

National Crime Statistics

Recorded Crime - Victims 2003 The South Australian Perspective

JAYNE MARSHALL

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 recorded by 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 recorded crime between states.


This Information Bulletin outlines the findings of the eleventh publication by the National Crime Statistics Unit (ABS, 2004: Cat No 4510.0). It reports on the number of victims per offence category recorded by police between January and December 2003. Some earlier figures from 1993 to 2002 have also been provided in the Bulletin for comparative purposes.

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.

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 during the year will be counted separately for each incident. For example, a person who reports to police that they have been robbed twice in 2003 will be counted twice.

Comparability across jurisdictions

While every effort is made to ensure that these national statistics are uniform and comparable, some differences remain. In particular, responsibility for deciding whether a particular crime will be recorded varies from one jurisdiction to another. South Australian police follow a 'prima facie' model, which means that all crime allegations are recorded. In some other states, such as Victoria, police use an 'evidence-based' model, with the police only recording those allegations when they are satisfied that a crime has actually occurred. The latter approach results in fewer allegations being officially recorded.

The Board of Management of the National Crime Statistics Unit has instigated a process to identify differences between jurisdictions in the recording of crime and to improve comparability. Until those differences are resolved, extreme care should be taken when considering whether one state's victimisation rate is higher or lower than another state.

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
- assault

- sexual assault
- kidnapping/abduction
- robbery
- blackmail/extortion
- unlawful entry with intent
- motor vehicle theft
- other theft.

For some of these offence types – notably *homicide and related offences*, *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 recorded by 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.

Percentage Changes In South Australia Between 2002 And 2003

Table 1 details changes in the actual number of victimisations between 2002 and 2003, together with changes in the rate of victimisation per 100,000 population. The magnitude of the percentage increase/decrease per offence differs slightly depending upon the type of measurement used. Numbers in some groups are also extremely low and therefore calculating percentage changes would be meaningless.

Overall, decreases in the **rate** of victimisation were recorded for most offence categories, including *assault* (down by 3.8%), *total robbery* (down by 19.1%), *unarmed robbery* (down by 28.6%), *unlawful entry with intent* (down by 14.2%), *motor vehicle theft* (down by 9.5%) and *other theft* (down by 7.4%).

Increases in the **rate** of victimisation were recorded for sexual assault (up by 13.3%), armed robbery (up by 1.2%) and kidnapping/abduction (up by 9.1%, although the rates in this category are relatively small).

Table 1 The number of victims and the rate of victimisation per offence category recorded in South Australia: 2002 compared with 2003

Offence Group	Number of victims			Rate of victimisation per 100,000		
	2002	2003	% change	2002	2003	% change **
Homicide and related offences	81	79	-2.5	5.3	5.2	-3.0
Murder	29	19	*	1.9	1.2	*
Attempted murder	39	40	+2.6	2.6	2.6	0
Manslaughter	0	1	*	0.0	na	na
Drive causing death	13	19	*	0.9	1.2	*
Assault	16,540	16,006	-3.2	1,089.1	1,047.9	-3.8
Sexual Assault	1,625	1,852	+14.0	107.0	121.3	+13.3
Kidnapping/abduction	31	34	+9.7	2.0	2.2	+9.1
Robbery (total)	1,623	1,321	-18.6	106.9	86.5	-19.1
Armed robbery	521	530	+1.7	34.3	34.7	+1.2
Unarmed robbery	1,102	791	-28.2	72.6	51.8	-28.6
Blackmail/extortion	61	61	0.0	4.0	4.0	-0.6
Unlawful entry with intent	33,054	28,513	-13.7	2,176.5	1,886.7	-14.2
UEWI involving the taking of property	21,773	18,379	-15.6	1,433.7	1,203.3	-16.1
UEWI - other	11,281	10,134	-10.2	742.8	663.5	-10.7
Motor vehicle theft	11,214	10,206	-9.0	738.4	668.2	-9.5
Other theft	79,185	73,759	-6.9	5,214.0	4,829.0	-7.4

* The number/rate of offences is too low to enable the effective use of percentages.

** The percentage change is calculated using the difference between *unrounded* rates.

Comparison Of South Australian Crime Rates In 2002 With National Average

Table 2 compares South Australian crime rates with those recorded for Australia as a whole. As noted earlier though, because of jurisdictional differences in how police record data, such comparisons must be treated with caution.

