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Firearms theft in Australia: a six-month exploratory analysis

Jenny Mouzos
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Technical and Background Paper

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Note: Because of rounding, some percentages may not sum to 100.

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Foreword

In 1996, the Australasian Police Ministers' Council (APMC) resolved that the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) should establish the National Firearms Monitoring Program (NFMP). The NFMP was established with the aim of building a knowledge base of firearms and their illegitimate use. The AIC has published several reports from this project, and this research has continued to inform the formulation of public policy in relation to firearms in Australia.

This report presents findings from an analysis of data on incidents of firearms theft in Australia during six months in 2004. It builds on previous AIC research on firearms theft (Mouzos 2002), and provides policy-makers, practitioners and researchers with a greater understanding of the nature of this offence.

A full reference list of NFMP publications is at:
http://www.aic.gov.au/research/projects/0002-docs.html

Toni Makkai
Director
Australian Institute of Criminology

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Executive summary

Earlier Australian research on firearms theft quantified the scale of the issue and identified the type of firearms stolen and the locations most vulnerable to theft (Mouzos 2002). While that research was seen as a starting point in developing our knowledge base on the issue of firearms theft in Australia, it also highlighted a number of information gaps. As a result of a national and multi-jurisdictional commitment, additional information was collected and analysed on incidents of firearms theft reported to police over a six-month period (1 February – 31 July 2004) using a firearms theft template developed by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) and the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department (AGD).

The findings outlined in this report provide useful insights into the emerging picture of firearms theft in Australia. This information is essential in assisting researchers, policy-makers and practitioners to:

- make well-informed strategic decisions; and
- assess, modify and implement legislative reforms.

It also highlights the importance of the continued collection of data on this issue, enabling the ongoing monitoring of trends and patterns of firearms theft in Australia over time and the identification of any changes. Such an ongoing policy response will allow governments to respond in a timely and effective manner to any identified issues.

Some of the findings to arise from the exploratory analysis are:

Characteristics of firearms stolen

- A total of 318 incidents of firearms theft were reported to police over the six-month period. These incidents resulted in the theft of 664 firearms (0.03 percent of registered firearms in Australia).
- The mean and median number of firearms reported stolen in a single theft incident were two and one respectively.
- Rifles accounted for the majority of the firearms stolen (58%), followed by shotguns (24%), handguns (9%) and air-rifles (8%).
- In terms of the firearm classification category, 61 percent of stolen firearms were classified as Category A, 24 percent as Category B, one percent as Category C and nine percent as Category H.
- The majority of firearms reported stolen were registered (93%).
- Most thefts were reported to police by the registered owner of the firearms (77%).
- Almost two-thirds of thefts were reported to police either on the day of the theft or on the following day.
- Firearms were recovered by police in 12 percent (n=37) of the 318 theft incidents.

Nature of firearms theft

- The most common location for incidents involving the theft of firearms was private residential premises (72%). Thefts of firearms from a motor vehicle accounted for 14 percent of incidents reported to police, and one in ten thefts were from business premises.

- Over half the incidents of firearms theft (58%) also involved the theft of other goods, such as audio/electrical appliances, jewellery and tools. The majority of these were stolen from private residential premises.
- Tools and force to gain entry into premises were more likely to be used for incidents where other goods were stolen, than for incidents where only firearms were stolen.
- Ammunition was also stolen in just over a quarter of incidents (26%).
- Based on this six-month snapshot, firearms theft appears to be predominantly opportunistic in nature, with only four in ten incidents involving the theft of firearms only. In these cases, the firearms may have been specifically targeted.
- A firearm had previously been stolen from the same location in six incidents.
- Firearms stolen in five incidents were identified as being used subsequently in crime or violence (homicide, armed robbery and suicide).

Compliance with the law

- Of the 318 incidents of firearms theft, 60 percent involved the theft of firearms stored in accordance with legislative requirements. This means that 30 percent of incidents involved the theft of firearms not stored correctly.
- Compliance with safe storage requirements was significantly greater for thefts involving multiple firearms (78%) than single firearms (58%).
- Over half (59%) of the 318 incidents involved the theft of firearms stored in a locked safe or receptacle. Incidents where firearms were unsecured in the premises accounted for 15 percent, and thefts from a vehicle accounted for 14 percent. Storage arrangements for remaining cases were not known (8%) or classified as other (3%).
- The most common methods used to access locked safes were: forced or jemmied open (45%), removal and/or theft of the whole safe (12%), keys for that safe or receptacle located and used (12%), and locks cut (10%).

Prosecution for non-compliance

- A charge was laid against the owners of the firearms in less than half of the 96 incidents (43%) that involved the theft of firearms not stored in accordance with legislative requirements.
- The most common offence firearm owners were charged with was failing to secure a firearm and/or ammunition (55%).

Future directions for policy and practice

Overall, these findings suggest a number of implications for policy and practice:

- while there is a decrease in the number of firearms stolen, the results still highlight the need for firearms owners to be more vigilant in safely storing and securing their firearms;
- thirty percent of firearms stolen were insecurely stored. This suggests that current security requirements may be ineffective in preventing theft;

- it is also important that the level of compliance is routinely monitored, and that proactive measures are employed, such as auditing and increased requirements for inspections for firearms safe keeping;
- a holistic approach to security is required to ensure that firearms and the premises in which they are stored are secure; and
- the continued collection of data on firearms theft in Australia will facilitate the monitoring of the theft of firearms, as well as long term strategic planning and analysis of the issue.

Introduction

Background to this study

The theft of firearms poses a potential threat to society, as they may be transferred from the legitimate to the illegitimate firearms market. This may result in some firearms being linked to injury, violence or criminal activities (Dandurand 1998; Wright & Rossi 1986; Alpers & Walters 1998; Walters 2000; Mouzos 2002). It also has the potential to create new opportunities for criminals by making illegal firearms more lucrative (Mouzos 2002), especially clean firearms, i.e. those not connected with past crimes (Johns 2004: 7). A key aim for law enforcement and criminal justice policy is to reduce this threat and ensure minimal transference of firearms from one market to the other.

Beginning almost a decade ago, the Australian Government in conjunction with the states and territories introduced a series of firearm regulation schemes (National Firearms Agreement 1996; National Handgun Agreement 2002; National Firearms Trafficking Policy Agreement 2002). These schemes included prohibitions/restrictions on certain categories of firearms (and, more recently, on the calibre, barrel length and magazine capacity of handguns) to be supplemented by a large-scale buyback of those weapons and new licensing, registration, safe storage, and firearm training requirements. They also introduced new penalties for the trafficking of firearms across borders.

To complement the strengthening of firearms regulations, a way of monitoring the effectiveness of these reforms and building a knowledge base of firearms and their illegitimate use was required. As a result, the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) established the National Firearms Monitoring Program (NFMP). As part of this program, research was conducted on trends and patterns of firearms theft in Australia between 1994–1995 and 1999–2000 (Mouzos 2002). This research provided first-time information on the incidence, types of firearms stolen, and the locations usually targeted in the theft of firearms in Australia. The study also raised a number of questions which would need to be answered to provide policy-makers with a better basis for decision-making, especially in reducing the threat associated with firearms theft.

Firearms theft template

The type of in-depth information required on firearms theft is not routinely captured in police recording systems. If it is recorded, it cannot be easily extracted. Much of the necessary information concerning the characteristics of the firearms theft incident is contained in the offence narrative. In order to capture the necessary additional information on incidents of firearms theft in Australia, a dedicated data collection instrument was required.

A national and multi-jurisdictional commitment was made to work towards gaining a greater understanding of the issues not canvassed in the earlier work on firearms theft (Mouzos 2002). In November 2003, the Australasian Police Ministers' Council (APMC) agreed that all jurisdictions would provide firearms theft data using a template to be developed by the Firearms Policy Working Group (FPWG)[1] commencing on 1 February 2004 for a period of six months.

In accordance with this, the AIC and the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department (AGD) developed a firearms theft template in consultation with FPWG (see Appendix A). The template was designed to capture information in relation to:

- whether stolen firearms were secured or unsecured at the time of being stolen, and whether ammunition was stolen at the same time;

[1] The Firearms Policy Working Group (FPWG) consists of representatives from each state and territory police service, the Australian Crime Commission, the Australian Institute of Criminology, Australian Customs Service, Australian Federal Police and CrimTrac, and is chaired by the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department.

- whether the firearm theft was opportunistic, being conducted during a house break-in, or targeted;
- where firearms are being stolen from;
- details of the number of stolen firearms recovered by police and/or firearm owners;
- whether stolen firearms were registered and whether their owners were licensed; and
- whether stolen firearms are being used in crime.

All states and territories used the template to collect data on incidents of firearms theft from 1 February 2004 to 31 July 2004.

Purposes of this study

This report summarises the exploratory findings from the analysis of firearms theft data provided by all jurisdictions using the firearms theft template.

The purposes of this study were to:

- identify characteristics of firearms that are commonly stolen;
- identify the nature of firearms theft in terms of time and location;
- examine the way in which firearms theft is committed; and
- assess the rates of compliance with safe storage requirements and the prosecution of non-compliance.

It is anticipated that findings of this research will assist the FPWG in:

- gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the emerging picture of firearms theft in Australia, to make well-informed strategic decisions and assessments;
- reviewing the adequacy of the current firearm storage arrangements in preventing firearms theft; and
- developing a minimum standard for firearms storage across all sectors of the firearms community, taking into account comparative risk.

Prior research on firearms theft

The potential threat posed by stolen firearms has made this area the focus of national and international research. This increased focus would assist in the development of (a) a more comprehensive understanding of the problem, and (b) more focused strategies to tackle these issues.

Investigating firearms theft is not always an easy task, however. In assessing the situation in the United Kingdom, one commentator observed that 'whilst there is quite a lot of information, statistical data, and intelligence available to inform an analysis of the nature and extent of the problem, overall the picture is patchy and poorly coordinated' (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) 2004: 36). Others have also noted the difficulty in identifying the origin and storage of firearms used in violence and crime due to the lack of reliable official information (see Walters 1997; Alpers & Walters 1998). Nonetheless, several studies have been undertaken on the issue of firearms theft.

The United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) conducted analyses of 1530 criminal investigations involving firearms traffickers, initiated from July 1996 to December 1998. The study found that firearms stolen from federally licensed dealers, residences and vehicles were involved in 26 percent of the trafficking investigations (ATF 2000). A similar study into the illicit firearms trafficking pathways through which youth and juveniles acquire firearms found that nearly 21 percent of the ATF investigations (n=648) involved trafficking in firearms stolen from a Federal Firearms Licensee (FFL). Just over 14 percent involved trafficking in firearms stolen from residences, and over two percent from a common mail carrier, such as the United Parcel Service (Braga & Kennedy 2001).

Surveys of the incarcerated population also have the potential for providing useful insights into sources of weapons used or carried in the commission of a crime. For example, a survey of 1982 convicted felons serving sentences across 10 states in the United States between August 1982 and January 1983 reported that theft was a major source of firearms used by the felons (Wright & Rossi 1986). Other studies note that 'theft and burglary were the ultimate source of many of the guns acquired' by criminals (Sheley, McGee & Wright 1993: 3).

A New Zealand study examined 88 incidents of firearms theft reported in the media between January 1994 and October 1995 (Alpers & Walters 1998). Of these, 23 percent were subsequently used in the commission of crime, including aggravated robberies and murders. The most common type of firearms stolen was rifles (54%). Shotguns accounted for just over a third of the firearms stolen (34%), and handguns accounted for only five percent. The most common location where the incidents occurred was urban dwellings (51%), followed by rural dwellings (26%). Over half of the incidents of theft involved firearms insecurely stored by their owners.

Australian research found a similar pattern in the type of firearms stolen and their location (Mouzos 2002). A total of 25,171 firearms were reported stolen to police between July 1994 and June 2000. The majority were stolen from residential premises (81%). The most common type of firearms stolen was rifles (52%), followed by shotguns (21%).

In contrast, research undertaken on 63 incidents of firearms theft in South Africa noted that the majority occurred in the inner city or central business district (75%), with only 10 percent of thefts from private residential properties (Hennop, Potgieter & Jefferson 2001). Over 90 percent of the victims' firearms were licensed.

The patterns observed in the type of firearms stolen in the United Kingdom and the United States were different from those observed in Australia. This may be due in part to different legal requirements for firearm ownership imposed across the countries. An examination of 642 firearms theft reports from 16 police services in England and Wales found that the majority of firearms were stolen during the course of a residential burglary in built-up areas (Corkery 1994). Shotguns were found to be the most commonly

stolen firearms (36%), followed by handguns (29%). In 2002–03, 2844 firearms were recorded by police as being stolen in the England and Wales, with air weapons accounting for over half of all thefts (Povey 2004).

In the United States, residential premises appear to be the most commonly targeted location for the theft of firearms. Over 81 percent of these thefts in the mid-1990s were from residential premises or motor vehicles. They primarily involved handguns (60%), followed by rifles (27%) and shotguns (13%) (ATF 2002). Some estimate that about 600,000 firearms were stolen from residential premises in 1994 in the United States (Cook & Ludwig 1997), and that 'slightly more than half of all privately owned firearms were stored unlocked; 16 percent of firearms were stored unlocked and loaded' (Cook & Ludwig 1997: 1).

More recent reports suggest that the number of gun owners who stored firearms safely had increased in the United States between 1994 and 2000, and over that same period, the number of firearms stolen had declined steadily (Americans for Gun Safety Foundation (AGSF) 2002). Moreover, rates of firearms theft were dramatically lower in states that had enacted safe storage laws than those without (AGSF 2002). These studies suggest that the enforcement of secure storage requirements could assist in reducing the risk of firearms theft.

