

Juvenile Offending Trajectories

A Queensland Study

Presentation

- Background
- Current study
- Results
- Limitations and future research
- Conclusions

Criminal Careers

- Based on longitudinal cohort studies
- Exploring initiation, frequency, duration, specialisation, escalation and desistance
- Focus on identifying offender sub-populations

Identifying chronic offenders

- E.g. Wolfgang et. al. (1975)
 - Chronics = >5 offences
- Farrington et. al. (1987)
 - ‘Frequents’ and ‘Occasionals’
- Moffitt et. al. (1993)
 - ‘Life course persistent’ and ‘adolescent-limited’ offenders

Identifying chronic offenders

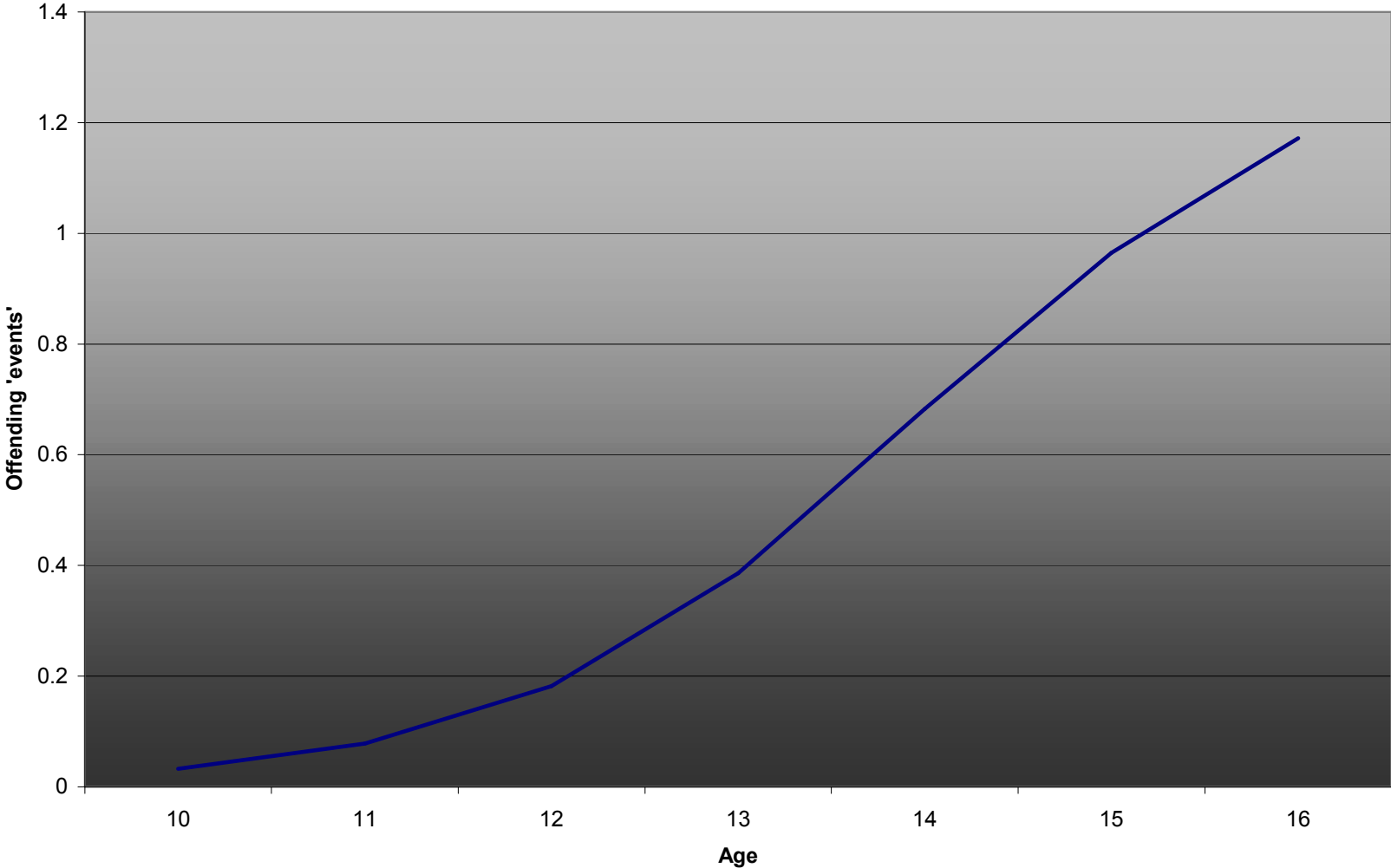
- Offending trajectories incorporate both prevalence and duration of offending
- Semi-parametric group-based method (SPGM) groups together offenders that have similar offending trajectories

