

3. Public experience of crime in Malawi

Key Findings

- In total, 2,984 respondents or 43.5% of the survey sample experienced one or more crimes over the 12 months between 1 May 2002 and 1 May 2003.
- 17.2% of the respondents were victims of crop theft, while 8.5% had livestock stolen from them in the 12-month period. The next most common experience of crime was that of corruption, reportedly experienced by 5.6% of the sample. Home burglary, was experienced by just 4.6% of those interviewed, while theft of personal property was experienced by 3.8% of respondents.
- Violent crimes, such as assault (1.5% of survey respondents), robbery (0.5%), murder (0.2%) and sexual assault, which includes rape (0.1%), were significantly less common.
- A distinct spatial pattern to crime and victimisation is apparent in Malawi, with residents of the rural areas experiencing more crop theft and livestock theft and residents of the urban areas experiencing more corruption, home burglary and theft of personal property. Indeed, residents of Malawi's four main urban areas – Blantyre, Zomba, Lilongwe and Mzuzu – experience corruption, home burglary and theft of personal property at a rate proportionately three times greater than residents of the rural areas
- A further spatial pattern is evident with higher occurrences of crop theft, stock theft, corruption and burglary in the Southern Region. Personal crimes, including theft of personal property and assault, appear to be more common in the Central Region. Importantly, the Northern Region, the least populated of the three regions experiences the lowest levels of crime.
- There is a direct correlation between the months in which the most common crime, crop theft, is most prevalent and what has been termed the “lean, hungry season” in the months just before and after March 2003. There is a similar, though less distinctive pattern to the theft of livestock, with most thefts occurring in May and June.

- Given the correlation between crop theft and, less obviously, theft of livestock and the occurrence of food shortages in Malawi, it appears that these crimes are crimes of need: people without sufficient access to food steal from others, who may be just as poor or even poorer, to survive
- Public experience of corruption when seeking a public service in Malawi appears relatively high. For example: 384 respondents (5.6% of the total sample) reported that, in the 12 months between 1 May 2002 and 1 May 2003, they had been asked for money, to perform a service or provide a favour by an official in return for a service the official was legally required to perform.
- In terms of actual experience, it appears that those looking for employment within the public service are most likely to be asked for, or offer to pay, a bribe.

3.1 Overview of crime in Malawi

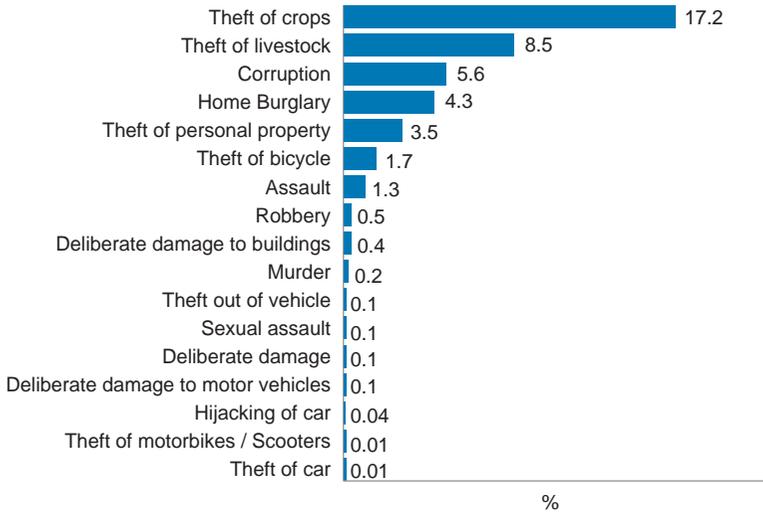
Data from the latest round of the International Crime Victim Surveys indicates that theft is the most common crime experienced in various African countries, followed by burglary, robbery and assault.¹⁶ As indicated below, theft, particularly of crops and live-stock, is a fairly common experience in Malawi but, fortunately, violent crimes such as robbery, assault and murder are not common at all.

In total, 2,984 respondents or 43.5% of the survey sample experienced one or more crimes over the 12 months between 1 May 2002 and 1 May 2003.

This, however, may present a slightly inflated indication of crime in the country, as by far the majority of these crimes are crimes that are characteristic of rural or peri-rural areas, specifically crop and stock theft.¹⁷ This is indicated in Figure 1 below.

16 Alvazzi del Frate, A. *Victims of Crime in the Developing World*, Rome, UNICRI, 1998, UNICRI Publication no. 57

17 It should also be noted that Malawi had experienced severe and wide-ranging food shortages in the period immediately preceding this survey.

Figure 1 Overall victimisation in Malawi: May 2002–May 2003 (n=6, 861)¹⁸

The figure above reflects the disproportionate occurrence of crop and stock theft compared to victimisation by other crime types. In total, 17.2% of those interviewed had been victims of crop theft, while 8.5% had livestock stolen from them in the 12-month period. The next most common crime, that of corruption, was experienced by 5.6% of the survey sample, home burglary 4.3% and theft of personal property was experienced by just 3.5% of respondents.

This means that together crop theft and the theft of livestock account for 59.1% of the actual victimisation recorded in the survey – that is, of the 2,984 incidents of crime recorded in the survey, 1,182 incidents were related to crop theft (39.6%) and 581 incidents related to theft of livestock (19.5%).

Other crimes, and especially violent crimes, such as assault, robbery, murder and sexual assault, which includes rape, were significantly less common.

18 The issue of experience of corruption was explored separately from other forms of victimisation in the survey, but is presented here to indicate the prevalence of this experience in relation to other forms of victimisation.

The details of the actual reported victimisation in the survey period is outlined in Table 12 below.

Table 12 Reported victimisation by crime type

Type of Crime	Incidents	Percent of actual victimisation
Crop theft	1,182	39.6
Theft of Livestock	581	19.5
Corruption	384	12.9
Home Burglary	293	9.8
Theft of personal property	237	7.9
Theft of Bicycle	118	4
Assault	93	3.1
Robbery	31	1
Deliberate damage to buildings	30	1
Murder	14	0.5
Theft out of vehicles	8	0.3
Sexual assault	5	0.2
Hijacking of vehicle	3	0.1
Vandalism of a vehicle	3	0.1
Theft of a vehicle	1	0.03
Theft of a motorbike/scooter	1	0.03
Total	2,984	100

