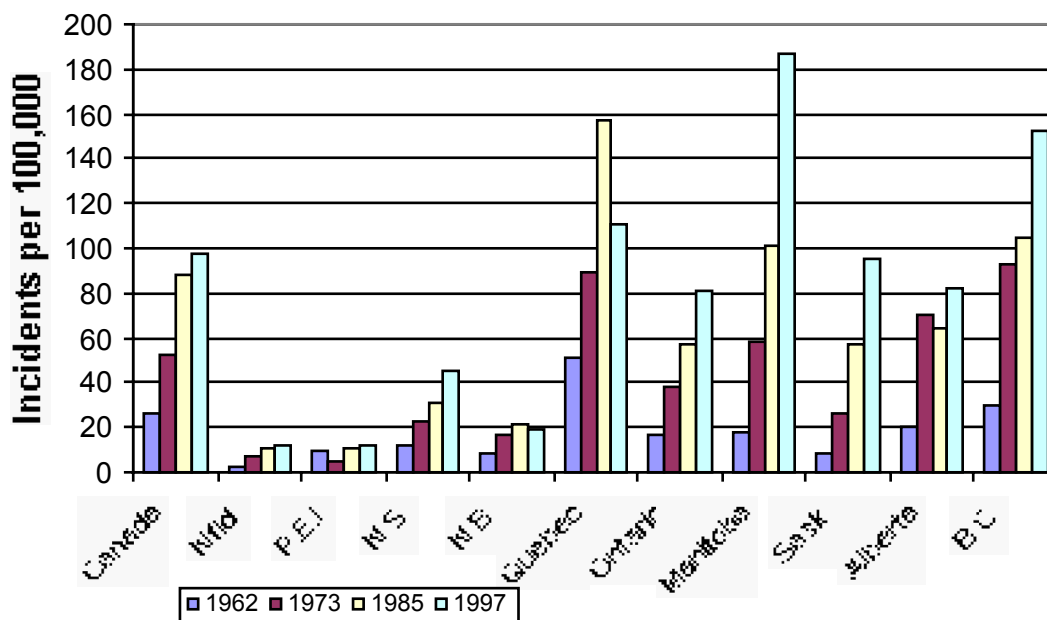


Chart 5.10: Increase in Robberies, Canada and Nova Scotia, 1962 – 1997
(Rate per 100,000 population)

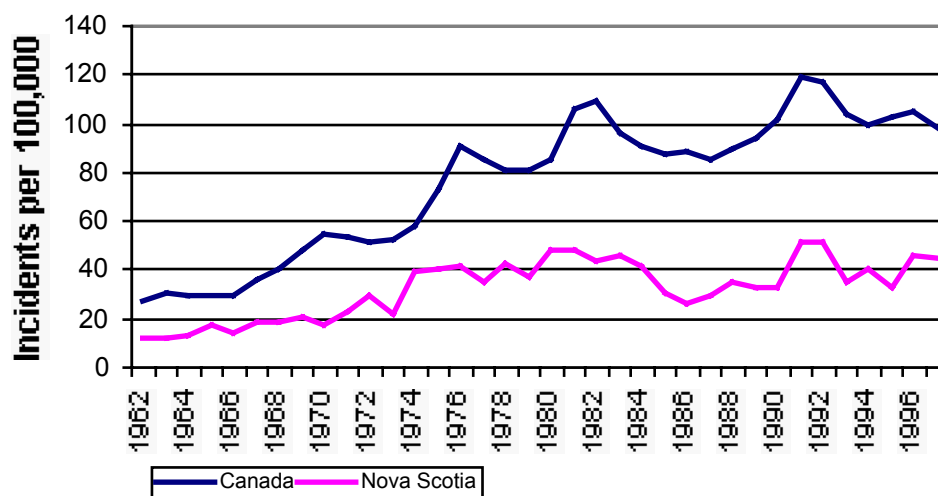


Table 5.4: Robbery Rates and Unemployment Rates, Canada and Nova Scotia, 1962 – 1997 (Average Rates by Decade)

	Canada		Nova Scotia	
	<i>Robbery Rate (per 100,000)</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	<i>Robbery Rate (per 100,000)</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate</i>
1962-69	33.6	4.0%*	16.0	4.9%*
1970-79	68.1	6.7%	32.8	8.1%
1980-89	93.3	9.3%	38.3	11.8%
1992-97	105.7	10.0%	41.6	12.5%

Sources: Statistics Canada, *ESTAT* and *CANSIM* databases.

NOTE: Unemployment rates are averaged for the years 1966-69, the earliest available on Statistics Canada's *ESTAT* and *CANSIM* databases.

5.3 Trends in Property Crime

Property crime rates in Nova Scotia have remained consistently below the Canadian average, but the gap has been closing as the provincial rate of increase in property crimes exceeds the national average. The Nova Scotia property crime rate was 62% of the Canadian rate in 1962, 60% in 1972, 72% in 1982, and 82% in 1997 (Table 5.5 and Chart 5.11). As in other categories of crime, there is a gradual convergence towards the national average. For the most serious of property crime categories, break and enter, the Nova Scotia rate was 67% of the national average in 1962 and 79% of the national average in 1997.²⁶

The official Nova Scotia property crime rate has fallen by nearly 20% since 1990 and by 26% from its 1991 mid-recession peak, but it has leveled off since 1994 and is still 340% higher than it was in 1962. The Canadian rate is 257% higher than it was in 1962. For police-recorded crimes, the chances of being a victim of property crime in Nova Scotia were one in 25 in 1997, compared to one in 86 in 1962, and one in 21 nationwide today (Chart 5.12).²⁷

As mentioned earlier, higher reporting rates probably account for part of this increase, but it is difficult to estimate an actual percentage. The 1988 and 1993 General Social Survey victim surveys indicate that overall victimization rates for theft of personal property (including both reported and unreported crimes) fell by eight percentage points, while reported thefts rose by just under 1% during the same period, an indication of higher rates

²⁶ Crime incidents from Statistics Canada, *CANSIM Database*, matrix 2200; population statistics used to calculate crime rates over time from Statistics Canada, *CANSIM Database*, matrix 1.

²⁷ See footnotes at sections 5.1 and 5.2 above on calculation of "chance of being a crime victim".

of reporting.²⁸ There are no comparable victim surveys for the 1960s and 1970s, so it is impossible to judge what percentage of the official property crime increase during this period is due to reporting cases that were previously not reported.

The 1996 International Crime Victimization Survey found that property crimes and car theft generally have high rates of reporting, partly for insurance reasons.²⁹ More dramatic changes in reporting rates have likely occurred for assaults and sexual assaults, which traditionally have the lowest rates of reporting. The increase in the property crime rate over time is therefore probably subject to a less severe discount than the violent crime rate increase.

The official violent crime rate in Nova Scotia has increased by 445% since 1962, while the official property crime rate has increased by 340%. A significant part of the difference between the two rates is probably due to increased reporting rates for assaults and sexual assaults, while the property crime reporting rate has probably changed less dramatically.

Among the provinces Nova Scotia has just the 7th highest rate of property crime in the country and only half the rate of front-runner British Columbia, but Nova Scotia's rate of increase has been the 4th fastest in the last 20 years (Chart 5.13). Among crime categories, the Nova Scotia official police-reported crime rate for break and enter was 3.3 times as high in 1997 as in 1962, 3.4 times as high for theft, 2.9 times as high for motor vehicle theft, and 6.4 times as high for fraud (Chart 5.14). Once again, the numbers probably need to be discounted somewhat for changes in reporting rates.

In actual numbers of reported incidents, there were more than four times as many thefts and break and enter incidents in 1997 as there were in 1962, 3.4 times as many motor vehicle thefts, five times as many robberies, and eight times as many reported frauds.³⁰ Even if higher rates of reporting account for a portion of the change, this dramatic long-term increase may help explain why public perceptions have not yet adjusted to the decline in crime since 1991, and why fear of crime remains high.

It is worth recalling here that these property crime rates refer almost exclusively to "street crime." As noted earlier, estimates of corporate crime are not included in this study, because of data and reporting difficulties, except for the rare cases where such incidents are prosecuted. While half the top 1,000 Canadian companies reported being victims of fraud, the vast majority of incidents remain unreported. Internal corporate fraud investigations should also be counted as a crime cost, but are also excluded in this study.

