

Attitudes to firearms and crime in Nairobi: Results of a city survey

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INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is one of the biggest challenges currently facing Kenya and the East African sub-region. The trafficking and wide availability of these weapons fuel instability and conflict and pose a threat not only to security, but also to sustainable development. The Kenyan government and civil society have begun to address the small arms problem during the past three years, creating institutional and political frameworks within which practical initiatives can be implemented. In March 2000, the ten countries of the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa sub-regions adopted the Nairobi Declaration. By November 2000, an agenda for action and an implementation plan were put in place.*

This survey seeks to ask and answer questions about the nature and extent of firearm penetration in Nairobi. Firearm penetration is defined as the perceived role and impact of firearms on a community, and the experiences of individuals regarding firearm use and possession within that community. Surveys of this kind throw light on community attitudes and perceptions of firearm-related activity and personal safety and security.

Insecurity, whether based upon the reality of criminal activity or merely its perception, is the key factor that drives the demand for firearms. In tackling crime and firearm-related offences, it is important to identify what the community believes are the most pressing priorities for improving safety. If communities favour impractical or tried-and-failed policies, policy

* Countries that signed the Declaration are: Republic of Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Djibouti, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, State of Eritrea, Republic of Kenya, Republic of Rwanda, Republic of the Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania, and the Republic of Uganda.

makers can design public awareness and education campaigns to address this.

Community perceptions of firearms and security are as crucial as the actual reality of firearm proliferation, crime and conflict in guiding policy development and implementation. A fear of armed robbery may be driving the demand for firearms as a tool of self-defence, even though the incidence of armed robbery may be relatively low and decreasing. A successful policy would seek to increase the sense of security and undermine the perceived need to possess firearms (for example, ensuring a greater and more visible police presence).

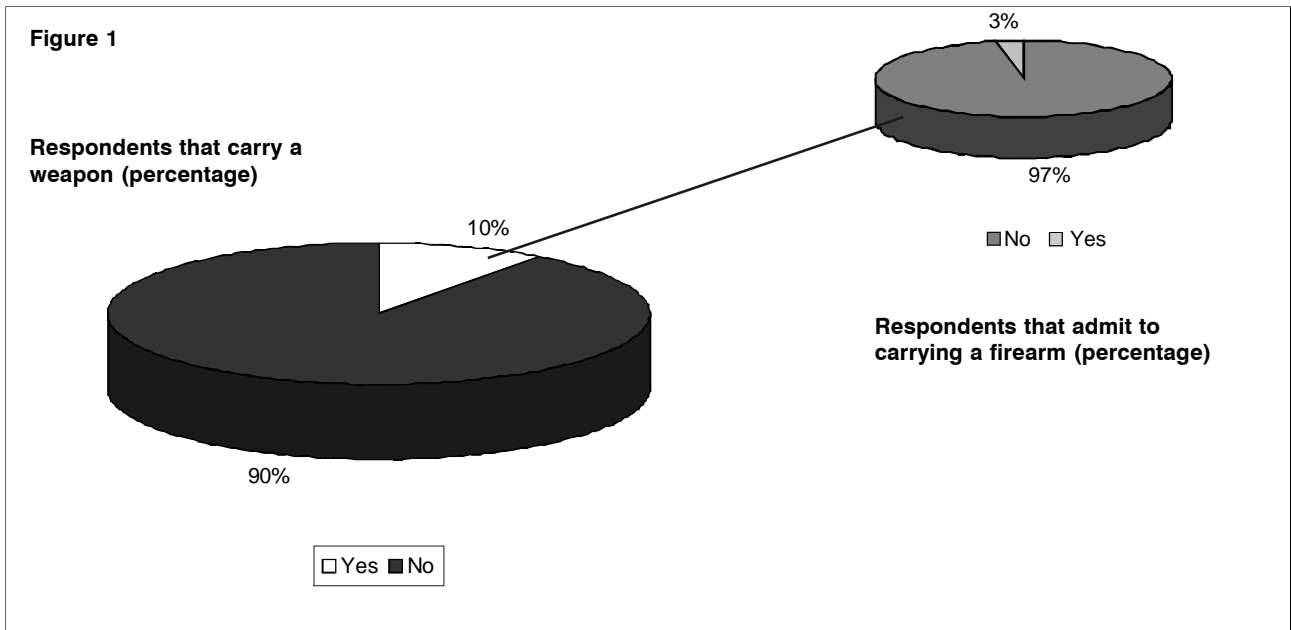
Determining the attitudes and experiences of different demographic groups (delineated by age, educational background, gender, race, residential location and experience as a victim of crime) helps to target specific policies where they are most needed.

The report is divided into three main sections. The first considers a range of indicators of firearm penetration within Nairobi identified by survey respondents. The second section considers some of the impacts of firearm penetration on the business community of Nairobi. The third section looks at areas for future research and poses some of the important questions brought to light by the survey results.

