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Speech presented by Adam Graycar, Director,  
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"AIC's research on firearms theft: talking points"

to the Australian Crime Commission (ACC), Sydney,  
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**Australian Institute of Criminology**

<http://www.aic.gov.au>



# **AIC's Research on Firearms Theft**

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**Director**

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## **AIC's Research into Illicit Markets**

- Art and Antiquities
- Diamonds
- Abalone
- Vehicle parts
- Drugs
- Firearms

## Main questions in any inquiry into illicit markets:

- What do we know?
- What don't we know?
- Why don't we know it?
- How do we find out?

## **AIC Firearms Research: The NFMP**

Examines the following:

1. The number and types of registered firearms in each Australian jurisdiction.
2. The number of people licensed to possess and use firearms.
3. Deaths and injuries (homicidal, suicidal and accidental; single and multiple) committed with the use of firearms;
4. Firearms –related offences generally (armed robbery, **firearms theft**, etc.).





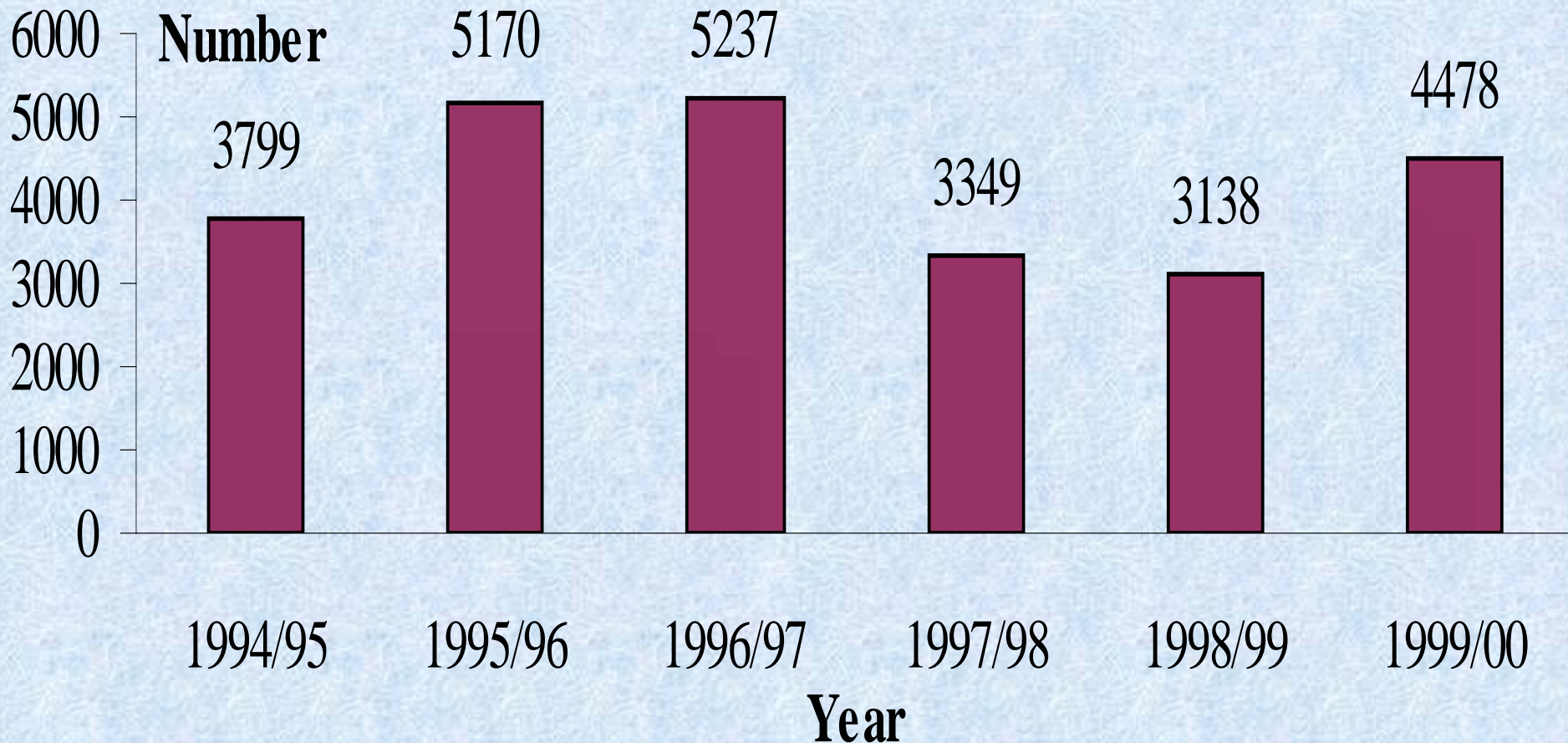
## What Do We know? Firearms Theft in Australia

