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SUMMARY

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SELF-REPORTED JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN FINLAND 1995–2008

1 Trends in self-reported juvenile delinquency in Finland, 1995–2008

The Finnish Self-Report Delinquency Study is a series of nationally representative self-report surveys of juvenile delinquency. The first sweep was conducted in 1995, the 6th and most recent one in 2008.

This publication is the main report of the 6th FSRD sweep. It begins with a chapter describing the main trends of delinquency in Finland during the period 1995–2008. The following four chapters provide more in-depth analyses on topics of general criminological interest: internet piracy, the link between alcohol use and crime, the link between offending and victimization, and dating violence.

Sample, administration and questionnaire

The FSRD schools were randomly selected from the register of Finnish-language municipal schools with geographical area and community type (urban, semi-urban and rural) as stratification criteria. In each sweep, all ninth-grade pupils of the selected schools comprised the target population. The samples include students placed in special needs education classes (cf. Kivivuori & Salmi 2009). To ensure confidentiality, the respondents sealed the anonymously completed questionnaire into an envelope. The survey was completed under the supervision of liaison teachers, who had been familiarized with the survey administration protocol. In the 2008 sweep, 5,826 pupils in 70 schools participated in the study.

The FSRD questionnaire was originally developed on the basis of the questionnaire used in the International Self-Report Delinquency Study (ISRD; see Junger-Tas et al. 1994). It contains 21 offences (Table 1), 14 of which have been used in all four sweeps (in bold in Table 1). The survey also includes questions about various types of victimization, attitudes to-

wards crime, police contacts, as well as a diversified set of background factors including both individual and family-level variables.

Major patterns in offending 1995–2008

The Finnish Self-report Delinquency Study in 1995–2008 shows a pattern of decrease in the participation in property related crimes, while participation in violence and the prevalence of using intoxicants have remained rather stable (Figures 1 and 2).

There was a distinct decline in thefts and the destruction of property till 2001, after which the situation stabilized. Trend is rather similar for both males and females, although the declining trend is even steeper among males. In mid-1990's participation in property offences was more prevalent among boys, but in 2008 the male prevalence is similar to the female prevalence.

Participation in violence (taking part in a fight or beating up somebody) has remained rather stable during the whole period 1995–2008, with a slight declining trend due to decreasing male participation in violence during the last two sweeps. Nevertheless, participation in violence is still more prevalent among boys than girls. Using intoxicants (marihuana/hashish and misuse of legal medicine), on the other hand, has been somewhat more common among girls than among boys in all six sweeps.

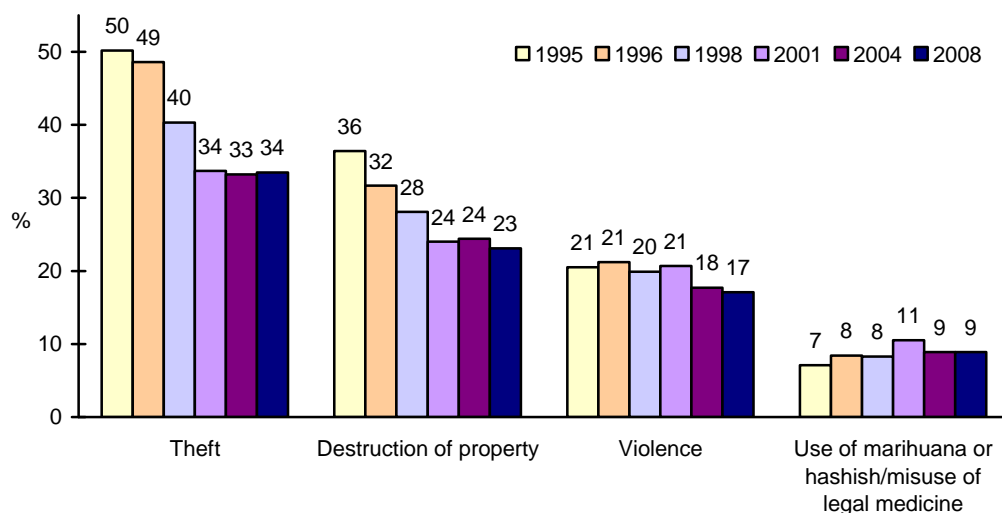


Figure 1 Male respondents' participation in offences over the preceding year, % of 15–16-year-old boys in Finland 1995–2008

