



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Criminology

# The Geography of Property Crime:

**The impact of shopping centres on the  
spatial distribution of property crime**

**Antonette Gaffney**



## Presentation Overview

- Why is geography important to the study of crime?
- Are shopping centres facilitators of property crime?
- Have the trends in shoplifting and property crime changed over the last 10 years?
- Have Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) techniques reduced property crime?
- What impact does CPTED have for crime prevention in drug markets?



## The Role of DUMA in the study of environmental criminology

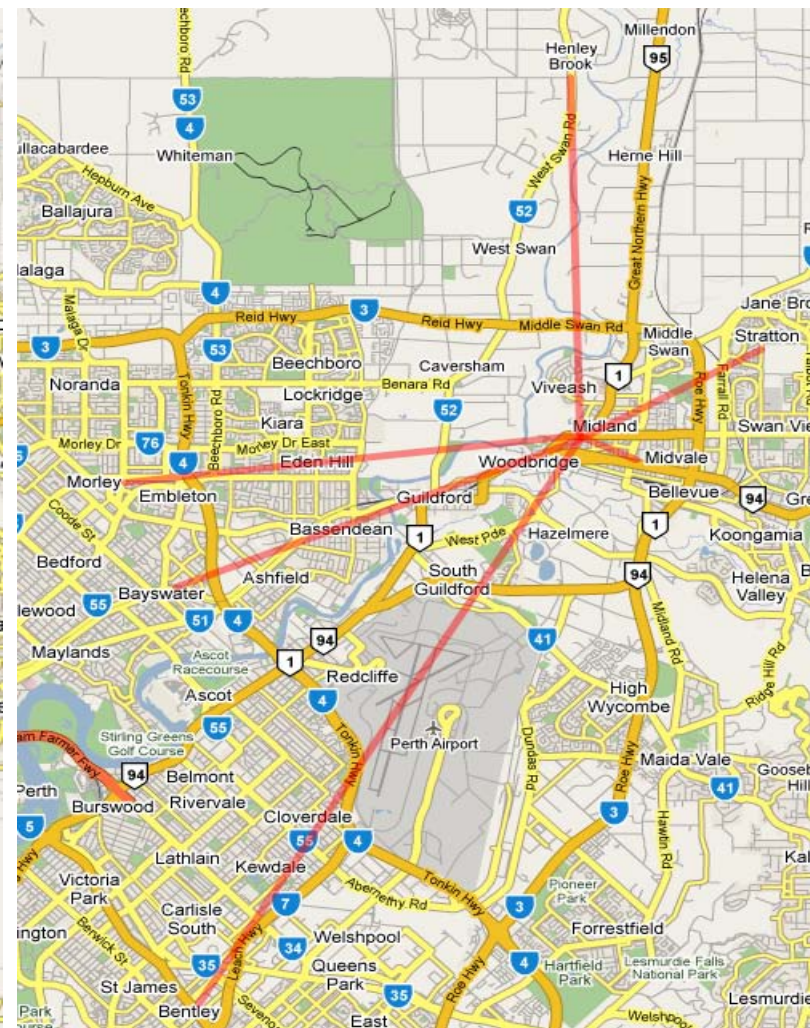
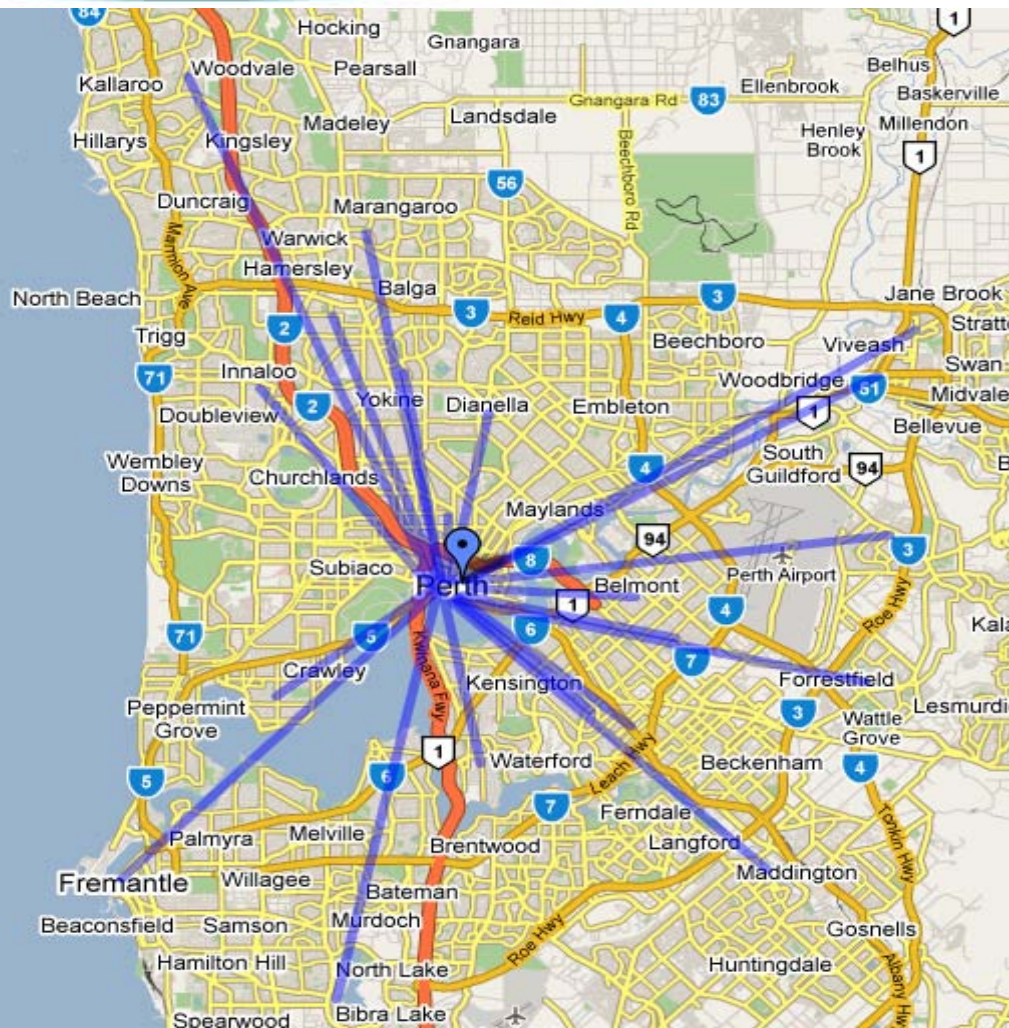
The DUMA database has the ability to:

- Utilise an offender-based sample
- Obtain suburb of offence and suburb of residence
- Record crime types
- Record geographic characteristics and social demographics

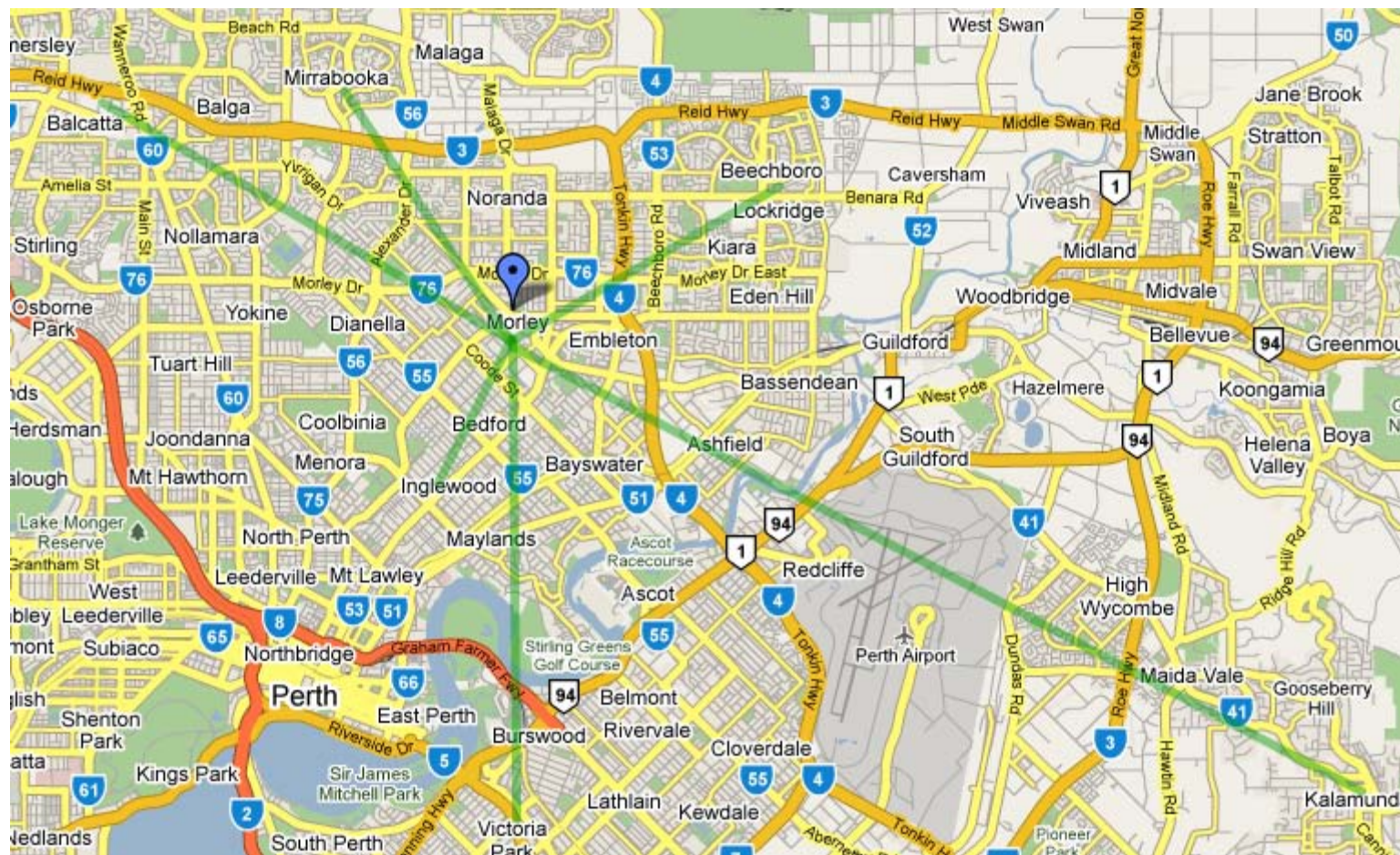


## Why is geography important to the study of crime? (Environmental Criminology)

- It provides a more accurate representation of criminal activity