National and international research on firearms theft has consistently reported that firearms are most commonly stolen from private dwellings, usually during the course of household burglaries (AGSF 2002; Cook & Ludwig 1997; Corkery 1994; Alpers & Walters 1998; Mouzos 2002). However, the frequency of theft, as well as the type of firearms most commonly stolen, tended to vary across countries. Differences also emerged in the level of compliance with safe storage, which may be a function of differing legislative requirements. Furthermore, countries with more stringent safe storage requirements report fewer thefts. This could be interpreted as a measure of the effectiveness of legislation, and the responsible actions of legitimate holders of firearms 'so that criminals intent on obtaining guns have to seek alternative avenues of supply' (HMIC 2004: 23).

Methodology

Information concerning incidents of firearms theft reported to police during the period of 1 February – 31 July 2004 was provided to the AIC by all Australian jurisdictions. Some jurisdictions entered information into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet in a format specified by the AIC, and then forwarded the completed spreadsheet to the AIC via email. Other jurisdictions preferred to complete either a hard copy or electronic version of the firearms theft template for each incident and then mail/email them to the AIC (see Appendix B). Information received from all jurisdictions was collated and entered into a single Stata[2] database. The database is in an incident-based format in which each single firearms theft incident is treated as a separate case. An incident of firearms theft can involve the theft of one or more firearms.

Information concerning 355 incidents of firearms theft was initially received from the jurisdictions. However, a total of 37 incidents were excluded from the analyses for the following reasons:

- incidents were reported to police outside the specified period (n=19)[3];
- incidents involved the theft of replica or imitation firearms (n=4);
- incidents involved the theft of antique or deactivated firearms (n=4);
- incidents involved the theft of paintball markers or starting pistols (n=3);
- incidents involved the theft of nail guns or cowpuncher[4] (n=4); and
- incidents did not involve the theft of firearms (n=3).

A total of 318 incidents of firearms theft form the basis of the analysis for this report. These incidents resulted in the theft of a total of 664 firearms over the six-month period. For the purpose of this report, firearms were grouped in the following categories:

- rifles;
- shotguns;
- handguns (including air pistols); and
- air-rifles.

Data quality

Information on firearms theft was gathered in an incident-based format in accordance with the firearms theft template. Once all the information was received, it was subjected to quality control to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data. There were a number of inconsistencies identified in the information supplied, most of which were resolved through follow-up with the various jurisdictions (see Appendix C for some examples of data quality issues). Insufficient information on action type and calibre was supplemented through consultation with other agencies (in particular, Gary Fleetwood at the Australian Crime Commission).

[2] Stata is the statistical package used to store and analyse the data.

[3] All but two incidents reported outside the period did not occur within the six-month period.

[4] A cowpuncher is not a firearm; it has a fixed bolt but does not fire a projectile.

Other issues

It is important to note that during the period examined in this report there were a number of firearm-related measures operating in each jurisdiction. For example, in all jurisdictions, with the exception of Tasmania and Northern Territory[5], the National Handgun Buyback and a general firearms amnesty were in operation. It is not known what impact these events may have had on the results.

[5] The National Handgun Buyback ended on 31 January 2004 in Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

Characteristics of firearms stolen

This section provides an overview of the characteristics of firearms reported stolen in Australia during the six-month period of 1 February to 31 July 2004 in terms of incidence, type of firearm (including action type), and license classification. Earlier Australian research on firearms theft noted that the number of firearms stolen in Australia had declined since the implementation of the firearms reforms of 1996 (Mouzos 2002). The average number of firearms reported stolen per year between 1994–95 and 1999–00 was 4195, which equates to 2098 per six months. Over the six-month period covered in the current study, 664 firearms were reported as stolen to police across Australia. Extrapolated to a yearly estimate of about 1300 firearms (or 600 incidents), the data indicate that the number of firearms reported stolen in Australia has continued to decline, and suggest that there has been a substantial reduction in the theft of firearms. The collection of data over a longer time period would probably confirm this trend.

Firearms theft, although serious, appears to constitute a small proportion of all theft in Australia. To add perspective to the issue, in 2003 there were 45,848 incidents of unlawful entry with intent (UEWI) involving the taking of property, and 136,417 incidents of other theft in Australia (ABS 2004). With an estimated 600 incidents of firearms in the last year, it appears that the theft of firearms accounts for less than one percent of reported incidents of theft.

A jurisdictional breakdown of the incidents examined in this study indicates that more than one quarter of firearms thefts reported to police during the six-month period occurred in New South Wales (26%; Table 1). Victoria had the second highest number of incidents of firearms theft (117 or 21%). The smaller jurisdictions (Tasmania, Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory) collectively accounted for a little more than 10 percent. Western Australia accounted for 17 percent, Queensland, 15 percent, and South Australia 11 percent.

For every incident of firearms theft, there were an average of two firearms reported stolen (with a standard deviation of 2; see Table 1). The median number of firearms stolen per incident was one. The largest number of firearms stolen in a single incident was 17, stolen from a private residence in New South Wales[6]. The mean number of firearms stolen was the highest in South Australia (2.7). Of the 318 incidents of firearms theft, 58 percent involved the theft of a single firearm, and the remaining 42 percent involved the theft of two or more.

In terms of the number of firearms stolen, just under a third were stolen in New South Wales (30%), followed by Victoria (18%) and South Australia (15%).

Table 1: Firearms theft incidents and stolen firearms

Jurisdiction	Number of incidents	Percentage	Number of firearms	Percentage	Mean number of firearms
New South Wales	82	26	196	30	2.4
Victoria	66	21	117	18	1.8
Western Australia	54	17	89	13	1.7
Queensland	48	15	91	14	1.9
South Australia	36	11	97	15	2.7
Tasmania	21	7	50	8	2.4
Northern Territory	9	3	21	3	2.3
Australian Capital Territory	2	1	3	0	1.5
Australia	318	100	664	100	2.1

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

[6] Firearms stolen in this incident were stored in a locked firearm safe, in compliance with legislative requirements. Ammunition was also stolen. The owner had not been charged with any offence at the time of data compilation.

It is also important to consider the level of risk of firearms theft based on the number of firearms licences and registered firearms in each state and territory.

Figure 1 presents the relative risk of an incident of firearms theft as a proportion of firearms licence holders across Australia. Of the 731,567 firearms licence holders in Australia[7], there were a total of 318 incidents of firearms theft reported to police. This equates to 0.04 percent, indicating that the risk of firearms theft as a proportion of firearms licences in Australia is relatively low.

A number of jurisdictional differences emerged with the Northern Territory recording the highest proportion of incidents of theft based on the number of licence holders (0.07%), followed by Tasmania and Western Australia (0.06% each) (see Figure 1). While over a quarter of incidents were reported in New South Wales, the state recorded a firearms theft rate proportionally lower than a number of other jurisdictions.

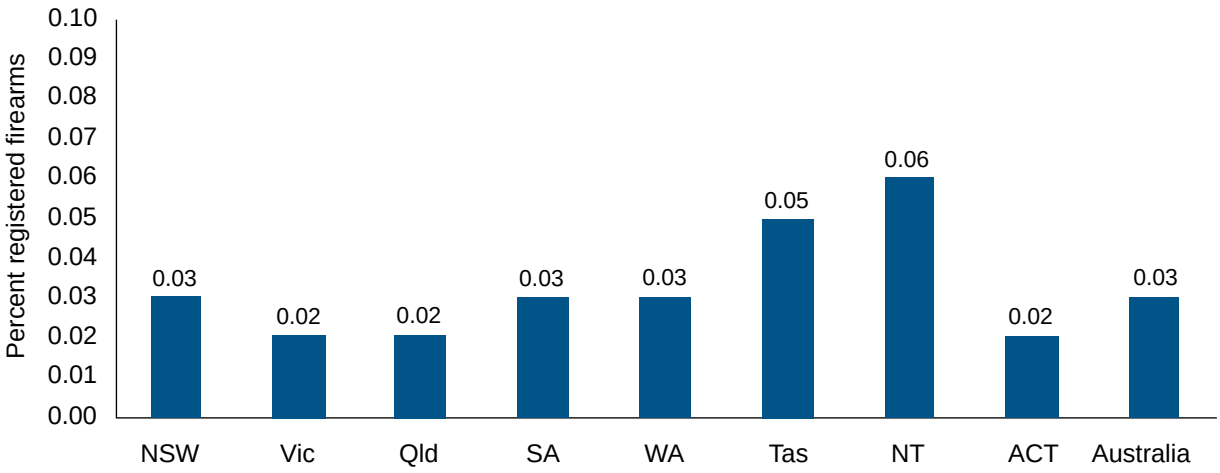
Figure 1: Firearms theft incidents as a proportion of licence holders

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file]; State and Territory Firearms Registries

During the period examined, there were a total of 2,526,888 registered firearms in Australia, of which 0.03 percent were reported stolen to police. Based on the number of registered firearms, it seems that very few of the available legal stock of firearms are reported stolen to police (see Figure 2).

[7] Due to differences in the capabilities of recording systems used by state and territory firearms registries, information on the number of licence holders and registered firearms for each state and territory was not available for the same reference period (New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and Northern Territory – April 2004; Queensland – March 2004; South Australia – June 2004; Western Australia – February 2005; ACT – March 2005).

Figure 2: Firearms stolen as a proportion of registered firearms



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file]; State and Territory Firearms Registries

A jurisdictional comparison indicates that in relation to the number of registered firearms in each state and territory, the Northern Territory recorded a proportionally higher rate of stolen firearms (0.06%), followed by Tasmania (0.05%).

Types of firearms stolen

Table 2 shows that the most common types of firearms reported stolen in Australia were rifles (58%), followed by shotguns, accounting for just under one-quarter of the total (24%). Handguns accounted for only nine percent of the total number of firearms reported stolen during the six-month period. Air-rifles accounted for eight percent. The number of shotgun-rifle combinations accounted for less than one percent. These patterns are consistent with the results of earlier research (see Mouzos 2002), suggesting very little change in the types of firearms commonly taken by thieves.

Table 2: Type of firearm stolen

Type	Number	Percentage
Rifle	386	58
Shotgun	159	24
Handgun	62	9
Air rifle	52	8
Shotgun/rifle combination	1	0
Not specified	4	1
Total	664	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file]

The firearms theft template collected additional information on the action type of the firearm. This was also examined in the current study and is shown in Table 3. Analysis was undertaken for the three most common types of firearms reported stolen – rifles, shotguns and handguns.

Table 3: Action type of rifles stolen

Action type	Number	Percentage
Rifle, bolt action	259	67
Rifle, semi automatic	1	0
Rifle, pump action	6	2
Rifle, single shot	52	13
Rifle, lever action	39	10
Revolving black powder	2	1
Unknown	27	7
Total	386	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

The most common action type of the rifles stolen was bolt action (67 percent of the 386 rifles stolen), followed by single shot (13%), and lever action (10%).

Table 4 shows that single barrel shotguns accounted for 33 percent of the total number of shotguns stolen, and double barrel shotguns accounted for 31 percent. Fewer than one in five shotguns stolen were over and under shotguns (17%).

Table 4: Action type of shotguns stolen

Action type	Number	Percentage
Shotgun, double barrel	49	31
Shotgun, over and under	27	17
Shotgun, single barrel	52	33
Shotgun, semi-automatic	3	2
Shotgun, pump action	2	1
Shotgun, bolt action	5	3
Unknown	21	13
Total	159	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Of the 62 handguns reported stolen, 44 percent were semi-automatic pistols and 29 percent were revolvers (Table 5). Insufficient information was provided to accurately classify a further 13 handguns.

Table 5: Action type of handguns stolen

Action type	Number	Percentage
Pistol, semi-automatic	27	44
Revolver	18	29
Handgun, black powder	2	3
Air pistol	2	3
Unknown	13	21
Total	62	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Firearms Classification[8]:

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.

Source: National Firearms Agreement (1996)

In terms of the classification of firearms in accordance with the categories described in the National Firearms Agreement (NFA) of 1996 (see above text box), Category A firearms constituted the majority of firearms reported stolen across all jurisdictions (61%) as shown in Table 6. Category B firearms accounted for 24 percent. Six Category C and D firearms (which are prohibited except for specific purposes) were reported stolen. Category H (handguns) represented a further nine percent of the firearms stolen. The remaining five percent of firearms were unable to be classified due to insufficient information.

