

Statistical Bulletin No. 5.

COMPARISON OF CRIME RATES

1. Introduction

Questions on the Crime rate in New South Wales are amongst those frequently asked of the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. This bulletin gives some of the most recent information and updates empirical data from an earlier¹ statistical report entitled Crime in Our Cities - A Comparative Report.

Statistics provided by the New South Wales Police Department have been used to determine crime rates within eight offence categories for the state as a whole, and for certain areas within the state. Some comparisons have also been made with crime rates of other industrial societies. The most accessible official statistics with which to make these comparisons are those provided by American, British, New Zealand and Canadian authorities.

The New South Wales Police Department processes crime statistics on the basis of information contained in 'Incident Reports' which are compiled at the time an offence is detected or reported. With police co-operation these figures have been recast within a framework so as to be used for this study. The Bureau used the 1978 offence data to calculate rates for different types of crime in urban and rural areas of this state. This has been achieved by matching Police districts, as closely as possible, with census units of known population size. The number of offences of different kinds can then be expressed as a rate per 10,000 population. Various offences occurring in the three metropolitan areas of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong were used to calculate 'Urban' crime rates. 'Rural' crime rates reflected offences occurring throughout the rest of the state.

Table 1 - Population Estimates for 1978^{*}

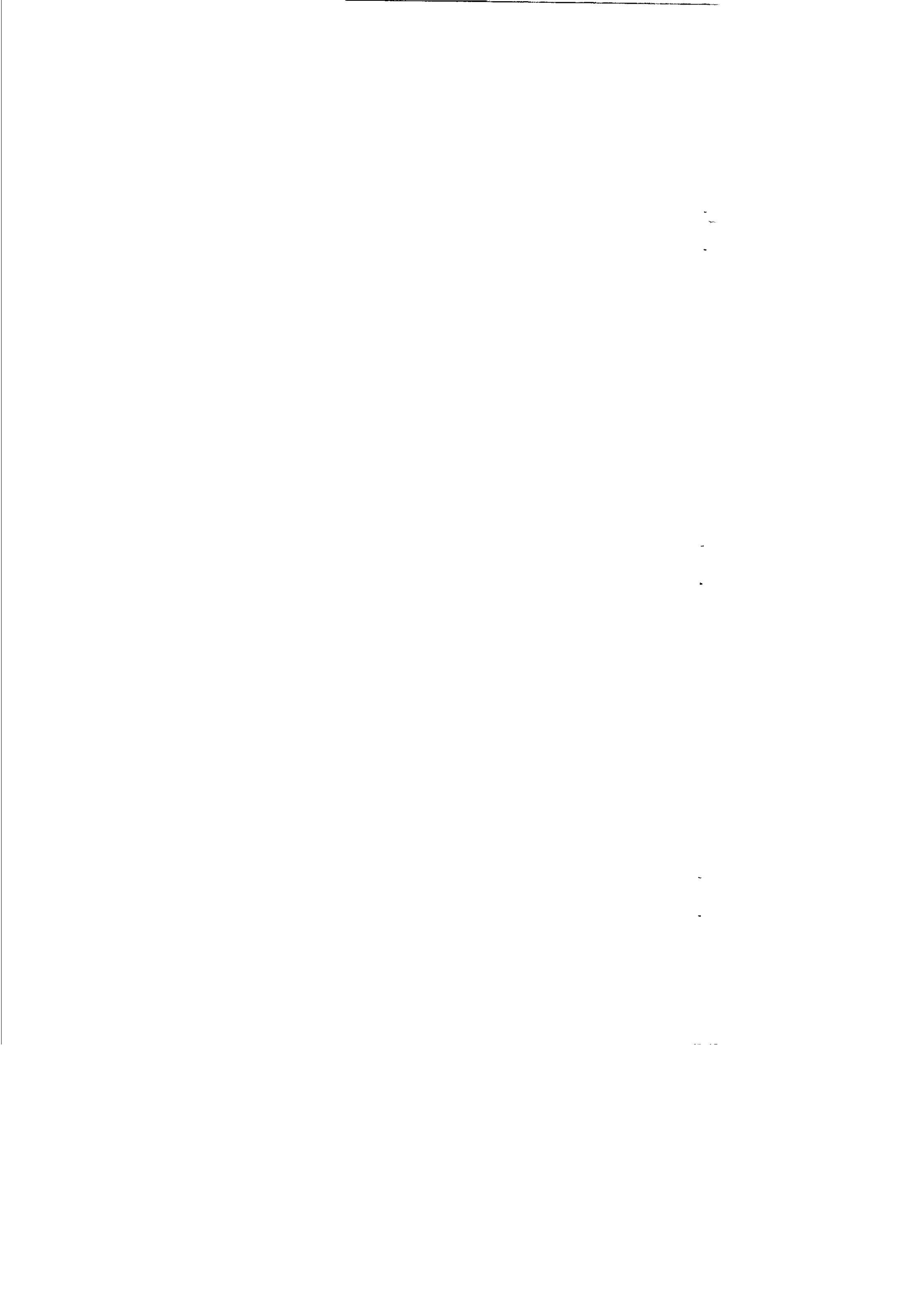
Sydney	3,007,197
Newcastle ²	377,274
Wollongong ³	202,175
Rest of the State	1,313,461
Total	4,900,107

