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# Offences cleared by way of an Apprehension

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This Bulletin is the third in a series of Information Bulletins based on the data contained in the publication *Crime and Justice 2003, Offences reported to Police, the Victims and Alleged Perpetrators*. Other Bulletins in the series consider:

- Incidents and Offences recorded by Police; and
- Victims of offences recorded by Police.

An apprehension report may be lodged by police when an alleged perpetrator is cautioned, arrested or reported.

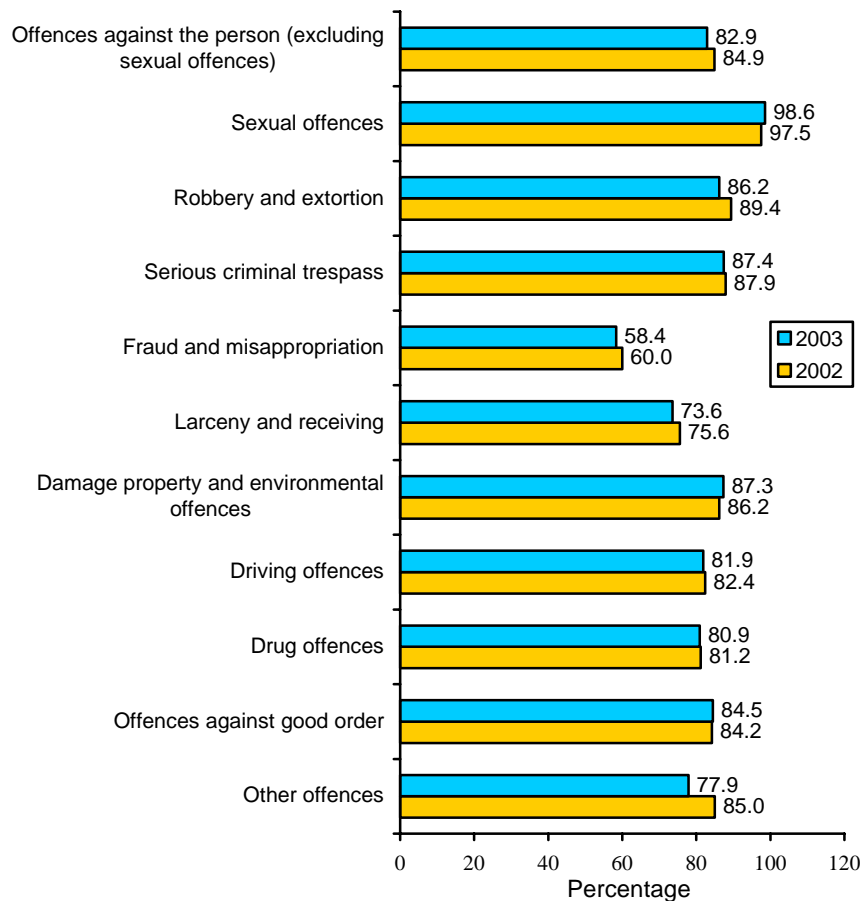
In the following analysis of apprehension data, several different units of analysis are used. In the first section below, information is presented on all charges laid. However, unlike the counting rules used in the tables contained in Section 3 and 4 of the report, this does not include multiple counts of the same offence. For example, if an alleged offender has been charged on the apprehension report with three counts of *assault* - which generally indicates the one victim and the one incident - only one *assault* is recorded. However, if the offender has been charged with three separate *assault* offences, all are counted because this usually indicates three different victims and three different incidents.

In the second section below, information is presented on the number of actual apprehensions and the number of discrete individuals involved in those apprehensions. This is relevant given that there can be more than one offence per apprehension report, and the same person may be apprehended on more than one occasion during the course of a single year.

## Characteristics of alleged offenders

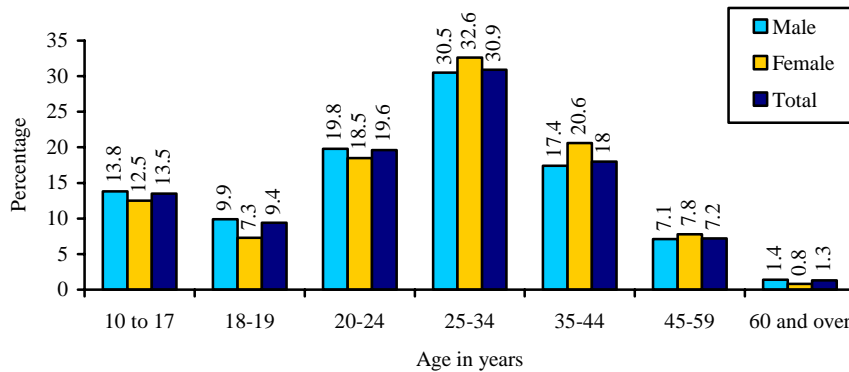
- There were 115,172 separate charges listed on police apprehension reports lodged in 2003. This figure was lower (by 3.2%) than the 118,948 charges laid in 2002.
- As was the case in previous years, with the exception of *fraud and misappropriation*, more than seven in 10 of those charges for which information on the sex of the alleged offender was recorded involved males, although this percentage varied depending on the type of offence involved (see Figure 1), reaching a high of 98.6% for *sexual offences*.
- While only a minority of charges were laid against females, this group accounted for 24.4% of all *larceny and receiving* offences charged (including 39.6% of all *larcenies from shops*) and 40% of all *fraud and misappropriation* charges.
- The proportion of males involved in charges laid by police remained relatively stable between 2002 and 2003 for all offence groups.

