

## **THE EXTENT OF CRIME**

Part of South Africa's economic heartland, and the country's administrative capital, the city of Pretoria in the Greater Pretoria Metropolitan Council area is located approximately sixty kilometres from Johannesburg in Gauteng. It houses 21 per cent of the province's population and is responsible for 13 per cent of South Africa's gross geographical product.<sup>10</sup>

The population of Greater Pretoria was estimated in 1996 at 1,48 million. The annual population growth rate was 3,8 per cent between 1970-1996, with higher levels in some parts of the metropolitan area. Soshanguve township, for example, doubled its population in the last five years reaching approximately 400 000 in 1996. In total, 56 per cent of the dwelling units in the area are formal houses, 26 per cent are informal and 18 per cent consist of flats.

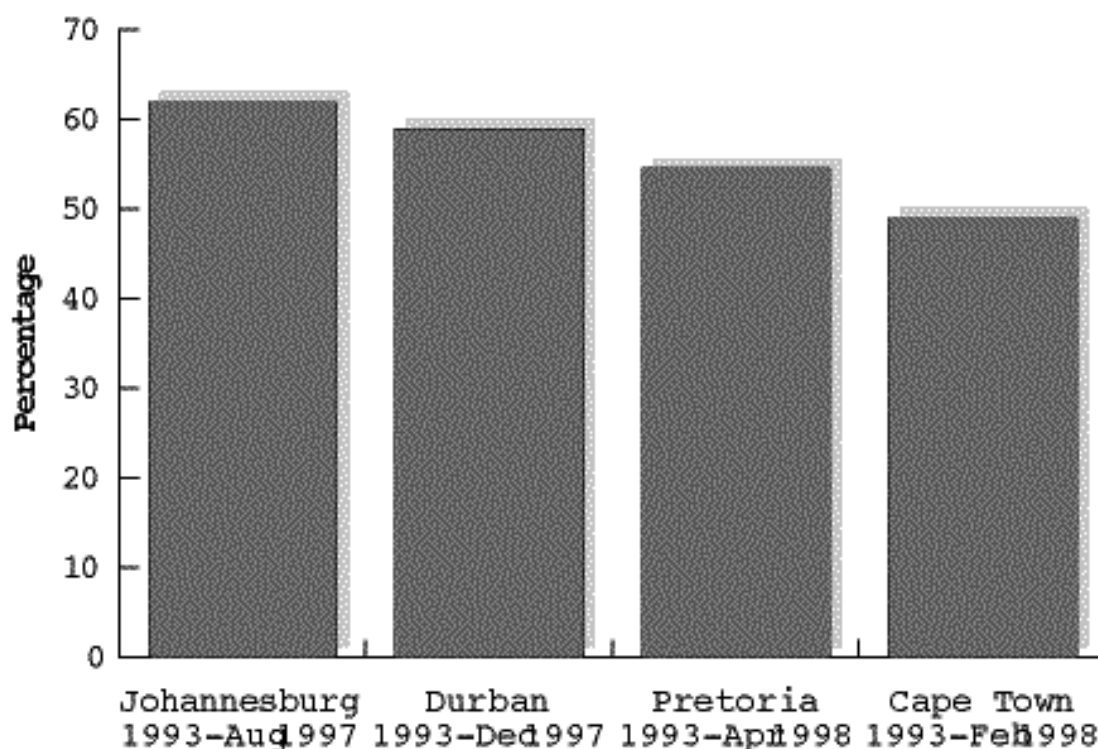
The city has been regarded for some time as the safest in the country, based on available police crime statistics. The results of the Pretoria city victim survey analysed below, more accurately describe the extent and nature of crime in the metropolitan area.

Respondents in Pretoria were asked whether they, or members of their household in the case of certain crimes such as murder and vehicle theft, had been victims of crime between 1993 and the time when the interview was conducted. The survey allowed for eight categories of serious crimes: burglary, car theft, car hijacking, mugging and robbery, assault, sexual assault (including rape and other violent physical incidents), sexual harassment, and murder. Respondents were also asked whether they had been victims of any other crime. Offences such as less serious personal thefts were captured in this category. Given the focus on serious crime in the city surveys, this category of crimes remained small and is not discussed here.

