

# Current Status of Crimes against Children/ School Students and Its Countermeasures in Japan

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## Current Status of Crimes

The number of cases where children (here referring to children aged under 13 years) became the victim to Penal Code offences in Japan has been decreasing since 2002, with 33,328 cases reported in 2008, a decrease of 1,130 cases (3.3%) compared to the previous year.

Of the total number of Penal Code offences in 2008, Abduction/Kidnapping (40.6%/63 cases); Indecent Assault (13.2%/936 cases); Murder (8.8%/115 cases) rank especially high among cases in which children were victimized. (Fig. 1).

## Crime Prevention Measures

As the result of a spate of violent crimes being committed in 2004 and 2005 against young girls on their way home from school in Nara, Ibaraki, Hiroshima, and other prefectures, in December of 2005, the Japanese Government established the Inter-Ministry/Agency Committee on Measures to Defend Children from Crimes comprising nine government ministries and agencies including the National Police Agency, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, and the Cabinet Office acting as Secretariat. Consequently, Measures to Defend Children

from Crimes comprising comprehensive measures for ensuring the safety of children on their commute routes and protecting children from crime were formulated. Furthermore, in June of 2006, the Ministerial Meeting Concerning Measures against Crime and the Headquarters Meeting for Promoting Growth of Youth were held jointly. In the meeting, Children's Safety and Security Acceleration Plan formulated by the Inter-Ministry/Agency Project Team Concerning Measures to Prevent Children from Crime Victimization and Delinquency was approved. Under this plan, families, schools, local residents, and government bodies combine to promote efforts to accelerate measures for preventing child victimization and delinquency.

In order to prevent the recurrence of these kinds of crimes, the police are promoting such policies as Support for Volunteer Activities, Crime Prevention Education, Safety Measures around Schools and Commute Routes, and Information Transmission Activities, in addition to intensifying street activities by uniformed police officers and clamping down on crime targeting children.

### Support for volunteer activities

In order to protect children from becoming the victims of crime, besides promoting the efforts of

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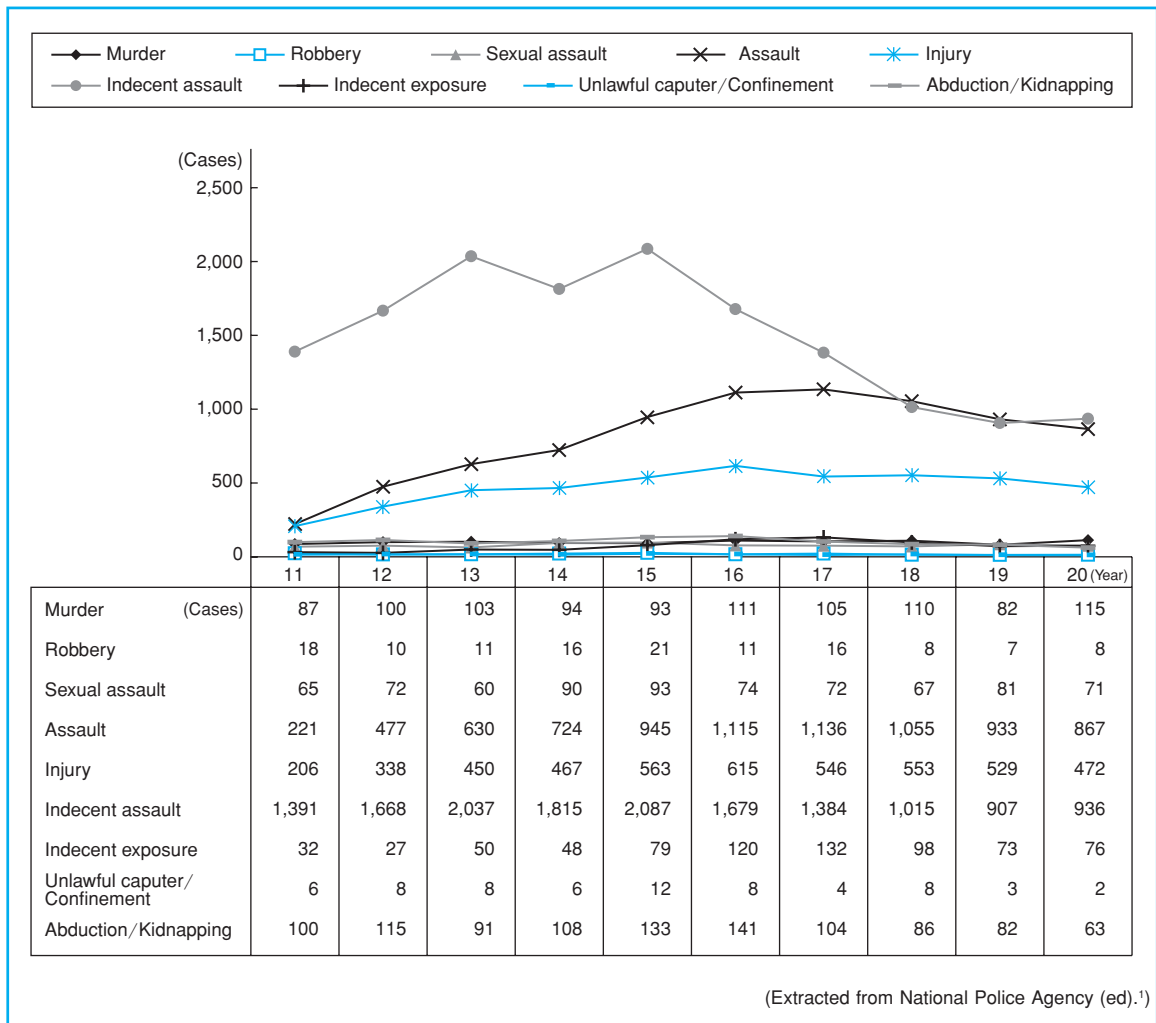


