

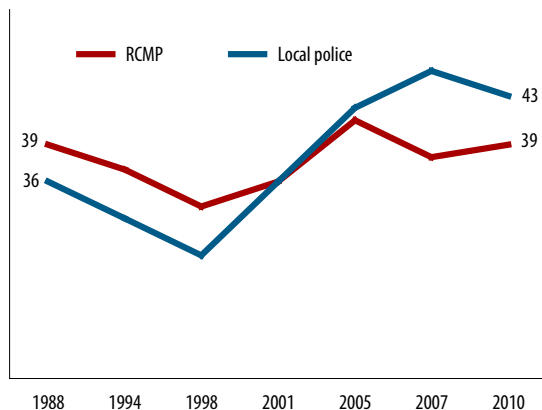
Crime and Justice

CONFIDENCE IN POLICING. Public confidence in the country's policing has held remarkably steady over the past five years, despite considerable media attention on problems at the national level and in some local areas. Nine in ten say they have a lot of confidence (43%) or some confidence (45%) in *their local police force*, with strong confidence down only slightly from the peak level recorded in 2007 (when 45% expressed a lot of confidence). Strong confidence in local policing is most widespread in Saskatchewan and Alberta, and least so in Quebec and Manitoba (confidence also increases with age). Since 2007, confidence levels are up in Alberta and down in Ontario.

Public confidence in *the RCMP* is also stable, despite recent controversies (e.g., taser death in the Vancouver airport, management conflicts). More than eight in ten Canadians have a lot of (39%) or some (45%) confidence in the RCMP, essentially unchanged from 2007 and just below the peak recorded in 2005. Confidence in the RCMP is strongest in Saskatchewan, Alberta and Atlantic Canada, and lowest in Manitoba, B.C. and Quebec. Since 2007, ratings are up in Alberta and down in Atlantic Canada.

Confidence in RCMP and local police

A lot of confidence 1988 - 2010

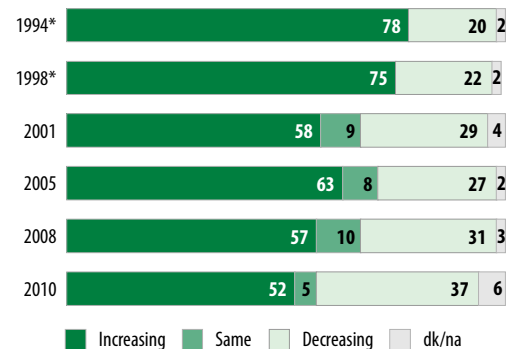


TRENDS IN CRIME. Government and police statistics have documented a continuing decline in crime rates over the past two decades, and public opinion is increasingly reflecting this reality. As in the past, Canadians are more likely than not to assume crime rates are on the rise (a typical reaction to extensive media coverage). However, in 2010 this view is now the lowest it has been since Focus Canada tracking began in 1994; half (52%) now believe that crime rates are actually getting worse, down five points from 2008 and well below levels recorded in the 1990s. A growing proportion say that crime rates in Canada are decreasing (up 6), while another five percent insist that crime rates remain stable (down 5).

This latest trend is evident across the population, but most significantly in B.C., Quebec and among Canadians under 45 years of age. Belief in rising crime rates is most widespread among residents of the Prairies, as well as among Canadians in the lowest income bracket.

Crime rates – real increase or media hype?

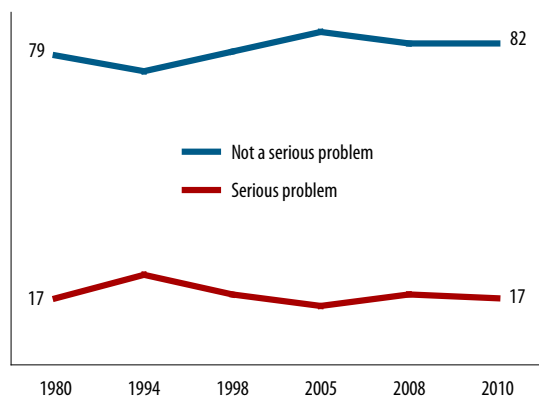
1994 - 2010



* Slightly different question wording: "staying the same" was not an option

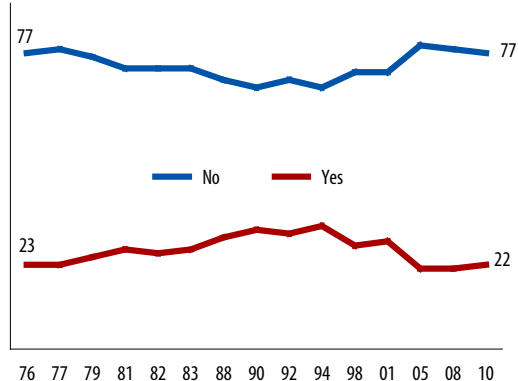
NEIGHBOURHOOD CRIME. Despite the majority view that crime rates are rising, this is not being experienced at the local level. As before, fewer than one in five (17%) Canadians say there is a serious crime problem in their neighbourhood (down 1 point from 2008) and the same proportion reported 30 years ago. Across the country, perceptions of serious local crime have increased in Atlantic Canada (to 24%, up 8), and declined by half in Manitoba (17% down 17) and Saskatchewan (16%, down 16).

