Trends in Crime Measures: British Columbia, 1999-2013

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Three different measures of crime intensity are available in British Columbia: the Standard Crime Rate (SCR) which measures the number of crimes per 100,000 population; the Crime Severity Index (CSI) which measures the weighted risk to residents of a police jurisdiction; and the Crime Gravity Score (CGS) which measures the seriousness of the set of crimes handled by police in a particular jurisdiction. Figure 1 explores trends in these three measures for British Columbia as a whole during 1999-2013. All three measures show declines over the past decade. British Columbians are safer now than they were in the early 2000’s. Police resource implications of the measures are different. The SCR and CSI have both declined by about 45% since their peak in 2003; the CGS measures the seriousness of the set of crimes handled by police in a particular jurisdiction. This includes the rate of Criminal Code offences (excluding traffic-related offences) mapped per 100,000 population. Significant spatial variation exists across the province, with lower rates typically falling in more urbanized jurisdictions and along the Eastern half of the province. Higher crime rates appear to be located throughout the remote areas within the province’s coastal and northern regions.

By analyzing the temporal patterns of crime intensity within British Columbia, a clearer understanding of longer-term patterns emerges. These trends emphasize the overall decline across measures, with less significant reduction in Crime Gravity Scores. When data is analyzed spatially, a distinct urban and remote divide is apparent in maps of the Standard Crime Rate and Crime Severity Index, but this trend is also less prominent when exploring Crime Gravity.

REFERENCES


Calculations by P.J. Brantingham based on Statistics Canada Uniform Crime Reports and Police Resources data sets. For fuller discussion see: P. J Brantingham, ICURS Technical Note 1.1.

Police jurisdiction spatial files have been created based on existing police detachment boundaries linked with municipal boundary files. Some jurisdictional boundary changes occur throughout the timeline under investigation – this created boundary file aims to act as a suitable proxy.