

Small Arms in Finland

Finnish country report

Hannu Vessari, Arttu Puro, Ilkka Taipale

hannu.vessari
@uta.fi

ilkka.taipale
@eduskunta.fi

Table of contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	2
INTRODUCTION.....	3
FINLAND IN NUMBERS.....	3
SMALL ARMS IN FINLAND.....	3
SMALL ARMS AND PERMISSIONS IN FINLAND.....	3
IMPORT AND EXPORT OF SMALL ARMS.....	4
HUNTING, GUN SPORTS AND HOBBIES.....	6
SHOOTING CLUBS.....	6
ORGANIZATIONS RELATED TO HUNTING.....	6
GUN CLUBS.....	7
MAGAZINES.....	7
SHOOTING RANGES.....	8
MUSEUMS AND PRIVATE COLLECTORS.....	8
THE AUTHORITIES, THE ARMY AND GUARDS.....	9
FINNISH DEFENSE FORCES AND NATIONAL DEFENSE ORGANIZATIONS.....	9
POLICE.....	10
SECURITY GUARDS.....	10
FINNISH LEGISLATION CONCERNING SMALL ARMS.....	10
LAWS ON ACQUIRING, POSSESSING AND MANUFACTURING SMALL ARMS.....	11
LAWS ON TRADES RELATED TO SMALL ARMS.....	12
LAWS ON HUNTING.....	12
LAWS ON IMPORTING, EXPORTING AND TRANSPORTATION OF SMALL ARMS.....	13
THE FUTURE OF SMALL ARM LEGISLATION.....	13
CRIMES RELATED TO SMALL ARMS.....	15
ACTS OF VIOLENCE.....	15
<i>Homicides and attempted homicides</i>	15
<i>Assaults and rapes</i>	17
OTHER CRIMES COMMITTED USING A SMALL ARM.....	18
<i>Burglaries</i>	18
<i>Drug offences</i>	19
SMALL ARM LARCENIES.....	19
SMUGGLING AND ILLICIT TRADE.....	20
HEALTH EFFECTS.....	21
DEATHS.....	21
<i>Suicides</i>	22
INJURIES CAUSED BY SHOOTINGS.....	23
OTHER HEALTH EFFECTS.....	24
DISCUSSION.....	25
REFERENCES.....	26
PRINTED REFERENCES.....	26
UNPRINTED REFERENCES.....	28

Introduction

This document is written to be a Finnish country report for "Aiming for Prevention" - International Medical Conference on Small Arms, Gun Violence and Injury. This conference is organized by International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War together with it's Finnish Affiliate Physicians for Social Responsibility and is held in Helsinki, from 28th till 30th of September, 2001.

Finland in numbers

The demographic information about Finland taken from the homepages of Statistics Finland.

Population: 5 181 115 (December 2000)

Gross Domestic Product: EURO 122,6 billion (estimate 2000)

GDP per capita: EURO 23663 (estimate 2000)

Percentage of households with firearms: 30,1 % (Aromaa et al 2000)

Governance: republic with parliamentary democracy, multiparty system
 member of European Union since 1995

5 provinces

Small Arms in Finland

Small arms and permissions in Finland

In the year 1984 the number of legal guns was 1712600 (the guns owned by the Finnish defense forces are excluded), and it is estimated that the number amount today is around 1,8 million guns.

In the year 2000 56796 new firearm permits were granted: 18473 of these were for a shotgun, 23073 for a rifle, 1622 for a combination rifle and 9595 for a pistol or a revolver. At the moment also a gas spray is compared to a firearm and the number of these licenses were 2980. Permits for manufacturing were given 318 in total, of which 21 for a shotgun, 176 for a rifle, 38 for a pistol or a revolver. (Salomaa 2001)

In the same year 1060 applications for different firearm permits were declined. About 90% of these were applications for acquisition of a firearm. The most common reasons for declination were lack of justified reason to acquire a firearm (about 50%)

and behavioral reasons (about 25%). In 43 cases (about 4%) the health of the applicant was the reason for declining (Salomaa 2001). On yearly basis, 700-800 firearm permits are cancelled, mostly due to violent behavior of the firearm owner (Paanila 2001).

Also the amount of illegal firearms is relatively big: According to the estimate given by the Ministry of Interior, the number of unregistered guns is 100000 – 200000.

Import and export of small arms

The information about import and export of small arms is based on the statistics given out by the Finnish Customs as a part of the statistics on international trade.

Additionally, some information about export can be found in the numbers given out by the Ministry of Defense. Some pieces of information are classified, in this case the amount of military weapons other than revolvers and pistols. Because of this, the figures presented in this chapter are in the means of value instead of amount.

According to the statistics on export of defense material the value of exported military firearms (including related components) and ammunition (including related components) were as follows (in terms of EURO) (Ministry of Defense 2001):

year	military firearms	ammunition
1998	413000 EURO	4422000 EURO
1999	617000 EURO	3239000 EURO
2000	537000 EURO	2637000 EURO

In the same years, the total value of export of the defense material was 30934000, 40155000 and 23485000 Euro. Out of these values 7.6%, 3.8% and 6.2%, respectfully, were exported into countries which had some foreign-policy or safety-policy issues to be considered. (Ministry of Defense 2001)

Statistics compiled by Finnish Customs goes further back in time. In the beginning of the 1990's Finland was a net importer of small arms, but later in the decade the import and export has balanced, and even turned other way around. Most of the imported small arms military weapons, while exported firearms are mostly civil weapons,

meaning hunting and sport rifles and shot guns. The value of import and export of small arms can be seen in figures 1 and 2. (Hassoun 2000)

Figure 1. The import of arms in terms of EURO. (Hassoun 2000)