* Source: Police Department.

The seven categories of crimes to be considered are as follows:

1. Murder: Includes murder, attempted murder, conspiring and being an accessory to murder but not death due to culpable driving. (Death due to culpable driving is included in the category of Homicide used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in their Uniform Crime Reports published in the Australian Year Books.)
2. Rape: Includes attempted rape.
3. Other Sexual Offences: Includes carnal knowledge, indecent assault, incest and homosexual offences.
4. Robbery: Armed robbery, robbery and demanding money with menaces.
5. Major Assault: Includes assault occasioning actual bodily harm, causing grievous bodily harm, malicious wounding and shoot to cause grievous bodily harm.
6. Larceny: Includes all incident reports of theft.
7. Breaking and Entering: (Burglary) The violation of premises but not violence to the person.

1. The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Statistical Report No. 6, 'Crime in Our Cities', November, 1972.
2. Figures for Newcastle included Wallsend, Belmont and Maitland Police Districts.
3. Figures for Wollongong include Warilla Police District.



2. Rural - Urban Crimes Patterns in New South Wales.

The available 1978 data for the seven index crimes were tabulated for urban areas (Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong) in comparison with rural areas (the rest of the state). It is portrayed below along with the information from the 1972 report.

Table 2 - Crime Rates ¹ for Urban and Rural Areas (Rates per 10,000 population)

Offence Category	1978		1971	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Murder	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.4
Rape	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.4
Other Sexual Offences	2.4	2.0	5.2	4.9
Robbery	4.8	0.7	4.3	0.5
Major Assault ²	2.4	2.1	-	-
Larceny ³	168.7	129.8	27.7	14.7
Breaking and Entering	122.7	60.0	123.3	44.9

1. Based on crimes reported to the police.
2. No rates were recorded for major assault in 1971 for urban and rural areas.
3. The rates calculated for larceny in 1971 only applied to larceny of items greater than \$100 in value.

It is a common finding that crime rates are higher in the cities than they are in rural areas. The above results conform to this finding for all offences except murder. American studies and previous Bureau reports⁴ have shown that murder is an exception due to the fact that it frequently occurs among people who know each other or live together in a domestic environment.

In referring to the 1978 rates we can see that robbery and demanding money with menaces occurred seven times more frequently in urban areas. The combined rate for Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong is 4.8 per 10,000 compared with 0.7 per 10,000 in the rest of the state.

The rates of sexual offences in urban and rural areas are similar, although the urban rate is slightly greater.

For breaking and entering, the police data enable us to consider a range of offences which involve violation of premises but not violation to the person. The urban rate for breaking and entering is just over twice the rate in country areas.

Similar rates for 1971 and 1978 exist within the offence categories of murder, rape and robbery. The rate for other sexual offences has dropped by half the value it was in 1971; for urban areas the rate dropped from 5.2 to 2.4 per 10,000 while in rural areas it decreased from 4.9 to 2.0 per 10,000. In order to investigate this decrease, figures were extracted for two types of the "other" sexual offences.

4. Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Statistical Report No. 2 'Intentional Shootings' May, 1975 and Statistical Report No. 9, 1973 'Gun and Knife Attacks'

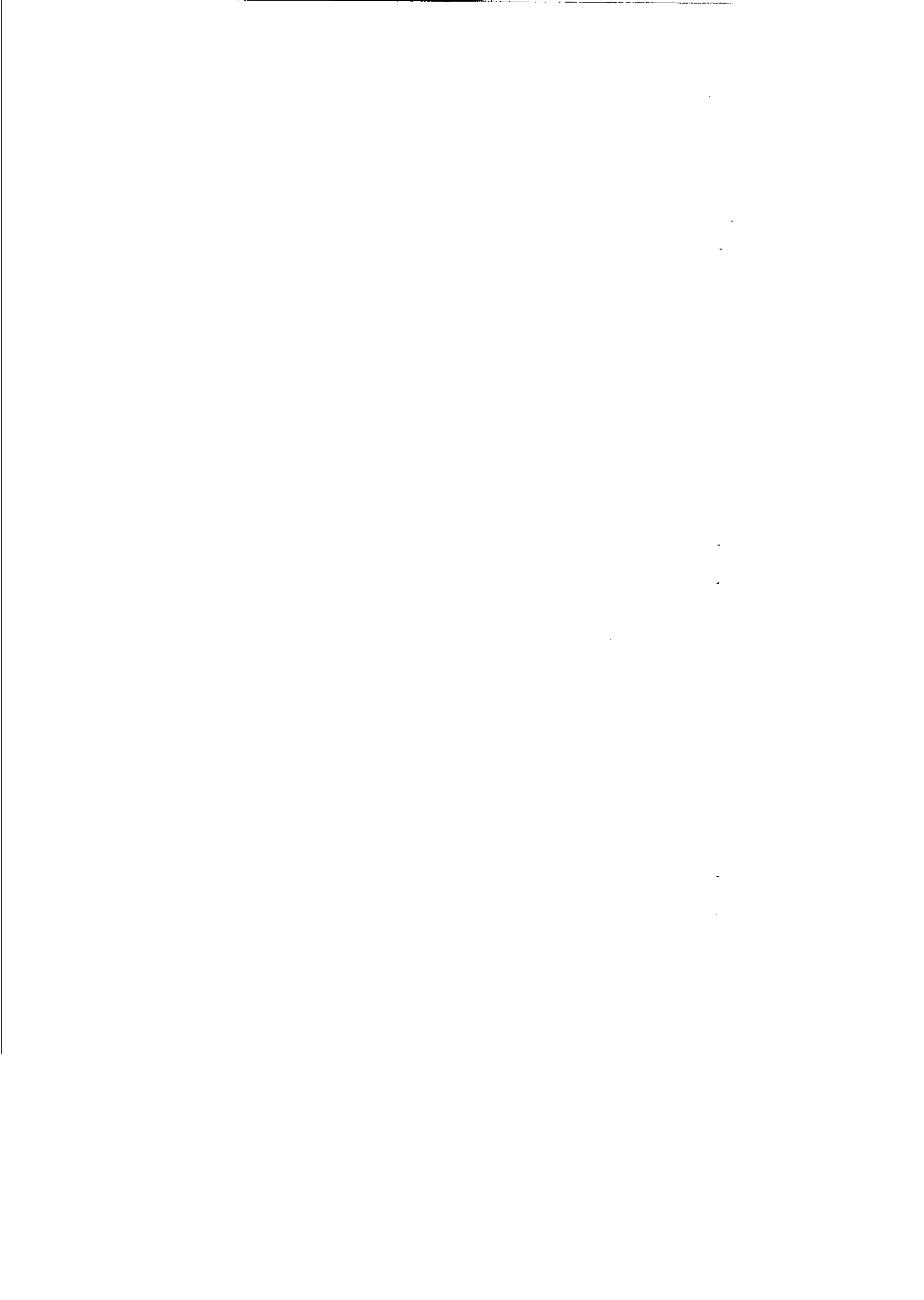


Table 3 - Number of Court appearances for two offences within the offence category of "other sexual offences".²

<u>Court</u>	<u>Offence</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Appearances</u>
Children's	Heterosexual offences	1974	321
	" "	1977	173
Higher	Unlawful sexual intercourse with female 10 to 15 years.	1974	171
		1977	46

It is possible that this fall is associated with changed opinions on adolescent sexual behaviour. Society over the past 10 years has taken on an increasingly liberal attitude towards the sexual behaviour of younger people and this is probably what is reflected in the figures in Table 3.

Breaking and entering in rural areas has increased by approximately 15.0 per 10,000 over the seven years, while the urban rate has remained stable.

Unfortunately comparisons between the years 1971 and 1978 could not be made for the rates of:

- (a) major assault, as no data for this offence category was collected in 1971, and
- (b) larceny, as the data collected for 1971 only included larceny of items greater than \$100 in value.

3. The Three Metropolitan Areas - : Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle

Table 4 - Crime rates* for metropolitan areas 1978 (rate per 10,000 population)

	<u>Murder</u>	<u>Rape</u>	<u>Other sexual offences</u>	<u>Robbery</u>	<u>Major Assault</u>	<u>Larceny</u>	<u>Breaking and Entering</u>
Sydney	0.3	0.6	2.4	5.5	2.5	172.7	132.0
Newcastle	0.2	0.4	2.5	1.5	1.3	151.4	71.0
Wollongong	0.0	0.2	2.3	1.7	1.8	141.0	81.8
Rest of State	0.4	0.4	2.0	0.7	2.1	129.8	60.0

* Based on crimes reported to the police.

Crime rates for three major urban areas of New South Wales have been compared. For murder, sexual offences and major assault the rates in all areas are comparable except for the zero murder rate in Wollongong. Sydney's rate was substantially higher for the remainder of the offence categories.

It is interesting to note that although Newcastle's population is almost double that of Wollongong's (due to the inclusion of the Wallsend, Belmont and Maitland population in Newcastle's population) their crime rates for the offences stated are very similar. In fact Wollongong's crime rates are higher for robbery, major assault and breaking and entering.

4. Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong

One way of interpreting the crime level of a city like Sydney is to relate it, where possible, to the level which exists in other cities of comparable size.

Table 5 shows the rates for five offence categories in eight American cities with populations between two and four million people. The 1975 figures for the American cities were the most recent that could be obtained. These figures were based on "offences known to the police" which we have assumed to be the same as crimes reported to the Police.