### **Crime levels: 1993 – April 1998**

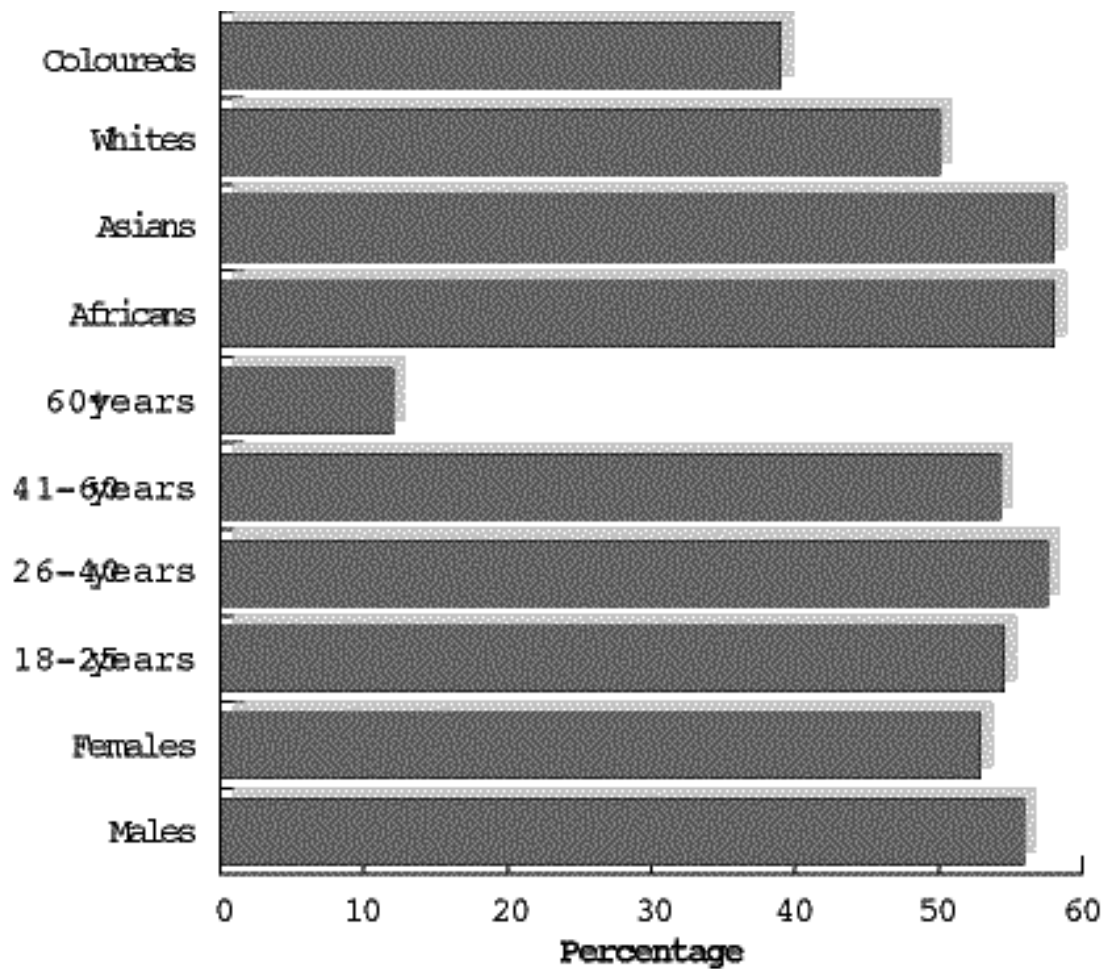
According to the victim survey, 54,6 per cent of people living in the Pretoria metropolitan area were the victims of at least one crime between 1993 and April 1998. This represents a higher overall victimisation rate than that recorded in the Cape Town city survey (49 per cent) but lower than rates in Durban (59 per cent) and Johannesburg (62 per cent) (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Overall victimisation levels in four cities  
ISS victim surveys**



