

## *Siena.*

### *Perspectives on crime statistics in Finland*

#### *1. General*

Criminality is a subject that is talked about every day. We read and see news about crime in the printed media and on television. The media have special crime reporters to look after daily news about criminal cases. Quite often, the media reports about crime also include estimates or statistics on the increase of crime.

Statistics on crime are needed for many purposes. The work to control and monitor crime and draw up related strategic policies sets out from crime statistics. Officials and authorities dealing with crime need crime statistics to plan their administration and activities. Adequate and transparent statistics on crime are essential for the functioning of the legal system and the implementation of legal security.

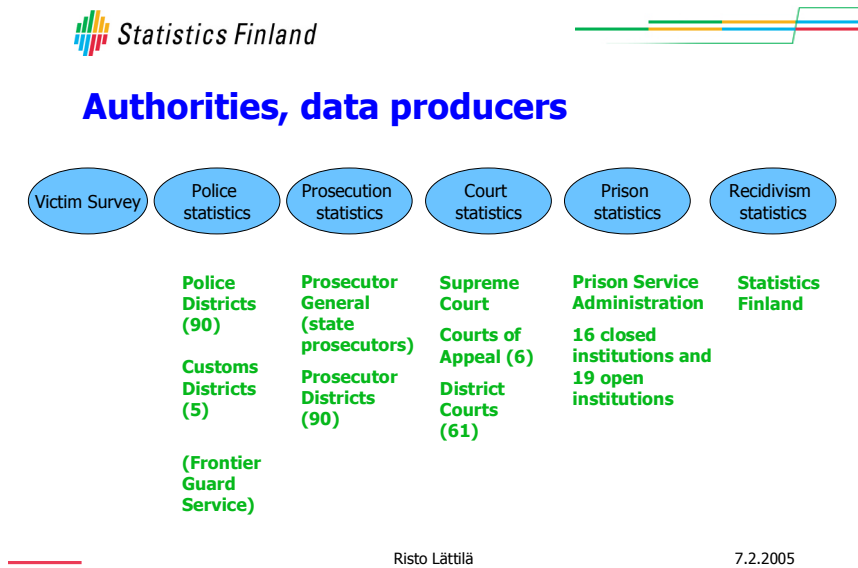
Crime statistics are relatively alike in different countries. International publications of crime statistics contain quite similar elements. However, the crime statistics produced in different countries are not comparable for a diversity of reasons, but comparability between countries will not be addressed in this context.

Crime statistics can be divided into statistics describing *reported crime*, statistics describing *total criminality* and those describing *hidden criminality*. Data on reported crime can be obtained from the information systems of officials and authorities whereas surveys are required to describe total or hidden criminality, and the required data are usually collected by interviewing victims of crime. Statistics describing reported crime are usually compiled annually. These days, victim surveys are also conducted at regular intervals in several European countries.

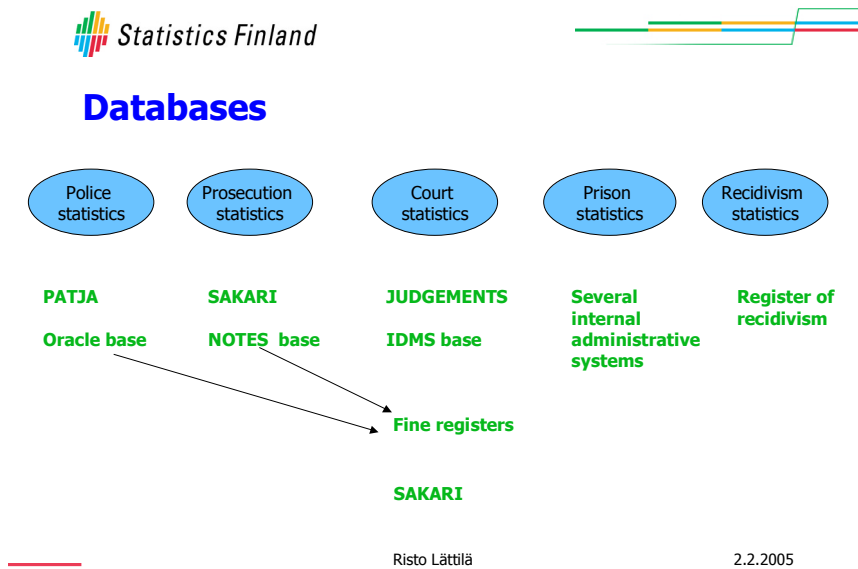
Both victim surveys and statistics concerning the crime dealt with by authorities are important. They are statistics that supplement each other. In this presentation I shall concentrate on register-based statistics production.

## 2. Authorities

Crime statistics are normally divided into the following groups: crimes recorded by police, crimes handled by prosecutor, crimes examined by courts, prisoners and recidivism. Each of these sets of statistics has its own data supplier, i.e. authority on whose data the statistics are based.



## 3. Administrative data



### 3.1. Databases of the police.

The police uses its “PATJA” information system of police matters. This information system that is intended for national use is a register of individuals which is maintained by means of automatic data processing. The data content of the system is prescribed in law as quite extensive. From the point of statistics, the central as-

pect is that it contains parts from which basic data can be drawn for statistics on crime and coercive measures.

