

DIFFERENCES IN RECORDED CRIME STATISTICS

This paper was prepared by the National Crime Statistics Unit
on behalf of the National Crime Statistics Unit Board of Management.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
BHO	British Home Office
CRS	Crime Recording System
DiRCS	Differences in Recorded Crime Statistics
DV	Domestic Violence
EDS	Electronic Despatch System
IT	Information Technology
MVT	Motor Vehicle Theft
NCRS	National Crime Recording Standard
NCSS	National Crime and Safety Survey
NCSU	National Crime Statistics Unit
RCVS	Recorded Crime - Victims Statistics
RSE	Relative Standard Error
SBT	Scenario Based Testing exercise
UEWI	Unlawful Entry With Intent

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Differences in Recorded Crime Statistics (DiRCS) project was to investigate state and territory differences in Recorded Crime Victim Statistics (RCVS). The project aimed to identify issues relevant to understanding the nature and extent of the impact of various factors on the national comparability of recorded crime statistics.

2. The project was initiated in 2001 by the Board of Management of the National Crime Statistics Unit (NCSU), which considered the results of the projects at its May 2005 meeting.

3. The project has identified differences in the way information has been entered and recorded at the front end, but has not found material differences in the way police jurisdictions manage the information once it has been recorded. That is, post recording processes undertaken by the police jurisdictions are sound.

4. In summary the key findings of the DiRCS project were:

- The incidence of recorded crime is variable across states and territories and by offence type. Survey measures give a consistent view of the relativities of rates of crime incidents across jurisdictions.
- The level of reporting of incidents of crime to police varies across states and territories, particularly for personal crimes. Again, survey measures give a consistent view of the relativities of reporting.
- Both the incidence and reporting of crime to police impact on the levels of crime observed in recorded crime statistics. These differences are known and measurable but do not account for all of the differences across states and territories in recorded crime statistics.
- There is evidence that the initial processes used by police when a crime is reported vary across jurisdictions and result in inconsistent recording of crime within and across jurisdictions.
- Once a crime has been recorded in a Crime Recording System (CRS), there is no evidence to suggest that processes within any jurisdiction have a significant impact on differences in recorded crime statistics.

5. Therefore, a critical issue leading to differences in recorded crime statistics for some offences occurs at the initial processing stage after an incident is reported to police. In particular, this is the case for assault and sexual assault offences.

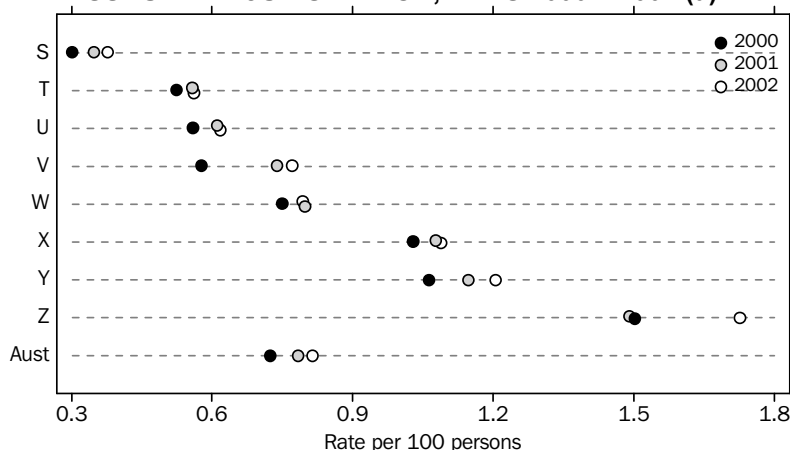
6. These findings were considered by the NCSU Board of Management who have endorsed a recommendation to develop a strategy for a National Crime Recording Standard to address this issue. This would include agreed purpose and principles, definitions and counting rules.

BACKGROUND

7. When the RCVS collection was first established a key focus of the NCSU was on developing national statistical standards that would be applied to crime reports recorded by police. This involved establishing and implementing definitions and counting rules for crimes recorded by police. These standards have been in operation for some time and quality assurance processes have focused on their implementation and improvement.

8. Over a period of time though, concerns have emerged about the different levels of crime and changes over time for different jurisdictions within the RCVS data. When compared to survey data for certain offence types such as assault these differ significantly. In particular concerns have developed that the national counting rule does not address differences between states and territories regarding which crimes are recorded by police. One of the main concerns was that the number of different offences recorded by each state and territory police service may vary depending on local recording procedures.

1. ASSAULT BY JURISDICTION, RCVS 2000 – 2002 (a)



(a) States and territories have been labelled S to Z based on the ascending size of the estimate in this graph.

9. Since the development of the national crime statistics collection in 1990 the policing environment has also changed considerably. For example there has been a large shift from paper-based systems to advanced IT systems for the storage of information about crime. It was also possible that these developments had impacted on comparability.

10. The UK police forces experienced similar issues to Australia regarding recorded crime statistics. The British Home Office (BHO) in the UK has focused on investigating how, and what, crime is recorded by police. In July 2000, the BHO released two reports: "Review of Crime Statistics: A discussion document" and the Research Study #204 titled "Review of police forces' crime recording practices". These reviews found that there were significant differences in the approaches to recording crime by different UK police forces. The BHO reports stated that the lack of consistency in the approach to crime recording made it extremely difficult to reliably compare statistics compiled by different police forces.

11. The DiRCS project was initiated to investigate whether the underlying differences between Australian state and territory RCVS data were due in part to differences in police recording practices, as found in the UK study, or due to other factors. At the May 2001 NCSU Board of Management meeting the NCSU presented a research proposal, based on the BHO study, investigating recorded crime. The Board endorsed the need for further research with regard to this issue and requested that the NCSU proceed with this work.

PROJECT GOVERNANCE

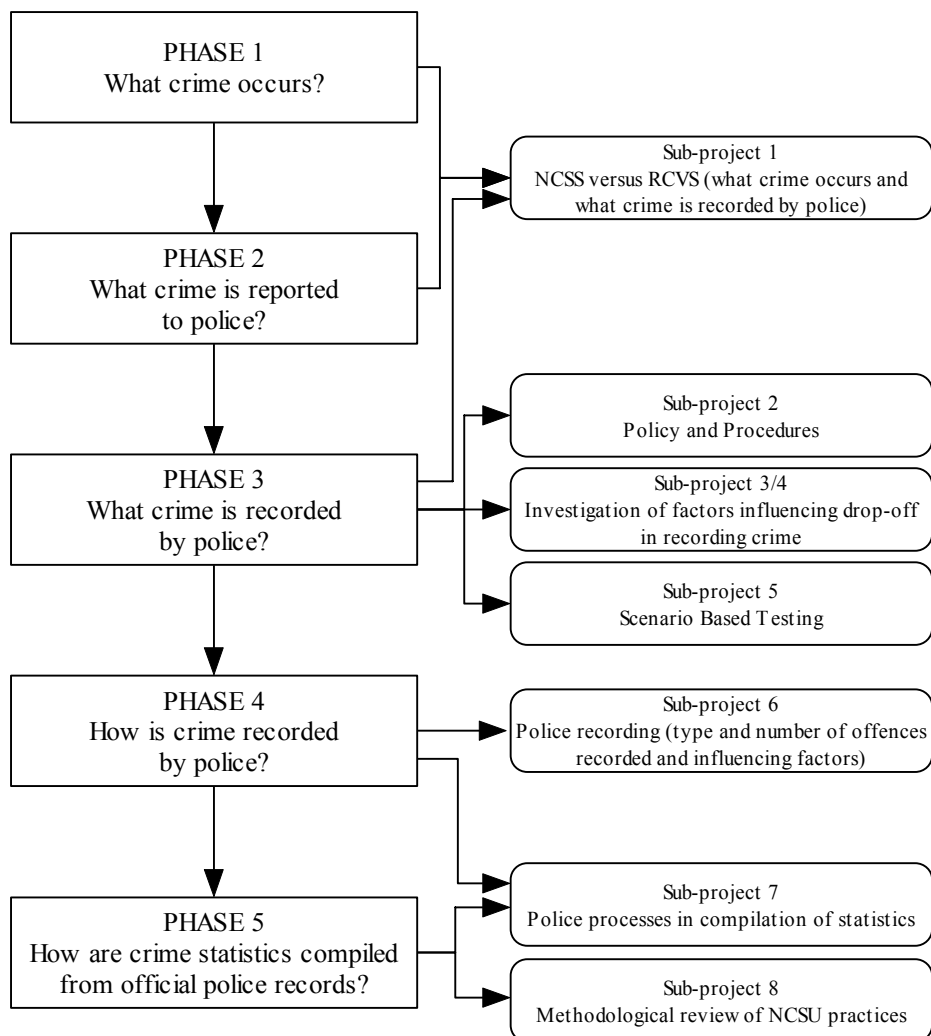
12. The DiRCS project was conducted under the auspices of the NCSU Board of Management and funded by the state and territory police services. As such ownership of the DiRCS project and outputs resides with the NCSU Board of Management.

13. The project was conducted under the guidance of a Steering Committee nominated by the NCSU Board of Management with the cooperation of all state and territory police forces. The NCSU was responsible for the conduct of the project and for the delivery of project outcomes and consulted with dedicated Liaison Officers in each state and territory.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

14. The DiRCS project identified five key phases that occur when a crime has been committed and from which differences in recorded crime data could occur. A series of eight sub-projects were developed to investigate each phase. These are represented in the diagram below. The aims and methodologies for the sub-projects are outlined in each sub-project section.

DIAGRAM 1 - PROJECT OUTLINE



SUB-PROJECT 1

SUB-PROJECT DESCRIPTION

15. This project compared and analysed data from the ABS National Crime and Safety Surveys (NCSS) and the national RCVS. The aims of the analysis were to:

- determine if the differences in the RCVS reflected real differences in the crime rates or were due to other factors; and
- prioritise the offence types for analysis in further sub-projects.

16. Data from the NCSS 2002 were compared to data from the RCVS collection for the equivalent period (May 2001 - April 2002). The analysis compared rates of prevalence, incidence, reporting and recording. It also calculated ratios of the NCSS reported victims or incidents to the RCVS recorded victims for each jurisdiction. Confidence intervals of 95% were calculated to determine if differences across jurisdictions were statistically significant, and to determine if differences might indicate that there are differences in other areas.

17. A number of issues had to be considered in this analysis.

- Not all RCVS offence types are included in the NCSS, so only assault, robbery, break-in/unlawful entry with intent (UEWI) and motor vehicle theft could be compared in this way.
- Sexual assault is included in both collections but has a small number of victims resulting in high survey relative standard errors (RSEs), making it difficult to reasonably compare data from the two collections.
- There are differences between the scope and classifications of the two collections. These were accounted for where possible but due to these differences the analysis was only considered as an indication of the point at which differences were occurring.
- There are differences in the counting rules applied for the NCSS and the RCVS collections. The RCVS counts victims each time they are recorded by police. NCSS counts both unique victims and incidents, neither of which match exactly to the RCVS counting unit. An assessment was made as to which measure was most comparable for each of the offence types analysed. The NCSS victim count was used for sexual assault and assault, whilst the incident count was used for break-in/UEWI, motor vehicle theft and robbery.

18. It should be noted that small estimates from the NCSS are subject to high Relative Standard Errors (RSEs). This has a significant impact on rate and proportion estimates for small states and territories (Tas, ACT and NT). Resulting 95% confidence intervals are depicted in the following graphs as an upper and lower bound.

SUB-PROJECT OUTCOMES

Incidence of crime

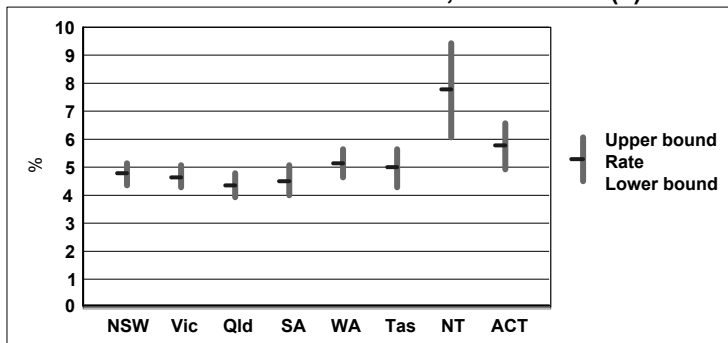
19. Using data from the NCSS, it was determined that there are some differences in the level of assault, break-in/attempted break-in and robbery across jurisdictions. An analysis of other national surveys that measure victimisation indicated that when comparing relative levels of incidence across jurisdictions, the differences observed are consistent across these collections.

20. NCSS data is for the period May 2001 - April 2002, and includes victims of offences that occurred in the reference period.

Assault

21. For most jurisdictions, the prevalence of assault measured in the NCSS in the 12 months preceding April 2002 was similar. There were more assaults in the ACT and the NT than other jurisdictions, with the assault victimisation rate in the ACT significantly higher than Qld, and the assault victimisation rate in the NT significantly higher than all jurisdictions except the ACT.

