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S.A. Crime and Safety Survey, 1991: Break and Enter Offences

Paul Thomas

ACQUISITIONS

Summary

- Of the estimated 540,036 households in South Australia in April 1991, 55,656 (10.3%) were victims of at least one break and enter or attempted break and enter offence in the 12 months prior to the survey.
- 6.9% or 37,431 households were victims of an actual break and enter, while 5.2% or 27,836 households were victims of an attempted break and enter.
- Residents within the Adelaide Statistical division were almost twice as likely to become victims (11.9%) compared with their non-metropolitan counterparts (6.0%).
- Within the Adelaide Statistical Division, Northern and Western suburb residents (16.3% and 13.8% respectively) are significantly more likely to be victimised than residents in the Southern suburbs (7.5%), while Eastern suburb residents experienced a rate somewhere in-between (10.3%).
- Victimization rates decreased in direct relationship to the age of the head of the household. For example, break and enter victimisation rates amongst head of households aged 15-24 years old were 8.5% compared with only 5.2% amongst those aged 65 years and over.
- Significantly greater proportions of persons living alone (13.3%) and single parent families (16.4%) were victims during the previous 12 months compared with married couples with

children (8.3%) or married couples without children (8.7%).

- 21.4% of break and enter victims and 31.5% of attempted break and enter victims were victimised more than once during the 12 months prior to the survey. Married couples without children were least likely to be victimised more than once.
- 75.5% of households that were victims of break and enter and 31.6% of households that were victims of an attempted break and enter reported all incidents to the police. Married couples without children were the most likely to report break and enter offences and people living alone were the least likely to report incidents to police.

Introduction

In April 1991 the Office of Crime Statistics commissioned the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to conduct a survey amongst South Australian residents covering issues relating to crime and safety. The survey examined the public's perception of crime as a problem in their neighbourhood, the level of victimisation during the 12 months prior to the survey, and the level of reporting of offences to the police. The offences covered by the survey were: break and enter, attempted break and enter, robbery and assault. This report deals with the findings from the questions relating to the break and enter and attempted break and enter offences.

Methodology

The questionnaire employed in the survey was identical to that used in "Crime and Safety, New South Wales, April 1990" (ABS catalogue no. 4509.1). The survey covered just under one percent of the households in the state. Questionnaires were delivered by ABS staff and after self completion were returned to the ABS for data analysis. Information was sought from all members of the household aged 15 or over, while data relating to the household was supplied by the person nominated as the head of the household. The figures in this report represent the statewide weighted estimates based on the information supplied by 3,503 households.

Further details of the survey methodology are presented in the ABS publication "Crime and Safety, South Australia, April 1991" (catalogue no. 4509.4).

Further copies of this bulletin
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Adelaide 5001

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Adelaide 5001

Definitions

For the purpose of the survey the following definitions were used:

A *household* is a group of residents of a dwelling who share common facilities and meals or who consider themselves to be a household. It is possible for a dwelling to contain more than one household, for example, where regular provision is made for groups to take meals separately and where persons consider their households to be separate.

A *break and enter* offence was recorded when a person responding for the household indicated that their home had been broken into in the last 12 months. The respondent's home was defined to include their garage or shed, but break and enter offences relating to their car or garden were excluded. If a respondent indicated that apart from any incident reported as a break and enter, they found signs of an attempted break in, an *attempted break and enter* was recorded.

A *victim* is a household reporting one of the offences listed above. Victims are counted once only for each type of offence, regardless of the number of incidents of that type.

Crime or public nuisance problems are anything perceived by the respondent to be problems arising from crime or people creating a public nuisance.

Neighbourhood – respondents were asked about crime problems in their neighbourhood. The precise definition of this term was left to the respondent.

The *regions/locations* used in the analyses are based on the ABS statistical divisions. The Adelaide Statistical Division consists of four subdivisions – Northern, Western, Eastern and Southern. The other statistical divisions have been grouped together to form two “non-metropolitan regions” – the Northern region consisting of the Northern, Eyre, Yorke and Lower North Statistical Divisions and the Southern region containing the statistical divisions of Outer Adelaide, Murraylands and the South East. Maps of these regions are included as appendix A.

Daytime occupancy – for the purpose of analysis households have been categorised as those in which someone is

usually home during the daytime and those for which no-one is usually home during the daytime. This classification was made on the basis of the household type and the occupational status of its members, and is therefore a guide only and not a precise measure.

Victim Profile

Of the estimated 540,036 households in South Australia during April 1991, 55,646 (or 10.3%) were a victim of one or more break and enter offences during the preceding 12 months. More specifically 37,431 (6.9%) were victims of a break and enter and 27,836 (5.2%) were victims of an attempted break and enter.

Amongst the factors which were associated with a greater likelihood of being a victim of a break and enter or attempted break and enter were:

Location – residents in metropolitan areas were significantly more likely to be victimised than non-metropolitan residents (11.9% and 6.0% respectively). (See table 1.) Within the Adelaide Statistical Division, Northern and Western suburb residents (16.3% and 13.8% respectively) are significantly more likely to become a victim of a break and enter or attempted break and enter than residents in the Southern suburbs (7.5%).

Age and Sex – analysis by age of the head of the household revealed significant differences in victimisation rates. For actual break and enter offences the victimisation rate was 5.2% amongst heads of households aged 65 and older,

compared with 8.5% amongst those aged between 15 and 24 years. A similar pattern was observed for attempts where the rate was 3.2% amongst those heads of households aged 65 and over compared to 6.4% of those aged 15-24. Sex differences were evident amongst those homes where the head of the household was aged 35-64 years old. In these cases homes headed by females reported break and enter victimisation rates of 10.6% compared to 5.8% amongst households who nominated a male as their head.

Household type – as demonstrated in table 2 significantly greater proportions of persons living alone (13.3%) and single parent families (16.4%) were victims compared with married couples with children (8.3%) or married couples without children (8.7%).

Daytime occupancy – for this variable households were coded as “some-one is generally home during the day” or “no-one is generally home during the day” on the basis of the employment status of the household members. For example, if all adult members of the household were engaged in full-time employment then the house was notionally classified as having “no-one usually home during the day”. (It is recognised that this is a very crude measure and is prone to possible error.) The results indicate that for both break and enters and attempts, households for which no-one was usually home were almost twice as likely to be victimised than households where someone was generally home during the day.

Table 1. Percentage of households victimised by location.

	% of victims		
	Break & Enter	Attempted Break & Enter	Break & Enter or Attempted Break & Enter
Adelaide Statistical Division			
Northern Adelaide	10.7	8.3	16.2
Western Adelaide	9.4	7.9	13.8
Eastern Adelaide	8.0	4.3	10.3
Southern Adelaide	4.2	3.8	7.5
Total – A.S.D.	8.0	6.1	11.9
Outside Adelaide Statistical Division			
Northern rural	3.6	2.2	5.4
Southern rural	4.9	3.4	6.9
Total – Outside A.S.D.	4.2	2.7	6.0

Table 2. Percentage of households victimised by household type.

Household type	% of victims		
	Break & Enter	Attempted Break & Enter	Break & Enter and/or Attempted Break & Enter
Person living alone	9.2	7.1	13.3
Married couple without children	5.8	3.8	8.7
Married couple with unmarried child(ren)	5.3	4.3	8.3
One person with unmarried child(ren)	11.9	9.4	16.4
All other households	7.6	4.5	11.2
All households	6.9	5.2	10.3

Multiple Victimisations

Overall 78.6% of break and enter victims were victimised only once during the previous 12 months, 16.6% were victims twice and a further 4.7% were victims of a break and enter three or more times. By comparison 31.5% of attempted break and enter victims were multiple victims including 21.0% who were victims twice and 10.5% who were victimised three times or more.

