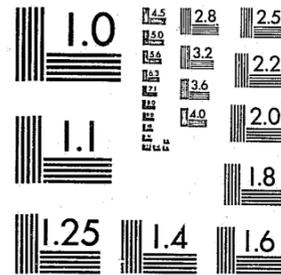


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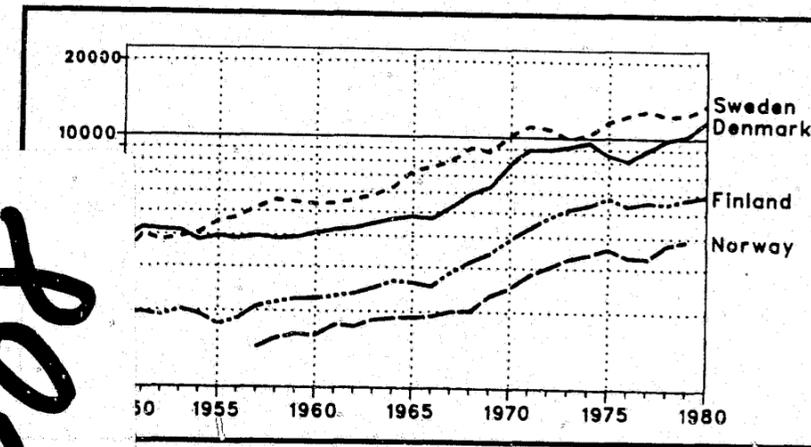
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and Welfare Statistics

PROMEMORIA 1982:15



NORDIC CRIMINAL STATISTICS 1950-1980



89808



Statistics Sweden

S-115 81 Stockholm

NORDIC CRIMINAL STATISTICS 1950-1980
Presentation of a report

By Hanns von Hofer*

Criminal statistics from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden have been compiled in a joint Nordic effort conducted under the auspices of the Nordic Committee on Criminal Statistics (NUK), and have been published under the title Nordisk kriminalstatistik 1950-1980.**

This paper is a presentation of the above report. It should be noted that the larger report does not contain any description or interpretation of the data presented. Its purpose instead is to provide researchers with a carefully documented sourcebook on Nordic criminal statistics.

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*) Translated by Karen Leander.

***) Nordic Criminal Statistics 1950-1980, Copenhagen 1982, 468 pp.

The report can be obtained from Nordisk Statistisk Sekretariat, Sejrøgade 11, Postbox 2550, DK-2100 Copenhagen Ø.

Figure 1: Contents of the Report

Police and Court Statistics on 10 types of offences, divided into	
- reported offences	(yearly data, 1950-1980)
- clearance rate	(yearly data, 1950-1980)
- persons found guilty	(yearly data, 1950-1980)
- persons found guilty, by sanction	(5-year intervals, 1950-1980)
All Offences Against the Penal Code, by sanction	
- imprisonment	(yearly data, 1950-1980)
- fines	(yearly data, 1950-1980)
- suspended sentence ¹	(yearly data, 1950-1980)
- waivers of prosecution ²	(yearly data, 1950-1980)
- other sanctions	(yearly data, 1950-1980)
- all sanctions	(yearly data, 1950-1980)
All Offences Against the Penal Code, by age	
- 15 (Norway 14)-17 years	(yearly data, 1950-1980)
- 18-20 years	(yearly data, 1950-1980)
- 21-24 years	(yearly data, 1950-1980)
- 25-(67) years	(yearly data, 1950-1980)
- all ages	(yearly data, 1950-1980)

Included is an appendix which contains verbal descriptions of police and court statistical routines in the different countries, a description of the systems of sanctions, and population tables (by age) for the years 1950-1980.

As an introduction to our project, we will begin by presenting two methods with which it is considered possible to compile international criminal statistics:

* The first method is initiated by the selection of certain types of offences and an investigation into whether the legal definitions of these offences in the different countries are comparable. It is then determined by examining relevant publications whether the statistical definitions also are comparable. The data which are found to contain comparable legal and statistical definitions are compiled.

- 1) A generic term including other sanctions such as probation, supervision, conditional sentence etc.
- 2) Although Scandinavian prosecutors are in principle under an absolute obligation to prosecute all cases for which there exists sufficient evidence, several sections of the law permit a prosecutor to waive prosecution for both serious and minor offences, usually due to the youth or disability of the offender. These waivers are considered findings of guilt.

* The second method begins in the opposite direction with a search through statistical publications for those types of offences which appear to be comparable. The data on these offences are then compiled and the legal rules and statistical procedures applied in each country are documented. Any final assessment on the comparability of the data then is left to the consumer of the statistics to make.

