

FACT FILE: CRIME

Background/History

A crime can be the act of violating or breaking a law, but it can also be the intention or attempt to break the law that is punished, e.g. conspiracy to commit an act of terrorism or attempted rape.

A crime is seen as an offense against society, and therefore it is the state that has to investigate and punish the criminal, as well as defend society from criminals and support victims of crime.

There is some variation in what is seen as a criminal act, for example in some countries adultery is seen as an immoral act, yet in others it is punishable by death, as in Nigeria and some other Muslim countries.

Lying can be seen as immoral, yet it is not criminal unless it falls under the category of slander, which is a crime.

In some countries in Africa, crime rates are very high.

Examples of crimes – there are a lot of things that you can do wrong!

- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| * Arson | * assault | * blackmail | * burglary |
| * child abuse | * domestic violence | * drug possession | * weapon possession |
| * embezzlement | * espionage | * forgery | * genocide |
| * hacking | * identity theft | * illegal gambling | * kidnapping |
| * looting | * manslaughter | * murder | * perjury |
| * prostitution | * rape | * robbery | * slander |
| * smuggling | * stalking | * tax evasion | * theft |
| * treason | * trespass | * vandalism | |

The Facts

Crime and Youth:

Youth crime is a big concern in Africa, particularly when over 2/3 of the population in cities is between 12 and 25.

In 1992, the African Union estimated that there were about 16 million street children in Africa. That figure was expected to be 32 million by 2000.

The number of street children in Zambia went from 35,000 to 70,000 between 1991 and 1994, while in Nairobi it went from 4500 to 30,000 in the same 3 year period.

The Othandweni project in Johannesburg, South Africa, was started to empower the street children

and youth of Johannesburg through four projects: basic care and human rights, health care, sport and recreation and entrepreneurial training. The project reaches an average of 600 youths a month.

Violence against Women and Children

According to Human Rights Watch, violence against women and children is widely recognized as a serious concern in South Africa. The South African government has introduced a new Sexual Offences Bill to make existing laws better. Police continue to receive training in handling rape cases. Specialized courts are being established, yet conviction rates remain low. In a country where one quarter of adults are HIV-positive, rape can mean a death sentence. In April 2002, the government pledged to provide rape survivors antiretroviral drugs, but government inaction, misinformation and delays in handing out the antiretroviral drugs continues to impede access to this lifesaving program. Children, an estimated 40 percent of rape and attempted rape survivors, are especially harmed by government failure to address their needs.

Children in Detention

According to international law child offenders should not be put in jail unless as a last resort, but in South Africa the number of juveniles in detention facilities- mostly jails - awaiting trial are currently at more than two thousand. While in some cases juveniles are held separately from adults, this is not always the case, leaving them particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse, violence, and gang related activities.

Whilst the number of cases of murder and rape in South Africa are amongst the highest per capita, there is a decline in the figures. But unfortunately there is a rise in the number of reported assaults and robberies.

Child Rape

An appalling epidemic of child rape is emerging in sub-Saharan Africa. This region, roughly the lower one-third of the African continent, is all ready being decimated by AIDS. Now recent crime statistics reveal a growing epidemic of rape involving young children.

According to a recent report by the South Africa Police Service, children (under the age of 18) are the victims of 41 percent of all reported rapes and attempted rapes. Even more disturbing is the fact that over 15 percent of the total reported rapes are against children under 11 years of age. In the year 2000, an average of 58 children were raped every single day.

21,538 rapes and attempted rapes against children reported in 2000. This marks a dramatic 300% rise in reported cases from 1994 (7,559 cases reported). However, despite this staggering increase in reported child rape, authorities believe that a large percentage of incidents still go unreported.

The AIDS epidemic has left an unprecedented number of children parentless and vulnerable to abuse. Henry Nel, executive director of the ROCK of Africa Mission in Zimbabwe, states, "We are seeing a tragic devaluation in the lives of little children. The life of a precious little girl is becoming mere medicine for a dying man."



A hate crime (bias crime),

loosely defined, is a crime committed because of the perpetrator's prejudices. This is a controversial political issue within the US. The U.S. Congress (HR 4797 - 1992) defined a hate crime as: "[a crime in which] the defendant's conduct was motivated by hatred, bias, or prejudice, based on the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity of another individual or group of individuals." In 1994, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act added disabilities to the above list.

In the last decade of the 20th century, U.S. legislation in many states has established harsher penalties for a number of crimes when they are also considered hate crimes; interestingly, however, very few of these statutes make it more likely for a murder to trigger the death penalty when it is found to have also been a hate crime. While some claim that these hate crimes laws exist because women and certain minorities have been victims and require special protection, others say that they exist because crimes motivated by hate deserve a harsher punishment.

A Pennsylvania legislator active in creating the classification of hate crime in Pennsylvania, and then expanding that classification to crimes against homosexuals, Rep. Mark B. Cohen of Philadelphia, said:

"Hate crimes deserve to be taken even more seriously than ordinary crimes because they victimize all they threaten as well as all they directly harm"

Current Events

The International Criminal Court (ICC) was started on 17 July 1998, it is the first ever permanent, treaty based, international criminal court established to promote the rule of law and ensure that the gravest international crimes do not go unpunished.



Case Study: Issues facing South Africa

In some countries in Africa, crime rates are very high. High crime rates are fuelled by growing poverty and inequality. Homicides tripled in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980's.

It has become increasingly clear to economists that large-scale political and criminal violence threatens to relegate several countries and regions of the developing world to a perpetual trap of poverty and slow or negative economic growth.

Lots of people think of South Africa when they think of crime in Africa. This is because it's got one of the highest crime rates in the world.

South Africa used to be ruled by a small group of white people who made black people live by strict rules, even though the huge majority of the country is black.

This system, called apartheid, ended in 1994. But there was loads of violence and crime because of the unfair system.

People hoped there'd be less crime after apartheid ended, but it hasn't really happened. Loads of violent crimes have actually gone up.

Sudans Death Penalty

Intisar Bakri Abdulgader gave birth to a child in September after becoming pregnant outside marriage. She was convicted of adultery and sentenced by a local court in the Khartoum suburb of Kalakia in July when she was seven months pregnant. The sentence was upheld by the appeal court in August. The alleged father of the child has reportedly not been charged but will have a blood test to establish paternity.

Following the postponement of the punishment from 20 December to 23 January due to the girl's poor health, Amnesty International is also asking people all over the world to write to the Sudanese authorities asking them to stop the punishment going ahead.

Intisar is caring for her four-month-old son, Dori. She is said to be very frightened at the prospect of the punishment and is reportedly eating and sleeping very little.

Under article 146 of Sudan's Penal Code, adultery is punishable by execution by stoning if the offender is married, or by one hundred lashes if the offender is not married. Adultery is defined as sexual intercourse with a man without being lawfully bound to him. Although the penal codes are based on an interpretation of Islamic law everyone in the north of Sudan is subject to them. Intisar's family are Christians from the south of Sudan who fled to the north to escape fighting near their home.

Amnesty International UK Media Director Lesley Warner said: "The Sudanese authorities must not carry out this vicious sentence on a young girl.

"It is a cruel punishment which completely contravenes basic international human rights law, to which Sudan is a party. The authorities should abolish all these cruel punishments now."

Scores of people were sentenced to amputation or flogging in Sudan last year. Flogging is frequently carried out immediately after sentencing leaving no chance for appeal, even when there are concerns about whether a fair trial has been held.

