



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



16 Days of Activism for no Violence Against Women and Children 2024

22 November 2024

**PARLIAMENTARY
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1. Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) among children and youth in South Africa is a significant and alarming issue, with serious social, psychological, and physical consequences. It affects both boys and girls, though it manifests differently for each gender. GBV in the context of South African provinces has been deeply intertwined with historical, socio-economic, and cultural factors that continue to influence the country's youth. Apartheid left a legacy of economic inequality, fractured communities, and entrenched violence, all of which continue to affect the experiences of youth today. Many children grow up in environments marked by high levels of domestic and community violence. High levels of poverty, unemployment, and lack of education create conditions where children and youth are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, including sexual and physical violence. Deep-seated gender norms and patriarchal attitudes often normalize GBV. This includes rigid gender roles where males may feel entitled to control, dominate, or abuse females, while also stigmatizing victims of violence and discouraging them from reporting incidents.

Bullying, sexual harassment, and violence between peers are common in schools and communities. Gender-based bullying, which is often sexualized or rooted in stereotypes, is rampant, and girls are particularly vulnerable to this type of aggression. The widespread abuse of alcohol and drugs among youth is often linked to incidents of GBV. Young people under the influence may be more likely to perpetrate or be victims of violence.

2. Rape and sexual violence

In South Africa, where rates of sexual assault are startlingly high, rape is a serious and persistent problem. With thousands of cases recorded annually, South Africa has one of the highest rates of rape in the world.