	SA rate per 100,000 population	Australian rate per 100,000 population	Rank of order of SA in 2003#	State/Territory with highest rate in 2003	
Homicide and related offences	5.2	4.7	4	NT	9.1
Murder	1.2	1.5	Lowest	NT	5.5
Attempted murder	2.6	1.8	2	QLD	3.1
Drive causing death	1.2	1.2	Equal 2 with QLD	NSW	1.8
Assault	1,047.9	798.0	3	NT	1,847.2
Sexual Assault	121.3	91.7	3	NT	152.8
Kidnapping/abduction	2.2	3.6	3	NSW	6.3
Robbery (total)	86.5	99.2	3	NSW	162.2
Armed robbery	34.7	36.0	3	NSW	49.6
Unarmed robbery	51.8	63.2	3	NSW	112.6
Blackmail/extortion	4.0	1.9	1	SA	4.0
Unlawful entry with intent	1,866.7	1,777.9	4	WA	2,899.7
UEWI involving the taking of property	1,203.3	1,313.1	6	WA	1,949.7
UEWI - other	663.5	464.8	3	WA	950.0
Motor vehicle theft	668.2	497.1	2	ACT	789.8
Other theft	4,829.0	3,214.3	1	SA	4,829.0

A ranking of one indicates the highest rate of reporting offending.

The offence of manslaughter has been excluded from this table due to lack of comparable data.

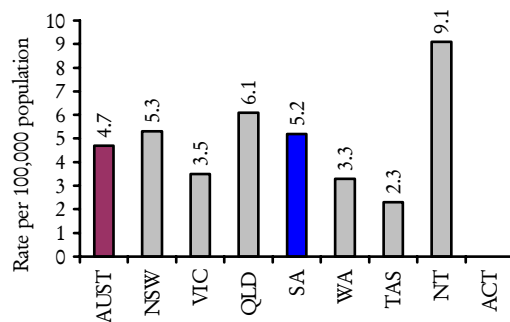
- South Australia had a higher rate per 100,000 population than Australia for
 - homicide and related offences (5.2 compared with 4.7 respectively)
 - assault (1,047.9 compared with 798.0 for Australia)
 - sexual assault (121.3 compared with 91.7)
 - blackmail/extortion (4.0 compared with 1.9)
 - motor vehicle theft (668.2 compared with 497.1) and
 - other theft (4,829.0 compared with 3,214.3).
- South Australia had a lower rate per 100,000 population for all robbery categories.
- South Australia had a slightly higher rate for unlawful entry with intent than Australia, although within this category, South Australia had a lower rate for UWEI involving the taking of property but a higher rate for UEWI – other.

A Comparison Of South Australia With Other Jurisdictions

Figures 1 to 16 provide a more graphic illustration of the level of recorded victimisations in South Australia compared with other jurisdictions and the national average. As noted earlier though, because of jurisdictional differences in how police record data, such comparisons must be treated with caution. Due to a lack of comparable data, *manslaughter* figures are not included here.

Homicide and related offences

Figure 1 Victims of homicide and related offences by state/territory, 2003



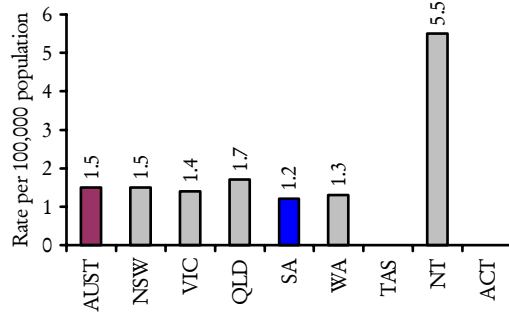
The number of extremely violent crimes against the person recorded in Australia in 2003 was relatively small. In total, 938 *homicide and related offences* were recorded by police during the year.

The Northern Territory recorded the highest rate for *homicide and related offences* (9.1), followed by Queensland (6.1).

South Australia recorded the fourth highest rate (5.2) while the lowest rate (2.3) was recorded in Tasmania.