The Sudanese Penal Code, which is partly based on interpretation of Islamic legal doctrines, allows for penalties including flogging and amputations. Under Sudanese law, all who live in northern Sudan, whether Muslim or Christian (like Intisar Bakri Abdulgader), fall under the penalties of the Sudanese Penal Code's interpretation of religious law. The use of religious law is an issue of contention in the ongoing peace negotiations between the Sudanese government and rebels in the South.

(AI article)

Kenya on Rape

The report: Kenya. Rape - the invisible crime - looks at violence, particularly sexual violence, against women and focuses on rape committed by both security officials and private individuals. It examines why women subjected to violence are inadequately protected by the law and why those who commit violence against women continue to operate with impunity.

Its conclusion is rather sobering. Every day, women are physically and sexually abused in all social and ethnic groups all over Kenya. It is a crime that shocks and traumatises the victim, and undermines the status of women in society. Yet, it is largely suffered in silence.

Victims of rape often face insurmountable obstacles in trying to bring perpetrators to justice. Many women who have been victims of rape or other forms of sexual abuse are too intimidated by certain cultural attitudes and state inaction to seek redress. To do so can often lead to hostility from the family, the community and the police, with little hope of success. Those who do seek justice are confronted by a system that ignores, denies and even condones violence against women, and protects perpetrators, whether they are state officials or private individuals," Amnesty international said.

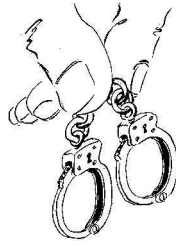
Amnesty International believes that acts of violence against women constitute torture for which the state is accountable when they are of such nature and severity envisaged by the concept of torture in international standards and the state has failed to fulfill its obligation to provide effective protection, investigation and prosecution.

"Rape is torture when the state has failed in its responsibilities to protect, investigate and provide redress to women victims. The Kenyan government should reform both its laws and practices to end impunity for violence against women, and to conform with its obligations under international humanitarian law," Amnesty International said.

The government has consistently stated its intention to promote gender equality through legislation, but has failed to implement constitutional provisions, failed to incorporate into domestic law any of the international instruments that it has ratified and that promote and protect women's rights.

The Penal Code does not recognise marital rape as a criminal offence because of the presumption, especially in criminal law, that consent to sexual intercourse is given by the act of marriage. No legal challenge to this presumption has been made through the courts in Kenya. The lesser charge of assault is more commonly used in marital rape cases, carrying with it a lower maximum sentence.

"Despite its moral and legal obligations, the government has not reformed Kenya's laws to make all acts of violence against women criminal offences, nor has it addressed the discriminatory practices of the police force, prisons services and court system, It is the failure of the state to take action against such abuses, whether they are committed by state officials or private individuals, that allows them to continue and operate with impunity. The state has a responsibility to take action in order to protect women from continuing violence, Amnesty International said.



Among the cases raised in Amnesty International's report are those of Mary, Agnes and Louise who all have several things in common. They have each been badly beaten by men in their families. They each say they have been raped by those men. They have suffered for years with no prospect of help from the authorities. The police are unwilling to become involved in cases of domestic violence and are biased against women, particularly poor women, and there are no state facilities to protect women fleeing domestic violence.

While women's achievements are being celebrated all over the world on International Women's Day today, women who continue to be raped and beaten and denied their basic rights - whether by state officials or family members - must not be forgotten.

"The year 2002 will see both presidential and legislative elections in Kenya. Members of parliament, voters and women in Kenya should do everything in their power to make women's rights a top priority on the election agenda and ensure that candidates are gender-sensitive in both their policies and attitudes," the organisation said.

(AI article)

Move to ban small arms in Africa
Small arms make ethnic conflicts more deadly
Countries in East and Central Africa may move to ban the civilian ownership of small arms in a bid to fight insecurity in the region.

It is estimated that there are 100 million illicit small arms in Africa, crippling development in many areas of the continent.

Some countries like Kenya and Tanzania have blamed the increase in violent crimes on the small arms that are smuggled into their countries.

However, a United Nations report earlier this year accused Somalia's neighbours of breaking an arms embargo on the war-torn country.

The BBC's Cathy Jenkins in Nairobi says measure being considered at a conference on the trade in small arms in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, are:

- Plans to enhance the capacity of police, customs and border guards
- The prohibition of the civilian ownership of all light weapons, semi-automatic rifles and machine guns.

Delegates to the Nairobi conference were reminded of just how devastating the proliferation of small arms has been for their countries.

A summary of the consequences described how the sub-region has been ravaged by the easy availability of light weapons which are used in inter-ethnic conflicts, by urban criminals, and by cattle-rustlers.

Daunting task

Some areas are no-go areas for development workers, thus depriving whole communities of much-needed help.

And the majority of victims are women, the elderly and children.

Kenya's Foreign Minister Marsden Madoka told delegates that the task was a daunting one and that their respective governments had to demonstrate unwavering political determination to follow through initiatives.

He said it was crucial that the conference came up with concrete proposals to eradicate the problem.

Observers from civil society agreed with the urgency of his message.

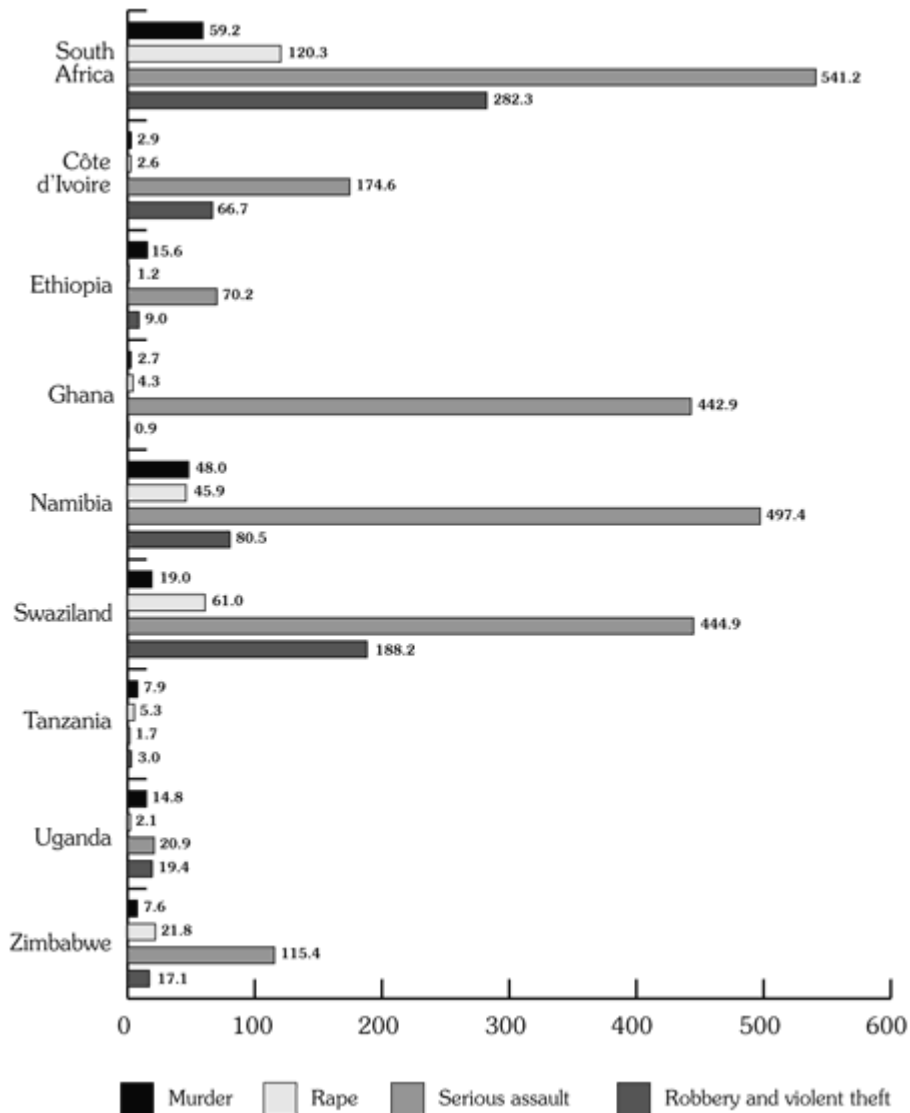
Haruun Ruun of the New Sudan Council of Churches said that unnecessary suffering had to come to an end, so that people and communities could develop.

