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Offences reported to Police during 2004

The Victims and Alleged Perpetrators

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Each year the Office of Crime Statistics and Research publishes *Crime and Justice in South Australia*, a comprehensive three volume report containing crime and criminal justice statistics for this state. This Information Bulletin summarises the data contained in Volume 1 of that report, including information on offences reported to police, the victims and alleged perpetrators for the period 1 January to 1 December 2004¹.

The information contained in this Bulletin is presented in six sections:

- Police Incident Reports;
- Offences recorded by police;
- Location of offences recorded;
- Clearance status of offences recorded by police;
- Victims of offences recorded by police; and
- Offences cleared by way of an apprehension.

¹ Volume 2 deals exclusively with young offenders and the juvenile justice system, and Volume 3 focuses on adult courts and correctional services. Refer to Information Bulletins 47 and 50 respectively for summaries.

Police Incident Reports

- In 2004, 208,097 incident reports were submitted by police. This was 1.9% lower than the preceding year.
- The majority (75.1%) of incident reports submitted in 2004 involved one offence only. The average number of offences per report was 1.35.

Offences recorded by police

- In 2004, there were 280,820 offences recorded by police.
- *Offences against property* dominated, accounting for approximately six in ten offences recorded (57.2%). In contrast, *sexual offences* and *robbery and extortion* each constituted less than 1%, while *drug offences* accounted for only 1.2%. This offence profile was similar to that observed in previous years.
- In 2004, the number of offences recorded by police declined by 1.3%.
- The number of *robbery offences*, *property offences*, *offences against the person* and *other offences* all decreased in 2004, while the number of *sexual offences* remained constant. In contrast, *against good order offences*, *selected driving offences* and *drug offences* all recorded increases.
- The number of *offences against the person, excluding sexual offences* recorded by police decreased in 2004 (by 7.4%). Within this broad category, *assault occasioning* decreased (by 7.4%) as did *other* (generally minor) *assault* (down by 7.1%).
- In 2004, the number of *sexual offences* remained constant (2,357 compared with 2,344 in 2003). This followed a fairly substantial increase of 10.3% in 2003 which coincided with the establishment of a Paedophile Task Force (in May 2003) as well as new legislation (in June 2003) to abolish the time limit for the prosecution of certain sexual offences. Within this broad category, the number of recorded *indecent assault* offences increased (by 6.5%) as did *other sexual offences* (by 2.8%). However, the sub-categories of *unlawful sexual intercourse* and *rape* both recorded decreases (8.0% and 3.9% respectively).
- The total number of *robbery* offences recorded by police in 2004 decreased by 7.4% which was the lowest figure recorded since 1997. Within this category, *armed robberies* decreased by 3.5% and *unarmed robberies* decreased by 8.2%.

- The number of recorded *offences against property* decreased by 5.2% in 2004. This downward trend applied to most, but not all, subcategories. For example:
 - While the number of recorded serious criminal trespass dwelling² offences declined by 7.0% in 2004, *serious criminal trespass shop* actually increased (by 6.5%).
 - *Larceny/illegal use of a motor vehicle* increased in 2004 by 3.3%, whereas *larceny from a shop* declined by 2.8%.
 - The number of *receiving, unlawful possession* offences declined by 27.5%, while *fraud and misappropriation offences* also decreased (by 21.8%) with the latest figure the lowest recorded for the past 15 years.
 - After recording increases since 1997, the number of total *damage property* offences declined marginally in 2004 (by 1.6%).
- The total number of selected *driving offences* rose by 10.5% in 2004. This included:
 - a 32.2% increase in driving licence offences;
 - a 4.1% increase in motor vehicle registration offences;
 - a 14.2% increase in drink driving offences; and
 - a 7.2% increase in traffic offences.
- In contrast, there was a 4.3% decrease in *dangerous, reckless or negligent driving*. It should be noted though, that the number of *driving offences* recorded is heavily reliant on police enforcement practices. For example, the number of random breath tests conducted impacts significantly on the number of *drink driving offences* detected by police while the increase over recent years in the number of *driving licence offences* and *motor vehicle registration offences* can largely be attributed to the increased use of red light and speed cameras.
- The number of *drug offences* recorded by police in 2004 increased by 4.1%, following an 19.3% decrease in 2003.
 - All drug offence sub-categories recorded increases with the exception of *fraudulent prescription offences* which decreased by 35.7% in 2004.
 - The number of *possess and/or use drugs* and *possess drug implement* increased by 17.4% and 14.3% respectively, while *possess for sale/sell drugs* increased by 3.3%.