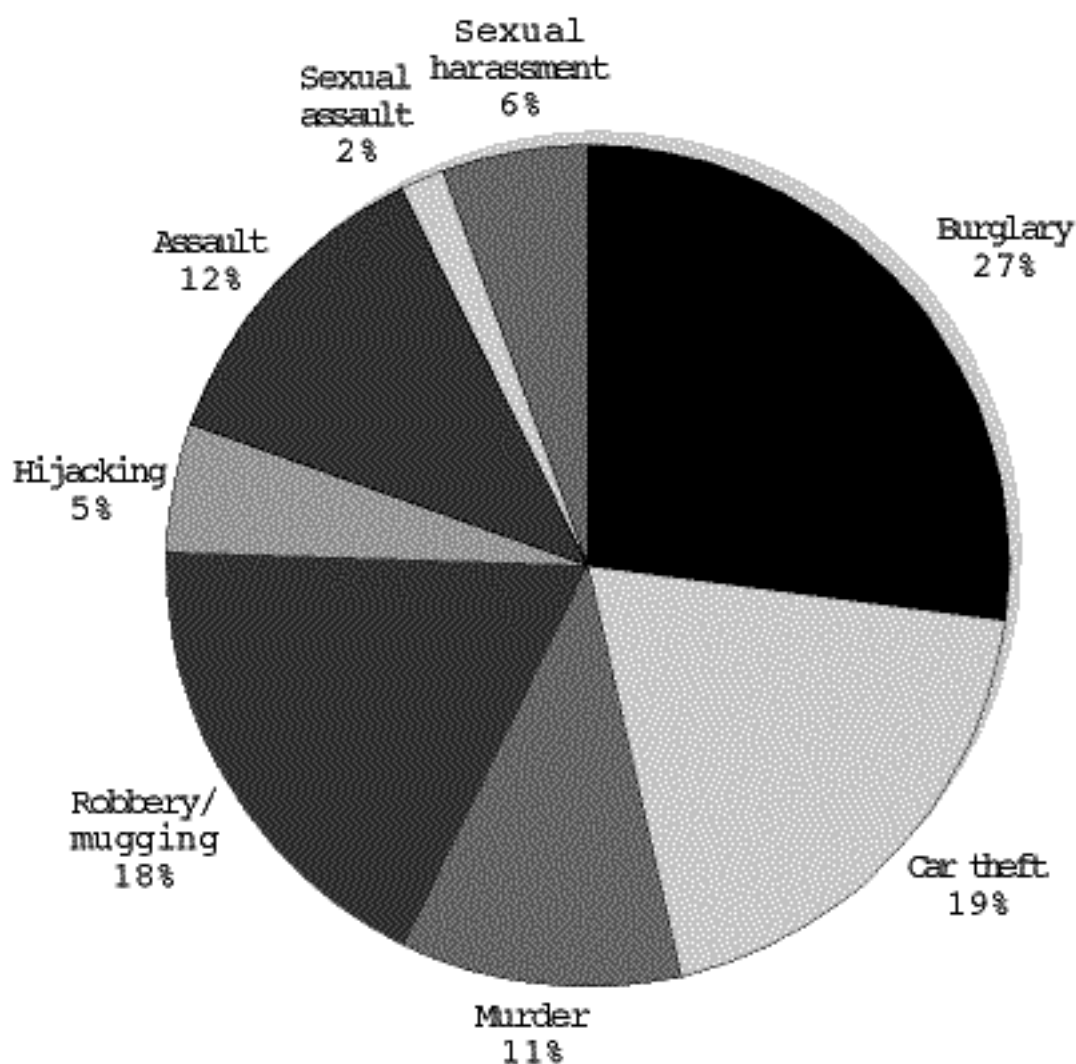
The overall victimisation rate – which counts all crime types together – provides a first perspective on who is most at risk in Pretoria according to their age, race and gender. Africans and Asians, each with overall victimisation ratios of 58 per cent – were more likely than whites (50 per cent) and coloureds (39 per cent) to have been victims of crime. Men, as well as people between the ages of 25 and 39 years were also more at risk. People over the age of 60 years – who often fear crime more than anyone else – were least likely to have been victims. Only 12 per cent of this age category experienced a crime over the survey period (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Proportion of people within each subsample who were victimised in Pretoria (all crime types)**



The risk of becoming a victim varies not only according to the socio-demographics of the population, but also according to crime type. Results suggest that people have more chance of victimisation by violent than by property crimes in Pretoria. Of all the crimes which people said happened to them, just over half (54 per cent) involved violence (murder, robbery/mugging, assault, car hijacking, sexual harassment and sexual assault), and 46 per cent were non-violent property crimes (burglary and car theft) (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Proportion of crimes in different categories reported to the Pretoria survey, 1993



#### April 1998

A similar distribution between property and violent crimes was evident in the Johannesburg metropolitan area, according to the city victim survey conducted there in 1997.<sup>11</sup> In developed countries, however, victim surveys usually reveal far lower levels of violent crime than is the case in South African cities. The British Crime Survey estimated that, in 1995, only 21 per cent of crime in Britain was violent (this category includes common assaults, 'wounding' and robbery but excludes murder).<sup>12</sup>

Of all the crimes that were recorded in Pretoria, the single most common type was burglary (27 per cent of all crimes), followed by vehicle theft (19 per cent). The violent crime that people reported most often to the survey was robbery, followed by assault. This distribution of crime types is comparable with that in the other metropolitan areas of South Africa. In Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town, burglary was the most common crime reported to the victim surveys. In Pretoria, a larger proportion of car theft was recorded than in the other cities. In other metropolitan areas, more assault and mugging were generally recorded than in Pretoria.

