

# Information Bulletin

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## Repeat contact with the Juvenile Justice System

### Apprehensions by police

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This Information Bulletin uses police apprehensions data for the year 2000 to provide an overview of the frequency of offending by juveniles. Included are data on the number of apprehensions and charges listed against individual youth. Male/female and Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal profiles are compared.

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## Introduction

The annual publication, *Crime and Justice in South Australia: Juvenile Justice*, provides information on young people apprehended by the police, the offences alleged against them and their resultant processing through the various levels of the juvenile justice system – formal cautions, family conferences and the Youth Court. In addition, it provides information on young people held in the State's juvenile detention centres. However, it does not provide insight into the frequency of offending by individual juveniles, or any information on whether or not juvenile involvement with crime is short lived or extends over a long period of time. These issues need to be considered when developing appropriate strategies to diminish crime.

There are a number of ways these issues can be investigated. Offender surveys are one way of obtaining data on the level and frequency of offending. Other sources are police apprehension data and information collected by other criminal justice agencies responsible for processing juveniles. Apprehensions data provide information on police apprehensions for alleged offending and the number of offences alleged. However, at that point, the matters are still allegations. In contrast, at the level of formal caution and family conferences, the matters have been admitted to. With Youth Court data it is possible to identify all matters found proved. Taken in combination these three sources provide the overall history of 'admitted' or 'proved' offences for juveniles dealt with by the criminal justice system.

This Bulletin focuses on just one source of data and aims to provide some insight into the frequency of offending by juveniles as represented in apprehensions data. It does this by taking those young people apprehended by the police in the year 2000 and considering the number of times they were apprehended in that one year and the number of allegations recorded against them.

## Interpreting the data

In interpreting the following data, several points need to be kept in mind:

- According to the *Young Offenders Act 1993*, "youth" means a person of or above the age of 10 years but under the age of 18 years on the date of the alleged offence.
- The information presented relates only to those youths apprehended by police and processed by the official criminal justice system. It does not provide an insight into the actual nature or level of youth offending in the community. It is well documented that many offences are never reported to police and of those that are, many are never cleared by way of an apprehension. Nonetheless, it should be noted that because of their comparative immaturity, it is likely that juveniles are quite visible to police and so relatively vulnerable to apprehension.
- An apprehension report is a report submitted by a police officer each time a person is arrested or reported for criminal behaviour. If more than one offender is involved in the criminal incident and apprehended by police a separate apprehension report is filed against each co-offender.
- Police have an option of issuing an 'informal caution' for dealing with juveniles who have committed offences considered to be 'trivial'. Matters dealt with by such informal cautions are not included here.
- As noted in the Introduction, at the stage of a police apprehension, the matters dealt with are still allegations only and have not been admitted to or found proved.

## Number of apprehension reports per individual

In 2000, young people aged 10 to 17 years inclusive at the time of the offence<sup>1</sup> accounted for 8,992 apprehensions lodged by the police<sup>2</sup>. Table 1 details the number of apprehensions per person for the year 2000. As shown, 5,352 distinct individuals were apprehended, with the majority (69.7%) being apprehended once only, while a very small proportion (5.1%) were apprehended on five or more occasions. On average, each juvenile was apprehended 1.7 times within the 12 month period.

There was a small difference between males and females in the proportions experiencing more than one apprehension in the 12 month reporting period, with 76.3% of females and 68.1% of males being apprehended once only. On average, males recorded 1.73 apprehensions in 2000 while females recorded 1.50 apprehensions.

### Juvenile offenders 1 January - 31 December 2000

**Table 1** Number of police apprehensions per person by sex

No. of apprehensions	Males		Females		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	2,919	68.1	813	76.3	3,732	69.7
2	662	15.4	143	13.4	805	15.0
3	327	7.6	48	4.5	375	7.0
4	144	3.4	22	2.1	166	3.1
5-9	208	4.9	35	3.3	243	4.5
10-14	23	0.5	3	0.3	26	0.5
15 and over	4	0.1	1	0.1	5	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,287</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,065</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5,352</b>	<b>100.0</b>

This table refers to individual young offenders who have been the subject of at least one apprehension report during 2000.

