



# NSW trends in the age-specific rates of offending, 1995 – 2018

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**Aims:** To describe the trends in age-specific rates of offending in NSW for break and enter, motor vehicle theft, robbery and serious non-domestic assault from 1995 to 2018.

**Method:** Age-specific offending rates are compared over time for NSW as a whole, Greater Sydney and regional NSW. Kendall's trend test was used to test for a significant upward or downward trend in the number of offenders proceeded against. These tests examined changes over the last five and 10 years of available data, and for NSW as a whole, the last 20 years.

**Results:** Over the past five and 10 years, the age-specific rates of break and enter offences, motor vehicle theft, robbery and serious non-domestic assault have either remained stable or trended downward for most age categories in NSW as a whole, Greater Sydney and regional NSW. The largest reductions were observed among offenders aged 15 to 20 years. In addition, the longer 20-year NSW trend for these four offences was either down or stable for almost all age categories. There are two key exceptions to this overall pattern. Firstly, break and enter offending increased over the last five years amongst those aged 35 years or more in Greater Sydney and NSW (on average, up by 5.0% and 3.0% each year, respectively). Secondly, the rate of motor vehicle theft increased in regional NSW (and, as a result, across NSW) over the last 10 years for those aged 25 to 29 years, 30 to 34 years and 35 years or more (on average, up by 6.8%, 3.9% and 3.8% each year, respectively).

**Summary:** In broad terms, the pattern of offending for break and enter, motor vehicle theft, robbery and serious non-domestic assault is one of stability or decline for most age categories. This applies to both the short- and the long-term trends, and to trends in both Greater Sydney and NSW regional areas. The largest declines have been observed for offenders aged between 15 and 20 years.

**Keywords:** long-term crime trends, age-specific rates of offending, break and enter offences, motor vehicle theft, serious non-domestic assault, robbery offences

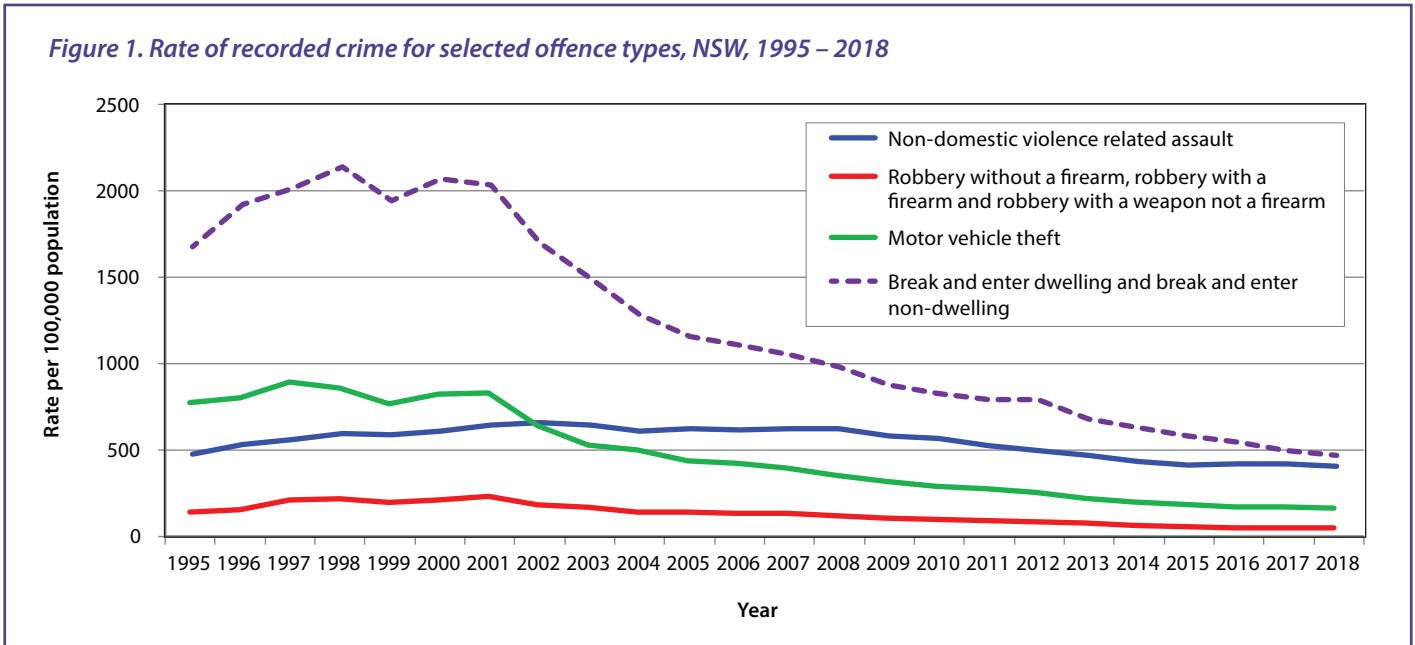
## Introduction

Since 2001, NSW has experienced significant falls across most major crime categories. Figure 1 shows that the decline in crime over the last 20 years has been particularly pronounced for property and robbery offences. Between 1998 and 2018, rates of break and enter fell by 79.4 per cent, from 2,271.8 to 467.7 incidents per 100,000 population; motor vehicle theft declined by 81.8 per cent, from 913.0 to 166.5 incidents per 100,000 population and robbery dropped by 85.1 per cent, from 213.6 to 31.8 incidents per 100,000 population. While similar trends were not initially evident for rates of assault, from 2008, non-domestic assaults declined by 39.2 per cent, from 666.4 to 405.4 incidents per 100,000 population and now appear to have stabilised at this lower level.

Previous work by Weatherburn, Freeman and Holmes (2014) examining age-specific rates of offending from 1994 to 2012 suggests that much of the decline in property crime since 2001 is due to a drop in the rate of offending by those aged 15 to 20 years. This age group accounts for a disproportionate amount of offenders proceeded against by police for property crime and therefore any change in their rate of offending will have a significant impact on overall crime levels.

Rates of violent offending by young people, on the other hand, showed different long-term trends. Weatherburn et al. report an initial steep rise in serious assault amongst those aged 15 to 20 years, beginning from around 2005 and then an equally dramatic fall amongst this age group between 2008 and 2012.

Figure 1. Rate of recorded crime for selected offence types, NSW, 1995 – 2018



The purpose of this Brief is to examine whether the downward trends in rates of property crime, robbery and serious assault observed amongst young people in NSW have continued beyond 2012. Building on the work by Weatherburn et al. (2014), this Brief also considers whether changes in age-specific rates of offending evident at the NSW level are equally apparent in both regional NSW and Greater Sydney areas.

