Australian Government
Australian Institute of Criminology

Firearms theft in Australia 2004–05

Maria Borzycki
Jenny Mouzos

Research and Public Policy Series

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Director's introduction

The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), through its National Firearms Monitoring Program, examines firearm related crime. Other programs, such as the National Armed Robbery and National Homicide Monitoring Programs, also contribute to our knowledge of firearms offences. Outputs from these programs provide evidence upon which policy makers can build. For example, a recent report examining the theft of firearms in Australia over a six-month period (Mouzos & Sakurai 2006) provided an exploratory account of the characteristics of the firearms stolen and offenders' methods. By understanding the characteristics of firearms theft, police and policy makers can ensure firearms owners provide optimal security for their firearms. In turn, this may assist in minimising the number of firearms that potentially can be diverted to the illegal firearms market.

This report is the inaugural output of the newly established National Firearms Theft Monitoring Program (NFTMP). The NFTMP evolved from an Australasian Police Ministers' Council recommendation and is an Australian Government funded program. This report adds to our understanding of firearms theft, building on the previous exploratory report by examining all incidents of firearms theft reported to police for the period 2004–05. Almost 1,500 firearms, or less than 0.1 of one percent of all registered firearms, were reported as stolen in 668 incidents. Importantly, data suggest a downward trend in the number of firearms stolen. Although this is the first year of monitoring, this compares favourably with results from previous research (Mouzos 2002) that found over 5,000 firearms reported stolen in 1995–96, prior to the implementation of the National Firearms Agreement in Australian jurisdictions. Most stolen firearms were registered. However, in around one-third of all theft incidents the firearms were not stored in compliance with requirements, highlighting the need for firearms owners to ensure their weapons are securely stored.

As the NFTMP collection grows over time, products such as this annual report will provide police and policy makers with important information on trends and changes in the circumstances and characteristics of firearms theft in Australia.

AIC publications about firearm related crime and more general weapons offences can be found at: http://www.aic.gov.au/research/weapons/publications.html

Toni Makkai
Director
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Disclaimer

This research report does not necessarily reflect the policy position of the Australian Government.

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Executive summary

Supported by the Australasian Police Ministers' Council (APMC) Firearms Policy Working Group (FPWG), the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department provided funding to the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) to conduct a detailed examination of firearms theft in Australia. Information relating to all incidents of firearms theft reported to police in Australian states and territories for the period 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005 have been analysed for this report.

This research was undertaken to further build upon knowledge gained in an earlier exploration of firearms theft in Australia (see Mouzos & Sakurai 2006). Specifically, this report examines the characteristics of commonly stolen firearms, the *modi operandi* of thefts, and related issues, such as compliance with firearms storage requirements, repeat victimisation and the recovery of and/or use of stolen firearms in other crime.

The conclusions which can be drawn from compiled data are somewhat limited by issues surrounding the reliability and representativeness of that data. Key findings are nonetheless consistent with those to emerge from the earlier exploratory research.

Key findings regarding stolen firearms

- A total of 1,470 firearms were stolen in 668 reported incidents.
- Stolen firearms represented 0.06 percent of all registered firearms in Australia.
- Less than 0.1 of one percent of Australian firearm licence holders (0.09) reported firearms theft incidents.
- Just over half of all incidents involved the theft of a single firearm. The number of firearms stolen in multiple firearm thefts ranged from two to 19.
- Rifles accounted for the majority (58%) of all stolen firearms, with bolt action rifles the most often listed. One-quarter of the stolen firearms were shotguns, and nearly 40 percent of these were single-barrelled. Handguns constituted seven percent of firearms reported stolen, with around three percent being semi-automatic handguns.
- Six in 10 stolen firearms were classified as category A firearms, around one in four as category B, and seven percent as category H. One percent was classified as category C, and less than one percent as category D.
- Nearly nine in 10 (88%) of firearms reported stolen were registered.

Key findings regarding theft incidents

- Nearly 90 percent of incidents were reported within two weeks of the firearm theft, and the average delay between occurrence and report for these cases was two days.
- The median delay between occurrence and report was one day. Just under three-quarters of incidents were reported by the registered owners of the stolen firearms.
- The majority of incidents (83%) occurred in urban areas, and 61 percent of all thefts occurred in urban private residences.
- Around three-quarters of all theft incidents were from private residences, regardless of whether the location was classified as urban or non-urban. Over 80 percent of all stolen rifles and shotguns, and 60 percent of stolen handguns, were taken from this location type.
- Thirteen percent of incidents involved theft from vehicles or while firearms were in transit, and the majority of these thefts resulted in the loss of single firearms.
- Just over one in 10 thefts occurred in business or commercial premises. These were the locations from which around 30 percent of all handguns were stolen, 11 percent of shotguns and eight percent of rifles.
- Six in 10 incidents also involved the theft of non-firearm items. The most commonly stolen Other type of good was tools (15% of the total types of goods reported stolen). A higher proportion of incidents where multiple firearms were taken involved the theft of other, non-firearm goods, than with incidents where single firearms were stolen.

Key findings regarding compliance and prosecution

- Fifty-three percent of incidents involved the theft of firearms from owners who were compliant with firearm storage requirements. The majority of incidents where non-compliance was reported involved firearms stored in locations other than locked safes or receptacles.
- A higher proportion of owners complied with storage requirements in incidents where multiple firearms were stolen compared with compliance among owners in incidents where only single firearms were stolen. Charges had been laid or were pending against owners in 42 percent of incidents in which non-compliance had been noted.
- Ammunition was stolen in addition to firearms in 27 percent of incidents. Ammunition was stored separately to firearms in 17 percent of these firearm plus ammunition thefts.
- A total of 122 charges relating to 109 incidents were reported, regardless of whether the owners had complied with storage requirements. Nearly six in 10 charges related to the inappropriate storage of firearms or ammunition.
- Valid licence information was provided for owners/reporting persons in 507 incidents. Thirty-two charges were brought against 25 individuals associated with the 161 incidents for which licensing information was not provided (11 of these charges related to licensing matters).

Key findings on related issues

- Previous thefts involving the loss of firearms in the same location had occurred in three percent of all incidents, but compliance with storage requirements at the time of the currently examined theft was noted in only two-thirds of these incidents.
- Some or all of the stolen firearms were recovered in around one in eight incidents, and recovered firearms were returned to owners in half of these cases.
- Less than half of the incidents included information regarding whether stolen firearms had subsequently been used in some other crime. Available data show that firearms stolen in one percent of incidents were known to be used in later criminal incidents (which included murder, suicide, armed robbery, fraud, and goods/licensing offences).

Future directions in policy and practice

Data suggest that the downward trend in the number of firearms thefts since the implementation of the National Firearms Agreement 1996 is continuing. Ongoing examination of firearm theft by the AIC, funded by the Australian Government, will allow monitoring of this trend. Other issues, such as firearm theft from vehicles and incidents where entire storage receptacles are stolen will also be examined and monitored over time, facilitating future evidence based firearms policy.

These analyses suggest refinements to what and how data are collated may increase the utility of generated findings. These refinements might include additional mandatory variables in the template (such as detailed location information, and data regarding previous unlawful entries to these locations, regardless of whether firearms were stolen in earlier incidents), as well as the development of mechanisms to decrease the proportion of missing data supplied for all variables.

Introduction

Background

The National Firearms Agreement 1996, National Handgun Agreement 2002, and National Firearms Trafficking Policy Agreement 2002 were implemented by Australian governments to better regulate firearms in the community. The schemes linked to these agreements prohibited and/or restricted certain categories of firearms and introduced new penalties for cross border firearms trafficking. These measures were accompanied by new firearm licensing, storage, registration and training requirements, and the government buyback of newly prohibited weapons.

In June 2002 the AIC published a *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice* paper on firearms theft in Australia, which examined:

- the incidence of the theft of firearms in Australia from 1994 to 2000
- the types of firearms stolen
- the location of firearms theft.

Firearms theft is important because firearms stolen from legitimate owners may re-emerge in the illegitimate market. Earlier research suggested that these stolen firearms might then be employed in crime (see Mouzos & Sakurai 2006). This research was also important because it provided information on a crime issue not previously reported upon.

After considering firearms theft at its meeting of 17 July 2002, the APMC resolved that the FPWG should consider measures to combat firearms theft, including the adequacy of firearms storage arrangements and audits. The FPWG agreed that further research and investigation was necessary to prepare a report on firearms theft for the APMC.

On 11 November 2003, the APMC agreed that all jurisdictions would provide firearms theft data for a period of six months. These data were collected using a template developed by the FPWG, and approved by the Senior Officers' Group (SOG).[1] Using the template, states and territories started collecting data on all firearms theft incidents reported from 1 February 2004 to 31 July 2004.

The AIC examined the data and prepared the report, *Firearms theft in Australia: a six-month exploratory analysis* (Mouzos & Sakurai 2006), on behalf of the FPWG. In accordance with the APMC resolution of 17 November 2004, the firearms theft report was submitted to the SOG and the APMC out-of-session.

In March 2005, the FPWG resolved that the report provided valuable information. However, the value of the research would be greatly enhanced by a further period of research to allow

1: SOG is comprised of the most senior Australian law enforcement officers from Australian states and territories.

better analysis of the overall trends in instances of firearms theft. States and territories continued to collect theft data from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005. Funded by the Australian Government, the AIC conducted analyses on these additional data.

Purpose of this report

The report summarises the findings of analyses of all incidents of firearm theft reported to Australian police forces during the one-year period 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005. As with the earlier analyses (see Mouzos & Sakurai 2006), this report aims to:

- identify the characteristics of firearms that are commonly stolen
- identify the characteristics and *modus operandi* of firearms thefts
- assess the rate of compliance with safe storage requirements, and the prosecution of non-compliance.

Accordingly, and after a brief discussion of issues related to data collection and analytical methods, the main body of the report is organised into three parts:

- a discussion of the firearms stolen
- an overview of the incidents in which those firearms were stolen
- a discussion in relation to compliance, repeat victimisation, stolen firearm recovery, and the use of stolen firearms in crime.

These findings add to the knowledge base of the circumstances surrounding firearms theft. This in turn will assist the FPWG to develop evidence based policy, especially in:

- developing initiatives to reduce the incidence of firearms theft
- developing a minimum standard for firearms storage across all sectors of the firearms community.

Methodology

As discussed, firearms theft data were supplied by state and territory police using the purpose-designed template (see Mouzos & Sakurai 2006 for a copy of the template). The template allows jurisdictions to supply information in a uniform manner. Some pieces of information, called variables, are mandatory and others need only be supplied when relevant. A number of variables have pre-coded response categories while others require free text responses.

This information was provided in a single response sheet for each incident of firearms theft in paper or electronic form. All data were compiled into a single national dataset using the proprietorial software, STATA. For the current purposes, a single record described a single firearms theft incident. As multiple firearms could be stolen in a single incident of theft, the number of firearms stolen exceeds the number of incidents.

The exploratory report captured data describing thefts reported from February to July 2004. This period tallied with neither calendar nor financial year. In order to calibrate data collection reference periods to align with usually employed crime statistics reporting periods, this current report examines 11 months of new data (namely theft reports for August 2004 to June 2005) plus one month (July 2004) of data already examined in the exploratory analysis. Only broad comparisons have been made between trends and patterns reported in the exploratory analysis and in the current work because of this overlap of cases and the differing reference periods examined.

A dataset combining all incidents of theft reported to police from February 2004 to June 2005 was created. Importantly, this dataset incorporated some incidents which were not theft *per se*, but in which firearms could not be located. These included instances such as those in which firearms known to be owned could not be found after an owner passed away, or when firearms were lost or misplaced when the owner was hunting. These non-thefts have been retained in the dataset because the firearms in question could potentially still be diverted into the illegal firearms market. A total of 1,005 incidents were described in the 18-month national dataset but not all were used in final analyses employed for this report. Exclusions were as follows:

- 297 cases, where the incident in question was reported to police outside the date range under consideration (that is, before July 2004 or after June 2005)
- 40 cases describing the theft of items that were not categorised as firearms for the current purposes. Specifically, incidents involving non-firearms which were excluded involved cases where:
  - only ammunition was stolen and/or there was no indication that an actual firearm was stolen (n=3)
  - unregistered replica or imitation firearms were stolen and no charges were laid against their owners (n=18)
  - firearms were antique, deactivated or inoperable (n=6)
  - items stolen were unregistered nail guns, paintball markers, starting pistols, or some other non-firearm such as a pen gun or laser gun, and where no firearms charges were laid against their owners (n=13).

There were two cases where the owner was charged with firearms offences even though the stolen item(s) would be considered non-firearms (i.e. imitation firearms, paintball markers),

plus a single case where the firearms were inoperable but nonetheless registered in the reporting jurisdiction. These three cases were retained in the final dataset. Three cases were also retained in which both firearms and non-firearms (as per the current criteria) were listed as stolen. In these latter instances, detail regarding the non-firearms was removed and the total number of firearms stolen in the incident amended to reflect only valid firearms.

The final dataset contained valid records describing 668 different incidents of theft, resulting in the loss of 1,470 individual firearms. All jurisdictions supplied total count information for every reported incident but full details regarding all those firearms and valid non-firearms stolen were not available in a minority of cases. Consequently, detail such as firearm category, make, model etc was available for only 1,455 firearms and all analyses examining details relating to stolen firearms consider only these firearms.

Extra detail supplied for a small number of incidents suggested that some were not actual thefts but rather cases where the firearms simply could not be located (n=19):

- six incidents involved firearms lost while boating, four wheel driving or during some other recreational activity
- four involved owners misplacing or losing firearms while on their own private property
- four involved owners lending firearms to others but those firearms were not returned
- two involved firearms which could not be located after the death of the registered owners but no known thefts had occurred
- three incidents simply noted that the firearms had been reported as lost but without any further detail.

A total of 21 firearms were reported as missing in these incidents. All of these cases were retained in analyses because the firearms could potentially be diverted into the illegal weapons market. Further, given that this information was deduced it is entirely possible that other incidents in the dataset should also be categorised as non-thefts but because relevant information had not been supplied, they could not be identified. Variables such as method of access to locked receptacles were coded as not applicable for these incidents.

Although almost 700 incidents involving stolen or missing firearms have been examined for this report, some detailed breakdowns of the data ultimately refer to only a very small number of cases. These have been included to paint as full a picture as possible of the dataset but it is important that findings based on only a few incidents are not over-interpreted: the stated number of cases used to calculate percentage values should be considered. Similarly, when making comparisons with findings from earlier research, it should be remembered that small numbers appear to fluctuate more widely than larger numbers but this fluctuation may not be meaningful in any real world sense.

The majority of analyses conducted for this report are descriptive in nature: if tests of statistical significance were conducted, this has been noted. Importantly, as data regarding firearm theft are accumulated over time, more complex testing and data modelling will be possible in the future.

Data quality

Thorough checks were conducted on data received to ensure consistent information within incident cases. When inconsistencies could not be resolved with information received, jurisdictions were asked to provide clarification. Three factors may affect the complete reliability of the data received and therefore the degree with which data provide a correct summary of all firearm thefts in Australia.

First, equivalently detailed information was not necessarily provided by all jurisdictions. While states and territories supplied all possible information for mandatory variables, the template also provides for optional additional information. In some instances, this information provided extra detail about an involved firearm (for example, it was no longer operable), or about the incident (for example, the firearm was lost while the owner was boating). This information can improve understanding of what transpired and influence the way other information related to the incident is interpreted (for example, an inoperable firearm would be excluded from analyses; variables describing how secure receptacles were accessed are not applicable if a firearm was lost while being used recreationally). However, this additional information is optional: it is possible that similar factors were at play in other incidents but because no additional information was supplied in these incidents, these factors could not be assessed.

Second, and in a related fashion, missing data on some variables in some cases may be because of random factors (that is, sometimes some information is missed when officers file reports of firearm theft but there is no pattern to what is missed). Sometimes it may be due to more systematic factors (for example, persons reporting theft may be hesitant to supply certain information). Unfortunately, there is no way to ascertain which might be the case with the current dataset and consequently, analyses of variables showing high numbers of missed cases should be interpreted with caution.

In addition, this dataset probably does not contain information concerning all firearms thefts in Australia. It is unlikely that unlicensed individuals in possession of unregistered or prohibited firearms would notify authorities if those firearms were stolen, because reporting would alert police to the owners' illegal firearm possession. Recent survey research suggests that a very small minority of firearm owners possess their weapons primarily for use in illegal activities (Mouzos & Borzycki 2006), and again, common sense would suggest

that any theft of these firearms may not be reported. Similarly, survey research also suggests that not all persons who report owning a firearm register that firearm or are licensed to own it (Mouzos & Borzycki 2006).

Of equal importance, this dataset does not capture instances of burglary or theft from premises or vehicles in which firearms were stored but from which they were *not* stolen. That is, we cannot estimate on how many occasions burglars and robbers may have had the opportunity to take secured firearms but were unable to do so. Some analyses included in this report do describe the number of firearm thefts as a percentage of licence holders, and the number of stolen firearms as a proportion of all registered firearms. Unfortunately, is it not known how many licence holders were burgled or robbed but did not lose firearms and it would be the inclusion of these figures that would allow a complete understanding of the features that characterise completed firearm thefts when compared with unsuccessful (from the offenders' perspective) attempts.