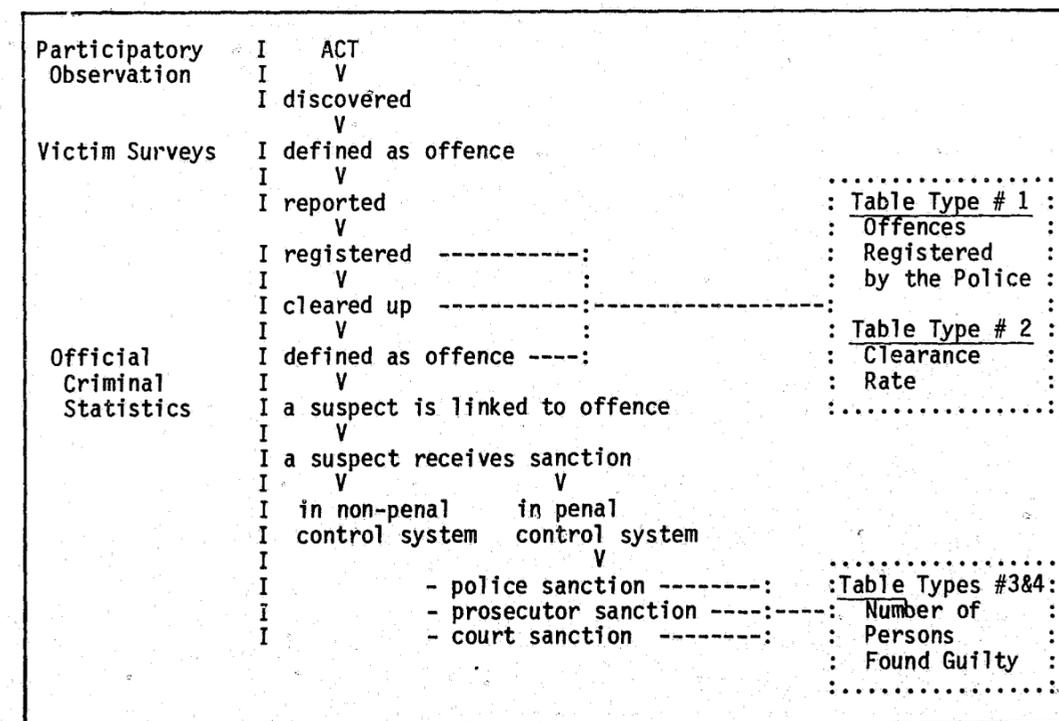
It may be the case that these two methods sound so similar to one another that choosing between them seems rather meaningless. It has proven in practice³, however, that only the second method is likely to produce results.

Thus, we have chosen to use the second method.

1 Choice of Statistics

Criminal statistics can be compiled on the basis of data obtained at several points in the criminal justice process, as shown in the following simplified flow-chart of this process:

Figure 2. Flow-Chart of the Criminal Justice Process



3) For a more detailed discussion, see Collmann (1973) and Vetere-Newman (1977) for their histories of international crime statistics and references.

For our purposes, we have chosen to compile and compare "official" statistics for registered and cleared offences as well as for persons found guilty of these offences. Observe that the units measured in the tables shift between offences (Table Types ## 1 & 2) and offenders (Table Types ## 3 & 4).

A joint Scandinavian study on correctional systems currently underway precludes any presentation of statistics on corrections in this study.

Based on the idea of a flow-chart like the one shown above, idealized criminal statistics for one country might take the following form:

Figure 3. Idealized Presentation of Criminal Statistics

CRIME CATEGORY (= offence description)	STATISTICS ON OFFENCES		STATISTICS ON OFFENDERS/SANCTIONS	
	Offences Registered by Police	Clearance Rate	Number of Persons Found Guilty	Number of Persons Found Guilty, by Sanction
	Table Types			
	# 1	# 2	# 3	# 4
1. Murder	:	:	:	:
2. Assault	:	:	:	:
3. Rape	:	:	:	:
4. Robbery	:	:	:	:
5. Breaking and Entering	: exactly same crime description :		:	:
6. Theft of Motorvehicle	:	:	:	:
7. Other Theft	: exactly same populations (offences) :		: exactly same populations (offenders) :	
8. All Theft	:	:	:	:
9. Fraud	:	:	:	:
10. Remaining Offences	:	:	:	:
11. Drunken Driving	:	:	:	:
12. All Offences against the Penal Code	:	:	:	:

Of course it is impossible each time, if ever, to meet the requirements of "exactly same crime description" and "exactly same populations". Therefore, deviations from these criteria in the statistics have been cited in the introduction to each section on the various types of offences and in the notes to the tables. While we have documented these deviations as thoroughly as possible, such efforts are and will remain unsatisfactory, since our statistical sources offer only fragmentary information on this point and since much of the relevant working knowledge accumulated through the years unfortunately has been lost.

2 Choice of Offences

A well-known publication on crime statistics is Interpol's "International Crime Statistics", which has been published since 1954.

Although we have adopted Interpol's basic language in our report, we have taken extensive liberties with the intended definitions of the offences. It has been our overall goal to choose as well-defined crime categories as possible.

