

CHAPTER 12

FEAR OF CRIME

Key points

- Nearly two-thirds of respondents (61%) felt unsafe in their areas after dark.
- Fear of crime is low in Dar es Salaam compared to South African cities.
- Women, young people between 15-25 years, those with the least education and those living in new and established suburbs felt least safe after dark in their areas of residence.
- Two-thirds (62%) said they thought crime had increased compared to previous years.
- People living in new and established suburbs were twice as likely to say they thought crime had increased than residents in the inner city or rural settlements. These perceptions may indicate how crime levels are changing in the city.
- 56% of people accurately estimated that housebreaking and theft followed by mugging (30%) were the most common crimes in Dar es Salaam. These were also the two types of crime feared by most people in the city.

Dealing with perceptions of crime, particularly anxiety and fear of crime, is as important as reducing crime levels. Fear of crime affects people's quality of life and can also have negative economic and political consequences. It can also affect people's willingness to interact and work with government, particularly the police, but also with local government crime prevention practitioners.

Public perceptions of crime are rarely based on statistical information about crime levels or the risk of crime. Instead, factors like actual victimisation, general impressions of the city environment, the media, interaction with colleagues, friends and family, perceptions about government's ability to protect people and the extent to which people feel helpless against crime, determine public perceptions.

In order to assess the fear of crime, both victims and non-victims in Dar es Salaam were asked:

- how safe they felt walking in their area during the day and after dark;
- which crimes occur most often in their area; and
- which crimes they fear the most.

Feelings of safety in areas of residence

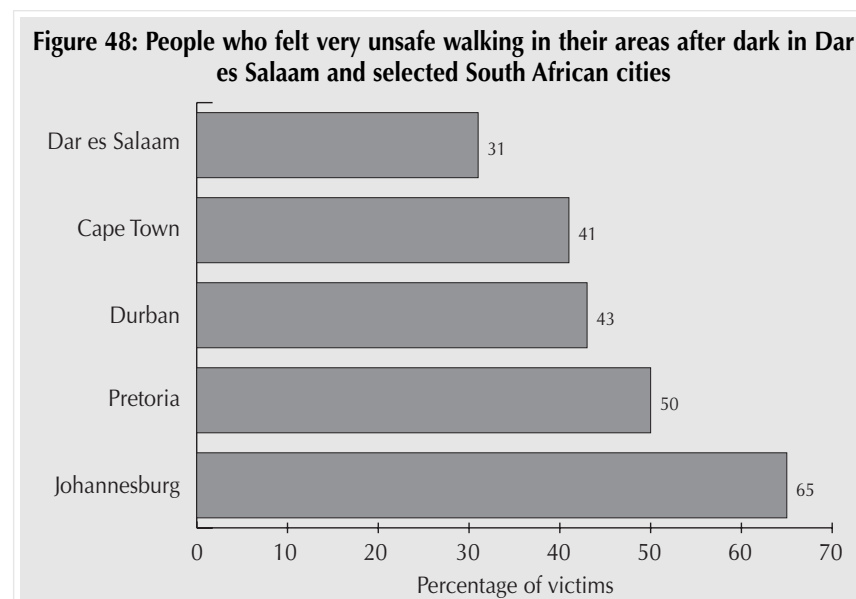
The vast majority of people (94%) in the city felt safe walking in their areas during the day. Only 6% said they felt unsafe. Not surprisingly, the opposite was true after dark: 61% felt unsafe walking in their neighbourhoods and 38% felt safe (table 13).

	During the day (%)	After dark (%)
Very safe	54	9
Fairly safe	40	29
A bit unsafe	4	30
Very unsafe	2	31
Total	100	100

This trend – for people to feel safer during the day than after dark – is common throughout the world. Compared to South African cities, the fear of crime is low in Dar es Salaam. In Johannesburg where crime levels and the fear of crime were the highest of all South African cities, as many as two-thirds of people felt very unsafe walking in their neighbourhoods after dark.⁸ This can be compared to 31% in Dar es Salaam. Even in Cape Town – the city where South Africans felt most safe – anxiety about crime was higher than in Dar es Salaam (figure 48).

Fear of crime does not affect everyone to the same extent. It is likely to be the highest among those people who think they have the greatest chance of victimisation, but also among those who worry the most about the consequences of crime, whether psychological, social, physical or economic. Typically, women, the aged and the poor fear crime the most. These trends have been illustrated by similar victim surveys in South Africa and abroad.⁹ In Dar es Salaam, this trend is clearly evident for gender only.

A quarter of men (25%) said they felt very unsafe in their area after dark, compared to 37% of women. When compared across age categories, it was surprising that

