



Young People and Crime

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'Kids who kill'

The Australian 17/11/95, p15

'No respect – teens contempt for law'

Daily Telegraph 25/5/95, p1

'City of fear. Brat pack stalk elderly'

Daily Telegraph 17/11/94, p1

'Parents should pay for crime – young law breakers fill courts'

Daily Telegraph 7/6/94, p14

'Cut jail age – battle to beat juvenile crime'

Daily Telegraph 6/6/94, p4

INTRODUCTION

Juvenile crime in New South Wales (NSW) has received a great deal of publicity in recent years. Despite the attention it receives, public perceptions of juvenile crime have been surrounded by a substantial amount of confusion. A casual reading of newspaper headlines may seem to suggest that most juvenile offenders are involved in violent crime and offend frequently. This bulletin explores recent trends in juvenile crime which tend to belie this impression and outlines the findings of two recent research studies conducted by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research on juvenile offending. There are four sections to this bulletin. The first section discusses the criminal prosecution process for juveniles in NSW. The second section discusses sources of information about juvenile crime. The third section presents current statistics with respect to offences committed by juveniles and juvenile offender characteristics. The final section of the bulletin examines patterns of juvenile offending, the offending frequency of juveniles in NSW, and how this information can be used to prevent juvenile offending.

JUVENILE PROSECUTION PROCESS

The NSW Children's Court generally hears matters for offenders who are at least 10 years old and under 18 years at the time of the alleged offence, and under 21 years when the matter is brought before the Children's Court. Generally, alleged offences committed by persons 18 years of age or older are heard in the Local or Higher Courts. Persons under the age of 18 can also appear in the Higher Courts for serious indictable offences.

Recently there has been a move towards diverting young offenders away from formal court proceedings as a means of avoiding stigmatisation of young offenders and reducing first-time offenders' contact with the formal criminal justice system. The NSW Government's White Paper, *Breaking the Crime Cycle: New Directions for Juvenile Justice in NSW*, embraced the principle of providing alternatives to court proceedings for minor and first-time juvenile offenders and the practice of reintegrating juvenile offenders into the community.¹ The provision of warnings and cautions are two alternatives to court proceedings, both of which are issued at the discretion of police officers. A warning can be issued for a trivial offence such as a minor street offence. In this situation, the juvenile's name is recorded in the officer's notebook but no formal action is taken. A formal caution may be issued by a patrol commander or supervising sergeant when a juvenile has committed a minor offence and has admitted guilt. The caution is issued to the juvenile in the presence of a person responsible for the juvenile, and the juvenile's name and details of the incident are recorded on the Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS).

Other alternatives to prosecution have been trialed in NSW, such as

conferencing.² In conferencing, the offender meets the victim of his or her crime and is encouraged to take responsibility for his or her actions and make some form of reparation. In the future, some form of conferencing is likely to be available as an alternative to court proceedings for minor offences.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT JUVENILE CRIME

The principal sources of information used to examine aspects of juvenile crime include incidents recorded by police, cases decided by the courts, research studies examining specific groups (for example, juvenile offenders in custody), and offender surveys. When considered in isolation, each of these sources of information has particular strengths and limitations.

When crimes are reported to the police, characteristics of the offender such as age and gender are often unknown, making it difficult to use such statistics to develop offender profiles. A further limitation of police statistics is that they can be affected by policing policy, discretion and effectiveness. For example, changes in the level of recorded crime for drug offences, offensive behaviour offences or drink-driving offences can be influenced by police initiatives as well as real changes in the number of offences occurring. Nevertheless, for many offences, changes in the reported rate of crime tend to reflect changes in the actual rate. In these cases, police statistics can be a rich source of information about changes over time in offending rates and about differences between areas in their relative offending rates. Police crime incident data are also often a valuable source of information about the circumstances surrounding an offence.

Court statistics, like police statistics, can be affected by changes in police

resources, discretion and effectiveness. For example, the number of appearances³ before the Children's Court may be affected by the willingness of police to issue cautions as opposed to charging a juvenile. This disadvantage is particularly relevant to the interpretation of trends in juvenile crime. Although the majority of offences committed by juveniles are relatively minor, many of these result in a caution rather than a court appearance. Court appearance data therefore give a somewhat distorted picture of the seriousness of juvenile offending. Moreover, changes over time in police willingness to issue cautions can result in apparent changes in the seriousness of offences committed by juveniles appearing in court. The major advantages of court statistics, however, are that they provide useful information on offender characteristics and on the way juveniles are dealt with by the criminal justice system.

Specific research studies on juvenile offending have the advantage of being able to examine particular groups of offenders or aspects of offending. Such studies can utilise a variety of sources of information that are already available or create new sources of information designed specifically to answer particular questions. Two such studies have been published by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research in recent years. The first of these studies, *Juvenile Offending: Predicting Persistence and Determining the Cost Effectiveness of Interventions* examined patterns of juvenile offending and possible predictors of juveniles re-appearing in the Children's Courts using records from the NSW Children's Court.⁴ The second study, *The Correlates of Offending Frequency: A Study of Juvenile Theft Offenders in Detention*, investigated factors which distinguish between young offenders who offend frequently and those who offend less often.⁵ This study involved interviews with juveniles serving control orders for theft or robbery offences in detention centres in NSW. They were interviewed about their involvement in crime and a broad range of factors in an attempt to further our understanding of the frequency of offending among these juveniles.

