

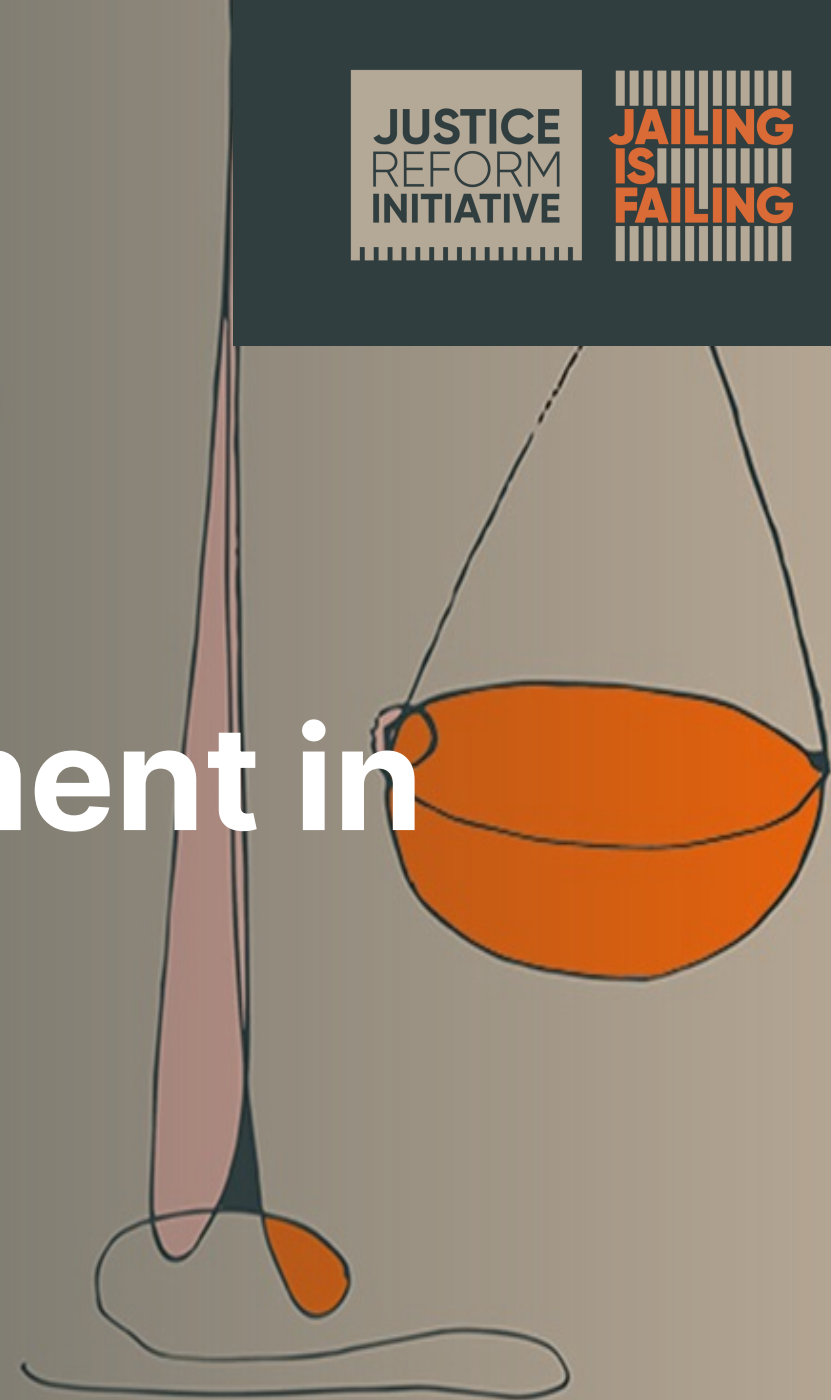
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Children's Imprisonment in Australia 2024

An Overview of Youth Detention



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Notes on this resource

This resource, created by the Justice Reform Initiative, provides an overview of the state of incarceration of children in Australia. The aim of this resource is to allow – as far as is possible – for comparisons between different jurisdictions on a range of measures.

This resource includes the most recent incarceration statistics across Australia as well as their rates of change, indicating how measures – i.e., prison populations, expenses etc. – have changed over the last decade. To assess the influence of recent policy changes, the rate of change was also calculated separately for the 2022–2024 period, offering insight into shifting imprisonment trends.

Data in this resource is primarily taken from two key sources:

- Productivity Commission – Report on Government Services (ROGS): Youth Justice
- Australian Institute for Health and Welfare – The Youth Justice National Minimum Data Set (YJ NMDS)

Both sources use daily averages from The Youth Justice National Minimum Data Set – one over the course of the financial year (ROGS), the other over the course of a quarter (YJ NMDS) – which explains variations in their statistics.

Notes on this resource (cont.)

Age: Some jurisdictions hold young people aged 18 and over in youth detention. As a result, some of the datasets used for this resource focus on children between the ages of 10 and 17 in youth detention and others include all children and young people in youth detention (10-18+). Each slide in this resource notes which population is being counted in the data presented.

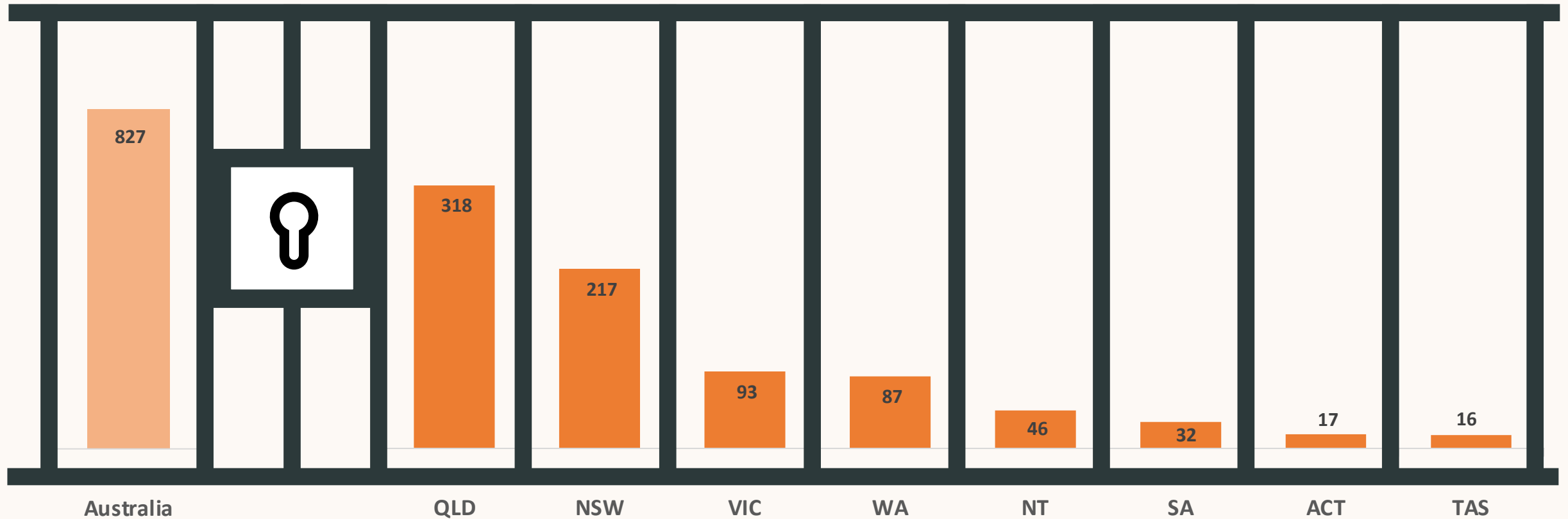
In 2023, the Northern Territory (NT) and Australian Capital Territory (ACT) raised the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 12 years. However, the NT reversed this decision in October 2024, returning the age to 10. All other Australian states retained the minimum age at 10 years throughout. As a result, in 2023–24, "young people" refers to those aged 12–17 in the NT and ACT, and 10–17 in New South Wales, Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania, and Queensland.

