

## **Chapter 2**

### **Crime Statistics**

#### **Learning Outcomes**

After reading this chapter students should be able to:

- 2.1 Describe how the collection and study of crime statistics has developed through history.
- 2.2 Understand the usefulness and limitations of crime statistics.
- 2.3 Recognize various methods used to collect and disseminate crime data.
- 2.4 Assess the correlations that exist between the predominant social dimensions of crime and criminal behaviour.

#### **Chapter Outline**

Introduction

A History of Crime Statistics

André Michel Guerry and Adolphe Quételet

Usefulness of Crime Statistics

Sources of Crime Statistics

The Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR)

Changes to the Uniform Crime Reporting System

Programmatic Problems with Available Data

Data Gathering Using Victimization Surveys

Critique of Victimization Surveys

Comparing Uniform Crime Reporting Surveys and Victimization Surveys

Data Gathering Using Self-Report Studies

Limitations of Self-Report Studies

The Social Dimensions of Crime

Age and Crime

Sex and Crime

Ethnicity and Crime

Social Class and Crime

Summary

#### **Lecture Outline**

I. Introduction.

A. Discuss the “Internet Black Widow” case and why it is unusual.

II. A History of Crime Statistics.

A. Population statistics have been gathered periodically since pre-Roman times.

B. Thomas Robert Malthus predicted that the human population would grow exponentially, leading to a shortage of essential resources and increased conflict.

C. André-Michel Guerry and Adolphe Quételet.

1. Among the earliest individuals to investigate and publish statistical analyses of crime. This type of work led to the development of the statistical school of criminology.

*Demographics:* The characteristics of population groups, usually expressed in statistical form.

*Statistical School:* A criminological perspective with roots in the early 1800s, which seeks to uncover correlations between crime rates and other types of demographic data.

III. Usefulness of Crime Statistics.

A. Crime statistics are useful in a number of ways:

1. They serve to describe the nature and extent of crime, necessary for the development of crime-prevention policies.
2. They help to provide empirical data to support criminology theory development.
3. They assist with social policy and program evaluation.
4. They provide a picture of risk.

**Discussion Topic:** Discuss how information about crime can influence policies and programs in the criminal justice system.

IV. Sources of Crime Statistics

A. Crime statistics in Canada are reported in two major surveys – the Uniform Crime Reporting System and the Victimization Survey.

1. The Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR).
  - a) The UCR was initiated in 1961 through the efforts of Statistics Canada and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police.
  - b) The UCR provides a standardized procedure by which police departments across Canada can collect information about crimes that come to their attention and report this information to the Centre for Justice Statistics.
  - c) Initial UCR data are structured in terms of six major categories of crime - crimes of violence, property crimes, other Criminal Code offences, federal statute violations, provincial statute violations, and municipal bylaw violations.
  - d) Changes in the UCR after 1988 shifted the emphasis of data collection away from aggregate collection and towards incident-based collection.
  - e) The new system, known as the Revised UCR Survey (UCR2) or Incident-Based UCR included changes in the following areas:
    - i. It includes information on victims.
    - ii. It includes information on the accused.
    - iii. It includes information on the circumstances of the incident.

- iv. It includes offences cleared by charge or otherwise.
- v. It includes rates of crime.

*Uniform Crime Report:* A summation of crime statistics tallied annually by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) and consisting primarily of data on crimes reported to the police.

*Crime Rate:* Crime per capita based on the number of recorded crimes calculated per 100 000 population.

*Uniform Crime Report Survey (UCR):* a summation of crime statistics tallied annually by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) and consisting primarily of data on crimes reported to the police.

*Victimization Survey:* first conducted as the Canadian Urban Victimization Survey in 1981 by Statistics Canada and then every five years since 1988 as part of the General Social Survey. It provides data on surveyed households reporting that they had been affected by crime.

- 3. Programmatic problems with available data include:
  - a. The underestimation of the true incidence of criminal activity in Canada, known as the dark figure of crime.
  - b. The lack of uniformity in police recording practices.
  - c. Methodological concerns due to the UCR counting only the most serious offence in the incident when multiple offences are involved. Therefore, less serious offences tend to be underrepresented.
  - d. The inconsistency of legal definitions of crime.

*Dark figure of crime:* Refers to that portion of criminal activity that goes unreported and/or undetected by official sources.

