

# Trends & Policies in Criminology and Justice

# K I C J

## Contents

### 1. Korean Crime Victim Survey (XIV): Elderly Crime Victim Study

Ji-young Kim, Soo-hyeong Choi, and Tae-gyung Gahng

### 2. Improving Digital Sex Crime Response System in South Korea

Joon Tag Cho, Jaekyung Ahn

### 3. Trends and Policy Recommendations for Livelihood-Infringing Crimes ( I ): Violent Crimes in Daily Life

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## 1

## Korean Crime Victim Survey (X IV): Elderly Crime Victim Study

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### Keywords

Elderly, Elder Abuse, Crime Victimization, Fear of Crime, Victim Support



### Summary

- This study aims to generate statistical data on the prevalence of crimes against the elderly and the characteristics of elderly victims, in order to inform crime prevention policies and effective victim support systems.
- The target population included South Korean nationals aged 66 and older residing in the country as of 2024. A total of 5,521 participants were surveyed between July 18 and September 6, 2024.
- The overall victimization rate among elderly individuals was 12.09%, comprising property crime (10.42%), violent crime (2.43%), and elder abuse (1.61%). These rates were considerably higher than those reported in the National Crime Victim Survey, which covers individuals aged 14 and older.
- A majority of offenders were known to the victims, and caregivers accounted for the highest proportion (55.1%) of elder abuse perpetrators.

## 1 Background and Research Objectives

- Despite Korea’s rapid population aging, there has been a lack of large-scale empirical surveys specifically targeting elderly crime victimization.
- Previous studies underestimated the vulnerability of the elderly due to low reported crime rates, but recent trends—including increased elder abuse and social engagement—demand a specialized analysis.
- This study aims to provide baseline statistics to support targeted crime prevention and support policies based on the specific risks faced by elderly individuals.

## 2 Methodology

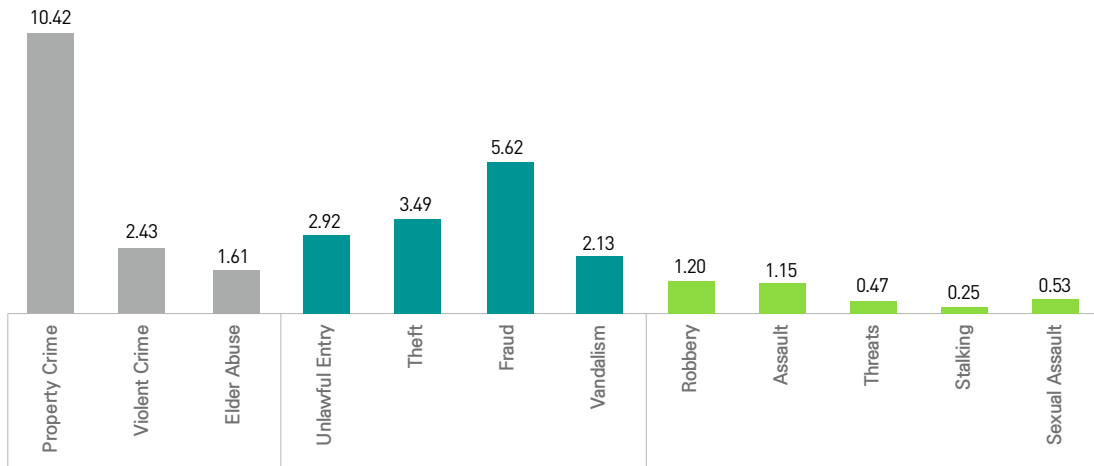
- The survey utilized face-to-face interviews with individuals aged 66 and above to capture incidents of crime victimization over the past year (July 2023 – June 2024).
- The questionnaire was divided into a basic survey form (demographic and social data) and a crime incident survey covering ten types of crimes.
- A literature review was also conducted to explore domestic and international frameworks for preventing and responding to elderly victimization.

