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NATIONAL CRIME STATISTICS: AN UPDATE 2001 THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE

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This Information Bulletin outlines the findings of the eighth publication by the National Crime Statistics Unit (ABS, 2001: Cat No 4510.0). It reports on the number of victims per offence category recorded by police between January and December 2001. Some earlier figures from 1993 to 2000 have also been provided in the Paper for comparative purposes.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Australian Bureau of Statistics formed a National Crime Statistics Unit in 1990. The key function of this Unit is to produce uniform national statistics on crimes reported to police. To this end, it has established a set of uniform offence classifications and counting rules designed to remove the past difficulties in comparing rates of reported crime between states.

This Information Bulletin outlines the findings of the ninth publication by the National Crime Statistics Unit (ABS, 2002: Cat No 4510.0). It reports on the number of victims per offence category recorded by police between January and December 2001. Some earlier figures from 1993 to 2000 have also been provided in the Bulletin for comparative purposes.

2. A METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

What official crime statistics measure

The statistics presented here are official crime statistics. As such they are influenced by factors other than the actual incidence of offending in the community. They are, for example, dependent on:

- whether the victim of an offence chooses to report that offence to police; and
- how that report is interpreted and entered onto the system by police.

As a result, changes in official crime statistics from one year to another or from one jurisdiction to another may not reflect a change/difference in the actual level of offending, but may be due to changes/differences in people's willingness to report or changes/differences in how police record the data.

Changes in how offences are classified: from ANCO to ASOC

It should be noted that a new offence classification system was implemented in 1999 – the Australian Standard Offence Classification (ASOC). The ABS has worked closely with police statisticians in all jurisdictions to ensure that the mapping of offences under the new system accords as closely as possible with that under the old system (ANCO- the Australian National Classification of Offences). According to the ABS, for South Australia, the switch to ASOC has had minimal effect on the statistics, with the result that the data available since 1999 are comparable with earlier years.

Counting rules

The counting rules applied by the ABS are victim based: that is, each victim within a distinct criminal incident is counted once per national offence subdivision. For example, within the *sexual assault* subdivision if a victim reports being subjected to multiple sexual assaults within the one incident, he/she will be counted only once in this subdivision. However, if in the one incident, the victim reports being robbed and sexually assaulted, he/she will be counted once under *robbery* and once under *sexual assault* because each constitutes a different offence subdivision.

The statistics do not refer to discrete victims because a person who has experienced multiple incidents of victimisation will be counted separately for each incident. For example, a person who reports to police that they have been robbed again will be counted twice.

Comparability across jurisdictions

While every effort is made to ensure that these national statistics are uniform and comparable, some inevitable differences remain. Responsibility for deciding whether a particular crime will be recorded and how it will be recorded is still vested in individual police jurisdictions. For some crimes, a high level of discretion exists in how to classify particular offences. For example, the perceived intent needs

to be judged before deciding whether an incident is defined as a serious *assault* or an *attempted murder*. This discretion will inevitably result in some inconsistency from one police officer to another. By its very nature, such inconsistency is extremely difficult if not impossible to eliminate. There are also variations between jurisdictions in the legislative definitions for particular offences. And finally, the actual means by which data are recorded on the police systems also differ, from written documentation to on-line computer charging. Thus, while the data provide the most accurate basis for state-by-state comparison, some inconsistencies may still exist.

Offences included in the national collection

Offences covered by the report include only those for which nationally comparable definitions have been developed. These are:

- homicide and related offences
 - *murder*
 - *attempted murder*
 - *manslaughter*
 - *driving causing death*
- assault
- sexual assault
- kidnapping/abduction
- robbery
 - *armed robbery*
 - *unarmed robbery*
- blackmail/extortion
- unlawful entry with intent
- motor vehicle theft
- other theft.

For some of these offence types – notably *murder*, *attempted murder*, *manslaughter*, *drive causing death*, *kidnapping and abduction*, and *blackmail/extortion* – numbers are extremely low, and tend to fluctuate considerably from one year to another. Any attempt to draw comparisons across time within the one jurisdiction, or to compare between jurisdictions is therefore difficult. Because of the small numbers involved, minor shifts in the actual numbers reported to police will result in large (and therefore potentially misleading) percentage changes.

The following points should also be noted.

- With the exception of *murder* and *motor vehicle theft*, in all other categories actual and attempted incidents are combined. Thus, *UEWI*, for example, includes both successful unlawful entries as well as attempts.
- Percentage increases/decreases differ slightly, depending on whether the unit of analysis is absolute numbers or rates per 100,000 population.

3. COMPARISON OF SOUTH AUSTRALIAN CRIME RATES IN 2001 WITH NATIONAL AVERAGE

Table 3.1 compares South Australian crime rates with those recorded for Australia as a whole.