The law sections from each country covering these offences are presented in complete form and are compared with one another in the report. However, below are some additional general comments on our offence definitions:

- * **Murder**
This offence includes attempts and various forms of participation⁴. Comparisons of murder rates are complicated by the inclusion under this heading of the category "Assault resulting in death" in some countries.
- * **Rape**
Rape is the only sex offence included in the present statistics, due to the unspecified nature of Interpol's Sex Offences category.
- * **Assault**
This category is not limited to serious assaults. "Violence against public servant" was excluded for volume reasons and here again "Assault resulting in death" complicates our attempts at comparison.
- * **Robbery**
We have treated Robbery as a separate offence category and thus have not included it under the heading All Theft below (in contrast from Interpol's practice.)
- * **Theft**
Breaking and Entering
Two different legal concepts are included in this offence category: the traditional breaking and

4) This is true for all offences reported herein.

entering offence and serious theft. The acts covered by these two legal concepts do not overlap entirely.

Theft of Motorvehicle

Cars, motorcycles and mopeds are herein considered motorvehicles. Discrepancies between the legal definitions of theft, unauthorized taking or use make comparisons difficult.

Other Theft

This category contains the remaining thefts. Receiving stolen goods is not included.

All Theft

All of the above theft categories are encompassed under All Theft. As stated above, robbery is not included.

*

Fraud

The possibility of making comparisons between fraud offences in the different countries is slight.

*

Drug Offences

Despite the immense current interest in drug offences, they have not been included in these statistics because of the unavailability of long term series due to the largely modern character of the offences.

*

Drunken Driving

Although excluded from Interpol's statistics, these offences are included in our publication in recognition of the considerable practical and theoretical attention they have attracted in the Nordic countries.⁵

Drunken Driving, however, is not included in "All Offences Against the Penal Code" below.

*

Remaining Offences Against the Penal Code

This category is used to indicate whether the total number of remaining offences which are covered by the Penal Codes differs from country to country.

*

All Offences Against the Penal Code

Due to the fact that Denmark and Norway do not produce special detailed accounts of offences against special legislation, this catch-all category (corresponding to Interpol's "Total Number of Offences") deals only with offences against the Penal Codes.

Drunkenness has been excluded from Finland's data and drunkenness/disorderly conduct from Sweden's.

The above offence selections are open to criticism for their almost exclusive focus on traditional crimes, while the

5) Cf. Scandinavian Studies in Criminology, Vol. 6 (1978).

so-called modern criminality is neglected. But until we reach the point that is possible to use a small number of categories as indicators of modern criminality, these shortcomings cannot be avoided in a publication such as ours which is aimed at documentation and not at the construction of new offence classifications.

It is also the case that the greatest proportion of the resources allotted to the criminal justice systems (except for that spent on traffic criminality) is actually spent on the offences listed above, a fact which of course is reflected in official statistics.

3 Commentary to the Statistics on Offenders/Sanctions

The main difficulty in compiling the sanction tables (see Figure 1 above) has been to condense a large number⁶ of diverse sanctions into a small number of representative categories. The resulting selections should not be taken as authoritative, but rather as one possible scheme among others.⁷

To save resources, the data in the tables on "Number of Persons Found Guilty, by Sanction" are given in 5-year intervals. However, the presentation of "All Offences Against the Penal Code, by Sanction" is given in yearly data.

Finally, crude data on age distribution are presented. Age is a very important criminological variable, for which reason it would be desirable to report offenders within each crime category by age as well as by sanction. However, technical obstacles (such as large gaps in the data on age, etc.) prevent this. Data on age therefore have been confined to the category "All Offences Against the Penal Code".

4 Description of Working Procedure

All of our tables were originally compiled at the Central Bureau of Statistics (SCB) in Stockholm. Drafts were sent to the main statistical bureau in each Nordic country, where they were corrected and supplemented. SCB then performed necessary computations and was responsible for the final typing and printing of the material. It took about 5 years to complete the report.

The base figures for each country have been obtained primarily from official criminal statistical publications. The data have been independently checked by several individuals so that a high degree of reliability is assured.

6) The Swedish sanction data, for example, consisted of more than 25 categories for 1977.

7) See, for example, Sveri (1977); NU A 1980:13.

Several additional computations have been made to facilitate use of the tables. All computations were performed electronically so that the risk for counting errors is non-existent.

Printing of the tables was made using a word processing machine. In that way, it was possible to attain automatic controls for most tables. The number of printing errors in the figures therefore should be minimal. (There are approximately 70,000 digits in the report.)

The errors which nevertheless may appear are of three types:

- * errors in the basic statistical publications which have not been discovered;
- * errors in the judgement of how a series should be continued, for example, after a statistical reorganization;
- * factual or printing errors in the text, which in any case should not affect the information given in figures.

To further increase the usefulness of the publication, about 60 curve diagrams and bar graphs have been added.

5 Comparability

The issue of whether or not it is rewarding to use official criminal statistics as the basis of criminal policy decisions or in conducting scientific studies, is one of the classic debates within criminology.⁸ No definitive answer to this question is provided here, and the dilemma certainly will not be solved through theoretical analyses or statements. The problem is empirical in nature so that each intended use of the data will itself determine whether or not they are suitable as the basis for analysis.

Comparative analyses generally fall into three categories:

- * distribution comparisons
- * level comparisons
- * trends over time

Distribution comparisons are aimed at such questions as: Do property crimes dominate the crime picture in different countries? What is the age profile for persons found guilty of offences in different countries?

The relevant questions for level comparisons are of the type: Which country has the highest frequency of robbery? Which country makes the most use of fines as a criminal sanction?

