

Research article

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Current State of Juvenile Delinquency

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Abstract

Introduction: juvenile delinquency has always been one of the most important evaluated factors when analyzing effectiveness of the fight against crime. Currently, the types of crimes committed by minors, as well as methods of their commission, have undergone significant changes. This is due to deterioration of the nature of juvenile delinquency, which is now characterized by special cruelty, mercenary orientation and well-managed organization. The article examines the current state of juvenile delinquency. The concept of “minor” contained in the Russian criminal legislation and official regulatory legal acts is defined. The term “juvenile delinquency”, disclosed by theoretical scientists and practitioners in the field of criminology, is given. Quantitative (level, dynamics) and qualitative (structure, nature) indicators of juvenile delinquency are analyzed on the basis of official statistical data of the Main Informational and Analytical Center of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia for 2016–2020, with regard to a relatively high level of crime latency. Despite serious epidemiological challenges of 2020 and socio-economic difficulties associated with them, it is believed that the criminogenic situation in the country has been stabilized. According to the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Russian Federation, the indicators of juvenile group crime have been consistently decreasing over the past 5 years (since 2016 it has decreased by more than 30%). Statistics of the Federal Penitentiary Service for more than 10 years indicate a consistent decline in the number of minors serving sentences in juvenile correctional facilities. Thus, the average number of convicted persons in these institutions amounted to 1,764 in 2016, 1,678 in 2017, 1,443 in 2018, 1,354 in 2019, and 1,251 in 2020. At the same time, the number of repeat offenders remained fairly constant: 27–19 people. It is noteworthy, however, that such optimistic data are connected, in particular, with the state’s desire to reduce a number of persons held in places of deprivation of liberty, and for this reason cannot be proof of absolute well-being in the field of juvenile delinquency. *Purpose:* to study the current state and criminological features of juvenile delinquency for further development of proposals to improve prevention measures implemented by law enforcement agencies, state and public structures. *Methods:* the universal dialectical method of cognition is used; in addition, the methodological basis of the research is made up of general scientific methods, such as generalization, analysis, synthesis, deduction and induction, classification, typing, system-structural method, comparison method, and private scientific methods, such as analysis of normative documents and statistical method. *Results:* juvenile delinquency is one of the components of crime in general, and at the same time it stands out as part of female, careless, intentional, penitentiary, mercenary and violent and other types of crime. In 2016–2020, the total number of crimes committed by minors decreased by 31.6%, and the number of identified

minors who committed illegal acts went down by 44.7%. In the structure of juvenile delinquency, a significant part is occupied by mercenary and mercenary-violent crimes, most of which are crimes against property (60.8%). *Conclusions:* having analyzed the current state of juvenile delinquency, the author identifies characteristic features that determine illegal behavior of adolescents, which ultimately contribute to emergence and development of a sense of impunity in a minor and ultimately lead to repeated offenses.

Key words: crime; minor; adolescent; crime; state; level; dynamics; share.

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Introduction

Juvenile delinquency is one of the components of crime in general, having its common features, as well as specific ones due to a special subject of crime, namely, a minor. In addition, it stands out as part of other types of crime, in particular, female, reckless, intentional, penitentiary, mercenary and violent crime.

Considering juvenile delinquency in terms of forecasting and research, it is also necessary to note a humanitarian aspect. Persons who have not reached the age of majority are one of the least protected social groups and that is why crime prevention is of the greatest importance for this category of persons. In this case, we mean protection of a social group consisting of children and young people from the negative criminal impact. Unfortunately, at present, the level of criminal influence on this part of population remains quite high.

Constant rejuvenation of the crime subject is one of the main diseases of society all over the world. A few decades ago, information about murders and other socially dangerous acts perpetrated by children and youth seemed incredible, it was simply impossible.

Juvenile delinquency is subject to general laws of crime existence. Its identification as an independent type of crime is based on age-related moral, psychological and intellectual characteristics of minors. During this period, the intellectual sphere is actively developing, experience is accumulating, including negative (criminal). It is noteworthy that not all children in our society have a proper socialization

process. A considerable part of children and teenagers grow up in dysfunctional families, communicate in bad companies, do not receive necessary social and legal knowledge. Some minors have contact with direct criminal and criminogenic situations.

At present, types of crimes committed by minors, as well as methods of their commission, have undergone significant changes due to a different nature of juvenile delinquency, characterized by special cruelty, organization, mercenary orientation, better concealment of crime traces. In addition, adolescents' psychology has recently been undergoing negative changes; thus law enforcement agencies find it much more difficult for to obtain information.

