



# Girls and young women in the juvenile justice system

2010–11

## Summary

### Relatively few young women are involved in the juvenile justice system

In Australia, young women are less likely than young men to enter the juvenile justice system and even less likely to progress to the most serious processes and outcomes. In 2010–11, young men were around twice as likely as young women to be proceeded against by police, more than 3 times as likely to be proven guilty in the Children's Court, 4 times as likely to experience community-based supervision and 5 times as likely to be in detention.

Among the cohorts of young people for whom a complete juvenile justice supervision history is available in 2010–11 (those born 1990–91 to 1992–93), young men were around 4 times as likely as young women to have experienced any supervision when aged 10–17.

### Young women are more likely than young men to be supervised in the community

On an average day in 2010–11, around 93% of young women under supervision were supervised in the community, compared with 85% of young men. Very few young women were in detention—only 85 on an average day (compared with 960 young men).

### Young women spend less time under supervision than young men, particularly in detention

When all time under supervision is considered, young women spent around 2 weeks less than young men under supervision during 2010–11 (171 days, on average, compared with 186) (excluding Western Australia and the Northern Territory as standard data were not provided). This was mainly due to less time spent in detention (31 days, on average, compared with 68).

### Young women under supervision are younger than young men

Young women under supervision were younger, on average, than young men (excluding Western Australia and the Northern Territory). In 2010–11, rates of supervision were highest among young women aged 15 and 16, compared with ages 16 and 17 for young men.

## Indigenous young women are over-represented in supervision

In 2010–11, Indigenous young women aged 10–17 were around 16 times as likely as non-Indigenous young women to be under community-based supervision during the year, and 19 times as likely to be in detention. This was slightly higher than the level of Indigenous over-representation among young men (13 and 17 times as likely, respectively).

## Rates of young women under supervision have increased

Over the 5-year period to 2010–11, rates of young women aged 10–17 under supervision rose from 0.8 to 1.0 per 1,000 on an average day and from 1.7 to 2.2 per 1,000 during the year, which were greater than the corresponding increases for young men. This was mainly due to increases in the numbers and rates of young women under community-based supervision.

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## Introduction

Although young men consistently form the majority of those involved in crime, research suggests that rates of contact with the juvenile justice system among young women have increased in recent decades, both in Australia and around the world (Beikoff 1996; Carrington & Pereira 2009; Holmes 2010; Kong & AuCoin 2008; Snyder & Sickmund 1999; Youth Justice Board 2009).

This bulletin explores the numbers and characteristics of young women involved in the juvenile justice system in Australia in 2010–11 and the types of supervision they experienced. Information about the Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set (JJ NMDS) and other data presented in this bulletin is provided in the *Technical notes*. Supplementary tables (those with a prefix of S) are available for download from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/>.

More information about young people in the juvenile justice system is available in *Juvenile justice in Australia: 2010–11* (AIHW 2012).

## Research on young women and crime

### Which young women are involved in crime?

Research has established that involvement in crime is typically highest in adolescence or early adulthood and diminishes with age (Fagan & Western 2005; Farrington 1986). The risk factors for involvement in crime among young people can be categorised into five broad areas:

- individual factors, such as low intelligence, impulsivity and poor social skills
- family factors, such as substance abuse, family violence, abuse and neglect
- school context, such as academic failure and bullying
- life events, such as divorce and family breakup
- community and cultural factors, such as socioeconomic disadvantage (National Crime Prevention 1999).

Although most research has found that the risk factors for involvement in crime are broadly similar for young men and women, several factors have been identified as particularly important for young women. Young women involved in crime are likely to have:

- a history of childhood abuse or neglect
- psychological or mental health issues such as mood and anxiety disorders, and experience of self-harm or attempted suicide
- a history of out-of-home care or unstable accommodation
- chronic illness or disability

- experience of socioeconomic disadvantage
- difficulties with school (Acoca 1999; Bloom et al. 2003; Espelage et al. 2003; Farrington & Painter 2004; Forsythe & Adams 2009; Hubbard & Pratt 2002; Indig et al. 2011; Kenny & Nelson 2008; McCabe et al. 2002; Smith et al. 2006; Smith & McAra 2004; Wong et al. 2010).

### How are young women involved in crime?

Although young women may be involved in the full range of criminal behaviour, young women's involvement in crime is often considered to be less serious and of shorter duration, in general, than that of young men. Young women are most commonly charged with minor assault, property offences such as shoplifting, and offences against good order, both in Australia and other Western countries (Batchelor & Burman 2004; Wundersitz 2000). Research in the United States shows that young women in the juvenile justice system are often younger, on average, than young men, and typically remain under supervision for less time (Snyder & Sickmund 1999; Zahn et al. 2009).

Most criminal behaviour among young people is limited to adolescence. Improvements in cognitive and analytical skills, access to work and increased social ties as young people become young adults tend to be linked to reduced participation in crime (Scott & Steinburg 2008; Steffensmeier & Allan 1995). However, some young people continue to offend for a significant portion of their lives, and this small proportion of chronic offenders is responsible for a large proportion of all crimes (Dennison 2011; Livingston et al. 2008).

Although interest in young women's involvement in antisocial behaviour and violence has grown significantly in recent years, research on the criminal trajectories of young women is still limited. Debate continues over whether mainstream theories developed for young men are applicable to young women (Johansson & Kempf-Leonard 2009). There is some evidence for distinct adolescent-limited and life-course-persistent criminal pathways among both young women and young men, and some research has investigated the possibility of different responses to risk factors, onset and outcomes (Fitzgerald et al. 2012; Lahey et al. 2006; Odgers et al. 2008; Piquero et al. 2005; Smith & McAra 2004). More research is needed in order to better understand the nature of young women's involvement in crime.

### Has involvement in crime changed over time?

Young men consistently form the majority of young people involved in crime. However, in recent decades, young women have been the fastest-growing group in juvenile justice around the world. Since the 1960s, rates of young women involved in crime have increased in many countries including the United States, England and Canada, and this increase has occurred at a faster rate than for young men (Carrington & Pereira 2009; Snyder & Sickmund 1999; Youth Justice Board 2009).

Although data are limited, there is evidence of this trend in Australia. For example, between 1960 and 2007, the difference between young men and women in rates of involvement in criminal matters in the New South Wales Children's Court narrowed

substantially: young women were involved in only 1 in 13 criminal matters in 1960, but 1 in 4 by 2007 (Carrington & Pereira 2009). Similar results have been found in other Australian studies (Beikoff 1996; Holmes 2010).

There is also some evidence that young women's involvement in violent crime has increased in recent years in Australia and internationally (Kong & AuCoin 2008; Snyder & Sickmund 1999; Youth Justice Board 2009). For example, research shows that the increase in young women charged with violent offences in New South Wales over the past 10 to 20 years was greater than the increase for young men (Carrington & Pereira 2009; Holmes 2010).

The factors driving these increases continue to be debated. Early explanations focused on the effects of the women's emancipation movement, the sexualisation of young women's behaviour and the increasingly active participation of young women in youth subcultures (Carrington & Pereira 2009; Chesney-Lind 1989). More recently, the rise of cyber-bullying and the role of electronic communication and social media in fuelling girls' violence has also been highlighted (Carrington & Pereira 2009).

However, some argue that these increases reflect legislative and policy changes rather than changes in criminal behaviour among young women. Research in the United States and England has found that while young women have become more likely to enter the juvenile justice system in recent years, their level of involvement in crime and violence has remained stable (Steffensmeier et al. 2005; Youth Justice Board 2009). It has been suggested that social changes regarding concerns for young women's sexuality and independence, coupled with legislative and policy shifts, have meant that in recent years, young women who may previously have appeared before the courts for welfare issues or status offences (such as for being uncontrollable, in moral danger or running away from home) have become more likely to enter the juvenile justice system under criminal charges (All Party Parliamentary Group on Women in the Penal System 2012; Carrington & Pereira 2009; Creaney 2012; Feld 2009; Gelsthorpe & Worrall 2009).

