

Killing Ubuntu?

The association between fear of crime and social cohesion in South Africa

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HSRC Seminar Series

“Safe and Inclusive Cities: Social cohesion and urban upgrading, mobilising resources for violence prevention”

Date: 14 March 2016



Introduction

- **Fear of crime** has featured as a **major concern among researchers, policymakers** and citizens for several decades.
 - Motivated by recognition that is salient social problem in own right
 - Reflects concern with complex and detrimental effects of fear of crime on quality of life at individual, community and societal levels
- **Skewed spatial distribution of crime and fear** of crime resulted in growing emphasis on local environmental context
 - Renewed attention to ecological theories in understanding and explaining relationship between social disorder, processes of change within neighbourhoods, and crime levels
- **Aim of study:** provide preliminary empirical evidence on association between fear of crime and social cohesion.
 - Primary focus on fear of crime rather than the occurrence of crime in examining associations with social cohesion.



Fear of crime and social cohesion in theory

- **Two dominant theoretical perspectives** on community responses to fear of crime: 'fear-decline' and 'fear-solidarity' models (Hawdon et al. 2013)
- **(1) 'Fear-decline' model**
 - **Argues:** escalating fear of crime can weaken ability of local communities to collectively address problems.
 - **Process:** fear inhibits social interaction, which may (i) diminish social cohesion and trust, (ii) erode informal social control or collective efficacy keeping crime and disorder in check, and (ii) promote withdrawal from neighbourhood life.
 - **Consequence:** decline thought to further provoke fear and a rise in crime.
- **(2) 'Fear-solidarity' model**
 - **Argues:** fear of crime may actually serve to enhance community solidarity
 - **Process:** motivates residents to come together, establish shared values, and respond collectively to the common threat posed by crime.



Existing evidence on fear-cohesion association

- Number of **studies attempted to test the hypothesised effect** of fear of crime on neighbourhood social ties and attachment.
 - **Hartnagel (1979): early Canadian study** found fear of crime did not reduce neighbourhood cohesion and social activity, but did significantly reduce attachment to community as place of residence.
 - Yet, **other studies tended to confirm view that fear promotes decline and withdrawal** rather than solidarity (Liska & Warner 1991, American cities; Markowitz et al. 2001, Britain; Hawdon et al. 2013, Finland)
 - **Very limited evidence exists favouring the solidarity model.**
 - Exception = Oh & Kim (2009): mounting fear of crime among elderly Chicago residents promoted greater social interaction with their neighbours and created the basis for stronger social cohesion and interpersonal trust.
 - **South African evidence especially limited**, particularly if one narrows the focus to quantitative studies.



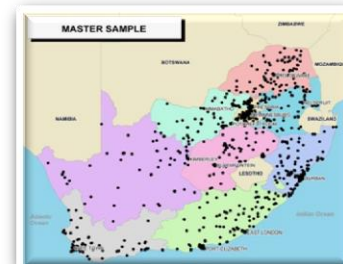
Methodology

South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS)

- Nationally representative of population 16 years and older living in private residence
- Study uses 2013 survey round: most recent round containing fear of crime and cohesion variables
- Realised sample size: 2885 respondents; data collection Oct-Dec

Study limitations

- **Absence of panel data** means focus is confined to exploring extent and nature of the association between crime, fear of crime and social cohesion.
- SASAS sample design: **does not permit disaggregation down to the neighbourhood level.** Means we are drawing on neighbourhood-level theory to inform the national-level analysis.
- The survey results will at least serve as **broad evidence of the fear-cohesion nexus** that future neighbourhood-level, quantitative research could substantiate or refute.





Constructs and Measures

Fear of crime

- Criticism of conventional fear measures ('walking alone') – vague; no reference to crime, frequency or impact of fear mentioned; rare activity.
- Focus on everyday experience of fear
- Use 4 items addressing frequency and impact of burglary and violent crime (Eurojustis/ESS).

