



Griffith Criminology Institute

# Trends in youth offending in Queensland, 2008 to 2017

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## Executive Summary

### Background

The Griffith Criminology Institute was commissioned by the Queensland Police Service to provide an analysis of trends in youth offending in Queensland. This analysis was designed to examine trends in the nature of offending, the characteristics of offenders, the frequency of re-offending, and the presence of co-offenders. The data used for this analysis was extracted from the Griffith Criminology Institute Social Analytics Lab (SAL) and covers recorded offences from 2008 to 2017 for offenders aged 10- to 17-years.

### Method and scope

The data used for this report was extracted from the Griffith Criminology Institute (GCI) Social Analytics Lab (SAL), a custom-built secure research facility housed at Griffith University to store, manage and analyse sensitive administrative data for research and teaching purposes. The data set used for this report is QPS QPRIME data, an administrative database for recording information on occurrences entered by QPS officers and Policelink.

The analysis in this report is primarily descriptive, and focusses on examining changes in trends in the characteristics of youth offending and offenders over this period. The data extracted for the analysis herein comprises all recorded occurrences for offenders aged 10 to 17 years at the time of the offence, which had a start date the period 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2017. As noted above, 10- to 17-year-olds are referred to as **youth offenders** in this report, as this reflects the contemporary definition of youth offenders in Queensland as of 2018. However, it should be noted that for the period of this analysis, 17-year-olds were not technically considered youth offenders in the Queensland criminal justice system, and as such, would have been subject to standard adult criminal justice responses in this period, rather than the criminal justice system responses designed for juvenile offenders. Also, police actions or court adjudications were not used to include or exclude recorded offences in this analysis, hence the young people examined in this report are more accurately described as **alleged offenders**, but are referred to as offenders for ease of reference.

### Results

The results of this report are organised into three main sections; trends in offences (section 2.1); trends in offending incidents (section 2.2); and trends in unique offenders (section 2.3). **Offences** represent all of the offences linked to all offenders aged 10 to 17 years in a given annual period. **Offending incidents** are defined as a count of all offenders in all occurrences in an annual period; this unit of analysis takes into account all of the offences that are linked to each offender in an occurrence, and examines in particular the most serious offence for each offender in each occurrence (note: offenders who have been recorded in multiple occurrences in an annual period will be represented more than once). **Unique offenders** represent each offender who has been recorded in any occurrence in an annual period (a calendar year), with each offender only represented once in each year. See section 1.4.2 for definitions of each of these terms.

Overall, the results present a mixed picture of youth offending in Queensland for the 10-year period from 2008 to 2017, however they align broadly to trends seen in other Australia jurisdictions and internationally. The size of the youth offending population in Queensland has continued to decline over this period, and this decline in the number of youth offenders has occurred primarily through the reduction of the number of low to moderate offenders. There has also been a concurrent growth in the size of the chronic offending population, and this appears to be driving an increase in the total number of offending incidents in the more recent years.

### Trends in offences

There has been an overall, though not linear, increase in the total number of offences recorded against youth offenders in Queensland (a 10.5% increase) from 2008 to 2017. The most common offences in 2017 were theft and related offences (27.9%), unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter (11.8%), and illicit drug offences (11.8%). Illicit drug offences in particular have demonstrated considerable growth over the 10-year period, almost doubling in volume from 2008 to 2017. When considering changes in the volume of different offence type categories, property-related offences and illicit drug offences displayed the most growth from 2008 to 2017, displaying increases of 8.6% (2416 additional offences) and 97.7% (3375 additional offences) respectively. Property-related offences in particular appear to be responsible for recent increases in the total number of offences and offence rates in 2016 and 2017. There were also increases in offences against the person (11.3% increase; 573

additional offences) and offences against justice procedures (12.1% increase; 593 additional offences) over this period, with a concurrent decline in public order and security offences (17.8% decrease; 1296 fewer offences).

### *Trends in offending incidents*

Youth offending incidents have followed a somewhat similar pattern to the trends for total offences recorded against youth offenders from 2008 to 2017, with an overall increase of 9.6% in offending incidents from 2008 to 2017 (4341 additional offending incidents). And consistent with the trends for total offences, the growth in offending incidents occurred in non-linear manner, with declines in offending incidents from 2013, and subsequent increases in 2016 and 2017. Most of the growth from 2008 and 2017 in offending incidents has been driven by incidents in which property offences, illicit drug offences or traffic and vehicle regulatory offences were the most serious offences, while more serious violent offences showed relatively less growth and in some instances declined over this period.

The top three most common most serious offences in 2017 were theft and related offences (29.4%), unlawful entry with intent/ burglary, break and enter (13.5%), and illicit drug offences (9.0%). The relative frequency of theft and related offences and unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter remain relatively unchanged from 2008, where they comprised 29.9% and 13.6% of offending incidents respectively. However, the notable recent increase in offending incidents in 2016 and 2017 appears to be driven in particular by incidents in which theft and related offences, unlawful entry with intent/ burglary, break and enter, and traffic and vehicle regulatory were the most serious offences, with these types of offending incidents growing by 3174, 1851 and 2552 respectively between 2015 and 2017.

Illicit drug offences showed significant growth from 2008 to 2017, increasing by 91.5% or 2120 offending incidents. Aside from illicit drug offending incidents, a number of other types of offending incidents also showed disproportionate growth from 2008 to 2017, including fraud, deception and related offences, and traffic and vehicle regulatory offences. Offending incidents in which fraud, deception and related offences were the most serious offence comprised 1.0% of offending incidents in 2008, and these increased by 282.7% (1340 additional offending incidents), comprising a total of 3.7% of offending incidents in 2017. Similarly, offending incidents in which traffic and vehicle regulatory offences were the most serious offence grew from 6.4% in 2008 to 7.9% in 2017, constituting a 36.1% increase (1044 additional offending incidents).

The gender distribution of young offenders in offending incidents has not changed dramatically, however there has been somewhat larger relative growth in offending incidents involving female offenders compared to males from 2008 to 2017 (12.2% compared to 8.7%). Despite this, young males were responsible for a greater volume of growth in offending incidents over this period and remained the majority of offenders in youth offending incidents (74.9%). Young females appear to be displaying more complex patterns of offending, with an increase in offending incidents in which the most serious offence was acts intended to cause injury over this period, indicating an increase in violent offending, and a decline in theft and related offences, although theft and related offences remained the most common most serious offence for young females. In contrast, young males displayed a growth in theft and related offending incidents from 2008 to 2017, alongside only a small increase in acts intended to cause injury.

The age distribution for youth offending incidents from 2008 to 2017 did not change substantially, though there were some notable shifts in offending patterns across the age groups. While 14- to 17-year-olds comprised the majority (79.8%) of offenders in youth offending incidents, there was notably greater relative growth in offending incidents among 10-, 11- and 12- year-olds from 2008 to 2017, growing by 53.3%, 73.5% and 61.0%, respectively. The greatest volume of growth from 2008 to 2017 in offending incidents, however, occurred amongst 17-year-olds, who were responsible for approximately 49% of the growth in offending incidents over this period, and who remained the age group with the highest rates of offending over this period. There was also a notable decline in the number of offending incidents for 16-year-olds from 2008 to 2017. Taking into account population growth across the age groups from 2008 to 2017, most age groups showed increases in the population rate of offending from 2008 to 2017, with the exception of 14- and 16-year-olds who demonstrated reductions in the population rate of offending over this period. The notably different patterns of offending between 16- and 17-year-olds suggests that at least one driver of this divergence in offending patterns is likely to be differences in the diversion options, criminal court jurisdictions and detention and community-based sanction options for youth offenders compared to adult offenders, as 17-year-olds were treated as adults in the criminal justice system in Queensland over this period.

Police responses to offenders aged 10- to 17-years appears to have changed somewhat from 2008 to 2017, with an overall growth in the use of arrest/warrants, and infringements for some offences, and a reduction in the use of cautions. This pattern is troubling, particularly for non-violent and high-volume offending incidents types such as illicit drug and property offending incidents. This trend may indicate that police are in general responding to offending among young people with more serious actions/sanctions, or that they are dealing with more repeat offenders who are more difficult to caution or divert, or both.

### *Trends in unique offenders and repeat offending*

The number of unique youth offenders in Queensland has shown overall a fairly consistent downward trend from 2008 to 2017, declining in total by approximately 14.2% over this period (a reduction of 2670 unique offenders), though there was a slight rebound upwards in the number of unique offenders in 2016 and 2017. This is also reflected in a reduced population rate for offenders in Queensland, with the number of offenders reducing from 404.2 per 10,000 young persons in 2008 to 321.7 per 10,000 young persons in 2017.

In 2017, most offenders (60%) were only recorded in one offending incident in a given year, and while the proportion of one-off offenders has not changed dramatically, they have declined notably in number from 2008 to 2017. In fact, most of the decline in unique offenders from 2008 to 2017 has occurred among offenders who are recorded in one incident in a year. There have also been declines in low to moderate repeat offenders, with reductions in the number of offenders who have two to nine offending incidents each year. The only repeat offending group that has demonstrated an increase from 2008 to 2017 is very chronic youth offenders, that is those who are recorded for 10 or more incidents in an annual period.

At the same time as experiencing a drop in the number of unique youth offenders from 2008 to 2017, there has been concurrent growth in the size of the very chronic offender group in Queensland, and this appears to be a primary driver of increases in the number of offending incidents in recent years. Chronic offenders, defined in this report as young people who have 10 or more offending incidents in a year, grew from 4% of the youth offender population (or 701 offenders) in 2008, to 7% of the youth offender population (or 1113 offenders) in 2017, translating to an increase of 412 chronic offenders. The number and proportion of offending incidents that these chronic offenders are responsible for have naturally grown over this period; in 2008 the chronic offender population was responsible for 25% of youth offending incidents or 11,358 incidents, while in 2017 the chronic offender population was responsible for 43% of youth offending incidents or 21,537 incidents.

### **Discussion**

In line with other jurisdictions and internationally, the findings that Queensland has had a reduction in the total number of youth offenders suggests that these are evidence of an overall cohort effect for more recent generations of young people. That is, newer generations of young people have been exposed to a different constellation of risk and protective factors, and opportunity contexts for offending, which have broadly altered the engagement in (traditional) offending behaviour, particularly for the later adolescent age groups (14- to 17-years). Recent cohorts of young people may have been exposed to fewer risk factors for offending including reduced binge drinking (Pennay, Livingston, & Maclean, 2015), reduced time spent without effective guardianship or in contexts where offending or antisocial behaviour is more readily detectable or reportable (e.g. rather than hanging out with friends on the street they may now be spending more time in their homes engaged in online activities; Farrell, Tilley, Tseloni, 2014; Payne, Brown & Broadhurst, 2018), and reduced opportunities for offending behaviour through greater securitisation of property (Farrell, Tilley, Tseloni, 2014). It should be noted that some antisocial behaviour amongst young people may have been displaced into online or virtual worlds, where there is less guardianship and opportunity for detection (Farrell, Tilley, Tseloni, 2014; Payne, Brown & Broadhurst, 2018).

Alongside the decrease in the number of youth offenders, an increase in repeat or chronic youth offenders has also been found in other international jurisdictions (Nilsson, Estrada & Backman, 2017) and in Australia, in Victoria (Millstead & Sutherland, 2016) and NSW (Payne, Brown & Broadhurst, 2018), though the latter study found that an increase in the proportion of chronic offenders in the youth offending population in a more recent cohort was the result of a larger decline in the one-off offending population, rather than an increase in the total number of chronic offenders. Notably, the analysis herein found an increase in both the proportion and total number of chronic youth offenders from 2008 to 2017. The proportion of offending incidents in Queensland in 2017 that are driven by the chronic youth offending cohort (43%) suggests that a key contemporary challenge for the Queensland criminal justice

system is how to effectively respond to chronic offenders in order to contribute towards reduced offending behaviour and ultimately desistance.

The scale of this concentration of chronic offending in Queensland, alongside evidence from other jurisdictions of increased concentration of repeat offending in a certain sub-group of the younger population, suggests that this is likely to be at least in part a concurrent cohort effect alongside the reduction in low level or one-off offending. However, the pattern of change repeat offending over the 10-year period from 2008 to 2017 is linear but inconsistent with some lumpiness, suggesting the additional influence of period effects on this trend. These period effects may relate to changes in criminal justice or other health and welfare systems, which are relevant to chronic young offenders, who tend to be contending with issues related to cumulative disadvantage and adverse life events (Corrado & Freedman, 2011; Savage, 2009; Shannon, 2007; Whitten, McGee, Homel, Farrington & Ttofi, 2019).

The concentration of recorded offences adjusted to the youth population across QPS Districts suggests that these chronic offenders are likely to be situated in the regional and remote areas of Queensland, in particular in the Far North, South West, Mt Isa, Townsville and Capricornia Districts (analysis not shown). Though not directly measured in this study due to missing data across the reference time period, a reasonable proportion of this chronic offending group are likely to be Indigenous young people, as cohort studies have found that a higher proportion of those identified as Indigenous are likely to be classified as chronic offenders (Allard, McCarthy & Stewart, 2020).

Recent studies of adult offending have indicated a similar increased concentration of offending or victimisation, occurring most commonly amongst the more socio-economically disadvantaged proportion of the population (Hunter & Tseloni, 2016; Ignatans & Pease, 2015; McVie, Norris & Pillinger, 2014; Nilsson, Estrada & Backman, 2017; Pease & Ignatans, 2016). Three potential drivers for an increased concentration of offending in lower socio-economic areas have been proposed recently (Nilsson, Estrada & Backman, 2017): increased inequalities in resources and opportunities leading to more motivated offender populations in lower socio-economic areas; uneven distribution in the of securitisation on property, with victims in lower socio-economic areas also having less resource which to secure their property; and uneven distribution in tough-on-crime policies, resulting concentration of policing resources in more socio-economically disadvantaged areas. To what extent these factors are drivers in the Queensland context requires further exploration, however the results of this analysis suggest that youth offences tend to be concentrated in more socio-economically disadvantage regional and remote areas of Queensland, and it is likely that at least some of these drivers are present in those locations.

Research has found that chronic offenders are likely to have been exposed to significant cumulative disadvantage and adverse life events (Corrado & Freedman, 2011; Savage, 2009; Shannon, 2007; Whitten, McGee, Homel, Farrington & Ttofi, 2019). Criminal justice system responses that do not address the drivers or contexts for the offending behaviour are unlikely to encourage desistance or more prosocial behaviours among this offending group, and may inadvertently contribute to their repeated recidivism though entrenching offender identities and social networks.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The analysis in this report finds that there has been an overall reduction in the number of young offenders in Queensland, and this is likely driven by broader social changes which have reduced exposure to risk factors for offending for more recent generations of young people, with similar trends in reductions in youth offending found internationally and in other Australian jurisdictions. Concurrently, there has been a recent increase in the volume of offending incidents, and this appears to be partly driven by a relatively small group of chronic offenders, who have increased in volume and as a proportion of the offending population and the total youth population. The relative size of the chronic youth offending population in Queensland and the number offending incidents being generated by this group, locate chronic youth offending as a more pressing concern in Queensland.

Chronic offenders are likely to have been exposed to cumulative disadvantage and adverse life events, which are likely to be in part drivers for their high levels of offending behaviour. Culturally appropriate, tailored responses to these chronic offenders, of which a significant proportion are likely to be Indigenous and located in regional and remote areas, need to be developed. Responses must consider the drivers of the offending behaviour, with cross-sector responses likely to be best placed to target issues such as lack of engagement in education, problematic living contexts and experiences of abuse or neglect, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, and limited employment opportunities, all issues that may be present as driving factors in the chronic offending behaviours.

Concentration of police resources in these areas may be self-reinforcing for chronic offending behaviour, if they are oriented towards enforcement rather than prevention, diversion or cross-agency partnership responses. Traditional criminal justice system responses are not well positioned to address the drivers of this offending behaviour and may inadvertently have criminogenic effects through entrenching young offender identities and social networks. The effect of concentrations of police resources and the orientations of officers in these locations on chronic offender populations, particularly in regional and remote areas, are not well understood. This would be a valuable area for further research.

As well as police resources, it will also be important to examine changes in police practices that may be having unintended consequences. This report has shown there has been a decline in police use of cautions and other diversionary measures, and an increased tendency to use arrests and infringement notices for young people. Given that the research shows the criminogenic effects for young people of formal criminal justice processes, increased resort to arrest may be contributing to increased youth offending over the longer-term, especially for non-chronic offenders who would otherwise be expected to 'age-out' of crime. This too merits further examination.



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# 1 Introduction

The Griffith Criminology Institute was commissioned by the Queensland Police Service to provide an analysis of trends in youth offending in Queensland. This analysis was designed to examine trends in the nature of offending, the characteristics of offenders, the frequency of re-offending, and the presence of co-offenders. The data used for this analysis was extracted from the Griffith Criminology Institute Social Analytics Lab (SAL) and covers recorded offences from 2008 to 2017 for offenders aged 10 to 17 years. The overall purpose of the report is to analyse, over a 10-year period, trends in the rates of young people being recorded for offences, the numbers and types of offences they commit, and the proportion who are repeat offenders. The report also examines changes in how police have responded to young offenders over this period.

It should be noted that during this time period, 17-year-olds were not technically considered 'youth offenders' in terms of access to youth justice provisions and services, but were instead dealt with through the standard adult criminal justice system processes. This was changed in 2016 by the *Youth Justice and Other Legislation (Inclusion of 17-year-old Persons) Amendment Act 2016*, and became effective on February 12, 2018. Though 17 year-olds were considered adults in the Queensland criminal justice system for the relevant time (2008 to 2017), this report applies the contemporary definition of youth offender in Queensland (10 to 17 years) to the trends analysis herein, to enable the report to inform current considerations about program and policy development for the complete cohort of youth offenders. However, when considering historical trends for 17-year-olds it should be noted that these young people would have received police responses, sanctions and detention as part of the adult criminal justice system.

## 1.1 Policy and legislative context

There are a number of key legislative changes relevant to the youth justice system in Queensland (Queensland) that have occurred over the 2008 to 2017 time period considered in this report, that may have affected trends in recorded offending over this period.

In 2013, the newly elected Liberal-National Party Newman government initiated amendments to the Youth Justice Act 1992 (Queensland), and as part of this legislative change bootcamp orders replaced court ordered youth justice conferencing in the same year. These amendments led to the following further changes in 2014, (Hutchinson, 2015):

- Opening the Children's Court proceedings to the public;
- Permitting publication of identifying information for repeat offenders;
- Removing the principle of 'detention as a last resort';
- Facilitating prompt referral of 17 year-olds to adult prisons;
- Initiating new bail offences; and
- Initiating mandatory boot camp orders for repeat motor vehicle theft offenders in Townsville.

Following a change of government, the Labor Palaszczuk government initiated *The Youth Justice and Other Legislation (Inclusion of 17-year-old Persons) Amendment Act 2016* which repealed most of the above amendments. Importantly, these changes included 17 year-olds in the definition of 'youth offenders', providing them with access to the youth justice system. Many of the changes came into effect in 2016, with the formal transfer of 17 year-olds from the adult system to the youth justice system coming into effect on February 12, 2018.

## 1.2 Youth offending trends in Australia and internationally

Since the 1990s, it has been evident that there has been a decline in crime in most Western countries, including the U.S., the United Kingdom, and Europe, most notably in the form of a decline in property crime (Farrell, Tilley, Tseloni, 2014; Nilsson, Estrada & Backman, 2017; McVie, Norris & Pillinger, 2014; Tonry, 2014; Aebi & Linde, 2010). Though starting slightly later in the early 2000s, a similar crime decline has been evident in Australia across a number of jurisdictions, particularly in property offences (Payne, Brown & Broadhurst, 2018; Weatherburn, Halstead, & Ramsey, 2016; Weatherburn, Freeman & Holmes, 2014). More recently it has been identified in Australia and some international jurisdictions that much of the drop in general offending in the population has been driven by a decline in youth offending (Kim, Bushway, & Tsao, 2016; Farrell, Tilley, & Tseloni, 2014; Matthews & Minton, 2018; Weatherburn, Freeman & Holmes, 2014).

Explanations for declines in youth offending across a broad range of Western countries have used both period and cohort effects to try to understand these changes in youth offending behaviour. Period effects describe factors that would affect all individuals equally in a given period (for example, changes in legislation

or police practices), while cohort effects describe factors that primarily exert their impacts on those born in particular years (for example, banning of leaded petrol resulting in reduced exposure for those born in more recent years) (Matthews & Minton, 2018; Kim, Bushway, & Tsao, 2016). However, it has been noted that there are likely to be interactions with age for both period effects and cohort effects such that their impacts are not evenly distributed across all age groups (Matthews & Minton, 2018; Kim, Bushway, & Tsao, 2016). Some of the period effects that have been noted that may have affected youth offending include increased securitisation of property, such as cars, households and other personal goods such as smart phones, which has changed the opportunity structure of, and the potential value that can be gleaned from, property theft (Matthews & Minton, 2018; Kim, Bushway, & Tsao, 2016; Farrell, Tilley & Tseloni, 2014; Payne, Brown & Broadhurst, 2018). However, increased securitisation has also been argued to have a cohort effect, as young people may engage in 'debut' offences of property theft, which then provides a pathway for some of these young people to more serious and longer-term offending (Farrell, Laycock, & Tilley, 2015; Payne, Brown & Broadhurst, 2018; Farrell et al., 2014; Matthews & Minton, 2018). Essentially it is argued that securitisation has narrowed the pathway through to more serious offending for more recent cohorts of young people, thereby limiting not only property offences but also participation in a wider range of offence types over the long term for more recent generations (Farrell, Laycock, & Tilley, 2015).

Lifestyle changes induced by widespread internet access have also been argued to contribute to a reduction in youth offending (Farrell et al., 2014; Matthews & Minton, 2018; Payne, Brown & Broadhurst, 2018). Widespread internet access has undoubtedly changed the routine activities of the broader population over the past two decades, particularly more recently with the introduction of smart phone technology and high-speed internet access. The impacts on routine activities may have been particularly strong for more recent generations of young people, for whom internet-based social and recreational activities may have displaced other activities (for example, 'hanging out' with friends in the street) that may have provided greater opportunities for offending (Payne, Brown & Broadhurst, 2018). It has also been suggested that antisocial motivations amongst young people may now be displaced to online or virtual contexts, where targets may be more plentiful and opportunities for detection lower (Farrell, Tilley, Tseloni, 2014; Payne, Brown & Broadhurst, 2018). However, Farrell et al. (2014) argue that the decline youth offending in the U.S. preceded widespread access to high-speed internet, and suggest that rather than being the primary driving force, internet usage may instead have consolidated reductions in offending behaviour that were primarily driven by increased securitisation and more limited opportunities for property theft.

While acknowledging cohort effects, more recently it has been argued that an overall downward trend in youth offending has been subject to heterogeneous period effects across different jurisdictions internationally. In particular, it is argued that period effects such as jurisdictional changes in criminal justice system policies and legislation or social and economic conditions may have accelerated, halted or countered an overall cohort trend for declining offending at different time points across jurisdictions (Matthews & Minton, 2018; Payne, Brown & Broadhurst, 2018). Recent studies examining youth offending in Victoria (Milstead & Sutherland, 2016) and NSW (Payne, Brown & Broadhurst, 2018) have found that while there has been overall downward trend in the number of youth offenders, there has been a concurrent increase in the relative size of the chronic offending cohort, though in the NSW cohort study this reflected a greater relative decline in the once-only and moderate offending cohort rather than an increase in the volume of chronic offenders (Payne, Brown & Broadhurst, 2018), while in the Victorian study it was not clear whether the proportionate increase in the more chronic offending cohort was accompanied by an increase in the number of these offenders as well (Milstead & Sutherland, 2016). Evidence for a broader cohort effect to explain declines in youth offending in Australia in recent years are strengthened by concurrent reductions in the level of risky or binge drinking in younger people in recent years (Pennay, Livingston, & Maclean, 2015). This may have contributed to lower levels of alcohol-related offending but may also collectively indicate exposure to fewer risk factors and greater protective factors for antisocial or offending behaviours amongst young people in more recent years (Kim, Bushway, & Tsao, 2016; Payne, Brown & Broadhurst, 2018; Sampson & Laub, 1995).

The age-crime curve (Farrington, 1986) has informed understandings of patterns of offending over the life-course for many decades. The age-crime curve shows that offending is heavily right-skewed over the life-course, with a sharp peak in offending in the late adolescent years, which then drops off dramatically to a long right diminishing tail for the remaining adult life years. The age-crime curve suggested that some level of antisocial or offending behaviour was normative in the late teen years, but that for most young people this would diminish rapidly, with no further offending behaviour over the life-course, but that a more serious offending cohort would continue through to an adult offending career which would diminish more slowly over the life course. This pattern of offending has been found across a broad range of jurisdictions, and more recently it has been examined again in light of the reductions in youth offending in many Western countries (Matthews & Minton, 2018). This recent exploration using Scottish recorded offending data found that there was still a peak in offending in the late teen years, however the reduction in offending in young people had

led to a flattening or blunting of the curve, so that the peak was not as pronounced as previously (Matthew & Minton, 2018). These findings would suggest that one-off or time-limited offending in the late adolescent years may have become a less common or desirable norm in more recent cohorts of young people.

### 1.3 Objectives

The objective of this report is to examine trends in youth offending in Queensland over the 10-year period between 2008 and 2017, using QPS police administrative data (QPRIME) comprising recorded offences for young people aged 10 to 17 years of age. This trends analysis includes an examination of trends in total offences, offending incidents and unique offenders, as well as a more detailed examination of changes across types of offending, the age distribution of offending, and the spatial distribution of offending<sup>1</sup>.

### 1.4 Methodology

#### 1.4.1 Data source and scope

The data used for this report was extracted from the Griffith Criminology Institute (GCI) Social Analytics Lab (SAL), a custom-built secure research facility housed at Griffith University to store, manage and analyse sensitive administrative data for research and teaching purposes. The data set used for this report is QPS QPRIME data, an administrative database for recording information on occurrences entered by QPS officers and Policelink. A QPRIME occurrence is created in respect of the commission or suspected commission of any indictable offence, simple offence of a serious nature or any regulatory offence (QPS, 2019). Occurrences are essentially criminal incidents, which may involve multiple offenders, multiple victims, multiple offences and multiple locations, but in general are constrained by time and space in some way. For example, a series of break and enters over two months by two individuals may be recorded in a single occurrence, which might have two offenders, multiple victims, and multiple offences attached to it.

The analysis in this report is primarily descriptive, and focusses on examining changes in trends in the characteristics of youth offending and offenders over this period. The data extracted for this analysis included all recorded occurrences for offenders aged 10 to 17 years at the time of the offence, which had a start date in the period from 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2017. For most of the analysis, only occurrences linked to offenders who are aged between 10 and 17 years are examined, as criminal liability begins at age 10 in Queensland, and hence charges or prosecution are in general not progressed against those aged younger than 10.

Age and gender are the key characteristics of offenders that are explored in this report. Unfortunately, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status is a field available in QPRIME the extent of missing data for this field over the 10-year period covered by this report would not enable reliable analysis of the Indigenous status of offenders over time.

It should be noted that the analysis in this report is limited to the consideration of **recorded crime**. Recorded crime may not always accurately reflect offending behaviour in the population, as some types of offences are not well reported or detected, and thus do not get accurately measured through reported crime statistics (referred to as the 'dark figure' of crime). Additionally, it can be difficult to disentangle the impacts of the allocation of police resources from patterns of underlying offending behaviour. For example, police crackdowns on drug networks can create spikes in recorded drug offences; this does not reflect a sudden increase in drug offending behaviour but rather that police resources have been temporarily concentrated on detecting, investigating and prosecuting drug offending.

#### 1.4.2 Counting rules and definitions

Offences are classified according to the Australian Standard Offence Classification at the Division level, resulting in 16 categories of offences (ABS, 2011). Offences are included if there is a young person aged 10 to 17 years recorded as an offender for the offence. Recorded offences were not included or excluded according to the type of police actions were applied (for example whether the young person was cautioned, diverted, fined had offence charges withdrawn, received a notice to appear, or was arrested). It should be noted therefore that not all of the young people recorded as offenders would have been formally charged, cautioned or diverted. Additionally, information on the final adjudications in the relevant court jurisdiction

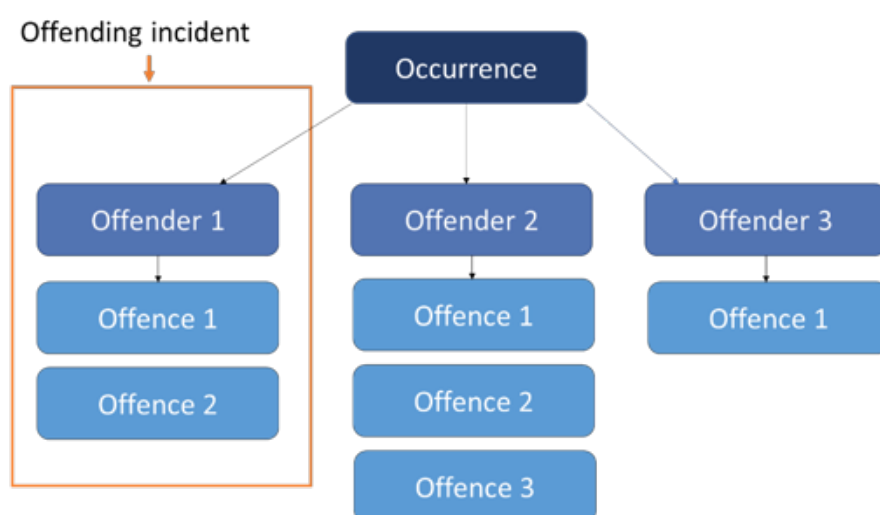
<sup>1</sup> The original version of this report included a spatial analysis of youth offending. This analysis has been removed in the current version of this report.

were not available for this analysis. Hence, this report describes **alleged offenders**, though they are referred hereafter as offenders for ease of reference.

As noted above, 10 to 17 year-olds are referred to as **youth offenders** in this report, as this reflects the contemporary definition of youth offenders in Queensland as of 2018. However, for the period of this analysis, 17 year-olds were not technically considered youth offenders in the Queensland criminal justice system, and as such, would have been subject to standard adult criminal justice responses in this period, rather than the criminal justice system responses designed for juvenile offenders.

Offences that were not able to be classified due to insufficient information were removed from the analysis. Some of the offence codes in the QPRIME data represent the legal act under which police powers are used in an incident, and do not refer to a specific offence, and these offence codes were also removed from the analysis.

**Offending incidents** are defined as a count of all offenders in all occurrences in an annual period. This unit of analysis takes into account all of the offences that are linked to each offender in an occurrence, and examines in particular the most serious offence for each offender in each occurrence. A diagrammatic representation of this is provided in Figure 1. For example, if an occurrence is linked to three offenders, this would result in three offending incidents, irrespective of the number of offences that were recorded against each offender. The National Offence Index (NOI), developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to rank offence categories from the ASOC according to relative perceived seriousness, was applied to offending incidents to determine the **most serious offence** that was recorded for an offender in each offending incident. Offender characteristics in offending incidents are described in this report but it should be noted that offenders may be represented in more than one offending incident in each annual period.



**Figure 1: Distinction between an occurrence and an offending incident**

The term **unique offender** is used to describe each offender that was recorded in an occurrence in a given annual period; unique offenders only have their characteristics represented once in each annual period, irrespective of how many occurrences that are linked to them in that period.

In some sections of this report, **higher level aggregations** of the 16 ANZSOC offence types are used to explore changes in the offence categories over time. The definitions for these offence groupings are as follows:

- **Offences against the person** includes the following offence types: homicide and related offences; acts intended to cause injury; dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons; abduction, harassment and other offences against the person; robbery, extortion, and related offences (ANZSOC Division codes 01 to 06).
- **Property offences** includes the following offence types: unlawful entry with intent/ burglary, break and enter; theft and related offences; fraud, deception and related offences; and property damage and environmental pollution (ANZSOC Division codes 07, 08, 09 and 12).
- **Public order and security offences** includes the following offence types: Prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives offences; and public order offences including disorderly conduct, regulated public order offences and offensive conduct (ANZSOC Division codes 11 and 13).

- **Illicit drug offences** includes the following offence types: import or export illicit drugs; deal or traffic in illicit drugs; manufacture or cultivate illicit drugs; possess and/or use illicit drugs; other illicit drug offences (ANZSOC Division code 10).
- **Offences against justice procedures** includes the following offence types: breach of custodial order offences; breach of community-based orders; breach of violence and non-violence orders; offences against government operations; offences against government security; offences against justice procedures (ANZSOC Division code 15).
- **Traffic and vehicle regulatory offences** include the following offence types: driver licence offences (e.g. driving while licence disqualified); vehicle registration and roadworthiness offences; regulatory driving offences (such as drink driving or exceed the legal speed limit); and pedestrian offences (ANZSOC Division code 14).

Throughout this report, offences, offending incidents and offenders have been examined as **population rates**. Population rates have the advantage of accounting for changes in population size during the period in which trends are being examined. Rates are particularly important in this report, as the size of the youth population in Queensland has grown over the period that this report examines, from approximately 465,183 in 2008 to approximately 501,483 in 2017 (ABS, 2018). Given the growth in the youth population it would be not be unexpected for offending to grow proportionately as a fraction of this population, hence examining rates enables examination of changes when population is controlled for. Estimated resident population figures for each year was drawn from the ABS Estimated Resident Population (2018).



## 2 Results / Findings

The results of this report are organised into three main sections; trends in offences (section 2.1); trends in offending incidents (section 2.2); and trends in unique offenders (section 2.3). **Offences** represent all of the offences linked to all offenders aged 10 to 17 years in a given annual period. As noted, an individual offender in an occurrence can be linked to multiple offences. Patterns of recorded offences can indicate changes in the nature and type of offending over time.

**Offending incidents** essentially reflect a count of each offender in each occurrence (see section 1.4.2 for definitions) in a given annual period (offenders who have been recorded in multiple occurrences in an annual period will be represented more than once). The offending incident analysis considers all the offences linked to an offender in an occurrence, and in particular this analysis examines the **most serious offence** for each offender in an incident. This analysis can give an indication of the types of young people that are engaged in offending and changes in offending patterns over time.

**Unique offenders** represent each offender who has been recorded in any occurrence in an annual period (a calendar year), with each offender only represented once in each year. Examining unique offenders can shed light on the size of the total youth offending population and how this has changed. It can also enable examination of trends in repeat offending.

### 2.1 Trends in offences

The total number of offences recorded against young people from 2008 to 2017 can be seen in Figure 2. This graph shows that there has been an overall increase in recorded offences for young people from 2008 to 2017, with the data indicating an overall 10.7% increase in all offences by young people, from 53,654 in 2008 to 59,417 in 2017. However, this trend has not been consistent, rising slightly between 2008 and 2012, then declining to 2015, before rebounding in 2016 and being maintained to 2017. The total number of offences in 2017 is the highest over this 10-year period, with 2015 having the lowest number of total offences.

It is important to note that absolute offence numbers like these do not account for population growth, which was substantial over the period. Figure 3 shows total offences for young people as a population rate (per 10,000 young persons aged 10 to 17 years). When population growth is accounted for the changes in youth offending demonstrate a relatively similar pattern to Figure 2.

