



Youth detention population in Australia 2022

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About

This report presents information on the youth detention population in Australia from June 2018 to June 2022. Among the 818 young people in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022, most were male (90%), aged 14-17 (81%), unsentenced (78%), and Indigenous (56%). Over the 4-year period, the number of young people in detention fluctuated across quarters, though fell overall from 969 in the June quarter 2018.

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Findings from this report:

- [On an average night in the June quarter 2022, 818 young people were in detention](#)
- [Most \(81%\) young people in detention were aged 14-17, the remainder were aged 10-13 \(5%\) or 18 and over \(13%\)](#)
- [More than half \(56%\) of all young people in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022 were Indigenous](#)

[Data visualisation](#)

[Data visualisation: This figure shows the number of young people in detention on an average night in Australia during 2022](#)

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Summary

This report analyses 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 criminal activity. It focuses on trends over the 4-year period from the June quarter 2018 to the June quarter 2022.

There were 818 young people in detention on an average night

There were 818 young people in youth detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022. The vast majority (90%) were male. Most young people (81%) were aged 14-17, at a rate of 5.4 per 10,000 young people. The other age groups in this analysis are young people aged 10-13 (5%), or 18 and over (13%).

Almost 4 in 5 (78%) young people in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022 were unsentenced—that is, they were awaiting the outcome of their court matter or sentencing. The remainder were serving a sentence.

There were small numbers of young people aged 10-13 in detention on an average night

There were 44 young people aged 10-13 in youth detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022. This was a slight decline from 53 in the June quarter 2018.

The rate of young people aged 10-13 in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022 was 0.3 per 10,000. For young Indigenous Australians aged 10-13 the rate was 4.5 per 10,000 and for young non-Indigenous Australians the rate was 0.1 per 10,000.

About 7% of young Indigenous Australians in detention were aged 10-13. This was lower for young non-Indigenous Australians (3%).

Numbers and rates of young people in detention have fallen over time

Over the 4-year period from the June quarter 2018 to the June quarter 2022, the number of young people in detention on an average night fell from 969 to 818.

The rate of young people aged 10-17 in detention in the June quarter 2022 was 2.8 per 10,000. This rate was lower than in the June quarter 2018 (3.4 per 10,000) and slightly higher than the June quarter 2021 (2.6 per 10,000).

Rates for sentenced detention have fallen over time, and unsentenced detention showed no clear trend

In the June quarter 2022, there were 2.3 per 10,000 young people aged 10-17 in unsentenced detention on an average night, and 0.5 per 10,000 in sentenced detention.

The rate of young people in unsentenced detention fluctuated over time, with no clear trend. The rate was lowest in the September quarter 2020 (1.7 per 10,000), and highest in both the March quarters of 2019 and 2022, and the June quarter 2022 (2.3 per 10,000).

The rate of young people aged 10-17 in sentenced detention in the June quarter 2022 was lower than the June quarter 2018 (0.5 per 10,000 compared with 1.1 per 10,000 young people). These were the lowest and highest rates over the 4-year period.

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

Over half (56%, or 461 of 818) of all young people in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022 were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. Indigenous Australians made up just 6% of the Australian population aged 10-17.

The rate of young Indigenous Australians aged 10-17 in detention on an average night decreased over the 4-year period, from 34 per 10,000 young Indigenous Australians aged 10-17 in the June quarter 2018 to 29.4 per 10,000 in the June quarter 2022.

However, young Indigenous Australians aged 10-17 were 26 times as likely as young non-Indigenous Australians to be in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022, and this fluctuated, at 16-26 times the non-Indigenous rate over the 4-year period.

Trends vary across the states and territories

The size of the youth detention population fell in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, and South Australia from the June quarter 2018 to the June quarter 2022. In Tasmania, the number of young people in youth detention was small, but down slightly compared to the June quarter 2018. In Queensland and the Northern Territory there was an increase in the number of young people in detention from the June quarter 2021 to the June quarter 2022.



Understanding 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 reflect differences in youth justice legislation, policy and practice. This includes differences in police practices, the types of legal orders available and the options for diversion.

This report 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.

A better understanding of the characteristics and seasonal trends of young people in detention can help support staff, case workers, and policy makers to get the best outcomes for these young people. The data can also support the work to consider raising the age of criminal responsibility that is currently underway in a number of states and territories.

This report and accompanying supplementary tables (those with a prefix of 'S') are available from [Youth detention population in Australia 2022, Summary](#)—Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

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Understanding youth detention in Australia

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 (UN 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
- youth justice conferencing.

Alternatives to detention include:

- transfer to specialist courts or programs
- supervised or unsupervised community orders.

As a result, most young people under supervision in Australia are supervised in the community.

On an average day in 2020-21, 84% of young people under supervision were supervised in the community, and 17% were in detention (some were supervised in both the community and detention on the same day). Of those who were supervised during 2020-21, 46% spent time in detention at some point during the year (AIHW 2022).

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Understanding youth detention in Australia

Age limits

In Australia, young people may be charged with a criminal offence if they are aged 10 or over. 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 most states and territories. Those aged 18 or over 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 was enacted in February 2018. Before then, the age limit in Queensland was 16, and young people aged 17 or over were treated as adults.

From February 2018, young people aged 17 in Queensland were transferred from the adult justice system into the youth justice system. This initially led to an increase in the number of young people held in youth justice detention in Queensland and the national detention rate.

In 2020-21, about 26% of young people under supervision on an average day were aged 18 or over (AIHW 2022). 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 over 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 assessed as suitable and the court deems this appropriate. This is known as the 'dual track' sentencing system.

In this report, 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 report, rates are calculated only for young people aged 10-13, 14-17 and 10-17, as these are the key populations in most states and territories (see 'Technical Notes' for more information about the calculation of rates).

For this report, the age on an average night each quarter is calculated based on the age a young person is each night that they are in detention. If a young person changes age during a period of detention, then the average nightly number in detention will reflect this.

Average nightly data broken down by age will not be comparable to *Youth detention population in Australia* releases prior to 2020. For more information about the calculation of age, see 'Technical Notes'.

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Understanding youth detention in Australia

Raising the age of criminal responsibility

In Australia young people are deemed to have criminal responsibility if they are aged 10 or over. Young people aged between 10 and 14 are given the presumption of *doli incapax*, meaning that they cannot be held criminally responsible unless it can be proved beyond reasonable doubt that the young person knew that their conduct was wrong (Child Rights International Network 2020).

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) recently issued an update to the International Standards for the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility. In paragraph 22 of its 'General comment no. 24 (2019) on children's rights in juvenile justice', the Committee deemed the previously recommended age of criminal responsibility of 12 years to be too low.

The Committee now encourages state parties to 'take note of recent scientific findings, and to increase their minimum age to at least 14 years'.

The recommendation to increase the minimum age of criminal responsibility reflects current research in child development and neuroscience which provides evidence that the capacity for abstract reasoning is not fully developed in children aged 12 and 13 (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2019).

In Australia, the Meeting of Attorneys-General (MAG) reviewed Australia's age of criminal responsibility. MAG noted that the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory have committed to raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility, and states have supported the development of proposals to raise the age, having regard to any carve outs, timing and discussion of implementation requirements (MAG 2022). This followed on from the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory (Royal Commission, Australian Government 2017), which resulted in recommendations for Australia to:

- raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12
- keep young people aged 14 and under out of detention unless they have committed a serious crime or pose a serious risk to the community.

In October 2021, the Australian Capital Territory committed to raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14; it is currently the only jurisdiction to do so. Legislation is expected to be introduced in 2022.

In June 2022, Tasmania committed to raising the age of criminal detention from 10 to 14 years old. This change is expected to be implemented at the end of 2024.

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Understanding youth detention in Australia

Sentenced and unsentenced detention

Young people might 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
- sentenced—when they have been found 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 2020-21, the vast majority (98%) of young people in unsentenced detention on an average day were on remand (AIHW 2022). 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 (39%) of those who were in unsentenced detention during 2020-21 experienced police-referred detention at some time during the year (AIHW 2022).

In this report, young people who are both sentenced and unsentenced at the same time (for example, for 2 different matters) are counted as sentenced.

From 2017-18 onwards, Queensland’s detention data include sentenced and unsentenced young people in detention centres and other custodial settings. In Queensland, ‘other custodial settings’ includes young people held in police watch houses under remand and sentenced detention, which is unique compared with other jurisdictions.

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Understanding youth detention in Australia

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a long history of over-representation in the youth and adult justice systems in Australia (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 2011; Johnston 1991).

Although only about 6% of young people aged 10-17 in Australia are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, almost half (49%) of the young people aged 10-17 in detention on an average day in 2020-21 were Indigenous (AIHW 2022). (Note this proportion differs from the nightly average for the June quarter 2022 as it is restricted to the 10-17 age group and is from an earlier period).

