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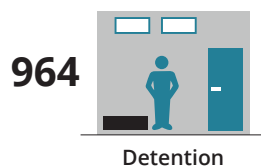
Youth detention population in Australia

2017

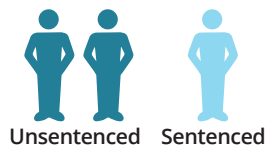
Summary

This bulletin looks at the numbers and rates of young people aged 10 and over who were in youth detention in Australia due to their involvement, or alleged involvement, in crime. It focuses on trends over the 4-year period from the June quarter 2013 to the June quarter 2017.

More than 950 young people in detention on an average night



There were 964 young people in youth detention on an average night in the June quarter 2017. The vast majority (91%) were male and most (84%) were aged 10–17. This equates to a rate of 3.5 young people aged 10–17 per 10,000. The other detainees were aged 18 or older.



Almost 2 in 3 (64%) young people in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2017 were unsentenced—that is, they were awaiting the outcome of their court matter or sentencing—and the remainder were serving a sentence (excluding Victoria as data were not available).

Detention rates are stable

Over the 4-year period from the June quarter 2013 to the June quarter 2017, the number of young people in detention on an average night fluctuated, with no consistent trend. The number was lowest in the September quarter 2016 (803 young people) and highest in the most recent quarter (964).

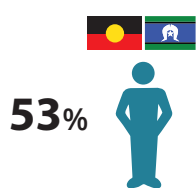
Similarly, the rate of those aged 10–17 in detention fluctuated between 2.8 and 3.5 per 10,000 each quarter over the 4-year period.

Sentenced detention has decreased, while unsentenced detention is stable

In the June quarter 2017, there were 2.6 per 10,000 young people aged 10–17 in unsentenced detention on an average night, and 1.4 per 10,000 in sentenced detention (excluding Victoria).

Over the 4-year period, the rate of young people in sentenced detention decreased from a high of 1.7 per 10,000 aged 10–17 in the December quarter 2013 to a low of 1.2 per 10,000 in the December quarter 2016, before rising slightly to 1.4 per 10,000 in the most recent quarter. The rate of young people in unsentenced detention ranged between 1.8 per 10,000 (September quarter 2016) and 2.6 per 10,000 aged 10–17 (March and June quarters 2017), with no clear trend.

Over half of those in detention are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people



Just over half (53%) of all young people in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2017 were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Indigenous young people aged 10–17 were 24 times as likely as non-Indigenous young people to be in detention on an average night, and this fluctuated between 23 and 27 times the non-Indigenous rate over the 4-year period.

Trends vary across the states and territories

Rates of young people in detention on an average night increased over the 4-year period in Victoria, and decreased in New South Wales, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory (despite a rise in the Australian Capital Territory in the most recent quarter). Rates in the other states and territories remained relatively stable or showed no consistent trend.

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1 Introduction

This bulletin is part of an annual series that looks at trends in the numbers and rates of young people in secure detention facilities in Australia due to their involvement or alleged involvement in crime.

This bulletin and accompanying supplementary tables (those with a prefix of 'S') are available from www.aihw.gov.au/reports-statistics/health-welfare-services/youth-justice/reports.

Youth detention in Australia

In Australia, young people who are charged with, or proven guilty of, criminal offences may be supervised by state and territory youth justice agencies. Supervision may take place either in the community or in detention facilities.

Among the states and territories, variations in the numbers and rates of young people under supervision can reflect differences in youth justice legislation, policy and practice. This includes differences in police practices, the range of legal orders available and the options for diversion.

Principles of youth detention

Two main principles upon which the Australian youth justice system is based, and which are incorporated in state and territory legislation, are that young people should be detained only as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate period (Chrzanowski & Wallis 2011). This is consistent with international guidelines, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (United Nations 1985, 1989).

Diverting young people from further involvement in the justice system is crucial to applying these principles. Forms of diversion include police warnings, referral to services such as drug and alcohol treatment, bail supervision for those at risk of remand, and youth justice conferencing. Alternatives to detention include transfer to specialist courts or programs, and supervised or unsupervised community orders.

Most young people under supervision in Australia are therefore supervised in the community. On an average day in 2015–16, 84% of young people under supervision were supervised in the community, and just 17% were in detention (some were supervised in both the community and detention on the same day; AIHW 2017). However, 44% of those who were supervised during 2015–16 spent time in detention at some point during the year.

Age limits

In Australia, young people may be charged with a criminal offence if they are aged 10 or older. Separate justice systems operate for young people and adults, each with specific legislation. The upper age limit in the youth justice system is 17 (at the time of the offence) in all states and territories except in Queensland, where the age limit is 16. Those aged 18 or older (17 or older in Queensland) are dealt with under criminal legislation relating to adults. In Queensland, legislation to increase the youth justice age limit to 17 was passed in 2016 and is expected to be enacted in February 2018.

In 2015–16, about 12% of young people under supervision on an average day were aged 18 or older (AIHW 2017). Reasons for this include:

- young people may be apprehended for an offence that was committed or allegedly committed when they were aged 17 or younger
- young people may continue to be supervised by the youth justice system once they turn 18 (or they may be transferred to the adult correctional system)
- some young people aged 18 or older are supervised by youth justice agencies due to their vulnerability or immaturity (in some jurisdictions)
- young people aged 18–20 in Victoria who appear in courts other than the Children’s Court may be sentenced to detention in a youth facility rather than an adult prison if the young person is assessed as suitable and the court deems this appropriate (known as the ‘dual track’ sentencing system).

In this bulletin, the term ‘young people’ is used to refer to individuals aged 10 and over who are supervised by a youth justice agency. Numbers of young people in detention relate to young people of all ages unless otherwise specified.

Population rates allow for the comparison of different groups while taking into account different population sizes. In this bulletin, rates are calculated only for young people aged 10–17 as this is the key population in most states and territories. For more information about the calculation of age, see the ‘Technical notes’.

Sentenced and unsentenced detention

Young people may be in detention while they are *unsentenced*—that is, while awaiting the outcome of their court matter, or while awaiting sentencing after being found or pleading guilty.

They may also be in detention when they are *sentenced*—when they have been proven guilty in court and have received a legal order to serve a period of detention. Whether a young person is unsentenced or sentenced is known as their ‘legal status’.

Most young people in unsentenced detention have been remanded in custody by a court until their next court appearance. In 2015–16, 98% of young people in unsentenced detention on an average day were on remand (AIHW 2017). The remainder were in police-referred detention—that is, they were detained before their first court appearance (which is possible in most states and territories). However, more than one-third (38%) of those who were in unsentenced detention during 2015–16 experienced police-referred detention at some time during the year.

In this bulletin, young people who are both sentenced and unsentenced at the same time (for example, for two different matters) are counted as sentenced.



Youth detention data

This bulletin examines the number of young people in detention on an average night in each quarter over the 4-year period from the June quarter 2013 to the June quarter 2017. Each quarter covers 3 months of the year and is identified with reference to the last month in the quarter (for example, the March quarter comprises January, February and March).

Data on the average nightly number of young people in detention each quarter were provided by the states and territories for the period from July 2016 to June 2017. The Northern Territory provided the number of young people in detention at midnight at the end of each month for this period. These data supplement the Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set (JJ NMDS) and non-standard data provided by the Northern Territory for the period from the June quarter 2013 to the June quarter 2016. For more information, see the 'Technical notes'.

For Victoria, data on the numbers of sentenced and unsentenced young people were not available for the 2016–17 financial year (September quarter 2016 to June quarter 2017). Analyses of trends by legal status in this bulletin therefore exclude Victoria.

Trends in the detention population

The number of young people in detention on an average night is relatively small, and the amount of random variation from quarter to quarter is more noticeable when numbers are small. This might affect the appearance and interpretation of trends, which should therefore be interpreted with caution, particularly where they relate to small populations.

In this bulletin, comparisons are made between the June quarter in 2017 and the June quarter 1 year earlier (2016) and 4 years earlier (2013). The same quarters are compared across years to minimise the effect of seasonal variation. Previous analyses have indicated that there appears to be some seasonal variation in the numbers of young people in sentenced and unsentenced detention each year, but this has not been fully investigated or explained.

