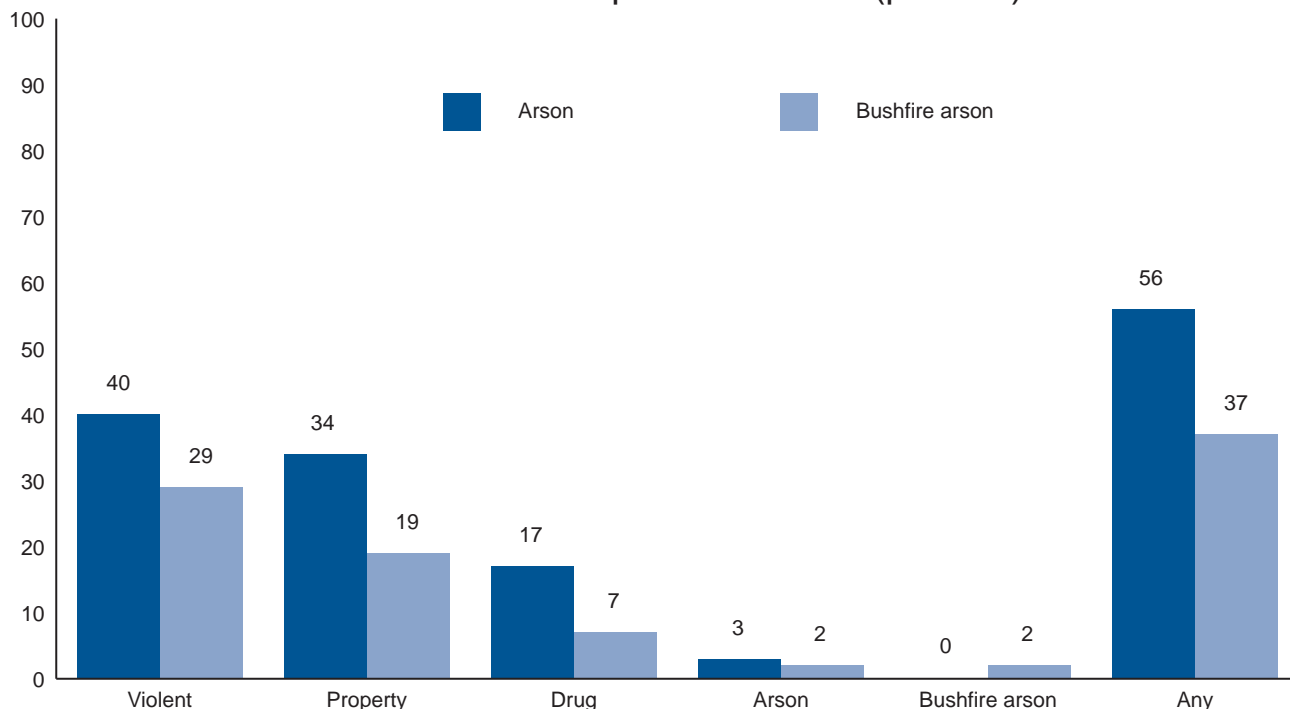


## Reoffending arsonists in NSW

Although there has been international research on the reoffending of arson offenders, published data on alleged arsonists in Australia are limited to police statistics on arson charges. There is no published Australian research on the recidivism of arsonists or bushfire arsonists. This bulletin reports on 1,099 arson and 133 bushfire arson defendants who appeared in NSW courts between 2001 and 2006 (a). The typical NSW firesetter was male (89%), and young (mean age 27 years), this was the same for arsonists and bushfire arsonists. One quarter were juveniles and bushfire arsonists were more likely to be in this category. As with many other crime profiles Indigenous persons were over-represented with 24 percent of firesetters identified as being indigenous; 91 percent were arsonists and 9 percent were bushfire arsonists. For defendants aged 17 years or more, more than half of the arson defendants and one-third of the bushfire arson defendants had a prior conviction for violence, theft, drugs and/or arson offences in the past seven years. For firesetters who had a prior conviction, the average number of these was 3.6. Arsonists had a higher rate of prior offending as compared to bushfire arsonists in the past seven years (56% compared to 37% for bushfire arsonists). Very few offenders had a prior conviction for either arson or bushfire arson; which could reflect the low conviction rates for this offence type (see BFAB 41). The most common appearance was for a violent offence, particularly for bushfire arsonists; they accounted for 45 percent of all prior convictions examined. There is also a relatively strong link with drug offences, with over 17 percent of arsonists and around 7 percent of bushfire arsonists having at least one prior conviction for this offence.

Defendants with a prior conviction (percent)



Source: BOCSAR (unpublished data); arson n=933, bushfire arson n=99

(a) The data were provided by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR).