

## **CRIME IN CAPE TOWN: 2001- 2008**

### **A brief analysis of reported Violent, Property and Drug - related crime in Cape Town**

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## **1 CRIME**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Cape Town is one of the crime hotspots in the country – in fact, it has the highest prevalence of both murder and drug-related crime in the country (City of Cape Town, 2006b). Apart from crime's devastating direct consequences for its victims, the social and psychological consequences of crime occurring in the city and the subsequent fear of crime should not be underestimated. It negatively affects the economy of the city as tourists are put off by the high crime rate and international, national and local businesses are discouraged from investing in Cape Town. This contributes to rising poverty in the city as it limits the assets and livelihood sources of the poor. The fear of crime also leads to increased fragmentation and the polarisation of the city, characterised by enforced segregation through gated communities, stigmatisation and exclusion. (City of Cape Town, 2006b).

This report focuses on three categories of crime, namely violent crime, property crime and drug-related crime. The report also illustrates comparisons between Cape Town and South Africa, presents information within each of these categories and provides some trend information (2001 to 2008).

### **1.2 Context**

Poverty is often cited as a cause of crime and violence, but increasing international evidence suggests that poverty *per se* has little to do with crime and violence levels. Rather crime and violence occur more frequently in settings where there is an unequal distribution of scarce resources or power (relative poverty) coupled with weak institutional controls. Although there is no simple or direct causal relationship between inequality and violence, inequality does appear to exacerbate the likelihood of violent crime, especially when it coincides with other factors. Individuals or groups are more likely to engage in violence if they perceive a gap between what they have and what they believe they deserve (United Nations, 2006). For example, crime increases when the social control that operates through formal institutions (such as the police and judicial systems) and informal institutions, including civil society organisations, breaks down or is weakened. According to Deputy Justice Minister, Johnny de Lange, "The criminal justice system was unacceptably dysfunctional and the "fragmented" and inadequate crime statistics did not necessarily reflect the true situation in the country, the government has admitted. Large numbers of cases went unreported because people had lost faith in the criminal justice system." (Cape Times 14<sup>th</sup> August 2008).

According to a recent UN-Habitat report (United Nations, 2007) on safety and security, crime in urban areas is increasing worldwide, giving rise to widespread fear and driving away investment in many cities, particularly in the developing world. A staggering 60% of all urban residents in

developing countries have been victims of crime, with 70% in Latin America and Africa. Whilst the prevalence of crime is increasing in the developing countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Africa, it is falling significantly in the developed countries of North America and Western Europe. The highest homicide rates are found in developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America (UN-HABITAT, 2008).

An article published by the HSRC (Roberts, 2008) is concerned with an important and often neglected related social phenomenon, namely the *fear* of crime and not with the actual levels of victimisation in South Africa. Why is it important to focus on people's anxieties about their personal safety rather than on the hard numbers related to levels of violent and property crimes.

The answer lies in the complex and detrimental effects that fear of criminal violence imparts on quality of life at the individual, community and societal levels. Such anxieties may also diminish the sense of trust and cohesion within communities, as well as provide mounting appeals for the reinstatement of the death penalty and lend credibility to vigilante violence. In Britain, the United States and Europe, it has frequently been heralded as a public concern that is at least as pressing as crime itself. Since the 1960s, the fear of crime in its own right has been the focus of increasing attention of researchers and policymakers. Countless studies have been conducted, with many concluding that fear continues to adversely affect the well-being of a proportion of the population.

In South Africa HSRC attitudinal surveys (HSRC public opinion surveys) since the early 1990s reveal that general perceptions of personal safety have been showing signs of improvement since the late 1990s. The percentage feeling personally unsafe has dropped from a high of 49% in both 1991 and 1998 to 30% in late 2007. However, the same cannot be said for feelings of neighbourhood or community safety. The 2005, 2006 and 2007 rounds of South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) found that people are substantially more fearful of walking alone in their residential areas during the day and after dark compared to 1998 (74% in 2007 relative to 44% in 1998). The survey results pose critical challenges to some of the prevailing archetypal images of who the fearful in the country are, and provide further support for other national and sub-national surveys that have arrived at similar conclusions.

Firstly, over the last decade and a half, the level of fear of crime among men has virtually matched, and in a couple of instances surpassed, that of women.

Secondly, South African youth appear more fearful than the elderly, though the relationship is weak and inconsistent over time.

Thirdly, Indian and black African respondents exhibited greater fear of crime than coloured and white respondents in 2005 and 2006. Since fear levels for black South Africans improved at a slower rate than for white South Africans, the gap between the proportion of white and black South

Africans who felt unsafe narrowed substantially in the late 1990s, and by 2005 a relative reversal of positions appears to have occurred.

The popular notion that fear of crime in the country is predominantly a 'white fear' is lamentable in that it is misleading and neglects the needs of a majority who are less able to adequately voice their concerns.

The crime issue and the role of government in addressing crime have received much publicity in the press lately, and there has been great pressure on government to deal more effectively with the crime issue. "Finding a solution to crime goes beyond just law enforcement issue alone and it is therefore essential that everybody work together to solve crime – law enforcement can only deal with the symptoms of crime" – Commissioner Mzwandile Petros, Provincial Commissioner of the South African police Service, Western Cape (Personal Comms, 2008). According to Temba A Notlutshungu, director of the Free Market Foundation (Cape Argus 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2008), the response to crime has so far focussed on the punitive aspect of crime management, which is necessary. He sees prevention, however, as equally important and proposes the following preventative measures:

- Massive deployment of plain clothes police personnel
- Improvement in remuneration and employment conditions and adequate insurance cover for the entire police force
- Separate first-time, petty offenders from hardened prisoners in prisons
- Devolve policing powers to provincial and local levels
- Establish a culture of the rule of law (Cape Argus 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2008)

### **1.3 Crime Statistics**

The availability of accurate and up-to-date crime statistics is important if we are to address the crime problem effectively.

Survey data suggests that the majority of South Africans did not believe crime statistics that were released by government. Public reaction is shaped by personal experience, or that of friends, family or neighbours. They believed the government manipulated the data for political purposes. (Shaw, 2002).

The issue of crime statistics illustrates just how sensitive the issue of the politics of safety has become in South Africa. It demonstrates also that government's aim is not only to make citizens believe that things are not as bad as they seem but, perhaps more importantly, that outsiders and particularly potential investors do not view the country as descending into a spiral of violence (Shaw, 2002). However, it is against this background, that the statistics that this report is based on the best available official statistics released by the South African Police services.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

This study is based on official reported crime statistics obtained from the South African Police Services ([www.saps.gov.za](http://www.saps.gov.za)). This source of crime statistics provides a basis on which to measure and monitor changes in crime rates over time. However there are a number of limitations in using official crime statistics.

1. The official crime statistics measures only **reported** crimes. Not all offences are either reported or detected by police. With certain crimes such as rape the rate of reporting may be far below the actual incidence of crime (some agencies say only about 50% of cases are reported). Increase in the rate of reported crime may imply higher rates of reporting or more effective policing rather than increases in the actual incidence of crime. For murder, the rates of reported crime are close to the actual incidence of crime and the rate of reported murder rates is thus a good indicator of violent crime.
2. Certain crimes (e.g. drunken driving, drug-related crimes) are dependent on **police action for detection**. The police may target certain offences during crime initiatives, thereby reducing/increasing certain offences or a rise in police numbers may increase detection rates. An increase in crime rate with these types of crime therefore does not necessarily indicate an increase in the actual incidence of crime but rather better enforcement and in this sense a higher crime rate might be a positive indicator.
3. Crime statistics are subject to changing definitions of **offences**. Police recording practices may also vary so that the same act may be recorded differently in different areas. Recently for example due to a changed definition of sexually – motivated crime resulting from the implementation of Act 32 on 16 December 2007, rape and indecent assault figures are only provided for the period April to December 2001 – 2007.

Despite these challenges the SAPS crime statistics are the best available information and, in the absence of any other information, form the basis for the rest of this report.

The South African Police Services records 31 types of crime categories. This report only focuses on the following priority categories:

1. **Violent Crime** which includes murder, robbery with aggravating circumstances, rape and assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm.
2. **Property Crime** including business crime, burglary at residential premises, common robbery and theft of motor vehicle and motorcycle.
3. **Drug-related Crime** including drug-related crimes and driving under influence of alcohol and drugs.

In order to account for increasing population, the level of crime activity is expressed as a rate per 100 000 people. By using the population in Cape Town and South Africa for 2008, it is possible to calculate the rate per 100 000 (Dorrington, 2005 and Statistics South Africa mid-year population estimates, 2001-2008). See table 1 below. It is also possible to look at the rates over the period 2001 to 2008. Trends are more useful than just one point in time, in providing a measure of the effectiveness of policy or other interventions.

