

## Section 2.—Juvenile Delinquency Statistics

**Characteristics and Limitations of Juvenile Court Statistics.**—The problem of juvenile delinquency and adult crime differ in their cause, nature and treatment to such an extent that, although one may lead to the other, it is advisable to study them separately. For this reason the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, since 1922, has compiled statistics for juvenile delinquency separately from those of criminal and other offences committed by adults.

Statistics published by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics deal primarily with delinquency cases disposed of by the courts and serve to further the program of the treatment of young offenders.

The tabulations are based on data received from 121 juvenile courts in Canada and from those judges and magistrates before whom are brought the children whose conduct is contrary to the law. The fact that juvenile court statistics furnish the most comprehensive figures collected on a Dominion-wide basis makes it important that the limitations of these statistics are understood.

In the first place, it is impossible for any report to give a complete picture of juvenile delinquency, as many instances of minor offences are not detected, while others are settled by the police, social agencies, or school authorities without the necessity of apprehending the child. This is particularly true in rural districts where the courts are not as accessible and difficulties are apt to be settled in a neighbourly fashion.

Secondly, the number of cases brought before the courts is influenced by such factors as the personnel and facilities of the court, and community interest and understanding of the function of a juvenile court. Furthermore, it must be remembered that as time goes on more courts are established and the added returns may exaggerate an apparent increase in delinquency or may under-estimate a decrease.

Thirdly, the figures refer to the number of charges dealt with by the courts rather than to the number of children. Some of the children may be brought to court more than once within a year and are recorded as separate individuals each time they appear on new complaints. The figures, therefore, should not be interpreted as representing the number of delinquent children.

Lastly, the number of delinquency cases reported by the courts is affected, to a considerable extent, by variations in the policies of the courts in the disposition of cases. Some courts handle certain cases unofficially, that is, in these cases legal papers are not prepared and the case is adjusted by the judge or other officer of the court without a formal court hearing. Although some of the courts report the cases as adjourned *sine die*, others consider the interview as an "occurrence" meaning that the case is not recorded as a charge. When the number of these occurrences goes up, the number of official cases goes down. For the compilation of statistics these variations are unsatisfactory, though from a social point of view such practice may be in the best interest of the child provided that a case history of the individual is filed for future reference.