
7. CRIME SITUATION

7.1 Main Characteristics

Crime is of increasing concern to South Africa's citizens and the Government. In its annual budget 2001, the Government prioritized fighting crime as an area of critical concern and increased expenditures for the safety and justice sectors. Crime is recognized as a deterrent to investment in the country and also having an adverse impact on the poor.

The overall levels of recorded crime in South Africa began to increase in the mid-1980s, dramatically so in the early 1990s. While levels stabilized between 1995 and 1996, crime has been increasing since then (Schonteich 1999), although in 2001/2002 there was a certain level of decrease, but still the rates were at a much higher level than in the period 1994/95. Police records indicating high levels of crime are supported by a number of victimization surveys, including the first National Victimization Survey⁶⁹, the International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS) and the International Crimes against Business Survey⁷⁰ as well as a number of local city surveys.

Among those countries that provide detailed crime statistics, South Africa reports some of the highest levels of violent crime. In 2000, one third of all crimes recorded by the police in South Africa were violent in nature (Schonteich and Louw 2001).

Violent crime is accentuated by the availability of firearms in the society. According to the police services' Central Firearms Registry, 3.5 million South Africans legally possess 4.2 million firearms, and it is estimated that a similar number of illicit firearms are circulating in the country. Most firearms used in crimes originate from theft or loss of private and state owned firearms.

Both official police records as well as victimization surveys confirm that crime does not affect all people uniformly. For example, while the wealthy run the risk of becoming victims of property crime, the poor are much more likely to become victims of violent crime, as well as property crime (Louw and Shaw 1997). In the rural areas of the country, stock theft is one of the most common crimes with particularly serious damage for the small farmers.

⁶⁹ Partially funded under a UNDP and ODC project.

⁷⁰ Sponsored by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), the ICVS was carried out in more than 70 countries across the world in 1989, 1992, 1996/97 and 2000. The ICVS in South Africa was carried out by the University of South Africa (UNISA: Professors Naude and Prinsloo) in 1992, 1996 and 2000, while the same team carried out the International Survey on Crimes against Business in South Africa in 1998.

7.2 Specific Crime Trends

The data suggests that after mid-1998, there was a steady increase in the total crime level. However, such an overall trend does not apply to all types of crime or to all specific crimes.

1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/2000	2000/01	2001/02
1,546.6	1,543.3	1,500.9	1,487.6	1,514.4	1,613.7	1,677.2	1,659.5

Trends in violent crime follow the temporal pattern found for the overall crime trends in that after 1995/96 there was a decrease in reported violent crime incidences to that increased again from 1998/99 and reached a peak in 2000/01. In the period 2001/02, there was a slight decrease in the violent crime rate.

1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/2000	2000/01	2001/02
3,300.4	3,308.4	3,156.3	3,199.4	3,364.8	3,488.1	3,631.6	3,581.2

As regards property crime, there was a steady increase from 1994/95 onwards with small variations in the period 1996/98. The figure for the last period under observation is lower than that of the previous year but still higher than for any other year after 1994.

The trend for the commercial crime category (e.g., all types of fraud, forgery, embezzlement, misappropriation) is different from the previous two crime types: from 1994/95 there was a steady decrease in recorded commercial crime incidents with the lowest recorded rate in 2001/2002 as presented in table below.

1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
163.2	154.4	154.1	153.5	150.4	157.5	150.9	124.5

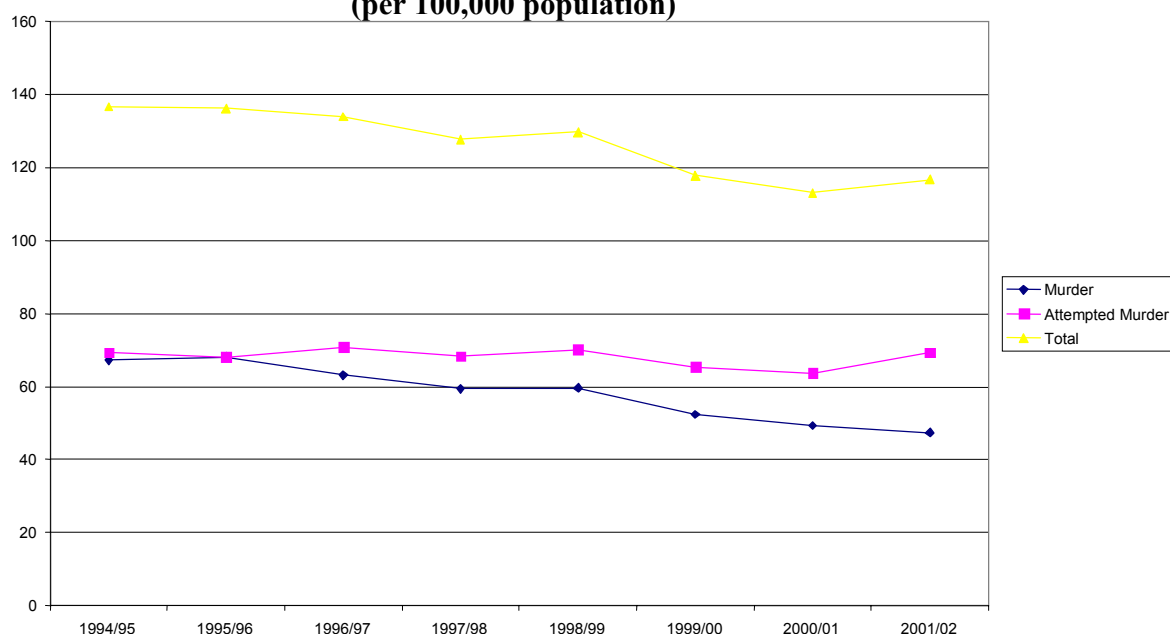
The data for murder confirms that cases of murder have been declining steadily since 1994 with a total decrease of 29.5%. It is assumed that this is partly because of declining levels of political violence in the country, but there are obviously other reasons at play. However, attempted murder has not shown such a downward trend and has remained stable over the whole period under consideration.⁷³

