

ADDENDUM: NOTES ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

BACKGROUND

The limitations of victim surveys and street surveys, in particular, to record the extent and details of violence against women, were discussed in the main report (see page 4). These noted that street surveys undercount sexual offences because of the sensitivity around discussing these incidents in public with a stranger. In addition, there is the danger that respondents and interviewers may not interpret incidents in the same way. Given the limited time available to administer street surveys, even well communicated definitions may not reduce or eliminate confusion around definitions of particular offences. The problem relates largely to the generalist nature of victim surveys. Only studies which are dedicated to record information about sexual offences (rather than about all serious crimes, as is the case here) will overcome these limitations.

Underreporting of sexual harassment and sexual assault in the Pretoria victim survey is thus more likely to account for the low response rate to the survey, than actual low levels of these offences. Questions about sexual offences were asked only of women in Pretoria. Of the 904 women who were interviewed in the detailed survey,¹ 23 (2,5 per cent) said they had been sexually harassed and 34 (4 per cent) were victims of sexual assault between 1993 and April 1998.

The sample of sexual harassment and sexual assault victims is thus too small to draw detailed or accurate conclusions. Trends cannot therefore be extrapolated to all women in the Pretoria metropolitan area in terms of risk, or to all victims of sexual offences, in terms of the circumstances in which the crimes occur. Nevertheless, since information on sexual offences in the Pretoria area is limited, the experiences and opinions of those few women who did respond to the survey are outlined below. It should be emphasised that these trends apply only to the victims who were interviewed, and not to victims of sexual offences more generally in Pretoria.

The experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault victims are discussed separately in this addendum, which follows a similar format to that of the crime profiles in the main report. Victims' views of the police, and about the type of support they would have liked and the support they actually received, are also discussed.

Each section describes:

- the extent of victimisation and who the victims are;
- when and where the offences occurred;
- the circumstances in which the crimes occurred;
- whether offences were reported to the police and victims' perceptions of service; and
- responses to victimisation and perceptions of assistance to victims.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment was defined to respondents in the following way:

People sometimes touch others against their will, or say offensive things or persistently harass them for sexual reasons. This can happen at work (for example, to get or keep a job). It can also happen at home or elsewhere in a bar/shebeen, in a street, at school, on public transport or at a shopping centre. The person doing this could be someone you do not know, or it could be a relative, friend, or a family member.

Interviewers were reminded that incidents such as stalking, obscene phone calls and flashing constituted sexual harassment. If any violent sexual assault or physical force was used, the incident would be recorded as sexual assault and not as harassment.²

Extent and victim profile

In South Africa, research into the extent of sexual harassment is limited. One survey, however, has suggested that 67 per cent of working women have experienced sexual harassment, while according to another, 76 per cent of female respondents had been harassed.³ These levels are far higher than the 2,5 per cent of women who reported sexual harassment to the Pretoria city victim survey between 1993 and April 1998 (Table 1), indicating the extent to which these offences were undercounted.

Table 1: Number of women who said they were sexually harassed, 1993-April 1998

Year	Number
1995	2
1996	2
1997	9
1998	3
Ongoing	7
Total	23
% of women in detailed survey sample (n=904)	2.5

Of the sexual harassment victims, thirteen (56,5 per cent) were white women and ten (43 per cent) were African women. The majority of these victims said they live in suburbs (68 per cent), while 27 per cent live in townships and 4,5 per cent in informal settlements around Pretoria.

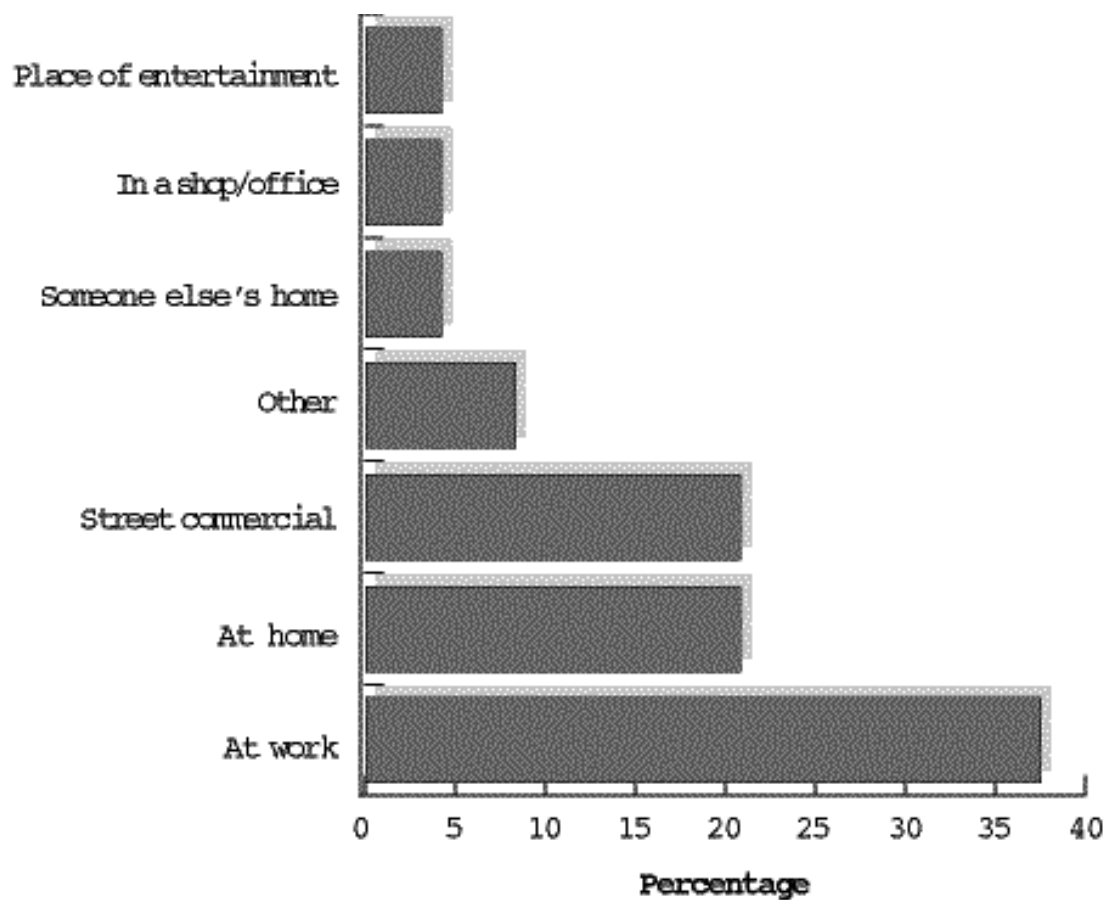
When and where offences were committed

Not all respondents could remember when they were sexually harassed: of the fifteen women who could recall the day, most (53 per cent) said the offence happened on the weekend and 47 per cent said during the week. The most common time was the latter part of the day. Forty six per cent said the

incident occurred between 12h01 and 18h00, and 23 per cent between 18h01 and 24h00.