## Method

The age-specific rate of offending was calculated by dividing the number of persons of interest (POIs) proceeded against by the NSW Police Force by the number of NSW residents within the same age category for a given year (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018) and then multiplying the result by 100,000. The data source for POIs proceeded against was the NSW Police Force’s Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS). A ‘person of interest’ is a suspected offender recorded by the NSW Police Force in connection with a criminal incident. The analyses in this Brief only include POIs who have been proceeded against. This includes those proceeded against to court via a Court Attendance Notice, and those proceeded against other than to court via a Youth Justice Conference or caution (Young Offenders Act 1997).<sup>1</sup>

It is important to note that, while ‘offenders’ and ‘offending’ are referred to in this Brief, not all POIs will plead or be found guilty. Further, the number of POIs used in this study is not a count of unique offenders. Rather, if an individual is proceeded against by police for multiple criminal incidents in a given year, he/she will be counted as a POI multiple times. In addition, multiple POIs could be proceeded against for an individual criminal incident. The data in this Brief are not disaggregated by the offender’s gender. Since males constitute the majority of offenders in the criminal justice system, changes to female offending patterns have little effect on overall crime trends.

This Brief analyses the same categories of serious offences as in the Weatherburn et al. (2014) publication, namely:

- ‘Break and enter’: break and enter – dwelling, and break and enter – non-dwelling.
- ‘Motor vehicle theft’.
- ‘Robbery offences’: robbery without a firearm, robbery with a firearm, and robbery with a weapon not a firearm.
- ‘Serious assault’: assault occasioning actual harm, and assault occasioning grievous bodily harm. This category excludes domestic violence related assault.

Age-specific offending rates are compared over time for NSW as a whole, Greater Sydney and regional NSW. These trends are summarised in Tables 1 (for NSW) and 2 (for Greater Sydney and regional NSW). For each of the four offence categories, a Kendall’s trend test was used to test for a significant upward or downward trend in the rate of POIs proceeded against. These tests examined changes over the last five and 10 years of available data and, for NSW as a whole, the last 20 years. The average annual percentage change over each period is then reported for any significant upward or downward trend. Changes over the 20-year period were only examined for the state as a whole because population statistics using the age categories examined in these analyses are not publicly available for either Greater Sydney or regional NSW prior to 2005. Table A1 also summarises the five-, 10- and 20-year trends in the age specific offending rate for NSW as a whole but reports the percentage change for any significant trends (i.e. the percentage change in the rate from 2014 to 2018, from 2009 to 2018 and from 1999 to 2018, respectively). Similarly, Table A2 summarises the five- and 10-year trends for Greater Sydney and regional NSW but reports the percentage change for any significant trends (i.e. the percentage change in the rate from 2014 to 2018 and from 2009 to 2018, respectively). These percentage changes are presented for all four offence categories.

## Results

### Age-specific rates of offending in NSW, 1995 – 2018

Figures 2 to 5 show the age-specific rates of break and enter (Figure 2), motor vehicle theft (Figure 3), robbery (Figure 4) and serious non-domestic assault (Figure 5) for NSW for the period from 1995 to 2018. See Appendix 2 for the number and rates (per 100,000 population) of persons proceeded against by age group for each year for NSW, Greater Sydney and regional NSW. Table 1 shows the five-, 10- and 20-year NSW trends in age-specific rates of offending for the four specified crime categories.

Figure 2 shows that rates of break and enter offending are highest among those aged 15 to 20 years and it is this age group who has experienced the largest declines in offending over the past 10 years. As Table 1 shows, the rate of break and enter offending for those aged 15 to 17 years fell by 8.4 per cent on average each year over the last 10 years and 5.6 per cent each year over the last 20 years. In 2018, break and enter offending by those aged 15 to 17 years was 54.7 per cent lower than in 2009 and 66.5 per cent lower than in 1999 (Table A1). Break and enter rates for those aged 18 to 20 years dropped by 6.6 per cent on average each year over the last 10 years and

Figure 2. Age-specific rates of break and enter for NSW, 1995 – 2018

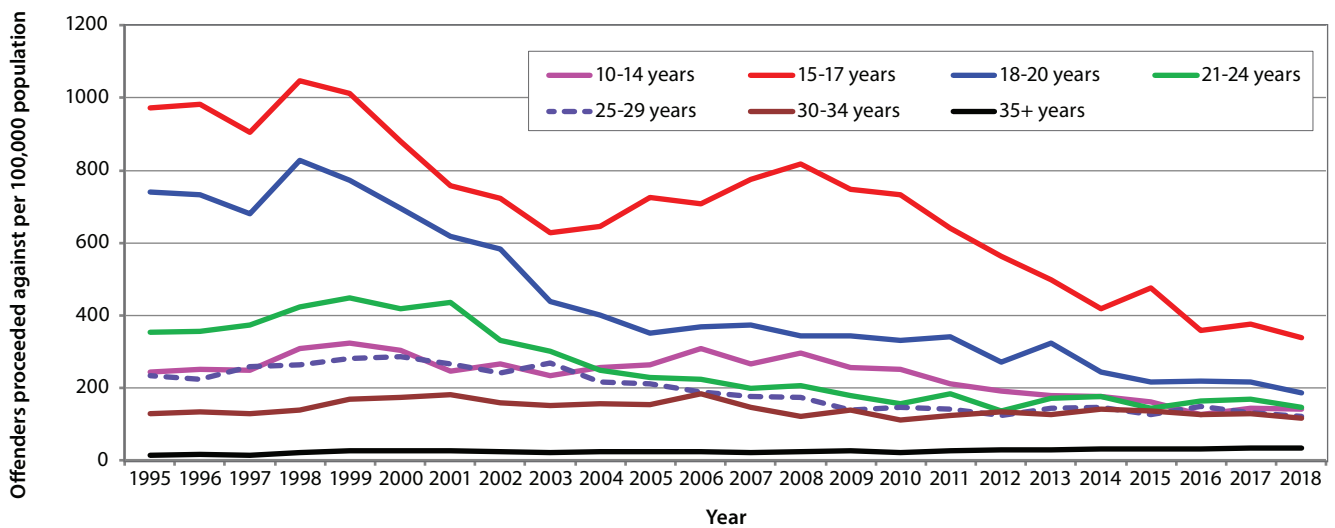


Table 1. Five-, 10- and 20-year trends in age-specific rates of persons of interest proceeded against in recorded criminal incidents in NSW as a whole, 1995 – 2018

