

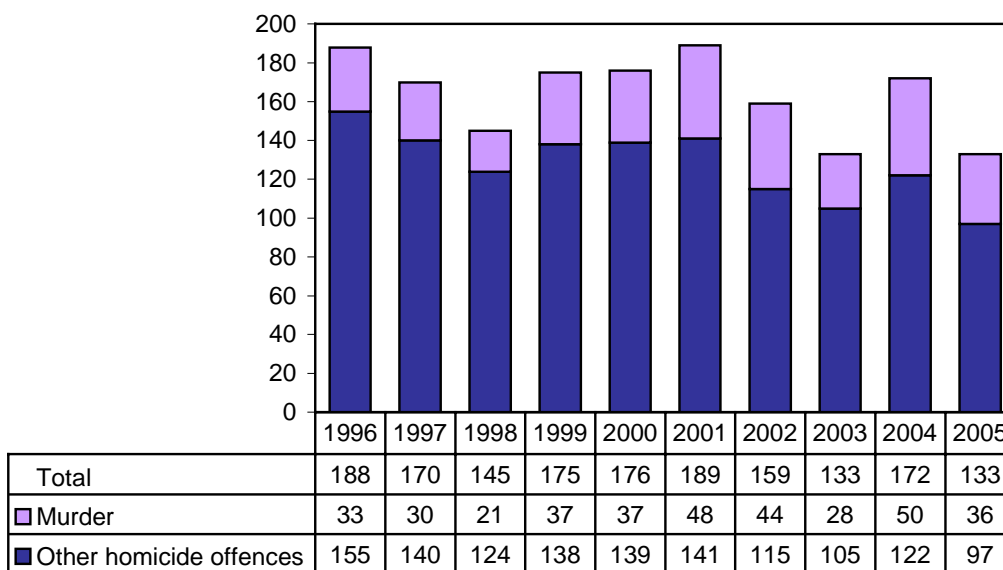
# SUMMARY

## CRIME TRENDS IN FINLAND

The societal changes in Finland during the last decades are reflected in the statistics on recorded crime. Recorded crime in general increased during the 1960s and the 1970s due to rapid urbanization and as the large post-war age cohorts reached a crime-intensive age. The surge in recorded crime was followed by a period of more stable trends. During the 1980s there were new increases in some categories of recorded crime. In the early 1990s, together with the economic recession, major property crime categories stabilized and like thefts, even began to decrease. In the 2000s changes in crime figures have been relatively small.

*Homicide 1996–2005.* In 2005, there were altogether 113 homicides (excl. attempts) reported to the police. The annual number of police-recorded homicides has varied between 100 and 155 during the last ten years. In 2005, the annual homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants was 2.2 (significantly under the ten-year-average). Additionally, Finnish law distinguishes assaults resulting in death and infanticides. In the past ten-year period, the number of assaults resulting in death has varied between 19 and 33 (19 in 2005). The annual number of infanticides has varied between 0 and 3 (one in 2005). The total number of homicides, infanticides and assaults resulting in death was 133 in 2005, significantly lower than the ten-year average (164). The total rate per 100,000 inhabitants of all lethal intentional violent crimes reported to the police was 2.6 in 2005.

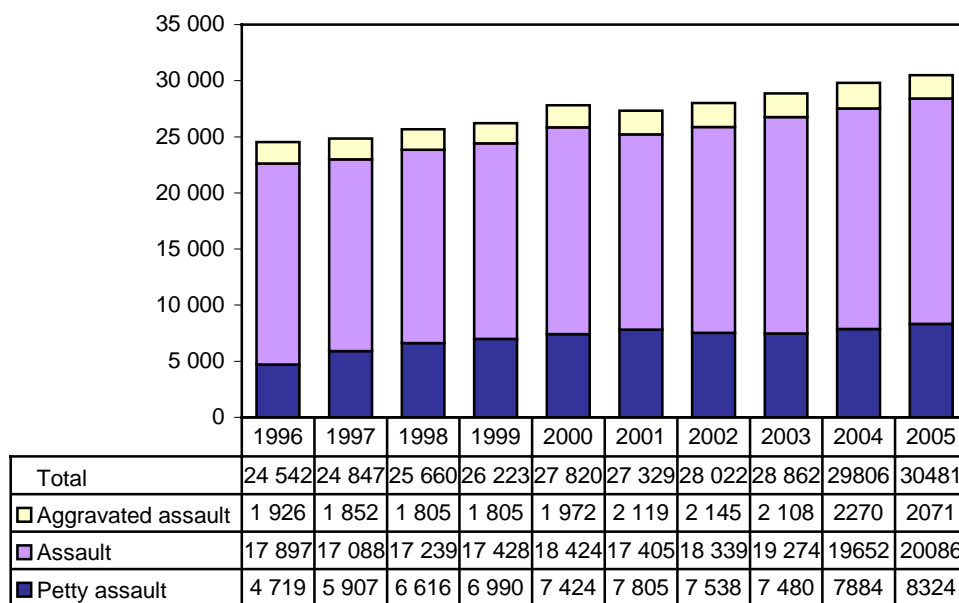
Homicides typically take place between middle aged, unemployed, alcoholized males from the lowest social stratum. The typical conflict type leading to lethal outcome is a drinking group quarrel between friends or acquaintances. The economically deprived areas of eastern and northern Finland are over-represented in the homicide statistics.



**Figure 1** Homicide offences recorded by the police, 1996–2005

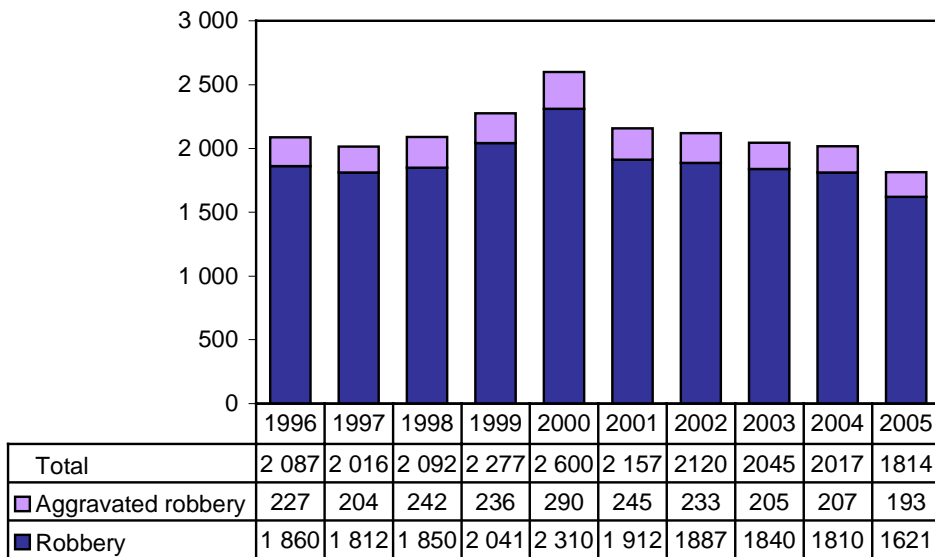
The following crime categories are included: murder, manslaughter, killing (*surma*), infanticide, and assault resulting in death.

