

# Youth Offending in Victoria

Year ending 31 March 2019







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# 1. Introduction and scope

This spotlight presents data on youth offending as recorded by Victoria Police in the Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) database. The focus of this publication is to explore trends over time for alleged offenders aged 10–17 years, who will be referred to as ‘*youth offenders*’ for the purpose of this spotlight.

Data for this spotlight were extracted from the Victoria Police LEAP database on the 18 April 2019.

This spotlight presents data on three measures, for the 10 year period from April 2009 to March 2019:

- Alleged offender incidents
- Unique alleged offenders
- Victim reports.

An alleged offender incident will be the primary measure for this spotlight. This represents one alleged offender but may involve multiple victims and offences. Where the same individual has multiple incidents within the reference period, they will be counted for each incident. Whereas, a unique alleged offender is a count of the individuals that come into contact with police and will be counted once for the 12 month period.

A victim report is recorded when an individual, business or organisation is recorded on LEAP as being a victim of one or more criminal offences. A victim report involves only one victim but can involve multiple offences and alleged offenders. Where the same individual has multiple reports within the reference period, they will be counted for each report.

For each of the three measures in this spotlight, data are excluded for businesses or organisations and where age has been recorded as unknown by Victoria Police. For more information on these measures see the [Explanatory Notes](#).

Unless otherwise stated, where an offence type is represented in the spotlight this will refer to the most serious offence type or principal offence type for the alleged offender incident or victim report. Further information on principal offence calculations can be found in the [Explanatory Notes](#).

## 2. Alleged offender incidents

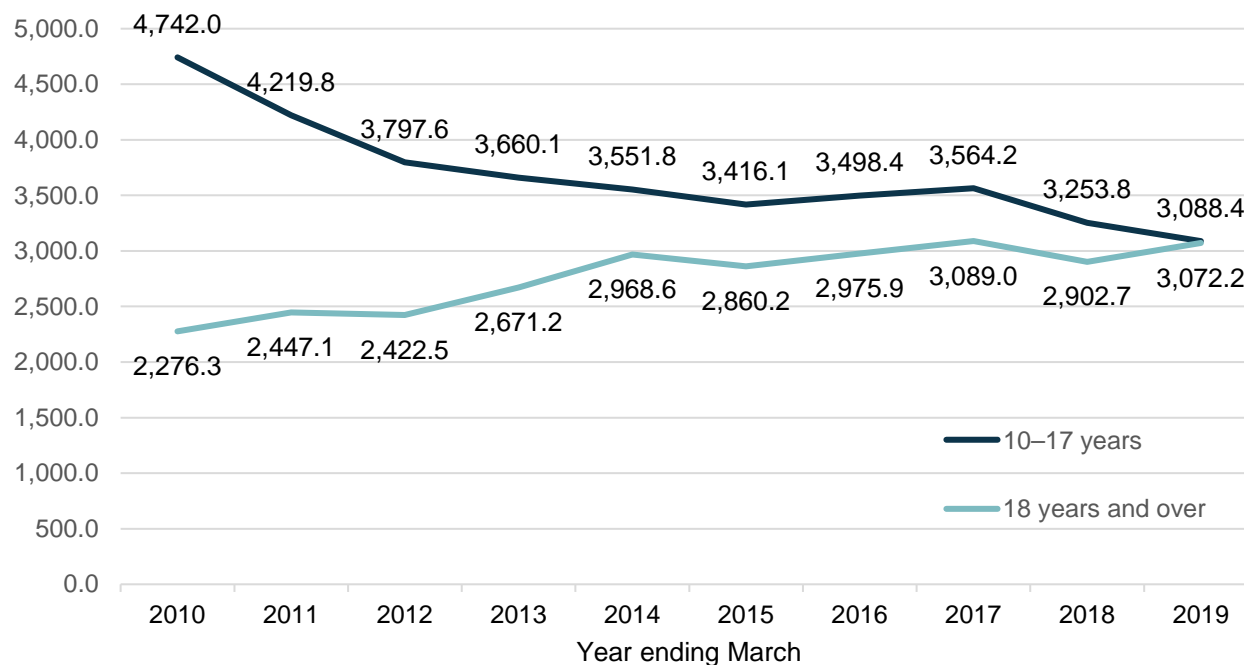
In the year ending March 2019, there were 18,799 alleged incidents recorded against youth offenders aged between 10–17 years. This is a decrease of 411 youth offender incidents from the previous year. In comparison, alleged offenders aged 18 years and over increased by 11,786 alleged offender incidents.

