



SHLC

Centre for Sustainable,
Healthy and Learning Cities
and Neighbourhoods

Neighbourhood Matters in Cape Town

City Report



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Authors

Ivan Turok

Justin Visagie

Andreas Scheba

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WITS SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE
UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG



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Abstract

Cape Town is a deeply polarised and segregated city, with graphic contrasts in living standards and subjective well-being between disparate neighbourhoods. People inhabit distinctive worlds that expose them to quite different opportunities and hazards affecting their health, education, economic prospects and general satisfaction with life. Public services moderate some of these inequalities, but their reach and quality are also very uneven across the city. Some communities are deprived of basic water and sanitation services, while many affluent residents opt out of public services through private education, healthcare and security. The Covid pandemic amplified pre-existing divisions and made life much harder for poor communities by retrenching their jobs and swelling their debt burdens. Higher-income groups were better equipped to cope with social distancing measures, economic shutdowns and remote working. The priorities of affluent communities are local peace and tranquillity, rather than altruism and solidarity towards poorer neighbourhoods. Individualistic attitudes run counter to opening up local opportunities for outsiders and engaging in collaborative activities to help improve conditions in other communities. The growing spatial divides in Cape Town raise uncomfortable questions about whether this trajectory can be sustained into the future without disruptive social consequences.

1. Neighbourhood Matters in Cape Town

There is mounting evidence from around the world that people's local neighbourhoods exert a powerful influence on their well-being and life chances. The residential environments in which people spend most of their time expose them to all kinds of positive and negative experiences, opportunities and hazards that affect their health, education, economic prospects and general satisfaction with life. Neighbourhoods are also important sites of social interaction and community organisation with the potential to support those in need and to improve their sense of personal security and freedom. These kinds of neighbourhood effects are bound to be particularly important in South African cities given their stark localised differences in physical, social and economic conditions. Such large neighbourhood disparities partly reflect the unequal competition for space among households with vastly different levels of income and wealth, superimposed on the historical legacy of the colonial and apartheid systems of enforced social separation.

The purpose of this short report is to present some of the main findings from a large household survey of almost 1,000 residents undertaken across different neighbourhoods in Cape Town during 2021-22. This report offers an overall assessment of the information emerging from the survey, rather than a definitive analysis of all the very detailed data. The survey was part of a four-year-long study of neighbourhood patterns and dynamics in seven countries and 14 cities around the world (SHLC, 2022). The survey used a mixture of in-person and telephone methods and was based on very careful sampling of neighbourhoods and households to ensure representative results.

The contrasts that emerge between different neighbourhoods in Cape Town are very striking indeed. The evidence reveals that the city remains highly segregated and unequal, whether this is defined in terms of race, employment, income or other variables. Glaring differences are apparent in objective measures of household living standards and economic security, as well as in subjective attitudes, attachment and well-being. Public services help to moderate some of these inequalities, but their reach and quality are also very uneven across the city. Sections of the population lack access to the most basic water and sanitation services, as well as adult education and training opportunities. Meanwhile, many residents of affluent neighbourhoods can afford to opt out of public services altogether through, for example, private education, healthcare and security. The Covid pandemic landed on an uneven playing field. It has amplified pre-existing divisions and made life noticeably more stressful and difficult for poor communities by retrenching their jobs, swelling their debt burdens and shrinking their savings. Higher-income groups were much better equipped to cope with social distancing measures, economic shutdowns and remote working.

The deep and growing spatial divides in Cape Town raise uncomfortable questions about whether this trajectory can be sustained into the future without increasingly disruptive social consequences. Violent crime and social instability threaten all communities in one way or another. They are linked inseparably to high unemployment, concentrated poverty and alarming inequality. Crime and social unrest seem to have been worsened during the pandemic, especially in poor communities, which are plagued by gender-based violence, gangsterism and murder. High crime also deters private investment and tourism from the city as a whole because of the risks, just as vandalism erodes the value of public investment in strategic infrastructure and facilities.

So, crime is one illustration of the interdependence between different communities and sectional interests across the city – it is hard to escape its pervasive effects. Systemic problems like crime patently require a multi-faceted and a multi-scale response to limit their harmful consequences at the community level and to tackle the wider underlying causes in poverty and inequality. Getting to grips with intractable issues like crime depends on building a shared commitment to bridge the gap between neighbourhoods AND to expand the economy and jobs. The household survey reveals that some of the prevailing attitudes in affluent communities may hinder the changes required to open up opportunities to outsiders and to engage in more collaborative activities, such as the individualistic ethos and preference for peace and tranquillity at the expense of social mixing and solidarity.

2. Five neighbourhood types

The survey covered each of the five most significant neighbourhood types, or ‘clusters’, in Cape Town. The five neighbourhood clusters were selected to be representative of a wide range of income levels – from very high through to very low-income groups. Approximately 200 individuals (including their household information) were surveyed in each neighbourhood cluster¹. The sample was randomly drawn from the Census and weighted to be demographically representative of the Cape Town population. However, it did not include a few smaller clusters of more specialised neighbourhoods.

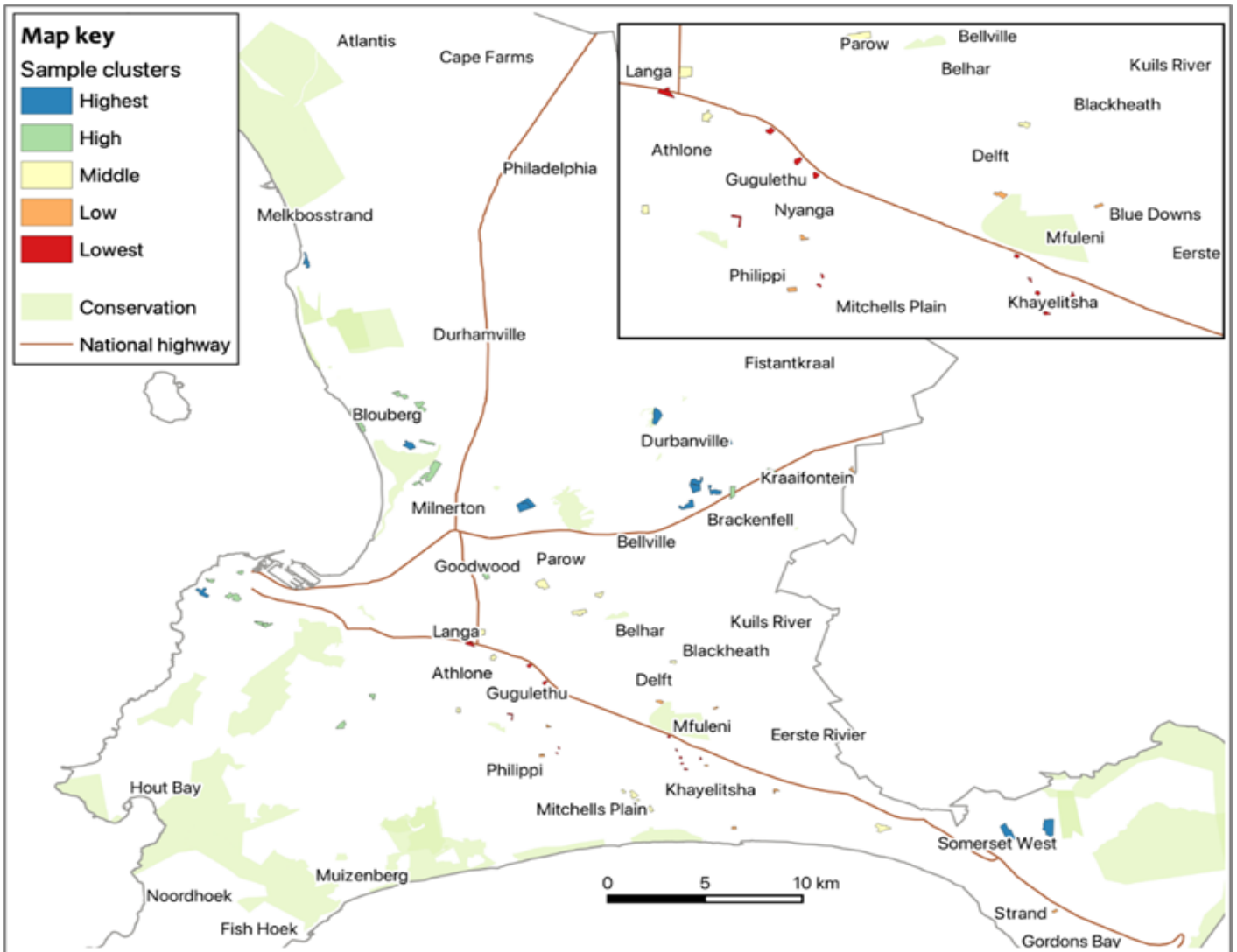
The table and map below show the main characteristics and geographical distribution of these neighbourhood clusters. This is followed by a short description of each cluster, including information on demographic characteristics², employment conditions and dwelling arrangements.

