

Juvenile delinquency: What to do?

The evidence provided by official statistics, the media and the experience of citizens constitute an eloquent reflection as to how a significant proportion of children and youth are making of delinquent activities their main source of work.

The press has informed . according to reports submitted by the *Carabineros* police- that there are approximately 50 criminal bands of minors operating in the Santiago Metropolitan Region; most of them coming from 4 municipal district communities. Additionally, about 100 full-time adolescents have been identified in all of Santiago committing crimes in a frequent manner and wooing others to participate in such activities, thus quickly shooting up the number of offenders.

On the other hand, annual *Carabineros* statistics¹, show how the percentage of minors under 18 years of age who are detained (over total detentions) increased from 10.5% during the 2001-2007 period

(see Chart N°1), hovering around 11% during the last 3 years of that series.

The same data . disaggregated by cause of detention- show that during that same time period there was an increasing trend of youth under 18 years of age² involved in theft, robbery and drug-related crimes. In effect, as it may be appreciated by observing Chart N°2, detentions on grounds of theft and robbery more than doubled, going from 13.8% to 20.6% and from 5.1% to 12.3%.³

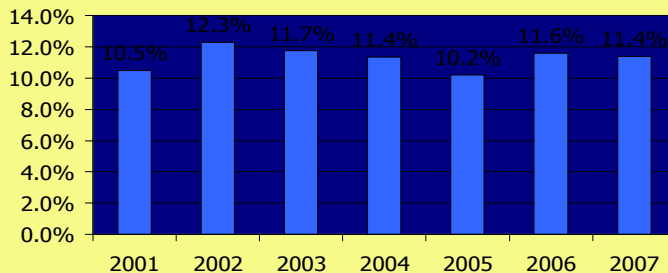
Thus, violence, juvenile delinquency and minors rights offenses constitute an important social challenge. Prevention, based on a systematic, direct and focused intervention of risk groups has become an effective, efficient and socially cost-effective mechanism⁴.

From this perspective, and in light of Chile's own experience, this situation begs questions such as: What is being done in this respect? Which currently applied policy measures aim in that direction?

22,004 minors were detained an average of 3.4 times in 3 years, while one-third of them were first-time detainees because of robbery or theft. The policy implications of these figures are very significant. Indeed, they evidence the need to focus resources in order to allocate them according to the specific needs of each risk group

Graphic N° 1

Menores de 18 años aprehendidos
(% del total de aprehensiones)



Source: National Institute of Statistics (INE), Annual Carabineros Police Statistics.

Detecting high risk groups⁵

Between 2004 and 2007, the *Carabineros* police recorded (through the Automated Police System (AUPOL) 387,094 detentions of children and adolescents who have been crime victims (50.8%) or detained (49.2%). The most common detentions are because of injury (22.4%), robbery (17.7%) and theft (16.4%). Moreover, there is always a higher proportion of male over female detainees, particularly regarding legal offenses (83.6% and 16.4%, respectively).

It is important, however, to consider that an individual may be detained more than once by a given police unit; therefore, one must distinguish between detentions and re-detentions. According to available information (Chart N°1), recorded detentions total 307,873 persons; of which, 88.3% have been detained only once (columns A + B of Chart N° 1), and 11.6% have been detained twice or more.

Out of the latter, 60.9% (22,004 individuals) correspond to offenders, 16% (5,780) to victims and 23.1% (8,336) to al-

ternant offenders; i.e. youth alternately detained for criminal and rights offenses.

When associating persons to detentions, we may observe that repeat victims account for 7% while repeat offenders represent 40.1% of all detentions. This means that 22,004 minors were detained an average of 3.4 times in 3 years, while one-third of them were first-time detainees because of robbery or theft.

The policy implications of these statistics are very significant. Indeed, they evidence the need to better focus resources in order to allocate them according to the specific needs of each risk group, because the treatment of a child who has been offended for the first time is not the same as that required by a child with an alternant offense record on repeated detentions. Additionally, such statistics provide important insight as to -among others- individual, family, social, school and economic factors possibly conditioning risk exposure situations and contribute to an early detection.

24-Hour Integrated Security Program

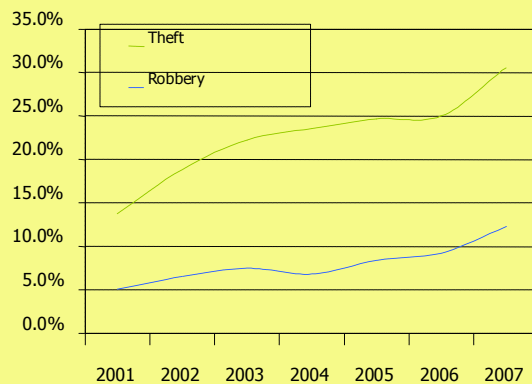
In Chile, the intervention of children exposed to social risk is carried out through the ~~24~~ 24-Hour Integrated Security Program⁺.

