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Criminally Involved Youth and Young Adults

Prepared by:
- Morgan McGuirk
  Research Intern

- Leland Smith
  Missouri Probation and Parole

Contributors:
- Vivien Clark, Missouri Probation and Parole

- Rachel Cramsey, LCSW, Let's Start

- Tamara Johnson, Missouri Probation and Parole

- Morgan McGuirk, Research Intern

- Stefanie Moore, MS, Center for Women in Transition

- Leland Smith, Missouri Probation and Parole

Criminally Involved Youth and Young Adults

Looking at research related to criminally involved youth and young adults at the national and local levels is important because these individuals are potential, future adult probation and parole clients. The possibility of these individuals becoming adult clients makes this issue relevant for those who do not specifically work with youth. Relatively consistent throughout the United States, offending begins in late childhood, increases until it peaks in the teenage years (15 to 19), and then begin to decline in the early 20s, forming a bell curve known as "the age-crime curve."[1]

Therefore, the research findings concentrate on youth and young adults with ages ranging roughly from 16 to 24 with the intent of focusing on the St. Louis area. As criminally involved youth often find themselves in the "school to prison pipeline," gaining an understanding of the demographics, risk factors, and barriers will provide insight on how to better assist and prepare youth and young adults to find and maintain success.[2] Please be advised that the information found in the tables below does not capture all juvenile arrest data as the information on juveniles who remain with the Missouri Division of Youth Services is protected by statute.

Demographics

United States

- **Age:** The median age for most crimes is younger than 30 with the peak age-crime involvement being under 25.[3] Historically, U.S. national crime rate trends are attributed to the proportion of the population that is aged 15 to 24. How this proportion fluctuates over time generally mirrors how the crime rate fluctuates.[4]

- **Offense:** The crimes that tend to peak the highest with younger populations and show the sharpest declines as that population ages are crimes such as vandalism, petty theft, arson, burglary, robbery, auto theft, and crimes involving liquor and drugs. More personal crimes, such as assault and homicide, generally peak in a slightly older age group (late 20s), much like DWI, embezzlement, and fraud.[5] Drug trafficking has the highest age of termination at

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[1] Rolf Loeber, David P. Farrington and David Petechuk, "Bulletin 1: From Juvenile Delinquency to Young Adult Offending," *National Institute of Justice,* last modified March 11, 2014, http://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/Pages/delinquency-to-adult-offending.aspx#reports.
[2] Jimmie M. Edwards, "How to shut down the school-to-prison pipeline," *St. Louis Post-Disptach*, last modified January 26, 2016, http://www.stltoday.com/news/opinion/how-to-shut-down-the-school-to-prison-pipeline/article_08fd2f18-e803-5698-9dce-9be6da998205.html.
[3] Jeffery T. Ulmer and Darrell Steffensmeier, "The Age and Crime Relationship: Social Variation, Social Explanations," *The Nurture Versus Biosocial Debate in Criminology: On the Origins of Criminal Behavior and Criminality.* Eds. Kevin M. Beaver J.C. Barnes and Brian B. Boutwell. London: SAGE Publications Ltd (2014) (Statistic based off of the age group with the highest arrest rate applying to all crimes reported in the Uniform Crime Report except gambling).
[4] Ibid., 378.
[5] Ibid., 386-387.

21.6, while lower-level offenses, such as shoplifting and vandalism, have an age of termination generally under age 18.[6]

- **Violent Crime:** Criminally involved youths tend to direct their violence towards victims of similar age. The age group 16 to 24 is at an especially high risk for violent victimization. Most homicides are isolated events that take place in the 19 to 24 age group. The first incidence of offending for differing crimes varies with the following average ages: gang membership (15.9), marijuana use (16.5), drug dealing (17), gun carrying (17.3) and narcotic use (17.5). Out of these offenses, offenders who are dealing drugs and illegally carrying guns are the most likely to continue these types of offenses into adulthood.[7]

- **Race:** African-American males tend to peak earlier and higher in "the age-crime curve" than white males, white females, or African-American females. Young African-American males have a significantly higher rate of both homicide offending and homicide victimization than young white males.[8]

Missouri

- The number of criminally involved youth and young adults in Missouri who are incarcerated or under community supervision represents a significant portion of the total number of offenders in each of the following categories:[9]