*Assaults and attempted homicides 1996–2005.* In 2005, there were altogether 30,481 assault offences and 349 attempted homicides reported to the police. The recorded number of non-fatal assault offences increased in the mid-1990s about 30 percent, but during the last few years the number has been stable. The increase of the 1990s was rather due to technical redefinitions of assault offences and police campaigns aimed at improving the security of public places, than an increase of violent incidents on the field-level. This is confirmed by large-scale victimisation surveys that indicate that the annual percentage of adults who have experienced violence resulting in physical injury has been very stable (about 2 percent) during the last 20 years. Apart from definition and control action influences, the number of assaults has been roughly paralleled by changes in alcohol consumption and economic affluence. – Recorded rates of assault offences are highest in the most urbanized regions. This is true also of violence measured by victimisation surveys.



**Figure 2** Assaults recorded by the police, 1996–2005

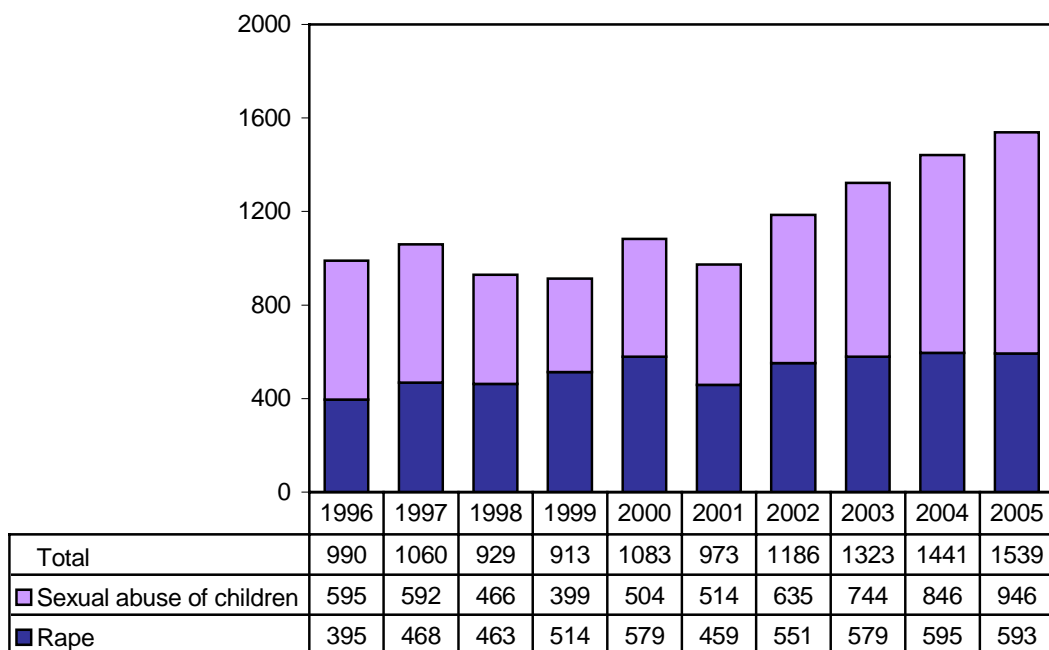
*Robberies 1996–2005.* Recorded robberies jumped upwards at the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s. In the mid 1990s, their number dropped back to an annual level of about 2,000 offences. In 2005, the number of recorded robberies was 1,814, which was significantly under the ten-year average (2,123). The number of bank or post office robberies increased in the late 1980s, peaking in 1992 (116 incidents). Subsequently, their number was halved after the introduction of systematic countermeasures. In 2002 (the most recent year with available data) only 19 bank or post office robberies were reported to the police. – Recorded rates of robberies are highest in the most urbanized regions and about half of the perpetrators are under 21 years of age.



**Figure 3** Robberies recorded by the police, 1996–2005

*Sex offences 1996–2005.* Reported forcible rapes display an increasing trend from 1995, likely to reflect, in the first place, an increasing reportability of such offences. The number of forcible rapes increased 3 % in 2004 compared with foregoing year.

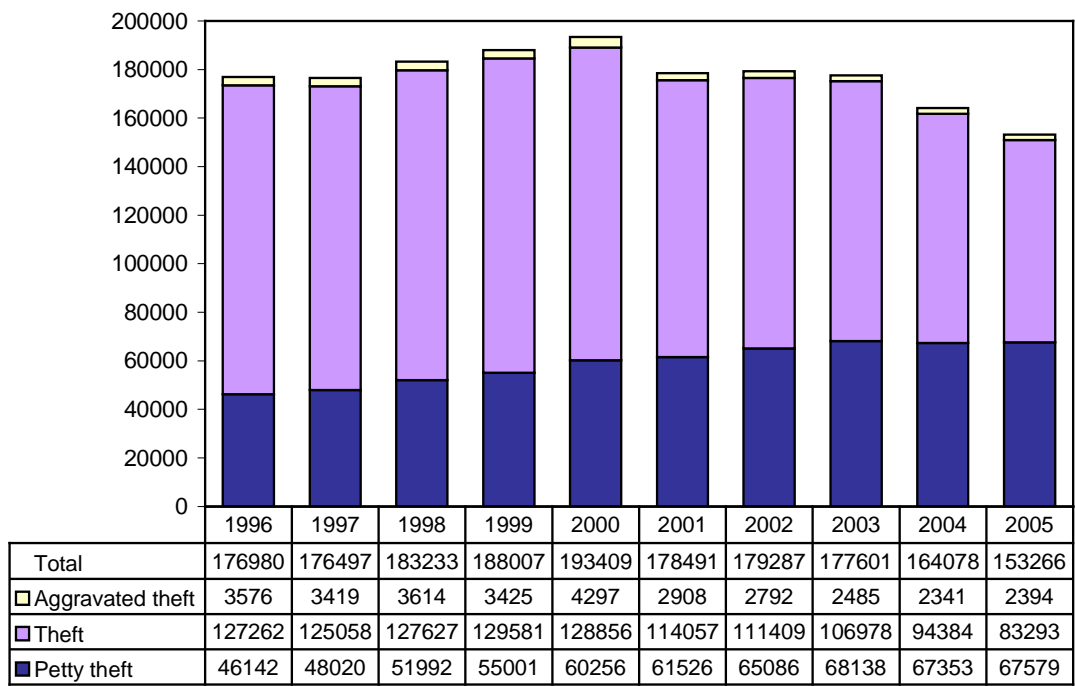
Recorded numbers of sexual offences against children and minors fluctuates annually relatively much, reflecting the probably very large proportion of hidden crime in this event type and incoherent recording practises of serial crimes. Over time, the reportability of these offences is likely to have increased. According to police and court statistics the number of sexual offences against children has increased in recent years.



**Figure 4** Rapes and sexual offences against children recorded by the police, 1996–2005

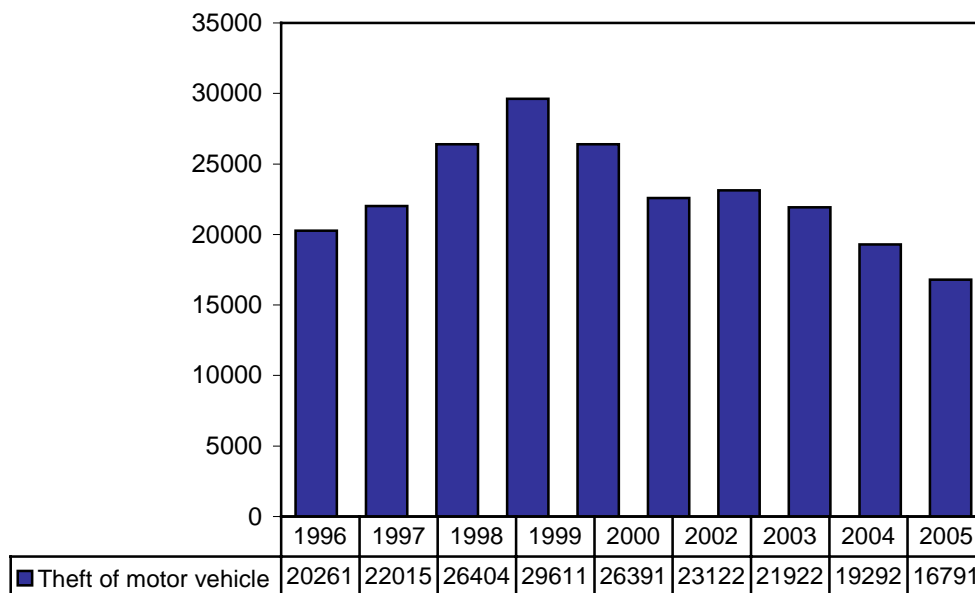
*Thefts 1996–2005.* The increase in recorded thefts that was apparent during the 1980s levelled off in the early 1990s. In the 2000s there has been a downward trend in the number of thefts. Large victimisation surveys also indicate a decrease in thefts after the mid 1990s. In 2005 the police recorded in total 153,000 crimes of theft or 2,900 crimes per 100,000 in population. There was a seven percent decrease from the previous year.

Changes in the level of theft offenses appear to be connected with the economic development of society. Periods of economic upswings have often been followed by an above-average increase in recorded theft. – The rates of theft offences or crimes per population are highest in the most urbanized regions.



**Figure 5** Thefts recorded by the police, 1996–2005

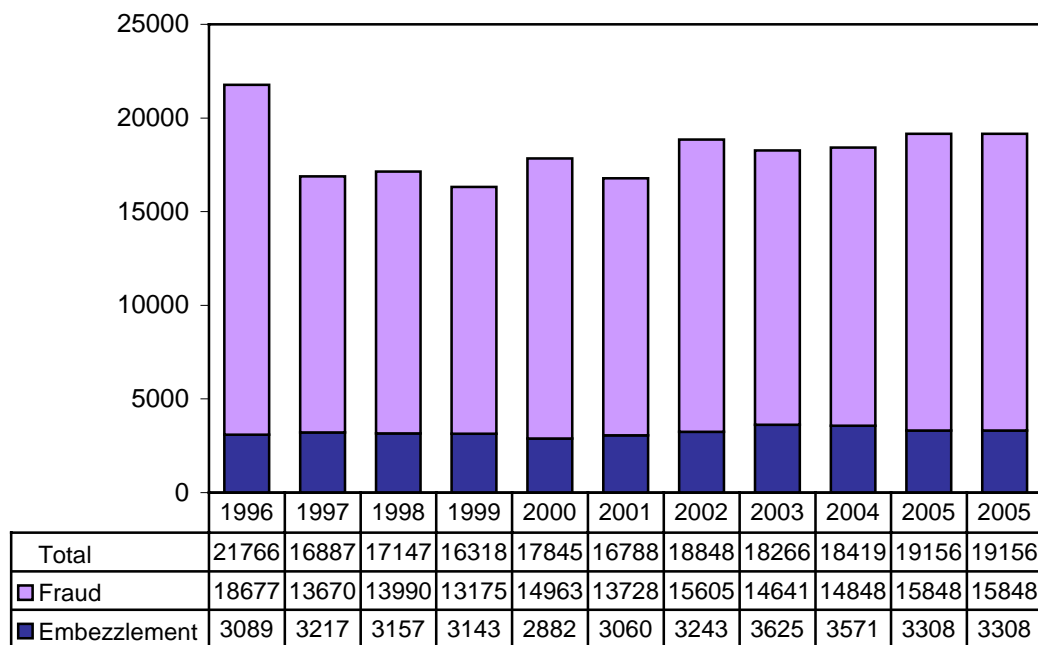
*Thefts of motor vehicles 1996–2005.* Recorded thefts of motor vehicles, majority of which are car thefts, increased in the 1980s, with a subsequent decline beginning in 1993, in line with other theft. The crime figures began to increase again in 1996 and the upward trend continued until the end of 1990s. In 2000–2005 there has been a clear break in this development as the number of crimes has decreased by 36 per cent. According to the International Crime Victim Surveys, Finland scores below the European average in the frequency of car thefts. – In the 1990s and 2000s the crime rate, or the number of thefts of motor vehicles per 1,000 cars and motorcycles, has fluctuated between 6 and 12 (absolute figure in 2005: 16,791).



