

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 increased each year from 1996 and peaked in 2002, when it reached 2,853,739, marking a post-war record high. From 2003 onward, the number has been on a declining trend, hitting a new post-war low from 2015 to 2021, but has continued to increase for three consecutive years from 2022, reaching 737,679 in 2024. Of the Penal Code offences reported in 2024, theft was the most prevalent, with 501,507 offences, constituting 68 per cent of the total.

The number of cleared Penal Code suspects reached a record high of 389,027 in 2004, the highest total since 1989. The number of cleared Penal Code suspects declined from 2017, setting a new postwar low every year from 2025 through 2022. However, it increased for two consecutive years starting in 2023, reaching 191,826 persons in 2024.

The clearance rate for Penal Code offences has declined every year since 1995, marking a post-war low of 19.8 per cent in 2001. However, the situation has improved since 2002, and it reached 36.6 per cent in 2021, the highest since 1989. The rate has declined for two years since 2022, but reached 38.9 per cent in 2024.

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 21.4 per cent in 2024. With regard to the gender of suspects cleared for non-traffic Penal Code offences, females accounted for 40,743, composing 21.2 per cent of the total in 2024.

B. Trends in Some Major Crimes

The number of reported homicide cases declined from 2004 to 2016, then remained generally stable. After hitting a post-war low for two consecutive years from 2021, it increased for two consecutive years from 2023, reaching 970 cases in 2024. The clearance rate for homicide remains high and was 96.6 per cent in 2024.

Reported cases of robbery reached 7,664 in 2003, the highest on record since 1951. It then began declining since 2004, reaching a post-war low in 2021. However, it increased for three consecutive years from 2022, reaching 1,370 in 2024. The clearance rate in 2024 was 92.5 per cent.

With regard to theft, the number of reported cases peaked in 2002, the highest since the World War II, then began declining from 2003. From 2014 through 2021, it set a new postwar low every year. However, it has increased for three consecutive years since 2022, reaching 501,507 offences in 2024, and a clearance rate of 33.1 per cent.

Concerning fraud, the number of reported cases peaked at 85,596 in 2005, the highest since 1960, then began declining from 2006. It showed an upward trend from 2012, but declined again from 2018. It has been increasing since 2021, reaching 57,324 cases in 2024, and the clearance rate of 28.2 per cent.

In recent years, a major *modus operandi* in fraud cases has been “*Tokushu Sagi*”(Special Fraud or Communications Fraud)– A type of fraud that deceives people via phone or social media, tricking them into transferring money to designated bank accounts or handing over cash.

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. The number increased in 2023 but decreased in 2024, totalling 292,598, which was a 1.7 per cent decrease over the previous year. Of that number, Road Traffic Act violators accounted for 210,818 suspects (72.1 %), followed by alleged violators of the Stimulants Control Act, who numbered 10,427 (3.6 %).