Table 3.1
South Australian crime rates per 100,000 population compared with other states

Offence group	SA rate per 100,000 population	Australian rate per 100,000 population	Rank order of SA in 2001#	Rank order of SA in 2000#	State/Territory with highest rate in 2001	
Homicide and related offences	4.9	5.4	4	1	QLD	7.5
Murder	1.9	1.6	2	Equal 5	NT	7.1
Attempted murder	1.6	2.4	4	2	QLD	4.3
Manslaughter	na	0.2	na	na	QLD	0.4
Driving causing death	1.3	1.3	4	1	VIC	1.5
Assault	1084.1	782.9	3	3	NT	1486.4
Sexual assault	105.0	86.4	3	3	NT	133.1
Kidnapping/abduction	2.4	3.9	3	2	NSW	7.2
Robbery (total)	111.9	137.1	2	2	NSW	233.2
Armed robbery	41.4	na	4	3	NSW	86.0
Unarmed robbery	70.5	na	2	2	NSW	147.3
Blackmail/extortion	3.7	1.8	1	2	SA	3.7
Unlawful entry with intent	2332.8	2246.9	4	5	WA	3250.9
Taking of property	1489.2	1677.6	7	na	WA	2189.8
Other	843.7	569.3	3	na	NT	1142.8
Motor vehicle theft	842.9	722.0	1	2	SA	842.9
Other theft	5267.3	3607.5	1	2	SA	5267.3

A ranking of one indicates the highest rate of reporting offending.
na indicates the rate is not available.

As shown, in 2001 South Australia was below the national rate for four of the discrete offence categories where comparison was possible, as follows:

- Attempted murder;
- Kidnapping/abduction;
- Robbery; and
- Unlawful entry with intent involving the taking of property.

South Australia was above the national rate for seven of the offences, namely:

- Murder;
- Assault;
- Sexual assault;
- Blackmail/extortion;
- Unlawful entry with intent - total;
- Unlawful entry with intent – other;
- Motor vehicle theft; and
- Other theft.

Summary

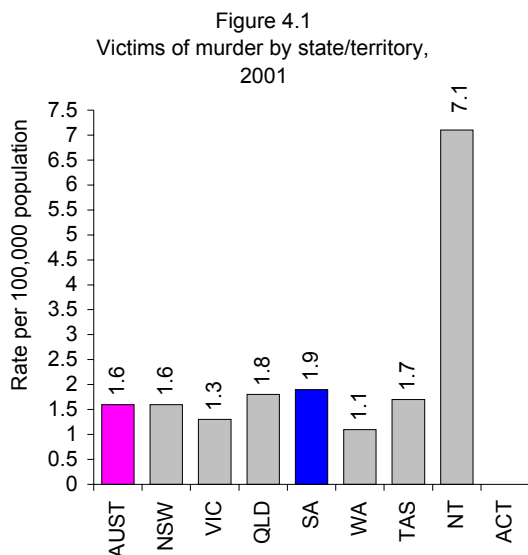
Where comparisons between South Australian and national figures were possible:

- In 1994, South Australia had a higher rate than that of Australia for all offence categories with the exception of *driving causing death* and *motor vehicle theft*;
- In 1995, South Australia was above the Australian rate for 8 out of 14 discrete offence categories;
- In 1996, South Australia was above the Australian rate for 5 out of 14 categories;
- In 1997, South Australia was above the Australian rate for 4 out of 14 categories;
- In 1998, South Australia was above the Australian rate for 6 out of 14 categories;
- In 1999, South Australia was above the Australian rate in 9 out of 14 categories; and
- In 2000, South Australia was above the Australian rate for 8 out of 11 categories.
- In 2001, South Australia was above the Australian rate for 7 out of 13 categories.

4. A COMPARISON OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA WITH OTHER JURISDICTIONS

Figures 4.1 to 4.15 provide a more graphic illustration of the level of recorded victimisations in South Australia compared with other jurisdictions and the national average.

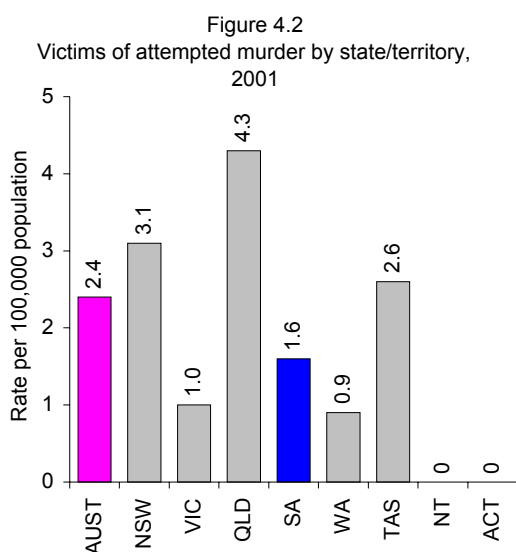
Homicide and related offences



The number of extremely violent crimes against the person recorded in Australia in 2001 was relatively small. In total, 306 *murders*, 458 *attempted murders*, 34 *manslaughter* and 249 *driving causing death* incidents came to police notice during the year.

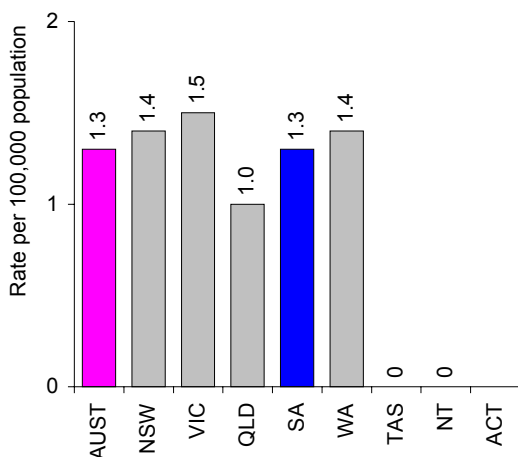
However, there were some obvious differences from one state to another. As depicted in Figure 4.1, the Northern Territory *murder* rate of 7.1 was higher than that of any other jurisdiction. South Australia recorded the second highest rate (1.9), while the lowest rate (of 1.1 per 100,000) was recorded in Western Australia.

Figures were not available for the ACT.



Queensland recorded the highest rate for *attempted murder* (4.3 per 100,000 persons). The lowest rate was recorded in the ACT and Northern Territory (0.0). The rate for South Australia was 1.6 per 100,000 population. Again, however, rates are extremely small across all jurisdictions.

Figure 4.3
Victims of drive causing death by state/territory, 2001



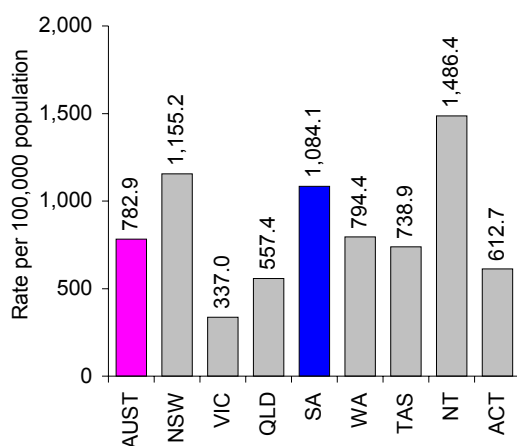
Again, reported rates for *driving causing death* were extremely low across all jurisdictions, ranging from 0 in the Northern Territory and Tasmania to 1.5 per 100,000 population in Victoria.

South Australia, with a rate of 1.3 per 100,000, was equal to the Australian rate of 1.3.

Figures were not available for the ACT.

Assault

Figure 4.4
Victims of assault by state/territory, 2001

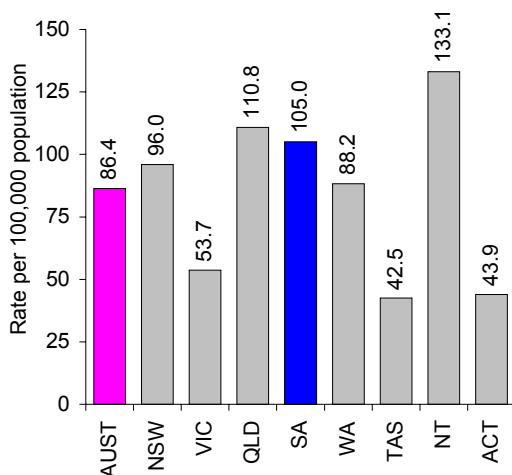


South Australia's recorded *assault* rate in 2001 was above the Australian rate. As shown in Figure 4.4, this state recorded a rate of 1,084.1 per 100,000 population, which was the third highest behind the Northern Territory, with a rate of 1,486.4 and New South Wales (1,155.2).

South Australia's rate of *assault* was three times greater than the rate recorded in Victoria (337.0), which had the lowest rate of all jurisdictions.

Sexual Assault

Figure 4.5
Victims of sexual assault by state/territory, 2001

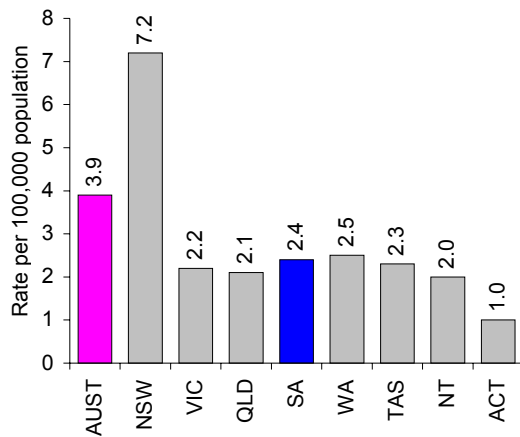


South Australia's rate of *sexual assault* (105.0 per 100,000 population) was above the national rate of 86.4.

As shown in Figure 4.5, South Australia recorded the third highest rate of *sexual assault*, behind the Northern Territory (133.1 per 100,000 population) and Queensland (110.8). Tasmania (42.5) and the ACT (43.9) recorded the lowest rates of *sexual assault* in 2001.

