How Rich the Rewards?

Results of the 2005 National Youth Victimisation Study

LEZANNE LEOSCHUT AND PATRICK BURTON
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**Overview of study and methodology**

- The study explored the victimisation experiences of 4409 South African youth between the ages of 12 and 22 years by means of a structured survey questionnaire.

- The aim of the study was to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the crimes committed against youth in South Africa.

- The objectives were two-fold: first, to assess the extent of victimisation experiences of young people; and second, to assess the nature and correlates of these experiences.

- Participants were asked a series of questions pertaining to their exposure to, and experiences of, violence in their homes, at school and within their broader communities.

- The types of crimes explored in the study included general violent crimes as well as property crimes.

- Information was also obtained about their perceptions of their communities, home environments, involvement in social activities, as well as their knowledge of support structures.

- The raw data was captured using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and was analysed by means of frequencies and cross-tabulations using chi-square statistical tests.
### Home environment

- One in five (21.8%) youth surveyed had witnessed domestic disputes between members of their family.
- Physical violence was commonly employed as a means of resolving conflict and effecting discipline within the homes of these participants.
- One-fifth (19.5%) of the sample was resident in poverty-stricken homes in which they seldom had enough to eat.
- Adult members in the participants’ families were often involved in drug-related crimes (8.3% used drugs and 2.1% sold drugs) and other activities that could get them in trouble with the law (10.5%).

### Neighbourhood and peer networks

- Drugs and alcohol were easily accessible in the communities in which these respondents lived.
- One in five respondents personally knew people in their residential areas who sell (21%) and buy (28%) drugs.

### Implications

- The family is the primary socialising agent where children are taught about the behaviours considered acceptable and unacceptable in their societies. When the role-models in the domestic context are involved in criminal activities and resort to violent tactics to resolve conflicts, young people come to view violence as an acceptable means of conflict resolution. Targeted interventions to raise awareness about constructive methods to resolve conflicts are therefore crucial.

- Given the empirical link between addictive substances and victimisation, the need to regulate the availability of addictive substances within residential communities becomes imperative.
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<td>• Close to one-third of these young people reported that it would be very easy (28.9%) to access beer, wine or hard liquor in their communities. Nearly one in five (17%) reported that it would be very easy for them to obtain marijuana in the communities in which they lived.</td>
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<td>• On the whole, more than two-thirds (68.6%) of the participants had witnessed someone being hurt or attacked in their communities.</td>
<td>• Practically, these findings point to the focus that is required on community substance abuse interventions, as well as the fostering of positive peer and family networks in which substance abuse is not condoned.</td>
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<td>• The victims (57.5%) as well as the perpetrators (74.2%) involved in these incidences of violence within their communities were largely known to the young people surveyed in the study.</td>
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<td>Perceptions of crime and personal safety</td>
<td>• One in five (20.5%) participants felt unsafe in their communities. Similarly, one in ten (11.5%) reported feeling fearful at school, while 8.4% were fearful at home.</td>
<td>• Young people in South Africa are at increased risk of a range of victimisations given their close proximity to offenders in the communities in which they live. Given their exposure to would-be offenders in their communities, and also in their families, a serious need for diversion programmes emerges.</td>
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## Violence experienced at schools

- **Findings**
  - Violence is endemic to South African schools.
  - Almost one in six (16.8%) young people feared travelling to school, one in five (20.9%) had been threatened or hurt by someone at school, and nearly a third (32.8%) had been verbally abused by someone at school.
  - Corporal punishment also continues to be employed as a means of effecting discipline at schools.
  - The perpetrators in these incidences of school violence typically were other learners at school, classmates, and other children from outside of the school.

- **Implications**
  - Effective strategies to combat crime and violence in South African schools are urgently required. More specifically, multi-pronged approaches involving the cooperation of staff, parents and community agents are needed.
  - This means that existing interventions such as the Safer Schools programme need to be consolidated and replicated in as many schools as possible.
  - Educators and the Department of Education need to be proactive in addressing violence and criminal activity at schools.

- The reason most commonly cited for feelings of fear within these contexts was a fear of criminals.
- The three crimes young people in this study were most afraid of were rape/sexual assault, murder and theft/mugging.

These spaces can take the form of social and recreational groupings and activities.
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<td>• Violence at school was very frequent. More than half of those who had been threatened at school had been threatened one to five times.</td>
<td>• The victimisation experiences of these participants hinder their psychological, physical and educational well-being. Young people therefore need to be made aware of the importance of seeking assistance following traumatic events.</td>
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| Criminal victimisation | • Two out of five (41.4%) young people had been the victim of some crime in the 12 months prior to the study.  
• Theft of personal belongings (19.5%) was the most commonly reported crime experienced, followed by assaults (16.5%) and robberies (9.4%).  
• Many of these crimes involved the use of weapons.  
• The most common locations for these crimes were their communities and school environments.  
• Known individuals in their communities were primarily implicated as the perpetrators of these crimes.  
• Changes in the young people’s behaviour following the | • Awareness needs to be raised about the importance of reporting crimes. Non-reporting prevents justice from taking its course and in so doing contributes to the maintenance of crime and violence in South Africa.  
• The findings from the study suggest the need for a coherent, integrated and comprehensive strategy to be developed at a national level and implemented by all departments to combat crimes against children and young people, and to make the environments in |
Victimisations were evident. The changes most commonly reported included becoming more vigilant, no longer going out unaccompanied, becoming aggressive, and changing their friends. Despite these changes, very few accessed counselling services after the violent incidences.

- The victims of crime in this study often do not report the incidences to the police. Instead they tend to inform family members of the attacks.

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'At the southern tip of the continent of Africa, a rich reward is in the making . . . This reward will not be measured in money, nor can it be reckoned in the collective price of the rare metals and precious stones that rest in the bowels of the African soil we tread [on] in the footsteps of our ancestors. . . [I]t will and must be measured by the happiness and welfare of our children, at once the most vulnerable citizens of any society and the greatest of our treasures.'

Acceptance speech by African National Congress President, Nelson Mandela,
Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony, Oslo, Norway, 10 December 1993

BACKGROUND

Crime and violence is pervasive in South African society; however, research studies investigating criminal victimisation have generally been confined to the perspectives and experiences of adults.¹ The discourses pertaining to young people and crime have largely centred on the offending of the youth.² Only in recent years have researchers become concerned with the escalating exposure of young people to both violent and non-violent forms of victimisation.³

International and local data has consistently identified adolescence as the age cohort most likely to be victimised⁴ and has attributed their increased vulnerability to a number of factors, including adolescents’ lack of physical strength, limited options concerning the people they associate with and the environments in which they live, as well as their lack of access to a number of resources. Researchers have maintained that the combination of these factors heighten the youth’s susceptibility to crime by limiting their ability to protect themselves from assaults and increasing their exposure to would-be offenders.⁵

THE VICTIMISATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people experience the same crimes as their adult counterparts, but they additionally suffer from crimes that are specific to their developmental stage.⁶
A misguided belief concerning the victimisation of adolescents is that their experiences are less severe than those of adults; however, studies consistently reveal that adolescents are two to three times more likely than adults to be victims of a violent crime.

Researchers in the United States (US) have investigated extensively the victimisation experiences of both adults and youth, and have commonly employed the National Crime Victimisation Survey, National Youth Victimisation Survey and the Federal Bureau of Investigations’ (FBI) Uniform Crime Reports as data collection methods for this purpose. Findings from these surveys have consistently revealed that young people between the ages of 12 and 19 experience higher rates of violence than any other age group. On the whole, adolescents constitute 24% of all victims of violent crimes and 6% of property crime victims. While males were more likely to be the victims of violent crimes such as robberies and assaults, females experienced significantly higher rates of rape and sexual assault.

Murder also constitutes a major problem for the youth with an alarming proportion of adolescents dying as a result of murder every year. Harms and Snyder reported that of the 434,000 people murdered in the US between 1980 and 2000, approximately 10% of these victims were 18 years or younger.

The high rates of child abuse and violence within the home is well documented in international and local literature. Youth, and young children in particular, are vulnerable to this type of victimisation since they typically spend more time at home with their families and are more dependent on their caregivers. Finkelhor and Ormrod examined the characteristics of youth victimisations in the US. Their study found that family members were implicated in a fifth (20%) of kidnapping and sexual offences committed against children.

Research studies also consistently draw attention to the high levels of school-related violence experienced by children and youth. The findings of the MORI Youth Survey highlighted the plight of adolescents in the school environment when it was revealed that 26% of the learners surveyed had previously been threatened, 23% were being bullied and 15% had their property stolen. Male and female learners were also found to have different victimisation experiences at school.

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**CHARACTERISTICS OF ADOLESCENT MURDERS:**

- The majority of murder victims are male.
- African American youth experience significantly higher rates of murder than those from other racial categories.
- The perpetrators of adolescent murders are normally male adults and other youth.
- Firearms are the weapons most commonly used in the murders of young people.

While males were more likely to be physically attacked by their peers, females experienced significantly higher rates of verbal assault and social isolation. The victimisation experiences of young people at school also include the use of corporal punishment by teachers and principals as a means of effecting discipline. Marked differences pertaining to the specific places where young people are victimised are also evident in the literature. Research has generally shown that females are more likely to be victimised at a private place of residence (including their own home, or that of a friend, neighbour or relative), while their male counterparts tend to be victimised in public places including businesses, parking areas as well as other open spaces.\(^\text{19}\)

A disturbing trend that has caught the attention of researchers over the past few years is the tendency on the part of adolescents not to report crimes committed against them.\(^\text{20}\)

Finkelhor and Ormrod\(^\text{21}\) have identified a number of reasons for this, including fears of retribution or of being blamed for the incident, the belief that the incident was not serious enough to warrant being reported to officials, and familial concerns

### WHEN CRIMINAL VICTIMISATION IS NOT REPORTED TO THE POLICE:

- it results in erroneous statistics depicting crime;
- it hinders the arrest and conviction of perpetrators, and hence perpetuates the cycles of violence and abuse; and
- it results in a lack of appropriate support systems for victims of crime, including psychological and psycho-social support.


### CHARACTERISTICS OF PERPETRATORS COMMITTING OFFENCES AGAINST YOUNG PEOPLE:

- In most cases, the perpetrators are known to the victim.
- Adults are responsible for the majority of (55%) criminal activities committed against young people that are reported to the police.
- Adults are most likely to be involved in kidnapping and sexual offences against the youth.
- As children mature, the number of adult perpetrators decreases while the number of adolescent offenders increases.

about the consequences of reporting for their children. The victim’s beliefs concerning the efficiency of the police and the criminal justice system, the availability of these officials, and reporting the incidences to other officials (e.g. school authorities) are other factors found to influence the non-reporting of criminal victimisation.22

When violent crimes committed against the youth are reported to police authorities, they tend to be incidences in which the perpetrators are strangers and where injuries result and the assailant is armed.23 Hart and Rennison24 found that these crimes were most often reported to prevent the incident from occurring again in the future, to protect future victims and to stop the offender.

YOUTH VICTIMISATION RATES IN SOUTH AFRICA

To date, information pertaining to the victimisation of South Africans has by and large excluded the experiences of South African youth. Past inquiries into this phenomenon have largely made use of official documents obtained from either police and/or other social agencies as sources of data. While this information initially proved useful, it was insufficient to provide an accurate account of the extent of youth victimisation since these records were largely dependent on the reporting of these crimes. Self-report surveys therefore became more popular among researchers over time as an additional means of collecting information on people’s experiences of victimisation.25 Subsequently, two Victims of Crime Surveys have been conducted in South Africa in 1998 and 2003: the first by Statistics South Africa (SSA); and the second by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS). In addition to these national studies, the ISS and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) have conducted a number of site-based victim surveys within specific localities throughout South Africa.

The SSA Victims of Crime Survey in 1998 revealed that 16.9% of all the respondents who had experienced at least one violent crime in 1997 were between
In 2003, the ISS study found that approximately 23% of South Africans surveyed had been victimised in some way in the 12 months preceding the study. Recent data published by the Medical Research Council’s National Injury Mortality Surveillance System indicates that more than half (51.7%) of all individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 who died as a result of unnatural causes in 2004, were the victims of violence. These studies reveal the lack of information on youth victimisation in this country and call for more extensive research into the experiences of young people as victims of crime.

Yet, as in other developing countries, young people constitute a significant proportion of the South African population. According to the most recent data available from Statistics South Africa, children between 10 and 14 years of age account for the largest percentage of the South African population, while those between the ages of 15 and 19, and 20 and 25 years, account for the fourth and fifth largest cohorts (see Figure 1).

**EFFECTS OF YOUTH VICTIMISATION**

The victimisation of young people has serious repercussions for the individual but also for society at large. For the most part, young people’s social relationships and perceptions of self-efficacy tend to suffer following a violent experience. Adolescent victimisation has also consistently been linked to subsequent delinquency, even extending into adulthood. Researchers have found that
adolescent victims of violence are more likely than non-victims to experience violent crimes, including domestic violence, later in life. Furthermore, the risk of them becoming perpetrators of violent offences is also higher than for non-victims.31

On the whole, experiences of victimisation may thwart the psychological and physical development of children and youth and may disturb their (already difficult) transition from adolescence to adulthood.32 This is exacerbated in the South African context since a significant proportion of South African youth continue to live in poverty-stricken households and communities, and consequently do not have access to counselling or support services following violent and traumatic experiences.

