

The Vancouver Board of Trade

CRIME BRIEFING NOTES

Crime is a serious problem in Canada:

According to Statistics Canada's *Criminal Victimization Survey*, there were more than eight million criminal offences in Canada in 2004, directly affecting one person in four. One person in ten was a victim of violent crime. There were more than 2.7 million violent crimes, which inflicted over 650,000 physical injuries.

1 Statistics

Police statistics of *reported crime* do not reflect *actual crime*.

2 Reported Crime

Statistics Canada warns that two-thirds of crime is not reported to police nor included in police data.

3 Actual Crime Rates

When commentators and the media use police statistics instead of actual crime data they understate the real level of crime.

4 Best Measure

Criminal Victimization Surveys by Statistics Canada, the U.S. Justice Department¹ and the United Nations *International Crime Victims Survey* measure actual crime rates.

5 Canada's Higher Crime Rates

- In comparison with other developed countries, crime rates in Canada are relatively high.
- The United Nations *International Crime Victims Survey* of 17 industrialized countries in 2000 placed Canada in the "high risk" group for violent-contact crimes, worse than the United States.
- The U.S. violent crime rate dropped significantly between 1999 and 2004. Canada's rate stayed virtually the same during that period.

6 Homicide Mistake

Since homicide rates in the U.S. are higher, the Canadian public assumes crime in the U.S. is higher than Canada. This conclusion is wrong.

7 Wrong Conclusion

The conclusion is wrong because homicide is less than 0.2% of serious crime – violent crime is much broader and includes robbery, aggravated and sexual assaults, and many other acts of violence.

U.S. Getting Better – Fast

Violent crime in the U.S. declined by one third between 1999 and 2004. Violent crime in Canada did not decline significantly.

8 U.S. Crime Dropping

Crime has dropped in the U.S. because of more police; tougher sentencing; less drug tolerance and demographic factors.

9 Board's Position

The Board supports longer sentences for repeat offenders; sentencing guidelines that meet community expectations; more police; vigorous prosecution; better measures to deal with gangs & organized crime; less tolerance for drug traffickers, habitual and dangerous criminals; policies that hold people responsible for their behaviour.

10 Equally Important

The Board also supports treatment for drug addicts; rehabilitation; crime prevention; education and literacy programs; early childhood development; and accountability of the courts.

11 Victims Versus Criminals

Criminal rights should not be at the expense of victims' rights and the protection of society.

Sources:

1. US Justice Department: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/cv04.pdf>
2. Statistics Canada: <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/051124/d051124b.htm>

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