This program is an exchange of information strategy between the *Carabineros* Police and the Municipalities. Various police units record detention of minors under 18 whose rights have been violated, or who are law offenders. Such records are forwarded weekly to the Police Family Protection Administration (DIPROFAM, in its Spanish acronym); which, subsequently, processes them, and . through the respective commissars- forwards them to the country's municipal authorities, where, the

Graphic N° 2

Trend of minors' detentions as % of total

(Theft and Robbery)



Source: National Institute of Statistics (INE), Annual Carabineros Police Statistics.

different municipal programs and projects trigger the appropriate psycho-social care program, as called for by the specific characteristics of each such minor, in order to get them started on an integral rehab program. Once a month, the municipalities submit a Technical Rehab Sheet to DIPROFAM, again through the respective commissars.

This program began operating in 1996, following a joint agreement between the *Carabineros* Police Prefecture Office and the Municipality of Conchalí, and is aimed at looking after minors admitted to the sector's corresponding police station. In 1997, this commitment was expanded to the Santiago Metropolitan Intendancy, resulting in the incorporation of 5 new municipal districts. In 2002, the commitment was again expanded to cover all metro area municipalities, and during the first-half of 2006 . applying a new design- the 24-Hour Inte-

grated Security Program was officially launched. To this date, 274 municipalities have executed this program's agreement. According to a study of 163 of them carried out by DIPROFAM, it was found that 73% of all municipalities execute the program through their respective Community Development Authority offices; 16% through the Rights of Minors Protection Office of the National Minors Service (SENAME); 3% through their Municipal Education Boards; and, 1% through their respective Municipal Health Authority offices.

Reportedly, the Program is mostly financed by municipal appropriations (39%); the SENAME Fund (17%); and, municipal management support funds contributed by the Public Security Division of the Ministry of the Interior (9%).

Conclusions

According to an article published by F. Vanderschueren⁶, the effectiveness of prevention policies is based on two aspects. The first of them has to do with the possibility of differentiating the childhood or adolescence stages to be intervened. And the second, with identifying the different intervention levels involved (family, school, community, the individual and his/her peer group). A successful program must include well focused interventions, with precise objectives directly related to the risk factors detected.

Undoubtedly, the process of exchange of information generated through the 24-Hour Program constitutes a very significant improvement in detecting risk groups and permitting a more sharply focused action on them, while applying the most adequate levels of intervention. On the other hand, the feedback generated by

this entire process is crucial toward the future effectiveness of interventions and; consequently, for the application of the most adequate methodologies.

Another interesting aspect of this program has to do with its local nature. The experience in developed countries (England, Canada, Australia, the United States, etc.) has shown that the most successful programs have been articulated with the objective of responding to local needs, thereby managing to strengthen the community's own sense of belonging regarding the programs in which they participate. From this point of view, the possibility of having each municipality autonomously develop their own social interventions is, indeed, a very important feature of this program.

Finally, the challenges now standing before this initiative have to do with municipal management; with the entity through which the program is to be executed; and, with the availability of sources of financing.

At the country level, the National Public Security Strategy . within which this program is framed- refers to it explicitly in its 1962 and 1963 goals, where it considers coverage aspects and commits evaluating it in 6 different regions.

It is desirable that -based on such evaluation, on the observation of successful experiences, and on the currently avail-

Chart N° 1
Characterization of minors detained

	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Vulnerado por primera vez	Infractor por primera vez	Vulnerado con reingreso	Infractor con reingreso	Trayectoria alternante	Total
Number	161,033	110,720	5,780	22,004	8,336	307,873
%	52.3%	36.0%	1.9%	7.1%	2.7%	100%
Average detentions	1.0	1.0	2.1	3.3	3.5	1.3
	12.3	15.3	13.2	15.1	14.6	13.7

Source: Undersecretary's Office for Carabineros Police.

able information system- new and specific objectives are incorporated insofar as the number of successful interventions is concerned, and that methodological guidelines continue to be put forward thereby enabling the municipalities to take advantage of such experiences, eventually adapting them to their own reality, as appropriate.

¹ Annual *Carabineros Police Report*, years 2001 to 2007, published in: www.ine.cl

² As a percentage of the total number of detentions of minors under 18, during 1 year.

³ According to a recent press report (El Mercurio, Friday, January 9, 2009), the latest police detention figures for robbery and theft -during the period of January-November 2009- would have experienced a drop of about 30%, as compared to the previous year. However, it was not possible to corroborate such information.

⁴ Farrington, 2006: *Childhood risk factors and risk-focused prevention*, in M. Maguire, R. Morgan and R. Reiner eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, 4th edition, Oxford University Press.

⁵ Based on the document entitled: *Methodological orientations toward developing actions in favor of infants and adolescents, based on the 24-Hour Integrated Security program of Carabineros de Chile police*+ prepared by the Carabineros Under Secretary's Office and the Police Family Protection Administration (DIPROFAM).

⁶ *Preventing Juvenile Delinquency . An Analysis of International Experiences*+, published by the Citizen's Security Division of Chile's Ministry of the Interior, March 2004.