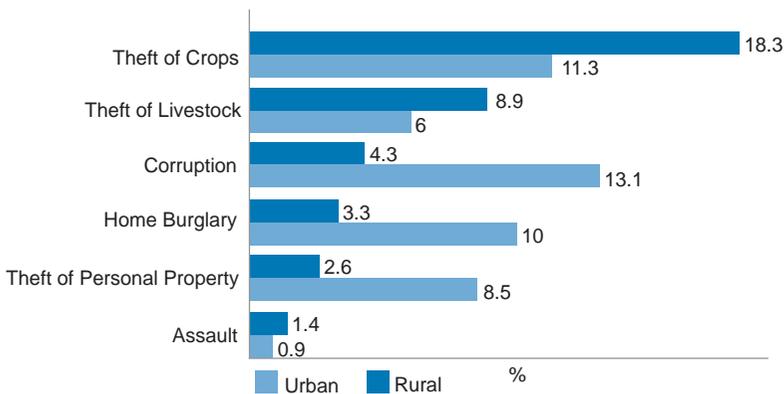
Accounting for a significantly higher proportion of criminal victimisation than any other crime, it is perhaps to be expected that theft of crops and theft of livestock assume such a high profile in Malawi. The vast majority of the population (85%), and therefore of the sample, resides in the rural areas where the cultivation of adequate crops, poultry and livestock is generally essential to the livelihood and sustainability of households. Indeed, a recent survey found that 91% of Malawian's residing in the rural areas relied on their own produce for subsistence.¹⁹ Further, household owner-

¹⁹ National Statistical Office. *2002 Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire Survey. Report of Survey Results*. Zomba: National Statistical Office

ship of crops and livestock would in all likelihood be significantly higher than ownership of luxury or electronic goods that often lend themselves to particularly high rates of theft of personal property, or housebreaking in more developed countries.²⁰

As indicated in Figure 2 below, there is a clear difference in the type of victimisation experienced most commonly by residents of Malawi's urban and rural areas; with residents of the rural areas experiencing more crop theft and livestock theft and residents of the urban areas experiencing more corruption, home burglary and theft of personal property.

Figure 2 Most common crimes in the urban and rural areas



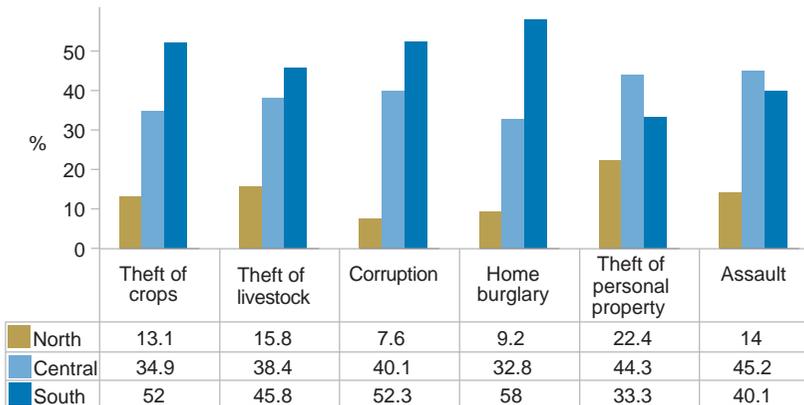
The figure above indicates that residents of Malawi's four main urban areas – Blantyre, Zomba, Lilongwe and Mzuzu – experience less crop theft and theft of livestock than residents of the rural areas, but experience corruption, home burglary and theft of personal property at a rate proportionately three times greater than residents of the rural areas.

Also, as indicated in Figure 3 below, a further distinct spatial pattern to crime and victimisation is apparent in Malawi, with higher occurrences of crop theft, stock theft, corruption and burglary in the Southern Region.

²⁰ Zvekic, U., Alvazzi del Frate, (Eds) *Criminal Victimisation in the Developing World*, Rome, UNICRI 1995, UNICRI Publication no. 55

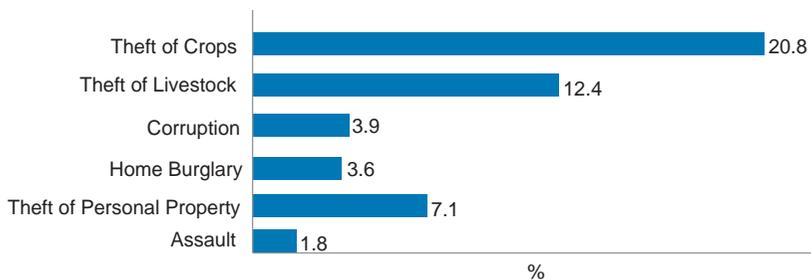
Personal crimes, including theft of personal property and assault, appear to be more common in the Central Region. Importantly, the figure indicates that the Northern Region, the least populated of the three regions,²¹ experiences the lowest levels of crime.

Figure 3 Most Common Crimes by Region



Lastly, Figures 4,5 and 6 below outline the rate of victimisation within each region.

Figure 4 Victimization in the Northern Region – most common crimes (n=741)



21 National Statistical Office, Government of Malawi, *Malawi – An Atlas of Social Statistics*, National Statistical Office and Food Policy Research Centre, CD Rom 2002

Figure 5 Victimisation in the Central Region – most common crimes (n=2,771)

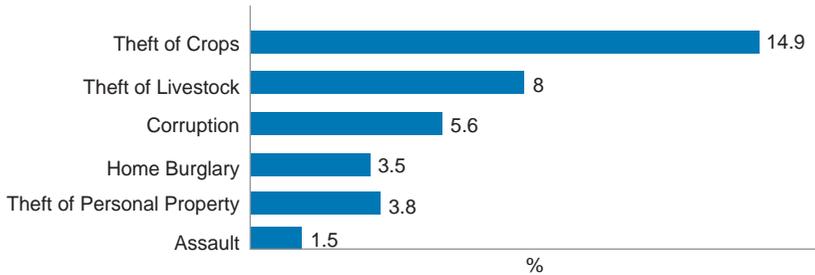
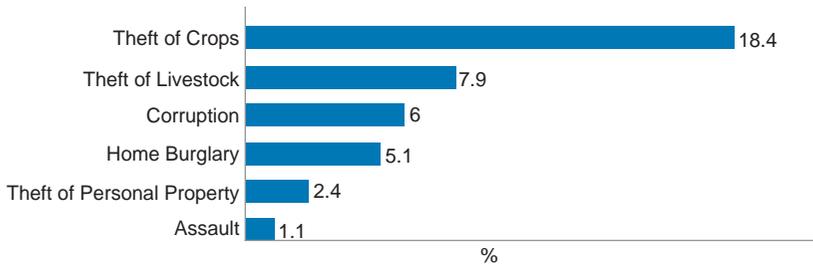


Figure 6 Victimisation in the Southern Region – most common crimes (n=3,349)



The next section explores in more detail the individual crimes reported in the survey. The analysis is divided into three main sections: crimes against the household, crimes against the individual and experience of corruption.

Household crimes are crimes that are committed against the household itself, or impact negatively on the whole household, and include house-breaking, theft of livestock, theft of crops, deliberate damage to buildings, theft of bicycle, car theft, car hijacking, motor vehicle vandalism, theft of goods out of vehicles and murder.

Individual crimes are crimes committed against an individual, and include theft of personal property, robbery, assault, and sexual assault and rape.

