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How has youth crime in Victoria changed over the past 10 years?

A previous Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) paper revealed that the number of very young offenders aged 10 to 14 has decreased over the past ten years, the number aged 15 to 19 has remained stable and the number aged 20 to 24 has increased (Sutherland and Millsted, 2016). That paper also found that on average, the number of incidents per offender increased for all of these groups. However, questions remain about how much crime youth account for overall, how many individuals are offending at a high rate, and whether there have been changes in the type of offences recorded for young people. This paper examines the police-recorded offending of three groups of young offenders over three two-year time periods (2007-2008, 2011-2012 and 2015-2016). The numbers of unique individuals who made up these groups are shown in Table 1, with their age category based on how old they were at the beginning of each time period.

Table 1: Number of unique offenders and age adjusted offender rates

Years	Age Group		
	10-14	15-19	20-24
2007-2008 (April 2006-March 2008)			
Number of unique offenders	11,508	20,203	13,841
Number of incidents	23,565	42,990	27,542
2011-2012 (April 2010-March 2012)			
Number of unique offenders	9,178	23,583	21,375
Number of incidents	20,928	52,499	39,775
2015-2016 (April 2014-March 2016)			
Number of unique offenders	6,092	17,773	20,870
Number of incidents	18,347	46,022	48,401

1. Has the amount of recorded crime allegedly committed by young people increased over time?

The proportion of incidents committed by offenders under the age of 25 has fallen from half of all recorded incidents in 2007-2008 to 40% of all incidents in 2015-2016.

Figure 1 shows that offenders aged 24 or younger are now responsible for a smaller proportion of all crime compared with the previous periods examined, though this may in part be due to an increase in offending by older age groups.

During the 2007-2008 period, offenders aged 24 or under were responsible for 52% of all incidents, but by the 2015-2016 period this had decreased to 40% of all incidents. The decline was most notable for 10 to 14 year olds and 15 to 19 year olds, with the proportion of offences accounted for by these groups decreasing from 13% to 6% and from 24% to 16% respectively. Over the same period, there was a corresponding increase in the proportion of offences by those aged 25 or older, from 48% to 60%.

Figure 1: Proportion of incidents recorded by offender age group



2. Has the frequency of offending increased amongst young offenders?

The proportion of young offenders recorded with higher numbers of incidents has increased slightly over time.

While the overall proportion of offending accounted for by young offenders has dropped, Figure 2 shows that the proportion of young offenders recorded for multiple incidents has increased. During 2007-2008, 17% of all alleged offenders under the age of 25 had three or more incidents recorded and this increased to 22% of all offenders during 2015-2016.

Figure 2: Proportion of offenders aged 10 to 24 recorded for 1, 2, 3 to 5, 6 to 10 and 11 or more incidents

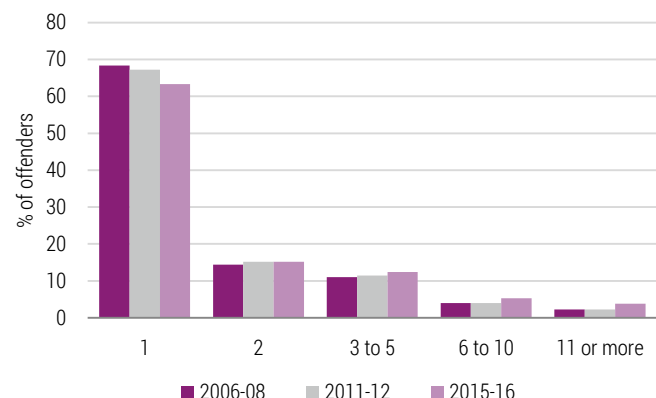


Table 2 shows the proportion and number of young offenders who were recorded for 1, 2, 3 to 5, 6 to 10 or 11 or more incidents over the past two years, along with the proportion and number of incidents each group accounted for. As shown, the 3.8% of high-frequency young offenders who were recorded for 11 or more incidents accounted for 28.9% of all incidents.

Table 2: Offending frequency, number of unique offenders aged 10 to 24 and number of incidents, 2015-2016

Number of incidents recorded per unique offender	Unique offenders		Incidents	
	%	n	%	n
1 incident	63.3	28,316	25.1	28,316
2 incidents	15.2	6,794	12.0	13,588
3 to 5 incidents	12.4	5,560	18.2	20,476
6 to 10 incidents	5.3	2,380	15.8	17,798
11 or more incidents	3.8	1,685	28.9	32,592
Total	100.0	44,735	100.0	112,770

3. Have the types of offences recorded for young people changed over time?

The proportions of young alleged offenders recorded for offences against the person, drug offences and justice procedures offences have increased, while the proportions for property and deception offences and other offences have decreased.