Each person is counted once regardless of the number of times they have been apprehended during the twelve month period.

Information on racial appearance was available for 8,238 (91.6%) of the 8,992 apprehensions. Persons identified by police as Aboriginal in appearance accounted for 16.2% of these apprehensions. However, when discrete individuals apprehended are considered, a somewhat different picture emerges. As shown in Table 2, 554 individual Aboriginal youth and 4,085 non-Aboriginal young persons were apprehended in the course of the year. This means that Aboriginal youth accounted for 11.9% of all individual juveniles who were apprehended. That is, Aboriginal youth accounted for approximately one in six apprehensions but a slightly lower one in nine juveniles apprehended in the 12 months under consideration.

A much lower proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal youth were apprehended only once (47.8% compared with 68.3% of non-Aboriginal youth) while a higher proportion recorded five or more apprehensions in the year (12.3% of Aboriginal compared with 5.1% of non-Aboriginal youth respectively). For apprehended Aboriginal youth, the number of apprehensions per individual was 2.4 compared with 1.7 for their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

<sup>1</sup> The following analysis details the number of apprehension reports and allegations recorded against juveniles during the year 2000. Some proportion of these would have turned 18 years of age during the period under study. For such individuals, this discussion details only the apprehensions and allegations relating to offences committed before the age of 18. Any offences that were committed after those youths turned 18 have been omitted from the following discussion

<sup>2</sup> Some offences – *traffic offences* and *offences against a court or court order* – have been omitted from the data. For more information, refer to the Appendix of the annual publication, *Crime and Justice in South Australia: Juvenile Justice* which excludes the same offence categories.

**Juvenile offenders  
1 January - 31 December 2000**

**Table 2 Number of police apprehensions per person by racial appearance**

No. of apprehensions	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal		Unknown	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	265	47.8	2,788	68.3	679	95.2
2	111	20.0	665	16.3	29	4.1
3	69	12.5	302	7.4	4	0.6
4	41	7.4	125	3.0	0	0
5-9	61	11.0	181	4.4	1	0.1
10-14	6	1.0	20	0.5	0	0
15 and over	1	0.1	4	0.1	0	0
Total	554	100.0	4,085	100.0	713	100.0

This table refers to individual young offenders who have been the subject of at least one apprehension report during 2000.

Each person is counted once regardless of the number of times they have been apprehended during the twelve month period.

**Number of allegations listed on an apprehension report**

An apprehension report may contain details of more than one offence. If the apprehending officer is aware that a young person has committed several offences on the same day, ordinarily one apprehension report that incorporates all detected offences will be submitted. Similarly, if a youth has allegedly committed several offences over several months and the apprehending officer becomes aware of all of these offences as part of a single investigation, they will all be included in the one report. In contrast, if the same youth is reported or arrested for 'fresh' offences after the initial apprehension report has been submitted, another report is lodged, addressing these 'new' matters.<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1 presents the number of allegations per report for males and females and shows close similarities for the two groups. Nearly two thirds of both male and female apprehension reports detailed only one offence (65.1% and 66.0% respectively) while a further one fifth listed two offences (22.1% and 20.0% respectively).

<sup>3</sup> Multiple counts of the same offence have not been included. This is in line with the counting procedure used by both SAPOL and the Office of Crime Statistics in its annual publication *Crime and Justice in South Australia: Offences reported to Police, the Victims and Alleged Perpetrators*. For more information refer to the Appendix of that report.

