

## ***Causal factors in New South Wales investigated bushfires: part 1 – deliberate fires***

This Bulletin continues the analysis of bushfire investigation data provided by the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS). An examination was conducted of fires the RFS determined to have been deliberately lit. The cause determinations of fires were analysed with the rationale given for the determination. Each fire was given a causal factor reflecting the basis for making the determination of deliberate lighting. The total number of cases derived from these causal factors exceeded the number of fires, as some fires had more than one causal factor contributing to the decision of deliberate lighting. As shown in Figure 1, in just over 32 per cent of cases the elimination of all other possible causes was the primary reason for determining the fire was deliberately lit. In 12 percent of cases the occurrence of other fires in what appeared to be a pattern of serial lighting was a major factor in the determination. In a similar number of cases physical evidence or clear indications of a form of ignition, such as the remains of an incendiary device, was a major factor. In nine percent of cases investigators found multiple points of ignition. In just over seven percent of cases the location of the fire, such as beside a walking track, made deliberate lighting likely. In the same percentage of cases, witness reports of persons or vehicles seen acting suspiciously around the time and location of the fires was a major factor. Just under seven percent of cases involved juveniles seen in the act of lighting the fire or otherwise acting in a way that made it likely one or more juveniles had lit the fire. In just over five percent of cases an adult firesetter had been linked to the fire through admission, police action or witness observation.

### ***Causal factors in New South Wales investigated bushfires 2001/02 to 2003/04: deliberate fires***

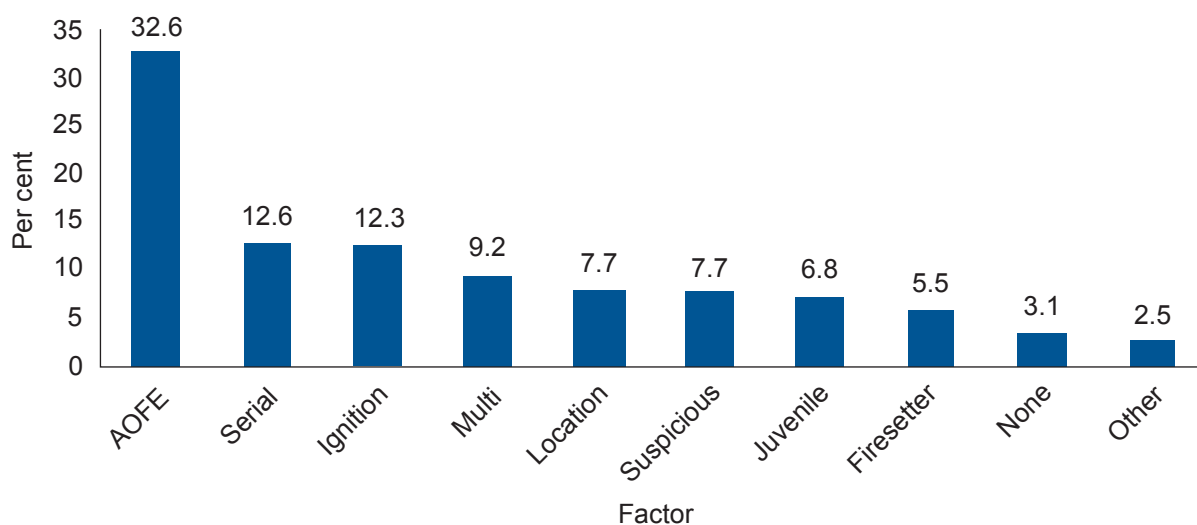


Figure 1: Causal factors in NSW investigated bushfires.  
Source: NSW RFS investigation data (AIC file).