



turning the corner 2007:

recent crime trends in Western Australia



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introduction

Turning the Corner 2007 is an overview of reported crime in this State over the last 10 years. The Police and the Office of Crime Prevention are only part of the solution to crime. Crime prevention needs the contribution of individuals and the whole community. The Office of Crime Prevention have promoted a whole-of-community approach that involves communities coming together through local government to identify crime issues of concern and prioritise actions. Over 120 local governments have entered into a partnership with the Office of Crime Prevention. The *State Community Safety and Crime Prevention Strategy* (2004) reinforces this approach (Office of Crime Prevention, 2004).

The Government's crime prevention goals are to:

- Support families, children and young people;
- Strengthen communities and revitalise neighbourhoods;
- Target priority offences;
- Reduce repeat offending; and
- Design out crime and use technology.

Making sense of statistics

Crime can be difficult to measure and it is important to note that the full extent of crime will never be completely known. Only crime that has been reported to the Police or estimated from crime victimisation surveys can be measured. These are the two sources of

data used in this publication. The rates of *reported* crime do not necessarily reflect the rate of crime *actually occurring*.

Fluctuations in recorded crime over time can occur due to the following:

- Increased reporting of crimes that are usually under-reported, such as domestic assaults and sexual assaults;
- Differences in reporting practices by government agencies, local government and private enterprise;
- Proactive policing initiatives that target certain offences or encourage their reporting;
- Changes to legislation and offence definitions;
- Changes in Police recording systems and practices (see 'Influences on crime data' below)

WA Police Data – Influences on crime statistics

Data from WA Police is used throughout this publication. It should be noted that data used in this publication reflects only those crimes that are reported to or become known to the Police. Also, recorded offences such as those used here have not been subject to court, for example a crime recorded as a murder may later result in a charge of manslaughter instead.

Crime records are heavily affected by whether people choose to report crime to police. Burglary and motor vehicle theft must be reported to Police in order to

make insurance claims (Allianz, 2003, 2007; QBE, 2005, 2006; RAC, 2006, 2007; SGIO, 2005, 2007). Crimes such as sexual assault and family violence are underreported (Trewin, 2006b). National crime victim surveys indicate that assault and sexual assault are massively under-reported, with 64% of assaults on women going unreported, and 81% of sexual assaults on women going unreported. The same figures demonstrate that more women today are reporting physical assaults and sexual assaults than 10 years ago. In 2005 36% (70,400) of women who experienced a physical assault by a male perpetrator reported it, but in 1996 only 19% (54,400) of women reported. In 2005 19% of women who experienced a sexual assault by a male perpetrator reported to Police (19,100) but in 1996 only 15% (14,700) reported (Trewin, 2006b).

This means that we are confident that changes to the rate of burglary and motor vehicle theft reflect the actual rates of these crimes. Records of assault and sexual assault must be interpreted with care because reporting issues are a far greater factor in fluctuations. Changes to the rate of these crimes could be due to a change in how much people tell Police and not the true state of crime.

Records for assault and sexual assault offences show an increase. These increases do not necessarily reflect an actual increase in crime. For assault the upward trend begins in 2004 but coincides with several significant changes. Firstly the Police recording system, FrontLine Incident Management System (IMS), was introduced

and domestic assaults were more accurately recorded which raised recorded numbers (WA Police, 2006). Secondly, WA Police implemented new strategies to address child abuse and family violence in 2004. These include a co-ordinated investigative approach for the state, the appointment of specialised Child Protection and Family Violence Officers in each Police District and new benchmarks for Police performance in this area. Other strategies are inter-agency collaboration (with the Department of Health and the Department of Child Protection), and positively influencing community culture that child abuse and family violence is criminal. These new strategies are leading the country and in just 3 years the number of criminals apprehended for family violence has tripled from 5,500 to 16,000 (Fairman, 2007).

The third significant influence on reported assaults from 2004 is legislative change (WA Police, 2006). Under the new legislation, Police must investigate any suspected domestic assault. Police also have greater powers such as entering and searching premises without a warrant and removing perpetrators for 24 or 72 hours. The fourth influence on assault reporting from 2004 is the federal government's long term social education campaign to clarify what domestic violence is and encourage its reporting. This includes advertisements on television and in cinemas (Office for Women, 2004). Changes to the level of reporting and recording of domestic violence are likely to be responsible for the increase in assault figures (for more see the 'assault' section).

For sexual assault, recorded offences increased in 2005. As with assault, it is possible sexual assault has increased, however the increase may also be due to reporting rather than an actual increase in crime. In 2005 IMS was changed to better enable multiple offences to be recorded on the same incident report (WA Police, 2006). The reporting of sexual assaults that have occurred in the past ('historical offences') can have a significant impact on recorded statistics because records indicate when an offence was reported to Police, not when the offence occurred. If numerous offences are recorded for historical incidents, a sharp rise in recorded sexual assaults can result (WA Police, 2006). Upward trends could thus be due to increased reporting; however it is still possible they are due to an actual increase in the crimes.