Firearm control measures

During the reference period examined, certain initiatives were underway that may have impacted upon firearm theft (although the extent or nature of any impact cannot be ascertained). For example:

- a general firearms amnesty in Queensland from 1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004
- an open amnesty policy in Western Australia, whereby the police accept unlicensed firearms to be either destroyed or licensed on the understanding that people surrendering firearms will not be charged
- a permanent amnesty in Tasmania, although an advertised amnesty was held between 3 October and 31 December 2005
- an audit of licensed firearms owners in New South Wales, specifically focusing on their compliance with storage requirements, completed in early 2005.

Characteristics of stolen firearms

Describing the dataset

A total of 668 incidents of theft were reported to police in Australian jurisdictions between 1 July 2004 and 30 June 2005 (see Table 1). In the calendar year 2004, there were 224,638 victims of unlawful entry with intent where property was taken, and 547,800 victims of other theft in Australia (ABS 2005). Although recorded crime statistics and the current firearm theft dataset are not directly equivalent in terms of reference periods or the types of incidents considered, the two sources in combination indicate that the firearm thefts make up a very small proportion of all reported thefts (around 0.09%). Similarly, thefts were reported by only small proportions of firearm licence holders.

Table 1: Firearm theft incidents and stolen firearms

	Incidents		Number of firearms		Mean firearms per incident (n)
Jurisdiction	n	%	n	%	
Qld	148	22	329	22	2.2
NSW	143	21	371	25	2.6
Vic	138	21	302	21	2.2
WA	113	17	207	14	1.8
SA	70	10	150	10	2.1
Tas	42	6	83	6	2.0
NT	12	2	20	1	1.7
ACT	2	< 1	8	1	4.0
Australia	668	100	1,470	100	2.2

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Based on estimates extrapolated from the previous report (Mouzos & Sakurai 2006), a total of 636 theft incidents would be expected in a 12 month period, resulting in the loss of an estimated 1,328 firearms. The numbers of theft incidents and of stolen firearms recorded in the current dataset are slightly higher, although generally in keeping with estimates. A total of 1,470 firearms were reported as being lost or stolen in these incidents, although as already noted, full weapon descriptions were available for only 1,455 firearms. Just over half of all incidents (51%) resulted in the theft of only a single firearm, as was observed in the six-monthly analysis. Figure 1 shows that less than 0.1 of a percent of licensed Australian firearm owners reported thefts.

Figure 1: Firearms theft incidents as a percentage of licence holders[a]

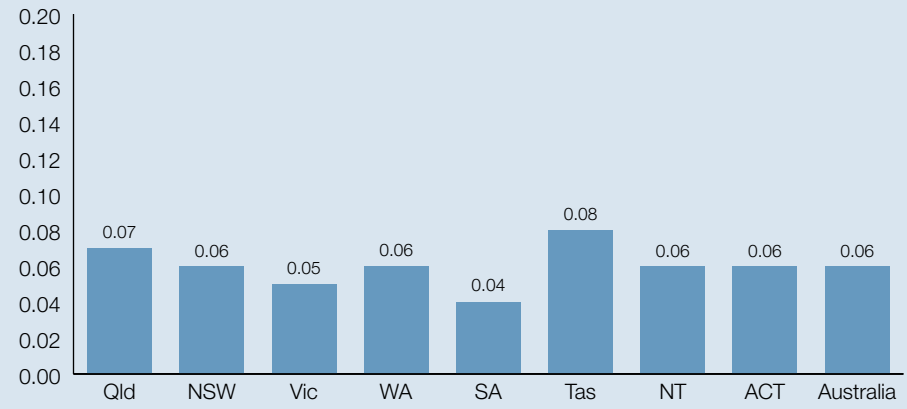
a: Reference periods for the capture of licence holder information varied with jurisdiction: Mar 2004 (Qld), Apr 2004 (NSW, Vic, Tas and NT), Jun 2004 (SA), Feb 2005 (WA) and Mar 2005 (ACT)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]; state and territory firearms registries

Only a small percentage of all registered firearms in Australia were stolen (less than 0.1 of one percent; see Figure 2). Both this and the percentage of theft incidents for all licence holders are similar to the findings from the earlier analyses: proportions overall and for each of the larger jurisdictions – that is, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia – are around twice those previously reported. The small number of incidents described for the smaller jurisdictions – Tasmania, the Northern and Australian Capital Territories, and to some extent, South Australia – means that those reported statistics, especially percentages, fluctuate more widely than in those reported for the larger states.

The highest percentage of incidents was reported in Queensland (22%), with the fewest (less than 1%) in the Australian Capital Territory. The highest number of stolen firearms (25% of all firearms) and the greatest average number of firearms stolen per incident (2.6) were reported in New South Wales. The Australian Capital Territory recorded the lowest number (eight firearms), although the very small number of incidents (n=2) resulted in an average well above the national mean. The proportion of incidents relative to licence holders was the lowest observed in any jurisdiction (see Figure 1).

Figure 2: Firearms stolen as a percentage of registered firearms[a]

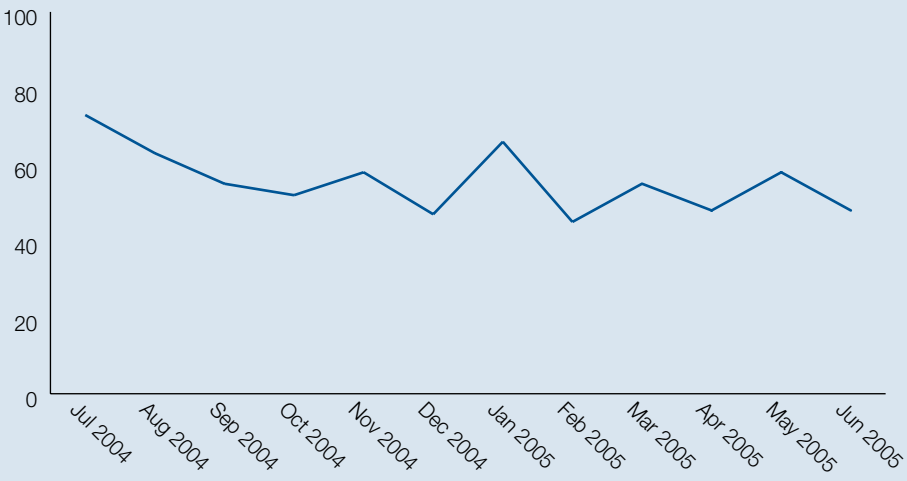


a: Reference periods for the capture of registered firearm information varied with jurisdiction: Mar 2004 (Qld), Apr 2004 (NSW, Vic, Tas, and NT), Jun 2004 (SA), Feb 2005 (WA), and Mar 2005 (ACT)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]; state and territory firearms registries

When considering all incidents reported to Australian police between July 2004 and June 2005, the spread of when these were reported was fairly uniform over the months (between 5% and 8% of all cases were reported each month; see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Firearm thefts reported per month, July 2004 – June 2005 (number)



Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file], n=668

Describing stolen firearms

Types of firearms stolen

Over half of all firearms reported stolen were rifles (58%), around one-quarter were shotguns or shotgun/rifle combinations, and almost one-tenth, air rifles (see Table 2). A little over one in twenty involved a handgun, with proportions similar to those observed in the six-monthly analysis. Examined from a slightly different perspective, nearly three-quarters of theft incidents (72% of the 668 incidents) resulted in the theft of a rifle, 41 percent in the theft of a shotgun, and seven percent in the theft of a handgun (these total more than 100 percent because multiple firearm types could be stolen in an incident).

Table 2: Type of firearm stolen[a]

Type	n	%
Rifle	846	58
Shotgun	362	25
Air rifle	130	9
Handgun	96	7
Shotgun/rifle combination[b]	8	1
Other[c]	4	< 1
Not specified	9	1
(Total)	(1,455)	(100)

a: Does not include 15 firearms reported stolen in incident totals provided by jurisdictions but for which detail was not supplied. Percentages may not necessarily total 100 because of rounding

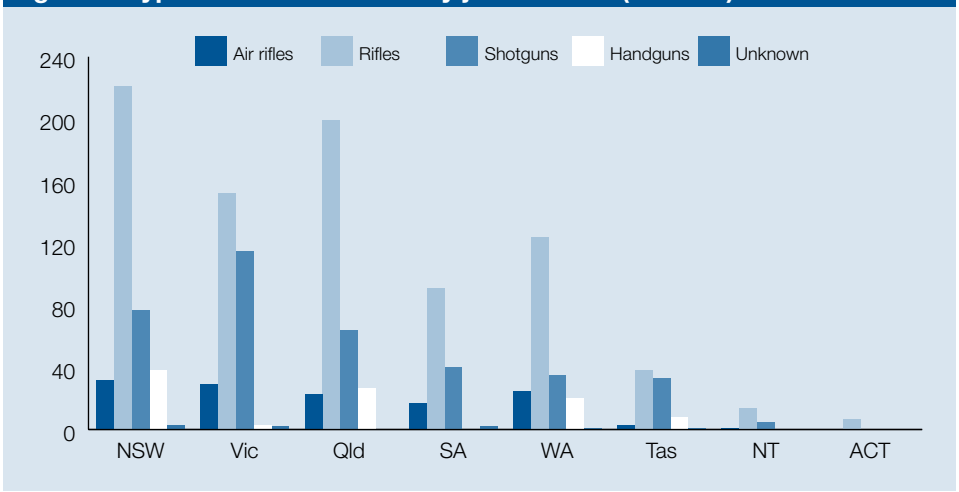
b: In all subsequent analyses, shotgun/rifle combinations are not listed separately but have been included in the shotgun category

c: Other includes a single firearm coded as such by the reporting jurisdiction but for which detail beyond calibre was unknown, and non-firearms (paintball markers, imitation firearms) retained in analyses because the related incidents resulted in firearms charges

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Consistent with this national breakdown and with figures obtained in the earlier analyses, rifles made up the largest percent of firearms stolen in each jurisdiction (ranging from 46% of all firearms stolen in Tasmania, to 88% of those stolen in the ACT; see Figure 4 and Table A1 in Appendix A, which shows percentages plus the raw numbers used to produce Figure 4). Shotguns constituted the next largest proportion of stolen firearms, ranging from 13 percent in the Australian Capital Territory, to 40 percent in Tasmania. In the larger jurisdictions, Victoria reported the smallest percentage of stolen handguns: one percent, versus around 10 percent for New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia.

Figure 4: Type of firearms stolen by jurisdiction[a] (number)



a: Excludes 15 firearms for which no detail was supplied, 3 non-firearms categorised as other, and 1 firearm coded as other by the reporting jurisdiction (see Table 2). Eight combination shotgun/rifles are included in the shotguns category (1 from Qld, 2 each from SA and NSW, and 3 from Tas)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file], n=1,451

Detailed information about stolen firearms resulted in similar findings to those from the six-month dataset. For example, the majority of rifles were bolt action (around three-quarters of all rifles in both the current and in the previous analyses; see Table 4), and one in ten were lever action (11% in the current dataset versus 10% in the preceding report). Very few instances of stolen semi-automatic rifles were reported (around 1%). The most commonly stolen shotguns were classed as single barrel (36% in Table 4, versus 33% in the six-monthly report). Just over four in ten handguns stolen in both reference periods were categorised as semi-automatic (41%, Table 5, versus 44% in the earlier analyses), with a high proportion of unclassifiable handgun actions seen in both periods (20% in these data and 21% previously).

Table 3: Action type of rifles stolen		
Action type	**n**	**%**
Bolt action	562	66
Lever action	94	11
Single shot	92	11
Semi-automatic	10	1
Black powder	10	1
Pump action	6	1
Double barrel	1	0
Unknown[a]	71	8
(Total)[b]	(846)	(100)

a: Includes rifles for which there was insufficient information to ascertain action type
b: Percentages may not necessarily total 100 because of rounding
Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Table 4: Action type of shotguns stolen		
Action type	**n**	**%**
Single barrel	135	36
Double barrel	104	28
Over and under	59	16
Pump action	7	2
Shotgun/rifle combination	7	2
Bolt action	5	1
Semi-automatic	1	< 1
Unknown[a]	52	14
(Total)	(370)	(100)

a: Includes shotguns for which there was insufficient information to ascertain action type
Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Table 5: Action type of handguns stolen		
Action type	**n**	**%**
Semi-automatic pistol	39	41
Revolver	27	28
Black powder revolver	6	6
Air pistol	4	4
Single shot pistol	1	1
Unknown[a]	19	20
(Total)	(96)	(100)

a: Includes handguns for which there was insufficient information to ascertain action type
Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Categories of firearms stolen

The 1996 National Firearms Agreement resulted in a system of firearm classification based on firing action, calibre and other criteria (see Appendix B). This breakdown is almost identical to that derived from the earlier, six-monthly dataset. The most commonly reported firearms stolen (84% of all firearms for which detailed information was available) were classified as either category A or B. Less than one percent of stolen firearms were classed as category D, which is to be expected as ownership of firearms within this category is restricted to a minimal number of purposes.

Table 6: Category of firearm stolen[a]

Category	n	%
A	885	61
B	336	23
C	12	1
D	5	< 1
H	96	7
Other[b]	3	< 1
Unknown[c]	118	8
(Total)	(1,455)	(100)

a: Does not include 15 firearms reported stolen in incident totals provided by jurisdictions but for which detail was not supplied. Percentages may not necessarily total 100 because of rounding

b: Includes paintball markers and imitation firearms retained in analyses

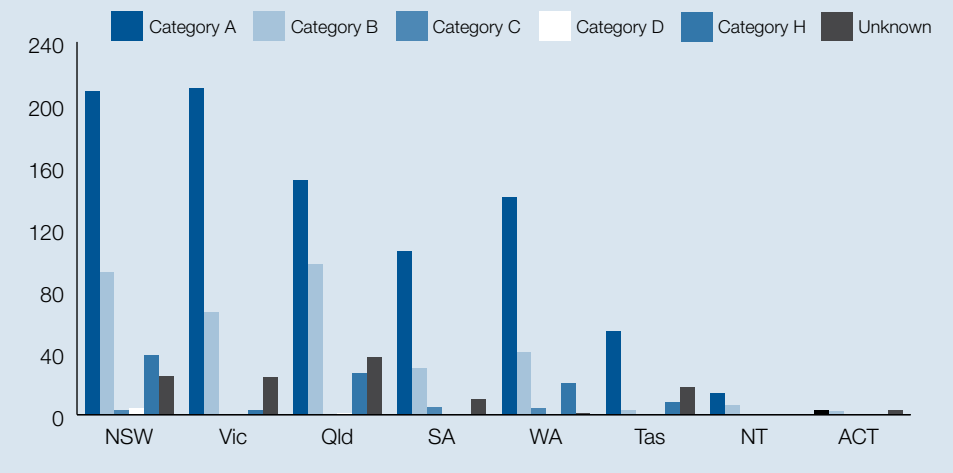
c: Includes firearms for which insufficient information was available to definitively ascertain category

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

There was some variation across jurisdictions in the categories of firearms stolen (Figure 5). For example, category A firearms made up around half of all firearms reported stolen in Queensland (n=151, or 48%) whereas the equivalent figure was nearly seven in 10 for Victoria (n=210), South Australia (n=105), and Western Australia (n=140; see also Table A2 in Appendix A).

Numbers and rates of handgun theft do not mirror those observed in the earlier report. A total of 62 handguns were reported stolen in the six-monthly analysis. On the basis of this, around 120 handguns would be expected to be reported stolen, but the current dataset contains details of only 96 handguns. This finding is worth monitoring especially since the Australian Government introduced greater controls on handguns in December 2002.

Figure 5: Category of firearm stolen by jurisdiction[a] (number)

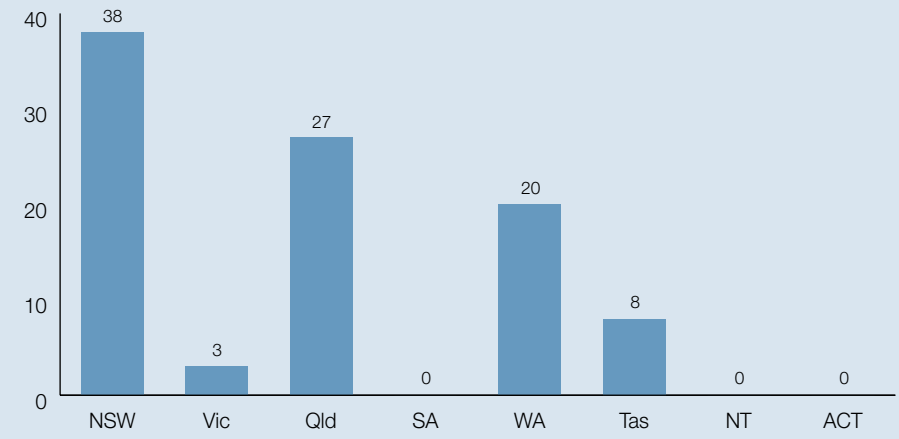


a: Excludes 15 firearms for which no detail was supplied and 3 non-firearms categorised as other but included in some analyses for reasons outlined above

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file], n=1,452

Current data show that the most handguns stolen were in New South Wales (40% of all reported category H firearms; see also Figure 6), followed by Queensland (28%), and Western Australia (21%). Victoria had the fewest handguns reported stolen in the larger jurisdictions (n=3) and the smallest percentage of registered handguns stolen in the larger states (0.01; see Figure 7). Although only eight category H firearms were reported stolen in Tasmania, this translated to 0.21 of one percent of all category H licence holders in the state, the highest percentage observed in any jurisdiction. However, it should be noted that the wide fluctuation in handgun statistics between states and territories both in the current dataset and when compared with earlier data is probably the result of the small number of cases contributing to these breakdowns.

