



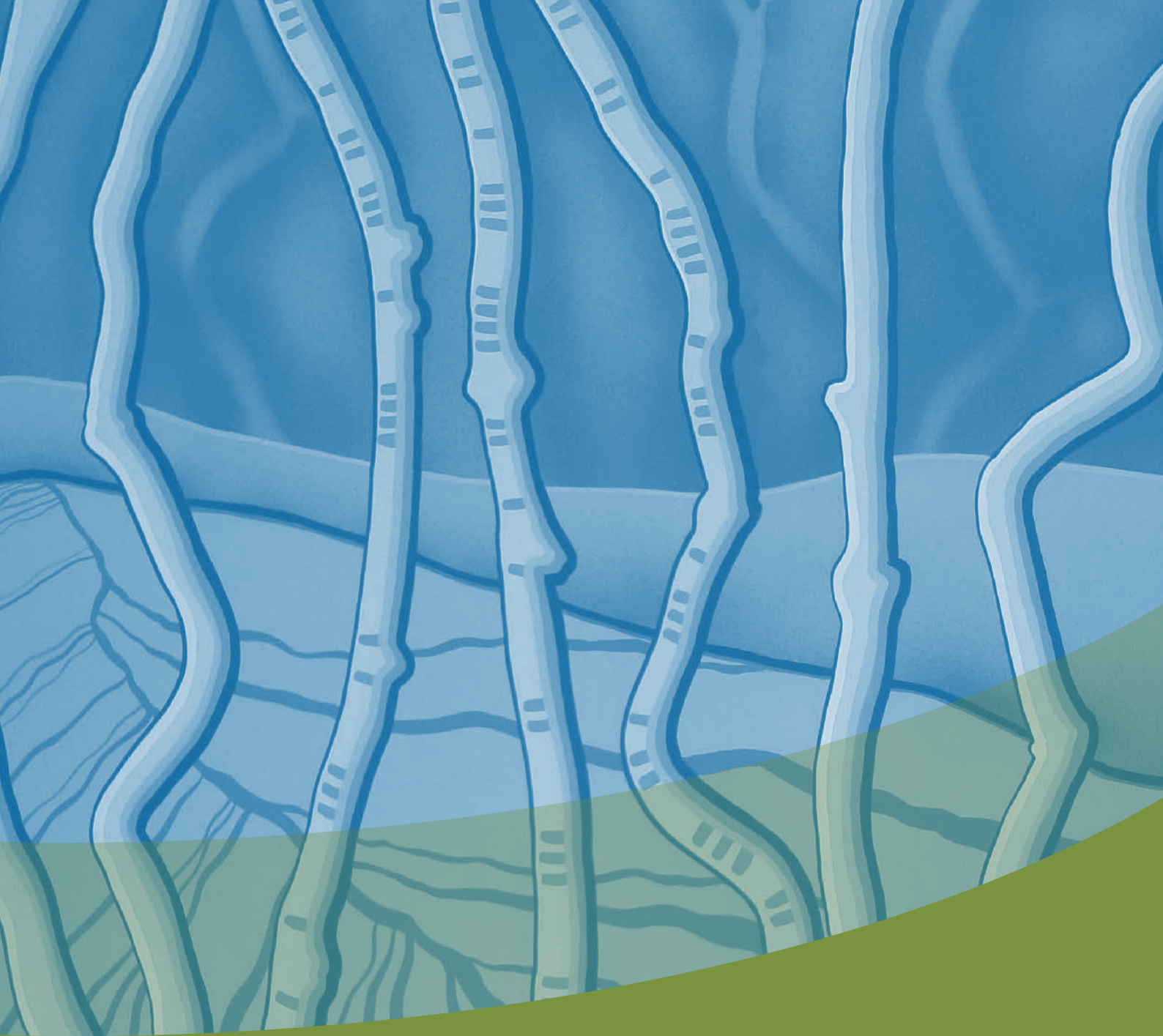
**Australian Government**

**Australian Institute of  
Health and Welfare**




# Pathways through youth justice supervision





# Pathways through youth justice supervision

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- Community Services Directorate, Australian Capital Territory
- Department of Correctional Services, Northern Territory.



# Abbreviations

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

# Summary

*Pathways through youth justice supervision* explores the types of youth justice supervision experienced by particular cohorts of young people, based on data available from the Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set (JJ NMDS) from 2000–01 to 2012–13. It examines the characteristics of young people within the most common supervision pathways—including Indigenous status, sex and age at first supervision—and whether pathways have changed over time. A ‘supervision pathway’ is a summary of supervision episodes experienced by young people under youth justice supervision. Understanding supervision pathways can inform the provision and targeting of services that aim to reduce the offending behaviours of young people.

## The top 10 pathways accounted for nearly three-quarters of the cohort

Nationally, the top 10 pathways accounted for nearly three-quarters (71%) of young people who experienced youth justice supervision. These pathways ranged from a single episode of supervision to more complex pathways involving a range of episodes of multiple supervision types. There has been a greater variation in pathways over time, with the proportion of young people within the 10 most common pathways gradually declining. This variation was also observed among individual states with comparable data.

## Half of all young people experienced only 1 type of supervision

Of all young people under youth justice supervision while aged 10–17, about half (52%) only experienced 1 type of supervision. Young people who experienced sentenced community-based supervision were the least likely to go on and experience another form of supervision.

## Pathways that contained detention were more complex

Young people whose pathways contained some form of detention experienced more varied and complex pathways. This was particularly the case for sentenced detention, where only 17% of young people experienced a pathway within the top 10.

## Pathways differed by young people’s characteristics

This report shows that young males, young Indigenous people, young people aged 10–14 at first supervision and those who experienced sentenced detention at some point were more likely than their counterparts, to have more complex, varied and serious (that is, containing detention) pathways through supervision. For the 4 states with available comparable data, young people in New South Wales and South Australia experienced more variation in their pathways than those young people from Queensland and Victoria.

## Completing the story

Further research is required in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of young people’s supervision pathways and contact with the justice system more generally. Current research highlights a number of additional factors that can play a role, including child abuse and neglect; disability; socio-economic status; homelessness; and the type of offence committed. A range of data development and linkage projects could be undertaken to examine the interaction of these factors. In addition, it would be ideal if future analyses were able to encapsulate a young person’s continuing contact with the criminal justice system into adulthood and thus their full pathway.



# 1 Introduction

This report explores episodes of youth justice supervision for particular cohorts of young people based on data available from the Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set (JJ NMDS). This is a longitudinal dataset, which contains information on all young people who have come under youth justice supervision from 2000–01 to 2012–13. The report examines the characteristics of young people within the most common supervision pathways—including Indigenous status, sex and age at first supervision—and whether pathways have changed over time. It also considers other factors outside the scope of the JJ NMDS that have been identified by research, including socio-economic status, prior protection orders, disability, and homelessness. Understanding the entire pathway a young person follows through supervision can help policy makers and practitioners to tailor a range of services and intervention strategies aimed at reducing the offending behaviour of young people.

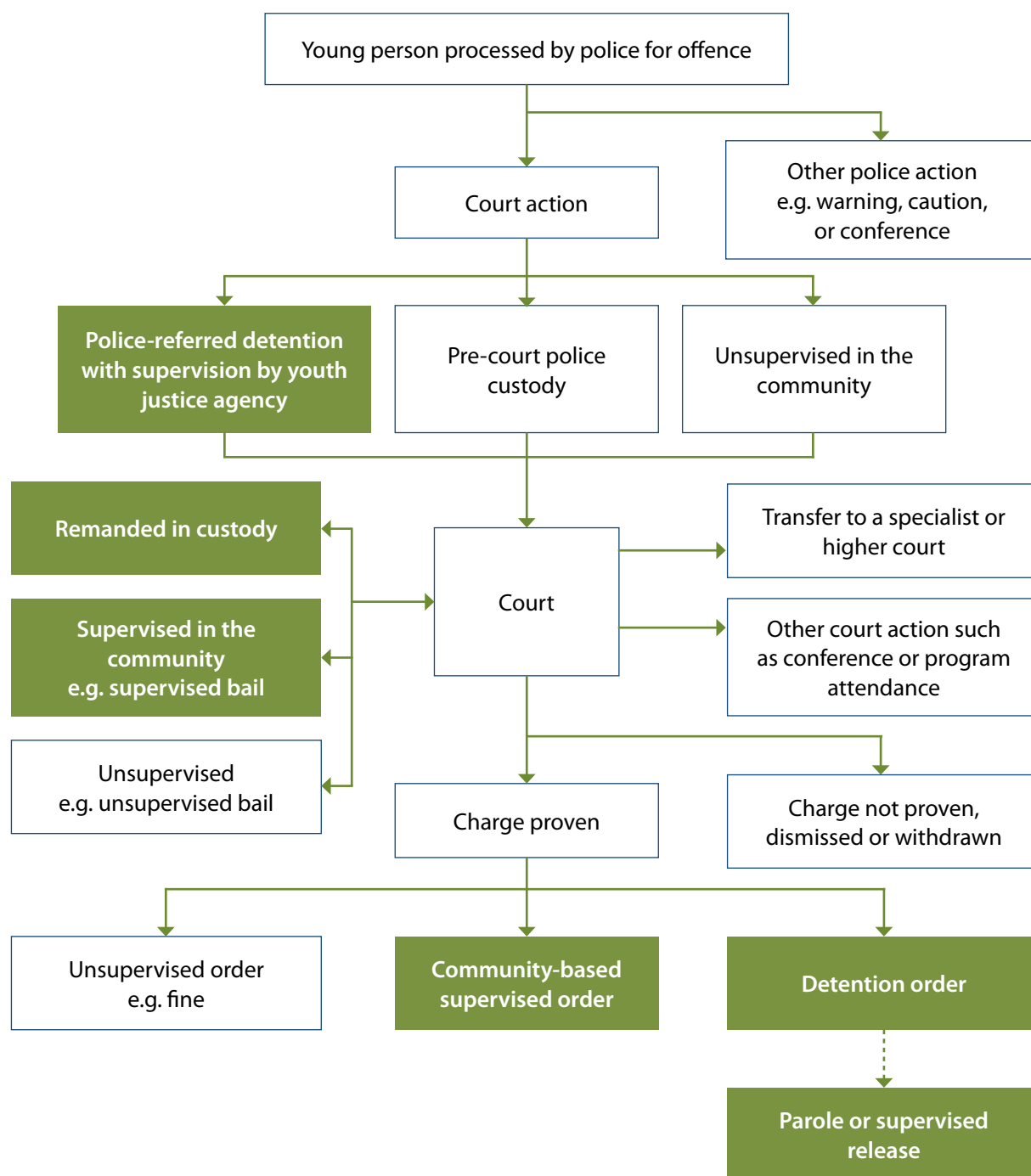
## The youth justice system in Australia

The youth justice system comprises the set of processes and practices for managing children and young people who have committed or allegedly committed an offence. In Australia, youth justice is the responsibility of the state and territory governments, each with their own legislation, policies and practices; however the general processes are similar.

