



CRIME IN CAPE TOWN: 2001- 2006

A brief analysis of reported Violent, Property and Drug-related crime in Cape Town

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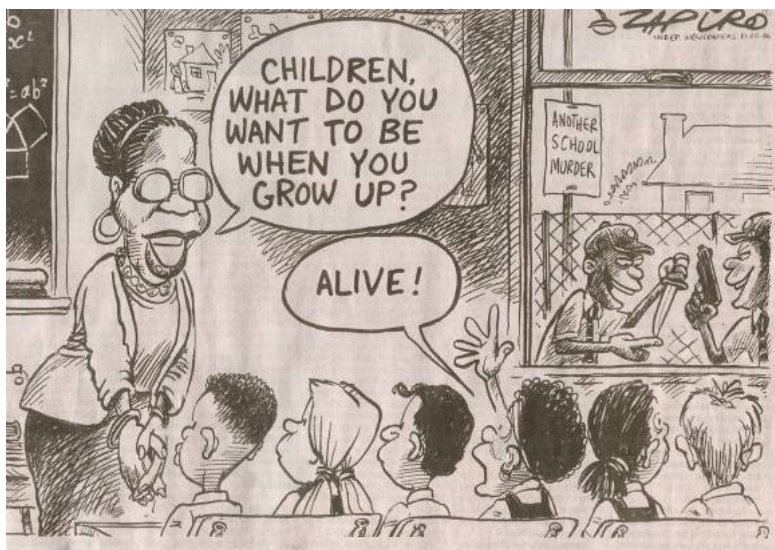
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Source: Cape Times 11/10/2006

'Insecurity will be a growing concern in cities of the developed world in the future' –
(United Nations, 2006)

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Citation: City of Cape Town (2007), Crime in Cape Town: 2001 - 2006, Strategic Development Information and GIS Department, Janet Gie and Craig Haskins, 19 pages.

1 CRIME

1.1 Introduction

The high incidence of crime in South Africa, especially violent crime, is one of the most disturbing problems that challenge this country at present.

This report focuses on three categories of crime, namely violent crime, property crime and drug-related crime. The report also illustrates comparisons between Cape Town and South Africa, presents information within each of these categories and provides some trend information (2001 to 2006).

1.2 Context

Poverty is often cited as a cause of crime and violence, but increasing international evidence suggests that poverty *per se* has little to do with crime and violence levels. Rather crime and violence occur more frequently in settings where there is an unequal distribution of scarce resources or power (relative poverty) coupled with weak institutional controls. Crime increases when the social control that operates through formal institutions (such as the police and judicial systems) and informal institutions, including civil society organisations, breaks down or is weakened. Although there is no simple or direct causal relationship between inequality and violence, inequality does appear to exacerbate the likelihood of violent crime, especially when it coincides with other factors. This theory is based on the assumption that individuals or groups are more likely to engage in violence if they perceive a gap between what they have and what they believe they deserve (United Nations, 2006).

Plans for South Africa to host the next Soccer World Cup, in 2010, have focussed international attention on the country's crime rate with organisers having to answer questions not only about whether the country will have enough stadiums or hotel rooms, but also whether the expected 350 000 foreign visitors will be safe (SAPA-AP, 2006).

One of Cape Town's main challenges is the high crime rate. Apart from crime's devastating direct consequences for its victims, the social and psychological consequences of crime occurring in the city and the subsequent fear of crime should not be underestimated. It negatively affects the economy of the city as tourists are put off by the high crime rate and international, national and local businesses are discouraged from investing in Cape Town. This contributes to rising poverty in the city as it limits the assets and livelihood sources of the poor. The fear of crime also leads to increased fragmentation and the polarisation of the city, characterised by enforced segregation through gated communities, stigmatisation and exclusion (City of Cape Town, 2006a).

The crime issue and the role of government in addressing crime have received much publicity in the press lately, and there has been great pressure on government to deal more effectively with the crime issue.

In his State of the Nation Address in February 2007 President Thabo Mbeki outlines the government's response, most of it focussed on the response to crime. Of interest is the need to improve analysis of crime trends.

'In addition to the many ongoing programmes that we have been implementing, government will this year:

- Improve our analysis of crime trends to improve our performance with regard both to crime prevention and crime combating. In this regard, we must respond to the cold reality that, as in other countries, the overwhelming majority of violent crimes against the person occur in the most socio-economically deprived areas of our country and require strong and sustained community interventions focused on crime prevention.' (Mbeki, 2007).

1.3 Crime Statistics

The availability of accurate and up-to-date crime statistics is important if we are to address the crime problem effectively. Against this background many South Africans have concluded that the moratorium on the release of crime statistics has a political purpose: to provide fewer figures to the media and public that could be used to demonstrate the seriousness of the crime problem.

It is however unlikely that reducing the amount of information made available to the public will make citizens feel less vulnerable. Public reaction is shaped by personal experience, or that of friends, family or neighbours. Survey data suggests that the majority of South Africans did not believe crime statistics that were released by government. They believed the government manipulated the data for political purposes. Placing a moratorium on their release however may have undermined the credibility of government crime data further. When crime statistics are released, and if they show dramatic reductions in crime, they will be believed by fewer people (Shaw, 2002).

The issue of crime statistics illustrates just how sensitive the issue of the politics of safety has become in South Africa. It demonstrates also that government's aim is not only to make citizens believe that things are not as bad as they seem but, perhaps more importantly, that outsiders and particularly potential investors do not view the country as descending into a spiral of violence (Shaw, 2002).

The negative impact of the current levels of crime in Cape Town on attracting international and national investment is one of the most important challenges facing this city. One of the goals of the City should be on integrating the efforts of all spheres of government, business and the public to work together to further strengthen and align the activities of law enforcement agencies, the criminal justice system, emergency and disaster risk management services to reduce the current levels of crime and vulnerability and to improve safety, security and resilience in all areas as an important foundation for accelerated and shared growth (City of Cape Town, 2006b).

2 METHODOLOGY

The study is based on official crime statistics obtained from the South African Police Services (www.saps.gov.za). This source of crime statistics provides a basis on which to measure and monitor changes in crime rates over time. However there are a number of limitations in using official crime statistics.