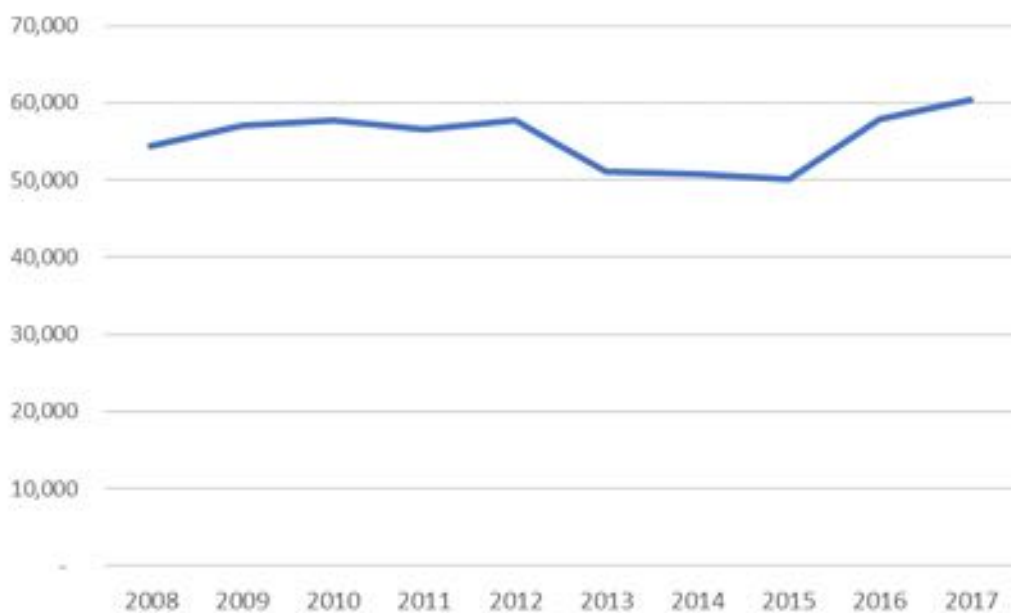
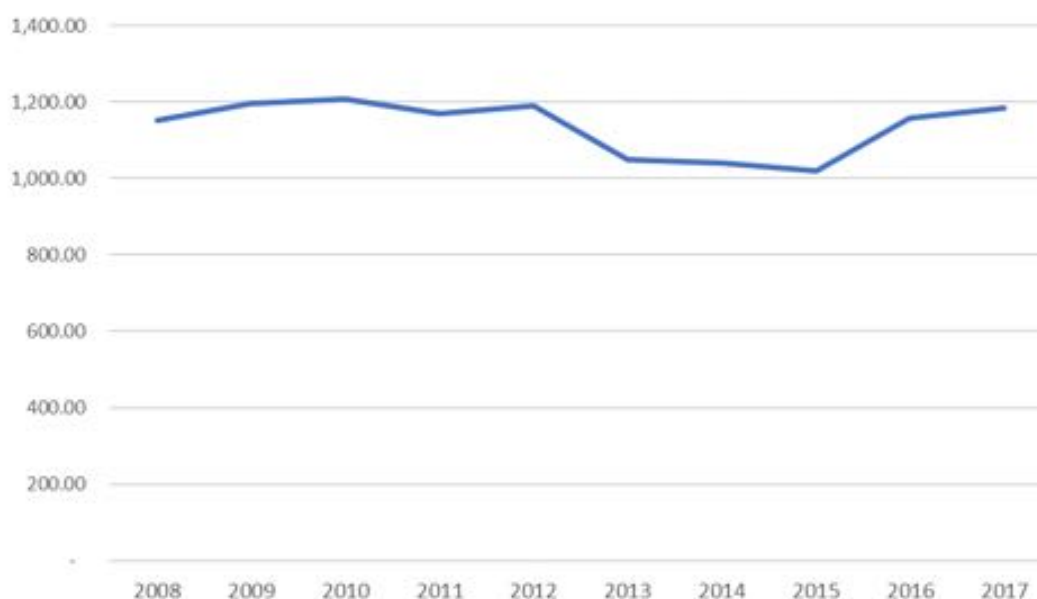


Figure 2: Trends in total offences recorded against youth offenders, 2008 to 2017



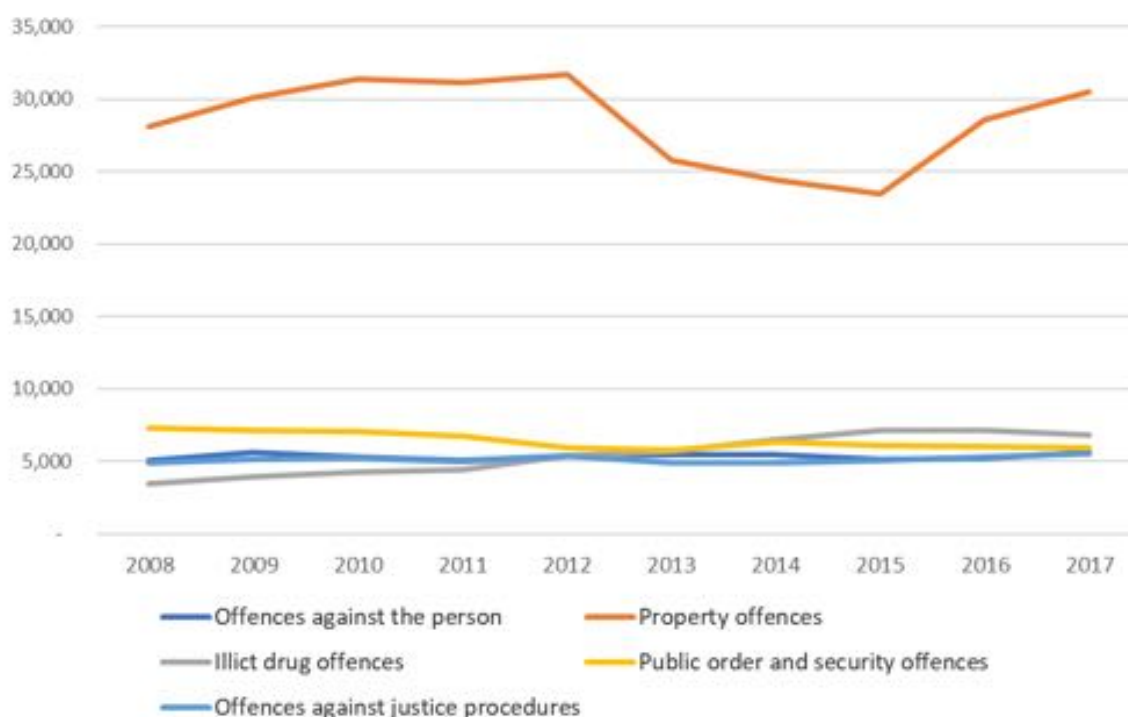
**Figure 3: Total offence rate per 10,000 young persons aged 10-17 years, 2008 to 2017**

Figure 4 displays the trends in recorded offences when they are grouped into the most common offence categories. It is apparent there have been a notable changes in the volume of property-related offences for young people from 2008 to 2017 (property offences include unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter, theft and related offences, fraud, deception and related offences, and property damage and environmental pollution; see section 1.4.2 for definitions). The number of property-related offences peaked in 2012, dropped over subsequent years to a low in 2015, and then increased again in frequency in 2016, which has been maintained through to 2017. Property offences have increased by a total of 8.6% from 28,088 in 2008 to 30,504 in 2017. The most notable increase in property-related offences occurred from 2015 to 2017, where they grew by 29.8% or 7,016 offences in total, and the growth in the property-related offences over this period appears to be driving much of the growth in offences in 2016 and 2017.

Illicit drug offences grew in a steady upward manner over the 10-year period, almost doubling from 3,454 in 2008 to 6,829 in 2017, a growth of 97.7% or 3,375 offences, though there was a small drop in illicit drug offences from 2016 to 2017 (a decline of 318 offences). Public order and security offences (comprising public order offences and prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives offences) displayed an overall decline in volume from 7,274 in 2008 to 5,978 in 2017, a reduction of 17.8% or 1,296 offences.

Offences against the person (comprising: homicide and related offences; acts intended to cause injury; sexual assault and related offences; dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons; abduction, harassment and other offences against the person; robbery, extortion and related offences) showed a fluctuating trend from 2008 to 2017, with a multiple inflection points over the 10-year periods. In total, offences against the person increased from 5,067 in 2008 to 5,640 in 2017, an increase of 11.3% or 573 offences. Similarly, offences against justice procedures (includes offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations, most notably breaches of court or community-based orders) displayed a fluctuating trend from 2008 to 2017, though overall there was an increase in these offences over this period, from 4,916 in 2008 to 5,509 in 2017, representing a 12.1% increase.

All offences recorded against young people aged 10 to 17 years according to offence type from 2008 to 2017 can be seen in Table 1. While there was an overall 10.7% increase in recorded offences for young people from 2008 to 2017, there were varied trends across the different offence types, with some showing notable increases, and other showing dramatic declines, as can be seen in Table 1. Theft and related offences have remained the most common offence recorded against young people from 2008 to 2017. However, while theft as a proportion of the total number of offences recorded against young people has remained fairly stable, from 27.0% in 2008 to 27.9% in 2017, there were 2,073 more theft offences in 2017 compared to 2008, constituting an increase of 14.3%.



**Figure 4: Trends in offences against the person, property offences, illicit drug offences, public order and security offences and offences against justice procedures recorded against young people, 2008 to 2017**

In 2017, the second most common offence types were unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter (11.5%; 6,854 offences), and illicit drug offences (11.5%; 6,829). The proportion of unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter have remained fairly stable from 2008 when they comprised 11.8% of total offences for youth offenders. However, as noted previously, illicit drug offences have shown substantial growth from 2008 when they constituted 6.4% of all offences (3,454 offences), a growth of 97.7%, or 3,375 in the total number of illicit drug offences.

Public order offences were the fourth most common offence type in 2017 constituting 9.5% of all offences (5,618 offences), and this represents a relative reduction in the proportion of public order offences in 2008 (12.5%; 6,689 offences), comprising a 16.0% drop in public order offences over this period (1071 fewer offences). The fifth most common offence type in 2017 was offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations which comprised 9.3% of total offences (5,509 offences). The relative proportion of these offences has remained relatively stable from 2008 when they constituted 9.2% of total offences (4916), however they have grown in volume over this period, with 593 more offences against justice procedures government security and government operations from 2008 to 2017, representing an increase of 12.1%.

There were notable declines in a number of offence types from 2008 to 2017, including for homicide and related offences (a decline of 72.2% or 13 offences), property damage and environmental pollution (a decline of 22.7% or 1547 offences), dangerous and negligent acts (a decline of 30.3% or 248 offences), and prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives (a decline of 38.5% or 225 offences).

Aside from notable increases in theft and related offences and illicit drug offences from 2008 to 2017, there were also considerable increases in less common offence types including sexual assault and related offences (an increase of 47.7% or 386 offences), robbery, extortion and related offences (an increase of 42.8% or 213 offences), fraud, deception and related offences (an increase of 272.3% or 1,345 offences).

**Table 1: Total offences recorded for young people aged 10 to 17 years, 2008 to 2017**

<b>Offences</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>Difference 2008 to 2017</b>
<b>Homicide and related offences</b>	18 (0.0%)	15 (0.0%)	7 (0.0%)	4 (0.0%)	6 (9.5%)	9 (0.0%)	3 (0.0%)	4 (0.0%)	5 (0.0%)	5 (0.0%)	-13
<b>Acts intended to cause injury</b>	2902 (5.4%)	3210 (5.7%)	3038 (5.3%)	2953 (5.3%)	2796 (4.9%)	2561 (5.1%)	2469 (4.9%)	2484 (5.0%)	2625 (4.6%)	3137 (5.3%)	235
<b>Sexual assault and related offences</b>	809 (1.5%)	902 (1.6%)	898 (1.6%)	790 (1.4%)	1101 (1.9%)	1594 (3.2%)	1862 (3.7%)	1694 (3.4%)	1521 (2.7%)	1195 (2.0%)	386
<b>Dangerous or negligent acts</b>	818 (1.5%)	799 (1.4%)	838 (1.5%)	834 (1.5%)	950 (1.7%)	797 (1.6%)	792 (1.6%)	533 (1.1%)	535 (0.9%)	570 (1.0%)	-248
<b>Abduction, harassment or other offences against the person</b>	22 (0.0%)	20 (0.0%)	15 (0.0%)	13 (0.0%)	30 (0.1%)	34 (0.1%)	20 (0.0%)	29 (0.1%)	17 (0.0%)	22 (0.0%)	0
<b>Robbery, extortion and related offences</b>	498 (0.9%)	666 (1.2%)	501 (0.9%)	445 (0.8%)	531 (0.9%)	501 (1.0%)	337 (0.7%)	418 (0.8%)	531 (0.9%)	711 (1.2%)	213
<b>Unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter</b>	6309 (11.8%)	6667 (11.9%)	6675 (11.7%)	6923 (12.5%)	8141 (14.3%)	6007 (11.9%)	5325 (10.7%)	4977 (10.1%)	6589 (11.6%)	6854 (11.5%)	545
<b>Theft and related offences</b>	14483 (27.0%)	16105 (28.7%)	17398 (30.6%)	16887 (30.4%)	16141 (28.4%)	14064 (28.0%)	12948 (26.0%)	12675 (25.7%)	15458 (27.2%)	16556 (27.9%)	2073
<b>Fraud, deception and related offences</b>	494 (0.9%)	691 (1.2%)	544 (1.0%)	455 (0.8%)	569 (1.0%)	844 (1.7%)	1187 (2.4%)	1264 (2.6%)	1627 (2.9%)	1839 (3.1%)	1345
<b>Illicit drug offences</b>	3454 (6.4%)	3970 (7.1%)	4264 (7.5%)	4419 (8.0%)	5361 (9.4%)	5691 (11.3%)	6526 (13.1%)	7126 (14.5%)	7147 (12.6%)	6829 (11.5%)	3375
<b>Prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives offences</b>	585 (1.1%)	501 (0.9%)	533 (0.9%)	494 (0.9%)	525 (0.9%)	417 (0.8%)	341 (0.7%)	360 (0.7%)	340 (0.6%)	360 (0.6%)	-225
<b>Property damage and environmental pollution</b>	6802 (12.7%)	6584 (11.7%)	6779 (11.9%)	6875 (12.4%)	6817 (12.0%)	4862 (9.7%)	4975 (10.0%)	4572 (9.3%)	4871 (8.6%)	5255 (8.8%)	-1547
<b>Public order offences</b>	6689 (12.5%)	6655 (11.9%)	6517 (11.5%)	6228 (11.2%)	5455 (9.6%)	5392 (10.7%)	5966 (12.0%)	5740 (11.6%)	5703 (10.0%)	5618 (9.5%)	-1071
<b>Traffic and vehicle regulatory offences</b>	4854 (9.0%)	4256 (7.6%)	3621 (6.4%)	3207 (5.8%)	3038 (5.3%)	2596 (5.2%)	2216 (4.4%)	2337 (4.7%)	4527 (8.0%)	4940 (8.3%)	86
<b>Offences against</b>	4916	5105	5235	4999	5389	4898	4923	5085	5269	5509	593

justice procedures, government security and government operations	(9.2%)	(9.1%)	(9.2%)	(9.0%)	(9.5%)	(9.7%)	(9.9%)	(10.3%)	(9.3%)	(9.3%)	
Miscellaneous offences	<3 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	4 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	4 (0.0%)	12 (0.0%)	20 (0.0%)	17 (0.0%)	16
<b>Total offences</b>	<b>53654</b>	<b>56146</b>	<b>56864</b>	<b>55530</b>	<b>56850</b>	<b>50268</b>	<b>49894</b>	<b>49310</b>	<b>56785</b>	<b>59417</b>	<b>5763</b>

Table 2 displays the number of offences in each offence category as a population rate (per 10,000 young persons aged 10-17 years), and the direction and magnitude of the trends in offence types remain largely the same as are shown in Table 1. The one notable difference is for traffic and vehicle regulatory offences which grew in total volume from 2008 to 2017 by 86 offences, but when considered as a function of the size of the youth population, actually decreased slightly from 2008 to 2017. This suggests that at least some of the increase in volume of traffic and vehicle regulatory offences could be a function of growth in the youth population over this period.

**Table 2: Rate of offences per 10,000 young person aged 10 to 17 years, 2008 to 2017**

Offences	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Difference 2008 to 2017
Homicide and related offences	0.39	0.32	0.15	0.08	0.13	0.19	0.06	0.08	0.10	0.10	- 0.29
Acts intended to cause injury	62.38	68.42	64.53	62.23	58.54	53.52	51.44	51.42	53.57	62.55	0.17
Sexual assault and related offences	17.39	19.23	19.07	16.65	23.05	33.31	38.79	35.06	31.04	23.83	6.44
Dangerous or negligent acts	17.58	17.03	17.80	17.58	19.89	16.65	16.50	11.03	10.92	11.37	-6.22
Abduction, harassment or other offences against the person	0.47	0.43	0.32	0.27	0.63	0.71	0.42	0.60	0.35	0.44	-0.03
Robbery, extortion and related offences	10.71	14.20	10.64	9.38	11.12	10.47	7.02	8.65	10.84	14.18	3.47
Unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter	135.62	142.11	141.78	145.90	170.45	125.52	110.94	103.02	134.47	136.67	1.05
Theft and related offences	311.34	343.28	369.53	355.90	337.94	293.89	269.77	262.36	315.47	330.14	18.80
Fraud, deception and related	10.62	14.73	11.55	9.59	11.91	17.64	24.73	26.16	33.20	36.67	26.05

<b>offences</b>											
<b>Illicit drug offences</b>	74.25	84.62	90.57	93.13	112.24	118.92	135.97	147.50	145.86	136.18	61.93
<b>Prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives offences</b>	12.58	10.68	11.32	10.41	10.99	8.71	7.10	7.45	6.94	7.18	-5.40
<b>Property damage and environmental pollution</b>	146.22	140.34	143.98	144.89	142.72	101.60	103.65	94.64	99.41	104.79	-41.43
<b>Public order offences</b>	143.79	141.85	138.42	131.26	114.21	112.67	124.30	118.81	116.39	112.03	-31.77
<b>Traffic and vehicle regulatory offences</b>	104.35	90.72	76.91	67.59	63.61	54.25	46.17	48.37	92.39	98.51	-5.84
<b>Offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations</b>	105.68	108.81	111.19	105.35	112.83	102.35	102.57	105.26	107.53	109.85	4.18
<b>Miscellaneous offences</b>	0.02	-	0.02	0.08	-	0.02	0.08	0.25	0.41	0.34	0.32
<b>Total offences</b>	1,153.40	1,196.76	1,207.78	1,170.30	1,190.25	1,050.42	1,039.52	1,020.68	1,158.89	1,184.83	31.43

### **2.1.1 Summary of trends in recorded offences**

There has been an overall, though not linear, increase in the total number of offences recorded against youth offenders in Queensland (a 10.5% increase) from 2008 to 2017, with a drop in total offences in 2013 subsequently increasing in 2016 and being maintained through to 2017. When considered as a function of population growth for young people, there was an overall increase in the offending rate amongst 10 to 17-year-olds, though changes in offending rates varied across offence types, with some offence types exhibiting increases as a population rate and some exhibiting declines. A key difference between the trends in the volume of offences and population offence rates was evident for traffic and vehicle regulatory offences, which showed a small increase of 1.8% in volume from 2008 to 2017, but when considered as a function of the size of the youth population over this period, constituted a decreased offending rate for traffic offences.

The most common offences in 2017 were theft and related offences (27.9%), unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter (11.8%), and illicit drug offences (11.8%). Illicit drug offences in particular have demonstrated considerable growth over the 10-year period, almost doubling in volume from 2008 to 2017. There were also smaller but notable increases from 2008 to 2017 in sexual and assault and related offences (47.7% increase; 386 additional offences), robbery, extortion and related offences (42.7% increase; 213 additional offences), and fraud, deception and related offences (272.3% increase; 1345 additional offences). Over the 10-year period there were also notable declines in homicide and related offences (72.2% decrease; 13 fewer offences), property damage and environmental pollution (22.7% decrease; 1547 fewer offences), dangerous and negligent acts (30.3% decrease; 248 fewer offences), and prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives (38.5% decline; 225 fewer offences).

When considering changes in the volume of different offence type categories, property-related offences and illicit drug offences displayed the most growth from 2008 to 2017, displaying increases of 8.6% (2416 additional offences) and 97.7% (3375 additional offences) respectively. Property-related offences in particular appear to be responsible for recent increases in the total number of offences and offence rates in 2016 and 2017. There were also smaller increases from 2008 to 2017 in offences against the person (11.3% increase; 573 additional offences) and offences against justice procedures (12.1% increase; 593 additional offences), with a concurrent decline in public order and security offences over the same period (17.8% decrease; 1296 fewer offences).

2.2 Trends in offending incidents

Offending incidents are defined as a count of each offender within each occurrence. This analysis takes into account all of the offences linked to each of offender within an occurrence, but in particular it examines the **most serious offence** linked to each offender in each occurrence. In this section, trends in the age and gender distribution of offenders in offending incidents will be examined, as well the most serious offence in offending incidents.<sup>2</sup> Compared to total offences, trends in offending incidents can indicate more about the volume of criminal events or incidents related to offenders, as the number of offences recorded within occurrences can vary according to policy and procedural factors, local police practices and officer discretion, and thus can vary in ways to do not always reflect the volume of underlying incidents or occurrences.

Figure 5 shows the total number of youth offending incidents from 2008 to 2017. The trends for offending incidents are similar to the trends for the total number of offences, though offending incidents have shown a relatively smaller increase from 2008 to 2017, from 45,218 in 2008 to 49,599 in 2017, representing an increase of 9.6%. The shape of the trend for offending incidents is somewhat similar to the trend for offences, with relatively flat trend in offending incidents from 2008 to 2012, which then drops notably in 2013, and with a subsequent increase in 2016 which has been maintained to 2017.

Figure 6 displays the trends in offending incidents from 2008 to 2017 as a population rate (per 10,000 young person aged 10 to 17 years) and while the trend line looks fairly similar to the total number of offending incidents, the drop in offending incidents from 2012 to 2015 appears to be more markedly a downward trend, suggesting that the number of offending incidents over this period were less than would be expected given population growth. The offending incident rate graph also shows a flattening of the upward trend from 2016 to 2017, suggesting some of the increase between these years may be accounted for by population increases in this age group.

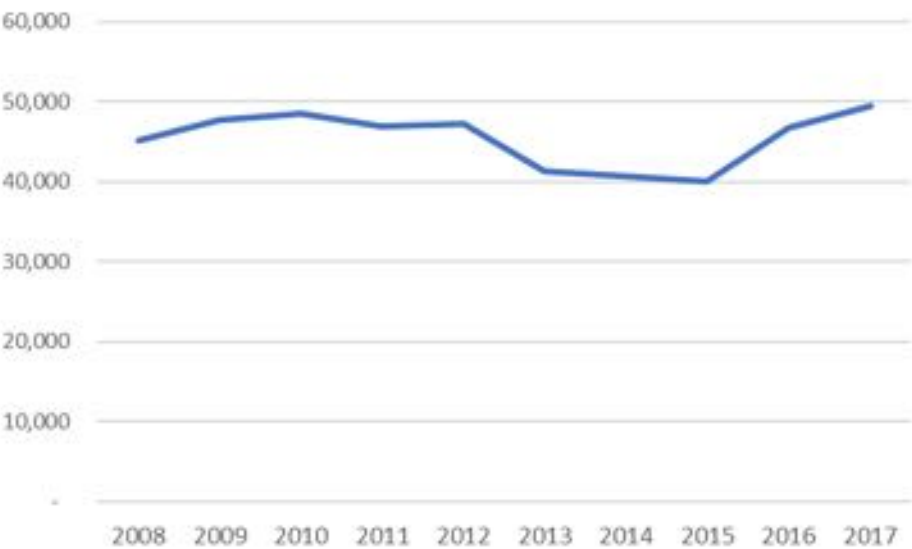
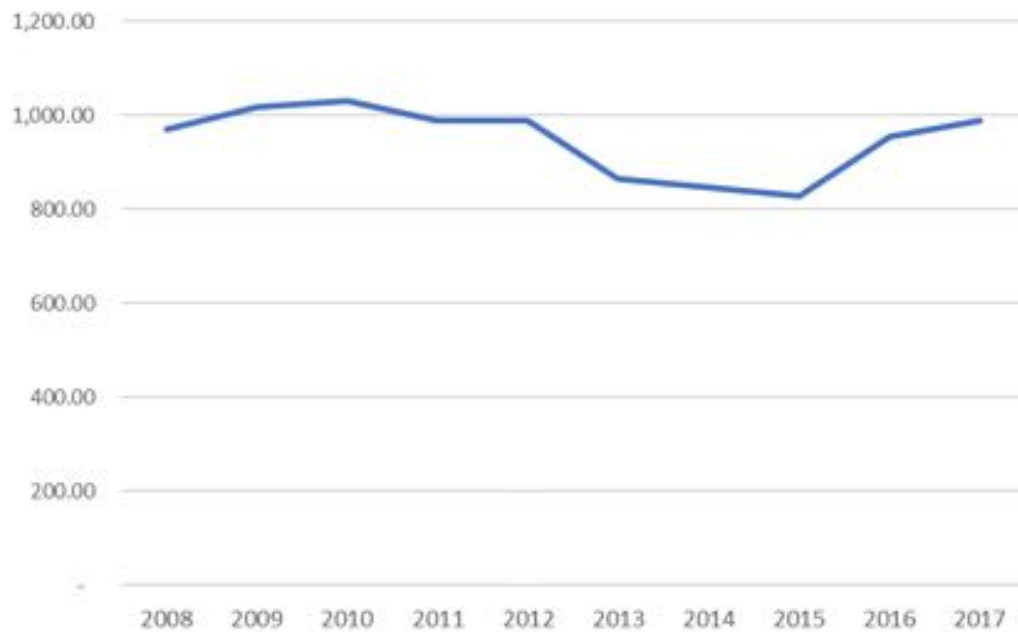


Figure 5: Trends in number of recorded offending incidents involving youth offenders, 2008 to 2017

<sup>2</sup> This is determined by applying the National Offence Index to all offences for an offender within an offender incident, and determining the offence type which is ranked as most serious.

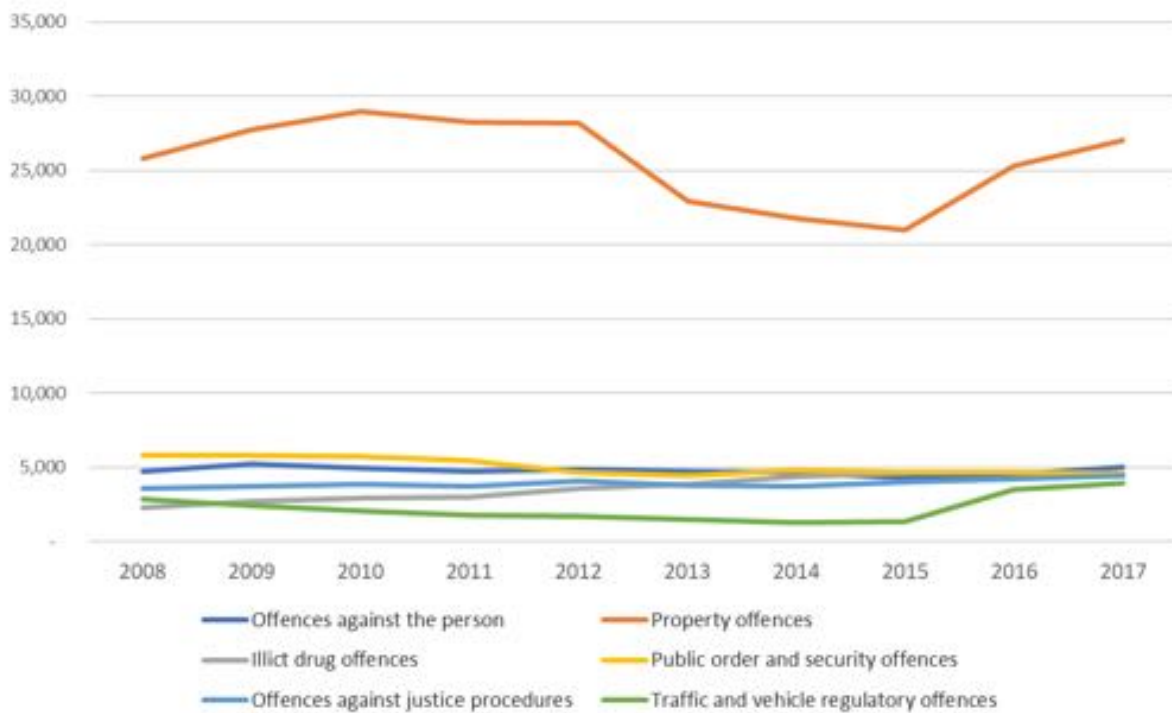




**Figure 6: Trends in offending incidents as population rate (per 10,000 young person 10-17 years), 2008 to 2017**

### **2.2.1 Most serious offence in offending incidents**

Figure 7 displays trends in the most serious offence in a youth offending incident from 2008 to 2017, with offences classified into higher level aggregations of offence types (see section 1.4.2 for definitions of these aggregations). As can be seen, much of the increase in offending incidents that occurred from 2008 to 2017 was driven by incidents in which property offences, illicit drug offences and traffic offences were the most serious offences. In terms of the recent increases in offending incidents from 2015 to 2017, this trend appears to be driven primarily by incidents in which property offences and traffic and vehicle regulatory offences were the most serious offence, with the largest growth within property offending incidents occurring in theft and related offences and fraud, deception and related offences. Offences against the person and offences against justice procedures have also shown some growth from 2008 to 2017, albeit of a much lower magnitude. The one category of offending incident that has declined over this period is public order and security offences, with public order offending incidents in particular showing a notable decline from 2008 to 2017.



**Figure 7: Trends in offences against the person, property, illicit drugs, public order and security offences, offences against justice procedures, and traffic and vehicle regulatory offences, as the most serious offence in youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

A more detailed examination of the number of offending incidents according to the most serious offence type recorded against the young person in the offending incident are displayed in Table 3. The rate of offending incidents per 10,000 young persons aged 10 to 17 years, according to the most serious offence, is displayed in Table 4.

Table 3 shows that, similar to the trend for total offences, theft and related offences was the most common most serious offence in offending incidents, comprising 29.4% of offending incidents in 2017, remaining relatively unchanged from 2008 when it comprised 29.9% of all offending incidents. However, despite not changing markedly in relative frequency, the volume of these offending incidents rose somewhat over the same period, from 13,507 in 2008 to 14,581 in 2017, an increase in 1074 offending incidents.

The second most common most serious offence for offending incidents in 2017 was unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter which comprised 13.5% of most serious offences, and remained relatively unchanged as a proportion of most serious offences in 2008 (13.6%). However, as with theft and related offences, there was an increase in the number of these incidents, increasing from 6,163 in 2008 to 6,677 in 2017, an increase of 8.3%.

Illicit drug offences comprised 9.0% of offending incidents in 2017, representing a notable increase from 2008, when it constituted 5% of the most serious offences in offending incidents, an increase of 91.5% (2,120 offences). Offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations also comprised 9.0% of most serious offences in offending incidents in 2017, increasing somewhat from 8.0% in 2008, representing an increase of 24.4% or 880 additional offending incidents. Offending incidents with property damage and environmental pollution or public order offending incidents were of a notably reduced frequency in 2017 compared to 2008. Property damage and environmental pollution dropped from being the most serious offence in 12.5% of offending incidents in 2008 to 8.1% in 2017 (a decline of 29.3% or 1,664 offending incidents), while public order offences dropped from being the most serious offence in 11.7% of offending incidents in 2008 to 8.6% in 2017 (a decline of 19.9% or 1058 offending incidents).

In addition to those noted above, there were some other less frequent types of offending incidents that demonstrated considerable increases from 2008 to 2017, including: sexual assault and related offending incidents (18.9% increase or 132 additional offending incidents); unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter (8.3% increase or 514 additional offending incidents); fraud, deception and related offences (282.7% increase or 1340 additional offending incidents); and traffic and vehicle regulatory offences (36.1% increase or 1044 additional offending incidents).

There were also some notable reductions in some less frequent types of offending incidents from 2008 to 2017, including: homicide and related offending incidents (72.2% reduction or 13 less offending incidents); dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons offending incidents (32.9% reduction of 251 less offending incidents); prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives offending incidents (38.0% reduction or 202 less offending incidents).

One of the most notable contrasts in the trends for offence types and the trends for the most serious offence in an offending incident is for traffic and vehicle regulatory offences. While in terms of offences there was small growth in traffic and vehicle regulatory offences from 2008 to 2017, 1.8% or 86 offences, this actually represented negative growth in the population rate for traffic and vehicle regulatory offences, indicating that the youth population has grown in excess of the growth in the number of these offences over the 10-year period. However, when examining traffic and vehicle regulatory offences as the most serious offence in an offending incident, this type of offending incident grew by 36.1% or 1044 additional offending incidents. This suggests that while the total number of traffic and vehicle regulatory offences being recorded against young people hasn't increased disproportionately to the population, it has increased in terms of being the most serious or potentially the only offence in an offending incident.



Table 3: Trends in the most serious offences for offending incidents recorded against young people, 2008 to 2017

Most serious offence in offending incident	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Difference 2008 to 2017
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
Homicide and related offences	18 (0.0%)	14 (0.0%)	7 (0.0%)	3 (0.0%)	6 (0.0%)	9 (0.0%)	3 (0.0%)	4 (0.0%)	5 (0.0%)	5 (0.0%)	-13
Acts intended to cause injury	2,803 (6.2%)	3,058 (6.4%)	2,932 (6.0%)	2,846 (6.1%)	2,685 (5.7%)	2,439 (5.9%)	2,377 (5.8%)	2,363 (5.9%)	2,525 (5.4%)	3,009 (6.1%)	206
Sexual assault and related offences	700 (1.5%)	764 (1.6%)	787 (1.6%)	678 (1.4%)	863 (1.8%)	1,090 (3.0%)	1,237 (3.0%)	1,071 (2.7%)	993 (2.1%)	832 (1.7%)	132
Dangerous or negligent acts	763 (1.7%)	746 (1.6%)	785 (1.6%)	770 (1.6%)	864 (1.8%)	730 (1.8%)	724 (1.8%)	483 (1.2%)	480 (1.0%)	512 (1.0%)	-251
Abduction, harassment or other offences against the person	4 (0.0%)	10 (0.0%)	5 (0.0%)	8 (0.0%)	12 (0.0%)	14 (0.0%)	5 (0.0%)	10 (0.0%)	2 (0.0%)	8 (0.0%)	4
Robbery, extortion and related offences	462 (1.0%)	624 (1.3%)	458 (0.9%)	404 (0.9%)	481 (1.0%)	459 (1.1%)	309 (0.8%)	359 (0.9%)	496 (1.1%)	663 (1.3%)	201
Unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter	6,163 (13.6%)	6,545 (13.7%)	6,537 (13.4%)	6,759 (14.4%)	7,957 (16.9%)	5,886 (14.2%)	5,179 (12.7%)	4,826 (12.0%)	6,426 (13.7%)	6,677 (13.5%)	514
Theft and related offences	13,507 (29.9%)	15,046 (31.5%)	16,238 (33.4%)	15,436 (32.9%)	14,172 (30.0%)	12,393 (29.9%)	11,512 (28.3%)	11,407 (28.5%)	13,568 (29.0%)	14,581 (29.4%)	1,074
Fraud, deception and related offences	474 (1.0%)	636 (1.3%)	514 (1.1%)	443 (0.9%)	566 (1.2%)	829 (2.0%)	1,173 (2.9%)	1,241 (3.1%)	1,604 (3.4%)	1,814 (3.7%)	1,340
Illicit drug offences	2,316 (5.1%)	2,733 (5.7%)	2,914 (6.0%)	2,980 (6.4%)	3,587 (7.6%)	3,913 (9.5%)	4,388 (10.8%)	4,679 (11.7%)	4,645 (9.9%)	4,436 (9.0%)	2,120
Prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives offences	531 (1.2%)	473 (1.0%)	497 (1.0%)	456 (1.0%)	478 (1.0%)	368 (0.9%)	305 (0.8%)	326 (0.8%)	311 (0.7%)	329 (0.7%)	-202
Property damage and environmental pollution	5,670 (12.5%)	5,547 (11.6%)	5,712 (11.8%)	5,605 (11.9%)	5,518 (11.7%)	3,846 (9.3%)	3,915 (9.6%)	3,528 (8.8%)	3,690 (7.9%)	4,006 (8.1%)	-1,664
Public order offences	5,311 (11.7%)	5,366 (11.2%)	5,244 (10.8%)	4,998 (10.7%)	4,193 (8.9%)	4,109 (9.9%)	4,495 (11.1%)	4,359 (10.9%)	4,324 (9.2%)	4,253 (8.6%)	-1,058
Traffic and vehicle regulatory offences	2,893 (6.4%)	2,467 (5.2%)	2,073 (4.3%)	1,824 (3.9%)	1,700 (3.6%)	1,507 (3.6%)	1,257 (3.1%)	1,385 (3.5%)	3,520 (7.5%)	3,937 (7.9%)	1,044
Offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations	3,602 (8.0%)	3,735 (7.8%)	3,906 (8.0%)	3,708 (7.9%)	4,127 (8.7%)	3,809 (9.2%)	3,756 (9.2%)	4,027 (10.0%)	4,231 (9.0%)	4,482 (9.0%)	880

<b>Miscellaneous offences</b>	<3 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	4 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	3 (0.0%)	11 (0.0%)	18 (0.0%)	15 (0.0%)	14
<b>Total offending incidents</b>	45,218	47,764	48,610	46,922	47,209	41,402	40,639	40,079	46,838	49,559	4,341

Table 4 displays trends in offending incidents when examined as a population rate (per 10,000 10- to 17-year-old persons), and the trends are largely in similar directions and magnitude. One of the key differences is for trends in prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives offences, which when considered as a function of the size of the youth population have actually decreased in frequency from 2008 to 2017. It is also worth noting that while property offending incidents have increased from 2008 to 2017, the population rate of the increase for theft and related offences and unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter offending incidents are not substantial, though there is a notable increase in these types of offending incidents in 2016 and 2017 after a decline between 2012 and 2015. In contrast, the increase in population rate from 2008 to 2017 for fraud, deception and related offending incidents is quite large, while the population rate for property damage and environmental pollution has actually declined notably over this period.

**Table 4: Rate of offending incidents per 10,000 young persons aged 10 to 17 years, 2008 to 2017**

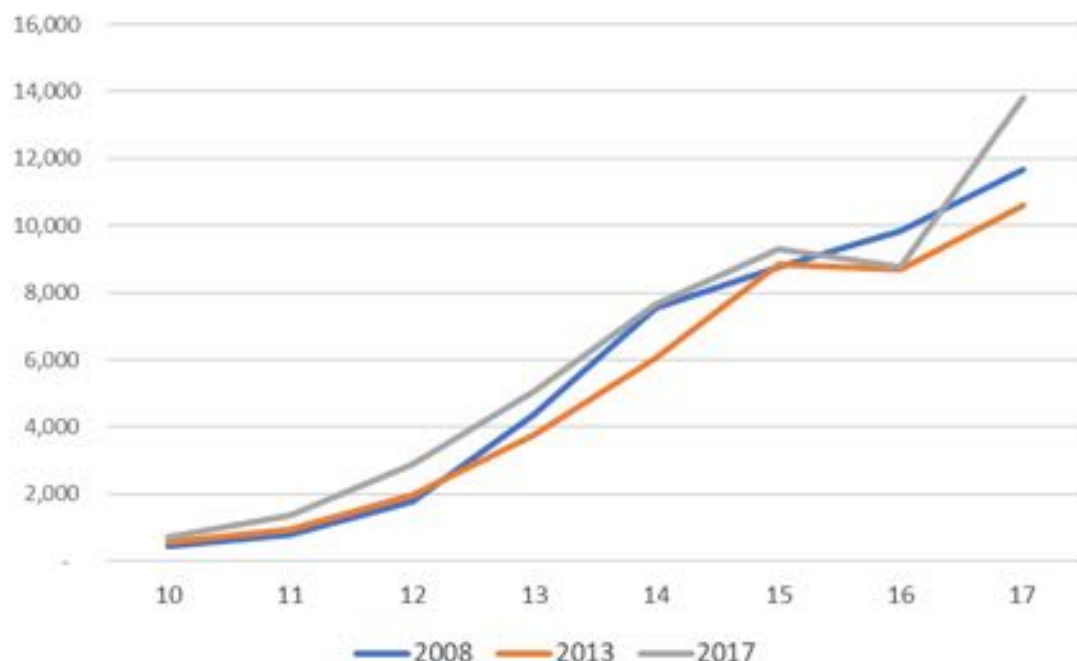
<b>Most serious offence in offending incident</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>Difference 2008 to 2017</b>
<b>Homicide and related offences</b>	0.39	0.30	0.15	0.06	0.13	0.19	0.06	0.08	0.10	0.10	- 0.29
<b>Acts intended to cause injury</b>	60.26	65.18	62.28	59.98	56.21	50.97	49.52	48.91	51.53	60.00	-0.25
<b>Sexual assault and related offences</b>	15.05	16.28	16.72	14.29	18.07	22.78	25.77	22.17	20.27	16.59	1.54
<b>Dangerous or negligent acts</b>	16.40	15.90	16.67	16.23	18.09	15.25	15.08	10.00	9.80	10.21	-6.19
<b>Abduction, harassment or other offences against the person</b>	0.09	0.21	0.11	0.17	0.25	0.29	0.10	0.21	0.04	0.16	0.07
<b>Robbery, extortion and related offences</b>	9.93	13.30	9.73	8.51	10.07	9.59	6.44	7.43	10.12	13.22	3.29
<b>Unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter</b>	132.49	139.51	138.84	142.45	166.59	123.00	107.90	99.89	131.14	133.15	0.66
<b>Theft and related offences</b>	290.36	320.71	344.89	325.32	296.71	258.97	239.85	236.12	276.90	290.76	0.40
<b>Fraud, deception and related offences</b>	10.19	13.56	10.92	9.34	11.85	17.32	24.44	25.69	32.73	36.17	25.98
<b>Illicit drug offences</b>	49.79	58.25	61.89	62.80	75.10	81.77	91.42	96.85	94.80	88.46	38.67

<b>Prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives offences</b>	11.41	10.08	10.56	9.61	10.01	7.69	6.35	6.75	6.35	6.56	-4.85
<b>Property damage and environmental pollution</b>	121.89	118.24	121.32	118.13	115.53	80.37	81.57	73.03	75.31	79.88	-42.00
<b>Public order offences</b>	114.17	114.38	111.38	105.33	87.79	85.86	93.65	90.23	88.25	84.81	-29.36
<b>Traffic and vehicle regulatory offences</b>	62.19	52.58	44.03	38.44	35.59	31.49	26.19	28.67	71.84	78.51	16.32
<b>Offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations</b>	77.43	79.61	82.96	78.15	86.41	79.59	78.25	83.36	86.35	89.37	11.94
<b>Miscellaneous offences</b>	0.02	-	0.02	0.08	-	0.02	0.06	0.23	0.37	0.30	0.28
<b>Total</b>	972.05	1,018.10	1,032.47	988.89	988.40	865.15	846.70	829.61	955.89	988.25	16.20



### 2.2.2 Age of offenders in offending incidents

Figure 8 displays the age distribution of offenders in offending incidents in three years over the 10-year period being examined: 2008, 2013 and 2017. As would be expected according to research on the age-crime curve, offending incidents show a fairly linear relationship with the adolescent age groups, with each increase in age associated with an increase in offending incidents. The exception to this is for 16-year-olds who displayed a fewer number of offending incidents compared to 15-year-olds in 2017. This graph also reflects the finding that relative growth from 2008 to 2017 has been greatest in the younger age groups (10- to 12-year-olds), with modest growth in offending incidents for the late adolescent groups (14- to 15-year-olds). The pattern for the two oldest age groups is highly divergent, with 16-year-olds displaying a decline in offending incidents over this period, while 17-year-olds have shown the most notable growth in offending incidents since 2008.



**Figure 8: Number of offending incidents according to offender age, 2008, 2013 and 2017**

A more detailed display of the age distribution of offenders in offending incidents from 2008 to 2017 can be seen in Table 5, which shows the number and percent of young people recorded in offending incidents at each age and each year. The 10-, 11- and 12-year-old age groups showed the greatest relative increase in the population rate for offending from 2008 to 2017, an increase of 30%, 52% and 48% respectively. There has also been a notable reduction in offending incidents for 16-year-olds over this period, with a 10.8% reduction in offending incidents in total, and a reduction of 16% in the population rate of offending in this group. Similarly, 14-year-olds have shown little growth in the total number of offending incidents from 2008 to 2017, an increase of 1.9%, and when considered as population rate have in fact shown a small reduction in the population rate of offending (-1%).

There was modest growth in offending incidents in the 13-, 15- and 17-year-old age categories of respectively 15.6%, 6.1% and 18.2%. However, the modest growth in the 17-year-old category from 2008 to 2017 represents the largest volume of growth in offending incidents (2,126 incidents), comprising approximately 49% of the growth in offending incidents.

**Table 5: Trends in the age of offenders in youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017\***

Age	2008 N (%)	2009 N (%)	2010 N (%)	2011 N (%)	2012 N (%)	2013 N (%)	2014 N (%)	2015 N (%)	2016 N (%)	2017 N (%)	Difference 2008 to 2017
10	456 (1.0%)	523 (1.1%)	594 (1.2%)	664 (1.4%)	664 (1.4%)	551 (1.3%)	684 (1.7%)	582 (1.5%)	735 (1.6%)	699 (1.4%)	243
11	786 (1.7%)	981 (2.1%)	1,144 (2.4%)	1,048 (2.2%)	1,046 (2.2%)	947 (2.3%)	895 (2.2%)	907 (2.3%)	1,225 (2.6%)	1,364 (2.8%)	578
12	1,782 (3.9%)	1,845 (3.9%)	2,042 (4.2%)	2,196 (4.7%)	2,038 (4.3%)	1,952 (4.7%)	2,237 (5.5%)	1,850 (4.6%)	2,268 (4.8%)	2,869 (5.8%)	1,087
13	4,377 (9.7%)	4,566 (9.6%)	4,544 (9.3%)	4,289 (9.1%)	4,912 (10.4%)	3,755 (9.1%)	4,148 (10.2%)	4,174 (10.4%)	4,815 (10.3%)	5,059 (10.2%)	682
14	7,533 (16.7%)	7,602 (15.9%)	8,006 (16.5%)	7,104 (15.1%)	7,616 (16.1%)	6,059 (14.6%)	6,357 (15.6%)	6,552 (16.3%)	7,607 (16.2%)	7,677 (15.5%)	144
15	8,778 (19.4%)	9,592 (20.1%)	9,806 (20.2%)	9,265 (19.7%)	9,023 (19.1%)	8,849 (21.4%)	7,654 (18.8%)	7,663 (19.1%)	8,754 (18.7%)	9,317 (18.8%)	539
16	9,819 (21.7%)	10,100 (21.1%)	9,936 (20.4%)	10,650 (22.7%)	9,602 (20.3%)	8,691 (21.0%)	8,355 (20.6%)	8,020 (20.0%)	8,707 (18.6%)	8,761 (17.7%)	-1,058
17	11,687 (25.8%)	12,555 (26.3%)	12,538 (25.8%)	11,706 (24.9%)	12,308 (26.1%)	10,598 (25.6%)	10,309 (25.4%)	10,331 (25.8%)	12,727 (27.2%)	13,813 (27.9%)	2,126
<b>Total</b>	<b>45,218</b>	<b>47,764</b>	<b>48,610</b>	<b>46,922</b>	<b>47,209</b>	<b>41,402</b>	<b>40,639</b>	<b>40,079</b>	<b>46,838</b>	<b>49,559</b>	<b>4,341</b>

\*Note: Age represents the age the offender was at the time of the occurrence. Only young people aged between 10 and 17 years were included in this analysis.

Figure 9 displays population rates in for youth offending incidents (per 10,000 young persons) for each age group, in 2008, 2013 and 2017, while Table 6 displays a more detailed examination of trends in the population rate of offending per 10,000 persons at each age from 2008 to 2017. The relationship between age and offending incidents from 2008 to 2017 is very similar when considering population rates of offending and the total volume of offending incidents that were shown in Figure 8. The largest relative growth from 2008 to 2017 has occurred in the younger age groups (10 to 12-year-olds) with very little growth in 13-, 14- and 15-year-olds, alongside a decline in the rate of offending incidents for 16-year-olds and a notable increase for 17-year-olds.

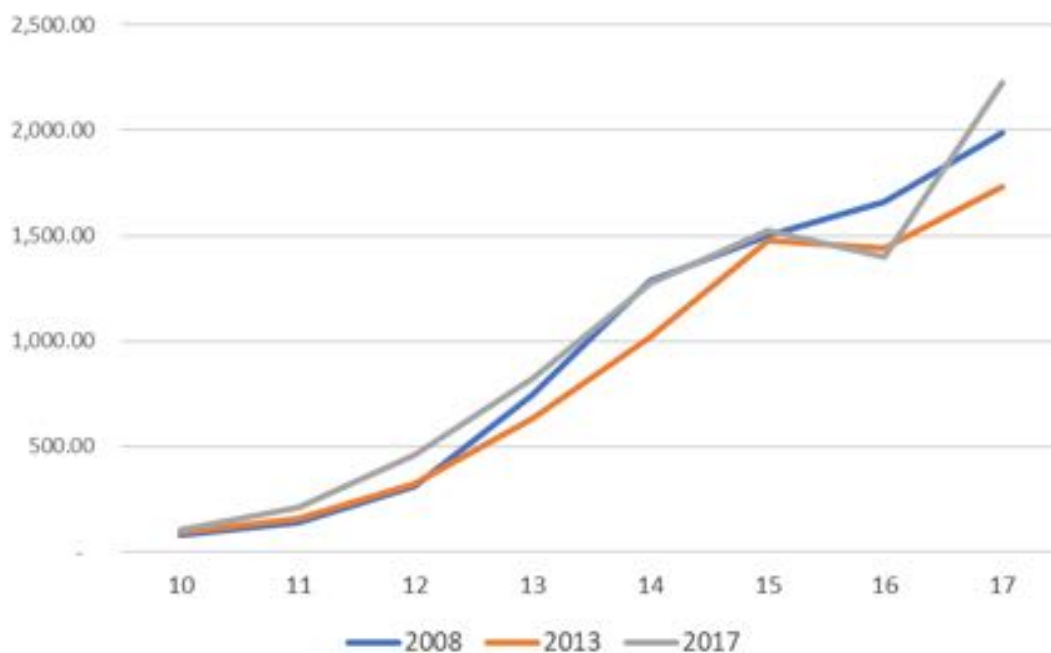
**Figure 9: Population rates for offending in each age group, 2008, 2013 and 2017**

Table 6 displays the population rate of offending in each of the age groups from 10-17 years of age, from 2008 to 2017. When considered as a population rate, trends in offending incidents largely mirror trends for the total volume of offending incidents, with the most substantial increases in the population rate for offending being evident in 10-, 11-, 12- and 17-year-olds with 30.3%, 52.2%, 48.5%, and 12.2% growth, respectively. At the same time, there has been a decrease in the population rate of offending incidents for 14- and 16-year-olds from 2008 to 2017 of 1.0% and 15.8% respectively.

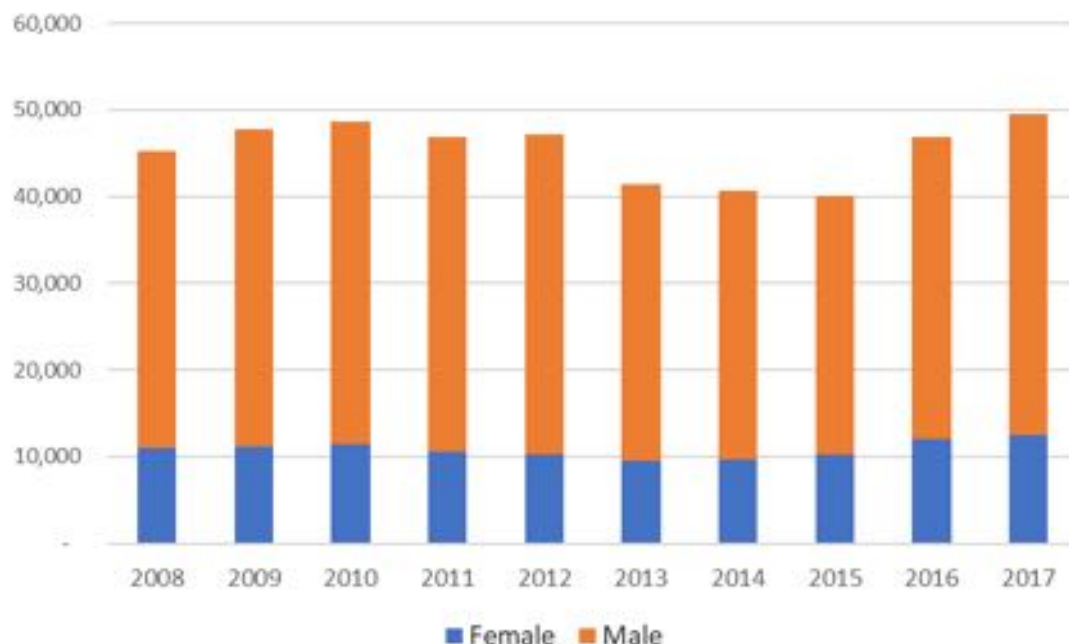
**Table 6: Rate of offending (per 10,000 10- to 17-year-old persons) in each age group, 2008 to 2017\***

Age	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Difference 2008 to 2017
<b>10</b>	80.52	91.78	103.06	112.59	113.15	94.26	114.07	94.81	114.44	104.91	24.40
<b>11</b>	137.96	170.08	198.38	179.81	175.16	159.74	152.01	150.47	198.58	210.02	72.06
<b>12</b>	309.74	318.40	350.13	376.49	345.28	323.28	375.35	312.58	373.21	459.81	150.08
<b>13</b>	743.59	781.26	776.31	726.97	833.94	630.52	682.07	696.62	807.83	823.04	79.45
<b>14</b>	1,286.61	1,274.26	1,356.70	1,200.49	1,279.83	1,020.89	1,057.51	1,069.77	1,261.99	1,273.79	-12.83
<b>15</b>	1,498.49	1,618.27	1,627.17	1,553.25	1,510.93	1,474.91	1,281.82	1,264.79	1,416.14	1,525.88	27.39
<b>16</b>	1,658.67	1,705.02	1,664.35	1,749.17	1,589.21	1,440.00	1,384.97	1,335.02	1,421.83	1,397.13	-261.54
<b>17</b>	1,985.73	2,094.84	2,100.73	1,944.58	1,996.11	1,732.38	1,702.05	1,709.47	2,107.89	2,227.47	241.74

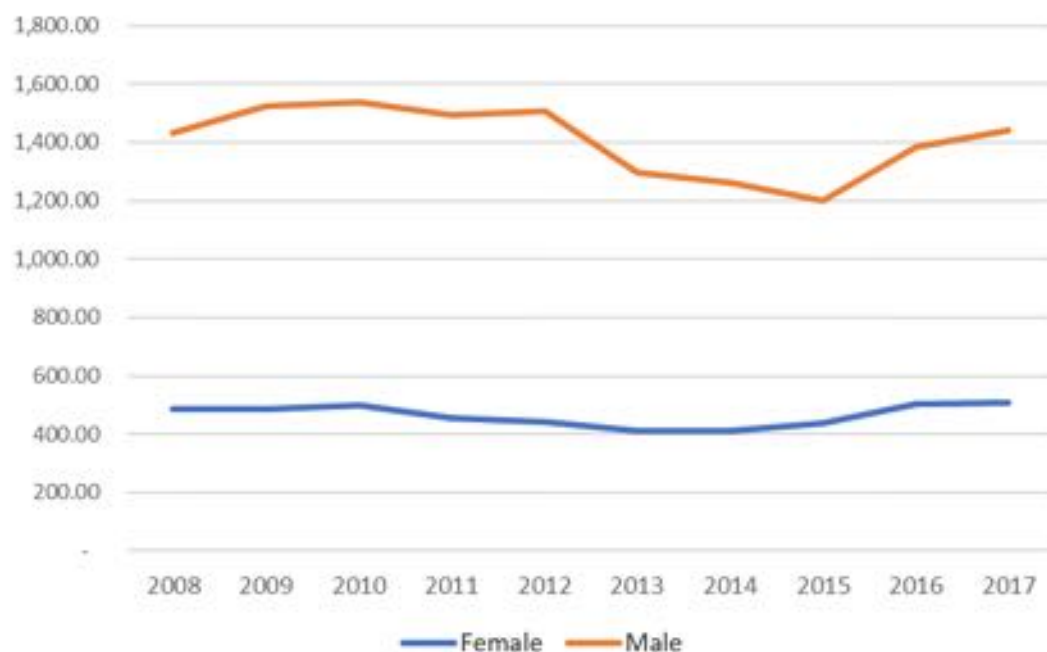
\*Note: The number of estimated residents in each age group in the relevant years (2008 to 2017) in Queensland were used to estimate the rate of offending in each group per 10,000 persons drawn from on ABS Census data. Age represents the age the offender was at the time of the occurrence.

### 2.2.3 Gender of offenders in offending incidents

The changes in the gender distribution of young people in youth offending incidents are displayed in Figure 10, and the population rate for male and female offending in the 10 to 17 year-old age group can be seen in Figure 11. These figures suggest that most of the changes in the volume of offending incidents are driven primarily by changes in the volume of offending by young males, rather than young females, and with young males continuing to comprise the majority of offenders (74.9%) in youth offending incidents in 2017. However, there has been a recent upward trend in female offending incidents from 2015 to 2016, with the population rate of offending increasing from 437.48 per 10,000 in 2015 to a high point of 509.34 per 10,000 in 2017. The trends in the population rate for male offending incidents match very closely the overall trend in offending incidents over this period, with a relatively flat rate in offending incident rates from 2008 to 2012, a subsequent decline from 2012 to 2015, and more recently an increase in 2016 which has been sustained through to 2017.



**Figure 10: Trends in the gender distribution of offenders in youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**



**Figure 11: Population rate offending for males and females aged 10 to 17 years (per 10,000 persons), 2008 to 2017**

Table 7 displays the the number and proportion of male and female youth offenders in offending incidents, along with the population rate of offending (per 10,000 persons) amongst 10- to 17-year-olds. The gender distribution of young people in offending incidents has not changed dramatically, as can be seen in Table 7 below. As noted, approximately three-quarters (74.9%) of youth offending incidents in 2017 involved male offenders, and this has remained relatively unchanged 2008. However, there has been greater relative growth in offending incidents involving young females compared to young males (12.2% compared to 8.7%, respectively). Due to higher base rates of offending amongst males, this translates into a greater increase in the volume of offending incidents for young males compared to young females (2,976 compared to 1,350, respectively).

**Table 7: Gender of youth offenders in offending incidents, 2008 to 2017\***

<b>Gender</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>Difference 2008 to 2017</b>
	<b>N (%)</b>	<b>N (%)</b>	<b>N (%)</b>	<b>N (%)</b>	<b>N (%)</b>	<b>N (%)</b>	<b>N (%)</b>	<b>N (%)</b>	<b>N (%)</b>	<b>N (%)</b>	
<b>Female</b>	11,072 (24.5%)	11,114 (23.3%)	11,467 (23.6%)	10,543 (22.5%)	10,345 (21.9%)	9,591 (23.2%)	9,680 (23.8%)	10,297 (25.7%)	11,993 (25.6%)	12,422 (25.1%)	1,350
<b>Male</b>	34,142 (75.5%)	36,644 (76.7%)	37,136 (76.4%)	36,374 (77.5%)	36,832 (78.1%)	31,800 (76.8%)	30,954 (76.2%)	29,775 (74.3%)	34,840 (74.4%)	37,118 (74.9%)	2,976
<b>Population rate offending for males and females per 10,000 persons 10 to 17 years</b>											
	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>Difference 2008 to 2017</b>
<b>Female</b>	487.81	485.43	499.70	455.81	443.76	410.71	413.27	437.48	502.74	509.34	21.53
<b>Male</b>	1,433.27	1,525.59	1,538.75	1,495.70	1,506.36	1,297.79	1,259.61	1,201.87	1,385.60	1,440.92	7.65

\*Note: 1. Due to low numbers, offenders who were listed as intersex, unknown or missing are not displayed. 2. Population estimates for males and females aged 10 to 17 years in each year were drawn from the ABS Estimated Resident Population, 2018.

## 2.2.4 Offending incident type according to offender age

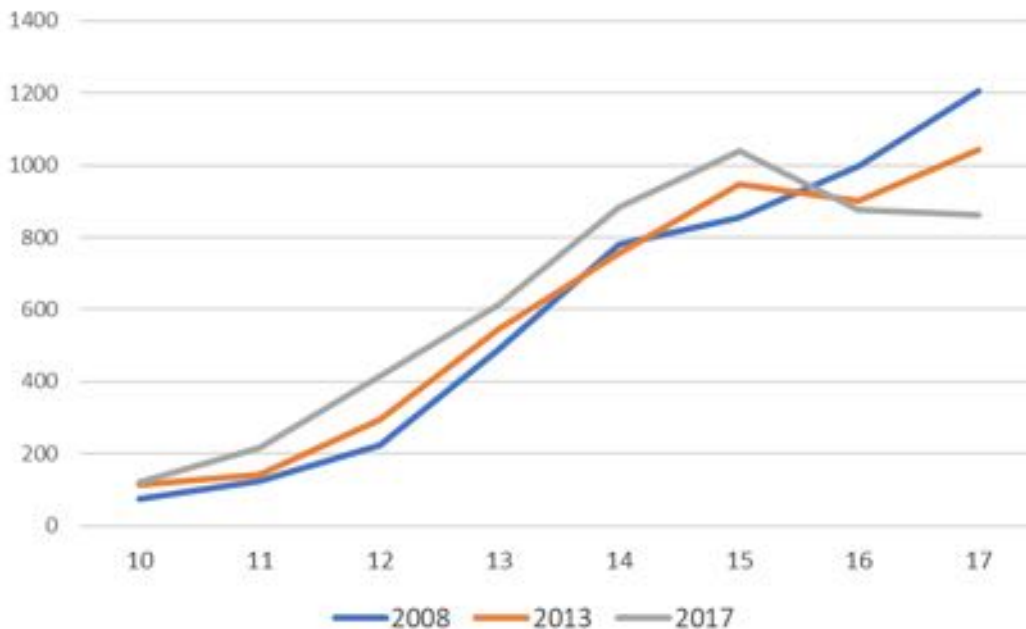
This section examines the age of youth offenders in offending incidents with different types of most serious offences, namely: offences against the person; property offences; illicit drug offences; public order and security offences; offences against justice procedures; and traffic and vehicle regulatory offences. See section 1.4.2 for the definition of these offence categories.

Table 8 displays the age of offenders in offending incidents in which the most serious offence was an offence against the person, from 2008 to 2017. The highest proportion of offending incidents involving an offence against the person in 2017 was for 15-year-olds (20.7%), followed by 14-, 16- and 17-year-olds (17.6%, 17.4% and 17.2% respectively). The greatest relative growth in offence against the person offending incidents was for 12-year-olds who displayed an 85.7% increase in these incidents from 2008 to 2017 (192 additional offending incidents).

**Table 8: Trends in the age of offender in offence against the person offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

Age	2008 N (%)	2009 N (%)	2010 N (%)	2011 N (%)	2012 N (%)	2013 N (%)	2014 N (%)	2015 N (%)	2016 N (%)	2017 N (%)	Difference 2008 to 2017
<b>10</b>	75 (1.6%)	82 (1.6%)	84 (1.7%)	100 (2.1%)	108 (2.2%)	113 (2.4%)	93 (2.0%)	89 (2.1%)	86 (1.9%)	122 (2.4%)	47
<b>11</b>	125 (2.6%)	153 (2.9%)	153 (3.1%)	151 (3.2%)	137 (2.8%)	141 (3.0%)	147 (3.2%)	152 (3.5%)	203 (4.5%)	215 (4.3%)	90
<b>12</b>	224 (4.7%)	296 (5.7%)	265 (5.3%)	271 (5.8%)	313 (6.4%)	296 (6.2%)	313 (6.7%)	295 (6.9%)	308 (6.8%)	416 (8.3%)	192
<b>13</b>	489 (10.3%)	554 (10.6%)	518 (10.4%)	418 (8.9%)	545 (11.1%)	546 (11.5%)	635 (13.6%)	552 (12.9%)	575 (12.8%)	613 (12.2%)	124
<b>14</b>	781 (16.4%)	868 (16.6%)	798 (16.0%)	681 (14.5%)	749 (15.3%)	754 (15.9%)	827 (17.8%)	761 (17.7%)	872 (19.4%)	883 (17.6%)	102
<b>15</b>	854 (18.0%)	1,003 (19.2%)	937 (18.8%)	884 (18.8%)	888 (18.1%)	947 (20.0%)	834 (17.9%)	840 (19.6%)	875 (19.4%)	1,041 (20.7%)	187
<b>16</b>	997 (21.0%)	1,020 (19.6%)	990 (19.9%)	1,022 (21.7%)	940 (19.1%)	900 (19.0%)	826 (17.7%)	793 (18.5%)	784 (17.4%)	876 (17.4%)	-121
<b>17</b>	1,205 (25.4%)	1,240 (23.8%)	1,229 (24.7%)	1,182 (25.1%)	1,231 (25.1%)	1,044 (22.0%)	980 (21.1%)	808 (18.8%)	798 (17.7%)	863 (17.2%)	-342

Figure 12 displays the volume of offending incidents in which the most serious offence was an offence against the person for each age group in 2008, 2013 and 2017. The volume of offending incidents with an offence against the person as the most serious offence increased notably in 2017 across most age groups when compared to both 2008 and 2013, with the exception of 16- and 17-year-olds age groups, where the number of offence against the person offending incidents constituted a reduction from 2013.



**Figure 12: Number of 'offence against the person' offending incidents across each age, 2008, 2013 and 2017**

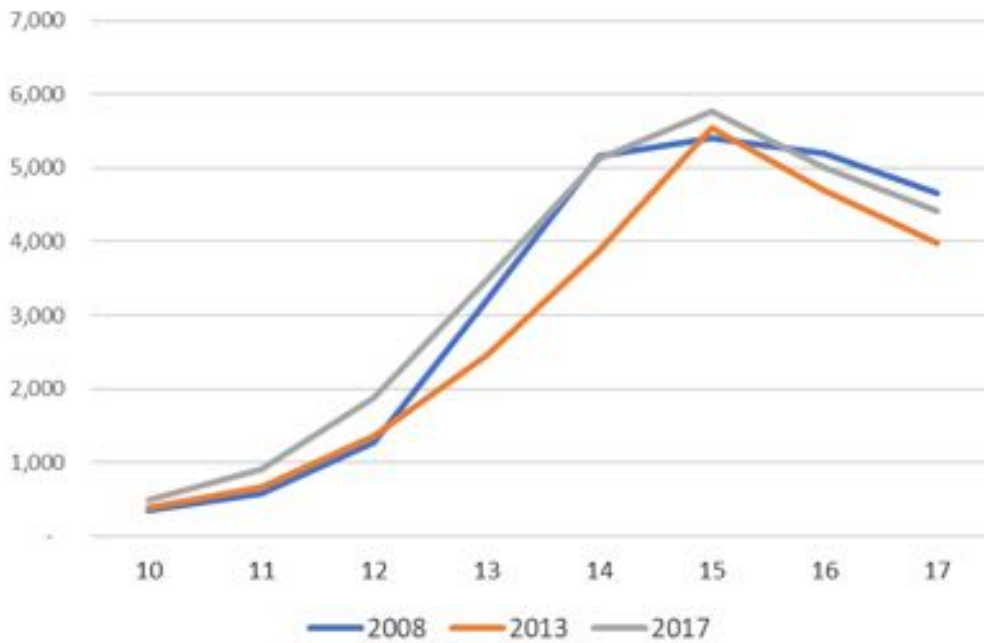
Table 9 displays the number and proportion of offending incidents in which the most serious offence was classified as a property offence across the age groups, from 2008 to 2017. The highest number of property offending incidents in 2017 occurred in the 14-, 15-, and 16-year-old age groups, with 18.9%, 21.3% and 18.5% of offending incidents occurring in these age groups. In terms of growth in property offending incidents from 2008 to 2017, the greatest relative growth was evident in the 10-, 11- and 12-year-old age groups, with growth of 42.9%, 60.0% and 46.7% offending incidents respectively. There was also negative growth in property offending incidents for 14-, 16- and 17-year-olds respectively of -5.5%, -3.6%, and -5.3%.

**Table 9: Trends in the age of offender in property offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

Age	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Difference 2008 to 2017
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
10	340 (1.3%)	383 (1.4%)	446 (1.5%)	479 (1.7%)	492 (1.7%)	380 (1.7%)	503 (2.3%)	405 (1.9%)	539 (2.1%)	486 (1.8%)	146
11	570 (2.2%)	704 (2.5%)	860 (3.0%)	788 (2.8%)	802 (2.8%)	670 (2.9%)	622 (2.9%)	615 (2.9%)	821 (3.2%)	912 (3.4%)	342
12	1,275 (4.9%)	1,233 (4.4%)	1,484 (5.1%)	1,579 (5.6%)	1,414 (5.0%)	1,349 (5.9%)	1,534 (7.0%)	1,181 (5.6%)	1,593 (6.3%)	1,870 (6.9%)	595
13	3,198 (12.4%)	3,189 (11.5%)	3,255 (11.2%)	3,105 (11.0%)	3,549 (12.6%)	2,457 (10.7%)	2,699 (12.4%)	2,606 (12.4%)	3,243 (12.8%)	3,470 (12.8%)	272
14	5,157 (20.0%)	5,154 (18.6%)	5,501 (19.0%)	4,916 (17.4%)	5,235 (18.6%)	3,872 (16.9%)	3,940 (18.1%)	4,066 (19.4%)	4,953 (19.6%)	5,129 (18.9%)	-28
15	5,402 (20.9%)	6,148 (22.1%)	6,483 (22.4%)	6,075 (21.5%)	5,909 (20.9%)	5,545 (24.2%)	4,515 (20.7%)	4,365 (20.8%)	5,421 (21.4%)	5,773 (21.3%)	371
16	5,204 (20.2%)	5,710 (20.6%)	5,628 (19.4%)	6,328 (22.4%)	5,582 (19.8%)	4,702 (20.5%)	4,434 (20.4%)	4,119 (19.6%)	4,669 (18.5%)	5,016 (18.5%)	-188
17	4,668 (18.1%)	5,253 (18.9%)	5,344 (18.4%)	4,973 (17.6%)	5,230 (18.5%)	3,979 (17.3%)	3,532 (16.2%)	3,645 (17.4%)	4,049 (16.0%)	4,422 (16.3%)	-246

Figure 13 shows the distribution of property offending incidents across each of the age groups in 2008, 2013 and 2017. This graph is notable for displaying a sharp decline in property offending incidents from age 15 to age 17, following a linear increase in the earlier years, a trend which appears to be relatively consistent across the years. This graph also displays notable increases in 2017 in the frequency of property offending incidents in the younger age groups (10-to 12-year-olds) compared to 2008. From 2008 to 2013, there was actually a notable reduction in property offending incidents for 13- and 14-year-olds and for 16- and 17-year-olds. However, these reductions appear to have

been reversed by 2017, with increases in the number of property offending incidents across all the age groups between 2013 and 2017, and particularly notable increases among 13- to 15-year-olds in this period.



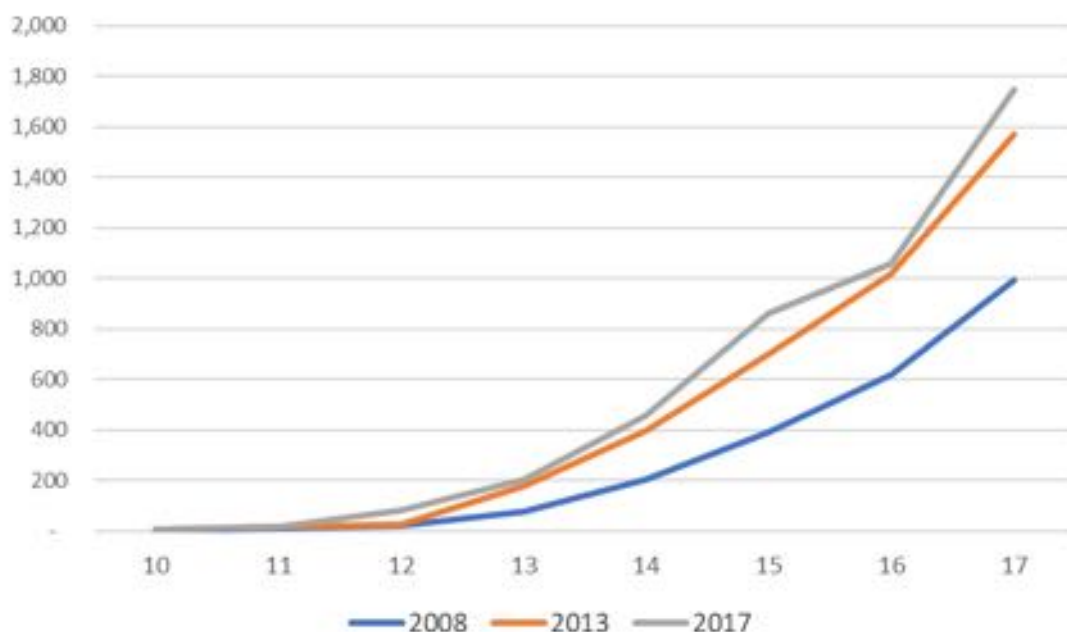
**Figure 13: Number of property offending incidents at each age in 2008, 2013 and 2017**

Table 10 displays trends in the age of offenders in offending incidents in which illicit drug offences are the most serious offence. Illicit drug offending incidents tend to be more concentrated in the older age groups, with 82.7% of illicit drug offending incidents being recorded against 15 to 17-year-old offenders in 2017. Though the younger age groups in general are less commonly recorded as offenders in illicit drug incidents, they have shown significant relative growth as recorded offenders in these incidents from 2008 to 2017, with 10 to 15-year-olds displaying more than double the illicit drug offences in 2017 compared to 2008. However, most of the growth (78.6%) in illicit drug offending incidents from 2008 to 2017 is accounted for by increased incidents amongst 15- to 17-year-olds.

