

# **THE FINNISH RACIST CRIME MONITORING SYSTEM**

JUHA KÄÄRIÄINEN  
NOORA ELLONEN

POLIISIAMMATTIKORKEAKOULUN TIEDOTTEITA 57 / 2007

Poliisiammattikorkeakoulu  
2007

Juha Kääriäinen ja Noora Ellonen

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ISSN 1544-8389  
ISBN 978-951-815-126-8

## **Abstract**

Eurobarometer and other surveys have found that Finnish people are, on average, more tolerant towards immigrants and minorities than respondents from other EU countries. Also, according to the preliminary results of the EU International Crime Survey, the level of hate crime victimization is low in Finland. One reason for this relatively positive situation is that foreign nationals living in Finland are very small in number. However, the number of foreign population is clearly increasing, and racism has been recognized as a serious social problem.

Racist crimes are monitored in Finland mainly through police records. Since 1997, the Ministry of Interior, and since 2003 also The Police College of Finland, has published annual reports on racially motivated crimes. These reports are based on a multi-phased research process in which the content of one year electronic textual data of police reports is analysed to identify all those cases in which the crime is racially motivated. As a result of this process a data matrix is formed which contains background variables of perpetrators and victims, the time and locale of the crime, the relationship between the perpetrators and victims, etc. The research process and the results for the year 2005 are presented in the paper. We are also presenting some ideas to develop our racist crime monitoring system in the future.

According to the study, 412 police reports, classified as racist, were filed in 2005. These reports contain a total of 669 racist offences. The number of offences is much higher than the number of police reports, because one police report may contain many offences. The most common offence in 2005, as well as in the three previous years was assault (Figure 1). A total of 289 cases of assault or attempted assault (attempted assault, petty assault, assault, attempted aggravated assault, and aggravated assault) took place, accounting for 43% of all racist offences. The second biggest category was breach of honour (94 instances), followed by unlawful threats (84 instances). Breach of honour and unlawful threats together represented about a quarter of all racist offences. Various types of damage to property (petty damage to property, damage to property) were also relatively common, being 90 in number and accounting for 14% of all cases. Other common headings of offence were discrimination (37 instances) and breach of domestic peace (24 instances).

Compared to previous years, racist offences have steadily increased (Figure 2). The trend is seen in almost every individual heading of offence as well. With the exception of discrimination and petty assault, the curves show a growth in most categories of offence. No clear decline is evident in any type of offence, while the increase is sharpest in assaults. It should be pointed out, however, that even though the number of individual offences has increased, the number of police reports concerning racist offences has not increased at the same rate: in 2003, the Finnish Police Information System listed 387 racist offences, while the corresponding figures for 2004 and 2005 were 400 and 412 respectively. Consequently, the number of offences per report seems to be increasing. This is probably due to an increase in offences involving several perpetrators and victims, a typical case in point being a mass brawl.

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The level and characteristics of crime are evaluated in Finland using two principal methods. First, use is made of the records created by the law enforcement system to prepare statistical reviews of crimes reported to the authorities. Usually, such statistics are based either on crimes reported to the police or judgments handed down by courts of law. Second, information about victims of crime is gathered by means of interviews or questionnaires addressed to the public at large in order to explore the experiences of crime victimization in the population or within certain special groups. In 2000 an interview survey targeting the immigrant population was carried out to determine to what extent they were victimised by racially motivated crime (Jasinskaja-Lahti et.al. 2002).

The level of racist crime is monitored in Finland mainly through police records. Trends in this type of crime have been monitored in Finland on an annual basis since 1997 by making use of the police reports contained in the Police Information System (Patja). Since said year, police have been required to make a special entry to identify any "racist cases", if the incident shows such characteristics. Unfortunately, Finnish police use this code in the reports only in a little over half of the cases where the motive of the crime is, either completely or partially, racist in nature (see e.g. Keränen 2005). For this reason, efforts have been made to develop the crime monitoring system so as to ensure that as many of the (suspected) offences, recorded by the police, that satisfy the criteria for a racist crime are included in the statistics. The purpose of the present paper is to provide a description of the Finnish monitoring system as it has existed in its present form, serving as a basis for the crime reviews during 2003–2005. However, we will not be content with a mere description of the monitoring system but will also make an attempt to evaluate its shortcomings critically and identify areas where improvements are called for. Additionally, we will discuss a number of empirical observations concerning the characteristics of racist crimes in Finland over the past few years.

## **2 DATA-MINING OF RACIST CRIMES USING THE CRIME-REPORTING SYSTEM: THE CASE OF FINLAND**

### **2.1 WHAT ARE RACIST CRIMES?**

Hate crimes mean crimes motivated by prejudice against an individual because of the ethnic, religious, racial, sexual or disability-based characteristics associated with the reference group that the victim belongs to. However, it is difficult to give an exact and universally applicable definition of hate crime because the identification of such crimes is extremely closely related to the political, cultural and social environment. It is hard to say what constitutes non-acceptable hatred or non-acceptable prejudice. What is acceptable behaviour in one society may be discriminatory to minorities in another. However, what is common to hate crimes is that they, through an individual member, have an impact on an entire group and their implications reach beyond the consequences affecting the individual victim. Hate crimes reinforce prejudice, fear and hatred between groups of people. (Perry 2001, 7-10; Hall 2005, 1-21.)

