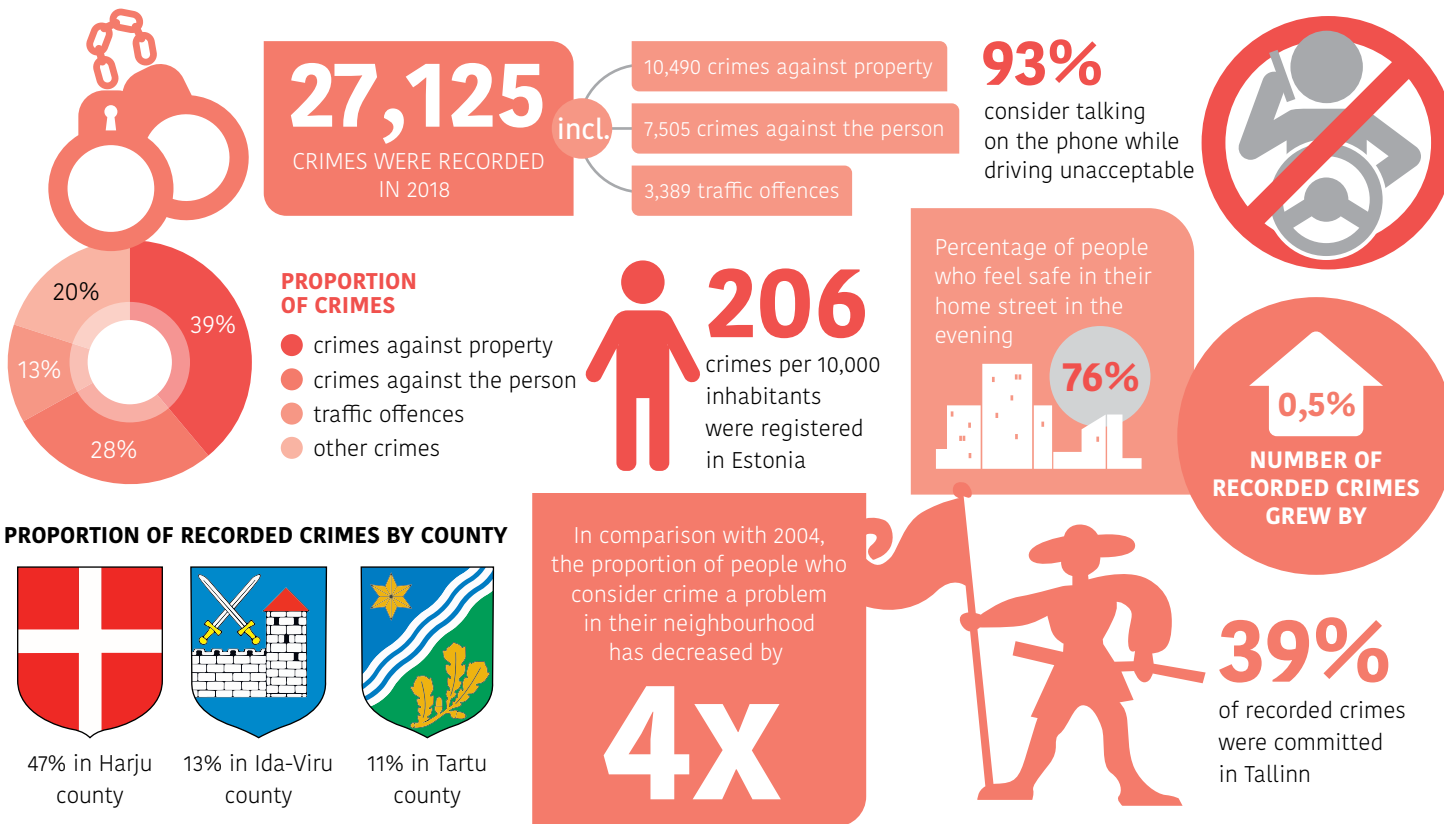


2. OVERVIEW OF CRIME

ANDRI AHVEN



Recorded crimes

According to official statistics as well as surveys conducted among people, recorded crimes have declined significantly over the last ten years. **In 2018, the falling trend of crimes was interrupted for the first time in the last 15 years, in particular due to the increase in crimes against the person.** The earlier decline is, first and foremost, a result of the decline in crimes against property, as the high proportion of such has the biggest impact on the overall picture regarding crime.

