

# Youth Justice NMDS 2018–19; Quality Statement

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# Youth Justice NMDS 2018–19; Quality Statement

## Identifying and definitional attributes

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## Data quality

### Data quality statement summary:

### Summary of Key Issues

The Youth Justice National Minimum Data Set (YJ NMDS) contains information on young people in Australia who were supervised by youth justice agencies because they were alleged or proven to have committed an offence. The YJ NMDS is the only national collection of youth justice data.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) compiles the YJ NMDS each year using data extracted from the administrative systems of the state and territory departments responsible for youth justice.

There are a number of data quality and coverage limitations specific to each state and territory. In particular:

- The 2018–19 YJ NMDS submission is the second to include YJ NMDS data for the Northern Territory. Data were supplied in YJ NMDS format for the period 2012–13 to 2018–19 and estimates are used (based on 2007–08 YJ NMDS data) for 2009–10 to 2011–2012. Additional information on how these totals are calculated is available in the [data quality and technical information](#).
- In Tasmania, data are available from 2006–07 onwards only.
- In the Australian Capital Territory, data prior to 2003–04 are not available, and data for 2003–04 to 2007–08 are only available in YJ NMDS 2007 format.
- In New South Wales, data on young people in the Kariiong Juvenile Correctional Centre between November 2004 and May 2015 are not included.

Overall, the levels of missing data in the YJ NMDS are very low. Only four variables have rates of missing or unknown data greater than 1%—Indigenous status, suburb, postcode and state of last known address.

Each year, most jurisdictions supply data from 2000–01 to the most recent financial year, incorporating updates to data as required. Trend data may therefore differ from those published in previous *Youth justice in Australia* reports due to data revisions. The most recent data are the most accurate.

### Description

The youth justice system is the set of processes and practices for dealing with children and young people who have committed or allegedly committed offences. In Australia, youth justice is the responsibility of state and territory governments, and each state and territory has its own youth justice legislation, policies and practices.

The YJ NMDS contains information on all children and young people in Australia who are supervised by youth justice agencies, both in the community and in detention.

Each year, the state and territory government departments responsible for youth justice supply data to the AIHW under a memorandum of understanding between the Australasian Youth Justice Administrators (AYJA) and the AIHW. Those data are compiled in the YJ NMDS.

**Institutional environment:** The AIHW is a major national agency set up by the Australian Government under the [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987](#) to provide reliable, regular and relevant information and statistics on Australia's health and welfare. It is an independent corporate Commonwealth entity established in 1987, governed by a [management board](#) and accountable to the Australian Parliament through the Health portfolio.

The AIHW aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians through better health and welfare information and statistics. It collects and reports information on a wide range of topics and issues, ranging from health and welfare expenditure, hospitals, disease and injury and mental health to ageing, homelessness, disability and child protection.

The Institute also plays a role in developing and maintaining national metadata standards. This work contributes to improving the quality and consistency of national health and welfare statistics. The Institute works closely with governments and non-government organisations to achieve greater adherence to those standards in administrative data collections to promote national consistency and comparability of data and reporting.

One of the main functions of the AIHW is to work with the states and territories to improve the quality of administrative data and, where possible, to compile national data sets based on data from each jurisdiction, to analyse the datasets and disseminate information and statistics.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act, in conjunction with the compliance provisions of the [Privacy Act 1988](#) (Cwth), ensures that the data collections managed by the AIHW are kept securely and under the strictest conditions to preserve privacy and confidentiality.

For further information, see the [AIHW website](#).

The data for the YJ NMDS are provided to the AIHW by those state and territory departments responsible for youth justice. These departments include:

- Department of Communities and Justice, New South Wales
- Department of Justice and Community Safety, Victoria
- Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, Queensland
- Department of Justice, Western Australia
- Department of Human Services, South Australia
- Department of Communities Tasmania, Tasmania
- Community Services Directorate, Australian Capital Territory
- Territory Families, Northern Territory

The AIHW requires sign off from each state and territory to publish YJ NMDS data.