Crime victimisation surveys

Another source of information on crime are crime victimisation surveys. These are conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Individuals are randomly selected to participate in face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, or mail/self administered surveys. The questions ask about their experiences of crime victimisation. This publication uses the National Crime and Safety Survey (Trewin, 2006a) and the Personal Safety Survey (Trewin, 2006b). As with recorded crime, surveys are not necessarily accurate portrayals of crime victimisation, however because people are asked directly about their crime experience in a private

forum, it is likely that surveys more accurately represent crimes that are under-reported.

Limitations associated with crime victimisation surveys include the survey design and methodology used. This means which questions are included in the survey (the scope and coverage), how questions are worded and the sequence of questions, the sample size and how the survey is administered (e.g. face-to-face, by phone, or by writing), whether respondents feel uncomfortable answering certain questions, and whether they read instructions correctly. Another limitation is the respondent's interpretation of whether an offence was committed and what type of offence occurred (some prompts and definitions are provided, however interpretation still affects the results). These factors can cause variations in results that are not due to crime victimisation. Existing crime victimisation surveys are usually only conducted once every few years, and this limits the analysis of crime trends over time (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002).

Surveys are useful in combination with Police statistics to gain a broader view of crime victimisation. Neither Police statistics nor victimisation surveys alone can provide comprehensive information about crime. Both sets of data contribute to our understanding of the nature and extent of crime victimisation.

perceptions of crime

Western Australians generally appreciate that the level of crime in our State is lower and less severe than in other countries. Despite this many people greatly over-estimate the risk of becoming a victim of crime and believe that the levels of crime are increasing (Weatherburn & Indermaur, 2004).

In 2005 a study was conducted to explore perceptions of crime in Western Australia. Individuals were asked to rate whether certain crimes had increased, decreased or remained stable in the last 2 years. When asked to compare the current level of crime with crime 5 years ago, over half thought it had increased. Only 13% of people thought that crime had decreased. In reality, most crimes had been decreasing for 4-8 years prior to the survey (Synovate, 2005). Significant declines had occurred in burglary, murder, robbery, theft, and motor vehicle theft.

When asked whether crime was going to get worse, better or stay the same in the next 5-10 years, respondents were equally divided, with half believing it would get a little worse or a lot worse and half believing it would stay the same or get a little bit better (Synovate, 2005).

Participants were also asked whether they thought the media was accurate in portraying the level of crime. Just under half (43%) were apparently sceptical and thought the media overstates the level of crime. Over half the participants (57%) believed that the media was accurate or understates the level of crime.

Many people's beliefs about crime come from newspapers and television,

“...three murders in a day can reliably be counted on to generate a headline. Three weeks without a murder will normally pass without comment” (Weatherburn and Indermaur, 2004, p. 1).

This disparity between what most people think and reality is not surprising, as surveys in Britain and the United States indicate the same,

“...it seems we are our own worst enemies – persisting in the belief that crime is rising even when the facts tell a very different story” (Weatherburn, 2004).

Fear of crime may rob us of a better quality of life. Fear of crime can make people withdraw from using public facilities, feel unsafe at home, or in and around their neighbourhood. It can also decrease our ability to respond to crime because when people are fearful of crime they are less responsive to crimes that occur.

“...next time you see the media giving saturation coverage to a crime problem, ask yourself whether you have seen any hard evidence that the problem is actually getting worse” (Weatherburn, 2004).

crime trends by offence category

General

The total number of offences reported to WA Police decreased markedly over the last 7 years. Crime decreased 7.8% from 224,496 offences in 2000-01 to 207,093 offences in 2006-07 (WA Police, 2007b).

The rate of reported crime has been on a significant downward trend to 2006 in four of seven offence categories: robbery, burglary, theft and motor vehicle theft. Homicides have remained in the same range. Reported crime has been on an upward trend for assault and sexual assault.

WA has made significant gains on crime in burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, and robbery over the past 4-8 years. In 2006 crime rose slightly in these categories. This suggests that renewed efforts are needed to continue our successes in decreasing crime.

The level of reported assaults and sexual assaults have increased in the last couple of years. This may indicate an increase in assaults and sexual assaults committed, however as these offences are hugely under-reported to Police it is more likely that increased reporting, in particular of domestic assaults, has driven the trend (for more see *Making sense of statistics* above; WA Police, 2006).

Police figures for the 2006 calendar year show that the rates of crime per 100,000 persons are up slightly compared with 2005. These figures, however, are still lower than figures from late 1990s – early 2000s.