²⁸ The authors wish to acknowledge the assistance of Paul Smith, Coordinator of Research and Planning, Nova Scotia Department of Justice, on the complex issue of reporting rates.

²⁹ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization: An International Perspective," *Juristat*, catalogue no. 85-002-XPE, volume 18, no. 3, 1996.

³⁰ Note that robbery is officially classified as a crime against the person rather than against property, but is included here for illustrative purposes.

Table 5.5 Property Crime Rate per 100,000 Population

Date	Incidents Canada	Pop.(000s) Canada	Crime rate Canada	Incidents Nova Scotia	Pop.(000s) NS	Crime rate Nova Scotia	1962=100 Canada	1962=100 Nova Scotia	NS as a % of Can Crime Rate
1962	351483	18583	1891	8714	746	1168	100	100	62
1963	387517	18931	2047	10403	751	1385	108	119	68
1964	414048	19290	2146	10937	755	1449	114	124	67
1965	410688	19644	2091	11108	756	1469	111	126	70
1966	451980	20015	2258	11199	756	1481	119	127	66
1967	506151	20378	2484	11109	760	1462	131	125	59
1968	584996	20071	2915	13508	767	1761	154	151	60
1969	655304	21001	3120	15369	775	1983	165	170	64
1970	748519	21297	3515	16203	782	2072	186	177	59
1971	801379	22026	3638	17400	799	2178	192	186	60
1972	807468	22285	3623	17367	804	2160	192	185	60
1973	833148	22560	3693	18528	814	2276	195	195	62
1974	946793	22875	4139	21281	820	2595	219	222	63
1975	1041036	23209	4485	25493	828	3079	237	264	69
1976	1062952	23518	4520	27730	837	3313	239	284	73
1977	1059688	23796	4453	27050	841	3216	235	275	72
1978	1097242	24036	4565	27641	846	3267	241	280	72
1979	1186697	24277	4888	30279	851	3558	258	305	73
1980	1334619	24593	5427	32122	855	3757	287	322	69
1981	1429520	24900	5741	35657	856	4166	304	357	73
1982	1466923	25202	5821	36338	862	4216	308	361	72
1983	1422703	25456	5589	34586	871	3971	296	340	71
1984	1408663	25702	5481	36339	880	4129	290	354	75
1985	1408717	25942	5430	37444	888	4217	287	361	78
1986	1448550	26204	5528	39174	892	4392	292	376	79
1987	1468591	26550	5531	39480	896	4406	293	377	80
1988	1457361	26895	5419	39448	900	4383	287	375	81
1989	1443048	27379	5271	39293	907	4332	279	371	82
1990	1554348	27791	5593	43828	913	4800	296	411	86
1991	1726769	28120	6141	48223	918	5270	325	451	86
1992	1674773	28542	5868	44268	925	4786	310	410	82
1993	1599037	28941	5525	40221	931	4320	292	370	78
1994	1524931	29251	5213	37915	934	4059	276	348	78
1995	1549877	29606	5235	37738	938	4023	277	344	77
1996	1555800	29672	5193	37880	931	4068	275	348	78
1997	1458930	30004	4862	37177	936	3971	257	340	82

5.3.1 Motor Vehicle Theft: An Illustration of Eroding Advantage

Trends in motor vehicle theft illustrate the advantage that the Atlantic provinces still enjoy in lower property crime rates, and also the fact that this advantage may be eroding. Motor vehicle theft is also a useful illustration because reporting rates are traditionally high for this crime category due to insurance theft claims, and are unlikely to change significantly over time.

The four Atlantic provinces still have the lowest rate of motor vehicle theft in the country. Nova Scotia's rate, though the highest in Atlantic Canada, is still less than half the Canadian average. In 1995, 9 out of every 1,000 Nova Scotian vehicle owners had a vehicle stolen, compared to 18 out of 1,000 in Canada, 21 in France, 22 in the USA and 33 in England.³¹

Based on motor vehicle thefts (MVT) per 100,000 registrations, the Nova Scotia rate of motor vehicle thefts has actually fallen by 9 per cent since 1975, while nationally there has been an increase of 36%. In 1977 the Nova Scotia motor vehicle theft rate per 100,000 vehicle registrations was 77 per cent of the national rate, and only 33% in 1994.

Since 1994, however, the rate of motor vehicle thefts has been rising steeply, and it is now 46% of the national average. There were 2558 incidents of motor vehicle theft in Nova Scotia in 1997, the highest annual total on record, and the highest rate since 1979. In the last few years, the Nova Scotia motor vehicle theft rate has risen considerably faster than the national rate. From 1994 to 1997 it increased by 50% compared to 8% nationwide. Canada even experienced a decline in its vehicle theft rate in 1997, the first decrease in a decade.

In 1996 alone, the rate of increase in vehicle thefts was 30% in Nova Scotia, the largest jump in the country. Halifax had the largest increase of any Canadian city, 59%, followed by St. John at 58%.³² In fact, 64% of Nova Scotia motor vehicle thefts are committed in Halifax. The overall trends illustrate a quality of life advantage still enjoyed in this region, and one that has been eroding rapidly in recent years. The substantial advantage of a motor vehicle theft rate less than half the national average is important for the business climate as well as for personal security and cost savings. Recent trends indicate that this advantage must be actively protected if it is not to slip away.

The conclusion is the same for trends in other categories of reported property crime. The Nova Scotia rate for break and enter incidents was 67% of the Canadian rate in 1962 but 79% in 1997. The Nova Scotia theft rate was 64% of the national average in 1962, and

³¹ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Julie Sauve, "Motor Vehicle Theft in Canada, 1996", *Juristat*, catalogue no. 85-002, volume 18, no. 1, January, 1998, page 2.

³² John Turner, Chief, Policing Services Program, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, recommends that inter-city comparisons be done using Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) data (personal communication, 6 April, 1999). We shall make an effort to adjust these data in this way prior to publication. Table 6.4, comparing overall crime rates in Canadian cities, does use CMA data.

95% of the national average in 1997. In cases of reported fraud, Nova Scotia has already surpassed the national average. In 1962, Nova Scotians committed fraud at 40% of the Canadian rate, and at 128% the Canadian rate in 1997 (Chart 5.14), though this category has wide discretionary powers in reporting and laying of charges.

There is no evidence to demonstrate that reporting rates have changed more dramatically in the Maritime provinces than in the rest of Canada. Therefore, even if higher rates of reporting qualify the absolute rates of increase in police-reported crimes, they do not explain the *relative* narrowing of the gap between this region and the rest of the country.

Chart 5.11: Nova Scotia Property Crime Rate as Percentage of Canada Property Crime Rate

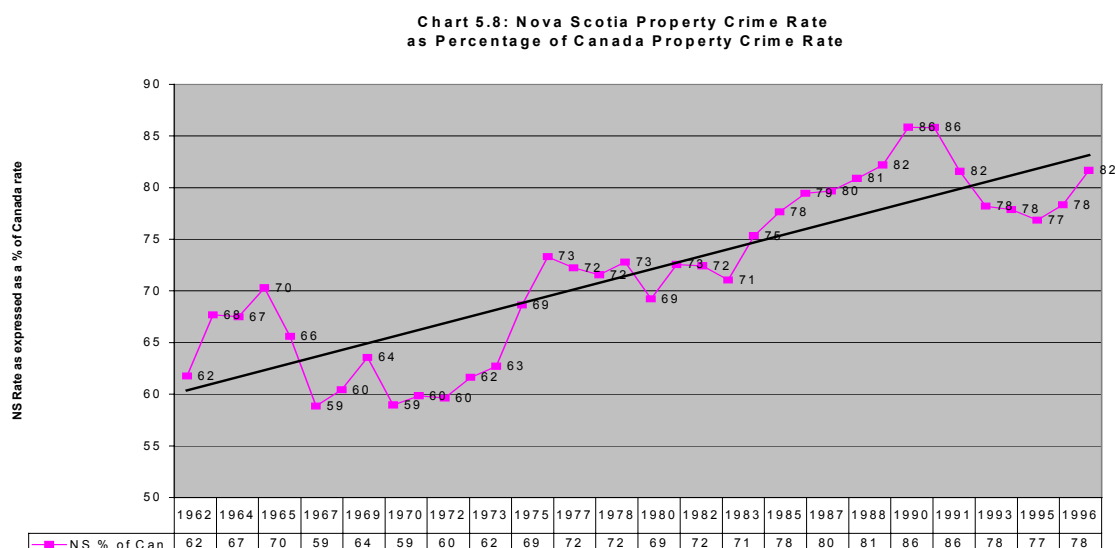


Chart 5.12: The Percentage Chance of Being a Victim of Property Crime³³, Police-Reported Property Crimes, Canada and Nova Scotia, 1962-1997