Figure 1 Charges laid by police in 2002 and 2003: proportion per offence type involving males



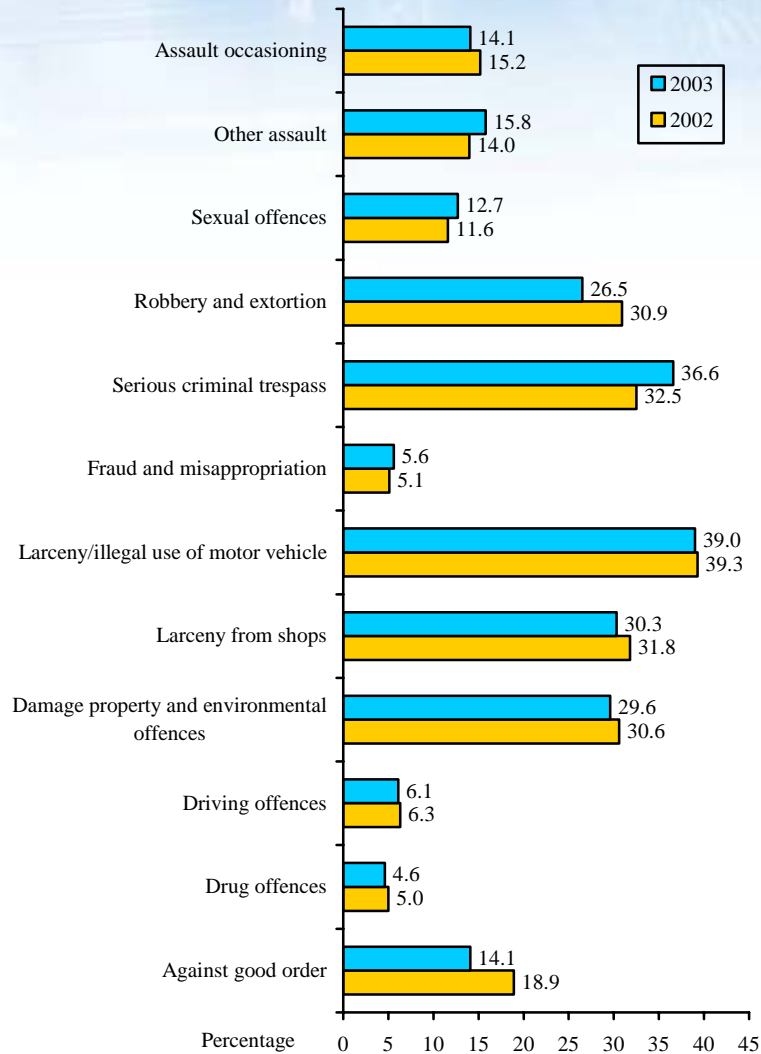
- Of the 115,139 charges listed in those apprehension reports filed in 2003 where the age of the alleged offender was recorded, relatively few involved older individuals. In contrast, almost six in ten of all charges were allegedly committed by persons in the 18 - 34 year age group.
- Figure 2 shows that overall, there were very few age differences between male and female charges laid in 2003. For both groups, those aged 25 - 34 years dominated. Similarly, relatively few males or females were aged 45 years and over.

Figure 2 Charges laid by police in 2003: age of alleged offenders by sex



- The proportion of charges involving juveniles aged 10 to 17 years varied depending on the type of offence involved. At one end of the scale, juveniles constituted only 4.6% of all *drug* charges laid in 2003, 5.6% of all *fraud and misappropriation* charges and 6.1% of all *driving offences*. At the other end of the scale, they were involved in 39.0% of all *larceny/illegal use of a motor vehicle* charges. This age group also accounted for 36.6% of all *serious criminal trespass* charges and 30.3% of all *larceny from shop* charges (see Figure 3).
- It should be stressed, however, that these data do not necessarily indicate that juveniles actually committed more or fewer offences within these categories than other age groups. It simply means that they were apprehended more or less often by police for such offences. Because of their comparative immaturity, they may simply have been more visible to police and so more vulnerable to apprehension.

Figure 3 Juveniles as a proportion of all charges laid by police: 2003 compared with 2002