⁸) Cf. the international bibliography in Kerner (1973, pp. 191-213).

On the other hand, interpretations of trends concern such questions as: Does the development of robbery differ over time between the different countries? Has the use of conditional sentences varied in the respective countries during the 1970's?

Before these questions can be answered, it should be noted that official statistics on crimes and sanctions are fundamentally dependent upon the following three sets of circumstances:

actual circumstances

- * such as propensity to commit crimes, opportunity structure, risk of discovery, propensity to report crimes, etc.;

legal circumstances

- * formal: design of the Penal Code, of the Code of Judicial Procedure, and of welfare legislation, etc., and the formal organization of the control bodies;
- * informal: application of the laws and the praxis of the control bodies;

statistical circumstances:

- * formal: collection and processing regulations
- * informal: the collection and processing procedures in operation.

To ensure reliability when conducting distribution and level comparisons, one must carefully control for the legal and statistical circumstances before observed similarities or dissimilarities in the data can be deemed as real, that is, as due to actual circumstances.

The demands are somewhat different when determining trends over time. For such analyses, the "real" level on which the time series lies need not be known; instead it is sufficient to control for possible changes in the legal and statistical systems. Naturally, this is a difficult task, and isolating the informal changes in the criminal justice procedures and in the statistical routines is especially tricky.

The basic premise underlying the analysis of trends is that changes in the series are ascribed to changes in actual circumstances ("real" changes), if changes in the legal and statistical systems reasonably can be ruled out. Comparisons of trends begin to resemble the above discussed level comparisons when changes in the different factors coincide time-wise. In those cases, it is important to hold the effects of the different factors separate (which often is not possible.)

In conclusion, there are two main problems that a comparative analysis of time series must face and solve:

- * the continuity problem, and
- * the congruence problem.

The problem of continuity concerns the question of whether the individual time series (for example, registered robberies in country A) reflects the same legal and statistical content at all points of measurement, and the question of how possible changes will be assessed.

The problem of congruence (which even occurs in distribution and level comparisons) concerns the question of whether the data being analysed from each country are comparable.

In order to facilitate statistical analyses in light of the continuity and congruence problems, we have documented

- * the applicable law sections, with interpretations and potential amendments, and
- * the statistical procedures in use, and revisions of them.

Not included in the report, however, are discussions of judicial procedure or of other relevant legal topics (such as social welfare legislation); nor have studies on the effects of changes in the legal system, etc., or on the quality of statistics⁹, been cited. A presentation of such scope would require an entire report in itself.

* * * * *

Following is a selection of diagrams showing offences registered by the police. The data are calculated in relation to the population between 15 (the age of criminal responsibility, Norway 14) and 67 years of age at the end of the year.

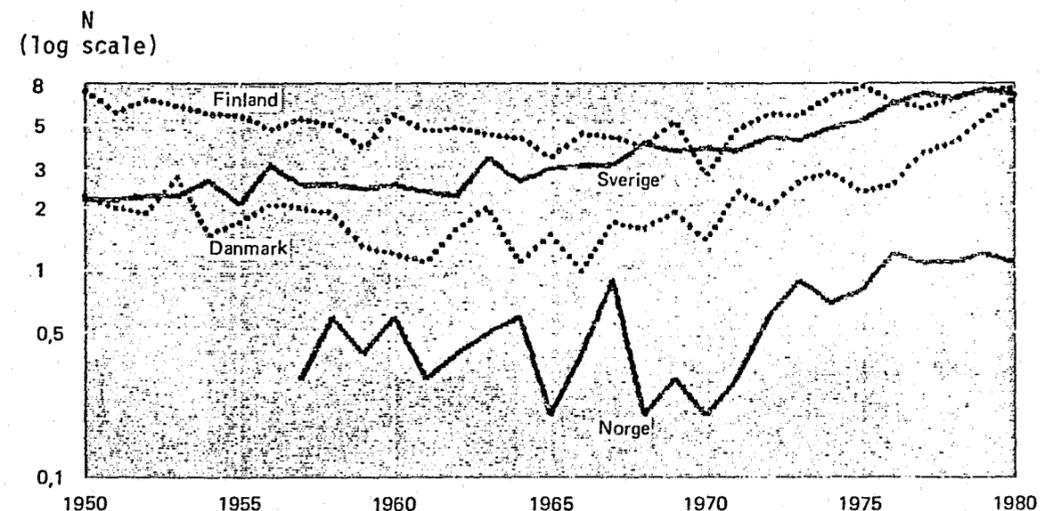
In addition, a few commentaries on quality and comparability have been attached.

9) Such studies would make possible closer scrutiny of the informal factors and their influence on official statistics.

Diagram 1: MURDER
Registered offences per 100,000 of the population, 15 (14)-67 years, 1950-1980.