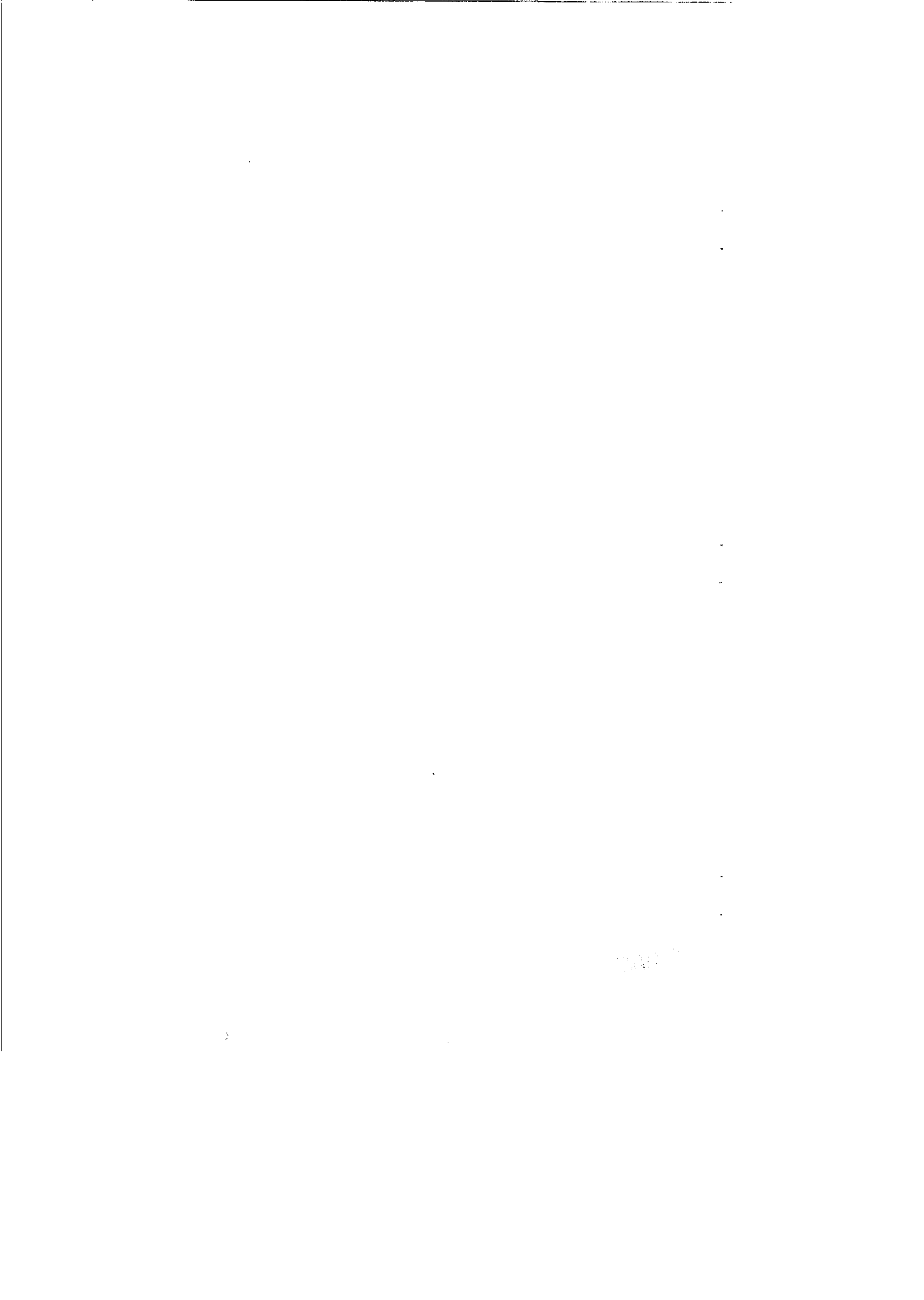


Table 5. Crime rates* for Sydney (1978) and eight American cities**(1975)

City	Population	(Rates per 10,000 population)				
		Homicide	Rape	Robbery	Assault	Burglary
Boston	3,403,326	0.5	2.3	30.8	20.8	169.3
San Francisco	3,134,755	0.2	4.9	39.7	30.2	231.6
Washington D.C.	3,029,599	1.2	4.1	47.4	22.2	143.1
Baltimore	2,141,139	1.5	3.6	49.2	42.2	154.1
Cleveland	1,987,933	1.7	3.2	43.0	21.0	115.3
Houston	2,256,388	1.9	3.4	32.7	12.9	194.8
Pittsburg	2,347,201	0.6	1.7	18.2	15.1	90.1
St.Louis	2,367,713	1.3	3.9	31.2	30.1	161.1
Average for eight cities		1.2	3.4	36.5	24.3	157.4
Sydney	3,007,197	0.3	0.6	5.5	2.5	132.0

* Based on crimes reported to the Police

** U.S. Department of Justice, Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 1977. Washington Feb., 1978 p.420 Table 3.101.

When Sydney's crime figures are compared with the averages for the eight American cities, a clear pattern emerges. Sydney has a much lower rate of offences against the person, i.e. approximately four times less homicide, six times less rape, seven times less robbery and almost ten times fewer assaults. However Sydney's burglary (breaking and entering) rate was only fractionally lower than the average for the eight American cities.

Table 6 - Crimes rates* for Newcastle and Wollongong 1978, compared with the average crime rates for eight American cities, 1977.

