

## CRIME PROFILE: MUGGING AND ROBBERY

People were asked about robberies other than car hijackings (which is also a type of robbery). If a car was taken by force, the event was recorded separately as a distinct crime type. This follows the general categorisation of these crimes used by the police.

Since mugging and robbery can involve the use of force or violence, these crimes could also be considered as violent, in the category of those offences profiled above. However, since the motive of robbery is generally to steal property, and, in the interests of using this analysis for developing a local crime prevention strategy for Pretoria, mugging and robbery is considered separately from other violent crimes.

During interviews, mugging and robbery was defined as follows:

- *Robbery and mugging* include the theft of any item from the person, where force or the threat of force is used. Mugging can be considered as one form of robbery.

The following characteristics of mugging and robbery are considered:

- crime levels and a profile of who the victims are;
- who is most at risk;
- when and where the crimes occurred;
- the circumstances in which the crimes were committed; and
- the nature of the violence, including weapons used and degree of injury.

### Crime levels and victim profile

Between 1993 and April 1998, 366 incidents of robbery were reported to the survey in Pretoria. Most of these happened in 1997 (Table 5).

**Table 5: Number of muggings and robberies reported to the survey, 1993-April 1998**

Year	Mugging & robbery
1993	30
1994	28
1995	40
1996	59
1997	115
Jan-April 1998	94
<b>Total</b>	<b>366</b>
% of total sample (n=2547)	14.3

The comparatively high number of crimes which victims said occurred in the first four months of 1998 probably reflect a combination of real crime levels,

as well as 'telescoping' - a tendency of victim survey respondents to recall crimes as happening more recently than was actually the case.

Of the total of 2 547 people interviewed, 14 per cent were victims of mugging and robbery between 1993 and April 1998. Of these victims, the vast majority were African (74 per cent). Just under half (48 per cent) were between the ages of 26 and 40 years and more than two-thirds (65 per cent) were males. The figures reflected in Table 6 below show the numbers of victims as a proportion of race, age and gender groups.

**Table 6: Profile of robbery and mugging victims, 1993-April 1998**

<b>Race</b>	<b>%</b>
African	74.4
White	20.6
Coloured	2.1
Asian	2.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>%</b>
18-25 yrs	11.4
26-40 yrs	47.7
41-60 yrs	30.6
60+ yrs	10.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	64.9
Female	35.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Who is most at risk

The crime profile in Table 6 shows some degree of risk for robbery and mugging. Table 4 shows the risk for all adults in Pretoria of mugging and robbery relative to other crime types. Of all those interviewed in Pretoria, Africans (11 per cent), people aged between 26 and 40 years (7 per cent) and men (9 per cent) are at risk of mugging and robbery (Table 4). African people are most at risk of violent crime (13 per cent) and burglary (13 per cent), followed closely by robbery/mugging (11 per cent). Young people (between the ages of 18-25 years) and women are more likely to be the victims of violent crime than of robbery and mugging.

An analysis of robbery victimisation within each subsample provides more insight into the relative risk for various groups:

- *Risk of mugging and robbery within each race group:* 18 per cent of all Africans and 17,5 per cent of all Asians in Pretoria were victims of mugging and robbery. This crime presents less of a risk for whites and coloureds: 9 per cent of white people and similar proportion of coloured people reported being victims (see Figure 16).
- *Risk of mugging and robbery within each age group:* Those who are perceived as most likely to have property or money worth stealing, are most at risk of this crime. Seventeen per cent of people aged 26 to 40

years and 15 per cent of those between 41 and 60 reported being robbed or mugged. Vulnerability is also a key factor in who is victimised: 13 per cent of people over the age of 60 were robbed - by far the most common single crime type reported by people in this age group.