RISK FACTORS AND VICTIMISATION

Considerable international research has been conducted into the various factors that increase the vulnerability of youth to victimisation. The factors frequently identified include individual, family and community factors that are believed to put youth at increased risk of becoming the victims of crime. The most common risk factors identified include family composition (adolescents from single-parent families are significantly more likely to experience victimisation), exposure to violence, inconsistent and harsh parenting styles, poverty, inadequate housing and health conditions, absence from school, association with delinquent peers, and a lack of educational and employment opportunities.33

The individual’s age, sex and the amount of time spent at home have also been linked to experiences of violent victimisation. More specifically, younger adolescents face a higher risk of victimisation as opposed to older adolescents, and males in general are more likely to experience violence than females.34 Also, it has been found that the more time young people spend at home, the less likely they are to become

### THE EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE INCLUDE:

- feelings of sadness;
- feelings of loneliness;
- anxiety;
- apprehension;
- disturbances in sleeping patterns;
- disrupted eating patterns;
- lack of interest in school;
- lack of concentration at school;
- depression;
- social isolation;
- violent behaviour; and
- alienation and exclusion.

the victims of violence. Adolescents, and particularly males, are adventurous and typically engage in a range of risk-taking behaviours outside of the home, such as partying until the early hours of the morning and consuming alcohol and other addictive substances. They are therefore more likely to be exposed to would-be offenders and hence increase their risk of being victimised.35

Importantly, however, researchers have concluded that young people’s risk of victimisation is not heightened by the existence of a single risk factor. Instead, the amalgamation of several risk factors intensifies their probability of being victimised. An awareness of the various risk factors that increase adolescents’ vulnerability to victimisation is crucial since knowledge of these issues would be the first step towards the development of more successful preventative strategies for youth victimisation.

CONCLUSION
The need for more extensive research into the experiences of South African youth becomes apparent given the limited research into the extent of youth victimisation in South Africa and the severe implications of such victimisations. For this reason, the National Youth Victimisation Study endeavoured to explore the extent and nature of differing forms of violence and crime experienced by young people within South Africa.
INTRODUCTION

A number of methodological issues unique to child and youth victimisation studies present themselves. These include the definition and understanding of the term victimisation, the most suitable methodology to employ, the most appropriate respondent to interview, and attaining access to the most suitable respondent. In addition, the selection or design of the most appropriate instrument is also pivotal to such studies.

While adult victimisation surveys such as the National Crime Victimisation Survey or the International Crime Victim Survey apply the standard conceptualisation of victimisation in relation to common crimes such as robbery, assault, murder, sexual assault and theft of property, the emerging literature on the subject of child victimisation broadens the issue to include ‘any involuntary physical, sexual or emotional injuries, loss or death at the hands of another human being, or when they are threatened by such actions against themselves’. Also included in these definitions are property crimes that may not involve violence, such as theft of property. Such definitions would further include incidents that might not otherwise be considered crimes, such as bullying or verbal abuse.

Defining child victimisation is therefore usually influenced by prevalent social norms as it is often difficult to distinguish between such actions as, for example, discipline and assault. In a country such as South Africa this is made somewhat easier as corporal punishment, at least, is in fact a crime. Nonetheless, when collecting information on crimes using these definitions, it is essential to collect
information on the perceived motive or circumstances under which the reported crime occurred in order to assess whether such incidents can justifiably be included.37

The second issue is appropriate methodology. Victimisation studies generally require the use of large-scale, nationally representative quantitative tools.38 It is, however, acknowledged that this may not always be the best approach to collect often sensitive information, particularly where children are concerned. One option for such a study is to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches.

The third issue is the selection of respondents. Practically, children under a certain age cannot answer a questionnaire-type interview and thus their parents, caregivers or guardians become the only option. In such instances, however, crimes that might have been committed against the child by his/her parent or caregiver will not be recorded. Furthermore, the adult may not provide an accurate picture of the child’s experience of the crime.

Finally, the selection or design of the most appropriate instrument is paramount. Depending on the age group of the sample population, questions need to be designed in such a way that they can be administered to respondents at very different levels of maturity and education. Questions need to be understood by, for example, a ten-year-old, if this age group is to be included in the survey, while not seeming condescending to a 19-year-old. Questions also have to be constructed in a way that is both sensitive and responsive to the often traumatic experiences of crimes that young respondents might have been subjected to.

**RESEARCH DESIGN**

In order to maximise the expertise and experience that exists among researchers and practitioners working with children and young people throughout the country, a reference group was established to advise on the research and questionnaire design. This ensured that questions most pertinent to the target population were addressed, thereby ensuring that the findings would be as useful as possible to as wide a range of stakeholders as possible. Representatives were drawn from civil society and academic institutions as well as government.39

A draft questionnaire was designed on which comments were received and then incorporated. A second draft was piloted at two sites in Gauteng, one rural and one urban. Minor amendments were made to the questionnaire following the pilot, and the pre-coded instrument was then finalised for the main study.

The questionnaire included components on:

- demographics;
- home environment;
- feelings on, and nature of, neighbourhood;
- general thinking and beliefs on crime;
- experiences at school;
• exposure to violence;
• access to information;
• social activities;
• perceptions of authorities;
• morality and values;
• access and exposure to drugs;
• view of the future; and
• experience of, and the nature of, crime.

The types of victimisation explored in the study include:

• general violent crime, including robbery, assault, sexual assault, car hijacking and exposure to murder; and
• property crimes including housebreaking and theft of personal property.40

Respondents were specifically asked about their experiences in the past year, or 12 months, in order to minimise recall limitations.

SAMPLING

The sample was designed to be proportionately representative in order to make it reflective of the South African population. The sample frame was provided by Statistics South Africa 2001 Census data, and the sample was stratified by province and race. The total population between the ages of 12 and 22 years was identified. Based on this, a sample of 333 enumerator areas (EAs) were randomly selected, with 13 households identified to be interviewed in each. Each EA was mapped, each household within the EA assigned a number, and a list of all houses within the EA was compiled. Households were then randomly selected from this numbered list and visited by enumerators. Where a youth between the ages of 12 and 22 lived in the household and was available and willing to participate in the study, an interview was conducted. Where no respondent falling within the required age cohorts lived in the house, the next house on the list was visited.

The final data was weighted by province, race and gender using the marginal totals drawn from the 2001 Census. This was done to ensure the most accurate representation of the experiences of young people throughout South Africa.

PROTOCOLS

Where children below the age of 16 were interviewed, prior informed, written consent was obtained from parents or the primary caregiver. Written consent was also obtained from the respondents themselves. Interviews were conducted in private. Only female enumerators conducted interviews with female respondents, while male respondents could be interviewed by either male or female interviewers.
Enumerators were selected for the project based on prior experience working on victimisation surveys, as well as on other studies dealing with sensitive issues such as HIV/AIDS and sexual health. Prior to the field process, an intensive two-day training programme was conducted with all enumerators to familiarise them with the process and protocols associated with the study, as well as with the specific questionnaire instrument used. All enumerators were provided with referral telephone numbers for support structures such as Lifeline and HIV/AIDS and rape counselling centres in each of the areas in which they were working.

DATA ANALYSIS
The physical data was captured using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and was analysed by means of frequencies and cross-tabulations using chi-square statistical tests.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
Most studies are subject to various constraints or limitations of one form or another. The National Youth Victimisation Study is, unfortunately, not exempt from its own limitations.

Any victimisation survey is reliant on the recall and memory of the respondents. While more violent incidents such as robbery or assault are seldom forgotten, minor incidents of theft or pick-pocketing can often be forgotten – more so when relegated to relative insignificance if the respondent has been a victim of both property and violent crime. Although respondents were asked about incidents within a limited timeframe (12 months), victim surveys can still miss incidents experienced by the general populace.

While victimisation surveys are generally recognised as a more accurate reflection of crime rates than police statistics, there is also no guarantee that potential respondents will be willing to share information that is often personal, sensitive and at times traumatic to recount to strangers. This is particularly pertinent to sexual crimes, such as sexual assault or rape, explored in this study.

STRUCTURE OF THE MONOGRAPH
The next chapter, Chapter 3, provides an overview of the demographics of the sample. Chapter 4 details the home environment in which young people live, as well as the characteristics of the communities and neighbourhoods in which they live. This is followed by Chapter 5, which presents young people’s views and perceptions on crime and personal safety, including feelings of safety at home and at school. Chapter 6 provides an overview of victimisation rates, and details experiences of crimes that young people had been exposed to over the preceding 12 months, while Chapter 7 examines the violent experiences of young people and children in schools.
Chapter 8 looks at the reporting of crime and victimisation, both to the police and to other authorities, including parents. Chapter 9 concludes with a synthesis of the key findings and the implications of these for policy makers and those working within the field of child and juvenile justice.
The sample employed in this study comprised 4409 young people recruited from all the nine provinces in South Africa. The demographic compositions of these respondents are illustrated in the ensuing sections of this chapter.

The majority of the participants were recruited from KwaZulu-Natal (22.5%), Gauteng (16.2%), Eastern Cape (15.7%) and Limpopo (13.7%) (see Figure 2). The sample consisted primarily of young people from urban areas (44.7%). Fewer respondents were sampled from rural (33.8%) and metropolitan areas (21.5%) (see Figure 3, over page).41

Figure 2: Sample by province (n = 4409)
Female participants constituted the majority of the study sample (50.8%), while their male counterparts accounted for 49.2% of the sample (see Figure 4).

Given that the aim of the study was to examine the victimisation experiences of South African youth, only individuals between the ages of 12 and 22 years were sampled. The findings pertaining to the age of these participants revealed that young people between the ages of 15 and 17 were primarily represented in this study (36.9%), followed by 18–20-year-olds (30.5%), and 12–14-year-olds (20.6%). Only 12.1% of the youth surveyed were in the 21–22-year-old age cohort (see Figure 5). This profile provides an accurate depiction of the age profile of youth in South Africa.

The greater part of the sample were black youth who accounted for more than two-thirds (82.6%) of the respondents. Coloured (8.4%), white (6.8%) and Indian participants (2.2%) constituted the remaining 17.4% of the sample.

The overwhelming majority (75.5%) of the participants were still attending school at the time of the study. Of those, just more than a quarter (26.7%) were 12–14-year-olds, 45.1% were 15–17-year-olds, while another quarter (25%) were participants in the 18–20-year-old age cohort. Additionally, respondents between the ages of 21 and 22 years constituted 3.2% of the participants who reported that they were still attending school at the time of the study. Those who indicated that they were no
longer at school were asked whether they had left for any particular reason and, if so, why. Of these, close to half (41.8%) reported that they had completed their high school education, while one in five (20%) participants surveyed were unable to pay their school fees. Other reasons for failing to complete their schooling included the commencement of employment (9.8%) and a dislike of school (8.1%) (see Figure 6).

Some interesting trends become evident when examining the gender trends with reference to the reasons given for failing to complete school. While the male respondents were more likely to report leaving school due to a lack of finances (required to pay for their tuition fees, uniforms or transport) (52.2%) and for employment purposes (67.7%), female respondents were more likely to leave school after failing a grade (67.2%) and for various other reasons (82%), of which pregnancy was the most commonly reported. These differences were statistically significant (p<0.001).

It was critical to obtain information concerning a participant’s level of education since factors such as truancy and absenteeism from school have consistently been linked to an increased risk of victimisation. Past research indicates that children and youth who are constantly absent from school tend to be more likely to engage in
violent activities and to be more familiar with delinquent peers – actions that themselves increase the risk of victimisation. Nonetheless, regular attendance at school does not necessarily increase the safety of young people, since the study found that school attendance has its own risks. These risks will be described in the discussion in later chapters.

The youths had been resident in their communities for various lengths of time, ranging from one to 22 years. The higher proportions of the sample, however, had lived in their communities for more than ten years (see Figure 7). They were thus well qualified to provide perceptions of safety and incidents of violence within their community.

On the whole, almost half the participants (43.3%) were at the time of the study living with both their parents; while more than a quarter (27.8%) were living with their mothers only. One in five participants (22.4%) was resident in households with extended family members including grandparents, uncles or aunts. Although most of the participants in all nine provinces were living with both parents, respondents from the Northern Cape proved to be the exception. These participants were significantly more likely to be residing with extended family members (42.5%, p<0.001). Most of the youth surveyed in this study also indicated that there were two (29.4%) or three (28.8%) young people (including themselves) between the ages of 12 and 22 years resident in their households.

The high percentage of young participants resident in female-headed households is a major cause for concern given that research studies have consistently found that young people from single-parent families are at higher risk of victimisation than those living in two-parent families.

Lauritsen explored the influences of family and community characteristics on the susceptibility of young people to violent victimisations. Her findings revealed that, in the main, youth resident in single-parent families (and particularly in female-headed households) were twice as likely as those living with both parents to become the victims of violent experiences. With this in mind, the familial characteristics of the participants surveyed in this study are described in more detail in the next chapter.
Many of the young people surveyed were from poverty-stricken households and home environments that were at times antagonistic.

Even though the majority of the participants reported that they were fond of their communities, a third of the respondents maintained that they would like to move from their residential areas. In this regard, black youth were significantly more likely than young people from other ethnicities to express a dislike for the communities in which they lived and a desire to move from their residential areas.

One-fifth of the participants reported that they did not feel safe in the communities in which they lived. Feelings of threat were highest among respondents from the provinces of Gauteng, Western Cape and North West.

Many of the youth in this study were acquainted with people in their communities who had used, sold and purchased addictive substances.

Nearly half the respondents personally knew someone who had broken the law and who makes a living by being involved in criminal activities.

While liquor was easily obtainable by these participants, drugs such as crack, ecstasy, tik and marijuana were more difficult to come by.

Guns were also difficult to access in their communities. Urban youth were most likely to report being able to access guns easily, followed by those from metropolitan areas. Coloured and white youth and those from urban areas were significantly more likely to report that a gun would be easily accessible in their communities.

Many of the family members of the youth interviewed in this study were themselves involved in criminal activities. Just under one-fifth reported they had thought of engaging in illegal or criminal activities, of whom half had actually acted on these thoughts.
INTRODUCTION

The crime and violence experienced by many South Africans threatens the physical and psychological well-being of young people. Furthermore, it violates young people’s personal sense of security since crime and violence permeates the social environments that are typically thought of as places of safety for them. Various factors stemming from the social contexts within which young people live heighten their vulnerability to criminal victimisation. These issues were explored in this study in an attempt to obtain a more comprehensive understanding and description of the victimisation experiences of youth in South Africa. The respondents were therefore asked a series of questions pertaining to their family, home and community locales. The findings generally revealed that these young people are exposed to social environments which are replete with a range of factors that significantly increase their likelihood of being victimised.