Two years ago, the countries of the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa launched an initiative to combat the problem of small arms trafficking.

This week's conference has been called to review the steps taken so far.

Statistics

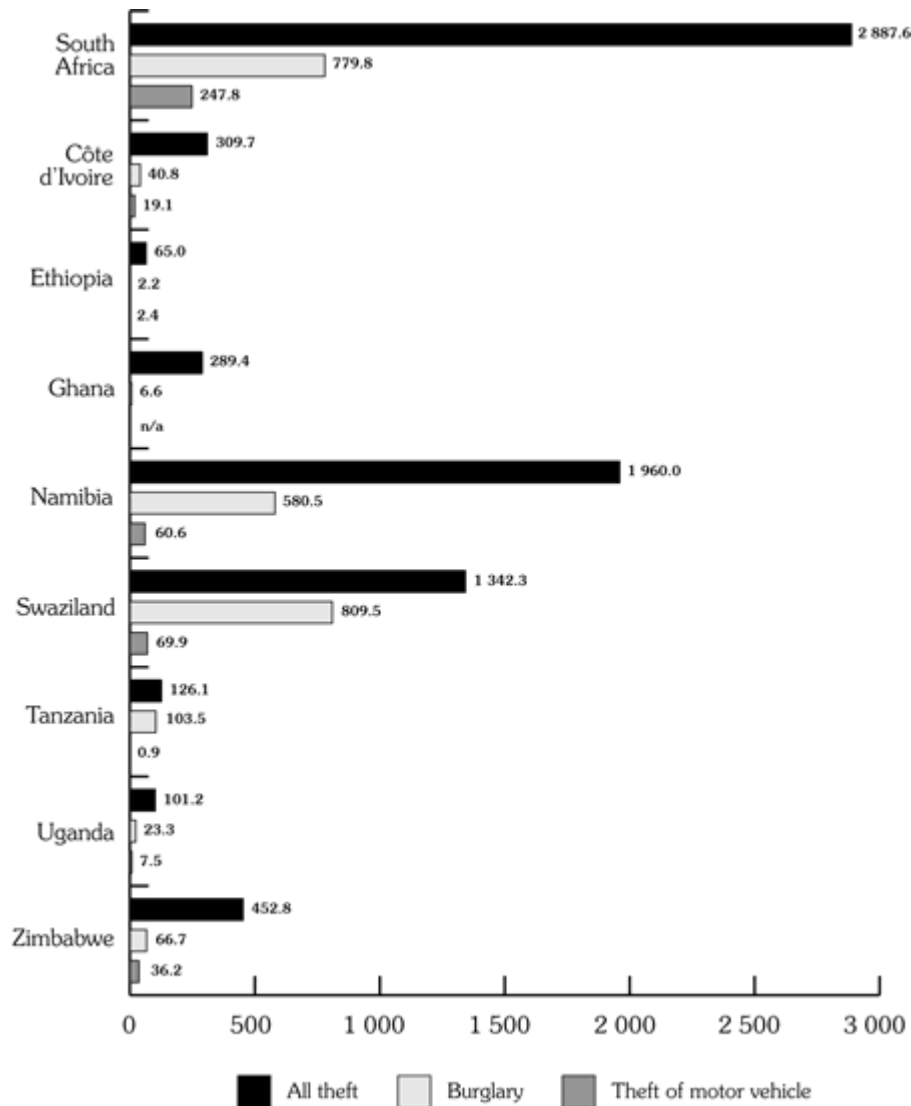
Figure 1: Number of violent crimes per 100 000, selected African countries



The 1997 Interpol report provides crime data for nine sub-Saharan countries only (including South Africa). The per capita crime rate for the major violent crimes of murder, rape, and robbery and violent theft was substantially higher in South Africa than in the other eight sub-Saharan countries. South Africa also had the highest per capita serious assault rate (541 per 100 000 of the population),

but this was closely followed by Namibia (497 per 100 000).

Figure 2: Number of property crimes per 100 000, selected African countries



The Interpol figures also indicate that, of the nine listed sub-Saharan countries, South Africa had the highest per capita levels of theft, in general, and vehicle theft specifically. Care needs to be taken when comparing South Africa's vehicle theft figures with that of other sub-Saharan countries, however. According to the Interpol figures, the per capita level of vehicle theft in South Africa (248 per 100 000 of the population) was almost four times as high as in the second worst affected country, Swaziland (70 per 100 000). Given South Africa's relative wealth and economic dominance in the region, it is likely that there are substantially more cars in South Africa than in other sub-Saharan countries.

In respect of burglary, Swaziland had the highest level in 1997 (810 cases per 100 000 of the

population), followed by South Africa (780 Cases per 100 000), and Namibia (580 Cases per 100 000).

VICTIMS OF CRIME SURVEY

Police crime statistics are generally considered to be the most accessible source of information on how many crimes are committed in a country. However, police records contain only information on crimes which are reported to and recorded or uncovered by the police. For a number of reasons, such information is not sufficient. Because of inadequate recording practices and political agendas, crime statistics sometimes reflect only the police's performance in recording crimes. Moreover, some crimes are reported but not recorded. This happens when victims call the police and the police judge the crime as not sufficiently serious to warrant its recording.⁴

Crime victims do not report crimes for a number of reasons.⁵ The propensity to report crimes is likely to differ from country to country and by type of crime. Generally, for serious property-related crimes - especially where the stolen property is insured - the reporting rate is high. However, for some violent offences - especially sexual offences - reporting rates tend to be low.

The general tendency is for people to report the more serious property crimes.