Table 6: Category of firearm stolen

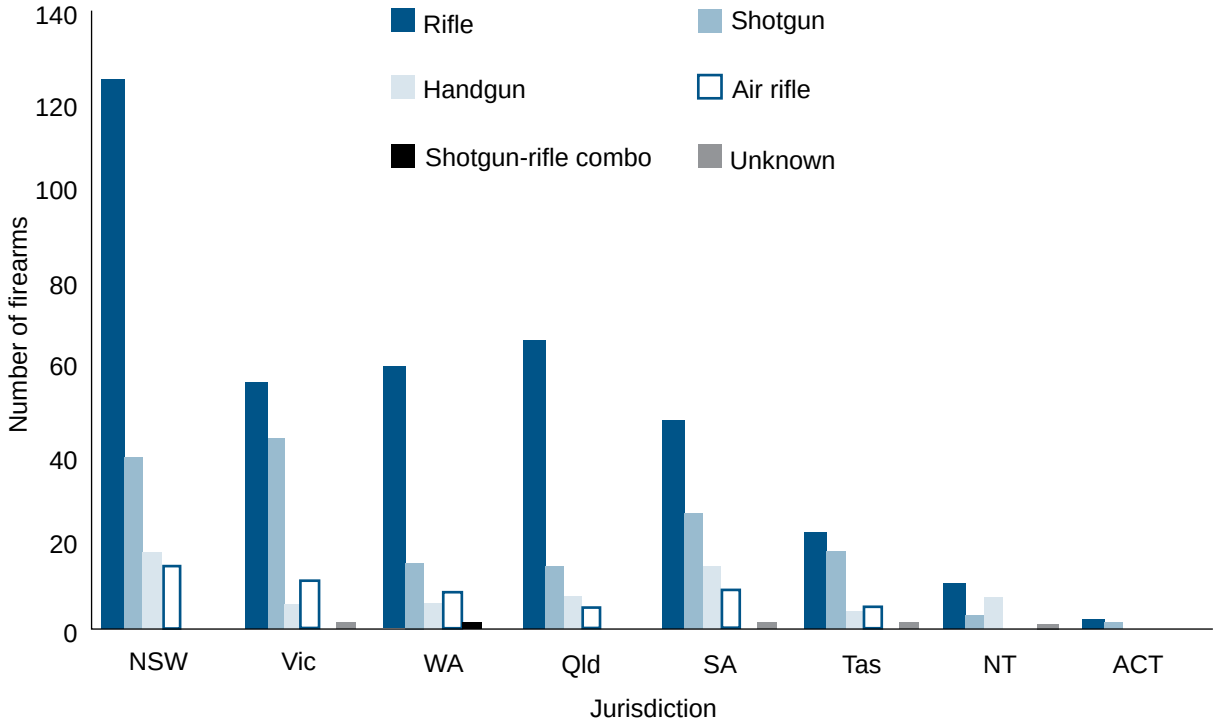
Category	Number	Percentage
A	406	61
B	157	24
C	5	1
D	1	0
H	62	9
Unknown	33	5
Total	664	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

There was little variation between the jurisdictions as to the type and licence category of the firearms most commonly stolen (see Figures 3 and 4). Consistent with overall findings, rifles were proportionally the most common type of firearm stolen across all jurisdictions, followed by shotguns. The exception to this pattern was the Northern Territory, where a higher proportion of handguns were reported stolen than shotguns. However, this finding should be treated with caution as the total number of firearms stolen in the Northern Territory was low (n=21). Of the 62 handguns that were reported stolen, 29 percent were from New South Wales (n=18) and 23 percent from South Australia (n=14). Additional figures on the type of firearms stolen in each jurisdiction are presented in Appendix D.

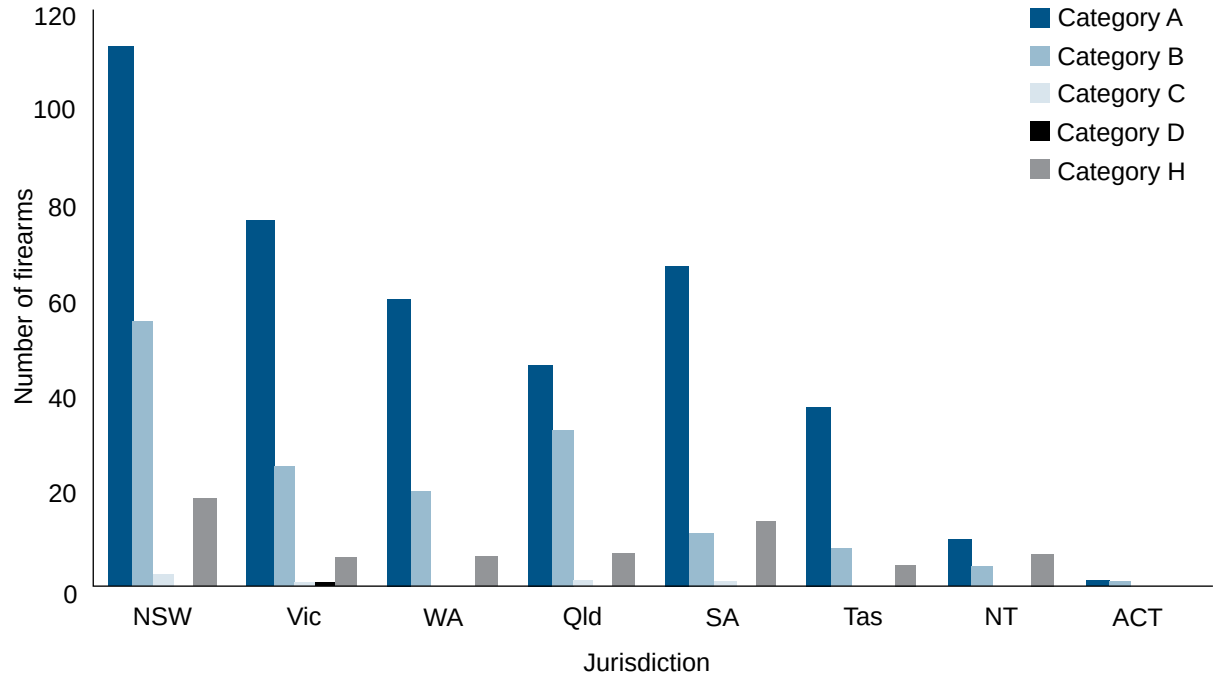
[8] Firearms categories vary slightly between jurisdictions.

Figure 3: Type of firearms stolen by jurisdiction



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file], n=664.

Figure 4: Category of firearms stolen



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file], n=631.
Note: Unclassified firearms (category unknown n=33) have been excluded from this figure.

Categories of firearms stolen were not in uniform proportions across all jurisdictions (see Figure 4). In the larger jurisdictions (i.e. excluding Tasmania, Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory), the proportion of Category A firearms stolen ranged from 53 percent in Queensland to 72 percent in South Australia (excluding firearms unclassified). The highest proportion of Category B firearms was stolen in Queensland (38%), while the highest proportion of Category H firearms (handguns) was stolen in South Australia (15%)[9].

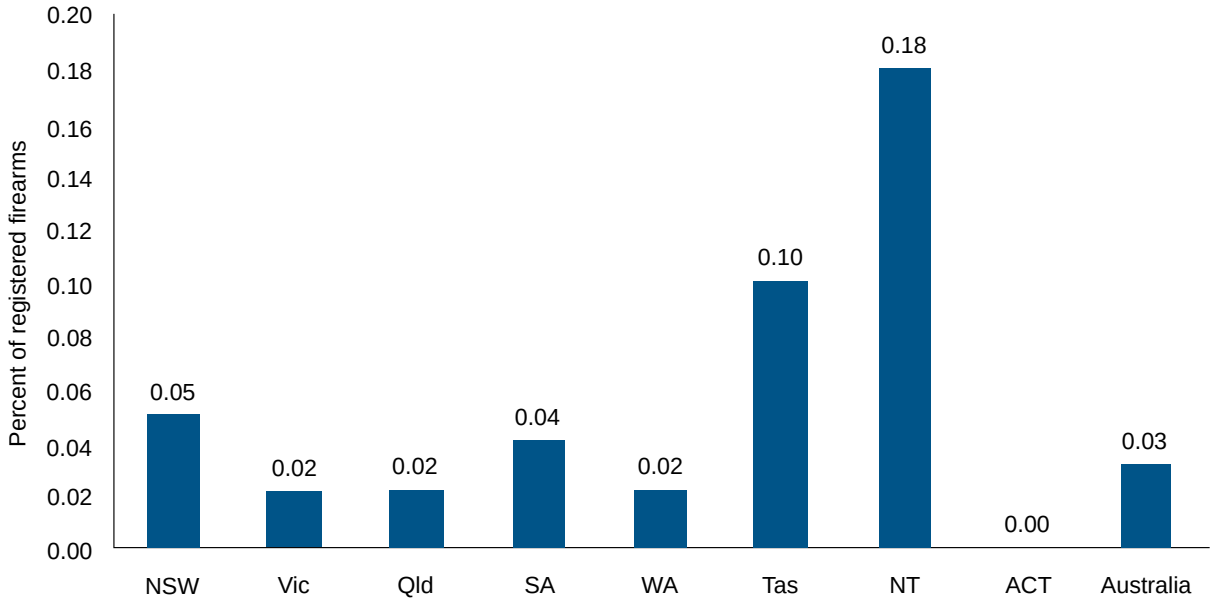
Handguns are of particular interest to policy-makers as some international research suggests that they are the most favoured type of firearms for diversion into criminal activities (Braga & Kennedy 2001; Walters 2000). Similarly, Australian homicide research indicates that there is a growing trend in the use of handguns in homicide (Mouzos 2003; Mouzos & Segrave 2004). In the present study, it was found that the total number of handguns reported stolen was 62, resulting from 32 separate incidents of theft. The highest number of handguns reported stolen was from New South Wales (n=18), followed by South Australia (n=14) (see Figure 5). As a proportion of registered handguns in Australia, the Northern Territory recorded the highest proportion of thefts (0.18%), followed by Tasmania (0.10%; Figure 6).

Figure 5: Handguns stolen, by jurisdiction

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file], n=62.

[9] Percentages refer to weapon categories as proportions of all firearms reported stolen for that jurisdiction.

Figure 6: Stolen handguns as a proportion of registered handguns



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Registration status of firearms stolen

The majority of firearms stolen were registered (93%). Unregistered firearms accounted for only six percent (Table 7)[10]. This finding was expected as it would be unlikely for persons to report a firearm stolen if they are not licensed to own that firearm, or if that firearm was not registered (Mouzos 2002). In other words, persons who own a firearm unlawfully are unlikely to report the theft of the firearm to police for fear of legal repercussions. As with most research into recorded crime, there is likely to be a 'dark figure' of crime (incidents of firearms theft not reported to police). On this basis, it is probable that this study may underestimate the number of illegally owned firearms that are stolen.

Table 7: Registration status of stolen firearms

Registration status	Number	Percentage
Registered	616	93
Unregistered	39	6
Unknown	9	1
Total	664	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

The jurisdictional breakdown of the registration status of stolen firearms is presented in Table 8. All the firearms reported stolen in Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory were registered, while unregistered firearms accounted for 14 percent of those reported stolen in Tasmania (n=7).

[10] Firearms were stored in locked receptacles in eight of the 26 incidents in which unregistered firearms were reported stolen. Storage arrangements at the time of the theft were unknown in seven of these incidents, whilst firearms were stored in a vehicle in three thefts. Owners were charged in six of the incidents.

Table 8: Registration status of stolen firearms, by jurisdiction

	Registered		Unregistered	
Jurisdiction	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
New South Wales	183	95	9	5
Victoria	102	90	12	11
Western Australia	86	97	3	3
South Australia	90	96	4	4
Queensland	88	96	4	4
Tasmania	43	86	7	14
Northern Territory	21	100	0	0
Australian Capital Territory	3	100	0	0

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Note: Firearms for which registration status was unknown (n=9) were excluded from this table. Percentages refers to row percent.

When the registration status of the firearms reported stolen was examined by licence category, it was found that Category H (handguns) accounted for one quarter of unregistered firearms (25%, n=8) (Table 9).

Table 9: Category of firearms by registration status

	Registered		Unregistered	
Category of firearms	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Category A	382	65	19	59
Category B	152	26	5	16
Category C	5	1	0	0
Category D	0	0	0	0
Category H	53	9	8	25
Total	592	100	32	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Note: Firearms for which registration status was unknown or licence category unknown were excluded from this table.

As Table 10 shows, the majority of the 318 incidents of firearms theft were reported to police by the registered owners (77%). Reports by the owner of the premises accounted for seven percent. In some jurisdictions, unregistered owners were included in this category. Other licensed persons, such as security guards, accounted for four percent. Family members (2%) or friends of registered owners reported the incidents to police when thefts had taken place while registered owners were away, or when firearms were found to be missing, for example, after the owner had passed away.

Table 10: Persons who reported firearms theft to police

Person who reported theft	Number	Percentage
Registered owner of firearm	245	77
Owner of the premises	21	7
Occupier of the premises	14	4
Other licensed person	12	4
Family member of the owner of firearm	6	2
Government/business employee	5	2
Police	4	1
Unregistered owner of firearm	4	1
Friend of the owner of firearm	1	0
Unknown	6	2
Total	318	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Note: Other licensed persons include security guards.

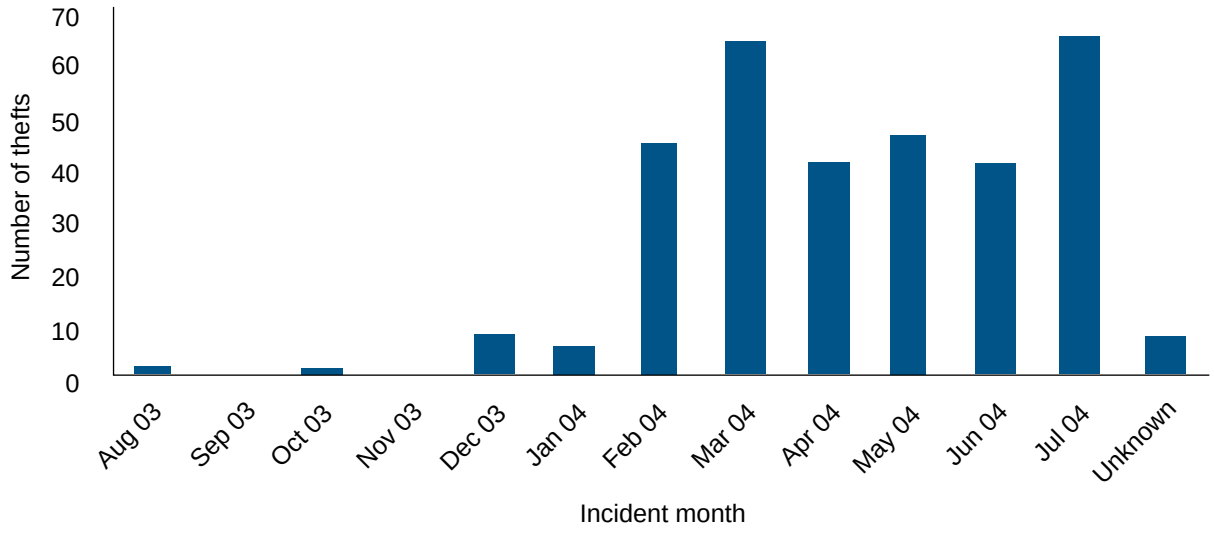
The nature of incidents of firearms theft

To gain a better understanding of the nature of firearms theft, information was gathered on the temporal characteristics of the incident, location, point and method of entry to the premises, and whether other goods, in addition to the firearms, were stolen. This information is important in determining whether the theft was opportunistic (with the firearm stolen during a house break-in) or whether the firearm was specifically targeted by the thieves in an organised manner.