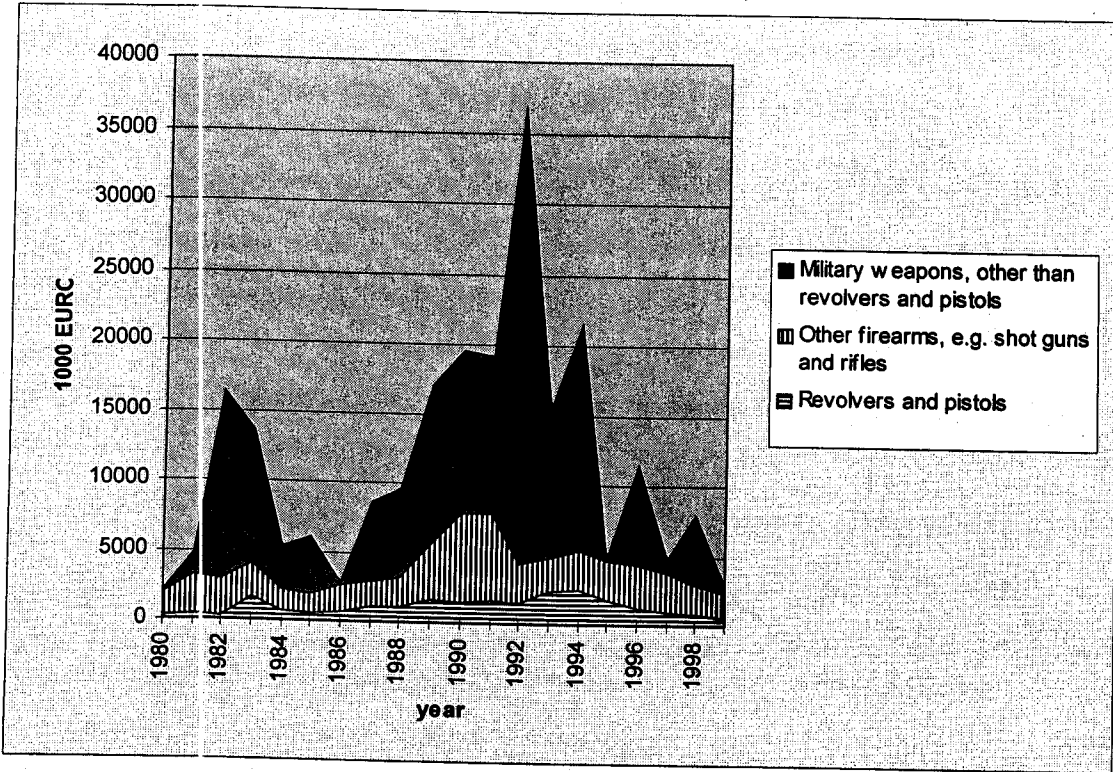
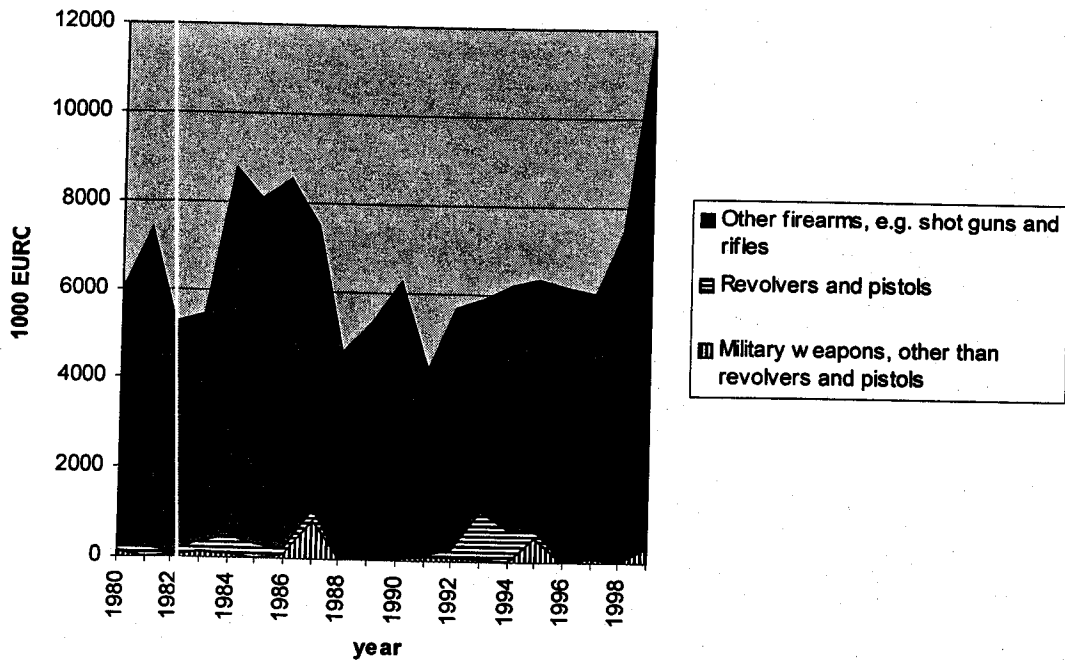


Figure 2. The export of arms in terms of EURO. (Hassoun 2000)



Hunting, gun sports and hobbies

Shooting clubs

Due to the need of better results in hunting, gun sports devotees began to organize in Finland (during that time Finland was a part of Russia) in the 1860's. The first organizations adopted shooting practises in their activities in the same decade. After Finland gaining it's independence in 1917, The Finnish Shooters' Federation was founded in 1919 and is still functioning, now with a new name, Finnish Shooting Sport Federation. This organization acts as a central organization for the various local shooting clubs. (Vehanen 2001)

At the moment The Finnish Shooting Sport Federation has 311 member organizations around the country. These member organizations have about 38000 members, of which about 2000 are women, 31000 men and 5000 under 20 years old persons. According to their own announcement, about 15000 of these are active shooters. About 5000 adults and 1000 youths have license to compete on the national level. Additionally about 100-200 shooters take part in international shooting competitions. (Vehanen 2001)

The mission of the these organizations is the maintain safe and guided shooting hobby and help the progress of the shooting sport in Finland.

Organizations related to hunting

Hunter's are the biggest group of people owning and using firearms in Finland. In March 2001 there were 347855 persons in Finland who have a right to obtain a license for hunting. Over 96% of the legal guns (guns owned by the defense forces are here excluded) are owned by the hunter's or shooting sport devotees. (Ripatti 2001)

Hunters' Central Organization is organization working under the guidance and supervision of the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The main task of this organization is to conduct and develop game management, develop education on hunting and game management and supervise and control the functions of game management districts. The organization is democratically administrated.

Finnish Hunters' Federation is a national central organization for hunting clubs willing to join. Its goals are to cherish the hunting culture, develop hunting and game management and work for the rights of the hunters. So In the beginning of the 2001 there were 2370 member organizations and over 140000 members.

The number of local hunting clubs in Finland is about 4500, out of which currently estimated to be viable less than 4000. Local hunting clubs lease areas for hunting from land owners and take care of the arrangements related to hunting, game management and supervision.

Gun clubs

As a definition, a gun club means in this context an organization, which activities and interests are dealing with firearms, but cannot be thought as a hunting club, a shooting club nor a gun collectors' organization. At the moment there isn't any club of this kind, but there has been some efforts to found an organization that is working for rights of the gun owners and devotees. The name of this organization is probably going to be The Gun Federation, and it's main goals will probably be influencing on decision making in the issues related to firearms, preserving the right to private gun ownership and promoting gun hobby. (Homepages at <http://www.aseliitto.org> 2001)

Magazines

Quite many of the organizations related to firearms publish a magazine for their members and other people who are interested. At the moment in Finland there are at least eight magazines of this kind in Finnish and at least one in Swedish, of which two are commercial (not funded by any non-commercial organization). Six of these magazines are dealing mostly with hunting and fishing, one is emphasizing on arms collecting, one on sport shooting and one on national defense and activities within it. Of field after the military service. The main purpose of these magazines is to act as an information channel and to promote the cause it is representing.

Shooting ranges

There are hundreds of shooting ranges in Finland. The vast majority of them currently in use are maintained and operated by hunting clubs and shooting clubs. At the moment, shooting range operated by a corporation cannot get a license, even though some gun shops have shooting ranges where people can shoot without having a firearm license. (Lehtonen 2001)

The permits for shooting ranges are granted by the local Provincial State Office, which is also the authority to maintain the local shooting range register.

Museums and private collectors

There are hundreds of museums in Finland that have small arms in their collections. Many of the biggest museums are property of Finnish Government, which means that the firearm law is not applied into them. Private museums and collections have to fulfill the safety criteria stated in the firearm law.

To be able to practise private gun collecting, one must have an official gun collectors status. To get such a status, the applicant has to fulfill the normal criteria for possessing firearm and additional to that, have an acceptable plan for systematic collecting and adequate expertise about gun technology and the history of guns. The premises where collected guns are stored must be approved by the local police. Gun collectors status is granted by the Provincial State Office. The number of granted statuses between 1998 and 2000 were 671. No granted collector's status has been cancelled. (Pohjolainen 2001)

There are a couple of dozens of organizations of which aims are to support and help the progress of studying of the history of guns and collecting guns. In these organizations there are about 1000 members.

The authorities, the army and guards

Finnish defense forces and national defense organizations

Finnish defense forces are the single biggest owner of small arms in Finland. The information about the amounts of those guns is very limited, since it is considered as a classified piece of information, but, however, the information about the size of the army during a crisis has been giving out, and is approximately 490000 men. In a crisis situation, each soldier is given a personal assault rifle, so it is reasonable to estimate the amount of small arms to be from 500000 to 600000 guns. Defense forces' peacetime organization consists from 8000 professional soldiers, 8500 civilians and 27000 conscripts (The Information Division of the Defense Staff 2000), so relatively small proportion of the guns is being actively used for training and peacetime activities.

Finnish defense forces are also the single biggest institution in Finland giving training in using firearms. About 27000 (from which about 500 are women) conscripts and 30000 reservists are trained annually (The Information Division of the Defense Staff 2000). This means that about 80% of the age group perform their military service. The aims of the training are derived from the missions of the defense forces: The soldier has to be capable of using firearm in a conflict situation safely and efficiently. The basic training given to each conscript consists about 110 hours of firearm training. Additional to that is the specialized training given to different branches and the training given to the reservists.

Additionally to the defense forces, there are three organizations whose interests are national defense and defense training. The National Defense Training Association organizes voluntary defense training for reservists and other people interested with support of the Defense forces. Two other organizations are for reservists: The Finnish Reserve Officer's Federation has about 350 local member organizations with 28000 members. Similarly the Finnish Reservists' Association has about the same amount of local member organizations with 36000 members in them. These two organize various activities for preserving the skills learned in the military service, for example leadership training and shooting.

Police

Similarly to the Defense forces, information about the amount and type of firearms used by the Finnish Police Forces is classified. In the end of 1998, the police administration employed 10633 persons, of whom 7891 were police officers (the Police of Finland 2001). With these figures it is reasonable to estimate the number of firearms to be at least 10000 – 20000.

The firearm training given to every police officer includes for example juridical issues, tactics, safe use of a firearm and practical training. Each year every police officer carrying a gun has to pass a test, which is testing the firearm-using skills.

Security Guards

Security services are strongly growing field of business in economical sense. In 2000 there were 323 valid licenses for companies offering these services. Over 80 % of these companies are situated in southern and western Finland.

Person working as a security guard has to have a license. In 2000 there were approximately 8000 persons with a valid security guard license, and out of these about 4000 were actively working as a security guard. Additionally 1200 temporary security guard licenses were granted. Use of firearm, however, is not so common: The biggest company providing security services in Finland reports to have about 2100 guards, out of which only 40 have a permit for firearm on duty and less than 10 actively carry one (Finnish Government 2000). In some cases this can also be misleading, since in some smaller companies bigger proportion of guards may carry a firearm (Kerkelä 2001). There is no register about guards carrying a firearm on duty.

Finnish legislation concerning small arms

The Finnish legislation concerning small arms is currently being changed. The first phase of the process was carried out in the year 1998 and the processing of the second phase was just finished in the Parliament. The law on hunting was prescribed in 1993, as well as the bylaw on hunting.

Laws on acquiring, possessing and manufacturing small arms

Manufacture, import, trade, acquisition and possession of firearms, firearm components and ammunition require a permit. All these permits are granted by the local police department.

The local police department can grant the permission to acquire a firearm by at least one of the following reasons:

- hunting
- sport shooting
- occupation in which a firearm is a necessity
- a showing, a photograph or film shooting or a performance
- collecting or having a firearm in a museum (requires an official gun collector's status)
- for having a firearm as a memento
- signalling

After obtaining a firearm, the person has to take it to the police station and show it to the authorities in 30 days time in order to get a possession permit for the gun. The permit is granted by the local police department. At the same time they enter the identification data in the firearm register. Usually the person who is applying a permit has to be 18 years or older, but in a special case (with a consent of guardians) also a person who is 15 years can be granted a permit for hunting or sport shooting. It is also possible to grant a so-called parallel permit for a firearm with a consent of the permit holder.

A person who holds a permit for a firearm can lend that firearm to someone else. However, the owner has to supervise the use of lended gun at all times.

In the firearm law, a gas sprayer is considered as a firearm, so all the regulations mentioned are also applied to them, with some exceptions. One of them is that the reason for obtaining a gas sprayer can also be self protection.

Firearms have to be stored in a locked place, or if there is no possibility for that, a part of the firearm has to be stored in a separate place. In both cases, the firearm must not be easily stealable.

Laws on trades related to small arms

There are three trades which can be granted a license. These are:

- dealing of firearms, firearm components and ammunition commercially
- manufacturing of firearms, firearm components and ammunition commercially
- repairing and modifying firearms or firearm components commercially.

The applicant can be a person or an organization. If the applicant is an organization, it has to point out a person, who is economically capable of running a firearm trade.

The licenses for firearm trades are given by the Provincial State Office.

The legislation concerning security services is at the moment quite dispersed. A person working as a security guard has to have either licence or a temporary licence. Temporary licence can be granted for 4 month at one time, but it doesn't require training. Security guards can also be granted a permit to carry a gun in their duties if it is found to be necessary. Additionally to normal possessing permit for a firearm, the person has to go under a weapon training, which consists at least 4 hours for a gas spray, 16 hours for a firearm and 18 hours for both of those. This training has also a practical training part.

Laws on hunting

In Finland hunting is subjected to license. In order to hunt legally one must have a valid hunting card, hunting right or permit granted by a land owner or holder of hunting rights and a firearm license. Additionally, when hunting moose or bear, the hunter must have a valid certificate of passed shooting test. Hunting of some species of game requires also a hunting license for that specific species.

Obtaining a Finnish hunting card, a person must pass a hunting examination. To be able to take this examination, he or she will have to participate in 12-hour course, which includes i.a. basic knowledge about firearms and their safe use.

According to Finnish law, hunting rights of certain area belong to the landowner. He or she can rent the hunting right to another party. When hunting moose, the area has to be at least 1000 hectares broad, and for the other deers 500 hectares. Without permission from the land owner, hunting closer than 150 meters from settlement is not allowed.

Laws on importing, exporting and transportation of small arms

As a definition, In Finland transportation of the small arms means transporting guns inside European Union. Importing means transporting firearms to Finland from a non-EU country and, similarly, exporting is the term used about transporting from Finland to a non-EU country.

