

CRIME PROFILE: BURGLARY

Burglary is commonly understood to involve the unlawful entry of someone into a house to steal property. Confusion often arises in the way people distinguish burglary from robbery. The clearest distinction is that burglaries cannot occur outside premises of some sort, while a robbery can occur anywhere. For the survey, burglary was defined for the interviewers and the respondents in the following way:

- *Burglary* applies only to theft of property from, or forced entry into the respondents' residential or domestic premises, and not their work premises.

Burglary is therefore a crime which is committed against a household and not an individual (unless the respondent lives alone). This means that demographic variables like age and gender cannot be analysed for burglary.

The following characteristics of burglary 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, 543 incidents of burglary were reported to the survey in Pretoria. Most of these happened in 1997 (Table 7).

Table 7: Number of burglaries reported to the survey, 1993-April 1998

Year	Burglary
1993	40
1994	61
1995	69
1996	135
1997	152
Jan-April 1998	86
Total	543
% of total sample (n=2547)	21.3

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, 21 per cent were victims of burglary between 1993 and April 1998. This is the single most common type of crime

which occurred in Pretoria. Burglary was also the crime type reported most often to the city victim surveys in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town.

Of those who reported being a victim of burglary in Pretoria, nearly two-thirds were African (62%) and one-third (33%) were white. Although most victims were African (as was the case for violent crime and robbery/mugging above), compared to other crimes, fewer victims of burglary were African, and a large proportion were white. This is not surprising, since the incidence of property crime is largely determined by opportunity for theft, and race distinctions largely mirror those of wealth and ownership.

Table 8: Profile of burglary victims, 1993-April 1998

Race	%
African	62.1
White	33.0
Coloured	1.9
Asian	2.9
Total	100.0

Who is most at risk

The victim profile in Table 8 indicates some degree of risk for burglary in Pretoria. Table 4 shows the risk for all adults in Pretoria of burglary relative to other crime types. Of all those interviewed in Pretoria, Africans were more likely to be burgled (13%) than any other people (Table 4). Although the proportion of African burglary victims was smaller than the comparable proportion of violent crime and robbery victims, Table 4 illustrates that the risk for Africans is equally high for burglary – a property crime – as it is for violent crime. The expectation might be that white people (many of whom are better off economically than Africans) bear the brunt of property crime; indeed, Table 4 shows that the risk of burglary is much higher for whites than the risk of violent crime and mugging. However, Africans are equally likely to be victimised by violent crime as they are by burglary in Pretoria.

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

- *Risk of burglary within each race group:* Burglary affects Asians more often than any other race group in Pretoria. Of all the Asians interviewed in the survey, 28 per cent reported a housebreaking. In comparison, 22 per cent of all Africans, 20,5 per cent of whites and 11 per cent of coloureds reported being victims of burglary. Pretoria is the only city in South Africa where a smaller proportion of white people said they were burgled than did Africans. On the whole, property crimes such as burglary and car theft tend to affect white (and in most cases Asian) people more than Africans and coloureds, following patterns of wealth distribution. While this trend is evident in terms of Asian victimisation patterns in Pretoria, the same does not apply to white people (see Figure 16).
- *Risk of burglary for people living in different parts of the city:* Of those people who live in suburbs in Pretoria, 19 per cent reported a

housebreaking to the survey. People in suburbs are therefore more likely to be a victim of burglary than of any other crime covered in the survey. Of those respondents who said they live in townships, 15 per cent were burgled. Only 3 per cent and 2 per cent of people residing in the inner city and in informal settlements, respectively, reported a burglary. These low levels probably relate to the fact that there are few informal settlements in Pretoria, and because few inner city residents were actually interviewed in the survey.³¹ It is nevertheless also likely that burglaries are less common in inner city areas which are characterised by flats and apartments as opposed to houses. Police statistics show that 41 per cent of all burglaries in Pretoria occurred in four suburbs (Wierdabrug, Garsfontein, Brooklyn and Lyttelton), with only 2 per cent of burglaries reported at the Pretoria Central police station in the CBD.³²

When burglaries occurred

People who reported burglary to the survey were not asked where the crime happened, since it was assumed that the location of the offence would match where the victims said they live. Details of where burglaries took place are therefore covered in the section above on the risk of burglary for people living in different parts of the city.