2. ASSAULT VICTIMISATION RATE, NCSS 2002 (a)

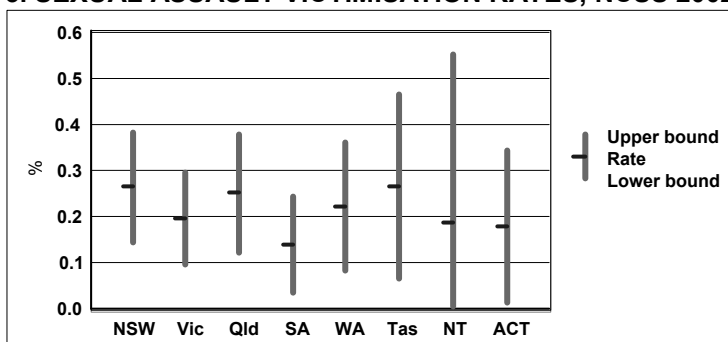


(a) Estimates for small states are subject to high RSEs, and consequently have large confidence intervals.

Sexual assault

22. Sexual assault victimisation is similar across jurisdictions. However the proportion of the population that reported being a victim of sexual assault is very small at less than 0.6% for all jurisdictions. Such small estimates from the NCSS are unreliable for comparison because of large RSEs. Hence comparisons for the purpose of this project are unreliable, and little value can be gained from further analysis of this data.

3. SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMISATION RATES, NCSS 2002 (a)



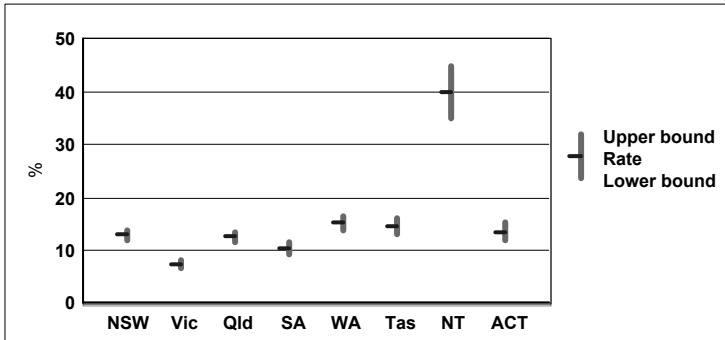
(a) Small estimates are subject to high RSEs, and consequently have large confidence intervals.

23. Further examination of the RCVS data for sexual assault shows inconsistency in the victim profiles (e.g. by age and sex) across jurisdictions. Additionally, in an exercise separate to the DiRCS project, the NCSU found many victim reports to police related to matters that occurred in earlier years. The inclusion of these historical reports further compromises the comparability of these statistics for sexual assault, making it difficult to compare incidence of sexual assault for a particular reference period.

Break-in/Attempted Break-in

24. While the NCSS refers to break-in, the RCVS refers to unlawful entry with intent (UEWI). These terms refer to the same type of offence. There was a much higher incidence of break-in/attempted break-in in the NT in the 12 months preceding April 2002, with the incidence rate for the NT being at least two and a half times higher than all other jurisdictions. The incidence rate of break-in/attempted break-in was lower in Vic than all other jurisdictions, with all other jurisdictions having a similar incidence of break-in/attempted break-in.

4. BREAK-IN/ATTEMPTED BREAK-IN INCIDENCE RATES, NCSS 2002 (a)

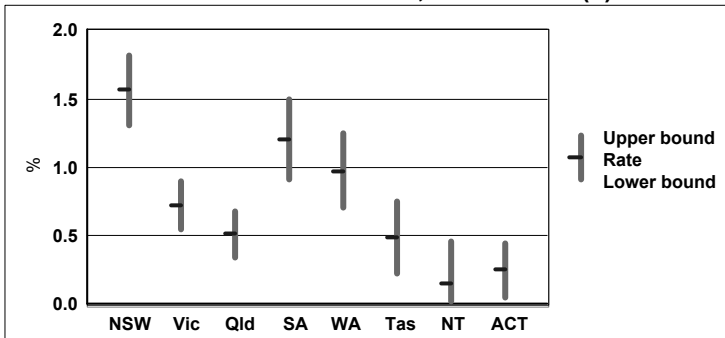


(a) Estimates for small states are subject to high RSEs, and consequently have large confidence intervals.

Robbery

25. The rate of robbery incidents was higher in NSW, SA and WA than most other jurisdictions, and was lower in the NT and the ACT in the 12 months preceding April 2002.

5. ROBBERY INCIDENCE RATES, NCSS 2002 (a)

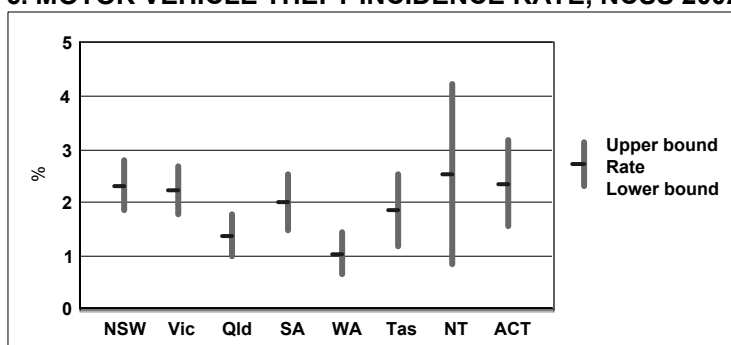


(a) Estimates for small states are subject to high RSEs, and consequently have large confidence intervals.

Motor vehicle theft (MVT)

26. There were different rates of MVT occurring across jurisdictions in the 12 months preceding April 2002. The incidence rate of MVT was significantly lower in Qld and WA than in NSW and Vic.

6. MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT INCIDENCE RATE, NCSS 2002 (a)



(a) Estimates for small states are subject to high RSEs, and consequently have large confidence intervals.

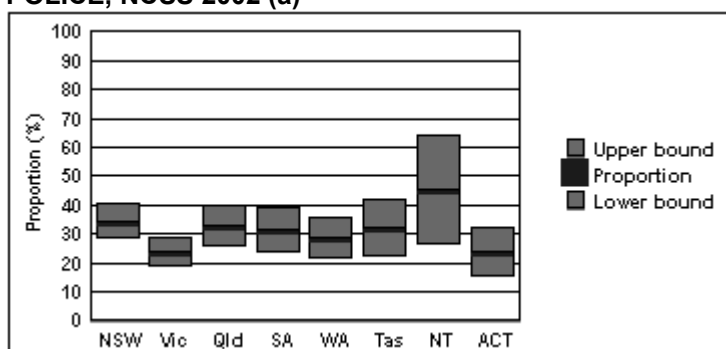
Reporting to police

27. The level of crime that police become aware of differs between offence types as well as between jurisdictions. For example, almost all MVTs are reported in all jurisdictions, whereas the percentage of assaults reported to police across jurisdictions was between 25% and 45%.

Assault

28. While the proportion of assault victims reporting the most recent incident to police was lower in Vic and the ACT and higher in the NT than other jurisdictions for the 12 months preceding April 2002, the differences in the proportions were not statistically significant. The proportion of assault victims that reported the most recent incident to police was significantly less than 50% for all jurisdictions except the NT. The RSEs for the NCSS results for the NT were higher than for other states and territories, with the 95% confidence interval ranged over 38 percentage points between 27% and 65%. This means that the difference between the NT and other jurisdictions is not statistically significant.

7. PROPORTION OF ASSAULT VICTIMS REPORTING MOST RECENT INCIDENT TO POLICE, NCSS 2002 (a)

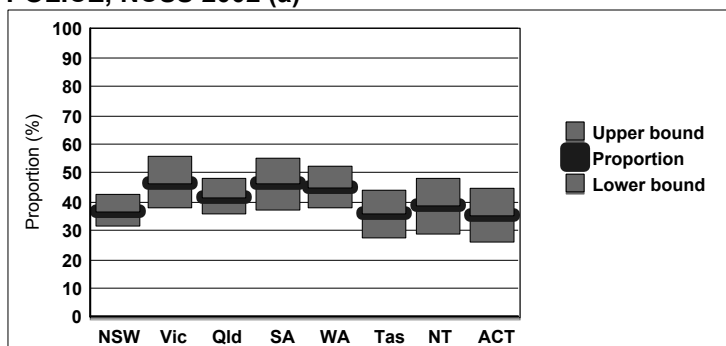


(a) Estimates for small states are subject to high RSEs, and consequently have large confidence intervals.

Break-in/attempted break-in

29. Between 30% and 50% of break-in/attempted break-in incidents were reported to police in the 12 months prior to April 2002, and there was no significant difference in the proportion reported between jurisdictions.

8. PROPORTION OF BREAK-IN/ATTEMPTED BREAK-IN INCIDENTS REPORTED TO POLICE, NCSS 2002 (a)

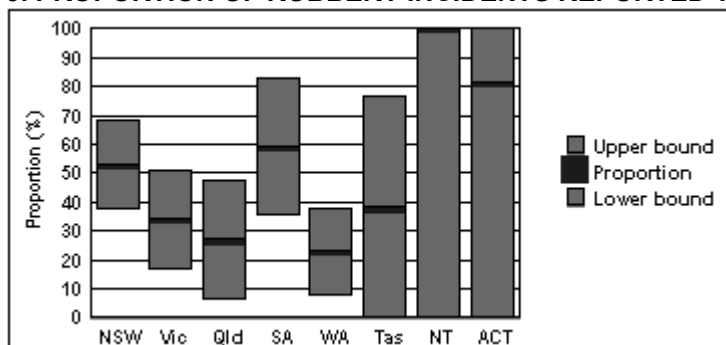


(a) Estimates for small states are subject to high RSEs, and consequently have large confidence intervals.

Robbery

30. There were few significant differences in the proportion of robbery incidents that were reported to the police in this period. Given the large relative standard errors, the proportion reported was not reliable for the three smallest jurisdictions (Tas, NT and ACT), and has limited reliability for all other jurisdictions. The proportion of incidents that were reported to police was higher in NSW than in WA.

9. PROPORTION OF ROBBERY INCIDENTS REPORTED TO POLICE, NCSS 2002 (a)

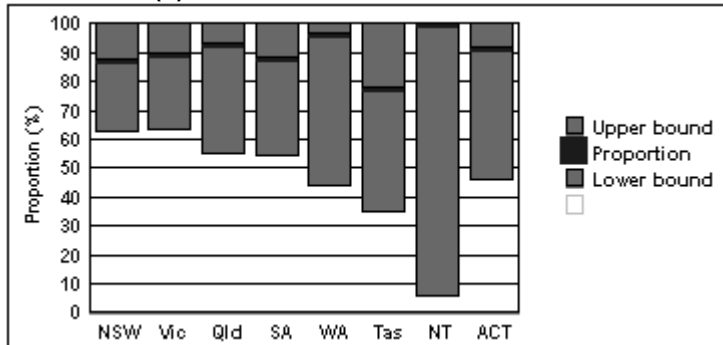


(a) Estimates for small states are subject to high RSEs, and consequently have large confidence intervals.

Motor Vehicle Theft (MVT)

31. Due to large relative standard errors, the estimate of the proportion of MVT incidents reported to police from NCSS 2002 was unreliable for most jurisdictions and very unreliable for the NT. There were no differences found in the proportion of MVT incidents that were reported to police in any jurisdiction. In all jurisdictions most MVT incidents were reported.

10. PROPORTION OF MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT INCIDENTS REPORTED TO POLICE, NCSS 2002 (a)



(a) Estimates for small states are subject to high RSEs, and consequently have large confidence intervals.

SUB-PROJECT 2

SUB-PROJECT DESCRIPTION

32. Sub-project 2 was a preliminary assessment of policy and practices relating to the recording of crime in all states and territories. The aims of this study were to investigate:

- the various ways in which the police may be notified of an incident;
- information regarding the use and purpose of various systems used by the jurisdictions; and
- the ways in which reported incidents may be recorded on these systems including the scope of the information recorded and the interconnection of these systems.

33. It was anticipated that sub-project 2 would involve an exercise mapping the documented policies and procedures of each state/territory police agency. However, it was found that either documentation did not exist, was not readily available (e.g. agency intranet only), or was out of date for many jurisdictions. Some of the initial information required for this project was obtained from documentation provided to the NCSU, however most of the information was obtained via a questionnaire completed by Liaison Officers.

SUB-PROJECT OUTCOMES

Initial processing of reported crime

34. The way in which jurisdictions initially process reports of crime are broadly similar but have a number of differences. For example, not all matters that come to police attention requiring despatch of police members to the scene are recorded on an electronic despatch system (EDS). Another example is that the geographic coverage of Communication Centres and EDSs differ across jurisdictions, as does the coverage in the type of calls that are handled centrally through the Communication Centres. These differences ultimately have an impact on the recording of a crime. Initial processes include the way crimes are reported and logged as well as how the initial inquiry is conducted.

