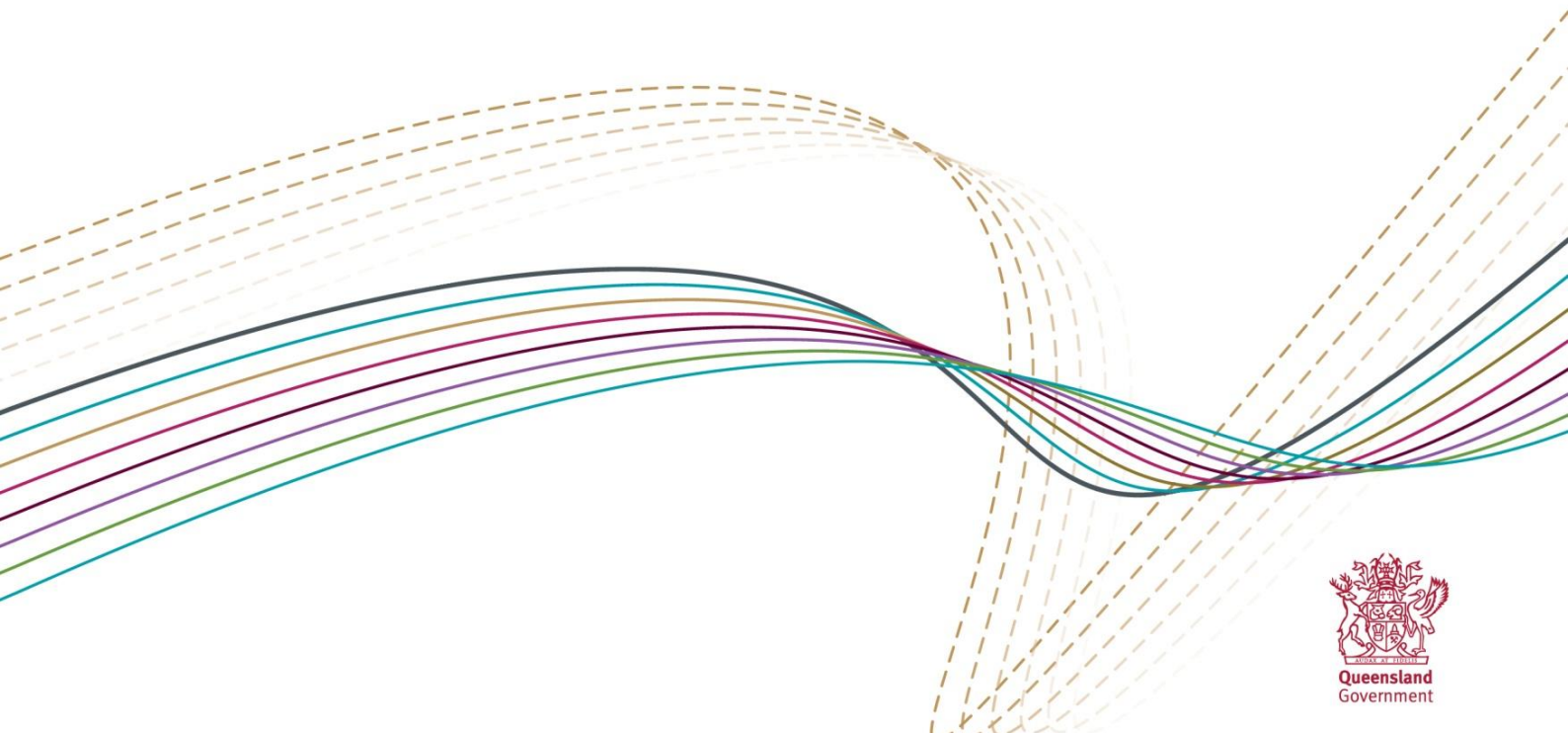


QUEENSLAND TREASURY

# Crime Research Agenda



## Queensland Government Statistician's Office

Queensland Treasury

<http://www.qgso.qld.gov.au>

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# 1.0 Introduction

The purpose of the Crime Research Agenda (the Agenda) is to describe the crime research priority areas of the Queensland Government Statistician's Office (QGSO). The Agenda serves to guide the development of QGSO's crime research work program and communicate the direction of crime research to external stakeholders. It is also anticipated that the Agenda will assist in the identification of potential research partnerships and collaborations.

