

# Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander alleged offenders

Year ending 30 June 2016







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# 1. Introduction

This publication presents data on alleged offenders recorded by Victoria Police from July 2011 to June 2016, with a focus on the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status of alleged offenders.

The 'most frequent' identification counting rule is used to derive information about a person's Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status and their alleged offender incident. This method is described in more detail below. Due to the quality of recording of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status for other groups, namely victims and family violence affected family members and other parties, the most frequent identification rule does not improve data quality to a requisite level for general use and as is therefore not currently available. The Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) will continue to monitor the quality of these datasets and when the quality improves, these will be made publicly available as part of the regular Victorian recorded crime statistics.

## Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status recording issues in Victoria

The standards for collecting and recording Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status are derived from the Commonwealth definition for the identification of a person as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. There are three components:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent;
- Self-identification as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person; and
- Acceptance of the person as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by their community.

For the purposes of data collection, the self-identification component is used as a means of assessing a person's Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Status.

To support the collection of consistent and comparable Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander statistics, the ABS developed the SIQ in 1996. This has since been used by the ABS and other government and non-government agencies as the standard for recording a person's Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status in survey and administrative datasets. The SIQ method requires an individual to be asked their Indigenous status each time they come into contact with a government agency or service provider, and data should be represented based on each contact, allowing people to change their Indigenous status over time.

Analysis conducted by the CSA has concluded that the quality of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status data recorded at each contact by Victoria Police is currently of poor quality, based on the high proportion of unknown values present in the data. The analysis also shows that there is a trend towards decreasing data quality of the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Status variable, with approximately 60% of person records having an unknown or missing Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status response recorded.

In June 2016, the CSA released a consultation paper that described the current issues in the recording and collection of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status data. It highlighted the gaps in the way the data is captured by Victoria Police, suggesting that the ABS SIQ is not asked on each occasion, or is not being routinely captured in the LEAP system. The CSA acknowledges that current limitations within the LEAP system make this information challenging to capture accurately and efficiently. The consultation paper also outlined options for methodologically improving Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status data by using all the information collected about a person's status over time. The paper and the outcomes from the consultation process are available on the CSA website.

## Indigenous status counting methodology

### 'Most frequent' Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status counting rule

As a result of the outcomes of the CSA consultation process, the most frequent Indigenous status rule has been adopted as the primary counting rule for the Indigenous status of offenders in CSA recorded crime statistics. Under this counting rule, a person has either a yes or no response to the SIQ on their record, then the most frequently appearing response is taken as correct. If the person only has one meaningful response ('yes' or 'no'), then that response stands across all records. If a person appears in the dataset two different times with a 'yes' and a 'no' in the records, a 'yes' response is taken over a 'no' response. For more information please see the technical notes.

## Resulting data quality

After the application of the 'most frequent' identification counting rule, there can still be a high proportion of unknown values which remain. As such, these data should be analysed with caution, and may represent an undercount of the involvement of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples within Victorian recorded crime statistics.

## 2. Indigenous status of alleged offender incidents

An alleged offender incident is an incident involving one or more offences to which an individual has been linked as an alleged offender. An alleged offender incident represents one alleged offender but may involve multiple victims and offences. One incident may involve offences that occur over a period of time but if processed by Victoria Police as one incident, it will have a count of one in the data presented in this section.

There may be multiple incidents within the reference period that involve the same individual. If there are multiple alleged offenders related to a criminal event, each will have their alleged offender incident counted once in the figures.

Where there were multiple offences recorded within the one incident, the incident is assigned an offence category of the most serious offence in the incident, known as the principal offence.

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status for alleged offender incidents are based on the most frequent recording of the Indigenous status for each offender.