	Section of Law 1980	Changes in legislation	Revision of statistical routines
Denmark	PC Sec. 237	-	1979
Finland	PC Chap. 21, Sec. 1-2	1970	1970
Norway	PC Sec. 233	-	-
Sweden	PC Chap. 3, Sec. 1-2	1965	1965, 1968, 1975
	including "Assault resulting in death"		

PC = Penal Code



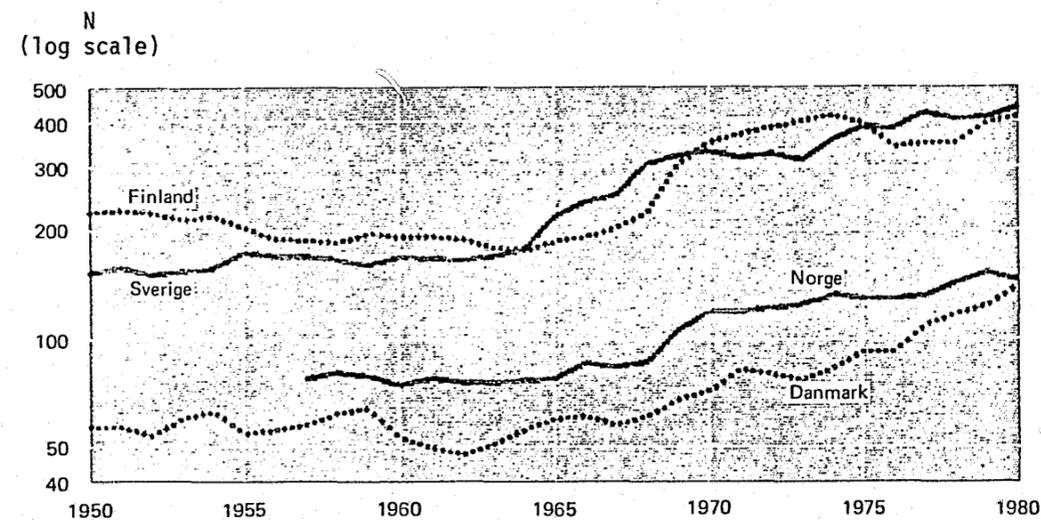
Danmark = Denmark
Finland = Finland
Norge = Norway
Sverige = Sweden

Comparisons with cause-of-death statistics show that this diagram underestimates the position of Finland and Norway. The likely correct ranking order is the following: Finland clearly the highest, followed by Sweden and lastly Denmark and Norway (with some uncertainty as to the order between the latter two). The main reason that the diagram gives a somewhat distorted picture is that the proportion of crime attempts varies between countries.

On the other hand, the diagram most likely gives a correct picture of trends. However, the rate of increase is somewhat exaggerated, since crime attempts increased more rapidly than completed crimes.

Diagram 2: ASSAULT
Registered offences per 100,000 of the population, 15 (14)-67 years, 1950-1980.

	Section of Law 1980	Changes in legislation	Revision of statistical routines
Denmark	PC Sec. 244-246	-	1979
Finland	PC Chap. 21, Sec. 5-8	1970, 1975	1970
Norway	PC Sec. 228, 229, 231	-	-
Sweden	PC Chap. 3, Sec. 5-6	1965	1965, 1968, 1975 excluding "Assault resulting in death"

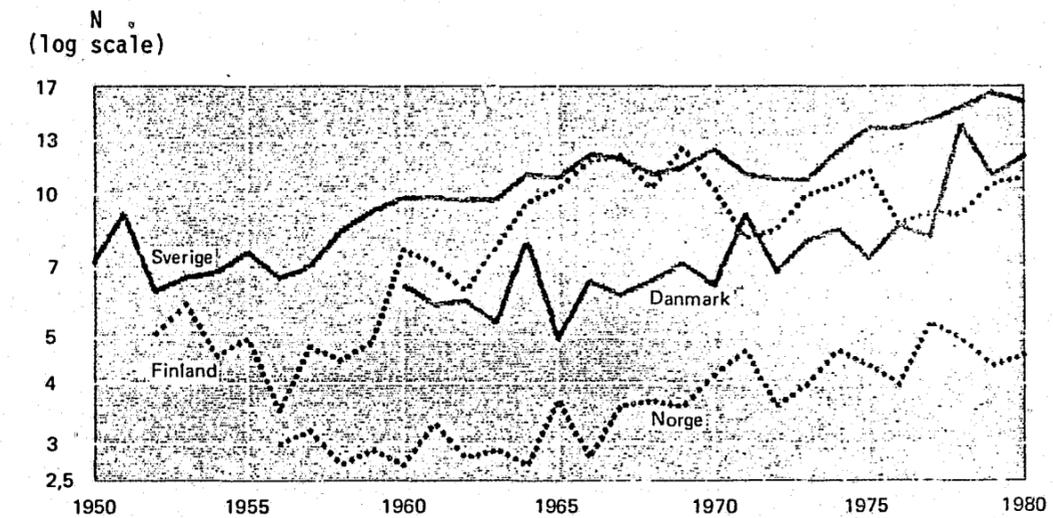


Comparisons with victim surveys lead to the conclusion that this diagram correctly describes the crime levels. Assault is more common in Finland and Sweden than in Norway and Denmark.

The increase in all countries from the middle of the 1960's is most likely an actual increase, judging from comparisons with statistics of persons found guilty and of alcohol statistics.