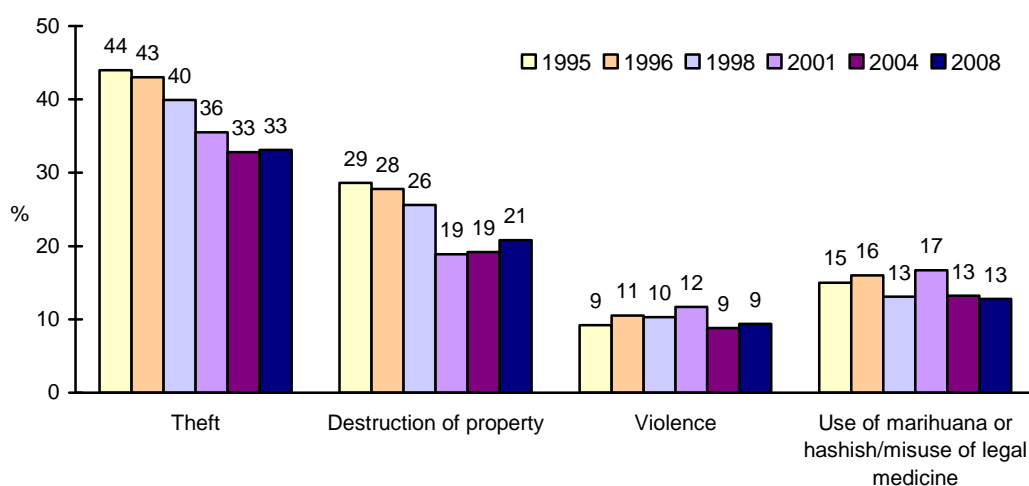


Figure 2 Female respondents' participation in offences over the preceding year, % of 15–16-year-old girls in Finland 1995–2008

One of the major trends during the FSRD has been the increasing prevalence of law-abidingness. In regard to the offences included in the sweeps, the percentage of adolescents refraining from all types of crime has increased. In the 2008 sweep, however, this trend seems to have come to a halt (Figure 3).

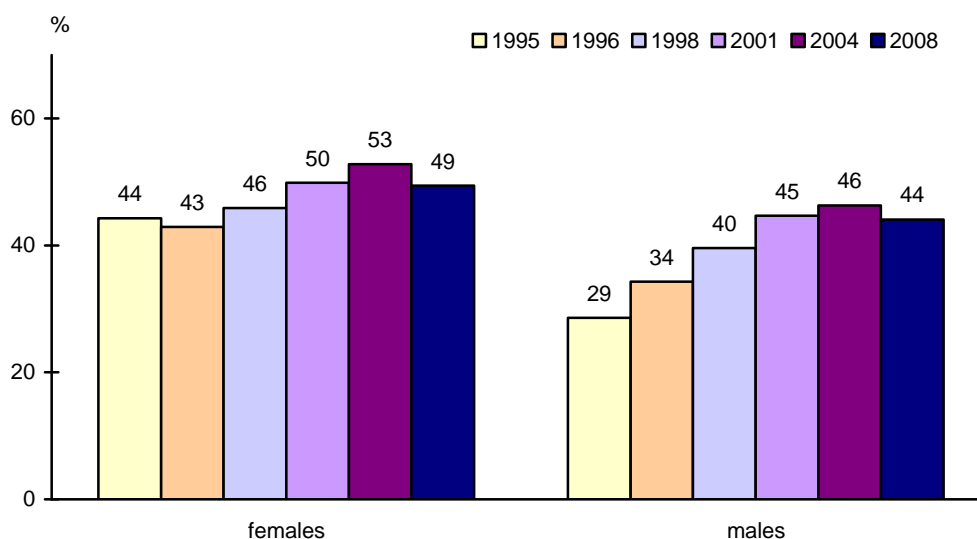


Figure 3 The percentage of respondents who refrained from delinquency during the preceding year, % of 15–16-year-old adolescents in Finland 1995–2008

Participation in offences

Table 1 shows last year prevalence of all offences included in the Finnish Self-Report Delinquency Study in 1995–2008. If the last two sweeps are compared, there are only a few significant differences in the prevalence rates. During the past four years marihuana/hashish use and auto thefts have become less prevalent, and stealing at home, bullying at school and the misuse of legal medicine more prevalent.