Outcome 11 of the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are not over-represented in the criminal justice system. The target under the National Agreement is to reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10-17 years) in detention by 30%, from 31.9 per 10,000 young people on an average day in 2018-19 to 22.3 per 10,000 young people by 2030-31 (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2020).

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Understanding youth detention in Australia

Youth detention data

This report looks at the number of young people in detention on an average night in each quarter over the 4-year period from the June quarter 2018 to the June quarter 2022. 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).

The states and territories provided data on the average nightly number of young people in detention each quarter between July 2021 and June 2022. These data supplement the Youth Justice National Minimum Data Set (YJ NMDS). For more information, see 'Technical Notes'.

In the Northern Territory, new legislation was implemented to the youth justice system on 15 May 2021—the *Youth Justice Legislation Amendment Act (YJLAA) 2021* (the Act). The intent of the Act was to target repeat youth offenders to reduce youth crime. The Act resulted in some key changes to processes of the youth justice system. This change in legislation may have impacted on the number and rate of young people in detention in the Northern Territory.

Impact of COVID-19 on youth detention data

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 'first wave' of social restrictions were introduced in Australia in mid-March 2020. These restrictions were progressively eased in most states/territories from May 2020. A 'second wave' of social restrictions were introduced in Victoria from July 2020 and started to progressively ease from September 2020. A 'third wave' of social restrictions were introduced in New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory from June 2021 and started to progressively ease from October 2021. Since then, additional waves of COVID-19 have affected all jurisdictions with small restrictions in place during that time.

While youth justice centres and other places of custody, courts or tribunals were considered essential services (Prime Minister of Australia 2020), COVID-19 still has had a substantial impact on the operations of these services and restrictions may have continued beyond the easing of restrictions in the general community. The impact may differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction (Judicial College of Victoria 2020).

In New South Wales, for example, Children's Court hearings were vacated from 24 March to 1 May 2020 with few exceptions. This led to a decrease in the number of court finalisations between March and June 2020, which resulted in a reduction in young people in sentenced detention. During this period there was also a decline in unsentenced detention as more young people were discharged to bail and fewer young people had their bail revoked when breaching bail conditions (Chan 2021).

This report includes data from the period in which COVID-19 was present in Australia, from the March quarter 2020 to the June quarter 2022. Nationally, over the 4-year period, the numbers of young people in detention on an average night were lowest in the June and September quarters 2020. However, the direct impact of COVID-19 and related social restrictions on the number of young people in detention is difficult to determine due to a range of factors including:

- variability of the data
- variations in state-based legislation, policy and practice
- small numbers of young people in detention on an average night.

More research is required in order to better understand the impact of COVID-19 and related social restrictions on youth detention across Australia.

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, and these should be interpreted with caution (particularly where they relate to small populations).

In this report, comparisons are made between the June quarter 2022 and the June quarter 1 year earlier (2021) and 4 years earlier (2018). 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 (AIHW 2022), which is yet to be fully investigated or explained.

This report aims to summarise key trends over the 1-year and 4-year periods.

For more data, including counts of young people who enter the youth justice system throughout the year, and trends over 10 years to 2020-21, see *Youth Justice in Australia 2020-21* at [Youth justice in Australia 2020-21, Summary—Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#).

Trends in detention

Numbers

On an average night in the June quarter 2022, there were 818 young people in youth detention in Australia due to their involvement, or alleged involvement, in crime (Figure 2.1).

On an average night in the June quarter 2022, most (709 or 87%) young people in detention were aged 10-17. Of these, 44 were aged 10-13 and 665 were aged 14-17. The remainder (110 or 13%) were aged 18 or over. The average nightly population is rounded to whole numbers, so components might not sum to the totals due to rounding (see 'Technical Notes').

Over the 4-year period from the June quarter 2018 to the June quarter 2022, the number of young people in detention on an average night declined from 969 in the June quarter 2018 to a low of 720 in the September quarter 2020, rising back up to 818 in the June quarter 2022 (Table S11).

The number of young people in detention on an average night declined in all age groups from the June quarter 2018 to 2022:

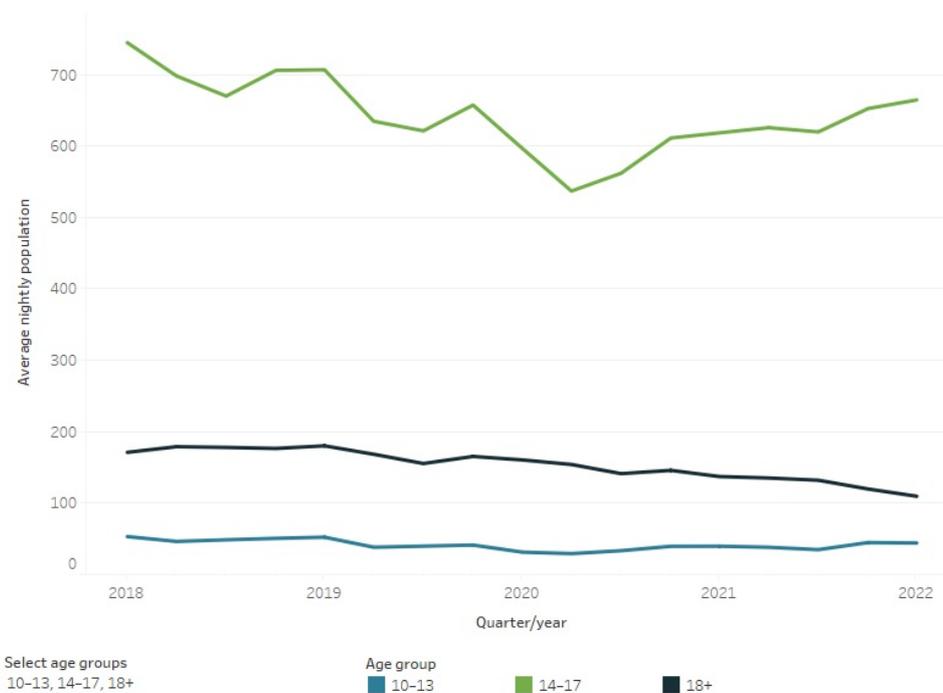
- The number of those aged 10-13 in detention declined slightly over the 4-year period from 53 to 44.
- The number of young people aged 14-17 in detention declined from 745 to 664 and was lowest in the September quarter 2020 (537). This age group drove an overall decline in the number of young people aged 10-17 in detention, from 798 to 709 over the 4-year period.
- Those aged 18 or over showed a steady decline from 171 to 110 young people over the 4-year period (Figure 2.1).

In the June quarter 2022, 9 in 10 (740 or 90%) young people in detention on an average night were male. This was the case in all quarters throughout the 4-year period (89%-92%). However, for young people aged 10-13 there was a slightly lower proportion of males in detention on an average night (75%-85%) and a higher proportion of females.

Figure 2.1: Young people in detention on an average night, by age group, Australia, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (number)

This line graph shows the number of young people in youth detention on an average night over a 4-year period. The 3 lines in the graph represent the population in detention who were aged 10-13, 14-17, 18 and over. There is an option to select additional age groups including 10-17 and 10 and over. Over the 4-year period, the 14-17 age group fluctuated, but has declined overall from a high in the June quarter 2018. The number aged 10-13 and 18 or over remained steady. Most people in detention were aged 14-17.

Figure 2.1: Young people in detention on an average night, by age group, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (number)



Notes

1. Includes young people with unknown sex.
2. Trend data may differ from those previously published due to data revisions.
3. For data extracted from the YJ NMDS, age is calculated at the start of the relevant quarter unless the period of detention began within the quarter or the young person had a birthday, in which case age is calculated as at the start of that period or from their birthday.

Source: tables S11, S12, S13, S14 and S15.

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Trends in detention

Rates

On an average night in the June quarter 2022, the rate of young people aged 10-17 in detention was 2.8 per 10,000. This is lower than in the June quarter 2018, where the rate was 3.4 per 10,000 and at its highest in the 4-year period. The June quarter 2022 rate was slightly higher than the June quarter 2021 (2.6 per 10,000). The rate was at its lowest in the September quarter 2020, at 2.3 per 10,000 (Table S18).

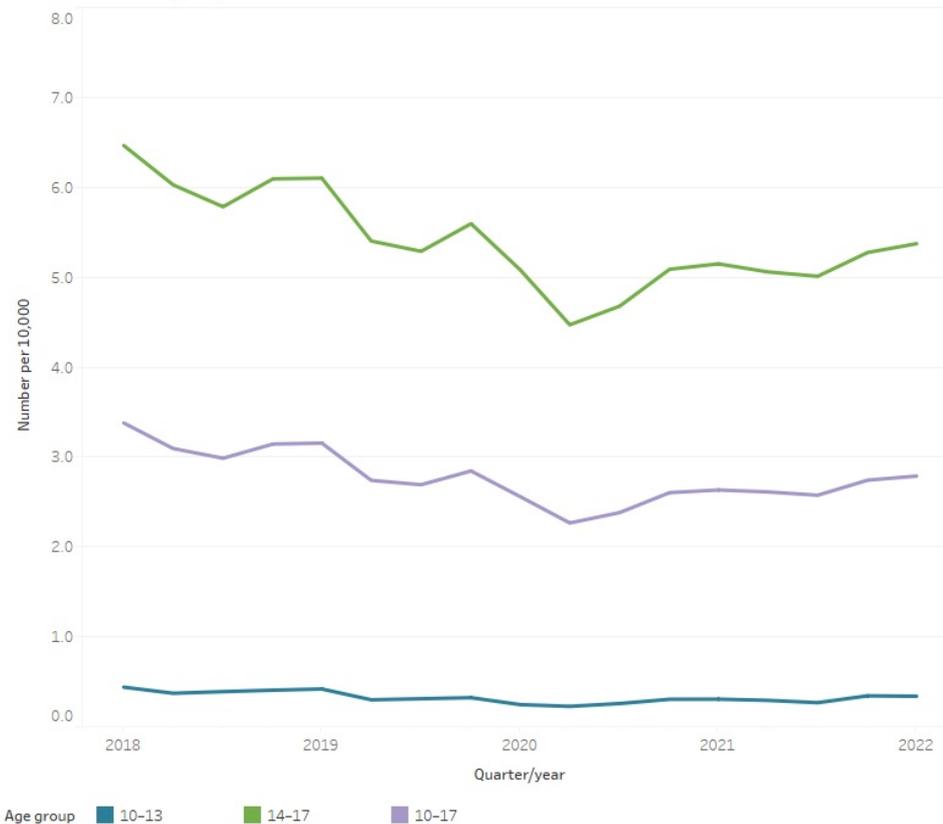
The rate for those young people aged 14-17 in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022 was 5.4 per 10,000. Similar to those aged 10-17, this was down from the rate in the June quarter 2018 (6.5 per 10,000) but slightly higher than the rate in the June quarter 2021 (5.1 per 10,000). The rate was at its lowest in the September quarter 2020 at 4.5 per 10,000 (Figure 2.2).

For those aged 10-13, the rate of young people in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022 was 0.3 per 10,000. This was slightly lower than in the June quarter 2018 where the rate of 0.4 per 10,000 (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Young people aged 10-17 in detention on an average night, Australia, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (rate)

This line graph shows 3 lines representing the rate of young people per 10,000 aged 10-13, 14-17 and 10-17 in detention on an average night in each quarter, across the 4-year period. Overall, the rate for those aged 14-17 and 10-17 fluctuated over the 4-year period, with a low in the September quarter 2020 and a decline overall. However, the rates for those aged 10-13 remained steady over the four-year period.

Figure 2.2: Young people aged 10-17 in detention on an average night, by age group, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (rate)



Note: Rates are the number of young people per 10,000 relevant population.
 Source: tables S16, S17 and S18.

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Trends in sentenced and unsentenced detention

Numbers

On an average night in the June quarter 2022, almost 4 in 5 (636 or 78%) young people in detention were unsentenced. The remainder (183 or 22%) were serving a sentence (Figure 3.1).

The proportion of young people in sentenced detention has fallen over time from 42% in the June quarter 2018 to 22% in the June quarter 2022. Conversely, the proportion of those in unsentenced detention has increased from 58% to 78% over the same period (tables S29 and S47).

The number of young people in unsentenced detention fluctuated over the 4-year period, with a low of 473 in the September quarter 2020 and a high of 636 in the June quarter 2022. The number of young people in unsentenced detention tended to be higher in the March and June quarters each year, except in the June quarter 2020 (Figure 3.1).

The number of young people in unsentenced detention has increased since the June quarter 2021 (566 compared with 636 young people in the June quarter 2022) (Figure 3.1).

The number of young people in sentenced detention has steadily declined (55%) over the 4-year period. There were 405 young people in sentenced detention on an average night in the June quarter 2018 compared with 183 young people in the June quarter 2022. The June quarter 2018 had the highest number of young people in sentenced detention (Table S47).

Figure 3.1: Young people in detention on an average night, by legal status, Australia, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (number)

This line graph shows 2 lines comparing the average nightly detention population for young people with a legal status of 'sentenced' or 'unsentenced'. More young people in detention were unsentenced than sentenced over the 4-year period. The number of young people in sentenced detention declined from the June quarter 2018. The number of young people in unsentenced detention has fluctuated between quarters but showed no trend over the long term.

Figure 3.1: Young people in detention on an average night, by legal status, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (number)



Notes
1. Includes young people with unknown sex.
2. Trend data may differ from those previously published due to data revisions.
Source: tables S29 and S47.

In the June quarter 2022, a higher proportion of those in unsentenced detention were aged 10-17 (92%), compared with sentenced detention (69%). Conversely, only 8.2% of those in unsentenced detention and 31% of those in sentenced detention were aged 18 or over.

Higher proportions of young people aged 10-17 in unsentenced over sentenced detention were consistent throughout the 4-year period, with:

- 89%-93% of those in unsentenced detention being aged 10-17
- 54%-69% of those in sentenced detention being aged 10-17, with a low in the September quarter 2020 and a high in the June quarter 2022 (tables S29, S32, S47, and S50).

Additionally, in the June quarter 2022, 6.8% of young people in unsentenced detention were aged 10-13 and less than 1% (0.6%) in sentenced detention were aged 10-13. These proportions fluctuated over the 4-year period from the June quarter 2018 to the June quarter 2022 for unsentenced detention (5.5%-8.3%) and sentenced detention (0.0%-1.8%) (tables S29, S30, S47, S48).

One reason more young people aged 18 and over are in sentenced detention than in unsentenced detention is that some might 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 on different policies and practices in the states and territories.

For example, in Victoria, 62%-78% of young people in sentenced detention were aged 18 or over in each quarter over the 4-year period, compared with 31%-46% in Australia overall. This is in part due to the 'dual track' sentencing system operating in Victoria, which results in a relatively large proportion of young people aged 18 and over in sentenced detention (see Chapter 1 for more details).

On an average night in the June quarter 2022, a higher proportion of females (82%) than males (77%) in detention were unsentenced (tables S29 and S11). This was the case in each quarter throughout the 4-year period, with:

- 73%-82% of females in detention unsentenced
- 54%-77% of males in detention unsentenced.

Conversely, a higher proportion of males (23%) than females (18%) were in sentenced detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022 (tables S47 and S11). But due to the small number of females in detention, these results should be interpreted with caution.

Over the 4-year period, the proportion of males in sentenced detention declined from 44% in the June quarter 2018 to 23% in the June quarter 2022.

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Trends in sentenced and unsentenced detention

Rates

On an average night in the June quarter 2022, 2.3 per 10,000 young people aged 10-17 were in unsentenced detention, and 0.5 per 10,000 were in sentenced detention (Figure 3.2).

Over the 4-year period, the rate of young people aged 10-17 in unsentenced detention was relatively stable at about 2.0 per 10,000 young people. The rate of young people in unsentenced detention was highest in the March quarter 2019, the March quarter 2022 and the June quarter 2022 (2.3 per 10,000 young people) and lowest in the September quarter 2020 (1.7 per 10,000) (Table S36).

Compared to the June quarter 2021, the rate of young people aged 10-17 in unsentenced detention in the June quarter 2022 was slightly higher (2.1 per 10,000 compared with 2.3 per 10,000 young people).

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 exception was the June quarter 2020 where the rate was lower (Figure 3.2).