- The number and type of firearms reported stolen to police between 1994/95 and 1999/00; and
- The locations which are usually targeted in the theft of firearms

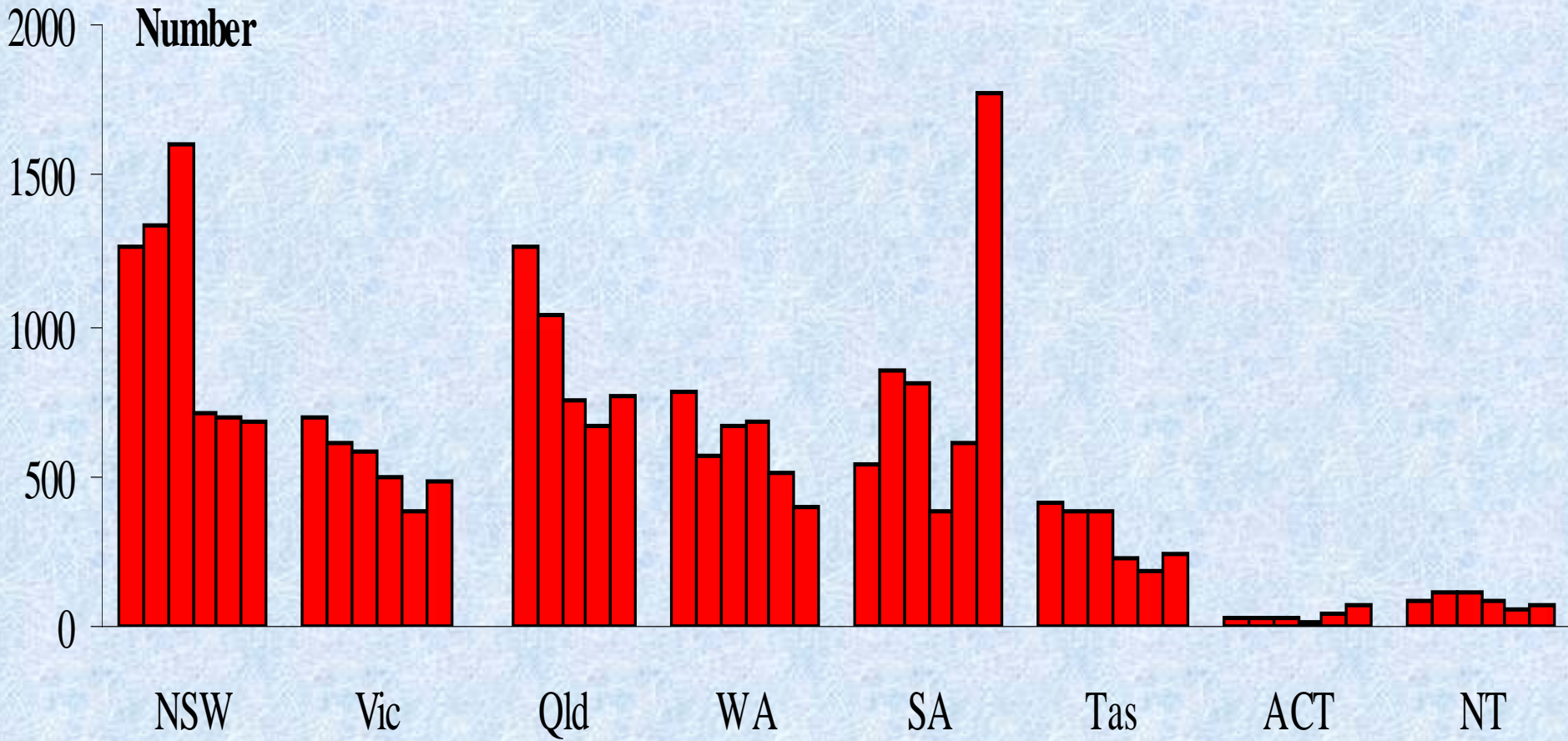
### Data Sources:

- Administrative data from Australian State and Territory police services.

## Firearms Reported Stolen in Australia

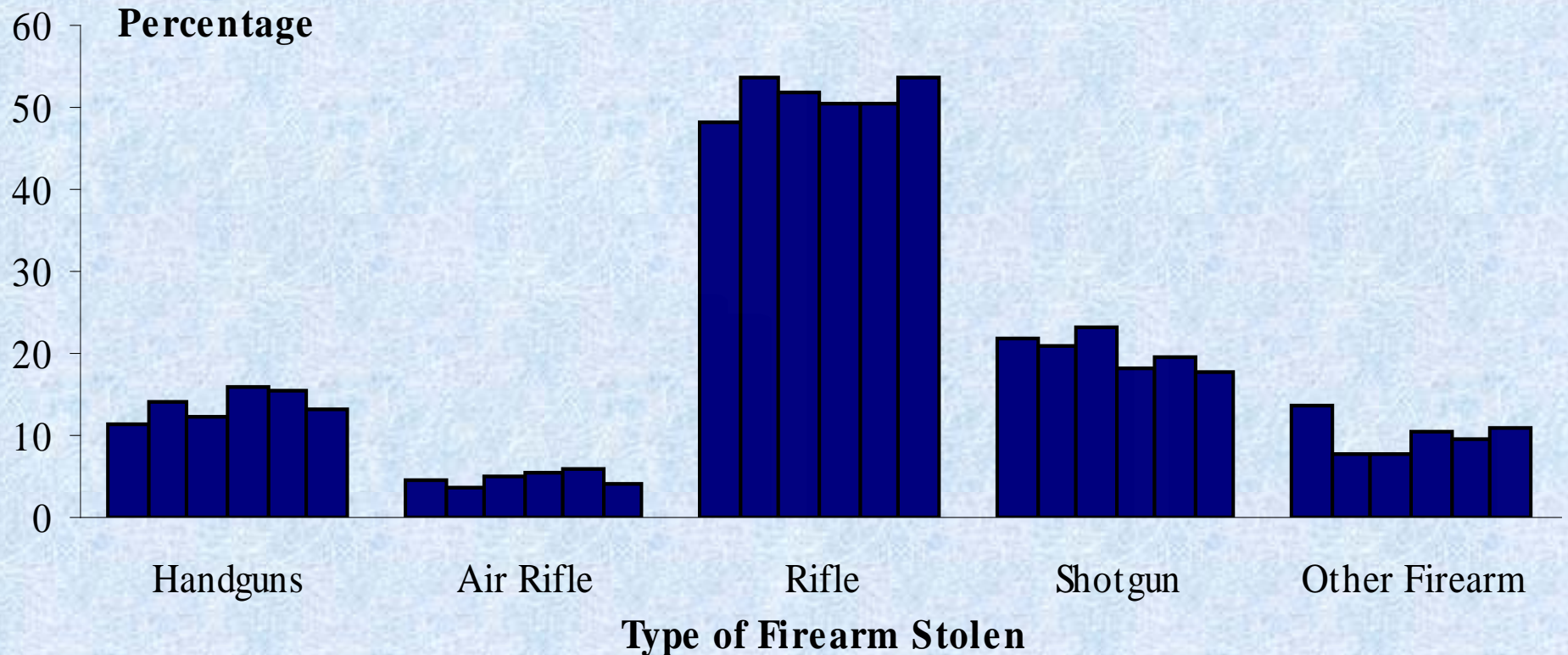


