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Characteristics of alleged offending by 10 to 13 year olds

This paper presents findings from Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) analysis examining young 10 to 13 year old alleged offenders recorded by Victoria Police between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2022. It will briefly explore the types of offences recorded, serious offending, and group offending. In this paper, young offenders are those who were aged between 10 and 13 years old at the time of offence. Where a young offender allegedly committed more than one offence, the most serious offence only is included. Any reference to an offender is referring to an alleged offender.

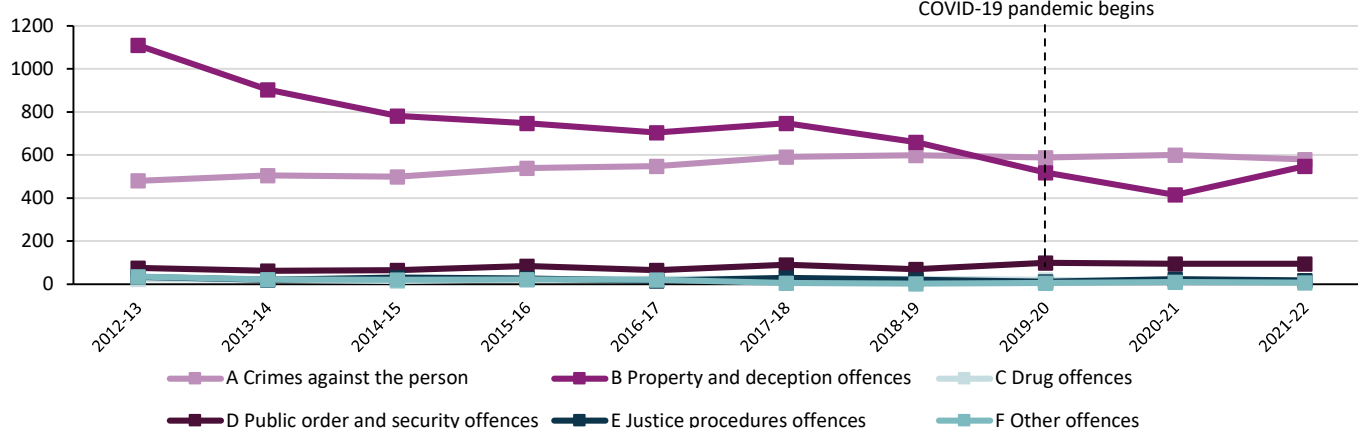
The number of 10 to 13 year old alleged offenders has decreased by 28% over the past ten years, from 1,760 in 2012-13 to 1,267 in 2021-22. There has been a change in the most common offence types recorded, with an increase in some assault-related offences and a decrease in theft-related offences, particularly shop-theft.

1. What offences are young offenders recorded for?

Common Assault was the most frequent offence group recorded for 10 to 13 year old alleged offenders in 2021-22.

Figure 1 shows the number of young offenders recorded in each offence division. The two most common offence divisions are *Property and deception offences* and *Crimes against the person offences*; combined they made up 89% of offenders in 2021-22. There has been a 51% decrease in the number of 10 to 13 year old *Property and deception* offenders between 2012-13 and 2021-22, with offender numbers reaching a low of 416 offenders in 2020-21 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 1. Offence divisions recorded for 10 to 13 year old alleged young offenders, 2012-13 to 2021-22.



The offence groups driving the decrease in *Property and deception offences* since 2012-13 are:

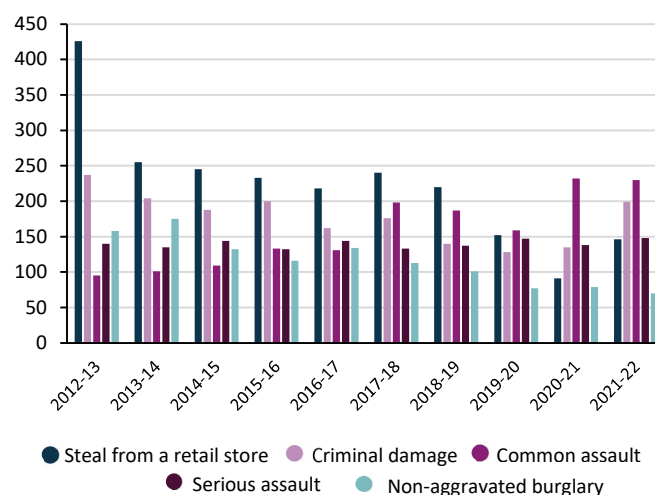
- Steal from a retail store (down 65.7%, from 426 to 146, although this reduction is partially due to changes in police issued infringement notice practices.)¹
- Non-aggravated burglary (down 55.7%, from 158 to 70)
- Other theft (down 74.3%, from 74 to 19)

Crimes against the person offenders have exhibited a gradual increasing trend since 2012-13 and were the most common offender type between 2019-20 and 2021-22 due to depressed levels of *Property and deception* offending during the pandemic-disrupted period. The main offence groups driving the increase of *Crimes against the person* offences since 2012-13 are:

- A51 Aggravated robbery (up 142.9%, from 21 to 51)
- A23 Common Assault (up 142.1%, from 95 to 230)

In 2021-22, the most common offence recorded for young offenders collectively was *Common assault*, followed by *Criminal damage*, whereas in 2013 it was *Steal from a retail store*, followed by *Criminal damage*. Figure 2 illustrates the decline of *Steal from a retail store* as an alleged offence.

Figure 2. Top 5 offence groups recorded for alleged young offenders, 2012-13 to 2021-22.¹



2. How many of these crimes are considered serious?

There were only 107 unique 10 to 13 year old alleged serious offenders recorded between 2017-18 and 2021-22.

