



A P R I L 2 0 0 5

Offending at 16 to 20 years of age

Identifying Youth for Intensive Intervention

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Introduction

Most young people who come into contact with the juvenile justice system do not reoffend, irrespective of whether or not the offence was detected or prosecuted (O'Connor and Cameron, 2002). However, there is a small minority who "persist" in their offending and they are repeatedly apprehended by police during their juvenile and young adult years. This group of youths is currently the focus of an initiative being developed by the government of South Australia aimed at "breaking the cycle" of re-offending (Social Inclusion Unit, 2004).

Promoting desistance amongst persistent young offenders has been an objective amongst criminal justice agencies across the world. Common across jurisdictions is that a small proportion of offenders are responsible for a large number of offences (Farrington, 1987; Tracy et al, 1990) and the crime prevention approach is becoming the preferred response, aiming to prevent or reduce chronic offending (Yoshikawa, 1995).

In late 1997 the Developmental Crime Prevention Consortium (DCPC), headed by Professor Ross Homel and including members from three Australian states, was set up as an interdisciplinary research team whose aim was to undertake a literature review and an assessment of existing crime prevention services in Australia, as well as formulate recommendations that would inform a policy framework for developmental crime prevention. The Consortium identified pathways to crime that consisted of a series of transition points or occasions for change (such as the shift from home to school, from primary school to high school and from high school to (un)employment), during which time intervention would be most effective. According to this approach, the path at the transition points may change either towards or away from offending. By focusing on the individual's total life trajectory and by identifying the critical points in that trajectory from birth to adolescence and beyond, appropriate interventions may be put in place to divert the individual from becoming involved in offending. The team stressed that it was never too early to intervene and that intervention could occur at any point in the pathways. In

addition, they suggested that for some individuals, repeated interventions would be beneficial, either as “booster shots” or where positive outcomes had not yet been achieved (see National Crime Prevention, 1999, for more information.)

An intervention strategy based on these principles has been developed by the Social Inclusion Unit of South Australia. In its ‘Breaking the Cycle’ paper, it has considered, as youth to be targeted for intervention, “young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty who have offended repeatedly, and for whom the risk of further recidivist behaviour is high” (Social Inclusion Unit, 2004, p11). Furthermore, the transition points, described as “points which can be of critical importance for young repeat offenders”, have been identified as the transition from:

- The juvenile justice system into the adult corrections system;
- Incarceration back into the community; and
- Between community-based and custodial sentencing.

It is not clear, however, how ‘repeatedly offending’ youth are to be selected as candidates for intervention. To facilitate discussion of this issue, this report aims to identify and profile sub-groups of frequent, serious offenders and examine how these groups vary depending on the definitions used.

In undertaking this task, one question which arises is whether early or late onset offenders should be differentiated. There is a growing body of research which shows that the juvenile offending population is comprised of two groups. One group (early onset) comprises individuals who begin to offend early in childhood while the other (late onset) involves offenders who first offend after the age of 14 (Moffitt, 1993; Patterson, 1996; Fergusson et al, 1996; Paterson and Yoerger, 1997). The aetiology of the two groups differ, as does the type of prevention strategies needed to prevent or reduce further offending. The early onset group is drawn from families characterised by poor parental discipline, impaired family problem solving and general dysfunction, which reinforces and exacerbates anti-social behaviours that are maintained over the life course. Late onset offenders, however, are described as adolescent-limited offenders who, through the processes of social mimicry, and motivated by a desire to demonstrate maturity and personal independence, “engage in delinquent behaviours only during adolescence”(Fergusson et al, 2000). (See also Sampson and Laub, 1993; Catalano & Hawkins, 1996; Patterson et al, 1998). To aid in the selection of candidates for intervention, both groups will be profiled in this study.

Other questions which arise when identifying candidates for intervention are ones of definition. What is the definition of a ‘chronic’ offender, a ‘persistent’ offender or a ‘high risk’ offender? These terms are freely used in the literature, yet few researchers assign any exact criteria of definition. Commonly, the literature on this topic loosely describes chronic offenders as that small proportion (ranging from 5% to 8%) of offenders who commit a large proportion (roughly half) of all crimes. Based on this approach each study subsequently defines chronic offenders according to the elements specific to that study. For example, in their work on delinquent offenders, Sheldon & Chesney-Lind (1993) define chronic offenders as those with five or more arrests, while Farrington & West (1993) define them as youth with nine or more convictions. In a study of Florida youth (Mullis et al, 1999) chronic offenders were defined as “youth 11 years old and younger who had committed 10

offences in a 12 month period; or youth 12 to 15 years old who had committed 15 offences in an 18-month period.”

In acknowledging that “there is no consensus about the optimal cut-off to distinguish the two groups” of chronic and non-chronic offenders, Loeber and Farrington (1998) further question whether similar definitions should be used for each gender, particularly since research shows clear differences in the offending behaviours of males and females. Within the Australian context the argument could further be extended to Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders. Cohort studies within OCSAR have found differences in the juvenile career characteristics of Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders in terms of the number of apprehensions, seriousness of offending and age of onset, as well as differences between males and females within each of these groups.

However, while the need to differentiate between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth, and between males and females is acknowledged, this paper provides only limited break downs for these sub-groups. However, work on identifying and profiling offenders in these categories is in progress and will be presented in a future paper.

Methodology

Selection of the Offender Study Group

This study involved an analysis of ‘snapshot’ data relating to all discrete individuals apprehended by police during the 2003/04 financial year who were 16 to 20 years of age at the time of the offence. While most members in this group were also aged 20 years or less at the time of apprehension, there were some who were older (ie 21 and over) when apprehended for offences that occurred when they were younger. This older group was not considered in the study. In effect then, this analysis focused only on those persons who were aged 16 to 20 years at both the time of apprehension and at the time of the offence.

While this project examined the offending record of all of these individuals, because it related only on those persons apprehended during one financial year the findings cannot be generalised.

Identification of Offending

Information taken from each apprehension report was used to determine the level of offending by considering discrete incidents for which the individual was apprehended. Each time a person is formally apprehended by police, a police apprehension report is lodged. Each apprehension report may contain charges arising from one or more criminal incidents or ‘events’. For the purposes of this analysis a ‘criminal event’ is viewed as that combination of charges listed on the apprehension report that occurred on the same day. When more than one ‘criminal event’ was included on the same apprehension report, each was counted separately. To illustrate, if an apprehension report contained a charge of *break/enter* that occurred on 15 September and charges of *disorderly behaviour* and *assault police* that occurred on the 21 September, this would be counted as two discrete criminal events.

In using apprehension data though, two points need to be stressed. First, not all young people apprehended by police are subsequently found guilty or admit guilt (although the majority do). Second, criminal events listed on apprehensions do not necessarily constitute a valid measure of actual levels of offending, for several reasons:

- First, young persons may commit offences which go undetected by police;
- Second, even if detected, not all young people are dealt with via a formal apprehension. For example, under the *Young Offenders Act* 1993, which applies to youths aged 10 to 17 years, police can issue an informal caution for trivial offending, which does not require the lodgement of an apprehension report. Since 1987 persons aged 17 and over detected in possession of cannabis receive a Cannabis Expiation Notice (CEN). Since late 2001, under the Police Drug Diversion Initiative (PDDI), police may refer young persons and adults detected in possession of any type of drug to a brief intervention/assessment, again without the need to lodge an apprehension report. For individuals aged 16 and over detected for certain traffic violations, there is also the option of Traffic Infringement Notices (TIN).

Determining Criminal Record

Each individual's criminal record, including the number of prior criminal events and the type of offences charged against them, was obtained from SAPOL's apprehensions database. This database extends from 1st July 1991. Given that the oldest individuals in our study (ie those aged 20 in 2003/04) would have reached the age of criminal responsibility in 1993/94, this means that for this group of offenders their entire official criminal record up to the 30 June 2004 could be accessed.

Determining the Length of Criminal Careers

The length of each offender's criminal career was calculated as the time between the *age of first event* as recorded on the first apprehension report lodged for that individual from 1 July 1991, and the *age of last event*, as recorded on the final apprehension report lodged for that individual up to the 30 June 2004. All detected criminal events recorded over this time period were included in the offender's criminal career.

However, it should be noted that, because we are relying on detected offending only, it is possible that some individuals actually started their criminal careers well before their first detected event but were simply not 'caught'. There is also the possibility that if the individual commenced offending before the age of 10, even if they had been detected by police no charges could be laid against them at this early stage because the child had not reached the age of criminal responsibility. In effect then, the length of the criminal careers presented here represents the length as defined by their official record.

Determining the Seriousness of an Offence

As already mentioned, because a criminal event in an apprehension report may have multiple charges listed on it, only the major or most serious charge (based on the maximum statutory penalty) for that criminal event was examined in this study.

