

NSW Police Recorded Female Persons of Interest: Has there been an increase in the 10 years to June 2013?

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Aim: To investigate characteristics and trends from 2003/04 to 2012/13 in female persons of interest (POIs) recorded by NSW Police.

Method: The number of female and male POIs were informed by data on POIs proceeded against by police from the NSW Police Force Computerised Operational Policing System. Characteristics of female POIs are described and trends over the 10 years to June 2013 were analysed using Kendall's rank-order correlation test.

Results: Over the decade ending June 2013 both adult female and male POIs increased in number. However the number of adult female POIs increased at a greater rate than their male counterparts. Adult females were most likely to be apprehended by police for shoplifting and assault. Unlike adult female POIs, juvenile female POIs have not generally increased over the past decade. Instead they rose, stabilised, then fell, so that by 2012/13 the number of juvenile female POIs were only slightly higher than in 2003/04. Over the most recent three years there were no significant increases for juvenile females for any of the offences examined. The offences committed by juvenile females were very similar to those committed by adult females, with shoplifting having the largest proportion of juvenile female POIs associated, followed by assault, breach of bail conditions and then malicious damage.

Conclusion: Females are still in the minority among POIs but their numbers are growing.

Keywords: female offenders, female POIs, female violence, domestic assault, shoplifting, juvenile offending, juvenile POIs

Introduction

In 2010 the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research conducted an analysis of female POIs which suggested that, in the 10 years to June 2009, women's participation in crime increased at a rate higher than that of men (Holmes 2010). In the three years since that research, there has been continued speculation as to whether that trend is continuing. Using data from the NSW Police Force on the number of persons of interest (POIs) proceeded against, this brief describes trends in offending by adult and juvenile females over a 10 year period from July 2003 to June 2013.

Specifically, the aim of this paper is to investigate the characteristics and trends of female POIs. This aim will be addressed with the following questions. In the decade from 2003/04 to 2012/13:

a) Has there been a change in the number of adult female POIs?

- b) Has the proportion of adult female POIs changed relative to adult male POIs?
- c) What offences are adult females most likely to be proceeded against for by police?
- d) Has the number of adult female POIs proceeded against by police for specific offences changed?
- e) Has there been a change in the number of juvenile female POIs (i.e aged 10 to 17 years)?
- f) Has the proportion of juvenile female POIs changed relative to juvenile male POIs?
- g) What offences are juvenile females most likely to be proceeded against for by police?
- h) Has the number of juvenile female POIs proceeded against by police for specific offences changed?

Method

Data used were derived from the NSW Police Force's Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS). As such

only crimes that are reported to or detected by the police are included. In this brief offenders are represented by persons of interest (POIs) formally proceeded against by police. Persons of interest are suspected offenders aged 10 years or more recorded by police in connection to a criminal incident. We are only considering POIs formally proceeded against by police to court or by an alternative method such as by a criminal infringement notice or youth justice caution or conference.¹ Importantly, POIs are not a count of unique offenders. Where an individual is involved in multiple criminal incidents during a given time period they are counted as a POI multiple times. Correspondingly, no POI information will be recorded for criminal incidents where there is no known suspect. For simplicity, for the remainder of this brief 'POIs proceeded against by NSW Police' will be referred to as 'POIs'.

Persons of interest for all recorded criminal incidents except driving and transport regulatory offences have been included for analysis. In addition, only incidents where police have recorded the POI's gender have been included.

One constraint of this report is that police POI data only captures a subset of actual offenders as some offences go unreported and some offenders go undetected. For this reason, the data we use may give an accurate picture of trends in POIs but will not give an accurate picture of the number of actual offenders. Another limitation is that while some offences are more likely reported to police (for example, break and enter – dwelling and robbery), other offences are more likely to be detected by the police (for example, drug offences and breach offences). As such, for many offences, a recorded increase or decrease may be attributable to an increase or decrease in offending, reporting and/or police activity.

Statistical testing of long-term and short-term trends was performed using Kendall's rank-order correlation tests. This test was applied to the monthly number of POIs over the relevant period. Where a statistically significant result was found ($p < .05$), the size of the trend is given by the average annual per cent change between the first 12 month period and the latest 12 month period. A non significant test result ($p > .05$) is denoted as 'stable'. Trends were not performed where there were fewer than 20 recorded POIs per year.

Results

Over the last 10 years ending June 2013, 316,813 females were proceeded against by the NSW Police. This represents 18.7 per cent of all POIs, similar to 18.0 per cent first reported by Holmes (2010) for the 10 year period ending June 2009. Of these, 246,798 were female POIs aged 18 years and over (77.9%).

a) Has there been a change in the number of adult female POIs?

Yes. Figure 1 shows the number of adult female and male POIs from 2003/04 to 2012/13. During this period, the number of adult female POIs increased from 22,196 in 2003/04 to 27,810 in 2012/13. This represents an average annual increase of 2.5 per cent per year. In contrast, over the same period the number

of adult male POIs rose on average 1.7 per cent per year from 106,385 in 2003/04 to 123,822 in 2012/13. Despite an increase in the number of female POIs relative to males over the 10 years to 2012/13, the majority of POIs are still male (81.7% in 2012/13). For every adult female POI in 2012/13, there were 4.5 adult male POIs.

b) Has the proportion of adult female POIs changed relative to adult male POIs?