Figures were not available for the ACT

Figure 2 Victims of murder by state/territory, 2003

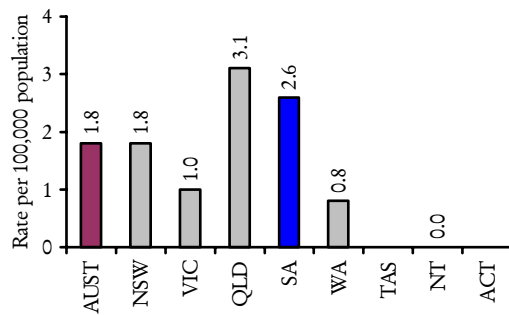


The Northern Territory *murder* rate of 5.5 was higher than that of any other jurisdiction.

South Australia recorded the lowest rate (1.2).

Figures were not available for the ACT or Tasmania.

Figure 3 Victims of attempted murder by state/territory, 2003



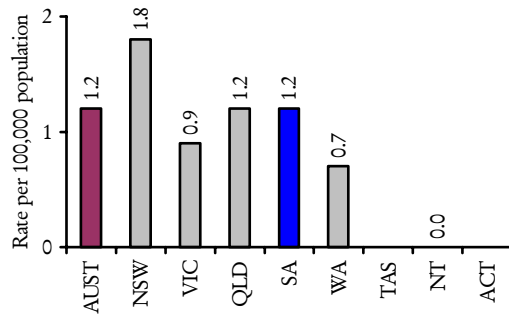
Rates are extremely small across all jurisdictions.

Queensland recorded the highest rate for *attempted murder* (3.1 per 100,000 persons).

South Australia recorded the second highest rate.

Figures were not available for the ACT and Tasmania.

Figure 4 Victims of drive causing death by state/territory, 2003



Again, recorded rates for *driving causing death* were extremely low across all jurisdictions.

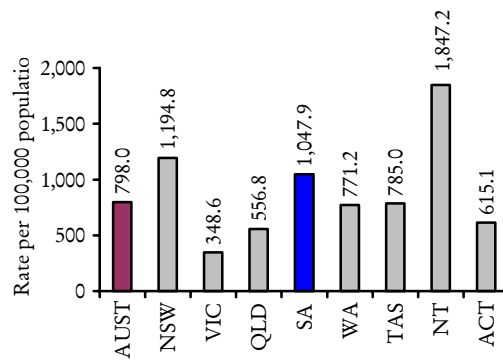
They ranged from 0 in the Northern Territory to 1.8 per 100,000 population in New South Wales.

South Australia was equal to the Australian rate of 1.2.

Figures were not available for the ACT or Tasmania.

Assault

Figure 5 Victims of assault by state/territory, 2003

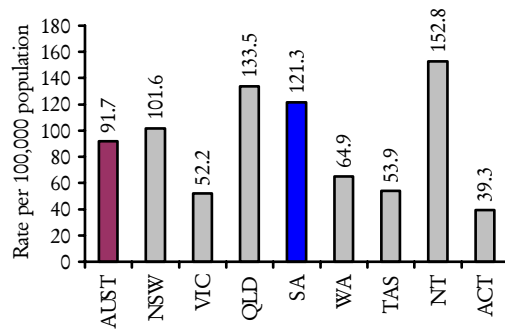


South Australia recorded the third highest rate behind the Northern Territory and New South Wales.

Victoria had the lowest rate of all jurisdictions but this may be due to differences in police recording practices. Whereas in certain states such as Victoria police require some evidence that the offence has occurred before they will record it, in South Australia all allegation are counted. This difference leads to higher recorded numbers in South Australia.

Sexual assault

Figure 6 Victims of sexual assault by state/territory, 2003



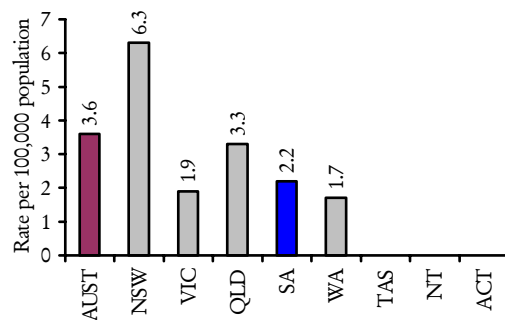
South Australia recorded the third highest rate of *sexual assault*, behind the Northern Territory and Queensland.

The ACT recorded the lowest rate of *sexual assault* in 2003.

Again, however, there is some indication that police recording practices for this offence varies across the jurisdictions, particularly in Victoria.