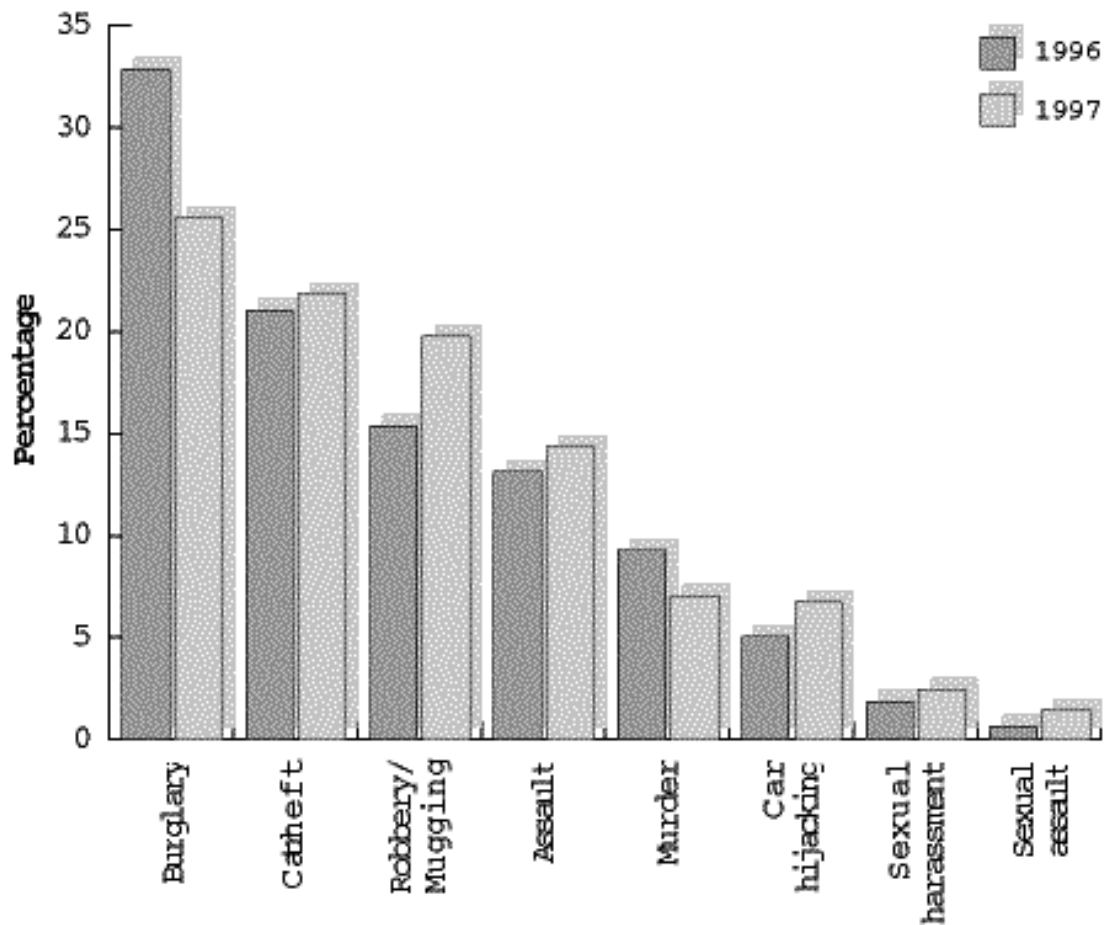
As in other city victim surveys, the number of murders reported to the survey was exceptionally high (11 per cent of all crime, which equals the proportion of assault). This is probably the result of overreporting. Respondents were asked whether a member of their household had been murdered since 1993. Given the seriousness of murder, the extended nature of many urban South African households, as well as migrancy which links urban and rural families, respondents in all likelihood, related murders that happened to people living beyond their immediate homes, and possibly even outside the survey period.

The extent of murder reported to the victim survey should not be regarded as an accurate reflection of the situation in Pretoria. Nevertheless, the attitudes of those reporting the incidents to the survey remain important. The needs of these people as 'victims' must be regarded in the same way as those who have survived other violent crimes, if the criminal justice system is to function effectively in prosecuting offenders and providing support to survivors.

### **Crime levels: 1996 and 1997**

In broad terms, the distribution of crime types described above has remained constant over time in Pretoria. A comparison between the crimes which victims said occurred in 1996 and 1997 shows a decrease in burglary over that period from 32 per cent of the total in 1996 to 25,6 per cent in 1997. Murder decreased from 9,3 per cent in 1996 to 7 per cent in 1997. Vehicle theft remained fairly constant over the two year period at 21 of all crimes. All other categories of crime increased as a proportion of the total between 1996 and 1997 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Distribution of crime types reported in 1996 and 1997 to the survey



This suggests that there has been an increase in crime involving violence (as compared with property crime) between 1996 and 1997 in Pretoria. In addition, more actual crimes were reported as having occurred in 1997. In that year, 588 crimes were reported to the victim survey compared with 407 in 1996. Although changing crime levels are more accurately reflected by conducting separate victim surveys at regular time periods (i.e. one in 1996 and another in 1997), these figures indicate that more crime happened during 1997 than during 1996, to those people interviewed for the survey. Trends in police statistics for this period are not dissimilar. They indicate increases in almost all categories of serious crime; the only offences which declined between 1996 and 1997 in the Pretoria police area were burglary of business and residential premises.<sup>13</sup>