

## OVERVIEW OF MAJOR TRENDS

### TRENDS IN RECORDED CRIME

However trends in recorded crime are presented, their interpretation is a difficult task. The recorded criminal incident data presented in this report are based on information derived from the NSW Police Service Computerised Operational Policing System, so only those incidents which are reported to, or detected by, police are included. The trends in recorded crime shown in this report will, therefore, reflect movements in the underlying factors which influence the detection, reporting and recording of crime, as well as changes in the true level of crime in the community.

An alternative measure of the level of crime in NSW is available from crime victim surveys, for example the *Crime and Safety Survey* which is conducted annually by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).<sup>1</sup> As well as providing an estimate of the victimisation rate in the community for a selected set of offences, this survey measures the proportion of crimes which are not reported to police, and are therefore not recorded in the official statistics. In particular, personal crimes, such as assault and robbery, are less likely to be reported than crimes which involve households. For example, *Crime and Safety, New South Wales, 2003* shows that, in the twelve-month period to April 2003, while 94 per cent of motor vehicle thefts and 72 per cent of break and enter offences (crimes against 'households') were reported to police, only 39 per cent of all alleged assault offences were reported during that period. Given that some offences have low reporting rates, it is possible that changes in recorded crime rates over time for these offences largely reflect changes in reporting rates.

Public willingness to report crime, however, is just one of the extraneous factors which can affect trends in recorded crime. Shifts in policing policy can also have a marked effect on the number of recorded drug offences, drink driving offences, cases of offensive behaviour or of receiving stolen goods. For these offences, therefore, recorded rates probably do not accurately reflect actual rates. For this reason, the more detailed comparisons of crime rates and examination of trends in this document are restricted to categories of offence which are reported to, rather than detected by, police.

The interpretation of trends in official reports of crime can be considerably more difficult than the interpretation of trends in unemployment or inflation statistics. The ease with which recorded crime statistics can be misunderstood creates a temptation to offer an authoritative explanation for each major crime trend. Indeed, in many instances it is simply impossible to state with any assurance why a particular trend has appeared. This report, therefore, confines itself to identifying and describing trends in recorded crime, rather than explaining them.

The trends examined in this overview cover a twenty-four month period, from January 2002 to December 2003. For comparative purposes, statistics for 2001 have been included in the detailed tables in the sections which follow. For some offence categories, separate trends have been presented for various offence subcategories; in particular, sexual offences, robbery, break and enter, and stealing offences have been further disaggregated.

For each offence category or subcategory except murder, a statistical test for trend was applied to the monthly numbers of recorded criminal incidents over the twenty-four month period from January 2002 to December 2003.<sup>2</sup> In the case of murder, the statistical test for trend was applied to the monthly numbers of victims over the same period. For those offences where a statistically significant trend was found, the extent of the trend is indicated by the percentage change between the total recorded number of incidents for the twelve months of January to December 2002 and the total recorded number of incidents for the same period in 2003.

## SUMMARY OF TRENDS

In the following summary the bracketed figures denote the percentage change in the total number of recorded criminal incidents between the consecutive twelve-month periods January to December 2002 and January to December 2003. The percentage change is shown only for those offences where a statistically significant upward or downward trend was detected.

### Significant downward trends

There was a statistically significant downward trend in the monthly numbers of recorded criminal incidents for the following offences:

- robbery without a weapon (down by 4.6%, see Figure 4)
- robbery with a weapon not a firearm (down by 19.3%, see Figure 4)
- break and enter – dwelling (down by 11.4%, see Figure 5)
- break and enter – non-dwelling (down by 12.8%, see Figure 5)
- motor vehicle theft (down by 17.3%, see Figure 6)
- steal from motor vehicle (down by 14.7%, see Figure 6)
- steal from person (down by 6.8%, see Figure 7)
- fraud (down by 15.2%, see Figure 8)

### Offences where there was no upward or downward trend

There was no statistically significant generally upward or downward trend in the monthly numbers of recorded criminal incidents<sup>3</sup> for any of the following offences:

- murder (see Figure 1)
- assault (see Figure 2)
- domestic assault (see Figure 2)
- sexual assault (see Figure 3)
- indecent assault, act of indecency, other sexual offences (see Figure 3)
- robbery with a firearm (see Figure 4)
- steal from dwelling (see Figure 7)
- steal from retail store (see Figure 7)
- malicious damage to property (see Figure 9).