All the permissions concerning import, export and transportation to and from Finland are given and cancelled by the Ministry of Interior. The exception is the European firearms pass, which is granted by the local police department.

When transporting a firearm inside the European Union, a European firearms pass can be used. This pass can be granted to a person having a possession or parallel permit for a firearm used in hunting or sport shooting. Additionally he or she will have to give a reliable account of participation in a hunting or shooting event. The European firearms pass is granted by the local police department.

The future of small arm legislation

The process of the new firearm law was finished in the Parliament in the beginning of June 2001, and the new law will take effect on the 1st of March, 2002. This new law will change the laws on possessing, trades and importing. Also some administrative changes will be made.

According to the new law, as an addition to current laws on storing firearms, a person owning an especially dangerous firearm or at least five different firearms has to store them into a specific locked firearm case. If, however, the local police has approved the premises where firearms are stored, this kind of case is not needed.

The process of getting a permit for a gas spray will be made simpler. This is because a gas spray is not considered as dangerous as a firearm. Additionally, a spray can

easily expire in five years and current system is rather bureaucratic when renewing the permit for a new canister.

The administration of the small arm issues will be centralized to the Firearm Administration Unit, which will be working within the Ministry of Interior. This unit will have the same duties which have nowadays been done in the Provincial State Offices. Within in the Firearm Administration Unit there will also be a firearm board, which will give statements concerning the interpretation of the firearm law.

One of the things planned was a computer-based centralized firearm register, but at this stage this is not going to come true, because of the costs of the system (Hallintovaliokunta 2001). Also so called "mercy year" when people can hand over the guns that they don't have a permit for to the authorities without any fear of a punishment, has been planned, but the preparations will continue after the new firearm law has gotten into power (Police of Finland 2001).

Also the new law for security services is being processed in the Parliament. The aims of it is to clarify current, dispersed laws, enbetter the legal protection of the person affected by the security services and the consumer protection of the person buying these services by enhancing the education and tightening the supervision. (Finnish Government 2001)

Crimes related to small arms

Comprehensive information about the crimes committed using a small arm in Finland is hard to gather. The database about the crimes reported to the police doesn't contain the information about the weapon used, and that is why there are no systematic statistics about this subject (Salomaa 2001). However, some special researches has been conducted about acts of violence and robberies, as well as some population interviews asking i.a. whether one has been assaulted and was there a weapon used. The first two paragraphs in this chapter are based on these researches. The rest of the chapter contains information given out by the police and the Finnish Customs.

Table 1 shows how many hits a word "ampuma-ase" (in English "firearm") causes when searching in the database for reported crimes. This doesn't give the accurate picture about the amount of firearms used in the crime, since it doesn't reveal how the firearm was related in the reported crime. However, it can be considered as a trend giving information. Additionally, table 1 contains the same information, but limited to Helsinki.

Table 1: Word "ampuma-ase" ("firearm") in Police crime report database. The first number includes the whole country and the latter one only Helsinki (whole country / Helsinki). (Salomaa 2001)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
total number	1916 / 549	2239 / 449	3049 / 503	3338 / 571	3316 / 714
Firearm misdemeanor (%)	5,7 / 6,0	5,1 / 11,8	6,2 / 9,2	8,8 / 11,0	10,6 / 10,9
firearm crime (%)	19,6 / 25,5	19,6 / 26,1	16,2 / 27,2	18,5 / 24,9	16,4 / 20,2
drug offence (%)	4,5 / 8,9	5,4 / 6,5	4,7 / 7,2	6,1 / 8,6	5,6 / 10,4
assault (%)	2,3 / 2,9	2,0 / 2,2	1,6 / 2,4	2,1 / 2,8	2,3 / 1,8
illegal threat (%)		4,8 / 5,8	3,9 / 6,4	4,1 / 4,6	4,1 / 3,1
murder or killing (%)	0,5 / 0,4	0,4 / -	0,2 / -	0,2 / -	0,2 / 0,1
attempted murder or killing (%)	0,7 / 0,6	0,5 / 0,2	0,5 / -	0,4 / 0,2	0,6 / -

Acts of violence

Homicides and attempted homicides

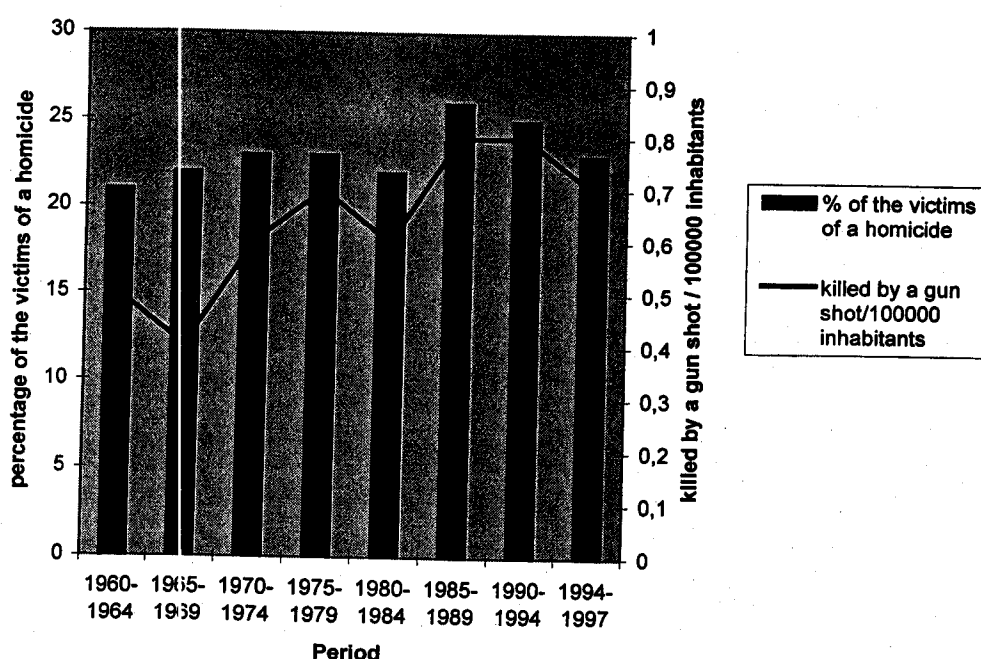
Over the period of 1989 – 1998 the annual rate of homicides recorded by the police has varied between 113 and 155. Additionally to homicides, Finnish law distinguishes also assaults resulting in death. In the same period of ten years, the number of these

has varied between 21 and 35. The number of these to crimes together has varied between 145 and 185. With these crimes the mortality has thus been about 3,5 per 100000 inhabitants. (National Research Institute of Legal Policy 1999)

During the last forty years, the proportion of the killed by a gun shot of all the homicides has been relatively steady, the average being 23,3%. From 1985-1994 the proportion was higher than the average (from 25% to 26%), but the reason for this is unknown. The data concerning the percentage of firearm homicide victims of all the homicide victims is presented in the figure 3. (Kivivuori 2000)

The risk of being shot in Finland is also presented in the figure 3. Even though the proportion of the firearm homicides has been quite steady, the risk of death by shooting has increased. However, this increase is not linked to any specific method of homicide but rather can be explained with the increased amount of homicides in total. (Kivivuori 2000)