3.2 Household crimes

In this section, the household crimes of theft of crops, theft of livestock, and housebreaking are analysed individually in detail below.

Given the low incidence of theft of bicycles and other vehicles, including cars, motorbikes and scooters, vehicle hijacking, theft out of cars and deliberate damage to vehicles, these household crimes are reported on together.

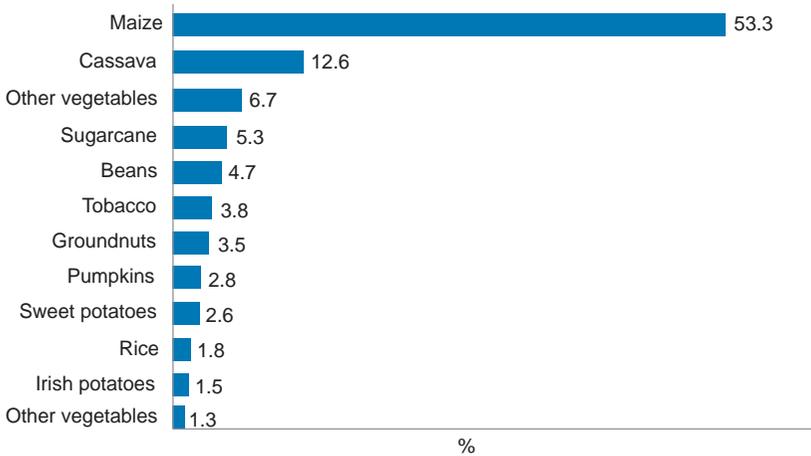
Finally, there is a short section on deliberate damage to household buildings.

3.2.1 Theft of crops

Theft of crops includes the stealing of any form of crops, including maize, sugar cane, cassava and tobacco, from the fields or from any storage facility located at a dwelling.

As already highlighted above, theft of crops is the most commonly experienced crime in all regions of Malawi, accounting for 17.2% of crimes experienced over the 12-month survey period.

Just about two-thirds of the victims of crop theft (65.1%) indicated that their crops had been stolen in the fields where the crops had been planted. The most commonly stolen crops were maize, cassava and other vegetables. Further, theft from household gardens, which was reported by 26.5% of the victims of crops theft, tends to focus on smaller cultivated crops such as beans and other vegetables. The types of crops that respondents reported they had lost to theft are presented graphically in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7 Crops stolen (n=1556, multiple response)

Given the high percentages of Malawians who rely on their own produce for subsistence, theft of these crops can threaten the ability of victimised households to survive, particularly in times of food shortages.

This is supported when the relationship between crop theft and household income is explored: the highest percentage of households to have been victimised by crop theft are the very poor, that is, those households earning less than MK500 a month (30.8%) and those earning between MK1000 and MK5000 a month (37.8%).

Households headed by males are more likely to experience crop theft – in total, 60.8% of the households that experienced crop theft in the 12-month survey period were headed by men.²²

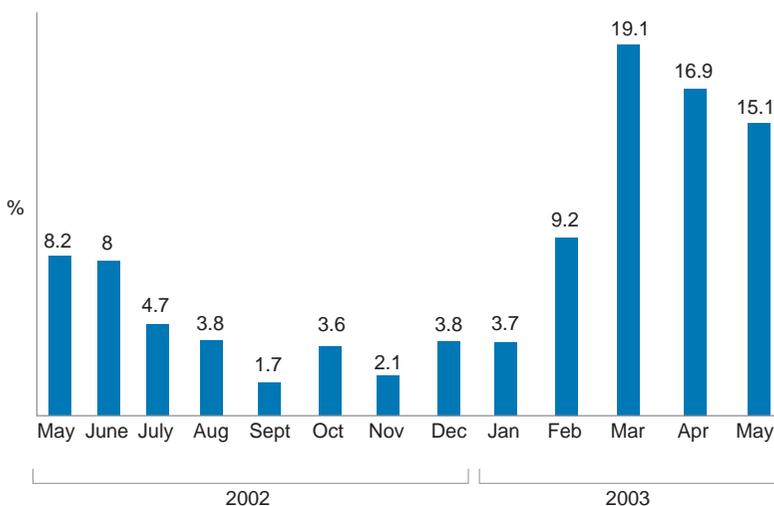


²² This may, however, be a reflection of the predominance of male respondents to the survey: 57.2% of the respondents were male, while 42.8% of the respondents were female.

Most importantly though, is that crop theft appeared to be seasonal: the increase in its prevalence correlates directly with what a SADC Vulnerability Assessment Committee called the “lean, hungry season” in which it was estimated that 3.3 million Malawians would require food aid by March 2003 and that this figure would increase to 3.5 million “before the next harvest”.²³

Thus, as indicated in Figure 8 below, 19.1 % of the crop thefts recorded in the survey took place in March (in which maize is traditionally harvested), 16.9% in April, 15.1% in May 2003.

Figure 8 Month of crop theft (n=1,181)



The clear increase in the occurrence of crop theft between February and May 2003 supports the seasonal nature of the crime – the prevalence of the crime increases dramatically as ripened crops, particularly maize, become available in the fields and steadily decreases as harvested crops are consumed or stored, thereby becoming less available.

²³ See *Malawi Emergency Food Security Assessment Report*, by the Malawi National Vulnerability Committee and the SADC Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Vulnerability Assessment Committee, 21 February 2003, pp.6-7.

Given the correlation between the months in which crop theft is most prevalent and the months in which ripened crops are harvested and most needed, it appears safe to conclude that these are crimes of need – that is, people without sufficient access to food steal from others, who may be just as poor or even poorer, to survive.

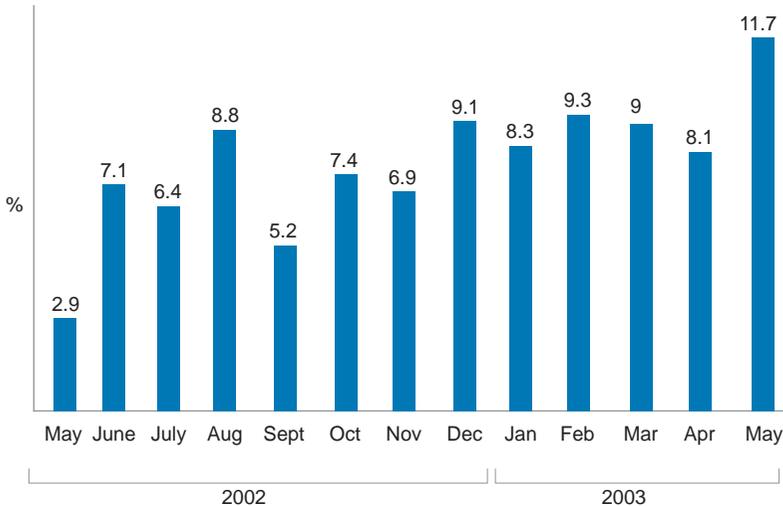
3.2.2 Theft of livestock

Theft of livestock, poultry and other animals involves the actual stealing of animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, chickens and dogs.