This bulletin aims to summarise key trends over the 1-year and 4-year periods, although there might be fluctuations between quarters.

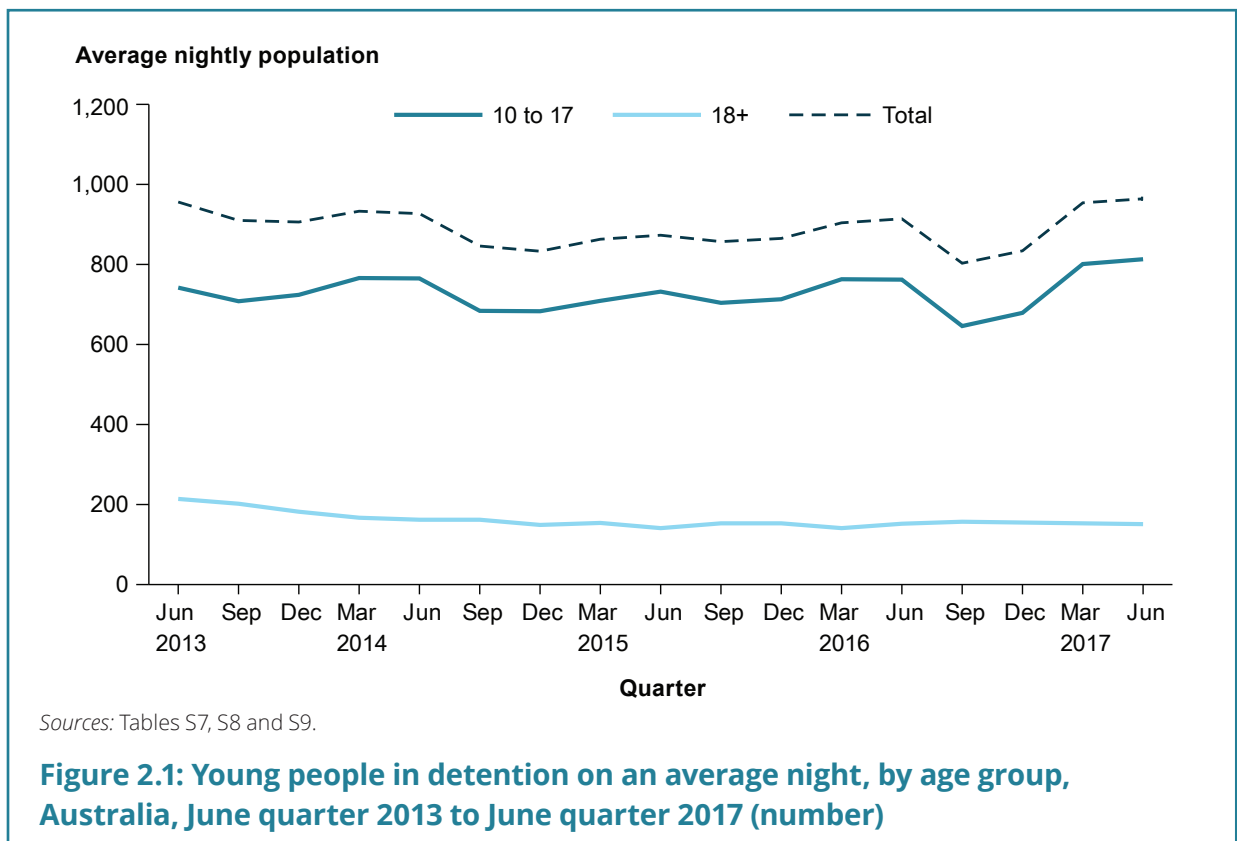
2 Trends in detention

Numbers

On an average night in the June quarter 2017, there were 964 young people in youth detention in Australia due to their involvement, or alleged involvement, in crime (Figure 2.1).

Over the 4-year period from the June quarter 2013 to the June quarter 2017, the number of young people in detention on an average night fluctuated between 803 and 964, with no consistent trend. Much of this variability occurred in the most recent year, when the number in detention decreased from 914 in the June quarter 2016 to 803 in the September quarter, before increasing to 964 in the June quarter 2017.

Most (813 or 84%) young people in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2017 were aged 10–17, and the remainder (16%) were aged 18 and older (Figure 2.1 and tables S7, S8 and S9). The number of young people aged 10–17 in detention fluctuated over the 4-year period, while the number aged 18 and over declined steadily over the period (from 214 to 151, or from 22% to 16% of the total).

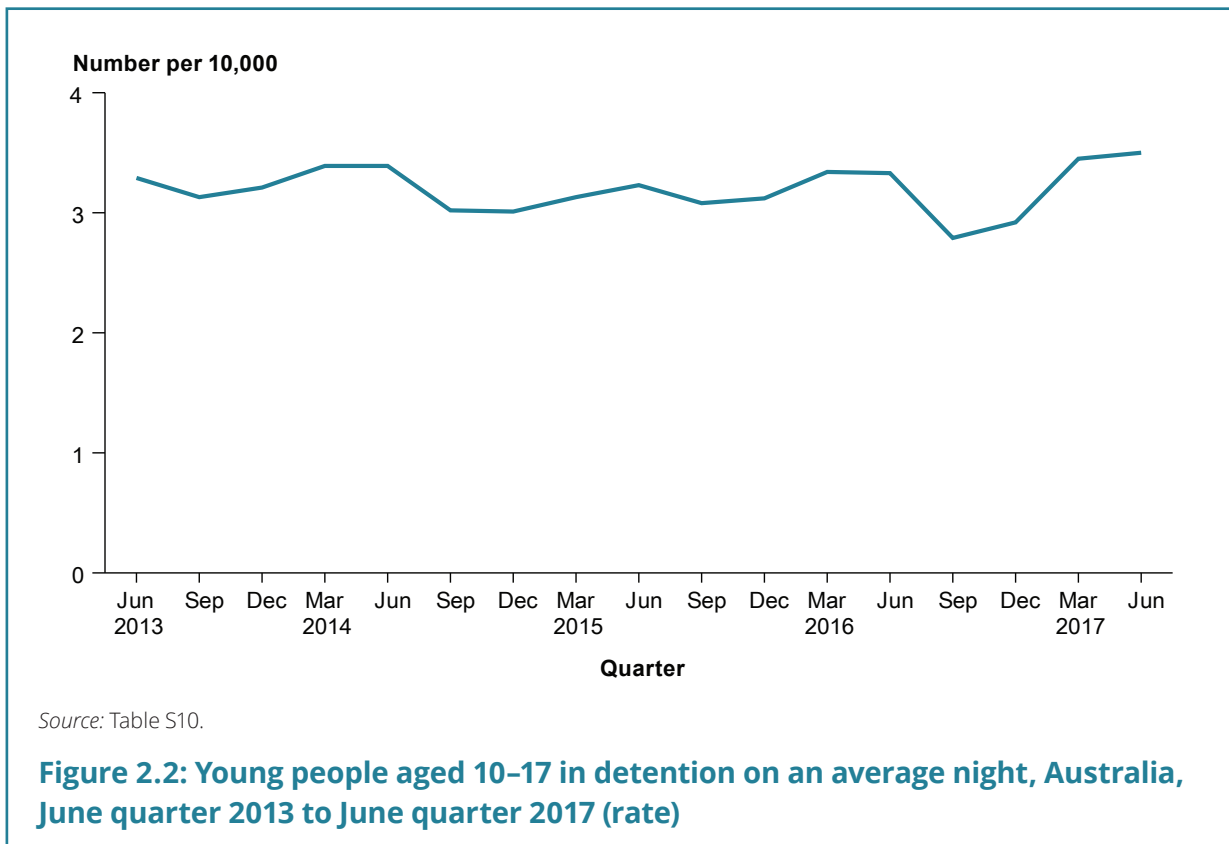


About 9 in 10 (880 or 91%) young people in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2017 were male (Table S7). This was the case (90–92%) in all quarters throughout the 4-year period.

Rates

The rate of young people aged 10–17 in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2017 was 3.5 per 10,000 (Figure 2.2).

Similar to the trend in the number of young people in detention, the rate of those aged 10–17 in detention fluctuated between 2.8 and 3.5 per 10,000 each quarter over the 4-year period. The rate was lowest in the September quarter 2016, and highest in the most recent quarter. Again, there was substantial variability over the most recent year (June quarter 2016 to June quarter 2017).



3 Trends in sentenced and unsentenced detention

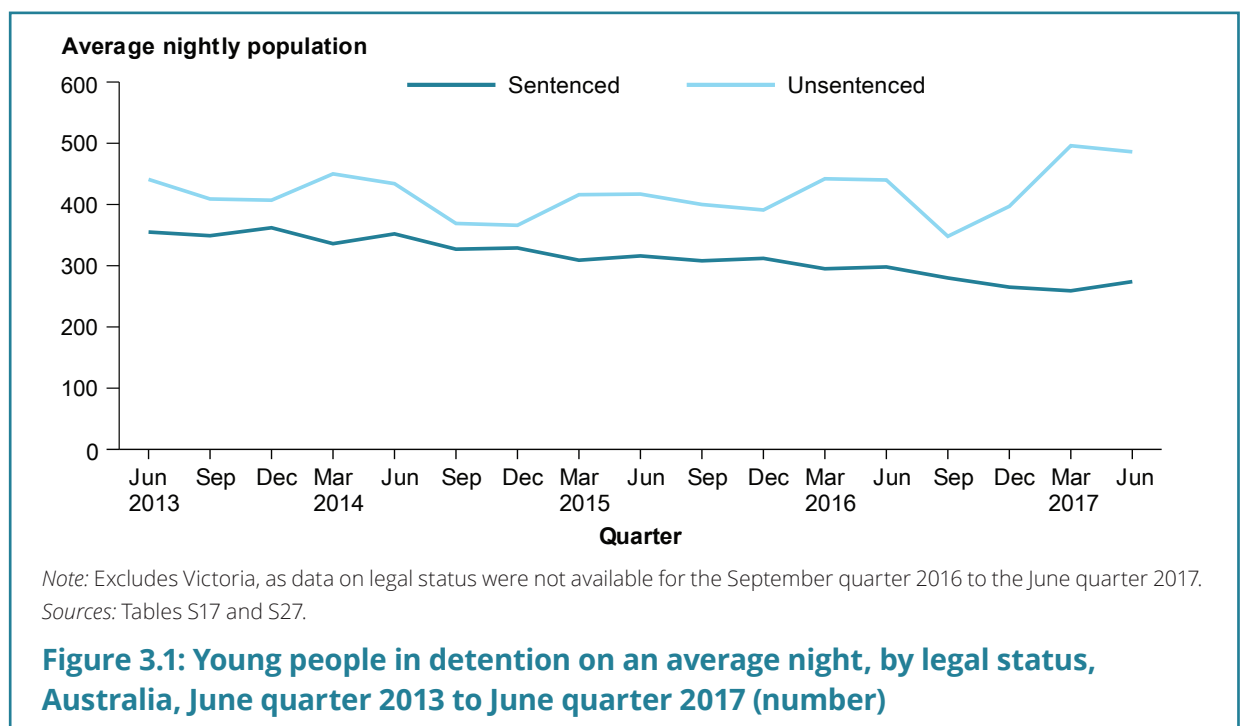
Numbers

Excluding Victoria, almost 2 in 3 (486 young people or 64%) young people in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2017 were unsentenced and the remainder (274 or 36%) were serving a sentence (Figure 3.1).

Victoria is excluded from this section as data on legal status were not available for the September quarter 2016 onwards. In the June quarter 2016, 19% of the Australian youth detention population were in Victoria, and 59% of those in detention in Victoria were serving a sentence (tables S7 and S27).

In each quarter over the 4-year period, young people who were unsentenced (348–496 young people each quarter) outnumbered those who were serving a sentence (259–362). In unsentenced detention, numbers fluctuated over the 4 years, and tended to be higher in the March and June quarters each year. In contrast, the number in sentenced detention declined steadily, from a high of 355 young people on an average night in the June quarter 2013 to a low of 259 in the March quarter 2017.

During the most recent year, the number in unsentenced detention was lowest in the September quarter 2016 (348 young people), and highest in the March quarter 2017 (496). There were between 259 and 298 young people in sentenced detention on an average night each quarter over the same period.



In the June quarter 2017, a slightly higher proportion of those in unsentenced detention were aged 10–17 (93%), compared with sentenced detention (87%) (tables S17, S18, S27 and S28). This difference occurred throughout the 4-year period: each quarter, 92%–96% of those in unsentenced detention were aged 10–17, along with 76%–87% of those in sentenced detention.



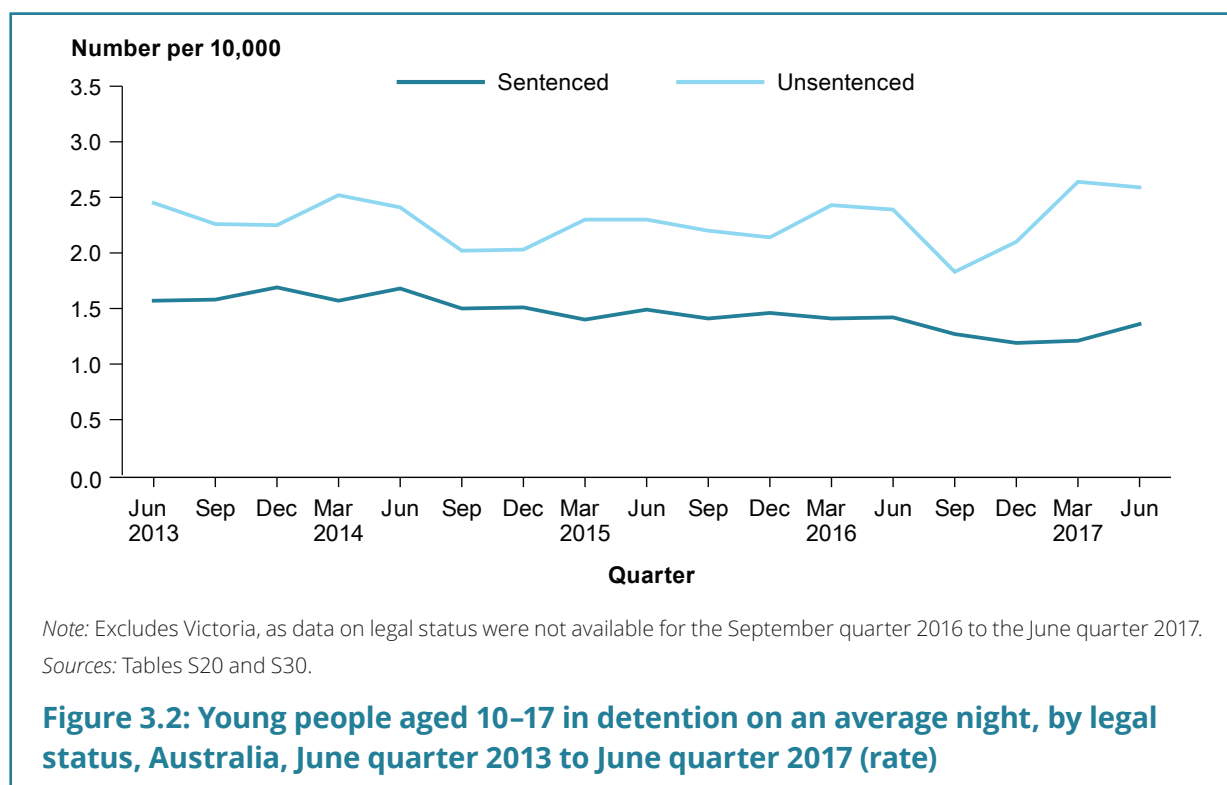
One of the reasons that there are more 18 year olds in sentenced detention than unsentenced detention is because some young people may continue serving a sentence in a youth facility once they turn 18. Whether they remain in youth detention or are moved to the adult justice system depends upon different policies and practices in the states and territories.

A higher proportion of females than males in detention were unsentenced; in the June quarter 2017, 75% of females in detention on an average night were unsentenced, compared with 63% of males (Table S17). This was the case throughout the 4-year period (61%–78% of females compared with 52%–65% of males each quarter).