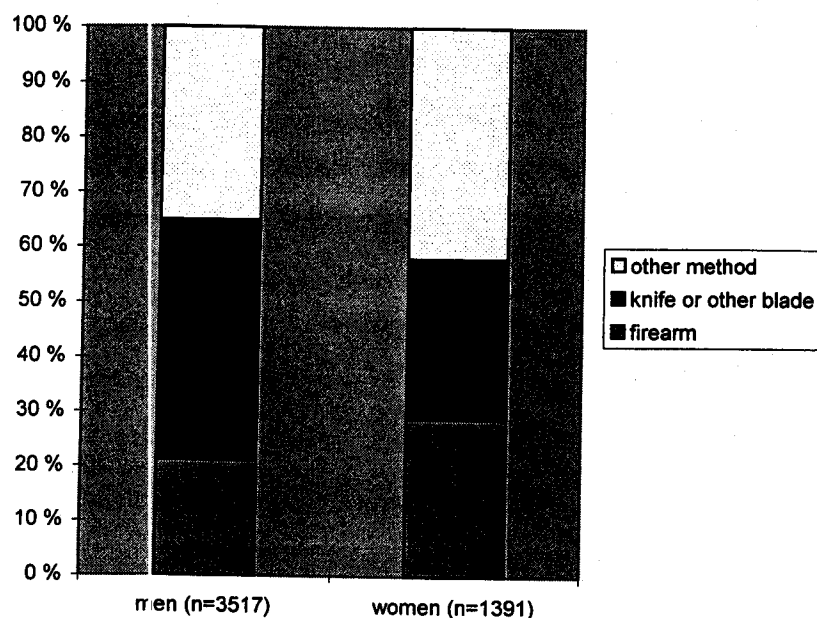
Figure 3: Killed by a gun shot of all the homicide victims (over 1 year old) and the number of gun shot victims / 100000 inhabitants (Kivivuori 2000)



When examining the firearm homicides from 1960 to 1997 with different sexes (figure 4), we notice that the amount of men killed by a gunshot is significantly

greater than amount of women (men 742, women 401). However, relatively greater proportion of the violently killed women is killed with a firearm. This distribution of the methods with both sexes has been quite steady during the whole period from 1960 to 1997. Further analysis of the phenomenon is difficult because of the structure of the police database. (Kivivuori 2000)

Figure 4: Men and women victims (over 1 year old) 1960-1997, the method of the homicide



During the period of 1950 to 1997 32 police officers were killed on duty. Out of these 24 were killed with a firearm, which in majority of the cases refers to a shotgun. Persons killed by the police officers in the line duty haven't been compiled into statistics. (Calin 2000)

Assaults and rapes

As explained earlier, accurate analysis of this information is difficult because of the structure of the police database, which doesn't contain information about weapon used in the crime. However, there are some small special studies made. Statistics Finland studied the use of firearms in serious assaults reported to police in 1998, and they found out that in 69 cases (3,4%) out of 2043 the firearm was used. (Aromaa 2001)

Also in 1998, there were 530 cases reported to the police. Out of these incidents 14% were made by using a weapon. The use of a firearm was not listed separately, since it was used only in one or two cases. (Aromaa 2001)

Based on the police-recorded assault offences during the years of 1950 to 1997, There are two noticable periods: From 1950 to about the middle of 1960s, the number of assaults varied relatively little. From the mid-1960s the volume of assaults have been increasing steadily, with some minor exceptions. However, victim surveys carried out in the 1980s give a different result. According to these surveys, the number of assaults have stayed at the same level or even fell. This can be partly due to that a bigger proportion of assaults are being reported, while the absolute amount have stagnated. At the same time, however, the number of homicides and attempted homicides increased, which suggests that also the amount of assaults would have increased. The reportability of these offences have always been high. One possible explonation can be that the assaults has increased in the group of marginalized persons, that is persons who don't answer to these surveys. (Sirén 2000)

In general, the total amount of violent crimes leading to physical injuries have slightly decreased during the period from 1980 to 1997. However, the number of cases of threats and violent acts not leading to physical injuries have increased since the beginning 1990s. Also the general fear of violent acts and preparing to meet violence beforehand increased slightly over the period of 1993 to 1997. (Heiskanen et al 2000)

Other crimes committed using a small arm

Burglaries

The fast increase in bank and business robberies in the late 1980's and early 1990's got Ministry of Justice to study the weapons used in these crimes. The results of this study are shown in table 2. No latter studies concerning these crimes have made. (Aromaa 2001)

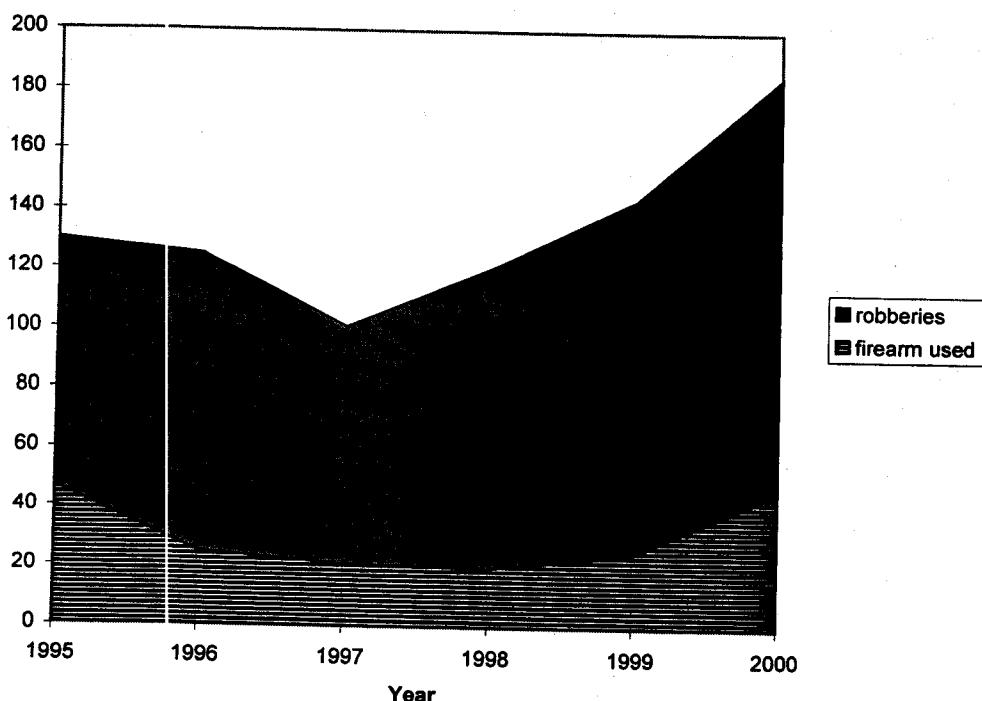
Table 2: Weapons used in the bank and business robberies 1990-1992 (Aromaa 2001)

	1990	1991	1992
--	------	------	------

firearm	38	87
knife, axe, etc.	1	14
gas weapon	0	0

Figure 5 shows the trend of using firearm in the burglaries in Helsinki in late 1990's.