Amongst break and enter victims there were significant differences in the extent of multiple victimisations between

married couples without children and persons living alone, whereby more than double the proportion of persons living alone (30.0%) compared to married couples without children (12.2%) were victimised more than once. (See table 3.)

For attempted break and enter offences married couples were less likely to be multiple victims (14.2%) compared with either persons living alone (43.5%) or single parent households (38.2%).

The proportion of multiple victimisations of attempted break and enter also varied across the state with the highest rate, 42.2% in Northern Adelaide, being

Table 3. Percentage of victims by number of victimisations and household type.

Household type	% of victims who during the previous 12 months had been victimised:					
	Break & Enter			Attempted Break & Enter		
	Once	Twice	3 or more	Once	Twice	3 or more
Person living alone	70.0	19.5	10.5	56.5	31.0	12.6
Married couple w/out child(ren)	87.8	10.6	1.6	85.8	9.0	5.2
Married couple with unmarried child(ren)	82.0	15.1	3.0	70.3	15.7	14.0
One person with unmarried child(ren)	70.3	23.3	6.4	61.8	30.4	7.8
All other households	82.5	17.5	-	71.8	20.8	7.4
All victims	78.6	16.7	4.7	68.5	21.0	10.5

Table 4. Number of incidents reported to police by offence.

No. of incidents reported	% of households that were victims of:	
	Break & Enter	Attempted Break & Enter
All	75.5	31.6
All but one	3.1	5.4
All but two or more	0.3	1.6
None	18.5	58.7
Don't know	2.5	2.8

significantly larger than the lowest rate of 20.9% recorded in Western Adelaide.

Reporting Rates

When questioned as to the frequency with which these incidents had been reported to police it was revealed that 75.5% of break and enter victims and 31.6% of attempted break and enter victims reported all incidents during the previous 12 months. Furthermore, 18.5% of break and enter victims and 58.7% of attempted break and enter victims reported none of the offences to the police.

In predicting the rate of reporting to police, variables such as the number of prior victimisations, location and household type all appear to be important factors.

Considering firstly the number of prior victimisations, it was observed that amongst households that had been victimised by a break and enter only once during the 12 months 81.1% reported the incident to the police. This compares with the significantly lower figure of 55.0% amongst households who had been victims twice or more.

The findings also revealed that rate of reporting differed between the residents living within the Adelaide Statistical Division and the rest of the state. For example, amongst households within the Adelaide Statistical Division that were victims of a break and enter 78.9% reported all incidents to the police, compared with only 58.1% of households outside the Adelaide Statistical Division. There were no significant differences in reporting rates across regions with respect to attempted break and enter offences. (As discussed later there were differences between the regions in their reasons for not reporting offences to the police.)

When considering 'household type' the results indicate that for break and enter incidents persons living alone were significantly less likely to report all incidents to the police compared with married couples without children (66.0% and 87.0%) respectively. Likewise for attempted break and enter incidents a greater proportion of married couples without children reported all incidents (51.4%) with this figure being significantly larger than the 16.1% of persons

living alone or the 28.9% of married couples with children. Conversely, 39.7% of married couples without children reported none of the attempted break and enter incidents. Amongst persons living alone and married couples with children the percentages were 72.7% and 64.1% respectively.

When asked specifically about the latest incident 79.3% of break and enter victims and 34.9% of attempted break and enter victims indicated that they had reported

the incident to police. Table 5 gives the breakdown of the figures by the number of times the household had been a victim during the previous 12 months. While the data does appear to suggest that repeat victimisation reduces the likelihood of reporting, the differences were not significant at the 95% confidence level for either break and enter or attempted break and enter incidents.

The only significant relationship between daytime occupancy and reporting

of the last incident was with attempted break and enters where twice the proportion of reports were made by households where someone is generally home during the day (43.1%) compared with where no one is generally home (20.2%).

The reasons for not reporting the latest incident to Police are listed in Table 6. The fact that either "nothing was stolen" or that "no actual break-in occurred" accounted for 23.8% of break and enter non-reports and 33.5% of attempted break and enter non-reports. A further 19.9% of break and enter victims said that the matter was "too trivial", while 16.6% of break and enter victims and 15.6% of attempted break and enter victims who did not report felt "there was nothing the Police could do".