**Table 1: Population estimates for Cape Town and South Africa 2001 – 2008**

	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
<b>City of Cape Town population estimates (using high migration rate)</b>	2994779	3056678	3118576	3180475	3242373	3304272	3366171
<b>South Africa mid-year estimates</b>	44682644	45245629	45801319	46347516	46892424	47391029	47850064

Source: Dorrington, 2005 and Statistics South Africa mid-year estimates, 2001 – 2008



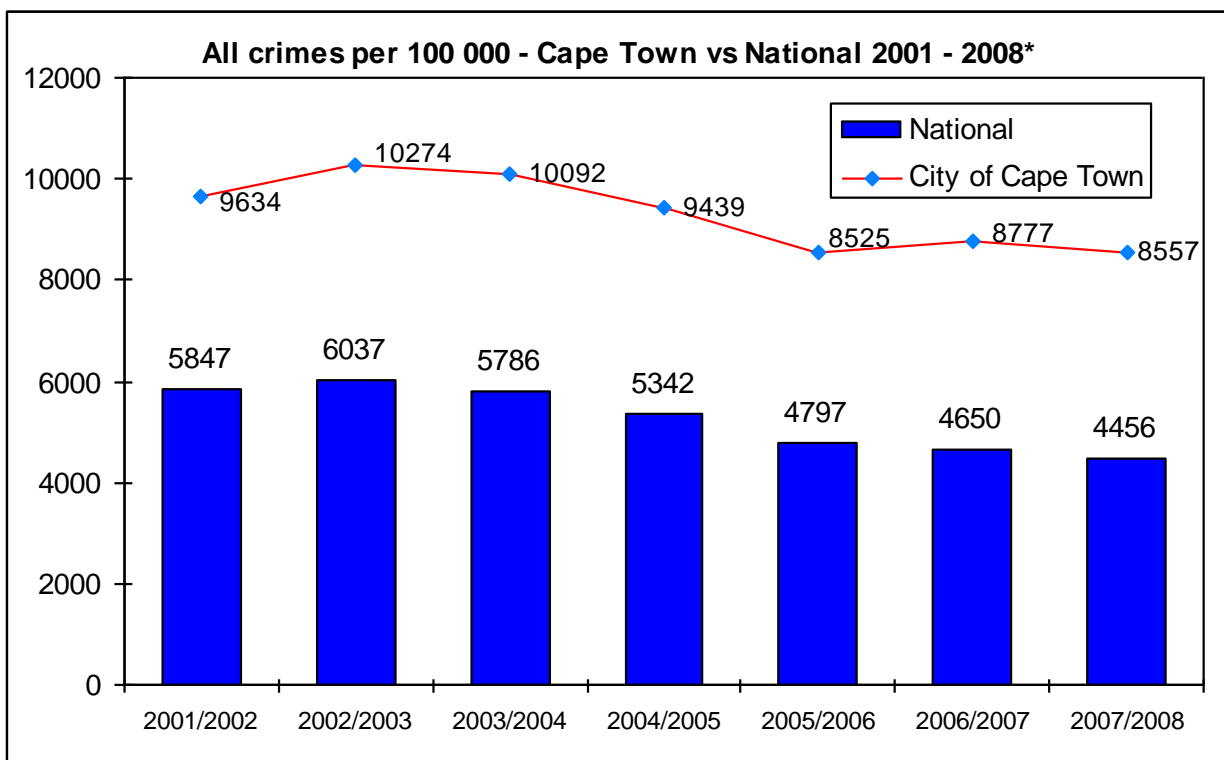
### 3 CURRENT LEVELS OF CRIME IN CAPE TOWN

Crime statistics at a national level indicate that the total of all reported crimes had steadily increased from 1996/97, stabilised during 2000/01 and has decreased since. Between the 2004/05 and 2005/06, national crime statistics decreased by 10.2 %, followed by a smaller decrease of 3% between 2005/06 and 2006/07. Since 2006/07 to 2007/08, overall crime statistics have dropped by a further 4.2%. (See Figure 1).

In Cape Town crime statistics indicate a decrease of 9.7% between 2004/05 and 2005/06, followed by an increase of 3% between 2005/06 and 2006/07. Since then, Cape Town crime statistics indicate a decrease of 2.3 % between 2006/07 and 2007/08. (See Figure 1).

However, all crime is still at a very high level and certain violent crime categories, like robberies at home and robberies at business premises are on the increase (City of Cape Town, 2007).

**Figure 1: Incidence of all reported crimes\* in Cape Town versus National (2001/02 – 2007/08)**



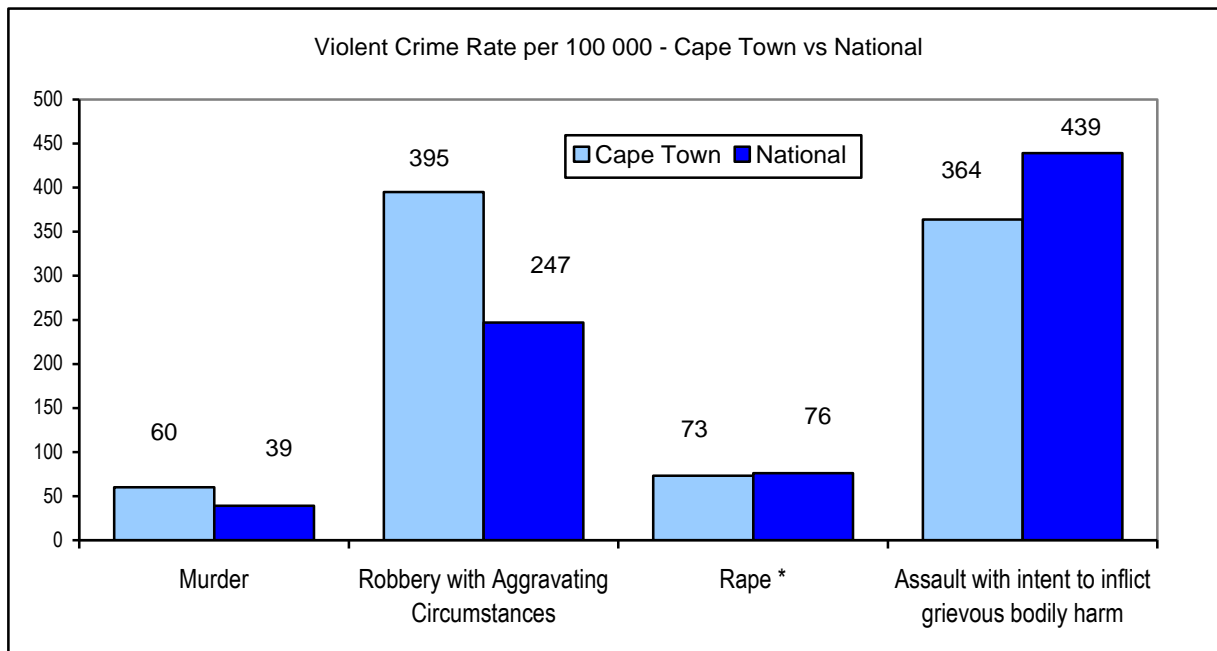
\* Due to a changed definition of sexually – motivated crime resulting from the implementation of Act 32 on 16 December 2007, rape and indecent assault figures are only provided for the period April to December.

### 3.1 Violent Crime

This category includes the following types of crime - murder, robbery with aggravating circumstances, rape and assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm.

Globally, violent crime is an issue worldwide. From 1990 to 2000, global violent crime increased from 6 to 8.8 incidents per 100 000 persons (UN-HABITAT, 2008). In Cape Town, the current state of the violent crime, reflected in crime rates for the period 2001 to 2008, is as below:

**Figure 2: Comparison of violent crime levels in Cape Town versus National (2007/08)**



\* Rape figures – Due to a changed definition of sexually – motivated crime resulting from the implementation of Act 32 on 16 December 2007, rape figures are only provided for the period April to December 2007