Slightly. Figure 2 shows the proportion of adult male and female POIs in each of the 10 years to June 2013. The proportion of offences committed by female POIs accounted for between 17.2 per cent in 2004/05 and 2005/06 and 18.5 per cent in 2011/12. In the past 10 years the proportion of adult POIs who are female has increased by one percentage point from 17.3 per cent in 2003/04 to 18.3 per cent in 2012/13.

Figure 1. Number of adult female and male POIs, NSW, July 2003 to June 2013

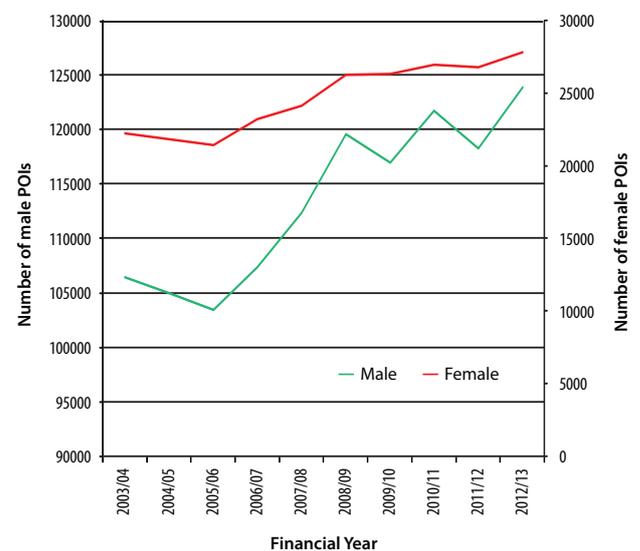


Figure 2. Percentage of adult female and male POIs, NSW, July 2003 to June 2013

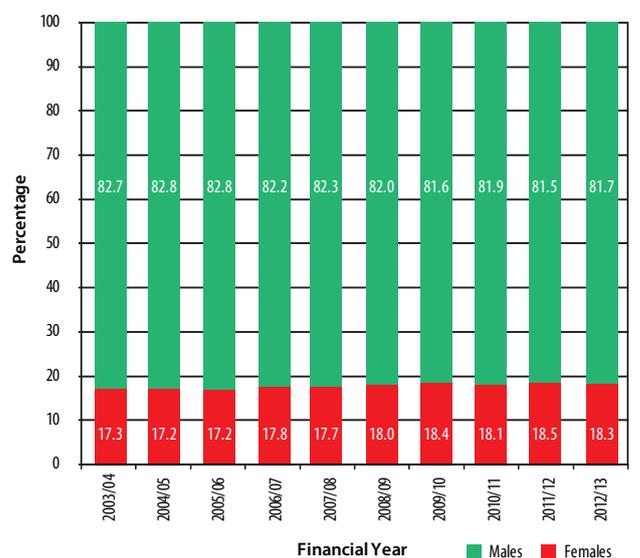


Table 1. Top 10 offences with the highest number of adult female and male POIs, NSW, July 2012 to June 2013

Offence	Female		Offence	Male	
	No.	% of adult female POIs		No.	% of adult male POIs
Shoplifting	4524	16.3	Domestic assault	13048	10.5
Domestic assault	2568	9.2	Possession and/or use of cannabis	10204	8.2
Non-domestic assault	1785	6.4	Offensive conduct/language	8262	6.7
Possession and/or use of cannabis	1724	6.2	Malicious damage to property	8238	6.7
Malicious damage to property	1494	5.4	Harassment, threatening behaviour and private nuisance	7910	6.4
Offensive conduct/language	1427	5.1	Breach Apprehended Violence Order	7612	6.1
Fraud	1407	5.1	Non-domestic assault	6803	5.5
Breach bail conditions	1398	5.0	Other offences**	6641	5.4
Breach Apprehended Violence Order	1167	4.2	Breach bail conditions	6487	5.2
Receiving or handling stolen goods	1134	4.1	Shoplifting	4601	3.7

** includes immigration/customs offences, dog offences, family law offences, public mischief, terrorism offences, carrying cutting weapons/offensive implements, obstruction as well as other miscellaneous offences.

c) What offences are adult females most likely to be proceeded against for by police?

The 10 most common offences police proceeded against adult female and male POIs for in 2012/13 are presented in Table 1. In this year, 16.3 per cent of female POIs were proceeded against by police for shoplifting. The next most common offence was assault (9.2% for domestic assault and 6.4% for non-domestic assault). Nearly a third of all adult female POIs were proceeded against for one of these offences. From the Top 10 list of most common female offences, fraud and receiving/handling stolen goods were the only offences not also represented in the Top 10 male list. The remaining eight offences were common for both males and females.

Among male POIs, the most common offence was domestic assault, followed by possession/use of cannabis, offensive conduct/language and malicious damage to property. Even though shoplifting was the most common offence for female POIs, the number of male POIs proceeded against by police for this offence still slightly exceeded that of female POIs (females=4,524; males=4,601). For the most common male offence (domestic assault), there were five male POIs for every female POI. Likewise, for every four male POIs of non-domestic assault there was one female POI.

