

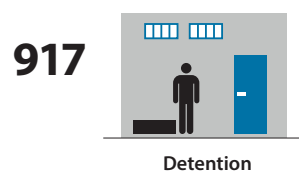


Youth detention population in Australia 2016

Summary

This bulletin examines 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 2012 to the June quarter 2016.

About 900 young people are in detention on an average night



There were 917 young people in youth detention on an average night in the June quarter 2016. Just over half (57%) were unsentenced—that is, they were awaiting the outcome of their court matter or sentencing—and the remainder were serving a sentence.

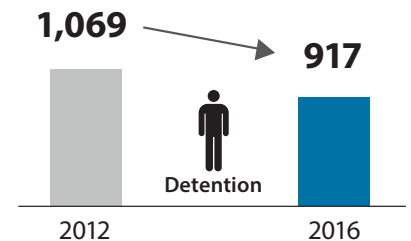


Most young people (83%) in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2016 were aged 10–17. This equates to 3.3 young people aged 10–17 per 10,000. The other detainees were aged 18 or older.

Detention rates are stable after long-term falls and despite recent rise in numbers

The number of young people in detention on an average night decreased, from a high of 1,069 in the June quarter 2012 to 917 in the June quarter 2016.

The rate of young people aged 10–17 in detention on an average night decreased, from 3.8 per 10,000 to 3.3 per 10,000, over the 4-year period.



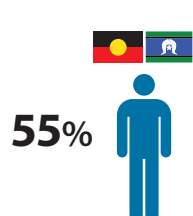
Over the most recent year, despite a slight increase in the number of young people (of all ages) in detention on an average night in each quarter (from 877 to 917), the rate of those aged 10–17 in detention remained relatively stable, between 3.1 and 3.4 per 10,000.

Unsentenced and sentenced detention rates have decreased

The rate of young people in unsentenced detention fell slightly over the 4-year period, from 2.4 young people aged 10–17 per 10,000 on an average night in the June quarter 2012, to 2.1 per 10,000 in the June quarter 2016. The rate was lowest in the December quarter 2014 (1.7 per 10,000).

In sentenced detention, the rate was 1.2 young people aged 10–17 per 10,000 on an average night in the June quarter 2016—a decrease from 1.4 per 10,000 in the June quarter 4 years earlier. The rate was highest in the September quarter 2012 (1.5 per 10,000).

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



Over half (55%) of all young people in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2016 were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. In the June quarter 2016, Indigenous young people aged 10–17 were 26 times as likely as non-Indigenous young people to be in detention; however the level of over-representation fluctuated between 23 times and 28 times over the 4-year period.

Trends vary across the states and territories

There were different trends in the youth detention population across the states and territories. Over the 4-year period, the rate of young people aged 10–17 in detention increased in Victoria and Queensland, showed no clear trend in South Australia and the Northern Territory, and decreased in the remaining states and territories.

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1 Introduction

This bulletin is part of an annual series that looks at recent 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 'S') are available from www.aihw.gov.au/publications/youth-justice/.

More information about the youth justice system is available from www.aihw.gov.au/youth-justice/.

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, either in the community or in detention.

Youth justice is the responsibility of state and territory governments. 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.

More information about youth justice systems, policies and programs in the states and territories is available from www.aihw.gov.au/youth-justice/states-territories/.

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
- 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 system is fundamental to applying these principles and may take various forms, including 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. Just 16% of those under supervision on an average day in 2014–15 were in detention (AIHW 2016). However, about 2 in every 5 young people (42%) who were supervised during 2014–15 were in detention at some time during the year.

Age limits

In Australia, young people may be charged with a criminal offence if they are aged 10 or older. The upper age limit in the youth justice system is 17 in all states and territories except in Queensland, where the age limit is 16. (This refers to the age at which the offence was committed or allegedly committed.)

Separate justice systems operate for young people and for adults, each under specific legislation. Those aged 18 or older (17 or older in Queensland) are dealt with under criminal legislation relating to adults.

Despite this, in 2014–15, about 13% of young people under supervision on an average day were aged 18 or older (AIHW 2016). Reasons for this include the following:

- ♦ They were 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).
- ♦ In some states and territories, youth justice agencies may supervise some young people aged 18 or older due to their vulnerability or immaturity.
- ♦ Young people in Victoria aged 18–20 appearing 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. (This is 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 under supervision by a youth justice agency as a result of having committed or allegedly committed offences. 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 because of the differences in age limits among the states and territories. More information about the calculation of age is in ‘Technical notes’.

Sentenced and unsentenced detention

Young people may be detained in secure detention facilities 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 *sentenced* detention 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 2014–15, 98% of young people in unsentenced detention on an average day were on remand (excluding young people in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, where standard data were not available) (AIHW 2016). 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).

In this bulletin, young people who are both sentenced and unsentenced at the same time 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 June 2012 to June 2016. Each quarter covers 3 months of the year and is identified by reference to the last month in the quarter. (For example, the March quarter comprises January, February and March.)

Data used in this bulletin for the period from July 2015 to June 2016 were provided by each state and territory (except the Northern Territory) on the average nightly number of young people in detention during each quarter. The Northern Territory provided the number of young people in detention at midnight at the end of each month. These data supplement the Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set (JJ NMDS) and non-standard data provided by Western Australia and the Northern Territory used for the period from June 2012 to June 2015. For more information, see 'Technical notes'.

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 2016 and the June quarter 1 year earlier (2015) and 4 years earlier (2012). 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. The bulletin aims to highlight the overall or net change over the 1-year and 4-year periods, although there might be fluctuations over quarters.

More detailed information about the population in each quarter is available in the supplementary tables at www.aihw.gov.au/publications/youth-justice/.

