

**Refugee Review Tribunal  
AUSTRALIA**

**RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE**

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**Question**

**Please send me information on the police force and its ability to offer protection to victims of crime in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth.**

**RESPONSE**

**Please send me information on the police force and its ability to offer protection to victims of crime in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth.**

Cape Town is the capital and largest city of Western Cape Province and has a population of 3.5 million in its metropolitan area.

Port Elizabeth is the largest city in Eastern Cape Province and has a population of 1.2 million.

Both cities have police from the South African Police Service (SAPS), but Cape Town also has a metropolitan police service (see below). Information from the South African Police Service website ([www.saps.gov.za](http://www.saps.gov.za)) indicates that:

- Western Cape has one police official for every 306 citizens, Eastern Cape has one police official for every 437 citizens and the national average is one police official for every 368 citizens. ('Police Population Ratios' 2007, South African Police Service website, <http://www.saps.gov.za/dynamicModules/internetsite/buildingBlocks/basePage4/BP444.asp> – Accessed 11 September 2007 – Attachment 1).
- Eastern Cape has 15,800 police at 191 police stations ('Profile: SAPS Eastern Cape' 2007, South African Police Service website

<http://www.saps.gov.za/dynamicModules/internetsite/buildingBlocks/basePage4/BP433.asp> – Accessed 11 September 2007 – Attachment 2).

- Eastern Cape has 15,779 police at 146 police stations (‘Profile: SAPS Western Cape’ 2007, South African Police Service website <http://www.saps.gov.za/dynamicModules/internetsite/buildingBlocks/basePage4/BP441.asp> – Accessed 11 September 2007 – Attachment 3).

Cape Town also has a metropolitan police service, the Cape Town City Police (CTCP) which had 798 police in August 2006 (Newham, G. & Masuku, T. & Gomomo, L. 2002, *Metropolitan Police Services in South Africa, 2002*, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, November, pp.7-9 <http://www.csvr.org.za/papers/papnwhm7.htm> – Accessed 11 September 2007 – Attachment 4; <http://www.csvr.org.za/index.htm>Newman, Gareth 2006, ‘Getting Into The City Beat: Challenges Facing our Metro Police’, *SA Crime Quarterly*, No 15, March [http://www.issafrica.org/static/templates/tmpl\\_html.php?node\\_id=648&link\\_id=3](http://www.issafrica.org/static/templates/tmpl_html.php?node_id=648&link_id=3) – Accessed 11 September 2007 – Attachment 5).

A large recent assessment of the South African police by David Bruce, Gareth Newham and Themba Masuku of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation is attached (Bruce, D., Newham, G. & Masuku, T. 2007, *In service of the people’s democracy: An assessment of the South African Police Service*, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, May [www.csvr.org.za/papers/papsaps.pdf](http://www.csvr.org.za/papers/papsaps.pdf) – Accessed 10 September 2007 – Attachment 6). (These authors have published many other works on the SAPS on the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation website at [www.csvr.org.za](http://www.csvr.org.za)). Chapter 5 of this report comments on the delivery of safety, security and justice by SAPS. It notes the high level crime environment in which the SAPS operates, the transition which has been taking place from the old apartheid force, the lack of reliable statistics and the difficulty of assessing performance.

Here are some points the report makes:

- At the same time that a new paradigm for the provision of policing services has emerged, South Africa has faced a formidable crime problem, with crime escalating steadily throughout the 1990s and remaining at high levels since then (although there have been decreases recently in important crime categories). The increase in crime has been associated with the emergence of certain new crime trends and an increase in the vulnerability of the (white) middle class to victimisation (and, with this, increased middle-class anxiety about crime). (p.78)
- the quality of police service delivery still roughly reflects the logic of apartheid. Township areas often receive lower-quality policing services than suburban areas (although services may tend to be better at presidential stations and in priority areas than in other township areas), and the rural poor receive the worst services of all. (p.79)
- The impression, then, is that race and ethnicity continue to play a role as determinants of the quality of service delivery, and that this is accentuated in rural areas. Thus, there are allegations that some white officers do not take complaints from black people seriously and are more sympathetic to white complainants, and that tribal or ethnic identities also play a similar role in some provinces.(p.80)
- The 2003 National Victims of Crime Survey confirms that physical access to police services is reasonably good:

The vast majority (97%) of South Africans knew where the nearest police station is. In almost two thirds (66%) of cases, respondents said that the nearest police station is less than 30 minutes away using their usual mode of transport. This is higher than might be expected and suggests that the police have improved accessibility to their services. (p.81)

- In discussing SAPS service delivery it is appropriate to make reference to what appears to be widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of police service delivery in South Africa. This dissatisfaction is reflected in conversations among members of the public, in media reports highlighting “high profile incompetence” and unsatisfactory police service delivery in the midst of rampant crime, in recurring vigilantism, and in the massive investment in private security measures by the more well-to-do, reflecting a pervasive sense that the police cannot be relied on for providing protection from crime.  
This widespread lack of confidence in the police is reflected in responses to the 2003 National Victims of Crime Survey, in which 45% of respondents indicated that they thought the police were doing a bad job. However, the fact that a greater number of respondents (52%) indicated that they thought police were doing a good job suggests that the service-delivery picture is more mixed, with many South Africans having some confidence in the SAPS. (p.83)
- there is a wide variation in the quality, purposefulness and ingenuity of policing between different stations that contributes to the overall SAPS problem of inconsistent service delivery. (p.87)
- There can be little doubt that the vast array of activities the SAPS engages in have a major impact on crime in South Africa. At the same time the impression on the whole is that the overall impact of the SAPS is highly fragmented, depending heavily on the ingenuity and determination of some police members and commanders. But there is far from optimal support to these members from provincial and national levels and, therefore, the SAPS’s ability to make a purposeful contribution to the reduction of crime is limited. (p.89)
- while the SAPS cannot be said to be under-resourced in relation to the standards of developing countries, relative to levels of serious crime the SAPS is understaffed. (p.89)
- Whether one uses figures on arrests, cases referred to court, prosecutions or convictions, the available information does not necessarily convincingly demonstrate that conviction rates in South Africa are particularly low. A 2003 article on the issue suggests that South African conviction rates for murder (18%) are significantly lower than those for England (61%) or the United States (56%), but suggests that conviction rates for other offences – such as rape, robbery, assault and vehicle theft – “do not seem to be out of kilter with those of more developed countries”. There is some evidence, therefore, that the SAPS is at least doing quite well in terms of crime investigations. (p.91)
- The fact that the police do not respond on time was the most common problem identified by African and coloured respondents, while Indians and whites prioritised other issues. (p.94)

The report then discusses the lack of reliable statistics (pp.83-4), and the difficulty of judging the effectiveness of policing from statistics such as arrests or convictions in any case (pp.84-7).

The report also notes the theory that certain crimes, especially “more socially determined” violent crimes where perpetrators and victims of crime are frequently known to one another, cannot be prevented by policing, an idea that is repeated in other sources. It states:

In its 2001–02 annual report, the SAPS specifically identified murder, along with other crimes such as assault grievous bodily harm (GBH), common assault and rape, as being “less policeable crime” on which the SAPS could not be expected to have an impact. The point is also emphasised in the latest SAPS annual report. The report highlights the fact that perpetrators of murder and other “more socially determined” violent crimes frequently involve perpetrators and victims of crime who are known to one another, and states that “conventional policing in the streets and public places will not prevent this kind of crime. At some time a point will be reached at which those murders, assaults and rapes which can be dealt with by means of conventional policing and other government actions have largely been addressed. This will leave the socially determined contact crimes as a remaining problem.” In terms of its own argument, then, the SAPS can claim little credit for reductions in the murder rate in so far as the reduction may have been in “socially determined” murders.

