

CRIME RATES ARE FALLING

WHY?



In July 2015 a teenager in London Ontario was allegedly killed over a cellphone. This tragic event sparked a nationwide discussion on crime, with many people concerned over what they perceived as "out of control" crime rates and society becoming more dangerous. If kids could kill for a cellphone, what will they do next?

Common Misconceptions Regarding Crime Rates

- Crime is getting worse
- Young people are responsible for most crimes
- Older people are better behaved

Statistics released by Stats Can in August of this year show that this is not the case. Since 1991, both violent and non-violent criminal code offenses have been falling.

The most dramatic change over this time period has been for the age group 18-24 (historically responsible for the largest share of crimes).

From 2009-2013, charges laid for robbery, motor vehicle theft, aggravated assault, and breaking and entering dropped between 23 and 31 per cent. During the same period, homicides for this group dropped 29 per cent. This drop in crime has also been recorded in other developed countries where many common street crimes have fallen by half since the early 1990s. It has been described as the most important criminal phenomenon of modern times.

Crime has decreased in BC as well.

The following statistics were released in September 2014:

- In 2013, BC reached its lowest crime rate in more than two decades. BC's crime rate declined 5.7% from 2012, the **tenth consecutive annual decrease**.
- The number of violent offenses decreased by 9.5% in 2013, with a 10.3% decrease in the violent crime rate, resulting in **BC's lowest violent crime rate in at least 25 years**.
- The Crime Severity Index (CSI) listed BC's 2013 value as 89.2, 6% lower than BC's 2012 CSI value of 95. **The youth CSI dropped 11.9% in 2013 to 50.3.**

What is behind this massive drop in crime rates? Experts suggest a number of theories:

- Better security options
- More household alarms
- Greater number of police on the street

But many criminologists are pointing to another theory - **our obsession with technology**. As one criminologist puts it, **"Frankly there are more interesting things to do than going out and nicking things."** He has a point. Nearly two-thirds of adults aged 18-34 play video games, whereas 80% of children and teens do.

This theory points to a positive outcome of technology, when technology quite often is viewed negatively and linked to a number of issues such as obesity, sedentary lifestyles, dwindling attention spans, depression, and even violence. This theory does not deny that technology is linked to the above; it views technological advances as having one positive influence on society.

This positive influence extends beyond crime, as not only has crime decreased, but other risky behaviors as well such as drug use, aggression, and risky sex among teens. Generation Z (those born after 1995 and thus do not remember a time before the internet) are smoking less, graduating more, having fewer pregnancies, and committing fewer robberies, car thefts, and murders than the previous Generation Y ("Millennials").

Crime is down among the youth, but this trend does not extend to older members of society.

Charges laid against Canadians in the 55 to 64 and 65 to 89 age groups actually *increased* between 2009 and 2013 for crimes such as homicide, breaking and entering, robbery, vehicle theft, and aggravated assault.

This appears to be a trend across countries with aging populations which has been attributed to "poverty, illness and loneliness" among seniors, and conversely, the increased physical activity of seniors, which some argue makes seniors more able to commit crime.

Grandad's Army



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