

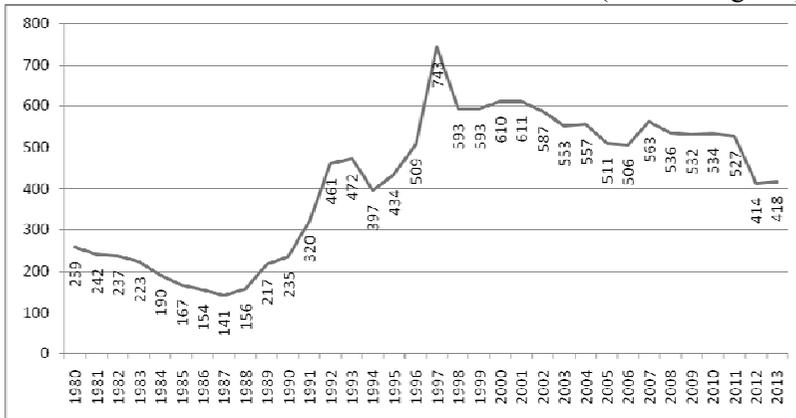
JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN ARMENIA

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Juvenile delinquency and criminal behavior are one of the most debated issues both in criminal law theory and practice. The level of juvenile delinquency varies across the societies and states however its perception as one of the most serious social problems remains almost the same regardless to the social-economical welfare of a state. Though states adopt different approach and penal policy in regard to the juvenile criminal behavior, the main task set by the states is the prevention of the juvenile's criminal career through the neutralization or elimination of the factors leading to deviancy and delinquency.

Traditionally, the level of juvenile delinquency in Armenia has been low and hasn't caused serious concerns in the society. However, according to the official crime statistics, in the recent years the absolute numbers of juvenile crimes have increased significantly when compared to 1980.²

Picture 1. Officially registered juvenile crime in Armenia, 1980-2013 (absolute figures)

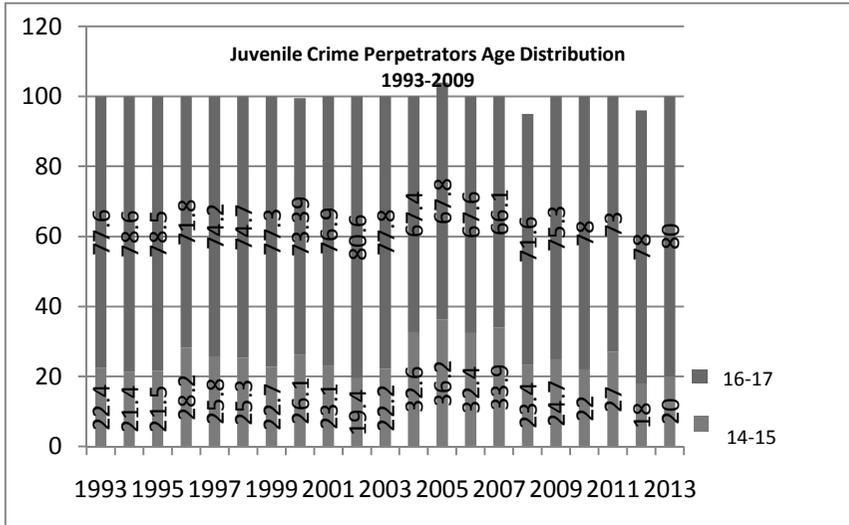


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² Information Centre of RA Police.

The increase of the juvenile crime³ was accompanied by the structural changes of the juvenile criminality. When compared to 1990-ies, criminal activation of the juveniles of the younger ages is observed. In 1993 only 22.4% of the juvenile crime perpetrators were aged 14-15, while in 2005 –36.2% and in 2013- 25.7%.

Picture 2. Age distribution of juvenile crime perpetrators, 1993-2013



According to official statistics, juveniles were responsible for 3.3% of all crimes known to the police in 1993, and 5.5% in 2004. Typical offences committed by juveniles in Armenia are thefts, hooliganism, assaults and group fights. Fights among groups of juveniles are rather common, but rarely registered in official statistics, as are offences committed by juveniles in general. The Armenian society has lenient attitude towards juveniles and they are being brought to criminal responsibility only in rare cases.

³ The age of Criminal responsibility in Armenia is 16. However, juveniles aged 14 can be held responsible for such offences as theft, robbery, hooliganism, homicide, rape, serious assault, extortion.

