



# South Africans' perceptions of the police and the courts

Results of the 2007 National victims of crime survey

## INTRODUCTION

With every National Victimization Survey (NVS) the gap between public perceptions of crime levels and official statistics becomes increasingly apparent. While the South African Police Service's (SAPS) statistics have shown a consistent decline in crime levels since 2001, victimisation surveys have, with similar consistency, shown the popular perception that crime levels are increasing. The comparison is ultimately that between a rather loosely measured impression juxtaposed against the 'hard statistics' provided by the state. The nett result of this disjuncture between perception and 'fact' is reduced public confidence in official statistics and either increasing official scepticism of surveys, or a perception that respondents are 'wrong'. While opinion surveys cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, provide an objective measure of changes in crime rates, they do reflect respondents' beliefs and, as such, cannot be 'wrong'.

Crime analysts' confidence in the veracity of the official statistics has been heavily undermined by SAPS use of reporting rates as a measure of the performance of police stations. However, crime rates are determined by a milieu of social, economic, environmental and other factors in which policing itself plays a relatively minor role. Thus, when SAPS managers demands, as they have, that stations achieve ambitious crime-reduction targets it is only natural to question, when those objectives are met, whether the resultant statistics reflect real reductions in crime rates or administrative attempts to ensure that crime reduction targets are met. This concern is particularly pertinent given the increasing gap between official statistics and public perception in the context of police being unable to determine crime rates in the first place<sup>1</sup>. When official statistics do not carry the necessary moral authority analysts have to look elsewhere if they wish to distill trends, determine levels of confidence in the criminal justice system or understand the relationship between public confidence and crime rates. National

Victimisation Surveys (NVS) offer an invaluable source of information as to where public opinion lies and how well the SAPS is performing.

## PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE SAPS

There are two levels at which the SAPS interfaces with the public: national and local. At national level the public face of the SAPS is senior police management personified by the national commissioner and regional commissioners. Most likely, at this level, public perceptions are heavily informed by crime statistics and other noteworthy public issues such as how the criminal charges against the national commissioner are proceeding and, lately, revelations of conflicts between the minister and the acting police commissioner. While these issues certainly inform public perceptions a second interface – that between residents and local police – is pivotal. It is at this level that residents learn how effectively the state protects them. It is here that victims learn whether or not they will see justice and it is here that perpetrators are (or not, as the case may be) brought to book.

The NVS asked respondents whether or not they thought police in their area were doing a good job. The answers to this question provide a measure of public perceptions as to the performance of local police. At the same time the responses cannot provide an insight into the perceptions of police at provincial and national level.

In general respondents to the previous NVS (2003) were divided in their responses. Slightly over half (52 per cent) said local police were doing a good job while 46 per cent said they were doing a poor job. A very small minority (two per cent) were unable or unwilling to share their opinion on the issue. By 2007 the proportion of respondents who held the opinion that the police were doing a poor job had dropped from 46 to 37 per cent. This is a marked (9 per cent) decrease in negative assessments. When asked to justify these negative impressions of local police a variety of reasons were presented;

however, only one reason was cited by most respondents. The reason given by respondents for the poor image of the local police was not corruption, insufficient capacity or laziness but the fact they 'don't respond on time'. This mirrored the 2003 NVS results.

While the reduction in the percentage of respondents stating that the local police were doing a poor job is a credit to the SAPS it was, however not accompanied by a corresponding increase in the proportion of respondents reporting that the local police were doing a 'good' job. This proportion remained constant at 51 per cent in both surveys. The difference between 2003 and 2007 is that in 2007 people were less willing to deliver a judgement as to whether the local police were doing a poor/good job (when compared to 2003). The central difference between 2003 and 2007 is thus not a general improvement in respondents perceptions of police performance, but an increase in the extent to which respondents were willing to reserve judgement. This said, it is *prima facie* an improvement when respondents reserve judgement rather than condemn.

An examination of the characteristics of those who were inclined to reserve judgement in 2007 is instructive. It would be tempting to attribute the difficulty people have in informing opinions about the local police to lower crime rates and the subsequent reduction in public exposure to the SAPS. However, it seems that those respondents who were neutral/undecided on the quality of the local police were marked primarily by their social and, to a lesser extent, geographical isolation. This category of respondents is, for example, marked by an unusually high prevalence of farmers and people who are now separated from their partners. This said, those who had difficulty forming an opinion about local police were slightly less likely than average to have been a victim of crime in the past year.