The seriousness level of this major charge was then determined using the ABS National Offence Index (NOI).

The NOI ranks all offence classifications contained within the Australian Standard Offence Classification (ASOC) system in order of seriousness. The index starts with the most serious

offence of *murder*, which is given an index value of one, and then continues down through 157 ranked offences. The index is organised so that a low index score represents a very serious offence and a high score indicates a minor offence.

All major charges were grouped into three ‘seriousness’ categories¹:

- Scores ranging from 97-157 formed Category 1 and consisted of ‘minor offences’. Charges in this category included *driving and registration offences, shop lifting, disorderly conduct, offensive behaviour, possession* and *use of illicit drugs*.
- Scores ranging from 65-96 were classified as ‘moderately serious’ and formed Category 2. Charges in this category included *graffiti, property damage, dangerous and negligent driving, receiving proceeds of crime, theft of a motor vehicle* and *fraud*.
- Scores ranging from 1-64 were the most ‘serious’ offences and formed Category 3. Charges in this category included *weapons/explosives offences, sexual offences, threatening behaviour, dealing/manufacturing illicit drugs, serious assaults* and *murder*.

Determining Indigenous Status

Some issues were encountered when determining the Indigenous status of offenders. For a start, what is recorded on Police Apprehension Reports is not based on self-identification but instead reflects the police officer’s perceptions, based on the physical appearance of the young person. Furthermore, Indigenous status is not always recorded on apprehension reports, and even when it is recorded, it is not always recorded consistently for the same individual over time.

To address this latter problem, a detailed background file maintained by OCSAR was used to check for consistency and to ‘plug’ missing values. This file contains all records pertaining to the same individual, gathered from a range of criminal justice data bases².

Even using this background file, however, the Indigenous status of 11% of all persons apprehended in the 2003/04 financial year for offences committed at 16 to 20 years of age was unknown.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the great majority of ‘unknowns’ are likely to be non-Indigenous since, where Aboriginality is evident, it is generally recorded. Thus, for the purposes of this study, ‘unknowns’ were grouped with non-Indigenous offenders. Given that not all ‘unknowns’ would be non-Indigenous (even though the majority probably are), this strategy means that the analysis will slightly under-estimate the number of Indigenous youths having contact with the system and will slightly over-estimate the level of contact of non-Indigenous youth. In effect then, the Indigenous/non-Indigenous differences recorded in this paper are probably smaller than in reality.

¹ It is serendipitous that the top and bottom groups were equally sized – a subjective evaluation of offences in each group was well matched with the seriousness ranking “cut-off” of offences.

² If one person is listed as Indigenous on three occasions and as non-Indigenous on a fourth, in this file an individual is assigned to the Indigenous category on the basis of majority verdict.

Defining 'Repeat' Offenders

To determine whether and how the number and characteristics of 'repeatedly offending' youth vary depending on the definitions used, two types of offenders were identified in this study as possible candidates for intervention, with the second group being a sub-group of the first.

The first group, *Chronic Offenders*, was defined according to criteria suggested by the literature; namely, that small proportion of youth (8%) who were responsible for about half of the offending. In applying this definition, the cut-off criteria was found to be '15 or more criminal events'. A *Chronic Offender* was hence defined as an offender with 15 or more criminal events charged against them up to 30 June 2004.

The second group, *Prolific Offenders*, was a subset of *Chronic Offenders* and was defined as the top 2% of the offender study group with the most criminal events. This procedure was used because of its potential to yield a smaller and therefore more manageable group of candidates for intensive case management intervention, as proposed in the 'Breaking the Cycle' document (Social Inclusion Unit, 2004).

In identifying the top 2% of offenders, the cut-off point used was 'more than 30 events'. In other words, all youth in the offender population who had more than 30 criminal events charged against them during their criminal career were classified as *Prolific Offenders*.

These two groups of *Chronic* and *Prolific Offenders* were further differentiated according to the seriousness of their offending. A *Serious Chronic Offender* was defined as a person who had 15 or more criminal events charged against them during their criminal career, with at least one of those offences falling within the 'serious' category according to the NOI ranking. Similarly, a *Serious Prolific Offender* was defined as an offender with more than 30 criminal events, at least one of which was classified as 'serious' using the NOI ranking.

The demographic and offending characteristics of the two groups of potential candidates for intervention are described in the study. The age of the first criminal event (where known) for individuals in each group was used to differentiate early and late onset offenders. In addition, the length of their criminal careers was also examined.

It is hoped that this information will inform decisions about appropriate selection processes for suitable candidates for targeted intervention.

Study Outline

The report which follows provides a description of:

1. All youth aged 16-20 years apprehended during the financial year 2003/04 (the offender study group);
2. *Chronic Offenders* within the study group, including those classified as 'serious' offenders; and
3. *Prolific Offenders* within the study group, including those classified as 'serious' offenders.

The total offending group: all youths aged 16 to 20 at the time of apprehension and at the time of the offence

Demographic Characteristics

Just under 8,000 (7,778) youths aged 16 to 20 were apprehended by police in the 2003/04 financial year for offences which occurred during that age range. More than two thirds (69.3%) of these offenders were aged 18 or over (Table 1) and the majority (81.2%) were males (Table 2).

Table 1 Age Distribution of Persons Apprehended at Age 16-20

Age at Apprehension	Frequency	Proportion (%)
16	951	12.2
17	1,433	18.4
18	1,722	22.1
19	1,769	22.7
20	1,903	24.5
Total	7,778	100.0

Table 2 Persons Apprehended at Age 16-20 in 2003/04 by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Proportion (%)
Males	6,312	81.2
Females	1,466	18.8
Total	7,778	100.0

Almost 8% of youth apprehended in this age range in 2003/04 were Indigenous (see Table 3). Given that this group accounts for only 2.3%³ of all youth aged 16 to 20 in South Australia, Indigenous youth are clearly over-represented in these figures.

Table 3 Persons Apprehended at Age 16-20 in 2003/04 by Indigenous Status

Indigenous status	Frequency	Proportion (%)
Non-Indigenous	7,162	92.1
Indigenous	6,16	7.9
Total	7,778	100.0

³ From ABS 2001 census.

The level of Indigenous involvement varied according to gender. As shown in Table 4, just under seven percent (6.8%) of the male offender group were Indigenous although one in eight (12.6%) of the female offender group had an Indigenous background.

Table 4 Offenders Apprehended at Age 16-20 in 2003/04 by Indigenous Status

Indigenous status	Males		Females	
	Frequency	Proportion (%)	Frequency	Proportion (%)
Non-Indigenous	5,881	93.2	1,281	87.4
Indigenous	4,31	6.8	1,85	12.6
Total	6,312	100.0	1,466	100.0

Number of Detected Criminal Events for Youths Aged 16-20

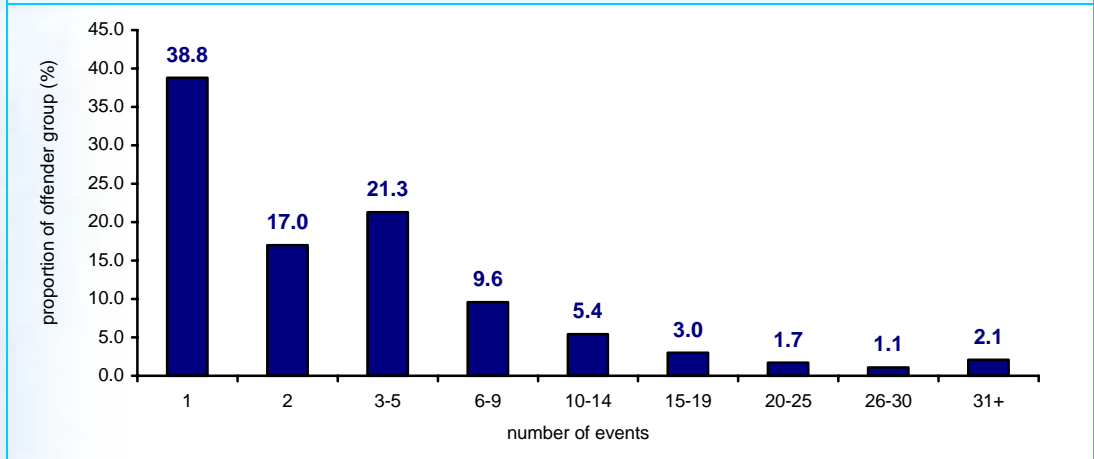
Most (86.7%) of the youths apprehended in this age bracket were infrequent offenders, each having been apprehended for less than 10 events during their criminal career, while about 40% (38.8%) had only one criminal event recorded against them (Table 5, Figure 3).

At the other end of the scale there were 616 young people (7.9% of the total) who had been apprehended by police for 15 or more events and a very small minority (2.1%) had more than 30 events charged against them. This included two males who each had a maximum of 84 criminal events lodged against them.