1. The official crime statistics measures only **reported** crimes. Not all offences are either reported or detected by police. With certain crimes such as rape the rate of reporting may be far below the actual incidence of crime (some agencies say only about 50% of cases are reported). Increase in the rate of reported crime may imply higher rates of reporting or more effective policing rather than increases in the actual incidence of crime. For murder, the rates of reported crime are close to the actual incidence of crime and the rate of reported murder rates is thus a good indicator of violent crime.
2. Certain crimes (e.g. drunken driving, drug-related crimes) are dependent on **police action for detection**. The police may target certain offences during crime initiatives, thereby reducing/increasing certain offences or a rise in police numbers may increase detection rates. An increase in crime rate with these types of crime therefore does not necessarily indicate an increase in the actual incidence of crime but rather better enforcement and in this sense a higher crime rate might be a positive indicator.
3. Crime statistics are subject to changing definitions of **offences**. Police recording practices may also vary so that the same act may be recorded differently in different areas. Recently for example a Committee of Enquiry into the Collection, Processing and Publication of Crime Statistics was established in response to concerns regarding the incorrect recording and registration of reported incidences of crime.

Despite these challenges the SAPS crime statistics are the **best available information** and, in the absence of any other information, form the basis for the rest of this report.

The South African Police Services records 33 types of crime categories. This report only focuses on the following priority categories:

1. **Violent Crime** which includes murder, robbery with aggravating circumstances, rape and assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm.
2. **Property Crime** including business crime, burglary at residential premises, common robbery and theft of motor vehicle and motorcycle.
3. **Drug-related Crime** including drug-related crimes and driving under influence of alcohol and drugs.

In order to account for increasing population, the level of crime activity is expressed as a rate per 100 000 people. By using the population in Cape Town and South Africa for 2006, it is possible to calculate the rate per 100 000 (Dorrington, 2005 and STATSSA, 2001-2006). It is also possible to look at the rates over the period 2001 to 2006. Trends are more useful than just one point in time, in providing a measure of the effectiveness of policy or other interventions.

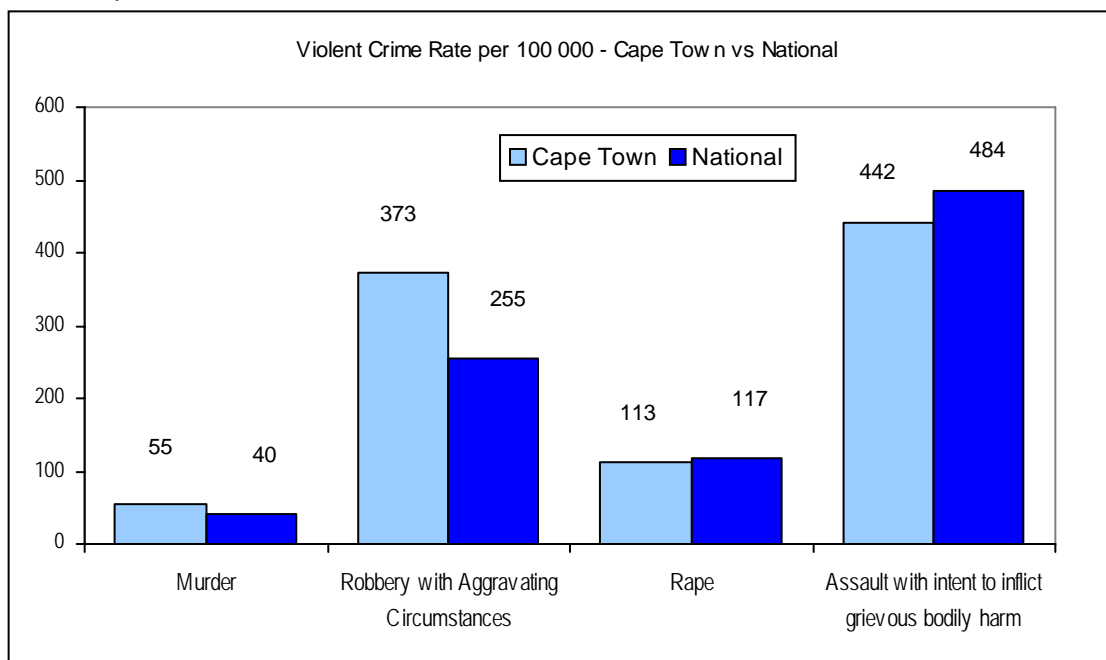
3 CURRENT LEVELS OF CRIME IN CAPE TOWN

Crime statistics at a national level indicate that the total of all reported crimes had steadily increased from 1996/97 stabilised during 2000/01 and has decreased since. Between the 2004/05 and 2005/06, national crime statistics decreased by 9%. In Cape Town overall crime statistics indicate a decrease of approximately 8% between 2004/05 and 2005/06.

3.1 Violent Crime

This category includes the following types of crime - murder, robbery with aggravating circumstances, rape and assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm.

Figure 1: Comparison of violent crime levels in Cape Town versus National (2005/06 crime statistics)



In Cape Town, the current state of the violent crime, reflected in crime rates for the period 2001 to 2006, is as follows:

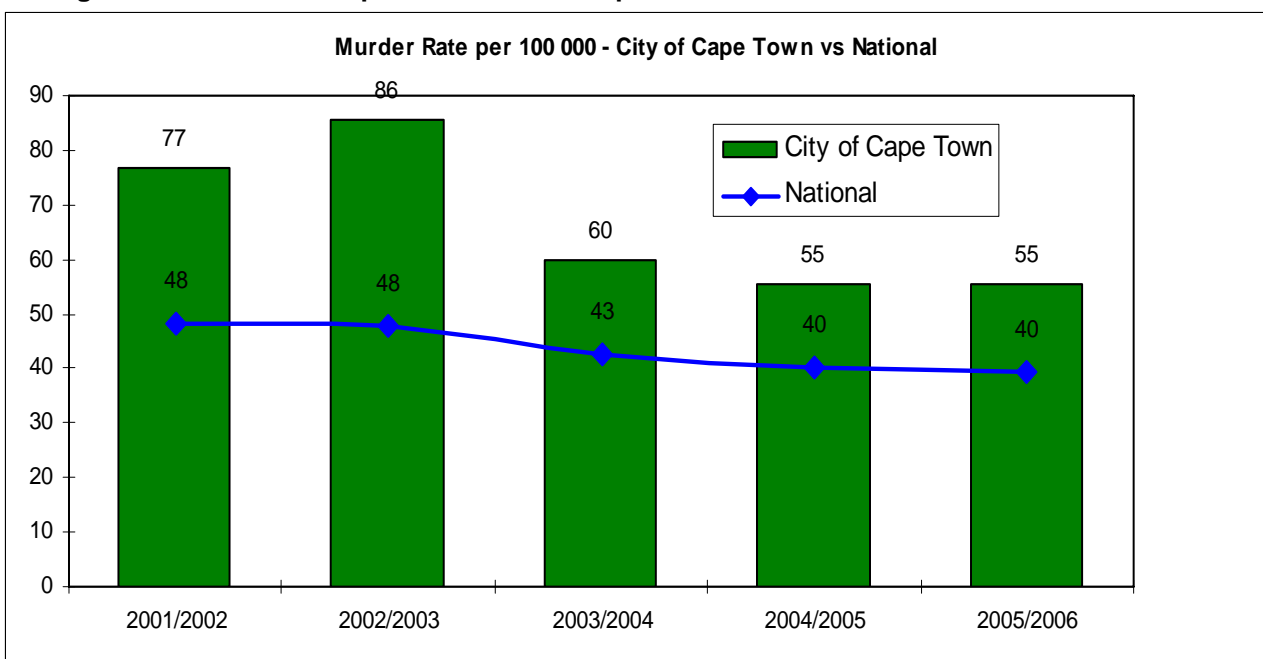
3.1.1 Incidence of murder

Cape Town has one of the highest murder rates in the world. According to the United Nations (2006), the city is considered one of the ‘high-risk’ cities for murder and is on par with Rio de Janeiro. Both cities have murder rates of more than 40 per 100 000 people (United Nations, 2006).

The incidence of murders in Cape Town (Figure 2) shows a decreasing trend over the past five years. However, the murder rate is still extremely high with a total of 1 797 murders in 2005/6, representing a murder rate of 55 per 100 000 population and, on average, five murders every day. The reduction in murders can largely be attributed to reductions in gang-related deaths. This is specifically evident in traditional gang areas, viz. Philippi, Elsie’s River and Kraaifontein. Gang violence is cyclical in nature and the situation should be closely monitored, as the sharp drop in murders indicates resolution of turf wars and possible concentration of gangs on income-earning activities such as the drug trade, vehicle theft, robberies as well as possible capture by gangs of the functions of the state (Redpath, 2006).

At a national level (Figure 2), murder rate (line) has also sustained declines and has decreased by 5% between 2002/03 and 2003/04. This has further decreased in 2004/05 and remained stable for 2005/06. Although murders have been decreasing, the volume of this crime is still high at 18 000 cases reported per year.

Figure 2: Incidence of reported murder in Cape Town versus National



Cape Town’s reputation as one of the world’s ‘murder capitals’, if not brought under control, could have a devastating impact on tourism and the city’s economy. Cape Town’s homicide mortality (murder) rate is approximately five times the global average (Table 1).

Table 1: Age standardised homicide mortality rates per 100 000

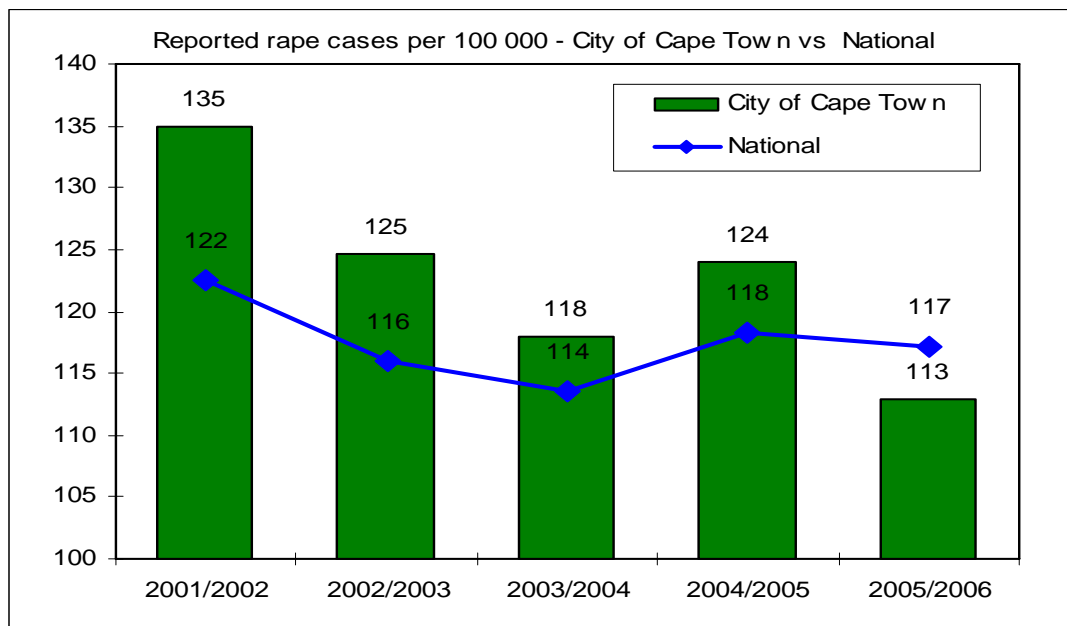
Year	Age standardised homicide mortality rates per 100 000			
	Cape Town	South Africa	Africa	World
2000		64.8	22.1	9
2001	70			
2002	73			
2003	57			
2004	46			

Source: Produced by Medical Research Council, University of Cape Town and Cape Metropole Health Information group

3.1.2 Incidence of rape

The incidence of reported rape in the city shows a stabilising trend (Figure 3), with a slight reduction from an average of 123 rape cases reported per 100 000 population over the period 2001 to 2006, with a rate of 117 per 100 000 in 2005/6. However, this still represents a staggering figure of 3 659 reported incidences of rape in a year. On average 10 cases are reported per day in Cape Town, although many cases go unreported. According to Rape Crisis (a non-profit organisation which offers counselling to rape survivors), in reality these numbers are likely to be at least twice as high as their records show that only 50% of people on average report their rape to the police.