**Table 10: Trends in the age of offenders in illicit drug offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

Age	2008 N (%)	2009 N (%)	2010 N (%)	2011 N (%)	2012 N (%)	2013 N (%)	2014 N (%)	2015 N (%)	2016 N (%)	2017 N (%)	Difference 2008 to 2017
10	<3 (0.0%)	<3 (0.1%)	4 (0.1%)	4 (0.1%)	8 (0.2%)	6 (0.2%)	<3 (0.0%)	3 (0.1%)	6 (0.1%)	7 (0.2%)	<7
11	8 (0.3%)	21 (0.8%)	11 (0.4%)	5 (0.2%)	9 (0.3%)	14 (0.4%)	17 (0.4%)	11 (0.2%)	25 (0.5%)	17 (0.4%)	9
12	22 (0.9%)	21 (0.8%)	35 (1.2%)	32 (1.1%)	44 (1.2%)	28 (0.7%)	53 (1.2%)	51 (1.1%)	53 (1.1%)	83 (1.9%)	61
13	78 (3.4%)	115 (4.2%)	137 (4.7%)	124 (4.2%)	178 (5.0%)	180 (4.6%)	174 (4.0%)	211 (4.5%)	203 (4.4%)	202 (4.6%)	124
14	204 (8.8%)	273 (10.0%)	320 (11.0%)	310 (10.4%)	397 (11.1%)	394 (10.1%)	471 (10.7%)	483 (10.3%)	546 (11.8%)	458 (10.3%)	254
15	389 (16.8%)	478 (17.5%)	508 (17.4%)	530 (17.8%)	617 (17.2%)	700 (17.9%)	766 (17.5%)	818 (17.5%)	818 (17.6%)	861 (19.4%)	472
16	619 (26.7%)	676 (24.7%)	762 (26.1%)	793 (26.6%)	913 (25.5%)	1,020 (26.1%)	1,081 (24.6%)	1,174 (25.1%)	1,187 (25.6%)	1,059 (23.9%)	440
17	995 (43.0%)	1,147 (42.0%)	1,137 (39.0%)	1,182 (39.7%)	1,421 (39.6%)	1,571 (40.1%)	1,824 (41.6%)	1,928 (41.2%)	1,807 (38.9%)	1,749 (39.4%)	754

Figure 14 displays the distribution of illicit drug offending incidents according to the age of the offender in 2008, 2013 and 2017. This graph shows that both 2013 and 2017 has increases in illicit drug offending incidents across nearly all age groups compared to 2008, with the largest volume increase in incidents being seen in the later adolescent age groups. The change between 2013 and 2017 is more modest, with notable increases in illicit drug offending incidents for 15- and 17-year-olds in 2017.



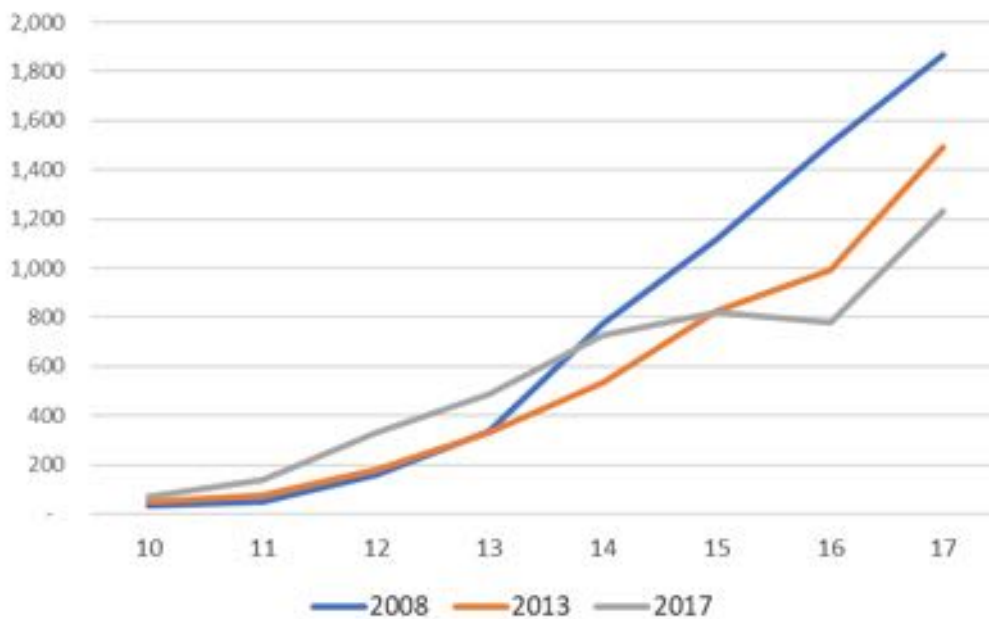
**Figure 14: Number of illicit drug offending incidents at each age in 2008, 2013 and 2017**

Table 11 displays trends in the age of offenders in offending incidents in which public order and security offences were the most serious offence, from 2008 to 2017. While public order and security offending incidents tend to be more concentrated in the older age groups – with 77.6% of these incidents being recorded against offenders aged 14- to 17-years of age in 2017 – the number of these incidents in the older age groups have actually declined since 2008. Public order and security incidents have declined by -5.8%, -26.5%, -48.4%, -34.0% in 14-, 15-, 16-, and 17-year-olds respectively. At the same time, while the younger age groups in general are less commonly recorded as offenders in these incidents, the number of younger age groups recorded for public order and security incidents has grown since 2008, more than doubling for 10-, 11- and 12-year-olds (growth of 102.9%, 172.5%, and 108.2% respectively), with slightly less relative growth amongst 13-year-olds (45.8%).

**Table 11: Trends in age of offenders in public order and security offending incidents by age, 2008 to 2017**

Age	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Difference 2008 to 2017
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
10	35 (0.6%)	48 (0.8%)	51 (0.9%)	71 (1.3%)	46 (1.0%)	48 (1.1%)	72 (1.5%)	66 (1.4%)	89 (1.9%)	71 (1.5%)	36
11	51 (0.9%)	72 (1.2%)	84 (1.5%)	69 (1.3%)	68 (1.5%)	76 (1.7%)	81 (1.7%)	103 (2.2%)	125 (2.7%)	139 (3.0%)	88
12	158 (2.7%)	179 (3.1%)	160 (2.8%)	218 (4.0%)	143 (3.1%)	181 (4.0%)	219 (4.6%)	216 (4.6%)	204 (4.4%)	329 (7.2%)	171
13	334 (5.7%)	429 (7.3%)	387 (6.7%)	405 (7.4%)	344 (7.4%)	329 (7.3%)	419 (8.7%)	468 (10.0%)	472 (10.2%)	487 (10.6%)	153
14	772 (13.2%)	792 (13.6%)	772 (13.4%)	686 (12.6%)	620 (13.3%)	536 (12.0%)	623 (13.0%)	759 (16.2%)	714 (15.4%)	727 (15.9%)	-45
15	1,115 (19.1%)	1,030 (17.6%)	1,005 (17.5%)	928 (17.0%)	790 (16.9%)	827 (18.5%)	834 (17.4%)	857 (18.3%)	892 (19.2%)	819 (17.9%)	-296
16	1,509 (25.8%)	1,372 (23.5%)	1,358 (23.7%)	1,309 (24.0%)	1,017 (21.8%)	990 (22.1%)	1,025 (21.4%)	926 (19.8%)	879 (19.0%)	778 (17.0%)	-731
17	1,868 (32.0%)	1,917 (32.8%)	1,924 (33.5%)	1,768 (32.4%)	1,643 (35.2%)	1,490 (33.3%)	1,527 (31.8%)	1,290 (27.5%)	1,260 (27.2%)	1,232 (26.9%)	-636

Figure 15 displays the distribution of offending incidents in which public order and security offences were the most serious offence by offender age, in 2008, 2013, and 2017. This graph shows clearly the decline in public order and security offending incidents amongst the older age groups in 2017 compared to 2008 and 2013, and also shows the relative growth of these incidents in the younger age groups.



**Figure 15: Number of public order and security offending incidents at each age in 2008, 2013 and 2017**

Table 12 displays trends in the age of recorded offenders in incidents in which offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations were the most serious offence, from 2008 to 2017. These types of offending incidents, which tend to be comprised largely of breaches of justice orders, are heavily concentrated amongst the older age groups, with half of these offending incidents (49.9%) in 2017 being recorded against 17-year-olds.

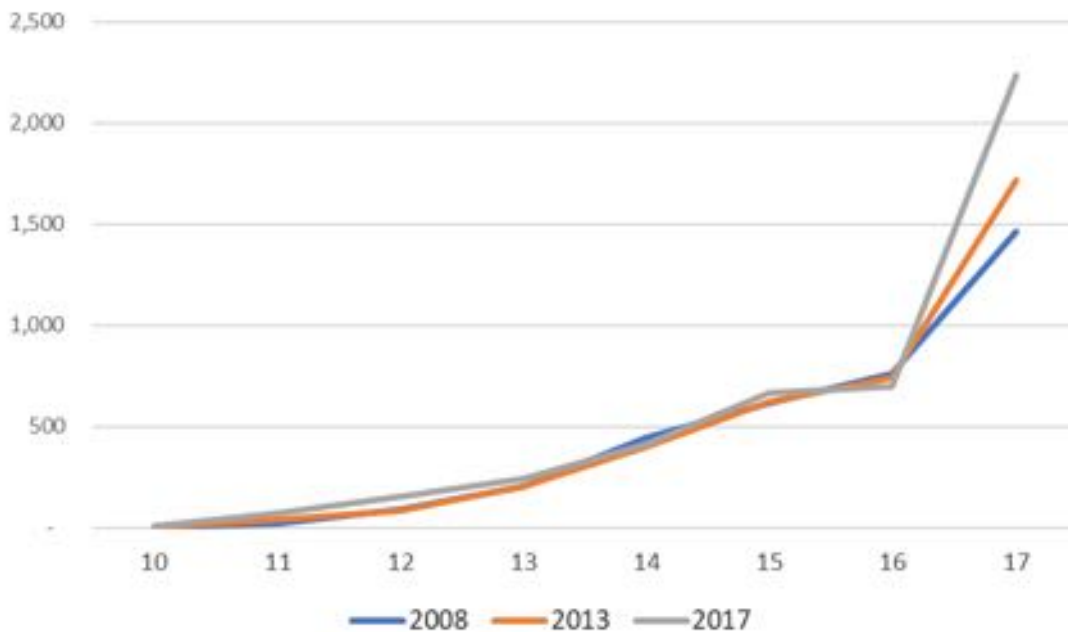
**Table 12: Trends in age of offenders in offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations incidents, 2008 to 2017**

Age	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Difference 2008 to 2017
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
10	<3 (0.1%)	5 (0.1%)	3 (0.1%)	8 (0.2%)	7 (0.2%)	3 (0.1%)	10 (0.3%)	13 (0.3%)	9 (0.2%)	7 (0.2%)	<7
11	19 (0.5%)	23 (0.6%)	24 (0.6%)	22 (0.6%)	26 (0.6%)	39 (1.0%)	24 (0.6%)	22 (0.5%)	45 (1.1%)	74 (1.7%)	55
12	88 (2.4%)	92 (2.5%)	72 (1.8%)	75 (2.0%)	110 (2.7%)	83 (2.2%)	103 (2.7%)	94 (2.3%)	105 (2.5%)	153 (3.4%)	65
13	204 (5.7%)	205 (5.5%)	201 (5.1%)	193 (5.2%)	250 (6.1%)	202 (5.3%)	197 (5.2%)	303 (7.5%)	301 (7.1%)	241 (5.4%)	37
14	446 (12.4%)	376 (10.1%)	501 (12.8%)	406 (10.9%)	497 (12.0%)	402 (10.6%)	416 (11.1%)	409 (10.2%)	443 (10.5%)	410 (9.1%)	-36
15	615 (17.1%)	586 (15.7%)	605 (15.5%)	587 (15.8%)	600 (14.5%)	619 (16.3%)	525 (14.0%)	587 (14.6%)	600 (14.2%)	665 (14.8%)	50
16	764 (21.2%)	701 (18.8%)	714 (18.3%)	776 (20.9%)	763 (18.5%)	743 (19.5%)	708 (18.8%)	724 (18.0%)	797 (18.8%)	696 (15.5%)	-68
17	1,464 (40.6%)	1,747 (46.8%)	1,786 (45.7%)	1,641 (44.3%)	1,874 (45.4%)	1,718 (45.1%)	1,773 (47.2%)	1,875 (46.6%)	1,931 (45.6%)	2,236 (49.9%)	772

There has been considerable relative growth from 2008 to 2017 in the number of offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations offending incidents amongst the younger age groups, with an increase of 250.0%, 289.5%, and 73.9% amongst 10-, 11- and 12-year-olds. However, the overwhelming majority of the growth of these incidents has occurred amongst 17-year-olds, with 87.7% of additional incidents in 2017 occurring

in this age group. In contrast, there was a reduction in these offending incidents among 14- and 16-year-olds from 2008 to 2017 of -8.1% and -8.9% respectively, along with very modest relative growth amongst 15-year-olds (8.1%).

Figure 16 displays the distribution of age and offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations offending incidents in 2008, 2013 and 2017. This graph displays clearly that much of the increase from 2008 in the offending incidents in 2013 and 2017 has been concentrated amongst 17-year-olds.



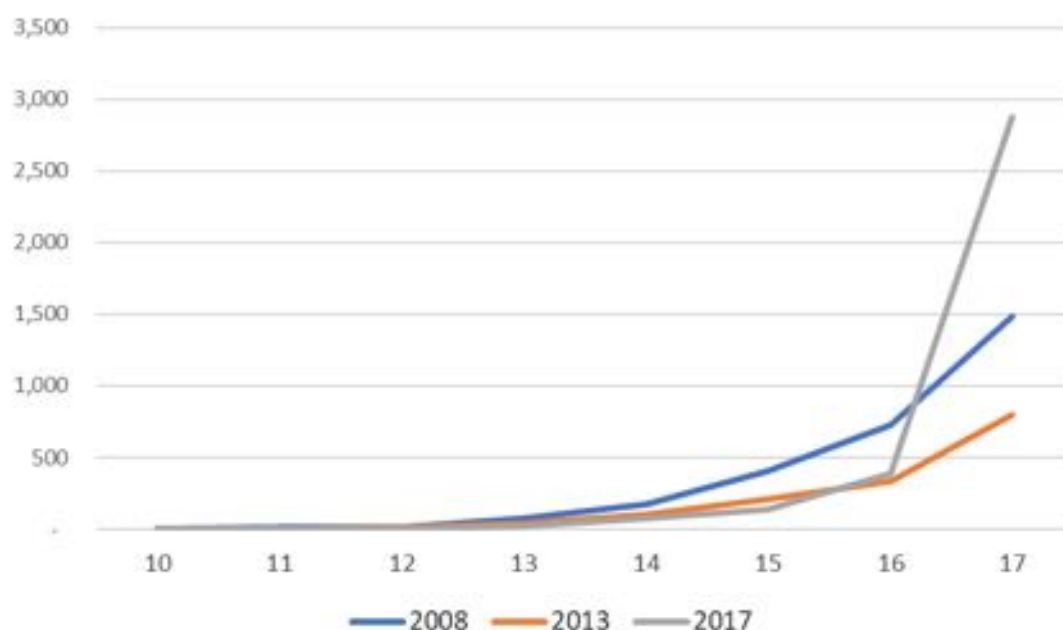
**Figure 16: Offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations offending incidents at each age in 2008, 2013, 2017**

Table 13 displays trends in the age of offenders recorded in traffic and vehicle regulatory offending incidents from 2008 to 2017. Given the age threshold for obtaining a license it is not surprising the 81.8% of these offending incidents were recorded against 17-year-olds in 2017. However, it is notable that compared to 2008, most of the age groups have experienced a relative decline in the number of traffic and vehicle regulatory offending incidents, with the exception of 10- and 17-year-olds. The overwhelming majority of growth (93.7%) in traffic and vehicle regulatory offending incidents from 2008 to 2017 has occurred amongst 17-year-olds (an additional 1,393 offending incidents).

**Table 13: Trends in age of offenders in traffic and vehicle regulatory offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

Age	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Difference 2008 to 2017
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
10	3 (0.1%)	3 (0.1%)	6 (0.3%)	<3 (0.1%)	3 (0.2%)	<3 (0.1%)	4 (0.3%)	5 (0.4%)	5 (0.1%)	5 (0.1%)	2
11	13 (0.4%)	8 (0.3%)	12 (0.6%)	13 (0.7%)	4 (0.2%)	7 (0.5%)	4 (0.3%)	4 (0.3%)	6 (0.2%)	6 (0.2%)	-7
12	15 (0.5%)	24 (1.0%)	26 (1.3%)	21 (1.2%)	14 (0.8%)	15 (1.0%)	15 (1.2%)	12 (0.9%)	5 (0.1%)	5 (0.1%)	-10
13	74 (2.6%)	74 (3.0%)	46 (2.2%)	44 (2.4%)	46 (2.7%)	41 (2.7%)	24 (1.9%)	33 (2.4%)	21 (0.6%)	21 (0.6%)	-53
14	173 (6.0%)	139 (5.6%)	114 (5.5%)	105 (5.8%)	118 (6.9%)	101 (6.7%)	80 (6.4%)	72 (5.2%)	77 (2.2%)	77 (2.2%)	-96
15	403 (13.9%)	347 (14.1%)	268 (12.9%)	261 (14.3%)	219 (12.9%)	211 (14.0%)	179 (14.2%)	196 (14.2%)	142 (4.0%)	142 (4.0%)	-261
16	726 (25.1%)	621 (25.2%)	484 (23.3%)	421 (23.1%)	387 (22.8%)	336 (22.3%)	279 (22.2%)	281 (20.3%)	385 (10.9%)	385 (10.9%)	-341
17	1,486 (51.4%)	1,251 (50.7%)	1,117 (53.9%)	957 (52.5%)	909 (53.5%)	795 (52.8%)	672 (53.5%)	782 (56.5%)	2,879 (81.8%)	2,879 (81.8%)	1,393

Figure 17 displays the distribution of traffic and vehicle regulatory offending incidents by age in 2008, 2013 and 2017. The substantial growth in these incidents for 17-year-olds in 2017 from 2008 and from 2013 is very notable.



**Figure 17: Number of traffic and vehicle regulatory offending incidents at each age, 2008, 2013 and 2017**

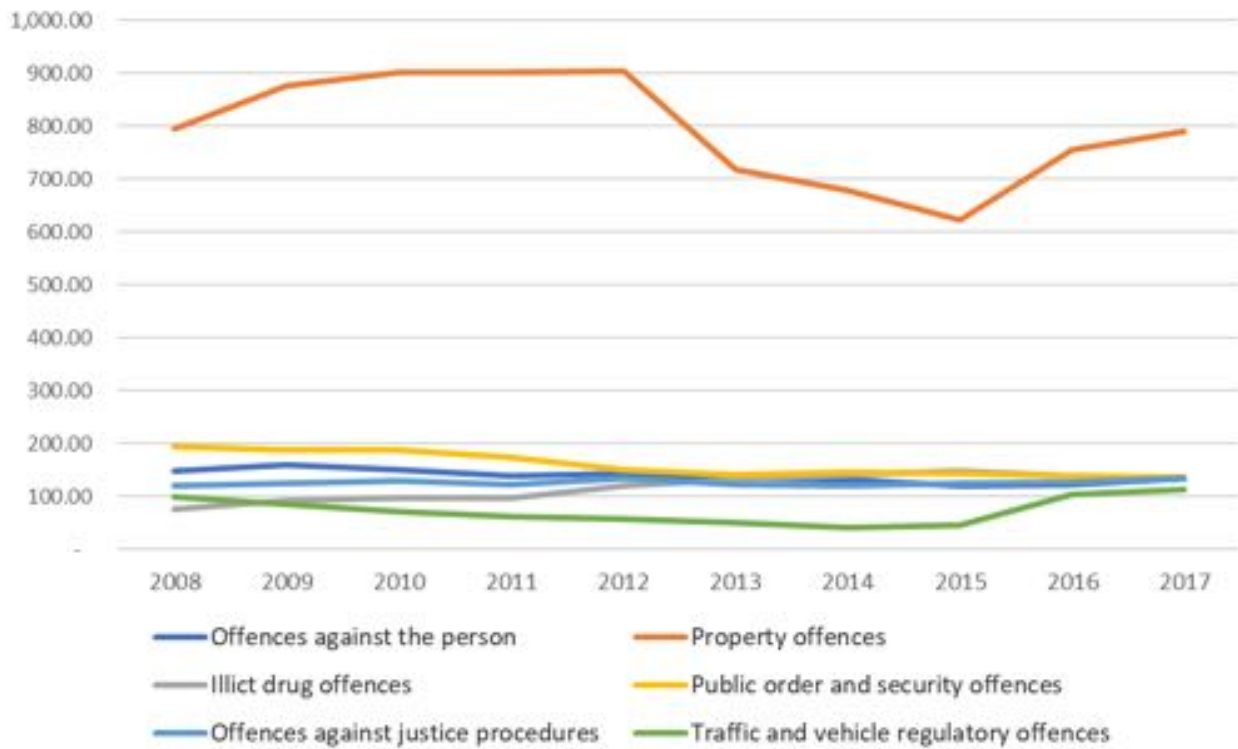
### 2.2.5 Offending incident types according to gender

This section examines trends in the gender of youth offenders in offending incidents with different types of most serious offences.

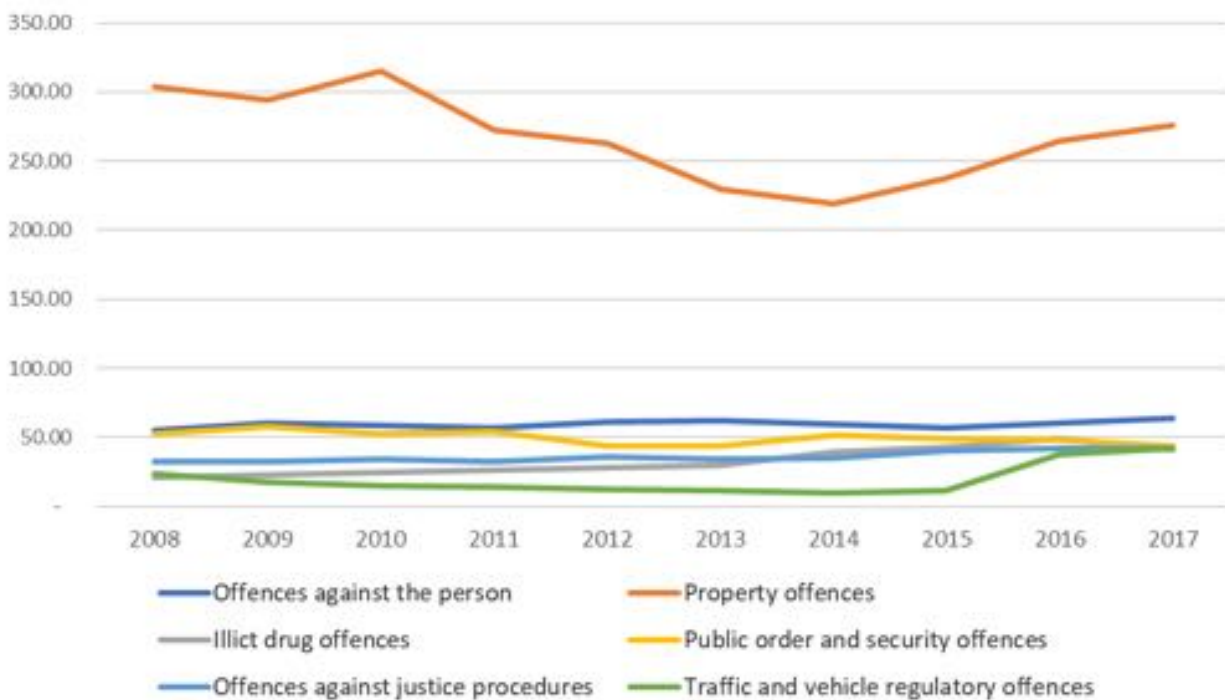
Figure 18 displays the most serious offence in offending incidents for male youth offenders as a rate (per 10,000 young males aged 10 to 17 years) for particular categories of offence types (see section 1.4.2 for offence category definitions). Figure 19 displays the most serious offending in offending incidents for female youth offenders as a rate (per 10,000 young females aged 10 to 17 years), using the same offence type categories.

These graphs demonstrate that male and female young people displayed somewhat similar patterns of offending over the 10-year period of 2008 to 2017, though population rates for all types of offending incidents for young females are considerably lower than for young males. However, there were notable differences in trends for property offending incidents and offence against the person offending incidents amongst young males and females. Young males had a relatively high rate of property offending which declined in 2013 through to 2015, and subsequently increased again in 2016 and was maintained through to 2017. In contrast, females displayed a much lower rate of property offending which overall declined 2008 to 2014, but which subsequently began to trend upward in 2015 continuing through to 2017. In total there was a decline in the population rate for property offending for both males and females from 2008 to 2017, however the decline was larger for young males.

Another contrasting trend for young males and females was for offence against the person offending incidents. Amongst young females there was an increase from 2008 to 2017 in the population rate for offence against the person offending incidents, indicating an increase in violent offending (or an increase in the recording of violent offences) among young females, while for young males the population rate of offence against the person offending incidents declined over this period. There was also a notable jump in the population rate of traffic and vehicle regulatory incidents for both males and females in 2016 which was maintained through to 2017. It is possible that this trend relates to the introduction of new traffic legislation or a focussed traffic offending crackdown which increased the policing of traffic offences in 2016 and 2017.



**Figure 18: Male youth offending incidents as a rate per 10,000 young males aged 10 to 17 years, 2008 to 2017**



**Figure 19: Female youth offending incidents as a rate per 10,000 young females aged 10 to 17 years, 2008 to 2017**

A more detailed examination of the most serious offence type in an offending incident for male youth offenders can be seen in Table 14, while the most serious offence in female youth offending incidents can be seen in Table 15.

Among young males, the most common most serious offences in offending incidents in 2017 were: theft and related offences (27.2%); unlawful entry with intent/ burglary, break and enter (15.8%); offences against justice procedures, government operations and government security (9.3%); illicit drug offences (9.2%); and public order offences (8.7%). The most notable increases in offending incidents from 2008 to 2017 were for those where the most serious offence was theft and related offences (20.9% increase; 1,742 additional offending incidents), fraud, deception and related offences (356.3% increase; 955 additional offending incidents), illicit drug offences (86.5% increase; 1,591 additional offending incidents), robbery, extortion and related offences (33.9% increase; 128 additional offending incidents), traffic, vehicle and regulatory offences (23.0% increase; 544 additional offending incidents), and offences against

justice procedures, government security and government operations (20.5% increase; 589 additional offending incidents). There were also notable decreases from 2008 to 2017 for offending incidents involving young males where the most serious offence was homicide and related offences (77.8% decrease; 14 less offending incidents), dangerous or negligent acts endangering others (32.6% decrease; 215 less offending incidents), prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives offences (43.2% decrease; 215 less offending incidents), property damage and environmental pollution (35.0% decrease; 1696 less offending incidents), and public order offences (22.5% decrease; 934 less offending incidents).

Among young females, the most common most serious offences in offending incidents in 2017 were: theft and related offences (36.1%); acts intended to cause injury (9.2%); public order offences (8.3%); traffic and vehicle regulatory offences (8.3%); and offences against justice procedures, government operations and government security (8.3%). For female young people, there were notable increases from 2008 to 2017 for offending incidents where the most serious offence was: acts intended to cause injury (16.2% increase; 159 additional offending incidents); sexual assault and related offences (150.5% increase; 114 additional offending incidents); fraud, deception and related offences (186.9%; 385 additional offending incidents); illicit drug offences (110.5% increase; 527 additional offending incidents); traffic and vehicle regulatory offences (94.0% increase; 499 additional offending incidents); and offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations (39.6% increase; 291 additional offending incidents). There were also notable decreases from 2008 to 2017 for offending incidents involving young females where the most serious offence was dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons (34.6% decrease; 36 less offending incidents), theft and related offences (13% decrease; 673 less offending incidents), and public order offences (10.9% decrease; 126 less offending incidents).

Notably, a higher proportion (9.2%) of young female offenders were recorded for offending incidents in which acts intended to cause injury was the most serious offence in 2017, compared to young male offenders (5.0%), and this type of offending incident has increased for female young people from 2008 to 2017. This suggests that female adolescents are exhibiting or being recorded more frequently for violent offending, though the growth in this type of offending is only moderate. Additionally, theft and related offending incidents reduced amongst female offenders from 2008 to 2017, but increased among male offenders over the same period, though theft and related offences remain by far the most common more serious offence type amongst young females in 2017 (36,1%).



**Table 14: Most serious offence for male youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

Most serious offence in offending incident	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Difference 2008 to 2017
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
<b>Homicide and related offences</b>	18 (0.1%)	12 (0.0%)	6 (0.0%)	3 (0.0%)	3 (0.0%)	7 (0.0%)	3 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.0%)	4 (0.0%)	-14
<b>Acts intended to cause injury</b>	1,822 (5.3%)	2,044 (5.6%)	1,922 (5.2%)	1,856 (5.1%)	1,727 (4.7%)	1,523 (4.8%)	1,569 (5.1%)	1,515 (5.1%)	1,580 (4.5%)	1,870 (5.0%)	48
<b>Sexual assault and related offences</b>	624 (1.8%)	631 (1.7%)	692 (1.9%)	581 (1.6%)	677 (1.8%)	836 (2.6%)	862 (2.8%)	751 (2.5%)	702 (2.0%)	641 (1.7%)	17
<b>Dangerous or negligent acts</b>	659 (1.9%)	636 (1.7%)	659 (1.8%)	623 (1.7%)	719 (2.0%)	605 (1.9%)	608 (2.0%)	411 (1.4%)	405 (1.2%)	444 (1.2%)	-215
<b>Abduction, harassment or other offences against the person</b>	<3 (0.0%)	8 (0.0%)	3 (0.0%)	6 (0.0%)	12 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	3 (0.0%)	8 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	7 (0.0%)	5
<b>Robbery, extortion and related offences</b>	378 (1.1%)	508 (1.4%)	351 (0.9%)	317 (0.9%)	355 (1.0%)	326 (1.0%)	222 (0.7%)	274 (0.9%)	367 (1.1%)	506 (1.4%)	128
<b>Unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter</b>	5,453 (16.0%)	5,890 (16.1%)	5,775 (15.6%)	6,050 (16.6%)	7,070 (19.2%)	5,131 (16.1%)	4,540 (14.7%)	4,166 (14.0%)	5,571 (16.0%)	5,876 (15.8%)	423
<b>Theft and related offences</b>	8,344 (24.4%)	9,969 (27.2%)	10,666 (28.7%)	10,702 (29.4%)	9,893 (26.9%)	8,740 (27.5%)	8,082 (26.1%)	7,590 (25.5%)	9,169 (26.3%)	10,086 (27.2%)	1,742
<b>Fraud, deception and related offences</b>	268 (0.8%)	387 (1.1%)	280 (0.8%)	260 (0.7%)	396 (1.1%)	569 (1.8%)	805 (2.6%)	853 (2.9%)	1,204 (3.5%)	1,223 (3.3%)	955
<b>Illicit drug offences</b>	1,839 (5.4%)	2,201 (6.0%)	2,358 (6.3%)	2,382 (6.5%)	2,929 (8.0%)	3,226 (10.1%)	3,475 (11.2%)	3,676 (12.3%)	3,472 (10.0%)	3,430 (9.2%)	1,591
<b>Prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives offences</b>	498 (1.5%)	428 (1.2%)	441 (1.2%)	398 (1.1%)	430 (1.2%)	327 (1.0%)	266 (0.9%)	294 (1.0%)	275 (0.8%)	283 (0.8%)	-215
<b>Property damage and environmental pollution</b>	4,848 (14.2%)	4,791 (13.1%)	5,038 (13.6%)	4,926 (13.5%)	4,708 (12.8%)	3,136 (9.9%)	3,218 (10.4%)	2,793 (9.4%)	3,028 (8.7%)	3,152 (8.5%)	-1,696
<b>Public order offences</b>	4,159 (12.2%)	4,093 (11.2%)	4,086 (11.0%)	3,809 (10.5%)	3,220 (8.7%)	3,124 (9.8%)	3,320 (10.7%)	3,239 (10.9%)	3,210 (9.2%)	3,225 (8.7%)	-934
<b>Traffic and vehicle regulatory offences</b>	2,362 (6.9%)	2,061 (5.6%)	1,735 (4.7%)	1,496 (4.1%)	1,407 (3.8%)	1,242 (3.9%)	1,032 (3.3%)	1,122 (3.8%)	2,618 (7.5%)	2,906 (7.8%)	544
<b>Offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations</b>	2,868 (8.4%)	2,985 (8.1%)	3,123 (8.4%)	2,962 (8.1%)	3,286 (8.9%)	3,005 (9.4%)	2,947 (9.5%)	3,081 (10.3%)	3,224 (9.3%)	3,457 (9.3%)	589
<b>Miscellaneous offences</b>	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	3 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	11 (0.0%)	8 (0.0%)	8
<b>Total</b>	34,142	36,644	37,136	36,374	36,832	31,800	30,954	29,775	34,840	37,118	2,976

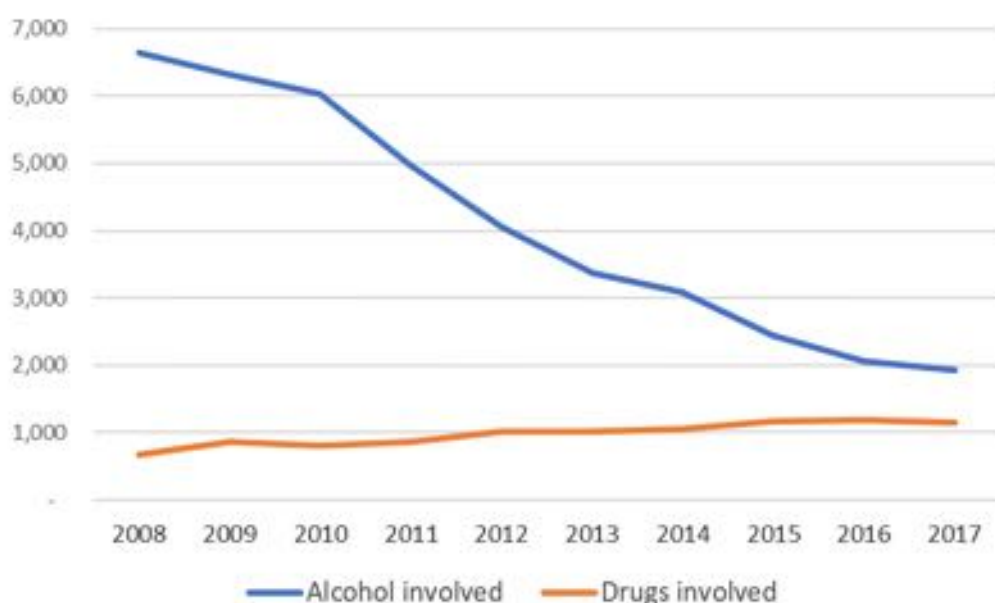
Table 15: Most serious offence in female youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017

Most serious offence in offending incident	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Difference 2008 to 2017
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
<b>Homicide and related offences</b>	0 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	<3	0 (0.0%)	3 (0.0%)	<3 ( (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (0.0%)	3 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	<3
<b>Acts intended to cause injury</b>	980 (8.9%)	1,013 (9.1%)	1,010 (8.8%)	990 (9.4%)	957 (9.3%)	916 (9.6%)	807 (8.3%)	845 (8.2%)	942 (7.9%)	1,139 (9.2%)	159
<b>Sexual assault and related offences</b>	76 (0.7%)	133 (1.2%)	93 (0.8%)	97 (0.9%)	185 (1.8%)	253 (2.6%)	375 (3.9%)	320 (3.1%)	291 (2.4%)	190 (1.5%)	114
<b>Dangerous or negligent acts</b>	104 (0.9%)	109 (1.0%)	126 (1.1%)	147 (1.4%)	145 (1.4%)	125 (1.3%)	116 (1.2%)	72 (0.7%)	75 (0.6%)	68 (0.5%)	-36
<b>Abduction, harassment or other offences against the person</b>	<3 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	12 (0.1%)	<3 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	<3
<b>Robbery, extortion and related offences</b>	84 (0.8%)	116 (1.0%)	107 (0.9%)	87 (0.8%)	126 (0.8%)	132 (1.4%)	87 (0.9%)	85 (0.8%)	129 (1.1%)	157 (1.3%)	73
<b>Unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter</b>	710 (6.4%)	655 (5.9%)	762 (6.6%)	708 (6.7%)	875 (8.5%)	754 (7.9%)	639 (6.6%)	659 (6.4%)	855 (7.1%)	799 (6.4%)	89
<b>Theft and related offences</b>	5,162 (46.6%)	5,075 (45.7%)	5,569 (48.6%)	4,733 (44.9%)	4,268 (41.3%)	3,649 (38.0%)	3,430 (35.4%)	3,817 (37.1%)	4,398 (36.7%)	4,489 (36.1%)	-673
<b>Fraud, deception and related offences</b>	206 (1.9%)	249 (2.2%)	234 (2.0%)	183 (1.7%)	170 (1.6%)	256 (2.7%)	368 (3.8%)	388 (3.8%)	400 (3.3%)	591 (4.8%)	385
<b>Illicit drug offences</b>	477 (4.3%)	530 (4.8%)	556 (4.8%)	598 (5.7%)	655 (6.3%)	687 (7.2%)	912 (9.4%)	1,002 (9.7%)	1,173 (9.8%)	1,004 (8.1%)	527
<b>Prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives offences</b>	33 (0.3%)	45 (0.4%)	55 (0.5%)	58 (0.6%)	48 (0.5%)	41 (0.4%)	39 (0.4%)	32 (0.3%)	35 (0.3%)	45 (0.4%)	12
<b>Property damage and environmental pollution</b>	821 (7.4%)	756 (6.8%)	674 (5.9%)	677 (6.4%)	809 (7.8%)	710 (7.4%)	697 (7.2%)	734 (7.1%)	662 (5.5%)	851 (6.9%)	30
<b>Public order offences</b>	1,151 (10.4%)	1,273 (11.5%)	1,157 (10.1%)	1,189 (11.3%)	971 (9.4%)	985 (10.3%)	1,172 (12.1%)	1,120 (10.9%)	1,114 (9.3%)	1,025 (8.3%)	-126
<b>Traffic and vehicle regulatory offences</b>	531 (4.8%)	406 (3.7%)	338 (2.9%)	328 (3.1%)	293 (2.8%)	265 (2.8%)	225 (2.3%)	263 (2.6%)	902 (7.5%)	1,030 (8.3%)	499
<b>Offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations</b>	734 (6.6%)	750 (6.7%)	783 (6.8%)	745 (7.1%)	840 (8.1%)	804 (8.4%)	809 (8.4%)	945 (9.2%)	1,007 (8.4%)	1,025 (8.3%)	291
<b>Miscellaneous offences</b>	<3 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	9 (0.1%)	7 (0.1%)	7 (0.1%)	6
<b>Total offences</b>	11,072	11,114	11,467	10,543	10,345	9,591	9,679	10,297	11,993	12,422	1,350

## 2.2.6 Alcohol and drug involvement in offending incident

As part of an occurrence record, officers can indicate if offenders or victims in an incident were affected by drugs or alcohol. It should be noted that If there is more than one offender linked to an occurrence and only one offender is affected by drug or alcohol, all offenders in that occurrence will have an alcohol or drug involvement flag linked to them. Hence, caution must be exercised when interpreting this data as it may inflate the number of offending incidents in which an offender is noted as being affected by drugs or alcohol.