## Rates of young women in the juvenile justice system

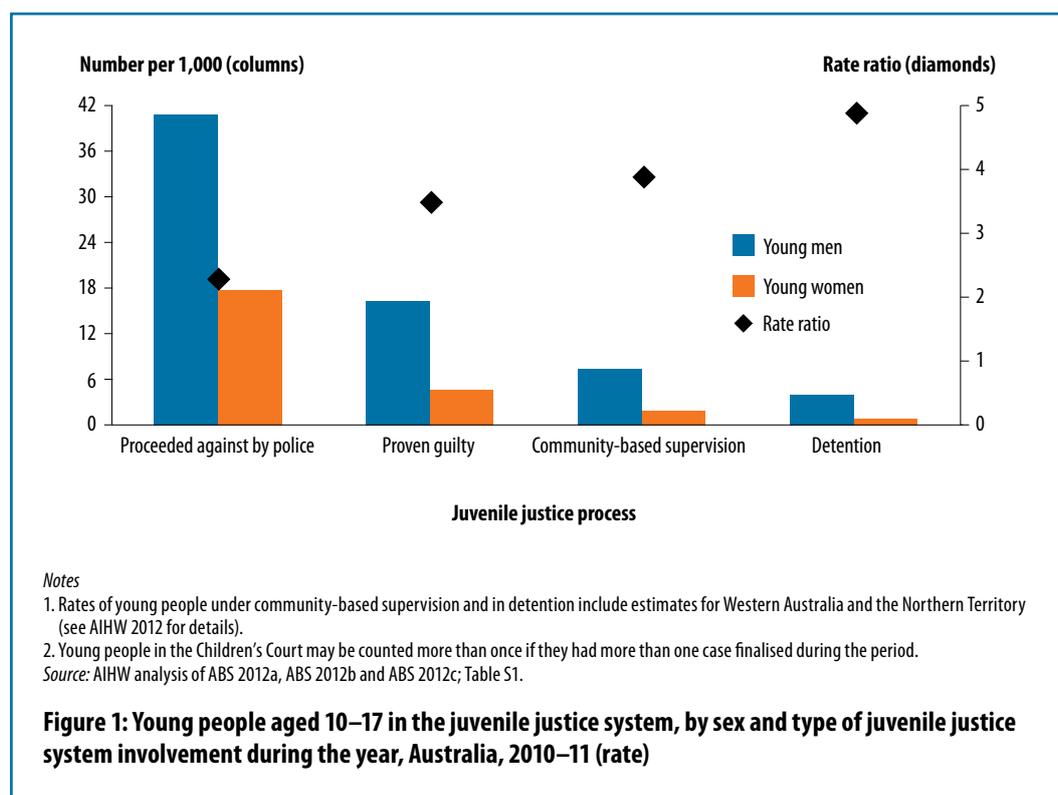
In summary, few young women enter the juvenile justice system for involvement in crime and fewer still experience juvenile justice supervision. During 2010–11, among young women aged 10–17:

- 19,753 were proceeded against by police for allegedly committing a crime (which equates to almost 18 per 1,000 in the population)
- 5,181 were proven guilty in the Children's Court (4.7 per 1,000) (young people may be counted more than once if they had more than one case finalised during the period)
- 2,400 were under juvenile justice supervision at some time during the year (2.2 per 1,000) (including estimates for Western Australia and the Northern Territory as standard data were not provided; see *Technical notes* for details)
  - 2,085 were under community-based supervision (1.9 per 1,000)
  - 900 were in detention (0.8 per 1,000; some young women experienced both community-based supervision and detention during the year) (Table S1).

Rates of young women involved in the juvenile justice system were lower than for young men at every stage (Figure 1). Young women were also increasingly less likely than young men to progress to the most serious processes and outcomes. During 2010–11, young men were:

- just over twice as likely as young women to be proceeded against by police
- more than 3 times as likely to be proven guilty in the Children’s Court
- around 4 times as likely to be under community-based supervision
- almost 5 times as likely to be in detention.

Young women’s involvement in each of these stages of the juvenile justice system is discussed in more detail in the sections below.

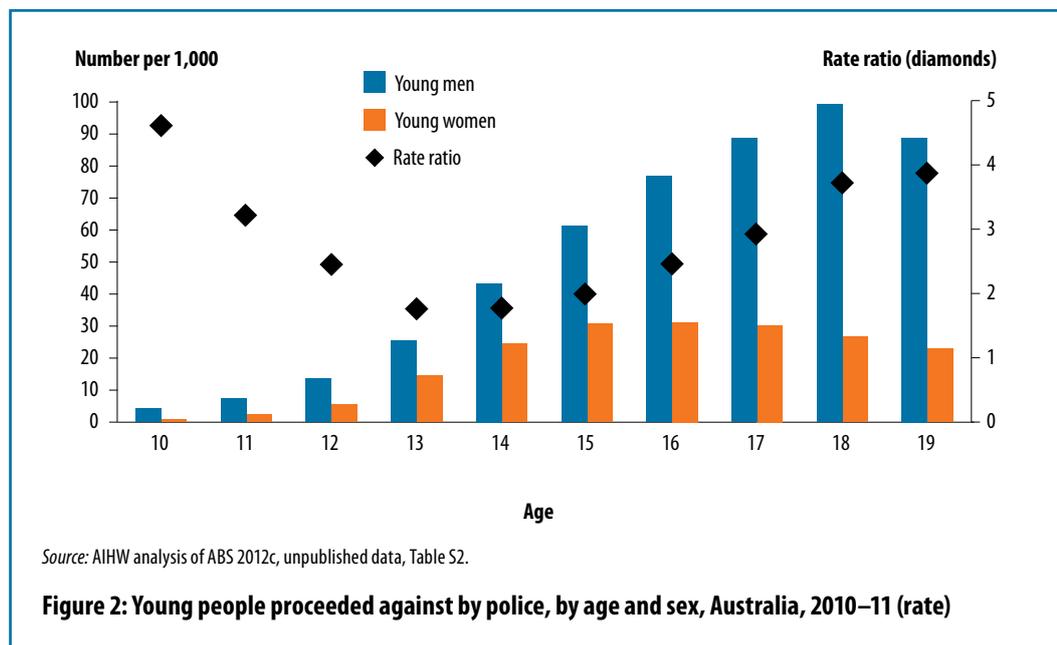


## Young women in contact with police

Young people first enter the juvenile justice system when they are investigated by police for allegedly committing a crime. Following the investigation, a decision will be made as to whether the young person will be proceeded against by police—that is, whether legal action will be initiated for the offence. Police proceedings include court actions (the laying of charges that must be answered in court) and non-court actions (such as cautions, conferencing, counselling or infringement notices).

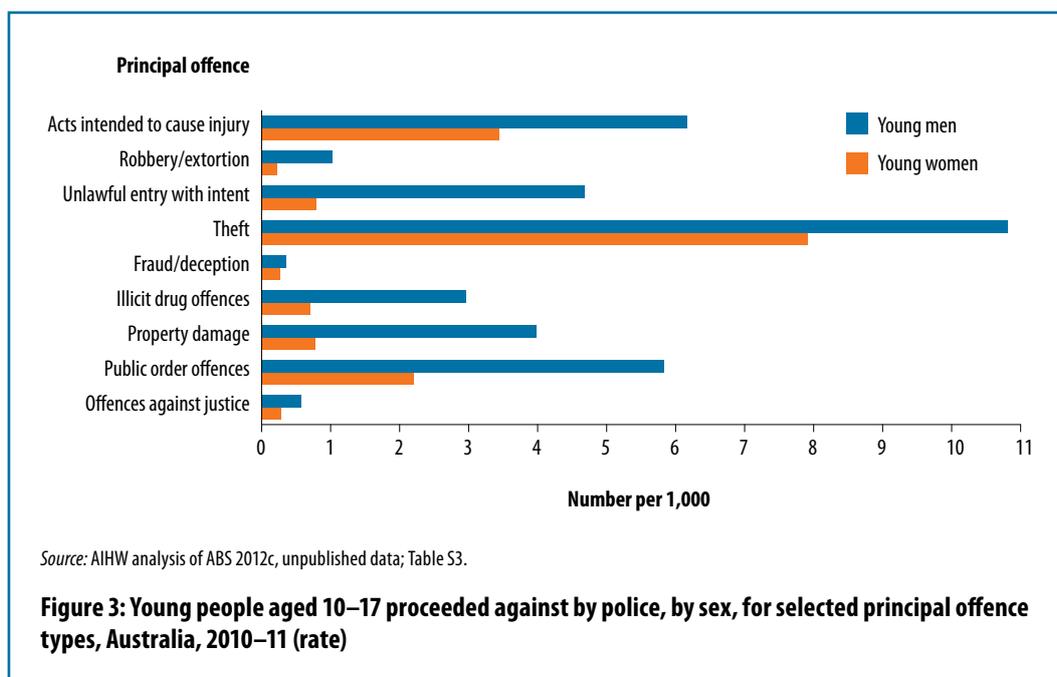
During 2010–11, around 18 in every 1,000 young women aged 10–17 were proceeded against by police (ABS 2012c; Table S1). This equates to less than 2% of all Australian young women.

Rates of young people proceeded against by police were higher among young men than young women in every individual year of age (Figure 2). Rates of young women proceeded against by police were highest among those aged 15 and 16 (31 per 1,000 in each group), and decreased thereafter as age increased. This was different from young men, where rates were highest at age 18 (99 per 1,000). The rate ratio of young men to young women was lowest among those aged 13–15, and highest in the youngest and oldest age groups.



The most common principal (most serious) offence for young women aged 10–17 proceeded against by police in 2010–11 was theft, followed by acts intended to cause injury and public order offences (Figure 3). These were also the most common principal offences among young men (Table S3). Young men were less than twice as likely as young women to be proceeded against for theft or acts intended to cause injury, but 5 times as likely for property damage, 8 times as likely for sexual assault and 9 times as likely for weapons offences.