It should be noted however, that half of the ten offences types having the highest volume of POIs for both males and females are those which can be heavily influenced by policing activities (i.e. possession and/or use of cannabis, offensive language/conduct, breach bail conditions and AVOs, and receiving/handling stolen goods).

d) Has the number of adult female POIs proceeded against by police for specific offences changed?

Yes, for some offences. Table 2 shows the number and average annual percentage change from 2003/04 to 2012/13 for adult female and male POIs for selected offences. Significant upward trends are highlighted in red; significant downward trends are

highlighted in yellow. A non-significant test result is denoted by 'Stable' and 'nc' indicates that the number of POIs recorded was too small for a reliable trend test to be performed. Table 2 shows the number of female POIs generally increased more than male POIs for many offences.

Over the decade ending June 2013, the number of adult female and male POIs increased significantly for many drug offences (especially possession/use offences) and justice procedure offences, which could be due to increasing police targeting of these offences, as well as for domestic assault, harassment and malicious damage to property. For each of these offences, the increase in female POIs was higher than the corresponding increase for males. Indeed, the largest increase in female POIs was for possession of ecstasy (an increase of 21.4% for female POIs compared with a 14.3% increase for males). Another noteworthy result was for domestic assault. While the number of adult female domestic assault POIs across all 10 years was well below the corresponding number for their adult male counterparts, female POIs for this offence increased much more quickly than males (females increased at a rate of 7.6% per year compared to males who increased at 1.8% per year).

Over the same 10 year period, the number of adult female POIs significantly declined for several property offences. While the decline for female POIs was greater than for males for break and enter non-dwelling and fraud, it was smaller for motor vehicle theft, break and enter dwelling and receiving or handling stolen goods.

Juvenile female POIs

e) Has there been a change in the number of juvenile female POIs?

Yes, it increased and then decreased. Figure 3 shows the number of juvenile female and male POIs over the 10 year period ending June 2013. While the number of juvenile female POIs in 2012/13 was slightly higher than in 2003/04, the trend here is more complex than a steady increase.

Table 2. Number, 10 year trend* and average annual percentage change for adult female and male POIs, NSW, July 2003 to June 2013

Offence	Adult Female POIs			Adult Male POIs		
	July 2003 - June 2004	July 2012 - June 2013	Trend* & av. annual % change	July 2003 - June 2004	July 2012 - June 2013	Trend* & av. annual % change
Possession and/or use of ecstasy	51	292	21.4	388	1292	14.3
Possession and/or use of other drugs	76	314	17.1	308	1172	16.0
Harassment, threatening behaviour and private nuisance	335	1092	14.0	2494	7910	13.7
Dealing, trafficking in amphetamines	89	276	13.4	477	1021	8.8
Possession and/or use of amphetamines	246	607	10.6	1295	2304	6.6
Breach bail conditions	673	1398	8.5	3535	6487	7.0
Liquor offences	397	803	8.1	1952	4508	9.7
Domestic assault	1329	2568	7.6	11151	13048	1.8
Criminal intent	95	175	7.0	1149	1133	Stable
Malicious damage to property	1098	1494	3.5	6886	8238	2.0
Breach Apprehended Violence Order	861	1167	3.4	6727	7612	1.4
Possession and/or use of cannabis	1281	1724	3.4	7796	10204	3.0
Offensive conduct/language	1067	1427	3.3	5490	8262	4.6
Trespass	363	482	3.2	1860	2359	2.7
Shoplifting	3503	4524	2.9	4661	4601	-0.1
Other drug offences	267	339	2.7	999	1157	1.6
Prohibited and regulated weapons offences	268	277	0.4	3264	2828	-1.6
Break and enter dwelling	339	305	-1.2	2694	2203	-2.2
Receiving or handling stolen goods	1415	1134	-2.4	5014	3684	-3.4
Fraud	2110	1407	-4.4	4008	2923	-3.4
Break and enter non-dwelling	109	66	-5.4	1719	1100	-4.8
Motor vehicle theft	175	104	-5.6	1546	862	-6.3
Robbery with a weapon not a firearm	55	29	-6.9	452	432	Stable
Non-domestic assault	2031	1785	Stable	8423	6803	-2.3
Assault Police	466	560	Stable	1642	1277	-2.8
Robbery without a weapon	69	92	Stable	518	536	Stable
Other offences against the person	25	28	Stable	228	174	-3.0
Steal from motor vehicle	92	69	Stable	1291	816	-5.0
Steal from dwelling	208	158	Stable	694	689	Stable
Steal from person	89	115	Stable	259	324	2.5
Other theft	558	525	Stable	1904	1588	-2.0
Possession and/or use of narcotics	158	126	Stable	650	386	-5.6
Dealing, trafficking in narcotics	86	183	Stable	441	322	-3.4
Dealing, trafficking in cannabis	122	68	Stable	483	571	1.9
Dealing, trafficking in ecstasy	30	36	Stable	250	360	Stable
Cultivating cannabis	207	117	Stable	1029	744	Stable
Resist or hinder officer	700	770	Stable	3959	3801	Stable
Other offences**	907	894	Stable	5559	6641	2.0
Possession and/or use of cocaine	13	74	nc	95	472	19.5
Pornography offences	1	4	nc	31	120	16.2
Fail to appear	4	16	nc	29	82	12.2
Dealing, trafficking in cocaine	3	13	nc	47	131	12.1
Dealing, trafficking in other drugs	10	32	nc	52	124	10.1
Manufacture drug	7	10	nc	48	56	1.7
Abduction and kidnapping	10	8	nc	158	122	-2.8
Escape custody	13	6	nc	147	95	-4.7
Sexual assault	13	7	nc	744	474	-4.9
Betting and gaming offences	11	2	nc	39	15	-10.1
Attempted murder	11	2	nc	54	20	-10.4
Murder	14	6	nc	78	48	Stable
Indecent assault, act of indecency	10	11	nc	788	789	Stable
Other sexual offences	16	13	nc	265	330	Stable
Robbery with a firearm	8	9	nc	211	138	Stable
Arson	20	24	nc	108	179	Stable
Other offences against justice procedures	29	18	nc	142	127	Stable
Murder accessory, conspiracy	2	1	nc	4	5	nc
Manslaughter	1	0	nc	6	0	nc
Driving causing death	0	0	nc	0	0	nc
Blackmail and extortion	2	4	nc	13	31	nc
Stock theft	3	0	nc	31	11	nc
Importing drugs	17	11	nc	48	43	nc
Prostitution offences	28	9	nc	52	38	nc