In all states and territories, children and young people aged 10 and older can be charged with a criminal offence. The upper age limit for treatment in the youth justice system is 17 in all states and territories except Queensland, where the limit is 16. However, some young people aged 18 and older are involved in the youth justice system. Reasons for this include the offence being committed when the young person was aged 17 or younger, the continuation of supervision once they turn 18, and their vulnerability or immaturity. Also, in Victoria, some young people aged 18–20 may be sentenced to detention in a youth facility (known as the ‘dual track’ sentencing system).

Key stages in the youth justice system include young people’s contact with police, contact with the courts, supervision by youth justice agencies and contact with parole boards (Figure 1.1).

A major aspect of the youth justice system is the supervision of young people, both in their communities and in secure detention facilities. 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 pleaded guilty and are awaiting sentencing. They may also be sentenced to a period of supervision if they are proven guilty in a court, either community-based or within a detention facility.



#### Notes

1. Shaded boxes indicate youth justice agency involvement. These areas of the youth justice system are the focus of this report (see Box 1.1 for further details on the supervision types used within this report).
2. This diagram is an indicative summary and is not intended to reflect all possible paths through the youth justice system.

**Figure 1.1: An overview of the youth justice system in Australia**



## Young people in the youth justice system

Overall, few young Australians are involved in the youth justice system, and fewer still end up under youth justice supervision. Each year, around 2% of the Australian population aged 10–17 are proceeded against by police, just over 1% have a case finalised in a Children's Court, around 0.5% are supervised by a youth justice agency in the community, and less than 0.3% will be subject to a custodial order (ABS 2012a, 2012b, 2013).

On an average day in 2012–13 in Australia, 6,329 young people aged 10 and older were under youth justice supervision due to their involvement, or alleged involvement, in crime. This equates to a rate of 23.8 per 10,000 young persons aged 10–17, or about 1 in 420. A total of 12,880 young people were supervised at some time during the year.

## Methods

This report is based on the results of analyses of the JJ NMDS and provides a unique insight into the pathways through youth justice supervision experienced by young people. Information collected for the JJ NMDS includes the characteristics of the young person, as well as the characteristics of their supervision (see Appendix A for further details). Box 1.1 includes definitions of key terminology used in this report.

For each young person under supervision, a pathway was constructed based on their experience of 4 broad supervision types—unsentenced community-based supervision, sentenced community-based supervision, unsentenced detention and sentenced detention. Each time a young person comes into contact with youth justice supervision, this is considered to be an 'episode'. Pathways can range from a single episode containing 1 type of supervision, to complex, multiple episodes involving multiple supervision types (see Boxes 1.2 and 1.3 for examples).

Where a single episode of supervision occurred, or where the same type of supervision occurred consecutively (that is, where the type of supervision had not changed across multiple supervision episodes), these episodes of supervision were rolled up into the 1 broad pathway type (see Box 1.2 for examples).

If there were multiple supervision episodes across a range of supervision types (that is, there was a change to the type of supervision at some point), each change in supervision type is reflected in the resulting pathway (see Box 1.3 for examples).

Therefore, each pathway described in this report represents a unique pattern of movement through youth justice supervision. The broad pathway types have also been mapped within each jurisdiction. Where a young person was supervised across 2 separate jurisdictions, 2 pathway types were generated; that is 1 pathway per person, per state/territory.

The JJ NMDS contains information on a total of 22,541 young people who experienced some form of youth justice supervision between 2000–01 and 2012–13 while aged 10–17 (referred to throughout this report as the 'study cohort'; see Appendix A for details). Of these young people in the overall study cohort, a total of 2,901 unique supervision pathways were identified.

## **Box 1.1: Key terminology**

### **Youth justice system**

This comprises the set of processes and practices for managing children and young people who have committed or allegedly committed an offence. In Australia, youth justice is the responsibility of the state and territory governments, each with their own legislation, policies and practices; however the general processes are similar.

### **Youth justice supervision**

Within the youth justice system, young people are often formally 'supervised' using a range of methods (see 'supervision type' below), both in their communities and in secure detention facilities.

### **Supervision order**

This is a legal arrangement handed down by courts and parole boards for the supervision of a young person by a youth justice agency.

### **Supervision type**

There are 4 types of supervision used in this report—unsentenced community-based supervision, sentenced community-based supervision, unsentenced detention and sentenced detention.

#### ***Unsentenced community-based supervision***

Includes orders, such as supervised or conditional bail and home-detention bail.

#### ***Sentenced community-based supervision***

Includes orders, such as probation, suspended detention, and parole or supervised release.

#### ***Unsentenced detention***

Where young people have been detained while awaiting the outcome of their court matter or sentencing. This can include remand or police-referred detention, although most are in remand.

#### ***Sentenced detention***

When a young person had been proven guilty in court and has received a legal order to serve a period of detention.

### **Supervision episode**

This is a single occurrence of either community-based supervision or detention. For example, where a young person has been detained in remand on 1 occasion, this is a single episode of supervision. A young person may also have repeated or multiple episodes of supervision, having been detained on more than 1 occasion.

### **Supervision pathway**

This is a summary of the supervision episodes experienced by young people under youth justice supervision. It may contain:

- a single episode of supervision; that is, either community-based or detention; or
- repeated episodes of the same supervision type; or
- a range of episodes with multiple supervision types.

These supervision episodes were summarised into pathway types (see Boxes 1.2 and 1.3 for further details). These pathway types represent the unique patterns of movement through youth justice supervision and, for the purposes of this report, are considered a youth justice supervision pathway.

## Box 1.2: Examples of a pathway type containing a single supervision type

### Pathway type—Sentenced Community

Example 1

Sentenced  
Community

Example 2

Sentenced  
Community

Sentenced  
Community

Sentenced  
Community

Sentenced  
Community

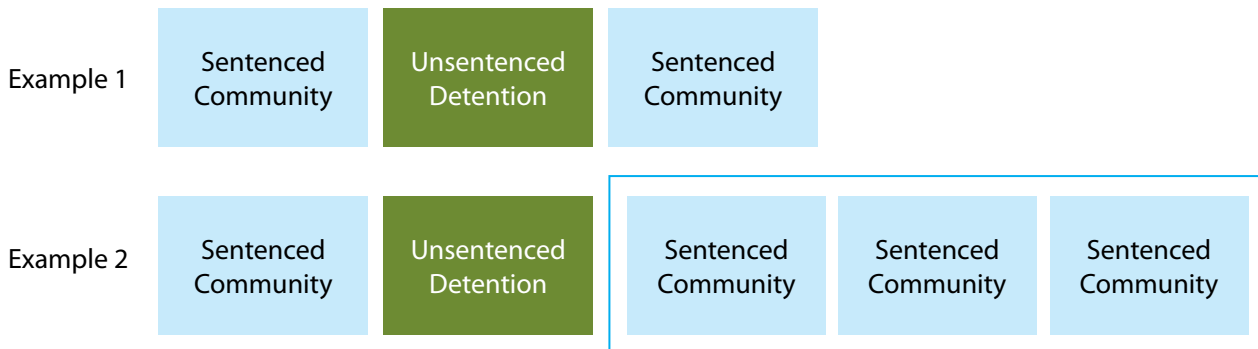
*Note:* Each box represents a single episode of supervision.

**Example 1:** A young person aged 15 was charged by the police for an offence, which was later proven in court. The court then sentenced the young person to a supervised community-based order. After completing this order, the young person did not commit any further offences before they 'aged out' of the youth justice system; that is, they turned 18.

**Example 2:** A young person aged 10 was charged by the police for an offence. This charge was later proven in court, and the young person was sentenced to a supervised community-based order. The young person completed this order, and went on to commit another offence at age 12. The court sentenced this young person to a second supervised community-based order, which they completed. This occurred on 2 more separate occasions for the young person before they 'aged out' of the youth justice system.

### Box 1.3: Examples of a pathway type containing multiple supervision types

#### Pathway type—Sentenced Community → Unsentenced detention → Sentenced Community



Note: Each box represents a single episode of supervision.

**Example 1:** A young person was sentenced to a supervised community-based order for an offence they committed at age 12. Some years later, the young person was charged with another offence by the police. The court adjourned the trial of the young person for this offence to a later date, but the young person was remanded in custody (unsentenced detention) until the offence was heard again. When the young person returned to court, the charge was proven and they were sentenced to a supervised community-based order. After completing this order, they did not commit another offence while aged under 18 and as a result had no further contact with the youth justice system.

**Example 2:** A young person was charged with their first offence at the age of 10, which was later proven by the court. The court sentenced the young person to a supervised community-based order. At age 12, they were then charged with an additional offence by the police. When hearing this charge, the young person was remanded into custody (unsentenced detention) while awaiting sentencing. The young person was then sentenced to a supervised community-based order. Before the age of 18, the young person went on to commit 2 further separate offences and in both cases was sentenced to supervised community-based orders.

## Report structure

**Chapter 1** (this chapter) provides background information about the youth justice system and the young people under youth justice supervision, and an overview of the aim and content of the report.

**Chapter 2** examines the type of pathways that are experienced by young people through youth justice supervision. It also highlights changes in pathways over time.

**Chapter 3** examines the different characteristics of young people, and how they vary by the type of pathway through youth justice supervision, including age, sex and Indigenous status.

**Chapter 4** examines pathways containing detention.

**Chapter 5** identifies additional factors to be explored for future research.

This report includes supplementary tables (those with a prefix of S) which can be downloaded free of charge from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) website at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/youth-justice/>.