No	Name	Income group	Weighted Percentage	Observations in sample	Average Household size
1	Cluster 1: Low-density free-standing houses, mostly white, highest income	Highest	20.2%	179	2.4
2	Cluster 2: Higher-density apartments, mixed, middle-high income	High	12.6%	186	2.3
3	Cluster 6: Mostly Afrikaans speaking coloured, lower-middle income	Middle	30.9%	210	3.9
4	Cluster 8: Established townships with free-standing housing and high concentration of backyarders	Low	26.6%	211	2.9
5	Cluster 10: informal settlements with electrification	Lowest	9.8%	210	2.7

Table 1: Neighbourhood types

¹ For a further discussion of the approach to neighbourhood clustering see: Turok, Scheba and Visagie (2020) ‘Cape Town: A city still divided by race and class’. SHLC Research Summary 01. <http://www.centreforsustainablecities.ac.uk/research/cape-town-a-city-still-divided-by-race-and-class/>

² Note: the racial terminology common in South Africa is used in this report: black African (African-language speakers from South Africa and other African countries, coloured (South African mixed race and Khoisan ancestry), Indian/Asian, white and other (non-classifiable). The term black is used to refer to everyone excluded from the white group privileged under apartheid. Readers are reminded that these terms, like any racial classifications, are problematic social constructs that were created during a particular era. They continue to be used in the country, partly to monitor progress since the advent of democracy.



Map 1: Location of surveyed neighbourhoods

2.1 Highest income – Cluster 1:

This cluster is home to professionals and well-off households living predominantly in free-standing dwellings, often in leafy suburbs or well-located areas with plentiful economic opportunities and social amenities. Many of these places were historically designated as ‘white’ areas and have all the privileges associated with that. The survey shows that whites continue to dominate (60%), although some de-segregation and mixing have taken place. Black Africans, coloureds and Indians/Asians constitute 40% of all residents.

Homeownership is the dominant tenure: more than two-thirds of residents own their properties. High incomes and secure occupations give people access to formal loan finance to buy houses and other assets at relatively low interest rates. Almost 1 in 4 had received a mortgage to acquire their home - the highest proportion among the five clusters. Nearly one third of residents rents their accommodation, mainly from private landlords. Whether they own or rent, most people (93%) are very satisfied or satisfied with their dwellings. Unemployment here is the lowest among all clusters (7%). Most residents are employed in the formal sector (59%) or run their own businesses with some employees (17%).

2.2 High income – Cluster 2:

This cluster comprises mainly upper middle-income households. It encompasses inner-city areas and higher-density precincts (made up of apartment blocks) close to public transport routes. Hence there is convenient access to jobs and social facilities. Almost 40% of people rent their accommodation, again from private landlords. Housing satisfaction is high: almost every resident is either very satisfied or satisfied with their dwelling.

Despite having a large white population (40%), this cluster is more mixed than cluster 1, with black Africans, coloureds and Indians/Asians making up the majority (60%) of residents. The unemployment rate is 14%, which is almost double cluster 1, although it is still low compared with the other neighbourhood types. Most workers are in the formal sector (60%), although informal employment (11%) and self-employment (20%) are also significant.

2.3 Middle-income - Cluster 6

This is a lower middle-income, Afrikaans speaking cluster that is exclusively occupied by coloured residents. It has many semi-detached houses (32%) and flats (14%). Homeownership is the dominant tenure, partly because older municipal flats were transferred to the occupiers via post-apartheid tenure regularization programmes. Yet, a quarter of residents rent from government or private landlords.

The average household size of 3.9 is larger than that of other neighbourhood types, which range between 2.3 and 2.9 persons. This is partly driven by overcrowding inside homes and extensive renting of backyard structures. While satisfaction with dwellings is still high (87% are very satisfied or satisfied), it is lower than in high income neighbourhoods. The unemployment rate of 45.4% is the highest of the five clusters, yet residents still have slightly more assets (cars, internet, washing machine) than poorer groups. This appears to be because people with jobs mostly work in the formal sector (74%), which tends to be better paid than informal work. Almost 1 in 5 is employed informally (18%). Far fewer people are self-employed compared with other neighbourhood types.

2.4 Low income – Cluster 8

This cluster covers low-income, formally established townships with mostly black African (88%) and coloured (12%) residents. Some of these townships were specifically built for these groups during apartheid. Others were developed as part of the massive state RDP/BNG housing programme post-apartheid. This explains the high levels of homeownership (62%), despite people's low incomes. As is common elsewhere in the city, many homeowners rent out space to tenants, who make up more than 22% of residents. Unemployment is high at 40.5%. Formal sector employment also dominates in this kind neighbourhood. Meanwhile, 16% of people are self-employed with no employees and other 12% are informally employed.

2.5 Lowest income – Cluster 10

This is the lowest income type of neighbourhood. It consists of many informal settlements. More than 30% of people live in informal (makeshift) dwellings - the highest among all clusters. Unsurprisingly, almost 30% of residents are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their dwellings. More than 23% of residents rent their dwelling from a private landlord.

The population is almost exclusively black African (97%). Unemployment is very high at 43.5%. While most of the employed work in the formal sector (57%), many others work informally (18%) or are self-employed (20%). Residents of this cluster tend to have fewer assets than other neighbourhood clusters.

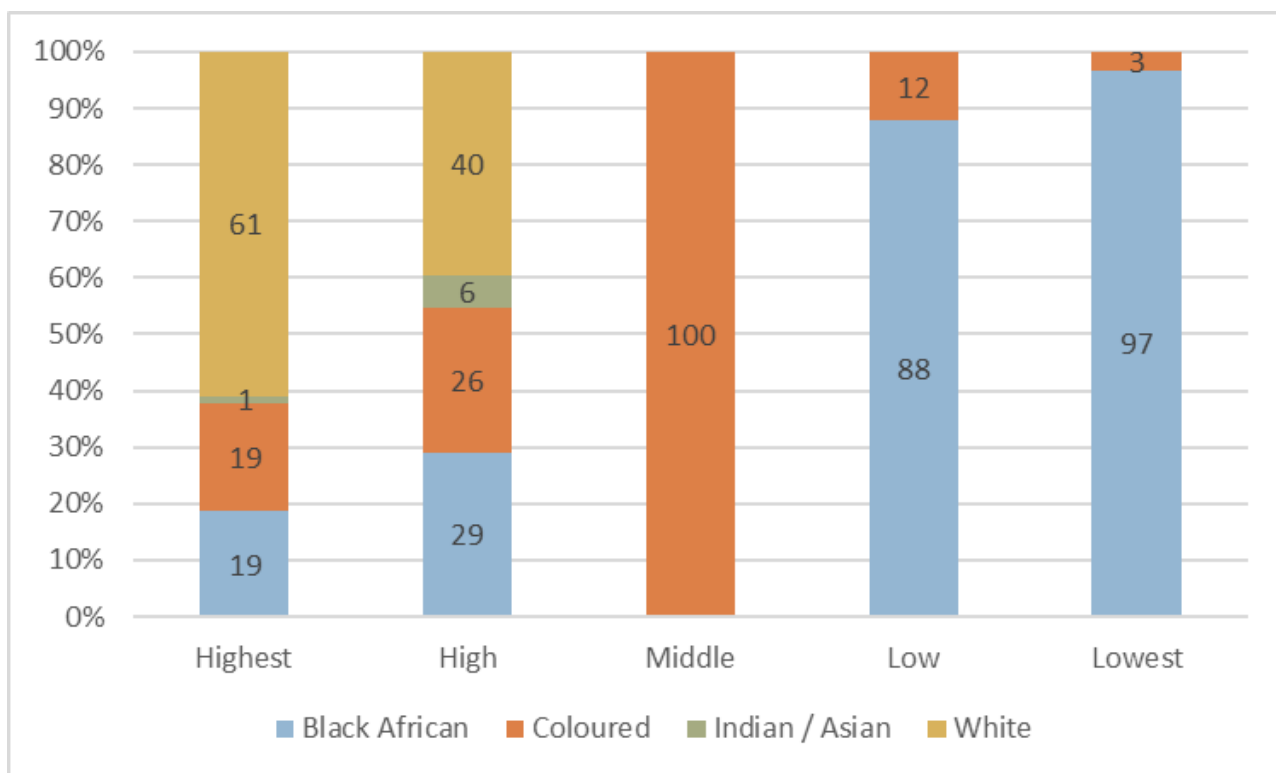


Figure 1: Racial composition of surveyed neighbourhoods

	Highest	High	Middle	Low	Lowest
Rate of unemployment	7.4	14.2	45.4	40.5	43.5
Employment Status					
Formal employee	59.2	60.4	74.2	64.7	57.1
Informal employee	9.7	11	18.3	11.8	18.4
Self-employed (no employees)	3.9	10.7	1.3	16.1	13.7
Self-employed (with employees)	17.4	9	2.8	6.9	5.9
Other	9.8	8.8	3.4	0.4	4.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Table 2: Employment type

4. Access to services

Access to basic services varies according to the type of utility and the neighbourhood cluster. The one exception was access to electricity, which was very high (between 93-95%) across all sampled neighbourhoods. Yet, it should be borne in mind that many low-income areas access electricity through informal (and unauthorised) connections, which are often unsafe and unreliable. Another qualification is that the survey did not include informal settlements that have not been electrified.