Diagram 3: RAPE
Registered offences per 100,000 of the population, 15 (14)-67 years, 1950-1980.

	Section of Law 1980	Changes in legislation	Revision of statistical routines
Denmark	PC Sec. 216-217 (224, 226)	1965, 1967	1973, 1979
Finland	PC Chap. 20, Sec. 1	1971	-
Norway	PC Sec. 192	1963	-
Sweden	PC Chap. 6, Sec. 1	1965	1965, 1968, 1975

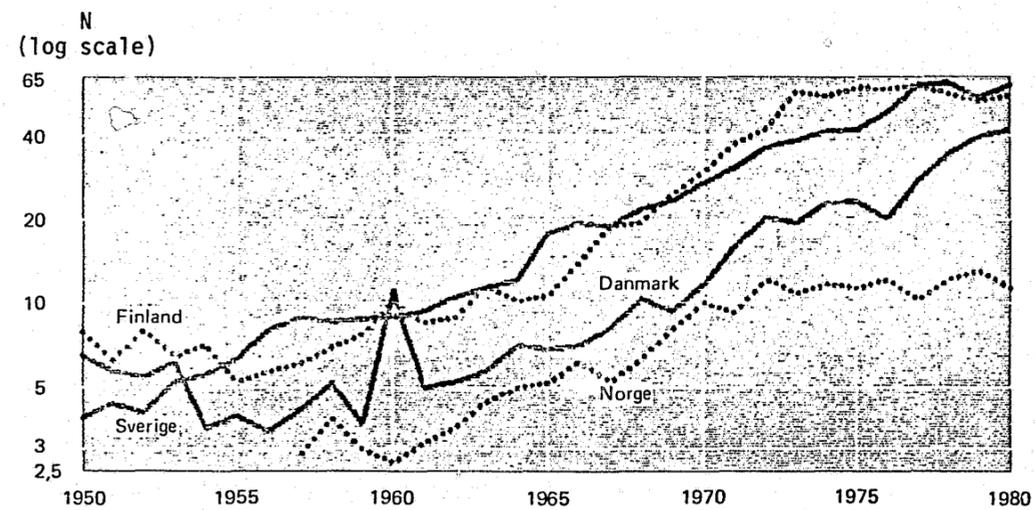


It is difficult to judge the reliability of the information in this diagram, since comparable statistics from areas other than criminal statistics are lacking. Therefore, no definite ranking order between countries can be discerned.

Comparisons with statistics on persons found guilty show that the registered criminality during the 1970's seems to have increased in Denmark and Norway, while it has decreased in Finland.

Diagram 4: ROBBERY
Registered offences per 100,000 of the population, 15 (14)-67 years, 1950-1980.

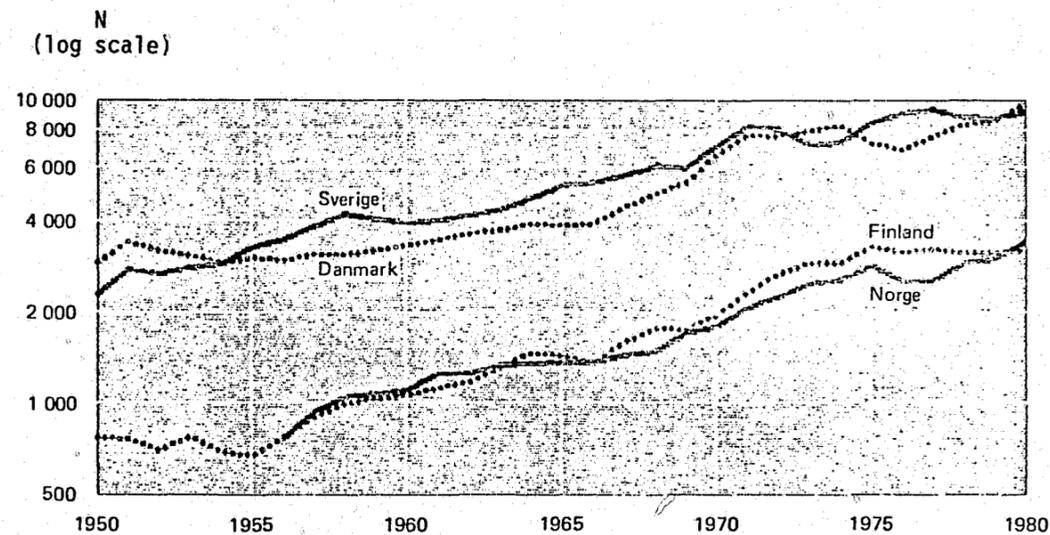
	Section of Law 1980	Changes in legislation	Revision of statistical routines
Denmark	PC Sec. 288	-	1979
Finland	PC Chap. 31, Sec. 1-3	1973	-
Norway	PC Sec. 267, 268 ² , 269	1967, 1972	-
Sweden	PC Chap. 8, Sec. 5-6	1965, 1976	1965, 1968, 1975



Comparable statistics are lacking from other areas for this crime category. Comparisons with statistics on persons found guilty nevertheless lead to the conclusion that the crime of robbery has increased in all of our countries. The levelling off which took place in Norway and Finland in the 1970's is also found in the statistics on persons found guilty.