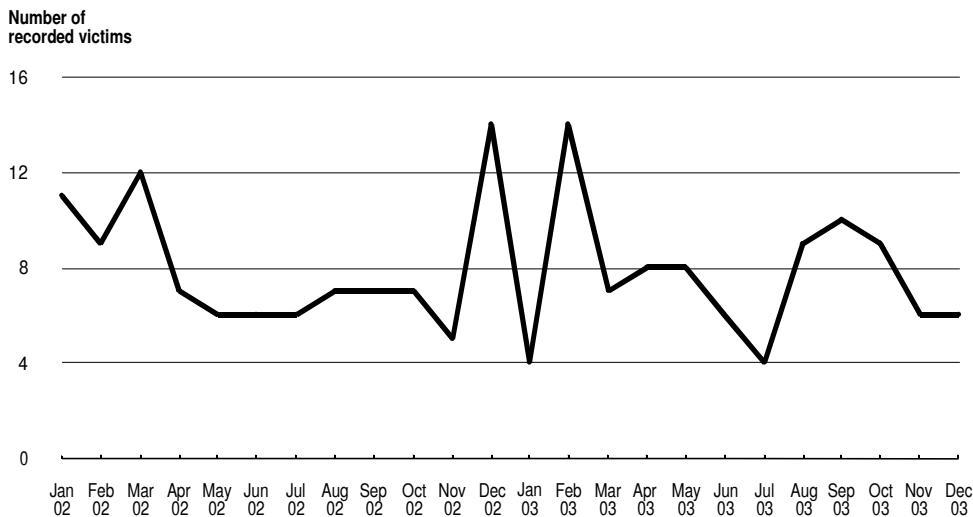
### Significant upward trends

There were no offences for which there was a statistically significant upward trend in the monthly number of recorded criminal incidents.

## DESCRIPTION OF TRENDS

Graphs in this section show monthly trends for a selected set of offences in NSW, between January 2002 and December 2003. For each offence category, information is given on the statistical significance of any trend shown in the graphs, and the annual rate of offences per 100,000 resident population. In addition, geographical areas with the three highest rates, and the three lowest rates of recorded criminal incidents in NSW are listed. Within the Sydney Statistical Division, recorded crime rates are detailed by Statistical Subdivision (SSD). Outside the Sydney Statistical Division, recorded crime rates are detailed by Statistical Division (SD). The rate calculations are based on resident population data and are calculated as recorded offences per 100,000 population in each Statistical Division or Subdivision.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that the Inner Sydney Statistical Subdivision has high recorded crime rates because, compared with other regions, the resident population is small relative to the 'transient' or non-resident population which uses the area for business, entertainment, shopping, etc. That is, the high transient population is not reflected in the rate calculation.

**Figure 1: Murder**

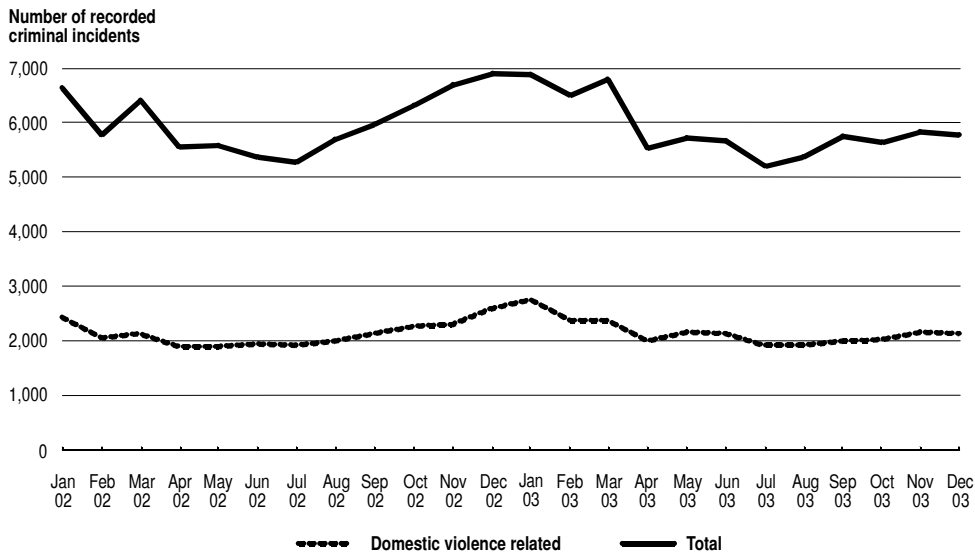


### Murder

With such small numbers of murder victims, the month to month variation is extremely marked. For this reason it is difficult to detect trends over such a short period. Because of the small numbers of murder victims, it is not sensible to make regional comparisons.

**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** No statistically significant upward or downward trend.

**NSW annual rate (2003):** 1.4 per 100,000 population

**Figure 2: Assault**

## Assault

### Total assaults

**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** No statistically significant upward or downward trend.

**NSW annual rate (2003):** 1,066.0 per 100,000 population

**Highest rates:** Far West SD - 3,602.4 per 100,000 population  
 North Western SD - 2,552.2 per 100,000 population  
 Inner Sydney SSD - 2,250.9 per 100,000 population

**Lowest rates:** Central Northern Sydney SSD - 287.7 per 100,000 population  
 Lower Northern Sydney SSD - 466.6 per 100,000 population  
 St George–Sutherland SSD - 568.6 per 100,000 population