In this aspect rather interesting are the results of ISRD-2 study conducted in Armenia. The results of the mentioned study show that theft and assault are the most often experienced by Armenian juveniles. Although theft and robbery are less common than in most Western societies, probably due to a less “favorable” opportunity structure, assault is rather frequent, even more so than bullying. It could seem strange that students reported more often becoming victims of assault than of bullying. This may be related to the characteristics of Armenian machismo. Solving the interpersonal problems using violence is part of a “behavioural stereotype” for juveniles, especially for males

Table 1: Last year prevalence of victimization and reporting to the police (in %)

	victimization		reporting to the police ^a
	%	% missing	%
robbery/extortion	1.1	0.4	4.3
assault	4.6	0.5	6.3
Theft	9.0	0.5	3.7
Bullying	2.6	0.6	1.9

Unweighted n = 2099; percentages based on valid cases

^a percentage based on number of victims

As to self-reported delinquency, the most often admitted offences are: group fighting, carrying a weapon, vandalism, computer hacking, assault and shoplifting.

Table 2: Life-time and last year prevalence of offences (in %)

Offences	life time		last year ^a	
	%	% missing	%	% missing
Group fight	23.5	3.3	18.4	4.0
Carrying a weapon	9.5	3.3	5.8	3.4
Assault	2.7	3.3	1.4	3.4
Pick pocketing/snatching	0.5	3.2	0.0	3.3
Robbery/extortion	0.5	3.2	0.4	3.2
Vandalism	8.3	2.9	3.3	3.0
Shoplifting	2.1	2.9	0.5	2.9
Bicycle/motor bike theft	0.5	3.0	0.2	3.0
Car break	0.7	3.2	0.3	3.2
Burglary	0.5	3.0	0.2	3.0
Car theft	0.5	3.0	0.3	3.1
Computer hacking	4.0	3.2	2.8	3.2
Drug dealing	0.2	3.4	0.1	3.4
XTC/speed use	0.1	2.9	0.0	2.9
LSD/heroin/cocaine use	0.2	2.9	0.1	2.9

Unweighted n = 2099; percentages based on valid cases

^a XTC/speed and LSD/heroin/cocaine use: last month prevalence

Overall, Armenian juveniles are committing violent offences at rates that are comparable or higher than in Western countries, but property and drug offences are extremely rare, obviously reflecting different opportunity structures. The same explanation applies to the relatively low rate of hacking.

Table 3 aggregates several offences into larger categories: frequent violent offences, rare violent offences, rare property offences and hard drug use.

Table 3: Life-time and last month prevalence of aggregated offences (in %)

Offences	life-time		last year ^a	
	%	% missing	%	% missing
frequent violent offences ^b	25.8	3.2	19.7	3.3
rare violent offences ^c	3.3	3.2	1.7	3.2
vandalism	8.3	2.9	3.3	3.0
shoplifting	2.1	2.9	0.5	2.9
rare property offences ^d	1.8	3.0	0.9	3.0
computer hacking	4.0	3.2	2.8	3.2
drug dealing	0.2	3.4	0.1	3.4
hard drugs use ^e	0.3	2.9	0.1	2.9

Unweighted n = 2099; percentages based on valid cases

^a hard drug use: last month prevalence

^b group fight and carrying a weapon

^c pick pocketing/snatching, robbery/extortion, and assault

^d burglary, bicycle/motor bike theft, car theft, and car break

^e XTC/speed and LSD/heroin/cocaine use

According to ISRD-2 results, boys committed almost all types of offences significantly more often than girls. This can be explained by more severe social control towards girls than boys. What is restricted for girls often is allowed to boys. Girls are taught that their most important role in the society is the role of mother, wife, housekeeper, while boys are expected to be more independent, and to be able to take care of themselves and their family, even with the use of force. Perhaps that is why boys are more frequently involved in violent behaviour than girls.