Report processing

35. Four jurisdictions have a specific crime reporting number (131 444) available for the public to make non-emergency reports of crime. This increases the options available for reporting in these jurisdictions. In two of these jurisdictions the number is primarily used to divert non-emergencies from the '000' emergency line. In the other two jurisdictions, calls to the number go straight to a call centre with data entry staff on hand to directly record reports of non-traumatic/non-personal matters that are not in progress. It is therefore likely that more of these types of crimes may be recorded in these jurisdictions, due to the ease of the reporting process for the complainant/victim.

36. There are some differences in the types of reports to police that are recorded on an electronic despatch system (EDS). Not all matters requiring despatch are recorded on an EDS in all jurisdictions, with some jurisdictions choosing to handle despatch locally in some circumstances, e.g. where reports are made directly to a police station. One contributing factor to this situation is that the geographic coverage of Communication Centres and EDSs differ across jurisdictions, as do the types of calls that are handled centrally through the Communication Centres.

37. Three jurisdictions have an electronic link between the EDS and the crime recording system (CRS). In two of these, the creation of a CRS record from an EDS record is automatic and occurs for every EDS record. In the third jurisdiction, manual intervention is required for the transfer of information. In all other jurisdictions, the process of creating a CRS record where an EDS record already exists is completed manually.

38. Jurisdictions take different approaches to the data entry of a crime report. In three jurisdictions, a central data entry area is responsible for the creation of the CRS record. In all other jurisdictions, the police member who detects the matter is responsible for the creation of the record. An obvious advantage of a central data entry area is more consistency in classification, but there are more steps and people involved in the creation of a CRS record. If the creation of a CRS record is the responsibility of the detecting police officer, it is likely to foster ownership of the crime report (and therefore better quality in terms of detail) but this is costly in terms of the officers' time.

SUB-PROJECTS 3 AND 4

SUB-PROJECT DESCRIPTION

39. It was anticipated that these sub-projects would be quantitative studies investigating what happens to reports of crime made by phone (sub-project 3) and crime allegations made in person (sub-project 4), through to the decision to record, or not to record reports as crimes. The aim was to investigate the proportion of reports received by police via either of these methods that are recorded as an incident/event on a police recording system and from which RCVS victim statistics are extracted; and to investigate some of the factors that may contribute to a call being recorded as an incident/offence. An additional aim was to identify if there are differences in recording depended on how an incident is reported to police.

40. In order to achieve this aim, a sample of calls and a sample of walk-in reports were needed from each jurisdiction. However it was determined during the planning phase that a representative sample could not be collected from all jurisdictions. The reasons for this were:

- not all calls for police assistance or walk-in reports were being recorded, particularly where dispatch was not required;
- information regarding reported incidents were not readily available from all jurisdictions; and
- a mechanism for linking electronic despatch records to crime recording system (CRS) records did not exist in all cases.

41. An observational study of police processes was considered for the analysis of walk-in reports to police, however there were considerable costs, methodological and privacy issues associated with this. It was therefore decided that the project be conducted qualitatively in consultation with Liaison Officers.

42. The NCSU identified a set of potential incidents to further investigate. These were selected on the basis that they were likely to have the greatest impact on a police decision to record an event as a crime on a police system. The selection involved:

- actual versus attempted offences;
- family/domestic violence (DV);
- incidents involving children;
- incidents involving police as victims and offenders;
- victim characteristics;
- victim stating at the time of reporting that they did not want to proceed;
- victim not wanting to identify themselves;
- victim not able to give detailed information about the incident/offender; and
- victim reporting an incident but later deciding to withdraw the matter or have no involvement.

SUB-PROJECT OUTCOMES

Qualitative analysis

43. The qualitative analysis indicated that there was a difference between jurisdictions in the recording of an offence when the victim stated at the time of reporting an incident that they did not want to proceed against the offender and the matter was not of a serious nature. In this situation, some jurisdictions do not record anything, some will record an incident not containing offences and others will record an offence regardless of the victim's wishes and deal with the victim wanting no action by using a finalisation code that indicates this.

44. The analysis also indicated that the procedures applied by jurisdictions vary, particularly with regard to the requirements for an arrest. For example, in one jurisdiction, officers must exercise their power in favour of an arrest. In another jurisdiction, there is a general requirement for a statement to be provided by the victim in order to proceed against the offender and there is a policy of not dropping charges once laid. These procedures and the differing functionality available to record Domestic Violence (DV) incidents appear to significantly impact on the decision by officers to record an assault offence. DV is a significant policy area within all jurisdictions and all jurisdictions have legislation and/or procedures in place to deal with these incidents. All jurisdictions require that all DV incidents be recorded but the ability to do this varies between jurisdictions and DV incidents may be on a discrete DV incident system separate to the CRS or as a specific record type within the CRS.

SUB-PROJECT 5

SUB-PROJECT DESCRIPTION

45. The aims of sub-project 5 were to determine if there were differences between jurisdictions in:

- the likelihood of recording an offence (e.g. is one jurisdiction more or less likely to record an offence for a particular scenario);
- the likelihood of recording a particular offence type (e.g. is one jurisdiction more or less likely to record an assault for a particular scenario);
- the influence of certain characteristics in recording an offence; and
- the influence of certain characteristics in recording a given offence type.

46. A Scenario Based Testing (SBT) study was developed. It comprised 30 scenarios that were sent to police officers in the form of a questionnaire. Respondents were asked to indicate what offence they would record for each scenario, if any.

47. Due to questionnaire space and time constraints, the SBT focus was on those offence types that were identified as requiring further investigation following sub-project 1. The Steering Committee determined that assault and UEWI be the main focus of the SBT with robbery to be included if space permitted, particularly with regard to the potential relationship between assault and robbery. Sexual assault was not included in the SBT, as the Steering Committee felt that the issues surrounding the recording of sexual assault could not adequately be investigated in this study.

48. Assault was disaggregated into assault on public premises, assault police and domestic violence scenarios as each of these potentially have quite distinct impacts on RCVS data.

Scope

49. The scope of the SBT was all personnel within a Police agency that are responsible for making either a decision about when or what to record in relation to an incident. This included unsworn staff from some jurisdictions, such as staff in Police Assistance Line areas, as the overall influence of these groups may have been significant.

Frame source

50. The frame was constructed from Human Resources (HR) lists received from each of the jurisdictions. In all jurisdictions, a number of staff that are not required to record offences were removed from the frame.