Offender surveys are the best source of information about the level of juvenile involvement in crime as they are less affected by the biases previously discussed in police and court statistics. They collect information on offending behaviour from random sample surveys of juvenile populations such as school students. However, despite providing information on aspects of participation in crime from juveniles themselves, for

reasons of cost they often provide only limited information about the circumstances of offending. In the United States a national youth survey is conducted regularly in schools to investigate juvenile involvement in crime.⁶ Unfortunately, no such youth survey is routinely conducted in NSW, although the NSW Health Department conducts regular surveys on the prevalence of illicit drug use.⁷

THE CURRENT STATE OF JUVENILE CRIME IN NSW

JUVENILE OFFENDER CHARACTERISTICS

Contrary to what many people believe only a small proportion of juveniles come into contact with the juvenile justice system. At most, only two per cent of young people aged from 10 to 17 years came into contact with the Children's Court in the 12 months from July 1994 to June 1995.⁸

The statistics also suggest that juvenile crime is an overwhelmingly male phenomenon. Just over 83 per cent of juveniles appearing before the Children's Court in 1994/95 were male.⁹ The high rate of appearances by males may in part reflect greater willingness on the part of the police to caution female offenders but this fact would not account for more than a small proportion of the over-representation by males. Studies of participation in crime based on self-reported offending also show higher levels of participation by males.¹⁰

Figure 1 shows age-specific offender rates based on the Children's Court, Local Court and Higher Court statistics.¹¹

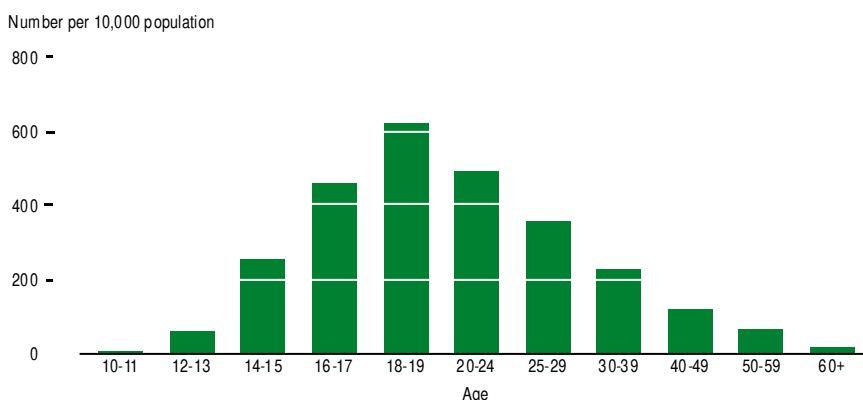
The highest rates are for persons aged 18 to 19 years and 20 to 24 years (612.5 per 10,000 population and 490.2 per 10,000 population, respectively). However, Figure 1 shows that the rate of appearances for juveniles aged 16-17 is also high (456.0 per 10,000 population). Moreover, young persons aged 16 and 17 years account for over 53 per cent of all appearances in the NSW Children's Court.¹²

The Aboriginal population are over-represented in many parts of the juvenile justice system. The 1991 Census indicated that Aboriginal young people account for 1.9 per cent of the juvenile population of NSW aged 10 to 17 years. However, in 1990 they comprised 15.6 per cent of court appearances, and 7.1 per cent of police cautions. Interestingly, this over-representation in the Children's Court was greater for young Aboriginal females who comprised 20.9 per cent of all Children's Court appearances for females, whereas young Aboriginal males accounted for 14.7 per cent of appearances by males in the Children's Court. A number of suggestions have been made to explain this over-representation of Aboriginal young people, including higher levels of offending, direct and indirect discrimination by sections of the criminal justice system, high police numbers in areas of higher Aboriginal populations and very high levels of arrest of a small number of Aboriginal juveniles.¹³

TYPE OF OFFENCE

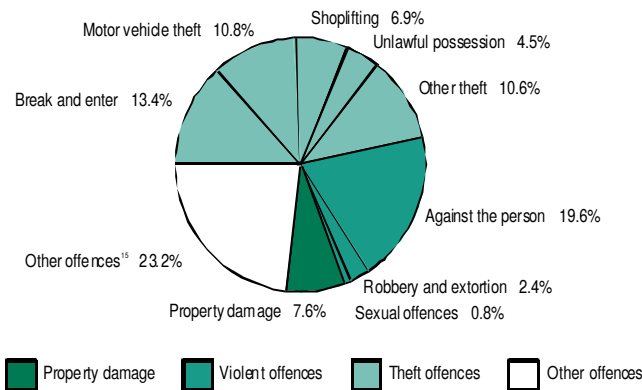
Despite the media focus on violent crimes by juveniles, theft offences make up the largest proportion of crime committed by juveniles appearing in the Children's Court.

