

Youth Justice NMDS 2020–21: Quality Statement

Identifying and definitional attributes

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Data quality

Quality statement summary:

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 Youth Justice National Minimum Data Set (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. The YJ NMDS is the only national collection of youth justice data.

Each year, the state and territory government departments responsible for youth justice supply data extracted from their administrative systems 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.

Summary of Key Issues

The YJ NMDS 2020–21 includes data relating to COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic up to 30 June 2021.

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

- The 2020–21 YJ NMDS submission is the fourth to include data for the Northern Territory. Data were supplied in YJ NMDS format for the period 2012–13 to 2020–21 and estimates are used (based on 2007–08 YJ NMDS data) for 2011–2012. Additional information on how these totals are calculated is available in the [data quality and technical information](#).
- The 2015–16 reporting period was the first year to include YJ NMDS standard data from Western Australia since 2007–08.
- 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.

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.

Institutional environment: The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) is an independent corporate Commonwealth entity under the [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987](#) (AIHW Act), governed by a [management Board](#) and accountable to the Australian Parliament through the Health portfolio.

The AIHW is a nationally recognised information management agency. Its purpose is to create authoritative and accessible information and statistics that inform decisions and improve the health and welfare of all Australians.

Compliance with the confidentiality requirements in the AIHW Act, the Privacy Principles in the [Privacy Act 1988](#) (Cth) and AIHW's data governance arrangements ensures that the AIHW is well positioned to release information for public benefit while protecting the identity of individuals and organisations.

For further information see the AIHW website www.aihw.gov.au/about-us, which includes details about the AIHW's governance (www.aihw.gov.au/about-us/our-governance) and vision and strategic goals (www.aihw.gov.au/about-us/our-vision-and-strategic-goals).

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 Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, 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, Housing and Communities, Northern Territory

Jurisdiction-level data releases must be signed off by the relevant state or territory.

Timeliness:

The reference period for the 2020–21 YJ NMDS is from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2021. This means that in 2020–21, data were resupplied for the period 2000–01 to 2019–20, and data for 2020–21 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 2020–21 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 2021). This year however, the AIHW also ran a trial timeline to collect and finalise YJ NMDS data early (by 16 September 2021), in parallel with the standard YJ NMDS collection timeline.

Data were finalised for 7 out of 8 participating jurisdictions according to the new trial timeline by September 2021.

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 AIHW 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 report 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 YJ NMDS data can be made by contacting the AIHW on (02) 6244 1000 or via email to 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.

Interpretability:

Detailed supporting information on the quality and use of YJ NMDS data is available at the [AIHW website](#). Readers are advised to consider supporting information to ensure appropriate interpretation of analysis 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 young people aged 17 in the youth justice system. Since the enactment of the legislation, Queensland has begun to transfer young people aged 17 into youth justice facilities.

In all other states and territories, youth justice legislation applies to children and young people aged 10–17. Although most 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
- 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. About 5% of all young people in the YJ NMDS since 2000–01 have an unknown Indigenous status. A small number of records in each of the order (5%) and detention (4%) files have unknown or missing information for the postcode 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.

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

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

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 2020–21 reporting period is the fourth 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 2011–12. Estimates for the Northern Territory for 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 analysis 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 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 2019–20 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.

In the 2020–21 detention end reasons '7 release on bail by appeal' and '8 release stayed pending appeal' were removed.

For the 2020–21 YJ NMDS collection, the reference period was 2000–01 to 2020–21. Data were resupplied for the period 2000–01 to 2019–20. YJ NMDS classification and coding changes can be applied retrospectively to all years of supplied data. 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:

New South Wales

For New South Wales, data provided in 2019–20 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'. Order type data (see more details under *coherence* section) submitted from 2018–19 onwards 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 Kariong 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 Kariong 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 Kariong Juvenile Correctional Centre after 10 November 2004 is not included. In 2012–13 there were 28 young people on an average day in the Kariong Juvenile Correctional Centre, and formed only a small proportion (around 8%) of young people in detention in New South Wales.

Kariong Juvenile Correctional Centre was closed in early 2015. During April and May 2015, 23 young people were transferred out of the Kariong 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 Kariong Centre, and who entered the supervision of Juvenile Justice NSW, entered the YJ NMDS data collection on the date they were transferred.

Victoria

For Victoria, data provided from the 2018–19 submission onwards will differ from previous submissions 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 2019–20 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 was 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

In 2021, the Australian Capital Territory implemented a new youth justice information system which improved data quality and availability. Police-referred pre-court detention and remand (court-referred detention) are now included as separate records for 2020–21 in the YJNMDS.

A review in the local to national order type mapping resulted in changes to 2019–20 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 YJ NMDS submissions from 2017–18 onwards, 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.

Due to system changes for the 2020–21 YJ NMDS submission, data for the Northern Territory will not be comparable to prior YJ NMDS data.

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, 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 in contact with a youth justice service which can lead to a higher count than jurisdictional results.

Source and reference attributes

Submitting organisation: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Relational attributes

Related metadata references: Supersedes [Youth Justice NMDS 2019–20: Quality Statement](#)

- [AIHW Data Quality Statements](#), Superseded 31/03/2022