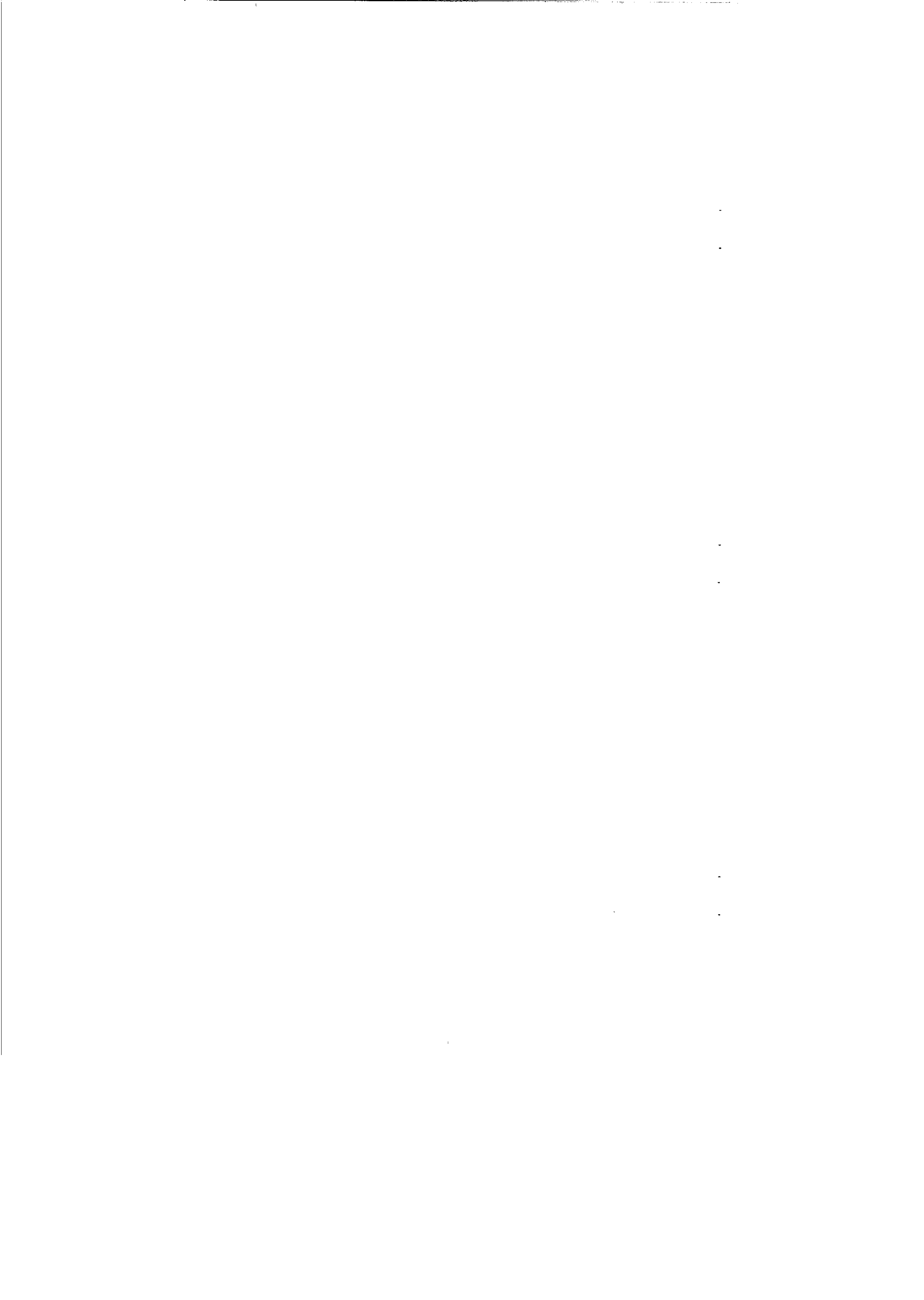
Offence Category	(Rates per 10,000 population)			
	Population between 350,000 and 400,000		Population between 200,000 and 250,000	
	Average for 8 U.S. cities ¹	Newcastle	Average for 8 U.S. cities ¹	Wollongong
Homicide	0.9	0.2	0.8	0.0
Rape	4.2	0.4	3.5	0.2
Robbery	19.1	1.5	13.7	1.7
Burglary	192.6	71.0	167.2	81.8

* Based on crimes reported to the police

1. The appendix contains the names and the population of the American cities.

The difference between the American cities and their New South Wales counterparts (with respect to their rates) is marked, even for the offence burglary where the American rates are 2.1 and 2.7 greater than those in Newcastle and Wollongong respectively.

Note: Homicide includes manslaughter (but not manslaughter arising from traffic accidents), murder, attempted murder, conspiring and being an accessory to murder.