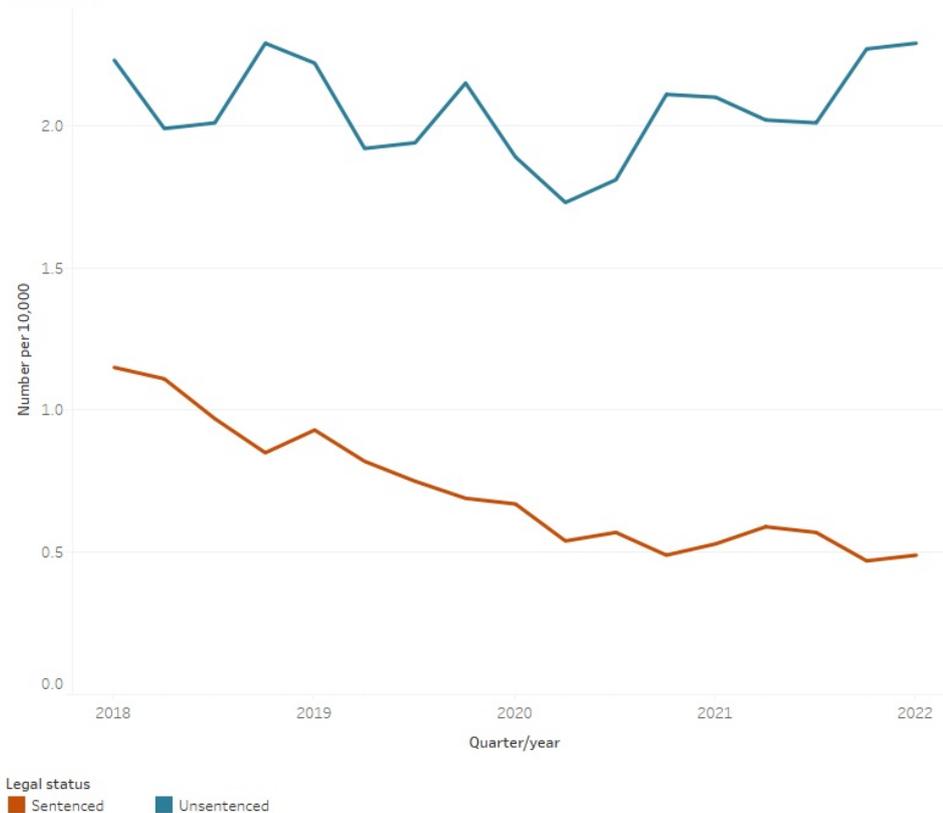
Over the 4-year period, rates of young people in sentenced detention have declined steadily. The rate of young people aged 10-17 in sentenced detention in the June quarter 2022 was lower than the June quarter 2018 (0.5 per 10,000 compared with 1.1 per 10,000 young people) (Figure 3.2).

Conversely, the rate of young people aged 10-17 in sentenced detention in the June quarter 2022 remained the same as the June quarter 2021 (0.5 per 10,000 young people) (Table S54).

Figure 3.2: Young people aged 10-17 in detention on an average night, by legal status, Australia, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (rate)

This line graph shows 2 lines comparing the rates of young people aged 10-17 who were in detention with the legal status of 'sentenced' or 'unsentenced'. It shows that the rate of young people in unsentenced detention was consistently higher than the rate for those in sentenced detention. Over the 4-year period, the rate of young people aged 10-17 in unsentenced detention fluctuated over time. The rate of young people aged 10-17 in sentenced detention fell over time.

Figure 3.2: Young people in detention on an average night, by legal status, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (rate)



Note: Rates are the number of young people per 10,000 relevant population.
Source: tables S36 and S54.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

Numbers

Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up more than half (461 or 56%) of all those in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022 (tables S1 and S11). Over the 4-year period, young Indigenous Australians made up about 6% of the Australian population aged 10-17 (Table S55c).

The number of young Indigenous people in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022 was lower than in the June quarter 2018 (531) but higher than the June quarter 2021 (396) (tables S1 and S11). The number of young Indigenous Australians in detention on an average night was at its lowest level in the September quarter 2020 (330).

There were 353 non-Indigenous young Australians in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022 (Table S6).

On an average night in each quarter, 46%-56% of young people in detention were Indigenous, and 43%-54% of young people were non-Indigenous (tables S1, S6 and S11).

The number of young Indigenous Australians in detention was slightly lower than young non-Indigenous Australians on an average night from the December quarter 2019 to the December quarter 2020. This difference was greatest in the September quarter 2020 (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Young people in detention on an average night, by Indigenous status, Australia, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (number)

This line graph shows 2 lines comparing the average nightly detention population for Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people. The proportion of young Indigenous Australians in detention was slightly higher than young non-Indigenous Australians on an average night in almost every quarter throughout the 4-year period but between the December quarter 2019 and the December quarter 2020, the proportion was greater for non-Indigenous young people.

Figure 4.1: Young people in detention on an average night, by Indigenous status, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (number)



Notes
 1. Includes young people with unknown sex.
 2. Trend data may differ from those previously published due to data revisions.
 Source: tables S1 and S6.

Age group

A higher proportion of young Indigenous Australians in detention were aged 10-13, 14-17 and 10-17 than young non-Indigenous Australians. Conversely, fewer Indigenous young people were aged 18 or over (Figure 4.2).

In the June quarter 2022:

- 7.2% of young Indigenous Australians in detention were aged 10-13 and 3.0% of young non-Indigenous Australians in detention were aged 10-13 (tables S1, S2, S6 and S7)
- 86% of young Indigenous Australians in detention were aged 14-17 and 75% of young non-Indigenous Australians in detention were aged 14-17 (tables S1, S3, S6 and S8)
- 94% of young Indigenous Australians in detention were aged 10-17 and 78% of young non-Indigenous Australians in detention were aged 10-17 (tables S1, S4, S6 and S9)
- 6.3% of young Indigenous Australians in detention were aged 18 or over and 22% of young non-Indigenous Australians in detention were aged 10-17 (tables S1, S5, S6 and S10).

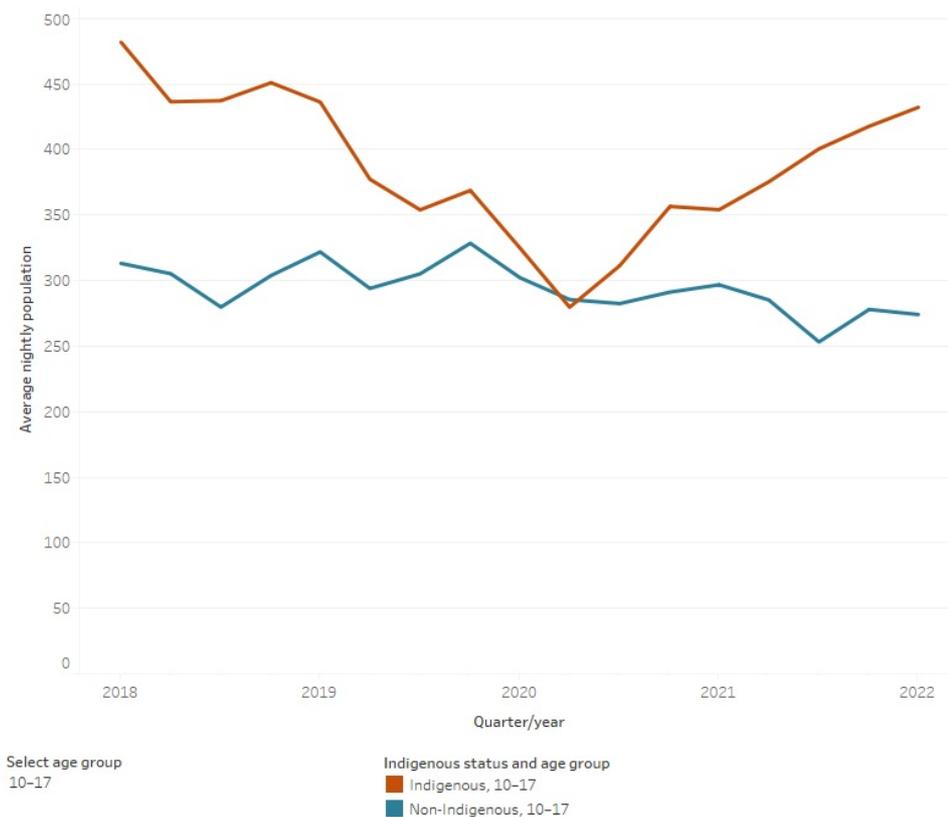
The proportion of young people in detention who were Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people aged 10-17 has fluctuated over the 4 years. Among young people aged 10-17, 61% of those in detention in the June quarter 2022 were Indigenous. This was similar to the June quarter 2018 (60%), but higher than the June quarter 2021 (54%) (tables S4 and S14). This pattern was similar for young people aged 14-17 (tables S3 and S13).

However, for those young people aged 10-13 a higher proportion of those in detention in the June quarter 2022 were Indigenous (76%). This is lower than the June quarter 2018 (82%) and slightly higher than the June quarter 2021 (73%) (tables S2 and S12).

Figure 4.2: Young people in detention on an average night, by Indigenous status and age group, Australia, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (number)

This line graph presents 2 lines in its initial view, comparing the number of young people in detention, by Indigenous status and by age group. For the 10-17 age group which is presented, Indigenous young people consistently outnumbered non-Indigenous young people over the 4-year period except during the September quarter 2020. Other age groups that can be selected include: 10-13, 14-17, 18 and over, and 10 and over.

Figure 4.2: Young people in detention on an average night, by Indigenous status and age group, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (number)



Source: tables S2, S3, S5, S7, S8 and S10.