There were some differences in the principal offences of young women proceeded against by police by age (Table S4). Among those aged 10–17, rates of young women proceeded against for theft and acts intended to cause injury were highest among those aged 15, while rates for public order offences were highest among those aged 17.



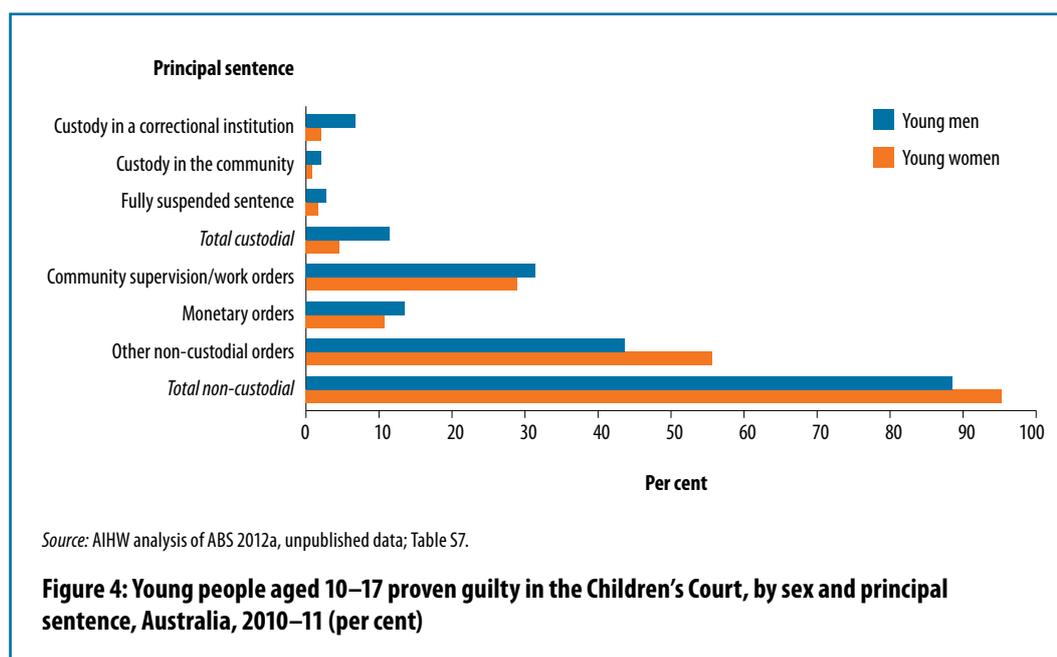
## Young women in contact with the courts

If a young person is proceeded against by police via a court action, the matter is usually heard in a Children's Court. The Children's Court may decide to dismiss the charge, divert the young person from further involvement in the system or transfer them to other specialist courts (such as drug or Indigenous courts) or programs. If the matter proceeds and the charge is proven, the Children's Court can hand down any of a number of orders, both supervised and unsupervised.

During 2010–11, a total of 6,463 young women aged 10–17 had cases that were finalised in the Children's Court; most (5,181 or 80%) were proven guilty (young people may be counted more than once if they had more than one case finalised during the period) (ABS 2012a; Table S5). This equates to 4.7 young women aged 10–17 proven guilty per 1,000, or almost 0.5% of the population. Young men were 3.5 times as likely as young women to be proven guilty in the Children's Court (16 per 1,000 or 1.6%).

Among young women aged 10–17 proven guilty in the Children's Court in 2010–11, the most common principal offences were theft (28%) and acts intended to cause injury (27%), followed by public order offences (10%) (Table S6). These were similar to the most common principal offences among young men.

Young women were more likely than young men to receive a non-custodial order—that is, a sentence that does not involve being held in custody. Most (95%) young women aged 10–17 proven guilty in the Children's Court in 2010–11 received a non-custodial principal sentence, compared with 88% of young men (Figure 4). While young men were more likely than young women to receive community supervision or work orders and monetary orders, young women were more likely to receive 'other non-custodial orders', such as good behaviour bonds, licence disqualifications, forfeiture of property or a nominal penalty.



## Young women under supervision

### How many young women were under supervision in 2010–11?

Young people who receive a supervised legal order from a court are supervised by state and territory juvenile justice agencies in the community or in detention. In 2010–11, there were 1,190 young women under juvenile justice supervision in Australia on an average day and 2,620 at some time during the year (including estimates for Western Australia and the Northern Territory as standard data were not provided; see *Technical notes* for details) (Table 1). This equates to around 1.0 young women aged 10–17 under supervision for every 1,000 in the population on an average day, and 2.2 per 1,000 during the year.

Numbers and rates of young men under supervision are consistently higher than young women; in 2010–11, young men aged 10–17 were around 4 times as likely as young women to be under juvenile justice supervision, both on an average day and during the year.

**Table 1: Young people under supervision, by type of supervision and sex, Australia, 2010–11**

	Number—all ages			Rate—age 10–17		
	Community	Detention	All supervision	Community	Detention	All supervision
<b>Average day<sup>(a)</sup></b>						
<b>Young men</b>						
Indigenous	1,880	455	2,320	29.88	6.95	36.83
Non-Indigenous	3,105	495	3,590	2.15	0.31	2.47
<i>Total</i>	<i>5,135</i>	<i>960</i>	<i>6,070</i>	<i>3.53</i>	<i>0.62</i>	<i>4.15</i>
<b>Young women</b>						
Indigenous	450	55	495	7.90	0.89	8.69
Non-Indigenous	620	30	650	0.51	0.02	0.54
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,110</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>1,190</i>	<i>0.88</i>	<i>0.07</i>	<i>0.95</i>
<b>During the year</b>						
<b>Young men</b>						
Indigenous	3,545	2,190	4,140	60.70	38.53	70.38
Non-Indigenous	6,390	2,910	7,345	4.53	2.23	5.24
<i>Total</i>	<i>10,315</i>	<i>5,175</i>	<i>11,900</i>	<i>7.37</i>	<i>3.94</i>	<i>8.51</i>
<b>Young women</b>						
Indigenous	910	430	1,055	16.78	8.19	19.35
Non-Indigenous	1,270	475	1,445	1.06	0.43	1.22
<i>Total</i>	<i>2,290</i>	<i>930</i>	<i>2,620</i>	<i>1.87</i>	<i>0.81</i>	<i>2.16</i>

(a) Number of young people on an average day may not sum due to rounding.

*Notes*

1. Western Australia and the Northern Territory did not supply JJ NMDS data for 2010–11. Totals include estimates for Western Australia and the Northern Territory; see *Technical notes* for details.

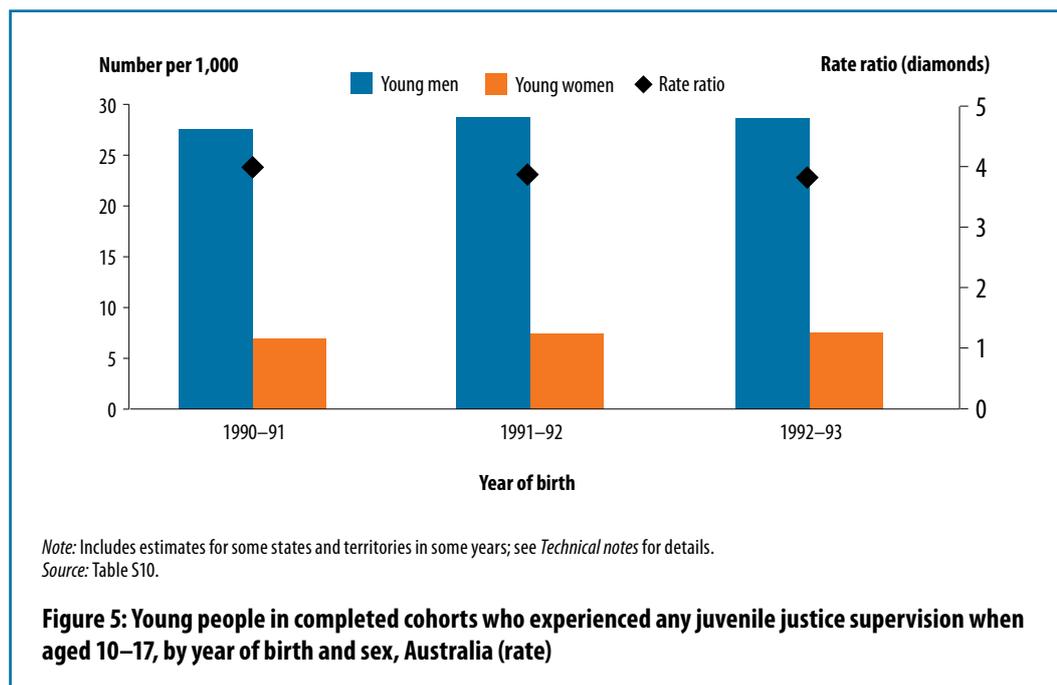
2. Rates are number of young people per 1,000 relevant population.