Age Group	Age	Apr 2014 - Mar 2015	Apr 2015 - Mar 2016	Apr 2016 - Mar 2017	Apr 2017 - Mar 2018	Apr 2018 - Mar 2019	1 year % change
10-17 years	10-14 years	5,361	5,533	5,725	5,865	5,435	-7.3%
	15-17 years	13,598	14,243	14,892	13,345	13,364	0.1%
	Subtotal	18,959	19,776	20,617	19,210	18,799	-2.1%
18 years and over		134,508	143,421	152,648	146,853	158,639	8.0%
Alleged offender incidents		153,467	163,197	173,265	166,063	177,438	6.8%

### 2.1 Trends over time

In the year ending 31 March 2019, youth offenders had a rate of 3,088.4 incidents per 100,000 population, this is a decrease of 34.9% from the year ending March 2010. This is a decrease from the 25,544 youth offenders in the year ending March 2010, down 6,745 incidents. In comparison, for alleged offenders aged 18 years and over rates increased by 35.0% while the number of alleged offenders incidents increased from 96,686 in year ending March 2010.

**Alleged offender incident rate per 100,000 population, April 2009 to March 2019**



In the 12 months to 31 March 2019, the proportion of youth offenders decreased from 11.6% to 10.6% of all person alleged offender incidents. The proportion of alleged youth offenders has been steadily decreasing over the last 10 years, down from 20.9% in the year ending March 2010.

Although the proportion of overall youth offenders has been decreasing, the proportion of *Crimes against the person* offences within this group has increased. Further detail can be found in section [2.3 Principal offence types](#).