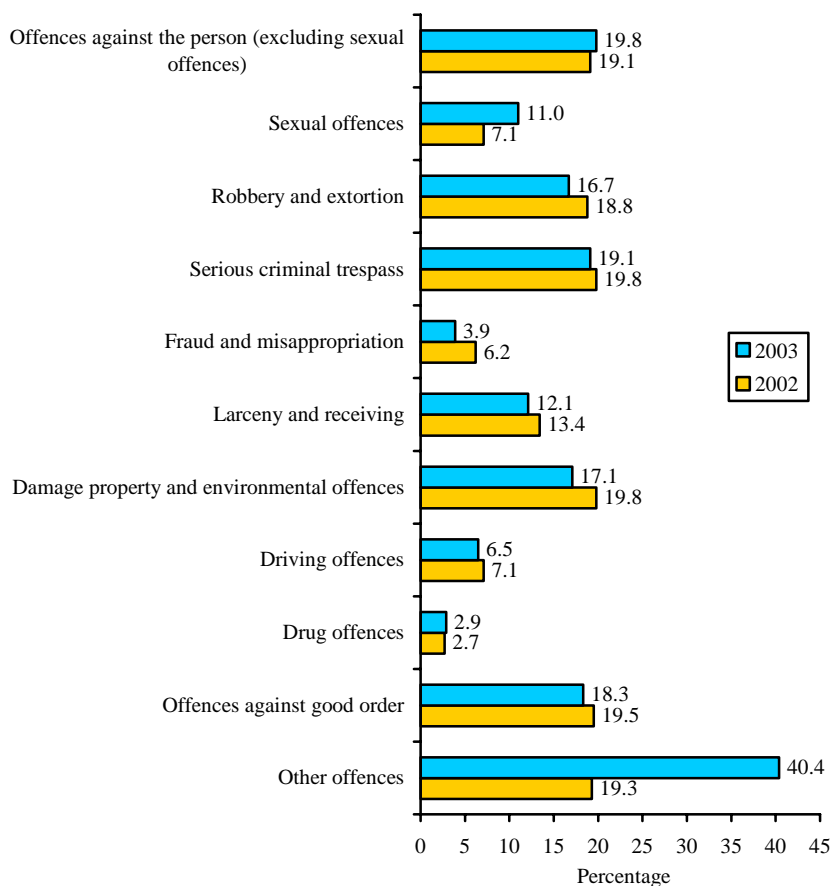


**Offences cleared in 2003 by way of an apprehension: racial appearance of persons charged.**

- Information on racial appearance was available for 108,698 or 94.4% of the 115,172 charges laid by police in 2003.
- Of these 108,698 charges, 13,279 (12.2%) involved persons considered by police to be of Aboriginal appearance. This points to a significant over-representation of Aboriginal persons within the South Australian criminal justice system, as according to the most recent census, Indigenous persons constituted only 1.4% of all persons aged 10 years and over resident in this State in 2001.

- It should be noted that these data do not include persons dealt with by way of expiation notices, such as CENs and Traffic Infringement Notices. Nor do they include those who, rather than being charged with a drug offence, are diverted to the Police Drug Diversion Initiative. It is well documented that Aboriginal persons are under-represented in these ‘diversionary’ options.
- The extent of Aboriginal involvement also varied considerably depending on the type of charge. As indicated in Figure 4, persons identified by police as Aboriginal accounted for 40% of all charges involving an *other offence*, but only about 3% of all *drug* charges.

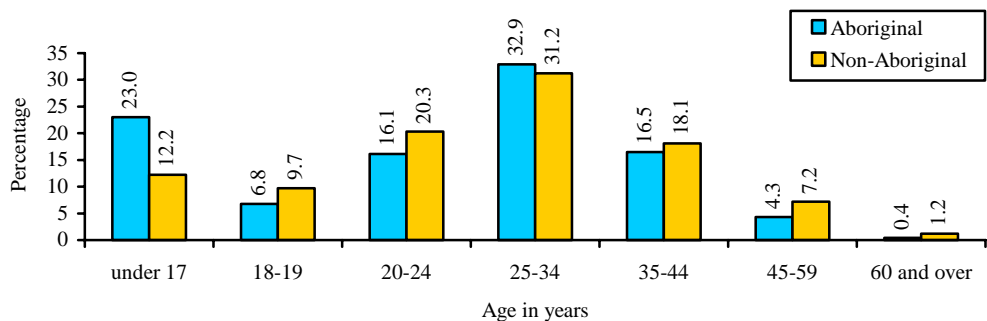
Figure 4 Charges laid by police in 2002 and 2003: proportion per offence category involving persons of Aboriginal appearance.





- Overall, the proportion of offences involving Aboriginal persons was relatively similar to those recorded for most offence types in the previous year. The only difference of note was the higher proportion of Aboriginal persons charged with *other offences* in 2003 compared with 2002.
- One offence category where Aboriginal persons have always been over-represented is that of *offences against good order*. In 2003 persons of Aboriginal appearance accounted for 22.9% of all such charges laid where relevant information was recorded. However, this varied depending on the type of *good order* offence involved. At one end of the scale, Aboriginals accounted for only 11.0% of *unlawful possession of weapons* charges laid and 11.4% of *graffiti and related* charges. At the other end of the scale, this group accounted for 28.6% of all *indecent/offensive language* charges, 18.2% of all *disorderly/offensive behaviour* charges and 17.4% of all *resist/hinder police* charges where information on racial appearance was available.
- In interpreting these figures though, it should be stressed that they do not reflect the proportion of offences within each category that were actually committed by Aboriginal persons. They simply indicate the proportion who were apprehended. Given the low clear up rate for many offences (see earlier discussion) it may be that, because of their greater visibility, persons of Aboriginal appearance are simply more vulnerable to detection than other Australians.
- A comparison of the age profiles of persons charged with offences in 2003 indicates some minor Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal differences (see Figure 5). As indicated, for those charges where information on racial appearance was recorded, a much higher proportion of those laid against Aboriginal persons involved individuals aged 10 - 17 years. In contrast, a lower proportion of offences alleged against Aboriginals in 2002 involved persons aged 18 to 24 years and 45 years and over.