### Domestic assault

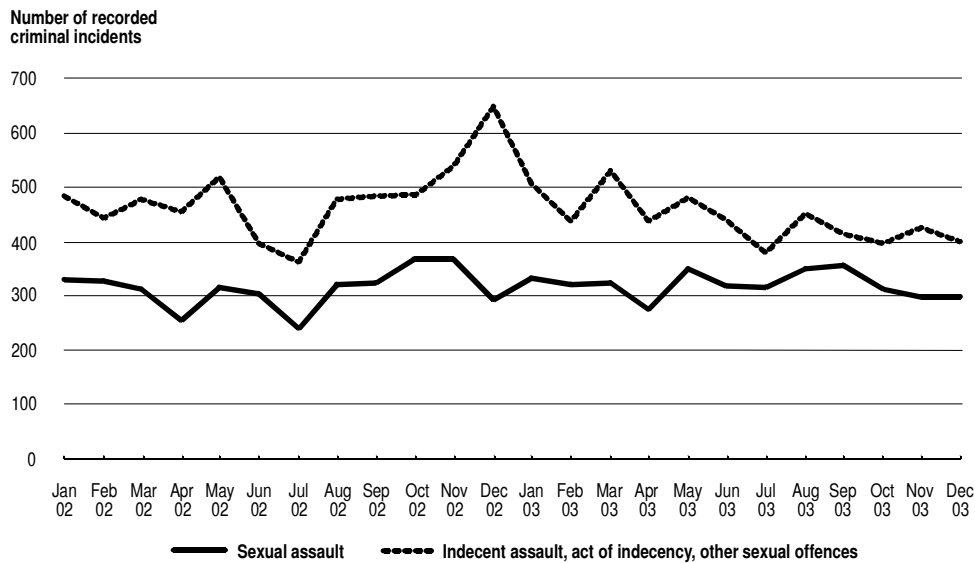
**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** No statistically significant upward or downward trend.

**NSW annual rate (2003):** 391.9 per 100,000 population

**Highest rates:** Far West SD - 1,968.7 per 100,000 population  
 North Western SD - 1,089.2 per 100,000 population  
 Blacktown SSD - 679.4 per 100,000 population

**Lowest rates:** Central Northern Sydney SSD - 101.8 per 100,000 population  
 Lower Northern Sydney SSD - 136.8 per 100,000 population  
 Inner Western Sydney SSD - 185.1 per 100,000 population

**Figure 3: Sexual assault and indecent assault, act of indecency, other sexual offences**



## Sexual offences

### *Sexual assault*

**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** No statistically significant upward or downward trend.

**NSW annual rate (2003):** 58.1 per 100,000 population

**Highest rates:** Far West SD - 119.9 per 100,000 population  
 North Western SD - 109.5 per 100,000 population  
 Northern SD - 100.3 per 100,000 population

**Lowest rates:** Central Northern Sydney SSD - 18.1 per 100,000 population  
 Lower Northern Sydney SSD - 23.4 per 100,000 population  
 Northern Beaches SSD - 24.9 per 100,000 population

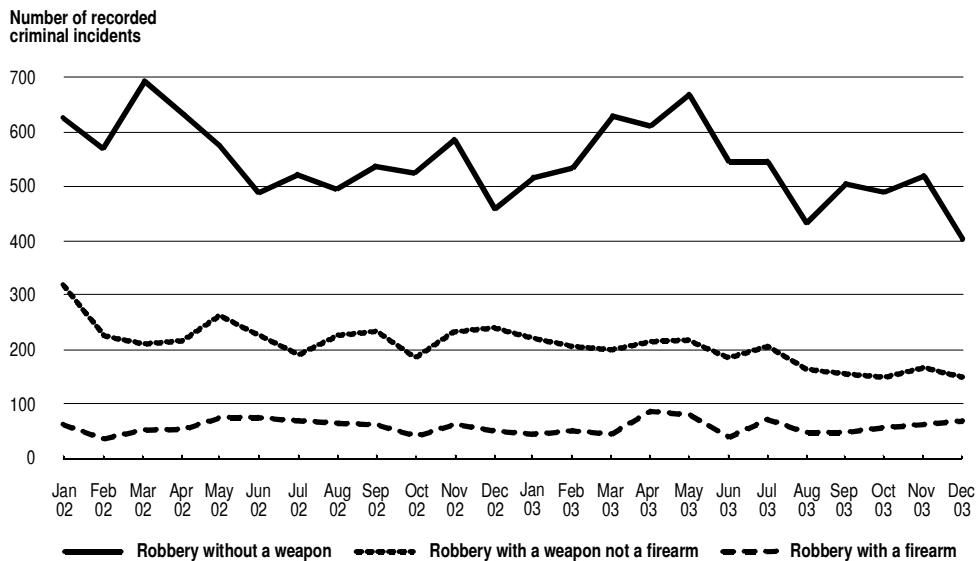
### *Indecent assault, act of indecency, other sexual offences*

**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** No statistically significant upward or downward trend.

**NSW annual rate (2003):** 79.8 per 100,000 population

**Highest rates:** North Western SD - 173.9 per 100,000 population  
 Far West SD - 132.4 per 100,000 population  
 Northern SD - 125.8 per 100,000 population

**Lowest rates:** Central Northern Sydney SSD - 32.4 per 100,000 population  
 Lower Northern Sydney SSD - 40.6 per 100,000 population  
 Northern Beaches SSD - 44.7 per 100,000 population