CRIME IN THE COMMUNITY

The close proximity of many youth in South Africa to offenders became evident in this study. Close to half (49.2%) of the respondents were personally acquainted with individuals in their communities who had committed criminal acts, including stealing, selling stolen property and mugging or assaulting others.

More than a quarter (28.8%) of these participants were also familiar with community members who made a living by being involved in criminal activities. Young people from the North West (37.1%), Western Cape (36.6%) and Limpopo (34.2%) were most likely to be acquainted with these individuals (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Respondents who knew someone in their area who made a living from crime, by province (n = 4409)
When the participants were asked to elaborate on the type of crime that their acquaintances were involved in, different trends emerged across the various provinces. Young people from Gauteng accounted for more than half (52.8%) of those who indicated familiarity with individuals involved in vehicular crimes. This is not surprising given that Gauteng as a province is notorious for violent motor thefts and also possibly has the highest rates of car ownership in the country.

The Western Cape participants constituted close to half (49.2%) of all respondents who were familiar with individuals who made a living by being involved in drug-related criminal activities. The highest proportion of participants who were familiar with individuals who were involved in robberies was concentrated among youth from Gauteng (23.5%), while personal knowledge of people involved in assault was highest among Limpopo youth (36.8%), followed by those from the Western Cape (24.4%). An awareness of perpetrators of rape or sexual assault was found to be more widespread among young people from North West (32.2%), followed by those residing in Limpopo (28.6%). These findings are an accurate reflection of the most recent official South African Police Service (SAPS) crime statistics for the different provinces (2004/05).44 (See tables 1, 2 and 3.)

Urban youth were most likely to be acquainted with individuals involved in thefts (24.9%) and robberies (23.6%), while those in rural areas tended to be familiar with perpetrators of thefts (43.4%) and housebreakings (25.9%). Participants resident in metropolitan areas were more likely to report familiarity with individuals involved in robberies (27%) and thefts (24%).

These high rates of familiarity with individuals involved in criminal activities are a major cause for concern. The close proximity of these youth to perpetrators of crime significantly increases their likelihood of being victimised, as well as the likelihood of being caught up in cycles of violence and crime where they themselves may become offenders.

Table 1: SAPS carjacking statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Total for 2004/05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>6902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KwaZulu-Natal</td>
<td>2702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limpopo</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12 434</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Crime Information Analysis Centre, SAPS, 2006.
DRUGS IN THE COMMUNITY

In an attempt to obtain a description of young people’s associations with delinquent peers, the respondents were asked a series of questions pertaining to their relationships, if any, with peers and acquaintances involved in delinquent activities. Given their familiarity with individuals resident in their communities who engage in criminal activities, it is not surprising that many of the young people surveyed were acquainted with peers and community members involved in various drug-related crimes. On the whole, many of the participants surveyed in this study were acquainted with community members who used, sold or purchased drugs (see Table 4).

Knowledge of community members who smoked marijuana was most prominent among North West (69.2%), Northern Cape (69.1%), Western Cape (66.6%) and...
Eastern Cape (66%) youth. Even though participants from the three older age groupings were significantly more likely to be familiar with community members who smoked marijuana, more than half (52.8%) of the 12–14-year-old respondents indicated that they were acquainted with individuals in their communities who had used marijuana. In particular, participants in the older two age cohorts were significantly more likely than those from the younger age groupings to indicate being familiar with community members who sold drugs (p<0.001). (See figures 9, 10 and 11.)

Young people from the Western Cape were significantly more likely to report that they were acquainted with individuals in their communities who sold (40.1%) or had purchased drugs (47.7%, p<0.001), followed by those from the Eastern Cape (28.9% and 36.6% respectively).

Awareness of community members who smoked marijuana was highest among coloured (73.8%) and black (63.5%) youth. Interestingly, coloured and Indian participants were significantly more likely to report that they personally knew individuals in their communities who had sold (48.3% and 28.4% respectively) or purchased (55.2% and 30.6% respectively, p<0.001) drugs. Of note, in addition to being aware of these individuals, more than three-quarters (78.9%) of the youth in this study reported that they had been in the presence of people who had been intoxicated as a result of consuming addictive substances.

Table 4: Respondent who are familiar with drug activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drug Activity</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals who smoke marijuana (n = 4384)</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals who sell or deal in drugs (n = 4344)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals who buy drugs (n = 4355)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Young people from the Western Cape were significantly more likely to report that they were acquainted with individuals in their communities who sold (40.1%) or had purchased drugs (47.7%, p<0.001), followed by those from the Eastern Cape (28.9% and 36.6% respectively).

Awareness of community members who smoked marijuana was highest among coloured (73.8%) and black (63.5%) youth. Interestingly, coloured and Indian participants were significantly more likely to report that they personally knew individuals in their communities who had sold (48.3% and 28.4% respectively) or purchased (55.2% and 30.6% respectively, p<0.001) drugs. Of note, in addition to being aware of these individuals, more than three-quarters (78.9%) of the youth in this study reported that they had been in the presence of people who had been intoxicated as a result of consuming addictive substances.

Figure 9: Respondents familiar with community members who smoke marijuana, by age (n = 4384)
Given these high percentages of young people who are acquainted with community members involved in various drug-related activities, it is not surprising that many of the participants reported that drugs were easily accessible in their communities (see Table 5).

Respondents from the Western Cape (39.6%) and those resident in metropolitan (44.9%) and urban (35.2%) areas were significantly more likely to report that alcohol was very easy to obtain in their communities ($p<0.001$). Those who reported that it would be very difficult to attain were primarily youth from the Northern Cape (32%), Free State (31.3%) and Limpopo (30%).

In view of the fact that the older participants are able to obtain alcohol legally, further analysis was done with the younger respondents only. These findings revealed that even though participants in both the two younger age cohorts reported that they would have difficulty accessing alcohol in their communities, those between the ages of 12 and 14 years were most likely to report that liquor would be
very hard to come by (37.1%) in their residential areas. Contrary to this, the 15–17-year-old participants were most likely to indicate that it would be easy (27.1%) or very easy (24.4%) for them to obtain alcohol or other types of liquor in their communities.

More than half the respondents in these two younger age cohorts indicated that they would have great difficulty accessing drugs such as crack/cocaine, ecstasy and tik in their communities. Even so, the participants in the 15–17 year age grouping were more likely than those from the younger age cohort to indicate that they would be able to obtain these substances in their communities easily (see figures 12 and 13, over page).

On the whole, young people from Gauteng (30.1%), the Western Cape (22.3%) and the Eastern Cape (16.9%) as well as those in the older age groupings accounted for the majority of those participants who reported that drugs such as crack, cocaine or ecstasy were easily accessible in their residential areas. Furthermore, 6.6% of all the youth interviewed in this study reported that they would be able to purchase these drugs at their schools or places of employment if they wanted to. These drugs appeared to be most accessible to Indian youth (17.7%) within their educational

Figure 12: How easy it would be to obtain crack/cocaine or ecstasy, by age (n = 2450)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Very Hard</th>
<th>Hard</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Very Easy</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obtain beer, wine or hard liquor</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain crack, cocaine or ecstasy</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain tik</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain marijuana or dagga</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain a gun</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain a knife or other weapon</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
institutions, followed by coloured (15.3%) and white (15.3%) participants. Young people resident in metropolitan areas (11.1%) and those between the ages of 18 and 20 years (8.3%) were most likely to report that they would be able to obtain drugs from their schools or places of employment (p<0.001).

WEAPONS AND VIOLENCE

Young people’s access to firearms and other weapons in their communities were also explored in this study. While most (93.5%) of the participants said that it would be difficult for them to obtain a firearm in their communities, young people from Gauteng (29.8%), Eastern Cape (17.5%) and Mpumalanga (13.8%) accounted for the majority of those who reported that it would be very easy for them to obtain firearms in their places of residence. Analysis within the different racial categories and area classifications revealed that coloured (3.2%) youth and those from metropolitan areas.

Figure 13: How easy it would be to obtain tik, by age (n = 2275)

Figure 14: How easy it would be to obtain a knife or other weapon, by province (n = 4384)
areas (2.8%) were more likely to have easy access to firearms within their communities. Other weapons, such as knives, were easier to access for all participants irrespective of age, province or race (see figures 14, 15 and 16). This is hardly surprising, as there is little or no control over anybody, of any age, walking into a shop and buying a potentially lethal knife.

In addition to criminal activities, incidences of violence were endemic to the communities in which these young participants lived. On the whole, many of them resided in communities in which they reported crime as being disturbingly prevalent (43.3%) and fights a widespread occurrence (49.2%); accordingly, more than half (68.6%) the respondents were exposed to some form of violence or crime within their communities. Black (70.3%) and coloured (76.6%) participants experienced the highest rates of exposure to violence within their residential areas (p<0.001). In contrast to this, exposure to violence within their community was lowest among white (58.2%) and Indian (43%) respondents. Additionally, more than half of all the participants residing in urban (70.5%), rural (67.9%) and metropolitan (64.3%) areas had witnessed incidences of violence.

Figure 15: How easy it would be to obtain a knife or other weapon, by age (n = 4384)

![Figure 15](image_url)

Figure 16: How easy it would be to obtain a knife or other weapon, by race (n = 4384)

![Figure 16](image_url)
With reference to the various provinces, exposure to violence within the community was highest among young people from Limpopo (79.6%), the North West (78.7%) and Mpumalanga (77.1%). An examination of the locations of these violent incidences revealed that incidences of violence typically occurred in the participants’ areas of residence (77.3%), in areas outside of their immediate areas (11.7%), and at their schools (8.5%) (see Figure 17).

Even though more than three-quarters (76.9%) of the victims in these interpersonal community disputes were unrelated to the participants, the majority of them (57.5%) were known to the young people interviewed in this study. The respondents who reported that the individual attacked was related to them (23.1%) frequently identified other relatives (33.2%), neighbours (24.7%) and friends (21.9%) as victims of the violence witnessed in their communities (see Figure 18).

Figure 17: Where respondents have seen others being hurt or attacked (n = 2919)

Figure 18: Identity of the person being attacked (n = 370)
Community members (47.5%), friends or friends of the family (14.8%), and other family members who were not resident in the participants’ households (14.3%) were typically implicated as the perpetrators in these disputes (see Figure 19).

Communities characterised by high levels of crime and violence often provide few, if any, social and recreational opportunities for young people. When the participants were asked how they spent most of their time after school, the highest proportion of the respondents indicated that their time was spent at home (27%), while nearly a quarter (24.2%) reported that their time was spent completing their homework. One in six participants (16.9%) said that they spent the greatest part of their time with their friends. Of those who were involved in any social activities within their communities, close to half (46.6%) were at the time of the study involved in a youth or religious group, while more than half (51.7%) of the respondents reported that they were involved in a sports team. Additionally, nearly one in five participants (19.2%) indicated that they were involved in after-school societies or groups.

In short, the findings discussed above suggest that many of the young people surveyed in this study are being raised in community environments fraught with the risk factors that have consistently been found to influence the vulnerability of youth to experiences of victimisation. Communities where crime and violence are the order of the day and where illegal substances and weapons are easily accessible have been found to heighten the susceptibility of young people to both victimisation and offending. This is often exacerbated by the lack of social and recreational opportunities that epitomise many contemporary South African communities.

Given the presence of these risk factors in the lives of the young people surveyed in this study, one can conclude that these participants are at significant risk for victimisation and subsequent involvement in criminal activities. Patchin et al argue that given high levels of youth victimisation, notions of victimisation must be extended beyond that which focuses merely on the victim, to those that may witness the victimisation and so are exposed to violence and crime, thereby increasing the chance of later being caught up in cycles of crime. This is even more pertinent when
young people are exposed to crime not only in their communities, but in their homes and families.

THE FAMILY

Certain family attributes are believed to mediate the effects of community violence on children. The study therefore also examined the family characteristics of these young participants. The research findings revealed that violence was not only pervasive in the communities in which these young people lived, but also permeated their familial environments.

Even though the study did not attempt to ascertain the socio-economic status of the participants, it became evident that many of these young people were from financially deprived households. This was revealed in the percentage (19.5%) of participants who reported that they did not always have enough food to eat at home. Of those, the highest proportion was black youth (96.3%) resident in rural areas (74.2%). There was a significant relationship between the province in which the respondents lived and whether or not they had an adequate amount of food at home. Those from the North West were significantly more likely than those from other provinces to state that they did not always have enough food (42.9%, p<0.001), followed by young people from Mpumalanga (31.7%), Eastern Cape (27%) and Limpopo (24.2%). These participants were also most likely to report going to bed hungry two or more nights out of the week.

In addition, many participants reported that their home environments were at times antagonistic. More than a quarter (26.5%) reported that their family members argued on a regular basis, while one in ten (11.9%) respondents indicated that their family members often became physical when they were angry with each other. Furthermore, one in five (27.1%) participants said they were often spanked at home as punishment for their wrongdoings. The use of physical punishment as a means of effecting discipline was more common among female participants (28.6%) than male (25.5%) respondents.

Given the violent nature of many of these families it is not surprising that for many of the young people surveyed in this study, violence among their family members was a common occurrence. One in five (21.8%) participants reported that they had previously witnessed interpersonal disputes within their own families. Family violence was found to be most common among respondents from the Northern Cape (33.4%), North West (27.1%), Mpumalanga (26.2%) and the Western Cape (25.6%). Furthermore, coloured (33.2%) participants were more inclined to indicate that they had witnessed incidences of violence within their own families, followed by black (21.7%) and Indian (17.9%) youth. When one examines the prevalence of family violence within the various area classifications, the data

The Children’s Bill will effectively make corporal punishment within the home illegal; however, the bill will not leave parents powerless as it offers alternatives to parents through the advocacy and facilitation of progressive (non-violent) parenting techniques.
suggests that youth resident in metropolitan areas (25.9%) experience greater exposure to violence within their families, followed by urban (21.8%) and rural (21.2%) respondents. For the most part, the victims in these family disputes were siblings (34.7%), other relatives (25.9%) and mothers (19%) (see Figure 20).