This document provides background information on QGSO and its crime statistics and research function, describes the role of the Crime Research Reference Committee (CRRC), and outlines the criteria to be used by QGSO and the CRRC to frame decisions regarding the types of crime research projects undertaken by QGSO.

Information on how the Agenda was developed and its implementation is also provided.

## 2.0 Background

### 2.1. Queensland Government Statistician's Office

QGSO is responsible for producing a range of information products and services to support government, business and the public. Key areas of work include:

- providing statistical services and data management (including data linkage)
- conducting surveys on behalf of Queensland Government agencies
- providing advice on data collection, research and evaluation
- monitoring and conducting evaluations of Queensland Government policies and programs
- developing information for population dynamics analysis and forecasting (including population, land supply, households and dwellings, and school enrolments)
- coordinating the activities of statistics providers to maintain an integrated statistical service across government.

The work of QGSO is facilitated by the *Statistical Returns Act 1896 (Qld)* (the Act), which provides for the collection of official statistics by the Queensland Government Statistician, a statutory role appointed by the Governor in Council.

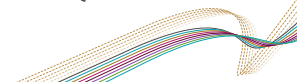
All information collected by QGSO is bound by the secrecy provisions of the Act. The Act precludes any person divulging or communicating any information obtained under the Act unless authorised by the Queensland Government Statistician.

### 2.2. Crime statistics and research

The crime statistics and research function of QGSO was initiated in 2017. The function has two primary objectives:

- publish criminal justice statistics
- undertake research into criminal justice issues.

The crime statistics and research function is supported by multi-disciplinary staff with expertise in quantitative and qualitative research strategies.



## 2.3. Adding value

The crime research work of QGSO will add value to the criminal justice sector and the public by:

- contributing to the evidence base used to develop and implement criminal justice responses
- supporting the effective use of public resources
- working closely with criminal justice stakeholders and research experts to identify priority research areas and carry out research
- taking a whole-of-criminal justice system approach to crime research
- building the public's confidence in criminal justice information through the publication of reliable research findings
- developing the public's knowledge of 'what works' to address crime in the community.

## 2.4. Crime Research Reference Committee

The Crime Research Reference Committee (CRRRC) is comprised of criminal justice and research experts with an understanding of Queensland's current criminal justice issues and an interest in criminal justice research. It supports QGSO's crime research by providing advice on the Agenda and crime research projects.

The CRRRC includes representation from the following organisations:

- Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (Youth Justice)
- Department of Justice and Attorney-General (Queensland Courts Services and Victim Assist Queensland)
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Griffith University
- James Cook University
- Queensland Corrective Services
- Queensland Police Service
- Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council
- University of Queensland.

## 2.5. Criteria to assess crime research activities

The following criteria are used by QGSO and the CRRRC to frame decisions regarding the crime research projects undertaken by QGSO.

### 2.5.1. Strategic benefit

- Does the research align with the Agenda?
- Does the research add value to criminal justice agencies, other government and non-government agencies, and/or the broader community?
- Does the research take a whole-of- system approach to understanding criminal justice issues?
- Will the research build the evidence base required to develop criminal justice services and policy?
- Will the research improve public awareness of criminal justice issues?

Research merit

- Is the research consistent with best practice research standards?
- Is the research methodology and timeframe suitable?
- Have similar research projects been conducted previously?



### **2.5.2. Operational implications**

- Have research ethics been considered?
- Does the research comply with privacy obligations and statutory provisions relating to the release of information?
- Does QGSO have the capability required to obtain and extract the required data/undertake the research?
- Is the research cost-effective?
- Are there partnership opportunities that can enhance the quality of research outputs?