**Figure 1 Apprehension Reports filed by police in 2000: sex by number of charges per report**

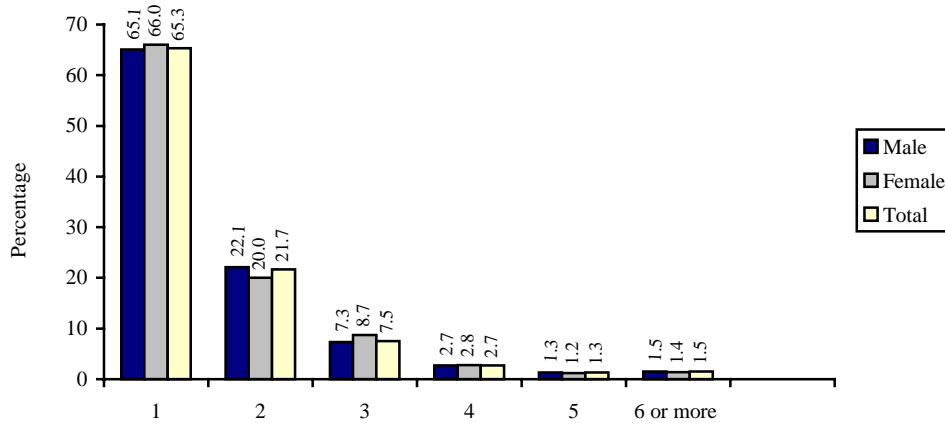
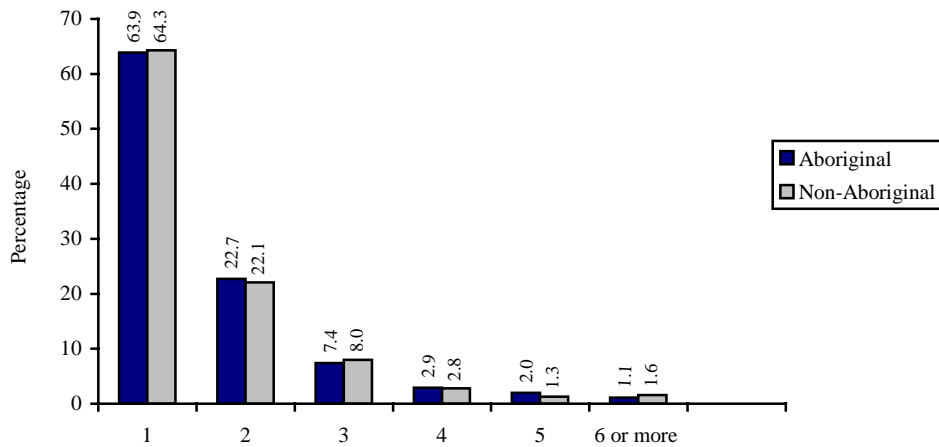


Figure 2 presents the same information by racial appearance and shows that the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal profiles for the number of offences per apprehension report are very similar.

**Figure 2 Apprehension Reports filed by police in 2000: racial appearance by number of charges per report**



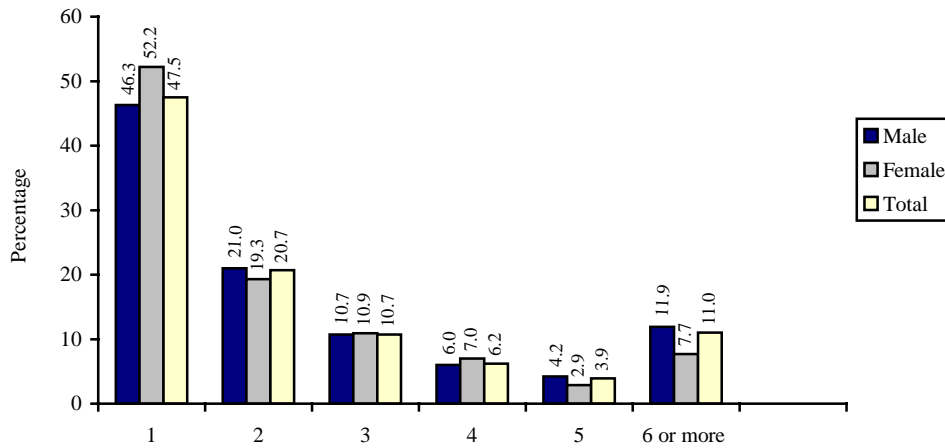
**Number of allegations per individual**

Another unit of analysis is the total number of offences alleged per individual over the 12 month period. Figure 3 shows that nearly half (47.5%) of the 5,352 juveniles apprehended in 2000 were charged with only one offence in the twelve month reporting period. For a further fifth (20.7%) there were two allegations and for one in ten (10.7%) three allegations. Small proportions of juveniles recorded four or five allegations (6.2% and 3.9% respectively). For one in ten apprehended juveniles, six or more offences were alleged against them during 2000.

