**Frequently asked questions**

**What is the Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set?**

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

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

The reference period for the 2011–12 JJ NMDS is from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2012. This means that in 2011–12 data were resupplied for the period from 2000–01 to 2010–11 and data for 2011–12 were supplied for the first time. The data set includes young people who were under juvenile justice supervision at any time during that period.

For each young person recorded in the JJ NMDS, data are collected on sex, date of birth, Indigenous status and date of first supervision. The JJ NMDS contains information on all supervised legal arrangements and orders that juvenile justice agencies administer (both community-based and detention orders) and all periods of detention in juvenile justice detention centres.

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

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

**What are the data quality and coverage limitations specific to each state and territory?**

**Western Australia** and the **Northern Territory** did not provide JJ NMDS data for the years from 2008–09 to 2011–12. Where possible, estimates for Western Australia and the Northern Territory are used to calculate estimated national totals. This means that end-of-month data were used for these jurisdictions for the entire period covered by the detention data (July 2009 onwards).

Data for **South Australia** for 2011–12 should be interpreted with caution due to the implementation of a new client and case management system in that state.

**How is the age of a young person calculated?**

Numbers of young people in detention include all age groups. For data extracted from the JJ NMDS, age is calculated at the start of the relevant quarter unless the period of detention began within the quarter, in which case age is calculated as at the start of the detention period.

A young person’s age can therefore vary across tables because age is calculated in light of the type of detention being analysed. This means that for a particular age group the total number of young people in detention might not be the sum of the number of young people in sentenced and unsentenced detention

For the end-of-month data, age is calculated as at the end of the relevant month

**How is the average nightly population calculated?**

For data that are extracted from the JJ NMDS, the average nightly population is calculated by summing the duration (in nights) of each period of detention that falls within the quarter and dividing the summed duration by 91, which is the number of nights in a standard year divided by the number of quarters in a year.

Where no JJ NMDS data were available for the relevant quarter, the nightly averages were calculated by averaging end-of-month data provided by the states and territories.

The average nightly population is rounded to whole numbers. Components might not sum to the given totals due to this rounding.

**What time period is covered by the data?**

The report examines data on the number of young people in detention on an average night in each quarter over the 4-year period from June 2009 to June 2013. Each quarter covers 3 months of the year and is identified by reference to the last month in the quarter. For example, the March quarter includes January, February and March.

**What needs to be considered when interpreting trends in the detention population numbers?**

The number of young people in detention on an average night is relatively small, and the amount of random variation from quarter to quarter is more noticeable when numbers are small. This may affect the appearance and interpretation of trends, which should therefore be interpreted with caution, particularly where they relate to small populations. Percentage changes are not calculated for populations of fewer than 100 young people.

In this report, comparisons are made between the June quarter in 2013 and the June quarter 1 year earlier (2012) and 4 years earlier (2009). The same quarters are compared across years to minimise the effect of seasonal variations.

**How are young people who are both sentenced and unsentenced at the same time counted?**

Young people who are both sentenced and unsentenced at the same time are counted as sentenced.