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By 2007 the number of respondents who held the opinion that the police were doing a 'poor job' had dropped from 46 to 37 percent

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The isolation of people reserving judgement as to the performance of the SAPS is reflected in their responses as to whether they had discussed crime issues with friends or family in the preceding two weeks. It is also reflected in the fact that the members of this group were less likely to know where the police station is or to have visited it recently. In 2007, 56 per cent of all respondents

had discussed crime at some time during this period. This was an increase from 2003 when 51 per cent of respondents had discussed crime in the preceding two weeks. In 1998 approximately 57 per cent of respondents reported having discussed crime in the same period. The 2007 figure thus matches the 1998 figure i.e. it equals the level when official crime statistics and thus exposure to the local police was peaking.

It is, however, unlikely that the level of social isolation had markedly increased between 2003 and 2007. The question then becomes why, in 2003, were virtually all respondents prepared to deliver an opinion on the performance of local police – even if they were somewhat isolated. The answer may lie in crime levels, media coverage or even the way in which interviewer and respondent interacted (the so-called 'interviewer effect').

The significance of having recently discussed crime lies in the impact these discussions have on perception of the local police. The general trend is that the more people talk about crime the less likely they are to have a favourable impression of the police. Among respondents who had not recently discussed crime with friends and family less than one-third (28 per cent) thought that the police in the area were doing a poor job. By contrast, almost half (44 per cent) of those who had recently discussed crime believed the local police were doing a poor job.

It would be reasonable to assume that the discussion on crime increase as offences became more prevalent or 'closer' in a social or geographic sense. Such discussions would tend to take place in an loaded atmosphere resulting in more negative impressions of local police performance. Generally, increased discussion about crime (as between 2003 and 2007) should tend to reflect in a poorer assessment of local police.

If the comparison is limited to only those who had discussed crime in the preceding two weeks then a slightly different picture emerges. In 2003, 45 per cent of this 'informed' population stated that police were doing a good job and 52 per cent said they were doing a poor job. By 2007 the proportion of respondents indicating that local police were doing a good job almost matched the proportion saying they did a poor job (44 per cent). The proportion of respondents who recently discussed crime and thought the police were doing a poor job thus dropped from 52 per cent to 44 per cent. Thus, contrary to the expectation noted above, in general the perception of local police performance seems to have improved – even amongst those who discussed the issue with others. This indicates that while the proportion of respondents discussing crime increased after 2003, those who did so were, in 2007, inclined to give the local police a slightly better rating than in 2003.

Obviously the ability to form a more realistic impression of police performance arises after contact with the SAPS and, in particular, after an offence has been reported to the local police. However, whether or not a particular offence is reported depends on a number of factors including the severity of the offence, the likelihood of it recurring, insurance company requirements, fear of retribution and the anticipated police response. Analyzing attitudes of those respondents who had been in contact with the police is complicated by the likelihood that those with poor expectations of the police would avoid such contact in the first place. As general expectations of the police are not high (almost half of the respondents in 2007 thought local police were doing a poor job) there is reason to expect that such contact is avoided. In the latest NVS one-in-five (19 per cent) respondents<sup>2</sup> reported having been a victim of at least one serious criminal offence in the preceding year. Among these respondents almost half (46 per cent) did not report at least one of the offences. This low reporting rate indicates where at least part of the gap between official statistics and public perceptions of crime trends originates.

While the NVS reflects the opinions held by those who had contact with the police, it does not explore in any depth the sentiment or rationale of those who avoided such contact. Fortunately, the NVS does provide data relating to the question of whether the opinion of those who had contact with the police or reported crimes differed significantly from respondents in general.

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The proportion of respondents who thought the police were doing a poor job dropped from 52 per cent to 44 per cent

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In general respondents indicated that contact with the local police tended to improve their perceptions of police performance. Those respondents who did have some 'official' interaction with the police (as a result of reporting an offence, paying bail, speaking to police patrols etc.) rated police performance higher than did those respondents who had no such contact. Almost 60 per cent (58 per cent) of respondents who did have official contact with local police said their opinion of the police had changed in some way as a result of the interaction. Moreover, most such respondents indicated that their opinion changed for the better. Almost 60 per cent of respondents who a) had official interaction with the police; and, b) said the interaction affected

their opinion, said their assessment of the police had improved.