Table 4: Gender and last year prevalence of offences (in %)

Offences	Female (n =1108)	Male (n=895)	
Group fight	2.8	37.3	**
Carrying a weapon	1.4	11.1	**
Assault	0.0	3.2	**
Pick pocketing/snatching	0.0	0.1	**
Robbery/extortion	0.0	1.0	**
Vandalism	0.3	6.4	**
Shoplifting	0.1	1.1	**
Bicycle/motor bike theft	0.0	0.4	**
Car break	0.2	0.5	**
Burglary	0.0	0.4	**
Car theft	0.0	0.8	**
Computer hacking	0.9	5.0	**
Drug dealing	0.0	0.3	*
XTC/speed use	0.0	0.1	Ns
LSD/heroin/cocaine use	0.1	0.1	Ns

Percentages based on valid cases, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

As to victimization, females and males have almost identical victimization rates for theft, robbery and bullying. At the same time boys become victims of assault more frequently than girls. This can be explained by the fact that the perpetrators of this offence are mainly males and they think that it is beneath of their dignity to commit violence towards a female.

Table 4: Gender and last year prevalence of victimization (in %)

	Female (n =1112)	Male (n=982)	
robbery/ext.	1.0	1.2	Ns
Assault	3.5	5.8	*
Theft	9.8	8.0	Ns
Bullying	2.8	2.4	Ns

Percentages based on valid cases, , * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

When coming to the deviant behaviour of victims, rather interesting is the factor of alcohol and drug consumption among the juveniles. According to the law of Republic of Armenia on Children's rights, no child under the age of 18 can be offered or sold any alcoholic beverages. Moreover, any person above the age of 18 who induces a child to regular use of alcoholic drinks, strong or other narcotic drugs not for medical purpose, is punished with a fine or with custody of up to 5 years (article 166 of the Armenian Criminal Code). Strong alcohol (except of cognac) advertising is entirely prohibited on television and radio, whereas in newspapers, such advertisements cannot be placed on the first and last pages.

In reality, however, Armenian juveniles have no difficulty with getting alcohol. Armenia is a country producing wine and cognac. Traditionally juveniles are allowed to taste small quantities of alcohol (wine, liqueur, rarely – cognac or vodka) during celebrations or other special events. However, due to moderate consumption of alcoholic beverages, drinking has never been treated as a social problem either for adults or for juveniles. That is why Armenians are rather tolerant to alcohol consumption.

The situation is different, however, with respect to drugs. Armenia's policy on trafficking and use of the narcotic drugs is extremely harsh. Severe criminal punishments are provided for illegal use, manufacture, processing, procurement, keeping, trafficking or supplying of narcotic drugs or psychotropic materials. More important, however, may be the fact that Armenia lives in isolation from the outside world. It has relatively open borders with Georgia (and, indirectly, Russia) only, whereas the borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan are hermetically closed and controlled by Armenian and Russian troupes. The Iranian border is open now to some extent, although still heavily controlled, but used to be entirely closed over many years. This may explain why importation of drugs into Armenia remained at a marginal level at best, despite the fact that its neighbors Iran and Turkey are experiencing extended drug trafficking. This has kept drug consumption and drug related crimes at a very low level. In turn, the absence of consumers and, therefore, of any significant demand for drugs has probably also slowed down

initiatives to develop importation. However, according to official statistics, drug use seems to have increased during the last years. From 2003 to 2013, for example, cases of drug related crimes known to the police have doubled, from 346 to 1139. It remains to be seen whether reduced restrictions on transborder mobility will ultimately change that picture in the next years.

The results of the Armenian ISRD-2 survey showed that almost two out of three surveyed juveniles already consumed beer or wine in their life, and one out of 6 strong spirits.

Table 5: Life-Time and last month prevalence of alcohol and soft drug use (in %)

	life-time		last month	
	%	% missing	%	% missing
beer/wine	66.3	2.4	23.4	2.9
strong spirits	18.1	2.7	5.8	2.8
marijuana, hashish use	1.4	2.6	0.5	2.6

Unweighted n = 2099; percentages based on valid cases

Unlike to Russia, Armenia has never experienced high level of strong spirits consumption among adults or juveniles. Alcoholism has never been a major problem for Armenian society. Juveniles can use small quantities of alcohol, mostly wine, during social events and usually in the presence of their parents. Strong spirits are not popular even among adults.

In contrast to the high level of alcohol consumption, using drugs is very uncommon among Armenian juveniles. Marijuana (hashish) was used by 1.4% only, ecstasy by 0.1%, heroin, cocaine, and LSD by 0.2% of the respondents. Only 0.2% of the respondents reported selling or intermediating drugs. Despite the common border with Iran and Turkey (two countries experiencing extended drug trafficking), the country's relative isolation⁴ during the last 20 years may have prevented drugs from spreading into Armenia and the emergence of a significant drug market there.

