

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. In the early 1990s, together with the economic recession, major property crime categories stabilized and like thefts, even began to decrease. In the 2000s the decreasing trend in theft, especially in car thefts and burglaries has strengthened. A slight downward trend can also be observed in homicides, a problem crime in Finland, and robberies. On the contrary, the number of recorded assaults has steadily increased to recent years. This is however partly due to increased reporting, as victimization surveys show no corresponding increase.

Homicide 1999–2008. In 2008, there were altogether 132 homicides (excl. attempts) reported to police. The annual number of police-recorded homicides has varied between 103 and 155 during the last ten years. In 2008, the annual homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants was 2.5. Additionally, Finnish law distinguishes assaults resulting in death and infanticides. In the past ten-year period, the annual number of assaults resulting in death has varied between 19 and 33 (28 in 2008). The annual number of infanticides has varied between 0 and 3 (one in 2008). In 2008, the total number of homicides, infanticides and assaults resulting in death was 160, slightly lower than the ten-year average (159). The total rate per 100,000 inhabitants of all intentional lethal violent crimes reported to police was 3.0.

Homicides typically take place between middle aged, unemployed, alcoholic men 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 provinces of eastern and northern Finland are over-represented in the homicide statistics.

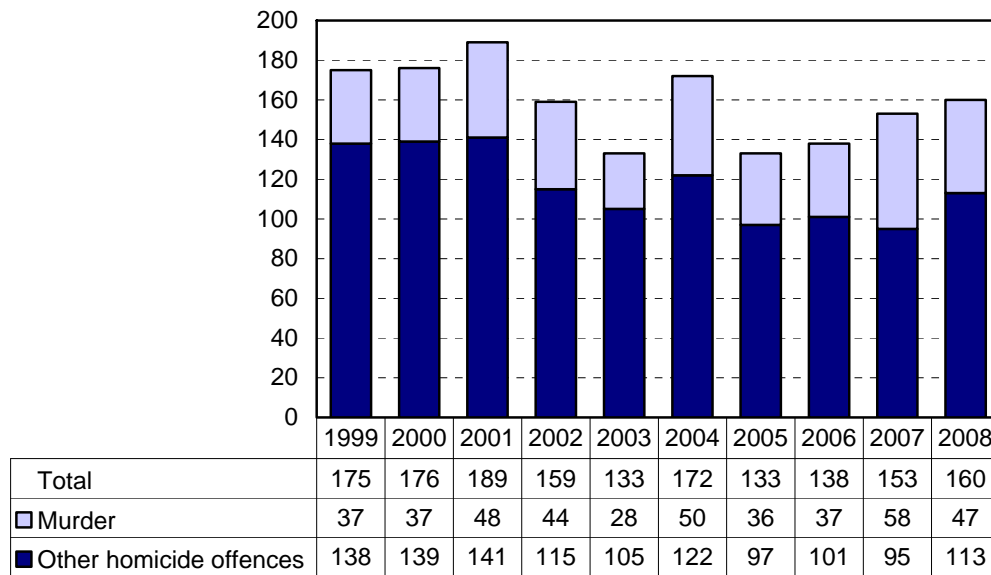


Figure 1 Homicide offences recorded by the police, 1999–2008

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

Assaults and attempted homicides 1999–2008. In 2008, there were altogether 34,803 assault offences and 363 attempted homicides reported to the police. The annual number of recorded non-fatal assault offences has increased about 90 percent since the end of the 1980s. The increase has been 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 stable (about two percent) during the last 20 years. Apart from definition and control action influences, the annual 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.

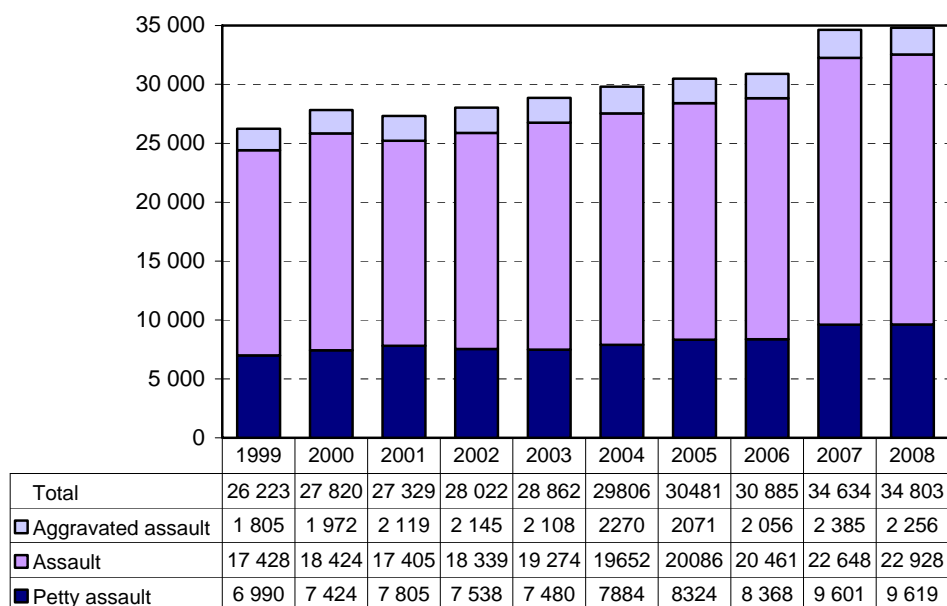


Figure 2 Assaults recorded by the police, 1999–2008

Robberies 1999–2008. The annual number of recorded robberies increased significantly at the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s. In the mid-1990s, the number dropped back to an annual level of about 2,000 offences. In 2008, the number of recorded robberies was 1,696, significantly under the ten-year average (2,021). Recorded rates of robberies are highest in the most urbanized regions and about half of the offenders are under 21 years of age.