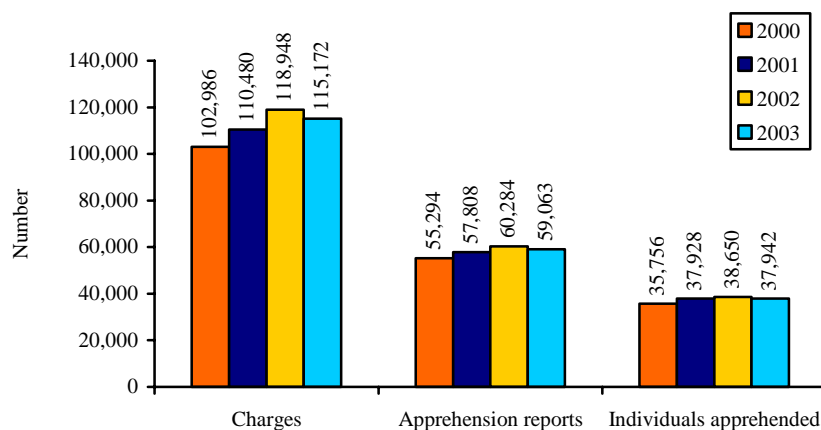
Figure 5 Charges laid by police in 2003: age by racial appearance



## Relationship between charges laid, apprehension reports filed and discrete persons apprehended

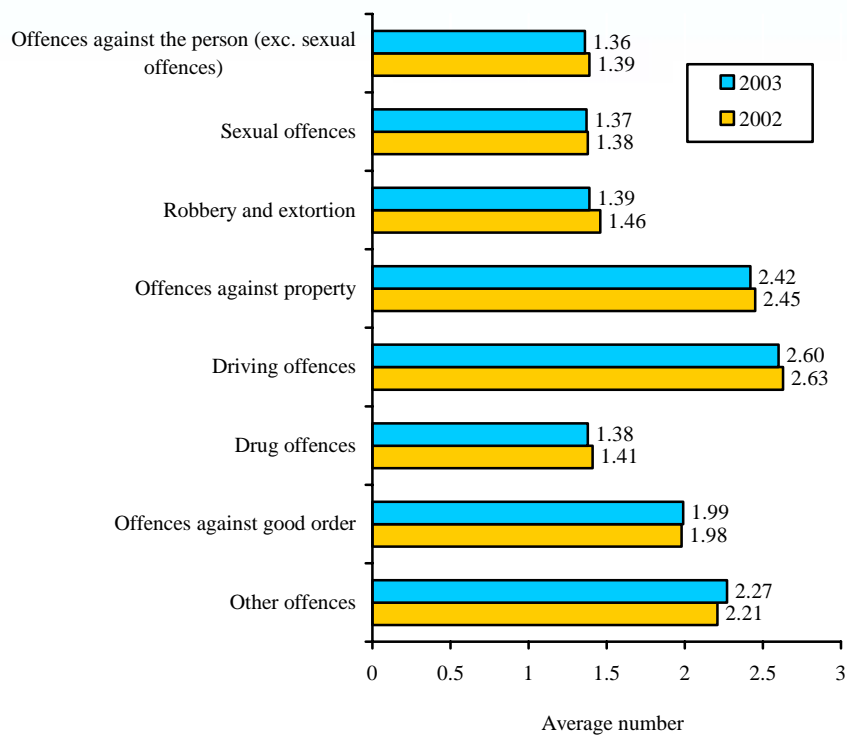
- As noted earlier, there were 115,172 charges recorded in 2003. These were contained within 59,063 apprehension reports. This means that, on average, each apprehension report lodged by police during this twelve month period contained 1.95 charges.
- Over the same time period, a total of 37,942 discrete individuals were apprehended. On average then, each person was apprehended 1.56 times, with an average of 3.04 charges laid per individual over the twelve month period.
- As indicated in Figure 6, the number of charges laid increased steadily over the previous three years but declined slightly in 2003. Similarly, the number of apprehension reports submitted and the number of individuals apprehended by police in 2003 also declined.
- The same trend was observed for the average number of charges per apprehension report and per individual and the average number of apprehension reports per individual: namely:
  - 1.95 charges per apprehension report in 2003 compared with 1.97 in 2002 1.91 in 2001 and 1.86 in 2000;
  - 3.04 charges per individual in 2003 compared with 3.08 charges per individual in 2002, 2.91 in 2001 and 2.88 in 2000.
  - 1.56 apprehension reports per individual in 2003 compared with 1.56 in 2002, 1.52 in 2001 and 1.55 in 2000.

Figure 6 Number of apprehension reports and discrete individuals apprehended: 2003 compared with 2000, 2001 and 2002.



- Figure 7 shows the average number of charges per alleged offender per offence group. (In preparing this graph, it should be noted that if, over a twelve month period, the one person is apprehended for different types of offences - for example, for an *offence against property* and for a *drug offence* - he/she will be counted once in each discrete offence grouping.)

Figure 7 Average number of charges per individual per offence group: 2003 compared with 2002.