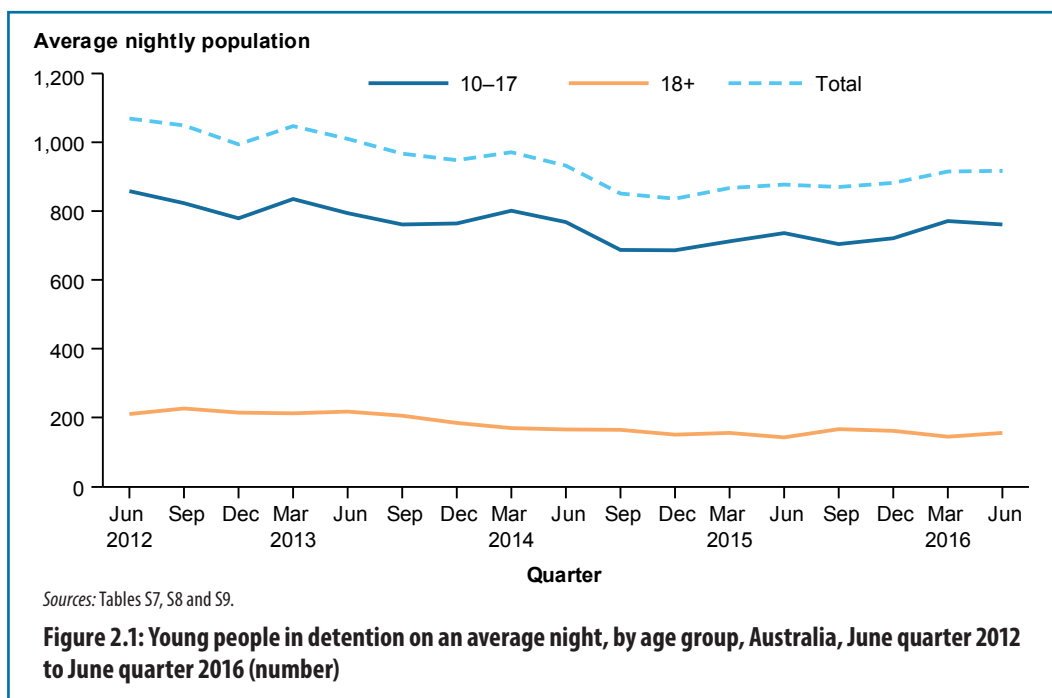
2 Trends in detention

Numbers

On an average night in the June quarter 2016, there were 917 young people in youth detention in Australia due to their involvement, or alleged involvement, in crime (Figure 2.1). The number of young people in detention on an average night decreased over the 4-year period from a high of 1,069 in the June quarter 2012.

The number of young people in detention on an average night increased slightly over the most recent year, from 877 in the June quarter 2015 to 917 in the most recent quarter.

Most (761 or 83%) young people in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2016 were aged 10–17; the remainder (155 or 17%) were aged 18 and older (Figure 2.1 and tables S7, S8 and S9). The proportion of those in detention who were aged 10–17 was similar (78%–84%) in each quarter over the 4-year period.

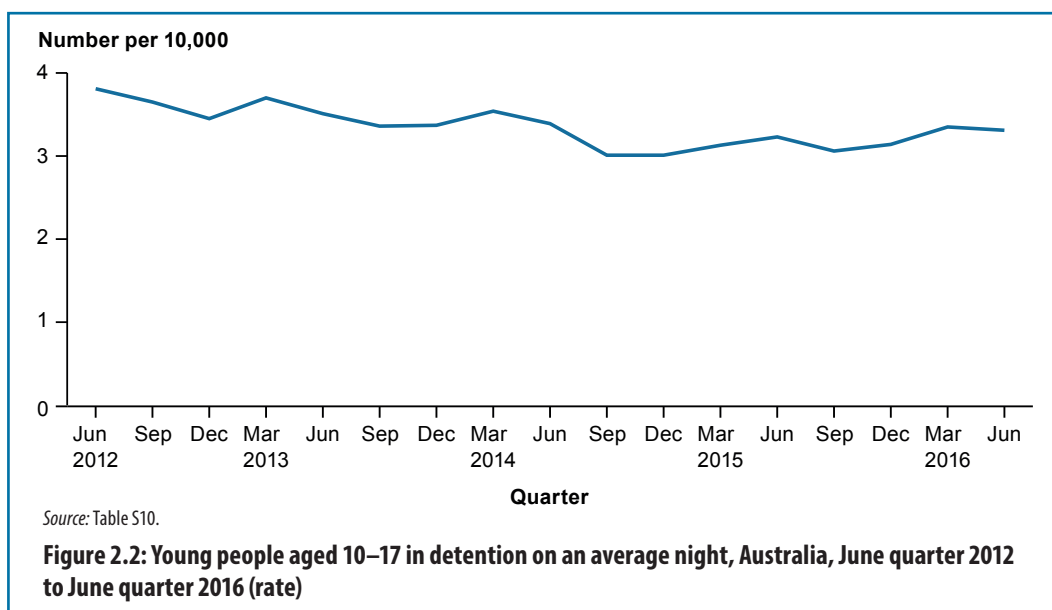


About 9 in 10 (839 or 91%) young people in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2016 were male (Table S7). The vast majority (89%–92%) of those in detention in all quarters throughout the 4-year period were male.

Rates

The rate of young people aged 10–17 in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2016 was 3.3 per 10,000 (Figure 2.2). This was a decrease from the rate in the June quarter 4 years earlier (3.8 per 10,000).

Over the most recent year, the rate of young people aged 10–17 in detention was between 3.1 and 3.4 per 10,000 each quarter.