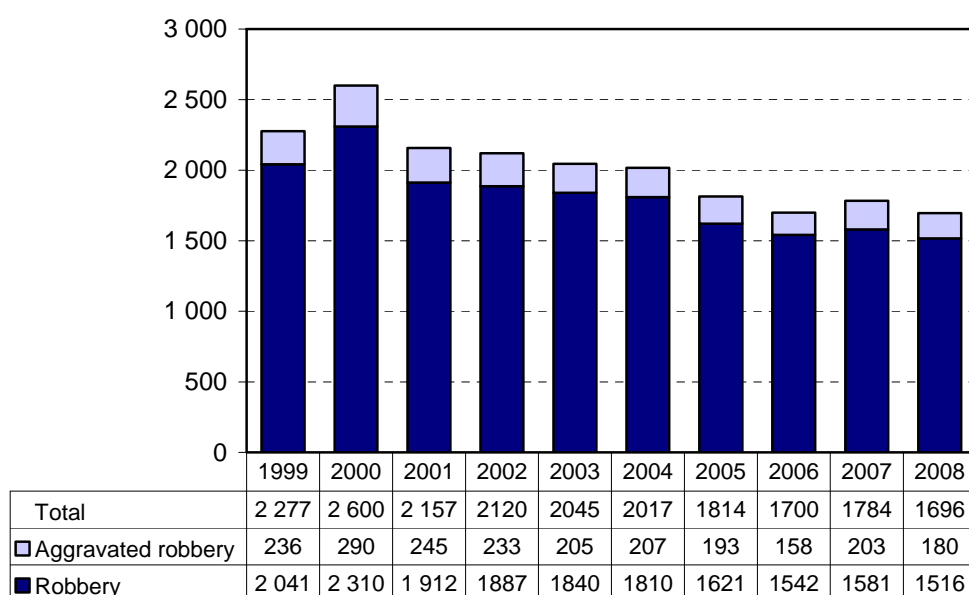


Figure 3 Robberies recorded by the police, 1999–2008

Sex offences 1999–2008. (Reported forcible rapes display an increasing trend from mid-1990s, likely to reflect, in the first place, an increasing reportability of such offences. The number of forcible rapes was 915 in 2008, and it increased 24 % 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 changeable recording practises of serial crimes. Over time, the tendency to report 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. Measures of a survey questionnaire conducted at schools for 12- and 15 year-old pupils indicate not any significant change of sexual abuse against children in 2008 compared with earlier corresponding study twenty years earlier.

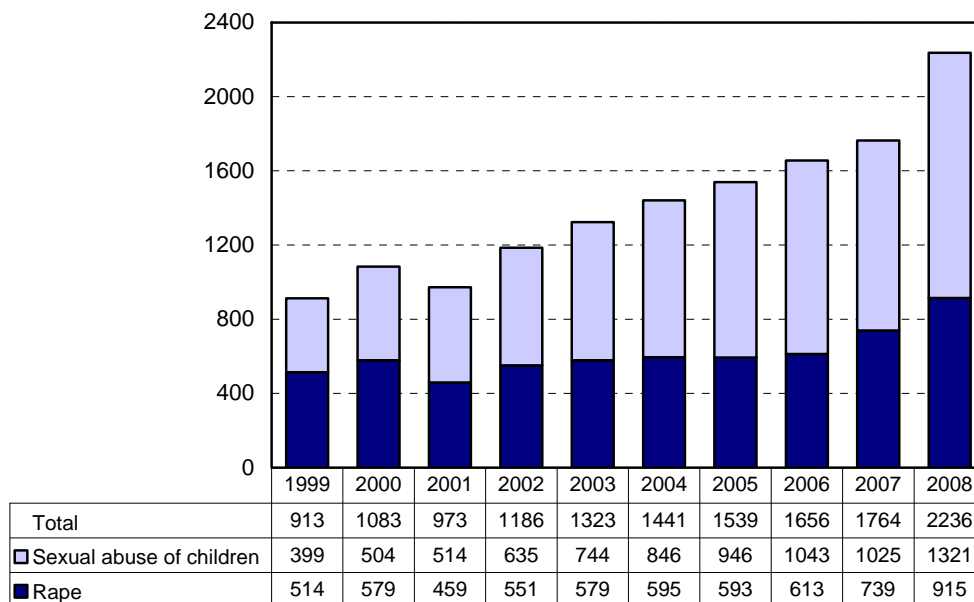


Figure 4 Rapes and sexual offences against children recorded by the police, 1999–2008

Thefts 1999–2008. The long time increase in recorded thefts has levelled off in the early 1990s and in the 2000s there has been a steady downward trend in the number of thefts. National victimisation surveys also indicate a decrease in thefts after the mid 1990s. In 2006, 9 percent of the 15–74 olds reported of a theft of their personal or household property during the last year, compared to 14 percent in 1997.

In 2008 the police recorded in total 146,000 crimes of theft or 2,700 crimes per 100,000 in population. This was about the same figure as in the year before.