Status	Ages 16-24*	Ages 25-29
Incarcerated	**3916** or **12%** of the total prison population. Females comprise of **347**, or **10.7%** for the total number of females. Males comprise of **3569**, or **10.7%** for the total number of males.	**5457** or **16.9%** of the total prison population. Females comprise of **627**, or **19.4%** for the total number of females. Males comprise of **4830**, or **16.6%** for the total number of males.
Parole	**1447** or **9%** of the total parolee population. Females comprise of **6.9%** for the total number of females. Males comprise of **9.5%** for the total number of males. *(ages 18-24)	**2837** or **17.8%** of the total parolee population. Females comprise of **19.4%** for the total number of females. Males comprise of **17.5%** for the total number of males.
Probation	**8395** or **19%** of the total probationer population. Females comprise of **15.5%** for the total number for females. Males comprise of **20%** for the total number of males.	**8097** or **18.1%** of the total probationer population. Females comprise of **19.4%** for the total number of females. Males comprise of **17.7%** for the total number of males.

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[6] See note 1 above, 5-6.

[7] Ibid., 8.

[8] Ibid., 10.

[9] Missouri Department of Corrections, "2015 Profile of the Institutional and Supervised Offender Population," last modified December 2015.

St. Louis

- **Arrest Demographics:** [10]

Offense	Ages 15-18		Ages 18-29	
	St. Louis City	St. Louis County	St. Louis City	St. Louis County
Murder and Non-negligent Homicide	**20** arrests, or **19%** of total murder arrests. **95%** of all arrestees were male.	**2** arrests, with both involving males.	**56** arrests, or **52%** of total murder arrests. **91%** of all arrests involved males.	**7** arrests, with **5** arrests being male.
Robbery	**135** arrests or **25%** of total robbery arrests. **96%** of arrestees being male.	**124** arrests or **30%** of total number of arrests. **93%** of arrestees were male.	**265** or **48%** of total robbery arrests. **88%** of all arrestees were male.	**174** arrests or **43%** of total robbery arrests. **84%** of arrestees were male.
Aggravated Assault	**61** or **6%** of total aggravated assault arrests. **82%** of these arrests were males.	**144** arrests or **30%** of total arrests. Males comprised **65%** of arrests.	**520** or **46%** of total aggravated assault arrests. Males comprised **77%** or total arrestees.	**415** arrests or **39%** of total arrests. Males comprised **73%** of total arrests.
Burglary	**70** arrests or **10%** of total burglary arrests. **98%** of these arrests were males.	**210** arrests or **22%** of total burglary arrests. **90%** of total arrests were males.	**307** or **42%** of total burglaries. Males accounted for **84%** of total arrests.	**435** arrests or **46%** of total burglary arrests. **87%** of arrestees were male.
Motor Vehicle Theft	**25** or **23%** of total motor vehicle arrests. **92%** of these arrests were males.	**62** arrests or **24%** of total motor vehicle theft arrests. Males accounted for **90%** of total arrests.	**49** or **44%** of total motor vehicle arrests. **77%** of arrestees were male.	**128** arrests, representing **53%** of total motor vehicle theft arrests. Males accounted for **90%** of total arrests.
Weapons Charges	**63** or **10%** of all weapons related arrests. **98%** of these arrests were males.	**91** or **16%** of total arrests for weapons charges. **85%** of arrestees were male.	**283** or **44%** of total weapons arrests. **96%** of theses arrests were males.	**242** or **43%** of total weapons arrests. **88%** of those arrested were male.

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[10] Missouri State Highway Patrol, "2014 Annual Missouri Uniform Crime Reporting Program," last modified 2014.

Risk Factors

There is no single risk factor or set of risk factors that can predict delinquency with certainty, but there is a multiplicative effect with risk factors which increases the likelihood of delinquency. The influence of a risk factor varies depending on "the developmental state of the individual."[11] Also, some situations and conditions influence the likelihood of delinquency and may not be captured in longitudinal studies, i.e. situation factors.[12]

The following table identifies juvenile risk factors by domain and age:

Risk and Protective Factors, by Domain[13]		
Domain	**Early Onset (ages 6-11)**	**Late Onset (ages 12-14)**
Individual	General offenses Substance use Being male Aggression* Hyperactivity Problem (antisocial) behavior Exposure to television violence Medical, physical problems Low IQ Antisocial attitudes, beliefs Dishonesty*	General offenses Restlessness Difficulty concentrating* Risk taking Aggression* Being male Physical violence Antisocial attitudes, beliefs, and antisocial behavior Crimes against persons Low IQ Substance use
Family	Low socioeconomic status/poverty Antisocial parents Poor parent-child relationship Harsh, lax, or inconsistent discipline Broken home Separation from parents Other conditions Abusive parents Neglect	Poor parent-child relationship Harsh or lax discipline Poor monitoring, supervision Low parental involvement Antisocial parents Broken home Low socioeconomic status/poverty Abusive parents Family conflict*
School	Poor attitude, performance	Poor attitude, performance, and academic failure
Peer group	Weak social ties Antisocial peers	Weak social ties Antisocial, delinquent peers, and gang membership
Community		Neighborhood crime, drugs, and disorganization
*Males only.		