² In calculating the 2004 figures, break/enter offences have been combined with the new criminal trespass offences. It should be stressed, however, that these are not directly comparable with break/enter offences applicable prior to 25 December 1999.

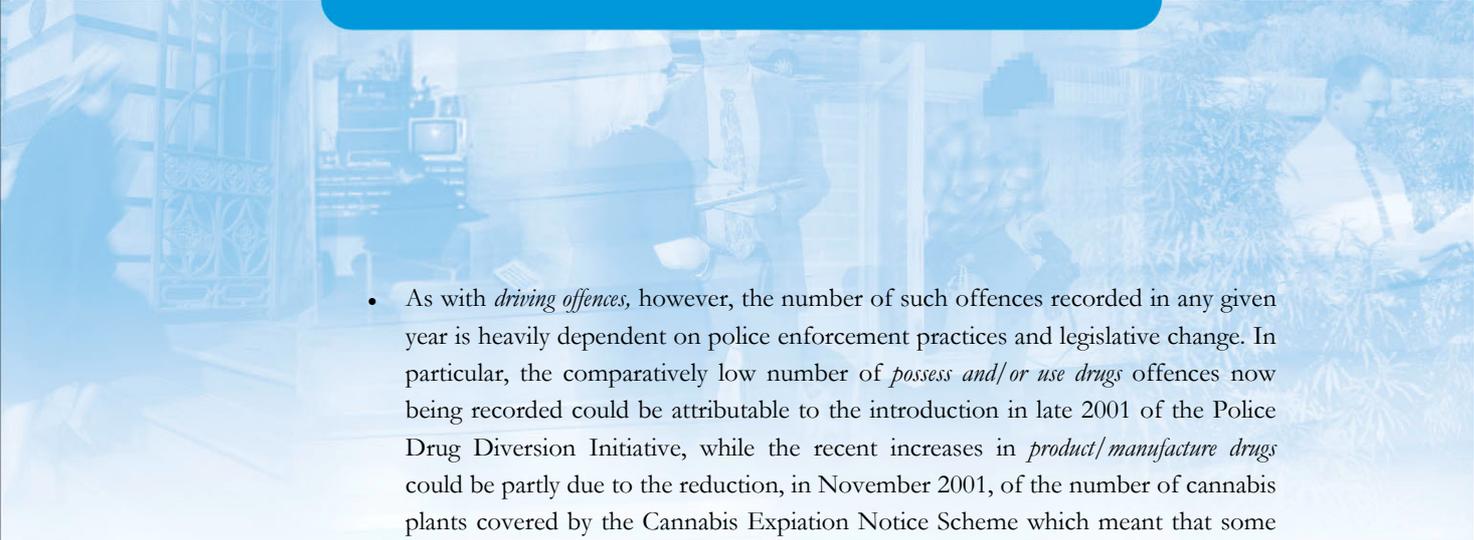
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- As with *driving offences*, however, the number of such offences recorded in any given year is heavily dependent on police enforcement practices and legislative change. In particular, the comparatively low number of *possess and/or use drugs* offences now being recorded could be attributable to the introduction in late 2001 of the Police Drug Diversion Initiative, while the recent increases in *product/manufacture drugs* could be partly due to the reduction, in November 2001, of the number of cannabis plants covered by the Cannabis Expiation Notice Scheme which meant that some individuals who were previously eligible for a CEN were henceforth charged with a *produce drug offence*.
 - *Offences against good order* increased by 3.3% in 2004. The latest figure is the highest recorded since 1992. Again, however, there were variations within this broad grouping, with *unlawful possession of weapons* and *indecent/offensive language* down by 4.3% and 22.2% respectively, while *graffiti and related offences* were up by 11.5%.