At the same time, the bigger picture of crimes against the person is not quite that unambiguous, as the majority involve direct violence or the threat thereof. The most severe cases of violence, such as manslaughter, murder, negligent homicide and causing serious health damage, have been declining almost without interruption, however, accounts of physical abuse and threats have increased in recent years. On the one hand, such evolution represents an actual decline in serious cases of violence, while on the other hand also

demonstrating increased attention of the public and the police on domestic violence and the so-called smaller cases of violence, whereas data from surveys and other sources does not necessarily indicate actual remarkable growth of such violence.

In terms of the structure of crimes, the proportion of crimes against property has been on a

steady decline, whereas the share of crimes against the person is generally on the rise. In 2018, the number of crimes against property decreased by 3% (-353), whereas recorded crimes against the person increased by 27% (+1,610). The number of crimes against political and civil rights increased considerably as well (+113; +50%), due to the fact that the number of stalking cases more than doubled.

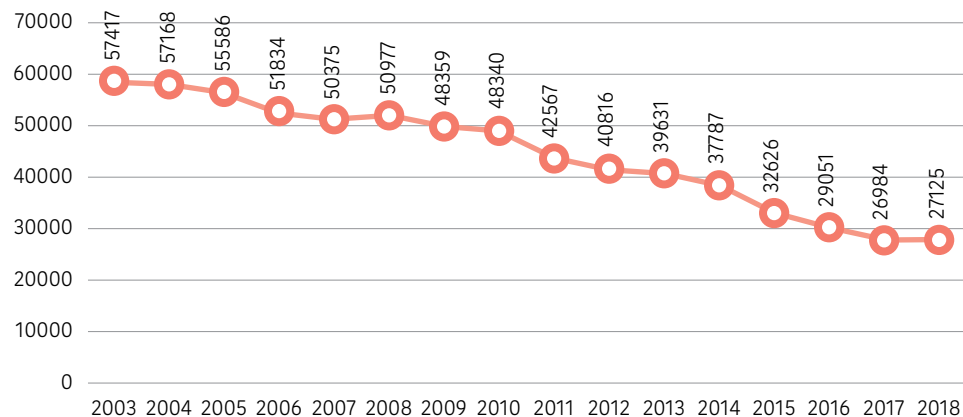


Figure 1. Number of recorded crimes¹

¹ The data from 2015–2017 have been corrected since a small number of crimes had been left out due to a technical error. Previously published data: 2015: 32,575; 2016: 28,986; 26,929.

In terms of separate types of crimes, the most common crimes recorded in 2018 were theft (7,403 crimes), physical abuse (5,966) and driving of power-driven vehicle in state of intoxication (2,661).

The crime rate per 10,000 inhabitants was highest in Ida-Viru county (263 crimes), followed by Jõgeva county (250) and Harju county (215, incl. Tallinn 245) – Figure 2. The crime rate remained the lowest on Western Estonia's islands.

Victim survey (people survey)

Official statistics can be affected by various factors that make comparison of data over time more complex, such as changes in legislation, the procedure of recording cases, priorities and resources, as well as how active people are in notifying the police of crimes. Therefore, people surveys (victim surveys) provide important additional insights, even though the data from these surveys is not directly comparable with official statistics

(e.g. cases perceived as crimes by respondents may not be crimes in the legal sense).

The results of victim surveys carried out in Estonia generally confirm the trends revealed in official statistics: **in general, crime rate has reduced in the last ten years thanks to the declining number of thefts in particular, whereas the sense of security has increased.** Results of the 2018 survey showed that the declining trend of crimes came to a halt, as did the number of recorded crimes, even though variations over consecutive years have generally been insignificant.² According to the victim survey, 6% of respondents fell victim to a crime in 2018 (5% in 2017, but the change falls within statistical error).

Victim surveys have shown that the number of victims of some violent crimes, such as theft, attacks, threats, has decreased in comparison with the beginning of the decade, however, this decline has come to a stop over the last couple of years. The proportion of victims of crimes of theft has demonstrated even greater decline, but this as well has stopped. Changes in all types of crimes between 2016 and 2018 have remained within the limits of statistical error.