Queensland: Data from 2018–19 is not comparable with previous years. This is due to a change from 12 February 2018, when 17-year-old offenders started to be treated as juvenile offenders in the youth justice system, as in other jurisdictions. In prior years in Queensland, they were treated as adult offenders.

ACT and Tasmania: The ACT and Tasmania only have one youth justice detention centre with relatively small numbers in detention and under supervision. Trend information for both states should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Number of children in detention on an average night 2023/24

Aged 10-18+



Rate of change: Children in detention

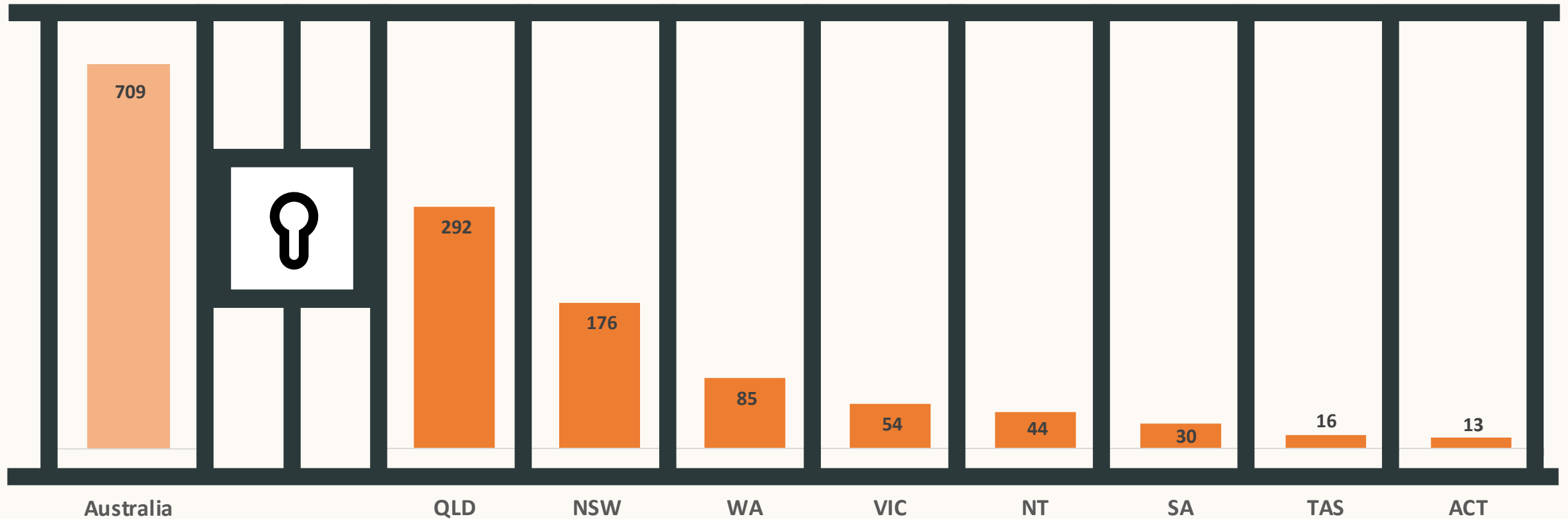
Aged 10-18+



	2013/14 - 2023/24	2021/22 - 2023/24
Queensland	77%	10%
Tasmania	36%	78%
ACT	6%	42%
Northern Territory	-4%	-12%
Australia	-11%	0%
NSW	-31%	14%
Victoria	-36%	-23%
Western Australia	-44%	-26%
South Australia	-44%	-9%

