



THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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MEDIA STATEMENT

Monday, December 15, 2003

EMBARGOED UNTIL 2am TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2003

CRIME AND JUSTICE STATISTICS FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA 2002

The Crime Research Centre at The University of Western Australia has released its report on Crime and Justice Statistics for Western Australia: 2002. It describes general trends and patterns in crime, police arrests, criminal court activity, imprisonment and juvenile contact with criminal justice.

The Centre found the overall rate of crime reported to police decreased by 1.6 per cent during 2002. The rate of violent offences decreased by 2.6 per cent. In this category, decreases occurred in rates of assault (0.7 per cent), sexual assault (5.4 per cent), robbery (6.0 per cent) and other offences against the person (7 per cent), while the number of homicides increased from 71 to 90.

The rate of reported property crime decreased by 1.7 per cent. In this category there were decreases in the rates of burglary (3 per cent), property damage (8.8 per cent) and motor vehicle theft (12.1 per cent), while there were increases in the rates of fraud (2.2 per cent) and other theft (2.4 per cent). The rate of motor vehicle theft has declined by 48 per cent since 1995 and is below the Australian average after Western Australia led the nation for this offence for many years. Compared with other Australian states, WA had average or below average recorded crime rates for all other types of offences in 2002, except for other theft and burglary, for which WA continues to have the highest rate in the nation.

Police apprehensions decreased by 1.1 per cent in 2002, and the number of distinct individuals arrested decreased by 5 per cent. The level of over-representation of Indigenous people in police arrest statistics increased in 2002 and is now at its highest level in this series (1990 to 2002).

Police cautioning of juvenile offenders decreased by 7.6 per cent, and police referrals of young offenders to 'teams' decreased by 8.2 per cent. The number of juveniles who appeared before the Children's Court decreased by 5.2 per cent. Of these offenders, 9.2 per cent were placed in detention and were responsible for 13.1 per cent of all offences heard by the court. The WA juvenile detention rate has decreased each year since 1998, and is now fourth highest in the nation. WA had the highest rate in the nation for detention of Indigenous juveniles, and this rate was 38 times greater than that for non-Indigenous juveniles in WA and 1.6 times the national rate.

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In the adult criminal courts, there was a 1.5 per cent increase in the number of charges dealt with in the Courts of Petty Sessions, and a 5.7 per cent increase in the Higher Courts.

Following a substantial decrease in the number of fraud charges dealt with by the Higher Courts in 2001, there was a 64.8 per cent increase in 2002. In the Higher Courts, 77 per cent of charges resulted in conviction. Overall, 61.8 per cent of convictions resulted in custodial sentences, but this figure rose to 76 per cent for violent offences.

Compared with 2001 figures, prison receptions in 2002 decreased by 6.9 per cent, but the prison census population remained virtually the same. Indigenous people accounted for 42 per cent of prisoners received in 2002 but only 34.5 per cent of prisoners on census night – indicating a higher turnover of Indigenous prisoners (for comparatively shorter sentences) than of non-Indigenous prisoners. Almost two thirds of all prison receptions for motor vehicle/driving-related offences were of Indigenous offenders, and half of all female Indigenous prisoners were in prison for fine-default.

The number of offenders ordered to serve sentences in the community decreased by 10 per cent in 2002. Specifically, there were decreases in the number of work and development orders (29 per cent), intensive supervision orders (10 per cent), parole orders (8 per cent) and home detention (13 per cent). However, community-based orders rose by 5 per cent.

Copies of the report (\$30) can be obtained from:

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E-mail crime.research@uwa.edu.au

Electronic copies of the report will be available (in PDF format) at:
<http://www.law.ecel.uwa.edu.au/crc>

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