Theft of livestock is the second most common crime in Malawi. Most prevalent in the Southern Region, it assumes a less obvious monthly pattern than that of crop theft.

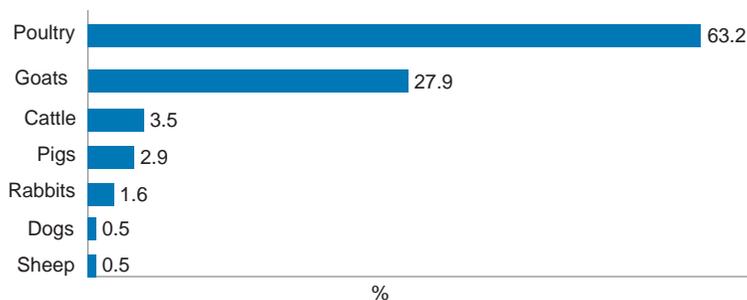
However, as indicated in Figure 9 below, increases in the occurrence of stock theft broadly correlate with the months associated with an increase in crop theft. Figure 5 thus indicates increases in the occurrence of theft of livestock between February and May 2003.

Figure 9 Month of livestock theft (n=581)



Livestock tends to be stolen mostly from an area in or close to the victim's home, suggesting a fair amount of confidence by the offenders. For instance, most livestock theft occurred when poultry or animals were taken from an outside kraal (40%), which would be very close to the victim's home, or when the livestock was wandering around outside the victim's home (29.8%). Least common was livestock stolen in the victim's fields or on communal grazing lands (18.3%). Figure 10 below details the kind of livestock stolen.

Figure 10 Livestock stolen (n=630, multiple response)



As with crop theft, the theft of livestock appears to affect those least able to cope with it, the very poor. For instance, 51.1% of the victims of livestock theft reported that they earned less than MK1000 per month, and a further 37.3% indicated that they earned between MK1000 and MK5000 per month.

Given the relatively expensive cost of livestock in Malawi – in December 2002, a chicken could cost MK200 in the Northern Region, MK100 in the South and MK90 in the Central Region – replacing stolen livestock would in all likelihood be beyond the means of most victimised households.²⁴ The impact of theft of livestock on the household would likely be severe.

²⁴ See *Malawi Emergency Food Security Assessment Report*, by the Malawi National Vulnerability Committee and the SADC Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Vulnerability Assessment Committee, 21 February 2003, pp.23-24. At the same time, a goat could cost MK1,200 in the North, MK900 in the Central and MK800 in the South.

Again, households headed by males were more likely to experience theft of livestock than those households headed by women – 64.9% of the households which had livestock stolen from them were headed by men.

3.2.3 Housebreaking and burglary

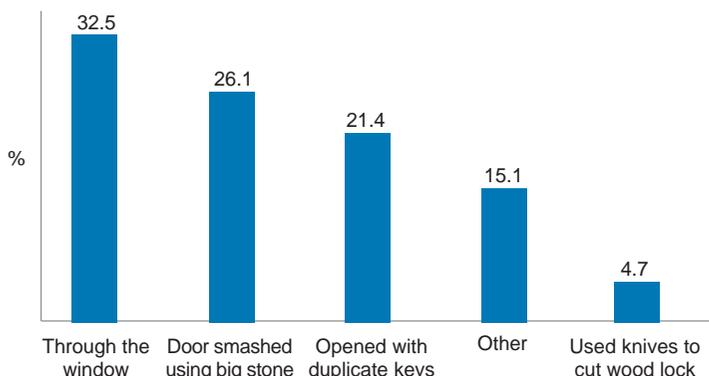
Housebreaking and burglary occurs when someone enters a dwelling without permission and steals or attempts to steal something.

The majority of the 293 incidents of housebreakings that were reported occurred, unsurprisingly, after dark (64.9%). This clearly gives perpetrators some protection from being observed or interrupted. However, at the same time, it increases the risk of being discovered by occupants of the house who might be sleeping. Indeed, in just less than half of the incidents (48.3%) the victims indicated that they were not at home at the time of the housebreaking, suggesting a remarkable degree of brazenness and confidence from the perpetrators.

The most common means of entry to the premises was reported to be through a window that may have been left open, or was forced open. Almost one third (30.9%) of the victims of this crime reported that the perpetrators gained access to the house through the window. In a little more than one quarter (26.2%) of the incidents, the respondents indicated that the perpetrators had used more violent measures, forcing the door open using stones or rocks. In a further 22.8% of the incidents, the respondents indicated that the perpetrators had used a duplicate key to gain access.

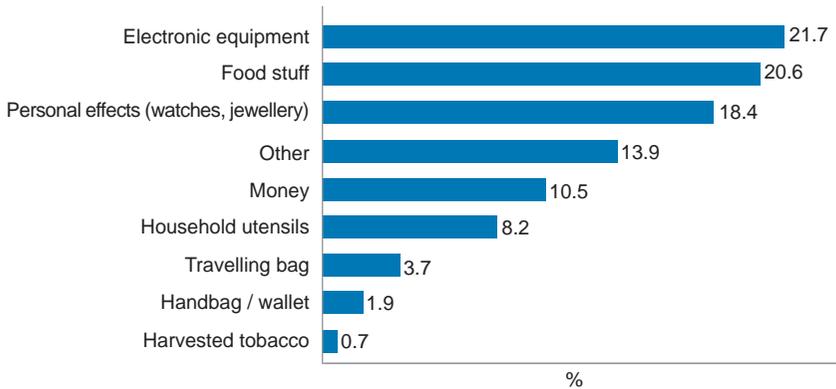
The means by which the victims of housebreaking reported that the perpetrators had gained access is outlined in Figure 11 below.

Figure 11 Means of entry (n=295)



Victims of housebreaking were also asked whether weapons were used during the incident. Technically, if the inhabitants or occupants of the house were threatened with force during the housebreaking, the crime would be classified as a robbery rather than a housebreaking. However, weapons can also be used to intimidate without an explicit threat of force, or can simply be used to force entry into a house, through breaking the lock, or window. While in the majority of incidents (53.8%) no weapons were reported to have been used, just under half of the respondents (46.2%) reported that weapons had been used. These tended to be metal bars, stones, and knives, suggesting that the weapons had been used primarily to gain access to the house.

Given that the primary aim of housebreaking is to acquire property from within the house, it is unsurprising that in the vast majority of the incidents some property was stolen (88.8%). The kinds of goods that were reportedly stolen are detailed in Figure 12 below.

