

GREATER PRETORIA (SOUTH AFRICA)

C.M.B. Naudé, M.M. Grobbelaar and J.J. Nesor¹

Description of sample

A non-probability sample was drawn in the Greater Pretoria region in the Transvaal. In total 6.4% of the South African population live in this area. This region was selected because it is reasonably representative of the population and is comparatively free of political unrest. South Africa is still a fragmented society in terms of residential areas as the law regulating separate living areas, the Group Areas Act, was only abolished in 1991. Although living areas are now integrated, 50 respondents were randomly selected in the following residential areas to intercept specific problems among the population groups:

- Eersterus township (pop. 29,000) - predominantly coloured;
- Atteridgeville township (pop. 184,000) - predominantly black;
- Laudium township (pop. 22,000) - predominantly Asian;
- Eastlynn (pop. 4,379); Hatfield (pop. 3,645); Waterkloof (pop. 3,869) suburbs - predominantly white.

The townships of Eersterus, Atteridgeville and Laudium were sub-divided in terms of low (17 respondents), middle (17 respondents) and high (16 respondents) income areas. In Eersterus and Laudium a street centrally situated in each income area was randomly selected. From here, a household was then randomly selected in each street-block to make up the required number of respondents.

Atteridgeville has few street-blocks, therefore, every tenth house was randomly selected using the same method applied in Eersterus and Atteridgeville. The same random sampling method applied for Eersterus and Laudium was employed in Eastlynn (17 respondents), a low income white area; Hatfield (17 respondents), a middle income white area; and Waterkloof (16 respondents), which is a high income white area.

Age and gender distribution of the respondents is as follows:

Age	16-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
	8.5%	38.5%	30.5%	12.5%	5.5%	5.0%
Gender	Male			Female		
	46.5%			53.5%		

¹ The researchers, of the Department of Criminology, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa, would like to thank the Department of Criminology for providing the financial assistance to undertake this pilot study, especially since funds are severely limited and this research was not budgeted for. A special word of thanks too to all the colleagues who helped to finalise this project.

Social class by area

- Higher status residential area	32.5%
- Middle status residential area	36.0%
- Lower status residential area	31.5%

Data collection techniques

Interview method

As South Africa is a developing country, the face-to-face interview method was used as many South Africans do not possess telephones.

Recruiting and training of interviewers

An *ad hoc* interview team was recruited which mostly consisted of graduate criminology students (males and females). The different communities were interviewed by interviewers from among their own population group in order to establish confidence and trust in a population which is still very much divided along racial lines.

All interviewers received intensive training by the research co-ordinators which included the definition of the purpose of the study, the sampling method, how to approach respondents, who to interview, clarification of key concepts such as robbery, pick-pocketing, attempted rape, indecent assault, offensive sexual behaviour, the handling of sensitive questions, the confidentiality of the data, etc. The interviewers also had to conduct a simulated interview with fellow interviewers and family members at home to improve their interviewing skills.

Collection of the data

The data were collected between 14 July and 4 August 1992. Interviews were held after normal working hours and in both official languages, namely English and Afrikaans (the questionnaire was translated into Afrikaans for this purpose).

Problems encountered

The following problems were encountered. Firstly, there are nine black ethnic groups in South Africa each speaking their own language which includes many dialects. Some of the disadvantaged blacks who had recently migrated to the urban area had difficulty in understanding questions put to them in the official languages; consequently, the black interviewer had to translate some of the questions for the sake of clarity which was rather time consuming. In the main survey it may be necessary to supply a glossary, translating and defining key terms in the principal black languages. Secondly, many respondents were hesitant or unwilling to supply information as regards household income. In black households, where more than one family often share a home, the exact household income was often unknown by the interviewee. Thirdly, female respondents were not always willing to discuss sexual offences. This was a problem mainly among the Indian community. Finally,

in South Africa there is a certain amount of antagonism towards the police in many communities. Thus, section B of the questionnaire, which invites respondents to phone the local police commissioner in order to confirm that the survey is undertaken for the United Nations, had to be deleted. For this purpose, the police was substituted with the Department of Criminology of the University of South Africa which, being a multiracial university since its inception in 1916, commands high credibility among most South African communities. Mention of the United Nations also created problems as many South Africans of all races regard the organisation as biased or not involved enough in South Africa's internal problems, past and present.

