

# Crimes reported in Italy in the year 2002

Luciano Petrioli

September 2004

During the year 2002, the police forces reported to the legal authorities 2,231,550 crimes, which registered an increase of approximately 3% compared to the previous year.

Among the crimes reported in 2002, the following were included:

Thefts	1,305,245
Fraud	54,328
Robberies	40,006
Malicious injury	28,699
Crimes relative to the production and sales of illegal drugs	37,965
Extortion	3,628
Crimes of exploitation and abetting prostitution	3,174
Sexual violence	2,543
Crimes relative to smuggling	1,512
Voluntary homicides and infanticides	644
Kidnapping for extortion	124
Total	1,477,868

The crimes reported in this list represent 66% of the total of crimes reported in the year 2002; the rest are distributed in the various and numerous types of crimes that can be seen in their analytical classification <sup>(1)</sup> which includes approximately 400 items.

In any case, only the thefts, robberies, extortion and fraud (generally against property) for a total of 1, 403,207, reach around 60% of all reported crimes. Among the others, compared to those reported in 2001, the following crimes registered increases during the year 2000, of

- 3.1 percent, in total reports;
- 39.5 percent, in thefts;
- 5.7 percent, in crimes of exploitation and abetting prostitution;
- 5.3 percent, in robberies;
- 5.1 percent, in crimes relative to the production and sales of illegal drugs.

Although varied according to the type of crime, at the moment of reporting, around 72% of the total crimes were committed by unknown persons.

As it is easy to guess, the statistics of the reported crimes furnished only partial information regarding the entirety of criminal acts which are committed in our country.

In substance, we know that beyond those reported, many crimes remain "submerged" when, generally, there is little economic damage, or in cases in which there is fear of retribution or also for disgrace, in cases of beatings or sexual violence.

In fact, people nearly always stop and think before reporting a crime in which they are the victims.

In examining the statistics, one must consider, beyond the personal sense of justice, that the propensity to report a presumed and suffered crime is often influenced by the threshold within which one also evaluates the opportunity or

---

(1) ISTAT(2004), "Statistiche giudiziarie penali –Anno 2002", Annuario n.11-Roma.

the lack of opportunity to commit it, taking into account the costs and benefits which begin when that type of action is taken.

These aspect have brought up the opportunity to support the data on criminality, derived from reports, with so-called “victimization” investigations which are aimed at estimating “submerged” criminality, the characteristics of victims and the amount of social fear.

This investigation has been carried out annually in the United States since 1967, and later by Great Britain, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland and other countries. In Italy, with a certain delay, the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) introduced an “investigation of victimization” in 1997, to be carried out every five years <sup>(2)</sup>.

In the investigation in 2002, 60,000 individuals, at least 14 years old, were interviewed regarding the following crimes: bag-snatching, pick-pocketing, theft of personal objects without contact, robbery, aggression, home theft, forced entry, car theft, and theft of parts and objects inside vehicles, acts of vandalism, sexual molestation and violence and sexual blackmail at work.

Regarding sexual molestation and violence, Istat <sup>(2)</sup> reports, however, that the relative analysis “...will be the object of deeper study in a specific future publication”.

From this investigation, one notes that out of the total crimes committed or attempted, the percentage of those reported is very low, being 34.7%. Regarding this value, we observe great variability, from 99.3% for motorcycle thefts to 4.3% for thefts of motor-scooter parts.

A summary distinction could be made relative to reporting, or not, some crimes, for example:

Type of criminal act	Was every 100 crimes reported?	
	Yes	No
Crimes against individuals	32.9	67.1
Crimes against the family	34.3	65.0
Bag-snatching or attempted bag-snatching	37.6	62.4
Pick-pocketing or attempted pick-pocketing	41.7	58.3
Thefts or attempted thefts	25.9	74.1
Robberies or attempted robberies	42.6	57.4
Thefts outside the home	15.4	84.6
Thefts or attempted thefts at the main or second home	59.9	40.1
Thefts or attempted thefts of automobiles, vans or trucks	56.1	43.9

Regarding sexual violence, we refer to the same investigation of 1997-1998, in which it resulted that only 32.8 per 100 of rapes and 1.2 percent of attempted rapes were reported to the police forces.

---

(2) ISTAT(2004), “La sicurezza dei cittadini. Reati, vittime, percezione della sicurezza e sistemi di protezione”, Informazioni n.18-Roma.