The concept of racist crime is narrower than that of hate crime. As a rule, racist crimes are crimes in which the victims are selected according to their ethnic or racial background. More often than not, the targets of racism are people belonging to "visible minorities", meaning individuals who are the most easily distinguishable from the main-

stream population, for instance because of the colour of their skin or the language they speak. In Finland, such minorities include traditionally the Roma and Sámi as well as many of the new immigrant groups. However, even a member of the mainstream population may be a victim of racism, typical examples being people married to a member of a minority or those who speak out against racism. (Makkonen 2000.)

## **2.2 RACIST CRIMES AND USE OF THE RACISM CODE IN POLICE REPORTS**

The data used in the study consists of police reports retrieved from the police crime-reporting system using a specific set of search criteria. A police report may be filed by any party to the incident or an eye-witness, and naturally by the police itself. All police reports are recorded in an electronic nationwide information system. If there is reason to suspect, based on the report or on other grounds, that a crime has been committed, the case will go to a pre-trial investigation. In case of an offence where prosecution rests with the injured party, such as breach of domestic peace or breach of honour, a pre-trial investigation is normally ordered if the complainant demands that punishment be meted out. However, most crimes are subject to public prosecution, meaning that the police may investigate them even if the complainant does not demand punishment. As the findings presented in this paper are based on police reports, a crime may not have necessarily been committed in all of the cases. In fact, whether a crime has been committed or not will be determined by a court of law, and the progression of an individual case from a police report to a court may be halted at several points during the process either by the police or the prosecutor. We will return to this question at the end of the paper.

In Finland, a police officer receiving a report of a crime is required to make an appropriate entry in the police report form if the report concerns a racist crime. Since 1997 when the code was introduced, the following standard operating procedure has been applied:

"The police officer is required to make the entry in the RIKI System indicating a racist case when a crime is committed against a member of a minority either completely or at least partially because he or she differs from the perpetrator with regard to race, colour of the skin, nationality, or ethnic background. Any racists characteristics or motives related to the alleged crime may be disclosed by the victim or some other party, or the police officer may independently arrive at such a conclusion. In case of doubt, the case must be recorded as a racist case."

One of the problems associated with the foregoing instruction is that it assumes that only a member of a minority group may become a victim of a racist crime. In the present study, we have applied a broader definition of a racist crime in order to ensure that cases in which a racist crime is committed against a member of the mainstream population are also included in the analysis. Towards the end of 2005, the instructions were revised to the effect that the victim no longer needs to be to a member of an ethnic minority; now it is enough that the perpetrator differs from the victim in terms of race, colour of the skin, ethnic background, or nationality.

Indeed, the determination of the number of police reports involving racist acts would be easy, if the police actually entered said code in all the reports involving an (alleged) racist crime. Unfortunately, this is not the case: only a little over half of suspected crimes that, according to previous analysis (e.g. Keränen 2005), could be considered racist, are identified by said code. Therefore the annual volume of police reports must be analyzed by other means in order to identify, as many as possible, of the reports that were not duly coded. The reasons why police officers receiving the reports fail to enter the appropriate code in such a large number of documents can only be speculated on in the absence of any scientific data on the subject. No doubt one of the reasons is simply carelessness be-

cause the system allows the user to skip the code. At the same time, it is conceivable that a police officer receiving a report does not necessarily think about whether the act is racially motivated or not because he or she focuses on recording the facts that are important to the pre-trial investigation and related to the obtaining of criminal evidence. A third reason may be that the issue of a potential racist motive does not even come up at the time when the report is recorded but later in the course of criminal investigations. While it is true that the code can be added later at various points during the investigative process, people may fail to do for one reason or another.

## **2.3 DESCRIPTION OF DATA GATHERING TECHNIQUES**

A description of the process used to collect the data for the reviews on racist crimes during 2003–2005 is provided below. The data was gathered in February–March following the target year. The data was retrieved from the database containing all the police reports for the target year in three phases. In the first phase, we gathered raw data consisting of the following:

- all police reports identified by the racism code by the police;
- all police reports with the name of crime discrimination, workplace discrimination, or incitement against ethnic group;
- police reports with names of crimes that are most likely to display racist characteristics and in which at least one of the complainants is a foreigner or of foreign extraction or whose country of birth is other than Finland; and
- all police reports with the combination of characters "rasismi" or "rasisti" (racism/racist).

A total of 5,441 police reports were returned by the system for 2005 when these search criteria were applied.

In the second phase, the data for further analysis was filtered from the raw data using a set of key words. The words used in the searches consisted of various abusive names that have been found to appear frequently in reports identified by the racism code. A total 37 such key words were used. The searches returned 820 police reports that included not only all the cases indicated by the racism code but also cases that satisfied the other criteria used in gathering the raw data and included at least one abusive expression.

In the third phase, all the 820 police reports were read one by one. The reports selected for final analysis consisted of reports

- that the police had identified with the racism code ; or
- that contained clearly abusive and racist language; or
- in which the suspect identified him- or herself as being a supporter of an extreme right-wing ideology (such as skinheads) and the victim was a member of an ethnic or national minority; or;
- in which any of the parties or the police thought that the act was racially motivated.

A total of 242 reports identified by the police with the racism code were included in the final data. An additional 170 reports were found, not identified by the racism code, that could be classified as racist when the reports were read as explained above. All in all, the 2005 data included a total 412 police reports related to racist crimes.