Neighbourhood crime
1980 - 2010



Similarly, one in five (22%) say they are sometimes afraid to walk in their own neighbourhood at night (essentially unchanged since 2005, and below levels dating back to 1976). Since 2008, such fear has increased somewhat in Atlantic Canada and among Canadians 45 and older, while declining among younger cohorts. And as in the past, it is women (33%) rather than men (11%) who are most apt to not feel safe walking at night in their neighbourhood.

Afraid to walk in neighbourhood at night
1976 - 2010

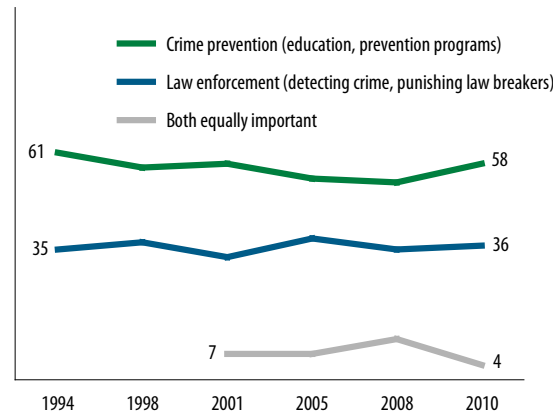


CRIME PREVENTION VERSUS LAW ENFORCEMENT.

In terms of how governments are expected to fight crime, Canadians continue to place greater confidence in crime prevention strategies (e.g., education) (58%) than in law enforcement (detecting crime and punishing lawbreakers) (36%), reflecting a remarkably stable perspective since the early 1990s.

Since 2008, there has been a modest strengthening in the emphasis on prevention (up 5 points), most notably in Quebec and among Canadians with the lowest incomes and education. The opposite trend is evident in Manitoba and Atlantic Canada (to a lesser degree). Prevention is most widely endorsed in Quebec and among Canadians 18 to 29, while enforcement is slightly preferred by those living in the Prairie provinces, where residents are divided between enforcement and prevention.

Government emphasis on crime and justice
1994 - 2010

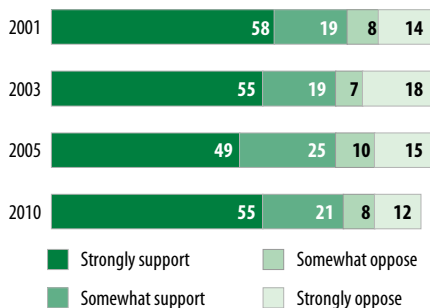


FIREARM REGULATIONS. The federal government's firearms legislation establishing a gun registry and new requirements for gun owners has proven politically controversial, but has been supported by a majority of Canadians. Public support for federal gun regulations declined somewhat over the 2001 to 2005 period, but has since strengthened. In 2010, three-quarters of Canadians say they strongly (55%) or somewhat (21%) support this initiative, compared with one in five (20%) who oppose it.

Since 2005, strong support has increased by six percentage points, while opposition has declined by five points. This trend is evident across most of the country, but most noticeably in Quebec and among residents of medium-sized cities (and overall support is up significantly in Alberta). Firearm regulations receive majority support in every identifiable group, but most widely in Quebec (85%), and least so in Saskatchewan (51%).

Support for federal gun regulations

2001 - 2010



CAPITAL PUNISHMENT. Capital punishment has not been used in Canada in almost 50 years and it is not an issue on today's public agenda, and yet it continues to retain public support. Just over half (53%) of Canadians favour capital punishment for some crimes, compared with 42 percent who oppose it under any circumstances. These results are unchanged since 2005, and reflect a more divided public than was the case in the 1980s and 1990s when capital punishment was more widely supported.

Since 2007, support has increased marginally in western and rural Canada and among Canadians 60 plus, while declining slightly in central and eastern regions. Quebecers are least apt to favour capital punishment for certain crimes (43%), while support is strongest in Saskatchewan (63%) and rural areas (64%).

Capital punishment for certain crimes

1979 - 2010

