

**Juvenile justice in Australia
2006–07**

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- Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania
- Office for Children, Youth and Family Support, Australian Capital Territory
- Department of Justice, Northern Territory.

Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACSP	Aboriginal cultural support plan
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AJJA	Australasian Juvenile Justice Administrators
CYDU	Community Youth Development Unit
DJJ	NSW Department of Juvenile Justice
ISP	intensive supervision program
JJ	juvenile justice
NMDS	national minimum data set
VONIY	Victorian Offender Needs Indicator for Youth
YDS	Youth Diversion Scheme

Symbols used in the tables

n.a.	not available
..	not applicable
—	nil, including null cells
n.p.	not published

Note

Percentages in tables may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Main findings

In Australia, responsibility for juvenile justice lies with the states and territories and involves both juvenile justice agencies and other justice agencies such as the police and the courts. This report presents information on one aspect of the juvenile justice process – the supervision of young people in the juvenile justice system.

Number of young people under supervision

A total of 12,765 young people were under supervision in Australia at some time during 2006–07, 10,675 of whom were aged 10–17 years (the remainder were older). Five out of every 1,000 young people aged 10–17 in Australia were under supervision at some time during the year. The majority had community-based supervision, although nearly a third had both community-based supervision and detention in 2006–07. On an average day in 2006–07, there were around 6,000 young people under supervision – around 5,000 in community-based supervision and nearly 1,000 in detention.

During the four years from 2003–04, the overall number and rate of young people under supervision remained relatively stable. However, while the number and rate of young people in community-based supervision reached a four-year low in 2006–07, the number and rate of young people in detention was highest in 2006–07.

The number of young people in detention each year increased by 6% from 2003–04 to 2006–07, while the average daily number of young people in detention increased by 12%. This indicates that more young people are being detained and that they are in detention for longer.

Over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people under supervision is continuing. Only 5% of Australians aged 10–17 years are Indigenous, but Indigenous young people were 14 times more likely to be under supervision than non-Indigenous young people in 2006–07. This pattern is especially prominent in detention. On an average day in 2006–07, there were nearly as many Indigenous young people in detention as non-Indigenous young people.

Age at first supervision and subsequent supervision

The younger people were when they were first supervised, the more likely they were to re-enter juvenile justice supervision. Nearly half of those aged 10–12 years at their first supervision completed four or more periods of supervision in a 5-year period, while only one-quarter of those aged 14 at their first supervision completed as many. Those who were younger at their first supervision were also more likely to be detained in their first supervision, and this detention was also associated with completing more periods of supervision.

Executive summary

Young people under supervision

In 2006–07, 12,765 young people were under juvenile justice supervision at some time during the year and there were around 6,000 young people under supervision on an average day.

Community-based supervision was more common than detention.

- Nearly 11,000 young people had community-based supervision in 2006–07 and there were around 5,000 in community-based supervision on an average day.
- Around 5,500 young people were detained at some time during 2006–07 and there were around 950 young people in detention on an average day.
- The relationship between the number under supervision over the year and the number under supervision on an average day shows that young people spent more time on average in community-based supervision than in detention.

Around 5 out of every 1,000 young people aged 10–17 years in Australia had supervision in 2006–07. Two young people per 1,000 were detained and 4 per 1,000 were in community-based supervision (some young people had both detention and community-based supervision during the year). Although the number and rate of young people in community-based supervision in 2006–07 was the lowest in four years, the number and rate of young people in detention was highest in 2006–07.

Sex

Most young people under juvenile justice supervision are male.

- On an average day, 84% of those in community-based supervision were male and 92% of those in detention were male.
- Of those aged 10–17 years, males were five times more likely to have supervision at some time during 2006–07 than females.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are over-represented among those who have juvenile justice supervision.

- Although only around 3% of the total Australian population and 5% of Australians aged 10–17 years are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, over a third (36%) of those who had supervision in 2006–07 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.
- Over a third of those in community-based supervision on an average day in 2006–07 and nearly half of those in detention were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.
- Of those aged 10–17 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were nearly 14 times more likely to have supervision in 2006–07 than non-Indigenous young people.

