SAFETY & POLICING DURING LOCKDOWN

A survey conducted by the Institute for Security Studies and Western Cape Government
OVERVIEW

This document presents the results of a cell phone-based survey carried out to explore experiences of crime, policing and safety during the first two months of South Africa’s COVID-19 lockdown. It was conducted in three high-violence communities in Cape Town – Delft, Khayelitsha and Philippi.

The survey ran from 15 - 30 June 2020 and elicited responses from 5 794 respondents in the three policing areas.

This data and analysis is intended to support research, violence prevention and policing as part of the Western Cape Government’s Safety Plan.

The survey was carried out as part of a partnership between the Western Cape Government and Institute for Security Studies, and was funded by the Hanns Seidel Foundation and Bavarian State Chancellery.
METHODOLOGY

The 20-question survey was broadcast via SMS to all MTN and Vodacom subscribers in the Khayelitsha, Philippi and Delft policing areas from 15–30 June 2020.

Subscribers received the message, “Voice your opinion on crime & policing during the COVID-19 lockdown. Complete a FREE, ANONYMOUS 2-min community survey, DIAL *134*3042# Opt-out? SMS STOP to 30212”.

Those who chose to proceed received the message, “Western Cape Government & Institute for Security Studies care about your safety during the lockdown & beyond. Please share your experiences.”

Respondents could complete the survey in English or Afrikaans.

Respondents did not bear any financial costs for their participation.

Respondents were provided with the contact information of support services on completion of the survey.

The survey received ethical approval from the ISS’s Ethics Committee.
5,794 people responded to some or all of the survey. Of those who provided responses to questions about age and sex, the breakdown was as follows:

**Age of Respondents**
- **23%** aged under 18
- **47%** aged 18-24
- **20%** aged 25-34
- **6%** aged 35-44
- **4%** other

**Gender/sex of Respondents**
- **49%** female
- **42%** male
- **6%** other
- **4%** prefer not to say

**Question 15**
What is your gender/sex?
1. Male
2. Female
3. Other
4. Prefer not to say

**Question 16**
How old are you?
1. Under 18
2. 18-24
3. 25-34
4. 35-44
5. 45-54
6. Over 55

*TOTAL: 1,932 respondents*
WHICH POLICE AREAS WERE RESPONDENTS FROM?

Question 17
What police station serves your area?
1. Delft SAPS
2. Philippi SAPS
3. Harare SAPS
4. Lingelethu-West SAPS
5. Khayelitsha SAPS
6. Other/I don’t know

38% didn’t know which station served their area, or were from other areas. These respondents may have predominantly been Khayelitsha-based, as Greater Khayelitsha is served by three stations. They may also have been Philippi-based but believed that they were served by Philippi-East or another nearby station.
VISIBILITY OF POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

There was little difference in reported police visibility before and during lockdown.

Question 1
How often did you see police or other law enforcers in your community BEFORE the lockdown?
1. Once a day
2. Once a week
3. Less than once a month

Question 2
How often did you see police or other law enforcers in your community DURING the lockdown?
1. Once a day
2. Once a week
3. Less than once a month

50% of respondents saw police once a day before and during lockdown

25% of respondents saw police once a week before and during lockdown
Most respondents (70%) approved of the way the lockdown had been enforced in their community. Only 16% did not approve of the way lockdown was enforced. 13% did not know whether they approved or not.
TRUST IN POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

There was little difference in reported trust in police and law enforcement before or during lockdown.

Question 4
How much did you trust the police and other law enforcers BEFORE the lockdown?
1. Not at all
2. Just a little
3. Somewhat
4. A lot

Question 5
How much do you trust police and other law enforcers NOW?
1. Not at all
2. Just a little
3. Somewhat
4. A lot

35% of respondents reported having ‘a lot’ of trust in police and law enforcement before and during lockdown.

24% reported having no trust ‘at all’ in police and law enforcement before and during lockdown.
INTERACTION WITH POLICE AND LAW ENFORCERS

A significant percentage of respondents (61%) reported having interacted with police or law enforcement during the lockdown.

Of those who interacted with police:

- 64% reported being treated ‘okay’ or ‘well’ (39% of question sample)
- 36% reported being treated ‘badly’ (22% of question sample)
CONTINUING LOCKDOWN POLICING

Most respondents (81%) reported that they would like to see lockdown-type policing continue beyond the lockdown.

Considering that there was little reported difference in police visibility or trust in police before and during lockdown this may reflect:

- Contentment with the status quo;
- The appeal of the idea of more policing;
- A desire for the retention of the SANDF
EXPERIENCES OF CRIME DURING LOCKDOWN

Of the 47% of respondents who reported whether they had been a victim of crime during lockdown, 29% said they had and 71% said they had not.

The high rate of victimisation over just 2-3 months may reflect the state of the precincts, and/or the nature of individuals inclined to respond to the survey (i.e. victims more likely than non-victims).

In 2018/19, between 0.25 and 6% of individuals experienced theft, robbery, assault, fraud, hijacking or a sexual offence (StatsSA, 2019).

