



## Information Bulletin

# Recorded Crime - Victims, 2005: The South Australian Perspective

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## Executive Summary

This Information Bulletin summarises the key South Australian findings from *Recorded Crime - Victims, Australia, 2005* (ABS, cat. no. 4510.0). This annual publication provides information on the number of victims of selected crimes recorded by police in Australia as a whole and in each jurisdiction. In interpreting the figures contained in *Recorded Crime*, it should be noted that:

- they do not necessarily equate with the actual incidence of offending in the community, as not all crimes are reported to or recorded by police;
- given concerns about the comparability of the data, the ABS now recommend that no state-by-state comparisons of victimisation levels be conducted; and
- only selected offence types are included in the report.

In South Australia decreases in the number of victims were recorded in most of the offence categories in 2005 compared with 2004, including:

- *Murder* (down by 28.6%);
- *Attempted murder* (down by 5.8%);
- *Sexual assault* (down by 7.7%);
- *Kidnapping/abduction* (down by 8.3%);
- *Unarmed robbery* (down by 10.6%);
- *Blackmail/extortion* (down by 6.8%);
- *Unlawful entry with intent - taking of property* (down by 19.3%);
- *Motor vehicle theft* (down by 14.1%); and
- *Other theft* (down by 8.2%).

In 2005, increases in victimisation numbers were recorded for:

- *Assault* (up by 3.5%);
- *Armed robbery* (up by 2.0%); and
- *Unlawful entry with intent - other* (up by 8.9%).

For most offence categories, the South Australian 2005 figures were also lower than those recorded five years earlier.

The downward trends in the number of victims recorded in most offence categories are not unique to South Australia, with most Australian jurisdictions also recording reductions.

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## Introduction

This Information Bulletin summarises the key South Australian findings from *Recorded Crime - Victims, Australia: 2005* (cat. no. 4510.0) released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on 25 May 2006.

*Recorded Crime* provides information on the number of victims of selected crimes recorded by police in Australia as a whole and in each jurisdiction between January and December 2005. The report also provides data from previous years to allow for comparisons over time.

## Limitations of this report

- The original aim of the *Recorded Crime* report, which has been published annually since the early 1990s, was to provide data on police-recorded victimisations that were comparable across jurisdictions so that state by state comparisons could be undertaken.
- However, an investigation of the differences in recorded crime statistics across jurisdictions conducted by the ABS National Crime Statistics Unit (NCSU) found evidence that the recording of certain offence categories - particularly *assaults* and *sexual assaults* - varied from one state to another. As a result, in the 2004 *Recorded Crime* report, *assault* and *sexual assault* figures were not published. In 2005, no national information is again available for these two offences. While figures for each state/territory are included they are based upon the recording practices employed in each jurisdiction and therefore are not comparable across jurisdictions.
- Another change introduced in 2005, is that rather than including rates per 100,000 population (as was done in previous years) an index measure has been developed. In calculating this indexed figure, 2001 has been used as the base or reference period, with the victimisation rate per 100,000 persons recorded in that year being assigned a value of 100. Victimisation index values for previous and subsequent years have then been determined by reference to this baseline value. As the ABS explains (p.36):

*...suppose the recorded crime rate was 200 victims per 100,000 population for a particular offence at 2001 (period 1), and for 2002 (period 2) it was 300 victims per 100,000 population. 2001 (period 1) would be designated as the reference value or base year giving an index of 100.0 (200/200x100). The index value for 2002 (period 2)*

*or the comparison value becomes 150.0 (300/200x100).*

- The index measure is useful in understanding changes over time within a jurisdiction and allows for the comparison of broad trends in one state with those in other states (ie whether victimisations for a particular offence have gone up or down). However, it does not provide any information about whether the actual victimisation level in one state is higher or lower than another state and the ABS recommends that it not be used for direct comparisons across jurisdictions.
- In effect then, the report is now extremely limited in terms of its capacity to provide an accurate insight into how victimisation levels in one state compare with those in other states or with the national average.
- A project is now underway to develop consistent counting and recording processes which, if applied by each jurisdiction, will hopefully enable more rigorous comparisons between states to be provided in future reports.

