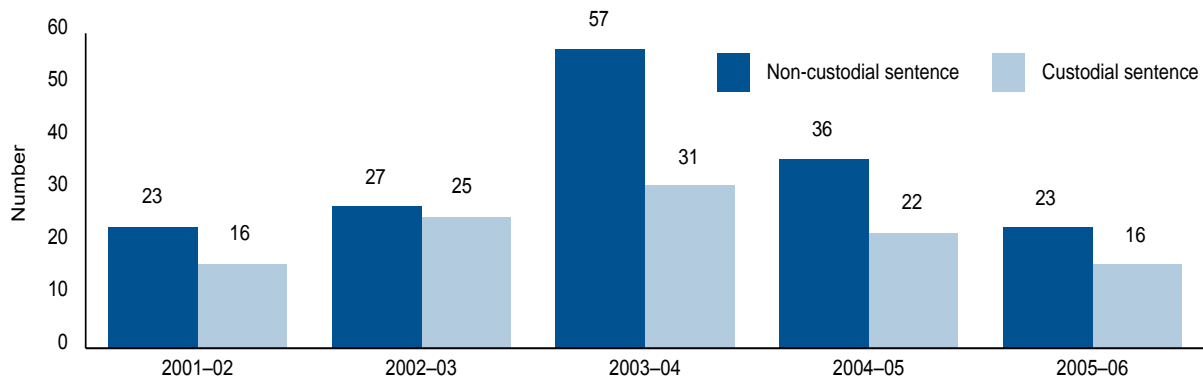


Sentences for arson in Victoria

There has been little information in the public domain to date about sentences handed down for arson. The Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council recently released data on 276 adults sentenced for the crime of arson between 2001–02 and 2005–06 in the County and Supreme Courts, showing that more than 99 percent of such cases were heard in these courts. While there is no indication whether the arsons involved bushfires, the data do provide information on the number of convicted arsonists who received a custodial sentence.

Sentencing outcomes, adults, Victoria



Source: Turner 2007

As can be seen from the above figure, the number of adults sentenced to a custodial sentence (including youth training centre orders, hospital orders and partially suspended sentences) ranged between 16 and 31 each year. Over the five years, 31 percent of those sentenced received a term of imprisonment, ranging from three months to eight years, with one year being the most common.

The majority of adults sentenced for arson were male (84%). The average age was 28 years 9 months, with 41 percent between the ages of 18 and 25 years. Women were, on average, older than men (31 years 11 months compared with 28 years 2 months). Prison sentences were most common among those aged 30 to 34 years and least common for those under the age of 20 years.

In 2005–06, 39 people were sentenced in Victoria's higher courts. During the same period, Victorian police data show that 2,926 arson charges were laid. This suggests that the vast majority of arson charges do not result in a conviction. More work is required to investigate low conviction rates as well as the factors that influence the likelihood of a custodial sentence.

References

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