

# Crime

# Alberta GPI

## Noteworthy:

- Crime in Alberta increased by 319% between 1961 and 2003.
- In 1993, 24% of adults in Canada were the victims of at least one criminal act within the preceding 12 months.
- The cost of crime in Alberta increased by 133% from 1961 to 2003.
- Albertans are increasingly spending money on burglar alarms, home security systems, locks, security guards and private investigators.

## The Cost of Crime in Alberta: What is included?

- Violent crimes
- Property crimes
- Police
- Courts
- Corrections
- Legal aid
- Security guards
- Private investigators
- Home security devices

## Crime in Alberta: How Much?

Despite reductions in crime in the last 10 years, the crime rate in the 1990s was still substantially higher than it was in the 1960s. Our analysis shows that total crime in Alberta has increased by 319% since 1961—an increase of 287% for property crimes and 585% for violent crimes. In 1993, 24% of adults in Canada were the victims of at least one criminal act within

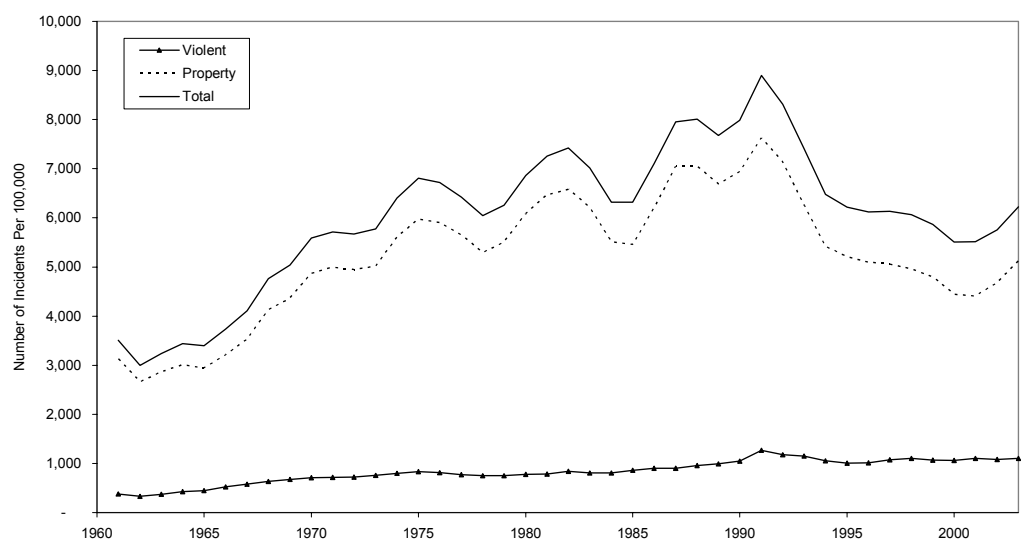
the preceding 12 months.

According to a 1993 survey by *Maclean's* magazine, some 50% of Canadians feel less safe than they did five years ago. The same survey found that 48% of women and 18% of men felt that there were areas close to their homes where they would be afraid to walk at night.

This increase in crime is

costing Albertans a lot of money. In fact, the estimated cost of crime in Alberta increased by 133% from 1961 to 2003. The cost of crime in Alberta in 2003 (valued at over \$2.1 billion) was worth 2% of total provincial Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

**Crime in Alberta, number of incidents per 100,000 people per year, 1961 to 2003**



# So What?

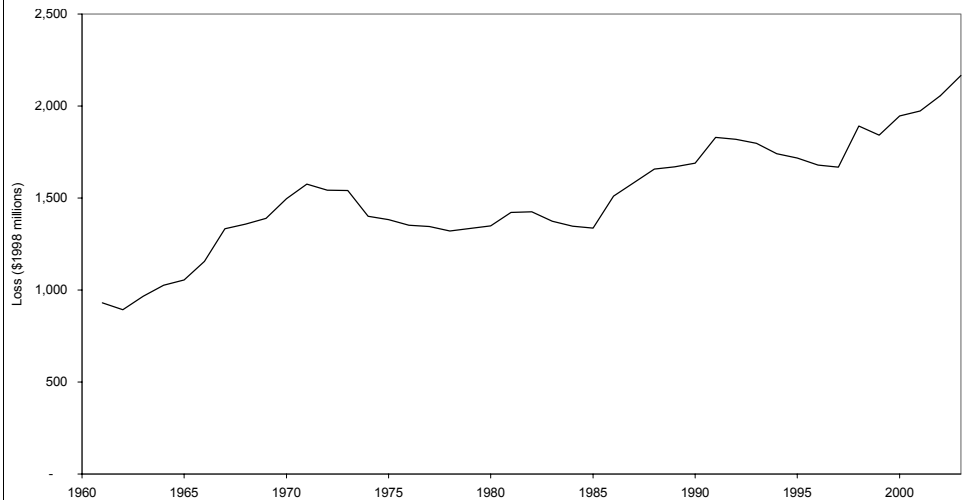
Albertans are spending more money on burglar alarms, home security systems, locks, security guards and private investigators. The more crime, the more we as a society spend on police officers, courts, corrections and legal aid. But is this expenditure contributing to the well-being of society in Alberta? According to our conventional system of economic accounting, namely the GDP, indeed it is. The GDP records all expenditure that takes place in the market. Thus, the more money we spend, the more our provincial GDP increases. In other words, the GDP tells us that the more crime there is and the more money society spends, the more prosperous our province is. Because the GDP does not distinguish expenditure that contributes to societal well-being from expenditure that detracts from societal well-being — called “regrettable expenditure” — it does not recognize the benefit of limits to growth in some sectors of the economy.

In contrast, the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) does distinguish regrettable expenditure from other types of expenditure. The GPI recognizes that, with respect to crime, limitless growth is not good for society. The GPI tells us that the more crime there is and the more money society spends, the less prosperous our province becomes. By recognizing that crime does not contribute to societal well-being, and measuring progress accordingly, the GPI provides a more comprehensive measure of well-being for society, policy makers, businesses and government.

## Alberta Crime Index: Where are we today?



## Big Bucks: The Cost of Crime in Alberta, 1961 to 2003



The estimated cost of crime in Alberta in 2003 was \$2.1 billion. That is equal to 2% of 2003 GDP.

As an index, crime in Alberta in 1999 ranked 49 on a scale of 0 to 100 where 100 is the lowest crime rate from 1961 to 2003 (see figure above).