#### 3.1.1 Incidence of murder

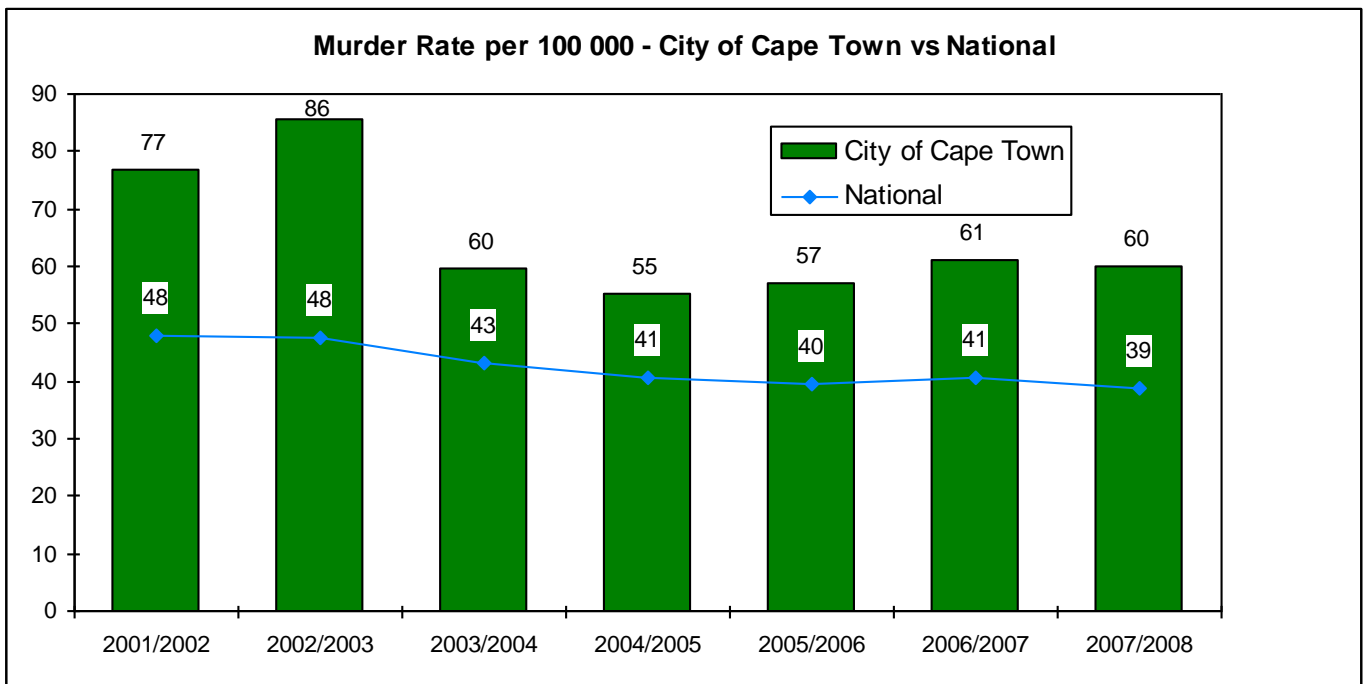
Cape Town has one of the highest murder rates in the world. According to the United Nations (2006), the city is considered one of the ‘high-risk’ cities for murder and is on par with Rio de Janeiro. Both cities have murder rates of more than 40 per 100 000 people (United Nations, 2006). Cape Town has retained its dubious record as South Africa’s murder capital, higher than those of Durban, Pretoria and Johannesburg. Pretoria has the lowest murder rate of major cities – 19.4 per 100 000 (Cape Times 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2008).

The incidence of murders in Cape Town (see figure 3) shows a recent decreasing trend over the past five years. However, the murder rate is still extremely high with a total of 2 018 murders in 2007/8, representing a murder rate of 60 per 100 000 population and, on average 5.5 murders every day. The reduction in murders can largely be attributed to reductions in gang-related deaths. This is specifically evident in traditional gang areas, viz. Philippi, Elsie’s River and Kraaifontein. Gang violence is cyclical in nature and the situation should be closely monitored, as

the sharp drop in murder may indicate resolution of turf wars and possible concentration of gangs on income-earning activities such as the drug trade, vehicle theft, robberies as well as possible capture by gangs of the functions of the state (Redpath, 2006).

At a national level (see Figure 3), murder rate (line) has also sustained declines and had decreased by 10% between 2002/03 and 2003/04. This has further decreased in 2004/05 and remained stable for 2005/06 with a slight increase of 2.5% in 2006/07 and decreasing again by 4.8% in 2007/08. Although murders have been decreasing, the volume of this crime is still high at 18 487 cases reported per year.

**Figure 3: Incidence of reported murder in Cape Town versus National (2001/02 – 2007/08)**



Cape Town’s reputation as one of the world’s ‘murder capitals’, if not brought under control, could have a devastating impact on tourism and the city’s economy. Cape Town’s homicide mortality (murder) rate is still five times the global average (Medical Research Council, 2004).

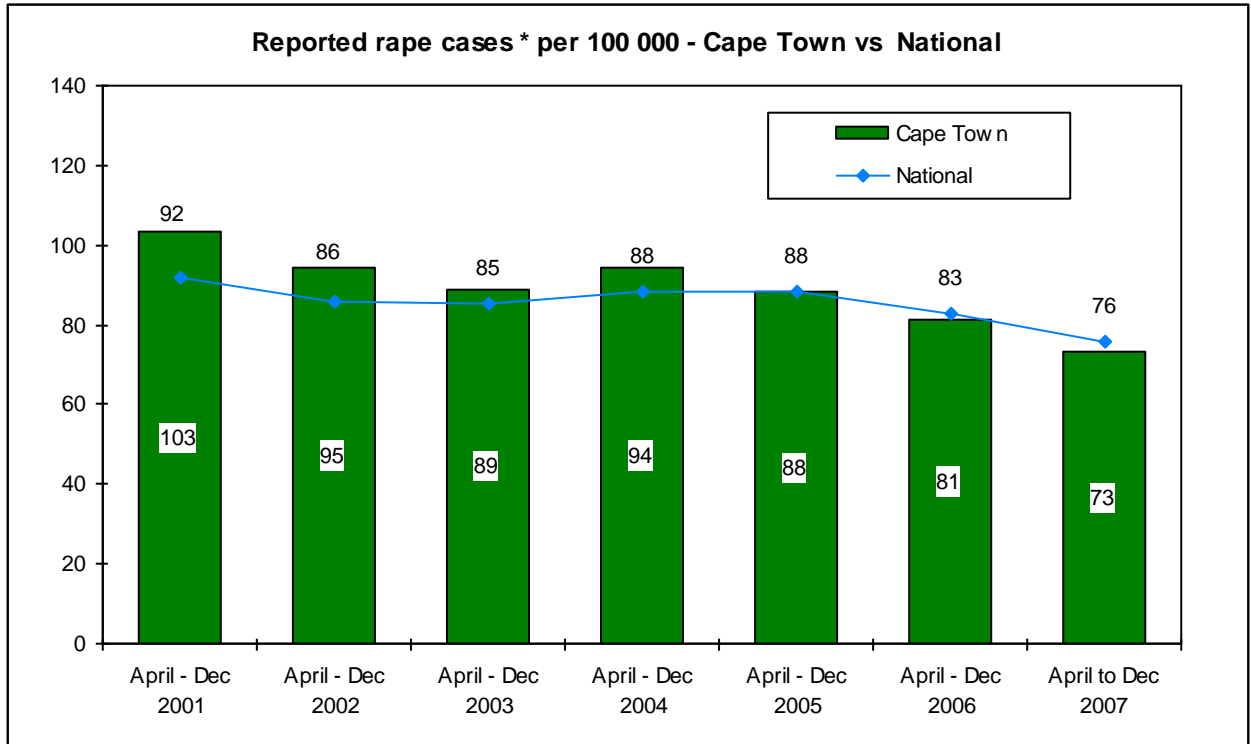
**3.1.2 Incidence of rape**

Due to a changed definition of sexually – motivated crime resulting from the implementation of Act 32 on 16 December 2007, rape figures are only provided for the period April to December 2007. For this reason, the rates for previous years have been calculated for the same time period. Incidence of reported rape in the city shows a stabilising trend (figure 4), with a slight reduction from 88 rape cases reported per 100 000 population in 2004, to a drop of 73 per 100 000 in 2007. However, this still represents a staggering figure of 2 460 reported incidences of rape in a year. On average 10 cases are reported per day in Cape Town, although many cases go unreported. According to Rape Crisis (a non-profit organisation which offers counselling to rape survivors), in

reality these numbers are likely to be at least twice as high as their records show that only 50% of people on average report their rape to the police.

With a high HIV/AIDS incidence in many areas of the city, rape is not only a brutal crime, but also a possible death sentence for many women.

**Figure 4: Incidence of Reported Rape\* cases in Cape Town versus National (April to Dec 2001 – 2007)**

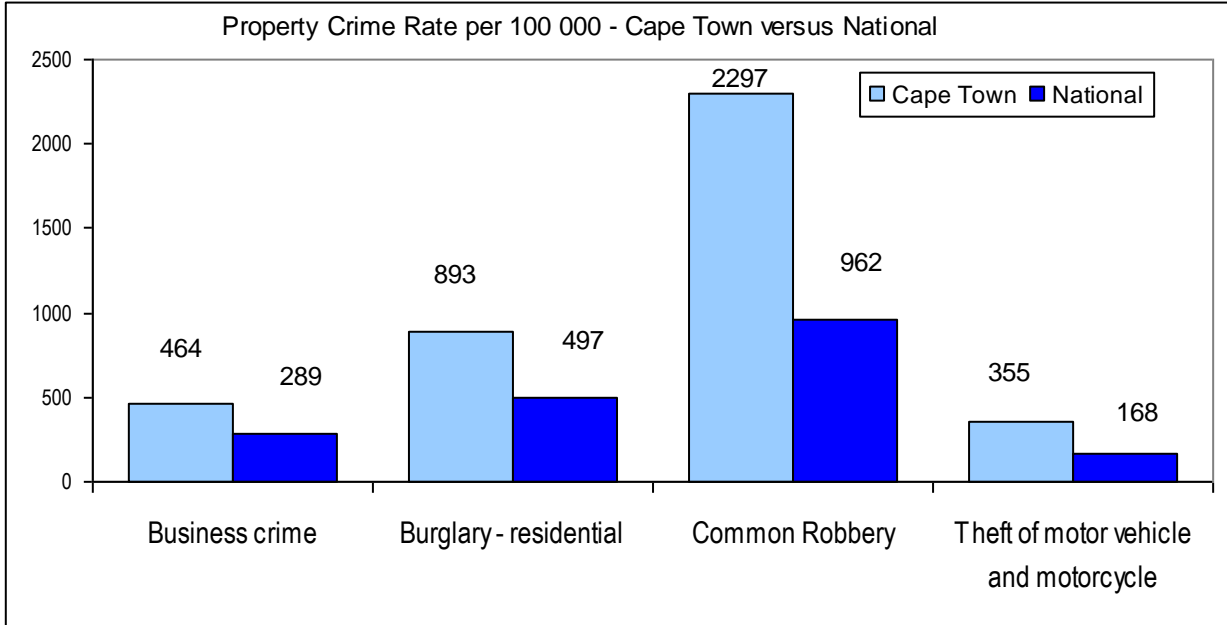


\* Rape figures – Due to a changed definition of sexually – motivated crime resulting from the implementation of Act 32 on 16 December 2007, rape figures are only provided for the period April to December 2007. For this reason, the rates for previous years have been calculated for the same time period.

