

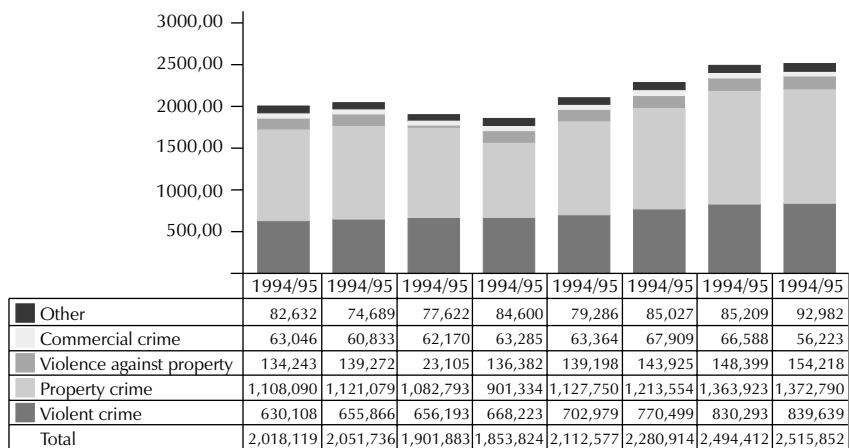
## CHAPTER 1 WHAT THE CRIME STATISTICS SAY

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In early October 2002 the South African Police Service (SAPS) released its annual report for 2001/02. The report contains recorded crime information by financial year, that is, from 1 April to 31 March the following year. When analysing the crime statistics that follow below, it is important to remember that recorded crime levels undercount the real levels of crime, as they do not reflect unrecorded and unreported crimes. For crime to make it onto the official police records two things need to happen. First, victims or witnesses must report it to the police. Second, the police must record the crime in their records.

According to the SAPS, 2.02 million crimes were recorded in the 1994/95 financial year. During the 2001/02 financial year 2.52 million crimes were recorded—an increase of 25% over an eight year period (Figure 1). Measured

**Figure 1: Number of crimes recorded, 1994/95 – 2001/02**



Source: SAPS Crime Information Analysis Centre

on a per capita basis this is an increase in real terms. The country's population increased by an estimated 10% over the same eight-year period.

While recorded crime has been increasing for some time, the rate of increase is slowing down. In 1998/99 recorded crime increased by 5.7%, followed by 7% (1999/00) and 6% (2000/01). During 2001/02 recorded crime increased by 0.9%—the lowest year-on-year increase since 1996/97.

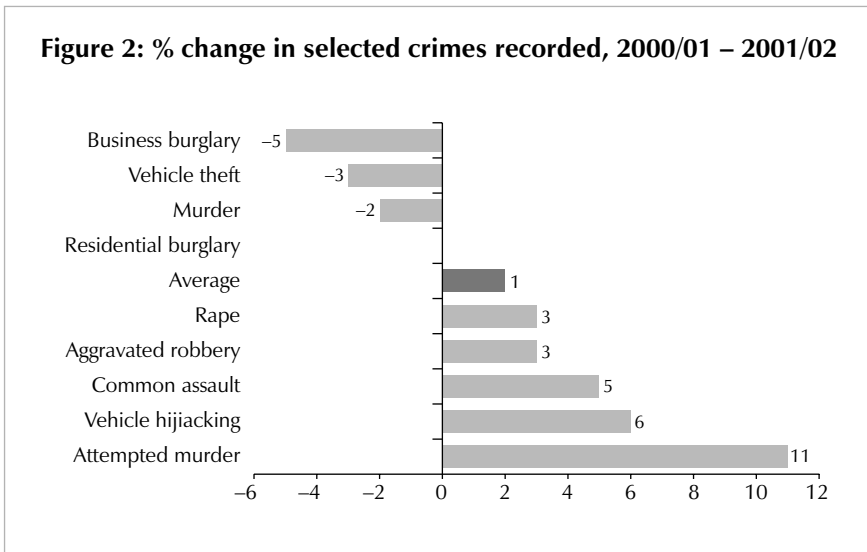
While the 2001/02 figures indicate a slowing down in the rate of increase of recorded crime, it needs to be remembered that this is occurring at a point where recorded levels of violent crime are extraordinarily high. Thus, during the 12-month period during 2001/02, almost 21,500 murders, 54,000 rapes, 118,000 aggravated robberies and 265,000 serious assaults were recorded. The time period is too short, moreover, to draw a firm conclusion whether the trend will continue to the extent that recorded crime levels will enter a sustained period of decline.

