



Australian Government
Australian Institute of Criminology

Firearm theft in Australia 2006–07

Samantha Bricknell

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GPO Box 2944

Canberra ACT 2601

Tel: (02) 6260 9200

Fax: (02) 6260 9299

Email: front.desk@aic.gov.au

Website: <http://www.aic.gov.au>

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Foreword

The National Firearms Theft Monitoring Program (NFTMP) was established at the Australian Institute of Criminology following a recommendation by the (then) Australasian Police Ministers' Council Firearms Policy Working Group for the long-term monitoring of firearm theft. The program is funded by the Australian Government under the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* for a period of four years, starting 1 July 2006. This report represents the second in the NFTMP-funded series and the third examining annual firearm theft data.

From 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007, 626 incidents of firearm theft were reported to police, with a total of 1,526 firearms stolen. Around half of these incidents resulted in the theft of a single firearm; in the majority of these, the firearm was registered, and the owner was in possession of an appropriate firearm licence. Rifles comprised 57 percent of stolen firearms; shotguns, a quarter; and handguns, seven percent. The majority of thefts targeted private residential premises, and one in ten thefts were from vehicles or business premises.

Characteristics of firearm thefts reported in 2006–07 are largely consistent with those found in the preceding two years. Of particular note is the relative constancy in the number of firearms reported stolen, which represents a considerable drop from the previous decade, in which an average 4,195 firearms were stolen annually between 1994 and 2000. The introduction of minimum storage and safekeeping requirements for firearms when not in use or being

carried is a likely factor in this decrease. The data show that many owners are complying with these requirements, and suggest that offenders consequently need to work at removing firearms from places of storage. Nonetheless, around four in 10 owners who reported a theft in 2006–07 had not complied with the requirements (despite the risk of prosecution), and almost one in five who locked their firearm(s) in an approved receptacle had not properly concealed the keys to the receptacle.

The longer-term compilation of firearm theft data provides a clearer picture of weaknesses that offenders may exploit, be they related to location, current prescribed forms of firearm safekeeping, or owner negligence or carelessness. Also of value is the means to begin identifying the circumstances of thefts that are planned rather than opportunistic, and in particular the types of firearms that premeditating offenders are seeking to steal. In turn, these data can help shape police and policy responses to reduce further the incidence of firearm theft, thus stemming the flow of firearms into the illegal market and their possible use for criminal purposes.

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

Judy Putt
General Manager, Research

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The research is funded by the Australian Government under the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002*.

Executive summary

This report presents information on all incidents of firearm theft reported to police in Australian states and territories (excluding the Australian Capital Territory) in the period 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007.

Key findings regarding stolen firearms

- A total of 1,526 firearms were stolen in 626 reported incidents of firearm theft in 2006–07.
- Stolen firearms represent 0.06 percent of all registered firearms in Australia.
- More than half of all incidents involved the theft of multiple firearms, whereas in previous years the majority of thefts involved the theft of a single firearm. The number of firearms stolen in multiple-firearm theft ranged from two to 25.
- Rifles accounted for the majority (57%) of all reported stolen firearms, with bolt-action rifles the most often recorded. One-quarter of stolen firearms were shotguns, mostly single barrel or double barrel. Handguns constituted seven percent of firearms reported stolen. Half of these were revolvers, and 28 percent, semiautomatic pistols.
- Almost two-thirds of stolen firearms were classified as Category A firearms, a quarter as Category B, and seven percent as Category H. Only two percent were Category C firearms, and less than one percent, Category D. (See Appendix B for firearm category description).
- Nine in ten firearms reported stolen were registered. Two-thirds of unregistered stolen firearms were category A firearms.

Key findings regarding firearm owners

- Ninety-one percent of firearm owners who reported a theft in 2006–07 held a valid firearm licence.
- Fewer than 0.1 percent of Australian firearm licence holders reported the theft of firearms.
- Firearm owners held an average of 1.7 firearm licences. Category A licences were owned by 86 percent of firearm owners reporting a firearm theft in 2006–07; Category B licences, by 66 percent; Category C and H licences, by seven percent of owners each; and Category D, by one percent.
- Three-quarters of firearm thefts were reported by the owner of the stolen firearms.

Key findings regarding theft incidents

- More than a third (36%) of firearm thefts were reported on the day the theft was discovered, and 20 percent the following day.
- The majority of thefts (85%) followed an unlawful entry of premises or a vehicle.
- Private residential premises were the primary target for firearm theft (76% of all thefts). More than 80 percent of rifles, shotguns, and air rifles, and 60 percent of handguns, were stolen from this location.
- Thefts from vehicles accounted for 10 percent of all reported firearm thefts; business premises accounted for nine percent. Almost a quarter of handguns were stolen from business premises, but none were taken from vehicles.

- Five in 10 thefts were classified as general burglaries, in that other items were stolen alongside the firearms. Tools were stolen in 30 percent of such incidents; cash, in 26 percent; and jewellery/watches, in 21 percent.
- Ammunition was stolen in 27 percent of incidents of firearm theft. Most of the ammunition stolen was for rifles.

Key findings regarding firearm storage; compliance; and prosecution of firearm owners

- Firearms stolen in 60 percent of incidents had been stored in a firearm safe or otherwise secure receptacle.
- The proportion of affected firearm owners found to be compliant with firearm storage requirements in 2006–07 was similar (52%) to the proportions in 2004–05 and 2005–06. Owners were considered non-compliant if receptacles were unlocked or unapproved or firearms had been left in vehicles or unsecured.
- A quarter of affected firearm owners were found to be in breach of firearm laws and regulations. Sixty-one percent of these owners subsequently faced charges or disciplinary action.
- Two-thirds (65%) of charges brought against firearm owners related to the offence of failing to secure a firearm; 17 percent, to unlawful possession of a firearm; and seven percent, to possessing an unregistered firearm.

Key findings on related issues

- Firearms were recovered from 13 percent of thefts, and were returned to owners in a third of these cases.
- Police apprehended and initiated proceedings against offenders involved in 12 percent of reported firearm thefts.
- Offenders who took part in general burglaries were more likely to be apprehended than those who stole just firearms.

- Three percent of theft locations had previously had firearms stolen. Five of the sixteen repeat victimisations occurred less than 12 months after the previous event.
- Firearms stolen in 13 firearm-theft incidents were later involved in the commission of an offence. These included three incidents of armed robbery, a home invasion, and various other firearm offences.

Trends over time

- The number of firearms stolen on a yearly basis has more than halved since the 1990s: 4,195 on average between 1994 and 2000, and fewer than 1,500 by 2004–05. The figure of 1,526 firearms stolen in 2006–07 represents a slight increase from the total firearms stolen in each of the preceding two years; theft incidence, however, has continued to decline.
- Rifles and, to a lesser extent, shotguns remain the most frequently stolen firearms, probably reflecting how commonly they are owned. Handgun theft in the 1990s has halved, from 14 percent to between five and seven percent in the last three years.
- Patterns of theft activity from 2004–05 to 2006–07 have remained relatively consistent. Firearms are primarily stolen from private residential premises, where the theft of multiple firearms is the more common scenario. Single-firearm thefts characterise most incidents at business premises and most involving vehicles. Up to a quarter of handguns are stolen from business premises. Few theft locations are re-targeted. A quarter or more of vehicle-based thefts are aided by owners not locking the vehicle behind them. Despite legislative requirements regarding how firearms should be stored, only slightly more than half of owners reporting thefts are considered storage compliant. Firearms from only a small proportion of thefts are known to have been used in subsequent criminal activity.



Introduction

Background

In 1996, Australian governments began introducing a series of amendments to firearm legislation and regulations, on the basis of resolutions outlined in the National Firearms Agreement 1996, followed by further amendments in response to the National Handgun Control Agreement 2002 and the National Firearms Trafficking Policy Agreement 2002. The purpose of these agreements was to prohibit and/or restrict certain categories of firearms; establish new firearm licensing, storage, registration, and training requirements; and introduce new penalties for the trafficking of firearms across borders.

Since the introduction of these legislative changes, the AIC has reported on a range of firearm-related topics, including trends in firearm-perpetrated crime, firearm-associated deaths and injuries, firearm trafficking, and licensing and registration of firearms used in crime. More recently, the AIC has undertaken a body of work on the theft of firearms. Little research has attended to the nature and extent of firearm theft occurring in Australia. An initial *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice* paper examining the incidence of firearm theft between 1994 and 2004 was followed by two commissioned reports describing in more detail the characteristics of all reported firearm thefts occurring from 1 February 2004 to 31 July 2005 (Mouzos & Sakurai 2006) and

from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005 (Borzycki & Mouzos 2007). These reports prompted a recommendation by the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management–Police Firearms Policy Working Group (MCPEMP FPWG) for longer-term monitoring of reported firearm thefts in Australia, and consequently advanced the establishment of the National Firearms Theft Monitoring Program at the AIC. The NFTMP is funded by the Australian Government under the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* for a period of four years starting 1 July 2006. The first report was published in 2007 and examined firearm thefts reported from 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006 (Bricknell & Mouzos 2007). This report is the second in the four-year-funded series.

Purpose of the report

This report builds on earlier AIC published research by (a) summarising the findings of analyses of all incidents of firearm theft reported to Australian police from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 and (b) assembling a three-year portrait of firearm theft in Australia, with particular reference to:

- the types of firearms stolen
- the circumstances of firearm theft incidents

- the modus operandi of offenders involved in firearm theft
- the rate of compliance with safe-storage requirements, and the prosecution of non-compliance
- the recovery rate of stolen firearms
- the incidence of repeat victimisations
- the use of stolen firearms in crime.

These findings add to our knowledge of circumstances surrounding firearm theft in Australia. This in turn will assist the MCPEMP FPWG to develop evidence-based policy, especially in:

- developing initiatives to reduce the incidence of firearm theft
- developing a minimum standard for firearm storage common to all sectors of the firearm-owning community.

Methodology

Firearm theft data were supplied by state and territory police, using a purpose-designed template. The template largely comprises pre-coded response categories to specific questions regarding the reporting of the incident; the location in which the theft occurred; how the firearms were removed; theft of other goods, including ammunition; criminal charges brought against firearm owners and offenders; prior thefts; and other crime linked to the theft incident. Free-text responses are included in parts of the template to enable provision of additional detail or theft specifics that pre-coded categories do not adequately capture. Information is requested on the stolen firearm's serial number; registration status; type and category; deactivation status; make; model; calibre; and action type.

Data were provided to the AIC in a single response sheet, in either paper or electronic format, for each incident of theft, or were compiled in an Excel spreadsheet. One jurisdiction provided data as copies of incident reports from which the AIC transcribed relevant information to a spreadsheet. Individual jurisdictional data were cleaned, and logic checks were performed during the quality control process using the STATA software package. Additional integrity checks of stolen firearms were

provided by the Australian Crime Commission. Once cleaned, data were compiled into a single national data set for analysis.

The original data set included 656 cases of theft. Four cases were discarded because the incident was reported to police outside the date range under consideration, and another six cases were removed because they did not refer to a genuine incident of theft. Four of the latter six cases referred to incidents in which the firearm had in fact been lost rather than stolen; one more, in which the owner reported his firearms stolen before remembering they had actually been destroyed; and one more, in which the owner's partner had removed the firearm from fear the owner was to use the firearm to harm himself. In contrast, one incident described the theft of a firearm that the police believed the owner had really misplaced; in the absence of conclusive evidence to support this assertion, the reporting jurisdiction included the case in the data provided, and it was retained in the national data set.

These eliminations left 646 incidents of firearm theft that were reported to police in 2006–07 (see data quality below), with the theft of 1,564 firearms. To ensure consistency with analyses undertaken in previous years, however, incidents of theft in which firearms were not categorised as firearms for the purposes of this report were also excluded from the data set. This amounted to 20 incidents of theft and 33 firearms, in which the stolen firearms were:

- replicas or imitations and no charges were laid against the firearm owner
- antique, deactivated, or inoperable
- paintball markers, spud guns, and starting pistols and no firearms charges were laid against the owner.

Four cases that reported the theft of both firearms and non-firearms (as defined by current criteria) were retained in the data set, but the non-firearms (five) were excluded from the analysis.

The final, amended data set comprised valid records describing 626 incidents of firearm theft, in which a total of 1,526 firearms were stolen. Each record represents a single incident of theft, 52 percent of which resulted in the theft of more than one firearm.

Data quality

Unlike previous years, the ACT was unable to provide firearm-theft data for the reference period. Since the number of theft incidents in the ACT is very small (two in 2004–05 and four in 2005–06), the absence of ACT data in the 2006–07 series should not disrupt comparability of results between years.

Data consistency was examined using prescribed logic checks, and instances of inconsistency were resolved either by referring to the original data or by clarifying with the reporting jurisdictions. The frequency of missing data was very low but affected some variables more than others, particularly such information on stolen firearms as make, model, and action type. ‘Unknown’ responses were more commonly returned, and accounted for between 0 and 24 percent of final responses, depending on the variable considered. Factors that may result in either missing data or unknown responses include:

- the persons reporting stolen firearms’ inability to, or choice not to, supply specifics about the theft and the items stolen
- delay in reporting by the firearm owner, increasing the chance that aspects of the theft will be forgotten or not easily recollected when the report is eventually made
- theft information is being missed or not transcribed when filing police reports.

In the absence of being able to establish the reason(s) behind missing data or unknown responses, any matter presented in the report that includes a high proportion of unknown responses should be considered with caution.