Temporal characteristics of firearms theft

Information was collected on the date that the incident was committed[11] as well as on the date the incident was reported to police. As will be shown later, offences are not always reported to police on the day that they have been committed, for various reasons. Figure 7 shows that there was some variation in the distribution of firearms theft incidents by month. The months of March and July accounted for a slightly higher proportion of thefts (20 percent each), followed by February and May (14 percent each). Only a small proportion of incidents took place outside the specified reporting period (August 2003 to January 2004).

Figure 7: Incidents of firearms theft, by month



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file], n=318.

Almost two-thirds of the incidents of firearms theft were reported to police shortly after they occurred, with 38 percent on the day of the theft and 25 percent on the following day, as shown in Table 11. Nearly one in five incidents were reported between two and seven days after the incident occurred. Excluding 16 incidents where reporting dates could be considered outliers (reporting date was greater than 60 days),[12] the average (mean) period between the incident date and the reporting date was three days (standard deviation of 6.5 days). The median period between these dates was one day. Given that the majority of incidents were reported within a few days, the median (rather than the mean) provides a more accurate account of the delay between the date of the incident and the date that the incident was reported to police.[13]

[11] In some cases, a date range was provided (e.g. 2–11 May 2004) for the date of the incident. For the purposes of this analysis, the earliest date was recorded.

[12] This also includes an incident in which the delay between the incident date and reporting date was 5229 days (or 14 years and three months). This lengthy delay concerned an incident in which a firearm was lent to a friend many years prior to reporting. The firearm in question had never been returned to the owner, who then reported it as a theft.

[13] The mean period between incident and report dates when only those cases reported within 14 days were considered (n=279) was 1.7 days, with a standard deviation of 2.5 days.

Table 11: Period between the incident date and reporting date

Period	Number	Percentage
0 (the day of incident)	117	38
1 day	76	25
2–7 days	74	24
1–2 weeks	12	4
More than 2 weeks	31	10
Total	310	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Note: Excludes eight incidents where the incident date was unknown

Location of firearms theft

Information on the location of the incident of firearms theft is important to assist in identifying the relative risk associated with commonly targeted locations. For the purposes of this exploratory analysis, the theft locations were grouped as follows:

- business/commercial premises (e.g. dealer's shop, police station);
- private residential premises;
- commercial residential premises (e.g. caravan park, holiday house);
- motor vehicle (in transit, parked in a driveway, or on the street);
- farm land/property; and
- other (e.g. firearms lent to a friend).

Table 12 shows that consistent with previous Australian and international research (AGSF 2002; Cook & Ludwig 1997; Corkery 1994; Mouzos 2002), the most common location targeted for theft of firearms was private residential premises (72%). Ten percent of firearms were stolen from business premises, and 14 percent were stolen from cars parked in driveways, on the street or in transit. Jurisdictional information on the location of incidents of firearms theft is presented in Appendix E.

Table 12: Location of incidents of firearms theft

Location type	Number	Percentage
Business premises	32	10
Private residential premises	228	72
Commercial residential premises	4	1
Motor vehicle	44	14
Farm land/property	5	2
Other	2	1
Unknown	3	1
Total	318	100

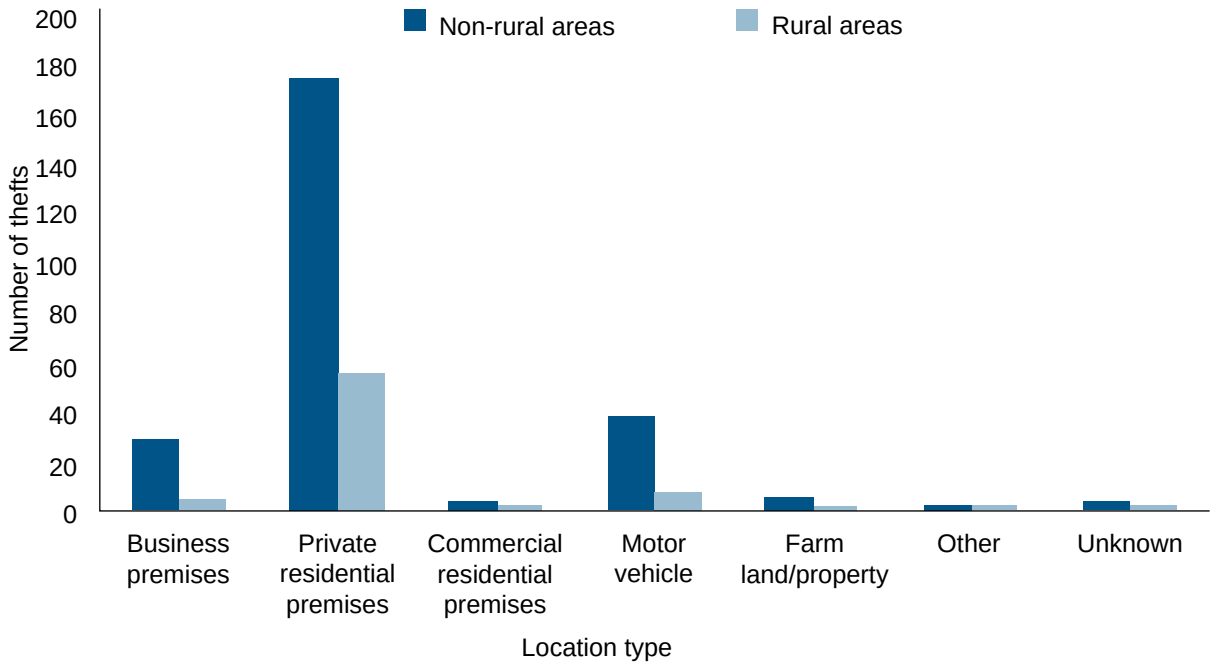
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

The incidents of firearms theft were further classified into rural and non-rural areas based on the addresses and postcodes[14] of where the incident occurred. In this study, rural is defined as towns with a population of fewer than 1000. Non-rural areas refer to towns or cities with a population greater than 1000, not necessarily large cities.

[14] Census 1996 or 2001 local government and electoral rolls were used for this categorisation.

Previous international research has shown that incidents of firearms theft are more commonly committed in urban dwellings (Alpers & Walters 1998; Corkery 1994). Figure 8 shows that of the total of 318 incidents, the most common location for thefts was private residential premises located in non-rural areas (54 percent). The second most common location was private residential premises in rural areas (17 percent). Thefts of firearms involving a vehicle frequently took place in non-rural areas (12 percent).

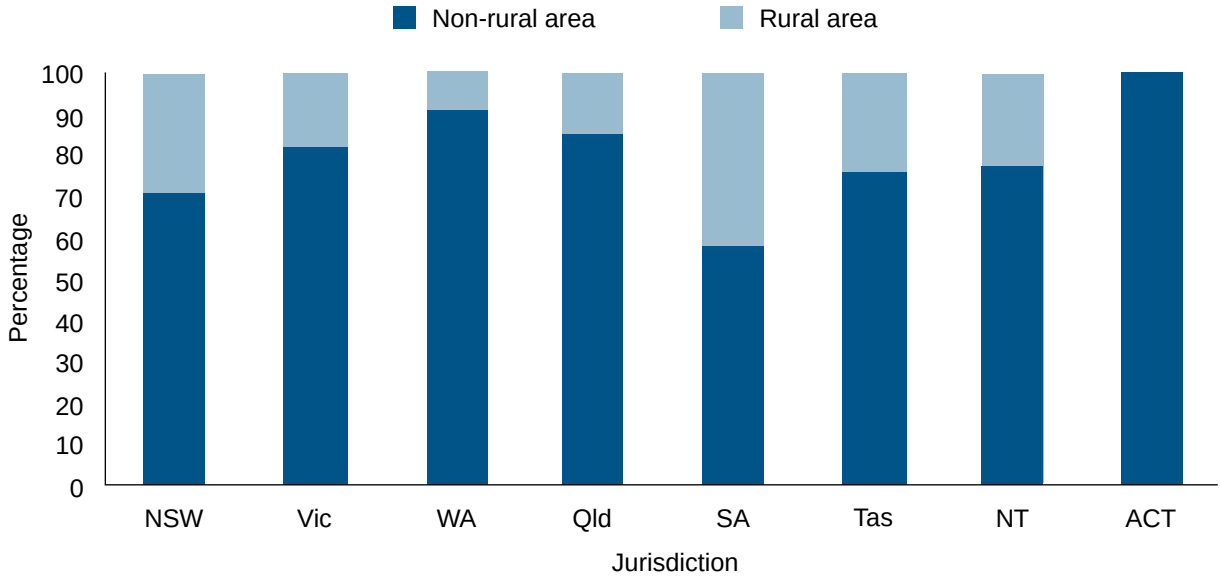
Figure 8: Area and location type of incidents of firearms theft



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file], n=318.

There was a slight jurisdictional variation in the proportion of thefts that occurred in rural and non-rural areas. A greater proportion of firearms thefts was committed in rural areas in South Australia (42 percent of the total number of incidents in SA) and New South Wales (29 percent of the total number of incidents in NSW), whereas only nine percent of the incidents of firearms theft occurred in rural areas in Western Australia (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Type of area of incidents of firearms theft, by jurisdiction



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

An examination of the type of location and firearm type (rifles, shotguns or handguns) reveals some variation (see Table 13). Of the 318 incidents of firearms theft, 216 incidents had one or more rifles stolen[15]. The majority of thefts involving rifles were committed in private residential premises (77%), 11 percent were from a motor vehicle and eight percent from business premises. A similar pattern was observed for firearms thefts involving shotguns. Thefts from private residential premises and business premises accounted for 77 percent and seven percent of the 124 shotgun thefts respectively, while thefts from a vehicle accounted for 11 percent. In comparison, one in four thefts involving one or more handguns occurred in business premises, and 59 percent occurred in private residential premises. A slightly higher proportion of handguns were stolen from a motor vehicle (13%) than rifles (11%) or shotguns (11%).

Table 13: Location of firearms thefts by type of firearms stolen

	Rifle		Shotgun		Handgun	
Location type	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Business premises	18	8	9	7	8	25
Private residential premises	166	77	96	77	19	59
Commercial residential premises	3	1	1	1	0	0
Car	23	11	14	11	4	13
Other	2	1	0	0	0	0
Farm land/property	2	1	3	2	0	0
Unknown	2	1	1	1	1	3
Total	216	100	124	100	32	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Although further details of location were not required, some jurisdictions provided detailed information on the actual location of the theft. In some instances, the actual location of the theft was supplementary to other information provided on how access was gained into the premises. For example, if the point of entry to the premises was recorded as bathroom, bedroom, toilet or kitchen windows, then the actual location where firearms were stolen was recorded as dwelling.

[15] This does not mean these incidents had only one type of firearm (e.g. rifles only) stolen, as a number of incidents had multiple types stolen.

Detailed locations within private residential premises were unavailable for more than half of the incidents. However, where the information was available, a dwelling was the most common location (Table 14). Within business premises, firearms thefts were frequently committed in retail premises, although information as to the type of retailers was not provided (Table 15). Additional information on the types of firearms stolen from residential and business premises is in Appendix E.

Table 14: Location details within private residential premises

Location	Number	Percentage
Dwelling	61	27
Shed	22	10
Garage	14	6
Caravan	1	0
Verandah	1	0
Farmhouse	2	1
Farm shed	1	0
False report	1	0
Not specified	125	55
Total	228	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

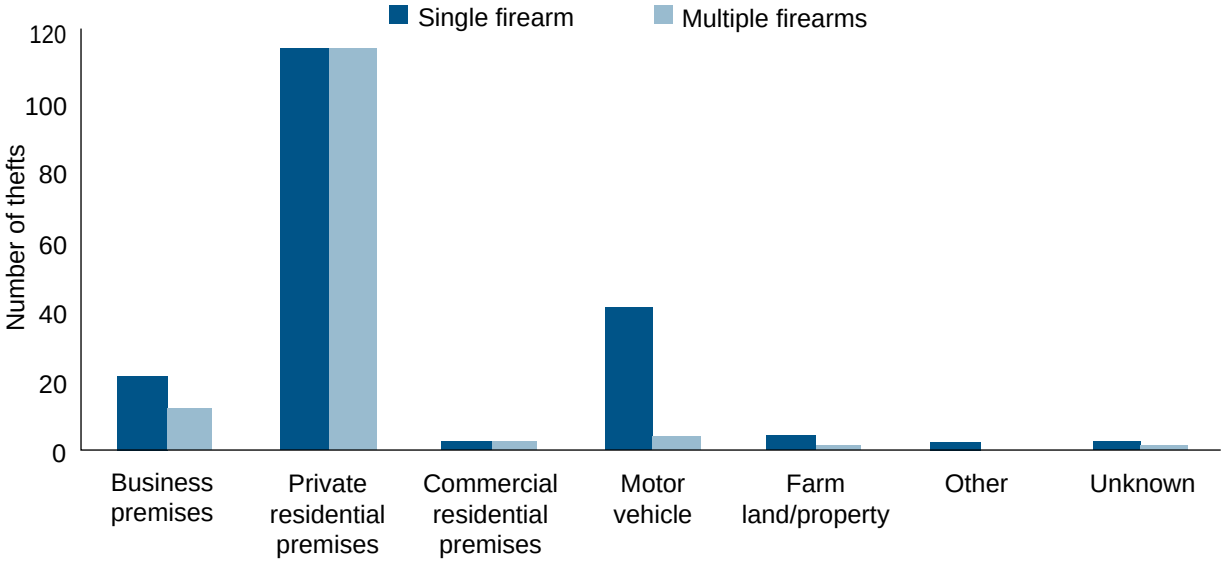
Table 15: Location details within business premises

Location	Number	Percentage
Shed	3	9
Retail not specified	9	28
Restaurant	1	3
Freight centre	1	3
Bank	1	3
Piggery	3	9
Police station	1	3
Recreational, not specified	1	3
Shooting club	1	3
Defence barracks	1	3
Dealer shop	2	6
Electric authority	1	3
Environment agency	1	3
Market garden	1	3
Unknown	5	16
Total	32	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Incidents involving the theft of single versus multiple firearms were examined across the different locations. As shown in Figure 10, the same number of incidents involving the theft of a single firearm and multiple firearms occurred in residential premises (n=114). However, incidents of theft from a vehicle were found to predominantly involve the theft of a single firearm. In addition, no significant difference was found in the proportion of single and multiple firearms theft that occurred in rural and non-rural areas.