Although most sexual harassment took place over the weekend, more than two-thirds of these incidents (66,5 per cent) happened in public places. These included: at work (37,5 per cent); in the street outside shops or offices (21 per cent); in a shop or office (4 per cent); and at a place of entertainment (4 per cent) (Figure 1). A quarter of the women interviewed said the offence happened in private places, such as their home (21 per cent) and someone else's home (4 per cent).

Figure 1: Where sexual harassment occurred (n=24)



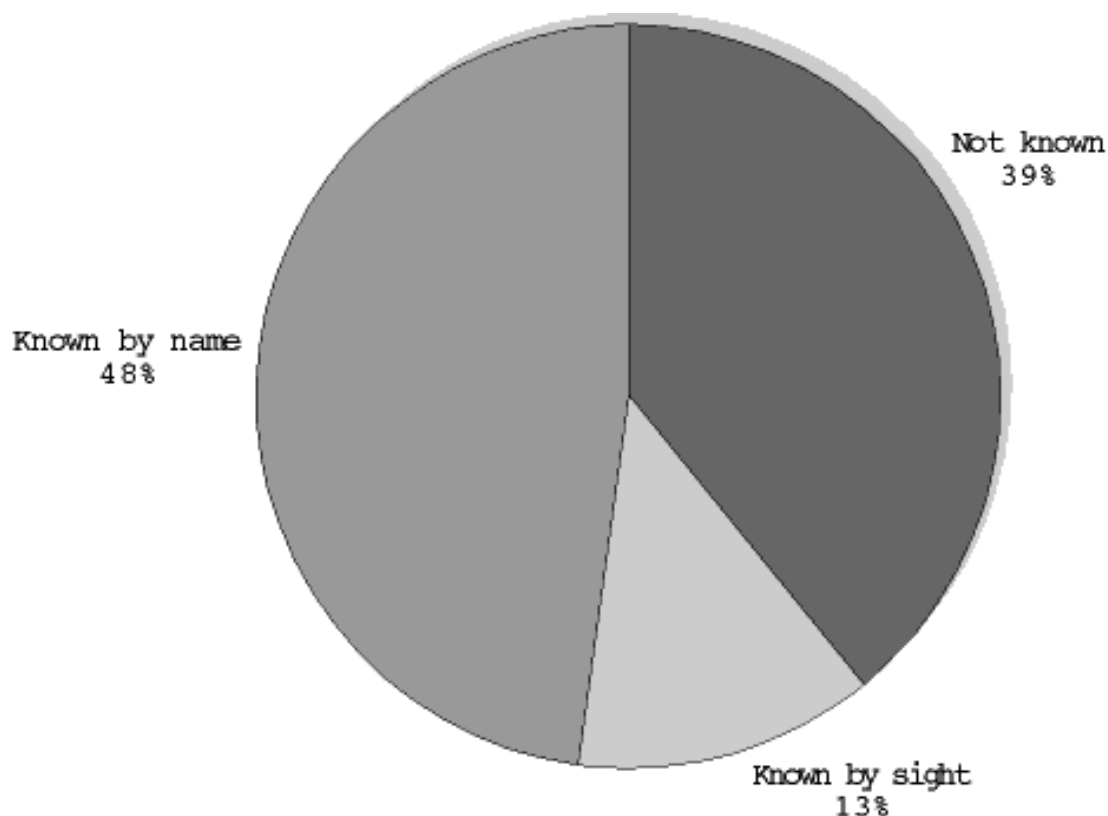
Victims and offenders

Most incidents of sexual harassment happened to the respondents when they were alone. Seventy eight per cent were alone and 22 per cent were in a group when the offence occurred. The majority of sexual harassments reported to the survey were one-on-one incidents. In most cases (68 per cent), there was also only one offender. Twenty one per cent of victims said there were two offenders, and 12,5 per cent said three people harassed them. More of the victims who live in townships reported two or more offenders (67 per cent) than did those living in the suburbs (27 per cent).

Of those women interviewed, most (61 per cent) said they knew the offenders. The largest proportion of them knew the person by name (48 per cent) and 13

per cent knew the offender by sight only. Thirty nine per cent did not know the offender at all (Figure 2). Many of these incidents of sexual harassment were committed by people whom the victims knew intimately. Of the ten women who said they knew the offenders, 30 per cent said the harassment was committed by family members or partners. Ten per cent described the offender as an acquaintance, and a further 10 per cent said a colleague was responsible. The remaining 50 per cent of victims were reluctant to reveal the details, describing the offender merely as 'other'.

Figure 2: Whether victims of sexual harassment know their offenders (n=23)



Circumstances

The victims were asked whether they thought alcohol, drugs or gang activity could have been related to the offences. As with most of the other crimes covered in the city survey, few respondents thought this was the case. A quarter of the women who said they were sexually harassed thought alcohol was linked to the offence. Most (59 per cent) denied any connection though, and 17 per cent were unsure. Fewer thought drugs played a role: 13 per cent said drugs could have been related to sexual harassment, 78 per cent said there was no link and 9 per cent were unsure.

Gang activity was even less likely than alcohol and drugs to have been a factor in the cases of sexual harassment reported to the survey: 83 per cent of the victims said there was no link.

Many of the issues discussed above (such as who the victims are and the circumstances in which the offences occur) influence whether or not sexual harassment cases are reported to the police. These trends are outlined next.

Reporting to the police and perceptions of service

The majority of the women (65 per cent) who said they were sexually harassed, did not report the offence to the police. More of the African victims (50 per cent) said they reported than white victims, of whom only 15 per cent notified the authorities. A similar trend was evident in the reporting rates among women who live in townships and suburbs; more living in townships went to the police than those living in the suburbs.

A lower reporting rate was recorded among the victims of sexual harassment than sexual assault: 57 per cent of the latter reported the attack to the police. This could be influenced by the comparative seriousness of sexual assault over harassment. However, unlike the victims of most other crimes recorded by the survey – who mostly said the reason for not reporting was that the crime was not serious enough – the most common reason given by sexual harassment victims was that they were ashamed (36 per cent). Another explanation (which was also common with other crime victims) was that the police “*never do anything about the reported crime*” (27 per cent). Fear of reprisals and lack of seriousness were mentioned by 18 per cent of the women, respectively, who were sexually harassed.