Stratification

51. The frame for each jurisdiction was stratified by:

- rank (Constable, Senior Constable, Sergeant and Senior Sergeant); and
- geographical region (State specific region information was used)

Sample

52. It was identified during the development of the collection that the greatest potential risk for the success of the SBT was the response rate. The Steering Committee suggested that the response rates for similar studies had not been greater than 40%.

53. There were two problems with a low response rate:
- insufficient sample to be able to determine if differences between jurisdictions were statistically significant; and
 - bias in the responses.
54. The first problem was dealt with by over-sampling. The required sample for each jurisdiction was increased by 150%, which allowed a 40% response rate to provide a sufficient number of responses for meaningful analysis.
55. The second problem was minimised through the use of stratification and following up responses in those strata that had low response rates.
56. An 8% relative standard error (RSE) target was chosen as a balance between accuracy and cost.
57. The sample was selected by proportionally allocating the required sample size across the strata. This was done for a number of reasons:
- minimising RSEs;
 - minimising bias;
 - allowing targeted follow up of poorly represented strata; and
 - possibility of reasonable estimates being available at the strata level.
58. The final national response rate achieved was 47%, and was over 40% in all states and territories.

Other

59. A number of additional factors were considered in designing the study. These included terminology differences between jurisdictions, format, order of multiple choice answers and pilot testing the questionnaire design.

SUB-PROJECT OUTCOMES

60. The SBT provides an indication of differences in recording practices across jurisdictions. SBT outputs are proportions of police that would record an offence of a particular type for the presented scenarios. However, the impact on recorded crime figures can not be determined as it is not known what proportion of incidents reported to police are of the particular types presented in the SBT.
61. An additional limitation of the SBT is that it measures the proportion of police that would initially record a crime. It does not take into consideration changes made to recorded offences types as a result of records being subject to changes during quality assurance processes.

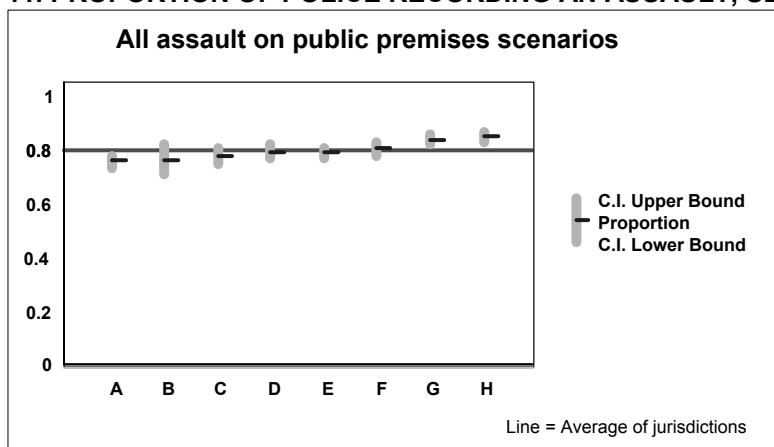
Assault

62. The SBT study showed that there are differences within and between the jurisdictions in the proportion of police recording assault, in particular domestic violence (DV) scenarios and assault on public premises scenarios where the parties are known to each other and there are no injuries. The SBT shows that there are clear and significant differences within and across jurisdictions in the proportions of police who would record an assault offence from a DV incident. Further, assault is more likely to be recorded in most jurisdictions when the victim is injured, acknowledges the assault and/or wants charges laid against the offender.

63. When the overall proportion of police recording assault for all eight of the assault on public premises scenarios is considered, there is little variability between jurisdictions, with the proportion recording assault ranging from 76% to 85%. The overall proportion recording an assault for these scenarios is not significantly different to the average (80%) for most jurisdictions.

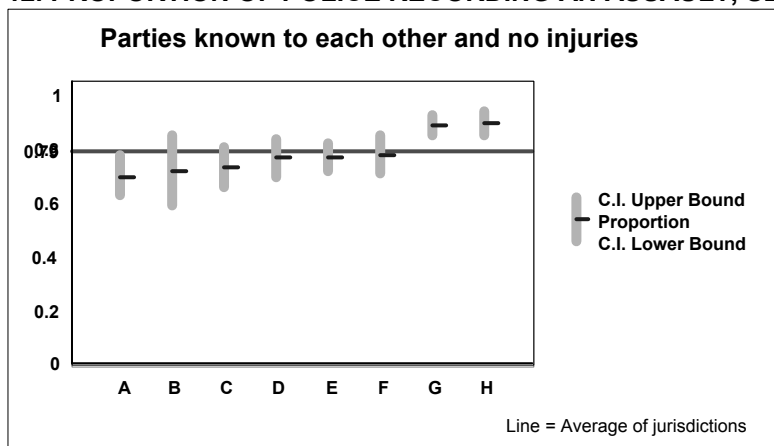
64. When each of the eight assault on public premises scenarios are analysed, it can be seen that when either the parties are not known to each other or there were injuries as a result of the incident, an assault is almost always recorded. However, when the parties are known to each other and there were no injuries, there is more variability between jurisdictions in the proportion that would record an assault.

11. PROPORTION OF POLICE RECORDING AN ASSAULT, SBT 2005 (a)



(a) States and territories have been labelled A to H based on the ascending size of the estimate in this graph.

12. PROPORTION OF POLICE RECORDING AN ASSAULT, SBT 2005 (a)



(a) States and territories have been labelled A to H based on the ascending size of the estimate in this graph.

65. The overall proportion of police recording assault for the six domestic violence scenarios ranged from 45% to 88%. The average of the jurisdiction proportions is 71%. There are significant differences with the proportions recording assault for these scenarios across the jurisdictions.

13. PROPORTION OF POLICE RECORDING AN ASSAULT, SBT 2005 (a)



(a) States and territories have been labelled A to H based on the ascending size of the estimate in this graph.

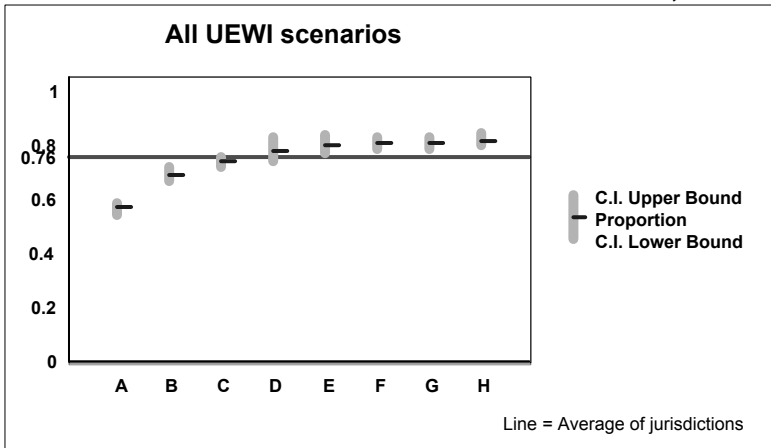
66. Whilst sexual assault was excluded from the scope of the SBT, it is believed that sexual assault is vulnerable to similar recording issues as those found for assault.