Overview of sample

The survey was conducted in Nairobi in June and July 2001, with 1,831 respondents from three different sample groups. A sample of 1,000 individuals were questioned on the street, a further 300 respondents working in business were

Insecurity, whether based upon the reality of criminal activity or merely its perception, is the key factor that drives the demand for firearms



interviewed and 531 people were interviewed in their homes.

The three sample groups were selected in order to gather a range of opinions based on both the respondents' experiences and the environment in which the interview was conducted. For example, to get a perspective on crimes against business, businesspeople were interviewed at their place of work. Residents interviewed at their home were not asked about business-related issues.

Different sections of the report have used various combinations of responses. When reading the report, the reader should be aware of the group or groups to whom the responses refer. For instance, the analysis in the first section of the report contains the responses from all three sample groups, while section two includes only responses from businesspeople. The report clearly states to which groups' responses the analysis refers.

The data utilised in this report has been weighted to reflect the demographic reality of Nairobi, based on the results of the most recent population census (1999). The weighted sample has been adjusted to reflect the gender and the age of the population so that results are representative of attitudes and experiences of Kenyans in Nairobi. Use caution when considering the over 60-year-old sample category, as the pre-weighted sample was small (n=36, as opposed to the post-weighted sample of 42 respondents). Although demographically

accurate, this is a small sample from which to draw conclusions reflective of the broader over-60 population in Nairobi.

SECTION ONE: INDICATORS OF FIREARM PENETRATION

Extent of carrying firearms and other weapons in Nairobi

To identify the extent to which the carrying of weapons is entrenched within a community, the survey looked at willingness to carry a weapon (firearm, knife, stick, club or other). The desire to carry a weapon for self-defence or status can indicate the extent to which insecurity pervades a community. This part of the survey was administered to all three sample groups.

In Nairobi, it was found that one in ten people (10%) felt the need to carry some form of weapon. A much higher percentage of males carry weapons than females. It was found that 14% of males indicated that they carried a weapon compared to only 5% of females. Gender appears to be a much more important determinant of a willingness to carry a weapon than age. The highest incidence of carrying a weapon was found in the over-60 age group, which may indicate a slightly greater sense of insecurity among the older members of the community. The difference is, however, not significant enough to assert conclusively that this is the case.

When respondents were asked if they carried a firearm, a relatively low number answered 'yes' (62 out of 1828, or 3%, compared to 10% who indicated that they carried a weapon of some description) (Figure 1). Under-reporting on the

Table 1: Minimum proportion of respondents that admit to carrying a firearm by gender

Carry a firearm	Male	Female
Yes	4	2
No	96	98

extent of firearm ownership is likely, and the extent to which the respondents truthfully answered the questions about carrying a firearm is difficult to determine. It can be said that the proportion of people in Nairobi that carry a firearm is located within a minimum of 3% and a maximum of 10% of the people in the city. The specific proportion would range according to a number of variables, such as social attitudes to firearms and other types of weapons available.

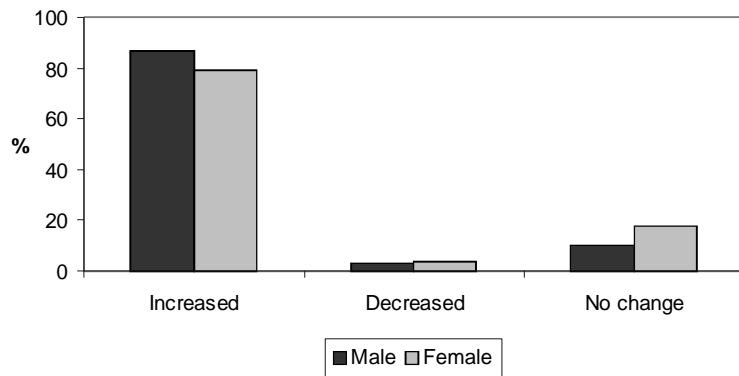
When the incidence of carrying a firearm is analysed by gender, males exhibit a greater readiness to carry a weapon. Four per cent of males questioned indicated that they carried a firearm compared with only 2% of females. However, as with weapons in general, age does not appear to be a significant determinant of whether or not someone in Nairobi would carry a firearm, with no clear correlation emerging between any particular age range and the incidence of carrying a firearm (Table 1).

Changes in the number of firearms

In response to the question 'Do you think that the number of firearms in Nairobi has increased, decreased or stayed the same?' a large majority indicated that they believed the number of firearms in Nairobi had increased (84%), a very small minority of the respondents believed that there had been a decrease, and about one in eight respondents (13%) stated that there had been no change. There is a clear difference of perception between males and females, with a higher percentage of males than females being of the opinion that the number of firearms had increased (87% versus 79%) (Figure 2).

However, the percentage of males and females that believed there had been a decrease was almost identical (3% of males versus 4% of females). There are a number of different factors that might explain the difference in perception between male and female citizens in Nairobi. Male citizens may have a greater exposure to firearms through contact with male peers who possess firearms. The statistics regarding the higher possession of firearms by males would concur with this hypothesis. Or, the difference could be a result of working and socialising in different spheres.