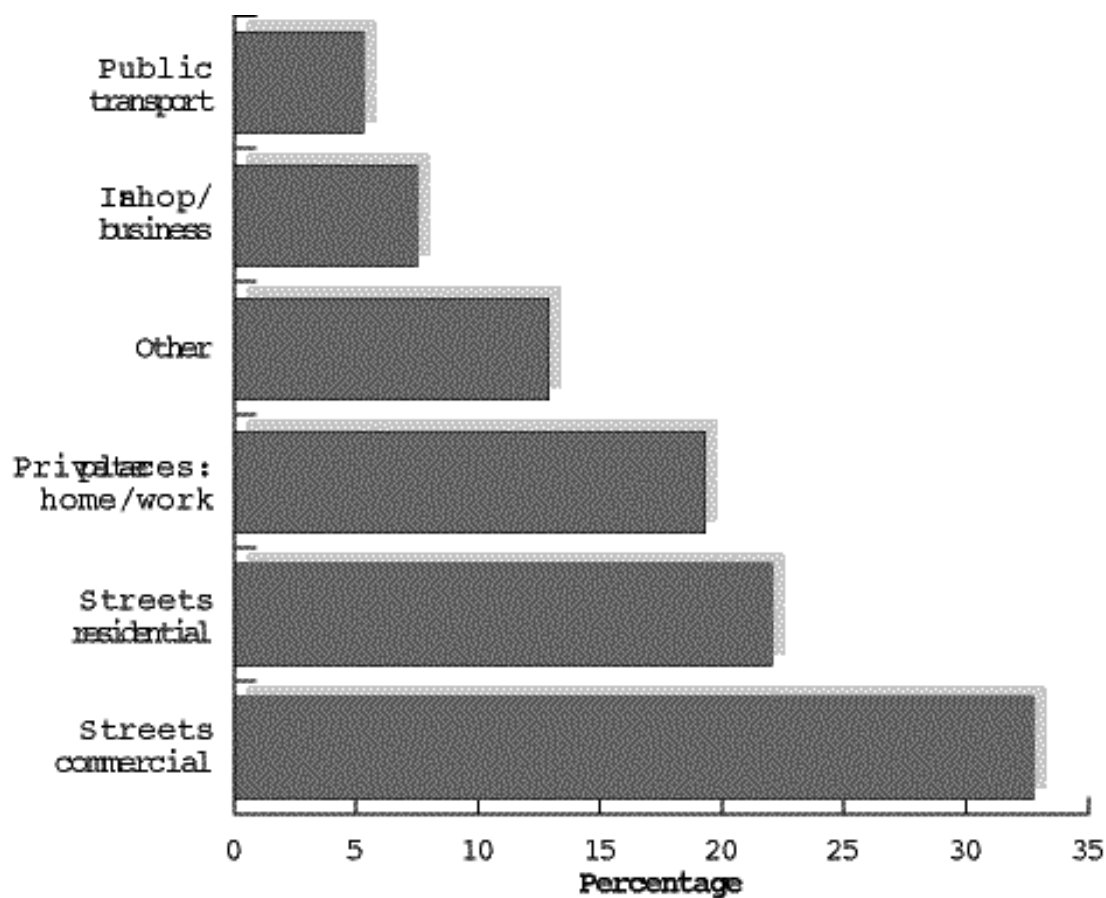
- *Risk of mugging and robbery for men and women:* Of all crimes committed against the individual, mugging and robbery are the ones in which the distinction between male and female victimisation is the greatest. Of all males interviewed in Pretoria, 17 per cent said they were robbed, compared with 11,5 per cent of all females surveyed. Although women are often perceived as more vulnerable targets than men, higher robbery rates for males probably relates to the greater levels of mobility and their economically active status relative to women.
- *Risk of mugging and robbery for people living in different parts of the city:* The risk of robbery is higher for those people who live in townships than elsewhere in Pretoria. Twelve per cent of all township inhabitants said they were robbed, compared with 8 per cent of people who live in suburbs, 3 per cent of those living in the inner city and 2 per cent in informal settlements. Mugging and robbery are usually committed in public rather than private places, and a better understanding of risk requires an analysis of where these crimes actually occurred.

### **Where and when robbery occurred**

Mugging and robbery occurred fairly evenly across the Pretoria metropolitan area. Of those people who could identify where the offence took place, 34 per cent named places in the suburbs, and an equal proportion indicated the inner city. Thirty per cent of these crimes were committed in the townships, and only 1 per cent happened in informal settlements. Based on the analysis of risk above, it is likely that people who live in the townships (who are most at risk of robbery) are victimised both in their neighbourhoods, as well as in the inner city where they go to work.

The vast majority of muggings and robbery occur in public places and more specifically in streets: 33 per cent happened in streets outside shops or offices and 22 per cent in streets of a residential area. Only 19 per cent happened in private home or work environments. Very few offences were committed at or on public transport facilities (5 per cent) (Figure 19). Crimes that are committed in public places present more opportunities for outside intervention than those which occur in private (like violent crime). In this case, environmental design measures, as well as visible policing - either by the public police or by private security or even car guards - could make an impact on levels of mugging and robbery. This would probably be most effective in the places where these crimes occur most often, namely the streets in commercial areas. In residential areas, given that they are more dispersed and less populated, it is often harder to provide an effective visible presence. In private places such as homes or offices, however, certain target hardening measures could reduce robberies, such as installing protective devices like burglar guards and alarm systems.

Figure 19: Where robbery and mugging occurred



Most robberies were committed during the week (60,5 per cent), of which the largest proportion happen on Friday (40 per cent). People were also more likely to be victims in the latter part of the day, when they were returning home from work or school. An equal proportion (36 per cent) of robberies were reported between 12h00 and 18h00 as between 18h00 and 24h00. Not surprisingly, given that most of these crimes were committed in public places, people were least likely to be robbed in the early hours of the morning between 0h00 and 6h00 (9 per cent).

### Crime circumstances

Most of the robberies reported to the survey were successful (81 per cent), which means that property was actually stolen from the victim. The most likely item to be stolen was money (42 per cent), followed by accessories (24 per cent), a hand bag (19 per cent) and electronic equipment (11 per cent). In only 17 per cent of cases, the stolen goods were covered by insurance.