Other relatives (27.3%), siblings (24.9%) and fathers (21.3%) were primarily implicated as the perpetrators in these domestic arguments (see Figure 21).

The violent nature of these familial disputes is evident in the percentage of those who reported that a weapon was used in the attack (39.8%). The weapons most commonly used were sticks (57.3%) and knives (26.4%). Subsequently, more than a quarter (27.6%) of these participants indicated that the victim had sustained injuries as a result of the argument.

In addition to the participants’ exposure to, and potential involvement with, delinquent peers (as described earlier in this chapter) the study also attempted to obtain a description of the presence of family members within these young people’s households who had been involved in unlawful activities. Several youth surveyed in this study indicated that adult members in their families were involved in drug-related
activities or other activities that could get them in trouble with the police. Table 6 illustrates that one in ten (10.5%) participants reported that adult members in their families were guilty of criminal transgressions.

Importantly, despite the aggressive nature of many of these households and the presence of family members involved in illicit activities, the overwhelming majority (90%) of participants reported that the adult members in their families were good role models for them.

**TAKING THE FINDINGS FURTHER**

The findings presented in this chapter suggest that South African youth have few places of safety since the very places (families and communities) typically thought of as safe havens are characterised by violence and criminal activities.

The family is the primary socialising agent where children are taught about the behaviours considered acceptable and unacceptable in the societies in which they live. Children who are raised in antagonistic households – as is the case with the young people surveyed in this study – come to perceive violence as an appropriate means of conflict resolution. This tendency was evident in this study as well. One in three respondents (30.2%) indicated that it would be acceptable to physically attack someone who had assaulted them on a previous occasion if the opportunity presented itself.

This viewpoint was most prominent among Indian (45.3%) and coloured (35.2%) participants and those residing in urban areas (34.6%). When we examine provincial differences, the data suggests that respondents from the Free State (41.4%), Gauteng (36.1%), KwaZulu-Natal (33.2%) and the North West (30.6%) were most likely to hold this view.

Participants were also asked whether it would ever be acceptable to frighten or intimidate someone else. Those who responded that it would be acceptable to do so (4.6%) were then asked to specify how they felt following an incident in which they had intimidated someone. Of these, close to half (45%) indicated that they felt good, while one in six (16.9%) respondents reported that they felt no different after the incident. These findings suggest the extent to which violence has become normalised in South African communities since individuals who perpetrate violence against others seldom feel remorse for their actions.

Research has also linked the continual exposure to violence and criminal activities to criminal behaviour later in life.46 For this reason, respondents were asked whether they ever thought about doing something that could be considered a crime.

### Table 6: Adult members in the respondents’ family have . . . (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used drugs (including mandrax, crack cocaine, ecstasy) (n = 4390)</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealt or sold drugs (n = 4394)</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Done something that could get them in trouble with the law (n = 4402)</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly a fifth (18.3%) of the participants responded positively to this question. Analysis within the different age groups reveals that participants in the 18–20 year age group were most likely to report experiencing urges to offend (22%), followed by those in the 21–22 year age cohort (18%). Participants in the two younger age cohorts reported similar rates (see Figure 22).

Of these, half (50.2%) reported that they had acted on their thoughts. Those who indicated that they did not act on their thoughts (49.8%) cited feelings of guilt (29.1%), a belief that the action would be morally wrong (25.6%) and fear (20.8%) as the primary reasons for failing to engage in criminal activities.

In short, the participants in this study are raised in family and community settings fraught with numerous factors known to increase the vulnerability of young people to victimisations. Hence, we can expect these young people to report significant rates of victimisation.

Figure 22: Respondents who had thought about offending (n = 4408)
**PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY AT HOME**

Despite living in communities where illegal substances are easily accessible and crime and violence are the order of the day, the overwhelming majority (91.6%) of participants reported that they felt safe at home; only 8.4% reported feeling threatened in their domestic environment. The low rates of young people who were afraid at home are interesting given the prevalence of violence within their homes (as described in Chapter 4). White participants (95.9%) and those resident in rural areas (93.3%) were most likely to report that they felt safe within their home environments (p<0.001).

When asked to specify why they felt unsafe at home, more than four-fifths of the respondents who were fearful at home (84.5%) indicated that they were afraid of criminals (see Figure 23, over page). Other reasons provided for feeling unsafe at home included a fear of being alone (11%); and an apprehension towards their parents (3.6%).
When one considers the pervasiveness of crime and violence within the home environments and broader communities in which many of these participants live, it is not surprising that a number of them feel threatened within these contexts. It is, in fact, surprising that not more of them feel unsafe in these locales.

Analysis within the different age groups suggests that all the participants, irrespective of their age, cited a fear of criminals and a fear of being alone as the primary reasons for their apprehension at home (see Figure 24). These findings point towards the prevalence of crime in the communities within which these participants live since their fears stem from influences outside of their homes.

Marked differences emerge when one considers the provinces in which these young people live. While most of the participants from the various provinces attributed their apprehension at home to a fear of criminals and a fear of being alone, all the participants from Mpumalanga cited a fear of criminals as the reason for their concerns at home. A fear of criminals and parents were the two primary reasons cited by Northern Cape respondents for their fears at home (See Figure 25).

Figure 23: Reasons for feeling unsafe at home (n = 373)

![Figure 23](image_url)

When one considers the pervasiveness of crime and violence within the home environments and broader communities in which many of these participants live, it is not surprising that a number of them feel threatened within these contexts. It is, in fact, surprising that not more of them feel unsafe in these locales.

Analysis within the different age groups suggests that all the participants, irrespective of their age, cited a fear of criminals and a fear of being alone as the primary reasons for their apprehension at home (see Figure 24). These findings point towards the prevalence of crime in the communities within which these participants live since their fears stem from influences outside of their homes.

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Figure 24: Reasons for feeling unsafe at home, by age (n = 373)

![Figure 24](image_url)
Similar trends were evident when examining the differences between youth from urban, rural and metropolitan areas. Young people from all three area classifications were most likely to attribute their fear at home to criminals in their communities, followed by their fear of being alone.

PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY AT SCHOOL

More than a tenth of the respondents (11.5%) reported that they were fearful at their school or place of employment. These respondents were asked to specify why they felt threatened in these contexts. As in the case of those who were fearful at home, more than half (52.5%) of those who were fearful at school reported that they were afraid of criminals. The other reasons provided for these qualms included the fear of being hurt (21.4%), a fear of their classmates (18.3%), and 4.8% of the respondents reported that they were afraid of their educators.

Variations in the participants’ responses become evident when the differences between the provinces are explored. Young people from all the provinces with the exception of Limpopo and the Northern Cape attributed their fears at school to their fear of criminals.

Contrary to this, those from Limpopo (49.7%) and the Northern Cape (65.1%) were most likely to attribute their fears at school to their fear of being hurt. A fear of classmates or colleagues was most prominent among youth from the North West (41.4%), Free State (29.2%) and Limpopo (23.5%) (see Table 7, over page).

Young people from various racial categories were most likely to attribute their apprehension at school or work to their fear of criminals. While black (20.5%), coloured (25.9%) and Indian (37.3%) youth cited their fear of being hurt as the second most common reason for their fear at school or work, white respondents (29.7%)

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Figure 25: Reasons for feeling unsafe at home, by province (n = 373)

![Reasons for feeling unsafe at home, by province](image-url)
attributed their second most common fear to fear of classmates, friends or colleagues 
(see Table 8).

Participants resident in metropolitan (74.8%), urban (53.8%) and rural (46.2%) communities were most likely to report that their fear of criminals gave rise to their feelings of threat within their school or work environments. A fear of principals or educators was concentrated among young people living in rural communities (8.4%), followed by those from urban areas (2.1%). Young people living in metropolitan areas were more likely than those from other areas to indicate that they were fearful of being disciplined (7.7%) (see Table 9). Even though this study did not attempt to explore the nature of the corporal punishment experienced by these participants at school, the above mentioned finding is indicative of the injurious nature of the discipline employed at schools. Since this chapter is centred on the perceptions of safety within their social locales, the violence experienced by these participants at school will be described in further detail in Chapter 7.

Table 7: Reasons for being fearful at school or work, by province (%) (n = 387)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Scared of being hurt</th>
<th>Scared of criminals</th>
<th>Scared of teachers or principals</th>
<th>Scared of classmates, friends or colleagues</th>
<th>Scared of being disciplined</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limpopo</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KwaZulu-Natal</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Reasons for feeling unsafe at school or work, by race (%) (n = 387)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Scared of being hurt</th>
<th>Scared of criminals</th>
<th>Scared of teachers or principals</th>
<th>Scared of classmates, friends or colleagues</th>
<th>Scared of being disciplined</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interestingly, the majority of respondents (81%) reported that they liked the neighbourhoods in which they lived. Those from Limpopo (89.2%), Free State (83.3%) and Gauteng (82.1%) were most likely to indicate that they were fond of the communities in which they lived. Contrary to this, participants from KwaZulu-Natal (25.4%), the North West (19.7%) and the Western Cape (19.3%) accounted for the majority of those who indicated a dislike for their communities. White (93.5%) and Indian (86.9%) youth and those resident in rural (81.7%) and urban (81.4%) areas were also more inclined to report that they were fond of the neighbourhoods in which they lived (p<0.001).

The high percentage of participants who were fond of their communities despite the high levels of crime characterising these locales could be attributed to the normalisation of crime and violence within the lives of young South Africans. When young people are continually exposed to violent and criminal activities within the spaces that they occupy – that is, their homes, schools and broader communities – they come to view these activities as part of the normal order of things.

Regardless of the high proportion of participants indicating that they were fond of their communities despite the high levels of crime characterising these locales could be attributed to the normalisation of crime and violence within the lives of young South Africans. When young people are continually exposed to violent and criminal activities within the spaces that they occupy – that is, their homes, schools and broader communities – they come to view these activities as part of the normal order of things.

The discrepancy between the participants reporting a liking for their community and those expressing a desire to move from their neighbourhoods could be attributed in part to the characteristics that epitomise the developmental stages of these participants. Adolescents, typically, are in the process of developing their unique identities. During this process they generally desire to explore and

### Table 9: Reasons for feeling unsafe at school or work, by area classification (n = 387)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scared of being hurt</th>
<th>Scared of criminals</th>
<th>Scared of teachers or principals</th>
<th>Scared of classmates, friends or colleagues</th>
<th>Scared of being disciplined</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metro</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY**

Interestingly, the majority of respondents (81%) reported that they liked the neighbourhoods in which they lived. Those from Limpopo (89.2%), Free State (83.3%) and Gauteng (82.1%) were most likely to indicate that they were fond of the communities in which they lived. Contrary to this, participants from KwaZulu-Natal (25.4%), the North West (19.7%) and the Western Cape (19.3%) accounted for the majority of those who indicated a dislike for their communities. White (93.5%) and Indian (86.9%) youth and those resident in rural (81.7%) and urban (81.4%) areas were also more inclined to report that they were fond of the neighbourhoods in which they lived (p<0.001).

The high percentage of participants who were fond of their communities despite the high levels of crime characterising these locales could be attributed to the normalisation of crime and violence within the lives of young South Africans. When young people are continually exposed to violent and criminal activities within the spaces that they occupy – that is, their homes, schools and broader communities – they come to view these activities as part of the normal order of things.

Regardless of the high proportion of participants indicating that they were fond of their communities, one in three (35.6%) respondents reported that they would like to move from their current residential areas. Of these, young people from the North West (55.9%) were particularly likely to report a desire to move from their communities, followed by those from the Free State (52%) and Mpumalanga (45.2%). The older participants, between the ages of 18 and 20 (37.5%), and 21 and 22 years (39.8%), were also more likely to report that they would like to move from their residential areas. These findings were statistically significant (p<0.001). In line with the findings pertaining to those described above, black youth (37.5%) were significantly more likely to indicate that they would like to move from their existing communities (p<0.001).

The discrepancy between the participants reporting a liking for their community and those expressing a desire to move from their neighbourhoods could be attributed in part to the characteristics that epitomise the developmental stages of these participants. Adolescents, typically, are in the process of developing their unique identities. During this process they generally desire to explore and
experience the outside world as they move away from parental authority figures and strive towards personal autonomy. This desire to move from their communities could also be ascribed to feelings of threat experienced by these participants within their residential areas.

On the whole, one in five (20.5%) participants reported that they do not feel safe in the communities in which they live. Interestingly, the majority of those living in rural communities reported feelings of safety in their neighbourhoods (82.6%, p<0.001) (see Figure 26).

Feelings of threat were highest among respondents from the Western Cape (26.3%), the North West (24%) and Gauteng (23%), and those between the ages of 21 and 22 years (30%, p<0.001). With reference to race, coloured participants (27%) were most likely to report that they felt unsafe in their residential areas (p<0.001).

Copious theories have been developed to explain why youth are at increased risk of victimisation within their communities. One such theory is the Routine Activities Theory (RAT) formulated by Cohen and Felson in 1979. This theory attributes young people’s increased vulnerability to crime to their exposure to would-be offenders (often in the form of delinquent peers and acquaintances) and waning parental supervision. Additionally, the risk-taking behaviours that adolescents typically engage in (such as partying until the early hours of the morning and consuming alcohol and other addictive substances) are believed to compromise parents’ ability to supervise young people and increase their vulnerability to experiences of victimisation.47

Figure 26: Respondents who feel safe in their communities (n = 4408)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metro</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In an attempt to obtain information pertaining to South Africans’ sense of safety within their communities, those participating in the 2003 National Victims of Crime Survey were asked how safe they felt walking alone in their residential areas during the day as well as at night time. The research findings suggest that South Africans living in rural areas were more likely than those in other areas to report feelings of safety when walking in the communities in which they lived during the day time.
In order to obtain an idea of the origins of concern for young people in South Africa, the participants were asked to select three things, if any, from a list of 12 that they were most scared of. The list of offences included:

- murder;
- rape/sexual assault;
- fighting;
- falling pregnant;
- theft/mugging;
- vigilantes;
- verbal abuse/being teased;
- guns;
- becoming infected with HIV/Aids;
- gangs;
- taking public transport; or
- nothing.