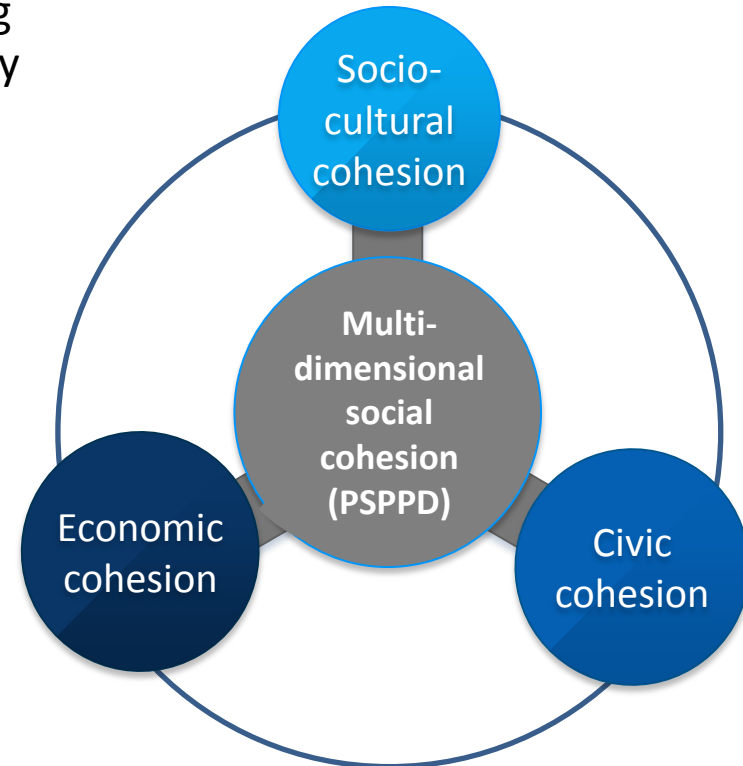
(1). “How often, if at all, do you worry about your home being burgled?”

(2) “Does this worry about your home being burgled have a serious effect on the quality of your life? ”

(3) – (4). Two similar questions focusing on “becoming a victim of violent crime”.

Social cohesion

- Draws on **multidimensional conceptualisation of social cohesion** designed by HSRC for PSPPD
- Focus on indicators of **socio-cultural and civic cohesion**





Experiential measures of fear IDRC | CRDI

Estimated proportions of different effects on quality of life given frequency of worry about crime (2013, row percentages)

	Effect of worry on quality of life				
	(Never worry)	No real effect	Some effect	Serious effect	Total
	Frequency of worry				
Never	100	-	-	-	100
Just occasionally	-	42	52	6	100
Some of the time	-	16	65	18	100
All / most of the time	-	4	37	59	100
Total	38	12	33	18	100
	Effect of worry on quality of life				
(Never worry)	100	-	-	-	100
No real effect	-	42	47	11	100
Some effect	-	13	70	17	100
Serious effect	-	5	27	69	100
Total	38	11	33	18	100



Comparing Fear of Crime with Europe

Levels of fear of crime in South Africa based on new categorisation using the four ESS questions, 2008-2013

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	All year average	Europe ESS 2010
1 Unworried	43	34	30	40	33	39	36	63
2 Burglary only	5	6	9	6	7	6	6	6
3 Violent crime only	6	7	6	7	7	8	7	7
4 Mild worry	21	23	22	25	25	22	23	17
5 Fairly high worry	5	4	6	4	6	6	5	2
6 Most worried	21	27	27	18	23	20	23	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

From a **comparative perspective**, South Africans are significantly more fearful than a **majority** of their **counterparts** in **Europe**.