### 3.2 Property Crime

The crimes that make up this category include business crime (including burglary at business premises, robbery at business premises, commercial crime), burglary (residential), common robbery and theft of motor vehicle and motorcycle.

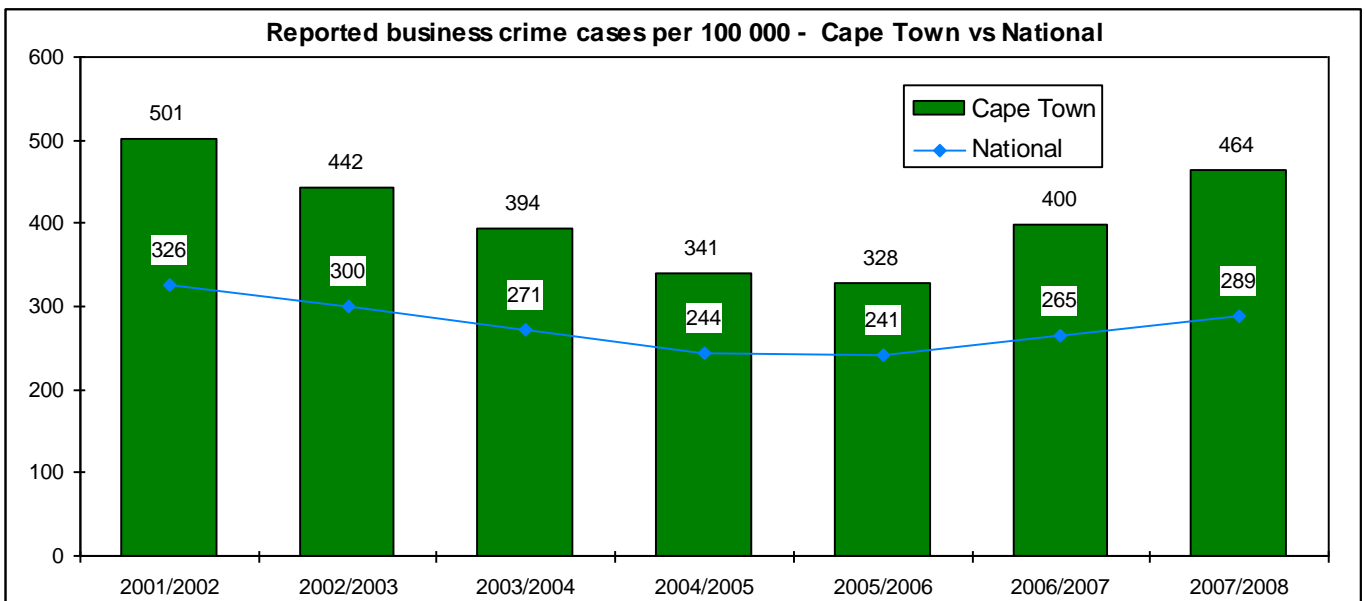
**Figure 5: Comparison of property crime levels in Cape Town versus National (2007/08)**



#### 3.2.1 Incidence of business crime

Reported incidents of business crimes (including burglary at business premises, robbery at business premises, commercial crime) have shown a steady declining trend over the period 2001 to 2006 (figure 6). However in the last two years, there has been over 400 cases of business crimes reported per 100 000 population each year in the city.

**Figure 6: Incidence of business crime in Cape Town versus National (2001/02 – 2007/08)**

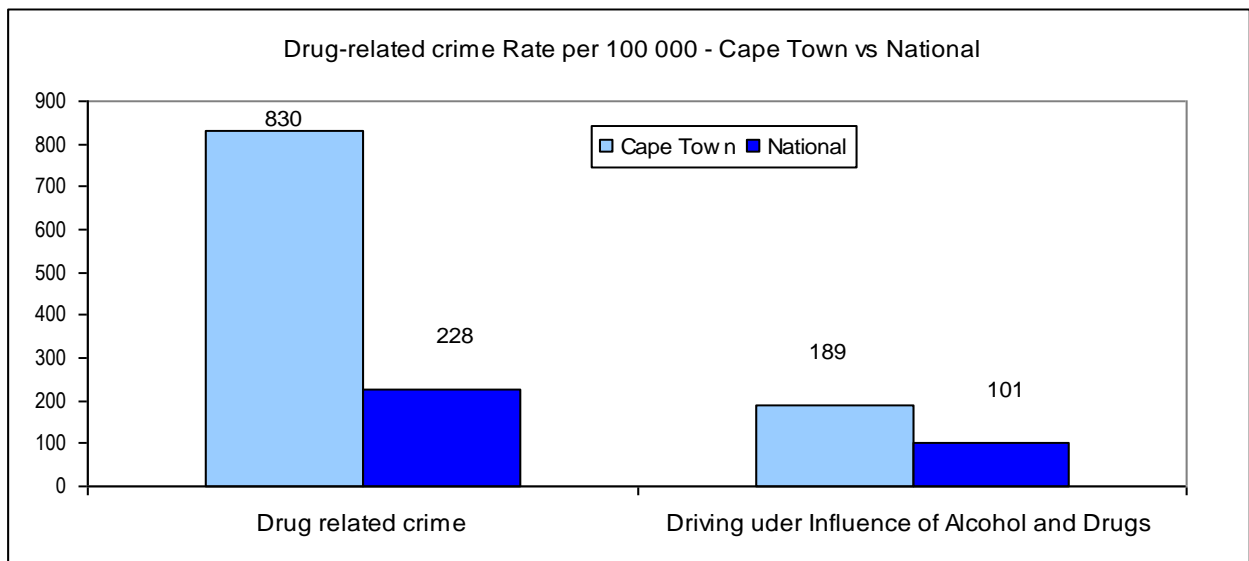


Business crime has obvious implications for the economic development in the city. If business premises are perceived to be unsafe and insecure by local, national and international companies they are less likely to invest their business in the city (City of Cape Town, 2005). This is particularly true in less affluent areas like Khayelitsha. If crime and the perception of crime are not brought under control, businesses are unlikely to invest in these areas, thus increasing unequal economic opportunities in the city.

### 3.3 Drug-related Crime

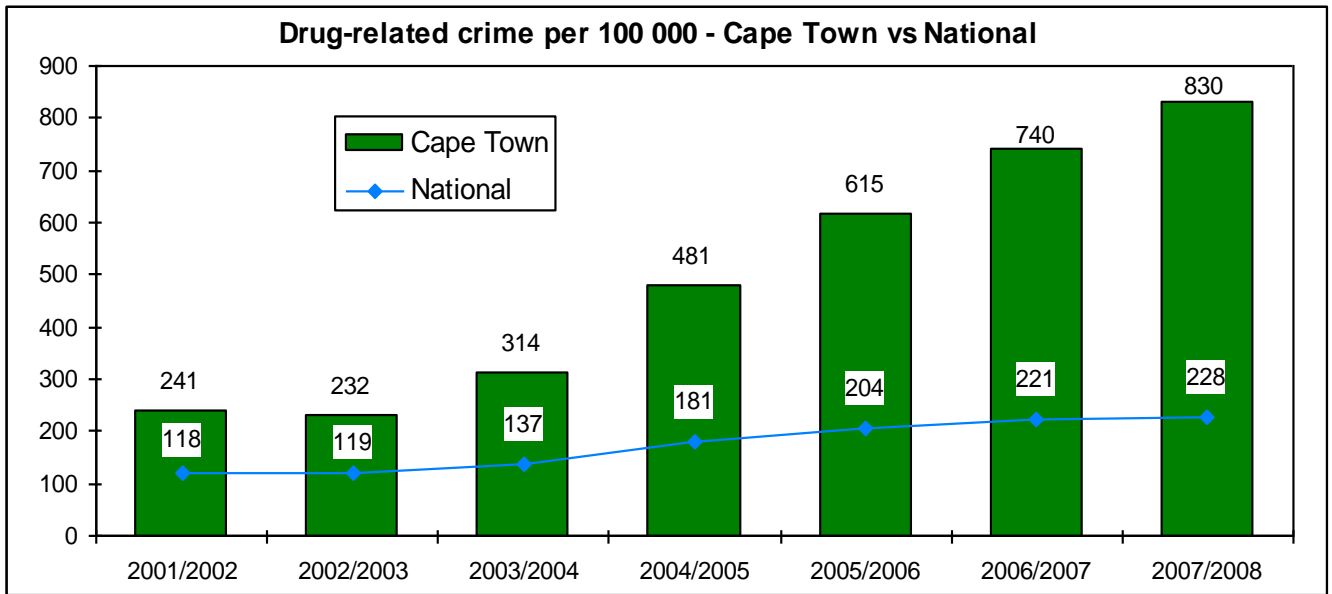
This category includes drug-related crime and driving under influence of alcohol and drugs.

