

# Crime down: Can SAPS take the credit?

According to *allAfrica.com*, in a report by Johan Burger, senior researcher the Crime and Justice Programme at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), the 2010/11 South African Police Service (SAPS) crime statistics show a 2,4% decrease in crime, meaning that the police recorded 50 400 fewer serious crimes in 2010/11 than they did in the previous financial year. However, Burger says SAPS alone cannot be credited for the reduction in crime statistics.



The 2011 *Grant Thornton International Business Report* reported a 5% decrease in 'contact crime' victimisation compared to the previous year, and 34% decrease since the first survey in 2007. Similar trends are reflected in reports by the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa and the South African Insurance Association.

Shortly after the latest release of the crime statistics, says Burger in the *allAfrica* article, the then National Commissioner of the SAPS, General Bheki Cele, claimed credit for the reduction in crime but while doing so, did not give any indication that in his opinion other social factors might have had a role to play in the reduction in crime. He said: "We, in the SAPS, have been enjoying, arguably, our best run of uninterrupted good media coverage since our formation in 1995."

## For more:

- *allAfrica.com*: [Can the police take all the credit for reductions in crime?](#)

## Additional comment:

Commenting on the police statistics, Gareth Newham, head of the Crime and Justice Programme at the Institute for Security Studies, said:

"Crime in South Africa keeps going down, for which the police and many communities deserve some credit.

"But what the statistics don't reveal is the grim reality of many serious and often hidden crimes such as domestic violence, child abuse, hate crimes and corruption. It is important that the SAPS further improves its method of

collecting and reporting on these crime statistics. If better data can be obtained about these crimes, they can be addressed more effectively.

"While murder has continued to decline since 1994, reductions in other interpersonal violent crime such as murder, attempted murder and assaults are part of an ongoing trend that started in 2003. There are no simple reasons for the reduction in these types of crime. It is not simply because of the World Cup, or because we have more police officials. The reasons are most likely to be found in a careful analysis of local socioeconomic factors.

"Reducing crime in the long run is not just about policing and the criminal justice system. It also requires a relentless focus on tackling poverty and inequality, making sure children are safe and healthy and improving education.

"The police can take credit for reductions in crimes such as vehicle hijacking, residential robberies and the stabilisation in business robberies.

This is because these crimes are organised and committed by repeat offenders who won't stop until the risks of being apprehended are too great.

Improvements in police intelligence, investigations and a rapid response to these types of crimes have resulted in better arrest and conviction rates for these criminals and once behind bars, they no longer pose a danger to our communities.

"The reduction in crime should remove undue pressure on the police and provide the much needed space for police leadership to focus on promoting police professionalism and service delivery by tackling ill-discipline, and the abuse of power and corruption by police members.

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