**Figure 6** Thefts of motor vehicles recorded by the police, 1996–2005

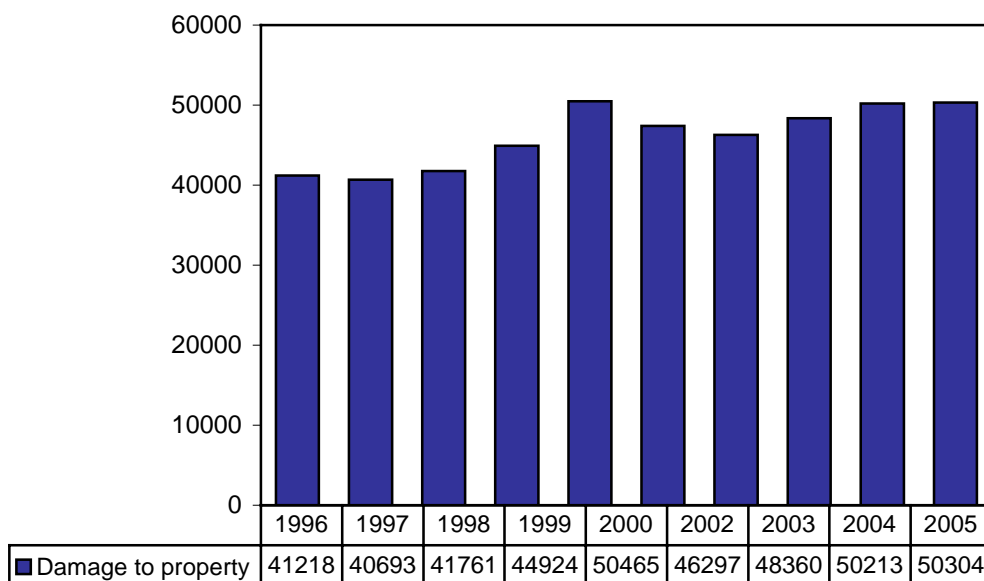
*Embezzlement 1996–2005.* The number of embezzlements recorded by the police shows a rather stable downward trend in the 1990s. In the last years there have been again some increases in the number of these crimes. However, the number of embezzlement is quite small, in 2005 63 crimes per 100,000 in population (absolute figure 3,308). Since 1991, in case of series of embezzlements, each series is counted as one offence which has considerably reduced the annual variation in the crime figures.

*Fraud 1996–2005.* Recorded frauds increased steeply during the 1980s following the rapid introduction of credit cards. During the early 1990s, presumably because of the tightened controls in the granting of credit and credit cards, the number of recorded frauds decreased considerably. Part of the decrease is also due to the new counting rule of serial frauds – the same applied for embezzlement. In the late 1990s and in the beginning of the 2000s the number of annually recorded credit card frauds has been quite stable. In 2005 the police recorded 66 credit card frauds and 236 other frauds per 100,000 in population (absolute figures 3,465 and 12,383). The rates of fraud by the population size of the region follow the same pattern as the rates of theft and embezzlement. They are clearly higher in big cities than in rural regions.



**Figure 7** Frauds and embezzlements recorded by the police, 1996–2005

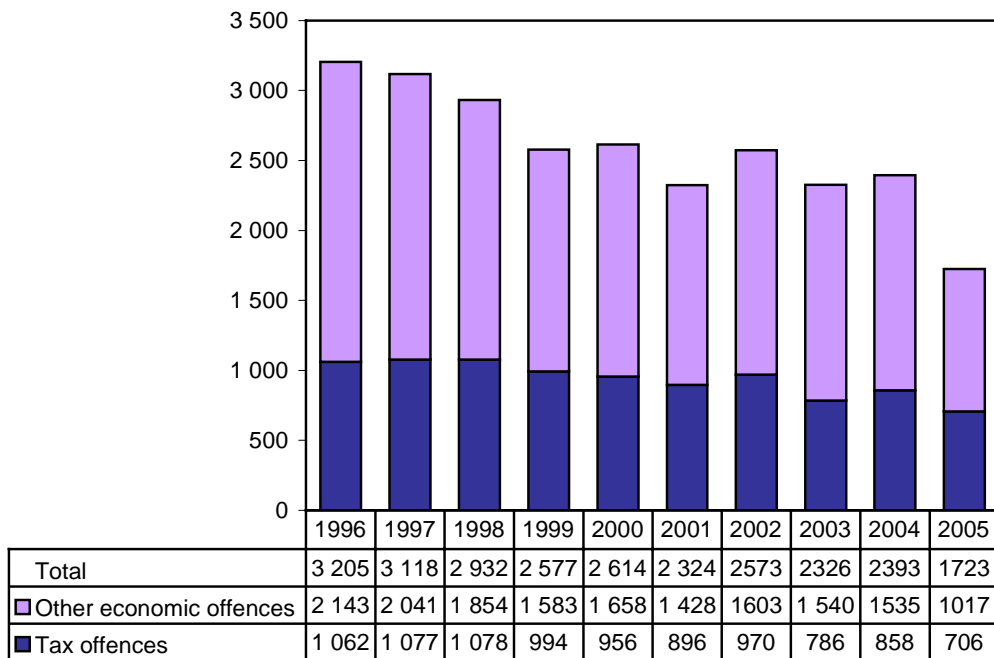
*Damage to property 1996–2005.* Offences of damage to property constitute 13 percent of police-recorded crimes against the penal code. During the last ten years the number of crimes has fluctuated between 40 to 50 thousand. In 2005 the police recorded 957 crimes per 100,000 in population (absolute figure 50,304). Several cities have organized special projects against graffiti, which have reduced the number of unwanted painting and increased the number of caught taggers. The International Crime Victimization Survey has found Finland to be below the European average in rates of victimization to crimes of damage to vehicles. Between 3.7 and 5.6 percent of subjects responded that their car had been damaged during the previous 12 months.



**Figure 8** Offences of damage to property recorded by the police, 1996–2005

*Tax offences and economic offences.* There has been expressed a significant concern in Finland over economic crimes such as bankruptcy offences, accounting offences and tax fraud. In 2005, the police recorded altogether 1,723 offences of this kind, which was about 28 percent less than the year before.

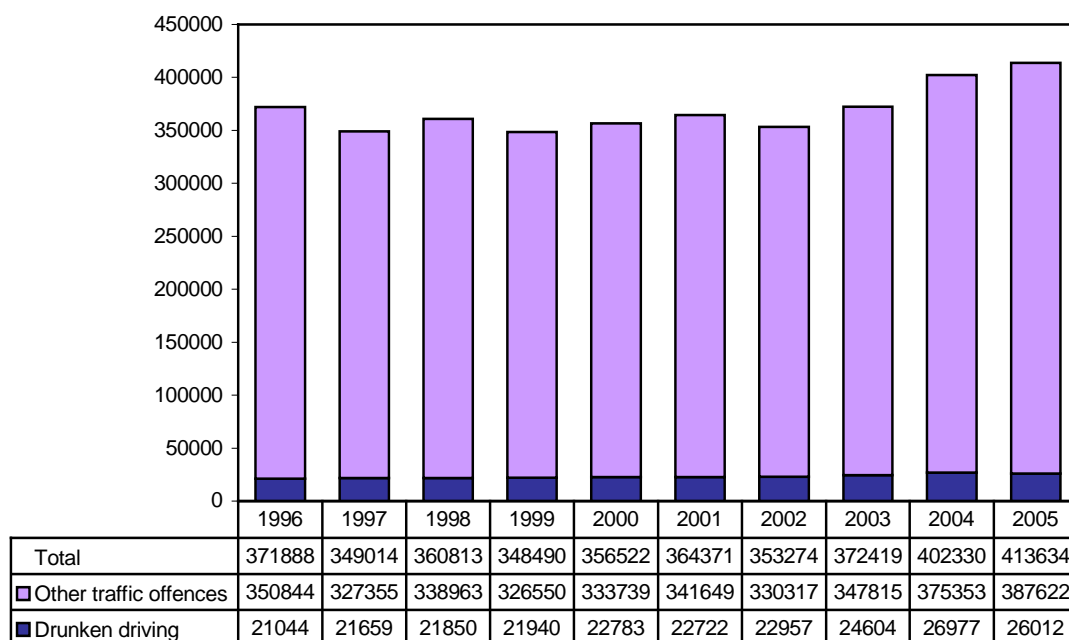
The changes in the level of control have a substantial impact on the annual changes in the number of recorded economic crimes in Finland. Still, the overall decreasing trend of recorded economic crimes since the depression years of the early 1990s (their numbers have decreased about 15 percent since the mid-1990s) can also be partly due to diminishing volume of actual economic crime.



**Figure 9** Tax offences and other economic offences recorded by the police, 1996–2005

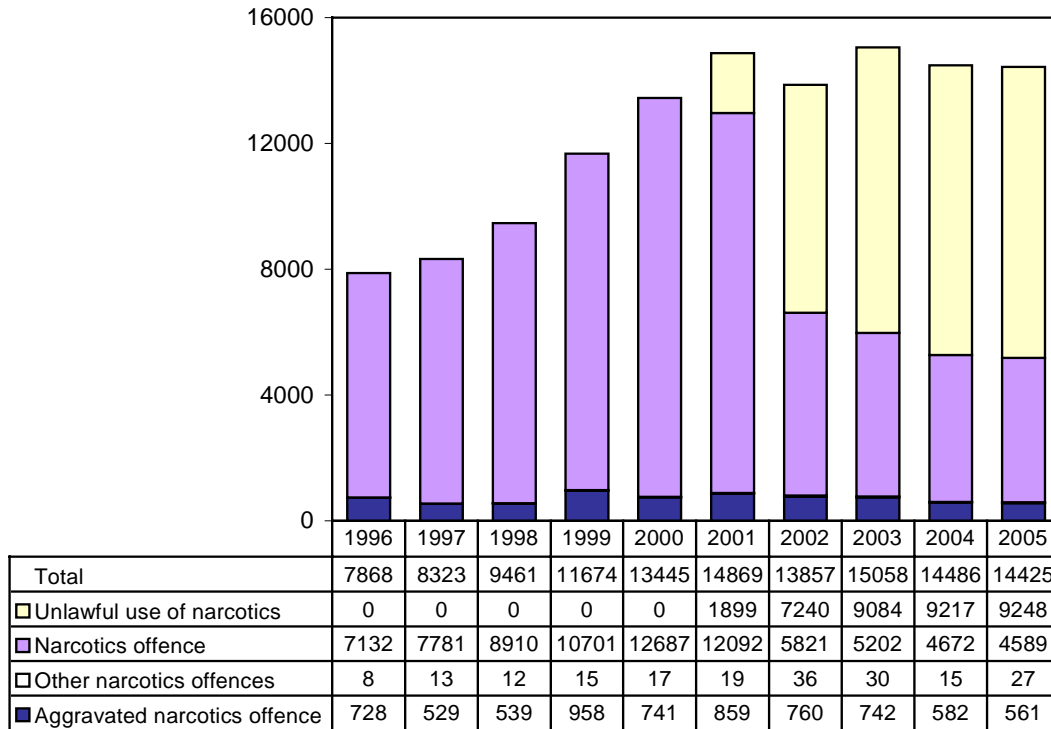
*Drunken driving 1996–2005.* For recorded cases of drunken driving, the last ten years represent a rather stable period. The number of drunken driving decreased 4 per cent in 2005 compared with foregoing year. The increase in 2003–2004 was mostly caused by the change of law concerning driving under the influence of drugs. The law stated a zero limit for drug driving. In the measurements of random roadside checks, the proportion of drivers with a blood alcohol content of 0.05 % or higher has been about 0.2 per cent in last ten years. In international perspectives these rates are very low. – The rates of drunken driving offences are highest in the less urbanized regions.

*Other traffic offences 1996–2005.* The general trend of other traffic offenses has been decreasing over the 1990s and in the beginning of 2000s, when assessed in proportion to the number of registered motor vehicles. The number of traffic offences increased 3 per cent in 2005 compared with the foregoing year. If the number of traffic fatalities and injuries in traffic is used as an indicator, also traffic safety has clearly improved: the annual number of fatalities has decreased from a high of 1,156 in 1972 to an average, during the 1980s, of about 550, and has continued to fall. The most recent data is from 2005, when 366 fatalities in traffic were recorded. – The rates of these offences are highest in the less urbanized regions, even if related to the number of motor vehicles.



**Figure 10** Drunken driving and other traffic offences recorded by the police, 1995–2004

*Narcotics offences 1996–2005.* Use and possession of drugs for personal use are considered to be crimes in Finland. In fact, the majority of sentences imposed for narcotics concern these crimes. The principal drugs are cannabis and amphetamine. After a period of major growth during the 1990s, the drug market in Finland appears to have stabilized.



**Figure 11** Narcotics offences recorded by the police, 1995–2004

*Juvenile crime.* The numbers of juveniles suspected of crimes against the Penal Code has been relatively stable in the last two decades. Their proportion out of all persons suspected of these crimes has slowly decreased.

The rate of juvenile theft offences decreased in the 1990s. This is so especially in the age bracket 15–17 years. The rates of assaults committed by juveniles increased at the same time, particularly after 1995 when assaults were redefined in the Penal Code reform. After 2000, the assault rate of 15–17 year olds has decreased slightly while the rate of recorded assaults in the age bracket 18–20 increased.

Typical juvenile offences (with high proportions of young suspects) are status offences related to alcohol possession and identity documents. Beyond these, car thefts, damage to property and robberies have unusually high proportions (19–31 %) of juvenile suspects (less than 18 years old). Also thefts

and assaults have relatively high percentages (12–17 %) of juvenile perpetrators.

The involvement of juveniles as perpetrators of lethal violence is rare. The number of homicides committed by persons aged less than 18 years increased in the period 1999–2002 (peaking in 13 offences in 2002), after which the number returned to a very low level (0 in 2003, 2 in 2004 and 2 in 2005).

*Gender issues in crime and victimization.* In 2005, 17 percent of the suspects apprehended by the police were women. During the last two decades, the share of women in arrest statistics has increased slowly. Studies of self-reported juvenile delinquency suggest that the gender difference in the prevalence of offending is not that large. However, relatively few high-frequency violent offenders are girls. According to the national victim survey, women and men report an equal number of violent incidents. The analysis of injury data suggests that violence against men tends result in more serious physical harm. Women are more likely to experience violence in the workplace and in intimate relationships. Between 1980–2003, the incidents of domestic violence against women resulting in actual physical harm declined by 70 %. In recent years, violence against women in the workplace has increased significantly, especially in health care professions.