Not every person who experiences a crime reports it to police, and hence it is assumed that the data captured in the 2006–07 data set do not encompass all incidents of firearm theft that occurred in or around the reference period. Though there are many possible reasons for people to choose not to report the theft of their firearms, the fear of sanctions if found in violation of firearm laws is a probable deterrent in some cases. This is particularly likely to influence owners who had unregistered firearms stolen, did not hold a valid firearm licence (or held one that had expired or been revoked), or knew that their firearms were not secured prior to the theft.

Missing from the analysis is the number of reported thefts in which firearms were not taken, either because they were not located or could not be removed from the storage facility or because offenders decided not to steal them. Collating such data is currently not feasible but would contribute greatly to an understanding of what determines the success of firearm theft.

Though there are many possible reasons for people to choose not to report the theft of their firearms, the fear of sanctions if found in violation of firearm laws is a probable deterrent in some cases.

Characteristics of stolen firearms

Incidence of firearm theft

A total of 626 incidents of firearm theft were reported to state and territory police (excluding the ACT) from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 (Table 1). From these incidents, a total of 1,526 firearms were reported as stolen, an increase from the 1,445 and 1,470 firearms reported stolen in the previous two years. More than a quarter (26%) of reported incidents of firearm theft occurred in New South Wales, with around two in five incidents taking place in Queensland (20%) and Western Australia (19%). The largest percentage of stolen firearms was also reported in New South Wales (28%), followed by Queensland (21%) and

Victoria (18%). An average of 2.4 (median of two) firearms were stolen in each incident, similar to the average 2.2 and 2.3 stolen firearms in the previous two years. The Northern Territory averaged one firearm per reported theft, in contrast with Tasmania, which again recorded an average of almost three.

The number of firearms reported stolen has declined in all jurisdictions and nation wide since the previous decade (Table 2). From 1994 to 2000, on average 4,195 firearms were reported stolen per year in Australia, but by the middle of the following decade the number had more than halved. Legal requirements regarding the storage and safekeeping

Table 1: Firearm theft incidents and number of stolen firearms

	Incidents		Number of stolen firearms		Mean number of firearms	Median number of firearms
	Number	%	Number	%		
NSW	165	26	432	28	2.6	2.0
Vic	109	17	276	18	2.5	2.0
Qld	127	20	320	21	2.5	2.0
WA	116	19	232	15	2.0	1.0
SA	81	13	204	13	2.5	2.0
Tas	18	3	52	4	2.9	2.0
NT	10	2	10	1	1.0	1.0
Australia	626	100	1,526	100	2.4	2.0

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table 2: Trend in stolen firearms 1994–2000 to 2006–07 (number stolen per year)

	1994–2000 ^a	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07
NSW	1,048	371	401	432
Vic	538	302	211	276
Qld	750	329	302	320
WA	602	207	191	232
SA	823	250	198	204
Tas	306	83	114	52
ACT	36	8	9	na
NT	92	20	19	10
Australia	4,195	1,470	1,445	1,526

a: Average

Sources: Mouzos 2002; AIC NFTMP 2004–07 [computer file] [2006–07 data exclude ACT]

Table 3: Single versus multiple firearm thefts

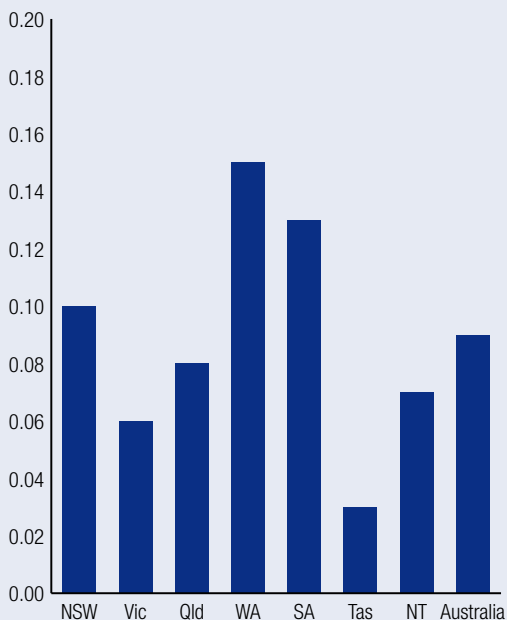
	Single-firearm thefts	Multiple-firearm thefts	% single-firearm thefts
NSW	75	90	46
Vic	51	58	47
Qld	57	70	45
WA	67	49	58
SA	34	47	42
Tas	6	12	33
NT	10	0	100
Australia	300	326	48

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

of firearms is probably the most influential factor in this decline. The trend in reports of stolen firearms over the most recent three years varies between jurisdictions (Table 2). From 2004–05 to 2006–07, New South Wales experienced a consistent increase in the number of reported stolen firearms; the Northern Territory, a decrease. The other jurisdictions showed fluctuating numbers.

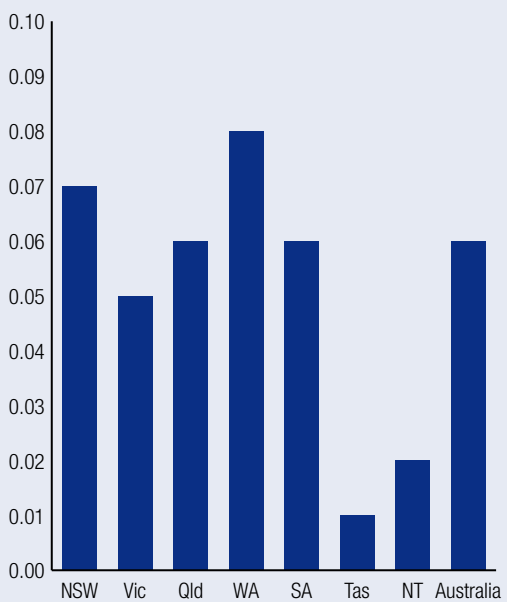
Single-firearm thefts accounted for less than half (48%) of firearm-theft incidents in 2006–07 (Table 3). In fact, only in Western Australia and the Northern Territory were single-firearm thefts the predominant theft scenario. This pattern differs from that found in 2005–06, in which single-firearm theft more commonly characterised incidents of firearm theft in all but two jurisdictions (NSW and ACT).

Figure 1: Firearm theft incidents per year as a percentage of licence holders



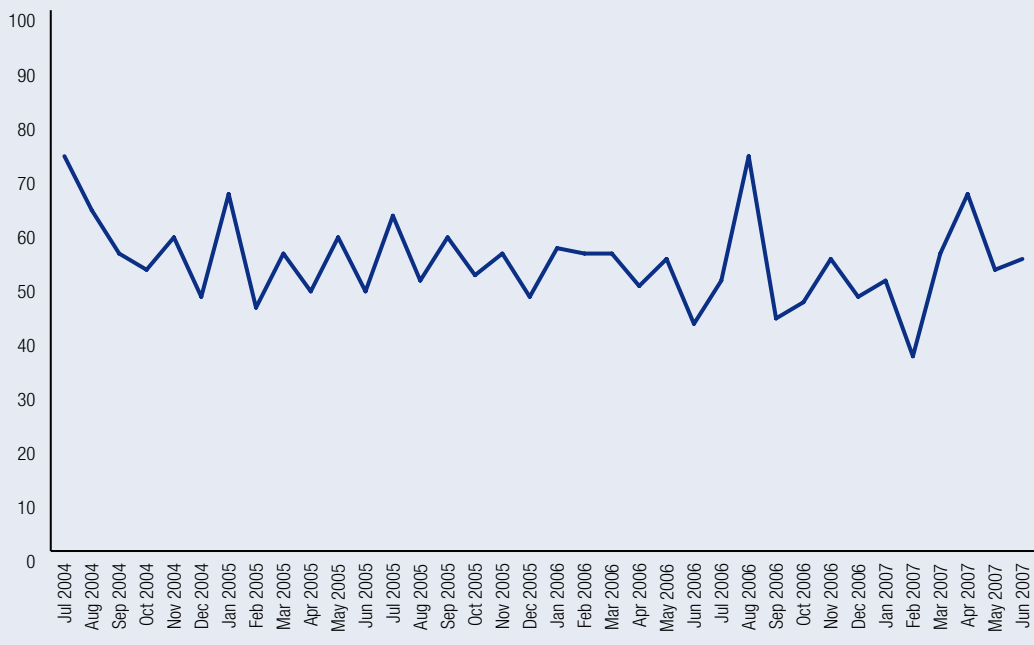
Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Figure 2: Firearms stolen per year, as a percentage of registered firearms



Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Figure 3: Firearm thefts reported per month, February 2004 – June 2007 (number)



Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–07 [computer file] [2006–07 data excludes ACT]

Fewer than 0.1 percent of licensed Australian firearm owners reported a theft in 2006–07 (Figure 1). An equally small proportion of all registered firearms were reported stolen (Figure 2).

The pattern of firearm theft incidents reported from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2007 is shown in Figure 3. On average, 53 incidents were reported each month in the 36-month period; the lowest number of incidents was 36 (in February 2007), and the largest was 73 (in August 2006). Between seven and twelve percent of incidents were reported each month in 2006–07.

Table 4: Type of firearm stolen

	Number	%
Rifle	873	57
Shotgun	375	25
Air rifle	140	9
Handgun	104	7
Other ^a	15	1
Unknown	19	1
Total	1,526	100

a: Includes firearms that cannot be classified as a rifle, shotgun, air rifle, or handgun

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Describing stolen firearms

Type of firearms stolen

Rifles were again the most commonly stolen firearm, accounting for 57 percent of all stolen firearms in 2006–07 (Table 4). A quarter of stolen firearms were shotguns; nine percent, air rifles; and seven percent, handguns. The small rise in handgun theft since 2005–06 can mostly be attributed to various armed robberies in NSW in which security guards reported

their handguns stolen. Three-quarters of all incidents resulted in the theft of a rifle; 41 percent, in the theft of a shotgun; and eight percent, in the theft of a handgun.

Consistent with the national breakdown, rifles comprised half or more of firearms stolen in each jurisdiction (Figure 4; Table A1): just below half (49%) in Victoria, up to 63 percent in Queensland and Tasmania. Shotguns accounted for around a fifth of reported stolen firearms in most jurisdictions, with

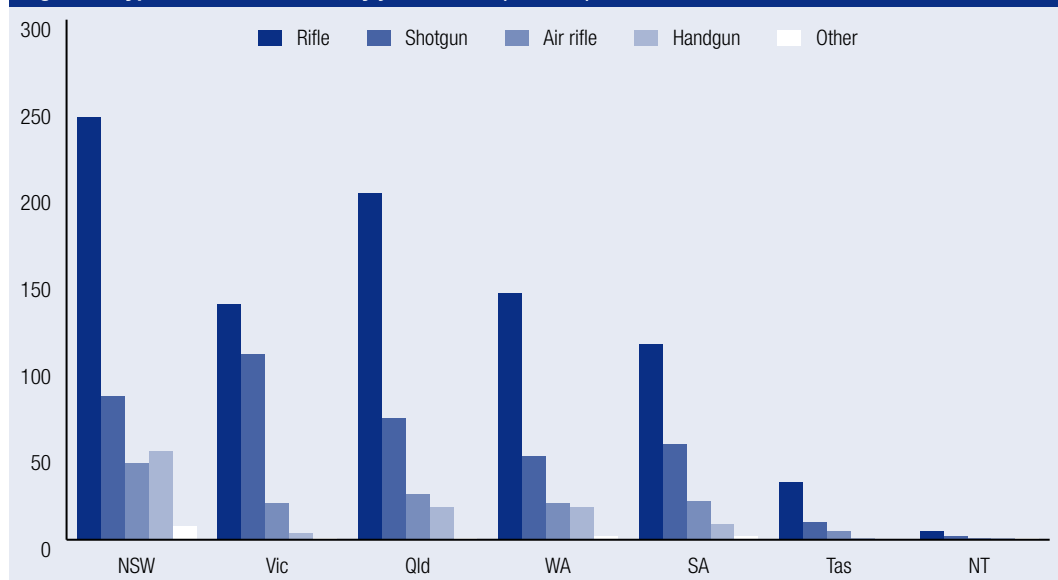
	Number	%
Bolt action	638	73
Lever action	101	12
Single shot	43	5
Pump action	26	3
Semiautomatic	18	2
Black powder	2	< 1
Double barrel	1	< 1
Other	2	< 1
Unknown	42	5
Total	873	100

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

	Number	%
Single barrel	122	33
Double barrel	116	31
Over and under	75	20
Pump action	11	3
Semiautomatic	6	2
Bolt action	5	1
Unknown	40	11
Total	375	100

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Figure 4: Type of firearm stolen, by jurisdiction (number)



Note: Excludes firearms in which firearm type was unknown (n = 19)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

the exception of South Australia, where they made up a quarter, and Victoria, where they made up 39 percent. Some variation existed between jurisdictions in handgun theft, ranging from two percent of all stolen firearms in Tasmania to 12 percent in New South Wales.

As found in previous years, the majority of stolen rifles were bolt action (73%), with lever action rifles the next-most frequently stolen rifle type (12%) (Table 5). Almost two-thirds of shotguns were either

single barrel (33%) or double barrel (31%), with another fifth (20%) categorised as over and under (Table 6). Handguns were mostly revolvers (50%) or semiautomatic pistols (28%) (Table 7). The distribution of handgun type has varied over the last three years: in 2004–05, semiautomatic pistols were stolen more commonly (41% of stolen handguns) than revolvers, and in 2005–06, revolvers and semiautomatics comprised an equal proportion of all stolen handguns (41% each).

