



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



CRIME STATISTICS ANALYSIS: QUARTER 3 (2025/26)

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CRIME STATISTICS ANALYSIS:

Quarter 3 (2025/26)

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While the national trends for most violent and property crime continue to head in the right direction, crime remains unacceptably high and continues to devastate many lives and communities.

Acting Minister Firoz Cachalia, 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

The Acting Minister of Police released the third-quarter crime statistics for the 2025/26 financial year (1 October to 31 December 2025) on Friday, 20 February 2026. This paper analyses recent shifts in crime statistics to assess the crime situation in South Africa. While several high-volume categories, including robbery and property-related offences, continue to decline from their 2023 peak, other offences, such as attempted murder, kidnapping and commercial crime, remain elevated. The overall picture is therefore mixed: there are promising signs of stabilisation in certain areas, but structural pressures persist in those linked to organised, economically motivated activity.

Crime reduction is a key priority of the 7th Administration in order to improve public safety and restore confidence. In response to the third quarter crime statistics, the Acting Minister of Police notes that there is a “sense of cautious optimism in relation to overall national crime trends”.¹ Although recent figures suggest improvement in selected categories, sustained reductions in other categories will require more than law enforcement alone. The persistence of firearm-driven murders, kidnapping linked to extortion, and rising commercial crime points to deeper structural and organised dimensions.

Furthermore, recorded crime statistics represent cases reported to and registered by the police. They do not measure the full scale of crime and are influenced by reporting behaviour, enforcement patterns and how crime is classified. Changes in recorded figures may therefore reflect shifts in policing intensity or public willingness to report, rather than underlying prevalence alone. For this reason, police statistics should be interpreted alongside complementary data sources, including victimisation surveys and health-sector mortality data.

The third-quarter crime statistics indicate an overall 6.7% decrease in contact crimes compared with the same period in the previous financial year. In contrast, crimes detected as a result of police action increased by 20.1% over the same period. This increase reflects intensified police activity and enforcement efforts.

2. OVERALL CRIME STATISTICS

Contact crime **declined by 6.7%** this quarter (-12 682 cases). This continues the downward movement that began after the 2023 peak. Over the past five years, contact crime rose steadily from 2021, reached its highest point in 2023, then began to ease in 2024 and 2025. The current level is clearly below the 2023 high, but still above the 2021 baseline. Although all provinces recorded reductions, Gauteng, Western Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal account for the largest share of cases and therefore drive the national trend.

Community-reported serious crimes in quarter 3 across the 5-year series remain unstable, with a broad, uneven contraction driven primarily by sustained declines in murder, property, and robbery-related offences. Figure 1 illustrates community-reported trends, but as shown in the subsequent sections, it obscures granular patterns of concern.

¹ Cachalia, F. 2026. *Release of the third quarter crime statistics*. Speech, 20 February. South African Government. Available at: <https://www.gov.za/news/speeches/acting-minister-firoz-cachalia-release-third-quarter-crime-statistics-20-feb-2026>

