

FACT SHEET: FIREARMS THEFT IN AUSTRALIA II

- Over a six month period in 2004, 318 incidents of firearms theft (664 firearms) were reported to police.
- During the period 1st February – 31st July, there were 2 526 888 registered firearms in Australia.
- The number stolen represents 0.03% of the total number of legally held firearms.
- Firearms theft represents a small proportion of all thefts reported in Australia, and the overall risk of firearms theft is low.
- 58% of firearms stolen were rifles, followed by shotguns (24%), handguns (9%, note that this includes air pistols), and air rifles (8%).
- Overall, Category H firearms (handguns) were least likely to be stolen.
- The majority of rifle/shotgun thefts occurred from residential premises.
- In contrast, one in four handgun thefts was from a business.
- Ammunition was stolen in 26% of incidents.
- There were five incidents where a stolen firearm was identified as being used in a subsequent crime. None of these incidents involved a handgun.
- The relatively short time period of the study, and associated data limitations, require this finding to be treated with interpretive caution.
- There are multiple pathways for the illicit trafficking of firearms into the illegitimate market.
- The theft of firearms appears to be becoming a less viable method of supply.
- Consequently, criminals may turn to other supply methods, such as dealer diversion, manufacturing, importation, conversion and re-activation of firearms.

Reference:

Mouzos, J., & Sakurai, Y. (2006). *Firearms Theft in Australia: a Six Month Exploratory Analysis. Technical and Background Paper No. 20, Australian Institute of Criminology.* <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tbp/tbp020/>