	Number	%
Revolver	52	50
Semiautomatic pistol	29	28
Air pistol	8	8
Single-shot pistol	6	6
Other	2	2
Unknown	7	7
Total	104	100

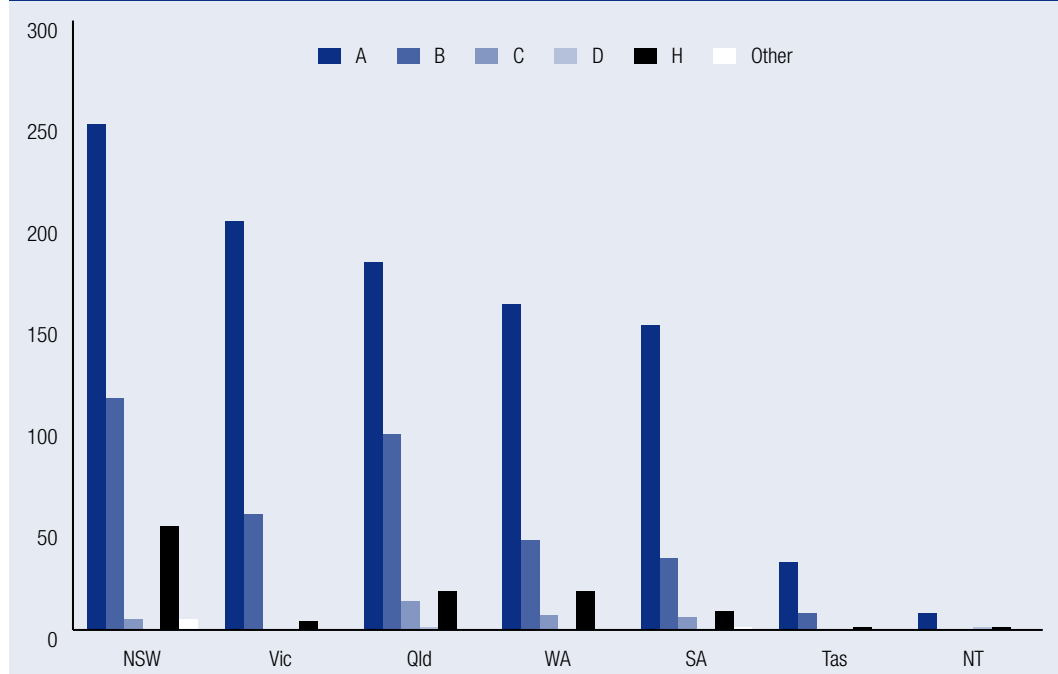
Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

	Number	%
A	982	64
B	354	23
C	32	2
D	2	< 1
H	104	7
Other	6	< 1
Unknown ^a	46	3
Total	1,526	100

a: Includes firearms about which insufficient information was available to ascertain category

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Figure 5: Category of stolen firearms, by jurisdiction (number)



Note: Excludes 46 firearms about which insufficient information was available to ascertain category

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Category of stolen firearms

For registration and licensing purposes, firearms in Australia are categorised according to a classification system based on firing action, calibre, and other criteria. Each jurisdiction recognises five primary categories—A, B, C, D, and H—although some

have created additional categories for specific firearms (e.g. paintball markers) (see Appendix B for a description of primary firearm categories). Categories A and B firearms are the most commonly registered firearms in Australia and may be owned for a range of sporting, recreational (primarily hunting) and occupational purposes. Categories C and D firearms are restricted firearms and are only used for a limited range of sporting (e.g. clay target

shooting), occupational (e.g. animal control), and official purposes. Category H firearms are exclusively handguns and are also restricted; they may only be acquired for specific sporting and occupational purposes.

Most of the firearms stolen in 2006–07 were category A (64%) or category B (23%) (Table 8); seven percent were category H; and just two percent were category C. Only two stolen firearms (or fewer than one percent of all stolen firearms) were classified as Category D. There was some variation between jurisdictions in the categories of firearms stolen (Figure 5; Table A2). In New South Wales and Queensland, category A firearms were less commonly stolen and category B firearms were more commonly stolen than in other jurisdictions. The proportion of reported stolen category H firearms was highest in New South Wales (11%) and Western Australia (8%). Category C firearms constituted four percent of firearms stolen in Queensland and three percent in South and Western Australia.

Registration status of stolen firearms

The majority (91%) of firearms stolen in 2006–07 were registered to private owners (Table 9), as was the case in 2004–05 and 2005–06. Two percent of stolen firearms were dealer stock, and five percent had not been registered. Almost all firearms reported stolen in Western Australia and Tasmania were registered at the time of theft, and around 80 percent or higher in other jurisdictions (Table 10). Two-thirds of unregistered firearms were category A firearms (Table 11).

Table 9: Registration status of stolen firearms

	Number	%
Registered ^a	1,389	91
Dealer stock ^b	32	2
Unregistered	75	5
Unknown	30	2
Total	1,526	100

a: Registered to private owner

b: Registered to firearms dealer

Note: Excludes one firearm whose registration status was recorded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table 10: Registration status of stolen firearms^a

	Registered		Unregistered	
	Number	%	Number	%
NSW	370	86	33	8
Vic	252	91	15	5
Qld	301	94	18	6
WA	231	99	1	< 1
SA	177	87	5	3
Tas	50	96	2	4
NT	8	80	1	10

a: Percentages are of all firearms stolen in that jurisdiction (i.e. including stolen firearms whose registration status was unknown or that were dealer stock). Percentages in table rows will therefore not total 100

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table 11: Category of stolen firearms by registration status

	Registered		Unregistered	
	Number	%	Number	%
A	908	66	36	66
B	341	25	10	18
C	31	2	1	2
D	1	< 1	1	2
H	88	6	7	13
Total	1,369	100	55	100

Note: Excludes 102 firearms that were dealer stock or of unknown registration status or whose category information was unknown or recorded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Firearm licence holders

Nine in ten firearm owners who reported a stolen firearm in 2006–07 held the appropriate licence(s) for the firearms they reported stolen (Table 12).

The percentage of licensed owners ranged from 88 percent, in New South Wales, to 100 percent, in the Northern Territory (Table 13). The highest percentage of unlicensed owners resided in New South Wales (12%) and Queensland (10%).

	Number	%
Licensed	569	91
Not licensed	45	7
Unknown	12	2
Total	626	100

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

	Licensed		Unlicensed		Total (n) ^a	% of all firearm owners
	No.	%	No.	%		
NSW	141	88	19	12	160	98
Vic	99	93	8	8	107	98
Qld	114	90	12	10	126	99
WA	113	97	3	3	116	100
SA	75	97	2	3	77	95
Tas	17	94	1	6	18	100
NT	10	100	0	0	10	100

a: Excludes 12 incidents in which the licence status of the firearm owner was unknown

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

A total of 1,057 firearm licenses were held by the 626 recorded firearm owners, an average of 1.7 licenses per owner. Eighty-six percent of owners held a category A licence, two-thirds a category B licence and seven percent each a category C or H licence (Table 14). Over all, half of the licences held were for a category A firearm; 39 percent, for a category B; four percent each, for categories C and H; less than one percent, for a category D; and one percent for other categories. Almost nine in ten (86%) of firearm owners reporting a theft in 2006–07 held a category A licence, and two-thirds held a category B licence (80% and 63% in 2005–06).

	Number	% of firearm owners	% of licences held
A	540	86	51
B	412	66	39
C	44	7	4
D	4	1	< 1
H	45	7	4
Other	12	2	1
Total	1,057		100

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Reasons for obtaining a firearms licence

To obtain a firearm licence, prospective firearm owners must state their reason(s) for applying to own or use a specific category of firearm. As was the case in 2005–06, recreational hunting was the most common reason cited for owning a category A (stated in 49% of applications for this category) or B (stated in 58% of applications for this category) licence, followed by primary production and sports/target shooting (Table 15). Category C licenses were primarily held for primary production purposes (68%), and category H licenses were mostly obtained to use handguns for sports/target shooting (33%) or in the security industry (22%).

Table 15: Reasons for owning a firearms licence by category type

	A		B		C		D		H	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sport/target shooting	118	22	110	26	4	9	1	25	15	33
Recreational hunting	263	49	237	58	5	11	1	25	2	4
Paintball shooting	9	2	1	< 1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Primary production	153	28	123	30	30	68	0	0	6	13
Security industry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	22
Vertebrate pest control	4	1	0	0	1	2	1	25	1	2
Animal welfare	2	< 1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other business or employment	3	1	3	1	2	5	1	25	2	4
Firearms collector	2	< 1	2	1	2	5	1	25	2	4
Dealer or armourer	6	1	5	1	4	9	3	75	5	11
Other	1	< 1	1	< 1	1	2	0	0	0	0
Unknown	114	21	37	9	5	11	0	0	8	18
Number of licence holders	540		412		44		4		45	

Notes: Excludes 12 licences held for other categories of firearms. Percentages are of firearm owners holding a specific licence. As owners may cite more than one reason for holding a specified licence, total column percentages will exceed 100

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

The nature of firearm theft incidents

Reporting of firearm thefts

Nintey-four percent of thefts reported from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 occurred the same period. Thirty-eight thefts (6%) occurred before 1 July 2006, of which 63 percent took place in the previous 12 months (i.e. from 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006). The oldest of these thefts dated back to the 1980s (one in 1980 and another in 1988).

Owners of registered firearms are required to notify police of lost or stolen firearms within a specified period following discovery of the theft. The period of notification varies between jurisdictions, from 24 hours, in Victoria and Tasmania, to a maximum of 14 days (in writing) in South Australia. In 2006–07, 56 percent of firearm thefts were reported within

a day of the theft's being discovered, either on the day of the incident (36%) or on the following day (20%) (Table 16), comparable with the 53% recorded for 2005–06 but lower than the 63% in 2004–05.

Distribution of periods to report a theft again varied between jurisdictions. In Western Australia, fewer than 50 percent (47%) of thefts were reported within a day of the theft; in Tasmania, all thefts were reported on the day of the theft or on the following day (Figure 6; Table A3). Commonness of reporting periods of more than two weeks was greatest in Western Australia (a quarter of all thefts) and in the Northern Territory (37% of all thefts). Some instances of delayed reporting occurred because owners were away (e.g. on holiday) or otherwise not resident at the time of the theft, or because they had not checked on their firearms for a while (particularly in cases in which firearms were stored on rural properties). In other cases, thefts were reported only after police had undertaken spot checks on owners regarding their licenses and/or firearms.

Table 16: Period between incident date and report date

	Number	%
0 (the day of the incident)	225	36
1 day	127	20
2 to 7 days	134	22
8 to 14 days	35	6
More than 2 weeks	102	16
Total	623	100

Note: Excludes three incidents whose date was unknown

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Persons reporting firearm thefts

Three-quarters of firearm thefts were reported by registered firearm owners (Table 17). In three percent (or 13) of these incidents, the owner reported the theft of both registered and unregistered firearms.

Table 17: Persons who reported firearm theft to police

	Number	%
Registered owner of firearm ^a	467	74
Owner of unregistered firearms	35	6
Owner of premises	35	6
Occupier of premises	21	3
Police initiated inquiry	13	2
Another licensed person	24	4
Unknown	2	< 1
Other	29	5
Relative or friend of firearm owner	15	2
Neighbour of firearm owner	3	< 1
Government/business employee	5	1
Firearms dealer	2	< 1
Other (no further detail)	5	1
Total	626	100

a: Includes 13 incidents in which both registered and unregistered firearms were reported stolen by a registered owner

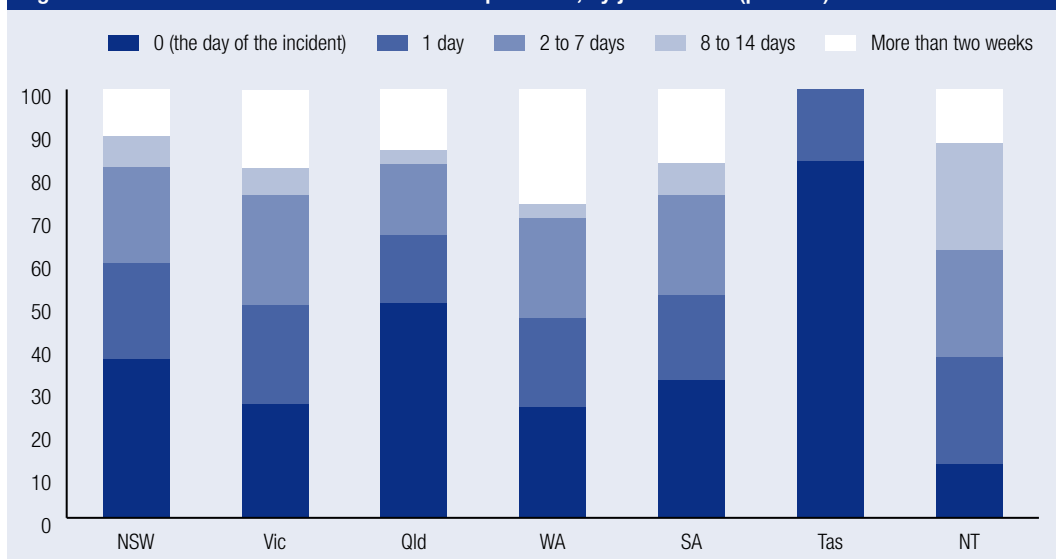
Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Six of these owners were subsequently found to be in breach of firearm regulations, and three were charged.