⁷¹ Violent crime comprises murder, attempted murder, rape, serious and common assault, aggravated robbery. It should be noted that the Annual Report, SAPS 2001/02 uses somewhat different classification. In that report, violent crime is comprised of murder, attempted murder and aggravated robbery, while “social fabric crime” includes rape, serious and common assault.

⁷² Property crime comprises housebreaking (business and residential), theft of motor vehicles, theft out/ from of motor vehicles, other thefts, other robbery, stock theft, shoplifting, arson and malicious damage to property. It should be noted that the Annual Report, SAPS 2001/02 uses somewhat different classification. In that report, “violence against property” comprises arson and malicious damage to property, while the other crimes listed above comprise “property-related crimes”.

⁷³ As with other violent crimes, murder is characterized by a higher number of instances in December. These

**Figure 19: Murder & attempted murder rates: 1994/95 - 2001/02
(per 100,000 population)**



Similar to attempted murder, serious assault and rape do not show steady declines. On the contrary, reported cases of serious assault have increased steadily over the past years, although a decrease is noted in the period 2001/2002, but still the level is higher than in any other period but for the immediately preceding ones. Common assault also shows a general upward trend to reach its peak in 2001/02.

Table 14: Serious assault rates: 1994/95 - 2001/02 (per 100,000 population)

1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
558.3	565.1	573.8	569.6	564.5	607.2	623.9	584.9

Reported cases of rape increased between 1994 and 1999 with a certain downward trend exhibited in the last two periods under consideration. This increase has been attributed to increases both in the occurrence of actual incidence of the crime and also in a greater propensity to report it to the police.⁷⁴ The latest figures suggest, however, that this trend may be stabilizing at a very high level: still one of the single highest in the world.

Table 15: Rape rates: 1994/95 - 2001/02 (per 100,000 population)

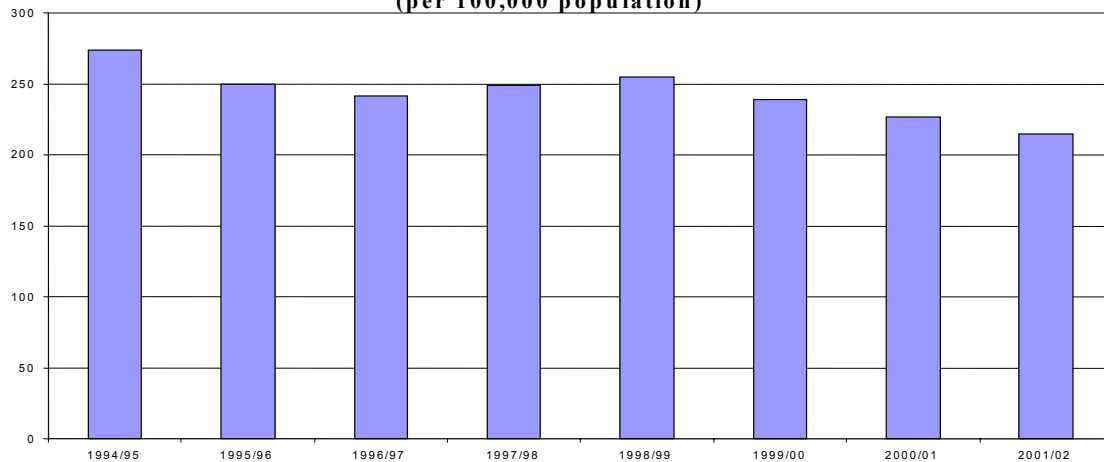
1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
113.8	124.6	126	124.8	116.8	121.4	118.6	119.4

upswings in interpersonal violent crime at the end of each year are probably related to the holiday period around Christmas and the New Year, which may be attributed to an excessive consumption of alcohol and increased visits to places of entertainment during this time of year.

