Crime and where people think it arises

TNS Research Surveys, South Africa's leading marketing and social insights company, recently conducted a survey to examine what people feel to be some of the root causes of crime. This survey was conducted amongst a sample of 2 000 SA adults from the seven major metropolitan areas of South Africa, interviewing them face-to-face in their homes, with a margin of error of under 2.5%. The study was conducted in the second quarter of 2008.

In the developed world
Crime is a social phenomenon, and the amount and rate of crime for a particular community can sometimes be quite deceiving, unless several factors are taken into consideration. Historically, the causes and origins of crime have been the subjects of investigation by many varied disciplines. Some of the factors and conditions which are known to affect the volume and type of crime occurring from place to place in developed countries are as follows:

1. Density and size of the community population and metropolitan area of which it is a part
2. Compositions of the population with reference particularly to age, sex, and race
3. Economic status of the population
4. Relative stability of the population including commuters, seasonal, and other transient types
5. Climate, including seasonal weather conditions
6. Educational, recreational, and religious characteristics
7. Effective strength of the police force
8. Standards governing appointment to the police force
9. Policies of the prosecuting officials and the courts

10. Attitude of the public towards law enforcement problems

And in South Africa?

In South Africa, whilst these same factors will be in play, there are at least two possible additional or exacerbating factors. These are -

- the level of income inequality in South Africa (we have a Gini co-efficient of 62, amongst the highest in the world) coupled with high levels of poverty; and

- the culture of violence and disobedience that permeated all parts of our society prior to the fall of apartheid.

In order to examine these, TNS Research Surveys asked people to agree or disagree with the following two statements:

1. "Crime is partly caused by poverty."

2. "Crime is partly caused by racial discrimination from the past."

Almost three-quarters of people agree with the first statement, with 51% agreeing with the second. On the poverty issue, differences by race are relatively small with whites having the lowest level of agreement. But on the issue of racial discrimination from the past, differences are greater with whites having by far the lowest levels of agreement (30%) blacks and coloured in the middle at 55% and Indians/Asians highest at 65%. Here is how the results fell, in more detail:

		Total sample	Blacks	Whites	Coloureds	Indians/ Asians
Crime is partly caused by poverty	Agree	74%	78%	62%	73%	80%
	Disagree	21%	18%	29%	23%	16%
	Don't know	5%	4%	9%	4%	4%
Crime is partly caused by racial discrimination from the past	Agree	51%	55%	30%	55%	65%
	Disagree	36%	32%	54%	38%	24%
	Don't know	13%	13%	17%	8%	10%

Differences by gender are negligible but those aged over 60 years show slightly lower levels of agreement in both cases. Unusually, given the different responses by race group, there are very few differences by city, and only on the racial discrimination issue where Johannesburg and the Vaal Triangle show slightly higher levels of agreement (about six out of ten agree) and Preto4ria and Port Elizabeth show slightly lower levels (four out of ten agree). There are no differences across various education levels. Afrikaans speakers are the least likely to agree with the statement on racial discrimination being a cause (36%).

It is of interest that very significant differences occur when the figures are analysed with respect to people's dwelling type. The extreme differences in perspective on poverty as a root cause amongst shack dwellers show the desperate circumstances in which these people feel that they are and the possible desperate measures they see happening all around them by those who want a better life. The urgent need for service delivery, at the very least, is tangible here. The higher levels of agreement amongst those in matchbox housing and in backyard rooms are likely to be linked to people who have been in such accommodation for many years and who know the history of their communities well.

		Total sample	House	Cluster	Town House	Flat	Match box type	Hostel	Room in back yard	Shack
Crime is partly caused by poverty	Agree	74%	74%	73%	53%	72%	70%	79%	64%	84%
Crime is partly caused by racial discrimination from the past	Agree	51%	51%	49%	28%	39%	72%	24%	77%	55%

Related findings - How widespread is the problem of crime?

In a study released three months ago, TNS Research Surveys found the following:

- One in five metro adults claim they are quite happy to buy pirated DVDs and CDs. A quarter of adults say they know people who have bought stolen goods. Four out of ten people would keep the money if a cashier or teller gave them R50 too much change. This cuts across all demographics and religious groupings. And 84% do not feel that crime levels are dropping.

- An astounding one-third of metro drivers have driven a vehicle in the last six months having *knowingly* had more alcohol than they should.

- Almost 90% feel that corruption has become a way of life in South Africa; 85% feel that there is corruption in senior levels of Government - 90% of people feel that this need to be eliminated.

- Only 29% feel that *refugees* from Zimbabwe should be allowed to stay and only 65% feel that people from other countries but here *legally* should be allowed to stay. That means that 71% of people feel refugees should be returned to Zimbabwe and a third of people want even those here legally to leave.

- And one in five feel that it is quite acceptable to refuse people admission to places, meetings or events because of their race.

