

ADULT CONVICTION AND SENTENCING STATISTICS

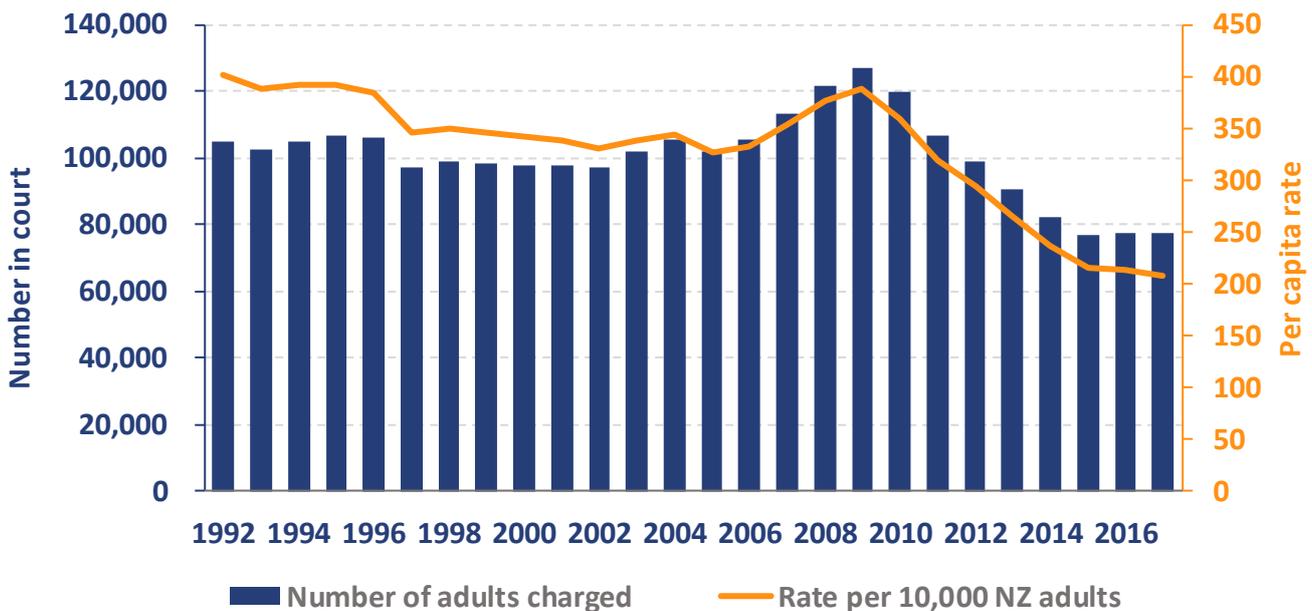
Data highlights for 2017

This summary highlights key data trends in the adult conviction and sentencing statistics published by Stats NZ.¹ These statistics include information on adults (aged 17 years or older) with charges in court between 1980 and 2017.²

Number of adults charged and convicted in 2017 remains stable

The number of adults charged and convicted remained largely unchanged in the past year, following strong decreases from 2009 to 2015 and a slight increase in 2016 (Figure 1). 77,721 adults had charges in 2017, only 78 (0.1%) more than in 2016. Whereas, 64,433 adults had convicted charges in 2017, 162 (-0.3%) fewer than in 2016. The number of adults charged has decreased 14% since 2013 and 35% since the high point in 2009.

Figure 1: Number and rate of adults charged, 1992 - 2017



A person may have more than one charge in a year. The total number of charges for adults rose by 6,865 (3%) to 219,368 charges in 2017, following a 4% increase in 2016. However, this is still 18% fewer charges than 5 years ago.

The total number of convicted charges for adults increased by 2% (3,653 more convicted charges) in 2017, following a 6% increase (8,647 more convicted charges) in 2016.

¹ <http://nzdotstat.stats.govt.nz> under 'Justice'.

² Stats NZ publishes separate tables for children and young people (aged 10 – 16 years).