⁷⁴ ODC, jointly with the Government of South Africa, has carried out a project on Violence against Women. The project established two One-Stop Out-Reach Centers in Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga, providing counseling to victims, facilitating access to justice, and raising community awareness and that of actual and potential offenders.

Figures for serious property crime show contradictory patterns with evidence of clear stabilization for some crimes and marked increases characterizing others. Of all the serious property crimes, motor vehicle theft has continued to display a stable trend. However, it should be noted that declines in the crime between 1995 and 1997 continued after 1999 with the lowest recorded rate in 2001/02.

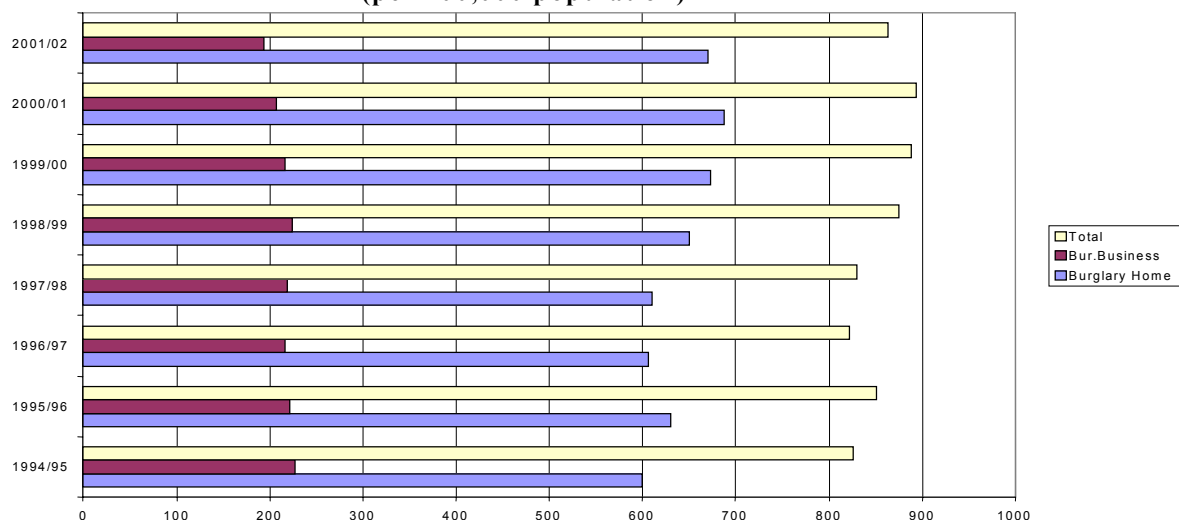
Figure 20: Motor Vehicle Theft: 1994/95 - 2001/02
(per 100,000 population)



It is possible that levels of motor vehicle theft have decreased given advanced vehicle security and increased surveillance of precincts, such as shopping areas, from where motor vehicles are often stolen.

Reported cases of residential housebreaking have shown slight variations since 1994 but generally have exhibited an upward trend. December of each year consistently shows a higher recording figure than previous months, presumably because residences are more likely to be broken into when people are away over the holiday period. On the other hand, the rates of business burglaries generally exhibited a downward trend, most probably due to security measures put in place in many business premises.

Figure 21: Burglary Rates: 1994/95 - 2001/02
(per 100,000 population)



Among current crime trends, there is great concern regarding aggravated robbery and the sub-category of vehicle hijacking. Cases of robbery with aggravating circumstances have shown a marked increase since 1994. Aggravated robbery, in its statistical expression, includes all cases of violent robbery where the assailants are armed. Thus, this also indicates the availability of firearms and their increased usage both for street crime as well as for gang or organized crime.

1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
219.5	195.5	164.0	177.2	219.9	229.2	257.7	258.5

A hijacking of cars and trucks (the majority of which occur in Gauteng), which is a sub-category of robbery with aggravating circumstances, reached its peak in the period 1998/99 and then started declining.

1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
*	*	41.3	43.0	52.0	47.0	44.1	42.5

*Disaggregated data from aggravated robbery are not available.

There is ample evidence that organized crime groups are involved both in vehicle theft and vehicle hijacking and that both crimes are increasingly becoming transnational. For example, in the period 2001/02, over 900 arrests were made and over 1,300 vehicles were seized at the 72 South African border posts. Furthermore, car hijacking was identified by SAPS as one among the top ten organized crime dimensions in South Africa. The introduction of security devices and tracking systems as well as the SAPS Vehicle Circulation System and the Department of Transport National Traffic Information System contributed to declining rates in illegal appropriations of vehicles.