Table 1 Number of offences recorded by police, 2003 compared with 2004

Offence	2003	2004	Percentage change
Offences against the person - total	18,903	17,500	-7.4
Assault occasioning	1,978	1,831	-7.4
Other assault	14,151	13,145	-7.1
Sexual offences - total⁺	2,344	2,357	+0.6
Rape*	786	755	-3.9
Indecent assault*	788	839	+6.5
Unlawful sexual intercourse*	262	241	-8.0
Other sexual offences*	508	522	+2.8
Robbery - total	1,390	1,287	-7.4
Armed Robbery*	520	502	-3.5
- with firearm*	75	80	+6.7
- with other weapon*	445	422	-5.2
Unarmed robbery*	806	740	-8.2
- robbery with violence*	347	326	-6.1
- robbery without violence*	459	414	-9.8
Property offences - Total	169,604	160,718	-5.2
Serious criminal trespass dwellings#	14,928	13,886	-7.0
Serious criminal trespass shop#	4,164	4,433	+6.5
Serious criminal trespass 'other'	9,971	8,791	-11.8
Larceny/Illegal use of motor vehicle	10,236	10,573	+3.3
Interfere with motor vehicle	3,868	3,939	+1.8
Larceny from shop	8,297	8,066	-2.8
Receiving/unlawful possession	2,463	1,786	-27.5
Fraud and misappropriation	5,260	4,111	-21.8
Damage property	42,991	42,308	-1.6
Selected driving offences - total	55,928	61,817	+10.5
Drink driving and related offences	6,200	7,079	+14.2
Dangerous, reckless, negligent driving	4,438	4,245	-4.3
Driving licence offences	10,730	14,182	+32.2
Motor vehicle registration offences	27,875	29,018	+4.1
Traffic offences	5,953	6,384	+7.2
Drug offences - total	3,144	3,272	+4.1
Possess and/or use drugs*	484	568	+17.4
Possess drug implement*	119	136	+14.3
Produce or manufacture drugs*	1,604	1,624	+1.2
Possess for sale/sell drugs*	761	786	+3.3
Against good order - total	30,814	31,842	+3.3
Against a court or court order	6,545	7,516	+14.8
Resist/hinder police	4,747	4,706	-0.9
Unlawful possession of weapons	2,897	2,773	-4.3
Trespassing	2,208	2,236	+1.3
Indecent/offensive language*	886	689	-22.2
Disorderly behaviour	4,042	4,091	+1.2
Graffiti and related offences	3,806	4,245	+11.5
Other offences	2,481	2,027	-18.3
Total	284,608	280,820	-1.3

*Numbers in these categories are relatively small. Hence, small numerical changes may produce large percentage shifts.

The total includes a small number of break/enter offences that occurred prior to the introduction of serious criminal trespass offences in December 1999, but were reported in 2004.

+ In June 2003 the Criminal Law Consolidation Act was amended to abolish the time limit for the prosecution of certain sexual offences.

