

SOUTH AFRICA

STUDENTS' NOTES

CRIME

VIOLENT CRIME

A survey for the period 1998–2000 compiled by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime ranked South Africa second for assault and murder (by all means) per capita and first for rapes per capita in a data set of 60 countries. Total crime per capita was 10th out of the 60 countries in the dataset.

MURDER

Around 50 people are murdered in South Africa each day. The murder rate has increased by an order of magnitude in South Africa during the last 40 years, though it has fallen from 66.9 per 100,000 people in 1994–95 to 37.3 in 2008–09. From 2003–2009, crime decreased significantly according to official police data. Between 1994 and 2009, the murder rate reduced by 50% to 34 murders per 100,000 people. The annual crime statistics released in 2011 show a continuing downward trend, except for rape, which went up by 2.1%. Business Against Crime attributed the reduction to improvements in the criminal justice system and policing. There have been numerous press reports on the manipulation of crime statistics that have highlighted the existence of incentives not to record violent crime.

CAR HIJACKINGS

South Africa also has a high record of car hijackings when compared with industrialised countries.

A South African insurance company, Hollard Insurance, stated in 2007 that they would no longer insure Volkswagen Citi Golfs manufactured in the previous two years as they were one of the most frequently hijacked vehicles in South Africa. Certain high-risk areas are marked with road signs indicating a high incidence of car hi-jackings within the locality.

GATED COMMUNITIES

Gated communities are popular with the South African middle class, black as much as white. Gated communities are usually protected by high

perimeter walls topped with electric fencing, guard dogs, barred doors and windows and alarm systems linked to private security forces. The Gauteng Rationalisation of Local Government Affairs Act 10 of 1998, allows communities to "restrict" access to public roads under the supervision of the municipalities. The law requires that entry control measures within these communities should not deny anyone access. The Tshwane municipality failed to process many of the applications it has received, leaving many suburbs exposed to high levels of crime. Several communities successfully sued, won and are now legally restricting access. These measures are generally considered effective in reducing crime (within those areas). Consequently the number of enclosed neighbourhoods (existing neighbourhoods that have controlled access across existing roads) in Gauteng has continued to grow.

PRIVATE SECURITY COMPANIES

In order to protect themselves and their assets, many businesses and middle- to high-income households in South Africa make use of privately owned security companies with armed security guards.

The South African Police Service employ private security companies to patrol and safeguard certain police stations, thereby freeing fully trained police officers to perform their core function of preventing and combating crime.

It is argued that the police response is generally too slow and unreliable, thus private security companies offer a popular form of protection. Private security firms promise response times of two to three minutes. Many levels of protection are offered, from suburban foot patrols to complete security checkpoints at the entry points to homes.