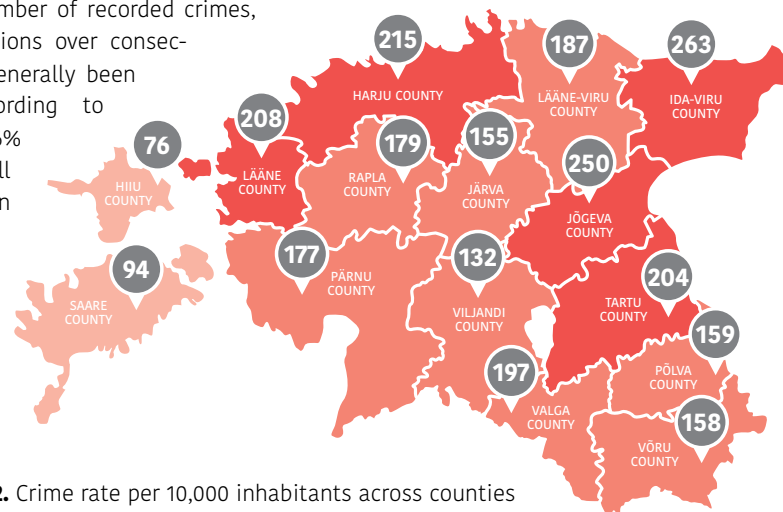


Figure 2. Crime rate per 10,000 inhabitants across counties

² In December 2018, Turu-uuringute AS surveyed one thousand persons at the age of at least 15. The sample size used in surveys has remained the same since 2010. The reference period is 12 months preceding the survey.

Approximately half of thefts have been reported to the police according to the crime survey. Said indicator has remained in the same range over the years without any clear trends.

3% of respondents stated that they had fallen victim to a crime due to their nationality, race, skin colour, religion, disability or sexual orientation (2% in 2017).

The answer to question “Has someone deceived you upon selling goods or providing services to you in the last 12 months in regard to the quantity, quality, price or delivery thereof?” was positive for 10% of people in 2018, whereas a third of the cases involved ordering goods or service from the internet. No clear trends have become apparent in regard to the proportion of persons who have fallen victim to fraud as said indicator has fluctuated between 11% and 16% from 2010 to 2017.

Sense of security among people is lower in cities and stronger in rural areas. In geographical terms, sense of security is the lowest in Ida-Viru county, which also has a high percentage of urban population. The sense of security of women has increased in recent years: proportion of women who feel completely safe grew from 22% in 2016 to 32% in 2018 (the change is statistically significant).

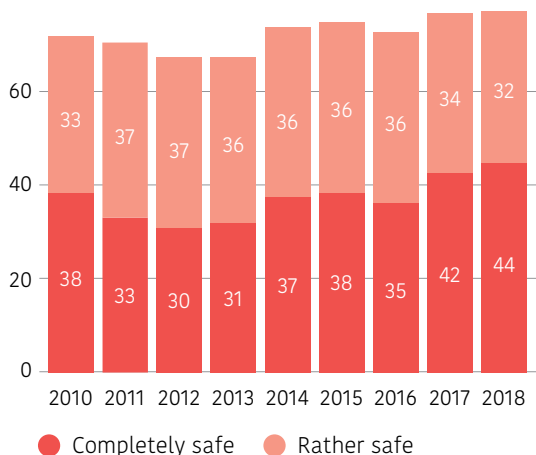


Figure 3. How safe do you feel when walking alone in your neighbourhood after dark? (Persons who answered “completely safe” or “rather safe”; %)

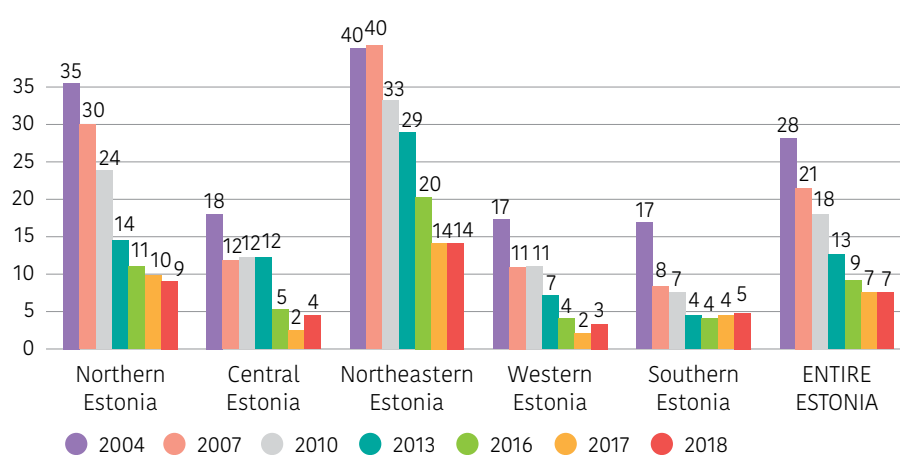


Figure 4. Proportion of households who consider crime a problem near their place of residence (%)
Source: Statistics Estonia