Official contact with the police should be distinguished from being a victim of an offence. Almost two thirds of the respondents who had official contact with the police had not been a victim of a crime in the previous 12 months. This gives rise to the question of whether those who had official contact with the police as victims had the same reaction to the contact. By limiting the analysis to only those respondents who had been a victim of crime in the previous 12 months we see that the effect of that contact was similar to the general trend. Half of the victims said that their interaction improved their opinion of the police. Only a quarter (27 per cent) of respondents said the interaction resulted in them having a lower opinion of the local police.

It is thus clear that, on balance, official contact with the police tends to improve public opinion of the local service. Despite this positive trend, the implications of a lack of confidence in police – even if this is experienced by a minority of citizens – can be profound. One in ten respondents (11 per cent) said that if they witnessed attempts to steal a stranger's car they would not report the crime. Almost one-in-five (19 per cent) respondents said that if they witnessed domestic violence they would not report it. In general the reasons given for not reporting crimes are varied and depend on both the context and the nature of the crime. For example, those who would not report a car being stolen primarily feared reprisals. By contrast those who would not report domestic abuse felt such incidents were 'none of their business'. Interestingly few of the respondents who said they would not report these crimes cited police complacency, tardiness or corruption as a reason for their inaction. However, since reporting rates vary according to context and crime type these reasons cannot be easily generalised to include other offences.

Trust in the police is further indicated by the fact that ninety per cent of respondents said they would teach their children to approach a police officer for help if they were lost or in trouble. While this sentiment is overwhelmingly positive it, alarmingly, still shows that up to ten per cent of the population were of the opinion that by approaching the police a distressed child would not necessarily be assisted.

## RACE AND THE SAPS

In South Africa analysis of attitudes to state institutions would seem incomplete without reference to racial differences. Indeed the differences in opinions held by the various race groups is often pronounced. Differing social, economic and cultural experiences of such groups predispose them to different experiences and vulnerabilities

**Table 1** Perceptions of police performance by race (2007)

	African/ Black	Coloured	Asian/ Indian	White
Good job	49,8	47,9	39,8	47,0
Poor job	36,4	40,2	54,3	36,3
Refused to answer	1,1	0,4	0,0	1,0
Don't Know	12,0	11,5	5,9	15,2
Not Applicable	0,7	0,0	0,0	0,4

Source National Victimization Survey studies of 1998, 2003 and 2007

– not least with respect to crime and victimisation. However, when referring to general trends of population groups, it must be borne in mind that all such groups are themselves massively varied. This said, the most remarkable aspect of opinions of local police performance is the extent to which they do not vary across race groups. Table 1, for example, presents the percentage of each racial group stating that the performance of their local police was ‘good’ or ‘poor’.

Table 1 shows that the two culturally and economically most disparate groups – whites and Africans – gave their local police very similar approval ratings. In both instances 36 per cent of respondents felt local police were doing a poor job. Generally between 47 and 50 per cent of these respondents felt that the police were doing a good job. The disapproval ratings offered by coloureds and Indians were noticeably higher.

The similarities in approval ratings accorded local police by whites and Africans is somewhat surprising given their dramatically different living circumstances. The results are more perplexing given the widespread belief that the poor (and thus a larger proportion of the African population) are particularly vulnerable to crime. For example, according to a survey by TNS Research Surveys:

Three quarters of the 2 000 adults from the seven major metropolitan areas of South African cities agreed that crime was mainly caused by poverty (SAPA 2008).

The NVS clearly shows that victims of crime are more likely to accord police a ‘poor’ rating. For example a minority of non-victims (40 per cent) rated local police performance as ‘poor’. By contrast most (52 per cent) victims gave them a negative rating. As victims, the poor in general (and Africans as a group) should, all

other things being equal, give local police lower ratings. However, contrary to popular perception, the likelihood of being a victim of a crime rises with income. The high rating accorded police by African respondents in general is largely a product of their low victimisation rates which, in turn, reflect higher levels of poverty within the group.

Table 2 shows that the proportion of Africans who were a victim of a surveyed crime in the preceding 12 months was lower than that of other population groups. While this (as mentioned above) is contrary to the popular belief that the poor are more likely to be victims of a crime; the finding of this survey is in accordance with other data, like the official crime statistics, which also indicate that poorer areas enjoy lower rates of serious crime. Obviously the levels of victimisation vary by social group, and different communities will be susceptible to different crimes. Poor communities, for example, may experience higher levels of assault and rape, but will not be as vulnerable to vehicle hijacking, bank robberies or business burglaries. Both SAPS statistics on serious offences and the NVS surveys show that wealthier communities and individuals are, in general, more likely to be the victim of crimes.