# Firearms Reported Stolen by Jurisdiction, 1994 - 2000





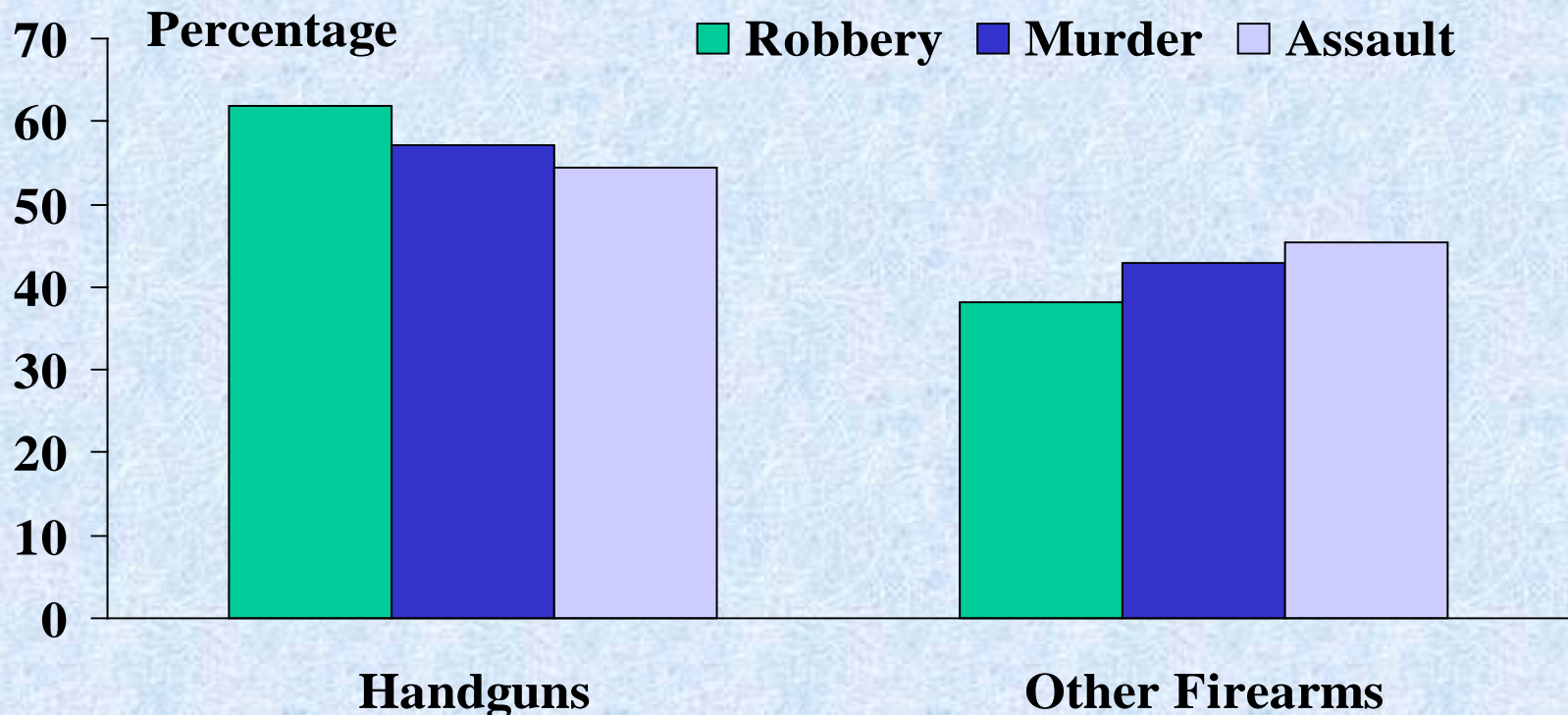
# Type of Firearm Stolen as a Proportion of All Stolen Firearms, 1994 - 2000