Source: Tables S8 and S9.

## How many young women experienced juvenile justice supervision when aged 10–17?

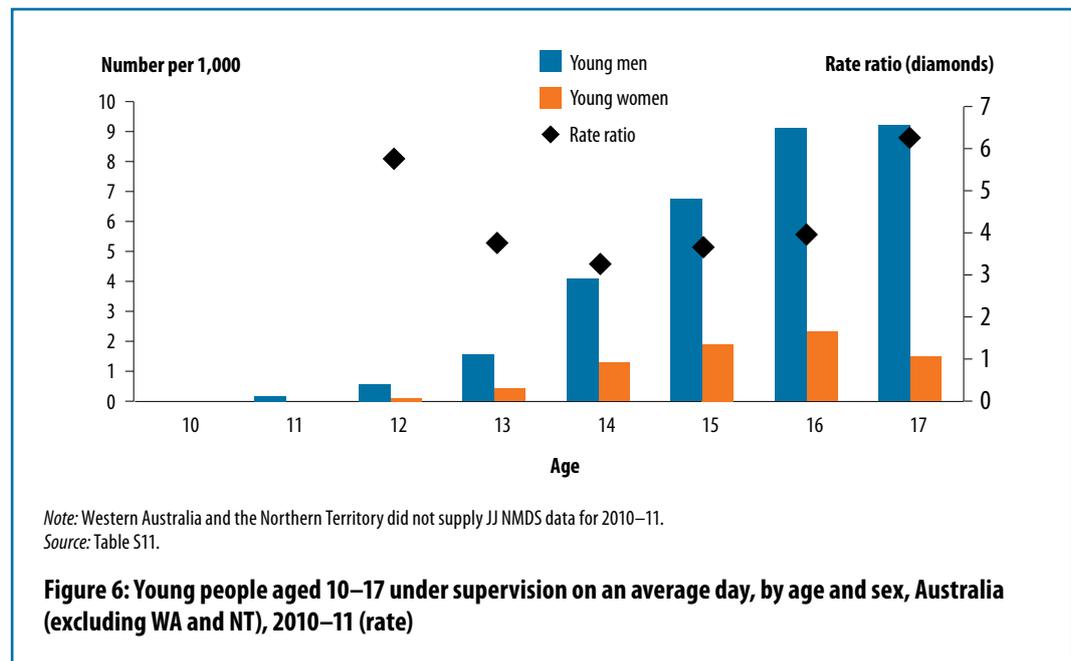
A complete juvenile justice supervision history is now available for three cohorts of young people—those born in 1990–91, 1991–92 and 1992–93. These young people were aged 10–17 during the period for which JJ NMDS data are available (2000–01 to 2010–11). As data are not available for all states and territories in all years, some estimates were used in the calculation of rates of supervision among completed cohorts (see *Technical notes* for details).

Overall, 6.9 in every 1,000 young women born in 1990–91 experienced any juvenile justice supervision when they were aged 10–17, rising to 7.5 per 1,000 among those born in 1992–93 (Figure 5). This equates to less than 1% of all young women born in each of these years. In comparison, the rate for young men in each cohort was 28–29 per 1,000, or almost 3%. Young men born in 1990–91 to 1992–93 were therefore around 4 times as likely as young women to experience any juvenile justice supervision when they were aged 10–17.



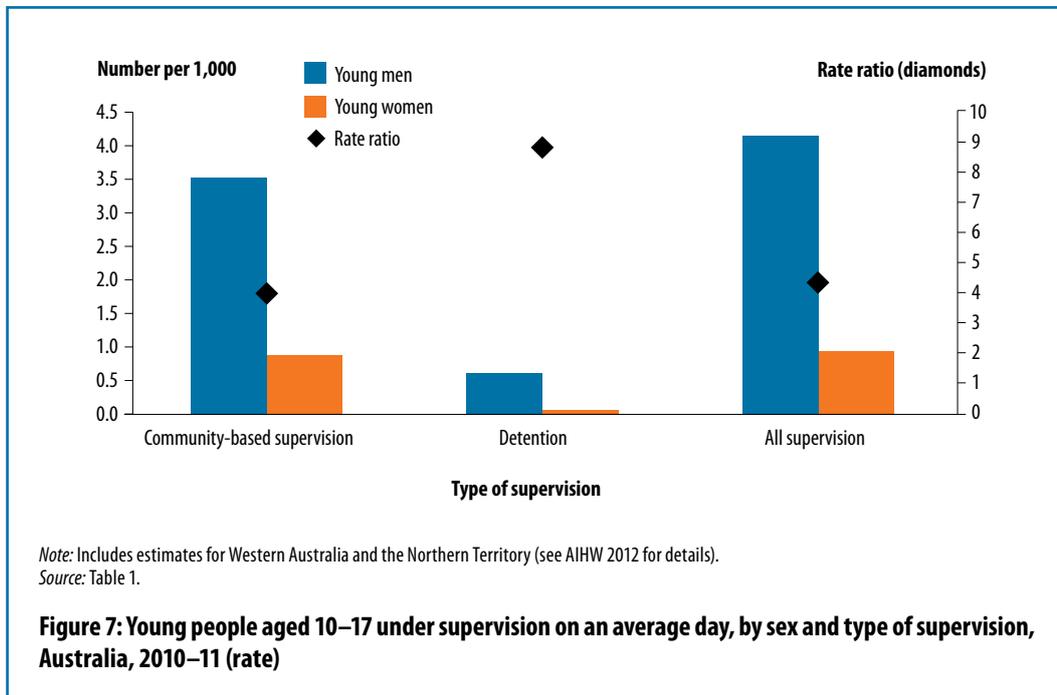
### How is the supervision of young women different from that of young men?

Young women under supervision were younger, on average, than young men (excluding Western Australia and the Northern Territory, as standard data were not provided and estimates were not available). In 2010–11, rates of supervision were highest among young women aged 15 and 16 (1.9 and 2.3 per 1,000, respectively), while rates among young men were highest among those aged 16 and 17 (9.1 and 9.2 per 1,000) (Figure 6). This pattern occurred in both community-based supervision and detention.



Young women under juvenile justice supervision were more likely than young men to be supervised in the community. On an average day in 2010–11, around 93% of young women under supervision were under community-based supervision, compared with 85% of young men (including estimates for Western Australia and the Northern Territory) (Table 1). Most young women and men (87% each) under supervision experienced community-based supervision at some time during the year; however, young women were less likely than young men to experience detention at some time (35% compared with 43%).

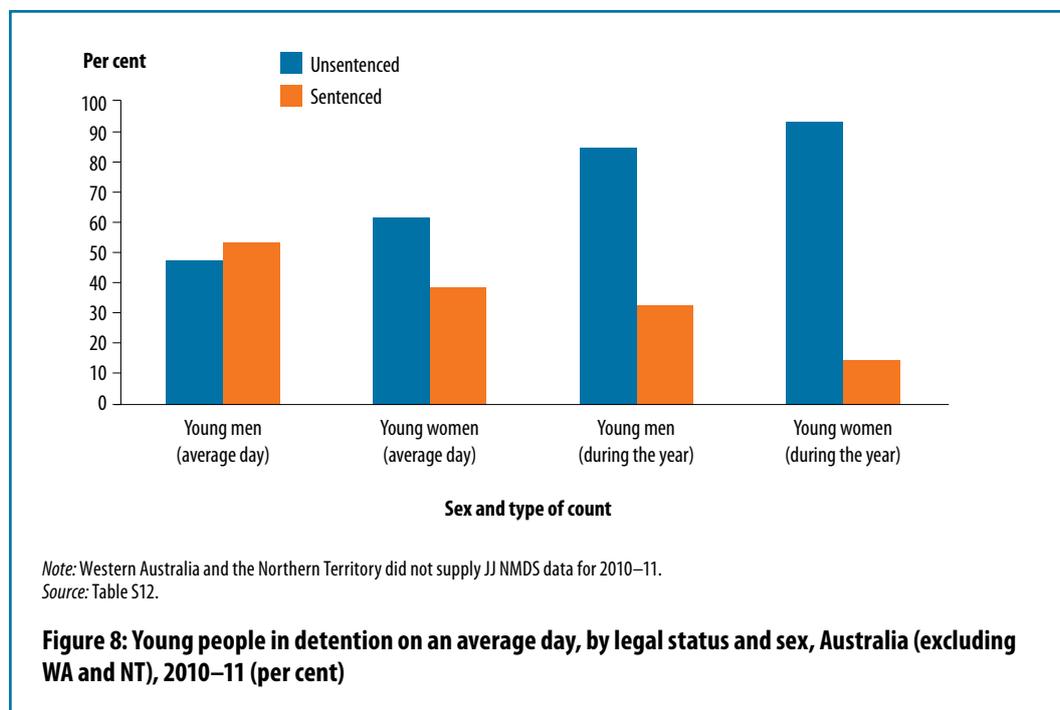
Among those aged 10–17, young men were 4 times as likely as young women to be under community-based supervision on an average day in 2010–11, but almost 9 times as likely to be in detention (Figure 7).