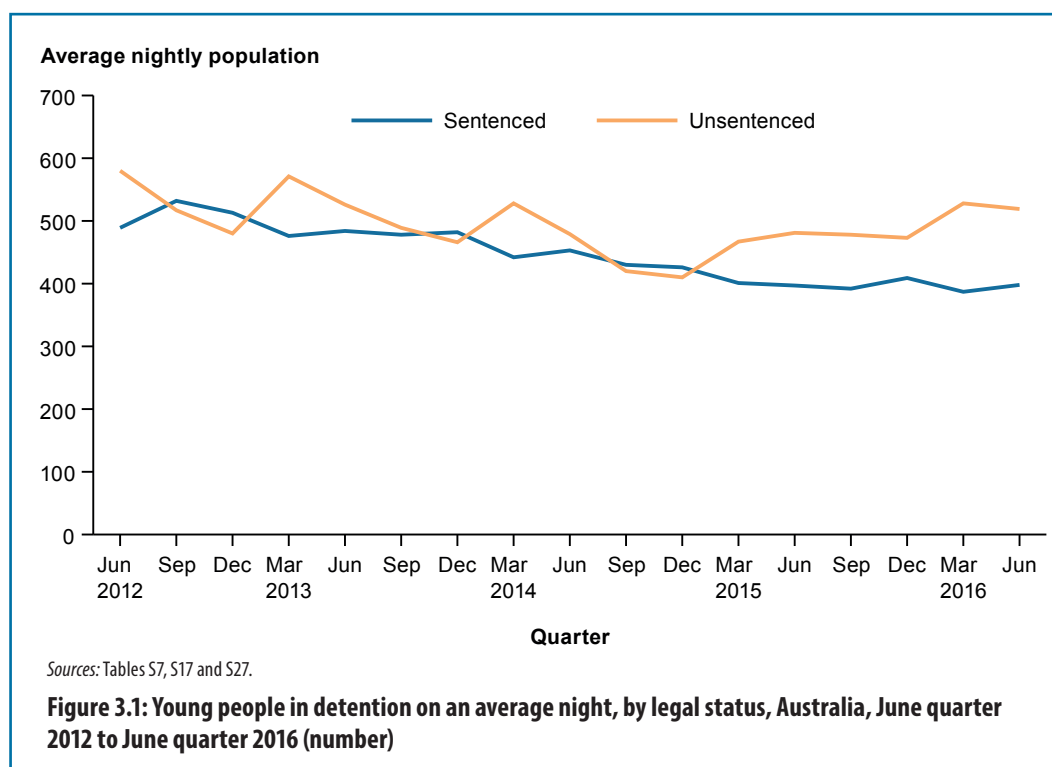


3 Trends in sentenced and unsentenced detention

Numbers

Over half (519 young people or 57%) of young people in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2016 were unsentenced and the remainder (398 or 43%) were serving a sentence (Figure 3.1).

Over the 4-year period, similar numbers of young people were in unsentenced (410 to 580 young people on an average night each quarter) and in sentenced detention (387 to 532). In general, numbers in unsentenced detention tended to be higher in the March and June quarters, while numbers in sentenced detention tended to be higher in the September and December quarters. However, since the March quarter 2015, numbers in unsentenced detention have remained higher than sentenced detention. The reasons for this variation are not well understood.



In the June quarter 2016, 93% of those in unsentenced detention on an average night were aged 10–17, compared with 70% of those in sentenced detention (tables S17, S18, S27 and S28). This difference occurred throughout the 4-year period: each quarter, 93%–97% of those in unsentenced detention were aged 10–17, along with 60%–71% of those in sentenced detention.

There is a higher proportion of young people aged 18 and over in sentenced detention, relative to unsentenced detention (tables S17, S19, S27 and S29). There are a number of reasons for this, including the fact that some young people may continue serving a

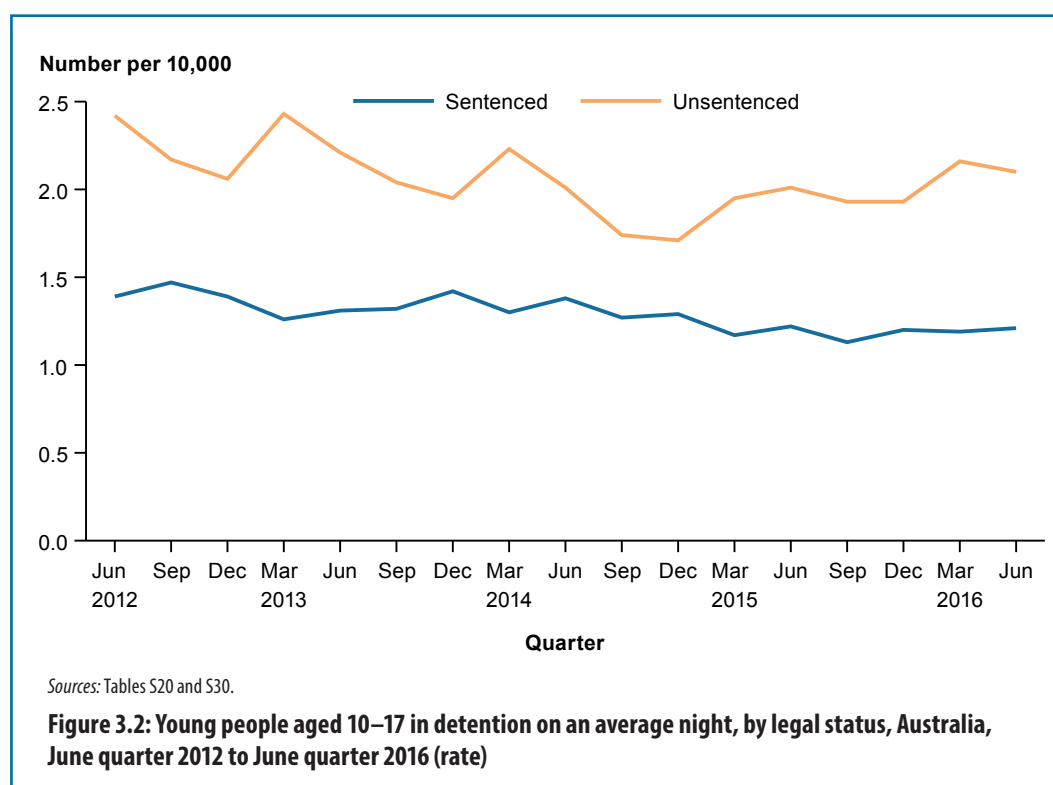
sentence in a youth facility once they turn 18. It is also driven by different policies and practices in the states and territories. Most notably, a low proportion of young people aged 10–17 in sentenced detention in Victoria (17%–36% in each quarter; tables S27 and S28) is in part due to the ‘dual track’ sentencing system operating in that state, which results in a relatively large population of young people aged 18 and over in sentenced detention (see Chapter 1 for more details about age limits in the youth justice system).