Cohort

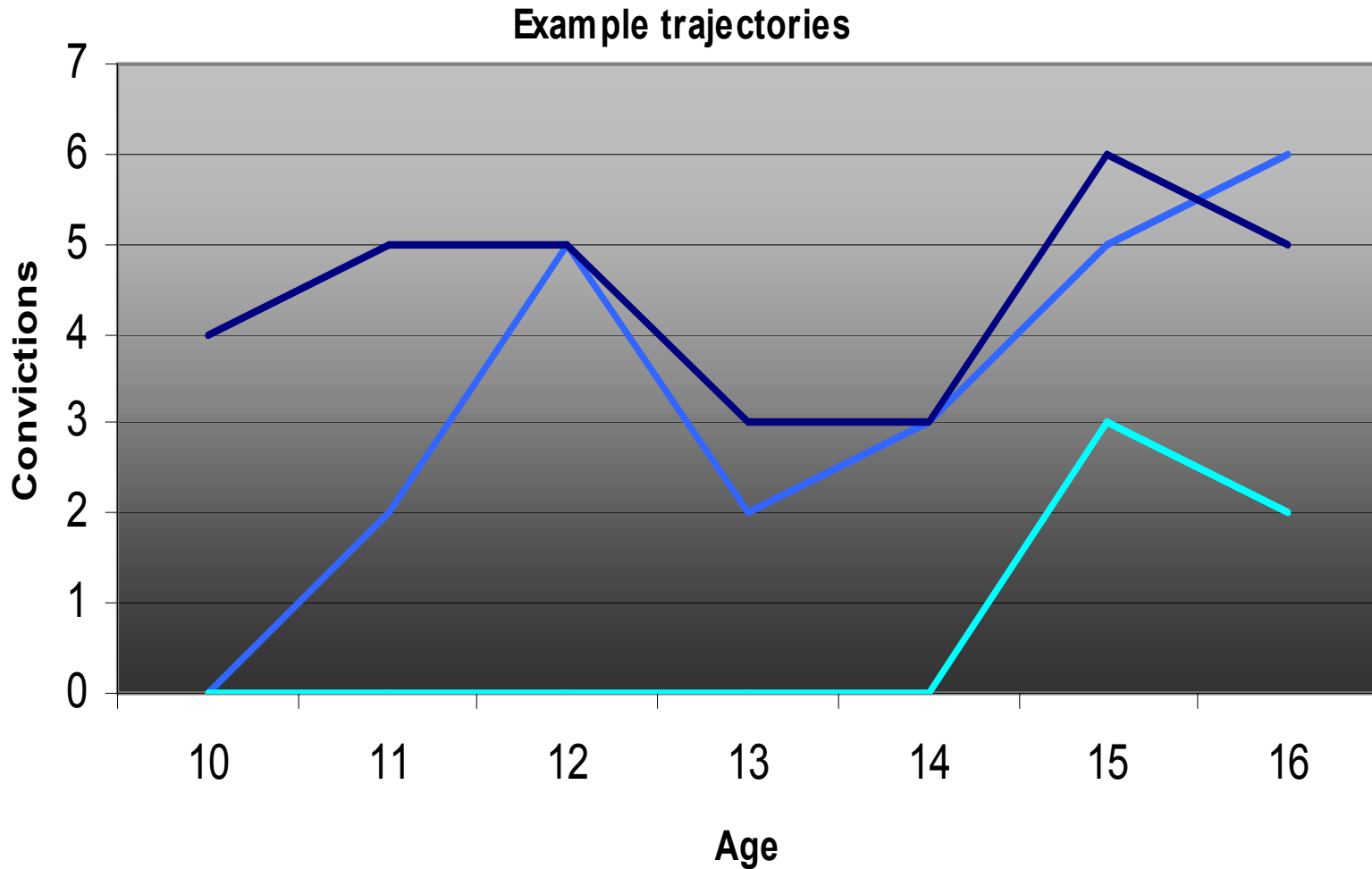
- People born in 1983 or 1984 with one or more finalised court appearances in Queensland
- Included 4,470 young people (23% Indigenous, 77% male)
- Offending (cautioning and court) modelled between the ages of 10 and 16