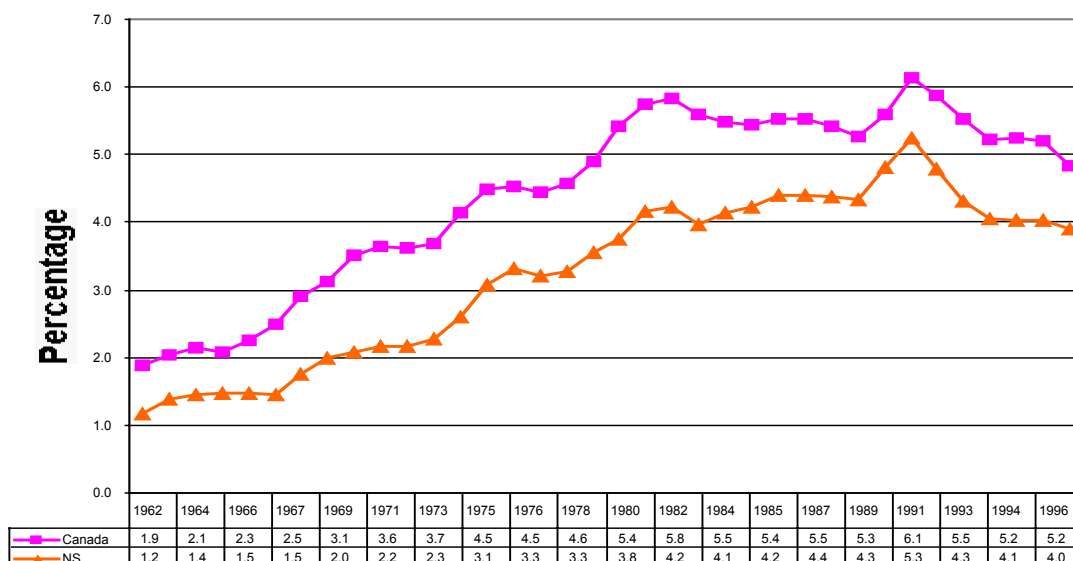
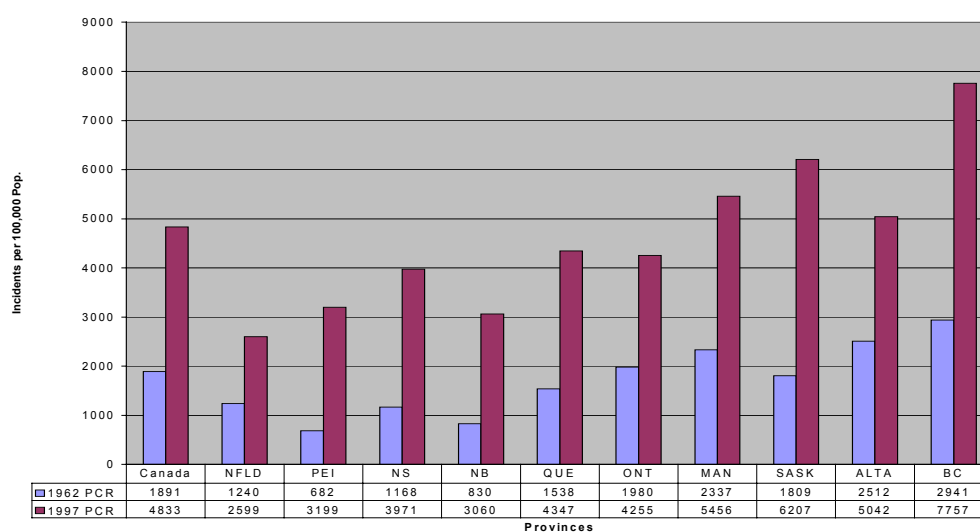


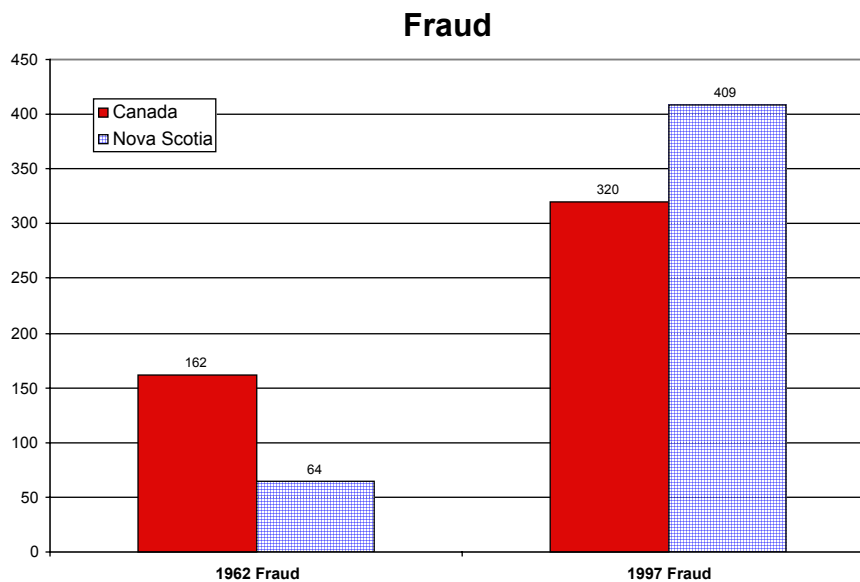
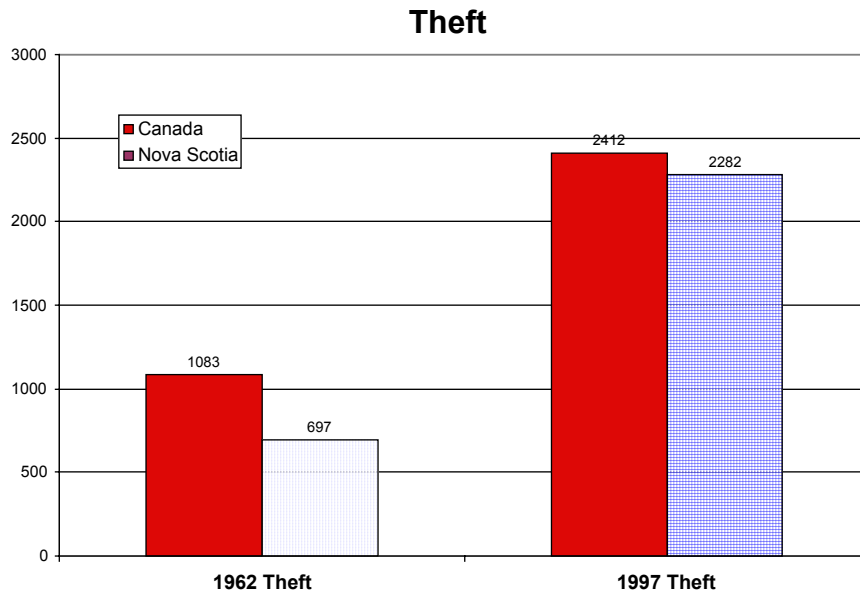
Chart 5.13: The Rise in the Property Crime Rate Across Canada