Victims were asked whether they were satisfied with the service they received from the police when reporting a crime. Of those few women who did report the incident, all were dissatisfied with the way the police treated them. Explaining their views, half of the respondents said the police did not investigate their cases. The remainder complained about the unprofessional and unhelpful approach of the police towards crime victims.

How women responded to victimisation

When asked if they changed their behaviour after the harassment, most of the women interviewed said they did not (62,5 per cent). Not all of the victims responded in the same way, however. More victims who live in the suburbs said they changed their behaviour (40 per cent) than did those living in townships (17 per cent). This is probably related to the type of change made, since some behaviour changes are more affordable than others. Of the 37,5 per cent of women who did change their behaviour, more than half (56 per cent) said they improved home security – something which requires resources. The remainder were more careful and aware (22 per cent) or actively changed their behaviour (22 per cent) through, for example, avoiding particular places where they thought they might be vulnerable.

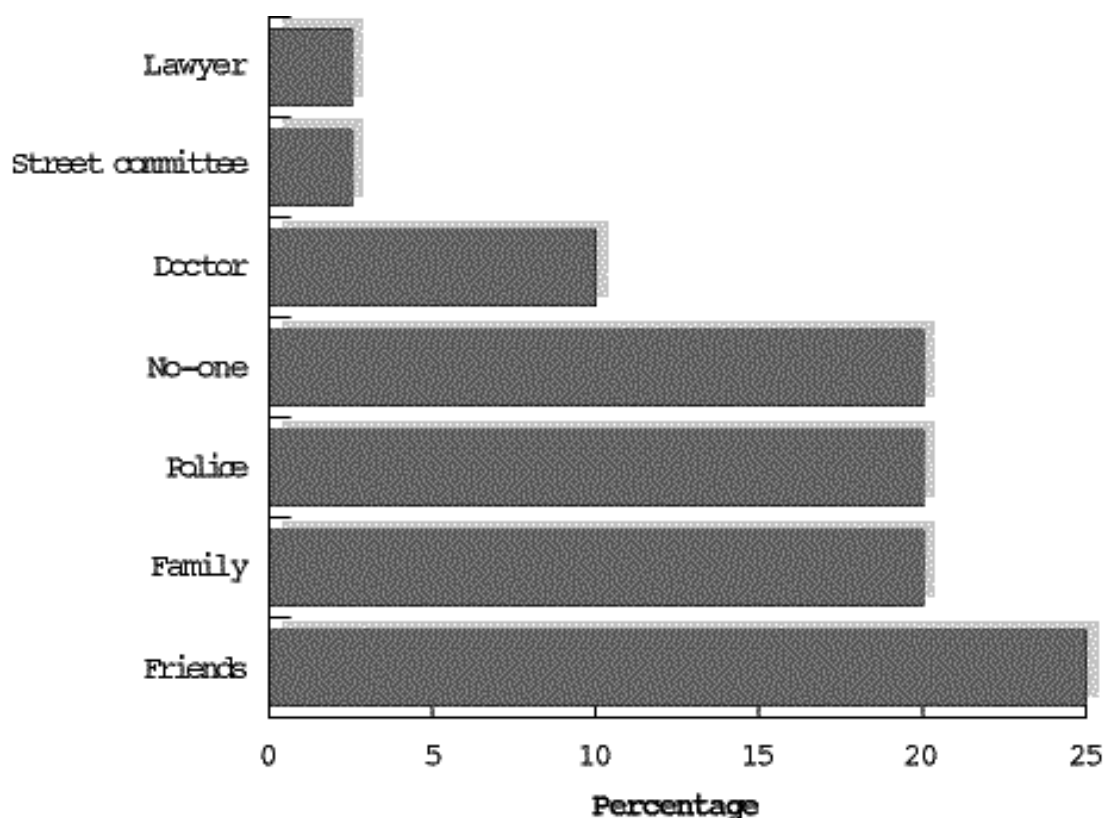
As is the case among victims of other violent crimes such as assault, most of the women who were sexually harassed (68 per cent) did not feel safer as a result of taking the precautions described above – particularly those living in townships. This is not surprising, since the majority of sexual harassment incidents reported to the survey occurred in public places and were committed by people known to the victim (see above). Improving home security is therefore unlikely to protect women from sexual harassment in certain circumstances.

Although these results are not representative, they suggest the need for further investigation into the issue. It is possible that victims are not well-informed about how best to avoid sexual harassment and how to respond when incidents do occur. Data on the type of assistance which victims received and what they would have liked, shed more light on the issue.

Assistance to victims

After the incident, 25 per cent of the women who said they were sexually harassed sought help from friends and 20 per cent looked to their family. Family and friends constitute intimate sources of support, and more victims sought help from these quarters than from public sources of assistance, such as the police (20 per cent of the victims went to the police). Other more public sources of assistance included the doctor (10 per cent), street committees (2,5 per cent) and lawyers (2,5 per cent) (Figure 3). The help of the police, street committees and lawyers potentially offers justice or retribution to victims after the event, while family and friends provide moral support. It is of concern, however, that 20 per cent of women did not seek any help at all.

Figure 3: Who victims of sexual harassment turned to for help (multiple response, n=40)