In 2010–11, most young women under community-based supervision were serving a sentence, both on an average day (92%) and during the year (89%) (excluding Western Australia and the Northern Territory, as comparable data were not available) (Table S12). These were similar to the proportions of young men serving a sentence (91% and 90%). The remainder were unsentenced—that is, awaiting the outcome of their court matter or sentencing.

Young women under community-based supervision on an average day were slightly more likely than young men to be on probation (86% compared with 80%) and less likely to be on suspended detention (6% compared with 8%) or parole or supervised release (3% compared with 7%) (Table S13).

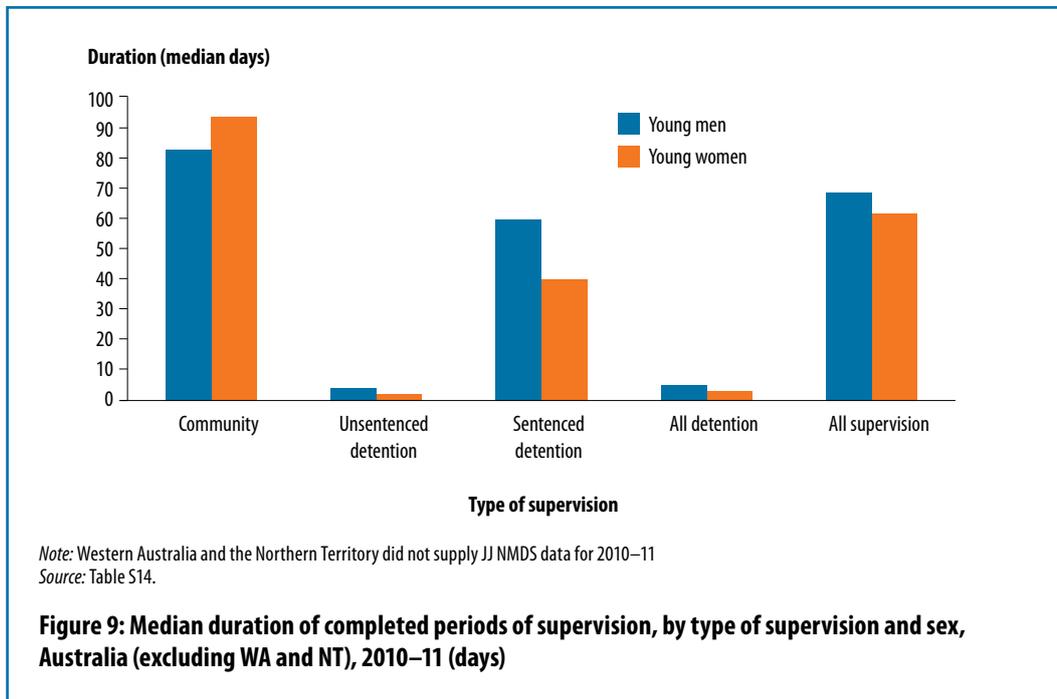
In detention, young women were less likely than young men to be serving a sentence on an average day (39% compared with 54%) and less likely to experience sentenced detention at any time during the year (15% compared with 33%) (Figure 8).



There were also differences between young men and young women in the average time spent under supervision (excluding Western Australia and the Northern Territory as comparable data were not available). Overall, in 2010–11, young women completed periods of supervision that were about 1 week shorter than young men (62 days on average compared with 69 days) (Figure 9).

Young women tended to complete longer periods of community-based supervision than young men (median length 94 days compared with 83 days), and completed slightly fewer periods, on average, during the year (1.3 periods compared with 1.4).

However, young women tended to complete shorter periods of detention than young men (median length 3 days compared with 5), and this was the case for both unsentenced (2 days compared with 4) and sentenced detention (40 days compared with 60). Young women completed slightly more periods of detention than young men during the year (2.1 periods on average compared with 1.9), and this was the case in both unsentenced and sentenced detention.



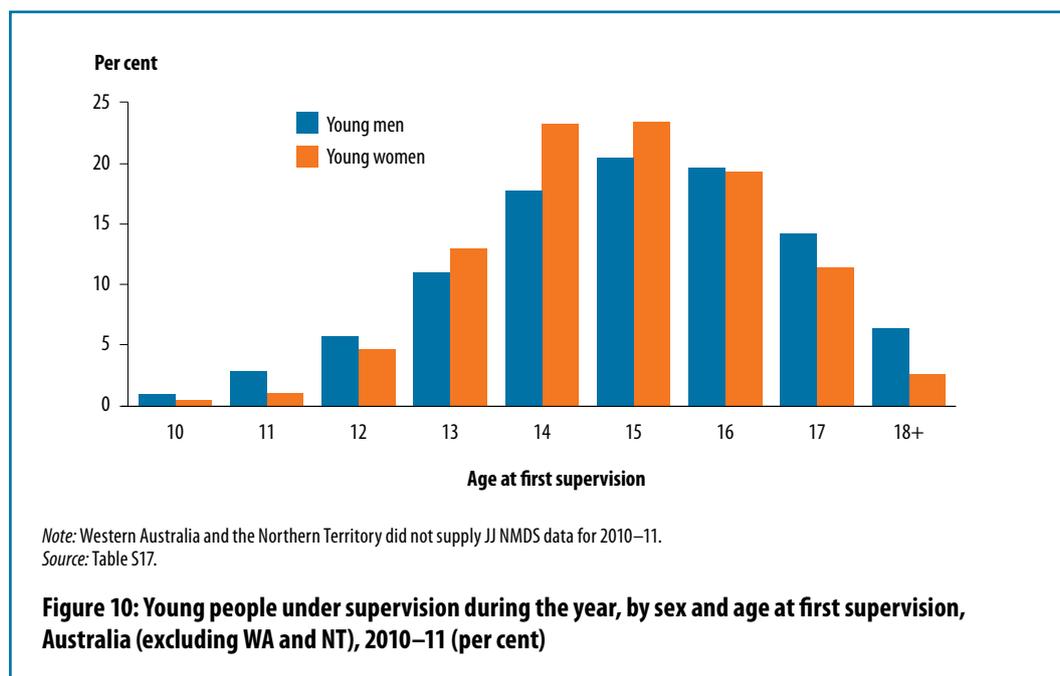
**Figure 9: Median duration of completed periods of supervision, by type of supervision and sex, Australia (excluding WA and NT), 2010–11 (days)**

When all periods of supervision during 2010–11 are considered, young women spent around 2 weeks less than young men, on average, under supervision during the year (171 days compared with 186) (Table S15). Most of this difference was due to less time spent in detention (31 days compared with 68).

### Do young women enter supervision differently from young men?

Young women who were under supervision during 2010–11 were somewhat more likely than young men to be new entrants to supervision (39% compared with 32%)—that is, they were less likely to have a history of supervision (excluding Western Australia and the Northern Territory as comparable data were not available) (Table S16). This pattern occurred among those in both community-based supervision and detention.

Young women under supervision during 2010–11 had most commonly first entered supervision when they were aged 14 or 15 (23% and 24%, respectively), while young men had most commonly entered supervision when they were aged 15 or 16 (21% and 20%) (Figure 10). Around 14% of young women had first entered supervision when they were aged 17 or older, compared with 21% of young men. However, young women were also slightly less likely than young men to have entered supervision in the youngest age groups—only 6% of young women had entered supervision when they were aged 10–12, compared with 10% of young men. These patterns were similar among young people in community-based supervision and detention.