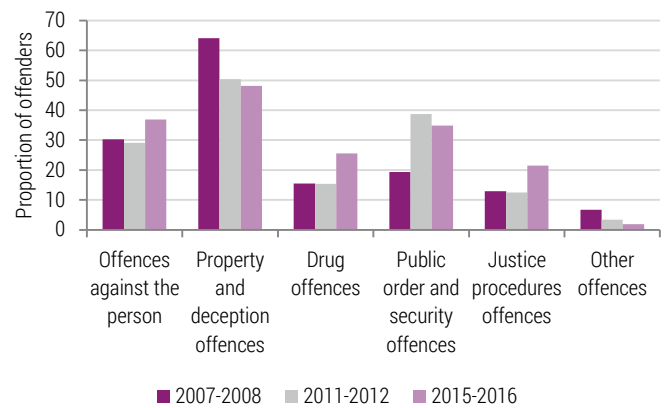
Figure 3 shows that at the offence division level, the proportion of young people recorded for at least one property and deception offence was significantly lower in 2015-2016 compared with the earlier time periods. It fell from 64.1% in 2007-2008 to 48.1% in 2015-2016. Over the same period, the proportion of offenders recorded for one or more:

- offences against the person increased significantly from 30.3 to 36.9%
- drug offences increased significantly from 15.5% to 25.5%
- justice procedures offences increased significantly from 12.9% to 21.4%.

Though the number of young offenders recorded for one or more public order offences increased significantly from 19.4% to 38.7% between 2007-2008 and 2011-2012, it has since fallen slightly to 34.8% during the most recent two year period.

The supplementary table that accompanies this report provides more detailed offence type information for young people across the three time periods.

Figure 3: Proportion of offenders aged 10 to 24 recorded for one or more of each crime type



The table shows that the fall in the proportion of offenders who were recorded for at least one property and deception offence was mostly driven by a significant decrease in those recorded for theft. Whereas in 2007-2008 43.6% of all young offenders were recorded for at least one theft offence, by 2015-2016 this had dropped to 31.0%. Across the same time periods, there was also a significant decrease in the proportion of young offenders recorded for burglary/break and enter offences, from 13.1% in 2007-2008 to 9.4%. There were not universal decreases across the property and deception offence division over time, however, with criminal damage offences accounting for 19.6% in 2007-2008, decreasing to 16.8% in 2011-2012, and increasing again to 19.4% in 2015-2016.

A significant increase in assault and related offences from 22.4% in 2007-2008 to 27.8% in 2015-2016 contributed to the overall increase in crimes against the person depicted in Figure 3. Drug use and possession offences similarly increased from 13.8% to 23.2% over the same period. Much of the increase in justice procedures offences was due to a significant increase in breaches of orders from 8.6% in 2011-2012 to 17.4% in 2015-2016.

The CSA is currently conducting further research in this area. This includes work to determine the characteristics and offending trajectories of the high-frequency young offenders identified in this paper and examine the seriousness of youth offending and how this may have changed over time.

Supplementary table – offences by subdivision and cohort

Offence subdivision	10-14 year olds			15-19 year olds			20-24 year olds		
	2007-2008	2011-2012	2015-2016	2007-2008	2011-2012	2015-2016	2007-2008	2011-2012	2015-2016
A10 Homicide and related offences	0	4	0	42	31	39	90	59	69
A20 Assault and related offences	1,745	2,300	2,497	9,300	9,866	9,054	7,683	8,661	10,534
A30 Sexual offences	375	520	449	1,426	1,387	1,464	1,048	1,224	1,638
A40 Abduction and related offences	9	12	16	92	158	143	114	251	283
A50 Robbery	504	506	370	2,175	2,885	1,981	760	958	684
A60 Blackmail and extortion	1	2	0	11	28	42	43	53	45
A70 Stalking, harassment and threatening behaviour	134	187	333	965	1,375	1,578	1,225	1,629	2,444
A80 Dangerous and negligent acts endangering people	375	323	395	1,275	1,466	1,417	1,052	1,312	1,749
B10 Arson	405	369	356	668	595	860	240	241	398
B20 Property damage	3,522	3,082	2,960	10,799	10,438	8,289	4,949	5,057	6,169
B30 Burglary/Break and enter	2,711	2,114	1,532	6,925	5,982	4,369	3,569	3,180	3,303
B40 Theft	8,335	7,358	5,292	25,050	23,757	21,138	16,028	14,695	17,116
B50 Deception	173	185	622	4,283	2,961	4,656	7,324	6,449	8,425
B60 Bribery	0	0	0	0	3	0	4	7	1
C10 Drug dealing and trafficking	9	18	15	514	459	804	1,428	1,306	2,381
C20 Cultivate or manufacture drugs	2	0	2	75	101	116	237	343	479
C30 Drug use and possession	165	194	233	2,845	3,639	4,898	5,058	5,815	9,656
C90 Other drug offences	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	4
D10 Weapons and explosives offences	401	379	340	2,445	2,488	2,691	2,368	2,918	5,392
D20 Disorderly and offensive conduct	345	438	368	2,816	8,035	4,564	2,214	12,328	8,157
D30 Public nuisance offences	562	458	454	1,386	1,431	1,135	543	513	786
D40 Public security offences	0	2	9	4	4	4	30	14	23
E10 Justice procedures	128	159	240	1,424	1,590	1,891	1,568	1,753	2,763
E20 Breaches of orders	179	262	1,764	2,316	2,696	8,730	4,116	5,062	13,027
F10 Regulatory driving offences	13	1	0	43	7	3	5	4	12
F20 Transport regulation offences	171	110	44	553	307	187	50	62	144
F30 Other government regulatory offences	197	124	28	1,678	1,036	176	185	164	127
F90 Miscellaneous offences	24	35	15	84	109	77	122	88	90