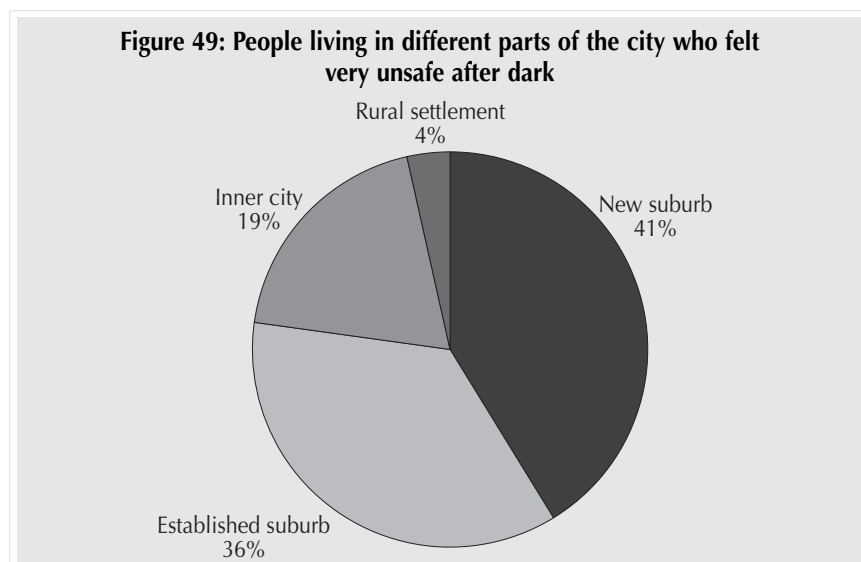


those over 40 years of age were least likely to feel very unsafe after dark: 29% said this was the case compared to 30% of those between 26-40 years and 37% of people aged between 15-25 years. Thus, contrary to the trend elsewhere, the youngest people in Dar es Salaam fear crime the most.

Other demographic variables were also significant. Those with no education or very little education tended to feel less safe than those with more education: 35% with no schooling or primary schooling only felt very unsafe after dark compared to 32% with a secondary school qualification and 17% of respondents with a post-secondary school qualification.

People living in suburbs were also much more likely to feel unsafe than those living in the inner city or rural settlements (figure 49). This is probably because people in suburbs are wealthier and thus more at risk of property crime than those living in other parts of the city. In addition, the survey also shows that these residents were much more likely than those in other parts of the city to believe that crime in their area had increased compared to previous years. This perception would fuel the fear of crime.

In South African cities, by comparison, people living in suburbs often felt more safe than other city residents. In Pretoria, for example, 70% of informal settlement



residents and 64% of township residents felt very unsafe after dark, compared to only 42% of those living in the suburbs.¹⁰ This can be attributed to the high levels of violent crime in South African cities and the fact that people living in the poorer parts of the city were much more at risk of violence than their wealthier counterparts. In addition, the capacity of the police was greater in wealthier areas where residents also have the added benefit of being able to afford elaborate private security systems to protect themselves and their property.

Although less significant than the variables outlined above, employment status also affected levels of anxiety about crime in Dar es Salaam. People who were unemployed were most likely to feel very unsafe after dark (35%), followed by those dependent on other income (31%), those in formal employment (31%) and those in informal employment (29%). The unemployed may feel least safe because they are

Who fears crime the most?

- Women
- The youth (aged between 15-25 years)
- Those with the least education
- Those living in new suburbs followed by those in established suburbs
- The unemployed

least able to protect themselves from crime, either through physical measures to safeguard their property, or the ability to choose safer transport routes, places to live or places of recreation.

Perceptions about changing crime levels

The majority of people in Dar es Salaam believed that, compared to previous years, the level of crime in their area had increased (62%). Only 19% said they thought crime had decreased and 15% said levels had remained the same. A few people (4%) were unsure. It is a common trend that most people interviewed in victim surveys believe that crime has increased compared to previous years. In South Africa, for example, 76% of people in Pretoria thought that crime had increased compared to previous years.¹¹ This trend has even been recorded in places where the actual crime level has been declining.

This suggests that perceptions about crime may be shaped more by subjective judgements than by factual information. Without reliable information on crime levels over the past few years in Dar es Salaam, however, it is difficult to establish whether or not this applies to the city. One indication that public perception here indeed reflects real changes in crime levels is the significant difference in views between residents living in different parts of the city. People living in new and established suburbs were twice as likely to say that the crime level had increased compared to previous years than were residents from the inner city or rural settlements (table 14). Those from rural settlements were much more likely than people from other parts of the city to believe that crime had decreased.

Table 14: Views of people living in different parts of the city about how crime levels have changed compared to previous years

	Inner city (%)	Established suburb (%)	New suburb (%)	Rural settlement (%)
Crime increased	42	79	81	40
Crime decreased	28	11	15	37
Stayed the same	30	10	4	23
Total	100	100	100	100

What people fear

Respondents were first asked what type of crime they thought occurred most often in their area. Over half identified housebreaking and theft as the most common crime (56%), followed by mugging (30%). Interestingly, according to the victimisation rate recorded by the survey, these are indeed the two most prevalent crimes in Dar es Salaam (see chapter 3). This suggests that, even in the absence of widely publicised crime statistics, people are able to identify the most common crime types.

Of the few remaining respondents, 5% said they did not know which crimes occurred most often, 3% mentioned gang-related crime, 2% robbery and 1% each for rape, murder, child abuse, assault and car-hijacking. No respondents mentioned other property crimes such as theft of livestock, crop theft or theft of vehicle parts. According to the actual victimisation rates, these are among the most prevalent crime types in the city. It is possible, however, that this is the result of the way in which this particular question was administered in the interview process.

When asked which crime types they feared the most in the area where they live, respondents were most likely to say housebreaking and theft (37%), followed by mugging (23%). Since these are the two crimes also identified as the most prevalent, people probably fear those crimes they believe are the most likely to be perpetrated. The influence of other factors such as anxiety about the consequences of crime, is also demonstrated by the data: 9% of people said the crime they feared the most was murder and 5% said it was rape. Although the actual risk of victimisation through murder was very low in Dar es Salaam (only 1% of people reported a murder in their immediate family in the past five years), nearly one in ten people fear this crime more than any other.

Although anxiety about crime does not always match the actual risk of crime, fears should not be regarded as irrational. In the United Kingdom where crime levels are comparatively low, the Home Office has concluded that fears are usually the highest among those living in areas where the chances of victimisation are the greatest, and among those with the most direct and indirect experience of crime.¹² Rather than accusing people of excessive concern, fears should be addressed when they become evident.