**Discussion Topic:** Discuss the ways in which the different legal definitions found in provincial/territorial child welfare legislation may impact the accuracy of measuring amounts of child abuse.

B. Data Gathering using Victimization Surveys.

- 1. The first Victimization Survey was conducted in 1981 under the auspices of the Solicitor General of Canada; beginning in 1988, Statistics Canada has conducted a Victimization Survey every five years as part of the General Social Survey (GSS).

*Victimization Survey:* First conducted as the Canadian Urban Victimization Survey in 1981 by Statistics Canada and then every 5 years since 1988 as part of the General Social Survey. It provides data on surveyed households reporting that they have been affected by crime.

- 2. Features and findings of current Victimization Surveys:
  - a. They consist of information elicited through interviews with members of randomly selected households throughout the country.
  - b. Respondents are asked about their experiences with the criminal justice system and specifically about 8 types of criminal victimization: sexual

assault, robbery, assault, break and enter, motor vehicle theft, theft of personal and household property and vandalism.

- c. Victimization Survey findings indicate that fewer than 42% of all crimes are reported to the police for a number of reasons ranging from the belief that the crime was “too minor”, to the belief that “police couldn’t do anything”.
- d. The findings of the *Violence Against Women Survey* of 1993 indicated significantly more incidents of violence against women than had ever been previously indicated in official UCR numbers. The findings of the *Violence Against Women Survey* of 1993 indicated that 50% of all Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of violence since the age of 16.

C. Critiques of Victimization Surveys include a number of claims such as:

- 1. The possible over-reporting of some crimes.
- 2. They depend upon the ability of the respondent to recall incidents and accurately place them in time.
- 3. They exclude data on any crimes not included in the 8 crime categories.

D. Comparing UCR Surveys and Victimization Surveys

- 1. When considered together, the data from these two types of surveys can be useful in providing a picture of crime and criminal activity in Canada.

**Discussion Topic:** Discuss reasons why some victims may hesitate to report a crime to the police. Discuss the types of crime for which this may occur most often.

E. Data gathering using Self-Report Studies.

- 1. Self-Report Studies are considered useful in highlighting the relationship between social class and crime and in uncovering much crime that goes undetected.
- 2. When considered in conjunction with other methods of information gathering, self-report studies help provide a more clear and complete picture of crime and who commits it.

F. Limitations of Self-report Studies

- a. The fact that accuracy is predicated on the honesty and forthrightness of the respondents.
- b. A lack of standardized data collection methods such as comparable questions, time frames or geographic areas.

*Self-Report Study:* A Data collection method requiring subjects to reveal their own participation in criminal behaviour.

**Discussion Topic:** Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each source of crime statistics.

V. The Social Dimensions of Crime.

A. Social dimensions.

- 1. Social dimensions of crime are said to reveal relationships or correlations.

2. A correlation is a connection or association observed to exist between two measurable variables.
3. Correlation does not imply causation. Because two variables appear to be correlated does not mean that they have any influence on one another, or that one causes the other to increase or decrease.

*Correlates of crime:* those variables observed to be related to criminal activity such as age, gender, ethnicity and social class.

*Correlation:* a causal, complementary, or reciprocal relationship between two measurable variables.

B. Age and crime.

1. Age is one of the strongest correlates of criminal behaviour.
2. Criminal activity is associated more with youth than with any other stage of life.
3. Data show that older Canadians (those over 65 years of age) are less likely to be victimized by violent crime than other age groups.
4. Data show that children are over-represented as victims of crimes such as sexual assault, sexual interference, sexual exploitation and incest.

C. Sex and crime.

1. Gender appears so closely linked to most forms of criminal activity that it has been called the best single predictor of criminality.
2. Male offenders far outnumber female offenders in most measured crime categories.
3. Some attribute the apparent low rate of female criminality to cultural factors (early socialization, role expectations, and a reluctance among criminal justice officials to arrest and prosecute women), while others assume a biological propensity toward crime and aggression among males, which may be lacking in women.
4. The rate of female criminality has increased substantially since the 1960's.
5. The increased rate of female criminality has been attributed to role convergence and the feminization of poverty.
6. Women are more often followers than leaders in criminal activity.
7. The risk of personal victimization is similar for males and females.