## Methodological notes

- The statistics presented in the ABS report are official crime statistics as recorded by police in their administrative data sets and do not necessarily equate with the actual incidence of offending in the community, as not all crimes are reported to or recorded by police.
- Only selected offences are included in the report. These are:
  - homicide and related offences;
  - assault;
  - sexual assault;
  - kidnapping/abduction;
  - robbery;
  - blackmail/extortion;
  - unlawful entry with intent;
  - motor vehicle theft; and
  - other theft.
- The counting rules applied by the ABS are victim based: that is, each victim within a distinct criminal incident is counted once per offence subdivision. For example, within the armed robbery subdivision, if a victim reports being subjected to multiple armed robberies 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 also had his/her car stolen, he/she will be counted once under *robbery* and once

under *motor vehicle theft* because each constitutes a different offence subdivision.

- Depending upon the type of offence, a victim can be a person, premise or organisation.
- For some of 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. 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.
- With the exception of *murder* and *motor vehicle theft*, in all other categories actual and attempted incidents are combined. *UEWI*, for example, includes both successful unlawful entries as well as attempts.

with 2004. As shown, decreases were recorded in a number of offences categories in 2005, including:

- *Total homicide and related* (down by 4.4%);
- *Murder* (down by 28.6%);
- *Attempted murder* (down by 5.8%);
- *Sexual assault* (down by 7.7%);
- *Kidnapping/abduction* (down by 8.3%);
- *Total robbery* (down by 5.5%);
- *Unarmed robbery* (down by 10.6%);
- *Blackmail/extortion* (down by 6.8%);
- *Total unlawful entry with intent (UEWI)* (down by 9.1%);
- *UEWI involving the taking of property* (down by 19.3%);
- *Motor vehicle theft* (down by 14.1%); and
- *Other theft* (down by 8.2%).

In 2005, increases in victimisation rates were recorded for:

- *Assault* (up by 3.5%);
- *Armed robbery* (up by 2.0%); and
- *UEWI - other* (up by 8.9%).

## South Australian victimisation levels: comparing 2005 with 2004

Table 1 details changes in the actual number of victimisations recorded in South Australia in 2005 compared

**Table 1 Number of victims per offence category recorded in South Australia: 2005 compared with 2004**

Offence group	Number of victims		
	2004	2005	% change
<b>Homicide and related offences</b>	91	87	-4.4
Murder	28	20	-28.6
Attempted murder	52	49	-5.8
Manslaughter	0	3	*
Drive causing death	11	15	*
<b>Assault</b>	14,880	15,404	+3.5
<b>Sexual assault</b>	1,793	1,655	-7.7
<b>Kidnapping/abduction</b>	36	33	-8.3
<b>Robbery (total)</b>	1,239	1,171	-5.5
Armed robbery	505	515	+2.0
Unarmed robbery	734	656	-10.6
<b>Blackmail/extortion</b>	44	41	-6.8
<b>Unlawful entry with intent (UEWI)</b>	26,728	24,295	-9.1
UEWI involving the taking of property	17,030	13,738	-19.3
UEWI - other	9,698	10,557	+8.9
<b>Motor vehicle theft</b>	10,511	9,033	-14.1
<b>Other theft</b>	52,500	48,198	-8.2

\* Percentage changes have not been calculated for these offence categories due to the small total numbers.

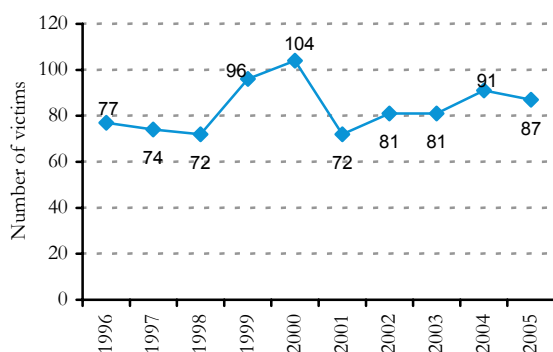
## South Australian trends over time

The following section considers trends over time in the number of victimisations recorded in South Australia between 1996 and 2005. *Manslaughter* has been excluded because of the extremely small numbers involved.

### Murder, attempted murder and drive causing death

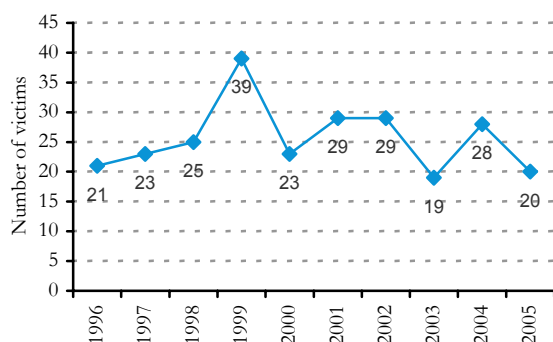
As Figure 1 indicates, the number of victims of *homicide and related offences* has remained relatively low over the past ten years (generally below 100 per year). The peaks in 1999 and 2000 can be attributed to the 'bodies in a barrel' murders in 1999 and a higher number of *drive causing deaths* in 2000. As noted previously, the number of victims was slightly lower in 2005 than 2004.

**Figure 1** Number of victims of *homicide and related offences* in South Australia, 1996-2005



As Figure 2 indicates, the number of victims of *murder* in South Australia has remained below 30 per year, apart from a spike in 1999 due to the 'bodies in a barrel' murders.

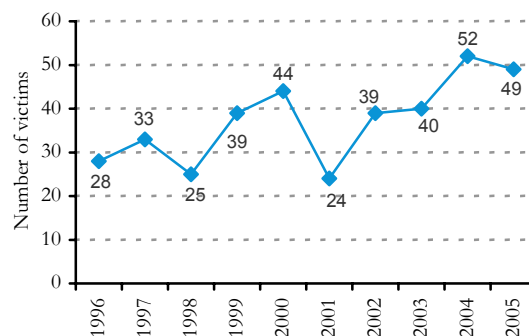
**Figure 2** Number of victims of *murder* in South Australia, 1996-2005



As Figures 3 indicates, the number of victimisations for *attempted murder* was higher at the end of the period

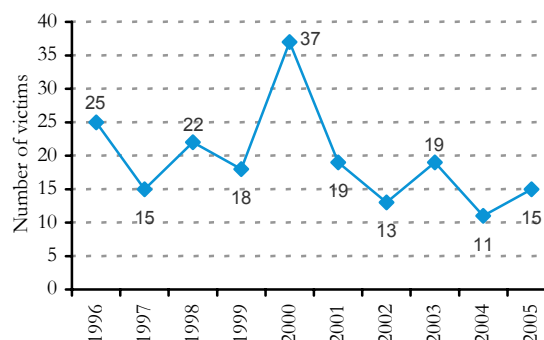
depicted than at the beginning, despite fluctuating somewhat from year to year.

**Figure 3** Number of victims of *attempted murder* in South Australia, 1996-2005



As shown (refer to Figure 4), with the exception of 2000, the South Australian *drive causing death* figures have shown a slight downwards trend, from 25 in 1996 to 15 in 2005.

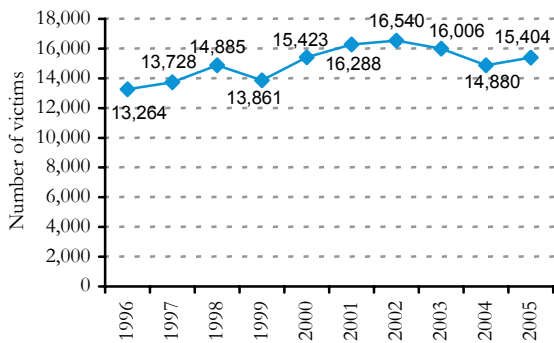
**Figure 4** Number of victims of *drive causing death* in South Australia, 1996-2005



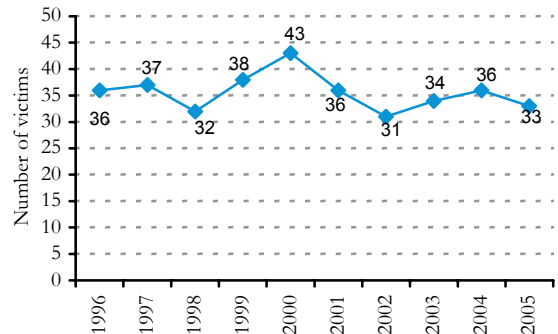
### Assault

The number of victims of *assault* generally increased until 2002, but then decreased after that time. However, the 2005 figure was higher than that recorded in 2004.

**Figure 4 Number of victims of assault in South Australia, 1996-2005**



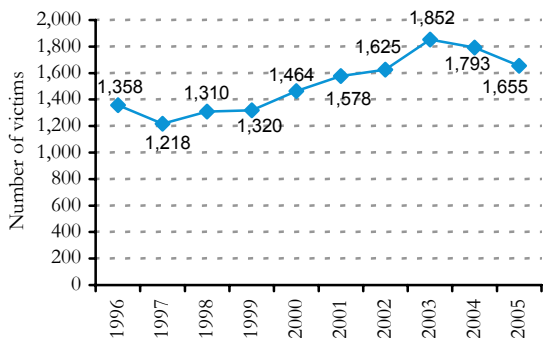
**Figure 6 Number of victims of kidnapping/abduction in South Australia, 1996-2005**



**Sexual assault**

Between the late 1990s and 2003 the number of *sexual assault* victims generally increased. However, as Figure 5 indicates, in the last two years there has been a decrease.

**Figure 5 Number of victims of sexual assault in South Australia, 1996-2005**



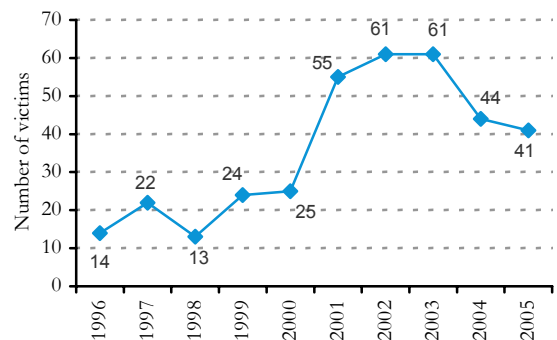
**Kidnapping/abduction**

As Figure 6 indicates, recorded victimisations for *kidnapping/abduction* have remained relatively low and relatively stable over the period 1996 to 2005.

**Blackmail/extortion**

*Blackmail/extortion* numbers increased substantially in South Australia between 2000 and 2002, before decreasing in 2004 and 2005. The marked increase may be partly attributable to the introduction in 1999 of new offences dealing with the contamination of goods which, in this state, are grouped within the *blackmail/extortion* category. It should also be noted that the overall number of *blackmail/extortion* offences in South Australia is low (41 in 2005).

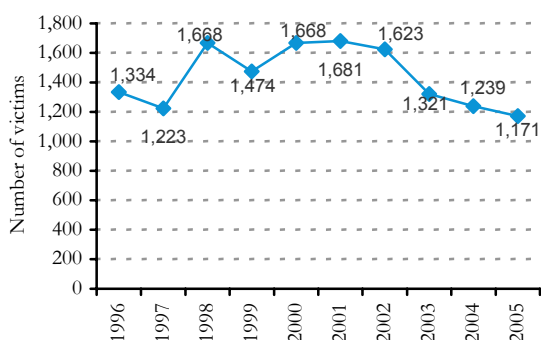
**Figure 7 Number of victims of blackmail/extortion in South Australia, 1996-2005**



**Robbery**

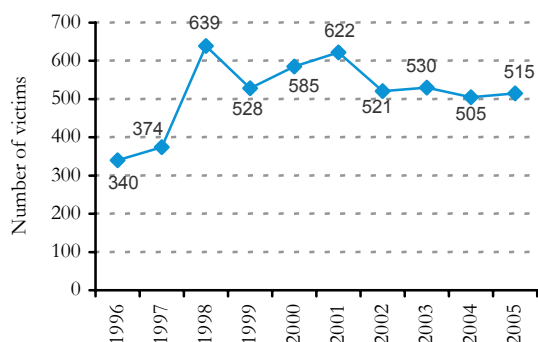
As Figures 8 indicates, the South Australia robbery figures have decreased since 2001. The 2005 figure is the lowest recorded over the period depicted.

**Figure 8 Number of victims of total robbery in South Australia, 1996-2005**



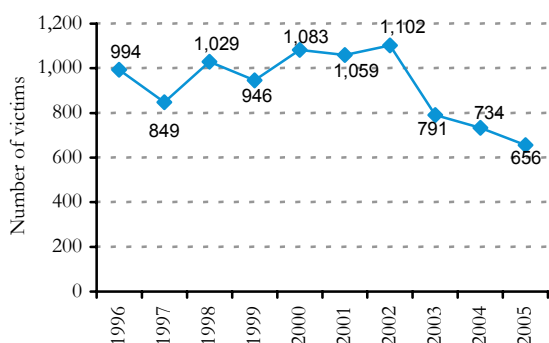
The number of victims of *armed robbery* in South Australia has remained relatively stable over the last four years.

**Figure 9 Number of victims of armed robbery in South Australia, 1996-2005**



After a period of relative stability, the number of *unarmed robbery* victimisations in South Australia decreased in 2003 followed by further decreases in 2004 and 2005. The latest figure is the lowest recorded in this state over the period depicted.

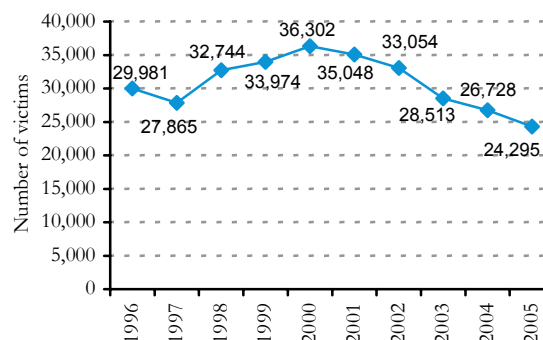
**Figure 10 Number of victims of unarmed robbery in South Australia, 1996-2005**



### Unlawful entry with intent

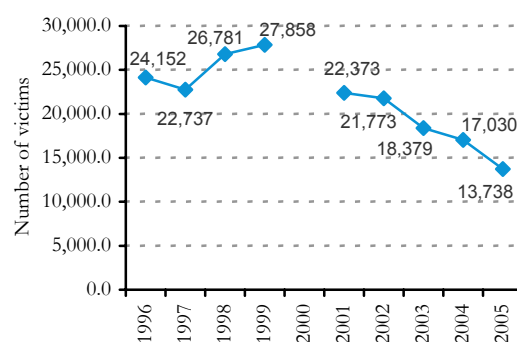
Since 2000 the state *unlawful entry with intent* (UEWI) figures have experienced downward trends. The number of victims recorded in 2005 was the lowest figure recorded over the 10 year period.

**Figure 11 Number of victims of total UEWI in South Australia, 1996-2005**



The 2005 *UEWI - taking of property* figure was the lowest recorded over the period depicted. As shown, there has been a general decline in the number of victimisations recorded since 2001. It was not possible to provide these data in 2000 due to a change in the legislation related to *UEWI* introduced in late 1999. This legislative change is also likely to explain the differences between the pre and post 2000 figures.

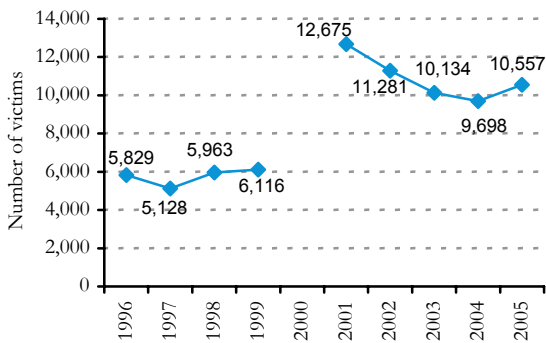
**Figure 12 Number of victims of UEWI involving the taking of property in South Australia, 1996-2005\***



\* In 2000 it was not possible to disaggregate *UEWI* figures in to property theft and other.

In contrast to *UEWI involving the taking of property*, the *UEWI other* figures were generally higher post 2000 than pre. However, from 2001 there was a general decline in the number of victimisations recorded, until 2005 when this trend was reversed.

**Figure 13 Number of victims of UEWI -other in South Australia, 1996-2005\***

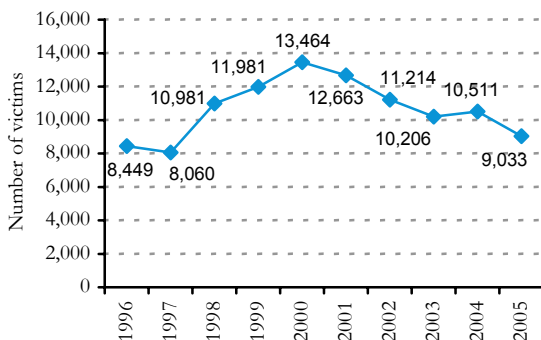


\* In 2000 it was not possible to disaggregate UEWI figures in to property theft and other.

### Motor vehicle theft

South Australian *motor vehicle theft* figures increased substantially between 1997 and 2000. From 2000 to 2005, this upward trend was replaced by a downward trend, with the 2005 figure well below that recorded five years earlier.

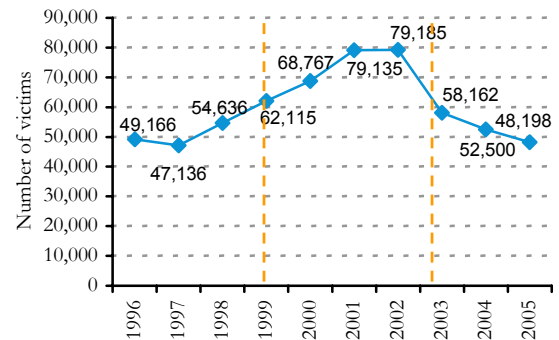
**Figure 14 Number of victims of motor vehicle theft in South Australia, 1996-2005**



The South Australian rate for *other theft* increased between 1997 and 2001. Part of the South Australian increase in this period was due to the 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, a second offence of *other theft* was also recorded. This, in effect, led to double counting for the one 'incident'. To rectify this, from 2003 onwards, the offence of *other theft* was no longer included in the national figures if it occurred in association with a *UEWI*. This second change in counting rules largely explains the obvious decrease in *other*

*theft* recorded for South Australia in 2003. Further decreases were recorded in 2004 and 2005.

**Figure 15 Number of victims of other theft in South Australia, 1996-2005**



## Comparisons with other Australian jurisdictions

The ABS report recommends that victimisation levels not be compared to determine the relative ranking of each state/territory for a particular offence category. However, it is possible to consider whether jurisdictions have experienced trends in victimisation rates in the same direction as observed in South Australia. This is the focus of the following section, although no such comparisons are provided for *assault* and *sexual assault* because of the differences in recording practices across the jurisdictions. In interpreting the information presented it should also be noted that special events, such as police operations, changes in legislation, policy or recording practices in a jurisdiction may impact upon trends over time. For further information about the state specific issues identified by each police agency refer to the explanatory notes section of the ABS report.

### 2005 compared with 2004

When 2005 index rates are compared with those of the previous year, the following results were found:

- *total homicide and related offences* - the only jurisdiction to record an increase was Victoria, while the New South Wales 2005 index rate was comparable with 2004. All other jurisdictions, including South Australia, and the nation as a whole recorded decreases.
- *kidnapping/abduction* - while figures were not available for three jurisdictions, three other states/territories including South Australia recorded decreases, while two others remained stable. Nationally, the 2005 index rate was lower than recorded in 2004.

- *total robbery* - for the majority of jurisdictions including South Australia there was little change in the indexed rate between 2004 and 2005. However, the Northern Territory and ACT both experienced increases. Within this category:
  - *armed robbery* - for most jurisdictions the 2005 figures were comparable with those recorded in 2004. Western Australia was the only state to record an increase, while Tasmania and the NT recorded decreases.
  - *unarmed robbery* - Australia as a whole and New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland remained stable. South Australia and Western Australia were the only jurisdictions to record decreases. The other three states/territories recorded increases.
- *blackmail/extortion* - as figures were not available for three jurisdictions it is difficult to make conclusions about the relative position of South Australia. As shown, of the five states/territories for which figures were available, two (including South Australia) recorded decreases, one recorded an increase and two remained stable.

Nationally, the 2005 and 2004 index rates were also comparable.