Figure 10: Single firearms theft versus multiple firearms theft, by location type



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Incidents involving the theft of firearms and other goods

Additional analyses were undertaken to explore the nature and characteristics of incidents of firearms theft in Australia. In determining whether a firearm was specifically targeted or stolen in the course of a house/commercial burglary, data were collected on: the extent to which other goods were stolen along with the firearm; type of goods commonly stolen; and the location where the theft of other goods was commonly perpetrated.

Of the 318 incidents of firearms theft, 58 percent (n=185) involved the theft of other goods in addition to the firearms (see Table 16)[16]. The majority of these incidents occurred in private residential premises (146 incidents, see Figure 11). These results are consistent with previous research (Corkery 1994; Alpers & Walters 1998; Mouzos 2002), suggesting that the majority of firearms in Australia may be stolen during the course of a household burglary. Forty percent of incidents did not involve the theft of other items: a sizable minority, therefore, may involve the specific targeting of firearms owners and/or their premises.

Table 16: Were other goods stolen?

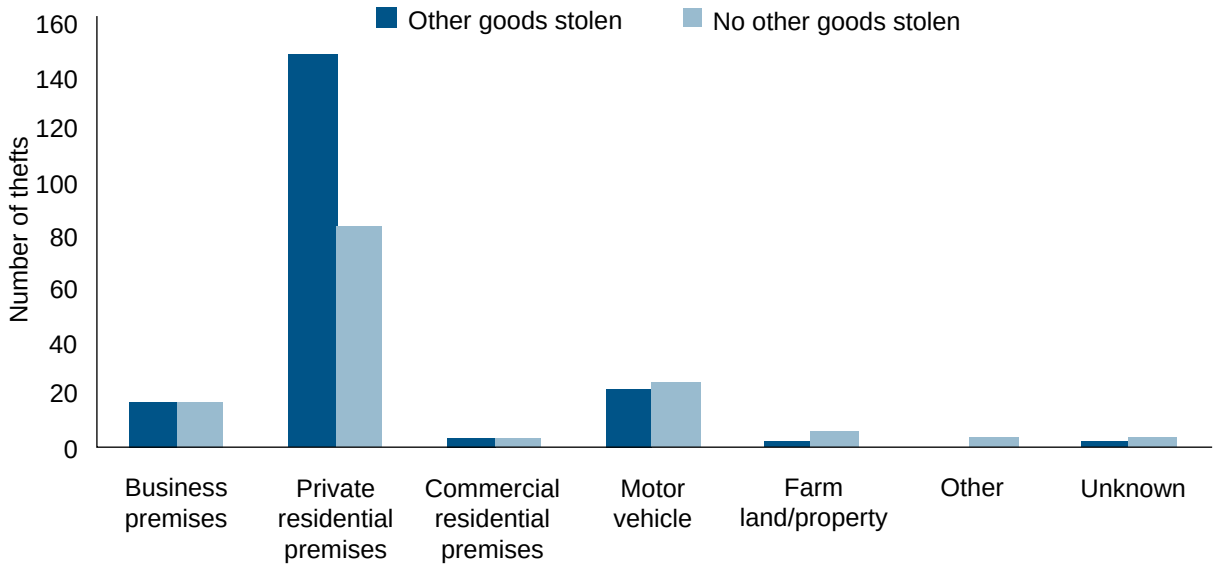
	Number	Percentage
Yes	185	58
No	128	40
Unknown	3	1
Not applicable	2	1
Total	318	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Note: One jurisdiction selected 'not applicable' for incidents where firearms were reported as lost property.

[16] When considering only incidents in private residential locations, 64 percent involved the theft of other goods. The equivalent figure in business premises was 47 percent.

Figure 11: Incidents where other goods were stolen, by type of location



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

The view that a firearm tends to be stolen during a general burglary was supported when the types of items stolen in the incidents of firearms theft were examined. In many instances, multiple items were reported stolen from each location. A total of 628 other goods were stolen in the 185 incidents that involved the theft of firearms and other goods (an average of three items stolen per incident). Table 17 outlines the types of items stolen in addition to the firearms. Research on residential burglary in the United Kingdom and Australia suggests that cash, electronic appliances (videos and televisions in particular) and jewellery are often favoured by thieves, whereas guns are frequently taken in the United States (see Clark 1999). In this study, household electric appliances including televisions, DVD players and stereos were the most common type of goods reported stolen, accounting for 13 percent (n=80) of the total number of goods stolen (Table 17). Small, concealable, and valuable items including personal electronic appliances (e.g. mobile phones and MP3 players) (7%) and jewellery and watches (7%) were also frequently stolen. Other items often stolen included hand tools and power tools (9 percent and 7 percent respectively). Interestingly, the proportion of cash taken was relatively low in this study (6%). In addition, firearm accessories such as telescope sets or gun-cleaning kits accounted for eight percent of the total goods stolen. It is possible that these items were stolen because they were physically attached to the firearms or stored with them.

Table 17: Types of goods stolen

	Number	Percentage
Hand tools	54	9
Power tools	42	7
Household electric appliances	80	13
Games/DVDs/CDs/videos	25	4
Personal electronic appliances	42	7
Computers/faxes/printers	20	3
Cards/cheques/ID documents	24	4
Firearm accessories	51	8
Drugs/alcohol/tobacco	19	3
Bags/safes/luggage	20	3
Collectable	4	1
Recreational items	35	6
Weapons	23	4
Car accessories	13	2
Cars/motorbikes	26	4
Keys	12	2
Furniture/household items	33	5
Jewellery/watches	44	7
Cash/coins	35	6
Personal items	23	4
Agricultural items	3	0
Total	628	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Note: Household electric appliances include home entertainment systems such as VCRs, TVs, stereos and other electric appliances such as vacuum cleaners. Personal electronic items refer to mobile phones, MP3 players, walkmans. Recreational items include sports and outdoor goods and musical instruments. Personal items include clothes, cosmetics, perfumes etc. Agricultural items include sheep dip. Other household items include ornaments, matches, lights, etc.

Modus operandi

This section examines the *modus operandi* (MO) of the offenders, that is, the methods they used to gain access to the premises to steal the firearms and, in some cases, other goods. Specific attention is given to determining whether there are differences in the MO of incidents involving the theft of firearms and other goods (general burglary) compared with incidents involving the theft of firearms only (firearms only theft).

The methods used to gained entry (and the level of preparation) were divided into three categories:

- using tools or force;
- without tools or force; and
- thefts from a motor vehicle.

If entry was gained by removing or lifting a screen, a door or window, cutting the lock to the door, forcing a door open or smashing a window, the MO was categorised as using tools or force. If a key was located or previously stolen and a door was unlocked, presumably no force or tool was used. Theft from a car implies low levels of planning and preparation: firearms kept in a motor vehicle are likely to become easy targets for thieves, especially when a motor vehicle is unlocked. In the present study, some of the

thefts from cars took place when farmers were attending to livestock, or when hunters were travelling to or participating in a bush camp.

The analysis reveals that tools and force were more likely to be used for general burglaries than firearms only thefts ($x^2(2)=20.19$, $p<.001$) (Table 18). Seventy-one percent of the general burglaries involved the use of tools or force to gain entry to the premises. In comparison, 42 percent of firearms only thefts involved the use of tools or force. More than one in three incidents of firearms only thefts involved no tools or force (37%). Incidents where the firearm was stolen from a motor vehicle accounted for 21 percent of firearms only thefts. Given that a firearm was often taken from a car or other premises where there was no sign of forced entry, it is likely that the theft of the firearm was opportunistic rather than specifically targeted by the offenders.

Of mention was one incident where the MO indicated that firearms were probably specifically targeted in the theft. The offenders, who broke into the premises, stole the firearms but ignored power tools and computers that were worth in excess of $20,000.

Table 18: Method used to gain access to the location of the firearm

	General burglary		Firearms only theft	
Method of entry	**Number**	**Percentage**	**Number**	**Percentage**
Using tools or force	109	71	37	42
Without tool or force	27	18	33	37
Taken from a vehicle	18	12	19	21
Total	154	100	89	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Of the 32 incidents of firearms theft where at least one or more handgun was stolen[17], information concerning the method of entry used to gain access to the premises was available for 31 incidents. Over two-thirds involved the theft of other goods (general burglary) (Table 19). Nearly half of these incidents involved the use of force or tools (10 incidents). In comparison, there were only 10 incidents that involved the theft of a handgun only and one in five of these incidents involved the use of force or tools. In other words, a greater proportion of general burglaries involved the use of force or tools than burglaries where only handguns were stolen.

Table 19: Method used to gain access to the location of the handgun

	General burglary		Firearms theft only	
Method of entry	**Number**	**Percentage**	**Number**	**Percentage**
Using tools or force	10	48	2	20
No tools or force	2	10	4	40
Taken from car	3	14	1	10
Unknown	6	29	3	30
Total	21	100	10	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Note: Incidents where information on other goods stolen was unknown (n=1) were excluded from this table.

[17] In some incidents, multiple types of firearms were stolen (e.g. a handgun and a shotgun).

Characteristics of firearms thefts in private residential premises

Given that the majority of incidents of firearms theft occurred in private residences (72 percent of the incidents of firearms theft examined) and during the course of a house break-in, the method and entry points of access to the private premises were analysed.

Focusing on the point of entry to the premises from which firearms were stolen, the data indicate that entry was frequently gained through a door (40%), or a window (24%). Due to a lack of detailed information concerning the point of entry, it is impossible to determine whether a front door or rear door was more commonly used[18].

Where information was available, the method of entry (use of force or tools) to the premises in relation to the point of entry (window or door) was examined. It was found that the method of entry varied depending on whether a window or a door was used. Tools and force were more likely to be used when entry was gained through a window ($x^2(1)=12.53$ $p<.001$), than when entry was gained through a door (Table 20).

Table 20: Method by point of entry to private residential premises

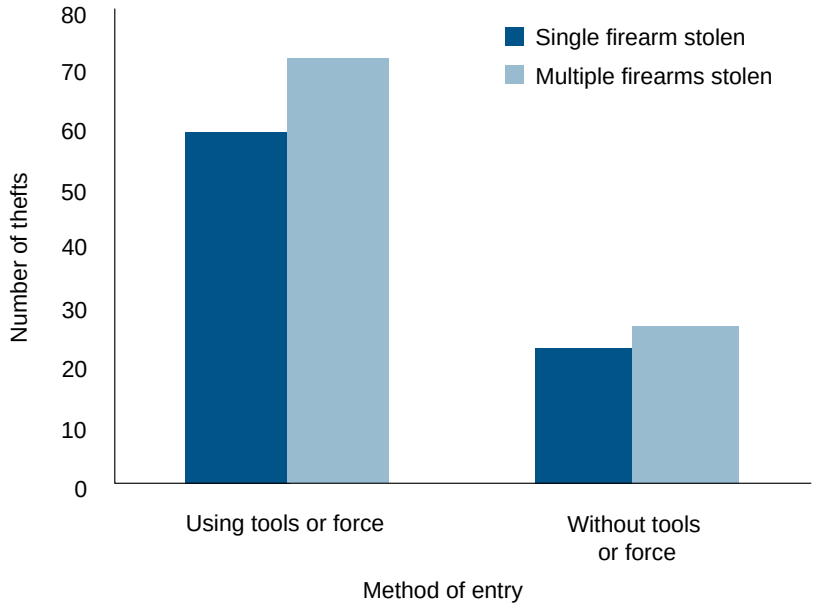
	Window		Door	
Entry method	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Using tools or force	46	88	55	60
Without tool or force	6	12	36	40
Total	52	100	91	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Note: Incidents where the points of entry or the methods of entry were recorded as unknown were excluded from the analysis.

In addition, no significant differences were found in the methods used to gain access to premises to steal one firearm as opposed to multiple firearms (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Method of entry, by number of firearms stolen in private residential premises



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

[18] Although it may be easier to gain access through a rear door or window, burglars sometimes prefer entry through a front door because it is less likely to draw attention to themselves (Wright & Decker 1994).

Characteristics of firearms thefts from business premises

Of the 318 incidents of firearms theft, 32 involved the theft of firearms from business/commercial premises. The point of entry to the premises was unknown for half of these incidents (n=16; 50%; Table 21). Where information was available, entry through a door (38%) was more common and no incidents recorded entry through a window. Of the 12 incidents where entry was gained through a door, force or tools were used in eight incidents, whereas no force or tools were used in four incidents.