## 3 Key Findings

### ○ Victimization Rate and Crime Types

- In the past year, the overall crime victimization rate among the elderly was 12.09%. By crime type, property crimes accounted for 10.42%, violent crimes for 2.43%, and elder abuse for 1.61%.
- For property crimes, the most common types were fraud (5.67%), followed by theft (3.49%), unlawful entry (2.92%), and vandalism (2.13%). For violent crimes, the rates were robbery (1.20%), assault (1.15%), sexual assault (0.53%), threats (0.47%), and stalking (0.25%).

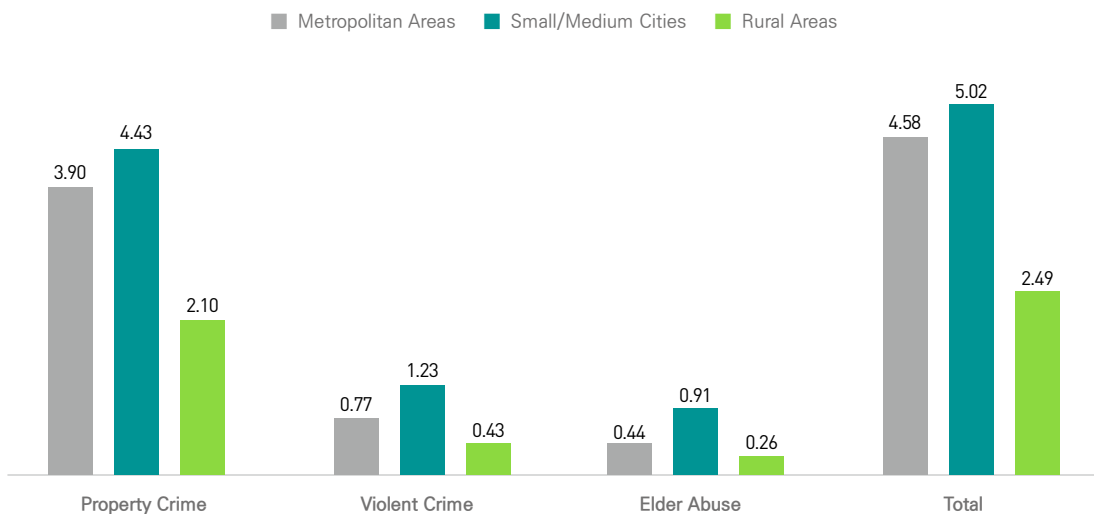
[Figure 1] Crime Victimization Among The Elderly



### ○ Crime Victimization by Area of Residence

- Among all crimes, the victimization rate was highest in small and medium-sized cities (5.02%), followed by metropolitan areas (4.58%), and rural towns (2.49%).
- This trend was consistent across property crimes, violent crimes, and elder abuse, with small and medium-sized cities showing the highest victimization rates.