Some recommendations

In the case of question 9, a specific "yes/no" question to determine whether the respondent was, in fact, a victim of any crime over the last five years would make more advanced statistical analysis easier.

It is further recommended that column 72 should not be exceeded as the computer screen can only reflect the data up to column 72; going beyond requires the data to be shifted to the left of the screen which is confusing when interpreting certain facts.

An interviewer sheet defining key concepts such as robbery, pick-pocketing, rape, attempted rape, sexual assault and sexually offensive behaviour would provide more uniform and reliable research results.

The minimum age of 16 for the respondents should be increased to 18 years as respondents under 18 give rise to problems in certain circumstances.

Response rates and re-contacting

The total sample number is 200. Refusals amounted to 8 and 200 interviews were completed. In order to save time, re-contacting respondents was excluded for the pilot study. The recommended sampling technique was, therefore, amended so as to interview the first person who was over 16 years of age whose birthday came next. When the occupants of the targeted household were not at home, the interviewers were instructed to select the home closest to the targeted household where dwellers were present. In the case of a refusal the next sample household was approached until the required number of 200 respondents had been reached. In the main survey the correct sampling procedure will be followed.

Victimisation rates over five years

Vehicle-related crimes (all respondents)

According to Table 1, theft from a car (26.5%) had the highest incidence followed by theft of a bicycle (21.6%). Car vandalism amounted to 19% and 18% were victims of car theft.

Vehicle-related crimes (owners)

In terms of owners, theft of a bicycle amounted to 39.8% followed by theft from a car (35.1%), car vandalism (25.2%), theft of a car (23.8%) and theft of a motorcycle (20%).

Other crimes

Based on all the respondents, 26.5% had been the victims of burglary with entry, 25% were the victims of personal theft, 20.5% were the victims of assault/threat, whereas 11.5% were victims of robbery.

Of the female respondents, 18.7% were victims of sexual incidents.

Victimisation rates over one year

Vehicle-related crimes (all respondents)

In the case of victimisation rates over one year for all the respondents, theft from a car (10.5%) had the highest incidence followed by theft of a bicycle (7.5%), theft of a car (5.5%) and car vandalism (5.5%) (Table 2).

Vehicle-related crimes (owners)

Victimisation rates in terms of owners amounted to 13.9% for bicycle theft; 13.9% for theft from a car; 7.3% for theft of a car and 7.3% for car vandalism. No motorcycle theft was registered.

Other crimes

A total of 7.5% females were victims of sexual incidents over a period of one year.

In the case of all respondents for 1991, 5% were the victims of robbery, whereas 9% were the victims of personal theft. A further 9% were victims of burglary with entry and 7% of attempted burglary. Victims of consumer fraud amounted to 23.5%, while 4.5% were the victims of assault/threat. Corruption had an incidence of 7%.

Crimes reported to the police

Table 3 presents crimes reported to the police. Theft of a car had the highest reporting rate, namely 94.4%, followed by burglary with entry 88.7%. Theft from a car also had a high reporting rate (79.2%). The reporting rate for car vandalism was 57.9%, whereas it amounted to 52.2% for both robbery and attempted burglary. Theft of a bicycle had a reporting rate of 46.5% and theft of a motorcycle 33.3%.

In the case of crimes against the person, sexual incidents had the highest reporting rate, namely 50%, followed by assault/threat (39%) and personal theft (38%).

Comments

As compared to the USA, Canada, Australia, Britain and other European countries², South Africa has a high crime rate with regard to both property crimes and crimes against the person. Political instability, conflict and discrimination, coupled with a severe economic recession (which, in turn, has induced a high level of unemployment) are probably major contributory factors.