### 2.1 Key movements in the number and rate of alleged offender incidents

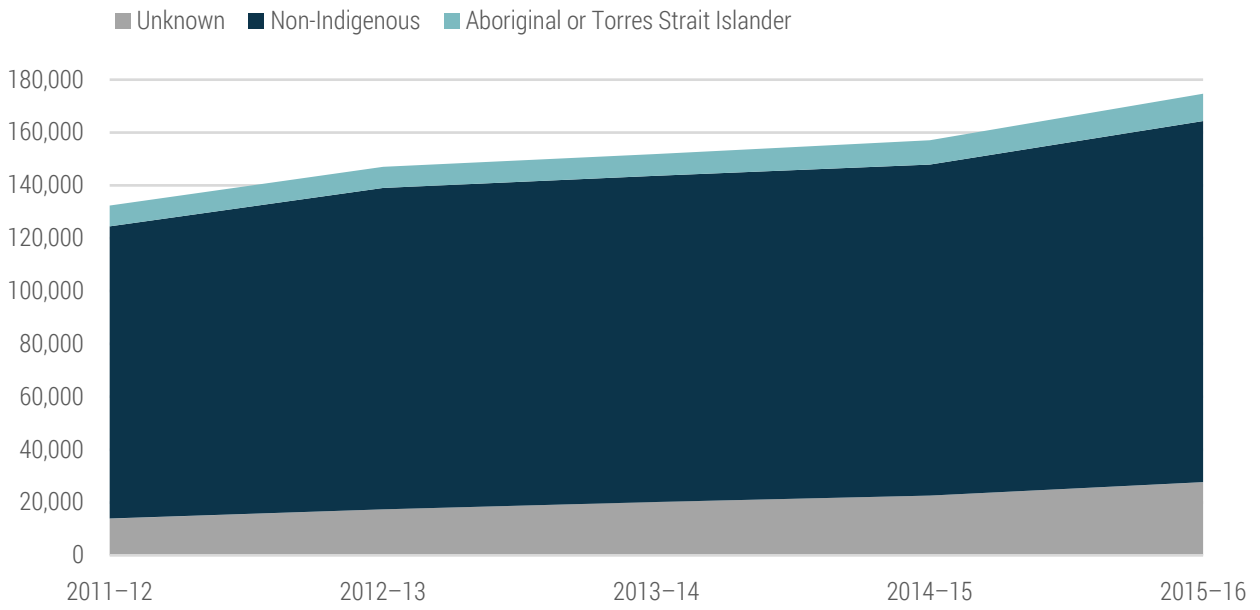
	Jul 2011 – Jun 2012	Jul 2012 – Jun 2013	Jul 2013 – Jun 2014	Jul 2014 – Jun 2015	Jul 2015 – Jun 2016	% change Jul 2015 – Jun 2016
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	7,920	8,028	8,246	9,243	10,350	12.0%
Non-Indigenous	110,533	121,626	123,474	125,295	136,659	9.1%
Unknown	13,949	17,361	20,178	22,566	27,683	22.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>132,402</b>	<b>147,015</b>	<b>151,898</b>	<b>157,104</b>	<b>174,692</b>	<b>11.2%</b>

In the year ending June 2016 there were 10,350 alleged offender incidents relating to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. This represented an increase of 12.0% (1,107 incidents) from the previous year, and made up 5.9% of all alleged offender incidents recorded in the year ending June 2016.

In the same period, non-Indigenous alleged offender incidents increased by 9.1% from 125,295 to 136,659, and proportionally comprised 78.2% of all alleged offender incidents. There were 27,683 alleged offender incidents where the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status was unknown, making up the remaining 15.8% of alleged offender incidents in the year ending June 2016.

There were 3,243 unique Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander offenders recorded for offender incidents by police in the year ending June 2016, up 1.1% from 3,207 in the previous year. By comparison, there were 63,219 unique non-Indigenous offenders, up 1.3% from 62,397 in the previous year. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander offenders on average were involved in 3.0 incidents per offender, compared to the state average of 2.0 incidents per offender. While the number of unique Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander offenders has remained relatively stable over the past five years, the average number of incidents per offender has increased from 2.5 to 3.0 incidents per offender. There were 15,447 unique offenders with an unknown Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status in the year ending June 2016, up 13.2% from 13,650 in the previous year.

