

Sociology 4099: Victimology

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Overheads Class 2.1: Defining Crime Victims: Official Police Data

Over the next few classes we will review:

- Official police data on victimization
- Problems with the accuracy of such data
- Data from victimization surveys
- Problems with the accuracy of such data
- An interactionist approach

Official Police Statistics (UCR data):

- The crime rate is calculated by dividing:

$$\frac{\text{Number of incidents in year}}{\text{Population in area}} \times 100,000 = \text{crime rate}$$

- * This is useful in classifying, analyzing, and clarifying crime trends
- * It is helpful in planning, implementing, and assessing programs
- * Problems:
 - Differences in data collection procedures (between police forces and over time)
 - Lack of sociological detail
- Uniform Crime Reports (since 1962) attempted to solve these problems with standard reporting practices

UCR Data (2007)

- In 2007 about 2.3 million Criminal Code incidents were reported to police (these don't include traffic incidents & other federal statute violations). Breakdown:
 - 13 % violent crime
 - 48% property crime
 - 39% "other" criminal code offences (e.g. mischief, bail violations)
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- Historically, property crimes have been losing ground to violent & "other" offences (e.g. in 1980 these were 8%, 65% & 27% respectively)
- The overall crime rate decreased 7% in 2007, mainly due to a drop in non violent crimes. This is a 30 year low, continuing the general decline in police-reported crime since the rate peaked in 1991.
- The 2007 drop in crime was driven by decreases in high-volume, predominately non-violent offences, most notably: counterfeiting, thefts under \$5,000, break and enters and motor vehicle thefts.
- The drop in crime occurred in all provinces and territories other than the Northwest Territories (+6 %), Yukon (+3 %) and Newfoundland and Labrador (+3 %). The most substantial decreases were reported by police in Prince Edward Island (-12 %) and Quebec (-10 %).
- Historically, crime rates were highest in the west/ lowest in the east. Saskatchewan recorded the highest rate among the provinces for the tenth year in a row, followed by Manitoba, British Columbia and Alberta. Crime rates in the territories were well above the rest of Canada. Ontario and Quebec reported the lowest 2007 crime rates.
- Drops in crime were also reported in most of Canada's cities, including the nine largest. The biggest decreases occurred in Kitchener (-17 %), Montréal (-14 %) and Winnipeg (-13 %). The only

areas to report increases were St. John's, Saguenay, Saint John and Gatineau.

- As in previous years, the highest crime rates were in the west: Regina, Saskatoon, Abbotsford, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Victoria and Vancouver. The lowest crime rates were in central Canada: Saguenay, Toronto and Trois- Rivières.

Violent Crime

- Violent crime decreased by 3% in 2007, continuing a downward trend evident since the early 1990s and marking the lowest rate in nearly 20 years (it had increased steadily for 30 years before the early 1990's).
- This drop was due to decreases in common assault, robbery and sexual assault. Other violent crimes, including homicide, attempted murder and abduction also decreased, while aggravated assault, assault with a weapon and forcible confinement remained stable.
- Newfoundland and Labrador was the only province to report an increase in violent crime, up by 11 %. This was driven primarily by an increase in common assaults. St. John's reported the largest increase in violent crime among all cities, up by 20 %.
- The lowest violent crime rate was in PEI, followed by Quebec and Ontario. Rates in the west, particularly Saskatchewan, were higher than those in the eastern and central parts of the country. Saint John, Thunder Bay and Halifax were exceptions to the general pattern, reporting violent crime rates similar to or higher than in the west.
- Other violent crime highlights:
 - Manitoba reported a record high in Homicides (5.2 per 100,000 vs. 1.8 nationally);
 - Firearm-related robberies reached a 30-year low (though up 17% here in Newfoundland);

Property Crime:

- In 2007, police-reported property offences dropped 8 % from the year before and reached their lowest rate since 1969.
- This decline was driven by drops in the four most common types of property-related offences: break and enter (-9 %), theft of motor vehicle (-9 %), theft under \$5,000 (-7 %) and fraud (-6 %). Theft over \$5,000 remained stable.
- B & E was at its lowest point in four decades and 55 % lower than its peak in 1991. This was seen in every province. Highest rates were found in Saskatchewan & other Western provinces.
- Auto thefts were down 9% on the year & well below the 1996 peak. Still, this is 56% higher than 20 years ago. Decreases occurred in all provinces except PEI. Highest rates were found in Manitoba.

Other Criminal Code Incidents:

- “Other” Criminal Code offences represent a general catch-all category of crimes that are classified as neither violent nor property-related. There are four high-volume types, three of which remained relatively stable in 2007: mischief under \$5,000, bail violations, and disturbing the peace. The fourth major category, counterfeiting currency, dropped 54% in 2007.

Drug Offences:

- Drug crimes, including possession, trafficking, importing, exporting and production-related offences, fall under the authority of the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* and are not included in the calculation of the overall crime rate
- In 2007, these increased by 4%. Drug offences generally increased throughout the 1990s, and have been relatively stable since.
- The rate of drug offences was far higher in BC than in any other province.

- Much was driven by cannabis, which accounted for about 6 in 10 drug offences. Possession of cannabis (3/4 of all cannabis offences in 2007), increased by 6%.
- Following 5 consecutive increases, cocaine offences remained stable while other drug offences, such as heroin, crystal meth and ecstasy, were up by 6 %.

Impaired Driving:

- While the 2007 rate of impaired driving offences increased by 3 %, the rate has been generally declining over the past 25 years.
- Newfoundland and Labrador (+25 %) and Alberta (+19 %) reported the most substantial increases in 2007. With a 4 % increase, Saskatchewan reported the highest rate for the 16th straight year.

Youth Crime:

- There were about 176,000 youth (aged 12 to 17 years) criminally accused. The rate of youth accused (the youth crime rate) decreased by 2 % in 2007, following a 3 % increase in 2006. Following substantial declines after peaking in 1991, the youth crime rate has remained relatively stable over the past decade. The 2007 drop was mostly driven by decreases in youth property crime.
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- The highest rate of youth crime was in Saskatchewan, nearly double the rates reported in Manitoba and NS, the next highest provinces.
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- In contrast, the rate of violent youth crime has been steadily increasing since the mid-1980s. While the 2007 rate was stable compared to the previous year, it was double the rate from 20 years ago. This can be largely attributed to increases in common assault (approximately 6 in 10 violent incidents committed by youth).
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- Following a record high in the youth homicide rate in 2006, the number of youth accused dropped 13 % in 2007. The 2007 youth homicide rate was still the second highest since 1961. The rates in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, reached record highs.

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- Changes in youth justice legislation must be considered in interpreting these results, most notably the repeal of the *Young Offenders Act* and its replacement with the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*.