**Timeliness:**

The reference period for the 2018–19 YJ NMDS is from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2019. This means that in 2018–19, data were resupplied for the period 2000–01 to 2017–18, and data for 2018–19 were supplied for the first time. The data set includes young people who were under youth justice supervision at any time during that period.

The state and territory departments responsible for youth justice provide data to the AIHW annually, following the end of each financial year. For the 2018–19 collection, the first iteration of data was due for upload and checking on the AIHW's data validation system within 3 months of the end of the financial year (by 27 September 2019). Seven of eight participating jurisdictions supplied data by the due date.

Data were finalised for all participating jurisdictions by December 2019.

The first release of YJ NMDS data for each collection period occurs in the *Youth justice in Australia* report. Subsequent publication of these data may occur in other AIHW bulletins and reports, online content, and other publications external to the AIHW.

YJ NMDS data are expected to be published, annually, 11 months after the reference period.

**Accessibility:**

Publications containing YJ NMDS data, including the annual Youth justice in Australia bulletin and online appendix tables, are available on the [AIHW website](#). These reports and tables are available free of charge.

Additional information about youth justice in Australia is available from the [Youth justice overview](#) page on the AIHW website.

Requests for unpublished JJ NMDS data can be made by contacting the AIHW on (02) 6244 1000 or via email to [info@aihw.gov.au](mailto:info@aihw.gov.au). A cost recovery charge may apply to requests that take longer than half-an-hour to compile. Depending on the nature of the request, requests for access to unpublished data may require approval from the AYJA and/or the AIHW Ethics Committee.

General inquiries about AIHW publications can be made to the Strategic Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Unit on (02) 6244 1032 or via email to [info@aihw.gov.au](mailto:info@aihw.gov.au).

**Interpretability:**

Detailed supporting information on the quality and use of YJ NMDS data is available from the AIHW website at the [AIHW website](#). Readers are advised to consider supporting information to ensure appropriate interpretation of analyses presented by the AIHW. Supporting information includes footnotes to tables and details of the data items, coverage, quality and the methods used in reporting, such as the calculation of counts, rates and supervision periods.

AIHW youth justice reports are available for purchase in hard copy or for download free of charge.

**Relevance:**

The YJ NMDS contains information on all children and young people who were supervised by a youth justice agency in Australia during the reference period because they:

- committed or allegedly committed an offence between the ages of 10 and 17, or
- committed or allegedly committed an offence when aged over 17 and were treated as a young person due to their vulnerability or immaturity.

In Queensland, youth justice legislation previously applied to children and young people aged 10–16 when the offence was committed or allegedly committed. In February 2018, new legislation was enacted to include 17 year olds in the youth justice system. Since enactment of the legislation, Queensland has begun to transfer 17 year olds into youth justice facilities.

In all other states and territories, youth justice legislation applies to young people aged 10–17. Although most young people under youth justice supervision are aged 10–17, some are aged 18 and over.

For each young person recorded in the YJ NMDS, data are collected on sex, date of birth, Indigenous status and date of first supervision.

The YJ NMDS contains information on all supervised legal arrangements and orders that youth justice agencies administer (both community-based and detention orders) and all periods of detention in youth justice detention centres.

Supervised legal arrangements and orders include police-referred detention before the first court appearance; court-referred remand; supervised bail; and sentenced orders, such as community service orders, probation, suspended detention, sentenced detention and parole or supervised release.

Periods of detention include police-referred detention (before the young person's initial court appearance), remand (court-referred detention following a court appearance) and sentenced detention.

For each period of supervision, data are collected on:

- order or detention type
- start date of the order or detention period
- end date of the order or detention period
- reason the order or detention period ended, including whether the order was successfully completed or breached and whether the young person was released from detention on bail or parole
- suburb and postcode of the young person's last known home address.

The YJ NMDS does not contain information on children and young people in the youth justice system who were not supervised (for example, young people on unsupervised bail), or who were supervised by other agencies, such as police.

**Accuracy:**

Data for the YJ NMDS are extracted each year from the administrative systems of the state and territory departments responsible for youth justice in Australia, according to definitions and technical specifications agreed to by the departments and the AIHW.

