

Australian Institute of Criminology

IDENTIFYING PRIME TARGETS FOR ARMED ROBBERY

By Lance Smith*

SINCE 2003 the Australian Institute of Criminology have been collecting ongoing data on armed robbery from all state and territory police services. This data is collected as part of the National Armed Robbery Monitoring Program (NARMP) at the Australian Institute of Criminology. The NARMP program was established to monitor trends in, and patterns of, armed robbery in Australia. This data also allows for popular targets of armed robbery such as service stations to be examined for crime prevention purposes. This article will report on some key industry targets popular with armed robbers and notes the differences between armed robberies committed against these locations.

In 2005 there were 6,341 reported armed robbery incidents across Australia in which 2,090 were targeted at a business location. The four locations examined here are “service stations,” “banking and financial institutions,” “licensed premises” and “corner stores, supermarkets and takeaways.” All vary in the frequency of armed robbery incidents they experience.

The location that experienced the most incidents was “service stations” with 598 incidents. “Corner stores, supermarkets and takeaways” experienced 498 incidents, while “licensed premises” suffered 286 incidents and “banking and financial institutions” experienced 93 incidents of armed robbery.

TIME OF ROBBERY

By examining the time an armed robbery occurs,

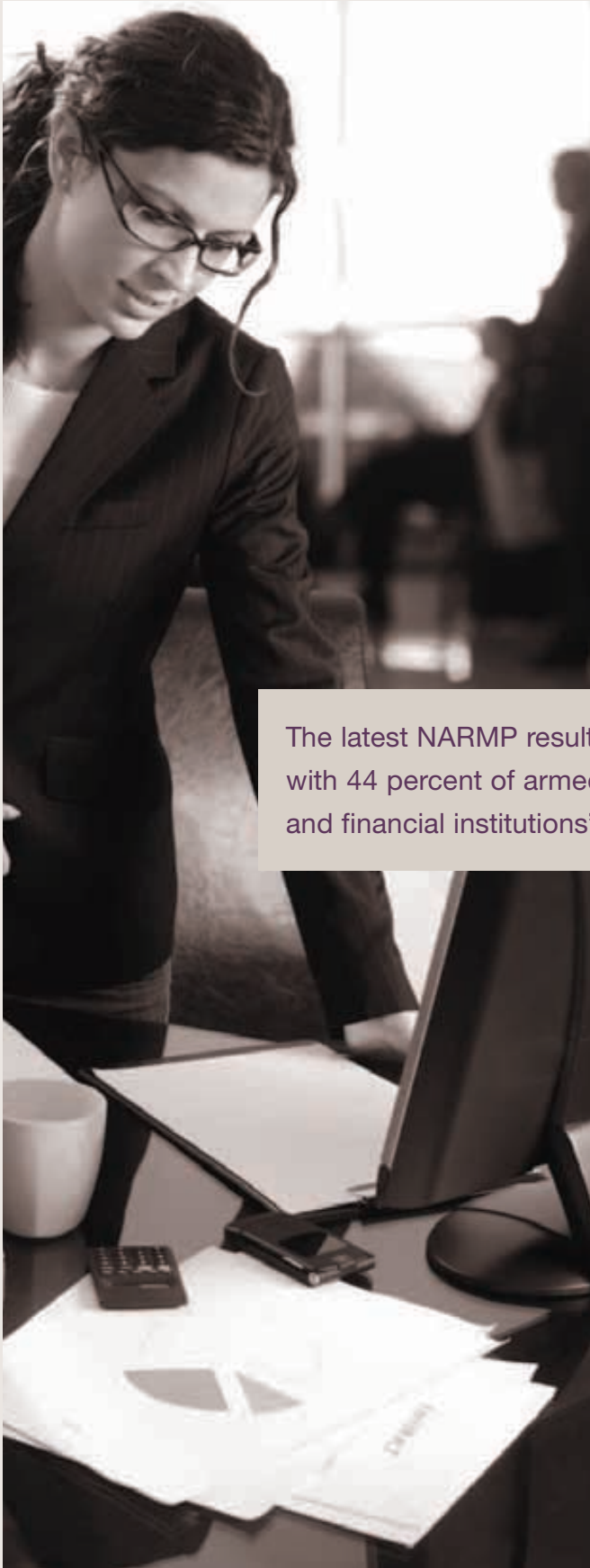
prevention strategies can be better targeted by focussing resources on certain high risk time periods.

Eighty-six percent of armed robberies at “service stations” occurred outside of normal business hours (6pm-6am). Forty-eight percent of all incidents occurred between the hours of midnight and 6am. The lack of customers (i.e. witnesses or assistance) during these hours and there often being a lone staff worker are the two core reasons for this phenomenon. Similar patterns exist for “corner stores, supermarkets and takeaways” and “licensed premises” where 51 and 46 percent of armed robberies happened between the hours of 6pm and midnight respectively.