A small number of firearm owners (35, or 6% of victims) notified the police of the theft of unregistered firearms. Possession of an unregistered firearm is a recognised offence in all states and territories, and for this reason it is probable that this collection underestimates the number of owners of unregistered firearms stolen. Twenty-two of the 35 owners (63%) were eventually found to be in breach of firearms laws and regulations, and half of these (11) were charged and/or received disciplinary action. Of those not charged, a reason of not being in the public interest was cited for four; in another case, charges were dropped so as not to affect the owner's employment prospects. In the remaining cases, it was not known why charges had not been laid.

Police-initiated inquiries detected thefts in 13 incidents (2%). These thefts were uncovered during routine licence and storage checks of firearm owners; following execution of warrants for drug and illegal-firearm searches; or in the course of other police activity (e.g. discovery of stolen vehicle, or call to an attempted suicide).

Figure 6: Period between incident date and report date, by jurisdiction (percent)



Note: Excludes three incidents in which the incident date was not recorded

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Circumstances of theft

As found in 2005–06, the majority of firearm thefts (86%) resulted from an unlawful entry (i.e. break-in) of premises or a vehicle (Table 18). The next-most common scenario was for a firearm to have been misplaced and presumed stolen (4%). Firearms stolen during a robbery, whereby the victim was physically attacked or threatened with violence, accounted for two percent of all reported thefts. Eleven of the fifteen robberies that occurred in 2006–07 involved the theft of handguns from security guards during raids on armoured vans. In each event, as well as the security guards' handguns, cash was stolen.

Table 18: Circumstances of theft

	Number	%
Theft, following unlawful entry	535	85
Theft, following robbery	15	2
Misplaced presumed stolen	23	4
Presumed stolen in transit	5	1
Not returned to owner following loan to another person	3	< 1
Other ^a	23	4
Unknown	22	3
Total	626	100

a: Includes theft by persons residing in or visiting premises from which the firearm was stolen (stealing) and one incident of home invasion

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Location of firearm thefts

Firearms were predominantly stolen from private residential premises (76% of all thefts) (Table 19), as they were in previous years. Vehicles were the source of stolen firearms in 10 percent of incidents, and business premises were in nine percent. The specific location from which the firearm was stolen was mostly a room in a dwelling (44%) or a garage or shed (31%) (Table 20).

Firearms stolen from business premises were generally located in garages or sheds (28%), administrative offices (15%), or warehouses (13%). Another 11 percent of such firearms were stolen from retail outlets.

Table 19: Location of incidents of firearm theft

	Number	%
Private residential premises	475	76
Business premises	54	9
Other accommodation	4	1
Vehicle	62	10
In transit	6	1
Other ^a	21	3
Unknown	4	1
Total	626	100

a: Includes outbuilding, shack, vacant rural block, pine plantation, motor home, shooting range, military storage barracks, and 'on the street'

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table 20: Specific location of incidents of firearm theft

	Number	%
Room in dwelling	275	44
Caravan	11	2
Rural or bushland	18	3
Warehouse or factory	9	1
Carried on person	6	1
Government premises	1	< 1
Retail location ^a	6	1
Garage or shed	194	31
Private driveway	20	3
Public road or car park	29	5
Administrative office	8	1
Firearms range	3	1
Club ^b	3	1
Other ^c	20	3
Unknown	22	3
Total	625	100

a: Includes firearm and hunting-supply store, sports and camping store, general wholesaler, and unspecified

b: Includes pistol club, RSL club, and unspecified

c: Includes boat weir, freight depot, secured yard, work area under house, roof cavity, backyard of private residential premises, paintball field, the pub, and unspecified

Note: Excludes one incident whose specific location was recorded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table 21: Location of firearm thefts, by type of firearm stolen

	Rifle		Shotgun		Air rifle		Handgun	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Private residential premises	741	85	329	88	112	80	66	64
Business premises	46	5	26	7	21	15	23	22
Other accommodation	2	< 1	0	0	1	1	4	4
Vehicle	52	6	9	2	2	1	0	0
In transit	2	< 1	1	< 1	0	0	1	1
Other	25	3	8	2	4	3	10	10
Unknown	5	1	2	1	0	0	0	0
Total	873	100	375	100	140	100	104	100

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Vehicles from which firearms were stolen tended to have been parked in private driveways or public roads (32% each) rather than in a garage or shed (10%). Of note are the nine thefts from vehicles (15%) that were parked and unattended in a rural or bushland location.

The majority of rifles (85%), shotguns (88%), air rifles (80%) and handguns (64%) were stolen from private residential premises, as would be expected given that firearms were primarily stolen from this location (Table 21). A sizeable proportion (22%) of handguns was also stolen from business premises, but none were stolen from vehicles. The few handguns reported stolen on a yearly basis has seen fluctuation in the proportion known to have been taken from vehicles: two percent in 2004–05 and 12 percent in 2005–06.

Firearm thefts by remoteness

The geographic distribution of firearm thefts can be described with relation to remoteness of the theft incident. The ABS Remoteness Index (ABS 2006) classifies differing degrees of remoteness based on the minimum road distance from a specified population locality to five service centres of differing population size. The index defines five remoteness areas—major city, inner regional, outer regional, remote, and very remote.

The distribution of thefts by remoteness varied somewhat in the larger jurisdictions. Inner regional areas were the predominant location for theft in New South Wales; major city areas, in Western Australia;

and major city or inner regional locales, in South Australia (Figure 7; Table A4). In Queensland, most thefts were evenly distributed among Brisbane and inner and outer regional areas of the state.

Table 22 compares the distribution of thefts with that of the resident population among remoteness areas in each state and territory. (A preferable comparison would use proportion of licensed owners among remoteness areas, but collation of such data is not feasible at this stage). As found in 2005–06, the distribution of thefts in the largest five jurisdictions was proportionally lower in major city areas and proportionally higher in inner regional (except Queensland) and outer regional areas than the distribution of population (Table 22). The proportion of thefts in remote and very remote locations in Western Australia was also higher than would be expected on the basis of population size. The distribution of thefts in Tasmania was little different from that of the population but in the Northern Territory was higher in the more remote locations.

Around seven in ten firearm thefts from private residential or business premises occurred in major cities or inner regional centres (Figure 8; Table A5). In 2005–06, the highest proportion of thefts (38%) from business premises took place in outer regional areas, but in the following year, thefts primarily took place in inner regional areas (39%). The highest proportion of thefts from vehicles also took place in inner regional areas (32%), but the distribution among major city, outer regional, and remote areas was even, at a fifth of all vehicle-based thefts each.

Figure 7: Firearm thefts, by remoteness and jurisdiction (percent)



Note: Excludes four incidents whose postcode location was not recorded

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table 22: Distribution of firearm theft incidents and population, by remoteness and jurisdiction

	Major city		Inner regional		Outer regional		Remote		Very remote	
	% FT	% pop	% FT	% pop	% FT	% pop	% FT	% pop	% FT	% pop
NSW	33	71	45	21	17	8	4	1	2	< 1
Vic	39	74	50	21	11	5	0	0	–	–
Qld	29	52	26	26	30	18	10	3	5	2
WA	32	70	18	12	21	10	20	5	10	3
SA	38	72	36	12	16	12	8	3	1	1
Tas	–	–	61	64	33	34	6	2	0	<
NT	–	–	–	–	30	53	40	22	30	25

Notes: Excludes four incidents whose postcode location was not recorded. FT = Firearm thefts; pop = population

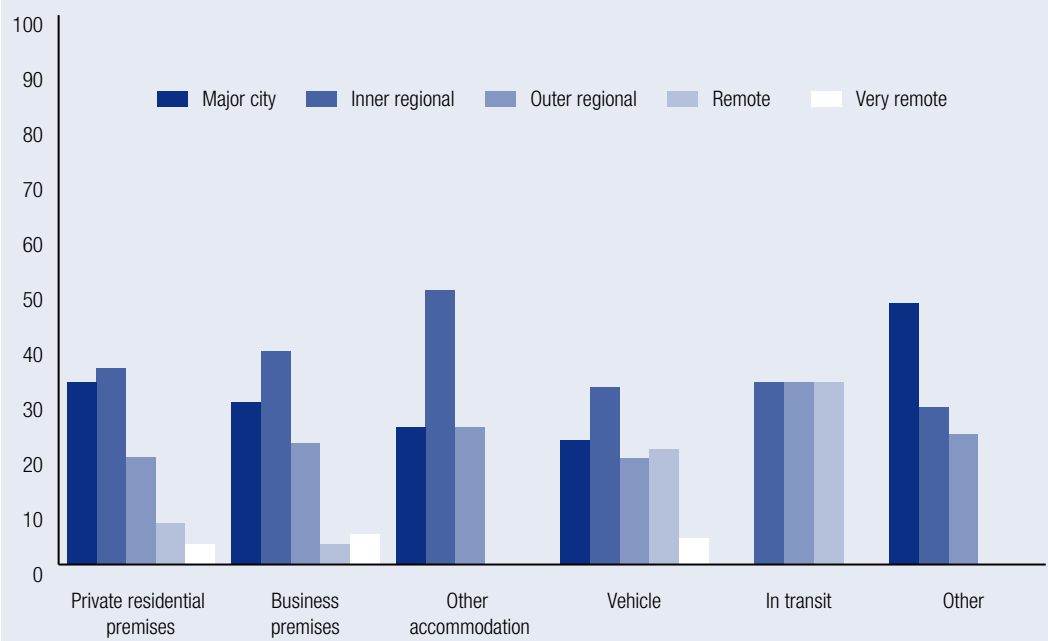
Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Sixty-eight percent of rifles and 73 percent of shotguns were stolen from a major city or inner regional location (Table 23). Major cities were the most likely sources (44% and 49% respectively) of stolen air rifles and handguns.

How offenders gain access to premises and vehicles

Offenders accessed private residential premises primarily through force (42%), whereas the method used to breach business premises was relatively

Figure 8: Firearm thefts, by remoteness and location type (percent)



Note: Excludes four incidents whose postcode location was not recorded and four incidents whose location was unknown

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table 23: Firearm theft, by type of firearm and remoteness area

	Rifle		Shotgun		Air rifle		Handgun	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Major city	277	32	120	32	61	44	51	49
Inner regional	313	36	155	41	46	33	30	29
Outer regional	169	20	68	18	21	15	10	10
Remote	75	9	24	6	9	6	11	11
Very remote	31	4	8	2	3	2	2	2
Total	865	100	375	100	140	100	104	100

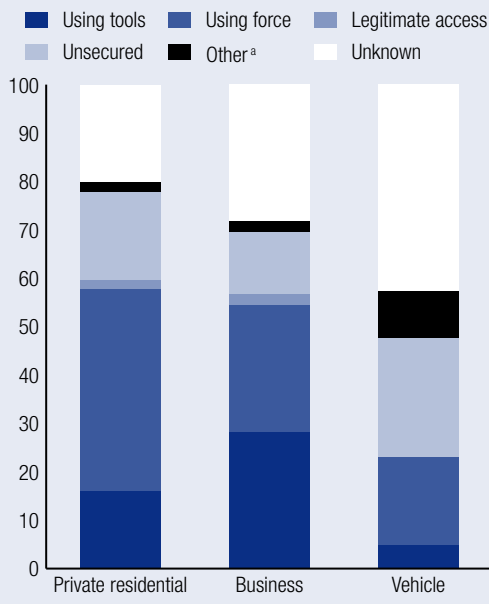
Note: Excludes eight rifles whose postcode location was not recorded

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

evenly distributed between force (28%) and the use of tools (26%) (Figure 9; Table A6). The most common method by which vehicles were penetrated (25%) was opening a door left unlocked. Forcing a car door or window accounted for another 18 percent of thefts from vehicles.

To gain entry in incidents of general burglary (i.e. thefts where goods other than firearms were also stolen), the most common method employed was force (46%; Table 24). This was also the case in incidents of theft in which only firearms were stolen (25%), but only marginally so, as another 23 percent of such thefts involved entry into an unlocked building

Figure 9: Method of access to premises or vehicle



a: Other includes using threat and using stolen key

Note: Excludes 14 incidents in which method of entry was recorded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table 24: Method of gaining entry to premises or vehicle, by type of theft

	General burglary		Firearm-only theft	
	No.	%	No.	%
Using tools	62	19	32	13
Using force	150	46	63	25
Using threat	1	< 1	0	0
Using stolen key	6	2	1	< 1
Legitimate access	1	< 1	10	4
Stole vehicle	4	1	1	< 1
Premises unsecured	47	15	57	23
Other	2	1	1	< 1
Unknown	51	16	86	34
Total	324	100	251	100

Note: Excludes 29 incidents in which the theft of other goods was unknown or was recorded as not applicable, and 22 incidents in which method of entry was recorded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

or vehicle. Further analysis reveals that in incidents of firearm-only theft from unsecured premises, firearms were more likely to have been taken from garages or sheds (53%, or 30) than from rooms within the building (19%, or 11).

The main known point of entry to premises or vehicles from which firearm theft was doors (67%) rather than windows (28%). Doors were mostly forced (43%), but the proportion of incidents in which they had been left unlocked (28%) was similar to the proportion that needed tools to open them (24%; Table 25). Windows, however, tended to be locked and consequently forced in order to gain entry (80%).