Figure 5: Burglaries investigated by Helsinki Police Department of violent crimes (Salomaa 2001)



Drug offences

As in many other countries, also in Finland drug offences have increased. Table 3 shows the amount of firearms confiscated within investigation of drug offences in Helsinki city area between 1990 and 2000.

Table 3: Firearm confiscations in drug offence investigations, Helsinki 1990-2000 (Salomaa 2001)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
drug offences	771	751	1098	1140	1408	1674	1995	2114	2210	2665	2589
firearms confiscated	23	23	45	31	22	54	49	56	63	100	121
percentage	3,0%	3,1%	4,1%	2,7%	1,6%	3,2%	2,5%	2,6%	2,9%	3,8%	4,7%

Small arm larcenies

The number of firearm larcenies and grand larcenies is as follows:

1996 1123

1997	55
1998	922
1999	820

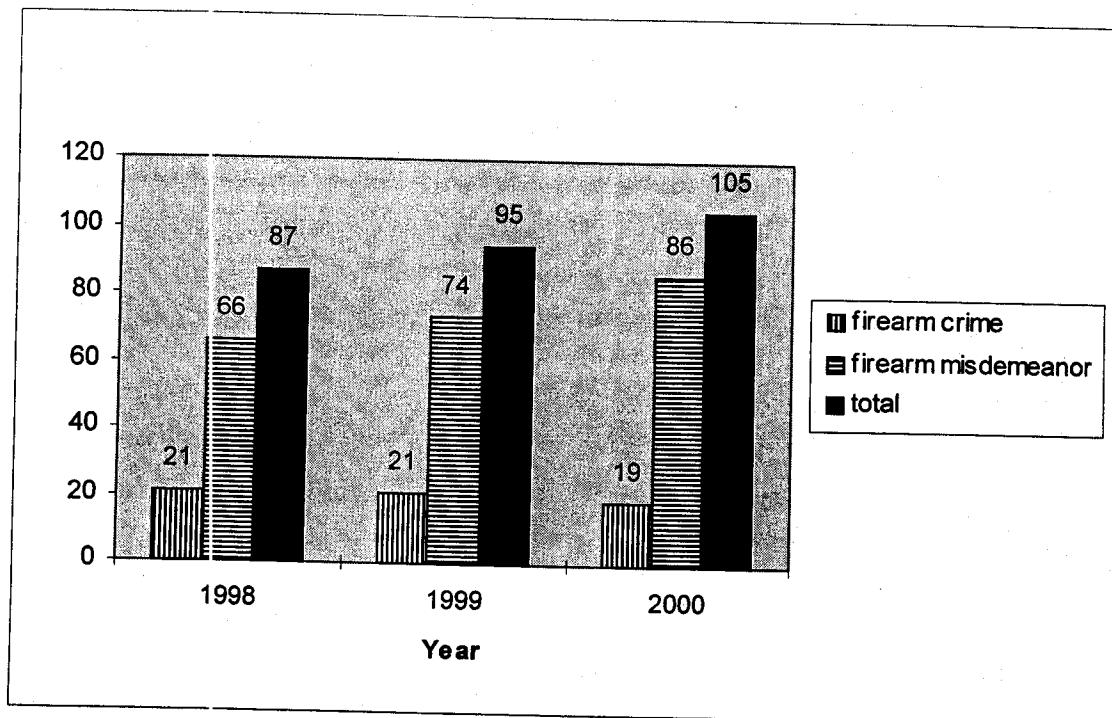
In January 1998 the regulations concerning the storing firearms were changed. From that moment the firearm and some essential part of it had to be stored separately. This, however, was not found to be an adequate procedure to avoid functional firearms to end up wrong hands in some cases, for example in breaking and entries to houses, where the thief can access to the whole premises.

According to Mauri Salomaa from Helsinki Police department (2001) in 2000 569 firearms were reported missing. By the middle of the March 2001 only 131 of them had been recovered.

Smuggling and illicit trade

The average amount of firearms confiscated by Finnish Customs between 1995 to 2000 was 27 firearms per year. The trend can be seen in the Figure 6. In the year 2000 these weapons were taken away in 105 firearm crimes, of which 54 were reported in the eastern district, 27 in the southern, 12 in both western and northern districts. The majority of these crimes are related to gas spray smuggling. During the last three years, the amount of filed firearm crimes has increased. (Paananen 2001)

Figure 6: Firearm crimes and misdemeanors reported by Finnish Customs, 1998-2000 (Paananen 2001)

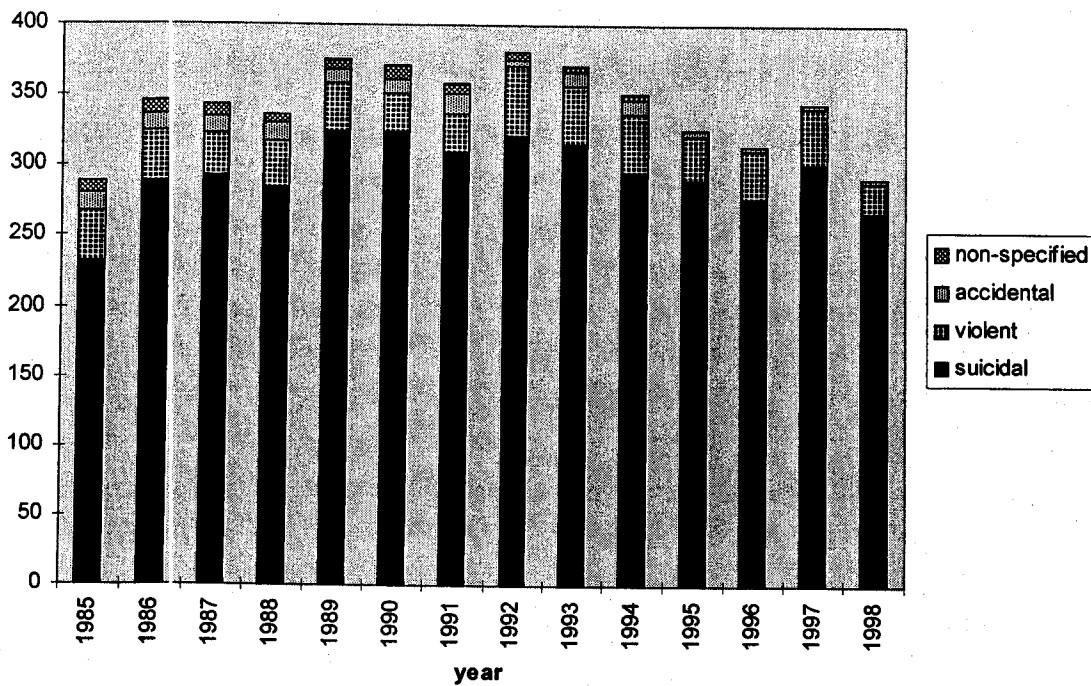


Health effects

Deaths

Over the period of 1985 to 1999 the number of deaths related to firearms is on average of 340 per year, which means about 8% of all accidental or violent deaths in Finland. Out of this number 85% are suicides, 11% murders and killings, 2% accidents and 2% are undetermined deaths (Mäkitie 2001). The homicides were dealt more closely in the previous chapter. The amounts of firearm related deaths between 1985 and 1998 in Finland are shown in figure 7.