Kidnapping/abduction

Figure 4.6
Victims of kidnapping/abduction by state/territory,
2001

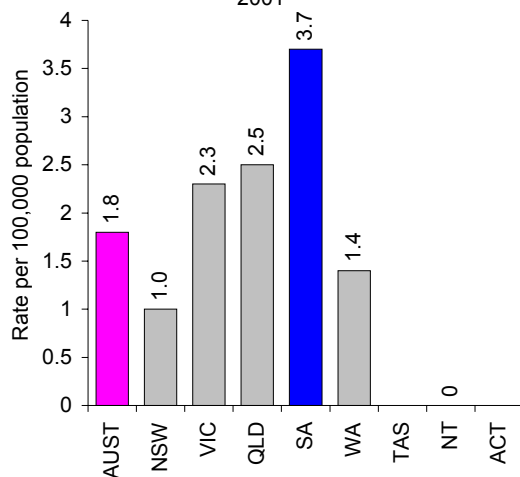


The reported *kidnapping/abduction* rates across all jurisdictions were comparatively low, with only 758 such offences being reported for Australia as a whole. In South Australia there were 36 such offences, which gave a rate of 2.4 per 100,000 population. This was below the national rate of 3.9.

In relation to the other Australian states and territories, South Australia had the third highest rate of *kidnapping/abduction*, with the figures for New South Wales being well above that of the other jurisdictions, at 7.2 per 100,000 population. The ACT had the lowest rate (1.0).

Blackmail/extortion

Figure 4.7
Victims of blackmail/extortion by state/territory,
2001

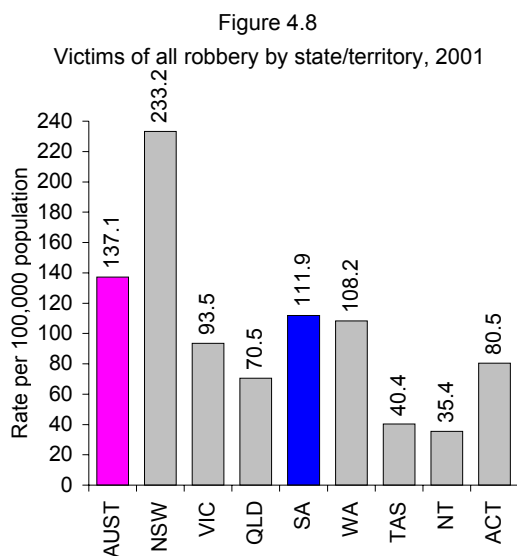


As with *murder, attempted murder* and *manslaughter*, the actual number of *blackmail/extortion* victims recorded in Australia in 2001 was very small (n=352).

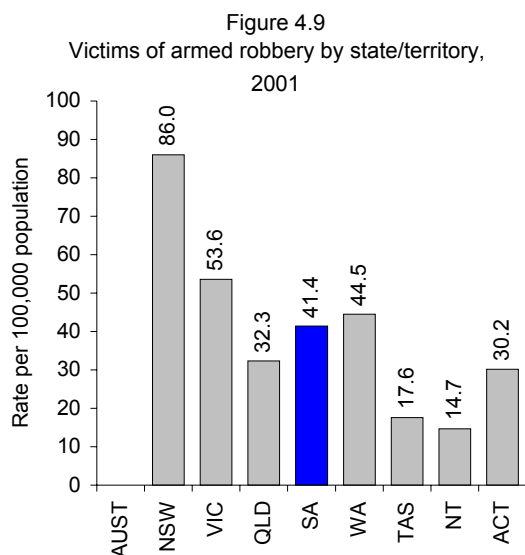
Figure 4.7 shows that South Australia recorded the highest rate of *blackmail/extortion* in Australia (3.7 per 100,000 population). The Northern Territory had the lowest rate (0.0).

Figures were not available for Tasmania and the ACT.

Robbery

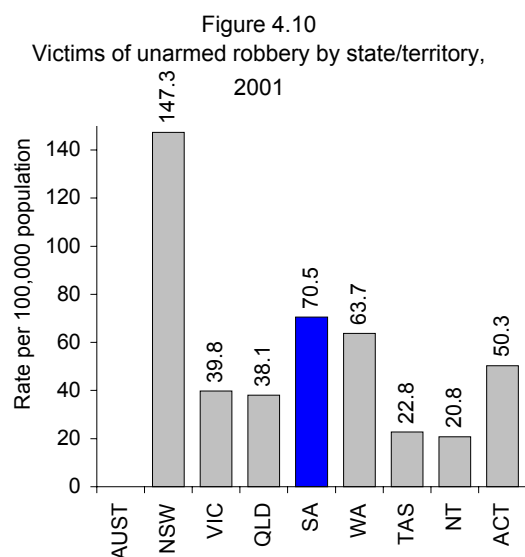


In 2001 South Australia recorded a *total robbery* rate of 111.9 per 100,000 population. This was the second highest rate in Australia, with the figure for New South Wales being well above that of the other jurisdictions (233.2). The lowest rates were recorded in the Northern Territory (35.4) and Tasmania (40.4).



In relation to *armed robbery*, South Australia had the fourth highest rate (41.4 per 100,000 population), which was well below that recorded in NSW (86.0). The two jurisdictions with the lowest *armed robbery* rates in 2001 were the Northern Territory (14.7) and Tasmania (17.6).

Armed robbery rates were not available for Australia as a whole.