	Age categories (years) of persons of interest proceeded against						
	10-14	15-17	18-20	21-24	25-29	30-34	35+
<b>Break and enter</b>							
5-year trend and average annual change	-5.3	-5.1	-6.6	Stable	Stable	Stable	3.0
10-year trend and average annual change	-6.3	-8.4	-6.6	Stable	Stable	Stable	2.8
20-year trend and average annual change	-4.3	-5.6	-7.2	-5.7	-4.3	-1.9	1.6
<b>Motor vehicle theft</b>							
5-year trend and average annual change	Stable	Stable	6.7	Stable	9.6	8.3	Stable
10-year trend and average annual change	-7.7	-6.3	-0.9	Stable	2.6	1.2	2.4
20-year trend and average annual change	-5.4	-6.4	-6.6	-5.8	-4.5	-3.7	-0.6
<b>Robbery offences</b>							
5-year trend and average annual change	Stable	Stable	-14.4	Stable	Stable	-14.2	Stable
10-year trend and average annual change	-5.3	-5.4	-9.3	-5.5	-3.6	Stable	Stable
20-year trend and average annual change	-2.5	-2.9	-7.3	-6.4	-3.7	-2.1	Stable
<b>Serious non-domestic assault</b>							
5-year trend and average annual change	Stable	Stable	-7.0	-4.7	Stable	Stable	Stable
10-year trend and average annual change	-4.9	-7.0	-9.4	-5.1	-4.3	-2.6	-2.3
20-year trend and average annual change	Stable	-1.2	-3.5	-2.3	-2.3	-1.8	Stable

Stable means there was no significant upward or downward trend

Significant upward trend (highlighted in RED)

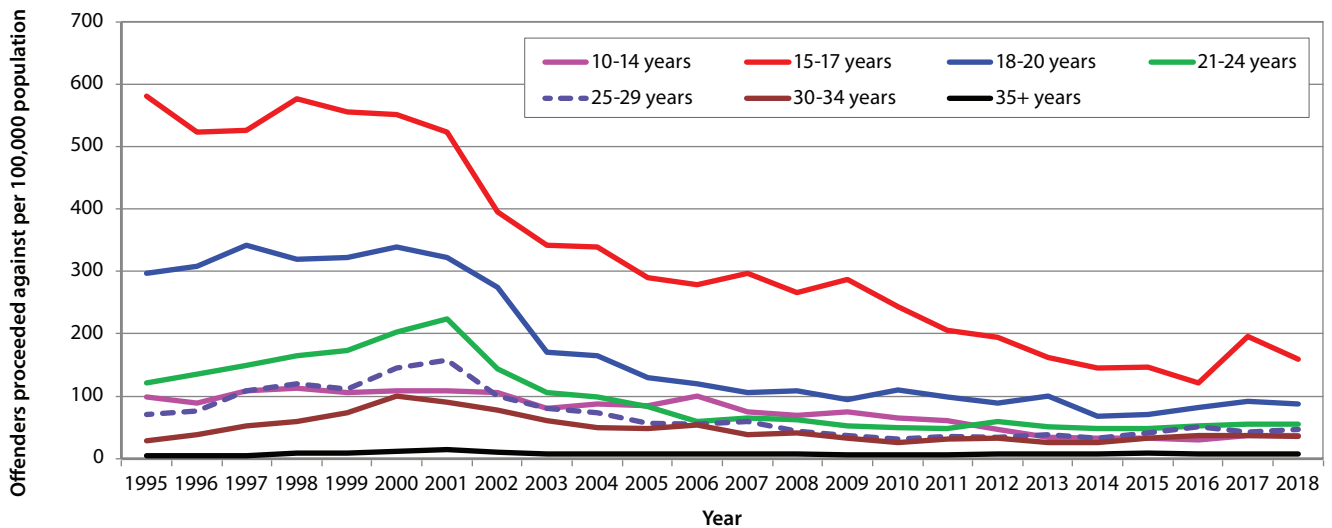
Significant downward trend (highlighted in YELLOW)

7.2 per cent on average each year over the last 20 years. The rate of break and enter offending by those aged 18 to 20 years in 2018 was 45.8 per cent lower than in 2009 and 75.9 per cent lower than in 1999 (Table A1). These downward trends have been maintained over the most recent five-year period (up until December 2018), with rates of break and enter dropping by 5.1 per cent on average each year for those aged 15 to 17 years and 6.6 per cent on average each year for those aged 18 to 20 years. In fact, break and enter rates for most age categories have either trended down or remained stable over the three time periods examined. Offenders aged 35 years or more are the exception to this general pattern. For this age group, rates of break and enter offending have significantly increased, however, rates are still low at 35.5 per 100,000 population in 2018.

Age-specific rates of motor vehicle theft have also declined for most age categories over the past 20 years. As Figure 3 shows,

the greatest declines are again observed amongst those aged 15 to 17 years, the age group accounting for the highest proportion of persons proceeded against for this offence. Table 1 shows that the age-specific rates of motor vehicle theft for 15 to 17 year olds have declined by 6.3 and 6.4 per cent on average each year over the last 10 and 20 years, respectively, and have remained stable over the last five years. In 2018, the rate of motor vehicle theft by those aged 15 to 17 years was 44.4 per cent lower than in 2009 and 71.3 per cent lower than in 1999 (Table A1). However, while the longer term trend for those aged 18 to 20 years is also down (decreasing by 6.6% on average each year over the past 20 years), the most recent five-year period saw a significant upward trend for this age group (increasing by 6.7% on average each year). Motor vehicle theft rates for older age groups have also increased over the past five years. Since 2013, motor vehicle theft rates for 25 to 29 year old offenders have increased by 9.6 per cent on average each year and rates