Figure 3: Incidence of reported rape in Cape Town versus National



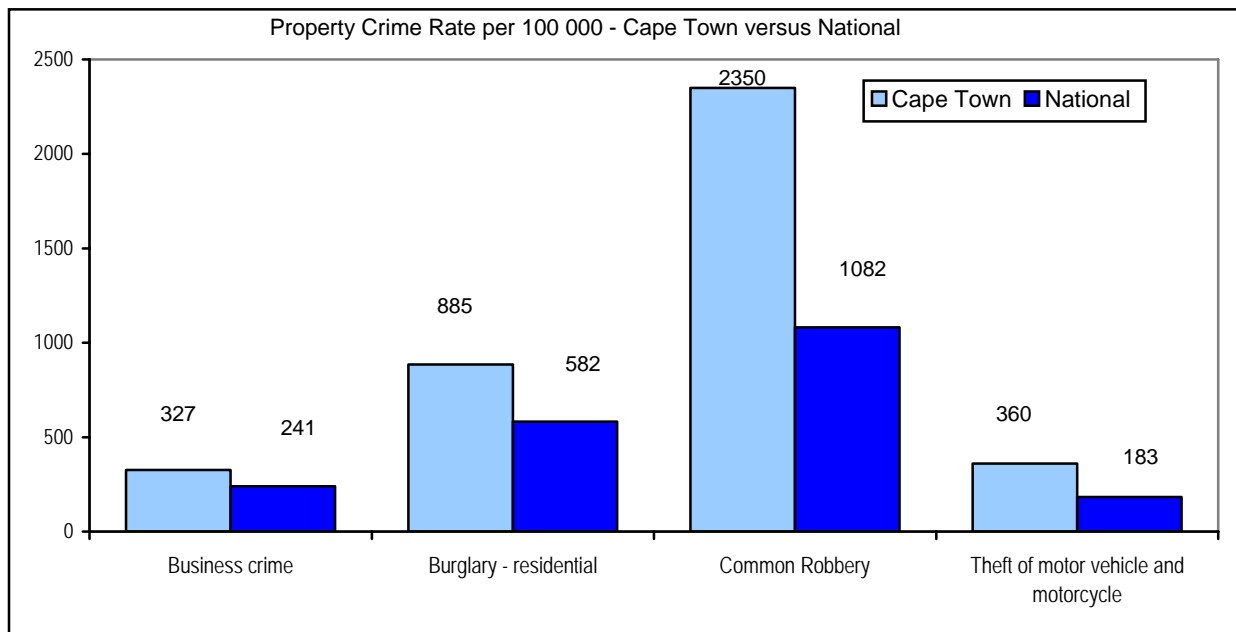
With a high HIV/AIDS incidence in many areas of the city, rape is not only a brutal crime, but also a possible death sentence for many women.

3.2 Property Crime

The crimes that make up this category include business crime (including burglary at business premises, robbery at business premises, commercial crime), burglary (residential), common robbery and theft of motor vehicle and motorcycle.

Overall property crimes are consistently decreasing. Only residential burglaries have been increasing steadily. The increase in residential burglaries may point to the vulnerability of families in socio-economically depressed areas, as well as the general situation of massive poverty and opulence existing side by side within society. Cape Town’s most recent property crime rate (especially common robberies) far exceeds the National figures (Figure 4).

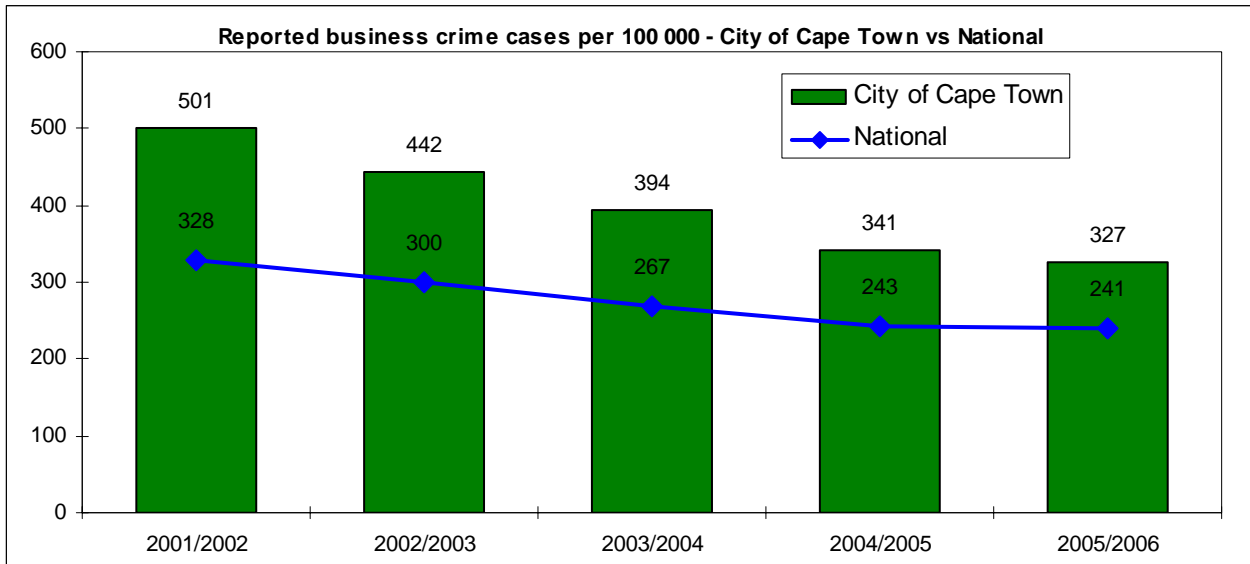
Figure 4: Comparison of property crime levels in Cape Town versus National (2005/06 crime statistics)



3.2.1 Incidence of business crime

Reported incidents of business crimes (including burglary at business premises, robbery at business premises, commercial crime) have shown a steady declining trend over the period 2001 to 2006 (Figure 5). There are on average 401 cases of business crimes reported per 100 000 population each year in the city which represents an average of 12 451 reported cases per year over the five year period.