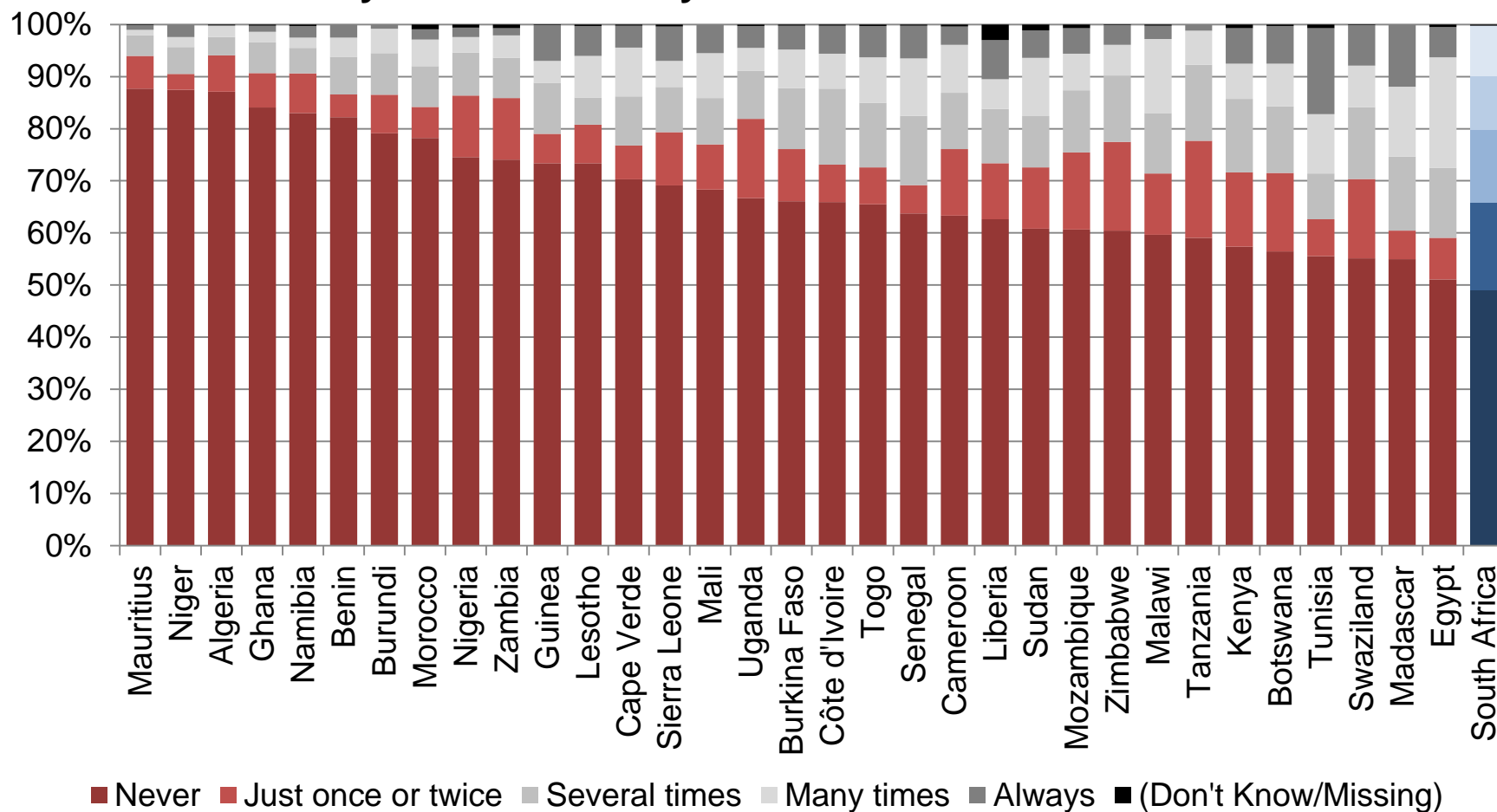
Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2005-2013.

Responses to the four questions were combined into a single categorical measure of fear of crime, using an approach that Jackson and Kuha refer to as a 'model-supported method' (latent class analysis).