## 2 Pathways young people experienced through youth justice supervision

The pathways young people take through youth justice supervision may vary for several reasons. Factors that can influence pathways include the differences in youth justice policies and practices between jurisdictions, the offending behaviour of the young person, personal circumstances, and the availability of early intervention and rehabilitation programs.

### The number of young people who have experienced youth justice supervision

The JJ NMDS contains information on a total of 22,541 young people who experienced some form of youth justice supervision between 2000–01 and 2012–13 while aged 10–17 (referred to throughout this report as the 'study cohort'; see Appendix A for details). The number of young people in each jurisdiction broadly reflects the distribution of the general population.

Of these young people, 8 in 10 were male (17,990 or 80%), and 3 in 10 (6,878 or 31%) were Indigenous (Table 2.1). Both groups are traditionally over-represented in the youth justice system—for example, in 2012–13 young males were 4 times as likely as young females, and Indigenous young people were 17 times as likely as non-Indigenous young people, to be under supervision on an average day (AIHW 2014).

**Table 2.1: All young people under supervision between 2000–01 to 2012–13 while aged 10–17 by sex and Indigenous status, Australia**

	Male	Female	Total
Indigenous	5,253	1,620	6,878
Non-Indigenous	11,931	2,647	14,587
Not stated	806	246	1,076
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,990</b>	<b>4,513</b>	<b>22,541</b>

#### Notes

1. Totals include young people whose sex or Indigenous status was unknown.
2. Full cohort data is not available for all states and territories. See Appendix A for details.

Sources: Tables S3 and S4.

### Common pathways through supervision

Young people under youth justice supervision in Australia between 2000–01 and 2012–13 have experienced a number of different pathways through youth justice supervision. This report examines these pathways on the basis of 4 broad types of supervision—unsentenced community-based supervision, sentenced community-based supervision, unsentenced detention and sentenced detention (see Box 1.1 for details).

#### First type of supervision

The first type of youth justice supervision a young person receives as part of their contact with the youth justice system has been shown to be an indicator of their future contacts within youth justice supervision. Research in relation to contact with the criminal justice system more broadly has suggested that the more serious a young person's initial contact with the system, such as an order for sentenced detention rather than community supervision, the more likely they are to have continued contact across all types of youth justice supervision compared with those experiencing less serious contacts.

There are, however, a number of different factors, including personal and environmental, that may play a role in determining a young person's first supervision type—some of which are highlighted throughout this report. These factors in turn will have some impact upon a young person's continued contact and subsequent pathway across all types of youth justice supervision. For example, the first type of supervision of a young person may affect whether they go on to experience multiple types of supervision.

Dennison et al. (2006), for example, found that young people whose initial contact with the system was through a court appearance were more likely to have additional contact with the youth justice system than those young people who had been cautioned on their initial contact (42% compared with 31% for those cautioned). Similarly, Vignaendra and Fitzgerald (2006) found that young offenders whose initial contact with the system was a youth justice conference were more likely to reoffend within 5 years than those who had been cautioned (58% compared with 42% for those cautioned).

A young person's first supervision type may therefore be an indicator of future episodes of supervision. Using the JJ NMDS it is possible to examine the relationship between young people's first type of supervision, and their subsequent supervision periods; that is, their pathway through youth justice supervision.

### Sentenced community-based supervision

Sentenced community-based supervision was the first type of supervision for almost half of all young people (49% or 11,095) within the overall study cohort. On average, young people in this group experienced about 3 episodes of supervision within their supervision pathway, and spent a total median duration of 331 days under supervision (Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2: Characteristics of first type of supervision for total study cohort**

First type of supervision	Number of young people	Per cent	Average number of episodes	Median duration of all supervision (days)
Sentenced community	11,095	49	3.1	331
Unsentenced detention	8,859	39	7.3	290
Unsentenced community	2,488	11	4.0	269
Sentenced detention	63	<1	3.0	190
<b>Total number of young people</b>	<b>22,541</b>	<b>100</b>		

*Notes*

1. Totals include young people whose supervision type was not within the 4 categories of analysis.

2. Full cohort data is not available in all states and territories. See Appendix A for details.

Source: Table S1 and AIHW JJ NMDS 2000–01 to 2012–13.

Interestingly, only about one-quarter of young people in this group (23%) went on to experience at least 1 other type of supervision, which is substantially lower than any other supervision type (Figure 2.1).

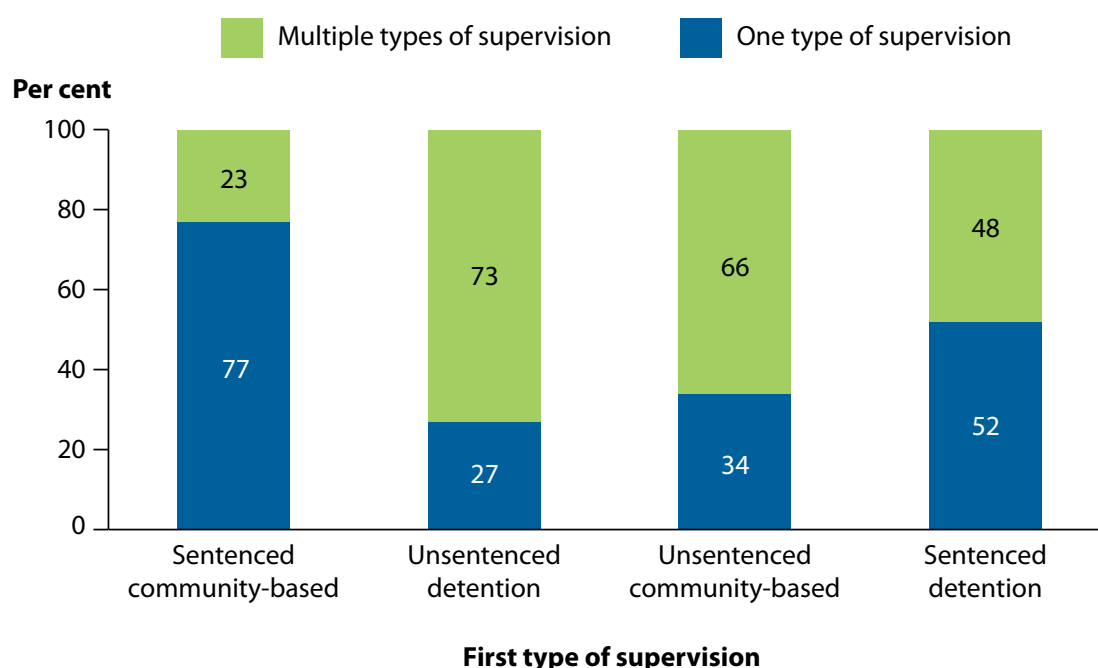
Certain demographic groups more commonly experienced another supervision type in addition to sentenced community-based supervision—young males and young Indigenous people made up a larger proportion of those who experienced more than one type of supervision (86% and 48%, respectively) than those who experienced unsentenced community-based supervision only (78% and 27%, respectively). This is not surprising, as young males and young Indigenous people have a history of over-representation in youth justice supervision and are more likely to return to supervision than their counterparts (AIHW 2013b, 2014).

## Unsented detention

About 2 in every 5 (39% or 8,859) young people within the study cohort experienced unsented detention as their initial supervision type. On average, these young people experienced about 7 episodes of supervision within their pathways, and spent a total median duration of 290 days under supervision (Table 2.2).

In contrast to sended community-based supervision, almost three-quarters (73%) of young people went on to experience at least 1 other type of supervision (Figure 2.1). This is not entirely unexpected, as it is likely that young people in any form of unsented supervision would in most cases go on to be sended.

Overall, young males and young Indigenous people made up a large proportion of those who experienced supervision types in addition to unsented detention (81% and 36%, respectively). In contrast, these same demographic groups accounted for a smaller proportion of those who experienced unsented detention only (75% for young males and 25% for young Indigenous people).



Source: Table S1.

**Figure 2.1: Young people who experienced multiple types of supervision, by type of first supervision (%)**

## Unsented community-based supervision

Around 1 in every 9 (11% or 2,488) young people experienced unsented community-based supervision as their first type of supervision. On average, they experienced about 4 episodes of supervision within their pathways, and spent a total median duration of 269 days under supervision (Table 2.2).

Similar to unsented detention, a large proportion of young people (66%) went on to experience at least 1 other form of supervision (Figure 2.1). Of these, 83% were young males and 19% were young Indigenous people. This is in contrast to those who experienced only unsented community-based supervision, where 76% were young males and 12% were young Indigenous people.

## Sentenced detention

For a small number of young people (less than 0.5% or 63), sentenced detention was their initial type of youth justice supervision (Table 2.2). Around half (52% or 33) of these young people only ever experienced sentenced detention (Figure 2.1).

Those young people who experienced sentenced detention as their first type of supervision, on average, experienced about 3 episodes of supervision within their pathways, and spent a total median duration of 190 days under supervision (Table 2.2).

Nearly all young people who experienced sentenced detention as their first supervision type, were male (95%) and about a third (32%) were Indigenous. This finding is consistent, regardless of whether they only experienced sentenced detention, or went on to experience other types of supervision.

## Summary

Overall, these findings indicate that the first type of supervision for most young people under youth justice supervision was community-based supervision rather than in detention. The first supervision type for almost half (49%) of all young people was sentenced community-based supervision, followed by unsentenced detention (39%), while less than 0.5% experienced sentenced detention.

Further, these results support findings from existing research that show that those young people whose first youth justice supervision type was of a more serious nature were more likely to have continued youth justice supervision contact across all types of supervision. About half (52%) of all young people did not experience another type of supervision beyond their first type of supervision. Clear differences emerged in pathways onto other forms of supervision, for example, between those young people who first experienced sentenced community-based supervision and those who experienced sentenced detention (Figure 2.1). This may in part reflect the fact that most supervision (85%) on an average day occurs within the community (AIHW 2014).