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

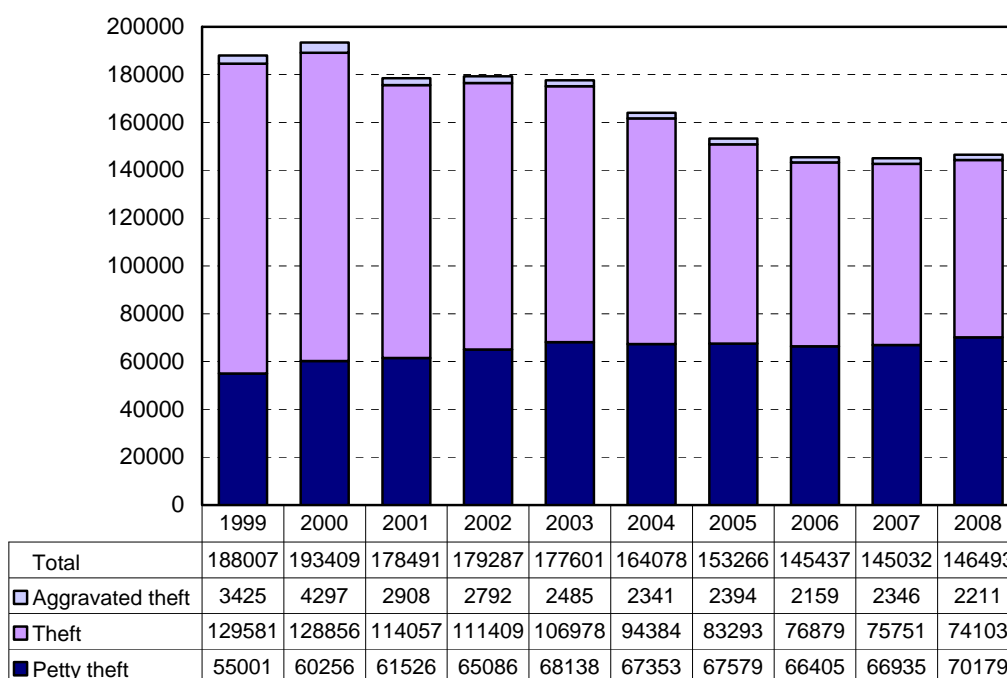


Figure 5 Thefts recorded by the police, 1999–2008

Thefts of motor vehicles 1999–2008. The number of recorded thefts of motor vehicles, majority of which are car thefts, has halved in the last ten years. Improved security measures are probably the most important factor behind this development. At the same time there appears a shift in these crimes from joy-riding to more planned and profit seeking type of thefts. In the 1990s and 2000s the number of stolen vehicles per 1,000 cars and motorcycles, has fluctuated between 4 and 12 (absolute figure in 2008: 13,804).

According to the International Crime Victim Surveys, Finland scores below the European average in the frequency of car thefts. In the 2006 victim survey 0.4 percent of the respondents representing households with a car, reported that their car had been stolen during the last 12 months.

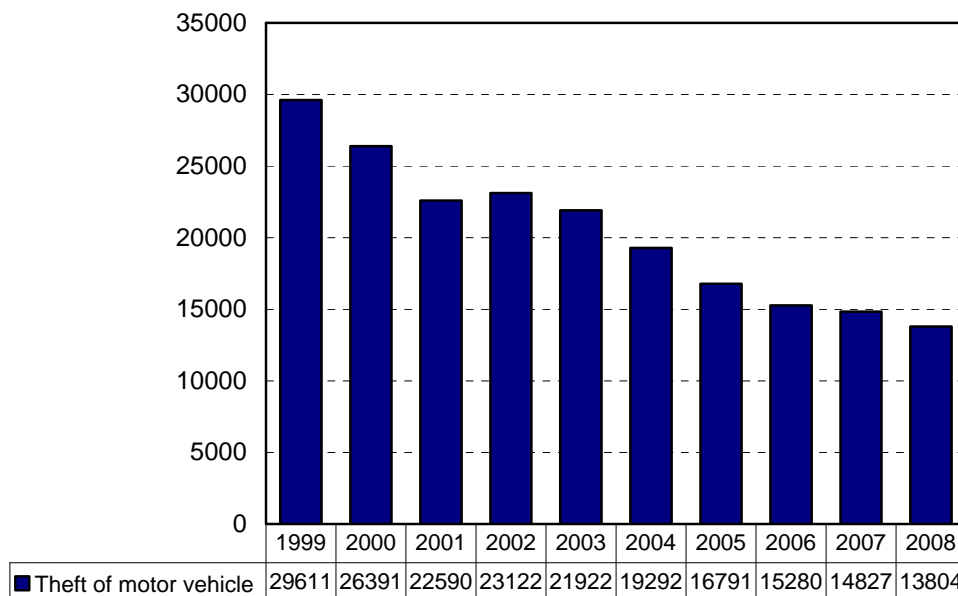


Figure 6 Thefts of motor vehicles recorded by the police, 1999–2008

Embezzlement 1999–2008. The number of embezzlements recorded by the police has been stable in the 1990s and 2000s. In 2008 the police recorded 65 such crimes per 100,000 in population (absolute figure 3,436). 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. – The rate of embezzlement is more than five times higher in the Helsinki metropolitan area than in the average in rural municipalities.

Fraud 1999–2008. 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 2000s the number of annually recorded credit card frauds has been stable. However, in recent years there has been an increase in other frauds (+18 percent in 2008), reflecting the new opportunities for fraud in the Internet.

In 2008 the police recorded 67 credit card frauds and 301 other frauds per 100,000 in population (absolute figures 3,562 and 16,052). 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.

