

# Treatment of female juvenile offenders in Sweden

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## International perspective

- Great variations as to when a person is responsible for his offending
- Great variations in the alternatives for handling/helping juvenile offenders
- In many countries very young boys and girls are put in prison
- In some countries there are several agencies, kinds of institutions, to take care of young offenders – in other countries not so many
- In most countries far more young men than girls are offending
- In many countries this means that there are more alternatives for handling boys than girls
- In many countries the stigma attached to offending, to having been put into institutions, is different for girls – harsher, more restricting – e.g. shelters needed
- In Sweden comparatively few are treated within the prison system but in special institutions for young offenders with much more staff and specialists available

## Government Assignment about young offenders 2013-2016

”The Prison and probation service shall conduct a special effort during the execution of young clients sentence, taking measures designed to prevent recurrence of criminal offences”

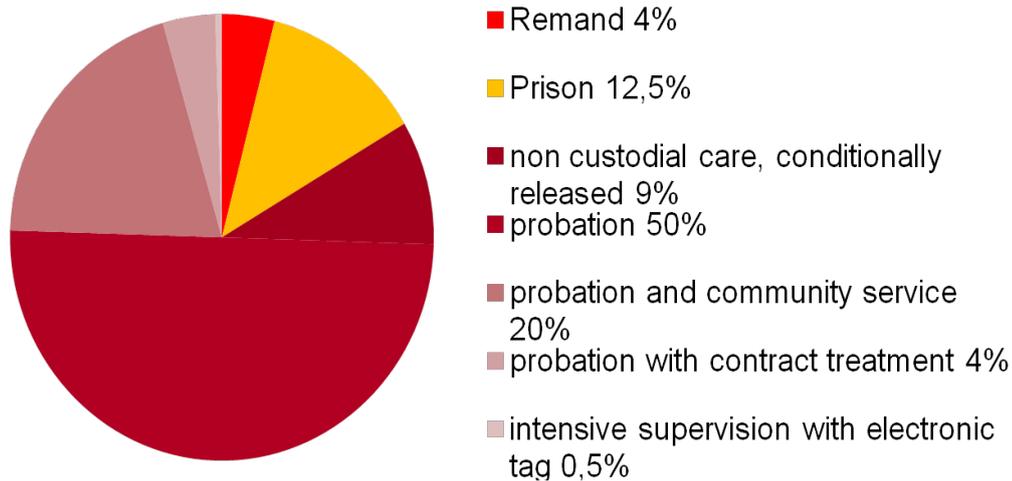
150 million skr.

## Young offenders

- Age of criminal responsibility 15 years
- Persons under 18 rarely receive custodial sentences – special legislation, special institutions
- **Young offender is less than 21 years old when entering remand, prison or non custodial care**
- (max until the age of 24)

## Young offenders

- Every day there are close to 2,000 young people in prison and probation service. About 180 of them are women.



## The young offenders

- The majority have been subject to previous social interventions
- 70% have some sort of addiction problems.
- 53% live in metropolis
- 86 % Swedish nationals
- 70 % live with their parents

(Source: Client mapping in 2013)

## The female young offender

- Often a background of abuse. Physical or sexual or harassment in general
- Many see themselves as “the inferior sex”
- Many female offenders have been subjected to prostitution
- Drug abuse

## The young offenders - the crimes

- 60% of young people are convicted of violent crimes, the most common is robbery.
- 35% are convicted of drug-related crime, and nearly as many for acquisitive.
- Average penalty if custodial sanction 10 months, if non custodial sanction 1 year.

## The young female offenders – the crimes

- Most common crimes are drug related crimes
- Second most common is theft of some kind
- In third place comes violent crimes – although among older women there is a tendency, not very prominent, towards more violent crimes

## Reactions to drug abuse and offending in the Swedish society

- In Sweden there are 7 institutions, SIS, for giving treatment and care for offenders of the age 15-17, 56 places.
- In 2014, 40 boys were placed in these institutions, only one girl
- Some girls with an offending behavior are placed in psychiatric care instead of any of the other kinds of institutions. Reason for this may be drug abuse, self harming behavior or – of course – other psychiatric problems

## What works according to science?

- The principle of Risk -high risk of recurrence – many efforts
- No difference mandatory or voluntary

### Multimodal operations

- Therapeutic treatment of social problem solving and anger control
- Professional mentors
- Education
- Efforts related to work
- ADHD investigation and treatment
- Drug treatment

## Early efforts

- Early investigation of – risk, needs and susceptibility
- Motivate to treatment early
- Study early
- Specialist departments for young

## Efforts in Prison

- Small specialized departments for 100 young offenders – today only about 10 young girls in prison
- Special cognitive treatment programs
- ADHD-investigation
- Cooperation with other authorities like employment agency or social services
- The female prisoners are relatively few which means less institutions for them, often far away from home

## Efforts in probation service

- Specialized probation officers
- More treatment programs
- Intensified probation - The lay probation officer and/or Professional Mentor or coach?
- Network?
- Cooperation with other authorities like employment agency or social services  
Employment agency or healthcare located with probation service

## Conclusions

- Female juveniles slightly different picture than for men – more abused, sexual components, low self esteem
- More empirical data on male juveniles – adjust treatment programs to match
- Fewer females – fewer places for good treatment – adjust!
- Early and broad approach to treatment is vital
- Other alternatives than imprisonment for juveniles is always preferable
- Postponing entry into prison gives better prognosis, is more humane and cost effective