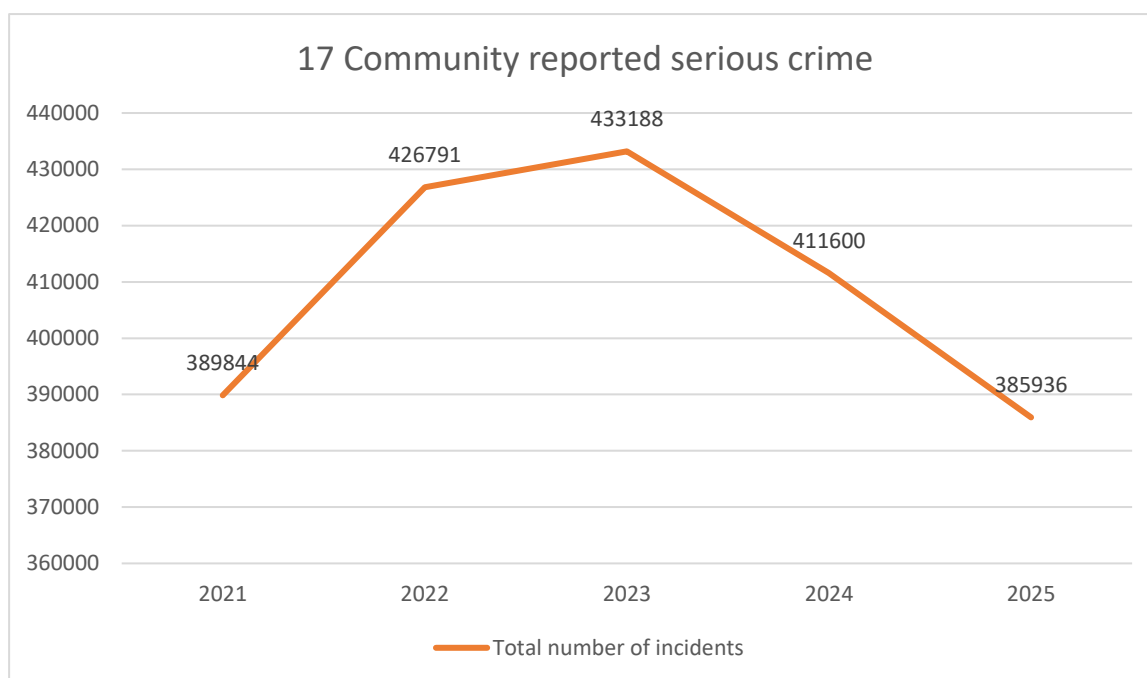


Figure 1: Crime rate of 17 community reported serious crime during the third quarter from 2021 to 2025.
Source: Adapted from SAPS Quarterly Crime Statistics

The total community-reported serious crime is lower than it was five years ago, but the decline is not uniform across all crime types. In observing the quarter 3 pattern over a five-year period, serious crime peaked in 2023 and has since trended downward, returning to levels closer to those reported in 2021. A similar pattern was observed during quarters 1 and 2. All provinces recorded declines across the three months in quarter 3, with only the Northern Cape recording an increase (a similar pattern is observed in quarter 2). Although this reflects a genuine reduction in some crime categories, it is not a general improvement across all major crime types.

3. SELECTIVE CATEGORIES OF CONTACT CRIME: A GRANULAR VIEW

This section provides a granular analysis of the serious contact crime category. The third-quarter data reflect a mixed but broadly declining pattern across serious violent crime. Murder and aggravated robbery continue to decline from their 2023 peak, and sexual offences show a modest decrease. By contrast, attempted murder and kidnapping remain elevated.

○ **Murder**

Murder rose sharply toward a peak in 2023/24, and has since declined for two consecutive years, bringing levels below those observed in 2021/22 (see Figure 2). Although this marks a positive shift from the 2023 peak, it is too early to conclude that a sustained long-term downward trend has been established.