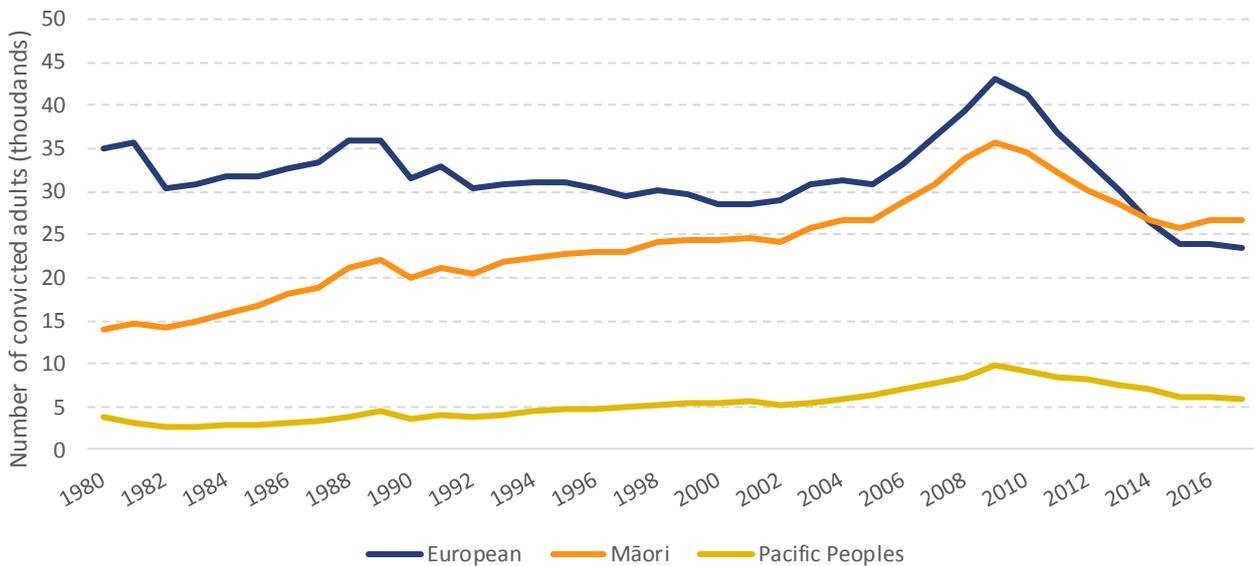
Majority of adult charges result in conviction

In 2017, 76% of adult charges resulted in a conviction. This has increased slightly over the last decade, from 71% in 2008. For charges that are not convicted, 4% had an 'other proved' outcome (discharge without conviction or diversion) and 19% were not proved (including acquittal, withdrawal and dismissal of the charge). A small proportion of charges had other outcomes such as being found not guilty by reason of insanity or unfit to stand trial.

Number of Māori adults convicted in 2017 increased slightly

In 2017, the number of Māori adults convicted increased by 175 (1%) to 26,800. While the number has fallen by 21% over the last 10 years, the number of Europeans convicted fell at more than twice the rate over the same period (40% decrease). As a result, Māori comprised 42% of adults convicted in 2017, compared with 36% in 2008.

Figure 2: Number of convicted adults by ethnicity, 1980 - 2017



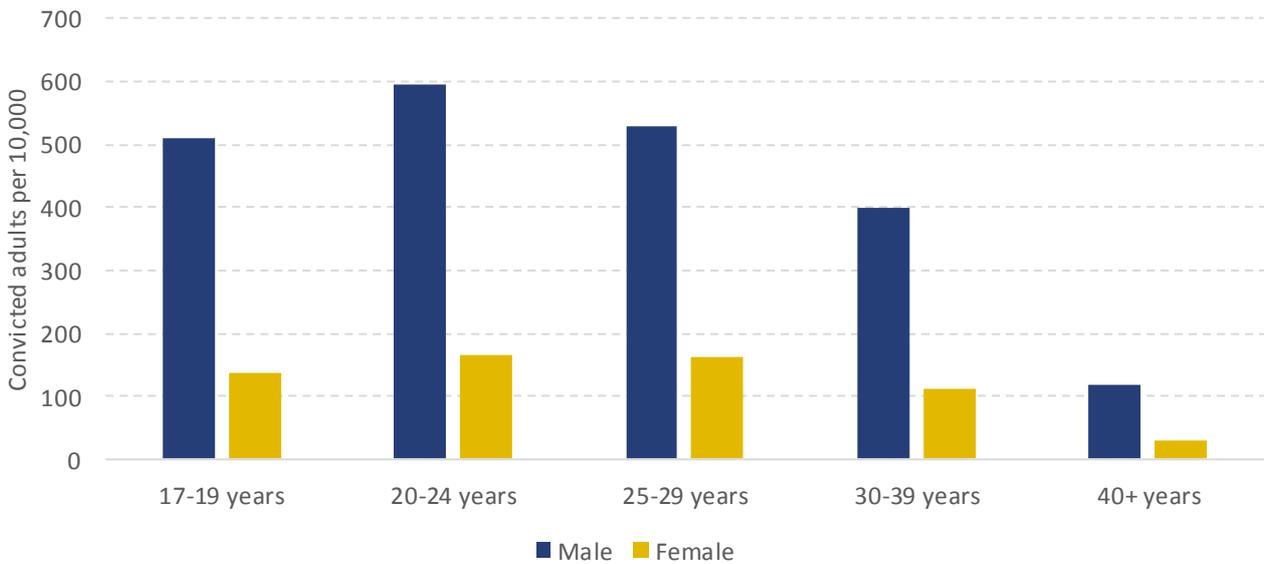
Most convicted adults are male and half were aged under 30

Three-quarters (78%) of adults convicted in 2017 were male. The proportion of male to female convicted offenders has changed little over the past three decades.

