

English summary. Criminal statistics 2004

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Swedish statistics and international comparisons

Comparisons between countries that are based on their individual crime statistics require caution since such statistics are produced differently in different countries. Criminal statistics do not provide a simple reflection of the level of crime in a given country. They are influenced by juridical and statistical factors, and by the extent to which crime is reported and registered. These factors can vary from one country to another. There are no international standards on how crime statistics should be produced and presented and this makes international comparisons difficult.

The juridical factors that influence criminal statistics include the way offences are defined in the relevant legislation, for example, as well as the rules and guiding principles that obtain for the work of the police and prosecutors.

Among the statistical factors that exert an influence are the principles that determine when a crime is recorded in the statistics. In some countries an event is only recorded in the criminal statistics if, after investigation, it can legitimately be considered a crime or where there is sufficient evidence that a crime has been committed. Swedish statistics, on the other hand, record all reported events as crimes even if some of them are later found not to have been criminal offences.

Every country has its own principles about what is to be recorded as a criminal act. In some countries, if several offences are committed on the same occasion, only the most serious of these will be recorded. In Sweden, every offence committed on a single occasion is recorded in principle.

Ways of counting crime also vary from one country to another. Several offences of the same kind against a single victim will be counted in some countries as a single crime. By contrast, in Swedish criminal statistics every offence occurring under these circumstances is counted separately.

The statistical classification of different kinds of events also varies. This is true of attempted offences, for example, which in Sweden are counted together with completed crimes. In a number of other countries, attempted offences are either recorded separately or ignored for statistical purposes.

Criminal statistics are also influenced by public willingness to report crime, and by the efforts made by the police to deal with reported crime in the light of the way they prioritise different kinds of offences. This too may vary from country to country, making international comparisons more difficult.

The International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS) constitutes an alternative source of statistics for international comparisons of criminality. The Swedish findings from this survey are presented in report number 2001:18 from the National Council for Crime Prevention, entitled Crime in different countries.

Reported offences

In 2004 almost 1,249,000 offences were reported to the police, the customs authority or the prosecution service. This constitutes a reduction of just under one percent by comparison with the figure for 2003. Violent offences (represented here by offences against Chapter 3 of the Swedish penal

code, crimes against life and health) increased by three per cent, whereas theft offences, which constitute the largest category of crimes in terms of their absolute number, fell by three per cent by comparison with the figure for 2003. Violent offences are numerically dominated by assaults, which also underwent a three per cent increase. Within this category of offences, assaults against children aged between seven and fourteen rose by ten per cent.

During the period between 1975 and 1990, the number of reported offences rose by 61 per cent. The increase was relatively constant throughout this period. By contrast, the level of reported offences then remained more or less stable during the 1990s and this stability has continued up to the present time. The number of reported offences has increased within the majority of offence categories during the period between 1975 and 2004. Burglaries, including residential burglaries, constitute an exception to this general rule. Since the beginning of the 1990s, trends show an increase in levels of reported violent offences and sex crimes whereas the number of reported thefts, such as bicycle thefts, and residential and other burglaries, has declined.

Reported violent offences are numerically dominated by assaults. Over the course of 2004, a total of almost 67,100 assault offences were reported, which constitutes an increase of three per cent by comparison with the figure for 2003. Assaults on women increased by slightly over one per cent to almost 22,800 reported offences. In addition, there were a total of approximately 2,050 reported cases of violation of a woman's integrity - which represents an increase of eleven per cent by comparison with the number reported in 2003. Assaults on men underwent a three per cent increase to slightly over 36,100 reported offences. Almost 1,150 assaults on children up to six years of age were reported in 2004. This figure represents a reduction of 49 offences (four per cent) by comparison with the figure for the previous year. By contrast, the number of reported assault offences against children aged between seven and fourteen (approximately 7,050 offences) increased by ten per cent by comparison with the figure for 2003. The number of reported assault offences against both children and adults has increased since 1975 and today lies at a level that is three times that of the 1975 figure. The largest increase occurred during the first years of the 1990s, when assault offences increased by 34 per cent in five years.