Offending Trajectories

Age-Crime Curve



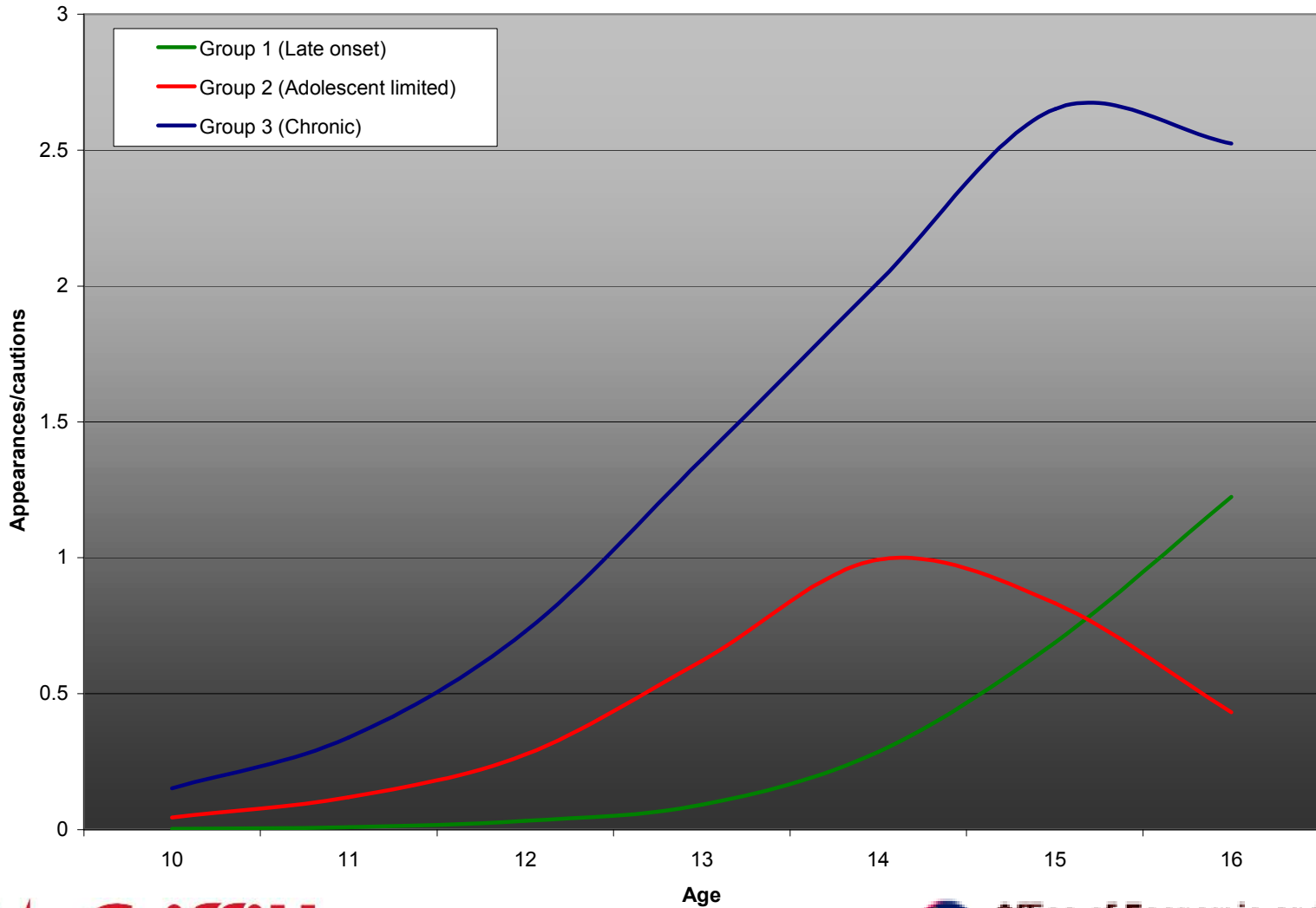
Offending Trajectories



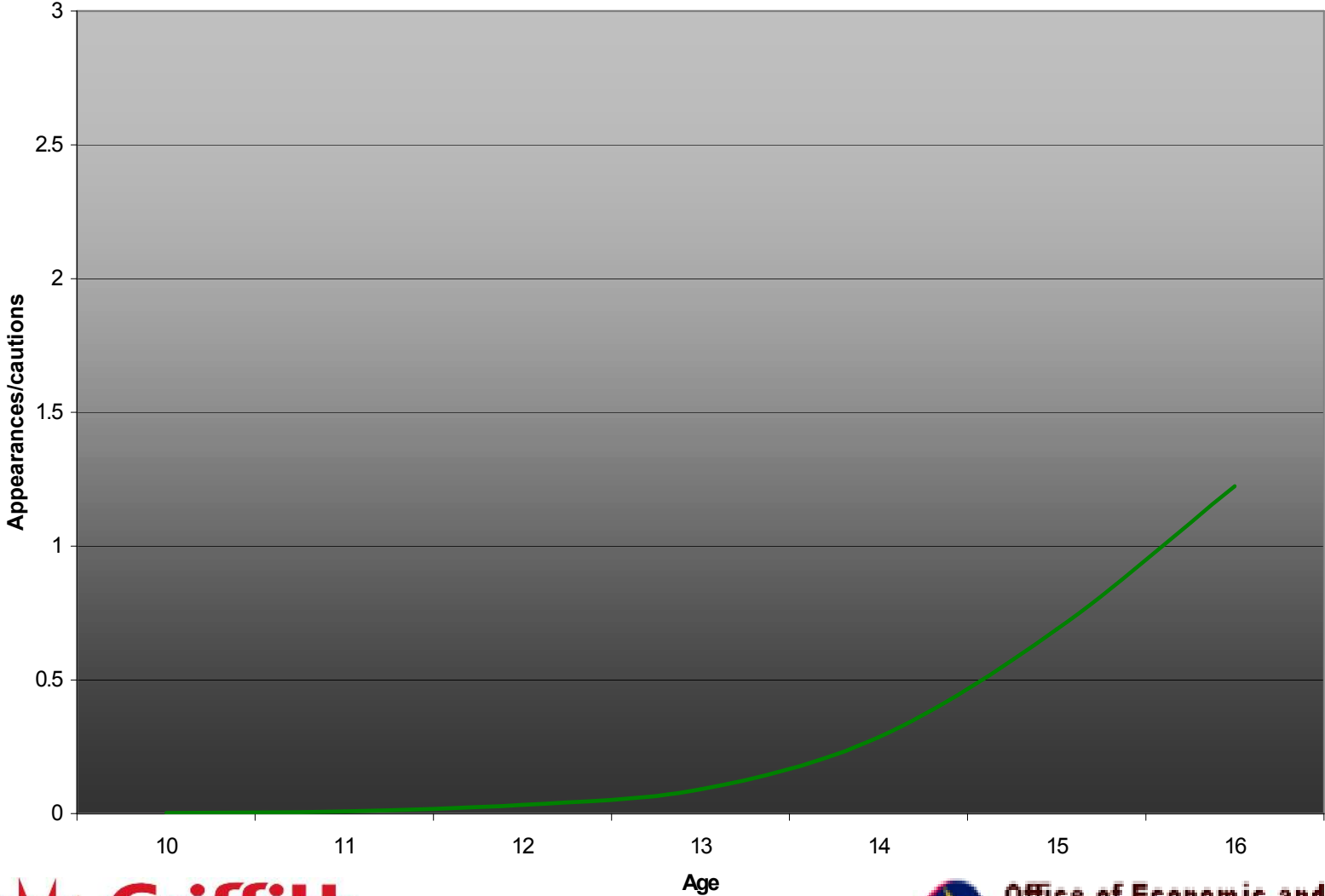
Current study

- Develop a trajectory model of juvenile offending
- Explore correlates of trajectory membership
- Assess predictive validity of trajectories

