

The Nature of Crime

Crime: An act or omission of an act that is prohibited and punishable by a federal statute.

In general, four conditions must exist for an act or omission to be considered a crime:

1. The act is considered wrong by society
2. The act causes harm to society in general or to those (such as minors) who need protection
3. The harm must be serious
4. The remedy must be handled by the criminal justice system

Examples of Crimes involving a prohibited act:

Examples of Crimes involving an omission of an act:

Criminal Law: The body of laws that prohibit and punish acts that injure people, property, and society as a whole

The main purposes of criminal laws are to:

- Protect people and property
- Maintain order
- Preserve standards of public decency

Why is a crime an offence against society as a whole, not just against the direct victims of crime?

The *Criminal Code of Canada*: A federal statute that contains the majority of criminal laws passed by Parliament. It lists the offences, the sentences to be imposed and the procedures to follow when trying those accused of crimes.

Did you know that s. 43 of the *Criminal Code* allows schoolteachers, parents or guardians to use "reasonable force" in disciplining children under their care? What would you consider "reasonable force"? Do you think this section of the Code should be amended? Explain.

Quasi-Criminal Laws: Laws covering less serious offences at the provincial or municipal level; most often punishable by fines.

Examples of Quasi-Criminal Laws:

Every province in Canada has passed laws that prohibit the sale of tobacco to people under a certain age. Are these criminal laws or quasi-criminal laws? Explain your answer.