*Foreigners and crime.* In 2005, about 19 300 foreigners who had residence in Finland, were suspected of some offence. This rate was 3.0 % out of all persons suspected of offences known to the police in Finland. The number of offences committed by foreigners has increased 79 % since 1996. In 2005, about 114 000 foreigners (2,2 % of the whole population) had residence in Finland. In addition about 16 100 foreigners not having residence in Finland, tourists and other visitors were suspected of offences in 2005.

23 per cent of all foreigners suspected of crimes were Russians, 18 per cent were Estonians, and 8 per cent were Swedes. Foreigners were most typically suspected of traffic offences (45 % in 2005). Forcible rapes and robberies were offences where foreign suspects were most clearly over-represented in 2005 (forcible rapes 21 per cent and robberies 27 per cent of all suspects).

Of all foreigners sentenced to imprisonment in 2005, over one-fourth (27 %) were Estonians, and about one-fifth (21 %) were Russians. The number of foreigners in Finnish prisons has been increasing rapidly in last ten years, from about one per cent to 7–9 per cent of the average daily prison population. Foreigner participation in the growing narcotics markets is a central factor in this development.

Studies of foreigners as crime victims indicate that they commonly suffer from many varieties of discrimination, including attacks of racist violence. Persons with a Somalian origin were particularly often exposed to such events. Also persons with an Arabic or Turkish background had experienced discrimination and racist violence more frequently than other foreigner groups.

*Fear of crime.* Large national population surveys measuring victimisation and fear of crime indicate that concern/fear of street crimes has decreased in 2003 compared with 1990s. Concern for one's home being burglarized has also slightly decreased after a clear increase between 1988 and 1993. In international comparison there was least concern about burglary in Finland and other Scandinavian countries according to the 2000 international crime victims survey. Also feelings of vulnerability on the streets at night were one of the lowest in Finland, Sweden and Denmark based on the international victimisation survey and the Eurobarometer of public safety.

The popularity of burglary protection by various methods has grown clearly since 1988 but not afterwards. Security precautions (for examples self-defence education) against violence have increased continuously during the last 15 years.

*The role of alcohol* is marked in Finnish criminality, especially in crimes of violence. Indeed, one explanation given for the relatively high level of violence in Finland is the drinking culture characterised by heavy and intoxication-oriented drinking patterns.

In the period 2002–2005, 80 per cent of homicide offenders were recorded as having committed the offence under the influence of alcohol. In assault offences, the corresponding figure was 70 per cent. In robbery offences, only 45 per cent of the offenders were under the influence of alcohol during the offence. In all violent offences, the proportion of offenders who were under the influence of drugs is slowly increasing. Especially robbery offences are increasingly committed under the influence of drugs. However, alcohol intoxication is by far more prevalent in all types of violent crime incidents.

The role of alcohol appears also on macro level or as a connection between the overall consumption of alcohol and violence. In a Finnish time series study covering the time period 1950–2000 it has been estimated that a one litre increase in annual per capita alcohol consumption (100 % alcohol) corresponds to a 3 to 6 percent increase in the assault rate (Sirén 2002).

## THE SYSTEM OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

*The system of sanctions.* General criminal punishments according to the Finnish law are fine, conditional imprisonment, community service and unconditional imprisonment.

A *fine* is imposed as day-fines. The number of day-fines is determined on the basis of the seriousness of the offence while the amount of a day-fine depends on the financial situation of the offender. A fine may be imposed either in an ordinary trial or, in respect of certain petty offenses, through simplified summary penal proceedings (penalty orders). A vast majority of fines are ordered in summary process. For minor traffic offenses there is a specific monetary penalty that is set at a fixed amount (petty fine). The petty fine is imposed by the police.

A sentence of *imprisonment* may be imposed either for a determinate period (at least fourteen days and at most twelve years) or for life. Imprisonment can be either *conditional* or *unconditional*. Sentences of imprisonment of at most two years can be imposed conditionally. A general prerequisite for a conditional sentence is that "the maintenance of general obedience to the law does not demand an unconditional sentence".

*Community service* was introduced into the Finnish penalty system on an experimental basis in 1991 in four judicial districts. Now the system covers the whole country. Community service is imposed instead of unconditional imprisonment for up to eight months. The prerequisites for sentencing the offender to community service are (a) that the convicted person consents to this, (b) that the sentence does not exceed eight months, and (c) that the offender is deemed capable of carrying out the community service order. Also (d) prior convictions may in some case prevent the use of this option. Community service involves unpaid work for the good of the community, for at least twenty hours and at most 200 hours during the offender's leisure time.

*The fall of the prison rate in Finland 1950–2000.* In the beginning of the 1950s, the prisoner rate in Finland was four times higher than in the other Nordic countries. Finland had almost 200 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants, while the figures in the other Scandinavian countries were around 50. Even during the 1970s, Finland's prisoner rate continued to be among the highest in Western Europe. However, while most European countries have experienced rising prison populations the Finnish one had been declining and by the beginning of the 1990s Finland had reached the Nordic level of about 60–70 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants.

**Table 1** Prison rates (including remand prisoners) in the Nordic countries 1950–2000 (/100,000 inhabitants)

	<b>Finland</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Denmark</b>	<b>Norway</b>
1950	187	35	88	51
1960	154	63	71	44
1970	113	65	70	44
1980	106	55	63	44
1990	69	58	67	56
2000	55	60	63	57

Source: Falck, von Hofer & Storgaard

This long-term development has been affected both by macro-level structural factors and ideological changes in penal theory, as well as legal reforms and changing practices of sentencing and prison enforcement. The courts had started to reduce the sentences already in the 1950s, which was mainly a reaction against overly repressive policies instigated by the legislator during the exceptional post-war conditions. Systematic legislative reforms towards decarceration started during the mid 1960s, and continued up till the mid 1990s. Penalties for both traditional property offenses and drunken driving were heavily reduced in the 1970s. Also the role of non-custodial sanctions was strengthened. The scope of conditional imprisonment (suspended sentence) and fines were extended in the mid 1970s. The use of imprisonment in younger age groups was further restricted in the late 1980s. During the 1990s new non-custodial sanction – community service – was introduced in the Finnish system with a specific aim to replace short prison sentences.

Also the enforcement practices have contributed in this change. A series of legislative acts were carried out in the 1960s in order to restrict the use of imprisonment as a default penalty for unpaid fines. In the early 1970s the use of preventive detention was heavily confined and the use of parole and early release were heavily extended.

*The use of different sentencing alternatives.* Key figures in the use of different sanctions 1970–2000 in the court practice are presented in table 2.

