



Justice and Security Research Cluster

Crime Statistics Bulletin

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Picture: Pixabay

2019/20 CRIME STATISTICS ANALYSIS

The Minister of Police released the 2019/20 crime statistics during a Portfolio Committee on Police meeting on 31 July 2020.

Overall crime decreased by 2.7 per cent in 2019/20 compared to the previous financial year. Contact crime had a slight increase of 0.7 per cent in 2019/20. Total sexual offences increased by 1.7 per cent compared to the previous financial year. All subcategories of property related crimes decreased in 2019/20 and recorded an overall decrease of 5.2 per cent. Other serious crimes also decreased by 4 per cent compared to the previous financial year. Crime detected as a result of police action decreased by 14.5 per cent, which is a concern as this is the one crime category where an increase is positive.

This paper provides a detailed summary and analysis of the 2019/20 crime statistics from a national perspective. It also highlights some of the challenges in analysing the statistics. These include: the use of raw numbers of counts per crime category during reporting and not population ratios per hundred thousand; using crime statistics as a key measurement of performance can lead to a manipulation of statistics; and crime statistics only shows reported crime and there is strong evidence that many crimes, especially sexual offence, are significantly underreported.

In addition, the paper identifies measure that have been taken to improve the quality of the crime statistics (through collaboration with Statistics South Africa) and usefulness of crime statistics (through the release of quarterly crime statistics). [Read more...](#)

Nicolette van Zyl-Gous
Researcher: Police

“South Africa has the 11th highest murder rate worldwide, with 35.0 murders to 100 000 people.”

Dear Members

This Bulletin is the third of a series published by the Justice and Security Research Cluster. It aims to bring topical issues to the attention of Members of Parliament.

Regards
Nadia Dollie

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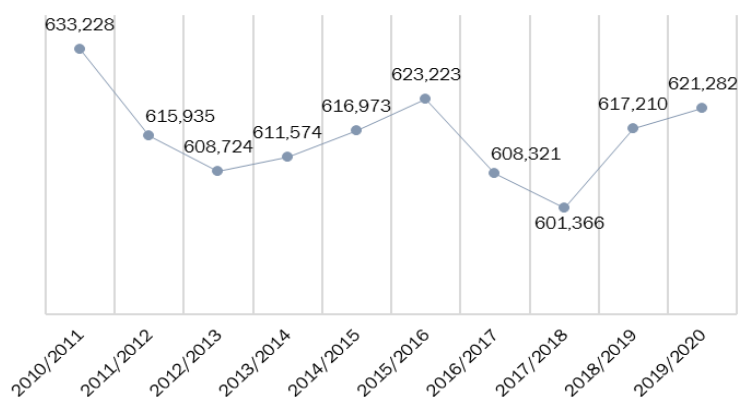


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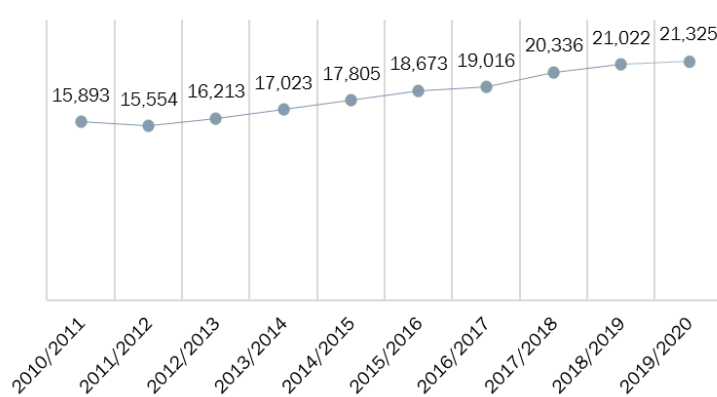
FAST FACTS ON CRIME STATISTICS 2019/20

- ❖ **Overall crime:** Decreased by 2.7% in 2019/20 compared to the previous financial year. During this period, 1 629 319 serious crimes were reported to SAPS, of which 38% (621 282 cases) were contact crimes (crimes against the person).
- ❖ **Contact crime:** Slight increase of 0.7% in 2019/20. Proportionally, contact crime accounted for 38% of crime in 2019/20.
- ❖ **Murder:** In 2019/20 South Africa recorded 21 325 murders, which represents a 1.4% increase compared to the previous financial year.

Contact Crimes: Trend over ten years



Murder: Trend over ten years



- ❖ **Causative factors:** According to the SAPS, in 2019/20, arguments were the leading causative factor in murder, attempted murder (2 974 cases), assault GBH (31 699) and common assault (37 876) cases. Domestic violence as a causative factor accounted for 21 344 common assaults, 14 907 assault GBH, 2 974 attempted murders and 3 447 murders.
- ❖ In 2019/20, **murder on farms and smallholdings** increased by 4.3% (49 murders), which is two counts more than the previous financial year.
- ❖ **Trio Crimes:** The largest increase was in **robbery with aggravating circumstances** (2.8% increase), which includes so-called trio-crimes (carjacking, and robbery at residential and non-residential premises). Carjacking increased by 13.3% in 2019/20 compared to the previous financial year. Robbery at residential premises decreased by 5.8% over this period and robbery at non-residential premises increased by 3.3%.
- ❖ **Total sexual offences:** Increased by 1.7% compared to the previous financial year. In 2019/20, 53 293 sexual offenses were reported in South Africa. Rape and sexual assault increased by 1.7% and 4.2%, respectively. Together rape and sexual assault account for 93% of all sexual offences.
- ❖ All subcategories of **property related crimes** decreased in 2019/20 and recorded an overall decrease of 5.2%.
- ❖ **Crime detected as a result of police action:** Decreased by 14.5%, which is a worrying trend. In 2018/19, this category also decreased by 21.8% compared to 2017/18. In 2019/20, the decrease was most noticeable in the subcategory: detection of drug related crime, which decreased by a significant 26.7%. In 2019, the SAPS attributed the decrease to the 2018 Constitutional Court judgement on the use, cultivation or possession of cannabis for personal consumption in private.
- ❖ **Firearms** were used in 34.5% of murders (7, 351 victims) and Knives were used in 21.2% of murders (4, 531 victims)