D. Ethnicity and crime.

1. Canadian crime statistics do not routinely report on the ethnic and racial makeup of offenders.
2. The only official Canadian statistics that report on this correlation comes from studies that consider incarcerated or inmate profiles.
3. There is a striking over-representation of Aboriginal peoples in Canada's correctional institutions.
4. Aboriginal peoples represent less than 3 percent of the total Canadian adult population yet they account for approximately 19 percent of all inmates in Canadian federal institutions.

5. Aboriginal males are almost 3 times as likely to be victims of a violent offence when compared to non-Aboriginal males.
6. The rate of violence for Aboriginal females is 3.5 times higher than that for non-Aboriginal females.

**Discussion Topic:** Discuss reasons for the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system.

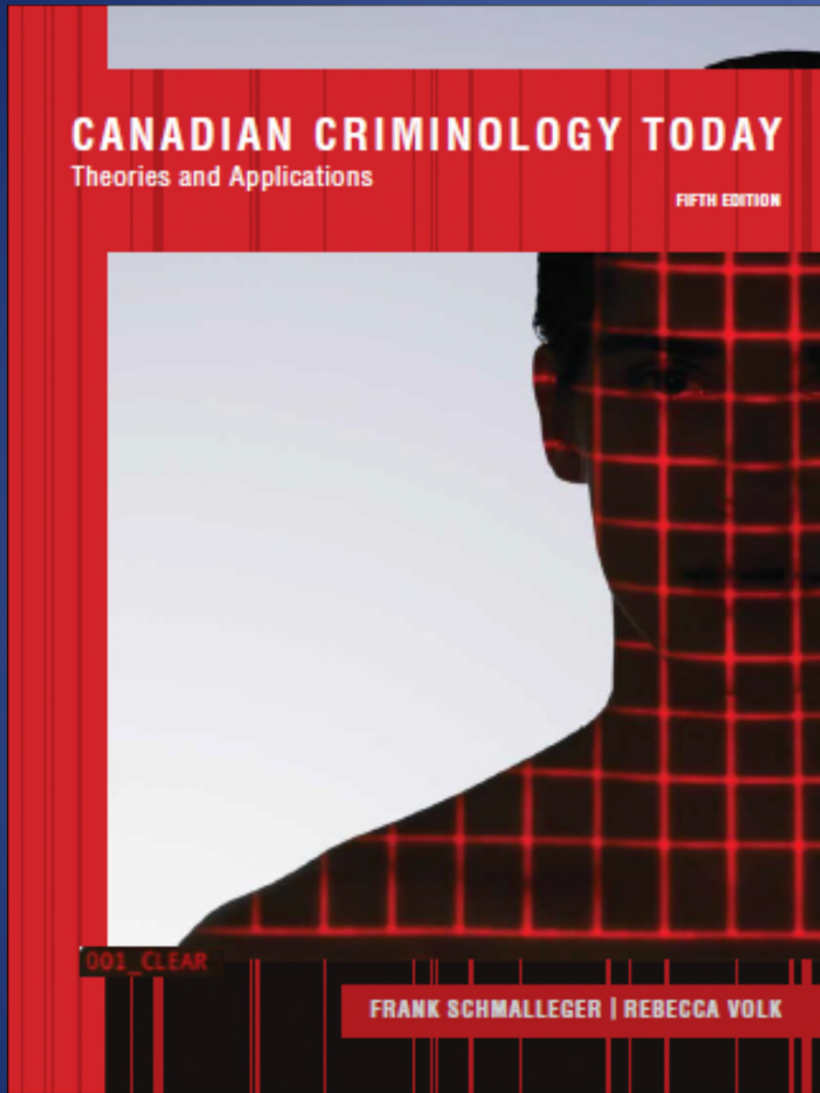
**Discussion Topic:** Should criminal justice agencies in Canada collect data on the race of criminal offenders? How would they use this information?

E. Social class and crime.

1. Prior to 1960, criminologists believed a correlation existed between social class and crime, with members of the lower classes being more prone to commit crime than other classes.
2. In the early 1960s, studies using offender self-reports began to challenge this belief. Various studies showed equal criminal tendencies across social classes thus concluding that a link between social class and criminality was non-existent.
3. Australian criminologist John Braithwaite, who in 1981 wrote a seminal article that summarized the results of 224 previous studies on the subject, concluded rather convincingly that members of lower social classes were indeed more prone to commit crime.
4. Early research difficulties on the subject arose from a lack of definitional clarity and inadequate measurement techniques that may have caused misleading results.
5. More recent studies and data conclude that a fairly significant correlation exists between criminality and social class when factors such as education and employment are considered.
6. Victimization Survey data indicate that victims identified as having personal incomes below \$15 000 are much more likely to be a victim of crime and especially of a violent crime.

