

6.1 CRIME IN CZECHIA

Jana Jíchová



Crime is a serious social phenomenon which has been a subject of study across a number of disciplines. Geography looks at crime from various points of view, including its spatial distribution. In Europe the so-called European cartographic criminalists were among the first to examine the territorial aspects of crime as early as the mid-nineteenth century. Guerry et al. (1833) analysed the indexes of crime against both persons and property in regions of France. The relation between the level of crime and other phenomena such as poverty or wealth were also investigated (Quetelet 1833). In Czechia on the contrary research into the spatial distribution of crime only attracted attention at the very end of the 19th century (for more see Jíchová 2014). The first more self-contained works are focused on youth crime but regional differences are not considered (L. K. 1897, Zucker 1894). Differences on the level of historic territories were not analysed until Solnař (1931), although Scholz (1927) examined crime index among young people on the level of judicial districts. Interest in regional differentiation of crime index only emerged at the end of the 1960s (including by Karabec 1973, Musil, Tichá 1977). Although at the same time differentiation of the structure and degree of crime was also being studied in Western countries¹ (Herbert 1982 and others), approaches influenced by environmental criminology which stressed local research and associations are beginning to become more prominent (for more Wortley, Mazerolle 2011).

Currently there is a wide spectrum of research into spatial differences in the distribution of crime across the world. In Czechia the principal researchers into this are employees of the Institute for Criminology and Social Prevention. They have published studies of criminal trends, analysing regional details (for instance Marešová 2014). Regional detail or simply selected areas are used in many studies, the exceptions being, for instance, works by Kamenický (2007) or the web portal mapakriminality.cz that also operate on the level of districts and separate police departments. In spite of this it can be said that more detailed analyses have not yet been undertaken many times, surprisingly not even on the district level, although such analyses are commonly used to evaluate an array of other phenomena. The maps aim to sum up the development and spatial differentiation of registered crime on the district level and they focus on three periods: 1960s (1965–1968), 1990s (1994–1997), and the present (2010–2013).

The maps use a typology based on a combination of the crime index (the number of crimes in relation to the number of inhabitants) and the detection of crime (the proportion of crimes with known offender). The sources of data are figures from the Police Presidium of the Czech Republic (Statistical Recording System of Crime) covering the period from 1994 up to the present. Unique data from the Criminal Yearbooks of the “public

¹ Generally it was the quantitative revolution that contributed notably to the development of crime research in Western countries in the first half of the 20th century. In particular, areal and ecological studies looking for spatial regularities and correlations between crime and other indicators expanded (summarized by Baldwin 1979, Herbert 1982).

constabulary” from the 1960s are also used. To facilitate comparison, maps are based on the level of administrative districts. The maps also give information on offenders in the 1920s and in the present. There is no data available for the period from the 1930s to the 1960s, as the General Prosecutor’s Office published Criminal Yearbooks of offenders only on a regional basis. Currently the data are administered by the Czech Ministry of Justice and they are available on a district level. Data from the 1920s record crimes, offences and transgressions (at a district level only, not at the level of individual offences), data from 2010–2013 include those who committed only crimes. Working with crime data poses significant difficulties (for more about methodical problems see for instance Marešová, Scheinost [2001]). Statistics record only recorded crimes which could be considerably different from the real level. Evaluating developments in crime levels in the long term is also complicated by legislative changes or other governmental interventions (such as an amnesty) that can result in “artificial” annual growth or decrease (see text accompanying Map sheet section B 6.1 Crime in Prague and 6.2 Structure of crime in Prague). This is the case in comparisons between the 1960s and the present, when not only were the legal codes completely different, but the approach to solving crime and its evaluation also differ.

Trends in crime in Czechia are strongly influenced by wider social events as well as by changes in legislation and organization and the activities of the police. In the last decade of the 20th century crime levels increased four-fold (Marešová, Scheinost 2001, see Figure 6.1.1) and the number of offenders increased correspondingly (see Figure 6.1.2). Such a development is usually associated with the social, political and economic changes after 1989 and with the new opportunities for criminal activities which the system was not prepared for or able to react to promptly. Though variations in the number of crimes in separate years are not easy to interpret, for instance in 2013 the number was definitely influenced by a declared amnesty.