Figure 2: Change in the number of firearms in Nairobi, by gender



Finally, in order to see whether the perceptions of an increase in the number of firearms could possibly be skewed by the respondents' experiences of crime, the responses of victims of robbery and those that had not been victims of robbery, were compared. This comparison does not suggest a marked difference.

Level of access to firearms

One way of illustrating the nature and extent of firearms possession is by asking if interviewees have access to a firearm. Eighty-seven per cent of

Figure 3: Possibility of firearm ownership

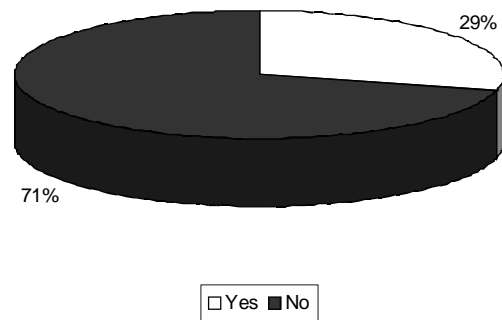


Figure 4: Possibility of firearm ownership by gender

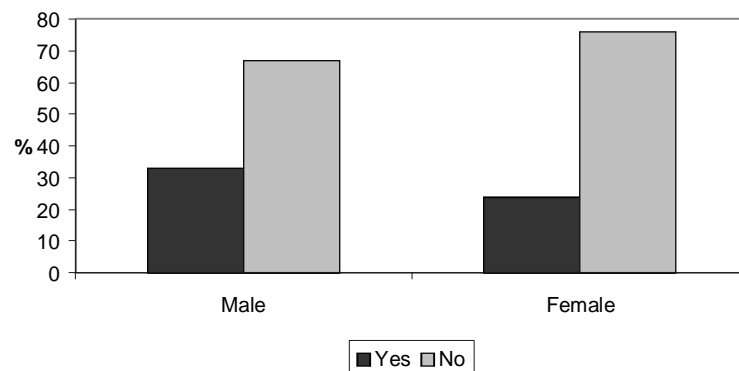


Table 2: Access to a firearm by age

Access to firearm	18–25 years	26–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
Yes	12	13	16	21
No	88	87	85	79

respondents indicated they did not have access to a firearm, while 13% said they did. The percentage of males stating they had access was considerably larger than the number of females (18% of males and 8% of females). When age is considered as an influence on access to firearms, the results suggest that the older the citizen in Nairobi the greater his/her access to firearms. It was found that 12% of those in the 18–25 age range had access to a gun, 13% in the 26–39 group, 16% in the 40–59 range and 21% of those in the 60+ age group (Table 2.)

Possibility of firearm ownership

Another useful indicator of firearm penetration is the degree to which people would consider acquiring a firearm. This gives the broadest indication on the extent of firearm possession within a community. The number of those who answer ‘yes’ to the question ‘Would you consider possessing a firearm?’ provides an upper limit of the extent of firearm possession. In Nairobi, 29% of people stated that they might possibly acquire a firearm, while 71% asserted that they would not. A higher percentage of males (33%) than females (24%) indicated that they would consider possessing a gun. Age does not appear to be a significant determinant of the possibility of Nairobi citizens owning a firearm (Figures 3 and 4).

Frequency of hearing a gunshot

Only 17% of Nairobi citizens never hear firearms being discharged, while 22% report hearing gunshots often or all the time. Forty per cent of people in Nairobi reported hearing gunshots ‘sometimes’. These results suggest that across Nairobi the incidents of discharges of firearms is fairly high, with over 60% of people indicating that they hear gunshots at least ‘sometimes’.

Correlations between victimisation and willingness to own a firearm

People who are victims of robbery in Nairobi are more likely to carry a weapon or firearm, have access to a gun, or show willingness to own a gun, than those who have not been a victim of robbery. Unfortunately, it was not possible to determine whether the victims of robbery were carrying a firearm as a result of crime. Although there is a strong correlation, it is not necessarily causal.

Citizens of Nairobi who have been the victim of robbery are almost twice as likely to carry a weapon of some sort than people who have not been robbed (15% compared to 8%). People in Nairobi are almost twice as likely to carry a firearm if they have been a victim of robbery than if they have not.

However, being a victim of robbery does not appear to suggest that people in Nairobi would be more likely to favour a firearm over other types of weapons.

When it comes to carrying a weapon, victims of robbery seem to feel a greater degree of insecurity

Among victims of a robbery, there is a 3:1 ratio of carrying a weapon to carrying a firearm specifically. This is the same ratio as the general population (Figure 5).

More robbery victims appear to have access to a gun than people who have not been victims of a robbery. Sixteen per cent of robbery victims stated they have access to a gun compared to only 12% of people who have not been robbed. Finally, 31% of Nairobi citizens indicated that they have been robbed and would be willing to own a firearm, while a slightly lower percentage (28%) of those who have not been robbed would be willing to own a gun.