**Figure 3. Age-specific rates of motor vehicle theft for NSW, 1995 – 2018**



**Figure 4. Age-specific rates of robbery for NSW, 1995 – 2018**

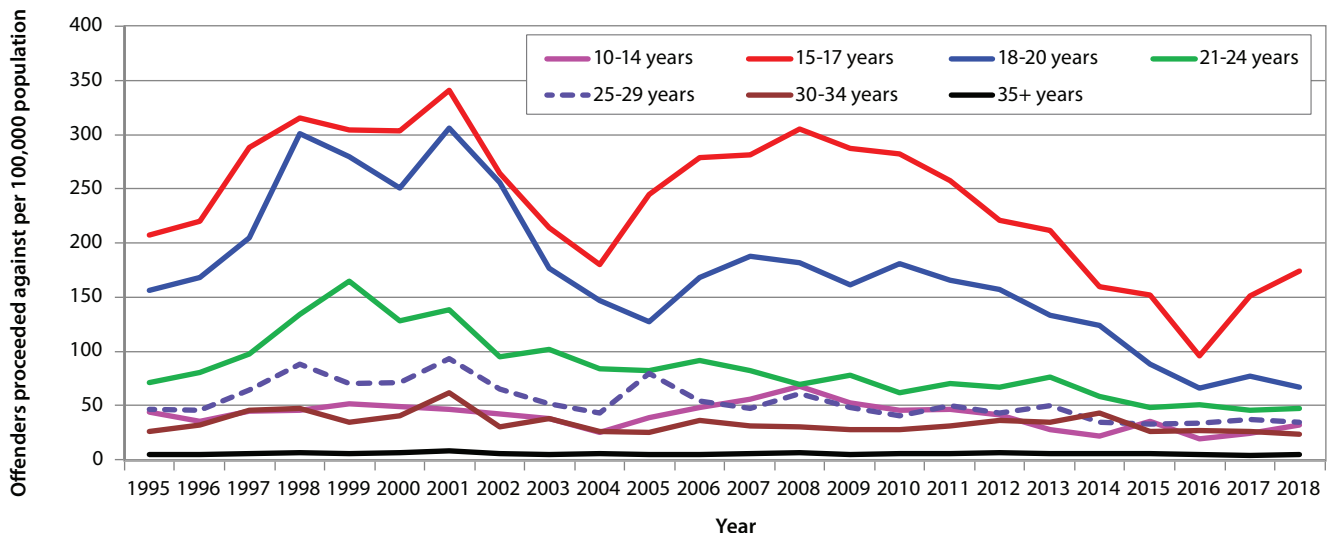
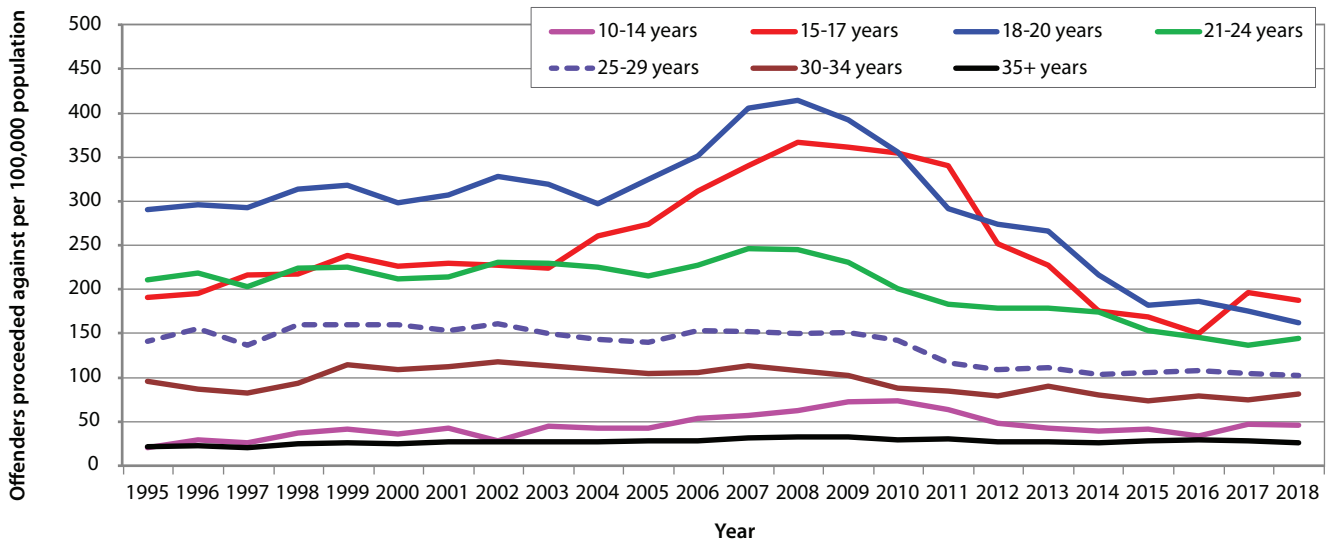


Figure 5. Age-specific rates of serious non-domestic assault for NSW, 1995 – 2018



for 30 to 34 year olds have increased by 8.3 per cent on average each year. However, from 2014 onwards, rates for all age groups, with the exception of 15 to 17 year olds, have been less than 100.0 per 100,000 population.

Figure 4 shows that those aged between 15 and 20 years also have the highest rates of robbery offending. There was a peak in 2001 when 340.6 offenders per 100,000 population aged 15 to 17 years and 306.2 offenders per 100,000 population aged 18 to 20 years were proceeded against. However, over the longer term, the NSW age-specific rates for robbery have either trended down or remained stable for all age categories. In fact, as Table 1 shows, over both the short- and long-term, the largest decreases occurred for those aged 18 to 20 years. Among this age group, the rate decreased by 7.3 per cent on average each year over the last 20 years and 14.4 per cent on average each year over the last five years. Thus, for those aged 18 to 20 years, robbery offending in 2018 was 76.2 per cent lower than in 1999 and 46.4 per cent lower than in 2014 (Table A1). For those aged 15 to 17 years, rates of robbery trended down over the last 10 and 20 years (decreasing by 5.4% and 2.9% on average each year, respectively) but have stabilised in the last five years. The other large decrease in the rate of robbery occurred amongst those aged 30 to 34 years, with the rate falling by 14.2 per cent on average each year in the last five years.

Figure 5 shows a stable pattern for serious non-domestic assault offending for all age groups in the decade after 1995. However, from 2005 onwards, the rate of serious assault for 15 to 20 year olds increased, peaking in 2008, with a rate of 366.8 per 100,000 population for offenders aged 15 to 17 years and 414.1 for offenders aged 18 to 20 years. Table 1 shows that, over the last 10 years, the largest declines in serious assault offending have occurred amongst these two age categories. Rates have fallen by 7.0 per cent on average each year for those aged 15 to 17 years and 9.4 per cent on average each year for those aged 18 to 20 years. Comparing rates in 2018 with rates in 2009, serious

non-domestic assault offending was 48.1 per cent lower for those 15 to 17 years and 58.8 per cent lower for those 18 to 20 years (Table A1). In the five years to December 2018, rates of serious non-domestic assault have continued to decline for 18 to 20 year olds (decreasing by 7.0% on average each year) but have stabilised for 15 to 17 year olds. For all other age categories, the NSW age-specific rates of serious non-domestic assault have either trended down or remained stable over the three time periods examined here.