Chart 5.13: The Rise in the Property Crime Rate Across Canada

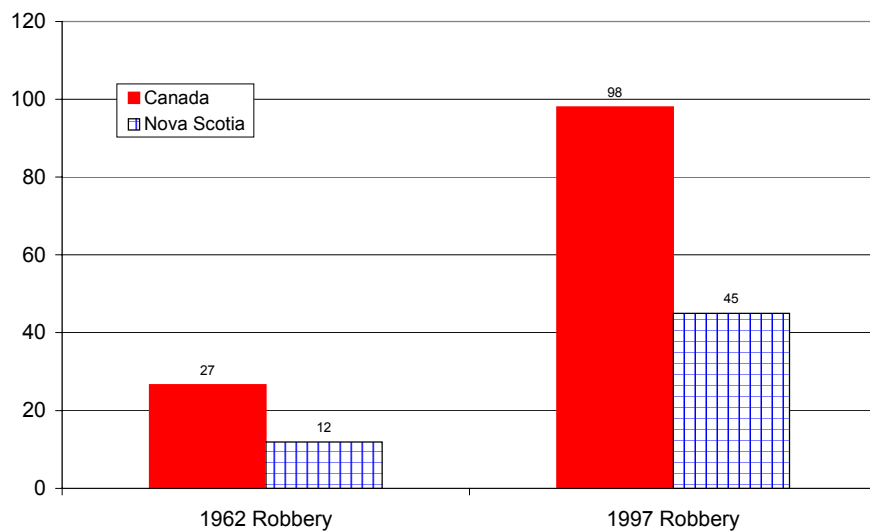


³³ See footnotes on calculation of "chances of being a crime victim" in sections 5.1 and 5.2 above.

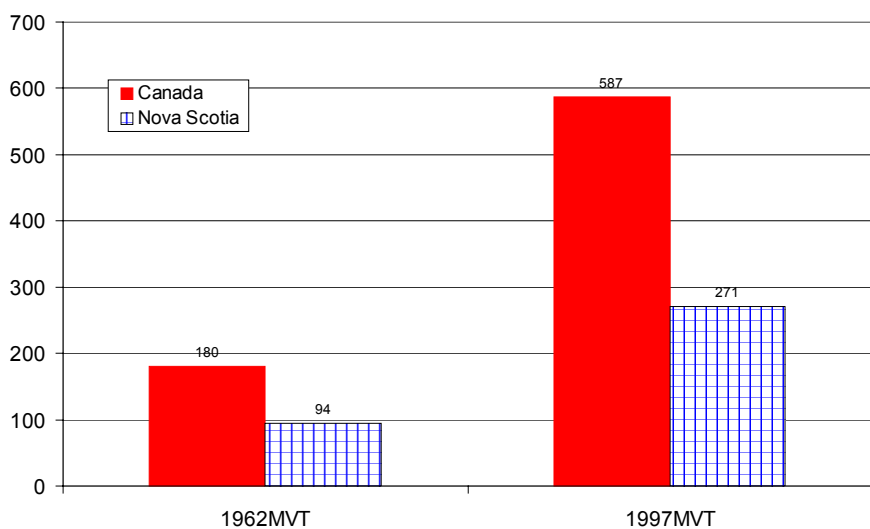
**Chart 5.14: crime rates per 100,000 population for various property crimes:
Nova Scotia and Canada, 1962 and 1997.**

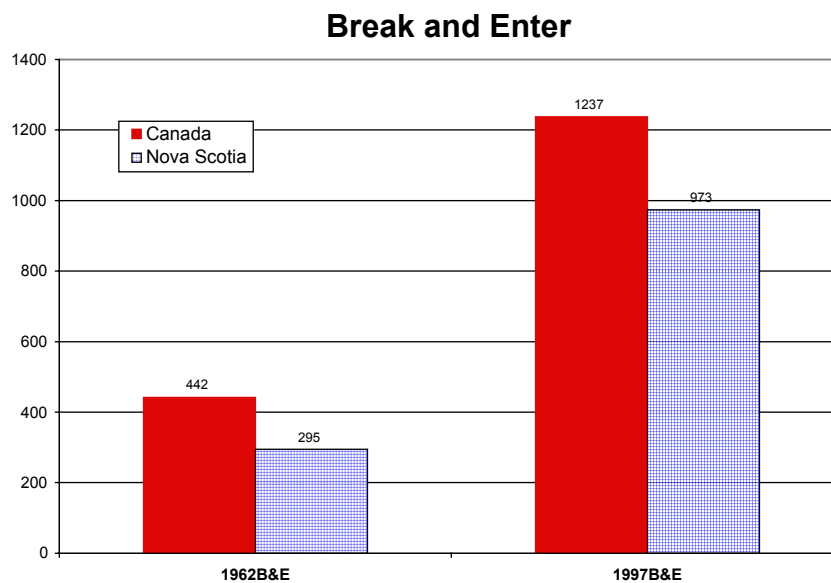


Robbery



Motor Vehicle Theft





5.4 A Depreciating Asset

In sum, police-reported crime rates overall have declined by 15% since peaking at the height of the recession in 1991, but they are still much higher than they were 35 years ago, as are unemployment rates. While part of the increase is undoubtedly due to higher reporting rates for some crimes, there is also no doubt that the chances of being a crime victim both in Nova Scotia and in Canada as a whole have risen markedly in the last four decades.

As noted in chapter 2, the official statistics must be qualified by the higher reporting rates in some crime categories. A higher propensity to report sexual assault, domestic violence and common assault, for example, may be regarded as a refusal to tolerate levels of violence once accepted. To the extent that higher official crime rates reflect increased reporting, the trend may actually signify movement towards a more civil society. Only regular victim surveys can reveal the extent to which reporting rates affect the official police-reported statistics.³⁴

Despite this major caveat, it is clear that crime rates and crime costs have risen substantially. The three-fold increase in robberies, where reporting rates are unlikely to have changed significantly, is indicative of the scale of the crime increase nationwide. It is difficult to interpret this in any other way than as a decline in the quality of life.

Our growing material wealth has occurred at the expense of a significant loss in personal security and social peace and harmony. Expressed in economic terms, that loss represents a depreciating asset that is producing higher costs and a loss of services, just as the gradual depreciation of a produced capital asset like factory machinery will show up years later as increasing inefficiencies and a decline in economic production.

Chapters 7 to 11 begin to document these growing economic costs, which are undermining our wealth and prosperity. The first step in arresting this depreciation is to stop adding crime costs to the GDP as if they were actual contributions to economic growth. That is a dangerous illusion that confuses apparent short-term gain for long-term loss and that prevents the development of meaningful social policy. The second step is to begin reinvesting in a valuable asset – the existence of a peaceful and secure society – by devoting resources to eliminating some of the major causes of crime.

The identification of crime costs in this study is intended as a contribution to the first step. Identifying and documenting the costs of crime as what they really are – costs and liabilities, rather than economic stimuli, is a challenging reality check that may initially be unpleasant. But it is also a salutary and liberating step that can lead to a reaffirmation of fundamental social values and a new commitment to measuring and valuing “that

³⁴ An important move in this direction has been taken in Nova Scotia since 1996 with annual victim surveys undertaken by Corporate Research Associates and commissioned by the N.S. Department of Justice.

which makes life worthwhile,” in Robert Kennedy’s words. Recognizing and acknowledging the problem honestly is necessary before remedial action can occur. With benchmarks of genuine progress in place, policy priorities will naturally change and social policy will respond to signals from the valuation system.

Nova Scotia and the other Atlantic provinces are well placed to take the lead in this process, because they are temporally less distant from a time when these values were stronger. As recently as 25 years ago Nova Scotia’s crime rate was less than two-thirds the Canadian average. But this “comparative advantage” has eroded, as the rate of crime increase in Atlantic Canada has far exceeded the national average, and Nova Scotia’s overall reported crime rate stands today at 98% of the Canadian rate.

As noted, common assault accounts for most of the increase, and the region retains a significant advantage when serious violent crimes and property crimes are considered, with offence rates still substantially below the Canadian average. However, since reporting rates are not likely to have changed more in one part of the country than another, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the overall crime trends demonstrate a gradual convergence towards the national average.