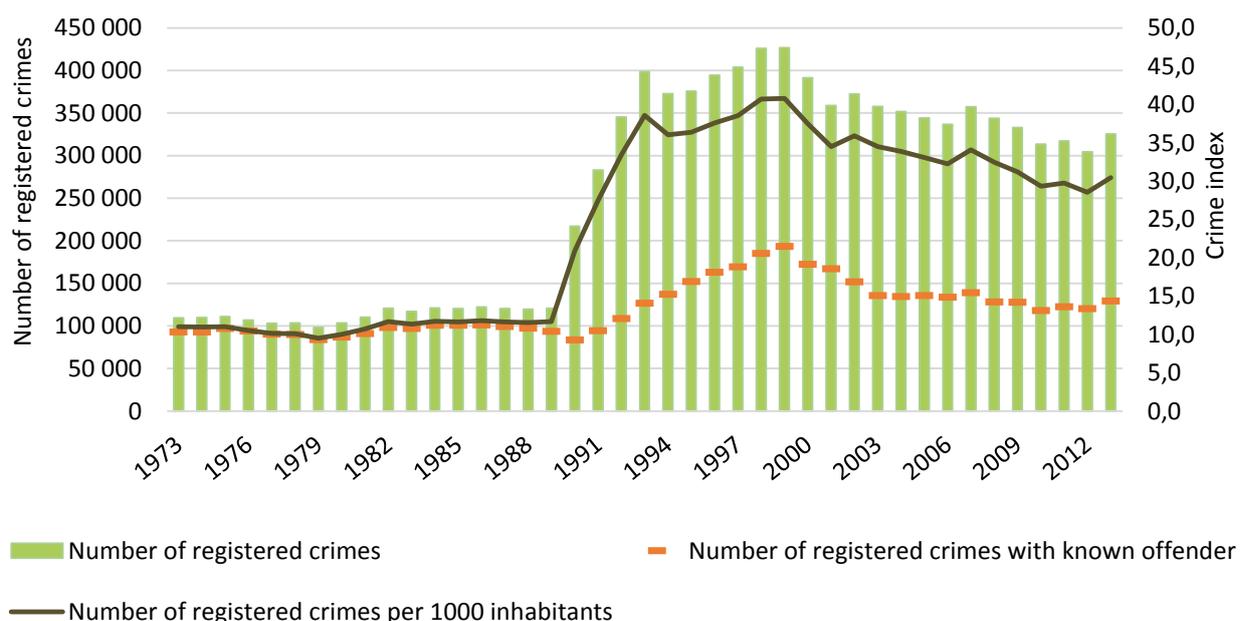


Figure 6.1.1: *Development of crimes in Czechia since 1973*

Source: *Adapted according to Marešová (2014); ČSÚ, 2015*

Changes in crime are also documented by different crime index in the years studied. Levels of crime in the 1960s were significantly lower in comparison to later periods. The average number of registered crimes in what is now Czechia was 14.0 per 1,000 inhabitants aged 15 and over, while in the 1990s it was 45.9 and now is 35.2. The percentage of crimes that are cleared up shows similarly significant differences; while in the 1960s the figure was just under 84%, in the later periods it was around 39%. However, this progression is also due to shifts in the structure of crime, particularly due to an increase in the proportion of those crimes where it is more problematic to determine the offender (for more see Map sheet section A 6.2 Structure of Crime in Czechia).

The spatial distribution of crime in Czechia is not regular and crime is more concentrated in Bohemia. It is concentrated particularly in “city” districts (Praha, Brno, Plzeň, Ostrava), giving higher levels of urban crime (see Map sheet section B 6.1 Crime in Prague). Higher levels of crime are also found in north and north-west Bohemia where the population tends to be concentrated in urban areas and socio-economic conditions are worse (see Map sheet section A 7.1 section Unemployment in Czechia). On the contrary, stable low levels of crime are found in the regions of Vysočina and south Moravia. An interesting comparison from both spatial and time perspectives is the combination of the crime index and the crime detection. In the 1960s differences in crime levels were significantly lower than in later years. Worse figures were found only in four districts (Karlovy Vary, Most, Ostrava and Sokolov). Higher variations in the next two periods correspond to overall social changes linked to developments after 1989. In the 1990s there was a typical combination of high crime index and lower detection, particularly for districts with regional capitals, but also for the central, north and northwest Bohemia. On the contrary, many Moravian districts and peripheral districts show lower crime index and higher detection. In the last period studied there is a noticeable reduction of detection – a significant result of changes in the structure of crime. It is also shown by the changes in the proportion of general crime in separate periods (for more see Map sheet section A 6.2 Structure of Crime in Czechia). The lowest detection combined with a higher crime index was in Praha, Brno, their hinterlands and in the Central Bohemia region. The situation in the Moravian districts remained steadily good (lower crime index and higher detection).