Figure 5: Incidence of business crime in Cape Town versus National

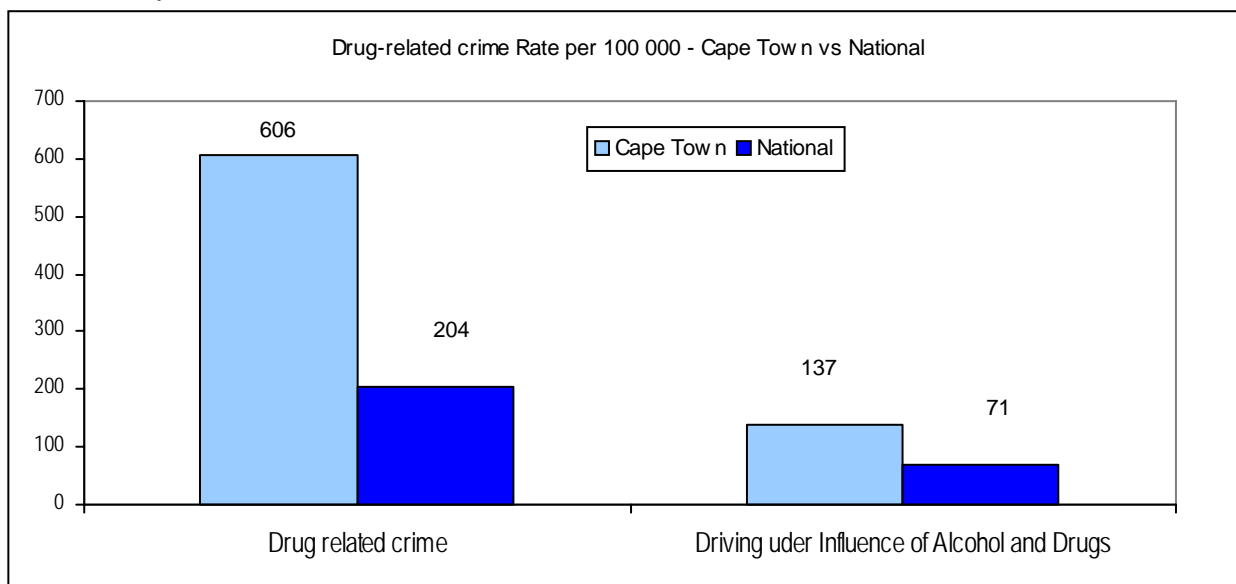


Business crime has obvious implications for the economic development in the city. If business premises are perceived to be unsafe and insecure by local, national and international companies they are less likely to invest their business in the city (City of Cape Town, 2005). This is particularly true in less affluent areas like Khayelitsha. If crime and the perception of crime are not brought under control, businesses are unlikely to invest in these areas, thus increasing unequal economic opportunities in the city.

3.3 Drug-related Crime

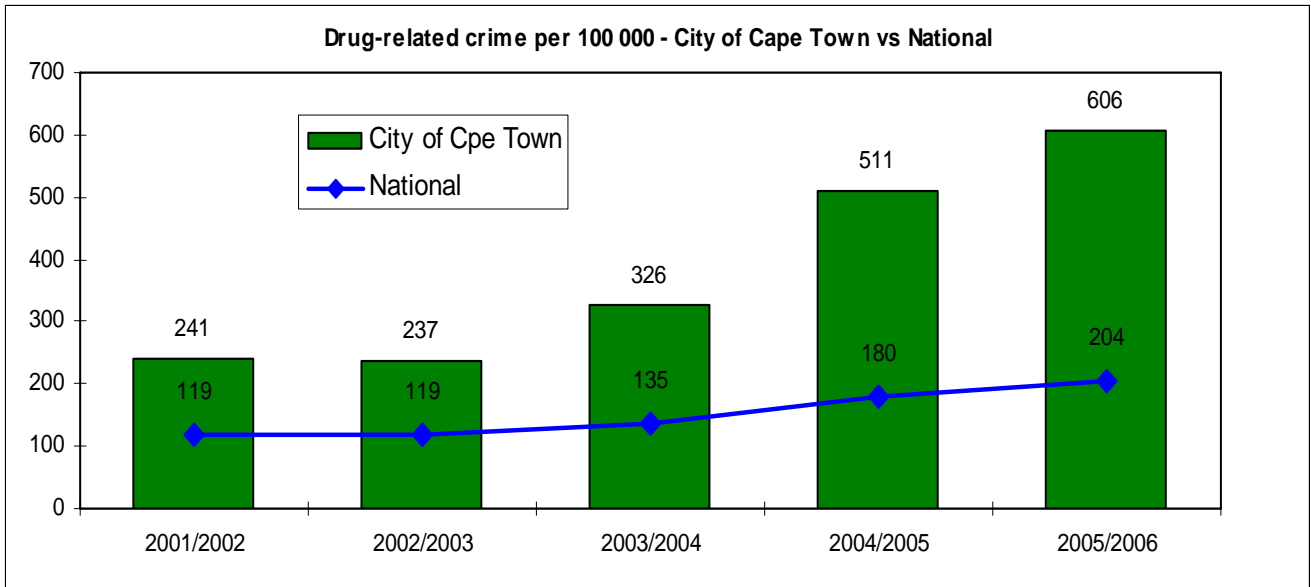
This category includes drug-related crime and driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs.