The number of people convicted in 2017 was spread across the age bands, although about half were aged less than 30 years (32% 17 - 24 years, 20% 24 - 29 years, 24% 30 - 39 years and 25% 40 years or older).³

³ Percentages were calculated excluding organisations and people of unknown age from the total.

Figure 3: Number of convicted adults in 2017, per 10,000 people, by gender and age group



6% of all New Zealand males aged 17 to 29 received a conviction in 2017.⁴ The most serious offence for this group continued to be dominated by driving offences related to excess alcohol content (comprising 21% of convictions for males aged 17-29) and driver licence offences (a further 16% of convictions for males aged 17-29).

Number of adults convicted differs by region

In 5 of the 15 justice service areas in New Zealand, fewer adults were convicted in 2017 compared to the previous year. In all justice service areas, the number of adults convicted in 2017 decreased compared to 5 years ago in 2012.

The East Coast justice service area (comprising courts in Gisborne, Hastings, Napier, Ruatoria, Waipukurau and Wairoa) had the largest increase (in terms of both the raw and percentage increase) in the number of adults convicted in 2017, with 249 (6%) more adults convicted.

The Canterbury (including Ashburton and Christchurch) and Taitokerau (including Dargaville, Kaikohe, Kaitaia, and Whangarei) justice service areas had the largest decreases (in terms of both the raw and percentage decreases) in the number of adults convicted in 2017. In Canterbury, 771 (12%) fewer adults were convicted in the past year, while Taitokerau saw 316 (8%) fewer adults convicted.

⁴ Based on Stats NZ estimated resident population.

Community and monetary sentences were the most common sentence types

A person may receive more than one sentence when convicted of a charge. These statistics count the most serious sentence received by each adult.⁵

Adults convicted in 2017 were most likely to receive a monetary sentence (33%; 21,190 adults) or a community work sentence (22%; 14,171 adults) as their most serious sentence. 13% of convicted adults received an imprisonment sentence, 19% other types of community sentences, 6% 'other' types of sentences, and 5% had no sentence recorded.

In 2017, the number of adults receiving an imprisonment sentence changed little compared to the previous year. However, since 2013 the number of adults receiving an imprisonment sentence increased 12%. Over the same time, the number of adults who received a community work sentence as their most serious sentence decreased 23% (from 18,341 in 2013), and the number who received a monetary penalty decreased 23% (from 27,656). However, the number who received other types of community sentences as their most serious sentence increased by 8% (from 12,471 to 13,525 adults).

Charges for some offence types have increased more than others

The most common convicted charges for adults were for the offence types:⁶

- 'Breach of community-based orders' (25,476 convicted charges; increased 4% from 2016)
- 'Driver licence offences' (18,888 convicted charges; increased 1%)
- 'Exceeding the prescribed content of alcohol or other substance limit' (16,414 convicted charges; increased 1%)
- 'Assault' (15,613 convicted charges; increased 3%)
- 'Theft (except motor vehicles)' (12,000 convicted charges; increased 3%).

The total number of convicted charges for drug offences have increased over the last two years. There have been changes to the types of drug offences in court. Cannabis offences, which previously dominated the statistics, have halved over the last 10 years, while methamphetamine offences have nearly doubled. In 2017, 'possession/use of illicit drugs' (mainly including cannabis or methamphetamine offences) increased 10% from 2016 to 3,354 convicted charges, and there was a 15% increase in 'other illicit drug offences' (the majority of which are now methamphetamine utensil offences) to 2,806 convicted charges. In contrast, there were 216 (18%) fewer convicted charges for manufacturing or cultivating illicit drugs and 116 (3%) fewer convicted charges for dealing or trafficking illicit drugs in 2017.

Also of note was another increase over the past year in the number of convicted charges for 'dangerous/negligent operation (driving) of a vehicle' (7% increase from 8,598 to 9,167 convicted charges), following continuous falls in the number of convicted charges from 2007 to 2015. While, 'obtaining benefit by deception' had the highest volume decrease (9%) over the last year, from 9,617 to 8,793 convicted charges since 2016. This is now at its lowest level since the data series began in 1980.

⁵ Sentences include (in order of seriousness) imprisonment (life imprisonment, preventive detention and imprisonment), home detention, community detention, intensive supervision, community work, supervision, monetary, other (including sentences and orders such as deferment, disqualification from driving, Sentencing Act final Protection Order and order for forfeiture) and no sentence recorded (where an offender is convicted and discharged and where an offender is ordered to pay court costs).

⁶ The Australian and New Zealand Standard Offence Classification (ANZSOC) is used to categorise offences into 16 divisions (which are further categorised into subdivisions and groups). More information can be obtained from: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1234.0>.