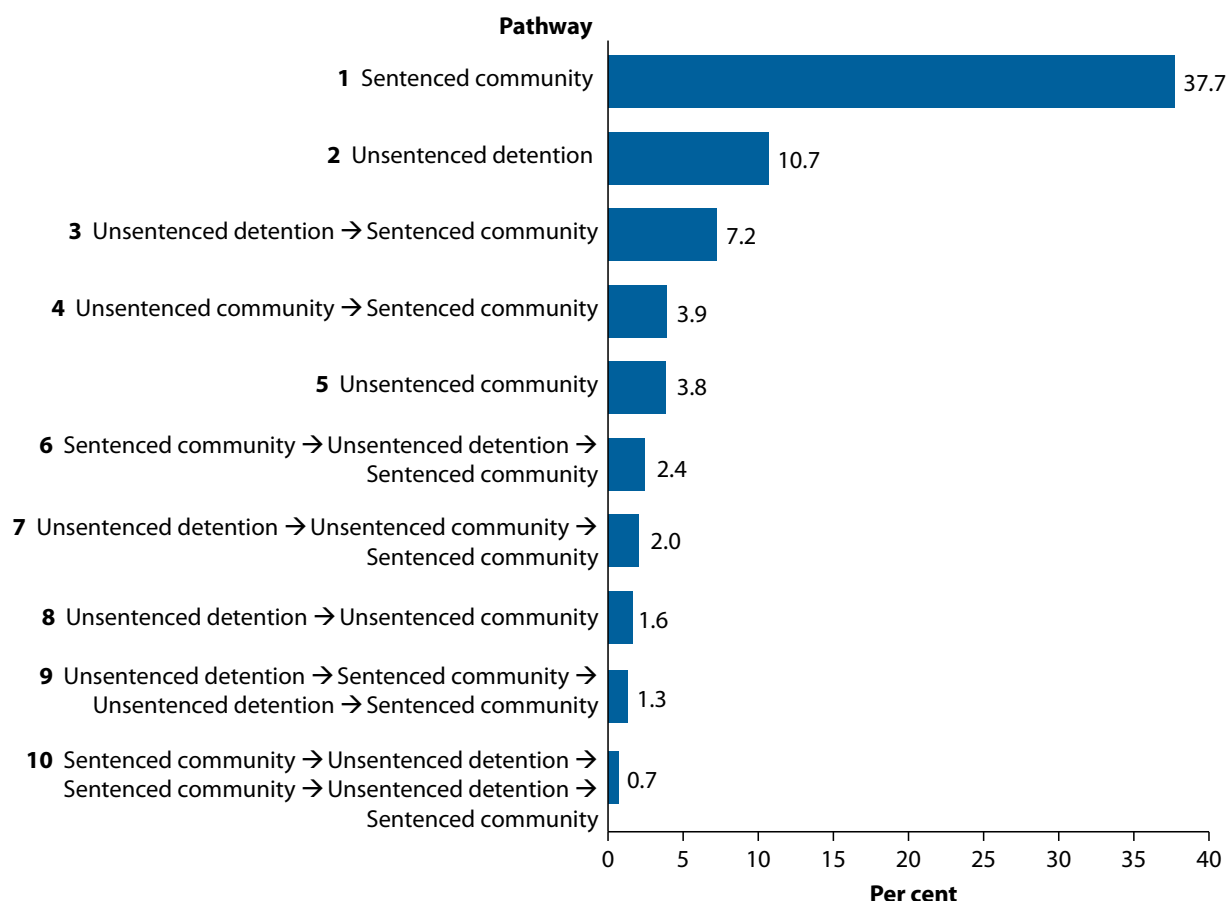
## Supervision pathways

It is important to understand a young person's entire pathway through supervision as this can inform the targeting of services and intervention strategies to reduce the offending behaviour of young people.

Nationally, of the 22,541 young people within the overall study cohort, a total of 2,901 unique pathways were experienced by young people through youth justice supervision. These included 3 general categories: a single episode of supervision, repeated episodes of the same supervision type, and a range of episodes with multiple supervision types.

The top 10 most common supervision pathways accounted for 71% of young people who experienced youth justice supervision (Figure 2.2). Experiences of pathways outside the top 10 were rare, with most pathways (97%) only being experienced by 10 or fewer young people. This is consistent with a study undertaken by Ferrante et al. (2004), which mapped the unique pathways through the Western Australian youth justice system using all contacts for young people 10–17 years (including contacts not captured in the JJ NMDS, such as cautions). This study found that the top 10 pathways accounted for about three-quarters of all paths (77%).

Based on analysis of the JJ NMDS, the most common supervision pathway experienced by young people was one that contained only sentenced community-based supervision—experienced by almost 2 in every 5 (38%) young people. This was followed by a pathway that involved only unsentenced detention—experienced by 11% of young people (Figure 2.2).



*Note:* All data for states and territories are included in this table. States with complete cohort data available include New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. The Australian Capital Territory has complete cohort data for the 1993–94 and 1994–95 cohorts, and partial cohort data for 1990–91 to 1992–93 cohorts. The remaining states and territories have partial cohort data. See Appendix A for further details.

*Source:* Table S2.

**Figure 2.2: Top 10 most common pathways through youth justice supervision, for young people born 1990–91 to 1994–95**

The next most common pathway involved multiple supervision types, with about 7% of young people starting in unsented detention and proceeding to sentenced community-based supervision.

Unsented community supervision was the only other single supervision pathway within the top 10 pathways, with 4% of young people experiencing this pathway.

Interestingly, while the top 10 pathways contain no instance of sentenced detention, about 13% of young people under youth justice supervision experienced a pathway that contained at least 1 episode of sentenced detention.

## Changes in pathways over time

Between 2000–01 and 2012–13 there has been little change in the patterns of pathways through youth justice supervision experienced by young people aged 10–17 in those states with full cohort data. The most notable change has been a gradual decline in the proportion of young people who experienced 1 of the top 10 pathways—from 74% for the 1990–91 birth cohort, to 69% for the 1994–95 birth cohort. This means that over time there has been an increase in the proportion of pathways experienced by young people outside of the top 10. This may be due to a number of factors including changes in sentencing practices in states and territories, and the increasing complexity of issues faced by young people, for example socio-economic status, homelessness and disability.

It appears that this decline has been driven by a decrease in the proportion of young people who were under sentenced community-based supervision only. Of those young people in the 1990–91 birth cohort, 39% had a pathway that contained only sentenced community, which has since declined to 35% in the 1994–95 birth cohort.

A similar decline in the overall number of pathways was observed across each state and territory for which data were available, except South Australia which experienced a slight increase.

Overall, there has been a greater variation in pathways over time with the proportion of young people within the 10 most common pathways gradually declining. This has largely been driven by a decline in those experiencing only sentenced community-based supervision—the most common pathway. Individual states also saw more variation in pathways, although the decline in pathways containing only sentenced community-based supervision was not uniform.

### 3 Characteristics of young people in supervision pathways

Research indicates that pathways through youth justice supervision vary by a number of different characteristics, with Indigenous status, sex and age at first contact with the justice system consistently highlighted throughout research (see, for example, Chen et al. 2005; Vignaendra & Fitzgerald 2006).

Further, each Australian state and territory government is responsible for their youth justice system, with their own legislation, policies and practices. Therefore, the state or territory where a young person is supervised may have an impact on their movement within youth justice supervision.

To explore differences within these groups, the analysis that follows primarily draws on the top 10 pathways.

#### Sex

JJ NMDS data showed that 4 in every 5 (80%) young people within the overall study cohort were male, which is consistent with the proportion of young males under supervision on an average day in 2012–13 (83%; AIHW 2014). Further, this finding supports research that shows males made up the large majority of young offenders (Marshall 2006; Skrzypiec & Wundersitz 2005).

Research also suggests that young males are more likely to be classified as chronic offenders, have shorter times between appearances, and experience greater variation in their pathways through the youth justice system than young females (Chen et al. 2005; Livingston et al. 2008).

#### Findings

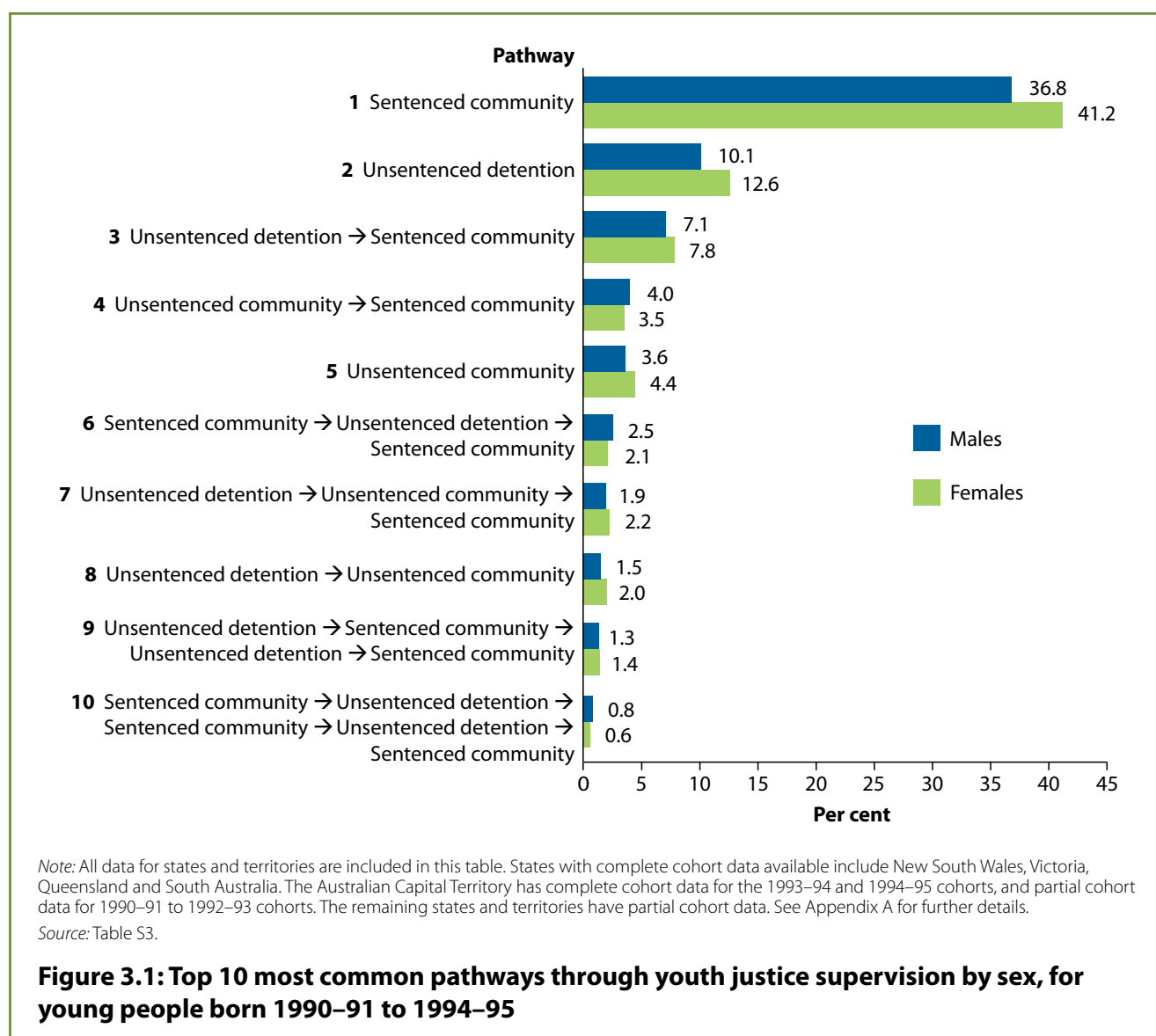
Overall, the findings from the JJ NMDS support findings elsewhere in the research literature, with young males experiencing a greater number of and more varied pathways through youth justice supervision than young females. In total, young males experienced 2,567 pathways through youth justice supervision, which equates to 88% of pathways. In comparison, young females experienced only 576 pathways, accounting for 20% of those experienced (note that some pathways are common to both males and females).