⁴ See details under 1.2.

Table 6: Life-time and last month prevalence of risk factors (in %)

	life-time		last month ^a	
	%	% missing	%	% missing
Alcohol total ^b	66.9	2.4	24.4	2.5
marijuana, hashish use	1.4	2.6	0.5	2.6
Truancy	-	-	61.7	0.7
two risk factors present	-	-	18.5	2.5

Unweighted n = 2099; percentages based on valid cases

^a Truancy refers to the last year, whereas alcohol and drug use have been asked for the last month.

^b beer/wine and strong spirits

^c "risk" assesses whether at least two of the following three behaviours have been reported: (1) Having drunken beer/wine or strong spirits at least once during the last month, (2) having used marijuana/hashish at least once during the last month, and (3) being truant at least once during the last year.

Alcohol consumption and hashish use is more frequent among male respondents. Hard drug use rates are very low and are almost the same for both sexes.

Table 7: Gender and last month prevalence of alcohol and drug use (in %)

	Female (n =1117)	Male (n =989)	
Beer/wine consumption	17.5	30.0	**
Spirits use	1.5	10.8	**
Marijuana, hashish use	0.1	1.1	**
XTC use	0.0	0.1	Ns
LSD/Heroine/Cocaine use	0.1	0.1	Ns

Percentages based on valid cases, * p≤0.05, ** p≤0.01,*** p≤0.001

It is evident, that truancy is very common among Armenian juveniles. According to ISRD-2 results, 62% of juveniles reported having missed one entire school day at least once during the last year.

Table 8: Truancy and last month prevalence of alcohol use (in %)

	Yes (n=924)	No (n=423)	
Beer/wine consumption	28.0	14.5	***
Spirits use	8.0	1.9	**

Percentages based on valid cases, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

The results show that juveniles who were absent for one day at least, use twice more often beer/wine, and even four times more often spirits than other adolescents. With delinquency, the situation is almost the same, truants offending three to four times more often than those who have never missed classes. More time spent outdoors obviously increases the risk of offending. Truancy may also go along with increased presence in Internet clubs that became very popular in Armenia during the last 10 years.

Table 9: Truancy and last year prevalence of offences (in %)

Offences	Yes (n=924)	No (n=423)	
Group fight	24.0	7.8	***
Carrying a weapon	8.0	1.8	***
Assault	1.8	0.8	Ns
Vandalism	4.7	0.9	***
Computer hacking	3.6	1.3	***

Percentages based on valid cases, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

Contrary to offending, truants do not experience victimizations more often than other juveniles, with the only possible exception of theft (where the difference, however, is not significant).

It has been often shown that truancy is correlated with delinquency, either as a symptom of weak social bonds (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990) or because it offers more time for more deviant activities (Felson 2002). That these correlations hold even in such

different a context as Armenia is noteworthy, particularly if we take into account that truancy is, as stated in the paragraph on response rates (2.3), to some extent related to taking private lessons rather than just hanging around. On the other hand, it seems that partially “justified” truancy by 9th graders offers a legitimate excuse to younger students as well. There even is some social pressure on “conformist” students to skip school as well in order to remain accepted in their class. Even if we consider private lessons, truancy is, thus, far more frequent in Armenia than in other countries.

In order to understand juvenile delinquency, it is necessary to discuss also the issues of social bonds, especially with the family, friends, neighbourhood.

Many studies (Antonyan Yu., Enikeev M, Eminov V., 1996; Antonyan Yu. 1995; Antonyan Yu, Kudryavcev V, Eminov V 2004, Bartol C. 2004) have found that stronger relationships with parents go along with lower rates of juvenile delinquency. In Armenia and according to our results, good relationships with parents are common among juveniles: 86% of the respondents reported having very good relationships with their father, and the same percentage said their relationship with their mother to be very good. Just 0.3% said the relationships with their father to be “bad”, and only 0.2% said being on “bad” terms with their mother. Among the respondents, 82% said having dinner with their parents daily, and 77% spend leisure with their parents at least once a week.