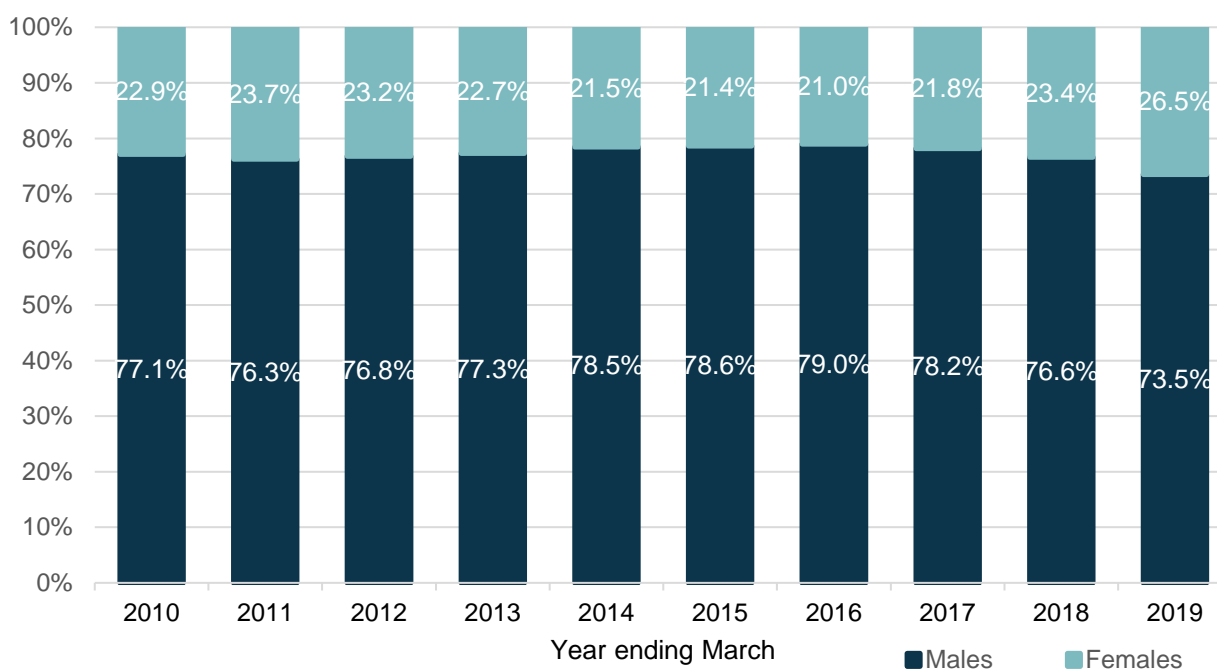
## 2.2 Youth offenders by sex

Of the youth offenders recorded in the last 12 months, 73.5% were a male and 26.5% were a female. The number of male youth offenders decreased by 889 incidents from the previous year, while female youth offenders increased by 478 incidents in the last 12 months.

Sex	Apr 2014 - Mar 2015	Apr 2015 - Mar 2016	Apr 2016 - Mar 2017	Apr 2017 - Mar 2018	Apr 2018 - Mar 2019	1 year % change
Males	14,909	15,623	16,124	14,715	13,826	-6.0%
Females	4,050	4,153	4,493	4,495	4,973	10.6%
<b>Youth offenders</b>	<b>18,959</b>	<b>19,776</b>	<b>20,617</b>	<b>19,210</b>	<b>18,799</b>	<b>-2.1%</b>

The increase in female youth offenders in the current reference period was driven by an increase in 16 and 17 year olds, up 17.1%(175 incidents) and 37.8%(292 incidents) respectively. While male youth offenders aged 14 years decreased 13.4% from 2,291 to 1,983 in the last year. Over the last 10 years, males aged 16 and 17 years had the largest decrease, down 31.6%(1,591 incidents) and 29.7%(1,546 incidents) respectively.

### Youth offenders by sex, April 2009 to March 2019



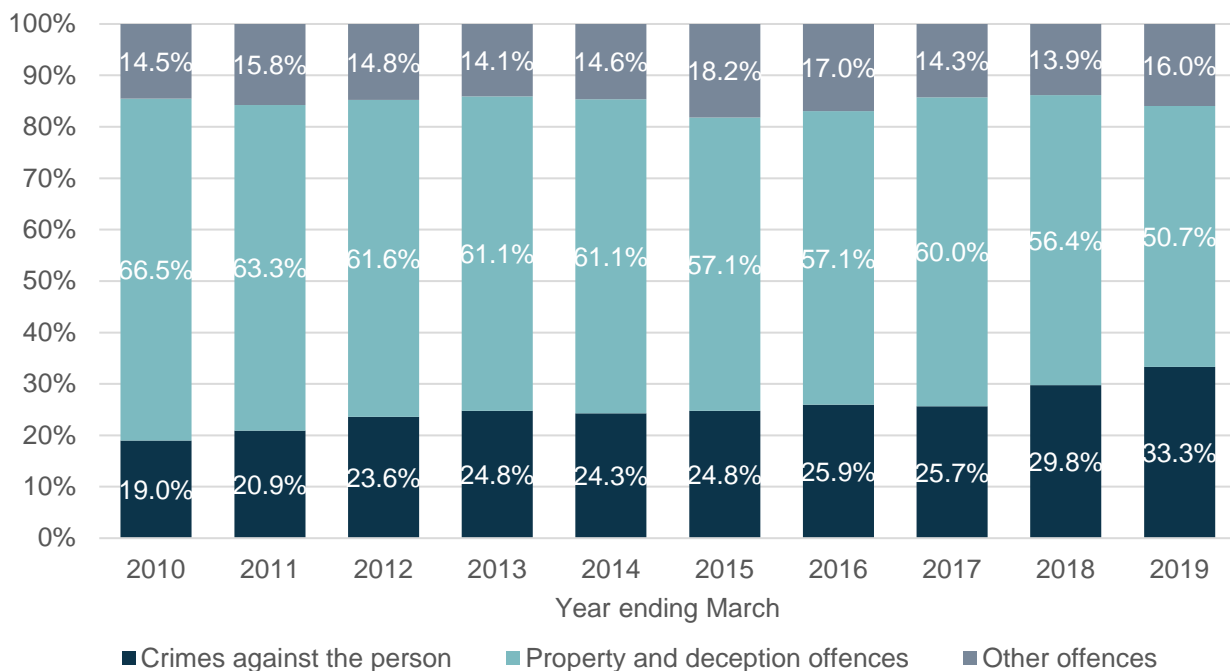
While males made up the majority of youth offenders in the current reference period, female youth offenders have proportionally increased over time, from 22.9%(5,838 incidents) in year ending March 2010 to 26.5%(4,973 incidents) in the year ending March 2019. This is a result of male youth offenders decreasing 29.8% from 19,706 to 13,826 incidents in the last 10 years.