* This table shows the results of a statistical test for significant upward or downward trends in the number of POIs over a 10 year period. The trend test used is Kendall's rank-order correlation test. Where the trend is significant (i.e p<0.05) the average annual percentage change is shown. Significant upward trends are highlighted in red; significant downward trends are highlighted in yellow. A non-significant test result is denoted by 'Stable' and 'nc' indicates that the number of POIs recorded was too small for a reliable trend test to be performed.

** Includes immigration/customs offences, dog offences, family law offences, public mischief, terrorism offences, carrying cutting weapons/offensive implements, obstruction as well as other miscellaneous offences.

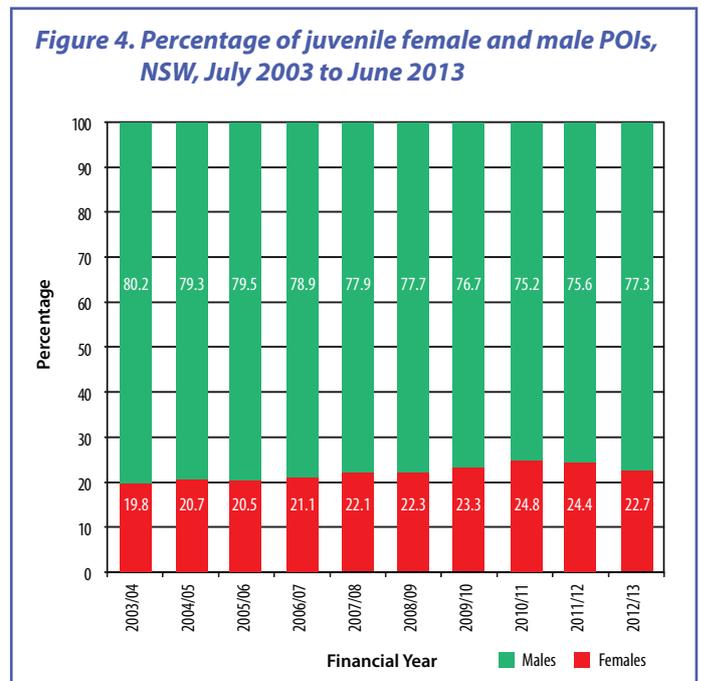
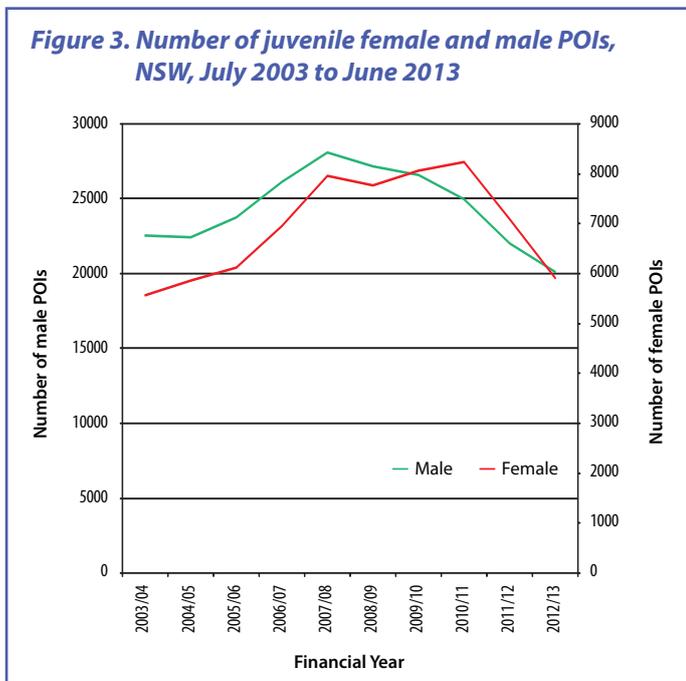


Figure 3 shows that the number of juvenile female POIs clearly increased from 2003/04 to 2007/08. They then plateaued between 2007/08 and 2010/11 after which there were two years of sharp decline. A similar pattern can be seen among juvenile male POIs.

f) Has the proportion of juvenile female POIs changed relative to juvenile male POIs?