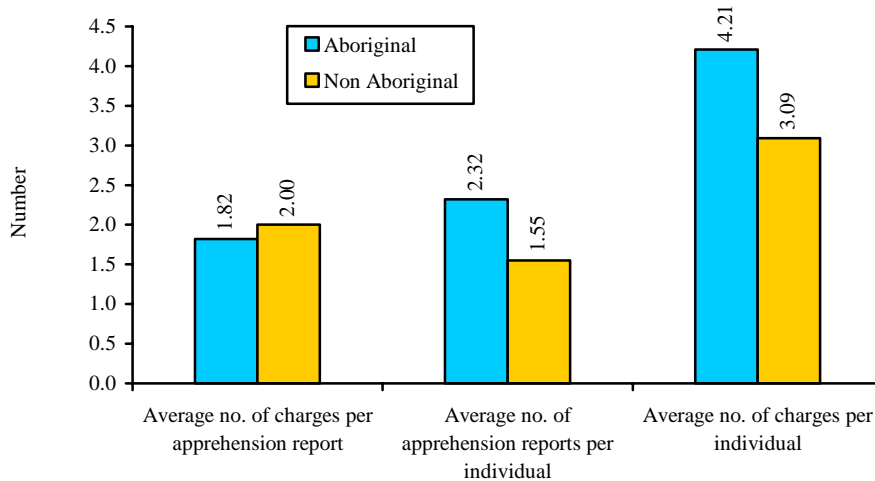


- As shown, the average number of charges laid varied slightly depending on the type of offence involved. Those persons apprehended in 2003 for a *property offence* faced an average of 2.42 such charges during the year. For individuals charged with a *driving offence*, the average was 2.60. At the other end of the scale, persons charged with an *offence against the person* faced an average of 1.36 such charges, while for those charged with a *sexual offence*, the average number was 1.37.
- For most offence categories the average number of charges laid per individual was similar to that recorded in 2002.
- Males accounted for the majority of apprehension reports lodged (80.6% of the 59,045 reports where information on the sex of the offender was recorded). Males also accounted for 79.0% of those 37,925 discrete individuals apprehended where relevant data were available.



- On average, the number of charges per apprehension report was higher for males than females (1.97 and 1.88 respectively). The same applied in relation to the average number of apprehension reports per individual (1.59 compared with 1.44 for females) and the average number of charges per individual (3.13 for males compared with 2.70 for females.)
- As noted earlier, persons of Aboriginal appearance accounted for 12.2% of the 108,698 charges laid by police in 2003 where relevant information was available. They also accounted for 13.3% of all apprehensions and 9.3% of all persons apprehended where information on racial appearance was recorded.
- As shown in Figure 8, in 2003, when compared with non-Aboriginals, the average number of apprehension reports and the average number of charges laid per individual was higher for persons of Aboriginal appearance. However, the average number of charges per apprehension report was slightly lower.

Figure 8 Average number of charges laid, apprehension reports lodged and individuals apprehended; comparison between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, 2003.

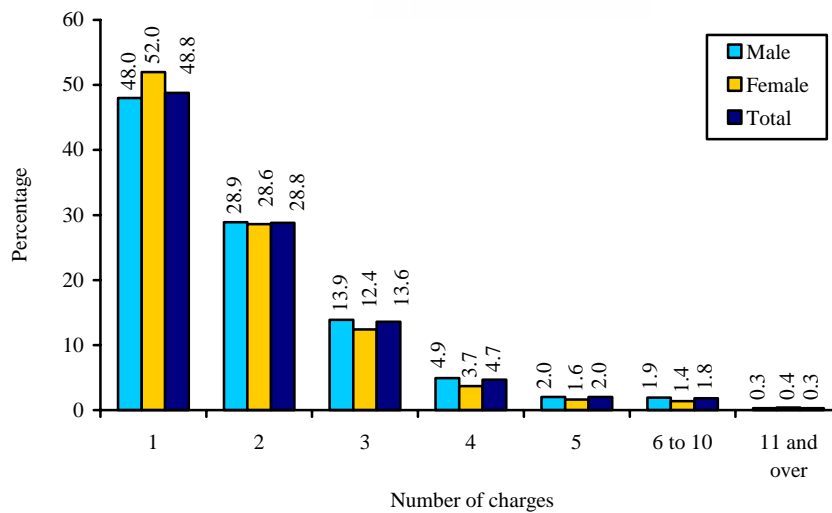


## Apprehension reports: some further details

An alternative way of considering the relationship between charges laid and apprehension reports is by looking at the actual number of charges per report rather than the average number of charges.

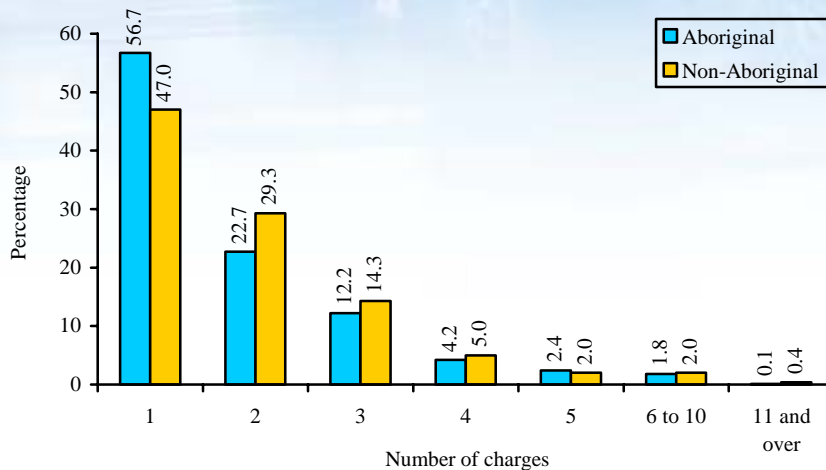
- As indicated in Figure 9, almost one half of all apprehension reports submitted by police in 2003 involved one charge only. At the other end of the scale, very few of these reports listed six or more charges. This pattern held true for both males and females, although the proportion of reports involving one charge only was higher for females than males.