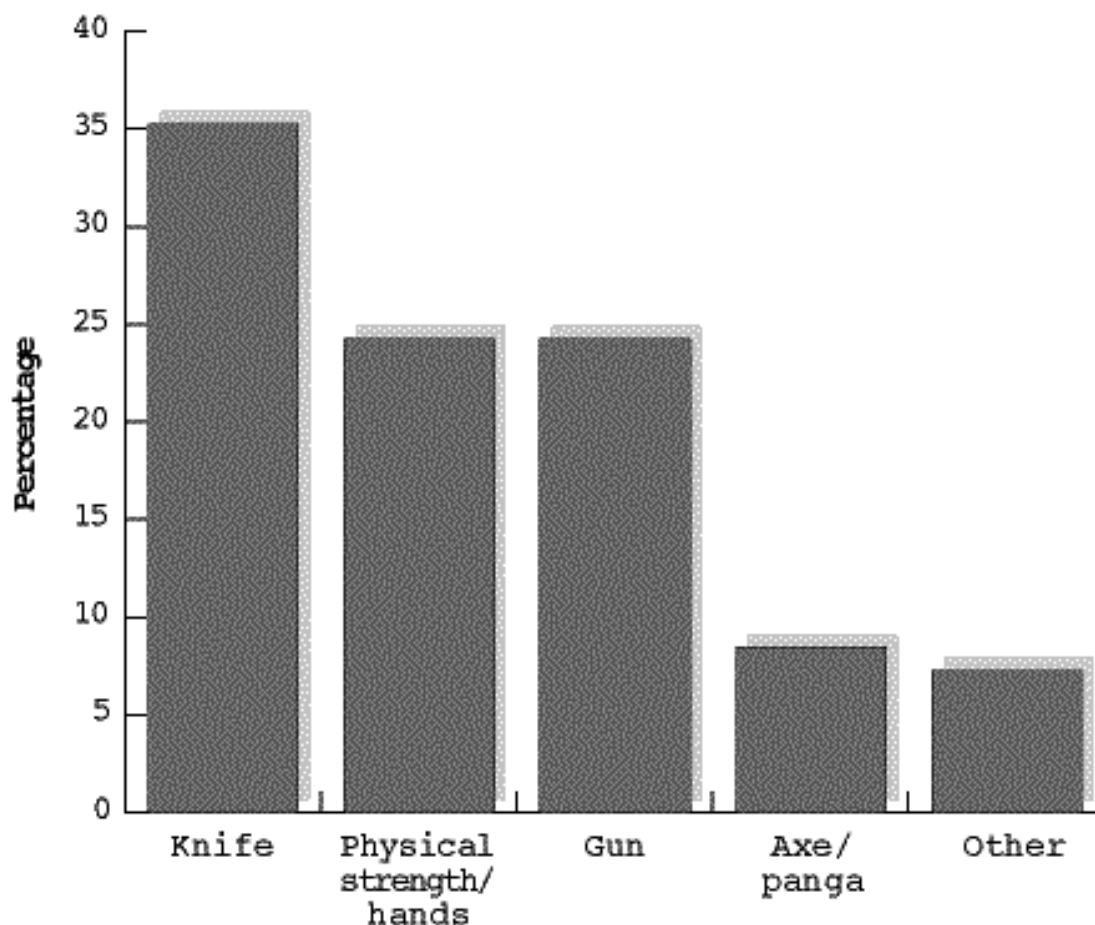
People are much more likely to be a victim of mugging and robbery when they are alone: 77 per cent of victims were alone when the offence was committed. When alone, people are more at risk of robbery than of violent crime: according to the violent crime profile above, 59 per cent of victims were alone when attacked.

Few people who were mugged in Pretoria believe the crime was related to gang activity (20 per cent). However, since nearly half of victims said they were unsure (49 per cent), the links remains unclear.

### Nature of the violence

Although mugging and robbery are considered to be violent crimes (since property is taken from people by force), most cases reported to the survey involved threats only (56 per cent) and not violence, and did not result in the victim being injured (77 per cent). This is despite the fact that weapons were used in the majority of incidents (73 per cent) and probably relates to the fact that offenders rarely attempt to inflict injury deliberately during muggings. In 27 per cent of attacks, victims said no weapons were visible. More white robbery victims than African victims reported this, which suggests that weapons are more likely to be used on Africans in the course of robberies, than on whites. Of those weapons which were visible, knives were used in 35 per cent of incidents and guns and physical strength in a quarter of incidents, respectively (Figure 20).

**Figure 20: Weapons used in mugging and robbery**



### How victims responded

Most people said they changed their behaviour after being victimised (72 per cent). As is the case for victims of most other crimes, this was a more common reaction among white people (78 per cent) than Africans (67,5 per

cent). Predictably, the most common response to mugging and robbery is to avoid certain places (56 per cent). Nearly a third of the victims of this crime said they were more careful and aware afterwards (30 per cent). Since few of these crimes happened in people's homes, improving home security (14 per cent) was not a popular response to victimisation.

These precautions make people feel safer: 68 per cent said this was the case, although this was more likely for white victims (71 per cent) than for Africans (62 per cent). This is important for the success of interventions to reduce the fear of crime, since it suggests that encouraging preventive behaviour is likely to make people feel safer. Specific attention will have to be paid to Africans victims and those living in townships and informal settlements, who are not only less likely to take precautions, but also to feel safer as a result.