

CHAPTER 2 THE CRIME SITUATION IN JAPAN

I. PENAL CODE OFFENCES

A. Trends in Penal Code Offences

The number of Penal Code offences reported to the police (including those where the police recognize the case *ex officio*) increased every year from 1996, marking a new post-World War II high each year, and peaked in 2002, when the number reached 2,854,061. However, from 2003, there was a continuous decrease and, in 2017, the number of reported Penal Code offences totaled 915,042, a 8.1 percent drop from the previous year.

Of the Penal Code offences reported in 2017, theft was the most prevalent, with 655,498 offences, constituting 71.6 percent of the total.

The number of cleared Penal Code suspects, crossing the 1,000,000 mark in 1998, increased every year from 1999, marking a new post-World War II high each year, and peaked in 2004, when the number reached 1,289,416. However, the number of cleared Penal Code suspects has decreased every year since 2005, totaling 215,003 in 2017, a 5.0 percent drop from the previous year.

The clearance rate of Penal Code offences, which used to be about 70 percent, showed a declining tendency from 1995. In 2001, the clearance rate was 19.8 percent, the lowest since World War II. However, the situation has improved since 2002, and in 2017 it reached 35.7 percent for all Penal Code offences.

As for the age distribution of suspects of non-traffic Penal Code offences (Penal Code offences excluding negligence in driving causing death or bodily injury etc.), those aged 65 or over accounted for 21.5 percent in 2017.

With regard to the gender of suspects cleared of non-traffic Penal Code offences, female accounted for 44,408 composing 20.7 percent of the total in 2017.

B. Trends in Some Major Crimes

The number of homicide cases reported to the police was decreasing from 2004, with 920 cases in 2017. The clearance rate for homicide remains steadily high and was 101.1 percent in 2017. (Because the remaining cases from 2016 were cleared in 2017, the clearance rate exceeded 100%.)

Reported cases of robbery reached 7,664 in 2003, the highest on record since 1951. Since then the number decreased, with the exception of 2009. The number of reported robberies was 1,852 in 2017, and the clearance rate was 82.1 percent.

With regard to theft, the number of reported cases has been decreasing since 2003, and the clearance rate has improved since 2002, with offences totaling 655,498 in 2017 and a clearance rate of 31.2 percent for the same year.

Concerning fraud, the number of reported cases has increased significantly since 2002, reaching a record high of 85,596 in 2005, the highest total since 1960. In 2017, the number was 42,571. The clearance rate reduced sharply from 1997 and recorded a post-war low of 32.1 percent in 2004. But the rate showed a recovery from 2005 and was 40.9 percent in 2017. In recent years, a major *modus operandi* in fraud cases has been “*Tokushu Fraud*” – confidence tricks targeting the elderly and designed to induce them to pay large sums of money to the offender.

II. SPECIAL LAW OFFENCES

Recently, the total number of Special Law offenders newly received by the public prosecutors offices has generally been on a declining trend, and in 2017 totaled 377,503, which was a 6.1 percent decrease over the previous year. Of that number, Road Traffic Act violators accounted for 287,349 suspects (76.1 %), followed by alleged violators of the Stimulants Control Act, who numbered 16,059 (4.3 %).