Figure 1: Number of offenders per 10,000 population, by age of offender, NSW Children's Court 1994/95, and NSW Local and Higher Courts 1995



Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 1996, *New South Wales Criminal Courts Statistics 1995*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney, and Australian Bureau of Statistics 1995, *Estimated Resident Population by Sex and Single Year of Age, States and Territories of Australia, 30 June 1994*, Cat. no. 3210.1, ABS, Canberra.

Figure 2: Percentage of juvenile appearances by type of most serious offence, NSW Children's Court 1994/95



Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 1996, *New South Wales Criminal Courts Statistics 1995*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.

Each person who appears before the Children's Court may be charged with one or more offences. Figure 2 shows the relative frequencies of different types of offences for the *most serious offence* dealt with in each court appearance in 1994/95.¹⁴ In 1994/95, theft offences accounted for 46.3 per cent of all appearances in the Children's Court. Included in theft are break and enter offences, motor vehicle theft (MVT) offences, shoplifting, unlawful possession offences and other theft offences. Violent offences, consisting of offences against the person (homicide,

driving causing death, assault and abduction), robbery and extortion, and sexual offences, accounted for 22.9 per cent of appearances in the Children's Court in 1994/95.

Break and enter is the most common theft offence to be heard in the Children's Court, accounting for 13.4 per cent of all appearances in 1994/95. The offence category of MVT (10.8% of all appearances) was the next most common theft offence in 1994/95. Shoplifting offences and unlawful possession accounted for 6.9 per cent and 4.5 per cent of all appearances

before the NSW Children's Court in 1994/95, respectively. Other theft offences accounted for 10.6 per cent of all appearances. The 'other theft' category includes the offences steal from person and other stealing, such as pick-pocketing and handbag snatching.

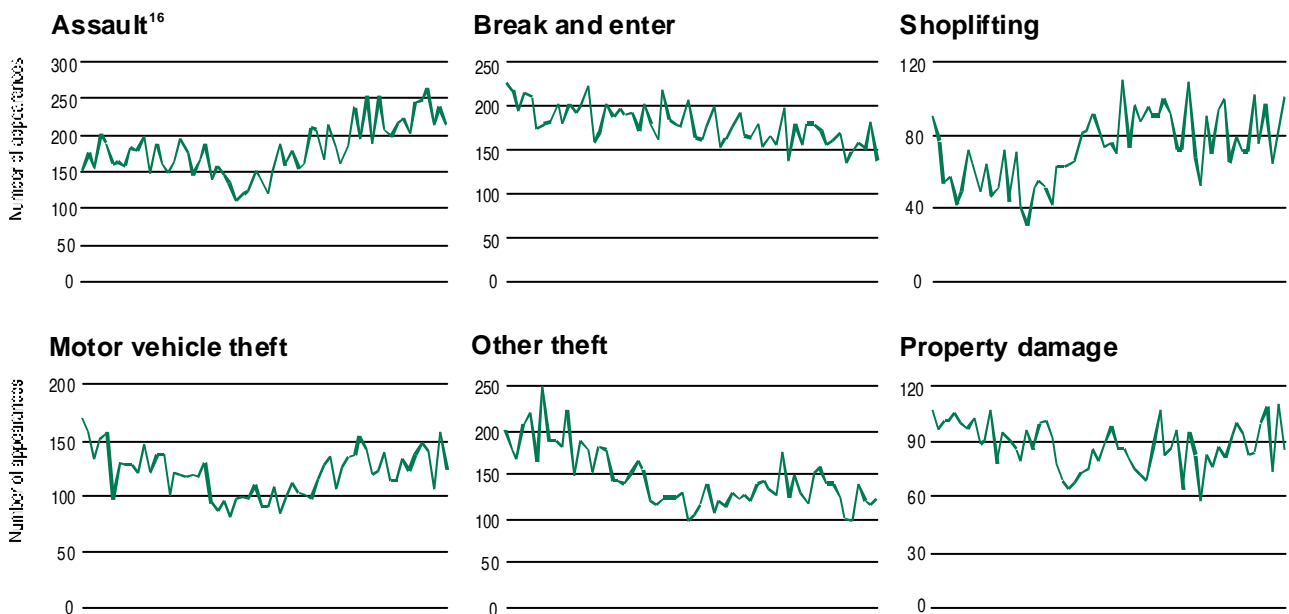
The most common category of violent offences heard during the same period was offences against the person (19.6% of all appearances) and of these, the vast majority (96.8% of all appearances for against the person offences) were for assault offences. Robbery and extortion accounted for 2.4 per cent of appearances before the NSW Children's Court in 1994/95, while sexual offences accounted for 0.8 per cent of appearances.

TRENDS IN JUVENILE OFFENDING

Trends in juvenile offending over time are also of public interest and concern. From July 1994 to June 1995 there were a total of 14,269 criminal appearances before the Children's Court, an increase of about three per cent from the number of appearances in 1993/94. Figure 3 shows the monthly number of appearances over the five year period July 1990 to June 1995 for the six most common offences heard by the Children's Court.