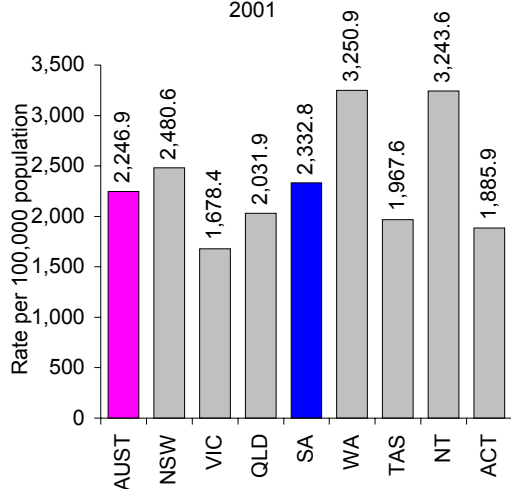


South Australia's *unarmed robbery* rate of 70.5 per 100,000 population was the second highest in Australia. The New South Wales rate for *unarmed robbery* (147.3) was well above that of all other jurisdictions. The lowest rates of *unarmed robbery* were recorded by the Northern Territory (20.8) and Tasmania (22.8).

Unarmed robbery rates were not available for Australia as a whole.

Unlawful entry with intent

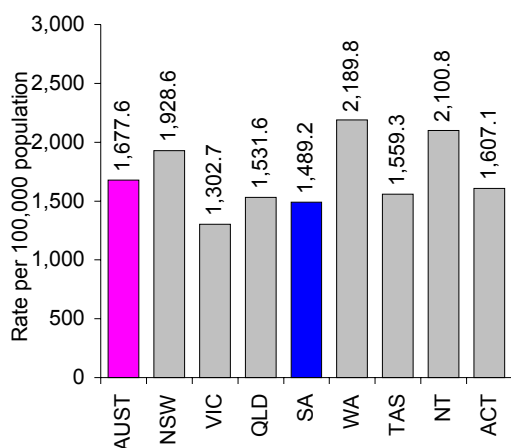
Figure 4.11
Victims of all UEWI by state/territory,
2001



Unlawful entry with intent (UEWI) is the unlawful entry of a structure with the intent to commit an offence such as theft, property damage or any offence against an individual. This category therefore incorporates burglary, break and enter and some stealing offences.

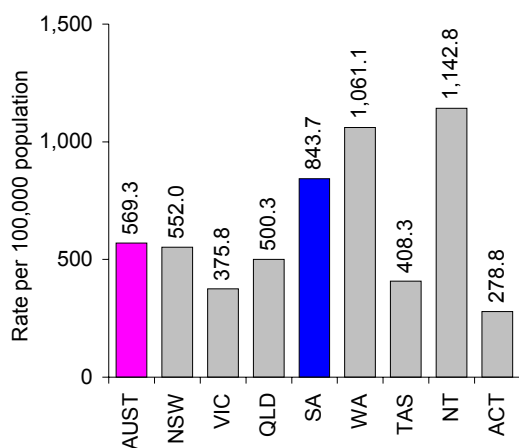
As indicated in Figure 4.11, in 2001 South Australia was ranked fourth for *Unlawful entry with intent*. Its rate of 2,332.8 was below that of Western Australia (3,250.9), the Northern Territory (3,243.6) and New South Wales (2,480.6). Victoria recorded the lowest rate of UEWI (1,678.4)

Figure 4.12
Victims of UEWI involving the taking of property by
state/territory, 2001



As indicated in Figure 4.12, in 2001 the rate of UEWI involving the taking of property for South Australia was 1489.2. This was lower than the national rate of 1677.6. It was the second lowest rate recorded, with Victoria recording the lowest rate of 1302.7.

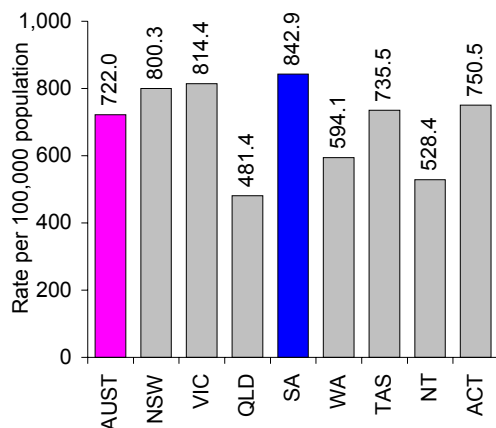
Figure 4.13
Victims of UEWI - other by state/territory,
2001



As indicated in Figure 4.13, in 2001 South Australia was ranked third for *Unlawful entry with intent - other*. Its rate of 843.7 was below that of the Northern Territory (1,142.8) and Western Australia (1,061.1). The ACT recorded the lowest rate (278.8 per 100,000 persons)

Motor vehicle theft

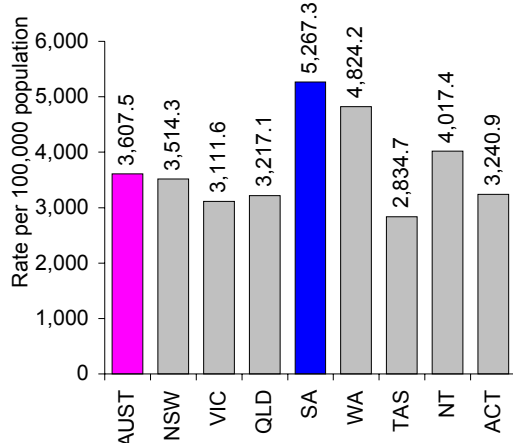
Figure 4.14
Victims of motor vehicle theft by state/territory,
2001



South Australia recorded the highest rate of *motor vehicle theft* in Australia in 2001 (842.9 per 100,000 population). Queensland had the lowest rate (481.4).