"In most cases, after a simple cost-benefit assessment, victims consider that the small loss is not worth the burden of going to the police station, filling in forms and answering questions which are sometimes perceived to be embarrassing."⁶

Victim surveys seek to overcome the phenomenon of underreporting of crime and the fact that the police do not record all crimes which are brought to their attention. Ideally, victim survey results should be read in conjunction with official crime statistics:

"Victimisation surveys do not cover all types of crime and they can only reveal so much about trends in crime over a longer period of time. To get a fuller picture, the results must be supplemented by data from other sources. UN statistics on officially recorded crime and UN victim survey data, taken together, provide important information about crime trends at a comparative cross-national level."⁷

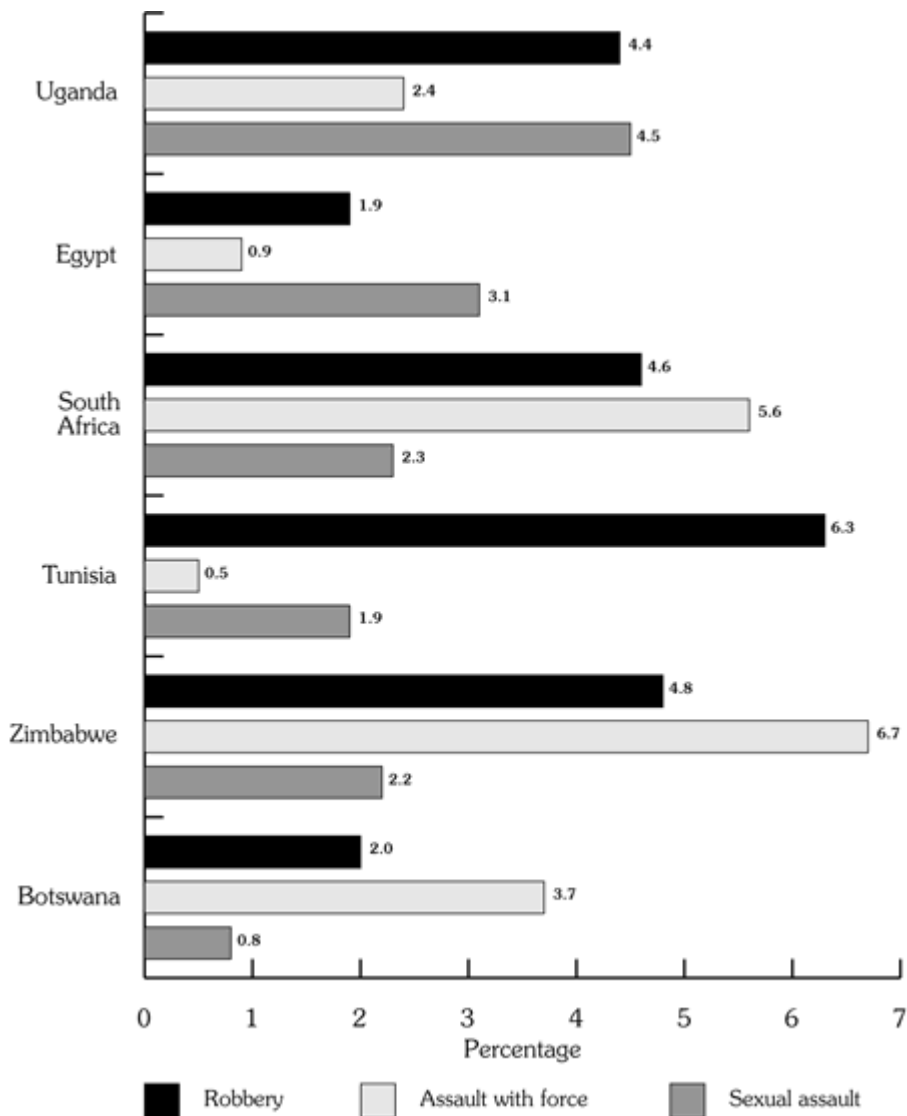
In 1996-97, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) conducted victim surveys in 17 countries of the developing world.⁸ Seven of these countries are in Africa, six in Latin America and four in Asia.⁹ The respondents were generally drawn from the population of the largest cities in the selected countries. Respondents were asked about their victimisation experiences over a one-year period preceding the survey.

Overall, the selected Asian countries consistently ranked the lowest for all types of crime, while African and Latin American countries had the highest victimisation rates for all types of crime. All regions were mostly affected by theft (7% in Asia and 13% in Africa and Latin America over a one-year period), while victimisation rates for all other types of crime were lower.¹⁰

VIOLENT CRIME

According to the 1996-97 UNICRI victim survey, for the crime type of sexual assault (which includes rape, attempted rape and indecent assault, but excludes offensive behaviour), Ugandans indicated the highest level of victimisation of 4.5% over a one-year period. This was followed by Egyptians (3.1%) and South Africans (2.3%). Victimization levels in respect of sexual assault were the lowest in Botswana (0.8%). African levels of sexual assault compared favourably with some Latin American countries. For example, Brazil had 8% and Colombia 5%. Asian levels, however, were the lowest.

Figure 3: Violent crime, selected African countries



Robbery was the highest in Tunisia (6.3%), followed by Zimbabwe (4.8%) and South Africa (4.6%).¹¹ As with sexual assault, Botswana had the lowest victimisation level for robbery (2%) of the six African

countries surveyed. Some Latin American victimisation levels were again higher for robbery: Brazil had 11.3% and Colombia 10.6%.

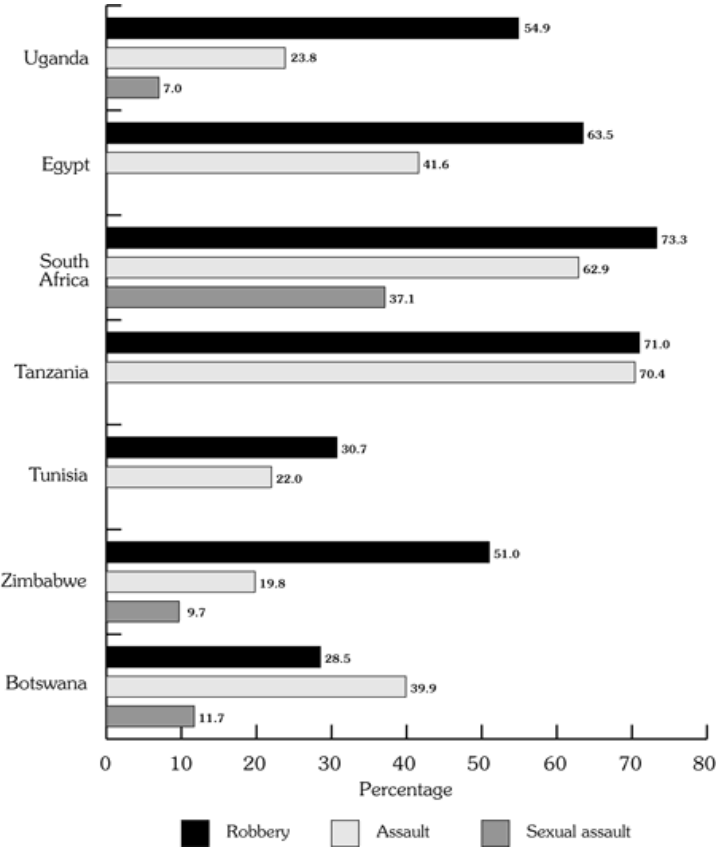
'Assault with force' victimisation levels were the highest in Zimbabwe (6.7%) followed by South Africa (5.6%) and Botswana (3.7%).¹²

For the 'assault with force' category, most of the surveyed African countries registered higher victimisation rates than Latin American countries, with surveyed Asian countries registering the lowest victimisation levels.

Sometimes, the offenders used a weapon to commit robberies, assaults and sexual assaults.¹³ Overall, weapons were used more frequently in the developing world than in the other regions surveyed for the commission of these crimes.