When it comes to carrying a weapon, victims of robbery seem to feel a greater degree of insecurity, and believe that acquiring a

Figure 5: Indicators of firearm penetration by robbery victimisation

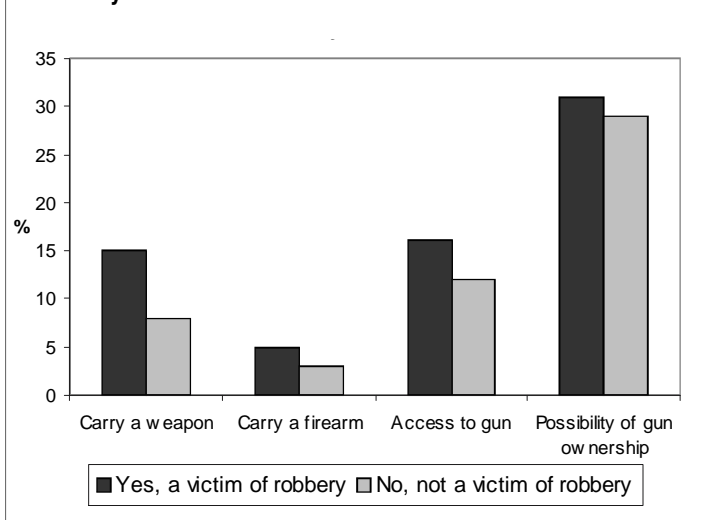
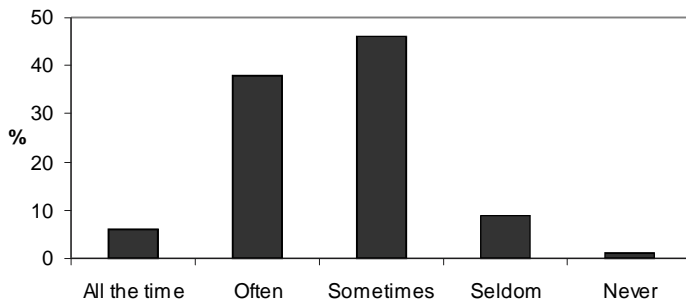


Figure 6: Use of firearms to commit crimes against business



weapon or firearm will help them guard against future victimisation.

Knowledge of a friend or family member who owns a gun

Only the household and individual respondents (excluding the business respondents from the sample) were asked whether or not they knew someone who owned a gun. Ten per cent of people in Nairobi know someone who owns a gun while 90% do not.

The likelihood that a citizen of Nairobi knows someone who owns a gun will be greater if that person is over the age of 60. Eighteen per cent of over 60s have a friend who owns a gun compared to 13% of 40–59 year olds, 9% of 26–39 year olds, and 9% of 18–25 year olds.

The chance that someone in Nairobi owns a gun is likely to vary greatly with education. Twenty-seven per cent of people with a university education have a friend who owns a gun compared with the next highest incidence level of 15% in the post-secondary group. The mean across the whole sample is 10%.

The employment status of citizens in Nairobi also seems to be a factor in determining the likelihood of having a friend who owns a gun. It was found that 14% of those ‘not working’ stated that they had a friend who owned a gun, while 10% of ‘employed’ people and only 7% of ‘unemployed’ people said the same.

SECTION TWO: THE IMPACT OF FIREARMS ON THE NAIROBI BUSINESS COMMUNITY

This section focuses on the experiences of business people regarding firearm-related crime committed against businesses in Nairobi. The response group includes only those responses given by members of Nairobi’s business community (300 respondents).

When members of the business community were asked how frequently they thought firearms were used in crimes against businesses, over 90% considered that firearms were used ‘sometimes’, ‘often’ or ‘all the time’. Forty-six per cent stated that firearms were ‘sometimes’ used to commit crimes against business, 38% that firearms were used ‘often’ and 6% said that firearms were used ‘all the time’ (Figure 6).

A higher percentage of women than men considered that firearms were used to commit crime against business ‘all the time’ (7% of women and 5% of men) and ‘often’ (47% of women and 31% of men). However, a much higher percentage of males than females considered that firearms were ‘sometimes’ used in crimes against business (59% of males compared to 30% of females).

SECTION THREE: CRIME IN NAIROBI

Change in the level of crime

The majority of people in Nairobi believe that the level of crime is worsening. Seventy-three per cent believe that the level of crime in Nairobi has increased, while 15% are of the opinion that the level of crime remains unchanged. The remaining 12% believe that crime is getting better (Figure 7).

It appears that people aged between 18 and 25 have a slightly more positive perception of the incidence of crime in Nairobi than respondents in the three other age categories.

Sixty-nine per cent of 18–25 year olds asserted that the level of crime had increased, a marginally lower proportion than in the other age ranges (76% of 26–39 year olds, 75% of 40–59 year olds and 77% of over 60s). Fifteen per cent of 18–25 year olds believed that the rate of crime was in fact decreasing compared to 10% of 26–39 year olds, 10% of 40–59 year olds, and none over 60 (Table 3).