As in most countries, the theft of valuable property was almost always reported to the police, whereas, property of lesser value - as well as crimes against the person - were less frequently reported to the police. The reporting rate for sexual incidents (50%) was, nevertheless, fairly high.

Reasons for not reporting

In the case of car theft, only one respondent indicated that he "didn't dare" report the theft to the police, one solved the crime and one reported that the theft was not serious enough. Reasons for not reporting crimes are presented in Table 4.

Crime seriousness

According to Table 5, sexual incidents (80%) and assault/threat (75.6%) were regarded as the most serious, followed by burglary with entry (77.4%) and theft of a car (69.4%) respectively. Theft of motorcycle was rated as very serious by 66.7% of the respondents, followed by the following crimes: robbery (65.2%), car vandalism (60.5%), personal theft (60%), theft from a car (47.2%) and theft of a bicycle (23.3%).

Victim support

Most of the victims were supported by family (66.5%) and friends (57.8%). Support by neighbours and the police was received by 30.1% and 21.4% of the respondents respectively. Assistance by religious organisations (13.3%), social welfare agencies (9.2%) and specialised victim support groups (4.6%) had a low incidence.

Concerning special agencies to help the victims of crime, 50.9% of the respondents felt they would be useful, whereas 29.5% thought they would not be useful and 19.7% did not know.

Attitudes towards the police

Many respondents (51.8%) were not satisfied with the way the police dealt with their complaints. The major dissatisfaction was that the police did not do enough (18.7%), whereas 16.5% thought the police were uninterested. Other problems cited were the fact that the offender was not apprehended (15.1%), that the property was not recovered (15.8%) and that the police failed to keep them informed of the progress made (14.4%).

² As reported in the 1989 International Crime Survey.

As regards police control, only 31.5% of the respondents reported that they saw a police patrol at least once a week in their street, whereas 21% asserted that they saw a patrol only once a month and 25.5% said the police patrolled their streets less than once a month. Most of the respondents (74%) would like to see increased police patrols in their street and only 17% thought it was sufficient (1.5% thought patrols should pass less often and 7.5% did not know).

It is evident that the majority of the respondents would like to see an improvement in the way the police handle their complaints, as well as an increase in police patrols in their streets.

Fear of crime

Only 24.5% of the respondents were of the opinion that the people in their area helped each other, 36% felt that most people showed a lack of community spirit, and 37.5% thought their area was a combination of the afore-mentioned two aspects. A total of 38.2% respondents said they felt fairly safe walking in their area after dark, whereas 26.6% felt very unsafe (only 12.6% felt very safe and 22.6% felt a bit unsafe).

Crime prevention

Most of the respondents installed window/door grills (64.5%) and door locks (47.5%) or kept watchdogs (47%). Only 34% had a high fence and 25% installed a burglar alarm. As many as 40.7% also asked somebody to watch their homes when nobody is there (usually the home-help) and 20.6% thought the neighbours watched anyway. Only 2% cited caretakers which can probably be ascribed to the fact that most South Africans live in houses (see Table 6).

A total of 106 firearms (some owned more than one firearm) were owned by the respondents and 42.5% had insurance against burglary.

Attitudes towards punishment

As regards sentencing, when asked what type of sanction they thought should be imposed on a recidivist burglar who on this occasion had stolen a colour TV set, most respondents were in favour of a prison sentence (65.5%), whereas 19.0% were in favour of a community service sentence and 8.5% favoured a fine.

Almost half (42.9%) of the respondents did not know what term of imprisonment would be appropriate. Of those who did venture an opinion 28% suggested a prison sentence of 11-15 years and 28.6% a life sentence! In order of priority other prison recommendations were: two years 20.2%, five years 15.3%, three years 15.3%, 6 months to one year 13.7%, one year 10.5%, 2-6 months 9.7%, four years 9.7%, six to ten years 5.6%.

It is evident that most South Africans are heavily biased in favour of a prison sentence for even less serious crimes such as the example cited. This position can probably be ascribed to the high crime-rate which has aroused in the population a desperate urge - albeit unrealistic - to protect themselves and their property.

