**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 youth justice agencies because they were alleged or proven to have committed an offence.

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 2015–16 JJ NMDS is from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2016. This means that in 2015–16 data were resupplied for the period from 2000–01 to 2014–15 and data for 2015–16 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?**

The Northern Territory did not provide JJ NMDS data for the years from 2008–09 to 2015–16.

For the Northern Territory, non-standard data were provided for 2011–12 to 2015–16. For the quarterly detention data set, end of month data was used to supplement data for the Northern Territory for 2008–09 to 2010–11.

Additionally, data based on the 2007 JJ NMDS was used for the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory, for quarter 1 (June quarter 2008).

JJ NMDS data were used for all other states and territories and quarters.

**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. This also means that 0 = zero or rounded to zero.

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

The set contains data on number of young people in detention on an average night in each quarter over the 8-year period from June 2008 to June 2016. 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.

**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.