As mentioned above there were differences between the regions for not reporting the most recent offence to the Police. Overall, metropolitan residents felt that the matter was "too trivial" while their non-metropolitan counterparts were more inclined to suggest that either "there was nothing the Police could do" or that "the Police would have been unwilling to do anything".

Property Stolen

Of the estimated 37,431 households that were victims of a break and enter, 27,592 (73.7%) claimed to have had goods stolen in the last incident. This proportion, however, differed markedly across the state, ranging from 79.9% of victims in Western metropolitan suburbs down to only 50.5% of victims from the Northern non-metropolitan region (See table 7). The results also reveal a clear metropolitan/non-metropolitan difference with the metropolitan rate of 77.1% being statistically larger than the 56.0% recorded amongst non-metropolitan victims. This may partly explain the lower reporting rates by non-metropolitan residents as well as their perception that there was "nothing the Police could do" or that "they would be unwilling to act".

Table 8 reveals that money, jewellery and video recorders were the most common items taken by thieves, with each of these items being reported by approximately a quarter of all victims who had goods stolen.

Table 5. Reporting of last incident by number of victimisations.

No. of victimisations	% of households who reported their last incident	
	Break & Enter	Attempted Break & Enter
One	82.5	37.2
Two	70.4	31.9
Three or more	56.8	26.1

Table 6. Reasons given for not reporting the last incident to the police.

What was the main reason you did not tell the police about the last incident?	% of households who did not report their last incident to the police	
	Break & Enter	Attempted Break & Enter
Nothing stolen	23.8	10.9
No actual break-in	-	22.6
Too trivial/unimportant	19.9	19.1
Nothing the police could do	16.6	15.6
Police would have been unwilling to do anything	12.4	16.8
Private matter/would take care of it themselves	7.4	1.7
Not covered by insurance	3.9	-
Did not want offender punished	3.6	-
Unknown date of offence	1.9	0.8
Somebody else told the police	-	1.6
Other reasons	10.5	11.0
All victims	100.0	100.0

Table 7. Percentage of break and enter victims who had goods stolen during the last incident by region.

Region	% of break & enter victims who had goods stolen
Adelaide Statistical Division	
Northern Adelaide	78.5
Western Adelaide	79.9
Eastern Adelaide	71.5
Southern Adelaide	77.0
Total — Adelaide Statistical Division	77.1
Outside Adelaide Statistical Division	
Northern Rural	61.5
Southern Rural	50.5
Total — Outside Adelaide Statistical Division	56.0
All break and enter victims	73.7

Table 8. Type of goods stolen in the last break-in.

Item	% of break & enter victims who had goods stolen during their last break-in. (can include multiple responses)
Money	26.5
Jewellery	25.7
Video recorder	23.1
Tools	13.7
Other electrical	11.7
Clothes	10.7
Television	10.2
Bicycles	7.2
Garden equipment	7.0
Camera	6.8
Records/cassettes	6.5
Stereo equipment	5.4
Radio	1.8
Other items	33.0

Table 9. Proportion of respondents who perceive the existence of crime or public nuisance problems in their neighbourhood.

	% of respondents who believe a problem exists
Victims	
Break & Enter victims	88.2
Attempted Break & Enter victims	90.0
Total — all victims of break & enter or attempts	88.8
Non-victims	58.5
All persons	61.6

Table 10. Problems perceived to exist within own neighbourhood.