### Alleged offender incidents by Indigenous status, July 2011 to June 2016



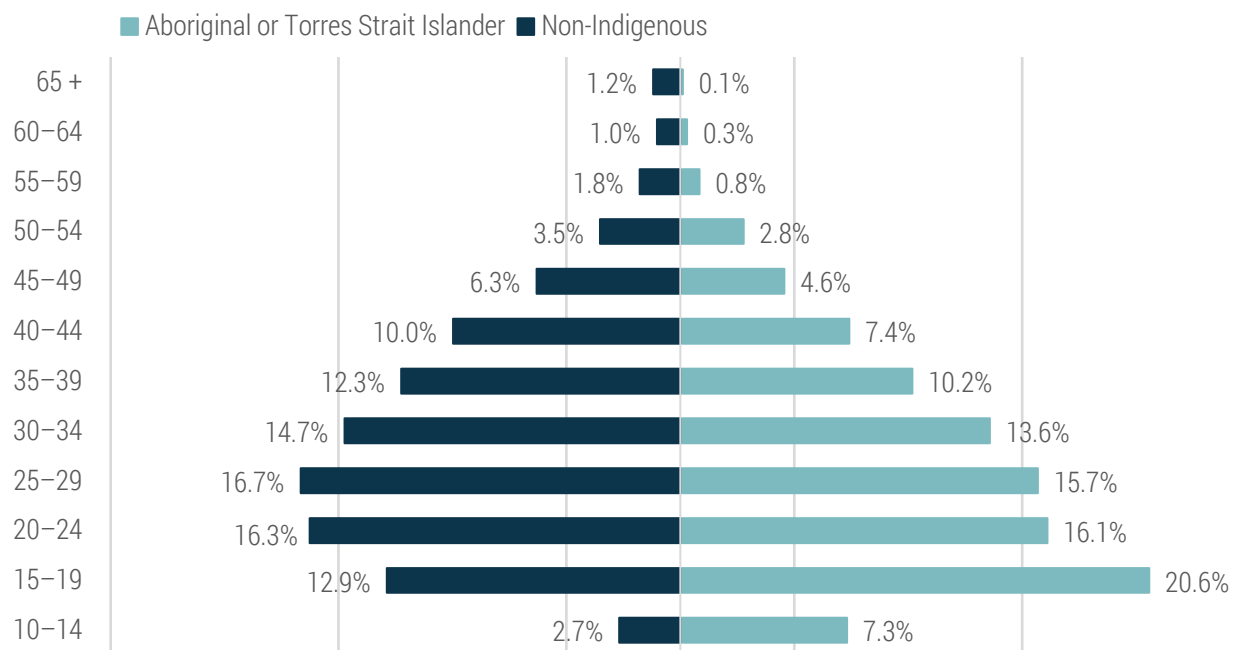


## 2.2 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status of alleged offenders by age

When comparing Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous offenders by age, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander offenders had a higher proportion of younger offenders compared to non-Indigenous offenders. In the year ending June 2016, 44% (4,553) of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander offenders were aged between 10 and 24, compared to 31.8% (43,511) of non-Indigenous offenders.

For Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander offender incidents, the age group with the highest proportion of offenders was 15–19 years, which made up 20.6% of all Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander offender incidents. The highest proportion of non-Indigenous offenders were aged between 25–29 years, and comprised 16.7% of all non-Indigenous offenders.