Access to water, sanitation and waste removal was more uneven across the city. Most households in all clusters accessed water inside their house, although many lower income groups relied on taps in the yard or communal standpipes. Almost 40% of residents in the poorest neighbourhoods accessed water outside their properties, which imposes a particular burden on women and children. Access to sanitation was also worse for people in the low- and lowest-income neighbourhoods, where approximately 20% and 36% respectively relied on communal shared toilets. This is a serious concern in terms of human dignity and the risks for personal safety and security.

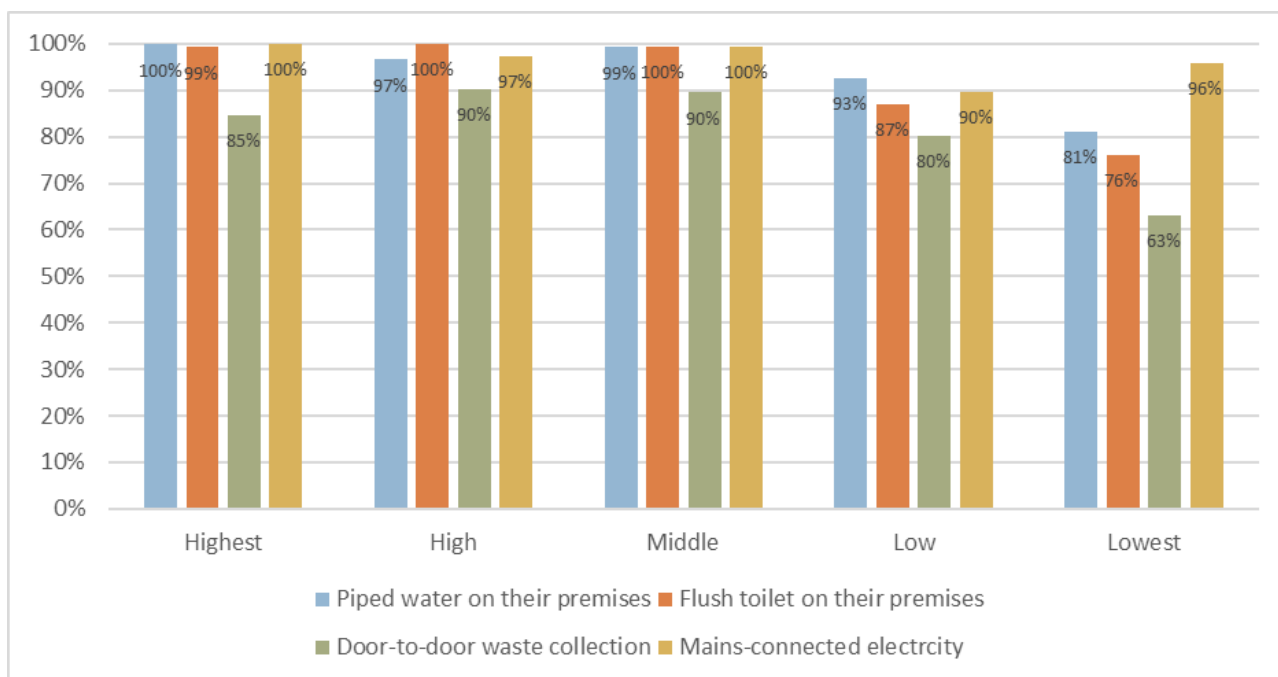


Figure 2: Access to services

5. Health

Most residents in all clusters rated their personal health as good or very good (figure 3). Similarly, most felt cheerful and in good spirits all or most of the time in the two weeks prior to the survey. Yet, the proportion of residents who gave this response varied from 80% in the richest neighbourhood cluster to 64% in the poorest group.

There was a bigger difference in the quality of healthcare services across the clusters (figure 3). 90% of residents in the highest-income areas rated their healthcare as very good or good, compared with under 60% for residents in middle- and lower-income neighbourhoods. This is a big discrepancy.

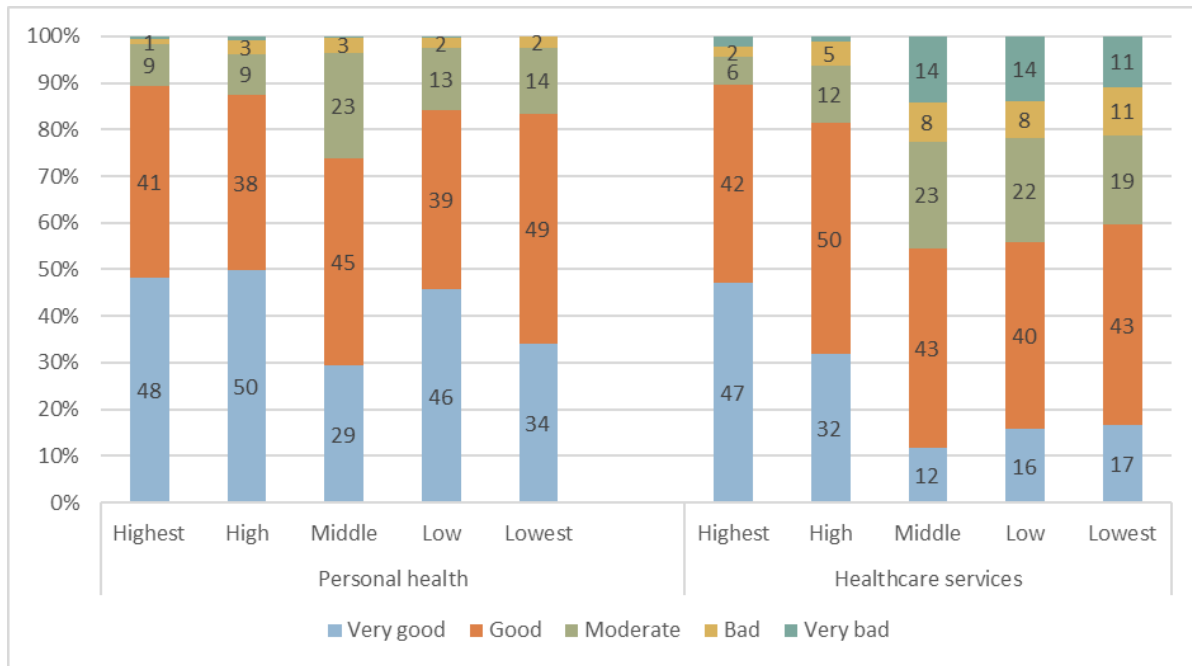


Figure 3: Rating of personal health and healthcare services

6. Education

There were modest differences between the clusters in terms of education (figure 4). In all areas, most residents were very satisfied or satisfied with their schools. This is surprising considering the marked contrasts in school quality that are well known to exist across Cape Town neighbourhoods. The survey detected a subtle difference in that the majority of respondents in the high income areas said they were very satisfied, whereas elsewhere the majority were just satisfied.

One reason for this is that private schools were important in the high-income areas, but not elsewhere (figure 4). Approximately 25% and 33% of respondents in the highest- and high-income neighbourhoods had children in private schools. This is bound to have contributed to the higher

levels of online learning during the Covid pandemic. More than 75% and 82% of respondents from the highest- and high-income neighbourhoods respectively had access to online learning in their household, compared with only 36% and 45% for the middle-income and lower-income neighbourhoods. This is a glaring difference with the potential for long-term repercussions.

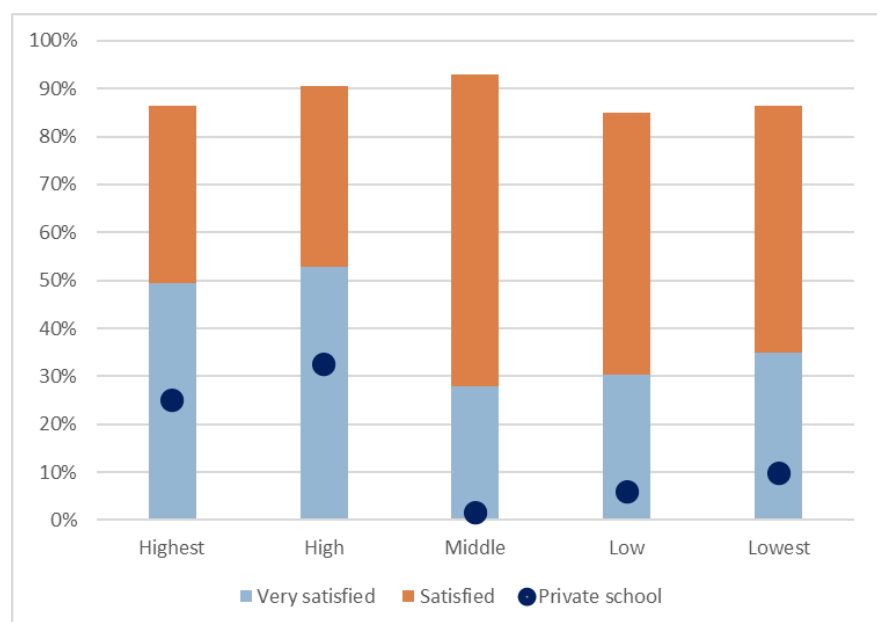


Figure 4: Satisfaction with schooling

More striking still is the uneven availability of adult education/training opportunities within easy reach (figure 5). Most residents in poorer neighbourhoods had no access to such facilities. Traveling elsewhere is bound to be costly in terms of time and resources.