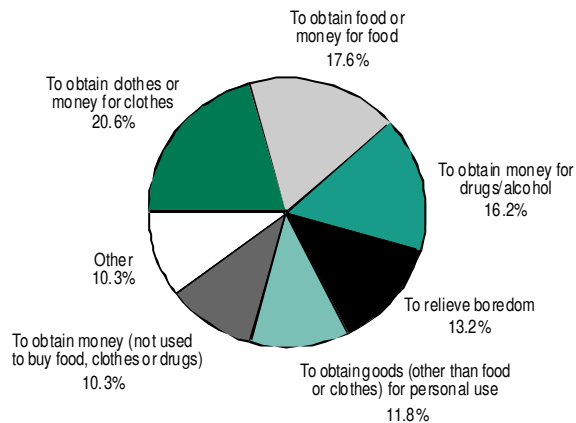
There was a statistically significant upward trend in the number of appearances for assault and shoplifting over this five-year period. Between the first and last twelve months of the period

Figure 3: Trends in the number of appearances in the NSW Children's Court from July 1990 to June 1995



Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 1996, *Key Trends in Crime and Justice New South Wales 1995*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.

Figure 4: Main reasons for committing shoplifting offences



Source: Salmelainen, P. 1995, *The Correlates of Offending Frequency: A Study of Juvenile Theft Offenders in Detention*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.

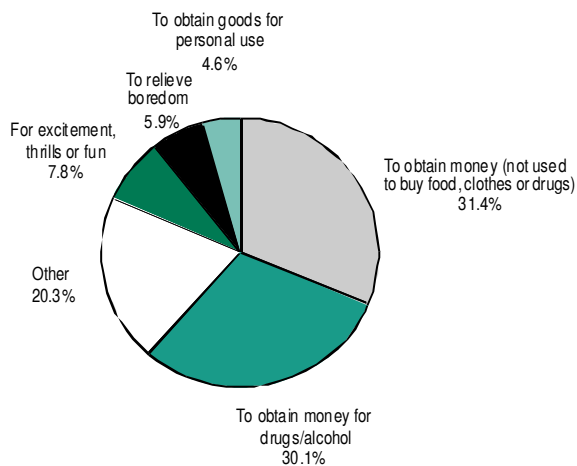
the number of appearances for assault increased by 32.6 per cent and the number of appearances for shoplifting increased by 38.9 per cent.

Statistically significant downward trends were recorded for the number of appearances for break and enter and other theft. The number of appearances for break and enter decreased by 18.9 per cent between the first and last twelve months of the period, while the number of appearances for other theft decreased by 34.1 per cent.

There was no statistically significant upward or downward trend in the number of appearances for MVT or property damage over the period.

REASONS FOR JUVENILE OFFENDING

Figure 5: Main reasons for committing break and enter offences

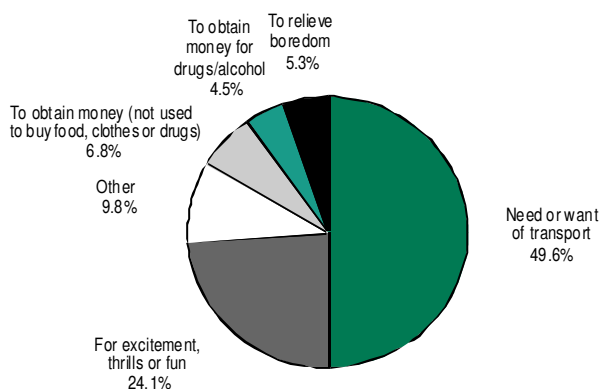


Source: Salmelainen, P. 1995, *The Correlates of Offending Frequency: A Study of Juvenile Theft Offenders in Detention*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.

It appears that the reasons juveniles give for why they offend varies with different types of offences. Salmelainen's recent study of juvenile theft offenders in NSW detention centres asked juveniles for their main reason for committing three types of theft offences: shoplifting, break and enter and MVT.¹⁷ Figure 4 shows the main reasons given by juveniles for committing shoplifting offences. A variety of reasons were given, with the most common reason cited being to obtain clothes or money for clothes (20.6%), followed by a desire to obtain food or money for food (17.6%).

Figure 5 shows the main reasons given by juveniles for committing break and enter offences. The most common reason given was to obtain money (61.5% of juveniles). About half of those giving this reason wanted the money specifically to buy drugs and/or alcohol. Only 4.6 per cent of juveniles responded that their main reason for committing break and enter offences was to obtain items for their personal use. This suggests that it is the money that can be obtained as a result of a break and enter offence rather than goods that is the motivating factor for most juveniles committing this offence.

Figure 6: Main reasons for committing motor vehicle theft offences



Source: Salmelainen, P. 1995, *The Correlates of Offending Frequency: A Study of Juvenile Theft Offenders in Detention*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.

Figure 6 shows the main reasons given by juveniles for committing MVT offences. Almost half (49.6%) cited the want or need of transport as the main reason for committing this offence. Excitement, thrills or fun was the second most common reason given (24.1%), whereas obtaining money for drugs, alcohol or another purpose (other than to buy food, clothes or drugs) was only given as the main reason for offending by 11.3 per cent of juveniles.