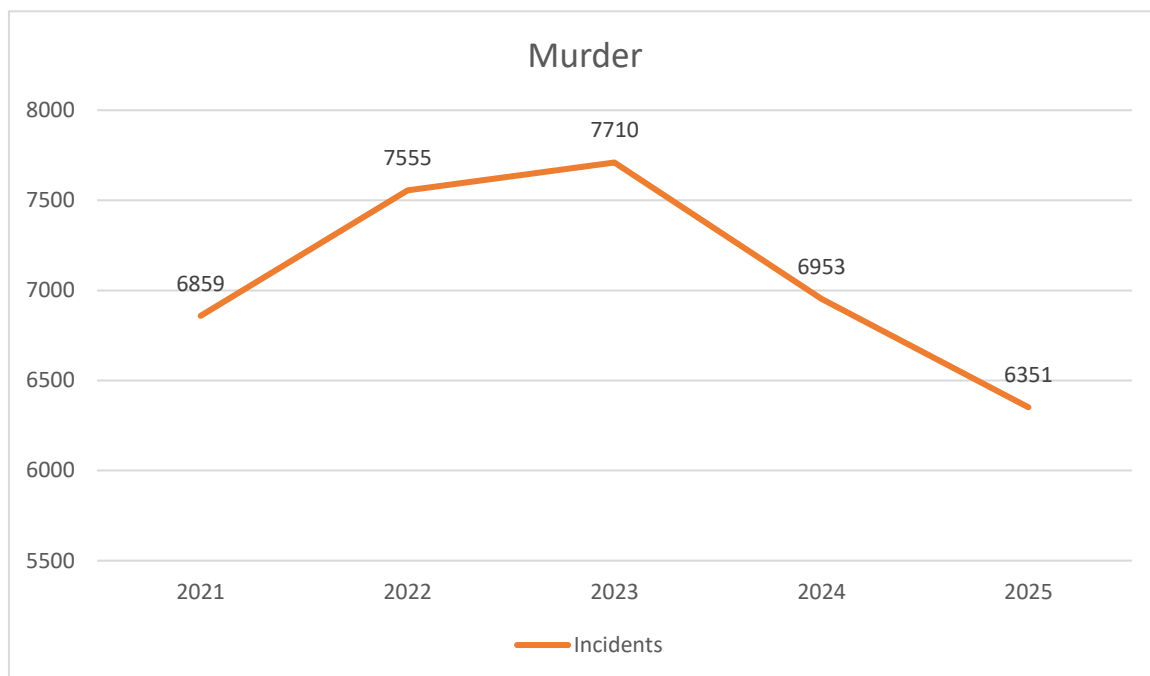


Figure 2: Murders recorded between October and December, from 2021 to 2025. Source: Adapted from SAPS Quarterly Crime Statistics

Nationally, murder declined by 8.7% this quarter (-602 cases). The decrease is driven by Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape, and the Eastern Cape. In Gauteng, murder levels have fallen slightly below those recorded in 2021/22. Only Limpopo (5.9%) and the Northern Cape (2.8%) recorded increases. However, their totals are modest relative to the high-volume provinces, so they do not offset the overall decline.

Murder

Per ratio: Provincial distribution (October 2025 to December 2025)

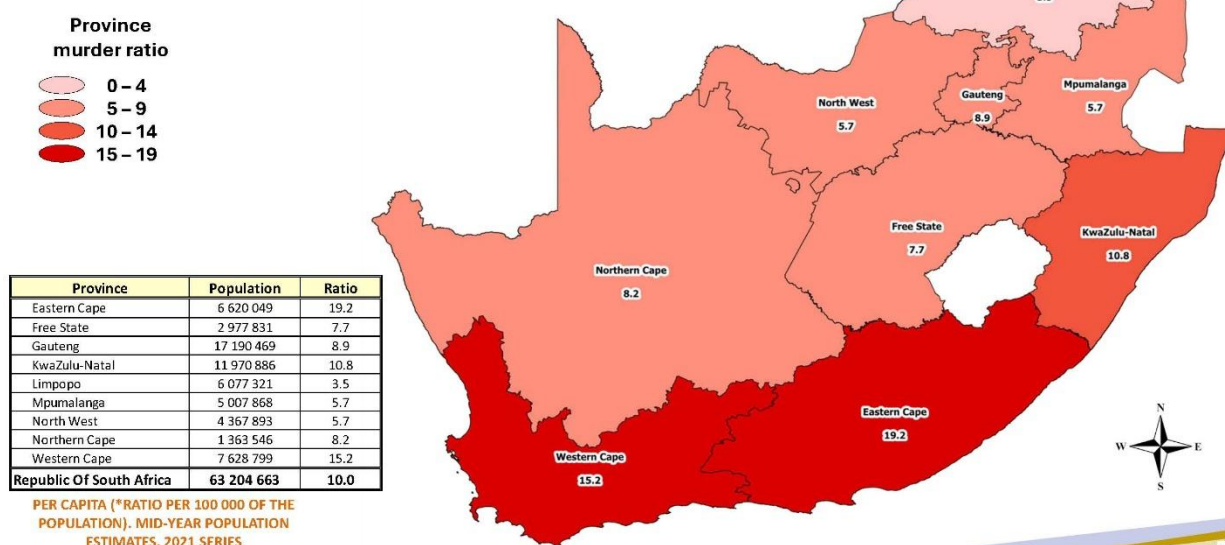


Figure 3: Murder ratio as per provincial distribution from October to December 2025. Source: Reproduced from SAPS Quarterly Crime Statistics presentation

Figure 3 illustrates the variation in the murder ratio across provinces.² The **Eastern Cape and Western Cape** record the highest ratios, well above the national average of 10 per 100,000. KwaZulu-Natal is slightly above average, while Gauteng and the Northern Cape sit just below it. The lowest ratios are found in Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West. Overall, the murder remains concentrated in the southern coastal provinces.

