**Juvenile delinquency**

Juvenile delinquency is participation in illegal behavior by minors (juveniles, i.e. individuals younger than the legal age of majority). Most legal systems prescribe specific procedures for dealing with juveniles, such as juvenile detention centers, and courts. A juvenile delinquent in the United States is a person who is typically below 18 years of age and commits an act that otherwise would have been charged as a crime if they were an adult. Depending on the type and severity of the offense committed, it is possible for people under 18 to be charged and treated as adults.

**Causes:**

There are many factors that cause juvenile delinquency. Children whose parents have been imprisoned are far more likely to show delinquent behavior than their peers. Some people believe that imposing strict laws such as curfews will cause a drop in juvenile delinquency rates, but sometimes imposing strict rules merely give the children more of an incentive to break them. However, sometimes juvenile crimes do in fact occur due to the exact opposite reason, that is, a lack of rules and supervision. One example of this is that children many times commit crimes after school and while their parents are at work or preoccupied. Additionally, mental illness and substance abuse are large contributing factors. Crime rates vary due to the living situations of children; examples of this could be a child whose parents are together, divorced, or a child with only one parent, particularly a teen mom. This is largely because living arrangements are directly related to increases and decreases of poverty levels. Finally, another cause could be the relationships a child develops in school or outside of school. A positive or negative friendship can have a great influence on the chances of children becoming delinquents. Relationships and friendships can lead to gangs, which are major contributors of violent crimes among teens.