



# Youth justice in Australia 2014–15

## Summary

This bulletin examines the numbers and rates of young people who were under youth justice supervision in Australia during 2014–15 because of their involvement or alleged involvement in crime. It explores key aspects of their supervision, both in the community and in detention, as well as recent trends.

### About 5,600 young people were under youth justice supervision on an average day

In 2014–15, there were around 5,600 young people (aged 10 and older) who were under youth justice supervision on an average day. Among those aged 10–17, this equates to a rate of 21 per 10,000 or about 1 in every 466 young people.

Most (82%) young people under supervision on an average day were male; 79% were aged 14–17; and 2 in 5 (43%) were Indigenous.

### Few young people in detention

Almost 900 (16%) young people under supervision on an average day in 2014–15 were in detention; most (about 4,800 or 85%) were supervised in the community (note that totals may not sum due to rounding, and some young people may have been under community-based supervision and in detention on the same day). More than half (54%) of those in detention were unsentenced (awaiting the outcome of their legal matter or sentencing).

### Consistent decreases in the number and rate of young people under supervision

The 5-year period to 2014–15 showed a steady decrease in the number and rate of young people under supervision on an average day. Overall, the number under supervision fell by 23%, while the rate dropped from 28 to 21 per 10,000 young people aged 10–17.

This decrease occurred in both community-based supervision (where the rate dropped from 24 to 18 per 10,000 aged 10–17) and detention (from 4 to 3 per 10,000).

### Indigenous supervision rates decreased, but over-representation continued to rise

Over the 5-year period, rates of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people under supervision fell. This decrease was proportionally greater for non-Indigenous young people (from 17 to 12 per 10,000 aged 10–17) than for Indigenous young people (from 213 to 180 per 10,000), which resulted in an increase in the level of over-representation of Indigenous young people. Indigenous young people aged 10–17 were 13 times as likely as non-Indigenous young people to be under supervision on an average day in 2010–11, rising to 15 times as likely in 2014–15.

### Rates of supervision varied among the states and territories

The rate of young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day in 2014–15 was lowest in Victoria at 14 per 10,000 and highest in the Northern Territory at 54 per 10,000.

Over the 5-year period to 2014–15, rates of supervision decreased in most states and territories except Queensland and the Northern Territory where there was no consistent trend (note data for the Northern Territory for 2010–11 were not available).

Variations in the rates of supervision among the states and territories reflect differences in legislation, policy and practices in the respective youth justice systems, including types of supervised orders and options for diversion that are available.

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## Introduction

### The youth justice system

The set of processes and practices for managing children and young people who have committed, or allegedly committed, an offence is known as the youth justice system. Each state and territory in Australia has its own youth justice legislation, policies and practices. However, the general processes by which young people are charged and sentenced, and the types of legal orders available to the courts, are similar.

Young people can be charged with a criminal offence if they are aged 10 and older. The upper age limit for treatment as a young person is 17 in all states and territories except Queensland, where the age limit is 16. Separate justice systems exist for young people and adults.

Some young people aged 18 and older are also involved in the youth justice system.

This may be due to the offence being committed when the young person was aged 17 or younger; the continuation of supervision once they turn 18; or their vulnerability or immaturity. Also, in Victoria, some young people aged 18–20 may be sentenced to detention in a youth facility under the ‘dual track’ sentencing system, which is intended to prevent young people from entering the adult prison system at an early age.

Young people generally first make contact with the youth justice system when police investigate them for allegedly committing a crime. Legal action that police undertake may include court actions (the laying of charges to be answered in court) and non-court actions (such as cautions, conferencing, counselling or infringement notices).

A court may decide to dismiss the charge, divert the young person from further involvement in the system (for example by referral to mainstream services), or transfer them to specialist courts or programs. If the matter proceeds and the charge is proven, the court may hand down any of a number of orders, either supervised or unsupervised.

### Youth justice supervision

One major aspect of youth justice is therefore the supervision of young people on legal orders. They may be supervised in the community or in secure detention facilities.

The notion that young people should be placed in detention only as a last resort is one of the key principles upon which Australia’s youth justice systems are based. This principle is currently found in youth justice legislation in each state and territory (with the exception of Queensland, which revised its legislation to remove the principle of detention as a last resort in March 2014). It is also consistent with the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN CRC) and the Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (‘The Beijing Rules’) (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 1985, 1989). The UN CRC states that children should be deprived of liberty only as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time. Accordingly, most young people under youth justice supervision are supervised in the community rather than in detention.

Young people may be supervised when they are unsentenced—that is, when they have been charged with an offence and are awaiting the outcome of their court matter, or when they have been found or have pleaded guilty and are awaiting sentencing. However, most of those under supervision have been proven guilty in court and sentenced.

### This bulletin

This bulletin presents information on the young people who were under youth justice supervision during 2014–15, both in the community and in detention. It also explores the characteristics of their supervision and recent trends.

In this bulletin, numbers of young people under supervision relate to young people of all ages (including those aged 18 and over who are under the youth justice system) unless otherwise specified. Population rates are only calculated for young people aged 10–17 due to the differences in age limits among the states and territories.

The information in this bulletin is based on data from the Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set (JJ NMDS), along with non-standard data for Western Australia and the Northern Territory (see ‘Technical notes’ section later in this bulletin for more details). Unless otherwise stated, Australian national totals include Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

This bulletin is part of the *Youth justice in Australia 2014–15* release, which includes supplementary tables (those with a prefix of S), fact sheets and web pages. These can all be downloaded free of charge from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) website at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/youth-justice/>.

## Number and rate under supervision

### National

In 2014–15, there were 5,629 young people (aged 10 and over) who were under youth justice supervision in Australia on an average day (Table 1). A total of 11,360 young people were supervised at some time during the year.

Most (4,785 or 85%) young people under supervision on an average day were supervised in the community, and the remainder (883 or 16%) were in detention (note that totals may not sum due to rounding, and because some young people may have been under community-based supervision and in detention on the same day).

Despite the low proportion of young people under supervision who were in detention on an average day (16%), many young people experienced detention at some time during the year. About 2 in every 5 young people (42%) who were supervised during 2014–15 were in detention at some time during the year; this proportion ranged from 20% in Tasmania to 64% in the Northern Territory (Table 1). This difference reflects the fact that young people spent substantially less time in detention, on average, than under community-based supervision (see ‘Technical notes’).

The rate of young people aged 10–17 under youth justice supervision on an average day was just over 21 per 10,000, which equates to about 1 in every 466 young people. There were 18 young people per 10,000 aged 10–17 under community-based supervision on an average day, and 3 per 10,000 in detention.

**Table 1: Young people under supervision, by supervision type, states and territories, 2014–15**

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
<b>Number—all ages</b>									
<b>Average day<sup>(a)</sup></b>									
Community	1,151	1,014	1,359	607	308	138	72	136	4,785
Detention	292	145	172	162	50	10	10	41	883
All supervision	1,436	1,155	1,524	754	357	148	82	174	5,629
<b>During the year</b>									
Community	2,459	2,157	2,634	1,627	678	260	139	285	10,239
Detention	1,480	679	921	822	420	52	91	256	4,721
All supervision	2,925	2,246	2,716	1,813	836	264	161	399	11,360
<b>Rate—age 10–17 (number per 10,000)</b>									
<b>Average day</b>									
Community	15.5	12.8	25.8	22.8	15.4	18.7	19.3	39.2	18.2
Detention	3.3	1.5	3.5	6.1	2.9	1.8	2.3	15.6	3.3
All supervision	18.8	14.4	29.2	28.5	18.4	20.6	21.9	54.1	21.5
<b>During the year</b>									
Community	32.3	25.8	50.3	60.4	33.3	34.9	36.0	88.1	38.5
Detention	18.4	8.6	18.9	31.9	24.3	9.0	22.2	96.0	18.8
All supervision	37.1	26.8	52.0	68.0	42.4	36.1	40.6	131.7	42.7

(a) Numbers of young people on an average day may not sum to the total, due to rounding and because some young people may have moved between community-based supervision and detention on the same day.