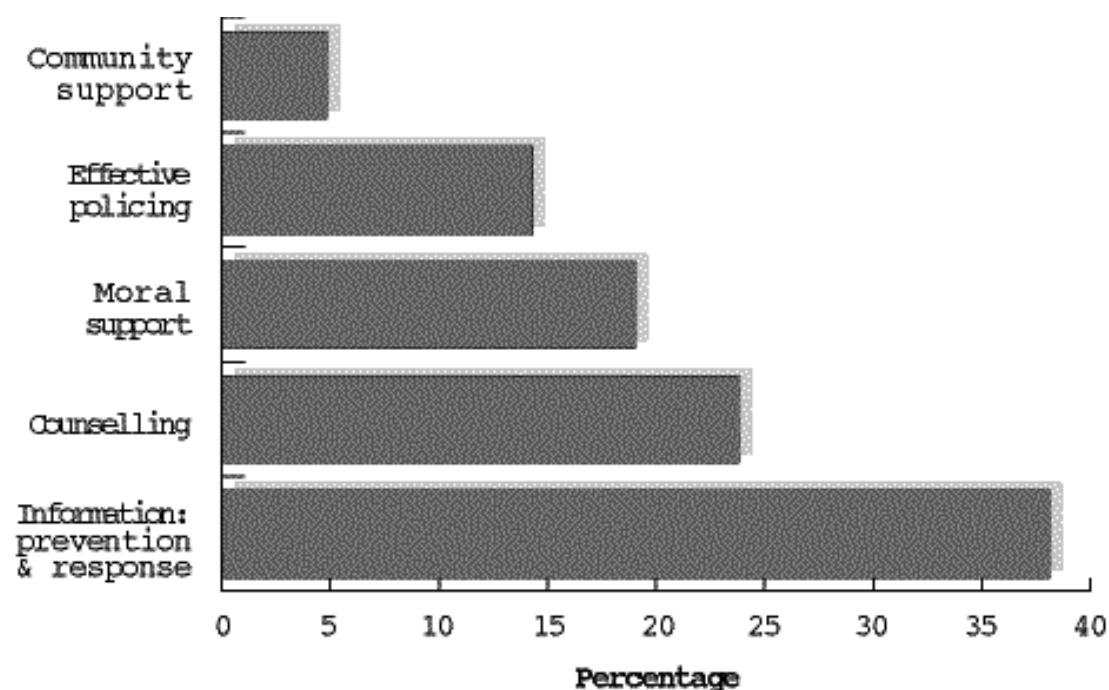


Many victims of crime seek particular types of assistance because there are few alternatives. (This, for example, has been proposed as the reason for so many women turning to the police after experiencing sexual offences.) Victims were asked what support they would have liked, as well as their opinion about established forms of victim assistance, such as victim support agencies. This information – especially when a significant portion of women interviewed,

received no help at all – is important for victim support policy and for shaping interventions aimed at preventing the offences from recurring.

More than one-third of the victims of sexual harassment interviewed in Pretoria said the support they would have liked was information: 33 per cent wanted information about how to prevent the incident from happening again and 5 per cent wanted details about how to respond once they had been harassed. Nearly a quarter (24 per cent) would have liked counselling and 19 per cent asked for moral support (Figure 4). Although information, counselling and moral support are among the services offered by victim support agencies, knowledge and the subsequent use of such services were limited among the women who responded to the survey.

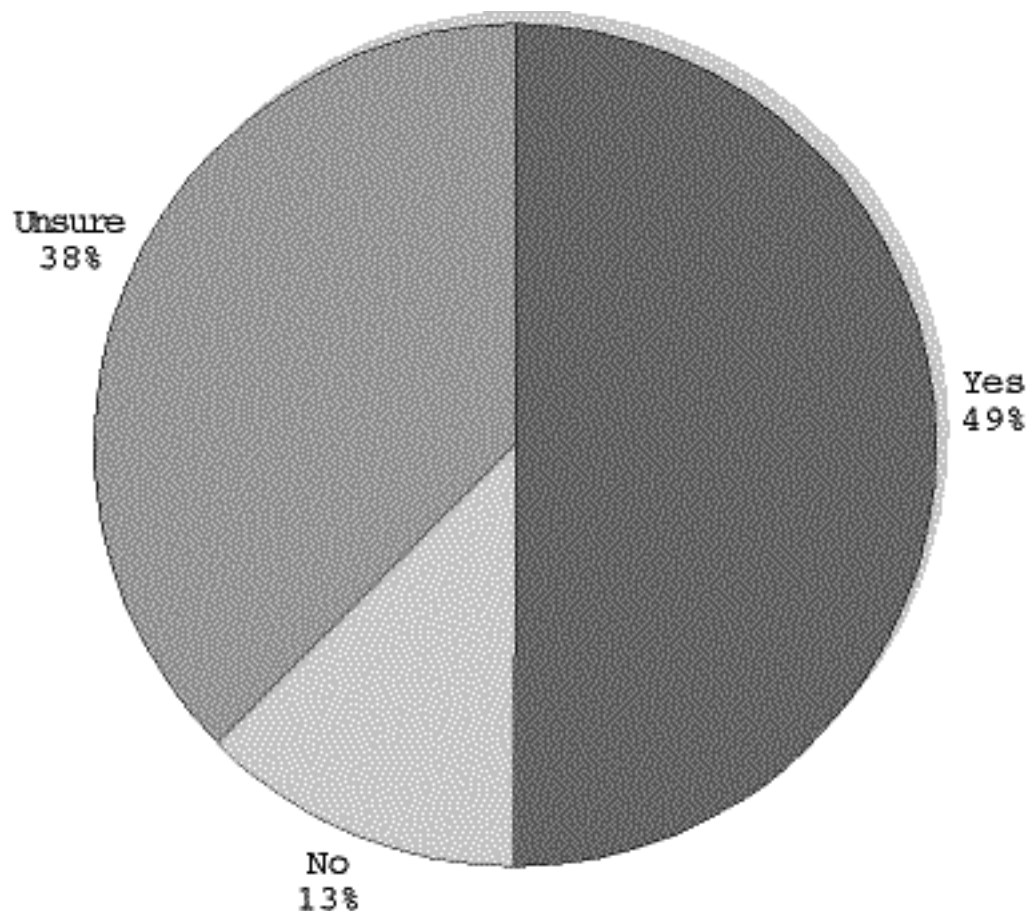
Figure 4: What kind of support victims of sexual harassment would have liked (n=21)



More than two-thirds (65 per cent) of the women who were harassed, had not heard of victim support agencies – and African women were less likely to be aware (20 per cent) than white women (46 per cent). Similarly, fewer of those women who live in townships had heard of agencies (17 per cent) than those in the suburbs (36 per cent).

Although none of the women who said they were sexually harassed had ever used the services of such agencies, half thought their services would have been useful. A significant proportion (37,5 per cent), however, were unsure of their usefulness (Figure 5). Given that so few victims have ever used their services, this response suggests a lack of information and knowledge, rather than a negative perception of the agencies themselves.

Figure 5: Whether victims of sexual harassment thought services of specialised support agencies would have been useful (n=24)



The victims of sexual harassment (and indeed of other crimes) interviewed in this survey thus expressed a need for information, counselling and moral support. These could be provided by established victim support agencies, but the poor knowledge of such services points to the need for better advertising and support. This could initially be focused around the public agencies that people actually turned to after victimisation, such as the police and doctors or clinics.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Interviewers defined sexual assault to respondents using the following explanation:

People sometimes force others to perform sexual acts against their will. These might include forced sexual intercourse, as well as other sexual acts. This can happen to anyone and can occur either at home or elsewhere, such as at work, in a bar/shebeen, in a street, at school, on public transport or at a shopping centre. The person doing this could be someone you do not know, or it could be a relative, friend or family member.⁴

Extent and victim profile

Of the 34 women who said they were sexually assaulted (Table 2), more than two-thirds were African (68 per cent) and 32 per cent were white. Most were in the middle age category, between 26 and 60 years (73 per cent). Of these, many were in the 26 to 40 year age group (44 per cent), with 29 per cent between 41 and 60 years. Unlike figures from other victim surveys (such as that carried out in the Cape Town metropolitan area in February 1998) and studies by Rape Crisis,⁵ women under the age of 25 years were not the most vulnerable group in the Pretoria sample. Only 23,5 per cent of the sexual assault victims interviewed in Pretoria were aged between 18 and 25 years. Few of the women who said they were sexually assaulted, were over the age of 60 years (3 per cent).