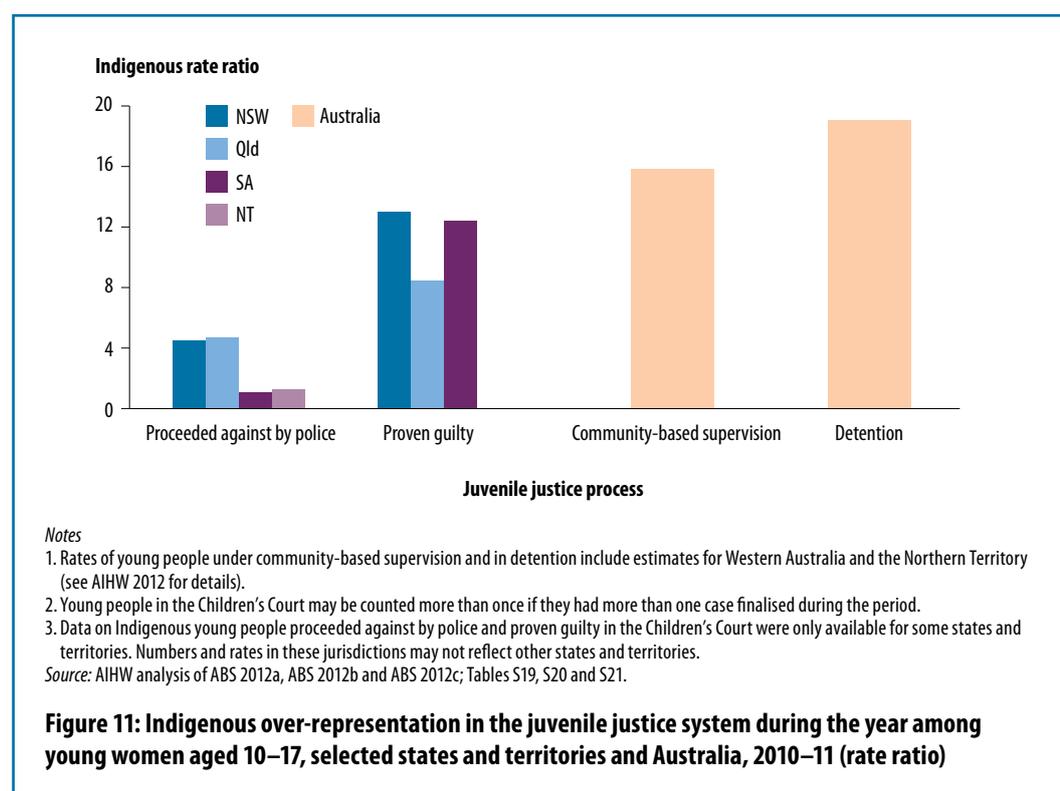
There was little difference between young women and young men in the types of supervision most commonly experienced upon entering supervision for the first time. Just over half of all young women and young men (53% and 55%, respectively) under supervision during 2010–11 had first experienced juvenile justice supervision when they were unsentenced. Unsentenced supervision includes remand, police-referred detention or supervised or conditional bail (young people may have had more than one first supervision type) (Table S18). Probation and similar was the first type of supervision for just under half of both young women (49%) and young men (46%).

### Indigenous young women in juvenile justice

Indigenous young women were more likely than non-Indigenous young women to be involved in each stage of the juvenile justice system. In 2010–11, Indigenous young women aged 10–17 were only slightly more likely than non-Indigenous young women to be proceeded against by police in South Australia and the Northern Territory (1.1 and 1.3 times as likely) but almost 5 times as likely in New South Wales and Queensland (data were only available for selected states and territories) (Figure 11).

Indigenous young women were also more likely than non-Indigenous young women to be found guilty in the Children’s Court. In 2010–11, Indigenous young women aged 10–17 were 8 times as likely as non-Indigenous young women to be found guilty in a Children’s Court, 12 times as likely in the Northern Territory and 13 times as likely in Queensland (data were only available for selected states and territories).

The over-representation of Indigenous young women was greater in juvenile justice supervision. Indigenous young women aged 10–17 were around 16 times as likely as non-Indigenous young women to be under community-based supervision at some time during 2010–11, and 19 times as likely to be in detention (including estimates for Western Australia and the Northern Territory, as standard data were not provided) (Figure 11). This was slightly higher than the level of Indigenous over-representation among young men (13 and 17 times as likely, respectively) (Table S21).



The level of Indigenous over-representation was particularly high among young women in detention on an average day: Indigenous young women aged 10–17 were almost 45 times as likely as non-Indigenous young women to be in detention on an average day in 2010–11 (Table S21). The difference between the average day and during the year measures reflects the greater amount of time Indigenous young women spend in detention. This level of over-representation among young women in detention on an average day was also higher than among young men (22 times as likely).

Indigenous young women under supervision during 2010–11 spent more time during the year, on average, under supervision than non-Indigenous young women (182 days compared with 168) (excluding Western Australia and the Northern Territory as comparable data were not available; Table S15). This was the case in both community-based supervision (185 days compared with 180) and detention (40 days compared with 26).

When those with a complete supervision history available are considered, Indigenous young women were more likely than non-Indigenous young women to experience any juvenile justice supervision when they were aged 10–17 (including estimates for some states and territories; see *Technical notes*). Among those born in 1990–91, around 81 Indigenous young women per 1,000 experienced supervision when aged 10–17, compared with 3.7 non-Indigenous young women per 1,000 (Table S10). Indigenous young women born in 1990–91 were therefore almost 22 times as likely as non-Indigenous young women to experience supervision, decreasing to 16 times as likely among those born in 1992–93. This decrease was due to both a decrease in the Indigenous rate, and an increase in the non-Indigenous rate. The level of Indigenous over-representation among young women was higher than the level among young men (11–13 times as likely in each cohort).

### Recent trends

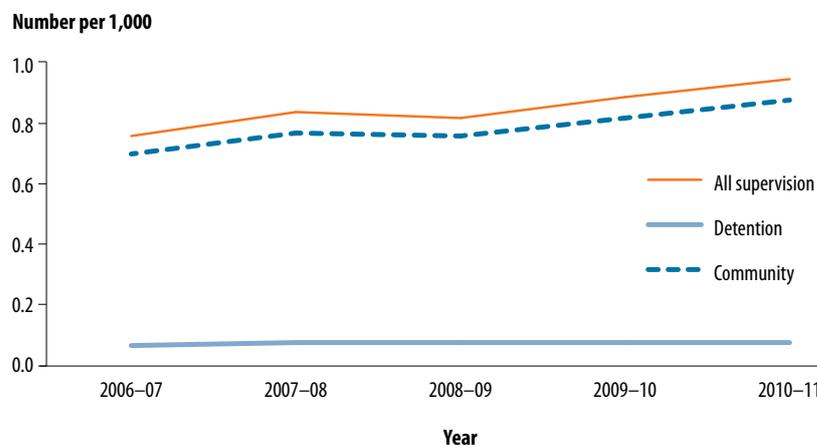
#### Have rates of young women in the juvenile justice system changed in recent years?

Over the 3 years to 2010–11, there was little overall change in the numbers and rates of young men and women aged 10–17 proceeded against by police, and therefore little change in the rate ratio (longer trend data were not available) (Table S22). Young men aged 10–17 were around 2.2 to 2.3 times as likely as young women to be proceeded against by police each year.

The numbers and rates of young women proven guilty in the Children's Court fluctuated in recent years. Over the 5 years to 2010–11, there was an overall decrease in the rate of young women aged 10–17 proven guilty in the Children's Court, from 5.3 to 4.7 per 1,000 (Table S5). Young men aged 10–17 were around 3.3–3.7 times as likely as young women to be found guilty in the Children's Court each year.

Despite the fall in the number of young women proven guilty in the Children's Court over the 5-year period (down 11%), there was an increase in the number who received a custodial sentence. The number of young women aged 10–17 who received a custodial sentence rose by 44%, compared with 16% for young men (Table S7).

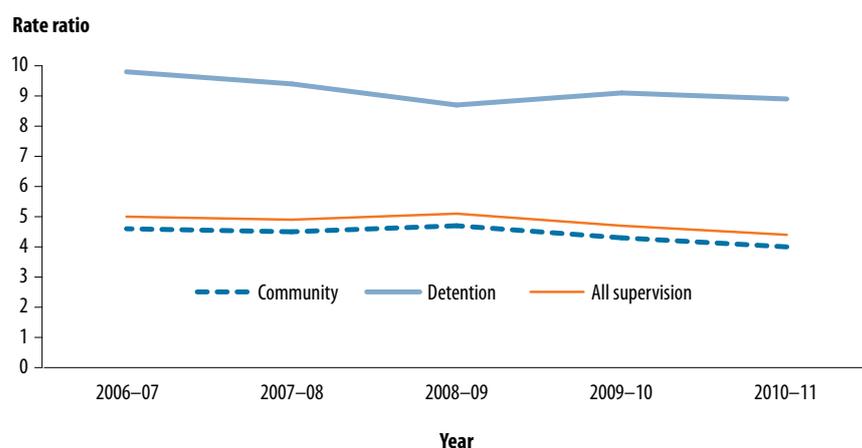
Over the 5 years to 2010–11, rates of young women aged 10–17 under supervision increased from 0.8 to 1.0 per 1,000 on an average day, and from 1.7 to 2.2 per 1,000 during the year (including estimates for Western Australia and the Northern Territory, as standard data were not provided) (Figure 12). This was mainly driven by increases in the numbers and rates of young women under community-based supervision (Figure 12, tables S21 and S23). Over the 5-year period, the rate of young women under community-based supervision on an average day increased from 0.7 to 0.9 per 1,000, while the rate in detention remained less than 0.1 per 1,000 each year.



Note: Includes estimates for Western Australia and the Northern Territory (see AIHW 2012 for details).  
Source: Table S21.