Notably, 10 of the 30 highest-crime stations for murder are in the City of Cape Town district, of which 6 are in the top 10 highest crime stations for murder in South Africa. These stations accounted for 500 murders during this period, or 8% of the national total. Just over **4 out of every 10 murders** in the Western Cape province took place in the Cape Town District (43%). **Mfuleni remains the station with the highest number of murders, as in Quarters 1 and 2, accounting for approximately 1.2% of all murders nationally.** At this station, 75 murders were recorded in three months, which is a high concentration for a single area.

Interpersonal conflict remained the dominant cause of murder, while vigilantism, robbery, gang activity, and targeted retaliation were markedly dominant drivers. Vigilantism-related murders constitute the second-largest category of interpersonal killings. This is concerning, as it reflects the continued reliance on mob justice rather than on formal criminal justice processes. Sector-specific violence, including in the taxi industry, hijackings, and illicit mining, remains comparatively modest, with 103 incidents recorded. Although this represents a small share of total murders, it is significant, as these incidents are concentrated in high-risk criminal markets where violence is strategic and competitive.

Just over half of all murders (51%) occurred in public spaces, followed by private residences (29%), while just under 4% took place at liquor outlets. This pattern has remained largely consistent across the 2025/26 financial

² SAPS 2025. *Crime statistics 2025/2026: Third quarter (October to December 2025) presentation*. Pretoria: South African Police Service. Available at: https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/2025/2025-2026_-_3rd_Quarter_WEB.pdf

year, demonstrating a relatively stable spatial distribution of murder closely linked to routine social interaction. It also highlights the role of alcohol in violent incidents.

Firearms remain the dominant weapon in murder, with 2,561 incidents, more than double the number involving knives (1,059), followed by other sharp instruments (526). Firearms account for 40% of all murders this quarter, emphasising their central role in lethal violence. Firearm-related murders are particularly concentrated in Gauteng (668), Western Cape (644) and KwaZulu-Natal (612), which together account for the vast majority of such cases. Knives are the second most common weapon and are more widely distributed across provinces than firearms. However, the Eastern Cape accounts for a disproportionately large share with 298 incidents (28% of all knife-related murders), followed by the Western Cape (197) and KwaZulu-Natal (191). The Northern Cape presents a distinct pattern: knife-related murders are comparable in scale to some larger provinces, yet firearm-related killings are markedly low. This shows that lethal violence in the province is far less driven by firearm availability than in any of the other provinces.

○ **Attempted murder**

Although murder has declined, attempted murder increased by **2.5% in quarter 3**. Attempted murder rose steadily from 2021 to 2023, reaching a high point in 2023/24. The slight decrease observed in the same quarter of the previous year has now been reversed (see Figure 4). The causative factors and places of occurrence for attempted murder closely mirror those for murder, reflecting similar underlying dynamics.