Table 1 The percentage of 15–16-year-old adolescents committing an offence during the preceding year, 1995–2008

	1995	1996	1998	2001	2004	2008
truancy	[46	42	43] ^a	39	38	41
running away from home	8	7	7	6	7	7
driving without a licence	[36]	25	20	22	24	23
graffiti writing/drawing	19	18	16	13	12	12
destruction of property at school	14	13	11	9	9	9
destruction of school exterior	20	16	14	10	11	11
shoplifting (from shops or kiosks)	15	19	15	12	10	10
stealing at school	30	27	21	19	17	15
stealing at home	20	21	21	17	17	20 ^{*g}
buying stolen goods	9	11	8	6	5	5
breaking into a building	..	..	..	..	..	8
auto theft	..	1	1	<1	1	<1 [*]
bullying at school	25	22	20	15	16	21 [*]
taking part in a fight ^b	13	14	13	14	12	11
beating up somebody	8	7	6	8	6	6
robbery ^c	..	..	..	..	..	1
use of marihuana or hashish	4	7	7	9	8	6 [*]
misuse of legal medicine ^d	9	8	6	8	5	7 [*]
use of other drugs ^e	..	..	..	1	1	2
drunken driving ^f	16	16	16	13	14	15
illegal downloading of files	..	..	..	..	..	69
N	1,195	4,204	4,503	4,347	5,142	5,826

.. = the question was not asked. a) Brackets indicate that the wording of the question was changed. b) Taking part in a fight in a public place. d) Use of legal medicine in order to become intoxicated. c) To threaten somebody with a weapon or to beat them up, to get money or other things from them e) Includes all other drug types. f) While using a motor vehicle. g) $*= p < .05$. Statistical significance refers to the difference between the findings of 2001 and 2004.

Crime-related attitudes

In the FSRD, crime-related attitudes are measured by items based on neutralization theory. The respondents were asked if they agree with various excuses and justifications for juvenile crime. The acceptance of such excuses has decreased, especially in the period 1995–2001. After that the trend has been more stable. On the whole, adolescents have become more punitive toward delinquent behaviour during the time span of FSRD. The trend is consistent with the declining trend of property offences: the lesser the prevalence of offending, the lesser the tolerance for delinquent behaviour.

Likelihood of police contact

The likelihood of adolescents becoming known to the police due to offending increased over the period 1995–2004, but the results of the last sweep in 2008 indicate that this trend has come to a halt. In the context of property destruction, violence and marihuana/hashish use, fewer adolescents had a police contact in 2008 than four years earlier. However, in shoplifting and in car thefts the probability of police contact increased. Regarding shoplifting, this may be due to the enhanced surveillance techniques and the rising propensity of shopkeepers to report shoplifters to the police. In general, the changes may reflect shifts in police resource allocation and increased eagerness of bystanders, victims and others to report juvenile misbehaviour to the police.

2 Finnish adolescents in peer-to-peer networks

Internet piracy and peer-to-peer (p2p) file sharing have sparked intense debate in the media. This notwithstanding, illegal downloading by Finnish adolescents has been studied very little, and our knowledge about the downloaders is limited. This article explores downloading from p2p networks by 15–16-year-old adolescents in Finland. The aim is to establish a reliable estimate of illegal downloading among Finnish adolescents, and to examine the background of p2p users: how do they differ from other youths? Frequent p2p users are analysed separately, and the correlation between illegal downloading and other delinquency is explored. The article draws on the Finnish Self-Report Delinquency Study data from the 2008 sweep (N=5,826), the first sweep to include questions about illegal downloading.

Illegal downloading from p2p networks is very prevalent among Finnish 9th grade students. 74 % of the students in the sample have downloaded illegal files, 69 % during the last 12 months. The most popular p2p-software among the Finnish youth is Limewire, followed by BitTorrent and Direct Connect. Of the adolescent who have downloaded files during the last 12 months, 29 % downloaded files daily or almost daily, 30 % 1–2 times a week, and 22 % 1–2 times a month. When asked “what is the file type you usually download”, mp3-files (music) were the most common (96 % prevalence), followed by movies and TV-series (46 %). Games (24 %) and other software (20 %) were not as popular as media content.

Sex differences in illegal downloading were rather small: 73 % of boys and 65 % of girls had downloaded files in the last 12 months. Although boys seemed to be more frequent and more versatile in terms of downloaded content and software used, the prevalence of girls’ p2p downloading is also very high. Girls concentrated heavily on media content, whereas boys downloaded also other content quite often.

Regarding law and attitudes to downloading, the majority (75 %) of young peer-to-peer downloaders knew that it was against the law. Almost half (47 %) of the sample thought that “uploading a copyrighted file to the internet, so that everyone could download it” was morally questionable, while 26 % felt this was the right thing to do.