In the June quarter 2016, most young people in both unsentenced and sentenced detention were male (89% and 94%, respectively) (tables S17 and S27). These proportions were relatively stable over the 4-year period.

Rates

Nationally, the rate of young people in unsentenced detention fell slightly over the 4-year period, from 2.4 in the June quarter 2012 to 2.1 per 10,000 in the June quarter 2016. The rate was lowest in the December quarter 2014 (1.7 per 10,000) (Figure 3.2). Over the most recent year, the rate in each quarter was between 1.9 and 2.2 per 10,000.

In sentenced detention, the rate was 1.2 young people aged 10–17 per 10,000 on an average night in the June quarter 2016, which was a decrease from 1.4 per 10,000 in the June quarter 4 years earlier. The rate was highest in the September quarter 2012 (1.5 per 10,000). The rate of young people in sentenced detention was about 1.1–1.2 per 10,000 in each quarter over the most recent year.

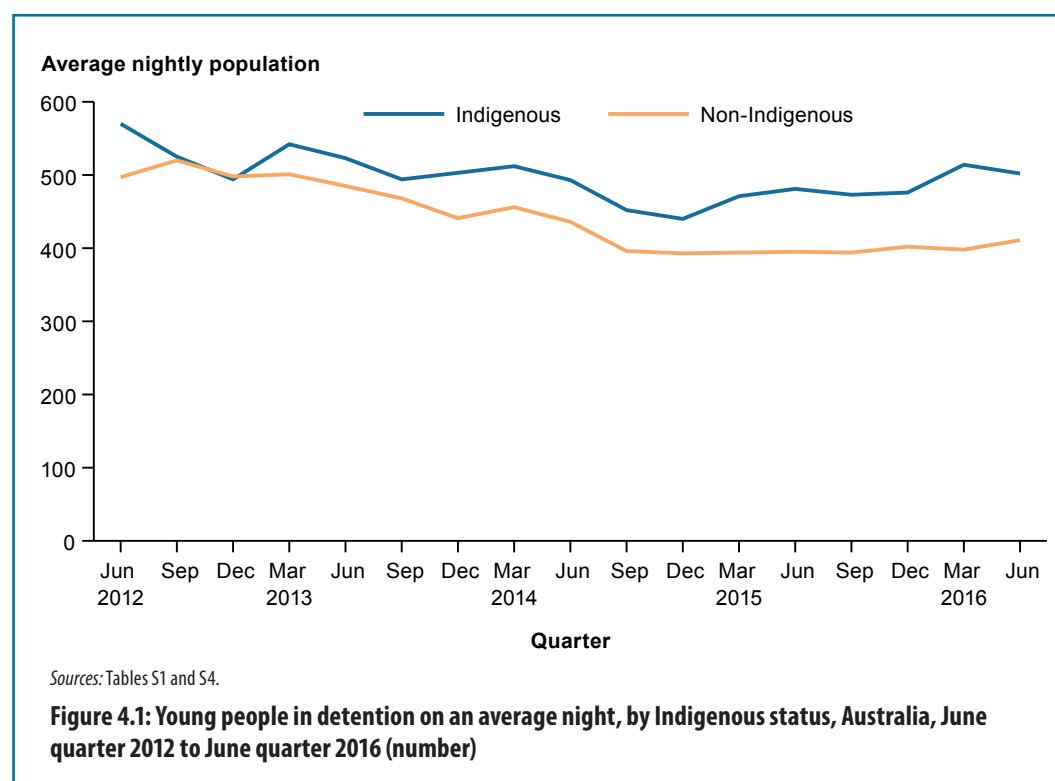


4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

Numbers

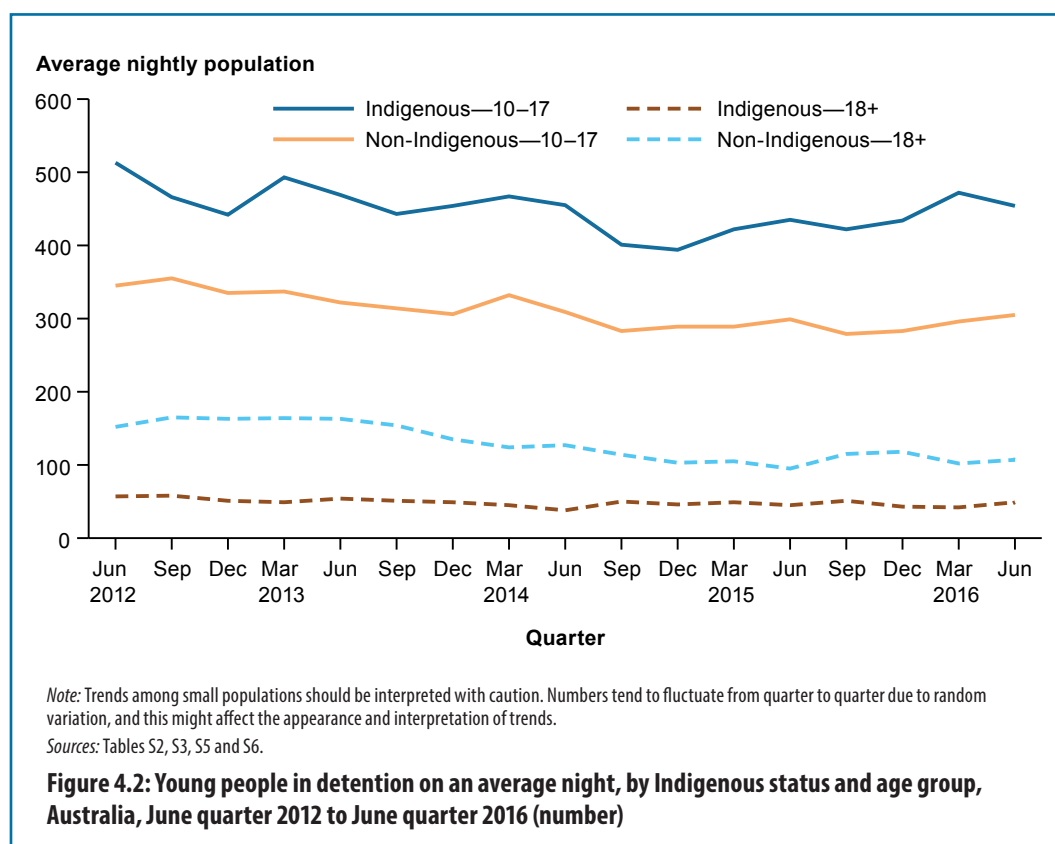
In the June quarter 2016, just over half (502 young people or 55%) of all those in detention on an average night were Indigenous (Figure 4.1 and Table S7).