**Figure 4: Robbery with and without a weapon**

## Robbery

### *Robbery without a weapon*

**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** A statistically significant downward trend (down by 4.6%).

**NSW annual rate (2003):** 96.2 per 100,000 population

**Highest rates:** Inner Sydney SSD - 570.2 per 100,000 population  
 Inner Western Sydney SSD - 225.9 per 100,000 population  
 Central Western Sydney SSD - 205.4 per 100,000 population

**Lowest rates:** South Eastern SD - 14.3 per 100,000 population  
 Murray SD - 15.8 per 100,000 population  
 Mid-North Coast SD - 24.6 per 100,000 population

### *Robbery with a firearm*

**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** No statistically significant upward or downward trend.

**NSW annual rate (2003):** 10.6 per 100,000 population

**Highest rates:** Inner Sydney SSD - 47.4 per 100,000 population  
 Inner Western Sydney SSD - 35.9 per 100,000 population  
 Central Western Sydney SSD - 27.8 per 100,000 population

**Lowest rates:** No robberies with firearms were recorded in the following SDs:  
 Richmond-Tweed, Murray, Far West.

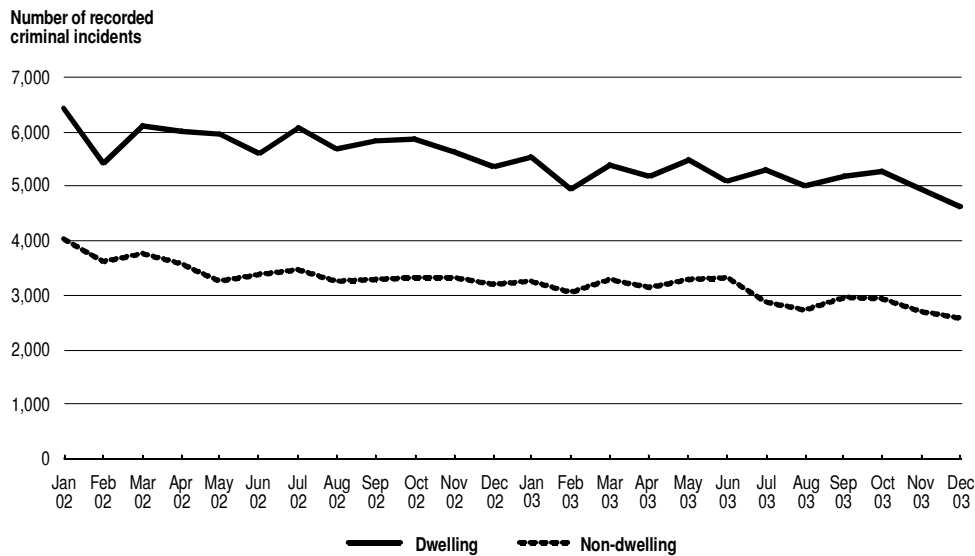
### *Robbery with a weapon not a firearm*

**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** A statistically significant downward trend (down by 19.3%).

**NSW annual rate (2003):** 33.6 per 100,000 population

**Highest rates:** Inner Sydney SSD - 168.0 per 100,000 population  
 Inner Western Sydney SSD - 83.4 per 100,000 population  
 Central Western Sydney SSD - 76.4 per 100,000 population

**Lowest rates:** Murrumbidgee SD - 2.0 per 100,000 population  
 Northern SD - 3.3 per 100,000 population  
 Far West SD - 4.1 per 100,000 population

**Figure 5: Break and enter – dwelling and non-dwelling**

## Break and enter

### *Break and enter – dwelling*

**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** A statistically significant downward trend (down by 11.4%).

**NSW annual rate (2003):** 934.6 per 100,000 population

**Highest rates:** North Western SD - 1,662.7 per 100,000 population  
 Inner Sydney SSD - 1,623.3 per 100,000 population  
 Eastern Suburbs SSD - 1,417.6 per 100,000 population

**Lowest rates:** Central Northern Sydney SSD - 544.0 per 100,000 population  
 Northern Beaches SSD - 628.5 per 100,000 population  
 Murray SD - 659.3 per 100,000 population