Figure 1 juxtaposes the income distribution of respondents who had been a victim of a crime to those who had not. In the graphic, the income (along the vertical axis) of victims and non-victims are contrasted using a ‘box-and-whisker’ plot. Each ‘box’ encapsulates half of the population in that group. It is clear that the incomes of non-victims are heavily concentrated in the lower reaches of the scale. By contrast many victims had incomes well in excess of non-victims.

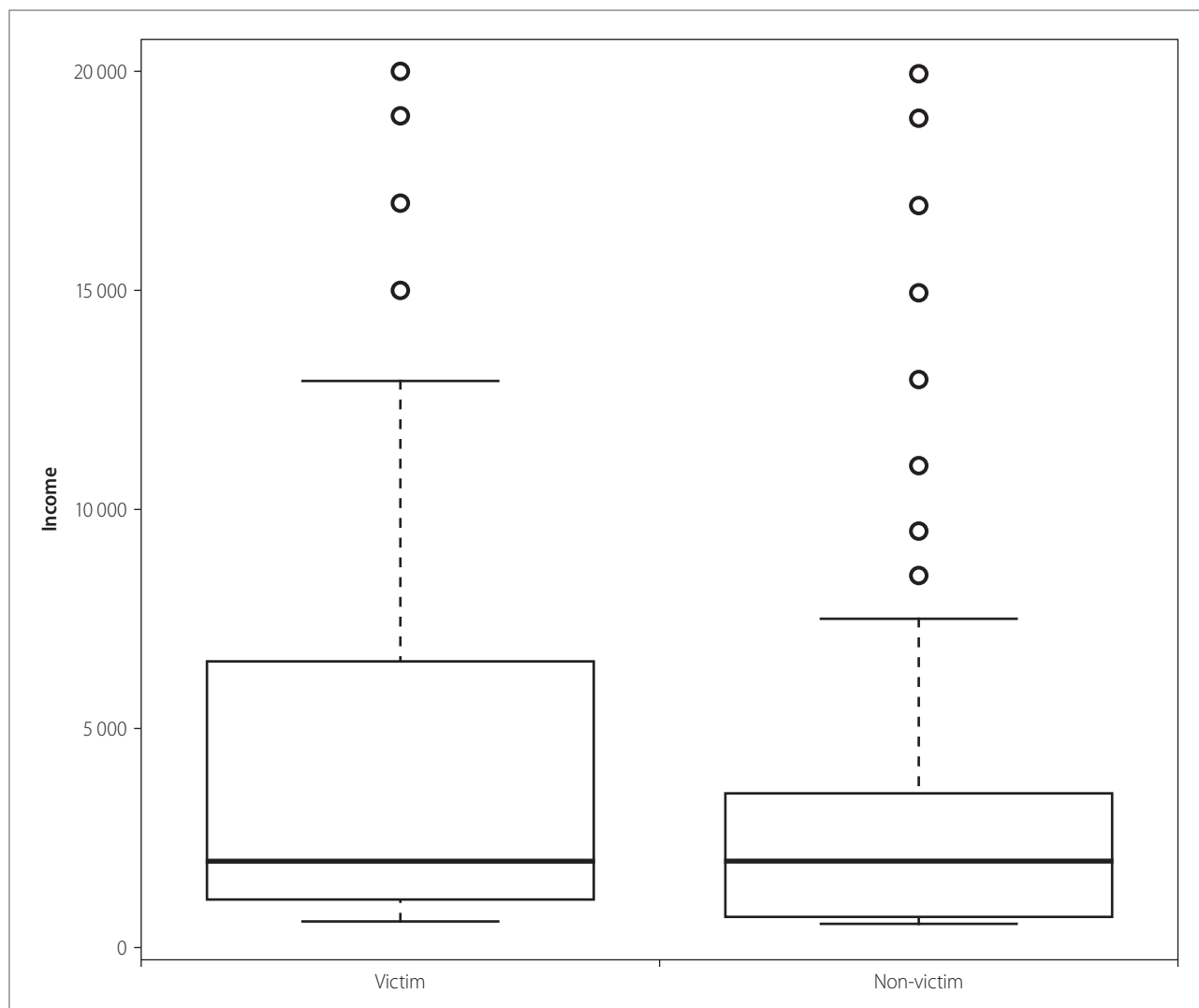
The correlation between income and victimisation rates dispels the idea that poorer communities experience higher rates of serious crime – thereby explaining (in part) the relatively high approval rates Africans