- Assault, up by 6 percent (from 1,060 per 100,000 to 1,125 per 100,000)
- Sexual Assault, up by 10 percent (from 145 per 100,000 to 160 per 100,000)
- Robbery, up by 10 percent (from 85 per 100,000 to 94 per 100,000)
- Burglary, up by 0.7 percent (from 1,939 per 100,000 to 1,953 per 100,000)
- Motor Vehicle Theft, up by 3 percent (from 360 per 100,000 to 372 per 100,000)
- Theft, up by 4 percent (from 3,872 per 100,000 to 4,031 per 100,000)

Some offence categories (such as burglary) have been high in Western Australia for some time. The Office of Crime Prevention has targeted burglary with initiatives that have had a significant impact on offence rates. While any offences are unacceptable, the recent downward trends show that improvements are achievable, and encourage us to tighten our efforts to make WA a safer place.

reducing burglary

Burglar Beware

Burglar Beware was developed by the Office of Crime Prevention in response to WA's comparatively high rate of residential burglary compared to the rest of the country. Since the program was implemented in 2003, burglary has declined at one of the fastest rates in Australia. While burglary is declining around the country, the decline was much more rapid in WA and followed the introduction of Burglar Beware. The Burglar Beware program has been implemented in 7 areas: Carnarvon, Geraldton, Armadale, Gosnells, Belmont, Kensington, and Cannington. Data shows a reduction in burglary between 16% and 50%. Burglar Beware is a multi-faceted program which addresses home security, offender diversion and intervention, community awareness and involvement, targeting known and repeat offenders, school attendance, stolen goods disposal, information and intelligence gathering, coordination between government agencies, and linking with non-government organisations. To find out more, including easy ways to increase the security of your home visit the Burglar Beware website, <http://www.burglarbeware.wa.gov.au>

BURGLARY

Burglary rates have fallen dramatically in Western Australia over the last five years. Data from 2007 show that burglary achievements for the state are sustained.

What is Burglary?

Burglaries are differentiated into those committed on dwellings and non-dwellings. Burglary (dwelling) is the most common type of burglary, with approximately double the number of 'non-dwelling' burglary offences and occurs "when a person enters or attempts to enter any building, structure, tent, vehicle or vessel that is ordinarily used for human habitation without consent, with intent to commit an offence such as to steal property" (WA Police, 2007a).

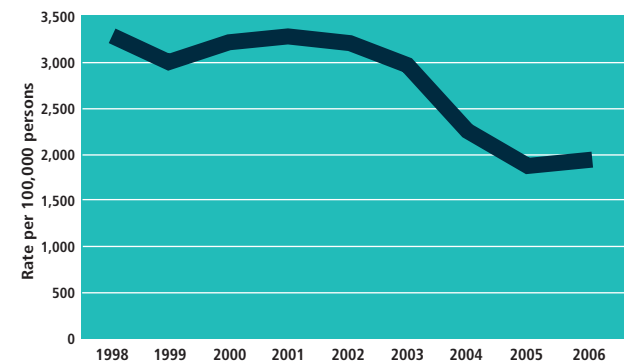
Trends in burglary

Chart 1 shows a marked decrease in the WA burglary rate between 2002 and 2006 of 40% (from 3208 burglaries per 100,000 persons to 1953 burglaries per 100,000 persons). In 2006 burglary (dwelling) offences increased 3%, from 1,283 burglaries per 100,000 persons to 1,322 burglaries per 100,000 persons. Preliminary figures from the first half of 2007 indicate continued decrease in burglary offences. Burglary has become relatively stable and renewed efforts may be needed to continue major decreases in burglary (Morgan & Clare, 2007).

Did You Know?

To decrease burglary, evidence suggests that better home security measures can help; including alarms, security screens, locks on doors and windows and also shutters on doors and windows. Keeping doors and windows locked is important to prevent burglary; in 2004, 38% of successful burglaries were a result of a burglar entering through an unlocked area (Ferrante & Clare, 2007a).

Chart 1 – Burglaries in WA, 1998-2006 (rate per 100,000 persons)



Source: WA Police Offence Information System and Frontline Incident Management System

THEFT

Theft has decreased substantially in Western Australia since 2002 and has been relatively stable for the last three years. This suggests that community members and service providers must take greater precautions to prevent theft and continue the declines.

What is theft?

Theft is "the unlawful taking or obtaining of money, goods or services, without the use of force, threat of force or violence, coercion or deception, with the intent to permanently deprive the owner or possessor of the use of the money or goods. Theft offences include the theft of vehicle parts or the contents of a vehicle" (WA Police, 2007a).

This category is usually the largest offence category because it contains a broad range of offences that are often crimes of opportunity. Crimes such as theft of a wallet or purse from an unlocked motor vehicle, or property from an unsecured veranda, are easily committed when the community is not sufficiently vigilant about personal safety and security. While theft is the highest volume crime in Western Australia, it is difficult to target as a single offence because it is made up of many different offences. Community vigilance is the most effective preventative strategy.

Trends in theft

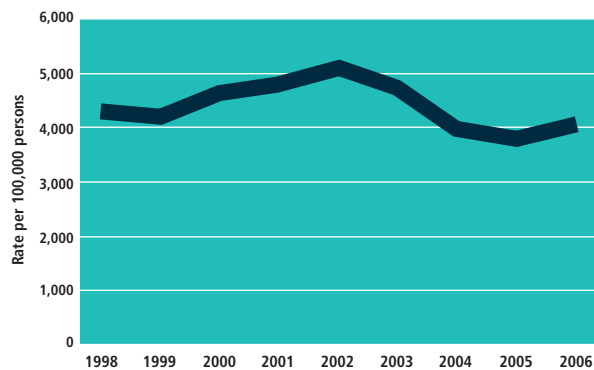
In Chart 2 a sharp downturn is evident in the rate of thefts after a peak in 2002. Theft was reduced 20% (from 5,064 thefts per 100,000 persons to 4,031 thefts per 100,000 persons). Figures from the last 3 years (2004-2006) suggest that theft may be stabilising. Preliminary data for 2007 show that the number of thefts is slightly lower than the same period last year.