**Discussion Topic:** Discuss the ways in which an understanding of the social dimensions of crime can assist in the development of crime prevention strategies.

**Discussion Topic:** Describe and evaluate the evidence concerning the relationship between social class and criminal behaviour.



# Chapter 2

## Crime Statistics

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# Learning Objectives

- 2.1** Describe how the collection and study of crime statistics has developed through history.
- 2.2** Understand the usefulness and limitations of crime statistics.
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# A History of Crime Statistics

- Inferences based on statistical demographics appear to be a product of the last 200 years.
- 'Moral statistics' or social enumerations, were gathered in hopes of measuring the degree to which crime and conflict existed in societies.

## Demographics:

- The characteristics of population groups, usually expressed in statistical form.

# A History of Crime Statistics

- André-Michel Guerry (1802-1866)
  - Calculated per capita crime rates
- Adolphe Quételet (1796-1864)
  - Assessed variation in crime rates based on climate and people's sex and age.
- Formed historical basis for the statistical school of criminology.

# Usefulness of Crime Statistics

- Describes the nature and extent of crime.
- Provides empirical data to support criminology theory development.
- Assists with social policy and program evaluation.
- Provides a picture of risk.

# Sources of Crime Statistics

- Uniform Crime Reporting System (UCR)
  - Annual crime statistics by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS).
  - Primarily data reported to police.
- Victimization Survey
  - data on surveyed households affected by crime.

# Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR)

Data collection on:

1. Information on victims.
2. Information on the accused.
3. Information on the circumstances of the incident.



# Programmatic Problems with Available Data

- Only crimes reported to police are included in the UCR.
- Sexual assault most unreported crime in UCR.
- Inconsistent police reporting methods.
- Method used to “count” incidents of crime.
- Inconsistent legal definitions.

**Dark Figure of Crime:** unreported and under-reported criminal activity.

# Victimization Surveys

## Characteristics:

- Data is collected through random telephone surveys of selected households.
- Participants are asked about their experiences with the criminal justice system and specific types of crimes.
- Includes crimes that have not been reported to police.

Combine with UCR to provide more accurate picture of crime and criminal activity.