within an area, compared to aggregate measure of analysis;
- It allows crime to be viewed as a process, not an event;
- It allows nexus points to be identified;
- It can determine the impact of a suburb's characteristics or demographics on criminal behaviour.



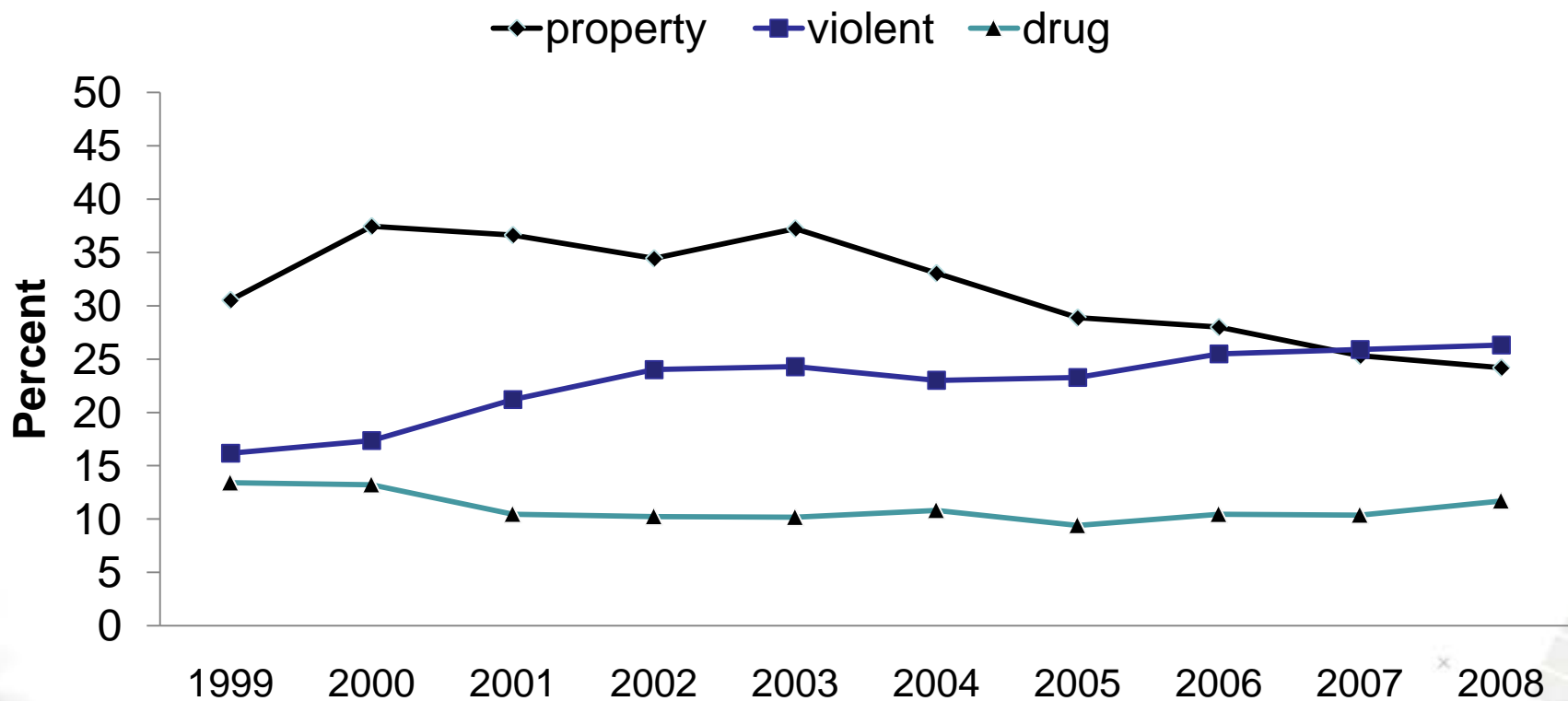
Source: DUMA dataset, 1999 – 2008; Google Maps