Table 5 Youth Aged 16-20 at Apprehension by Number of Events in Criminal Record

Number of Events	Frequency	Proportion (%)
1	3,018	38.8
2	1,321	17.0
3-5	1,657	21.3
6-9	748	9.6
10-14	418	5.4
15-19	235	3.0
20-25	134	1.7
26-30	84	1.1
31+	163	2.1
Total	7,778	100.0

Figure 3 Youth Aged 16-20 at Apprehension by Number of Events in Criminal Record



Gender

For one half of all females aged 16-20 apprehended in 2003/04 this constituted their first formal contact with the criminal justice system (Table 6). In other words, most of the female offenders, unlike males, had no prior criminal history⁴. Only 5.4% (n=79) of female offenders had 15 or more events charged against them, including a handful (n=15 or 1.0%) who had been charged with more than 30 events.

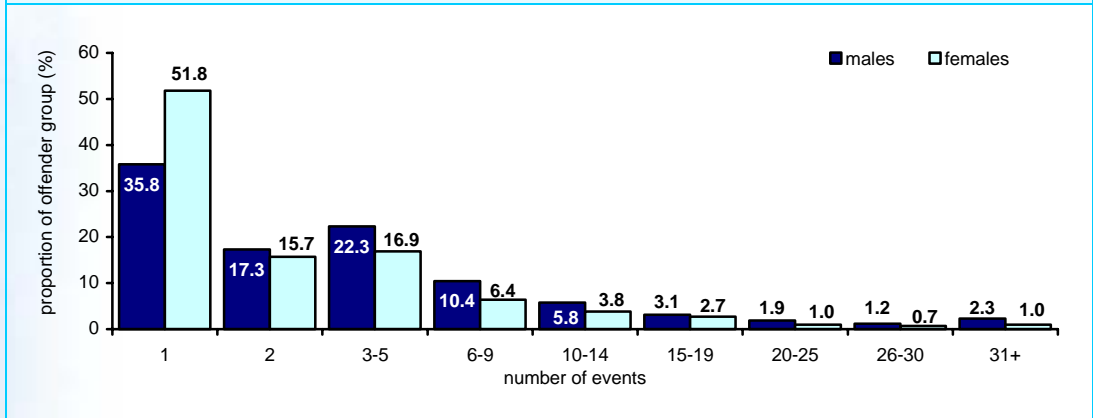
In contrast, nearly two-thirds (64.2%) of male offenders had at least one other criminal event recorded against them prior to their last apprehension in 2003/04, including 8.5% (n=537) charged with 15 or more events and 2.3% (n=148) charged with more than 30 events.

Table 6 Number of Events in Criminal Record by Gender of Youth Aged 16-20 at Apprehension

Number of Events	Males		Females	
	frequency	proportion (%)	frequency	proportion (%)
1	2,258	35.8	760	51.8
2	1,091	17.3	230	15.7
3-5	1,409	22.3	248	16.9
6-9	654	10.4	94	6.4
10-14	363	5.8	55	3.8
15-19	196	3.1	39	2.7
20-25	119	1.9	15	1.0
26-30	74	1.2	10	0.7
31+	148	2.3	15	1.0
Total	6,312	100.0	1,466	100.0

⁴ The differences were statistically significant: Mann-Whitney U, Z=-11.5, p<0.0001

Figure 1 Number of Events in Criminal Record by Gender of Youth Aged 16-20 at Apprehension



Indigenous Status

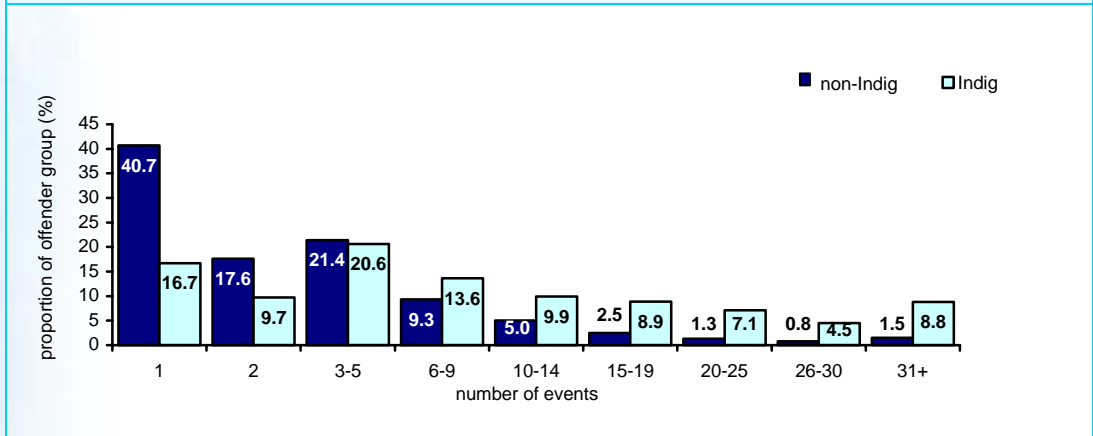
Only a small proportion (16.7%) of all Indigenous offenders aged 16 to 20 apprehended in 2003/04 were experiencing their first formal contact with the system (Table 7). In other words, the great majority of Indigenous offenders had a criminal record, with about three quarters (73.6%) having been apprehended for three or more criminal events. This included 181 Indigenous youths (29.3% of the total) who had 15 or more criminal events charged against them, and 54 (or 8.8% of the total) who had recorded more than 30 events. In contrast, less than half (41.7%) of the non-Indigenous offenders had at least three criminal events recorded against them, 435 (or 6.1% of the total) had 15 or more, and 109 (only 1.5% of the total) had more than 30⁵.

Table 7 Number of Events in Criminal Record by Indigenous Status of Youth Aged 16-20 at Apprehension

Number of Events	Non-Indigenous		Indigenous	
	frequency	proportion (%)	frequency	proportion (%)
1	2,915	40.7	103	16.7
2	1,261	17.6	60	9.7
3-5	1,530	21.4	127	20.6
6-9	664	9.3	84	13.6
10-14	357	5.0	61	9.9
15-19	180	2.5	55	8.9
20-25	90	1.3	44	7.1
26-30	56	0.8	28	4.5
31+	109	1.5	54	8.8
Total	7,162	100.0	616	100.0

⁵ The differences were statistically significant: Mann-Whitney U, Z=-18.7, p<0.0001

Figure 2 Number of Events in Criminal Record by Indigenous Status of Youth Aged 16-20 at Apprehension



Chronic Offenders Apprehended at 16-20 years of Age (n=616)

As explained earlier, the group of *Chronic Offenders* was established by examining the aggregate number of criminal events associated with the offender study group and determining that small proportion, around 8%, who were responsible for about 40%-50% of all the events. Using this approach, over six hundred (616) offenders, who comprised 7.9% of the offender study group, were identified. They were responsible for 42.6% (16,345) of all criminal events charged against the study group.

Of this 616, the overwhelming majority (537 or 87.2%) were male, while 181 (or 29.4%) were Indigenous. Amongst this group then, the level of Indigenous over-representation was even higher than that recorded for the total study group, of whom about 8% were identified as Indigenous.

The average number of criminal events recorded for the *Chronic Offender* group was 26.5 per person, ranging from a minimum of 15 to a maximum of 84 events (with the latter recorded by two males).

This group of offenders were generally *serious* offenders, with 87.8% having been apprehended for at least one serious offence during their criminal career. Less than 10 percent (51 or 8.3%) were classified as *moderately-serious* offenders and only 24 (3.9%) were *minor* offenders. Of those 75 non-serious *Chronic Offenders*, 84% were males and over three-quarters (76.0%) were non-Indigenous.

Because the overwhelming majority of *Chronic Offenders* were classified as serious, a detailed profile is provided for this group only, as outlined below.

A Profile of Serious Chronic Offenders (n=541)

This group of 541 *Serious Chronic Offenders* was responsible for 38.4% (n=14,727) of all criminal events (n=38,380) charged against individuals aged 16-20 who were apprehended in 2003/04. The average number of events per individual in this group was 27.2.

Just over one third (35.9%) of these *Serious Chronic Offenders* were apprehended for 15 to 19 events during their criminal career while nearly one in seven (14.1%) had more than 40 criminal events recorded against them (see Table 8).

Table 8 <i>Serious Chronic Offenders</i> Aged 16-20 at Apprehension by Number of Events in Criminal Record		
Number of Events	Frequency	Proportion (%)
15-19	194	35.9
20-29	181	33.5
30-35	67	12.4
36-40	23	4.3
41-50	37	6.8
51-60	22	4.1
61-70	9	1.7
71+	8	1.5
Total	541	100.0

Demographic Characteristics

In terms of the demographic characteristics of this group, the vast majority were male (87.6% or 474) and just under one third, 30.1% (n=163), were Indigenous.