Table 25: Point of entry, by method of entry^a

	Window		Door	
	No.	%	No.	%
Using tools	13	11	68	24
Using force	94	80	122	43
Other	0	0	13	5
Premises unsecured	11	9	80	28
Total	118	100	283	100

a: Excludes 26 incidents in which point of entry was not a window or a door; those in which method of entry was not known or not applicable; and 199 in which an offender was admitted using force (robbery) or had legitimate access to the premises

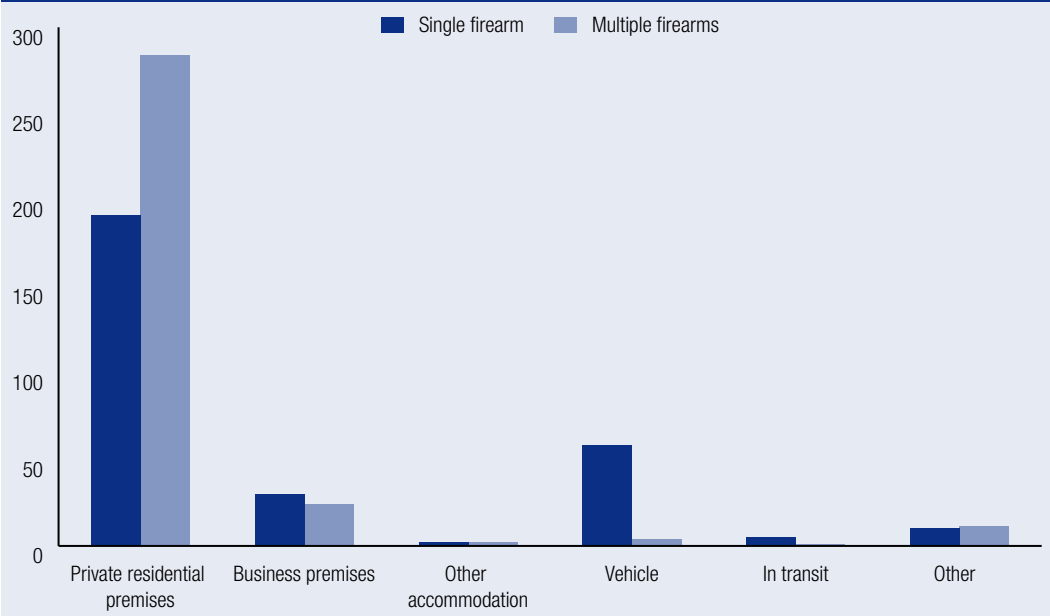
Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Items stolen

Firearms

As stated previously, just under half (48%) of firearm-theft incidents resulted in the theft of a single firearm. One in five incidents (21%) involved the theft of two firearms, and 12 percent involved the theft of three firearms (Table 26). The remaining incidents resulted in the theft of four to 25 firearms. Firearm thefts from private residential premises resulted generally in the theft of more than one firearm (284, or 60% of all thefts from this location: Figure 10), as was the case in 2004–05 and 2005–06. In contrast, the majority of thefts from vehicles (58, or 94%) were single-firearm thefts. Firearm owners may be less inclined to transport multiple firearms at any one time, which may explain why single thefts

Figure 10: Single versus multiple firearm theft, by location type (number)



Note: Excludes four incidents whose location was not known

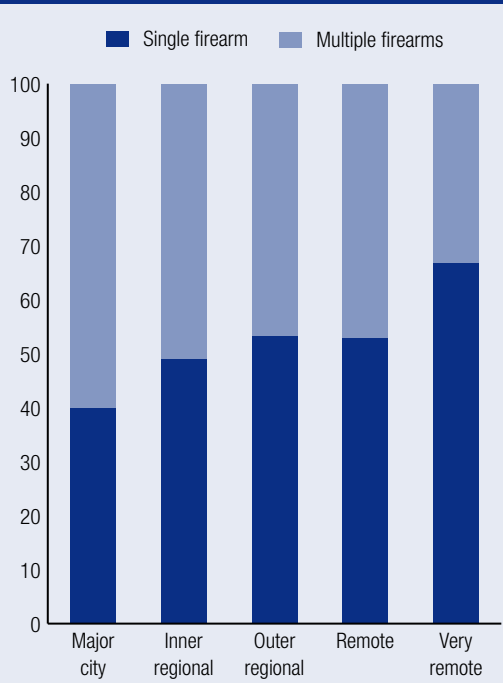
Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table 26: Number of firearms stolen per theft

Number of firearms	Incidents (no.)	% of incidents
One	301	48
Two	133	21
Three	72	12
Four	39	6
Five	30	5
Six	16	3
Seven	12	2
Eight	7	1
Nine	3	< 1
Ten	2	< 1
Eleven	3	< 1
Twelve	2	< 1
Thirteen	2	< 1
Fourteen	1	< 1
Fifteen	1	< 1
Seventeen	1	< 1
Twenty-five	1	< 1
Total	626	100

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Figure 11: Single versus multiple firearm theft, by remoteness category (percent)



Note: Excludes four incidents whose postcode location was not recorded

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

predominate when vehicles are targeted. Thefts from business premises tended to result in the theft of a single firearm too. Multiple firearms were stolen in six in every ten (60%) incidents in major cities, and a single firearm was stolen in 67 percent of incidents in very remote areas (Figure 11). In other remoteness categories, the incidence of single and multiple firearm theft was almost equal.

Ammunition

Ammunition was stolen in 27 percent of incidents in 2006–07 (Table 27). Data provided on the calibre, amount, and type of ammunition stolen again proved highly variable, but the amount of detail provided in 127 cases allows some comment. Overall, 200 sets of ammunition were stolen, two-thirds (67%) of which were for rifles; a quarter (26%), for shotguns; and four percent each, for air rifles and handguns. One set of ammunition was stolen in 58 percent of applicable thefts; two sets, in 21 percent. Six sets of ammunition were stolen in each of three incidents.

Table 27: Theft of ammunition

	Number	%
Ammunition stolen	168	27
Not stolen	402	64
Unknown	55	9
Total	625	100

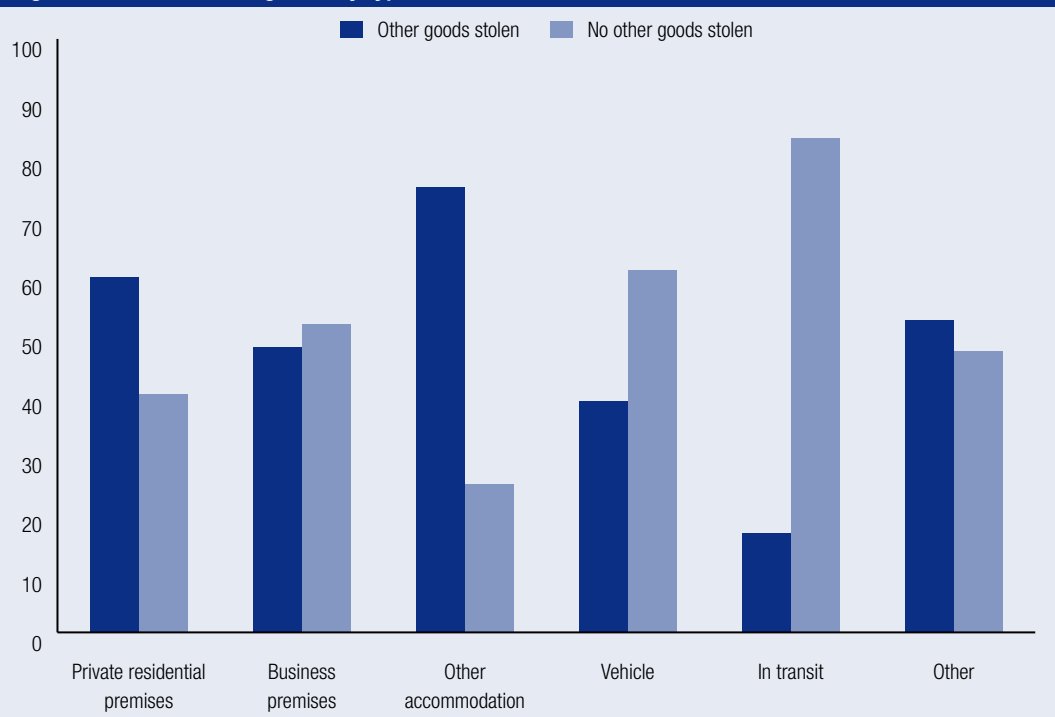
Note: Excludes one incident in which the theft of ammunition was recorded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Other, non-firearm goods

Theft incidents in which goods other than firearms were also stolen may be classified as a general burglary (see Mouzos & Sakurai 2006), and thefts in which only firearms and ammunition are taken may be considered a targeted theft. Sixty percent of thefts reported in 2004–06 were deemed to be general burglaries; in 2006–07, 54 percent of thefts may be classified as such (Table 28). General burglaries comprised 60 percent of incidents that

Figure 12: Theft of other goods, by type of location



Note: Excludes 31 incidents in which the theft of other goods was unknown or recorded as not applicable or whose location was unknown

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

occurred at private residential premises, but at business premises general burglaries and firearm-only thefts were almost equally common (Figure 12). Thefts from vehicles mostly included just firearm(s) (60%).

Table 28: Theft of other goods

	Number	%
Other goods stolen	335	54
Other goods not stolen	262	42
Unknown	24	4
Total	621	100

Note: Excludes five incidents in which the theft of other goods was recorded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table 29: Types of other goods stolen

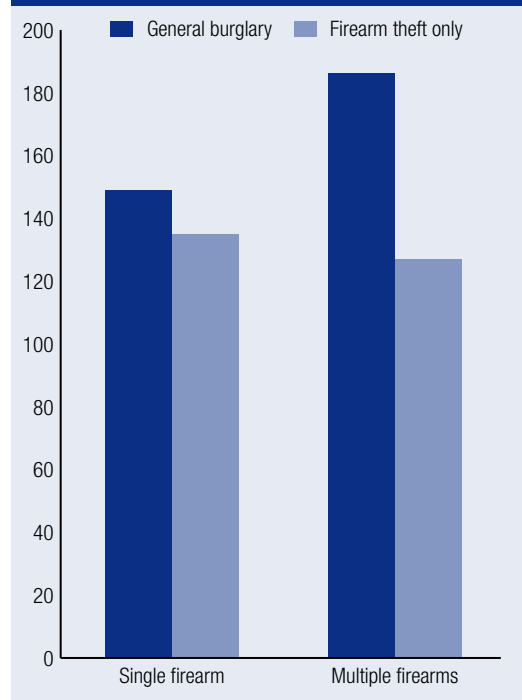
	Number of general burglaries	% of general burglaries
Tools	100	30
Cash	88	26
Jewellery/watches	70	21
Personal electronic items	64	19
Storage items	51	15
Home entertainment	50	15
Recreational items	35	10
Firearms accessories	34	10
Other household items	33	10
Vehicles	30	9
Personal items	26	8
ID and negotiable documents	24	7
PCs and accessories	24	7
Vehicle accessories	23	7
Collectible items	22	7
Household electrical appliances	22	7
Weapons (non-firearms)	21	6
DVDs, CDs, videos, games etc	20	6
Alcohol and other drugs	15	5
Agricultural items	15	5
Keys	10	3
Other	14	4

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table 29 lists other goods commonly stolen in incidents of reported firearm theft. Because the amount of detail provided on the type and number of individual items stolen per theft incident varied between jurisdictions, data presented in Table 29 simply indicate the number of incidents in which a particular category of good was stolen. Tools, cash, jewellery/watches and personal electronic items were again the most commonly stolen other items, probably reflecting the distribution of items normally taken during burglaries.

Analyses of previous data found a statistically significant association between the number of firearms stolen and the theft of other goods and suggested that some multiple-firearm thefts could be viewed as opportunistic burglaries in which offenders accessed as many goods as possible. In 2006–07, 60 percent of multiple-firearm thefts, compared with 53 percent of single-firearm thefts (Figure 13), were characterised by the theft of other, non-firearm goods, but the association was not significant.

Figure 13: Type of theft, by single/multiple firearm theft (number)



Note: Excludes 29 incidents in which the theft of other goods was unknown or recorded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Compliance with the law

Security and storage

Firearms stolen in 60 percent of theft incidents were stored in a firearm safe or equally secure receptacle (Table 30), slightly higher than the 55 percent reported for 2005–06. In nine percent of incidents, the firearms had been left in a vehicle; in six percent, stowed in a cupboard or wardrobe. One in ten thefts was of unsecured firearms, and seven percent of incidents were characterised by the owner's not knowing where the firearms were located at the time of the theft.

Ammunition had been stored in a locked receptacle in half of incidents of ammunition theft; left in a vehicle in five percent; left in an unlocked receptacle in four percent; and left 'in the open' in four percent (Table 31). In a quarter of thefts, however, it was not known where ammunition had been stored.

Firearm regulations require ammunition to be stored separately from firearms. Data from the previous two years found quite different practices in ammunition storage: 28 percent of owners reporting ammunition theft in 2004–05 had stored their ammunition with their firearms, whereas in 2005–06, 68 percent of owners had done so. In 2006–07 this percentage dropped again, to 35 percent, though this was based on fewer than half (71) of ammunition-theft cases.