These reports were then examined to obtain the necessary data concerning the crime, victims and suspects. Some of the variables (basic data such as municipality in which the locale was situated, time of commission, date of birth of the victim/suspect, gender, nationality and country of birth) were readily available from the police database. A number of variables were reclassified (such as date and time of commission) and some



completely recreated using the information contained in the reports (e.g. locale and the victim's relationship with the suspect).

A single police report may involve several crimes and several complainants. The one and the same individual may be a complainant under several names of crimes; for instance, an assault may also involve breach of honour or unlawful threat. In the analysis of racist crimes, attention was focused on the most serious of the crimes committed against the victim, i.e., the so-called principal crime. The numbers of various crimes are mostly based on principal crimes. When crimes were divided into principal and secondary crimes, crimes committed against life and health were considered more serious than property crimes. The order of "seriousness" of the crimes from the most to the least serious was as follows: homicide or attempted homicide, sexual crimes (rape), physical violence, (assault), threat of violence (unlawful threat), discrimination, breach of honour, breach of domestic peace, and damage to property.

## **2.4 MAIN PROBLEMS**

The figures illustrating the level of racist crime in Finland calculated for the purposes of the present study include several distortions that should be born in mind when interpreting the numbers. The most important distortions are discussed below.

Police reports only provide information about crimes that come to the attention of the authorities. However, most of crime is hidden, something that applies to racist crime as well. According to a survey of immigrant victims of crime published in Finland in 2002, only 7 per cent of those included in the study had reported every perceived racist crime that they had been victim of, while 69 per cent had not reported a single crime. (Jasinskaja-Lahti et. al. 2002.). As a result, victim surveys is the only relatively reliable method of evaluating the overall level of racist crime victimisation. However, it should be pointed out that both the police report data and the victim surveys may include acts recorded as crime even if they do not, in the final analysis, satisfy the applicable criteria when evaluated by the police, prosecutor, or a court of law.

Therefore, it is safe to say that the biggest problem with the study is the source data, although we are not alone with this predicament, which is shared by all crime monitoring systems all over the world. As if this was not enough, another set of problems is associated with the way we selected racist crimes from the mass of all police reports. We will discuss some of these problems encountered in the various phases of data gathering.

A description of the method employed in collecting the data was provided above. At least two problems were identified in this first phase of data gathering. The first is due to the fact that the police report does not indicate the ethnic background or origin of the person involved, only nationality or country of birth. Consequently, racist acts victimising an individual born in Finland with a Finnish citizenship may be left out even though he or she is a member of some original minority (such as the Roma), or he or she is of foreign extraction despite a Finnish passport or having been born in this country. True, some of the cases may be returned are a result of the other search criteria used in the selection, for instance when the report includes the characters "rasism" or "rasist". A second problem associated with the first phase of data gathering is that the search may have missed cases in which the victim is a Finn and the perpetrator of foreign extraction. As already suggested, this is related to the instructions given to the police for the use of the racism code, saying, in effect, that only a member of a minority can be a victim of a racist crime. Granted, this problem may be somewhat alleviated by the fact that reports with a victim of Finnish extraction may have been accepted into the sample at other points during the data selection process.

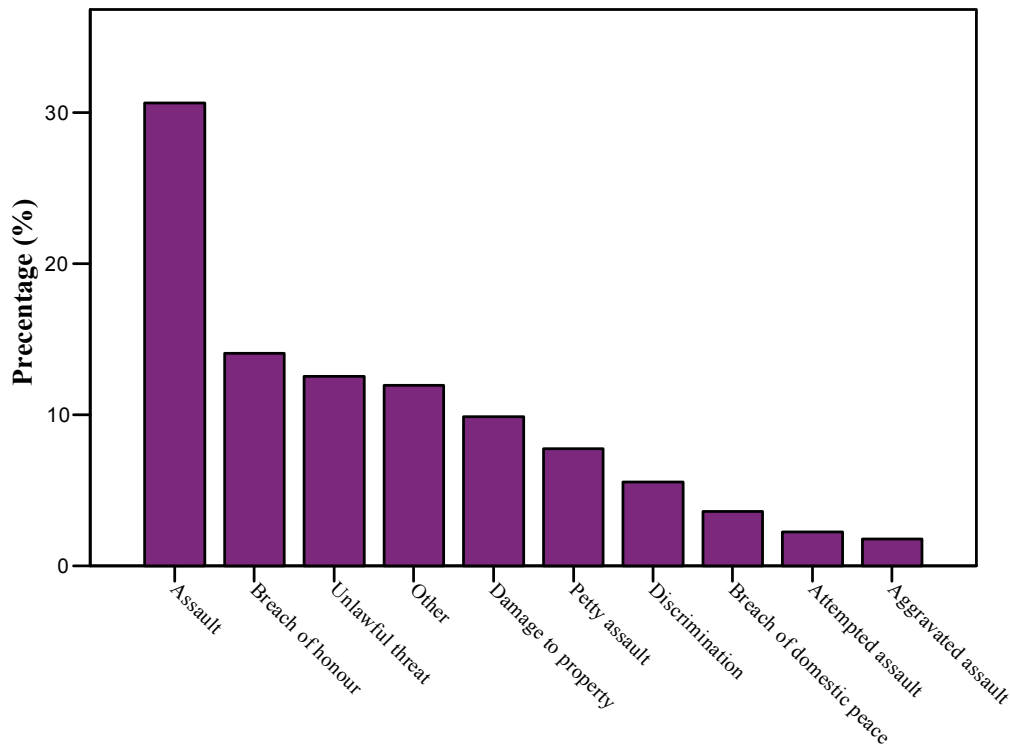
Thus, in the second phase of data gathering, police reports are selected from the raw data using various key words consisting of abusive expressions that have been found to appear in reports identified by the racism code. Naturally, the problem here is to determine an sufficiently exhaustive list of abusive names normally associated with racially motivated crimes. Moreover, it should be pointed out that all police reports pertaining to racist crimes do not necessarily include such abusive language: either such expressions have not been recorded or they have not been used at all.

