

YOUTH PROSECUTION STATISTICS

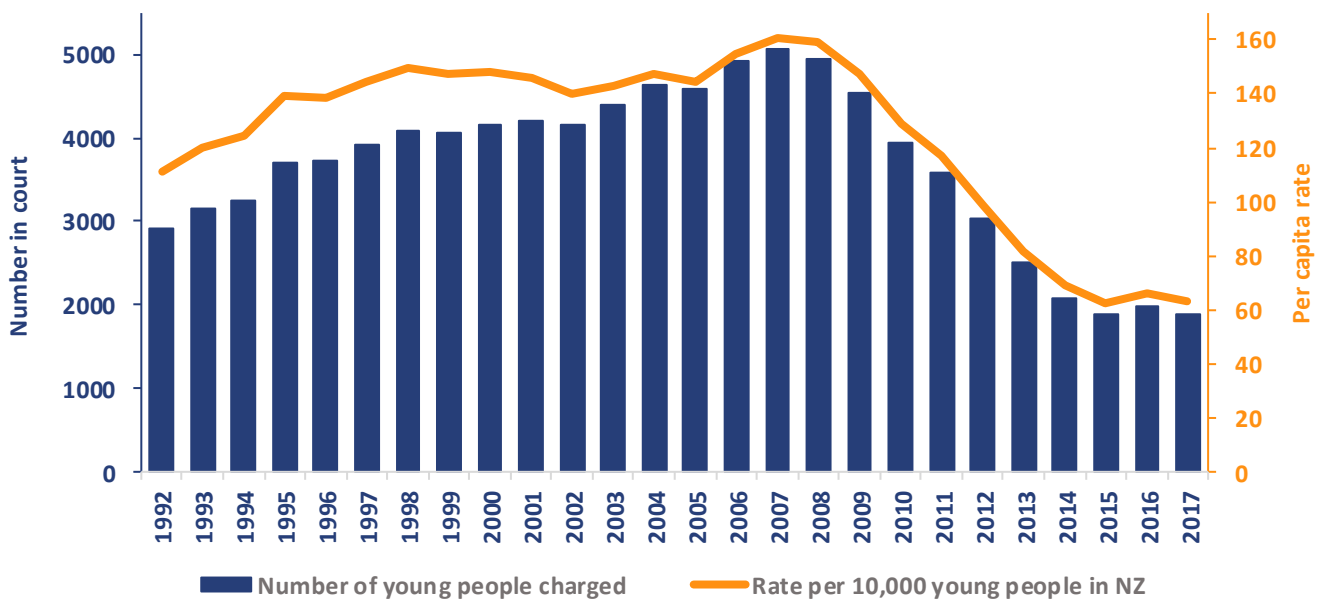
Data highlights for 2017

This summary highlights key data trends in the youth prosecution statistics published by Stats NZ.¹ These statistics include information on children (aged 10 - 13) and young people (aged 14 -16) with charges in court between 1992 and 2017.² Usually only the most serious young offenders appear in court. Minor offending is often dealt with by warnings, Family Group Conferences and other alternatives to prosecution in court.

Number of youth in court in 2017 has remained low

1,884 children and young people (youth) had charges finalised in court in 2017 (this includes Youth, District and High Courts).³ This is approximately 105 (5%) fewer than 2016 but similar to the number of youth in 2015 (Figure 1). Prior to 2015, the number of youth in court had been decreasing substantially each year (in 2017 there are 25% fewer youth than 2013 and 63% fewer than the high point in 2007). Youth accounted for less than 3% of all people in court in 2017.

Figure 1: Number of children and young people in court, 1992 to 2017



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

² Stats NZ publishes separate tables for adult (aged 17 years or older) conviction and sentencing statistics.