**Figure 12: Young women aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day, by type of supervision, Australia, 2006–07 to 2010–11 (rate)**

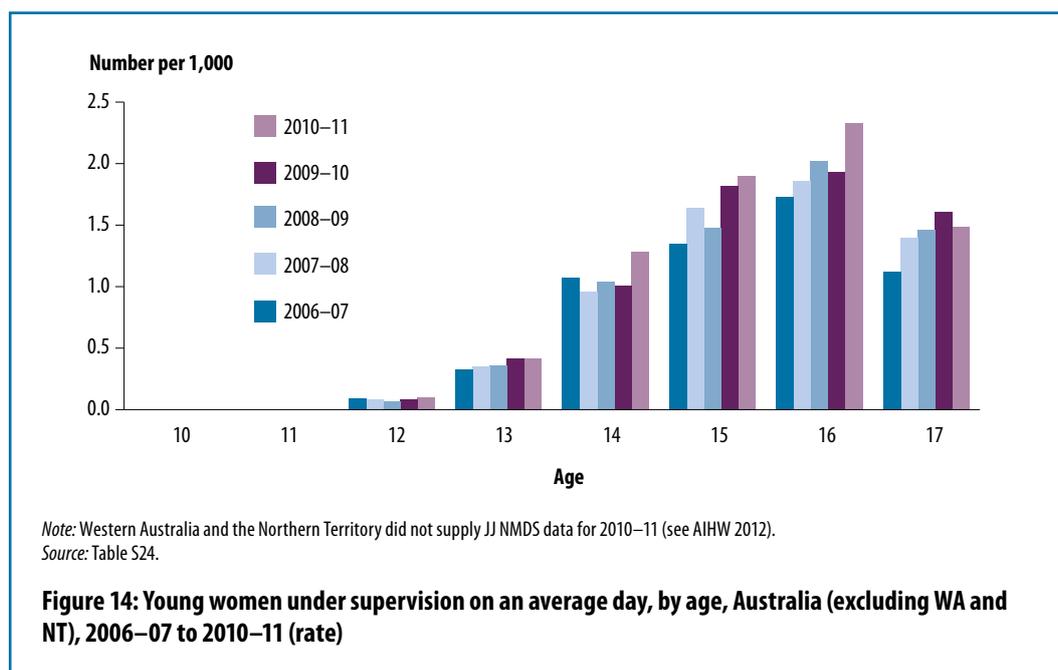
The increases in the numbers and rates of young women under supervision over the 5-year period were greater than the corresponding increases among young men, and this was the case in both community-based supervision and detention (tables S21 and S23). Overall, these changes resulted in decreases in the rate ratio of young men to young women under supervision. Young men were 5 times as likely as young women to be under supervision on an average day in 2006–07, dropping to just over 4 times as likely in 2010–11 (Figure 13).



Note: Includes estimates for Western Australia and the Northern Territory (see AIHW 2012 for details).  
Source: Table S21.

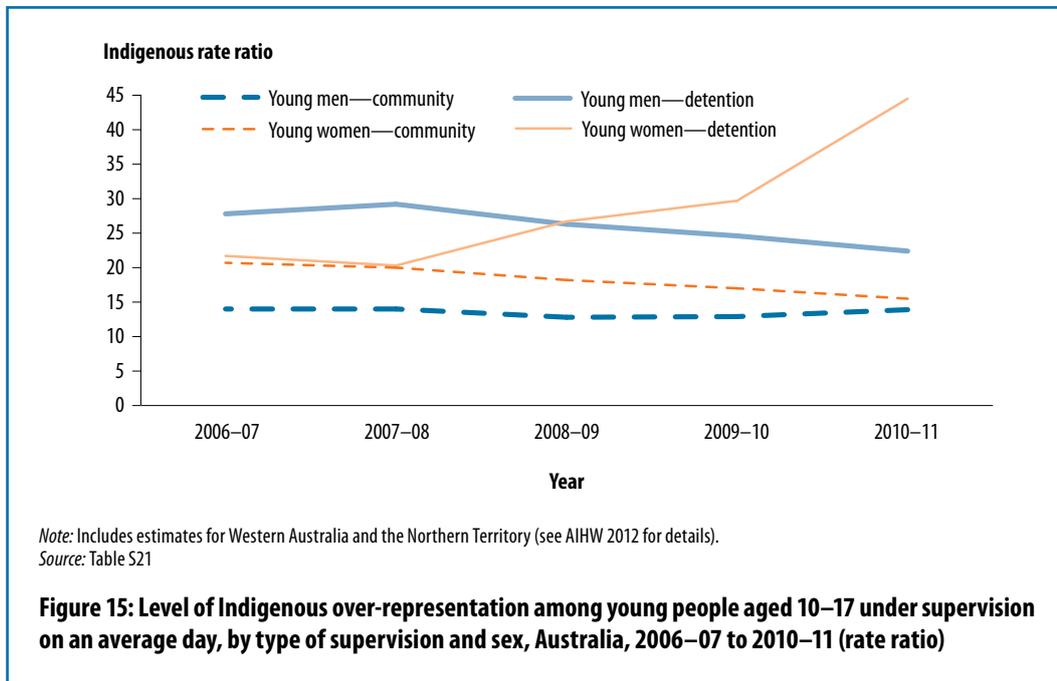
**Figure 13: Rate ratio of young men to young women aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day, by type of supervision, Australia, 2006–07 to 2010–11**

Most of the increase in the rate of young women under supervision was among the older age groups (excluding Western Australia and the Northern Territory, as comparable data were not available) (Figure 14). Between 2006–07 and 2010–11, the rate of young women aged 15 under supervision on an average day increased from 1.4 to 1.9 per 1,000, the rate of those aged 16 increased from 1.7 to 2.3 per 1,000, and the rate of those aged 17 increased from 1.1 to 1.5 per 1,000.



Over the 5-year period, the level of Indigenous over-representation among young women under community-based supervision fell: Indigenous young women aged 10–17 were 21 times as likely as non-Indigenous young women to be under community-based supervision on an average day in 2006–07, but 15 times as likely in 2010–11 (including estimates for Western Australia and the Northern Territory, as standard data were not provided) (Figure 15). However, the level of Indigenous over-representation among young women in detention rose, from 22 times in 2006–07 to 45 times in 2010–11.

In contrast to young women, the level of Indigenous over-representation among young men aged 10–17 fell over the period for those in detention, and remained relatively stable among those under community-based supervision.



### How have rates of young women under supervision changed?

There are several factors influencing the increase in the rate of young women under supervision on an average day (Western Australia and the Northern Territory are excluded from this section as standard data were not provided and estimates were not available).

First, there is evidence that the length of periods of supervision completed by young women has increased. Although the median duration of completed periods of supervision fluctuated from year to year, between 2006–07 and 2010–11 there was an overall increase among young women from 39 to 62 days (up 59%), compared with 60 to 69 days (15%) among young men (Table S25). The increase among young women was mainly due to an increase in the duration of completed periods of community-based supervision (from 84 to 94 days), while the duration of periods of detention decreased—particularly sentenced detention (from 61 to 40 days).

However, over the 5-year period there was a slight fall in the average number of periods of supervision completed by young women (from 1.4 to 1.3 periods), and little change in the average total amount of time young women spent under supervision each year (from 170 to 171 days in total) (tables S26 and S27). There was also little change in the average total amount of time young men spent under supervision (from 184 to 186 days). Among young women, there was a slight increase in the time spent under community-based supervision (from 177 to 180 days) and a slight decrease in detention (from 35 to 31 days). Overall, these changes in the amount of time spent under supervision would have a minimal effect on the rates of young women under supervision on an average day.

Second, the numbers of young women under supervision each year increased. Between 2006–07 and 2010–11, the number of young women who experienced supervision at some time during the year increased by 31%, compared with 11% for young men (Table S23). Similar patterns occurred in both community-based supervision and detention.

At least in part, this may be due to an increase in the number of young women entering supervision for the first time. Between 2006–07 and 2010–11, the number of young women who entered supervision for the first time increased by 38% (from 622 to 857) (Table S28). The number of young men who first entered supervision increased between 2006–07 and 2009–10, but dropped in 2010–11, resulting in little change overall (down 2%). Each year, the proportion of young women who were new to supervision was greater than the corresponding proportion of young men. The increase in the number of young women entering supervision for the first time was greater for Indigenous young women than for non-Indigenous young women (up 55% compared with 27%).

Finally, the increase in the number of young women under supervision each year may indicate that more young women are returning to supervision, or that young women are returning to supervision more often. Work is currently underway by the AIHW to develop data that can be used to measure recidivism, or re-offending behaviour, among young people in Australia.

### **Appendix: Programs and services for young women under supervision**

#### **Do young women need different types of programs and services?**

To date, there is limited evidence available regarding the most effective services and interventions for young women involved in crime (Hipwell & Loeber 2006; Youth Justice Board 2009; Zahn et al. 2009). Since young men commit the majority of crime, many juvenile justice interventions have been primarily designed to deal with their needs and risks. It is unclear whether these interventions are equally effective for young women.