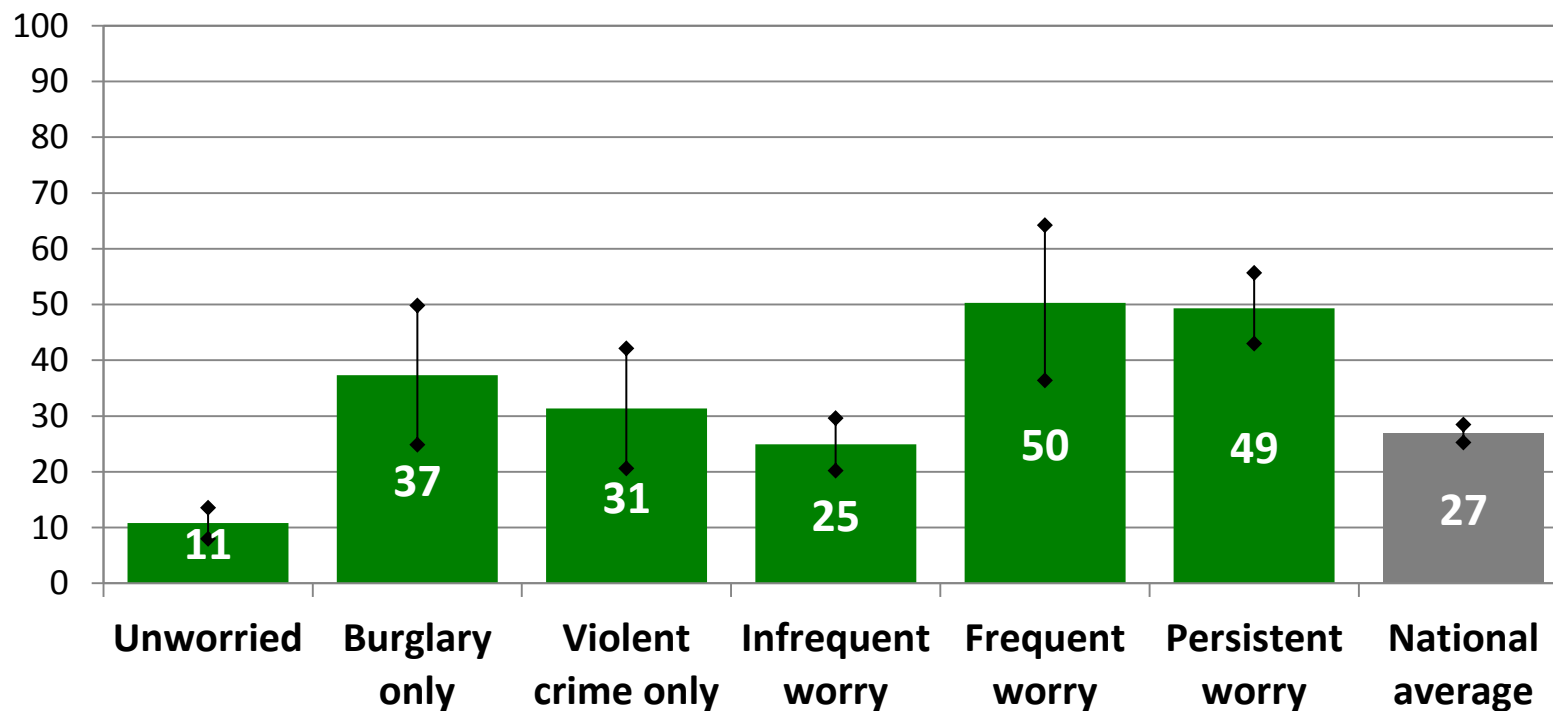
Fear of Crime in African perspective

Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family feared crime in your own home?





Experience of crime by fear of crime



The experience of crime (personally or by another household member) is significantly associated with higher levels of fear