5. New South Wales and Other countries

The comparability of definition is a problem when we attempt to relate the New South Wales crime rates to those occurring overseas. However, it is still possible to make rough comparisons with five of the seven index crimes reported by Government agencies within five other countries. Unfortunately not all the information came from the same time period.

Table 7. Crime rates* for New South Wales, England, Wales, Canada, United States of America and New Zealand.

Year of information	Country or State	(Rate per 10,000 population)				
		Homicide	Rape	Other sexual Offences	Robbery	Burglary
1978	England ^{1.}	0.19	0.25	4.31	2.77	115.66
1978	Wales ^{1.}	0.15	0.28	4.05	1.02	104.67
1976	Canada ^{2.}	0.59	0.81	3.80	8.68	116.11
1975	U.S.A. ^{3.}	0.96	2.63	+	21.82	152.59
1978	N.S.W.	0.32	0.51	2.30	3.74	105.92
1978	New Zealand ^{4.}	0.27	0.94	3.52	1.12	152.80

* Based on crimes reported to the Police

+ A rate for Other sexual offences for the U.S.A. was not published

1. Home Office Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1978

2. Statistics Canada, Crime and Traffic Enforcement Statistics 1976

3. U.S. Department of Justice, Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 1977. Washington Feb., 1978.

4. New Zealand Police Headquarters, Statistics and Operations Research Management Services.

Table 7 demonstrates that New South Wales crime rates (within the five offence categories) are compatible to those of England and Wales. It is more than possible that this similarity in crime rates is a reflection of the social, cultural and judicial ties between N.S.W. and Britain.

Similar crime rates exist for homicide and other sexual offences in New Zealand and New South Wales. In the other three offence categories some marked differences are apparent with New Zealand having significantly higher rates of rape and burglary and New South Wales having three times the New Zealand rate of robbery.

The highest crime rates appear in the U.S.A. If we compare the crime rates for the U.S.A. and Canada it is clearly shown that the U.S.A. has almost twice the rate for homicide, over twice the rate for robbery and three times the rate for rape.