In the third phase of data gathering, the data for the final analysis is selected by reading all the second-stage police reports manually. An unambiguous rule at this point is that all cases identified by the racism code are included. Otherwise, it is hard to specify any explicit criteria for defining the final sample. What is, for example, a "clear" racist expression and where should the line be drawn? Also, it may difficult to single out the cases in which the perpetrators have had some right-wing or other ideological motive. Sometimes these things are impossible to determine from the police report. Similarly, it may be hard to discern the motives for the acts based on the text of the police report unless the motive is clearly stated.

### **3 STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RACIST CRIME AND RELATED TRENDS IN FINLAND DURING THE 2000S**

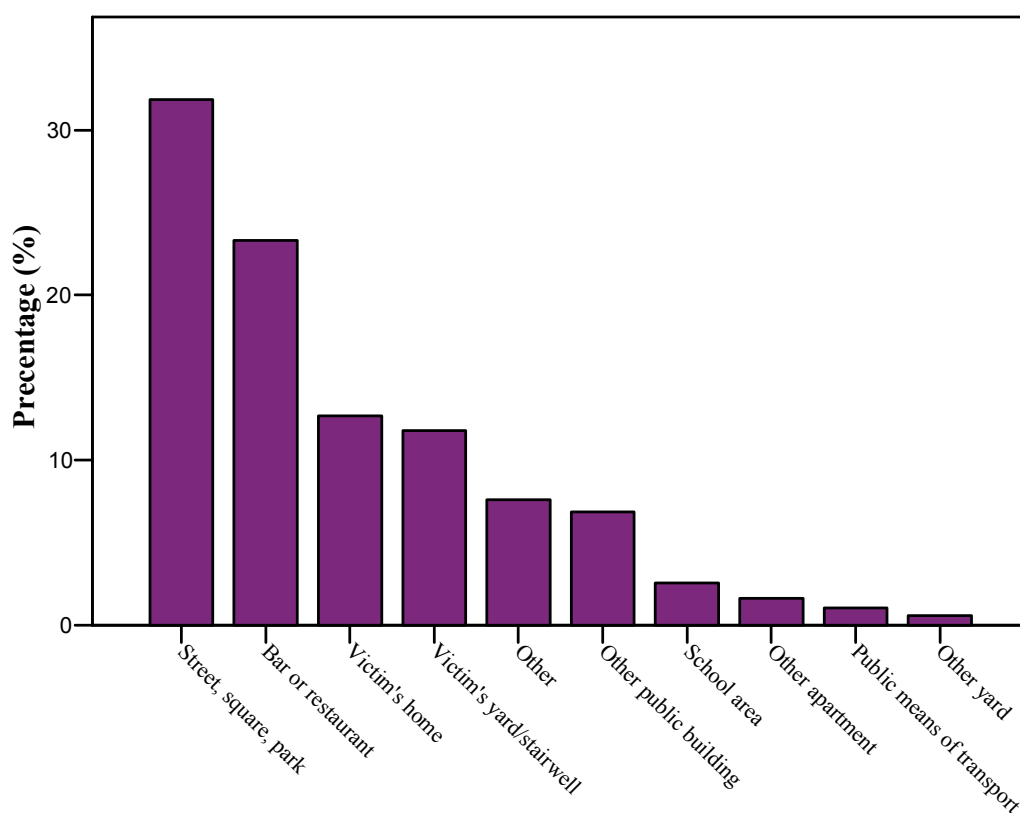
First, we will discuss some of the structural characteristics of racist crime in the light of the latest data gathered in 2005 and then briefly evaluate the trends in the level of racist crime victimisation in Finland during 2003–2005.

As a result of the 412 police reports classified as racist, a total of 660 racist crimes came to the attention of the police during 2005, the most common being assault. A total of 289 cases of assault or attempted assault (attempted assault, petty assault, assault, attempted aggravated assault, and aggravated assault) took place, accounting for 43% of all racist crimes. The second biggest category was breach of honour (94 instances), followed by unlawful threats (84 instances). Breach of honour and unlawful threats together represented about a quarter of all racist crimes. Various types of damage to property (petty damage to property, damage to property) were relatively common, being 90 in number and accounting for 14% of all cases. Other common names of crime were discrimination (37 instances) and breach of domestic peace (24 instances). (See Fig. 1). There were few other crimes, the most common being vandalism and forgery. Three cases of incitement against an ethnic group, which can be regarded as a particularly serious racist crime, were recorded in 2005.