Table 21: Point of entry for thefts from business premise

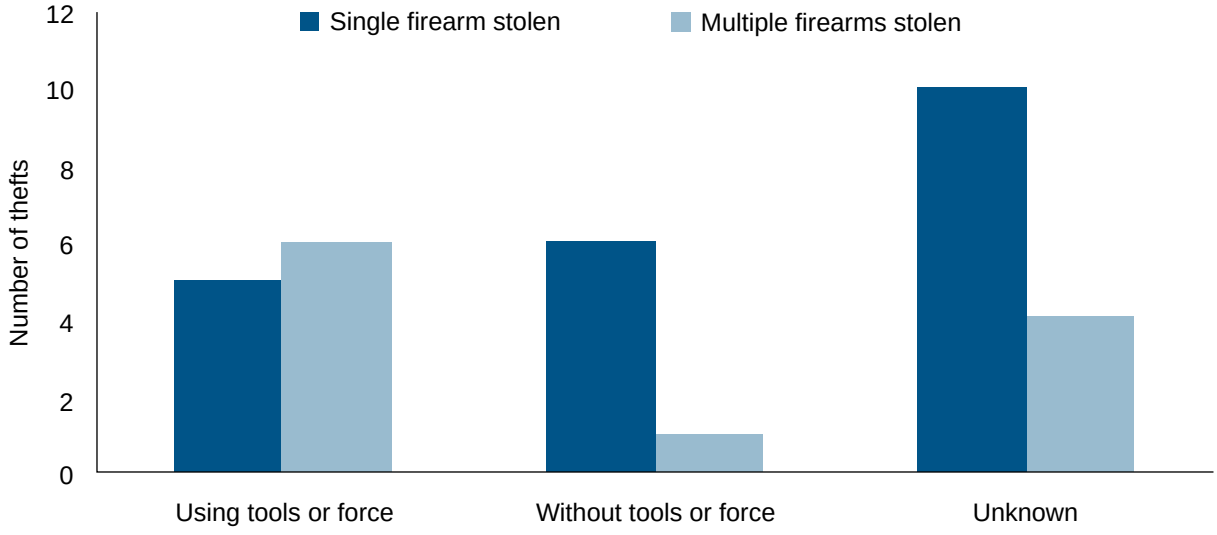
Point of entry	Number	Percentage
Window	0	0
Door	12	38
Other	4	13
Unknown	16	50
Total	32	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Note: Other includes: firearms found missing during the audit, and entry was gained via adjoining premises.

A comparison of the methods of entry to business/commercial premises was made between incidents involving the theft of single firearms and those involving multiple firearms. It was found that a higher proportion of incidents involving the theft of multiple firearms involved the use of force or tools to gain entry to business/commercial premises, than incidents involving the theft of single firearms (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Method of entry, by number of firearms stolen in business/commercial premises



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Compliance with the law

Data were collected on adherence to safe storage and security requirements for firearms at the time of the theft. For licence categories A and B, the National Firearms Agreement states that firearms should be stored in a locked receptacle constructed of either hard wood or steel with a thickness to ensure it is not easily penetrable. If the weight is less than 150 kg then the receptacle should be fixed to the floor or wall. Licence categories C, D and H firearms should be stored in a locked steel safe bolted to the structure of the building. All ammunition must be stored in locked containers separate from firearms. It is important to note that storage requirements vary between jurisdictions.

Security and storage

It was found that 60 percent (n=192) of the 318 incidents of firearms theft involved firearms stored in accordance with requirements[19]. A further 30 percent of incidents involved the theft of unsecured firearms (Table 22). Even the relatively moderate compliance rate found in this study supports the view that 'sometimes even the secure storage of firearms may be ineffective in deterring a determined theft' (Mouzos 2002: 3; Corkery 1994).

The extent to which safekeeping requirements were met varied across jurisdictions. In New South Wales, 80 percent of thefts involved firearms that were secured correctly (i.e. stored in compliant facilities). However, in Western Australia, only 59 percent involved firearms that were secured properly (Table 23). The higher level of compliance in New South Wales may be because New South Wales had recently completed a state-wide audit of licensed firearms owners to ensure they were complying with safe storage requirements.

Information relating to how firearms were stored at the time of the theft was also captured in the template. It was found that over half of the 318 incidents (59%; n=189) involved firearms that were stored in a locked safe or receptacle (see Table 22). In some instances, a locked firearm safe was not seen to be an appropriate storage facility and hence deemed non-compliant with legislative requirements (n=12). This may be due to the locked safe or receptacle in question not being bolted to the wall or floor to prevent easy removal.

Incidents where firearms were unsecured in premises, such as being kept in cupboards, wardrobes or drawers, accounted for 15 percent of the 318 incidents of firearms theft (n=49), and thefts from a vehicle accounted for 14 percent. It is important to note that there were variations in safe storage compliance concerning firearms stored in vehicles. Of the 44 incidents where firearms were stolen from a vehicle, eight were recorded as firearms being secured in accordance with the secure storage requirements, 30 incidents were recorded as not being secured (i.e. owners had not complied), and six incidents were recorded as not applicable (i.e. not covered by legislation). In principle, if a firearm is transported or is temporarily away from its usual place of storage, the registered owner is required to ensure that reasonable precautions are taken to safeguard the firearm, that it is not stolen or lost, and that it does not come into the possession of a person who is not authorised to possess it (NFA 1996). The interpretation of these requirements could be affected by different circumstances, for example, a firearm stolen from a vehicle parked in garage in residential premises may be different from a firearm stolen from a vehicle while the owner was attending to livestock on farmland.

[19] Seventy-five percent of incidents in business premises and 67 percent of residential premises had recorded that firearms were stored in accordance with requirements. All locked receptacles in business premises complied with legislation, whereas seven percent of locked receptacles in residences did not comply.

Table 22: Type of storage where stolen firearms were kept and level of compliance

Type of storage	Complied	Not complied	Unknown	Not applicable
Locked firearm safe	96	6	1	0
Locked hardwood or steel receptacle	61	6	1	0
Locked receptacle fixed to the wall	15	0	0	0
Locked firearm safe with an alarm	1	0	0	0
Alternative facility to firearm safe	2	0	0	0
Premises with an alarm	0	0	1	0
Locked safe/receptacle	175	12	3	0
Unsecured in premises	0	49	0	0
Vehicle	8	30	0	6
Other	7	0	0	2
Unknown	2	5	19	0
Total	192	96	22	8

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Note: Unsecured in premises includes cupboards, wardrobes or drawers; under the bed or lounge; or left underneath verandah. In some cases, not applicable was selected because firearms were not operational. Alternative storage arrangements to an approved firearm safe, indicated by jurisdiction to be consistent with safe storage requirements, include a concrete cylinder and locked tool box.

Table 23: Level of safe storage compliance, by jurisdiction

	Complied		Not complied	
Jurisdiction	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
New South Wales	59	80	15	20
Victoria	41	64	23	36
Western Australia	29	59	20	41
South Australia	19	66	10	34
Queensland	27	63	16	37
Tasmania	10	56	8	44
Northern Territory	5	56	4	44
Australian Capital Territory	2	100	0	0
Australia	192		96	

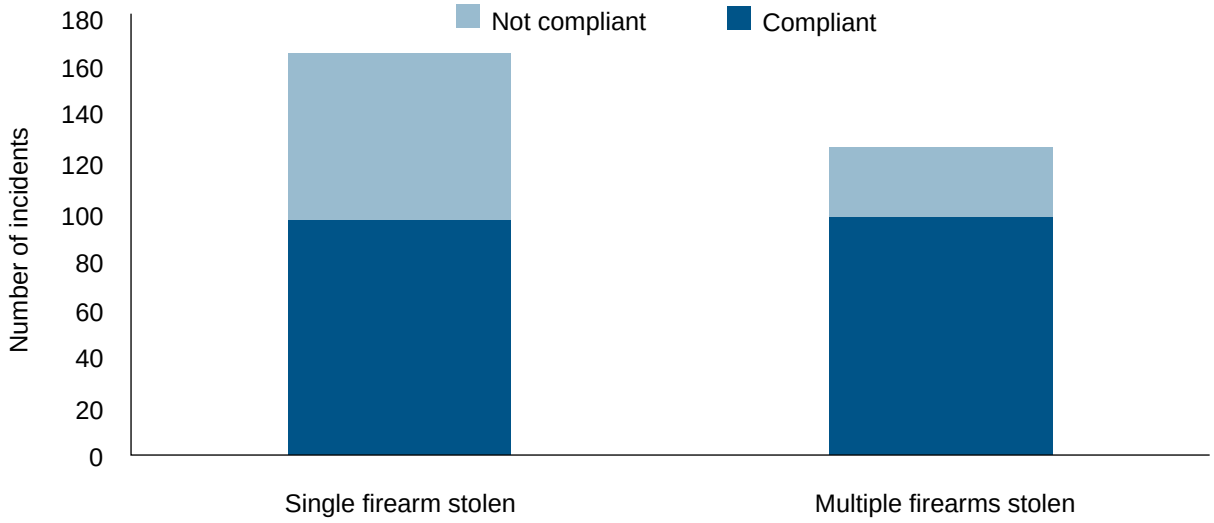
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Note: Percentages shown as column percents; excludes unknown and not applicable.

There were significant differences in the proportion of safe/secure storage compliance and non-compliance between incidents involving the theft of a single firearm and those involving the theft of multiple firearms (x^2 (1)=13.09, p<.001). Compliance with safe storage requirements was significantly greater for thefts involving multiple firearms (78%) than thefts involving single firearm (58%; see Figure 14)[20].

[20] This difference appeared most pronounced in incidents in which shotguns were reported stolen: 41 percent of single theft incidents were recorded as complying, compared with 81 percent of multiple theft incidents (the equivalent figures for incidents involving handguns were 50 percent versus 67 percent; and for rifles, 58 percent versus 73 percent). It should be noted that incidents could involve the theft of multiple types of firearms.

Figure 14: Level of safe storage compliance, by number of firearms stolen



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].
Note: Excludes unknown and not applicable categories.

Method of access to secured firearms

In determining the effectiveness of the safekeeping requirements of firearms currently governed by legislation, further examination was conducted of the methods used to gain access to locked firearm safes (including alternative facilities to firearm safes). Of the total of 189 incidents where firearms were kept in locked facilities (12 of which were recorded as non-compliant facilities), the most common method used to access the firearms was to force open (32%) or jemmy open (13%) the safe/receptacle.[21] The whole safe was removed and/or stolen in 12 percent of the 189 thefts involving a locked safe/receptacle.[22] In just over one in 10 incidents of firearms theft (12%), the key(s) to the locked safe/receptacle were found by the offender (see Table 24).

[21] A safe/receptacle can be forced open with or without a jemmy, hence the inclusion of separate categories.

[22] In all but one incident, all thefts of an entire safe or firearm storage receptacle also involved the theft of some other goods. All categories of other goods (as per Table 17) except for agricultural equipment and collectables were represented in this group of incidents, suggesting that these are probably not some subset of firearms thefts in which safes are specifically targeted.

Table 24: Type of method used to access locked safes or receptacles

Type of method	Number	Percentage
Key located	23	12
Lock combination located	1	1
Key stolen	3	2
Lock cut	19	10
Lock removed	3	2
Lock combination broken	1	1
Unscrewed hinges	1	1
Broken into	1	1
Forced open	60	32
Safe removed/stolen	22	12
Jemmied open	24	13
Unlocked	2	1
Ground open	1	1
Other	3	3
Unknown	25	13
Total	189	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Detailed examination of the data showed that 74 percent of incidents in which entry to the locked receptacle was forced or used tools also involved the theft of other goods compared with 58 percent of unforced access. The finding that just over four in 10 incidents of unforced access to locked receptacles (42 percent, or 14 incidents) involved the theft of only firearms suggests these were probably instances of the specific targeting of firearms by thieves.

In examining storage facilities employed in private residential premises, it was found that firearms were stolen from locked safes or receptacles or alternative safe facilities in 73 percent of the 228 thefts. The majority (92 percent of 167 thefts) were stored in accordance with safekeeping requirements. Tools or force was used to access the locked safe or receptacles in 59 percent of the 167 incidents. No sign of forced entry was found in 22 percent of the incidents. The method to gain access to the safe was unknown for 19 percent of the incidents.

Information was gathered on the number of firearms thefts where ammunition was also stolen. Of the 318 incidents of firearms theft, ammunition was stolen in just over one in four incidents (26%). There were six incidents in which handguns and ammunition were reported as stolen, 43 involving ammunition and shotguns and 63 involving rifles and ammunition[23]. The largest proportion of incidents involving the theft of firearms and ammunition occurred in private residential settings: four out of six (67%) for handguns, 40 out of 43 (93%) for shotguns, and 55 out of 63 (87%) for rifles.

The majority of ammunition was reported stolen from a locked safe (Tables 25 and 26). Available information was insufficient to determine whether ammunition was stored with or separate from the firearms at the time of incident, as well as whether ammunition was available, but not stolen, in the incident.

[23] Number exceeds the total number of incidents involving the theft of ammunition because weapon categories overlap: more than one type of firearm could be stolen in an incident.

Table 25: Number of firearms thefts where ammunition was stolen

Ammunition	Number	Percentage
Stolen	83	26
Not stolen	231	73
Unknown	4	1
Total	318	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Table 26: Type of storage where ammunition was kept

Type of storage	Number	Percentage
Locked safe	55	66
Unsecured in premises	9	11
Car	6	7
Unknown	13	16
Total	83	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Prosecution of non-compliance

In the previous section, it was noted that 30 percent (96 incidents) of thefts involved firearms that were not stored in accordance with legislative requirements. In this section, the prosecution of persons who failed to comply with legislative requirements and securely store their firearms is examined. Results indicate that, at the time of data collection, a charge was laid by police against the owner of the firearm(s) in only 43 percent of these 96 incidents (Table 27).

This suggests that there are low rates of prosecution for failure to adhere to safe storage requirements. A possible explanation for this is that there was a delay between the time the incident was recorded and the time the owner was officially charged, meaning that the result was not captured at the time of data collection. It is also possible that in some cases, and especially for first-time offenders, a warning was given to the owners, but official charges were not laid.