Figure 20 illustrates the trends in the proportion of offending incidents that were recorded as involving alcohol or drugs, while Table 16 displays the number and proportion of youth offending incidents that were recorded as involving alcohol or drugs. There was a dramatic decrease in the number of youth offending incidents that were recorded as involving alcohol, from 14.7% in 2008 to 3.9% in 2017. At the same time, there was a slight increase in the number of offending incidents that were recorded as involving drugs, from 1.5% in 2008 to 2.3% in 2017.



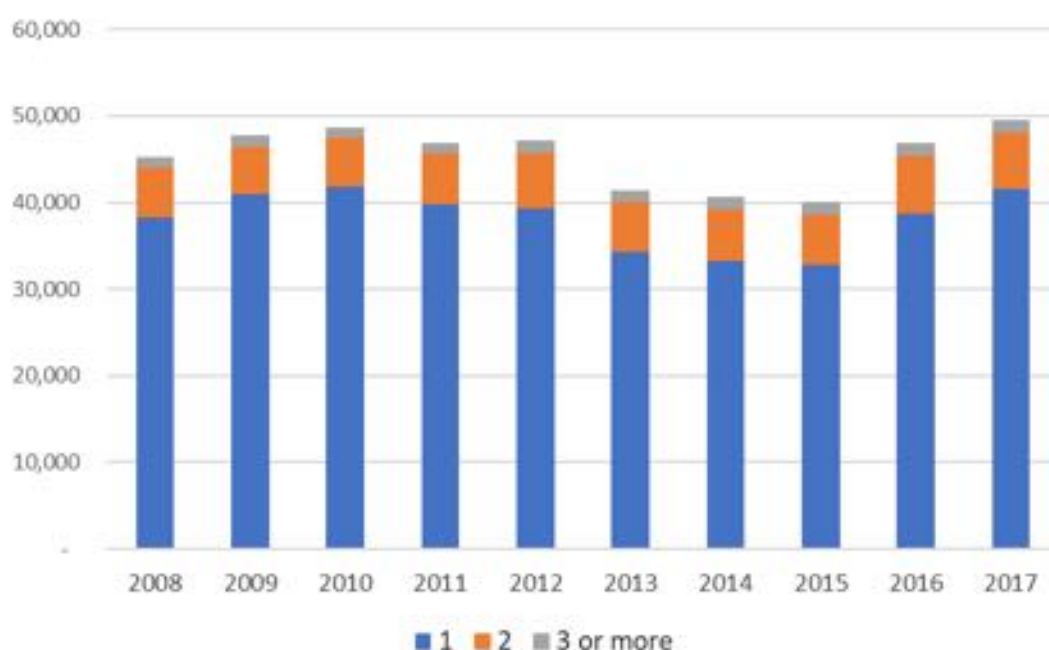
**Figure 20: Number of youth offending incidents in which alcohol or drug involvement has been noted, 2008 to 2017**

**Table 16: Trends in alcohol or drug involvement in youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

Alcohol or drug involvement in offending incident	2008 N (%)	2009 N (%)	2010 N (%)	2011 N (%)	2012 N (%)	2013 N (%)	2014 N (%)	2015 N (%)	2016 N (%)	2017 N (%)	Difference 2008 to 2017
<b>Alcohol involvement</b>	6650 (14.7%)	6313 (13.2%)	6027 (12.4%)	4968 (10.6%)	4055 (8.6%)	3364 (8.1%)	3090 (7.6%)	2437 (6.1%)	2056 (4.4%)	1920 (3.9%)	-4730
<b>Drug involvement</b>	671 (1.5%)	865 (1.8%)	807 (1.7%)	866 (1.8%)	1025 (2.2%)	1020 (2.5%)	1047 (2.6%)	1166 (2.9%)	1185 (2.5%)	1146 (2.3%)	475

## 2.2.7 Number of offences recorded in offending incidents

Trends in the relative proportion of the number of offences for youth offending incidents are illustrated in Figure 21, while the number of offences recorded in youth offending incidents from 2008 to 2017 are displayed in Table 17. Most youth offending incidents are comprised of just one offence and this has been relatively consistent over this time- period, with 84.6% of offending incidents in 2008 comprising just one offence and 83.8% of offending incidents in 2017 comprising one offence.



**Figure 21: Trends in number of offences recorded against youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

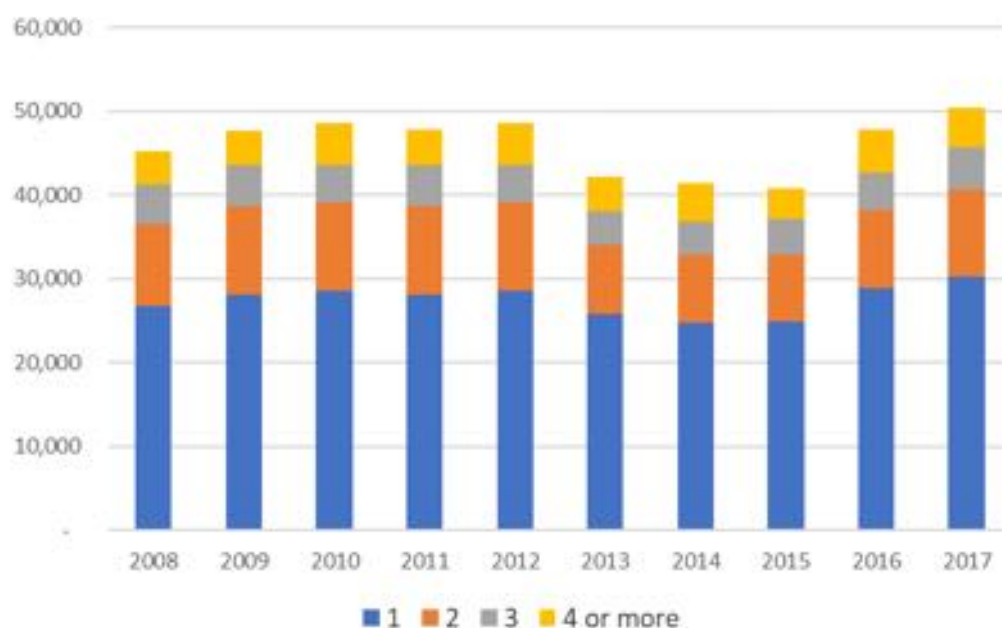
While the number of offending incidents comprising two, or three or more offences has remained relatively low, constituting 13.3% and 3.0% respectively of offending incidents in 2017, these more complex offending incidents have shown notable growth from 2008 to 2017, increasing by 14.2% and 22.2% respectively (see Table 17).

**Table 17: Number of offences recorded in youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Difference 2008 to 2017
Count of offences	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
1	38,269 (84.6%)	40,967 (85.8%)	41,858 (86.1%)	39,846 (84.9%)	39,363 (83.4%)	34,331 (82.9%)	33,263 (81.9%)	32,770 (81.8%)	38,805 (82.9%)	41,525 (83.8%)	3,256
2	5,752 (12.7%)	5,541 (11.6%)	5,571 (11.5%)	5,845 (12.5%)	6,396 (13.5%)	5,729 (13.8%)	5,936 (14.6%)	5,842 (14.6%)	6,534 (14.0%)	6,570 (13.3%)	818
3 or more	1,197 (2.6%)	1,256 (2.6%)	1,180 (2.4%)	1,231 (2.6%)	1,448 (3.1%)	1,339 (3.2%)	1,436 (3.5%)	1,456 (3.6%)	1,496 (3.2%)	1,463 (3.0%)	266
<b>Total</b>	<b>45,218</b>	<b>47,764</b>	<b>48,609</b>	<b>46,922</b>	<b>47,207</b>	<b>41,399</b>	<b>40,635</b>	<b>40,068</b>	<b>46,835</b>	<b>49,558</b>	<b>4,340</b>

### 2.2.8 Youth co-offenders in youth offending incidents

Table 18 displays the number of youth offenders that were recorded in youth offending incidents, from 2008 to 2017. Figure 22 illustrates the changes in the volume of youth offending incidents involving one or more youth offenders. As can be seen in Figure 22, nearly two-thirds (60.1%) of youth offending incidents involve only a sole young person (note: this may include young people who have offended with adults), and this has remained relatively consistent from 2008.



**Figure 22: Trends in the number of youth co-offenders in youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

Though the relative proportion of sole youth offenders in youth offending incidents has remained fairly consistent, the volume of these offending incidents appear to have increased proportionately with the increase in total offending incidents, resulting in no notable differences in patterns of co-offending over this period. However, the highest relative growth from 2008 to 2017 has been for offending incidents with 4 or more co-offenders, which grew by 20.1% over this period. The growth in offending incidents from 2015 to 2016 appears to be driven primarily by offending incidents involving sole offenders (accounting for 56.4% of growth), and offending incidents involving two offenders (accounting for 24.3% of this growth).

**Table 18: Number of youth offenders in offending incidents, 2008 to 2017\***

Number of youth offenders in youth offending incidents	2008 N (%)	2009 N (%)	2010 N (%)	2011 N (%)	2012 N (%)	2013 N (%)	2014 N (%)	2015 N (%)	2016 N (%)	2017 N (%)	Difference 2008 to 2017
1	26,694 (59.1%)	28,160 (59.0%)	28,605 (58.8%)	28,160 (59.0%)	28,605 (58.8%)	25,796 (61.3%)	24,831 (59.9%)	24,891 (60.9%)	28,828 (60.3%)	30,291 (60.1%)	3597
2	9,801 (21.7%)	10,438 (21.9%)	10,441 (21.5%)	10,438 (21.9%)	10,441 (21.5%)	8,332 (19.8%)	8,087 (19.5%)	7,947 (19.5%)	9,402 (19.7%)	10,272 (20.4%)	471
3	4,745 (10.5%)	4,908 (10.3%)	4,521 (9.3%)	4,908 (10.3%)	4,521 (9.3%)	3,946 (9.4%)	3,924 (9.5%)	4,270 (10.5%)	4,318 (9.0%)	5,084 (10.1%)	339
4 or more	3,962 (8.8%)	4,201 (8.8%)	5,043 (10.4%)	4,258 (8.9%)	5,050 (10.4%)	4,037 (9.6%)	4,587 (11.1%)	3,740 (9.2%)	5,292 (11.1%)	4,776 (9.5%)	814

\*Note: Only youth co-offenders are considered in this analysis, any adult co-offenders are not included in this analysis.

## 2.2.9 Actions associated with offending incidents

This section examines the police actions applied for the most serious offence in youth offending incidents from 2008 to 2017. Actions have been grouped into seven categories: arrest or warrant; caution; conference; counselling/diversion; infringement; notice to appear; and other. Offending incidents in which an arrest/warrant or notice to appear have been recorded indicates in general that the offences were charged and prosecuted in a criminal court jurisdiction. Offending incidents in which a caution, conference, counselling/diversion or an infringement were recorded indicate that these offence charges would have been most commonly resolved without the involvement of the court. In most cases, if the conditions associated with these non-court options are properly fulfilled by the identified alleged offender, a formal conviction of the offence is not recorded (though it should be noted that infringements can have a range of outcomes depending on the type of charge and action taken by the alleged offender). The 'other' option included

actions indicating that offences were dismissed due to lack of evidence, that offences were based on victim complaints that were later withdrawn by complainants, or that the offences for whatever reason could not proceed to prosecution.

The analysis of actions in this section is based on the action associated with the most serious offence in an offending incident, i.e. for offenders who had multiple offences recorded in an incident, only the action associated with the most serious offence is considered in this analysis. The most serious offence is classified according to the definitions outlined in section 1.4.2.

### 2.2.9.1 Police actions for offence against the person offending incidents

Table 19 displays in more detail the type and volume of different police actions applied to youth offending incidents in which offences against the person were the most serious offence. In 2017, the most common police action type associated with offences against the person was arrest or warrant (40.9%), followed by caution (29.5%) and notice to appear (14.2%). There have been some notable changes in the distribution of action types for offence against the person offending incidents from 2008 to 2017, with arrest or warrant increasing from 35.3% in 2008 and the use of notices to appear reducing from 24.2% of actions in 2008. This change may indicate increases in more serious offences or charges within the offences against the person offence classification from 2008 to 2017, or that police are using more serious responses to these types of offences.

**Table 19: Police actions linked to offence against the person youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

Police action	2008 N (%)	2009 N (%)	2010 N (%)	2011 N (%)	2012 N (%)	2013 N (%)	2014 N (%)	2015 N (%)	2016 N (%)	2017 N (%)
<b>Arrest/ warrant</b>	1,788 (35.3%)	1,927 (34.3%)	1,851 (34.9%)	1,829 (36.3%)	2,163 (40.0%)	1,906 (34.7%)	1,744 (31.8%)	1,731 (33.5%)	1,870 (35.7%)	2,308 (40.9%)
<b>Caution</b>	1,400 (27.6%)	1,524 (27.2%)	1,340 (25.3%)	1,251 (24.8%)	1,278 (23.6%)	1,678 (30.5%)	1,862 (34.0%)	1,856 (36.0%)	1,771 (33.8%)	1,661 (29.5%)
<b>Conference</b>	348 (6.9%)	419 (7.5%)	341 (6.4%)	309 (6.1%)	272 (5.0%)	285 (5.2%)	271 (4.9%)	331 (6.4%)	330 (6.3%)	364 (6.5%)
<b>Counselling/ Diversion</b>	46 (0.9%)	50 (0.9%)	62 (1.2%)	56 (1.1%)	67 (1.2%)	72 (1.3%)	90 (1.6%)	80 (1.5%)	68 (1.3%)	79 (1.4%)
<b>Infringement</b>	<3 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (0.1%)	<3 (0.0%)	15 (0.3%)	42 (0.8%)	41 (0.8%)	38 (0.7%)	29 (0.5%)
<b>Notice to appear</b>	1225 (24.2%)	1221 (21.8%)	1123 (21.2%)	986 (19.6%)	960 (17.7%)	867 (15.8%)	799 (14.6%)	736 (14.3%)	742 (14.2%)	803 (14.2%)
<b>Other</b>	258 (5.1%)	469 (8.4%)	580 (10.9%)	603 (12.0%)	673 (12.4%)	673 (12.2%)	674 (12.3%)	387 (7.5%)	414 (7.9%)	396 (7.0%)
<b>Total</b>	5,066	5,612	5,297	5,039	5,414	5,496	5,482	5,162	5,233	5,640

Note: This analysis considers only the actions associated with the most serious offence in the offending incident.

Figure 23 displays trends in the use of different police actions in youth offending incidents in which offences against the person were the most serious offence. This graph shows that many of the changes in the distribution of police actions in offence against the person offending incidents from 2008 to 2017 have been non-linear, with some directional changes for the use of arrest/warrant and cautions in 2012 respectively, and subsequent further directional changes in 2014 and 2015 respectively. This suggests that significant policy or procedural changes may have occurred at these time points which changed the use of these police actions. The use of a notice to appear has followed a more linear downward trajectory from 2008 to 2017.

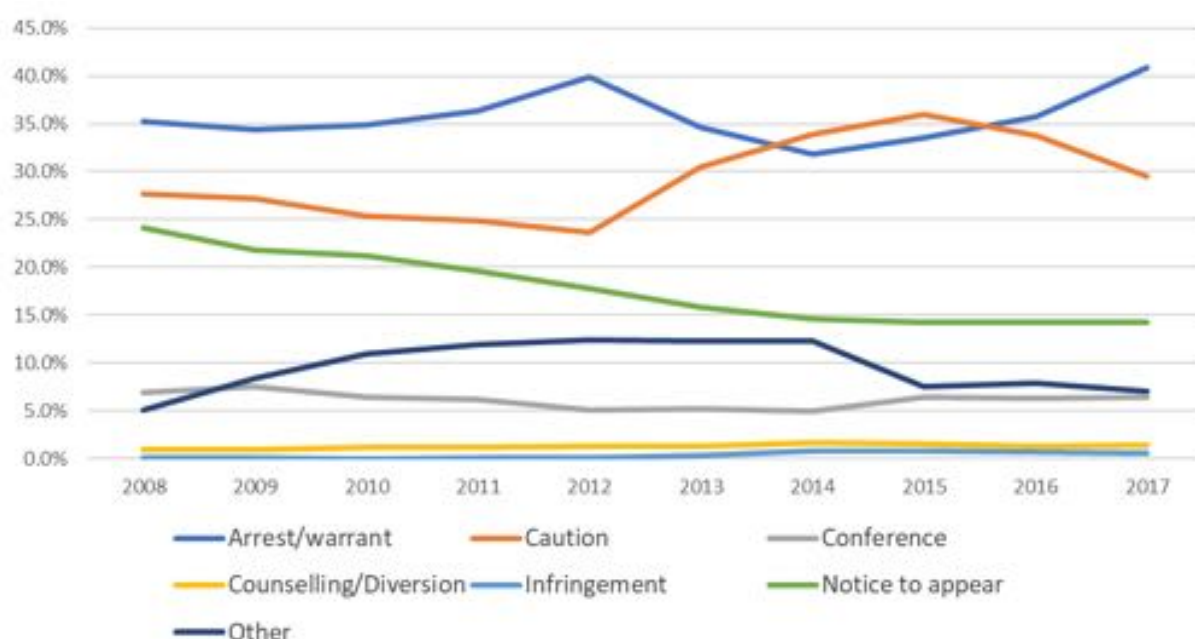


Figure 23: Trends in actions for offence against the person offending incidents, 2008 to 2017

### 2.2.9.2 Police actions for property offending incidents

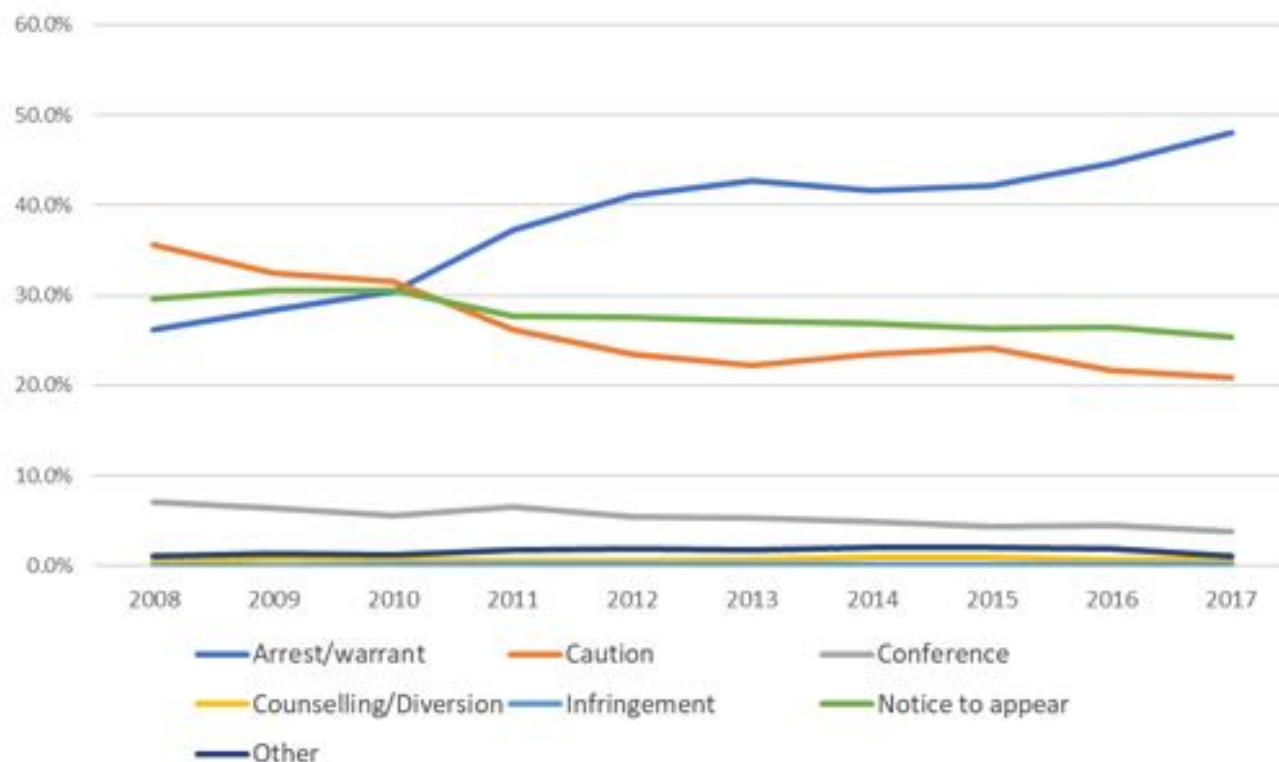
Table 20 displays in more detail the type and volume of different police actions associated with youth offending incidents in which a property offence was the most serious offence, from 2008 to 2017. The most common police actions associated with property offending incidents in 2017 were arrest or warrant (48.1%), followed by notices to appear (25.4%), and cautions (20.9%). There have been substantial increases in the use of arrests and warrants for these types of offending incidents from 2008 to 2017, increasing from 26.2% in 2008 to 48.1% of offending incidents in 2017. At the same time there has been a decrease in the use of cautions for property offending incidents from 35.6% in 2008 to 20.9% of offending incidents in 2017.

Table 20: Police actions linked to property offence youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017

Police action	2008 N (%)	2009 N (%)	2010 N (%)	2011 N (%)	2012 N (%)	2013 N (%)	2014 N (%)	2015 N (%)	2016 N (%)	2017 N (%)
<b>Arrest/ warrant</b>	7,368 (26.2%)	8,512 (28.3%)	9,532 (30.4%)	11,606 (37.3%)	12,997 (41.0%)	11,025 (42.8%)	10,161 (41.6%)	9,905 (42.2%)	12,751 (44.7%)	14,666 (48.1%)
<b>Caution</b>	10,004 (35.6%)	9,753 (32.5%)	9,905 (31.5%)	8,161 (26.2%)	7,416 (23.4%)	5,737 (22.3%)	5,741 (23.5%)	5,661 (24.1%)	6,190 (21.7%)	6,363 (20.9%)
<b>Conference</b>	1,979 (7.0%)	1,922 (6.4%)	1,735 (5.5%)	2,038 (6.5%)	1,735 (5.5%)	1,360 (5.3%)	1,210 (5.0%)	1,015 (4.3%)	1,272 (4.5%)	1,154 (3.8%)
<b>Counselling/ Diversion</b>	126 (0.4%)	220 (0.7%)	200 (0.6%)	176 (0.6%)	187 (0.6%)	179 (0.7%)	218 (0.9%)	204 (0.9%)	207 (0.7%)	198 (0.6%)
<b>Infringement</b>	0 (0.0%)	6 (0.0%)	23 (0.1%)	23 (0.1%)	29 (0.1%)	14 (0.1%)	26 (0.1%)	29 (0.1%)	31 (0.1%)	37 (0.1%)
<b>Notice to appear</b>	8,302 (29.6%)	9,202 (30.6%)	9,611 (30.3%)	8,604 (30.6%)	8,708 (27.5%)	6,993 (27.1%)	6,566 (26.9%)	6,198 (26.4%)	7,563 (26.5%)	7,751 (25.4%)
<b>Other</b>	304 (1.1%)	423 (1.4%)	384 (1.2%)	532 (1.2%)	594 (1.9%)	466 (1.8%)	508 (2.1%)	472 (2.0%)	523 (1.8%)	330 (1.1%)
<b>Total</b>	28,088	30,047	31,396	31,140	31,668	25,777	24,435	23,488	28,545	30,504

Note: This analysis considers only the actions associated with the most serious offence in the offending incident.

Figure 24 displays trends in the distribution of police actions types for youth offending incidents in which property offences were the most serious offence, from 2008 to 2017. The notable increase in the use of arrests/warrants is apparent in this graph, and this change appears to have occurred in a gradual upward trend over this 10-year period. Similarly, the decline in the use of cautions also appears to be a gradual downward trend, and this is a less dramatic but still notable downward trend in the use of notices to appear. This could reflect a more general move towards more serious police response to youth property offences or it could also reflect a growth in repeated property offending by offenders which may preclude the use of cautions, or alternatively there may other drivers for this trend. Given that a large proportion of youth offending is comprised of property offending, it is important to understand the drivers for the use of more serious actions/sanctions for this type of youth offending.



**Figure 24: Trends in police actions linked to property youth offending incidents**

### 2.2.9.3 Police actions for illicit drug offending incidents

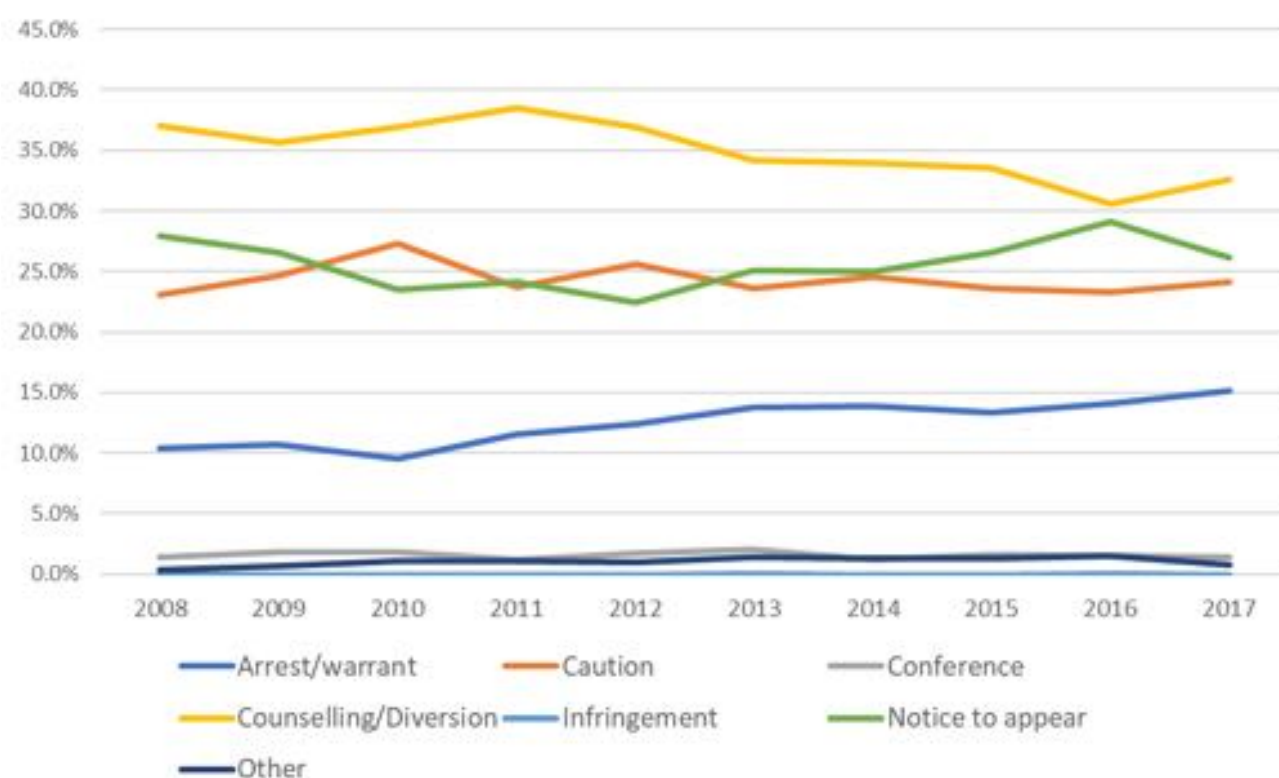
Table 21 displays in more detail the types and volume of police actions associated with youth offending incidents in which the most serious offence was an illicit drug offence from 2008 to 2017. The most common police action for illicit drug offending incidents in 2017 was counselling or diversion (32.6%), followed by notices to appear (26.1%), and cautions (24.2%). There has been a notable increase from 2008 to 2017 in the use of arrests or warrants in response to illicit drug offences, from 10.3% in 2008 to 15.1% in 2017. There has also been a decrease in the use of counselling or diversion for these offending incidents, from 37.1% in 2008 to 32.6% in 2017.

Figure 25 displays trends in the use of police actions for youth offending incidents in which illicit drug offences were the most serious offence, from 2008 to 2017. The decline in the use of counselling or diversion in responses to these offending incidents from 2008 to 2017 is apparent, though it remains the most common police action. Likewise that increase in the use of arrests or warrants from 2008 to 2017 appears to have occurred in a gradual and fairly consistent manner.

**Table 21: Police actions linked to illicit drug youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

Police action	2008 N (%)	2009 N (%)	2010 N (%)	2011 N (%)	2012 N (%)	2013 N (%)	2014 N (%)	2015 N (%)	2016 N (%)	2017 N (%)
<b>Arrest/ warrant</b>	357 (10.3%)	423 (10.7%)	405 (9.5%)	509 (11.5%)	662 (12.3%)	782 (13.7%)	907 (13.9%)	950 (13.3%)	1,008 (14.1%)	1,032 (15.1%)
<b>Caution</b>	795 (23.0%)	977 (24.6%)	1,164 (27.3%)	1,046 (23.7%)	1,373 (25.6%)	1,343 (23.6%)	1,603 (24.6%)	1,680 (23.6%)	1,660 (23.2%)	1,649 (24.2%)
<b>Conference</b>	46 (1.3%)	71 (1.8%)	75 (1.8%)	54 (1.2%)	92 (1.7%)	112 (2.0%)	79 (1.2%)	116 (1.6%)	107 (1.5%)	91 (1.3%)
<b>Counselling/ Diversion</b>	1,280 (37.1%)	1,416 (35.7%)	1,574 (36.9%)	1,700 (38.5%)	1,978 (36.9%)	1,947 (34.2%)	2,219 (34.0%)	2,392 (33.6%)	2,184 (30.6%)	2,225 (32.6%)
<b>Infringement</b>	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (0.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<3 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
<b>Notice to appear</b>	965 (27.9%)	1,055 (26.6%)	1,001 (23.5%)	1,064 (24.1%)	1,205 (22.5%)	1,426 (25.1%)	1,632 (25.0%)	1,895 (26.6%)	2,080 (29.1%)	1,782 (26.1%)
<b>Other</b>	10 (0.3%)	27 (0.7%)	45 (1.1%)	46 (1.0%)	51 (1.0%)	78 (1.4%)	86 (1.3%)	93 (1.3%)	106 (1.5%)	49 (0.7%)
<b>Total</b>	3,453	3,969	4,264	4,419	5,361	5,691	6,526	7,126	7,146	6,828

Note: This analysis considers only the actions associated with the most serious offence in the offending incident.

**Figure 25: Trends in police actions linked to illicit drug youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

#### 2.2.9.4 Police actions for public order and security offending incidents

Table 22 displays the type and volume of police actions associated with youth offending incidents in which the most serious offence was a public order or security offence (see section 1.4.2 for the offences included in this offence group). The most police actions associated with public order or security offending incidents in 2017 was arrest or warrant (33.4%), followed by notices to appear (29.7%), and cautions (23.0%). There appears to have been a notable increase in the use of arrests/warrants for public order and security

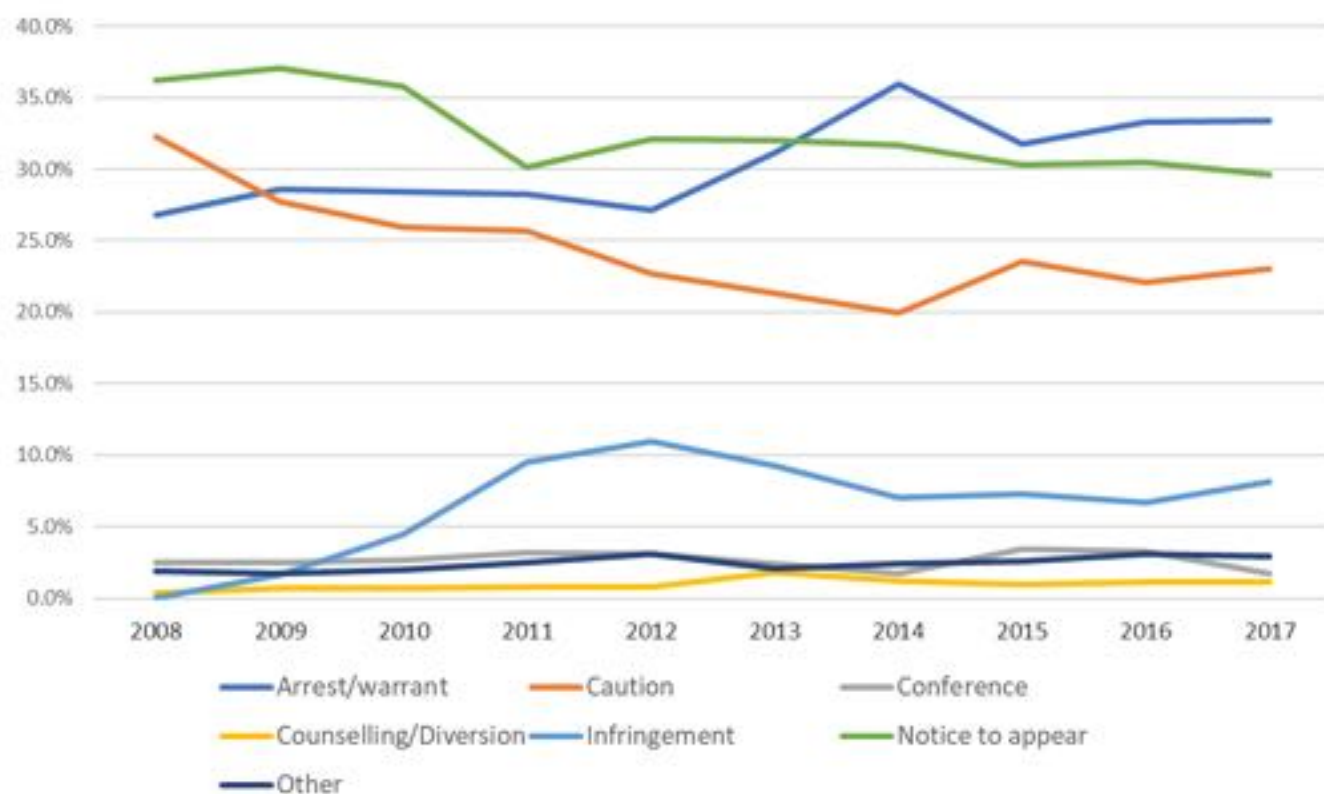
offending incidents, from 26.8% in 2008 to 33.4% in 2017. At the same time, there has been a decrease in the use of cautions for these offending incidents, from 32.3% in 2008 to 23.0% of offending incidents in 2017. The use of infringements have also increased over this period, comprising essentially 0% of actions for offending incidents in 2008 and rising to 8.1% of offending incidents in 2017.