**Figure 7: Comparison of drug-related crime levels in Cape Town versus National (2007/08)**



Cape Town has a rising incidence of drug-related crime (Figure 8). As can be seen from figure 8, there has been a dramatic increase in the rate of drug-related crime over the period 2001/2 to 2007/08 – from 241 cases per 100 000 to a staggering 830 per 100 000 in 2007/08. This may be due to the depressed socio-economic conditions in many areas on the Cape Flats as well as the recent dramatic influence of the use of the drug ‘Tik’ in these areas. This increase could also be a result of better enforcement and more effective policing, resulting in higher numbers of arrests. The national figures over the same period was substantially less at 118 per 100 000 in 2001/02 to 228 per 100 000 in 2007/08.

**Figure 8: Incidence of drug-related crime in Cape Town (2001/02 – 2007/08)**



**4 DISTRIBUTION OF CRIME WITHIN CAPE TOWN (2007/08)**

There are 58 police districts within Cape Town.<sup>1</sup> The maps in figures 9, 11, 13, 15 and 17, showing police precincts, spatial distribution of actual incidences of crime by murder, reported rape, business crimes and drug-related respectively, has only 51 of these police precincts shown as the latest geographical boundaries of the police precincts are not available from SAPS.

In addition by expressing the incidence of a type of crime in a particular police district as a percentage of the total incidences of that type of crime in Cape Town, one is able to compare the distribution of level of crime across the various police precincts. The concentration of crime within these areas varies significantly, with a relatively small number of police precincts accounting for a disproportionate amount of crime, particularly violent and drug-related crime.

<sup>1</sup> The latest police precincts were established as follows: Strandfontein established from Mitchell's Plain in July 2000, Phillippi East from Nyanga, Lingeletu West and Harare from Khayelitsha, Kleinvlei from Kuilsrivier all in July 2004, Mfuleni from Kleinvlei in July 2005, and most recently Belhar from Delft in December 2007.

Figure 9: Police Districts in Cape Town as at January 2000



Produced by Strategic Development  
Information and GIS, 2007  
Data extracted from SAPS

**Police Districts**



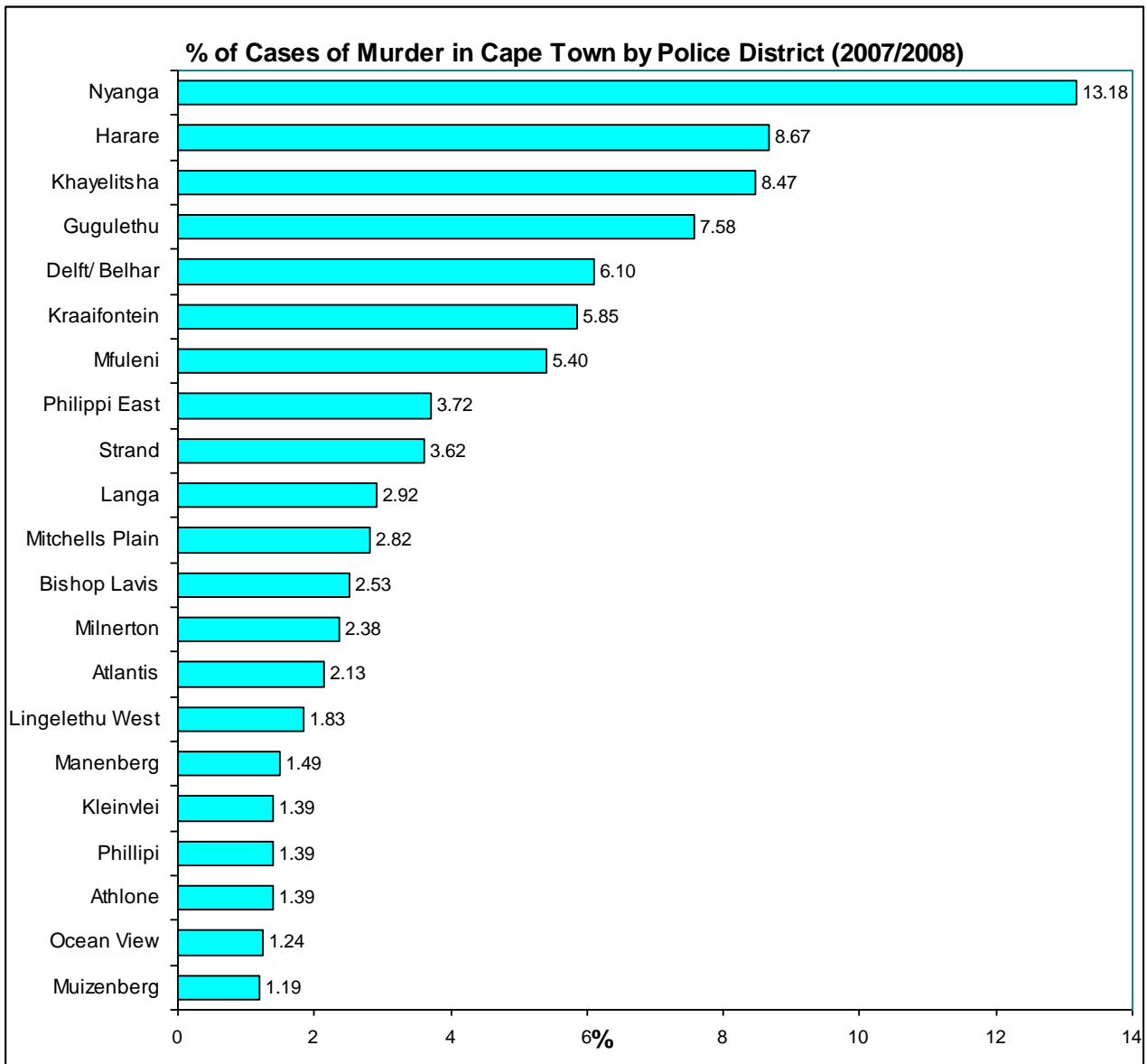


### 4.1 Violent Crime

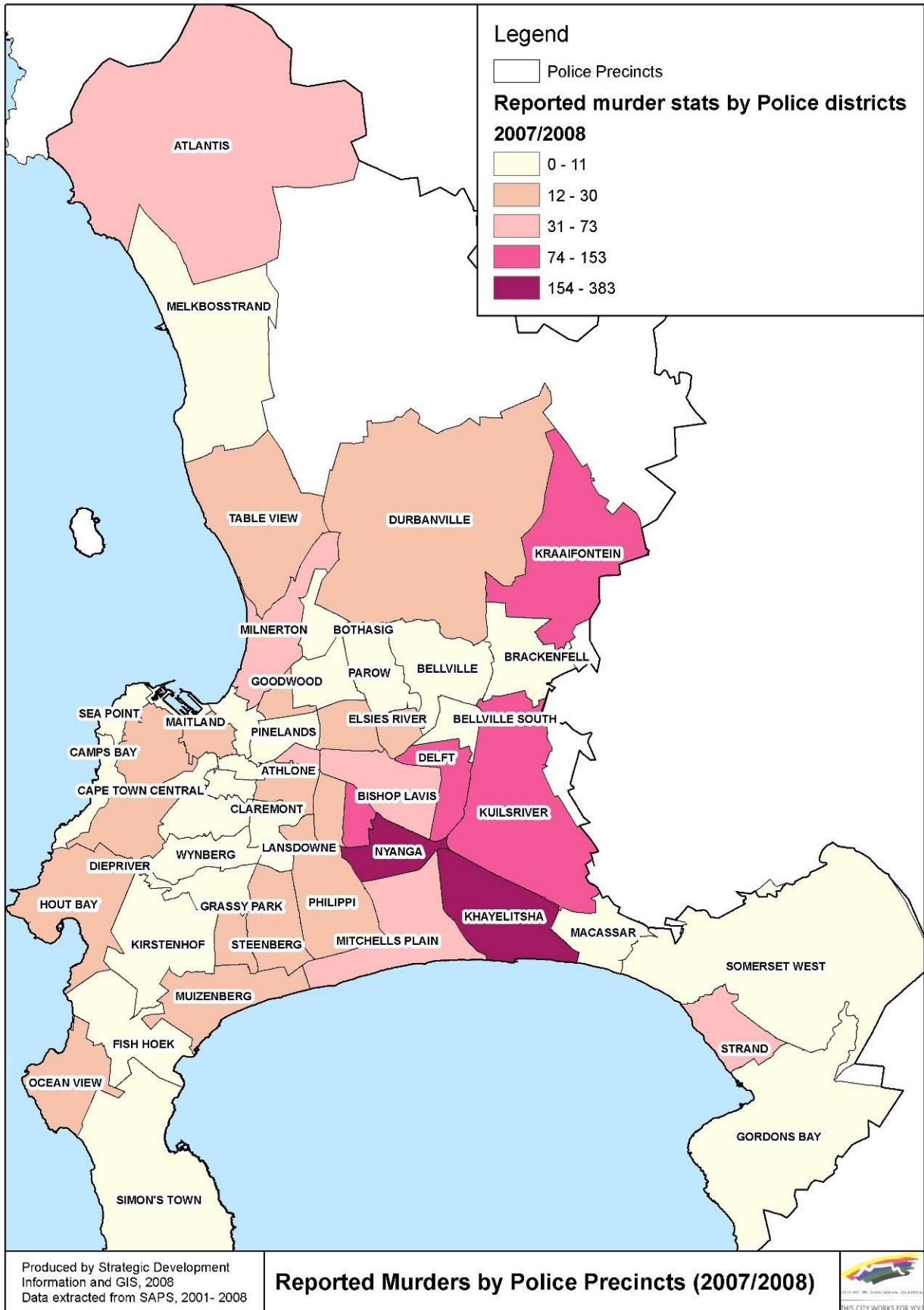
Violent crime tends to be concentrated in the poorest parts of the city with a small number of police districts accounting for a disproportionate amount of crime:

- Out of the 58 police districts in the city, five police districts account for over 44% of murders, Nyanga (13.18%), Harare (in Khayelitsha) (8.67%), Khayelitsha (8.47%), Gugulethu (7.58 %), and Delft/ Belhar (6.1%).

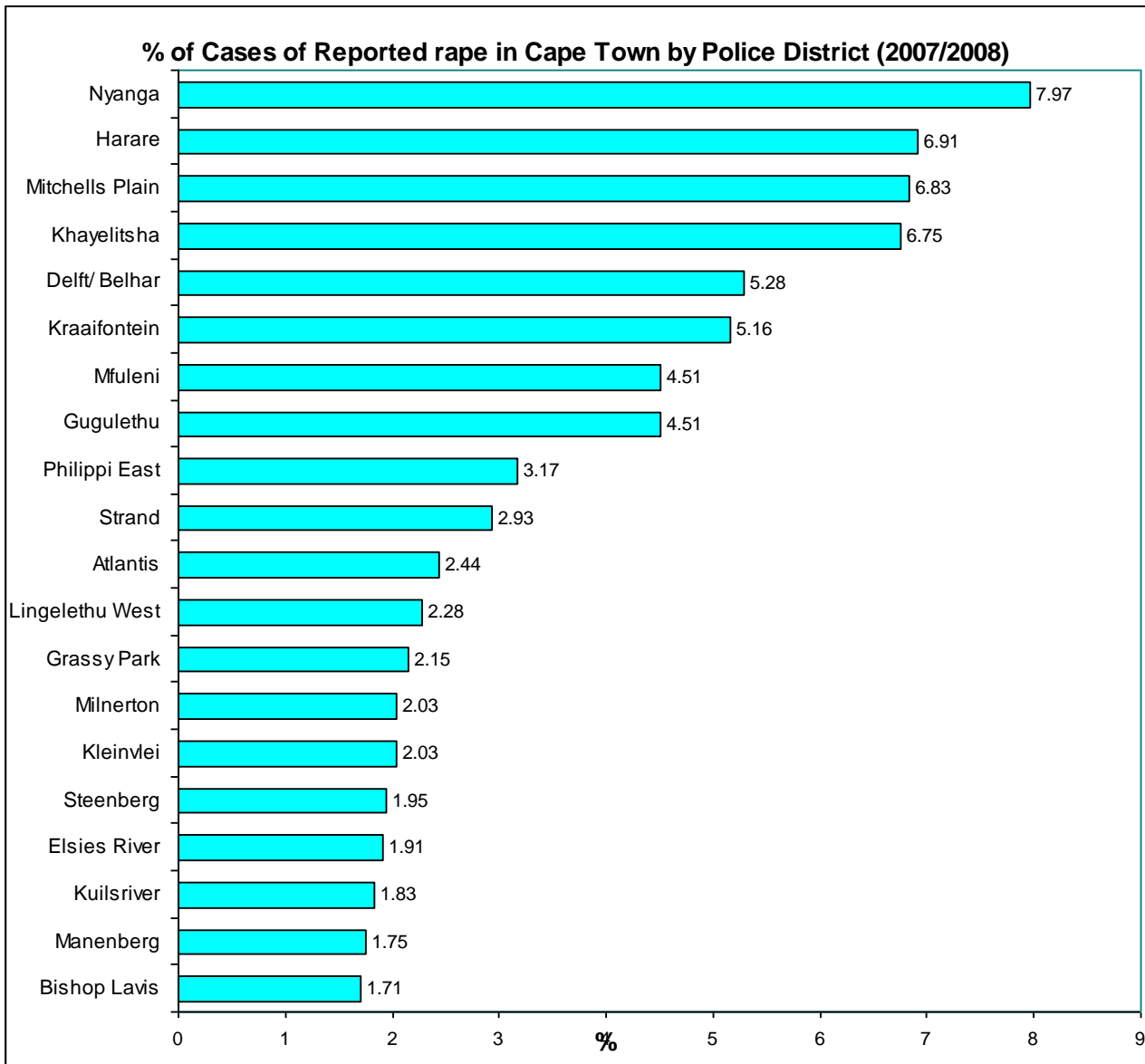
**Figure 10: % Cases of reported murder in Cape Town**



**Figure 11: Spatial distribution of reported murders by Police Precinct (2007/08)**

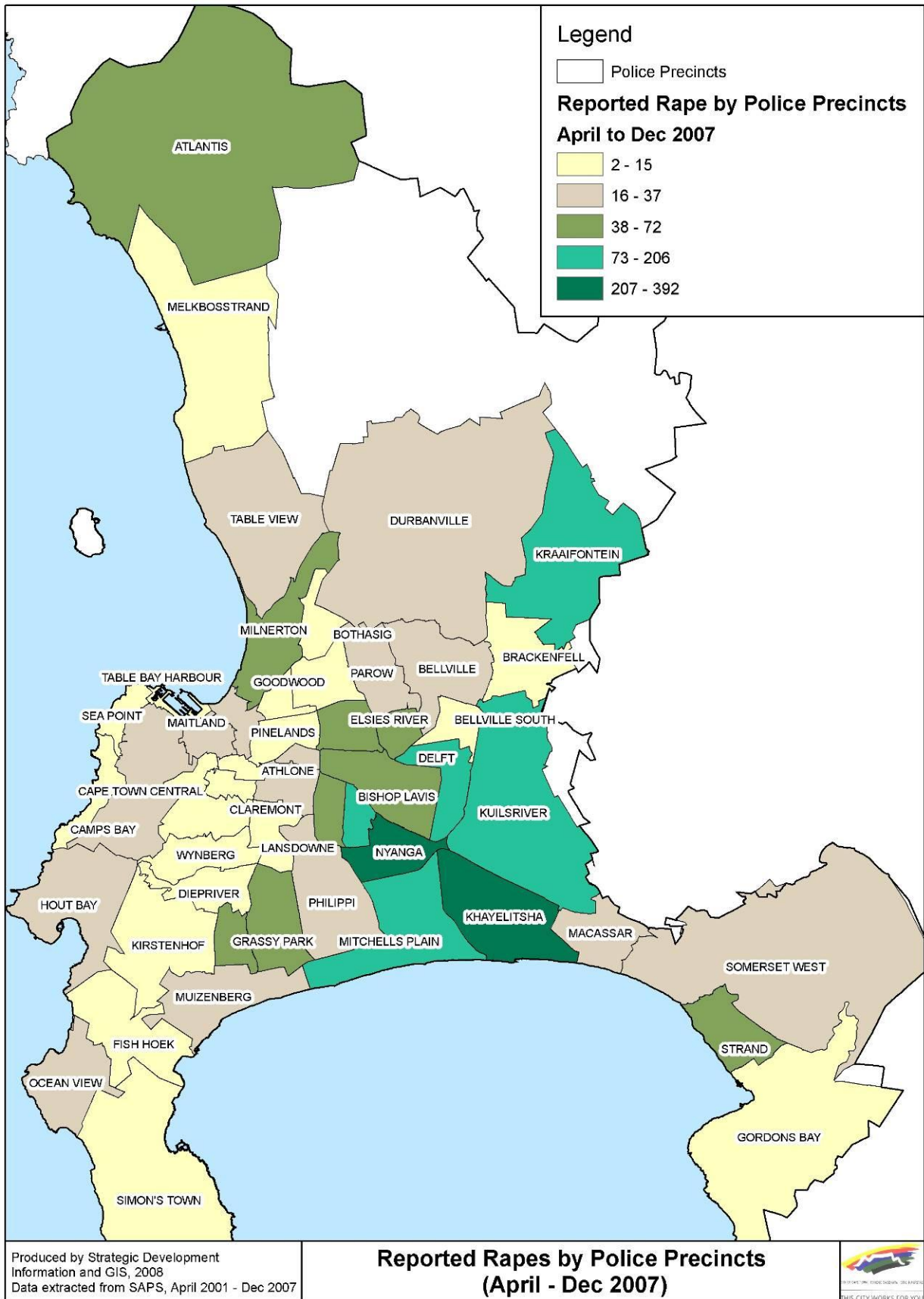


**Figure 12: % Cases of reported rape in Cape Town**



- Five police districts account for 34% of reported rape cases, Nyanga (7.97%), Harare (also in Khayelitsha) (6.91%), Mitchell's Plain (6.83%), Khayelitsha (6.75%) and Delft / Belhar (5.28%).