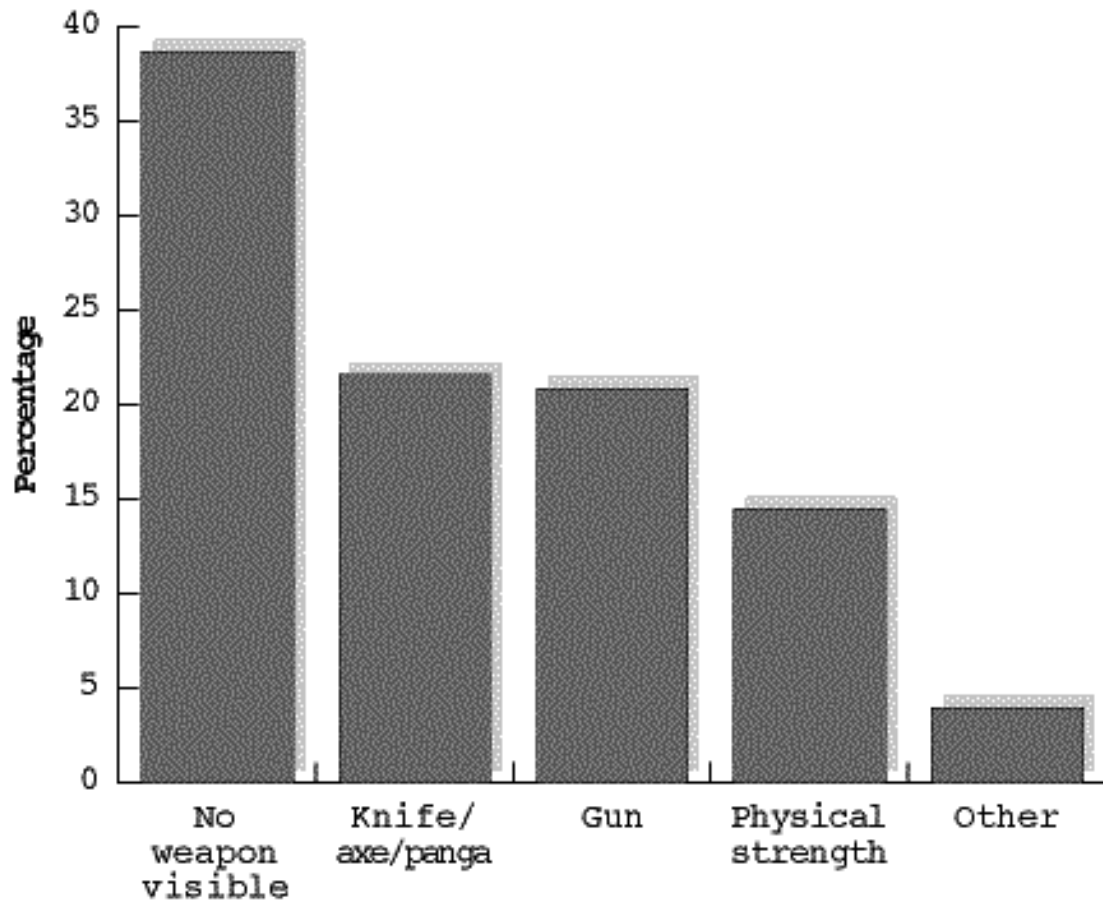
Most burglaries are committed during the week (67%). Although 34 per cent of those who said the offences occurred during the week could not recall the exact day, 22 per cent could – saying they were burgled on a Friday. Burglaries are probably more likely during the week when homes are left uninhabited (see below). However, this is not the main consideration since most occurred during the afternoon between 12h01-18h00 (34%) and at night between 18h01-24h00 (30,5%) – the times when people are more likely to be at home.

Nature of burglaries and violence used

Property was actually stolen in the vast majority of burglaries (84,5%) in Pretoria. Most victims (59%) said they did not have insurance to cover these losses. While the survey does not provide details on the type of security (if any) that victims had to protect their property at the time of the housebreaking, or how the offenders gained entry, this very high 'success' rate suggests that offenders gain easy entrance to people's homes. In the UK, for example, the British Crime Survey found that the majority of burglaries (56%) did not involve the loss of property.

The high rate of property loss cannot be attributed to the use of force in the course of burglaries. Victims said that, in 69 per cent of incidents, no one was at home when the crime was committed. Of those incidents in which someone was present, the majority were non-violent (59%). One third of burglaries when someone was present involved violence (33%), while in 8 per cent of cases, only threats were made. Nearly one quarter (23,5%) of victims who were present during the crime sustained injuries. A fairly even spread of weapons were reported by these victims: 22 per cent said a knife/axe/panga was used, 21 per cent reported the use of a gun and 18,5 per cent reported physical strength or other weapons. In 39 per cent of violent burglaries, no weapon was visible (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Weapons used in burglaries



How victims responded

When asked if they had changed their behaviour as a result of the crime, the vast majority of victims said they had (70%), although Africans were least likely to do this. Fifty six percent of Africans responded in this way compared with 83 per cent of whites. This probably relates both to the options available, as well as varying levels of fear of crime. The form that these behaviour changes took, illustrates this.

Most people chose to improve security in their homes (54%). A significant proportion also took other active precautions (39%), while being more alert (7%) was, rightly, not regarded as likely to reduce risk of burglary. Some of these measures, however, are restricted to those who can afford them. White victims were much more likely to improve home security (64%) than were Africans (37,5%), the majority of whom chose to change their behaviour (59%) instead. Only 27 per cent of whites in comparison changed their behaviour as a result of victimisation.

Taking these types of precautions is likely to make victims feel safer: 72 per cent of all people said this was the case. Only half of the African victims (51%) shared this view, however, compared with 86 per cent of whites, which

suggests that home security probably provides greater levels of perceived safety than simply taking active precautions and other measures of this kind.