## **3.0 Developing the Agenda**

The key crime research priority areas outlined in this document were supported by the CRRC after consideration of their own knowledge of Queensland's criminal justice system and information collected by QGSO via informal consultation with key stakeholders, and an environmental scan of crime and justice literature. Further information about QGSO's information collection processes is presented below.

### **3.1. Informal consultation**

QGSO consulted informally with ten criminal justice stakeholder and research bodies to develop its understanding of criminal justice business priorities, gather ideas on crime research projects considered to be of value to the criminal justice sector, collect information on the types of crime research projects already in progress, and identify potential research partnership opportunities.

There was a high degree of consistency in the key messages heard during consultation and a commonality among the types of crime research projects proposed by participating agencies.

### **3.2. Environmental scan**

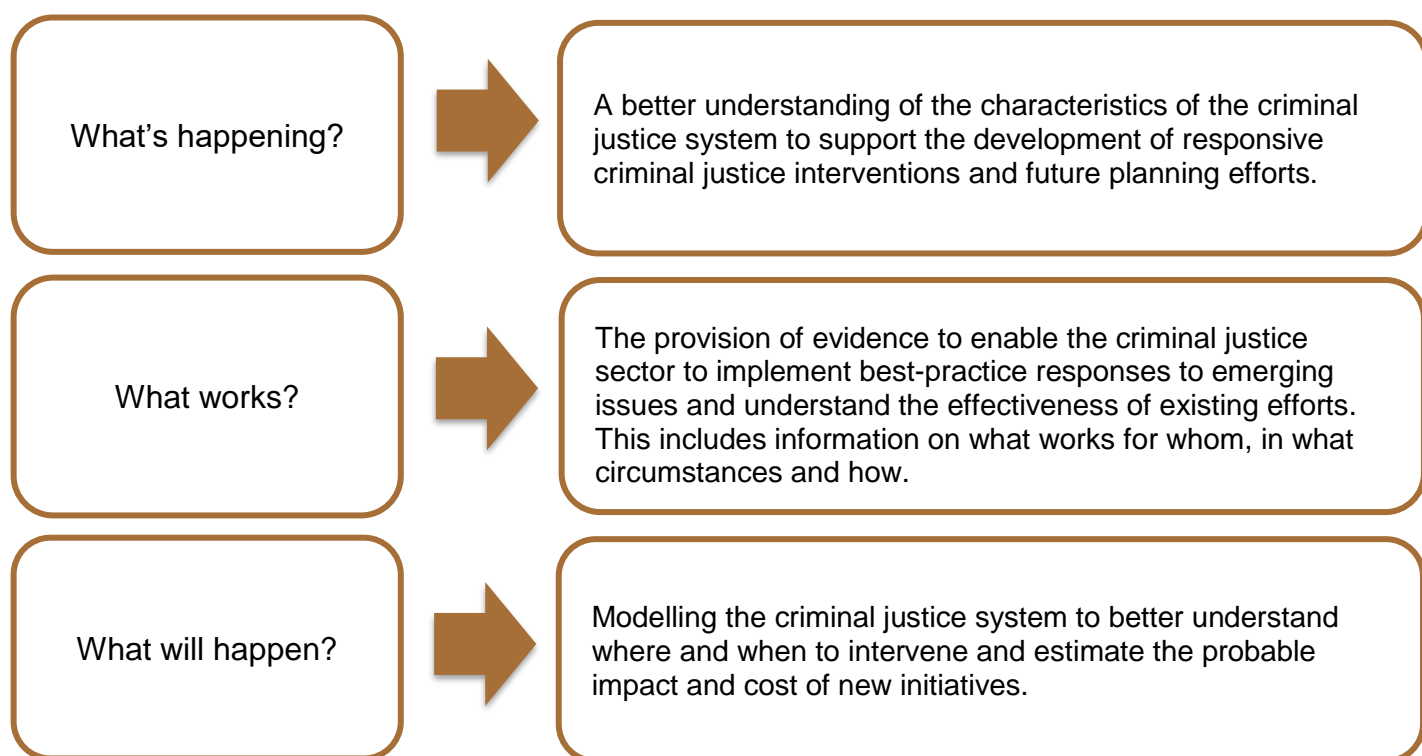
QGSO undertook an environmental scan of criminal justice literature recently released by Australian criminal justice research bodies to identify any emerging criminal justice issues evident in other jurisdictions and ascertain any research gaps. This information was considered in relation to the crime research projects proposed by agencies involved in the informal consultation process and will be used to inform the development of QGSO crime research projects.