[Figure 2] Crime Victimization by Area of Residence

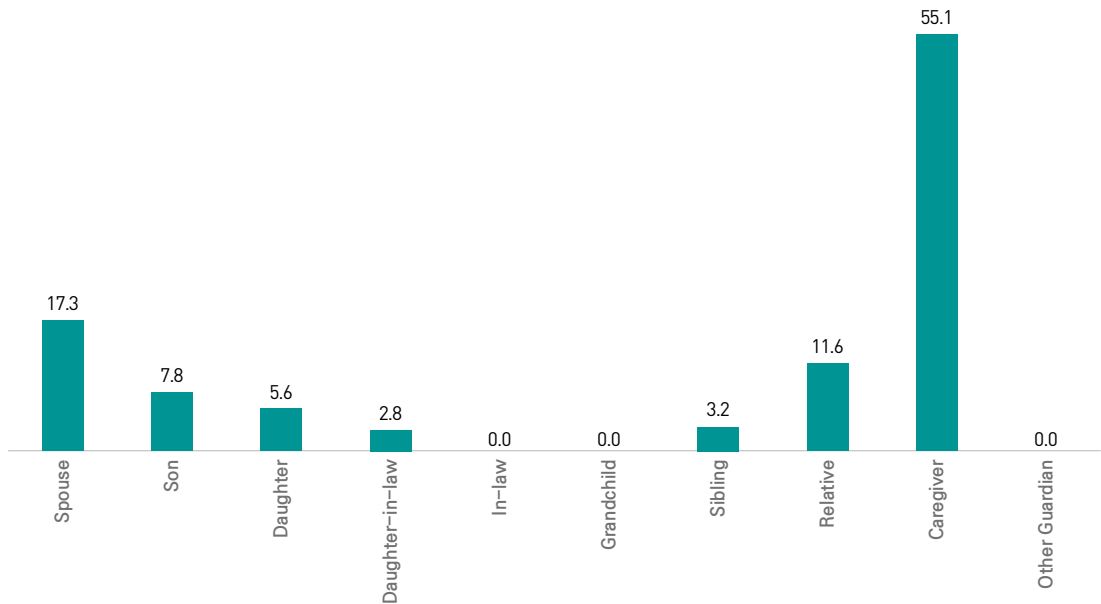


### ○ Perpetrators of Elder Abuse

- The most common perpetrators of elder abuse were caregivers (55.1%), followed by spouses (17.3%), relatives (11.6%), sons (7.8%), daughters (5.6%), and daughters-in-law

(2.9%). The high proportion of caregiver-perpetrated abuse is likely due to the increase in elderly individuals living alone, who are more likely to rely on caregivers than on spouses or children when ill or immobile.

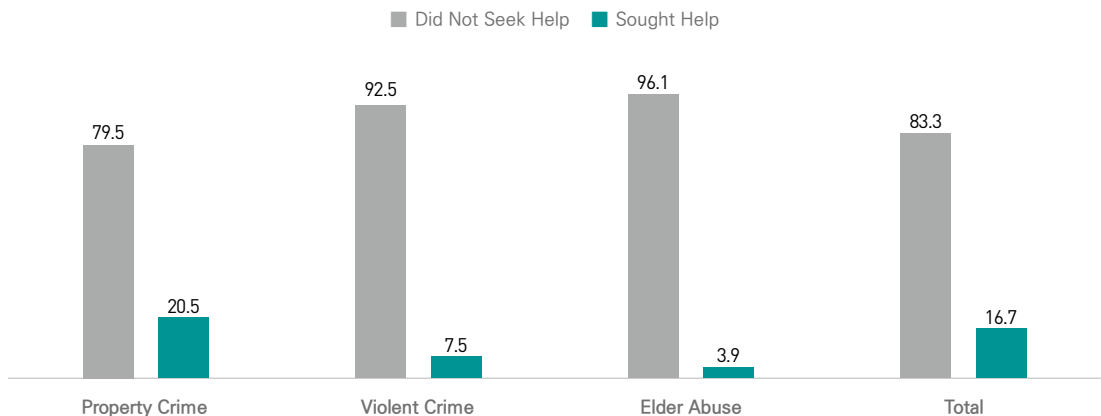
[Figure 3] Perpetrators of Elder Abuse



### ○ Help-Seeking Behavior of Elderly Victims

- Only 16.7% of elderly victims reported the crime or sought help from others.
- By crime type, property crime victims had the highest rate of help-seeking (20.5%), followed by violent crime victims (7.5%), and elder abuse victims (3.9%), which was the lowest.

[Figure 4] Help-Seeking Behavior of Elderly Victims



### ○ Fear of Crime Among the Elderly

- Fear of crime was higher among elderly individuals with lower monthly household income and no cohabiting family members.
- Those living in areas with high levels of physical and social disorder reported greater fear of crime, while those with strong neighbor relationships and higher trust in the police had lower levels of fear.
- Satisfaction with friendship and neighbor relationships, as well as relationships with spouses and children, was also associated with reduced fear of crime.

### ○ Factors Influencing Crime Victimization Among the Elderly

- Victimization by property and violent crimes was more common among elderly individuals who were more socially and digitally active and who lived in neighborhoods with strong community ties.
- Elder abuse, in contrast, was more prevalent among elderly individuals who were socially isolated and had limited external activity. Unlike other crimes, those living in close-knit communities were less likely to experience elder abuse.
- Across all crime types—property, violent, and abuse—elderly individuals living with family members were significantly less likely to be victimized than those living alone.

