

THE CHILDREN

FACTS, STATS AND DEMOGRAPHICS



The [most recent BOSCAR Statistics](#):

171 NSW children spent time locked up, all were initially on remand. Very few NSW children are sentenced to spend time in custody. In 2023, 10 children were sentenced and incarcerated.

2144 Individual children aged under 14 had formal contact with the police 4662 times in 2023. Once the police have contact with a child, further contact becomes more likely.

70% of proceedings against children under 14 were for non-violent offences.

There were 719 court appearances by young children in NSW in 2023 – in most matters (50%) charges were ultimately withdrawn, and an additional 25% of these matters resulted in a not guilty outcome.

On average in NSW in 2023 there were 5 children aged 10-14 in custody on any given night.

Children aged 10–13 spent time isolated and in segregation 172 times in 2023-2024 – 70% of these children were First Nations.

Forty percent of the children who have formal contact with the police are Aboriginal. 102 (more than 60%) of the children who were locked up in 2023 were Aboriginal, just 8% of the NSW population of children aged 10-14 identify as Aboriginal.

Children from regional communities are significantly overrepresented when it comes to contact with police, courts and juvenile prisons. The rate of young people proceeded against by police in outer regional/remote/very remote regions of NSW was over double the NSW average.

The stats show that the more often we lock up children the more often we lock up children. Only 171 NSW children aged 10-13 were locked up in 2023, but they were locked up on 526 different occasions. Eight children were locked up 10 or more times each. Locking children up does not prevent crime, it in fact perpetuates it.

Early contact with the police, courts and custody results in increased likelihood of ongoing contact with police, courts and custody.

More about the children:

More than half of a group of 500 children¹ who had court proceedings taken against them in 2023 had previous contact with the police prior to this appearance and 23 percent of them had already spent time in custody.

Ninety percent of this group had been reported as at significant risk of harm to child protection services. 60 percent of the children had been reported at significant risk of harm more than 10 times. A quarter of the children had been in out-of-home-care and 40% had been in homelessness services.

70 percent of the children had been recorded as being previous victims of crime, with 60% being recorded as a victim of violence and more than 20% a victim of family violence.

The experience of these children is intergenerational with 75 percent of parents having appeared in court and more than 40% in custody.

Half of the children who come into contact with the police are not engaged in school and a quarter are not even enrolled.²

Children who have **mental health issues (60 percent) and or intellectual disability or an acquired brain injury (11%)** are overrepresented in these systems. These children are **often not engaged with appropriate mental health and disability services and supports.**³

The children have high levels of early adversity and trauma and family difficulties.⁴

Neglecting key social, developmental, health and mental health needs of some children is likely to contribute to their reinvolvement in the justice system.⁵

Children are [being criminalised for their disadvantage.](#)

We can do better for children and communities by:

¹ <https://bocsar.nsw.gov.au/documents/publications/bb/bb151-200/bb171-report-involvement-of-young-people-nsw.pdf>

² https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-01/crg_41_20_21_children_aged_10_to_13_in_the_justice_system.pdf

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

1. **Investing in services** in our communities **that prevent crime** from the start.
2. **Funding targeted services** and interventions **that help children learn** to be accountable if they go off track.
3. **Resourcing and supporting Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations** to provide local responses for First Nations young people.
4. **Stop making things worse, be guided by evidence and raise the age** of criminal responsibility from 10 to at least 14.