



## Sentencing Spotlight technical information

The *Sentencing Spotlight* series is produced by the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council, and summarises the sentencing outcomes of defendants finalised in the Queensland Courts for selected offences. The summary includes an analysis of the demographic characteristics of offenders and the sentencing outcomes.

### Data sources

This series uses data from the administrative information collected by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) and provided to the Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury as part of the Courts database. Additional information is also sourced about cases from the sentencing remarks obtained from the Queensland Sentencing Information Service (QSiS).

### Limitations and counting rules

The data presented is a simplified representation of Queensland's complex criminal justice system and subject to a range of limitations. Caution should therefore be used when interpreting the data, particularly due to the following:

- Data is derived from an administrative system that is designed for operational, rather than research purposes. The accuracy of information presented in this paper reflects how administrative information is structured, entered, maintained and extracted from the administrative system.
- The GovStats courts database is continually updated as more information is entered into the DJAG administrative database. Data presented in each *Sentencing Spotlight* paper will be clearly marked in terms of the valid timeframe from which the data has been derived.
- Sentencing outcome information is included for the court imposing the sentence, and not the court of original lodgement, as this is how this information is administratively recorded.
- Information on offender disability status is not reported as this information is not collected by DJAG.
- Sentencing details are provided in relation to the original, or 'first instance' judgements relating to the offences dealt with. Information relating to any appeals and their outcomes are not included in the data maintained by GovStats.
- An offender may be sentenced for multiple offences at the same time. The sentencing outcomes presented throughout the *Sentencing Spotlight* series generally relate to the most serious offence for which the offender is sentenced, though additional details of other offences and sentencing outcomes are also presented where relevant.

### Definitions

Case (or finalisation)	For the purposes of the analyses presented in this series, a 'case' (also referred to as a 'finalisation') is the collection of offences for a single offender that are finalised on the same day at the same court level and court location. Where there are multiple offenders dealt with jointly, they are considered to be separate cases, or finalisations.
------------------------	--

Court level	Offenders who are transferred to a higher court for sentencing or adjudication are only included in the sentencing court's counts.
Defendants finalised	A case may involve multiple defendants, and a defendant may appear in multiple cases (or finalisations). Where there are multiple defendants in an individual case, these defendants are counted separately. Where a defendant appears across multiple cases (or finalisations), each finalisation is counted separately.
Joint penalty	In some instances, a single penalty may be applied jointly to multiple offences. This series reports on the outcome in relation to the most serious offence noted.
Mean (or average)	<p>The mean (or average) describes a set of data by identifying the central position within that set of data.</p> <p>Mean (or average) values are calculated by adding the total values in the data set and dividing this by the number of values.</p> <p>When the sample size is large and does not include extreme (or outlier) values, the mean usually provides the preferred measure of central tendency.</p>
Median	<p>The median is describes a set of data by identifying the central position within that set of data.</p> <p>Median values summarise the middle number, or mid-point of values—half of the values in the data set lie above the median, and half of the values lie below the median.</p> <p>The median is less susceptible to extreme (or outlier) values and is used through the <i>Sentencing Spotlight</i> series where the value set indicates the mean is not be the most appropriate measure to use.</p>
Missing information	<p>Cases with missing demographic information, such as gender or age are removed from the relevant analysis.</p> <p>Where a record indicates that an offender is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, this is noted accordingly. All other offenders are recorded as non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>
Most serious offence	<p>The complexity of offending and the courts administrative system means that the data presented in this series focusses on the most serious offence for which an offender is sentenced for each case.</p> <p>The most serious offence is defined as the offence receiving the most serious sentence, as ranked by the classification scheme used by the ABS.</p>
Multiple penalty	In some instances it is possible for a single offence to receive multiple penalties. For example, an offender may receive both a probation order and a community service order. Where multiple penalties are received for a single offence, the most serious of the multiple penalties are used for this series.
Offence classification	Offences are classified into offence categories according to the 2008 Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Australian Standard Offence Classification (ASOC) scheme. The offence categories reflect ASOC's four-digit offence classification. Cases lacking a valid ASOC code have been excluded from the analyses.
Offender	For the purpose of analyses presented in this paper, an 'offender' is a person charged with one or more criminal offences, and where the offender has either pleaded or been found guilty.