Kidnapping/abduction

Figure 7 Victims of kidnapping/abduction by state/territory, 2003



The recorded *kidnapping/abduction* rates across all jurisdictions were comparatively low, with only 716 such offences being recorded for Australia as a whole.

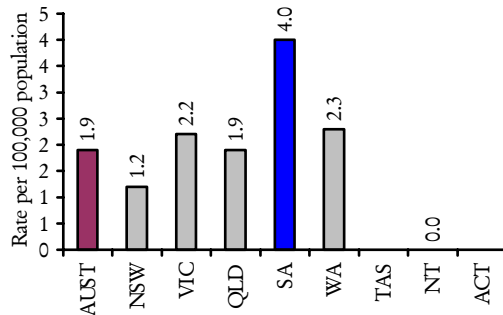
In South Australia in 2003 there were 34 such offences, which gave a rate of 2.2 per 100,000 population. This was below the national rate of 3.6 and consistent with the rates recorded in a number of other jurisdictions.

The New South Wales rate was well above that of the other jurisdictions, at 6.3 per 100,000 population.

Figures were not available for Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the ACT.

Blackmail/extortion

Figure 8 Victims of blackmail/extortion by state/territory, 2003



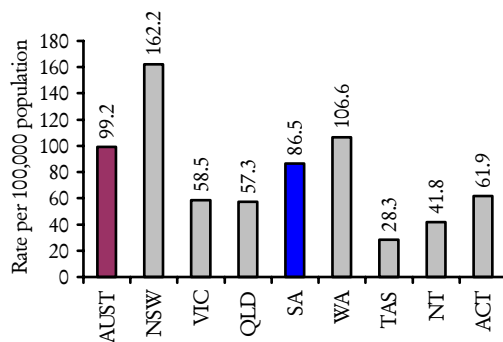
The actual number of *blackmail/ extortion* victims recorded in Australia in 2003 was very small (n=370).

South Australia recorded the highest rate of *blackmail/extortion* in Australia. This may be attributable to the introduction in 1999 of new offences dealing with the contamination of foods which, in South Australia, are grouped within the *blackmail/ extortion* category.

Figures were not available for Tasmania and the ACT.

Robbery

Figure 9 Victims of all robbery by state/territory, 2003

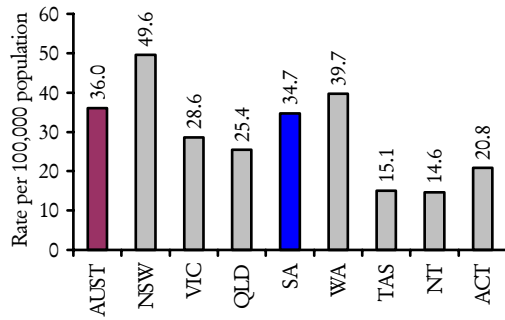


In 2003 South Australia recorded the third highest rate of *total robbery* in Australia.

However, the figure for New South Wales was well above that of the other jurisdictions (162.2).

The lowest rate was recorded in Tasmania (28.3).

Figure 10 Victims of armed robbery by state/territory, 2003

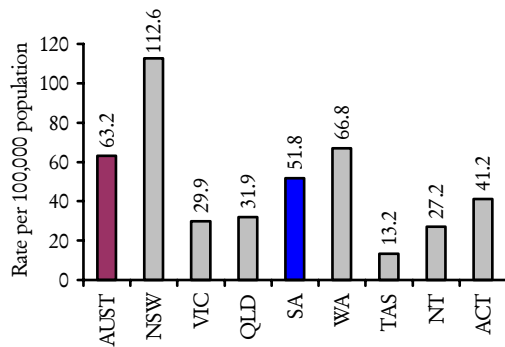


In relation to *armed robbery*, South Australia had the third highest rate, which was well below that recorded in NSW.

The jurisdiction with the lowest *armed robbery* rate in 2003 was the Northern Territory.

The South Australian rate was lower than the national rate.

Figure 11 Victims of unarmed robbery by state/territory, 2003



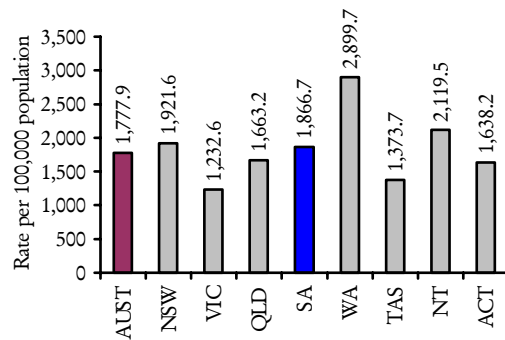
South Australia's *unarmed robbery* rate was the third highest in Australia, but below the Australian average.

The New South Wales rate for *unarmed robbery* was well above that of all other jurisdictions.

The lowest rate of *unarmed robbery* was recorded by Tasmania.

Unlawful entry with intent

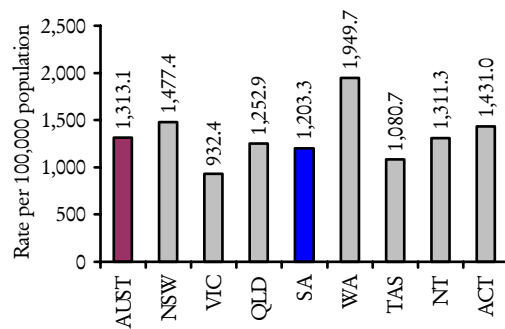
Figure 12 Victims of all UEWI by state/territory, 2003



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.

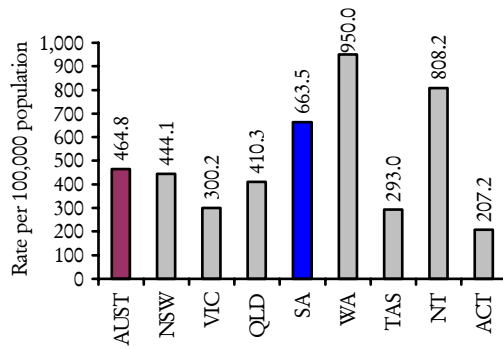
In 2003 South Australia was ranked fourth for *Unlawful entry with intent*, below that of Western Australia, the Northern Territory and New South Wales.

Figure 13 Victims of all UEWI involving the taking of property by state/territory, 2003



In 2003 the rate of UEWI involving the taking of property for South Australia was lower than the national rate and considerably lower than the Western Australian rate.

Figure 14 Victims of all UEWI - other by state/territory, 2003



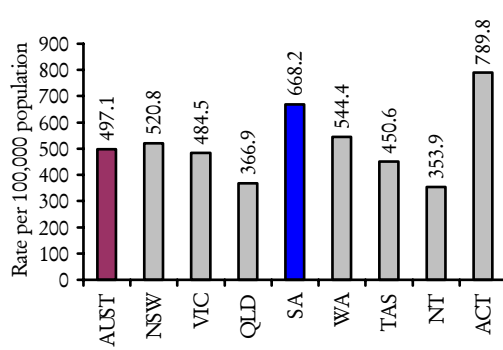
In 2003 South Australia was ranked third for *Unlawful entry with intent - other*.

Its rate was below that of Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

The ACT recorded the lowest rate.

Motor vehicle theft

Figure 15 Victims of motor vehicle theft by state/territory, 2003

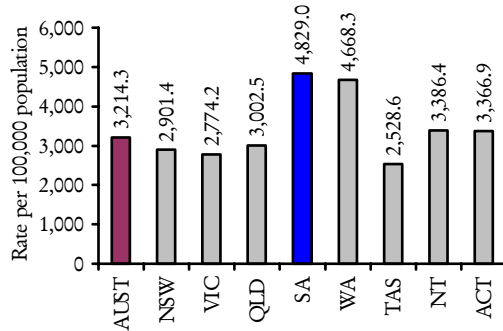


South Australia recorded the second highest rate of *motor vehicle theft* in Australia in 2003.

The Northern Territory had the lowest rate.

Other theft

Figure 16 Victims of 'other' theft by state/territory, 2003



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 2003 the recorded rate for *other theft* in South Australia was the highest of any state or territory.

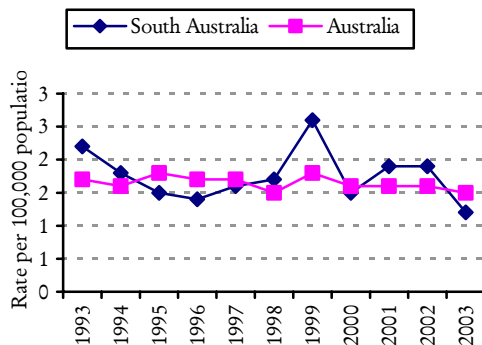
Tasmania recorded the lowest rate of *other theft*.