Number of children in detention on an average night 2023/24

Aged 10-17



Rate of change: Children in detention 2022/23

Aged 10-17

2013/14 - 2023/24

2021/22 - 2023/24

Queensland

59%

9%

Tasmania

45%

100%

ACT

-7%

30%

Northern Territory

-8%

-15%

Australia

-11%

1%

Victoria

-11%

-32%

NSW

-36%

20%

South Australia

-38%

-3%

Western Australia

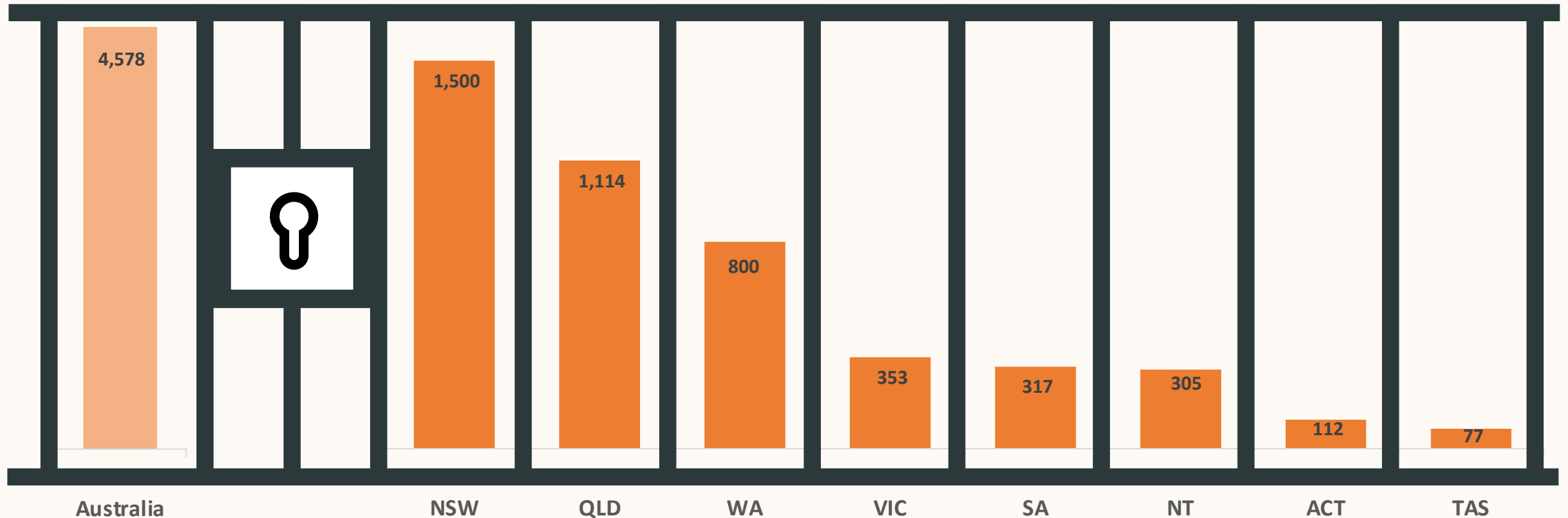
-45%

-19%



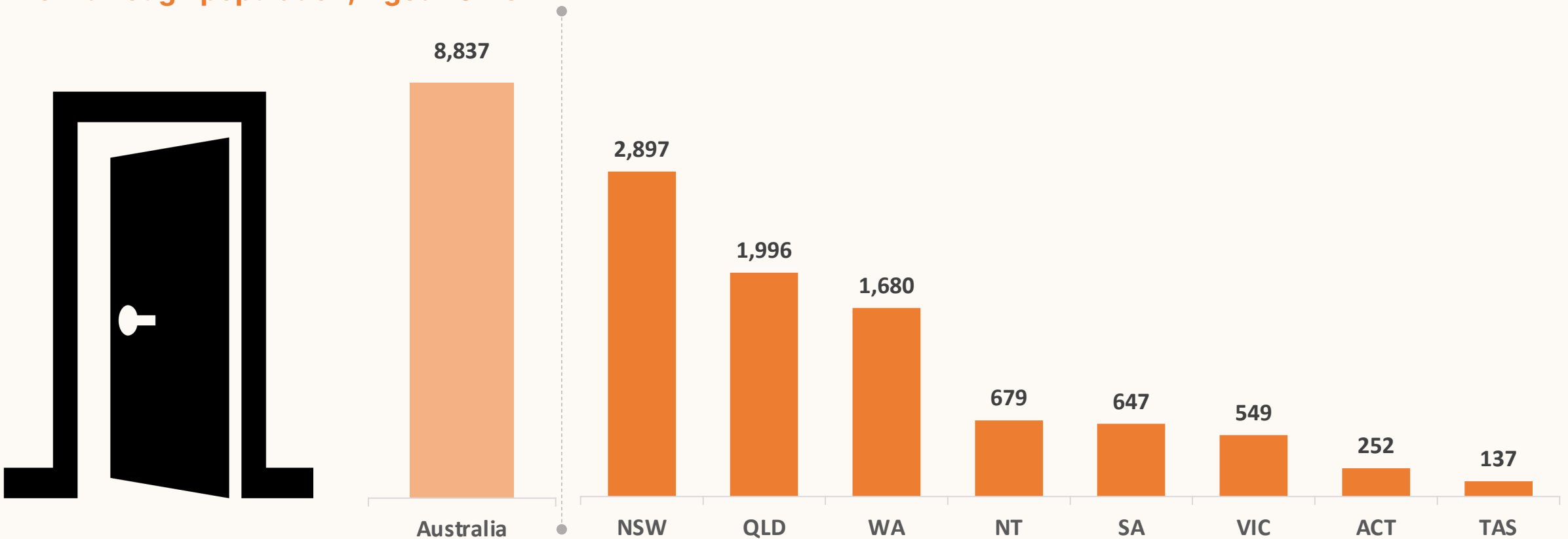
Number of children in detention over the course of a year 2023/24

Aged 10-18+



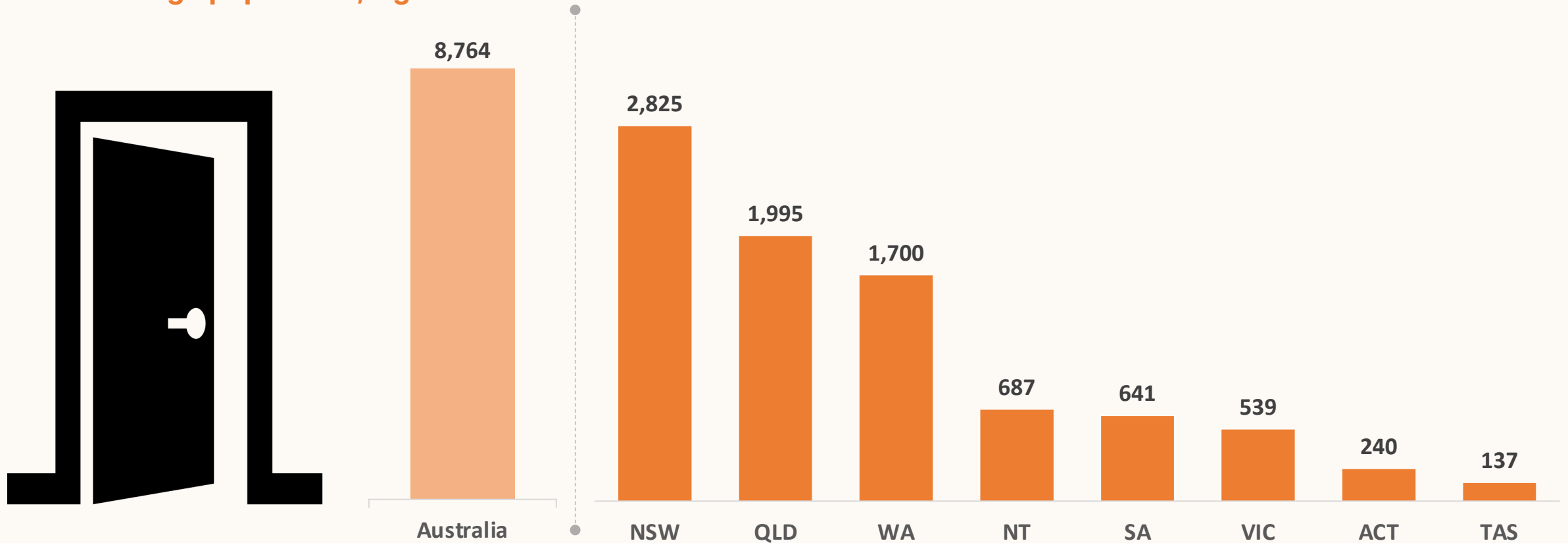
Number of children received into detention over the course of a year 2023/24