### Regional trends

Table 2 shows the five- and 10-year trends in age-specific rates of break and enter offending, motor vehicle theft, robbery and serious non-domestic assault for Greater Sydney and regional NSW. Table A2 shows, for each of the four offences and each age category of POIs proceeded against, the five- and 10-year percentage changes, that is, the percentage change from 2014 to 2018 and from 2009 to 2018, respectively.

In broad terms, the pattern of offending in both Greater Sydney and regional NSW is one of stability or decline for most age categories over both the short- and the long-term. Reflecting the state-wide trends, the largest declines in age-specific rates of offending over time occurred among those aged between 15 and 20 years. For example, as Table 2 shows, in Greater Sydney the rate of break and enter offending for those aged 15 to 17 years fell by 7.9 per cent on average each year over the last five years, and for offenders aged 18 to 20 years, the rate fell by 10.7 per cent on average each year over the same period. In both regional NSW and Greater Sydney, over the last 10 years, the rate of serious non-domestic assault fell for those aged 15 to 17 years (by 8.2% and 6.5% on average each year in regional NSW and Greater Sydney, respectively) and for those aged 18 to 20 years (by 9.1% and 9.0% on average each year in regional NSW and Greater Sydney, respectively). The decrease in robbery rates was even greater, particularly for the 18 to 20 years age group. For example, over the last five years, the rate of robbery

**Table 2. Five- and 10-year trends in age-specific rates of persons of interest proceeded against in recorded criminal incidents in Greater Sydney and regional NSW, 2005 – 2018**

	Age categories (years) of persons of interest proceeded against						
	10-14	15-17	18-20	21-24	25-29	30-34	35+
<b>Break and enter</b>							
<i>Greater Sydney</i>							
5-year trend and average annual change	Stable	-7.9	-10.7	Stable	Stable	Stable	5.0
10-year trend and average annual change	-7.7	-11.6	-7.2	Stable	-3.4	Stable	3.1
<i>Regional NSW</i>							
5-year trend and average annual change	-5.5	-3.4	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable
10-year trend and average annual change	-4.7	-6.2	-5.8	Stable	Stable	Stable	3.6
<b>Motor vehicle theft</b>							
<i>Greater Sydney</i>							
5-year trend and average annual change	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable
10-year trend and average annual change	-7.1	-6.5	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable
<i>Regional NSW</i>							
5-year trend and average annual change	0.1	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable
10-year trend and average annual change	-6.8	-5.9	Stable	Stable	6.8	3.9	3.8
<b>Robbery offences</b>							
<i>Greater Sydney</i>							
5-year trend and average annual change	Stable	Stable	-16.4	Stable	Stable	-14.7	Stable
10-year trend and average annual change	-5.7	-5.8	-10.0	-7.5	-6.9	-2.8	Stable
<i>Regional NSW</i>							
5-year trend and average annual change	Stable	Stable	-9.8	Stable	Stable	-12.0	Stable
10-year trend and average annual change	Stable	-4.8	-7.8	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable
<b>Serious non-domestic assault</b>							
<i>Greater Sydney</i>							
5-year trend and average annual change	Stable	Stable	-3.9	-5.7	Stable	Stable	Stable
10-year trend and average annual change	-6.2	-6.5	-9.0	-4.9	-3.4	-1.9	Stable
<i>Regional NSW</i>							
5-year trend and average annual change	Stable	Stable	-7.9	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable
10-year trend and average annual change	-3.7	-8.2	-9.1	-5.1	-5.4	-2.9	-3.0

Stable means there was no significant upward or downward trend

Significant upward trend (highlighted in **RED**)

Significant downward trend (highlighted in **YELLOW**)

for 18 to 20 year olds has fallen by 9.8 per cent on average each year in regional NSW and 16.4 per cent on average each year in Greater Sydney. In fact, as Table A2 shows, in 2018, robbery offending by those aged 18 to 20 years was 51.9 per cent lower than in 2009 in regional NSW and 61.4 per cent lower in Greater Sydney. As Table 2 shows, for 15 to 17 year olds, the age-specific rate of robbery has remained stable over the last five years but fell over the longer term in both regional NSW (by 4.8% on average each year) and in Greater Sydney (by 5.8% on average each year). Declines in robbery rates were also observed over the last five years amongst 30 to 34 year olds in both regional NSW (by 12.0% on average each year) and Greater Sydney (by 14.7% on average each year). The only exception to this overall pattern of stability or decline is the rate of break and enter offending by those aged 35 years or more. Amongst this older age group, there has been a significant upward trend over the last 10 years in both regional NSW (up by 3.6% on average each

year) and in Greater Sydney (up by 3.1% on average each year); however, reflecting the state-wide figures, the rates are still low, at 34.3 and 33.1 per 100,000 population, respectively, in 2018.

For motor vehicle theft, the pattern in Greater Sydney is the same as that for regional NSW in the short-term, with age-specific rates either declining or remaining stable for all age categories over the last five years. Although this pattern continued in Greater Sydney over the longer period, in regional NSW, there were significant upward trends for several age categories, with the largest increases occurring among those aged 25 to 29 years (up by 6.8% on average each year), 30 to 34 years (up by 3.9% on average each year) and 35 years or more (up by 3.8% on average each year). As Table A2 shows, in 2018 in regional NSW, motor vehicle theft by those aged 25 years or more was considerably higher than in 2009 (80.2% higher for 25 to 29 year olds; 40.8% higher for 30 to 34 year olds; and 40.2% higher for those aged 35 years or more).

## Age-specific rates of offending, 2012 and 2018

The relationship between age and offending is well-established. For most crime types, offending has been shown to peak in adolescence and gradually decline in early adulthood (see, for example, Allard et al., 2010; Moffitt, 1993; Weatherburn et al., 2014). However, given the significant decline in age-specific rates of offending for young people aged 15 to 20 years over the last five years, it is worth re-examining the age-crime curve.