Also presented in Figure 3 are the male/female profiles for the number of allegations per person. As discussed earlier, there were small differences in the male/female profiles for the number of apprehensions per individual. However, there were almost no differences in the number of allegations per report. Hence, it would be expected that there would be only small differences in the male/female profiles for the total number of allegations per person. As shown, this is the case. A slightly higher proportion of females than males were charged with only one allegation during 2000 (52.5% compared

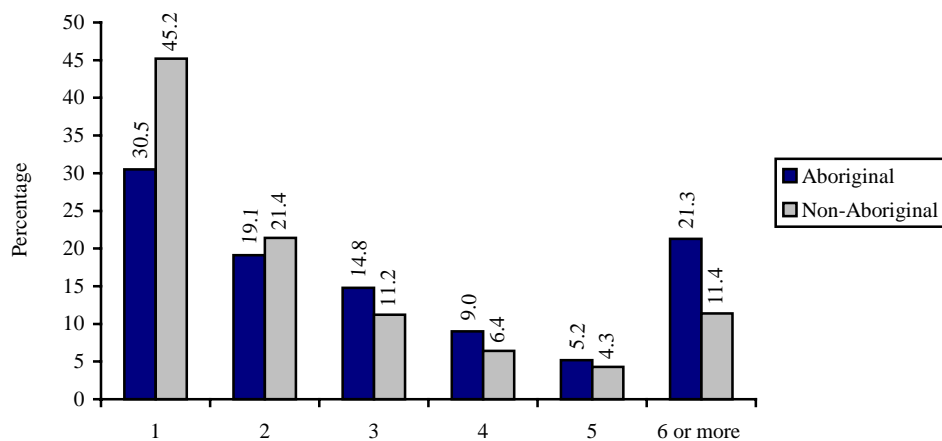
with 47.5% respectively) while a lower proportion were the subject of six or more allegations (7.7% compared with 11.9% respectively).

**Figure 3 Discrete individuals apprehended by police in 2000: Number of allegations by sex**



In contrast to the similarities discussed for males and females, substantial differences were apparent for the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal profiles. As Figure 4 shows, apprehended Aboriginal youth were far less likely than their non-Aboriginal counterparts to have only one allegation recorded against them over the twelve month period (30.5% compared with 45.2% respectively), but substantially more likely to have six or more allegations listed (21.3% compared with 11.4% respectively). However, for those youth with two, three four or five allegations, there were only small differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth.

**Figure 4 Discrete individuals apprehended by police in 2000: Number of allegations by racial identity**



Significant findings emerge when the data relating to charges are analysed in a different way. As indicated in Table 3, there were 2,541 individuals who, during the course of the year, were alleged to have committed only one offence. This means that together they accounted for 2,541 offences. As juveniles were alleged to have committed 14,468 offences in total, this means that 2,541 individuals or 47.5% of all apprehended juveniles accounted for 17.6% of all allegations. However, at the other end of the scale, 591 persons who were alleged to have committed six or more offences accounted for 5,623 of the allegations laid. That is, one in ten individuals (11.0%) accounted for nearly four in ten of all offences (38.9%).

**Table 3 Proportion of individuals compared with proportion of offence allegations accounted for by those individuals in 2000**

<b>Number of offences per individual</b>		
1	2,541 persons @ 1 offence each = 2,541 offences	47.5% of individuals accounted for 17.6% of all allegations
2	1,106 persons @ 2 offences each = 2,212 offences	20.7% of individuals accounted for 15.3% of all allegations
3	574 persons @ 3 offences each = 1,722 offences	10.7% of individuals accounted for 11.9% of all allegations
4	330 persons @ 4 offences each = 1,320 offences	6.2% of individuals accounted for 9.1% of all allegations
5	210 persons @ 5 offences each = 1,050 offences	3.9% of individuals accounted for 7.3% of all allegations
6 or more	591 persons @ 6 + offences each = 5,623 offences	11.0% of individuals accounted for 38.9% of all allegations

Table 4 provides a male/female comparison. As shown, a similarly small proportion within each group accounted for a similarly high proportion of all offences, with 16.1% of males accounting for 48.1% of all allegations against males and 17.6% of females accounting for 48.3% of offences recorded against females. For males, it was the individuals with five or more offences who accounted for nearly half of all allegations listed against males while for females it was those with four or more offences.