When broken down further by gender and Indigenous status, it was found that:

- Nearly two thirds (64.0% or 346) were non-Indigenous males;
- Just under one quarter (23.7% or 128) were Indigenous males;
- 5.9% (n=32) were non-Indigenous females; while
- 6.5% (n=35) were Indigenous females.

These findings point to a significant variation in the level of over-representation between Indigenous males and females. Of the 474 male *Serious Chronic Offenders*, 27% (128) were Indigenous, but amongst the 67 female *Serious Chronic Offenders* over one half (52.2% or 35) were Indigenous. Given that Indigenous females constitute only 2.3% of the South Australian population aged 16-20 years, their level of over-representation is more than twenty times higher than expected within this serious chronic offending group.

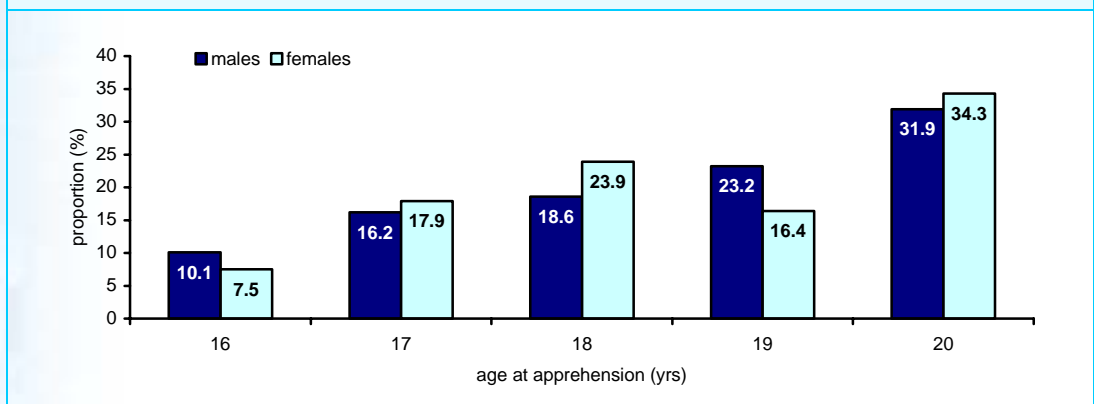
Just under three-quarters, 73.8% of the *Serious Chronic Offenders* were aged 18 or older at the time of their most recent apprehension in 2003/04 (see Table 9).

Table 9 Age at most recent apprehension in 2003/04 of *Serious Chronic Offenders*

Age at Apprehension	frequency	proportion (%)
16	53	9.8
17	89	16.5
18	104	19.2
19	121	22.4
20	174	32.2
Total	541	100

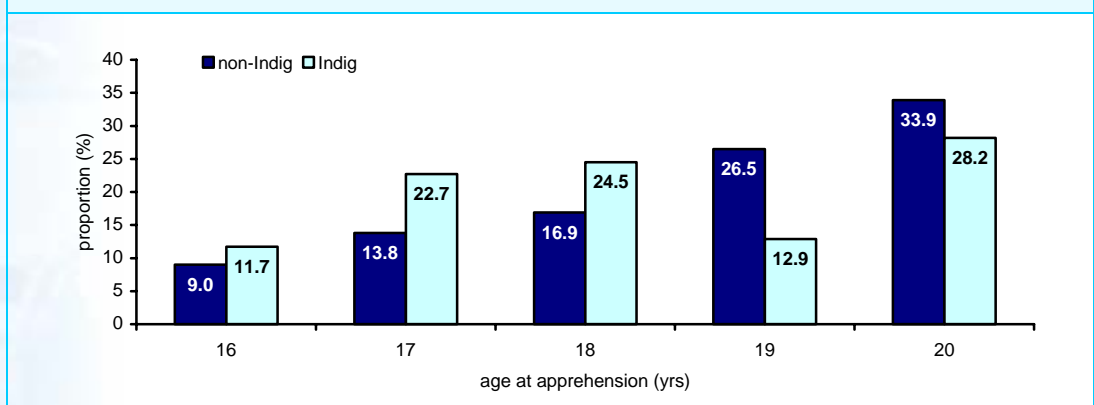
As shown in Figure 3, there were some minor age differences between males and females, with a lower proportion of females aged 16 and 19, but a higher proportion aged 17, 18 and 20. Overall though, these differences were not statistically significant⁶.

Figure 3 Age at most recent apprehension in 2003/04 of *Serious Chronic Offenders* by Gender



However, the same finding did not apply to the comparison between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youths, as indicated in Figure 4. As shown, Indigenous *Serious Chronic Offenders* were clearly younger than their non-Indigenous counterparts, with just over one third (34.4%) aged 16 and 17 and well over half (58.9%) aged 18 and under. Conversely, only 41.1% were aged 19 and 20. In contrast, amongst the non-Indigenous *Serious Chronic Offenders*, only 22.8% were aged 16 to 17, while 60.4% were aged 19 and 20. These differences were statistically significant⁷.

Figure 4 Age at most recent apprehension of *Serious Chronic Offenders* by Indigenous Status



⁶ Mann-Whitney U, Z=-0.08, p<0.93

⁷ Mann-Whitney U, Z=-3.0, p<0.002

Offending Characteristics

A breakdown of the most serious offence listed for this group during the course of their offending careers shows that by far the most common offences listed against this group were *unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter* and *aggravated robbery* (see Table 13). Overall,

- Just over half, 50.8%, had *break and enter* recorded as their most serious offence; while
- About one quarter, 24.6%, had *aggravated robbery*.

Sixteen separate offence categories accounted for the remaining quarter, with three of these - namely *deal or traffic in illicit drugs* (4.8%), *aggravated sexual assault* (4.3%) and *aggravated assault* (5.0%) - being the most prominent.

Charge (in order of decreasing seriousness)	frequency	proportion (%)
Murder	1	0.2
Attempted murder	3	0.6
Driving causing death	1	0.2
Aggravated sexual assault	23	4.3
Non-aggravated sexual assault	1	0.2
Deal or traffic in illicit drugs	26	4.8
Manufacture or cultivate illicit drugs	13	2.4
Aggravated robbery	133	24.6
Aggravated assault	27	5
Non-aggravated assault	2	0.4
Other dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons, n.e.c.	10	1.8
Non-aggravated robbery	4	0.7
Threatening behaviour	2	0.4
Property damage by fire or explosion	13	2.4
Unlawfully obtain or possess regulated weapons/explosives	3	0.6
Subvert the course of justice	1	0.2
Unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter	275	50.8
Cheque or credit card fraud	3	0.6
Total	541	100.0

Age of Onset

Most of the *Serious Chronic Offender* group, 82.6%⁸, were ‘early onset’ offenders, having been apprehended for the first time at 14 years or younger (see Table 11). In contrast, 86 people were ‘late onset’ offenders.

⁸ Based on the number of offenders for whom the age of first event was known. It was not recorded for 42 (7.8%) of the 541.

Table 11 Age of First Event of *Serious Chronic Offenders*⁹

Age of First Event		frequency	proportion (%)
<i>early onset</i>	10	56	11.2
	11	81	16.2
	12	82	16.4
	13	97	19.4
	14	97	19.4
		413	82.6
<i>late onset</i>	15	49	9.8
	16	26	5.2
	17	8	1.6
	18	2	0.4
	19	1	0.2
Total		499	100.0

As illustrated in Table 12, there were significant differences in the age of onset between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth¹⁰. More specifically, a much lower percentage of Indigenous *Serious Chronic Offenders* (11 out of 148 or 7.4%) fell within the ‘late onset’ category compared with 21.4% (ie 75 out of 351) non-Indigenous *Serious Chronic Offenders*.

Of the 11 ‘late onset’ Indigenous offenders, eight were male and three were female. Ten had been apprehended for the first time at the age of 15 or 16 while one person was apprehended at the age of 17.

Table 12 Age of First Event of *Serious Chronic Offenders*¹¹ by Indigenous Status

Age of First Event	Non-Indigenous		Indigenous		
	frequency	proportion (%)	frequency	proportion (%)	
<i>early onset</i>	10	31	8.8	25	16.9
	11	45	12.8	36	24.3
	12	58	16.5	24	16.2
	13	70	19.9	27	18.2
	14	72	20.5	25	16.9
		276	78.6	137	92.6
<i>late onset</i>	15	42	12.0	7	4.7
	16	23	6.6	3	2.0
	17	7	2.0	1	0.7
	18	2	0.6	0	0.0
	19	1	0.3	0	0.0
Total		351	100.0	148	100.0

⁹ Missing=42

¹⁰ Mann-Whitney U, Z=-4.9, p<0.0001

¹¹ Missing=42

Length of Criminal Career

As shown in Table 13, over one third (35.3%) of the offenders in the *Serious Chronic Offender* group had criminal careers that spanned seven years or more while 71.4% spanned five or more years. Twenty two people had begun offending less than three years prior to the most recent apprehension in 2003/04 and the majority of these (17) were 'late onset' offenders. Two of these were 'late onset' Indigenous offenders.