Parents of 74% of the respondents always know the friends with whom they spend time, and only 3% never do so. Parents of 90% of the respondents insist on their children to be back at home at a certain hour, and 74% said to respect always that limit. This conformity of children is typical for Armenian society, where the family ranks among the most important values. Parents live not for themselves, but for the children. Everything is done to protect the child, and to satisfy his/her needs. At the same time, children are being taught from early childhood to respect their parents and elderly people, and to obey to whatever their parents tell them to do. The following Table shows that parental supervision is a very powerful variable in explaining delinquency, problem behaviour and victimization.

Table 10: Parental supervision and delinquency, alcohol use and victimization (in %)⁵⁶

Offences	Parents know friends			Parents tell time		
	Always (n=1530)	Never (n=67)		Yes (n=1200)	No (n=128)	
Group fight	11.2	41.8	***	23.8	32.0	*
Carrying a weapon	3.2	20.9	***	7.1	14.1	**
Assault	1.0	8.9	***	1.9	1.6	Ns
Computer hacking	1.8	8.9	***	3.3	6.3	Ns
Beer/wine consumption	18.4	38.9	***	25.8	32.8	Ns
Spirits use	3.2	22.4	***	6.9	14.1	Ns
Victimization of assault	3.9	11.9	**	5.5	21.4	Ns

Percentages based on valid cases, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

According to the Armenian ISRD-2 study, 74% of the respondents reported that they like school, whereas the others have a weaker attachment to the school.

Table 11: Attachment to school and alcohol use and delinquency (in %)⁷

	Strong attachment (n=1559)	Weak attachment (n=536)	
Beer/wine consumption	19.9	31.3	***
Spirits use	3.6	11.6	***
Group fight	14.0	28.5	***
Carrying a weapon	4.1	9.9	***

Percentages based on valid cases, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

⁵ The results of ISRD-2 study in Armenia.

⁶ The rates of delinquency and victimization refer to the last year, whereas the rates of alcohol use refer to the last month.

⁷ The rates of delinquency refer to the last year, whereas the rates of alcohol use refer to the last month.

It is evident, that juveniles with little school attachment use alcohol including spirits far more often than those who like school. They also commit offences, such as group fights and carrying a weapon, about twice as often. With respect to other offences and victimization, the differences are small or hard to interpret, given low cell frequencies.

Overall, 56% of ISRD-2 survey respondents reported that they spend leisure-time with a group of friends. 8.1 % (171 students) said they belong to a group that is accepting illegal things to be done, and 6% (123 students) admit their group is doing illegal things. Only 1.5% (31 students) described their group of friends to be a “gang”.

Table 12: Group characteristics and last year prevalence of victimization, alcohol/drug use and delinquency (in %)

	Illegal things accepted			Illegal things being done		
	Yes (n=171)	No (n=1017)		Yes (n=123)	No (n=1066)	
Experiencing an Assault	7.1	3.8	Ns	9.0	3.8	**
Beer/wine consumption	44.4	26.5	***	48.4	26.8	***
Spirits use	17.2	6.5	***	21.3	6.5	***
Marijuana, hashish use	1.8	0.6	Ns	3.3	0.5	*
Group fight	43.2	18.7	***	51.6	18.8	***
Carrying a weapon	20.7	5.6	***	24.6	5.8	***
Assault	6.5	1.2	***	9.0	1.1	***
Robbery/extortion	3.0	0.2	***	4.1	0.2	***
Vandalism	12.4	3.3	***	17.2	3.1	***
Computer hacking	7.7	3.3	**	10.7	3.1	***

Percentages based on valid cases, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

Juveniles belonging to groups that engage, from time to time, in illegal activities, or that at least accept such activities by its members, have substantially higher risks of being victims of assault. They also use far more alcohol (especially spirits) and marijuana/hashish, and commit all sorts of offences, including violent and property offences⁸ and computer hacking, far more often than other respondents.

In sum, belonging to a group where delinquency is accepted and acceptable goes along with higher rates of delinquency, victimization and problem behaviour. It is noteworthy that this correlation, first observed by Sutherland and Cressey (1978) and other writers of classical criminology hold in remote a country as Armenia.

The ISRD-2 results showed that delinquent behaviour is connected to several family, school, peer and neighbourhood related social variables. However the most significant factors were neighbourhood problems, while gender, truancy and school attachment have an impact depending on the type of offence.

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⁸ Not shown due to low cell frequencies

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