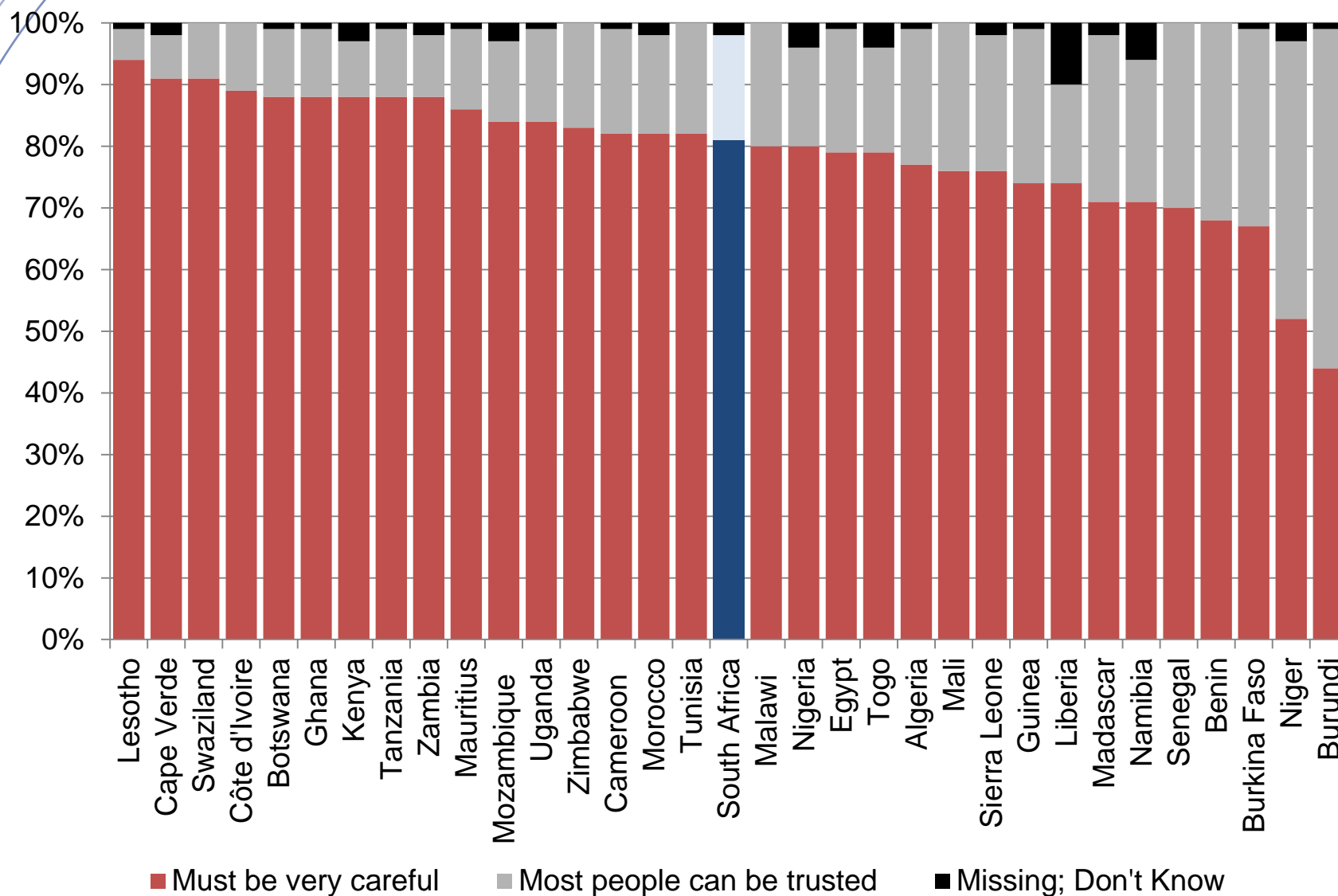


Does fear diminish social trust?

- Despite common references to the ‘rainbow nation’ and the moral philosophy of *ubuntu*, national and comparative data on social trust suggest **South Africa is a low trust society**.
- Interpersonal trust: use 3 items as follows:
 - (1) ‘Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people?’;
 - (2) ‘Do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?’;
 - (3) ‘Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves?’.
- Responses to these items are captured on an 11-point scale, where 0 represents the lowest level of trust and 10 the highest.
- **Relatively low levels of trust are evident**, with mean scores ranging between **4.02 and 4.40** on the scale.