**Table 2** Percentage of population victimised by crime (by race)

	African/ Black	Coloured	Asian/ Indian	White
Victim	22	25	32	29
Not victim	78	75	68	71

Source National Victimization Survey studies of 1998, 2003 and 2007

**Figure 1:** Boxplot of income profiles of victims/non-victims



Source National Victimization Survey studies of 1998, 2003 and 2007

accord local police. African respondents also report seeing police patrols and special crime prevention initiatives far more often than other respondents did – especially whites. The question then arises why whites, with higher victimisation rates and lower levels of visible police action, accord local police the same approval ratings Africans do? The answer to this question is not revealed by the NVS but may very well lie in the way the surveys are conducted and in interviewer effects. The same effect was evident in the 2003 survey when whites similarly accorded the local police the same performance rating that Africans did. The results of that survey are presented below.

Both the 2003 and 2007 NVS studies show that whites rate local police performance far better than would be expected on the basis of their victimisation rates and the extent to which they see police activity in their areas. However, a clear distinction should be drawn between actual levels of police activity – like local patrols and crime prevention efforts – and the extent to which these efforts are observed by respondents. For example the likelihood of a respondent observing a local patrol depends not only the frequency of such patrols and prevention exercises, but on whether or not they are employed (and thus poorly positioned to observe these activities); how often they walk around

**Table 3:** Police performance by race group (2003)

	African/ Black (%)	Coloured (%)	Indian/ Asian (%)	White (%)
Do not know	1,9	2,7	2,9	9,2
Good job	53,9	48,5	19,4	46,1
Poor job	44,3	48,7	77,7	44,7

Source National Victimization Survey studies of 1998, 2003 and 2007

their neighbourhood, or how high their garden walls are. For these reasons wealthier communities are less likely to observe a police patrol or crime prevention initiative irrespective of how often such activities take place.

Other studies have also shown that whites tend to rate police services better than would be expected on the basis of their victimisation rates. However this is usually only observed after 'controlling' for education. Such studies show that better educated rate police performance lower than people with lower education levels. Once this is taken into consideration it is clear that whites still rate police performance better than would be expected purely on the basis of their victimisation and education levels. However, the sheer difference between the expected rating and the ones provided by white respondents in the 2007 NVS beg the question as to why this is the case. A question that is beyond the scope of this paper to answer.

## THE COURT SYSTEM AND PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

While a relatively high percentage of respondents were able, through direct and other interaction, to form an opinion on the local police, the same cannot be said about the court system. Although people go to court for many reasons – as witnesses, complainants in civil cases, or in support of friends and family, they are far more likely to interact with the police than they are with the court system. In fact only one in five respondents reported having been to court in any capacity within the last four years. By contrast 45 per cent of respondents indicated that they had 'official' contact with the police at least once in the preceding four years.

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Less than one-in-five (17 per cent) of the respondents who had been to court in the preceding four years went to court to testify as a witness. Thus, while twenty per cent of all respondents had been the victim of a crime in the last 12 months only four per cent had been to court to testify as a result of that, or another criminal offence. This indicates that impressions regarding the performance of the court system, in so far as they are determined by personal experience, are influenced mostly by an involvement other than as a victim of a crime. Such 'other' involvement includes traffic offences, maintenance hearings as well as divorce or other civil matters. The NVS shows that twice

as many people went to court as 'a party to a case' than as the result of having to testify as a witness.

When the analysis is limited only to those households who reported a crime in the preceding 12 months it would appear that one-in-five (21 per cent) had been called to court as a witness<sup>3</sup>. It should also be noted that victims are not necessarily called to testify in all cases and whether or not they are called depends partly on the nature of the offence. Regardless, the survey does suggest that a small minority of cases result in a court hearing within a year. Other data from the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) indicates that case cycle times are indeed long and constantly increasing<sup>4</sup>. By mid-2006 over 40 per cent of cases on regional court rolls had taken longer than six months to finalise. This figure has almost certainly increased since then. As the wheels of justice do grind slowly it would seem that many respondents were yet to be called as witnesses and that their cases had not necessarily been closed without a court hearing.