Table 2: Number of women who said they were sexually assaulted, 1993-April 1998

Year	Number
1993	5
1994	10
1995	1
1996	3
1997	9
1998	6
Total	34
Per cent of women in detailed survey sample (n=904)	

Over half of the victims of sexual assault said they live in townships in Pretoria (55,5 per cent) and 44 per cent live in suburbs. Although the numbers of respondents are too small to apply this victim profile to all sexual assault victims in Pretoria, some comparisons with police statistics on rape are instructive. In 1997, rapes recorded by the police in Pretoria were concentrated in the metropolitan area's townships. Nearly 60 per cent of these happened in Mamelodi, Soshanguve/Rietgat and Atteridgeville. The highest proportion of rapes were recorded in the police station at Mamelodi township (26 per cent).⁶

In terms of age, the categories used in the presentation of police statistics are not comparable with those of the city victim survey, since people under the age of 18 were not interviewed in the survey. Nevertheless, the analysis of police rape data shows that 67 per cent of the recorded offences happened to women over 17 years of age. One-third of the victims in the Pretoria area were younger than 17. Given the sensitivity of sexual assault cases, particularly when young women and children are the victims, it is likely that many incidents are not reported to the police. The police statistics should also therefore be interpreted as indicators of rape trends, rather than accurate representations of the problem.

When and where offences were committed

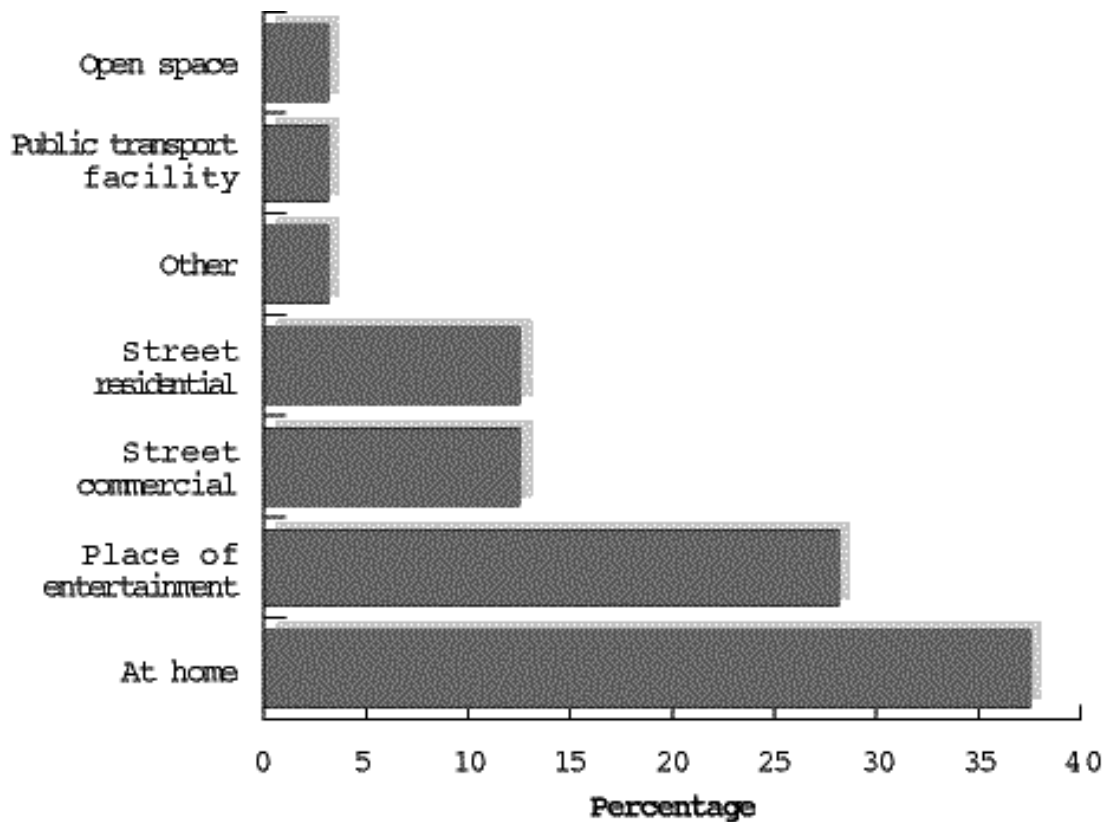
Two-thirds of the victims could recall the day that the crime happened. Of these, more than half (54 per cent) said the offence was committed on the weekend and 45 per cent said during the week. This is in contrast with other violent crimes like assault and murder, the majority of which happened during the week.

Like other violent crimes, there was less variation in the time of sexual assaults: 76 per cent of those victims who could remember the time, said it happened at night, between 18h01 and 24h00. The survey showed that violent crimes generally occur in the evening and night.

When asked exactly where they were sexually assaulted, the vast majority of those who could recall where the attack happened, named places in townships (76 per cent). Only 14 per cent and 9,5 per cent said the crime occurred in suburbs and the inner city, respectively. The survey indicated – in keeping with police statistics on the issue – that violent crime generally is most likely to occur in the townships. In the case of sexual assault, however, this trend is more pronounced. For example, while most assaults were committed in townships (56 per cent), more sexual assaults happened in these parts of Pretoria (76 per cent).

Victims were also asked about more generic locations. Like other violent crime, most were committed in public places (59 per cent). These consisted of places of entertainment (28 per cent), streets in commercial areas (12,5 per cent), streets in residential areas (12,5 per cent), at public transport facilities (3 per cent) and open spaces (3 per cent). By comparison with public places, 37,5 per cent of sexual assaults occurred in the home (Figure 6). Sexual assault was more likely to occur in the home than non-sexual assault, 24 per cent of which occurred in the victim's home.