Young offender	The <i>Sentencing Spotlight</i> series examines cases concerning both adult and young offenders. Currently in Queensland a person who offends under the age of 17 years is considered a child (and referred to as a young offender). <sup>1</sup> Any child under the age of 10 years at the time of the offence is not considered to be legally responsible for any offending behaviour.
----------------	---

## Interpreting a boxplot

The boxplot is also known as a box or whisker plot.

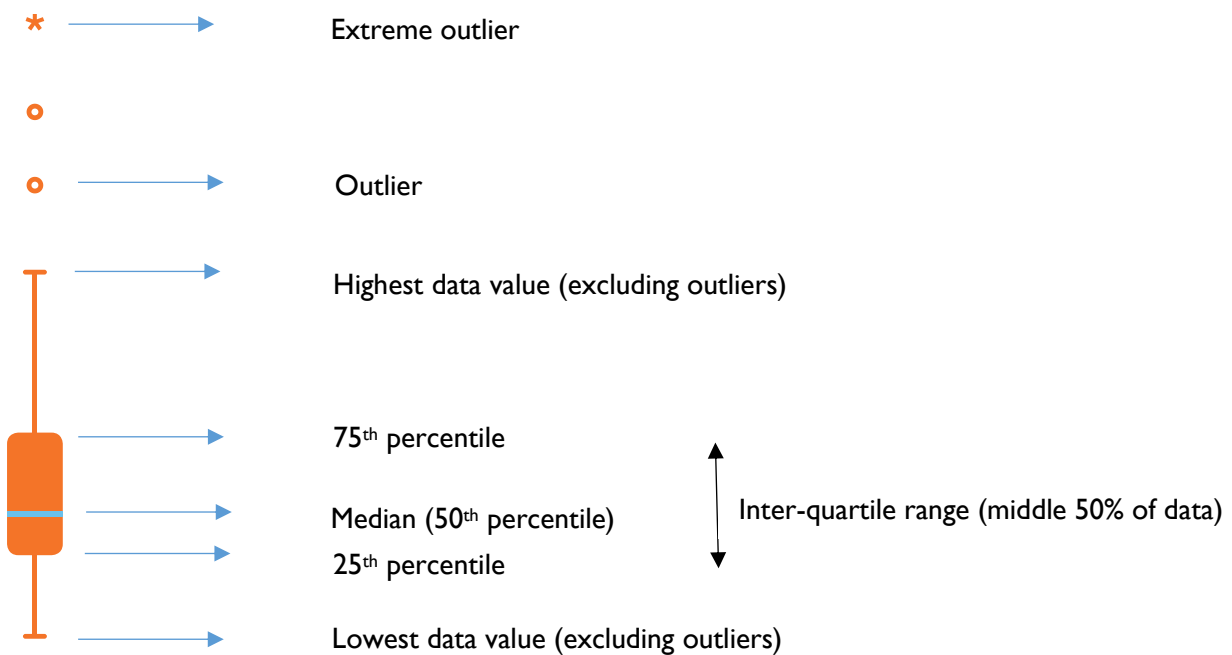
Dots and stars outside of the box and whiskers are considered outliers.

The highest and lowest values are shown at the ends of each whisker.

The middle 50 per cent of all of the data points lie within the box.

A quarter of the data falls below the box, and 25 per cent of the data falls above the box.

The median is the line inside the middle of the box.



<sup>1</sup> Note: Legislative change is currently underway that will change the Queensland definition of a child for the purposes of criminal law, to cover young people aged up to and including 17 years.