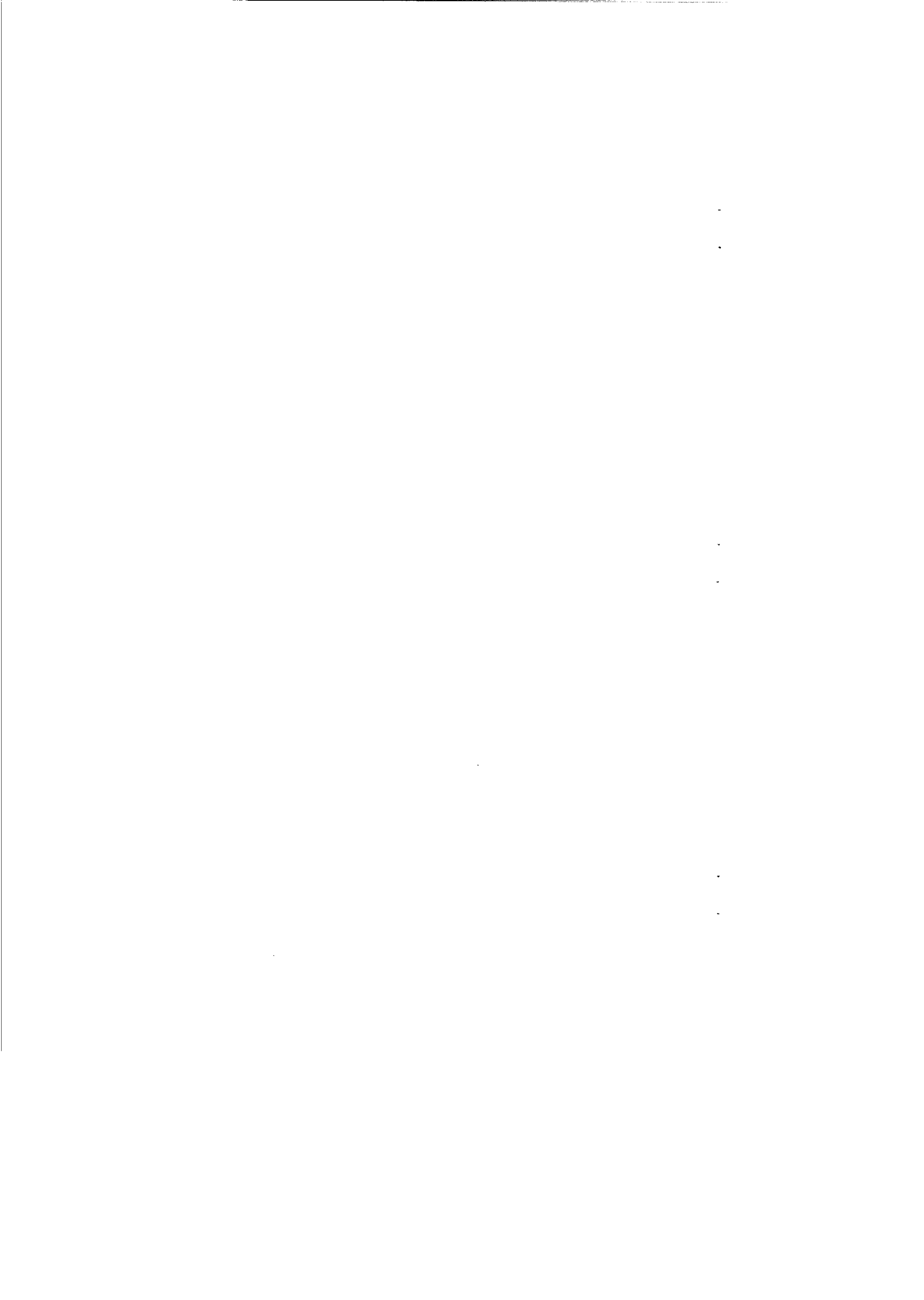
6. Conclusion

According to a recent publication 'The Size of the Crime Problem in Australia'¹ there has been a significant increase in most categories of crime in Australia since 1964-65. It is stated that the actual number of offences reported or becoming known to Police has grown with an annual average increase of 16.0 percent.

From Table 2 it is apparent that within five or seven categories of violent crime there is little difference between the rates of 1971 and 1978 for N.S.W. In fact there has been a significant decrease in the rate for sexual offences other than rape.

The above information leads us to ask the obvious question. What is happening to crime rates in the other States of Australia? David Biles, author of 'the Size of the Crime Problem in Australia' states even though some crime rates,

1. The size of the Crime Problem in Australia - David Biles, Australian Institute of Criminology, 1979.



particularly for robbery and breaking and entering, increased dramatically in the 1960's it seems that rates for most serious offences have been relatively stable for most of the 1970's. We can conclude from this statement and from the analysis (See Table 2) that increases in the rates of minor offences have caused the increase in offences reported or becoming known to Police.

The figures presented in this bulletin have been derived from crimes which are reported to the police. However, these figures do not measure the actual level of crime as not all crime is reported to the police. A victimization survey carried out by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 1975 found that the reportability of offences to the police varied with the offence. For example for the 12 months preceeding the survey only 30 percent of rape victims and 55 percent of robbery victims informed the police. Therefore it should be noted that any increase in the number of crimes reported to the police may be due to an increase in the reportability of that offence or changes in management practices rather than an increase in the actual level of crime in the community. Nevertheless, it is vital to have as much information as possible available on the practice of law enforcement and it is with this aim that this bulletin is published.

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics 'General Social Survey Crime Victims' May 1975. Catalogue No. 41050.

APPENDIX

Names and Populations of the American cities compared with Newcastle and Wollongong in Table 6.

<u>American cities with population between 200,000 and 250,000 (1975)</u>		<u>American cities with population between 350,000 and 400,000</u>	
Columbus	230,318	Albuquerque	386,320
Daytona Beach	209,207	Austin	394,497
Eugene -Springfield	240,240	Chattanooga	394,737
Fayetteville	227,185	Columbia	363,209
Johnston	249,278	Fort Wayne	371,630
Killen - Temple	205,268	Mobile	399,798
Lima	211,107	Peoria	352,200
Macon	242,128	Wichita	370,972