Flow through population, Aged 10-18+



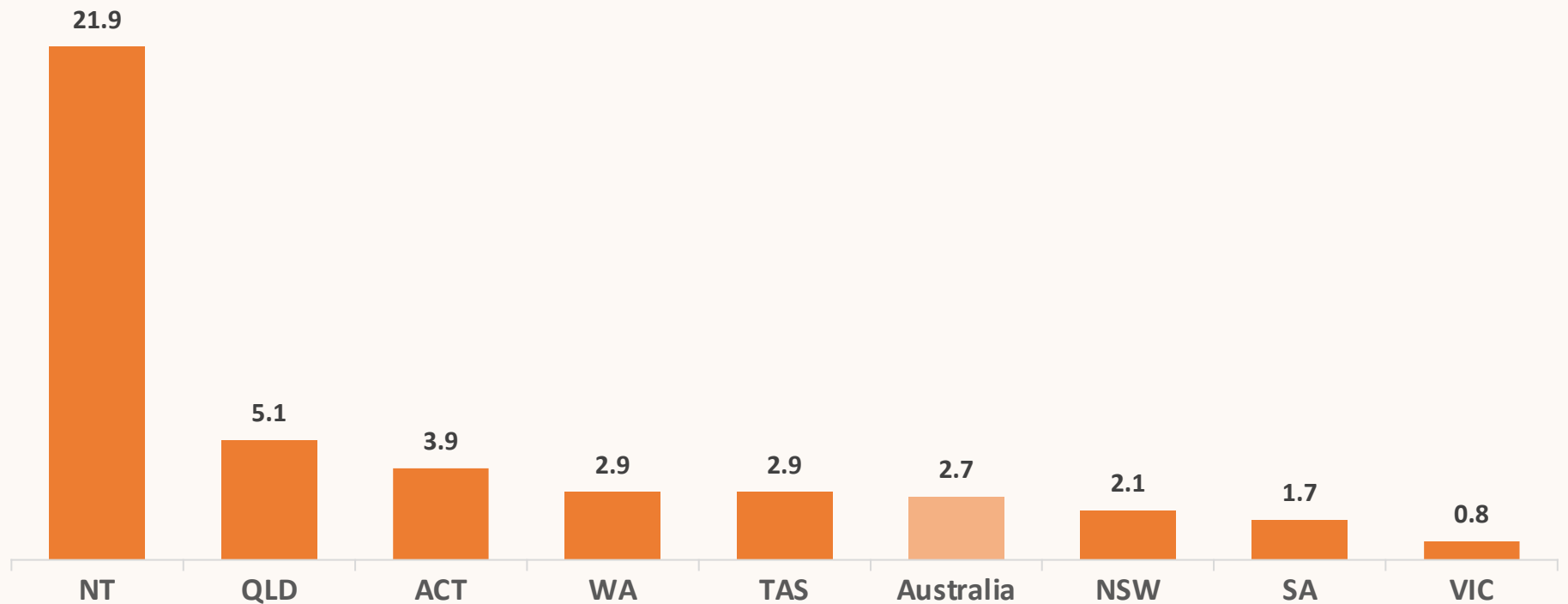
Number of children released from detention over the course of a year 2023/24

Flow through population, Aged 10-18+



Rate of children's incarceration 2023/24

per 10,000, aged 10-17



Rate of change: Children's incarceration rate

Aged 10-17

2013/14 - 2023/24

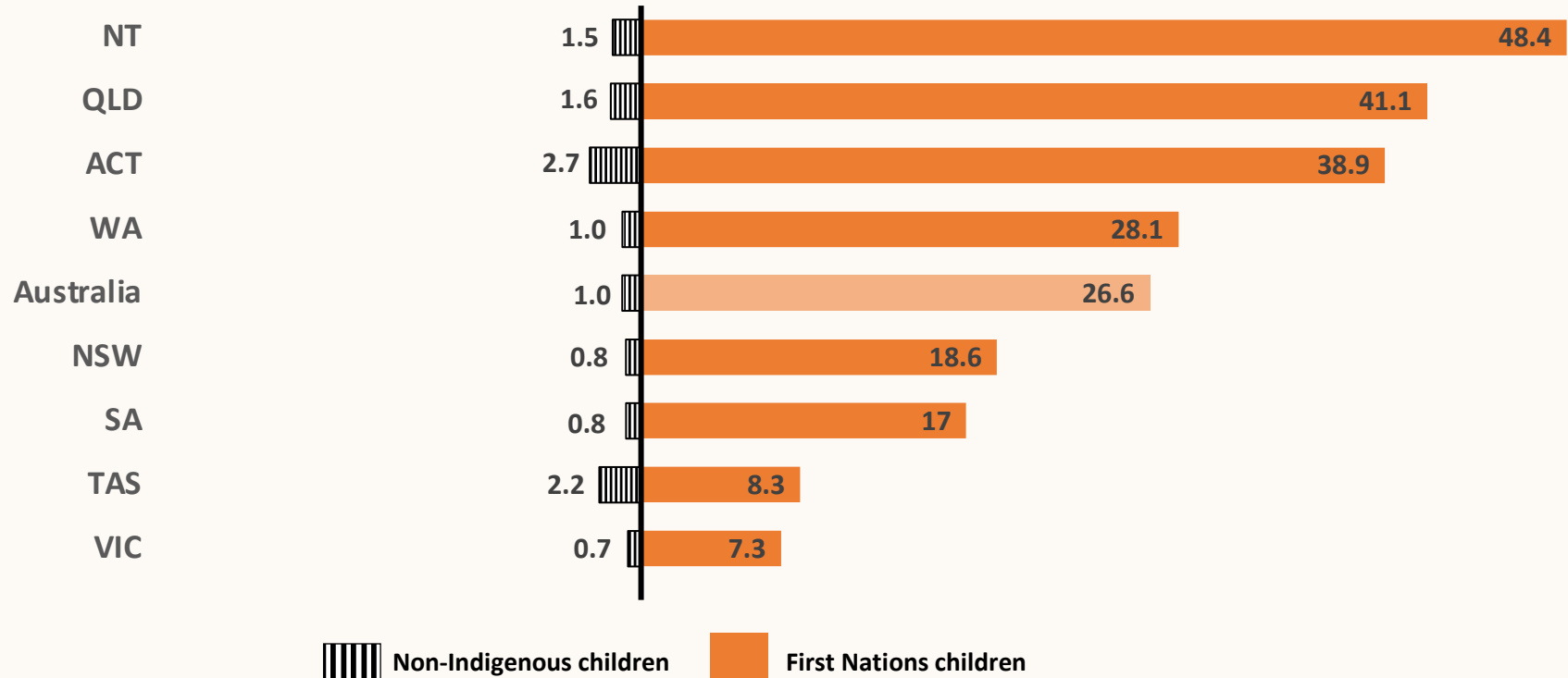
2021/22 - 2023/24



	2013/14 - 2023/24	2021/22 - 2023/24
Tasmania	36%	93%
Queensland	34%	4%
Northern Territory	21%	11%
ACT	-3%	70%
Australia	-23%	-4%
Victoria	-29%	-38%
South Australia	-44%	-6%
NSW	-45%	11%
Western Australia	-54%	-24%