In 2004, the number of reported robberies (at almost 8,600) was relatively unchanged by comparison with the figure for 2003. Over the period between 1975 and 1999, this figure increased from just over 2,300 to a little over 8,600, subsequent to which the level has stabilised. Robberies against the person, i.e. those perpetrated against private individuals, which comprise approximately 70 per cent of reported robbery offences, increased by two per cent over the course of 2004 by comparison with the 2003 figure. Four per cent (238) of these robberies against the person were committed abroad but reported in Sweden. A total of 839 robberies of shops and stores were reported in 2004, which constitutes a reduction of seven per cent by comparison with the number reported in 2003. During the same period, 70 bank and postal robberies were reported, representing a drop of approximately 24 per cent in relation to the 2003 figure, when 92 such robberies were reported. The trend in reported robberies of shops and stores has been on the increase since the beginning of the 1980s, whereas the trend in bank and postal robberies has declined subsequent to a peak reached in 1993. At that time, almost five times as many bank and postal robberies were reported than was the case in 2004. A total of approximately 4,450 violent offences against public servants (police, security officers etc.) were reported in 2004. This represents an increase of three per cent by comparison with the number reported in 2003.

A total of 652,000 theft offences were reported in 2004, which represents a reduction of three per cent in relation to figure for the previous year. This category of crimes accounts for 52 per cent of the total number of reported offences. The number of reported theft offences increased between 1975 and 1990, at which point the figure reached a peak. Subsequent to this point, the number of theft offences has declined and now lies at a level that is twelve per cent lower than that recorded in 1990. Slightly over 47,100 car thefts were reported in 2004, along with a little over 136,000 thefts from motor vehicles. The number of car thefts declined by eleven per cent, and the number of thefts from motor vehicles by five per cent by comparison with the figures for 2003. The number of reported car thefts peaked in 1990. Since this point the number of such offences has fallen by approximately 38 per cent.

A total of almost 17,600 residential burglaries (thefts committed in connection with break-ins) were reported in 2004, which represents an

increase of one per cent by comparison with the figure for 2003. The number of burglaries in detached houses increased by one per cent, and the number of burglaries in flats or apartments increased by two per cent. Approximately fourteen per cent of residential burglaries were comprised of attempted burglaries. The increase noted over the past three years constitutes a break in the trend which had previously been on the decline since 1975.

Cleared-up offences

Slightly over 375,000 offences were cleared-up in 2004, which represents an increase of 14,000 in the number of cleared offences, or four per cent, by comparison with the figures for 2003. A total of 1,249,000 offences were reported in 2004. Thus in 2004, the number of cleared offences in relation to the number of reported offences, also known as the *clearance rate*², amounted to 30 per cent. The corresponding figure for 2003 lay at 29 per cent. The clearance rate fell from a level of around 35 per cent during the 1970s to approximately 25 per cent during the mid-1990s. Over recent years it has once again increased by a few percentage points. Of the offences cleared during 2004, the majority (approximately 72 per cent) were reported during the year, 23 per cent had been reported in 2003, and the remaining four per cent had been reported during previous years.

The concept of clearing-up crime has its roots in police practice and either involves a person having been tied to the offence as a suspect or the offence having been cleared by some other means. Where a person has been tied to the offence, a clearance means either that the case has resulted in a court prosecution, that a summary sanction order (involving a fine) has been issued by the prosecutor, or that the prosecutor has issued a waiver of prosecution. Crimes cleared by this means are usually referred to as person-based³ clearances. In the remaining cases, the cleared offences have also been investigated to completion from a police perspective even if no perpetrator can be tied to the crimes in question. To take one example, it is possible that following the investigation of a reported offence, it may have been determined that the

event did not constitute a criminal offence, a so-called “no-crime” decision, or it may be the case that the perpetrator has not reached the age of criminal responsibility and that the investigation cannot therefore be continued. Offences cleared by these means are referred to as technical clearances.

Of the 375,000 offences that were cleared over the course of 2004, 47 per cent involved technical clearances (175,000 offences) and 53 per cent person-based clearances (200,000 offences). The increase in cleared offences in 2004 is primarily accounted for by an increase in person-based clearances, i.e. offences where a person has been tied to the offence as a suspect. Offences cleared in this way increased by five per cent (9,730 offences) whereas offences cleared by means of technical clearances increased by three per cent (4,310 offences).

As is the case with reported violent crime, the cleared violent offences are numerically dominated by assaults. In 2004, 31,600 assault offences were cleared, which represents an increase of eight per cent by comparison with the figure for 2003. This increase is first and foremost a reflection of an increase in the number of technical clearances. Numbers of both reported and cleared offences have increased, but the increase has been greater among the cleared offences and the clearance rate for 2004 stands at 47 per cent. The person-based clearance rate for 2004 stands at nineteen per cent.

