

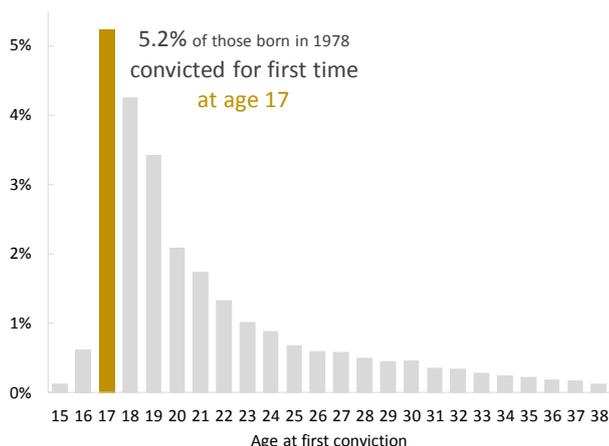
Convictions in the general population

One in four people born in 1978 had a criminal conviction by age 38

Among New Zealanders born in 1978, 16% had a criminal conviction by age 20 and 26% by age 38. Conviction rates vary across gender and ethnic groups with men and Māori having higher rates. Those born later, particularly in the 1990s, have lower rates of conviction, in major part due to increased use of alternatives to court action as part of the Policing Excellence programme that began in 2009.

First convictions usually happen at an early age

For people born in New Zealand in 1978, we can reliably track the number who have at least one conviction up to age 38 years¹. Of those born in 1978, 5.2% were convicted for the first time at age 17 – more than at any other age². The peak age of first conviction remained at 17 or 18 years for those born in the 1980s and 1990s.



The vast majority of people with a conviction received their first conviction by age 25. Only 5% were first convicted from age 26 up to 38. By age 38, a total of 26% had been convicted.

Convictions for people under 17 years old have always been rare. After the Youth Court was established in 1989, such convictions have become even rarer. Most charges against young people aged 14–16 years are heard in the Youth Court – those charges, even if proved, do not result in convictions.

Convictions highest for men and for Māori

Among those born in 1978, the percentage having at least one criminal conviction by age 38 varied by gender and ethnicity. The proportion of men with a conviction (37%) was much higher than women (15%). The percentages were much higher for Māori (46%) than for other ethnic groups. By age 38, 60% of Māori men born in 1978 had at least one conviction.

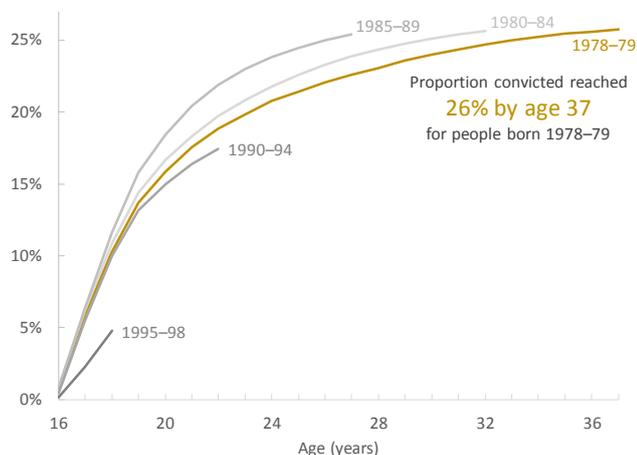
| Proportion of 1978 birth cohort convicted by age 38 | | | |
|---|------------|------------|---------------|
| | Women | Men | Women and men |
| Māori | 31% | 60% | 46% |
| Pacific | 19% | 47% | 33% |
| Asian | 3% | 22% | 12% |
| European or other | 11% | 33% | 22% |
| All ethnic groups | 15% | 37% | 26% |

¹ This analysis is based on data in the Integrated Data Infrastructure, which has conviction data from 1992 onwards. By implication, those data completely cover convictions at age 14 or more for people born in 1978. This analysis makes no adjustment for emigration or mortality.

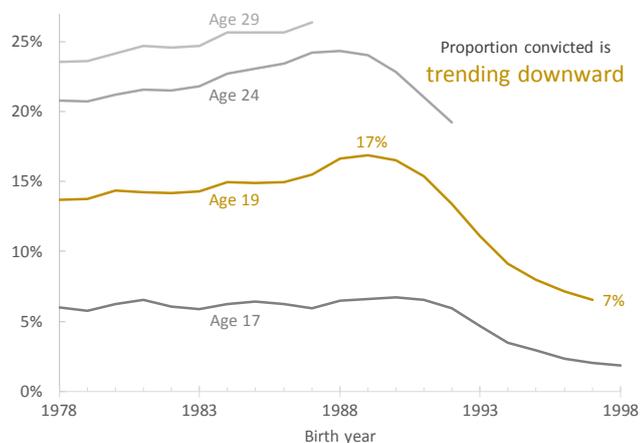
² This analysis relates to charges that lead to a conviction in the District or High Court; it does not include charges proved in the Youth Court.

Fewer young people are being convicted

People born in the late 1980s have had higher rates of conviction than those born either earlier or later. Among those born in 1988, for example, 25% had a conviction by age 25, compared with 21% of those born in 1978 and 22% of those born in 1991.



The proportion of young people who have a conviction by age 19 increased for those born during the 1980s and peaked at 17% for people born in 1988–1990. Since then the trend has been steeply downward. By the time the 1997 birth cohort reached age 19 (year 2016), only 7% had a conviction.



The downward trends coincided with the 2009–2014 Policing Excellence programme. That programme included greater police focus on preventing crime, supporting victims, and dealing with low-level offending out of court. Policing Excellence had its greatest impact on young people. The largest decrease in proportion convicted was among those who were at peak offending ages (late teenage

years) during and after the Policing Excellence programme.

Statistics New Zealand disclaimer

The results in this report are not official statistics. They have been created for research purposes from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI), managed by Statistics New Zealand. Access to the anonymised data used in this study was provided by Statistics NZ under the security and confidentiality provisions of the Statistics Act 1975. The opinions, findings, recommendations, and conclusions expressed in this paper are those of the researchers, not Statistics NZ.

Only people authorised by the Statistics Act 1975 are allowed to see data about a particular person, household, business, or organisation, and the results in this report have been confidentialised to protect these groups from identification and to keep their data safe.

Careful consideration has been given to the privacy, security, and confidentiality issues associated with using administrative and survey data in the IDI. Further detail can be found in the privacy impact assessment for the IDI available from www.stats.govt.nz

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