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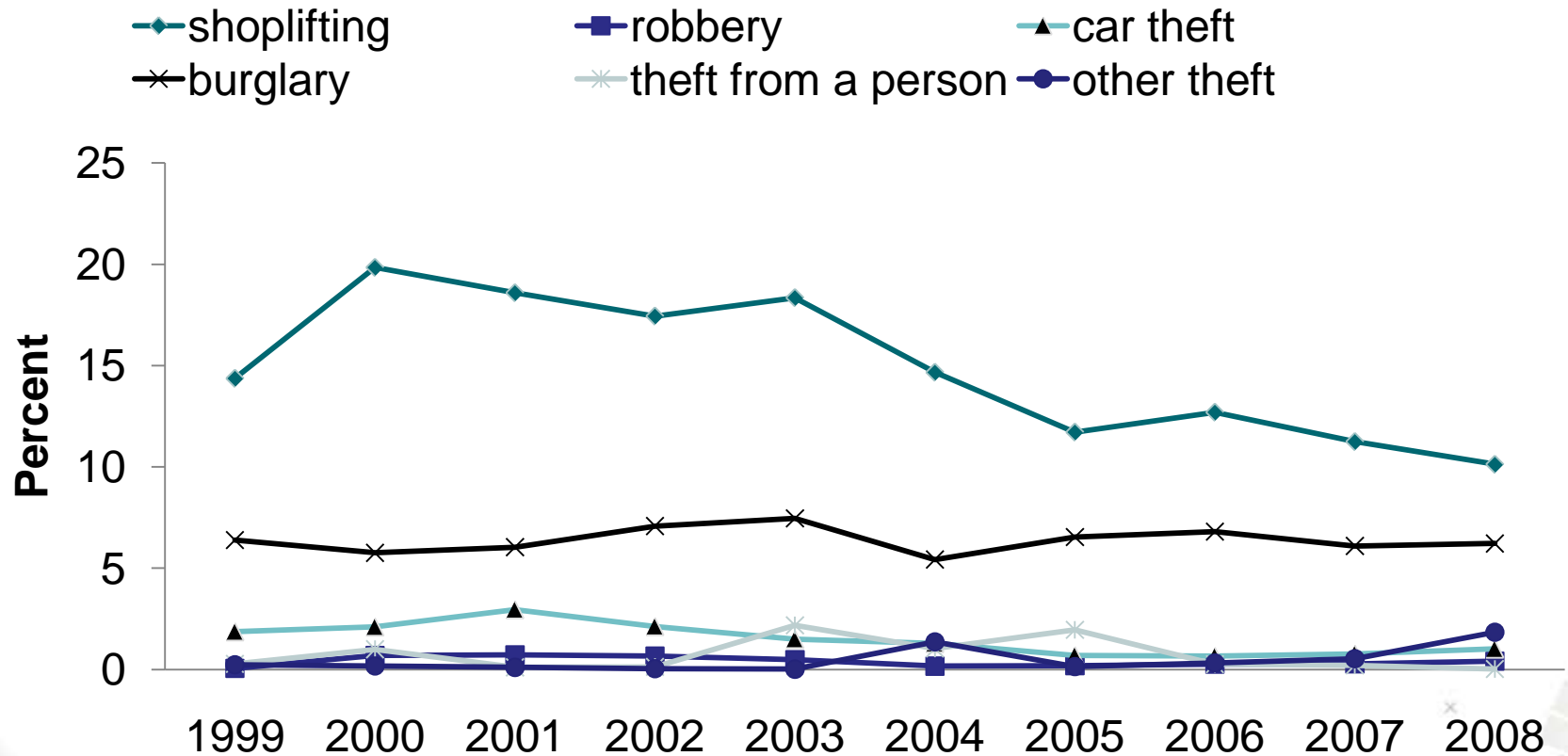