Figure 26 displays trends in the use of different police actions for youth offending incidents in which public order and security offences were the most serious offences, from 2008 to 2017. The decline in the use of cautions from 2008 to 2017 is apparent in this graph, though it is somewhat lumpy suggesting that this change has not been consistent over this period. Likewise, the increase in the use of arrests/warrants has increased in an inconsistent manner with a sharp increase from 2012 peaking in 2014, and a subsequent decline in 2015, and with a fairly flat trend through to 2016 and 2017. The decrease in notices to appear has also demonstrated a non-linear but overall downward trend over this period, with a sharp decline in 2011, a subsequent increase in 2012, and from this period a gradual downward trend to 2017. Infringements appear to be a new police action used for public order and security offences in 2009, and subsequently rose steeply in use to a peak of 11.0% in 2012, and have since shown a slight decline through to 2017.

**Table 22: Police actions linked to public order and security youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

Police action	2008 N (%)	2009 N (%)	2010 N (%)	2011 N (%)	2012 N (%)	2013 N (%)	2014 N (%)	2015 N (%)	2016 N (%)	2017 N (%)
<b>Arrest/ warrant</b>	1,946 (26.8%)	2,048 (28.6%)	2,006 (28.5%)	1,901 (28.3%)	1,624 (27.2%)	1,811 (31.2%)	2,266 (35.9%)	1,938 (31.8%)	2,010 (33.3%)	1,994 (33.4%)
<b>Caution</b>	2,348 (32.3%)	1,983 (27.7%)	1,826 (25.9%)	1,725 (25.7%)	1,357 (22.7%)	1,239 (21.3%)	1,258 (19.9%)	1,438 (23.6%)	1,333 (22.1%)	1,377 (23.0%)
<b>Conference</b>	181 (2.5%)	181 (2.5%)	191 (2.7%)	212 (3.2%)	187 (3.1%)	138 (2.4%)	110 (1.7%)	211 (3.5%)	196 (3.2%)	102 (1.7%)
<b>Counselling/ Diversion</b>	26 (0.4%)	53 (0.7%)	50 (0.7%)	54 (0.8%)	49 (0.8%)	103 (1.8%)	78 (1.2%)	59 (1.0%)	70 (1.2%)	70 (1.2%)
<b>Infringement</b>	3 (0.0%)	116 (1.6%)	314 (4.5%)	639 (9.5%)	657 (11.0%)	537 (9.2%)	445 (7.1%)	443 (7.3%)	406 (6.7%)	486 (8.1%)
<b>Notice to appear</b>	2,629 (36.2%)	2,653 (37.1%)	2,525 (35.8%)	2,023 (30.1%)	1,918 (32.1%)	1,859 (32.0%)	1,998 (31.7%)	1,850 (30.3%)	1,840 (30.5%)	1,772 (29.7%)
<b>Other</b>	136 (1.9%)	122 (1.7%)	138 (2.0%)	168 (2.5%)	187 (3.1%)	122 (2.1%)	151 (2.4%)	159 (2.6)	186 (3.1%)	175 (2.9%)
<b>Total</b>	7,269	7,156	7,050	6,722	5,979	5,809	6,306	6,098	6,041	5,976

Note: This analysis considers only the actions associated with the most serious offence in the offending incident.



**Figure 26: Trends in police actions for public order and security youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

#### **2.2.9.5 Police actions for offences against justice procedures offending incidents**

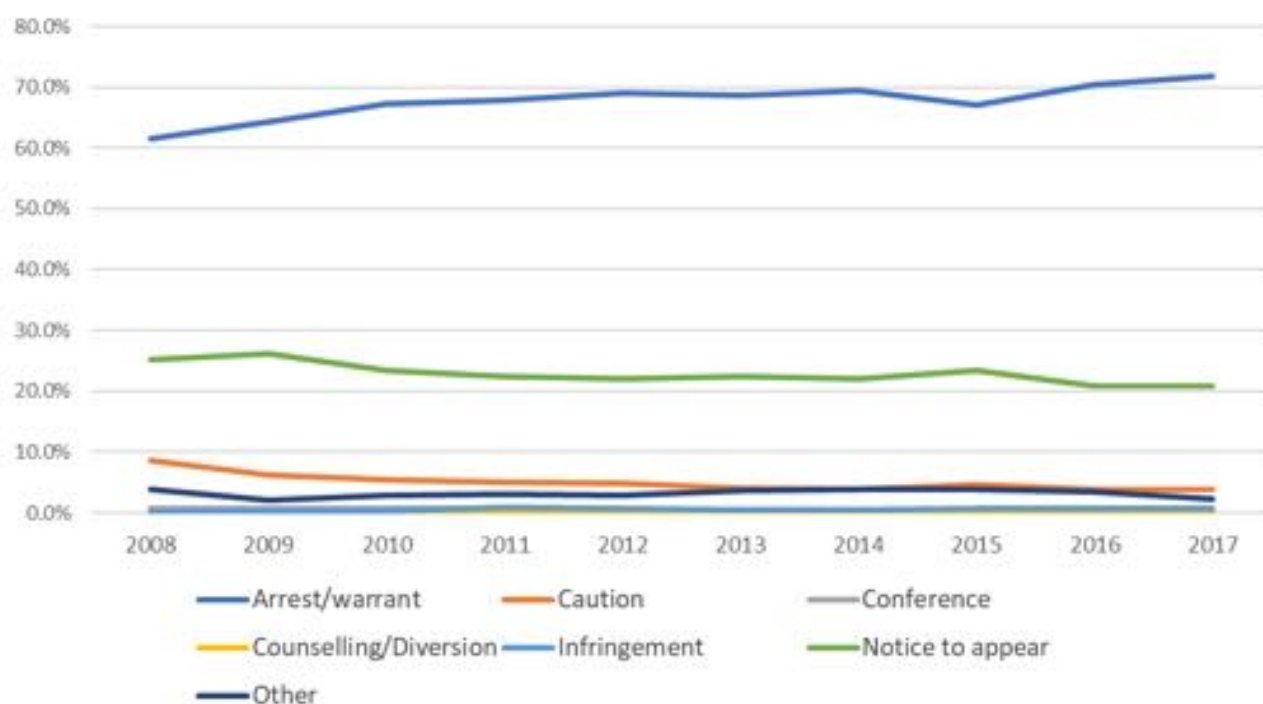
Table 23 displays the type and volume of police actions applied to youth offending incidents in which the most serious offence was offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations, from 2008 to 2017. The most common police actions in offences against justice procedure offending incidents was overwhelmingly arrest or warrants in 2017, with this action being used in 71.8% of these youth offending incidents. The second most common police action was notices to appear in 2017, being applied in 20.8% of these incidents. Over this 10-year period there has been an increase in the use of arrests/warrants for offences against justice procedure offending incidents, from 61.6% of offending incidents in 2008 to 71.8% in 2017. Concurrently, there have been declines in the use of cautions from 8.5% in 2008 to 3.8% of offending incidents in 2017. The use of notices to appear have also declined over this period, from 25.1% in 2008 to 20.8% in 2017.

Figure 27 displays trends in the use of different types of police actions for youth offending incidents in which offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations were the most serious offence, from 2008 to 2017. This graph shows that the increase in the use of arrests/warrants in responses to these offending incidents has been fairly gradual over this period, aside from a slight decrease in 2015. Likewise the decline in the use of notices to appear and cautions from 2008 to 2017 appears to have occurred as a more gradual trend with no major inflection points or directional changes over this period.

**Table 23: Police actions linked to offence against justice procedures, government security and government operations youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

Police action	2008 N (%)	2009 N (%)	2010 N (%)	2011 N (%)	2012 N (%)	2013 N (%)	2014 N (%)	2015 N (%)	2016 N (%)	2017 N (%)
<b>Arrest/ warrant</b>	3,026 (61.6%)	3,279 (64.2%)	3,518 (67.2%)	3,392 (67.9%)	3,714 (68.9%)	3,363 (68.7%)	3,413 (69.3%)	3,412 (67.1%)	3,708 (70.4%)	3,954 (71.8%)
<b>Caution</b>	419 (8.5%)	320 (6.3%)	282 (5.4%)	255 (5.1%)	262 (4.9%)	203 (4.1%)	187 (3.8%)	238 (4.7%)	201 (3.8%)	209 (3.8%)
<b>Conference</b>	35 (0.7%)	35 (0.7%)	34 (0.6%)	31 (0.6%)	27 (0.5%)	10 (0.2%)	22 (0.4%)	10 (0.2%)	27 (0.5%)	17 (0.3%)
<b>Counselling/ Diversion</b>	9 (0.2%)	9 (0.2%)	11 (0.2%)	5 (0.1%)	8 (0.1%)	16 (0.3%)	10 (0.2%)	14 (0.3%)	12 (0.2%)	8 (0.1%)
<b>Infringement</b>	<3 (0.0%)	16 (0.3%)	20 (0.4%)	44 (0.9%)	37 (0.7%)	29 (0.6%)	22 (0.4%)	32 (0.6%)	41 (0.8%)	43 (0.8%)
<b>Notice to appear</b>	1,235 (25.1%)	1,336 (26.2%)	1,220 (23.3%)	1,119 (22.4%)	1,188 (22.0%)	1,099 (22.4%)	1,081 (22.0%)	1,186 (23.3%)	1,096 (20.8%)	1,148 (20.8%)
<b>Other</b>	189 (3.8%)	109 (2.1%)	149 (2.8%)	151 (3.0%)	152 (2.8%)	177 (3.6%)	188 (3.8%)	192 (3.8%)	184 (3.5%)	130 (2.4%)
<b>Total</b>	4,914	5,104	5,234	4,997	5,388	4,897	4,923	5,084	5,269	5,509

Note: This analysis considers only the actions associated with the most serious offence in the offending incident.



**Figure 27: Trends in police actions associated with offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

### 2.2.9.6 Police actions for traffic offending incidents

Table 24 displays the type and volume of police actions used in youth offending incidents in which the most serious offence was a traffic or vehicle regulatory offence. The most common police actions in response to traffic and vehicle regulatory offending incidents in 2017 was infringements (59.6%), followed by notices to appear (19.2%), and arrests/warrants (10.2%). There were some major changes in the most common police

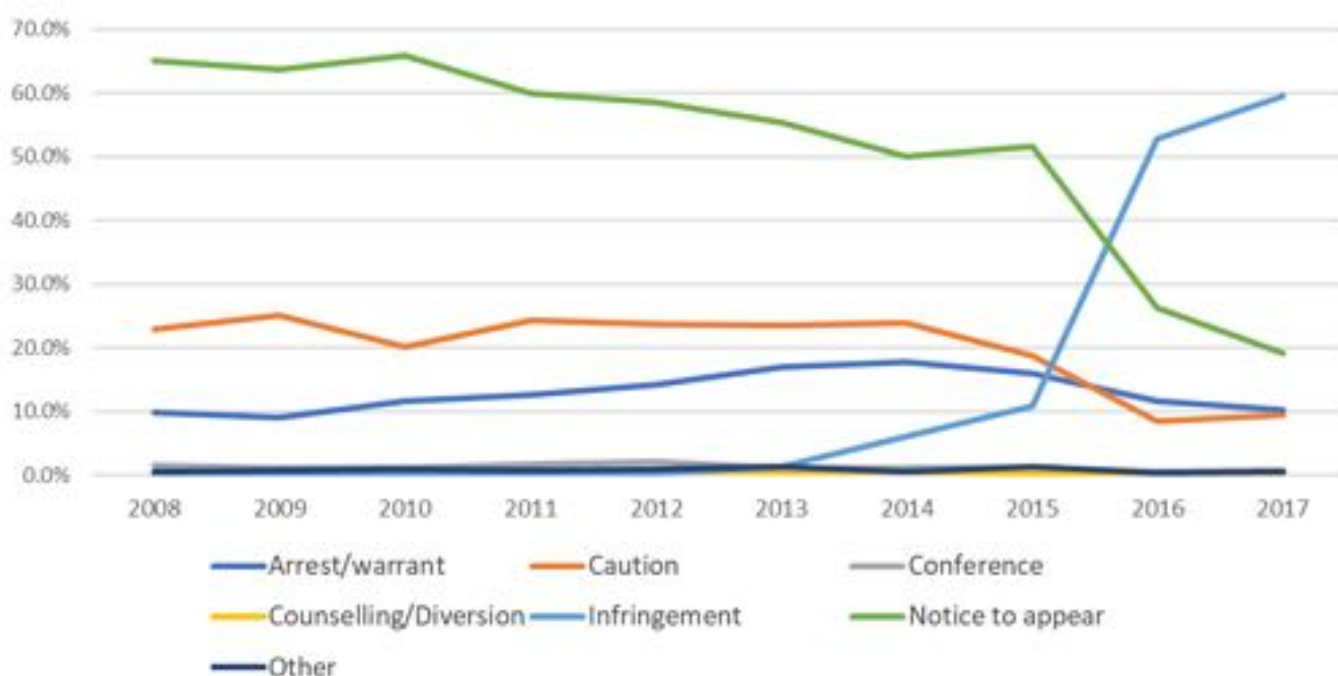
actions for youth traffic and vehicle regulatory offending incidents, with a major growth in the use of infringements (from 0% in 2008 to 59.6% of offending incidents in 2017), and with a concurrent major decrease in the use of notices to appear (65.2% in 2008 to 19.2% of offending incidents in 2017).

**Table 24: Police actions linked to traffic youth offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

Police action	2008 N (%)	2009 N (%)	2010 N (%)	2011 N (%)	2012 N (%)	2013 N (%)	2014 N (%)	2015 N (%)	2016 N (%)	2017 N (%)
<b>Arrest/ warrant</b>	474 (9.8%)	381 (9.0%)	422 (11.7%)	404 (12.6%)	430 (14.2%)	438 (16.9%)	392 (17.7%)	374 (16.0%)	523 (11.6%)	502 (10.2%)
<b>Caution</b>	1,110 (22.9%)	1,069 (25.1%)	727 (20.1%)	779 (24.3%)	719 (23.7%)	611 (23.5%)	530 (23.9%)	439 (18.8%)	380 (8.4%)	471 (9.5%)
<b>Conference</b>	73 (1.5%)	51 (1.2%)	38 (1.0%)	55 (1.7%)	63 (2.1%)	30 (1.2%)	27 (1.2%)	28 (1.2%)	26 (0.6%)	36 (0.7%)
<b>Counselling/ Diversion</b>	10 (0.2%)	4 (0.1%)	8 (0.2%)	18 (0.6%)	14 (0.5%)	12 (0.5%)	14 (0.6%)	10 (0.4%)	<3 (0.0%)	9 (0.2%)
<b>Infringement</b>	0 (0.0%)	6 (0.1%)	6 (0.2%)	4 (0.1%)	9 (0.3%)	34 (1.3%)	134 (6.0%)	252 (10.8%)	2,395 (52.9%)	2,942 (59.6%)
<b>Notice to appear</b>	3,162 (65.2%)	2,711 (63.8%)	2,384 (65.8%)	1,922 (59.9%)	1,776 (58.5%)	1,438 (55.4%)	1,107 (50.0%)	1,205 (51.6%)	1,186 (26.2%)	949 (19.2%)
<b>Other</b>	23 (0.5%)	30 (0.7%)	36 (1.0%)	25 (0.8%)	27 (0.9%)	32 (1.2%)	12 (0.5%)	29 (1.2%)	15 (0.3%)	31 (0.6%)
<b>Total</b>	4,852	4,252	3,621	3,207	3,038	2,595	2,216	2,337	4,527	4,940

Note: This analysis considers only the actions associated with the most serious offence in the offending incident.

Figure 28 displays trends in the use of police actions for youth offending incidents in which the most serious offence was a traffic or vehicle regulatory offence. This graph indicates that infringements were first used in traffic and vehicle regulatory offending incidents in 2014 and have since grown dramatically to comprise the most common police action for these types of incidents by 2016. The introduction of infringements as a police action appears to have reduced the use of notices to appear over the same time period. The use of cautions also shows a decline from 2014, the same year that the infringements began to be used.



**Figure 28: Trends in police actions associated with traffic offending incidents, 2008 to 2017**

### 2.2.10 Summary and discussion of trends in offending incidents

Youth offending incidents have followed a somewhat similar pattern to the trends for total offences recorded against youth offenders from 2008 to 2017, with an overall increase of 9.6% in offending incidents from 2008 to 2017 (4341 additional offending incidents). And consistent with the trends for total offences, the growth in offending incidents occurred in non-linear manner, with declines in offending incidents from 2013, and subsequent increases in 2016 and 2017. When offending incidents are considered as a population rate for 10- to 17-year-olds the trend line is similar, however the population rate trend suggests that decreases from 2013 were more than would be expected given population growth, and that at least some of the growth in offending incidents in 2017 may be explained by population growth.

#### 2.2.10.1 Most serious offences

Most of the growth from 2008 and 2017 in offending incidents has been driven by incidents in which property offences, illicit drug offences or traffic and vehicle regulatory offences were the most serious offences, while more serious violent offences showed relatively less growth and in some instances declined over this period. The top three most common most serious offences in 2017 were theft and related offences (29.4%), unlawful entry with intent/ burglary, break and enter (13.5%), and illicit drug offences (9.0%). The relative frequency of theft and related offences and unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter remain relatively unchanged from 2008, where they comprised 29.9% and 13.6% of offending incidents respectively. However, the notable recent increase in offending incidents in 2016 and 2017 appears to be driven in particular by incidents in which theft and related offences, unlawful entry with intent/ burglary, break and enter, and traffic and vehicle regulatory were the most serious offences, with these types of offending incidents growing by 3174, 1851 and 2552 respectively between 2015 and 2017.

Illicit drug offences showed significant growth from 2008 to 2017, increasing by 91.5% or 2120 offending incidents. Aside from illicit drug offending incidents, a number of other types of offending incidents also showed disproportionate growth from 2008 to 2017, including fraud, deception and related offences, and traffic and vehicle regulatory offences. Offending incidents in which fraud, deception and related offences were the most serious offence comprised 1.0% of offending incidents in 2008, and these increased by 282.7% (1340 additional offending incidents), comprising a total of 3.7% of offending incidents in 2017. Similarly, offending incidents in which traffic and vehicle regulatory offences were the most serious offence grew from 6.4% in 2008 to 7.9% in 2017, constituting a 36.1% increase (1044 additional offending incidents).

As noted, offending incidents in which offences against the person were the most serious offence showed relatively little growth or declines in their population rates from 2008 to 2017, with the exception of sexual assault and related offences which demonstrated growth of 18.9% or an additional 132 offending incidents and robbery, extortion and related offences which grew by 43.5% or 201 additional offending incidents.

#### 2.2.10.2 Gender of offenders

The gender distribution of young offenders in offending incidents has not changed dramatically, however there has been somewhat larger relative growth in offending incidents involving female offenders compared to males from 2008 to 2017 (12.2% compared to 8.7%). However, young males were responsible for a greater volume of growth in offending incidents in this period and remained the majority of offenders in youth offending incidents (74.9%). The trends in the most serious offence in offending incidents across the genders did not diverge dramatically, with notable growth in offending incidents with the most serious offence of fraud, deception and related offences, illicit drug offences and traffic and vehicle regulatory offences for both groups. However, young females appear to be displaying more complex patterns of offending, with an increase in offending incidents in which the most serious offence was acts intended to cause injury over this period, indicating an increase in violent offending, and a decline in theft and related offences, though theft and related offences remained the most common most serious offence for young females. In contrast, young males displayed a growth in theft and related offending incidents from 2008 to 2017, alongside only a small increase in acts intended to cause injury.

#### 2.2.10.3 Age of offenders

The age distribution for youth offending incidents from 2008 to 2017 did not change substantially, though there were some notable shifts in offending patterns across the age groups. While 14- to 17-year-olds comprised the majority (79.8%) of offenders in youth offending incidents, there was notably greater relative growth in offending incidents among 10-, 11- and 12- year-olds from 2008 to 2017, growing by 53.3%, 73.5% and 61.0%, respectively. The greatest volume of growth from 2008 to 2017 in offending incidents, however, occurred amongst 17-year-olds, who were responsible for approximately 49% of the growth in offending incidents over this period, and who remained the age group with the highest rates of offending over this period. There was also a notable decline in the number of offending incidents for 16-year-olds from 2008 to 2017, resulting in this age group having fewer offending incidents compared to 15-year-olds in 2017. Taking

into account population growth across the age groups from 2008 to 2017, most age groups showed increases in the population rate of offending from 2008 to 2017, with the exception of 14- and 16-year-olds who demonstrated reductions in the population rate of offending over this period.

When examining the most serious offence in offending incidents by age, very different trend patterns emerge for the different age groups. As noted, 17-year-olds were responsible for 49% of growth in offending incidents between 2008 and 2017. However, the more recent growth in offending incidents between 2015 and 2017 has a more mixed pattern with higher relative growth in 12-, 14-, 15- and 17-year-olds of 11%, 12%, 17%, and 37% respectively. Notably different patterns of offending between 16- and 17-year-olds suggests that at least one driver of this divergence in offending patterns is likely to be differences in the diversion options, criminal court jurisdictions and detention and community-based sanction options for youth offenders compared to adult offenders, as 17-year-olds were treated as adults in the criminal justice system in Queensland over this period.

Examination of the most serious offences for offending incidents across the age groups revealed substantial declines in offences against the person offending incidents in 16- and 17-year-olds from 2008 to 2017, with some small increases in the younger age groups. For property offending incidents, the greatest relative growth between 2008 to 2017 occurred in 10- to 12-year-olds (between 42.9% and 60.0% increases in property offending incidents), while at the same time there was a reduction in property offending incidents for 16- and 17-year-olds from 2008 to 2017. However, when examining the growth in property offending incidents between 2015 and 2017, the majority of this growth occurred amongst 14- to 16-year-olds who demonstrated collectively 55% of the increase in property offending incidents over this period.

As noted, illicit drug offending incidents grew dramatically between 2008 and 2017, with high relative growth seen across most of the age groups, in particular the younger ages. However, most of the increase in illicit drug offending incidents from 2008 to 2017 occurred amongst 15- to 17-year-olds, with these age groups responsible for 78.6% of this growth. Public order and security offences were found in total to have declined from 2008 to 2017, and it appears that most of the decline has occurred amongst 16- and 17-year-olds. For offending incidents in which offences against justice procedures, government operations and government security were the most serious offences, the most notable increase from 2008 (and from 2013) to 2017 in these offending incidents was for 17-year-olds, suggesting that this increase may relate to order breaches incurred in the management of community-based orders in the adult criminal justice system. Similarly, for offending incidents in which traffic and vehicle regulatory offences were the most serious offences, the most notable growth occurred for 17-year-olds. This is not surprising, as a learner license cannot be obtained in Queensland until the age of 16 and it is required to be held for a minimum of one year before a provisional license can be applied for, meaning that young people can only drive unsupervised in Queensland from age 17 years at minimum. However, the scale of growth in traffic offending incidents amongst 17-year-olds particularly between 2015 and 2016 and 2017 suggests that new traffic or vehicle regulation legislation may have been introduced in this period, or that traffic and vehicle regulatory offences were policed much more aggressively in 2016 and 2017.

#### **2.2.10.4 Alcohol and drug involvement in youth offending**

Officers can record in QPRIME whether drug or alcohol use was involved in the incident. There was a major decline in offending incidents in which alcohol involvement was noted by attending officers from 14.7% of offending incidents in 2008 to 3.9% 2017 (a decline of 71.1% or 4730 offending incidents). At the same time, there was a small growth in the proportion of offending incidents in which drug involvement was noted by attending officers from 1.5% in 2008 to 2.3% in 2017 (an increase of 70.8% of 475 offending incidents). The small growth in drug involvement in youth offending incidents is dwarfed by the much larger increase in illicit drug offences over this period (2120 additional offending incidents), suggesting that many of the illicit drug offences may have been recorded against young people when they were not under the influence of the drug.

#### **2.2.10.5 Police actions in response to offending incidents**

The type of police actions applied to different types of offending events changed over the 10-year period from 2008 to 2017, with overall trends indicating an increase in the use of arrests/warrants (and infringements for some types of offending incidents) and a decrease in the use of cautions. For youth offending incidents in which offences against the person were the most serious offence, there was an increase in the use of arrest/warrant and a decrease in notices to appear over the same period. This may reflect a greater volume of more serious offences against the person (for example more serious assault or robbery offences) or more serious police responses to offences against the person over this period.

For youth offending incidents in which property offences were the most serious offence, there was an increase in the use of arrests/warrants for youth offenders from 2008 to 2017, and a decline in the use of

cautions and notices to appear for youth property offending incidents over the same period. Youth offending incidents in which an illicit drug offence was the most serious offence were less commonly responded to by police with counselling or diversion options, though this police response remained the most common form of police action for illicit drug offending incidents. At the same time there was a small but consistent increase in the use of arrests/warrants in response to youth illicit drug offending incidents over the same period.

For public order and security offending incidents there was also an increase in the use of arrests/warrants from 2008 to 2017, along with an increase in the use of infringements which appear to have been introduced as a new type of police action for these types of offences early in this 10-year period. At the same time, the use of cautions for public order and security offences have reduced over this period. From 2008 to 2017, there was also a major growth in the use of infringements for offending incidents in which traffic and vehicle regulatory offences were the most serious offence (with the most notable growth occurring between 2015 and 2016), and decline in the use of notices to appear over the same period. Offending incidents in which offences against justice procedures, government security, and government operations were the most serious offence were increasingly responded to with arrests/warrants from 2008 to 2017, with a decline in the use of cautions over the same period.

### **2.2.11 Conclusion**

The nature of youth offending incidents has changed somewhat from 2008 to 2017, with a substantial increase in offending incidents in which illicit drug offences were the most serious offences, and more recent notable increases from 2015 to 2017 in offending incidents in which theft and related offences, unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter, and traffic and vehicle regulatory offences were the most serious offences.

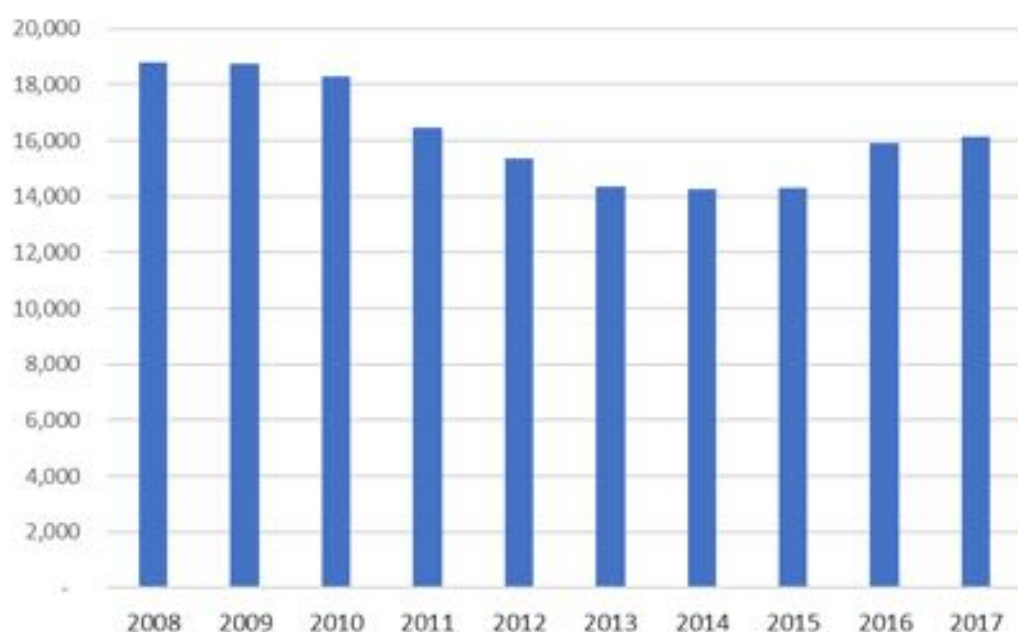
There has also been greater relative growth in offending amongst the younger age groups (10- to 12-year-olds) from 2008 to 2017, with more recent growth in offending amongst 17-year-olds, and at the same time a decline in the number of 16-year-olds offending over this period. These differences in patterns amongst the age groups suggests there are likely to be different drivers and influences driving offending behaviour amongst population sub-groups. For example, those who offend for the first time in their early adolescence are more likely to become chronic offenders than those who offend for the first time in late adolescence, so the growth in offending amongst the younger age groups is concerning. The decline in offending amongst 16-year-olds concurrent with a growth of offending amongst 17-year-olds may reflect differences in options for diversion, criminal court jurisdictions and community-based or detention sanction options for juveniles compared to adults in Queensland, as 17-year-olds were considered adults in the criminal justice system for the 2008 to 2017 period. Much of the growth for 17-year-olds was in offending incidents in which the most serious offence was an illicit drug offence, a traffic and vehicle regulatory offence, or an offence against justice procedures, government operations or government security, indicating that overall the growth in offending amongst 17-year-olds was mostly in less serious, non-violent offences.

Police responses to offenders aged 10- to 17-years appears to have changed somewhat from 2008 to 2017, with an overall growth in the use of arrest/warrants, and infringements for some offences, and a reduction in the use of cautions. This pattern is troubling, particularly for non-violent and high-volume offending incidents types such as illicit drug and property offending incidents. This trend may indicate that police are in general responding to offending among young people with more serious actions/sanctions, or that they are dealing with more repeat offenders who are more difficult to caution or divert, or both.

## 2.3 Trends in unique offenders

Unique offenders are defined as any offender aged 10- to 17-years who has been recorded in an occurrence in any given year. Hence, unique offenders are counted only once within each year, but may be represented as a unique offender across a number of different years if they have also been recorded in occurrences in multiple annual periods. Figure 29 displays the changes in the number of unique offenders in each year from 2008 to 2017, while Table 25 displays the number of unique offenders in each year as well as the rate of unique offenders (per 10,000 young persons aged 10 to 17 years).

Figure 29 shows that there has been an overall downward trend in the number of unique offenders from 2008 to 2017, though the number has shifted upwards slightly in 2016 and 2017.



**Figure 29: Trends in the number of unique offenders aged 10 to 17 years in each year, 2008 to 2017**

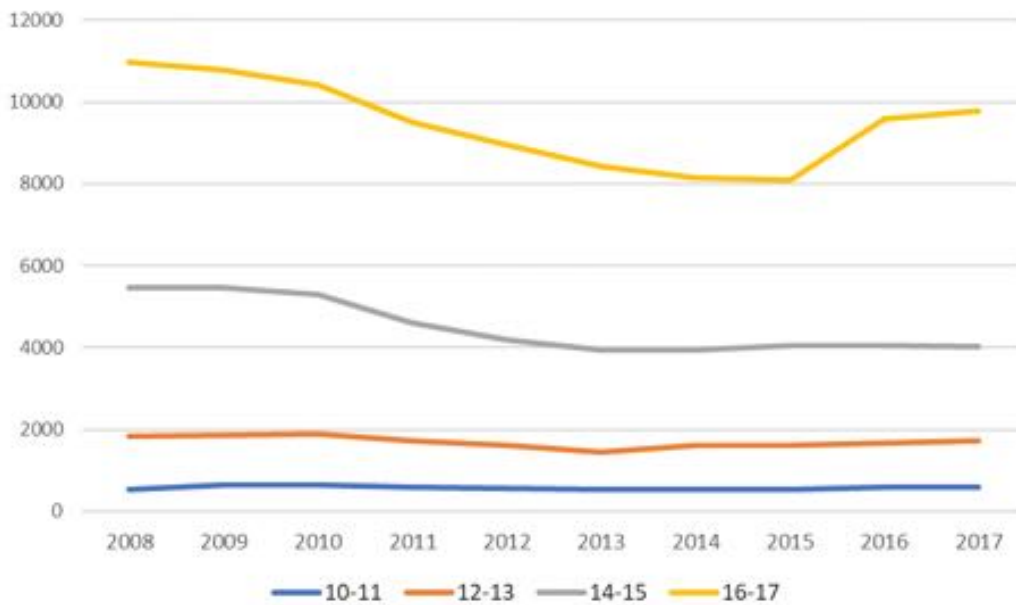
As can be seen in Table 25, there has been a notable decline in the number of unique offenders from 2008 to 2017 of 14.2%, with 2670 less young people being recorded for offences in 2017. This decline has occurred both in the total volume of youth offenders, but also as a proportion of the population, with an overall lower population rate for youth offenders in 2017 compared to 2008. The population rate for youth offenders was 404.16 in 2008 compared to 321.67 in 2017, comprising a decline of 20.4% in the population rate for youth offenders.

**Table 25: Number and rate of unique offenders aged 10 to 17 years, 2008 to 2017**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Difference 2008 to 2017
<b>Number of unique offenders</b>	18,801	18,746	18,278	16,448	15,363	14,348	14,270	14,298	15,913	16,131	-2670
<b>Rate of unique offenders*</b>	404.16	399.57	388.22	346.64	321.65	299.82	297.31	295.96	324.76	321.67	-82.50

\*Note: The rate represents the number of unique offenders per 10,000 young person aged 10 to 17 years in each year.

Trends in the approximate age of unique offenders is shown in Figure 30. It should be noted that the age for unique offenders is approximated based on their year of birth and the index year, as some offenders will have multiple offending incidents in each year, and so there is no single date that can be used to establish an exact age. As can be seen in Figure 30, the most notable drop in unique offenders has been in the 16- to 17-year-old age group, followed by the 14- to 15-year-old age group.



**Figure 30: Trends in approximate age of unique offenders, 2008 to 2017\***

\*Note: The age of offenders represented here are approximate; because offenders can have multiple offending incidents in the year, an offender's age is estimated as the difference between their year of birth and the index year. Therefore, the proportions in each age group may vary somewhat compared to when age is measured at a specific occurrence/incident.

Table 26 displays the number and proportion of unique offenders in each age group (note: age groups are approximate not exact), from 2008 to 2017. Over this period there has been an 11% decline in the number of unique offenders in 16- to 17-year-old age group, and a 26% decline in unique offenders respectively in the 14- to 15-year-old age group, translating to 1,192 and 1,429 fewer offenders respectively over this time period. There was also a decline of 6% in the number of unique offenders in the 12- to 13-year-old age group from 2008 to 2017, translating to 111 fewer offenders in 2017. In contrast to the other age groups, there was an increase of 12% in the number of unique offenders in the 10- to 11-year-old group from 2008 to 2017, translating to an additional 62 offenders in this age group in 2017.