# Victimization Surveys

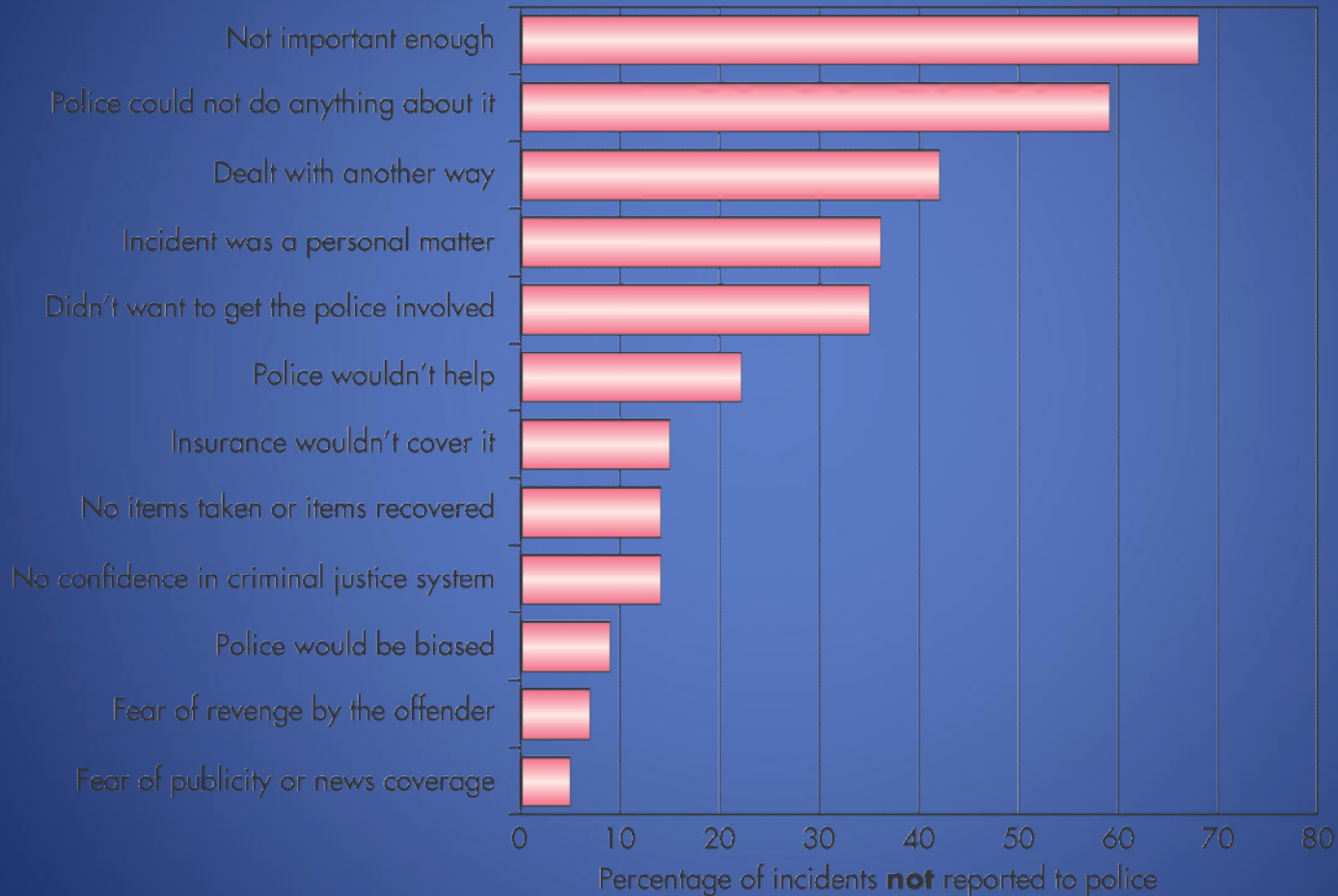
Type of offence





# Victimization Surveys

## Reasons



# Examples of Victimization Surveys

- Canadian Urban Victimization Survey (CUVS)
- General Social Survey (GSS)
- Violence Against Women Survey (VWS)
- International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS)

# Canadian Urban Victimization Survey (CUVS)

- Conducted in 1981.
- Solicitor General of Canada.
- Included eight categories of crime.
- Revealed that fewer than 42% of the victimizations identified in this survey had been reported to the police.

# General Social Survey (GSS)

- Began in 1988.
- Conducted by Statistics Canada.
- Conducted every five years.
- Targets Canadians  $\geq 15$  years old
- Eight types of victimization are recorded.
- Details of victimization recorded.
- Demographic information also collected.

# Violence Against Women Survey (VAWS)

- Conducted by Statistics Canada in 1993.
- Included 12,000 women 18 years and older.
- Examined the amount of physical and sexual violence experienced by women since age 16.
- Examined perceptions of personal safety.
- One-half of all Canadian women reported at least one incident of violence.



# International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS)

- 30 countries participated
  - Victimization for 10 offences was recorded.
  - Opinion on public safety, policing and sentencing.
- 17 percent of Canadians victimized.
- Slightly above average of 16 percent of other countries.

# Shortcomings of Victimization Surveys

- Actual crime may be over-reported.
- Dependent upon memory, honesty of respondents.
- No way to verify information from respondents.
- Do not record information on incidents of “victimless” crimes.

# Self-Report Studies

- Understand crime by asking people about their involvement.
- From the perspective of the perpetrator.
- Means of counting crimes and criminals.
- Particularly useful:
  - to highlight the relationship between social class and crime.
  - Uncovering undetected crime.



# Shortcomings of Self-Report Studies

- Inaccuracy of information
  - Respondent may fail to disclose or exaggerate behaviour.
  - Respondent may not remember.
- Lack of standardized collection methods
  - Comparable questions.
  - Time frames.
  - Geographic areas.

# Social Dimensions of Crime

- Reveal a relationship between a measurable variable and crime.
- Correlation does not necessarily imply causation.
- Correlates of crime are those variables observed to be related to criminal activity.

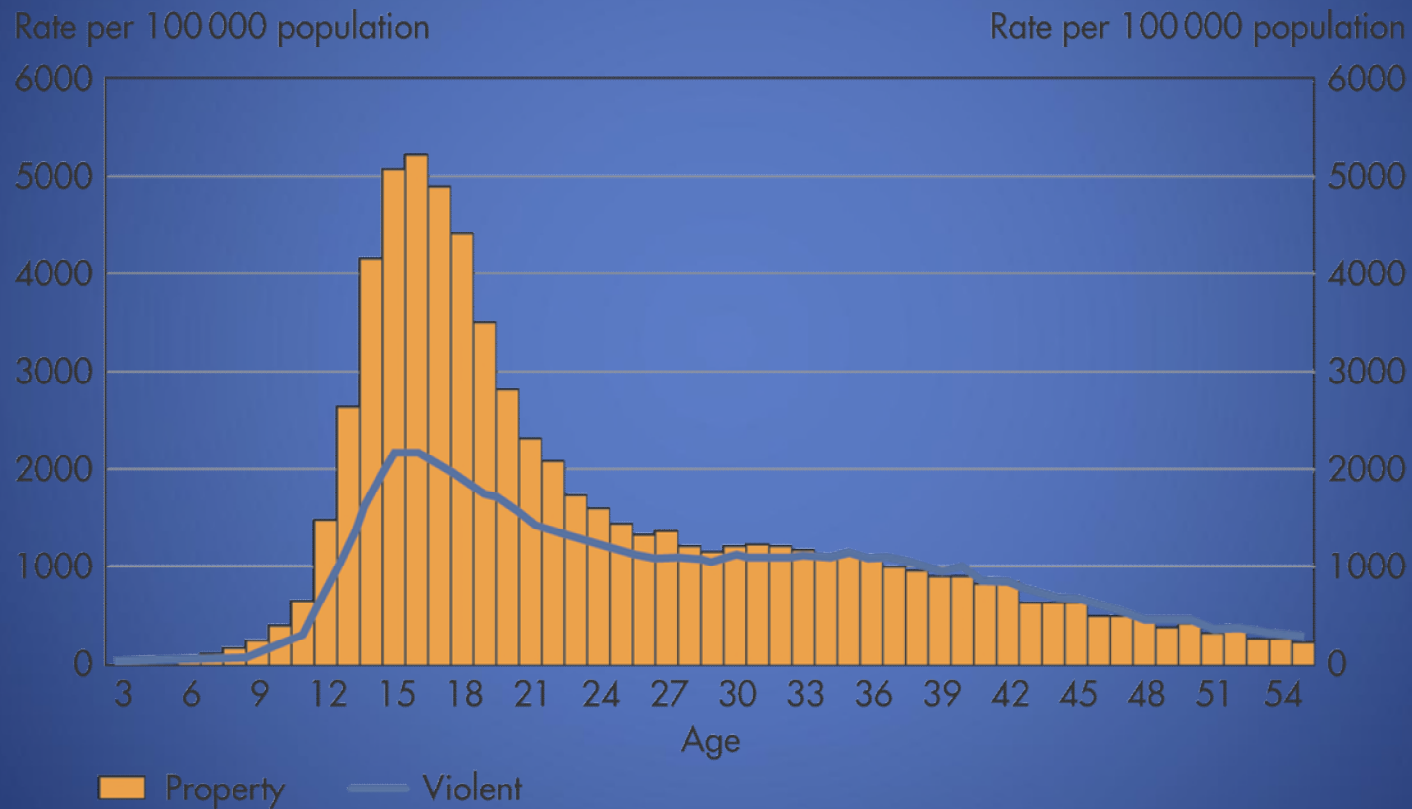
# Correlates of Crime

- Age
- Sex
- Ethnicity
- Social class

# Age and Crime

- Age is one of the strongest correlates of criminal behaviour.
- Criminal activity is associated more with youth than any other stage of life.
- Between ages of 15 and 24 years experienced personal victimization 15 times greater than other groups.

