The correlates of victimisation in Galeshewe and implications for local crime prevention

Jean Redpath, Independent Consultant

[start abstract]

Abstract

During 2010 the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) conducted a victimisation survey in Galeshewe, in Sol Plaatje Municipality (Kimberley). The variables explored included demographic ones such as age, gender and marital status; service delivery variables such as access to housing and water; and community participation variables such as participation in sport. Correlates of victimisation were explored by regression analysis and subsequently supplemented by qualitative data. The resulting analysis confounds some common assumptions regarding crime prevention and has important implications for local crime prevention in urban township contexts.

[end abstract]

INTRODUCTION

A safety plan for Galeshewe (population ca 100 000) in Sol Plaatje Municipality (Kimberley) was developed by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP). This paper draws from the research report prepared for the municipality by the author on behalf of CJCP.

Galeshewe's rates of violent and violent economic crime are higher than both the South African average and the Sol Plaatje average. This suggests that the risk of violent crime is higher for people living in Galeshewe than elsewhere in South Africa, in keeping with the finding that urban township areas in South Africa are more at risk of crime.[1] However such area-level analysis cannot tell us about risk at the individual level *within* such areas. What are the risks faced by individuals who live in Galeshewe relative to each other? This is the question this paper seeks to answer.

METHODOLOGY

CJCP conducted a survey of 800 respondents asking respondents whether they had ever been a victim of six categories of crime (theft, robbery, assault, burglary, hijacking and sexual assault). A number of variables related to the crime as well as demographic, service delivery and behaviour were recorded. Regression and multivariate analysis was carried out. Modified focus group sessions were also conducted with victims of crime selected randomly from crimes reported to police in the last year. Of 300 invited, 39 attended sessions designed to record key information relating to the crime they had experienced. Finally, interviews were held with key informants from stakeholder organisations in Galeshewe to complement the survey results.

RESULTS

Overview

Correlates of victimisation emerged from the analysis which suggests that being a victim in Galeshewe is not random. Furthermore, characteristics frequently presumed to be 'good' or 'bad' at the area level were found to have different effects at the individual level. For example, while it is often theorised that social capital activities such as youth group and sports participation work to prevent

crime at the area level, the analysis showed that at the individual level participation in these activities may increase personal risk of individuals in areas such as Galeshewe. Similarly, the survey found that a range of service delivery variables expected by some theorists to have an impact at an area level, were generally found not to be significant at the individual level. These included:

- Living in a shack
- Living in a house
- Living in an RDP house
- Living in a household of four or more
- Going hungry
- Having a toilet in the home
- Being unemployed
- Having to collect water outside the home
- Living in a household which receives a social grant[2]

The findings suggest service delivery indicators are generally *not* a risk factor for individual victimisation in Galeshewe. This may seem counter-intuitive, particularly to those who espouse social crime prevention views. However these results speak to the overall risk experienced by specific individuals in the Galeshewe context, and not to the impact of changes to the context, with which social crime prevention is concerned.

This is not to imply that improvement in service delivery will necessarily reduce crime rates. Universal social grant provision (desirable for reasons of redress, equity, etc) may have negative consequences for crime prevention via increased disposable income for alcohol and drug use. However, this is beyond the scope of this paper. What the survey results do mean is that for any individual currently living in Galeshewe - given the current levels of, for example, social grant provision - whether their household receives a social grant has no impact on whether that individual is likely ever to be a victim of crime in Galeshewe.

The exceptions to the general irrelevance of service delivery indicators to *individual* risk in Galeshewe was that increasing distance from a police station was correlated with greater risk of victimisation of more than one type of crime::

- Long travel time to police station (>30 minutes) (12% v 8%) (50% increase in risk)

This suggests that in Galeshewe the proximity of the police is relevant to risk of victimisation at the individual level. It also suggests the police are able to provide some measure of protection within a perimeter of influence, but it also suggests that their perimeter of influence does not cover the whole of Galeshewe.[3]

Multiple victimisation

Almost half (48%) of all crimes counted by the survey were committed against people who were victims of more than one type of crime type. [4] Yet only 10% of the sample population experienced more than one type of crime, 20% experienced only one type of crime, and 70% experienced no crime. This means half of the crimes counted in the survey were committed against only 10% of the sample population.[5]

