



FOLKETINGET
STATSREVISORERNE



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RIGSREVISIONEN

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Extract from Rigsrevisionen's report
submitted to the Public Accounts Committee

The police's discontinuation of cases concerning crime against the person

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose and conclusion

1. This report concerns the police's discontinuation of cases concerning crime against the person. The police's handling of reports of crime may lead to a case being discontinued or to a perpetrator being charged with having committed the crime. When the police discontinue a case, this means that, as a general rule, they do not investigate it any further. From 2019 to the first half of 2025, a total of approx. 315,000 cases concerning crime against the person were reported and approx. 110,000 cases were discontinued.

2. Police investigations of cases are regulated by the Police Act and the Administration of Justice Act. Under section 2 of the Police Act, the police are tasked, among other things, with *"bringing criminal activity to an end and investigating and prosecuting criminal offences"*. In addition, section 742(2) of the Administration of Justice Act states that *"following a report of crime or on its own initiative, the police shall initiate an investigation when there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a criminal offence subject to public prosecution has been committed"*. If the police discontinue cases without attempting to solve them, this may affect victims' and the public's sense of justice, just as it may have consequences for the level of crime in society if criminals learn that they are not punished for breaking the law.

3. The Danish Public Accounts Committee has requested Rigsrevisionen to examine whether the police discontinue cases without sufficient investigation, and the extent to which this occurs.

A study in which we are to identify whether the police have failed to take relevant investigative steps is difficult. This is because what we are looking for is, to some extent, something that is not there and therefore will not be documented. Our approach is therefore to examine whether there are signs that the police have an inappropriate practice. This may, for example, be that the police refuse to receive reports of crime, or that they refrain from opening cases as criminal cases, so-called regular criminal cases, and instead register them as so-called inquiry cases. When this happens, there are fewer requirements for the police's investigation. It may also be that investigative steps are omitted in an ongoing investigation.

Crime against the person

Crime against the person comprises various types of crime. These include, for example, violence, rape, threats, homicide, attempted homicide and arson. The sentencing range extends from a fine for common assault to life imprisonment for homicide.

Regular criminal case

The police register a report of crime as a regular criminal case if there is suspicion that a criminal offence has been committed and there is no doubt about the substance of the offence.

Inquiry case

The police initially register a report of crime as an inquiry case in POLSAS if, during the initial assessment, it is unclear whether the reported matter is a criminal offence and/or which provision of the Criminal Code may have been violated.

We use four different sources which, taken together, shed light on police practice. These are:

- data from the police's records and case management system POLSAS
- the police's written guidelines, orders and instructions
- police case information from selected cases in POLSAS (case review)
- police employees' experiences with inappropriate practice, which we have collected in an anonymous questionnaire survey.

We compare the different sources to shed light on whether the police have an inappropriate practice. We therefore do not examine whether the police, in all crime areas, do what they are required to do under the guidelines, but we look across the different sources for areas where there are indications that the police have an inappropriate practice. Parts of the report therefore do not concern all parts of the area of crime against the person. This applies particularly in relation to the registration of cases, where we have identified three problematic crime areas. The analyses of discontinuations cover the entire area of crime against the person to a greater extent.

4. The Administration of Justice Act and the Police Act are broadly worded. This means that the police have wide discretionary powers in relation to assessing whether an investigation should be initiated, the form in which it should be initiated, and when cases can be discontinued. This means that, in some cases, our study can only indicate, but not prove, that cases are not registered, investigated or discontinued correctly.

5. The purpose of the study is to assess whether the police's practice for handling a number of matters in connection with crime against the person is satisfactory. We answer the following questions in the report:

- Do the police refrain from registering regular criminal cases even though they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a criminal offence has been committed?
- Do the police discontinue cases with investigative potential without investigating them?
- Have the cases been discontinued by authorised personnel and with correct explanations to the injured party?

Rigsrevisionen initiated the study in March 2025 at the request of the Danish Public Accounts Committee. The Danish Public Accounts Committee's questions also cover financial crime. Financial crime is addressed in the *report on the police's discontinuation of cases concerning financial crime*, which is submitted at the same time as this report.



Conclusion

Rigsrevisionen finds the police's practice in relation to crime against the person highly unsatisfactory. In some areas, the police register cases as cases with a lower sentencing range and fewer requirements for the investigation, and there is a large number of cases that the police have not investigated, even though they informed the injured party otherwise. In addition, a large number of cases have been discontinued by employees who were not authorised to do so and, in some cases, with an incorrect explanation. The consequence of the practice may be that cases concerning crime against the person that could have been solved are not solved.

In some cases, the police register cases in a way that may allow the perpetrator to get off more lightly

In three areas, the police districts have, to varying degrees, a practice indicating that cases are registered as cases with a lower sentencing range, fewer deadlines and fewer investigative steps than they ought to be. For the other crime areas under crime against the person, we have not, by means of our methodological approach, found indications of an inappropriate practice.

First, approx. 2,000 rape cases have been registered as so-called inquiry cases, even though, according to the Danish National Police's guidelines, this may only happen in *highly exceptional cases*.

Second, reports concerning harassment and stalking, particularly in some police districts, are predominantly registered as administrative cases concerning restraining orders, even though a specific section on stalking was introduced into the Criminal Code in 2022, imposing stricter penalties. Rigsrevisionen recommends that the Ministry of Justice follow up on whether the police districts' practice conflicts with the intentions behind the introduction of the stalking provision.

Third, there is considerable variation across the country in terms of the proportion of reports concerning violence in nightlife that are registered as violence cases, and how many are registered as administrative cases with a lower sentencing range. In addition, police employees from almost all districts state that they register cases with a lower sentencing range because their management wishes to avoid too many violence cases. Rigsrevisionen recommends that the Ministry of Justice ensure clearer frameworks for when violence in nightlife must be treated as violence cases.

The practice described above in the three areas means that there are fewer requirements for investigative steps and deadlines, and that there is therefore a greater probability that the cases are not investigated sufficiently.

The police districts have discontinued a large number of cases without investigating them, and there are indications that some investigative steps are deselected

In approx. 5,900 cases, the police informed the injured party that they had initiated an investigation, even though, in our assessment, no investigative steps had been taken. There is no clear definition of what constitutes an investigative step, and we therefore recommend that the Ministry of Justice ensure that clearer frameworks are drawn up for this.

In addition, the police districts discontinue cases concerning crime against the person with reference to resources to a greater extent than provided for in the rules, and there are indications that, in some cases, they deselect central investigative steps, for example technical examinations or review of video surveillance. The latter may, among other things, be because the districts are not aware of the extent to which they must pay for obtaining video material. We therefore recommend that the Ministry of Justice use its existing authority to clarify the rules.

The rules on who may discontinue cases are not complied with

Thousands of cases concerning crime against the person have been discontinued by the police, even though only the prosecution service may do so. In addition, the police have discontinued some cases with a misleading explanation.

Cases concerning human trafficking are investigated to a limited extent

The study indicates that cases concerning human trafficking are investigated less than other forms of crime against the person. The proportion of cases registered as inquiry cases is three times higher than for cases concerning crime against the person in general. The proportion of cases discontinued without investigation, even though the police have stated that an investigation has been carried out, is likewise three times as high.

At the same time, in a significant proportion of the cases (27%), no explanation is given as to why the cases have been discontinued.

Across the areas examined, there are considerable differences between the police districts in relation to whether investigations are initiated and cases discontinued. The legislation gives the police wide discretionary powers, but we encourage the Ministry of Justice to monitor the area more closely to ensure that citizens across the country are treated consistently.