Rates

In the June quarter 2017, there were 2.6 per 10,000 young people aged 10–17 in unsentenced detention on an average night, and 1.4 per 10,000 in sentenced detention (Figure 3.2).

Over the 4-year period, the rate of young people in unsentenced detention ranged between 1.8 per 10,000 (September quarter 2016) and 2.6 per 10,000 aged 10–17 (March quarter 2017; Figure 3.2). As with the numbers, the rate of young people in unsentenced detention tended to be higher in the March and June quarters each year, and lower in the September and December quarters.



The rate of young people aged 10–17 in sentenced detention decreased over the 4-year period to the June quarter 2017. The sentenced detention rate was highest in the December quarter 2013 at 1.7 per 10,000 aged 10–17, and lowest in the December quarter 2016 at 1.2 per 10,000.

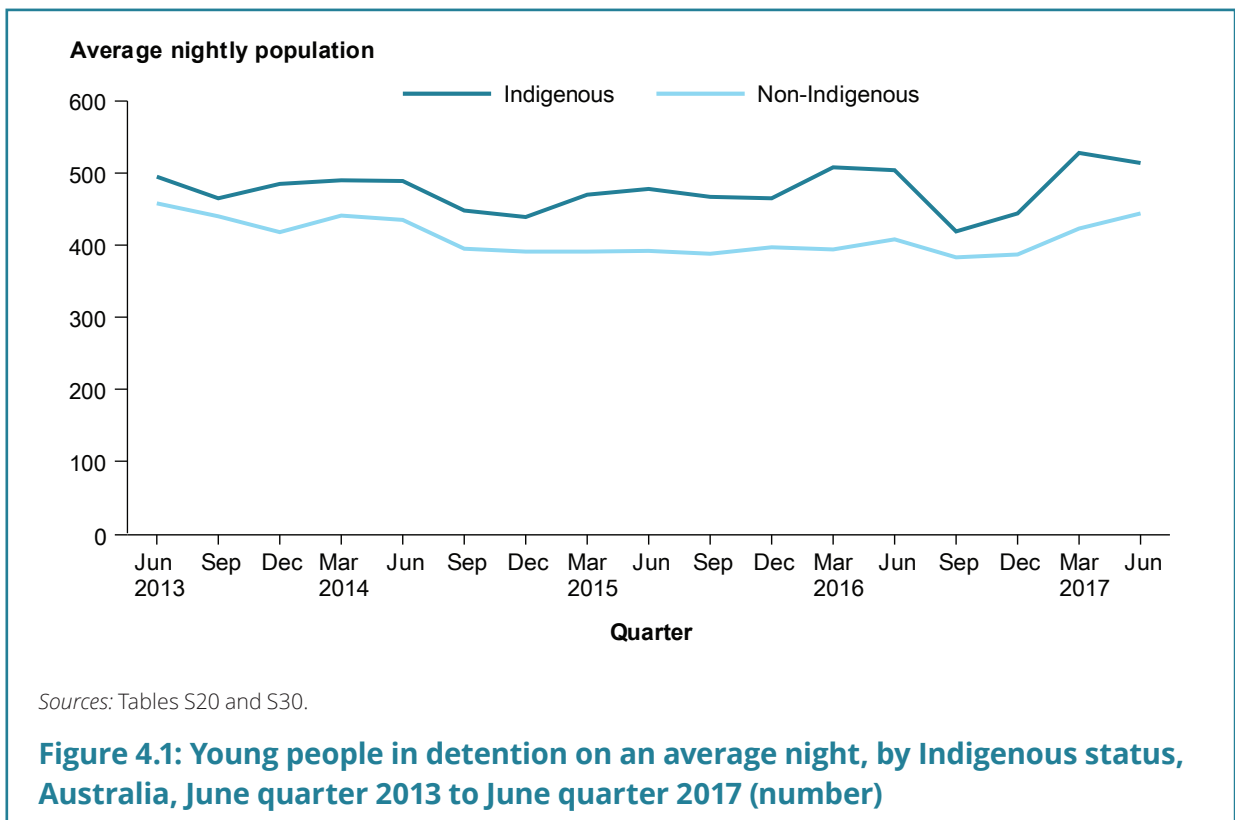
In the most recent year, there were 1.8–2.6 young people per 10,000 aged 10–17 in unsentenced detention and 1.2–1.4 per 10,000 in sentenced detention.

4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

Numbers

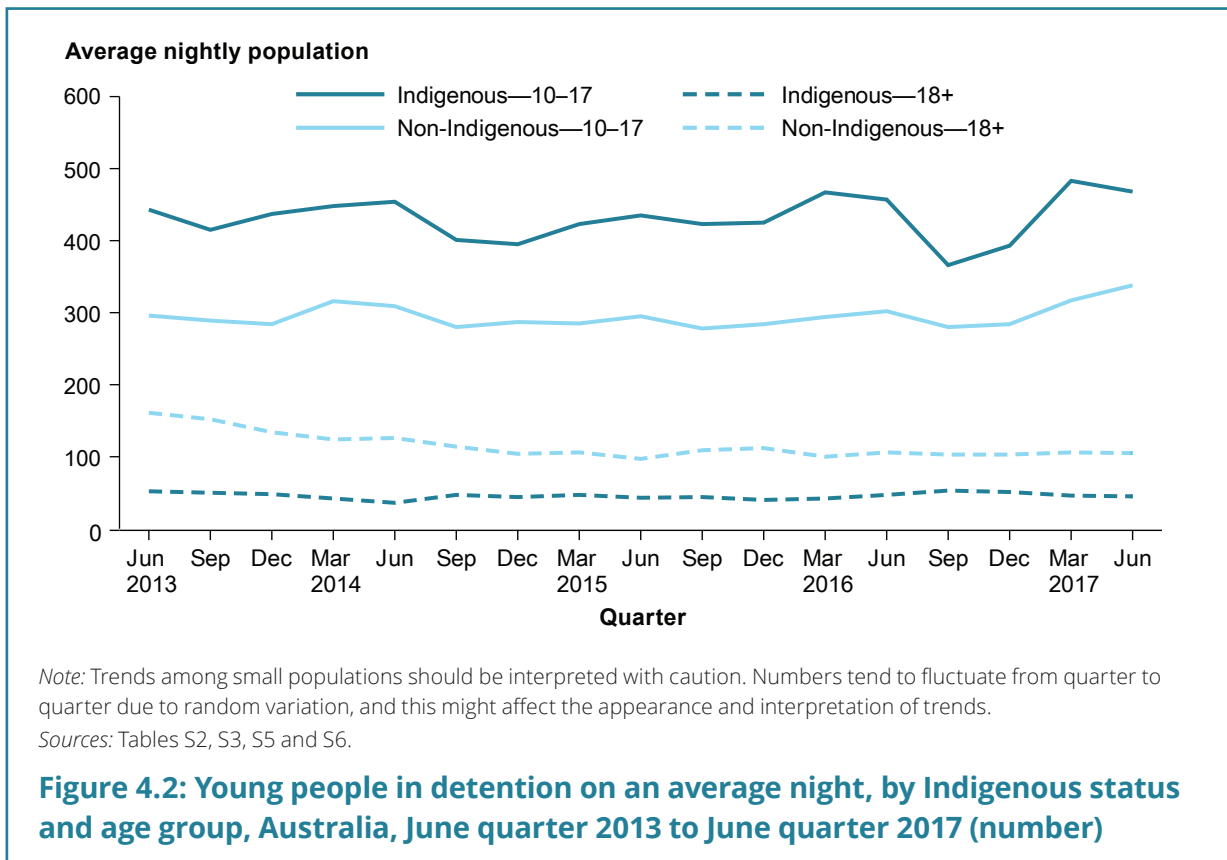
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people made up just over half (514 young people or 53%) of all those in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2017 (Figure 4.1 and Table S7).

Indigenous young people in detention outnumbered non-Indigenous young people on an average night in every quarter throughout the 4-year period. There were 419–528 Indigenous young people in detention on an average night each quarter, and 383–458 non-Indigenous young people.



Indigenous young people aged 10–17 were the largest group in detention throughout the 4-year period (Figure 4.2). A higher proportion of Indigenous young people in detention were aged 10–17 than non-Indigenous young people: in the June quarter 2017, 91% of Indigenous young people in detention were aged 10–17, compared with 76% of non-Indigenous young people (tables S1, S2, S4 and S5).

