

FAST FACTS: The crossover cohort

The extent of the crossover between the Queensland youth justice and child protection systems

March 2024

1. Queensland children living in residential care¹

As at 30 June 2023:

- 1,763 Queensland children and young people were living in residential care. This is an 11.4% increase since 30 June 2022 and an 85.4% increase since 30 June 2019.
- The proportion of children and young people living in out-of-home care (OOHC) who were in residential care placements increased from 9.9% as at 30 June 2019 to 15.2%.
- Of the 11,593 children living in OOHC, 15.2% were living in residential care, 36.6% were living in foster care and 48.2% were living in kinship care.
- The proportion of First Nations young people living in residential care remained stable over the past 5 years, at around 42%.
- Of the 1,763 children living in residential care, 32 (1.8%) were aged 0-4 years, 280 (15.9%) were aged 5-9 years, 785 (44.5%) were aged 10-14 years and 666 (37.8%) were aged 15-17 years.

2. Queensland children in contact with youth justice services²

By comparison with the previous period, for the 12 months ending 30 June 2023:

- there were 15,515 cautions administered to young people (increase of 8.2% from the previous year).
- 3,260 young people had a proven offence finalised (decrease from 3,334 in the previous year).
- the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who had a proven offence finalised increased from 51% to 53%.
- the average daily number of children held in detention was 283 (increase from 276).
- the average daily number of children in unsentenced detention was 249 (increase from 239 - making up 88% of young people in custody).
- There were 8,119 admissions of young people into police watchhouses.

3. Rates of children under child protection orders who are also on youth justice orders

As at 30 June 2023, **3.4%** of Queensland children aged 10 and over who were on a child protection order, were also on a youth justice order.³

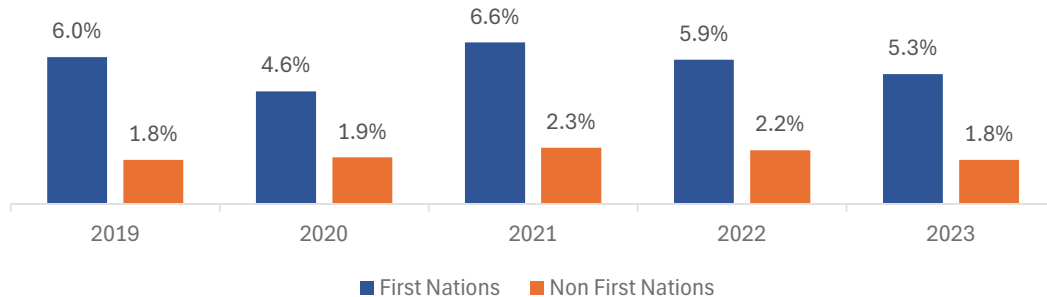
Changes over time in rates of young people under child protection orders who are also on youth justice orders and how this varies by First Nations status

- Across the last 5 years, the percentage of young people subject to both child protection and youth justice orders remained about the same (3.5% at 30 June 2019 and 3.4% at 30 June 2023).
- The percentage of First Nations children who were on both child protection and youth justice orders was consistently higher than the percentage of non-First Nations children (Figure 1).
- In 2023, First Nations children were almost three times more likely than non-First Nations children to be on both child protection and youth justice orders.



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Figure 1. A comparison of the percentage of First Nations and non-First Nations Queensland young people aged 10 and over, on a child protection order who are also on a youth justice order as at 30 June in each reference year



Source: Child Safety (2024). [Our performance website](#)

Youth justice involvement among young people living in residential care

- In some regions, young people living in residential care are more likely to be on youth justice orders, compared to the overall rate for Queensland (Table 1 – high rates in NQ, FNQ and SCC; low rates in SE, BMB, SW):

Table 1. A regional comparison of the percentage of young Queenslanders aged 10-17 years living in residential care who were subject to a youth justice order as at 31 March 2023

Queensland	Brisbane and Moreton Bay	South East	South West	Sunshine Coast and Central	North Queensland	Far North Queensland
5.1%	3.2%	2.5%	3.0%	6.3%	13.8%	6.0%

Source: Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, Child and Family Corporate Data

4. Rates of young people in contact with the youth justice system who have had contact with the child protection system

A significant proportion of young people living in Queensland youth detention centres are currently subject to a child protection order

- As at 30 June 2023, 20.7% of young people living in Queensland youth detention centres (51 out of 246) were subject to both a supervised youth justice order and a child protection order.⁴
- Of these, 3 young people had a current active Child Safety placement in residential care.