Location of offences recorded

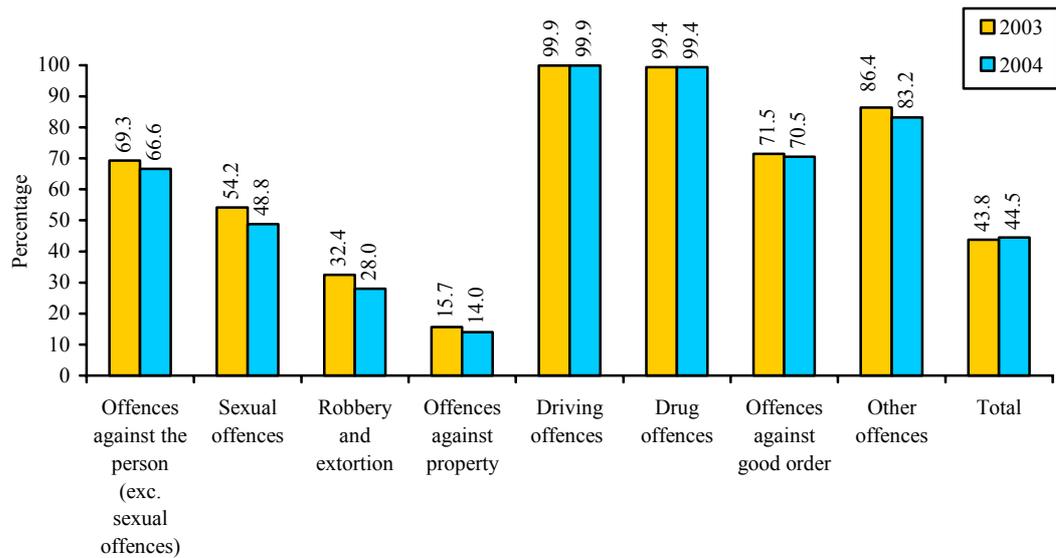
- In 2004, the Northern Statistical Division recorded the highest rate of *offences against the person* (23.9 per 1,000 population). This was considerably higher than any other statistical division, with the next highest rate recorded for Murray Lands (14.6), followed by Adelaide (14.1) and then Eyre (13.2). The lowest rate of 7.9 offences per 1,000 population was recorded for the Outer Adelaide Division.
- The highest rate of *serious criminal trespass* in 2004 was recorded by the Adelaide Statistical Division (24.9 offences per 1,000 dwellings). The Northern Division was second highest (19.7), with the rates in the other Divisions ranging between 8.6 (in Yorke and Lower North) and 14.0 offences per 1,000 dwellings in Eyre.
- When these broader statistical divisions are broken down into the smaller spatial units of Local Government Areas (LGAs), it was found that:
 - In 2004, the LGA of Adelaide recorded the highest rate of offending per 1,000 population (1,557.3). This was followed by Coober Pedy (631.4), Port Augusta (393.5), Unincorporated South Australia (377.7), Ceduna (370.4), Port Adelaide Enfield (284.9) and Playford (265.6).
 - The LGA of Adelaide also had the highest rate of *offences against the person* (136.3 per 1,000 population). The LGA with the second highest rate was Unincorporated South Australia (55.5), followed by Coober Pedy (45.2), Ceduna (44.2) and Port Augusta (43.1).
 - The highest rate for *serious criminal trespass* was also recorded by the LGA of Adelaide (43.8 per 1,000 dwelling). This was followed by Coober Pedy (42.7), Port Augusta (39.7), Port Adelaide Enfield (38.4), Playford (37.9) and Walkerville (34.5).

Clearance status of offences recorded by police

- Of the 280,820 offences recorded by police during 2004, 124,876 (44.5%) were cleared by the end of that year while conversely, 55.6% remained uncleared.
- However, the clear up level varied depending on the type of offence involved, with the lowest recorded for *property offences* (14.0% cleared by the end of 2004), followed by *robbery and extortion* (28.0% cleared). At the other end of the scale, over 99% of *driving offences* and *drug offences* were cleared – a finding which is to be expected given that police normally detect these offences at the time of their commission by the perpetrator.

- Across a number of these categories, clear up levels were either similar to or marginally lower than those recorded in 2003.
- In addition to the 124,876 offences which were both reported and cleared in 2004, a further 4,835 offences reported to police in earlier years were also cleared in 2004. This gives a total of 129,711 offences cleared over the twelve month period.
- Of these 129,711 offences cleared, the majority (90.3%) were cleared by way of the apprehension or cautioning of a suspect. A very small proportion of offences (1.2%) were designated as cleared on the grounds that they were unfounded, while 7.7% were cleared by the victim requesting that no further action be taken.

Figure 1 Percentage of offences per offence group recorded and cleared in the same year: 2003 and 2004



- Again, however, the method of clearance varied depending on the type of offence involved. As expected, virtually all *driving* and *drug offences* were cleared by way of the apprehension of a suspect. In contrast, two thirds (66.5%) of *sexual offences* and just over one half (56.8%) of *offences against the person* were cleared in this way. For these last two categories, the proportion cleared as a result of the victim requesting that no further action be taken was relatively high (40.7% in the case of *offences against the person* and 28.9% of *sexual offences*).