Similar proportions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people in detention were male (91% each in the June quarter 2017; tables S1 and S4). These proportions were relatively stable throughout the 4-year period.



In the June quarter 2017, 61% of young people in unsentenced detention and 67% in sentenced detention on an average night were Indigenous (excluding Victoria, as data were not available; tables S11, S17, S21 and S27). The majority of young people in both sentenced and unsentenced detention were Indigenous each quarter throughout the 4-year period.

Rates

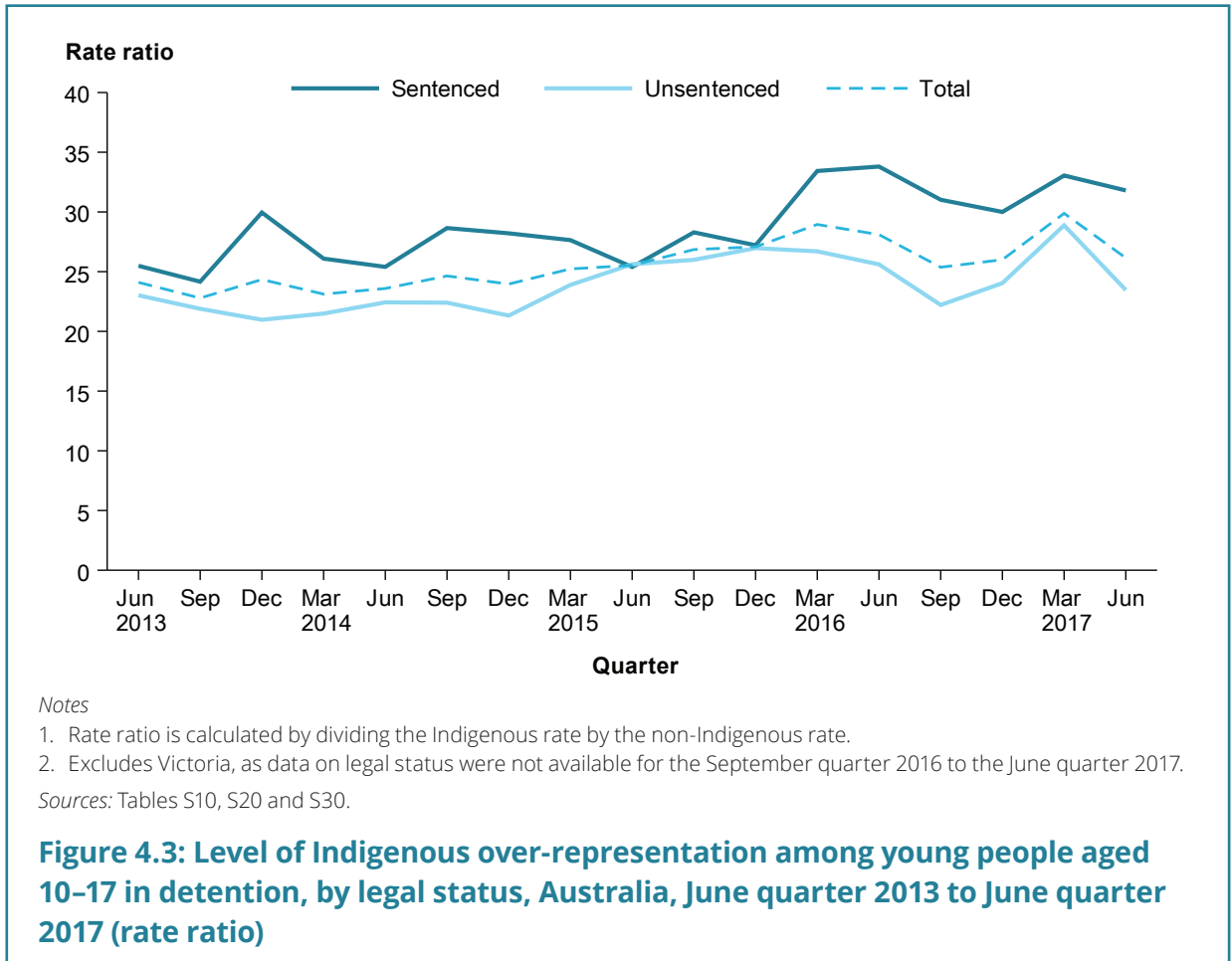
Indigenous over-representation in youth detention can be expressed as a rate ratio, which compares the rate of Indigenous young people to the rate of non-Indigenous young people (see 'Technical notes' for more details).

Nationally, in the June quarter 2017, there were 37 per 10,000 Indigenous young people aged 10–17 in detention on an average night, compared with 1.5 per 10,000 non-Indigenous young people (Table S10). Indigenous young people aged 10–17 were therefore 24 times as likely as non-Indigenous young people to be in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2017 (26 times as likely when Victoria is excluded; Table S10).

Over the 4-year period from the June quarter 2013, the level of Indigenous over-representation fluctuated between 23 and 27 times the non-Indigenous rate.

The level of Indigenous over-representation was higher in sentenced detention than in unsentenced detention in almost all quarters in the 4-year period to June 2017 (excluding Victoria, as data were not available; Figure 4.3). In sentenced detention, the rate ratio increased overall between the June quarter 2013 (25 times the non-Indigenous rate) and the June quarter 2017 (32 times). This increase was due to a proportionally greater decrease in the non-Indigenous rate compared with the Indigenous rate.

In unsentenced detention, the rate ratio ranged between 21 and 29 times the non-Indigenous rate each quarter (23 times in the June quarter 2017).



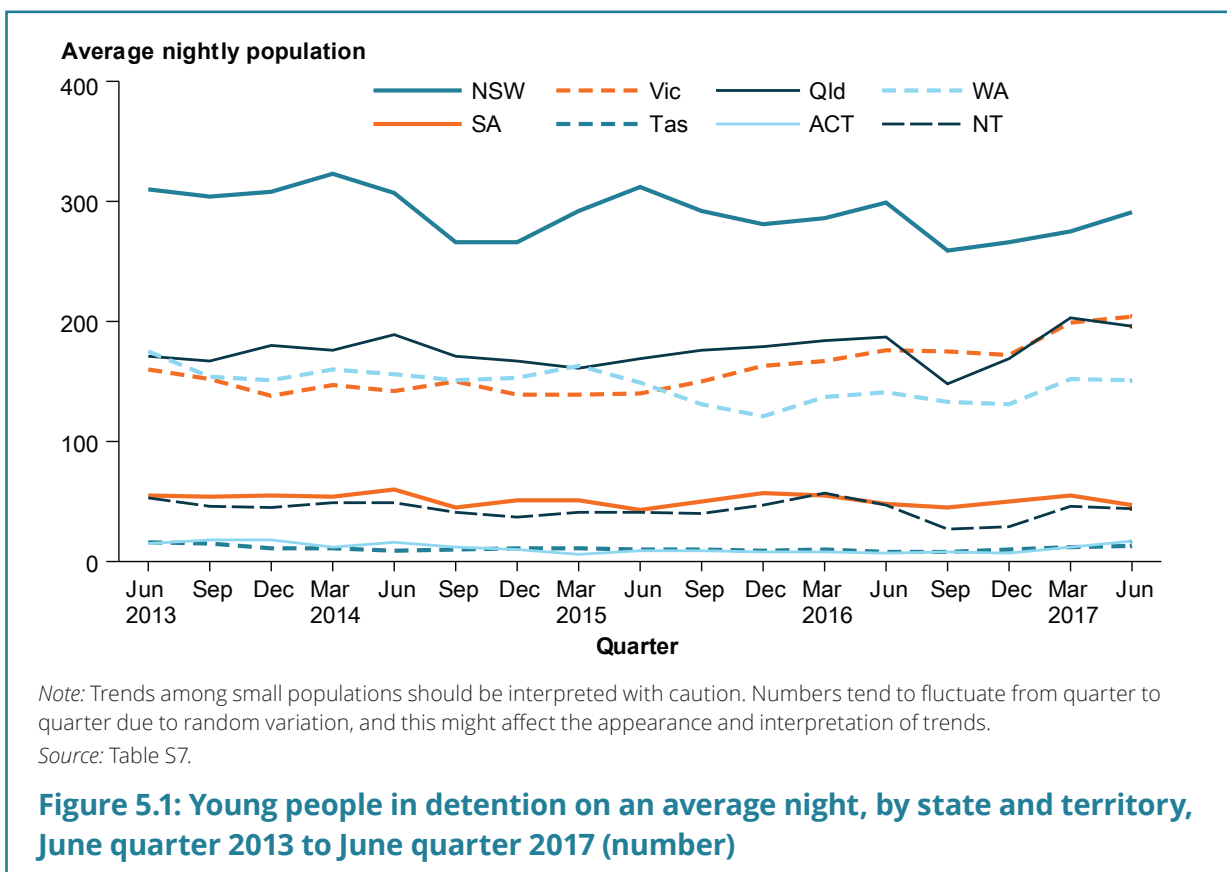
5 State and territory trends

Numbers

New South Wales had the largest number of young people in detention throughout the 4-year period (259–323 young people each quarter), followed by Queensland (148–203), Victoria (138–204) and Western Australia (121–175) (Figure 5.1).

