

Adult Criminal Court Statistics 2008/2009

Adult criminal courts in Canada completed more than 390,000 cases in 2008/2009, involving nearly 1.2 million charges. The number of cases was virtually the same as a year earlier, but about 3% higher than in 2006/2007.

Before then, criminal court caseloads had been declining for four years.

The most frequently occurring cases were for impaired driving (11%), theft (10%), common assault (9%), failure to comply with a court order (9%) and breach of probation (8%). Combined, these five offences accounted for almost half of all cases disposed of in adult criminal courts across the country.

The amount of time it takes to complete a case in adult criminal courts has fallen in recent years. The median time to case completion fell to 124 days in 2008/2009, down from a peak of 128 days in 2004/2005, but still almost a month higher than in 2000/2001 when it was 101 days.

Certain types of cases take longer to complete than others. This includes those with added complexities such as multiple charges, serious offences, trials and the failure of accused persons to make scheduled appearances. For instance, cases involving a trial had twice the median elapsed time (255 days) of those in which no trial was involved (113 days).

In 2008/2009, two-thirds (66%) of adult cases resulted in a guilty decision with the accused pleading guilty in 59% of all completed cases.

The most common sentence imposed on offenders in 2008/2009 was probation, which was handed down in 45% of guilty cases. A term of imprisonment was ordered in 34% of cases and a fine in 30%. Multiple sentences can be imposed in cases with a guilty finding, hence the percentages will not sum to 100%.

Younger adults were over-represented in adult criminal courts. Individuals aged 18 to 24 comprised 12% of the adult population but accounted for 31% of all cases in adult criminal court in 2008/2009.