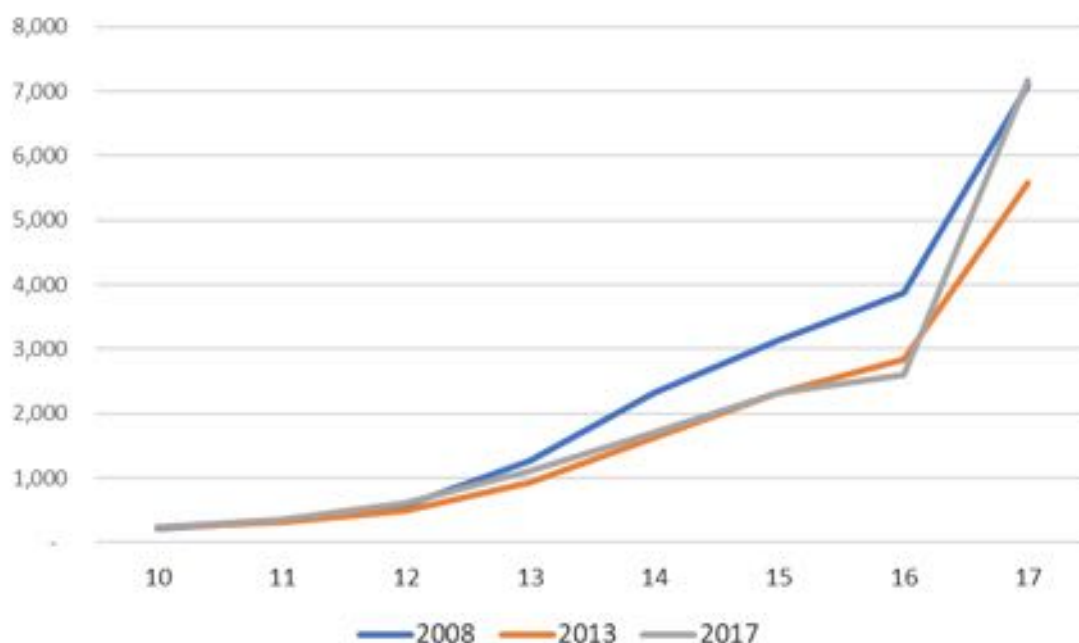
**Table 26: Number of unique offenders by approximate age, from 2008 to 2017**

Age group	2008 N (%)	2009 N (%)	2010 N (%)	2011 N (%)	2012 N (%)	2013 N (%)	2014 N (%)	2015 N (%)	2016 N (%)	2017 N (%)	Difference 2008 to 2017
10-11	538 (2.9%)	644 (3.4%)	645 (3.5%)	601 (3.7%)	574 (3.7%)	544 (3.8%)	537 (3.8%)	529 (3.7%)	593 (3.7%)	600 (3.7%)	62
12-13	1,834 (9.8%)	1,862 (9.9%)	1,907 (10.4%)	1,719 (10.5%)	1,630 (10.5%)	1,446 (10.1%)	1,625 (11.4%)	1,611 (11.3%)	1,681 (10.6%)	1,723 (10.7%)	-111
14-15	5,457 (29.0%)	5,465 (29.2%)	5,297 (29.0%)	4,610 (28.0%)	4,195 (28.0%)	3,935 (27.4%)	3,950 (27.7%)	4,055 (28.4%)	4,059 (25.5%)	4,028 (25.0%)	-1,429
16-17	10,972 (58.4%)	10,775 (57.5%)	10,429 (57.1%)	9,518 (57.9%)	8,964 (57.9%)	8,423 (58.7%)	8,158 (57.2%)	8,103 (56.7%)	9,580 (60.2%)	9,780 (60.6%)	-1,192

\*Note: The age of offenders represented here are approximate; because offenders can have multiple offending incidents in the year, an offender's age is estimated as the difference between their year of birth and the index year. Therefore, the proportions in each age group may vary somewhat compared to when age is measured at a specific occurrence/incident.

Figure 31 displays the distribution of the approximate age of unique offenders in 2008, 2013 and 2017. This graph demonstrates that changes in the number of unique offenders over these three time periods has not been uniform across the age groups. In particular it demonstrates that the greatest drop has been in the number of unique offenders in the 14- to 16-year-old age groups, with the younger age groups showing little change, and with the number of unique offenders in the 17-year-old age group in 2017 constituting little change from 2008 but a notable increase from 2013. The starkly different patterns for unique offenders in the 16- and 17-year-old age groups suggests that some of these differences are likely to be driven by differences in criminal justice system legislation, diversion options, court jurisdictions and differences in

detention and community-based sanctions for youth offenders compared to adult offenders, as 17-year-olds were considered adult offenders by the Queensland criminal justice system for the period of this analysis.



**Figure 31: Number of unique youth offenders at each age\* in 2008, 2012 and 2017**

\*Note: The age of offenders represented here are approximate; because offenders can have multiple offending incidents in the year, an offender's age is estimated as the difference between their year of birth and the index year. Therefore, the proportions in each age group may vary somewhat compared to when age is measured at a specific occurrence/incident.

### 2.3.1 Repeat offenders

Table 27 displays the number of offenders who have two or more offending incidents recorded against them in each annual period, by age group (note that age groups in this analysis are approximate not exact).

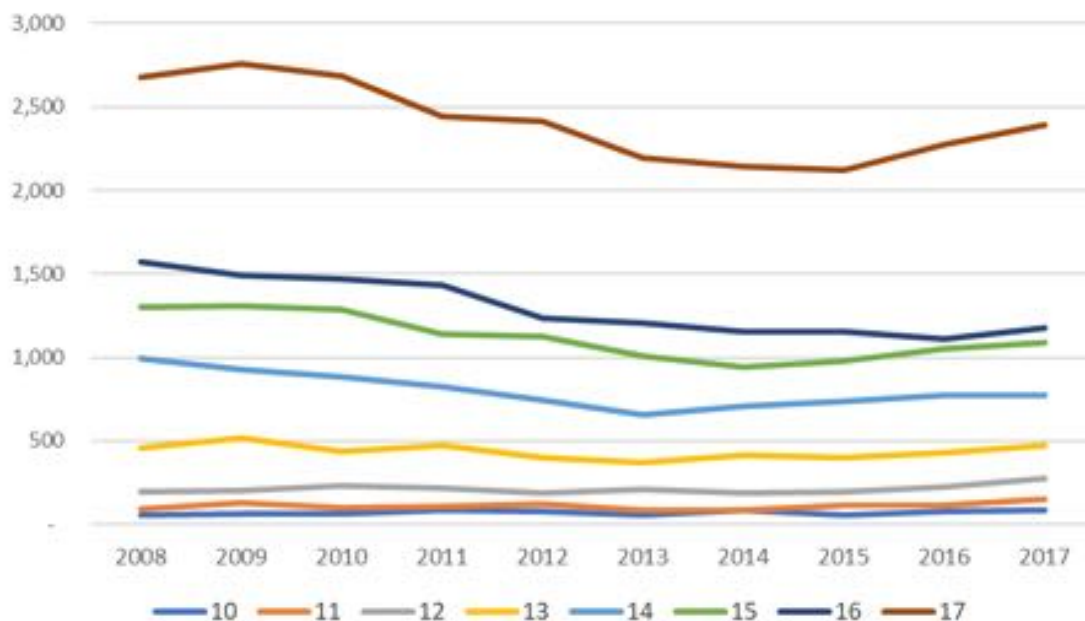
Overall, there was a 12.7% decline in the number of repeat offenders from 2008 to 2017. There were contrasting trends for repeat offending for the younger age groups compared to the older age groups, with an increase in repeat offending among the younger age groups and a decrease in repeat offending among the older age groups. Compared to 2008, there were fewer repeat offenders in 2017 in the older adolescent age groups, with 14-, 15-, 16- and 17-year-old age groups displaying declines of 21.8%, 16.2%, 25.3% and 10.5% in repeat offending, respectively. In contrast, there was an increase in the number of repeat offenders in the younger age groups from 2008 to 2017, with increases of 57.5%, 63.7%, 37.9% and 3.0% in the 10-, 11-, 12-, and 13-year-old age groups respectively.

Figure 32 displays the number of offenders who had two or more offending incidents recorded each year from 2008 to 2017. Figure 32 shows the decline in repeat offending in the older adolescent age groups (14- to 17-year-olds) from 2008 to 2017 that were evident in Table 27. It is notable, however, that there has been a small increase in repeat offending for 17-year-olds in 2016 and 2017.

**Table 27: Number of repeat offenders in each annual period by age, 2008 to 2017**

Age	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Difference 2008 to 2017
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
10	59 (28.0%)	66 (24.1%)	63 (26.6%)	89 (33.7%)	75 (31.0%)	59 (25.9%)	84 (35.3%)	60 (28.8%)	77 (29.2%)	87 (36.1%)	28
11	91 (27.8%)	129 (34.9%)	102 (25.0%)	107 (31.8%)	122 (36.7%)	88 (27.8%)	86 (28.8%)	113 (35.2%)	117 (35.6%)	149 (41.5%)	58
12	198 (35.0%)	201 (34.4%)	230 (36.3%)	216 (36.9%)	186 (34.7%)	207 (41.0%)	189 (36.2%)	199 (37.2%)	222 (37.4%)	273 (45.0%)	75
13	461 (36.4%)	517 (40.5%)	439 (34.5%)	472 (41.6%)	402 (36.7%)	371 (39.4%)	413 (37.4%)	399 (37.1%)	429 (39.4%)	475 (42.5%)	14
14	993 (42.8%)	930 (39.5%)	882 (40.1%)	827 (42.5%)	741 (41.9%)	658 (40.6%)	710 (41.4%)	738 (41.4%)	775 (44.0%)	777 (45.7%)	-216
15	1,299 (41.4%)	1,311 (42.1%)	1,287 (41.5%)	1,137 (42.6%)	1,124 (46.3%)	1,005 (43.4%)	942 (42.1%)	982 (43.2%)	1,049 (45.7%)	1,089 (46.8%)	-210
16	1,573 (40.6%)	1,492 (41.5%)	1,467 (41.4%)	1,433 (44.6%)	1,235 (42.4%)	1,206 (42.6%)	1,156 (43.2%)	1,156 (42.8%)	1,113 (42.1%)	1,175 (45.0%)	-398
17	2,674 (37.7%)	2,759 (38.4%)	2,683 (39.0%)	2,440 (38.7%)	2,416 (39.9%)	2,197 (39.3%)	2,142 (39.1%)	2,121 (39.2%)	2,271 (32.7%)	2,393 (33.4%)	-281
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,348</b>	<b>7,405</b>	<b>7,153</b>	<b>6,721</b>	<b>6,301</b>	<b>5,791</b>	<b>5,722</b>	<b>5,768</b>	<b>6,053</b>	<b>6,418</b>	<b>-930</b>

\*Note: The age of offenders represented here are approximate; because offenders can have multiple offending incidents in the year, an offender's age is estimated as the difference between their year of birth and the index year. Therefore, the proportions in each age group may vary somewhat compared to when age is measured at a specific occurrence/incident.

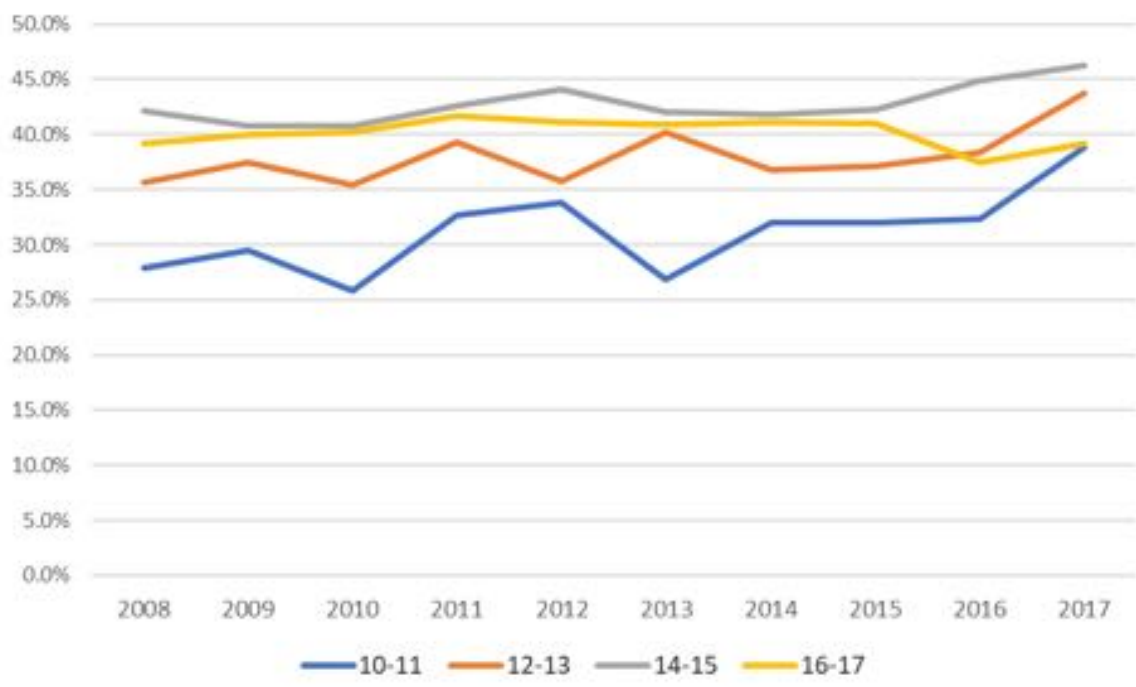
**Figure 32: Number of offenders with two or more offending incidents in a year by approximate age, 2008 to 2017**

\*Note: The age of offenders represented here are approximate; because offenders can have multiple offending incidents in the year, an offender's age is estimated as the difference between their year of birth and the index year. Therefore, the proportions in each age group may vary somewhat compared to when age is measured at a specific occurrence/incident.

Figure 33 shows the proportion of offenders in each age group that are classified as repeat offenders, from 2008 to 2017. This graph indicates that despite a drop in the number of repeat offenders as shown in Table 27, the offender cohort in each age group is now comprised of a notably greater proportion of repeat offenders in 2017 than in 2008, with the exception of 16- to 17-year-olds, where the proportion of repeat

offenders has not materially changed (39.1% in 2008 and 39.2% in 2017). The decline in the number of repeat offenders alongside an increase in the proportion of repeat offenders suggests that there has been a relatively larger decline in one-off offenders over this period, with repeat offenders declining as well but by a relatively smaller magnitude.

The most dramatic increases in the proportion of offenders who have two or more offending incidents in an annual period from 2008 to 2017 was for 10- to 11-year-olds; in this age group in 2008, 27.9% of offenders were repeat offenders, while in 2017 38.8% of offenders were repeat offenders. The proportion of repeat offenders in the 12- to 13-year-old group increased from 35.7% in 2008 to 43.8% in 2017, and for the 14- to 15-year-old age group the proportion of offenders increased from 42.1% in 2008 to 46.2% in 2017.



**Figure 33: Percent of offenders with two or more offending incidents within a 12-month period in each age group, 2008 to 2017**

\*Note: The age of offenders represented here are approximate; because offenders can have multiple offending incidents in the year, an offender’s age is estimated as the difference between their year of birth and the index year. Therefore, the proportions in each age group may vary somewhat compared to when age is measured at a specific occurrence/incident.

Table 28 displays the number and proportion of offending incidents for youth offenders within each year, which illustrates the extent of repeat offending by unique offenders in each annual period. Table 29 displays the rates for each repeat offending group as a population rate, adjusting this to the size of the population aged 10 to 17 years in each year.

Overall, these data indicate that the most notable declines in unique offenders have been for offenders who are recorded in one occurrence in a year, with declines also evident in low to moderate rates of offending, that is declines in young people with two to nine offending incidents in a year. However, both in terms of the number of offenders and the population rate of offenders, there has been considerable growth in the chronic offending rates, that is growth in the proportion of the youth population that are recorded in 10 or more incidents in a year.

Table 28 shows that the majority of unique youth offenders in each year only offend once, however as noted the size of this group has reduced from 2008 to 2017, comprising a relative reduction of 15.2% and translating to 1,740 less offenders who offend only once in a year. Noting that the total number of unique offenders has declined by 2,670 or 14.2% from 2008 to 2017, the reduction in offenders who offend only once in a year constitutes 65.2% of this decline in unique offenders. Youth offenders who have two offending incidents in a year have declined by 21.5% or 653 unique offenders, while those who have 3 to 4 offending incidents in a year have declined by 22.8% or 495 unique offenders. There has also been a decline in the number of offenders who have 5 to 9 offending incidents in a year of 13.5% from 2008 to 2017, translating to a decrease in 194 unique offenders.

The only group of offenders which has shown a substantial increase is for offenders with 10 or more offending incidents recorded against them in a year; these chronic offenders have grown collectively by 58.8% or by 412 offenders. The growth of a more chronic recidivist young offending population appears to be one of the main drivers for increases in offending incidents from 2008 to 2017, with concurrent declines in the number of low to moderate offenders in the offending population over the same period.

Table 29 displays the population rate of offenders for each repeat offending group, from 2008 to 2017. The changes in the offender population rate for each repeat offending group supports the trends apparent in the changes in numbers in each of these groups from 2008 to 2017. The greatest decline in offender population rate occurring for those who have one offending incident in a year, with declines of a lesser magnitude occurring in offender population rates for those who have two to nine offending incidents in a given year. Similarly, the only increase in offender population rate is for the very chronic offenders, that is those who have 10 or more offending incidents in a year.

The growth in the chronic youth offender population is notable, and will be explored further in section 2.3.3.3.

**Table 28: Number of annual offending incidents for youth offenders, 2008 to 2017**

<b>Number of annual offending incidents</b>	<b>2008 N (%)</b>	<b>2009 N (%)</b>	<b>2010 N (%)</b>	<b>2011 N (%)</b>	<b>2012 N (%)</b>	<b>2013 N (%)</b>	<b>2014 N (%)</b>	<b>2015 N (%)</b>	<b>2016 N (%)</b>	<b>2017 N (%)</b>	<b>Difference 2008 to 2017</b>
<b>1</b>	11,453 (60.9%)	11,341 (60.5%)	11,125 (60.9%)	9,727 (59.1%)	9,062 (59.0%)	8,557 (59.6%)	8,548 (59.9%)	8,530 (59.7%)	9,860 (62.0%)	9,713 (60.2%)	-1740
<b>2</b>	3,034 (16.1%)	3,137 (16.7%)	2,797 (15.3%)	2,535 (15.4%)	2,307 (15.0%)	2,115 (14.7%)	2,104 (14.7%)	2,170 (15.2%)	2,141 (13.5%)	2,381 (14.8%)	-653
<b>3-4</b>	2,172 (11.6%)	2,122 (11.3%)	2,026 (11.1%)	1,921 (11.7%)	1,725 (11.2%)	1,535 (10.7%)	1,544 (10.8%)	1,578 (11.0%)	1,657 (10.4%)	1,677 (10.4%)	-495
<b>5-9</b>	1,441 (7.7%)	1,365 (7.3%)	1,463 (8.0%)	1,347 (8.2%)	1,276 (8.3%)	1,264 (8.8%)	1,206 (8.5%)	1,183 (8.3%)	1,264 (7.9%)	1,247 (7.7%)	-194
<b>10 or more</b>	701 (3.7%)	781 (4.2%)	867 (4.7%)	918 (5.6%)	993 (6.5%)	877 (6.1%)	868 (6.1%)	837 (5.9%)	991 (6.2%)	1,113 (6.9%)	412
<b>Total unique offenders</b>	18,801	18,746	18,278	16,448	15,363	14,348	14,270	14,298	15,913	16,131	-2670

**Table 29: Rate of offenders (per 10,000 young person aged 10 to 17 years) in each repeat offending group, 2008 to 2017**

<b>Number of annual offending incidents for youth offenders</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>Difference 2008 to 2017</b>
<b>1</b>	246.20	241.74	236.29	205.00	189.73	178.81	178.09	176.56	201.23	193.69	-52.52
<b>2</b>	65.22	66.87	59.41	53.43	48.30	44.20	43.84	44.92	43.69	47.48	-17.74
<b>3-4</b>	46.69	45.23	43.03	40.49	36.12	32.08	32.17	32.66	33.82	33.44	-13.25
<b>5-9</b>	30.98	29.10	31.07	28.39	26.72	26.41	25.13	24.49	25.80	24.87	-6.11
<b>10 or more</b>	15.07	16.65	18.41	19.35	20.79	18.33	18.08	17.33	20.22	22.19	7.12
<b>Total unique offenders</b>	404.16	399.57	388.22	346.64	321.65	299.82	297.31	295.96	324.76	321.67	-82.50

## 2.3.2 Growth in chronic offenders

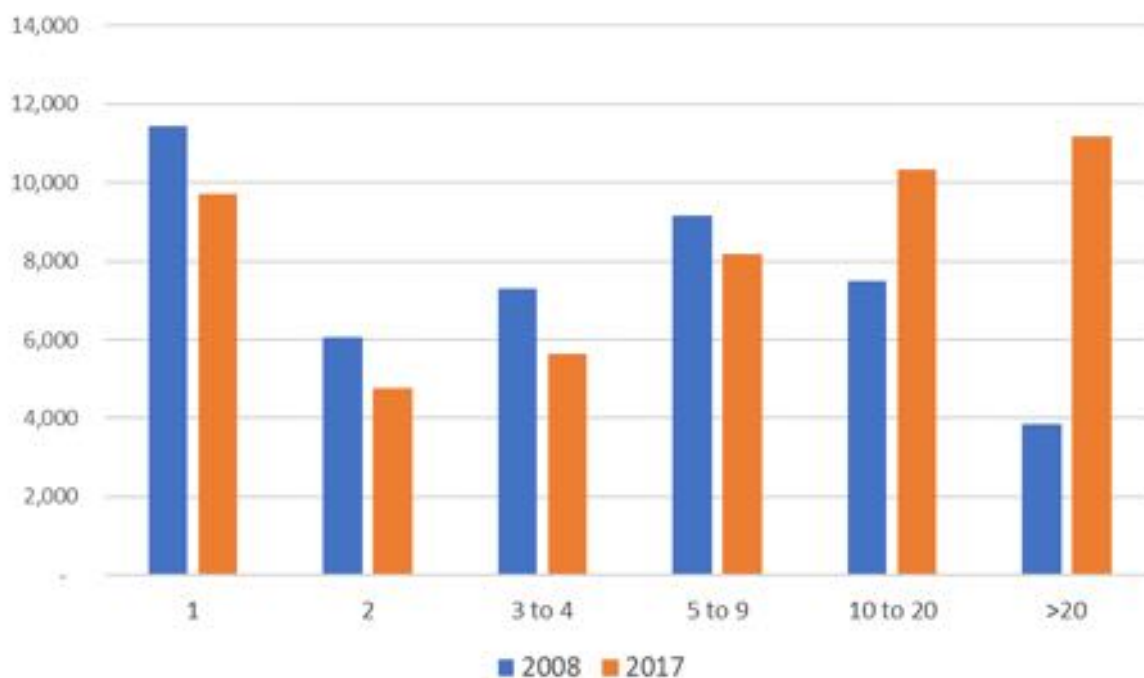
This section aims to better explore the growth in chronic youth offenders in Queensland from 2008 to 2017. Table 30 displays the extent of repeat offending for unique offenders in each year, and the number of offending incidents each of offenders are associated with. Compared to 2008, there are a smaller number of offenders offending between 1 to 9 times in a year, with the total number of offending incidents for these low to moderate repeat offender groups naturally dropping. In 2008, offenders who had one to 9 offending incidents recorded against them in a 12-month period were associated with 75% of all offending incidents in 2008, while in 2017 offenders who had one to nine offending incidents recorded against them were associated with 57% of all offending incidents in 2017.

At the same time as the decline in low to moderate offending from 2008 to 2017, there has been dramatic growth in the proportion and volume of the youth offender population who are offending 10 or more times. In 2008, young offenders with 10 or more offending incidents in a year comprised in total 4% of the youth offending population and were responsible for 25% of offending incidents, translating to 11,358 incidents. In 2017, young offenders with 10 or more offending incidents in a year comprised in total 7% of the youth offending population and were responsible for 43% of offending incidents, translating to 21,537 incidents. The growth of this chronic offending group has therefore been associated with a dramatic growth in offending incidents over this period.

**Table 30: Number of repeat offending incidents for unique offenders and associated total number of offending incidents in each repeat offending category, 2008 and 2017**

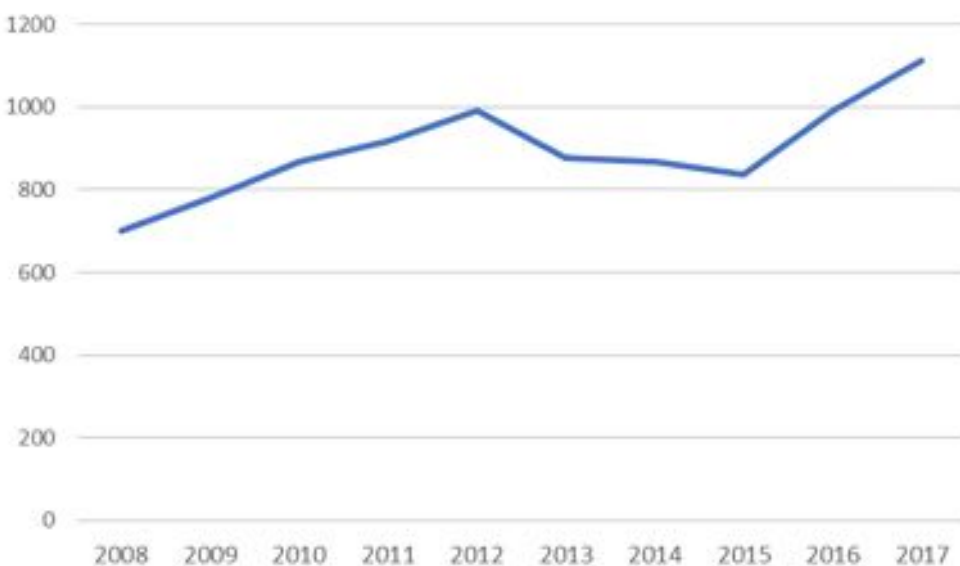
Number of offending incidents in annual period	2008				2017			
	Number of unique offenders	Percent of unique offenders	Number of offending incidents	Percent of offending incidents	Number of unique offenders	Percent of unique offenders	Number of offending incidents	Percent of offending incidents
1	11,453	61%	11,453	25%	9,713	60%	9,713	19%
2	3,034	16%	6,068	13%	2,381	15%	4,762	10%
3-4	2,172	12%	7,317	16%	1,677	10%	5,633	11%
5-9	1,441	8%	9,158	20%	1,247	8%	8,168	16%
10-20	568	3%	7,498	17%	754	5%	10,345	21%
21 or more	133	1%	3,860	9%	359	2%	11,192	22%
Total	18,801	100%	45,354	100%	16,131	100%	49,813	100%

The number of offending incidents being generated by each repeat offending group from 2008 to 2017 can be seen in Figure 34. The dramatic increase in the number of offending incidents being generated by offenders who have 10 or more offending incidents recorded against them in each annual period is clear in this graph, along with drops in the number of offending incidents generated by the low to moderate offender groups.



**Figure 34: Total number of offending incidents for unique youth offenders according to the level of repeat offending, 2008 to 2017**

Figure 35 displays the number of offenders in each year that have been recorded for 10 or more offending incidents. The shape of this trend indicates a degree of linear but inconsistent growth. The shape of this graph suggests a possible interaction of a broader cohort effect for a sub-group of young people which is driving increases in chronic offending, along with potential period effects, such as changes in criminal justice system or other health and welfare system procedures, policies or legislation over this period, which have acted either to hasten or slow the increase in chronic offending or the surveillance or recording of offending among particular offender groups, or both.



**Figure 35: Trends in the number of offenders who are recorded for 10 or more offending incidents in a year, 2008 to 2017**

Table 31 and Table 32 examine the age breakdown of young people who have had 10 or more offending incidents in a year from 2008 to 2017, displaying respectively the number and proportion of chronic offenders and the population rates for chronic offenders. It is evident that there have been increases in chronic

offending across all the age groups, when considered in terms of both absolute growth and population rate growth of chronic offending. There has been greatest relative growth in the 10- to 11- and 12- to 13-year-old age groups, with a 210.0% and 117.2% increase in chronic offending in these groups, albeit off a low base. The volume of chronic offending has remained in the 14- to 15- and 16- to 17-year-old age groups with 84.7% of chronic offending being generated by these age groups in 2017. Additionally, the growth in chronic offending from 2008 to 2017 is led by 16- to 17-year-olds who comprise 38.6% of the additional chronic offenders in 2017, followed by 14- to 15-year-olds who comprise 38.1% of this growth, with 10- to 11-year-olds and 12- to 13-year-olds comprising 5.1% and 18.2% of the growth in chronic offending, respectively. The population rates for chronic offenders show a similar pattern, with increases in each age group, but most of the growth occurring in the 14- to 17-year-old age groups.

**Table 31: Number and proportion of unique offenders with 10 or more offending incidents in a year in each age group\*, 2008 to 2017**

Age group	2008 N (%)	2009 N (%)	2010 N (%)	2011 N (%)	2012 N (%)	2013 N (%)	2014 N (%)	2015 N (%)	2016 N (%)	2017 N (%)	Difference 2008 to 2017
10-11	10 (1.4%)	19 (2.4%)	17 (2.0%)	35 (3.8%)	25 (2.5%)	18 (2.1%)	22 (2.5%)	15 (1.8%)	30 (3.0%)	31 (2.8%)	21
12-13	64 (9.1%)	81 (10.4%)	76 (8.8%)	94 (10.2%)	96 (9.7%)	92 (10.5%)	122 (14.1%)	100 (11.9%)	111 (11.2%)	139 (12.5%)	75
14-15	243 (34.7%)	268 (34.3%)	313 (36.1%)	299 (32.6%)	362 (36.5%)	311 (35.5%)	302 (34.8%)	314 (37.5%)	381 (38.4%)	400 (35.9%)	157
16-17	384 (54.8%)	413 (52.9%)	461 (53.2%)	490 (53.4%)	510 (51.4%)	456 (52.0%)	422 (48.6%)	408 (48.7%)	469 (47.3%)	543 (48.8%)	159
<b>Total</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>781</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>918</b>	<b>993</b>	<b>877</b>	<b>868</b>	<b>837</b>	<b>991</b>	<b>1113</b>	<b>412</b>

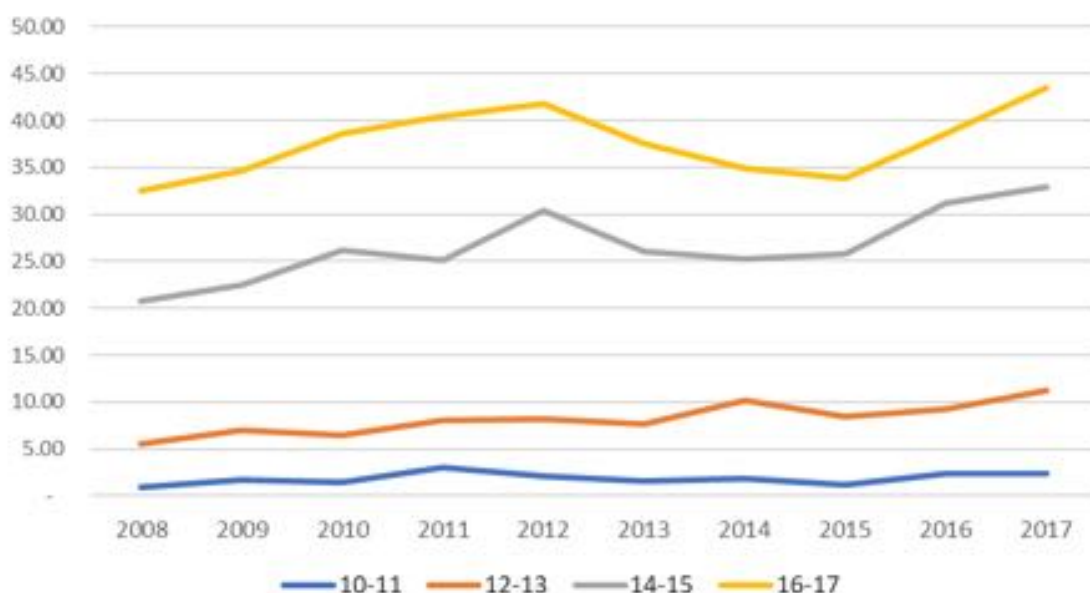
\*Note: The age of offenders represented here are approximate; because offenders can have multiple offending incidents in the year, an offender's age is estimated as the difference between their year of birth and the index year. Therefore, the proportions in each age group may vary slightly compared to when age is measured at a specific occurrence/incident.

**Table 32: Rate of chronic offending (10 or more offending incidents each year) in each age group\* per 10,000 10-17 year-olds, 2008 to 2017**

Age group	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Difference 2008 to 2017
10-11	0.88	1.66	1.47	2.98	2.11	1.53	1.85	1.23	2.38	2.36	1.48
12-13	5.50	6.96	6.50	8.01	8.14	7.67	10.13	8.40	9.22	11.22	5.72
14-15	20.75	22.53	26.24	25.16	30.36	26.06	25.20	25.77	31.21	32.97	12.22
16-17	32.53	34.66	38.62	40.47	41.78	37.52	34.91	33.86	38.56	43.54	11.01

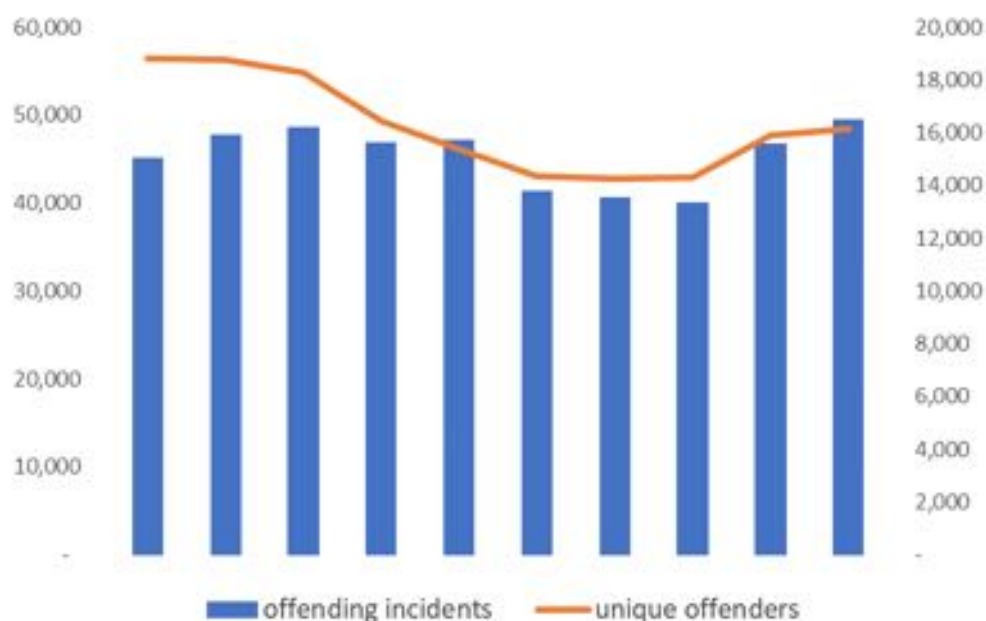
\*Note: The age of offenders represented here are approximate; because offenders can have multiple offending incidents in the year, an offender's age is estimated as the difference between their year of birth and the index year. Therefore, the proportions in each age group may vary slightly compared to when age is measured at a specific occurrence/incident.

Figure 36 displays the trends in the population rate for chronic offending amongst 10- to 17-year-olds. This figure displays that the growth in chronic offending has a somewhat linear but inconsistent growth, with 14- to 15-year-olds and 16- to 17-year-olds age groups displaying a reduction in the rate of chronic offending in 2013, and with a subsequent upswing in the rate of chronic offending in 2016 and 2017 for these two age groups. For the younger age groups (10- to 13-year-olds), the increase in chronic offenders has displayed a much slower and more gradual growth.



**Figure 36: Population rate for chronic offending in each age group (per 10,000 10- to 17-year-olds), 2008 to 2017**

Figure 37 shows the trends in youth offending incidents (on the primary axis) and the trend for the number of unique youth offenders (on the secondary axis). This graph shows that the growth in offending incidents in recent years is being driven by both an increase in unique offenders and an increase in repeat offending, particularly for 2016 and 2017. The trend for unique offenders has rebounded only slightly in these years, while offending incidents shows notable relative growth over the same period.



**Figure 37: Comparison trends in youth offending incidents (on the primary axis) and the trend for the number of unique youth offenders (on the secondary axis), 2008 to 2017**

### 2.3.3 Summary and discussion of trends in unique offenders and repeat offending

#### 2.3.3.1 Unique offenders

The number of unique youth offenders in Queensland has shown overall a fairly consistent downward trend from 2008 to 2017, declining in total by approximately 14.2% over this period (a reduction of 2670 unique offenders), though there was a slight rebound upwards in the number of unique offenders in 2016 and 2017. This is also reflected in a reduced population rate for offenders in Queensland, with the number of offenders reducing from 404.2 per 10,000 young persons in 2008 to 321.7 per 10,000 young persons in 2017.