### 3.3. High-level research questions

The crime research projects identified by stakeholders during informal consultation can be summarised into three high-level research questions – what’s happening, what works and what will happen?

These research questions will frame the types of research projects developed by QGSO in relation to the crime research priority areas supported by the CRRC.

#### Crime research question framework



Stakeholders also identified the importance of understanding the role of local contexts and the costs and benefits of criminal justice interventions when undertaking criminal justice research work. QGSO will therefore frame its crime research to reflect these issues where possible.

## 4.0 Priority crime research areas

The priority crime research areas of QGSO have been supported by the CRRC and reflect information collected through consultation with stakeholders and an environmental scan of recent research publications.

QGSO will focus its research efforts on system demand and effectiveness, system pathways, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander overrepresentation<sup>1</sup>, and domestic and family violence. These areas will be explored in relation to other issues identified during informal consultation with stakeholders such as gendered differences and youth offenders. Further information on each of these priority areas is provided below<sup>2,3</sup>.

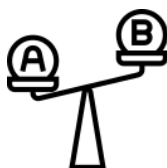
### QGSO priority crime research areas



System demand  
and effectiveness



System pathways



Overrepresentation of  
Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islanders



Domestic and  
family violence

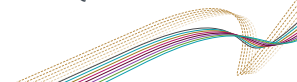
### 4.1. System demand and effectiveness

The number of people in contact with the Queensland criminal justice system has increased considerably in recent years. For example, the number of adults held in custody increased by 39% between 2012 and 2017 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018), while the total Queensland population grew by about 8% (QGSO 2018)<sup>4</sup>. The total number of people charged by police (ABS 2018) and matters finalised in criminal courts (ABS 2018) also increased during this period.

The profile of people held in custody has also changed. For example, the number of unsentenced people held in adult custody more than doubled (up by 104%) between 2012 and 2017 which, in effect, changed the proportion of people on remand in relation to the total adult prisoner population (increasing from 22% in 2012 to 30% in 2017) (ABS 2013, 2018). There has also been a slight increase in the share of adults in custody with prior adult imprisonment, increasing from 60% in 2012 to 64% in 2017 (ABS 2018).

Understanding the factors contributing to Queensland's criminal justice system growth and changing offender and victim characteristics will assist in the development of appropriate responses and future planning efforts.





## 4.2. System pathways

The idea of developing a better understanding of the ways in which people move through the criminal justice system and their contact with other human service agencies is influenced by research that shows that offenders are characterised by a relatively high prevalence of certain factors (such as alcohol and illicit drug misuse, mental health issues, poor family/marital circumstances and low engagement with school/work) and that addressing these factors is more likely to reduce their likelihood of future offending than the imposition of harsher sentences (Andrews and Bonta 2010).

The most recent National Prisoner Health Data Collection (NPHDC) undertaken by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) found that 64% of participants reported using illicit drugs during the 12 months before entering custody and 40% had been told that they had a mental health disorder at some stage in their life (AIHW 2015)<sup>5</sup>. Twenty per cent of participants had been in youth detention and 56% had been unemployed during the month prior to entering custody (AIHW 2015).

A system pathways research project will build on previous research and enable a more detailed exploration of criminal justice outcomes in relation to offender characteristics and offence history. It will also highlight any changes in offender profile complexity that may have occurred over time.

## 4.3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander overrepresentation

The overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the criminal justice system continues despite efforts to address this issue.

In Queensland, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders represent about 3% of the total Queensland adult population (QGSO 2017), but 32% of adults in custody in 2017 (ABS 2018). When accounting for age differences in the population, Indigenous adults were 11 times more likely to be incarcerated than non-Indigenous adults (ABS 2018).