7.3 Victimization Patterns

National victimization patterns⁷⁵

During 1997, 20.6% of households were victims of crime. The most common crimes experienced were burglary (7.2%) and theft of livestock (4.9%); 1.4% of households had been victimized by hijacking or attempted hijacking, and 0.5% by murder.

The picture of crime changes when the data is analysed by examining the percentage of respondents who own or have access to particular types of property. Thus, 15% of all those who own or have access to livestock suffered one or more incidents of theft; 10.9% of those who owned or had access to bicycles were victimized by theft.

⁷⁵ The first national victim survey was carried out in South Africa in 1997/1998 by Statistics South Africa.

Wealthy households were more likely to experience property crime than poorer households. Thus, 28.7% of households earning R96,000 or more per year were victimised by some form of property crime. Violent household crimes were most likely to be experienced by the category of respondents earning between R48,000 and R96,999 per year. Only a small percentage of respondents in lower income categories were victimized by such violent household crimes.

Some 15% of individual respondents reported being victimized. The most common individual crime was theft of personal property (4.8%), followed by assault (4.2%), fraud (3%), robbery with force (2.4%) and corruption (2%).

The most likely place for individuals to be victimized by crime is in their own homes. Thus, 50% of all sexual offences and 30% of all assaults took place within people's own homes. In such cases, victims are more likely than not to know the offender.

While those earning above R96,000 a year were least likely to experience violent individual crimes (0.1%), victimization is distributed fairly consistently (at an average of 6.8%) across other incomes categories. However, 21.8% of the highest income category were victims of individual non-violent crime.

Indian/Asian and White households were far more likely to have experienced non-violent household crimes (25% each of respondents respectively) than were other communities. White respondents (4.3%) were more likely to experience violent household crimes than either Indian/Asian (0.4%), Coloured (2.4%) or Black/African (2.7%) respondents.

Individual Coloured and Black/African respondents were most likely to have experienced individual violent crimes during 1997. Individual White respondents were more likely to have been victimized by non-violent individual crimes (13.7%), followed by Coloured (11.3%), Indian/Asian (8.6%) and Black/African (8.3%) respondents.

Households in Gauteng (20.3%) and the Western Cape (19.8%) were most likely to have experienced non-violent household crimes, followed by the Northern Cape (16.9%) and Mpumulanga (14.9%). The national average was 14.7%.

Violent household crimes were most common in Free State (5.6%) and Mpumulanga (4%). KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng (3.8% and 3.5% respectively) also displayed comparatively high levels of violent household crimes.

Individual violent and non-violent crimes showed a similar geographical pattern. Free State and Mpumulanga displayed the highest levels of violent individual crimes (11.8% and 10.8% respectively). The Eastern Cape (8.8%) and North West (8.8%) also showed high levels. KwaZulu-Natal (5.8%), Gauteng (4.6%) and the Western Cape (4.9%) showed comparatively lower levels.

Crimes against business

The first Survey on Crimes against Business in South Africa was carried out in 1998 (Naude, Prinsloo and Martins 1999). While it was not a national survey, it covered a representative sample of wholesale, retail and manufacturing businesses from Gauteng, the Durban metropole, in KwaZulu-Natal, the Cape Peninsula in the Western Cape and the Port Elizabeth-Uitenhage and East London areas in the Eastern Cape.

Almost 60% of companies consider crime as a serious problem, and more than half of companies report an increase in crime over the period 1995-98. Across the business sectors, the following crimes are considered as significant problems: theft of money or goods from the premises (68%), burglary (56%), employee theft (52%) and theft from motor vehicles (43%). Moreover, businesses located in built-up areas outside a city center (52%), as compared to 42% of businesses located in a town or a city center, consider crime as a serious problem in their area, and the former report the highest increase in crime (53%) over the past two to three years.

Most of the businesses (76%) have insurance coverage to compensate for financial losses caused by crime, and theft of vehicles is considered to cause the most serious financial loss. Employee theft involves higher financial damage than that by customers/clients. Security measures, such as burglar alarms (74%), entry control (67%), inspection of premises by security guards (61%), security patrols (55%), security lighting (51%) and other security measures have a positive impact on crime prevention but at a substantial financial cost to the businesses.