Figure 6: Comparison of drug-related crime levels in Cape Town versus National (2006 crime statistics)



Cape Town has a rising incidence of drug-related crime (Figure 7). There has been a dramatic increase in the rate of drug-related crime over the period 2001/2 to 2005/6. This may be due to the depressed socio-economic conditions in many areas on the Cape Flats as well as the recent dramatic influence of the use of the drug ‘Tik’ in these areas. This increase could also be a result of better enforcement and more effective policing, resulting in higher numbers of arrests.

Figure 7: Incidence of drug-related crime in Cape Town



4 DISTRIBUTION OF CRIME WITHIN CAPE TOWN (2005 / 06)

There are 56 police districts within Cape Town (Figure 8). By expressing the incidence of a type of crime in a particular police district as a percentage of the total incidences of that type of crime in Cape Town, one is able to compare the distribution of level of crime across the various police districts. The concentration of crime within these areas varies significantly, with a relatively small number of police districts accounting for a disproportionate amount of crime, particularly violent and drug-related crime.

Figure 8: Police Districts in the East and West Metropoles



4.1 Violent Crime

Violent crime tends to be concentrated in the poorest parts of the city with a small number of police districts accounting for a disproportionate amount of crime:

- Out of the police districts in the city, four police districts account for 45% of murders, Nyanga (15.8%), Khayelitsha (12.2%), Gugulethu (8.6%), and Harare, (in Khayelitsha) (8%).

Figure 9: % Cases of reported murder in Cape Town

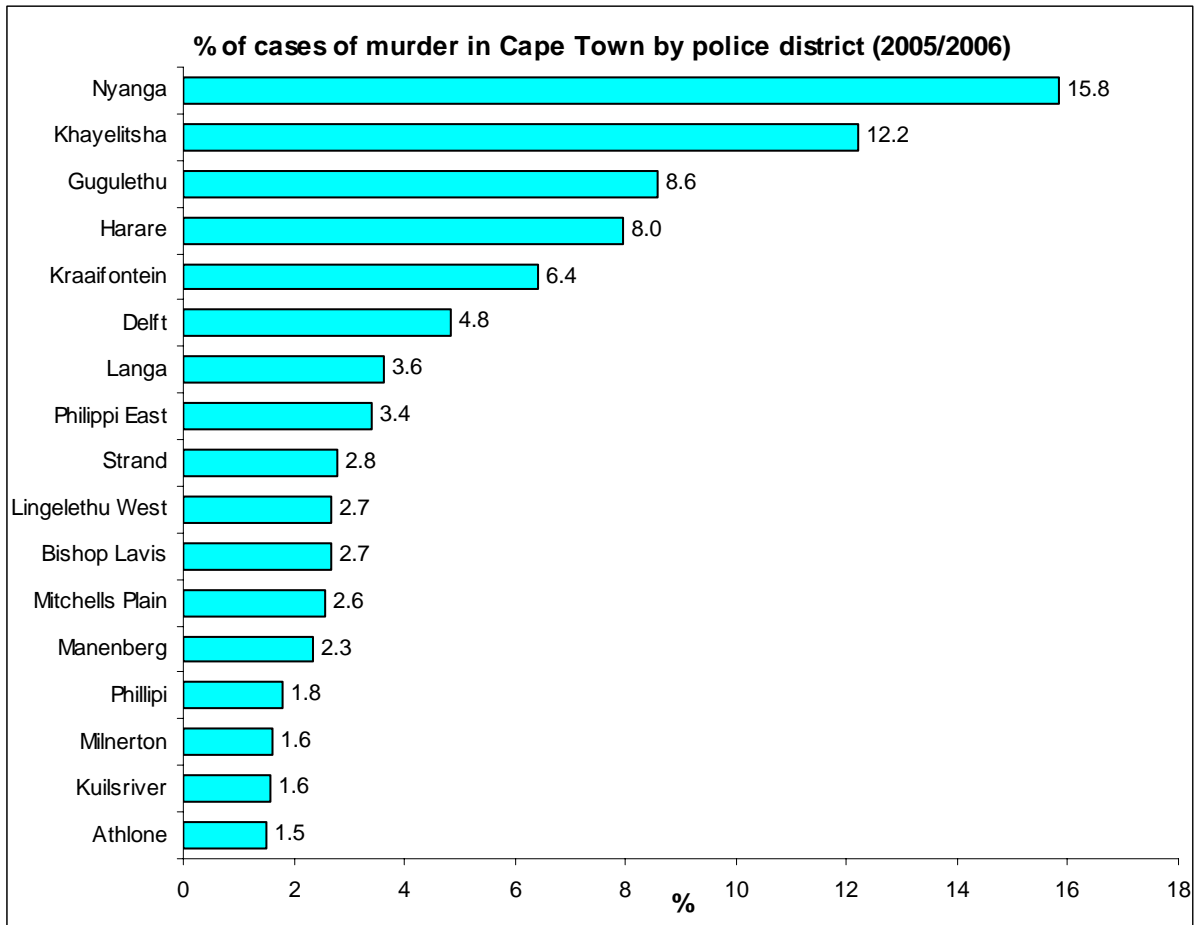
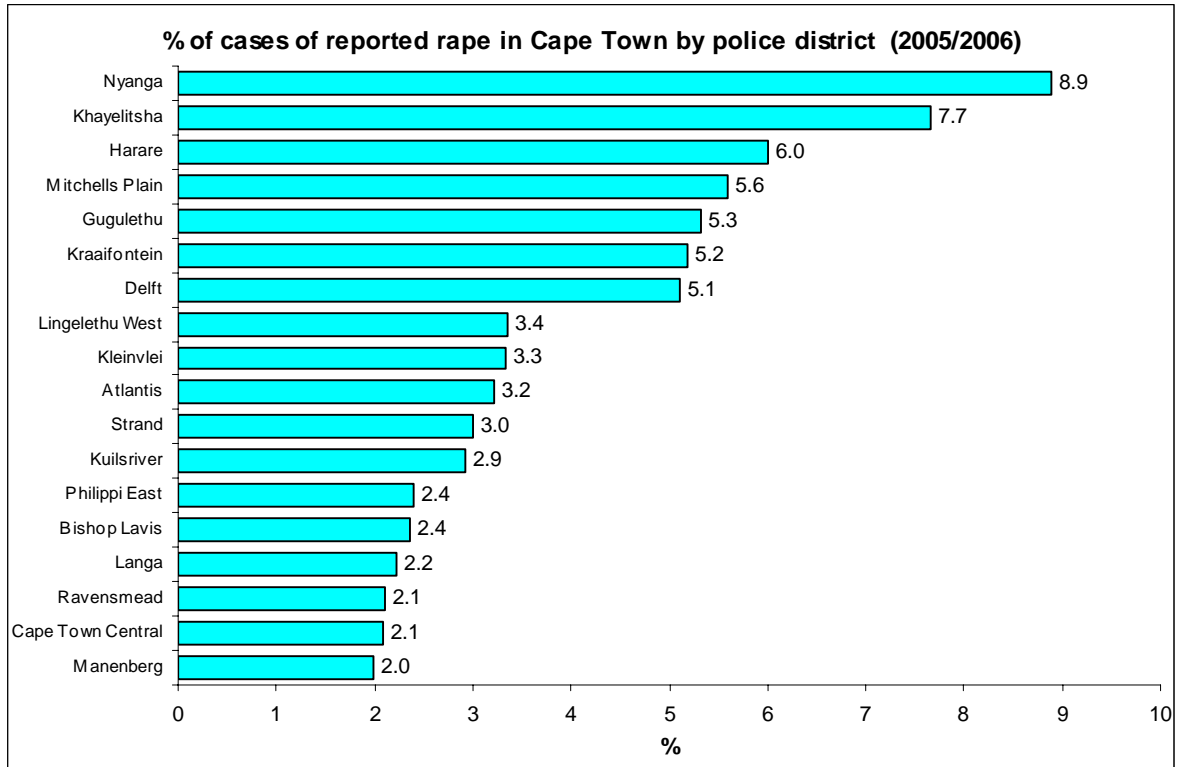