Figure 4 illustrates the proportion of female juvenile POIs compared to male juvenile POIs over the 10 years to June 2013. In line with adult POIs, the vast majority of juvenile POIs were male. Females constituted a greater proportion of all juvenile POIs in 2012/13 than they did in 2003/04 (22.7% and 19.8% respectively).

g) What offences were juvenile females most likely to be proceeded against for by police?

The 10 most common offences police proceeded against juvenile female and male POIs for in 2012/13 are described

in Table 3. The offence profiles of juvenile female POIs were closely aligned to those of adult female POIs. Like adult female POIs, shoplifting was the offence which had the most juvenile female POIs (20.3% of juvenile female POIs). This was followed by assault (13.0% for non-domestic assault; 7.7% for domestic assault), then breach of bail conditions (9.4%) and malicious damage to property (9.2%). Almost 60 per cent of all juvenile female POIs were proceeded against for one of these offences.

Even though shoplifting was the most common offence for female juvenile POIs, the number of male juvenile POIs committing this offence still exceeded that of females but only slightly (females=1,198; males=1,331).

Similar to adult POIs, it must be remembered that some of the most common offences police proceeded against juvenile female and male POIs for can be heavily influenced by police targeting (i.e. breach bail conditions and AVOs, possession and/or use of drugs).

Table 3. Top 10 offences with the highest number of juvenile female and male POIs, NSW, July 2012 to June 2013

Offence	Female		Offence	Male	
	No.	% of juvenile female POIs		No.	% of juvenile male POIs
Shoplifting	1198	20.3	Malicious damage to property	2843	14.1
Non-domestic assault	771	13.0	Breach bail conditions	2047	10.2
Breach bail conditions	554	9.4	Non-domestic assault	1409	7.0
Malicious damage to property	542	9.2	Shoplifting	1331	6.6
Domestic assault	457	7.7	Possession and/or use of cannabis	1147	5.7
Harassment, threatening behaviour and private nuisance	255	4.3	Trespass	952	4.7
Breach Apprehended Violence Order	209	3.5	Break and enter dwelling	942	4.7
Possession and/or use of cannabis	196	3.3	Domestic assault	938	4.7
Trespass	179	3.0	Harassment, threatening behaviour and private nuisance	873	4.3
Liquor offences	177	3.0	Break and enter non-dwelling	727	3.6

Table 4. Number, 10 year trend* and average annual percentage change for juvenile female and male POIs, NSW, July 2003 to June 2013

Offence	Juvenile Female POIs			Juvenile Male POIs		
	July 2003 - June 2004	July 2012 - June 2013	Trend* & av. annual % change	July 2003 - June 2004	July 2012 - June 2013	Trend* & av. annual % change
Harassment, threatening behaviour and private nuisance	67	255	16.0	323	873	11.7
Domestic assault	148	457	13.3	434	938	8.9
Breach Apprehended Violence Order	76	209	11.9	262	466	6.6
Breach bail conditions	255	554	9.0	1512	2047	3.4
Robbery without a weapon	49	96	7.8	339	346	Stable
Trespass	107	179	5.9	822	952	1.6
Malicious damage to property	395	542	3.6	2268	2843	Stable
Possession and/or use of cannabis	156	196	2.6	860	1147	3.3
Non-domestic assault	725	771	0.7	1772	1409	Stable
Break and enter non-dwelling	96	61	-4.9	1564	727	-8.2
Motor vehicle theft	150	83	-6.4	1249	471	-10.3
Fraud	156	80	-7.2	235	215	-1.0
Steal from dwelling	71	36	-7.3	304	216	-3.7
Other offences**	155	77	-7.5	1067	550	-7.1
Liquor offences	470	177	-10.3	1382	413	-12.6
Assault Police	99	111	Stable	194	187	-0.4
Break and enter dwelling	122	111	Stable	1372	942	-4.1
Receiving or handling stolen goods	179	122	Stable	694	548	-2.6
Steal from motor vehicle	29	24	Stable	641	585	-1.0
Shoplifting	1427	1198	Stable	1831	1331	Stable
Steal from person	32	27	Stable	122	131	Stable
Other theft	154	115	Stable	800	491	-5.3
Prohibited and regulated weapons offences	21	26	Stable	410	289	-3.8
Resist or hinder officer	120	120	Stable	516	460	Stable
Offensive language/conduct	152	143	Stable	504	400	Stable
Murder	1	3	nc	6	3	nc
Attempted murder	0	0	nc	4	1	nc
Murder accessory, conspiracy	0	0	nc	0	0	nc
Manslaughter	0	0	nc	1	1	nc
Driving causing death	0	0	nc	0	0	nc
Sexual assault	3	1	nc	93	76	Stable
Indecent assault, act of indecency	13	0	nc	76	79	Stable
Other sexual offences	1	2	nc	10	30	nc
Abduction and kidnapping	0	5	nc	12	14	nc
Robbery with a firearm	0	0	nc	27	24	nc
Robbery with a weapon not a firearm	14	8	nc	169	179	Stable
Blackmail and extortion	0	1	nc	0	0	nc
Other offences against the person	3	14	nc	30	20	Stable
Stock theft	0	0	nc	1	3	nc
Arson	14	17	nc	129	129	Stable
Possession and/or use of cocaine	1	0	nc	2	4	nc
Possession and/or use of narcotics	6	0	nc	5	1	nc
Possession and/or use of amphetamines	13	8	nc	23	38	nc
Possession and/or use of ecstasy	2	23	nc	17	56	nc
Possession and/or use of other drugs	6	5	nc	9	25	nc
Dealing, trafficking in cocaine	0	0	nc	0	1	nc
Dealing, trafficking in narcotics	1	0	nc	7	2	nc
Dealing, trafficking in cannabis	15	3	nc	37	42	nc
Dealing, trafficking in amphetamines	8	2	nc	9	6	nc
Dealing, trafficking in ecstasy	0	1	nc	4	15	nc
Dealing, trafficking in other drugs	2	1	nc	6	3	nc
Cultivating cannabis	4	0	nc	32	27	nc
Manufacture drug	0	0	nc	0	0	nc
Importing drugs	0	0	nc	0	0	nc
Other drug offences	21	12	nc	57	52	Stable
Criminal intent	16	27	nc	260	267	Stable
Betting and gaming offences	1	0	nc	2	3	nc
Pornography offences	0	7	nc	3	15	nc
Prostitution offences	1	0	nc	0	0	nc
Escape custody	2	0	nc	44	27	-5.3
Fail to appear	0	0	nc	0	1	nc
Other offences against justice procedures	6	1	nc	13	4	nc