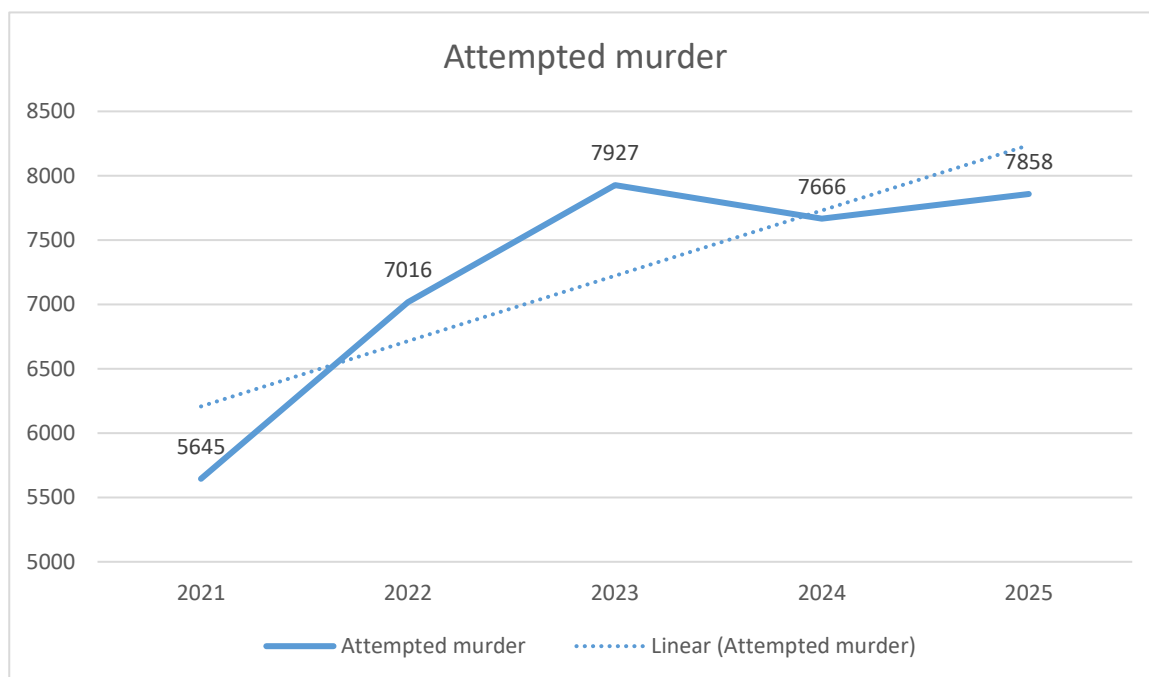


Figure 4: Attempted murders recorded between October and December, from 2021 to 2025. Source: Adapted from SAPS Quarterly Crime Statistics

○ **Sexual offences**

Compared to other contact crime categories, **sexual offences declined modestly** by **2.8%** during the third quarter compared with the previous year. Although the number of sexual offences has not yet returned to the levels observed in 2021/22, the downward movement has been sustained since the 2022/2023 peak. All subcategories decreased, with the exception of attempted sexual offences, which rose slightly by seven cases. It is important to note that, according to the 2024 Victims of Crime Survey, **only 48% of sexual offences are reported to the police, meaning recorded figures likely understate the true scale of the problem.**

Although year-to-year fluctuations are visible, rape shows a gradual downward movement over the five-year period and declined again this quarter **(-3.2%)**. It remains the only sexual-offence category that reflects a relatively consistent longer-term easing. Sexual assault decreased slightly **(-1.2%)** and continues to fluctuate within a narrow band, without establishing a clear long-term upward or downward trend. Contact sexual offences showed a notable decline **(-14.5%)** this quarter, reversing the increases observed earlier in the financial year.

