

**B. CRIME TRENDS IN CANADA, 1962-1990**

*Yes, social violence is increasing. Criminological research shows us it's linked to various systemic factors of increasing poverty, unemployment and so on. The fact that social violence is increasing should not surprise us. What we need to grapple with is its reflection within television. — Professor Eileen Saunders, School of Journalism and Communications, Carleton University<sup>9</sup>*

Data released in 1992 by Statistics Canada attest to the increasing level of violence in Canada.<sup>10</sup> (See note of caution about the difficulties in comparing crime statistics over a long period of time.)<sup>11</sup> The Statistics Canada analysis of the Uniform Crime Reporting survey conducted by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics shows that violent offence rates increased three and one-half times between 1962 and 1990. (An offence rate is the number of offenses per 100,000 population.) During the same time period, property offence rates increased two-fold.

*Criminal Code* offenses include violent and property offenses. Violent offenses include homicide, sexual assault, other assaults and robbery. Property offenses include break and enter, theft of motor vehicle, theft of money, possession of stolen goods and fraud. Due to the proportionally higher increase in the violent offence rates over the three decades, particularly since the mid-1980s, violent offenses as a proportion of total *Criminal Code* offenses have increased from 8% in 1962 to 10% in 1990. It should be noted that homicides represent less than one percent of total *Criminal Code* offenses. Patterns of victimization also show that most violence involves people who know each other; only 30% of violent incidents involve strangers.

However, these statistics do not show the relatively small number of individuals who are responsible for violent offenses. In its November 1992 submission to the Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General, in reference to the approximately 30,000 individuals incarcerated in Canadian federal and provincial prisons, CAVEAT (Canadians Against Violence Everywhere Advocating its Termination) postulated that "*we are dealing with a very small segment of the population indeed — probably about 0.25 of 1 percent.*"<sup>12</sup> CAVEAT concluded this analysis with the following statement:

*A somewhat sobering side of this analysis is the realization that we have allowed such a small number of people to significantly affect and restrict our daily lives and dictate in many cases what we can or cannot safely do.<sup>13</sup>*

In the context of our own study, this statement raises the question as to whether or not violence portrayed in television programming is partly responsible for the violent behaviour of this small number of people. The next sections of this report will outline the viewing habits of Canadians, before examining violence in television programming and in videos, and what effects television violence may have on individuals and society.