Most age groups had declines in the number of unique offenders, with the exception of 10- to 11-year-olds who displayed a small increase in the number of unique offenders from 2008 to 2017. In addition, the more recent rebound in the unique offender numbers appears to have occurred primarily amongst 17-year-olds. Most of the growth in 17-year-old offenders from 2015 to 2017 were for offenders who had one offending incident in a year (a growth of 1493 offenders; analysis not shown). As noted in section 2.2.10.3, the biggest growth in offending incident types for 17 year-olds in recent years (from 2013 to 2017) has been in incidents where the most serious offence was a traffic and vehicle regulatory offences or an offence against justice procedures, government security and government operations. It is possible that a considerable proportion of the growth in unique offenders in the 17-year-old age group from 2015 to 2017 may be due to increased traffic policing or new traffic or vehicle regulation legislation.

These trends suggest that both period and cohort effects are driving changes in the youth offending population, with an overall cohort effect exerting downward pressure on offending in the contemporary youth population and with recent period effects, such as changes in criminal justice legislation, policy or practices, likely to have impacted on recent increases in the youth offender population in 2016 and 2017. It is possible that some of the increase in the number of unique offenders in 2016 and 2017 could be due to increases in traffic and vehicle offending incidents; 17-year-olds show a large increase in these offence types since 2015 and also display the most notable increase in the number of unique offenders, primarily of offenders with only one incident in a year.

### **2.3.3.2 Repeat offenders**

In 2017, most offenders (60%) were only recorded in one offending incident in a given year, and while the proportion of one-off offenders has not changed dramatically, they have declined notably in number from 2008 to 2017. In fact, most of the decline in unique offenders from 2008 to 2017 has occurred among offenders who are recorded in one incident in a year. There have also been declines in low to moderate repeat offenders, with reductions in the number of offenders who have two to nine offending incidents each year. The only repeat offending group that has demonstrated an increase from 2008 to 2017 is very chronic youth offenders, that is those who are recorded for 10 or more incidents in an annual period.

Repeat offenders are defined as offenders who are recorded in two or more occurrences in a calendar year. The proportion of repeat offenders across the age groups ranged from between 39% to 46%. However, there were divergent trends across the age groups in the number of repeat offenders, with the number of repeat offenders in the older adolescent groups (14- to 17-year-olds) decreasing from 2008 to 2017 by between 11% to 25%, while the number of repeat offenders in the early adolescent groups (10- to 13-year-olds) increased over the same period by between 3% and 63%. Despite a reduction in volume of repeat offenders in the older adolescent group, the proportion of repeat offenders increased by 4.1 percentage points from 2008 to 2017 amongst the 14- to 15-year-old group; though the proportion of repeat offenders did not change materially for the 16- to 17-year-old age group. The most dramatic increases in the proportion of repeat offenders occurred for the 10 to 11-year-old age group and the 12- to 13-year-old age group, where repeat offenders increased as a proportion of the offending population by 10.9 and 8.1 percentage points respectively.

### **2.3.3.3 Chronic offenders**

At the same time as experiencing a drop in the number of unique youth offenders from 2008 to 2017, there has been concurrent growth in the size of the very chronic offender group in Queensland, and this appears to be a primary driver of increases in the number of offending incidents over this period. Chronic offenders, defined in this report as young people who have 10 or more offending incidents in a year, grew from 4% of the youth offender population (or 701 offenders) in 2008, to 7% of the youth offender population (or 1113 offenders) in 2017, translating to an increase of 412 chronic offenders. The number and proportion of offending incidents that these chronic offenders are responsible for have naturally grown over this period; in 2008 the chronic offender population was responsible for 25% of youth offending incidents or 11,358 incidents, while in 2017 the chronic offender population was responsible for 43% of youth offending incidents or 21,537 incidents.

The growth of the chronic offender population has occurred in two key periods, from 2008 to 2012, and following a slow decline from 2012 to 2015, a subsequent second growth period in 2016 and 2017. This suggests that while there are likely to be cohort effects that are leading to a concentration of chronic offending amongst particular population groups, there are also evident period effects in which it is probable that changes in criminal justice policy, legislation, or practices may have increased the volume of contacts that particular groups are having with the criminal justice system. The growth of the chronic offender

population from 2008 to 2017 was evident across each of the age groups, with most of the growth in chronic offenders over this period occurring amongst 16- to 17-year-olds and 14- to 15-year-olds.

#### **2.3.3.4 Discussion**

The decline in the number of offenders among young people in Queensland from 2008 to 2017 is consistent with trends occurring in other Australian jurisdictions and in a number of international jurisdictions. This suggests that the decline is likely at least in part driven by cohort changes, which have resulted in contemporary cohorts of young people being exposed to a different constellation of risk and protective factors and different opportunity contexts for offending, which have overall reduced the number of young people being recorded for offending behaviour. The concurrent growth in highly chronic or recidivist offenders also reflects trends seen in Australia and internationally.

While it is challenging to compare on a like basis the size of the chronic offender population in Queensland with that found in other jurisdictions, comparison with a recent Victorian analysis (Millstead & Sutherland, 2016; analysis not shown) suggests that chronic offenders comprise a large proportion of the youth offending population in Queensland and are responsible for a larger proportion of overall offending incidents, compared to the Victorian youth offender population. The Victorian analysis suggested that among youth offenders aged 10- to 24-years-old in 2015/16, 3.8% had 11 or more incidents recorded against them in a year, and this group of chronic offenders were collectively responsible for 28.9% of all offending incidents in the same year (Millstead & Sutherland, 2016). Considering the same threshold for chronic offending in the Queensland data, in 2017, 6.1% of youth offenders had 11 or more incidents recorded against them in a year, and this group were collectively responsible for 40.8% of all incidents in the same year. This suggests that chronic youth offending constitutes a larger and more critical feature of the youth offending landscape in Queensland.

The proportion of offending incidents in Queensland in 2017 that are driven by the chronic youth offending cohort (43%) suggests that a key contemporary challenge for the Queensland criminal justice system is how to effectively respond to chronic offenders in order to contribute towards reduced offending behaviour and ultimately desistance. Unlike the broader trend in the reduction in youth offending population, the drivers for the growth in the chronic youth offending population are less well explored or understood, though recent studies have indicated that this growth in chronic adult and youth offenders and repeated victimisation has been concentrated in lower socio-economic areas (Hunter & Tseloni, 2016; Ignatans & Pease, 2015; McVie, Norris & Pillinger, 2014; Nilsson, Estrada & Backman, 2017; Pease & Ignatans, 2016). It has been argued that this increased concentration of youth chronic offenders could be a result of growing economic inequalities, an unequal dispersion of securisation benefits for property (leaving greater opportunities for theft in lower socio-economic areas), or greater concentrations of police resources in lower socio-economic areas leading to greater likelihood of detection, recording and charging of offences in these locations (Nilsson, Estrada & Backman, 2017). These issues will be explored further in the discussion section of this report (section 3).

### **3 Discussion**

The results from the analysis of youth offending will be discussed with reference to potential drivers of the trends within the Queensland criminal justice system context but also with reference to broader trends for youth offending being seen across a range of other jurisdictions. As noted in the introduction, recent international and national studies have found a reduction in the number of offenders amongst young people, alongside an increase in repeat offending (Milstead & Sutherland, 2016; Nilsson, Estrada, & Backman, 2017; Payne, Brown & Broadhurst, 2018). This examination of trends in youth offending in Queensland over 10-year period from 2008 to 2017 presents a mixed picture of offending, but aligns to recent research indicating a decline in the number of youth offenders, along with a growth in the chronic offending population, with the latter effect appearing to be particularly pronounced in the Queensland context, comprising both growth in the proportion and number of chronic offenders. The following discussion will present some of the key findings of this analysis, and will explore potential reasons for these findings with references to Queensland specific factors as well as broader trends identified from national and international research.

#### **3.1 Summary of key findings**

##### **3.1.1 Trends in offences**

Overall, the results present a mixed picture of youth offending in Queensland for the 10-year period from 2008 to 2017. The size of the youth offending population has continued to decline over this period, and this decline in the number of youth offenders has occurred primarily through the reduction of the number of offenders who offend as a one-off or at low to moderate rates. However, there has also been a concurrent growth in the size of the chronic offending population, and this appears to be a primary driver of the increase in the total number of offending incidents in recent years. Some of the key findings are presented below.

##### **3.1.2 Trends in offending incidents**

There has been an overall, though not linear, increase in the total number of offences recorded against youth offenders in Queensland (a 10.5% increase) from 53,654 in 2008 to 59,417 in 2017. This was also reflected in an overall increase in the population rate of offences for young people over this period. The most common offences in 2017 were theft and related offences (27.9%), unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter (11.8%), and illicit drug offences (11.8%). Illicit drug offences in particular have demonstrated considerable growth over the 10-year period, almost doubling in volume from 2008 to 2017.

There was also a smaller, and similarly non-linear, increase in the number of offending incidents from 2008 to 2017, increasing from 45,218 in 2008 to 49,599 in 2017, a 9.6% increase. When considered as a population rate, the rate of offending incidents per young person rose from 972 per 10,000 10 to 17 year-olds, to 988 per 10,000 10 to 17 year-olds, comprising only a 2% increase, and suggesting that at least some of this growth in offending incidents is matched by, and may driven in part by, the growth in the youth population over this period. The non-linear trends for offending incidents from 2008 to 2017 indicate that at least some of the increases in offending incidents have occurred in more recent years. And importantly for contemporary policing considerations regarding youth offending, there has been a notable upward trend for offending incidents in 2016 and 2017.

##### **3.1.2.1 Most serious offences**

Most of the growth from 2008 and 2017 in offending incidents has been driven by incidents in which property offences, illicit drug offences or traffic and vehicle regulatory offences were the most serious offences, while more serious violent offences showed relatively less growth and in some instances declined over this period. The top three most common most serious offences in 2017 were theft and related offences (29.4%), unlawful entry with intent/ burglary, break and enter (13.5%), and illicit drug offences (9.0%). The relative frequency of theft and related offences and unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter remain relatively unchanged from 2008, where they comprised 29.9% and 13.6% of offending incidents respectively. However, offending incidents in which illicit drug offences were the most serious offence showed significant growth from 2008 to 2017, increasing by 91.5% or 2120 offending incidents. Additionally, the notable recent increase in offending incidents in 2016 and 2017 appears to be driven in particular by incidents in which theft and related offences, unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter, and traffic and vehicle regulatory were the most serious offences, with these types of offending incidents growing by 3174, 1851 and 2552 respectively between 2015 and 2017.

##### **3.1.2.2 Gender distribution**

The gender distribution for youth offending incidents has not changed dramatically from 2008 to 2017, with the majority of offending incidents involving young males in 2017 (74.9%), though young females showed

greater relative growth in offending incidents from 2008 to 2017 than males (12.2% compared to 8.7%). The trends in the most serious offence in offending incidents across the genders did not diverge dramatically, with notable growth in offending incidents where the most serious offence was fraud, deception and related offences, illicit drug offences and traffic and vehicle regulatory offences for both groups. However, young females appear to be displaying more complex patterns of offending, with an increase in offending incidents in which the most serious offence was acts intended to cause injury over this period, indicating an increase in violent offending or the recording of violent offending for young female offenders, and a decline in theft and related offences, though theft and related offences remained the most common most serious offence for young females. In contrast, young males displayed a growth in theft and related offending incidents from 2008 to 2017, alongside only very small relative increases in acts intended to cause injury.

### **3.1.2.3 Age distribution and types of offending**

The age distribution for youth offending incidents from 2008 to 2017 did not change substantially, though there were some notable shifts in offending patterns across the age groups. While 14- to 17-year-olds comprised the majority (79.8%) of offenders in youth offending incidents, there was notably greater relative growth in offending incidents among 10-, 11- and 12- year-olds from 2008 to 2017, growing by 53.3%, 73.5% and 61.0%, respectively. The greatest volume of growth from 2008 to 2017 in offending incidents, however, occurred amongst 17-year-olds, who were responsible for approximately 49% of the growth in offending incidents over this period, and who remained the age group with the highest rates of offending over this period. There was also a notable decline in the number of offending incidents for 16-year-olds from 2008 to 2017, resulting in this age group having fewer offending incidents compared to 15-year-olds in 2017. Taking into account population growth across the age groups from 2008 to 2017, most of the age groups showed increases in the population rate of offending from 2008 to 2017, with the exception of 14- and 16-year-olds, who demonstrated reductions in the population rate of offending over this period.

The notably different patterns of offending between 16- and 17-year-olds suggests that at least one driver of this divergence in offending patterns is likely to be differences in the diversion options, criminal court jurisdictions and detention and community-based sanction options for youth offenders compared to adult offenders, as 17-year-olds were treated as adults in the criminal justice system in Queensland over this period.

Examination of the most serious offences for offending incidents across the age groups revealed very different trends across the ages for different types of offending incidents. There were substantial declines in offences against the person offending incidents in 16- and 17- year-olds from 2008 to 2017, with some small increases in the younger age groups. For property offending incidents, the greatest relative growth between 2008 to 2017 occurred in 10- to 12-year-olds (between 42.9% and 60.0% increases in property offending incidents), while at the same time there was a reduction in property offending incidents for 16- and 17- year-olds from 2008 to 2017. However, when examining the growth in property offending incidents between 2015 and 2017, the majority of this growth occurred amongst 14- to 16-year-olds who demonstrated collectively 55% of the increase in property offending incidents over this period.

As noted, illicit drug offending incidents grew dramatically between 2008 and 2017, with most of the growth in illicit drug offending incidents (78.6%) from 2008 to 2017 occurring amongst 15- to 17-year-olds. Public order and security offences were found in total to have declined from 2008 to 2017, and it appears that most of the decline has occurred amongst 16- and 17-year-olds. For offending incidents in which offences against justice procedures, government operations and government security were the most serious offences, the most notable increase from 2008 (and from 2013) to 2017 in these offending incidents was for 17-year-olds, suggesting that this increase may relate to order breaches incurred in the management of community-based orders in the adult criminal justice system. Similarly, for offending incidents in which traffic and vehicle regulatory offences were the most serious offences, the most notable growth occurred for 17-year-olds. This is not surprising, as a learner license cannot be obtained in Queensland until the age of 16 and it is required to be held for a minimum of one year before a provisional license can be applied for, meaning that young people can only drive unsupervised in Queensland from age 17 years at minimum. However, the scale of growth in traffic offending incidents amongst 17 year-olds particularly between 2015 and 2017 suggests that new traffic or vehicle regulation legislation may have been introduced in this period, or that traffic and vehicle regulatory offences were policed much more aggressively in 2016 and 2017.

There was a major decline in youth offending incidents in which alcohol involvement was noted from 14.7% of offending incidents in 2008 to 3.9% in 2017 (a decline of 71.1% or 4730 offending incidents). At the same time, there was a small growth in the proportion of offending incidents in which drug involvement was noted from 1.5% in 2008 to 2.3% in 2017 (an increase of 70.8% of 475 offending incidents). The small growth in the presence of drug involvement in youth offending incidents is dwarfed by the large increase in illicit drug

offences over this period (2,120 additional offending incidents), suggesting that many of the illicit drug offences may have been recorded against young people when they were not under the influence of the drug.

#### **3.1.2.4 Police actions**

Police responses to offenders aged 10- to 17-years appears to have changed somewhat from 2008 to 2017, with an overall growth in the use of arrest/warrants, and infringements for some offences, and a reduction in the use of cautions. This is particularly notable for property offending incidents, which comprises the highest volume type of offending incident type for young people, and which in 2017 were much more commonly responded to by police by arrest/ warrant than in 2008 (increasing from 48.1% of incidents in 2008 compared to 26.2% of incidents in 2017) and much less commonly responded to using cautions (decreasing from 35.6% in 2008 to 20.9% of incidents in 2017). These changes in police actions may indicate in general that police are responding to offending among young people with more serious actions/sanctions, or that officers are dealing with more repeat offenders who are more difficult to caution or divert, or both.

#### **3.1.3 Trends in youth offenders**

The number of unique youth offenders in Queensland has shown overall a fairly consistent downward trend from 2008 to 2017, declining in total by approximately 14.2% over this period (a reduction of 2,670 unique offenders), though there was a slight rebound upwards in the number of unique offenders in 2016 and 2017. This is also reflected in a reduced population rate for offenders in Queensland, with the number of offenders reducing from 404.2 per 10,000 young persons in 2008 to 321.7 per 10,000 young persons in 2017.

Most age groups had declines in the number of unique offenders, with the exception of 10- to 11-year-olds who displayed a small increase in the number of unique offenders from 2008 to 2017. In addition, the more recent rebound in the unique offender numbers appears to have occurred primarily amongst 17-year-olds. Most of the growth in the number of 17-year-old offenders from 2015 to 2017 was in offenders who had one offending incident in a year (a growth of 1493 offenders; analysis not shown). As noted in section 2.2.10.3, the biggest growth in offending incident types for 17 year-olds in recent years (from 2013 to 2017) has been in incidents where the most serious offence was a traffic and vehicle regulatory offences or an offence against justice procedures, government security and government operations. It is possible that a considerable proportion of the growth in unique offenders in the 17-year-old age group from 2015 to 2017 may be due to increased traffic policing or new traffic or vehicle regulation legislation.

These trends suggest that both period and cohort effects are driving changes in the youth offending population, with an overall cohort effect exerting downward pressure on offending in the contemporary youth population and with recent period effects, such as changes in criminal justice legislation, policy or practices, likely to have impacted on recent increases in the youth offender population in 2016 and 2017. It is possible that some of the recent rebound in the number of unique offenders in 2016 and 2017 could be due to increases in traffic and vehicle offending incidents; 17-year-olds show a large increase in these offence types since 2015 and are also the group displaying the most notable growth in unique youth offenders, with this growth primarily comprised of youth offenders with only one incident in a year.

In 2017, most offenders (60%) were only recorded in one offending incident in a given year, and while the proportion of one-off offenders has not changed dramatically, they have declined notably in number from 2008 to 2017. In fact, most of the decline in unique offenders from 2008 to 2017 has occurred amongst offenders who are recorded in one incident in a year. There have also been declines in low to moderate repeat offenders, with reductions in the number of offenders who have two to nine offending incidents each year. The only repeat offending group that has demonstrated an increase from 2008 to 2017 is very chronic youth offenders, that is those who are recorded for 10 or more incidents in an annual period.

While there has been a decline in the number of unique youth offenders from 2008 to 2017, the concurrent increase in the size of the very chronic offender group in Queensland appears to be driving increases in the number of offending incidents over this period. Chronic offenders, defined in this report as young people who have 10 or more offending incidents in a year, grew from 4% of the youth offender population (or 701 offenders) in 2008 to 7% of the youth offender population (or 1,113 offenders) in 2017, translating to an increase of 412 chronic offenders. The number and proportion of offending incidents that these chronic offenders are responsible for have naturally grown over this period; in 2008 the chronic offender population was responsible for 25% of offending incidents or 11,358 incidents, while in 2017 the chronic offender population was responsible for 43% of offending incidents or 21,537 incidents.

The growth of the chronic offender population has occurred in two key periods, from 2008 to 2012, and following a slow decline from 2012 to 2015, a subsequent second growth period in 2016 and 2017. This may

suggest that while there are likely to be cohort effects that are leading to a concentration of chronic offending amongst particular population groups, there are also evident period effects in which it is likely that changes in criminal justice policy, legislation, or practice may have increased the volume of contacts that particular groups are having with the criminal justice system. The growth of the chronic offender population from 2008 to 2017 was evident across each of the age groups, with most of the growth in chronic offenders over this period occurring amongst 16- to 17-year-olds and 14- to 15-year-olds.

### **3.2 Reduction in youth offenders**

In line with other jurisdictions and internationally, the findings on a reduction in the number of youth offenders suggests an overall cohort effect, that is that newer generations of young people have been exposed to a different constellation of risk and protective factors, and opportunity contexts for offending, which have broadly altered the engagement in (traditional) offending behaviour, particularly for the later adolescent age groups (14 to 16 years). According to the age-crime curve, this is traditionally when a larger proportion of young people engage in offending behaviour as a one-off or for a limited time period, before desisting from further offending behaviour over long term (Farrington, 1986). While these findings support other research indicating a blunting of the peak in the age-crime curve (Matthews & Minton, 2018), suggesting a reduction in offending as a behavioural norm in late adolescence, this requires further exploration with across the complete adolescent and early adult age range.

A number of explanations have been proposed for reductions in offending among more recent cohorts of young people in Australia and internationally. Recent cohorts of young people may have been exposed to fewer risk factors for offending including reduced binge drinking (Pennay, Livingston, & Maclean, 2015), reduced time spent without effective guardianship or in contexts where offending or antisocial behaviour is more readily detectable or reportable (e.g. rather than hanging out with friends on the street they may now be spending more time in their homes engaged in online activities; Farrell, Tilley, Tseloni, 2014; Payne, Brown & Broadhurst, 2018), and reduced opportunities for offending behaviour through greater securitisation of property (Farrell, Tilley, Tseloni, 2014). It should be noted that some antisocial behaviour amongst young people may have been displaced into online or virtual worlds, where there is less guardianship and opportunity for detection (Farrell, Tilley, Tseloni, 2014; Payne, Brown & Broadhurst, 2018). It is likely that this overall cohort effect has interacted with other period effects such as jurisdictional changes to legislation and policy in Queensland. This is apparent in the recent growth (from 2015 to 2017) in unique offenders in the 17-year-old age group in particular, which suggests that the overall downward trend for youth offending is possibly interacting with the introduction of new criminal justice legislation, practices or policies, which appear to be increasing the volume of contacts that 17-year-olds in particular are having with the criminal justice system. It should be noted that this would reflect changes in the adult criminal justice system legislation or policies over this period, as 17-year-olds were treated as adult offenders in the period of analysis for this report.

A further hypothesis regarding the reduction in youth crime internationally relates to the debut crime hypothesis. It has been argued that with increased securitisation of property, young people have less access to early opportunities to offend, which would previously have served as a pathway or starting point through to longer term and a broader range of offending through the process of learning and associating with other high-risk peers; thus the limitation of these 'debut' opportunities has reduced offending amongst young people over the longer term (Farrell, Laycock & Tilley, 2015). However, at face value this hypothesis seems less well-placed to explain the reduction of youth offending in Queensland, as the number of property offences appears to be increasing rather than decreasing, and increasing most notably amongst the younger age groups. This is most likely reflecting the growth in the chronic offending cohort, and it is possible that these young people may be located in areas where the benefits of property securitisation are not as evident, or that they may be motivated enough to adapt their methods to account for enhance securitisation leading to more serious offences (see discussion in section 3.3). Additionally, most of the decline in youth offending in Queensland appears to be in offenders who commit one to two offences in a year, rather than in the more prolific offenders, suggesting that rather than narrowing the pathway to long term offending, enhanced securitisation may have reduced opportunities for one-off or time-limited offending by adolescents. However, this theory could be more fruitfully examined through the use of cohort data, which could enable examination of changes in first offence types over time for individual offenders.

### **3.3 Increase in chronic offenders**

An increase in repeat or chronic youth offenders has been found in other international jurisdictions (Nilsson, Estrada & Backman, 2017) and in Australia, in Victoria (Millstead & Sutherland, 2016) and NSW (Payne, Brown & Broadhurst, 2018), though the latter study found an increase in the proportion of chronic offenders

in the youth offending population in a more recent cohort that was the result of a larger decline in the one-off offending population, rather than an increase in the total number of chronic offenders. Notably, the analysis herein found an increase in both the proportion and total number of chronic youth offenders from 2008 to 2017. While it is challenging to compare on a like basis the size of the chronic offender population in Queensland with that found in other jurisdictions, comparison with a recent Victorian analysis (Millstead & Sutherland, 2016) suggests that chronic offenders comprise a larger proportion of the youth offending population in Queensland and are responsible for a larger proportion of overall offending incidents, compared to the Victorian youth offender population (see section 2.3.3.4 for further detail).

The proportion of offending incidents in Queensland in 2017 that are driven by the chronic youth offending cohort (43%) suggests that a key contemporary challenge for the Queensland criminal justice system is how to effectively respond to chronic offenders in order to contribute towards reduced offending behaviour and ultimately desistance. The scale of this concentration of offending in Queensland, alongside evidence from other jurisdictions of increased concentration of repeat offending in a certain sub-group of the younger population, suggests that this is likely to be at least in part a concurrent cohort effect alongside the reduction in low level or one-off offending. However, the pattern of change repeat offending over the 10-year period from 2008 to 2017 is linear but inconsistent with some lumpiness, suggesting the additional influence of period effects on this trend. These period effects may relate to changes in criminal justice or other health and welfare systems, which are relevant to chronic young offenders, who tend to be contending with issues related to cumulative disadvantage and adverse life events (Corrado & Freedman, 2011; Savage, 2009; Shannon, 2007; Whitten, McGee, Homel, Farrington & Ttofi, 2019). It also not clear why some parts of the youth population may be experiencing a downward trend for offending behaviour at the same time that other parts of the youth population may be experiencing an increase, however the potential drivers of a proposed cohort effect are examined in section 3.3.1 below.

The concentration of recorded offences adjusted to the youth population across QPS Districts (analysis not shown) suggests that these chronic offenders are likely to be situated in the regional and remote areas of Queensland, in particular in the Far North, South West, Mt Isa, Townsville and Capricornia Districts. Though not directly measured in this study due to missing data across the reference time period, a reasonable proportion of this chronic offending group are likely to be Indigenous young people. A recent Queensland study examining the location of chronic offenders first recorded offence found that the initial offending locations for chronic offenders were characterised by relatively high proportions of Indigenous young people, were often remote and exhibited high levels of disadvantage (Allard, Chrzanowski & Stewart, 2012). Additionally, a recent study of offending trajectories for a birth cohort in Queensland born 1983/84 found that among the identified Indigenous cohort, a larger proportion were likely to be classified in a chronic offending group (15%) compared to those within the non-Indigenous cohort (3%), though in total the identified Indigenous chronic offenders comprised 14% of the total number of the cohort classified as chronic offenders (Allard, McCarthy & Stewart, In press). The chronic offenders identified as Indigenous started offending earlier and at a higher rate than the chronic offending groups in the non-Indigenous population (Allard, McCarthy & Stewart, 2020).

### 3.3.1 Cohort effects

A number of studies have found that the reduction in offending noted in most Western countries, has been accompanied by an increased concentration of offending or victimisation amongst a smaller proportion of the population, with this crime concentration most commonly increasing amongst the more socio-economically disadvantaged proportion of the population (Hunter & Tseloni, 2016; Ignatans & Pease, 2015; McVie, Norris & Pillinger, 2014; Nilsson, Estrada & Backman, 2017; Pease & Ignatans, 2016).

Reasons for an increased concentration of repeat offending amongst adult or youth offenders haven't been explored extensively in the literature to date. However, a recent Swedish study (Nilsson, Estrada & Backman, 2017) articulated a number of reasons why offending might be becoming increasingly concentrated amongst the more socio-economically disadvantaged, while the rest of the population displays lower levels of offending behaviour, with three potential drivers proffered for this concentration. First, increased inequalities that have been evident in the distribution of economic resources in recent times, are suggested to be a general factor which may result in increasingly polarised quality of life and opportunities for those from more disadvantaged areas compared to those from more advantaged areas, creating more motivation for offending for those with less resources. Second, the deterring effect of securitisation on property crime is argued to be reduced in more socio-economically disadvantaged areas, where potential victims have fewer resources with which to acquire enhanced security for their property, and thus the opportunities for property crime in these areas have remained higher than in more advantaged areas. They add that the concentration of people at high-risk of offending in these areas may also facilitate learning and transmission of offending behaviour. Third, they suggest that tough on crime policies have tended to be

directed towards less affluent members of society, with a resulting concentration of policing resources on more socio-economically disadvantaged areas leading to self-fuelling cycle of surveillance, detection, charges and sanctions for the people living in these areas.

It is possible that these explanations could in part explain the increased concentration of offending in chronic young offenders in Queensland as found in this study. The highest relative volume of recorded offences appear to be concentrated in regional and remote areas of Queensland which tend to be areas with fewer economic resources than in the south-eastern corner of the state (ABS, 2018). Additionally, it is likely that a reasonable proportion of the chronic offender population are Indigenous, as has been found in a recent study of offending cohorts in Queensland (Allard, McCarthy & Stewart, 2020). Indigenous Australians, including Indigenous young people, are recognised as experiencing considerably more disadvantage than non-Indigenous Australians across a broad range of socio-economic indicators (AIHW, 2017). With notable growth in property offending incidents in the most recent years, this might also support the proposition that securitisation of property might not be equally distributed across all areas, and may coincide in lower socio-economic areas where they are likely to be more motivated offenders. There has also been an increase in break and enter and robbery as most serious offences in recent years, which suggests that in some cases motivated offenders may be adapting their methods to overcome enhanced security measures (such as breaking into a house to steal the keys for a car that has engine immobilisation). The last argument by Nilsson et al. (2017) about the concentration of policing resources on more disadvantaged areas will be explored in the following section as a potential period effect that may be influencing the concentration of offending.

### 3.3.2 Period effects

The increase in the number of young offenders who had 10 or more repeat offending incidents in a year grew in a linear but inconsistent manner from 2008 to 2017, suggesting that while this increase in repeat offending may be part of larger cohort trend, there may have also been some period effects over this time frame which have reduced, stabilised or increased this trend. The number of young offenders who were recorded for 10 or more offending incidents increased from 2008 to 2012, then reduced somewhat through to 2015, and then increased again in 2016 and 2017. This suggests that changes in the criminal justice or other health and welfare system processes, policy or legislation may have influenced this trend, in particular changes in 2012/2013 and changes in 2015/2016.

In 2014, the Newman government introduced a range of measures which were intended to respond to the chronic offending cohort by taking a tougher-on-crime approach, through the following measures: mandating bootcamps for recidivist motor vehicle offenders; removal of the sentencing principle of detention or imprisonment as an option of last resort; creating a new breach of bail offence for young offenders who are found guilty of committing an offence while on bail; and opening the Children's Court for matters related to repeat offenders and allowing their names to be published; mandating the transfer of 17-year-old offenders with six or more months remaining on their sentences to an adult correctional facility) (Hutchinson, 2015). While bootcamps were introduced in 2013 to replace court-ordered youth justice conferences, and became legislated as a mandatory option for youth offenders changed with repeat vehicle theft in 2014, according to youth justice statistics there were only 16 orders recorded for bootcamps in 2013-14. This is effectively the first period in which an initial drop in this chronic offending group is observed, and as such is unlikely to have been driven by the introduction of bootcamps due to the low volume of offenders participating in the bootcamps in this period. The additional measures introduced in 2014 would have filtered through the justice system in terms of changes in sanctions for young offenders towards the second half of 2014. After an initial drop in chronic offending in 2013, there was little change in chronic offending numbers from 2014 and 2015, and so the lack of further notable declines in chronic offending in 2014 and 2015 further undermines these system changes as a potentially explanatory reason for a decline in chronic offending in this period.

More recent changes to the criminal justice system that occurred in July 2016 included a repeal of many of the measures introduced by the Newman government, with bootcamps no longer a sentencing option, the sentencing principle of detention or imprisonment as an option of last resort reinstated, the breach of bail offences removed, and 17-year-olds no longer automatically transferred to adult prison if they 6 months remaining on their detention order. The repeat offending cohort remained relatively stable from 2013 to 2015 after an initial drop in 2013, and then increased notably in 2016 and 2017. Again, while these changes would seem at face value to link with these criminal justice system changes, the initial impacts of the legislative changes introduced in July 2016 would take some time to filter through the justice system in terms of sanctions for young offenders, and are unlikely to be responsible for the magnitude of upward growth in the chronic offending cohort in 2016.

As argued by Nilsson, Estrada & Backman (2017), it is possible that increased concentration of police resources in lower socio-economic communities where there is a concentration of crime, may have had the inadvertent effect of generated a self-fuelling cycle of surveillance, detection, and charges for the offenders in these areas compared to other areas where more low to moderate offenders may reside. This is particularly the case if the additional police officers located in these areas are oriented towards enforcement rather than prevention, diversion or cross-agency partnership responses to these young people. This repeated contact with the criminal justice system and authorities may also have additional criminogenic effects for these young people, as they become increasingly “known” to authorities as an offender and have their identity as offenders reinforced repeatedly (Lopes et al., 2012). This is more likely in smaller regional or remote communities, where there is a smaller volume of offenders who are offending at higher rates, and thus may be readily identifiable by police.

Research has found that chronic offenders are likely to have been exposed to significant cumulative disadvantage and adverse life events (Savage, 2009; Shannon, 2007; Whitten, McGee, Homel, Farrington & Ttofi, 2019). Criminal justice system responses that do not address the drivers or contexts for this chronic offending behaviour are unlikely to elicit desistance or more prosocial behaviours among this offending group, and may inadvertently contribute to their repeated churn through the system. A recent study of Queensland birth cohort born in 1983/84 found that criminal justice system responses to chronic offenders over the course of their adolescence and young adulthood (through to age 31-years) represented significant costs to the criminal justice system (Allard, McCarthy & Stewart, 2020). For non-Indigenous chronic offenders the average net present cost of offending over their young adulthood was \$74,798 (2016/17 dollars) for each chronic offender, while for those chronic offenders who were identified as Indigenous, the average net present cost over young adulthood was \$380,097 (2016/17 dollars) for each offender. This study estimated that for a birth cohort that was aged 10 years in 2016/17, the total cost of the non-Indigenous chronic offenders, representing approximately 2.5% of the total birth cohort, would be \$156.6 million over their young adulthood (net present value; 2016/17 dollars), while the total cost of the Indigenous chronic offenders, representing approximately 0.4% of the total birth cohort, would be \$131.9 million over their young adulthood (net present value; 2016/17 dollars). The results of the current study suggest that there has been increased churn of these chronic offenders through the criminal justice system in recent years, and hence there may be even more substantial costs associated with chronic offending for more recent cohorts. Given the relatively high criminal justice system costs that are incurred in repeated detection, prosecution, sanctioning and detaining these young people who comprise only a small proportion of the overall population, there would be clear economic value in enhanced investment in more resource-intensive, localised prevention or early intervention approaches that could address the drivers and contexts of the offending behaviours. These types of interventions have the potential to more effectively encourage desistance and to engage young chronic offenders in more pro-social and productive lives, which could generate considerable benefits for victims, offenders, communities and in general for community safety.

## 4 Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis in this report finds that there has been an overall reduction in the number of young offenders in Queensland, and this is likely driven by broader social changes which have reduced exposure to risk factors for offending for more recent generations of young people, with similar trends in reductions in youth offending found internationally and in other Australian jurisdictions. Concurrently, there has been a recent increase in the volume of offending incidents, and this appears to be partly driven by a relatively small group of chronic offenders, who have increased in volume and as a proportion of the offending population and the total youth population.

While increases in repeat or chronic offending in a sub-group of young people concurrent with an overall reduction in youth offenders has been noted in other jurisdictions, the relative size of the chronic youth offending population in Queensland and the number offending incidents being generated by this group, locate chronic youth offending as a more pressing concern in Queensland. Reasons for an increase in repeat or chronic youth offenders, alongside an overall decline in the number of youth offenders, have only been explored in the literature to a limited extent. A similar pattern has been seen amongst adult offenders, with a reduction in overall offending and victimisation, accompanied by an increased concentration of offending and victimisation in lower socio-economic areas. Growth in inequalities in access to economic resources and opportunities, uneven distribution in the deterrent effect of securitisation of property, and uneven distribution on tough-on-crime resources have been argued to have resulted in a concentration of offending and victimisation in lower socio-economic areas (Nilsson, Estrada & Backman, 2017).

Chronic offenders are likely to have been exposed to cumulative disadvantage and adverse life events, which are likely to be in part drivers for their high levels of offending behaviour. Culturally appropriate, tailored responses to these chronic offenders, of which a significant proportion are likely to be Indigenous and located in regional and remote areas, need to be developed. Responses must consider the drivers of the offending behaviour, with cross-sector responses likely to be best placed to target issues such as lack of engagement in education, problematic living contexts and experiences of abuse or neglect, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, and limited employment opportunities, all issues that may be present as driving factors in the chronic offending behaviours.

Concentration of police resources in these areas may be self-reinforcing for chronic offending behaviour, if they are oriented towards enforcement rather than prevention, diversion or cross-agency partnership responses. Traditional criminal justice system responses are not well positioned to address the drivers of chronic offending behaviour and may inadvertently have criminogenic effects through entrenching young offender identities and social networks. The effect of concentrations of police resources and the orientations of officers in these locations on chronic offender populations, particularly in regional and remote areas, are not well understood. This would be a valuable area for further research.

As well as police resources, it will also be important to examine changes in police practices that may be having unintended consequences. This report has shown there has been a decline in police use of cautions and other diversionary measures, and an increased tendency to use arrests and infringement notices for young people. Given that the research shows the criminogenic effects for young people of formal criminal justice processes, increased resort to arrest may be contributing to increased youth offending over the longer-term, especially for non-chronic offenders who would otherwise be expected to 'age-out' of crime. This too merits further examination.

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