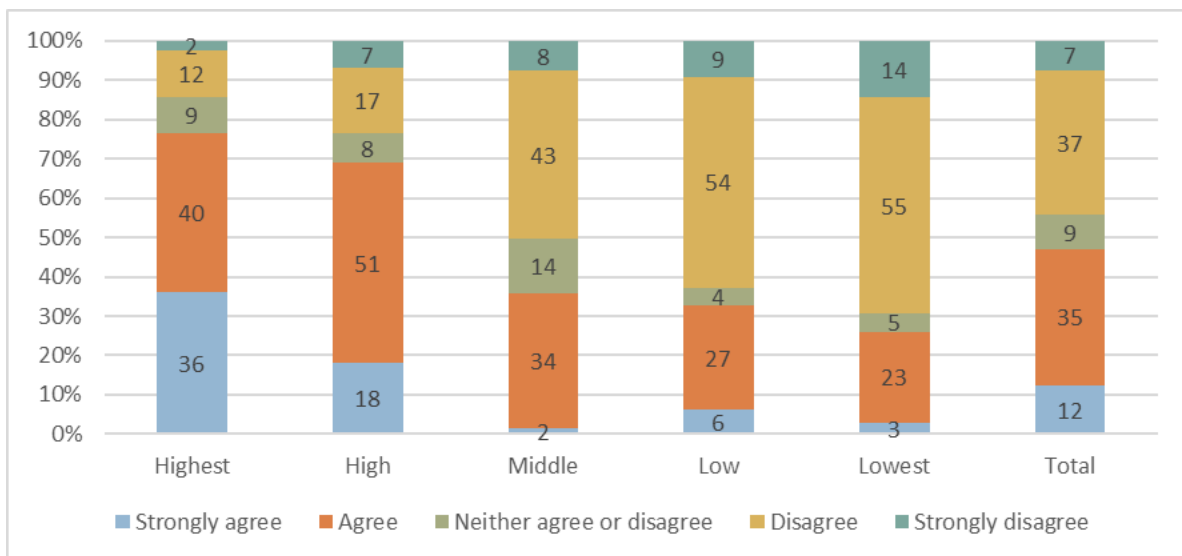


Figure 5: Adult training/education opportunities within easy reach for people in my neighbourhood

7. Neighbourhood experiences and attachment

Neighbourhoods across Cape Town are patently very different. There are many highly visible contrasts, ranging from the quality of local amenities, green parks and other public spaces, to the size and character of the housing stock, the amount of litter and graffiti, or simply the number of people wandering about. There are also many less conspicuous differences, including the strength of the social fabric and community organisation, the level of personal safety and security, and the quality of local public services.

Residents are bound to feel very differently about these contrasting neighbourhoods, and to feel more strongly attached to some places than to others. Just how marked are these attitudinal differences, bearing in mind that most people probably don't have much choice about where they live, so they must reconcile themselves to local conditions to some extent. Otherwise, constant disappointment and frustration would contribute to anxiety, depression or worse. Some residents may also have limited awareness of conditions in other neighbourhoods, especially places quite far away or inaccessible, such as upmarket gated communities.

The neighbourhood survey sought to shed light on people's experiences and attachment to their own localities. One of the main findings was that many residents of poorer neighbourhoods were indeed dissatisfied with their living environments. They also said they had limited choice of where to live. These respondents were particularly unhappy about the high level of crime in their areas. They also criticised the quality of public services. Yet, there was some mitigation for living in difficult places, including a richer social environment. So, their responses were not negative across the board.

Figure 6 sheds light on the issue of neighbourhood contentment. People were asked how satisfied they were with their area. Less than 2% of residents in high income neighbourhoods were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. This compares with nearly one in three (31%) residents of the lowest income areas and more than one in six (17%) residents of low-income areas. Meanwhile, nearly half (46%) of people living in the highest income areas were very satisfied with their neighbourhood, compared with less than one in eight (12%) of people living in the lowest income areas. These are important differences, although there are fewer dissatisfied people in poor neighbourhoods than perhaps one might have anticipated.

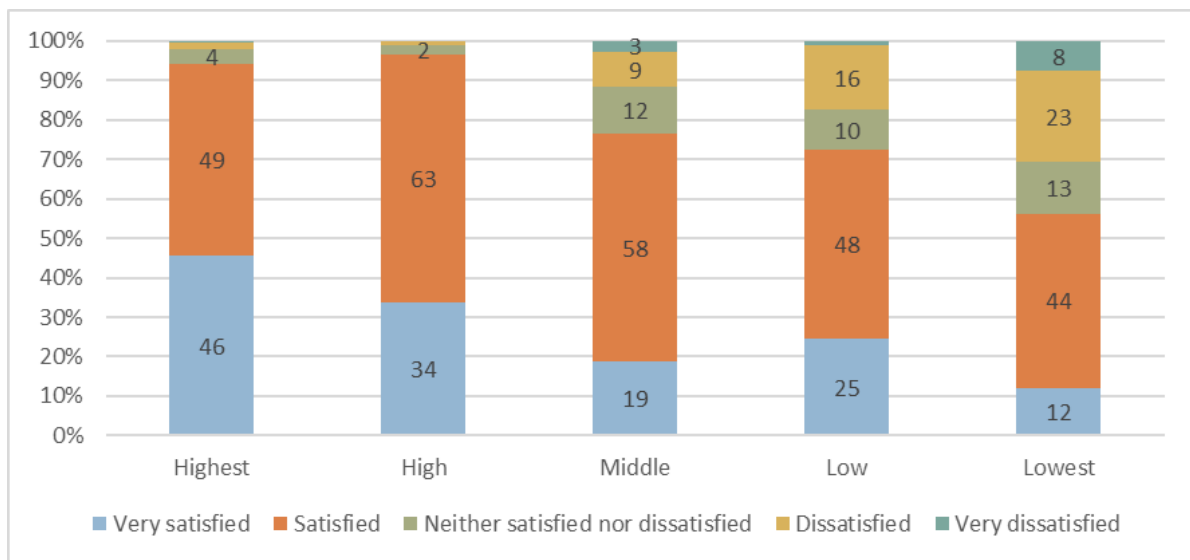


Figure 6: How satisfied are you with your neighbourhood?

Crime emerged as by far the biggest neighbourhood concern (Figure 7). This is consistent with the rising level of crime in Cape Town in recent years, including murder, robbery, property-related crime and public violence (SACN, 2020). Overall, nearly half of respondents (44%) said that crime was the worst thing about their area! This varied between 72% of respondents in middle-income neighbourhoods and 46-48% in low-income areas, but only 14% in high-income neighbourhoods.

The chasm between rich and poor areas is striking considering that the Constitution guarantees everyone’s right to live in a safe and secure environment (SA Government, 1998). This White Paper for Safety and Security stated that the skewed allocation of police resources under apartheid would be turned around so that citizens would have equal access to police services when affected by crime and violence (SA Government, 1998). Yet, this has patently not happened in practice. Police statistics show consistently that Cape Town’s townships experience among the highest levels of violent crime in the country (SACN, 2022). This includes gender-based violence, drug-dealing, gangsterism, vigilantism and murder. Khayelitsha is one of the largest townships in the country but has only three police stations, with one police officer for every 628 residents. A total of 513 murders were reported across these three police stations over the last year (Mafolo, 2022). A Khayelitsha Commission of Inquiry into policing found many serious weaknesses, inefficiencies and staff shortages, including a lack of visible policing and regular patrols in the informal settlements, even though many people lived there (O’Regan and Pikoli, 2014). A lack of subsequent remedial action by the police resulted in civil society organisations taking them to the Equality Court. In 2018 the Court found that the allocation of police resources in the Western Cape discriminated against black and poor people.

Some of the problems of crime and gangs on the Cape Flats have been traced back to the forced removals under apartheid and disintegration of long-established community networks, social obligations, loyalties and informal social controls that bound working class communities together (Pinnock, 2016). Meanwhile, many affluent neighbourhoods now employ private security companies to supplement the public police service. This seems to pay off in reassuring many residents that their areas are safe, although they may still fear being mugged or assaulted if they walk outside after dark.

All other neighbourhood concerns paled into insignificance besides crime. About a quarter of respondents (26%) said that there was nothing about their area that they disliked. This varied between 44% of high-income neighbourhoods and 10% of middle-income neighbourhoods. A small minority of residents mentioned frustration with their neighbourhood, bad neighbours and poor service delivery.