Business appears to be quite selective when it comes to reporting crimes to the police. It was noted that there was a higher propensity to report to the police customer theft (51%) as compared to 23% of employee theft and 30% of employee fraud. On the one hand, a significant portion of known crimes are dealt with as internal matters because of the “inconvenience, legal costs involved, minor cases, etc.”, while on the other hand, the reluctance to report to the police is based on previous experience with the police, lack of evidence and a perception of an extraordinary heavy police workload and police inability to deal with such cases. This negative attitude towards police is supported by the view that the police play a minor role in community crime prevention education and security advice to business. Only 30% of businesses had any contact with the police on crime problems and crime prevention, and most businesses (59%) consult security firms and insurance companies (39%) for advice on such matters. Crime appears to be seen by business as its “own matter” since most of the companies (71%) did not have any contact with local business chambers on crime problems, nor have they taken cooperative action against crime. It appears that, at least in 1998, the most significant business-driven anti-crime programme, “Business against Crime”, has not yet reached the majority of the business sector.

Victimization patterns in the metropolitan areas

There were four city victim surveys carried out in South Africa. Each of them used different methodologies and samples; thus, a straightforward comparison is very difficult, although an overall picture of city victimization patterns does appear. Property crimes (e.g., burglary and car theft) and violent crimes (e.g., robbery and assault) pose the greatest risk for urban residents.

Johannesburg

The ICVS was carried out in the Johannesburg area in 1992, 1996 and 2000 (Naude et. al 1999; Zvekic and Alvazzi del Frate 1995). As regards the last survey (2000), theft of vehicles (85%), theft of a motorcycle (82%), sexual offences (78%), burglary with entry (77%) and robbery (74%) were considered the most serious crimes. On average, some 44% of crimes were reported to the police with the highest reporting rate for car theft (91%), car hijacking (74%) and burglary with entry (62%). The reporting rates for other crimes varied significantly, with consumer fraud (9%), corruption (26%) and personal theft (29%) having the lowest reporting rates. Four in ten sexual incidents (39%) were reported to the police.

Personal crimes with elements of violence (robbery, assaults/threats, sexual offences) represent one third of the total victimization experienced by the citizens of Johannesburg (34% in 1992-96 and 30% in 2000). This is followed by burglary and attempted burglary which equaled 20% of total victimization experience in the period 1992-96 and increased to 26% in 2000. A similar pattern of increase is found with thefts of personal property (19% in 2000 as compared with 15% in the period 1992-96). On the other hand, theft of cars and from cars, car vandalism and bicycle theft have slightly decreased over the period 1992-2000 from 19% to 16% (car theft), from 8% to 6% (car vandalism) and from 5% to 4% (bicycle theft).

Overall, from 1992 to 2000, crime rates have remained fairly stable. In fact, theft from cars decreased considerably in the case of vehicle owners (about 6%), assault decreased by about 2% and corruption by about 4%.

However, fear of crime appears to have increased over this same period. In 1992, some 15% felt very safe walking in their residential areas while 44% felt very unsafe. In 1996, the "feeling safe" category decreased to 12% and subsequently to 9% in 2000, while the "unsafe" category decreased to 39% in 1996 and then increased to 53% in 2000. Fear of crime and insecurity appear to be of the major concerns to the citizens, indicating a need to focus crime prevention and security programmes on this important aspect of the quality of life. Coupled with data regarding the location of crime occurrence ("home", "near home", "area where the victim lives"), this points out that a more focused and visible crime prevention and policing are needed.

On the other hand, attitudes towards police have changed for the better. This is indicated by two measures: first, the rate of reported crimes, and second, the evaluation of police work. As regards the average levels of reporting to the police, these have significantly increased from 34% in 1992, to 42% in 1996, and 44% in 2000, representing an increase of 10% in the period from 1992 to 2000. Similarly, a bit more than one quarter of the respondents in 1992 and 1996 thought that police were doing a good job in controlling crime, while this positive evaluation has increased to 14% stating that police was doing a very good job and 32% stating that it was doing a fairly good job.

Durban

In the Durban metropolitan area, burglary and robbery were the most prevalent crimes: 11% of those surveyed said they were a victim of burglary in the past year (1997), and 10% said the same about robbery (Robertshaw 2001). Levels of assault (6%) and car theft (5%) were similar in the city, while 2% experienced a car hijacking and 1% sexual assault and 1% sexual harassment.

Overall, Black/African and Coloured people faced the greatest risk of victimization, followed by Indians/Asians and Whites. Women were more at risk of crime than men. Those aged between 16 and 25 years, followed by those over 61 years of age, faced greater chances of victimization than people in other age categories.

The risk of victimization varied most according to ethnicity and category of crime. Black/African people were most at risk of burglary, followed by Whites. Vehicle theft was more likely to be experienced by Whites, followed by Indians/Asians and Coloureds. Coloureds and Indians/Asians were more at risk of violent property crimes such as robbery and hijacking. Other violent crimes such as assault and sexual offences were more likely to be reported by Black/African people than other city residents.