**FIGURE 1.** Racist crimes by type of crimes in Finland in 2005, % (N=669).

The most common locale where criminal acts were committed was a public place out of doors: 32% of the crimes took place outdoors, in the street, on a square or in a park (see Fig. 2). Other common locales included public transport stations, particularly underground stations, that were also included in this category. The second most common scene for racist crimes was bars and restaurants that accounted for nearly one quarter of the crimes, followed by the victim's home. A quarter of all crimes were committed in the victim's home, stairwell or out in the court. Harassment calls, messages and other "remote" offences are also deemed to have taken place in the victim's home.



**FIGURE 2.** Locales for racist crimes in Finland in 2005, % (N=669).

Most of the racist crimes were committed in the evening or during the night, with over one third taking place in the evening and another third at night. Additionally 23 crimes (3%) were committed between the period from evening till morning. Most of these consisted of damage to property, such as vehicles or business premises, making it difficult to determine the exact time of commission. About 11% of the racist crimes took place during the day and only 4% in the morning. Crimes that were committed over a period of more than 24 hours were assigned to the category Other time/Not known. These included breach of honour committed between neighbours or unlawful threats that had been going on for a long period of time and did not come to the attention of the police until later. Only in one case out of 669 reports the time of commission remained completely unknown.

Most racist crimes are committed against foreigners or people of foreign extraction. According to nationality or country-of-birth data, over 70% of the victims were of foreign extraction. In about 5% of the cases the victim of a racist crime was a Roma person. Most of the crimes committed against the Roma consisted of discrimination or breach of honour. About one fifth of the victims represented the mainstream population. Most of these were cases in which a native Finn had been in the company of a person of foreign extraction or his or her married spouse was of foreign extraction. In a small percentage of cases, there was no victim at all as the crime was committed generally against foreigners or a specific ethnic group.

**TABLE 1.** Largest groups of foreign nationals living in Finland\* and racist crimes committed against these nationalities; no. of crimes per 1,000 inhabitants.

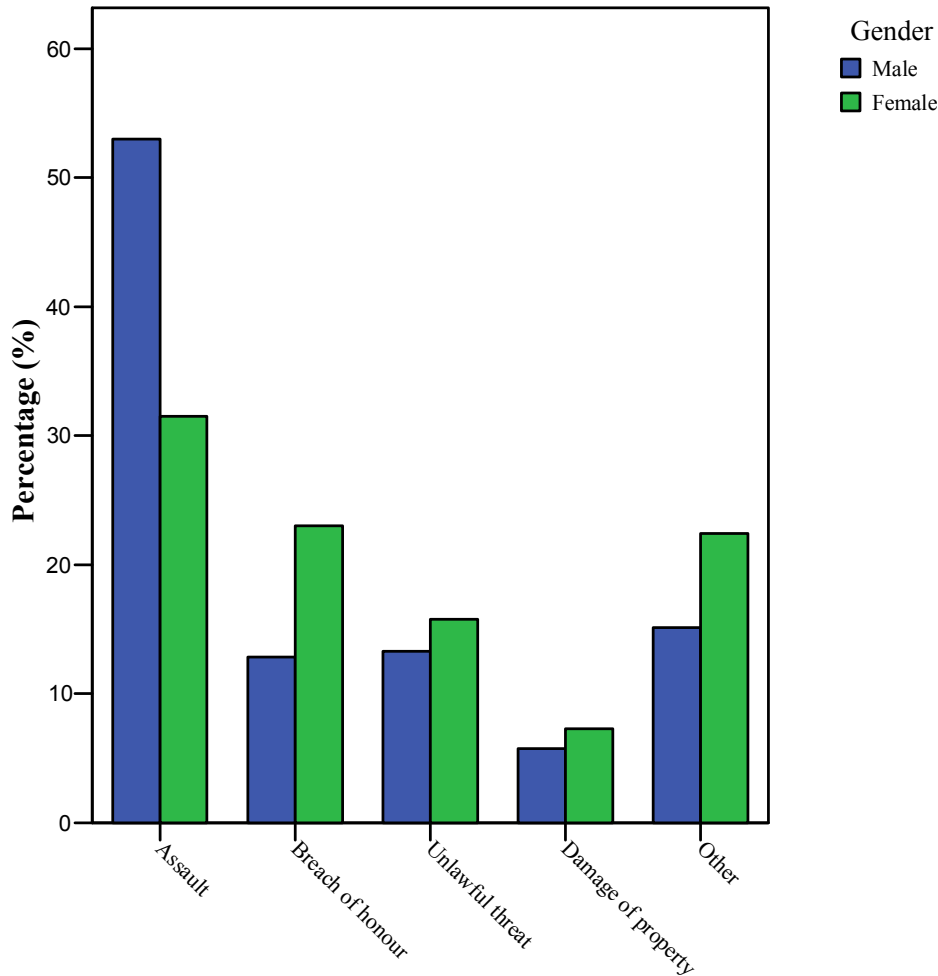
<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Living in Finland</b>	<b>Racist crimes</b>	<b>Racist crimes / 1000</b>
Afghanistan	1 833	22	12.0
Somalia	4 704	51	10.9
Turkey	2 621	24	9.2
Iran	2 562	16	6.2
Iraq	3 267	19	5.8
Thailand	2 605	6	2.3
Vietnam	1 657	3	1.8
Russia	24 621	35	1.4
USA	2 086	2	1.0
China	2 992	2	0.7
Germany	2 792	2	0.7
UK	2 762	1	0.4
Estonia	15 459	6	0.4
Serbia and Montenegro	3 321	1	0.3
Sweden	8 196	2	0.2

\*Source: Statistics Finland 2006

Table 1 lists the level of racist crimes relative to the number of people of the same nationality living in Finland. The table shows that in 2005 most crimes were committed against Afghans, followed by Somalis and Turks. It seems that in Finland, like in other countries, most racist crimes are committed against "visible" minorities, meaning groups that differ from the mainstream population most. Public attitudes towards individual ethnic groups also vary, being more negative towards people coming from the poorest countries and representing a highly different culture, than towards those who resemble ourselves. At the bottom of the "ethnic hierarchy" in Finland are Somalis, Arabs, Russians, and Kurds whereas topping the list are Ingrian Finns and other Scandinavians (Jaakkola 2005).

