

# **Research Department Report 65**

## **Research on Juvenile Delinquents and Their Living Environments**

### **Outline**

This study examines a questionnaire survey conducted for juvenile delinquents in juvenile training schools, juvenile delinquent probationers, and their guardians in order to contribute to the improvement of treatment and assistance for juvenile delinquents struggling under difficult circumstances by clarifying the living environments of the juvenile delinquents. A research was also carried out on trends in juvenile delinquency and treatment and assistance for juvenile delinquents.

#### **1. Statistical Research (Chapter 2)**

The Institute analyzed data on juvenile delinquents in juvenile training schools and juvenile delinquent probationers collected by the Ministry of Justice on the basis of official records and hearing investigations.

##### **(1) Juvenile delinquents in juvenile training schools**

The proportion of juveniles whose guardians were "birth parents" had a declining trend, while "birth mother" had an increasing trend. The percentage of juveniles with childhood abuse experiences had an upward trend. Regarding economic backgrounds, the highest proportion was "middle class", followed by "poor" and "wealthy," with a declining trend for "poor" in recent years.

Analyzing data for 2021, approximately 70% of juveniles with a "poor" family budget had either a "birth mother" or "birth father", which was higher than "birth parents." "Poor" ranked the highest for the combined total of "birth mother" and "birth father," followed by "middle class" and "wealthy." In terms of the relationship between childhood abuse experiences and economic status, "poor" had the lowest percentage of "no childhood abuse experience," followed by "middle class" and "wealthy."

Focusing on school/work engagement, juveniles with "birth parents" ranked the highest for "school." Juveniles with a poorer family budget had a lower percentage for "school." Regarding academic backgrounds, the juveniles with "birth parents" also had the two lowest percentages for "in junior high school" and "graduated from junior high school" and the two highest for "in high school" and "high school diploma or higher." Juveniles with a poorer family budget had higher percentages for "high school dropout" and "graduated from junior high school" and lower percentages for "high school diploma or higher".

In terms of mental disorders, juveniles with child abuse experiences were more prone to mental disorders.

## **(2) Juvenile delinquent probationers**

Regarding people with whom juveniles lived, the proportion for "parents" was on a decline, compared to "mother" which was increasing. Focusing on family budgets, "middle class" had the highest proportion, followed by "poor" and "wealthy." "Poor" has been within a range of 11%-17% since 2002.

Analyzing data for 2021, approximately 60% of juveniles with a "poor" family budget lived with either a "mother" or "father", which was higher than "parents." The juveniles with a "poor" family budget also ranked the highest for the combined total of a "mother" and "father", followed by "middle class" and "wealthy."

Focusing on school/work engagement, the highest proportion of juveniles lived with "both parents" for the group "school." Additionally, the percentage for "school" declined as economic hardships on families increased. Regarding academic backgrounds, the juveniles living with "both parents" had the two highest proportions for "high school diploma or higher" and "in high school" and the two lowest proportions for "high school dropout" and "graduated from junior high school." Juveniles with a poorer family budget had higher proportions for "high school dropout" and "graduated from junior high school" and lower proportions for "high school diploma or higher" and "in high school."

In terms of mental disorders, juveniles with a "poor" family budget had a lower proportion for "no mental disorder" and a higher proportion for "intellectual disabilities" and "other mental disorders."

## **2. Questionnaire Survey (Chapter 3)**

The Institute carried out a questionnaire survey by examining participants as follows:

- [1] Juvenile delinquents at the highest treatment stage in juvenile training schools from June to September (June to November for females) in 2021,
- [2] Juvenile delinquents newly placed under probation in June (June to November for females) in 2021; and,
- [3] Guardians (only relatives within the sixth degree of consanguinity) of [1] and [2].

As the Institute limited participants subject to analysis to cases available for both juveniles and their guardians, the actual number of participants in the research totaled 579 (335 for juvenile delinquents in juvenile training schools, and 244 for juvenile delinquent probationers).

The Institute compared the results of the questionnaire survey to other surveys conducted by the Cabinet Office or other authorities ("general population surveys"). It should be noted that these comparisons do not

necessarily have complete accuracy, because the questions or the age range of the participants are not the same for certain question items.

### **(1) Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**

The Institute examined Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) of the juvenile participants and classified the juvenile participants into three groups: severe, moderate, and absent. 86.3% of the juvenile delinquents in juvenile training schools had one ACE or more, as did 56.5% of the juvenile delinquent probationers. This suggests that juvenile delinquents tend to have ACEs, and juveniles are more likely to have ACEs as their delinquency becomes more severe.

### **(2) Education and family engagement during childhood**

The Institute asked the guardians for their prospects of future education for their children as of the eighth grade. A higher proportion of guardians of juvenile delinquent probationers with "absent" ACEs had prospects of a Bachelor's degree or higher, while "severe" ACEs had a lower proportion. The juvenile delinquents in juvenile training schools with "severe" ACEs named fewer experiences of family activities such as "having picture books read" and "taking a family trip."