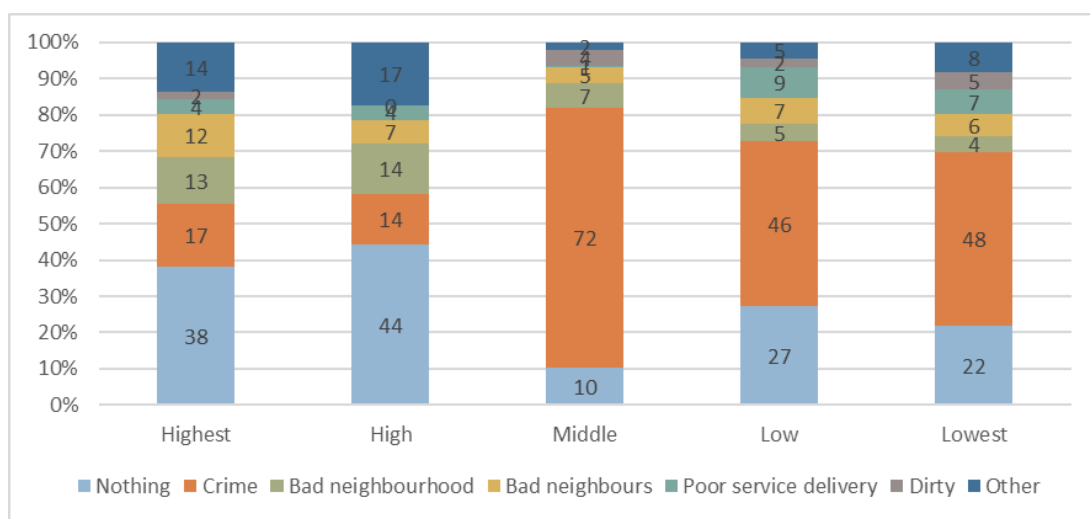


Figure 7: What do you dislike about your neighbourhood?

The evidence of differential perceptions of crime was supported by answers to a question about people’s feelings of safety (Figure 8). When asked how safe people felt within their own homes, respondents in the poorest communities were far more likely to feel vulnerable than people living in high income areas. More than two-fifths (42%) of the former felt unsafe compared with only 6-8% of the latter. Conversely, less than one in five people in the poorest communities felt completely safe in their own homes compared with about two-thirds in the affluent areas. This is consistent with more objective evidence on the incidence of crime (SACN, 2020, 2022).

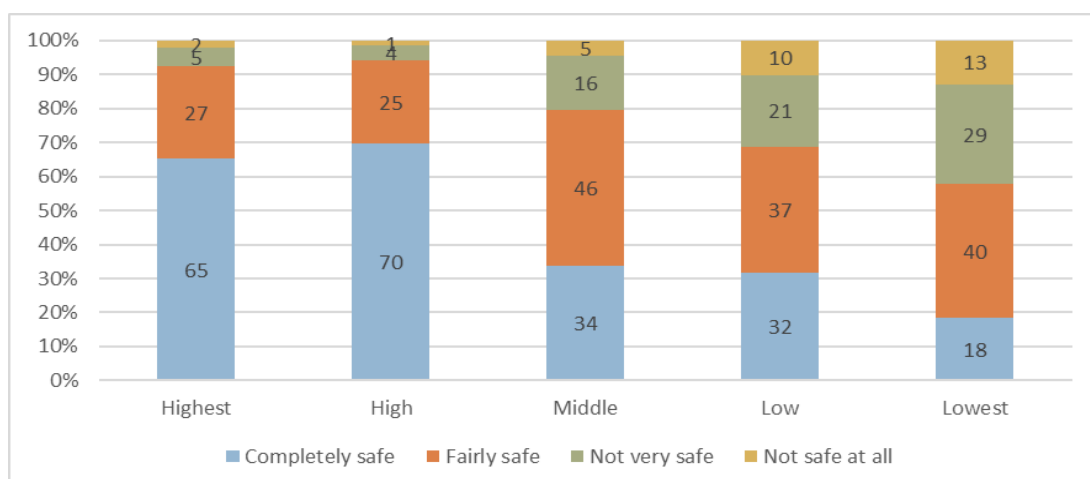


Figure 8: How safe do you feel inside your own dwelling?

Concerns about crime and safety in poor communities were compounded by feelings of insecurity and alienation among some respondents (figure 9). When asked whether people felt like they belonged to their neighbourhood, 86-87% of those in affluent areas agreed, compared only 69% of those in the poorest areas. Conversely, only 5-7% of people in affluent areas disagreed with this proposition, compared 21% of those in the poorest areas. Weaker place attachment means that people are less likely to invest time and resources in their neighbourhoods.

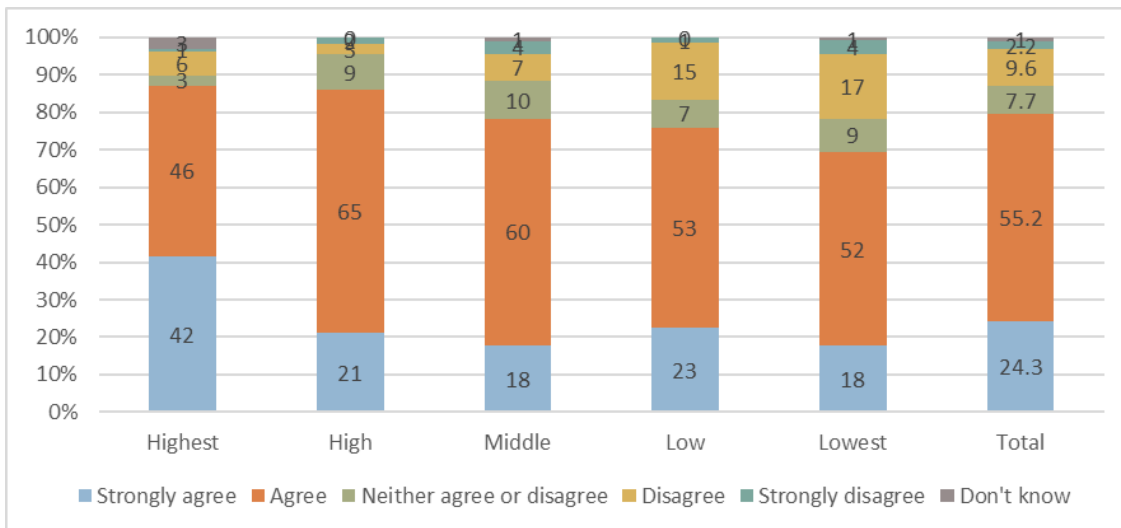


Figure 9: I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood

Feelings of insecurity and lack of belonging in poor areas were worsened by lower levels of social trust (Figure 10). When asked whether most people in the local neighbourhood could be trusted, only 44% of respondents in the poorest areas agreed, compared 59% of those in the most affluent areas. Conversely, 37% of respondents in the poorest areas felt that locals could not be trusted, compared only 12% of those in the richest areas.

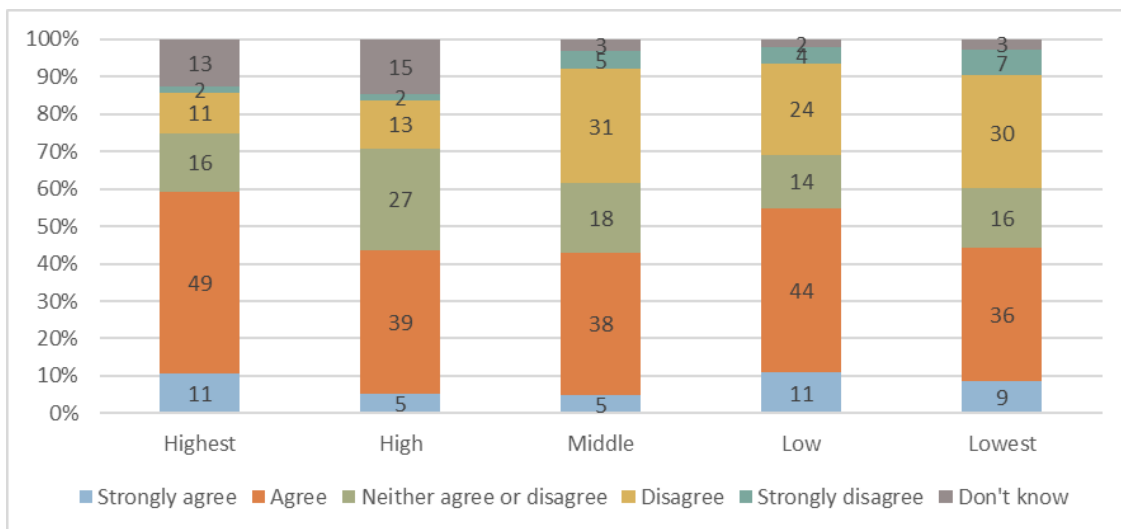


Figure 10: Most people in this neighbourhood can be trusted

The sense of vulnerability and insecurity in poor communities was exacerbated by feeling powerless to change anything in their areas (Figure 11). When asked whether people like them held any sway, about half (46-52%) of respondents in the poor areas agreed that people like them could **not** influence developments in the neighbourhood, compared only about a quarter (20-29%) of those in the affluent areas. Conversely, 34-37% of respondents in poor areas disagreed (i.e. they felt they had some influence), compared with 51-53% in the affluent areas.