Rape/sexual assault (19.9%), murder (19.1%), and theft/mugging (10.6%) were the three crimes most commonly identified by the participants as the offences that they were most afraid of (see Figure 27).

Differences and similarities emerged with regard to age and the events that instil fear in the young people interviewed in this study. Participants in the 15–17 and

Figure 27: Things the participants are most afraid of (multiple response set) (n = 7805)
18–20 year age cohorts were most likely to report that they were most fearful of rape or sexual assault, followed by murder, and theft or muggings. Those in the 12–14 and 21–22 year age groupings were more inclined to indicate that they were most fearful of murder, followed by rape or sexual assault. While the youngest participants identified fighting as the third event that they were most afraid of, the oldest participants identified theft or mugging (see Table 10).

All the participants, irrespective of their age, were least afraid of verbal/emotional abuse, vigilantes, and the use of public transport.

When we examine provincial trends, various differences become evident. Young people from Gauteng (40.7%), North West (60.5%) and the Western Cape (50.3%) were more inclined to be most afraid of murder. The fear of rape or sexual assault

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 10: Things the participants were most scared of (multiple response set) (%) (n = 7805)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12–14 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape/sexual assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falling pregnant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft/mugging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigilantes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse/being teased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Aids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking public transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings are once again reflective of the types of crimes that are most prevalent in these provinces. SAPS crime statistics show that the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal reported the highest rates of rape for the period April to March 2004/2005.

was most prominent among youth from Mpumalanga (56.4%), Eastern Cape (44.1%), Northern Cape (26.1%) and KwaZulu-Natal (23%).

The fear of theft or mugging was most concentrated among young people residing in Mpumalanga (26.9%), Gauteng (24.2%) and the North West (20.1%).

With reference to gender, male respondents comprised the highest percentages for all the offences listed, except sexual assault or rape, verbal abuse, and the fear of becoming pregnant. These incidences were most prominent among the female youth (see Table 11).

Table 11: Things the respondents are most afraid of, by gender (multiple response set) (%) (n = 7805)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape/sexual assault</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>55.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falling pregnant</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft/mugging</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigilantes</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse/being teased</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guns</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Aids</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangs</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking public transport</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall victimisation

‘But the real beginning of respect for women and children and indeed humanity starts at home with partners, parents, relatives and friends who cannot and should not be abusers or perpetrators. … [T]he responsibility of ensuring the safety of women and children in our homes and our bedrooms, in our playing fields and our schools, indeed everywhere, is our joint responsibility as citizens.’

Deputy President Mlambo Ngcuka, Launch of the 16 Days of Activism 2005 Campaign, November 2005

- Young people experienced significant rates of victimisation. In total, two-fifths (41.4%) of young South Africans had experienced some form of victimisation during the preceding year. This is a rate almost double that of adult South Africans.

- The most commonly experienced victimisation was theft of personal belongings (19.5%), followed by assault (16.5%), housebreaking (9.5%) and robberies (9.4%).

- Crimes against young people were primarily perpetrated by known members in the communities within which these respondents live.

- These victimisations typically occurred in the participants’ communities and at their schools.

- The rates for reporting crimes were generally low, except for burglaries and assaults where the rates were slightly higher.

- Most participants failed to access counselling services after their violent victimisations.

- The most prominent reasons cited for failing to do so was the perception that counselling was not required at the time and a lack of awareness about where to access these services within their communities.

- Participants also indicated that they had noted changes in their behaviour following the experiences of violence.
Young people experience significantly higher rates of victimisation than their adult counterparts. As Figure 28 illustrates, just over two-fifths of young people in South Africa had been victims of some crime in the preceding 12 months. The most common crime experienced was theft of personal property, which includes pickpocketing (19.5%), followed by assault (16.5%). Housebreaking has been experienced by just under one-tenth (9.5%) of young South Africans, while only fractionally fewer (9.4%) have been victims of robbery.

Of concern, clearly, is the prevalence of the violent crimes of assault and robbery that many young people are experiencing. This corresponds with international trends, where young people are two to three times more likely than adults to be the victims of a violent crime.48

It needs to be borne in mind that many of the young people cited incidences of violence at schools when reporting on their experiences of criminal victimisation. A number of the incidences reported here are therefore assaults, thefts, robberies and sexual assaults that have taken place at these young people’s schools. This is not to suggest that crimes that occur at school are any less serious than those that occur elsewhere; however, various forms of bullying are certainly included in Figure 28, and go some way towards accounting for the high assault statistics.

At the same time, this also suggests that there are few places where children are actually safe from crime and violence, as they are being victimised in every space
they occupy. The places in which crimes occur are discussed in more detail in the analysis of individual crimes.

Alarmingly, the overall rate of victimisation for young people in this study was close to double that of adults, as reported in the 2003 National Victims of Crime Survey. This supports the theory that young people are victimised at rates exponentially higher than those of adults (see Table 12).

Although housebreakings and car hijackings are typically household crimes, they still expose young people within the household to forms of crime and violence that can impact on their own lives in a significant way. It therefore became imperative to explore young people’s experiences of these crimes as well as the personal crimes

**Table 12: Comparative victimisation rates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of victimisation</th>
<th>Adult rates 2003 (National Victims of Crime Survey) %</th>
<th>Youth rates 2005 (National Youth Victimisation Survey) %</th>
<th>Difference %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any crime</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>+18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft of personal property</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>+14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>+14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>+7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual assault</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>+4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housebreaking</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car hijacking</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>+1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 29: Number of crimes experienced by respondents (n = 4368)
that impact more directly on the victims. In addition to the increased likelihood of experiencing crime, young people also tend to experience more than one crime, or multiple victimisations. Figure 29 (previous page) depicts those respondents, as a percentage of the total sample, who experienced one or more crimes over the course of the preceding 12 months. Provincially, KwaZulu-Natal (20.7%), Limpopo (15.5%), Gauteng (14%) and the Eastern Cape (12.4%) emerge as the four provinces with the highest rates of youth victimisation (see Figure 30).

Differences were also evident across the various provinces. While more than half of all the participants who had been victimised in the various provinces were the victims of only one crime, significant proportions of these youth were the direct victims of two or more crimes (see Table 13).

The relationship between exposure to violence and victimisation has already been discussed in Chapter 4. It is hardly surprising that people who see violence and

Table 13: Rates of victimisation, by province (%) (n = 4368)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gauteng</th>
<th>Limpopo</th>
<th>Free State</th>
<th>Mpumalanga</th>
<th>North West</th>
<th>Eastern Cape</th>
<th>Northern Cape</th>
<th>KwaZulu-Natal</th>
<th>Western Cape</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 crime</td>
<td>74.7</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>62.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 crimes</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 crimes</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more crimes</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
crime going on around them on a daily basis, either in their community or in their homes, are more likely to fall victim to crime than those not exposed to such a scenario. Similarly, such individuals are more at risk of themselves turning to crime.

A significant relationship (p<0.001) existed between those young people who had been victimised in the previous 12 months and those who had been exposed to violence in their neighbourhood or home. A similarly significant relationship existed between those who knew someone who engaged in criminal behaviour and those who had been victimised (p<0.001). In total, four out of five (80%) of those who had been a victim of any crime had been exposed to violence in their neighbourhood, with those who had been victims of sexual assault most likely to be exposed to such violence (86.6%). Of note is that those victims of crime who were most likely to report exposure to violence within the home were those who had been victims of sexual assault (40.3%) and assault (36.3%) – both violent offences (see Figure 31).

These findings speak to the general nature of the environment in which young people live and their likelihood of victimisation. Of even more interest, however, is the percentage of those young people who reported exposure to violence who had in fact been victimised. As Figure 32 (over page) illustrates, many of the young respondents who reported exposure to violence and crime – either in their home or community, or through knowing someone who made a living from crime – had themselves been victimised. Indeed, knowing someone who made a living from crime was significantly likely to increase the likelihood of being assaulted, sexually assaulted or burgled, while being exposed to incidents of violence within the

![Figure 31: Percentage of all those victimised who had been exposed to violence and crime](image-url)
household was significantly likely to increase the risk of theft and robbery. Overall, however, knowing someone who made a living from crime was the most significant factor of the three exposure to violence and crime variables in determining victimisation of any crime (p<0.001 in all cases).

These findings suggest that while knowing someone who makes their living from crime is likely to result in an increased chance of victimisation, those young people who had been robbed or sexually assaulted (both violent crimes) were very likely to live in homes where they were exposed to violence and hurt.

NATURE OF YOUTH VICTIMISATION

The findings pertaining to the individual crimes experienced by these participants are elaborated on in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

THE DESCRIPTION OF THEFT OF PROPERTY AS USED IN THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE:

Can you tell me if you have experienced a theft in the past 12 months? By theft, I mean that someone has taken something from you without your permission, including electronics, jewellery, books, or anything else that you may own.

Theft of personal belongings was the one type of crime that was most commonly experienced by the participants surveyed in this study (19.5%). More than half (59.6%) of those...
who had their property stolen in the 12 months preceding the study were males and young people resident in rural (53.9%) communities (see figures 33 and 34).

Theft of personal belongings was most concentrated among the youth from Mpumalanga (35.3%), North West (28.4%) and Limpopo (25.6%). Young people in the 12–14 (24.4%) and 15–17 (19.5%) year age groups were most likely to report that they had had their property stolen in the 12 months preceding the study.

In an attempt to shed some light on the specific locations of these thefts, young people were asked to indicate where these incidences had taken place. More than half (52.4%) reported that their property was stolen at school, while close to a third (31.2%) indicated that the theft had occurred at their homes. Other places commonly identified as locations for these thefts included streets (8.9%), and areas in and around shops (4.7%) (see Figure 35, over page).

The perpetrators of these thefts were typically known (46.2%) to the respondents. More than half (55.7%) the respondents knew the offenders by name, while close to
a third (28.3%) were familiar with the identity of the offenders because other people had witnessed the theft.

Most of the participants (85.4%) who had been victimised in this way had informed someone about the theft. Interestingly, males (55.9%) accounted for more than half of all those who had told someone about the theft. Nearly half of these (46.7%) indicated that they had informed their family members about the incident, while more than a quarter (28.7%) had reported the incident to a private security company. Interestingly, only 8.5% had reported the incident to their local police station.

Given the negative implications of victimisations for the well-being of young people, the participants were asked whether they had accessed any counselling services subsequent to the theft. While most (71.4%) of these participants were not provided with any counselling services following the theft, nearly a third (28.6%) reported that they had accessed support services. Those who did not access any services were asked to specify why they had failed to do so. The most common reasons cited for failing to do so included a belief that support services were not needed (81.1%), followed by a lack of information pertaining to the availability of these services (12.8%). The tendency not to seek emotional support following traumatic events is disconcerting given that many (70.6%) of these victims had experienced changes in their behaviour as a result of the incident.

**ASSAULT**

The incidence of assault was also found to be widespread among these participants. One in seven

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**Figure 35: Place where theft occurred (n = 871)**

![Bar chart showing the distribution of theft occurrence locations.]

The description of assault as used in the survey questionnaire:

Assault is when someone has attacked you physically or hurt you using any kind of weapon or their hands, without taking anything from you. Please DO NOT include any times when your parents might have hit or hurt you for something you had done wrong.
(16.5%) young people surveyed reported that they had been assaulted in the 12 months prior to the study. Respondents in the 12–14 and 21–22 year age groupings reported the lowest rates of assaults; they were more likely than those in the other age cohorts to report that they had been assaulted prior to the study (16.6% and 19.1% respectively, p<0.001).

Young people from Limpopo (28.9%), the North West (25.8%) and Mpumalanga (19.3%) were most likely to report an experience of assault in the 12 months before participating in this study. Coloured (17.8%) youth and males (19.6%) in particular were significantly more likely than those from other ethnicities and females to report having been previously assaulted. Contrary to this, white (90.1%) and Indian (88.2%) youth reported not having experienced assault in the year prior to the study (p<0.001) (see figures 36 and 37).

Figure 36: Respondents who had been assaulted, by race (n = 4402)

![Figure 36: Respondents who had been assaulted, by race (n = 4402)](image)

Figure 37: Respondents who had been assaulted, by gender (n = 4402)

![Figure 37: Respondents who had been assaulted, by gender (n = 4402)](image)
The participants who were assaulted reported that these incidences typically occurred at school (26%), in streets outside of shops or offices (21.6%), and at home (19.6%). More than half (52.3%) of those who had been assaulted had been injured as a result of the assault. Furthermore, nearly half (48%) of those who were injured had to seek medical attention for the injuries sustained.

As with those who had had their property stolen, the majority (92.9%) of assault victims were aware of the identity of their offenders. Community members (29.8%), school mates (22.1%), other relatives or household members (16%), and employers or educators (7%) were primarily implicated as the perpetrators in these assaults. Other individuals identified as the perpetrators in these incidences of assault are given in Table 14.

Further analysis revealed that for the coloured, black and Indian participants, assaults were primarily perpetrated by known members of the communities in which they lived, followed by school mates. The assaults against the white youth in

Table 14: Perpetrators of youth assaults (%) (n = 643)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perpetrators</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Known community members</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School mates</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relative/household member</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other friends/acquaintances</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boss/teacher</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyfriend/girlfriend</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown community members</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other unknown people</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang member</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other authority figure</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants who were assaulted reported that these incidences typically occurred at school (26%), in streets outside of shops or offices (21.6%), and at home (19.6%). More than half (52.3%) of those who had been assaulted had been injured as a result of the assault. Furthermore, nearly half (48%) of those who were injured had to seek medical attention for the injuries sustained.