Other theft

Figure 4.15
Victims of 'other' theft by state/territory,
2001



Other theft is the taking of another person's property permanently and illegally, but without force, threat of force, use of coercive measures, deceit or having gained unlawful entry to any structure.

In 2001 the reported rate for *other theft* in South Australia was the highest recorded in any state or territory at 5,267.3 per 100,000 population. Tasmania recorded the lowest rate of *other theft* (2,834.7).

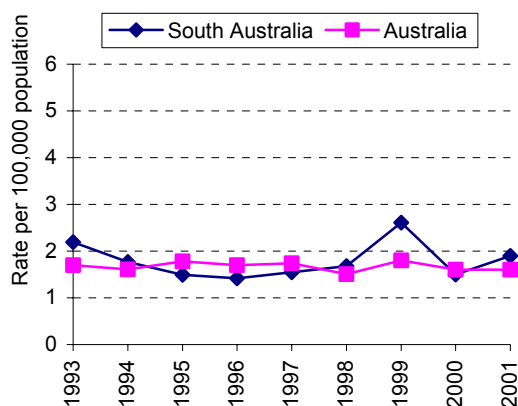
5. COMPARISONS ACROSS TIME

The following section compares South Australian victimisation rates per 100,000 persons with Australian rates. It should be noted that *manslaughter* has been excluded because of the negligible numbers involved.

2000 figures included for comparative purposes in this section are based on figures released by the ABS last year. As a result they may differ slightly from the revised 2000 figures included in the current ABS publication.

Murder, attempted murder and drive causing death

Figure 5.1
Murder 1993-2001

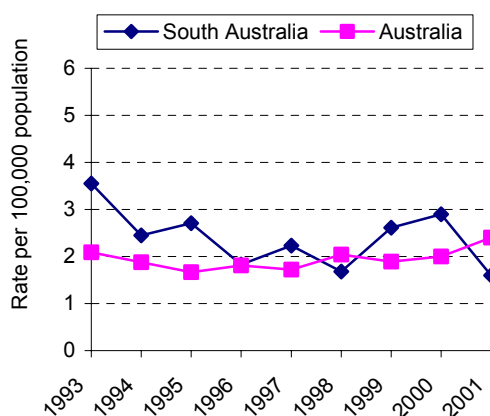


As shown in Figure 5.1, the murder rate in South Australia has ranged between 1.4 in 1996 and 2.6 in 1999 (as a result of the Snowtown murders)

In comparison, the national rate has ranged between 1.5 and 1.8.

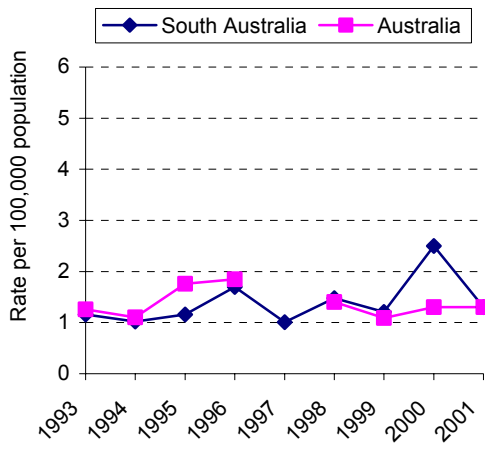
With the exception of 1999, murder rates for both South Australia and Australia have remained relatively stable.

Figure 5.2
Attempted murder 1993-2001



The South Australian *attempted murder* rate was higher than the Australian rate throughout most of this period, dipping below the national level in 1998 and 2001 only.

Figure 5.3
Driving causing death 1993 -2001*

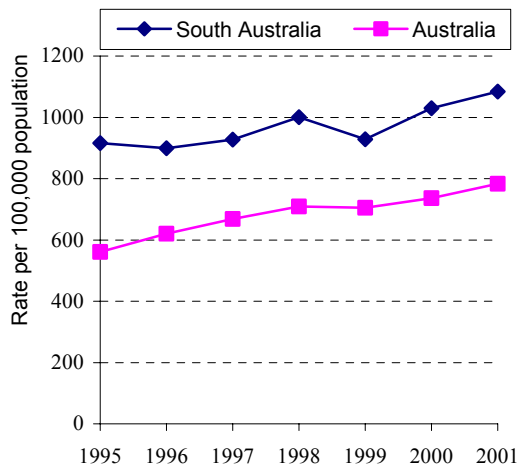


*National rate not available for 1997

As illustrated in Figure 5.3, with the exception of 1995 and 2000, the South Australia rate was comparable with the Australian rate throughout the nine years depicted.