[Hover for notes]

Sex

The proportion of young Indigenous Australians in detention who are male were generally similar to the proportion of non-Indigenous young males. On an average night in the June quarter 2022, the proportions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people aged 10-17 in detention who were male were similar (90% and 89%, respectively) (tables S4 and S9). This was similar for those young people aged 14-17 (91% and 89%, respectively) (tables S3 and S8).

However, of those young people aged 10-13 in detention there was a lower proportion of males who were Indigenous (81%) and a higher proportion of females (19%). For non-Indigenous young people aged 10-13 the proportions of males were similar across age groups (91%) (tables S2 and S7).

Legal status

On an average night in the June quarter 2022, 367 (or 58%) young people in unsentenced detention and 94 (or 51%) young people in sentenced detention were Indigenous (tables S19, S29, S37 and S47).

Over the 4-year period, young Indigenous Australians made up a higher proportion of those in unsentenced detention (48%-59% each quarter) than in sentenced detention (41%-53%) which is consistent with the overall trend (tables S19, S29, S37 and S47).

The number of young Indigenous Australians in sentenced detention has continued to trend downward over the 4-year period, falling from 210 in the June quarter 2018 to 94 in the June quarter 2022 (Table S37). While for young Indigenous Australians in unsentenced detention, there was no clear trend despite a slight rise in numbers (from 321 to 367).

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

Rates

Nationally, on an average night in the June quarter 2022, 29 per 10,000 young Indigenous Australians aged 10-17 were in detention, and 1.1 per 10,000 young non-Indigenous Australians aged 10-17 were in detention.

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

This means that young Indigenous Australians aged 10-17 were 26 times as likely as young non-Indigenous Australians to be in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022 (Table S10).

The rate of young Indigenous Australians aged 10-17 in detention on an average night decreased over the 4-year period, down from 34 per 10,000 young Indigenous Australians aged 10-17 in the June quarter 2018. The rate was higher than the June quarter 2021 (24 per 10,000). The rate was at its lowest during the September quarter 2020 (19 per 10,000) (Table S18).

This means that over the 4-year period, the level of Indigenous over-representation in detention fluctuated, ranging from 16 times the non-Indigenous rate in the September quarter 2020 to 26 times in the December and June quarters 2022.

Age group

Nationally, on an average night in the June quarter 2022, 4.5 per 10,000 young Indigenous Australians aged 10-13 were in detention and 0.1 per 10,000 young non-Indigenous Australians aged 10-13 were in detention.

This means that young Indigenous Australians aged 10-13 were 51 times as likely as young non-Indigenous Australians to be in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022. This is down from 72 times as likely in the June quarter 2018, where 6.0 per 10,000 young Indigenous Australians were in detention on an average night (Table S16).

For those aged 14-17, there were 55 per 10,000 young Indigenous Australians in detention in the June quarter 2022 and 2.3 per 10,000 young non-Indigenous Australians in detention. This means that young Indigenous Australians aged 14-17 were 24 times as likely as young non-Indigenous Australians to be in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022.

Legal status

From the June quarter 2018 to the June quarter 2022, the rate of young Indigenous Australians aged 10-17 in sentenced detention dropped from 12.2 per 10,000 to 5.4 per 10,000. The rate was at its lowest in the March quarter 2022 at 4.7 per 10,000. The rate of young non-Indigenous Australians aged 10-17 in sentenced detention gradually declined from 0.5 per 10,000 in the June quarter 2018 to 0.2 per 10,000 in the June quarter 2022 (Table S54).

The rate of young Indigenous Australians aged 10-17 in unsentenced detention fluctuated over the period showing no apparent trend but was at its highest in the June quarter 2022 at 24 per 10,000. The rate was at its lowest in the September quarter 2020 at 14.4 per 10,000. The rate of young non-Indigenous Australians aged 10-17 in unsentenced detention was relatively stable over time ranging from 0.8 per 10,000 to 1.1 per 10,000 (Table S36).

The Indigenous rate ratios in sentenced detention and unsentenced detention were relatively similar for all quarters. The exception to this was the March quarter 2019 and March to September quarters 2021, where there was a sharp increase in the Indigenous rate ratio for sentenced detention (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Young Indigenous Australians aged 10-17 in detention, by legal status, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (rate ratio)

This line graph shows the level of Indigenous over-representation as a rate ratio, which compares the rate of young Indigenous Australians to that of young non-Indigenous Australians. The 3 lines show the rate ratio for sentenced detention, unsentenced detention, and the total of both. Over the 4-year period, the level of Indigenous over-representation in detention fluctuated, at a rate 16-26 times the non-Indigenous rate.

Figure 4.3: Young Indigenous Australians aged 10–17 in detention, by legal status, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (rate ratio)



Note: Rate ratio is calculated by dividing the Indigenous rate by the non-Indigenous rate.
Source: tables S18, S36, S54.

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State and territory trends

Numbers

Throughout the 4-year period Queensland (194-290 young people each quarter) and New South Wales (172-289) had the largest number of young people in detention. This was followed by Victoria (109-198), and Western Australia (88-152) (Figure 5.1). Since the September quarter 2020, Queensland has had the largest number of young people in detention on an average night.

The size of the youth detention population fell in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, and South Australia from the June quarter 2018 to the June quarter 2022. In Tasmania the number of young people in youth detention was small, but down slightly compared to the June quarter 2018 (Figure 5.1).

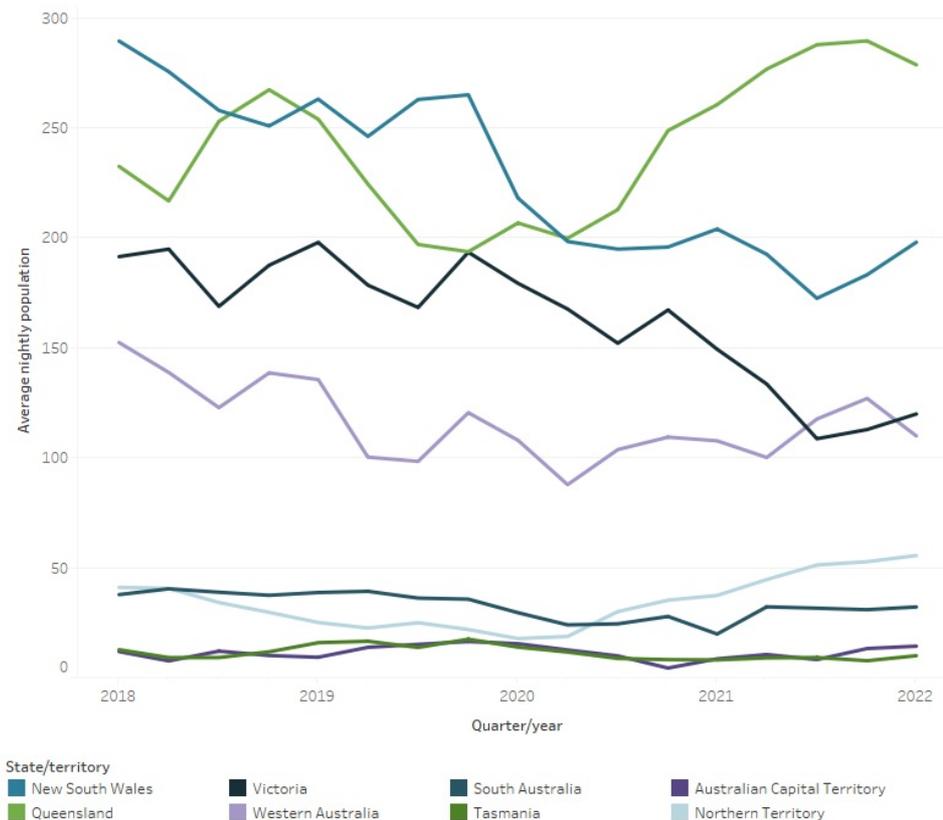
In Queensland and the Northern Territory, there was an increase in the number of young people in detention from the June quarter 2021 to the June quarter 2022 (Figure 5.1).

In the Australian Capital Territory, the number of young people in youth detention was small, but up slightly compared to the June quarter 2018 (Table S11).

Figure 5.1: Young people in detention on an average night, by state and territory, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (number)

This line graph presents 8 lines showing the average nightly youth detention population for each state and territory over the 4-year period. New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, and Western Australia had the highest numbers of young people in detention on an average night. South Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, and the Northern Territory had less than 100 young people in detention on an average night.

Figure 5.1: Young people in detention on an average night, by state and territory, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (number)



Source: Table S11.