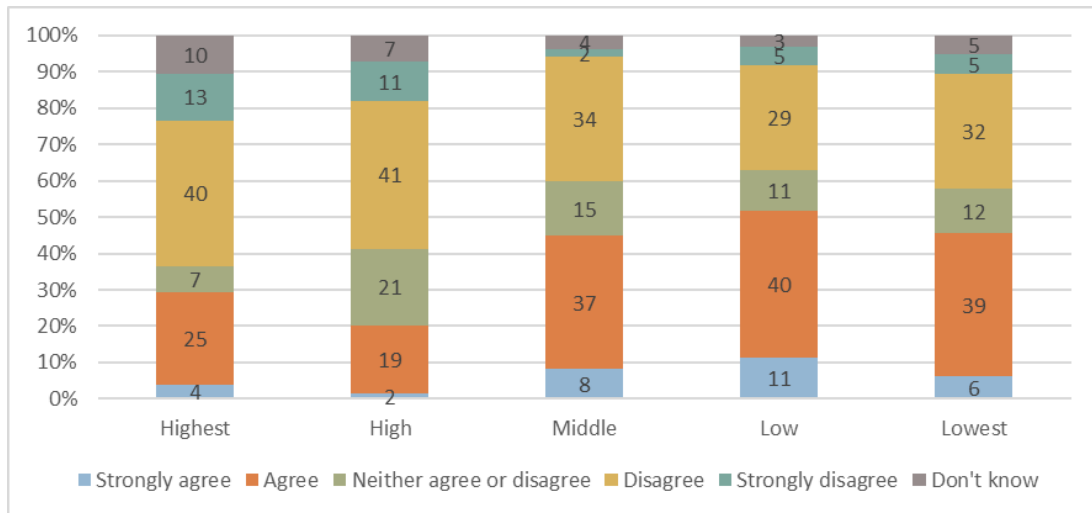


Figure 11: People like me cannot influence developments in this neighbourhood

The experience of living in low income neighbourhoods was not completely negative. When people were asked what they liked about their area, good neighbours emerged as the best feature (figure 12). More than a third of respondents (37%) valued their neighbours highly. Residents of low and middle-income neighbourhoods seemed to appreciate them most. Almost half (49%) of respondents in middle-income neighbourhoods said this was important compared with only 17% in high-income areas. This is a big difference. More than two-fifths of people in low income neighbourhoods also said their neighbours were important.

The second most important neighbourhood asset was tranquillity, mentioned by 26% of respondents. 42% of residents in high income areas said they liked the peace and quiet, compared with only 14% in the lowest income neighbourhoods. This is another striking contrast. Could the emphasis attached to tranquillity for affluent groups reflect a tendency to seek relief from the unpleasant realities of disorder and instability in the wider city – a kind of escapism? A further 15-19% of residents in high income areas said they liked the safety and security of their localities. This was much lower in poor areas. Incidentally, it is also worth noting that between 18-26% of people living in poor areas said there was nothing they liked about their neighbourhoods.

One of the messages that appears to emerge is that people in high income neighbourhoods live more insular and self-contained lives than people in middle- and low-income areas. The individualistic ethos or culture of these groups reflects well-established differences in social class. This could be why they rate good neighbours far less important than the peacefulness and safety of their areas.

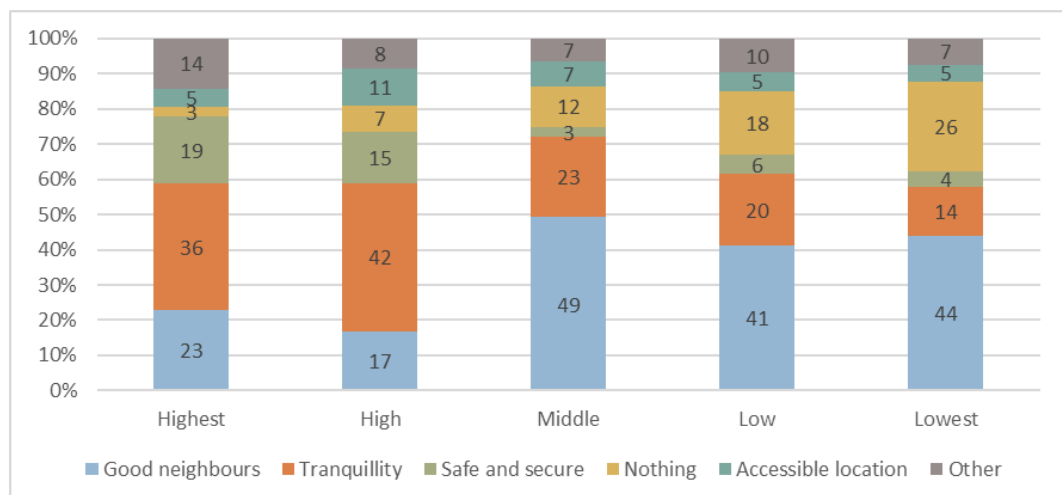


Figure 12: What do you like about your neighbourhood?

Further evidence of the importance of neighbours in poor communities emerged from a question about reciprocity (figure 13). Almost two-thirds (61-64%) of people in poor areas agreed or strongly agreed that they borrowed things and exchanged favours with their neighbours. This compares with just over a third (36-39%) in the affluent areas. Other questions about people’s willingness to work together and the extent of their communication with other residents also suggested that the social environment of poor communities was slightly richer than elsewhere, with more interaction among neighbours.

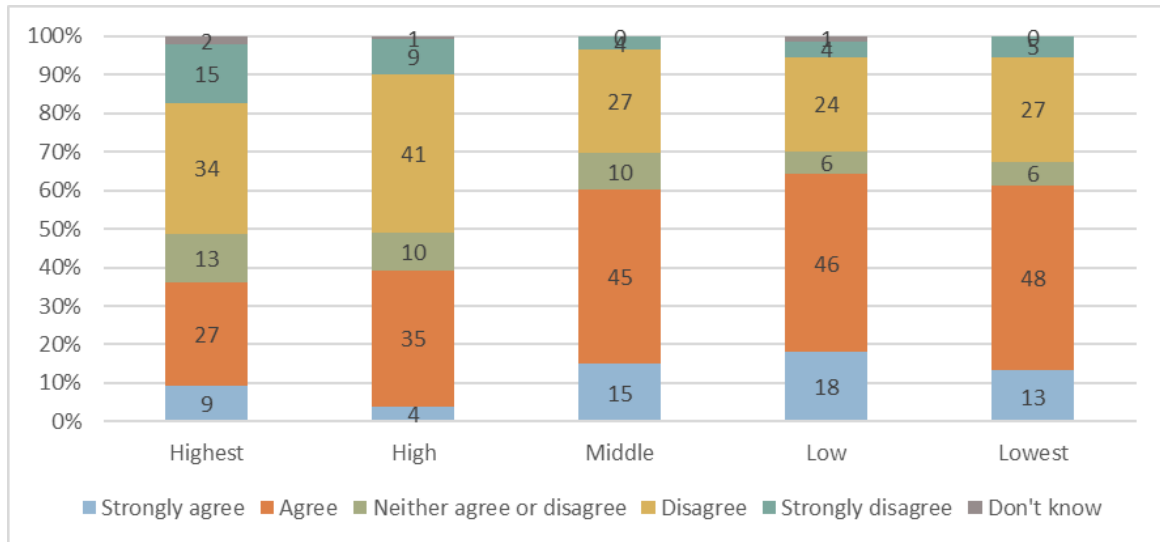


Figure 13: I borrow things and exchange favours with my neighbours

The suggestion that the community spirit or sense of solidarity in poor areas is slightly stronger than elsewhere is supported by evidence from a question about the importance of various organisations in maintaining the neighbourhood (table 3). The answers indicate that residents of poor communities tend to rate the contribution made by various state, civil society and private organisations as more valuable than the residents in affluent areas tend to believe. It is interesting that low income residents have particular confidence in religious leaders (the church), traditional leaders and healers, and local authorities. These organisations are clearly more visible and active in low income areas than in affluent neighbourhoods.

	Highest	High	Middle	Low	Lowest
Local government – officials and politicians	27.3	31.4	19.2	48.6	42.8
Neighbourhood residents’ committee or association	25.9	28.1	19.0	50.7	38.2
Property owners’ association	43.1	40.4	38.8	58.9	53.5
Estate or property management company	31.1	20.0	10.7	34.9	24.9
Charitable organisations and NGOs	22.3	18.5	7.0	24.5	19.2
Religious leaders	24.3	22.4	38.2	62.4	43.9
Traditional leaders and healers	40.4	38.2	53.2	57.3	56.0
Individuals acting on their own initiative	13.5	9.8	6.7	40.5	42.5
Local employers	32.7	34.4	31.2	46.0	42.3

Table 3: The following organisations are rated as important in managing this neighbourhood during the last two years

It has been shown that people living in low income neighbourhoods are generally less satisfied with their living environments than residents of affluent areas. They feel more insecure, vulnerable and powerless to change their situation. Not surprisingly, many of them would like to move elsewhere. This emerged from questions about the impact of the pandemic on neighbourhoods, which are presented in the next section. The answers revealed that the residents of poor communities believed that they suffered much more from Covid-19 than other areas. These residents were also much more likely to want to move away from their neighbourhoods than other groups.

Despite wanting to move to other neighbourhoods, people living in poor communities tend to be more physically confined to their areas than people living elsewhere. At worst they are trapped because they cannot afford to move to more desirable places. The survey asked people how long they had lived in their current dwelling. The answers revealed that the residents of low-income areas had lived longer than others in their current homes (figure 14). Almost half of these residents (47-50%) had lived in their current dwelling for over 10 years, compared with just over a third (36-39%) of people living in affluent areas.