Overall, the levels of missing data in the YJ NMDS are very low. Less than 5% of all young people in the YJ NMDS since 2000–01 have an unknown Indigenous status, and similar proportions of records in each of the order (5%) and detention (5%) files have unknown or missing information for the postcode, suburb and state of the young person's usual residence. For all other variables in the YJ NMDS, the proportion of missing data is 1% or less.

Each year, most jurisdictions supply data from 2000–01 to the most recent financial year, incorporating updates to data as required. Trend data may therefore differ from those published in previous Youth justice in Australia reports due to data revisions. The most recent data are the most accurate.

Some analyses exclude states and territories where data are incomplete or unavailable due to data quality issues. Readers are advised to read the supporting information in publications (such as footnotes to tables and details of the methods used to compile the data) to ensure appropriate interpretation.

Data quality issues specific to each state and territory include the following:

### **New South Wales**

For New South Wales, order type data (see more details under *coherence* section) submitted in 2018–19 will differ from previous years after a review of the mapping of local to national order type classifications. Order types affected include '31–Community-based with and without additional mandated requirements' reported as 'probation and similar' and '37–Other community sentence' reported as 'other'.

The Kariiong Juvenile Justice Centre was transferred from the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice to the NSW Department of Corrective Services on 10 November 2004 and renamed the Kariiong Juvenile Correctional Centre. As the YJ NMDS includes only young people who are supervised by youth justice agencies in Australia, information about young people in custody in the Kariiong Juvenile Correctional Centre after 10 November 2004 is not included. In 2012–13 there were 28 young people on an average day in the Kariiong Juvenile Correctional Centre, and therefore they formed only a small proportion (around 8%) of young people in detention in New South Wales.

Kariiong Juvenile Correctional Centre was closed in early 2015. During April and May 2015, 23 young people were transferred out of the Kariiong Centre to another youth detention centre under the supervision of Juvenile Justice NSW. All young people under the age of 18 years who were transferred out of the Kariiong Centre, and who entered the supervision of Juvenile Justice NSW, entered the YJ NMDS data collection on the date they were transferred.

### **Western Australia**

The 2015–16 reporting period was the first year to include YJ NMDS data from Western Australia since 2007–08. For the 2015–16 and 2016–17 submissions the Western Australia data supply included only the sentenced detention period, where a young person was both sentenced and unsentenced at the same time. As a result, an undercount of young people on unsentenced detention orders is expected in those years.

### **Tasmania**

For Tasmania, complete data on detention periods and orders are available only for 2006–07 onwards. Because data on length of detention are used to derive the time spent under community-based supervision, information on periods of community-based supervision before 2006–07 may therefore be incomplete and are not reported.

### **Australian Capital Territory**

In the Australian Capital Territory, both police-referred pre-court detention and remand (court-referred detention) are recorded as remand.

For the Australian Capital Territory, data for 2000–01 to 2002–03 are not available and data for 2003–04 to 2007–08 are available only in YJ NMDS 2007 format.

### **Northern Territory**

The 2018–19 reporting period is the second year to include YJ NMDS data for the Northern Territory. Data prior to 2012–13 are not available in YJ NMDS format, so estimates are used (based on 2007–08 YJ NMDS data) for 2009–10 to 2011–12. Estimates for the Northern Territory for 2009–10 to 2011–12 are not published in tables or figures, but are included in national totals where appropriate.

### **Coherence:**

The YJ NMDS was initially developed between 2002 and 2004, and the first report containing data from the YJ NMDS was published in 2006. This first version of the YJ NMDS (referred to as YJ NMDS 2007 on METeOR) contained information on only the most serious supervised legal arrangement or order for each young person under youth justice supervision (see [Juvenile justice in Australia 2007–08](#) for more information).

In 2009, the YJ NMDS was redeveloped to capture all supervised legal arrangements and orders for young people under youth justice supervision, rather than only the most serious one. This version of the YJ NMDS (known as YJ NMDS

2009) allows for more complete analyses of the numbers and types of supervised orders that youth justice agencies administer. [Juvenile justice in Australia 2008–09](#) was the first report to contain data from the redeveloped YJ NMDS.