According to Statistics South Africa's Child Series Volume II: Crime Against Children report, between 2015–16 and 2019–20, the number of child rape cases rose by 6.3 percentage points, while the number of common assault and assault with grievous bodily harm (GBH) cases fell by 2.1 and 3.5 percentage points, respectively. Additionally, there was a 1.4 percentage point increase in child sexual assault instances.

Because it has a substantial impact on children's mental, physical, and emotional well-being, crimes against children are a serious problem. It may take years for victims of abuse to fully

recover from their trauma. One of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the protection of children from all forms of violence.¹

While GBV is a nationwide problem, certain provinces in South Africa have seen more acute cases, driven by specific local challenges. The table below on the rape cases report by SAPS² reflects this:

Table 1: Reported Rape cases: January to June 2024

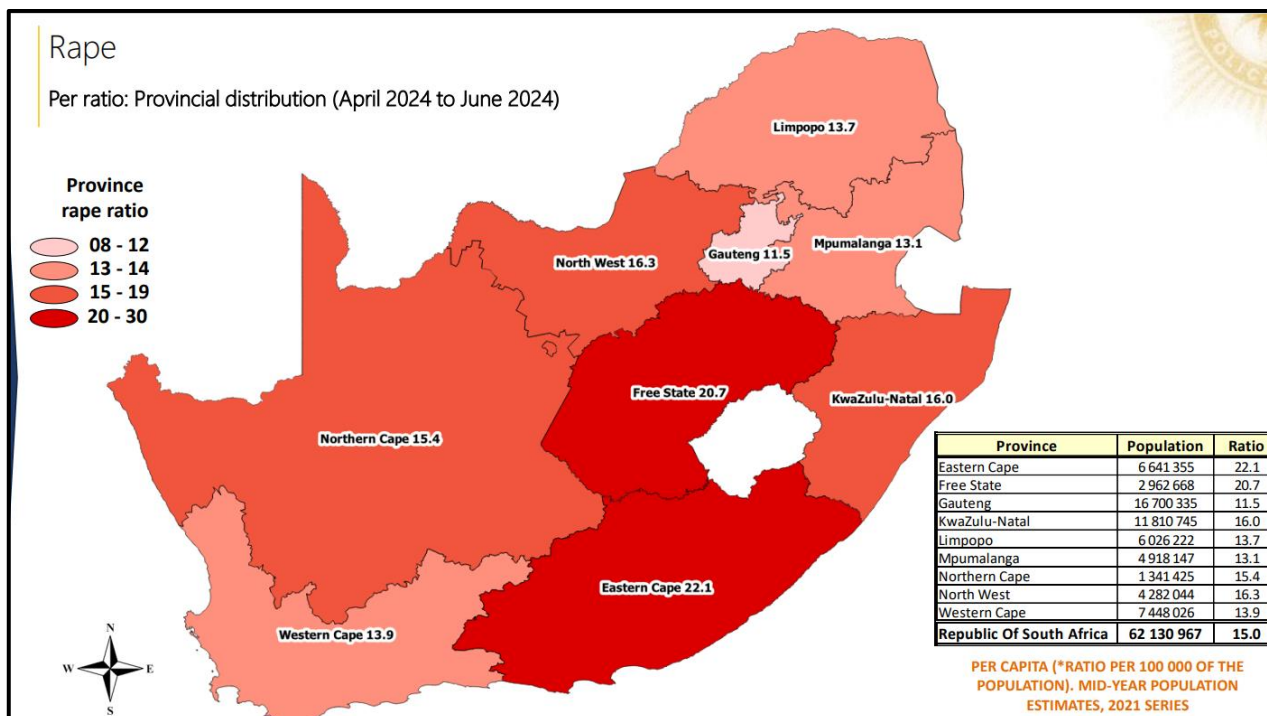
Places	EC	FS	GP	KZN	LP	MP	NW	NC	WC	Total
Private Residences (perpetrator's/ victim's family/friends/ neighbours etc.)	3 192	804	3 521	3 192	3 998	894	1 784	639	207	18 231
Public place (Street/Open field/ Recreational centre/ Park/ Beach / Parking area / Abandoned building)	1 038	452	2 122	1 275	885	559	1 109	233	267	7 940
Educational institutions (Schools, universities, college, Day Care Facilities)	61	23	96	61	56	19	10	5	49	380
Prison/ Holding cells	11	242	40	11	20	4	8	0	29	365
Mode of Transport (Bus / Car / Plane / Boat / Ship / Taxi etc)	23	0	45	23	90	37	17	16	101	352
Liquor outlets (Shebeen/ Tavern / Pub/ Night club / Bottle Store)	17	11	192	17	51	26	3	8	23	348
Business premises (e.g. Mall/ restaurants /workplace / Office Park / Entertainment Centre e.g. Movie Theatre, Gambling Facility)	42	44	53	42	42	16	5	4	12	260
Leisure premises (Hotel / Guest house / BnB/ Motel / Holiday resort)	9	8	60	9	36	9	3	0	33	167
Agricultural Land / Farm / Plot / Small Holding	52	0	4	52	3	2	0	0	48	161
Railway Premises e.g. Track / Station	5	0	49	5	5	1	0	0	11	76
River / Lake / Pool / Dam	14	0	7	14	35	0	0	0	0	70
Bus Stop / Taxi Rank	12	0	2	12	13	2	0	0	2	43
Mining Area	0	0	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	18
Government Premises / Building e.g. Home Affairs	0	0	7	0	0	2	2	0	5	16
Petrol Station	0	0	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	5

