



Focus Canada 2011

Highlights Report on Crime and Justice

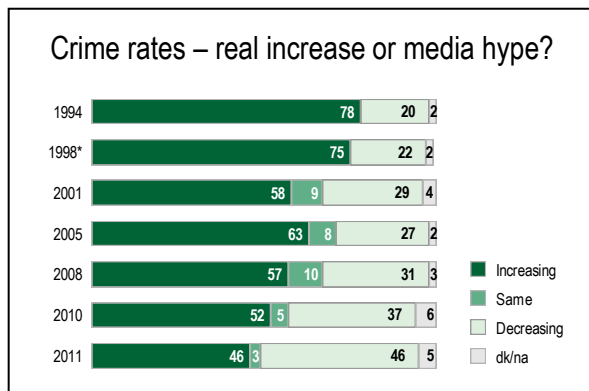
This report provides key highlights from the 2011 Focus Canada survey, based on a telephone survey conducted November 21 to December 14, 2011 with a representative sample of 1,500 Canadians (18+). A sample of this size drawn from the population produces results accurate to within +/-2.5 percentage points in 19 out of 20 samples. Reference to previous data come from Environics Focus Canada surveys (1976 – 2010).

Crime and Justice

Trends in crime. Government and police statistics reveal a steady decline in crime rates over the past two decades, and public opinion continues to match this trend. The likelihood of Canadians believing that crime is increasing has declined over the past year and is now the lowest on record (since Focus Canada tracking began in 1994).

Fewer than half (46%) now say that crime rates are on the rise (down 6 points since 2010), while an equal proportion believe crime is declining (46%, up 9).

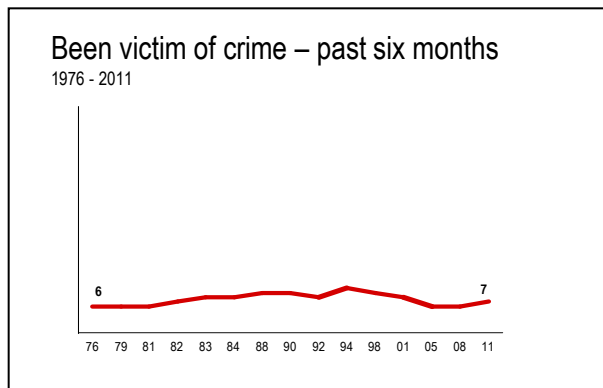
This trend is evident across the country, but most noticeably in Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Concerns about rising crime rates continues to be more widespread among residents of Atlantic Canada and Manitoba, as well as Canadians with lower socio-economic status and Conservative supporters.



Personal experience with crime. Perceptions of crime rates is one thing, but what about personal experience? Seven percent of Canadians report having been a victim of a criminal act in the previous six months, consistent with Focus Canada data collected as far back as 1976 (with the rate varying by only a couple of percentage points, and peaking at 10% in 1994).

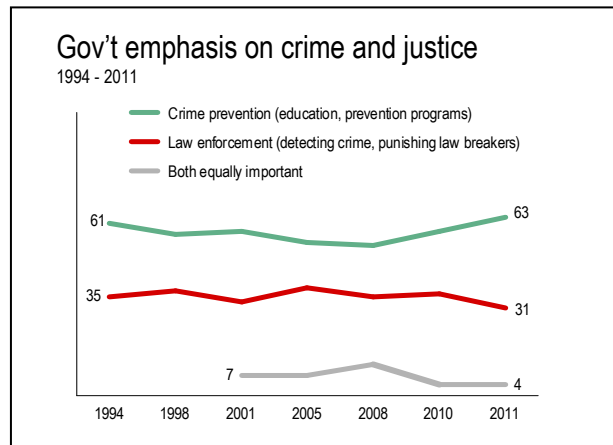
As before, reports of crime victimization are marginally higher in Saskatchewan (13%), Manitoba (12%) and B.C. (9%), and among Canadians 18 to 29 years of age (11%).