When the sample was divided into three groups by the frequency of p2p downloading (never/sometimes/often), vast differences between the groups were found. The frequent users were much more versatile in their downloading, and tended to have a more positive attitude towards file sharing and other crimes as well. They performed worse than average in school and were more likely to opt for a vocational school instead of an upper secondary school. They were not different in terms of being bullied, but were much more likely to be bullies themselves. And finally, they showed a much higher prevalence rate in other delinquent acts, both violence- and property-related, and used alcohol much more often. The frequent users (N=489; 8 %) were mostly boys (72 %), but this does not explain the differences between the groups, as the same factors were also associated with frequent girl downloaders. Although illegal p2p downloading is a mass crime committed by the majority of Finnish adolescents, it seems that very frequent downloading is predicted by the same factors as the more “traditional” crimes.

In Finland, the rise of illegal p2p downloading seems to be an exception to the otherwise declining adolescent property crime in the past few years. Increased surveillance in retail stores and changes in leisure time usage are probably the biggest reasons changing the pattern of juvenile property

crime. Routine activities and rational choice can at least partly explain the structural change, where property crime is taken to an environment where control is virtually non-existent and crime opportunities vast.

The other major explanation for the high prevalence of illegal downloading relates to the previously confirmed research finding that downloading is not considered to be a serious offence, but more in the lines of under-age alcohol drinking, which is very common. Furthermore, only a small proportion of peer-to-peer users are delinquent outside the virtual world. However, active peer-to-peer downloading correlates very strongly with other delinquency. This finding is well compatible with criminological theories that emphasize general criminal propensity as the reason for crime.

3 Adolescents' alcohol consumption and risk behaviour in Finland

The article aims to assess drinking behaviour and reported alcohol-related harms and risk behaviour among the 15–16-year-old Finnish adolescents. Additionally, the main purpose of this study is to examine to what extent reported alcohol-related harms are associated with adolescent's subjective state of intoxication, frequency of drinking, self-control, social control, and family factors such as family composition and family's financial situation. Subsequently, four harm groups were formed and selected for closer contemplation, namely 1) physical harms (nausea, passing out, hangover), 2) social harms (regretting things said or done, argument with friends), 3) sexual risk-taking behaviour (having sex which was regretted the next day, intercourse without a condom), and 4) delinquency (delinquent behaviour, participating in a fight, trouble with the police or security guards). The article is based on the 2008 sweep of the Finnish Self-Report Delinquency Study (N=5,826).

The vast majority of the 15–16-year-old adolescents have drunk alcoholic beverages. From those consuming alcohol during the last year, 36 % had drunk alcohol at least once a month and 18 % had become intoxicated at least once a month. Boys (32 %) were more likely to abstain from alcohol than girls (29 %). During the latest drinking occasion, 26 % had felt being heavily intoxicated. While boys reported drinking mostly beer, girls preferred other low-alcohol beverages such as cider and long drink. Spirits were also likely to play a substantial role in adolescent's latest drinking occasion.

Adolescents' alcohol-related harms were explored within the subgroup of respondents who reported drinking alcohol during the last year (N=3,990). Adolescents had experienced a wide variety of alcohol-related

harms during the latest drinking incident. The most commonly reported harm for both boys and girls was hangover (36 %), followed by regret over things said or done (22 %) and nausea (17 %). Delinquency or sexual risk-taking behaviour was reported by six percent of the respondents.

Adolescent's drunkenness-oriented 'binge drinking' was strongly associated with alcohol-related harms. Physiological harms were evidently connected with heavy drunkenness but not, on the other hand, with the prevalent drinking behaviour. Instead, weekly alcohol consumption and drunkenness-oriented drinking were associated with social harms, and especially with sexual risk-taking behaviour and delinquency. Adolescent's low self-control was associated with all alcohol harm groups but most strongly with delinquency and sexual risk behaviour. Low parents' social control was related to social harms and delinquency.

The analysis of accumulation of the risk factors connected to alcohol-related delinquency showed that the more risk factors the adolescent had, the more prevalent were the experiences of alcohol-related delinquency. Results indicate that more serious alcohol-related harms tend to heap upon a specific group of adolescents who have both low self-control and a tendency towards frequent binge drinking.

4 The association between violent victimization and delinquent behaviour among adolescents in Finland

The article examines the association between violent victimization and delinquent behaviour among the 15–16-year-old adolescents in Finland. In addition to the respondents' own delinquent behaviour, the possible connection between several individual and family-level background factors and violent victimization was explored. The article draws on the Finnish Self-Report Delinquency Study using combined data from the 2008 (N=5,371) and 2004 (N=5,848) sweeps.