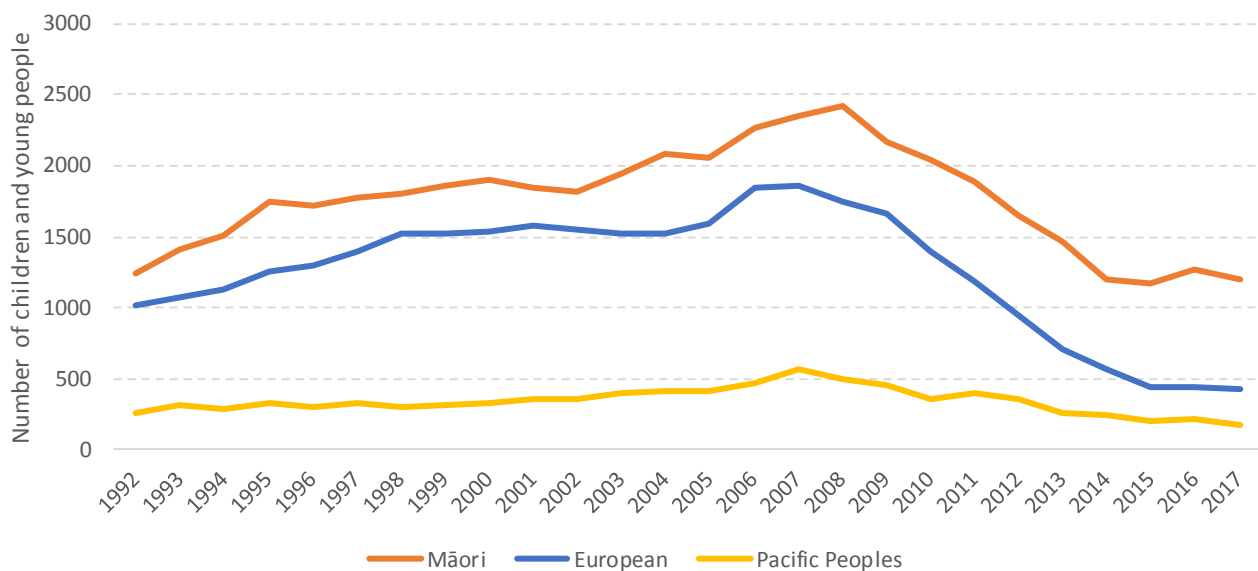
³ All data is randomly rounded to counts of three and all percentages are calculated off these rounded numbers.

More Māori youth continue to be in court than other ethnicities

Māori comprise around 64% of all youth charged in 2017, with more youth in court than all other ethnicities (1,197 Māori compared to 426 European, 174 Pacific Peoples, 30 Other and 57 of Unknown ethnicity). While the number of youth in all the other ethnic groups has continued to decrease the number of Māori youth in 2017 remains similar to the number in 2014. The number of Māori youth did decrease in 2017 from 1,266 in 2016 (6%), making some recovery from an 8% increase in 2016. The number of European youth decreased 2% in 2017 to 426 youth, while the number of Pacific youth fell by the largest proportion (17%).

The proportion of Māori youth in court has increased from around 49% in 2008. Despite drops in the number of Māori youth in court over the past 10 years (from 2,421 in 2008 to 1,197 in 2017), Māori comprise an increasing proportion of all youth in court because the rate of decrease has been much slower compared to that of European and Pacific youth (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of youth in court by ethnicity, 1992 – 2017



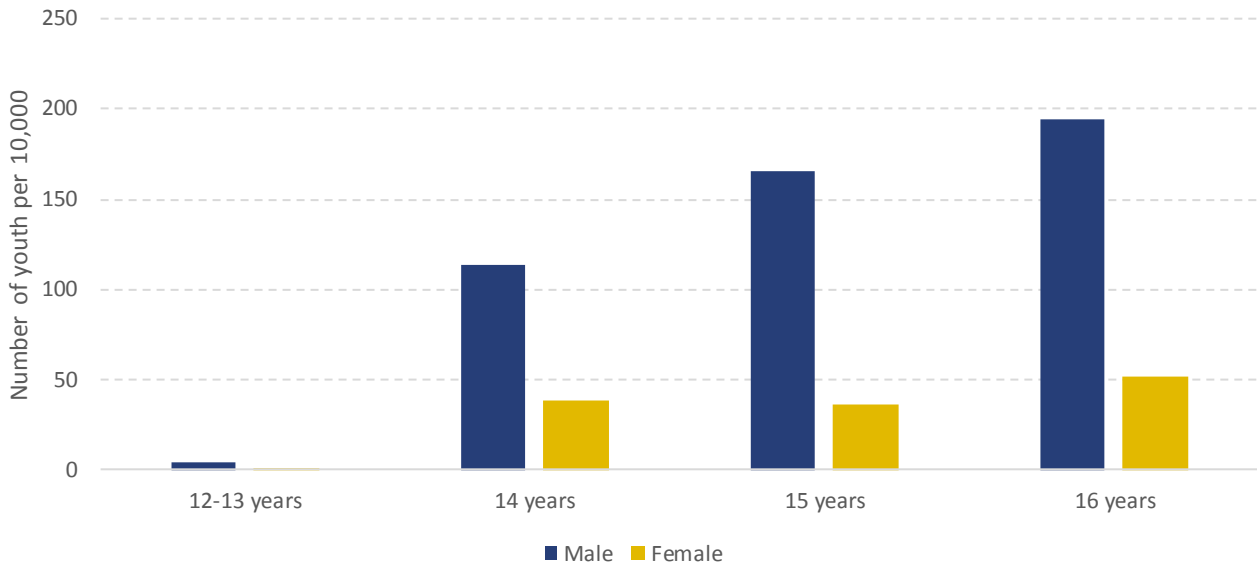
Note: Other and unknown ethnicities are not shown.

Most youth in court are male and most are 15 or 16 years old

Of all youth in court in 2017, 80% were male. This proportion has remained largely unchanged since the data series began in 1992. This is a similar proportion to adults in court.