Table 27: Level of police prosecution

	Number	Percentage
Charged	41	43
Not charged	51	53
Unknown	4	4
Total	96	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

The level of police prosecution varied by jurisdiction (see Table 28). This may be indicative of cases being referred to local police and delays in follow-up. The most common type of offence laid against the firearms owners by police was failing to secure a firearm (and/or ammunition) (55%). Three firearms owners were charged with possession of an unregistered firearm (Table 29).

Table 28: Level of police prosecution by jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Charged	Not charged	Unknown
NSW	8	7	0
Vic	7	16	0
WA	12	7	1
SA	7	1	2
Qld	0	16	0
Tas	4	3	1
NT	3	1	0
ACT	0	1	0
Australia	41	52	4

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Thirteen percent of incidents in which firearms were not stored in accordance with requirements also involved the theft of unregistered firearms (n=12). Charges were laid against the firearm owners in six of these incidents, but the nature of the charges laid were specified in only three cases (and related to owning unregistered firearms and failing to secure firearms). Examined from a different perspective, about one-quarter (23%) of the 26 incidents involving unregistered firearms (regardless of whether they had been stored appropriately) resulted in charges against the firearm owners.

Table 29: Types of charges laid against firearms owners

Type of offence	Number	Percentage
Failing to secure a firearm	26	55
Possession of an unregistered firearm	3	6
Failing to report theft within 24 hours	1	2
Permitting an unlicensed holder to possess a firearm	1	2
Failing to notify change of address	2	4
Unknown	14	30
Total	47	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Note: In some incidents, multiple charges were laid, so the total number of offences exceeds the total number of incidents where the firearms owner was charged.

Repeat victimisation

Information was collected on whether firearms had been stolen previously from the same location, to assess whether some premises are vulnerable to repeat victimisation. Of the 318 incidents of firearms theft captured during the six-month exploratory analysis, there were a total of six incidents (2%) in which a firearm had previously been stolen from the same location. A total of 17 firearms were stolen in these incidents (11 shotguns; six rifles). While the number is quite low, it suggests that some locations have been subject to repeat victimisation, highlighting the possibility that these locations were specifically targeted on a second occasion because of the availability of firearms. Three of these repeat victimisations involved the theft of other goods, suggesting that thieves returned to these locations because of a range of desirable goods, including firearms, or opportunistically removed additional items even though firearms were the target. Data are not available to determine which scenario is more likely.

Recovery of stolen firearms

Police recovered stolen firearms in 12 percent of incidents (n=37). They were returned to the owners in 32 percent of these incidents (n=12). It is possible that data were entered shortly after the incidents were reported to police, and so the rate of recovery may increase with the passing of time. However, research into the stolen property market in the Australian Capital Territory indicates that goods that are resold easily are the least likely items to be recovered (Nelson, Collins & Gant 2002). For example, the study found that car stereos, tools, televisions, mobile phones and jewellery were the least likely to be recovered. Only three percent of the 2274 video/DVD players, and only two percent of 4953 mobile phones stolen were recovered by police (Nelson, Collins & Gant 2002: 47). Given that firearms are a sought after commodity on the black market, they are less likely to be recovered.

Other countries also report a low recovery rate of firearms. For example, in 2003 the total value of firearms reported stolen in the United States was just over $97 million, of which only $7.5 million was recovered (7.8%; FBI 2004).

Linking stolen firearms to criminal offences

The diversion of stolen firearms into the illegitimate firearms market and, more importantly, their subsequent use in criminal acts, is an issue of great concern. Quantifying this issue is difficult, with problems in: lack of police resources to trace firearms found in crime scenes; inconsistencies in police recording practices; obliterated serial numbers; and low recovery rate (Walters 1997; Walters 2000).

Similar to the data on the recovery rate of stolen firearms, the relatively short period of time covered in this report (six months), and the fact that data are based on firearms that have been reported stolen to police, will affect the accurate assessment of the rate of stolen firearms being used in crime. This is exemplified by the high proportion of firearms theft incidents in this study where the police had not yet matched the stolen firearms to a crime, and therefore did not know whether the stolen firearms had subsequently been used in an act of crime or violence (n=136; 43 percent of firearms thefts). Given these limitations, the following figures are provided as an indication only of the type of information that could be available from the ongoing long-term collection of firearms theft data.

Based on the 182 incidents where information was provided on whether the stolen firearms had been used in a criminal offence, there were five incidents (3%) where a stolen firearm was identified as being used in subsequent crimes. These crimes include a murder/suicide, suicide and armed robbery. None of these incidents involved handguns.

With the collection of data over a longer time, and the follow-up of information, it may also be possible to calculate an estimate of the time-to-crime (i.e. the period between the theft of the firearm and when the firearm was used in a crime). At this stage, estimates of time-to-crime are available only from overseas research. A study of more than 1500 firearms recovered from youths aged 21 and under in Boston, United States found that 26 percent of all traceable firearms and more than 40 percent of traceable semiautomatic pistols, had a time-to-crime[24] period of less than two years, with half of all firearms being recovered by police within eight months of their first sale at retail by a Federal Firearms Licensee (FFL) (Kennedy, Piehl & Braga 1996: 172). It should be noted that the time-to-crime estimates provided in overseas research refer to when firearms are sold, as opposed to being stolen and then used in a criminal offence.

[24] For this study, time-to-crime was defined as 'the period between the firearms first retail sale through an FFL and its recovery and/or submission from tracing by a law enforcement agency' (Kennedy et al. 1996:172).

Future directions for policy and practice

Earlier Australian research on firearms theft quantified the scale of the problem and identified the type of firearms and the locations most vulnerable to theft (Mouzos 2002). While that research was seen as a starting point in developing our knowledge base on the issue of firearms theft in Australia, it also highlighted a number of issues where information was lacking. The national and multi-jurisdictional commitment to improving knowledge has allowed additional information to be collected on incidents of firearms theft over a six-month period (1 February – 31 July 2004). This report outlined the results of the six-month exploratory analysis of firearms theft in Australia.

In brief, similar patterns to those observed in the earlier research, such as types of firearms stolen and locations commonly targeted by thieves, were found. The report noted that the downward trend in the number of firearms reported stolen had continued. This may be the result of a decreased availability of legal firearms and, to some extent, the vigilance of firearms owners in securing their firearms.

This study also found that the majority of firearms reported stolen were Category A and B firearms, with few Category C and D firearms stolen during the six-month period. This may be due to a reduction in the availability of those type of firearms, particularly those newly prohibited firearms (Category D) (Reuter & Mouzos 2003). As expected, the majority of the firearms reported stolen were registered. It would be highly unlikely for owners who were in possession of an unregistered firearm to report it stolen for fear of legal repercussions.

In keeping with other Australian and international research, residential premises were identified as the most common location targeted by thieves for firearms. Just over one in ten incidents (14%) involved the firearm being stolen from a motor vehicle. One of the major issues examined in this report was in relation to the security and storage of firearms. The level of compliance with safe storage requirements by firearms owners was found to be moderate (60 percent of incidents involved the theft of firearms stored correctly). Given that the majority of firearms were stolen during the course of household break-in or from motor vehicles, thefts of firearms insecurely stored in dwellings and garden sheds or left unattended in motor vehicles appeared to be opportunistic.

It was also found that the storage of firearms in locked safes or receptacles did not act as a deterrent to some thieves, with almost half of the locked safes or receptacles being forced or jemmied open (45%). In some cases, the whole safe was removed. In these cases, it is difficult to determine whether thieves intentionally targeted the premises because of the likelihood of firearms being present and hence sought to open or remove the safe/receptacle, or were unaware of the safe/receptacles contents, but believed that whatever it housed was valuable, and sought to open/remove it anyway. The latter situation is likely to be a more accurate picture. It seems that ‘few criminals are gun theft specialists and few set out to commit burglaries and other thefts to obtain guns. Instead, guns are just part of the property that thieves come across in the routine course of their criminal activities’ (Wright & Rossi 1986: 194).

In instances where firearms owners failed to securely store their firearms, less than half resulted in the owner being charged with an offence. While a strong message needs to be sent to firearms owners that penalties will apply for failing to comply with legislative requirements, this may result in unintended consequences with such owners becoming reluctant to report stolen firearms for fear of legal repercussions. Ultimately, the aim is to reduce the transfer of firearms from the legal market to the illegal market through theft.

Overall, these findings suggest a number of implications for policy and practice. Firstly, they highlight the need for firearms owners to be more vigilant in safely storing and securing their firearms, and ensuring that firearm safes remain locked and bolted/fixed to the structure of the building as required by legislation. In some instances of firearms theft a safe did not prevent determined thieves, and this needs to be taken into account when reviewing safe storage requirements.

In order to prevent the accessing of firearms through unsecured premises, a holistic approach should be taken in relation to security. As current data only relate to successful firearms thefts, it is not known how many burglaries of premises containing firearms did not result in the theft of those weapons. If many completed firearms thefts are the result of opportunistic household burglaries, ensuring the safe storage of weapons in secure premises would appear to be an important crime reduction measure.

Secondly, based on the New South Wales experience, it appears that monitoring may provide advantages. This can be achieved through proactive measures such as auditing and increased requirements with inspections to improve safe storage compliance. As previously highlighted, New South Wales had the highest level of compliance with safe storage requirements, but they had also recently completed a state-wide audit of their licensed firearms owners. This indicates that the audits may have had a positive impact on the level of compliance.

Thirdly, another option to improve the level of compliance is the provision of education programs for licence holders. For almost two years, the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia has run a 'Secure your gun – secure your sport' campaign by placing advertisements in the *Australian Shooter* magazine to encourage compliance.

It is vital to acknowledge that there are multiple pathways for the illicit trafficking of firearms into the illegitimate market. The theft of firearms is only one method, but it appears to be becoming a less viable method of supply. As a result, criminals may turn to other methods, such as dealer diversion, manufacturing, importation, conversion and re-activation of firearms as sources of firearms. Of course, this would depend largely on the level of demand. However, given the declining levels of firearm use in crime in Australia, it is possible that the theft of at least 1300 firearms a year may be sufficient alone to meet the criminal demand for firearms (see also Kleck 1997: 94).

The findings outlined in this report provide useful insights into the emerging picture of firearms theft in Australia. Such information is essential for policy-makers, practitioners and researchers to be able to make well-informed strategic decisions and assess, modify and implement legislative reforms (see also Centre for Defence Studies 2001: 23). It also highlights the importance of the continued collection of data on this issue. Such an ongoing policy response could enable the continued monitoring of trends and patterns of firearms theft in Australia over time, including the identification of any changes, as well as facilitation of long term strategic planning and analysis. In addition to the monitoring function, the data could also be used to examine the impact of jurisdictional initiatives aimed at reducing the rates of firearms theft. For example, while New South Wales has a considerably larger firearms community than other states and territories, it has a lower rate of firearms theft. This may be a result of a number of initiatives implemented in New South Wales to tackle the issue of firearms theft, such as a dedicated police unit – the Firearms and Regulated Industries Crime Squad.

With over 2.5 million firearms registered in Australia, the proportion of registered firearms stolen reported to police over the six-month period was small. However, given the relatively long shelf life of firearms, there is still the risk that at least some of the stolen firearms will be added to the stockpile of illegal firearms in the Australian community. Current and future efforts are aimed at reducing this risk.

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Appendix A: Firearms theft template

Firearms Theft Incident Report

How to fill out this form

Most of the questions can be answered simply by circling the number or letter which corresponds to the most appropriate answer.

For example:

Yes	1
No	(2)

In some cases you will be asked to write a response

1. Date of theft

_____

2. Date of report of theft to police

_____

3. Number of firearms stolen:

_____

4. Police reference number:

_____

5. Make, Model, Type (such as air-rifle, handgun, rifle, shotgun, shotgun/rifle combination, other) and calibre of the firearm(s):

Provide information on each firearm stolen.

	Make	Model	Type	Calibre
Firearm 1:				
Firearm 2:				
Firearm 3:				
Firearm 4:				
Firearm 5:				
Firearm 6:				
Firearm 7:				

If more than 7 firearms stolen, attached additional information to this report.

6. Where were the firearms stolen from (circle appropriate response):

   a. business premises

   b. private residential premises

   c. commercial residential premises

   d. in transit

   e. other (such as a public place or a sports shooting club. Please specify below.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. What is the address of the premises from which the firearms were taken?

Street Name: _____

Suburb: _____

Postcode: _____

8. For each firearm listed in Question 5, circle whether the firearm(s) was registered or unregistered

Firearm 1:	Registered / Unregistered
Firearm 2:	Registered / Unregistered
Firearm 3:	Registered / Unregistered
Firearm 4:	Registered / Unregistered
Firearm 5:	Registered / Unregistered
Firearm 6:	Registered / Unregistered
Firearm 7:	Registered / Unregistered

9. Who reported the theft? (please circle the number corresponding to the appropriate response)

Registered owner of the firearms	1 →	Go to question 10
Owner of the premises	2 →	Go to question 11
Occupier of the premises	3 →	Go to question 11
Another licensed person	4 →	Go to question 10
Other (please specify below)	5 →	Go to question 11

_____

_____

10. If the report was made by a licensed person or registered owner, please provide details of licence or registration, including purpose of licence held.

11. Was the firearm owner charged with any offences (e.g. failing to comply with safe storage requirements)? (Circle response.)

Yes	1 →	Go to question 12
No	2 →	Go to question 13

12. Please specify below the offence that the firearm owner was charged with, including the relevant Act and section of that Act.