Among the African countries surveyed, South African victims were the most likely to state that the offender used a weapon in the sexual assault (37.1% of sexual assaults), and robbery (73.3%). Tanzania had the highest incidence of assault where a weapon was used (70.4%) followed by South Africa (62.9%). In all other African countries surveyed, less than half of the assaults involved the use of a weapon.¹⁴

Figure 4: Proportion of violent crimes committed with weapons



Victims of assault were asked whether they suffered personal injuries as a result of the aggression

perpetrated against them. The seriousness of the injuries can be gauged by the need of victims to ask for a doctor's assistance after the incident.

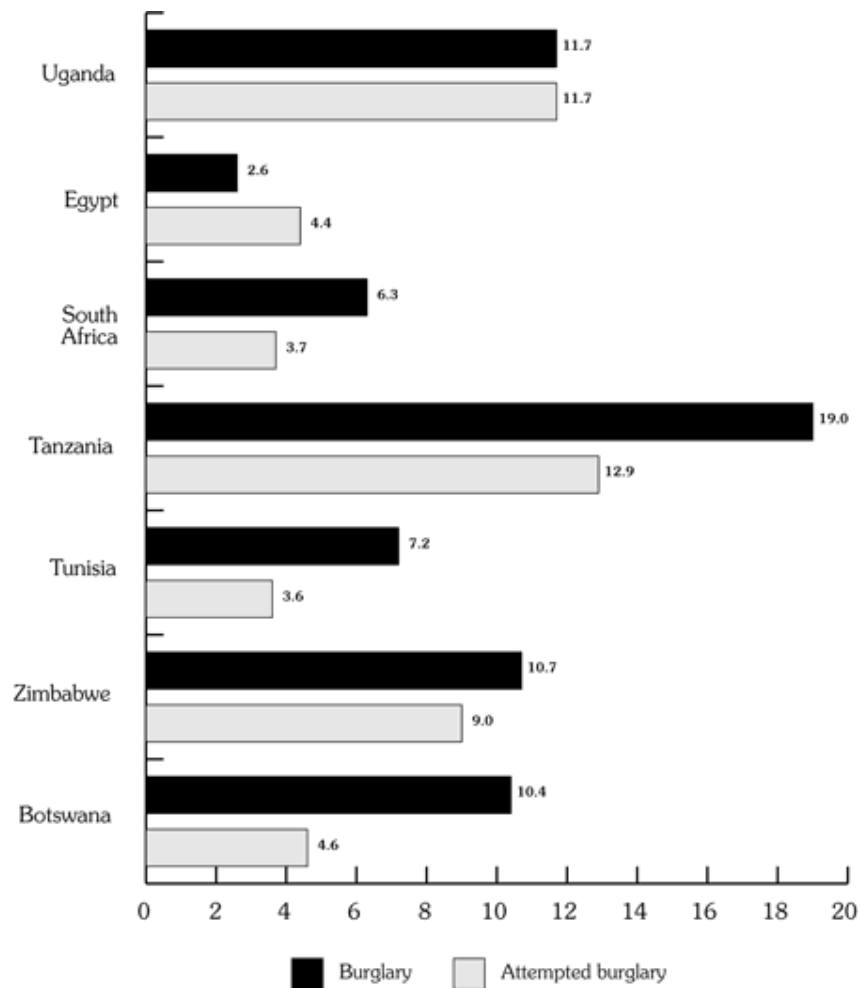
In Tanzania, 53.9% of assault victims were injured and 32% saw a doctor. This was followed by South Africa where 43% of assault victims were injured and 31.7% consulted a doctor. In all other African countries surveyed, the injury rate was lower as was the propensity of assault victims to see a doctor after the incident. The injury rate was also generally lower in the Asian and Latin American countries surveyed compared to the African countries.²⁵

PROPERTY CRIMES

According to the 1996-97 UNICRI victim survey, Tanzanians experienced the highest levels of victimisation with regard to burglary and attempted burglary. Thus, 19% of the Tanzanian survey respondents stated that they had been a victim of a burglary, and 12.9% said that they had fallen victim of an attempted burglary over a one-year period.

According to the survey, South Africa had one of the lowest risks of burglary and attempted burglary compared to the other surveyed African countries: 6.3% and 3.7% of South Africans stated that they had been the victim of, respectively, a burglary or attempted burglary over a one-year period.

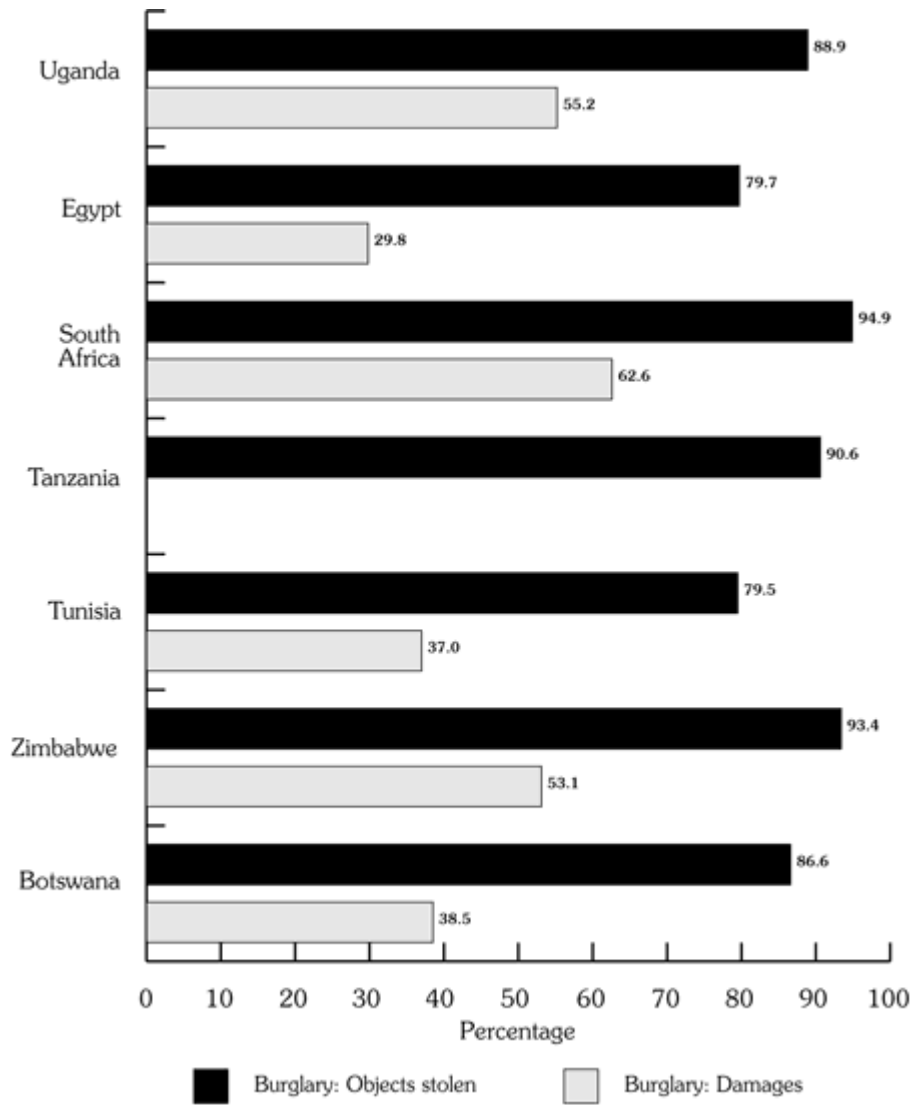
Figure 5: Burglary and attempted burglary, African countries



Actual theft during burglaries happened more frequently in developing countries than in the rest of the world. In poorer areas, stolen goods typically include money, food and inexpensive household items such as clothing or linen, which are most probably stolen for the personal use of the burglar.