The Estonian Social Survey collects data on various problems in neighbourhoods where people live.³ 7% of households considered crime near their place of residence a problem in 2018, remaining at the same level as the year before. Such data has been collected since 2004 and crime-related concerns have clearly decreased during that time – see Figure 4.

Assessment of people’s perception of crime as a problem is also supplemented by the Eurobarometer survey conducted regularly in all EU countries, according to which the concern of Estonian people in regard to crime has remained low in comparison with other social problems in recent years.⁴ Only 3% of Estonian people considered crime as the primary problem in the state between 2016 and 2018.

9% of respondents had either sometimes or often come into contact with drug addiction (use, trade, syringes) in their neighbourhood (nearly 12% in 2017; decline in the marking of option “often” is statistically significant).⁵ Drug problems have been most prominent in Ida-Viru county and Tallinn; relevant signs were witnessed by 20% and 16% of respondents respectively.

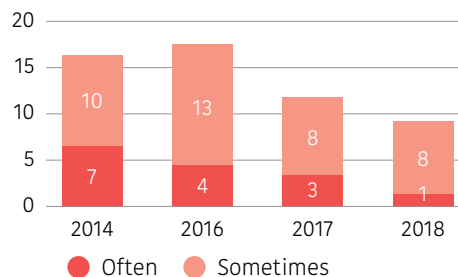


Figure 5. Proportion of persons who had come in contact with drug addiction in their neighbourhood (%)

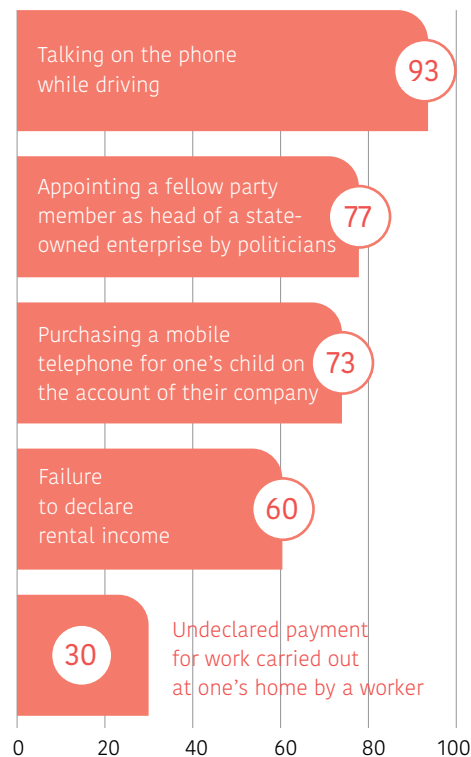


Figure 6. Proportion of respondents who consider the activity as rather or completely inappropriate (%)

3 Statistics Estonia. 2018. Estonian Social Survey. <https://www.stat.ee/eesti-sotsiaaluuring> Sample size is 7,800 households, covering approximately 1% of the population of Estonia.

4 Eurobarometer. 2017.

5 The following question was asked: “How often have you witnessed people trade or use drugs, or found syringes used by drug addicts in your neighbourhood since last December?” The figure illustrates rounded numbers, due to which the sum of 2017 differs from that mentioned in the text.

The survey also examined what people consider appropriate and inappropriate. Most people consider talking to the phone while driving unacceptable (93%), which does not however mean that people are necessarily avoiding it, although the survey gives reason to hope that people understand the consequences and dangers thereof. The majority of people also frown upon activities associated with political corruption (appointing a fellow party member as head of a state enterprise), even though the number is already

significantly lower than that of persons who condemn talking to the phone while driving (77%). Women consider all aforementioned activities more inappropriate. In general, persons with a higher education also consider all these activities more inappropriate, which is probably due to the fact that they better understand the consequences of such actions. Furthermore, people who live in urban areas tend to consider the activities more inappropriate as well