Serious youth offending was defined in 2018 with the introduction of Category A and B serious youth offence categories.² In the five years 2017-18 to 2021-22, there were 107 unique young alleged offenders recorded for a Category A or B offence.

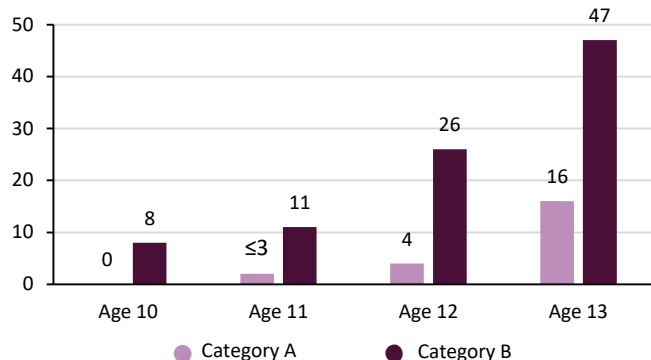
Table 1 shows the average number of serious alleged offenders recorded each year. It shows on average there were less than 2 (1.8) 10 year old alleged serious offenders recorded each year between 2017-18 and 2021-22, and just under 12 (11.8) 13 year olds recorded each year.

Table 1. Annual average number of Category A and B alleged young offenders by age, 2017-18 to 2021-22.

Number of offenders per year	
10 years old	1.8
11 years old	2.4
12 years old	6.0
13 years old	11.8

Figure 3 shows the number of 10 to 13 year old alleged serious offenders over the 5 years 2017-18 to 2021-22 by age, noting that the Category A and B definitions were introduced in 2018. It shows that young offenders are rarely recorded for Category A offences, the most serious offence category: only 16 13 year olds were recorded in 5 years. Category B offences were more common: the majority of offenders were recorded for sexual offences (94%). Alleged offenders aged 10, 11 and 12 made up less than half (45%) of all 10 to 13 year old alleged serious offenders.

Figure 3. Alleged young offenders recorded for Category A & B offences, 2017-18 to 2021-22.



3. Do 10 to 13 year olds offend alone or with others?

Group offending for 10 to 13 year old alleged offenders decreased by 40% between 2012-13 and 2021-22.



A downward trend of group offending³ emerging over the

past ten years indicates that more young offenders are committing offences individually than in previous years. In 2012-13, the majority (57%, $n = 1,009$) of alleged offenders had been involved in an incident with at least 1 or more co-offenders. This trend reversed by 2021-22, with the majority of offenders (53%, $n = 666$) now being recorded as an individual offender. Figure 4 shows there has been a reduction in the number of alleged 'group' offenders across all ages. For 10 and 11 year old alleged offenders, the number of 'group' offenders decreased from 174 (54%) in 2012-13 to 59 (37%) in 2021-22, a 16% point decrease.

Figure 4. Number of alleged young offenders classified as group offenders³, 2012-13 to 2021-22.

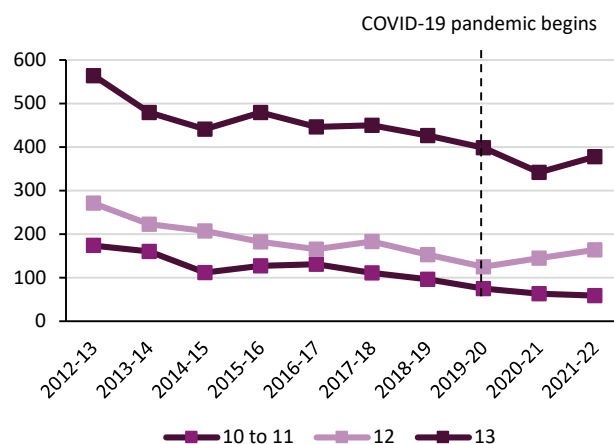
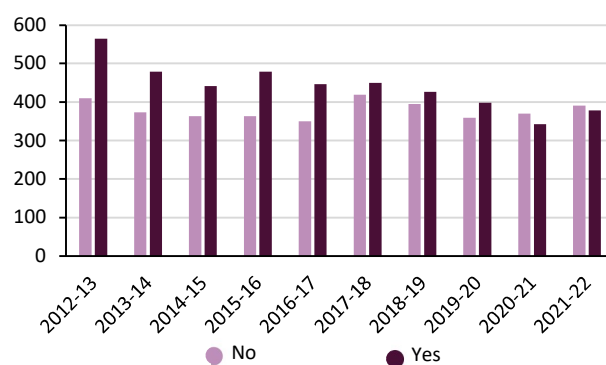


Figure 5 shows the decrease in group offending for 13-year-old offenders. Where there was once a notable difference between group and individual offenders, in 2021-22, they are now much closer in volume, with individual offenders in the majority for the most recent two years.

Figure 5. Number of alleged 13-year-old offenders classified as group offenders³, 2012-13 to 2021-22.



¹A trial enabled police to issue infringement notices for shop theft of goods up to \$600 until 1 July 2014. Offence numbers decreased thereafter.

²Serious offending for this analysis is defined as any Category A and Category B Serious Youth Offences. Category A comprises murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, child homicide, homicide by firearm, intentionally causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence, aggravated home invasion, aggravated carjacking, arson causing death, culpable driving causing death and terrorism. Category B comprises recklessly causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence, rape including by compelling sexual penetration, home invasion and carjacking.

³'Group' offending refers to alleged offenders who have been involved in an incident with a co-offender.