Figure 9 Apprehension reports filed by police in 2003: number of charges per report by sex



- As shown in Figure 10, the proportion of apprehension reports involving one offence only was higher for Aboriginals than non-Aboriginals. Conversely, the proportion of reports involving two offences was slightly lower for Aboriginals. For reports with three or more charges there were marginal or no Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal differences.

Figure 10 Apprehension reports filed by police in 2003: number of charges per report by racial appearance



Tables 6.29 and 6.30 in Section 6 of the report also provide details on the age, sex and racial appearance of those persons listed on all apprehension reports. However, because these profiles are similar to those provided for offences cleared via an apprehension, no further analysis is presented here.

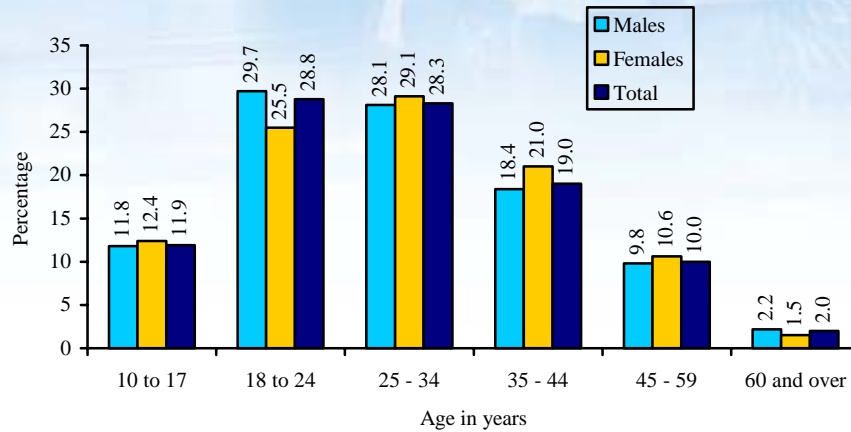
### Individuals apprehended by police: some further details

Tables 6.33 to 6.41 in Section 6 of the *Crime and Justice in South Australia, 2003, Offences reported to Police, the Victims and Alleged Perpetrators* report focus on the number of discrete individuals apprehended by police in 2003. In these tables, each individual is counted once only, irrespective of the number of times they were apprehended during the course of the year or how many offences they were charged with. The tables detail their age, sex and racial appearance, as well as providing more information on the number of times each individual was apprehended and the total number of offences each person was charged with over the twelve month period.

#### *Age, sex and racial appearance of persons apprehended*

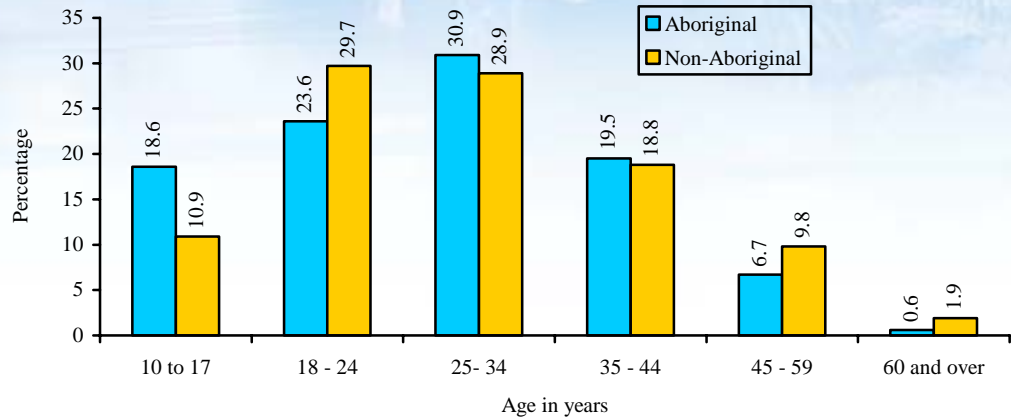
- As noted earlier, 37,942 individuals were apprehended at least once by police during 2003. Information on the sex of 17 of these persons was not available. Of the remaining 37,925, the majority (79.0%) were male.

Figure 11 Discrete individuals apprehended by police in 2003: age by sex



- As indicated in Figure 11, where age was known, the majority of individuals apprehended were either aged 18 - 24 years or 25 - 34 years. Very few were aged 60 and over.
- Figure 11 also indicates close similarities in the age profile of males and females apprehended in 2003. For both groups, the 18 – 24 and 25 - 34 year age categories dominated, although a slightly lower proportion of females were aged 18 – 24 years and a slightly higher proportion aged 25 – 34 years.
- Of the 37,942 individuals apprehended in 2003, information on racial appearance was not recorded for 3,933 (or 10.4%). As noted earlier, persons of Aboriginal appearance accounted for 9.3% of the remainder. Given that persons of Aboriginal descent constitute only 1.4% of South Australia’s population aged 10 years and over, this indicates that their level of contact with the criminal justice system was 6.6 times higher than would be expected on a per capita basis.
- While the age profiles of the two groups were generally similar, Aboriginal persons apprehended by police in 2003 tended to be slightly younger than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. As shown in Figure 12, a higher proportion of Aboriginal persons apprehended in 2003 were aged 10 - 17 years compared with non-Aboriginals, while the reverse was true for apprehended individuals aged 45 and over.