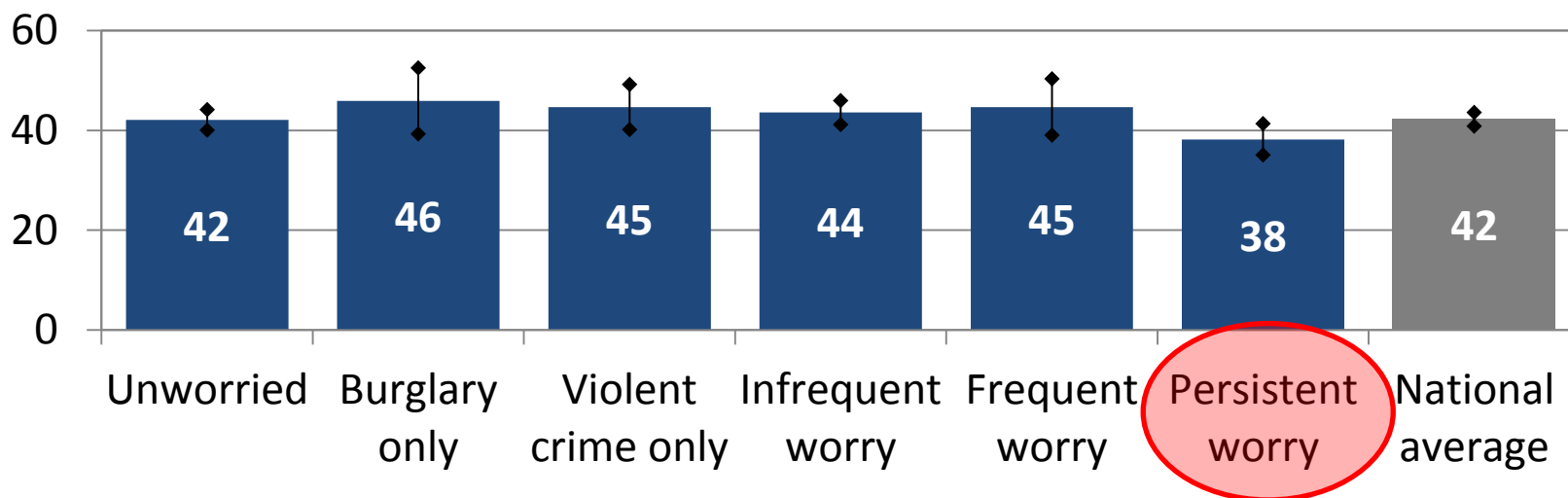


'Must be very careful' versus 'Most people can be trusted'





Does fear diminish social trust?

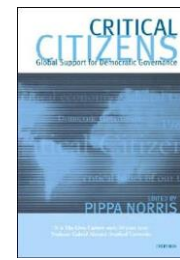
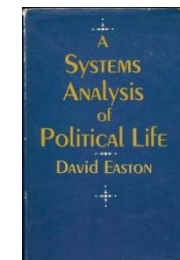
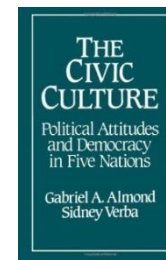
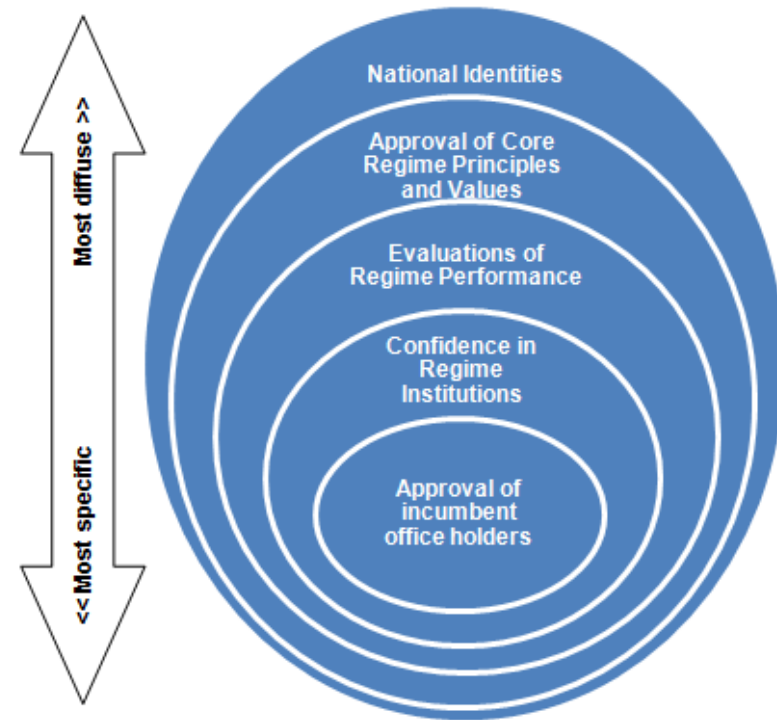


- Results do not reveal a stark gradient of difference across the fear scale.
- Fear of crime did exert a significant effect on social trust, but only for those in the most worried category.
- Similar findings when use measures of neighbourliness and conventional 'walking alone at night' fear measure.
- This could be seen as evidence that South Africans are resilient and do not allow fear of crime to reduce their levels of social trust or damage neighbourly bonds.
 - BUT, given the low trust scores, could also argue that trust and community ties may to some degree already have eroded.