Further, young males were likely to have a greater number of episodes of supervision within their pathways than young females (5.0 compared with 4.1), and spent longer under supervision (median duration of 322 days compared with 273 days).

The top 10 pathways through youth justice supervision further highlight this variation, with 70% of young males experiencing these pathways compared with 78% of young females (Figure 3.1).

Despite the top 10 pathways for young males and females containing the same paths (although ranked differently), the type of supervision experienced differed by the seriousness of the order type and the complexity of the pathways. For example, young females were more likely to follow a pathway that contained only a single type of supervision than young males—58% compared with 51%. This was the case for pathways containing only sentenced community-based supervision (41% of females compared with 37% of males) and unsentenced detention only (13% compared with 10%).

Males were also more likely than females to have a pathway containing sentenced detention (14% compared with 6%). In addition, the proportion of pathways for males (64% or 1,643 pathways) that contained an episode of sentenced detention was much higher than that for females (41% or 234 pathways). This is consistent with the differences in supervision for the average day in 2012–13, where males are 8 times as likely to be in detention as females (AIHW 2014). These outcomes are likely to be mainly due to a longer offending history for young males than females, as well as an increased likelihood of appearing before the courts and having committed more serious offences (Chen et al. 2005; Hua et al. 2006; Livingston et al. 2008).



An examination of the rate of young people under supervision within the states with full cohort data (that is, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia) found that young males were over-represented across the 10 most common pathways by between 3 and 5 times. This is generally consistent with previous AIHW analyses, where on an average day in 2012–13, males were 4 times as likely to be under supervision as females (AIHW 2014).

## Indigenous status

Research indicates that the pathways experienced by Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people through the youth justice system differ. Indigenous young people have been shown to have more contacts on average, progress onto more serious contacts (for example onto sentenced detention) and have a wider variety of pathways through the system than non-Indigenous young people (see, for example, Chen et al. 2005; Ferrante et al. 2004; Livingston et al. 2008; Marshall 2006; Skrzypiec & Wundersitz 2005).

## Findings

Analysis of JJ NMDS data showed that around 31% (6,878) of young people under youth justice supervision were Indigenous (Table 2.1). Indigenous young people aged 10–17 are traditionally over-represented in youth justice supervision—from 2006–07 to 2012–13 they were 15–17 times more likely than non-Indigenous young people to be under supervision (AIHW 2014). Previous analyses of the JJ NMDS have also shown that on average, Indigenous young people enter youth justice supervision at younger ages than non-Indigenous young people (AIHW 2012a), which is another characteristic considered in this report (see ‘age at first supervision’ section below).

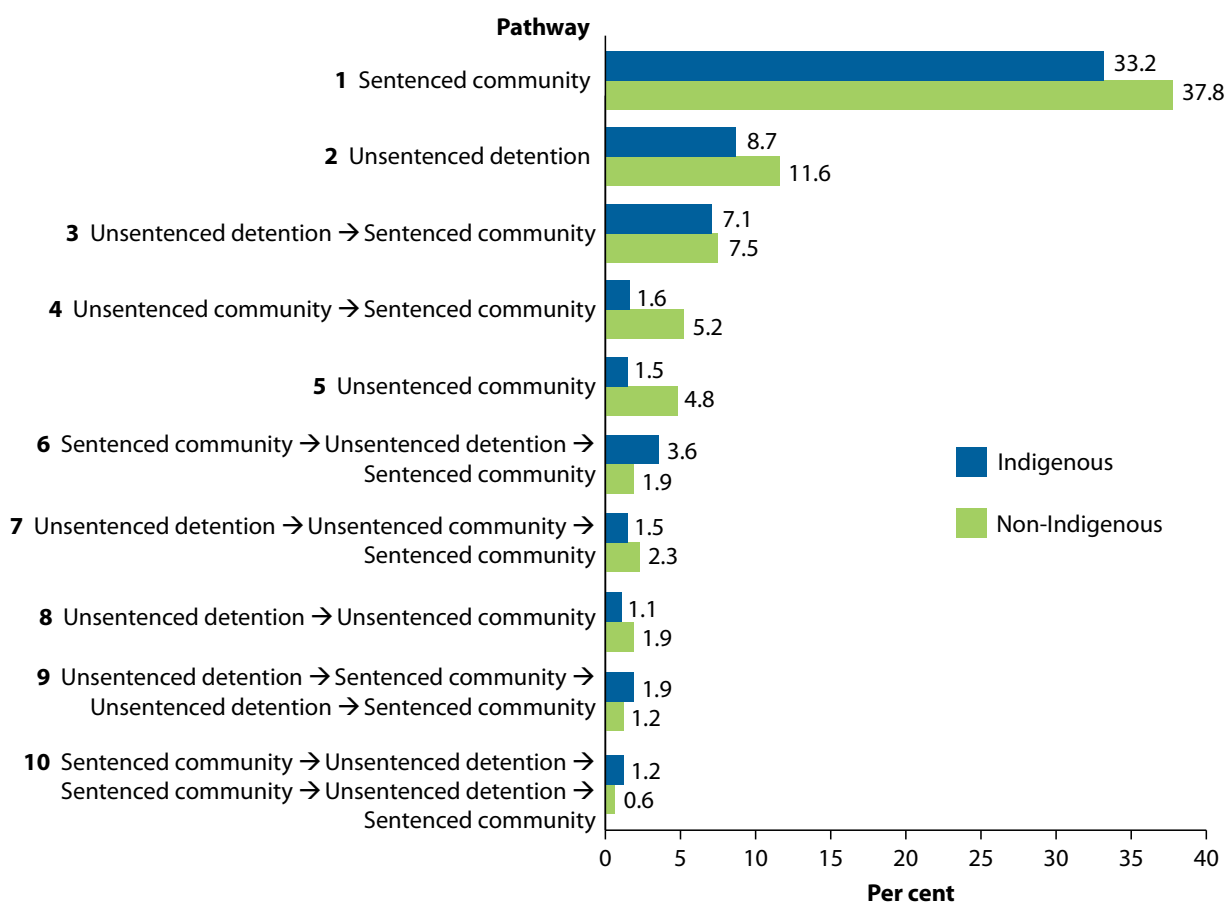
Indigenous young people were also, on average, more likely to have a greater number of supervision episodes within their pathways than non-Indigenous young people (6.8 compared with 4.1), which supports findings from existing research. In addition, they were also more likely to have spent a longer median duration for all episodes under supervision (458 days compared with 274 days).

A breakdown of the top 10 pathways through supervision highlights the variation between Indigenous young people and non-Indigenous young people within the overall study cohort (Figure 3.2). A larger proportion of Indigenous young people experienced pathways outside of the top 10 than non-Indigenous young people (39% compared with 25%). This difference supports existing research findings into pathways through the youth justice system (Ferrante et al. 2004).

Further, Indigenous young people were more likely to experience pathways containing multiple types of supervision than non-Indigenous young people (56% compared with 46%). This highlights the variation and complexity in pathways through youth justice supervision experienced by Indigenous young people.

Indigenous young people were more likely to have experienced pathways containing more serious outcomes, such as orders containing detention. Indigenous young people were twice as likely to have experienced sentenced detention as non-Indigenous young people (20% compared with 10%).

A number of factors may have influenced outcomes for Indigenous young people. These include that they are more likely than non-Indigenous young people to have entered supervision at a younger age, and have longer and more serious offending histories, which results in Indigenous young people appearing before the courts more often (Lynch et al. 2003; Ferrante et al. 2004; Chen et al. 2005; AIHW 2012a).



*Note:* All data for states and territories are included in this table. States with complete cohort data available include New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. The Australian Capital Territory has complete cohort data for the 1993–94 and 1994–95 cohorts, and partial cohort data for 1990–91 to 1992–93 cohorts. The remaining states and territories have partial cohort data. See Appendix A for further details.

*Source:* Table S4.

**Figure 3.2: Top 10 most common pathways through youth justice supervision by Indigenous status, for young people born 1990–91 to 1994–95**

In addition, an examination of the rate of young people under supervision within the states with full cohort data (that is, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia) found that Indigenous young people were over-represented across the 10 most common pathways by between 4 and 23 times. For example, Indigenous young people were 9 times as likely to have followed the most common pathway (sentenced community-based supervision only) than non-Indigenous young people (rates of 38.6 and 4.3 per 10,000 young people, respectively).

## Age at first supervision

Research has shown that the younger a person is when they enter the system or initiate into offending, the more likely they are to progress through the system onto multiple and more serious forms of re-contact (Chen et al. 2005; Dennison et al. 2006; Ferrante et al. 2004; Hua et al. 2006). Further, Livingston et al. (2008) found that those young people starting at an earlier age follow a different trajectory through the youth justice system than those who start at a later age. In addition, those young people who have entered at an earlier age have also been found to commit a larger number of offences and have more court offences (Chen et al. 2005; Marshall 2006).