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.

Murder, attempted murder and drive causing death

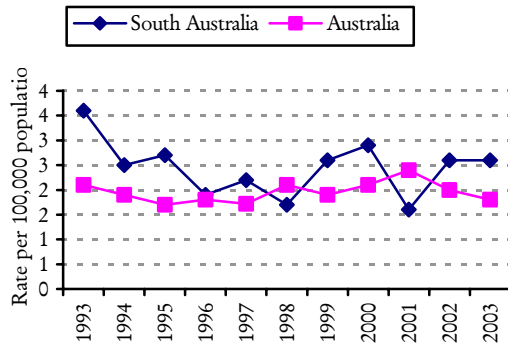
Figure 17 Murder 1993-2003



The *murder* rate in South Australia has remained below 2.0 per 100,000 population apart from a spike in 1999 due to the 'bodies in a barrel' murders.

Similarly, rates for both South Australia and Australia as a whole have remained relatively stable over the period.

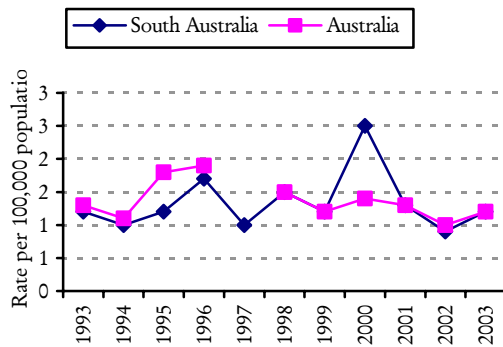
Figure 18 Attempted murder 1993-2003



Despite annual fluctuations, the South Australian *attempted murder* rate has remained relatively stable over the 11 years depicted.

The Australian rate has also remained relatively stable.

Figure 19 Drive causing death 1993-2003*

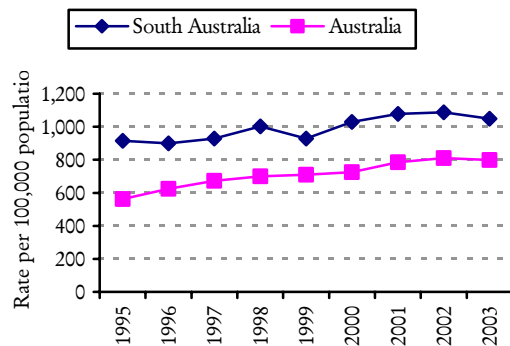


With the exception of 1995 and 2000, the South Australia rate was comparable with the Australian rate throughout the eleven years depicted.

The national rate was not available for 1997.

Assault (excluding sexual assault)

Figure 20 Assault (excluding sexual assault) 1993-2003



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

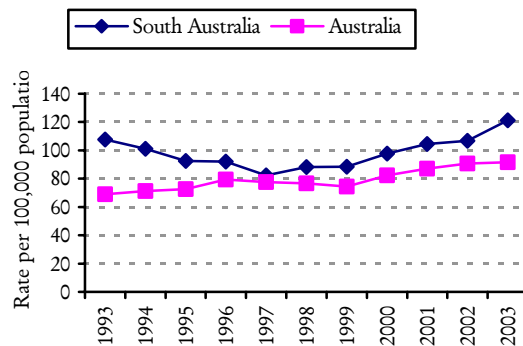
Throughout the nine years depicted, the South Australian rate of *assault* has been considerably higher than the national rate.

As noted earlier, this may be partly due to jurisdictional differences in police recording practices as well as to the fact that SAPOL strongly encourages the reporting of all assaults, particularly domestic violence assaults.

While both the state and national rates generally increased over the last nine years, the magnitude of increase in South Australia has been lower than that of the national average (14.4% compared with 41.8% respectively).

Sexual assault

Figure 21 Sexual assault 1993-2003



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

Again, this could be due to differences in police recording practices as well as to the fact that SAPOL strongly encourages reporting of sexual offences. Mandatory reporting of child abuse cases has also been in place in this state for a number of years.

While the South Australian rate decreased between 1993 and 1997, the national rate generally increased over the same period.