* This table shows the results of a statistical test for significant upward or downward trends in the number of POIs over a 10 year period. The trend test used is Kendall's rank-order correlation test. Where the trend is significant (i.e p<0.05) the average annual percentage change is shown. Significant upward trends are highlighted in red; significant downward trends are highlighted in yellow. A non-significant test result is denoted by 'Stable' and 'nc' indicates that the number of POIs recorded was too small for a reliable trend test to be performed.

** Includes immigration/customs offences, dog offences, family law offences, public mischief, terrorism offences, carrying cutting weapons/offensive implements, obstruction as well as other miscellaneous offences.

Table 5. Number, 3 year trend* and average annual percentage change for juvenile female and male POIs, NSW, July 2010 to June 2013

Offence	Juvenile Female POIs				Juvenile Male POIs			
	July 2010 - June 2011	July 2011 - June 2012	July 2012 - June 2013	Trend* & av. annual % change	July 2010 - June 2011	July 2011 - June 2012	July 2012 - June 2013	Trend* & av. annual % change
Liquor offences	415	261	177	-34.7	808	506	413	-28.5
Steal from motor vehicle	56	40	24	-34.5	645	534	585	Stable
Other offences**	141	83	77	-26.1	737	565	550	-13.6
Offensive language/conduct	251	191	143	-24.5	629	476	400	-20.3
Resist or hinder officer	192	158	120	-20.9	593	463	460	-11.9
Break and enter dwelling	177	108	111	-20.8	1391	1136	942	-17.7
Shoplifting	1844	1590	1198	-19.4	1744	1474	1331	-12.6
Other theft	175	160	115	-18.9	596	493	491	Stable
Non-domestic assault	1138	1072	771	-17.7	1999	1740	1409	-16.0
Breach bail conditions	791	641	554	-16.3	2881	2460	2047	-15.7
Malicious damage to property	679	597	542	-10.7	3298	2898	2843	-7.2
Domestic assault	510	447	457	Stable	878	839	938	Stable
Assault Police	141	112	111	Stable	179	149	187	Stable
Robbery without a weapon	92	120	96	Stable	524	402	346	-18.7
Harassment, threatening behaviour and private nuisance	290	297	255	Stable	898	896	873	Stable
Break and enter non-dwelling	66	85	61	Stable	909	1004	727	Stable
Receiving or handling stolen goods	166	151	122	Stable	676	616	548	-10.0
Motor vehicle theft	95	89	83	Stable	686	692	471	-17.1
Steal from dwelling	51	41	36	Stable	291	223	216	Stable
Steal from person	35	41	27	Stable	129	116	131	Stable
Fraud	121	110	80	Stable	209	168	215	Stable
Possession and/or use of cannabis	175	184	196	Stable	1139	1074	1147	Stable
Prohibited and regulated weapons offences	42	30	26	Stable	422	339	289	-17.2
Trespass	229	181	179	Stable	1125	1072	952	-8.0
Criminal intent	40	32	27	Stable	253	265	267	Stable
Breach Apprehended Violence Order	199	172	209	Stable	431	509	466	Stable
Murder	1	0	3	nc	10	0	3	nc
Attempted murder	1	0	0	nc	1	1	1	nc
Murder accessory, conspiracy	0	0	0	nc	0	0	0	nc
Manslaughter	0	0	0	nc	0	1	1	nc
Driving causing death	0	0	0	nc	0	0	0	nc
Sexual assault	3	4	1	nc	67	114	76	Stable
Indecent assault, act of indecency	3	3	0	nc	59	80	79	Stable
Other sexual offences	2	1	2	nc	23	28	30	Stable
Abduction and kidnapping	6	1	5	nc	10	9	14	nc
Robbery with a firearm	5	2	0	nc	43	23	24	Stable
Robbery with a weapon not a firearm	30	16	8	nc	282	221	179	-20.3
Blackmail and extortion	2	0	1	nc	2	0	0	nc
Other offences against the person	7	9	14	nc	31	30	20	Stable
Stock theft	1	0	0	nc	3	1	3	nc
Arson	17	16	17	nc	98	95	129	Stable
Possession and/or use of cocaine	0	0	0	nc	3	1	4	nc
Possession and/or use of narcotics	0	0	0	nc	2	3	1	nc
Possession and/or use of amphetamines	3	10	8	nc	28	44	38	Stable
Possession and/or use of ecstasy	3	10	23	nc	25	20	56	49.7
Possession and/or use of other drugs	9	6	5	nc	15	21	25	nc
Dealing, trafficking in cocaine	0	0	0	nc	0	1	1	nc
Dealing, trafficking in narcotics	0	0	0	nc	0	1	2	nc
Dealing, trafficking in cannabis	5	4	3	nc	62	38	42	Stable
Dealing, trafficking in amphetamines	0	2	2	nc	6	17	6	nc
Dealing, trafficking in ecstasy	3	0	1	nc	11	8	15	nc
Dealing, trafficking in other drugs	0	2	1	nc	2	2	3	nc
Cultivating cannabis	5	4	0	nc	28	21	27	Stable
Manufacture drug	0	0	0	nc	1	2	0	nc
Importing drugs	0	0	0	nc	0	0	0	nc
Other drug offences	17	10	12	nc	60	69	52	Stable
Betting and gaming offences	1	0	0	nc	4	2	3	nc
Pornography offences	2	2	7	nc	9	11	15	nc
Prostitution offences	1	0	0	nc	0	0	0	nc
Escape custody	4	2	0	nc	30	36	27	Stable
Fail to appear	2	3	0	nc	4	8	1	nc
Other offences against justice procedures	2	3	1	nc	6	4	4	nc

* This table shows the results of a statistical test for significant upward or downward trends in the number of POIs over a 3 year period. The trend test used is Kendall's rank-order correlation test. Where the trend is significant (i.e p<0.05) the average annual percentage change is shown. Significant upward trends are highlighted in red; significant downward trends are highlighted in yellow. A non-significant test result is denoted by 'Stable' and 'nc' indicates that the number of POIs recorded was too small for a reliable trend test to be performed.

** Includes immigration/customs offences, dog offences, family law offences, public mischief, terrorism offences, carrying cutting weapons/offensive implements, obstruction as well as other miscellaneous offences.

h) Has the number of juvenile female POIs proceeded against by police for specific offences changed?

Yes. Table 4 shows the number of POIs and average annual percentage change over the 10 years ending June 2013 for juvenile female and male POIs for selected offences. Among the few offences that increased over this period, the increases among juvenile females were generally greater than for males.

Over the decade ending June 2013, the number of both juvenile female and male POIs increased significantly for harassment, threatening behaviour and private nuisance, domestic assault, breaching Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs) and bail conditions, trespass and possession/use of cannabis. With the exception of the cannabis offence, the increase in female POIs was higher than the corresponding increase for males. While the number of juvenile female POIs increased significantly for robbery without a weapon, malicious damage to property and non-domestic assault, the number of juvenile male POIs for these offences remained stable.

Another noteworthy result was for the justice procedure offences of breach bail conditions² and AVOs. While the number of juvenile female POIs for these offences across all 10 years were well below the corresponding number for their male counterparts, the rate for females increased much more quickly than the rate for males (females increased at a rate of 11.9% per year for breach of AVOs and 9.0% for breach of bail conditions compared to males increasing at 6.6% and 3.4% per year respectively).

Over the same 10 year period, the number of juvenile female and male POIs significantly declined for several property and liquor offences. The decline for female POIs was greater than the decline for males for fraud, stealing from dwellings and other offences, however the decline for female POIs was smaller than the decline for males for break and enter non-dwelling, motor vehicle theft and liquor offences.

As noted above however, it is important to remember that increases or decreases in POI numbers for many of these offences may be attributable to policing activities, changes in reporting and/or changes in actual offending rates.

In summary, for the offences examined, juvenile female POIs experienced more increasing trends and fewer decreasing trends than their male counterparts. Nine offences had significantly more juvenile female POIs in 2012/13 compared to 2003/04; for juvenile male POIs there were six offences which had increasing numbers. Conversely, six offences had significantly fewer juvenile female POIs in 2012/13 compared to 2003/04; however for juvenile male POIs, there were 13 offences which had declining numbers. Notwithstanding this, for all the offences where statistical trend tests could be carried out, there were more juvenile male POIs than juvenile female ones.