Table 30: Firearm storage

	Number	%
Safe or other secure receptacle ^a	372	60
Strong room/vault	9	1
On display	5	1
In vehicle	56	9
Carried on person	11	2
Unsecured or in the open	64	10
Unknown	42	7
Other	65	10
Cupboard/wardrobe	39	6
Box	7	1
Shipping container	6	1
Loft or roof space	2	< 1
Locker	2	< 1
Pallets	2	< 1
Under bed	2	< 1
Locked boot of car/ute tray	2	< 1
Bag	1	< 1
Caged area in car park	1	< 1
Freezer chest	1	< 1
Total	624	100

a: In four incidents, the firearms were stored in a safe or other secure receptacle in a vehicle

Note: Excludes two incidents in which the type of firearm storage was recorded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table 31: Ammunition storage

	Number	%
Locked receptacle	87	52
<i>Same location as firearm(s)</i>	23	14
<i>Separate from firearm(s)</i>	40	24
Unlocked receptacle	7	4
<i>Same location as firearm(s)</i>	1	1
<i>Separate from firearm(s)</i>	4	2
Unsecured/in the open	6	4
<i>Same location as firearm(s)</i>	1	1
<i>Separate from firearm(s)</i>	2	1
Vehicle	9	5
Carried on person	2	1
Other ^a	13	8
Unknown	44	26
Total	168	100
<i>Total same location as firearm(s)</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Total separate location to firearm(s)</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>65</i>

a: Includes loaded in stolen firearm (nine); in cupboard drawer (one); on top of cupboard (one); under bed (one); and not defined (one)

Note: Numbers in italics refer only to those incidents in which storage arrangements for both firearm(s) and ammunition, and whether they were stored separately or together, are known

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Compliance status

The proportion of storage-compliant owners amongst firearm owners reporting a firearm theft has remained the same over the last three years, with around half considered compliant regarding the securing of their firearms (52% in 2006–07; Table 32). Just under three in ten owners (27%) were found not to have complied. An unknown compliance status was recorded for a fifth

Table 32: Status of compliance with firearm storage arrangements

	Number	%
Complied	325	52
Not complied	172	27
Unknown	129	21
Total	626	100

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

of owners, in some cases reflecting insufficient information on storage arrangements to adequately indicate compliance status.

Incidence of compliance per jurisdiction ranged from 40 percent, in the Northern Territory, to 85 percent, in South Australia (on the basis of thefts in which compliance was known; Table 33). From 2004–05 to 2005–06, four jurisdictions (Qld, WA, SA and Tasmania) improved their degree of compliance. Three of these (WA, SA and Tasmania) recorded another increase in compliance in 2006–07; compliance in Queensland remained unchanged (Figure 14). The only jurisdiction to record a decrease in compliance was New South Wales: a decrease from 76 percent to 66 percent.

Data presented in Table 34 compare the compliance status in firearm thefts in which firearms were stored in locked receptacles, unlocked receptacles, or vehicles or were left unsecured. Overall, incidents of firearm theft in which the firearm had been stored in a locked receptacle were considered compliant, often despite whether the premises were secured at the time of the theft or the receptacle had not been secured to the door or wall of the building. When an owner was found to be non-compliant, it was generally because the offender had been able to locate the key to the gun safe or was able to remove the whole receptacle.

Owners who had had firearms stolen from unlocked receptacles or who had not secured their firearms were found in all but one case not to have complied

Table 33: Incidence of safe-storage compliance, by jurisdiction

	Complied		Not complied	
	Number	%	Number	%
NSW	92	66	48	34
Vic	63	64	35	36
Qld	44	55	36	45
WA	49	60	32	40
SA	60	85	11	15
Tas	13	77	4	23
NT	4	40	6	60

Note: Excludes 129 incidents in which storage compliance was recorded as unknown

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Figure 14: Trend in storage compliance, by jurisdiction (percent)



Source: AIC NFTMP 2004-07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

with storage regulations (or compliance status was unknown). (The one incident in which the owner was considered compliant was the theft a handgun from an unattended storeroom in a retail store.) Similarly, firearm owners who reported the theft of firearms from unlocked vehicles were considered non-compliant.

The compliance status of owners who had left their firearms in locked vehicles was less clear. Seventeen firearm owners who had had firearms stolen from locked vehicles were considered not to have complied with storage regulations; nine as having complied; and 11 as having unknown compliance status. Of those owners who had complied, four had stored their firearm in an approved receptacle within the car, and another three had made some attempt to secure their firearms by other means (e.g. in the boot of the car or under a locked ute cover). What attempt, if any, had been made by the remaining two owners to secure their firearms in the vehicle was not obvious from the data supplied; hence it is difficult to identify the reason(s) for which these owners were considered compliant in comparison with the group of 17 owners who were not. Further analysis of circumstances of individual thefts from

locked vehicles suggests that the recording of non-compliance may have been influenced by the following additional factors:

- the additional theft of ammunition,
- some uncertainty as to how the vehicle was broken into (therefore casting doubt as to whether the vehicle was locked in the first place), and/or
- the location of the parked vehicle (e.g. public areas outside shopping malls, golf course, boat ramp).

In incidents in which single firearms were stolen, just under half of owners were compliant (45% compliant versus 55% non-compliant; see Figure 15), but a much higher proportion of owners were compliant in multiple-firearms theft (82% compliant; 18% non-compliant; $\chi^2(1) = 78.13$; $p < .05$; Cramér's $V = 0.3536$). Compliance was also greater by owners whose firearms were stolen as part of a general burglary (71% compliant; 29% non-compliant; Figure 16) than by those from whom only firearms were stolen (58% compliance; 42% non-compliant: $\chi^2(1) = 19.99$; $p < .05$; Cramér's $V = 0.1265$).

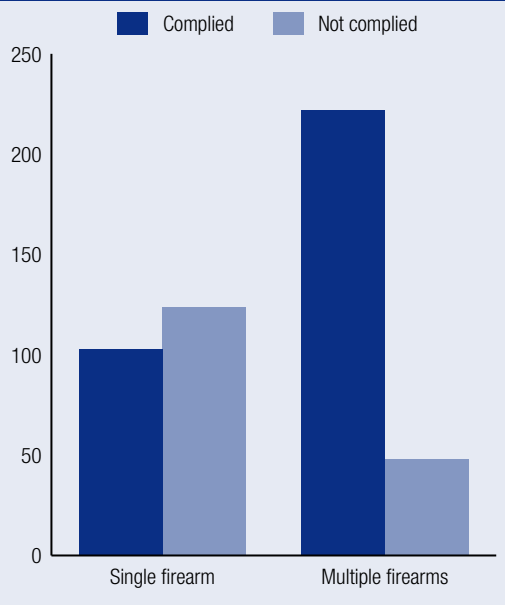
Table 34: Type of firearm storage and status of storage compliance (number)

	Complied	Not complied	Unknown
Locked receptacle			
Locked receptacle (no other information)	17	2	18
Locked receptacle, secured premises	225	11	19
Locked and secured receptacle, secured premises	146	1	5
Locked and unsecured receptacle, secured premises	28	6	3
Locked receptacle, unsecured premises	44	13	10
Locked and secured receptacle, unsecured premises	19	5	3
Locked and unsecured receptacle, unsecured premises	4	4	2
Unlocked receptacle			
Unlocked receptacle (no other information)	1	4	0
Unlocked receptacle, secured premises	0	18	4
Unlocked and secured receptacle, secured premises	0	3	1
Unlocked and unsecured receptacle, secured premises	0	2	0
Unlocked receptacle, unsecured premises	0	12	1
Unlocked and secured receptacle, unsecured premises	0	2	0
Unlocked and unsecured receptacle, unsecured premises	0	2	0
Vehicle			
Locked vehicle (no other information)	5	17	8
Locked receptacle, locked vehicle	4	0	3
Unlocked receptacle, locked vehicle	0	0	0
Unlocked vehicle (no other information)	0	13	1
Locked receptacle, unlocked vehicle	0	1	0
Unlocked receptacle, unlocked vehicle	0	1	0
Unsecured			
Unsecured (no other information)	0	25	4
Unsecured, secured premises	0	18	2
Unsecured, unsecured premises	0	18	2
Unsecured, locked vehicle	0	3	0
Unsecured, unlocked vehicle	0	1	0

Note: Excludes 93 incidents in relation to which information on security of firearm was unknown or not applicable (including incidents in which security of premises was known but security of firearm was not) or in which other methods of storage were used to secure firearms

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Figure 15: Storage compliance, by number of firearms stolen (number)

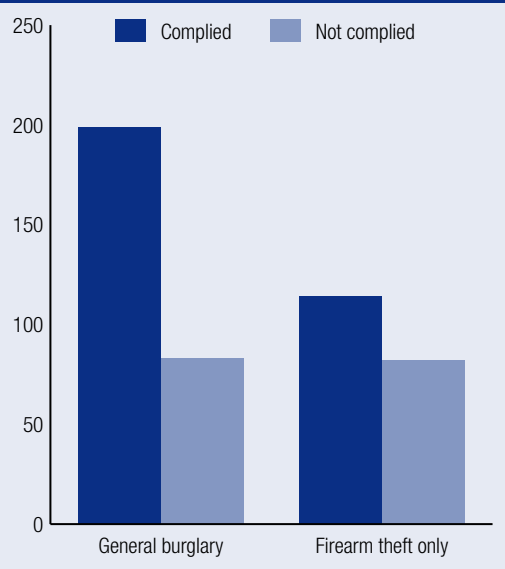


Note: Excludes 129 incidents in relation to which compliance was unknown
 Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Method of accessing firearms

Firearm laws in each state and territory stipulate the approved storage and safekeeping requirements for specific categories of firearm. Six in ten firearm owners who reported a firearm theft in 2006–07 were determined to have stored their firearms according to these requirements. Nonetheless, in 60 percent of thefts, otherwise secure receptacles were penetrated by the application of force or through the use of tools (36% and 24% respectively; Table 35). One in five incidents (19%) was characterised by the offender’s finding the key to the firearm safe, and in another fifth (18%), by the removal of the entire receptacle, in most cases because the receptacle had not been secured to the floor or wall. Previous analyses have found that stealing the entire receptacle tended to associate with general burglaries rather than firearm-only thefts, and the same was observed in 2006–07. Three-quarters of thefts involving the removal of a locked firearm safe occurred during the course of a general burglary.

Figure 16: Storage compliance, by type of theft (number)



Note: Excludes 148 incidents in relation to which compliance was unknown or in which the theft of other goods was unknown or recorded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Few firearms left in vehicles were properly secured at the time of the theft; hence the majority (75%) could be taken once the vehicle had been broken into. In 17 percent of vehicle-associated firearm theft, the firearm was lost because the vehicle was stolen. The securing of firearms in other repositories (e.g. wardrobes) was also considerably less careful. Fifty-nine percent of thefts from such repositories were aided by the receptacle’s being either not locked at the time of the theft or otherwise not secured.

Table 35: Method used to access firearm storage repository

	Safe/other secure receptacle		Vehicle		Other ^a	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Using tools	81	24	1	2	10	16
Using force	121	36	2	4	12	19
Using threat	1	< 1	0	0	0	0
Key located/broke combination	64	19	1	2	0	0
Legitimate access	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stole vehicle	1	< 1	8	17	0	0
Entire receptacle stolen	61	18	0	0	4	6
Other	1	< 1	0	0	0	
Unsecured	9	2	36	75	37	59
Total	339	100	48	100	63	100

a: Includes firearms stored in strong rooms or other receptacles such as wardrobes/cupboards, boxes, etc., or on display

Note: Excludes 74 incidents in which firearms were carried on the person or described as unsecured at their time of theft or in which the method of storage was unknown or not applicable and 102 in which the method by which the firearm was accessed was recorded as unknown or not applicable to storage types included in table

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Prosecution of non-compliance

A total of 162 firearm owners (26%) who reported a firearm theft in 2006–07 were found to be in breach of firearm laws and/or regulations (Table 36), similar to the 24 percent found in breach in 2005–06. The lowest proportion of breaching was recorded in South Australia (17%); the highest, in the Northern Territory (56%), although the latter is based on few incidents (Figure 17). Jurisdictional breaching rates were much the same as recorded in 2005–06, although New South Wales recorded some increase (from 18% to 26%) and the Northern Territory recorded a decrease (from 69% to 56%).

Sixty-one percent of the firearm owners who were found in breach of firearm laws or regulations were charged; underwent disciplinary action; or had charges or disciplinary action pending (Table 37). This represents a decrease from the 75 percent

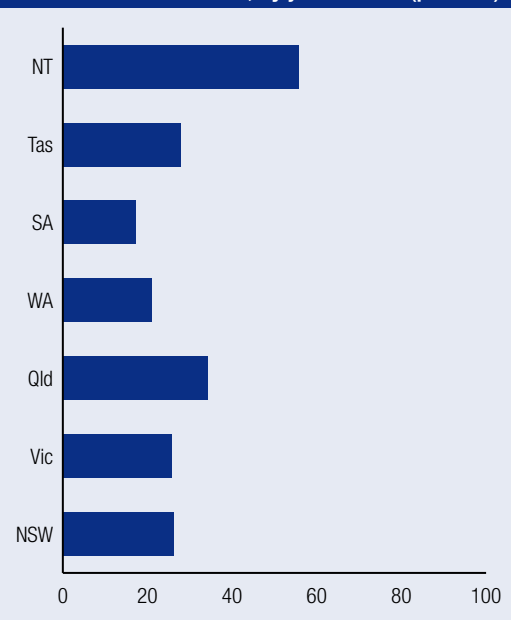
of such firearm owners prosecuted in 2005–06. The proportion of firearm owners found in breach but not prosecuted was consequently higher than in 2005–06: 27 percent rather than 22 percent. Rates of prosecution varied considerably, and more so than they did in 2005–06, by jurisdiction (Table 38):

Table 36: Firearm owners found in breach of firearm laws

	Number	%
In breach	162	26
Not in breach	404	65
Unknown	58	9
Not applicable	2	< 1
Total	626	100

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Figure 17: Firearm owners found in breach of firearm laws, by jurisdiction (percent)



Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

lowest in Victoria (39% prosecuted and 39% not prosecuted) and Queensland (47% prosecuted and 49% not prosecuted), and highest in South Australia (93% prosecuted).