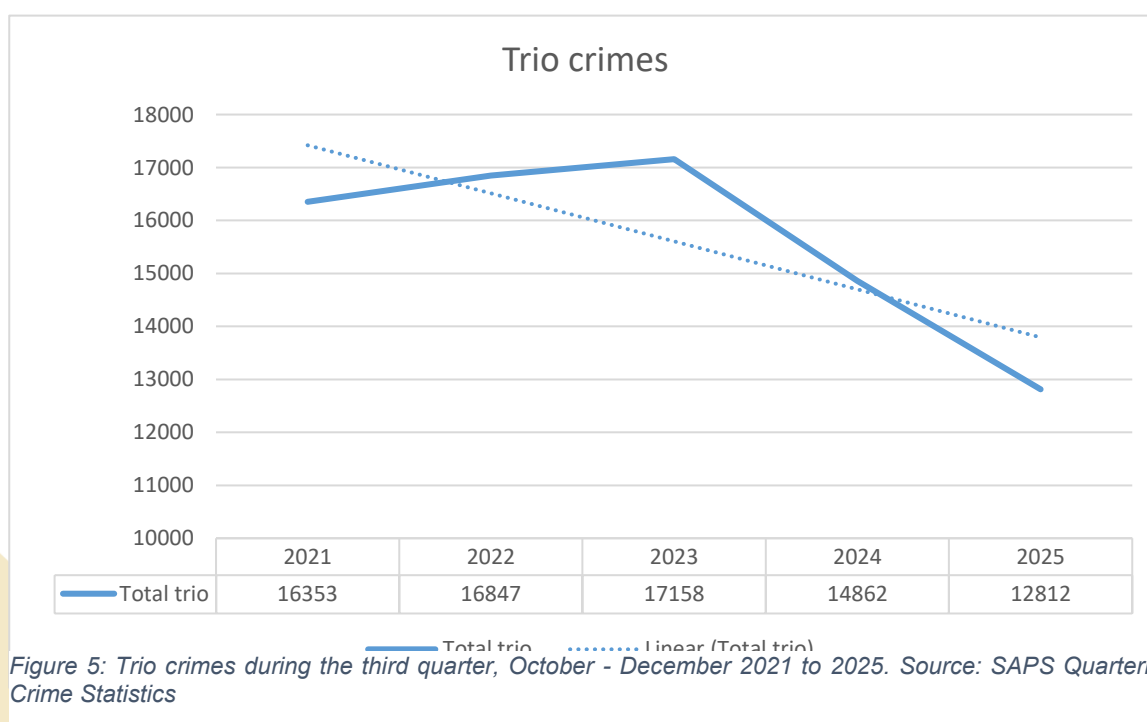
KwaZulu-Natal (19.5%) and Gauteng (18.7%) account for the largest shares of sexual offences recorded in the third quarter. Most rape incidents occur in private residences (5 517 cases nationally), followed by public places and liquor outlets — a spatial pattern that closely mirrors that observed for murder. Fifty-six (56) rapes were committed at schools, including pre-primary, primary, secondary, and special needs schools. **Of which nine learners were raped in daycare facilities (pre-school).**

○ Robbery and some subcategories

Common robbery continues its **sustained downward trend**, declining by **7.0%** in the third quarter. This follows earlier reductions and supports the broader national pattern of declining robbery-related crime. However, the provincial breakdown shows that the **Northern Cape recorded an increase (+3.1%)**, even as the other provinces declined.

Common robbery in the Northern Cape shows a **gradual upward trend over the five-year period**, despite a slight dip in 2024. The 2025 increase (+3.1%) is not a sharp spike, but the continued longer-term rise since 2021 is concerning. Again, it should be noted that the province's smaller overall numbers cause relatively modest case increases to produce noticeable percentage shifts.

Robbery with aggravating circumstances declined sharply in the third quarter, **decreasing by 11.3%** nationally. The reduction is broad-based and visible across most provinces, with the largest declines recorded in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape. These high-volume provinces account for much of the overall improvement. Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga also recorded meaningful decreases, reinforcing the national downward movement. Although the North West (carjacking up by +8.3%) and the Northern Cape (robbery aggravated increased by +5.1 %) recorded slight increases, the difference amounts to only a few cases and does not materially affect the national trend.



TRIO crimes have moved from a period of growth to a sustained downward trend, with the current quarter showing one of the strongest reductions in the dataset, with a **-13.8% decrease** (see Figure 5). **Gauteng (-7.3%), KwaZulu-Natal (-12.8%), and the Western Cape (-20.3%)** recorded the largest decline, where case numbers are highest, thus accounting for a large portion of the national decrease. **Eastern Cape (23.5%)** also recorded a notable reduction. The other provinces show either modest declines or very small increases, but their numbers are relatively low and do not change the national pattern.

○ Kidnapping

Kidnapping has risen sharply over the past five years and has almost **doubled since 2021/22**. Although the most recent increase was modest, levels remain elevated and continue to trend upward (see Figure 6). The largest concentration of kidnappings was recorded in Gauteng (2551 cases), accounting for more than half of all recorded cases nationally, with KwaZulu-Natal (855) a distant second.