## 4

## Policy Recommendations

### ○ Legislation Addressing Elderly Crime and Abuse

- A comprehensive law is needed to address elder-targeted crimes, particularly elder abuse, including structured provisions for both penalty and protection.
- Legislation should include clauses on non-discrimination based on age and acknowledge elderly vulnerability.

### ○ Crime Prevention Education

- Education programs tailored to specific crime types encountered by older adults are essential.
- Elderly individuals should be empowered and encouraged to report victimization.

### ○ **Statistical Infrastructure for Elderly Victimization**

- There is a need to build a systematic and integrated crime data system to better inform prevention and response.

### ○ **Integrated Legal and Institutional Support**

- Current support for elderly victims is fragmented; a unified legal framework and improved inter-agency cooperation, including data sharing, are essential.

### ○ **Expected Policy Impact**

- By offering evidence-based insights into victimization and fear among the elderly, this study supports policies that can enhance quality of life, prevent crime, and reduce fear in Korea's aging society.

## 2

## Improving Digital Sex Crime Response System in South Korea

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### Keywords

Digital Sex Crime, Response System, Victim Protection, International Cooperation



### Summary

- This study analyzes previous research and the current state of digital sex crimes in South Korea, examines both domestic and international response systems, and proposes policy improvement measures based on expert consultation and practitioner surveys.
- In Korea, the response to digital sex crimes involves multi-agency cooperation: the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) acts as the lead coordinating ministry, the National Police Agency oversees investigations, and the Korea Communications Standards Commission deliberates on illegal digital content and processes removal/blocking requests.
- Victim support systems differ by region. Metropolitan areas such as Seoul, Gyeonggi, Incheon, and Busan operate independent one-stop support centers, while other regions depend on support services funded by MOGEF, resulting in regional disparities in service delivery.
- Internationally, countries like the U.S., U.K., and EU member states have adopted national strategies for child protection and prevention of gender-based online violence, involving multi-stakeholder cooperation across government, private sector, civil society, and academia.

- The study also reviews global cooperation platforms related to digital sex crimes, including Interpol, the Virtual Global Taskforce, the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse, ECPAT International, and International Association of Internet Hotlines (InHope).
- Based on the results of a survey of relevant practitioners and experts the study proposes:
  - 1) Establishing a control tower for cross-ministerial coordination under the Prime Minister's Office,
  - 2) Designating the National Police Agency as the lead agency for international cooperation,
  - 3) Creating a Digital Sex Crime Convergence Research Center affiliated with a national research institute,
  - 4) Enhancing training programs for digital sex crime response professionals, and
  - 5) Restructuring the victim support system with a clearer division of responsibilities between central and local governments.

## 1

## Background and Research Objectives

### ○ Necessity of the Research

- Public anxiety over digital sex crimes such as the Nth Room case and deepfake pornography has grown, elevating the issue to a key policy priority.
- The Korean government has included “creating a society safe from crime” and “establishing a victim support system” as major national agendas.

### ○ Research Objectives

- While existing studies have focused on legal reforms and victim support, there is a lack of research on the institutional response system, especially the need for a centralized coordination mechanism or control tower.
- This study seeks to fill that gap by presenting comprehensive strategies for improving organizational structures and inter-agency coordination.

## 2 Major Findings

### ○ Trends in Digital Sex Crime Victimization (2018–2022)

- The number of digital sex crime cases reported to victim support centers increased from 2,289 in 2018 to 12,727 in 2022, a 5.6-fold increase.
- In 2022, the most common types of victimization were: fear of distribution (30.1%), illegal filming (21.1%), actual distribution (19.5%), distribution threats (18.0%).

