



UN-HABITAT

International Youth Crime Prevention & Cities Summit

17 - 21 June 2008, Durban, South Africa



Feature 6

Trends & types of crime and violence

Over a period of 20 years, 1980–2000, crime rates in the world increased by about 30 per cent, from 2,300 to over 3,000 crimes per 100,000 people. Over the past five years, 60 per cent of all urban residents in developing countries have been victims of crime. The UN-HABITAT report, *Enhancing Urban Safety and Security: Global Report on Human Settlements 2007* shows that while the incidence of terrorist-related violence is quantitatively smaller in relation to other types of violence, it has, however, significantly worsened the impacts of violence on cities in recent years. Rapid and chaotic urbanization processes have been identified as one of the causes of insecurity in cities and towns. The fear of crime and violence is pervasive in both developed and developing countries.

- **Crimes and violence are unevenly distributed** across the globe and even within nations and cities. They are a continuing threat to human security generally but especially more to the poor who are disproportionately victimized as individuals and as communities
- Three categories of crimes generally affect people throughout the world.
- **Contact crimes** include violent acts against persons and are considered to be the most serious offences. **Property offences** are considered less serious than the personal crimes but significantly impact individual victims and negatively affect the overall quality of urban life. The most serious property crimes include burglary and theft. **Crimes against public order and welfare** include moral infractions and anti-social behaviour such as sexual offences, corruption, trafficking of human beings, use of firearms and drugs. **Others** may include (depending on the jurisdiction), “white collar” crimes such as fraud, cyber-crime and environmental offences.
- Public opinion surveys in the US and the UK repeatedly show that **people rank crime among the top concerns** they have in everyday life. In Nairobi, more than half of the citizens worry about crime ‘all the time’ or ‘very often’. Likewise, in Lagos, 70 per cent of respondents in a city-wide survey were fearful of being victims of crime, with 90 per cent being fearful of the prospects of being killed in a criminal attack.
- **Fear of crime is often exacerbated by the media** and may spread quickly as information is communicated by cell phones, email and through the internet.
- Global **insecurity affects the poor more intensely**, breaks down socio-cultural bonds and prevents social mobility, thus contributing to the development of urban ghettos and stigmatized neighbourhoods.

Types of crime and violence

Terrorism

No current discussion of urban safety and security would be complete without mention of terrorism. Recent attacks in Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Bali, New York, Madrid, London, Colombo and Mumbai, as well as the daily attacks in Baghdad, have all had specific and more general impacts on urban centres, including a significant shift in public perceptions of the safety and security of cities. The large size and high population density of cities make them ideal targets for terrorist attacks.

- The UN-HABITAT Report notes that the **incidence of terrorist attacks is significantly small in comparison to common crime and other types of violence**. For example, the US National Counter Terrorism Center reported 13 terrorist incidents in the US between February 2004 and May 2005 and, for approximately the same period; the Federal Bureau of

1200

1300

1400

1500

1600

1700

1800

1900

2000

(World Population in Billions)

Investigation (FBI) identified 10.32 million property crimes and over 1.36 million violent crimes. Most terrorist-related attacks and subsequent loss of human lives that have occurred in 2007 are linked to the situation in Iraq, where deaths from car bombings have increased steeply.

- It is pertinent to note that a **greater proportion of recent terrorist attacks has taken place in developing countries**. Colombia, more than any other country, experienced a total of 191 terrorist attacks in 2001 alone. Cities are increasingly becoming targets of terrorist attacks. Notable examples include the attack on the World Trade Center in New York on 11 September 2001, the coordinated bombings of Madrid in March 2004, the London bombings of July 2005, and the bombing of commuter trains in Mumbai in July 2006.

Organised crime:

- Organised crime is often linked to corruption. As one measure of its profitability, the United Nations Drug Control Programme has estimated that **US\$1 billion in illicit capital is circulated daily by criminal groups** among the world's financial institutions. Findings show comparatively high levels of perceived organized crime in Africa, Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, while low levels are reported for Canada, Australia and Northern Europe. Drugs, arms and human trafficking are among the principal activities of organized crime.

Arms trafficking

- Easy access to illegal weapons is a major risk factor driving crime and violence rates. Like drug trafficking, arms trafficking is often the focus of organized crime. It is thought to be worth about US\$1 billion a year. According to the Small Arms Survey, the sales of illegal weapons account for an estimated 60 to 90 per cent of the 100,000 combat deaths that occur each year and thousands more that take place outside of war zones. It is estimated that there are more than **640 million small arms available** worldwide, or enough to arm one in every ten persons, and that 1,000 individuals each day are killed by guns worldwide.

Human trafficking

- It is estimated that between **700,000 and 1 million persons are trafficked around the world each year**. Trafficking people is big business that generates enormous revenues for traffickers. Survey data reveals 127 countries in which trafficking reportedly originates and 137 destination countries. Women and girls are especially vulnerable to human trafficking.

Youth gangs & youth homicides

- It has been estimated that, worldwide membership of youth gangs runs into millions – spreading throughout both high and low crime cities. While the direction of causality is arguable, recent research suggests that cities that have high violence rates tend to have institutionalized youth gangs, especially in Chicago, Los Angeles, Rio de Janeiro, Medellin, Caracas, Kingston, Lagos, Mogadishu and Belfast. Closely related to youth gangs is the issue of youth homicides. According to World Health Organisation data, about **199,000 youth homicides took place globally in 2000**, implying an average of 565 young people aged between 10 and 29 dying daily due to various types of violence.

Homicide

- Homicide rates for cities are extremely variable, with Asian cities demonstrating generally low rates compared to cities in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and North America. Findings suggest that **in 2000, more than 500,000 people across the globe were victims of homicide**.

Interpersonal violence (domestic violence)

- **Women and children are the main victims of this type of crime**. While the private setting of the home is often the venue for child abuse and interpersonal violence, many victims experience these crimes in public institutions such as schools, hospitals or in other public facilities.