OFFENDING PARTICIPATION AND FREQUENCY

Changes in the crime rate can be a result of changes in the participation rate in crime, the frequency of offending, or both.¹⁸ The term ‘participation rate’ refers to the proportion of individuals in the population that commit criminal offences. The term ‘frequency of offending’ refers to the frequency with which these individuals engage in crime. As changes in either one of these factors produces changes in the rate of crime in society, it is necessary to address both aspects to gain an understanding of trends in crime and to develop appropriate strategies to diminish crime.

PARTICIPATION IN JUVENILE CRIME

One way to reduce the level of juvenile crime in society is to reduce the number of juveniles who participate in crime. Numerous studies have examined the factors that are related to involvement in juvenile crime. Developmental and familial factors such as the family structure, relationships with peers and school-related factors such as truancy, disruptive classroom behaviour and level of attainment, are strong predictors of offending. In a major review of research on the impact of family factors on delinquent behaviour, Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1986) found that the most powerful predictors were lack of parental supervision, the rejection of a child by a parent and the amount of involvement a child has with his or her parents. The marital status and the criminal history of parents also appeared as significant predictors of juvenile delinquency although the relationships were not as strong as for those factors previously mentioned.¹⁹ Other factors that have been found to be linked to involvement in juvenile crime include homelessness, poor school performance, and unemployment.²⁰

FREQUENCY OF JUVENILE OFFENDING

Another strategy for reducing juvenile crime is to attempt to lower the frequency of offending by young offenders. In order to do this it is helpful to know something about the factors which affect juvenile offending frequency.

Coumarelos (1994) investigated the frequency of offending by examining the number of NSW Children’s Court appearances for 33,900 juveniles whose first proven appearance in the Children’s

Court was between 1982 and 1986.²¹ The study showed, contrary to common belief, that the majority of young offenders (69.7%) do not re-appear in the Children’s Court after their first proven offence. Furthermore, the study showed that most juveniles have a relatively short period of involvement in crime in terms of appearances in the Children’s Court. Amongst those who had more than one court appearance, the average time between the first and last court appearance was about two years.²² Therefore, it appears that the majority of juveniles who become involved in crime are only involved for a relatively short period of time.

This study also found that the minority of juveniles who persist in offending account for a disproportionately large percentage of Children’s Court appearances. For example, almost half of the appearances (45.4%) were accounted for by only 15.4 per cent of juveniles. The finding that a relatively small percentage of offenders (whether juvenile or adult) account for a disproportionately large number of offences, arrests and convictions has been shown many times by past research.²³

Predictors of court re-appearances

Coumarelos (1994) identified three main factors that were important for predicting the likelihood of re-appearing in the Children’s Court: number of previous appearances in the Children’s Court, most serious offence at first proven appearance, and age at first proven appearance.

Number of appearances in the Children’s Court

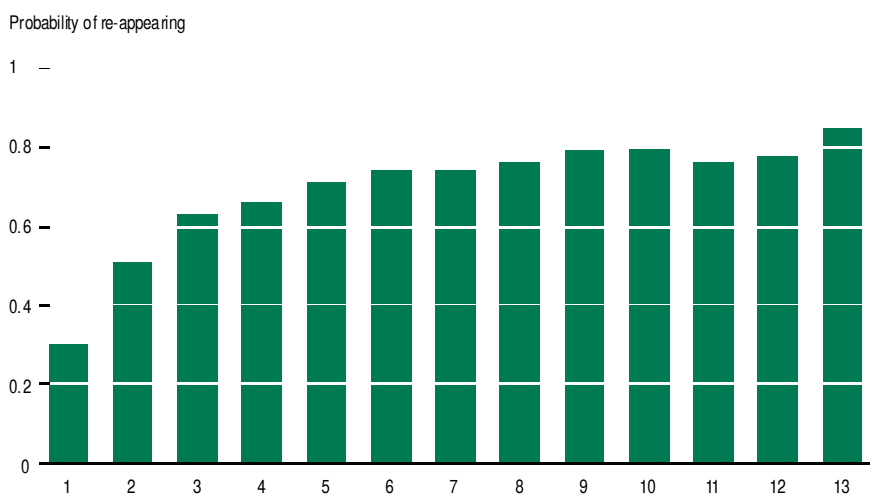
Figure 7 shows the estimated probability of re-appearing in the Children’s Court given the number of appearances to date. It can be seen that the probability of re-appearing increases with the number of times the juvenile has previously appeared. This increase occurs rapidly after the first couple of appearances and then more gradually. This finding is consistent with previous research that has shown that each successive contact with the criminal justice system is associated with an increase in the likelihood of further re-offending.²⁴

It should be noted, however, that the pattern shown in Figure 7 may be partially due to the way police deal with juvenile offenders. That is, when a juvenile has been apprehended previously, police may be more likely to proceed with prosecution rather than to issue a caution. It is also possible that the pattern stems simply from the fact that juveniles disinclined to re-offend are gradually filtered out leaving only juveniles with a high probability of re-offending.