Table 13 Time lapsed between age of first event and age at last event of *Serious Chronic Offenders*

Years	frequency	proportion (%)
1	6	1.2
2	16	3.2
3	43	8.6
4	77	15.4
5	90	18.0
6	91	18.2
7	77	15.4
8	53	10.6
9	34	6.8
10	12	2.4
Total	499	100.0

However, the results outlined in Table 13 are, at least in part, dependent on the age of the offender at the time of the most recent event for which they were apprehended in 2003/04. To allow for this, Table 14 shows the length of the criminal career of *Serious Chronic Offenders* expressed as a proportion of the time they had available in which to offend from the age of 10 years¹². As shown, for over seventy percent (72.4%) of *Serious Chronic Offenders* the length of their criminal career (as measured by the time between the first and last recorded criminal event) constituted at least half of the total time they had available in which to offend (as measured by the time between their current age and the age of criminal responsibility ie 10).

Table 14 Time between age at first event and age at last event expressed as a percentage of total time available in which to offend of *Serious Chronic Offenders*

	frequency	proportion (%)	cumulative proportion (%)
0-25%	12	2.4	2.4
25-50%	126	25.3	27.7
50-75%	178	35.7	63.3
75-100%	183	36.7	100.0
Total	499	100.0	

¹² A person aged 20 at the time of their most recent apprehension in 2003/04 who began offending at 10 and was still offending at 20 would have a criminal career that spanned 100% of the time available to offend. However, if that same person had not started offending until they were 16, then their criminal career spanned four years of the 10 they had available in which to offend. Expressed as a proportion, this amounts to 40% of the time available for offending. It should be noted, though, that no deductions have been made for any time spent in a custodial facility.

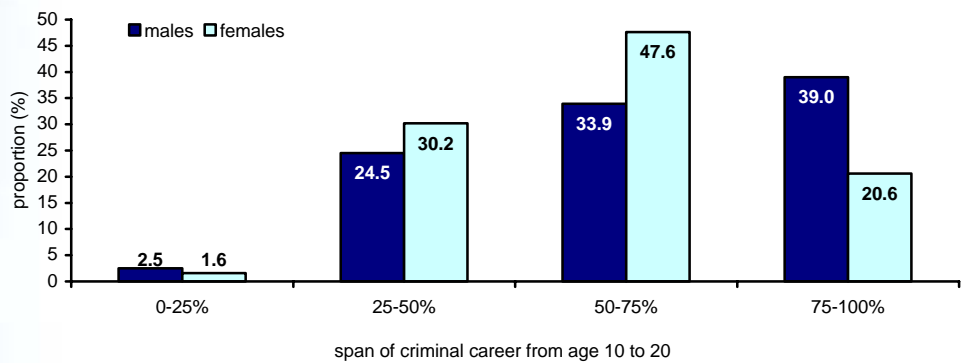
¹³ missing=42

This finding applied to both male and female offenders, although there were some notable differences. As shown in Table 15 and Figure 5, for almost 40% of males, the length of their criminal career constituted at least 75% of the time they had available in which to offend, whereas for females, the figure was much lower - 20.6%.

Table 15 Time between age at first event and age at last event expressed as a percentage of total time available in which to offend of *Serious Chronic Offenders* by Gender

	Males		Females	
	frequency	proportion (%)	frequency	proportion (%)
0-25%	11	2.5	1	1.6
25-50%	107	24.5	19	30.2
50-75%	148	33.9	30	47.6
75-100%	170	39.0	13	20.6
Total	436	100.0	63	100.0

Figure 5 Time between age at first event and age at last event expressed as a percentage of total time available in which to offend of *Serious Chronic Offenders* by Gender

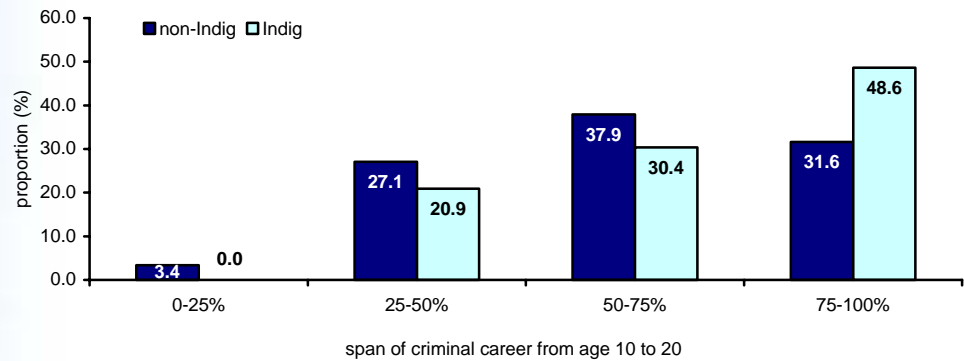


For Indigenous offenders the length of involvement with the criminal justice system, expressed as a percentage of the total time available in which to offend, was even more pronounced. As shown in Table 16 and Figure 6, nearly half (48.6%) had a criminal career which spanned 75% or more of their available time to offend. The corresponding figure for non-Indigenous youth was 31.6%.

Table 16 Time between age at first event and age at last event expressed as a percentage of total time available in which to offend of *Serious Chronic Offenders* by Indigenous Status

	Non-Indigenous		Indigenous	
	frequency	proportion (%)	frequency	proportion (%)
0-25%	12	3.4	0	0.0
25-50%	95	27.1	31	20.9
50-75%	133	37.9	45	30.4
75-100%	111	31.6	72	48.6
Total	351	100.0	148	100.0

Figure 6 Time between age at first event and age at last event expressed as a percentage of total time available in which to offend of *Serious Chronic Offenders* by Indigenous Status



As shown in Table 17, for those youth whose criminal career spanned 75% or more of the total time they had available for offending, all were ‘early onset’ offenders whose first criminal event occurred before the age of 14¹⁴. The demographic characteristics of this group of 183 is shown in Table 18.

Table 17 Time between age at first event and age at last event expressed as a percentage of total time available in which to offend by Age of First Event

Age of Onset	0-25%		25-50%		50-75%		75-100%	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
10	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	56	30.6
11	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	1.1	79	43.2
12	0	0.0	0	0.0	43	24.2	39	21.3
13	0	0.0	13	10.3	75	42.1	9	4.9
14	0	0.0	41	32.5	56	31.5	0	0.0
15	3	25.0	44	34.9	2	1.1	0	0.0
16	4	33.3	22	17.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
17	3	25.0	5	4.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
18	1	8.3	1	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
19	1	8.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	12	100.0	126	100.0	178	100.0	183	100.0

¹⁴ There were no early onset offenders who began offending at 14.

Table 18 Profile of *Serious Chronic Offenders* whose criminal careers spanned 75% or more of their time available for offending

	Age of Apprehension					Total	
	16	17	18	19	20	No.	%
Gender							
Males	18	21	26	45	60	170	92.9
Females	1	1	4	2	5	13	7.1
Indigenous Status							
Non-Indigenous	10	9	16	33	43	111	60.7
Indigenous	9	13	14	14	22	72	39.3
Demographic Group							
Non-Indigenous males	10	9	16	33	41	109	59.6
Indigenous males	8	12	10	12	19	61	33.3
Non-Indigenous females	0	0	0	0	2	2	1.1
Indigenous females	1	1	4	2	3	11	6.0
Total	19	22	30	47	65	183	100
Age of onset¹⁵							
early	19	22	30	47	65	183	100.0
late	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0

Prolific Offenders Apprehended at 16-20 Years of Age (n=163)

An alternative way of selecting a smaller subset from the total *Chronic Offender* group is to focus only on those who comprised the top 2% of offenders with the most criminal events. This small group of 163 individuals, defined as *Prolific Offenders*, accounted for 18.6% (n=7,145) of all events (n=38,380). The average number of events per individual in this group was 43.8, ranging from 31 to a maximum of 84 events.

This group of offenders were generally *serious* offenders, with 93.7% having been apprehended for at least one serious offence during their criminal career. A small proportion, 4.9% (or eight of the 163 individuals), were classified as *moderately-serious* offenders and only two persons were *minor* offenders. All of these individuals were males and seven out of the 10 were non-Indigenous.

Given that all but 10 of the 163 *Prolific Offenders* were also serious *Prolific Offenders*, a detailed profile is only provided for the latter group.