#### Notes

1. Includes non-standard data for Western Australia and the Northern Territory, as JJ NMDS data were not supplied for 2014–15 (see 'Technical notes' section).
2. See 'Technical notes' section for more information about 'average day' and 'during the year' measures.

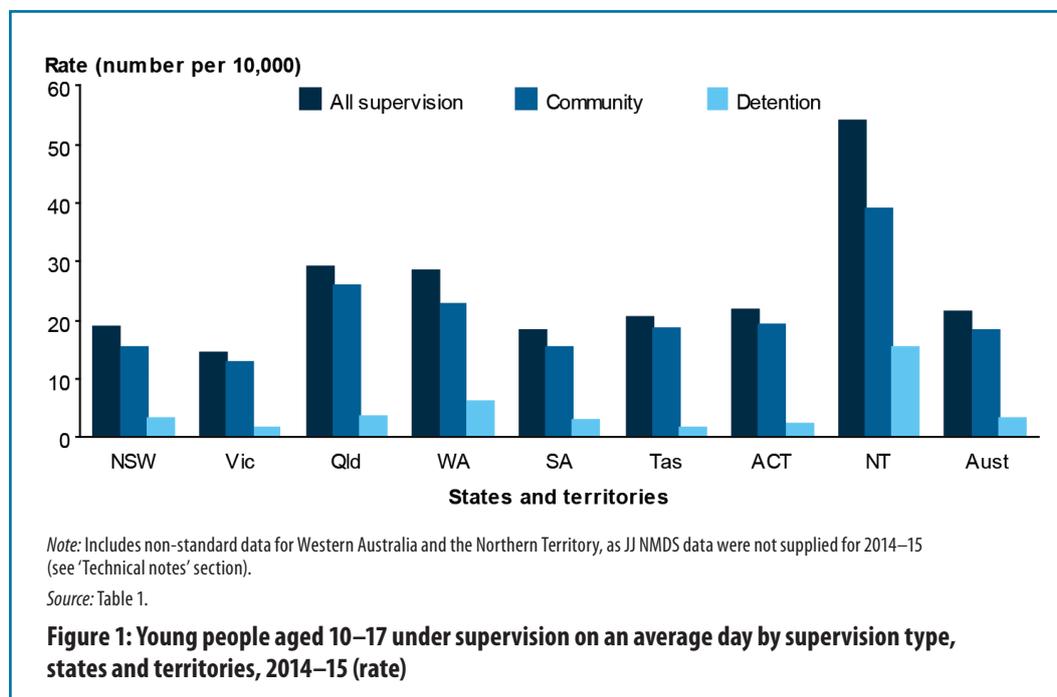
Sources: Table S1, S4, S36, S39, S74 and S77.

## States and territories

Among the states and territories, Queensland had the largest group of young people under supervision on an average day. Young people in Queensland accounted for more than one-quarter (27%) of all those under supervision on an average day (Table S1a). This was followed by New South Wales (26%). Queensland had the largest group under community-based supervision on an average day (28%), while New South Wales had the largest group in detention (33%).

Rates of young people under supervision varied among the states and territories (Figure 1). These variations may reflect differences in legislation, policy and practices in the respective youth justice systems, including the types of supervised orders and options for diversion that are available (Detailed information is available from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/youth-justice/states-territories>). In 2014–15, the rate of young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day was lowest in Victoria at 14 per 10,000 and highest in the Northern Territory at 54 per 10,000.

In community-based supervision, the rate of young people aged 10–17 on an average day ranged from 13 per 10,000 in Victoria to 39 per 10,000 in the Northern Territory. In detention, it ranged from less than 2 per 10,000 in Victoria to 16 per 10,000 in the Northern Territory.



## Young people under supervision

### Age and sex

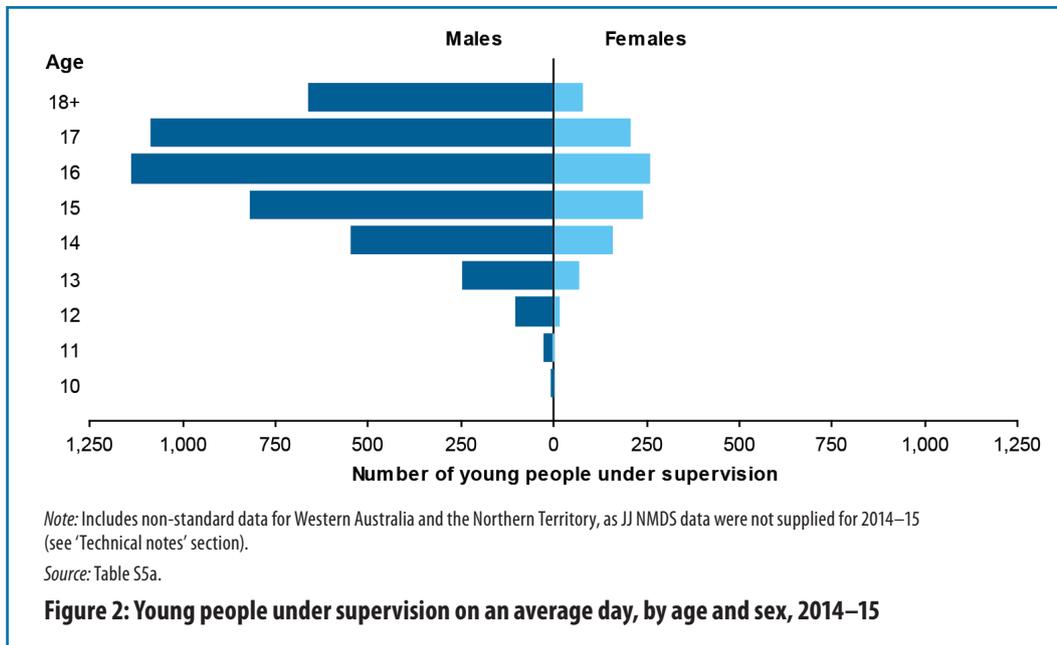
About 4 in 5 young people (82%) under supervision on an average day in 2014–15 were male (Figure 2 and Table S2a). This proportion was higher among those in detention (91%) (Table S75a). Among young people aged 10–17, males were about 4 times as likely as females to be under supervision on an average day (rates of 34 and 8 per 10,000, respectively) (Table S4a).

Males under supervision substantially outnumbered females in all the states and territories, with the proportion of young males under supervision on an average day ranging from 77% in Queensland to 86% in Victoria and the Northern Territory (Table S2a).

Most (79%) young people under supervision on an average day were aged 14–17 (Figure 2 and Table S7a). Both numbers and rates of young people under supervision were highest among those aged 16 (1,395 young people or 48 per 10,000) (tables S1a and S6a). About 13% were aged 18 or older and 8% were aged 10–13 (Table S7a).

There are variations among the states and territories in the age profiles of young people under supervision. In Queensland, young people aged 17 or over at the time that they allegedly commit offences are processed in the adult criminal justice system. This results in a younger population, on average, under youth justice supervision in Queensland (12% aged 10–13) (Table S7a). Conversely, in Victoria, some young people aged 18–20 may be sentenced to detention in a youth facility (known as the 'dual track' system) which results in an older population, on average (32% aged 18 and over).

A greater proportion of males than females were in the older age groups (aged 17 years or older) (Figure 2). In 2014–15, about 38% of males under supervision were aged 17 or older, compared with 28% of females (Table S5a).



### Indigenous young people under supervision

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

Although less than 6% of young people aged 10–17 in Australia are Indigenous, more than 2 in 5 (43%) young people under supervision on an average day in 2014–15 were Indigenous (tables S2a and S144). This proportion was higher in detention, where more than half (54%) were Indigenous (S75a).