Although half (48 per cent) of all respondents thought the courts were performing their duties adequately, the level of approval varied greatly. For example, the level of approval depended in part on whether or not the respondent had been to court in the recent years. Less than half (43 per cent) of respondents who had not been to court in the preceding four years thought the courts were performing adequately. By contrast, two thirds of respondents who had been to court in this period thought they were performing adequately. It would thus seem that exposure to the court system (as in the case of exposure to the police) generally improves public perceptions of the institution. When the analysis is restricted to only those respondents who had reported a crime in the preceding 12 months virtually identical results are apparent. Two-thirds of victims who had been to court in the preceding four years thought that the court system was functioning satisfactorily. Victims of crime thus held similar opinions about the performance of the court system to respondents who had been to court for other reasons.

As could be expected, respondents who thought the court system was functioning adequately were generally of the opinion that both the prosecution, and magisterial services were satisfactory<sup>5</sup>. In other words, neither arm of the criminal justice system tended to be singled out for praise or criticism. To gain insight into service shortfalls we have to examine the opinions of those who thought that the court services were not satisfactory. When doing this we find that most (57 per cent) of these respondents thought that prosecution services were not satisfactory. Similarly 57 per cent of these respondents believed that judicial services were unsatisfactory. It seems that neither critics nor supporters of the court system make a clear distinction between prosecution and judicial services in their assessment. Thus, if an individual gave prosecution

services a 'satisfactory' rating they invariably also gave judicial services a 'satisfactory' rating. Conversely dissatisfaction with one of the two services almost universally corresponded with a 'dissatisfied' rating with the other. This pattern is also evident in the 2003 NVS.

Respondents were also asked as to how they thought perpetrators were dealt with by the courts. It appears that this question was largely interpreted in terms of the appropriateness of sentences passed. The single largest group of respondents (41 per cent) thought perpetrators were 'satisfactorily' dealt with by the courts. By contrast only a third of respondents thought they were not satisfactorily dealt with. One-in-five respondents (21 per cent) did not hold an opinion on the issue. When the analysis is limited to only those respondents who had been to court in the preceding four years (i.e. when limited to those more informed about the operation of the courts) satisfaction with the way in which perpetrators were dealt with jumped from 41 per cent in 2003 to 61 per cent in 2007. The marked increase in satisfaction levels was, however, not the result of a reduction in the proportion of respondents expressing dissatisfaction – this remained constant at 33 per cent. The increase in the 'satisfied' proportion of respondents comes as a result of a reduction in the proportion of respondents stating they 'did not know' how courts deal with perpetrators. This figure dropped from 21 to 5 per cent.

When the analysis is further restricted to those respondents who had reported a crime in the preceding 12 months, satisfaction with the way in which perpetrators are dealt with dropped back to 43 per cent. This disillusionment is possibly due to their own cases not having been resolved.

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Forty-one per cent of respondents thought perpetrators were 'satisfactorily' dealt with by the courts

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The reasons given for dis/satisfaction in the way perpetrators were dealt with by the courts were relatively consistent. Two thirds of those respondents who were satisfied with the way in which perpetrators were dealt with gave, as justification, the fact that 'they pass sentences appropriate to the crime'. Those who were not satisfied with the way in which perpetrators were dealt with cited two primary reasons for their dissatisfaction. The most frequently cited reasons (53 per cent) was the 'leniency of sentence' and (42 per cent) the frequent 'unconditional release' of perpetrators<sup>6</sup>.

It should be remembered that in South Africa sentences passed for serious offences tend, to be punitive. This is particularly the case where minimum sentences are specified by legislation. As a result any victim that was given the opportunity to testify in court would most probably have been party to both a conviction (see below) and is likely to have seen a punitive sentence being handed down. It is thus with some reservation that the opinions of respondents should be taken to represent the performance of the criminal justice system in general.

Indeed the high ratings accorded the court system are surprising given that even senior court officials describe the system as 'fragmented and dysfunctional' (de Lange 2008). In general court proceedings are typified by frequent and lengthy delays and a very high rate of cases being withdrawn. The high rate of withdrawal has contributed to prisons enrolling ever fewer convicts. In the second quarter of 2007 the number of admissions to prison had fallen to less than half that of the corresponding period in 2003. This drop is far more dramatic than is warranted by the decline in the official crime rate. Given the, still, high crime rate many would view this drop as cataclysmic. At this stage it is unclear to what extent the drop can be attributed to the conclusion of fewer cases and to what extent it can be attributed to the passing of non-custodial sentences. The question then arises as to how the NVS studies result in such a positive assessment of the court system – particularly by those who have been exposed to it.

