UNDERSTANDING CRIME TRENDS IS KEY TO CRAFTING THE RIGHT RESPONSES

The 2016 State of Urban Safety in South Africa Report highlighted how the lack of useful data at city level hampers the implementation of effective, evidence-driven urban safety interventions. Such interventions require understanding the trends and roots of each city’s specific crime and safety challenges. The 2017 Report goes further and highlights how quality city-level data makes the difference, allowing for efficient and better-targeted use of resources, especially in the current budget climate. To craft the appropriate responses requires a reliable and contextual reading of crime trends and fear at the city level, and the availability of such data impacts on the efficient and better targeting and use of resources, especially in the current budget climate. To craft the appropriate response requires a reliable and contextual reading of crime trends at a country, city and neighbourhood level. Quality city-level data is important because national crime statistics obscure the immensely skewed distribution of crime at local level. Within cities and neighbourhoods, people living just a few kilometres apart, or living side by side but occupying different social spaces because of, for example, their gender, age, disability or employment status, experience entirely different worlds of crime risk. Therefore, regular, reliable and context-specific crime data is a key factor in meeting the varying safety concerns and needs at neighbourhood level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

i. Ensure that city planning and delivery is ‘crime wise’
   All service delivery needs to better take into account crime and safety issues. For example, include safety considerations when conceptualising and planning integrated public transport networks.

ii. Develop a multi-stakeholder approach
   Cities cannot manage complex challenges of urban safety on their own, and so must establish strong cooperation, integrated working methods and functional institutional relationships drawing on all relevant role-players.

iii. Push for aligned boundaries for more efficient resource allocation
   The use of metro police data and other data (e.g. household income, education level, quality of life and safety perception surveys) would enhance readability, painting a more accurate picture of national crime data when aggregated to city level.

iv. Ensure policy making is informed by research
   To deal with the various drivers of crime, such as substance abuse, cities must ensure that their plans are coordinated and integrated, aligned to policy, have appropriate budgets and are evidence-based.

v. Allocate resources and build capacity
   Given the current prominence, climate and constrained resources, the need to leverage efficiencies is perhaps more important than that of additional fiscal allocations.

vi. Align the USRG programme of work with these recommendations
   The recommendations made in this report will be directly linked to the USRG’s knowledge generation and application work streams for the coming year.

The Urban Safety Reference Group (USRG) was established in early 2014. It is convened by the South African Cities Network (SACN) with the support of the Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention (VCP) Programme. The VCP Programme is a joint South African-German intervention steered by the South African Department of Cooperative Governance and various other departments and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The USRG is the first institutionalised forum in South Africa that enables evidence and practice-based learning on urban safety and violence prevention, to inform preventive policy, planning and management. Its core objectives are to:

- serve as a platform for peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing among practitioners on urban safety, by providing a space for regular interaction and networking between city practitioners and national departments directly relevant to urban safety governance,
- serve as a mechanism to identify topical matters requiring lobbying and interaction with other spheres of government, the private sector and other stakeholders,
- raise the profile of urban safety, to advocate for the necessary policy, legislative, institutional and fiscal reforms, and
- provide a contact point for structured engagement between South African municipalities and international urban safety networks.

For more information on the USRG or the State of Urban Safety in South Africa Report 2017, please contact:

South African Cities Network
urban@ SACities.net
Tel: +27 (0)11 407 6471

Or visit:
www.sacities.net
www.safespaces.org.za
Crime and violence in South Africa

South Africa has some of the highest violent crime levels in the world, with a murder rate (in 2015/16) more than five times the global average. Over time city murder rates fluctuate above and below the national average. This illustrates the importance of a longitudinal perspective of city crime trends.

South African murder rate per 100 000 people (1994/95–2015/16)

Today, the average South African is less than half as likely to be murdered than they were in 1994/95, which is a major achievement. However, South African murder rates remain among the highest in the world, at more than 5 times the global average. 

Recorded murder rates per 100 000 by municipality (2005/06–2015/16)

As part of developing a comparative assessment tool, selected crime problems in the cities were compared.

Index of relative city scores for broad areas of crime and fear

Fear of crime stops citizens from participating in activities

Achieving the New Urban Agenda’s aim of human settlements where all live, work, and participate in life without fear of violence and intimidation requires improving residents’ perceptions and feelings about crime, and over and above real crime levels.

Hillbrow murder rates per 100 000 (2005/06–2015/16)

A focus on crime hotspots can help cities to allocate resources better and leverage efficiencies.

Data available on the SCODA data platform http://scoda.co.za

Crime and violence in South Africa

South Africa has some of the highest violent crime levels in the world, with a murder rate (in 2015/16) more than five times the global average. Although the murder rate has reduced over the past 20 years, it remains high and has increased since 2012/13. The nine urban municipalities analysed in this report are home to about 40% of South Africa’s population and are where most crime types occur, which is consistent with global trends. For example, the nine cities record about 7% of murders, 58% of residential robberies, 64% of aggravated robberies, 74% of vehicle thefts and 77% of carjackings in the national statistics.