Since 1994 violent crime, as a proportion of all recorded crime, increased from 31% to 33%. That is, during 2001/02 one in three crimes recorded involved violence or the threat of violence. All other crime categories experienced a slight decline as a proportion of the overall number of recorded crimes. Property crimes such as theft and burglary make up the largest proportion of recorded crimes—approximately 55% of the total.

Between 1994 and 2002 violent crime increased by 33%, more than the average increase in crime (25%) or the increase in property crime (24%). Encouragingly, recorded violent crime increased by only 1% between 2000/01 and 2001/02, about the same as the increase in all crimes recorded over this period. Recorded commercial crime (primarily fraud) decreased by 16% over the same period. Drunk driving offences, and drug and firearm related offences—categorised as 'other' in Figure 1—increased by 9%.

Not all crimes increased or decreased at the same rate between 2000/01 and 2001/02. Attempted murder and vehicle hijacking experienced the greatest increase of 11% and 6% respectively (Figure 2). Aggravated robbery is robbery involving a dangerous weapon, including bank robberies and cash-in-transit heists.

Recorded murders decreased by 2% between 2000/01 and 2001/02. This is a continuation of a trend whereby the yearly number of murders has been declining since 1994. Vehicle theft declined by 3% over the same period. This



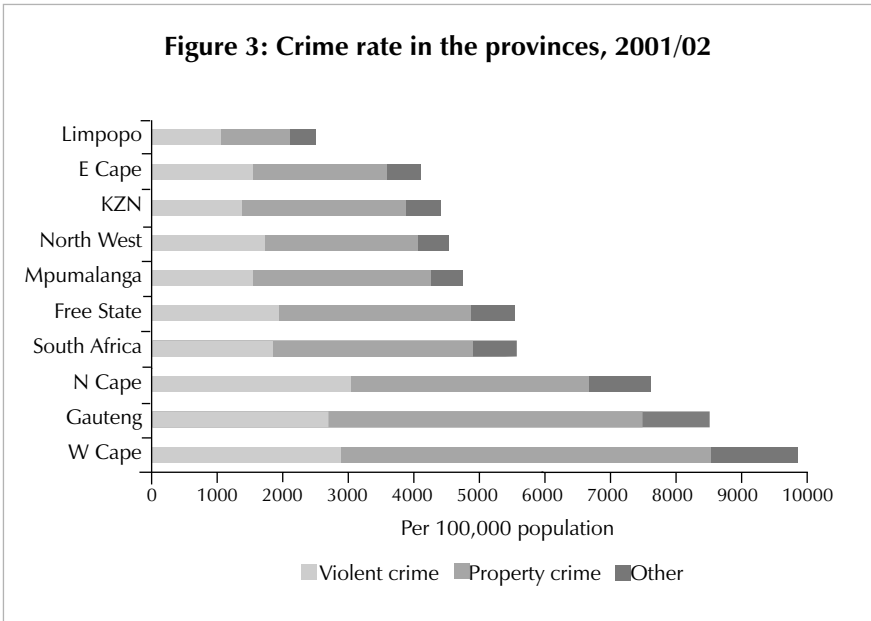
Source: SAPS Crime Information Analysis Centre

could be an indication that vehicle owners are improving the protection of their vehicles. As a result vehicle thieves might be more inclined to rob owners of their vehicles once the vehicles have been opened and the motor started—hence the increase in vehicle hijackings (+6%).

Measured on a per capita basis, the crime rate for the 2001/02 period was highest in the Western Cape with 9,878 recorded crimes for every 100,000 people residents in the province. In other words the average resident of the Western Cape stood a 9.8% chance of becoming a victim of a recorded crime during the 12-month period in 2001/02. The Western Cape was followed by Gauteng (8,537) and the Northern Cape (7,625).

It is clear that recorded crime is spread unevenly across the country’s provinces. In Limpopo province the crime rate was 2,497 per 100,000 of the population. Residents of the Western Cape, Gauteng and the Northern Cape, for example, were over three times as likely of becoming a victim of a recorded crime during 2001/02, than Limpopo residents (Figure 3).

In respect of recorded violent crime only, the rate during 2001/02 was highest in the Northern Cape (3,016 violent crimes per 100,000 of the population), followed by the Western Cape (2,878) and Gauteng (2,726).



Source: SAPS Crime Information Analysis Centre