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NFMP 1994 – 2000 [computer file]

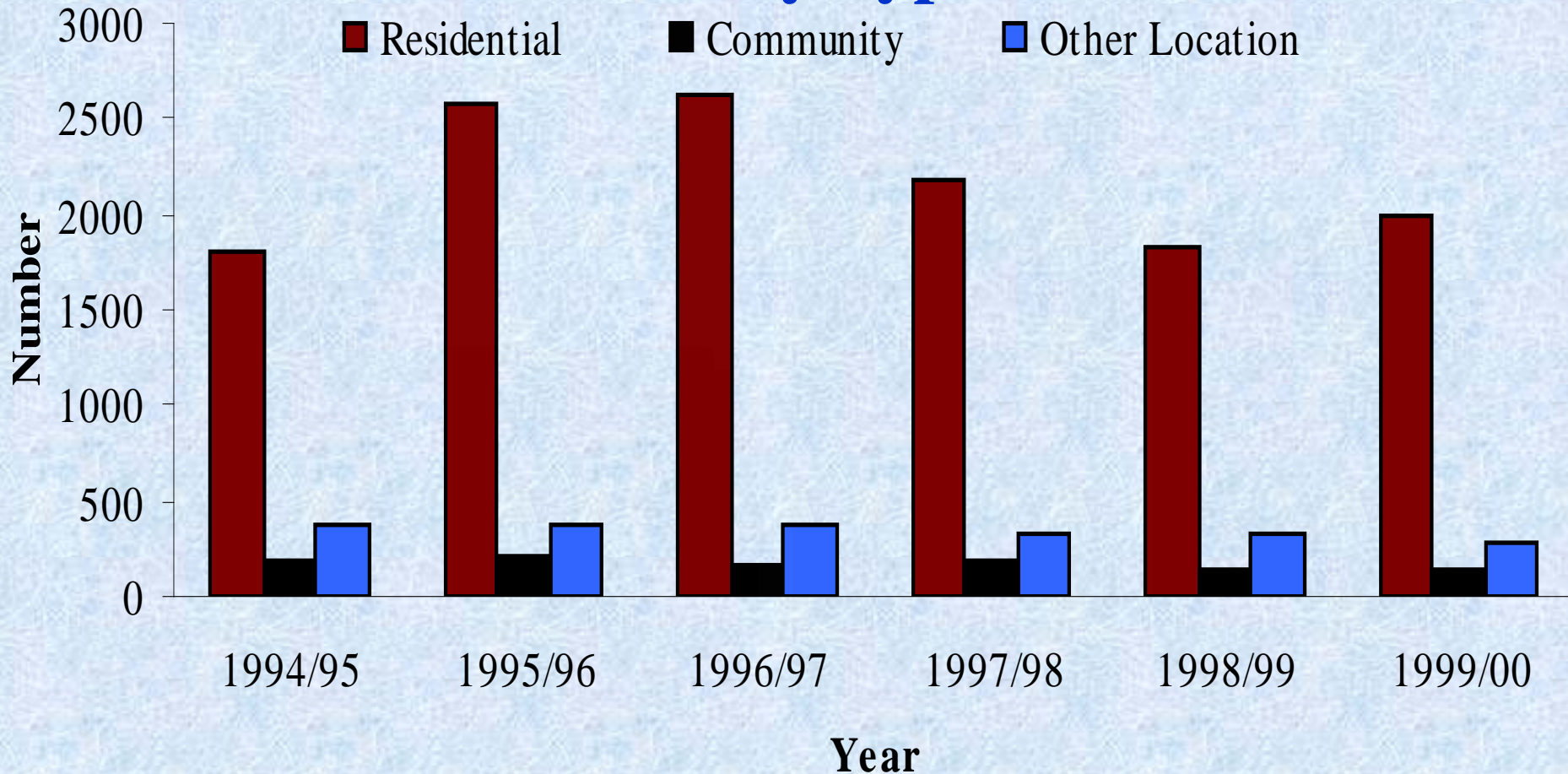
Note: Information not available for SA and the ACT.