This is one area where convergence towards the national average is clearly not what this region needs for its development, nor is it the type of “growth” we want to encourage. But the memory of a more peaceful, secure and harmonious society is recent enough that the political and social will may still be present to reverse the discouraging trends of the last 30 years, and to seek a more balanced path of development that more accurately reflects the region’s inherent strengths and genuine values. From the GPI perspective, such a path will be a more effective guarantor of future stability, well-being and prosperity than adherence to the narrow materialist and consumer ethic reflected in our current accounting system.

6. Social & Demographic Characteristics

The basic purpose of this study, as explained at the beginning, is to establish an accounting framework that recognizes the costs of crime as losses rather than gains to the economy, in contrast to the existing system of economic accounts that recognizes only quantitative growth as a contribution to prosperity. The GPI distinction between social assets and liabilities necessarily relies on a cost-benefit approach to accounting that can eventually be very useful in assessing the cost-effectiveness of alternative policy options aimed at reducing crime.

However we do not claim to be at that stage, and this study is primarily concerned that the macro-economic accounting framework send accurate signals to policy makers about overall trends in the quality of life. As such, an accurate index of progress should go up when crime rates go down and decline when crime rates rise. Because market statistics dominate the policy arena, the GPI goes a step further and translates the costs of crime into economic terms.

Nevertheless, crime is not an independent variable, but is highly correlated with particular social and demographic characteristics. In particular, high rates of crime are associated with gender, substance abuse, recidivism, unemployment, low education, and age. Understanding these correlations is particularly important in eventually identifying cost-effective investments that can reduce crime rates and produce long-term social savings.

No claims are made in this study for any detailed analysis of these correlations, and nothing that follows should naively imply that crime is *caused* by any of these social and demographic characteristics. We have already noted, for example, that the high correlation between crime trends and unemployment rates over time cannot be taken as a causal relationship in any absolute sense, as the high unemployment and low crime rates in Newfoundland attest.

With these caveats and qualifications, it is still necessary at least to list briefly the major socio-demographic correlations that do exist, both in order to demonstrate the dependent nature of crime, and to point to future policy-relevant uses of the cost-benefit approach on which the GPI is based. Social programs targeted in particular areas may have a significant crime prevention function while producing other social benefits. It is therefore an economically prudent strategy to identify such “no-regrets” measures that improve work skills, productivity and performance, raise educational levels, reduce social service costs and increase the tax base, while reducing crime at the same time.

6.1 Gender

85% of adult criminal court cases in Nova Scotia involved males, and 95% of those incarcerated are male.³⁵ In 1996 just five per cent of admissions to Nova Scotia jails were female, a figure that has remained fairly constant over the last two decades. Nationwide more women are being imprisoned, and the female share of total admissions to provincial jails has risen from five per cent in 1978 to nine per cent in 1996.³⁶ In federal prisons 98% of inmates are male, indicating that men overwhelmingly commit the most serious crimes.

Between 1986 and 1997 women committed only 13% of all criminal code violations, 10% of violent crimes, 7% of robberies, and just 5% of break and enters and motor vehicle thefts. In every criminal category men significantly outscore women (Table 6.1).

From an economic perspective this effectively means that women are subsidizing the costs of crime committed by men, even though Nova Scotian women working full-time earn only 66 cents on average to the male dollar.³⁷ Female tax dollars pay for prisons and police, and women bear substantial costs of victim losses, theft insurance, higher prices due to crime, and home security expenditures -- costs incurred largely because of male crime. From the GPI perspective, women would have a case for arguing for a public justice tax rebate in proportion to their lower crime rates.

One positive gender-related aspect of crime that may be reflective of a more civil society is the higher propensity to report sexual assault, domestic violence and spousal abuse to police. Higher reporting rates for these crimes indicate that levels of violence once tolerated are no longer socially acceptable. As noted, this is one instance where higher official crime rates are not indicative of a depreciating social asset, but rather of higher social standards.

³⁵ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Denyse Carriere, "Adult Criminal Court Statistics, 1996-97", *Juristat*, catalogue no. 85-002, volume 18, no. 7, April, 1998, page 1; Statistics Canada, Robinson, David, et. al., "A One-Day Snapshot of Inmates in Canada's Adult Correctional Facilities," *Juristat*, catalogue no. 85-002, volume 18, no. 8, gives the male percentage as 96%.

³⁶ Statistics Canada, *Number of Admissions to Provincial facilities*. Cansim Matrix 318

³⁷ Statistics Canada, *Women in the Workplace*, 2nd edition, catalogue no. 71-534, page 42.

Table 6.1: Crimes by Gender, Nova Scotia, 1997 and 1986-1997

Adults Charged by Actual Offences, 1986-1997.³⁸				
	Female 1997	Female Total: 1986-97	Male 1997	Male Total: 1986-97
All Offences, Total	2438	37334	11423	256346
Criminal Code, Total	2302	28036	10387	128303
Crimes Of Violence	501	3558	3221	29825
Murder	4	31	10	128
Attempted Murder	3	20	7	108
Manslaughter	1	2	1	14
Robbery	9	97	137	1390
Property Crimes	1353	18308	3693	53814
Breaking & Entering	67	660	886	12960
Theft-Motor Vehicle	14	133	205	2569
Theft	754	12242	1810	26170
Frauds	503	5022	608	9792

6.2 Drugs

Studies indicate that 80% of offenders in Canada have used psychoactive substances; that 50-75% had drugs in their urine at the time of arrest; that 30% were actually under the influence when charged; and that 30-50% of prison inmates have drug-dependency problems.³⁹

Time did not permit further exploration of this important correlation, but provocative studies have been undertaken relating substance abuse and addiction in general to crime.⁴⁰ The explosive growth of the gambling industry in North America creates an incentive for further exploration of the links between gambling addictions and crime.

³⁸ Statistics Canada. Cansim Disc 1998-2, Cat. No. 10F0007XCB, Matrix 2198: *Adults Charged by Actual Offences, Canada, Provinces & Territories*.

³⁹ Brochu, Serge, "Estimating the Costs of Drug-Related Crime", *CCSA web site*, <http://www.ccsa.ca/brochu.htm>

⁴⁰ A 1997 report by the Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse, for example, reported lost potential production worth \$18.5 billion a year due to substance abuse. Certainly a percentage of that is attributable to activities defined as criminal under the Criminal Code.

6.3 Previous Convictions

Statistics Canada's "One-Day Snapshot" of inmates revealed that 83% had at least one previous adult conviction.⁴¹ 72% of Canadian inmates have served a prior term of provincial incarceration. The "Snapshot's" profile of 401 inmates in Nova Scotia adult correctional facilities, who had been convicted of a "crime against the person," showed that 82% had one or more prior convictions.⁴² The latter sample clearly refers to prisoners convicted of more serious offences, rather than those found guilty to non-violent property crimes. Recidivism rates are not regularly maintained, although they are potentially important indicators of the effectiveness of prisons and rehabilitation programs.

In 1954 only 18% of Nova Scotia inmates had a previous conviction. That figure rose steadily through the 1950s when provincial data on prior conviction rates were maintained annually, until 1961 when 36% of inmates had a previous conviction. In other words, the percentage doubled in less than a decade. While data for the intermediate years are not readily available, 55% of Nova Scotia inmates currently incarcerated have served a prior term of incarceration.⁴³

But this does not necessarily mean that a higher percentage of offenders are re-offending than previously. As with reporting rates, the statistics may be conveying a double message, and may be telling us more about trends in sentencing than about the propensity to re-offend. Paul Smith of the N.S. Justice Department correctly points out that the tendency to keep less serious offenders out of prison and to seek alternative forms of sentencing means that only those with a fairly significant criminal record are likely to receive a custody term. This is particularly true in Nova Scotia, which has the lowest incarceration rate in the country.

Thus, higher rates of inmates with prior convictions may simply reflect that those guilty of minor offences with no previous records are less likely to go to jail than previously. New legislation and amendments to earlier laws have actually created more non-prison sentencing options and kept more first-time offenders out of jail. By the time an offender actually ends up in prison, he is likely to have accumulated quite a criminal record. This will show up in the statistics as a high proportion of inmate with prior convictions.⁴⁴

GPI Atlantic recommends that provincial recidivism rates be published annually in order to assess the extent to which increases in the number of inmates with prior convictions reflect changes in sentencing, and whether a higher or lower proportion of criminals are

⁴¹ Statistics Canada, Robinson, "Snapshot", op. cit., Shelley Trevethan, Chief, Corrections Program, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, cautions that the percentage is based on data that were available at the time (personal communication, 6 April, 1999).