Despite these positive trends, WA's victimisation rate for thefts was considerably higher than the national rate between 1998 and 2006 (Pink, 2007; WA Police, 2007b).

Did You Know?

A recent study interviewed incarcerated burglars and found that 73% of stolen goods were quickly on-sold or traded following burglary. Half the burglars interviewed reported 'stealing to order' which means stealing goods that were requested of them by someone else. Out of this portion of burglars, most (82%) of them said they 'always', 'mostly' or 'sometimes' stole to order for drug dealers. 40% said they 'always', 'mostly' or 'sometimes' stole to order for legitimate businesses. A similar number stole to order for family and friends (Ferrante & Clare, 2007a). This reinforces the responsibility we all have to be vigilant about where our purchases come from. This is the core message of the Don't Buy Crime campaign as part of Burglar Beware. No-one wants to be burgled so no-one should support the products of someone else's burglary (Office of Crime Prevention, 2007b).

Chart 2 – Thefts in WA, 1998-2006 (rate per 100,000 persons)



Source: WA Police Offence Information System and Frontline Incident Management System

Did You Know?

A recent research project took a snapshot of general theft in WA (however it must be noted that many thefts go unreported). The researchers found that one of the most commonly targeted items is cash; usually stolen from homes, offices, car parks and cars in streets. This highlights the importance of being careful with bags and wallets, and not leaving cash unattended. Other popular items were computers and related equipment which were stolen as frequently from homes and offices as from 'open space locations' like parked cars. A third of all stolen items were from in and around the home; many valuables were left in the open or stored in unsecured sheds. Greater care with personal items is one way of reducing thefts (Ferrante & Clare, 2007b).

MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT

The rate of motor vehicle theft has fallen dramatically since 1998 coinciding with the introduction of the immobiliser program.

What is Motor Vehicle Theft?

Motor vehicle theft is “unlawfully using a motor vehicle without the consent of the owner or the person in charge of that motor vehicle. This category of offence does not include attempts to steal a vehicle, damaging or tampering/interfering with a vehicle, the theft of vehicle parts or the contents of a vehicle” (WA Police, 2007a).

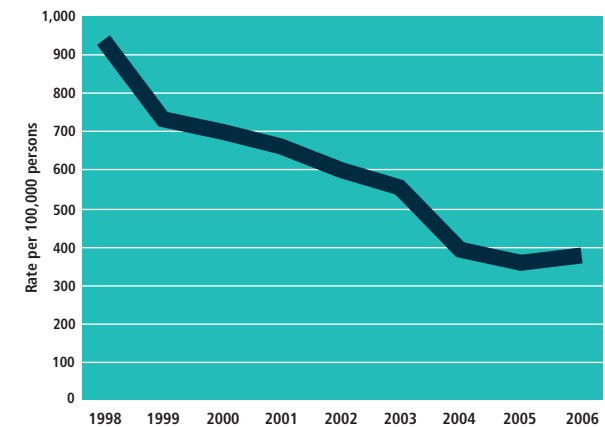
Trends in Motor Vehicle Theft

In 1998, WA experienced the highest rate of motor vehicle theft in the country with 47 thefts a day. In 1999 the compulsory immobiliser scheme was introduced, and in 2006 WA experienced just 21 thefts a day (Office of Crime Prevention, 2007a; WA Police, 2007b). Chart 3 shows that a decrease of 60% between 1998 and 2006 (932 motor vehicle thefts per 100,000 persons to 372 motor vehicle thefts per 100,000 persons; WA Police, 2007b).

If a motor vehicle is fitted with either an Australian Standard or a non-Australian Standard immobiliser it is far less likely to be stolen. Only 23% of vehicles fitted with an Australian Standard immobiliser were stolen in

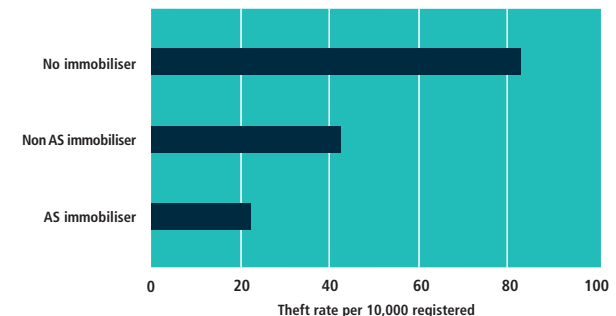
2006, even though they comprise 51% of all vehicles registered in Australia (Comprehensive Auto Research System, 2007). Chart 4 shows the dramatic difference in Australian motor vehicle theft rates according to a car’s immobiliser type. Note that the Australian Standard immobiliser fared better than the Non-Australian Standard immobiliser. Each quarter WA experiences an average of 1 theft per 1,000 registered passenger/light commercial vehicles and this is lower than the national average; this is at least partly due to WA’s high level of immobiliser use. In December 2006, 77% of all registered vehicles in WA had immobilisers fitted, while the national average was 51% (National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council, 2007a). The level of motor vehicle theft in the first half of 2007 was the same as the level of motor vehicle theft in 2006.