At June 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland aged 10 to 17 years were 32 times more likely to be held in detention than non-Indigenous children and young people, and on average, 72% of all children and young people in detention identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (AIHW 2017)<sup>6</sup>.

Working towards the reduction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander overrepresentation in the criminal justice system is a key priority for Queensland's criminal justice agencies. Developing a better understanding of the drivers of overrepresentation and ways to support Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders desist from offending will assist in the development of responses to this issue.

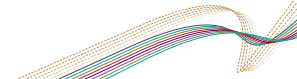
## 4.4. Domestic and family violence

Many new initiatives have been introduced in Queensland following recommendations made by the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in the *Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an end to domestic and family violence in Queensland* report released in 2015. These recommendations centred on three areas of reform: changing culture and attitudes, changing responses to the incidents of abuse and its victims, and changing the response of the justice system.

New criminal justice initiatives include amendments to legislation and the introduction and expansion of the Specialist Domestic and Family Violence Court. The legislative changes aim to: provide victims of domestic and family violence with access to earlier and more individualised support; enable information sharing; provide greater focus on victim safety; hold offenders more accountable for their actions and encourage offender rehabilitation. The initiatives form part of the broader suite of actions being implemented as part of the *Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016–2020* (DFV Strategy).

Further research into domestic and family violence will highlight any criminal justice system changes taking place since the introduction of new or enhanced criminal justice responses to domestic and family violence, and build the evidence required to further support the reduction of domestic and family violence in the community. It is anticipated that the research performed under this priority area will complement work being undertaken as part of the evaluation of the Queensland Government's DFV Strategy.





## 5.0 Implementation of the Agenda

### 5.1. Conducting research projects

QGSO will develop crime research projects in relation to the priority crime research areas identified in the Agenda, the types of research projects proposed during informal consultation with key stakeholders, existing literature and available resources. The CRRC will use the criteria set out in section 2.5 above to assist in determining if proposed research projects should be supported.

The completion of these research projects will involve ongoing collaboration with key stakeholder agencies, with the view of linking information collected by multiple agencies given QGSO's whole-of-sector approach to the Agenda.

### 5.2. Agenda review

The Agenda will be monitored by QGSO in relation to advice provided by the CRRC to ensure that it remains contemporary and relevant.

### 5.3. Research partnerships

QGSO recognises the value of establishing research partnerships in the implementation of its Crime Research Agenda.

Please contact QGSO by telephone on 07 3035 6421 or via email to [govstat@treasury.qld.gov.au](mailto:govstat@treasury.qld.gov.au) for further information about the Agenda or to discuss research partnership opportunities consistent with the priority research areas identified in this document.



## Notes

1. The use of the term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' in this report refers to persons who identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both, and is not intended to diminish or deny the diversity of cultures, traditional practices and differences across the different clans and communities located across Australia and the Torres Strait.
2. The data described in this publication may vary from data published elsewhere by QGSO and others. Data variation can be due to differences in the dates data are extracted, counting rules or statistical standards applied. Readers are urged to exercise caution when making comparisons between publications.
3. This publication uses ABS and AIHW data to describe elements of Queensland's criminal justice system. Information on adults in custody is from the National Prisoner Census which counts all people (sentenced and unsentenced) in custody on 30 June of each year. These data are derived from administrative systems held by corrective service agencies. Information from AIHW on children and young people used in this publication represents the average daily number of children and young people aged 10 to 17 years in detention during the June 2017 quarter.
4. This population growth figure is based on total Queensland population estimates for 2012 and 2017.
5. The NPHDC gathers information from people entering and existing adult custody in all Australian jurisdictions. The results presented here relate to prisoner entrants in Queensland.
6. Percentage change between time periods relating to youth justice information is highly sensitive given the relatively small number of people held in youth detention. For example, the average daily number of children and young people aged 10 to 17 years in youth detention in Queensland for the June quarter 2017 was 196.

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