A total of 82,700 theft offences (against Chapter 8 of the Swedish penal code) were cleared in 2004, which represents an increase of seven per cent by comparison with the number cleared in 2003. This increase also meant that the clearance rate rose from twelve to thirteen per cent. In the same way as was the case with violent offences, the increase in the clearance of theft offences is primarily the result of an increase in the number of technical clearances. Person-based clearances of theft offences also increased, from six to seven per cent. In general, the rate of person-based clearances is low for theft offences (with the exception of thefts from shops and stores) since witnesses to incidents of this kind are a rarity. Since 1975, the clearance rate for theft offences has declined from nineteen per cent to thirteen per cent in 2004. The total number of cleared theft offences has also declined over this period.

The crime structure among cleared offences differs from that among reported offences. This is a result of the fact that different categories of crime are

² The number of cleared offences expressed as a proportion of the number of reported offences.

³ The number of person-based clearances expressed as a proportion of the number of reported offences is referred to as the person-based clearance rate.

cleared to a varying extent. The official statistics therefore provide a picture of the way in which cleared offences are distributed across different categories of crime. Theft offences constitute an example of a crime category characterised by a low clearance rate (with the exception of shoplifting offences, where a suspect is commonly identified at the same time as the offence is detected). Theft offences accounted for approximately 22 per cent of cleared crimes in 2004, while at the same time accounting for slightly under 52 per cent of reported offences.

Approximately 152,000 offences were cleared in 2004 by means of a prosecutor's decision to prosecute. This constitutes an increase of five per cent by comparison with the figure for 2003. A decision to prosecute also constitutes the most common form of decision arrived at in connection with the clearance of crime. Approximately 41 per cent of the total number of cleared offences were cleared by means of such a decision in 2004. Other types of prosecutor's decision included among person-based clearances include decisions to issue summary sanction orders (involving a summary fine), which accounted for nine per cent of clearances, and decisions to issue a waiver of prosecution.

Persons suspected of offences

A total of slightly over 104,000 individuals were registered as suspects in connection with criminal offences over the course of 2004. This represents an increase of five per cent by comparison with the previous year. From the mid-1970s and up until 1993, the number of registered suspects rose from 81,200 to peak at 110,800 in 1993. Over the following years, the number of registered suspects fell, but has now once again undergone an increase. Since there has also been an increase in the size of the population that has reached the age of criminal responsibility (fifteen years), the increase in the number of registered suspects becomes smaller when it is viewed in relation to this population trend.

In 2004, only 24 per cent of all those individuals suspected of offences were suspected in connection with *theft offences*, a figure that may be compared with the fact that theft offences accounted for approximately 52 per cent of the total number of reported crimes. A large proportion of registered suspects were also suspected in connection with *motoring offences*, *crimes against the person* and *drug offences*. In 2004, persons suspected in con-

nection with motoring offences accounted for nineteen per cent of registered suspects, persons suspected in connection with crimes against the person accounted for sixteen per cent and those suspected of drug offences accounted for eleven per cent of the total number of registered suspects.

The lowest age at which an individual can be registered as a crime suspect is the age of criminal responsibility, which in Sweden is fifteen years. In 2004, approximately 25,100 persons aged between fifteen and twenty were registered as suspects. As a proportion of all those registered as suspects in connection with criminal offences in 2004, these youths account for 24 per cent of the total whilst at the same time accounting for nine per cent of the population. Among older age-groups, persons aged fifty or over accounted for fifteen per cent of registered suspects and fully 45 per cent of the population in 2004. Thus this means that the number of registered suspects in relation to population size is greater among younger age-groups than it is among older segments of the population. Among registered youth suspects aged between fifteen and twenty, theft offences constitute the most common offence type, whereas theft and traffic offences are the most common offence types among those aged over twenty.

The majority of those suspected of offences are men. In 2004, men accounted for 80 per cent of all those registered as suspects in connection with crime. The *proportion* of women among all those suspected of offences has increased successively from thirteen to nineteen per cent over the period between 1980 and 1996. Subsequent to this point, the proportion of registered suspects comprised of women has remained relatively stable at a level of around eighteen to twenty per cent. In 2004, approximately 20,400 women were registered as suspects, which represents an increase of ten per cent by comparison with the figure for 2003.

Theft crimes constitute one of the most common offence types among women, whereas theft crimes and motoring offences are the most common among the men. Some of the offence types where women accounted for between 39 and 52 per cent of the total number of registered suspects in 2004 include unlawfully taking custody of a child, offences relating to false statements, precipitating a false prosecution, making false accusations, using false documents, frauds against the Social Insurance Administration, offences against the Aliens Act, thefts from shops and stores (including petty shoplifting offences) and embezzlement. In

terms of the numbers involved, however, very few individuals are registered as suspects in connection with these offences, with the exception of thefts from shops and stores.