Previous AIHW analysis in relation to the JJ NMDS has shown that those who were first supervised at age 10–14 were more likely than those first supervised at older ages to have more serious outcomes, experience detention at age 15–17 and spend longer under supervision (AIHW 2013a).

## Findings

In order to explore these issues, JJ NMDS data for those states with full cohort data between 2000–01 and 2012–13 (that is, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia) are included in these results. Of these young people, a quarter were aged 10–14 at first supervision (26% or 5,065).

Despite making up only a small number of young people under supervision, those aged 10–14 at first supervision experienced a wider range of pathways than those aged 15–17. It should be noted however, that the smaller number of pathways for those aged 15–17 may be due to the fact that they ‘aged out’ of youth justice supervision; that is they turned 18 and were too old to be under the care of youth justice, and would transition into the adult justice system (with a small number of exceptions).

The variation in pathways between different age groups on entry is highlighted by the number of paths experienced by each group. Those young people who were first under supervision aged 10–14 experienced a total of 1,841 pathways through supervision, compared with 1,116 experienced by those aged 15–17. On average, those aged 10–14 had a greater number of episodes of supervision than those aged 15–17 (9.2 compared with 3.1).

The top 10 pathways for each group further highlight this variability. For those aged 15–17 at first supervision, 4 in every 5 (80%) experienced a pathway that was within the top 10, compared with less than half (48%) of those aged 10–14 at first supervision.

This variation can be seen particularly through the first 3 most common pathways, where these were the same for each age group, but there was substantial variation in the proportion of each group that experienced them. Of these pathways, young people aged 10–14 at first supervision were less likely than those aged 15–17 at first supervision to have experienced them (Table 3.1). For example, those young people aged 15–17 were more than twice as likely to have experienced a pathway of unsentenced detention only than those aged 10–14 (12% compared with 5%).

Further, these findings support the notion that young people aged 10–14 were more likely than those aged 15–17 to have experienced more complex pathways. The data highlight that more than two-thirds (69%) of young people aged 10–14 followed a pathway that contained multiple supervision types, compared with just under a third (41%) of those aged 15–17.

**Table 3.1: Most common pathways by age group**

Aged 10–14 at first supervision	Per cent	Aged 15–17 at first supervision	Per cent
Sentenced community only	23.7	Sentenced community only	42.0
Unsentenced detention only	5.2	Unsentenced detention only	12.0
Unsentenced detention → Sentenced community	5.4	Unsentenced detention → Sentenced community	7.8
Sentenced community → Unsentenced detention → Sentenced community	3.3	Unsentenced community → Sentenced community	5.0
Unsentenced community → Sentenced community	2.5	Unsentenced community only	5.0

*Note:* This table only includes those states with complete cohort data available between 2000–01 and 2012–13 (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia).

*Source:* Tables S5.

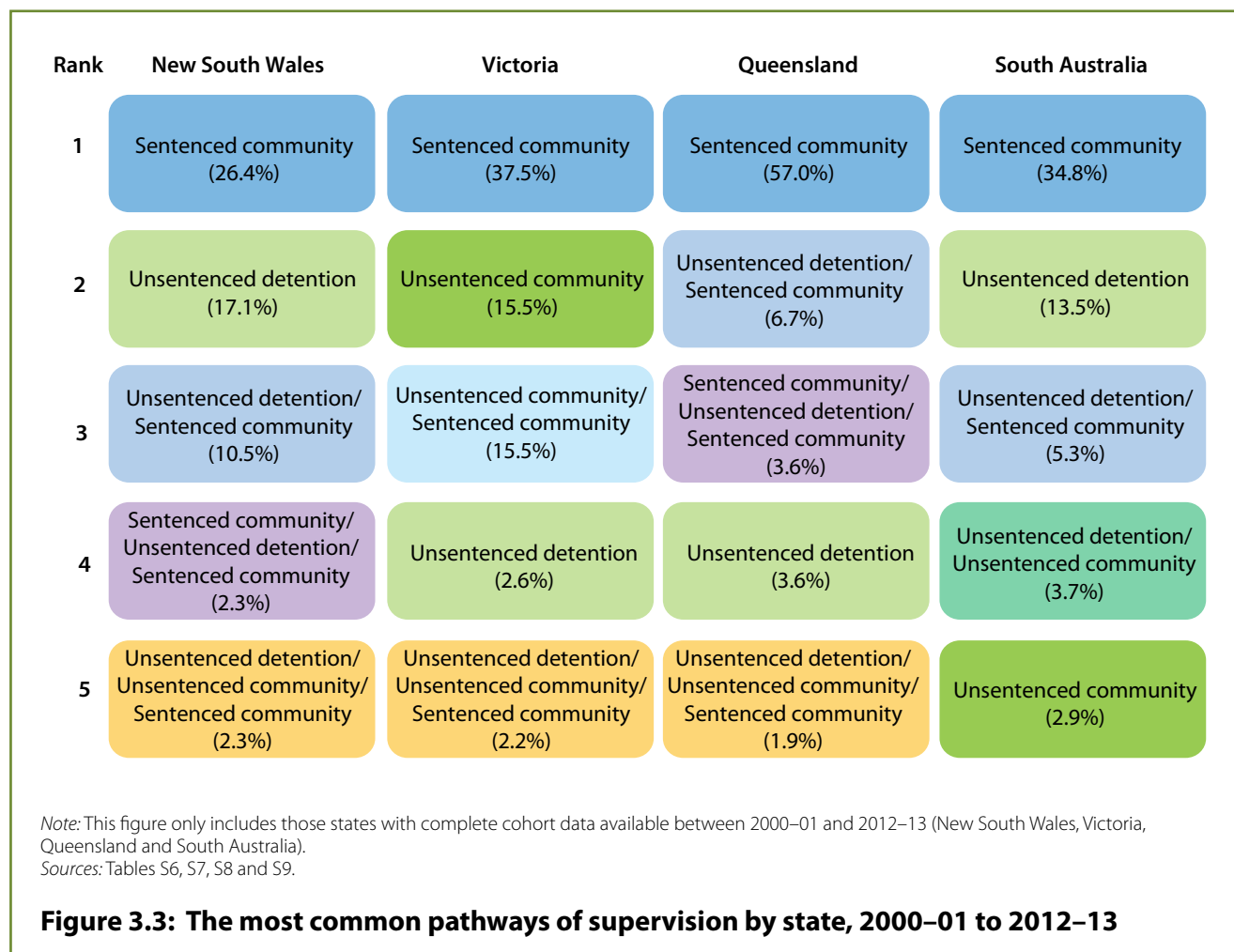
## State

In Australia, youth justice is the responsibility of the state and territory governments, each with their own legislation, policies and practices; however the general processes are similar.

Of those states with full cohort data available from 2000–01 to 2012–13 (that is, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia), there was some variation in the pathways through youth justice supervision. Analysis of the most common pathways highlighted this variation, with a smaller proportion of young people in New South Wales (59%) and South Australia (60%) experiencing these common pathways than those in Queensland and Victoria (73%, respectively) (Figure 3.3).

The most common pathway for all states was sentenced community-based supervision only, although Queensland had a substantially larger proportion of young people than any other state which followed this pathway. Other differences included that unsentenced detention was the second most common pathway in New South Wales and South Australia, whereas in Queensland and Victoria it was the fourth most common (Figure 3.3).

Further, there were differences in the proportions of young people who followed a pathway that contained multiple types of supervision. New South Wales for example, had the highest proportion of young people (55%) who followed a pathway that contained multiple supervision types, while Queensland had the lowest proportion (39%).



## Summary of findings—varying characteristics

Research suggests that the typical pathways through youth justice supervision may vary by a number of characteristics, including age at first supervision, sex and Indigenous status. The JJ NMDS data highlighted that young males, young Indigenous people and those aged 10–14 were more likely than their counterparts to have more serious, complex and varied pathways through supervision, which is supported by research.

As noted earlier, it is important to remember that while none of the pathways described above involved instances of sentenced detention, about 13% of young people under youth justice supervision experienced sentenced detention at some point in time.

A breakdown by state (for those with full cohort data available) showed that there was some variation in the most common pathways across states. For example, young people in New South Wales and South Australia experienced more variation in their pathways than those young people from Queensland and Victoria.

Additional factors that may have a relationship with a young person's pathway through youth justice supervision are outlined in the following chapters of this report.

## 4 Pathways containing detention

The notion that young people should only be placed in detention as a last resort and for the shortest time possible is one of the key principles on which Australia's youth justice systems are based. This principle can be found in the youth justice legislation in each state and territory (with the exception of Queensland, which revised its legislation in March 2014).

The detention population on an average day accounts for a relatively small proportion (15%) of the total supervision population (AIHW 2014). However, while small, the detention population is a strong point of focus for the youth justice system given that this level of supervision is commonly seen as serious in nature.

Analysis of the first type of youth justice supervision a young person received showed that 2 in every 5 young people first experienced detention, with 39% having had experienced unsentenced detention, while less than 0.5% experienced sentenced detention.

As young people accumulate supervision orders over time, a greater proportion experience some form of detention. This is to be expected; as a young person's offending history is taken into consideration when sentencing occurs.

### Unsentenced detention

In the overall study cohort, just over half (53% or 11,845) of all young people experienced some form of unsentenced detention.

Of all pathways through youth justice supervision, most (99%) contained at least 1 episode of unsentenced detention. This suggests that most young people who experience multiple supervision types are likely to go on to experience unsentenced detention at some point in time.

Further, analysis of the 10 most common pathways for those young people that experienced unsentenced detention showed a wide variation in pathways through youth justice supervision. Overall, the top 10 accounted for just over half (53%) of all pathways that contained unsentenced detention.

For 1 in every 5 (20% or 2,404) young people who experienced unsentenced detention, this was their only form of youth justice supervision. These young people, on average, experienced 1.6 episodes of unsentenced detention each within their pathways, and spent, in total, a median duration of 2 days in detention.