Figure 7: Perception of changes in level of crime

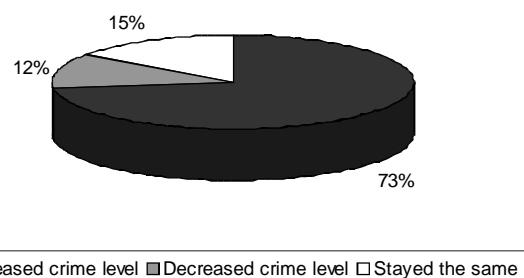


Table 3: Changes in level of crime by age and level of education (percentage)

	18 to 25 years	26 to 39 years	40 to 59 years	60 or more years	No formal education	Some primary education/primary completed	Some secondary education/secondary completed	Post secondary/artisan/A-levels/post high school	University qualifications
Increased crime level	70	77	75	77	79	72	73	74	84
Decreased crime level	15	10	10	0	7	13	13	10	4
Stayed the same	15	13	15	23	14	15	14	17	12

The most notable difference in perception between people with different levels of education was the gap between those with a university education and all other groups. A greater proportion of university educated people believe that crime has worsened than those with lesser levels of education (79% with 'no formal education', 72% with 'some primary/primary completed', 73% with 'some secondary education/secondary completed' and 74% with 'post secondary/artisan A-levels/post-high school'). Employed people in Nairobi are more likely to think that crime has increased (75%) than unemployed people (69%) or those 'not working' (70%).

Respondents from the individual and household samples were asked how frequently they believed firearms are used to commit crime. The perception among 70% of the respondents was that crime was frequently committed with firearms, indicating a possible relationship between the use of firearms and worsening crime (Figure 8).

Who commits crime in Nairobi?

When questioned as to who is responsible for crime within their community, people from the community or those from outside their community, 52% of respondents believed that both people

inside and outside the community are responsible, while 21% believed that outsiders are responsible and 27% said it is insiders.

'Insiders' are defined as people living in similar residential areas or houses. A residential area could be a formal low income suburb, formal middle income suburb, formal upper income suburb, informal settlement (slum), inner city, or industrial area. 'Outsiders' are defined as people living outside the immediate residential area or in a different type of area.

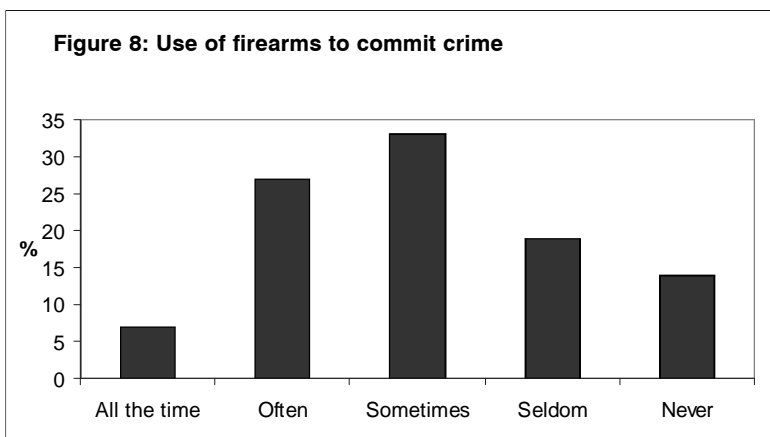
Men and women have a slightly different perception of who causes crime. A significantly higher percentage of males than females believe that both insiders and outsiders cause crime in their community (57% of males compared with 45% of females). In both gender groups, more people believed that insiders were the cause of crime: 25% of males and 29% of females believed that insiders were causing crime compared with 18% of males and 26% of females who believed that

outsiders were the main cause of crime.

Over half of Nairobi's citizens believe that crime is a significant concern

Frequency of worrying about crime

Over half of Nairobi's citizens believe that crime is a significant concern: 25% worry 'all the time' and 27% worrying 'very often'. A further 35% worry about crime 'from time to time', 8% 'seldom' worry and only 6% are 'never' worried by crime (Figure 9).



Individual action to improve safety in Nairobi

A significant proportion (35%) of citizens in Nairobi believed that there was no action they could take to help improve safety in Nairobi. This suggests that many

people in Nairobi either feel that they are powerless to improve the situation or believe that it is solely the responsibility of others to provide for their security. There is a need to educate and empower the community regarding the action that they themselves can take. Eighteen per cent of people identified co-operating with the police as an effective approach to improving safety and 20% of people identified socially responsible citizenry as important. A relatively low percentage (6%) identified community policing, a policy many states favour as an effective crime prevention strategy. Also significant is the very small percentage (less than one per cent) of those that said they would consider hiring private security. The small numbers of people favouring this approach to personal safety might be explained by the economic factors and the relatively high cost of private security in Nairobi (Table 4).