Persons found guilty of offences

Statistics relating to persons convicted of offences present those determined to be guilty of crimes either by the courts (county court convictions) or by prosecutors (via the issuance of summary sanction orders or waivers of prosecution). In the year 2004, approximately 114,900 persons were determined to be guilty by means of one of these so-called conviction decisions issued by the courts or the prosecutor. This constitutes an increase of one per cent by comparison with the figure for 2003. A substantial part of this increase related to persons convicted by the courts, with the size of this group undergoing a two per cent increase (1,000 persons) over the course of the year. The number of individuals accepting a summary sanction order also increased by two per cent (600 persons) in 2004, whereas the number of persons issued waivers of prosecution fell by two per cent (450 persons).

Since 1975, the number of persons convicted of offences has fallen by more than 50 per cent. The greatest reduction came at the end of the 1970s in connection with the decriminalisation of public drunkenness. Over the subsequent period, the trend has been more stable, but there has nonetheless been a continuous reduction in the number of persons found guilty of offences. In part, this reduction is due to the fact that certain offences have with time come to be actioned by means of summary (police) fines which are presented separately in the conviction statistics. Part of the fall in the number of persons found guilty of offences, and in particular during the period 1994-1996, should also be viewed in relation to the fact that the number of cleared offences has also fallen over this period.

Traffic offences constitute the most common category of offences among those for which a finding of guilt has been registered. In 2004, offences against various road traffic statutes accounted for 39 per cent of the principal offences recorded in connection with findings of guilt. The next most common category is comprised of *theft offences*, which accounted for 23 per cent of findings of guilt in 2004.

Fines issued either by the courts or by the prosecutor constitute the most common form of sanction. In 2004, 54 per cent, or approximately 61,550 of

those found guilty of offences were given a fine as their principal sanction. In addition, approximately 259,000 persons received summary fines issued directly by the police. Approximately thirteen per cent (slightly under 15,400 persons) were sentenced to a *prison term* in 2004. The most common sentence lengths involved a prison term of *at most one month* (29 per cent of those sentenced to prison) and *no less than two but no more than six months* (27 per cent of those sentenced to prison) respectively. Approximately 1,050 persons, or seven per cent, were sentenced to a prison term of over two years, of whom 24 received life sentences. A total of approximately 145 youths were sentenced to a term of youth custody in 2004, a sentence which since 1999 has largely replaced the use of prison terms for youths up to eighteen years of age.

For youths aged fifteen to twenty, it has been possible since 1999 for the courts to combine a sentence involving *remand into the care of the social services* with a requirement that the youth carry out unpaid work or similar, a sanction referred to as youth service. A total of approximately 2,700 youths were sentenced to social services care in 2004, of whom nineteen per cent (487 persons) were given this sentence in combination with youth service.

In 2004, slightly under 9,600 persons received a *suspended sentence* as their principal sanction, of which 34 per cent (just under 3,300 persons) received this sanction in combination with *community service*. The number of persons being given a suspended sentence or placed on probation in combination with community service has increased continuously since these sanctioning forms were introduced in 1993 and 1999 respectively.

Men and women accounted for 83 and seventeen per cent respectively of those found guilty of offences in 2004. Since 1975, the proportion of women has increased from thirteen to seventeen per cent. Youths aged between fifteen and twenty comprised approximately 21 per cent of those found guilty of offences in 2004. In relation to the proportion of the population accounted for by this age-group, such youths are over-represented among those found guilty of offences by comparison with the members of other age-groups.

The Prison and Probation Service

Over the course of the year 2004 a total of 11,300 individuals were *admitted* to prisons, which consti-

tutes an increase of approximately 620 persons by comparison with 2003. The number of *inmates* in prison service institutions declined from just over 13,600 in 1995 to approximately 9,100 in 1997 and remained quite unchanged until 2002, when the level started to increase. A large proportion of the reduction in inmate numbers is a result of the introduction in the whole country in 1997 of the use of intensive monitoring by means of electronic control, also known as electronic tagging.

Of those admitted to prisons during the year 2004, almost half had been sentenced for either theft *offences* (22 per cent) or crimes against the person (18 per cent). Assault offences dominated among the crimes against the person (accounting for slightly over twelve per cent of all admissions). Other common offence types included drug offences (13 per cent) and road traffic offences (21 per cent). Drink driving offences dominated among the traffic offences.