¹ Statistics South Africa (2024). Child Series Volume II: Crime against children

² As extracted from SAPS Q4 of 2023/24 and Q1 of 2024/25: Public Recorded Crime Statistics

Rape and sexual violence are serious issues in South Africa. Based on the SAPS Crime Statistics 2024/25, provinces like the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and Limpopo have reported significant incidents of rape. Most reported cases occur in homes of families and friends or in public places such as streets, parks, beaches or parking areas.

In terms of incidence rates, according to statistics released by the South African Police Services (SAPS), the highest incidents of rape are reported in the Eastern Cape (22.1 incidents per 100 000 persons) and the Free State (20.7 incidents per 100 000 persons).³ This is compared to a national ratio of 15 incidents per 100 000 persons, signalling that while urgent intervention is required as a whole, these provinces require particular attention.



Insofar as sexual offences overall is concerned, the latest SAPS statistics indicate that the highest rates of sexual offences have been reported in Gauteng, followed by KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape.⁴

Table 2: Highest incidence of reported sexual offences: April – June 2024

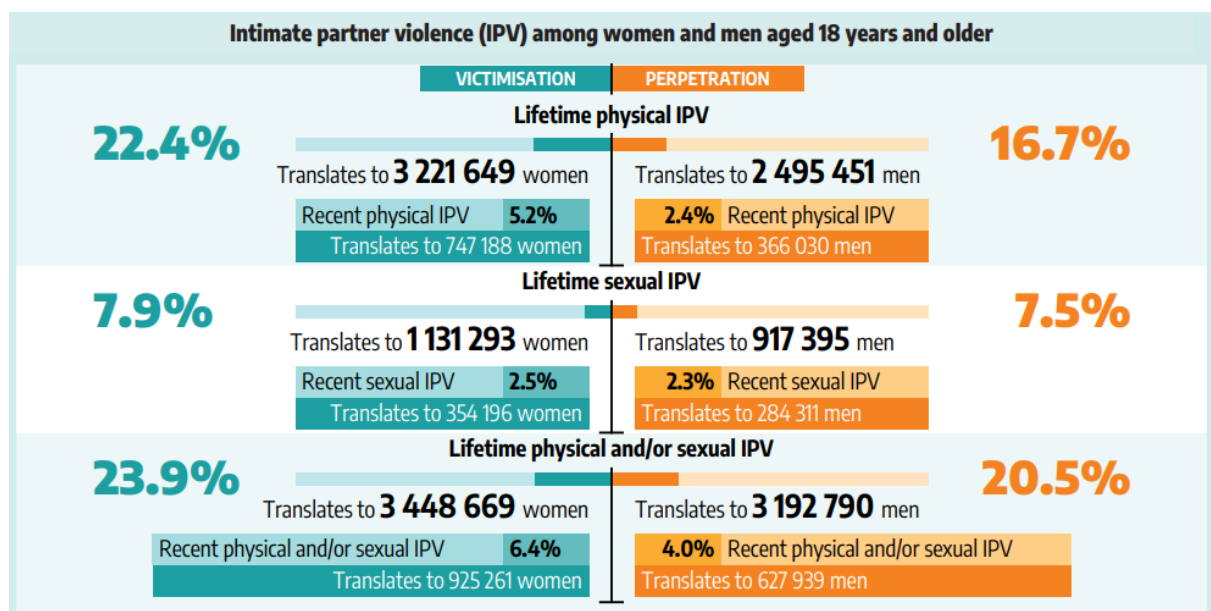
Province	Number of reported sexual offences cases	% contribution to national figure	These 4 provinces constitute nearly 70% of sexual offences cases
Gauteng	2 379	20.6%	
KwaZulu-Natal	2 315	20.0%	
Eastern Cape	1 763	15.0%	
Western Cape	1 472	12.7%	

³ SAPS Q1 of 2024/25: Public Recorded Crime Statistics

⁴ Ibid. at 3

3. Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence

A recently released report on gender-based violence in South Africa notes that “Overall, 23.9% of ever-partnered women reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by a partner in their lifetime. This translates to an estimated 3 448 669 ever-partnered women who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime.”⁵



During the first quarter of 2024/25, more than 29 500 incidents of domestic violence related crimes were reported. More than 77% of these incidents were perpetrated against women. Gauteng (7 536), the Western Cape (7 080) and KwaZulu-Natal (4 923) have the highest number of reported incidents. Common Assault is the highest category of domestic violence related crime against women, with 12 185 reported incidents, followed by assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm (4 748 reported cases). In addition, 3 254 incidents of malicious damage to property were also reported.

In terms of perpetrators of these crimes, President Ramaphosa stated the following⁷:

Men are the perpetrators of gender-based violence and it is therefore men that need to change. It is men – as husbands and partners, as fathers, colleagues, peers and classmates – who need to consider their own attitudes towards women and girls.

To give meaning to 16 Days of Activism we now need to engage the men of South Africa in a dialogue about their responsibility towards women and toxic masculinity. All of society should be mobilised to organise these men’s dialogues.

⁵ Zungu NP., Petersen Z., Parker W., Dukhi N., Sewpaul, R., Abdelatif N., Naidoo I., Moolman B., Isaacs D., Makusha T., Mabaso M., Reddy T., Zuma, K. and The SANSHEF Team (2024). The First South African National Gender-Based Violence Study, 2022: A Baseline Survey on Victimisation and Perpetration. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council

⁶ Ibid at 5. GBV Study, Factsheet 1

⁷ Ramaphosa, C. (2022). Men are the problem, but they should be part of the solution.

4. Concluding Comments

Oversight and interventions related to GBV must include looking at the role of men as perpetrators as well as agents of change in addressing violence against women and children. Oversight should also be concentrated on the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and Limpopo specifically as it related to SAPS and departments related to justice, health and social development.

As previously noted, South Africa has one of the highest rates of reported rapes in the world, and these provinces are no exception. Gender-based violence, including rape, is often exacerbated by issues such as limited access to justice, poor healthcare systems for survivors, and inadequate support services. Efforts are being made through government programs and NGOs to address these issues, but the problem remains deeply entrenched in many communities.

Equality and socio-economic progress are closely linked to safe communities. A safe and secure nation promotes economic development and change, which makes it a significant factor in tackling the triple problem of unemployment, inequality, and poverty. NDP 2030: The National Development Plan envisions a crime-free South Africa where people live in safety and enjoy their communities. To do this, a functional criminal justice system is necessary, wherein law enforcement, the courts, and correctional facilities collaborate to guarantee that suspects are apprehended, charged, found guilty, and safely imprisoned and rehabilitated. Strengthening the criminal justice system, professionalizing the police force, improving prisoner rehabilitation and effective reintegration into society, and lowering the rate of repeat offenders are all necessary to achieve this.⁸

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⁸ Statistics South Africa (2024). Child Series Volume II: Crime against children



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