Figure 12 Discrete individuals apprehended by police in 2003: age by racial appearance

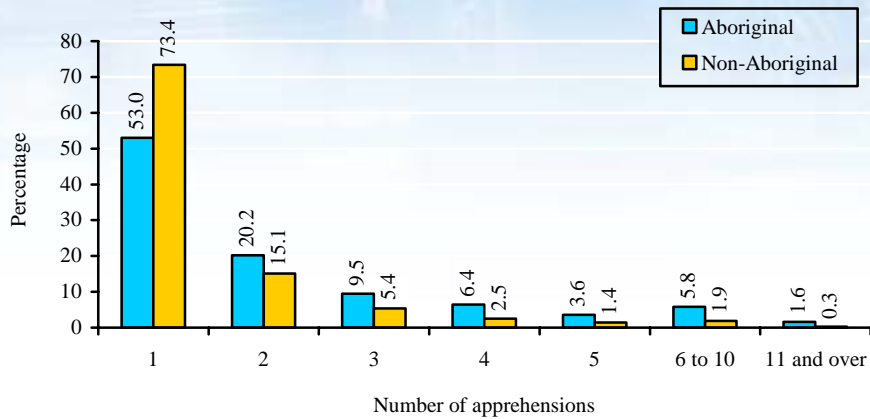


### *Number of apprehensions per individual*

- Of the 37,942 persons apprehended in 2003, three quarters (74.2%) were apprehended on one occasion only during the twelve month period while a further 14.2% were apprehended on only two occasions.
- A small group of individuals (925 or 2.4% of the total) were apprehended on six or more occasions, with 118 of these persons recording 11 or more apprehensions.
- There were no significant sex differences in the frequency of apprehension, with the overwhelming majority of both males and females being apprehended only once in 2003 (72.8% and 79.2% respectively).
- There were, however, some clear Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal differences in the number of apprehensions per individual. As indicated in Figure 13, almost half of the Aboriginal (47.0%) had multiple apprehensions during 2003 compared to only a quarter of non-Aboriginals.

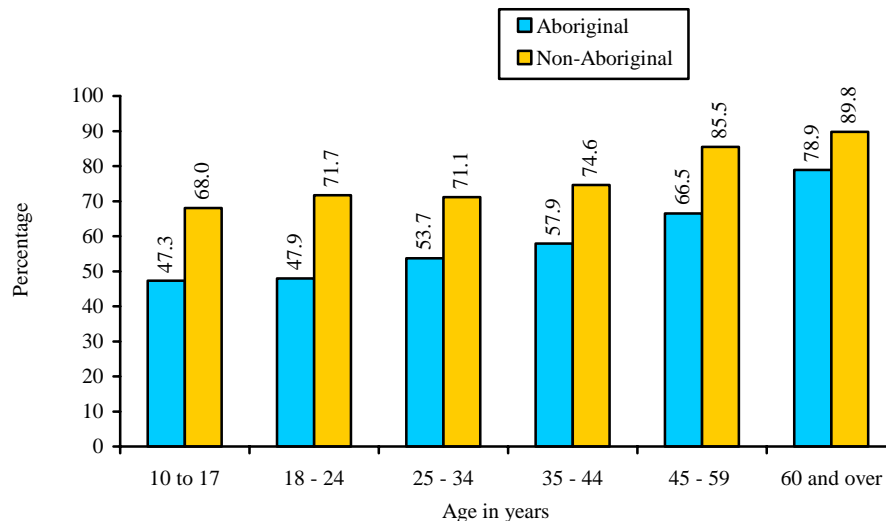


Figure 13 Discrete individuals apprehended by police in 2003: number of apprehensions per individual by racial appearance



- While the majority of individuals were apprehended only once irrespective of age, it was found that younger individuals were more likely to experience multiple apprehensions than were older persons. This pattern held true for both males and females.
- While this finding also applied to persons of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal appearance, the proportion per age group who experienced one apprehension only was noticeably lower for Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal persons, as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14 Discrete individuals apprehended by police in 2003: proportion per age group experiencing one apprehension only by racial appearance



