

6.2 STRUCTURE OF CRIME IN CZECHIA

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Crime is one of the phenomena that significantly influences society. Both the level of crime and its structure can be considered as significant indicators. Different kinds of crimes have different impacts on the population and territory, and thus research into their spatial differentiation is important. The so-called European cartographic criminalists first examined this in the 19th century. Guerry et al. (1833) analysed level of personal and property crimes in regions of France, Greg (1839) researched selected crimes for instance rapes or murders. Attention was also later focused on the spatial distribution of crime, particularly when technological progress and advances in computers allowed faster processing of extensive data sets. Ecological and areal studies identifying regularities in the distribution of crimes and its correlation with other phenomena are one such example (summed up in Baldwin 1979, Herbert 1982). A similar type of studies but working with the most modern methods of analysis and representation is now used. This makes it possible to identify areas where certain kinds of crimes are more common and to draw effectively on these in planning precautionary measures in combination with the knowledge of local participants.

Solnař's study (1931) analysing crime during and after WWI can be considered the first work focusing on the structure of crime in Czech lands. Although the author himself emphasized the necessity of examining crime on a smaller geographical level the study looked at historic lands¹. Only in the 1960s with the formation of the Scientific Research Institute of Criminality and the publishing of annual yearbooks districts were looked at in detail (Karabec 1973). However, studies of crime on the regional or city levels still prevailed after that. Bartoňová (1996), Kolbábek (2007) or Kamenický (2007), for instance, did analyse the structure of crime on a district level in relation to various characteristics. The main aim of the map is thus to evaluate changes in the spatial differentiation and structure of recorded crime at the district level in Czechia from the 1960s up to the present. The map relates to Map sheet section A 6.1 Crime in Czechia.

The general crime index² (the number of registered crimes per total number of inhabitants aged 15 and more) is used in maps combined with the thematic map depicting the structure of crime. The categorisation of crime is taken from the police tactical-statistical classification but in order to achieve a more transparent representation, some kinds of crime are grouped together. Due to the limited data, the map for the 1960s only includes property crime, general crime (excluding property crimes) and other crimes. The last map for 2010–2013 includes a synthetic evaluation in the form of a district typology based on percentages of selected types of crimes compared to the Czech averages. This map also works with detection of crime (the percentage of crimes with known offender) which are closely linked with the structure of crime. The territorial detail of districts is

¹ The detail of judicial districts is covered in Scholz's study (1927) focused on juvenile delinquents.

² General crime includes violent, moral and property crime.

used in particular to allow easier comparability of the 1960s and the present. Although more detailed data for local police departments have also been available since the mid-1990s, the frequent closures and openings of departments makes it difficult to use these without better information on the changes in their field of activity.

The basic data source is the statistics of the Police Presidium of the Czech Republic (Statistical Recording System of Crime) covering the period since 1995. Unique data from Criminal Yearbooks from the 1960s are also used. Statistics cover only recorded crimes (for more about so-called latent crime see for instance Marešová, Scheinost [2001]). Furthermore, in crime analyses it is necessary to take into account other circumstances which may have significantly influenced crime statistics, for instance changes in legislation and classifications (for more see maps for sections B 6.1 Crime in Prague and 6.2 Structure of Crime in Prague). These changes are visible for instance in a comparison of maps from the 1960s and the post-revolutionary period.

Development in the crime structure are linked to changes in society in general after 1989. The data show a significant rise in recorded crimes at the beginning of the 1990s, particularly property crimes (see Figure 6.2.1). The structure of crime did not change overly in the second half of the 1990s, with a gradual growth in the proportion of economic crime and a decline in the proportion of burglaries being the only clear points. However, Marešová and Scheinost (2001) point out specific changes that are not shown by the data: the increasing brutality of violent crime, the growth of drug-related crime and the significant proportion of economic crime with financial losses. The upward trend in economic crime and its proportion of total crime has also continued since the turn of the century and consequently the number and percentage of other and overall crime have also grown. These trends are also connected with the detection of “new” types of crime and their gradual inclusion in legislation. This situation is obvious in a comparison of the maps for the 1990s and later years. While in the 1990s the percentage of other crime is small, it now represents almost a quarter of all crimes.