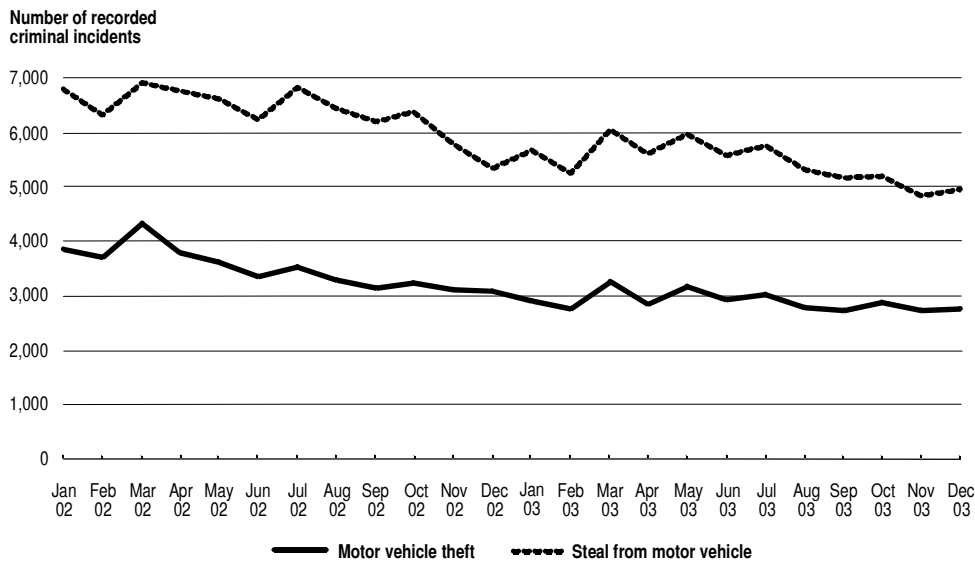
### *Break and enter – non-dwelling*

**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** A statistically significant downward trend (down by 12.8%).

**NSW annual rate (2003):** 545.4 per 100,000 population

**Highest rates:** North Western SD - 1,340.9 per 100,000 population  
 Inner Sydney SSD - 1,107.9 per 100,000 population  
 Far West SD - 992.6 per 100,000 population

**Lowest rates:** Central Northern Sydney SSD - 250.0 per 100,000 population  
 St George–Sutherland SSD - 302.1 per 100,000 population  
 Inner Western Sydney SSD - 320.3 per 100,000 population

**Figure 6: Motor vehicle theft and steal from motor vehicle**

## Motor vehicle theft and steal from motor vehicle

### *Motor vehicle theft*

**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** A statistically significant downward trend (down by 17.3%).

**NSW annual rate (2003):** 524.0 per 100,000 population

**Highest rates:** Inner Sydney SSD - 1,103.2 per 100,000 population  
 Canterbury–Bankstown SSD - 875.0 per 100,000 population  
 Central Western Sydney SSD - 824.8 per 100,000 population

**Lowest rates:** Central Northern Sydney SSD - 199.5 per 100,000 population  
 Northern SD - 202.3 per 100,000 population  
 Northern Beaches SSD - 243.7 per 100,000 population

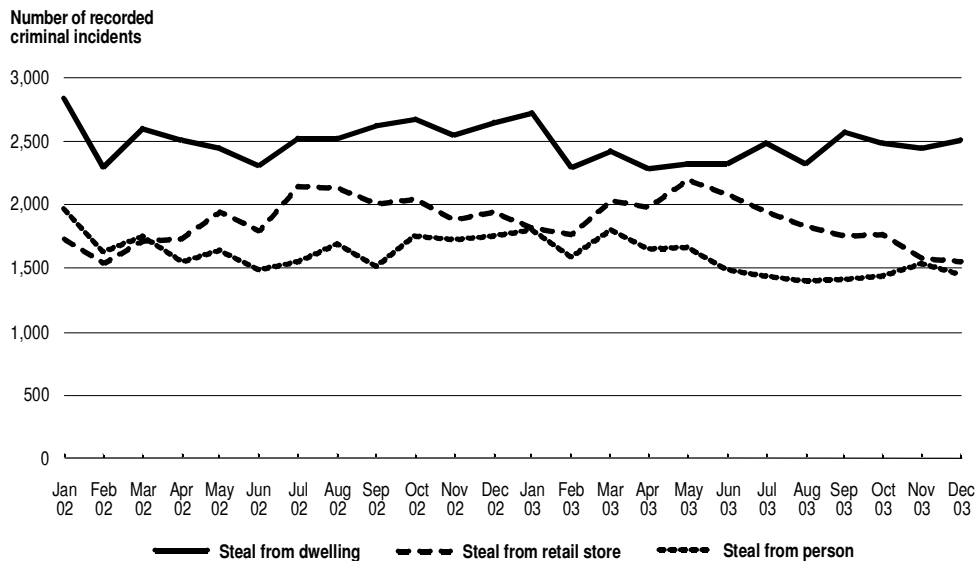
### *Steal from motor vehicle*

**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** A statistically significant downward trend (down by 14.7%).

**NSW annual rate (2003):** 983.2 per 100,000 population

**Highest rates:** Inner Sydney SSD - 3,756.9 per 100,000 population  
 North Western SD - 1,242.2 per 100,000 population  
 Eastern Suburbs SSD - 1,145.2 per 100,000 population

**Lowest rates:** Central Northern Sydney SSD - 505.6 per 100,000 population  
 South Eastern SD - 654.4 per 100,000 population  
 St George–Sutherland SSD - 667.0 per 100,000 population

**Figure 7: Steal from retail store, from dwelling and from person**

## Stealing

### *Steal from retail store*

**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** No statistically significant upward or downward

**NSW annual rate (2003):** 335.5 per 100,000 population

**Highest rates:** Inner Sydney SSD - 735.5 per 100,000 population  
Blacktown SSD - 472.4 per 100,000 population  
North Western SD - 460.6 per 100,000 population

