

Crime Rates

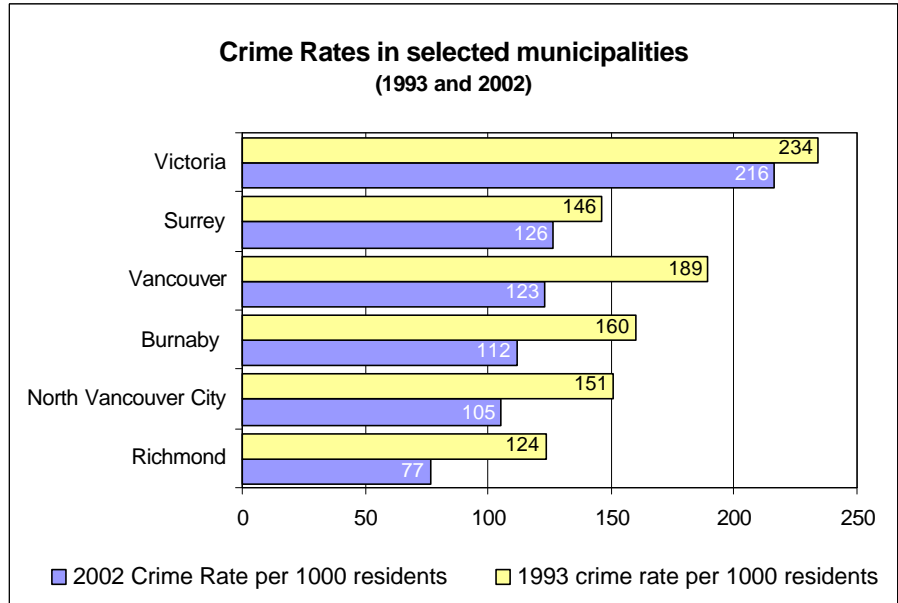
This fact sheet outlines trends of crime rates in British Columbia and selected municipalities, as well as selected crime rates for Vancouver's neighbourhoods.

Many theories suggest factors other than population numbers affect levels of crime, but there is little consensus among criminologists and police analysts as to which theory is correct. Examples of these other factors are: age, unemployment and poverty. There are also numerous factors that influence the reporting of crime, such as age, gender, level of income and education of the victim or the offender.

Trends

As the population of an area increases, the total number of crimes reported will tend to increase as well. However, the crime rate, expressed in the number of crimes per 1000 residents, is a better way to understand change over time. For example, Vancouver crime rates increased significantly from 124 crimes per 1000 residents in 1977 to 200 in 1992. However, the rate has since fallen to 123 crimes per 1000 residents in 2002 (see above chart).

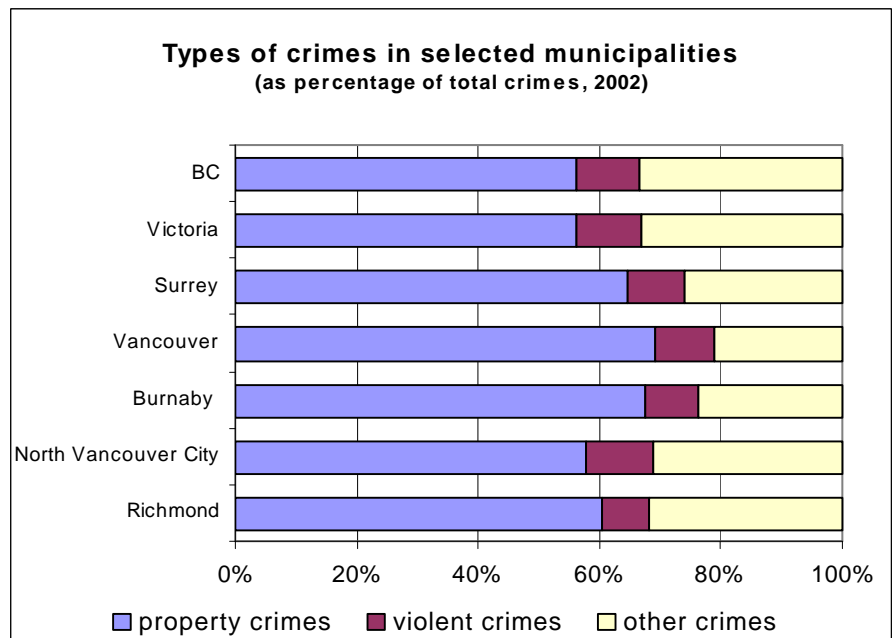
Crime rates have been decreasing across North America in recent years, a trend generally credited to changing demographics, specifically an aging population and a declining percentage of youth aged 15 to 25. Other potential explanations are more community-based policing, lower police budgets, which can lead to lower reporting rates, and more aggressive law enforcement practices.



Crime Rate and Population

Municipal crime rates vary across British Columbia, but they are not necessarily an indicator of the safety of one community over another. In many instances, a high crime rate occurs due to the "core" city or

tourist function of a particular municipality. In addition to workers not being reflected in the rate per resident population, these areas also attract large numbers of people to entertainment venues and sporting events.



For a better understanding of crime trends in a particular area, the police advises residents to contact the local police about incidence of crime in the area.

Types of Crime

The main categories of crime are:

- Property crime, e.g. break and enter, motor vehicle theft;
- Violent crimes or crimes against persons, e.g. homicide, attempted murder, sexual assault, common assault; and
- Other crimes, e.g. gambling, prostitution, drugs.

In British Columbia, approximately 468,000 criminal code offences were reported in 2001. Of these, 56% were

property crimes, 11% were crimes against persons, and 33% were other crimes. The graph above shows the breakdown between these categories for the same selected municipalities used earlier.

Crimes in Vancouver

The Central Business District ranks highest in both property and violent crime rates. As mentioned earlier, this could be a reflection of the “core” function of this neighbourhood and the fact that it attracts many non-residents during the day and at night.

The crime rates for crimes against persons and crimes against property are shown by local area in the graph below. Riley Park and South Cambie have a similar rate of crimes against persons. However, the property crime

rate is higher in South Cambie.

Please see also the Fact Sheet on Police Services (5.2.1).

Sources:

- Summary of Crime in British Columbia, 1993 - 2002, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General.
- Vancouver Police Department, Violent Crimes and Property Crimes data, 2003, custom order.
- Statistics Canada, 2001 Census.