In addition, Indigenous young people under supervision are more likely to be younger than non-Indigenous young people and they are more likely to have entered supervision for the first time at a younger age.

Supervision experience

In this report, the supervision experience is examined using the concepts of *supervision periods* and *episodes* (see Section 2.1.2). A *supervision period* begins when a young person enters supervision and ends when a young person has had no supervision for 1 or more days. *Supervision periods* contain *episodes*, which provide details on the highest level of supervision experienced by a young person at any given time based on a hierarchy.

Although a young person may be subject to a number of legal orders simultaneously, the data collection on which this report is based does not attempt to provide a comprehensive coverage of orders. Instead, information on the experience of the young person under juvenile justice supervision is collected in the form of episodes.

Of the 12,765 young people who had supervision during 2006–07, 8,808 young people completed at least one *supervision period* in 2006–07 (the remaining 3,957 young people entered supervision before or during 2006–07 and by the end of 2006–07 had not left supervision for at least 1 day). This section reports on the supervision experience of young people who completed at least one *supervision period*.

- Most young people (80%) completed only one *supervision period*; less than 10% completed three or more *supervision periods* in 2006–07. However, the fewer *supervision periods* completed, the longer they were likely to be.

Sentenced episodes

- Most of the time under supervision (93% of person days) was spent in some form of sentenced supervision. More than 75% of person days were spent in *episodes* of sentenced community-based supervision (such as probation). Only 4% of person days were spent in sentenced detention, while around 12% was spent in other forms of sentenced supervision such as suspended detention and parole.
- Most types of sentenced *episodes* in the community were about twice as long, on average, as sentenced detention *episodes*. The median lengths of sentenced community *episodes* and immediate release/suspended detention *episodes* were each around 6 months and the median length of parole *episodes* were around 4 months. In contrast, the median length of sentenced detention *episodes* was around 3 months.
- Most types of sentenced *episodes* ended because the conditions of the sentence were met. For sentenced detention *episodes*, 35% ended because the young person was released on parole and 20% ended because the conditions of the sentence were met.

Pre-sentence *episodes*

- Less than 10% of the time under supervision was spent in pre-sentence *episodes* – 4% in pre-sentence community *episodes* (supervised bail) and 2% in pre-sentence detention *episodes* (remand).
- The median length of pre-sentence community *episodes* was nearly 2 months, while the median length of pre-sentence detention *episodes* was only 2 days.
- Nearly a third of *episodes* of pre-sentence community ended with the start of a more serious order – three-quarters of which involved pre-sentence detention – while two-thirds of pre-sentence detention *episodes* ended with the young person released on bail (either supervised or unsupervised).

Relationship between age at first supervision and subsequent supervision

- The younger people were when they first entered juvenile justice supervision, the more *supervision periods* they completed compared with those who were older when they first entered supervision. Over a 5-year period, 90% of those who were aged 10–11 years at their first supervision completed more than one *supervision period*, compared with 65% of those who were aged 14 years at their first supervision.
- Those who were younger at their first supervision were also more likely to spend time in sentenced detention rather than sentenced community-based supervision. Young people who were aged 11 at their first supervision spent nearly one-third of their time in sentenced supervision in detention in the year they were 16. In contrast, those who were aged 14 at their first supervision spent less than 10% of their time in sentenced supervision in detention in the year they were 16.
- Age at first supervision was also related to being detained in the first *supervision period*: around 60% of those aged 10 or 11 at their first supervision were detained in this first *supervision period*, compared with 40% of those aged 17.
- Young people who were detained during their first *supervision period* completed more *supervision periods* than those who were not detained. Eighty per cent of those detained in their first *supervision period* completed more than one *supervision period*, while less than 60% of those who were not detained completed more than one *supervision period*. This relationship between detention in the first *supervision period* and the number of completed *supervision periods* was strongest for those who were youngest at their first *supervision period*.