Maps demonstrating numbers of offenders are not directly comparable as those for the 1920s include crimes, offences and transgressions, while only crimes are included in the current period. In spite of this some trends can be demonstrated in differentiation and spatial distribution. The higher concentration of offenders in south Moravia in the 1920s is one interesting exception. Today, on the contrary, the region has some of the lowest numbers of offenders and lowest crime index in Czechia. Similarly to the 1920s, those regions with higher crime index are particularly northwest Bohemia but also the Plzeň-south district, Vyškov, Jeseník and Bruntál. The structure of crime and the socio-economic environment are not the only reasons as the age structure in the districts plays its part.

Districts of the Ústí nad Labem region, for instance, have a younger age structure of both the general population and offenders. Younger offenders also predominated in selected districts with a higher proportion of urban population, particularly districts with regional capitals or larger cities (for instance Ostrava, České Budějovice, Pardubice). On the contrary, an older age structure of offenders is typical for many districts in south and central Moravia and central Bohemia. The more significant proportion of offenders aged between 25–39, i.e. in the younger productive age, is found in Praha, Brno, their hinterlands, and in the Ústí nad Labem region.

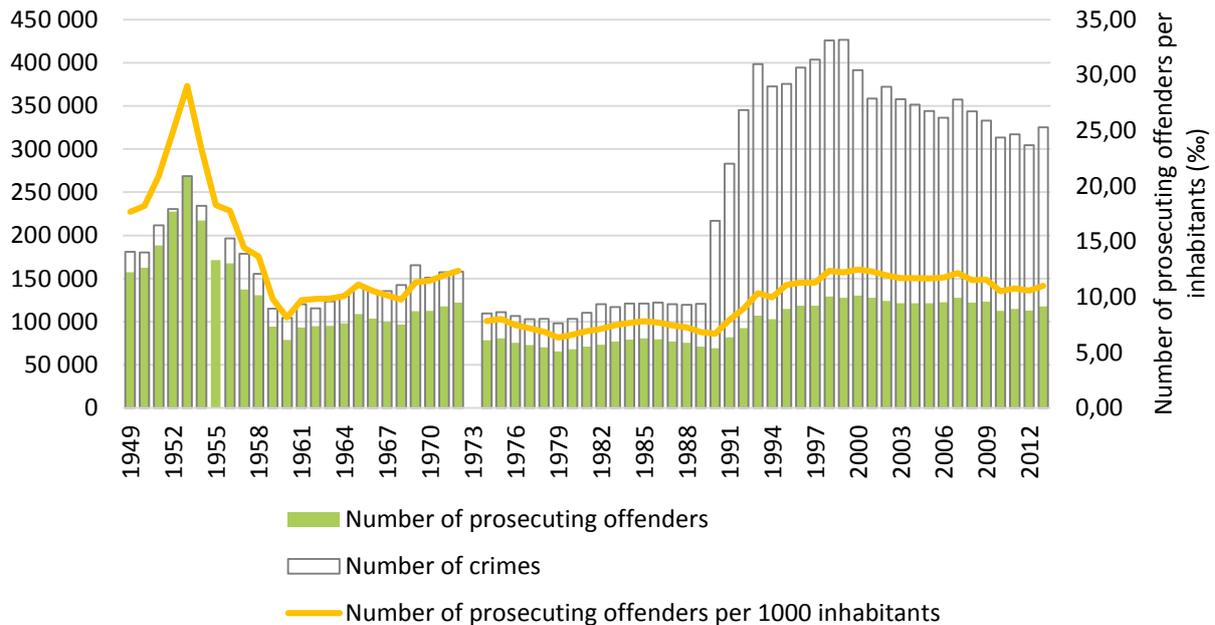


Figure 6.1.2: Vývoj počtu pachatelů v Česku od roku 1949

Source: ČSÚ, 2015; Policejní prezidium, 2014

References:

- BALDWIN, J. (1979): Ecological and Areal Studies in Great Britain and the United States. *Crime and Justice*, 1, pp. 29–66.
- GUERRY, A.-M., LACROIX, S. F., de SILVESTRE, A.-F., GIRARD, P.-S. (1833): *Essai sur la statistique morale de la France*. University of Gent, Crochard.
- HERBERT, D. T. (1982): *The Geography of Urban Crime*. Longman, New York.
- JÍCHOVÁ, J. (2014): Výzkum zločinu v Česku z pohledu geografie. *Historická geografie*, 40, n. 1, pp. 73–93.
- KAMENICKÝ, J. (2007): Vývoj kriminality v územích ČR po roce 2000. Český statistický úřad, Praha.
- KARABEC, Z. (1973): Vývoj kriminality v ČSSR. Výzkumný ústav kriminologický při Generální prokuratuře ČSSR, Praha.
- L. K. (1897): *Zločinnost mládeže: o její velikosti, příčinách a léčení*. Knihkupectví B. Stýbla, Praha.

- MAREŠOVÁ, A. (2014): Trendy kriminality v České republice v roce 2013. In: Marešová, A., Cejp, M., Holas, J., Martinková, M., Rozum, J.: Analýza trendů kriminality v roce 2013. Praha, Institut pro kriminologii a sociální prevenci, pp. 11–28.
- MAREŠOVÁ, A., SCHEINOST, M. (2001): Trendy kriminality v ČR z pohledu roku 2000. Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review, 37, n. 1, pp. 23–41.
- MUSIL, S., TICHÁ, B. (1977): Přehled dynamiky kriminality 1970–1974 a prognóz 1975–1980. Výzkumný ústav kriminologický, SEVT, Praha.
- QUETELET, A. (1833): Recherches sur le Penchant au Crime aux Différens Ages. Bruxelles, M. Hayez.
- SCHOLZ, O. (1927): Zločinnost mládeže ve světle statistiky. Věstník čs. Společnosti pro právo trestní, 3, pp. 39–57.
- SOLNAŘ, V. (1931): Zločinnost v zemích českých v letech 1914–1922. Knihovna Sborníku věd právních a státních, Praha.
- WORTLEY, R., MAZEROLLE, L. (2011): Environmental Criminology and Crime Analysis. New York, Routledge.
- ZUCKER, A. (1894): Kriminalistické črty zejména se zřetelem k zločinné a spustlé mládeži. Bursík & Kohout, Praha.

Data sources:

- ČSÚ (1970): Databáze výsledků ze Sčítání lidu, domů a bytů k 1. 12. 1970. Elektronická databáze dat. Český statistický úřad, Praha.
- ČSÚ (1991): Databáze výsledků ze Sčítání lidu, domů a bytů k 3. 3. 1991. Elektronická databáze dat. Český statistický úřad, Praha.
- ČSÚ (2001): Databáze výsledků ze Sčítání lidu, domů a bytů k 1. 3. 2001. Elektronická databáze dat. Český statistický úřad, Praha.
- ČSÚ (2011): Databáze výsledků ze Sčítání lidu, domů a bytů k 26. 3. 2011. Elektronická databáze dat. Český statistický úřad, Praha.
- ČSÚ (2015): Demografické ročenky 1974–2014. Český statistický úřad, Praha.
- Ministerstvo spravedlnosti: Centrální statistické listy a výkaznictví 2010–2013. Ministerstvo spravedlnosti ČR, Praha.
- Policejní prezidium: Evidenčně statistický systém kriminality 1994–2013. Policejní prezidium ČR, Praha.
- Policejní prezidium: Počet trestných činů a stíhaných pachatelů od roku 1946. Policejní prezidium ČR, Praha.
- SÚS (1931): Trestní statistika z Republiky československé v letech 1923–1927. Státní úřad statistický, Praha.