Problem	% of respondents who believe a problem exists (multiple responses possible)		
	Victim	Non-victim	Total
Housebreakings	89.8	74.2	76.5
Dangerous/noisy driving	55.4	52.3	52.7
Vandalism/graffiti	51.1	50.3	50.4
Car theft	43.2	37.1	38.0
Lout/youth gangs	30.7	25.9	26.6
Prowlers/loiterers	27.6	17.1	18.7
Other theft	27.2	16.7	18.2
Illegal drugs	17.8	12.8	13.6
Domestic/neighbour problems	13.1	11.6	11.8
Other assault	11.3	4.5	5.5
Sexual assault	8.2	4.2	4.8
Other	3.3	4.4	4.3

Public Perception of Crime as a Problem

Another aim of the survey was to gauge the extent to which the community perceived a problem existing in relation to crime within their own neighbourhood. Of the 7,214 respondents surveyed 61.6% were of the opinion that "Yes there did exist problems from crime or people creating a public nuisance in their neigh-

bourhood". Table 9, however, reveals that this proportion differs between victims of a break and enter offence and non-victims, such that 88.8% of victims and only 58.5% of non victims agreed that problems exist.

The respondents who answered in the affirmative to the above question were then asked what they thought these problems were (See table 10). Their major

concerns were housebreakings (76.5%), dangerous and noisy driving (52.7%), vandalism (50.4%) and car theft (38.0%). Higher proportions of victims than non-victims nominated each item with these proportions being significantly at the 95% level for housebreakings, car theft, other theft, prowlers/loiterers, illegal drugs, sexual assault and other assault.

When asked to then nominate the main problem within their neighbourhood 51.6% of respondents chose housebreakings (See table 11). Dangerous and noisy driving was second, being selected as the main problem by 13.6% of respondents, followed by vandalism and graffiti (9.6%). While a significantly greater proportion of victims nominated housebreakings as the main problem (64.0% compared to only 49.6% amongst non-victims) victims were significantly less likely than non victims to nominate louts and youth gangs, vandalism and graffiti or problems with neighbours/ domestics as their main problem.

Overall only 3.3% of victims and 3.0% of non-victims were unable to suggest any one problem as the main problem in their neighbourhood.

Interstate Comparisons

One of the advantages of this survey was that it was simultaneously run in New South Wales and also conducted in Western Australia (during October 1991) thus providing one of the few sources of comparable interstate statistics.

Table 12 presents a comparison of the percentage of victims recorded in the three state surveys. The proportion of households victimised in New South Wales was significantly lower than that recorded in South Australia which was in turn significantly lower than the Western Australian result. Considering actual break and enter offences South Australia's victimisation rate of 6.9% compares to 5.6% in New South Wales and 7.7% in Western Australia. For attempted break and enters New South Wales recorded the lowest rate (3.8%) followed by South Australia (5.3%) and Western Australia (6.5%).

Interestingly a major difference between South Australia and New South

Table 11. The main problem reported by respondents who perceive a problem existing.

Problem	% of respondents who believe a problem exists		
	Victim	Non-victim	Total
Housebreakings	64.0	49.6	51.6
Dangerous/noisy driving	9.6	14.3	13.6
Vandalism/graffiti	4.2	10.6	9.6
Lout/youth gangs	4.3	7.4	6.9
Car theft	3.1	3.9	3.8
Domestic/neighbour problems	1.5	3.2	2.9
Other theft	2.6	2.5	2.5
Prowlers/loiterers	3.5	2.0	2.2
Illegal drugs	1.5	1.6	1.6
Sexual assault	1.0	0.3	0.4
Other assault	0.4	0.2	0.2
Other	1.2	1.6	1.6
No opinion	3.3	3.0	3.0

Table 12. The percentage of household victims in South Australia, New South Wales, and Western Australia.

	Percentage of households victimised during the previous 12 months:		
	South Australia	New South Wales	Western Australia
Break & enter only	6.9	5.6	7.7
Attempted Break and enter only	5.2	3.8	6.5
All victims	10.3	8.3	12.3

Table 13. Percentage of households that were victims of a break and enter offence by location in South Australia, New South Wales, and Western Australia.

Location	Percentage of households victimised during the previous 12 months:		
	South Australia	New South Wales	Western Australia
Within capital city's statistical division	11.9	9.8	NA
Outside Capital city	6.0	6.0	NA
Whole state	10.3	8.3	NA

Table 14. Percentage of households that were multiple victims of a break and enter offence in South Australia, New South Wales, and Western Australia.