An examination of the flow of cases reveals that a very high proportion of cases that appear in court are concluded with a guilty verdict. However the high conviction rate (typically in excess of 85 per cent) is achieved by prosecutors withdrawing questionable cases before a plea is entered. High conviction rates are thus achieved by effectively dropping most cases. Those victims who did get to court were thus almost certain to witness a conviction and, in the case of serious offences, a punitive jail sentence. The result is a high satisfaction levels with both the performance of the system and the way in which perpetrators are treated (as reflected by NVS respondents who have been to court as victims). However the vast majority of cases are never enrolled on the court system because perpetrators were not identified and arrested or the prosecution did not enrol the case because of 'insufficient evidence'.

The criminal justice system is ultimately weakest where there are no interactions with the aggrieved i.e. when the prosecution declines to enrol a case because the poor quality of the investigation, congestion of the court roll or because the detectives are unable to identify or locate suspects. Unfortunately, NVSs largely ask about the quality of respondents' interactions with agencies of the state while ignoring what goes on behind the scenes

i.e. beyond the purview of respondents. The opinions of this cohort which would invariably offset the high opinions offered by those respondents most exposed to, and best served by, the system. To use a culinary analogy – the analytically tasty bit between the functioning of the criminal justice system and what respondents say is lost in the slip between cup and lip.

## CONCLUSION

In some ways the National Victimization Surveys raise as many questions as they answer. The latest survey points, for example, to slightly improved perceptions of local police performance. However, when those perceptions are analysed by race the ratings received do not seem to be correlated with the obvious indicators of police performance – crime rates and police visibility. High crime rates and low police visibility among white respondents results in approval ratings very similar to that of black respondents who, in general, report lower crime rates and better police visibility. This raises the question as to what, if not police performance, informs how respondents rate their local police service.

The NVS also indicates that, in general, respondents thought the courts (in the form of both the prosecution and judicial authorities) were doing a good job. These high ratings are enigmatic as there is ample evidence that the courts system is painfully slow, extremely selective, results in ever fewer prison terms and is generally ‘dysfunctional’. These contradictions point to the limits of generalising victimisation surveys to the population as a whole and caution against making too much of the hints at greater public satisfaction with the performance of the CJS.

## NOTES

- 1 Much of the debate on the role of police in controlling crime centres on the decline of crime rates in New York during

the 90’s. Authors on the subject range from those who claim credit for the decline (eg. Bratton W and Knobler P 1998. *Turnaround. How America’s top cop reversed the crime epidemic*. New York: Random House) to more critical perspectives which ascribe the decline to socio-economic and demographic to factors. Implicit in Bratton’s argument is that better resourcing and management of police can reduce crime rates irrespective of the social and economic context. By contrast more dispassionate works (eg. Conklin J 2003. *Why Crime Rates Fell*. New York: Allyn and Bacon) focus on issues of incarceration regimes, population age profiles and inequality.

- 2 Estimates based on unweighted data.
- 3 These respondents were not necessarily testifying in the case they had lodged in that 12 month period.
- 4 Private correspondence with NPA.
- 5 In both instances at least 85 per cent of respondents though services were satisfactory.
- 6 These figures indicate that 45 per cent of dissatisfied respondents cited length of sentences and 42 per cent cited ‘releases’. As survey participants were allowed to provide multiple responses they could have cited both these and other reasons.