Diagram 5: THEFT
Registered offences per 100,000 of the population, 15 (14)-67 years, 1950-1980.

	Section of Law 1980	Changes in legislation	Revision of statistical routines
Denmark	PC Sec. 276, 293 ¹	1961, 1963	1959, 1979
Finland	PC Chap. 28, Sec. 1-3 Chap. 38, Sec. 6a 2-4	1964, 1973	-
Norway	PC Sec. 257, 258, 260	1972	-
Sweden	PC Chap. 8, Sec. 1-4, 7-11	1965, 1972, 1976	1965, 1968, 1975



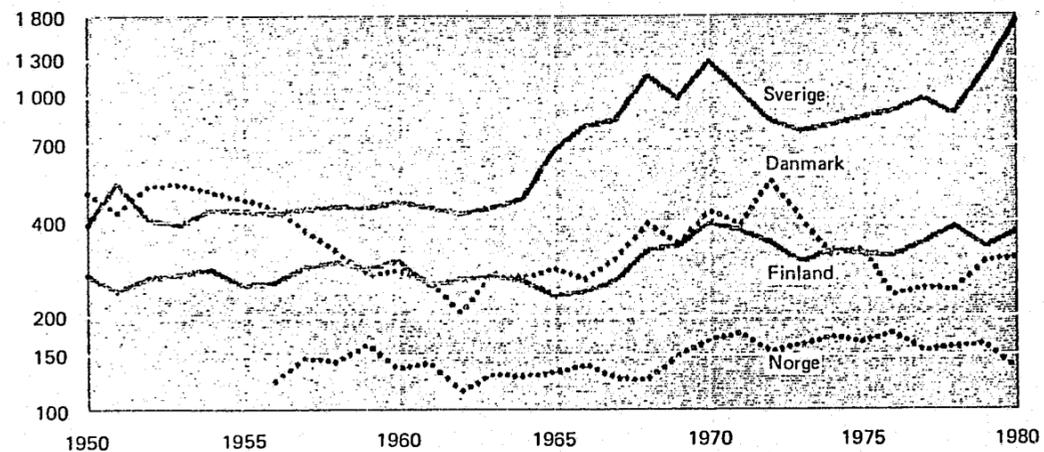
Comparisons with victim surveys give a consistent picture: theft crimes are higher in Sweden and Denmark than in Norway and Finland. Levels of consumption in the different countries also fall into this order.

Even the increases over time in all likelihood are real.

Diagram 6: FRAUD
Registered offences per 100,000 of the population, 15 (14)-67 years, 1950-1980.

	Section of Law 1980	Changes in legislation	Revision of statistical routines
Denmark	PC Sec. 278-280, 283	1973	1979
Finland	PC Chap. 36, Sec. 1, 1a; Chap. 29, Sec. 1-3	1973	-
Norway	PC Sec. 255-256, 270-278	-	1975
Sweden	PC Chap. 9, Sec. 1-3, 8-10; Chap. 10	1965, 1971, 1977	1965, 1968, 1975

N
(log scale)

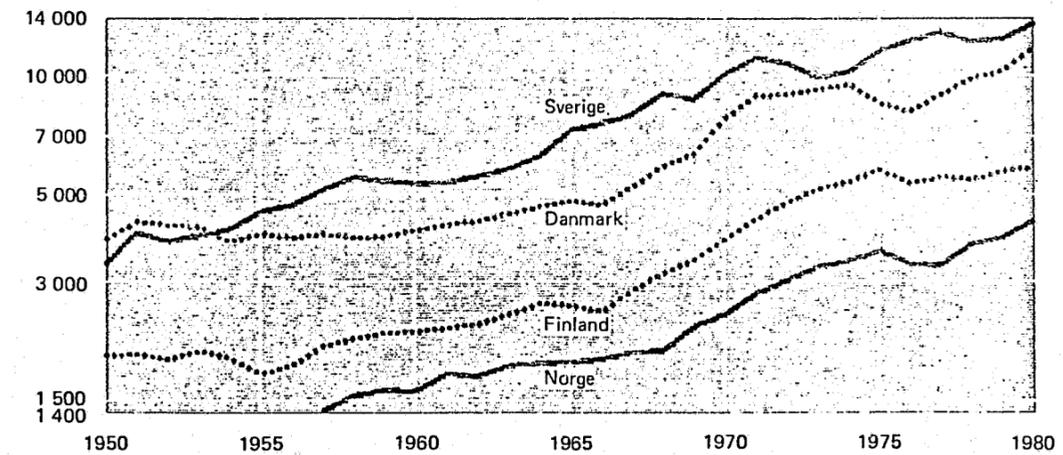


It is difficult to judge the reliability of the information in this diagram, as comparable statistics are lacking from areas other than criminal statistics. On the other hand, it is likely that the trends are described correctly, judging from comparisons with statistics on persons found guilty.

Diagram 7: ALL OFFENCES AGAINST THE PENAL CODE
Registered offences per 100,000 of the population, 15 (14)-67 years, 1950-1980.