	Percentage of households victimised during the previous 12 months:		
	South Australia	New South Wales	Western Australia
Break and enter only			
One incident	78.6	78.6	68.7
Two incidents	16.6	16.6	19.4
Three or more incidents	4.7	4.8	11.9
Attempted break and enter only			
One incident	68.5	67.1	66.7
Two incidents	21.0	21.3	24.1
Three or more incidents	10.5	11.5	9.1
Total — any Break and enter offence			
One incident	67.5	67.8	NA
Two incidents	18.0	18.9	NA
Three or more incidents	14.6	13.3	NA

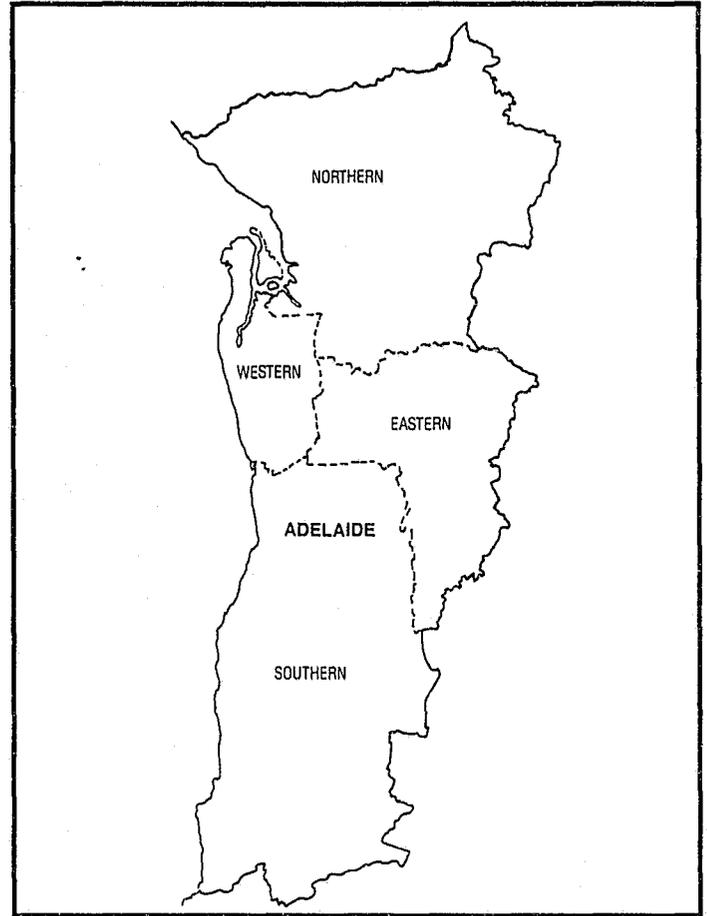
Wales appears to be in respect to the rate of victimisation within the metropolitan area around the capital cities. Table 13 reveals that within the Adelaide Statistical Division the percentage of dwellings victimised was 11.9% compared with 9.8% within the Sydney Statistical Division. By contrast the rate of victimisation across the rest of the state was 6.0% in both South Australia and New South Wales. Also Adelaide's share of the South Australian population is greater than the corresponding Sydney population of the New South Wales population. This factor accounts for 30% of the difference in victimisation rates between the two states.

Analysis of the extent of multiple victimisation across the states indicates that the proportion of such victims is similar in South Australia and New South Wales with regard to both actual and attempted break and enters. In Western Australia, however, a significantly greater proportion of victims of actual break and enters suffered one or more repeat victimisations within a 12 month period. (See table 14.)