Some researchers have argued that gender-specific programs are required for young men and women due to possible differences in the impact of risk factors such as abuse and neglect and serious family problems (Bloom et al. 2003; Chesney-Lind et al. 2008; Farrington & Painter 2004). In addition, some research has found that young men and women tend to prefer different formats of service delivery: while young men often prefer structure and rules, young women often prefer building one-on-one relationships and a female-only environment (Youth Justice Board 2009). However, in a recent review of program evaluations in the United States, Zahn and colleagues (2009) concluded that comprehensive and individualised programs targeting multiple risk factors tend to work best in reducing offending behaviour, whether sex-specific or directed towards both genders.

## What programs are available for young women under supervision?

State and territory juvenile justice agencies provide a range of services and interventions to all young people under supervision, including education and training programs, rehabilitation programs and assistance in finding accommodation and employment or returning to school. Offence-specific and therapeutic programs available typically include group and individual programs that focus on issues such as drug and alcohol use, violence and aggressive behaviour, relationships and conflict. These programs may be available within a community-based setting or provided within a detention centre. More information about the programs and services provided to young people under supervision in each state and territory is available in Appendix A of *Juvenile justice in Australia 2010–11* (AIHW 2012).

In addition, gender-specific programs for young women under community-based supervision and in detention are available in most states and territories (Table A1). While some of these programs are designed specifically for young women, others are available to both young men and women but may be modified to suit the needs of young women. Although there is variation across the states and territories, most gender-specific programs available to young women under supervision can be classified into four main categories:

- **Health and wellbeing** programs, which help young women deal with issues such as self-esteem, body-image, fitness, alcohol and other drug use, hygiene, pregnancy and sexual health.
- **Relationship** programs, which focus on issues such as family and domestic violence, managing emotions and parenting skills.
- **Education and training** programs, which provide assistance with returning to school, gaining employment and vocational training.
- **Other** programs including life skills, gaining accommodation, living independently, cooking or learning to abide by the law.

In all states and territories, young women in detention are accommodated separately from young men. In New South Wales, the Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre accommodates only young women. In Victoria, the Parkville Youth Resident Centre accommodates young women aged 10–21 and young men aged 10–14, with each group housed in separate units. In the remaining states and territories, young women are accommodated within the same detention centres as young men, although in separate areas.

**Table A1: Programs for young women under juvenile justice supervision that were designed for young women or can be tailored to meet their gender-specific needs, states and territories, 2010–11**

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas <sup>(a)</sup>	ACT <sup>(b)</sup>	NT
<b>Community-based supervision</b>								
<b>Programs designed for young women</b>								
Health and wellbeing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Relationships	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Education and training	✓		✓					
Other	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
<b>Programs available to young people that can be tailored to meet the needs of young women</b>								
Health and wellbeing	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Relationships	✓		✓				✓	
Education and training	✓		✓				✓	
Other		✓	✓	✓	✓			
<b>Detention</b>								
<b>Programs designed for young women</b>								
Health and wellbeing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Relationships	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Education and training	✓		✓	✓				
Other	✓	✓	✓	✓				
<b>Programs available to young people that can be tailored to meet the needs of young women</b>								
Health and wellbeing	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Relationships	✓		✓			✓		✓
Education and training		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Other		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

✓ Programs for all young women.

Programs aimed towards Indigenous young women.

(a) In Tasmania, Youth Justice uses services and programs provided by non-government organisations, when available, for young women under supervision in the community. These services and programs are varied and usually offered on a time- and area-limited basis.

(b) Due to the small number of young women under supervision in the Australian Capital Territory, in particular in detention, programs and services are modified on an individual basis to meet the needs of the young women under supervision.

## Technical notes

### *Supplementary tables*

Supplementary tables (tables with a prefix of S) referred to in this report are available for download from <[www.aihw.gov.au/juvenile-justice-publications/](http://www.aihw.gov.au/juvenile-justice-publications/)>.

### *Young people proceeded against by police*

Information on young people proceeded against by police is based on unpublished data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) collection *Recorded crime—offenders*. More information about this collection is available from the ABS website at <[www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)>.

### *Young people in contact with the Children's Court*

Information on young people in contact with the Children's Court is based on unpublished data from the ABS collection *Criminal courts, Australia*. In this collection, if a person or organisation is a defendant in more than one case dealt with by the court during the collection period then they will be counted more than once. For this reason, data on the number of defendants are likely to be an overestimate of the number of individuals. More information about this collection is available from the ABS website at <[www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)>.

Rates of young people aged 10–17 found guilty in the Children's Court were calculated by AIHW using ABS Estimated Resident Population data (ABS 2012b).

### *Young people under juvenile justice supervision*

Information about young people under juvenile justice supervision is based on data from the Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set (JJ NMDS). This collection contains information about all young people who were supervised by state and territory juvenile justice agencies in Australia, both in the community and in detention.

For more information about this collection, including details of the data and methods used in reporting, see AIHW (2012), available from <[www.aihw.gov.au/juvenile-justice/](http://www.aihw.gov.au/juvenile-justice/)>. A data quality statement for the JJ NMDS 2010–11 is also available at <<http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/490897>>.

### **Age range for treatment as a young person**

Across Australia, young people have criminal responsibility if they are aged 10 or older. The upper age limit for treatment as a young person is 17 years (at the time an offence was allegedly committed) in all states and territories except Queensland, where the age limit is 16 years. Young people aged 18 and older (17 or older in Queensland) at the time an offence was allegedly committed are dealt with under the criminal legislation relating to adults. However, it is possible for young people aged 18 and older to be under juvenile justice supervision.

### Number under supervision

Two measures of young people under supervision are available from the JJ NMDS:

- Average day—calculated by summing the number of days each young person spends under supervision during the year and dividing this total by the total number of days in the financial year.
- During the year—calculated by counting each distinct young person under supervision during the year only once, even if they entered and exited supervision multiple times.

### National totals

Western Australia and the Northern Territory did not provide JJ NMDS data for 2008–09 to 2010–11. Estimated national totals were calculated, where possible, using non-standard data. Data from the JJ NMDS may therefore include two national totals:

- Australia excluding Western Australia and the Northern Territory—all states and territories with JJ NMDS data.
- Australia including estimates for Western Australia and the Northern Territory—an approximate national total derived, where possible, from the available JJ NMDS data, non-standard data for Western Australia and 2007–08 JJ NMDS data for the Northern Territory (both rounded to the nearest 5 young people). These totals are then further rounded to the nearest 5 young people.

In addition, not all states and territories were able to provide JJ NMDS data in the current format for all years of the JJ NMDS (2000–01 to 2010–11).

### Completed cohorts

'Completed cohorts' are groups for which a complete juvenile justice supervision history is available. In 2010–11, a complete supervision history is available for young people born in the 1990–91, 1991–92 and 1992–93 financial years, as these young people were aged 10–17 during the period of the JJ NMDS (2000–01 to 2010–11). The number of young people in completed cohorts who experienced supervision when they were aged 10–17 was calculated by counting each young person only once, even if they entered and exited supervision multiple times.

Since JJ NMDS data are not available for all states and territories in all years, some estimates were used in the calculation of the number of young people who experienced supervision.

- **Western Australia and the Northern Territory:** JJ NMDS data were not available from 1 July 2008 onwards. Data therefore under-count the number of young people in completed cohorts who experienced supervision, as young people who first entered supervision after this date are excluded. Data on age at first supervision among completed cohorts were used to adjust data for Western Australia and the Northern Territory for the relevant age groups and years.

- ♦ **Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory:** JJ NMDS data are only available for Tasmania from 2006–07 onwards, and for the Australian Capital Territory for 2003–04 onwards. Data therefore under-count the number of young people in completed cohorts who experienced supervision, as young people who exited supervision before these dates and did not return are excluded. Data on the exit date of last supervision by age were used to adjust cohort data for the relevant age groups and years. Using this method, it was not possible to create estimates for young people in Tasmania who exited supervision when aged 10–12 and did not return. Analysis of other jurisdictions with similar age distributions indicated that this is likely to result in under-counting of less than 0.5% (equal to less than 1 young person) in Tasmania in each cohort.

Population rates for completed cohorts were calculated by dividing the number of young people who experienced supervision by the number of young people who were eligible to be supervised. The number of young people eligible to be supervised was estimated using ABS Estimated Resident Population data (ABS 2012b) for each cohort at age 10.

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- Department of Justice, Northern Territory.

## Related publications

The following AIHW publications might also be of interest:

- AIHW 2012. Juvenile justice in Australia 2010–11. Juvenile justice series no. 10. Cat. no. JUV 10. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2012. Juvenile detention population in Australia 2011. Juvenile justice series no. 9. Cat. no. JUV 9. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2012. Child protection Australia 2010–11. Child welfare series no. 53. Cat. no. CWS 41. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2011. Headline indicators for children's health, development and wellbeing, 2011. Cat. no. PHE 144. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2011. The health of Australia's prisoners 2010. Cat. no. PHE 149. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2011. Young Australians: their health and wellbeing 2011. Cat. no. PHE 140. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2008. Linking SAAP, child protection and juvenile justice data collections: a feasibility study. Data linkage series no. 5. Cat. no. CSI 5. Canberra: AIHW.

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