Trauma

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[11] Michael Shader, "Risk Factors for Delinquency: An Overview," *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency* (2004).

[12] Office of the Surgeon General, "Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General," *Department of Health and Human Services, Officer of the Secretary, Office of Public Health and Science, Office of the Surgeon General* (2001).

[13] Office of the Surgeon General (2001) (Adapted).

- **Environment:** When children grow up in safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments they learn empathy, impulse control, anger management, and problem-solving; all skills that protect against violence.[14] When children grow up in environments where they don't feel safe, their brain cells form different connections with each other to better recognize and respond to threats.[15] Children living in a persistently threatening environment are more likely to respond violently (fight) or run away (flight) than children who grow up in safe, stable, and nurturing environments. Fight or flight responses are survival skills that people are born with and often override other skills that enable non-violent conflict resolution.[16]

- **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs):** Childhood abuse, neglect, and exposure to other traumatic stressors are common ACEs. ACEs contribute to stress during childhood and put individuals at a higher risk for problems such as alcoholism and alcohol abuse, depression, illicit drug use, intimate partner violence, and suicide attempts.[17] The short and long term outcomes of these childhood exposures include multiple health and social problems. The impact of an ACE is also cumulative, meaning the more ACEs a child is exposed to, the higher likelihood he or she will experience health and social problems later in life. The life expectancy of individuals with 6 or more ACEs is 20 years shorter than those without any ACEs.[18]

Employment

- Employment is identified as a criminogenic need which reduces recidivism for criminally involved individuals. Research has identified the following barriers for youth and young adults in obtaining or sustaining employment:

  Anger Management: Having a history of anger and destructive behaviors makes employment for an individual often unattainable and unable to maintain.[19]

  Job Readiness: Criminally involved youth and young adults often lack skills such as workplace expectations, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, work ethics, time management, and other soft skills needed for employment.[20]

  Work Experience: Having little to no work experience or specialized skills training leave youth and young adults struggling to survive on unsteady work hours and low wages.[21]

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[14] Topitizes J. Mersky and AJ Reynolds, "From Child Maltreatment to Violent Offending: An Examination of Mixed-Gender and Gender-Specific Models," *J Interpers Violence* (2012).

[15] JP Shonkoff and DA Phillips, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development,* (Washington DC: National Academy Press 2000).

[16] R. Kotulak, *Inside the Brain: Revolutionary Discoveries of How the Mind Works,* (Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel Publishing 1997).

[17] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,"Adverse Childhood Experiences Study," accessed April 4, 2014, www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/ace/index.htm.

[18] "Adverse Childhood Experiences: Looking at How ACEs Affect Our Lives & Society," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012), accessed April 4, 2014, vetoviolence.cdc.gov/childmaltreatment/phl/resource center infographic.html.

[19] "Overcoming Barriers to Employment for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System: A Practical Guide," *National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges* vol. 2, no. 5 (2005), http://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/employmentopportunitiesforyouth_0.pdf.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

Court Records: Criminally involved youth and young adults are often questioned about their legal backgrounds, which if not sealed or expunged, can result in the individual being fired after a short period of employment.[22]

Social

- **Behavior:** Evidence suggests emotional and cognitive behavior are essential factors in childhood and adolescent offending, and these behaviors can potentially affect the learning of social rules.[23] In addition, the most outstanding social behavior characteristic is early aggression before the age of 13.[24] The strongest early predictor of violence is substance abuse before the age of 12 and the involvement in general offenses between the ages of 15 to 18.[25]

- **At Home:** There are no strong risk factors but "low socioeconomic status/poverty" and living with antisocial parents are modest factors. Early childhood predictors include poor parent-child relations and the effects of a broken home. Additionally, later predictors of violence include abusive parenting in general and parental neglect specifically.[26]