⁴² Statistics Canada, *A One-Day Snapshot of Inmates in Canada's Adult Correctional Facilities, Nova Scotia*, catalogue no. 85-601, page 121.

⁴³ The 55% prior incarceration statistic is supplied by Paul Smith, N.S. Department of Justice, personal communication, March 17, 1999.

⁴⁴ Robert Roe, Senior Policy Analyst, N.S. Department of Justice, personal communication, 18 March, 1999.

re-offending after release. It would be helpful to present such recidivism data according to number of offenders as well as number of inmates. These data seem to be critical to any analysis of the success or failure of alternative sentencing options and rehabilitation programs.

6.4 Employment Status

Regression analyses conducted by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics demonstrate a strong statistical link between crime and unemployment.⁴⁵ In a 1984 study prepared for the U.S. Joint Economic Committee, Harvard University epidemiologist Harvey Brenner in 1984 found that a 14.3% increase in the U.S. unemployment rate (from 4.9% to 5.6%) from 1973 to 1974, was associated with 403 additional homicides and 7,000 additional assaults in that country, with many of the effects spread over a period of six years.⁴⁶ Caution must clearly be exercised in implying causal relationships, as demonstrated below, and this study does not attempt to explore the association for Nova Scotia beyond the presentation of a few suggestive statistics.

52% of Canadian prison inmates and 59% of Nova Scotian inmates were unemployed at the time of admission to sentenced custody, five times the unemployment rate in the general population (Table 6.2). A Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics survey of inmates in Nova Scotia prisons found that 67% were unemployed at the time of admission to the correctional facility.⁴⁷ As demonstrated in Chapter 5, crime rates are also highly correlated with the business cycle and with unemployment rates over time.⁴⁸

Unemployment rates and crime rates have risen sharply during each of the last two recessions, then dropped back during the business cycle upturn but not to pre-recession levels. Each decade, both unemployment rates and crime rates have risen substantially (Table 5.4). The chance of being a crime victim, as mentioned is earlier was four times greater in 1997 than in 1962, and the chance of being unemployed was three times greater. When official crime statistics are discounted for changes in reporting rates, the correlation is probably very close indeed.

⁴⁵ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *Criminal Justice Trends Canada from 1962: Corrections Program*, page 21.

⁴⁶ Brenner, Harvey, *Estimating the Effects of Economic Change on National Health and Social Well Being*, a study prepared for the Subcommittee on Economic Goals and Intergovernmental Policy of the Joint Economic Committee, Joint Committee Print 98-198, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1984; cited in Cobb, Clifford, Ted Halstead, and Jonathan Rowe, *The Genuine Progress Indicator: Summary of Data and Methodology*, Redefining Progress, San Francisco, September, 1995.

⁴⁷ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *A One-Day Snapshot of Inmates in Canada's Adult Correctional Facilities*, catalogue no. 85-601, page 120. For Canada, the "Snapshot" shows 55% of provincial prisoners and 43% of federal prisoners unemployed at the time of admission.

⁴⁸ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *Criminal Justice Trends Canada from 1962: Corrections Program*, page 21, reports "a strong statistical link between crime and unemployment" found from regression analysis, but no close association between unemployment and the number of persons actually charged with crime (page 23).

In addition to employment status, economic security may also affect crime rates. Among the unemployed, and especially among unemployed youth, economic insecurity is rising in proportion to the declining percentage eligible for employment insurance benefits. Only 15 per cent of unemployed Canadian workers aged 15 to 24 qualified for benefits in 1997, down from 55 per cent in 1989. In Nova Scotia, the percentage of unemployed youth receiving employment insurance benefits declined by 70%, from 66% in 1989 to 21% in 1997. Among unemployed adults of all ages in Nova Scotia, the percentage receiving benefits fell by 50% from 93% in 1989 to 48% in 1997.⁴⁹

As noted earlier, it is not possible to make an absolute correlation between unemployment status and the propensity to commit crime, as the case of Newfoundland, with the highest unemployment rate and the lowest crime rate in the country, clearly demonstrates. The correlation is strongest in *relative* terms, when trends over time *within* a particular jurisdiction are tracked over time. Crime rate peaks at the height of both the last recessions occurred in Canada as a whole and in almost every province.

Table 6.2: Employment Status at Time of Admission to Sentenced Custody, Nova Scotia; 1995-96 to 1997-98⁵⁰

Employment Status	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Full Time	23.6%	23.6%	21.6%
Other	1.3%	2%	2.2%
Part Time	1.5%	1.8%	1.6%
Seasonal	1.3%	1.5%	1.5%
Student	1.9%	1.3%	1.4%
Unemployed	57.4%	58.4%	58.8%
Unknown	12.8%	11.5%	12.9%
Total Admissions	2622	2134	1914

6.5 Education

In Canada as a whole, only 19% of the population have less than a grade 10 education. But 36% of all inmates, 34% of provincial inmates, and 46% of federal prisoners, who are the most serious offenders, have less than a grade 10 education. A Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics survey of Nova Scotia prison inmates found that 42% had less than a

⁴⁹ Canadian Labour Congress, *Left out in the Cold: The End of UI for Canadian Workers*, 1998; McCarthy, Shawn, "Just 36% of Jobless get UI: Tight Rules Blamed as Labour Study Finds Number of Recipients at Record Low," *The Globe and Mail*, Jan 27, 1999, P. A1 & A4.

⁵⁰ Nova Scotia Justice Department, Policy, Planning and Research Division kindly supplied these data in personal correspondence, January, 1999. The table includes all persons sentenced to custody terms in Nova Scotia. It includes persons sentenced to provincial custody and federal custody.

grade 10 education, compared to 19% in the population as a whole.⁵¹ Since offenders given sentences of two years or more serve their time in federal facilities, there appears to be a direct correlation between poor education and both overall crime rates and seriousness of offence. By contrast, crime rates appear to go down in direct proportion to level of education.⁵²

In other words, people with jobs and a decent education are far less likely to commit crimes than those who are unemployed and poorly educated. While this certainly does not prove that unemployment and poor education *cause* crime, as many case studies demonstrate, the correlation does indicate that investments in job creation and education are likely to produce positive spin-off benefits in reduced crime.

6.6 *Aboriginals*

Aboriginals in Nova Scotia are jailed at four times their representation in the population. While they make up only 1.5% of the general population, they accounted for 6% of all admissions to custody in 1997-98. Of 3,318 admissions to provincial and federal custody and on remand, 199 were natives. Considering only provincially sentenced offenders, 5% were aboriginals in 1996 and 3.8% were in 1997-98.

This disproportion is in line with the rest of the country, where aboriginals accounted for 16% of prison admissions compared to a 3% general population share. In Saskatchewan, aboriginals are jailed at nearly seven times their share of the population. 74% of prisoners in that province are aboriginals, compared to an 11% population share.

Again, the correlation demonstrates that job creation and social support programs in aboriginal communities may be cost-effective investments that may reduce crime rates and crime costs while raising the standard of living and quality of life in general. Because the absolute number of aboriginal admissions to custody is small, such investments would certainly need to be justified primarily by their larger intended social and economic purposes and objectives, from a cost accounting perspective. But a full cost-benefit analysis would certainly include the potential reduction in crime costs as a beneficial side effect of such programs.

⁵¹ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *A One-Day Snapshot of Inmates in Canada's Adult Correctional Facilities*, catalogue no. 85-601, page 120.

⁵² Statistics Canada, Robinson, David, et. al., "A One-Day Snapshot of Inmates in Canada's Adult Correctional Facilities", *Juristat*, catalogue no. 85-002, volume 18, no. 8, pages 5 and 6. Shelley Trevethan, Chief, Corrections Program, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, points out that Statistics Canada has not actually stated that crime rates are proportional to level of education, so GPI Atlantic takes full responsibility for this inference (personal communication, 6 April, 1999).