Figure 6: Where sexual assaults occurred (n=32)

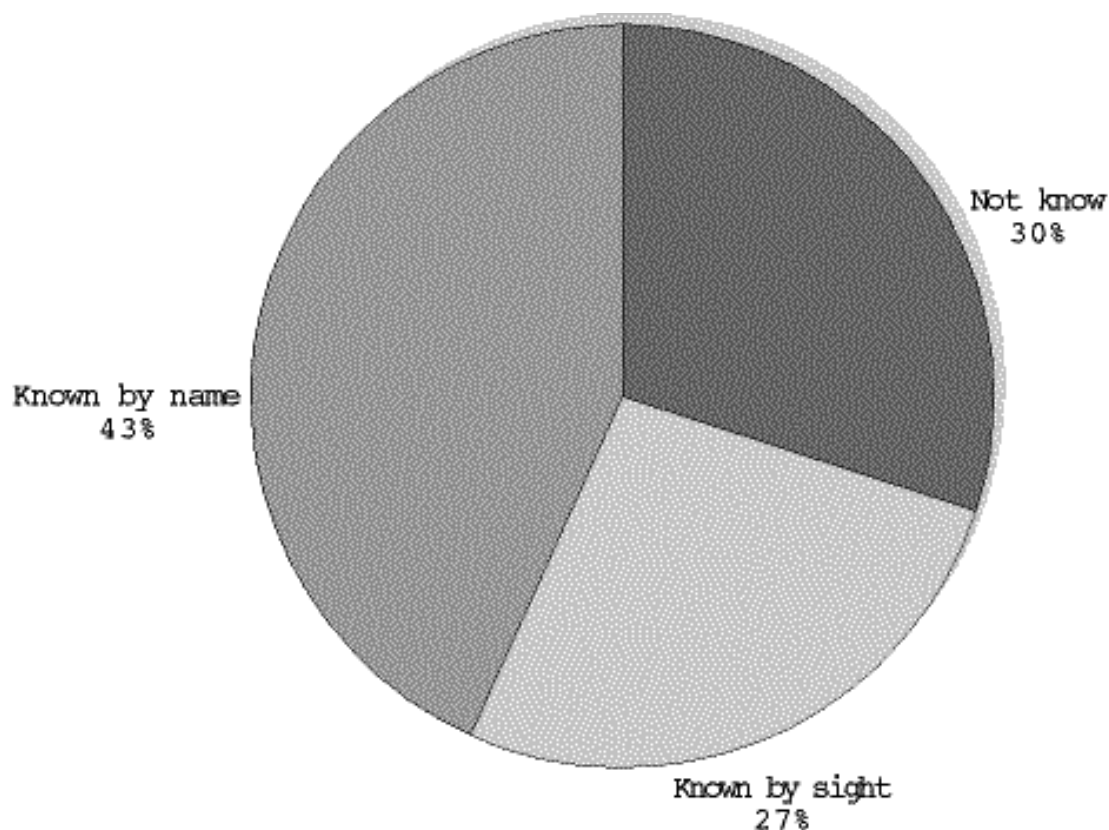


Victims and offenders

Victims of sexual assault were asked to describe how they experienced the incident. Most said they were raped (57 per cent); 30 per cent said the incident was an attempted rape and 13 per cent described it as offensive behaviour. Most of these assaults were committed by a single offender (64,5 per cent) and happened when the woman was alone (74 per cent). A quarter of women said they were in a group when they were attacked. Similar trends also apply to other violent crimes such as assault and murder.

Most sexual assaults were committed by people known to the victim: 43 per cent knew the offender by name and 27 per cent by sight only. Thirty per cent of women who had been sexually assaulted did not know their attackers at all (Figure 7). Of those who knew their assailants, nearly half knew them intimately: 23,5 per cent identified them as their father and as their spouse/lover/partner respectively. Eighteen per cent described the offender as an 'acquaintance', while other specific offenders identified included uncle/nephew (6 per cent) and a personal close friend (6 per cent).

Figure 7: Whether sexual assault victims knew their offenders (n=30)



Circumstances

Although most victims of sexual assault were injured in the attack (58 per cent), they were less likely than victims of non-sexual assault to sustain injuries (89 per cent of whom were hurt). The type of weapons used, is likely to influence the degree of injury: 57 per cent of assailants used only their physical strength or their hands. Actual weapons were used in 30 per cent of cases: 16 per cent of these were knives, 11 per cent guns and 3 per cent

were described as 'other' weapons. Thirteen per cent of victims said no weapons were visible.

Factors which may have precipitated the sexual assault, such as alcohol, drugs and gang activity were not thought to have played a major role. Only 16 per cent linked the attacks with gang activity. Alcohol was associated with sexual assault to a greater extent than drugs: 45 per cent of victims mentioned alcohol and 13 per cent associated the incident with drug use.

Reporting to the police and perceptions of service

Most women who said they were sexually assaulted, reported the offence to the police (57 per cent). Although the number of respondents is too small to draw conclusive findings, in contrast with the reporting trends for other crimes, African women were far more likely to report to the authorities (73 per cent) than white women (12,5 per cent). This high reporting rate for offences of this nature is in contrast with police estimates that reported cases make up only 2,8 per cent of all rapes.⁷ While the survey recorded the experiences of too few sexual assault victims to accurately reflect the true picture, it is likely that those women who are prepared to share their experiences with a stranger administering a survey, would probably also be prepared to report the attack to the police.

One of the key factors which determine whether crime is reported to the police is the perceived seriousness of the offence. Not surprisingly, this does not apply to sexual assault victims. The vast majority of incidents were described by the respondents as rape or attempted rape, and when asked for their reasons for not reporting, no women said the crime was not serious enough. Instead, reporting to the police is affected by the victim's fear of reprisals (33 per cent mentioned this) and feeling ashamed (33 per cent). An equal number of women (33 per cent) said they did not report because the police never did anything about the crime.

Perceptions of police ineffectiveness and poor treatment of victims (particular victims of sexual offences) by police in the charge office are key deterrents in reporting these crimes. These factors also shape the public's perceptions of the police more generally. The majority of women who were sexually assaulted (71 per cent), were not satisfied with the way the police dealt with their report. As is the case with violent crimes, in general, many victims attributed their dissatisfaction to the fact that their case was inadequately investigated (47 per cent) and that the police never contacted them or followed-up on the case (27 per cent). Other reasons were that the police were unprofessional and treated victims badly (13 per cent). A few women (13 per cent) were positive about police performance, saying they were treated professionally and efficiently.