The results show a strong association between victimization and offending behaviour. When life style and other background factors are controlled for in logistic regression analyses, the results show that offenders are at an increased risk of becoming victims of violence as well. The analyses were executed with both the prevalence- and incidence-based variables of delinquent behaviour with similar results.

In the analyses, respondent's own criminal behaviour increases the probability of victimisation the most. Other factors significantly related to violent victimization are male gender, frequent alcohol consumption, risk-seeking behaviour, spending leisure time with friends older than the re-

spondent himself/herself, family's poor financial situation, and living in a town of more than 100,000 inhabitants. School achievements were weakly associated with the risk of violence victimization.

The article confirms the earlier findings that offending and victimization are not independent processes, and that the roles of victim and offender are often overlapping.

5 Dating violence victimization among 15–16-year-old adolescents in Finland

This article explores dating violence experiences among the 15–16-year-old adolescent in Finland. It draws on the Finnish Self-Report Delinquency Study data from the 2008 sweep (N=5,836). The prevalence of verbal and physical dating violence, as well as the risk factors of dating violence were explored among those respondents who were dating at the time of data gathering (28 % of female respondents and 19 % of male respondents, N= 1,358).

One in four dating adolescents had experienced threat of violence or physical violence perpetrated by the present partner. The most prevalent forms of dating violence were grabbing, preventing respondent from moving freely, and slapping. Two percent of females and nine percent of males reported having been hit with a fist or with a hard object or kicked by the current partner (Figure 1). Partner's jealousy, name-calling and insulting behaviour were equally prevalent among both sexes, whereas exposure to physical violence was significantly more prevalent among boys. Similarly, boys were more prone to experience repeated physical victimization.

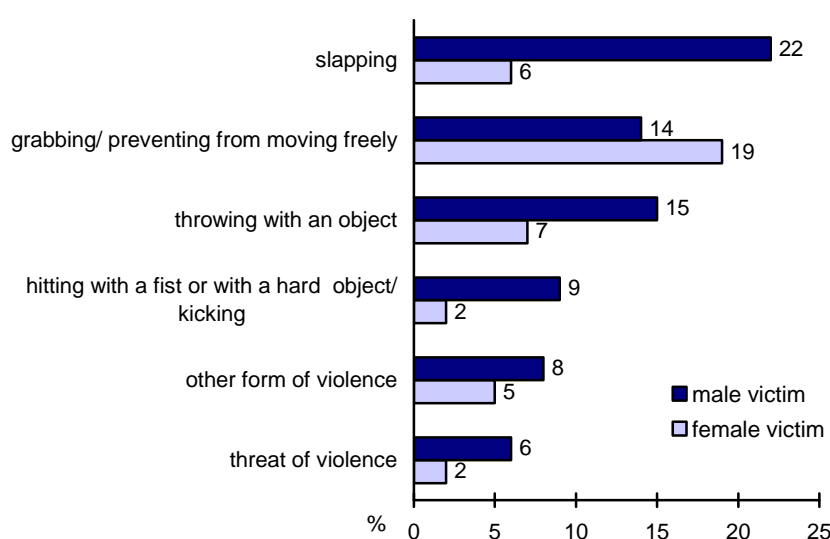


Figure 4 Percentage of adolescents exposed to dating violence perpetrated by present partner, of 15–16-year-old dating adolescents (N=1,358)

Dating violence victimization was related to different forms of risk behaviour such as delinquency and victimization outside the dating relationship. Same risk factors were correlated with the dating itself. Adolescents who were dating used intoxicants more frequently, had lower academic achievements, and had committed offences more frequently than their non-dating peers. It seems that dating itself is associated with risky lifestyle regardless of the possible experiences of inter-relationship violence. This notwithstanding repeated dating violence victimization was linked even stronger to these factors.

Results indicate that even repeated dating violence victimization is not associated with depression or low self-satisfaction among the Finnish youth. As far as the feeling of safety is concerned, repeated dating violence victimization seems to leave the boys with a sense of insecurity when other victimization experiences are controlled for, whereas the girls have no such notion.

Possible explanations for boys' more prevalent dating violence victimization may relate to the attitudes and cultural norms towards violence, as well as to the tight association between dating violence and risky life-style factors. It is known that attitudes regarding male violence against female partner are more punitive whereas female violence is more easily accepted or not taken as seriously (e.g. Price et al. 1999; Sears et al. 2006). These attitudes may have a bearing on the actual behaviour. On the other hand, dating at the age of 15 or 16 is more normative behaviour among girls than boys. It is possible that the different forms of risk behaviour (including dating violence victimization) are more strongly related to the selected population of dating boys.

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