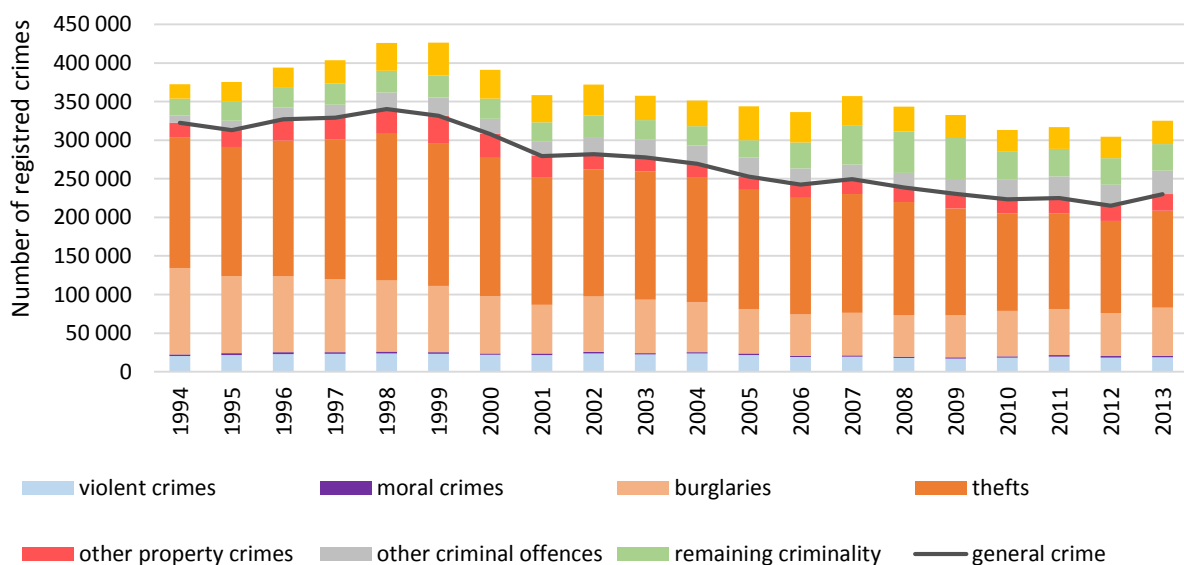


Figure 6.2.1: Changes in the structure of crime in Czechia

Source: Police presidium, 1994–2014

Note: Crimes 901–903 according to a tactical-statistic classification (military punishable crimes, war punishable crimes and crimes against peace) were included into the category “other crimes”.

Spatial differentiation in the structure of crime is evident already on the regional level. The regions of Liberec, Ústí nad Labem, Morava-Silesian and Karlovy Vary (see Figure 6.2.2) currently have high crime index. A high percentage of burglaries is typical for Prague and the region of Plzeň. The highest property crime index is definitely in the capital Prague, which also has a higher percentage of car thefts and pick-pocketing. However, other regions with higher crime index include Morava-Silesia, Ústí nad Labem, Liberec, as well as Central Bohemia which has a higher percentage car thefts (for more information see Figure 6.2.3).

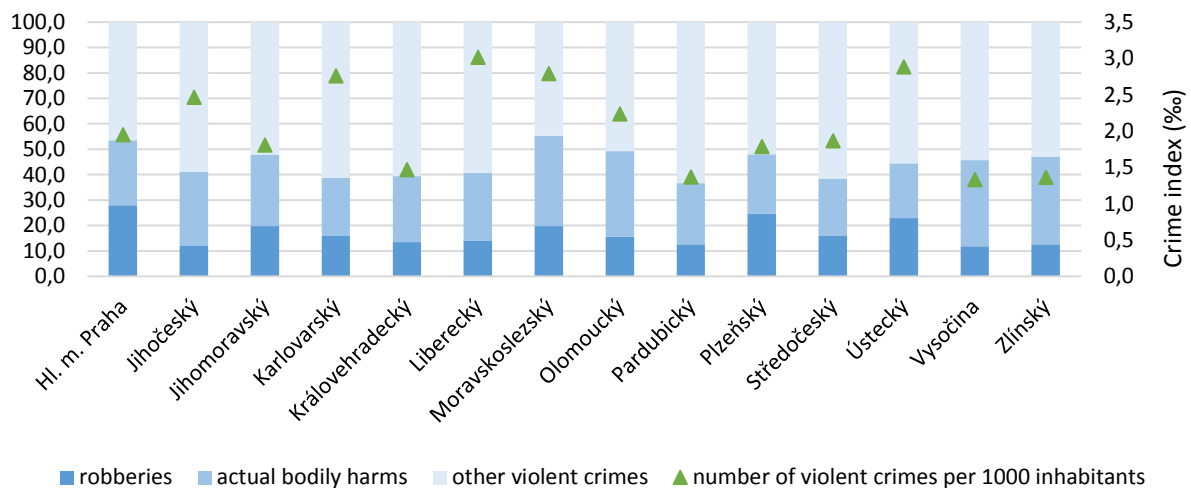


Figure 6.2.2: Structure of violent crime in regions of Czechia

Source: Police presidium, 2010–2013; ČSÚ, 2011

Note: Average values in 2010–2013 are shown, related to the population aged 15 and older.