### Sentenced detention

Around 1 in every 8 (13% or 2,842) young people under youth justice supervision experienced sentenced detention at some point in time. In total, there were 1,808 pathways that contained at least 1 episode of sentenced detention, which equates to 62% of all pathways.

Of those young people who experienced sentenced detention, for 33 young people (1%) this was the only form of youth justice supervision experienced before they 'aged out' (that is turned 18) of the system. These young people, on average, experienced 1.1 episodes of sentenced detention each within their pathways, and spent a median duration of 89 days in detention.

Nearly all young people (99%) who had experienced sentenced detention experienced at least 1 other form of youth justice supervision. Around 2% of young people experienced sentenced detention as their first supervision type, with the remainder (98%) experiencing it after their first supervision type. This is indicative of how the youth justice system works, with sentenced detention generally considered as a last resort, and as such young people are more likely to experience another form of supervision before sentenced detention (see Figure 1.1).

An examination of the 10 most common pathways through supervision for those young people that experienced sentenced detention demonstrated a large degree of variation in their experience of supervision. In total, these pathways accounted for 17% of all pathways for those young people that experienced some form of sentenced detention.

In contrast, young people who experienced pathways containing other forms of supervision were less likely to experience this level of variation. For example, 45% of young people who experienced unsentenced community-based supervision fell within the top 10 pathways, which was the case for 70% of young people who experienced sentenced community-based supervision.



## Summary of detention pathway

It should be noted that, due to the cumulative effect across a young person's youth justice involvement, as a young person's pathway continues through youth justice supervision they become more likely to have some experience of detention, particularly unsentenced detention.

It is also evident that young people whose pathways contained detention, sentenced or unsentenced, experienced a large degree of variation in their pathways and generally had more complex pathways. This was particularly the case for sentenced detention, where only 17% of young people experienced a pathway within the top 10.

## 5 Completing the story

This report provides insight into young people's experiences of youth justice supervision, including an outline of the various pathways through youth justice supervision that young people experience. It highlights the number of unique pathways through youth justice supervision, a major aspect of the youth justice system, and demonstrates that pathways vary by a number of characteristics. It also highlights changes in pathways over 5 separate birth cohorts. These findings support existing research into the criminal justice system more generally.

The available literature on pathways through the criminal justice system highlights a number of additional factors that can play a role. These factors, amongst others, include: child abuse and neglect, disability, socio-economic status, homelessness and the type of offence committed.

The available data in the JJ NMDS are currently unable to measure all of these factors; however, some are under development, such as offence type. In addition, there are a number of data linkage projects currently being undertaken by the AIHW, so that future research may be able to highlight the role of these factors in the pathways of young people through youth justice supervision.

### Child abuse and neglect

Currently, the understanding of how child abuse and neglect relates to pathways through the justice system is limited, which may in part be due to the lack of availability or access to data. Where studies have been able to analyse these data, they have found the presence of prior child protection orders to be a significant factor associated with young people's pathways through the justice system. This research, with a specific focus on Queensland, has shown that young offenders with a prior order were likely to have re-contact and progress into the adult system than those without an order (Dennison et al. 2006; Lynch et al. 2003).

A multi-year data linkage project commenced in 2013–14 to develop a process for linking between the JJ NMDS and the Child Protection NMDS. This work will enable the identification of the number and characteristics of young people under youth justice supervision who have also had contact with the child protection system, and will provide an insight into the effect of this contact on their pathways through youth justice supervision.

### Socio-economic status

Another factor that may have a relationship to a young person's supervision pathway is their socio-economic status. Research has indicated that there is an increased risk of entering into offending pathways for those individuals at disadvantage, due to the impact of their socio-economic status on the environment in which they develop (Stewart et al. 2006; Livingston et al. 2008; Weatherburn et al. 2003). Young offenders have been found to be disproportionately over-represented within the highly-disadvantaged category, while at the same time being under-represented within the highly-advantaged category (Lynch et al. 2006). Further, this is likely to have an increased effect on young Indigenous people as they are generally at higher levels of disadvantage than non-Indigenous youth (Livingston et al. 2008).

Currently, the AIHW uses the JJ NMDS data on the postcode of the young person's last known home address to model the socio-economic status of young people under supervision. Further work is required in order to enhance the geographical data currently available in the JJ NMDS so that future research may be able to determine the potential impact of a young person's socio-economic status on their pathway through youth justice supervision.

## Homelessness

Recent research indicates that a lack of suitable accommodation options for young people charged with an offence may result in them being placed in detention on remand (Richards & Renshaw 2013; Wong et al. 2010). Further, a lack of suitable accommodation options upon release may contribute to further re-offending (Mazerolle & Sanderson 2008; Richards 2011).

A project examining the relationship between youth justice supervision and accessing homelessness services found that 20% of young people under youth justice supervision received homelessness support within 2 years of their most recent period of supervision (AIHW 2012b). However, further research and data are required to determine the impact of homelessness on pathways through youth justice supervision.

## Disability

The presence of a disability diagnosis, including intellectual and cognitive diagnoses, has been associated with earlier and more frequent contact with police, and the likelihood of having been under some form of youth justice supervision. Further, young people with a disability are also likely to have ongoing contact in some form with the criminal justice system over their lifetime (Baldry et al. 2011; Baldry et al. 2012; French 2007).

The JJ NMDS does not currently collect any data on the disability status of a young person. However, with further research, including potentially linking the JJ NMDS to the Disability Services NMDS, the role that disability plays in affecting a young person's pathway through youth justice supervision may become clearer.

## Type of offence

The type of offence committed by a young person may be a factor that impacts their pathway through supervision. Research has indicated that if a young person's first contact was for a serious offence, then they are more likely to progress onto more serious contact (for example, sentenced detention) with the criminal justice system (Ferrante et al. 2004). Offenders with more serious charges are also more likely to have high or very high offending rates than those with less serious charges (Marshall 2006). However, a detailed study has also indicated that offence specialisation amongst young offenders is rare (Prichard & Payne 2005).

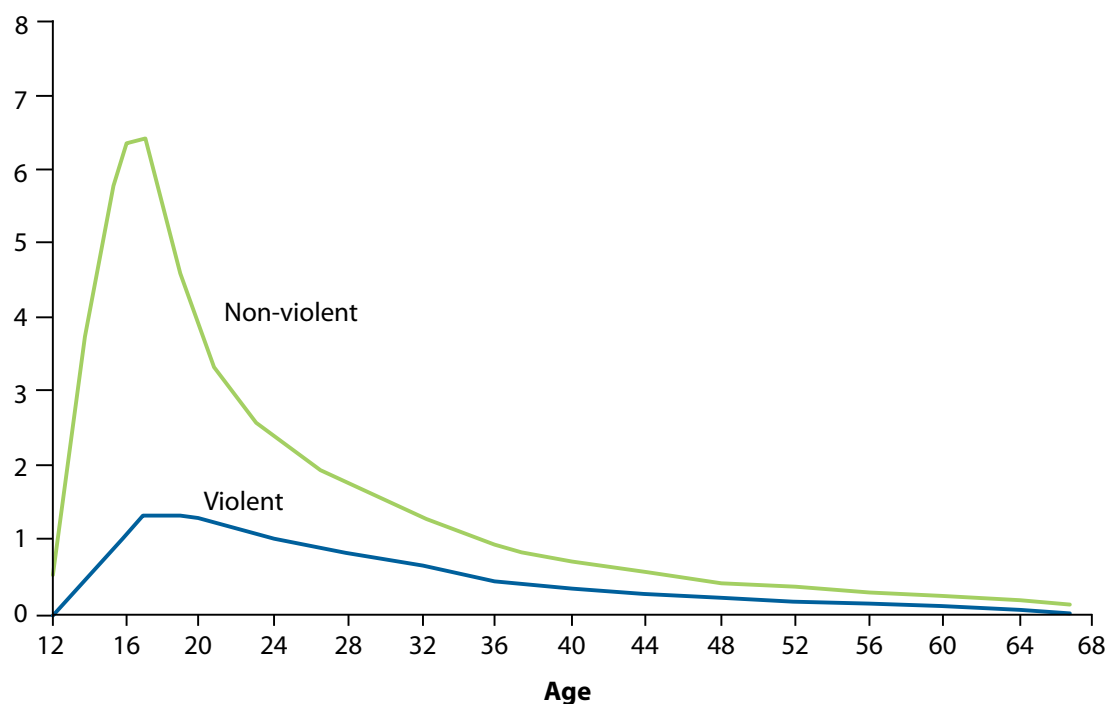
The JJ NMDS currently collects the offence type as an optional data item as represented by the relevant code of the Australian and New Zealand Standard Offence Classification (ABS 2011). In future, should this item be able to be developed further as a mandatory data item within the JJ NMDS, the impact of the type of offence committed by a young person on their pathway through supervision may be accurately and reliably measured.

## Transition to the adult criminal justice system

Understanding a young person's transition to the adult criminal justice system is important in order to gain a complete picture of their pathway beyond youth justice supervision. A key component of understanding a young person's transition to the adult criminal justice system is the relationship between age and crime, a consistently accepted principle within criminology. This relationship shows that the majority of people 'grow out' of their offending behaviour and this has been commonly depicted in the visual representations of the age–crime curve (Figure 5.1) (Richards 2011).

The age–crime curve demonstrates that the rate of offending generally increases through the mid to late teenage years before peaking in late adolescence when young people are aged 18–19, before declining through the early stages of adulthood (Richards 2011). As such, this current analysis is not able to encapsulate a young person's continuing contact with the criminal justice system and thus their full pathway.

Crimes per 100 population



Source: Farrington 1986 as in Richards 2011.

**Figure 5.1: Example of an age-crime curve**

The importance of being able to follow a young person's pathway into the adult system can be seen through differences between 2 studies of the same sample of young people in New South Wales. The findings showed that more than twice as many young people re-appeared in court (70% compared with 30%) when the follow-up period included their transition into adulthood (Coumarelos 1994; Chen et al. 2005).

Ideally, future analyses of pathways would encapsulate data from the adult system to overcome the limitation of the JJ NMDS, which only follows the pathway of young people under supervision until they are 17 years (16 years in Queensland), after which they 'age out', that is turn 18 (with a small number of exceptions).