Most serious offence at first proven appearance

A second factor that was identified as predicting re-appearance in the Children’s Court was the type of offence at first proven appearance. Figure 8 shows the cumulative percentage of juveniles who re-appeared within two

Figure 7: Probability of re-appearing in the NSW Children’s Court given the number of court appearances to date



Source: Coumarelos, C. 1994, *Juvenile Offending: Predicting Persistence and Determining the Cost-Effectiveness of Interventions*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.

years of their first proven court appearance by the type of most serious offence at first proven appearance. It includes only those juveniles who were aged under 16 years at the time of their first proven appearance.²⁵ Juveniles were most likely to re-appear within two years if their first proven offence was for robbery/extortion (about 49% of these juveniles re-appeared within two years). Juveniles whose first proven offence was MVT were the next most likely to re-appear within two years (44.0% of these juveniles), and those with driving/traffic offences and break and enter offences also had high percentages of re-appearance within two years (43.3% and 38.6%, respectively). The offence categories resulting in the lowest percentages of re-appearance within two years were fraud/misappropriation (19.3%), offences against good order (22.7%) and stealing/theft offences (26.3%).

Age at first proven appearance

Age at first proven appearance was also a predictor of re-appearance but only when appearances were examined over a relatively long period of time. Coumarelos (1994) found that the younger the juveniles were when they had their first proven appearance, the more likely they were to re-appear in the Children’s Court over a four-year period.²⁶

Using these predictors of re-appearance it is possible to target intervention strategies

at juveniles who are most at risk of re-appearing in the Children’s Court.

Correlates of offending frequency

The study by Salmelainen (1995) identified factors which distinguish high-rate from low-rate juvenile offenders.²⁷ This study examined three theft offences, namely shoplifting, break and enter and MVT, by interviewing 247 juveniles in detention centres in NSW and obtaining self-reports of their offending. The relationships between offence rate and lifestyle factors, risk/punishment factors, criminal history, developmental factors, and attitudes and perceptions were explored.

Lifestyle factors

Salmelainen (1995) found that lifestyle rather than developmental factors were the most important correlates of offending frequency, with drug use and the income needed to maintain this lifestyle being amongst the most important correlates of offending frequency. Break and enter offenders who used large quantities of marijuana, hallucinogens or stimulants were more likely to be high-rate offenders than low-rate offenders as were MVT offenders who used large amounts of marijuana. Moreover, a greater proportion of high-rate offenders tended to cite money for drugs as the main reason for offending than low-rate offenders. This suggests

that a decrease in the use of illicit drugs or the income need it generates may have a significant effect in reducing the aggregate rates of break and enter and MVT.

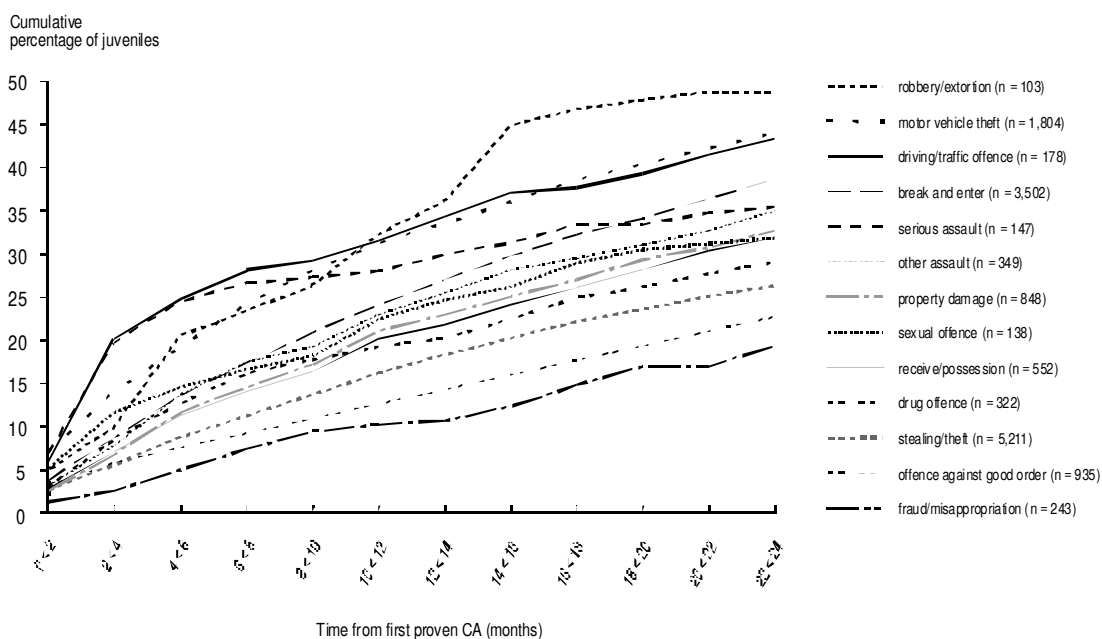
Another lifestyle factor that affected the offence rate for MVT offenders was thrill-seeking. Juveniles who stated that excitement and thrills were very important reasons for committing the offence were more likely to be high-rate offenders than juveniles who did not think these reasons were so important. This finding has been observed in other studies.²⁸

Offending frequency for shoplifting offenders was found to be related to residential status. Shoplifters who had no fixed address were more likely to be high-rate offenders than low-rate offenders.