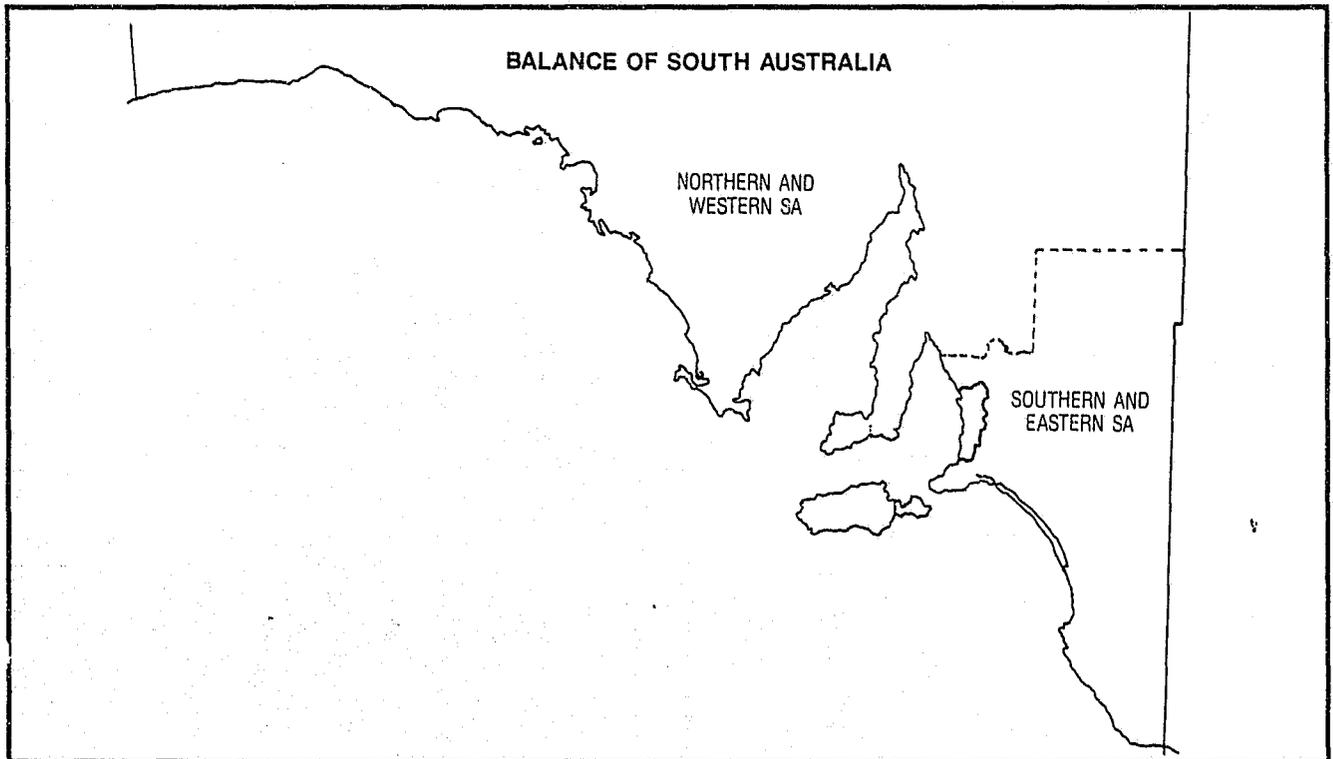
Another source of variation between the states concerned the level of reporting of incidents to the Police. In South Australia 79.3% of break and enter victims reported their latest incident to the police compared with a significantly smaller proportions of victims in both New South Wales (72.3% of actual break and enter victims) and Western Australia (72.6%). These differences in reporting rates are of particular importance when comparing interstate police statistics, and should be always be taken into account when using police statistics to calculate offence rates across the states. With respect to reporting rates for attempted break and enters 34.9% of South Australian victims reported the latest incident compared with 30.1% in New South Wales and 27.2% in Western Australia. (Although numerically greater, these differences were not significant at the 95% confidence level.)

APPENDIX A

Adelaide Statistical Division showing subdivisions used in the survey. (Map courtesy of the Australian Bureau of Statistics.)



Non-metropolitan statistical boundaries used in the survey. (Map courtesy of the Australian Bureau of Statistics.)



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