Unlawful Entry with Intent

67. For the UEWI scenarios the overall proportion of police recording a UEWI offence across jurisdictions ranges from 57% to 82%. The average of the jurisdictions is 76%. In most jurisdictions the proportion of police recording UEWI is similar with the exception of jurisdiction A which is significantly lower than all other jurisdictions (see paragraph below regarding UEWI and Trespass recording).

68. UEWI was almost always recorded by all police for the scenarios where access was gained and the premises were secured, regardless of whether people were home or not.

14. PROPORTION OF POLICE RECORDING AN UEWI, SBT 2005(a)

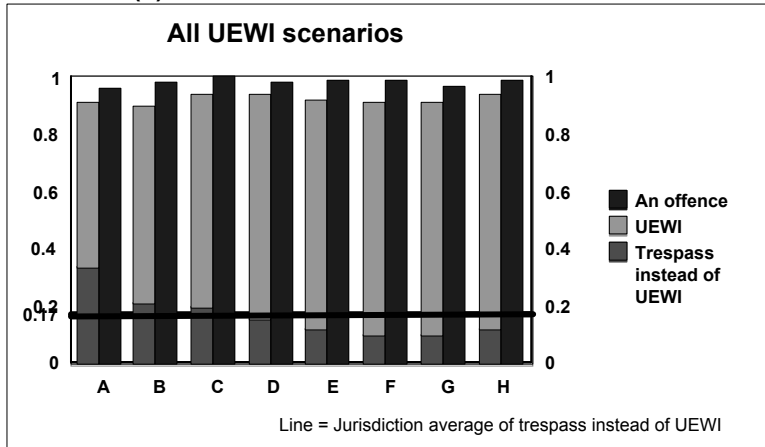


(a) States and territories have been labelled A to H based on the ascending size of the estimate in this graph.

69. There is some difference between the overall proportion recording an offence (between 96% and 100%) and the overall proportion recording a UEWI offence (between 57% and 82%). Given this discrepancy the results were analysed to determine what other offences are recorded in situations where UEWI is not recorded, as this situation is likely to impact on RCVS counts.

70. The overall proportion (for all UEWI scenarios) of police recording trespass instead of UEWI across jurisdictions ranges from 10% to 34%. Police in jurisdiction A are more likely to record trespass instead of UEWI than other jurisdictions. The graph below shows that the proportion of police recording trespass instead of UEWI makes up the majority of the difference between the proportion recording an offence and the proportion recording UEWI.

15. PROPORTION OF POLICE RECORDING AN OFFENCE, UEWI AND TRESPASS, SBT 2005 (a)



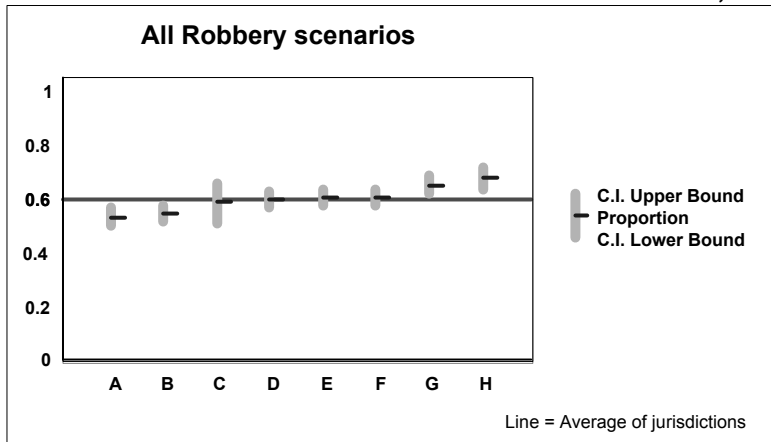
(a) States and territories have been labelled A to H based on the ascending size of the estimate in graph 14

Robbery

71. The overall proportion of police recording robbery is similar for most jurisdictions, ranging from 53% to 68%. Four jurisdictions have a proportion recording robbery that is not different to the average of the jurisdictions (60%). Two jurisdictions have a proportion slightly lower than the average of the jurisdictions, and two jurisdictions have a proportion slightly higher.

72. Robbery is almost always recorded in all jurisdictions where there was intentional force used against the victim and goods were actually stolen.

16. PROPORTION OF POLICE RECORDING A ROBBERY, SBT 2005 (a)



(a) States and territories have been labelled A to H based on the ascending size of the estimate in this graph.

SUB-PROJECTS 6

SUB-PROJECT DESCRIPTION

73. The aims of sub-project 6 were to:

- investigate the type and number of offences recorded for victims on police CRSs; and
- investigate some of the factors that influence the type and number of offences recorded for a victim e.g. weapon use, location, witnesses, sex of victim and relationship of offender to victim.

74. It was found that the data structures in the CRSs in many jurisdictions did not lend themselves to the identification of multiple victims within a single incident. This meant that associating all recorded victims to one incident was not possible. As a result, it was determined that for sub-project 6, the scope would need to be limited to investigating the offences recorded for victims more generally.

75. The national analysis of the sub-project 6 data focused on three main questions about individual victim records:

- Is the offence type distribution for victims different between jurisdictions?
- Are certain victim and incident characteristics impacting on recording practices?
- Is there a difference between jurisdictions in the volume of co-occurrence of different RCVS offences for individual victims?

76. Initially it was anticipated that a stratified random sample of incidents within a 12 month period would be used, to ensure that a sample representative of all incident types would be selected for analysis. However, due to resource implications for this volume of data, a one month period was extracted from all states and territories.

77. The file format requested was one record for each offence associated with each victim, as recorded on the RCVS related recording system. Information regarding incidents without victims was also requested. The NCSU supplied each jurisdiction with specifications for the data items required. Not all jurisdictions were able to supply all requested data items.

SUB-PROJECT OUTCOMES

Offence type distribution

78. Large differences in the offence type distribution between jurisdictions may indicate that particular jurisdictions are more likely to record a non-RCVS offence type than an RCVS offence type, and consequently not counted in the RCVS collection. In particular, it was thought that assault may be recorded as threatening behaviour, or attempted UEWI as property damage or trespass. Whilst there was some difference in the offence type distribution, there was no indication of assault being recorded as threatening behaviour on a consistent basis in any jurisdiction. It is possible though that some jurisdictions record property damage instead of UEWI. However the results of this analysis are indicative only, as no information was obtained about the nature of the original incident.