Trajectory model



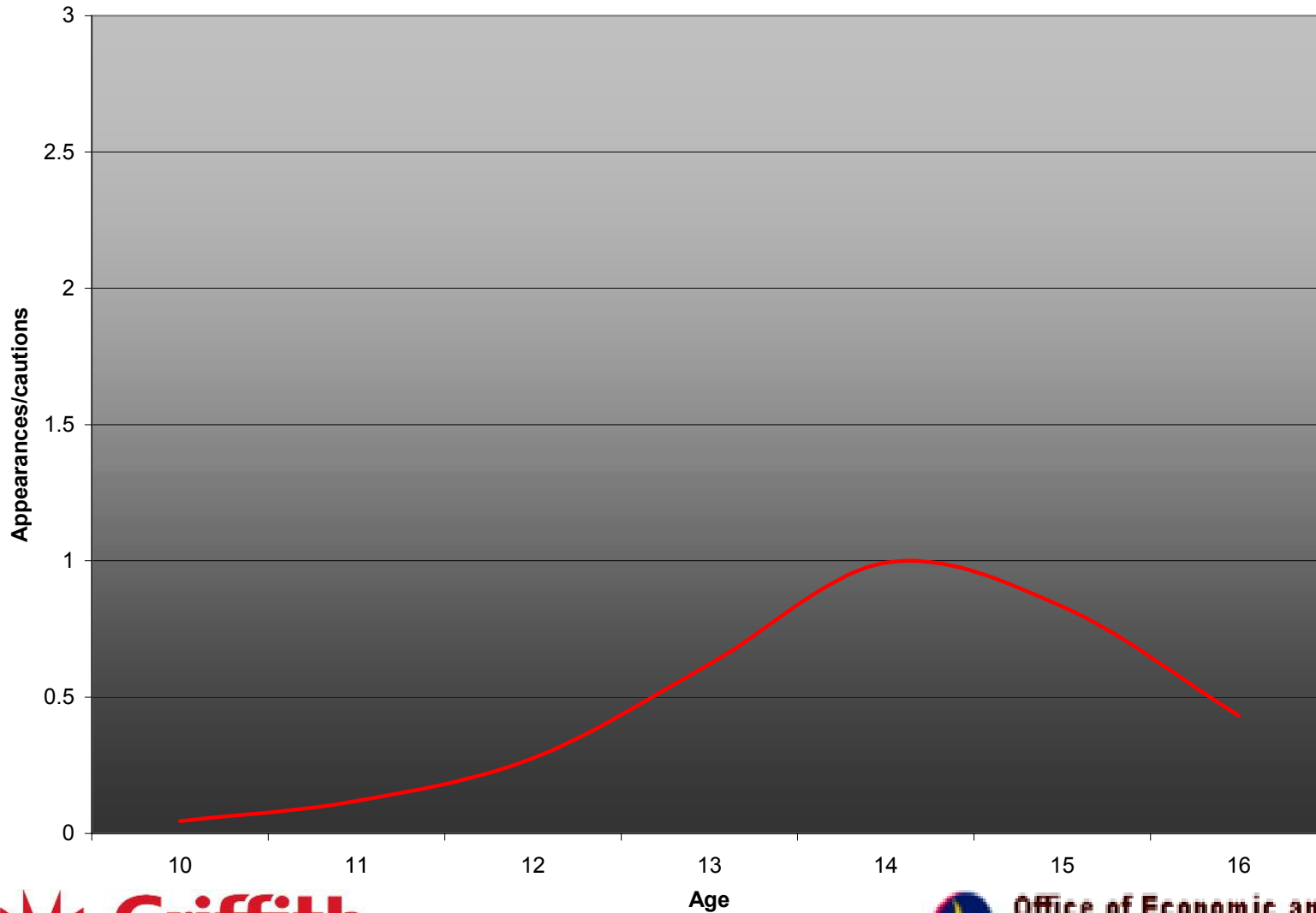
Late Onset Group



Late Onset Group

- Included more than two-thirds of the cohort
- Average of 2.3 contacts as juveniles
- Responsible for 40% of the entire cohort's offending
- Average 15.3 years old at first contact