Over the 4 years from the June quarter 2013 to the June quarter 2017, the size of the youth detention population increased in Victoria, and decreased in New South Wales and Western Australia. Numbers were stable or showed no clear trend in the other states and territories.

In the most recent year, numbers in detention fluctuated from quarter to quarter in most states and territories, with no clear trends.



Rates

On an average night in the June quarter 2017, the rate of young people aged 10–17 in detention ranged from 2.1 per 10,000 in Victoria to 17 per 10,000 in the Northern Territory (Figure 5.2 and Table 5.1).

Over the 4-year period, the Northern Territory consistently had the highest rate of young people in detention on an average night (11–23 per 10,000 aged 10–17), while Victoria (0.9–2.3 per 10,000), Tasmania (1.2–2.7 per 10,000) and the Australian Capital Territory (1.5–4.1 per 10,000) had the lowest (Figure 5.2 and Table S10). It should be noted that rates of detention fluctuated from quarter to quarter, particularly among the smaller jurisdictions, due to the small numbers in detention.

Among the states and territories, rates of young people in detention on an average night increased over the 4-year period in Victoria, and showed slightly decreasing trends in New South Wales, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory (despite a rise in the Australian Capital Territory in the most recent quarter). Rates in the other states and territories remained relatively stable or showed no consistent trend.

Again, over the most recent year from the June quarter 2016 to the June quarter 2017, the rates fluctuated in all jurisdictions, with no clear patterns or little overall change.

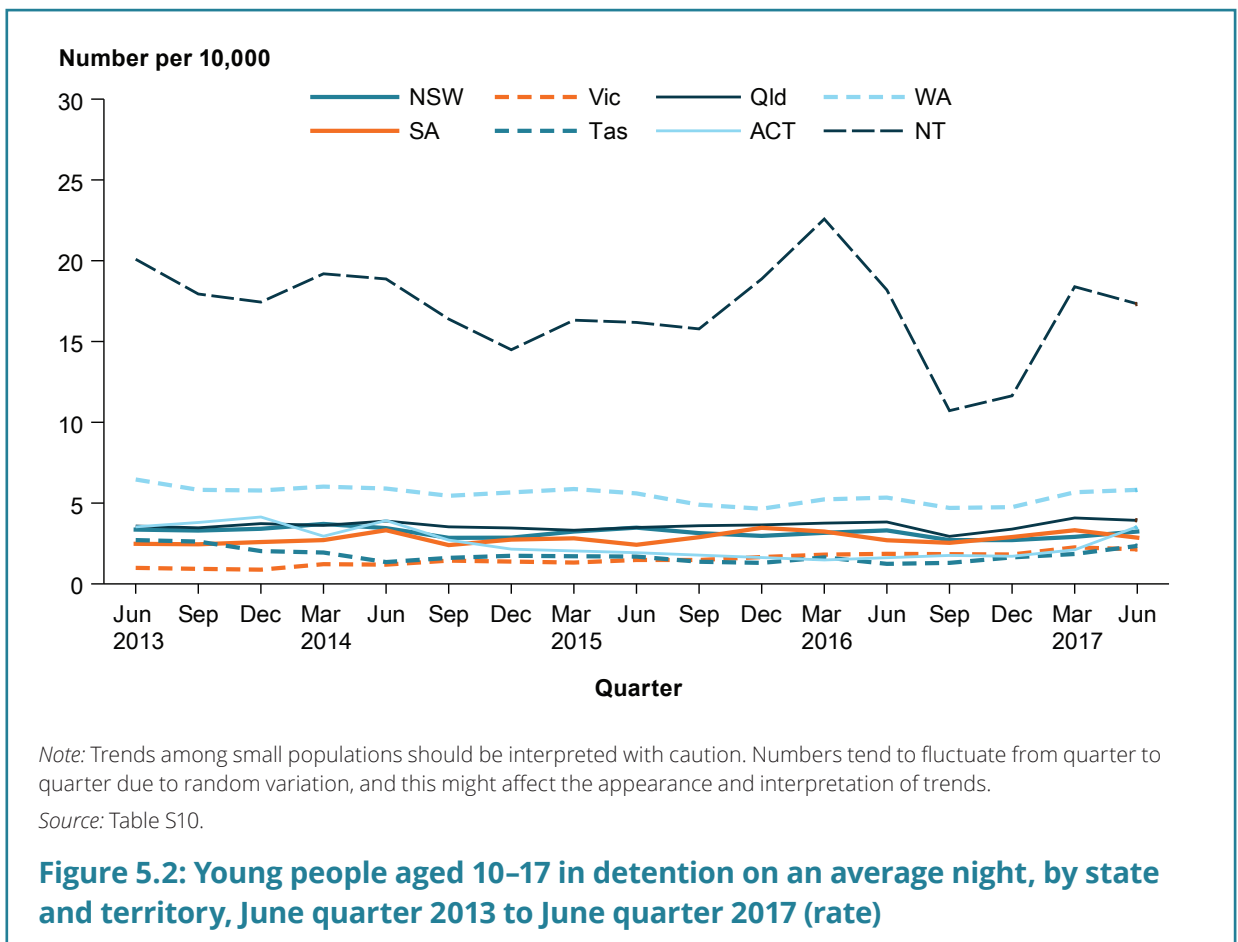


Table 5.1: Young people in detention on an average night, by state and territory, June quarter 2013, 2016 and 2017 (number and rate)

| | NSW | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT | Australia excl. Vic | Australia |
|---------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|------------------------|-----------|
| Number | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sentenced detention | | | | | | | | | | |
| June quarter 2013 | 152 | 127 | 38 | 103 | 26 | 9 | 6 | 20 | 355 | 482 |
| June quarter 2016 | 134 | 103 | 41 | 77 | 21 | 5 | 4 | 17 | 298 | 401 |
| June quarter 2017 | 112 | n.a. | 35 | 80 | 25 | 4 | 6 | 12 | 274 | n.a. |
| Unsentenced detention | | | | | | | | | | |
| June quarter 2013 | 157 | 33 | 133 | 72 | 28 | 8 | 9 | 33 | 441 | 474 |
| June quarter 2016 | 165 | 74 | 147 | 64 | 27 | 4 | 3 | 29 | 440 | 513 |
| June quarter 2017 | 180 | n.a. | 161 | 71 | 21 | 10 | 12 | 31 | 486 | n.a. |
| Total detention | | | | | | | | | | |
| June quarter 2013 | 310 | 160 | 171 | 175 | 55 | 16 | 15 | 53 | 796 | 956 |
| June quarter 2016 | 299 | 176 | 187 | 141 | 48 | 8 | 7 | 47 | 738 | 914 |
| June quarter 2017 | 291 | 204 | 196 | 151 | 47 | 13 | 17 | 44 | 760 | 964 |
| Rate (number per 10,000) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sentenced detention | | | | | | | | | | |
| June quarter 2013 | 1.38 | 0.46 | 0.79 | 3.65 | 0.81 | 1.27 | n.p. | 7.61 | 1.57 | 1.30 |
| June quarter 2016 | 1.34 | 0.65 | 0.83 | 2.80 | 1.11 | n.p. | n.p. | 6.54 | 1.42 | 1.23 |
| June quarter 2017 | 1.16 | n.a. | 0.70 | 3.04 | 1.55 | n.p. | n.p. | 4.90 | 1.36 | n.a. |
| Unsentenced detention | | | | | | | | | | |
| June quarter 2013 | 1.98 | 0.54 | 2.79 | 2.81 | 1.66 | 1.45 | 2.47 | 12.48 | 2.45 | 1.99 |
| June quarter 2016 | 1.98 | 1.21 | 3.00 | 2.54 | 1.59 | n.p. | n.p. | 11.64 | 2.39 | 2.10 |
| June quarter 2017 | 2.08 | n.a. | 3.23 | 2.78 | 1.31 | 1.87 | 2.65 | 12.44 | 2.59 | n.a. |
| Total detention | | | | | | | | | | |
| June quarter 2013 | 3.36 | 0.99 | 3.58 | 6.46 | 2.48 | 2.71 | 3.53 | 20.09 | 4.02 | 3.29 |
| June quarter 2016 | 3.31 | 1.86 | 3.83 | 5.34 | 2.70 | 1.24 | 1.62 | 18.19 | 3.81 | 3.33 |
| June quarter 2017 | 3.24 | 2.14 | 3.93 | 5.82 | 2.86 | 2.35 | 3.54 | 17.33 | 3.95 | 3.50 |