[Table 1] Number of Digital Sex Crime Cases Reported to Victim Support Centers (2018–2022)

Year	Total	Distribution	Illegal Filming	Distribution on Threat	Fear of Distribution	Editing/Deepfake	Cyber bullying	Others
2022	12,727	2,481	2,684	2,284	3,836	212	534	696
2021	10,353	2,103	2,228	1,939	2,660	176	533	714
2020	6,983	1,586	2,239	967	1,050	349	306	486
2019	4,114	1,213	1,043	354	557	144	273	530
2018	2,289	758	656	208	216	69	108	274

### ○ Deepfake Pornography Regulatory Review Statistics (2020–2023)

- From June 2020 to August 2023, the number of deepfake pornography cases deliberated by the Korea Communications Standards Commission increased sharply.
  - 2021: 1,913 cases
  - 2022: 3,574 cases
  - Up to August 2023: 3,046 cases

[Table 2] Status of Regulatory Review on Sexually Manipulated Video Content (June 2020 – August 2023)

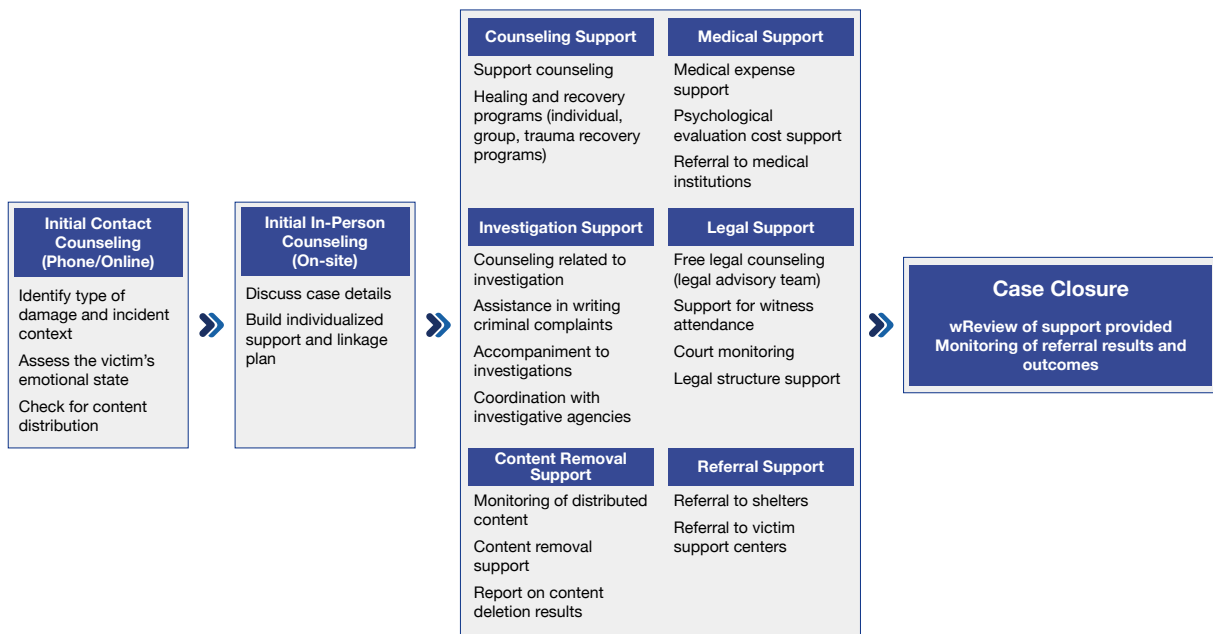
Year	Complaints	Self-Detection	Referrals from Other Agencies	Total Reviewed	Account Termination	Deletion	Access Blocking
2020 (from Jun. 25)	150	323	-	473	-	-	473
2021	361	1,507	45	1,913	-	-	1,913
2022	1,040	2,491	43	3,574	1	410	3,163
2023 (until Aug.)	313	2,715	18	3,046	-	-	3,046

Note: Data from 2020 are only available starting from the revision of the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Sexual Crimes(effective June 25, 2020).

## ○ Domestic Response System & International Cooperation Mechanisms

- MOGEF oversees policy planning, coordinates agency cooperation, and manages national victim support centers. The National Police Agency handles criminal investigations, while the Korea Communications Standards Commission is responsible for reviewing and blocking illegal content.
- Local governments, particularly metropolitan municipalities, operate their own centers, while other regions rely on national programs, creating service inconsistencies.

[Figure 1] Integrated Support Process for Victims at the Busan Metropolitan City Digital Sex Crime Victim Support Center



- Countries such as the U.S. and U.K. address digital sex crimes within broader national strategies for child protection and gender-based violence.
- Given the transnational nature of digital sex crimes, active participation and leadership in global cooperation are essential. Key platforms include: Virtual Global Taskforce, INTERPOL, Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse, ECPAT International, INHOPE.