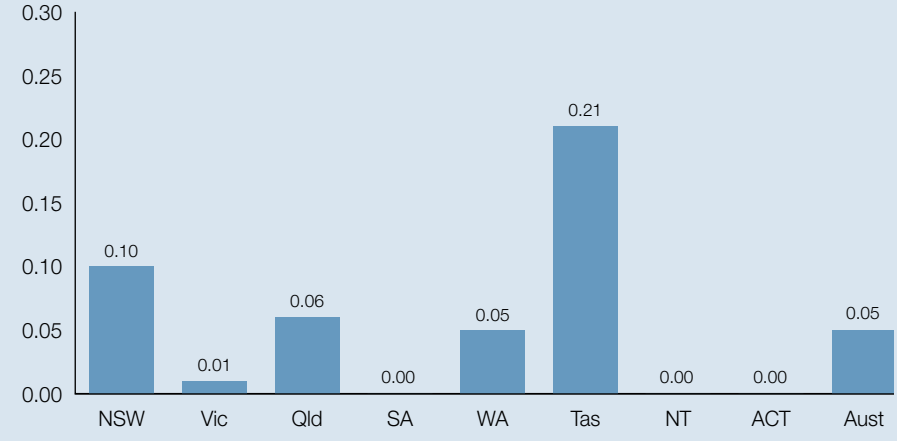
Figure 6: Handguns stolen by jurisdiction (number)[a]



a: Calculated from firearm category, which was derived from information supplied by jurisdictions

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file], n=96

Figure 7: Stolen handguns as a percent of registered handguns[a]



a: Calculated from firearm category, which was derived from information supplied by jurisdictions. Reference periods for the capture of licence holder information varied with jurisdiction: Mar 2004 (Qld), Apr 2004 (NSW, Vic, Tas, and NT), Jun 2004 (SA), Feb 2005 (WA), and Mar 2005 (ACT). Total employed as denominator for Australia excludes registrations in the ACT therefore percent is an overestimation

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]; state and territory firearms registries

Data regarding the total number of *all* types and categories of firearms registered in each jurisdiction were not gathered for this phase of the research. Therefore the percentage of all types and all categories of registered firearms stolen in each jurisdiction could not be calculated. It is expected that these data will be available for future research.

Registration status of stolen firearms

Almost nine in 10 firearms reported as stolen were registered (88%; see Table 7), a similar percentage as observed in the previous report (93%). South Australia reported the highest percentage of stolen firearms that were registered (97%), with the highest percentage of unregistered stolen firearms reported in Queensland (14%; see Table 8).

Table 7: Registration status of stolen firearms[a]

Registration status	n	%
Registered	1,280	88
Unregistered	127	9
Unknown	48	3
(Total)	(1,455)	(100)

a: Does not include 15 firearms reported stolen in incident totals provided by jurisdictions but for which detail was not supplied

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Table 8: Registration status of stolen firearms by jurisdiction as percentage of total firearms stolen in jurisdiction[a]

	Registered		Unregistered	
Jurisdiction	n	%	n	%
NSW	331	89	29	8
Vic	276	91	26	9
Qld	245	78	43	14
SA	145	97	0	0
WA	182	88	23	11
Tas	74	89	5	6
NT	19	95	1	5
ACT	8	100	0	0

a: Does not include 15 firearms which were reported as stolen in incident totals provided by jurisdictions but for which detail was not supplied. Does not list 48 firearms for which registration status was unknown although row percentage is based on total firearms stolen in jurisdiction, including those with unknown registration status

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Analysis of firearm category and registration status suggests that no particular category was more or less likely to be registered. Table 9 highlights that the categorical breakdown of both registered and unregistered firearms generally mirrors the proportions of all those reported stolen in the community: around two-thirds of both unregistered and registered were category A weapons, around one-quarter were category B, and 10 percent or less were category H. There were no reports of the theft of unregistered category C and D firearms, which have the greatest restrictions on availability.

Table 9: Category of firearms by registration status[a]

Category of Firearms	Registered		Unregistered	
	n	%	n	%
A	813	67	55	65
B	306	25	20	24
C	12	1	0	0
D	5	< 1	0	0
H	78	6	10	12
(Total)	(1,214)	(100)	(85)	(100)

a: Does not include 15 firearms which were reported as stolen in incident totals provided by jurisdictions but for which detail was not supplied. Excludes firearms for which registration status was unknown and/or with unknown or other category information (n=156). Percentages may not necessarily total 100 because of rounding

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

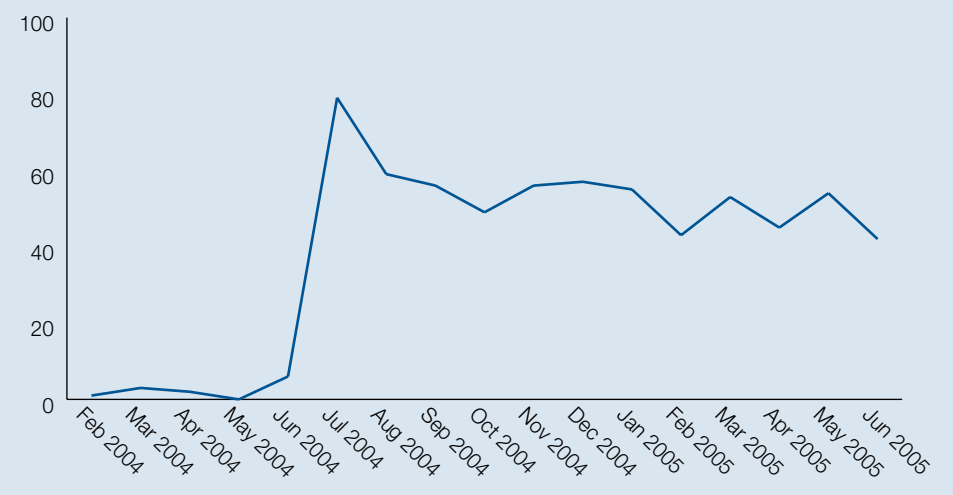
The nature of firearm theft incidents

Reporting of firearm theft incidents

Temporal aspects of firearm theft incident reporting

The overwhelming majority of thefts reported during the reference period (97%) occurred during the reference period (see Figure 8). Owners of registered firearms in Australian jurisdictions are required to notify police of lost or stolen firearms as soon as practical or within a specified timeframe. The period of notification varies between 24 hours in Tasmania and Victoria, to within 14 days (in writing) in South Australia. It is therefore not surprising that most incidents were reported soon after they occurred. As shown in Table 10, 81 percent of incidents were reported within one week of occurrence, and 87 percent within two weeks. When considering all thefts, the average delay between occurrence and report was 45 days. This average is skewed, however, by a minority of lengthy delays. For example, the most extreme involved a reporting delay of over 22 years (although there was no detail supplied as to the reasons behind this). With the more extreme delays (that is more than 2 standard deviations above the mean) removed from the analysis, the average time from occurrence to report was 12 days, and when considering only incidents reported within a fortnight of occurrence, the average was 2 days. As Table 10 suggests however, these data were highly skewed, therefore a more appropriate measure would be the median delay, which was 1 day regardless of whether more extreme scores were included in the analysis.

Figure 8: Incidents of firearm theft by month of occurrence[a] (number)



a: Does not include 8 theft incidents reported as occurring before 2004 (Jan 1983, Jan 1988, Apr 1996, Jul 1998, Aug 2000, Jul 2001, Jul 2003 and Sep 2003)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file], n=660

Table 10: Period between the incident date and reporting date		
Period	**n**	**%**
0 (the day of incident)	258	39
1 day	162	24
2 to 7 days	120	18
8 to 14 days	40	6
More than 2 weeks	88	13
(Total)	(668)	(100)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Persons reporting firearm thefts

The previous six-monthly report noted that just over three-quarters (77%) of thefts were reported by the registered owners of the firearms. Table 11 shows similar findings from the current dataset: 73 percent of incidents were reported by registered owners. This category includes eight incidents where the owners reported the theft of both registered and unregistered firearms previously in their possession (two of these incidents resulted in unregistered possession charges against the owners). A small number of reporting firearm owners (n=18) notified the theft of only unregistered firearms. Interestingly, police were notified of the missing firearms despite the fact that firearms offences might be brought against the owners if a report was made at a time when no amnesty was in operation. Further analyses show that nine of these theft incidents did indeed result in charges relating to the possession of unregistered firearms.

Sixteen percent of incidents were reported by the owner or occupier of the premises where the theft occurred. Less than two percent were reported by relatives or friends of the registered owner, because the owner was deceased or was unable to report the missing firearms for some other reason. Only a single incident was coded as involving a report by an employee of an organisation which had firearms stolen.

Table 11: Persons who reported firearms theft to police		
Person who reported theft	**n**	**%**
Registered owner of firearm[a]	487	73
Owner of the premises	76	11
Occupier of the premises	35	5
Another licensed person	12	2
Owner of unregistered firearm	18	3
Unknown	10	2
Other		
Relative or friend of firearm owner; owner now deceased[b]	6	1
Relative or friend of firearm owner; other reason	3	< 1
Government/business employee	1	< 1
No further detail	20	3
Total other	30	4
(Total)	(668)	(100)

a: Includes 8 incidents in which both registered and unregistered firearms were stolen

b: Probably does not capture all cases where this occurred because some jurisdictions may simply have classified this type of incident in the pre-defined categories of owner of the premises or occupier of the premises

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Locations where firearms thefts occur

Almost three-quarters of all incidents of firearms thefts were from private residential premises (73%; see Table 12), a figure almost identical to that found for the previous report (72%). Similarly, the percentage of thefts while firearms were in vehicles or in transit was virtually unchanged from the earlier report (13% below versus 14% previously).

Table 12: Location of incidents of firearms theft		
Location type	**n**	**%**
Business premises	58	9
Private residential premises	487	73
Commercial residential premises	16	2
In transit or vehicle/craft[a]	89	13
Other[b]	15	2
Unknown	3	0
(Total)[c]	(668)	(100)

a: Captures all incidents in which any variable indicated that the firearm(s) was taken from a vehicle

b: Captures only incidents in which location was coded as Other by jurisdictions and no further location detail was supplied

c: Percentages may not necessarily total 100 because of rounding

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Specific details of the types of locations where firearms were stolen (for example, the bedroom of a private residence) were described in the previous report. The data collection template does not specifically request precise details of where thefts occurred: in both the currently examined and the earlier dataset, detail was deduced from information supplied in response to other requested variables. Because of this, data relating to specific detail is neither wholly reliable nor descriptive of all locations and consequently, this variable has been summarised in Table A3 (see Appendix A) but has not been further examined in this report.

Given that the majority of all thefts occurred in private residences, it is not surprising that the majority of rifles (80%), shotguns (82%) and handguns (60%) were stolen from this type of location (see Table 13). The previous report indicated that while the majority of handguns were stolen from private residential premises, a sizable minority were taken from business and commercial locations. This was also found in the current analysis (31%). Notably, while 13 percent of incidents where handguns were stolen were thefts from vehicles in the earlier report, only two percent of handguns (or four percent of handgun incidents) were recorded as such in the current analysis. This suggests that handgun owners may be transporting their firearms in a more secure fashion. Of course, the very small number of handguns examined in both this and the earlier dataset mean that seemingly large differences should not be over-interpreted.

Table 13: Location of firearm thefts by type of firearms stolen[a]

	Rifle		Shotgun[b]		Handgun	
Location type	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Business premises	57	7	29	8	27	28
Private residential premises	681	80	302	82	58	60
Commercial residential premises	12	1	10	3	3	3
In transit or vehicle/craft	80	9	21	6	2	2
Other	16	2	8	2	1	1
Unknown	0	0	0	0	5	5
(Total)	(846)	(100)	(370)	(100)	(96)	(100)

a: Excludes all firearms types not coded as Rifle, Shotgun or Handgun (n=143). Percentages may not necessarily total 100 because of rounding

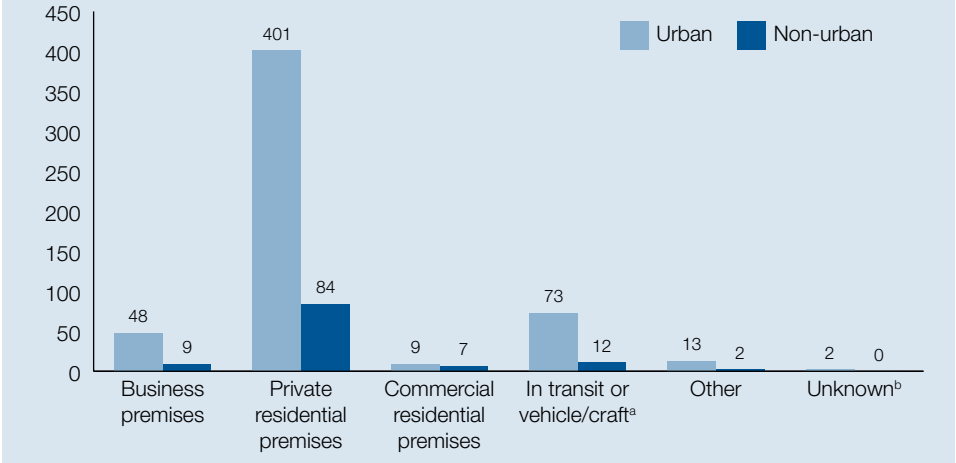
b: Eight combination shotgun/rifles are included in the shotgun category

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Urban versus non-urban firearm thefts

The locations in which firearms theft occur can also be classified on the basis of whether they occurred in urban or in non-urban areas.[2] The majority of incidents (83%) occurred in urban locations, and Figure 9 shows a pattern virtually identical to that found in the six-monthly report: namely, the majority of thefts occurred in urban, private residences (n=401, or 61% of all incidents in the current dataset; 54% in the preceding report).

Figure 9: Area and location type[a] of incidents of firearms theft (number)[b]



a: Category In transit or vehicle/craft captures all incidents in which any variable indicated that the firearm(s) were taken from a vehicle. Category Other captures only incidents in which location was coded as other by jurisdictions and no further location detail was supplied

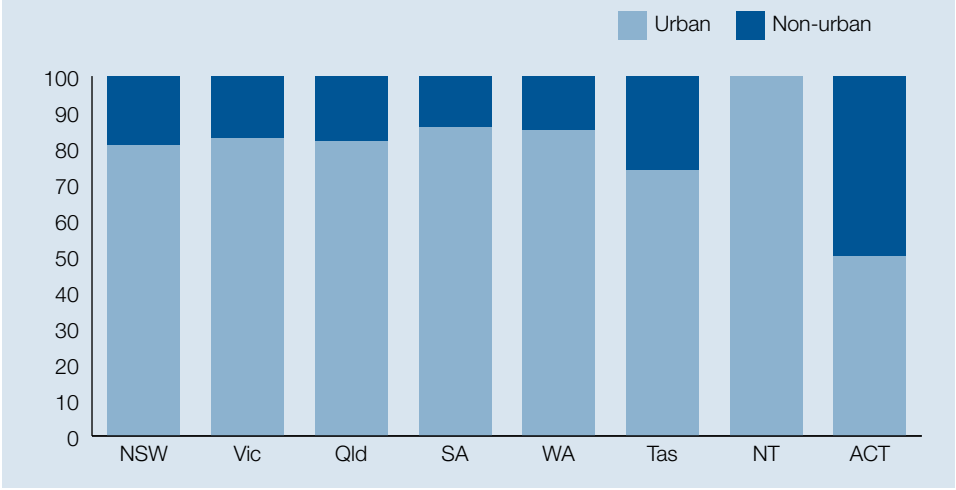
b: Excludes incidents in which there was insufficient information to categorise the incident as urban or non-urban (n=8)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file], n=660

There was little variation in terms of the proportion of urban to non-urban firearm theft incidents in the larger jurisdictions (Figure 10; over 80% of thefts in NSW, Vic, Qld and WA occurred in urban areas). As with other analyses, apparent disparities seen in smaller states were probably due to the small number of incidents recorded there.