A significant proportion of young people who have been identified as serious repeat offenders (SROs) are currently subject to a child protection order

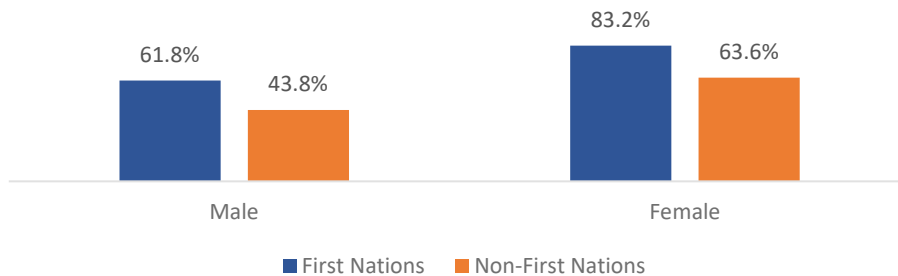
- As at 30 June 2023, of the 452 Queensland young people classified as SROs,ⁱ 133 (29.4%) had an active child protection order.⁵

ⁱ The Serious Repeat Offender Index was developed as a guide to identify the cohort of young people whose offending is so serious and so frequent, they pose a significant threat to community safety.

More than half of young people who had been in youth justice supervision during 2020–21 had also had an interaction with the child protection system in the last five years

- Many young offenders may have had contact with the child protection system in the last five years although may not currently be on a child protection order.
- In 2020-21, among the group of young Queenslanders subject to youth justice supervision, 58.2% had an interaction with the child protection system in the previous five years.⁶
- Among this Queensland young offender cohort, rates of child protection interaction varied by gender (female offenders were more likely to have had child protection contact) and by First Nations status (First Nations offenders were more likely to have had interaction with the child protection system):

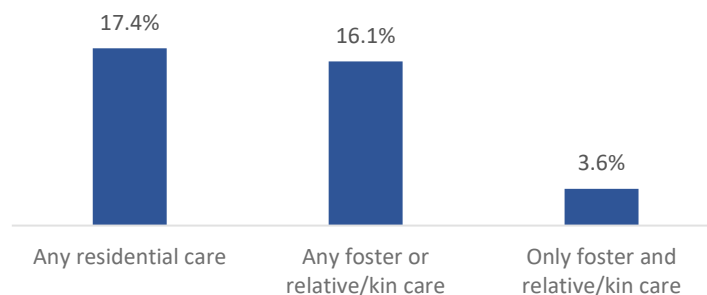
Figure 2: Proportion of Queensland young people under youth justice supervision in 2020-21 who had an interaction with the child protection system in the five years prior



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2022

- As shown in Figure 3, among young people in youth detention Australia-wide, 17.4% have had a placement in residential care, 16.1% have had a placement in foster or relative/kinship care and 3.6% have had a placement in only foster or relative/kinship care:⁷

Figure 3. Proportion of young people in detention during 2020–21 who had been in out-of-home care in the 5 years from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2021, by type of living arrangement



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2022

Queensland young people under youth justice supervision have interacted with all parts of the child protection system⁸

Between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2021 among young people under youth justice supervision during 2020-21:

- 60.0% were the subject of investigated notifications (68.2% FN vs 49.3% non-FN)
- 27.4% were placed on a care and protection order (32.0% FN vs 21.2% non-FN)
- 26.2% were in out-of-home care (30.5% FN vs 20.4% non-FN) (AIHW, 2023).

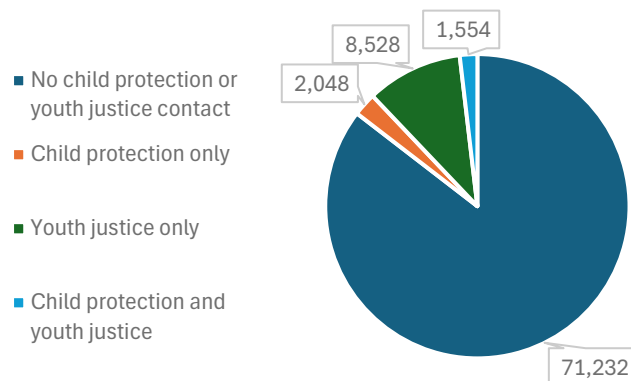
5. Longitudinal analyses can provide the most accurate estimates of the number of children involved in both child protection and youth justice systems.