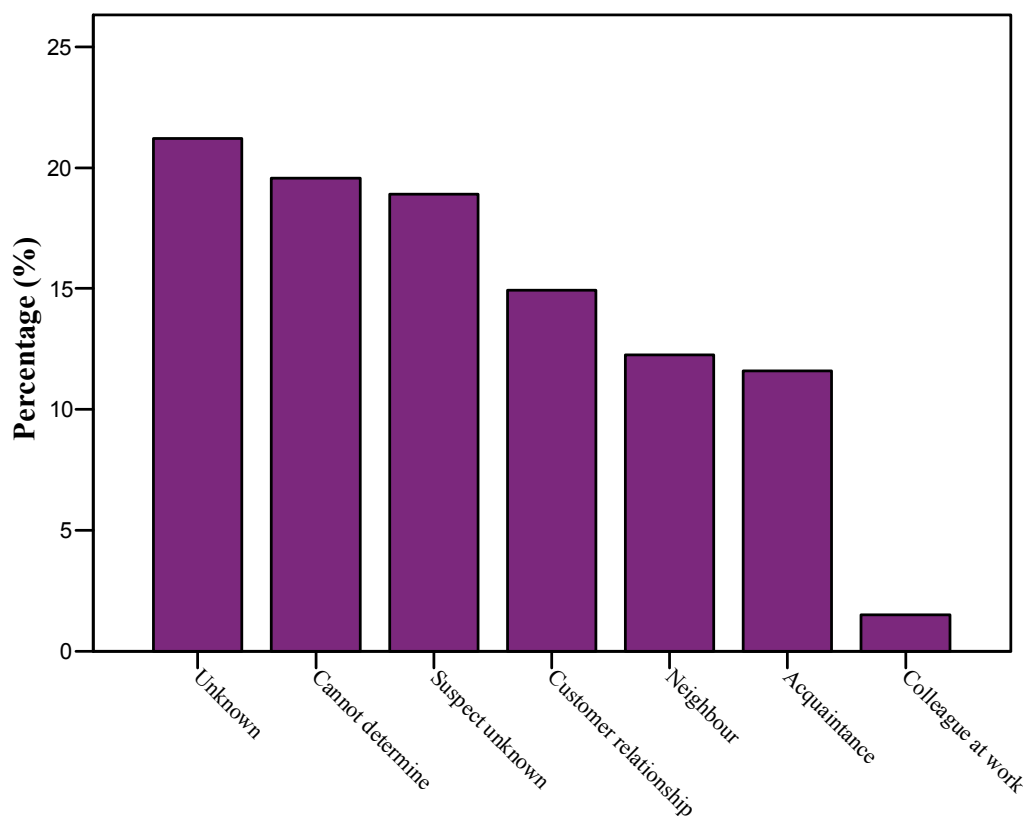
Of the victims of racist crimes, 73% were men and 27% women. The same holds for previous years, with men usually accounting for 70% of the victims. In terms of age, the victims were relatively young with 90% of the crimes being committed against people aged 15 to 44. The names of crimes vary slightly according to age. While assaults were committed mostly against young people, breaches of honour and damage to property affected mostly middle-aged people or older age groups.

As victims of racist crimes, men and women are different (see Fig. 3) with crimes differing in terms of name of crime and characteristics. With men, the most common name of crime is assault (Table 15 and Fig. 5). No fewer than 39% of the crimes committed against men were assaults. The second largest category was unlawful threats (13%) followed by breaches of honour (13%). Women, by contrast, were most often victims of breach of honour (23%). The most common crime committed against women was assault (20%) followed by unlawful threat (11%).