Over the 4-year period, the number of Indigenous young people in detention declined from 570 in the June quarter 2012 to 502 in the June quarter 2016. The number of Indigenous young people in detention was lowest in the December quarter 2014 (440). The number of non-Indigenous young people decreased from 497 in the June quarter 2012 to 411 in the most recent quarter. Indigenous young people outnumbered non-Indigenous young people in detention in every quarter from March 2013 onwards.



Throughout the 4-year period, Indigenous young people aged 10–17 were the largest group in detention (Figure 4.2). Compared with non-Indigenous young people, a higher proportion of Indigenous young people in detention were aged 10–17: in the June quarter 2016, 90% of Indigenous young people in detention were aged 10–17, compared with 74% of non-Indigenous young people (tables S1, S2, S4 and S5).

About 9 in 10 (91%) Indigenous young people in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2016 were male (Table S1). This proportion remained stable over the 4-year period (88%–91% each quarter), and was similar to the proportion of non-Indigenous young people in detention who were male (89%–94% each quarter; 92% in the June quarter 2016) (Table S4).



Over the 4-year period, Indigenous young people made up a higher proportion of those in unsentenced detention (54%–59% each quarter) than they did in sentenced detention (44%–53% each quarter) (tables S11, S17, S21 and S27). In the June quarter 2016, 56% of those in unsentenced detention and 53% of those in sentenced detention on an average night were Indigenous.

Rates

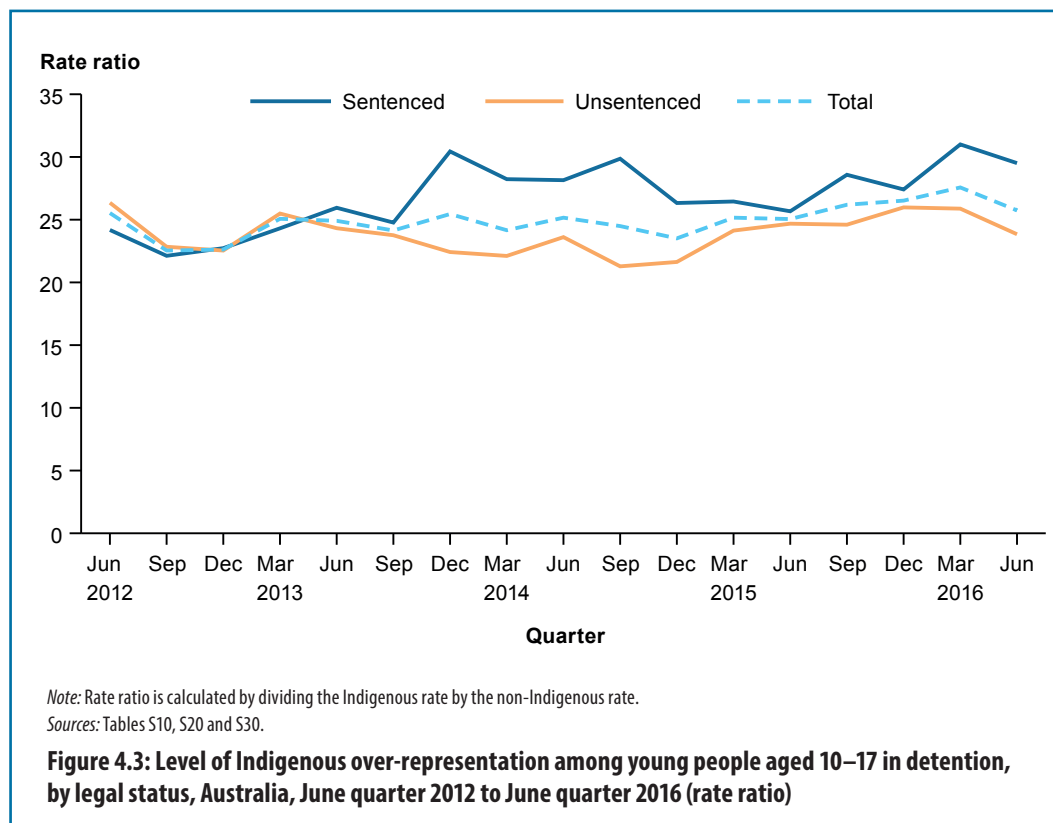
Indigenous over-representation in youth detention can be expressed as a rate ratio, which is the rate of Indigenous young people relative to the rate of non-Indigenous young people (see ‘Technical notes’ for more details).

There were 36 per 10,000 Indigenous young people aged 10–17 in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2016, compared with 1.4 per 10,000 non-Indigenous young people (Table S10).

The rate ratio shows that Indigenous young people aged 10–17 were 26 times as likely as non-Indigenous young people to be in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2016 (Figure 4.3). This was consistent with level of over-representation in the June quarter 2012 (also 26 times), however this fluctuated between 23 times and 28 times over the 4-year period.

The rate ratio in sentenced detention increased from a low of 22, in the September quarter 2012, to a high of 31 in the March quarter 2016; in the most recent quarter, the Indigenous rate was 30 times the non-Indigenous rate (Figure 4.3). The increase in the rate ratio was due to a proportionally greater decrease in the non-Indigenous rate compared with the decrease in the Indigenous rate over the period (Table S30).