It is important to note that numerous measures are already being conducted in the Russian Federation: from eliminating criminogenic factors in youth environment to improving effectiveness of the crime prevention system. In Russia, for example, the Decade of Childhood was announced in 2017, the Foundations of the state youth policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025 were approved in 2014, and the Concept for information security of children was adopted in 2015, the Federal Law No. 120-FZ of June 24, 1999 "On the basics of the system to prevent neglect and juvenile delinquency" (hereinafter – Law No. 120) is in force. These documents show that the state policy focused on ensuring the future of Russia is being formed and implemented in our country. However, in the context of the ongoing globalization pro-

cesses, society and the state face new problems, which require fundamental solutions. The information causes of juvenile delinquency, which in modern realities are one of its leading factors, are not sufficiently studied in modern criminology, and therefore are not taken into account when developing practical measures. These facts indicate the need for a more detailed consideration of juvenile delinquency, as well as importance of developing practical measures with regard to the theoretical data obtained.

In the 19th century the problem of juvenile delinquency was studied by prominent Russian scientists: L.M. Vasilevskii, A.I. Zak, E.N. Tarnovskii, N.N. Makovskii, S.A. Sokolinskaya. Many works of famous criminologists of the Soviet and post-Soviet period, in particular Z.A. Astemirov, M.M. Babayev, L.I. Belyaeva, N.I. Vetrov, A.B. Sakharov, V.D. Ermakov and others, are devoted to these issues. Juvenile delinquency is still reflected in modern Russian literature. We should note works of the following scientists: A.V. Anosov, Yu.M. Antonyan, E.A. Armanova, I.N. Artemenko, E.V. Batyshcheva, A.I. Bel'skii, E.V. Bochkareva, A.P. Varygin, E.V. Demidova-Petrova, T.M. Zaiko, A.N. Il'yashenko, G.S. Karshiev, E.V. Kosheleva, U.E. Klinova, Ya.I. Kurinova, V.A. Lelekov, E.D. Naimanova, N.G. Osadchaya, L.S. Rad'kova, A.I. Titova, T.S. Fetisova, M.V. Shaikova, O.V. Shlyapnikova, and L.M. Shcherbakova.

This interest is provoked by the fact that it is difficult to correct juvenile offenders in future and, thus, they may commit crimes in adulthood. So it would be fair to judge that the current state of juvenile delinquency reflects the crime rate of tomorrow, poses a threat to the future generation and the state as a whole.

Research methods

A universal dialectical method for cognition of juvenile delinquency is used in the study. Its methodological basis is made up of general scientific methods, such as generalization, analysis, synthesis, deduction and induction, classification, typing, system-structural method (juvenile delinquency is considered not as a simple set of crimes, but as a certain complexly organized systemic entity that has a clear structure and is due to a number of factors), comparison method (used in com-

paring the overall crime rate in the Russian Federation and juvenile delinquency at the moment and in previous years), and private scientific methods, such as analysis of normative documents (consideration of modern Russian legislation), statistical method (used in the study of juvenile delinquency in the Russian Federation).

Discussion

Juvenile delinquency is a complex system consisting of many elements that has its inherent characteristics (quantitative and qualitative), and manifests itself in a set of criminally punishable acts committed by persons aged 14–18.

Based on the analysis of theoretical and scientific sources, the following definition of juvenile delinquency can be formulated: it is a historically changeable, relatively massive, social and legal phenomenon, which is an integral systemic set of negative socially dangerous, criminally punishable acts and minors who committed them in a certain territory (locality, region, state as a whole) for a specific time period with qualitative and quantitative characteristics (indicators). This provision is also confirmed in the criminological literature [5, p. 114; 7, p. 41].

Juvenile delinquency is characterized by a high degree of public danger, which follows from its ability to act as a serious personnel base for replenishment of organized and professional crime. According to some expert estimates, over 80% of adult professional criminals (apartment thieves, pickpockets, fraudsters, etc.) committed their first criminal act in adolescence [2; 6; 8; 9, pp. 242–248].

The above circumstances make it necessary to clarify the concept “minor” in order to conduct a full-fledged analysis of the current state of youth crime.