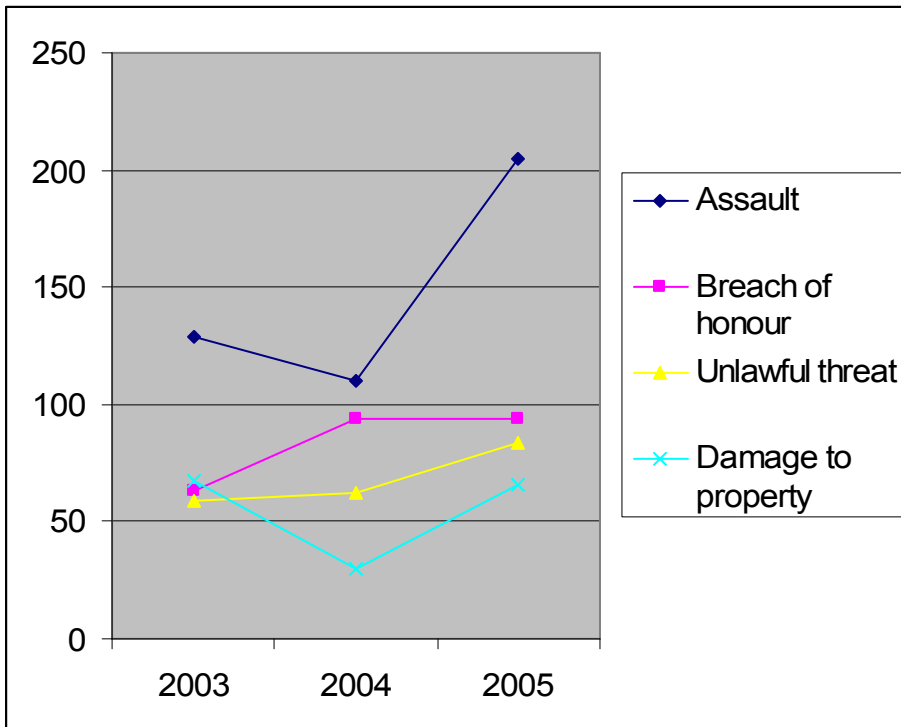
**FIGURE 3.** Victims of racist crimes in Finland in 2005 according to gender, % (N=603).

Often, it is difficult to draw any conclusions from a police report as to the relationship between the victim and the suspect because its nature is not stated clearly but must be inferred from the circumstances. Therefore the information provided herein cannot be deemed to be fully reliable. In a little over one fifth of the cases, the suspect was unknown to the victim (Fig. 4). In about 15% of the cases a customer relationship was involved. Of these, most were brawls or discrimination cases in a restaurant. In a few cases, police officers and social workers were among the suspects, being accused mainly of breach of honour. In 12% of the cases the victim and suspect knew each other slightly. In this context, "knowing" means that the victim knew the suspect by sight or name but not more closely. Students attending the same class were also assigned to this category. Only nine of the cases involved colleagues, i.e., people employed in the same workplace, and 74 (12%) neighbours. In 20% of the cases, the relationship between the victim and suspect could not be determined, and in one fifth of the cases the suspect was unknown.



**FIGURE 4.** Victim's relationship with suspected perpetrator in racist crimes in Finland in 2005, % (N=603).

How, then, has racist crime developed in Finland during the three-year period from 2003 to 2005 examined in this study? Generally, it is safe to say that racist crimes increase from year to year (Fig. 5). The trend is relatively steady in the individual names of crimes as well. With the exception of discrimination and petty assault, the curves shows a growth for most categories of crime. No clear decline is evident in any of the types of crime, while the increase is the sharpest in assaults. It should be pointed out, however, that even though the number of individual crimes has increased, the number of police reports concerning racist crimes has not increased at the same rate: in 2003 the Finnish Police Information System listed 387 reports of racist crimes while the corresponding figures for 2004 and 2005 were 400 and 412, respectively. Consequently, the number of crimes per report seems to be increasing. Probably this is due to an increase in crimes involving several perpetrators and victims, a typical situation being mass brawl.