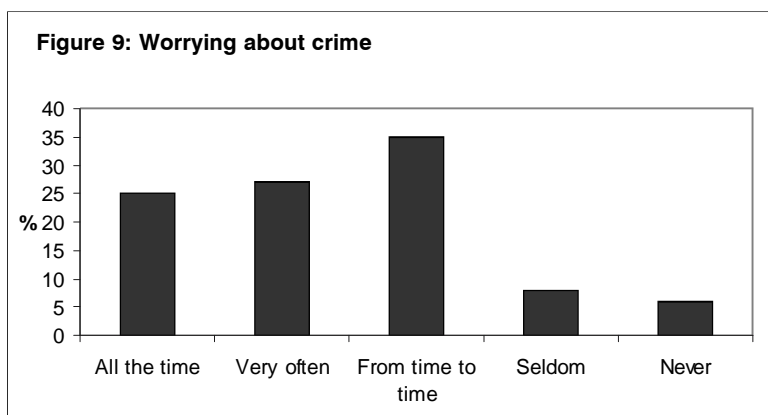
Co-operating with the police and lobbying for improved security proved to be relatively more popular with males (respectively 24% and 6% of males compared with 8% and 1% of females) while doing nothing and prayer were considered to be more effective or worthwhile by females.

Those over 60 years of age are the least likely to feel that socially responsible citizenry is an important element of personal action to improve safety (only 8% compared with a mean across all age groups of 20%). The over-60 group is also the most likely to believe that there is no action they can take to improve safety. Being the victim of robbery also appears to be a determining factor. Those who had been robbed were more likely to co-operate with the police and less likely to feel that there was nothing they could do to improve safety in Nairobi.

Government action to make Nairobi safer

Responses to how the government should improve safety may reflect broader concerns about the effectiveness of government. Good governance and

	Percentage
Nothing	35
Socially responsible citizenry	20
Co-operate with the police	18
Prayers	8
Community policing	6
Social and political action	6
Lobbying and advocacy for improved security	4
Others	3
Hire private security	1



tackling corruption constituted 40% of the responses given and 32% of responses indicated poverty reduction and improving the economy as being important factors in improving safety. While improved policing made up 17% of responses, few people considered changing legislation and implementing appropriate crime reduction strategies to be important (4% and 6% respectively). These results suggest that there is a general perception of the ineffectiveness of the state in addressing issues of crime and safety. The implication is that actions like changing legislation and implementing crime prevention strategies are not likely to have the desired impact because the organs of the state are failing to govern efficiently and to address underlying causes of crime. The role of policing within the broader structures of government may be discounted for similar reasons. Police position as a part of the machinery of state means that they are perceived either as part of the problem or as handicapped and unable to function effectively (Table 5).

Major differences between age groups are only identifiable in the over-60 group, most notably with regard to improved policing (29% compared with a mean across all age groups of 17%). Fifty-five per cent placed emphasis on good governance compared with a mean of 40%, and 8% chose poverty reduction compared with a mean of 32%.

There are few general outstanding trends when examining the educational background of respondents and how this impacts on their perception of government policies to improve safety. However, a greater proportion of those with

	Percentage
Good governance/tackling corruption	40
Reduction of poverty/Improve the economy	31
Improved policing	17
Appropriate crime reduction strategy	6
Change legislation	4
Others	2

'no formal education' identified good governance as being a key factor in improving safety. Only 13% of those with 'no formal education' believed that reducing poverty would be an effective way of improving safety compared to a mean value across all educational groups of 32%.

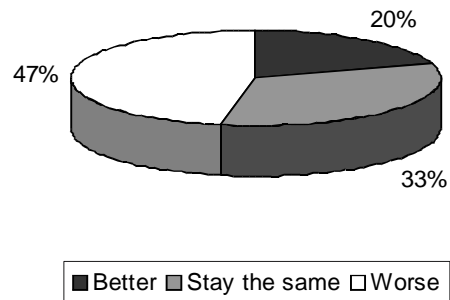
The working status of respondents appears to have a considerable impact on their perceptions of how government could best improve levels of safety. The perceptions of those not working showed marked differences from those either employed or seeking work on a number of policy proposals. In the not working category, 10% of respondents identified a change of legislation compared to a mean of 4% across all categories, and 12% believed that appropriate crime reduction strategies were important compared to a mean of 6%. There are considerable differences between all three categories choosing poverty reduction and improving the economy (21% of those 'not working', 46% of those unemployed and 31% of the employed). Those unable to find work considered poverty and economic disadvantages to be the most important issue to address.

For the most part, where people live in Nairobi does not appear to be a significant determinant of perceptions. There are only a few results that suggest a notably different proportionate level of support for certain policies compared with other residential areas. Twenty-nine per cent of people living outside of Nairobi identified improving policing as an important aspect in improving safety compared with percentages of all other groups ranging between 13% and 20%.

The implementation of government policy in a number of key areas, including crime prevention and policing, may need to be different as well. Similar disparities can be found in the attitudes of the 'formal middle' category's response to changing legislation (7% compared with a mean value of 4% and values in other categories ranging from 5% to zero) and in the 'industrial' residential

There appears to be a correlation between the frequency of patrols and the perception that police service is improving

Figure 10: Efficiency of police in last twelve months



category's response to the reduction of poverty (51% compared with values ranging from 23% to 33% across all other categories). Ensuring good governance and tackling corruption was the most important factor identified in all residential categories except 'industrial'. Those in the industrial category identified the reduction of poverty and improvement of the economy as being the most important.