Crude incarceration rate by Indigenous status 2023/24

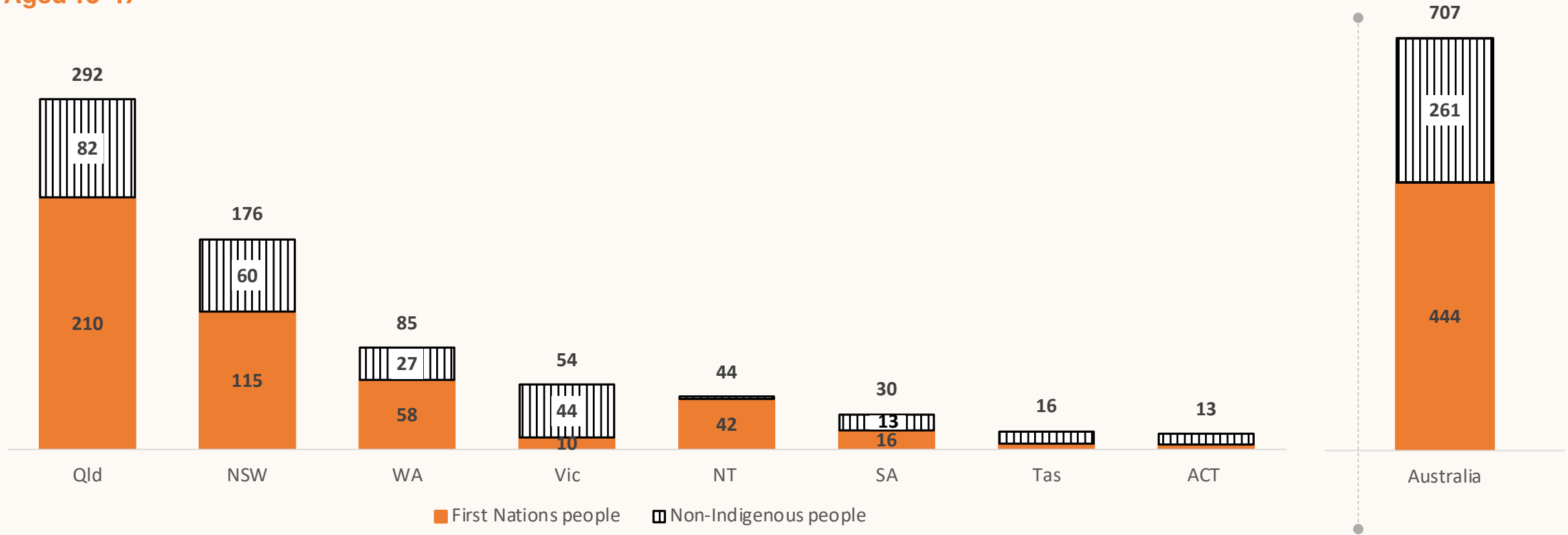
per 10,000, 10-17 years



Number of children in detention by Indigenous status

2023/24

Aged 10-17



Rate of change: Children in detention by Indigenous status

Aged 10-17

2012/13 – 2023/24

2021/22 – 2023/24

First Nations children

Non-Indigenous children

First Nations children

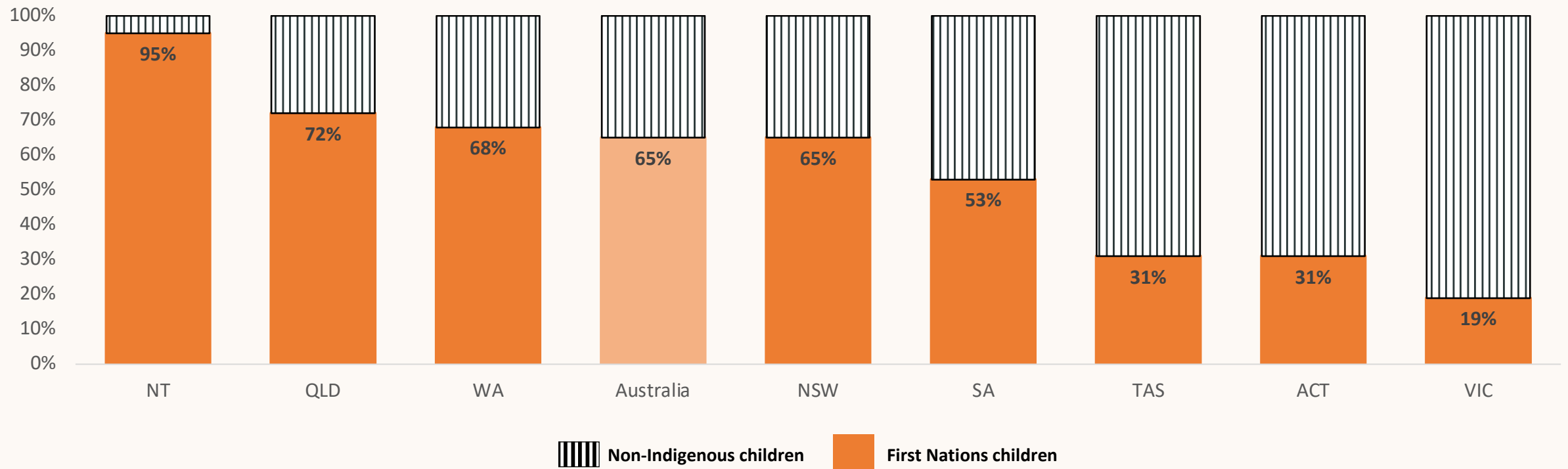
Non-Indigenous children



Tasmania	400%	0%	67%	100%
Queensland	75%	32%	17%	-9%
Australia	-1%	-24%	9%	-11%
Northern Territory	-9%	0%	-16%	0%
Victoria	-9%	-14%	-17%	-34%
NSW	-15%	-55%	49%	-12%
ACT	-20%	0%	33%	29%
South Australia	-33%	-46%	0%	-13%
Western Australia	-52%	-21%	-30%	23%