Fig. 1 Trends in the status of crimes against children aged under 13 years (1999–2008)

the police, education boards, and schools, it is also vitally important that the entire communities surrounding children are conscious of the need and responsibility of protecting their children. Accordingly, the police provide support by giving out stickers, manuals to volunteer households that act as “Children’s 110 (Emergency) Houses,” providing temporary refuge to children who have run into danger and notifying the authorities. The police also support voluntary activities, such as conducting joint patrols with members of volunteer groups in addition to providing materials and equipment to and outfitting the operational bases of volunteer groups whose

main activities are the protection and guidance of children along commute routes.

**Promotion of crime prevention education**

To enhance their ability to predict and avoid situations in which children are in danger of becoming entangled in crime, the police provide anti-crime education to nursery school, kindergarten, and elementary school children in the form of picture-story shows, plays, and role plays appropriate for the children’s age and level of comprehension, and interactive anti-crime classes are also held in coordination with schools and education boards. Teachers are provided with

training in how to respond in the case of a school intruder.

### Safety measures around schools and commute routes

In order to prevent cases where children become the victim before they occur and ensure that children are able to go to and from school safely, in addition to intensifying patrols by police officers of school routes, especially at times when children are going to or from school, the police are appointing retired police officers as school supporters and actively sending them into schools, working in cooperation with schools to ensure the security of children at schools and commute routes.

### Promotion of information transmission activities

In order for children and their parents/guardians to be swiftly provided with information about cases in which a child has been victimized or incidents that may foretell crimes against children such as strangers approaching or stalking a child, a system for sharing information has been set up between police stations, elementary schools, and boards of education. Not only is this information made publicly available on prefectural police websites, but also community residents are actively provided with information through information provision systems utilizing e-mail, etc.

### Establishment of Juvenile and Woman Aegis Teams

Due to the great anxiety created among the general public by a series of violent crimes against children and women, the fiscal year 2009 police

budget made provision for an increase in the number of police officers; systems for protecting children and women from becoming crime victims were reinforced; and in April 2009, nationwide police headquarters established Juvenile and Woman Aegis teams.

The mission of these special teams is to identify perpetrators as quickly as possible and expertly and continuously undertake preemptive and preventative measures such as apprehension or direction/warning to ensure that incidences of strangers stalking children/women or other behaviors do not escalate into crimes. The establishment of these teams has enabled the strengthening of responses to incidents of strangers approaching children/women, which until now cannot be said to have been sufficient. As of December 2009, nine months after their establishment, teams nationwide have achieved steady progress, apprehending 886 people and issuing directions/warnings to another 931 as the result of preemptive/preventative activities.

### Conclusion

Ensuring the safety of children/school students requires not only the police but also the national government, municipalities, local residents, parents/guardians, school personnel, and entire community members to each play the role in their position, cooperating and coordinating with each other, sharing the strong consciousness of crime prevention and the idea that protecting children of the community from crimes is the community's responsibility. I conclude this paper by asking for the support and cooperation of everyone in creating communities in which children—the leaders of the next generation—can live and grow in safety and a sense of security.

### Reference

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