

**T**hat South Africa is faced with a serious crime problem is undisputed. It is considered one of the most violent and unsafe countries in the world, ranking 15th worst in terms of safety and security. Compared to its counterparts in the BRICS community - Brazil, Russia, India, and China - South Africa has the highest levels of crime. In terms of the country itself, Gauteng Province contributes the most in terms of crimes committed.

At the same time, South Africa is characterised by low levels of happiness. The UN's 2016 World Happiness Report ranked South Africa as the 116th happiest out of 156 countries.

Research conducted by a team from the School of Economics and Finance at the University of the Witwatersrand looked at the correlation between crime and life satisfaction, studying the perception that South Africans in Gauteng have of their life satisfaction in the face of a high crime rate. The researchers used four subjective measures of well-being – satisfaction of South Africans with life as a whole; with their neighbourhood of residence; with their standard of living; and safety/security provided by the Government in their area of residence. In addition, they utilise five crime-related measures – crime rate; being a victim of crime; day, night, and home safety perceptions.

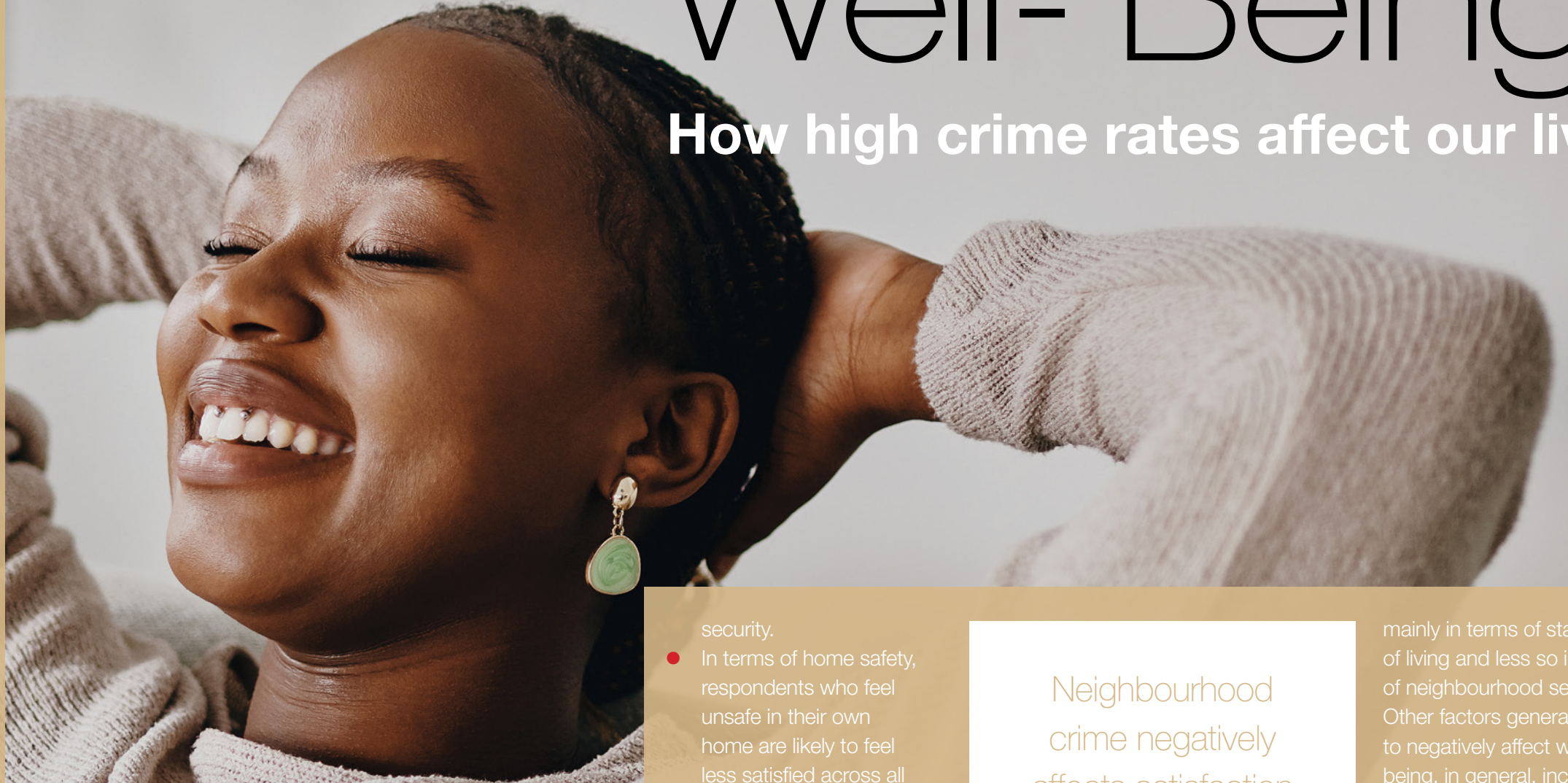
#### The effect of crime on well-being

- The study found that neighbourhood crime negatively affects satisfaction with the neighbourhood and standard of living while not affecting life satisfaction as a whole or with safety/security.
- Crime victimisation, or the first-hand effects of crime, significantly affects all measures of well-being.
- Day safety, i.e., the feeling of safety when walking in one's neighbourhood during the day, significantly affects all measures of well-being. Night safety, i.e., the feeling of safety when walking in one's neighbourhood during the night sees a greater negative effect compared to day safety and the strongest impact on safety/

Research indicates how our sense of well-being fares in the face of a burgeoning crime rate.

# Crime and Well-Being:

## How high crime rates affect our lives



security.

- In terms of home safety, respondents who feel unsafe in their own home are likely to feel less satisfied across all measures of well-being.

**A**dditional results showed that women are more likely to be satisfied with life as a whole than men and less likely to be satisfied with their neighbourhood and safety/security. Race also affects the results with Africans having a lower well-being compared to Whites, Coloureds, and Indians,

Neighbourhood crime negatively affects satisfaction with the neighbourhood and standard of living

mainly in terms of standard of living and less so in terms of neighbourhood security. Other factors generally found to negatively affect well-being, in general, include low levels of education, disability, unemployment and very low levels of household income.

Overall, South Africa's high crime levels are affecting its citizen's life satisfaction at all levels, particularly for victims of crime. As a result, the researchers believe that

policies designed to drastically reduce crime are critical. 