### Alleged offender incidents by Indigenous status and age, July 2015 to June 2016



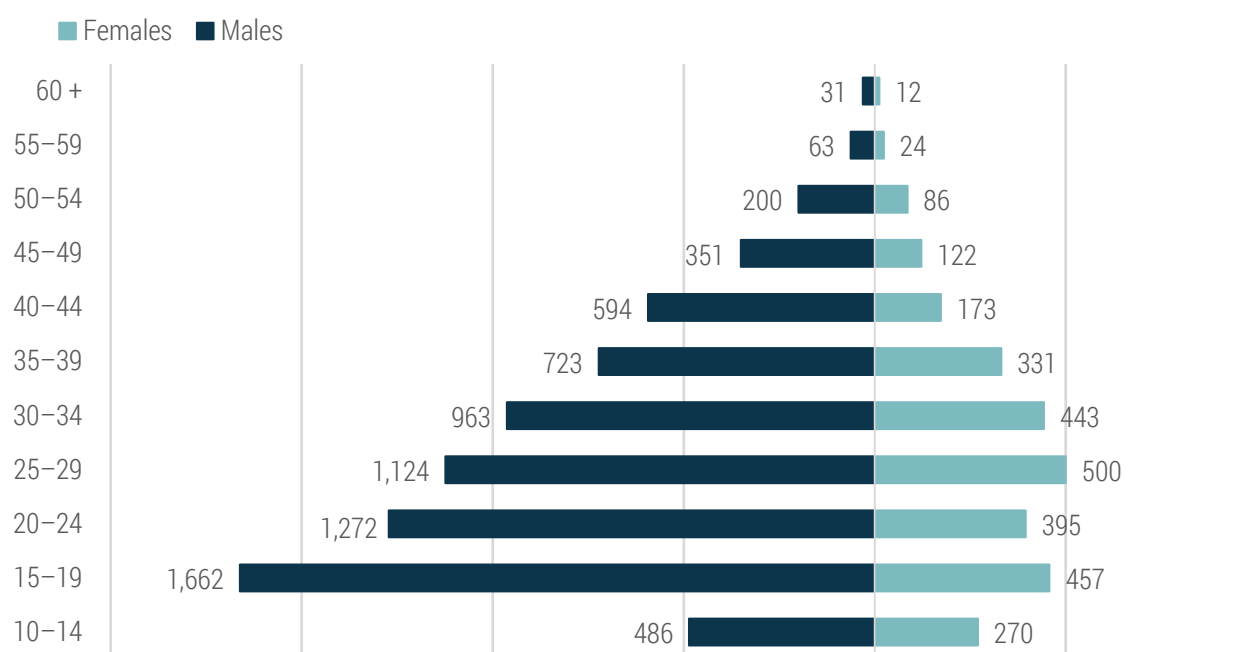
The age distribution for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons varies to non-Indigenous populations in Australia. On average, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons tend to be younger than the non-Indigenous population. For these statistics, the CSA has not controlled for these differing age populations.

## 2.3 Sex and age of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander alleged offenders

In the year ending June 2016 there were 7,507 incidents involving a male Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander offender, making up 72.5% of all Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander offenders, while 2,829 incidents involved a female Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander offender, making up 27.3% of all Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander offenders. The remaining Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander offenders had an unknown sex recorded.

The highest proportion of male Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander offenders were aged between 15–19 years, with this group making up 22.1% of all male Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander offender incidents. Females tended to be older, with the highest proportion aged 25–29 years, making up 17.7% of female Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander alleged offenders.

### Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander alleged offenders by sex and age, July 2015 to June 2016



The number of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander alleged offender incidents involving a male increased in the year ending June 2016 by 14.0% (920 incidents) from the previous year. Incidents involving a female alleged offender increased by 7.0% (184 incidents) from the previous year.