## Type of Firearms Used in Crime in NSW as a proportion of All Firearms, 2001



Source: NSW Recorded Crime Statistics, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

## Stolen Firearms By Type of Location



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, NFMP 1994 – 2000 [computer file]

Note: Information not available for SA and the ACT

## What Don't We Know?

Average of about 4,000 firearms stolen each year, **BUT**

- Are all firearms that are reported stolen to police *actually* stolen or are they reported stolen but actually sold on the black market?
- Firearms theft has been identified as a potential source of firearms for the black market, but what % of firearms are actually transferred into the illegitimate firearms market?
- What % of firearms are later recovered by police?



## What Don't We Know?

- What % of stolen firearms are subsequently used in crime?
- What % of stolen firearms are not reported to police?
- Can the stockpile of firearms on the black market be quantified?
- What are the sources of firearms used in crime?
- AND Many More.



## Why Don't We Know? Methodological Challenges

- Information required not routinely collected;
- Different Data Sources:  
Administrative **versus** Research Data
- **Administrative data** is sometimes limited, but is improved by value-adding (eg. the National Homicide / Armed Robbery Monitoring Programs);
- Jurisdictional recording differences;

## How Do We Find Out?

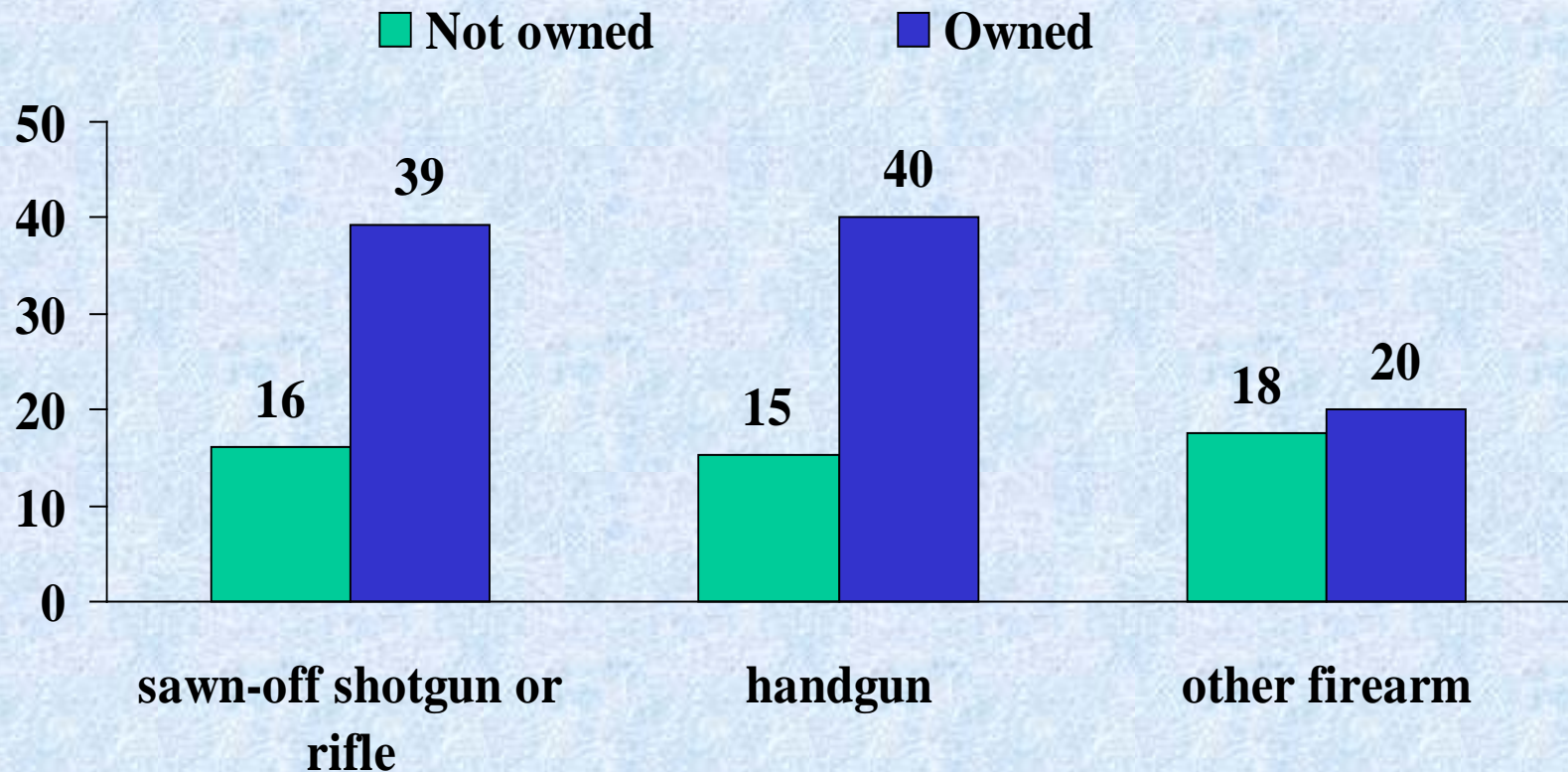
Focussed Studies and Research Data:

➤ **Surveys – For Example:**

*DUMA Weapons Addendum*

- Reasons for possessing a weapon (self-defence, use in drug trade, gang membership, etc)?
- How weapon was obtained (made, stole, bought it, etc)?
- Where weapon was obtained from (gun shop, pawn shop, family/friend, etc)?
- Where and how often the weapon is usually carried?

# Firearm ownership in the past 12 months by use of weapon to commit a crime (%)



## Main reason for owning weapon in last 12 months (%)

	Knife	Firearm
Hunting/ target shooting	8.2	20.0
Job requirement	12.6	3.3
Protection/ self defence	45.9	46.7
Use in drug trade	1.9	3.3
Use in other criminal activity	1.3	6.7
Part of being in a gang	1.9	3.3
Other	28.3	16.7
(n)	(159)	(60)



## Usual supply (%)

	Knife	Gun
Made it	.6	
Stole it	7.0	1.7
Borrowed it	4.4	1.7
Traded for it	3.8	13.3
Bought it	66.5	56.7
Gift	16.5	13.3
Other	1.3	13.3
(n)	(158)	(60)



## Usual source (%)

	Knife	Gun
On the street	5.1	11.9
Army disposal store	20.9	0.0
Drug dealer	1.3	6.8
Knife/gun shop	12.7	6.8
Private sale	.6	8.5
Family member/friend	24.7	55.9
Pawn shop	3.8	0.0
Other retail outlet	19.0	0.0
Stole it	4.4	1.7
Found it	4.4	1.7
Other	3.2	6.8
(N)	(158)	(59)

## How Do We Find Out?

### *ACT Firearms Audit Survey:*

- Compliance with storage requirements;
- Whether firearms were secured or unsecured at the time of the theft;
- If firearms were secured correctly, how did the offender gain access to the firearms?
- How did the Police respond to the reporting of the theft of a firearm?



**Additional information can be found at:**

**<http://www.aic.gov.au/research/fmonitor/>**