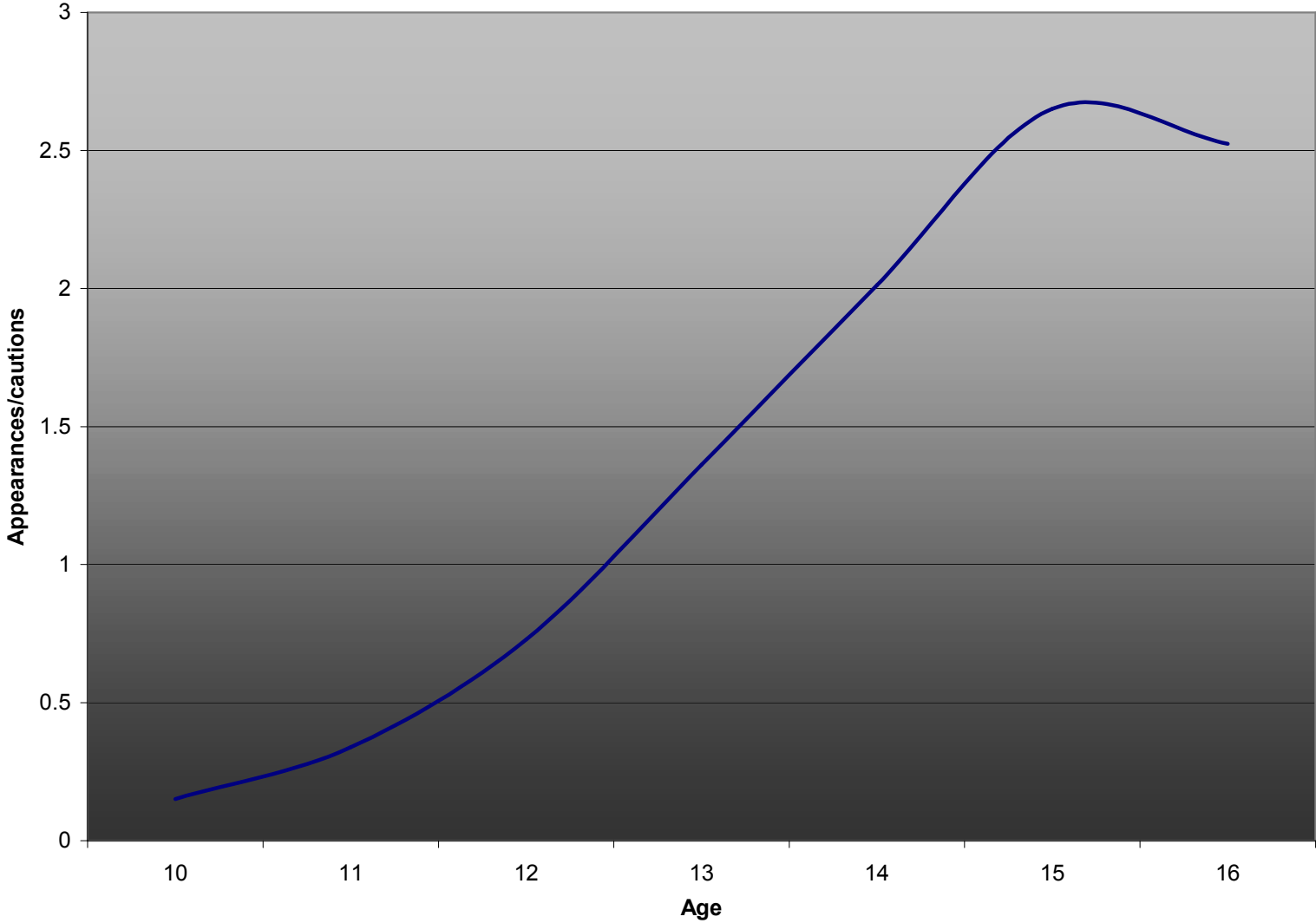
Adolescent Limited Group



Adolescent Limited Group

- Included 20% of the cohort
- Average of 3.9 contacts as juveniles
- Committed 23% of the offences committed by the whole cohort
- Average 13.8 years old at first contact

Chronic Group



Chronic group

- Included just over one-tenth of the cohort
- Average of 10.5 contacts as juveniles
- Responsible for 33% of the entire cohort's offending
- Average 13.3 years old at first contact

Factors associated with trajectories

Six factors explored:

- Sex
- Indigenous status
- Remoteness of residence
- Socio-economic disadvantage (of area of residence)
- Child protection history
- First court outcome

Factors associated with chronic offending

- Males more than twice as likely as females to follow ‘chronic’ trajectory
- Indigenous offenders between 3 and 5 times as likely as non-Indigenous to follow ‘chronic’ trajectory
- Young people with child protection substantiations were 2 – 4 times more likely to follow ‘chronic’ trajectory

Factors associated with chronic offending

	% Chronic group	% Offending cohort	% Entire Population
Indigenous	51%	23%	5%
Male	87%	71%	51%
CP History	42%	22%	7%

Predictive validity of trajectories

- Relationship between juvenile offending trajectory and adult offending
- For this study, adult offending was based on adult court appearances and was simply coded as a yes/no variable

Adult offending

Offending Trajectory Group	Adult offending			
	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
Late Onset	1,102	36.0	1,956	64.0
Adolescent Limited	308	33.4	615	66.6
Chronic	329	67.3	160	32.7
Total	1,739	38.9	2,731	61.1

Adult offending

- When sex, Indigenous status, remoteness and SED, child protection and first court outcome were controlled for in a logistic regression model:
 - Chronics were 2.7 times more likely to progress than late onset offenders
 - Chronics were 3.3 times more likely to progress than adolescent limited offenders

Adult Offending

- Of the offenders who did go on to adult offending:
 - Late-onset juveniles averaged 4.1 adult court appearances
 - Adolescent-limited juveniles averaged 3.6 court appearances
 - Chronic juveniles averaged 6.3 court appearances

Findings

- Trajectory model similar to U.S., U.K. and New Zealand models
- Consistency of results adding evidence to a model of offending that includes two or more subpopulations of offenders

International comparisons

Study	# offending trajectories	# chronic trajectories
Cambridge study of delinquent development	3	2
Christchurch Health and Development Study	3	1
Philadelphia Study 2	4	3
Juvenile delinquency and adult crime 1942	4	2
Juvenile delinquency and adult crime 1949	3	1
Juvenile delinquency and adult crime 1955	4	2
Queensland offending cohort	3	1

Findings

- Expected differences between males and females; Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders
- Child protection history strongly related to offending trajectory

Findings

- Offending trajectories strongly predict adult offending at an aggregate level
- Chronic juveniles are twice as likely to appear as adults as other juveniles and appear more frequently as adults.

Limitations of study

- Short time frame
- Limited range of factors available
- Sample attrition
- Use of official data for offending

Future research

- Extend study into adult offending
- Explore costs of juvenile chronic offenders to Government
- Studies of how interventions/social changes (such as marriage, employment etc) affect trajectory group membership