Figures 6 to 9 compare the age-specific rates of offenders proceeded against in 2012 and 2018 for break and enter offences (Figure 6), motor vehicle theft (Figure 7), robbery (Figure 8) and serious non-domestic assault (Figure 9). Consistent with the previous section dealing with trends over time in the age-specific rates of offending, the data in Figures 6 to 9 are also presented as a rate per 100,000 population.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 6 shows that, in both 2012 and 2018, the likelihood of break and enter offending increased rapidly in the adolescent years, after which the rate gradually declined. Although the overall patterns were similar in both years, there are two notable differences. Firstly, in 2018, the peak was substantially lower than in 2012 (388.8 versus 604.9 offenders per 100,000 population). Secondly, while there was a distinct peak in 2018 (at 16 years of age), the peak was less pronounced in 2012, with similar rates of offenders for those aged 15 and 16 years.

Unlike the patterns for break and enter offending, the age-specific rates of offenders proceeded against for motor vehicle theft in 2018 were almost identical to that for 2012 (see Figure 7). For example, in both years, 16 year olds had the highest rate of motor vehicle theft with 205.5 and 240.6 offenders proceeded against per 100,000 population, respectively.

**Figure 6. Age-specific rates of offenders proceeded against for break and enter offences in NSW in 2012 and 2018**



**Figure 7. Age-specific rates of offenders proceeded against for motor vehicle theft in NSW in 2012 and 2018**

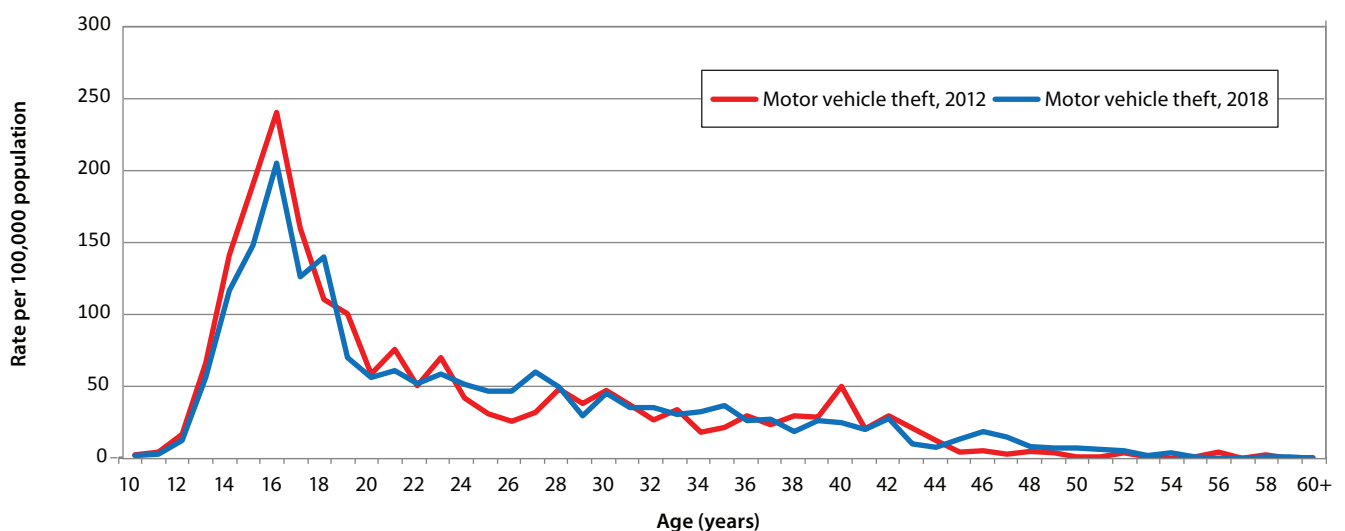


Figure 8. Age-specific rates of offenders proceeded against for robbery in NSW in 2012 and 2018

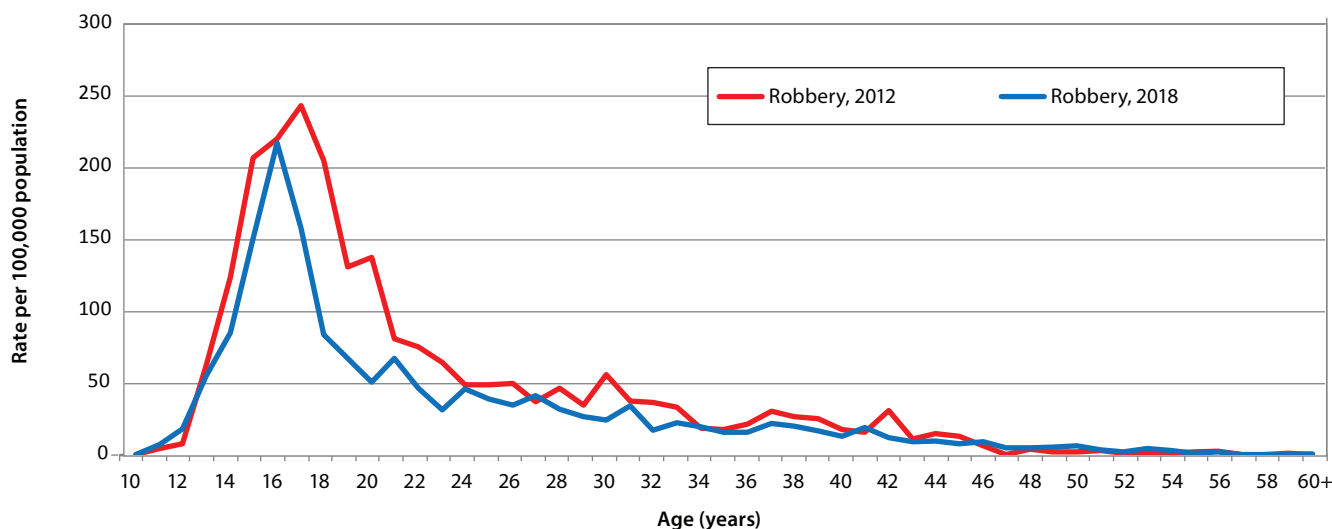


Figure 9. Age-specific rates of offenders proceeded against for serious non-domestic assault in NSW in 2012 and 2018