6.7 Is Crime an Urban / Metropolitan Problem?

The crime rate for Halifax for all reported criminal code offences was 9388 per 100,000 population in 1997, up slightly from 9198 in 1995.⁵³ This was actually lower than the reported rate in 16 other Nova Scotia municipal areas with smaller populations (Table 6.3: arranged according to percentage change in crime rates between 1986 and 1995). Clearly Halifax is not the only Nova Scotia jurisdiction with a crime problem. From the data in Table 6.3, there does not appear to be a direct correlation between crime rates and population size.

On the other hand, the victimization survey in Statistics Canada's 1993 General Social Survey found that when reported and unreported crimes are both considered, the nationwide results did reveal a difference between rural and urban areas. In that survey, 27% of urban residents and only 17% of the rural population reported that they were victims of crime in 1993.

Nationally, there is also no correlation between crime and population size. According to the official statistics, Halifax has the highest reported crime rate among major cities east of Winnipeg, including Toronto and Montreal, but less than most western cities (Table 6.4). Again the official numbers must be treated with caution. Whether city boundaries include only inner city areas or whether they include suburbs and even rural areas may affect reported crime rate statistics. For example, Vancouver's high crime rates compared to Toronto (consistently double the rate) may have a lot to do with their respective city boundaries. Similarly, differences in provincial and municipal police policies may affect reporting rates, since police discretion may vary widely.

⁵³ These numbers are not strictly comparable due to the major boundary changes that have taken place as a result of amalgamation in the Halifax metropolitan region.

Table 6.3: Crime Rate: Nova Scotia Municipal Areas: 1986 - 1995

Criminal Code Offences⁵⁴	Rate/100000	Rate/100000	% Change
	1986	1995	
Sydney Mines	6822	3080	-55
Windsor, Ns (Rcmp)	16361	12162	-26
Glace Bay	5296	4478	-15
Yarmouth (RCMP)	17667	15063	-15
Lunenburg	10677	9259	-13
North Sydney	8675	7577	-13
Sackville	6062	5828	-4
Berwick	12176	12783	5
Truro	15963	16943	6
Bridgewater	14357	15304	7
Springhill	5388	5791	7
Port Hawkesbury (RCMP)	8308	9098	10
New Glasgow	12804	14370	12
Kentville	10060	11717	16
Digby (RCMP)	18385	21636	18
Pictou (RCMP)	8283	10075	22
Liverpool (RCMP)	7909	9967	26
Oxford (RCMP)	5667	7143	26
Sydney	8919	11362	27
Blacks Harbour	4429	5727	29
Middleton	10053	15833	58
Stellarton	4204	8868	111
Trenton	4781	10517	120
Mahone Bay	4000	9818	145
Wolfville	6719	18132	170

⁵⁴ Statistics Canada. Criminal Justice at a Glance: Data Highlights from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1997. CD Rom. File: *Common Offences, Selected Municipal Areas, 1986-95*.

Table 6.4: Crime Rate: Selected Census Metropolitan Areas: 1995 - 1997⁵⁵

CMA	1995	1996	1997	% Change 95-96	% Change 96-97
Toronto	7452	6920	6549	-7.14	-5.36
Montreal	7776	7981	7531	2.64	-5.64
Vancouver	14516	14868	13029	2.42	-12.37
Ottawa-Hull	10245	9045	7825	-11.71	-13.49
Edmonton	8573	8569	8836	-0.05	3.12
Calgary	7889	7843	7796	-0.58	-.6
Quebec	6082	6398	5664	5.2	-11.47
Winnipeg	10543	9829	10281	-6.77	4.6
Halifax	9198	9608	9388	4.46	-2.29
Victoria	12683	12014	11434	-5.27	-4.83
Saskatoon	10996	11638	12126	5.84	4.19
St. John's	6471	7526	7077	16.3	-5.97
St. John, NB	6822	7973	6980	16.87	-12.45

6.8 Age

A one-day survey of Canada's inmate population revealed that the median age of those on-register was 32 years old, (31 in provincial prisons and 34 in federal prisons), whereas the median age in the general adult population was 41. In Nova Scotia, the median age of inmates was 30, compared to the general population median of 42. Of those found guilty in adult criminal courts in Nova Scotia, 1995-96, 31% were aged 18-24, 32% 25-34, 21% 35-44, 9% 45-54, and 5% were aged 55 or over.⁵⁶ In other words, most criminals are relatively young.

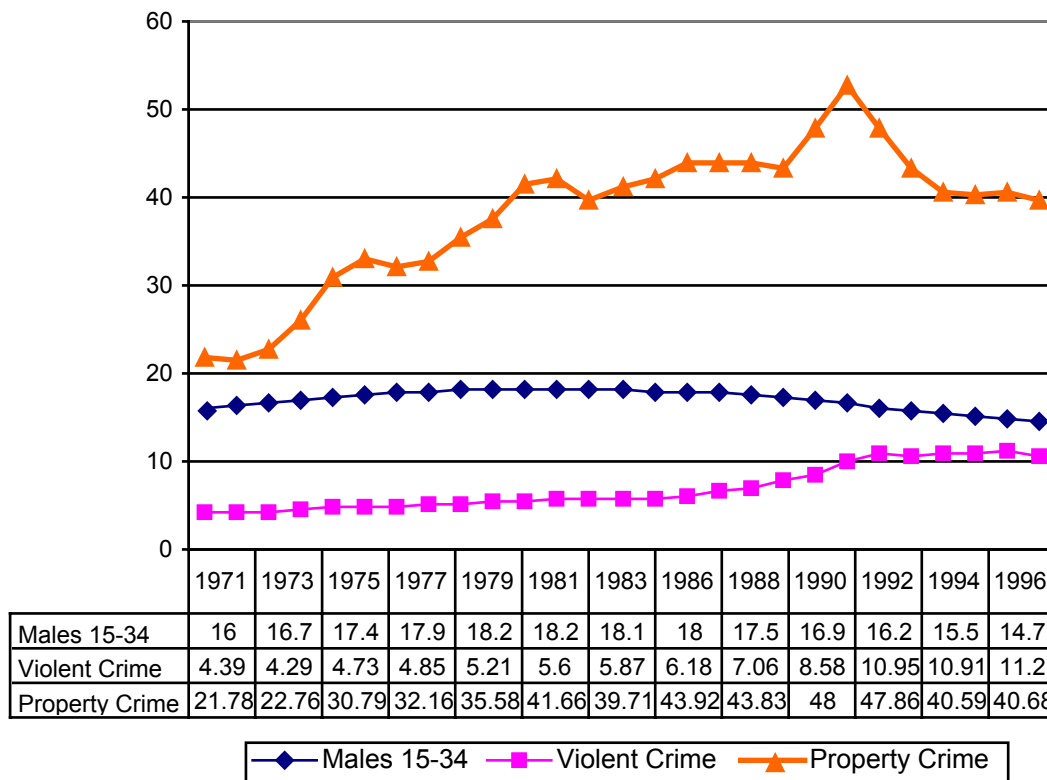
It has been suggested that changes in the crime rate are partly dependent on changes in the number and proportion of young male adults in the population. Since crime is highly correlated with this demographic group, the aging of the Canadian population should produce a proportionate decline in the crime rate. We have tried to test this proposition with somewhat indeterminate results (Chart 6.1).⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Statistics Canada. *Canadian Crime Statistics, 1995-97*. Table 3.2.

⁵⁶ Statistics Canada. *Criminal Justice at a Glance: Data Highlights from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1997*. CD Rom. File: *Adult Criminal Court – Most Serious Sentence, 1995-96*.

⁵⁷ The authors wish to thank Dr. Don Clairmont, Department of Sociology, Dalhousie University, for recommending that this proposition be tested.

Chart 6.1: Percentage of Young Males, age 15-34, in the Population, and Changes in the Crime Rate, Nova Scotia, 1971 – 1997
(Violent Crime and Property Crime Rates per 1,000 population)



It can be seen that the sharpest drop in the percentage of 15 to 34 year-old males in the Nova Scotia population has occurred in the last 10 years, and this may well be reflected in declines in the property crime rate in the 1990s, though the correlation is less clear for violent crime and for the 1980s as a whole. Also, the sharp increase in crime in the early 1990s occurred despite an ongoing drop in the proportion of young males in the population, and seems more highly correlated with the recession than with age factors.