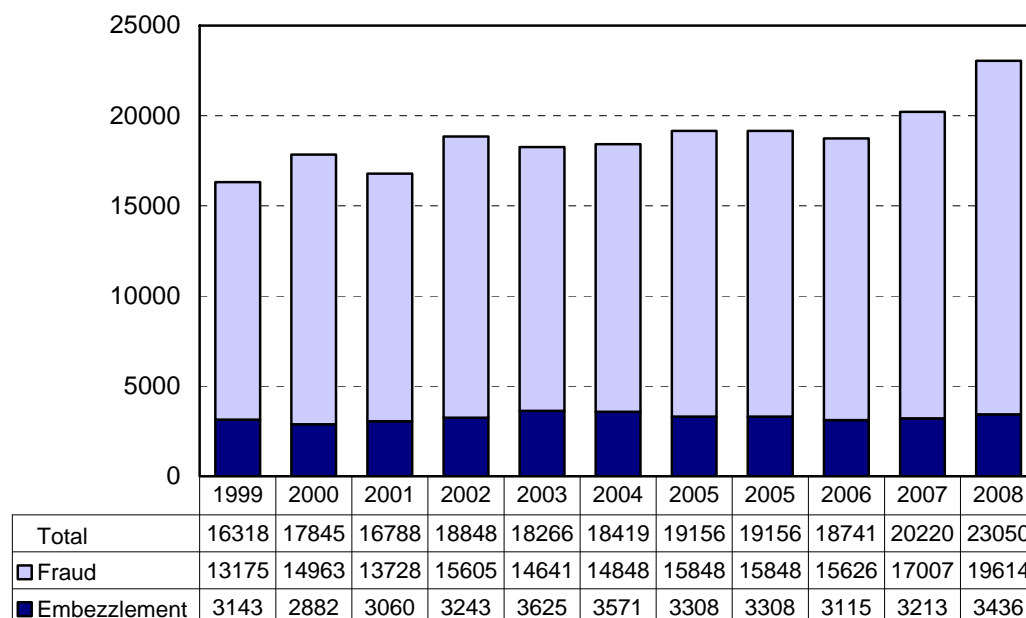


Figure 7 Frauds and embezzlements recorded by the police, 1999–2008

Damage to property 1999–2008. Offences of damage to property constitute about 15 percent of police-recorded crimes against the penal code. During the last ten years the number of crimes has fluctuated between 41 to 57 thousand. In 2008 the police recorded 1,062 damages to property per 100,000 in population (absolute figure 56,566). 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. In the 2006 surveys 4.3 percent of subjects responded that their car had been damaged during the previous 12 months.

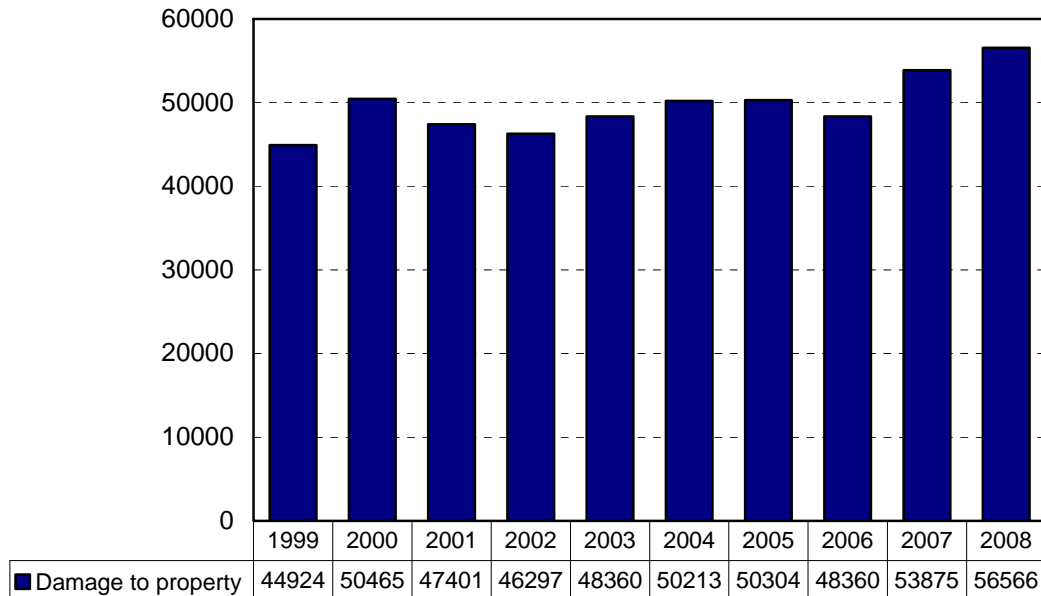


Figure 8 Offences of damage to property recorded by the police, 1999–2008

Tax offences and economic offences 1999–2008. There has been expressed a significant concern in Finland over economic crimes such as bankruptcy offences, accounting offences and tax fraud. In 2008, the police recorded altogether 1,814 offences of this kind, which was about four 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. Still, the overall decreasing trend since the depression years of the early 1990s can also be partly due to diminishing volume of actual economic crime.