## Number of charges per individual

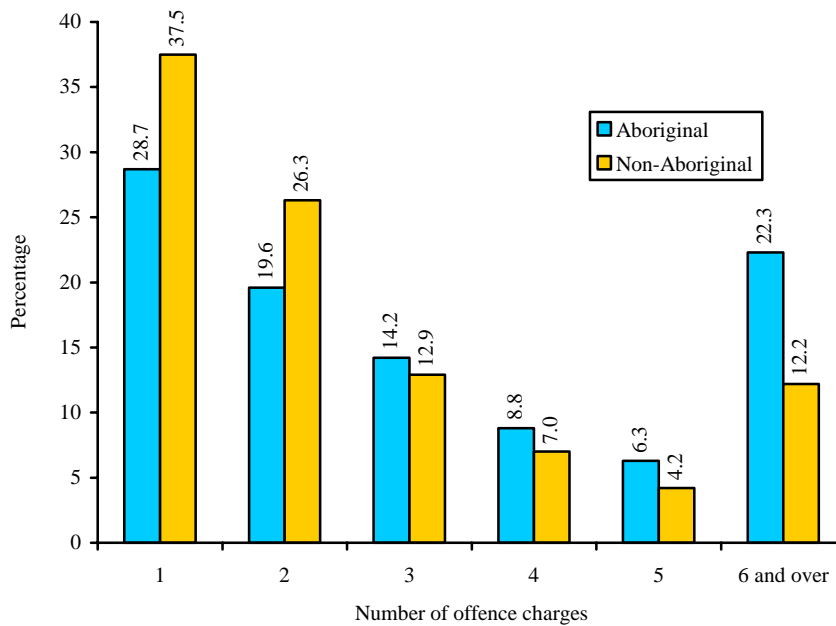
- Of the 37,942 distinct individuals apprehended by police in 2003, 14,615 or 38.5% were charged with one offence only, while a further 26.5% had two allegations laid against them. Only a small proportion (11.8%) were charged with six or more offences.
- There were some minor sex differences, with a slightly higher proportion of females facing one offence allegation only (43.6% compared with 37.2% of males).
- While very few individuals were charged with more than five offences, a significant finding emerges when the data are analysed in a different way. As indicated in Table 1, there were 14,615 individuals who, during the course of the year, were charged with one offence only; i.e. in total, they accounted for 14,615 offences. This means that 38.5% of all individuals apprehended in 2003 accounted for 12.7% of all offences recorded. However, at the other end of the scale, the 4,482 individuals who were charged with six or more offences accounted for 48,519 of the allegations laid
- In other words, 11.8% of persons apprehended in 2003 were responsible for 42.1% of all charges laid by police. These results clearly indicate that in 2003, as in previous years, a comparatively small group of individuals accounted for a disproportionately large proportion of all allegations laid by police during this twelve month period.

Table 1 Proportion of individuals compared with proportion of offence charges accounted for by those individuals, 2003

14,615 persons @ 1 offence each = 14,615 offences	38.5% of all individuals apprehended accounted for 12.7% of all charges
10,062 persons @ 2 offences each = 20,124 offences	26.5% of individuals apprehended accounted for 17.5% of all charges
4,728 persons @ 3 offences each = 14,184 offences	12.5% of individuals apprehended accounted for 12.3% of all charges
2,545 persons @ 4 offences each = 10,180 offences	6.7% of individuals apprehended accounted for 8.8% of all charges
1,510 persons @ 5 offences each = 7,550 offences	4.0% of individuals apprehended accounted for 6.6% of all charges
4,482 persons @ 6 + offences each = 48,519 offences	11.8% of individuals apprehended accounted for 42.1% of all charges

- At the most extreme end of the scale, there were 627 persons charged with more than 15 offences. As would be expected, only a very small number of these individuals (9 or 1.4% of the 627) were apprehended on only one occasion. In contrast, 435 persons, or 69.3%, accumulated these offences during the course of six or more apprehensions.
- The number of offences alleged per individual also varied according to racial appearance. As shown in Figure 15, a lower proportion of apprehended Aboriginal persons had only one or two offences alleged against them during the course of the year than was the case for apprehended non-Aboriginals. At the other end of the scale a higher proportion of apprehended Aboriginals faced four or more charges compared with non-Aboriginals.

Figure 15 Discrete individual apprehended by police in 2003: number of offence charges by racial appearance



- Nevertheless, a similarly small proportion of individuals within each group accounted for a similarly high proportion of all charges. More specifically, 22.3% of all Aboriginal persons apprehended in 2003 accounted for 57.9% of all charges laid against this group by police, while 12.2% of all non-Aboriginals apprehended accounted for 42.6% of all non-Aboriginal charges (see Table 2).

Table 2 Proportion of individuals compared with proportion of offence charges accounted for by those individuals in 2003: an Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal comparison

Number of offences per individual	Aboriginal persons apprehended	Non-Aboriginal persons apprehended
1	28.7% of individuals apprehended accounted for 6.8% of all allegations	37.5% of individuals apprehended accounted for 12.1% of all allegations
2	19.6% of individuals apprehended accounted for 9.3% of all allegations	26.3% of individuals apprehended accounted for 17.0% of all allegations
3	14.2% of individuals apprehended accounted for 10.1% of all allegations	12.9% of individuals apprehended accounted for 12.5% of all allegations
4	8.8% of individuals apprehended accounted for 8.3% of all allegations	7.0% of individuals apprehended accounted for 9.1% of all allegations
5	6.3% of individuals apprehended accounted for 7.5% of all allegations	4.2% of individuals apprehended accounted for 6.7% of all allegations
6+	22.3% of individuals apprehended accounted for 57.9% of all allegations	12.2% of individuals apprehended accounted for 42.6% of all allegations

Copies of the full report “Crime and Justice in South Australia, 2003: Offences reported to Police, The Victims and Alleged Perpetrators” can be downloaded from the publications page of the OCSAR website - [www.ocsar.sa.gov.au](http://www.ocsar.sa.gov.au)