- **Education:** Beginning in elementary school, "peers become more important… although school-age children still look primarily to parents for cues on how to behave."[27] An early risk factor that has been shown to have a minimal effect is a child having a poor attitude and poor performance in school.[28] In addition, school suspensions are shown to be an important predictor for children dropping out of school, leading youth to a greater probability of "unemployment, reliance on social-welfare programs, and imprisonment."[29] Also, when youth frequently fall below educational benchmark standards or have diminished educational histories, this leaves them without the necessary reading, writing, and comprehension skills preferred to fill out and understand job applications and other essential forms needed for employment.[30,31]

- **Community:** Risk factors from the community including, "living in socially disorganized neighborhoods with high rates of crime, violence, and drugs" are predictors in adolescents,

[22] Y. K. Pham, D. Unruh, and M. Waintrup, "Employers' perceptions on the disclosure of juvenile records," *Journal of Juvenile Justice,* vol. 4, no. 2 (2015): 111-122, http://search.proquest.com/docview/1726788661?accountid=14872.

[23] G.A.Wasserman, K. Keenan, R.E. Tremblay, J.D. Coie, T.I. Herrenkohl, R. Loeber, and April D. Petechuk, "Risk and Protective Factors of Child Delinquency in Child Delinquency Bulletin Series," *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention* (2003).

[24] Ibid.

[25] See note 12 above.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] See note 2 above.

[30] R. Zabel and F. Nigro, "Occupational interests and aptitudes of juvenile offenders: Influence of special education experience and gender," *Journal of Correctional Education*, vol. 58, no. 4 (2007): 337-355, http://search.proquest.com/docview/229793965?accountid=14872.

[31] Chung, H. L., Mulvey, E. P., & Steinberg, L. "Understanding the school outcomes of juvenile offenders: An exploration of neighborhood influences and motivational resources," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, vol. 40 no. 8 (2011): 1025-38, doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10964-010-9626-2.

but are less powerful predictors in children. Much like peer risk factors, the external influences have a more direct influence on adolescents than on children.[32]

Conclusion and Future Study

There is no greater challenge for the St. Louis community than seeking solutions on how to address youth and young adults entering the criminal justice system. As outlined above, youth and young adults represent a significant portion of the population in St. Louis being arrested and subsequently incarcerated in Missouri. Furthermore, as no single risk factor can predict delinquency, efforts in working with criminally involved youth and young adults must be comprehensive when identifying each individual's strengths as well as risk factors. Only through the collaboration of the government, non-profits, universities, and other social service agencies can a comprehensive approach be implemented. In 2016, STAR has identified criminally involved youth and young adults as a theme for its efforts. Towards this goal, future STAR papers in 2016 will include:

- Identification of diversion programs offered in the St. Louis area, including each program's mission and purpose.

- How a strength-based approach with youth can enhance community supervision through identification of examples of such programs being utilized.

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[32] See note 2 above.

RESOURCES

Community Action Agency of St. Louis, (314) 863-0015,
http://www.caastlc.org/programs/youth-at-risk.html
The Youth @ Risk school based program is designed to reach youths and their families who are at-risk of involvement in or are involved in gang activities, violence, illegal acts and/or other related activities.

CAASTLC staff provides classroom presentations on such topics as peer pressure, relationships, and positive communication skills. Referrals are made through school principals, teachers, counselors, and police officers who identify high-risk students needing intervention.

Covering House, (314) 865-1288,
www.thecoveringhouse.org
Covering House is the first facility in the state of Missouri for girls, between the ages of 13-17 years old, that have experienced sexual trafficking or exploitation in the U.S. Covering House also provides Supportive Adults Program, a 9-week session curriculum developed to address the needs of the adults in the lives of CH's clients, as well as other support.

Employment Connection, (314) 333-5627,
http://www.employmentstl.org
Employment Connection's "To Health and To Work" program, provides St. Louis City youth ages 15-18 with an integrative synthesis of case management, career counseling, talk therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and additional psycho-educational interventions guided by psychometrics. The program's goal is to engage and empower youth, helping them to develop a hopeful future orientation and greater self-efficacy leading to meaningful engagement in the workforce.

The program assesses the behavioral health status of each participant and provides an appropriate therapeutic response either directly or through referrals to partner agencies. Youth acquire critical emotional regulation and professional skills as they explore a career and/or educational path that meshes with their aptitude and temperament. Through early intervention and one-on-one attention, "To Health and To Work" empowers the youth to start along a lifelong trajectory of personal and/or academic success.