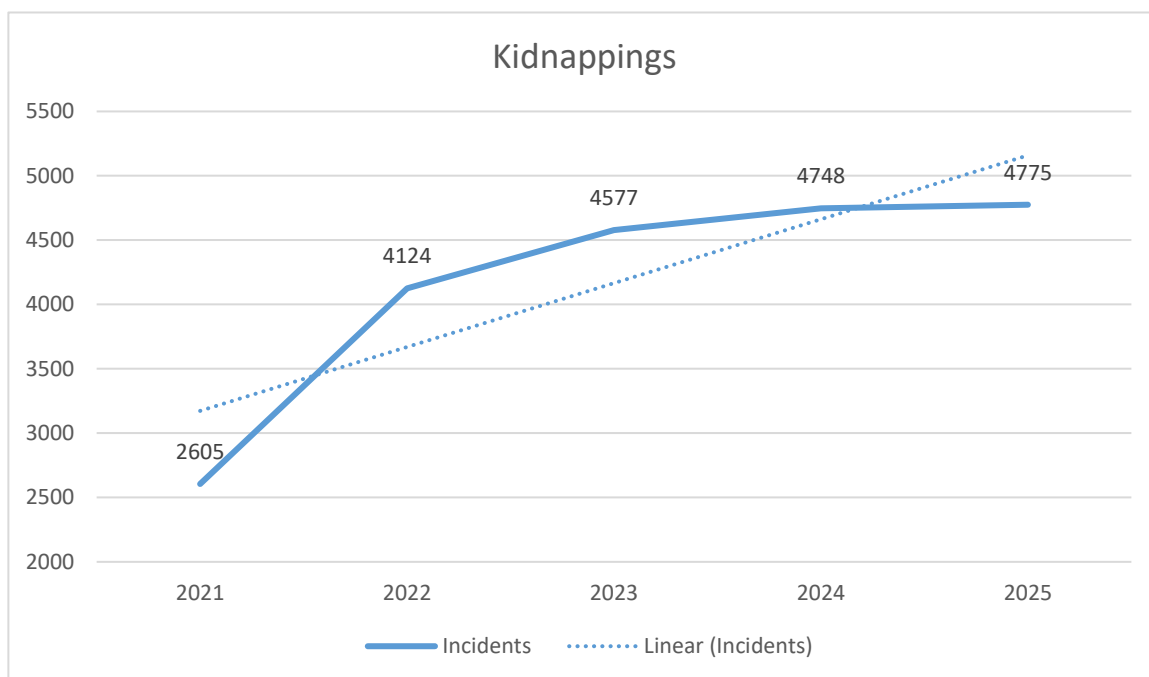


Figure 6: Kidnappings recorded between October and December, from 2021 to 2025. Source: Adapted from SAPS Quarterly Crime Statistics

The data shows that ransom-related kidnappings account for 208 cases nationally, with Gauteng contributing two-thirds (66%) of these incidents. Human trafficking (67 cases) is also concentrated in Gauteng (62 cases), while extortion-linked kidnappings (39 cases of which 16 occurred in Gauteng) remain comparatively small in absolute terms.

The extortion data further supports this pattern. Financial extortion (289 cases) is concentrated in Gauteng (116) and KwaZulu-Natal (61), while protection rackets (128 cases) are heavily concentrated in the Western Cape (51) and Gauteng (19), particularly in taxi-related operations, retail businesses, and construction-linked activities. Only two cyber extortion cases were recorded, including cyber-attacks, data theft, hacking, and phishing. This appears low when compared to the CSIR's 2024 national cybersecurity survey, which found that 88% of surveyed institutions experienced data breaches.³

³ CSIR. 2024. *CSIR issues national survey results on state of cybersecurity in South Africa*. Available at: <https://www.csir.co.za/csir-issues-national-survey-results-on-state-cybersecurity-south-africa>

4. PROPERTY-RELATED CRIME

Property crime has shown a consistent national decline in the third quarter since peaking in 2022 (see Figure 2), **falling by 8.2%** compared with the same period last year. Burglary (residential and non-residential), vehicle theft, theft from vehicles, and stock theft have all fallen steadily over the past two years. This category is therefore one of the dominant drivers of the overall observed reduction.