A Profile of Serious Prolific Offenders (n=153)

This group of 153 *Serious Prolific Offenders* accounted for 17.6% (n=6,762) of all criminal events (n=38,380) charged against 16-20 year olds apprehended in 2003/04. The average number of events for this group was 44.2 per person.

Just under half (49.7%) of these *Serious Prolific Offenders* were apprehended for more than 40 criminal events during their criminal career and just over 10% (11.1%) had more than 60 criminal events recorded against them (See Table 19).

Number of Events	Frequency	Proportion (%)
31-35	54	35.3
36-40	23	15.0
41-50	37	24.2
51-60	22	14.4
61-70	9	5.9
71+	8	5.2
Total	153	100.0

Demographic Characteristics

In terms of the demographic characteristics of this group, the vast majority were male (90.2% or 138) and one third (33.3% or 51) were Indigenous. Indigenous youth therefore comprised a higher proportion of the *Serious Prolific Offender* group than that recorded for all 16-20 year olds apprehended in 2003/04¹⁶.

¹⁶ As noted, separate analyses of Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders will be dealt with in another paper.

When broken down by gender and Indigenous status:

- Nearly two thirds (62.7% or 96) of the group were non-Indigenous males - just over twice the number of Indigenous males;
- Over one quarter (27.5% or 42) were Indigenous males;
- 3.9% (six) were non-Indigenous females; and
- 5.9% (nine) were Indigenous females.

These findings again indicate a higher level of over-representation amongst Indigenous females than males. Of the 138 male *Serious Prolific Offenders*, 30.4% (42) were Indigenous, but amongst the 15 female *Serious Prolific Offenders* nearly twice this proportion (60.0% or nine) were Indigenous. Given that Indigenous females constitute only 2.3% of the South Australian population aged 16-20 years, their level of over-representation in this group of *Serious Prolific Offenders* is more than twenty five times higher than expected.

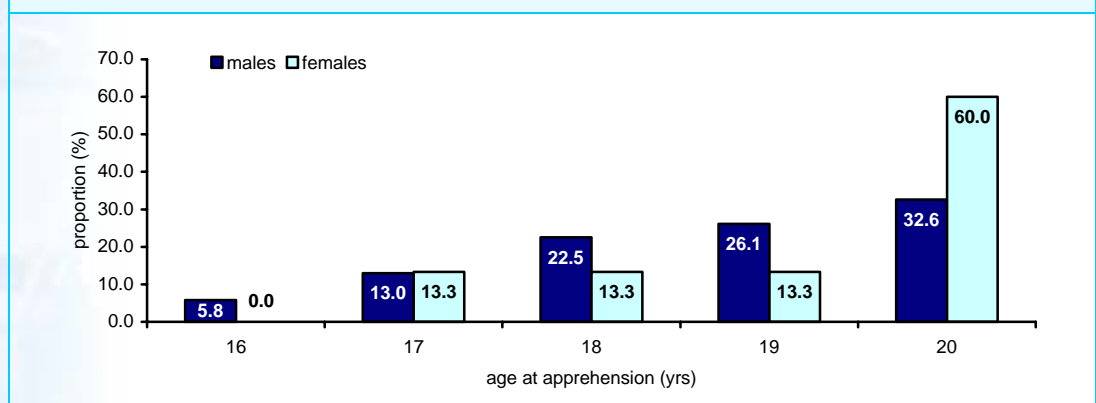
Over four in five, 81.7%, of the *Serious Prolific Offenders* were aged 18 or older at the time of their last apprehension in 2003/04 (see Table 20).

Table 20 Age at Apprehension of *Serious Prolific Offenders*

Age at Apprehension	frequency	proportion (%)
16	8	5.2
17	20	13.1
18	33	21.6
19	38	24.8
20	54	35.3
Total	153	100

As shown in Figure 7, there were some age differences between males and females, with a lower proportion of females aged 18 and 19, a higher proportion aged 20, and none at 16. These differences, however, were not statistically significant¹⁷.

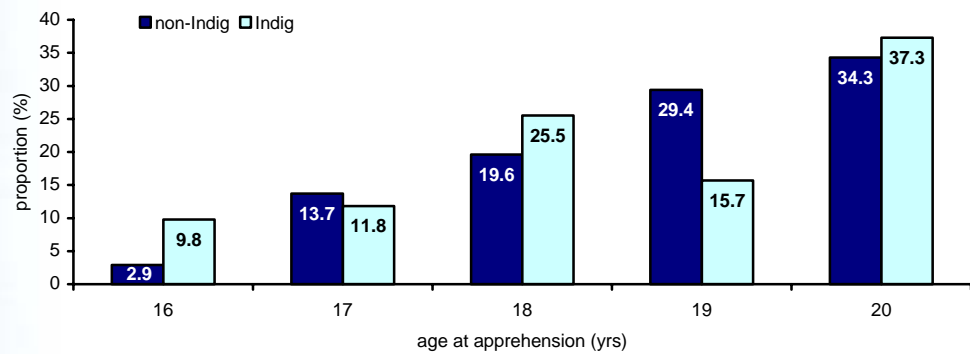
Figure 7 Age at most recent apprehension in 2003/04 of *Serious Prolific Offenders* by Gender



¹⁷ Mann-Whitney U, Z=-1.7, p<0.084

A comparison between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youths also failed to find any significant differences¹⁸ in their age at apprehension in 2003/04 (see Figure 8). As shown, Indigenous *Serious Prolific Offenders* were generally about the same age as their non-Indigenous counterparts, except for those apprehended at the age of 16 and 19. The proportion of Indigenous youth (9.8%) apprehended at 16 was over three times greater than that of non-Indigenous youth (2.9%), while at 19, the situation was reversed, with nearly twice the proportion of non-Indigenous (29.4%) than Indigenous (15.7%) juveniles apprehended. As already mentioned however, the differences were not significant statistically although this could be due to the small number of individuals involved.

Figure 8 Age at most recent apprehension of *Serious Prolific Offenders* by Indigenous Status



Offending Characteristics

A breakdown of the most serious offence charged against this group during the course of their offending career showed that there were two offences most commonly listed against them. As indicated in Table 23, these were *unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter* and *aggravated robbery*. Overall:

- About two in five, 40.5%, had *break and enter* recorded as their most serious offence; while
- Over one third, 36.6%, had *aggravated robbery*.

Eight separate offence categories accounted for the remaining quarter, with two of these - namely, *deal or traffic in illicit drugs* (6.5%) and *aggravated sexual assault* (6.5%) - being the most prominent.

¹⁸ Mann-Whitney U, Z=-0.65, p<0.52

Table 21 Most Serious Offence in Criminal Career of *Serious Prolific Offenders*

Charge (in order of decreasing seriousness)	freq	proportion (%)
Aggravated sexual assault	10	6.5
Deal or traffic in illicit drugs	10	6.5
Manufacture or cultivate illicit drugs	3	2.0
Aggravated robbery	56	36.6
Aggravated assault	2	1.3
Other dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons, n.e.c.	3	2.0
Threatening behaviour	1	0.7
Property damage by fire or explosion	5	3.3
Unlawfully obtain or possess regulated weapons/explosives	1	0.7
Unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter	62	40.5
Total	153	100.0

Age of Onset

Most of the group, 94.2%¹⁹, were ‘early onset’ offenders, having been apprehended for the first time at 14 years or younger (see Table 22). There were only eight ‘late onset’ offenders, all of whom had begun offending before the age of 17.

Table 22 Age of First Event of *Serious Prolific Offenders*²⁰

Age of First Event	frequency	proportion (%)
<i>early onset</i>		
10	34	25.2
11	27	20.0
12	24	17.8
13	21	15.6
14	21	15.6
	127	94.2
<i>late onset</i>		
15	6	4.4
16	2	1.5
Total	135	100.0

As illustrated in Table 23, there were no significant differences in the age of onset between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth. For both groups, only a minority were ‘late onset’ offenders - seven out of 94 non-Indigenous and one out of 41 Indigenous *Serious Prolific Offenders*.

¹⁹ Based on the number of offenders for whom the age of first event was known.

²⁰ Missing=18

Table 23 Age of First Event of *Serious Prolific Offenders*²¹ by Indigenous Status

Age of First Event	Non-Indigenous		Indigenous	
	frequency	proportion (%)	frequency	proportion (%)
<i>early onset</i> 10	23	24.5	11	26.8
11	17	18.1	10	24.4
12	17	18.1	7	17.1
13	15	16.0	6	14.6
14	15	16.0	6	14.6
	87	92.6	40	97.6
<i>late onset</i> 15	6	6.4	0	0.0
16	1	1.1	1	2.4
Total	94	100.0	41	100.0

Length of Criminal Career

As shown in Table 24, over half (57.1%) of the offenders in this group had criminal careers that spanned seven years or more while the majority (92.6%) spanned five or more years. Only one person (a non-Indigenous male who was first apprehended at 15) had begun offending less than three years prior to the most recent apprehension in 2003/04.