Figure 10: % Cases of reported rape in Cape Town



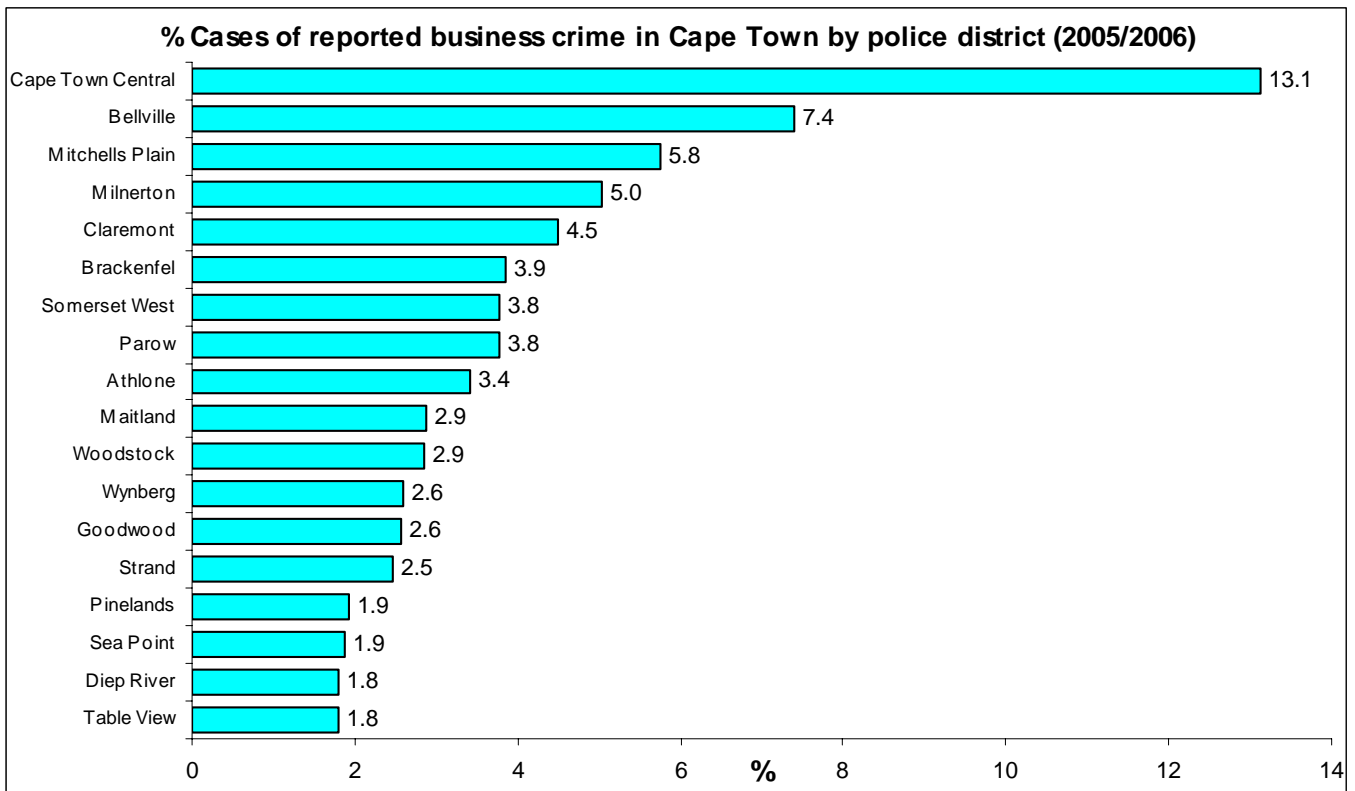
- Five police districts account for 34% of reported rape cases, Nyanga (8.9%), Khayelitsha (7.7%), Harare (6%) (also in Khayelitsha), Mitchell’s Plain (5.6%) and Gugulethu (5.3%).

‘This is an extraordinarily violent society and nobody understands it’ –
 Peter Gastrow (2006), Director: Institute for Safety Studies of South Africa

4.2 Property Crime

The poorest and most densely populated police districts account for relatively less property crimes in contrast to violent crime. Cases of reported business crimes (including business robbery, burglary at business premises and commercial crime) occur in the police districts that are more economically well off (Figure 11).