[Figure 2] Virtual Global Taskforce



### Expert Survey Results

- Experts emphasized the urgent need for a central control tower for policy coordination, suggesting alternatives such as the Prime Minister's Office or inter-ministerial task forces.
- There was strong support for the creation of a specialized research center and enhancement of training through institutions such as the Women's Human Rights Institute of Korea (WHRIK) and the Korean Institute for Gender Equality Promotion and Education (KIGEPE).
- Regarding victim support, experts stressed the need to eliminate regional disparities and clearly divide roles between the central and local governments.

## 3 Policy Recommendations

### Improvement Measures for the Digital Sex Crime Response System

- **Control Tower:** A cross-ministerial coordination body under the Prime Minister's Office, modeled after task forces in countries like the U.S.
- **Research & Training:** Establish a Digital Sex Crime Research Center and strengthen educational programs for professionals, led by the WHRIK and KIGEPE.

- **Victim Support System:** Standardize services across regions through a hybrid model, where local governments provide primary support and central government agencies coordinate nationwide functions.

## 4 Expected Policy Impact

- This study contributes to strengthening the institutional and policy foundation for responding to digital sex crimes and protecting victims.
- By presenting concrete proposals such as the establishment of a control tower, international cooperation strategies, and legal reform directions, it offers actionable recommendations for policy improvement.
- Notably, the study's finding on limitations in punishing deepfake offenders under existing law contributed to a 2024 legislative revision, demonstrating real-world impact.

## 3

## Trends and Policy Recommendations for Livelihood-Infringing Crimes ( I ): Violent Crimes in Daily Life

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### Keywords

Livelihood-infringing crimes, violent crimes, assault, injury, threats, extortion, property damage, obstruction of official duties, interference with business, coercion



### Summary

- This study was planned to identify trends and characteristics of livelihood-infringing crimes that significantly affect the daily lives of the public—such as violent crimes in everyday environments, rental fraud, voice phishing, robbery, and theft—through empirical research, and to suggest directions for institutional and policy improvements based on domestic and international trends.
- In 2024, the first year of this three-year project, the study focused on eight types of violent crimes in everyday environments. By analyzing court decisions and expert surveys, it examined crime patterns, offender characteristics, and policy responses.
- Over the past decade (2013–2022), the most common types of crimes were assault, property damage, injury, threats, and extortion, in that order. While threats and extortion have increased, injury cases have decreased significantly. Cases of obstruction of official duties declined from 14,284 in 2013 to 11,111 in 2022, showing a general downward trend despite annual fluctuations.
- Violent crimes in everyday environments include a variety of behaviors such as assault, injury, threats, extortion, property damage, obstruction of official duties, interference with business, and coercion.

- Policy recommendations include clarifying the scope and definition of these crimes, strengthening responses to alcohol-related violence, increasing sentencing severity, enhancing protections for public officials, and developing preventive strategies.

## 1

## Background and Research Objectives

- This study was designed to empirically examine trends and offender characteristics of three types of livelihood-infringing crimes: (1) violent crimes in everyday environments, (2) financial crimes, and (3) malicious fraud.
- In 2024, the first phase focused on violent crimes in everyday settings, using court document analysis (800 cases), expert opinion surveys, and legal system comparisons to assess current conditions and propose improvement strategies.
- “Violent crimes in everyday environments” refer to repeated, chronic violence occurring in daily public spaces—such as streets, shops, restaurants, public transportation, hospitals, and offices—which endanger public safety and weaken public authority.

### ○ Research Objectives

- While existing studies have focused on legal reforms and victim support, there is a lack of research on the institutional response system, especially the need for a centralized coordination mechanism or control tower.
- This study seeks to fill that gap by presenting comprehensive strategies for improving organizational structures and inter-agency coordination.