Co-occurring offence types

79. The recording of co-occurring offence types was thought to be a possible factor in the differences in recorded crime and results of the SBT indicate that this may be the case for robbery incidents. Co-occurrence could also explain some of the discrepancy between the NCSS and the RCVS. The most likely impact of co-occurrence would be on the recording of assault and other theft, as these are the offences that are likely to be recorded in addition to an offence type that more closely reflects the type of incident. Further analysis was conducted but data were not available at the incident level for all jurisdictions so the analysis was conducted on the co-occurrence of offences for a victim. It was found that assault did not co-occur with another offence type at a high enough rate to impact on the RCVS assault rate in any jurisdiction. Other theft was found to have a high rate of co-occurrence with UEWI in a number of jurisdictions. However this analysis was conducted on data that did not have the RCVS counting rules for the co-occurrence of UEWI and other theft applied.

SUB-PROJECT 7

SUB-PROJECT DESCRIPTION

80. Sub-project 7 was designed to be a qualitative study of information systems and processes used in the compilation of recorded crime statistics. This project investigated what happens to the data once they were recorded on the CRS, and aspects of the system that were likely to impact on the way data are entered, stored and extracted.

81. It involved investigating the information technology (IT) systems used in each state and territory, in particular the data models and system specific rules involved in the data entry under each particular model. It also involved analysing extraction and quality assurance procedures applied in each jurisdiction.

82. Available documentation about IT systems, counting rules applied, and extraction processes were obtained from jurisdictions. This information was collated into jurisdictional reports, which were then used to construct a national report.

SUB-PROJECT OUTCOMES

Crime recording systems (CRSs)

83. The purpose of each CRS differs according to the specific needs identified within each jurisdiction. These range from incident management systems that provide an auditable trail of police actions, to offence recording systems. Some systems fall somewhere in between these extremes, with specific types of non-crime incidents being recorded.

84. The underlying data structure within each of the CRSs differs and consequently the principal recording entities vary in each jurisdiction, e.g. some CRS records represent victims, others represent incidents. The various components of the record, such as victims, offenders and offences, may or may not be linked depending on the data structure. These structural differences impact on the counting rules applied and the way data are input onto the CRSs. This is only an issue for the RCVS collection if it prohibits the extraction of data in accordance with the RCVS counting rules.

85. It is not necessary for a victim record to exist in all jurisdictions when charges are laid against an offender for victim-based offences. This may be due to charges being recorded on a separate system to victims so there is no physical link that mandates the creation of a victim record when charges are recorded, or it may be due to the recording business rules applied. Where it is not necessary for a victim record (corresponding to charges) to be created, there may be some undercount of victims.

86. Intensity of the initial training in the use of CRSs differs and in some jurisdictions much of the training in the use of CRSs appears to be on the job. More intensive centralised training could assist in ensuring that police force policy is adhered to during data entry and would make it less likely that procedures are based on local convention. Documentation on counting rules is available in most jurisdictions, but while these provide guidance on what information to record they do not provide guidance on when a reported incident should be recorded as an offence.

87. There is no restriction in some jurisdictions on who can make changes to completed records, and this increases the chance that inappropriate changes could be made to a completed record. Changes to offence details are made by deleting or overwriting the original offence details in many jurisdictions. Consequently, information regarding the reason for the change and the possibility of auditing these changes are removed.

SUB-PROJECT 8

SUB-PROJECT DESCRIPTION

88. The aim of this sub-project was to review the treatment by the NCSU of extracted data provided by the states and territories for the compilation of the RCVS collection. The ABS methodology division undertook the review by assessing methodology used in producing figures for the RCVS publication. This process was conducted independently of the NCSU to ensure that the information was impartial. This review only covered the methodology that was applied to the datasets received by NCSU in calculating the publication figures. It did not cover the issue of whether the correct counting rules were applied by state/territory police in putting together the datasets supplied.

SUB-PROJECT OUTCOMES

Compilation of statistics

89. An examination of the various extraction and output processes across jurisdictions was conducted and it was found that the appropriate standards and counting rules are being observed by all relevant areas.

90. There was also an independent examination of the NCSU processes and methodologies that indicated that there were no significant issues.

FINDINGS

91. The DiRCS project found evidence indicating that Recorded Crime Victim data for assault and sexual assault are not currently comparable across all states and territories because of the different bases on which these offences are recorded. It was found (through Scenario Based Testing) for these offence types, that after incidents had been reported to police the initial investigative processes resulted in inconsistent recording.

92. Some jurisdictions almost always record a reported criminal incident on their crime recording system, whereas other jurisdictions apply a form of threshold test prior to a record being made (e.g. whether the victim wishes to proceed against the offender, or the seriousness of the incident). These thresholds vary across jurisdictions and are not currently guided by national standards. Evidence suggests that variation in the decision to record a crime is significant for assault (and by association, sexual assault), and in particular for domestic violence incidents. Variation in the recording of property related offences does not appear to be as significant, as the threshold for recording such offences is generally clear, i.e. the theft of or damage to property.

93. This has resulted in a significant difference in the measured levels of recorded crime across states and territories for these offence types, which is inconsistent with the state and territory patterns of victimisation measured in surveys.

94. The project also found that once a crime had been recorded in a CRS, there was no evidence to suggest that processes within any state or territory had a significant impact on differences in recorded crime statistics.

IMPLICATIONS

95. The NCSU Board of Management has accepted that the lack of a uniform standard in recording contributes to the inconsistency for these offence types and has endorsed a recommendation to develop a strategy for a National Crime Recording Standard to address this issue. This would include agreed purpose and principles, definitions and counting rules.

96. In considering the findings of the DiRCS project the ABS has determined that in its Recorded Crime Victim Statistics numbers and rates per 100,000 persons will only be presented by state and territory for those offences that are currently considered comparable across jurisdictions. The offences of assault and sexual assault have been excluded from the 2004 RCVS outputs due to differences in recording across states and territories.

97. In considering other aspects of recorded crime statistics, the ABS concluded that information for other offence types was satisfactory for the level of comparison presented in the Recorded Crime, Victims 2004 (cat. no. 4510.0) publication. These offences are homicide and related offences, kidnapping/abduction, robbery, blackmail/extortion, unlawful entry with intent, motor vehicle theft and other theft.

FURTHER INFORMATION

98. For further information about this product contact Director, NCSU on 03 9615 7374 or email crime.justice@abs.gov.au.