Needless to say, both factors may work together, and high unemployment rates among male youth may produce the highest correlation with increased crime rates. This proposition needs to be tested further with regression analyses. Paul Smith's 1987 thesis did find that age-specific unemployment rates were linked to motor vehicle thefts.⁵⁸

Nationwide, youth unemployment has remained steadily high since 1990 and has consistently been about 80% higher than for older groups. Youth unemployment reached 20% during the recession of the early 1980s and 18% during the 1990s recession. But unlike the 1980s, in which the recovery produced a steady drop in youth unemployment

⁵⁸ Paul Smith, personal communication, 17 March, 1999.

to 11% in 1989, the economic recovery of the 1990s has not proportionately benefited youth. While overall unemployment rates fell during the 1990s, youth unemployment remained steadily high, averaging 17% in 1997, more than twice the rate for adults.⁵⁹

As Statistics Canada notes:

*Since the end of the last recession, the beneficiaries of employment growth have been adult men and women. Aside from a little spark around the end of 1994, youths' employment growth has yet to be rekindled.*⁶⁰

Among those who are employed, young workers have also experienced the greatest growth in temporary, part-time, and limited-term jobs,⁶¹ and therefore have the highest rates of underemployment. Again, no simplistic correlations can be made with crime, but it is likely that combining age and gender specific data with employment characteristics will yield useful information.

Nova Scotia youth courts hear more cases than in the past, a trend that runs counter to that in the country as a whole. In 1996 3,549 Nova Scotia youth appeared in court, up from 3,078 in 1992.⁶² Nationally the figure has dropped from 115,187 in 1992 to 110,065 in 1996. Though the number of Nova Scotia youth appearing in court has increased at a rate in excess of the national average, the overall rate of youth criminal cases is now about the same as the national average. It is noteworthy that the fastest rates of increase in youth arrests in Nova Scotia have been among the younger age groups, with court appearances by 14-year-olds up 93% since 1992, 15-year-olds up 42%, and 13-year-olds up 33% (Table 6.5).

Table 6.5: Cases Heard in Youth Court, Canada and Nova Scotia, 1992 – 1996:
(Rate of youth court cases per 10,000 youth within each age group)⁶³

	92	92	93	93	94	94	95	95	96	96	92-96	92-96
Age	Can	NS	Can	NS	Can	NS	Can	NS	Can	NS	Can %	NS %
12	88	68	93	54	91	75	97	75	95	78	7	15
13	224	151	232	185	221	161	234	192	229	201	2	33
14	446	235	433	282	407	304	419	351	421	453	-6	93
15	615	384	630	427	577	443	581	570	589	545	-4	42
16	751	686	732	683	703	809	684	785	660	793	-12	16
17	781	816	773	779	720	755	712	834	677	706	-13	-14

⁵⁹ Statistics Canada, *Canadian Economic Observer*, catalogue no. 11-210-XPB, table 8, page 34.

⁶⁰ Statistics Canada, *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, Autumn 1997, catalogue no. 75-001-XPE, p. 12.

⁶¹ Statistics Canada, *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, Winter, 1995, catalogue no. 75-001E, pp. 38-39.

⁶² Statistics Canada. *StatCan: CANSIM Disc, 1998-2*. Cat. No. 10F0007XCB. Matrix 8901: *Cases Heard by Youth Courts, by Age of the Accused for Canada and the Provinces, Annual*.

⁶³ Statistics Canada. *StatCan: CANSIM Disc, 1998-2*. Cat. No. 10F0007XCB. Matrix 8901: *Cases Heard by Youth Courts, by Age of the Accused for Canada and the Provinces, Annual*. Matrix 6370: Population by Single Years of Age, Age Groups and Sex, for Nova Scotia, July 1. Matrix 6367: Population by Single Years of Age, Age Groups and Sex, for Canada, July 1. See Appendix on methodology.

The trend in youth court cases is worrying. If criminals learn their trade when they are young the overall crime rate in Nova Scotia looks set to increase, especially given the high recidivism rates noted above. Further research is needed to understand more about the socio-economic and demographic background of young offenders. In particular, it seems important to examine the relationship between child poverty and crime, and to determine whether the increase in child poverty rates in Nova Scotia is responsible in part for the higher numbers of children appearing in youth courts.

6.9 Marital Status

Single people are more likely to commit crimes than married people. The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics survey of Nova Scotia prison inmates found that 55% were single, another 11% were separated or divorced, and only 33% were married. If assessed on a per capita basis against the proportions of the general population single, married and divorced, the disproportion is even more dramatic.

6.10 Television Violence

The effect of television and movie violence on crime is an extremely controversial topic beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, it would also be wrong to omit the fact that many citizens groups concerned to limit violence on television do claim that a correlation with crime exists. The following numbers are not intended to reach any conclusion on this subject, but simply acknowledge the arguments frequently made in the public arena.

Statistics Canada's General Social Surveys reveal that the average Canadian watches an average of 22.7 hours of television a week. The hours watched by teenagers have actually declined from 20.3 in 1986 to 17.1 in 1994, and by children from 22 to 17.7. The extent to which increased use of video games, which may be at least as violent as foregone television programs, has replaced TV is not clear. By the time Canadian children reach high school, most of them have seen between 10,000 and 15,000 hours of television. By age 18, they have seen an estimated half million commercials.

One study reports that by the time he or she leaves elementary school, the average Canadian child has witnessed 8,000 murders and 12,000 violent deaths on television. American studies report that the average American child watches more than one thousand murders, rapes, armed robberies and assaults on television each year, and that 90% of programs shown during children's prime viewing time contain violence.

The chairman of the U.S. FCC reports that hundreds of studies do show a "significant link" between exposure to TV violence and aggressive behaviour, and that studies comparing groups of children according to their television watching patterns find that television accounts for a 5%-15% increase in levels of violence. 80% of surveyed Americans also believe that television is harmful to society, and especially to children.

In response to these concerns, “V-chips” have become available that can screen out violent programs. These devices increase the average cost of a television by up to \$30. This added cost is counted as an economic gain in the Gross Domestic Product and a sign of well-being in our conventional measures of progress. From the GPI perspective, the V-chip is a “defensive” expenditure, if not a direct cost of crime, that does not actually enhance welfare but protects against harm and prevents a decline in existing well being.

6.11 History of Abuse

A recent study profiling U.S. prisoners by the United States Justice Department’s Bureau of Justice Statistics revealed that almost half the female inmates and 13% of jailed men in the U.S. have been abused sexually or physically at least once in their lives. More than a quarter of the women and 3% of the men said the abuse included rape. While comparable Canadian figures were not available to the authors at this time, the correlation is clearly worth investigating to give further clues to the origins of criminal behaviour.

6.12 Conclusion

From the above correlations, it is clear that poorly educated, unemployed, young, single males are the most likely socio-demographic group to commit crimes. A drug habit and a prior conviction increase the likelihood further.

While it is beyond the scope of this study to recommend specific policies to reverse the dramatic increase in crime in the last 36 years, the correlations noted in this section definitely point to areas for social investment likely to yield cost-effective solutions to high crime rates. For example, drug treatment and rehabilitation programs, as well as investments in education and job creation, particularly among youth and the Aboriginal population, are likely to be cost-effective investments that deal with some of the major social causes of crime. They will likely reduce crime costs and save money in the long-run while improving the quality of life in other areas simultaneously.

From the GPI perspective, long-term cost-benefit analyses can be useful in identifying cost-effective crime reduction strategies. For example, a Montreal study indicates that every dollar invested in residential drug treatment produces a seven dollar saving in crime costs. The Perry Pre-School Program in the United States found that a \$5,000 investment in early childhood education yielded a \$28,000 return in dividends to society, including reduced crime costs. And community supervision has proven more cost-effective for minor crimes in reducing recidivism than prison sentences. Recognizing correlations between crime and social-demographic characteristics is a necessary first step in such analyses and indicates where attention may be most usefully directed.