Figure 7: Firearm related deaths in Finland 1985-1998 (Mäkitie et al 1997, Mäkitie 2001)



Suicides

Suicides constitute a significant public health problem in Finland, especially among men. According to statistics by WHO (2000), the suicide rate of Finnish men is the seventh highest in Europe and the suicide mortality of Finnish women is slightly over the average in Europe. At the moment, suicide is the commonest manner of death among Finnish men aged 20 to 34 years. (Öhberg 1998)

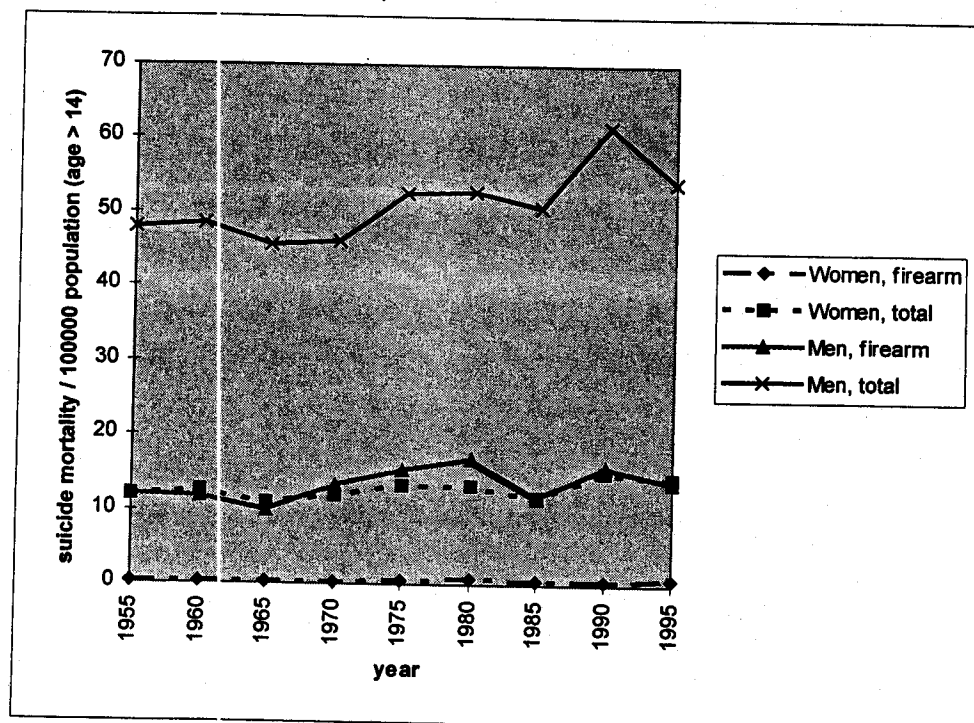
Among Finnish men (age > 14) over the period from 1947 to 1990, the suicide rate increased from 39,7 to 61,7 per 100000 population. This increase was observed in all age-groups. After that, from 1990 to 1995, the total suicide rate turned to decline. The largest change happened among the 15- to 24-year-olds. During the whole period, hanging and firearms were the most commonly used methods of suicide among men. In 1995, these two methods accounted for 30,2% and 25,6% of all male suicides, respectively (Öhberg 1998). When studying men serving in the Finnish Defense Forces, using firearm is the most common (51%) way of committing suicide. However,

the overall suicide rate among conscripts is lower than same aged men not serving in the Defense forces (Mäkitie et al. 1997).

The same kind of development is also true with Finnish women. Between 1947 and 1995, the suicide rate of Finnish women (age > 14) increased from 7,1 to 14,4 per 100000 population. Also this change happened in all age-groups, but only among the middle-aged the increase was statistically significant. This is due to relatively small number of suicides in total. Firearms are relatively uncommon method of suicide among women. In 1995, the proportion of suicides committed by firearm, was only 4,9% of all the female suicides. (Öhberg 1998)

The figure 8 shows the development of suicide rates and suicides committed by firearm of both sexes in Finland between 1955 and 1995.

Figure 8: Suicide rate and suicides committed using a firearm / 100000 population. (Öhberg 1998)



Injuries caused by shootings

From 1985 to 1999, the average number of gun shot patients given treatment in hospital was 280 annually, without any noticeable trend of increasing or decreasing. In this group of patient, the reason for gun shot injury was accident in 57 % of the cases,

in 20% it was suicide, in 12% violence and in 11% the reason was something else. (Mäkitie 2001)

The results of a research examining firearm injuries between years 1990 to 1994 show that the main injuries was the extremities in 46%, skull or face in 29% and mid-trunk in 25% of the cases (Mäkitie et al 1996). Another research shows that on the average, patients injured by a gun shot needed 1,1 operations and 13 days of hospital treatment. About 10% of these patients died during their stay in the hospital. Similarly to suicides, the majority of the patients (about 70%) were men aged 15 – 34 (Mäkitie 2001). There is no research information about rehabilitation of the firearm injury patients.

Other health effects

There are only few epidemiological studies made about shooting and it's effects on health in Finland. However, some kind of idea about the incidence and type of the different kinds of health effects can be drawn from the compensations paid by the insurance companies. Every sport shooter and hunter who is a member of a central organization (that is The Finnish Shooting Sport Federation or Hunter's Centralorganization) has a insurance for accidents happened while shooting or hunting. Over the period of 1995 to 1998, there were 52 compensated accidents among sport shooters. None of these were caused by shooting. (Vehanen 2001)

There is a small study made about indoor shooting. According to this study, indoor shooting significantly exposed shooters to lead substances. 32-44% of the indoor shooters shooting with gunpowder firearms had a feeling of burning in the throat, when in the control group the amount was 4-15%. Also taste of metal in the mouth as a symptom was more common in shooters' group (22 - 41% vs. 0 - 18% in the control group). The concentration of lead in the blood (B-Pb) averaged 1,0 $\mu\text{mol/l}$ (reference 0,3 $\mu\text{mol/l}$), which increases the risk of lung cancer and miscarriage. However, a majority of these symptoms and also the lead expose could be reduced by adequate air conditioning in the shooting ranges (Nurmenniemi et al. 1999). No larger epidemiological studies about this health effect has carried out.

Discussion

It seems that the use of firearms is increasing in some types of crimes. This is especially noticable in drug offences and in the capital city area and within drug offences. Despite the firearm law passed in 1998, which made laws on storing firearms stricter, the amount of illegal firearm on criminal possession seems to increase. Along with publicity that violence awakes, this is probably also the reason for increased fear of meeting violence.

Since the 1950s, the suicide rate increased steadily until the 1990s. After that, it has been decreasing being now about During the whole period from 1950s to 1990s the relative proportion of suicides committed with a firearm stayed about the same level. When talking about prevention of suicides, one thing to be considered is reducing the means of committing a suicide, meaning also reducing the amount of unnecessary firearms in the households.