Opinions of the police service

Respondents were asked about frequency of police patrols to determine their opinions of police presence. Almost 20% of respondents believed that police patrolled 'seldom' or 'never', while 51% said that they patrolled 'all the time' or 'often'. Thirty per cent thought the police patrolled 'sometimes'.

Males believe that the police patrol more frequently than females, with 57% of males stating that the police patrol 'all the time' (21%) or 'often' (36%) compared with 42% of females. It was found that 30% of females stated that the police patrolled 'never' (13%) or 'seldom' (17%) compared with only 12% of males. Perhaps males and females spend a majority of their time in different areas of the city. Female respondents may be more familiar with residential areas of Nairobi, where police patrols are infrequent. Male respondents may be more familiar with the business districts, where police patrolling happens more often. There was no distinct difference in the frequency of the police patrols as reported by respondents of different age categories.

Efficiency of police services

Overall, 20% of respondents believed that the police service had

Table 6: Relationship between frequency of patrols and perceptions of police service

Efficiency of police service	Frequency of police patrols (percentage)					Total
	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	
Better	31	22	20	6	6	20
Stay the same	33	31	25	44	57	33
Worse	36	46	56	50	38	47

become more efficient in the last twelve months, 33% believed there had been no change in its efficiency, and 47% said that it had become less efficient. Among male respondents, 51% believed that the service had deteriorated compared with 41% of females. There is little difference between the proportion of males and females believing that the efficiency of policing had improved (21% of males and 19% of females). Age differences are only identifiable in the over-60 category. The general impression in that category is that the police service is more efficient. Twenty-seven per cent of respondents over-60 believed that the police had become more efficient, a higher percentage than other age group, while 33% believed that the police had become less efficient, considerably less than in the other age groups (Figure 10).

When considering those that believed that the efficiency of the police had improved, there appears to be a correlation between the frequency of patrols and the perception that police service is improving. Six per cent stated that patrols occurred 'never', 6% said 'seldom', while 22% stated they happened 'often' and 31% 'all the time' (Table 6).

When respondents were asked why they thought there had been a change in the efficiency of the police there were a number of potential choices, some of which implied that there had been an improvement in efficiency and others that there had been a deterioration. Thirty-two per cent believed that poor remuneration and a lack of morale were responsible for the change in police efficiency, while 30% said that it was the result of corruption within the police force. Only 3% identified an increase in the rate of crime as a key reason. An increase in the pay of police officers was the most significant reason identified that might explain an improvement in the efficiency of the police, with 20% of respondents giving this response. Eleven per

A large number of people believe that the number of firearms has increased

cent believed that a change in the police services was a result of the police collaborating with criminals. Only 3% explained the change as a result of a decrease in crime. Overall, whether the respondent had a positive or negative view of police efficiency, crime was not seen to be a significant factor (Table 7).

ACTIONS TO IMPROVE THE GUN SITUATION

When respondents were asked to identify those actions that could be taken to help improve the control of firearms, better policing was identified as the most important factor, making up 46% of responses. Improving border controls (18%) and changing legislation (14%) were deemed to be the next most important factors.

It was surprising that education, something that is often suggested as a useful tool to help improve controls on firearms, constituted only 1% of responses. Community-based initiatives (4%) and firearm collection programmes (4%) as effective tools for improving the control over firearms also had very few proponents. Gender did not play a significant role in the responses (Table 8).

It is apparent that those over the age of 60 place much less importance on amending legislation to improve the control over firearms than those in the three other age categories. Three per cent of over-60s thought that legislative change was important compared to a mean of 14% across the whole sample. Comparatively, however, this age group put more emphasis on firearms collection programmes, with 12% identifying this approach as an effective tool compared with a mean across the whole sample of 4%. The 18–25 group placed comparatively little importance on education (1% compared to 2%, 2% and 3% in the other three age ranges) and relatively greater importance on community-based initiatives

Table 7: Reason for change in police services

	Percentage
Poor remuneration of police officers/ lack of morale	32
Corruption in the police force	30
Improved remuneration of the police	20
Police collaborating with criminals	11
Increased rate of crime	3
Decreased rate of crime	3
Political instability in neighbouring countries	1
Others	1

Table 8: Suggestions for improved control over firearms (multiple responses)

	Percentage
Better policing	46
Improved border controls	18
Change in legislation	14
Others	12
Community-based initiatives to curb proliferation	4
Firearm collection programmes	4
Education	1

Table 9: Suggestions for improved control over firearms, by age (multiple responses, percentage)

	18–25 years	26–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
Change in legislation	14	16	12	3
Better policing	43	47	50	48
Education	1	2	2	3
Community-based initiatives to curb proliferation	6	3	4	3
Firearm collection programmes	5	4	4	12
Improved border controls	19	15	21	23
Others	12	13	8	9

(6% compared with a mean of 4% across the whole sample) (Table 9).