## Appendix A: Studies and methods

The focus of this report is the analysis of birth cohorts and supervision cohorts (referred to throughout the report as the 'study cohort'), using data from the JJ NMDS to provide a unique insight into the pathways of young people through youth justice supervision. The report also incorporates findings from existing research, based on longitudinal studies using different methods and cohorts.

### Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set

The JJ NMDS is a longitudinal dataset which contains information on all young people who have come under youth justice supervision from 2000–01 to 2012–13. Information collected for the JJ NMDS includes the characteristics of the young person, as well as the characteristics of their supervision. The inclusion of a person identifier means that young people can be tracked throughout their contact with the youth justice system; that is their pathway through the youth justice system.

By examining pathways through youth justice supervision, it is possible to answer several questions around young people's contact with the youth justice system. For example, it is possible to examine how youth justice pathways have changed over time, whether the pathways young people experience vary by sex and Indigenous status, and whether their initial type of supervision has an impact on their subsequent supervision periods. It is also possible to examine how young people come to end up under a certain type of supervision, for example, the pathways that end with sentenced detention.

The JJ NMDS currently contains 5 full birth cohorts of data; that is, youth justice supervision information is available for young people born 1990–91 though to 1994–95 (who were supervised between 2000–01 to 2012–13), while they were aged 10–17. Additionally, the JJ NMDS contains several supervision cohorts; that is, data on young people who experienced the same type of supervision. These 2 types of cohorts allow for full pathway analyses as well as end-point pathway analyses (for example, the pathways that lead young people to sentenced detention).

For each of these analyses, 4 broad categories of supervision were used to provide a profile of the pathways through supervision, including the general or types of changes in the types of supervision young people experience. A pathway was constructed through analyses of the patterns of young people's movement through and across the available types of supervision before exiting the youth justice system. Each unique pattern was considered a pathway through youth justice supervision. Four supervision types were included in this analysis: unsentenced community-based supervision, sentenced community-based supervision, unsentenced detention and sentenced detention. Where the same type of supervision occurred consecutively—that is, where the type of supervision had not changed across multiple supervision episodes—these episodes of supervision were rolled up into the 1 broad category. Additionally, these broad pathways were mapped within each state. Where a young person is supervised across 2 separate states, 2 pathways will be generated; that is, 1 pathway per person, per state.

Although the JJ NMDS covers young people who had contact with the youth justice system from 2000–01 to 2012–13, data are not available for all states and territories for all years (see Table A1 for details). Full cohort data are available for 5 cohorts in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. The Australian Capital Territory contains 2 full birth cohorts, while the remaining states and territories contain partial cohorts. Data for Western Australia and the Northern Territory are not available between 2008–09 and 2012–13 and are not included in the supervision cohort analyses. The JJ NMDS also contains limited information in relation to charges and offences and does not contain information on unsupervised orders such as fines and good behaviour bonds. For the purposes of analyses, *parole and supervised release* orders have been excluded, as these types of orders can only occur administratively and in conjunction with an episode of sentenced detention.

**Table A1: JJ NMDS data availability by year and state, 2000–01 to 2012–13**

Year	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
2000–01	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n.a.	n.a.	✓
2001–02	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n.a.	n.a.	✓
2002–03	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n.a.	n.a.	✓
2003–04	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n.a.	✓	✓
2004–05	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n.a.	✓	✓
2005–06	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n.a.	✓	✓
2006–07	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2007–08	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2008–09	✓	✓	✓	n.a.	✓	✓	✓	n.a.
2009–10	✓	✓	✓	n.a.	✓	✓	✓	n.a.
2010–11	✓	✓	✓	n.a.	✓	✓	✓	n.a.
2011–12	✓	✓	✓	n.a.	✓	✓	✓	n.a.
2012–13	✓	✓	✓	n.a.	✓	✓	✓	n.a.

Note: Where data is available within a year it is represented by a ✓ and where data is not available it is represented by n.a.

## Longitudinal research

In Australia, a number of longitudinal studies have examined young peoples' pathways through the youth justice system. These studies have used different methods and cohorts. One method is the trajectory-based method, whereby the analysis identifies distinct groups of youth offenders (Livingston et al. 2008). An alternative method is to follow the offending events of young people—an event-based approach (Chen et al. 2005; Courmarelos 1994; Ferrante et al. 2004).

Studies using the event-based approach are generally focussed on recidivism and the characteristics of recidivist offenders, with the exception of the study by Ferrante et al. (2004) which tracked the progression of young people through the Western Australian youth justice system over an 8-year period.

The cohorts commonly used to examine pathways through the youth justice system are birth and offender-based cohorts. A birth cohort is generally used in studies following any person born in a particular year and specifically any young person born in that year who has had some form of contact with the youth justice system. Birth cohorts can also be used to measure the impact of new legislation and how the current system works. Offender-based cohorts generally focus on groups of offenders who committed an offence or had had their first court appearance within a particular year.

## Appendix B: Technical notes

Information about young people under youth justice supervision in this report is based on data from the JJ NMDS. This data collection contains information about all young people who were supervised by state and territory youth justice agencies in Australia from 2000–01 to 2012–13, both in the community and detention. 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 2012–13 is also available at <<http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/558327>>.

### Age

Across Australia, young people may be charged with a criminal offence once they are aged 10 or older. The upper age limit for treatment as a young person is 17 (at the time an offence was allegedly committed) in all states and territories except Queensland, where the age limit is 16. Young people who are aged 18 and older (17 or older in Queensland) at the time an offence was allegedly committed are dealt with under criminal legislation relating to adults.

However, it is possible for young people aged 18 and older to be under youth justice supervision. Reasons for this include 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. In addition, in Victoria, some young people aged 18–20 may be sentenced to detention in a youth facility (known as the ‘dual track’ system).

For the purposes of this study, only those young people under supervision up until the 17 years are included in the analysis, after which they ‘age out’ (that is turn 18) of the youth justice system. This is so the pathways of all young people are followed up until the same point.

### Average and median

Two measures are used to describe the typical or central value for the data reported in this report. For example, when reporting the total number of contacts a young person had with the youth justice system, the mean number of contacts is used. However, when reporting the length of time spent under youth justice supervision, the median is used due to the skewed distribution of the data.

### Cohorts

Two types of cohorts are used in this paper to describe the data. The first is a ‘birth cohort’ which provides a complete youth justice supervision history. There were 5 full birth cohorts available for this paper—for those born in the 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93, 1993–94 and 1994–95 financial years. These young people were aged 10–17 during the period of the JJ NMDS (2000–01 to 2012–13).

The second type of cohort is a ‘supervision cohort’. This grouping allows analysis to be conducted on young people who experienced the same type of supervision. For example, it can allow an examination of the pathways that lead young people to sentenced detention.

Complete cohort data are not available for all states and territories. This is because complete data in the latest version of the JJ NMDS (known as JJ NMDS 2009 format) are not available for all states and territories in all years from 2000–01 to 2012–13. Data from the previous version of the JJ NMDS (JJ NMDS 2007 format) are used to generate the numbers of young people under supervision in each cohort, but are not sufficiently comparable to include in all analyses, such as types of supervision experienced.

Therefore, cohort analyses may exclude young people in the following states and territories, when a complete supervision history was not available:

- Western Australia and the Northern Territory (data only available in JJ NMDS 2007 format from 2000–01 to 2007–08; data not provided from 2008–09 onwards)
- Tasmania (data not available before 2006–07)
- Australian Capital Territory (data not available before 2003–04; data only available in JJ NMDS 2007 format from 2003–04 to 2007–08).



## 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 young people aged 18 and older can be supervised by youth justice agencies, rates are restricted to those aged 10–17. For this report, rates are expressed as the number per 10,000 young people in the population.

Note that in some previous AIHW youth justice reports, rates of young people under supervision were expressed as the number per 1,000 young people. Rates that are expressed as a number per 1,000 can be converted to a number per 10,000 by multiplying the rate by 10.

The calculation of rates for particular variables excludes young people for whom data are not available. For example, the calculation of rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people excludes young people with unknown Indigenous status (although they are included in totals).

Rates are not calculated where there are fewer than 5 young people in the numerator due to a lack of statistical reliability.

## Rate ratios

In this report, rate ratios are used to compare Indigenous and non-Indigenous rates and to provide a measure of the level of Indigenous over-representation. They are also used to compare rates for males and females. Rate ratios should be interpreted with caution where there are small denominators, rare events and rates that converge while declining. Crude rates are also provided to guide interpretation.

Rate ratios are not calculated where 1 or both the rates have fewer than 5 young people in the numerator, due to a lack of statistical reliability.

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## Related publications

More information about young people under youth justice supervision in Australia is available from the AIHW website at <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/youth-justice/>>.

This report can be downloaded free of charge from <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/youth-justice-publications/>>.

The following AIHW publications may also be of interest:

- AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2012. Linking SAAP, child protection and juvenile justice data: technical report. Data linkage series no. 14. Cat. no. CSI 14. Canberra: AIHW
- AIHW 2012. Children and young people at risk of social exclusion: links between homelessness, child protection and juvenile justice. Data linkage series no. 13. Cat. no. CSI 13. Canberra: AIHW
- AIHW 2012. Girls and young women in the juvenile justice system: 2010–11. Bulletin no. 107. Cat. no. AUS 162. Canberra AIHW
- AIHW 2013. Young people aged 10–14 in the youth justice system 2011–12. Juvenile justice series no. 12. Cat. no. JUV 19. Canberra: AIHW
- AIHW 2013. Using the Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set to measure youth recidivism. Juvenile justice series no. 14. Cat. no. JUV 32. Canberra: AIHW
- AIHW 2013. Youth detention population in Australia 2013. Cat. no. JUV 31. Canberra: AIHW
- AIHW 2014. Youth justice in Australia 2012–13. Bulletin no. 120. Cat. no. AUS 179. Canberra: AIHW.

*Pathways through youth justice supervision* explores the types of youth justice supervision experienced by particular cohorts of young people based on data available from the Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set (JJ NMDS) from 2000–01 to 2012–13. The report found that the top 10 pathways accounted for nearly three quarters (71%) of young people who experienced supervision. It also found that young males, young Indigenous people, those aged 10–14 at first supervision and those experiencing sentenced detention at some point were more likely than their counterparts to have more complex and varied pathways through supervision.