Figure 12 Items stolen in the housebreaking (n=267)

Unsurprisingly electronic goods, including televisions, stereos or hi-fis, video recorders, and camera's were reportedly taken in one fifth of the housebreakings (21.7%). These are items that would be likely to fetch quick and probably fairly easy money when sold. Food stuffs accounted for another fifth (20.6%), followed by personal effects such as watches and jewellery (18.4%), which would also have a reasonable re-sale value. Money was stolen in slightly more than one tenth (10.5%) of cases. In less than one tenth of the reported incidents were other household utensils taken (8.2%).

Neither the gender of the respondent nor the household income showed up as statistically significant variables when analysing the occurrence of housebreaking.

However, the residential location of the respondents was highly significant: the victimisation rate of respondents residing in the urban areas was proportionately 3 times greater than the victimisation rate of respondents residing in the rural areas.

3.2.4 Theft of bicycles, cars and other vehicles

Theft of bicycles includes the theft of any bicycle belonging to the household, from any location whether at the dwelling or elsewhere.

Theft of motor vehicles (excluding hijacking) occurs when someone steals a car, van, truck or pick-up when nobody is present in the vehicle, regardless of where the vehicle was parked at the time.

Hijacking of motor vehicles occurs when someone steals, or attempts to steal, a car, truck, van or pick up when a member or members of the household are inside, or just outside, the vehicle. Theft of goods from vehicles includes theft of car radios or goods left in the car or parts of the car such as the car mirror or spare tyre.

Motor Vehicle Vandalism occurs when someone deliberately damages a vehicle or part of a vehicle, such as a car, van truck or pick-up, for example through scratching the paintwork. Theft of motorcycles or scooters excludes bicycles.

Bicycles are a very common form of transport in Malawi, in the urban and rural areas. With the exception of mini-bus taxis, they are probably one of the most accessible modes of transport, as the cost of cars and motorbikes remain beyond the means of the vast majority of Malawian households. Often used to transport goods as well as people, and often more than one person at a time, they are a common sight when travelling anywhere in Malawi. Just over a third of the respondents to the survey, 2,541 respondents or 37% of the sample, reported owning a bicycle.

The theft of bicycles should therefore be contextualised within this ownership profile. In total 120 bicycle thefts were reported from the 2,541 households who reported ownership. This accounts for a real victimisation rate of 4.7% of those who could be victims of this crime.

Of these 120 bicycles stolen, the majority were taken from the home (53.8%), while a little over one fifth (21%) were stolen while their riders, or owners, were at the market. These thefts tend to happen throughout the year, with no significant identifiable pattern.

Figure 13 Month of bicycle theft (n=118)

Apart from bicycle theft, household crimes relating to the theft of vehicles are very low in Malawi.

This is undoubtedly due to the fact that ownership of motor vehicles is also very low – as indicated in Table 11, just 113 households interviewed reported owning a car, translating to 1.6% of the sample, while 41 households, or 0.6% of the sample reported owning a motorbike or scooter; 30 respondents or 0.4% of the sample reported owning a mini bus, taxi or van; and only 11, or 0.2% of the sample reported owning a truck.

These figures, as well as the very low incidence of theft of vehicles, theft from vehicles and vehicle hijacking, make significant statistical analysis or incident analysis impossible. For instance, just one vehicle, a pick-up 4X4, was reported to be have been stolen during the twelve months of the survey period. Just a single respondent reported that their scooter or motorbike had been stolen but no details were provided for this incident.

In total three vehicle hijackings were reported during the survey. However, detailed information was provided in only one of these incidents – the hijacking of a pickup in the Southern Region. This happened in a street in the town and the incident appeared to follow a ‘standard’ hijacking profile, with the perpetrator threatening the driver with a gun. In this instance, the victim was shot, and required medical attention and hospitalisation.

Theft out of motor vehicles is more common than the theft of vehicles, with nine cases reported in the survey. This translates to a real victimisation

rate of 7.9% – that is, of those who own motor vehicles, and therefore could be victims of this crime.

Victims of these crimes reported that the incidents generally occurred when the vehicle was parked at home (4 incidents), or in a public parking lot (3 incidents). Victims also reported that the incidents tended to take place on weekdays in the early morning (6 incidents). A range of goods were reportedly stolen, including personal items left in the car (4 incidents) the car radio (3 incidents), and other car parts (2 incidents), which could include tyres, radio antennas, side mirrors, or wheel caps.

Finally, deliberate damage to vehicles was reported by just three households over the course of the survey period.

3.2.5 Deliberate damage to property

Deliberate damage, burning or destruction of dwellings includes acts of deliberately setting fire to, or damaging a household's dwelling, but excludes damage that may be caused in official forced removals or resettlements. This also includes outbuildings that might be used for household functions, or for agricultural purposes, and household buildings or part of buildings that may be used by any member of the household for commercial purposes.

Deliberate damage to household buildings is often an act of vindictiveness or revenge against a family, or individuals living in the household. It may also be associated with other crimes such as housebreaking or crop or stock theft. The crime is really defined by the deliberate nature of the act – an accidental fire caused by someone outside the household does not classify the act as a crime, and it is rather the intent of an individual to inflict damage on the household that is important.

In total, 30 cases of such intentional damage to property were reported.

Seventeen incidents (56.7%) took place in the Southern Region, with just a single incident reported in the Northern Region.

In 20 of the incidents (66.7%), the main house, or homestead was reportedly damaged and in a further 4 cases (13.3%), an outbuilding used for lodgings by tenants was reportedly damaged.

In total, 23 of the incidents (76.7%) were reported to have occurred during the night.

In 23 incidents the victims of these crimes reported that someone was at home at the time of the incident, suggesting that the perpetrators did not particularly care whether they were discovered or not, which supports the idea that such acts are often motivated by revenge.

3.3 Crimes against the individual

3.3.1 Theft of personal property

Theft of personal property includes pick-pocketing, or theft of a purse, wallet, clothing, jewellery, or sports equipment without the use, or the threat of force.

Theft of personal property, constituted the fourth most common crime in Malawi. In total, 3.5% of all crimes recorded fell within this category, or put another way, 237 individuals reported that they had been victims of this crime in the 12-month survey period.

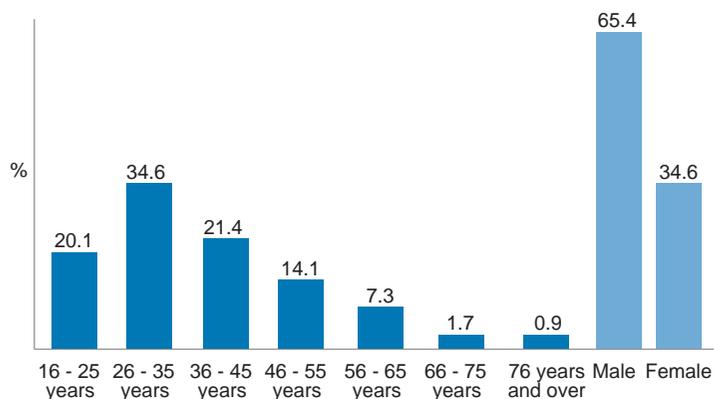
Theft of personal property is usually a crime that occurs outside a person's home and it is surprising that 108 victims of this crime (45.6%), reported that the incident took place at their homes. The market place, a common venue for such crimes in any country, accounted for the next most frequent site (18.2%), followed by the bus station or taxi rank and simply walking in the street (both 13.6%).