Table 24 Time lapsed between first and last event of *Serious Prolific Offenders*

Years	frequency	proportion (%)
1	0	0.0
2	1	0.7
3	4	3.0
4	5	3.7
5	23	17.0
6	25	18.5
7	28	20.7
8	24	17.8
9	16	11.9
10	9	6.7
Total	135	100.0

Because the results outlined above are at least partly dependent on the age of the offender at the time of their most recent event for which they were apprehended in 2003/04, to allow for this Table 25 shows the length of the criminal career of *Serious Prolific Offenders* expressed as a proportion of the time they had available in which to offend from the age of 10 years²². As shown, for over nine out of ten (91.9%) *Serious Prolific Offenders* the length of their criminal career (as measured by the time between the first and last recorded criminal event) constituted at least half of the total time they had available in which to offend.

²¹ Missing=18

²² A person who began offending at 10 and was still offending at 20 in 2003/04 would have a criminal career that spanned 100% of the time available to offend.

Table 25 Time between age at first event and age at last event expressed as a percentage of total time available in which to offend for *Serious Prolific Offenders*

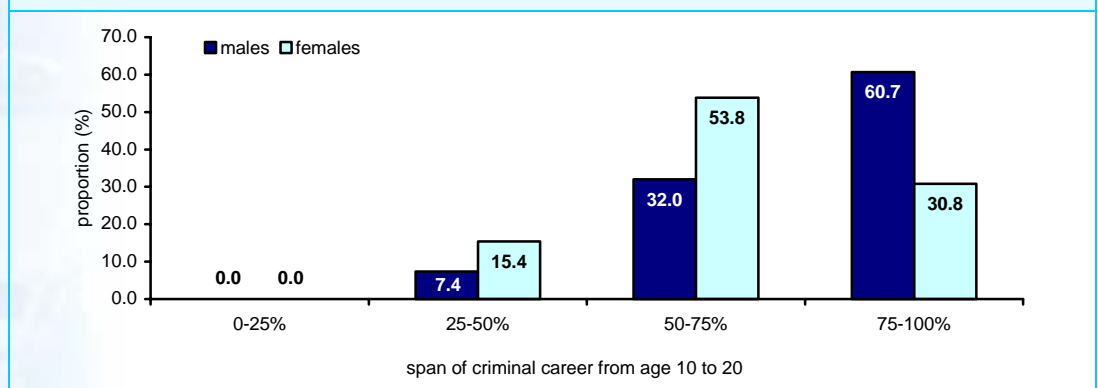
	frequency	proportion (%)	cumulative proportion (%)
0-25%	0	0.0	0.0
25-50%	11	8.1	8.1
50-75%	46	34.1	42.2
75-100%	78	57.8	100.0
Total	135	100.0	

This finding applied to both male and female offenders, although there were some notable, and statistically significant, differences between the two groups²⁴. As shown in Table 26 and Figure 9, for 92.7% of males, the length of their criminal career constituted at least 50% of the time they had available in which to offend, whereas for females, the figure was lower - 84.6%. Twice as many females than males had a criminal career that was less than half of the time they had available in which to offend - 15.4% compared to 7.4%. Furthermore, twice as many males than females had a criminal career that was more than 75% of the time they had available in which to offend - 60.7% compared to 30.8%

Table 26 Time between age at first event and age at last event expressed as a percentage of total time available in which to offend of *Serious Prolific Offenders* by Gender

	Males		Females	
	frequency	proportion (%)	frequency	proportion (%)
0-25%	0	0.0	0	0.0
25-50%	9	7.4	2	15.4
50-75%	39	32.0	7	53.8
75-100%	74	60.7	4	30.8
Total	122	100.0	13	100.0

Figure 9 Time between age at first event and age at last event expressed as a percentage of total time available in which to offend of *Serious Prolific Offenders* by Gender



²³ Missing=18

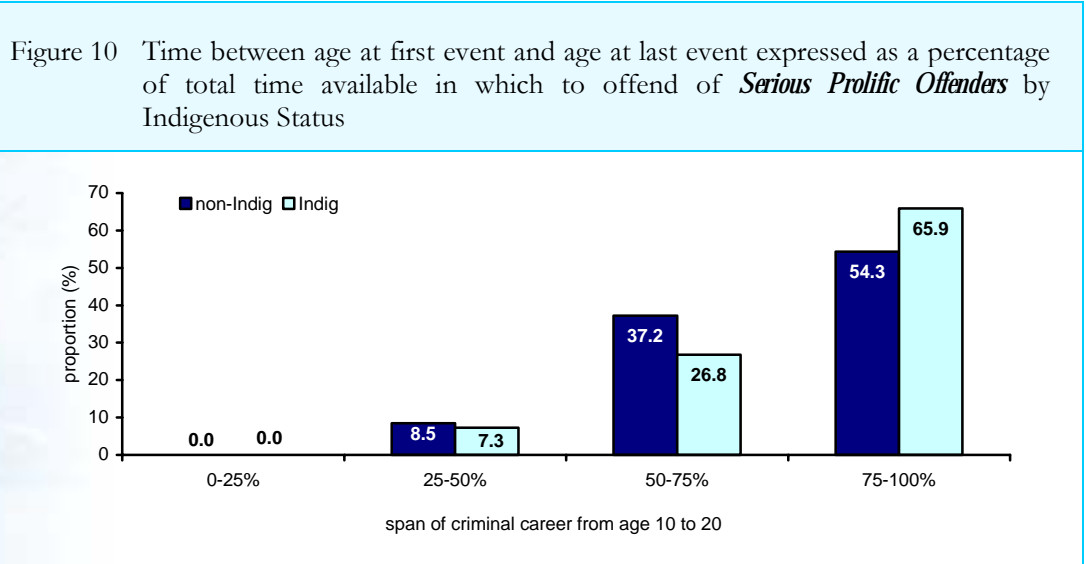
²⁴ Mann-Whitney U, Z=-2.1, p<0.04

For Indigenous offenders the time between their first and last criminal event expressed as a percentage of the total time available in which to offend was, overall, similar to that of non-Indigenous offenders. As shown in Table 27 and Figure 9, about nine out of ten non-Indigenous (91.5%) and Indigenous (92.7%) *Serious Prolific Offenders* had a criminal career which accounted for at least half of their available time to offend.

However, while not statistically significant, there were some differences. About half (54.3%) of non-Indigenous offenders had a criminal career which spanned 75% or more of their available time to offend, while the corresponding figure for Indigenous youth was nearly two thirds (65.9%). In contrast, only one quarter (26.8%) of Indigenous offenders had a criminal career which spanned between 50% and 75% of their available time to offend, while the corresponding proportion for non-Indigenous youth was over one third (37.2%).

Table 27 Time between age at first event and age at last event expressed as a percentage of total time available in which to offend of *Serious Prolific Offenders* by Indigenous Status

	Non-Indigenous		Indigenous	
	frequency	proportion (%)	frequency	proportion (%)
0-25%	0	0.0	0	0.0
25-50%	8	8.5	3	7.3
50-75%	35	37.2	11	26.8
75-100%	51	54.3	27	65.9
Total	94	100.0	41	100.0



As shown in Table 28, for those youth whose criminal career spanned 75% or more of the total time they had available for offending, inevitably all were ‘early onset’ offenders whose first criminal event occurred before the age of 15²⁵. The demographic characteristics of this group of 183 is shown in Table 29.

²⁵ Although there were none who had initiated offending at 14.

Table 28 Time between age at first event and age at last event expressed as a percentage of total time available in which to offend of *Serious Prolific Offenders* by Age of First Event

Age of Onset	0-25%		25-50%		50-75%		75-100%	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	q
10	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	34	43.6
11	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.2	26	33.3
12	0	0.0	0	0.0	8	17.4	16	20.5
13	0	0.0	1	9.1	18	39.1	2	2.6
14	0	0.0	3	27.3	18	39.1	0	0.0
15	0	0.0	5	45.5	1	2.2	0	0.0
16	0	0.0	2	18.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	0	0.0	11	100.0	46	100.0	78	100.0

Table 29 Profile of *Serious Prolific Offenders* whose criminal careers spanned 75% or more of their time available for offending.

	Age of Apprehension					Total	
	16	17	18	19	20	No	%
<i>Gender</i>							
Males	5	7	16	22	24	74	94.9
Females	0	0	1	0	3	4	5.1
<i>Indigenous Status</i>							
Non-Indigenous	3	4	9	15	20	51	65.4
Indigenous	2	3	8	7	7	27	34.6
<i>Demographic Group</i>							
Non-Indigenous males	3	4	9	15	19	50	64.1
Indigenous males	2	3	7	7	5	24	30.8
Non-Indigenous females	0	0	0	0	1	1	1.3
Indigenous females	0	0	1	0	2	3	3.8
Total	5	7	17	22	27	78	100.0
<i>Age of onset</i>							
early	5	7	17	22	27	78	100.0
late	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0

Summary of Findings: A comparison between *Serious Chronic* and *Serious Prolific Offenders*

Summarised in Table 30 are the characteristics of the two main groups of *Serious Chronic Offenders* and *Serious Prolific Offenders*. They differ in a number of ways.

