

Firearms Theft in Australia 2008-09

Number and type of stolen firearms

- A total of 1,570 firearms from 620 separate theft incidents were reported stolen to state and territory police in 2008-09.
- This figure excludes Western Australia (WA), who did not provide data for the 2008-09 period.
- In 2008-09, 60% of firearms stolen were rifles, followed by shotguns (24%), air rifles (7%) and handguns (6%).
- In 2008-09, the proportion of firearms stolen in New South Wales (38%) was around 10-12 percentage points higher than that reported in the previous four years of data collection.

Stolen firearms as a percentage of all firearms

- In contrast with previous firearms theft reports, the 2008-09 report does not provide the number of firearms stolen as a percentage of the total number of legally owned firearms in Australia.

Storage at time of theft

- In 2008-09, 60% of owners who reported a firearm theft were compliant with firearm storage laws, while 24% were non-compliant.
- There is no suggestion that firearm owners overall are not complying with laws around the safekeeping of firearms.
- The data provided on storage arrangements was not sufficient to allow comment on the adequacy of current storage specifications (as prescribed in state and territory firearm laws).

Prosecutions

- In 2008-09, 13% of firearm theft offenders were apprehended and charged.

Is theft increasing?

- With the absence of WA data, it is not possible to comment on overall trends in stolen firearms.
- There is insufficient information to determine whether theft numbers are rising.
- The pattern observed across states and territories is not uniform, and in most jurisdictions the number of reported stolen firearms has tended to fluctuate rather than present a clear upward or downward trend.

Theft and subsequent crime

- Only one theft incident in 2008-09 resulted in the use of a firearm to commit a violent crime (manslaughter).

Theft and criminal markets

- The fate of stolen firearms has generally remained unknown.
- Little is known about possible relationships between firearms theft, the illegal market, and criminal misuse of firearms.

References

Bricknell, S. (2011). *Firearm theft in Australia 2008-09*. Australian Institute of Criminology: Canberra.