In unsentenced detention, the rate ratio decreased, from 26 in the June quarter 2012 to 21 in the September quarter 2014, after which the Indigenous rate remained at about 22–26 times the non-Indigenous rate (24 times in the most recent quarter) (Figure 4.3). The decrease in the rate ratio between the June quarter 2012 and the September quarter 2014 was due to a proportionally greater decrease in the Indigenous rate compared with the decrease in the non-Indigenous rate (Table S20).

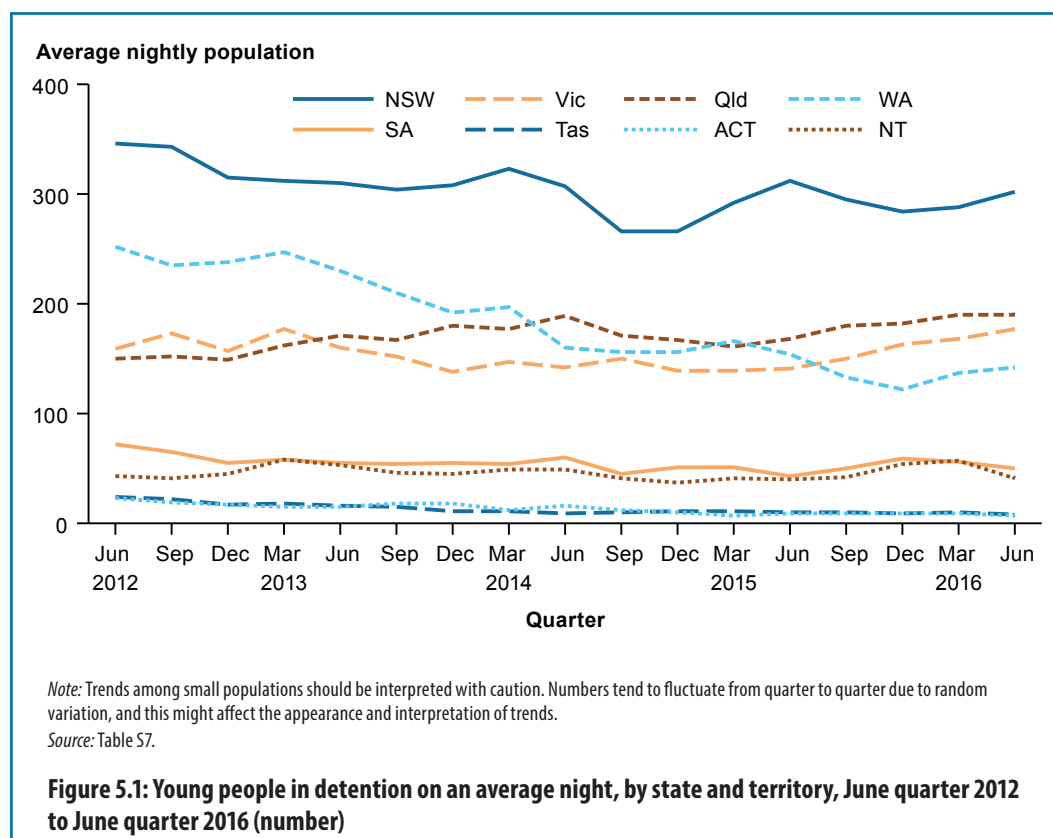


5 State and territory trends

Numbers

New South Wales had the largest number of young people in detention throughout the 4-year period, followed by Western Australia, Queensland and Victoria (Figure 5.1).

Over this period, there were decreases in the detention population in most states and territories except Queensland, Victoria and the Northern Territory. In Queensland, the number in detention increased from 150 in the June quarter 2012 to 190 in the June quarter 2016. In Victoria and the Northern Territory, the numbers were stable or no clear trend was present.



Over the most recent year, the number of young people in detention on an average night increased in Victoria (141 in the June quarter 2015 to 177 in the June quarter 2016) and Queensland (from 168 to 190). The numbers were stable or there were no clear trends in the other states and territories.

Rates

On an average night in the June quarter 2016, the rate of young people aged 10–17 in detention ranged from 1.2 per 10,000 in Tasmania to almost 16 per 10,000 in the Northern Territory (Figure 5.2 and Table 5.1).

Victoria consistently had the lowest rate on an average night except for 2015–16, when Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory had the lowest rates. The Northern Territory consistently had the highest rate on an average night. However, it should be noted that rates of detention fluctuated from quarter to quarter throughout the 4-year period, particularly among the smaller jurisdictions (Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory), due to the small numbers in detention.

Over the 4 years, the rate of young people aged 10–17 in detention on an average night decreased in most states and territories, but increased in Victoria and Queensland. In Victoria, the rate decreased between the June quarter 2012 and the December quarter 2013, before increasing to a peak in the June quarter 2016. In Queensland, the rate peaked in the June quarter 2014 and is at a similar level in the most recent quarter.