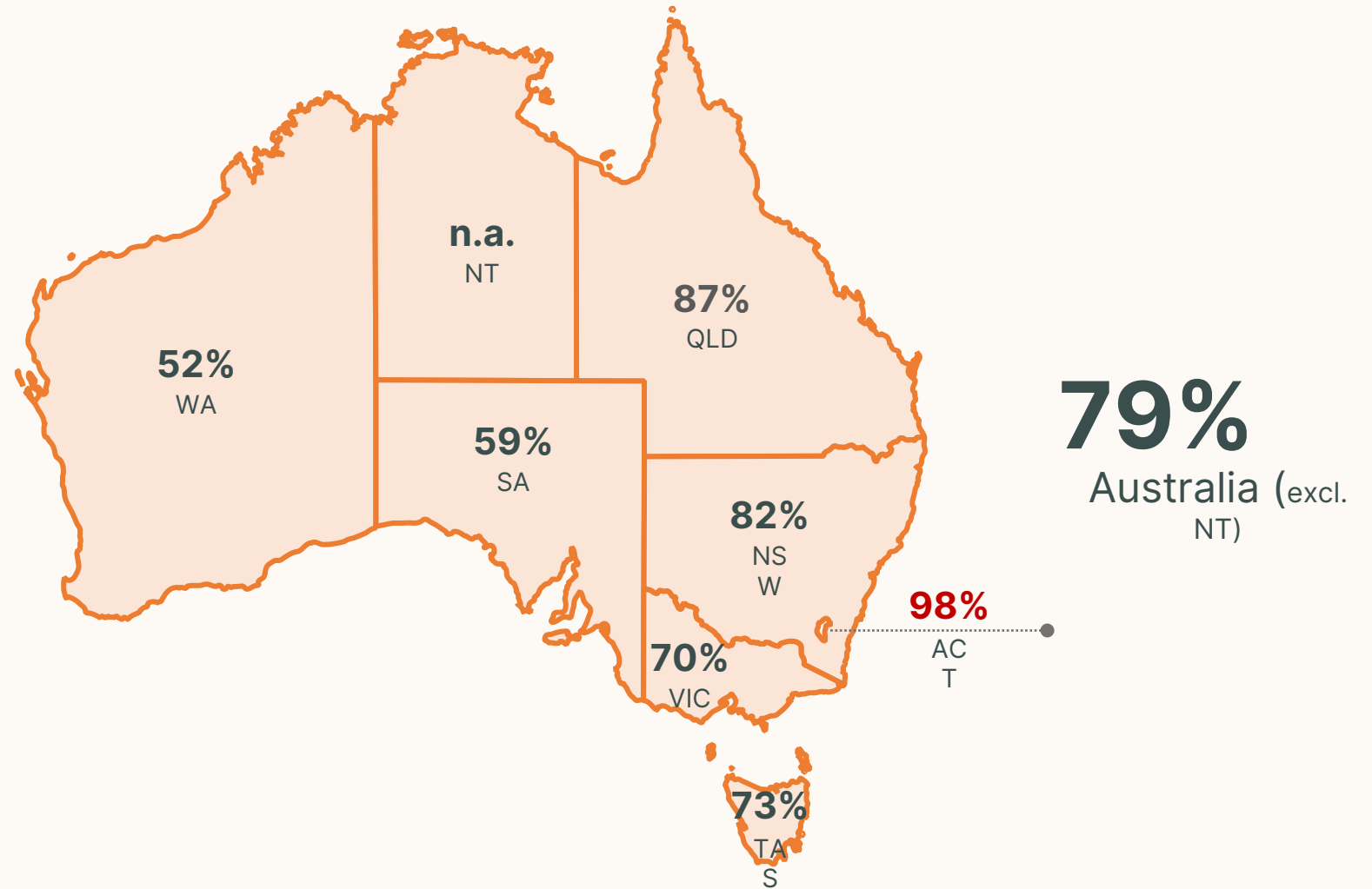
Proportion of detained children who are First Nations 2023/24

Aged 10-17



Proportion of children in detention on remand 2024

Aged 10-17, June Quarter 2024



Rate of change: Children in detention on remand

Aged 10 – 17, June quarter



	2014 - 2024	2022 - 2024
Tasmania	575%	107%
Queensland	84%	11%
ACT	37%	86%
NSW	31%	27%
Australia (excl. NT)	27%	-1%
Victoria	-30%	-57%
Western Australia	-40%	-44%
South Australia	-42%	-25%
Northern Territory	n.a.	n.a.