Police discretion was applied in some incidents to waive the laying of firearm offences. The main reason given in such cases (16 of the 44 firearm owners eventually not prosecuted) was that the pursuit of charges was not in the public interest. Other reasons cited for not prosecuting include the owner's admitting wrongdoing and showing sufficient remorse; the owner having deceased or had a mental-health impairment (in this latter case, the owner's licence was revoked); or that prosecution would affect the firearm owner's employment. In two incidents there was insufficient evidence to proceed, and in four cases, charges could not be laid, as the statute of limitations had expired.

A total of 108 charges were laid or pending against owners of stolen firearms (Table 39). Thirteen owners had multiple charges brought against them, with one owner charged with four different firearm offences.

Table 37: Prosecution of firearm owners found in breach of firearm laws

	Number	%
Charged	65	40
Charges pending	25	15
Disciplinary action	4	3
Disciplinary action pending	5	3
No prosecution	44	27
Unknown	19	12
Total	162	100

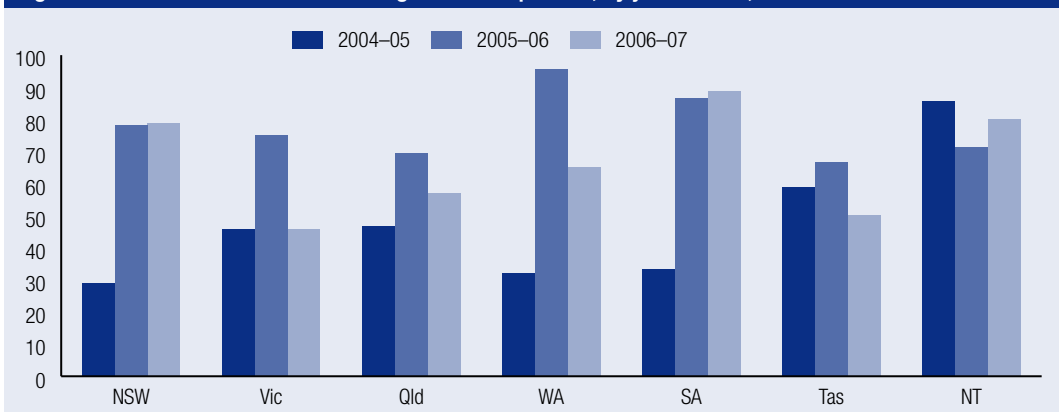
Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table 38: Prosecution of firearm owners found in breach of firearm laws, by jurisdiction (number)

	Charged/pending	Disciplinary action / pending	No prosecution	Unknown
NSW	28	4	8	3
Vic	9	2	11	6
Qld	18	2	21	2
WA	16	0	3	5
SA	12	1	0	1
Tas	3	0	0	2
NT	4	0	1	0
Australia	90	9	44	19

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Figure 18: Prosecution rates for storage non-compliance, by jurisdiction, 2004–05 to 2006–07



Source: AIC NFTMP 2004–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Two-thirds of charges (65%) related to the failure to secure or correctly store firearms, and a sixth (17%) were for unlawful or unlicensed possession of a firearm (80% and 7% respectively in 2005–06). Fewer than 10 percent of charges referred to possession of unregistered firearms (7%) or breach of licence conditions (5%).

Table 39: Type of offences firearm owners charged with^a

	Number	%
Unlawful or unlicensed possession of a firearm	18	17
Possession of an unregistered firearm	7	7
Failure to secure or correctly store firearms	70	65
Failure to secure or correctly store ammunition	1	1
Breach of licence conditions	5	5
Other ^b	7	7
Total charges	108	100

a: Excludes 11 incidents in which, though the firearm owner was prosecuted, the nature of the offence was recorded as unknown

b: 'Other' includes illegal sale of firearms (one), unlawful supply of a firearm (delivered to unlicensed person) (one), failure to keep correct records (firearms dealer) (one), and failure to notify of loss/theft/destruction of firearm (two). No information was provided on the remaining two charges recorded as 'other'

Note: In 13 incidents, multiple charges were laid. The total number of offences therefore exceeds the total number of firearm owners prosecuted
Source: ACT NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Twenty-seven of the 45 firearm owners (60%) who did not hold a valid firearm licence (either for the stolen firearm or at all) were found to be in breach of firearm laws and regulations. Of these, 13 (48%) were prosecuted for a total of 21 firearm offences. The majority of charges (12 or 57%) related to unlawful or unlicensed possession of a firearm. A similar rate of breaching was recorded for the 54 owners who reported the theft of unregistered firearms (56%, or 30), but the proportion eventually prosecuted was higher (60%, or 18). Twenty-eight charges were brought against this group: one-quarter (25%, or 7) for possession of unregistered firearms and forty-six percent (13) for unlawful or unlicensed possession of a firearm. Both breaching and prosecution rates have increased from 2005–06 to 2006–07.

The previous chapter noted that 172 owners of stolen firearms had not secured or stored their firearms in accordance with legislative requirements. Three-quarters of these owners (74%, or 128) were recorded to have breached firearm regulations, and just under half (48%, or 84) were proceeded against. Jurisdictional prosecution rates (including cases in which it was unknown whether prosecution was attempted) ranged from 46 percent in Victoria to 89 percent in South Australia (Table 40). Since 2004–05, prosecution rates have generally increased in all jurisdictions (Figure 18), although in Victoria and Tasmania the 2006–07 rate fell to or below that recorded in 2004–05.

Table 40: Prosecution of firearm owners found to be storage non-compliant, by jurisdiction (number)

	Charged/ pending	Disciplinary action/pending	No prosecution	Unknown
NSW	26	4	6	2
Vic	9	2	9	4
Qld	14	2	12	0
WA	13	0	2	5
SA	7	1	0	1
Tas	2	0	0	2
NT	4	0	1	0
Australia	75	9	30	14

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]



Repeat victimisation

Sixteen incidents of firearm theft in 2006–07 were flagged as repeat victimisations, i.e. the location of the current theft had been the site of a previous burglary or robbery during which firearms or ammunition had been stolen. Repeat victimisations represent three percent of all reported thefts in 2006–07, as they did in 2004–05 and 2005–06. An additional five incidents of firearm theft occurred at locations that had been burgled before without firearms' having been stolen.

Five of the previous thefts had occurred within 12 months of the most recent theft. One incident occurred the day before the reported theft, two in the previous six months, and two almost 12 months prior to the incident recorded in the 2006–07 data set. All thefts resulted from an unlawful entry—two of private residential premises, two of business premises, and one of a vehicle parked outside a private residence. The remaining eleven thefts were perpetrated from 15 months to twenty-two years before the current theft.

Two locations, both private residential premises in a major city, had been targeted twice before. One location was burgled eight years, and then 12 months, before the most recent theft, with a

single shotgun stolen in each incident. Burglaries of the second location had taken place 15 and 22 years earlier. Two rifles and a paintball marker had been stolen in these respectively.

In all, fifteen rifles, four shotguns, four handguns, one underwater gun, and four uncategorised firearms had been stolen in fourteen of the sixteen previous victimisations. One incident resulted in the theft of ammunition only, and no information was provided on stolen firearms in another. An average of 1.9 firearms (median = 2) were stolen per theft. Despite having been targeted before, four of the sixteen owners were found in the most recent event not to have suitably stored their firearms.

In part because of the small number of repeat victimisations that occur from year to year, a discrete pattern of theft behaviour has not yet been detected. In 2006–07, repeat victimisations tended to result in the theft of more than one firearm (nine of sixteen thefts) and to be part of a general burglary (nine of sixteen thefts). This was also observed in 2004–05, but in 2005–06, repeat victimisations were characterised by firearm-only thefts of a single firearm.

Recovery of stolen firearms

Firearms were recovered in thirteen percent (78) of incidents of firearm theft, similar to the recovery rate reported in 2004–05 and 2005–06. In 70 percent of incidents (438), they were not recovered. Most jurisdictions reported rates of recovery in 2006–07 that were similar to those in 2005–2006, the exceptions being Queensland, where the rate increased from 13 to 21 percent, and Western Australia, with a decrease from 19 to 12 percent (Table 41). Tasmania again reported the highest rate of recovery, with firearms located from 28 percent of incidents. Data on recovery rates refer only to those in which the firearm was retrieved in the jurisdiction where the theft occurred.

Information was available in relation to 42 thefts on the number of firearms actually recovered. Of the 153 firearms stolen, police recovered half (52%, or 79). On average, two (median = 4) firearms were stolen in each of these incidents and two (median = 1) were located in each recovery event. In 14 of the 42 incidents, all recorded stolen firearms were recovered (range of one to four firearms reported stolen).

Previous analyses revealed that the time after which a theft was reported, the type of theft, and the apprehension of an offender were all associated with the success of firearm recovery. Two-thirds of incidents from which stolen firearms were

Table 41: Recovery rate of firearms, by jurisdiction

	Number	%
NSW	15	9
Vic	10	9
Qld	27	21
WA	14	12
SA	5	6
Tas	5	28
NT	2	20
Australia	78	13

Note: Excludes 109 incidents from which the recovery of firearms was not known

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

subsequently recovered were reported either on the day or within 24 hours of the theft's occurrence or discovery. Delaying the report diminished the likelihood that the firearm(s) would be recovered, particularly if victims did not alert police to the theft until two weeks later.

Firearms stolen in general burglaries were also likelier to be recovered than those taken in firearm-only thefts (58% rather than 40%). This association may be influenced by the larger number of general burglaries that took place, but further examination

indicates that another factor may be at play, i.e. the reporting time frame. Victims of general burglary tended to report to the police much more promptly (65% within 24 hours) than those who experienced theft of just firearms (48% within 24 hours). Furthermore, a quarter of persons reporting a firearm-only theft contacted the police more than a fortnight after discovering the theft; only nine percent of victims of general burglary did so.

Offenders were apprehended in 72 incidents (see next chapter), and in 63 percent (45) of these some or all of the firearms were recovered. Firearms were recovered in just six percent of thefts (26) in which an offender was not apprehended. The same relationship was observed in 2005–06.

For a multitude of reasons, recovered firearms are not always returned to owners. In 2004–05, recovered firearms were returned in 50 percent of cases, but in the following two years this decreased

to below 40 percent (38% in 2005–06 and 32% in 2006–07) (Table 42). Jurisdictions that provided detail on the reasons firearms were not returned to owners most commonly gave as reasons in 2006–07:

- alteration of the firearm (e.g. shotgun barrel sawn off, rifle shortened)
- owner having deceased or become demented
- retention of the firearm in police possession as exhibit property or for safekeeping.

	Number	%
Firearms returned	25	32
Firearms not returned	34	44
Unknown	19	24
Total recovered	78	100

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Prosecution of offenders

Offenders were apprehended and subsequently prosecuted in 12 percent of incidents (Table 43). An additional nine incidents were being investigated at the time the data were collated, and suspects had been identified in five. No proceedings had begun for three-quarters of incidents (466). The Northern Territory and Queensland recorded the highest rate of offender prosecution (20% and 17% respectively), followed by Victoria (15%). Tasmania prosecuted offenders associated with 35 percent of incidents of firearms in 2005–06 but none in 2006–07.

Table 43: Offenders proceeded against, by jurisdiction

	Number	%
NSW	17	10
Vic	16	15
Qld	21	17
WA	12	10
SA	4	5
Tas	0	0
NT	2	20
Australia	72	12

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Offenders were significantly more prone to prosecution if involved in a general burglary (64%) than if they had perpetrated a firearm-only theft ($\chi^2 = 34.1730$; $p < .05$; Cramér's $V = 0.1350$). Whether the offence resulted in the theft of a single or multiple firearms, however, did not hold a significant association with prosecution rate.

The types of offences with which offenders were charged were provided by jurisdictions of 64 of the 72 applicable incidents, and are listed in Table 44. Data refer to the number of incidents in which a charge for a specific offence (e.g. break and enter) was laid, regardless of whether one or multiple charges were enacted and one or multiple offenders were involved for that offence per incident. Seven in ten incidents in which an offender was prosecuted were characterised by charges of theft or stealing, and in two-thirds, offenders were charged with break and enter. A considerably higher proportion of incidents in 2006–07 (58%) than in 2005–06 (20%) were characterised by an offender's being charged with a firearms-related offence. Charges for drug-related offences fell, from 10 percent in 2005–06 to five percent in 2006–07.

Table 44: Offence type

	Number	%
Theft/stealing	45	70
Break and enter / burglary	42	66
Firearm offences ^a	37	58
Handling/receiving/possession of stolen property	10	16
Drug-related	3	5
Damage property	3	5
Other	6	9
Total incidents	64	

a: Firearm offences include carrying offensive weapon; discharging firearm; possession/use of unlicensed firearm; possession of a dangerous article; prohibited person possessing firearms; possessing ammunition without a licence; possessing unregistered firearm; delivering firearm to unlicensed/unauthorised person

Note: Percentages are of incidents in which a charge was laid (64), excluding incidents in which no information had been provided on the charges laid against offenders. As multiple charges were laid for some incidents, total column percentage will exceed 100

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]



Linking stolen firearms to crime

Data on whether firearms had been employed in crimes following their theft was available in relation to 81 percent of thefts (504). Of these, firearms stolen in thirteen incidents (or 3%) were known to have been used either to perpetrate a crime or to be in the possession of persons charged with serious offences—six thefts in New South Wales, five in Queensland, and two in Western Australia. In total, 34 firearms were stolen in these incidents—17 rifles, 10 handguns, five shotguns, one air rifle, and one paintball marker—but it was not clear from the data which of these were used in the crimes subsequently committed. In an additional incident, a stolen rifle was used in an attempted suicide.