Figure 11: % Cases of reported business crime in Cape Town

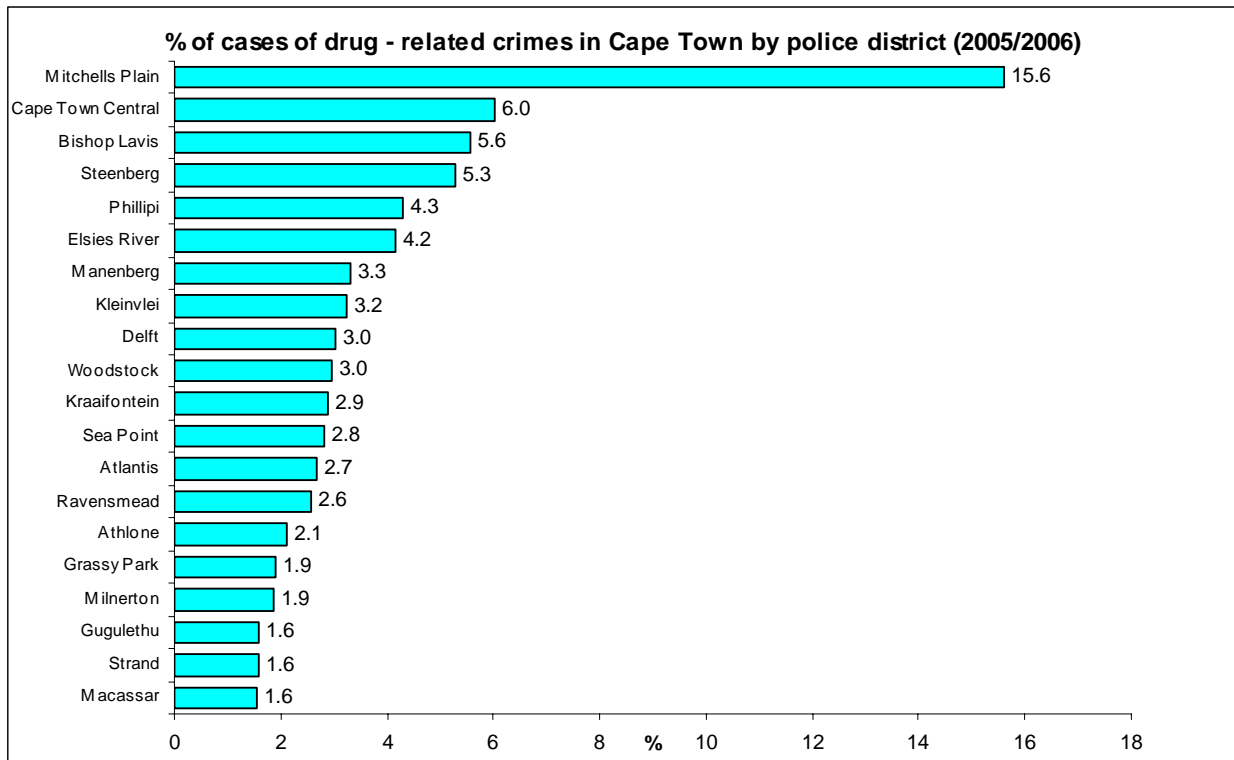


- 36% of business crime occurs in the police districts of Cape Town Central (13.1%), Bellville (7.4%), Mitchell’s Plain (5.8%), Milnerton (5.0%) and Claremont (4.5%). Most of the major economic hubs are located in these police districts, viz. CBD in Cape Town central, Tygervalley and N1 in Bellville, Mitchell’s Plain CBD, CBD in Claremont, etc.

‘Business will only invest in areas like Khayelitsha if the crime issue in these areas is addressed’ -
 Albert C. Schuitmaker (2006), Director: Cape Regional Chamber of Commerce

4.3 Drug-related Crime

Figure 12: % Cases of drug-related crimes in Cape Town



- Six police districts account for over 40% of drug-related crimes, Mitchell’s Plain (15.6%), Cape Town Central (6%), Bishop Lavis (5.6%), Steenberg (5.3%), Phillippi (4.3%) and Elsie’s River (4.2%).

‘If you ignore the Cape Flats, you are breeding serious social discontent in the future’ –
 Peter Gastrow (2006), Director: Institute for Safety Studies of South Africa

5 CONCLUSION

Of the three priority crime categories analysed for Cape Town, murder and rape rates indicate a reducing trend. The reducing trend is significant for murder, although this comes off a very high base level. For rape the reducing trend is not likely to be significant because of the associated under reporting with this category of crime. The rapidly increasing rate for drug-related crime is significant and should pose a serious concern for the authorities.

There is clearly a need for better understanding the nature of crime and in this regard perhaps a lead from President Mbeki's State of the Nation address (2007) is appropriate – '...government will this year: improve our analysis of crime trends to improve our performance with regard both to crime prevention and crime combating.' There is also a need to understand the causes of crime including weak institutional controls and depressed socio-economic conditions of many communities. This includes dealing with the challenges of inequality, poverty, unemployment and youth development. There also needs to be more concerted inter-governmental cooperation as well as private sector and community support to solve crime.

The initiatives of the spheres of government, business, law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system must be better aligned in order to reduce crime and improve security in all areas of the city. The following initiatives could contribute to addressing the issue of crime in the city:

- Implementing community and youth development programmes directed at reducing crime and lawlessness, including community anti-crime initiatives and Community Police Forums
- Focusing equally on crime prevention in affluent as well as less affluent areas in the city, including the Cape Flats
- Implementing the principles of crime reduction by environmental design in all development projects and the approval of building plans
- Expanding the CCTV network to cover key economic and transport locations as well as crime hot spots
- Addressing crime on all modes of transport
- Addressing the fear and perception of crime by being transparent about crime statistics and the locations of crime
- Implementing targeted prevention and enforcement based on the use of information.

For further information on the issue of crime information please refer to Crime in Cape Town: Some Strategic considerations with respect to the use of Information (City of Cape Town, 2007).

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