In 2017, 1,392 (74%) of youth in court were aged 15 or 16 (Figure 3); 60% of all youth in court were males aged 15 or 16. The number of 14 and 16 year olds decreased compared to 2016 (8% fewer 14 year olds and 9% fewer 16 year olds), while the number of 12-13 year olds increased (there was no change in the number 15 year olds).

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



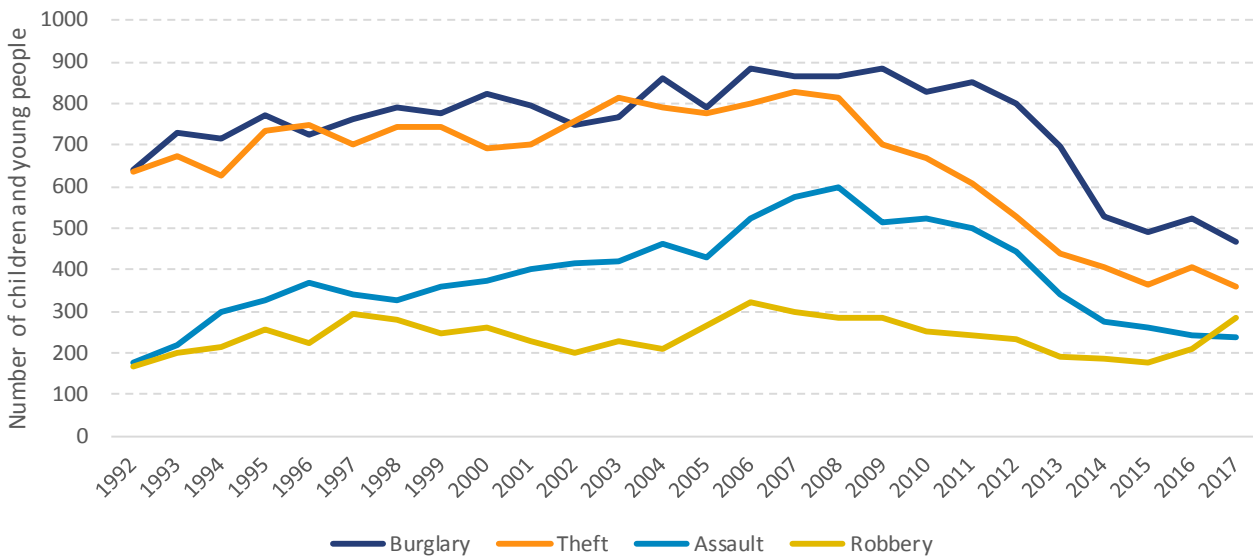
Property offences are still common but robbery has increased

In 2017, youth were most often charged with burglary (25%), theft (19%) or robbery (15%) offences as their most serious offence. This is the first time that the number of youth charged with robbery has exceeded the number of youth charged with assault since the data series began.

The number of youth whose most serious offence was robbery continued to increase in 2017 (up 36% from 207 in 2016 to 282 in 2017), following steady decreases from 2006 until 2015 (from 321 in 2006 to 174 in 2015).

In contrast, there was an 11% decrease in the number of youth whose most serious offence was burglary (from 525 to 465 youth) or theft (from 405 to 360 youth), compared to 2016. This is consistent with the overall downward trend in these offences over the last 10 years (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Number of youth charged, by offence type, 1992 – 2017



Most youth had their charges proved

The Youth Court deals with criminal offending by children and young people that is too serious to be dealt with by the police in the community. In the Youth Court children and young people can deny a charge (equivalent of a not guilty plea) or agree with what the Police say happened (equivalent of a guilty plea). The majority participate in a Family Group Conference and complete the plan that was developed. If a charge is proved the judge will decide whether to order a discharge under s282 of the Oranga Tamariki Act (it is as if the charged had never been filed; the youth is given a second chance and can enter adult life without a criminal record) or impose a Youth Court proved outcome (under s283 of the Act) and impose an order.

Serious offending is dealt with in the District or High Court, and youth can be convicted and receive an adult sentence if found guilty.

In 2017, most youth (78%) had their charges proved. As a result, they were either discharged under s282 (46% of all youth charged), had a 'Youth Court proved' outcome under s283 and received an order to complete (28% of all youth charged) or were convicted and sentenced in an adult court (4% of all youth charged).

Nearly a third of youth received orders for their offending

In 2017, 600 youth (32%) received an order or sentence. Of these the most common were 'monetary, confiscation, or disqualification' (22%; 129 youth) and 'supervision or community work' (19%; 111 youth). Other orders included 'supervision with residence' (96 youth), 'supervision with activity' (87 youth) and 'education and rehabilitation programmes' (12 youth).

Of the small number of youth convicted in court and given an adult sentence to complete (36 youth), the majority received imprisonment or home detention for very serious offending.