Firearms stolen from four separate incidents were later used in armed robbery (three) and a home invasion (one) (Table 45). There were five cases relating to firearm offences—illegal firearm sale, alteration of a firearm, illegal discharge of a firearm (two), and one not defined—and one case of receiving stolen property (including the firearm). Firearms from two thefts were later found in the possession of persons charged with various drug offences, including possession and manufacture.

Table 45: Stolen firearms used in crime

Stolen firearms	Subsequent offence committed	Jurisdiction
One shotgun, one rifle	Armed robbery	New South Wales
One rifle	Armed robbery	New South Wales
One rifle	Armed robbery	Western Australia
Seven rifles, two shotguns and five handguns	Home invasion	New South Wales
Two handguns	Illegal firearms sale	New South Wales
One rifle	Discharge of firearm / likely to injure	New South Wales
One rifle, one shotgun	Discharge of firearm	New South Wales
One rifle	Alteration of firearm	Western Australia
One air rifle	Other firearm offence	Queensland
One paintball marker	Weapons offences	Queensland
Two rifle, three handguns	Drug offences	Queensland
One rifle, one shotgun	Drug offences	Queensland
One rifle	Receiving stolen property	Queensland
One rifle	Attempted suicide	Western Australia

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Pattern in firearm theft 2006–07

The pattern of firearm thefts reported from 2004–05 to 2006–07 has been largely consistent, particularly with respect to the types of firearms stolen and where and how they are stolen. What variation does exist can largely be classified as one of the following:

- specific categories of theft occurring in individual years (for example, an increase in handgun theft from vehicles in 2005–06)
- specific categories of theft occurring in particular jurisdictions (for example, the apparent targeting of security guards during 2006–07 in one of the larger jurisdictions)
- measures to combat firearm theft, specifically improving storage compliance by firearm owners.

The following summarises findings from the last three years.

Incidence of reported thefts

The incidence of reported firearm thefts has declined over the three-year period, from 668 incidents recorded in 2004–05 to 625 in 2006–07. The number of stolen firearms remained relatively stable in the first two observation years (1,470 and 1,445 respectively) but crept up over 1,500 in 2006–07. Nonetheless, these totals are considerably lower than the estimated 4,195 firearms stolen on average every year from 1994 to 2000 (Mouzos 2002).

The firearms

Around half of all reported firearm thefts result in the theft of a single firearm. When multiple firearms are stolen, it is usually two, sometimes three, that are taken. The majority of firearms reported stolen were registered at the time of the theft, suggesting that most firearm owners are adhering to firearm laws and regulations regarding the registration of firearms. It's worth noting, however, that because owners of unregistered firearms might refrain from reporting a theft so as not to risk being found in contempt of firearms laws, the proportion of stolen unregistered firearms could actually be higher.

The composition of firearms stolen from year to year varies little. Rifles comprise around six in ten of all firearms stolen every year; shotguns, around a quarter; and air rifles, one in ten. There is insignificant fluctuation in handgun theft. Category A and B firearms are the most commonly owned firearms in Australia, and hence tend to be the predominant type stolen. Of the more controlled firearms, fewer than 50 category C firearms and five or fewer category D firearms are reported stolen every year.

The firearm owners

Most firearm owners (around 90 percent) who reported stolen firearms held a valid firearm licence.

The licensed owners represented fewer than one percent of all licensed owners in Australia. Amongst those who were not licensed, the majority reported the theft of less-restricted category A firearms. A small number of unlicensed owners were licensed in a jurisdiction different from that in which the firearms were stolen.

The theft incident

Firearms were primarily discovered and subsequently stolen following an unlawful entry of premises or breaking into vehicles. In robberies during which firearms were stolen, the victim was almost always a security guard. More often than not, firearms were stolen along with other items (mostly tools, cash, and jewellery), but on average four in ten thefts reported each year could be considered targeted, in that only firearms were stolen.

Private residential premises were the principal location for firearm theft, and the majority of multiple firearm thefts occurred there too. For the most part, offenders had to apply force or use tools to gain access to the residence, but from year to year, one in five residences was entered because owners had left doors or windows unlocked. A laxness in securing buildings particularly affected garages and sheds. The securing of firearms within the premises was generally better than within garages and sheds, as the majority of thefts from this location required offenders having to penetrate a gun safe or other appropriately secure receptacle to retrieve the firearms. Nonetheless, thefts were aided in other cases by firearms left in cupboards and wardrobes or otherwise unsecured.

Around ten percent of thefts targeted business premises. Firearms were stolen from a broad range of business entities, and the theft usually resulted in the removal of a single firearm. Business premises were a common source of handguns—a quarter of stolen handguns, compared with fewer than ten percent of rifles and shotguns. The proportion of thefts involving the breaching of a gun safe was lower in this location than in private residences. This could mean that a greater variety of methods to secure firearms were used in business premises or that firearms stored in gun safes in business locales were not as easily stolen.

Theft from vehicles also comprised around ten percent of all firearm thefts. Firearms left in vehicles appear to be particularly vulnerable to theft, and made more so by owners not locking their vehicles (a quarter or more of all thefts from vehicles) and/or not securing the firearm within the vehicle (three-quarters of vehicle-based theft). Why firearm owners are apparently less vigilant in securing firearms in vehicles is not evident from the data provided. A possible explanation might be that because the storage of firearms in vehicles is usually temporary (e.g. overnight, while travelling, transiting from shooting range to home), owners underestimate the risk of leaving their firearms unsecured.

Reporting the theft

Firearm owners reported the majority of firearm thefts reported to police, and more than half of theft reports occurred within one calendar day of the theft's discovery. Early reporting increased the chance of at least some of an owner's firearms' being recovered as well as the apprehension of an offender. Delayed reporting (i.e. two or more weeks after the theft event) tended to arise when owners returned after being away when the theft occurred; when the firearms had been stored in a location separate from where the owner resided or worked (for example, in sheds on rural properties); or following a police inquiry into licence and registration status of selected owners.

Storage and other compliance, and prosecution for non-compliance

Despite legislation requiring owners to store firearms in prescribed receptacles, fewer than six in ten owners who reported a theft between 1 July 2004 and 30 June 2007 had actually done so. Even amongst owners who had complied in the sense that firearms were stored in an approved gun safe, some still had their firearms stolen, because the key to the safe was found or the receptacle either was not secured to the floor or wall or could be levered off.

The prosecution rate of owners found in breach of storage requirements or other firearm legislation has fluctuated over the observed period, but the proportion not prosecuted has been below 30 percent since 2005–6. Failure to secure

represents the most common offence with which firearm owners were charged, with a changing pattern in the number sanctioned for offences relating to possession of an unregistered firearm or being unlicensed.

Stolen firearms and crime

Only a fraction (around 12 percent) of stolen firearms was eventually recovered, with many of the rest likely to end up in the illegal market. Of concern is the uncertainty as to how many are acquired or used for criminal purposes. The available information suggests that only some are, with firearms stolen from one percent of thefts in 2004–07 later involved in crime. The most serious offences known to have been committed with a stolen firearm in the three-year period are two murders and seven armed robberies, with stolen firearms also cited as having been used in an incident of domestic violence and one of assault. The remaining criminal activities related to a range of firearm offences, including trafficking and possession. In addition to criminal activities, two stolen firearms were later used to self-harm: one to commit suicide and another in an attempted suicide.

Implications for firearm policy

The theft of firearms represents an issue of concern to a broad range of parties, including Australian governments, law-enforcement agencies, and the firearm-owning community. With the possibility that stolen firearms may be used to commit a crime, this concern extends to the wider Australian population too. Long-term monitoring of firearm theft enables parties not just to identify the general characteristics and methodology of firearm theft but also, and just as crucially, to look beyond the year-to-year variations that might be taken at face value if only individual years of data were considered.

From an operational perspective, the collation of information regarding the *modus operandi* of firearm thieves provides detail regarding the successful methods of theft and the detection of target weaknesses. As stated earlier, some comparison with theft events in which firearms were available but not stolen would strengthen perspectives on the types of scenarios that precipitate or preclude the theft of firearms. Nonetheless, the available data show that in most cases, with the obvious exception of many vehicle-related thefts, thieves have to work at removing firearms from the place of theft. Though this of course indicates that not every offender is deterred by prescribed storage facilities and that some have the opportunity and the know-how to penetrate an approved firearm safe, it also suggests that the introduction of storage requirements has had an effect on the overall prevalence of firearm theft. The number of reported thefts might be much higher if owners were not bound by law to appropriately secure their firearms.

A continuing theme that emerges from the analysis, however, is the still reasonably high number of owners who do not appropriately store their firearms, in spite of an increase in firearm auditing; the dissemination of education programs; and a relatively high rate of prosecution of firearm owners found in breach of firearm regulations. Interestingly, many of the owners who flouted legislative requirements regarding storage were owners of less restricted firearms (particularly category A firearms) or had just one firearm stolen (and presumably only owned one), possibly suggesting that some of these owners take the securing of their firearms less seriously. The other problematic area identified in previous reports is the susceptibility of firearms stored in vehicles, often because owners do not lock the vehicle or do not or cannot secure the firearm in an adequate fashion. This behaviour might arise from the temporary nature of vehicle storage or from some uncertainty as to how and whether firearms transported in vehicles are to be secured. A focus on these categories of owners might improve overall rates of storage compliance in the future and potentially reduce the rate of firearm theft overall.



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Appendix A:

Additional tables

Table A1: Types of firearms stolen from jurisdictions

	Rifle		Shotgun		Air rifle		Handgun		Other		Unknown	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
NSW	244	56	83	19	44	10	51	12	8	2	2	0
Vic	136	49	107	39	21	8	4	1	1	0	7	3
Qld	200	63	70	22	26	8	19	6	1	0	4	1
WA	142	61	48	21	21	9	19	8	2	1	0	0
SA	113	55	55	27	22	11	9	4	2	1	3	1
Tas	33	63	10	19	5	10	1	2	0	0	3	6
NT	5	50	2	20	1	10	1	10	1	10	0	0
Australia	873	57	375	25	140	9	104	7	15	1	19	1

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table A2: Category of firearm stolen, by jurisdiction

	A		B		C		D		H		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
NSW	249	58	114	26	5	1	0	0	51	11	5	1
Vic	201	73	57	21	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	0
Qld	181	57	96	30	14	1	1	<1	19	5	0	0
WA	160	69	44	19	7	3	0	0	19	8	0	0
SA	150	74	35	17	6	3	0	0	9	4	1	1
Tas	33	64	8	15	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0
NT	8	80	0	0	0	0	1	10	1	10	0	0
Australia	982	64	354	23	32	2	2	<1	104	7	6	<1

Note: Excludes 46 firearms about which insufficient information was available to ascertain category

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table A3: Period between incident date and reporting date by jurisdiction

	Day of incident		1 day		2–7 days		8–14 days		More than 2 weeks	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
NSW	61	37	37	22	37	22	12	7	18	11
Vic	29	27	25	23	28	26	7	6	20	18
Qld	63	50	20	16	21	17	4	3	18	14
WA	30	26	24	21	27	23	4	3	31	27
SA	26	32	16	20	19	24	6	7	14	17
Tas	15	83	3	17	0	0	0	0	0	0
NT	1	13	2	25	2	25	2	25	1	13
Australia	225	36	127	20	134	22	35	6	102	16

Note: Excludes three incidents of which incident date was not recorded

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table A4: Firearm thefts' remoteness, by jurisdiction

	Major city		Inner regional		Outer regional		Remote		Very remote	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
NSW	54	33	73	45	28	17	6	4	3	2
Vic	43	39	54	50	12	11	0	0	–	–
Qld	36	29	33	26	38	30	12	10	6	5
WA	37	32	21	18	24	21	23	20	11	10
SA	30	38	29	36	13	16	7	9	1	1
Tas	–	–	11	61	3	33	1	6	0	0
NT	–	–	–	–	3	30	4	40	3	30
Australia	200	32	221	35	124	20	53	9	24	4

Note: Excludes four incidents in which postcode location of theft was not recorded

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table A5: Firearm thefts' remoteness, by location

	Private residential		Business premises		Other accomm ^a		Vehicle		In transit		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Major city	158	33	16	30	1	25	14	23	0	0	10	48
Inner regional	169	36	21	39	2	50	20	32	1	33	6	29
Outer regional	93	20	12	22	1	25	12	19	1	33	5	24
Remote	36	8	2	4	0	0	13	21	1	33	0	0
Very remote	18	4	3	6	0	0	3	5	0	0.0	0	0
Total	474	100	54	100	4	100	62	100	3	100	21	100

a: Other accommodation

Note: Excludes eight incidents in which postcode location of theft was not recorded or location of theft was unknown

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Table A6: Method of access to premises or vehicle

	Private residential premises		Business premises		Vehicle	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Using tools	75	16	13	28	3	5
Using force	196	42	12	26	11	18
Legitimate access	9	2	1	2	0	0
Premises unsecured	85	18	6	13	15	25
Other	10	2	1	2	6	10
Unknown	95	20	13	28	26	43
Total	470	100	46	100	61	100

Note: Excludes 14 incidents in which method of access was recorded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2006–07 [computer file] [excludes ACT]

Appendix B: Firearm classifications

Table B1: Firearm classifications according to the National Firearms Agreement 1996

Category A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> air rifles rimfire rifles (excluding self-loading) single and double barrelled shotguns
Category B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> muzzle-loading firearms single shot, double-barrelled and repeating action centre-fire rifles break-action shotguns/rifle combinations
Category C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 5 rounds
Category D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all handguns, including air pistols

Note: Firearm categories vary slightly between jurisdictions

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