- *UEWI* - all states/territories recorded a decrease in *total UEWI* and in *UEWI* involving the taking of property. South Australia and the ACT recorded increases in *UEWI other*, while Australia and three states/territories remained stable.
- *motor vehicle theft* - in comparison with 2004, the 2005 figures were lower for Australia as a whole, South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland. Only the ACT and Tasmania recorded increases, while figures for the other jurisdictions remained stable.
- *other theft* - for most jurisdictions the 2004 and 2005 figures were comparable. South Australia was one of only three jurisdictions to record a decrease.

**Table 2 Comparing 2005 with the 2004 indexed rate for each offence category<sup>#</sup>**

Offence Category	SA	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	AUST
<b>Homicide and related offences</b>	↓	—	↑	↓	↓	np	↓	np	↓
Kidnapping/abduction	↓	—	—	↓	↓	np	np	np	↓
Armed Robbery	—	—	—	—	↑	↓	↓	—	—
Unarmed robbery	↓	—	—	—	↓	↑	↑	↑	—
<b>Total robbery</b>	—	—	—	—	—	—	↑	↑	—
Blackmail/extortion	↓	↓	—	—	↑	np	np	np	—
UEWI - taking of property	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
UEWI - Other	↑	—	—	↓	↓	↓	—	↑	—
<b>Total unlawful entry with intent</b>	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Motor vehicle theft	↓	↓	—	↓	—	↑	—	↑	↓
Other theft	↓	↓	—	↓	—	—	—	—	—

np = not provided due to small numbers (20 or less).

A green arrow indicates that the 2005 indexed rate is lower than 2001, while a red arrow indicates that it is higher. An orange line indicates no change. There is considered to have been no change if the 2005 indexed rate is less than five points above or below the 2001 base rate.

<sup>#</sup> *Assault* and *sexual assault* have been excluded because of differences in the recording practices employed in each jurisdiction for these offences.



## 2005 compared with 2001

Table 2 shows whether the 2005 indexed rate for each offence category is higher, lower or comparable with the 2001 base rate. As shown:

- total homicide and related offences** - the majority of jurisdictions (n=4) and the nation as a whole experienced decreases in 2005 compared with 2001. South Australia was the only state to experience an increase over this time period. However, these figures should be treated with some caution given the relatively small numbers involved.
- kidnapping/abduction** - while figures were unavailable for three jurisdictions, all other states/territories, with the exception of Queensland and Victoria, experienced decreases. Australia also recorded a decrease.
- total robbery** - while the Northern Territories indexed rate in 2005 was comparable with 2001, all other jurisdictions and the nation as a whole experienced decreases. Similar findings were observed for *armed* and *unarmed robbery*.
- blackmail/extortion** - the number of offences/victimisation rates recorded in some jurisdictions are relatively small and hence these figures should be treated with some caution. As shown, figures were not available for three jurisdictions. Of the remainder, South Australia was one of three jurisdictions to experience decreases, while New South Wales, Western Australia and Australia as a whole recorded increases in the indexed rate in 2005 compared with 2001.
- UEWI** - for *UEWI total*, *UEWI involving the taking of property* and *UEWI other*, all jurisdictions experienced decreases in the indexed rate in 2005 compared with 2001.
- Motor vehicle theft** - all states/territories and the nation as a whole recorded decreases in this offence category.
- Other theft** - all jurisdictions recorded decreases in the indexed rate of victimisation.

**Table 3 Comparing 2005 with the 2001 indexed rate for each offence category<sup>#</sup>**

Offence Category	SA	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	AUST
<b>Homicide and related offences</b>	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	np	—	np	↓
Kidnapping/abduction	↓	↓	—	—	↓	np	np	np	↓
Armed Robbery	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓
Unarmed robbery	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓
<b>Total robbery</b>	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	—	↓	↓
Blackmail/extortion	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑	np	np	np	↑
UEWI - taking of property	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
UEWI - Other	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
<b>Total unlawful entry with intent</b>	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Motor vehicle theft	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Other theft	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

np = Not provided due to small numbers (20 or less).

A green arrow indicates that the 2005 indexed rate is lower than 2001, while a red arrow indicates that it is higher. An orange line indicates no change. There is considered to have been no change if the 2005 indexed rate is less than five points above or below the 2001 base rate.

<sup>#</sup> *Assault and sexual assault* have been excluded because of differences in the recording practices employed in each jurisdiction for these offences.