NATIONALLY:

5% of individuals and 9% of households experienced crime in 2017/18. (StatsSA, 2018)

WESTERN CAPE:
EXPERIENCES OF CRIME DURING LOCKDOWN [continued]

The most commonly reported crime among victims:

- **41%** Street robbery
- **25%** House robbery
- **11%** Assault

Domestic violence had a low reported frequency:

- **2%** Domestic violence

NOTE:
It is possible that some 'house robberies' were in fact burglaries, but that respondents confused or conflated the two.

Domestic violence had a low reported frequency: 0.2% of survey sample.
REPORTING OF CRIMES TO POLICE

Of those who experienced crime during lockdown,

- 66% reported the incident to police
- 16% said they would like to report it

These figures are slightly higher than national data showing that 47% of assault victims, 51% of burglary victims and 59% of house robbery victims reported crimes to police in 2017/18 (Stats SA, 2018).

The reporting rate may indicate confidence in police and/or be shaped by the youth of the respondents.
KNOWLEDGE OF OTHER CRIME DURING LOCKDOWN

36% of respondents reported that they knew of someone else in their family or community who had been a victim of crime during the lockdown.

The crimes most common among respondents’ familial and community networks were the same as those experienced by respondents who were victims themselves. Street robbery was most common (29%) followed by house robbery (22%) and assault (17%).

Again, it is possible that some ‘house robberies’ were in fact burglaries, but that respondents confused or conflated the two.

Again, 2% of occurrences were reported as domestic violence.
FEELINGS OF SAFETY BEFORE AND DURING LOCKDOWN

Respondents’ feelings of safety in their community did not differ significantly before and during lockdown.

50% Felt ‘very safe’ before and during lockdown
12% Felt ‘very unsafe’ before and during lockdown
4% Felt ‘fairly safe’ during lockdown compared to before lockdown
PERCEPTIONS OF VIOLENT CRIME

Almost as many (31%) felt it had increased, while 12% said they didn’t know. 15% of respondents thought that violent crime had remained the same.

On the other hand, 12% reported that poverty and 7% that stress were the drivers of change, which likely referred to perceived increases in violence.

Asked why they thought violent crime had ‘changed’, 31% thought it was due to the alcohol ban while 26% put it down to restricted movement and 16% to more policing. These likely relate to perceived declines in violence.

42% of respondents thought that violent crime had decreased in their community during lockdown.
PERCEPTIONS OF FAMILY/DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Slightly more respondents believed that violence within families had increased than thought it had decreased during lockdown:

39% Believed that violence within families had increased

36% Believed that violence within families had decreased

1949 TOTAL

INCREASED 29%
DECREASED 36.2%
STAYED THE SAME 14%
I DON'T KNOW 10.8%
COMPARING SAPS AND SURVEY DATA

It is useful to consider these survey findings in relation to the SAPS' reported crime data for the period 1 April – 30 June 2020:

WESTERN CAPE AS A WHOLE
- Murder -27% (767)
- Aggravated robbery -43% (3547)
- Sexual offences -38% (990)
- Residential burglary -33% (6190)
- Non-residential burglary +8% (2838)

KHAYELITSHA SAPS
- Murder -29% (53)
- Aggravated robbery -53% (180)
- Sexual offences -38% (990)
- Residential burglary -33% (6190)
- Non-residential burglary +8% (2838)

PHILIPPI SAPS
- Murder -43% (16)
- Aggravated robbery -23% (50)
- Sexual offences -0% (12)
- Residential burglary -9% (49)
- Non-residential burglary +31% (17)

DELFIT SAPS
- Murder -49% (38)
- Aggravated robbery -55% (99)
- Sexual offences -2% (52)
- Residential burglary -56% (101)
- Non-residential burglary +5% (22)
90% of respondents were younger than 34.

Khayelitsha generated at least twice as many responses as either Delft or Philippi.

There was little difference in reported police visibility before and during lockdown, with 50% reporting daily visibility and 25% reporting weekly visibility.

Most respondents (70%) approved of the way the lockdown was enforced in their community.

There was little difference in reported trust in police and law enforcement before and during lockdown, with roughly 35% trusting them ‘a lot’ and 24% ‘not at all’.

61% of respondents interacted with police or law enforcement during the lockdown, with 64% of these reporting being treated ‘well’ or ‘okay’, compared to 36% who reported being treated ‘badly’.

Most respondents (81%) reported that they would like to see lockdown-type policing continue beyond the lockdown.

5,794 people responded to some or all of the survey.

Thank you for completing our survey!
29% of respondents reported being a victim of crime during lockdown, most commonly street (41%) and house robbery (25%), and assault (11%). 66% of victims reported the crime to police.

36% of respondents reported knowing someone else in their family or community who had been a victim of crime during the lockdown, most commonly street (29%) and house robbery (22%) and assault (17%).

There was little difference in respondents’ feelings of safety in their community before or during lockdown, with roughly 50% feeling ‘very safe’ and 12% ‘very unsafe’.

42% of respondents thought that violent crime had decreased in their community during lockdown while 31% thought it had increased. 31% thought the change was due to the alcohol ban while 26% put it down to restricted movement and 16% to increased policing.

Slightly more respondents believed that violence within families had increased (39%) than thought it had decreased (36%) during lockdown.