All criminal offences as well as violations are recorded into PATJA. When an offence is reported to the police or one becomes otherwise known to the police, the police records the case into a reporting system from where the data are automatically copied into an operational database. Thus, there are two databases: the reporting base where the information concerning an offence is in the form in which it was reported and the operational base in which the information changes as investigation progresses. PATJA also contains offences known to the customs.

Finnish police statistics are compiled from the operational database. To ensure annual comparability of the statistics it is important that the data are drawn on a set date agreed in advance, and at the same time every year (or quarter). The data for the final Finnish annual crime statistics (approx. 750,000 offences) are drawn every year on the fifth of February.

### *3.2. Databases of the public prosecutor.*

The activities of prosecutors and district courts are recorded into the "SAKARI" case management system (management system of criminal cases for prosecutors and courts of first instance).

### *3.3. Databases of the courts.*

Court judgements are entered into the "TLP" system for recording statements of judgement in criminal cases. The purpose of the system is to inform the parties who must be notified according to law about the judgements or are otherwise entitled to know about them. The system contains precise information on all offences handled and punishments imposed by courts of law. In addition, all factors affecting the measurement of a punishment are itemised in it. Exhaustive and accurate basic data for describing those prosecuted and sentenced by courts of law, as well as the punishments received by them can be drawn from the system.

The same information as from general courts of first instance is also available from higher courts (courts of appeal and the Supreme Court). The "SAKARI" crime case management system of lower courts is also in use.

### *3.4. Databases of the prison administration.*

A central prisoner register as well as several registers of the prison administration can be used. Collection of fines can be monitored with the specific "ULJAS" information system for recovery cases.

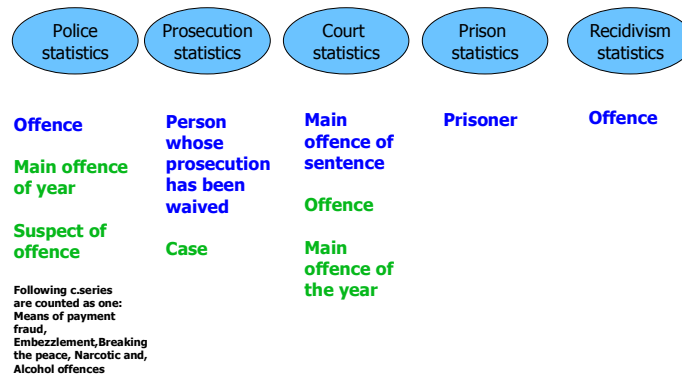
### *3.5. Database of recidivism.*

Statistics Finland has combined the decisions of courts of first instance in criminal cases into a register on recidivism. The data in the register goes back to as far as 1976. Thus, information can be drawn from the register on all offences and punishments of an individual person since the year 1976.

## 4. Statistics compilation practices



### Statistical units



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*In police statistics*, the statistical unit is crime (event). If several persons have participated in the same offence, the recorded number of crimes is one. One or more offences can be reported at the same time. There are diverse rules and exceptions according to which the number of offences must be counted.

Besides the crime, the other primary statistical units in police statistics are person suspected of crime and victim of crime.

Some of the mildest violations, e.g. traffic offences, are concluded at the police investigation stage. The police may issue monetary fines of certain amounts for them. If the suspected person is satisfied with this the matter is not taken to the prosecutor. Similarly, for certain minor violations the police may issue a summary penal order. It is a fine ordered as a so-called day-fine, the size of which depends of the income of the offender. If the suspect is satisfied with the summary penal order, the general prosecutor concludes the case. Petty fine or summary penal order cases very rarely lead to court proceedings, as people prefer to pay.

*The prosecutor* records a prosecution precisely into the information system: specifies the offences, gathers the offences of a person into a prosecution and for court procedures, as well as combines the crimes and persons relating to the same subject context into cases. No special crime counting rules need then be considered in the prosecution stage.

The statistical unit consists of the available information on the offences, persons under consideration of charges and cases handled by the prosecution. Perhaps the most important prosecution statistics are those on persons against whom prosecution has been waived by grounds for the waiving and the most serious offence. Traditionally, statistics are also compiled in Finland by case: cases concluded by prosecutor and cases referred by prosecutor to a court of law by the most serious (principal) offence.

*In court statistics*, the statistical unit is usually the principal offence for which judgement has been passed on the defendant. The crime statistics of courts describe persons sentenced to punishment and the punishments they have received. Crime is selected as the statistical units when statistics are compiled to describe the measurement of punishments.

Court statistics usually concentrate on depicting decisions of *courts of first instance*. The decisions of courts of appeal and the Supreme Court usually follow so

much later that combining them with the statistics describing persons accused and sentenced is not expedient in practice. Moreover, these higher courts of law rarely make major changes to the decisions of lower courts. The Finnish Supreme Court, for example, is a so-called precedent-setting court, which only handles cases that may have a fundamentally bearing on the application of law.