Assault (excluding sexual assault)

Figure 5.4
Assault (excluding sexual assault)
1995 to 2001



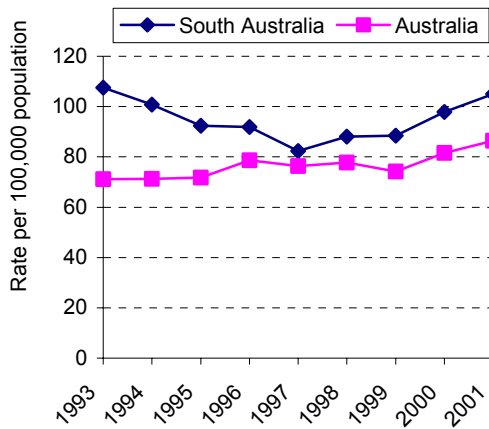
Data on *assault* victimisations (excluding *sexual assault*) have only been available at the national level from 1995 onwards.

As shown in Figure 5.4, with the exception of a decrease in South Australia in 1999, both the state and national rates for assault have increased over the period shown.

Throughout the seven years depicted, the South Australian rate of *assault* has been considerably higher than the national rate.

Sexual assault

Figure 5.5
Sexual assault 1993 -2001



As shown in Figure 5.5, the longitudinal trend in the *sexual assault* rate in South Australia is different from the national trend up until 1997.

While the South Australian rate decreased between 1993 and 1997, the national rate increased over the same period. However, both jurisdictions recorded increases in 2000 and 2001.

Throughout the period depicted the South Australian rate has been higher than the national rate.

Kidnapping/Abduction

Figure 5.6
Kidnapping/abduction 1993 -2001

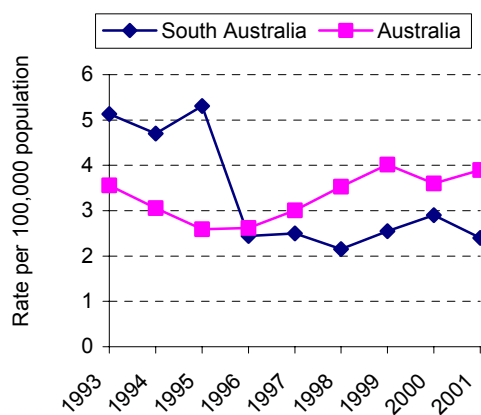


Figure 5.6 shows that South Australian *kidnapping/abduction* rates were higher than the Australian rates between 1993 and 1995 and lower than the Australian rates after this time.

Trends in the South Australian and national rates have differed considerably since 1993. The South Australian rate decreased from 2.9 per 100,000 population in 2000 to 2.4 in 2001, while the national rate increased from 3.6 to 3.9.

Robbery

Figure 5.7
Armed robbery 1993 -2001

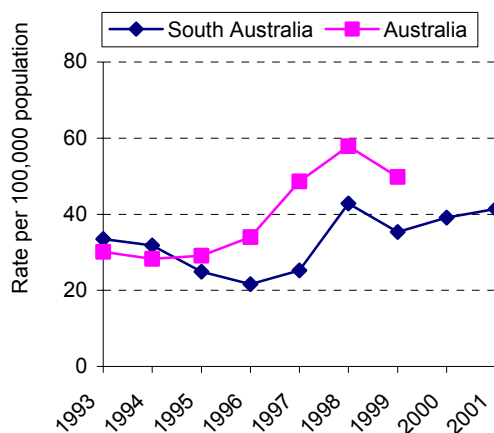
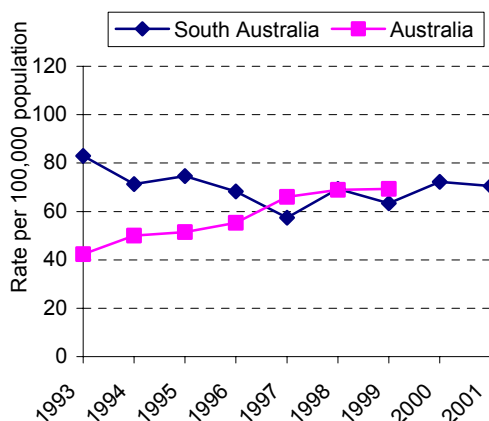


Figure 5.7 shows that between 1995 and 1999, the *armed robbery* rate in South Australia was well below the national rate.

The South Australian *armed robbery* rate increased in 2000 and again in 2001 (up to 41.4 per 100,000 population). No national rates were available for these years.

Figure 5.8
Unarmed robbery 1993 -2001



As shown in Figure 5.8, the *unarmed robbery* rate in South Australia was higher than the national rate between 1993 and 1996. From 1997 to 1999 the South Australian rate was similar to that recorded for Australia as a whole.

No data were available on the national rate in 2000 and 2001.