Pretoria

In the Pretoria metropolitan area, the broad crime profile was similar to Durban, although crime levels were higher for all offences (Louw 1998). In 1997, 25% of those surveyed said they experienced a burglary. Car theft was the next most prevalent crime, with 21% reporting this theft to the survey. Robbery was experienced by 20% of respondents, and 15% said they had been assaulted. Car hijacking was also higher than in Durban, with 6% reporting having been victimised. A similar percentage of respondents were sexually assaulted (2%) in Pretoria as in Durban.

Overall, Blacks/Africans and Indians/Asians in Pretoria were more at risk of victimization than other ethnic groups. Indians/Asians and Blacks/Africans were more at risk of burglary than Whites and Coloureds. Blacks/Africans and Indians/Asians also were much more likely to experience robbery (17% each) than were Whites and Coloureds (9% each). Black/African people in Pretoria were also much more at risk of assault (15%) than Indians/Asians (4%), Whites (3%), or Coloureds (3%). The risk of car hijacking was similar across ethnic groups. Car theft, as in Durban, was more prevalent among the wealthier ethnic groups: 23% of Indians/Asians reported this crime to the survey, followed by 20% of Whites, 16% of Coloureds and only 12% of Blacks/Africans. In terms of other demographic variables, men were more at risk than women, and people between the ages of 25 and 39 years were more at risk than those in other age groups.

Cape Town

In the Cape Town metropolitan area, the broad crime profile was similar to the other metropolitan areas surveyed (Camerer et al. 1998). Burglary was the most prevalent crime, with 25% of people saying they were victims of burglary, followed by 24% for robbery, and 17% for vehicle theft. Fourteen percent of respondents experienced assault, and 2% reported being a victim of a car hijacking.

Overall, Coloureds were most at risk of victimization, followed by Whites and Blacks/Africans. In terms of other demographic variables, people between the ages of 21 and 35 years and those between 36 and 60 years were most at risk, followed by those between 16 and 20 years, and people over 60 years.

7.4 Issues of Specific Concern

Organized crime

Prior to 1970, criminal organizations in South Africa tended to be relatively unsophisticated, and very few had international contacts. During the 1970s and 1980s, however, the police increasingly diverted resources toward suppressing political opposition rather than combating crime. Organized crime expanded unchecked and became more sophisticated, increasing cross-border trade in stolen vehicles and narcotics. The nature of South Africa's transition since 1994, particularly the weakening of state structures, opening up of borders, growth in international trade and tourism, and uncertainty among members of the police, has led to an increase in organized crime (Gastrow 1998).

South Africa, with its air, road and sea links to the rest of the world and well functioning telecommunication facilities, provides organized crime groups with a well developed infrastructure to transport illegal goods through, into and out of its territory. In addition, South Africa is both a supplier of resources for organized crime and a market for it. South Africa has gold, diamonds, ivory, rhino horn, abalone, and motor vehicles, while it presents a market for illegal firearms and drugs (CIAC 1999).

The South African Police Service has developed an organized crime threat assessment methodology. The most recent data for the period June – September 2001 reveal the following characteristics:

Total number of organized crime threat groups:	238
Total number of individuals involved:	3,845
Top ten organized crime dimensions:	
-- Drugs	-- Corruption
-- Theft of motor vehicles	-- Illegal weapons and ammunition
-- Armed robbery	-- Other theft related
-- Fraud	-- Diamond and gold offences
-- Car hijacking	-- Murder related

As regards their areas of operation, the number of organized crime groups that are active at each level are as follows:

Local	47
Provincial	59
National	67
African	35
International	65

A total of 1,834 persons were arrested for their involvement in crime syndicates, and 343 members of the organized crime groups were prosecuted.

This data clearly shows that organized crime in South Africa has to be contextualized both with respect to organized crime in the region of Southern Africa as well as in the broader framework of international organized crime. Thus, the local organized crime groups are situated in a web of regional and international organized crime players. A number of the organized crime groups operating in South Africa have regional or international links. However, the distinction between the “indigenous” and “transnational” organized crime groups is not a clear one (Gastrow 2001). According to the police of SADC countries, many “indigenous” groups are very active in cross-border criminal activity. As regards South Africa, both groups are involved in very similar activities, the only exceptions being the somewhat more specialization of the indigenous criminal groups in diamonds and gold smuggling, and that of transnational organized crime groups in illegal weapons trafficking (Gastrow, 2001). Russian and Chinese groups are operating in South Africa, together with many West African groups. Nigerian organized criminals in South Africa helped create a serious cocaine and heroin problem that did not exist a few years ago. Overall, it appears that there has been a major increase in the number of organized criminals operating in South Africa during the past five years (Gastrow 2001).

Corruption

Corruption has long been a problem among the South African and related Bantustan administrations created under apartheid rule. Since 1994, achieving good governance and fighting corruption have become two of the most important challenges for the country. However, there appears to be much speculation and perception that corruption has in fact increased during the period of political and economical transition.