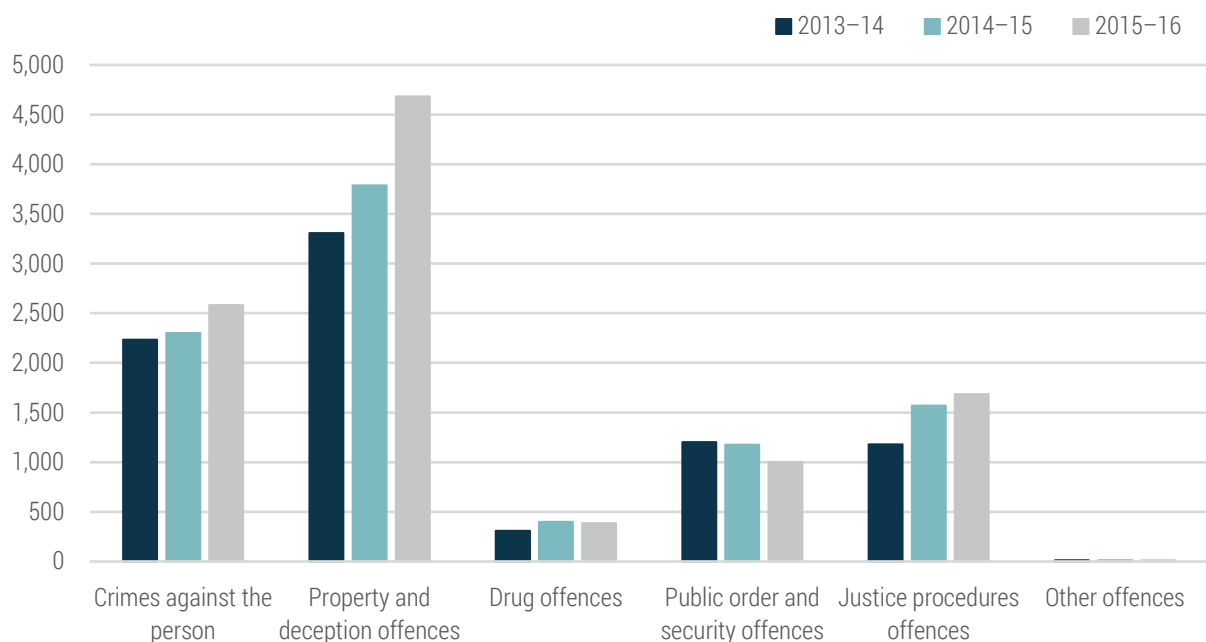
Males aged between 15 and 29 years of age accounted for just over half of all male Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander alleged offenders in the year ending June 2016 (54.1% or 4,058 incidents). For female offenders, a similar proportion (47.8% or 1,352 incidents) were also between 15 and 29 years of age.

## 2.4 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander alleged offender incidents by principal offence

In order to best represent the type of offence associated with an incident involving multiple offences, the most serious offence within an incident is determined and this becomes the principal offence to represent the incident.

By principal offence, the category that made up the largest proportion of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander offender incidents was *Property and deception offences*. These offences made up 45.2% (4,683 incidents) of all Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander alleged offender incidents, which was a 23.7% (897 incidents) increase from the previous year.

### Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander alleged offender incidents by principal offence, July 2013 to June 2016



In the past three years, the number of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander alleged offender incidents with a principal offence of *Crimes against the person* has been steadily increasing. In the year ending June 2016, *Crimes against the person* made up 24.9% of all Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander offender incidents.

*Property and deception offences* rose sharply in the past three years to 4,683 in the year ending June 2016. The increases were driven mainly by increases in *Burglary/break and enter* and *Theft* offences, which comprise 72.5% of offences in the Property and deception offence category.