## 2.3 Principal offence types

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

In the year ending March 2019, 50.7% of all youth offenders had a principal offence of *Property and deception offences*. Since the year ending March 2010 the numbers in this category has decreased 43.8% (7,442 incidents) down from 16,982 alleged offender incidents.

### Youth offenders by principal offence division, April 2009 to March 2019



The number of youth offenders with the principal offence type of *Crimes against the person* has increased in the past 10 years, up 29.0% (1,406 incidents) from 4,853 alleged offender incidents to 6,259 in the last 12 months. Proportionally this offence division made 33.3% of youth offenders in the current year, which has increased from 19.0% in the year ending March 2010.

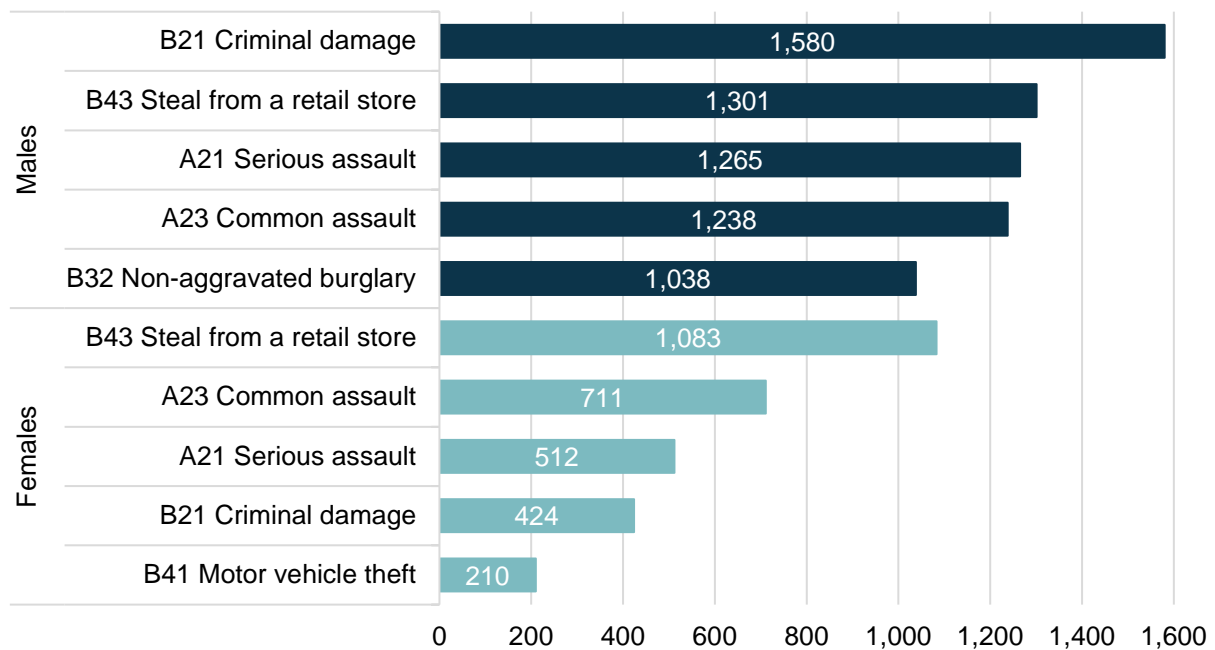
The principal offence groups driving the increase of *Crimes against the person* since the year ending March 2010 are:

- A23 Common assault (up 105.8%, from 947 to 1,949)
- A51 Aggravated robbery (up 23.4%, from 841 to 1,038)
- A73 Threatening behaviour (up 122.7%, from 150 to 334)

### 2.3.1 Principal offence by sex

While there were similarities in principal offence divisions for male and female youth offenders, differences in the top principal offence groups in the current reference period were observed for each sex.

#### Youth alleged offender incidents by top 5 principal offence groups by sex, April 2018 to March 2019



For male youth offenders, the top principal offence group was B21 Criminal damage (11.4% of male youth offenders), while the top principal offence group for females in the past 12 months was B43 Steal from a retail store (21.8% of female youth offenders). For each sex, the top offence group has remained the same over the past five year period.

### 2.3.2 Co-occurrence

Alleged offender incidents are represented by a principal offence, however they may include multiple offence types as part of the incident. The top co-occurring offences, for the offence categories that were driving the increase in *Crimes against the person* over the past 10 years, for youth offenders are detailed below.

#### Common assault

In the past 12 months, the principal offence category A23 Common assault recorded the largest increase for youth offenders, up 221 incidents (12.8%) to 1,949 alleged offender incidents. In the current reference period, the top five offence groups co-occurring within these youth alleged offender incidents were:

- B21 Criminal damage
- E21 Breach family violence order
- B43 Steal from a retail store
- A83 Throw or discharge object endangering people
- B49 Other theft.

## Aggravated robbery

In the year ending March 2019, there were 1,038 youth offenders with a principal offence of A51 Aggravated robbery. This count was stable from the previous year, with 1,035 alleged offender incidents recorded in the year ending 31 March 2018. The top five offence groups co-occurring within this principal offence group in the past 12 months were:

- B45 Receiving or handling stolen goods
- B53 Obtain benefit by deception
- D21 Riot and affray
- A52 Non-Aggravated robbery
- D12 Prohibited and controlled weapons offences.

## Threatening behaviour

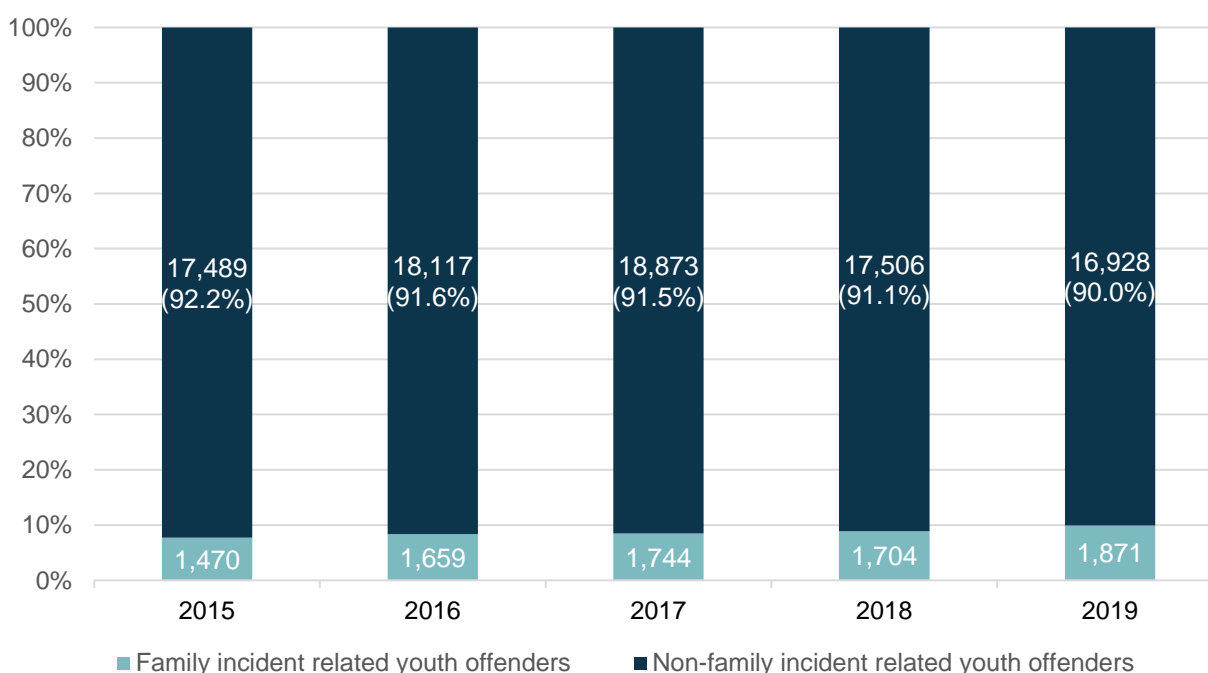
The number of youth offenders with a principal offence of A73 Threatening behaviour increased in the past year, up 40.9% (97 incidents) from 237 alleged offender incidents to 334. In this period, the top five offence groups co-occurring within a youth alleged offender incident for this principal offence category were:

- B21 Criminal damage
- E21 Breach family violence order
- D12 Prohibited and controlled weapons offences
- B49 Other theft
- E22 Breach intervention order.

## 2.4 Family violence related youth offenders

A family incident is counted each time Victoria Police complete an L17 form and may or may not involve a criminal offence. The following graph highlights the number of youth offenders that were related to a family incident and those that were not over the past five years.

Youth alleged offender incidents by whether family incident related, April 2014 to March 2019



In the year ending March 2019 there was an increase in the number of youth offenders that were family violence related, compared with five years ago, up 27.3% (401 incidents).

### 3. Unique offenders

#### 3.1 Average number of alleged offender incidents per unique offender

In the year ending March 2019, the average number of alleged offender incidents recorded per unique alleged offender aged 10–17 years was 2.7 alleged offender incidents. This was higher than for those aged 18 years and over, which recorded an average of 2.1 alleged offender incidents per unique alleged offender in the current reference period.

Age Group	Apr 09 - Mar 10	Apr 10 - Mar 11	Apr 11 - Mar 12	Apr 12 - Mar 13	Apr 13 - Mar 14	Apr 14 - Mar 15	Apr 15 - Mar 16	Apr 16 - Mar 17	Apr 17 - Mar 18	Apr 18 - Mar 19
10-14 years	1.9	1.9	2.1	2.3	2.2	2.6	2.8	2.9	2.7	2.8
15-17 years	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.8	2.9	2.7	2.6
<i>10-17 years total</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>2.1</i>	<i>2.3</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>2.6</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>2.9</i>	<i>2.7</i>	<i>2.7</i>
18 years and over	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.1
<b>All alleged offender incidents</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>2.1</b>

While youth had a higher average alleged offender incidents over time, the table shows that the average number of alleged offender incidents per unique offender has increased for all age groups over increased time.

### 4. Victim reports

In the year ending March 2019, there were 211,003 person victim reports where age was recorded. Of these, 12,491 were aged between 0–17 years of age (5.9% of all victim reports). The proportion of youth victim reports has remained relatively stable in the last 10 years. Almost half (48.3% or 6,035 victim reports) of these youth victims were aged 15-17 years.

Victim Age Group	Victim Age	Apr 2014 - Mar 2015	Apr 2015 - Mar 2016	Apr 2016 - Mar 2017	Apr 2017 - Mar 2018	Apr 2018 - Mar 2019	1 year % change
0-17 years	0-9 years	1,922	2,506	2,867	2,455	2,057	-16.2%
	10-14 years	3,428	4,009	4,641	4,367	4,399	0.7%
	15-17 years	4,716	5,053	5,607	5,899	6,035	2.3%
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>10,066</i>	<i>11,568</i>	<i>13,115</i>	<i>12,721</i>	<i>12,491</i>	<i>-1.8%</i>
18 years and over		185,342	205,291	221,489	199,637	198,512	-0.6%
<b>Victim reports</b>		<b>195,408</b>	<b>216,859</b>	<b>234,604</b>	<b>212,358</b>	<b>211,003</b>	<b>-0.6%</b>

## 4.1 Principal offence types

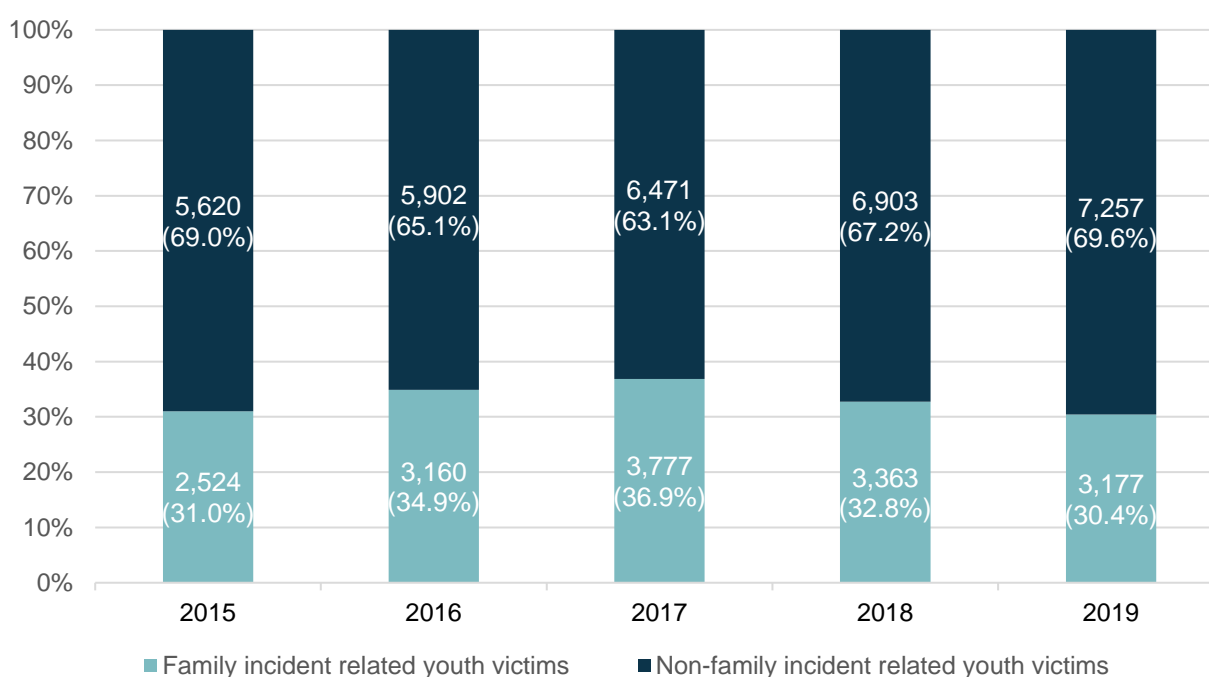
To assign an offence type to a victim report with multiple offences, the most serious offence within a report is determined and this becomes the principal offence for the victim report. Of the 10,434 youth victims aged between 10–17 years in the last 12 months, 8,536 reports (81.8%) had a principal offence of *Crimes against the person*. The proportion of victim reports with a principal offence of *Crimes against the person* has increased in the last 10 years from 62.4% (5,446 victim reports) in the year ending March 2010.

The principal offence categories that contributed the most for youth victims aged 10–17 years was A23 Common assault, with 3,035 victim reports in the year ending March 2019. This was followed by A21 Serious assault and A32 Indecent assault, with 1,383 and 1,239 victim reports respectively.

## 4.2 Family violence related youth victims (10–17 years)

A family incident is counted each time Victoria Police complete an L17 form and may or may not involve a criminal offence. The following graph highlights the number of youth victims (aged 10–17 years) that were related to a family incident and those that were not over the past five years.