TABLES

Table 1: Prevalence victimisation rates (5 years)*

	Victimisation rate (%)
Theft of car	18.0
Theft from car	26.5
Car vandalism	19.0
Theft of motorcycle	1.5
Theft of bicycle	21.6
(Owners)	
Theft of car	23.8
Theft from car	35.1
Car vandalism	25.2
Theft of motorcycle	20.0
Theft of bicycle	39.8
Burglary with entry	26.5
Attempted burglary	22.5
Robbery	11.5
Personal theft	25.0
Sexual incidents	18.7
Assault/threat	20.5

* Prevalence - percentage of respondents who have been victims of a specific form of crime once or more.

Table 2: Prevalence victimisation rates (1 year)*

	Victimisation rate (%)
Theft of car	5.5
Theft from car	10.5
Car vandalism	5.5
Theft of motorcycle	0.0
Theft of bicycle	7.5
(Owners)	
Theft of car	7.3
Theft from car	13.9
Car vandalism	7.3
Theft of motorcycle	0.0
Theft of bicycle	13.9
Burglary with entry	9.0
Attempted burglary	7.0
Robbery	5.0
Personal theft	9.0
Sexual incidents	7.5
Assault/threat	4.5
Consumer fraud	23.5
Corruption	7.0

* Prevalence - percentage of respondents who have been victims of a specific form of crime once or more.

Table 3: Reported crimes

	%
Theft of car	94.4
Theft from car	79.2
Car vandalism	57.9
Theft of motorcycle	33.3
Theft of bicycle	46.5
Burglary with entry	88.7
Attempted burglary	52.2
Robbery	52.2
Personal theft	38.0
Sexual incidents	50.0
Assault/threat	39.0

Table 4: Reasons for not reporting*

	Theft of car %	Theft from car %	Car vandalism %	Theft of motorcycle %	Theft of bicycle %	Burglary with entry %	Robbery %	Personal theft %	Sexual incidents %	Assault/threat %
Not serious enough	100.0	20.0	31.3		5.0	50.0		23.3	20.0	8.0
Solved it myself	100.0	10.0	6.3		10.0			20.0	10.0	40.0
Inappropriate for police			31.3		4.0	16.7		33.3	10.0	28.0
Other authorities		10.0	6.3					16.7	20.0	20.0
My family solved it		20.0	6.3		15.0	16.7		3.3	30.0	16.0
No insurance		20.0	18.8		35.0	16.7		6.7	10.0	4.0
Police could do nothing		10.0	25.0		30.0	16.7		30.0	40.0	20.0
Police won't do anything			6.3		30.0	33.3		13.3	20.0	28.0
Fear/dislike police			6.3		25.0			3.3	20.0	12.0
Didn't dare	100.0	10.0						10.0	10.0	36.0
Other reasons		10.0						10.0		8.0
Don't know		10.0			10.0					4.0

* Percentages calculated on victims who said they had not reported the last incident of each type of crime to the police - multiple answers possible.

Table 5: Crime seriousness*

	Theft of car %	Theft from car %	Car vandalism %	Theft of motorcycle %	Theft of bicycle %	Burglary with entry %	Robbery %	Personal theft %	Sexual incidents %	Assault/threat %
Very serious	69.4	47.2	60.5	66.7	23.3	77.4	65.2	60.0	80.0	75.6
Fairly serious	30.6	41.5	18.4	33.3	51.2	15.1	34.8	22.0	10.0	12.2
Not serious	0.0	11.3	21.1	0.0	25.5	7.5	0.0	18.0	10.0	12.2

* Percentage based on victims of specific crimes.

Table 6: Crime prevention measures*

	%
Installed burglar alarm	25.0
Installed door locks	47.5
Installed window/door grills	64.5
Maintain watchdogs	47.0
High fence	34.0
House has a caretaker	2.0
None of these	
Others	8.0
Ask somebody to watch home	40.7
Neighbours watch anyway	20.6
Possession of firearms	106.0
House is insured against burglary	42.5

* Percentages based on total sample of respondents.