Risk and punishment factors

The only risk or punishment factor that was found to be related to offending frequency for these three offence types was the actual risk of apprehension. Not surprisingly, the study found that offenders with a low **actual** risk of being apprehended were more likely to be high-rate offenders than low-rate offenders. It is surprising, however, that there was no difference found between high-rate and low-rate offenders on their **perceived** risk of getting apprehended nor on how upsetting they perceived different forms of punishment (e.g., fine, detention) to be. This suggests that the

Figure 8: Cumulative percentage of juveniles who re-appeared within 24 months of their first proven criminal appearance (CA) by type of most serious offence at first proven CA, Children’s Court



Source: Coumarelos, C. 1994, *Juvenile Offending: Predicting Persistence and Determining the Cost-Effectiveness of Interventions*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.

high-rate offenders may be more successful than low-rate offenders in minimising their risk of apprehension rather than low risk of apprehension being a causal factor in high frequency offending.

Criminal history

For MVT, it was found that high-rate offenders were more likely than low-rate offenders to have a mother or a non-immediate family member who had been arrested.

Developmental factors

The only developmental factor correlated with offending frequency was school performance. Generally, shoplifting offenders who rated their school performance as poor were more likely to be high-rate offenders than low-rate offenders.

Attitudes and perceptions

Salmelainen (1995) also showed that the offenders' attitudes towards the effect of their crime on the victim and on their own future had little association with their rate of offending. There was no relationship between juveniles' offending rate and juveniles' perception of the emotional and financial effect their crime had on the victim. Moreover, the study showed that, for shoplifting and break and enter, the majority of the offenders said they had not thought, or did not care, about the impact on the victim. This may be because they had few opportunities in which to see the impact of their crime. Again, the offending rate was not related to how upset offenders said they would be if their family or friends learned of their criminal behaviour. Nevertheless, many juveniles did show concern about the possibility of their crime affecting their chances of getting a good job, although this did not appear to significantly affect their rate of offending.

CONCLUSION

Contrary to popular belief, only a small percentage of juveniles come into contact with the criminal court system, and of those who do, almost half appear for theft offences. The majority of juveniles who appear in court, appear only once. Among those who re-appear, the average time between their first and last court appearance is usually only about two years.

Research shows that the factors which affect participation in juvenile crime are somewhat different to the factors which affect the frequency with which juveniles commit crime. Developmental factors, such as child neglect and poor parenting, strongly influence the probability of a

young person getting involved in crime, but do not appear to significantly influence the frequency with which they offend once they are involved. Lifestyle factors such as drug use and thrill seeking, are the strongest predictors of offending frequency. Furthermore, the number of prior court appearances, the type of offence at first proven appearance and the offender's age at first proven appearance are strong predictors of re-appearance in the Children's Court.

The research findings suggest that different strategies are needed to reduce the participation rate of juveniles in crime and the frequency of juvenile offending. Long-term interventions which aim to reduce child neglect and poor parenting may be particularly useful for reducing the participation rate of juvenile crime. The benefits of such interventions, however, will not be felt very quickly, even if they are substantial.

Strategies which address the frequency of juvenile offending are likely to produce more immediate effects. As lifestyle is the main determinant of offending frequency, targeting lifestyle factors such as drug use (particularly cannabis use), boredom and homelessness, should affect offending frequency by juveniles involved in crime. Increasing the legitimate income-earning capacity of young people could be expected to reduce juvenile crime. Decriminalisation of cannabis cultivation for personal use has been another strategy suggested to reduce offending frequency. This would only be effective if its change in legal status lowered the cost of cannabis.

As the majority of juveniles do not re-appear in the Children's Court after their first proven appearance, introducing interventions aimed specifically at the minority who persist in offending may be a more effective strategy for reducing juvenile crime than adopting strategies targeted at first-time offenders. It is also important to note that strategies such as increasing the severity of punishment, which traditionally have been thought to influence the frequency of juvenile offending, are unlikely to have much effect on the offending behaviour of juveniles already involved in crime.

Clearly there is no single solution to reducing the level of juvenile crime in society. An eclectic approach to prevention policy is most appropriate and requires support and co-operation from all aspects of the community including the Police, the Department of Community Services, the Department of Health, the Department of School Education, the Local Courts, the Children's Courts, the public and young people.