In wealthier areas where homeowners generally keep their money in a bank and other valuable items in safes, burglars tend to take what is available and give preference to objects which are easily resold. In this respect, the most frequently stolen objects are those that are easier to place on the market of stolen goods, such as electrical appliances, television sets and radios.

Figure 6: Proportion of burglaries involving theft or damage



"The difference in objects stolen between affluent and poor regions is opportunity determined, in terms of the type of objects available, or the level of protection. Furthermore, the level of protection determines the damage involved in breaking into the house, which is also an indicator of the degree of difficulty that the burglar has to face in committing the offence. It is therefore clear that behind burglaries in well or poorly protected houses, there will be different cost-effectiveness calculations that will take into account whether the prospective target is worth the risk involved in committing the crime."²⁶

Of all the African countries surveyed, South African burglary victims were the most likely to state that something had been stolen (94.9% of burglaries), or that damage had been caused (62.6% of burglaries). In fact, in this respect South Africa experienced the highest level of damages occurring during the course of a burglary of all 17 developing countries surveyed. In respect of objects being stolen during the course of a burglary, South Africa was placed second after India.

The UNICRI survey also asked vehicle owners whether any of their household vehicles (including trucks and vans) had been stolen (vehicles taken away for the purposes of 'joyriding' were included in the question).

South Africans indicated the highest level of vehicle thefts with 7.6% of surveyed vehicle owners indicating that one of their household vehicles had been stolen. This was followed by Uganda (5.9%) and Tanzania (5.8%).

In respect of theft from a vehicle (such as, for example, a car radio or money left lying inside a vehicle), Tanzanians indicated that they were the worst affected with just over a quarter of vehicle owners indicating that something has been stolen from one of their household vehicles over a one-year period. This was followed by Zimbabwe (21.2%) and Tunisia (17.8%). Among South African respondents, only 14% of vehicle owners stated that one of their household vehicles had something stolen from it.

An important indicator of the nature of vehicle theft and of the efficiency of the police's response to this type of crime is the data on vehicle recovery rates. It can be argued that a high recovery rate indicates that vehicles are stolen for joy-riding purposes. This might explain why vehicle recovery rates are very high in industrialised countries (84% in North America and 74% in Western Europe). "The recovery rate in the developing world is much lower than in the industrialised world which, comparatively speaking, indicates both lower levels of efficiency in recovery and less joy-riding."¹²

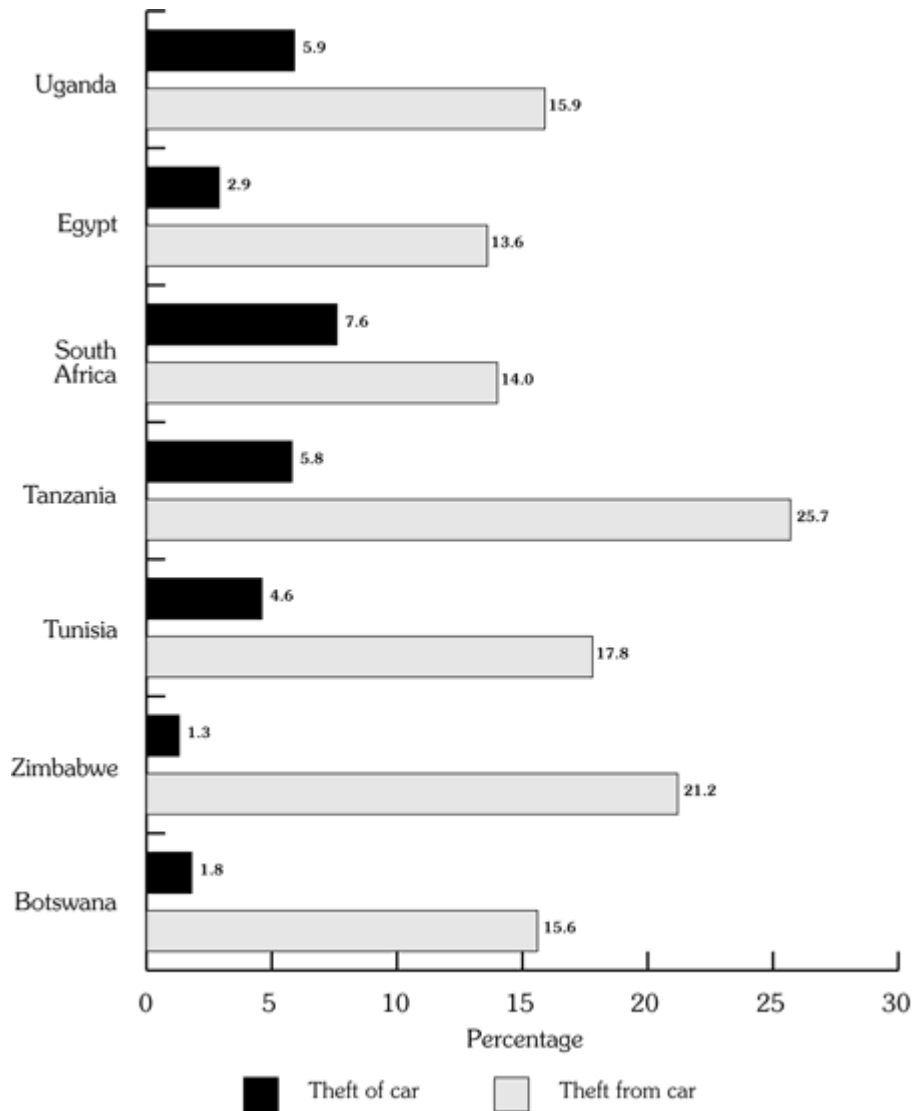
Among the African countries surveyed Zimbabwe had the lowest recovery rate (30.2% of stolen vehicles recovered), followed by South Africa (45.8%). In all the other surveyed African countries, more than half of the stolen vehicles were recovered.

OTHER CRIMES

Apart from the types of crime which have been dealt with so far, other forms of victimisation covered by the UNICRI victim survey included vehicle vandalism, theft of a motorcycle, theft of a bicycle, theft of personal property and assault without force. During the year preceding the interviews, approximately a quarter of the respondents from all participating countries experienced at least one of these types of victimisation.