The Queensland Cross-Sector Research Collaboration (QCRC) contains linked administrative data from a range of health, child welfare and protection, youth justice and adult criminal justice systems.^{9 ii}

A recent paper presented findings using QCRC data based on its cohort of 83,371 Queensland individuals who were born in 1983/1984 and who were followed up to age 29. This study provides the most comprehensive estimate of the co-occurrence of child protection and youth justice contact in Queensland.

As shown in Figure 4, 1,554 (1.9%) of the 83,371 Queenslanders born in 1983/1984 experienced both child protection and youth justice contact. Of the 3,602 children who had been in contact with the child protection system, 43.1% had also experienced youth justice contact. Of the 10,082 children who had been in contact with the youth justice system, 15.4% had also experienced child protection contact.

Figure 4. The number of Queensland children born in 1983/1984 who experienced child protection contact, youth justice contact or both.



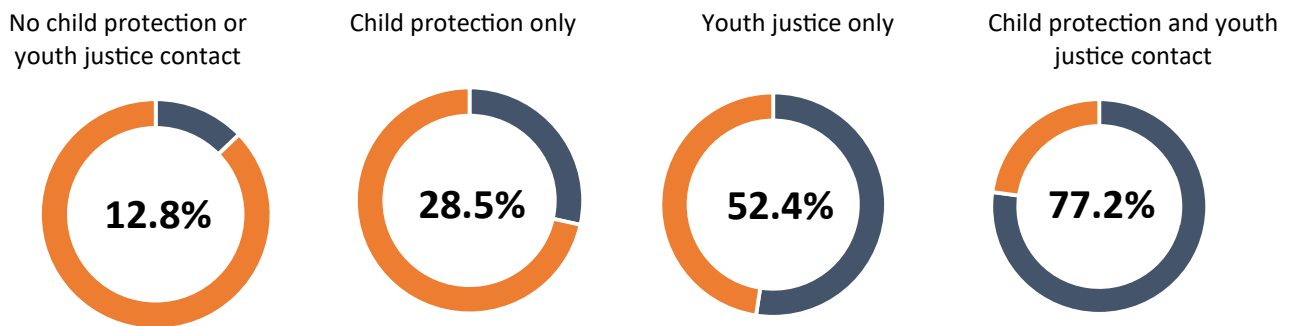
Source: Matthews, B., McVie, S., Thompson, C. & Stewart, A. (2022).

ⁱⁱ The QCRC database includes data for three cohorts of Queensland children born in 1983, 1984 and 1990. It includes data on child protection contact (which includes children with at least one substantiated episode of abuse) and data on any periods of out-of-home care placements. Youth justice contact includes formal police cautions, youth justice conferences, and Children’s Court finalisations resulting in a guilty outcome.

Children who have contact with both youth justice and child protection systems are at increased risk of having persistent adult criminal system contact.

- A recent follow up of the QCRC 1983/1984 cohort found within their Queensland cohort who had contact with both child protection and youth justice systems, 77.2% had a subsequent adult criminal conviction:

Figure 5. Rates of adult criminal convictions among the four groups of adults from the QCRC 1983/1984 cohort



Source: Matthews, B., McVie, S., Thompson, C. & Stewart, A. (2022).

¹ Child Safety (2024). [Our performance website](#)

² Children’s Court of Queensland (2023). *Annual report 2022-23*. https://www.courts.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/786466/cc-ar-2022-2023.pdf

³ Child Safety (2024). [Our performance website](#)

⁴ Queensland Parliament (2023). *Question on Notice No. 1424*.

<https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/tableoffice/questionsanswers/2023/1424-2023.pdf>.

⁵ Queensland Parliament (2023). *Question on Notice No. 1266*.

<https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/tableoffice/questionsanswers/2023/1266-2023.pdf>.

⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022). *Data tables: Young people under youth justice supervision and their interaction with child protection*. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/youth-justice/young-people-under-youth-justice-supervision/data>

⁷ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022). *Data tables: Young people under youth justice supervision and their interaction with child protection*. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/youth-justice/young-people-under-youth-justice-supervision/data>

⁸ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022). *Data tables: Young people under youth justice supervision and their interaction with child protection*. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/youth-justice/young-people-under-youth-justice-supervision/data>

⁹ Matthews, B., McVie, S., Thompson, C. & Stewart, A. (2022). From childhood system contact to adult criminal conviction: investigating intersectional inequalities using Queensland administrative data. *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*, 8, 440-480.