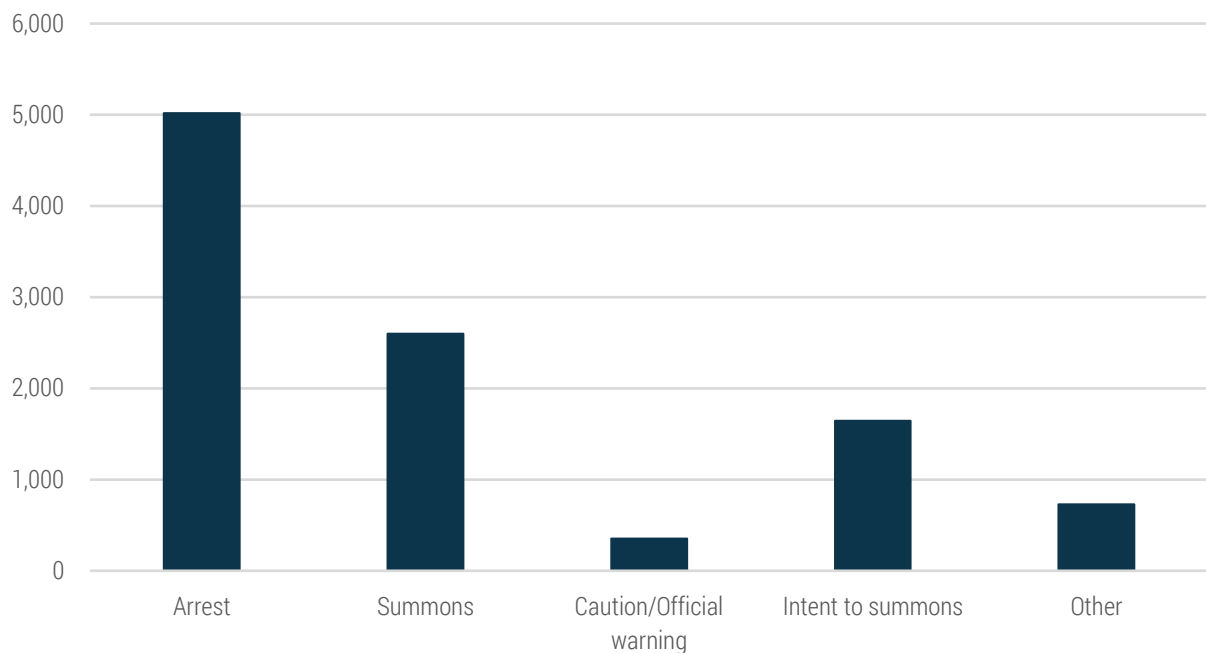
Incidents involving *Justice procedures offences* increased from 1,180 in the year ending June 2014 to 1,686 in the year ending June 2016, an increase of 42.9%. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander offender incidents with a principal offence of *Public order and security offences* and *Drug offences* have decreased in the last 12 months, down 14.9% and 3.8% respectively.

## 2.5 Investigation status

As at 18 July 2016, nearly half (48.5% or 5,019) of all Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander alleged offender incidents resulted in an Arrest, while 2,601 (25.1%) resulted in a Summons and 1,645 (15.39%) in an Intent to Summons. There were 355 (3.4%) alleged offender incidents that led to a Caution or Official warning being issued.

An Intent to Summons is an interim investigation status and is not necessarily the final outcome of an incident. As the data is captured at a point in time, the investigation status of each incident is subject to change.

### Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander alleged offender incidents by status of investigation, July 2015 to June 2016

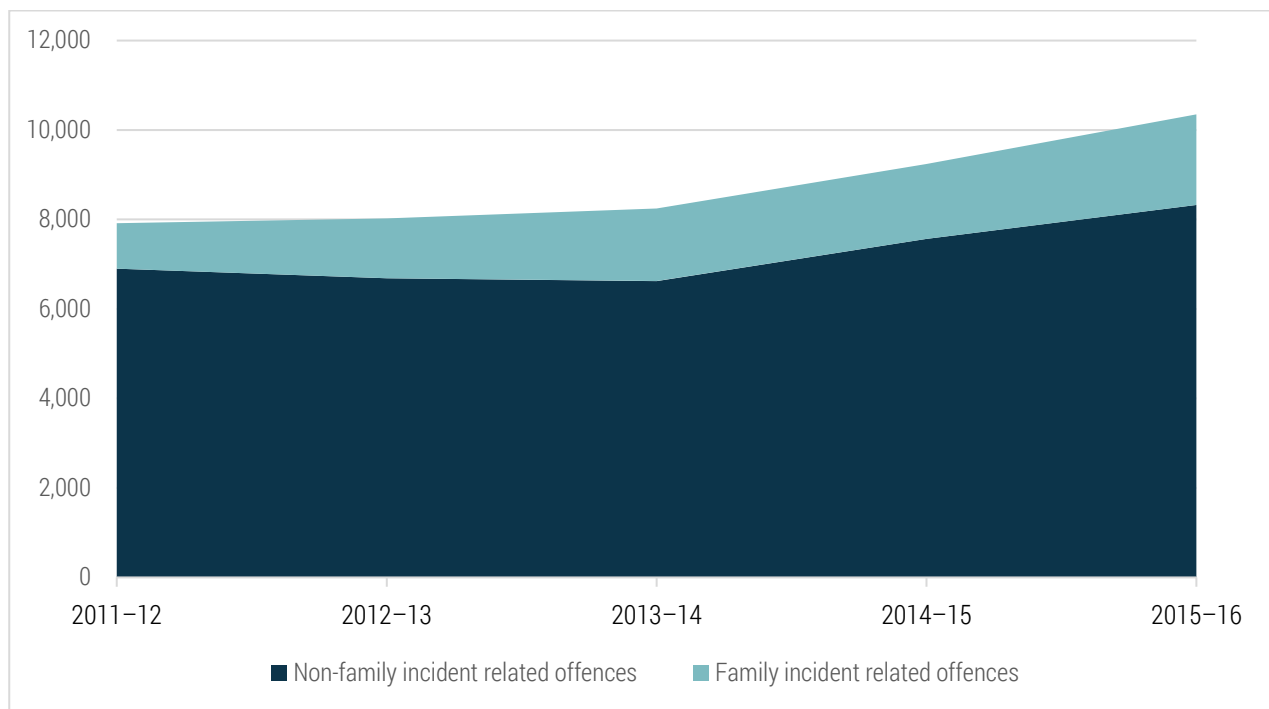


Other includes: Penalty infringement notice, not authorised, warrant issued, notice to appear, presentment and other statuses.

## 2.6 Family incident related Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander alleged offender incidents

A family incident related offender is counted each time Victoria Police complete an L17 form and a criminal offence is recorded against an offender. The following graph highlights the number of alleged offender incidents that were related to a family incident and those that weren't over the past five years.

### Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander alleged offender incidents by family incident flag, July 2011 to June 2016



In the year ending June 2016, 19.6% (2,025 offender incidents) of the 10,350 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander alleged offender incidents recorded in the year were related to a family incident, while the other 80.4% (8,325) were not related to a family incident.

For the family related Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander alleged offender incidents, more than half (55.1% or 1,117) had a principal offence of *Crimes against the person*.

# Appendix 1. Technical notes

## Collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander statistics within administrative data systems.

Standards for the collection and recording of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status in statistical collections stem from the Commonwealth definition for the identification of a person as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. There are three components:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent
- Self-identification as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person and
- Acceptance of the person as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander by the community in which he or she lives.

In practice, however, the second of these components (self-identification) is used within data collection exercises as a means of assessing a person's Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Status. The first and third components are not easily verifiable at the point of data collection. Self-identification is the element captured by the ABS Standard Indigenous Question.

### ABS Standard Indigenous Question

The Australian Bureau of Statistics developed the ABS Standard Indigenous Question (SIQ) to support the collection of consistent and comparable statistics relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in ABS surveys and administrative data collections. It was introduced in 1996 and is used by ABS and many government and non-government agencies. The basic structure of the ABS SIQ is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The ABS Standard Indigenous Question

<p>[Are you] [Is the person] [Is (name)] of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Aboriginal</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Torres Strait Islander</p> <p>For persons of both Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, mark both Yes boxes.</p>
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If the person being asked the question refuses to answer then that is also a valid response. There can be legitimate reasons for a person to not want to respond to the SIQ. The recent review undertaken by ABS highlighted that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people did not think there was a good understanding of why the question was being asked or what the response will be used for, which could lead to unwillingness to answer the question.

## Collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status in law enforcement crime recording systems

The counting rules for the national recorded crime statistical collections require that the SIQ be asked on each occasion of a victim report or recording as an alleged offender, wherever possible.

Over a decade ago, the ABS led implementation of the Indigenous identification strategy to improve the identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in police, criminal courts and corrective services data systems, which hinged upon the successful implementation of a standard question to allow people to self-identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The ABS does not currently publish Victorian recorded crime data relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status of victims and offenders from the national statistical collections, noting that they are not of sufficient quality for inclusion.

### Improving the quality of Indigenous status outputs

While the quality of the data input by Victoria Police members in relation to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status remain at current levels, the Crime Statistics Agency identified three main options for calculating this information to try and improve the utility of the data. These were:

- an 'ever-identified' rule
- a 'most recent identification' rule
- a 'most frequent' rule.

These methods may artificially 'improve' the completeness of this data through various methods of imputation and derivation. These methods involve in some way using assumptions from available pieces of information to 'fill in the gaps' of the missing data.

With this in mind, in July 2016 the CSA consulted with government and non-government stakeholders to seek feedback on the preferred option of the three counting methods. Based upon this feedback the 'most frequent' rule was the preferred method for presenting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data in CSA recorded crime statistics.

### Application of the 'most frequent' Indigenous status rule

As a result of the outcomes of the CSA consultation process, the most frequent Indigenous status rule has been adopted as the primary counting rule for the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status of offenders in CSA recorded crime statistics. Under this counting rule, a person has either a yes or no response to the SIQ on their record, then the most frequently appearing response is taken as correct. If the person only has one meaningful response ('yes' or 'no'), then that response stands across all records. If a person appears in the dataset two different times with a 'yes' and a 'no' in the records, a 'yes' response is taken over a 'no' response. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate how this counting rule operates in two different scenarios.

A most frequent response may be less susceptible to data entry error than the previous methods, as a person with a number of appearances would require multiple incorrect responses in the dataset for their records to be incorrectly assigned, and it is less likely to occur based upon a single incorrect entry. The more entries a person has in the dataset, the greater the likelihood that their data is correct. The only exception to this would be where a person wishes to change the way they identify and respond to the question over time. This would not be recognised until the majority of a person's entries in the database reflected their current status. This rule is also dependent upon the SIQ being asked and recorded on each occasion.

Figure 2. Illustrative example of the application of a 'most frequent' derivation rule to output from the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status variable relating to a victim or an offender

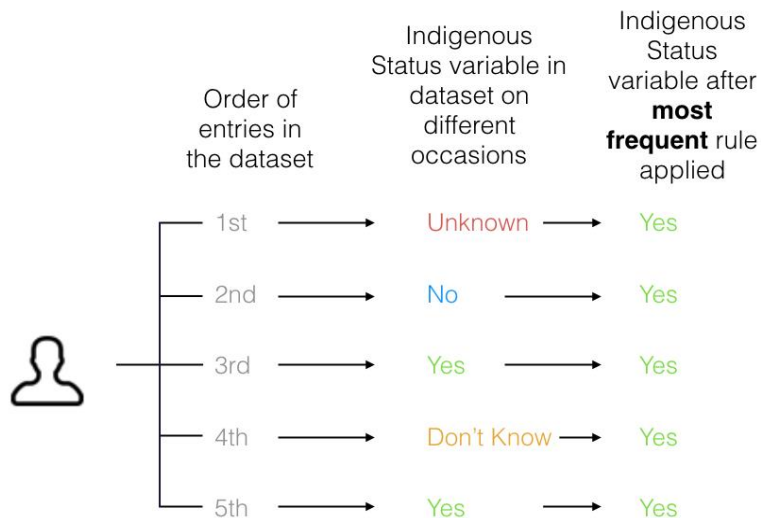


Figure 3. Illustrative example of the application of a 'most frequent' derivation rule to output from the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status variable relating to a victim or an offender