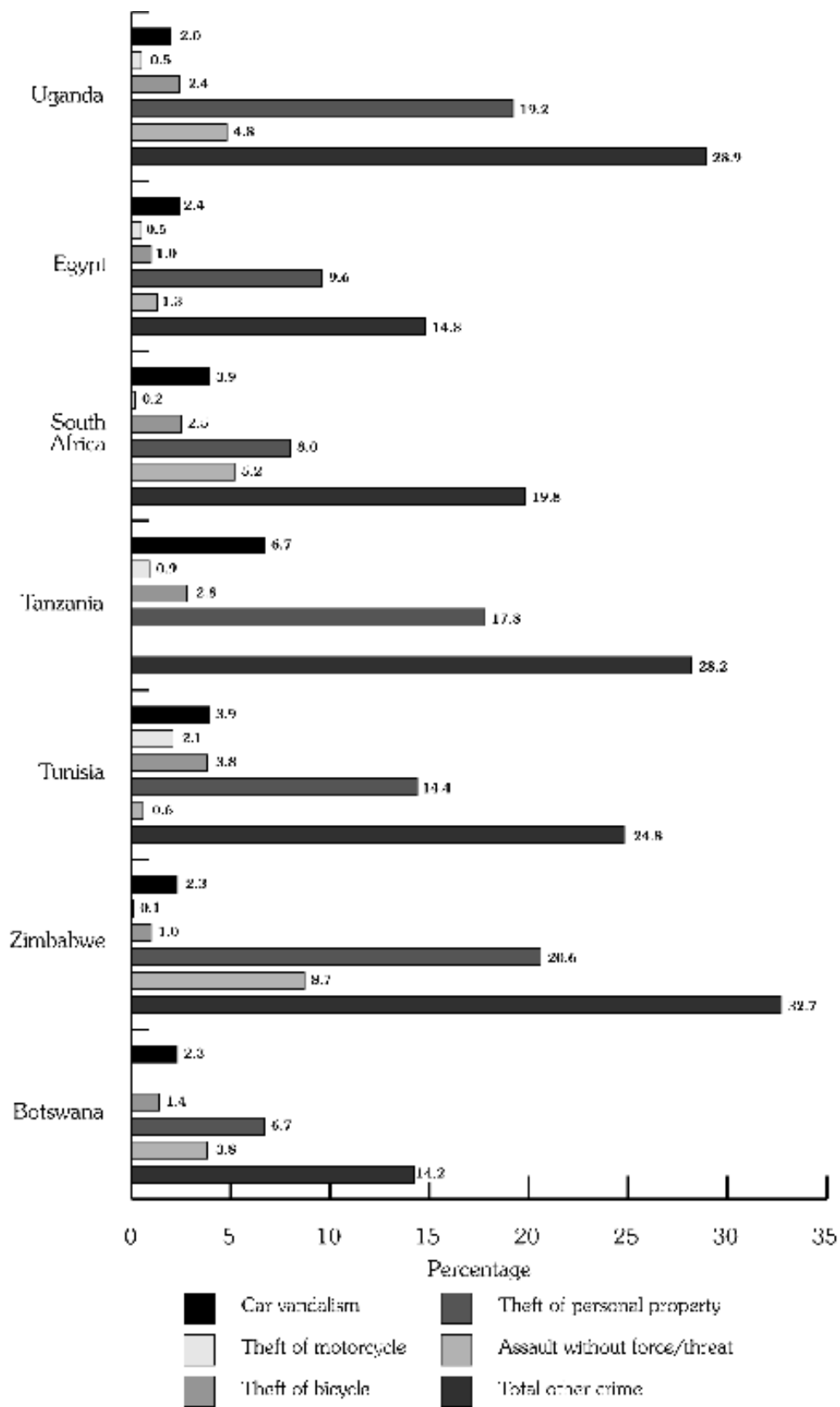
Figure 7: Theft of and from vehicles, African countries



If all these crimes are taken together, Zimbabweans experienced the highest level of victimisation (32.7%) of the seven African countries surveyed. This was followed by Uganda (28.9%) and Tanzania (28.2%). South Africa was in the middle with 19.8%. South Africa experienced relatively high levels of assault without force (5.2%), second only to Zimbabwe (8.7%).

Taking the category of 'other crimes' together, the surveyed African countries compared poorly to the Asian countries which generally registered considerably lower victimisation rates. A number of Latin American countries, however, had the highest victimisation rates of all the countries surveyed. For example, Colombia had the highest with 35.1% followed by Argentina (30.7%).²⁸

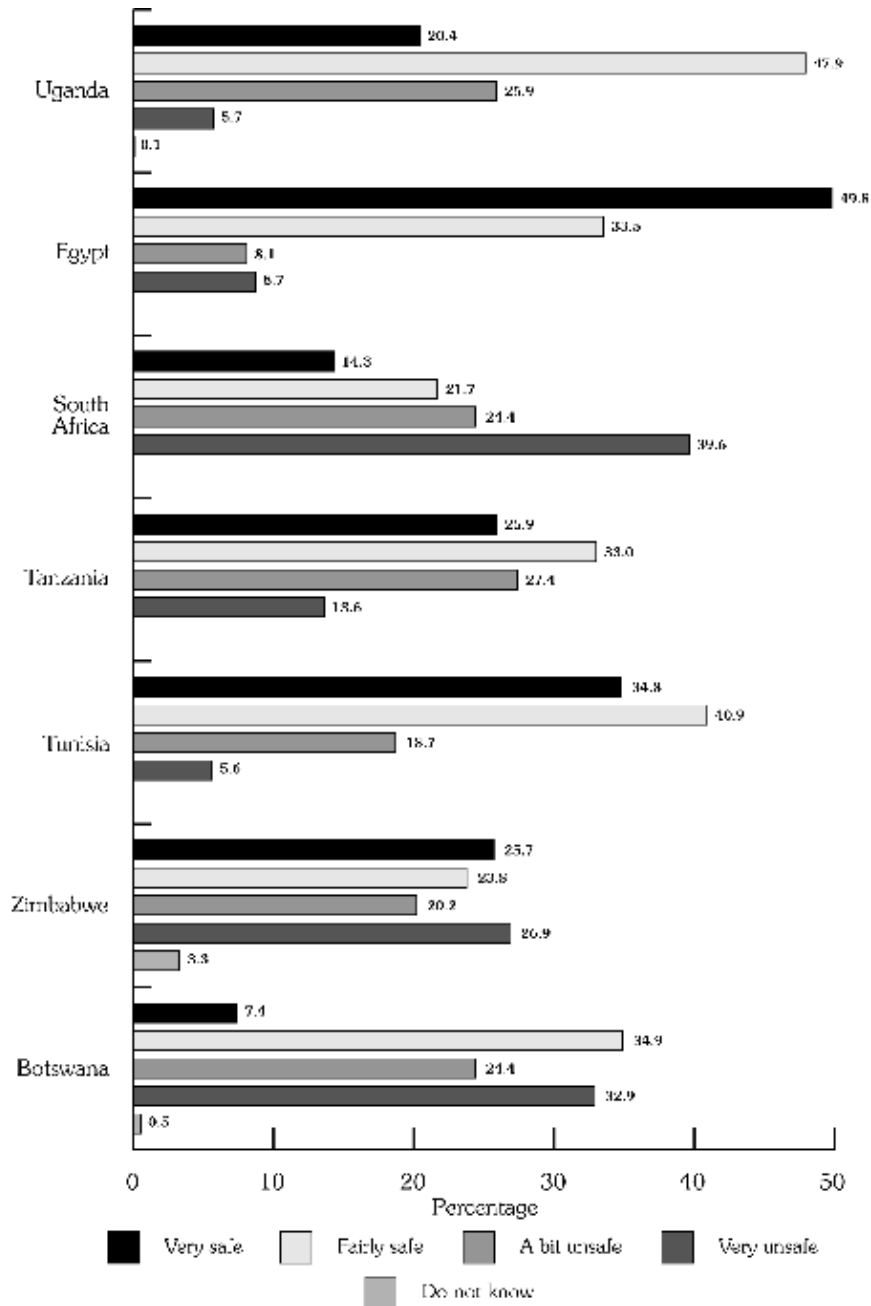
Figure 8: Other crime, African countries



Fear of Crime

The UNICRI survey asked respondents whether they felt very safe, fairly safe, a bit unsafe or very unsafe in the street after dark. Of all the African countries surveyed (and all Latin American and Asian countries), South Africans were the most likely group to say that they felt very unsafe in the street after dark (39.6%). After Botswana (7.4%), South Africa was the country where the fewest respondents felt very safe (14.3%).