**Lowest rates:** Central Northern Sydney SSD - 149.7 per 100,000 population  
Northern Beaches SSD - 194.3 per 100,000 population  
St George–Sutherland SSD - 239.2 per 100,000 population

### *Steal from dwelling*

**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** No statistically significant upward or downward trend.

**NSW annual rate (2003):** 439.1 per 100,000 population

**Highest rates:** Far West SD - 1,050.5 per 100,000 population  
North Western SD - 712.2 per 100,000 population  
Murrumbidgee SD - 692.0 per 100,000 population

**Lowest rates:** Canterbury–Bankstown SSD - 185.4 per 100,000 population  
Central Northern Sydney SSD - 214.5 per 100,000 population  
Fairfield–Liverpool SSD - 236.7 per 100,000 population

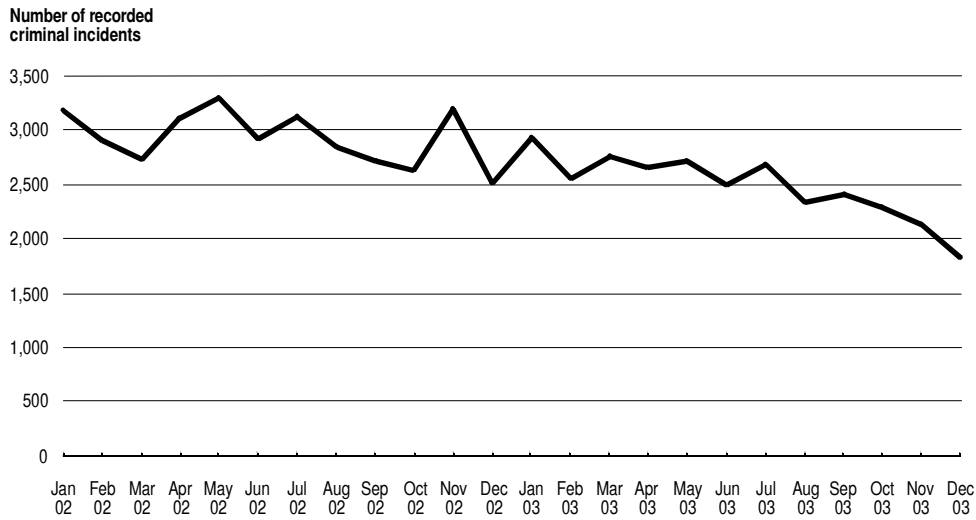
### *Steal from person*

**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** A statistically significant downward trend (down by 6.8%).

**NSW annual rate (2003):** 280.9 per 100,000 population

**Highest rates:** Inner Sydney SSD - 2,457.0 per 100,000 population  
Inner Western Sydney SSD - 446.9 per 100,000 population  
Eastern Suburbs SSD - 423.1 per 100,000 population

**Lowest rates:** South Eastern SD - 55.1 per 100,000 population  
Murray SD - 64.0 per 100,000 population  
Murrumbidgee SD - 67.3 per 100,000 population

**Figure 8: Fraud**

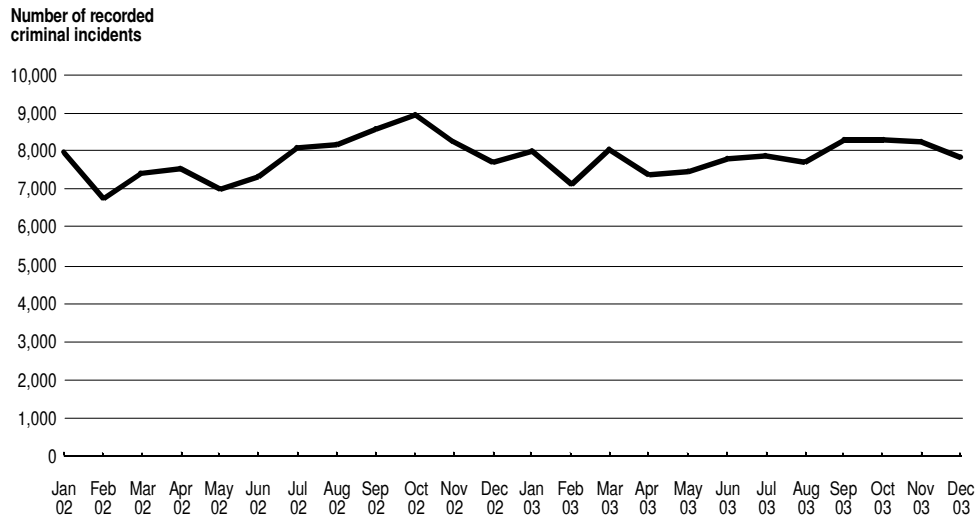
## Fraud

**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** A statistically significant downward trend (down by 15.2%).

**NSW annual rate (2003):** 448.6 per 100,000 population

**Highest rates:** Inner Sydney SSD - 1,616.3 per 100,000 population  
 Central Western Sydney SSD - 739.7 per 100,000 population  
 Blacktown SSD - 587.9 per 100,000 population

**Lowest rates:** Far West SD - 223.3 per 100,000 population  
 Central Northern Sydney SSD - 231.9 per 100,000 population  
 Murray SD - 258.6 per 100,000 population

**Figure 9: Malicious damage to property**

## Malicious damage to property

**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** No statistically significant upward or downward trend.

**NSW annual rate (2003):** 1,417.6 per 100,000 population

**Highest rates:** Far West SD - 2,804.2 per 100,000 population  
 North Western SD - 2,737.7 per 100,000 population  
 Murrumbidgee SD - 2,101.3 per 100,000 population

**Lowest rates:** Central Northern Sydney SSD - 698.5 per 100,000 population  
 Inner Western Sydney SSD - 839.6 per 100,000 population  
 Lower Northern Sydney SSD - 867.2 per 100,000 population

## TRENDS IN METHODS OF PROCEEDING AGAINST ALLEGED OFFENDERS

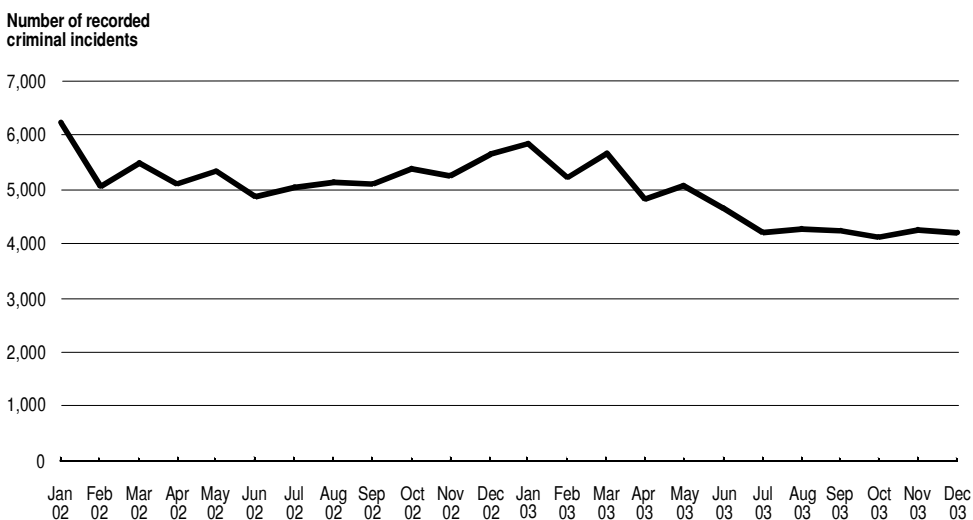
The information which follows highlights trends in the number of persons proceeded against to court by NSW Police. These proceedings relate to criminal incidents recorded between January 2002 and December 2003.

Following legislative changes to Local Court procedures, since July 2003 the police have commenced all criminal proceedings by Court Attendance Notice. Charges and Summonses have been replaced by specific types of Court Attendance Notice. Charges have been replaced by Bail Court Attendance Notices and Summonses have been replaced by Future Court Attendance Notices. Field Court Attendance Notices remain unchanged, while Court Attendance Notices are now called No-Bail Court Attendance Notices. In this publication, proceedings from July to December 2003 have been reclassified under the original categories.

### Charge

**Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003):** A statistically significant downward trend (down by 11.0%).

**Figure 10: Persons charged\***

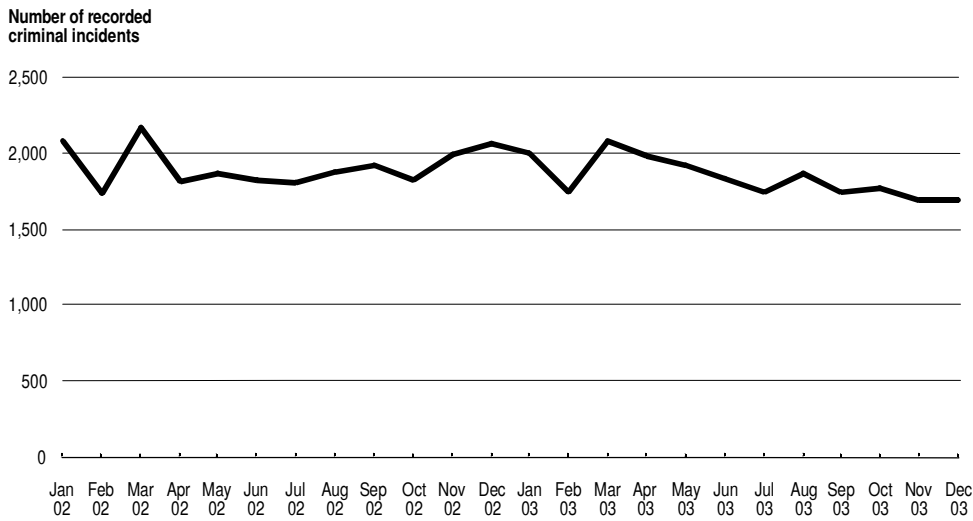


\* In July 2003, Bail Court Attendance Notices replaced charges.