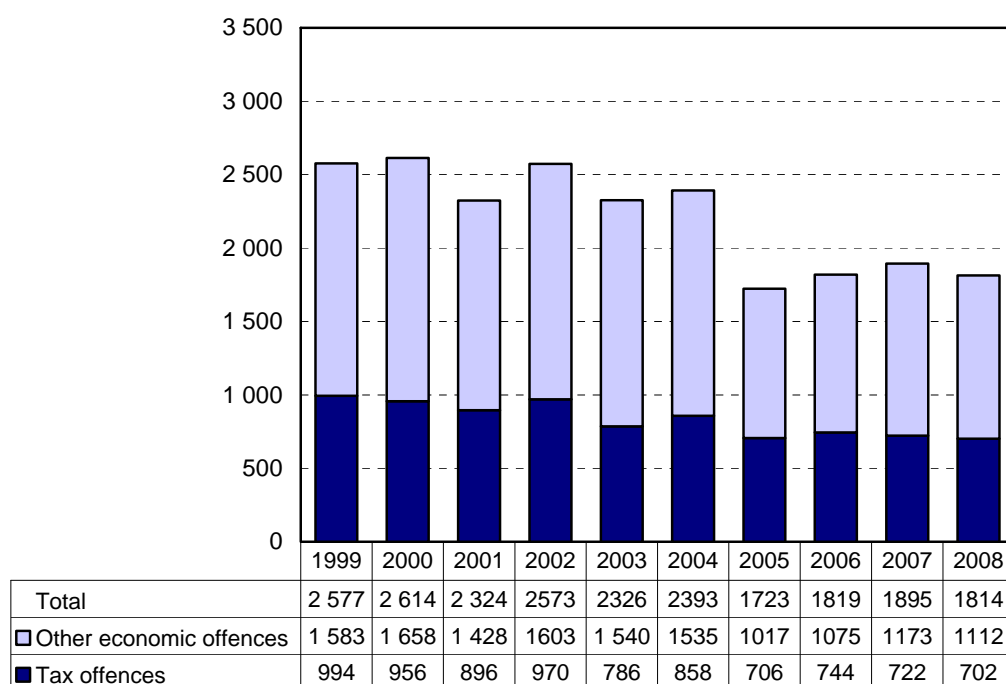


Figure 9 Tax offences and other economic offences recorded by the police, 1999–2008

Drunken driving 1999–2008. For recorded cases of drunken driving, the last ten years represent a rather stable period. The number of drunken driving decreased six per cent in 2008 compared with foregoing year but still there are about 10 % less offences than 20 years ago. 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 1999–2008. The general trend of other traffic offences 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 nine per cent in 2007 compared with the foregoing year. The number of traffic offences depends in large measure on the extent of police traffic control. The automatic monitoring by roadside traffic cameras is nowadays very relevant in this respect. 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 2008, when 344 fatalities in traffic were recorded (380 fatalities in 2007). A total of 96 persons (28 % of all fatalities) were killed in drunken driving accidents in 2008. – The rates of these offences are highest in the less urbanized regions, even if related to the number of motor vehicles.

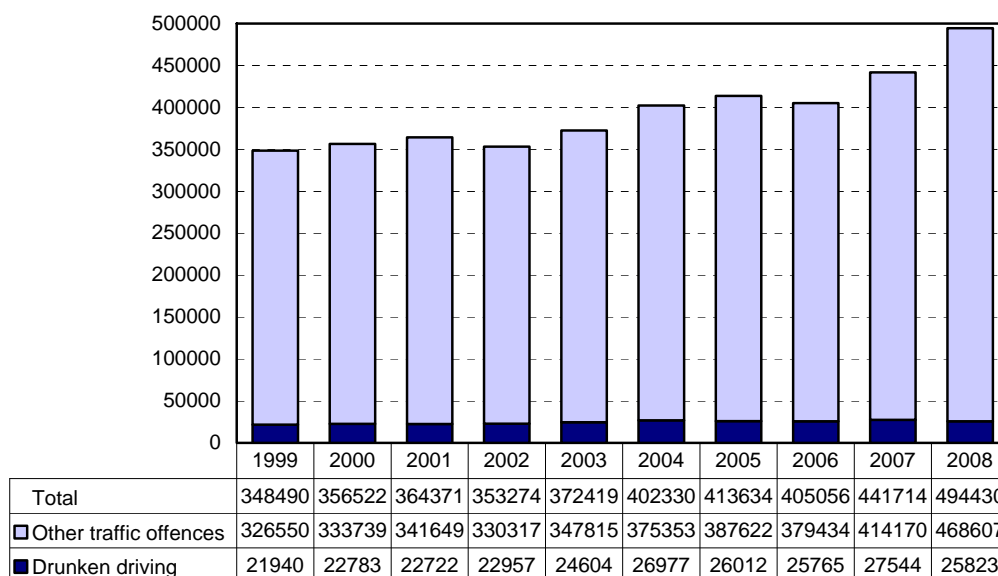


Figure 10 Drunken driving and other traffic offences recorded by the police, 1999–2008

Narcotics offences 1999–2008. 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.

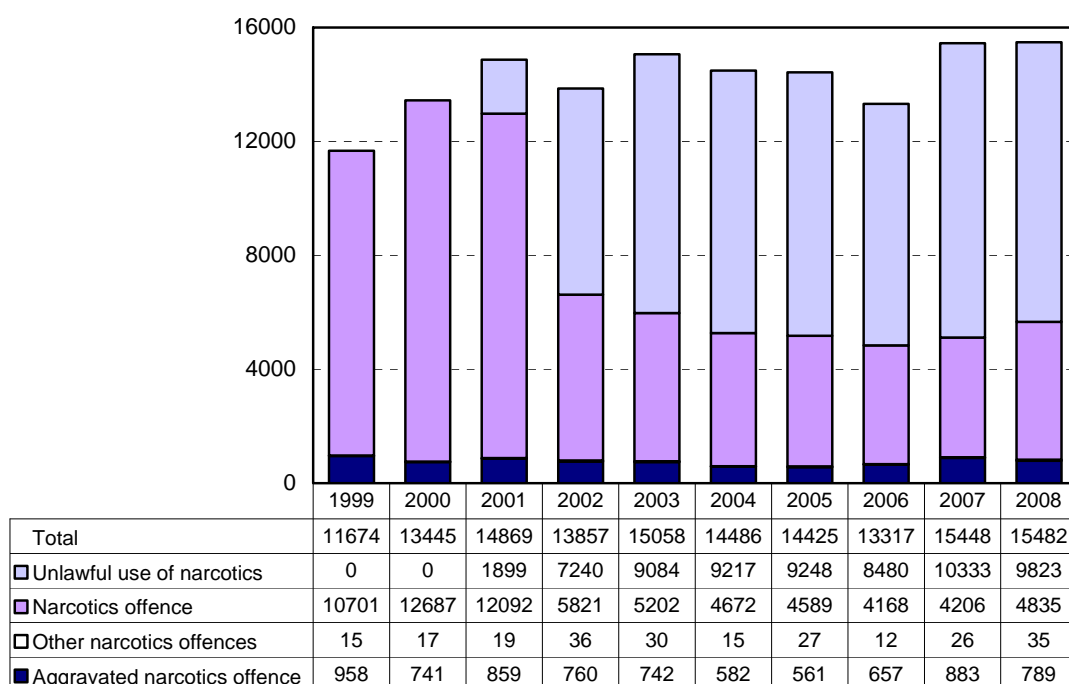


Figure 11 Narcotics offences recorded by the police, 1999–2008

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, damage to property (10 %), car thefts (10 %) and robberies (16 %) have high proportions of juvenile suspects (less than 18 years old). Also thefts (10 %) and assaults (11 %) have relatively high percentages 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, 2 in 2005 and 4 in 2006, 2 in 2007 and 0 in 2008).

Self-reported delinquency measures among Finnish adolescents indicate significant decrease in thefts and the destruction of property till 2001, after which the situation stabilized. Participation in violence related offences has been fairly stable. One of the major trends in self-reported delinquency among Finnish adolescents has been the increasing prevalence of law-abidingness. The number of adolescents refraining from all crime types measured in self-reported surveys has increased 1995-2004. However, in the latest survey (2008) this trend seems to have come to a halt.

Exposure to violence is age-specific phenomenon. Victimization is more prevalent among youths than it is among adults. According to Finnish national victimization survey, 14 % of 15–19 year olds reported having been victims of violence or threat of violence in 2006. 3 % reported violent victimization resulting in physical injury. Violent victimization of youth has decreased in past 26 years.

Due to increasing use of computers and mobile phones, new types of offences and victimisation have emerged. These include i.a. internet harassment and threats by e-mail or sms messages and illegal downloading and sharing of files.

Women as perpetrators and victims of crime. In 2008, 19 percent of the suspects apprehended by the police were women. During the last two decades, the share of women in police statistics has increased slowly. Studies in self reported juvenile delinquency suggest that the gender difference in the prevalence of offending is not as large as in official statistics. 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. According to a recent nationally representative female victimisation survey 44 percent of the women had at least once experienced a man's physical or sexual violence or threat of it after having reached 15 years of age. 20 percent of the women currently in the partnerships had experienced violence or threats at least once by the current partner.

Foreigners, immigrants and crime. In 2008, about 24,800 foreigners who had residence in Finland, were suspected of some offence. This rate was 3.4 % out of all persons suspected of offences known to the police in Finland. The number of offences committed by foreigners has increased annually, 86 % since 1999. In 2008, about 143,000 foreigners (2.7 % of the whole population) had

residence in Finland. In addition about 19 500 foreigners not having residence in Finland, tourists and other visitors were suspected of offences in 2008. Totally about 39,500 foreigners were suspected of crimes in 2007 and 44,300 (6.0 % of all suspects) in 2008.

21 per cent of all foreigners suspected of crimes were Estonians, 18 per cent were Russians, and 8 per cent were Swedes. Foreigners were most typically suspected of traffic offences (51 % in 2008). Forcible rapes and robberies were offences where foreign suspects were most clearly over-represented in 2007 and 2008 (forcible rapes about 15 - 20 per cent and robberies about 10 per cent of all suspects).

Of all foreigners sentenced to imprisonment in 2008, over one-fourth (26 %) were Estonians, and less than one-fifth (16 %) 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 immigrants 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 2006 compared with foregoing surveys and 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 victimisation 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. The increasing tendency of security precautions (for examples self-defence education) against violence turned also to decrease in 2006 after a long increasing period.

The role of alcohol is marked in Finnish criminality, especially in crimes of violence. Indeed, one explanation given for the relatively high level of vio-

lence in Finland is the drinking culture characterised by heavy and intoxication-oriented drinking patterns.

In the period 2005–2008, 68 per cent of homicide offenders had according to police records committed the offence under the influence of alcohol. In assault offences, the corresponding figure was 64 per cent. In robbery offences, only 47 per cent of the offenders were under the influence of alcohol during the offence. In the 2000s the proportion of intoxicated offenders has been stable, but the proportion of offenders under the influence of drugs has been 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.

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. At the beginning of the year 2005 juvenile punishment extended permanently to whole country after an experimentation period from 1997.