Only 13% of people feel that crime levels are dropping.
Over eight out of ten people feel that crime levels are not dropping - yet a fifth of these very people admit their willingness to buy pirated goods. Buying pirated goods is a crime - and helps fund much more serious crime. Four out of ten of these people are willing to pocket incorrect change - which the cashier or teller will almost always have to make up out of her or

his own pocket. A quarter of people know others who have bought stolen goods. Had these people been reported to the police, the market for stolen goods would disappear. There are anonymous tip off lines such as Primedia's Crime Line that exist for this very purpose. People cannot **but** be aware of the dangers of drink-driving - yet a third of metro drivers admit to doing this in the last six months. Corruption is felt to be endemic - and should be stopped. Yet the morality of many of those who feel this is in itself questionable.

Our take-out

These findings when taken as a whole, suggest that, whilst poverty and the racial discrimination of the past are indeed perceived to be major factors in the origination of crime, the problem is vastly more complex.

- Service delivery and the upgrading of squatter shacks to decent houses is clearly an urgent priority: these people feel themselves to be in particularly desperate circumstances, with crime being perceived to be a direct result, frustration with Government over the lack of service delivery no doubt adding fuel to the fire. A year-long study of people's satisfaction with service delivery levels in 2006 and 2007 by TNS Research Surveys warned that these had become so poor in certain areas that violence was likely to follow - which, tragically, it has done. The need just to survive are understandable drivers of a "me first" syndrome that says that "I don't need to bother with the rules - they are for other people."

And how does the past history of South Africa possibly affect crime levels? There are several scenarios:

- Getting around the "system", however it was perceived, was laudable pre 1994. Those involved in the struggle justifiably ignored or flouted laws that violated their human rights; on the other side of the fence, people were involved in sanctions-busting and getting around international laws. It became acceptable for people to build a culture of "the rules are not for me".
- Sociologists feel that the unusual violence associated with crime here has to do with cultural 'depersonalisation' which has been the net outcome of the repression associated with apartheid. The culture then becomes self perpetuating and worsens. Perpetrators see the victims as 'other' and not as a part of their culture.

Another factor that plays a role is the high levels of perceived corruption in society and especially at senior levels of Government. Government needs to act quickly and visibly on all issues pertaining to corruption. Whilst senior people are perceived to be profiting by illegal deals, people will feel disinclined to change their attitudes to others and to "the rules".

Clearly, it is time for all levels of Government and of civil society to turn to a genuine programme of moral regeneration, to turn up the heat on people who feel that they are above the law and the judicial system, above the rules of basic human dignity and human rights, and who do not feel accountable for their actions. Organisations need to adopt values for themselves and their staff to live by. Parents need to instill good values in children and, in particular, take care not to pass on racist views. Schools must play an active role in promoting and living good values, as must churches, mosques and synagogues.

But let us also not lose sight of the critical need to address poverty and to uphold people's human rights and human dignity.

Technical note

The studies were conducted amongst a sample of 2 000 adults (1260 blacks, 385 whites, 240 coloureds and 115 Indians/Asians) in the seven major metropolitan areas: they have a margin of error of under 2.5% for the results found for the total sample. The studies were conducted by TNS Research Surveys (Pty) Ltd as part of their ongoing research into current social and political issues and were funded by TNS Research Surveys. For more details, please contact Neil Higgs on 011-778-7500 or 082-376-6312.
Website: www.tnsresearchsurveys.co.za

About TNS

TNS is a global market information and insight group.

Its strategic goal is to be recognised as the global leader in delivering value-added information and insights that help its clients make more effective business decisions.

TNS delivers innovative thinking and excellent service across a network of 80 countries. Working in partnership with clients, TNS provides high-quality information, analysis and insight that improves understanding of consumer behaviour.

TNS is the world's leading provider of customised services, combining sector knowledge with expertise in the areas of Product Development & Innovation, Brand & Communications, Stakeholder Management, Retail & Shopper and Customer Intelligence. TNS is a major supplier of consumer panel, media intelligence and audience measurement services.

TNS is the sixth sense of business™.

www.tnsglobal.com

- **The Blueprint for Brand Growth. An evidence-based framework that defines the future of marketing** 15 May 2024
- **South Africa shines in the global 2024 Kantar Creative Effectiveness Awards** 25 Apr 2024
- **Creative trends 2024: Crafting effective digital ads** 1 Feb 2024
- **Navigating media trends in 2024: adapting strategies for consumer engagement** 25 Jan 2024
- **10 marketing trends for 2024** 5 Dec 2023

Kantar

Kantar is the world's leading evidence-based insights and consulting company. We have a complete, unique and rounded understanding of how people think, feel and act; globally and locally in over 90 markets. By combining the deep expertise of our people, our data resources and benchmarks, our innovative analytics and technology we help our clients **understand people** and **inspire growth**.

Profile | News | Contact | Twitter | Facebook | RSS Feed

For more, visit: https://www.bizcommunity.com