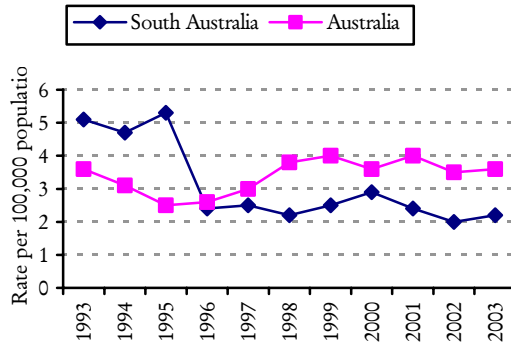
However, since 1999, both the national and South Australian figures have trended upwards. In 2003 South Australia recorded a sharper increase than did Australia as a whole (up 13.3% compared with a national rise of only 0.2%).

The large increase in South Australia in 2003 coincides with:

- The establishment of a Paedophile Task Force in May 2003 and
- New legislation to abolish the time limit for the prosecution of certain sexual offences

Kidnapping/abduction

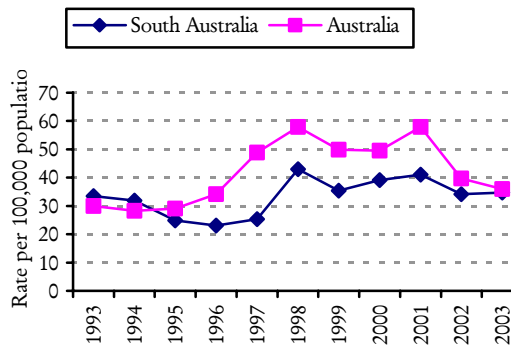
Figure 22 Kidnapping/abduction 1993-2003



Between 1993 and 1995, the South Australian rates for *kidnapping/abduction* were higher than the Australian average. However, following a strong decrease in South Australia in 1996, the South Australian *kidnapping/abduction* rates have remained lower than the Australian rates.

Robbery

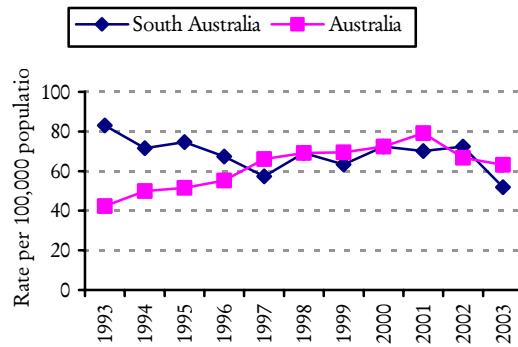
Figure 23 Armed robbery 1993-2003



The South Australian *armed robbery* rate has been lower than the Australian rate since 1995.

However, due to a marked decrease in the national figure in 2002 and a further decrease in 2003, the South Australian rate is now only marginally lower than that of Australia as a whole (34.7 per 100,000 population, compared with 36.0).

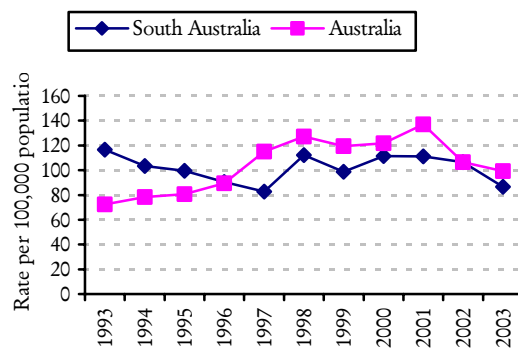
Figure 24 Unarmed robbery 1993-2003



Trends in the *unarmed robbery* rate in South Australia were generally comparable with those for Australia for the years 1997 to 2002.

South Australia recorded a sharp decrease in 2003, with the latest figure the lowest recorded in this state over the period depicted.

Figure 25 Total robbery 1993-2003



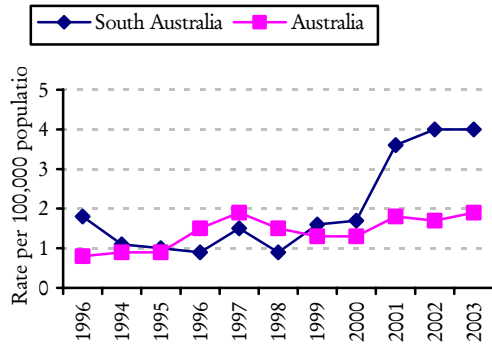
The South Australian total *robbery* rate was lower than the Australian rate between 1997 and 2001.