13. Was any ammunition also stolen? (Circle response.)

Yes	1 →	Go to question 14
No	2 →	Go to question 16

14. If ammunition was also stolen, please specify below type, calibre and amount.

15. Please specify below where the stolen ammunition was stored.

16. Were any other goods stolen in addition to the firearm and/or ammunition? (Circle response.)

Yes	1 →	Go to question 17
No	2 →	Go to question 18

17. Provide details below of the other goods stolen.

18. How was the firearm stored at the time of the theft? (Circle all applicable responses.)

(a). Locked firearm safe

(b). Locked receptacle constructed of hard wood or steel

(c). Locked receptacle constructed of hard wood or steel fixed to the floor/wall of the premise

(d). Locked firearm safe fitted with an alarm system

(e). Premises fitted with an alarm system

(f). Other (such as a vault. Please specify below.)

19. Was the firearm stored in accordance with legislative requirements? (circle response)

Yes	1 →	Go to question 20
No	2 →	Go to question 20

20. If the firearm was stored in a locked safe or locked receptacle, how was access gained to the safe or receptacle? Please provide details below.

21. How was entry gained into the premises to steal the firearm? (Provide details below.)

22. Have any of the firearms listed in Question 5 been recovered by police?

Yes	1 →	Go to question 23
No	2 →	Go to question 24

23. Have the recovered firearms been returned to the registered owner?

Yes	1 →	Go to question 24
No	2 →	Go to question 24

24. Has the stolen firearm(s) been used in a criminal offence after the theft (this question may not be able to be answered at the time of the theft and will need to be revisited later if any information becomes available to indicate the firearm has been used in a criminal offence)?

Yes	1 →	Go to question 25
No	2 →	Go to question 26

25. Please provide details below of the criminal offence that the stolen firearm was used in.

26. Please provide below any additional information concerning the firearms theft incident

Previous firearms theft incidents

27. Have any other firearms been reported stolen from the same location (as specified in Question 7)?

Yes	1 →	Go to question 28
No	2 →	Go to question 29

28. Provide the details of the previous incidents of firearms theft from this location.

Make	Model	Type	Calibre

29. If the stolen firearms were registered (as indicated in Question 8), has the registered owner previously reported an incident of firearm(s) theft?

Yes	1 →	Go to question 30
No	2 →	End

30. Provide details of the previous incident(s) of firearms theft.

Appendix B: Format of data received

Table B.1: Incidents of firearms theft and format of data received, by jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Number	Percentage	Format
New South Wales	82	26	Electronic
Victoria	66	21	Electronic
Western Australia	54	17	Hard copy
Queensland	48	15	Electronic
South Australia	36	11	Hard copy
Tasmania	21	7	Electronic
Northern Territory	9	3	Hard copy
Australian Capital Territory	2	1	Hard copy
Total	318	100	

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Appendix C: Data quality issues

Examples of incorrect or inadequate information are presented below.

- Information on firearms, such as type, model and calibre. For example: air rifle was recorded as rifle (or vice versa); and firearm type (such as bolt action) was recorded incorrectly under the variable model.
- Information concerning the way the firearm was stored at the time of the theft. In the template, four categories of locked safe were provided: locked firearm safe, locked receptacle constructed of hardwood or steel, locked receptacle constructed of hardwood or steel fixed to the floor/wall of the premises, and locked firearm safe fitted with an alarm system. However, it appears that locked firearm safe was selected over the three other categories, possibly because it was listed first.
- Information on compliance or non-compliance with safe storage requirements. For example, if the incident involved the theft of firearms that were stored in an unlocked cupboard, the incident was recorded as being compliant with safe storage requirements.
- Information on the location where the firearms were stolen from. In some cases, an incident involving the theft of firearms from a vehicle was recorded as in transit, and in other cases, it was recorded as other.
- Information on details of licence and purpose of licence held. Inconsistent information was obtained regarding licensing due to the variations in licence arrangements existing across jurisdictions. In some incidents, multiple firearms were stolen in a single incident and the licence variables in the template are attributed to the incident, not to the firearm stolen. Information on licence category of each firearm stolen needed to be supplemented.
- Information on the way an offender gained entry into the premises to steal the firearm. The template would, ideally, have requested the specific information, including the type of the premises (e.g. shed), the point of entry (e.g. rear door) and the method used to gain an entry (e.g. using a screwdriver).

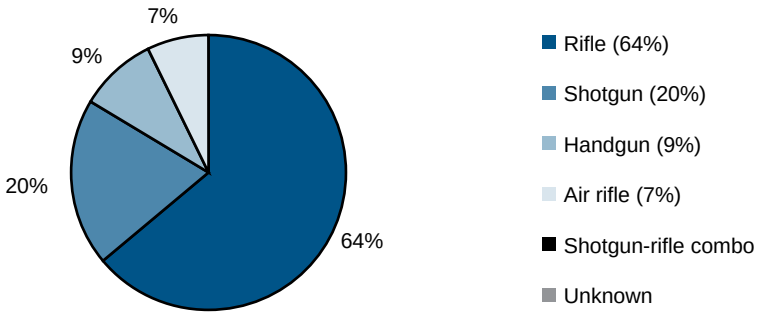
Appendix D: Additional tables and charts

Table D.1: Type of firearms stolen by jurisdiction

Type	NSW	Vic	WA	SA	Qld	Tas	NT	ACT	Aust.
Rifle	125	56	59	47	65	22	10	2	386
Shotgun	39	43	15	26	14	18	3	1	159
Handgun	18	6	6	14	7	4	7	0	62
Air rifle	14	11	8	9	5	5	0	0	52
Shotgun/rifle combo	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Unknown	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	4
Total	196	117	89	97	91	50	21	3	664

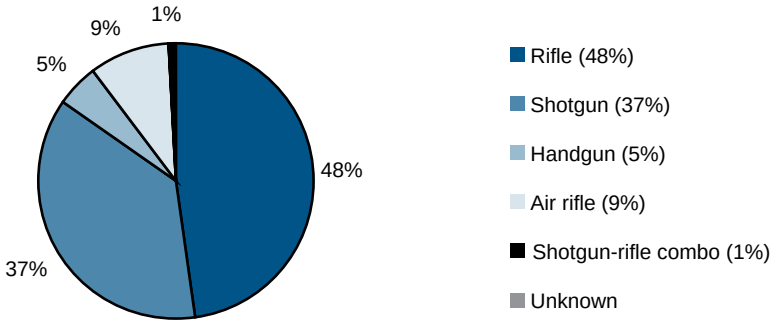
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Figure D.1: Firearms stolen in New South Wales



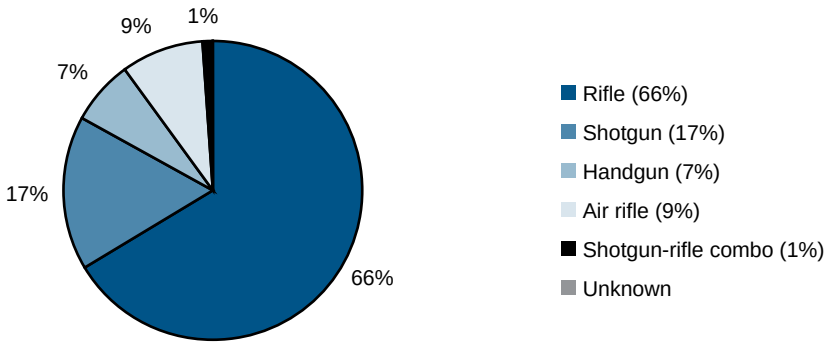
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file], n=196.

Figure D.2: Firearms stolen in Victoria



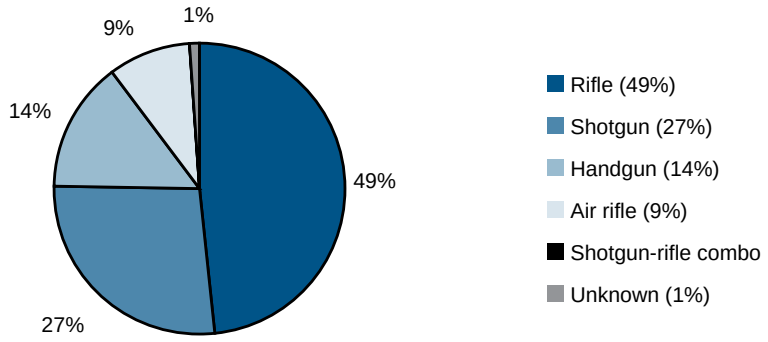
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file], n=117.

Figure D.3: Firearms stolen in Western Australia



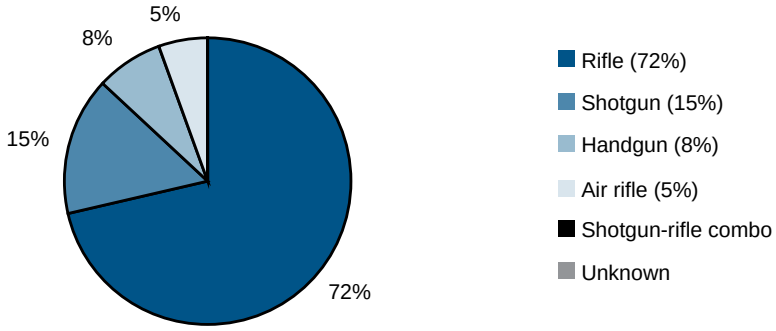
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file], n=89.

Figure D.4: Firearms stolen in South Australia



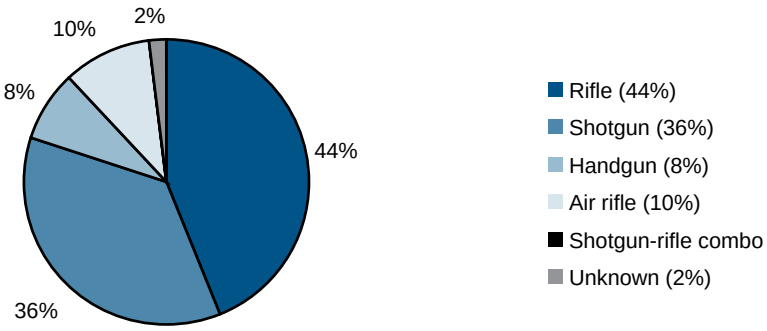
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file], n=97.

Figure D.5: Firearms stolen in Queensland



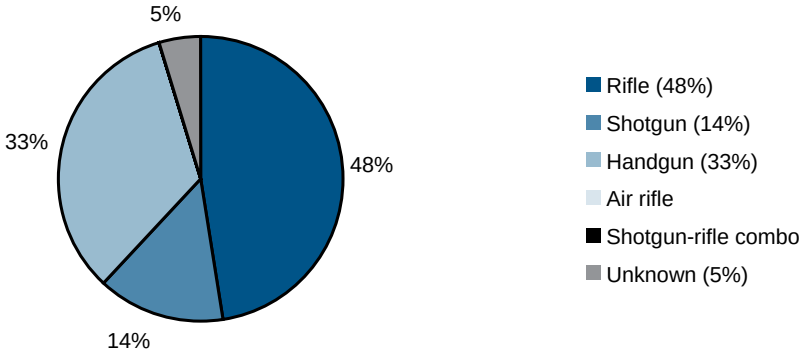
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file], n=91.

Figure D.6: Firearms stolen in Tasmania



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file], n=50.

Figure D.7: Firearms stolen in the Northern Territory



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file], n=21.

Appendix E: Location of incidents of firearms theft

Table E.1: Location of incidents of firearms theft by jurisdiction (n=310)

	NSW		Vic		WA		SA		Qld		Tas		NT		ACT	
Location	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Business premises	9	11	8	12	6	11	4	11	4	8	0	0	1	11	0	0
Private residence	63	77	43	65	38	70	25	69	33	69	18	86	6	67	2	100
Commercial residence	0	0	1	2	1	2	1	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Motor vehicle	10	12	11	17	8	15	3	8	8	17	3	14	1	11	0	0
Farm land/property	0	0	2	3	1	2	1	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	11	0	0
Unknown	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	82	100	66	100	54	100	36	100	48	100	21	100	9	100	2	100

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Table E.2: Types of firearms stolen from private residential premises (detailed location)

	Handgun		Shotgun		Rifle		Total
Detailed location	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Dwelling	5	26	17	18	42	25	64
Shed	2	11	16	17	14	8	32
Garage	1	5	6	6	9	5	16
Caravan	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Verandah	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Farmhouse	0	0	0	0	2	1	2
Farm shed	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Not specified	11	58	56	59	96	58	163
Total	19	100	95	100	166	100	280

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Note: Number refers to number of incidents in which this firearm type was reported as stolen from this location. Percentage refers to percentage of cases for weapon type. Total exceeds number of incidents because multiple firearm types could be stolen in a single incident. Excludes a single case in which location was recorded as 'false report'.

Table E.3: Types of firearms stolen from business premises (detailed location)

	Handgun		Shotgun		Rifle		Total
Detailed location	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Shed	0	0	1	11	2	11	3
Retail not specified	4	50	2	22	4	22	10
Restaurant	1	13	0	0	0	0	1
Freight centre	0	0	1	11	0	0	1
Bank	1	13	0	0	0	0	1
Piggery	0	0	0	0	3	17	3
Police station	0	0	0	0	1	6	1
Recreational, not specified	1	13	0	0	0	0	1
Shooting club	1	13	0	0	0	0	1
Defence barracks	0	0	0	0	1	6	1
Dealer shop	0	0	1	11	1	6	2
Electric authority	0	0	0	0	1	6	1
Dept. of Land Conservation	0	0	0	0	1	6	1
Market garden	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	0	4	44	4	22	8
Total	8	100	9	100	18	100	35

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Firearms Monitoring Program: Firearms theft 1 February – 31 July 2004 [computer file].

Note: Number refers to number of incidents in which this firearm type was reported as stolen from this location. Percentage refers to percentage of cases for weapon type. Total exceeds number of incidents because multiple firearm types could be stolen in a single incident.