Notes

1. Numbers might not add up to the total due to rounding.
2. Rates are for young people aged 10–17. Numbers include young people aged 18 or older who are under youth justice supervision. For numbers of young people aged 10–17 only, refer to the supplementary tables.
3. Trends among small populations should be interpreted with caution. Numbers tend to fluctuate from quarter to quarter due to random variation, and this might affect the appearance and interpretation of trends.
4. Rates are calculated from the unrounded average nightly populations, and are not published when there are fewer than 5 young people in the numerator. There might be instances when a numerator is presented as 5 due to rounding and the rate is not calculated (see 'Technical notes: rates').
5. Data on numbers of young people in detention by legal status were not available for Victoria for the September quarter 2016 to the June quarter 2017.

Sources: Tables S7, S10, S17, S20, S27 and S30.

Sentenced and unsentenced detention

Among the states and territories, the rate of young people aged 10–17 in unsentenced detention on an average night in the June quarter 2017 ranged from 1.3 per 10,000 in South Australia to 12 per 10,000 in the Northern Territory (data for Victoria were not available for the most recent year; Table 5.1).

Between the June quarter 2013 and the June quarter 2017, the rate of young people in unsentenced detention on an average night decreased in South Australia (Table 5.2). Trends could not reliably be determined in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, due to small numbers. Rates fluctuated or showed no clear trend among the other states and territories.

In sentenced detention, the rate of young people aged 10–17 on an average night in the most recent quarter ranged from 0.7 per 10,000 in Queensland to 4.9 per 10,000 in the Northern Territory (Table 5.1).

Over the 4-year period, the sentenced detention rate increased in South Australia and decreased in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory (Table 5.2). Trends could not be reliably determined in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory due to small numbers.

Table 5.2: Rates of young people aged 10–17 in detention on an average night, by legal status, summary of 4-year trends, June quarter 2013 to June quarter 2017

| | Unsentenced | Sentenced | Total in detention |
|------------------------------|-------------|-----------|--------------------|
| New South Wales | ↔ | ↓ | ↓ |
| Victoria | n.a | n.a | ↑ |
| Queensland | ↔ | ↓ | ↔ |
| Western Australia | ↔ | ↓ | ↓ |
| South Australia | ↓ | ↑ | ↔ |
| Tasmania | n.p. | n.p. | ↔ |
| Australian Capital Territory | n.p. | n.p. | ↓ |
| Northern Territory | ↔ | ↓ | ↔ |
| Australia | ↔ | ↓ | ↔ |

Notes

1. Data on numbers of young people in detention by legal status were not available for Victoria for the September quarter 2016 to the June quarter 2017. The Australia totals for unsentenced and sentenced detention therefore exclude Victoria.
2. ↑ increase; ↓ decrease; ↔ no clear trend or stable; n.a. not available; n.p. not publishable due to small numbers.
3. Trends among small populations should be interpreted with caution. Numbers tend to fluctuate from quarter to quarter due to random variation, and this might affect the appearance and interpretation of trends.

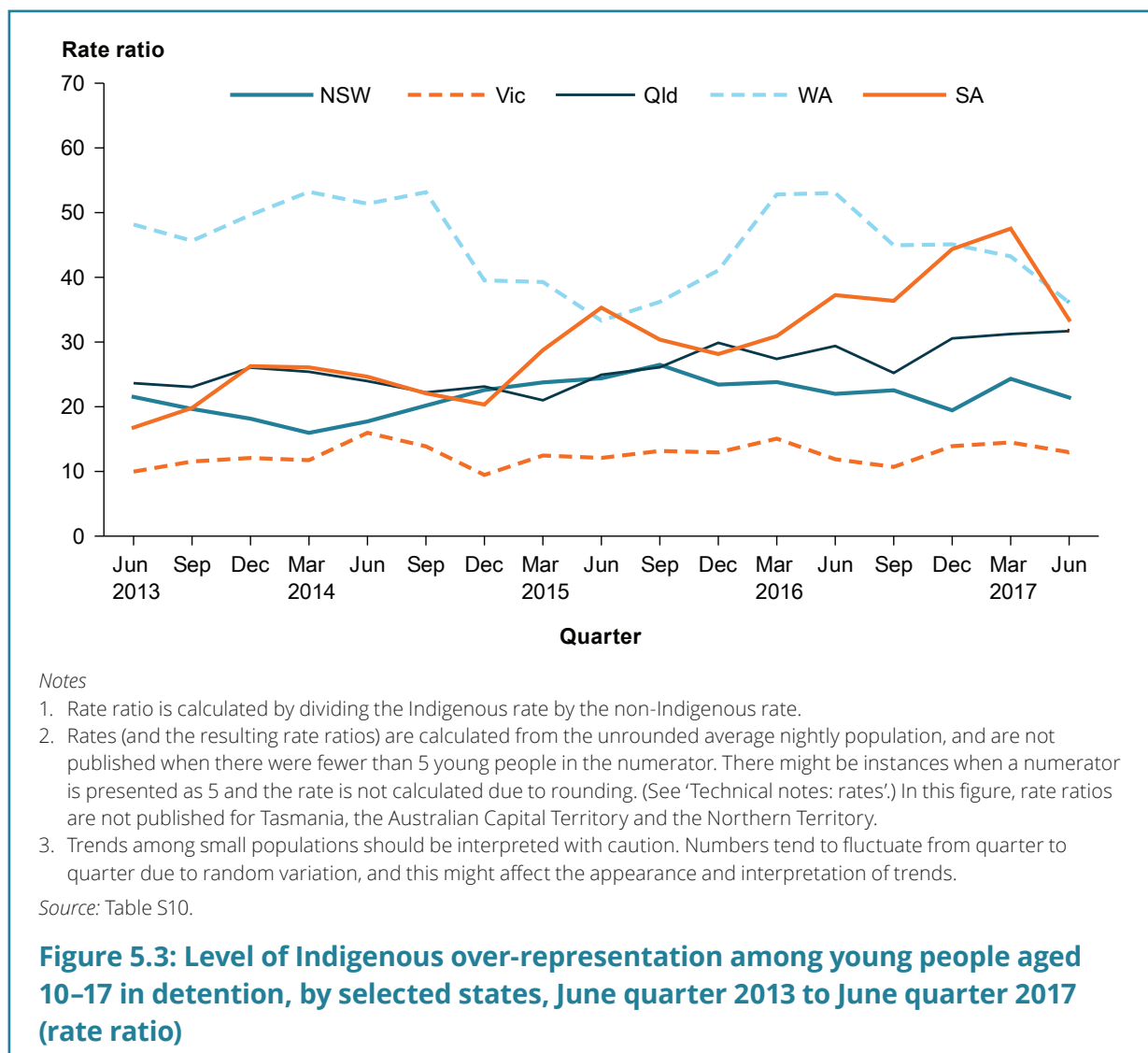
Sources: Tables S10, S20 and S30.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

The rate of Indigenous young people aged 10–17 in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2017 ranged from 23 per 10,000 in Victoria to 63 per 10,000 in Western Australia (rates were not calculated for Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory due to small numbers) (Table S10). The non-Indigenous rate ranged from 1.2 per 10,000 aged 10–17 in Queensland and South Australia to 2.5 per 10,000 in the Australian Capital Territory.