**Table 4 Proportion of individuals compared with proportion of offence allegations accounted for by those individuals in 2000: a Male/Female comparison**

<b>Number of offences per individual</b>	<b>Males apprehended</b>	<b>Females apprehended</b>
1	46.3% of individuals accounted for 16.7% of all allegations	52.2% of individuals accounted for 21.8% of all allegations
2	21.0% of individuals accounted for 15.1% of all allegations	19.3% of individuals accounted for 16.2% of all allegations
3	10.7% of individuals accounted for 11.5% of all allegations	10.9% of individuals accounted for 13.7% of all allegations
4	6.0% of individuals accounted for 8.6% of all allegations	7.0% of individuals accounted for 11.6% of all allegations
5	4.2% of individuals accounted for 7.5% of all allegations	2.9% of individuals accounted for 6.1% of all allegations
6 or more	11.9% of individuals accounted for 40.6% of all allegations	7.7% of individuals accounted for 30.6% of all allegations

For both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth, a small proportion of individuals accounted for a high proportion of offences. For each group, one fifth of individuals accounted for over half of all allegations:

- 21.3% of Aboriginal youth accounted for 54.5% of all allegations recorded against this group; and
- 22.0% of non-Aboriginal youth accounted for 55.9% of non-Aboriginal allegations.

For Aboriginal youth, it was the individuals with six or more offences who accounted for over half of all allegations against Aboriginal youth while for their non-Aboriginal counterparts it was those with four or more offences.

At the top end of the spectrum, it can be seen that the Aboriginal young people with nine to 15 offences accounted for nearly three in ten of all Aboriginal allegations while the equivalent figure for non-Aboriginal youth was only 14.9%. However, there was a greater level of similarity at the extreme top of the spectrum. For both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth, those with 16 or more allegations recorded against them in 2000 accounted for approximately one in twelve of all allegations against the group (8.8% for Aboriginal and 7.6% of non-Aboriginal youth).



**Table 5 Proportion of individuals compared with proportion of offence allegations accounted for by those individuals in 2000: an Aboriginal /non-Aboriginal comparison**

<b>Number of offences per individual</b>	<b>Aboriginal persons apprehended</b>	<b>Non-Aboriginal persons apprehended</b>
1	30.5% of individuals accounted for 7.9% of all allegations	45.2% of individuals accounted for 16.4% of all allegations
2	19.1% of individuals accounted for 9.9% of all allegations	21.4% of individuals accounted for 15.5% of all allegations
3	14.8% of individuals accounted for 11.5% of all allegations	11.2% of individuals accounted for 12.2% of all allegations
4	9.0% of individuals accounted for 9.3% of all allegations	6.4% of individuals accounted for 9.3% of all allegations
5	5.2% of individuals accounted for 6.8% of all allegations	4.3% of individuals accounted for 7.9% of all allegations
6 to 8	9.4% of individuals accounted for 15.9% of all allegations	6.6% of individuals accounted for 16.2% of all allegations
9 to 15	10.3% of individuals accounted for 29.8% of all allegations	3.7% of individuals accounted for 14.9% of all allegations
16 or more	1.6% of individuals accounted for 8.8% of all allegations	1.0% of individuals accounted for 7.6% of all allegations

## **Summary**

This Bulletin has used police apprehensions data to provide an overview of the frequency of offending by juveniles apprehended by police in the year 2000, and has provided broad brush information on the number of apprehensions and charges listed against these individuals.

The data reveal that the majority of the 5,352 juveniles apprehended in 2000 were apprehended only once in the year and that most had only one or two charges recorded against them. However, a minority of youth accounted for a sizeable proportion of the charges listed against juveniles. When all the apprehended youth were considered, approximately 10% of individuals accounted for almost 40% of all offences. This pattern of 'the majority with few' and 'a minority with many' held true for both males and females and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth.