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**SUMMARY**

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## **SELF-REPORTED DELINQUENCY AMONG HELSINKI ADOLESCENTS, 2006**

This research communication draws on a self-report delinquency survey conducted in Helsinki in spring 2006. From grades 7 to 9 (mostly 13–16 year olds) 1,368 students responded to an anonymous survey. The survey is based on a self-administered internet questionnaire completed under outside supervision in school computer classrooms, although eight per cent of the respondents resorted to the paper & pencil option because of either computer unavailability or internet failure. No significant differences were found between internet responses and the paper & pencil responses.

The Helsinki survey is based on the International Self-Report Delinquency Study (ISRD-2), and the standard ISRD-2 questionnaire was used. Specific national questions were also added and they were placed at the end of the questionnaire to ensure that they do not compromise the feasibility of international comparison.

National questions were based on qualitative focus interviews which preceded the Helsinki measurement. In these interviews, adolescents (N=10) suggested that, in addition to standard ISRD-2 offences, the following offences were relatively typical or known among the Helsinki adolescents: stealing from the homes of other adolescents (for example during parties), buying stolen goods from the Internet, fixing stickers on walls (a mode of offence allegedly substituting graffiti), graffiti writing/drawing, doping, and insulting or threatening others by e-mail. Illegal downloading and sharing of files from the internet was also included because, in Finland, mere downloading for personal use does not in most cases constitute a criminal offence. Sharing and selling of files does constitute a crime.

The survey suggested that sticker-fixing, illegal downloading & sharing of files, and threatening behaviour by e-mail were relatively prevalent

activities. Stealing from other adolescents' homes was also a relatively prevalent offence at least as a once-in-a-lifetime experience among Helsinki adolescents.

**Table** Lifetime and last year prevalence of delinquent behaviour among upper grade adolescents in Helsinki, Finland, 2006 (N=1,368). Offences marked with an asterisk are national questions.<sup>a</sup>

	Lifetime	Last year
shoplifting	28	8
stealing at other adolescents' home*	6	2
bicycle/ moped/ scooter theft	3	2
snatching a purse/ bag from a person	3	1
burglary	2	1
stealing out/from a car	2	1
motorbike/ auto theft	1	<1
buying stolen goods from the Internet*	1	<1
fixing stickers on walls*	27	10
destruction of property	14	7
graffiti writing / drawing*	11	6
insulting or threatening by e-mail*	18	10
fighting	17	7
carrying a weapon	15	7
assault with a weapon	2	1
robbery	1	1
(illegal) downloading and sharing files*	16	13
hacking	6	3
selling drugs	1	1
doping*	1	<1

	Lifetime	Last 4 weeks
drinking beer, breezers or wine	68	28
drinking strong spirits	39	14
use of weed, marihuana or hash	4	1
use of XTC or speed	<1	<1
use of LSD, heroin or coke	<1	<1

a) National questions were placed at the end of the Finnish ISRD-2 questionnaire. Here they are shown in the relevant category of offences.

Finland participated in the first sweep of the ISRD in 1992. At that time too the Finnish sample was a one-city sample in Helsinki. The sample was a non-random sample that aimed at full social and geographical coverage of the city (Aromaa 1994). In this research communication, the results of 1992

are compared with the results of 2006 sweep (ninth graders, fifteen to sixteen year-olds, only). The comparison indicates substantial decrease in most crime types. Today's ninth graders are significantly more law-abiding than ninth graders 14 years ago.

Finland has a national self-report indicator system (FSRD) which has been operating since 1995 (Kivivuori & Salmi 2005). The FSRD system indicates significant decrease in property offences on a national scale. The Helsinki-based ISRD results corroborate this finding. Additionally, the ISRD sweeps suggest that violent behaviour has also decreased between 1992 and 2006 in Helsinki. The national trend shown by FSRD indicates relative stability in violence. This divergence may reflect differential trends in Helsinki as opposed to the whole country, or differences in the span of the observed years (1995–2004 for the national FSRD, years 1992 and 2006 for the Helsinki-based ISRD).

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