Chart 3 – Motor Vehicle Thefts in WA, 1998-2006 (rate per 100,000 persons)



Source: WA Police Offence Information System and Frontline Incident Management System

Chart 4 – Thefts of passenger/light commercial vehicles by immobiliser presence, 2006



Source: National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council (2007b). Reproduced with permission

eyes on the street

Eyes on the Street is an initiative involving coordinated intelligence gathering about crime in the community. It enables local government and other select agencies to identify suspicious people, vehicles and/or criminal activities and to report that information to Police. Participants are trained and provided with tools to report suspicious or criminal activity. The program supports crime prevention and helps reduce burglary in Western Australia. It currently operates in the South East and South Metropolitan Police districts, and number of regional locations.

Since its implementation in 2004 the program has been effective. Nearly 4,000 pieces of information have been received by Police and in the last 18 months over 200 arrests were made as a direct result of Eyes on the Street intelligence. The information being received pertains to criminal activity including burglary, drug activity, 'hoon' drivers, paedophilia, and organised crime. This success is due not only to the involvement of key government agencies, but also the active participation of non-government agencies, businesses and the community. Local governments, private and commercial organisations are requesting that the program be implemented throughout the metropolitan area and regional districts (Office of Crime Prevention, 2007b).

ROBBERY

The rate of Robbery has reduced significantly in the past 9 years; 1998–2006.

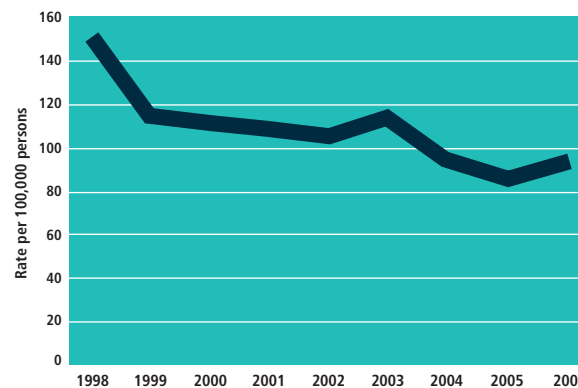
What is robbery?

A robbery is “the unlawful taking of property with intent to permanently deprive the owner of the property, from the immediate possession, control, custody or care of a person, accompanied by the use, and/or threatened use of immediate force or violence” (WA Police, 2007a). Robbery may involve aggravating circumstances such as the infliction of bodily harm to any person; being committed in company, involving a threat to kill, and being committed on a person 60 years or over.

Trends in robbery

Police data shows in Chart 5 that robbery declined steadily by nearly 40% from 1998 to 2006 (151 robberies per 100,000 persons to 94 robberies per 100,000 persons). There was a spike in robberies in 2003, at the same time improvements were made to Police recording of aggravated robbery which enabled more offences to be recorded. This may have caused an increase in the robbery offences recorded. According to the ABS the last 10 years have seen WA have the same overall rate of robbery as the national rate (Pink, 2007). Preliminary figures for 2007 suggest a slight rise in the number of

Chart 5 – Robberies in WA, 1998-2006 (rate per 100,000 persons)



Source: WA Police Offence Information System and Frontline Incident Management System

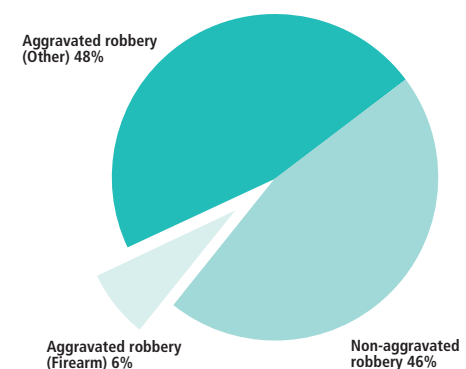
robberies reported to Police compared with the same period in 2006 (January to June).

In 2006 armed robberies comprised 39% of all robberies (Pink, 2007). The percentage of armed robberies involving a firearm is very small; in the last 10 years just 6% of all robberies involved a firearm as can be seen in Chart 6 (WA Police, 2007b).

ASSAULT

The rate of reported assault has increased since 2004 when a number of changes were made to Police practice and legislation to improve recognition of domestic assault and effectively address it.

Chart 6 – Robbery by type in WA, 1997-2006



Source: WA Police Offence Information System and Frontline Incident Management System

What is assault?

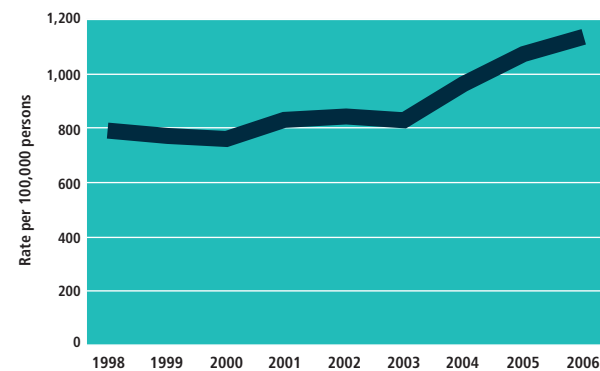
An assault is the direct (and immediate/confrontational) infliction of force, injury or violence upon a person or persons or the direct (and immediate/confrontational) threat of force, injury or violence where there is an apprehension that the threat could be enacted. An assault may involve aggravating circumstances such as causing serious bodily injury, being carried out in company, carried out using a weapon, carried out with the intent of preventing apprehension or committing a crime, and committed with the intent to recklessly endanger life or cause injury. An assault can also involve non-aggravating circumstances such as the indirect and

non-confrontational infliction of harm, injury or violence upon a person which includes administering drugs/poison or stupefying (WA Police, 2007a).

Trends in assault

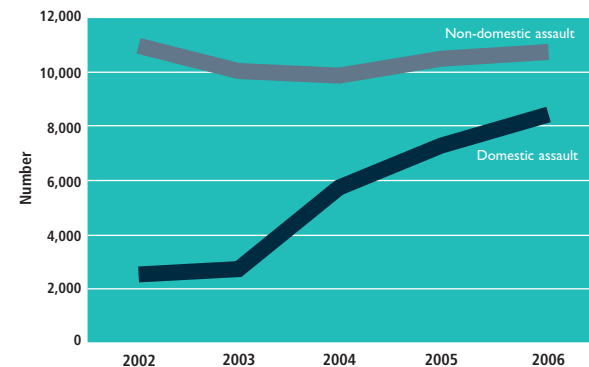
Police data in Chart 7 shows a slight increase in assaults for Western Australia between 2001 and 2003, and a significant upward trend of assaults from 2004-2006. This increase coincides with improvements to domestic violence legislation and the way Police record and respond to family domestic violence (FDV) assaults. This trend is therefore positive because response to domestic violence in Western Australia has been greatly improved. (See 'Making sense of statistics' at the beginning of this document for a full discussion on these changes). Chart 8 demonstrates this argument: the rate of reported non-domestic assault is stable in recent years while the rate of reported domestic assaults has increased. Preliminary data for the first half of 2007 show almost identical levels of reported assault to the same period in 2006. Reporting of domestic assaults is likely to increase in the next 5 years as the legislative changes take full effect and further improvements are made; the increase may slow down but will continue (Fairman, 2007).

Chart 7 – Assaults in WA, 1998-2006 (rate per 100,000 persons)



Source: WA Police Offence Information System and Frontline Incident Management System

Chart 8 – Domestic assaults compared with non-domestic assaults in WA, 2002- 2006



Source: WA Police Offence Information System and Frontline Incident Management System

Did You Know?

In 2004 significant changes were made to the *Restraining Orders Act 1997*, the *Criminal Code*, and the *Bail Act 1982* to improve the way Police respond to and report domestic violence. Prior to 2004 domestic assaults comprised around 20% (2,658) of total reported assaults (13,659), but in 2006 it comprised around 44% (8,292) of total reported assaults (19,028) (WA Police, 2007b).

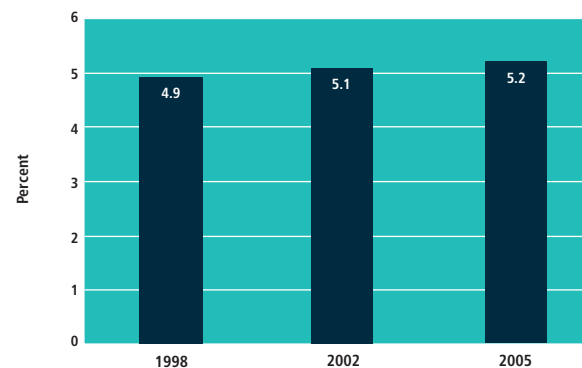
Further support that actual assaults levels have not changed comes from the ABS crime victimisation surveys where the percent of assault experiences over the past 8 years has not changed (the surveys ask people directly about their experience of crime). As demonstrated in Chart 9 the experience of assaults in WA is consistent despite the dramatic rise in the number of recorded assaults (Pink, 2007). The minute differences between surveys are statistically non-significant.

National crime victimisation surveys reveal differences in the experience of assault between men and women that are likely due to women more frequently being victims of family and domestic violence. It is highly common for women to know the perpetrator of an assault; 81% of female victims reported knowing the offender; compared with 49% of male victims (Trewin, 2006b). Assault in the home is more common for women than men: in 2005 the location of the most recent assault occurred in the home for 42% of female assault victims and 22% of male assault victims (Trewin, 2006a).

Did You Know?

Australians aged 15-24 had the highest rates of assault in a recent crime survey, being 32% of assault victims. Assault rates declined with each successive 10-year age group (25-34 and so on). The lowest rate of assault was experienced by the elderly, or those aged 65 and over who were 2.6% of assault victims (Trewin 2006a).

Chart 9 – National Crime and Safety Survey Results for Assault in WA Percentage of respondents who reported experiencing assault



Source: ABS Crime and Safety Australia, 2005. (ABS cat. No. 4509.0)

state family and domestic violence strategy

Responding to the increasing rate of assaults in Western Australia, the State Government began implementing a *Family and Domestic Violence Strategic Plan* in 2004 to reduce and prevent family and domestic violence. Numerous initiatives are currently underway and the focus of the action plan for 2006-2007 is on increasing the co-ordination of policy and practice in response to family and domestic violence (Department for Community Development Family and Domestic Violence Unit, 2006). Other focuses for 2006-07 are improving training and guidelines in service delivery, and improving services for communities who face discrimination due to disability, race, religion, and sexuality).

There are three major initiatives for 2006-2007. The first is improved regional coordination of responses to family and domestic violence. The second is legislative review of amendments that were made in 2004 to the *Restraining Orders Act 1997* and *The Criminal Code*. The third major initiative is the development of specialised Family Violence Courts in metropolitan areas and a specific Indigenous court in Geraldton. These courts will only deal with family and domestic violence offending such as assaults, breaches of violence restraining orders, damage and threats (Department for Community Development Family and Domestic Violence Unit, 2006). WA Police have created 9 Multi-Function Police Facilities in remote areas which combine WA Police, Department for Child Protection, Department for Corrective Services, Northern Territory Police and South Australian Police to target child abuse and family violence. Early results from the facilities suggest that people are now more prepared to report offences (WA Police, 2006).

SEXUAL ASSAULT

According to Police data, the rate of reported sexual assaults was similar in 2006 as it was 9 years ago. From 2004 onwards reported sexual assaults increased, although it is possible that this increase is not due to an actual increase in crimes experienced but a change in the way sexual assaults are recorded by Police.

What is sexual assault?

A sexual assault is a physical contact of a sexual nature directed toward another person where that person does not give consent, gives consent as a result of intimidation or fraud, or consent is proscribed (i.e. the person is legally deemed incapable of giving consent because of youth, temporary/permanent (mental) incapacity or there is a familial relationship). Sexual assaults can occur in aggravating or non-aggravating circumstances. Aggravating circumstances include sexual intercourse, infliction of violence or injury upon the person, possession/use of a weapon, consent proscribed, or committed in company. Non-aggravated sexual assaults do not include any of these aggravating circumstances, for example indecent assault (WA Police, 2007a).

Trends in sexual assault

Police data shows a general downward trend in the rates of reported sexual assaults per 100,000 persons from 1999 to 2003; a decrease of 24%. Chart 10 shows an increase in the rate of reported sexual assaults from 2004 onwards and in 2006 the rate of sexual assault was almost identical to that of 1998. It is known that sexual assault is a crime that is under-reported to Police (Trewin, 2006b) and this rise in recorded sexual assault offences coincides with an enhancement of Police recording systems in 2004 which meant more records for this offence category (WA Police, 2006). While it is possible that the rate of sexual assault offences committed has increased, it is also possible that these factors have raised the number of sexual assault offences recorded. In the first half of 2007, the average number of sexual assault per month was higher than for the same period last year.

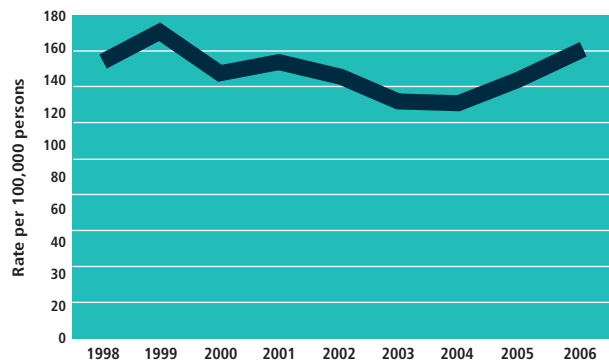


increased police response to sexual assault

Police created a new Sex Assault squad earlier this year to better address sexual assault. The Cyber Predator team and the Australian National Child (sex) Offender Register (ANCOR) provide measures against child sexual assault. The Sex Assault Squad assist in crime scene investigation and response, cold-case review and collection of intelligence, identifying high-risk prisoners due for release and providing appropriate intelligence to local Detectives (in consultation with the ANCOR Unit). They also identify known and suspected predator style sex offenders living in the community and provide appropriate intelligence to local Detectives.

The Cyber Predator Team is responsible for investigating and prosecuting adults who use electronic communication to groom children for sexual abuse or exploitation. The Team investigates complaints received from children or their parents, and also proactively targets predators by posing as children in various online environments that are used by both children and predators. WA Police have implemented the ANCOR program as part of their commitment to addressing child sexual abuse. Offenders convicted of child sex offences are registered and must submit details of their email accounts and internet server; home address, relationship status, employment, and any access to children. The offenders are case managed and requirements include regular reporting and comprehensive details of travel plans. Case managers periodically visit the offender's home to photograph their vehicle, check their proximity to schools and playgrounds, past victims and potential victims. These management plans are reviewed regularly.

Chart 10 – Sexual Assaults in WA, 1998-2006
(rate per 100,000 persons)



Source: WA Police Offence Information System and Frontline Incident Management System

Did You Know?

Sexual assaults are twice as likely to be perpetrated by a family member of the victim as by a stranger. A recent Australia-wide report found that 22% of sexual assaults were perpetrated by a stranger, 40% by a family member and 38% by another known person (like a previous partner or friend); in total four fifths (78%) of sexual assault victims know the offender. The same report revealed that the highest rate of sexual assault victimisation was recorded for girls aged 10-14 years (516 victims per 100,000 persons in that age group.) for males the rate of sexual assault was also highest in that age group at 88 victims per 100,000 persons in that age group (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2006). In a crime victimisation survey 5.5% of men and 19% of women reported experiencing at least one incident of sexual violence since the age of 15 (either sexual assault or threats of sexual violence) (Trewin, 2006b).

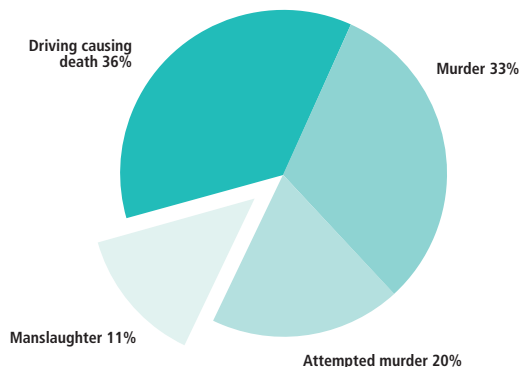
HOMICIDE

It is difficult to deduce a trend for homicide because the numbers of homicides are so small that almost any change would create the false impression of a trend (Trewin, 2006a).

What is Homicide?

Murder is the unlawful killing of another person where there is either the intent to kill, or the intent to cause grievous bodily harm with the knowledge that it was probable that death or grievous bodily harm would occur, or without intent to kill in the course of committing a crime. Attempted murder is the

Chart 11 – Percentage of Homicides by Category in WA, 1998-2006

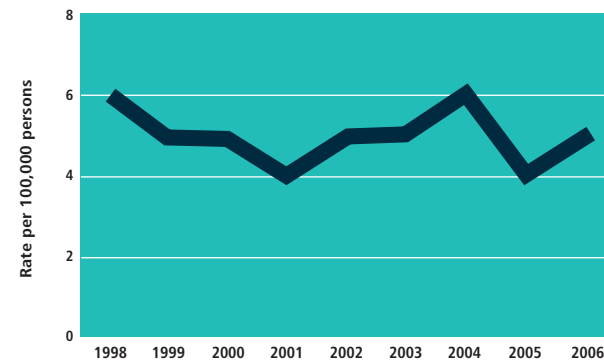


Source: WA Police Offence Information System and Frontline Incident Management System

attempted unlawful killing of another person where there is either the intent to kill, or the intent to cause grievous bodily harm with the knowledge that it was probable that death or grievous bodily harm would occur but where death did not actually occur (WA Police, 2007a).

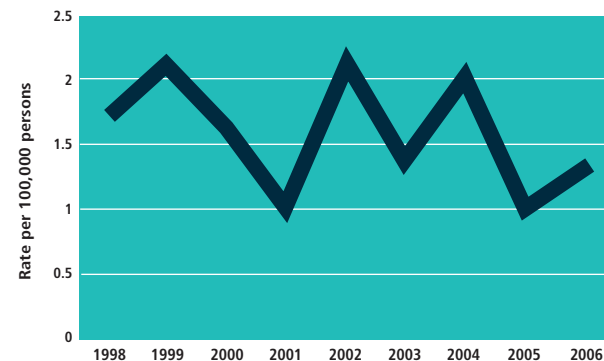
Manslaughter is the unlawful killing of another person while deprived of the power of self-control by provocation or under circumstances amounting to diminished responsibility or without intent to kill, as a result of a careless, reckless, negligent, unlawful or dangerous act. Driving causing death is the unlawful killing of another person without intent to kill, as a result of culpable, dangerous, reckless, or negligent driving (WA Police, 2007a). The proportion of offences in each category is shown in Chart 11.

Chart 12 – Homicides in WA, 1998-2006 (rate per 100,000 persons)



Source: WA Police Offence Information System and Frontline Incident Management System

Chart 13 – Murders in WA, 1998-2006 (rate per 100,000 persons)



Source: WA Police Offence Information System and Frontline Incident Management System

Features of Homicide

As outlined above, homicide is a crime category which includes murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, and driving causing death. WA has an average total of 153 homicides a year; see Chart 12 for the rate of homicides in WA. The average number of murders each year is 30; see Chart 13 for the rate of murders (WA Police, 2007b). Western Australia's murder rate per 100,000 persons is identical to the national rate (Pink, 2007), and in the first half of 2007 the number of homicides in WA were half the number they were in the same period of 2006 (29 homicides for Jan-June 2007 compared with 63 for Jan-Jun 2006; WA Police, 2007b). According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, most murders in Australia occur in a residential dwelling (60%) rather than parks, streets, shops and similar locations (Trewin, 2006a). In keeping with this finding, family and domestic violence plays a significant role in this crime category. In 2005, for example, half of all murders and attempted murders were FDV related (Mann, 2007).



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