

SA's 2012 Crime Stats. Is the improvement perception, reality or neither?

by Stuart Pennington

Reality

Much has been said about the crime stats over the past few days, so I'll try not to be repetitive. The reality is that in 2011/2012 we have seen an overall decline of roughly 3% over 2010/2011 in the 17 major crime categories (see table 1 and 2 below).

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Much has been said about the crime stats over the past few days, so I'll try not to be repetitive. The reality is that in 2011/2012 we have seen an overall decline of roughly 3% over 2010/2011 in the 17 major crime categories (see table 1 and 2 below). The only categories that saw an increase were:

- * Business Robbery +7.5%
- * Business Burglary +0.2%
- * Driving under the influence +2.9%
- * Stock theft +1.5%

If measured over the last 10 years there has been an overall decline of approximately 30% across the board, with some dramatic reductions in excess of this:

- * Attempted murder -57%
- * Murder -34%
- * Sexual offenses -35%
- * Bank robberies -90%
- * Vehicle and motor bike theft -46%
- * ATM bombings -35%
- * Common Robbery -47%



SAP crime analysis per 100 000 of Population (1)

	2001/02	2008/09	2010/11	2011/12	2001/11 (%)	2011/12
Murder	47.8	37.3	31.9	31	33.4% ↓	3.1% ↓
Assault/GBH	590	419	397	381	3.5% ↓	4.2% ↓
Rape	98	97	98	95	3.5% ↓	3.5% ↓
Attempted Murder	69.8	37.6	31.0	29	57.3% ↓	5.2% ↓
Common Robbery	201.3	121.7	109.8	105	4.7% ↓	4.6% ↓
Aggravated Robbery	260.5	249.3	203.0	200	2.3% ↓	1.4% ↓
Carjacking	Not available	30.6	21.7	19	3.6% ↓	11.9% ↓
Bank Robbery*	356	102	39	35	9.0% ↓	1.0% ↓
Cash in Transit Robbery*	238	386	291	182	23.5% ↓	37.5% ↓
Residential Robbery	Not available	37.9	34.5	33	1.3% ↓	1.9% ↓
Residential Burglary	675.3	506.5	495.3	485	27.5% ↓	2.0% ↓

* Raw figures/frequencies

Source: Crime Information Analysis Centre – South African Police Service 2001/2

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SAP crime analysis per 100 000 of Population (2)

	2001/02	2008/09	2010/11	2011/12	2001/11 (%)	2011/12
Business Robbery	Not available	28.6	29.9	32	10% ↑	7.5% ↑
Business Burglary	194.4	143.8	138.2	139	2.6% ↓	0.2% ↑
Vehicle and Motorbike Theft	216.1	156.0	129.0	117	45.8% ↓	9.5% ↓
Driving under the influence	53.7	115.4	133.4	137	152% ↑	2.9% ↑
Stock Theft	92.9	61.7	60.3	61	34.5% ↓	1.5% ↑
ATM Bombing	Not available	387	399	261	3.2% ↓	34.6% ↓
Crime detection by Police	225	385	464	514	228% ↑	10.9% ↑
Drug related crime	135	241	301	349	258% ↑	15.6% ↑

* Raw Figures/Frequencies

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Perception

Despite our progress in the 'war on crime' perceptions remain gloomy. We still constantly hear that 'our crime is the worst in the world', 'Jo'burg is the crime capital of the world', 'the police are useless' etc, etc. Changing perceptions is hard, particularly where personal experience mitigates, and then there is always the relationship between leading and lagging measures.

But, in the recent Global Competitiveness Report where Executives were asked to complete a detailed questionnaire on 'the most problematic factors for doing business in a country' there are signs that perceptions of crime are changing. The chart below summarizes this.

When comparing the top six most problematic factors over the past five years there is a significant change – crime and theft have all but slipped off the radar.

			2	2
Inadequately trained workforce			1	1
Crime and Theft			2	2
Inadequately trained workforce			3	3
Inefficient Government Bureaucracy			4	4

Restrictive Relations	5	5
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Corrupt Policy instability	6	6
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The information is drawn from the 2012 edition of the World Economic Forum's Executive Opinion Survey. From a list of 16 factors, respondents were asked to select the five most problematic and rank them from 1 (most problematic) to 5. The results were then tabulated and weighted according to the ranking assigned by respondents.

Whether this is because inadequate State capacity has become more problematic than Crime and Theft, and therefore higher on the agenda or whether there is a genuine sense that Crime and Theft have become less problematic remains moot.