[Hover for notes]

Table 5.1: Young people in detention on an average night, by state and territory, June quarter 2018, 2021, and 2022 (number)

Quarter	Detention type	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
June quarter 2018	Sentenced	122.1	117.8	31.1	77.6	17.5	4.8	4.6	29.4	404.8
June quarter 2020	Sentenced	76.2	57.9	32.3	44.1	3.1	1.6	2.9	11.2	229.3
June quarter 2022	Sentenced	46.5	42.4	30.4	34.9	12.8	2.8	3.6	9.2	182.6

June quarter 2018	Unsentenced	167.3	73.6	201.4	74.7	20.3	7.9	7.3	11.7	564.2
June quarter 2021	Unsentenced	127.7	91.4	228.3	63.6	16.8	6.5	5.7	26.1	566.1
June quarter 2022	Unsentenced	151.5	77.5	248.2	75.0	19.3	7.2	10.7	46.3	635.7
June quarter 2018	Total	289.4	191.4	232.4	152.4	37.8	12.7	11.9	41.1	969.0
June quarter 2021	Total	204.0	149.3	260.5	107.7	19.8	8.1	8.6	37.4	795.3
June quarter 2022	Total	198.0	119.9	278.6	109.9	32.2	10.0	14.3	55.5	818.3

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 over 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. For Queensland, the June quarter 2018 and the June quarter 2021 are not comparable, due to legislation to increase the age limit in the youth justice system from 16 to 17 enacted in the March quarter 2018. This change resulted in an increase in young people aged 17 under youth justice supervision.

Source: tables S11, S29, and S47.

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State and territory trends

Rates

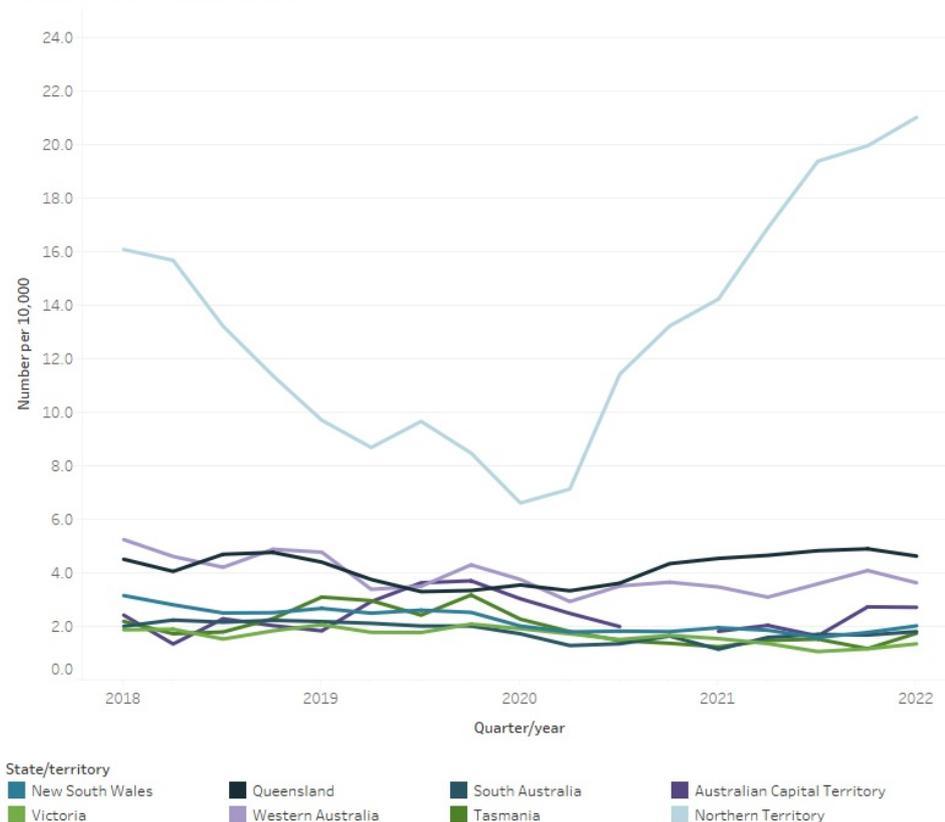
On an average night in the June quarter 2022, the rate of young people aged 10-17 in detention ranged from 1.3 per 10,000 in Victoria to 21 per 10,000 in the Northern Territory. Queensland had the second highest rate of young people aged 10-17 in detention at 4.6 per 10,000. Rates in Victoria (1.1-2.1 per 10,000) and South Australia (1.1-2.2 per 10,000) were generally lower than other states and territories (Figure 5.2).

Over the 4-year period, the Northern Territory consistently had the highest rate of young people in detention on an average night each quarter (6.6-21 per 10,000 aged 10-17). This rate was at its peak in the June quarter 2022 (21 per 10,000) and lowest in the June quarter 2020 (6.6 per 10,000). In this period, there were declines in the rate of young people in detention on an average night in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia (Table S18).

In the Northern Territory, from the June quarter 2020 to the June quarter 2022 there continued to be a sharp increase in the rate of young people in detention on an average night from 6.6 per 10,000 in the June quarter 2020 to 21 per 10,000 in the June quarter 2022 (Figure 5.2). Figure 5.2: Young people aged 10-17 in detention on an average night, by state and territory, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (rate)

This line graph presents 8 lines showing the rate of young people per 10,000 aged 10-17 in detention in each state and territory on an average night over the 4-year period. It shows that the Northern Territory consistently had the highest rate of young people in detention on an average night, all other states and territories reported a rate below 6 per 10,000.

Figure 5.2: Young people aged 10-17 in detention on an average night, by state and territory, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (rate)



Source: Table S18.

[Hover for notes]

Rates for young people aged 10-13 for states and territories are not reported, as numbers in most jurisdictions are too low for rates to be reliably calculated.

Table 5.2: Young people aged 10-17 in detention on an average night, by state and territory, June quarter 2018, 2021, and 2022 (rate per 10,000)

Quarter	Detention type	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
June quarter 2018	Sentenced	1.2	0.8	0.6	2.3	0.8	—	—	11.5	1.1

June quarter 2021	Sentenced	0.6	0.2	0.5	1.2	–	–	–	4.3	0.5
June quarter 2022	Sentenced	0.4	0.2	0.5	1.0	0.7	–	–	3.5	0.5
June quarter 2018	Unsentenced	2.0	1.1	3.9	2.9	1.2	1.4	1.6	4.6	2.2
June quarter 2021	Unsentenced	1.4	1.3	4.1	2.3	1.0	1.1	1.4	9.9	2.1
June quarter 2022	Unsentenced	1.6	1.1	4.1	2.7	1.1	1.2	2.1	17.5	2.3
June quarter 2018	Total	3.2	1.9	4.5	5.2	2.0	2.2	2.4	16.1	3.4
June quarter 2022	Total	1.9	1.5	4.5	3.5	1.1	1.2	1.8	14.2	2.6
June quarter 2022	Total	2.0	1.3	4.6	3.6	1.8	1.7	2.7	21.0	2.8

Notes

1. Rates are for young people aged 10-17. Numbers include young people aged 18 or over who are under youth justice supervision. For numbers of young people aged 10-17 only, refer to the supplementary tables.
2. 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.
3. 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').
4. For Queensland, the June quarter 2018 and the June quarter 2021 are not comparable, due to legislation to increase the age limit in the youth justice system from 16 to 17 enacted in the March quarter 2018. This change resulted in an increase in young people aged 17 under youth justice supervision.

Source: tables S18, S36, and S54.

Sentenced and unsentenced detention

On an average night in the June quarter 2022, the rate of young people aged 10-17:

- in unsentenced detention ranged from 1.1 per 10,000 in South Australia and Victoria to 17.5 per 10,000 in the Northern Territory
- in sentenced detention ranged from 0.2 per 10,000 in Victoria to 3.5 per 10,000 in Northern Territory (among the states and territories for which data is available, Table 5.2).

Over the 4-year period, the rate of young people in unsentenced detention on an average night declined in New South Wales (2.0 to 1.6 per 10,000) (Table 5.2). Trends could not be reliably determined in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, while other states showed no clear trend.

In the Northern Territory, the rate of young people in unsentenced detention on an average night sharply increased from the June quarter 2018 to the June quarter 2022 (4.6 to 17.5 per 10,000, respectively) (Table 5.2).

Between the June quarter 2018 and the June quarter 2022, the rate of young people in sentenced detention fell in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Trends could not be reliably determined in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

On an average night in the June quarter 2022, the rate of young Indigenous Australians aged 10-17 in detention ranged from 12 per 10,000 in Victoria to 46 per 10,000 in Northern Territory.

The non-Indigenous rate ranged from 0.8 per 10,000 in New South Wales and Western Australia to 2.1 per 10,000 in Australian Capital Territory (tables S1, S6, and S18).

Among the states and territories for which rate ratios could be calculated, the rate ratio ranged from 10 times the non-Indigenous rate in Victoria to 58 times in Western Australia in the June quarter 2022 (Table S18).

Over the 4-year period, the rate of young Indigenous Australians aged 10-17 in detention has fallen in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, and South Australia; leading to subsequent declines in the rate ratios for these states except for New South Wales and Western Australia (Table S18). The rate ratio was lowest in Victoria, at 5.0-14, and highest in Western Australia, at 34-58 (Figure 5.3).

Due to the small rates of young non-Indigenous Australians in detention, notably in Western Australia and South Australia, variances can cause large fluctuations in the rate ratio.

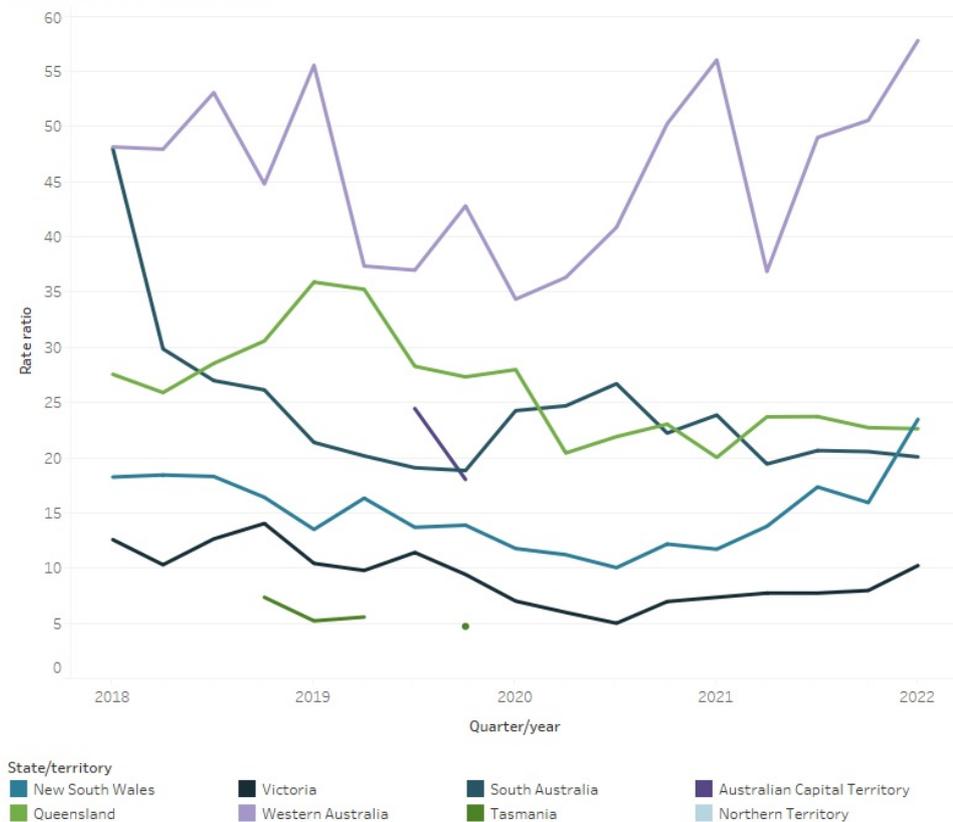
For most quarters, rate ratios could not be calculated for:

- Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, due to the small number of Indigenous Australians
- Northern Territory, due to the small number of non-Indigenous Australians.

Figure 5.3: Young people aged 10-17 in detention, by selected states, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (rate ratio)

This line graph presents lines for 5 Australian states (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, and South Australia), showing the level of Indigenous over-representation in youth detention. The rate ratio was highest in Western Australia for most quarters over the 4-year period, except June quarter 2018, when both South Australia and Western Australia had the highest rate. Victoria had the lowest rate ratio over the 4-year period. Due to insufficient numbers, for most quarters the rate ratio could not be calculated for the Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania, and the Northern Territory.

Figure 5.3: Young Indigenous people aged 10–17 in detention, by state and territory, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022 (rate ratio)



Source: Table S18.

[Hover for notes]

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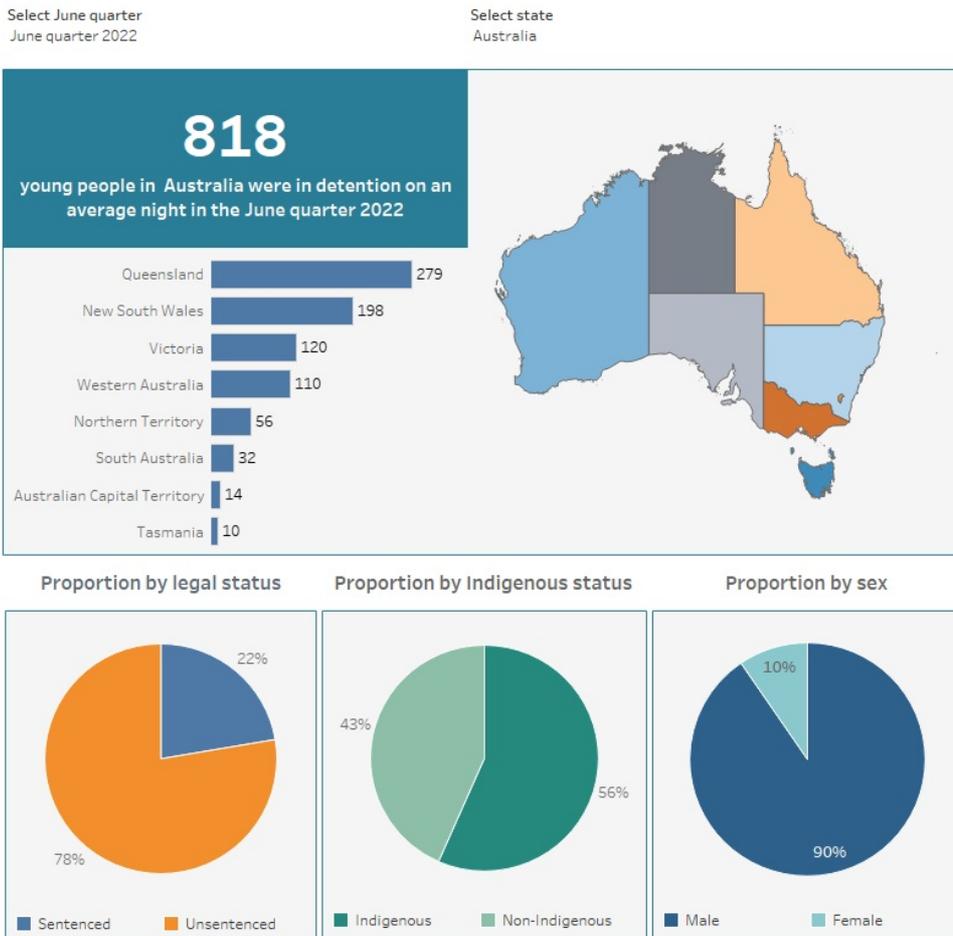
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Data visualisation

Number of young people in detention

This figure shows the number of young people in detention on an average night in Australia. It includes data for the June quarter 2022 and each state and territory. Additionally, it presents the proportion of young people in detention by legal status, Indigenous status and sex. This figure shows that there were 818 young people in Australia that were in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022. Queensland had the highest number of young people in detention on an average night, while Tasmania had the lowest (279 compared with 10 young people). Nearly 4 in 5 (78%) of young people in detention were in unsentenced detention; more than half were Indigenous (56%); and 9 in 10 (91%) were male.

Figure: Number of young people in detention on an average night in Australia, June quarter 2022



Source: AIHW 2022. Youth detention population in Australia 2022, <<http://www.aihw.gov.au>>

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Data visualisation

Rates of youth detention

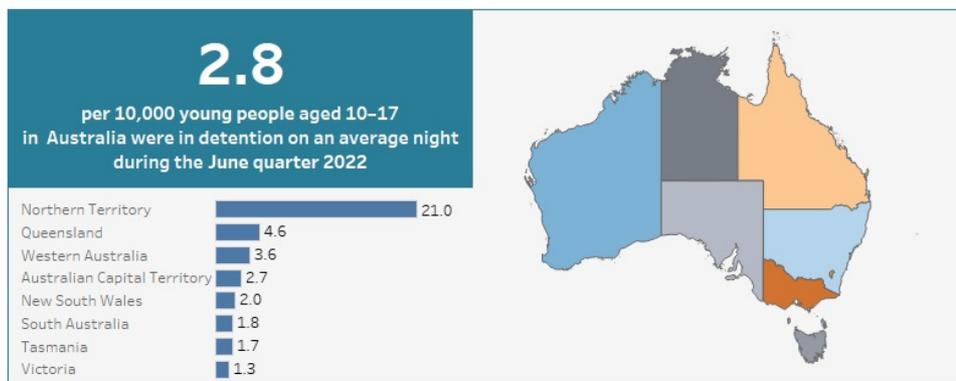
This figure shows the rate per 10,000 young people aged 10-17 in detention on an average night in Australia. It includes data for the June quarter 2022 and each state and territory. Additionally, it presents trends for each state and territory from the June quarter 2018 to the June quarter 2022.