Furthermore, multiple victimisation results in poorer reporting rates. Some 78% of victims of only one type of crime in the last year said they reported the most recent to the police compared to only half (50%) of multiple victims. These findings suggest that crime prevention initiatives in Galeshewe which succeed in preventing past victims of crime from being re-victimised in future may have a disproportionate impact, in reducing crime rates as reflected in victimisation surveys.[6]

Correlates of victimisation

Five statistically significant demographic and behavioural risk factors and one protective factor emerged in relation to being a victim of crime in Galeshewe.[7] The independent effect of these significant risk factors is listed below in order of magnitude or effect.

Increasing risk:

- Being age 27-31 (43% ever-victim versus 31% among persons of other ages) (39% increase in risk)
- Having ever taken drugs (41% ever-victim versus 30% among the drug-free) (37% increase in risk)

- Being male (39% ever victim versus 29% of women) (34% increase in risk)
- Having completed high school (38% versus 30%) (27% increase in risk).

Decreasing risk:

- Having children (40% ever victim among those without children versus 31% among those with children) (23% decrease in risk)

With 'victimisation in the last year', 'having ever taken drugs' did not retain its significance, possibly because 'having ever taken drugs' may relate to behaviour in the past. An additional protective factor emerged in relation to victimisation in the last year – being married. Among the unmarried, 31% are victims of crime compared to 24% among married people who are victims of crime – a 23% decrease in risk. In other words, around 1 in 3 unmarried people are victims of crime compared to 1 in 4 married people.

These factors seem to suggest that persons who have stronger social ties are less at risk of crime. It may be theorised that such persons are less likely to engage in behaviours which place them at risk of crime. This suggests that risk in general is partly determined by the behaviour of the victim.

Regression analysis in relation to multiple victimisation resulted in an additional protective factor, relevant to multiple victimisation that did not emerge as relevant to lifetime victimisation: being partnered, or having children at a young age.

- Being partnered: Persons who are single are more than twice as likely as persons of more complicated marital status (married, divorced, widowed) to be victims (13% victims amongst singles versus 6% among others) (117% increase in risk).

Three contextual risk factors emerged as having an impact on the risk of victimisation:

- High perceived prevalence of graffiti (17% v 9%) (89% increase in risk)
- Long travel time to police station (>30 minutes) (12% v 8%)(50% increase in risk)

- Access to libraries (12% v 8%) (50% increase in risk)

These demographic and behavioural risk factors were also considered together in a multivariate analysis. All the factors listed above operated in the same direction even when considered together. This suggests that the risk factors are robust.

While increasing age was generally associated with less risk of crime, two trends were observed in this data with age 31 being the turning point. Some 30% of those aged 18-27 were victims of crime in the last year, 34% among those aged 27-31, and 19% among those older than 31. This suggests that 27-31 is a key age in relation to victimisation.

The descriptors of 'likely Galeshewe victim' are similar to those identified in other research for perpetrators in the Northern Cape.[8] This suggests that the social gap between victims and perpetrators generally is small.[9] Interpreted together with the findings on marriage and having children, the result suggests persons more willing to engage in risky behaviours.

It is tempting to ascribe the observed trends to 'crime between people who know each other', that is, disputes and the like. However the data showed around half of those who had ever been vitims did not know the perpetrator(s) of the crimes committed against them.

These demographic variables were found not to be significant in relation to 'ever' or 'in the last year' victimisation:

- Having the first child at age younger than 18 Leaving school due to pregnancy
  Being Tswana speaking
  Being Afrikaans speaking
  Being Coloured
  Being black

Factors relating to the environmental context of the individual were also tested. Three factors were found to be significantly associated with a respondent ever being a victim of crime:

- Perceived very easy access to alcohol (35% v 24%) (46% increase in risk)
- Perceived easy access to marijuana (37% v 27%) (37% increase in risk)
- Perceived inadequate refuse collection service (39% v 31%) (29% increase in risk).