Figure 9: Feeling unsafe after dark, African countries



A further question gauging people's fear of crime was whether they avoided places when going out after dark. Among the African countries surveyed, Zimbabwe had the highest proportion of respondents stating that they avoided places when going out after dark (56.7%), followed by Egypt (54.4%) and South Africa (51.7%).

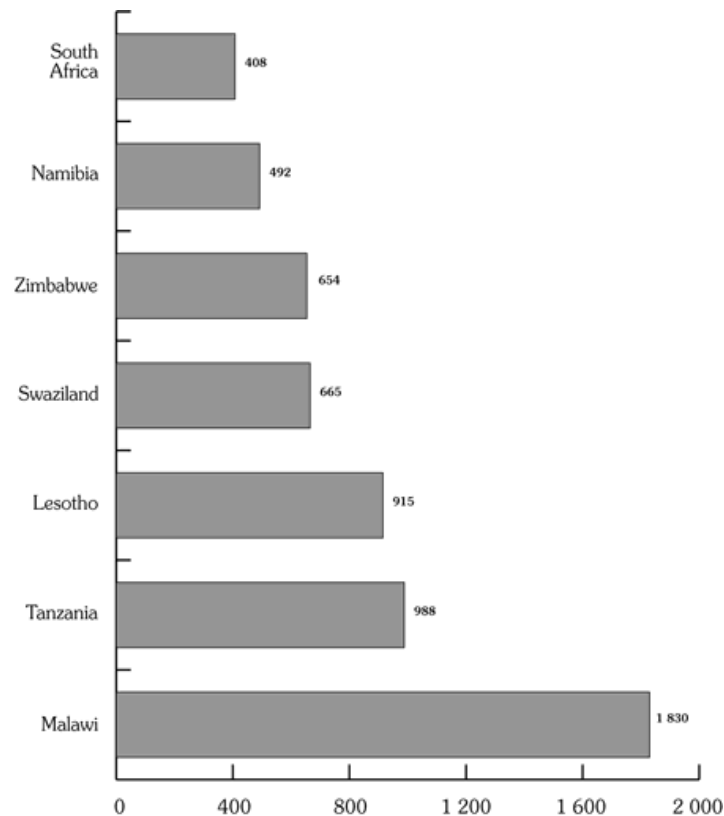
A third question seeking to measure the fear of crime asked respondents whether they felt that a burglary was likely to occur in their household in the next year. Respondents in Botswana were most likely to state that a burglary was very likely in their household in the next 12 months (26.6%), followed by South Africans (25.1%), and Tanzanians (23.3%).²⁹

POLICING LEVELS

It is sobering to realise that levels of policing in a country have a limited impact on crime levels only. Generally, developed states have a favourable police to population ratio. For example, in Italy the ratio is 1:102. That is, for every uniformed police officer or detective there are 102 people living in Italy. Portugal has a ratio of 1:225 and Germany of 1:315.

In South Africa, there is one police officer for every 408 people. However, some developed countries have a police to population ratio which is not as favourable as South Africa's. For example, in Canada the ratio is 1:552 and in New Zealand, 1:557, yet the levels of serious violent crime in these countries are significantly lower than in South Africa.

Figure 10: Number of residents per police officer

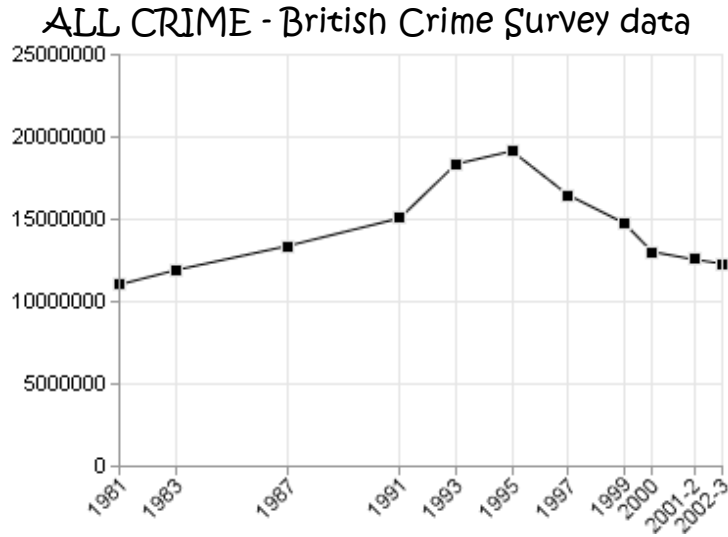


However, compared to more developed countries, South Africa's civilian to police officer ratio does not reveal the full picture. While the South African Police Service (SAPS) is large, with 105 000 uniformed police officers and detectives, the service's effectiveness is hampered by a number of factors:²⁰

- South Africa has a high crime rate, especially in respect of serious and violent crime. The investigation of such crimes consume considerable police resources.
- South Africa has a relatively youthful population. In 1996, over 44% of the country's population was under the age of 20.²¹ Young people commit more crime than adults - especially violent crime.²²
- South Africa is geographically large with the result that police resources are thinly spread in the country's rural areas.
- South Africa has a rapidly urbanising population. The anonymity provided by expanding cities and the unstructured terrain of the growing number of informal settlements make effective policing difficult.

- Many officers in the SAPS are poorly trained. According to the previous national police commissioner, George FivaZ, a quarter of all police officers are 'functionally illiterate'. Moreover, 34 800 have only ten years of schooling or less, and over 8 000 do not have a driver's licence.²³

South Africa's police to population ratio compares favourably to that of many developing states — especially sub-Saharan countries. While South Africa has a police to population ratio of 1:408, Tanzania has a ratio of 1:998 and Malawi of 1: 1 830.²⁴



CONCLUSION

In terms of crimes reported to the police, South Africa has extraordinary high levels of violent crime — both by global and by African standards. Moreover, in respect of property crime — especially vehicle theft — South Africa has one of the highest levels of crime among sub-Saharan states for which figures are available.

However, when victim survey results are analysed, this picture changes. In respect of violent crime South Africa's crime levels are high but not the highest when compared to a number of other African countries. It is striking, however, that South African victims of violent crime are more likely to be attacked or threatened with a weapon compared to the victims of all the surveyed African countries. Not surprisingly, South African assault victims are very likely to suffer serious injuries.

In respect of property crimes, South Africans fall somewhere in the middle in relation to other African countries surveyed by UNICRI. However, in respect of burglary, South African victims were the most likely to suffer some loss through burglary, while South African vehicle theft victims are — after their Zimbabwean counterparts — the least likely to have their vehicle recovered by the police.

It is undeniable that levels of crime in South Africa are high by global and African levels — especially in respect of violent crime. It would seem, however, that in respect of a number of violent crimes and most property crimes, South Africans are less likely to be victimised than many Africans inhabiting a number of countries on the rest of the continent.

Glossary of useful terms

Antiretroviral drugs: medicine used to reduce the chances of contracting the HIV virus.

'Treaty based': An agreement by 2 or more countries to abide by some laws that they have agreed to. The most famous 2 international treaties are the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which contains rules about torture, capital punishment etc, and the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which contains rules about health, religion and family. Most countries who are members of the UN have signed these two treaties.