The **Northern Cape is the exception**, suggesting that local factors there are offsetting the wider downward trend. While other provinces show clear reductions, the Northern Cape recorded increases in several property categories, including residential (+5.7%) and non-residential burglary (+5.2%). Although the province has a small population and lower overall case numbers,⁴ the spread of increases across multiple stations suggests a genuine local pressure.

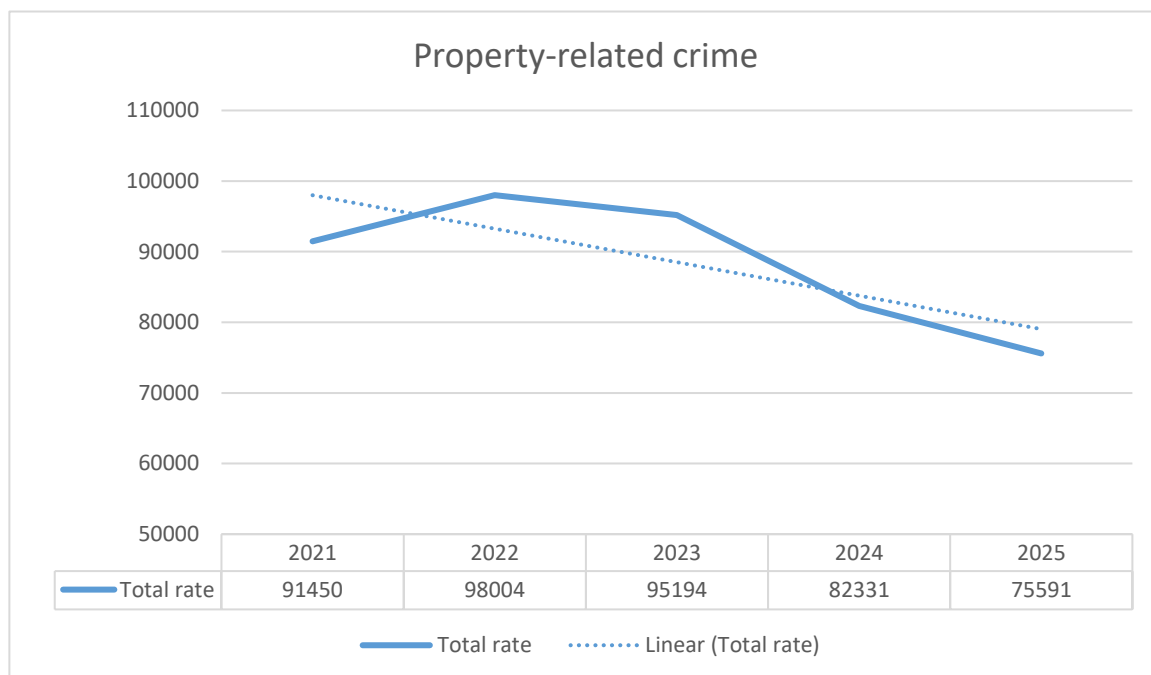


Figure 7: Property-related crimes during the third quarter, 2021- 2025. Source: SAPS Quarterly Crime Statistics

A further concern is **stock theft in the Eastern Cape**. While stock theft fell nationally (-9.6%), the **Eastern Cape recorded an increase (+1.4%)**. Although this rise is modest relative to the declines seen in most other provinces, the broader pattern shows steady growth since 2023. Compared to 2021, stock theft in the province has increased by 20%. Station-level data indicate that much of this pressure is concentrated in specific rural districts, particularly the **OR Tambo District**, with several of these stations **recording sharp increases (between 20 and 65%)**.

5. CRIMES DETECTED AS A RESULT OF POLICE ACTION

The period under review **shows a sustained multi-year increase in crimes detected as a result of police action**, culminating in a 20% increase compared to the previous financial year. A particularly sharp increase is observed in cases of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, which rose by 37%. By contrast, sexual offences detected through police action declined by 13.2%, while illegal possession of firearms and ammunition increased only marginally (0.3%).

⁴ This translates to exaggerated percentage changes.

6. REFERENCES

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