**Table 2** The use of different sentencing alternatives in Finland, 1970 to 2000

	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	2004
	N	N	N	N	N	N
<i>Penalties imposed by courts</i>	(57,675)	(72,282)	(81,627)	(61,208)	(64,403)	(69,765)
- unconditional imprisonment	10,212	10,326	11,657	6,754	8,147	8,530
- community service	..	..	..	2,803	3,413	3,621
- conditional imprisonment	5,215	14,556	17,428	13,624	13,973	16,165
- fine by the court	42,248	47,401	52,542	38,027	37,503	39,420
<i>Summary proceedings</i>						
- fine by a penalty order	150,542	249,006	311,889	277,530	196,156	232,613
- petty fine (traffic violations)	..	..	69,291	52,009	103,499	109,634
<i>Waiving of penal measures*</i>						
Non prosecution	..	2,003	3,417	6,361	7,483	5,249
Waiver of the sentence*	..	1,765	1,648	1,351	1,069	1,011

Source: Statistics Finland

\* Excluding traffic offences.

Note: The population of Finland is 5.2 million

The fine has been the principal punishment throughout the whole period. This is partly due to the fact that there is no general administrative penal law in Finland. Practically all offences are classified as crimes and treated under the label of criminal punishments.

During the period 1950–1990 the number of conditional sentences has increased from some 3,000 to 17,000, falling then back in the course of the 1990s to 13,000 sentences per year. The growth was especially rapid between 1970–1980 and was partly a result of the changes in the Finnish policy in regards of drunken driving. During the 1970s, the sentencing practice concerning drunken driving was changed to favour non-custodial alternatives: In 1971, 70 % of offenders received an unconditional sentence while in 1981 their proportion had dropped to 12 %. A similar development has also occurred in the case of property offenses. In 1971, offenders sentenced of larceny received a custodial sentence in 38 % of all cases; in 1991, their proportion had decreased to 11 %.

*The use of community service.* During the 1990s the penalties remained fairly constant. The only major amendment in the system has the introduction of community service. In Finland community service is imposed instead of unconditional imprisonment for up to 8 months. In order to ensure that community service will really be used in lieu of unconditional sentences of imprisonment (and not instead of other more lenient penalties), a specific *two-step procedure* was adopted. First the court is supposed to make its sentencing decision in accordance with the normal principles and criteria of sentencing, without even considering the possibility of community service. If the result is

unconditional imprisonment, then the court may commute the sentence into community service under certain conditions prescribed in the law. The duration of community service varies between 20 and 200 hours. In commuting imprisonment into community service, one day in prison equals one hour of community service. The number on prison sentences and community service sentences in 1992–2002 is presented in table 3.

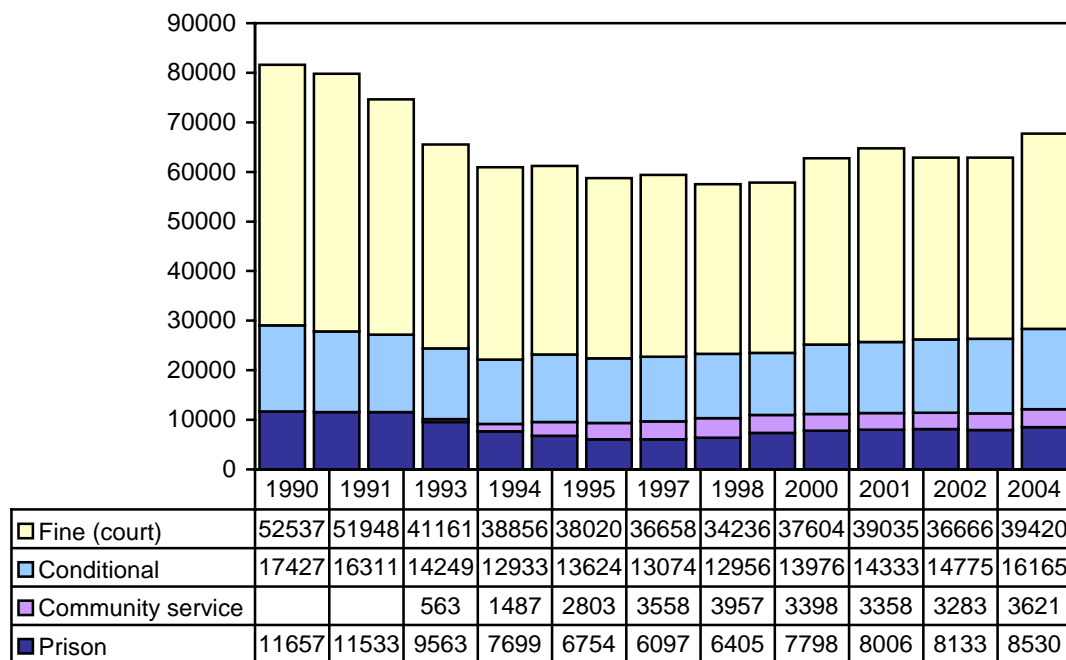
**Table 3** Imprisonment and community service in the Finnish court practice 1992–2002

Year	Imprisonment	Community service
1992	11,538	0
1993	9,563	563
1994	7,699	1,487
1995	6,754	2,803
1996	6,101	3,277
1997	5,967	3,534
1998	6,642	3,957
1999	7,666	3,658
2000	8,147	3,413
2001	8,352	3,388
2002	8,489	3,313
2003	8,000	3,297
2004	8,530	3,621

Source: Statistics Finland

Along with the increase in the number of community service orders, the number of unconditional sentences of imprisonment decreased between 1992–1993. It is therefore reasonable to argue that, within a short period of time, community service has proven to be an important alternative to imprisonment. For the moment it looks as the use of this sanctions has reached its peak. During 1998–2000 the number of community service order has been slightly falling, while the number of prison sentences have been increasing.

### Sentencing statistics 1990–2004



**Figure 12** Choice of sanctions 1990–2004

The distribution of penalties in 2004 is illustrated in table 4.

**Table 4** The distribution of penalties in 2004

	N	%
<i>Court Decisions 2004</i>	68,778	100 %
Prison	8,530	12 %
Community service	3,621	5 %
Conditional imprisonment	16,165	24 %
Juvenile penalty	31	0 %
Fines by the court	39,420	57 %
Waiver of the sentence	1,011	1 %
<i>Other Decisions 2004</i>		
Fine by the prosecutor	232,613	
Petty fine by the police	109,634	

The clear majority of all penalties imposed by the courts is fines (57 %). The second largest group is conditional imprisonment 24 %. 12 % of cases in the courts lead to unconditional prison sentence, 5 % to community service and 1 % to waiver (a kind of warning).

*Non-prosecution.* Non-prosecution may be divided into two sub-groups: 1) The decisions based on procedural facts such as lack of evidence and statute of limitations, where there are "legal obstacles" for prosecution ("procedural" non-prosecution) and 2) the cases when there is enough evidence to support prosecution, but the prosecutor chooses to drop the charge for other reasons, often related to the petty nature of the offense or the young age of the offender ("diversionary" non-prosecution).

Traditionally, the scope of (diversionary) non-prosecution has been quite narrow, as compared to many other countries. In the beginning of the 1980s, only about 2 % of all criminal cases led to non-prosecution. However, in 1991 the scope of non-prosecution was extended through a law reform which tripled the number of offences diverted from the court proceedings due to non-prosecution. Table 5 summarises non-prosecution practices in both groups in 1991–2002.