Among those reporting such experience, seven in ten (72%) say they reported this crime to police. This reflects an increase from 2008 (66%), but remains below the level recorded in 2001 and 2005 (77%).



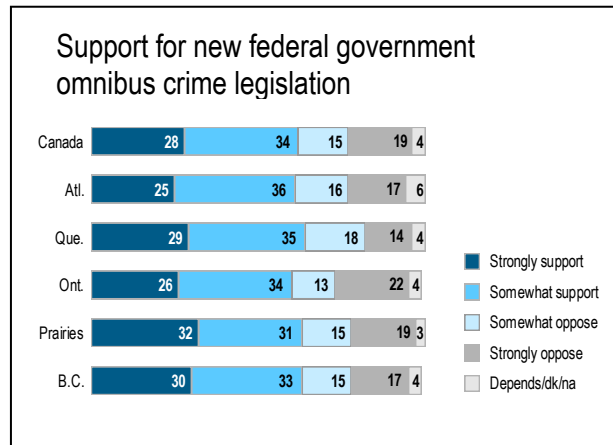
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Crime prevention versus law enforcement. In terms of how governments are expected to fight crime, an increasing majority of Canadians think the emphasis should be on crime prevention strategies (e.g., education, prevention programs) (63%), up five percentage points since 2010 and now at the highest level recorded (starting in 1994). Fewer than half as many (31%, down 5) now take the opposite perspective of endorsing a primary focus on law enforcement (detecting crime and punishing lawbreakers).



This trend is evident across the population, with the shift since 2010 most noticeable in Atlantic Canada, the Prairies and in smaller-sized communities. Conservative Party supporters remain less likely than others to support an emphasis on prevention over enforcement, but are also more likely than before to do so than a year ago (51%, up 9 points).

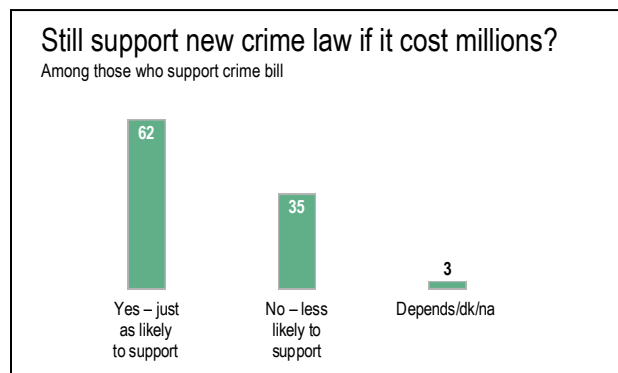
New omnibus crime legislation. Declining public concerns about crime notwithstanding, Canadians are broadly supportive of the federal government's new omnibus crime bill, which (among other things) will increase the length of jail time for some offences and reduce judges' discretion on sentencing. Six in ten say they strongly (28%) or somewhat (34%) support this legislation, compared with one-third who somewhat (15%) or strongly (19%) oppose it.



The legislation attracts majority support across the country, but most widely in Alberta, in communities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants, allophones, and Conservative Party supporters (but also attracting small majorities of Liberal, NDP and Bloc supporters).

Support for the new bill is comparatively weaker in Saskatchewan, among university graduates, Canadians aged 60 plus and those with no religious affiliation.

Several provinces have warned that this new legislation will require them to spend additional millions on law enforcement and new prisons, but this message is having a limited effect on those who support the bill. Among supporters, six in ten (62%) say they are just as likely to support the new crime laws despite the increased provincial spending it may require, compared with only one-third (35%) who say this would make them less likely to support it.



Such support in the face of increased provincial costs reflects the majority view across the country, although it is comparatively weaker in Ontario and Quebec, as well as among allophones, Canadians aged 18 to 29 and those with the lowest levels of education and income (groups most vulnerable to changing economic conditions).

The Environics Institute for Survey Research was established by Michael Adams in 2006 to promote relevant and original public opinion and social research on important issues of public policy and social change. The Focus Canada research program is intended to provide a credible, independent and sustained source of Canadian public opinion on important issues, that will be on the public record for use by organizations and individuals in all sectors.

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