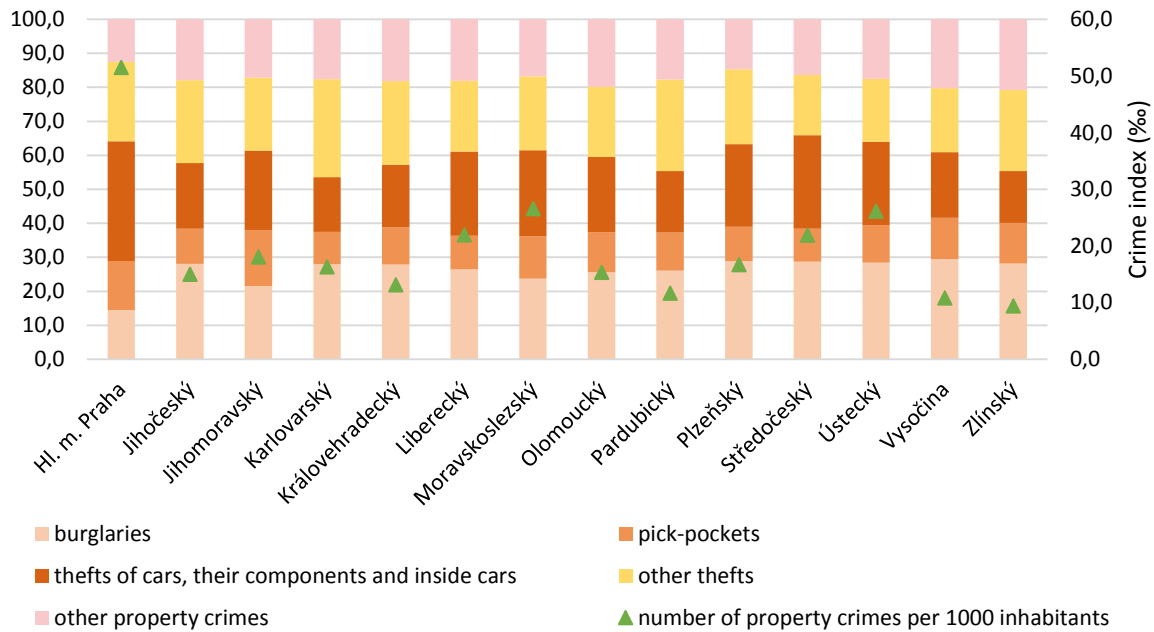


Figure 6.2.3: Structure of property crime in regions of Czechia

Source: Police presidium, 2010–2013; ČSÚ, 2011

Note: Average values in 2010–2013 are shown, related to the population aged 15 and older.

On a district level the differentiation is greater and differences between the periods monitored are markedly visible. While in the 1960s the general crime index was very low in many districts, in the course of the 1990s both the index and the spatial differentiation increased significantly. As with total crime, districts with a greater urban population have a higher level of general crime (see the map for section A 6.1 Crime in Czechia). In the last two decades the general crime index decreased in almost all districts, but those districts with the biggest regional cities still have the highest level.

While property crime is still the predominant part of total crime, its share is gradually decreasing. A heightened representation of property crime is found particularly in districts with regional capitals or in their hinterlands. On the other hand, less urbanized and more peripheral districts have a lower percentage of property crime but at the same time more significant percentages of other types of crimes. On the contrary, the low occurrence of property crime in the 1960s means that the percentage of moral and violent crime was significant in that period. The districts with the highest index were those with regional capitals and districts in northwest Bohemia. Although in the post-revolution years the percentage decreased in favour of property crime, the spatial distribution remained similar. Currently we find higher index in the north Moravian, north Bohemian and some of the south Bohemian districts (see the last map). Prague has a lower percentage due to its high property crime index.

In terms of detection there is a significant difference between property and violent crime. The offenders are identified for a high proportion of violent crimes, particularly in more rural districts. On the other hand, "urban" districts have lower detection and while the anonymity of the urban environment is one factor in this, the wider range of violent crime also plays a role as these crimes are mostly related to this environment. The detection for property crimes is significantly lower.

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