## 2

## Major Findings

### ○ Crime Trends Based on Official Statistics

- Over the past 10 years (2013–2022), the five most common offenses were assault, property damage, injury, threats, and extortion. While injury has declined, threats and extortion have increased. Obstruction of official duties also showed a decline over the same period.
- Location-based trends:
  - 1) On roads: assaults, injury, extortion declined; threats increased.
  - 2) In department stores: most crimes increased except injury.

- 3) In supermarkets: injury, extortion, and damage first declined, then rose again; threats steadily increased.
- 4) In convenience stores, large retail stores, and stations: threats and damage increased; injury declined.
- 5) In shops and street markets: injury and extortion declined; threats increased; assault and damage fluctuated.
- 6) In entertainment venues and hospitals: threats rose; other crimes generally declined.
- 7) In subways: injury declined, but assault, threats, and damage increased.
- 8) In transportation: assault, threats, and damage rose, while injury and extortion remained relatively stable.

## ● Court Decision Analysis

- 800 first-instance court rulings from 2019–2023 were analyzed. Summary of selected crimes:
  - 1) Assault: Often occurred at night and on roads; half involved prior criminal records; high alcohol involvement.
  - 2) Injury: Most incidents occurred at night and on roads; 52.7% of offenders had prior similar offenses.
  - 3) Threats: Mainly occurred while the victim was working; repeat victimization rate was high (53.3%).
  - 4) Extortion: Frequently occurred in office settings; offenders had high repeat offense rates with long crime durations.
  - 5) Property Damage: Most commonly occurred on roads at night; many first-time offenders, but repeat offenses still significant.
  - 6) Obstruction of Official Duties: Predominantly occurred on roads at night; victims were always on duty; high alcohol involvement.
  - 7) Interference with Business: Fines were imposed in 59% of cases; high repeat rates; about 90% occurred while the victim was working.
  - 8) Coercion: Highest average sentence; long crime duration; high rate of repeat victimization.

## ● Expert Survey Results

- Definition and Scope: Lack of consistent classification makes legal response difficult; a standardized academic definition and classification system is needed.
- Current Status and Patterns: Alcohol-related violence was found to be especially problematic both in public spaces and in crimes against public officials.
- Policy Limitations and Recommendations:
  - 1) Amend the Act on the Performance of Duties by Police Officers and the Punishment of Minor Offenses Act; establish a new law to protect intoxicated individuals.

- 2) Drawing on examples from the United States, Germany, and Japan, consider enacting legislation that classifies public intoxication and alcohol-related violence as punishable offenses, while granting law enforcement limited immunity and authority to intervene effectively in managing intoxicated individuals.
- 3) Strengthen sentencing for obstruction of official duties and apply cumulative penalties to habitual offenders.
- 4) Establish local integrated management centers for chronic alcohol-related offenders; create protective facilities and reintegration programs.

### 3 Policy Recommendations

- **Clarify Definitions and Scope:** Establish consistent definitions for violent crimes in everyday environments to support statistical tracking and research, thereby enabling tailored policy design.
- **Respond to Alcohol-Related Violence:**
  - 1) Many offenders were intoxicated at the time of the offense. Measures such as regulating public drinking, issuing fines, and granting police authority for protective action are recommended.
  - 2) Adopt foreign legislative models to introduce specific penalties for alcohol-induced violence.
  - 3) Strengthen cooperation among police, fire, medical, and welfare services for improved intervention and protection.
- **Strengthen Sentencing:**
  - 1) Repeat offenses are common among offenders. Shared databases and inter-agency collaboration are needed for targeted prevention.
  - 2) Increase imprisonment rates and fines to reflect the severity of livelihood-infringing crimes.
- **Protect Public Officials:**
  - 1) Adjust sentencing guidelines upward and introduce cumulative punishment for repeat offenders.
  - 2) Raise awareness of the social risks of violence against public officials and implement preventive education for high-risk groups such as new civil servants.
- **Preventive Strategies:**
  - 1) Since many violent crimes occur on streets, emphasize police crime prevention activities in public spaces.
  - 2) Promote public campaigns to encourage immediate reporting, particularly for crimes with high repeat patterns like extortion and coercion.
  - 3) Develop AI- and big data-based predictive systems for early detection and intervention, inspired by the U.S. Real-Time Crime Center (RTCC) model.