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 offences, through simplified summary penal proceedings (penalty orders). A vast majority of fines are ordered in summary process. For minor traffic offences 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 begin-

ning 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 1950–2006 (/100,000 inhabitants)

	Finland	Sweden	Denmark	Norway
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	67	63	57
2006	72	79	76	71

Source: Falck, von Hofer & Storgaard; Nordic Prison Statistics; Criminal Sanctions Agency of Finland

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 extend in the mid 1970s. The use on 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 1970–2006 in the court practice are presented in table 2.

Table 2 The use of different sentencing alternatives in Finland, 1970 to 2006

	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	2007
	N	N	N	N	N	N
<i>Penalties imposed by courts</i>	(57,675)	(72,282)	(81,627)	(61,208)	(64,403)	(64,861)
- unconditional imprisonment	10,212	10,326	11,657	6,754	8,147	7,111
- community service	..	..	..	2,803	3,413	3,312
- conditional imprisonment	5,215	14,556	17,428	13,624	13,973	15,956
- fine by the court	42,248	47,401	52,542	38,027	37,503	36,696
<i>Summary proceedings</i>						
- fine by a penalty order	150,542	249,006	311,889	277,530	196,156	258,890
- petty fine (traffic violations)	..	..	69,291	52,009	103,499	133,833
<i>Waiving of penal measures*</i>						
Non prosecution	..	2,003	3,417	6,361	7,483	5,665
Waiver of the sentence*	..	1,765	1,648	1,351	1,069	764

Source: Statistics Finland

* Excluding traffic offences.

Note: The population of Finland is 5.3 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 1992–2007 is presented in table 3.

Table 3 Imprisonment and community service in the Finnish court practice 1992–2007

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
2005	8,313	3,370
2006	7,662	3,310
2007	7,111	3,312

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 both sanctions is fairly stabilized.

Sentencing statistics 1991–2007

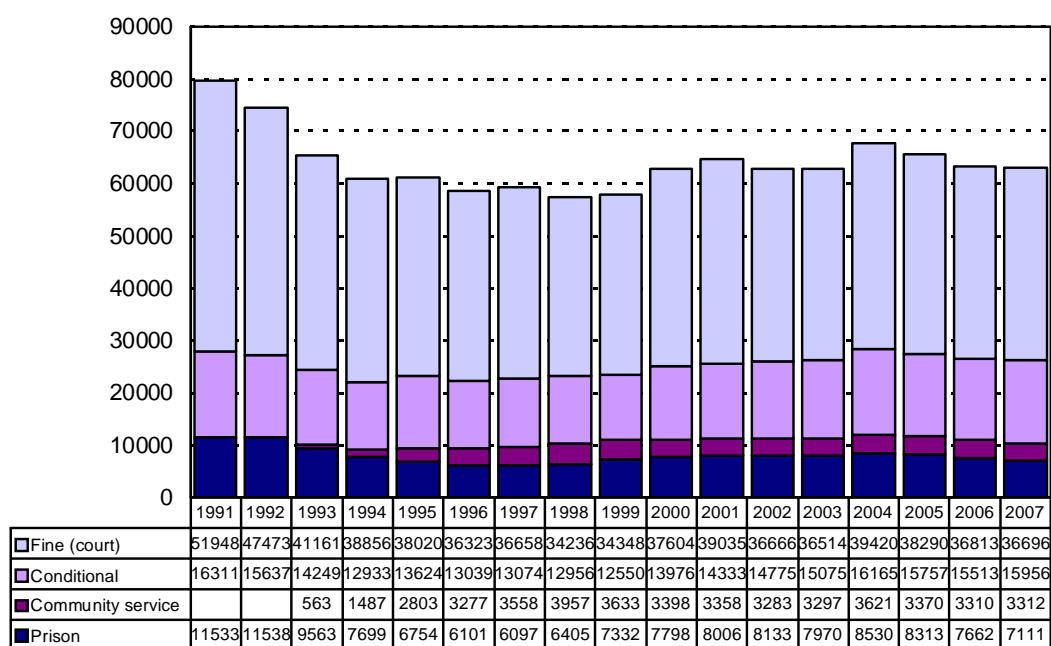


Figure 12 Choice of sanctions 1991–2007

The distribution of penalties in 2007 is illustrated in table 4.

Table 4 The distribution of penalties in 2007

	N	%
<i>Court Decisions 2006</i>	63,864	100 %
Prison	7,111	11 %
Community service	3,312	5 %
Conditional imprisonment	15,956	25 %
Juvenile penalty	25	0 %
Fines by the court	36,696	57 %
Waiver of the sentence	764	1 %
<i>Other Decisions 2006</i>		
Fine by the prosecutor	258,890	
Petty fine by the police	133,833	

The clear majority of all penalties imposed by the courts are fines (57 %). The second largest group is conditional imprisonment 25 %. 11 % 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 stat-

ute 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 1991–2008.

Table 5 Decisions on non-prosecution in 1991–2008

Year	Procedural reasons (technicalities)	Diversionary	Total
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
2006*	18,520	5,561	24,081
2007*	17,077	5,665	22,742
2008*	17,567	6,038	23,605

* Change in statistical units

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 2006 the number of prisoners has increased by 38 %. 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.

