

Criminology



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How do rates of re-offending (recidivism) compare for juveniles sentenced to juvenile-only s compared to juvenile and adult s in America

In criminology, it has been a matter of debate for a long time if juvenile-only institutions are any better than juvenile and adult institutions in terms of reducing recidivism. There are strong arguments supporting both the systems. However, examining the case of America, a closer look at the studies and statistics reveals that the juvenile only institutions reduce recidivism more than juvenile and adult institutions.

The Theory of Hard Punishments Reducing Recidivism

Punishment does have an effect of reducing crime. Firstly, it is known that harsh punishments for a crime would lessen the adolescent's motivation to commit additional crimes. Secondly, if the adolescent knows that the punishment for the crime would be severe, and that he or she would be treated the same way as adult criminals, it is likely that he or she would have second thoughts about committing the crime and lesser crimes would take place.

Juvenile Only Institutions Reduce Recidivism

There have been a number of studies carried out in different states of America to find out the effect on young criminals being treated by the juvenile system versus those treated in the adult court systems. Generally, the results have gone against the theory that harder punishments reduce recidivism and draw out the same conclusions i. e. young criminals treated through juvenile systems reduce recidivism.

In Florida, a study took a sample of 2, 738 adolescent offenders. They included many different kinds of offenses such as burglary, robbery, car thefts, and so on. The study compared two sets of offenders: those who were

transferred to criminal courts and those who were kept in the juvenile system. The research concluded that offenders trialed by the juvenile system were rearrested less, 19 percent compared to 30 percent. The time taken before they got rearrested was also greater, 227 days as compared to 135 days. (Johnson & Rosch)

A similar study was conducted in New York and New Jersey as well, where 16 and 17 year old lawbreakers were compared. The backgrounds of the offenders were similar. However, the New York state law treats all 16 year olds and most 17 year olds under the adult court system, whereas New Jersey treats them under the juvenile system. Again, the studies concluded that those trialed under the New York law, treating young criminals under adult systems, had a higher rate of recommitting crime. The re-arrests in New York were around 76 percent, compared to 67 percent in New Jersey. Also, the re-arrests took a time period of 457 days in New York, compared to 553 days in New Jersey. (Johnson & Rosch)

Conclusion

Therefore, the general pattern depicts that in America, juvenile only institutions reduce recidivism more, as compared to the adult institutions. This is because the juvenile systems are focused more on rehabilitation of the young offenders, instead of merely punishing them. As young people make impulsive decisions without evaluating the probable outcomes, they need to be treated accordingly. They are affected greatly by social pressures and their backgrounds into indulging in criminal activities. Instead of being harshly punished, they must be counseled and shown the right path.

Works Cited

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