	Section of Law 1980	Changes in legislation	Revision of statistical routines
Denmark	Total Penal Code	..	1979
Finland	Total Penal Code, excl Chap. 23, Sec. 1-7	..	-
Norway	Total Penal Code, excl drug offences	..	-
Sweden	Total Penal Code, excl disorderly conduct	..	1965, 1968, 1972

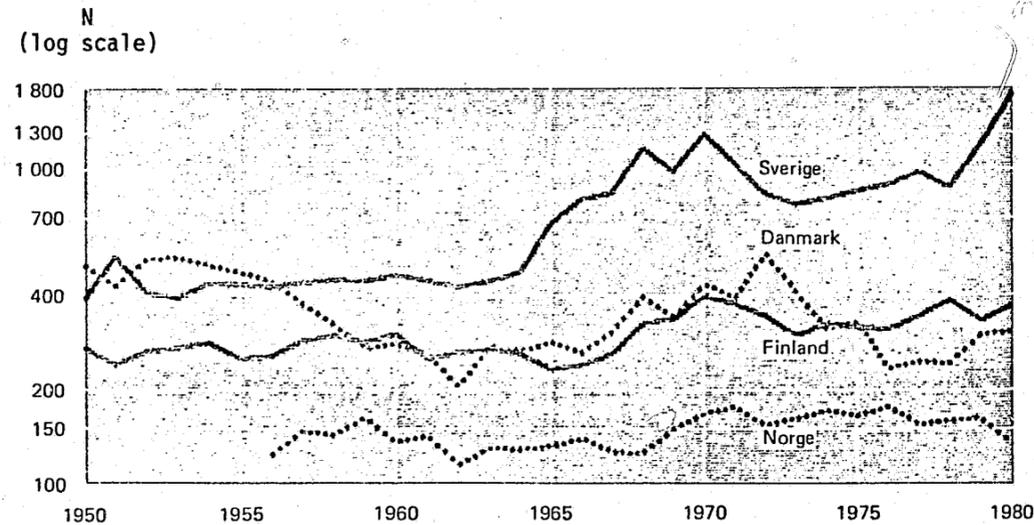
N
(log scale)



Primarily, this diagram is a reflection of the scope and development of property crimes in the different countries (Cf. Diagrams 5 and 6 above). At the same time, the diagram describes the differing coverage of the legislation (more comprehensive criminalization in Sweden and Finland than in Norway and Denmark).

Diagram 6: FRAUD
Registered offences per 100,000 of the population, 15 (14)-67 years, 1950-1980.

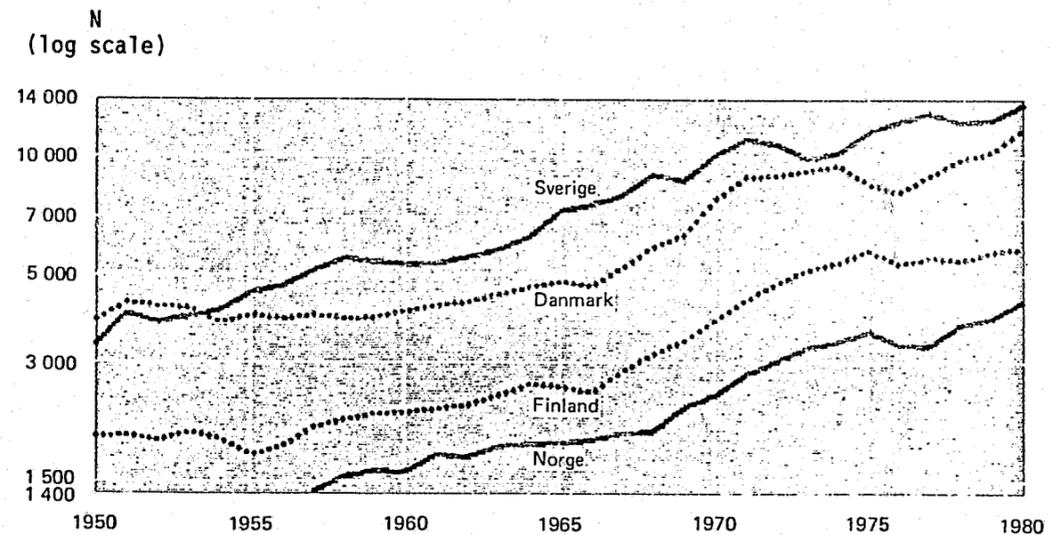
	Section of Law 1980	Changes in legislation	Revision of statistical routines
Denmark	PC Sec. 278-280, 283	1973	1979
Finland	PC Chap. 36, Sec. 1, 1a; Chap. 29, Sec. 1-3	1973	-
Norway	PC Sec. 255-256, 270-278	-	1975
Sweden	PC Chap. 9, Sec. 1-3, 8-10; Chap. 10	1965, 1971, 1977	1965, 1968, 1975



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Denmark	Total Penal Code	..	1979
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Norway	Total Penal Code, excl drug offences	..	-
Sweden	Total Penal Code, excl disorderly conduct	..	1965, 1968, 1972



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