

# Gun use in robberies registers steep decline in '08

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OTTAWA — A new study says the use of firearms in police-reported robberies has declined precipitously over the past decade.

Statistics Canada reports firearms were used in 14 per cent of robberies in 2008, compared with 20 per cent a decade earlier. The agency says the types of robberies have changed, too, as commercial robberies have declined and robberies at residences and in public transit facilities have increased.

Canadian police services reported about 32,000 robberies in 2008, accounting for seven per cent of all violent crimes.

The police-reported robbery rate was down 10 per cent from 1999, with most of the decline occurring between 1999 and 2002.

Police-reported residential robberies, often referred to as "home invasions," increased 38 per cent between 1999 and 2005, and stabilized since.

The vast majority of robberies were committed by young men - almost nine in 10 of suspects in 2008 were male and nearly two-thirds were between the ages of 12 and 24.

Money was the most common item reported stolen (37 per cent of all robberies), followed by personal accessories such as jewellery (18 per cent).

Electronic devices such as cell phones, personal music devices and computers - items that can often be sold for a quick profit - were next at 15 per cent.

The report says three provinces - Quebec, British Columbia and Manitoba - have driven the overall decline in the rate of police-reported robbery over the past decade.

Between 1999 and 2008, the rate fell 30 per cent in Quebec, 22 per cent in British Columbia and 20 per cent in Manitoba.

Robberies increased in all of the remaining provinces, with the largest increase reported in Newfoundland and Labrador, where it more than doubled, yet remained well below the national average.

Western Canada, particularly Manitoba, recorded the highest rates of police-reported robbery in the country. This is similar to the pattern for overall violent crime rates.

The highest rates in cities were reported in Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Vancouver and Edmonton. The only cities in Central and Eastern Canada with above-average robbery rates were Montreal, Toronto, Thunder Bay, Halifax and Hamilton.