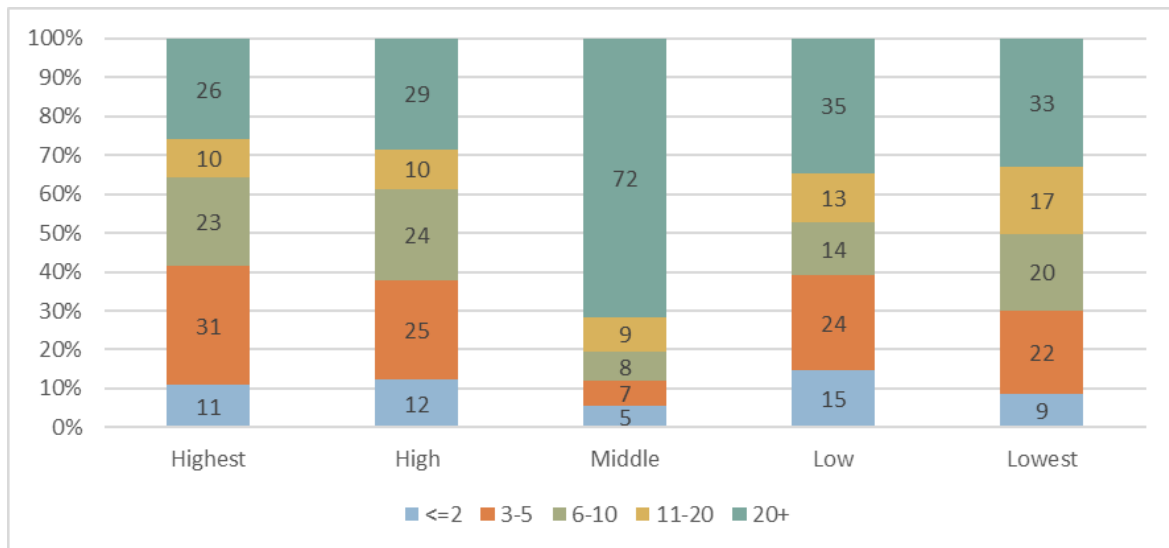


Figure 14: Number of years living in current dwelling

8. The Impact of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic was a global health and economic shock which affected the lives of almost everyone in South Africa. Yet some people and places were better positioned to cope with the lockdown and aftermath of stringent economic and health regulations. The official approach to managing the spread of the virus was highly centralised with blanket regulations that largely ignored local conditions. The geographic incidence of infections was never well documented beyond provincial totals, although the Western Cape did release data for districts which suggested that Cape Town made up more than 70% of total cases in the province (Western Cape Government, 2021). The lack of capacity for widespread testing and tracing probably blunted attempts to institute a local response to managing infections in favour of nationwide restrictions.

In fact, the government imposed one of the strictest and longest economic shutdowns in the world (Hale, 2020). This began with a total lockdown of all non-essential activity for more than a month between 27 March to 1 May 2020 after which the economy was cautiously reopened in phases.

Lockdown measures included a ban on the sale of alcohol and cigarettes, a ban on all public gatherings and tight restrictions on the movement of persons and public transport. The army were deployed to enforce the lockdown for a period of several months, especially in the townships, which became a source of obvious tension and discontent (Retief, 2020).

The economic consequences were severe with widespread job losses and business closures. Official statistics mostly ignored how Covid-19 amplified spatial disparities (Turok and Visagie, 2021; Visagie and Turok, 2021). People living in the suburbs were much better positioned to work from home, having occupations more suited to remote working as well as suitable home infrastructure and connectivity. Meanwhile, people living in townships or informal settlements tend to work in blue collar or low-skilled service jobs which can only be carried out on site.

The household survey presents a unique opportunity to explore the uneven impact of the pandemic. What does the evidence suggest about the consequences for different types of area in Cape Town?

Figure 15 shows how the pandemic impacted unevenly on employment outcomes. Nearly a quarter (23%) of working adults in low income neighbourhoods, and nearly one in six (15%) in the lowest income areas, lost their main job and became unemployed. A further 15% of adults in both areas also lost their main job but found another one. These job losses compounded the already extremely high rates of unemployment (above 40%), hunger and hardship in these poor neighbourhoods. They dealt a severe blow to vulnerable communities.

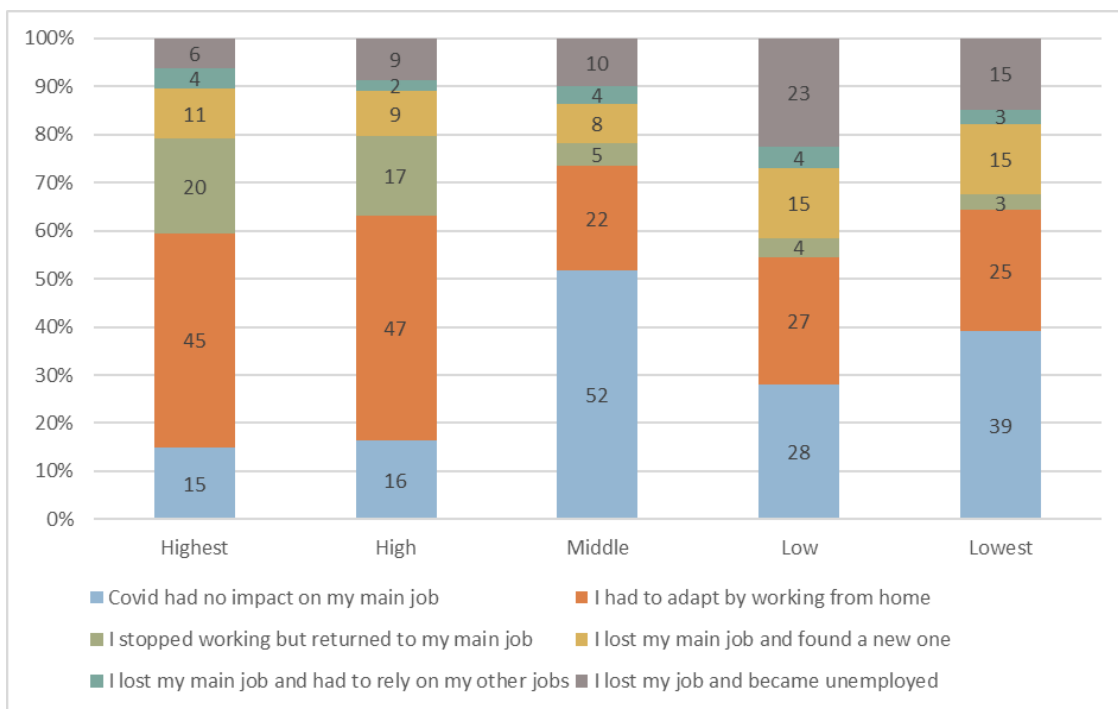


Figure 15: Impact of Covid-19 on main job

Affluent neighbourhoods also experienced a big change in employment conditions, but this took the effect of people working from home rather than losing their jobs. Almost 50% of working adults in these areas said they had adapted to the crisis by home working (figure 15). Another 1 in 5 adults said they stopped working temporarily, but were then able to return to their job. In contrast, less than 5% of adults in poorer neighbourhoods had stopped their work temporarily (many more lost their jobs permanently).

Working adults in middle income neighbourhoods were least likely to experience such disruptions, with 52% reporting no impact on their working lives. This puzzle could be attributable to higher levels of attachment to steady work in blue collar occupations and/or essential services where jobs could not be carried out at home. This might include food production, distribution and retailing, health workers and other frontline public services such as refuse collection.

The high level of job loss and instability in the poor neighbourhoods severely affected household finances (Figure 16). Nearly half (48% and 41%) of adults in the low- and lowest-income neighbourhoods suffered a loss of income, compared with less than a quarter in the middle- and higher-income neighbourhoods. Similarly, household savings were cut (52% and 41%) and household debts rose (48% and 36%) for many residents of the low- and lowest-income neighbourhoods. Household debt also increased and savings fell in the affluent neighbourhoods, but the extent of financial loss was much more widespread for the poor.