For the above reasons statistics concerning *higher courts* are presented as relatively summary, separate statistics on numbers of cases and numbers of times changes have been made to the decision of lower courts.

*The prison administration's* registers are important sources for planning and research. However, the general statistics only present relatively cursory prisoner accounts: numbers of new prisoners received, numbers of prisoners currently in custody, institutions they are serving their sentence in and numbers of prisoners discharged from prison.

An important statistical target is also type of prisoner. For example, some prisoners are so-called default prisoners. If a person fails to pay the sum of money imposed as day-fines or it cannot be collected, he/she has to ultimately serve a prison sentence.

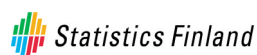
*The register of recidivism* can be exploited for a wide range of purposes. The statistics produced from the register are characteristically of survey type. Despite concerted efforts, regular production of statistics on recidivism has not yet proved possible in Finland.

## 5. Technical implementation

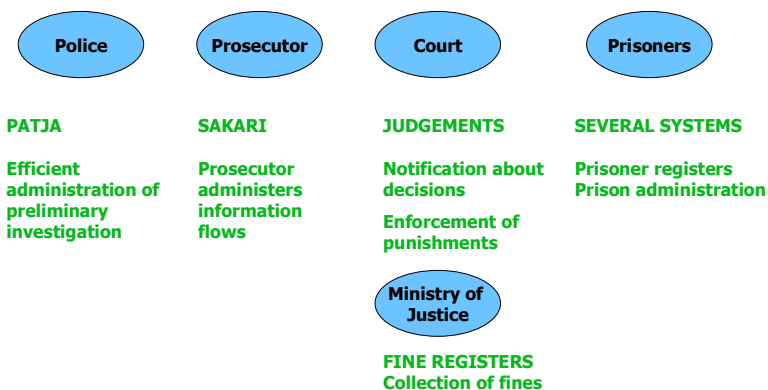
The basic data for the statistics are those produced by different authorities for administrative purposes. The data are processed and aggregated at Statistics Finland.

The databases of the police and legal administration are different relational databases and there are plans for converting all of the current databases into relational ones. The kind of sampling that is made from a database is not a decisive aspect as such in statistics production. Conversion of the data into basic data for statistics is always a somewhat laborious process.

The point of departure is that the statistics are produced from the administrative data that are generated as a result of the normal activities of authorities. The goal that has been seen as important is that the production of statistics should not cause extra work for administrative authorities.



### Systems, administrative usage

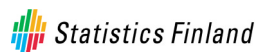


## 6. Data contents

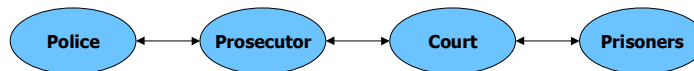
Maintenance of classifications is a crucial part of statistical work: an accurate, exhaustive crime classification is available. Information on cases, case decisions, persons, and so on, is obtained from the databases of authorities. All regional classifications and Statistics Finland's classifications of individual persons can be utilised.

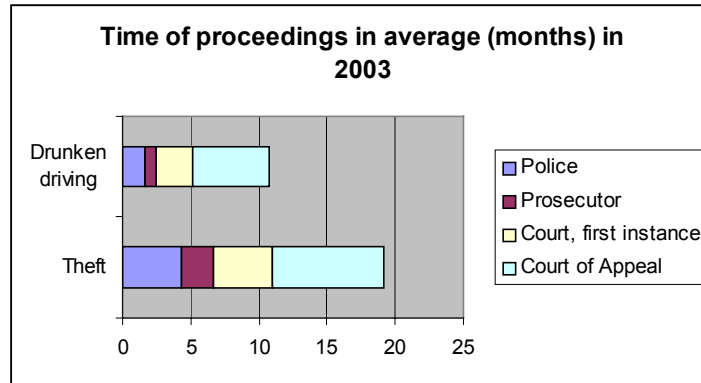
Another vital element is the personal identification code: all crime data contain the personal identification codes of persons suspected of crime. Obviously, the data, and especially those of the police, also contain tourists and visitors who do not have the Finnish personal identification code, but their proportion is relatively small. Data on age, gender and nationality have to be resorted to in respect of persons without the personal identification code. The personal identification code can be used to put together the criminal history of a person, as well as incorporate into his/her data background information from different data files of Statistics Finland.

The third important element is integration of the data obtained from the different authorities. The data contain identification components which facilitate combining the data contents of the different files. In the majority of cases, a crime or a person suspected of crime can today be followed from the reporting of the offence to the enforcement of the punishment.



### Chain of events in the crime process





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## 7. Publication of the data

Conventionally, the data are published as printed reports, either preliminary or final, annual ones. Today, brief summary, or so-called latest, data are first published on Statistics Finland's website from all statistics it has produced.

The central means for publishing data is Statistics Finland's free StatFin service that offers statistical information via the Internet. It is a database of tables that are matrixes with at least two dimension. The user forms the required table him/herself by selecting the desired variables.

Many other tools facilitated by modern technology are also used in data dissemination, which is one of the areas where technological development has been particularly rapid in recent years.