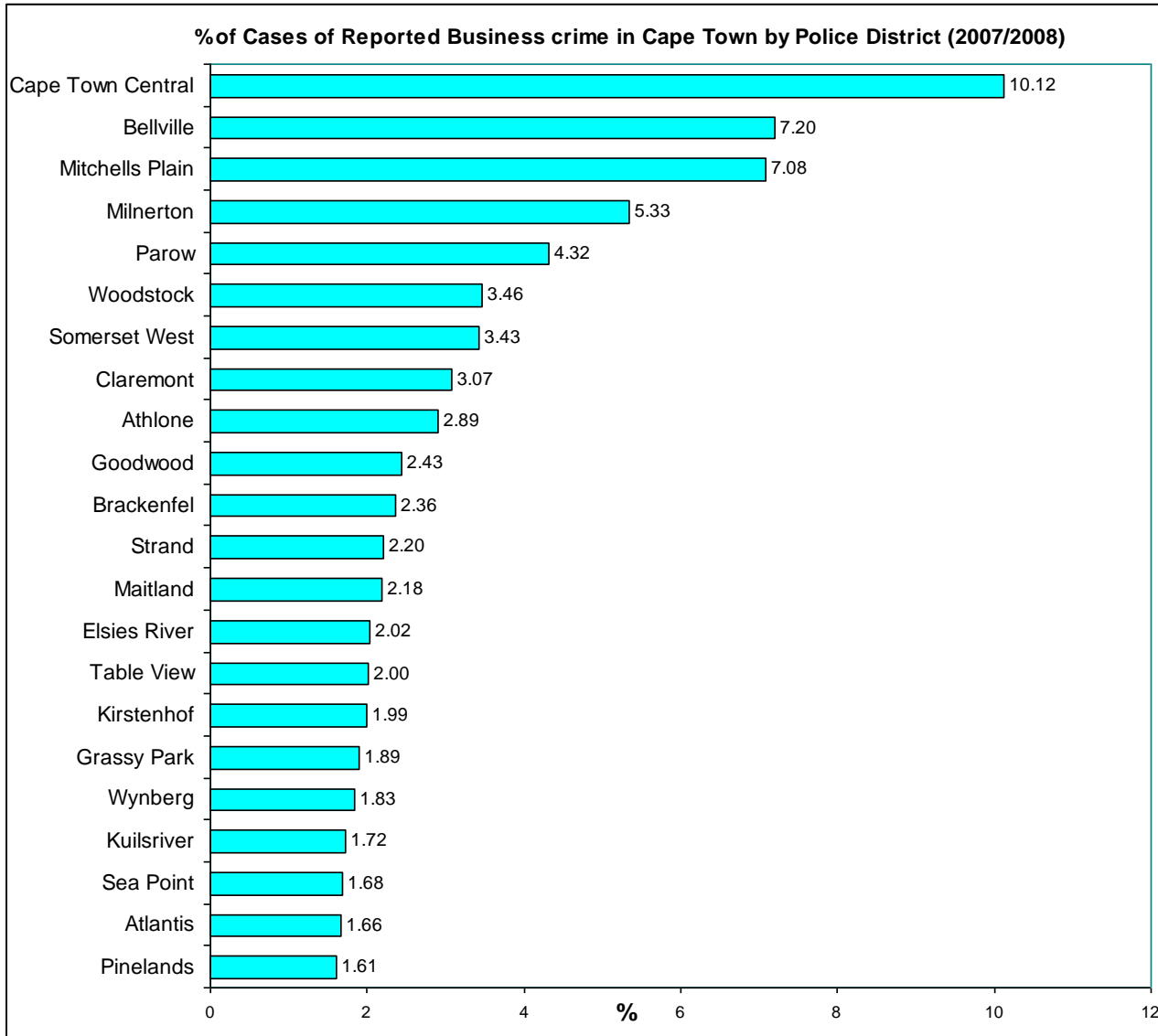
**Figure 13: Spatial distribution of reported rape by Police Precinct (April to Dec 2007)**



## 4.2 Property Crime

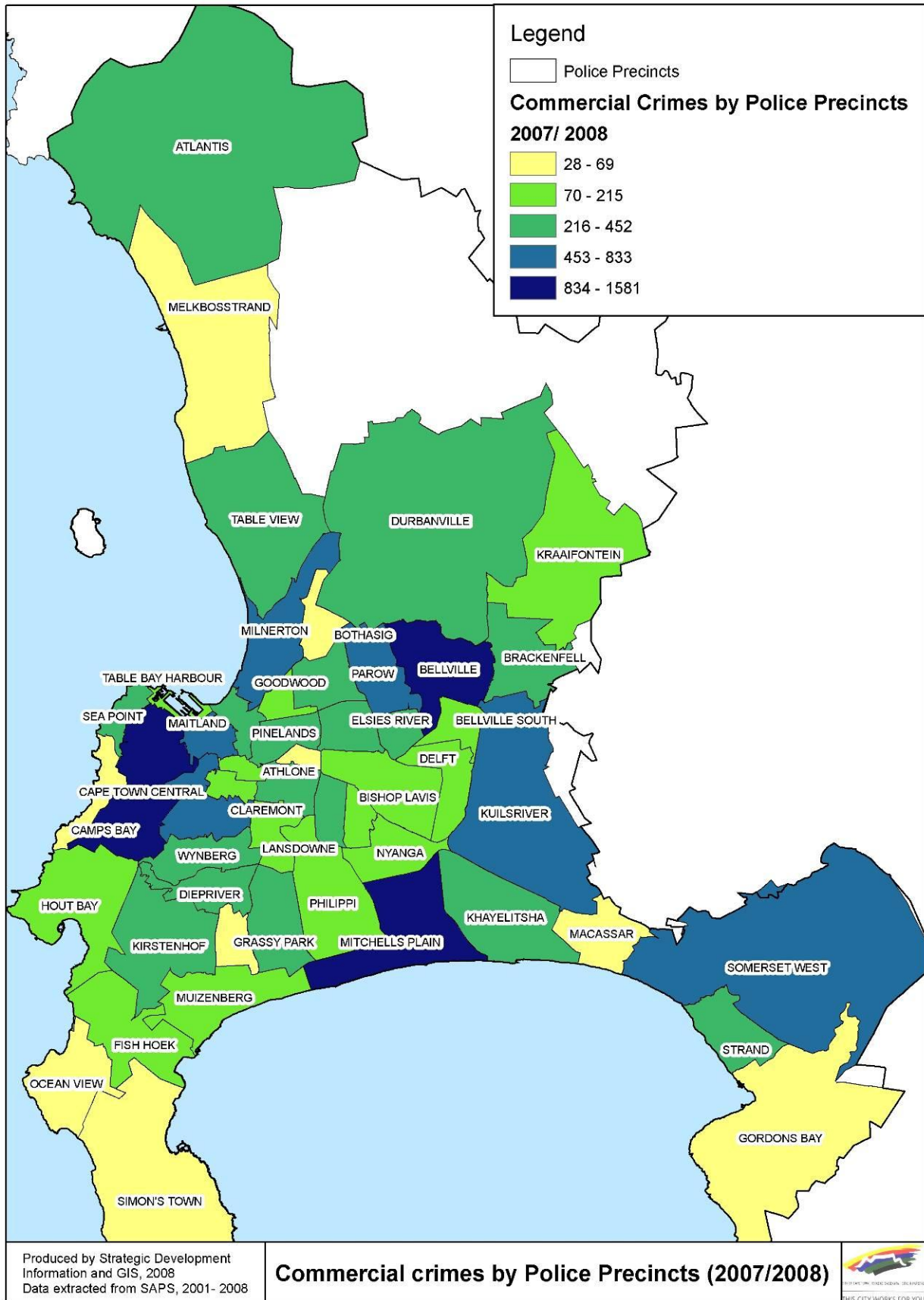
The poorest and most densely populated police districts account for relatively less property crimes in contrast to violent crime. Cases of reported business crimes (including business robbery, burglary at business premises and commercial crime) occur in the police districts that are more economically well off. See Figure 14 below.

**Figure 14: % Cases of reported business crime in Cape Town**



- 34% of business crime occurs in the police districts of Cape Town Central (10.12%), Bellville (7.20%), Mitchell’s Plain (7.08%), Milnerton (5.33%) and Parow (4.32%). This would make sense as major economic hubs are in these police districts, viz. CBD in Cape Town central, Tygervalley and N1 in Bellville, Mitchell’s Plain CBD, N1 in Parow.