In 2002, due to a pronounced downturn in the national figure, South Australia's recorded victimisation rate for *robbery* was virtually the same as the national average.

In 2003, both South Australia and Australia recorded decreases, but because the decrease was more pronounced in South Australia, its rate is again lower than the national figure.

Blackmail/extortion

Figure 26 Blackmail/extortion 1993-2003



While *blackmail/extortion* rates remain relatively low, this category increased substantially in South Australia between 2000 and 2002, while national rates remained stable.

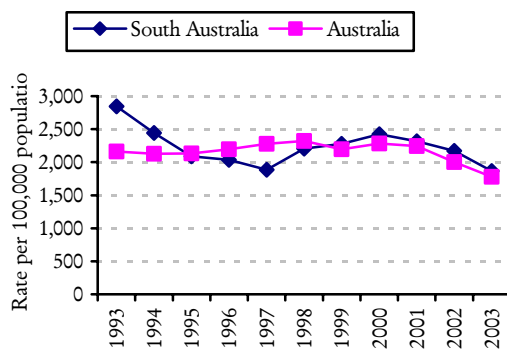
As a result, the state figures are now substantially higher than the national rate.

This increase may be attributable to the introduction in 1999 of new offences dealing with the contamination of foods which, in South Australia, are grouped within the blackmail/ extortion category.

There was little change between 2002 and 2003 in the South Australian figures.

Unlawful entry with intent

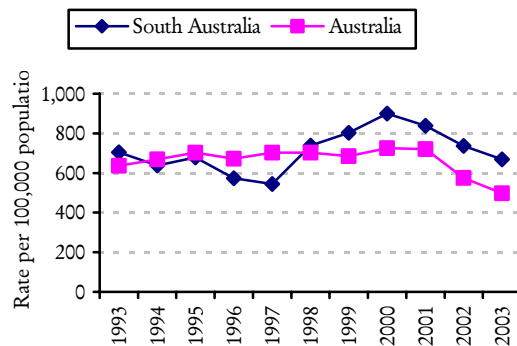
Figure 27 Total unlawful entry with intent 1993-2003



From 2000 onwards the South Australian and Australian rates have followed a similar downward trend, with the South Australian rate being marginally higher over this period.

Motor vehicle theft

Figure 28 Motor vehicle theft 1993-2003



South Australian rates for *motor vehicle theft* increased substantially from 1997 until 2000, while national rates remained relatively stable.

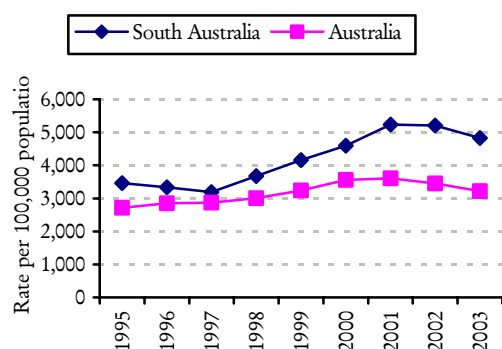
Over the past three years, this upward trend has been reversed, with both South Australian and Australian rates decreasing substantially.

The South Australian decreases could be attributed to a strong emphasis by police on strategies to reduce motor vehicle crime, such as Operational Vigil.

However, despite the recent decreases, the South Australian rate remains well above the national average which may, in part, be due to the fact that South Australia has the oldest fleet in Australia.

Other theft

Figure 29 Other theft 1993-2003



Other theft figures are only available since 1995.

Between 1998 and 2001 both the South Australian and Australian rates for *other theft* increased, with the South Australian rate rising more sharply.

Both peaked in 2001, followed by decreases in 2002 and 2003.

Part of the increase in South Australia in the late 1990s could be due to legislative changes introduced in December 1999, which replaced *break/enter* offences with *serious criminal trespass*. Under the old legislation, any goods stolen during a break-in were recorded under the general charge of *break/enter*. However, under the new legislation, as second offence of *theft* is now recorded.

The Office of Crime Statistics and Research acknowledge the assistance of Chris Zanker and Joanne Favretto from SAPOL in providing some interpretation for the observed trends.