To begin with, we will consider the criminal law definition of the term “minor”. In Part 1 of Article 87 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, the concept “minor” is interpreted as a “person who at the time of crime commission turned fourteen, but did not reach eighteen years old”. In Law No. 120, a minor is defined as a person who has not reached the age of eighteen. These definitions, in our opinion, are quite applicable for prevention of juvenile delinquency.

Due to the special legal status of minors, a special approach should be applied to criminals of this category when forming a set of measures to prevent crimes with their participation. It is important to take into account that effective organization of specific and targeted preventive work is possible on the basis of clear ideas about the state of juvenile delinquency, its level, dynamics, structure and nature.

A current state of juvenile delinquency in Russia shows a downward trend, but this does not mean that its level is adequate to society's needs. It is crucial to further reduce its level and degree of public danger.

In Russia in 2016–2020, the number of crimes committed by minors decreased: 2016 – 53,736 crimes, 2017 – 45,288, 2018 – 43,553, 2019 – 41,548, 2020 – 39,421 (Table 1).

Table 1

Dynamics of juvenile crimes in Russia, 2016–2020 [14]

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Rates of decline, growth, in %
Total crimes	2 160 063	2 058 476	1 991 532	2 024 337	2 044 221	5.62
Juvenile crimes	53 736	45 288	43 553	41 548	39 421	36.3
Share of juvenile delinquency in the total volume of crime, in %	2.5	2.2	2.2	2.1	1.9	31.6

In 2020, 39,421 crimes committed by minors or with their complicity were registered, which is 4.8% or 2,127 crimes less than in the previous year (2019 – 41,548 crimes). In general, during the study period, the number of juvenile crimes decreased by 36.3% (in absolute terms – by 14,315 crimes). Thus, it can be concluded that juvenile crime dynamics in 2016–2020 showed a steady downward trend.

At the same time, the share of juvenile

delinquency in the total volume of crime decreased by 31.6% and amounted on average to 2.2%.

The state of juvenile delinquency in the country can be assessed by taking into account a number of minors who have committed crimes. During the period under analysis, the number of minors who committed crimes went down: in 2016 – 48,589, 2017 – 42,504, 2018 – 40,860, 2019 – 37,953, 2020 – 33,575 (Table 2).

Table 2

Dynamics of identified delinquent offenders in Russia, 2016–2020 [14]

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Rates of decline, growth, in %
Identified criminals, total	1 015 875	967 103	931 107	884 661	852 506	19.1
Of them minors	48 589	42 504	40 860	37 953	33 575	44.7
Share, in %	4.8	4.4	4.4	4.3	3.9	23

During the study period, the number of identified minors who committed a crime reduced by 44.7%, while the total number of identified criminals – by 19.1%.

The proportion of minors in the total number of identified criminals during the study period averaged 4.5%. At the same time, throughout the entire period, the share of juvenile delinquents was going down, and only in 2018 it remained at the same level.

Reduction in the number of delinquent offenders reproduces dynamics in relation to all criminals. However, as noted by Y.M. Antonyan and M.V. Goncharova, the number of

delinquent offenders decreases more intensively in comparison with adult criminals [1, pp. 91–92].

Analyzing quantitative indicators of juvenile delinquency, we bear in mind that a large number of such crimes are hidden from accounting and registration. According to expert estimates, the juvenile delinquency rate is 3–4 times higher than it is reflected in official statistics. Robberies, thefts and hooliganism are characterized by the greatest latency.

Such a situation occurs, as educational organizations often conceal facts of students' illegal behavior, thus contributing to emer-

gence and development of a sense of impunity among minors, which ultimately generates repeated offenses and crimes. Heads of schools and other educational organizations, in cases of revealing facts of intentional damage to other people's property, petty theft, and beatings, resort to the use of its own educational measures. Consequently, comprehensive preventive measures are not applied to such minors, which negatively affects the overall state of the fight against juvenile delinquency.

The current state of juvenile delinquency and reduction of its quantitative indicators are influenced by transfer of crime into virtual space. Thus, a number of cybercrimes characterized by high latency is growing [10, pp. 3–24]. We share E.V. Demidova-Petrova's opinion that today a global information environment serves as a communication center for a wide range of Internet users, between whom virtual social connections are built, including in the criminal sphere [3, p. 328].

Due to a limited scope of criminal encroachments inherent in minors, they are mainly self-serving. Accordingly, the structure of the considered type of crime is dominated by mercenary and mercenary-violent crime. At the same time, crimes against property

make up 60.8%, of which 71% are theft (Article 158 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation). Of all juvenile offenders, persons who have committed crimes against property make up 82.3%.