As with those who had had their property stolen, the majority (92.9%) of assault victims were aware of the identity of their offenders. Community members (29.8%), school mates (22.1%), other relatives or household members (16%), and employers or educators (7%) were primarily implicated as the perpetrators in these assaults. Other individuals identified as the perpetrators in these incidences of assault are given in Table 14.

Further analysis revealed that for the coloured, black and Indian participants, assaults were primarily perpetrated by known members of the communities in which they lived, followed by school mates. The assaults against the white youth in

Table 15: Perpetrators of assaults, by race (%) (n = 643)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>School mates</th>
<th>Other relative or household member</th>
<th>Other unknown people</th>
<th>Other friends or acquaintances</th>
<th>Known community members</th>
<th>Boss or teacher</th>
<th>Unknown community members</th>
<th>Boyfriend or girlfriend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants who were assaulted reported that these incidences typically occurred at school (26%), in streets outside of shops or offices (21.6%), and at home (19.6%). More than half (52.3%) of those who had been assaulted had been injured as a result of the assault. Furthermore, nearly half (48%) of those who were injured had to seek medical attention for the injuries sustained.

As with those who had had their property stolen, the majority (92.9%) of assault victims were aware of the identity of their offenders. Community members (29.8%), school mates (22.1%), other relatives or household members (16%), and employers or educators (7%) were primarily implicated as the perpetrators in these assaults. Other individuals identified as the perpetrators in these incidences of assault are given in Table 14.

Further analysis revealed that for the coloured, black and Indian participants, assaults were primarily perpetrated by known members of the communities in which they lived, followed by school mates. The assaults against the white youth in
this study were largely perpetrated by school mates, followed by other relatives, household members or intimate partners (see Table 15).

Assaults experienced by younger participants (12–14 years) were on the one hand most likely to be perpetrated by:

- school mates (33.9%);
- familiar individuals in the communities in which these respondents live (22.7%); and
- educators (16.1%).

The 15–17-year-old participants, on the other hand, identified:

- known individuals in their communities (27.5%);
- learners at their schools (22.1%); and
- other relatives or household members (21.4%) as the perpetrators in their assaults.

Participants in the 18–20 year age cohort reported that the perpetrators in the physical attacks experienced by them were primarily known members of their communities (29.7%) and individuals at their schools (21.9%). The oldest participants were most likely to identify known (47.7%) and unknown (15.4%) residents in their residential areas as the perpetrators (p<0.001).

Alcohol was found to be a contributing factor in the assaults experienced by these young participants. More than a quarter (27.1%) of the participants who had been assaulted prior to the study reported that the perpetrators were intoxicated at the time of the attack. Additionally, one in ten (10.7%) respondents was also under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of the assault. Young people in the two oldest age groupings – 18–20 and 21–22 – were most likely to report that the perpetrator (33.2% and 54% respectively) and they themselves (11.9% and 35% respectively) were intoxicated at the time of the assault.

No weapons were used in the majority of these assaults (59.2%). When a weapon was used axes, sticks, pangas, clubs (25.1%) or knives (12%) were the weapons of choice. Given the types of weapons used in these attacks, it is not surprising that more than half the respondents (52.3%) were physically injured in these assaults and had to seek medical attention (48%).

In most instances (76%) the victims had told someone about the assault. Close to three-quarters of these participants (72.4%) reported that they had informed their family members, while one in ten (10.4%) respondents had reported the incident to their local police stations. The low rates of reporting the assaults to officials may be attributed in part to fears of retribution. One in ten (10.7%) young people who had been assaulted indicated that they were pressured or persuaded not to report the attack. Questions pertaining to the identity of the individuals who had pressured the victim not to report the incident revealed that close to half (49.4%) of these
respondents had been intimidated by the perpetrators of the assaults. Additionally, friends (30.7%) and school mates (11.4%) were other individuals who commonly dissuaded the victims from informing others about the assaults.

Interesting trends emerge when the differences between the age cohorts are considered. Young people between the ages of 12–14 years were most likely to be intimidated by learners at their schools (34.2%). Given that the perpetrators of the assaults against these 12–14-year-olds typically were school mates, one can assume that these learners were in some way involved in the incident. The majority of the participants in the 15–17 year age grouping identified their friends (71.1%) as the individuals who had dissuaded them from reporting the assault to the police. Respondents in the two oldest age cohorts, 18–20 (73.9%) and 21–22 (100%), reported that the perpetrator had pressurised them not to inform the officials about the attack.

As with those who had their property stolen, more than half (62.9%) of these participants reported changes in their behaviour following the physical attacks. The specific changes noted included becoming more cautious (45.1%), while one in seven (16.7%) reported that they had changed their friends. In addition, one in ten (11.2%) respondents who had been assaulted reported that they had become more aggressive.

One in three (31.3%) respondents was provided with counselling services after the attack. Those who did not access any support services were asked to specify why they had failed to do so. The majority of the participants reported that they did not think that it was necessary to access these services (69.9%) after the incident, while nearly one in five (19.1%) youth indicated that they did not know where to access these services.

**ROBBERY**

On the whole, nearly one in ten (9.4%) respondents reported that they had been robbed in the 12 months prior to the study. Males (62%) accounted for the majority of these respondents. Youth resident in metropolitan areas (16.9%) were more likely to report being robbed prior to the study, followed by those from urban (10.9%) and rural (6.9%) areas (see Figure 38). Participants resident in the Western Cape (19.9%) were most likely to report an incident of robbery in the 12 months prior to the study, followed by those from the North West (11.5%) (see Figure 39). These findings were statistically significant ($p<0.001$).

With reference to age, robberies were found to be most prevalent among the older participants. Those in the 18–20- (10.2%) and 21–22-year-old (14.8%) age cohort were most likely to indicate that they had

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**THE DESCRIPTION OF ROBBERY AS USED IN THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE:**

Robbery is when someone has taken something from you that belonged to you by force or violence, or by threatening to hurt you. Something MUST have been taken from you for it to be a robbery.
been robbed prior to the study (p<0.001). There was also a significant relationship between the race of the participants and whether or not they had been robbed. Coloured (16.5%) and Indian (16.4%) youth were most likely to report being robbed in the 12 months preceding the study. Black participants (8.5%) reported the lowest rates of robberies. These findings were statistically significant (p<0.001).

In an attempt to shed some light on the locations of the robberies experienced by South African youth, the participants were requested to specify where these incidences had taken place. For the most part, robberies involving young victims typically occurred in the streets in residential areas (32%), at school (13.7%), in outdoor areas (8.1%), and at home (7.6%) (see Table 16, over page).

These participants were generally familiar with the identities of their perpetrators. Again, known community members (37.7%), learners at school (20.8%),
and other friends or acquaintances (10.7%) were typically implicated as the perpetrators in these robberies.

Alcohol was also found to be a common element in the robberies involving young victims. One in three (34.1%) perpetrators was intoxicated at the time of the robbery, while 6.6% of the participants who had been robbed had themselves been under the influence of alcohol or drugs. As with the assaults, respondents in the 21–22 year age cohort were most likely to indicate that the perpetrator (47.9%) and they themselves (15.9%) were intoxicated at the time of the robbery (p<0.001).

Reporting rates for robberies were high (87.9%) among these participants. However, the majority of those who had informed someone about the incident had told their family members (68.4%) about the robbery. Fewer respondents (14.5%) had reported the robbery to police officials. Those who did not inform anyone of the robbery (12.1%) were asked whether they had been persuaded by anyone not to report the robbery. Of these, one in five (19.7%) young people indicated that a relative (35%), friend (33.3%) or school mates (18%) had advised them against reporting the robbery to the police. The perpetrators themselves were also implicated in 13.6% of these cases.

One in four (25.1%) young people who had been robbed had accessed counselling services after the attack. Those who did not access any counselling services primarily attributed their failure to do so to the belief that these services were not required (74.2%), as well as to a lack of information as to where these support services could be accessed (18%).

More than half (62.1%) the youth in this study had noticed changes in their behavioural patterns following the robbery. The majority of these respondents indicated that they had become more vigilant (51.4%) and no longer go out unaccompanied (18.8%). Other participants also reported that they had difficulty sleeping (6.2%) and concentrating at school (5.7%).

### Table 16: Location of robbery (%) (n = 476)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the street in a residential area</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At school</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other outdoor area</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At home</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the street outside offices/shops</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment area/bar/tavern</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a shop/place of business</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transport station/taxi rank</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a field</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While travelling on public transport</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to my home</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other indoor area</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone else’s home</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOUSEBREAKING/BURGLARY

Housebreaking was also found to be a common occurrence among the young people surveyed in this study. Nearly one in ten (9.5%) participants reported that their house had been burgled in the 12 months prior to the study. Housebreakings were most common among youth living in metropolitan areas (12.5%), followed by equal rates for those in urban (9.2%) and rural (9.2%) communities (p<0.001) (see Figure 40).

While burglaries were a problem in all the provinces, young people from Mpumalanga (15.3%), the Western Cape (14.2%) and KwaZulu-Natal (11.6%) were most likely to report that their households had been burgled prior to the study (p<0.000).

Regarding race, white (10.8%) respondents were most likely to report incidences of burglary at their homes, followed by Indian (10.5%) and black (9.5%) participants. Coloured (8%) respondents constituted the lowest rates of burglary.

Burglaries typically occurred in the evenings (69%) as opposed to during the day (31%). In more than half of these cases (58.4%) the participant or other household members were at home at the time of the burglary. Weapons were used in more than a third (33.8%) of these incidences, and 6.7% of the respondents indicated that injuries were sustained as a result of the burglary. These weapons might have been used to gain access to the house, as well as to inflict injury on household members. Technically, housebreaking is classified as such where the threat of violence or actual violence does not occur; those cases of housebreaking where injuries were sustained in fact indicate a robbery more than a housebreaking, and suggest that the instances of robbery are in fact higher than reported above.

Figure 40: Respondents whose households had been burgled, by area classification (n = 4405)
The perpetrators of these housebreakings were once again often known to the participants (35.7%). More than half (68.1%) of the respondents knew the offender by name, whereas one in seven (15.3%) young people reported that they were familiar with the identities of the perpetrators because other people had witnessed the incident taking place. The majority of these participants had informed someone about the burglary (78.8%) and more than half of these (71.2%) had reported the incident to the police. The rates of reporting for housebreaking are generally higher than those for other victimisations since a police report is required in order for an insurance company to process a claim for the compensation of stolen goods. Furthermore, it is possible that parents or caregivers would have reported the crime rather than the young person.

Close to a third (30.2%) of the respondents had accessed support services following the incident. Of those who were not provided with these services, close to two-thirds (71.6%) said that they did not require such services, while nearly a fifth (18.6%) reported that they did not know where to access these support services.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

It is generally difficult to obtain a true reflection of the rates and nature of sexual assault by means of a household survey given the sensitive nature of this specific victimisation. Nonetheless, 4.2% of the young people surveyed in this study reported that they had been raped or sexually assaulted in the 12 months preceding the study. Female participants (5.8%) were more likely to indicate that they had been victimised in this way. Young people between the ages of 18–20 (5.7%) were most likely to indicate an experience of sexual assault, followed by those in the 15–17 year age cohort (4.6%, p<0.001).

Experiences of sexual assault were most concentrated among participants from the North West (7.4%), Western Cape (6%) and KwaZulu-Natal (5.5%). Victims of sexual assault were most likely to be coloured (6.8%) and white (5.8%) respondents. Young people from metropolitan areas (5.5%) were most likely to report being sexually assaulted in the 12 months leading up to this study, followed by those from urban (4.3%) and rural (3.9%) communities (p<0.001).

Sexual assaults typically occurred at school (21.3%), home (21.1%), and in the streets in residential areas (21.1%) (see Figure 41).

Marked differences emerge when the location of these assaults within the various
provinces are considered. Youth residing in North West Province were most likely to indicate that they had been sexually assaulted at home (37.5%). Those from the Western Cape were most likely to be sexually victimised at an entertainment area (32.1%), while those from KwaZulu-Natal were most likely to be victimised at school (32.7%). The single participant from the Northern Cape who was sexually assaulted reported that the incident had taken place at school (100%) (see Table 17).

Table 17: Location of sexual assault, by province (%) (n = 173)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>At home</th>
<th>At school</th>
<th>In the street in a residential area</th>
<th>In someone else’s home</th>
<th>In the bush</th>
<th>At an entertainment area</th>
<th>Near my home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limpopo</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KwaZulu-Natal</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even though the participants were not asked about sexual violence when they were reporting on their victimisation experiences at school, the findings illustrated in Table 17 (previous page) suggest that young people in this study experienced other serious crimes at schools, in addition to being physically and verbally assaulted and having their personal belongings stolen from them.

Disturbing trends also emerged when we considered the locations of these sexual assaults as they varied within the different area classifications. Urban youth (25.7%) were on the one hand most likely to identify their homes as the locations for these assaults. Rural participants, on the other hand, were most likely to report being sexually assaulted at schools (28.8%), while young people resident in metropolitan areas were most likely to be assaulted in the street in a residential area (26.3%). These findings were statistically significant (p<0.001).

Weapons were used in many of these assaults (10.5%). The weapons most commonly used were knives (57.2%), machetes or pangas (17.7%) and guns (9%). The identities of the offenders were typically known in the majority of cases (87.7%). Known community members (30%), friends or acquaintances (28.7%), and relatives or household members (11.2%) were primarily implicated as the perpetrators in these sexual assaults. Given the weapons used, it is not surprising that nearly a third of these participants (27.2%) were physically hurt during the incident and more than half (52.2%) sought medical attention for their injuries.

Close to a third (27.3%) of the perpetrators had been intoxicated at the time of the sexual assault, while 2.6% of the participants who had been assaulted in this way were themselves under the influence of alcohol or drugs. More than three-quarters of the participants (83.2%) who had been sexually assaulted had informed someone about the incident. The greater part of the respondents (63.3%) indicated that they had informed their parents of the assault, while one in ten (11.3%) respondents had reported the sexual assault to the police, and 9.5% had notified the authorities at their schools.