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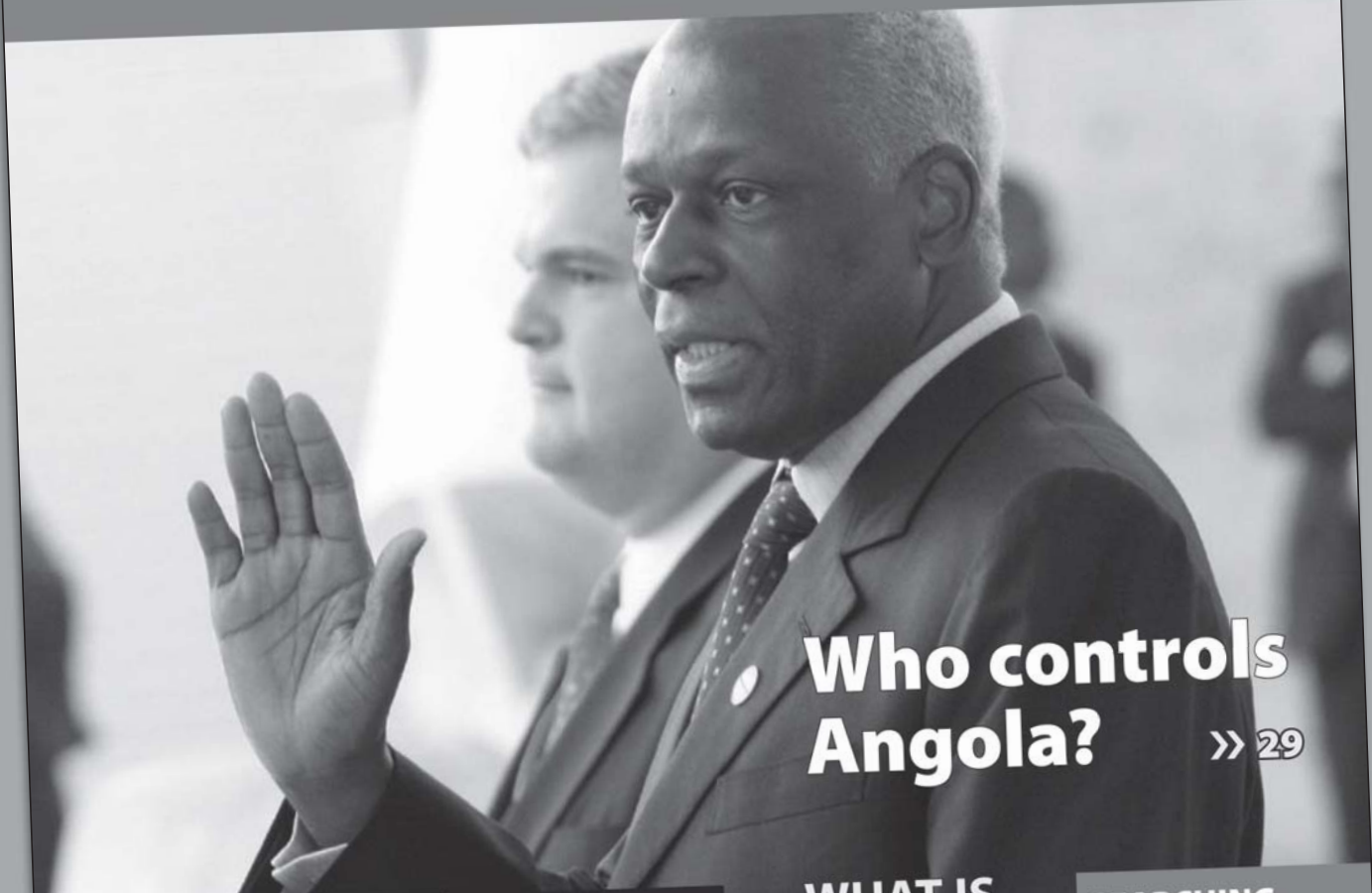
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## Who controls Angola? » 29

**THE REAL STORY  
BEHIND WHAT'S  
HAPPENING IN  
DARFUR**

» 42

**ZIMBABWE AFTER  
MUGABE » 42**



**WHAT IS  
HAPPENING  
TO OUR  
TREASURES?**

» 39

**SEARCHING  
FOR THE MAP  
OF SUDAN**

» 30



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■ Côte d'Ivoire preparing for Elections  
■ Upcoming conference on light arms management  
■ AU to discuss peace in Mauritania » 5

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## ABOUT THIS PAPER

In 2007 the Institute for Security Studies conducted a national crime and victimisation survey. The survey followed on from two earlier victim surveys conducted by the ISS and Statistics South Africa in 1998 and 2003 respectively. Together, these three surveys provide an unprecedented snapshot of both changing victimisation levels and perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system over the last decade. This paper, one of several on the research results, provides an analysis of the findings of the 2007 victimisation survey in respect of perceptions of the public in relation to the functioning of the police and courts. It also provides a comparison between the 2003 and 2007 victimisation survey findings on these matters.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael O'Donovan is an independent analyst specialising in service delivery and its related social and political dimensions. This work is united by a strong statistical focus. Over recent years he has increasingly concentrated his energies on the criminal justice system. As part of this O'Donovan has conducted or contributed to reviews of incarceration policy, community courts, and the effects of bail policy and practices. In order to improve popular understanding of crime he has designed various tools to map and describe crime in particular communities and across the country as a whole.

## FUNDER

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Tel: (27-12) 346 9500 Fax: (27-12) 460 0998  
iss@issafrica.org

[www.issafrica.org](http://www.issafrica.org)

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