This figure shows that there were 2.8 per 10,000 young people aged 10-17 in Australia that were in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022. The Northern Territory had the highest rate of young people in detention on an average night, while Victoria had the lowest (21.0 compared with 1.3 young people). The trend figure shows that since the Northern Territory has the highest rate of young people aged 10-17 in detention on an average night, ranging from 6.6 young people per 10,000 in June quarter 2020 to 21.0 young people per 10,000 in June 2022. All other states and territories had rates of less than 6 young people per 10,000 for each quarter over the 4-year period.

Figure: Rate of young people in Australia aged 10-17 (per 10,000 population) in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2022

Select June quarter
June quarter 2022

Select state
Australia



June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022



Source: AIHW 2022. Youth detention population in Australia 2022, <<http://www.aihw.gov.au>>

[Hover for notes]

Last updated 14/11/2022 v2.0

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Data visualisation

Trends in the youth detention

This figure shows the number of young people in detention on an average night in Australia, from the June quarter 2018 to the June quarter 2022, by legal status and Indigenous status. It presents an additional trend figure that highlights the rate ratio level of Indigenous to non-Indigenous young people aged 10-17 in detention by legal status.

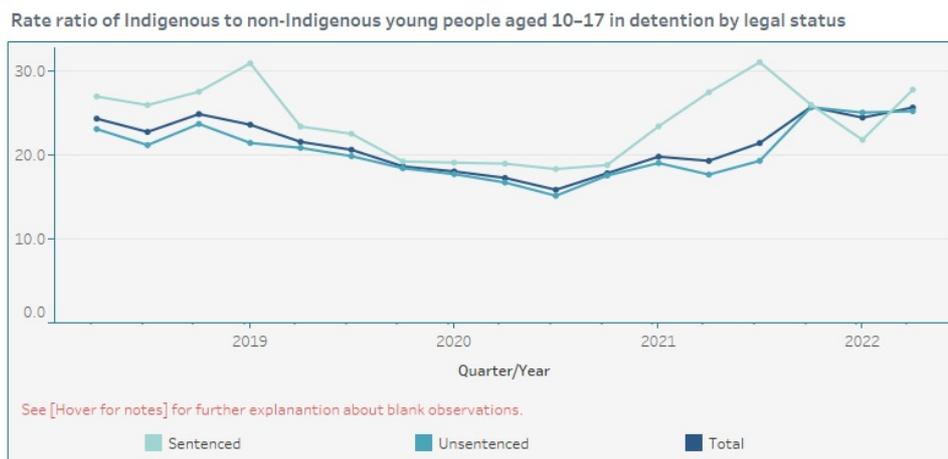
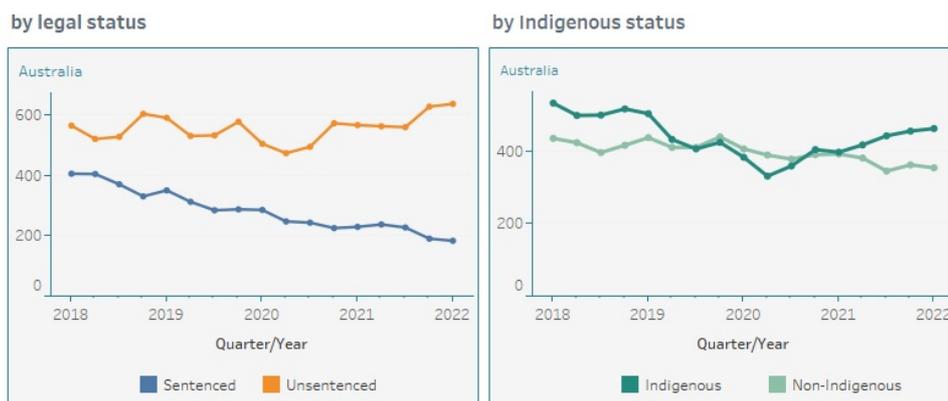
The first graph in this figure shows that more young people in detention were unsentenced than sentenced over the 4-year period. The number of young people in sentenced detention declined overall from the June quarter 2019. The number of young people in unsentenced detention tended to be higher in the March and June quarters each year and lower in September and December quarters. The exception was the June quarter 2020 where the rate was lower.

The second graph in this figure shows that the proportion of young Indigenous Australians in detention was slightly lower than young non-Indigenous Australians on an average night between the December quarter 2019 to the December quarter 2020. This difference was greatest in the September quarter 2020.

The third graph in this figure shows that over the 4-year period, the level of Indigenous over-representation in detention fluctuated, at a rate 16-26 times the non-Indigenous rate.

Figure: Number of young people in detention on an average night in Australia, June quarter 2018 to June quarter 2022

State
Australia



Source: AIHW 2022. Youth detention population in Australia 2022. <<http://www.aihw.gov.au>>

[Hover for notes]

Technical notes

Youth detention data sources

This report was compiled using 2 data sources. States and territories provided data on the average nightly population per quarter between July 2020 and June 2021. These data were used to supplement the 2020-21 YJ NMDS, which contains data up to and including 30 June 2021 for all states and territories.

This report is not comparable with previous editions of *Youth detention population in Australia*. Previous editions contained differences in data formats, specifications, definitions and/or quality across jurisdictions. Comparisons between YJ NMDS and youth detention population data should be made with caution.

A data quality statement for the YJ NMDS 2020-21 is available at [Youth Justice NMDS 2020-21: Quality statement - external site opens in new window](#).

Youth detention reports

In addition to this report, 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 report is slightly different from the presentation in *Youth justice in Australia*:

- This report presents the average nightly population for each quarter, while *Youth justice in Australia* presents the average daily population for each year. These data are reported differently because unit record data are not available for all reporting years for the youth detention population in Australia.
- Young people who are concurrently unsentenced and sentenced are classified as sentenced in this report, 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 publications).

Age

In this report, numbers of young people in detention include all age groups unless otherwise specified. Population rates include young people aged 10-17 only (see 'Rates' in this section).

The age on an average night each quarter is calculated based on the age a young person is each night that they are in detention. If a young person changes age during a period of detention, then the average nightly number in detention will reflect this.

For example, where a young person turns 18 during a period of detention, any nights spent in detention (sentenced or unsentenced) aged 18 will only be counted in quarterly average nightly population for the 18+ age group. Similarly, nights spent in detention before a young person has turned 18 will only be counted in the 10-17 age group.

Average nightly data broken down by age are not comparable to *Youth detention population in Australia* releases prior to 2020.

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.

Indigenous status

Information on Indigenous status has been collected since the implementation of the YJ NMDS. Nationally, the proportion of young people with 'not stated' Indigenous status was between <0.2% and 1.0% each quarter between the June quarter 2018 and the June quarter 2022. This proportion was low (2.3% or less each quarter) in all states and territories.

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. Some jurisdictions have taken steps to improve their data collection forms and information systems in recent years to address this issue.

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 report.

Rates

Population rates enable different groups to be compared, 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 over can be detained in youth justice facilities, rates are restricted to those aged 10-13, 14-17 and 10-17. Crude rates are presented in this report.

The number of young people in detention on an average night during a quarter is rounded to the nearest person in text. The rate is calculated using the number on an average day before rounding.

In the text of this report, rates are presented to 1 decimal place for rates less than 10, and to the nearest whole number for rates 10 and over. Rates are presented to 3 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 report.

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). But these young people contribute to overall state and national rates. The calculation of rates for young Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians excludes young people with unknown Indigenous status.

Population data used in the calculation of rates are provided in tables S55a, S55b and S55c.

Rate ratios

Rates for different groups can be compared using a rate ratio, which is the ratio of 2 rates. In this report, 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 report are not calculated where 1 or both of the rates have fewer than 5 young people in the numerator. But these young people contribute to overall state and national rate ratios.

Rounding

The average nightly population is rounded to whole numbers, so components might not sum to the totals.

Rate ratios were calculated using rates rounded to 3 decimal places. Proportions were calculated using average nightly numbers rounded to 3 decimal places. Numbers and rates displayed in figures are rounded, as presented in the supplementary tables.

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Technical notes

Abbreviations

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

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Technical notes

Symbols

– nil or rounded to zero

n.p. not publishable because of small numbers, confidentiality or other concerns about the quality of the data

n.a. not available

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Notes

Data quality statement

[Youth Justice National Minimum Data Set, 2020-21 - external site opens in new window](#)

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Data

[Supplementary tables: Youth detention population in Australia 2022](#)

Data

XLSX 334Kb

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[Young people returning to sentenced youth justice supervision 2019-20](#)

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