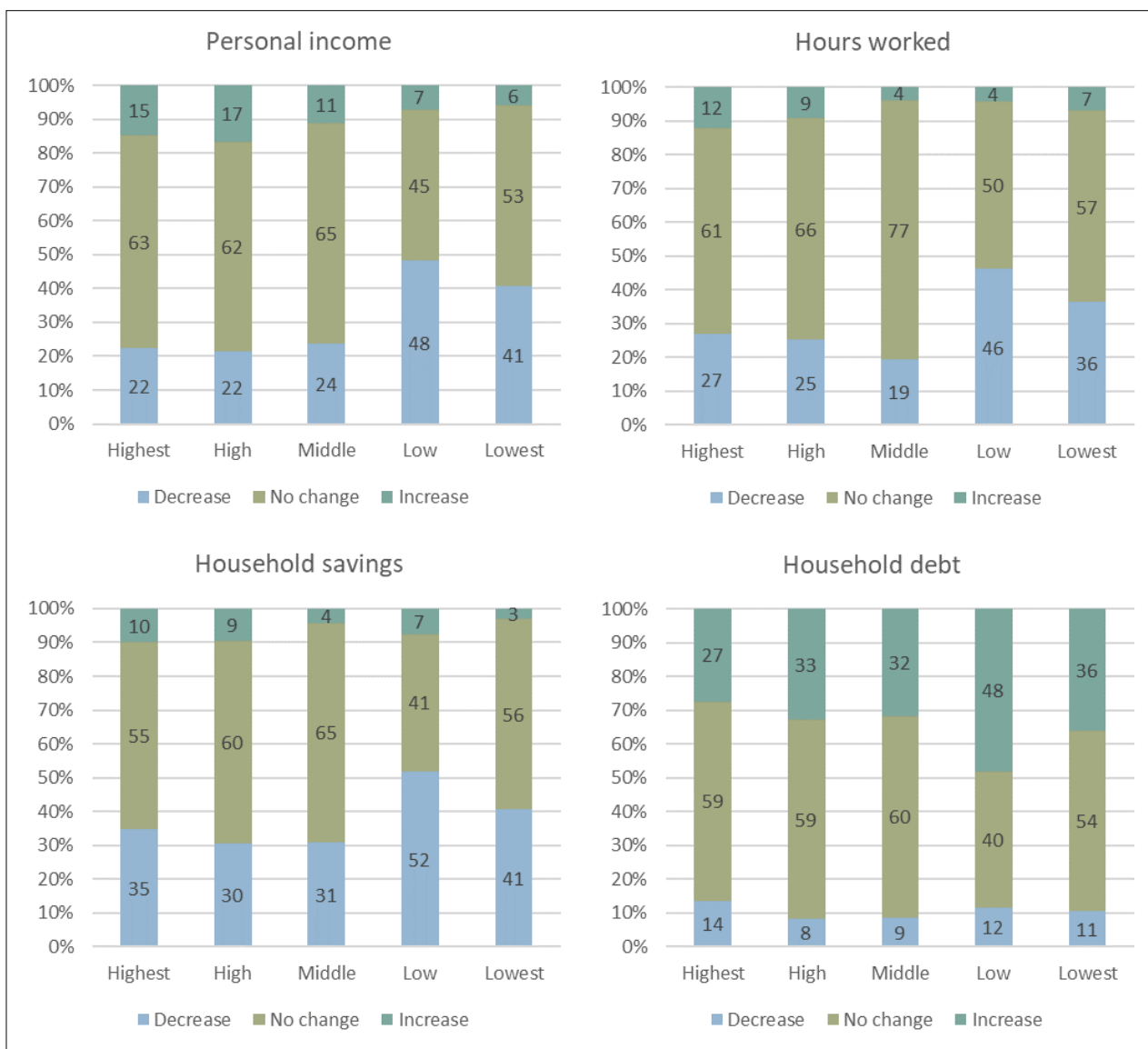


Figure 16: Impact of Covid-19 on household finances

Covid-19 presents a direct threat to the health and vitality of people through infection, disease and death in some cases. The indirect consequences for personal health and well-being have also been severe and probably more widespread through lost livelihoods, psychological stress, mental health problems and serious disruptions to social life.

Table 4 presents various subjective measures of health and well-being for adults across the five neighbourhood clusters. The general pattern is for health outcomes to deteriorate from high- to low-income areas. Some of the disparities are modest, such as the 14 percentage point difference in people who said that ‘it has been harder to look after my health’ or the 11 percentage point difference in those who said they ‘lost contact with friends and family’ between the highest and lowest income neighbourhoods. This underlies the pervasive effects of Covid on people from all walks of life and in all parts of the city.

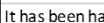




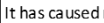
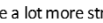
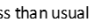


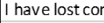

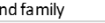


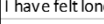
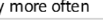



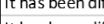
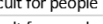
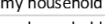
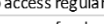
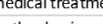
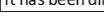
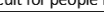
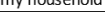
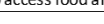
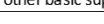
Yet poor communities reported much higher levels of health-related stress for other indicators. More than half of adults in the poorest neighbourhoods said they had difficulty accessing food and other basic supplies. It was similar story with regular medical treatment. Meanwhile, between a third and a quarter of people in the affluent neighbourhoods had these problems. Remarkably, more than half of all adults said that Covid caused a ‘lot more stress than usual’ across all neighbourhoods. This was as high as 75% in the low- and lowest-income neighbourhoods.

The final impact of the pandemic discussed here is people’s subjective feelings of attachment and the resilience of their neighbourhood. Table 5 shows that people living in poor neighbourhoods were far more likely to believe that their area had ‘suffered more during Covid-19 than others’ (about 60%) compared with about 20% in high income areas. This is consistent with the evidence reported above about the more severe impact of Covid on jobs, livelihoods and health outcomes.

People’s outlook for the future was rather mixed across all areas. Between 36% and 52% of respondents said their neighbourhood would recover quickly after Covid, leaving many who were more apprehensive. People in the poorest communities were the most pessimistic about their future prospects, whereas affluent neighbourhoods had more resources to help them to bounce back. The proportion of people who believed there was ‘strong community spirit’ in their area was fairly consistent at about 60% across the clusters.

The most striking feature of table 5 is the proportion of people who said that ‘Covid-19 has made me want to move away from this neighbourhood’. This was far higher in the poor and poorest neighbourhoods (33% and 41% respectively) than in the other neighbourhood types (8-15%). Poor communities were also more likely to say that ‘some people in the neighbourhood were harassed by others due to fears of Covid-19 infection’. A strong desire to move elsewhere is consistent with the lower levels of perceived safety and lower neighbourhood satisfaction (as shown earlier), which have probably been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Table 4: Impact of Covid-19 on health

	Highest	High	Middle	Low	Lowest
It has been harder to look after my health	 43	 35	 52	 56	 57
It has caused me a lot more stress than usual	 57	 54	 65	 77	 73
I have lost contact with friends and family	 41	 38	 53	 58	 52
I have felt lonely more often	 37	 34	 43	 55	 56
It has been difficult for people in my household to access regular medical treatment	 33	 29	 52	 55	 46
It has been difficult for people in my household to access food and other basic supplies	 26	 26	 44	 57	 55

Notes: Percentage of respondents who either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ with the statement

Table 5: Impact of Covid-19 at neighbourhood level

	Highest	High	Middle	Low	Lowest
This neighbourhood has suffered more during Covid-19 than others	23	19	41	60	59
This neighbourhood will quickly recover after Covid-19	48	53	40	52	36
There was a strong community spirit amongst residents of this neighbourhood during Covid-19	66	58	67	63	59
Some people in this neighbourhood were harassed by others due to fears of Covid-19 infection	31	21	45	42	44
Covid-19 has made me want to move away from this neighbourhood	15	8	14	33	41

Notes: Percentage of respondents who either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the statement

9. Conclusions

The Cape Town survey reveals graphic contrasts between different neighbourhoods. The city remains deeply polarised and segregated, with conspicuous differences in economic conditions, quality of life and subjective well-being. This is partly a reflection of income inequalities and the sorting of different households in the competition for attractive space. Yet public services are also very uneven in their extent and quality across the city, with sizeable communities lacking access even to essential water and sanitation services. The Covid pandemic has exposed pre-existing social and spatial inequalities in resources and working conditions, and compounded the financial stresses facing poor communities by eroding their savings and increasing their debt burdens. The suffering and hardship are likely to have lasting consequences. Meanwhile, affluent communities do not seem to demonstrate a strong sense of altruism or solidarity towards poorer neighbourhoods. Their priorities are local peace and tranquillity, they have a more individualistic ethos and they believe they can influence events within their own neighbourhoods. These attitudes seem to run counter to opening up local opportunities for outsiders and engaging in collaborative activities to help improve conditions in other communities.

Cape Town's deep neighbourhood divides raise awkward questions about the future. Crime emerged as a threat to all communities, with origins in mass unemployment, concentrated poverty and stark inequality. Crime provokes widespread fear and uncertainty, and undermines the confidence of households and businesses. It prompts existing firms to disinvest and deters new private investment in the city, just as vandalism damages and devalues public investment in social infrastructure and facilities. Crime illustrates the interdependence between neighbourhoods in the city and the impossibility of escaping the social malaise. It also demonstrates the limitations of a strategy focused narrowly on boosting economic growth or increasing neighbourhood autonomy without tackling the underlying structural problems that constrain investment, growth and prosperity.

Deep-seated problems like crime can only be resolved by building a common commitment across different groups and interests to narrow the gap between neighbourhoods and to expand the economy in an inclusive manner. This requires a more joined-up, area-based approach from government and civil society organisations, in contrast to the conventional sectoral model of policy-making and service provision. For example, it should be much easier for people living in the townships to access opportunities, amenities and facilities in affluent areas. Progress also necessitates closer engagement with, and empowerment of, ordinary people to channel their energy and resources into rebuilding damaged communities, rather than traditional top down delivery to a passive citizenry. The City of Cape Town is better placed than almost all other municipalities to take on these challenges given its superior administrative capabilities, professional skill-sets and resource base. However, strong line departments with their own agendas tend to inhibit a strategic, integrated approach to solving neighbourhood problems in partnership with other stakeholders and communities themselves.

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Get in touch

GCRF Centre for Sustainable, Healthy and Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods (SHLC)

University of Glasgow, Rm 710, Adam Smith Building, Glasgow G12 8RS

✉ shlc-info@glasgow.ac.uk

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