2 For current purposes, a location was categorised as an urban centre or as a non-urban locality using the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) UC/L structure (ABS 2002a) where an urban centre is a population cluster of 1,000 or more people, and a locality is a population cluster of between 200 and 999 people. The UC/L structure encompasses only part of Australia therefore incidents which could not be categorised under this scheme were coded as urban or non-urban on the basis of the population corresponding to that location's postcode (as derived from ABS 2002b), where populations greater than 999 were coded as urban and those less than 1,000 as non-urban. The category 'rural' in the previous report equates with *non-urban* employed here, whereas 'non-rural' in the earlier work equates with *urban*.

Figure 10: Type of area of incidents of firearms theft by jurisdiction (percent)[a]



a: Excludes incidents in which there was insufficient information to categorise the incident as urban or non-urban (n=8)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file], n=660

Table 14 shows that around four-fifths of incidents in which rifles were stolen occurred in urban locations, with about one-fifth occurring in non-urban areas. A similar figure was found for incidents in which shotguns were stolen. A slightly higher proportion of thefts resulting in the loss of handguns – almost nine in 10 – occurred in urban areas, relative to the other firearm types. This pattern of theft may simply reflect overall patterns of firearm ownership (i.e. more handguns are registered in urban areas), and the very small number of cases means that this is only indicative: differences have not been statistically tested. This possibility can be more thoroughly examined once more incident numbers have been accumulated.

Table 14: Types of firearms stolen in theft incidents in urban and non-urban areas[a]

	Urban		Non-urban	
Type of firearm	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Rifle	386	81	92	19
Shotgun	224	82	49	18
Handgun	42	88	6	13

a: Excludes 53 incidents for which there was insufficient information to categorise as urban or non-urban and/or where firearms stolen were not coded as rifle or shotgun or handgun. Numbers exceeds number of incidents because multiple firearm types could be stolen in an incident. Percentages refer to rows and may not necessarily total 100 because of rounding

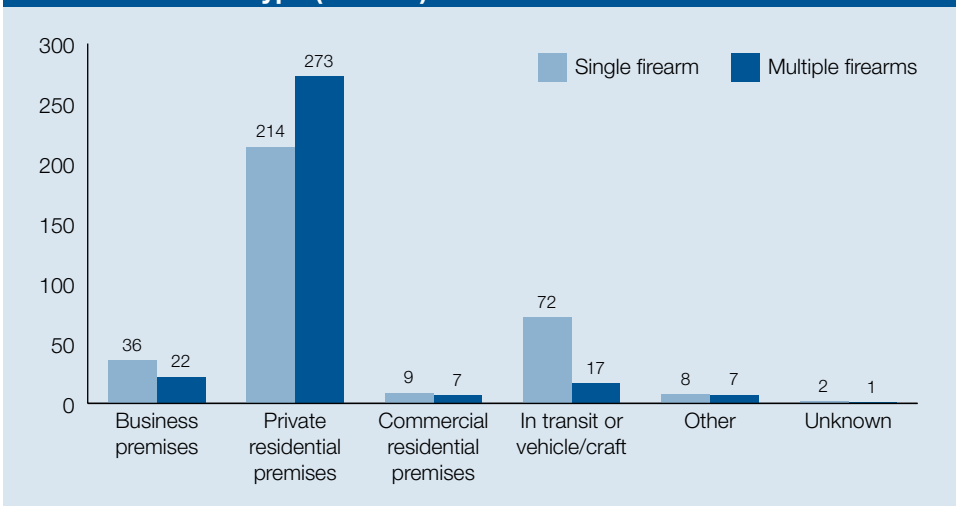
Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Items stolen in firearms thefts

Number of firearms stolen

As discussed previously, an average of two (median=1) firearms were stolen in recorded incidents (see Table 1). Around half of all incidents (51%) involved the theft of a single firearm. One in five (20%) involved the theft of two firearms, and 13% involved the theft of three. The remaining incidents resulted in the theft of between four and 19 firearms.

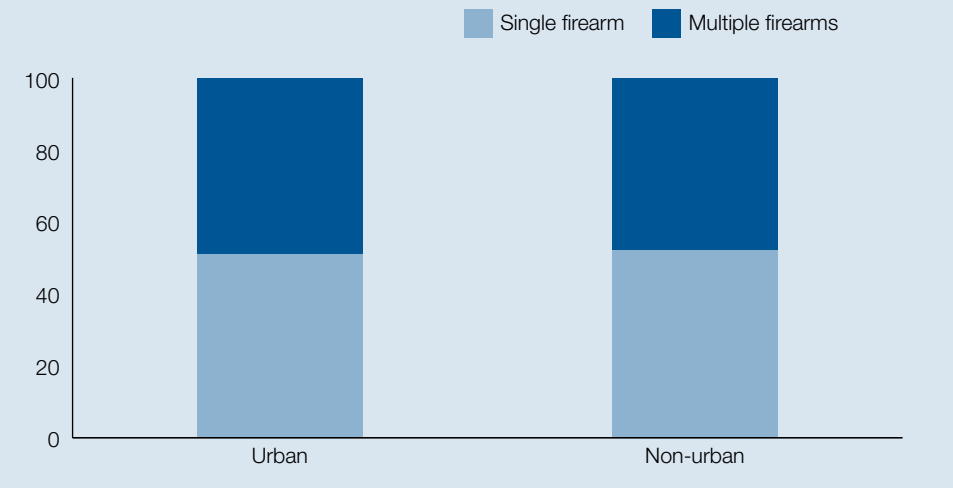
Figure 11: Single firearm theft versus multiple firearms theft by location type (number)



Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file], n=668

Most incidents in private residences resulted in the theft of multiple firearms (n=273, 56%; see Figure 11). Eight in 10 (81%, n=72) thefts from vehicles resulted in the loss of only a single firearm and as has been the case with most of the current analyses, percentage breakdowns were similar to those arising from the six-monthly analyses. Multiple firearm thefts from vehicles accounted for only one percent of all incidents, whereas 41 percent of all cases could be characterised as multiple thefts from private residences, possibly indicating that multiple firearm owners transport only single firearms but keep firearms collections in their homes. Figure 12 indicates that there was no difference between the numbers of firearms stolen in urban and non-urban locations: half of the thefts in urban and in non-urban areas resulted in the loss of a single firearm.

Figure 12: Single firearm theft versus multiple firearms theft by area (percent)[a]



a: Excludes incidents in which there was insufficient information to categorise the incident as urban or non-urban

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file], n=660

The theft of non-firearms items

Analysis of the six-monthly data resulted in characterising theft incidents as *firearms only* theft which included incidents where only firearms with or without ammunition were stolen, or as *general burglary* where other items in addition to firearms and ammunition were stolen. The former may be more targeted thefts where offenders deliberately select and burgle premises known to contain firearms and ignore other non-firearm items. General burglaries may be opportunistic, where offenders steal both firearms and a range of other valuable items. Unfortunately, data do not allow a test of this but, as discussed later in the context of repeat victimisation, future analyses may be able to better address such questions.

Fifty-eight percent of incidents in the earlier analyses were general burglaries, as was the case with current data (59%; see Table 15). Around two-thirds of private residential thefts (307 of 482 incidents) involved the loss of other goods, with just over half of incidents in vehicles (51%, or 44 of 87) involving the theft of other goods (Figure 13).

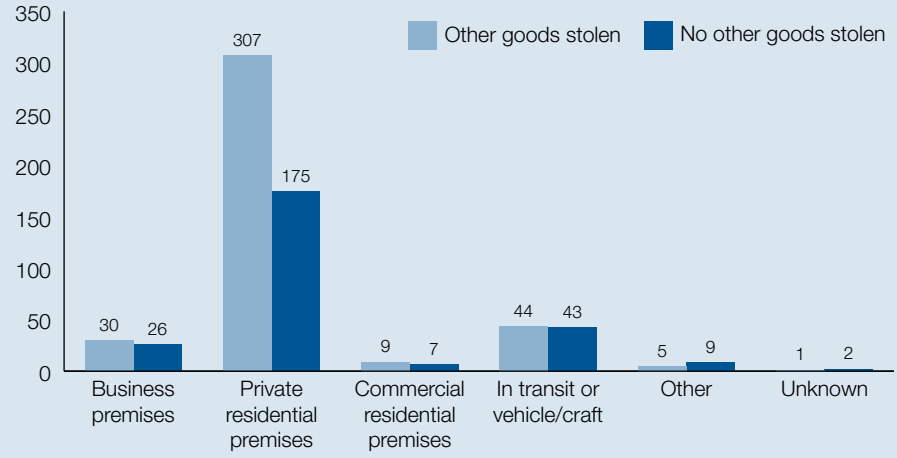
Table 15: Incidents involving the theft of other, non-firearm goods

Were other goods stolen?	n	%
Yes	396	59
No	262	39
Unknown	7	1
Not applicable[a]	3	< 1
(Total)	(668)	(100)

a: Coded as not applicable by reporting jurisdiction

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Figure 13: Incidents where other goods were stolen by type of location (number)[a]



a: Excludes cases for which it was unknown or not applicable if other goods were stolen (n=10)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file], n=658

A detailed examination of the types of all other goods stolen has been problematic because there may have been many types of items stolen but information was only recorded for up to 20 types. Further, the quantity and value of items taken is unknown: for instance, the category 'CDs' may refer to one or to 500 CDs; 'jewellery' may refer to a single inexpensive piece of imitation jewellery or to a collection of valuable items. With these caveats in mind, a total of 1,404 different types of goods were listed as being taken in the thefts where other goods were stolen (see Table 16). The most commonly listed types of items were tools (including hand and power tools; 15% of all listed items) and home entertainment equipment (11%). These categories were also the most numerous in the preceding six-monthly analysis.

Table 16: Types of other goods stolen[a]		
Type of good	**n**	**%**
Tools[b]	212	15
Home entertainment[c]	159	11
Personal electronic items[d]	123	9
Jewellery	112	8
Furniture and other household items	102	7
Cash	101	7
Firearm accessories	80	6
Recreational items[e]	69	5
Personal items[f]	66	5
Luggage and other storage items	61	4
DVDs, CDs, videos, games etc	49	3
Weapons (non-firearms)	47	3
PCs and accessories	41	3
ID and negotiable documents	39	3
Vehicles	29	2
Vehicle accessories	27	2
Alcohol and other drugs	26	2
Household electric appliances	19	1
Collectible items[g]	18	1
Keys	11	1
Agricultural items[h]	8	1
Other[i]	5	< 1
(Total)	(1,404)	(100)

a: Indicates number of times types of goods were recorded in the total dataset, not the quantity of those goods taken in each incident. For example, a count of 1 in the category of DVDs, CDs, videos, games etc indicates that some quantity of CDs etc were noted as being taken in an incident. Percentages may not necessarily total 100 because of rounding

b: Tools include power and hand tools

c: Home entertainment includes items such as VCRs, TVs, and hi-fi units

d: Personal electronic items include mobile phones, walkmans, CB radios etc

e: Recreational items include non-electronic toys, sport, camping and equestrian equipment

f: Personal items includes clothes, cosmetics, personal papers etc

g: Collectible items include coin collections, war medals, art work etc

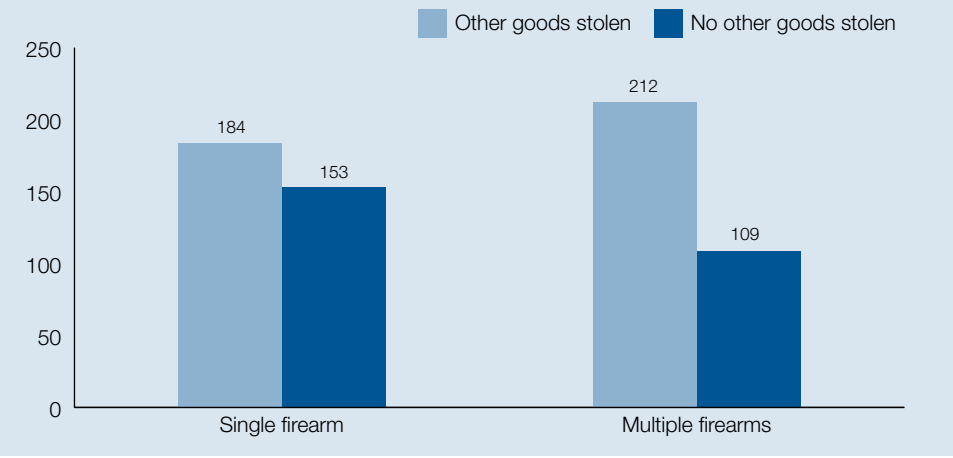
h: Agricultural items include livestock drenching equipment, shearing equipment etc

i: Other items are those recorded as Other or Miscellaneous by jurisdictions

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Data suggest a degree of opportunism in the examined burglaries: offenders appear to have opportunistically taken readily accessible items. For example, if offenders broke into a garage it would be expected that offenders would have access to tools in addition to any firearms stored there. Further analyses show that firearms were stored in a garage or shed in 23 of the 55 incidents (42%) with specific location detail in which tools were stolen. Further, a statistically significant association ($\chi^2(1) = 8.99$; $p < .05$; Cramérs V = -0.1169) was found between the number of firearms stolen and the theft of other goods. Figure 14 shows that when multiple firearms were stolen (as compared with single firearms) a higher proportion of incidents involved the theft of other goods. Indeed, the average number of other types of goods stolen in multiple firearm thefts appeared to be slightly greater than in single firearm thefts (2.3 versus 1.9; although this was not statistically tested because of the already discussed limitations surrounding the other goods variables). Together, these findings hint at the possibility of a subset of highly opportunistic burglaries involving offenders accessing as many goods as possible, of which firearms are just one type.

Figure 14: Incidents where other goods were stolen by number of firearms stolen (number)[a]



a: Excludes incidents missing information concerning whether other goods were taken (n=10)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file], n=658

How do offenders gain access to premises?

A high proportion of both thefts where no other goods were stolen (called *firearms only thefts* from this point forward) and those resulting in the loss of non-firearm goods (hereon referred to as *general burglaries*) did not have valid information concerning how offenders gained unlawful access to premises (38% and 19% respectively). Consequently, the following analyses should be treated as only broadly indicative of all firearm thefts. Future

research should also aim to minimise the number of cases missing access variables. Unlike the previous report, incidents missing valid information on the access variable have been retained when deriving percentages to highlight the large proportion of missing cases and to minimise any over-interpretation of percentages derived from a small number of valid cases. This means even broad comparisons over time are inappropriate.

That said, tools or force were used to gain entry to premises in the largest number of incidents for both types of theft, although proportionally more general burglaries involved force (56% versus 26% for firearms only thefts; see Table 17). The small number of incidents in some cells precluded statistical testing. Over 10 percent of both types of incidents saw firearms taken from vehicles: that is, in circumstances where firearms could not have been held in locked and fitted receptacles. Vehicles were stolen in seven theft from vehicle incidents (although it may be that offenders simply stole the vehicles unaware of the presence of firearms: data do not allow this to be clarified).

Table 17: Method of gaining entry to the premises where the firearms were stored[a]

	General burglary		Firearms only theft	
Method of entry	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Using tools or force[b]	219	55	69	26
Without tools or force[c]	53	13	51	19
Taken from a vehicle	44	11	35	13
Other nfd	3	1	8	3
Unknown	73	18	76	29
Not applicable[d]	4	1	23	9
(Total)	(396)	(100)	(262)	(100)

a: Excludes incidents where there was insufficient information to ascertain if firearm only theft or general burglary (n=10). Percentages refer to columns and may not total 100 because of rounding

b: Using tools or force includes incidents where offenders gained entry to premises via intimidation (i.e. robbery)

c: Without tools or force includes incidents where firearms were unsecured, and incidents where offenders were granted admission to premises (for example, resident or employee on the premises)

d: Not applicable responses were coded as such by reporting jurisdictions, or were incidents which did not involve theft *per se* (for example, firearms misplaced)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Table 18 indicates that entry information was also unknown in a sizeable proportion of handgun thefts, and that a similar proportion to that found for all firearms involved tools or force. Data indicate that proportionally more handgun only thefts do not involve force than all firearm only thefts but this was not tested because of the extremely small number of cases. As cases accumulate in the dataset, stronger conclusions regarding the *modus operandi* of handgun theft may be possible.

