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MEDIA RELEASE

ABS Crime and Safety Survey - 1999 (NSW Commentary)

Rates of break and enter and motor vehicle theft victimisation in New South Wales were stable between April 1997 and April 1999, according to the latest NSW Crime and Safety Survey.

This confirms recent police figures which show stability in the recorded rates of major household crimes during this same period.

The ABS survey covers key personal and household crimes experienced by a representative sample of about 10,000 NSW residents in the 12 months to April 1999.

Rates of personal crime victimisation reported in the survey also confirm the trend in police figures. The survey results show an increase in the rate of assault between April 1997 and April 1999, but no increase during this period in the rate of sexual assault.

The detailed results of the survey show that in the 12 months to April 1999, compared with the 12 months to April 1997 (there was no NSW survey in 1998):

The percentage of households experiencing a break and enter remained stable at 5.6 per cent.

The percentage of households experiencing a motor vehicle theft remained stable at about two per cent.

The percentage of persons experiencing an assault was 3.7 per cent (an increase of 16%).

The percentage of adult females experiencing a sexual assault remained stable at less than one per cent.

The survey also reports the victimisation rate for robbery. In the 12 months to April 1999, the percentage of persons experiencing a robbery was 1.2 per cent.

There is no comparable figure for robbery in the 1997 survey results because of a change made to the questionnaire between surveys. Comparison with the 1998 National Crime and Safety Survey, however, shows an increase in the rate of robbery in NSW between 1998 and 1999.

This does not support recent police figures, which show a stable robbery rate over this same time period. One possible reason for this is that respondents to the survey confused robbery with break and enter. The recorded rate of break and enter was still increasing during the survey period.

As in previous years, the ABS figures show that socially disadvantaged groups are more at risk of crime victimisation than others.

For example, the personal crime victimisation rate among unemployed persons was double the rate for employed persons (11.0% compared with 5.5%).

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Similarly, one parent households had a household crime victimisation rate of 15.0 per cent compared with 10.7 per cent for households overall.

Households in Sydney are more likely to be victims of crime than households elsewhere in New South Wales.

For example, in the 12 months to April 1999, 12.1 per cent of Sydney households were victims of a household crime, compared with 8.4 per cent of households outside Sydney.

This difference is less marked for personal crime, where 5.0 per cent of Sydney residents were victims of a personal crime, compared with 4.3 per cent of other NSW residents.

The 1999 Crime and Safety Survey report shows a high rate of repeat victimisation for assault in NSW, with 46 per cent of assault victims having been assaulted more than once during the previous 12 months. About 30 per cent of assault victims were assaulted three times or more.

The survey also shows that almost half of the assault victims knew their attacker. One in ten victims of assault were assaulted by a family member.

According to the survey, approximately 47 per cent of NSW residents did not think there were any crime or public nuisance problems in their neighbourhood.

This is similar to the percentage of persons who did not perceive any problem in 1997. In the 1999 survey, housebreaking is again the main perceived problem, followed by dangerous/noisy driving and louts/youth gangs.

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