Figure 5.9
Total robbery 1993 -2001

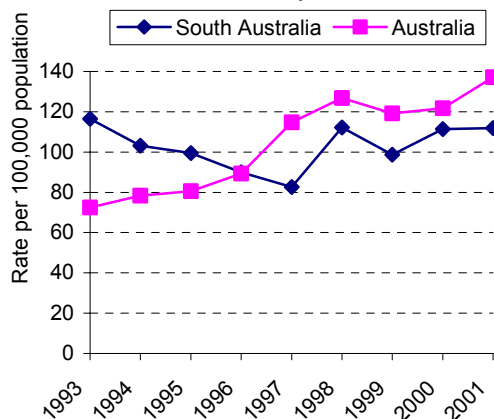


Figure 5.9 shows that since 1996 the South Australian rate has been below the national rate.

In 2001, while the South Australian rate remained stable (at 111.9), the Australian rate increased (to 137.1).

Blackmail/extortion

Figure 5.10
Blackmail/extortion 1993 -2001

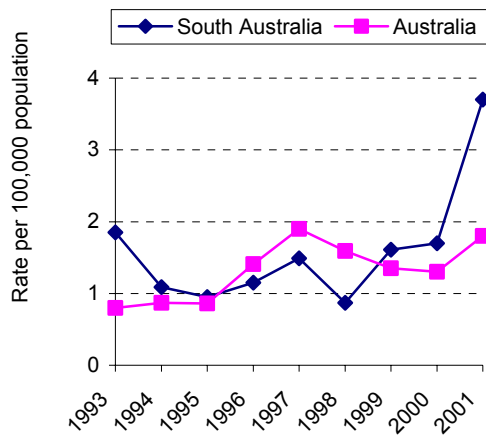
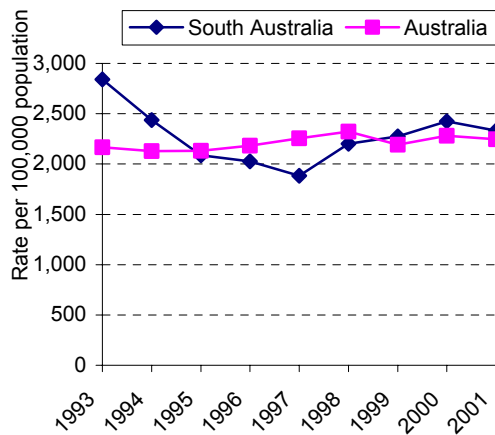


Figure 5.10 shows that the South Australian rate of *blackmail/extortion* has fluctuated considerably over the nine year period, although such fluctuations are to be expected given the small number of victimisations recorded.

Due to a sharp increase in 2001, the South Australian rate is now considerably higher than the Australian rate (3.7 compared with 1.8 per 100,000 population).

Unlawful entry with intent

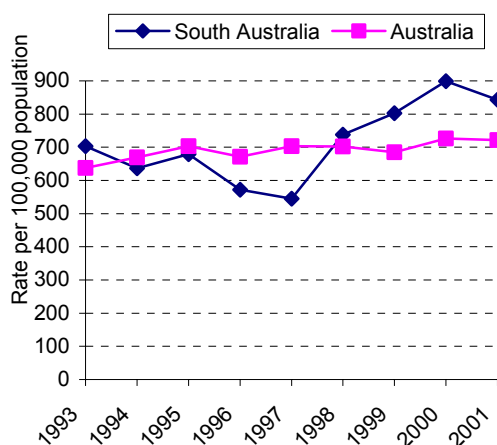
Figure 5.11
Total unlawful entry with intent
1993 -2001



As shown in Figure 5.11, there was a drop in the rate of total *unlawful entry with intent* in South Australia between 1993 and 1997, followed by increases between 1998 and 2000. In contrast, the national rate has remained relatively stable.

Motor Vehicle Theft

Figure 5.12
Motor vehicle theft 1993 -2001

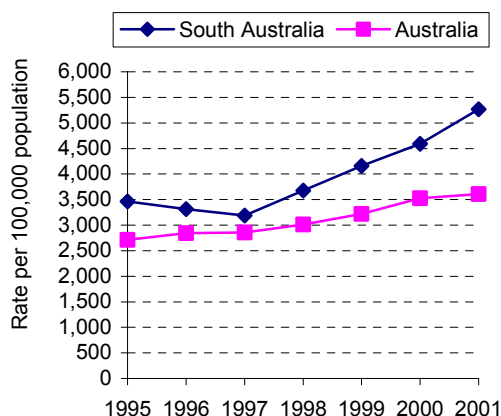


As indicated in Figure 5.12, the South Australian and national trends in the rate of motor vehicle theft have differed markedly over the period depicted.

While the Australian rate has remained relatively stable since about 1995, the South Australian rate initially decreased and then increased sharply between 1997 and 2000. As a result, from 1997 onwards, South Australia has been above the national rate.

Other theft

Figure 5.13
Other theft 1995 -2001



Other theft figures are only available since 1995.

Figure 5.13 shows that between 1997 and 2001 both the South Australian and Australian rates for *other theft* increased.

However, while the national rate increased gradually, the South Australian rate rose more sharply.

As a result, South Australia's rate of *other theft* has been consistently higher than the national average since 1995.