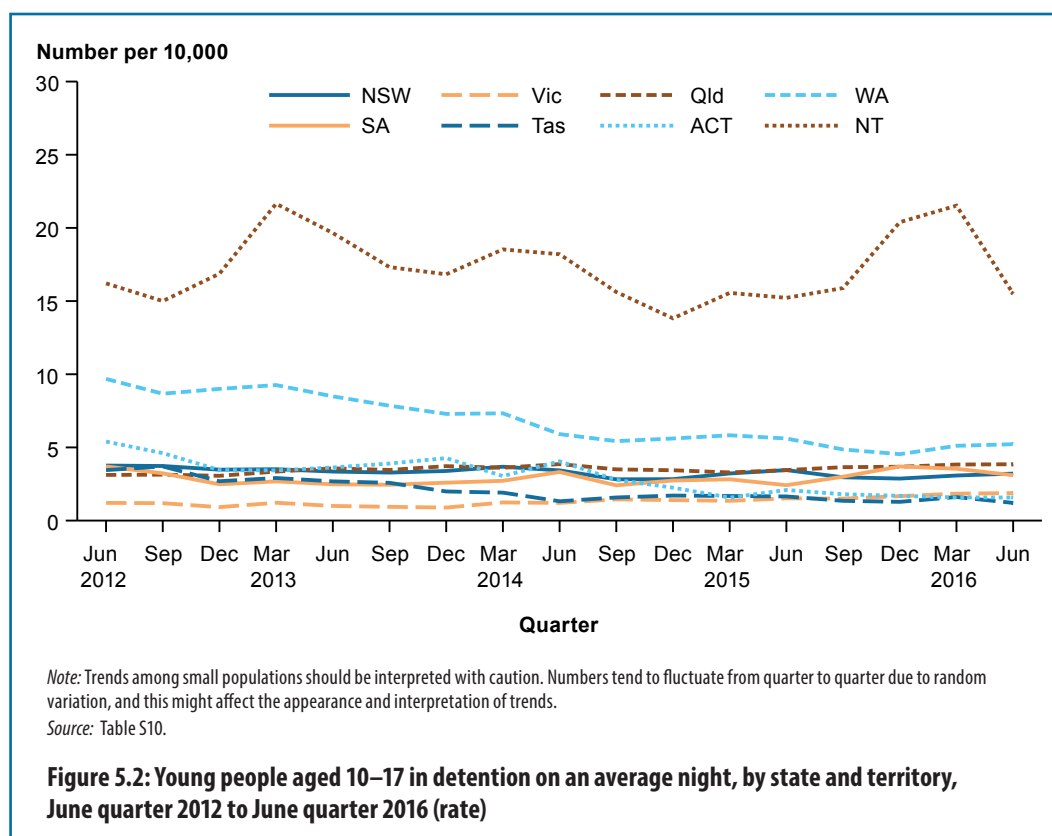


Table 5.1: Young people in detention on an average night, by state and territory, June quarter 2012, 2015 and 2016 (number and rate)

Quarter	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Number									
Sentenced detention									
June quarter 2012	161	124	41	99	34	10	6	14	489
June quarter 2015	165	79	26	93	18	5	3	9	397
June quarter 2016	131	103	40	77	23	5	3	16	398
Unsentenced detention									
June quarter 2012	185	35	109	152	37	14	17	29	580
June quarter 2015	147	62	143	61	25	6	6	31	481
June quarter 2016	171	74	151	64	27	4	4	25	519
Total detention									
June quarter 2012	346	159	150	252	72	24	23	43	1,069
June quarter 2015	312	141	168	154	43	10	9	40	877
June quarter 2016	302	177	190	142	50	8	7	41	917
Rate (number per 10,000)									
Sentenced detention									
June quarter 2012	1.46	0.61	0.83	3.55	1.51	1.15	1.58	5.14	1.39
June quarter 2015	1.66	0.41	0.52	3.21	0.92	n.p.	n.p.	3.52	1.22
June quarter 2016	1.25	0.65	0.80	2.74	1.39	n.p.	n.p.	6.00	1.21
Unsentenced detention									
June quarter 2012	2.30	0.60	2.30	6.13	2.18	2.30	3.81	11.07	2.42
June quarter 2015	1.79	1.10	2.94	2.40	1.50	n.p.	1.49	11.70	2.01
June quarter 2016	1.97	1.23	3.05	2.48	1.71	n.p.	n.p.	9.51	2.10
Total detention									
June quarter 2012	3.76	1.21	3.12	9.68	3.70	3.45	5.40	16.21	3.81
June quarter 2015	3.45	1.52	3.45	5.61	2.42	1.65	2.09	15.22	3.23
June quarter 2016	3.21	1.88	3.85	5.22	3.10	1.21	1.58	15.51	3.31

Notes

- Numbers might not add up to total due to rounding.
- Rates are for young people aged 10–17. Numbers include young people aged 18 or older, who are under youth justice supervision for reasons considered appropriate by youth justice agencies. For numbers of young people aged 10–17 only, refer to the supplementary tables.
- 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.
- Rates are calculated from the unrounded average nightly populations, and are not published when there were fewer than 5 young people in the numerator. There might be instances when a numerator is presented as 5 and the rate is not calculated due to rounding. (See 'Technical notes: rates'.)

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

Sentenced and unsentenced detention

Throughout the 4-year period, the rate of young people aged 10–17 in unsentenced detention was lowest in Victoria (between 0.4 and 1.3 per 10,000) and highest in the Northern Territory (between 8.9 and 15 per 10,000) (Table S20).

While the rate of young people aged 10–17 in unsentenced detention on an average night fell slightly over the 4-year period at the national level (from 2.4 to 2.1 per 10,000), there were differences in trends between the states and territories.

Between the June quarter 2012 and the June quarter 2016, there were overall increases in the rates of young people in unsentenced detention in Victoria and Queensland, and a decrease in Western Australia (Table 5.2). Trends could not reliably be determined in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, due to small numbers. Rates were stable or showed no clear trend among the other states and territories.

In sentenced detention, rates were also consistently lowest over the 4-year period in Victoria (between 0.4 and 0.7 per 10,000) and consistently highest in the Northern Territory (between 3.0 and 7.8 per 10,000) (Table S30).

A decrease in the rate of young people aged 10–17 in sentenced detention on an average night was seen in New South Wales and Western Australia (Table 5.2). Trends could not be reliably determined in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory due to small numbers, and rates were stable or showed no clear trend among the other states and territories.