CONCLUSION

Although this survey does not claim to provide a comprehensive picture of the level of firearm penetration in Nairobi, it does provide some important indications on the problem of proliferation in the city.

Different aspects of the problem reveal areas where policy interventions and action can reduce the incidence of firearm proliferation. The survey also raises interesting questions for future research.

The study's most disturbing conclusion is that crime seems to be on the increase in Nairobi. The majority of citizens (70%) are of the opinion that crime is increasing. In relation to this, a large number of people (84%) also believe that the number of firearms has increased in Nairobi. Ninety per cent of the business community in Nairobi are of the opinion that firearms are commonly used when committing crime in the city. This suggests a problematic level of crime and firearm penetration.

The insecurity that comes with increased crime has a direct impact upon demand for firearms and other weapons. The results show that there is a strong correlation between victimisation (i.e. being a victim of robbery) and willingness to own a firearm. Although no casual link can be made between victimisation and firearm ownership, the findings do suggest that crime influences people's attitudes towards weapons in general and firearms in particular.

There are also interesting gender distinctions revealed by the survey. These need to be taken into

account when formulating future policy and action. More males than females (14% compared to 5%) show a willingness to carry a firearm. Gender distinctions were also evident when dealing with the question of firearm availability and accessibility. More males (18% as opposed to 8%) than females said that they have access to firearms.

The survey reveals both opportunities and challenges regarding possible courses of action

to reduce firearm penetration in Nairobi. Although a high percentage of respondents (35%) believe there is nothing they can do to improve safety in Nairobi, still a relatively high percentage (18%) stated that co-operation with police can provide a better solution. More males than females indicated this to be the solution.

The major stumbling block to firearms control and crime reduction in Nairobi seems to be the perceived failure of authorities to tackle these problems. The majority of respondents (47%) believed that police services have become less efficient in recent years. This would suggest that there is a need to improve service on the part of the police.

Suggested action might include collaborative forms of policing where the police and community are equal stakeholders in solving crime and increasing safety. This might decrease the appeal of firearms as a form of protection and help in relieving overstretched police resources.

The majority of respondents believed that action to solve the problem of firearms and crime was beyond their control. This will hinder attempts aimed at designing community-based strategies to solve the problem. However, it is suggested that public awareness campaigns, public education projects about the negative effects of firearms ownership and proliferation, as well as weapons collection programmes can contribute in solving the problem.

The survey also identifies areas that may benefit from additional research. These include the following:

- Since the survey questions did not differentiate between licit and illicit firearms in relation to access, future work on the extent of firearm penetration could focus on the relationship between these two forms of acquisition and

ownership. This might shed light on the most important aspects of control that need to be prioritised (i.e. border control or gun ownership legislation).

- The survey showed clear differences between males and female attitudes towards various aspects of the problem of firearms penetration. Future work could be done to look at the reasons behind these differences as they might help in formulating gender specific action where appropriate.
- The survey also identified a seemingly consistent difference in terms of perceptions and responses in different age categories. Those who were over 60 showed remarkably different perceptions in a range of questions such as those related to access to firearms and possible courses of action. Further studying why those over 60 have more access to firearms than other age groups might reveal historical patterns in gun ownership that reveal possible sources of the problem.
- The lack of sufficient evidence to suggest a casual

relationship between victimisation and receptiveness to firearm ownership needs further study. Answers to questions of causality might suggest, *inter alia*, that government action should focus more on crime prevention strategies as a means to limit resort to firearm ownership as a guarantee of security.

- The perceptions of people regarding the possible role of government in solving the problem of firearms and their own role in solving the problem need further study. Is the negative attitude towards government's capacity to control crime and gun proliferation reflective of a general disillusionment with government? Related to this is the question as to why the majority of people in Nairobi feel that individual action cannot improve safety.

Answers to these questions are important in that they have a direct effect on the partnership between government and the community in reducing crime and firearms proliferation.

The ISS mission

The vision of the Institute for Security Studies is one of a stable and peaceful Africa characterised by human rights, the rule of law, democracy and collaborative security. As an applied policy research institute with a mission to conceptualise, inform and enhance the security debate in Africa, the Institute supports this vision statement by undertaking independent applied research and analysis; facilitating and supporting policy formulation; raising the awareness of decision makers and the public; monitoring trends and policy implementation; collecting, interpreting and disseminating information; networking on national, regional and international levels; and capacity building.

About this paper

Kenya is at the crossroads of conflict in East Africa and the Horn. Small arms trafficking and proliferation in the region threatens security, stability, and sustainable development. Based on the premise that guns flourish where insecurity prevails, this paper looks at community perceptions of firearms and security as crucial indicators of small arms penetration in Nairobi. A city survey of citizens on the street, in their homes, and in businesses was conducted to gather a range of opinions on the role of firearms and the scope of their presence and availability. The findings show that crime appears to be on the increase in Nairobi. The attendant increase in insecurity is evident in people's attitudes towards weapons, revealing both opportunities and challenges to government firearms control policies.

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