Epworth Children and Family Services, (314) 918-3399,
www.epworth.org
Epworth strives to help youth and families find strengths, break through obstacles, and build brighter futures. Among Epworth's programs is their Residential and Intensive Treatment, which provides a safe and stable living environment while youth work through emotional and behavioral issues that often stem from a history of abuse or neglect. They also provide psychological services, family support, street outreach, and other services for at-risk youth and families.

Lakeside Residential Treatment Center, (314) 434-4535,
http://stlouisco.com/HealthandWellness/HumanServices/LakesideTeenServices
Lakeside Residential Treatment Center provides comprehensive residential treatment services for troubled Saint Louis County Teens referred for placement by The Family Court of Saint Louis County. LRTC focuses on personal responsibility and positive change so that young people are empowered to turn from negative and self-destructive behaviors and some productive members of society.

Mission: St. Louis Beyond Jobs Program, (314) 534-1188,
https://www.missionstl.org/what-we-do/beyond-jobs
Mission: St. Louis works within the community to empower at-risk youth and young men through the Beyond Jobs program. To help men become leaders in their home and community, Mission: St. Louis empowers at-risk men ages 22-35 through skills training, internships and a community of support. Students enrolled in Beyond Jobs complete internships at a variety of local businesses, including in the organization's social enterprise Revive Thrift Shop.

Queen of Peace Adolescent Resource Center, (314) 531-0511,
www.qopcstl.org
The Adolescent Resource Center (ARC), a Queen of Peace Center and St Louis County Children's Fund program, provides services and support to teens, aged 12-19 in need. All services are confidential and free of charge. The ARC empowers youth who may be at risk for emotional/mental health issues and/or risky behaviors. Services include prevention education, group education, art therapy, process groups, cognitive behavioral therapy, among other services.

SafeFutures Program, (314) 534-5437
The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has created this program to address matters of school failure, substance abuse, gang violence, and other issues that can catch youth in the juvenile justice system. Through the SafeFutures Initiative, a collaboration between local government, organizations, and volunteers bind together to provide services to children and their families that create safe, healthy communities. Collaboration also ensures services are not duplicated. The purpose of the initiative is to prevent and reduce delinquency along with victimization by intervening when children and teens encounter problems or when they commit violent or other crimes.

St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department Juvenile Division, (314) 444-0195,
http://www.slmpd.org/juvenile.shtml
This division of SLMPD has grown programs to connect law enforcement with youth and provide mentorship, education, and access to resources to divert youth from gang involvement and reduce involvement in crime. The Department has several programs geared toward juveniles including the Police Athletic League (http://www.slmpd.org/pal.shtml), Do The Right Thing (http://www.slmpd.org/do_the_right_thing.shtml), and the Police Explorers (http://www.slmpd.org/police_explorers.shtml).

St. Louis YouthBuild Americorps, (314) 261-0202,
http://stlyouthbuild.wix.com/stlyouthbuild
St. Louis YouthBuild engages in helping young men and women improve their education, earn a GED, learn leadership skills and marketable job skills, obtain and retain decent-paying employment and advanced education. YouthBuild provides a safe, secure, and supportive learning environment for young adults who dropped out of high school (ages 18-24). St. Louis YouthBuild helps men and women earn a high school equivalency certificate and learn real job skills in the construction field. St. Louis YouthBuild is an alternative school/pre-apprenticeship program that is sponsored by the Parent Child Center and Bridging Families to Communities and Beyond. Accepts those with criminal backgrounds apart from charges for murder and sexual crimes.

St. Vincent Home for Children, (314) 261-6011,
www.saintvincenthome.org
St. Vincent offers a variety of on-site residential and home-based programs. Programs are tailored for the various levels of support that our kids need and are created to be seamless, so that children and families have as much support as they need for as long as they need it. The four primary programs are LifeFOCUS residential treatment; LifeRECOVER substance abuse treatment; LifePATHS services for teens emancipating and moving into adulthood; and InHomeFOCUS, which is home-based counseling.

Youth in Need, (636) 946-5600,
www.youthinneed.org
Youth In Need was established in 1974 and has served runaway and at-risk youth through an emergency shelter and other services that aim to support children and teens in crisis. Youth In Need attempts to strengthen families and provide support and encouragement to those teens that don't have families.

Services include: Early Head Start and Head Start; Counseling; Project Safe Place; Street Outreach Program; Emergency Shelter/ Transitional Living Program; Teen Parent Program; and Foster Care & Adoption.