The majority of those admitted to prisons are men. In 2004, men accounted for approximately 93 per cent of the total number of prison inmates. The proportion of inmates comprised of women has increased from five to seven per cent during the last ten years. The number of female inmates has varied between 500 and 775 during the same period.

Men constitute the majority of those admitted to prison in connection with all offence types. The proportion of men is greatest among those inmates sentenced for rape, murder and homicide, crimes against creditors, robbery and assault. The proportion of males among those admitted to prison for these offence types varied between 97 and 100 per cent in 2004.

Thirty-eight per cent of those admitted to prison in 2004 were aged 40 or over, twenty-eight per cent were aged between 30 and 39 and an equal part was aged between 21 and 29 years. Youths aged 20 or under accounted for slightly over five per cent of admissions in 2004. If you see to those admitted to prison per 100 000 inhabitants in the age groups respectively the distribution is different. Then the dominating age group is 21 to 24 years, 355 persons per 100 000 inhabitants, whilst those 40 years or over were 96 persons per 100 000 inhabitants.

Approximately 2,700 individuals served their prison sentence by means of intensive electronic supervision in 2004, which constitutes an increase of 370 individuals by comparison with 2003, and

155 individuals were placed in the electronic monitoring pre-release programme.

In 2004, approximately 2,090 individuals were placed in custody. Among those 72 per cent were detained persons and two per cent were taken into custody or caught by the law. Almost 500 persons, 26 per cent, were serving a prison term in the custody, which constitutes an increase of 40 per cent relative to the year 2003, and 150 per cent by comparison with the year 1995.

Recidivism

The statistics show that the proportion of those convicted of offences that reoffend has varied a little from year to year. An average of one-fifth (20-23 per cent) of those convicted for offences between 1991 and 1999 reoffended within a year of the initial conviction. The proportion reoffending within a three year follow-up period was approximately one-third (32-36 per cent). This means that in slightly over half of the cases of recidivism noted within a three-year period, the first reoffence occurs within a year of the initial conviction.

The recidivism rate is higher among men convicted of offences that it is among convicted women. Of all the women convicted in 1999, only fifteen per cent reoffended within a year, by comparison with 25 per cent of the men. This difference between the sexes remains when attention is instead focused on a three year follow-up period. The proportion of women that reoffend within three years lies at 24 per cent whereas the corresponding proportion is 39 per cent among the men. This difference in the recidivism rate between men and women has not changed over time, i.e. during the period 1991-1999.

The highest proportion of recidivists among those convicted of offences in 1999 was noted among those aged between 30 and 39 years of age, as was also the case among those convicted the previous year. Within this age-group, 41 per cent of those convicted reoffended within three years. Recidivism rates were almost as high among those aged 18-20, 21-24, 25-29 and 40-49. Among those convicted of offences in these age-groups, the recidivism rate lay at between 38 and 40 per cent over the course of a three year follow-up period, which is somewhat higher than was the case for those convicted in 1998, among whom the recidivism rate lay at between 37 and 39 per cent. Thus the proportion of reoffenders is more or less the

same among persons aged between 18 and 49 convicted of offences. The risk for recidivism is somewhat lower for persons aged between fifteen and seventeen, by comparison with those aged between 18 and 49. Of those convicted in 1999, 37 per cent of those aged fifteen to seventeen reoffended within three years. The corresponding proportion for those convicted in 1998 was 35 per cent. Among convicted persons aged 50 and over, the recidivism risk declines with increasing age.

The statistics show that the recidivism rate increases with levels of prior involvement in crime among persons convicted of offences. The term prior involvement in crime here refers to the number of previous convictions during a ten year period prior to the initial conviction at the start of the observation period. Of those convicted in 1999 with no prior convictions, i.e. first time offenders, seventeen per cent reoffended within a period of three years, which represents a reduction of one per cent

by comparison with the figure for those convicted in 1998. The corresponding proportion among convicted persons with one or two prior convictions amounted to 35 per cent, whereas fully 89 per cent of those with more than ten prior convictions over the previous ten years reoffended, which represents an increase of one per cent by comparison with the figure for those convicted in 1998. The recidivism rate for groups of convicted persons with different levels of prior involvement in crime has not changed during the period 1991-1999. The group comprised of those with the highest levels of prior convictions is relatively small, however. During the years 1991-1999, the number of convicted persons with at least ten prior convictions amounted to between 5,600 and 6,700. By comparison, the number of first time offenders amounted to between 36,400 and 59,700 persons over the course of this same period.