In a departure from the experiences in other countries, the majority of the victims of this crime indicated that they were not alone at the time of the incident – with 127 of the victims (53.6%) reporting that someone (other than the perpetrator) was with them at the time their goods were stolen. This is significant in that it is commonly perceived that there is safety in numbers, and

that being accompanied by another person, decreases the risk of victimisation. In terms of theft of personal property, in Malawi this is clearly not so.

Internationally, the risk of personal victimisation is also often associated with gender. In many other countries, women are more likely to be victims of pick-pocketing and bag snatching than men. In Malawi however, almost two-thirds of the victims of this crime were men (65.4%). Figure 14 below provides more detail of the victims of these crimes.

Figure 14 Victims of theft of personal property (n=237)



Also of note is that the rate of victimisation in the urban areas is proportionately three times that of the rate of victimisation in the rural areas.

The most commonly stolen goods tended to be, unsurprisingly, money, stolen in 43.3% of the incidents, followed by clothes (8.5%), travelling bags (7.3%) and radios (5.7%).

3.3.2 Robbery

Robbery involves taking something from a person by force or the threat of force

Robbery is classified as a violent individual crime, as it by definition involves the threat of force, or the use of force, against an individual from

whom goods are taken. Thefts or housebreakings may start out as simple thefts, but on being discovered by the victims, or bystanders, turn into robberies as the perpetrators threaten force, or use force, on those that have discovered or interrupted them.

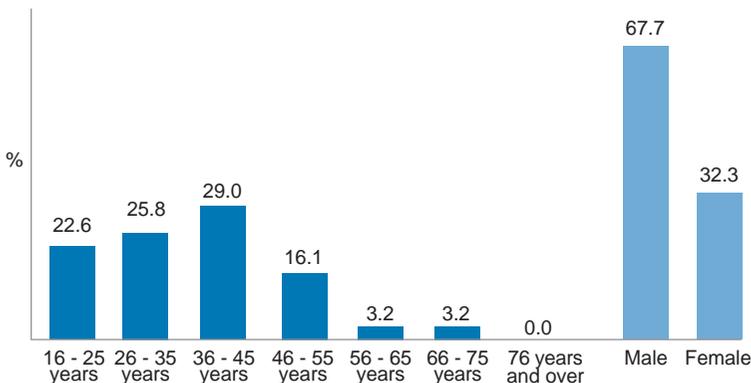
A total of 31 respondents reported that they had experienced robbery in the course of the 12-month survey period.²⁵

More than half of these robberies (55.6%) reportedly took place in the victim's homes, suggesting that, in many instances these started out as house-breaking or theft of personal property but, then turned violent.²⁶ A further 4 incidents (14.8%) reportedly occurred in the street in residential areas.

In 16 instances (59.2%), the victim was accosted while alone, but in the remaining instances had been robbed while in the company of someone else.

As with theft of personal property, males again constituted the majority of victims (67.7%). Figure 15 below provides more detail of the victims of these crimes.

Figure 15 Profile of Robbery Victims (n=27)



Property is usually the motivation for robbery, as the robber tends simply to want something that the victim has, or might have, on their person. Often the desire may simply be for cash, to meet a need for food, or in some

25 Detailed information was collected on only 27 of these cases.

26 It must be noted that once again the sample is too small to perform meaningful statistical or trend analysis (n=27).

instances, various addictions. Alternatively, in some instances it may simply be an act of almost gratuitous violence, where the violence is simply an end in itself, simply an expression of anger or frustration.²⁷

In 6 of the recorded cases (22%) no property was taken in the robbery, which suggests one of two things: the resistance put up by the victim in fact succeeded and frightened the perpetrator off, or the perpetrator was not really after cash or goods, and the incident was rather intended to frighten the victim.

However, the threat of violence or force used against robbery victims often results in injuries. In this survey, in spite of the use or threat of force, 10 of the victims (37%) tried to resist the perpetrator. In all of these cases in which the victim attempted to resist, the victim incurred physical injury. Only one of the victims that incurred injury during the robbery did not require medical attention, and 4 of the victims required admission to hospital, stressing the danger of resisting, especially when weapons such as guns are used in the crime.

In the other incidents, in which the victims did not offer resistance, no injuries were reported. This is significant, in that the implication is that when victims do not resist, there are unlikely to be injuries sustained in the commission of the crime. This differs from countries like South Africa, where even those that do not resist in the course of a criminal act such as robbery are likely still to incur injuries.

The victims of robbery reported that guns were used in 11 instances (40.7%), pangas, sticks, clubs or axes in 8 instances (29.6%), and knives in 5 instances (18.5%).

Similar to theft of personal property, the most common items taken during the robberies were money (in 40% of the incidents), followed by personal affects such as jewellery and watches (30%). Other items taken include travelling bags and electronic equipment.

27 Legget, T (2003) *Rainbow Tenement: Crime and Policing in Inner Johannesburg*, ISS monograph No 78, ISS: Pretoria

3.3.3 Assault

Assault (including domestic violence), includes being attacked, physically beaten or threatened by an attacker in a frightening way without the attacker taking anything from the victim.

Just 93 individuals, or 1.4% of all those interviewed in the survey, reported that they had been assaulted during the 12-month survey period.

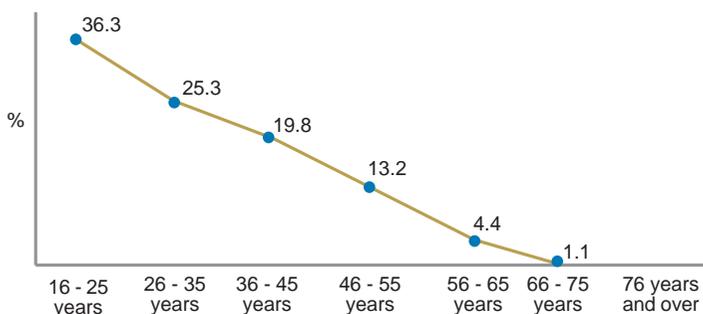
However, these statistics should be treated with some caution as they are unlikely to reflect the true scale of assault in Malawi. This is simply because what is named “assault” and deemed criminal in many societies, may not be viewed so in others. This is particularly relevant to domestic violence, which is sometimes so thoroughly engrained in society that it is not seen as the crime of “assault” by either the perpetrator or the victim. This appears to be the case in Malawi, where a recent study has indicated that “Nkhanza” or violence against women is so open and so often spoken about that it “is the norm in Malawi”.²⁸ Given this “normalisation” of violence it is unlikely that most victims of domestic violence would view their victimisation as “assault” and therefore equally unlikely that they would report it to a survey enumerator.