Prevention vs Enforcement

The BIG issue is that 85% of the victims of violent crime know their attackers by name, AND 60% of the victims are either drugged or drunk at the time of the attack.

We have close on 200,000 members of SAPS now, that's a Police: Population ration of around 275:1. In terms of police officers 'on patrol' (excluding those that are office bound) it is about 325:1). In the UK the same ratio is around 400:1, and 380:1 for the USA. But, it is unreasonable to expect there to be a police officer 'in every home' or for that matter 'in every pub/shabeen'.

That we have a chronic domestic violence problem is beyond dispute, and judging by our recent statistics, a growing substance abuse problem.

The challenge is much more one of **prevention** rather than enforcement. As citizens we can all get involved in the prevention issues in one way or another.

A Ledge

Last year when I wrote a newsletter on the crime stats 2011, I proposed the idea of a 'Pledge' which all SA citizens would commit to (see below) to assist with prevention. Prof. Jonathan Jansen, Vice-Chancellor of Free State University was critical of the idea, he didn't think 'children routinely mouthing meaningless words' would make a difference. So, with input from Justin Foxton of 'Stop Crime, Say Hello' this pledge morphed into an invitation to the public to submit a "Ledge", their personal commitment to prevention (amongst other things) in SA. Visit LedgeSA on [Facebook](#) to check them out. We had a considerable response.

MY PLEDGE: Today and every day I pledge to do the following:

1. I will abide by the law and will encourage others to do the same
2. I will support my local CPF and get to know my local police
3. I will report all criminal activity of which I am aware, regardless of my relationship to the criminal
4. I will pick up litter and encourage others to recycle theirs
5. I will not partake in bribery of any description

6. I will not buy stolen goods
7. I will not drink and drive, nor take or deal in illegal drugs
8. I will, as a driver, observe the rules of the road and be courteous at all times
9. I will respect the property of others, even if I am participating in a public protest
10. I will respect my family and the rights of children, the disabled and the aged
11. I will promote my country always, making it my duty to know the truth of the good and the bad
12. I will live our Constitution which promotes freedom, peace, liberty and justice for all

Again, in the fight against crime, and in the quest for prevention, we at SA – the Good News urge citizens to commit to their own 'Ledge'. Send it to us, we'll put it up on the LedgeSA Facebook page.

Here are some examples of LEDGES that our readers submitted:

My ledge by Guy Watkins (Project Director UIC Control & Automation (Pty) Ltd)

- 1) I will greet people when and wherever possible, especially when cycling. (We cyclists have a rotten reputation.)
- 2) I will make every effort to be involved in contributing time and effort to communities in need.
- 3) I will not accept negative talk about South Africa.
- 4) I will use every opportunity to promote my suburb, my city and my country.
- 5) I will maintain family values.
- 6) I will share the past and where we have come from as South Africans with my children and their children.
- 7) I will always be aware of the injustices of our past and let it be a reminder of where we do not ever want to be again.
- 8) I will respect the highest office in the land.
- 9) I will afford every policewoman and policeman the respect they deserve for doing the dangerous job they do.
- 10) I will stand every time the national anthem is played, be it on radio, TV or live.

My Ledge by Chris Stevens

- 1) I will strive to be a good citizen
- 2) I will respect the rights and property of others
- 3) I will be more tolerant of others and try to understand their situations
- 4) I accept that the law applies equally to everyone; there is no law for me that is different from others
- 5) I accept that there are no 'grey areas' in the law; either it's legal or it isn't
- 6) I will support any government or private organisation that stands for law and order
- 7) I will inform myself on local and national matters and try to ensure that others do the same
- 8) I will not use any racial slur or have thoughts that differentiate between people based on race, gender, age or sexual orientation
- 9) I will encourage everyone to respect each other first, and form opinions only on others' actions
- 10) I will pay my taxes, my accounts, my fines and other dues
- 11) I will respect our police and politicians but will not be afraid to report inappropriate behaviour
- 12) I will try to encourage a moral code and respect for others in my children, staff, friends and colleagues

- 13) I will do my utmost to preserve and improve the environment we live in
- 14) I will reduce my waste, reduce energy usage and recycle everything I can
- 15) I will endeavour to make South Africa a country to be proud of and will encourage others to do the same
- 16) I will 'speak up' when I see, hear, or am aware of anyone who breaches my 'Top 15'

Conclusion

A year back I asked a grade 7 class at an eminent private school "how many of you have seen your parents bribing policemen?" Answer: 85%. And "how many of you have knowingly bought stolen goods?" Answer: 65%.

Winning the war on prevention is a good place to start, for everyone. We invite you to make your own personal Ledge.