# Age and Crime in Canada





# Sex and Crime

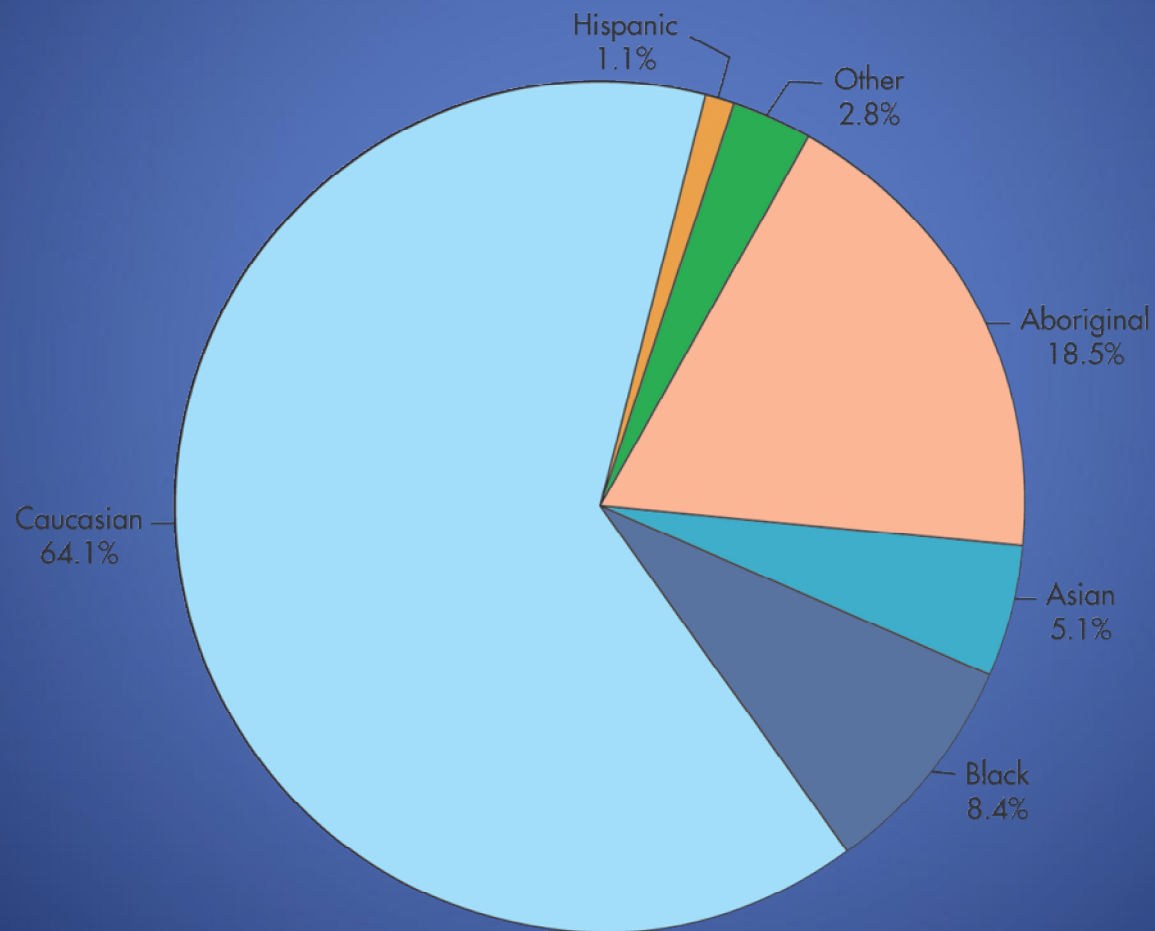
- Males account for 77 percent of adults accused of a criminal offence.
- 90 percent of homicide and 98 percent of charges for sexual assault.
- Lower female criminality due to:
  - cultural factors
  - role expectations
  - reluctance to arrest and prosecute women

# Ethnicity and Crime

- Statistics come from studies using incarcerated offenders or inmate profiles.
- Aboriginal peoples are over-represented in Canada's correctional facilities.
- Aboriginal peoples are more likely to be victims of violent offences.

# Ethnicity and Crime in Canada

Percentage of Federal Offender Population (as of April 10, 2011)





# Social Class and Crime

- Social class less significant indicator of criminal behaviour.
- Measured by employment and levels of education.
- Disagreement on the correlation between social class and crime.
- People from all social classes commit crimes.

# Summary of Social Dimensions of Crime

## Age

Mostly younger  
individuals

## Sex

Mostly males

## Ethnicity

Overrepresentation of  
Aboriginal Canadians

## Social Class

Mostly lower socio-  
economic class