Thus, in this survey, the majority of respondents who reported being assaulted were men (65.6%).

As indicated in Figure 16 below, more than one third of the victims were between the ages of 16 to 25 years of age.

28 See Saur, M; Semu, L & Ndau, S.H Listening to people’s voices. *A base-line study of gender-based violence – “Nkhanza” – in three districts of Malawi*. Research report submitted to the GTZ/Ministry of Gender and Community Services Project to Combat Gender Violence in Malawi, 2003. The report notes that there is a common acceptance amongst men and women of “educational beating” for instruction purposes and that women apparently accept being beaten by their spouses “if they have done something wrong ...” .

Figure 16 Age Profile of Assault Victims (n=93)



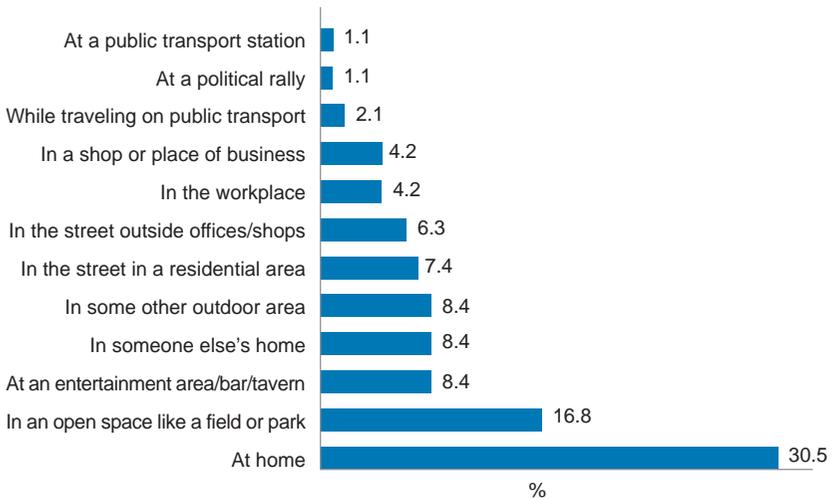
The age profile of the victims follows a common international trend, where young people (and often those below 16 years of age as well) are amongst the highest victims of assault in any country.²⁹

Assaults, often taken by members of the public to refer only to attacks by strangers, in fact also include attacks by spouses, other family members, and friends. While often associated with alcohol or drug abuse, assaults occur in a range of places, and for a number of different motivations.

In Malawi, the highest percentage of the assaults reported in the survey, occurred in the victim's home, suggesting that the perpetrators might be someone known to the victim.

Importantly, in the majority of the assaults that occurred at home (60%), the victim was female. A significant statistical relationship ($p=0.036$) exists between gender of the victim and the location of the assault. This suggests that what is being reported in these cases may, actually be domestic violence.

29 Lewit, E and Baker, L. *Children as Victims of Violence, The Future of Children*, Winter 1996, www.futureofchildren.org/usr_doc/vol6no3ART13.pdf

Figure 17 Place of assault (n=95)

As indicated in the figure above, open spaces and parks were also common spots for assaults, and account for 16.8% of the assaults that were reported.

Locations such as bars and taverns, or other entertainment areas, are commonly associated with assaults. In Malawi, such places, together with someone else's home, and other outside areas, were the third most common sites for assaults (each accounting for 8.4% of the reported assaults).

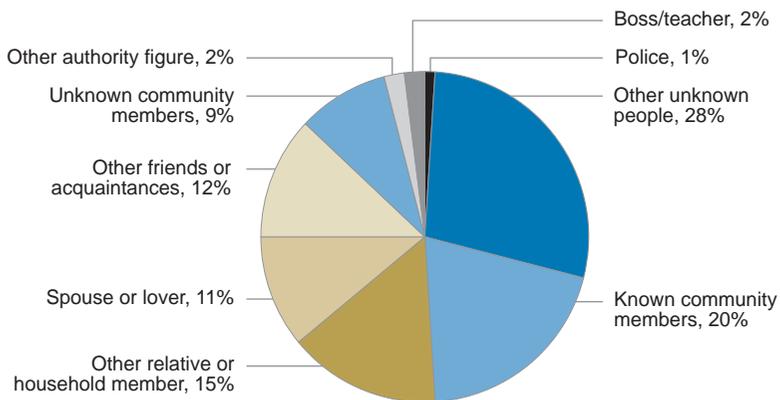
Assaults also do not necessarily entail the use of weapons. Indeed, domestic violence, amongst other assaults, generally entails the use of just physical force. In Malawi, most assaults follow this trend, with almost three out of every ten of the reported assaults (29.8%) occurring without the use of weapons.

Where weapons were used in the assault, the most common were axes, clubs or machetes, which were reportedly used in one fifth of the assaults (21.3%), while knives were used in less than one tenth of the incidents (8.5%).

Although violent by definition, just over half of the victims of assault (50.5%) reported that they sustained injuries. When injuries were sustained, they tended to be serious, with 83% of the injured cases serious enough to warrant medical attention. However, less than one quarter of these cases were serious enough to require the victim to be admitted to hospital.

The victims of assault also indicated that they were accosted by single perpetrators in 45.2% of the cases, two perpetrators in 20.4% of the incidents and three or more assailants in 44.4% of the cases. Figure 18 below details graphically who the victims of assault believed their assailants to be.

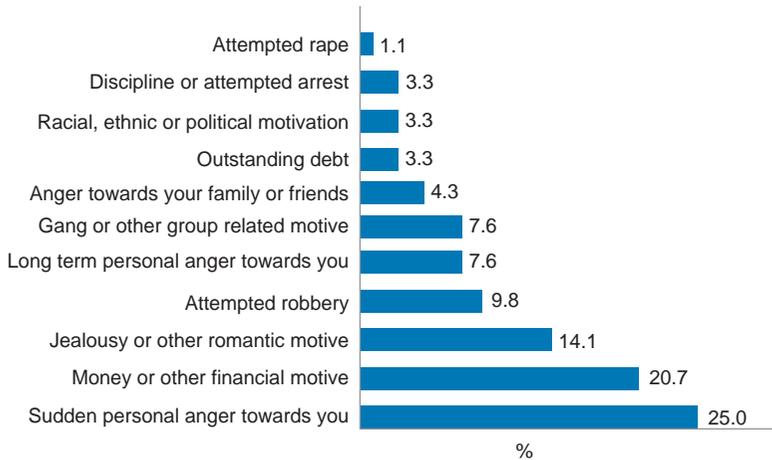
Figure 18 Identity of the assailants (as indicated by the victims)



The figure above indicates that in 64 of the reported incidents (62%), the assailants were known to the victims. This follows the very common trend in assaults of the perpetrator being known by the victim.