Table 18: Method of gaining entry to the premises where the handguns were stored[a]

	General burglary		Firearms only theft	
Method of entry	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Using tools or force[b]	15	52	5	28
Without tools or force[c]	3	10	6	33
Taken whilst in transit/vehicle	1	3	1	6
Unknown	9	31	5	28
Not applicable[d]	1	3	1	6
(Total)	(29)	(100)	(18)	(100)

a: Excludes incidents in which handguns were stolen where there was insufficient information to ascertain if firearms only theft or general burglary (n=3). Percentages refer to columns and may not necessarily total 100 because of rounding

b: Using tools or force includes incidents where offenders gained entry to premises via intimidation (i.e. robbery)

c: Without tools or force includes incidents where firearms were unsecured, and incidents where offenders were granted admission to premises (for example, resident or employee on the premises)

d: Not applicable responses were coded as such by reporting jurisdictions, or were incidents which did not involve theft *per se* (for example, firearms misplaced)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Firearm thefts from private residential premises

As with the previous report, the vast majority of residential thefts where entry was gained via windows involved the use of force or tools (92%, Table 19, versus 88% in the last report). A slightly lower percentage involved forced access when the door was used to enter a location (81%). An additional point of entry category to those considered in the last report – garages or sheds – has been included in the current analyses to try to gain a more detailed understanding of the types of firearm theft. Relative to windows and doors, a smaller proportion of thefts where entry was gained via a garage or shed involved force, and a significant association was found between the point of entry and the method used to gain that entry ($\chi^2(2) = 12.77$; $p<.05$; Cramérs V = 0.2216).

The variable specifying point of entry is not wholly reliable (see Table 19 note) but nonetheless implies that force was not used as often in thefts where access was gained via garages and sheds when compared with primary dwellings accessed though windows or doors. Table 19 shows 31 percent of garages and sheds were accessed without tools or force compared with dwellings accessed by windows (8%) or doors (19%). This in turn implies easier access, which could indicate generally lower levels of security for these residential outbuildings than for private dwellings. Detailed descriptions of method of entry were provided for some incidents and these data suggest lower levels of security for garages and sheds. For instance, premises were unlocked in 29 percent of the residential thefts where access was gained via a garage or shed. The equivalent figure when a primary dwelling was entered via a door was 19%, with 7% when a window was used to access the dwelling.

Table 19: Method of gaining access to private residential premises by point of entry[a]

	Window[b]		Door[b]		Garage or shed	
Method of entry	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Using tools or force	89	92	84	81	41	69
Without tools or force	8	8	20	19	18	31
(Total)	(97)	(100)	(104)	(100)	(59)	(100)

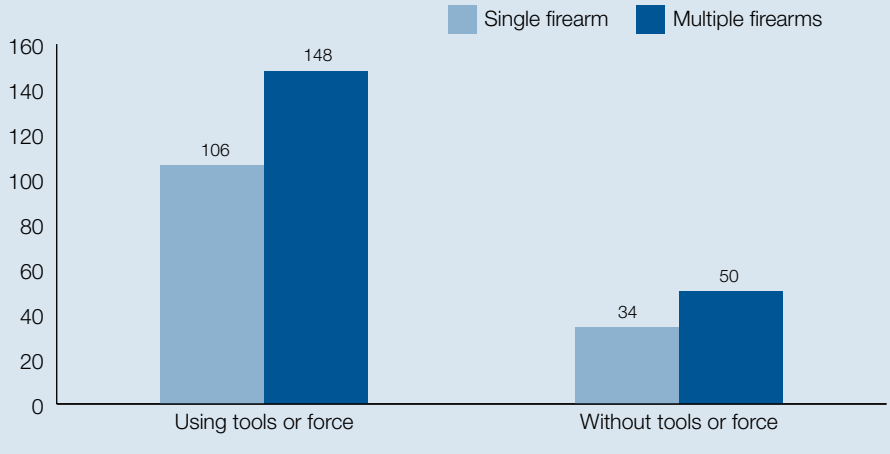
a: Excludes incidents occurring in private residential premises where point and/or method of entry were not known, not applicable, and/or where access was not via the three entry point categories specified, or where an offender was admitted to premises either using force (robbery) or without force (for example, friend of resident) (n=227)

b: Categories Window and Door assumed to refer to entrances to the primary dwelling. However, not all cases had sufficient information to ascertain if the theft was from a garage or shed or from some other part of a residential property as opposed to the dwelling (for example, some incidents in which access was via garages or sheds might have been captured in Window or Door category)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

There was no association between the number of firearms stolen and whether force was employed to access the premises. Figure 15 shows around four in 10 thefts resulted in the loss of a single firearm both when tools or force were employed (42%; n=106) and when they were not (40%; n=34). Similar findings emerged from the six-monthly data analysis.

Figure 15: Method of gaining access to private residential premises by number of firearms stolen (number of incidents)[a]

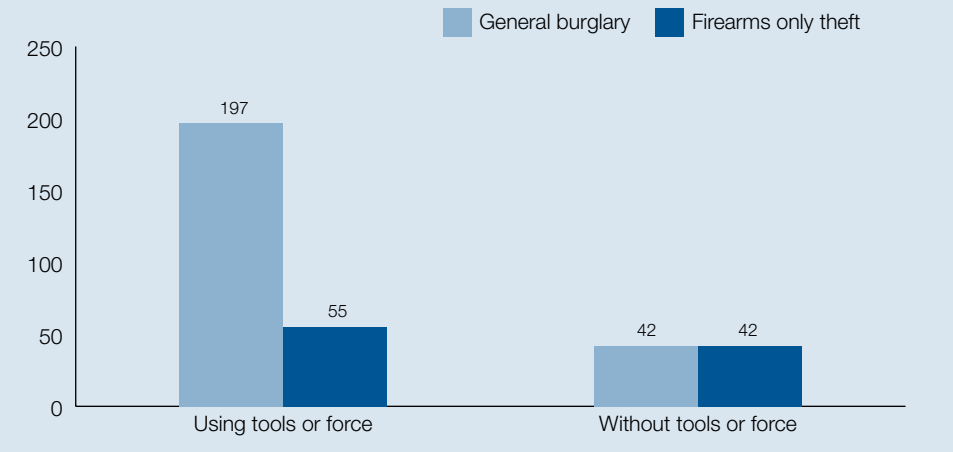


a: Excludes incidents occurring in private residential premises where method of entry was not known or not applicable (n=149)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file], n=338

A significant association was found however, between the use of force and whether the incident was a general burglary or firearms only theft ($\chi^2(2) = 24.35$; $p<.05$; Cramérs V = 0.2692). Figure 16 highlights that half of the incidents where entry was gained without force were firearms only thefts (n=42), whereas 78 percent (n=197) of those with forced entry were general burglaries. This could be interpreted as meaning firearm only thefts tended to be less opportunistic – that they were committed by offenders who knew the location and therefore knew a non-forcible means of access, and once accessed, knew to target only firearms. Alternatively, it could indicate that these are the most opportunistic of thefts: offenders happened upon accessible premises and took only the most 'valuable' goods there – firearms. The most appropriate interpretation is not clear, and examination of method of entry detail does not shed further light. Sixty percent of unforced entries in firearms only theft involved offenders accessing unlocked premises, which could be the product of prior planning on the part of offenders, or simply fortuitous timing.

Figure 16: Method of gaining access to private residential premises for general burglary and firearms only theft (number of incidents)[a]



a: Excludes incidents occurring in private residential premises where method of entry was not known or not applicable and/or where there was insufficient information to ascertain if firearms only theft or general burglary (n=151)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file], n=336

Firearms thefts from business and commercial premises

As was the case with residential premises, a sizeable number of incidents in commercial and business premises (30 of 74) were missing information concerning the point of entry to those premises. Of those with valid data, around four in 10 gained access via the door (39%; Table 20) and around one-third entered via a garage or shed. Data on how entry was gained was available for only 51 theft incidents in business/commercial premises. Of these, 33 (or 65%) involved force, which included two incidents of robbery where offenders gained access to the premises via intimidation.

Table 20: Point of entry for thefts from business and commercial premises[a]		
Point of entry[b]	**n**	**%**
Window	9	27
Door	13	39
Garage or shed	11	33
(Total)	(33)	(100)

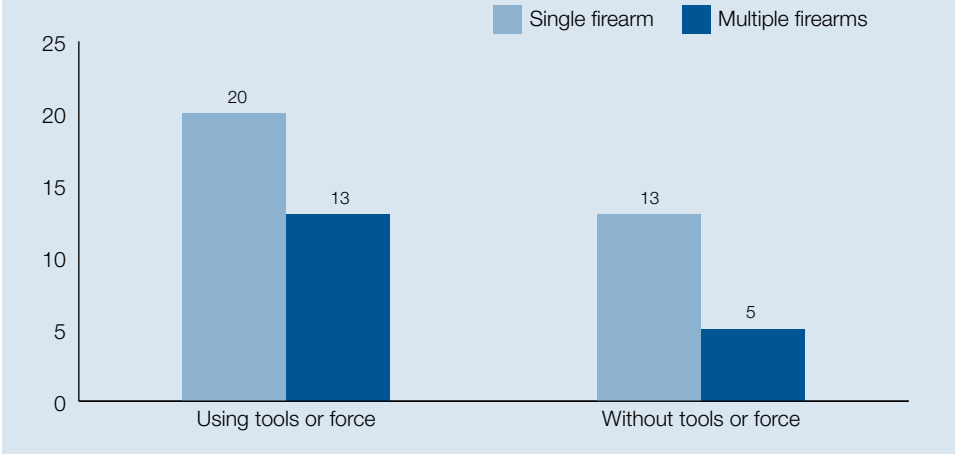
a: Excludes incidents occurring in business or commercial premises where point of entry was not known, not applicable, where access was not via the three entry point categories specified, or where an offender was admitted to premises either using force (robbery) or without force (for example, friend of employee) (n=41). Percentages may not necessarily total 100 because of rounding

b: Categories Window and Door assumed to refer to entrances to the primary structure; however not all cases had sufficient information to ascertain if the theft was from a garage or shed on the same land as or adjoining the business or commercial premises or from some part of a property other than the main structure (for example, some incidents in which access was via garages or sheds might have been captured in Window or Door category)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

A single firearm was taken in the majority of business and commercial thefts (65%), and a higher proportion of single firearm thefts than multiple thefts occurred regardless of whether force was employed (see Figure 17). An equivalent analysis in the preceding report produced a different pattern of results with slightly more multiple firearm thefts than single thefts in commercial robberies involving force. It is likely however, as has been the case with a number of the analyses presented, that fluctuation is simply due to the very small numbers involved.

Figure 17: Method of gaining entry to business and commercial premises by number of firearms stolen (number of incidents)[a]

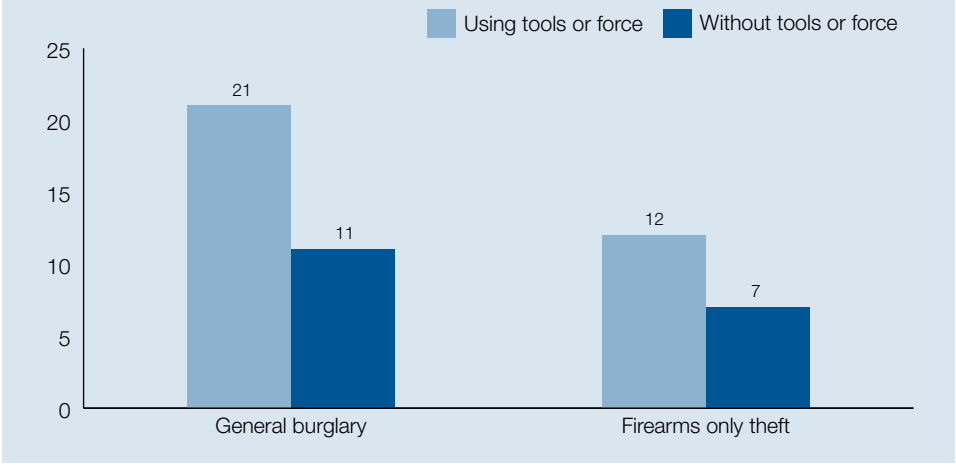


a: Excludes incidents occurring in business or commercial premises where method of entry was not known, not applicable or coded as Other nfd n=23)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file], n=51

An analysis of method of entry to business and commercial premises and whether force was employed suggests that, unlike residential firearm thefts, the percentage of incidents where force was employed did not appear to vary for general burglaries and firearms only thefts (see Figure 18). Again however, any apparent differences should not be over-interpreted because valid data were available for only 51 incidents.

Figure 18: Method of gaining entry to business and commercial premises general burglary and firearms only theft (number of incidents)[a]



a: Excludes incidents occurring in business and commercial premises where method of entry was not known, not applicable or coded as Other nfd and incidents where there was insufficient information to ascertain if firearms only theft or general burglary (n=23)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file], n=51

Compliance with the law

Security and storage

Regardless of the specifics of how stolen firearms had been stored prior to their theft, owners in 53 percent of all incidents complied with the storage requirements in their jurisdiction. Secure firearm storage requirements are broadly uniform across Australian jurisdictions although there is some variation in detail. Relevant extracts from state and territory legislation/regulations are summarised in Appendix C. Thirty-five percent did not comply. These figures differ only slightly from those observed in the previous report (60% compliant; 30% non-compliant). Table 21 highlights that the majority of non-compliant incidents (77%) involved storage in Other storage, with unsecured firearms comprising the largest percentage of non-compliant cases (41%), and those in vehicles or transit making up the next largest (21%). Not surprisingly, the majority of incidents coded as compliant recorded that the firearms had been stored in a locked safe or receptacle (92%).

Table 21: Type of storage where stolen firearms were kept and level of compliance

Type of storage	Complied	Not complied	Unknown	Not applicable
Locked safe or receptacle				
Locked firearm safe	185	14	5	0
Locked hardwood or steel receptacle	99	20	3	0
Locked receptacle fixed to the premises	34	3	0	0
Locked firearm safe with an alarm	3	0	0	0
Premises with an alarm	2	3	1	0
Unknown	4	14	25	3
Total locked safe/receptacle	327	54	34	3
Other storage				
Strong room, vault or safe nfd[a]	1	0	0	0
Locked structure or room nfd[b]	3	4	1	0
On display[c]	2	0	0	0
Unsecured (not in vehicle)[d]	1	94	3	0
In vehicle or transit[e]	12	49	2	2
On person[f]	4	0	0	1
Other storage nfd[g]	3	29	18	2
Not applicable[h]	1	3	4	11
Total other storage	27	179	28	16
(Total)	(354)	(233)	(62)	(19)

a: Strong room, vault or safe nfd includes thefts from secure storage facilities that may have been captured by locked safe or receptacle categories but for which there was insufficient information to assess if this were the case

b: Locked structure or room nfd includes incidents from a locked safe or receptacle but for which the precise nature of this apparently secure storage could not be evaluated

c: On display includes all firearms on display regardless of whether in a cabinet

d: Unsecured (not in vehicle) includes incidents where, for example, firearms were kept in unlocked wardrobes or drawers or under beds, or where firearms were normally stored in accordance with regulations but were not in that receptacle (nor in a vehicle or in transit) at the time of incident

e: In vehicle or transit includes incidents where firearms were in a vehicle or transit but there was no indication that locked receptacles were used inside the vehicles/means of transport

f: On person includes the robbery of firearms from individuals

g: Other storage nfd includes incidents where jurisdictions reported firearms stolen from other storage locations but where no further detail regarding those other storage locations was available. Includes incidents coded as other by jurisdictions plus incidents where detail supplied indicated that these categories were most appropriate. Firearm storage types in this category differ from those employed in the previous report therefore are not directly comparable over the two timeframes

h: Not applicable includes incidents coded as such by reporting jurisdictions plus those incidents in which theft *per se* had not occurred (for example, firearms misplaced). Firearm storage types in this category differ from those employed in the previous report therefore are not directly comparable over the two timeframes

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

There were apparent jurisdictional differences in the level of compliance with storage requirements. For example, less than half of the incidents in Western Australia were coded as compliant whereas around three-quarters of firearms owners in New South Wales were noted as complying with requirements (see Table 22). The jurisdictional breakdown differs from that observed in the last report, but the states and territories varied in the percentage of cases where compliance data were missing and, as already discussed, in the number of cases considered. For these reasons, jurisdictional comparisons are not necessarily appropriate.