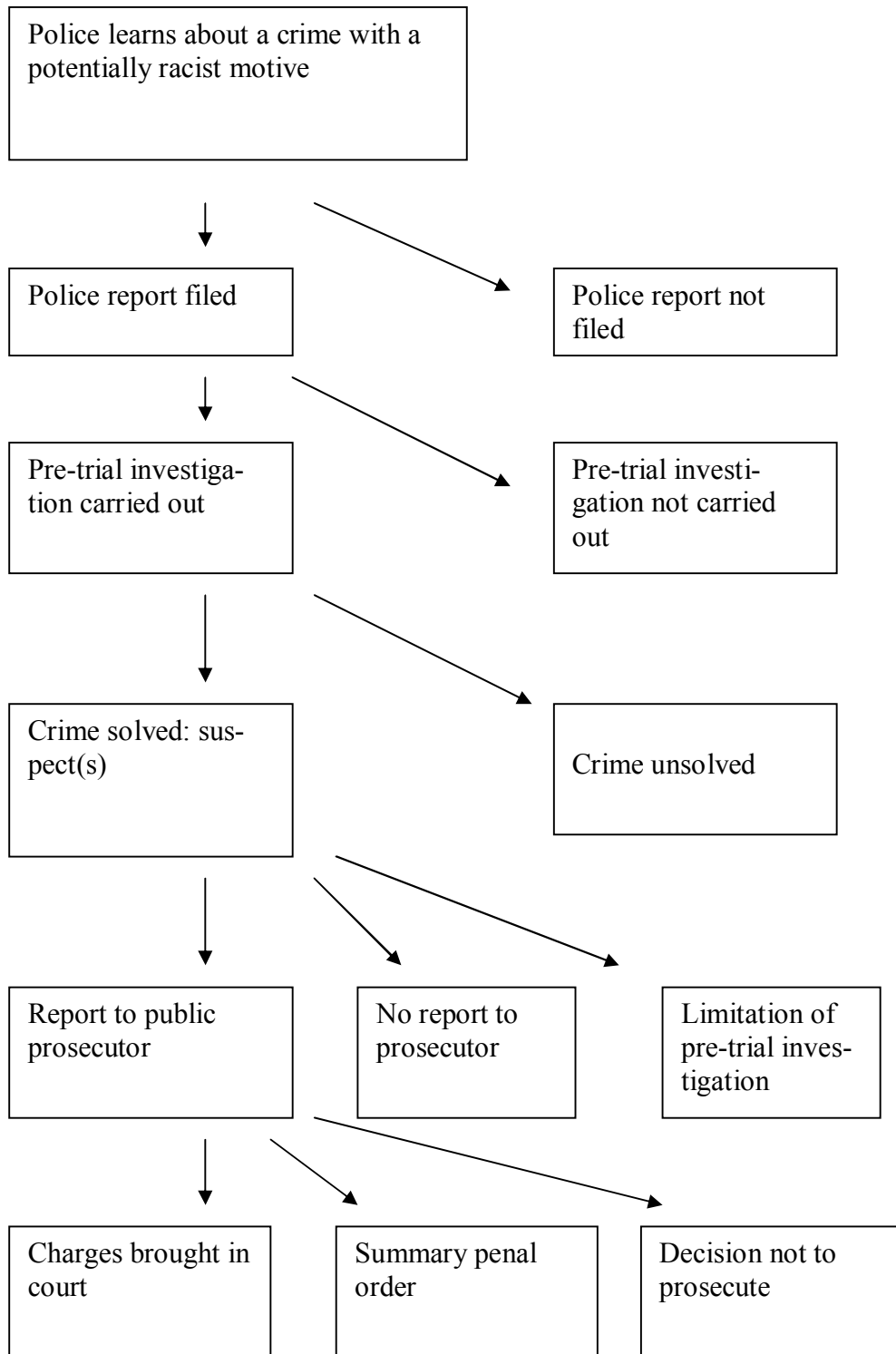


**FIGURE 5.** Trends in the level of racist crime victimisation in 2003, 2004 and 2005 (most common types of crime).

#### **4 PROGRESSION OF CRIMINAL RACIST CASE FROM POLICE TO PROSECUTOR TO COURT – WHAT HAPPENS TO THE CRIME?**

As already explained, this study is based on police reports recorded by Finnish police. However, the progression of a criminal case from the police report to a court resolution is long and complicated. In fact, we are forced to admit that we have no idea of how many incidents involving a report of a racist crime are actually determined to be racist offences by the police, prosecution and a court of law. We do know, however, that a total of 760,000 crimes were recorded in reports received by the police in 2002. In the same year the police referred about 490,000 cases to the public prosecutor while about 133,000 crimes reached a court of law. (In Finland, the prosecutor may, instead of prosecuting, impose a fine through a penal order procedure, the number of such cases in 2002 being 191,000; Lappi-Seppälä 2004, p. 258). A rough estimate suggests that slightly over 40% of all reported criminal cases end up in court or result in a fine imposed by the public prosecutor. What, then, really happens to the other reported crimes, particularly to racist crimes that we are concerned with here? Below we will give a brief description of the progression of a police report while limiting ourselves to the actions of the police (see Fig. 6 and Lappi-Seppälä 2004).





**FIGURE 6.** Progression of racially motivated criminal case from police report to court of law (adapted from Lappi-Seppälä 2004, p. 258).

Most probably the majority of racist crimes go unreported. Additionally, a certain percentage of the illegal acts brought to the attention of the police may not be recorded as crimes, such as offences where prosecution rests the injured party, for which now police report is filed because the victim refuses to do so. In Finland the police is obligated to investigate all crimes reported to it (pre-trial investigation obligation). Under the Pre-trial Investigation Act, a pre-trial investigation must be instigated if the police finds that a crime may have been committed in the light of the information received. If the pre-trial investigation shows that no crime has taken place or that charges cannot be pressed against anybody, the case lapses.

If the police pre-trial investigation shows that a crime has been committed and that the person suspected of such act is known, the case must be forwarded to the consideration of charges. However, there are two exceptions to this: a decision may be made not to report the case to the prosecutor or the pre-trial investigation may be limited in scope. In the first-mentioned case, the police have the right not to report to the prosecutor's office any crimes that are, as a whole, considered to be minor and or that most likely carry a maximum punishment of a fine. An additional requirement for such a course of action is that the complainant makes no claims. The idea with the limitation of the scope of the pre-trial investigation is to save investigation resources in cases where a decision to waive charges would be made anyway. However, the provisions on the limitation of pre-trial investigation are seldom invoked in Finland. (emt.)

When considering the charges, the prosecutor make a decision either to press charges or to dismiss the case. Additionally, the prosecutor confirms or cancels penal orders (usually fines). The consideration of charges is carried out to determine whether the necessary elements of crime are present and whether it is the suspect who is the actual perpetrator of the crime. In principle, charges must be pressed if it is probable that the suspect is guilty of the crime. However, the prosecutor may drop charges not only on procedural grounds but also when the crime is insignificant, the perpetrator is young or the victim and perpetrator have settled the matter between themselves.

This presentation does not allow us to examine the operation of the Finnish criminal law system with regard to racist crimes in more detail. However, this brief review should be enough to show how little we actually know about the processing of racist crimes in our legal system. A key question is whether crimes, in which the perpetrator has a clear racist motive, are systematically processed differently from other crimes by the police, the prosecution and the courts of law. To be able to give a satisfactory answer to this question, it should be possible to study the progression of individual cases through the system that involves several authorities. The problem with this approach is that the individual authorities have their own computer systems with bleak prospects for integration. Additionally, any perception of the performance of the system based on records only would remain flimsy: what would probably be required is a combination of individual monitoring and interviews with the authorities and parties involved.

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