Many victims of violent crime describe their frustration with the police when reporting in terms of lack of investigation and follow-up, rather than treating victims badly. The latter is often perceived as the area in which police service to crime victims is most lacking. It is unlikely that these perceptions mean the police actually treat victims of violent crime better than other victims, however, or that police service does not need improvement. Instead, it is probable that, soon after the incident, the most immediate (and often the only) resolution for

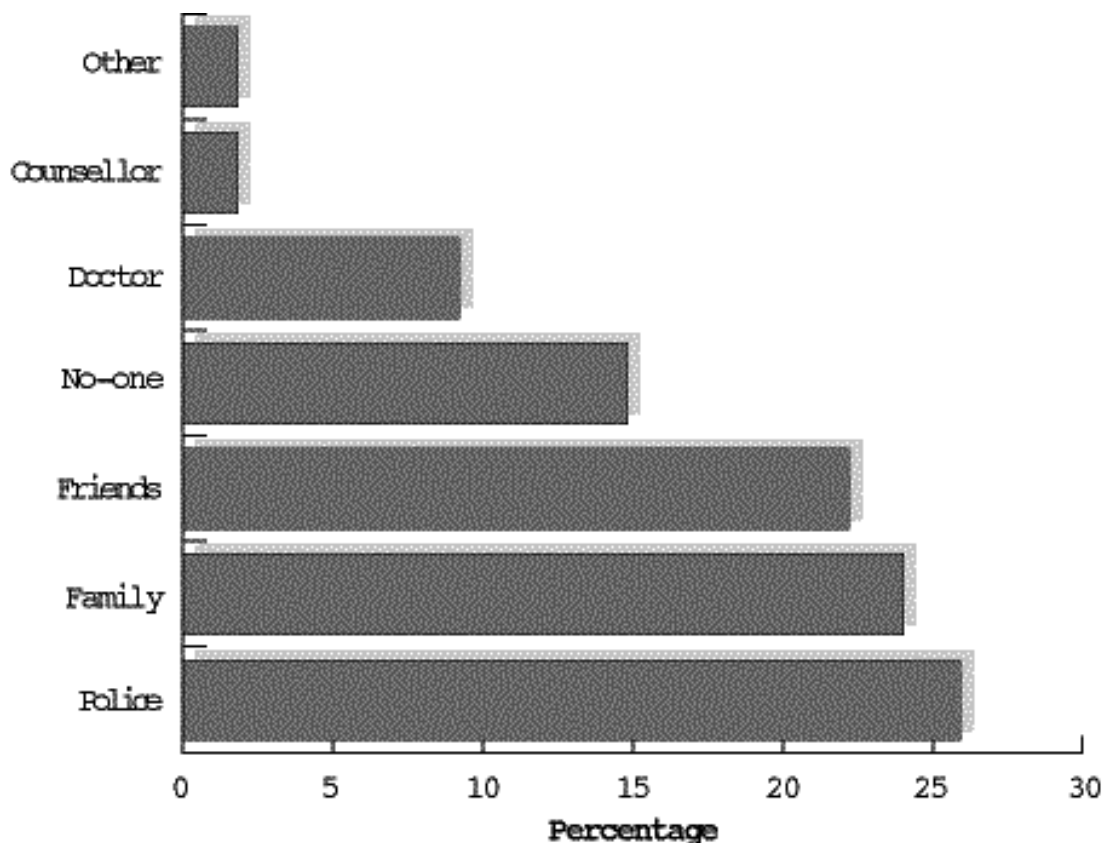
victims of violent crime is the arrest and conviction of the perpetrator. Victims of less serious and less personal crimes, such as car theft and burglary, have other interests, such as insurance claims and the return of their property. It is thus very often these victims who complain the most about the lack of police professionalism and poor treatment of victims in the charge office.

The way in which women responded to sexual assault and whom they turned to for help after the incident occurred, shed more light on the issue of what people expect from the various agencies which provide a service to crime victims.

Assistance to victims

Victims were asked whom they turned to for help after they were sexually assaulted, and each woman could give several options. As in the case of other crime victims, many respondents said they sought assistance from the police (26 per cent), followed by family (24 per cent) and friends (22 per cent). Several did not seek help at all (15 per cent). Doctors and councillors were mentioned by 9 per cent and 2 per cent of victims, respectively (Figure 8).

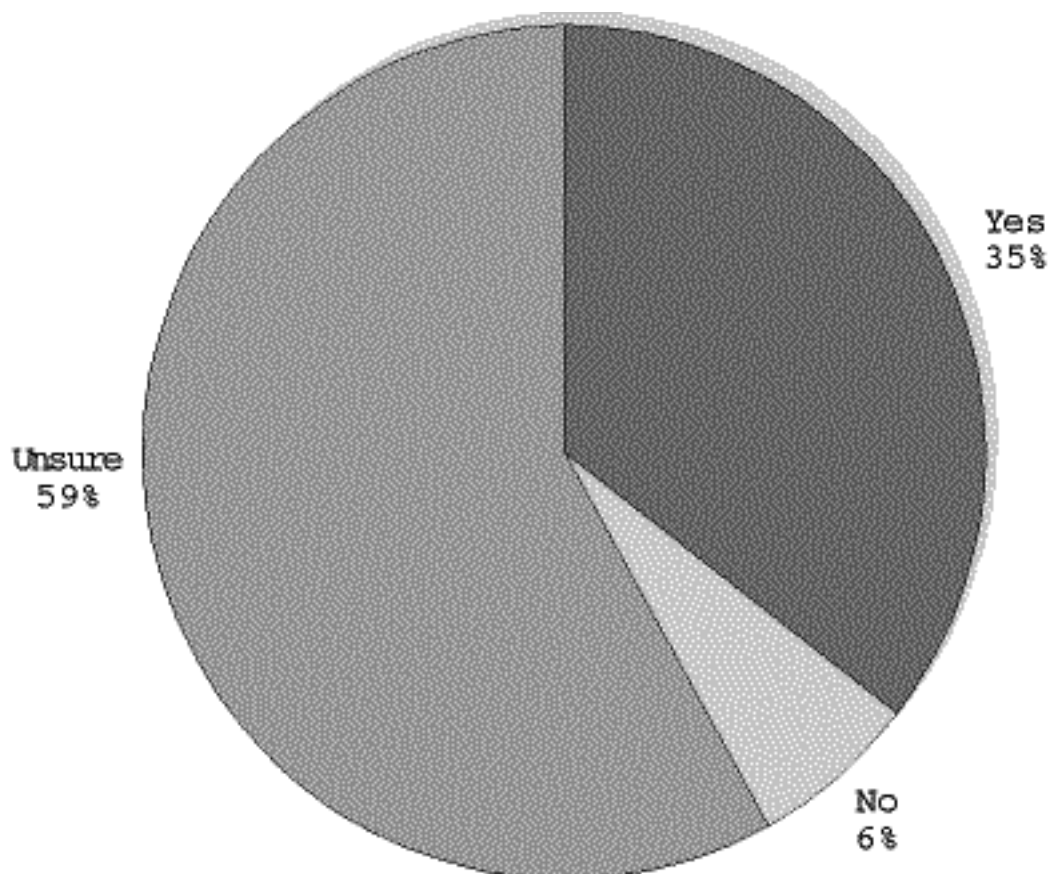
Figure 8: Who victims of sexual assault turned to for help (multiple response, n=54)