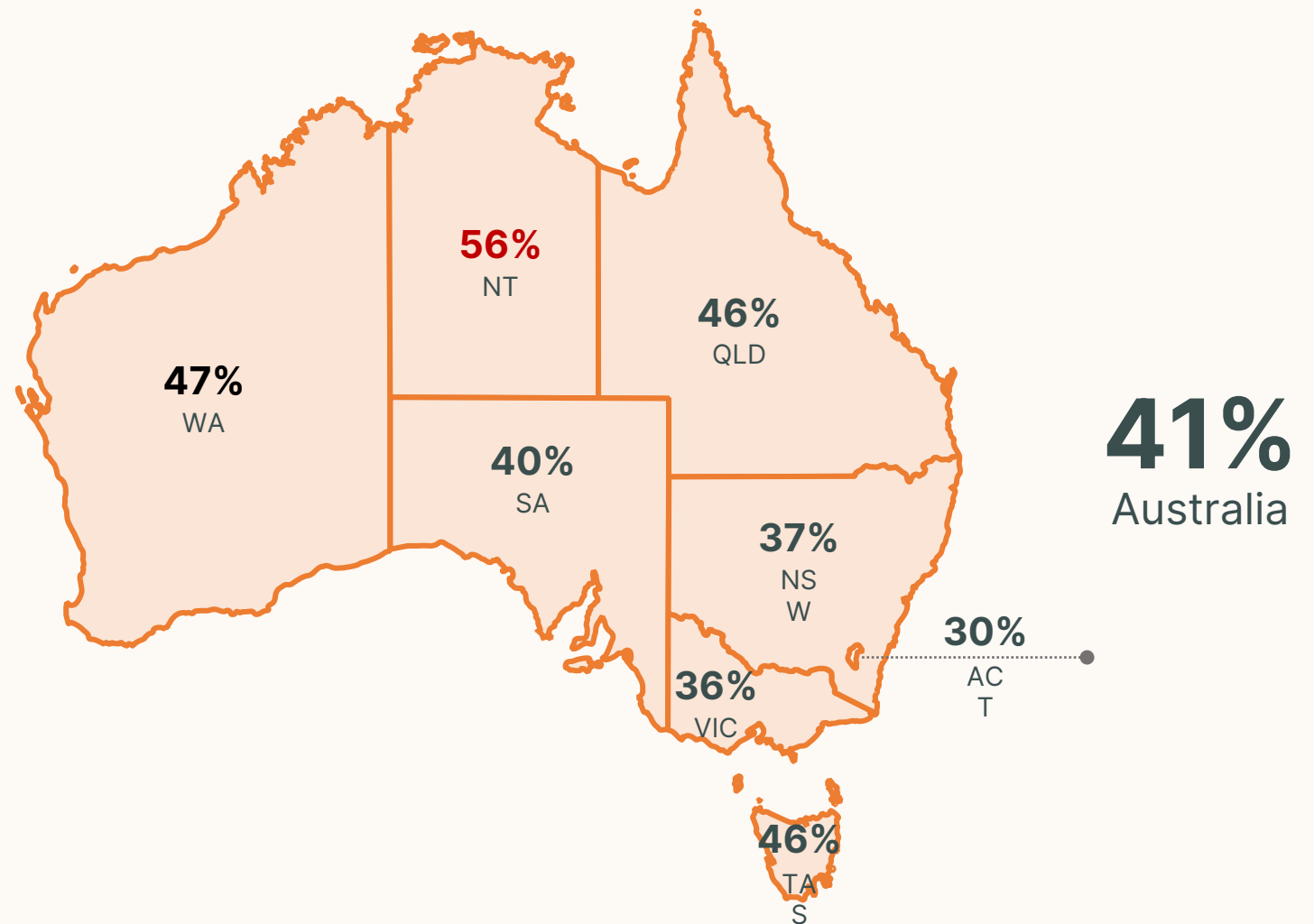
Source: Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (2025). Youth detention population in Australia 2024, tables S14 and S32.

Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (2014). Youth detention population in Australia 2014, tables S8 and S18.

Note: Rate of change was calculated from total remand population. This data is most meaningful when compared to the increase of the prison population over the same period.

Proportion of children in detention with more than one previous supervised sentence*

2000/01 – 2021/22**



*Includes both detention and community-based sentences.

** Data relate to young people aged 10–17 who were supervised from 2000–01 to 2021–22

Source: Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (2023). Young people returning to sentenced youth justice supervision 2021–22, table S7.

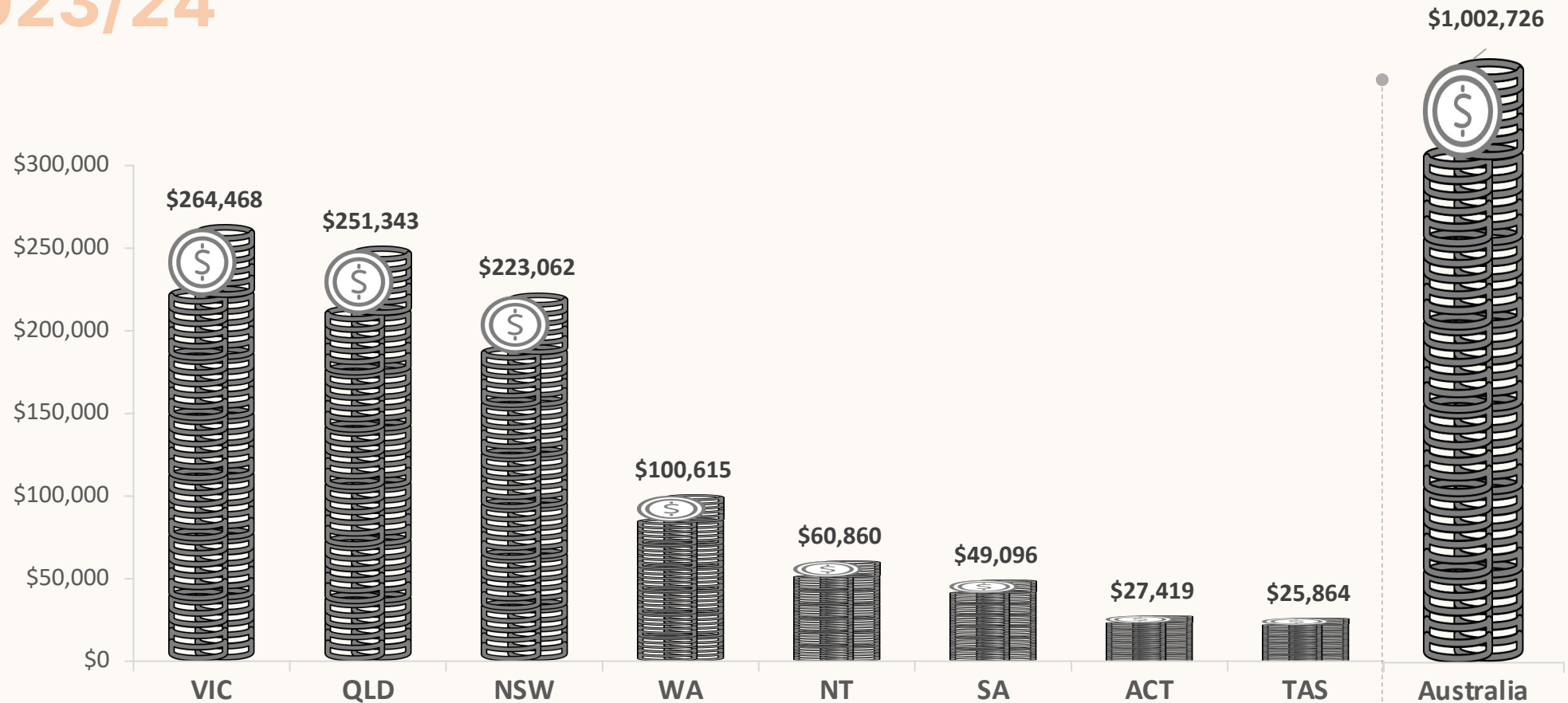
Proportion of children in detention who are girls 2023/24