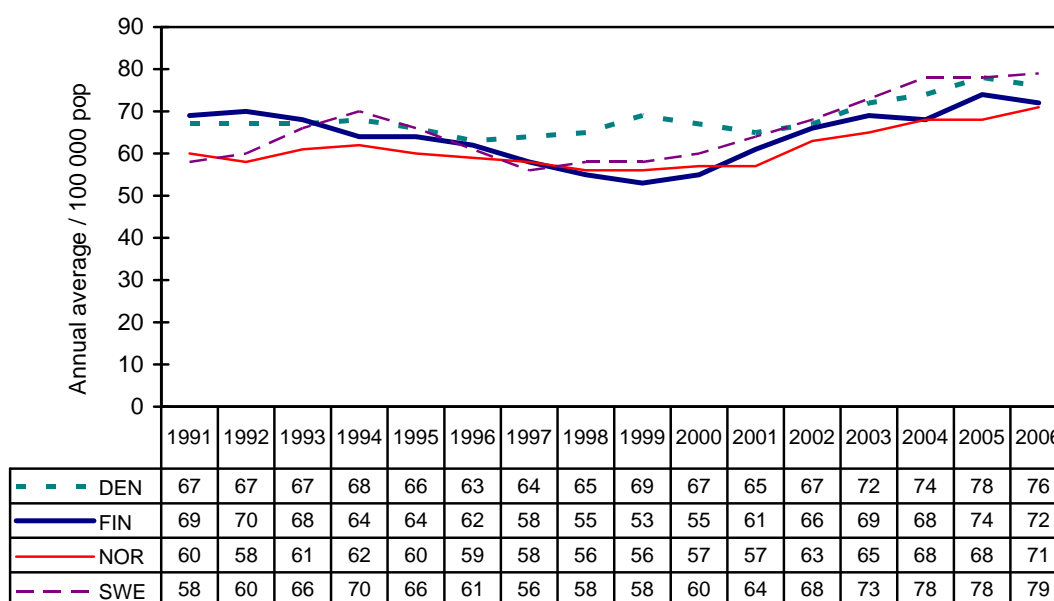


Figure 13 Prisoner rates in four Scandinavian countries 1991–2006

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 1998–2005 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. In 2006 the figures took again a downward trend.

Table 6 Prisoners in 1999, 2002 and 2008 by prisoner groups (annual averages)

	1999	2002	2008
All	2,743	3,433	3,526
- serving a sentence	2,296	2,765	2,697
- remand prisoners	354	478	559
- fine defaulters	102	190	121
Foreigners	138	293	325

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

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

	1.5.1999	1.5.2002	1.5.2008	Change 1999–2008 %
All	2,361	2,762	2,865	+21 %
- violence	794	951	1,220	+54 %
- drugs	360	498	461	+28 %
- property	746	875	633	-15 %
- drunken driving	312	313	376	+21 %
- other	149	125	175	+17 %

Violence offences show the most rapid increase (54 %). At the same time the number of prison sentences for aggravated drug offences 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 after 2002 the situation seems to have been stabilised. The bad news is that also violent offences – the largest prisoner group – continued to increase also from 2002 to 2008.

Sentencing juveniles. The Finnish juvenile criminal sanction system is fairly simple. General punishments are fine, conditional imprisonment, community service and unconditional imprisonment. Specific punishments for young offenders include supervision connected with conditional sentence and juvenile punishment. The primary differences in sentencing of young offenders and adult offenders lie in the fact that offenders between the ages of fifteen and seventeen (inclusive) benefit from a mitigated scale of punishment and that they benefit from a greater possibility for waiving of measures. Furthermore, an offender under eighteen at the time of his offence cannot be sentenced to unconditional imprisonment unless there are weighty reasons for doing so. In addition, the juvenile punishment and supervision may be imposed on an offender who was under 18 years at the time of the offence. Finally, there are also some differences in criminal procedure and enforcement of punishments. Juvenile delinquents are given less severe penalties than adult offenders. Also the duration of penalties are shorter and the scales smaller.

In Finland, some three fourths of the penalties imposed on juvenile offenders are issued outside the court through lighter procedure. Out of all penalties, there have hardly been any changes in the respective share of penalties imposed by the police. Non-prosecution has received widest application among juveniles. In the age group 15–17 years the share of non-prosecution varies around 27 % of all courts disposal and 6 % of all disposals (fines included).

Unlike general criminal justice in Finland and many other countries, sentencing practice of juveniles has not become harsher. During the past few years, there have not been any major changes in regard to the punishments issued for young persons. However, compared to the early 1990s, the number of offences handled by courts has decreased approximately by one half.

In practice, criminal sanctions applied to juveniles are strongly dominated by formality. The vast majority of penalties imposed by courts for all age-groups consist of fines. The younger the offender, the higher the share of fines (75 % in age-group 15–17, 60 % in 18–20 and 55 % for offenders over 20 years). This is a quite exceptional characteristic in international comparison. Second in the list is conditional imprisonment, which to large extent has a fairly formal character as well (18 % in the age-group 15–17 and 27 % in the age group 18–20). In about 60 % of conditional sentences the young offender is given a supervision order. Community service has no practical role in the youngest age group as the use of this option requires that the offender would have been sentenced to unconditional prison term.

A new community alternative, juvenile punishment has been introduced to be used mainly in those cases where the offender keeps receiving several conditional sentences. As well as community service this option has only limited practical relevance. From 1997 to 2004 an experiment with juvenile penalties was carried out in seven municipalities. Few sentences were then passed. On a yearly base, such sentences amounted to 45, 45, 68, 102, 45, 38 and 31, a total of some 400 in eight years. In 2005–2008 when the system was extended to the whole country, only some 20–40 sentences were rendered. Juvenile punishment has not experienced a breakthrough as a specific form of punishment for young persons.