Interestingly, shoplifting, the offence most often committed in 2012/13 by juvenile females, recorded a stable trend from 2003/04 to 2012/13.

While there have been significant increases (and decreases) in the number of juvenile female POIs over the 10 years ending June 2013 for the offences examined in Table 4, more recent trends show a very different picture. Table 5 shows that over the most recent three years (to June 2013) there were no significant increases for juvenile female POIs for any of the offences examined. All of the trends were either significantly down, remained relatively the same or there were too few juvenile POIs to carry out statistical trend tests.

Summary and conclusion

This brief aimed to describe trends in female POIs proceeded against by police by characterising the nature of their offending and whether it changed between 2003/04 to 2012/13.

The key findings which relate to the research questions posed in the introduction are:

Adult female POIs

- The number of adult female POIs recorded by NSW Police increased steadily over the past decade by an average of 2.5 per cent per year.
- This increase is greater than the comparable figure for adult male POIs of 1.7 per cent per year.
- In 2012/13 females comprised 18.3 per cent of POIs compared with 17.3 per cent in 2003/04.
- The offences which adult females were most likely proceeded against by police were for shoplifting (16.3% of adult female POIs), domestic assault (9.2%) and non-domestic assault (6.4%).
- The biggest increases in adult female POIs occurred for particular drug offences (e.g possession of ecstasy up 21.4% per annum over the past 10 years and dealing in amphetamines up 13.4%), harassment, threatening behaviour and private nuisance (up 14.0%) and breach of bail conditions (up 8.5%).
- For these offences and many others, the increase in female POIs was greater than for males.

Juvenile female POIs

- Unlike adult female POIs, numbers of juvenile female POIs have not generally increased over the past decade. Instead they rose, stabilised, then fell so that by 2012/13 the number of juvenile female POIs were only slightly higher than in 2003/04.
- The same pattern is true of juvenile males, however juvenile male POIs in 2012/13 were actually lower than in 2003/04. Thus, males have shown a greater decrease in juvenile POIs than females.
- The proportion of juvenile POIs who were female increased relative to males (from 19.8% of juvenile POIs in 2003/04 to 22.7% in 2012/13) due to the larger falls in male POIs.

- The offences which juvenile females were most likely proceeded against by police were for shoplifting (20.3% of juvenile female POIs), non-domestic assault (13.0%) and breach of bail conditions (9.4%).
- Even though the overall number of juvenile female POIs did not increase over the past decade, for some offences the police did proceed against more juvenile female POIs. There were an increasing number of juvenile female POIs for harassment, threatening behaviour and private nuisance (up 16.0% per annum over the past 10 years), domestic assault (up 13.3%) and breach of AVOs (up 11.9%).
- Juvenile male participation in these particular offences also increased but not by as much.

Female POIs are still in the minority among POIs but their numbers are growing and at a rate greater than that of males. Of concern is that generally where POI numbers are increasing, females are increasing at a greater rate than for males. Where POI numbers are falling, such as we saw among juvenile POIs, they are falling more slowly among females than males. This pattern is also repeated in many cases at the offence level. For instance while the number of adult female domestic assault POIs increased by 7.6 per cent per annum over the past 10 years, the increase in adult male POIs was only 1.8 per cent per annum. This may be due to a real increase in adult female offending, an increase in the willingness of victims to report female perpetrators, an increase in the willingness of police to proceed against females or a combination of all these. Another noteworthy finding is that despite female POI numbers increasing significantly for domestic violence over the past decade, there were still five male adult POIs for every female adult POI in 2012/13.

It is important to recognise that while female POI numbers might be increasing, crime statistics are still dominated by male POIs. There is not one offence where the number of female POIs outnumber males, even for shoplifting which is the most common female offence.

The question of why female POI numbers are increasing is an interesting one. It is possible that, relative to men, females have increased their exposure to factors which are known to be associated with offending such as substance abuse and alcohol consumption. Perhaps police are responding to female offending differently to the way they have in the past. It should be remembered that in this paper we have used people who have criminal proceedings commenced against them by police to represent offenders. Perhaps ideas of which offences females typically commit and which offences males typically commit are less relevant in 2012/13 than they once were. Unfortunately these questions are beyond the scope of the current paper.

In considering these findings, two main limitations to this study should be noted. The first is that we are limited to offenders apprehended by police for offences which come to police attention. As many offenders are likely to go undetected, POI data provides an indication of offending only and so is an imperfect measure of actual offending. The second limitation is that for many offences it cannot be definitively concluded whether a recorded increase or decrease is attributable to increased or decreased offending or whether these changes are due to police targeting activities.

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Notes

1. Excluding POIs issued warnings because the recording of warnings changed in late 2008 and so there is no continuity in this series for this legal action. For information – in financial year 2012/2013, 523 juvenile females and 1,706 juvenile males were issued with Young Offenders Act 1997 warnings.
2. While ‘breach bail conditions’ is not a formal criminal offence, the NSW Police Force record them within their incident categories and as such, they are reported here.