- The number of criminal events used to select *Serious Prolific Offenders* is about double that of *Serious Chronic Offenders*, the former being more than 30 criminal events and the latter 15 or more criminal events. This has the effect of reducing the number of individuals in the *Serious Prolific Offender* group to just over one quarter of the *Serious Chronic Offender* group. Hence, fewer resources would be required if only *Serious Prolific Offenders* were to be targeted for intervention.
- There is a lower proportion of females in the *Serious Prolific Offender* group than the *Serious Chronic Offender* group - 9.8% compared to 12.4%.
- There is a slightly greater proportion of Indigenous males in the *Serious Prolific Offender* group than the *Serious Chronic Offender* group - 27.5% compared to 23.7%.
- The length of criminal careers for *Serious Prolific Offenders* is about one year longer than that of *Serious Chronic Offenders* - 6.8 years compared to 5.7 years. However, the differences may be too small to warrant attention. More important is that both groups comprise members with long juvenile criminal careers.
- The proportion of *Serious Prolific Offenders* whose criminal career constituted at least 75% of the time they had available in which to offend was greater than that of *Serious Chronic Offenders* - over half (57.8%) of *Serious Prolific Offenders* compared with over one third (36.7%) of *Serious Chronic Offenders*.
- In terms of offending, a greater proportion of *Serious Prolific Offenders* than *Serious Chronic Offenders* had, as their most serious criminal event, a charge of *aggravated robbery* - over one third (36.6%) of *Serious Prolific Offenders* compared to less than one quarter (24.6%) of *Serious Chronic Offenders*.
- A lower proportion of *Serious Prolific Offenders* than *Serious Chronic Offenders* had, as their most serious criminal event, a charge of *aggravated assault* - just over 1% (1.3% or two people) of *Serious Prolific Offenders* compared to 5% (27 individuals) of *Serious Chronic Offenders*.

Despite these differences, however, the two groups are similar in other ways.

- About three quarters of the offenders in each of the groups were aged 18 or over at the time of their last apprehension in the 2003/04 financial year.
- Nearly half of the offenders in each group had, as their most serious criminal event, a charge of *unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter*.
- About one third of the offenders in each group were of Indigenous status.

Table 30 Profile of *Serious Prolific Offenders* and *Serious Chronic Offenders*

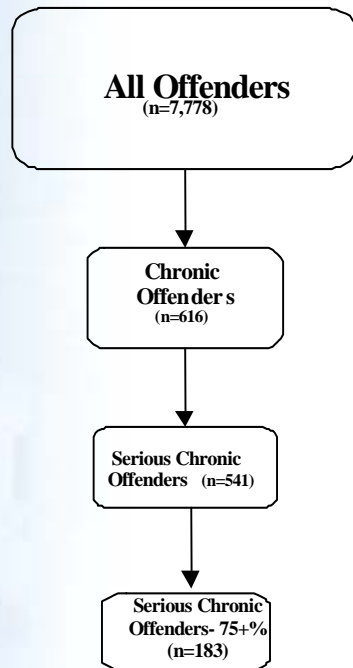
	Serious Prolific Offenders		Serious Chronic Offenders	
	frequency	proportion(%)	frequency	proportion (%)
<i>Gender</i>				
Males	138	90.2	474	87.6
Females	15	9.8	67	12.4
<i>Indigenous Status</i>				
Non-Indigenous	102	66.7	378	69.9
Indigenous	51	33.3	163	30.1
<i>Demographic Group</i>				
Non-Indigenous males	96	62.7	346	64.0
Indigenous males	42	27.5	128	23.7
Non-Indigenous females	6	3.9	32	5.9
Indigenous females	9	5.9	35	6.5
<i>Age of onset</i>				
early	127	94.1	413	82.8
late	8	5.9	86	17.2
(missing)	(18)		(42)	
Total	153	100.0	541	100.0
Averages				
Number of Criminal Events	44.2		27.2	
Length of Criminal Career	6.8 years		5.7 years	

Discussion and Conclusion

Selecting candidates for intensive intervention involves identifying offenders who would benefit from programs in a way that would break their offending cycle. This study has attempted to identify possible candidates by defining *Chronic Offenders* and a sub-group of *Prolific Offenders* based on the number of events for which they were apprehended during their criminal careers.

Chronic Offenders

Figure 11: Extraction Process 1



The process undertaken was analytical and systematic. Firstly, a group of *Chronic Offenders* as defined by the literature was extracted from the study group of offenders, as illustrated in Figure 11. This yielded a large group of over 600 individuals, so a sub-group of *Chronic Offenders* based on the seriousness of offending was extracted. In this way, *Serious Chronic Offenders* became the first sub-group to be examined in detail. However, because most *Chronic Offenders* were serious offenders, the number in this group remained large, with over 500 members. Further extraction was then undertaken and another sub-group identified by considering the length of criminal career. This sub-group now included only those offenders with the longest criminal record, who were identified as those with criminal careers that constituted at least 75% of the time available to offend. The result was a much smaller group of youth, that numbered 183, comprising of 170 males and 13 females.

As targets for intervention any of the sub-groups identified above could be selected. However, the most feasible option may be to target the smallest group identified in Figure 11 (*Serious Chronic Offenders* whose criminal career accounted for 75% or more of the time available in which to offend).

The 183 potential candidates from this group would include:

- Predominantly males (92.9% or 170), one third (33.3% or 61) of whom were Indigenous;
- Eleven (6.0%) Indigenous females; and
- Two (1.1%) non-Indigenous females.

Prolific Offenders

The study also examined another sub-group of *Chronic Offenders*, those who were the most 'prolific' offenders, as shown in Figure 12. They were identified as the top 2% of all offenders who had been apprehended for more than 30 events during their criminal careers. This selection process yielded a small group of *Prolific Offenders* who were further reduced in number by considering only those with at least one serious offence. A group of about 150 offenders was thus identified as *Serious Prolific Offenders* and examined in detail. A

consideration of those with criminal careers that constituted at least 75% of the time available to offend further reduced the number to 78.

The number of *Serious Prolific Offenders* (153) is not large when compared to the size of the chronic offender groups examined in the first part of the study. This would mean that possibly all members in this group could be targeted for intervention. However, ‘late onset’ youth, who comprised less than six percent (5.9%) of this population could be omitted from selection, with all programs designed to suite ‘early onset’ individuals.

Using these criteria, the potential candidates from this group would include all ‘early onset’ males and females, who had more than 30 events charged against them during their criminal career, at least one of which was classified as *serious*. This would involve a group of 116 males, 83 (71.6%) of whom would be non-Indigenous, and 15 females, nearly two thirds (63.6%) of whom would be Indigenous.

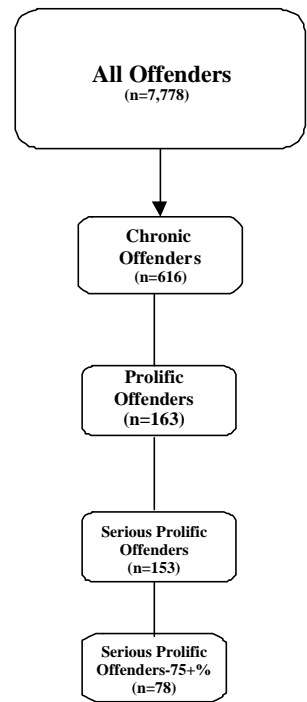
Alternatively, *Serious Prolific Offenders* with the greatest proportion of time spent offending during their youth could be considered for intervention. Specifically, this would be the small group of 78 individuals in Figure 12 whose criminal careers accounted for 75% or more of the time available in which to offend.

The 78 potential candidates from this group would include:

- Predominantly males (94.9% or 74), one third (32.4% or 24) of whom were Indigenous;
- Three (3.8%) Indigenous females; and
- One (1.3%) non-Indigenous female.

Thus, a systematic procedure, based on the number of apprehensions, the seriousness of offending and length of criminal career, was undertaken to identify potential candidates for intensive intervention. Both procedures resulted in groups of individuals who were characteristically ‘early onset’ offenders, having begun their offending before the age of 15, who were predominantly male and who had long criminal careers. It would seem that youth in either of these groups would certainly benefit from interventions designed to break their cycle of offending. What remains is a question of resources which will ultimately determine the number of individuals who can be targeted.

Figure 12: Extraction Process 2



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