In 2011, the centre file was deemed unnecessary and removed from the YJ NMDS. Additionally in 2015–16, the orders file was updated with changes to the following order types:

- 12 'Pre-court appearance—Other police-referred pre-court arrangements', 32 'Sentenced—Community-based with additional mandated requirements' and 38 'Sentenced—probation or similar not elsewhere classified' were removed.
- 31 'Sentenced—Community-based without additional mandated requirements' was updated to 'Sentenced—Community-based with and without additional mandated requirements'.
- 37 'Sentenced—Other sentence requiring JJ Department supervision or case management' was amended to 'Sentenced—other community sentence requiring YJ Department supervision'.
- 39 'Sentenced—Community service orders' was added.

In 2018–19 a new data item 'Order issue date' was added to the order file to collect information about when an order is handed down by the courts.

For the 2018–19 YJ NMDS collection, the reference period was 2000–01 to 2018–19. Data were resupplied for the period 2000–01 to 2017–18. Trend data may therefore differ from those previously published due to data revisions.

Data coherence issues specific to each state and territory include the following:

### **Victoria**

For Victoria, data provided in 2018–19 will differ from previous years after a review of order end reason classifications. Order end reasons affected include '1 – Completed' reported as 'successful completions' and '88 – Other'.

### **Queensland**

In Queensland, legislation to increase the youth justice age limit to 17 was passed in 2016, and enacted on 12 February 2018. Before then, the age limit in Queensland was 16, and young people aged 17 and over were treated as adults.

From February 2018, young people aged 17 have been transferred from the adult justice system into the youth justice system, which has, in part, led to a rise in the number of young people held in youth justice supervision in Queensland and nationally.

### **South Australia**

South Australian order type data reported in 2018–19 may vary from that reported in previous years due to a review of the mapping of local to national order types. Most community order types were impacted to a small degree by the review.

### **Western Australia**

From 2017–18 onwards, Western Australia were able to capture more accurate legal status changes, so unsentenced orders will appear to have increased. Western Australia also began backdating sentenced orders from the 2017–18 submission onwards which has led to variations in the number of sentenced orders captured within a reporting period.

### **Australian Capital Territory**

A review in the local to national order type mapping resulted in changes to 2018–19 YJ NMDS data for the Australian Capital Territory. Suspended detention orders are now being reported where previously they were combined with probation or similar orders.

### **Northern Territory**

For the 2017–18 and 2018–19 YJ NMDS submissions, periods of sentenced detention have been backdated to take into account periods of unsentenced

detention already served. This has led to a higher proportion of young people reported as being under sentenced and unsentenced detention at the same time.

Data coherence issues specific to other youth justice data:

### **Report on government services (RoGS)**

Published YJ NMDS data is sourced by the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision for the annual *Report on Government Services* (RoGS) from 2014–15 to 2017–18.

Since the 2017–18 RoGS publication, the most recent year of data has been sourced directly from jurisdictions. The most recent year of RoGS data is not comparable to AIHW data because states and territories apply different counting rules to those data published in AIHW reports.

### **State and Territory youth justice department data**

Individual state and territory youth justice departments publish data which is not comparable to AIHW reports. This is due to each state and territory youth justice department applying counting rules specific to their jurisdiction. This can lead to differences in calculations, such as age calculations and how concurrent detention and community-based orders are treated. The YJ NMDS data is also not time-stamped so a whole day is counted when a young person comes into contact with a youth justice service which can lead to a higher count than jurisdictional results.

The AIHW uses YJ NMDS data to publish four annual reports:

- *Youth Justice in Australia*,
- *Youth detention population in Australia*,
- *Young people returning to sentenced youth justice supervision*, and
- *Young people in child protection and under youth justice supervision*.

## **Relational attributes**

### **Related metadata references:**

Supersedes [Juvenile Justice NMDS 2017–18; Quality Statement AIHW Data Quality Statements](#), Superseded 15/05/2020

Has been superseded by [Youth Justice NMDS 2019–20; Quality Statement AIHW Data Quality Statements](#), Superseded 31/03/2022