Youth victim reports by whether family incident related, April 2014 to March 2019



In the year ending March 2019 there was an increase in the number of youth victim reports that were family violence related, compared with five years ago, up 25.9% (653 victim reports).

## 4.3 Victims of youth alleged offender incidents

The following section will focus on victim reports with at least one youth alleged offender (aged 10-17), where an alleged offender has been identified.

In the year ending March 2019, there were 9,639 person victim reports related to youth offenders. Of these reports, victims aged 18 years and over make up the largest proportion (73.0% or 7,040 victim reports). In the last 12 months, victims aged 10–17 have increased by 18.0% or 384 victim reports.

### Victim reports associated with youth offenders, April 2014 to March 2019

Victim Age Group	Apr 2014 - Mar 2015	Apr 2015 - Mar 2016	Apr 2016 - Mar 2017	Apr 2017 - Mar 2018	Apr 2018 - Mar 2019	1 year % change
0-9 years	118	121	120	110	86	-21.8%
10-14 years	760	781	861	954	1,070	12.2%
15-17 years	952	987	1,010	1,175	1,443	22.8%
<b>10-17 years</b>	<b>1,712</b>	<b>1,768</b>	<b>1,871</b>	<b>2,129</b>	<b>2,513</b>	<b>18.0%</b>
18 years and over	6,940	7,542	8,116	7,089	7,040	-0.7%
<b>Victim reports</b>	<b>8,770</b>	<b>9,431</b>	<b>10,107</b>	<b>9,328</b>	<b>9,639</b>	<b>3.3%</b>

### 4.3.1 Youth victims of youth alleged offender incidents

The number of youth victim reports for the same age group (10–17 years) related to these alleged offender incidents has increased, up 27.9% from 1,965 in the year ending March 2010.

#### Principal offence type

Of the 2,513 youth victims of youth offenders in the last 12 months, 2,318 victim reports (92.2%) had a principal offence of *Crimes against the person*. The proportion of victim reports with a principal offence *Crimes against the person* has increased in the last 10 years from 82.3% (1,618 victim reports) in the year ending March 2010.

Of the victim reports with a *Crimes against the person* principal offence, 35.5% (822 victim reports) had the offence category of A23 Common assault. This was followed by A21 Serious assault with 27.1% (629 victim reports) and A51 Aggravated robbery with 15.7% (365 victim reports).

Over the last 10 years victim reports with the principal offence category of A23 Common assault increased by 112.4% up from 387 victim reports in the year ending March 2010. Additionally, the principal offence category A51 Aggravated robbery has been increasing since the year ending March 2015.

#### Relationship of victim to offender

In the year ending March 2019, the most common relationship type for youth victims associated with youth offenders was 'Non Family Member'<sup>1</sup>, with 1,119 victim reports or 44.5% of all youth victim reports related to youth offenders). In the past 10 years this relationship type has increased 22.4%, up 205 victim reports from the year ending March 2010.

<sup>1</sup> Non-family member includes acquaintance, business associate/colleague, co-resident, employer/employee, neighbour and other known person.

## 5. Conclusion

In summary, in the year ending March 2019 the youth offender incidents and rate per 100,000 Victorians was lower than it was 10 years ago, while alleged offenders aged 18 year and over have increased during this time. Although there has been a decrease in the youth offending rate, there has been an increase in the proportion of *Crimes against the person* offences. With the offence categories of Common assault, Aggravated robbery and Threatening behaviour driving the increase.

Since the year ending March 2010 the proportion of female youth offenders has been increasing, however males are still the majority. In the last 12 months, male youth offenders were more likely to have a principal offence of Criminal damage, and females more likely to have a principal offence of Steal from a retail store.

In the last 12 months, youth victims (10–17 years), are more likely to have a principal offence of Common assault, Serious assault or Indecent assault. When looking at youth victims of youth offenders, the main principal offence types for these victims are Common assault, Serious assault and Aggravated robbery. Youth victims associated with youth offenders has also increased.