Cell phones are the most common objects of theft. To illustrate it, we will give a brief example from investigative and judicial practice: a minor S., while in the gym of the Golden Dragon club during training, stole a mobile phone of the brand "Xaomi 5-s", worth 13,000 rubles, belonging to a minor victim A. from the pocket of a jacket in the locker room [12].

In foreign countries, the situation with juvenile delinquency is similar. In European countries and the USA, juvenile crimes against property account for up to 80% of all youth crimes [4, p. 48; 15, pp. 488–493].

It is interesting to note that in Russia the proportion of minors who committed robbery, plunder, theft and rape is 1.5–2 times higher than the average for all other crimes. At the same time, drug trafficking is growing as well, mainly crimes provided for in Articles 228 and 228.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation [13, p. 228].

Characterizing the content of youth crimes, it is important to analyze the structure of this type of crime by crime severity (Table 3).

Table 3

Dynamics of grave and especially grave youth crimes in 2016–2020 [14]

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Rates of decline, growth, in %
Juvenile crimes, total	53 736	45 288	43 553	41 548	40 367	33
Of them heavy and especially heavy	11 537	10 238	9 716	10 113	9 651	19.5
Share, in %	21.5	22.6	22.3	24.3	23.9	-10.04

In 2020, 9,651 grave and especially grave crimes were committed by minors, which is 19.5% less than in 2016. At the same time, these crimes are accompanied by greater audacity and cynicism. As for the proportion of serious and especially serious crimes in the total volume of juvenile delinquency, it amounts to 23.1% on average. At the same

time, during the study period, this indicator showed an upward trend – by 2.43%. If in 2016 it was 21.5%, then in 2019 it was already 23.9%.

According to severity of juvenile crimes, they are distributed in the following percentage (Figure 1).

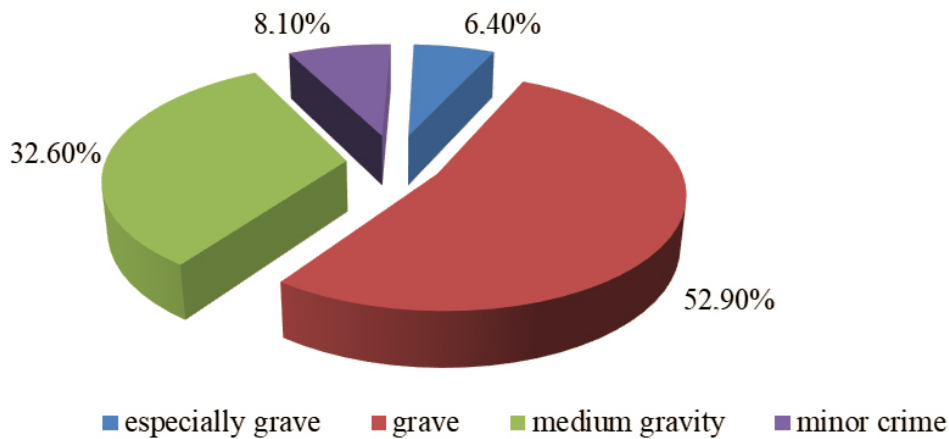


Figure 1. Structure of juvenile crimes by severity, in 2020 (according to official data of the Main Information and Analytical Center of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation)

Territorial distribution of juvenile delinquency in 2020 by regions with the highest proportion of delinquent youth (of the total

number of identified persons) is shown in Figure 2.