The fight against corruption is a top priority for the South African government. Since 1994, numerous anti-corruption programmes and projects have been put in place by the new government. Recent initiatives on corruption have focused on promoting accountability, transparency and the rule of law; good governance; a free press to report to the public on corrupt practices; and the establishment of government agencies to identify corrupt practices and bring perpetrators to justice. Indeed, South Africa has 12 government agencies which have anti-corruption within their mandates. This creates problems in coordination. The Government of South Africa adopted the Public Sector Anti-Corruption Strategy, including the creation of the Anti-corruption Coordinating Committee, to facilitate the coordination among various government agencies. Recently, a National Forum against Corruption, composed of the government, business and civil society, has been established, for coordinated multi-sectoral approach to curbing corruption. The new draft on Prevention of Corruption Bill has been tabled at the Parliament.

In March 2001, the Government signed an agreement with ODC within the framework of the UN Global Programme against Corruption to provide assistance to the various government departments and provinces to prevent, detect and fight corruption and to promote integrity, transparency, accountability and the rule of law. Within the framework of this programme, a comprehensive assessment of corruption and anti-corruption in South Africa is being carried out.

Trafficking in persons

In line with the South African Aliens Control Act, 1991, the Department of Home Affairs is responsible for investigating the problem of trafficking in persons. No data was available from the Department with regard to this issue. However, two recent reports from a South African NGO focused on the problem of trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation (Molo Songololo 2000a, Molo Songololo 2000b). According to the reports, trafficking operations take two forms, namely cross-border and in-country, with the modus operandi differing according to the origins of the women and children and the origins of the traffickers involved. While traffickers may be single operators, they are more likely to operate within one of the following main syndicates: Chinese Mafia from South East Asia and in Swaziland, Bulgarian syndicates from Eastern Europe, Russian Mafia, and African criminal groups from mainly Angola, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo. While South Africa has no specific legislation prohibiting the trafficking in persons, provision is made for the prosecution of offences related to trafficking and some of the exploitative and abusive practices in the sex industry.

Proliferation of illegal firearms

Violent crime is accentuated by the availability of firearms in the society. According to the police Central Firearms Registry, 3.5 million South Africans legally possess 4.2 million firearms, and it is estimated that a similar number of illicit firearms are circulating in the country. Most firearms used to commit crimes originate from theft or loss of private and state owned firearms.

The theft of firearms has doubled since 1994. Murder with a firearm increased to 49% of all murders in 1999, while robbery with a firearm increased to 85% of all serious robberies. Three quarters of firearms victims are young men aged 18-39, and 85% of firearm perpetrators are young men aged 16-39.

As a response to this situation, the SAPS developed a four-pillar firearm programme within the framework of a Firearm Strategy which is “implementation friendly” and aims at establishing an effective firearm control system and eradicating the proliferation of firearms used to commit crimes.

Crimes against women and children

Violence against women and children is endemic to South Africa. In 2000, over 52,000 rapes and attempted rapes were reported, while for the period January-September 2001, more than 37,000 cases were reported. In particular, the level of reported rape is among the single highest in the world, and is of great concern to the government. The South African Police Service disclosed that in the period January-September 2001 more than 15,000 children (persons under the age of 18) were raped, while more than 1,800 girls were the victims of indecent assault. In the same period, almost 9,000 had become victims of violence, and 920 were murdered (with more than 1,600 victims of an attempted murder). In addition, the country experienced problems of in-country trafficking of women and children, mainly from rural areas and informal settlements to urban areas into the sex industry. Violence against women is typical in rural areas.

There appears to be a structural relationship between, on the one hand, female economic dependence and violence and abuse, and on the other hand, the prevailing social and cultural attitudes which generate conditions where violence against women is or becomes acceptable and tolerated. In 2001, cases of infants, as young as five months old, being raped and gang raped have been reported in the media, sparking both national and international outrage.