In 2014–15, the rate of Indigenous young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day was 180 per 10,000, compared with 12 per 10,000 for non-Indigenous young people (Table 2). Indigenous young people aged 10–17 were therefore about 15 times as likely as non-Indigenous young people to be under supervision on an average day.

This level of Indigenous over-representation (as measured by the rate ratio; see 'Technical notes' section) was higher in detention (24 times as likely) than in community-based supervision (14 times).

Indigenous young people were over-represented in youth justice supervision in each state and territory (Figure 3). The rate of Indigenous young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day was lowest in Tasmania (32 per 10,000) and highest in Western Australia (285 per 10,000). Similarly, the level of Indigenous over-representation (rate ratio) was lowest in Tasmania, where it was less than twice the non-Indigenous rate, and highest in Western Australia (27 times) (Table 2).

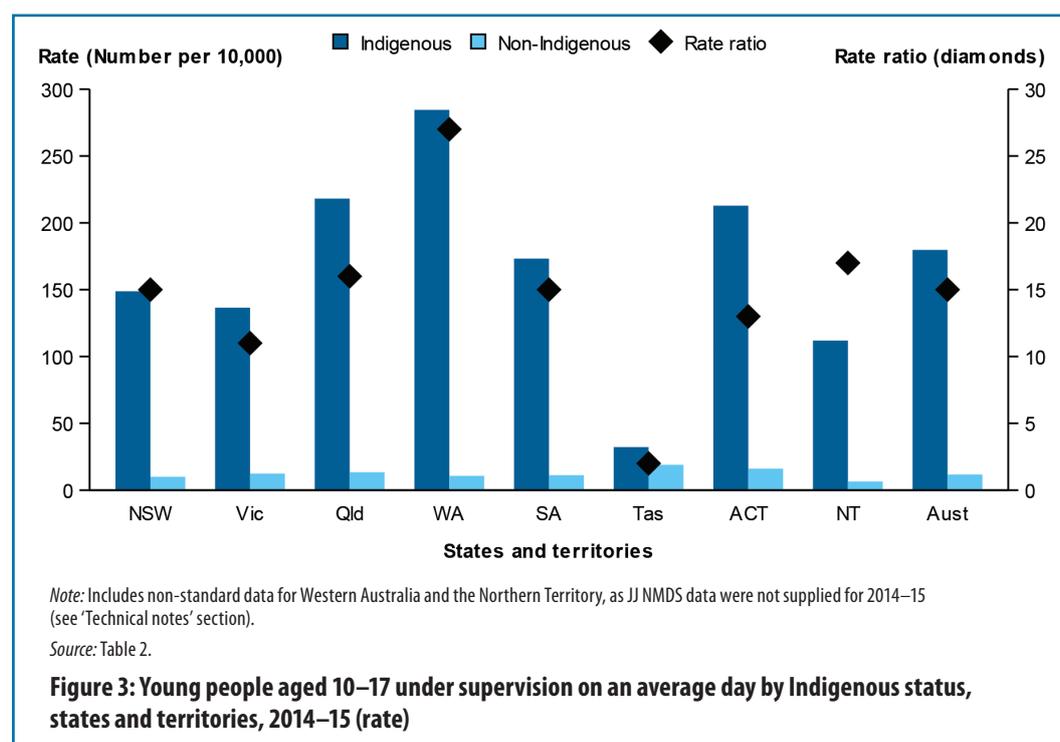
**Table 2: Young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day by Indigenous status, states and territories, 2014–15 (rate)**

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
<b>Community-based supervision rate</b>									
Indigenous	115.2	119.0	188.9	220.4	138.8	28.6	178.9	80.1	145.8
Non-Indigenous	8.5	11.0	12.1	9.1	9.7	17.2	14.5	5.2	10.3
<i>All young people</i>	<i>15.5</i>	<i>12.8</i>	<i>25.8</i>	<i>22.8</i>	<i>15.4</i>	<i>18.7</i>	<i>19.3</i>	<i>39.2</i>	<i>18.2</i>
Rate ratio	14	11	16	24	14	2	12	15	14
<b>Detention rate</b>									
Indigenous	33.8	15.2	30.3	69.7	34.1	n.p.	n.p.	33.1	34.9
Non-Indigenous	1.6	1.3	1.4	1.7	1.4	1.6	1.5	n.p.	1.5
<i>All young people</i>	<i>3.3</i>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>3.5</i>	<i>6.1</i>	<i>2.9</i>	<i>1.8</i>	<i>2.3</i>	<i>15.6</i>	<i>3.3</i>
Rate ratio	22	12	22	40	24	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	24
<b>All supervision rate</b>									
Indigenous	148.8	136.5	218.1	284.5	173.2	32.2	212.8	111.9	179.7
Non-Indigenous	10.0	12.4	13.4	10.7	11.2	19.0	16.1	6.5	11.7
<b>All young people</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>28.5</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>21.9</b>	<b>54.1</b>	<b>21.5</b>
Rate ratio	15	11	16	27	15	2	13	17	15

*Notes*

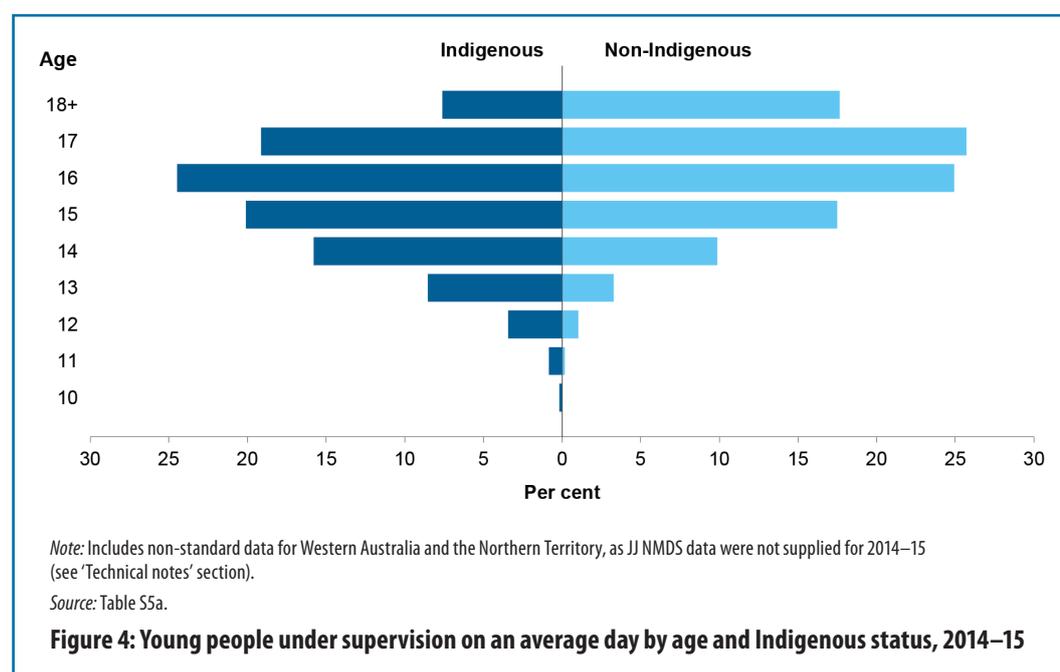
1. Includes non-standard data for Western Australia and the Northern Territory, as JJ NMDS data were not supplied for 2014–15 (see 'Technical notes' section).
2. Rates are not published where there were fewer than 5 young people.
3. As some denominators may be less than 10,000, rates should be interpreted with caution.
4. The rate ratio is calculated by dividing the Indigenous rate by the non-Indigenous rate.

Sources: Table S4a, S39a and S77a.



On average, Indigenous young people under supervision were younger than non-Indigenous young people (Figure 4). This was the case for both males and females. In 2014–15, about half (49%) of all Indigenous young people under supervision on an average day were aged 10–15, compared with almost one-third (32%) of non-Indigenous young people (Table S5a).