Table 22: Level of safe storage compliance by jurisdiction[a]

	Complied		Not complied	
Jurisdiction	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
NSW	99	76	31	24
Vic	88	65	48	35
Qld	60	50	61	50
SA	39	67	19	33
WA	42	46	50	54
Tas	19	53	17	47
NT	5	42	7	58
ACT	2	100	0	0
Australia	354		233	

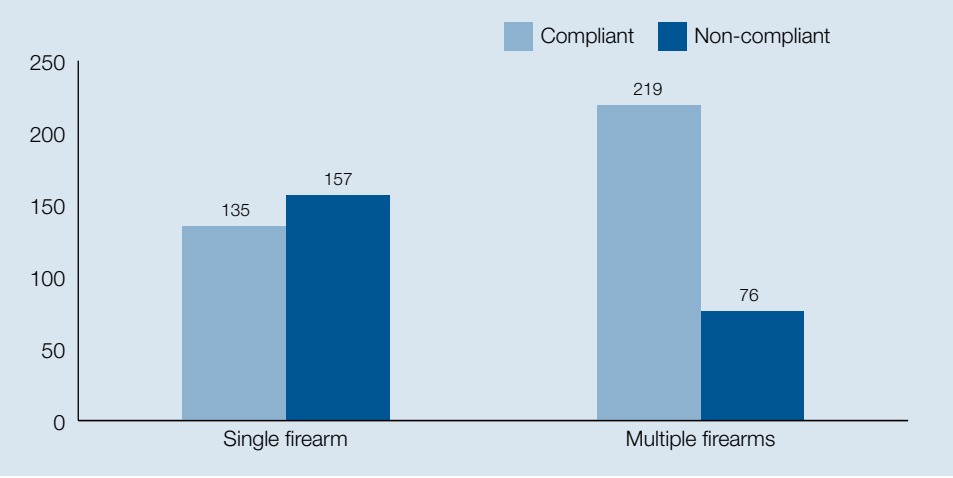
a: Excludes incidents for which compliance was unknown or not applicable (n=81). Percentages refer to rows

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Three additional analyses examined whether incidents where owners complied differed from those incidents where storage requirements were not met on other characteristics. These analyses found that:

- there was only slight variation in compliance as a function of the type of premises where the thefts occurred – 67 percent of residential thefts with valid compliance information were noted as compliant compared with 63 percent of business or commercial premises thefts
- in incidents where single firearms were stolen, around half the owners were compliant (46% compliant versus 54% non-compliant; see Figure 19) but a higher proportion of owners were compliant when multiple firearms were stolen (74% compliant; 26% non-compliant; χ^2 (1) =48.08; p<.05; Cramérs V=-0.2862)
- there was not a significant association between compliance level and whether an incident was classified as firearms only theft or general burglary (see Figure 20).

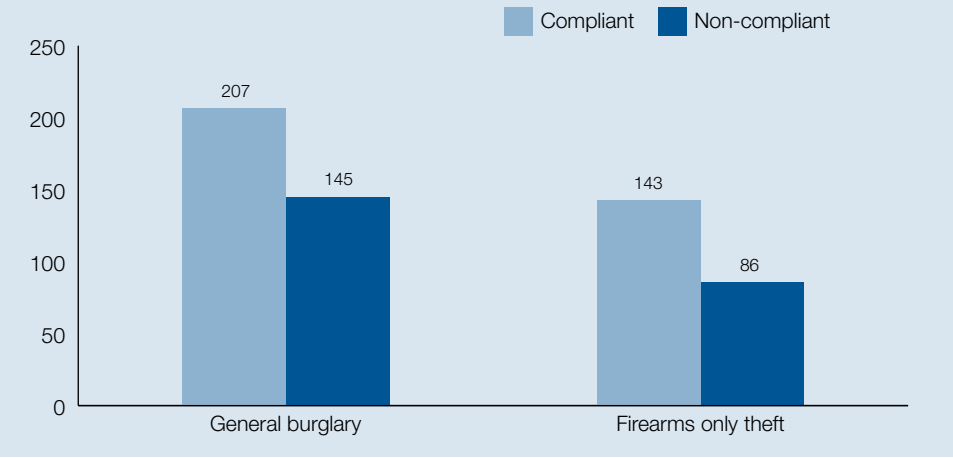
Figure 19: Level of safe storage compliance for single versus multiple firearm thefts (number of incidents)[a]



a: Excludes incidents for which compliance was unknown or not applicable (n=81)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file, n=587

Figure 20: Level of safe storage compliance for general burglary and firearms only theft (number of incidents)[a]



a: Excludes incidents for which compliance was unknown or not applicable and/or incidents where there was insufficient information to ascertain if firearms only theft or general burglary (n=87)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file], n=581

Method of accessing secured firearms

Data were examined to assess how the receptacles containing firearms were accessed. Logically, this analysis could only include cases where firearms had been removed from storage therefore cases where other storage (as per Table 22) had been employed were not considered.

A similar percentage of thefts to that observed in the preceding report contained missing data (17% currently, see Table 23, versus 13% previously) but other percentages did vary from those observed in the previous report. This is because the actual categories considered were not derived in an identical fashion to those employed in the six-monthly report. Nevertheless, the largest proportion of cases still involved receptacles being forced or jemmied (30% currently, versus 45% for categories *Forced open* plus *Jemmied open* in the last report). The whole receptacle was removed in 11 percent of the current cases (13% in the six-monthly analysis). In around one percent of current incidents, offenders gained access to firearms through intimidation (for example robbery).

The breakdown for residential thefts where firearms had been stored in receptacles (n=351) were similar to those shown in Table 23. For example, the largest percentage recorded access via force (32% were forced or jemmied), 12 percent had the entire safe removed, and the

receptacle was unlocked in 14 percent of incidents. Although very much smaller in number (n=47), the proportional breakdown was slightly different for business/commercial premises. Around one-fifth of cases recorded forced or jemmied entry (19%), around one-fifth saw the receptacles unlocked (19%), with the entire safe removed in only six percent of incidents.

Table 23: Methods used to access locked receptacles[a]

Method of access	n	%
Forced or jemmied	124	30
Lock broken into or removed	76	18
Unlocked (key located, combination broken)	60	15
Entire receptacle removed	48	12
Firearm unsecured	8	2
Cut open (ground, oxy)	6	1
No sign of force/unfounded	6	1
Robbery or intimidation	3	1
Firearm in transit	5	1
Unknown or missing	71	17
Not applicable[b]	11	3
(Total)	(418)	(100)

a: Excludes cases where firearm storage was recorded as other (n=250). Percentages may not necessarily total 100 because of rounding

b: Not applicable coded as such by reporting jurisdictions

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

An exploratory analysis was conducted on the type of theft and the method of access in each of these. Significance testing was not conducted and only access method categories containing more than 10 cases were considered. This is summarised in Table 24. Perhaps most worthy of follow-up in future more complex analyses, the vast majority of cases where the entire safe was removed (85%) were general burglaries. While the firearms themselves were secured, burglars stole unsecured or inadequately secured receptacles and the firearms they contained, as well as other, non-firearm items. It is possible that offenders did not know the nature of safe contents but assumed them to have a high value, suggesting that the theft of these firearms might have been opportunistic. Conversely, firearm safes may have been deliberately targeted and other valuable, non-firearms goods taken simply because they were accessible. Unfortunately, neither possibility can be discounted with these data.

Table 24: Methods of access to locked receptacles in general burglaries and firearms only thefts, as percentage of method[a]			
Type of method	**General burglary**	**Firearms only theft**	**n**
Forced or jemmied	64	36	123
Lock broken into or removed	58	42	76
Unlocked (key located, combination broken)	54	46	59
Entire receptacle removed	85	15	48

a: Excludes cases where firearm storage was recorded as Other; and/or where there was insufficient information to ascertain if firearms only theft or general burglary; and/or incidents contained in access method categories with less than 10 cases, and/or where methods were unknown or not applicable (n=362)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

The theft of ammunition

Almost identical percentages to those obtained for the six-monthly report were found in the current analysis for theft of ammunition (Table 25). Ammunition was stolen in 27 percent of incidents (26% in the previous report). Accordingly, no ammunition was recorded as stolen in seven out of 10 cases (73% in the six-monthly analysis).

Table 25: Number of firearm thefts where ammunition was stolen[a]		
Ammunition	**n**	**%**
Stolen	178	27
Not stolen	469	70
Unknown	20	3
(Total)	(667)	(100)

a: Excludes a single case coded as not applicable by the reporting jurisdiction

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

The level of detail concerning the location in which the ammunition was stored varied markedly between jurisdictions, hence the hierarchical categories shown in Table 26. These were developed to allow the grouping of incidents on the most salient aspect of the ammunition storage (namely, was it stored with the firearms), while also recording other detailed aspects of storage if these were supplied. Unfortunately, information concerning whether ammunition was stored with firearms was unavailable for more than half (56%) of the incidents in which ammunition was taken. In more than one-quarter of cases (28%) the ammunition was stored with the firearms, but in the majority of these (39 of 49 incidents) both were stored securely. Only a minority of cases where ammunition was stolen explicitly noted that ammunition was stored separately at the time of the theft.

No significant association was found between where stolen ammunition was stored and whether the incident was classified as firearms only theft or general burglary. Data show that around 70 percent of incidents where ammunition was stolen were general burglaries regardless of where that ammunition was kept (that is, 67% of cases where ammunition and firearms were stored together were general burglary, as were 71% of cases where ammunition was stored separately, and 71% of cases where this was unknown).

Table 26: Type of storage where ammunition was kept

Type of storage[a]	n	%[b]
Ammunition stored separately from firearm		
Secured in fixed receptacle	11	6
Secured nfd	10	6
Unsecured, for example in wardrobe	7	4
Unsecured nfd	1	1
Separate location to firearm nfd	1	1
Total separate from firearm	30	17
Ammunition stored in same location as firearm		
Secured, for example firearm safe	7	4
Secured nfd	9	5
Unsecured, for example wardrobe	30	17
Unsecured nfd	2	1
Same location as firearm nfd	1	1
Total same location as firearm	49	28
Unknown if ammunition stored with firearms		
Locked vehicle	14	8
Vehicle nfd	5	3
On premises nfd (unknown if separate and secured)	15	8
Wardrobe/cupboard nfd (unknown if separate and secured)	9	5
Garage/shed nfd (unknown if separate and secured)	6	3
On person nfd (unknown if separate and secured)	1	1
Other secure storage, for example safe nfd (unknown if separate)	3	2
Other storage nfd (unknown if separate and secured)	17	10
Other secure nfd (unknown if separate)	2	1
Other unsecured nfd (unknown if separate)	2	1
Unknown storage location	25	14
Total other storage	99	56
(Total)	(178)	(100)

a: Responses categorised on the basis of the varying levels of detail supplied. Category qualifier nfd means location detail was not further defined

b: Percentages may not necessarily total 100 because of rounding

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Prosecution of non-compliance

A total of 109 incidents in the dataset (regardless of reported compliance) resulted in 122 charges laid or pending against the owners of stolen firearms, although 90 percent of these charges arose from incidents where non-compliance with legal storage requirements was noted. Three incidents where compliance information was missing or reported as not applicable resulted in charges. Eight incidents where compliance was reported resulted in charges but the nature of these charges was unknown in two incidents. Of those where detailed information was available, two related to unlawful possession of firearms, and despite the fact that storage apparently complied with requirements, the remainder related to failures to secure firearms or ammunition.

As reported in Table 21, 233 incidents in the current dataset were annotated to show that firearms had not been stored in accordance with legal requirements. Table 27 shows that as was the case with the last report, less than half of these (41%) resulted in charges (43% in the six-monthly analysis).

Table 27: Police prosecution in incidents where secure storage requirements were not met[a]

Prosecutorial outcome	n	%
Charged	95	41
Charges pending	3	1
Not charged	129	55
Unknown	5	2
Not applicable[b]	1	0
(Total)	(233)	(100)

a: Includes a single incident in which charges were later withdrawn. Percentages may not necessarily total 100 because of rounding

b: Not applicable coded as such by the reporting jurisdiction

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

The majority of incidents in which firearms were not stored legally in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia did not result in charges (Table 28). Around 60 percent of Tasmanian incidents in which owners had not correctly stored weapons, and nearly 90 percent of those in the Northern Territory, resulted in charges, but as has been noted, these represent only small numbers of incidents.

Table 28: Level of police prosecution in incidents where secure storage requirements were not met, by jurisdiction (number)[a]

Jurisdiction	Charged or charges pending	Not charged	Unknown
NSW	9	20	2
Vic	22	26	0
Qld	28	31	1
SA	7	12	0
WA	16	33	1
Tas	10	6	1
NT	6	1	0
ACT	0	0	0
Australia	98	129	5

a: Includes a single incident in which charges were later withdrawn and excludes a single incident coded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Given that around one-third of all firearm owners in the current data had not complied with storage requirements, it is not surprising that the majority of charges laid (59%) related to the incorrect storage of firearms or ammunition (Table 29). Around one in eight charges related to the unlawful possession of firearms. As noted elsewhere, 76 incidents involved the theft of unregistered firearms. Charges were laid against owners in one-third of cases (the equivalent figure in the previous report was 23%). In 13 of these 76 incidents, charges related to unlawful firearm possession.

Table 29: Types of offences laid against firearms owners, regardless of reported storage compliance[a]		
Type of offence	**n**	**%**
Unlawful possession		
Unlawful/unlicensed possession of a firearm	5	4
Possess an unregistered firearm	10	8
Total unlawful possession charges	15	12
Storage		
Failure to secure/store correctly, firearm	67	55
Failure to secure/store correctly, ammunition	5	4
Total storage charges	72	59
Licensing conditions		
Breach of licence conditions	7	6
Refuse to produce licence	1	1
Total licensing condition charges	8	7
Unknown	27	22
(Total)	(122)	(100)

a: Includes a single incident in which charges were later withdrawn. Multiple charges were laid in 13 incidents so the total number of offences exceeds the total number of incidents where the firearms owner was charged

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Reporting jurisdictions were not asked explicitly about whether firearms owners in the examined incidents held valid licences. They were asked to provide the details of licences held by owners or reporting persons. Consequently, this variable may not accurately reflect the actual number of licensed owners because it potentially includes the details of reporting persons who did not actually own the stolen firearms, and potentially excludes individuals whose licence details could not be provided, for whatever reason. Given these limitations, licence information was provided for the owners or reporting persons associated with 507 incidents. Because individuals can hold licences for multiple firearm categories, and because these can be held for multiple genuine reasons, information relating to 855 categories of licence was provided (and summarised in Table A4 in Appendix A).

Charges were pending or brought against individuals associated with 25 of the 161 incidents for which no owner/reporting person licence details were provided. Because some incidents gave rise to more than one charge, 32 different charges were specified. These included 13 charges relating to a failure to secure firearms and/or ammunition, nine relating to unregistered or unlicensed ownership, and two relating to licensing conditions. The detail of the remaining charges was not known.

Repeat victimisation

Eighteen incidents within the dataset – only three percent of all reported thefts – were flagged as repeat victimisations. That is, the location where the theft occurred had been burgled on a previous occasion, and firearms had been taken during that previous theft. The registered owner had also previously reported stolen firearms in three of these incidents. Two incidents were flagged to indicate that the registered owner but not the location of the current theft had been previously associated with reported firearms theft but these two incidents were not included in the examination of repeat victimisation. Data were not available regarding any prior theft incidents involving registered owners for 13 of the incidents flagged as repeat burglaries of that location.

Data do not allow an examination of whether the same offender(s) was responsible for the multiple unlawful entries of these locations. The amount of time elapsed between thefts might also help identify cases of offenders repeatedly targeting locations but unfortunately, the dates of the prior thefts were not available. Of course, any earlier unlawful entries of the locations of current firearm thefts, regardless of whether firearms were actually stolen, would allow offenders an opportunity for reconnaissance. Data were not compiled regarding previous burglaries in which firearms had not been stolen however, and as a consequence, figures described here may be an underestimate of all instances of repeat victimisation. Despite these limitations, the information gathered suggests that a small subset of recent thefts may have been planned (or at least not wholly opportunistic) insofar as offenders might have known that valuable items could be obtained from the locations in question.

Information is ambiguous about whether the valuable items primarily motivating offenders were firearms. Eleven of the 18 locations that had been previously burgled (over 60% of repeat victimisation cases) had more than one firearm taken in the recently reported theft. If firearms were the only target, it might be expected that only firearms would be taken but other goods were removed in a high number of these cases. In just under 80 percent of the repeat burglaries (14 incidents) other, non-firearm goods were taken in the recent theft but there was no real pattern to the types of other goods stolen, with goods listed from most of the categories specified in Table 16. Forty-four percent of recent burglaries in previously victimised locations involved the theft of both other goods and more than one firearm.

Another indication that firearms were the target of repeat offenders might be the disproportionate theft of prohibited or harder to obtain firearms. Where possible, jurisdictions, provided details of the firearms taken in these earlier thefts. Despite the small number of cases, the proportional breakdown of the types of firearms stolen in these previous victimisations closely mirrored that seen in the current thefts (as shown in Table 2). Sixty percent of the 35 firearms described were rifles, 25 percent shotguns, 9 percent handguns, and six percent were air rifles.

Although these locations were apparently victimised in the past, data indicate that not all firearms were suitably stored. Stolen firearms had been stored securely and in compliance with legal requirements in only two-thirds of the repeat victimisations.

Recovery of stolen firearms

Similar to the six-monthly analysis, firearms were recovered in 12 percent of incidents of theft (n=80). No particular set of characteristics describes incidents in which stolen firearms were recovered. For example, the majority of incidents for which firearms were recovered (90%) were reported within 14 days of the incident occurring, equivalent to reporting delays in the entire data set (Table 10 shows that 87% of all incidents were reported within 14 days). Similarly, other goods were stolen in 59 percent of incidents with recovered firearms (59% for all incidents, see Table 15). Lastly, there was no statistically significant difference between the percent recovered for incidents in which multiple firearms were taken when compared with those where only single firearms were stolen.