NOTES

- 1 NSW Government White Paper 1994, *Breaking the Crime Cycle: New Directions For Juvenile Justice in NSW*, NSW Government, Sydney.
- 2 For example, in 1995 a conferencing procedure (Community Youth Conferencing) was introduced in selected regions of NSW as a 12-month pilot project.
- 3 An appearance is defined as a group of one or more charges against a person, disposed of by the Children's Courts.
- 4 Coumarelos, C. 1994, *Juvenile Offending: Predicting Persistence and Determining the Cost-Effectiveness of Interventions*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.
- 5 Salmelainen, P. 1995, *The Correlates of Offending Frequency: A Study of Juvenile Theft Offenders in Detention*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.
- 6 See, for example, Lauritsen, J. L. 1993, 'Sibling resemblance in juvenile delinquency: Findings from the National Youth Survey', *Criminology*, vol. 31, pp. 387-409.
- 7 Cooney, A., Dobbins, S. & Flaherty, B. 1993, *Drug Use by NSW Secondary Students: 1992 Survey*, NSW Department of Health, Sydney.
- 8 The two per cent estimate has been calculated using 1994/95 Children's Court appearance data from the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice publication *NSW Department of Juvenile Justice Annual Children's Court Statistics, Criminal Matters 1994/95*, NSW Department of Juvenile Justice, Sydney, and population estimates from the Australian Bureau of Statistics publication *Estimated Resident Population by Sex and Single Year of Age, States and Territories of Australia, 30 June 1994*, Cat. no. 3210.1, ABS, Canberra. As some juveniles may have had more than one appearance in 1994/95, this figure may be an overestimate of the proportion of the juvenile population that came into contact with the NSW Children's Court in 1994/95.
- 9 NSW Department of Juvenile Justice, op.cit.
- 10 See, Blumstein, A., Cohen, J., Roth, J. A. & Visher, C. A. (eds) 1986, *Criminal Careers and "Career Criminals"*, vol. 1, National Academy Press, Washington, D. C., Appendix A.
- 11 The number of appearances in the Children's Court are used rather than the number of proven offences as it is not possible to provide a complete count of proven offences in the NSW Children's Court due to the codes used by the Department of Juvenile Justice to record outcomes of appearances. It is important to note, however, that a large majority (74 %) of juveniles appearing in the NSW Children's Court enter a guilty plea (NSW Department of Juvenile Justice, op. cit.). The age-specific appearance rates exclude 1,366 persons aged 18 and over because Children's Court statistics present only aggregated data on appearances for persons aged 18 and over.
- 12 NSW Department of Juvenile Justice, op.cit. The high percentage of appearances in the Children's Court involving juveniles aged 16 and 17 years may in part reflect a willingness on the part of the police to issue cautions to younger offenders, or that older offenders commit more serious offences.
- 13 Luke G. & Cunneen, C. 1995, *Aboriginal Over-Representation and Discretionary Decisions in the NSW Juvenile Justice System*, Juvenile Justice Advisory Council of NSW, Sydney.
- 14 NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 1996, *New South Wales Criminal Courts Statistics 1995*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.
- 15 The category 'other offences' includes drug offences, fraud, drink-driving and motor traffic offences, firearms and weapons offences and offensive behaviour.

- 16 Trends in assault offences are examined as they account for the overwhelming majority of offences against the person.
- 17 Salmelainen, op. cit. The reasons for committing shoplifting offences are based on the responses of 68 juveniles, the reasons for committing break and enter offences are based on the responses of 153 juveniles and the reasons for committing MVT offences are based on the responses of 133 juveniles.
- 18 Blumstein et al., op. cit.
- 19 Loeber, R. & Stouthamer-Loeber, M. 1986, 'Family factors as correlates and predictors of juvenile conduct problems and delinquency,' *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research*, vol. 7, eds M. Tonry & N. Morris, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- 20 Mc Carthy, B. & Hagan, J. 1992, 'Mean streets: The theoretical significance of situational delinquency among homeless youth', *AJS*, vol. 98, no. 3, pp. 597-627; Wolfgang, M., Figlio, R. & Sellin, T. 1972, *Delinquency in a Birth Cohort*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago; Elliott, D., Ageton, S., Huizinga, D., Knowles, B. & Canter, R. 1983, *The Prevalence and Incidence of Delinquent Behaviour: 1976-1980*. National Youth Survey, Report No. 26, Behavioural Research Institute, Boulder, Colorado.
- 21 Coumarelos, C., op. cit.
- 22 It must be noted that this statistic may underestimate the length of juvenile criminal careers because juveniles may have been offending for some time before their first appearance in the Children's Court and may have offended after their last appearance in the Children's Court.
- 23 See, for example, Wolfgang et al., op.cit.; Farrington, D.P., Loeber, R., Elliott, D.S., Hawkins, D.J., Kandel, D.B., Kleun, M., McCord, J., Rowe, D.C. & Tremblay, R.E. 1990, 'Advancing knowledge about the onset of delinquency and crime,' in *Advances in Clinical and Child Psychology* vol.3, eds B.B. Lahey & A.E. Kazdin, Plenum, New York; and Polk, K., Alder, C., Bazemore, G., Blake, G., Cordory, S., Coventry, G., Galvin, J. & Temple, M. 1981, *An Analysis of Maturational Development from Ages 16 to 30 of a Cohort of Young Men*, University of Oregon Press, Oregon.
- 24 Wolfgang et al., op. cit.; Broadhurst, R.G. & Maller, R.A. 1991, 'Estimating the number of prison terms in criminal careers from one-step probabilities of recidivism', *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, vol. 7, pp. 275-290.
- 25 Given that children aged 18 years or more generally do not appear before the Children's Court, two years of follow-up data in the Children's Court were not available for juveniles aged 16 years or over at their first proven court appearance.
- 26 When the number of re-appearances was examined over a two-year period, age at first proven appearance was not found to be a predictor of re-appearance. However, the relationship found over the four-year follow-up period is consistent with past research.
- 27 Salmelainen, op. cit.
- 28 See, for example, Katz, J. 1988, *Seductions of Crime: Moral and Sensual Attractions of Doing Evil*, Basic Books, New York.

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