# Key crime profiles in DUMA





# Property crime by offence type





# The “crime triangle”

Crime is a result of the convergence between:

- A motivated offender
- A suitable victim/target
- A lack of a capable guardian



*“criminal events must be understood as convergences of offenders, victims or criminal targets, and laws in specific settings at particular times and places” (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1991: 2).*



# Shopping centre 'appeal'

- Purpose
- Nature
- Design





## Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED): in theory

- Is influenced by criminology, civil planning, environmental psychology, opportunity theory, rational choice theory and routine activities theory;
- Identifies areas within the physical and social environment that provide opportunities for criminality

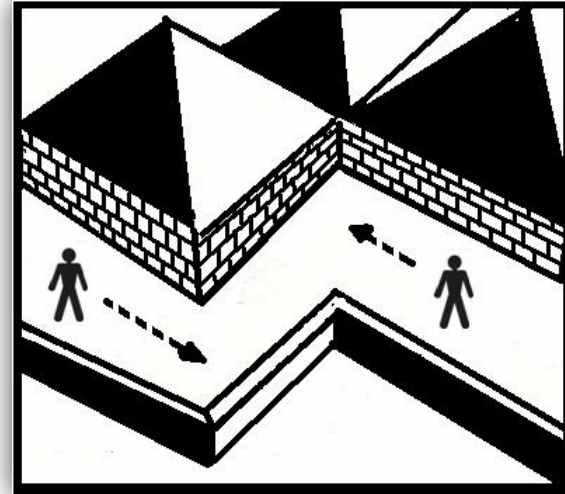
*“the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the fear of crime and the incidence of crime, and to an improvement in the quality of life” (Crowe, 2000: 1).*



## Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED): in practice

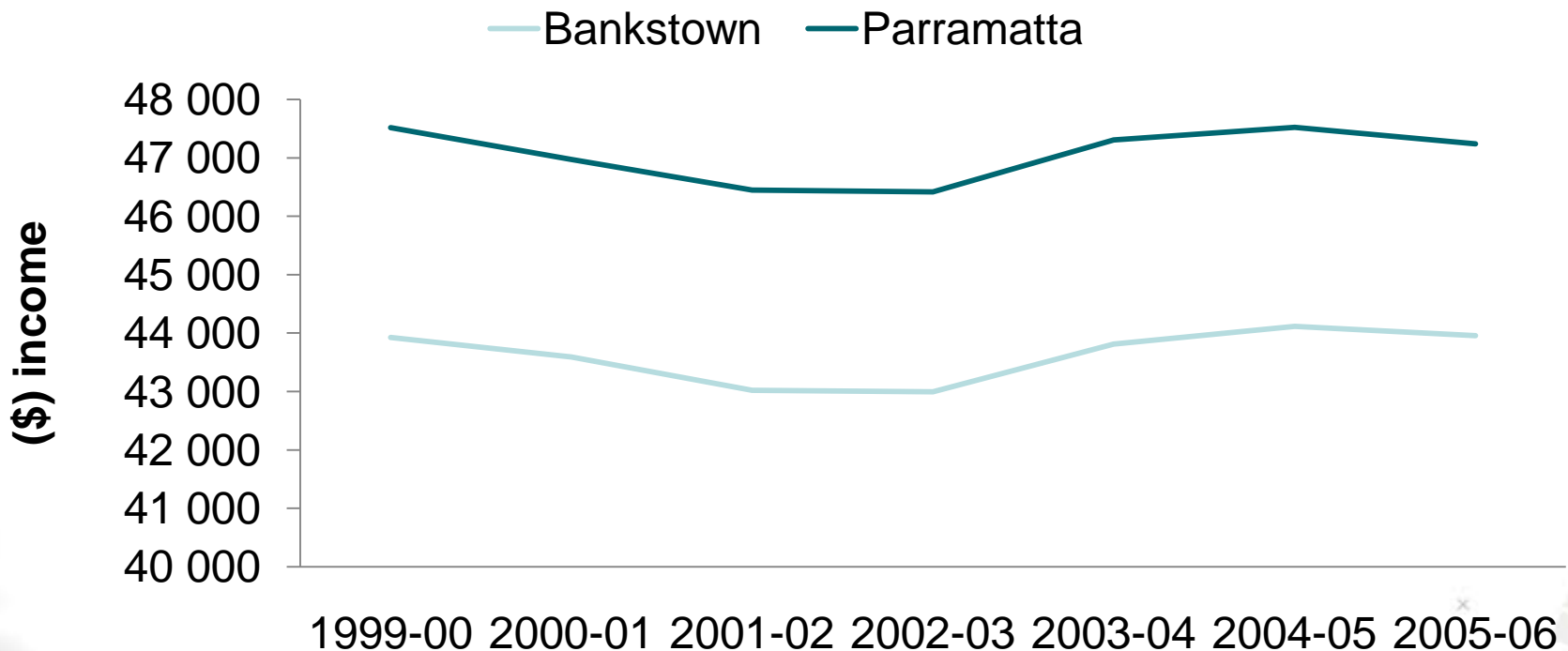
CPTED features that have been adopted by shopping centres to reduce criminality include:

- Improved lighting
- Natural surveillance
- Access control
- Target hardening



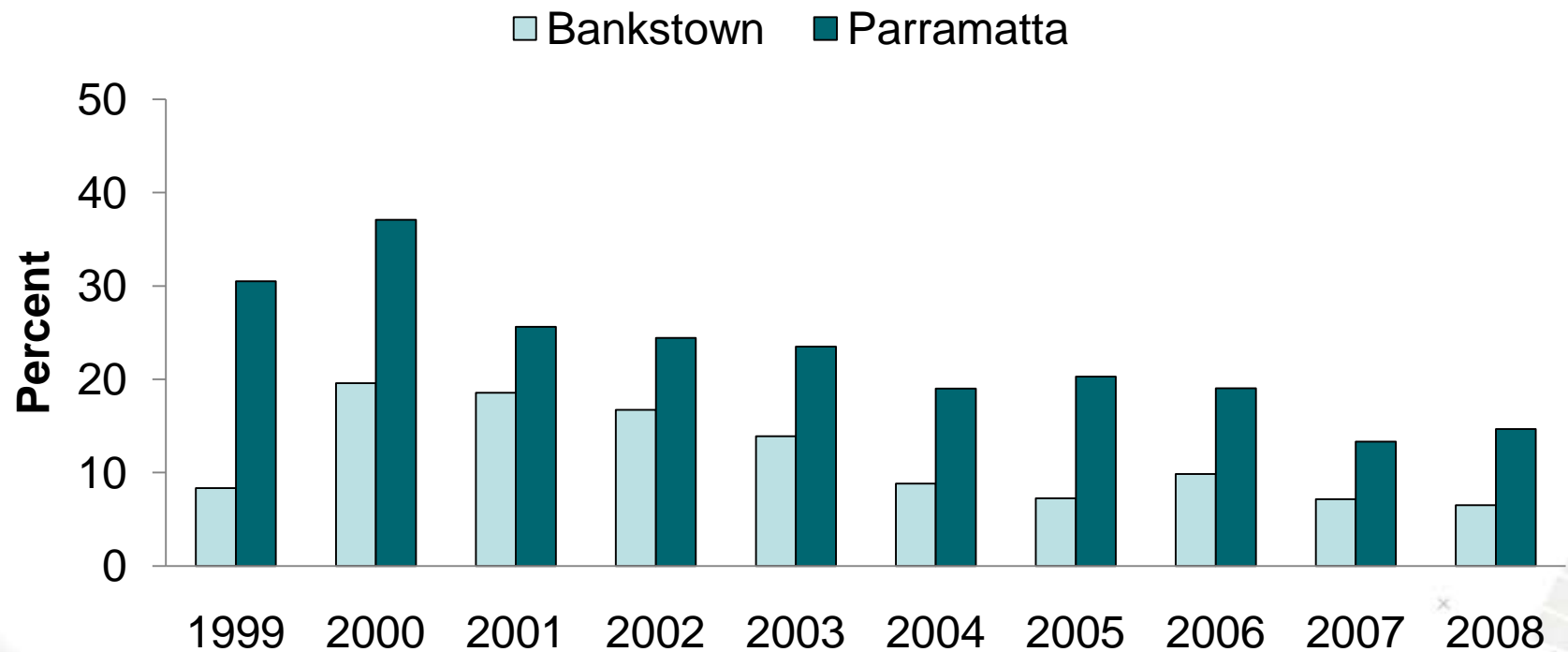


# Has the changing economy impacted upon shoplifting rates?





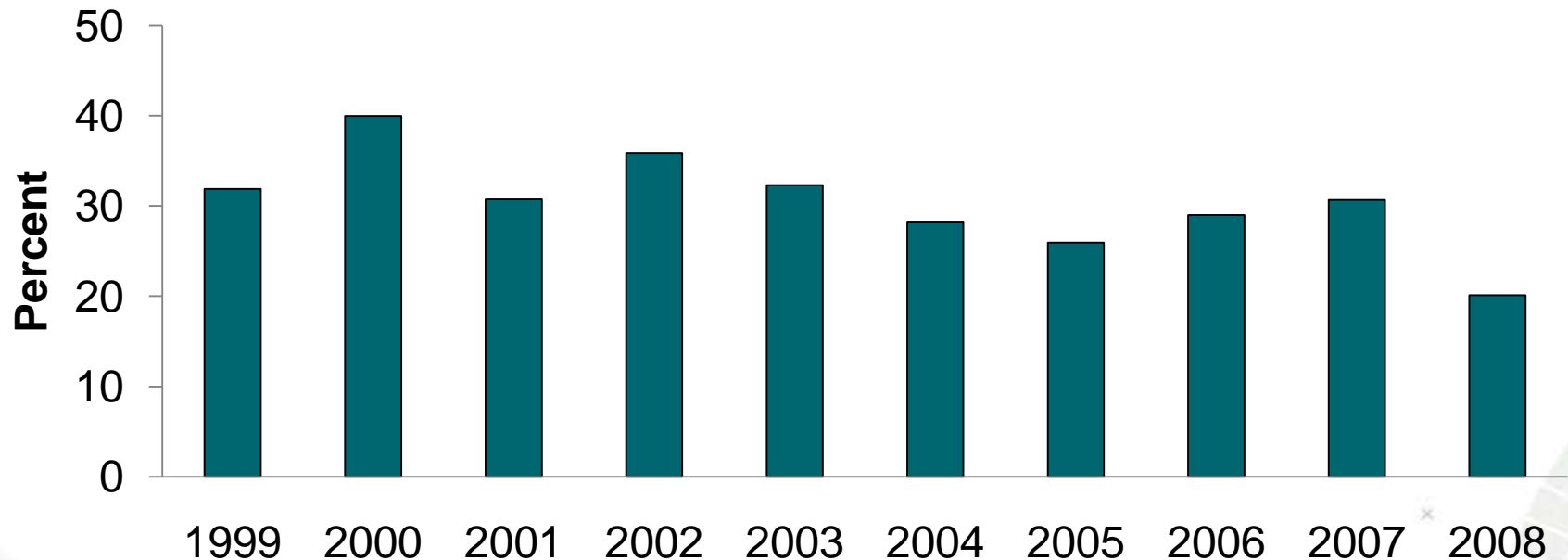
# Shoplifting rates in the NSW DUMA sites





# Has the heroin drought of 2001 impacted upon shoplifting rates?

**Number of heroin users charged with shoplifting  
(percent)**





# Wider implications of CPTED on the criminal justice system

- **Drug and alcohol treatment programs**

Treatment location and their proximity to local drug markets.

- **Open-air drug markets**

Open-air drug markets are place-specific and exist in geographically well-defined areas at identifiable times.



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