Following the sexual assault, nearly a third (28.6%) of these respondents had become more vigilant, one in seven (16.6%) had become more aggressive and one in ten (11.3%) respondents was having difficulty sleeping as a result of the assault. Of these, one in three (32.6%) respondents had been provided with support services subsequent to the attack. Participants who did not access any counselling services attributed their failure to do so to their belief that they did not require these services (55.7%), while a quarter (24.8%) did not know where to access support services.

**CAR HIJACKING**

Car hijacking was the least prevalent among these participants (1.7%). Even so, youth living in Gauteng (3.3%), Mpumalanga (3.3%) and KwaZulu-Natal (2%) were most likely to report being hijacked prior to the study. The high rates of car hijacking in Gauteng are in line with official SAPS statistics that identify Gauteng as the province reporting the highest rates of car hijackings.
Questions pertaining to the location of the hijacking revealed that nearly a third (39.7%) of the respondents reported that the car had been hijacked from their homes, one in five (20%) said that the incident took place near their home, while more than a quarter (26.5%) reported that the hijacking had occurred in the street outside offices or near shops. Few respondents (8.6%) were in the car when the hijacking occurred. Even though a weapon was used in the majority of these cases (65.1%), no respondent was injured during the attack. Nearly half (48.8%) the respondents who had been hijacked in the 12 months prior to the study experienced changes in their behaviour following the incident. These changes included increased vigilance (58.2%) and aggression (10.8%). More than half (52.3%) of the respondents had been provided with counselling services after the hijacking. Those who did not access any support services reported that they did not think it was necessary to do so (75.6%) and that they did not know where to access these services (15.4%).

On the whole, the findings presented in this chapter reveal that young people experience a range of victimisations. Further analysis was conducted to ascertain whether young people raised in antagonistic households experienced higher rates of victimisations than those not raised in such environments.

The data suggests that young people whose families argued a lot, often lost their tempers, and whose family members often became physical with one another when they were angry reported significantly higher rates for all the victimisations explored in this study, with one exception. There was no difference between participants who reported that their family members did or did not often lose their temper when it came to comparing rates of sexual assault or rape. These findings were all statistically significant (p<0.001).

In addition to familial influences, the study also explored the effects, if any, of relations with delinquent peers on the victimisation rates of young people. Participants who were acquainted with community members who consumed and purchased addictive substances and who had broken the law experienced significantly higher rates for most of the victimisations explored. However, those who were not familiar with community members who smoked marijuana were more likely to be hijacked prior to the study.

Additionally, respondents who indicated that they had been in the presence of community members who had been intoxicated, were also more likely to experience higher rates for most of the victimisations explored. Those who indicated that they had not been in the presence of someone who was under the influence of alcohol or drugs were more likely to report that their homes had been burgled prior to the study.

THE DESCRIPTION OF CAR HIJACKING AS USED IN THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE:

Car hijacking is when someone, using force or the threat of force, takes your vehicle or a vehicle belonging to your household, when you are in the vehicle or next to the vehicle. You could be alone in the car, or with other people.
The findings in this chapter point to the alarming prevalence of victimisations within the respondents’ homes, schools and broader communities. Even though participants were not asked about specific types of crime when they were questioned about their exposure to violence within their families and communities, the findings herein illustrate that young people are subjected to serious forms of violence within the locales assumed to be places of safety. Furthermore, the data indicates that those individuals considered responsible for providing children and young people with protection and nurturing are in fact guilty of perpetrating horrific crimes against the youth.

**SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

Violent victimisations have serious implications for the physical and emotional well-being of children and youth. The prevalence of violence within the respondents’ schools indicates that their learning process is compromised since they are compelled to be taught in environments where both learners and educators provoke feelings of threat. The study therefore also attempted to obtain information pertaining to the support systems, if any, that these young people have at their disposal. The participants were asked to specify who they would approach for assistance if they ever needed help with anything. More than half (57.3%) the respondents reported that they would approach their parents for support, while one in seven (16.3%) said they would ask their friends or siblings (11.5%) for assistance.

Marked differences emerged when the ages of these participants were taken into consideration. Youth, regardless of their age, were most likely to report that they would speak to their parents if they needed help with a personal problem. In addition to parents, those in the 12–14 year age cohort identified other relatives (11.4%) and siblings (9.9%) as other individuals they would speak to. Participants in the three older age groupings indicated that they would also approach friends and their siblings for assistance (see Table 18).

The respondents were also asked whether they knew where they could go to receive assistance if they were ever a victim of crime. The overwhelming majority (94.4%) indicated that they knew where to get assistance; however, this finding seems inconsistent with other information obtained from the respondents. In the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 18: Who respondents will approach for help with a personal problem (%) (n = 4405)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12–14 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15–17 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–20 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21–22 yrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


64
discussions pertaining to the types of victimisations young people experienced, they were repeatedly asked whether they had accessed any support services following the assaults.

The findings consistently revealed that many of the young people who had been victimised failed to access counselling services because they did not know where to access them. Participants from the Western Cape (11.5%), Free State (10.8%) and Mpumalanga (8.8%) were most likely to indicate that they did not know where to get help if they were a victim of crime.

Those who reported that they knew where to access these services were asked to specify where they would go. More than half the participants (60.3%) indicated that they would approach the police for assistance. Social workers (6.4%), hospitals (6%) and traditional leaders or authorities (5.9%) were also identified as places where these participants would seek assistance if they were a victim of crime. Nearly three-quarters (74.8%) of the participants responded positively when asked if they knew where to obtain information on how to protect themselves from being victimised. The most common sources of information were the police (47.7%), parents (13.7%), social workers (10.2%) and their schools (8.9%).

While many young people have had negative experiences within their homes and communities, many of them (74.9%) still reported that they felt good about their future in South Africa. Youth resident in rural areas (52.4%) and those from KwaZulu-Natal (22.1%), Gauteng (16.7%) and Limpopo (15.4%) accounted for the greater proportion of these responses. This is particularly interesting given the high levels of crime and violence reported by these participants.
CHAPTER 7

Violent experiences in school

‘We must provide a safe school environment; we must offer protection from physical and emotional harm and support for those who suffer harm outside of the school environment, if we are to be successful in the achieving our educational goals. We must succeed in overcoming violence, criminal activity, bullying and vandalism in our schools. A functioning school is a true community in its own right, and an indispensable centre for the wider community’s social and cultural needs and interests.’

Prof. Kader Asmal, MP, Minister of Education, Signposts for Safe Schools workbook launch, Cape Town, 1 June 2001

- The findings presented in this chapter suggest that South African youth experience a diverse range of victimisations at school. These experiences include verbal and physical assaults, threats and intimidation, and theft of personal belongings.

- Classmates were implicated as the offenders in most of the cases, followed by other learners at school.

- The respondents were not only afraid of travelling to and from school but also identified particular areas at school that were a cause of concern, such as toilets, open grounds, playing fields or sport areas, the principal’s office and classrooms.

- Victimisation at school was found to be a common occurrence for these participants, with many reporting being victimised more than once.

- Males reported higher rates of victimisation at school than females.

- Corporal punishment was also found to be prevalent in the young participants’ schools.
Crime appears to have permeated many of the societal institutions in which young people live and work. Research studies both locally and internationally have drawn attention to the high levels of violence within educational institutions.49 The victimisation experiences of young people at school were also explored in this study, and the findings revealed that the participants experienced a diverse range of victimisations at school in addition to robberies, assaults and sexual assaults, as illustrated in the preceding chapter. Other types of victimisations commonly experienced by school-going youth include verbal threats, physical assaults, and theft of personal property. The results pertaining to these victimisations and others examined in the study are described in this chapter.

Many (16.8%) of the young people surveyed in this study reported that they feared travelling to and from school. Female respondents accounted for more than half of these responses (51.3%), while males accounted for the remaining 48.7%. Young people from Limpopo (24.2%), North West (20.6%) and the Western Cape (18.5%) 

Figure 42: Places at school where the respondents are afraid (n = 441)
were significantly more likely to report being afraid when travelling to and from their schools (p<0.001). These statistics reflect the rural nature of these provinces, with the exception of the Western Cape. Young people in rural provinces typically travel long distances by foot to and from their schools. The findings suggest that the participants are confronted with many dangers when they travel to school in this way. Indian (20.5%) and black (17.4%) youth and those in the three older age cohorts (17.3%, 17% and 20% respectively) were more likely to report being fearful when travelling to and from school. These findings were statistically significant (p<0.001).

When the participants were asked whether there was any area or place at school that they were particularly afraid of, one in ten (12.8%) participants responded positively. Of these, nearly half (49.3%) identified the toilet as the area at school that they were most fearful of. Other areas identified included open grounds (16%), playing fields/sport areas (10.7%) and the principal’s office (11.5%) (see Figure 42).

With reference to gender, clear differences were evident in the male and female responses pertaining to the specific areas at school that study participants were fearful of. Female participants were more inclined to identify classrooms, playing fields and the principal’s office as the areas at school they were fearful of. This is of particular concern given that the principal’s office should be the one place at school where children should be able to seek solace from the criminal activities and violence prevalent in their school environments. It seems, however, that for many of the participants in this study, the principal’s office serves as an area of concern rather than of safety. In contrast, the males were more likely to identify corridors, toilets, other open grounds and hallways as the places at school they were most apprehensive of (see Table 19).

Threats and intimidation were common occurrences at these young people’s schools. One in five (20.9%) participants reported that they had been threatened or hurt by someone at their school. Of these, black (21.9%) participants were most likely to indicate that they had been victimised in this way (p<0.001). Young people from the North West (37.3%), Limpopo (28.9%) and Mpumalanga (27%) constituted the majority of those who indicated that they had previously been threatened or hurt by someone at their school.

Questions pertaining to the identity of these perpetrators revealed that in nearly half these cases (43.9%) the offender was a fellow learner at the participants’ school.

Table 19: Places at school where the respondents are afraid, by gender (% (n = 441)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Classrooms</th>
<th>Playing fields/ports areas</th>
<th>Corridors</th>
<th>Toilets</th>
<th>Other open grounds</th>
<th>Halls</th>
<th>Principal’s office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, classmates (38.1%) and other children outside of the respondents’ schools (8.1%) were implicated as the perpetrators of this school violence (see Figure 43). This explains in part why a number of these respondents reported being fearful of travelling to and from school.

Young people from the Northern Cape (53.2%), North West (45.9%) and Limpopo provinces (43.9%) and those between the ages of 12–14 years (45.9%) were most likely to identify classmates as the offenders in the incidences of school violence that they had experienced. Mpumalanga (56.6%), Free State (54.2%) and KwaZulu-Natal (46.9%) youth constituted the higher proportions of those who indicated that other learners were the offenders. Respondents in the 21–22 year age cohort (61.8%) were

Figure 43: Person who threatened the respondents (n = 689)

- Other learner: 43.9%
- Classmate: 38.1%
- Another child from outside the school: 8.1%
- Teacher or Principal: 7.1%
- Other adult: 2.8%

Figure 44: How often the respondents have been threatened (n = 689)

- More than ten times: 7.8%
- Six to ten times: 9.7%
- Two to five times: 33.4%
- Once: 49.1%
also more likely to identify other learners as the perpetrators, followed by those between the ages of 18–20 (46.3%) and 15–17 years (44.2%). Those who were more inclined to identify the perpetrators as other young people who were not attending the same school were primarily from the Eastern Cape (17.9%) and Gauteng (12.9%).

Of particular concern is the frequent occurrence of these victimisations. Of those who had been threatened, scared or hurt at school, nearly half (49.1%) reported that this had occurred once, while more than a third (33.4%) had been victimised in this way two to five times. Additionally, many participants indicated that they had been the victims of threats or physical harm six or more times (see Figure 44).

The study found that males tended to be victimised more often than females, which is consistent with international and local victimisation data (see Figure 45).

In an attempt to obtain a description of the victimisation experiences of young people at school, the participants were requested to consider their most recent violent experience at school and to indicate what had transpired during this incident. More than half (55.2%) of the respondents reported that the perpetrator had threatened to hurt them physically, while more than a third (38.3%) of the youth had actually been physically attacked during this incident. In addition, 4.4% maintained that their property had been stolen.

Provincially, differences emerge with regard to the type of victimisations at school. Youth from Mpumalanga (55.9%) and Limpopo (49.3%) were more likely to

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**COMPARATIVE SURVEY DATA**

The Institute of Criminology at the University of Cape Town in 1998 conducted a survey at 20 schools in the Cape Metropole in an attempt to obtain information concerning the prevalence and nature of crime and violence at schools in the Western Cape. The study found that theft (100%), physical assaults (95%), bullying (80%) and threats or coercive behaviour (75%) were prevalent at all the schools surveyed.
report physical assaults at school, while those from the Western Cape (71%), KwaZulu-Natal (67.5%) and the Northern Cape (66.3%) were most likely to be threatened or intimidated at their schools. Theft of personal property was most concentrated among young people residing in the Free State (12.3%). These findings were statistically significant \((p<0.001)\).

Insults and other forms of verbal abuse also proved to be rampant at the participants’ schools. Nearly a third (32.8%) of the youth in this study reported that they had been teased, insulted or otherwise scared at school. More males (34.3%) than females (31.3%) had been insulted at school. Verbal victimisations were most common among young people in the 12–14 year age grouping (37.8%), as well as among black (33.6%) and coloured (33.3%) youth \((p<0.001)\). The perpetrators in these incidences were primarily classmates (54.1%), other learners attending the same school as the participants (36.7%), and children from other schools (4.3%). Questions pertaining to the frequency of these occurrences revealed that more than a third (37.1%) of the participants who had been verbally victimised at school had been victimised only once. One in three (34.25%) young people surveyed had been victimised two to five times, while one in seven participants (16.1%) reported that these incidents had taken place more than ten times.