As a result of the different operating hours for banks and financial institutions (i.e. 9am-5pm) these locations experience the majority of armed robbery incidents during the daytime. Slightly more armed robbery incidents do occur in the afternoon with 30 percent taking place between 3pm to 6pm. Some incidents did occur outside of normal business hours but these were not common and may have happened whilst the bank was closed to regular customers.

WEAPON USE

The type of weapon used in an armed robbery can also tell us something about the offenders who are targeting certain locations. Are these offenders using a baseball bat or some other easy to obtain weapon? In other words, are they opportunistic, inexperienced offenders after small gains? Or are they offenders using difficult to obtain



The latest NARMP results support this notion with 44 percent of armed robberies at “banking and financial institutions” involving firearms.

weapons such as firearms? In other words, are they more organised professional offenders interested in larger gains? The latter offender is usually associated with more lucrative locations such as “banking and financial institutions” and to a lesser extent “licensed premises”. The latest NARMP results support this notion with 44 percent of armed robberies at “banking and financial institutions” involving firearms compared with a much smaller 12 percent for all armed robberies. Thirty five percent of armed robberies at licensed premises involved a firearm of some description. In contrast “service stations” and “corner stores, supermarkets and takeaways” were far more likely to have a knife involved as the most serious weapon with 56 and 61 percent of incidents involving this weapon type.

NUMBER OF OFFENDERS

The number of offenders involved in an armed robbery can, along with other variables, help confirm how opportunistic a robbery may have been. “Corner stores, supermarkets and takeaways” and “service stations” were more likely to be targeted by lone offenders (51% and 49% respectively). This pattern matches the overall trend with these locations attracting these opportunistic lone offenders.

The location of “banking and financial institutions” were more likely than most other locations to attract 2 offenders with 36 percent of incidents having two offenders

present. “Licensed premises” were more likely than any other location to have multiple offenders involved. This is illustrated by the findings for “licensed premises” where 28 percent of incidents involved four offenders.

Fitting with patterns already described, multiple offenders can mean the armed robbery incident was better planned, earn higher yields and involve more serious weapons.

AGE OF OFFENDERS

For those offenders who were arrested and charged, details such as age demonstrates how different offenders target different locations. The oldest on average of all offenders were those who were targeting “banking and financial institutions” (average age of 31 years old). Slightly younger armed robbery offenders were targeting “licensed premises” and were on average 27 years of age. “Corner stores, supermarkets and takeaways” were targeted by younger offenders with these offenders being 25 years old on average. Lastly, the youngest offenders of all were those who target “service stations”, these offenders were on average only 24 years old. These patterns in age continue to enforce the profile of these locations particularly in relation to the type offender who targets them.

REPEAT VICTIMISATION

The level of repeat victimisation can provide some insight into the profiles and prevention methods used by these four key locations. Of the four locations specified “banking and financial institutions”

continued page 44 >

CRIMINAL MINDS

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had the lowest rates of repeat victimisation. Only 3.2 percent of banking and financial locations suffered repeat victimisation in 2005. The security measures employed by this location may be a factor for its low levels of repeat victimisation. In contrast, “corner stores, supermarkets and takeaways” and “licensed premises” were considerably more likely to be repeat victims (12.2 and 11.6 percent respectively). Although there are some factors which may contribute to this such as longer opening hours and remaining open during the late night/early morning. For the location of “service stations” 8.4 percent suffered repeat victimisation in 2005.

VALUE OF PROPERTY TAKEN

Although “banking and financial institutions” are targeted less frequently than the other three locations they yield the highest average for value of property stolen. On average the value of the property (mostly money) taken from “banking and financial institutions” was \$7,273 per incident. The location of “licensed premises” was only slightly less profitable with \$6,092 dollars taken on average. This average figure rose for both locations when a firearm was used to \$9,052 for “licensed premises” and \$10,570 for

“banking and financial institutions.” “Corner stores, supermarkets and takeaways” venues yield on average substantially less at \$1,281 regardless of the weapon type used. For “service stations” the average value of property taken was even less and was one of the lowest for any location recorded by NARMP at \$634. This kind of pattern further supports the profile of the type of offender who targets each of these locations, ranging from the professional who is targeting “banking and financial institutions” to the opportunist targeting “service stations”

PROFILE OF LOCATIONS

Each of these four locations has their own unique profiles in relation to their armed robbery victimisation. Such profiles are important to 1) develop successful prevention strategies that can be tailored to suit each individual location and 2) help us understand why these locations are prime targets of armed robbery while others are not. The armed robbery profiles of these locations are as follows:

Banking and financial institutions

- Targeted during normal business hours with slight

continued page 56 >

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