The recovery rate may have been higher for thefts where offenders had been apprehended but information concerning offender apprehension was not routinely collected for the data template. A variable flagging offender apprehension may be a valuable inclusion in future research. Timeframes would vary such that there would be a longer time elapsed for police to investigate and apprehend offender(s) for incidents occurring early in the reference period relative to incidents occurring at the end of a reference period. This may be problematic if investigative outcomes were to be explored but would not be an issue if an offender apprehension flag were employed merely to examine the characteristics of firearm thefts where an offender was proceeded against as compared with those where no offender was apprehended.

Recovered firearms were returned to owners in half of the cases (n=40). The template does not include specific questions regarding the circumstances surrounding the return or non-return of recovered firearms to owners. However, some incidents included additional information that can add to understanding of what transpired. For example, although firearms from two incidents had been recovered, they were not going to be returned to owners until investigations were complete. In another, the recovered firearm had been shortened by the offender and so was destroyed by police rather than being returned to the victim.

Linking stolen firearms to criminal offences

Data indicating whether stolen firearms had been employed in crimes following their theft were available for less than half of all incidents (n=268). Of these, firearms stolen in seven incidents were known to have been used in subsequent crimes. This equates to around one percent of all incidents in the dataset, and a total of 14 firearms (eight rifles, two shotguns, and four handguns). None of these incidents had been flagged as repeat victimisations.

Stolen firearms were known to be involved in a range of serious crimes. Firearms from three thefts were later used in murder and/or suicide, and those from two other thefts were subsequently involved in armed robberies. There was a single case of fraud and another in which offender(s) were charged with licensing and stolen goods offences. Multiple firearms were stolen in four of the theft incidents preceding these crimes. Because reporting jurisdictions were not required to specify which firearms were later used criminally, the type of firearm or firearms used to commit offences cannot be precisely determined. With this caveat in mind, handguns were among the firearms taken in three incidents where the stolen firearms were later used in a murder, a suicide and an armed robbery. Shotguns were stolen in incidents that preceded armed robbery, and rifles were taken in incidents after which the stolen firearms were employed in fraud, murder/suicide, armed robbery, and in goods/licensing offences.

Future directions for policy and practice

Implications for firearms policy

This report presents the findings of a one-year analysis of incidents of firearms theft, the characteristics of the firearms stolen and the circumstances surrounding their theft. Many of the findings mirrored the trends and patterns of firearms theft derived from the analyses of the six-monthly data (see Mouzos & Sakurai 2006).

Earlier research indicated a general downward trend in the number of firearms stolen annually in Australia since the introduction of the National Firearms Agreement in 1996. For instance, 5,170 firearms were reported stolen in the financial year 1995–96, compared with 3,138 in 1998–99 (Mouzos 2002). Theft data for the year 2004–05 suggest a continuation of the downward trend in the number of firearms stolen. While this is a positive finding, there were still close to 1,500 firearms stolen during the one-year period in Australia with the possibility of at least some of these being transferred into the illegitimate firearms market.

The findings of the current study also highlighted the vulnerability associated with leaving firearms in vehicles, with just over one in ten firearms stolen from a vehicle or in transit. Unfortunately, current information did not include details of how exactly these stolen firearms may have been secured (for example, whether trigger locks were fitted). Firearms transported in vehicles are probably more vulnerable to theft because the measures that can be taken to secure a vehicle are unlikely to match those that can be taken to secure premises. Some of these thefts from vehicles may have been wholly opportunistic insofar as the vehicles were unlawfully entered or stolen and the firearms found only after the vehicles were illegally accessed. Others may have been the result of offenders observing unsecured firearms that were in open view and then deciding to illegally access the vehicle. If more detailed information is collated in future, a better understanding of firearm theft from vehicles will be obtained, allowing appropriate policy responses to be formulated.

Over half of the firearms owners who reported a firearm stolen were compliant with safe storage requirements (of the firearms owners who were not compliant, 42 percent of incidents resulted in charges being laid or pending against the owners). In the cases where owners were compliant, thieves managed to gain access to the locked safes or receptacles. In other cases, the whole safe or receptacle was stolen. In these incidents it is difficult to determine whether the firearms were specifically targeted, or the thieves were unaware of the content of the safes. As with theft from vehicles, more detailed data may allow a greater understanding as to whether the firearms were specifically targeted, allowing prevention policies to be tailored where the need arises.

In response to the findings of earlier published reports on firearms theft, a number of initiatives have been introduced to further reduce firearms theft. These include:

- a review of firearms storage in the security industry
- ongoing programs for inspecting firearm storage facilities
- community information initiatives such as the National Firearms Safety Code
- investigation of burglary reduction initiatives to assist firearms owners reduce the incidence of opportunistic theft – a partnership between the AGD and state and territory police services
- partnerships between the Sporting Shooters and Firearms Advisory Council and stakeholders ensuring the dissemination of a safe and secure storage educational message to firearms owners.

In addition to these initiatives the Australian Government under the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* has provided funding to the Australian Institute of Criminology to establish a Firearms Theft Monitoring Program for a further four year program. This ensures the trends and patterns of firearms theft can be monitored in detail, over time.

The firearms theft data collection

The firearms theft dataset provides a tool for examining national and jurisdictional trends but the current analyses have revealed that it is not capable of addressing all issues of relevance to policy makers. Refinements to the nature of information collected may assist in improving the utility of the collection. Stakeholders are currently being consulted regarding the template used to gather data for the firearms theft dataset and their feedback is being compiled. The current analyses indicate that some changes to data compilation that may improve the usefulness of output might be:

- the inclusion of mandatory variables, containing information on:
  - the precise locations from which firearms are stolen (for example, bedroom in a dwelling)
  - whether the location is urban or rural
  - whether the premises has been unlawfully entered in the recent past, regardless of whether firearms were stolen in that earlier event, and how recently those previous unlawful entries took place
  - whether offenders have been proceeded against for the burglary or robbery
- developing some means of decreasing the number of missing data points for some variables, or if unable to do so, attempting to establish reasons behind missing data.

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All URLs correct at 20 December 2006

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Additional tables

Table A1: Types of firearms stolen from jurisdictions[a]

	Air rifle		Rifle		Shotgun[b]		Handgun		Unknown	
Jurisdiction	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
NSW	32	9	221	60	77	21	38	10	3	1
Vic	29	10	152	50	115	38	3	1	2	1
Qld	23	7	199	64	64	20	27	9	0	0
SA	17	11	91	61	40	27	0	0	2	1
WA	25	12	124	60	35	17	20	10	1	< 1
Tas	3	4	38	46	33	40	8	10	1	1
NT	1	5	14	70	5	25	0	0	0	0
ACT	0	0	7	88	1	13	0	0	0	0
Australia	130	9	846	58	370	25	96	7	9	1

a: Excludes 15 firearms for which no detail was supplied, 3 non-firearms categorised as Other, and 1 firearm coded as Other by the reporting jurisdiction (see Table 2). Percentages refer to rows and may not necessarily total 100 because of rounding

b: Includes 8 combination shotgun/rifles (1 from Qld, 2 each from NSW and SA, and 3 from Tas)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Table A2: Categories of firearms stolen from jurisdictions[a]

	A		B		C		D		H		Unknown	
Jurisdiction	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
NSW	208	56	92	25	3	1	4	1	38	10	25	7
Vic	210	69	66	22	0	0	0	0	3	1	24	8
Qld	151	48	97	31	0	0	1	0	27	9	37	12
SA	105	70	30	20	5	3	0	0	0	0	10	7
WA	140	68	40	20	4	2	0	0	20	10	1	< 1
Tas	54	65	3	4	0	0	0	0	8	10	18	22
NT	14	70	6	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ACT	3	38	2	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	38
Australia	885	61	336	23	12	1	5	< 1	96	7	118	8

a: Excludes 15 firearms for which no detail was supplied and 3 non-firearms categorised as Other. Percentages refer to rows and may not necessarily total 100 because of rounding

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Table A3: Detailed descriptions of locations where firearms were stolen[a]		
Detail of location	**n**	**%**
Private premises/land		
Dwelling nfd	41	18
House	27	12
– bedroom	28	12
– lounge room	3	1
– basement	2	1
– kitchen	2	1
– study	1	< 1
Caravan on private land	3	1
Humpy	2	1
Garage or shed[b]	72	31
Other structure, for example shipping container	6	3
Rural land	4	2
Total private premises/land	191	82
Public space/commercial premises		
Commercial/public premises nfd	2	1
Primary production nfd	2	1
– piggery	1	< 1
– dairy farm	1	< 1
– meatworks	1	< 1
– mango farm	1	< 1
– rural tourist attraction	1	< 1
Manufacturing/wholesale nfd	4	2
– timber packaging	1	< 1
Office/administration nfd	1	< 1
– security company office	1	< 1
Retailer nfd	3	1
– firearms retailer/repairer	2	1
– other retail nec	1	< 1
Club nfd	2	1
– RSL club	1	< 1
Caravan park	2	1
Aerodrome	1	< 1
National park/bushland	5	2
Total commercial/public premises	33	14
Detail of vehicles[c]		
Vehicle parked at residence	5	2
Vehicle in car park/urban street	1	< 1
Vehicle on rural road/bushland	2	1
Boat	2	1
Total vehicles	10	4
(Total)	(234)	(100)

a: Includes only incidents for which detail of the location where the firearms were stored was stated or could be deduced from incident information. Percentages may not necessarily total 100 because of rounding

b: Total for category Garage or shed varies from that for analyses of point of entry to premises because in the current context, this category captures incidents where firearms were known to be *stored* in this location rather than *access being gained* to the premises via this location

c: Category Vehicles does not include cases where specific detail concerning the vehicle's location was not included

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Table A4: Purposes for which firearms licences held in firearm theft incidents[a]

	A		B		C		D		H	
Purpose	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Sporting	15	4	18	5	2	7	2	67	25	63
Recreational	237	60	214	55	4	14	0	0	3	8
Occupational	110	28	114	30	19	66	0	0	9	23
Collector	4	1	2	1	1	3	0	0	1	3
Other limited purpose	1	< 1	1	< 1	0	0	1	33	1	3
Other nfd[b]	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Multiple purposes										
Sport and rec[c]	7	2	16	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sport and occup[d]	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	3
Rec and occup[e]	16	4	14	4	3	10	0	0	0	0
Sport, rec and occup[f]	5	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total multiple purposes	28	7	37	10	3	10	0	0	1	3
(Total)	(397)		(386)		(29)		(3)		(40)	

a: Percentage calculated from total number of licences listed for that class and may not necessarily total 100 because of rounding. Grand total exceeds total incidents because licence holders could hold licences in multiple categories

b: Other nfd indicates other purposes not further defined

c: Sport and rec denotes sporting plus recreational purposes

d: Sport and occup denotes sporting plus occupational purposes

e: Rec and occup denotes recreational plus occupational purposes

f: Sport, rec and occup denotes sporting plus recreational plus occupational purpose

Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–05 [computer file]

Appendix B: Firearms classification, National Firearms Agreement 1996[a]

Category A	air rifles rimfire rifles (excluding self-loading) single and double barrelled shotguns
Category B	muzzle-loading firearms single shot, double-barrelled and repeating action centre-fire rifles break-action shotguns/rifle combinations
Category C	**Prohibited except for occupational purposes** self-loading rimfire rifles with a magazine capacity no greater than 10 rounds self-loading shotguns with a magazine capacity no greater than five rounds pump-action shotguns with a magazine capacity no greater than five rounds
Category D	**Prohibited except for official purposes** self-loading centre fire rifles self-loading shotguns and pump action shotguns with a capacity of more than five rounds self-loading rimfire rifles with a magazine capacity greater than 10 rounds
Category H	all handguns, including air pistols

a: Firearms categories vary slightly between jurisdictions

Appendix C: Firearm storage requirements, extracts

New South Wales

40 Category A and category B licence requirements

(1) The holder of a category A or category B licence must comply with the following requirements in respect of any firearm to which the licence applies:

(a) when any such firearm is not actually being used or carried, it must be stored in a locked receptacle of a type approved by the Commissioner and that is constructed of hard wood or steel and not easily penetrable,

(b) if such a receptacle weighs less than 150 kilograms when empty, it must be fixed in order to prevent its easy removal,

(c) the locks of such a receptacle must be of solid metal and be of a type approved by the Commissioner,

(d) any ammunition for the firearm must be stored in a locked container of a type approved by the Commissioner and that is kept separate from the receptacle containing any such firearm,

(e) such other requirements relating to security and safe storage as may be prescribed by the regulations.

(2) A licensee does not have to comply with the requirements of this section if the licensee satisfies the Commissioner that the licensee has provided alternative arrangements for the storage of firearms in the licensee's possession that are of a standard not less than the requirements set out in this section.

41 Category C, D and H licence requirements

(1) The holder of a category C, category D or category H licence must comply with the following requirements in respect of any firearm to which the licence applies:

(a) when any such firearm is not actually being used or carried, it must be stored in a locked steel safe of a type approved by the Commissioner and that cannot be easily penetrated,

(b) such a safe must be bolted to the structure of the premises where the firearm is authorised to be kept,

(c) any ammunition for the firearm must be stored in a locked container of a type approved by the Commissioner and that is kept separate from the safe containing any such firearm,

(d) such other requirements relating to security and safe storage as may be prescribed by the regulations.

(2) A licensee does not have to comply with the requirements of this section if the licensee satisfies the Commissioner that the licensee has provided alternative arrangements for the storage of firearms in the licensee's possession that are of a standard not less than the requirements set out in this section.

Extracted from *FIREARMS ACT 1996*

http://portsea.austlii.edu.au/cgi-pit/renderFrag.py?frag=/home/www/pit/xml/nsw/act/438ea8acb7874e14.xmlanddate=20060330

http://portsea.austlii.edu.au/cgi-pit/renderFrag.py?frag=/home/www/pit/xml/nsw/act/438ea8acb79d4cd4.xmlanddate=20060330

accessed 2 August 2006

Victoria

Storage Requirements

1. Longarm licences for category A and B longarms

(1) The firearm must be stored in a receptacle–

(a) which is constructed of hard wood or steel that is not easily penetrable; and

(b) which, if it weighs less than 150 kilograms when it is empty, must be fixed to the frame of the floor or the wall of the premises where the firearm is kept in such a manner that it is not easily removable; and

(c) which, when any firearm is stored in it, is locked with a lock of sturdy construction.

(2) If more than 15 firearms are stored on the premises where the firearm is stored, the premises must be fitted with an effective alarm system.

(3) Any cartridge ammunition for the firearm must be stored in a locked container separate from the receptacle in which the firearm must be stored.

2. Longarm licences for category C or category D longarms and handgun licences for general category handguns

(1) The firearm must be stored in a steel safe–

(a) which is of a thickness that is not easily penetrable; and

(b) which, if it weighs less than 150 kilograms when it is empty, must be bolted to the structure of the premises where the firearm is authorised to be kept; and

(c) which, when any firearm is stored in it, is locked.

(2) If more than 15 firearms are stored on the premises where the firearm is stored, the premises must be fitted with an effective alarm system.

(2A) The key to the container in which the firearm is stored must–

(a) be carried by the holder of the licence; or

(b) be kept securely in a separate room from the container– when the container is not being accessed.

(3) Any cartridge ammunition for the firearm must be stored in a locked container separate from the safe in which the firearm must be stored.

3. Firearms collectors licences

(1) The firearm must be stored–

(a) on premises or a part of premises which is a permanent building with secure locks on all openings; and

(b) in a room–

(i) the walls of which are solid enough to be a substantial physical barrier to entry; and

(ii) any window of which is covered by security bars; and

(iii) any door to which is–

(A) of a solid material, or is covered by steel sheet or reinforced by firmly fixed steel mesh; and

(B) fitted with a lock of the dead latch type or an extra hasp or barrel bolt and padlock which is of such a nature as to reduce the possibility of the door being sprung from the jamb; and

(C) hinged with concealed hinge pins or with hinge pins which are welded to prevent the pins being removed; and

(c) in a container–

(i) which is made of steel or any other robust material; and

(ii) which must be firmly fixed to the wall or floor of the room; and

(iii) the doors of which are attached with concealed or welded hinges; and

(iv) which, when any firearm is stored in it, is locked with a lock which is so constructed as to prevent the doors of the container being easily sprung.

(2) If–

(a) in the case of an antique handgun, more than 15 antique handguns are stored on the premises where the handgun is stored; or

(b) in any other case, more than 5 firearms are stored on the premises where the firearm is stored– the premises must be fitted with an effective alarm system of a class approved by the Chief Commissioner.

(2A) The key to the container in which the firearm is stored must–

(a) be carried by the holder of the licence; or

(b) be kept securely in a separate room from the container– when the container is not being accessed.

(3) The firearm must not be removed from the container except by the holder of the licence.

(4) Any bolt or firing pin which is required to be stored separately from the firearm it is a part of, must be stored in the same manner as is required for the storage of a firearm under a longarm licence for a category A or B longarm.

(3A) Firearms collectors licences-section 122 (1A) The firearm must be stored in a receptacle–

(a) which is constructed of hard wood or steel that is not easily penetrable; and

(b) which, if it weighs less than 150 kilograms when it is empty, must be fixed to the frame of the floor or the wall of the premises where the firearm is kept in such a manner that it is not easily removable; and

(c) which when any firearm is stored in it is locked with a lock of sturdy construction.