In addition to being intimidated and physically or verbally attacked, the study data revealed that nearly a tenth of the young people (9.5%) in this study have been compelled by individuals at school to engage in wrongful activities against their will. Of these, the majority were males (59%) and respondents in the 12–14 (10.1%) and 18–20 (10.4%) year age cohorts. There was a significant relationship between the race of the participants and whether or not they had ever been forced to do something they considered inappropriate at school. While black (91.1%) and Indian (91.8%) youth were significantly more likely to report that they had never been victimised in this way, coloured (16.2%) and white (11%) respondents were significantly more inclined to indicate that they experienced victimisation of this sort \((p<0.001)\).

The use of corporal punishment as a means of effecting discipline was also widespread among the participants: more than half (51.4%) of the participants reported being caned or spanked at school for their transgressions. The physical punishment of learners was prevalent in all the provinces. Nonetheless, the highest proportions of these responses were concentrated among youth from the Eastern Cape (65.3%), Mpumalanga (64.1%) and Limpopo (55.7%, \(p<0.001\)) (see Figure 46).

Black youth (57.3%) and participants between the ages of 12–14 years (64.6%) were most likely to report being spanked at school \((p<0.001)\). In addition, participants residing in rural communities were significantly more likely to report that corporal punishment was effected as a means of discipline at their schools (62.5%, \(p<0.001\)). Conversely, urban youth (61.6%) and those residing in metropolitan areas (67%) were significantly more likely to report the contrary.

In short, the findings suggest that young people experience a range of victimisations at school. Physical and verbal assaults, threats and intimidation, and theft of personal property are issues of major concern to these young participants.
However, these are not the only types of victimisations experienced by young people at schools; the previous chapter highlights incidences of assault, robberies and sexual assault that occur at schools. What becomes apparent from this data is that young people are at constant threat of danger at school, even from the teachers and principals. This is particularly disconcerting given that schools are typically thought of as places of safety for children. Furthermore, quality learning cannot take place in dangerous school environments. It therefore becomes evident that violence not only threatens the physical and emotional well-being of children but also compromises the learning processes of many South African children and youth.
WOULD YOU REPORT A CRIME?

In an attempt to shed light on the participants’ attitudes pertaining to the reporting of criminal activities, the respondents were asked whether they would report a crime they had seen taking place. While most of the participants said that they would do so, one in five (21.8%) respondents asserted that they would not report the incident.

Figure 47: Respondents who would report a crime if they saw one being committed, by race (n = 4401)
Young people living in rural areas were significantly more likely to indicate that they would report an incident where they saw a crime being committed (82.1%, p<0.001). With reference to age, participants between the ages of 12–14 (82.5%) and 21–22 (79.5%) years were most likely to report a crime to police officials. Coloured (31.5%) and male (22.1%) youth were most likely not to report a crime to the police (see figures 47, previous page, and 48). Reasons for not reporting a crime to police officials included:

- feelings of fear (54.2%);
- a belief that the event was none of their business (29.7%);
- misgivings about police competence (9.6%); and
- a belief that reporting would not help the situation (6.5%).

The findings also gave rise to racial differences pertaining to the reasons provided for failing to report a crime if they were to witness an offence taking place. Black youth (59%) indicated they were most likely not to report an incident because they were fearful. On the contrary, white (53.1%), coloured (45.5%) and Indian youth (39.5%) were most likely to indicate that they would not report a crime because they believed that the incident was none of their business (see Table 20).

Table 20: Reasons for not reporting a crime to the police, by race (%) (n = 951)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Not my business</th>
<th>Too scared</th>
<th>Don’t think it would help</th>
<th>I don’t trust the police</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interestingly, the majority of the participants (93.4%) reported that they would report the incident to someone other than the police, such as their parents or neighbours. This is in line with findings discussed in earlier sections of this report. Participants generally showed high rates of reporting their violent experiences; however, they were more inclined to inform their family members of these victimisations. Fewer respondents were likely to report the incidents to their local police stations unless they required a police report in order to submit a claim to an insurance company.
International and local research on youth in relation to crime has focused largely on young people as offenders. This study suggests, however, that in South Africa as elsewhere, young people are significantly more exposed to crime and violence. Furthermore, the crimes that the youth are exposed to are often not policeable, and as such suggest the need for specific policies that provide alternative means of addressing the problem.

Many of the findings presented herein are not new. For instance, those within the sector have long known that violence and crime is impacting disproportionately on South African youth and children. This study does, however, for the first time quantify these issues and provides an indication of the extent of the problem. Furthermore, youth are most at risk in the environments thought of as places of safety. The research findings presented here reveal that the youth in this study are victimised at rates exponentially higher than adults, when compared to the adult victimisation rates found by the 2003 National Victims of Crime Survey.

The overall victimisation rate of the young people interviewed (41.4%) was nearly double that of adults in South Africa (22.9%). The violent victimisation of youth between the ages of 12–22 years in all the provinces of South Africa is an issue of grave concern. These statistics point to the need for immediate intervention, given that young people in this age cohort constitute a significant proportion of the South African population.

In 1994, South Africa committed itself to ensuring the rights of children in this

‘Our days will remain forever haunted when frightening numbers of the women and children of our country fall victim to rape and other crimes of violence.’

Thabo Mbeki, State President, Inaugural Speech, 1999
country by ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, however, the findings in this study raise serious questions about the ability of government to follow through on its commitment. According to the Convention, government parties are responsible for ensuring that children are provided with the protection and care required for their well-being. The clear violation of this right is, however, apparent in this study.

Given the prevalence of crime and violence in their homes, schools and broader communities, young people are evidently not being provided with basic protection and care. Related to this is the duty of the state to guarantee that the social institutions responsible for providing this security should conform to the principles outlined by knowledgeable authorities. The research data points to a need to monitor the provision of these rights on an on-going basis.

YOUTH HAVE VERY FEW SAFE SPACES, WHERE THEY ARE NOT AT RISK OF FALLING PREY TO, OR ARE EXPOSED TO, CRIME AND VIOLENCE

On the whole, young people were not only exposed to violence but were also the direct victims of a range of victimisations. The crimes most commonly experienced by these participants were theft of personal belongings, assault and robbery. The widespread incidence of violence within these respondents’ homes, schools and communities have serious implications for their psychological, physical and educational well-being. When the locales typically thought of as safe spaces for young people are replete with violence and criminal activities, the support structures that youth have at their disposal is restricted. This is particularly disconcerting given that many of the young people in this study were not only victimised in their communities, but also at school and in their homes.

These findings call for the implementation of psycho-social support structures within the different contexts in which young people are likely to engage. Youth who are victimised at home should be able to access support services at their schools and within their communities. Similarly, those who are victimised at school should be able to obtain assistance from support structures outside of the school environment.

THE DANGERS AT SCHOOLS

School is one of the most important influences in a child’s socialisation process. A safe and trusting school environment is therefore necessary if one is to achieve quality educational development of children and youth. The findings presented in this report suggest, however, that many South African youth are not afforded this opportunity. They are instead compelled to learn in environments where they are assaulted (both physically and sexually), robbed, forced to do things against their will, intimidated and threatened with harm. This becomes even more disturbing given than children spend several hours a day in these threatening environments.
Furthermore, these victimisations tend to be regular occurrences at the participants’ schools.

The pervasiveness and frequency of violence experienced by school-going youth in this study raises questions pertaining to the effectiveness of current government initiatives to combat crime and violence in South African schools. Given that violence in schools is influenced by a range of factors, strategies for the prevention of school violence should also be multifaceted. Many South African schools have adopted the Safe Schools project in an attempt to increase levels of safety for their learners. These projects have been successful particularly when staff members, parents and community groups are involved.

The findings in this study therefore point towards a need for the urgent development and implementation of multi-pronged crime prevention strategies at all schools. Existing and proven programmes and interventions need to be replicated. In addition, these interventions need to be managed by a committee specifically developed to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the initiatives on an on-going basis. The existence of crime prevention strategies at schools in South Africa, and the effectiveness thereof, warrants further in-depth investigation.

Crimes experienced at schools tend to be reported to school authorities rather than to police officials, and it can be assumed that crimes reported to relevant authorities at schools often do not go beyond these authorities.

Linkages therefore need to be developed between the school authorities responsible for managing incidences of crime and police officials. In addition, procedures outlining the consequences for educators and pupils who have been accused of or found guilty of committing sexual and other offences against children need to be put in place. This is of particular concern given the diverse range of victimisations experienced by these participants in their school environments. Immediate action therefore needs to be taken when children are victimised at schools, since school violence not only disrupts the psychological and physical well-being of young children but also interferes with their learning processes.

SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people between the ages of 12 and 22 years are still in the process of developing their personal identities and look to a range of sources for guidance in this process. Parents, family members, teachers and peers are important role models for children. But when the role models available to the youth are involved in criminal activities, young people come to view crime and violence as the norm.

This tendency can be expected in the South African context since the primary role models in homes, schools and in the broader communities in which these respondents live were often guilty of criminal offences. The respondents’ likelihood of engaging in delinquent behaviour is therefore significantly increased. A fifth of the participants surveyed reported that they had thought about engaging in
activities that could be considered a crime, and more than half of these had actually acted on their thoughts. These findings point to a need for the increased availability of diversion programmes to deter at-risk youth from becoming involved in delinquent activities.

REPORTING OF CRIME AND VICTIM SUPPORT

Youth in this study were generally unlikely to report their experiences of violence to police officials. The non-reporting of crimes have serious repercussions not only for the individuals but also for the community at large, since the perpetrators are never brought to justice and are thus allowed to continue victimising others. The participants who did notify someone about their experiences were most likely to inform their parents, irrespective of the crime experienced.

Targeted awareness on the need to report incidences of violence to the police is therefore required. This, however, is premised on the perception that the police are trustworthy and competent; but the data from this study suggests that these young people were not particularly trusting of the police. When participants were asked whether they would report an incident where they had witnessed a crime taking place, many said they would not report such incident and attributed their decision to misgivings about police competence and a belief that reporting the incident would not help the situation in any way. The police therefore need to be seen as providing some sort of solution. In addition, young people need to be made aware of the benefits of reporting crimes to the police.

Most of the young victims of crime in this study did not feel the need to access support services following their violent experiences; however, the overall findings of the study suggest otherwise. When participants who had been victimised were asked whether they had noticed any changes in their behaviour following the criminal incidences, many reported that they were more vigilant, had difficulty sleeping, eating or concentrating at school, and some even reported an increase in aggressive tendencies. These behavioural changes indicate symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

This finding therefore calls for awareness around the seriousness of non-violent offences, such as property offences, as these are typically viewed as less traumatic than violent victimisations.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND DISCIPLINE

Targeted interventions aimed at raising awareness about appropriate conflict resolution techniques and alternative methods of discipline are also required. These interventions need to be instituted at various levels given the incidence of corporal punishment highlighted in this study. Young people who are exposed to corporal punishment at home and at school come to view it as an acceptable means of resolving conflict. The roles of the departments of Social Development and
Education therefore become imperative in terms of developing and implementing such interventions. Importantly, interventions should be aimed at raising awareness among families and school staff, since these two social institutions significantly affect the socialisation processes of young people.

**CREATING ‘SAFE ZONES’**

An alarming trend throughout the study was the tendency for the participants to know the identities of the perpetrators in the violence they experienced. Known community members and learners at their schools were primarily implicated as the offenders in such incidences. This finding, too, is indicative of the lack of safe spaces that young people in South Africa have at their disposal – they are likely to come into contact with these individuals on a daily basis as they interact in the same social locales with these offenders.

One can therefore expect young people to experience feelings of anxiety in the very contexts in which they are supposed to feel safe. Furthermore, this erodes the ‘social capital’ within communities since the relationships between community members will suffer. This in turn has implications for crime prevention initiatives (in addition to many interventions targeting sexual health and HIV/Aids prevention and awareness) that are premised on the good relationships between community members and a united interest in the well-being of the community and its members.

The limited places of safety that young people have at their disposal necessitate the creation of safe spaces for South African youth. The development of recreational and other social groupings and activities can provide these much needed safe spaces. The provision of these facilities will not only create areas of safety but will also meet the social and recreational needs lacking in many South African provinces. The Department of Social Development together with Arts and Recreation therefore need to engage with communities in order to develop recreational facilities in the various provinces.

In short, the rates of victimisation of young people in South Africa are exceptionally high and support international youth victimisation theories which postulate that young people are two to three times more likely than adults to be the victim of a violent crime. The overall findings point to an urgent need for the development and implementation of multi-pronged crime prevention initiatives to address the levels of crime and violence that youth in South Africa are subjected to. Most importantly, a coherent strategy that delineates and defines the role of all relevant agencies, including the departments of Education, Health, Arts and Culture, and Social Development, should be prioritised, and form the basis of a comprehensive youth safety strategy that will begin to address some of the dangers facing South African youth.
Endnotes

7. Finkelhor, op cit.
11. Ibid; Catalano, op cit.
13. Ibid.
15. Finkelhor, op cit.
16. Finkelhor & Ormrod op cit.
17. Finkelhor & Hashima op cit.
21 Finkelhor & Ormrod, op cit.
24 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
30 Harms & Snyder, op cit; Shaffer & Ruback, op cit.
32 Menard, op cit.
33 Lauritsen, op cit; Shaffer & Ruback, op cit.
34 Lauritsen, op cit.
35 Finkelhor, op cit.
37 A note on terminology needs to be made: the age cohort included in the study was 12–22 years, thus bridging many of the common definitions of what constitutes a ‘child’ and ‘youth’. The terms children, youth and young people are therefore used interchangeably throughout the report.
38 See Burton et al, op cit.
39 A complete list of reference group participants can be found in the acknowledgements.
40 The definitions are based on those used in the 1998 and 2003 Adult National Victimisation Survey.
41 Metropolitan, rural and urban areas were defined according to the Statistics South Africa classification. The metropolitan areas include all five metropoles of Johannesburg, Tshwane, Nelson Mandela, Cape Town, and Etekweni, while all other urban areas (cities, towns) are incorporated into the urban classification.
43 Lauritsen, op cit.
46 Finkelhor, op cit.
48 Finkelhor, op cit.
51 Ibid.
52 Juvenile Offenders and Victims, op cit.