Among the states and territories for which it could be calculated, the rate ratio ranged from 13 times the non-Indigenous rate in Victoria to 36 times in Western Australia (Figure 5.3; see 'Technical notes' for more information). Rate ratios could not be calculated for Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory due to small Indigenous numbers and for the Northern Territory due to small non-Indigenous numbers.

The rate ratio was lowest in Victoria and highest in Western Australia in most quarters over the 4-year period.



Technical notes

Youth detention data sources

This bulletin was compiled using four data sources. Data for 2016–17 were provided by each state and territory (except the Northern Territory) on the average nightly population per quarter between July 2016 and June 2017. The Northern Territory provided the number of young people in detention at midnight at the end of each month for the same period.

These data were used to supplement the 2015–16 JJ NMDS, which contains data up to and including 30 June 2016 for all states except the Northern Territory. JJ NMDS data were not provided by the Northern Territory for the period from 1 April 2013 to the 30 June 2016. Non standard data provided by the Northern Territory were used instead.

Comparisons between JJ NMDS and non-standard data in this bulletin should be made with caution due to potential differences in data format, specifications, definitions and/or quality.

A data quality statement for the JJ NMDS 2015–16 is available at <http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/666484>.

Youth detention reports

In addition to this bulletin, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) also publishes the annual *Youth justice in Australia* report series, which provides comprehensive information on young people under youth justice supervision.

The presentation of data in this bulletin is slightly different from the presentation in *Youth justice in Australia*. First, this bulletin presents the average nightly population for each quarter, while *Youth justice in Australia* presents the average daily population for each year. This is due to the availability of aggregate average nightly population data. Second, young people who are concurrently unsentenced and sentenced are classified as sentenced in this bulletin, but are counted separately as both unsentenced and sentenced in *Youth justice in Australia* (although they are only counted once in the total detention population in both bulletins).

Methods and technical notes


Key information about the methods used in this bulletin are provided below.

Age

In this bulletin, numbers of young people in detention include all age groups unless otherwise specified. Population rates include young people aged 10–17 only (see Rates below).

Age is calculated at the start of the relevant quarter unless the period of detention began within the quarter, in which case age is calculated as at the start of the detention period.

Where a young person was in more than one type of detention (both unsentenced and sentenced), their age can vary across tables because age is calculated with respect to the start of each relevant detention period. This means that, for a particular age group, the total



number of young people in detention might not be the sum of the number of young people in sentenced and unsentenced detention.

For end-of-month data provided by the Northern Territory, age is calculated as at the end of the relevant month.

Average nightly population

The average nightly population is calculated by adding the duration (in nights) of each period of detention that falls within the quarter, and dividing the summed duration by the number of nights in the quarter.

Where end-of-month data has been supplied for the relevant quarter (which occurred for the September quarter 2016 to June quarter 2017 for the Northern Territory), the nightly averages were calculated by averaging end-of-month counts. Average nightly numbers in these instances were therefore calculated using data from only 3 nights in a quarter. There may be differences between these data and the nightly averages based on JJ NMDS and 2016–17 data provided by each state and territory (except the Northern Territory), which are calculated based on every night in the quarter.

Indigenous status

Information on Indigenous status has been collected since the implementation of the JJ NMDS. Nationally, the proportion of young people with ‘not stated’ Indigenous status ranged from 0.5% to 1.2% each quarter between the June quarter 2013 and the June quarter 2016. This proportion was low (1.8% or less each quarter) in all states and territories. However, information on the proportion of Indigenous young people who are correctly reported as Indigenous is not available.

Changes in the collection and recording of Indigenous status can affect rates of Indigenous identification over time. There are some differences in the ways states and territories collect information about Indigenous status. Not all jurisdictions use the national standard question and standard codes for recording Indigenous status, as recommended by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. However, some jurisdictions have taken steps to improve their data collection forms and information systems in recent years. See *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification in community services data collections: an updated data quality report* (AIHW 2012) for more information.

Legal status

Young people who are both sentenced and unsentenced at the same time (that is, serving multiple or concurrent supervision orders) are classified as ‘sentenced’ in this bulletin.

Data on the legal status of young people in detention in Victoria were not available for the period from the September quarter 2016 to the June quarter 2017.

Rates

Population rates allow for the comparison of different groups while taking into account different population sizes. Because there are differences between the states and territories in the extent to which young people aged 18 or older can be detained in youth justice facilities, rates are restricted to those aged 10–17. Crude rates are presented in this bulletin.

The number of young people in detention on an average night during a quarter is rounded to the nearest person. The rate is calculated using the number on an average day before rounding. In the text of this bulletin, rates are presented to 1 decimal place for rates less than 10, and to the nearest whole number for rates greater than 10. Rates are presented to 2 decimal places in the tables. As a result, rates calculated by using the average nightly population rounded to whole numbers might differ slightly from the rates presented in this bulletin.

Due to a lack of statistical reliability, rates are not calculated where there are fewer than 5 young people in the numerator. In some instances, the number of young people might be presented as 5, but the rate might not be calculated due to rounding (for example, if there are 4.7 young people in detention on an average night, this will appear as 5 in the table, but the rate will not be calculated). However, these young people contribute to overall state and national rates. The calculation of rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people excludes young people with unknown Indigenous status.

Population data used in the calculation of rates are provided in supplementary table S31.

Rate ratios

Rates for different groups can be compared using a rate ratio, which is the ratio of two rates. In this bulletin, rate ratios are used to compare Indigenous and non-Indigenous rates, and to provide a measure of the level of Indigenous over-representation. Rate ratios are calculated by dividing the Indigenous rate by the non-Indigenous rate.

Rate ratios should be interpreted with caution where there are small denominators, rare events and rates that converge while declining.

Due to a lack of statistical reliability, rate ratios in this bulletin are not calculated where one or both of the rates have fewer than 5 young people in the numerator. However, these young people contribute to overall state and national rate ratios.

Rounding

The average nightly population is rounded to whole numbers. Components might not sum to the given totals due to this rounding.

Rate ratios were calculated using rates rounded to 2 decimal places. Proportions were calculated using average nightly numbers rounded to whole numbers. Numbers and rates displayed in figures are rounded, as presented in the supplementary tables.

References

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United Nations 1985. United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice ('The Beijing Rules'). New York: United Nations. Viewed 2 August 2013, <<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/beijingrules.pdf>>.

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- Community Services Directorate, Australian Capital Territory
- Territory Families, Northern Territory.

Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|--|
| ACT | Australian Capital Territory |
| AIHW | Australian Institute of Health and Welfare |
| JJ NMDS | Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set |
| NSW | New South Wales |
| NT | Northern Territory |
| Qld | Queensland |
| SA | South Australia |
| Tas | Tasmania |
| Vic | Victoria |
| WA | Western Australia |

Symbols

| | |
|------|---|
| — | nil or rounded to zero |
| n.a. | not available |
| n.p. | not publishable because of small numbers, confidentiality or other concerns about the quality of the data |
| ↑ | increase |
| ↓ | decrease |
| ↔ | no clear trend or stable |



Related publications

The following AIHW publications may also be of interest:

- AIHW 2015. Pathways through youth justice supervision: further analyses. Juvenile justice series no. 19. Cat. no. JUV 75. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2016. Young people in child protection and under youth justice supervision 2014–15. Data linkage series no. 22. Cat. no. CSI 24. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2017. Young people returning to sentenced youth justice supervision 2015–16. Juvenile justice series no. 21. Cat. no. JUV 104. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2017. Youth justice in Australia 2015–16. AIHW Bulletin no. 139. Cat. no. AUS 211. Canberra: AIHW.

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Stronger evidence,
better decisions,
improved health and welfare

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