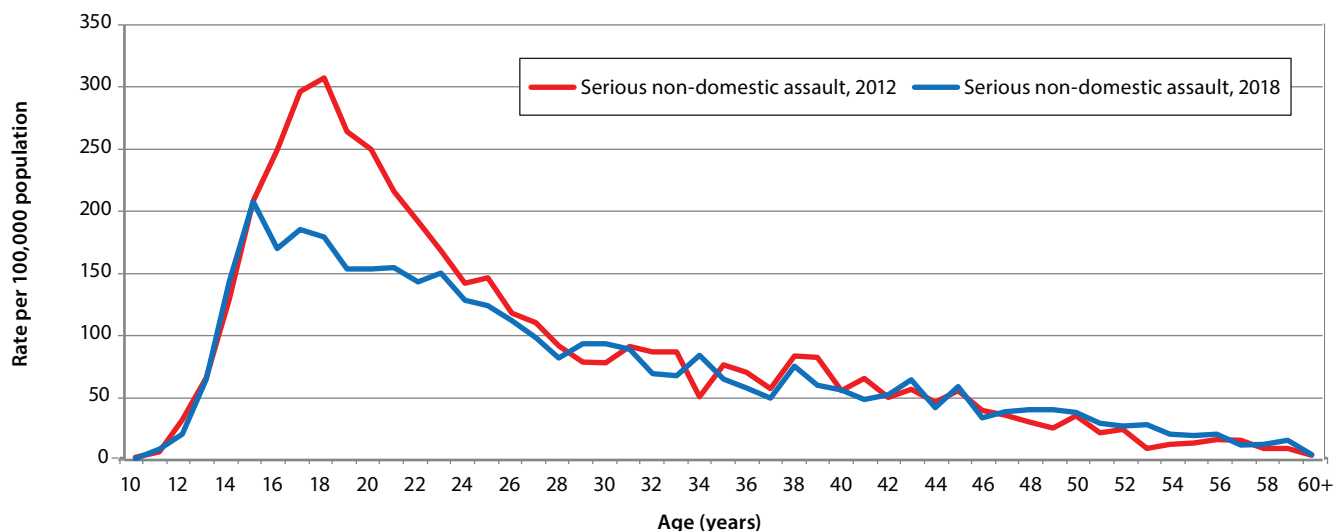


Figure 7 also shows that, in both 2018 and 2012, the rates fell dramatically from these peaks to 56.2 and 58.6 offenders proceeded against per 100,000 for 20 year olds and then continued to fall, although more gradually.

Consistent with the property offences examined above, age-specific rates of robbery also increase sharply from early to mid-adolescence and then fall in early adulthood (see Figure 8). Similar to motor vehicle theft, there is very little difference between 2012 and 2018 in terms of the rate of robbery offending by age. One slight difference between the two years is that 16 year olds had the highest rate of robbery in 2018, with 216.6 offenders being proceeded against per 100,000 population, but in 2012, the highest rate was for 17 year olds, with 242.6 offenders being proceeded against per 100,000 population. Further, the rate of robbery offending declined more rapidly in 2018 compared with 2012.

There are several noteworthy differences between 2012 and 2018 in the age-specific rates for serious non-domestic assault (Figure 9). Firstly, in 2012, the highest rate of serious assault is for those aged 18 years. By contrast, in 2018, the highest rate of serious assault is for those aged 15 years. The peak is noticeably higher in 2012 than in 2018 (307.3 versus 207.7 offenders proceeded against for serious assault per 100,000 population, respectively). Further, in 2018, rates declined more gradually from ages 15 to 23 years, compared with 2012.

## Summary

Over the past five to 10 years, the age-specific rates of break and enter offences, motor vehicle theft, serious non-domestic assault and robbery offences have either trended downward or remained stable for most age categories of offenders in NSW as a whole, in Greater Sydney and in regional NSW. The longer



term 20-year trend for these four major offence categories is also down for NSW as a whole. The largest reductions were observed among those aged between 15 and 20 years. There are two main exceptions to this overall pattern of stability or decline. Firstly, break and enter offending by those aged 35 years or more increased in both Greater Sydney (up by 5% on average each year over the last five years and 3.1% on average each year over the last 10 years) and in regional NSW (up by 3.6% on average each year over the last 10 years); and secondly, the rate of motor vehicle theft increased in regional NSW only, particularly in the last 10 years, among those aged 25 to 29 years (up by 6.8% on average each year), 30 to 34 years (up by 3.9% on average each year) and 35 years or more (up by 3.8% on average each year). Given the number of recorded incidents for both these crime types has fallen significantly across NSW over the past decade, this increase in persons proceeded against for motor vehicle theft and break and enter may reflect improvements in policing rather than changes in actual rates of offending. While the clear-up rate for property crime remains relatively low, between 2007 and 2016, it increased by 3.7 percentage points for motor vehicle theft and by 4.2 percentage points for break and enter (non-dwelling) (Holmes & Fitzgerald, 2017).

This analysis builds on previous work by showing that property offending committed by young people has, for the most part, continued to decline in recent years and, further, that this decline is uniform across NSW. In the earlier Brief on this topic, Weatherburn et al. (2014) identified the 2001 heroin shortage, which led to higher prices and lower purity, as an explanation for the initial drop in property crime committed by young people. However, they argue that the longer downward trend observed amongst 15 to 20 year olds suggests that additional factors may also be important, factors such as the growth in average weekly earnings, the risk of arrest, the likelihood of imprisonment resulting from a conviction, increased security and more effective police strategies.

For serious non-domestic assault, there have been significant declines over the last 10 years, particularly amongst 15 to 20 year olds and, over the last five years, for 18 to 20 year olds. This drop in the rate of violence amongst young people is again observed across both Greater Sydney and NSW regional areas. These findings may reflect changing patterns of alcohol consumption amongst teenagers and young adults. Weatherburn et al. (2014) noted that the downward trend in assault from 2008 to 2012 was consistent with hospital admission data over the same period showing a fall in 18 to 24 year olds being hospitalised for acute alcohol conditions. Recent survey data also reveal significant declines in alcohol use amongst adolescents<sup>3</sup> (e.g. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017; Livingston et al., 2018), increases in the average age of first trying alcohol<sup>4</sup> (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017) and reductions in parental supply of alcohol to their adolescent children<sup>5</sup> (e.g. Kelly et al., 2016).

Other evidence suggests that stricter liquor licensing conditions may be contributing to both the state-wide decline in violence observed amongst 18 to 20 year olds over the last five to 10 years (see for example, Menendez, Tusell & Weatherburn, 2015) and the recent decline in assaults committed by 21 to 24 year olds in Greater Sydney (see for example, Donnelly & Poynton, 2019).