**Table 5** Decisions on non-prosecution in 1991–2002

Year	Procedural reasons		Total
	(technicalities)	Diversionary	
1991	13,756	7,158	20,914
1992	18,027	9,426	27,453
1993	14,758	7,381	22,139
1994	14,079	7,209	21,288
1995	14,086	7,238	21,324
1996	15,179	8,234	23,413
1997	15,572	7,880	23,452
1998	15,812	8,599	24,411
1999	17,574	8,669	26,243
2000	18,621	7,878	26,499
2001*	13,785	7,998	21,783
2002*	16,425	6,181	22,612
2003*	16,470	5,152	21,622
2004*	18,532	5,249	23,781
2005*	17,695	5,047	22,742

\* Change in statistical units

*Mediation.* Mediation has been in use in Finland since 1983, starting from local experiments and then slowly expanding. However, the system has not yet reached the whole country. Today, all towns with a population over 25,000 and most over 10,000 offer mediation services. 80 percent of Finns live in a municipality that has an agency for mediation. Annually some 5,000 cases are referred to mediation.

In Finland mediation does not constitute a part of the criminal justice system but cooperates with the system as far as the referral of cases and their

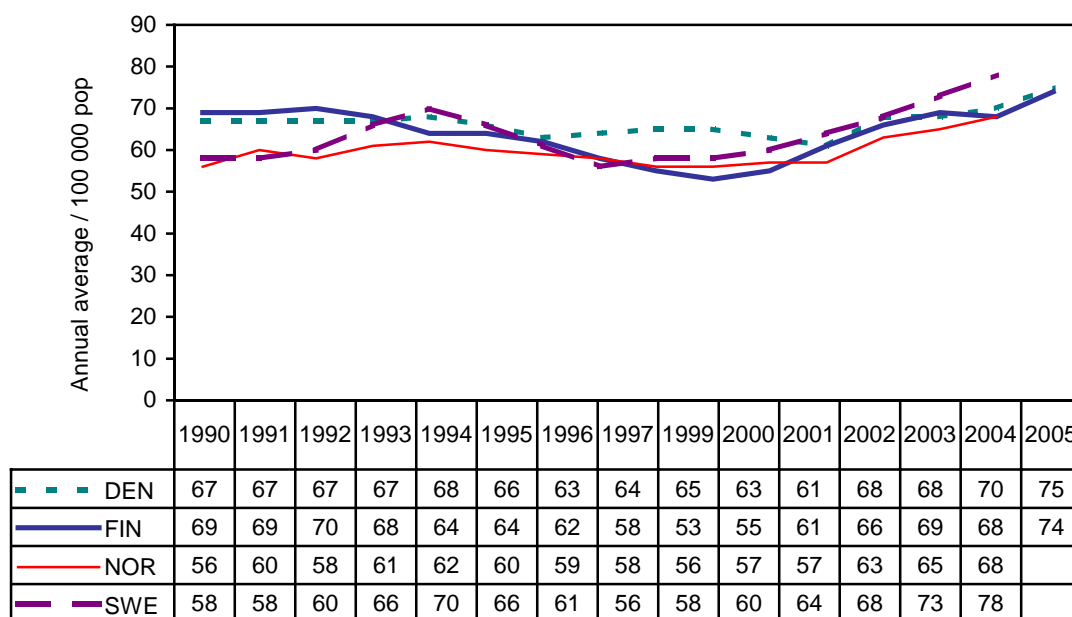
further processing is concerned. There is no legislation on the organization of mediation, but plans and proposals are being prepared. Also the criminal code has recently been revised so that it now mentions an agreement or settlement between the offender and the victim as a possible grounds for waiving of charges by the prosecutor, the waiving of punishment by the court or mitigation of the sentence.

Mediation is based on volunteer work. Also participation in mediation is always voluntary for all the parties. The municipal social welfare authorities usually assist in coordinating the mediation services, but mediators are not considered public officials.

Mediation can start at any time between the commission of the offence and the execution of the sentence, and be initiated by anyone of the possible parties. Three-quarters of all cases are referred to mediation either by the prosecutor (44 %) or by the police (30 %); the remainder of the cases are initiated by the offender (9 %), social authorities (7 %), the victim (5 %) or other (6 %). According to 1997 data, typical offenses are minor forms of violence (assault and petty assault, 38 %), theft and petty theft (17 %), and damage to property (21 %).

In complainant offences mediation will often put an end to the matter even before it gets into the court. In non-complainant offences the prosecutor can drop the charge, if prosecution would seem either unreasonable or pointless due to a reconciliation and non-prosecution does not violate "an important public or private interest." The latter condition excludes more serious offences from non-prosecution. If non-prosecuting would endanger the victim's right to get his/her damages compensated, this option would – in general – be out of question.

*Recent trends in prison population.* The number of prison sentences, as well as the number of prisoners have again started to increase. Between 1999 and 2004 the number of prisoners has increased by 40 %. Similar changes have occurred also in other Scandinavian countries. Figure 13 describes the changes in the annual average number of prisoners in four Scandinavian countries.



**Figure 13** Prisoner rates in four Scandinavian countries 1990–2005

This upwards trend in prisoner rates first started in Sweden, then in Finland and after that in Norway and Denmark. The increase of prisoner rates in Finland in 1998–2004 is a summary effect of five major factors, each affecting in slightly different times: (1) An increase in the number of foreign prisoners (mainly from Russia and the Baltic countries), (2) an increase in drug trafficking (often linked with the former groups), an increase in the number of (3) fine defaulters and (4) prisoners in remand, and (5) an increase in violent offenders (towards the shift 1990/2000).

**Table 6** Prisoners in 1999, 2002 and 2003 by prisoner groups (annual averages)

	1999	2002	2005
All	2,743	3,433	3,888
- serving a sentence	2,296	2,765	3,190
- remand prisoners	354	478	519
- fine defaulters	102	190	179
Foreigners	138	293	282

The change can be viewed also from the point of view of different offense categories.

**Table 7** Situation 1.5. by the type of offense in Finland (remand and fine defaulters excluded)

	1.5.1999	1.5.2002	1.5.2005	Increase 1999–2005 %
All	2,361	2,762	3,173	+34 %
- violence	988	1,082	1,369	+38 %
- drugs	360	498	512	+42 %
- property	552	684	667	+21 %
- drunken driving	312	313	409	+30 %
- other	149	185	216	+45 %

Drug offenses show the most rapid increase (42 %). The number of prison sentences for aggravated drug offenses have doubled and the sentences have become longer by one third. However, rather than changes in the sentencing traditions, this increase reflects changes in the crime structure (especially in the quantity of the drugs). The good news is that between after 2002 the situation seems to have been stabilised. The bad news is that also violent offenses – the largest prisoner group – show an increase of 38 %, and that this increase has also continued between 2002 to 2005.