Political Consequences of Fear

- The goal of democratic transformation: united, cohesive society.
- The National Development Plan emphasises...
 - ...political legitimacy and
 - ... democratic participation...
- ... as primary goals of the state and core indicators of social cohesion.
- We examine various indicators of political support, ranging from diffuse measures (national identity, pride) through to more specific evaluations (democratic performance, institutional trust).
- We leave aside the political participation element of civic cohesion.
 - Future studies will hopefully explore the impact of fear of crime on political behaviour





Relationship between fear of crime and civic cohesion

	National pride	Satisfaction with democracy	Trust in political leaders	Trust in courts	Trust in police	Satisfaction with crime reduction
Unworried	82	33	28	48	36	24
Burglary only	76	40	34	65	30	24
Violent crime only	69	36	29	50	27	21
Infrequent worry	81	31	25	44	21	13
Frequent worry	86	46	29	41	26	16
Persistent worry	76	27	26	35	22	12
→ National average	79	33	27	45	28	18

- Evidence shows the results are rather mixed.
- Association between fear and national pride is clearly not manifest. Same appears true of satisfaction with democratic performance and country's political leaders.
- Slightly stronger but moderate negative association between fear and both trust in the police and satisfaction with crime reduction ($r=-0.15$ and -0.18 respectively)
- While fear of crime has some association with more specific political support items, it is unlikely to be a primary driver of political legitimacy (weak associations)



Fixed-Effects Regression Models

	Social Trust	Neighbourhood Social Ties	
Experience of Crime	-0.154	0.080	
Concrete Fear Index	-0.045	-0.100	**
Years of Education	-0.001	-0.054	**
Deprivation Index	-0.113 ***	-0.163 ***	
Controls			
Demographic	X	X	
Labour Market	X	X	
Political Affiliation	X	X	
Constant	5.295 ***	7.789 ***	
N	2314	2322	
R ₂ within	0.051	0.061	
R ₂ between	0.098	0.019	
R ₂ overall	0.062	0.076	

- Social trust **more or less resilient** to fear of crime.
 - **Fear of crime** had a **weak** but **negative impact** on **neighbourhood social ties**
- Being a **victim of crime** has no bearing on trust levels
- **Mixed effect of education**, but uniform **negative effect of deprivation on trust**

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2013.

Note: 1. The neighbourhood social ties measures are coded such that higher coefficients represent greater levels of social capital. 2. Regression models control for demographics: provincial residence, geographical location, ethnic group, gender, and marital status. 4. Labour market status includes full-time employed, part-time employed, unemployed, and labour inactive. 5. To account for political affiliation I used responses to the question "If there were a national election tomorrow, for which party would you vote?" 6. To account for economic status, the study employs a self-reported deprivation index which includes five questions on whether the respondents have adequate: (i) housing; (ii) transport; (iii) health care; (iv) clothing; (v) children's schooling (where applicable); and (vi) food. 7. All regressions exclude members of the white population group.



Conclusion

- In South Africa, **fear of crime continues to reported by large shares** of the population, irrespective of measure
 - Fear is informed by experiences of crime
- **Consequences of fear on local society:** circumscribed support for a corrosive effect on social cohesion.
 - Weak, negative association with social trust and neighbourhood ties.
 - Greater fear associated with more negative views of police effectiveness and overall police confidence.
 - BUT...does not yield a consistent, adverse association with more diffuse measures of political support (democratic satisfaction; pride).
 - Where relationship exists, tends to be at the extreme, upper margins of the fear scale.
- **These results do not provide clear evidence in favour of either fear-decline or fear-solidarity models** of community responses to fear.
 - At best, they show marginal and somewhat variable support for the fear-decline perspective.



Conclusion

- **Further work:**
 - Determine the **replicability of our findings**, by experimenting with alternate measures of both fear and cohesion.
 - **Consistency of our findings across different groups, geographies and individual and community attributes** will need to be explored.
- If our findings are however replicated through other studies it would suggest that **success in efforts at reducing crime and the fear of crime are unlikely to translate into immediate and substantive gains** in terms of positive forms of neighbourhood cohesion.