### **(3) Guardians**

Regarding the guardians' childhood experiences including parental divorce and victimization of parental physical abuse/neglect, guardians of juvenile delinquents in juvenile training schools with "severe" ACEs had a lower proportion for "I do not have such an experience," while guardians of juvenile delinquent probationers with "severe" ACEs had higher proportions for "I was victimized by parental physical abuse" and "I was victimized by parental neglect." Focusing on the guardians' history of medical consultation for mental disorders, a higher proportion of guardians of juveniles with "severe" ACEs in both groups of juvenile training schools and under probation had a history of consultation. As the Institute examined correlations between the experiences of the guardians after giving birth to the juveniles and the items of the juveniles' ACEs, the guardians' "suicidal feeling" and "spousal physical abuse" had statistically significant positive correlations for many ACE items. This suggests that juveniles of guardians with family troubles are more likely to have ACEs.

### **(4) Household economies**

The Institute examined the family incomes, finance, and other factors of the juveniles and classified the juvenile participants into three groups: very poor, somewhat poor, and not poor. Approximately 28% of the juvenile delinquents in juvenile training schools were very poor, as were 21% of the juvenile delinquent probationers. The combined total of "very poor" and "somewhat poor" exceeded 40% for both the juvenile

delinquents in juvenile training schools and the juvenile delinquent probationers. It can be said that the percentage of households of the juvenile delinquents with economic difficulties is in no way small.

As the Institute examined correlations between the three economic groups mentioned above and all the items of the juveniles' ACEs, eight ACE items had statistically significant correlations. The "very poor" group had a higher proportion for "I have or had a family member with depression or mental disorders" and other items. This suggests there are correlations between juveniles' ACEs and their household economies.

#### **(5) Daily life of juveniles**

Compared to the general population surveys, the juvenile delinquents had irregular/insufficient dietary habits, with less frequent family dinners. They spent longer hours for video games, TV, the internet, etc., as well as household chores and family caregiving. A lower percentage of the juvenile delinquents participated in extracurricular/office/local group activities including sports and volunteering.

#### **(6) School/work**

Compared to the general population surveys, the juvenile delinquents had not studied outside of classrooms and had difficulties keeping up in class. There was also a higher proportion of those who experienced worrying to the extent of wanting to drop out of school. The composition ratio of regular employment was higher, while irregular employment was lower. The percentage of those with job change experiences was also higher.

Focusing on school lives, the juvenile delinquent probationers and groups for "absent" ACEs and "not poor" had relatively longer hours to study outside class hours, while juvenile delinquents in juvenile training schools and groups for "severe" ACEs and "very poor" groups did not, with a higher rate of those who experienced worrying to the extent of wanting to drop out of school.

Regarding employment, the juvenile delinquents in juvenile training schools and groups for "severe" ACEs and "very poor" had higher composition ratios of those with job change experiences. Juvenile delinquents in juvenile training schools and the "severe" ACEs group were more likely to change their jobs on account of human relationships. On the other hand, the "not poor" group tended to change their jobs when they found jobs with more satisfactory conditions.

#### **(7) Psychological situation**

According to the responses to the items on the Locus of Control Scale, the juveniles with the more "severe" ACEs had a tendency to attribute their current situation to external factors.

According to the responses to the items on the Adolescent Resilience Scale, the juvenile delinquents in

juvenile training schools had a tendency to [1] show interest in and challenge new events, and [2] anticipate a bright and positive future with plans to endeavor for said future. On the other hand, juvenile delinquent probationers had a tendency to think they could control their feelings. In addition, the juveniles with the less "severe" ACEs also had the same tendency. Regarding the juveniles in the "not poor" group, they had a tendency to think they could control their feelings and anticipate a bright and positive future with plans to endeavor for said future.

The responses to the items on the Time Continuity Scale show that the juvenile delinquents in juvenile training schools and groups for "absent" ACEs and "not poor" sensed a connection between their present and future selves.

### **(8) Contact with others and society**

It can be seen that the guardians with a "poor" family budget had fewer people they could confide in or rely on. The guardians of both juvenile delinquents in juvenile training schools and juvenile delinquent probationers had a need for one-stop consultation services.

Regarding interpersonal relationships of the juveniles, the "severe" ACEs group has the possibility of having strained relationships with their family or people around them in society including school friends. The results suggest that the "severe" ACEs group could interact with others on the internet and required places where they could spend time relaxing when they fought with their guardians.

## **3. Research on the Current Measures (Chapter 4)**

The Institute conducted a field research on juvenile training schools, probation offices, juvenile support centers, and children's cafeterias in order to examine the treatment of juveniles with experiences such as child abuse.

## **4. Discussion (Chapter 5)**

Regarding juvenile delinquents with ACEs, this study points out: [1] trauma-informed care is important, [2] when trauma is severe, cooperation with medical institutions may become necessary during/after the protective measures; and, [3] identifying that a juvenile has trauma is important in order to provide the trauma-informed care.

In terms of financial difficulties, as economic problems could hinder the continuation of school/work, this study points out: [1] it is important to give juveniles and their guardians advice and make arrangements

with other organizations to enable the juveniles and their guardians to use various measures; and, [2] it is also important to establish a system where continuous assistance is available when necessary, having understood individual backgrounds and circumstances of juvenile delinquents with these financial difficulties.

Regarding assistance available in the communities, this study points out: [1] complex difficulties arising from under severe living environments are potential reasons for delinquency, [2] assistance to juvenile delinquents by organizations in their communities is necessary in order to prevent repeat delinquency; and, [3] it is important that local communities notice the difficulties of juveniles and their guardians and offer assistance before the juveniles turn to delinquency.

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