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 2012 to June quarter 2016

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

↑ increase ↓ decrease ↔ no clear trend or stable n.p. not publishable due to small numbers

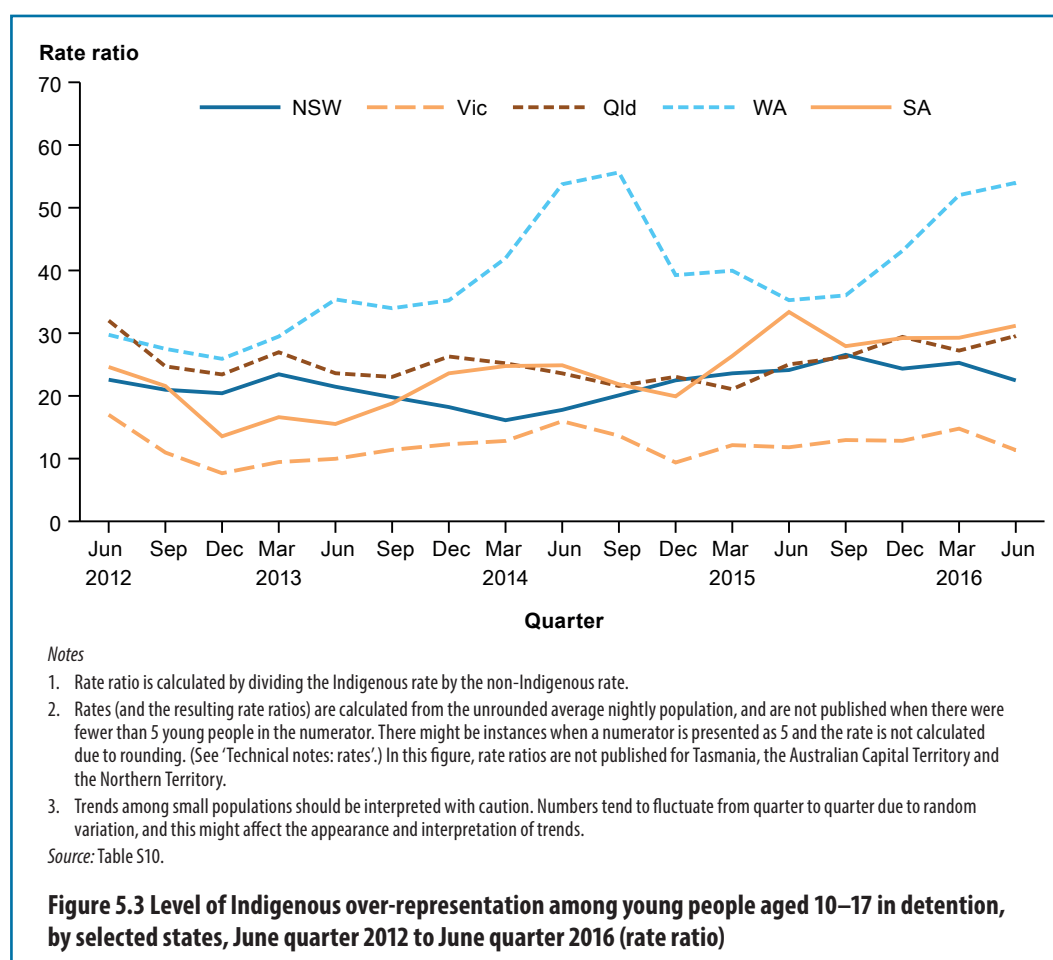
Note: Trends among small populations should be interpreted with caution. Numbers tend to fluctuate from quarter to quarter due to random variation, and this might affect the appearance and interpretation of trends.

Sources: Tables S10, S20 and S30.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

Among the states and territories, the rate of Indigenous young people in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2016 ranged from 18 per 10,000 in Victoria to 64 per 10,000 in Western Australia (a comparison which does not include Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory due to small numbers) (Table S10).

In the June quarter 2016, among the states and territories for which the rate ratio could be calculated, the rate ratio ranged from 11 times the non-Indigenous rate in Victoria to 54 times in Western Australia (Figure 5.3; see 'Technical notes' for more information). The rate ratio was lowest in Victoria and highest in Western Australia in most quarters throughout the 4-year period. In Western Australia, the rate for Indigenous young people peaked at 56 times the non-Indigenous rate in the September quarter 2014. (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.)



Technical notes

Youth detention data sources

This bulletin was compiled using 4 data sources. Data for 2015–16 were provided by each state and territory (except the Northern Territory) on the average nightly population per quarter between July 2015 and June 2016. 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 2014–15 JJ NMDS, which contains data up to and including 30 June 2015 for all states except Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

JJ NMDS data were not provided by Western Australia and the Northern Territory for the period from 1 April 2012 to the 30 June 2015. Therefore, non-standard data for Western Australia and the Northern Territory were used for this period 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 2014–15 is available at <http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/635597>.

In addition to this bulletin, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare also publishes the annual *Youth justice in Australia* series, which provides comprehensive information on young people under youth justice supervision. (For the most recent bulletin and accompanying fact sheets, see www.aihw.gov.au/publications/youth-justice/). The *Youth detention population in Australia 2016* bulletin presents more recent data on trends in the detention population than the *Youth justice in Australia* series.

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

Following is key information about the methods used in this bulletin. For more detailed information about the JJ NMDS, including details about the data and methods used in reporting, see www.aihw.gov.au/youth-justice/data-quality/.

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).

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 1 type of detention (both unsentenced and sentenced), their age can vary across tables because age is calculated in light of the type of detention concerned. 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 2015 to June quarter 2016 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 2015–16 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 0.2% to 0.5% each quarter between the June quarter 2012 and the June quarter 2015. This proportion was low (2% 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.

The JJ NMDS includes periods of detention with 'other' legal status, which are not included in this bulletin. In 2014–15, there were no young people in detention during the year with a legal status of 'other'.

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 2 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.

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- Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania
- Community Services Directorate, Australian Capital Territory
- Department of Correctional Services, 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.p.	not published due to small numbers, confidentiality or other concerns about the quality of the data
↑	increase
↓	decrease
↔	no clear trend or stable

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Related publications

More information about young people under youth justice supervision in Australia is available from the AIHW website at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/youth-justice-/>.

The bulletin can be downloaded free of charge from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/youth-justice-publications/>.

The following AIHW publications may also be of interest:

- AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2014. Pathways through youth justice supervision. Juvenile justice series no. 15. Cat. no. JUV 40. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2015. Pathways through youth justice supervision: further analyses. Juvenile justice series no. 19. Cat. no. JUV 75. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2015. Using the Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set to measure returns to sentenced youth justice supervision: stage 2. Juvenile justice series no. 17. Cat. no. JUV 54. 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 2016. Young people returning to sentenced youth justice supervision 2014–15. Juvenile justice series no. 20. Cat. no. JUV 84. Canberra: AIHW.

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