Aged 10-17



Government expenditure on youth detention-based services 2023/24

\$'000

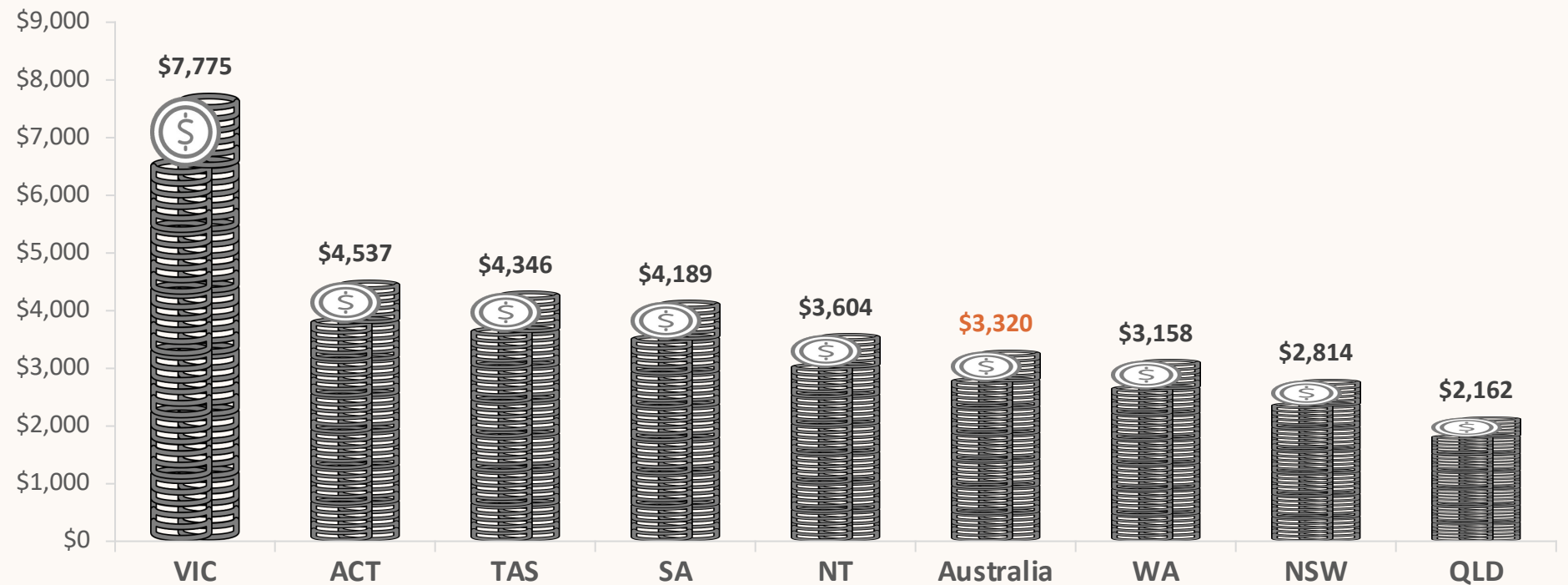


Rate of change: Youth detention-based services expenditures



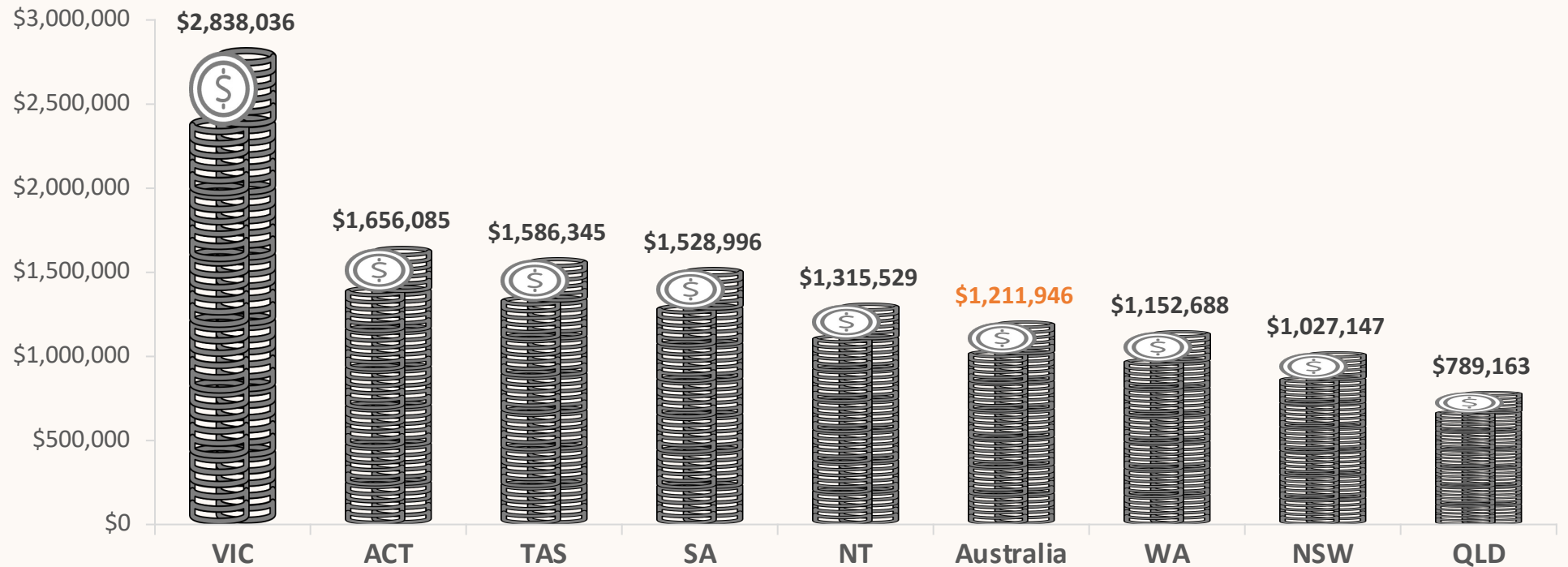
	2013/14 - 2023/24	2021/22 - 2023/24
Northern Territory	465%	17%
Victoria	291%	9%
Queensland	201%	5%
Australia	145%	12%
South Australia	133%	21%
Western Australia	115%	46%
Tasmania	88%	46%
ACT	58%	18%
NSW	51%	7%

Daily cost per child in detention 2023/24



Annual cost per child in detention 2023/24

Daily cost x 365



Source: Productivity Commission (2025). Report on government services 2025: Youth justice services, table 17A.20.

Note: Annual costs have been calculated by multiplying daily costs by 365.

Rate of change: Annual cost per child in detention

2013/14 - 2023/24

2021/22 - 2023/24

Victoria	498%	41%
Northern Territory	477%	33%
South Australia	312%	30%
Western Australia	277%	97%
Australia	170%	12%
NSW	114%	-7%
Queensland	68%	-5%
ACT	50%	-17%
Tasmania	34%	-18%



Source: Productivity Commission (2025). Report on government services 2025: Youth justice services, table 17A.20.

Productivity Commission (2016). Report on government services 2016: Youth justice services, table 16A.24.

Note: Annual costs have been calculated by multiplying daily costs by 365.