Similar proportions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people under supervision were male (80% and 83%, respectively) (Table S5a).



### Remoteness and socioeconomic position

Most young people under supervision on an average day in 2014–15 lived in *Major cities* (39%) or *Inner and outer regional areas* (34%) before entering supervision (based on postcode of last address) (Table S21a). (Western Australia and the Northern Territory are excluded from this section, as data were not available.)

However, young people from geographically remote areas had the highest rates of supervision. In 2014–15, young people aged 10–17 who were from *Remote* areas were almost 7 times as likely to be under supervision on an average day as those from *Major cities* (79 per 10,000 compared with 12 per 10,000), while those from *Very remote* areas were 9 times as likely (106 compared with 12 per 10,000) (Table S22a).

Almost one-third (32%) of those under supervision on an average day were from the lowest socioeconomic areas (based on postcode of last address) (Table S23a). Young people aged 10–17 from the lowest socioeconomic areas were about 6 times as likely to be under supervision as those from the highest socioeconomic areas (30 per 10,000 compared with 5 per 10,000) (Table S24a).

Consistent with the geographical distribution of the Indigenous population in Australia, Indigenous young people under supervision on an average day were more likely than non-Indigenous young people to have lived in *Remote* or *Very remote* areas before entering supervision (12% compared with less than 1%) (Table S21a). They were also more likely to have lived in the lowest socioeconomic areas before entering supervision (41% compared with 27%) (Table S23a).

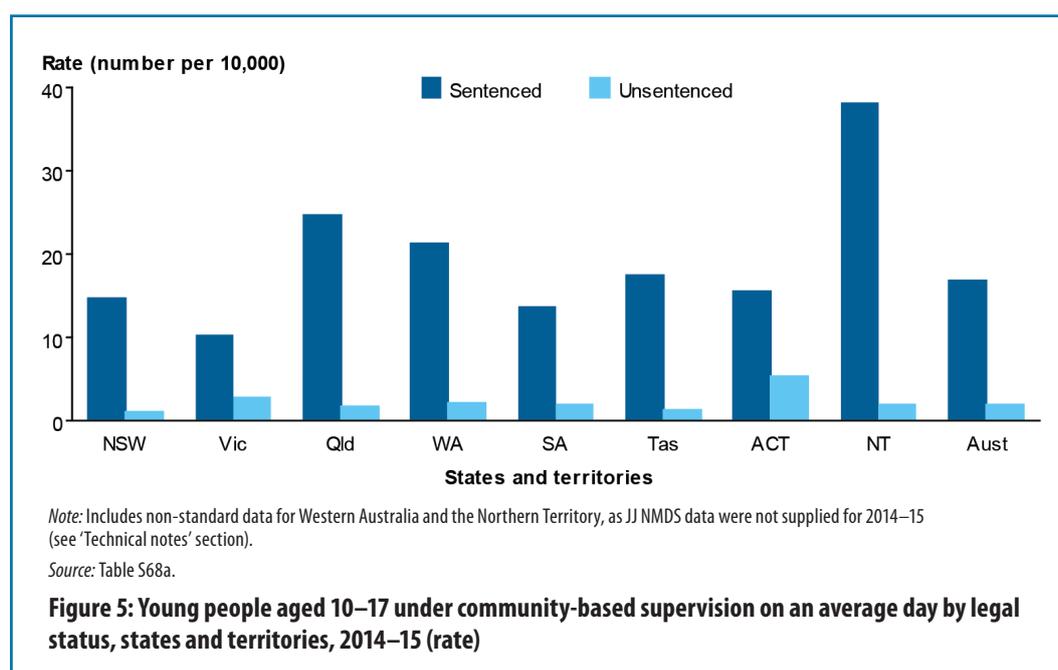
## Types of supervision

### Community-based supervision

Community-based supervision results from both unsentenced and sentenced legal orders, reflecting the legal status of the person under supervision. Unsentenced orders may be given when the young person is awaiting the outcome of their legal matter or sentencing. These can include supervised or conditional bail (which may include conditions such as curfew or a monetary bond) and home detention bail.

Young people may be in sentenced community-based supervision if they have been found guilty in court and received a sentenced order. Sentenced orders can include probation and similar (where regular reporting to the youth justice agency and participation in treatment programs may be required); suspended detention (where the young person must meet certain conditions or re-offend within a specified time period); and parole or supervised release (supervision that follows a period of detention). Young people can change legal status or be on multiple types of orders on the same day.

On an average day in 2014–15, most (92% or 4,389) young people who were under community-based supervision were serving a sentence (Table S66a). The rate of young people aged 10–17 who were under sentenced community-based supervision was 17 per 10,000 (Figure 5). Among the states and territories, this rate was lowest in Victoria (10 per 10,000) and highest in the Northern Territory (38 per 10,000).



'Probation and similar' was the most common type of sentenced community-based supervision, accounting for 87% of those under sentenced community-based supervision on an average day in 2014–15 (excluding Western Australia and the Northern Territory, as data were not available) (tables S62 and S66a). About 8% were on parole or supervised release, and 6% were on suspended detention orders.

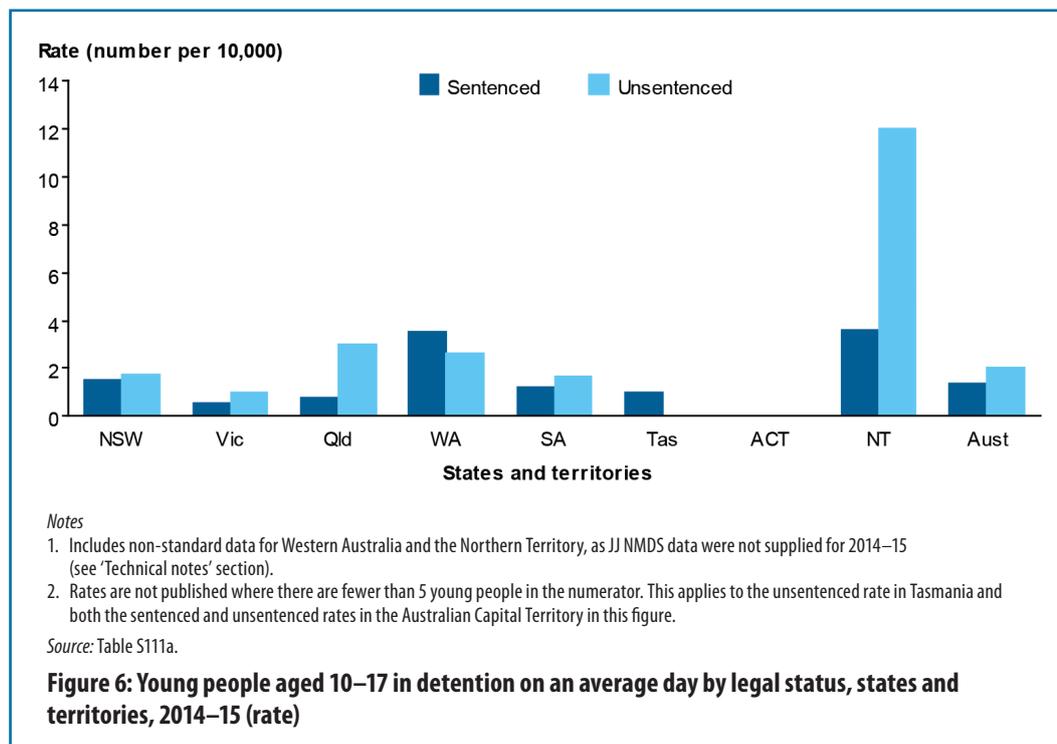
About 10% of young people under community-based supervision on an average day were under unsentenced community-based orders (500 young people) (Table S66a). The national rate of young people aged 10–17 under unsentenced community-based supervision was 2 per 10,000 (Figure 5). Among the states and territories, rates ranged from 1 per 10,000 in New South Wales and Tasmania to 5 per 10,000 in the Australian Capital Territory.