## Court Attendance Notice

Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003): No statistically significant upward or downward trend.

**Figure 11: Persons issued with a Court Attendance Notice\***

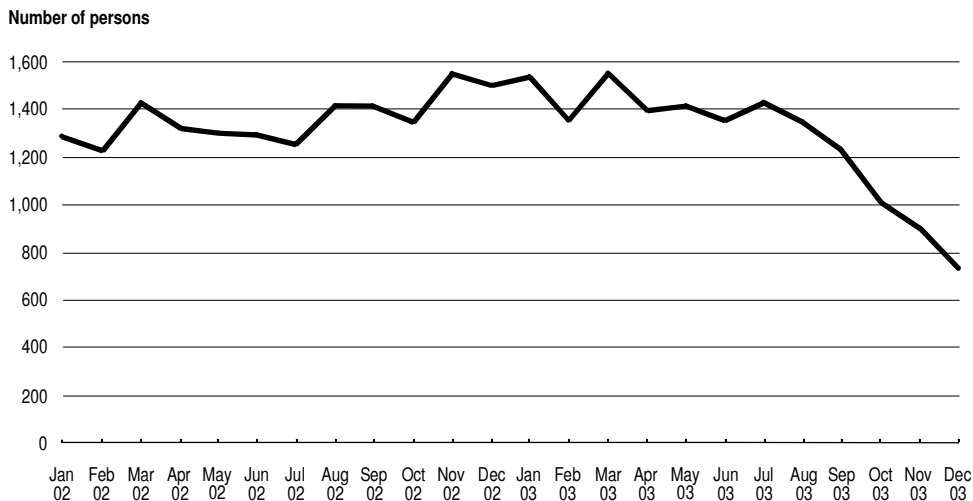


\* In July 2003, No-Bail Court Attendance Notices replaced Court Attendance Notices

## Summons

Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003): No statistically significant upward or downward trend.

**Figure 12: Persons issued with summons\*#**



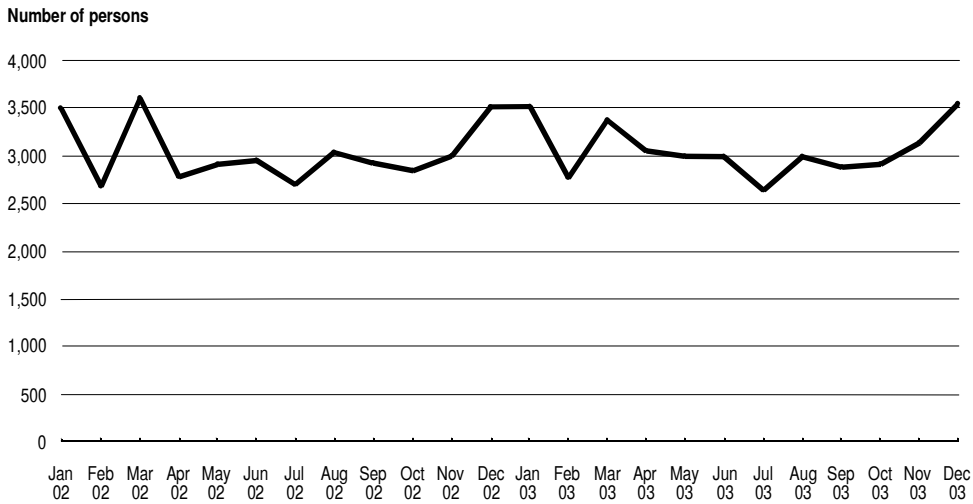
\* In July 2003, Future Service Court Attendance Notices replaced summons.

# These data show the number of summons issued for criminal incidents recorded in 2002 and 2003. The number of summons issued for offences in the final months of 2003 are low due to a time lag between the incident being recorded and a summons being issued.

## Field Court Attendance Notice

Trend (Jan 2002 - Dec 2003): No statistically significant upward or downward trend.

**Figure 13: Persons issued with a Field Court Attendance Notice**



## NOTES

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003, *Crime and Safety, New South Wales, April 2003*, Cat. No.4509.1, ABS, Sydney.
2. The trend test used was Kendall's rank-order correlation test (see for example, Conover, W.J., 1980, *Practical Non-Parametric Statistics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, John Wiley and Sons, pp 256-260). A two tailed test was used to determine whether there had been an increasing or decreasing trend in the recorded numbers of criminal incidents over the most recent twenty-four month period covered in the report. Some month to month variations in the numbers could be due in part to seasonal factors. The test for trend is not sensitive to seasonal variations; it is sensitive only to a generally increasing or decreasing trend over the time period examined.
3. In the case of murder, there was no statistically significant trend in the monthly numbers of recorded victims.
4. For the rate calculations, population data were obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics publication: *Regional Population Growth, Australia and New Zealand, 2001-02*, Cat. No. 3218.0 (for 2001 and 2002 population estimates). As no population estimates were available for 2003 when this report was published, rates for 2003 were calculated using 2002 population estimates.