The high likelihood of some form of domestic violence constituting a significant percentage of these assaults is further borne out by the fact that while 11% were carried out by the victims' spouse or partner, another 15% were perpetrated by another household member or relative. Another common characteristic of assaults associated with domestic violence are sudden, often irrational bursts of anger towards the victim, which implies a prior relationship of some form with, or knowledge of, the victim.

In this survey, 25% of the victims of assault indicated that they believed that such sudden anger motivated the assault. Figure 19 below outlines the reasons the victims of assault believed motivated the attack.

Figure 19 Motivation for the assault (as provided by the victim)

The victims of assault also indicated that they believed alcohol abuse was directly associated with the incident. In almost one third of the incidents (31.5%), the victim reported that the assailant was under the influence of alcohol; and moreover, in 12.9% of the assaults the victims themselves reported that they were drunk at the time of incident.

A statistically significant relationship exists between the likelihood that both the assailant and the victim were drunk at the time of the assault ($p=0.000$), which strengthens the argument that assaults, and non-property-related violent crime in general, are often a result of excessive consumption of alcohol.

3.3.4 Other violent crimes: murder and sexual offences

Murder includes a deliberately inflicted death which could have happened during housebreaking, hijacking, assault including domestic violence, rape or in any other circumstance. Included in this are ritual or muti-related killings. It is regarded as a household crime, as the victim is unable to report its occurrence.

Sexual offences include rape and domestic sexual abuse, grabbing, touching, or sexually assaulting or raping someone.

In total, 14 murders were reported to have occurred in the 12-months between 1 May 2002 and 1 May 2003. Most of these cases (10 incidents) occurred in the Southern Region.

In every incident of murder, a single victim was reportedly killed. The incidents occurred in a range of places, including outside the home of the victim in the street (4 cases), and at home (3 cases).

Knives were used by the assailants in 5 cases, axes or pangas in 4 cases, and guns in 3 cases.

In 8 cases, the victim was a primary a source of income for the household, in 2 cases the victim was a parent and in one other case, the victim was a spouse of the head of the household.

The impact of these murders on the household is therefore likely to have been profound, depriving the affected households of essential income for survival and of care-givers.

Five sexual assaults were reported by respondents in the survey period.

Three of these incidents occurred in the bush near the victims home and two occurred at the victims home. In two incidents, the victim was male.

The victims of this crime reported that they were alone with their attackers at the time of the incident and that, in 4 out of the 5 incidents, their attackers did not use weapons in the attack.

Four out of the five victims also reported that they were attacked by more than one perpetrator.

One victim, an individual who was attacked in her home, indicated that she believed that her attacker was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the attack.

3.4 Experience of corruption

Corruption can be hard to define, and may fall outside the common experience of many people. Often, people become accustomed to providing a little money of a gift to make something happen or to “expedite” or “facilitate” a process. This is often not perceived as corruption. However, if any public official is required, in terms of their job, to perform a function but accepts or demands payment of one kind or another to do it, such an act is classified as corrupt. Further, paying to expedite or facilitate any process that an official should perform anyway is also corruption.

In a departure from international victim surveys, the Malawi National Crime and Victimization Survey attempted to explore the issue of corruption, specifically the experience of Malawians when seeking services from the key institutions of Malawi’s public service.³⁰

Public experience of corruption when seeking a public service in Malawi formed, after the theft of crops and livestock theft, the third most common criminal experience in Malawi in the 12-month survey period.³¹

For example:

- A total of 310 respondents (4.5% of the total sample) reported that, in the 12 months between 1 May 2002 and 1 May 2003, they had been asked for money by an official in return for a service the official was expected to provide.
- A further 39 (0.6% of the total sample) reported that they were asked to perform a service; and,

30 It should be noted that corruption in the private sector was explicitly excluded from the study, as any sub-sample dealing with the private sector would have been too small for meaningful analysis.

31 It should also be noted that respondents to questions about experience of corruption are likely to be hesitant to respond, as a positive response may indicate complicity or invoke the belief that they may suffer retribution for blowing the whistle. Corruption is likely to be under-reported.

- An additional 35 respondents (0.5% of the total sample) reported that they were asked for, or performed a favour, in return for a service the official is legally required to perform. Significantly here, 20 of these respondents were women, the only instance in which more women than men were victimised.

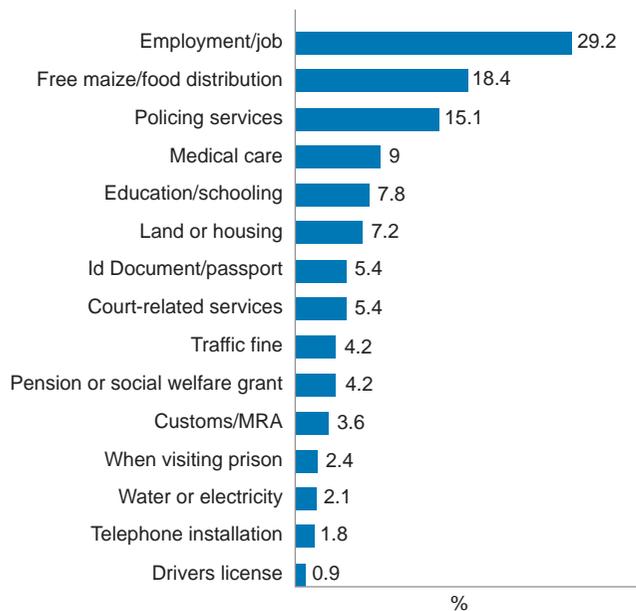
This indicates that 384 respondents (or 5.6% of the total sample) experienced a corrupt act between May 2002 and May 2003.

In terms of actual experience, it appears that those looking for employment within the public service are most likely to be asked for, or offer to pay, a bribe.

In total, 97 respondents reported that they had been asked for, or had offered a bribe at least once in the survey period in order to strengthen their chances of being employed in the public service.

Public experience of corruption is outlined in Figure 20 below.

Figure 20 Incidents of corruption (n=332)



The relatively high levels of corruption involving employment opportunities, as well as those encountered in food distribution, provide some indication of the desperation of many Malawians to access some means of livelihood and survival, and it is telling that it is in these essential services, on which households would often be dependent for their survival, that corruption appears to be most rife.

In most cases (with the notable exception of telephone installations, policing, court-related services and seeking employment) when respondents were asked for a bribe, they responded by paying the bribe. It is unclear whether those who refused to pay did so on moral grounds, or because they could not afford to. However, in most cases where the individual refused to pay the requested bribe, the official refused to help or serve the individual.

Further, there appears to be a common public perception that corruption in the public service is increasing. For instance 41.4% of the total sample reported that they believed that the level of requests amongst public officials asking for bribes or favours has increased, 37.7% believe that the level has decreased, and 20.8% believed there had been no change.