



# Report

## **Recorded Crime in South Australia, Metropolitan South Australia and Regional South Australia**

*Crime Mapper 2008-2012*

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# Introduction

This report provides an analysis of recorded crime data published in *Crime Mapper 2008-2012*. The report is intended to provide a high level summary of recorded crime in South Australia, Metropolitan South Australia and Regional South Australia.

## Crime Mapper

*Crime Mapper* is an online application that provides the geographic distribution of recorded crime across South Australia. Two units of measurement are reported:

1. Number of offences - provides a count of all offences listed on all incident reports recorded by South Australia Police<sup>1</sup>.
2. Rate per 1,000 estimated residential population - provides the number of offences as a rate per 1,000 estimated population residing in each given location.

Offences are categorised as follows:

- Offences against the person (homicide; major assault; other);
- Sexual offences (rape; indecent assault; unlawful sexual intercourse; other);
- Robbery & extortion offences (armed robbery; unarmed robbery; extortion);
- Offences against property (serious criminal trespass/break and enter; fraud and misappropriation; receiving/illegal possession of stolen goods; larceny/illegal use of a motor vehicle; other larceny; larceny from shops; larceny from a motor vehicle; arson/explosives; property damage and environmental offences);
- Offences against good order;
- Drug offences (possess/use drugs; sell/trade drugs; produce/manufacture drugs; possess implement for drug use; other);
- Driving offences (driving under the influence of alcohol/drugs; dangerous driving; driving licence offences; traffic offences; motor vehicle registration offences; other); or
- Other offences.

Recorded crime statistics are provided for the following geographic areas:

- South Australia;
- Metropolitan South Australia<sup>2</sup>;
- Regional South Australia<sup>3</sup>; and
- South Australian Local Government Areas.

When using *Crime Mapper* it is important to understand that the statistics it contains may not provide an accurate measure of the true prevalence or incidence of crime in a community. *Crime Mapper* statistics represent only those offences reported to police or which come to the attention of police. They can, therefore, be influenced by a number of factors, including victim reporting rates, the identification or detection of offences by police (in the case of 'victimless' crimes) and police interpretation and decision as to whether a crime has occurred. In addition, *Crime Mapper* does not include offences that are dealt with by way of expiation (e.g., speeding, littering, etc.).

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<sup>1</sup> Although *Crime Mapper* statistics are based on data sourced from South Australia Police (SAPOL), there may be slight differences between the offence counts published by SAPOL and those that appear in *Crime Mapper*. This is due to the use of different counting rules and the different classification of some offence types. Therefore, while the two sources of crime data are complementary, they are not comparable.

<sup>2</sup> The definition of Metropolitan South Australia used for *Crime Mapper* has changed for the 2008-2012 release. Previously, Metropolitan South Australia referred to the Adelaide Statistical Division as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2011). Due to changes to the geographical boundaries implemented by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2010), *Crime Mapper* now defines Metropolitan South Australia as the sum of all LGAs that previously fell within the Adelaide Statistical Division whether in total or in part. For further information, please refer to the *Crime Mapper* explanatory notes.

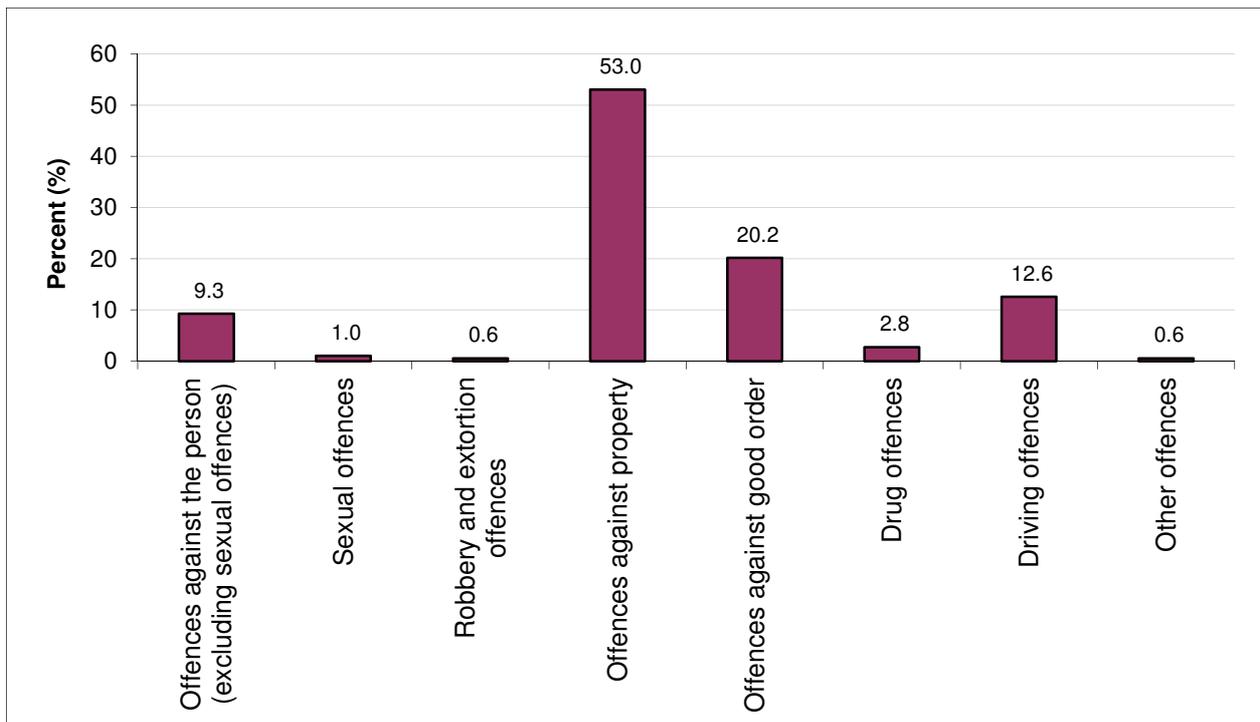
<sup>3</sup> Regional South Australia refers to all areas outside of Metropolitan South Australia.

## 2012 Recorded Crime

A total of 191,505 offences were recorded by police across South Australia in 2012, a rate of 115.6 offences per 1,000 South Australian residents.

*Offences against property* accounted for more than half (53.0%) of all offences, followed by *offences against good order* (20.2%), and *driving offences* (12.6%) (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Distribution of offences recorded by police, 2012.

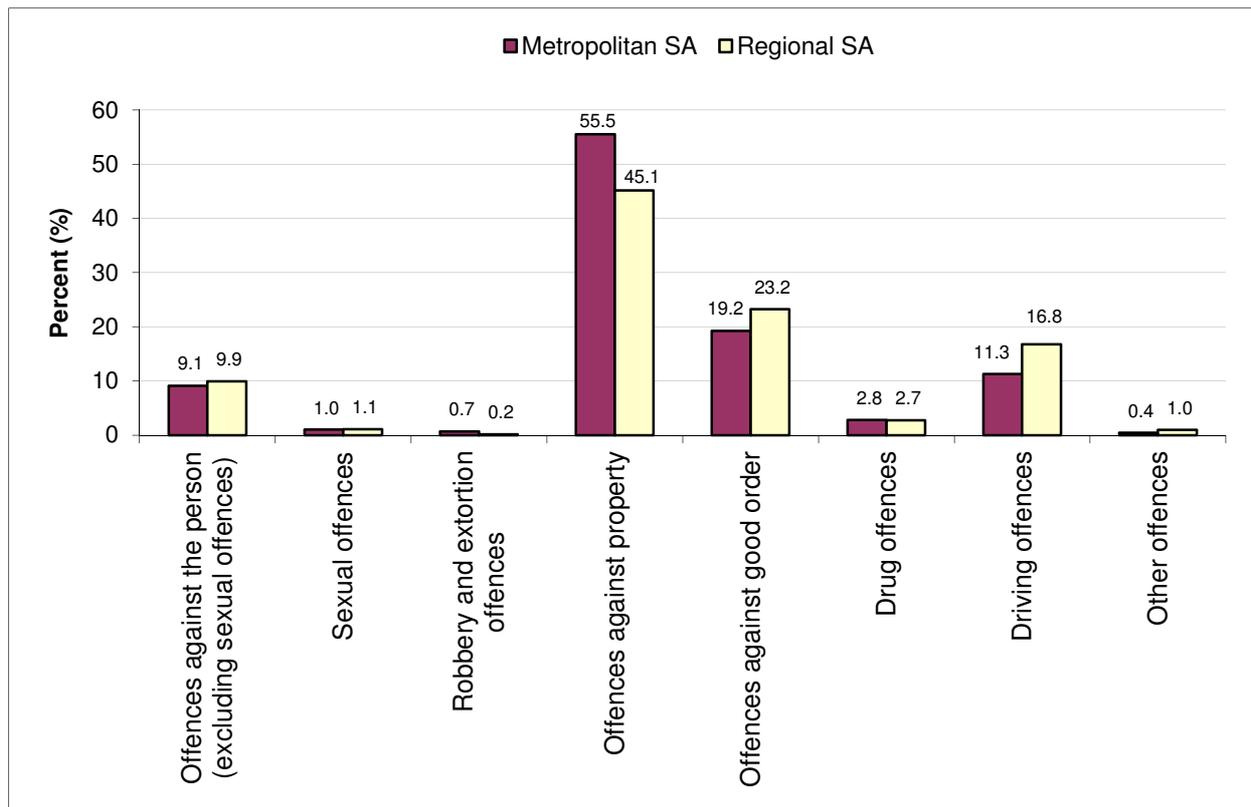


Source: Calculated from statistics reported in *Crime Mapper 2008-2012*.

Three quarters of all offences (146,247) recorded in 2012 occurred in metropolitan South Australia (118.3 per 1,000 population), 23.6 percent (45,161 recorded offences) occurred in regional South Australia (107.5 per 1,000 population) and the remaining 97 offences (0.05%) had an unknown location.

Figure 2 compares the 2012 offence profiles of metropolitan South Australia to regional South Australia. In both locations, *offences against property* accounted for the greatest proportion of offences, followed by *offences against good order* and *driving offences*. However, the proportions differed slightly between the two locations. For metropolitan South Australia, *offences against property* comprised 55.5 percent of total offences compared to 45.1 percent for regional South Australia. In contrast, *offences against good order* and *driving offences* comprised a greater proportion of total offences in regional South Australia than in metropolitan South Australia.

**Figure 2.** Distribution of offences recorded by police according to region, 2012.



Source: Calculated from statistics reported in *Crime Mapper 2008-2012*.

## 2012 versus 2011

In 2012 there were 8,211 fewer offences recorded than in the preceding year (a reduction of 4.1%). This decrease is greater than the decrease observed between 2012 and 2011 (a reduction of only 0.7%).

The 4.1 percent reduction in 2012 included a decrease of 2,761 offences for regional South Australia (a 5.8% decrease) and a decrease of 5,364 offences (3.5%) for metropolitan South Australia.

With regard to offence category, most offence types recorded a decrease from 2011, with the exception of *offences against good order* and *drug offences* in both metropolitan and regional South Australia, and *sexual offences* in metropolitan South Australia only.

**Table 1.** Difference and percentage change in recorded offence numbers for South Australia, Metropolitan SA and Regional SA according to offence category, 2012 versus 2011.

	South Australia		Metropolitan SA		Regional SA	
	Difference	% change	Difference	% change	Difference	% change
Offences against the person (excluding sexual offences)	- 1,302	- 6.8	- 764	- 5.4	- 515	- 10.3
Sexual offences	+ 38	+ 2.0	+ 103	+ 7.5	- 58	- 10.5
Robbery and extortion offences	- 68	- 6.0	- 54	- 5.2	- 16	- 18.6
Offences against property	- 7,438	- 6.8	- 4,556	- 5.3	- 2,836	- 12.2
Offences against good order	+ 1,642	+ 4.4	+ 970	+ 3.6	+ 666	+ 6.8
Drug offences	+ 415	+ 8.5	+ 183	+ 4.7	+ 233	+ 23.5
Driving offences	- 1,483	- 5.8	- 1,245	- 7.0	- 222	- 2.8
Other offences	- 15	- 1.4	- 1	- 0.2	- 13	- 2.9
Total offences	- 8,211	- 4.1	- 5,364	- 3.5	- 2,761	- 5.8

Source: Calculated from statistics reported in *Crime Mapper 2008-2012*.

## Five-year recorded crime trends

Recorded crime in South Australia has demonstrated year on year decreases since 2002. Between 2008 and 2012, the total number of offences recorded by police decreased by an average of 5.6 percent each year (or approximately 12,597 offences annually). This has resulted in a 20.8 percent reduction in offences recorded over the five-year period. In other words, there were 50,386 fewer offences recorded in 2012 than in 2008.

The total number of offences recorded by police decreased in both metropolitan and regional South Australia between 2008 and 2012 (see Figure 3). For metropolitan South Australia, total offences decreased by 21.3 percent (39,617 offences). The decrease for regional South Australia was slightly less pronounced at 19.2 percent (10,701 offences).

**Figure 3.** Total offences recorded by police for South Australia, Metropolitan SA and Regional SA, 2008 to 2012.



Source: Crime Mapper 2008-2012.

Table 2 shows the change in recorded offence numbers between 2008 and 2012 according to the eight major offence categories. The observed reduction in recorded crime across South Australia includes significant reductions in *driving offences* (down 29,557 offences, or 55.1%), *offences against property* (down 19,399 offences, or 16.0%) and *robbery and extortion offences* (down 221 offences, or 17.3%). These decreases have been offset by a comparatively small increase in *drug offences* (up 1,903 offences, or 56.4%).

Similar trends by offence type were found in metropolitan and regional South Australia (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Difference and percentage change in recorded offence numbers for South Australia, Metropolitan SA and Regional SA according to offence category, 2012 versus 2008.

	South Australia		Metropolitan SA		Regional SA	
	<i>Difference</i>	<i>% change</i>	<i>Difference</i>	<i>% change</i>	<i>Difference</i>	<i>% change</i>
Offences against the person (excluding sexual offences)	- 1,895	- 9.6	- 1,118	- 7.8	- 767	- 14.6
Sexual offences	- 214	- 9.7	- 145	- 8.9	- 67	- 12.0
Robbery and extortion offences	- 221	- 17.3	- 217	- 18.1	- 7	- 9.1
Offences against property	- 19,399	- 16.0	- 15,894	- 16.4	- 3,449	- 14.5
Offences against good order	- 995	- 2.5	- 1,011	- 3.5	+ 8	+ 0.1
Drug offences	+ 1,903	+ 56.4	+ 1,390	+ 52.2	+ 513	+ 72.1
Driving offences	- 29,557	- 55.1	- 22,512	- 57.7	- 7,038	- 48.1
Other offences	- 8	- 0.7	- 110	- 14.9	+ 106	+ 31.6
Total offences	- 50,386	- 20.8	- 39,617	- 21.3	- 10,701	- 19.2

Source: Calculated from statistics reported in *Crime Mapper 2008-2012*.

Note. This analysis does not take into account annual variability in the number of offences.

## Explaining changes in recorded crime trends

### Driving offences

The decrease in recorded *driving offences* can largely be attributed to legislative change. Changes to the *Motor Vehicles Regulations 1996*, which made offences relating to driving unregistered and uninsured expiable, came into operation on 1 June 2009. Expiable offences are not counted in *Crime Mapper*. Consequently, recorded motor vehicle registration offences decreased from 25,521 in 2008 to 3,438 in 2012 (a reduction of 22,083 recorded offences) accounting for three quarters of the observed decrease in *driving offences*.

### Property offences

The decrease in recorded *property offences* is more difficult to explain. According to research undertaken in New South Wales, property crime rates are influenced by a range of factors including drug use, the criminal justice response to property crime, and economic factors (Moffatt, Weatherburn & Donnelly, 2005). It is not known for certain what factors account for this continuing decline in property crime in South Australia, but it is noted that this trend is consistent with those observed nationally (AIC, 2013) and overseas (UK Office for National Statistics, 2014; US Department of Justice, 2013).

## Drug offences

Over the period of 2008-2012, Metropolitan South Australia recorded a 52.2 percent increase (1,390 offences) and Regional South Australia recorded a 72.1 percent increase (513 offences) in *drug offences*. One quarter of all *drug offences* (1,420) recorded across South Australia in 2012 were for the charge of *possess implement for drug use*, a greater than 350 percent increase of for this offence type over the five-year period.

The increases in *drug offences* can be explained, at least in part, by a combination of legislative change and changes in policing activity. Between 2008 and 2012, the following legislation commenced:

- The *Summary Offences (Drug Paraphernalia) Amendment Act 2008* commenced on 8 June 2008. This Act introduced provisions which made it illegal to sell equipment for use in connection with the consumption of controlled drugs and amended the *Controlled Substances Act 1984* to introduce the offence of selling drug-related equipment to children.
- Section 4 of the *Controlled Substances (Possession of Prescribed Equipment) Act 2007* commenced on 19 October 2008. This section introduced offences relating to the possession of prescribed equipment (e.g., hydroponic equipment for cultivating controlled plants, equipment for manufacturing a controlled drug and documentation outlining how to cultivate or manufacture a controlled plant/drug).
- The *Controlled Substances (Offences Relating to Instructions) Amendment Act 2011* commenced on 28 August 2011. This Act makes the sale, possession with intent to sell, supply or intent to supply, a document that contains instructions for the manufacture of a controlled drug or the cultivation of a controlled plant an offence. The Act also makes the possession of prescribed equipment or a prescribed quantity of a controlled precursor with the intent to supply to another person an offence.

In addition, during the five-year period, SAPOL regularly undertook specialised policing operations targeting drug-related crimes, particularly the sale and trafficking of controlled drugs (SAPOL Annual Reports, 2008; 2013) in line with the *South Australian Alcohol and Other Drug Strategy 2011 - 2016* (DASSA, 2011, p.5).

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