## Detention

Similar to community-based supervision, young people may be in detention when they are unsentenced or sentenced. In 2014–15, more than half (54%) of those in detention on an average day were unsentenced (Table S109a). The proportion is 61% when only young people aged 10–17 are considered (Table S110a).

The rate of young people aged 10–17 in unsentenced detention on an average day in 2014–15 was 2 per 10,000, with just over 1 per 10,000 in sentenced detention (Figure 6).

Among the states and territories, rates of young people aged 10–17 in unsentenced detention were higher than sentenced detention in all states and territories except Western Australia (excluding Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, for which some rates were not calculated due to small numbers) (Figure 6).



Among the states and territories for which rates could be calculated, rates of young people aged 10–17 in both unsentenced and sentenced detention on an average day were lowest in Victoria (less than 1 per 10,000 for each type of detention) and highest in the Northern Territory (12 and 4 per 10,000, respectively).

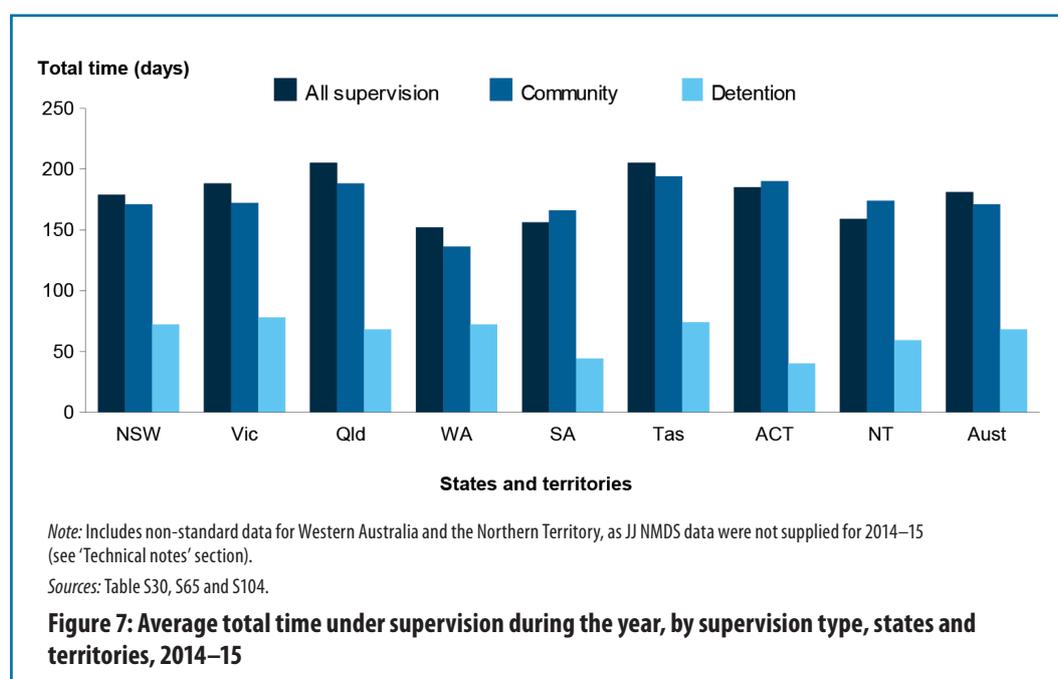
## Time under supervision

### Total time under supervision

When all the time spent under supervision is considered (including periods that were not yet completed), young people who were supervised during 2014–15 spent a total of 181 days or about 6 months (26 weeks), on average, under supervision (Figure 7). This was lowest in Western Australia (152 days) and highest in Queensland and Tasmania (205 days).

Young people spent more time, on average, under community-based supervision during the year (171 days or about 24 weeks) than in detention (68 days or almost 10 weeks). Again, this varied among the states and territories. The average total amount of time spent under community-based supervision ranged from 136 days in Western Australia to 194 days in Tasmania, while the average time in detention ranged from 40 days in the Australian Capital Territory to 78 days in Victoria.

Young people spent substantially more time in sentenced detention (104 days on average, or 15 weeks) than unsentenced detention (42 days or 6 weeks) (tables S118 and S126). This is to be expected, as young people are typically placed in unsentenced detention for relatively short periods while awaiting the outcome of their legal matter or sentencing.



Males spent almost 2 weeks longer, on average, under supervision during the year than females (183 days compared with 171) (Table S30). Males spent about the same amount of time as females under community-based supervision (170 days on average, compared with 172) (Table S65) but about twice as long in detention (75 days compared with 38) (Table S104).

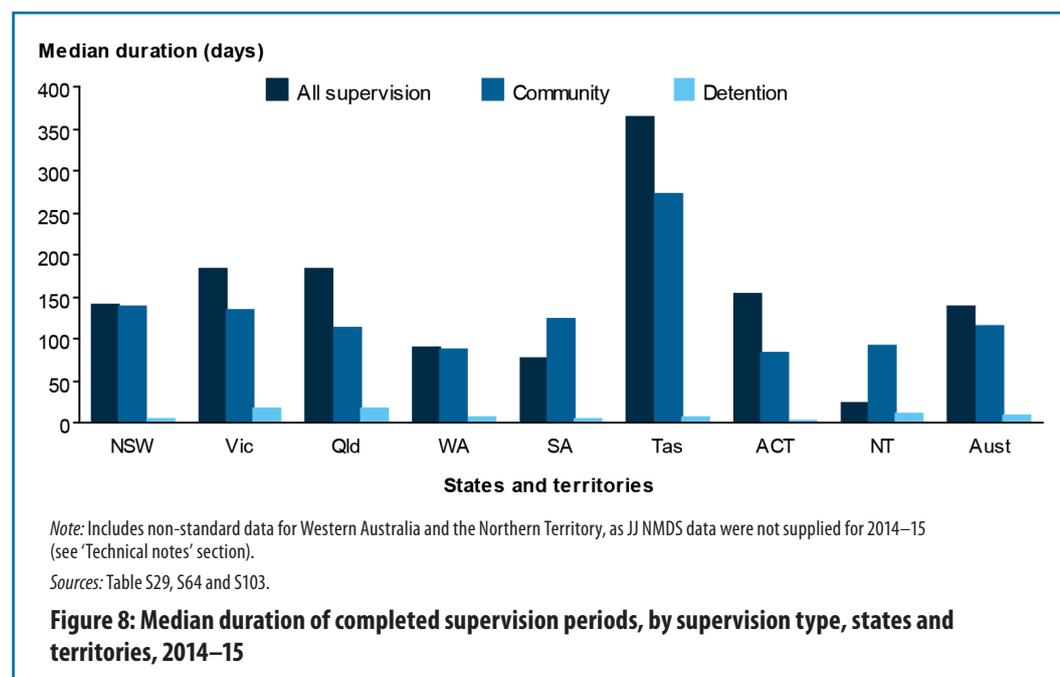
Indigenous young people spent a week longer, in total, under supervision during the year than non-Indigenous young people (187 days on average, compared with 180) (Table S30). There were no differences in community-based supervision (172 days each, on average) (Table S65) but Indigenous young people spent over a week longer in detention (74 days compared with 64) (Table S104). On average, Indigenous young people spent 8 days longer in unsentenced detention (46 days compared with 38), but 4 fewer days in sentenced detention (102 days compared with 106) (tables S118 and S126).

### Individual supervision periods

Individual periods of supervision that were completed during 2014–15 lasted for a median of 138 days or about 20 weeks (this includes time under supervision prior to 1 July 2014 if the period started before that date) (Figure 8). The median duration of completed periods varied substantially among the states and territories, ranging from 23 days in the Northern Territory to 365 days in Tasmania.

Completed periods of community-based supervision were typically substantially longer than completed periods of detention (median 116 days compared with 9 days). Again, there were differences among the states and territories. In 2014–15, the median for community-based supervision ranged from 83 days in the Australian Capital Territory to 274 days in Tasmania. In detention, it ranged from 3 days in the Australian Capital Territory to 18 days in Queensland.

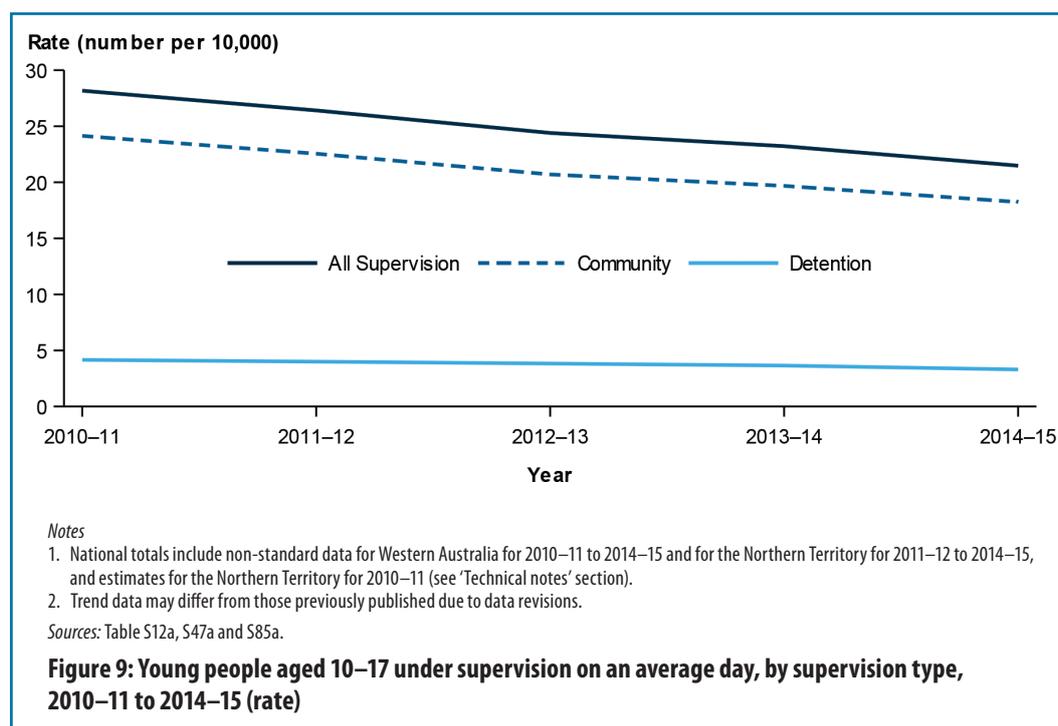
Completed periods of unsentenced detention were much shorter than periods of sentenced detention (median 7 days compared with 65 days), and this was the case in all states and territories (tables S117 and S124).



## Recent trends

### National

Over the 5-year period from 2010–11 to 2014–15, there was a steady decrease in the number and rate of young people under supervision on an average day (Figure 9 and Table S11a). The number under supervision fell by 23% (from 7,348 to 5,629), while the rate of those aged 10–17 dropped from 28 to 21 per 10,000 young people.



A drop in the number of individual young people who were supervised each year drove this trend, while the total amount of time young people spent under supervision during the year, on average, remained stable. Between 2010–11 and 2014–15, the number of young people under supervision during the year decreased by 24% (from 14,948 to 11,360) (Table S11). Over the 4 years to 2014–15, the total amount of time young people spent under supervision remained steady at 179–181 days each year, on average (Table S30).

The decrease in the number of young people under supervision reflects the fact that, in recent years, there have been decreases in the numbers of young people who were proceeded against by police and who had charges finalised in the Children's Courts. Between 2010–11 and 2014–15, the number of young people aged 10–19 who were proceeded against by police each year dropped by 20% (ABS 2016). The number of young people with matters finalised in the Children's Courts dropped by 19% between 2010–11 and 2013–14 (ABS 2015).

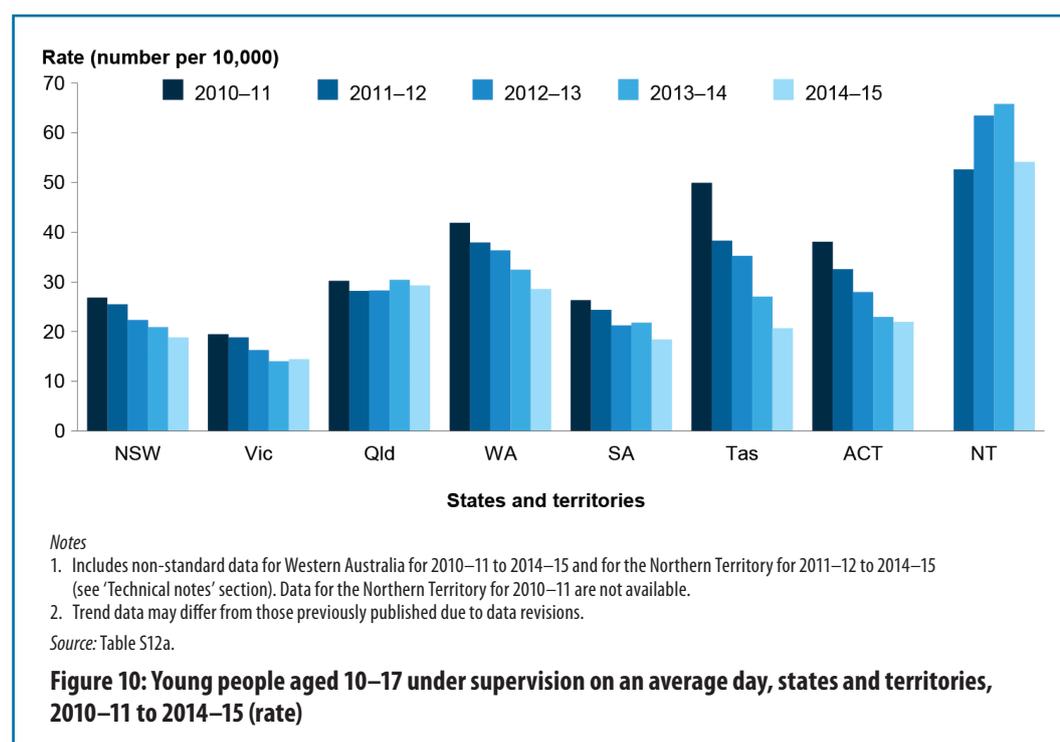
In the most recent year (between 2013–14 and 2014–15), the number under supervision on an average day decreased by 9% (from 6,153 to 5,629), while the rate of those aged 10–17 decreased from 23 to 21 per 10,000.

The number of young people in community-based supervision on an average day, fell by 24% (from 6,287 to 4,785) over the 5-year period, while the rate dropped from 24 to 18 per 10,000 aged 10–17 (Figure 9 and Table S46a). In the most recent year, the number decreased by 8% and the rate decreased from 20 to 18 per 10,000.

There were also steady decreases over the 5-year period in detention. Between 2010–11 and 2014–15, the number of young people in detention on an average day dropped by 21% (from 1,124 to 883) while the rate dropped from 4 to 3 per 10,000 aged 10–17 (Figure 9 and Table S84a). In the most recent year, the number in detention decreased by 10% while the rate dropped slightly (to 3 per 10,000 aged 10–17).

### States and territories

Between 2010–11 and 2014–15, the rate of young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day decreased in almost all states and territories (Figure 10 and Table 3). The rate declined most markedly in Tasmania, from 50 to 21 per 10,000.



In Queensland, the rate of young people aged 10–17 under supervision fluctuated at 28–30 per 10,000 each year, while in the Northern Territory there was an increase in the rate between 2011–12 and 2013–14 (from 53 to 66 per 10,000) before dropping back to 54 per 10,000 in the most recent year (note this section includes trends in the Northern Territory only for the 4-year period from 2011–12 to 2014–15 due to data availability).

In community-based supervision, the rates of young people on an average day decreased in all states and territories except in Queensland and the Northern Territory, where it fluctuated from year to year with no consistent trend. Tasmania had the largest decrease in the rate of young people aged 10–17 under community-based supervision (from 44 to 19 per 10,000).

In detention, rates decreased in most jurisdictions but fluctuated in Victoria and the Northern Territory and showed an overall increase in Queensland. The Australian Capital Territory had the largest decline in the rate of young people aged 10–17 in detention on an average day (from 6 to 2 per 10,000).

**Table 3: Young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day by supervision type, summary of trends in rates, 2010–11 to 2014–15**

	Supervision type		
	Community	Detention	All supervision
New South Wales	↓	↓	↓
Victoria	↓	↔	↓
Queensland	↔	↑	↔
Western Australia	↓	↓	↓
South Australia	↓	↓	↓
Tasmania	↓	↓	↓
Australian Capital Territory	↓	↓	↓
Northern Territory <sup>(a)</sup>	↔	↔	↔
<b>Australia</b>	↓	↓	↓

(a) Trends for the Northern Territory relate to the period 2011–12 to 2014–15. Data for the Northern Territory for 2010–11 are not available.

*Notes*

- ↑ increase; ↓ decrease; ↔ stable or no clear trend.
- National totals include non-standard data for Western Australia for 2010–11 to 2014–15 and for the Northern Territory for 2011–12 to 2014–15 (see 'Technical notes' section).
- Arrows indicate an overall trend between 2010–11 and 2014–15. Trends may have fluctuated between these years, particularly among smaller jurisdictions.
- Trend data may differ from those previously published due to data revisions.

Sources: Table S12a, S47a and S85a.

## Age and sex

Steady decreases in the rates of young people under supervision occurred among both males and females. Over the 5-year period to 2014–15, the rate of males aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day decreased from 45 to 34 per 10,000, while the rate of females decreased from 10 to 8 per 10,000 (Table S15a). Males aged 10–17 were around 4 times as likely as females to be under supervision on an average day each year. Similarly, in community-based supervision, there were steady decreases in the rates of both males and females aged 10–17 over the 5-year period (Table S50a). Males were about 4 times as likely as females to be under community-based supervision on an average day each year. They were about 7–9 times as likely as females to be in detention on an average day each year (Table S88a).

The decrease in rates of young males under supervision on an average day occurred in most single-year age groups, with the largest decrease being among young males aged 17, from 96 to 66 per 10,000 over the 5-year period (excluding Western Australia and the Northern Territory as data were not available) (Table S9a). Among young females, the largest decrease was among those aged 16 (from 25 to 18 per 10,000).

## Indigenous young people

Over the 5-year period, there was a drop in the rate of Indigenous young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day, from 213 to 180 per 10,000 (Table S12a). The rate of non-Indigenous young people under supervision also dropped over this time, from 17 to 12 per 10,000.

The decreases in numbers and rates of non-Indigenous young people under supervision over the 5-year period were proportionally greater than the decreases for Indigenous young people. This resulted in the level of over-representation of Indigenous young people increasing. Indigenous young people aged 10–17 were 13 times as likely as non-Indigenous young people to be under supervision on an average day in 2010–11, rising to 15 times as likely in 2014–15 (Table S12a).

Similar increases in the Indigenous rate ratio occurred in both community-based supervision (from 12 to 14 times the non-Indigenous rate on an average day), and in detention (20 to 24 times) (tables S47a and S85a). Again, this was due to the fact that decreases in the rates of supervision were proportionally greater for non-Indigenous young people.

Over the 5-year period, there were decreases in the rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people under supervision in all states and territories for which data were available except the Northern Territory, where rates fluctuated (over the 4-year period for which data were available), and Queensland, where rates of Indigenous young people fluctuated from year to year, but increased overall (Table 4).

**Table 4: Young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day by supervision type and Indigenous status, overall trends in rates, states and territories, 2010–11 to 2014–15**

	Community		Detention		All supervision	
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
New South Wales	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Victoria	↓	↓	↓	↔	↓	↓
Queensland	↑	↓	↑	↔	↑	↓
Western Australia	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
South Australia	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Tasmania	↓	↓	n.p.	↓	↓	↓
Australian Capital Territory	↓	↓	n.p.	↓	↓	↓
Northern Territory <sup>(a)</sup>	↔	↔	↔	n.p.	↔	↔
<b>Australia</b>	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

(a) Trends for the Northern Territory relate to the period 2011–12 to 2014–15. Data for the Northern Territory for 2010–11 are not available.

### Notes

- ↑ increase; ↓ decrease; ↔ stable or no clear trend.
- National totals include non-standard data for Western Australia for 2010–11 to 2014–15 and for the Northern Territory for 2011–12 to 2014–15 (see 'Technical notes' section).
- Arrows indicate an overall trend between 2010–11 and 2014–15. Trends may have fluctuated between these years, particularly among smaller jurisdictions.
- Trend data may differ from those previously published due to data revisions.
- Changes in the Indigenous rates for Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory should be interpreted with caution due to small numbers.

Sources: Table S12a, S47a and S85a.

The level of Indigenous over-representation in supervision on an average day (rate ratio) increased overall between 2010–11 and 2014–15 in all states and territories except Victoria, where it showed no clear trend, and Tasmania, where it decreased (Table S12a).

### Time under supervision

Over the 4 years from 2011–12 to 2014–15 the total amount of time young people spent under youth justice supervision during the year remained stable (179–181 days each year, on average) (Table S30). There was little change among the states and territories.

Over the 4-year period, the total amount of time young people spent under supervision during the year remained relatively stable in both community-based supervision (171–174 days each year, on average) and detention (68–69 days) (tables S65 and S104).

## Technical notes

### Age

In this bulletin, numbers of young people under supervision include young people of all ages (including those aged 18 and over), unless otherwise specified. Rates include young people aged 10–17 only, in order to enable meaningful comparisons (see ‘Rates’ below).

Age is calculated as at the start of the first relevant period of supervision, unless that period began before the financial year, in which case age is calculated as at the start of the financial year. A young person’s age can, therefore, vary across tables as age is calculated with respect to the type of supervision being analysed.

### Average and median

Two measures are used to describe the typical or central value for the data reported in this bulletin—mean (average) and median. For example, when reporting the total time spent under supervision, the mean duration of all periods is used. However, when reporting the length of completed periods, the median is used due to the skewed distribution of the data.

### Data sources

Information about young people under youth justice supervision in this bulletin is based on data from the JJ NMDS, supplemented with non-standard youth justice data that Western Australia and the Northern Territory have supplied.

### Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set

This data collection contains information about the young people who were supervised by state and territory youth justice agencies in Australia, both in the community and in detention. Data from the JJ NMDS were used for all states and territories except Western Australia and the Northern Territory. However, not all participating states and territories were able to provide JJ NMDS data in the current format for all years of the JJ NMDS (2000–01 to 2014–15).

More information about the JJ NMDS, including details of the data and methods used in reporting, is available from the AIHW website at <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/youth-justice/data-quality/>>. A data quality statement for the JJ NMDS 2014–15 is also available at <<http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/635597/>>.

### Non-standard data (Western Australia and the Northern Territory)

Western Australia and the Northern Territory did not supply JJ NMDS data for the period 2008–09 to 2014–15. This report uses:

- non-standard youth justice data that Western Australia supplied for the period 2008–09 to 2014–15
- non-standard youth justice data for the Northern Territory for the period 2011–12 to 2014–15
- estimates (based on 2007–08 JJ NMDS data) for the Northern Territory for 2008–09 to 2010–11.

Comparisons between JJ NMDS and non-standard data in this report should be made with caution due to potential differences in data format, specifications, definitions and/or quality. Estimates for the Northern Territory for 2008–09 to 2010–11 are not published in tables or figures, but are included in national totals where appropriate.

### Indigenous status data quality

Less than 7% of all young people in the JJ NMDS since 2000–01 have an unknown Indigenous status. In 2014–15, about 3% of all young people under supervision during the year had an unknown Indigenous status. Among the states and territories, this ranged from less than 1% in Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory, to 9% in New South Wales.

In *Youth justice in Australia* reports, young people with ‘not stated’ Indigenous status are excluded from analyses of Indigenous status data.

In 2011, an AIHW review of Indigenous data quality in the JJ NMDS found that there were variations among the states and territories in the use of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) standard for collecting and recording Indigenous status data. See the report *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification in community services data collections: an updated data quality report* (AIHW 2012) for more information.

### National totals

JJ NMDS data were not always available for all jurisdictions for all years. Accordingly, where possible, non-standard data were used in order to calculate estimates of national totals (see ‘Data sources’ above).

Where national estimates could not be calculated, totals excluding Western Australia and the Northern Territory are reported. This includes analyses such as age of first supervision, remoteness, socioeconomic position, supervision orders and supervision history.

Tables, therefore, may include two kinds of national totals:

- ‘Australia excluding Western Australia and the Northern Territory’—all states and territories with JJ NMDS data.
- ‘Australia’—an estimated national total derived from the available JJ NMDS data, plus non-standard data supplied by Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

### Number of young people under supervision

Two measures of the number of young people under supervision are available from the JJ NMDS—‘average day’ and ‘during the year’.

The 'average day' measure reflects the number of young people under supervision on a typical day during the year and gives an indication of the average number of young people supported by the supervision system at any one time. It is calculated by summing the number of days each young person spends under supervision during the year and dividing this total by the total number of days in the financial year. This summary measure reflects both the number of young people supervised and the amount of time they spent under supervision. This measure is the main focus of this bulletin.

In contrast, the 'during the year' measure is a count of the number of unique individuals who were supervised at any time during 2014–15. It is calculated by counting each distinct young person under supervision during the year only once, even if they entered and exited supervision multiple times.

Comparing the average day and during the year measures provides information on the average amount of time spent under supervision during the year. For example, there could be 100 young people under community-based supervision at some time during the year, but only 50 on an average day. This tells you that the average length of time those young people were supervised during the year was 6 months ( $50/100 \times 12$  months). By contrast, if you have 100 people in detention during the year and 25 on an average day, the average length of time those young people spent in detention is 3 months ( $25/100 \times 12$  months).

In 2014–15, only 16% of young people under supervision were in detention on an average day, but 42% experienced detention at some time during the year. This difference reflects the fact that young people spent substantially less time in detention, overall, than under community-based supervision.

### **Rates**

Population rates allow for the comparison of different groups while taking into account differences in population sizes. Because there are differences between the states and territories in the extent to which youth justice agencies can supervise young people aged 18 and older, rates compared in this report are restricted to young people aged 10–17.

The calculation of rates excludes young people for whom data on particular variables are not available, and are not calculated where there are fewer than 5 young people, due to a lack of statistical reliability.

In this bulletin, rates are expressed as the number per 10,000 young people in the population.

### **Rate ratios**

Rate ratios are used to compare Indigenous and non-Indigenous rates and to provide a measure of the level of Indigenous over-representation. They should be interpreted with caution where there are small denominators, rare events, or rates that converge while declining (or diverge while increasing).

Rate ratios are calculated using the rates rounded to 2 decimal places, as published in the supplementary tables.

### **Remoteness**

JJ NMDS reporting uses the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) Remoteness Structure that the ABS has developed to analyse the remoteness of usual residence of the town or suburb of young people under supervision. This structure

allows areas that share common characteristics of remoteness to be classified into broad geographical regions of Australia. These areas are *Major cities, Inner regional, Outer regional, Remote* and *Very remote*.

The remoteness of the young person's usual residence was determined using the most recent postcode of their last known address. Young people with invalid, missing or unknown postcodes of last known home address were excluded from the analysis.

The number of young people under supervision in each remoteness area was estimated based on each young person's most recent postcode. Some postcode areas were split between 2 or more remoteness areas. Where this was the case, the data were weighted according to the proportion of the population of the postcode area in each remoteness area. Some young people may appear in remoteness areas for which there is no population within that state or territory. This is due to young people whose last known home address is in a different state or territory to the one in which they are under supervision.

### **Socioeconomic position**

JJ NMDS reporting uses the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) that the ABS has developed to analyse the socioeconomic position of the usual residence of young people under supervision. The Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage is used.

The socioeconomic position of the area of the young person's usual residence was determined by allocating the relevant SEIFA population-based (2011 population) quintile score to the most recent postcode of the last known home address. Young people with invalid, missing or unknown postcodes of last known home address were excluded from the analysis.

The number of young people under supervision in each area was estimated based on each young person's most recent postcode. Some postcode areas were split between 2 or more areas with different SEIFA scores. Where this was the case, the data were weighted according to the proportion of the population of the postcode area in each SEIFA area.

The SEIFA represents the average of all people living in the area, and not the socioeconomic position of a particular individual living in the area. Therefore, socioeconomic analyses in JJ NMDS reporting indicate the level of socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage in the area of usual residence of the young person, not the level of socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage of the young person or their family. Some young people may appear in socioeconomic areas for which there is no population within that state or territory. This is due to young people whose last known home address is in a different state or territory to the one in which they are under supervision.

### **Trends**

This report examines trends over the period from 2010–11 to 2014–15. When the number of young people under supervision on an average day is relatively small, the amount of random variation from year to year is more noticeable. This may affect the appearance of trends, which should therefore be interpreted with caution, particularly where they relate to small numbers. In recognition of this, percentage changes are not calculated where they relate to groups of fewer than 100 young people.

In this report, comparisons are made between 2010–11 and 2014–15 data. The report aims to highlight the overall or net change over the 5-year period (that is, comparing the start and end of the period) while taking into account the trend within the period. Where possible, changes in the interim years are explored in the text. Full details are available in the supplementary tables.

## More information

This bulletin and associated supplementary data tables (those with a prefix of S) are part of the *Youth justice in Australia 2014–15* release, which also includes a series of fact sheets and web pages. All components can be downloaded free of charge from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/youth-justice-publications/>.

Previous editions are also available for download.

Table 5 provides a guide to the range and location of information available in the supplementary data tables.

**Table 5: Index of supplementary tables<sup>(a)</sup>**

Characteristic	Type of supervision		
	All young people under supervision	Community-based supervision	Detention
Age, sex, Indigenous status	S1–S7	S36–S42	S74–S80
Trends	S8–S18	S43–S55	S81–S93
First supervision	S19–S20	S56–S57	S94–S97
Remoteness	S21–S22	S58–S59	S98–S99
Socioeconomic position of usual residence	S23–S24	S60–S61	S100–S101
Number of orders/supervision periods	S25–S28	S62–S64	—
Time under supervision/supervision history	S29–S35	S65–S73	S102–S104
Receptions/releases	—	—	S105–S108
Legal status	—	—	S109–S113
Detention type	—	—	S114–S127

(a) See also tables S128 to S143 for detailed state and territory data and tables S144 to S152 for the population numbers used to calculate rates.

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- ✦ Department for Communities and Social Inclusion, South Australia
- ✦ Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania
- ✦ Community Services Directorate, Australian Capital Territory
- ✦ Department of Correctional Services, Northern Territory.

## Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
Aust	Australia
JJ NMDS	Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set
UN CRC	United National Convention on the Rights of the Child

## Symbols

n.p.	not published due to small numbers, confidentiality and/or reliability concerns
↑	increase
↓	decrease
↔	stable or no clear trend

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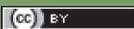
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