The fact that many of the women identified the police as a source of assistance, may relate to their desire for some sort of resolution immediately after the crime was committed. Similar reasons could explain sexual assault victims' desire for the police to investigate their case over their need for professional and helpful assistance when reporting the crime. The type of help

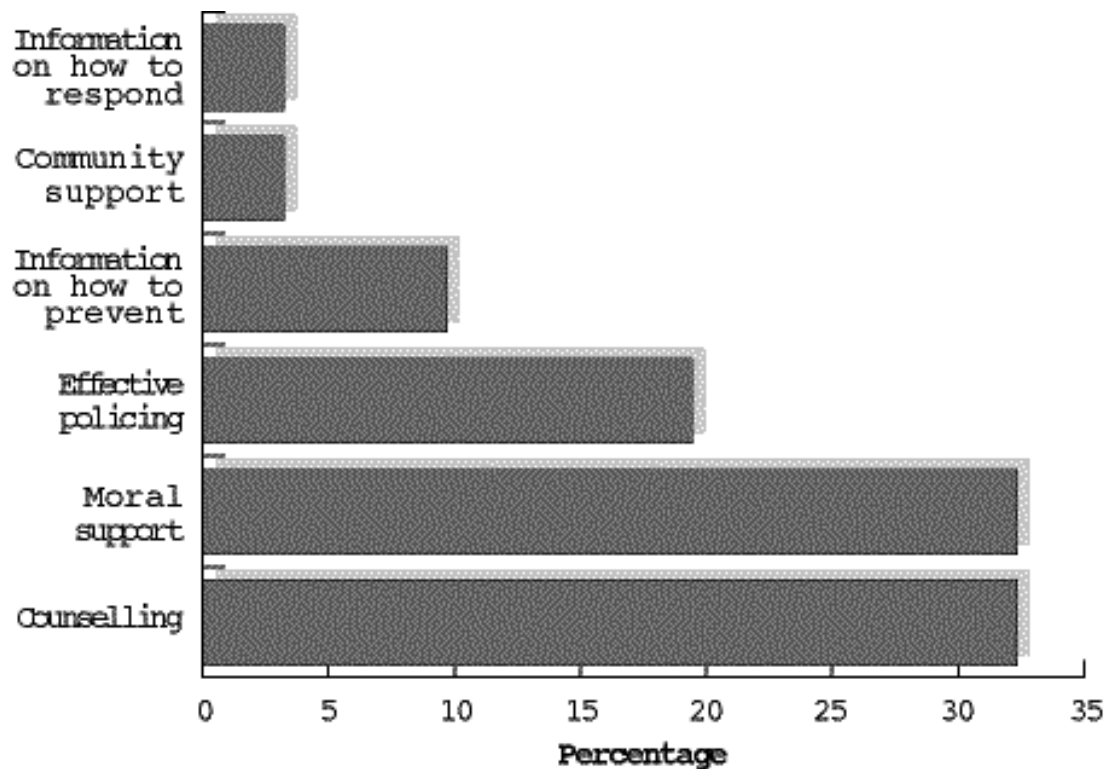
sought from friends and family is of a quite different nature, and probably includes moral support and comfort. This is illustrated by survey data on what kind of support victims of sexual assault would have liked after the attack. Thirty two per cent of the victims said moral support and counselling, respectively. Only 19 per cent said effective policing and 13 per cent mentioned the need for information on how to proceed after the incident had occurred, as well as how to prevent it from happening again (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Whether victims of sexual assault thought the services of victim support agencies would have been useful (n=31)



Since much of the assistance wanted by victims of sexual assault is provided by special victim support agencies, the respondents were asked whether they knew of these agencies, and if they had made use of their services. The vast majority (71 per cent) were not familiar with these organisations. It is not surprising then, that 95,5 per cent of victims said they had never received help from these agencies. Despite this lack of awareness, only 6,5 per cent of the women interviewed, said they thought the services of such agencies would not be useful. More than a third (35,5 per cent) said it would have been useful and the majority (58 per cent) were unsure (Figure 10).

Figure 10: What kind of support victims of sexual assault would have liked (n=31)



A similar trend was evident among the victims of other violent crimes. This presents a key area for increasing the awareness of existing support services in Pretoria. This depends of course on which services are currently available, and where they are situated. It is likely that a crime prevention strategy would need to support and enhance the capacity of these agencies before advertising their services, especially in townships and informal settlements where violent crime is most serious.

Endnotes

- 1 Given the sensitivity of the issue, questions about sexual offences were not asked in the initial scan of 2 547 people, which aimed to measure only the extent of crime in Pretoria. These incidents were covered in the detailed survey of 2 064 people during which interviewers had more time and could probe for information about the circumstances in which crimes happened, how victims responded and their opinions about the police and about solutions to crime. For more details on methodology, see p. ??7 of the main report.
- 2 See Appendix 2: The Pretoria Crime Survey, questionnaire for more details.
- 3 Mowatt (1986), cited in C Sutherland, *Prevention is Better than Cure*, in S Jagwanth, P J Schwikkard & B Grant (eds.), **Women and the Law**, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria, 1994; Institute of Directors, **Sexual Harassment in the Workplace**, Institute of Personnel Management, UNISA Centre for Women's Studies, Women's Bureau of South Africa and ANC Women's League, Pretoria, 1992. Both sources cited in L Camerer et. al,

Crime in Cape Town: Results of a city victim survey, ISS Monograph Series, 23, Institute for Security Studies, Halfway Studies, April 1998, p 34.

- 4 See Appendix 2: The Pretoria Crime Survey questionnaire for more details.
- 5 See Camerer et. al., op. cit., p. 34 for both references.
- 6 A Altbeker, Crime in Pretoria: a quantitative report. IDASA Community Safety Unit, April 1998.
- 7 Human Rights Watch/Africa, **Violence Against Women in South Africa: The State Response to Domestic Violence and Rape**, Human Rights Watch, New York, 1995, p. 51.