Victimisation in the last year revealed the following to be relevant:

- Perceived easy access to marijuana (27% v 18%) (33% increase in risk)
- Perceived adequate refuse collection (21% v 31%) (32% reduction in risk)
- Perceived adequacy of schooling (22% v 29%) reduction in risk (24% reduction in risk)

Perceived easy alcohol and drug access, and perceived adequate refuse collection and schooling, are the only contextual factors likely to have an impact at the level of the individual. While theory postulates that these factors will have an impact at the level of the community (communities with easier access to alcohol/drugs are less safe than communities with limited access), these results suggest that the impact will be felt even at the level of the individual. In addition, while receiving a grant will not affect whether a person in Galeshewe is victimised, the results suggest that living in an area of poor refuse collection will affect that person's risk of being a victim of crime.

Not found to be significantly correlated to victimisation were the following contextual factors:

- Prevalence of fights
- Access to other drugs
- Access to knives
- Access to guns
- Access to malls
- Access to sports grounds
- Access to community halls
- Access to a tele-centre
- Access to mosques or churches
- Access to libraries
- Access to psycho-social support
- Access to skills development

These results do not imply that changes to the community *context* in relation to these factors will have no impact on crime, only that in the current Galeshewe context, an individual's access to for example skills development is likely to have no impact (positive or negative) on an individual's risk of ever being a victim of crime.

Further factors tested related to individual's current forms of interaction with the community, or involvement in 'social capital'. The following emerged as risk factors for ever being a victim of crime:

- Participating in sports (47% v 32%) (47% increase in risk). The relationship between victimisation and sport participation holds if the analysis is limited to men, but not if it is limited to women. In other words, sports participation is a risk factor for victimisation for men but not for women. This was explored in some detail in the qualitative focus groups with youth, victims, and with the head of the local soccer federation.

- Being a member of a *stokvel* (47% v 33%) (42% increase in risk).

- Being a member of a youth group. However the relationship does not hold if the analysis is restricted to younger persons. Hence this result appears to relate to the youth of respondents rather than their membership of youth groups.

For victimisation in the last year, increased risk also related to participating in sports, being a member of a *stokvel*, burial society or of a youth group.

Because crime types have been amalgamated in the above analysis, more numerous types (such as assault) determine the trend. Specific crimes have their own trends. For robbery alone, the analysis suggests risk factors speak both to the individuals' propensity to place themselves at risk (being male, key age), as well as of their living in environments conducive to robbery (far from police, easy access to dagga, frequent turnover of people, poor refuse collection). For housebreaking, being male, married or having children fall away as factors. However two remain: the respondent being of key age, or having completed high school. These factors may relate to likely perceptions of their suitability as targets of crime.[10]

Selected key informant results

Participation in sports is frequently promoted as a crime prevention mechanism – the slogan of the Northern Cape Department of Sport is 'a child in sport is a child out of court'. The results however show sport participation as a risk factor for victimisation. The role of football - the major sport for young men in Galeshewe - was consequently explored during the qualitative research. Some of the qualitative evidence appears below:

> Football people are angry people. There are riots at football grounds. Clubs attack each other about goal disputes. In fact most crime is conducted by football people – they think they are 'big men' and get easily involved in crime, they easily get angry. They are also involved in drugs and often smoke ochre pipes before a game.
>
> Football players lack self-esteem. Many kids aged 11-15 are vulnerable to crime and easily learn wrong things. Coaches tend to coach only football and not life skills. At night players go to taverns taking the issues of the game with them. Part of the problem is that football is only started here at teenage when kids are particularly open to peer pressure. If it was started earlier children could learn the game positively. Another problem is 'club-hopping' – players go to clubs outside their areas. Players should have to play for the clubs where they come from, so parents and neighbours can oversee their practices.
>
> Players who are in prison are there because they like to wear new things, and so they steal. Also because sometimes they are 'over-happy', over-excited and commit crimes because of peer pressure.
>
> Although letters have been sent to the Health MEC, programmes on for example HIV and life skills are only carried out at schools and not with footballers, and so the players are not reached. Even women's teams are beginning to take drugs and get involved in disputes. Politics also plays a role.

> [Crime prevention actors] must also be careful not to get involved with arranging games for hooligans and gangsters, providing food and clothes to tsotsis. Why should players keep ties with their clubs if being bad gets you to go to play and get food and clothes for free? They don't get food and clothes at their clubs. Anything done from a crime prevention perspective with football must be done with existing clubs and federations and must not undermine existing programmes or provide perverse incentives.

Both the quantitative and qualitative input on the role of sports suggests that sports and football are not necessarily either protective or positive in reducing crime in contexts such as Galeshewe. This suggests crime prevention interventions which seek to employ sport need to be carefully managed and perhaps avoided in some contexts not able adequately to manage the associated outcomes. This does not imply that sports may not be beneficial for reasons not related to crime prevention.

Modified focus group results

Prompted by the finding that a small proportion of people are repeatedly victimised, a further semi-quantitative exercise was held with groups of victims of crime.[11] More than half (53%) of the victims in these groups had been victims of crime before the most recent event, some by the same perpetrator or perpetrators (even when excluding domestic violence victims). Victimisation tended to occur during usual behaviour such as walking or standing in the street. Some 56% (22) of the crimes took place in 'police-able' places such as streets, parks, in the neighbourhood, and in taverns. Those previously victimised were more likely (62%) to have had their recent crime occur in less police-able places such as homes, other residences, at parties, at work, or in shops. Even if domestic violence victims are excluded, the majority of repeat victims (56%) had their crime occur in such places. By contrast, some 77% of first time victims had their most recent crime occur in a police-able place.

CONCLUSION

While these findings speak particularly to the Galeshewe context, other township areas are likely to exhibit similar findings. The most important findings from the research as described above are as follows:

- ⇒ A man aged 27-31 who has ever taken drugs, is childless and unmarried and has completed high school is far more at risk of crime in Galeshewe than a woman aged 45 with two children and who has never taken drugs or finished high school. Personal familial ties are the best antidote to becoming a victim of crime.

- ⇒ The extent of multiple victimisation suggests that protecting past victims of crime from future crime may have disproportionate crime prevention impact. Such interventions are likely to be victim-specific.

- ⇒ Social capital activities such as sports may have unintended effects and service delivery may have no crime prevention effects at the individual level at all. Indeed the qualitative evidence suggests 'obvious' solutions may be part of the problem. Sports initiatives must be carefully crafted and implemented if they are to avoid reinforcing criminogenic behaviour.

Notes

[1] See the paper by Michael O'Donovan in this volume.

[2] These were in relation to both 'ever victimisation' and 'victimisation in the last year'.

[3] The variable was not statistically significant when considering victimisation ever or victimisation in the last year, but only in relation to multiple victimisation.

[4] While only just over a third of people indicated that they had ever been a victim of these crimes, a quarter had been a victim of these crimes in the last 12 months. A factor increasing the 'last year' rate may be the tendency of respondents to 'telescope' their experience of crime – to include crimes which occurred more than 12 months previously in the 'last year'. Telescoping does not account for the apparently low lifetime victimisation rate. A factor reducing the lifetime victimisation rate may be the tendency of respondents to forget crimes which occurred a long time in the past (thus reducing the 'victim ever' figure). But such collective amnesia surely cannot account on its own account for the phenomenon.

[5] Because the survey only counted the most recent of each type of crime, the true extent to which victims may have been repeatedly victimised cannot be established.

[6] The findings also suggest that if the reporting trends observed above remain unchanged, the impact of a successful intervention aimed at preventing re-victimisation is likely to be reflected to a less pronounced degree in recorded crime rates compared to the impact reflected in victimisation surveys.

[7] All results are to the 95% confidence level unless otherwise stated.

[8] See for example D Mistry, R Snyman and M van Zyl, *Social fabric crime in the Northern, Cape,* Institute for Human Rights and Criminal Justice Studies, Technikon South Africa, September 2001, http://http://www.unisa.ac.za/contents/docs/fabric.pdf (accessed 1 March 2010).

[9] Readers interested in results by type of crime may contact the author.

[10] Those interests in the detail of crime-specific results should contact the author.

[11] The design of this process is the subject of a forthcoming paper by Monson, Nodoba and Redpath.