Hunters, sport shooters and gun collectors are well organized. Additionally to the tasks stated in the law, these organizations also work many ways on maintaining and improving the legitimate gun hobby. The small number of firearm accidents within recreational use is a one sign of this. These organizations also have a notable influence on development of the firearm legislation since they have act as experts and consults in preparing stage of the new firearm law. Also, these strong organizations could also be used when supervising the criterias to have a permit for a firearm. For instance, when a person quits practising shooting and there is no more need for a firearm, this situation should be notified to the police, but in many cases this doesn't happen. In this supervision hunting clubs and shooting clubs could be very efficient.

When thinking the small arms issue in global scale, the problems in Finland related to firearms are relatively small compared to number of firearms. Long traditions of hunting and sport shooting and rather strict legislation are surely the most important reason for this. However, the existing and especially growing problems shouldn't be neglected.

References

Printed references

Ampujan ympäristöopas. The Finnish Shooters' Federation, 2000

Ampuma-aselaki, Ministry of Justice 1998

Böstman O, Marttinen E, Mäkitie I, Tikka S: Firearm injuries in Finland 1985-1989. *Annales Chirurgiae et Gynaecologiae* 82: 47-49, 1993

Facts about the Finnish defence forces 2000-2001. The Information Division of the Defence Staff, Espoo 2000

Finnish military defence 1999-2000. The Information Division of the Defence Staff, Kuopio 1999

Hallintovaliokunnan mietintö 6/2001 vp: Hallituksen esitys laiksi ampuma-ase lain muuttamisesta.

<<http://www.eduskunta.fi/triphome/bin/utahref.scr?{KEY}=HaVM+6/2001>>, accessed 25.5.2001. Hallintovaliokunta, Helsinki 2001

Hallituksen esitys 110/2000 vp: Hallituksen esitys Eduskunnalle laiksi ampuma-ase lain muuttamiseksi, Finnish Government 2000

Hallituksen esitys 69/2001 vp: Hallituksen esitys Eduskunnalle laiksi yksityisistä turvallisuuspalveluista sekä eräiksi siihen liittyviksi laeiksi, Finnish Government 2001

Heiskanen M, Aromaa K: Suomalaisten rikosriskit 2000 – mediatiedote. <<http://www.om.fi/optula/4872.htm>>, accessed 24.5.2001. The National Research Institute of Legal Policy, Helsinki 2000

Homepages maintained by Aseliitto planning group, <<http://www.aseliitto.fi>>, accessed 25.4.2001.

Homepages of Hunter's Central organization, <<http://www.mkj-jco.fi>>, accessed 24.4.2001.

Homepages of Finnish Ministry of Defense, <<http://www.vn.fi/plm/>>,

Homepages of the Police of Finland, <<http://www.poliisi.fi>>, accessed 23.4.2001

Homepages of Statistics Finland, <<http://www.stat.fi>>, accessed 13.9.2001

Kivivuori J: Henkirikollisuuden tekotavoista 1960-1997. Rikollisuustilanne 1999: 123-125. Oikeuspoliittinen tutkimuslaitos, Helsinki 2000

Paanila J: Mielenterveyden häiriöt ja aseenkantolupa. Suomen Lääkärilehti 36: 3581-3584, 2001

Metsästysasetus. Ministry of Justice 1993.

Metsästyslaki Ministry of Justice 1993.

Mäkitie I, Pesonen H, Tikka S, Hiekkalinna S: Gunshot injuries in the Finnish defense forces during 1983-1993. Ann Med Milit Fenn 70: 46-51, 1995

Mäkitie I, Tikka S, Böstman O: Firearm injuries in Finland 1990-1994. Ann Med Milit Fenn 71: 79-83, 1996

Mäkitie I, Palcneva H: Firearm and explosion related deaths in Finland 1985-95. Ann Med Milit Fenn 72: 170-174, 1997

Mäkitie I: Firearm injuries in Finland from 1995 to 1999. Ann Med Milit Fenn 76, 2001, in press

Nurmenniemi V, Huupponen P, Pääkkönen R, Sillanpää T, Kallio A, Uitti J: Sisärata-ampumiseen liittyvistä terveysriskeistä. Ympäristö ja terveys-lehti 9: 42-48, 1999

Sirén R: Recorded assault offences 1950-1997 - Summary.
<<http://www.om.fi/optula/4921.htm>>, accessed 28.5.2001. The National Research Institute of Legal Policy, Helsinki 2000

The National Research Institute of Legal Policy: Crime and criminal justice in Finland - Summary, <<http://www.vn.fi/om/suomi/optula/summary/summa165.html>>, accessed 16.4.2001. Helsinki 1999

World Health Organization: Suicide Rates.
<http://www.who.int/mental_health/Topic_Suicide/suicide_rates.html>, accessed 23.4.2001.

Öhberg A, Lonnqvist J, Sarna S, Vuori E, Penttilä A: Trends and availability of suicide methods in Finland: proposals for restrictive measures. British Journal of Psychiatry 160: 35-43, 1995

Öhberg A, Lonnqvist J, Sarna S, Vuori E: Violent methods associated with high suicide mortality among the young. Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry 35: 144-153, 1996

Öhberg A, Vuori E, Ojanperä I, Lonnqvist J: Alcohol and drugs in suicides. British Journal of Psychiatry 69: 75-80, 1996

Öhberg A, Lonnqvist J: Suicides hidden among undetermined deaths. Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica

Öhberg A: Suicide methods in Finland. National Public Health Institute, Helsinki
1998

Unprinted references

Calin A-P: Personal notification. Ministry of Interior - Police Department 7.11.2000

Hassoun T: Personal notification. Finnish Customs 20.10.2000

Kerkelä J: Personal notification. Ministry of Interior 26.6.2001

Kolehmainen S: Personal notification. Ministry of Interior – Police Department
16.5.2001

Lehtonen M: Personal notification. Ministry of Interior – Police Department
11.6.2001

Sinisalo A: Personal notification. Finnish Hunters' Federation 29.9.2000

Uusisilta K: Personal notification. Ministry of Interior. 2.11.2000

Small arms and Finland. The lecture material of various lecturers used in a national seminar concerning small arms. 16.3.2001 Finnish Parliament.

The lecturers:

Risto Aarrekivi	Executive Director, Finnish Shooting Sport Federation
Kauko Aromaa	European Institute of Criminal Politics
Kai Kalmari	Finnish defence forces
Runo Kurko	Chairman, The Amenable Importers of Sporting and Hunting Firearms and Accessories Association of Finland
Alfred McAlister	Professor of behavioral science, University of Texas
Ilkka Mäkitie	MD, Finnish defence forces
Aarno Paananen	Chief Inspector, Finnish Customs
Heikki Pohjolainen	Honorary chairman, Finnish Gun History Society
Brian Rawson	Campaign coordinator, International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War
Juha-Pekka Ripatti	Executive Director, Hunter's Central Organization
Mauri Salomaa	Crime, Helsinki Police force
Alpo Vehanen	Chairman, Finnish Shooting Sport Federation
Pilvi-Sisko Vierros-Villeneuve	Chief of gun control unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Markus Weckström	Chairman, Firearm
Annakatri Öhberg	MD