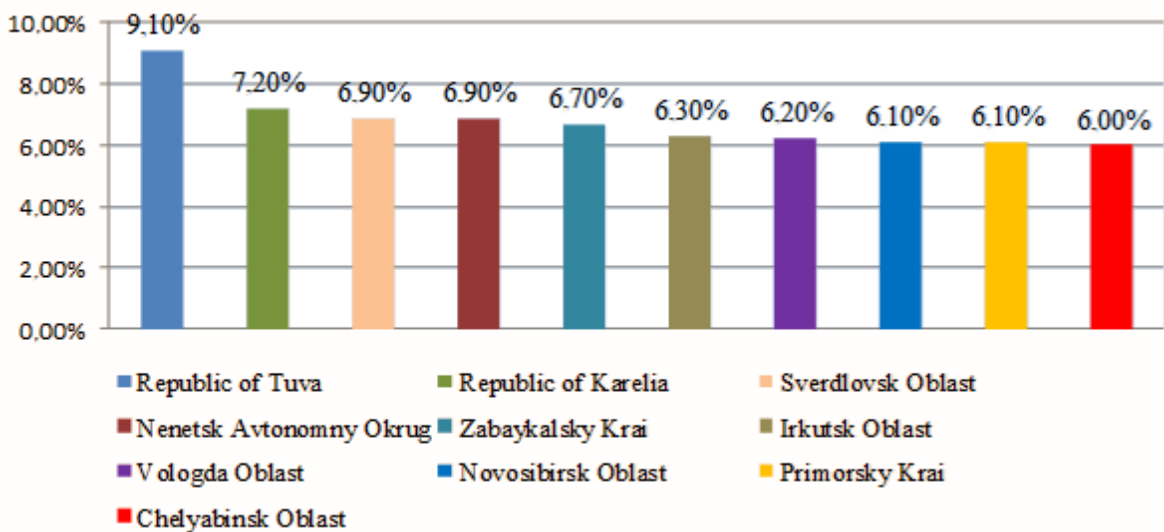


Figure 2. Share of minors in the total number of identified persons by Russian regions in 2020 (according to official data of the MIAC MIA RF)

The largest share of delinquent youth is recorded in the Republic of Tuva – 9.1% and the Republic of Karelia – 7.2%.

A group nature of juvenile delinquency is its specific feature. A significant number of crimes are committed by teenagers in com-

plexity with adults (in most cases, in the form of co-execution). Such groups usually consist of 2–3 people and are unstable in terms of activity duration (up to 3 months).

Dynamics of youth group crimes for the period from 2016 to 2020 is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Dynamics of youth group crimes, 2016–2020 [14]

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Rates of decline, growth, in %
Identified minors, total	48 589	42 504	40 860	37 953	36 811	31.99
Those who committed a crime in a group	21 463	19 889	19 508	17 882	16 694	28.6

Share in the group, in %	44.2	46.8	47.7	47.1	45.4	-2.7
Those who committed a crime as part of an organized criminal syndicate, criminal community	62	75	88	96	99	-37.4
Share in the composition of the organized criminal group, criminal community, in %	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.27	-62.9

Table 4 shows a 28.6-percent decrease in the number of minors who committed a crime as part of a group and a 37.4-percent increase – as part of an organized criminal syndicate and criminal community.

The total number of minors who committed group crimes in 2016–2020 averaged 45.7% of the total number of juvenile offenders during the study period. It should be noted that this is a fairly high indicator, which indicates law enforcement agencies' insufficient attention to adolescents, and consequently weak preventive work with this special category of offenders.

The share of minors who committed a crime as part of organized criminal groups and criminal communities averaged 0.2%. In 2020, 16,694 minors (28.6%) committed crimes as part of a group, of which 99 minors (37.4%) as part of an organized group or criminal community (criminal organization).

Analysis of investigative and judicial practice proves a predominantly group nature of youth crimes. For instance, minors R. and M., by prior agreement, for the purpose of stealing someone else's property, illegally entered an auto repair shop through an open window and stole a welding machine and two car headlights [11].

Minors more often become organizers and instigators. Such groups are characterized by cohesion and clear hierarchy. When planning criminal actions, they distribute roles between participants.

A group nature of juvenile delinquency has an objective ground: biological and social factors of adolescent cohesion and desire to protect themselves from violence from other peers or older adolescents. Low recidivism is another feature of juvenile delinquency. Assessed dynamics of repeated juvenile delinquency is presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Indicators of repeated crimes committed by minors in Russia, 2016–2020 [14]

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Rates of decline, growths, %
Number of juvenile delinquents	48 589	42 504	40 860	37 953	36 742	32.3%
Previously committed crimes	12 778	11 022	10 035	9 357	8 683	47.16
Share, in %	26.3	25.9	24.6	24.7	23.6	11.5
Of them previously convicted of crimes	4 389	4 245	3 811	3 520	3 415	28.5
Share, in %	9.0	10.0	9.3	9.3	9.3	-3.22

In the study period, the proportion of minors who had previously committed crimes in the total number of juvenile offenders averaged 25.1%, and previously convicted persons – 9.4%.

In 2020 8,683 minors who had previously committed crimes were identified, which is 47.16% less than in 2016. Of these, 3,415 minors were previously convicted of crimes (9.3%), which is 28.5% less than in 2016.