**Figure 15: Spatial distribution of commercial crimes by Police Precinct (2007/08)**

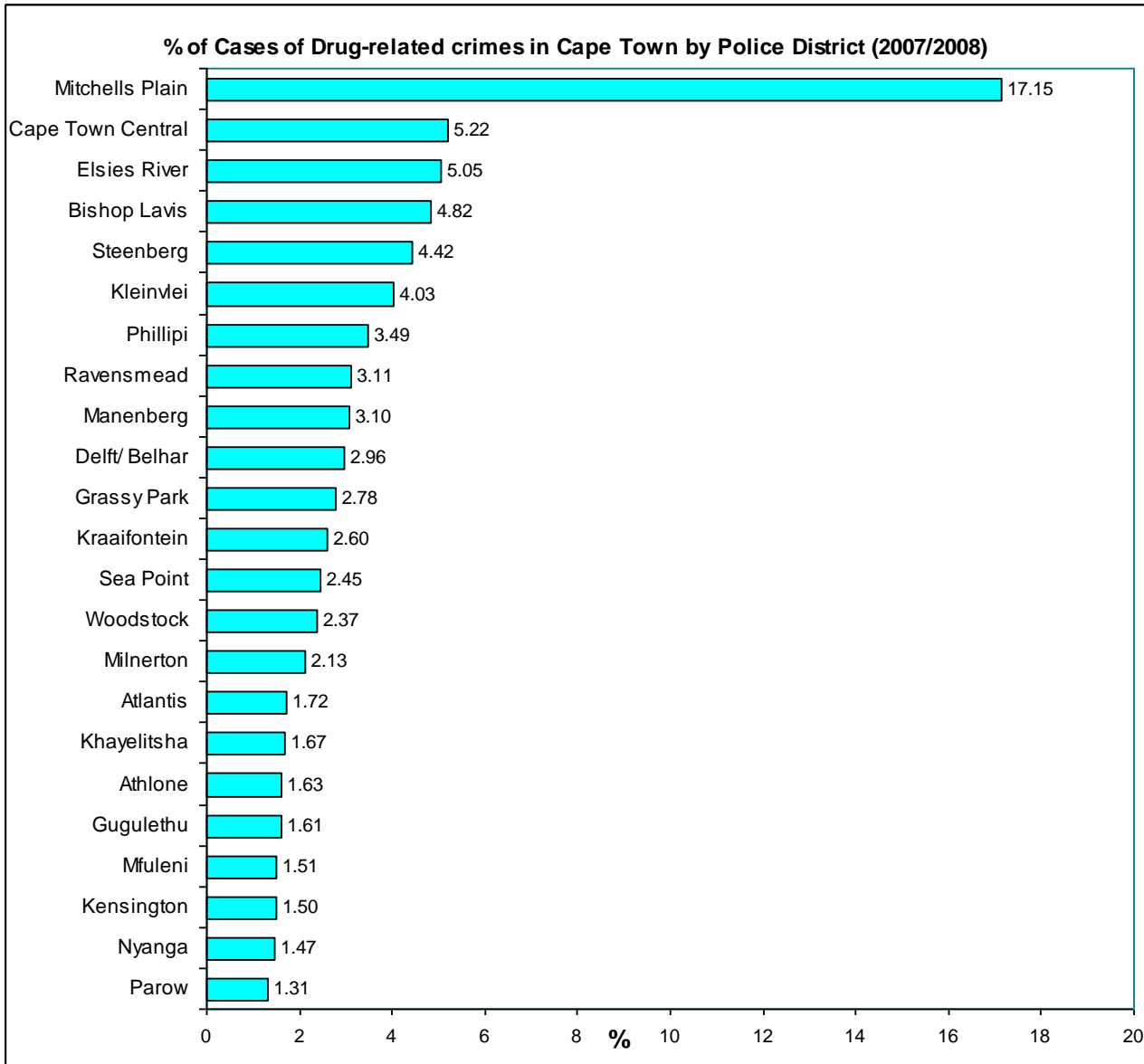




### 4.3 Drug-related Crime

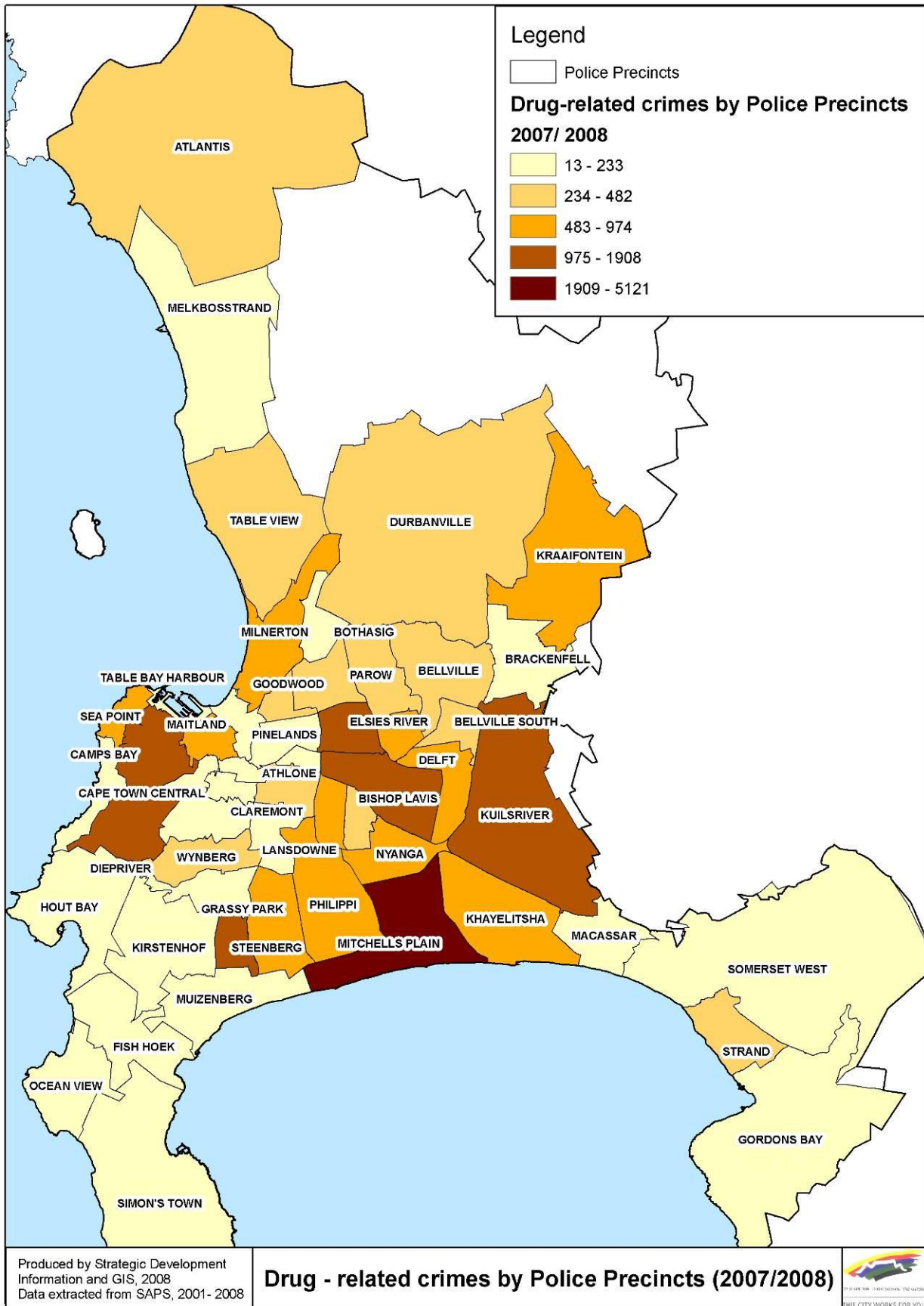
Drug-related crime has increased dramatically in recent years, which is one of the most alarming aspects of the crime situation in the city. Figure 16 and 17 show the Cape Flats with the highest concentration. This may be due to the depressed socio-economic conditions as well as the recent dramatic influence of the use of the drug 'Tik' in these areas.

Figure 16: % Cases of drug-related crimes in Cape Town



- Six police districts account for over 40% of drug-related crimes, Mitchell's Plain (17.15%), Cape Town Central (5.22%), Elsie's River (5.05%), Bishop Lavis (4.82%), Steenberg (4.42%), and Kleinvei (4.03%).

**Figure 17: Spatial distribution of drug-related crimes by Police Precinct (2007/08)**





## **5 CONCLUSION**

Of the three priority crime categories analysed for Cape Town, murder and rape rates indicate a reducing trend. The reducing trend is significant for murder, although this comes off a very high level. For rape the reducing trend is not likely to be significant because of the associated under reporting with this category of crime. The rapidly increasing rate for drug-related crime is significant and pose a serious concern for the authorities.

Cape Town's crime statistics should be viewed within the broader context of a number of external socio-economic factors that impact on crime fighting (South African Police Service, 2007). In fact, in order to effectively address the crime situation in the city, the city's problems relating to inequality, poverty, unemployment, youth development and the unabated settlement of communities in areas where there is non-existent physical and social infrastructure should be addressed (South African Police Service, 2007). This should be underpinned by involvement by all relevant stakeholders i.e. communities, law enforcement agencies, the legal system and the SAPS to address the underlying socio-economic issues which impact on the crime issue in the city (City of Cape Town, 2006b).

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