This may not necessarily be true and the SAPS may have contributed to the reduction in murders, including “socially determined” murders, in so far as this may have occurred. But, even if, for the sake of argument, one focuses only on the “less socially determined” murders that, according to the SAPS, can be addressed by conventional policing methods, the SAPS should be able to answer specific questions if it were to demonstrate that it has had an impact on murder. These questions are:

- What are the main circumstances in which these murders occur?
- What strategies can be effective in preventing murders from happening in these circumstances?
- What steps have been taken to assist police stations in implementing these strategies and to ensure that they are being effectively implemented?
- Is there evidence that these strategies are actually impacting on murder in the areas in which they have been implemented?

Similar questions would have to be answered in relation to other categories of crime, such as assault GBH and rape as well as “robbery with aggravating circumstances” and “other robbery”, if the SAPS were to demonstrate that it is impacting on these crimes. (p.860

The idea that policing will not prevent violent crime is also examined in the paper by Newham, Masuku & Gomomo (Newham, G., Masuku, T. & Gomomo, L. 2002, *Metropolitan Police Services in South Africa, 2002*, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, November, pp.27-8 <http://www.csvr.org.za/papers/papnwhm7.htm> – Accessed 11 September 2007 – Attachment 4).

Other sources on the effectiveness of South African police are in *RRT Research Response ZAF31961* (Q.3-5).

No reports were found in the sources consulted to indicate that the police in Cape Town or Port Elizabeth are more or less efficient than other police in South Africa.

## List of Sources Consulted

### Internet Sources:

#### **Government Information & Reports**

Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada <http://www.irb.gc.ca/>

UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk>

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>  
US Department of State website <http://www.state.gov>

### **United Nations (UN)**

UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.ch/>

### **Non-Government Organisations**

Amnesty International website <http://www.amnesty.org/>

Freedom House <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=1>

Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/>

### **International News & Politics**

*BBC News* website <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

### **Region Specific Links**

South African Police Service <http://www.saps.gov.za/>

Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation <http://www.csvr.org.za/>

South African Crime Quarterly

[http://www.issafrica.org/index.php?link\\_id=3&slink\\_id=125&link\\_type=12&slink\\_type=12&tmpl\\_id=3](http://www.issafrica.org/index.php?link_id=3&slink_id=125&link_type=12&slink_type=12&tmpl_id=3)

Cape Town government <http://www.capegateway.gov.za/eng/directories/services/11460/9612>

### **Search Engines**

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

### **Databases:**

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

### **List of Attachments**

1. 'Police Population Ratios' 2007, South African Police Service website, <http://www.saps.gov.za/dynamicModules/internetsite/buildingBlocks/basePage4/BP444.asp> – Accessed 11 September 2007.
2. 'Profile: SAPS Eastern Cape' 2007, South African Police Service website <http://www.saps.gov.za/dynamicModules/internetsite/buildingBlocks/basePage4/BP433.asp> – Accessed 11 September 2007.
3. 'Profile: SAPS Western Cape' 2007, South African Police Service website <http://www.saps.gov.za/dynamicModules/internetsite/buildingBlocks/basePage4/BP441.asp> – Accessed 11 September 2007.
4. Newham, G. & Masuku, T. & Gomomo, L. 2002, *Metropolitan Police Services in South Africa, 2002*, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, November, pp.7-9 <http://www.csvr.org.za/papers/papnwhm7.htm> – Accessed 11 September 2007.
5. Newman, Gareth 2006, 'Getting Into The City Beat: Challenges Facing our Metro Police', *SA Crime Quarterly*, No 15, March [http://www.issafrica.org/static/templates/tmpl\\_html.php?node\\_id=648&link\\_id=3](http://www.issafrica.org/static/templates/tmpl_html.php?node_id=648&link_id=3) – Accessed 11 September 2007.

6. Bruce, D., Newham, G. & Masuku, T. 2007, *In service of the people's democracy: An assessment of the South African Police Service*, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, May [www.csvr.org.za/papers/papsaps.pdf](http://www.csvr.org.za/papers/papsaps.pdf) – Accessed 10 September 2007.