4. Firearms heirlooms licences

(1) The firearm must be stored in a receptacle–

(a) which is constructed of hard wood or steel that is not easily penetrable; and

(b) which, if it weighs less than 150 kilograms when it is empty, must be fixed to the frame of the floor or the wall of the premises where the firearm is kept in such a manner that it is not easily removable; and

(c) which, when any firearm is stored in it, is locked with a lock of sturdy construction.

(2) Despite paragraph (1) of this item, the firearm may be displayed by being fixed to the wall of a room in a manner that makes it unable to be readily removed.

5. Firearms ammunition collectors licences

(1) The ammunition must be stored in a receptacle–

(a) which is constructed of hard wood or steel that is not easily penetrable; and

(b) which, if it weighs less than 150 kilograms when it is empty, must be fixed to the frame of the floor or the wall of the premises where the ammunition is kept in such a manner that it is not easily removable; and

(c) which, when any ammunition is stored in it, is locked with a lock made of sturdy construction.

Extracted from *FIREARMS ACT 1996*

http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/fa1996102/sch4.html

accessed 2 August 2006

Queensland

60 Storage of weapon not in licensee's physical possession-secure storage facilities

(1) This section does not apply–

(a) to the extent that this regulation otherwise provides; or

(b) to a weapon possessed under an armourer's, collector's, dealer's or theatrical ordnance supplier's licence or a security licence (organisation); or

(c) to a weapon to which section 60A applies; or

(d) if section 60A does not apply to a weapon that is in or on a vehicle and section 61 is complied with.

(2) A person who possesses a weapon must, when the weapon is not in the person's physical possession, store it unloaded in a locked container with the bolt removed or the action broken.

(3) The container must–

(a) for a category D, H or R weapon–be a rigid structure made of solid steel and be bolted to the frame or floor of a permanent building; or

(b) for another weapon–

(i) be a rigid structure made of solid steel or solid timber; and

(ii) if the container weighs less than 150kg–be securely fixed to the frame or floor of a permanent building.

(4) The container must also–

(a) have a sturdy combination lock, keyed lock or keyed padlock; and

(b) always be locked (other than for the time necessary to insert or remove a weapon, or something else, for a proper purpose).

(5) However, a person who possesses a weapon must, when the weapon is not in the person's physical possession, store it in the way provided in sections 39 to 43, if there are, at the premises where the weapon is, more than–

(a) for category A, B, C or D weapons–a total of 30 of any of those weapons; or

(b) 30 category H weapons.

(6) To prevent any doubt, it is declared that subsection (2) does not apply while a weapon is in the physical possession of a body's representative endorsed on the licence, or another individual, under the authority of a licence held by the body.

Extracted from *WEAPONS REGULATION 1996 – SECT 60*

From http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/qld/consol_reg/wr1996198/s60.html

accessed 2 August 2006

South Australia

29–Security of firearms

(1) A person (not being a dealer) who has possession of a class A or B firearm must keep the firearm secured by–

(a) securely attaching and locking it to part of the building in which it is kept; or

(b) keeping it in a locked cabinet made of hardwood or steel that is securely attached to the building in which it is kept; or

(c) keeping it in a locked safe made of steel that is securely attached to the building in which it is kept; or

(d) keeping it in a locked steel and concrete strong room; or

(e) such other method as is approved by the Registrar.

(2) A person (not being a dealer) who has possession of a class C, D or H firearm must keep the firearm secured by–

(a) keeping it in a locked safe made of steel that is securely attached to the building in which it is kept; or

(b) keeping it in a locked steel and concrete strong room; or

(c) such other method as is approved by the Registrar.

(3) A cabinet or safe referred to in subregulation (1) or (2) must–

(a) be fitted with fittings and locks that prevent it from being easily forced open; and

(b) be made of material of sufficient thickness to prevent it being easily broken, opened or destroyed.

(4) Despite subregulations (1)(c) and (2)(a), a safe need not be attached to the building if its mass when empty is 150 kilograms or more.

Extracted from *FIREARMS REGULATIONS 1993 – REG 29*

From http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/sa/consol_reg/fr1993211/s29.html

accessed 2 August 2006

Western Australia

11A. Storage security requirements

(1) A person entitled to possess firearms or ammunition of any kind is to ensure that the firearms or ammunition are stored in accordance with this regulation.

(2) Firearms and ammunition are to be stored in a locked cabinet or container that at least meets the specifications described in Schedule 4 or in such other way as is approved.

(3) A cabinet or container that can be unlocked with a key is to be regarded as unlocked if the key is left in the lock or is otherwise accessible where the cabinet or container is located.

[(4)–(6) repealed]

(7) A magazine is not to contain any ammunition when it is stored.

(8) Ammunition is not to be stored in a cabinet or container in which a firearm is stored unless the ammunition is in another locked metal container in which no firearm is stored and which is securely affixed so as to prevent its removal from the cabinet or container.

(9) Despite subregulation (8), propellant that is not incorporated in a cartridge is not to be stored, whether or not it is in another container, in a container or cabinet that contains any ammunition, firearm, or primer.

(10) The requirements of this regulation are in addition to, not instead of, any requirements under the Explosives and Dangerous Goods Act 1961.

[Regulation 11A inserted in Gazette 6 Dec 1996 p.6801; amended in Gazette 24 Sep 1997 p.5367.]

Schedule 4 – Specifications for storage cabinets or containers

1. Construction

(1) The cabinet or container is to be constructed of mild steel that is 2 mm thick.

(2) A joint between 2 faces that is butt welded is to have a continuous weld along the full length of the joint.

(3) A joint where the edge of one face is folded over the edge of another face is to be stitch welded, with welds of at least 20 mm in length at intervals of not more than 100 mm between welds.

(4) Spot welding is not to be used on the joints between faces.

(5) The cabinet or container is to be so designed that no firearm or ammunition within it can be removed from it while it is locked.

(6) In this clause –
"face" means a side, the top, or the bottom, of the cabinet or container.

[Clause 1 inserted in Gazette 6 Dec 1996 p. 6847.]

2. Doors

(1) Doors are to be recessed into the surrounding frame with margins of not more than 4 mm.

(2) Each edge of the door and door frame is to be internally supported and have a return of at least 10 mm.

(3) The cabinet or container is to have an internal stop of at least 10 mm against which each edge of the door, other than the hinged edge, closes.

(4) The supports and stops required by subclauses (2) and (3) are to be welded at the corners.

[Clause 2 inserted in Gazette 6 Dec 1996 p. 6847.]

3. Hinging mechanisms

(1) Hinge protection is to be provided in such a way that, if the hinges are removed, the door of the cabinet or container remains in place and locked.

(2) If the hinged edge of the door is not longer than 1 metre, 2 hinges are required on it, and if it is longer than 1 metre, an additional hinge is required for each additional 500 mm or part thereof.

(3) If 2 hinges are required, the distance between them is to be not less than one third of the length of the hinged edge.

(4) If more than 2 hinges are required the distance between adjacent hinges is to be the same and that is also to be the distance from each of the outermost hinges to the nearest end of the hinged edge.

(5) If a spindle is used instead of hinges, it is to extend the full length of the hinged edge of the door and is to be attached to the door by welds the number and placement of which comply with the requirements of subclauses (2), (3), and (4) for the number and placement of hinges.

(6) If, instead of using hinges, the door swings on a spindle or on pivots not extending the full length of the hinged edge of the door, the cabinet or container is to incorporate a return protecting the hinged edge, along its full length, against the use of a jemmy.

[Clause 3 inserted in Gazette 6 Dec 1996 p. 6847–8.]

4. Locks and locking points

(1) If the swinging edge of the door is not longer than 500 mm, one lock is required with a locking point half way along that edge.

(2) If the swinging edge is longer than 500 mm but not longer than 1.5 m –

(a) 2 locks are required each with a separate locking point along the swinging edge; and

(b) the distance between the 2 locking points is to be not less than one third of the length of the swinging edge.

(3) If the swinging edge is longer than 1.5 m –

(a) for each additional 500 mm or part thereof there is to be an additional lock with a separate locking point along the swinging edge; and

(b) the distance between adjacent locking points is to be the same and that is also to be the distance from each of the outermost locking points to the nearest end of the swinging edge.

(4) It is sufficient compliance with subclause (2) if, when the swinging edge is longer than 500 mm but not longer than 1.5 m, there is one lock with at least 3 separate locking points.

(5) Each lock is to have a 5 pin mechanism that deadlocks the bolt in the locked position until it is properly unlocked.

(6) If the locking bolt is designed to be released by a handle or lever, the design is to be such that, if the handle or lever is forcibly removed while the door is locked, the bolt remains in the locked position.

(7) The cabinet or container is to be fitted with a protective structure to guard against the forcible removal of any lock.

(8) In this clause –

"locking point" means the point at which the bolt locks the door to the cabinet or container, preventing the door from opening;

"swinging edge" means the edge of the door opposite the hinged edge.

[Clause 4 inserted in Gazette 6 Dec 1996 p. 6848–9.]

5. Anchoring

(1) The cabinet or container is to be securely anchored from the inside at 2 points on each of 2 separate surfaces to 2 immovable structural surfaces by means of 8 mm x 75 mm masonry fixing bolts or coach screws, as is appropriate.

(2) At each anchor point the cabinet or container is to be reinforced with a 40 mm x 40 mm x 2 mm metal plate, or a 40 mm x 2 mm metal washer, fitted between the surface of the cabinet or container and the head of the bolt or coach screw.

[Clause 5 inserted in Gazette 6 Dec 1996 p. 6849.]

Extracted from FIREARMS REGULATIONS 1974

http://www.slp.wa.gov.au/statutes/regs.nsf/3c0405a7241b5fe648256810003b1b1d797abddd48538ed248256ff10002c157?OpenDocument

http://www.slp.wa.gov.au/statutes/regs.nsf/3c0405a7241b5fe648256810003b1b1d/f44f52631794506448256ff10002c11e?OpenDocument

accessed 2 August 2006

Tasmania

85. Category A and B firearms licence requirements

(1) The holder of a Category A firearms licence or Category B firearms licence must comply with the following requirements in respect of the storage of any firearm to which the licence applies:

(a) if the firearm is not being used, it must be stored in a locked receptacle of an approved type that is –

(i) constructed of hard wood, metal, concrete or any other approved material; and

(ii) not easily penetrable;

(b) a receptacle that weighs less than 150 kg when empty must be fixed to a wall or floor in a manner that prevents easy removal;

(c) the locks of a receptacle must be –

(i) of solid metal; and

(ii) of an approved type;

(d) any ammunition for the firearm must be stored in a locked container of an approved type that is kept separate from the receptacle containing the firearm;

(e) any other prescribed requirement relating to security and safe storage.

Penalty:
Fine not exceeding 20 penalty units or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months, or both.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply to a licensee if the licensee satisfies the Commissioner that the licensee has provided alternative arrangements for the storage of firearms in the licensee's possession that are of a standard not less than the requirements specified in this section.

86. Category C, D and H firearms licence requirements

(1) The holder of a Category C firearms licence, Category D firearms licence or Category H firearms licence must comply with the following requirements in respect of the storage of any firearm to which the licence applies:

(a) if the firearm is not being used, it must be stored in a locked receptacle of an approved type made of metal, concrete or any other approved material that is not easily penetrated;

(b) the receptacle must be bolted to a wall or floor;

(c) any ammunition for the firearm must be stored in a locked container of an approved type that is kept separate from the receptacle containing the firearm;

(d) any other prescribed requirement relating to security and safe storage.

Penalty:
Fine not exceeding 50 penalty units or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years, or both.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply to a licensee if the licensee satisfies the Commissioner that the licensee has provided alternative arrangements for the storage of firearms in the licensee's possession that are of a standard not less than the requirements specified in this section.

Extracted from *FIREARMS ACT 1996*
From http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/tas/consol_act/fa1996102/s85.html
http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/tas/consol_act/fa1996102/s86.html
accessed 2 August 2006

Northern Territory

Schedule 2

Regulation 21: storage and safekeeping requirements for category a and b firearms

1. The sides and door are to be constructed of solid steel –
   (a) that has a minimum thickness of 3 mm; or
   (b) that has a minimum thickness of 2 mm if the method of construction used ensures rigidity or additional reinforcing to prevent distortion has been included.
2. All edges are to be rolled or folded.
3. The door is to be recessed or flush fitted and is to be sized to prevent leverage points.
4. All hinges are to be secured so that the door cannot be detached by removing the pins, internal or trap-type hinges being preferred.
5. There are at least 2 bolt-down points.
6. There is to be one locking point.
7. There is to be sufficient reinforcing to prevent distortion of the door if a forced entry were to be attempted.
8. If a padlock is used, it is to be covered so as to prevent the lock being cut or broken off.

Schedule 3

Regulation 22: storage and safekeeping requirements for category C, D and H firearms

1. The safe or other receptacle is to be constructed of solid steel –
   (a) that has a minimum thickness of 6 mm in the sides and the door; or
   (b) that, subject to inspection and approval by the Commissioner, has minimum thicknesses of 3 mm in the sides and 6 mm in the door.
2. All hinges are to be non-removable and are to be constructed in the same manner as safe-style hinges.
3. Locks are to be internal and may be combination locks, key locks or electronic locks or a mixture of 2 or more of those kinds of locks.
4. A safe or other receptacle for the storage of category C or D firearms is to have at least 2 locks.
5. A safe or other receptacle for the storage of category H firearms is to have –
   (a) at least one lock; or
   (b) if the swinging edge is greater than 500 mm – at least 2 locks.
6. Alternatively, category H firearms may be stored in a compartment inside a receptacle that complies the requirements specified in Schedule 2 (a "Schedule 2 receptacle") if the compartment –
   (a) is a separate box inside the Schedule 2 receptacle;
   (b) has a thickness of solid steel that is at least equal to the thickness of the steel in the Schedule 2 receptacle;
   (c) can only be accessed if the door to the Schedule 2 receptacle is opened first; and
   (d) is designed so that, in combination with the Schedule 2 receptacle, it provides a double thickness of steel on all sides.

Extracted from *FIREARMS REGULATIONS*

From http://notes.nt.gov.au/dcm/legislat/legislat.nsf/d989974724db65b1482561cf0017cbd2/b1c92878c767c7d469256e84001d0657?OpenDocument#SCHEDULE%203

accessed 2 August 2006

Australia Capital Territory

Category A and B licence requirements

(1) The holder of a category A or category B licence shall comply with the following requirements in respect of a firearm to which the licence applies:

(a) when the firearm is not being used or carried, it shall be stored in a locked receptacle–

(i) of a type approved by the registrar; and

(ii) that is constructed of hard wood or steel so as not to be easily penetrable; and

(iii) if the receptacle weighs less than 150kg when empty–fixed in position to prevent its easy removal; and

(iv) secured by locks of solid metal of a type approved by the registrar;

(b) any ammunition for the firearm shall be stored in a locked container of a type approved by the registrar and that is kept separate from the receptacle containing the firearm;

(c) the other requirements relating to security and safe storage that are prescribed.

Maximum penalty: 50 penalty units.

(2) A licensee need not comply with the requirements of this section if the licensee satisfies the registrar that the licensee has provided alternative arrangements for the storage of firearms in the licensee's possession that are of a standard not less than the requirements set out in this section.

Category C, D and H licence requirements

(1) The holder of a category C, category D or category H licence shall comply with the following requirements in respect of any firearm to which the licence applies:

(a) when the firearm is not being used or carried, it shall be stored in a locked steel safe–

(i) of a type approved by the registrar that can not be easily penetrated; and

(ii) bolted to the structure of the premises where the firearm is authorised to be kept;

(b) any ammunition for the firearm shall be stored in a locked container of a type approved by the registrar and that is kept separate from the safe containing the firearm;

(c) the other requirements relating to security and safe storage that are prescribed.

Maximum penalty: 50 penalty units.

(2) A licensee need not comply with the requirements of this section if the licensee satisfies the registrar that the licensee has provided alternative arrangements for the storage of firearms in the licensee's possession that are of a standard not less than the requirements set out in this section.

Extracted from *FIREARMS ACT 1996*

From http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/act/consol_act/fa1996102/s63.html

http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/act/consol_act/fa1996102/s64.html

accessed 2 August 2006

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This report represents the first output of the newly established National Firearms Theft Monitoring Program (NFTMP). It builds on previous research into firearms theft, examining all such incidents reported to police in 2004–05. Almost 1,500 firearms were reported stolen in 668 incidents, affecting less than 0.1 of one percent of all registered firearms. The data collected for this report suggest a downward trend in the number of firearms stolen, but highlight issues of compliance with safe storage regulations.

The NFTMP was established on the recommendation of the Australasian Police Ministers' Council and is funded under the Australian Government's Proceeds of Crime Act. It aims to help police and policy makers understand the characteristics of firearms theft and may help in the development of initiatives to reduce the incidence of firearm theft.