Victims of offences recorded by police

In this section, only offences which involved a 'personal' victim were counted. This included all *offences against the person*, all *sexual offences* and all *robberies* directed against an individual³.

- In 2004 there were 20,603 recorded victimisations directed against a person.
- Of those 20,603 victimisations where the sex of the victim was recorded, just under one half (49.8%) involved males, while conversely, 50.2% involved females. This fairly even distribution of victims between males and females is in direct contrast to the male/female breakdown for alleged offenders, with males accounting for the overwhelming majority of persons apprehended by police in 2004.
- Persons in the mid age ranges of 18 - 24 and 25 - 34 years accounted for the highest proportion of 'personal' victimisations recorded by police in 2004 (22.4% and 23.3% respectively), while the very young and the elderly accounted for relatively small proportions.
- However, the age profiles of victims varied depending on the type of offence involved. For *sexual offences*, for example, young people aged less than 18 years accounted for nearly half (40.5%) of all such victimisations recorded in 2004 while those aged 60 and over accounted for less than 3.0%.
- While the age profiles of male and female victims of *against person* and *sexual offences* were generally similar, this was not the case for *robbery and extortion*. For male victims, from the age of 24 onwards as age increased so the proportion of victims decreased. In contrast, while the highest proportion of female victimisations also occurred in the 18-24 year age category, from the age of 24 onwards, there was no decline, with the proportion per age category remaining fairly constant.

The information detailed above relates to the total number of offences involving a personal victim. However, the same victim may be subject to more than one offence and more than one incident during the course of the year. Another way of analysing the data then, is to focus on the discrete number of victims who came to police attention in 2004.

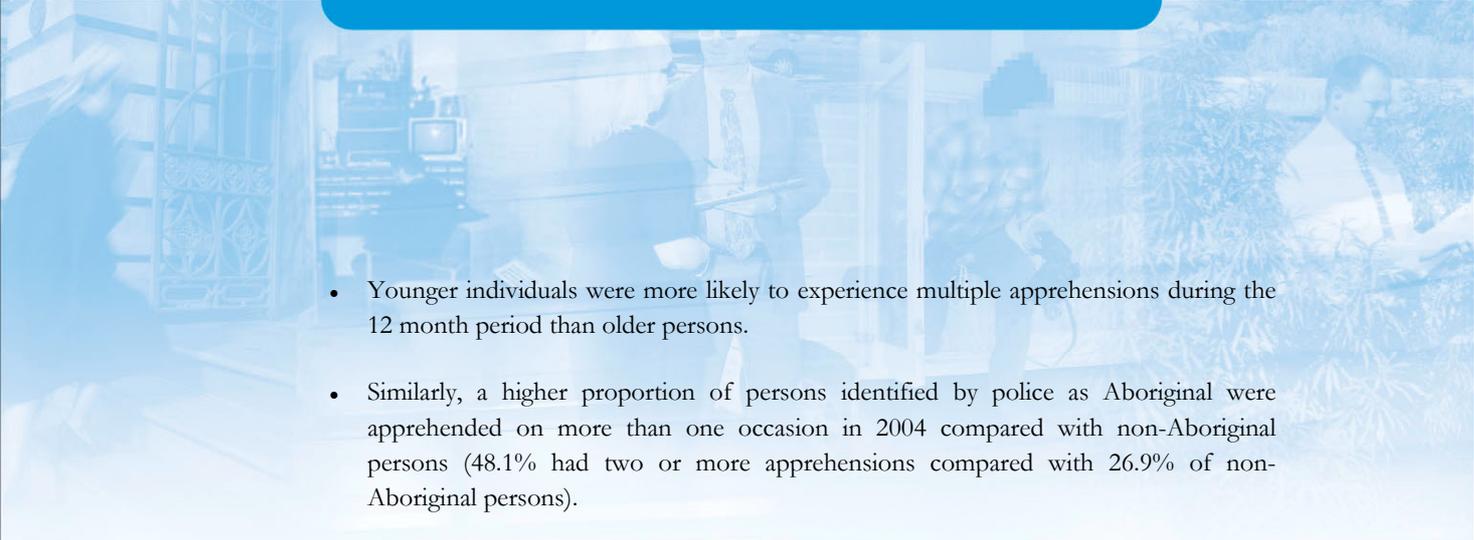
The results indicate that:

- Over this twelve month period, 17,894 persons were victimised at least once.
- Almost nine in ten of these were victimised once only during the 12 month period, indicating that the level of repeat victimisation was low.

³ In previous years, *larceny from the person* victimisations were also included. However following the introduction of the *Criminal Law Consolidation (Offences of Dishonesty) Amendment Act 2002* on 5 July 2003, *Larceny from the Person* under section 155 of the Criminal Law Consolidation Act was repealed and no longer exists as a separate offence.

Offences cleared by way of an apprehension

- There were 117,036 separate charges listed on police apprehension reports lodged in 2004. This figure was higher (by 1.6%) than the 115,172 charges laid in 2003.
- Overall, more than eight in ten of these charges were laid against males, although this varied from 63.8% for *fraud and misappropriation* to 98.2% for *sexual offences*.
- Of the 117,008 charges listed in those apprehension reports filed in 2004 where the age of the alleged offender was recorded, relatively few involved older individuals. In contrast, almost six in ten charges were allegedly committed by persons in the 18 - 34 year age group.
- Overall, 12.3% of charges laid in 2004 involved juveniles (aged 10 – 17 years inclusive). The level of juvenile involvement varied, however, according to the type of charge. To illustrate, this age group accounted for only 5.4% of all *fraud and misappropriation* charges but 38.5% of all *larceny/illegal use of a motor vehicle*.
- Information on racial appearance was available for 109,795 or 93.8% of the 117,036 charges laid by police in 2004. Of these, 13,971 (12.7%) involved persons considered by police to be of Aboriginal appearance. Again, however, this varied depending on the type of charge involved, with this group accounting for only 43.6% of all charges involving an *other offence*, but only about 3.0% of all *drug* charges.
- The 117,036 charges recorded in 2004 were contained in 61,494 separate apprehension reports. On average then, each apprehension report lodged by police during this twelve month period contained 1.90 charges.
- Over the same time period, a total of 39,327 discrete individuals were apprehended, giving an average of 1.56 apprehensions and 2.98 charges per person in 2004.
- Males accounted for the majority of apprehension reports lodged (80.3%) and the majority of discrete individuals apprehended during 2004 (78.5%).
- Persons of Aboriginal appearance constituted 13.5% of all apprehensions and 9.7% of all persons apprehended, where information on a person's racial appearance was recorded. Given that persons of Aboriginal descent constitute only 1.4% of the State's population aged 10 years and over, this indicates that their level of contact with the criminal justice system was considerably higher than expected on a per capita basis.
- Of the 39,327 discrete individuals apprehended in 2004, three quarters (73.9%) were apprehended only once during the 12 month period. However, there was a small group (975 or 2.5%) who were apprehended on six or more occasions, with 146 of these persons recording 11 or more apprehensions.

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- Younger individuals were more likely to experience multiple apprehensions during the 12 month period than older persons.
 - Similarly, a higher proportion of persons identified by police as Aboriginal were apprehended on more than one occasion in 2004 compared with non-Aboriginal persons (48.1% had two or more apprehensions compared with 26.9% of non-Aboriginal persons).
 - In 2004, as in previous years, a small proportion of individuals were responsible for a high proportion of all charges laid during the twelve month period. In fact, 11.8% of persons apprehended in 2004 were responsible for 41.4% of all charges laid by police.

Copies of the full report "*Crime and Justice in South Australia, 2004: Offences recorded by Police, the Victims and Alleged Perpetrators*" can be downloaded from the publications page of the OCSAR website - www.ocsar.sa.gov.au