The reported recidivism rate for juvenile offenders is lower (approximately by 2 times), in comparison with that for adults, as minors are not criminally liable for many crimes due

to their age. After returning from juvenile correctional facilities or being sentenced to a suspended sentence, they usually reoffend after reaching the age of majority. Accordingly, their recidivism will be recorded as adult crime.

Results

After considering juvenile delinquency, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Juvenile delinquency is a complex system consisting of many elements, which has its inherent characteristics (quantitative and qualitative), and manifests itself in the totality of criminally punishable acts committed

by persons aged fourteen to eighteen years. This is one of the components of crime in general, and at the same time it stands out as part of female, careless, intentional, penitentiary, mercenary, violent and other types of crime.

2. Juvenile delinquency exists in all subjects of Russia, but in some regions it significantly exceeds the national average. The highest level of juvenile delinquency is observed in the republics of Tuva and Karelia, the Novgorod Oblast and Zabaykalsky Krai.

3. Juvenile delinquency acts as a human resource potential to replenish adult crime, especially organized and professional crime, characterized by increased public danger. According to experts, 80% of apartment thieves, pickpockets and scammers committed their first crime in adolescence.

4. The current state of juvenile delinquency in the Russian Federation, which is confirmed by official statistical indicators, shows a downward trend in key quantitative indicators: in general, in Russia for the past five years, the number of youth crime decreased by 36.3%, in absolute terms – by 14,315 crimes, and at the same time the share of such crimes in the total volume declined by 31.6%. The number of identified minors who committed illegal acts went down by 44.7%, while the total number of identified adult criminals reduced by only 19.1%. It is reasonable to forecast further decline in the main indicators of juvenile delinquency. However, it is noteworthy that in the present realities the level of juvenile delinquency is still inadequate to modern society's requirements, which causes the need to further reduce its level and degree of public danger when formulating concrete proposals for the implementation of general social and special criminological measures to prevent juvenile delinquency.

5. When analyzing quantitative indicators of juvenile delinquency, it is necessary to take into account a crime latency level. According to experts, the juvenile delinquency rate is 3–4 times higher than reflected in official statistical sources (thefts, robberies and hooliganism are still highly latent, especially committed on the territory of schools and other educational organizations of secondary and special education).

6. Virtual space has a very significant impact on reduction of quantitative indicators

of juvenile delinquency. With IT technology development, modern youth crime is also transferring into the Internet, where a fertile ground is being created for commission of cybercrimes, characterized by a high degree of latency.

7. In the structure of juvenile delinquency, a significant part is occupied by mercenary and mercenary-violent crimes. At the same time, crimes against property make up 60.8%, and of all juvenile offenders, persons who have committed crimes against property make up 82.3%.

8. In 2020, 9,651 serious and especially serious crimes were committed by minors, which is 19.5% less than in 2016. Juvenile delinquency is mainly of a group nature (over the past five years – an average of 47.16%) and has a lower criminal recidivism than among adults (in 2020 – 9.3%).

9. When forming a set of measures to prevent youth crimes, it is necessary to apply a special integrated approach, it is important to bear in mind that effective and targeted preventive work can be organized only on the basis of a representative analysis of the state of juvenile delinquency: level, dynamics, structure and nature.

10. To prevent juvenile delinquency, we propose the following:

1) a set of measures for general social prevention of juvenile delinquency should include:

- social patronage and formation of various specialized funds whose activities are aimed at solving specific socio-economic problems of families and minors;

- adoption of the federal state program for the formation of a legal culture of family relations based on the “Concept of state family policy in the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025” and legalization of a system of compulsory treatment for drug addiction and alcoholism of aggressive persons who raise minor children;

- conduct of thematic events for parents dedicated to spiritual and moral education of minors; widespread introduction and development of a network of crisis and psychological centers, hotlines and counseling centers on family relationships, including between parents and children;

2) in the complex of measures for special criminological prevention of juvenile delinquency, it is necessary to:

- identify socially disadvantaged families;
- carry out operational and preventive measures;
- consult school teachers on the problems of taking into account individual psychological characteristics of a minor's personality in the educational process;
- form effective mechanisms to ensure children's safety on the Internet;

3) in the complex of measures for individual prevention implemented in the activities of

the Department of Internal Affairs, it is important to:

- conduct regular conversations with minors in order to involve them in sections, clubs, children's and youth public associations;
- hold meetings with teachers of educational organizations;
- visit minors at the place of residence;
- involve minors in prevention as public educators;
- continue practice of announcing official warnings to adults that negatively affect minors.

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