Rural violence

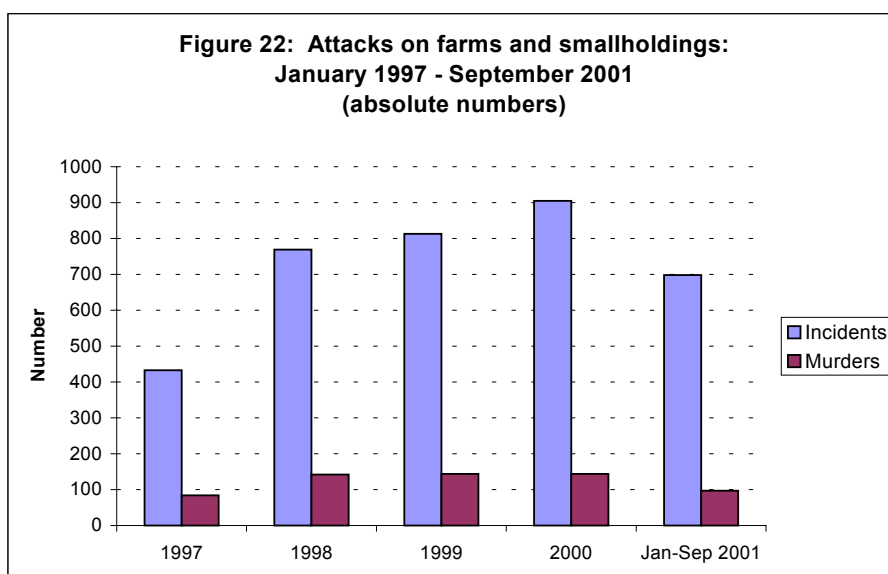
Violence in rural areas is an issue of great concern in South Africa. It is not only a security issue but also very much so a developmental and political issue. Poverty is concentrated in rural areas and, along the land ownership issue, is considered one of the developmental (and political) priorities. Broadly speaking, four crime issues are of particular importance: crimes committed on farms and smallholdings; rural women victimization; stock theft, and violence and crime related to witch-hunting. The Government is committed to prevent farm violence and provide for developmental security of the rural communities.⁷⁶

Since a large number of farmers possess firearms, attacks are often aimed at obtaining these weapons. Government acknowledges the importance of getting the problem under control, since it views a stable and productive farming community as an extension of the state's visible authority and order in rural areas (CIAC 1999). With the complaint of many farmers that rural violence that targets the commercial farming sector is aimed at removing them from the land, Government recognizes the acute political sensitivity of the issue.

The nature and scale of stock theft varies across South Africa (with high rates in Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Free State, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, North West and Northern Cape). It is also one of the most commonly experienced crimes in South Africa. Its economic impact is severe regardless of the scale of farming. In the period 2001/02, the total value of R77,184,555 of stolen stock was seized. Many of the individual perpetrators themselves are unemployed and state that the primary motive was to take care of family needs and for domestic consumption. Thus, it appears to be a poverty-driven crime. This is not the case when an organized crime group is involved. In such cases there, is a clear rural-urban network for profit being exploited.

Witchcraft and related ritualistic practices have deep historical roots and form an intrinsic part of the belief systems in many rural communities. However, the specific practice of witch-purging and witch-hunting take the forms of banishment, assault and murder. More often than not, the victims are women, while the perpetrators are young men. These are among the most difficult crimes to investigate and prevent.

⁷⁶ SAPS and UNDP/ODC organized a national conference on "Rural Safety and Security: A Shared Responsibility for Development" from 23 to 25 October 2001.



Source: CIAC.

Crimes related to precious materials and endangered species

South Africa is rich in precious materials such as diamonds and gold, as well as in wildlife (flora and fauna). The mining industry was for a long time a driving economic sector in developmental terms, while the richness in bio-diversity and game parks provides for ever increasing opportunities for income-generating tourism and entertainment. Such natural opportunities linked with those related to the economy and transport infrastructure facilitate illegal activities. Involvement of organized crime in those illegal activities and its transnational nature has been also on increase, representing one of the top ten organized crime dimensions in South Africa.

In the period 2001/02, over 300 persons were arrested for the illegal possession, purchase and theft of unpolished or uncut diamonds. More than 1,100 persons were arrested for the illegal possession and/or theft of unwrought gold and other precious metals. In the same period, 339 kg. of ivory, 36 kg. of rhino horn, 975 kg. of flora cycads and 22,623 kg. of marine cases (abalone and others) were seized for a total value of R 16,669,330.

Policing the borders

The Border Police cover 53 land, 10 air and 9 sea border posts. In 2001, numerous arrests were made at the border posts, including 14,369 illegal migrants and 90 persons involved in aiding and abetting the smuggling of illegal migrants, 108 persons for false documents, and 108 for illegal firearms.

Over 1,300 vehicles, 250 firearms, 62,000 units of abalone and 52,000 units of crayfish were seized at the border posts. However, the majority of seizures were related to illicit substances such as dagga, mandrax, ecstasy, and cocaine.

Within the framework of the activities of the Southern African Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (SARPCCO) and/or on a bilateral basis, a number of successful joint anti-crime and cross-border operations were undertaken targeting the smuggling of stolen vehicles and trafficking in drugs and firearms (e.g., Operation Voyager, Operation Makhuku, Operation Rachael).

Police safety

An average of some 200 police officers were killed in South Africa each year from 1994 until 2001: 265 in 1994, 224 in 1997, 204 in 1999 and 176 in 2000/01. In 2001/02, 135 were killed. This figure is high and of great concern to the Government. Some 40% of police officers were killed while on duty. A Directorate Public Safety was established, and it has developed preventive measures and programmes with the aim of reducing the risk of police officers being killed.