## Notes

1. POIs can also be proceeded against via a cannabis caution, other drug caution, criminal infringement notice or infringement notice, or issued a warning. The latter were not included in the analyses as there is no continuity in this legal action because the recording of warnings changed in late 2008.
2. These figures differ to those in Weatherburn et al. (2014) which show the age distribution of POIs proceeded against for property and violent offences.
3. The proportion of young people aged 14 to 19 years who consumed five or more drinks at least monthly declined significantly between 2013 and 2016 (25% versus 18%, respectively) (Australian Institute for Health and Welfare, 2017, p. 11). Between 2007 and 2013, three Australian surveys (National Drug Strategy Household Survey; National Health Survey; and Household Income and Labour Dynamics of Australia Study, HILDA) found decreases in alcohol consumption of 45 per cent, 56 per cent and 71 per cent, respectively, for young people aged 15 to 17 years (Livingston et al., 2018, Table 2).
4. The average age at which young people aged between 14 and 24 years first tried alcohol has risen steadily from 14.4 years in 1998 to 16.1 years in 2016 (Australian Institute for Health and Welfare, 2017, p. 43).
5. Based on nationally representative Australian surveys (National Drug Strategy Household Surveys) conducted from 1998 to 2013, there has been a significant decrease in the parental supply of alcohol to adolescents aged 14 to 17 years. In the 1998 survey, 14.9 per cent of the total sample of these adolescents self-reported that their parents were their dominant source of alcohol, this proportion increased to 22.4 per cent in the 2007 survey before decreasing to 11.8 per cent in the 2013 survey. Friends' supply of alcohol also decreased from 27.9 per cent in 1998 to 20.2 per cent in 2013 (Kelly et al., 2016, p.4).

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## Appendix

### Percentage change in age-specific rates of persons of interest proceeded against in recorded criminal incidents

**Table A1. Five-, ten- and 20-year<sup>1</sup> percentage changes in age-specific rates of persons of interest proceeded against in recorded criminal incidents in NSW as a whole, 1995 – 2018**

	Age categories (years) of persons of interest proceeded against						
	10-14	15-17	18-20	21-24	25-29	30-34	35+
<b>Break and enter</b>							
5-year percentage change	-19.7%	-19.0%	-23.8%	Stable	Stable	Stable	12.6%
10-year percentage change	-44.5%	-54.7%	-45.8%	Stable	Stable	Stable	28.2%
20-year percentage change	-56.2%	-66.5%	-75.9%	-67.4%	-56.6%	-30.5%	34.1%
<b>Motor vehicle theft</b>							
5-year percentage change	Stable	Stable	29.6%	Stable	44.3%	37.4%	Stable
10-year percentage change	-51.4%	-44.4%	-7.6%	Stable	26.3%	11.6%	23.7%
20-year percentage change	-65.5%	-71.3%	-72.7%	-67.8%	-58.0%	-51.0%	-10.5%
<b>Robbery</b>							
5-year percentage change	Stable	Stable	-46.4%	Stable	Stable	-45.9%	Stable
10-year percentage change	-38.9%	-39.2%	-58.7%	-40.0%	-28.0%	Stable	Stable
20-year percentage change	-38.2%	-42.6%	-76.2%	-71.5%	-51.2%	-32.6%	Stable
<b>Serious non-domestic assault</b>							
5-year percentage change	Stable	Stable	-25.1%	-17.5%	Stable	Stable	Stable
10-year percentage change	-36.4%	-48.1%	-58.8%	-37.5%	-32.6%	-21.0%	-19.1%
20-year percentage change	Stable	-21.2%	-49.1%	-36.1%	-36.3%	-29.0%	Stable

<sup>1</sup> Five-year percentage change is from 2014 to 2018; 10-year percentage change is from 2009 to 2018; 20-year percentage change is from 1999 to 2018.

Stable means there was no significant upward or downward trend

Significant upward trend (highlighted in **RED**)

Significant downward trend (highlighted in **YELLOW**)

**Table A2. Five- and ten- year <sup>1</sup> percentage changes in age-specific rates of persons of interest proceeded against in recorded criminal incidents in Greater Sydney and regional NSW, 2005 – 2018 <sup>2</sup>.**

	Age categories (years) of persons of interest proceeded against						
	10-14	15-17	18-20	21-24	25-29	30-34	35+
<b>Break and enter</b>							
<i>Greater Sydney</i>							
5-year percentage change	Stable	-28.1%	-36.5%	Stable	Stable	Stable	21.4%
10-year percentage change	-51.2%	-67.2%	-49.0%	Stable	-26.7%	Stable	32.0%
<i>Regional NSW</i>							
5-year percentage change	-20.3%	-12.8%	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable
10-year percentage change	-35.4%	-43.7%	-41.5%	Stable	Stable	Stable	36.9%
<b>Motor vehicle theft</b>							
<i>Greater Sydney</i>							
5-year percentage change	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable
10-year percentage change	-48.3%	-45.5%	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable
<i>Regional NSW</i>							
5-year percentage change	Stable	Stable	54.4%	Stable	77.7%	65.2%	Stable
10-year percentage change	-46.8%	-41.9%	Stable	Stable	80.2%	40.8%	40.2%
<b>Robbery</b>							
<i>Greater Sydney</i>							
5-year percentage change	Stable	Stable	-51.2%	Stable	Stable	-47.1%	Stable
10-year percentage change	-41.2%	-41.3%	-61.4%	-50.5%	-47.3%	-22.9%	Stable
<i>Regional NSW</i>							
5-year percentage change	Stable	Stable	-33.7%	Stable	Stable	-40.1%	Stable
10-year percentage change	Stable	-35.8%	-51.9%	1.0%	77.4%	20.3%	Stable
<b>Serious non-domestic assault</b>							
<i>Greater Sydney</i>							
5-year percentage change	Stable	Stable	-14.8%	-21.1%	Stable	Stable	Stable
10-year percentage change	-43.9%	-45.3%	-57.2%	-36.5%	-27.0%	-15.5%	Stable
<i>Regional NSW</i>							
5-year percentage change	Stable	Stable	-28.2%	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable
10-year percentage change	-28.5%	-53.8%	-57.5%	-37.4%	-39.2%	-23.1%	-24.3%

<sup>1</sup> Five-year percentage change is from 2014 to 2018; 10-year percentage change is from 2009 to 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Population statistics using the age categories examined in these analyses are not publicly available for either Greater Sydney or regional NSW prior to 2005.

Stable means there was no significant upward or downward trend

Significant upward trend (highlighted in **RED**)

Significant downward trend (highlighted in **YELLOW**)