Burglary at residential premises
decreased with 6.7%



Stock-theft decreased
with 4.2%



Carjacking increased
by 13.3%



Truck hijacking
increased by 1.7%

FAST FACTS ON GBVF AND SEXUAL OFFENCES

- ❖ Rape and sexual assault contribute 93.9% of the total sexual offences in 2019/20.
- ❖ In 2019/20, 80% of 53 293 sexual offences were recorded in South Africa, of which 80% were rapes (42 289 rapes).
- ❖ Most rapes took place in a private residence, followed by public places and educational institutions.
- ❖ Provincially, most rapes were recorded in Gauteng (8,509), followed by KwaZulu-Natal (8,017) and the Eastern Cape (7,282).
- ❖ Sexual assault increased by 4.2% in 2019/20.
- ❖ Provincially, the Western Cape recorded the most sexual assault cases (1,910). The figure increased with 8.7% in 2019/20 compared to the previous year.
- ❖ A ten-year trend analysis of sexual offences reflects a steady decrease from 2010/11 to 2016/17, where after it increased over the past three financial years (2017/18 to 2019/20).
- ❖ Domestic violence as a causative factor in contact crime reveals that it accounts for-
 - 21 344 common assault cases
 - 14 907 assault GBH cases
 - 923 attempted murder cases
 - 1 482 Murder cases

CRIME STATISTICS, THE NATIONAL PROSECUTING AUTHORITY AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

For the third year in succession, according to the SAPS 2019/20 crime statistics, there was an increase in reported sexual offences of 1.7 per cent (an additional 873 reported cases resulting in 53 293 sexual offences cases). However, the crime statistics for the first quarter of 2020/21 (reflecting the period when the country was under lockdown Level 5, 4 and the first month of Level 3) show major decreases in reported sexual offences (39.7 per cent) and a reduction in reported rapes (40.4 per cent).

Although the National Prosecuting Authority reports gradual improvement in its conviction rate for sexual offences, it is a concern that the number of prosecutions for sexual offences is actually decreasing. Overall, in 2018/19 the NPA prosecuted 5.6 per cent fewer sexual offences cases and 12.7 per cent fewer TCC cases than the previous financial year. The number of sexual offence cases in the courts that reach verdict is very low.

This paper identifies problems in the high attrition rate of reported sexual offence cases and provides some analysis of the femicide and domestic violence statistics. It outlines the commitments made by the NPA to prioritise sexual offences from a strategic perspective and highlights progress and challenges faced by the NPA in its response to the Emergency Response Action Plan (ERAP) to address gender-based violence and femicide. Lastly, the paper identifies key activities to be monitored by Parliament in relation to implementation of the National Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Strategic Plan. [Read more...](#)

Gulian Nesbitt

Researcher: Justice

“A 2012 study into the attrition rate of rape cases showed that only 340 (8.6 per cent) of a total of 3 953 rape cases reached a guilty verdict.”

COMPLIANCE BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE (SAPS) TO LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS RELATED TO GBVF

The CSPPS recently published its findings on a census at all police stations (1,143 stations) to collect baseline information on SAPS performance in relation to implementation of the Domestic Violence Act in an effort to improve the effectiveness of the response to Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF). The census made startling findings, including that only 21 police stations (from 1,143 police stations) were fully compliant with the provisions and only 66% of police stations had Victim Friendly Rooms (VFRs) that are functional and resourced.

The CSPPS also collected data from 35 of the 187 Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offence (FCS) Units and identified a number of challenges. These include: shortages of Forensic Social Workers (FSW) who play a vital role in the assessment of children and people with mental disabilities contributing to delays in the finalisation of cases; and a serious shortage of buccal swabs contributing to the inability to link suspects to crimes and the withdrawal of cases at court. [Read more...](#)

“10% of police stations have no Victim Friendly Rooms (VFRs).”

Nicolette van Zyl-Gous

Researcher: Police

PROVINCIAL OVERVIEW: 2019/20 ANNUAL CRIME STATISTICS

This paper provides a provincial overview of crimes reported in the 2019/20 annual crime statistics released by the Minister of Police. The paper highlights, for each province, the crimes that have increased, and those that have decreased, in comparison to the previous year.

Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape were the four provinces that dominated the statistics for reporting the most contact crimes generally, and for contact crimes committed against women and children. The Northern Cape reported fewer contact crimes compared to other provinces, and also showed significant decreases in, for example robbery at non-residential premises and trio crimes.

[Read more...](#)

Patricia Whittle

Researcher: Security and Justice

“KwaZulu-Natal reported the most murders nationally, which included the murders of 18 police officers.”

CRIME STATISTICS AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE VALUE CHAIN

Key stakeholders in the criminal justice value chain include the following:

- The SAPS: investigates cases and presents case dockets to the NPA for decisions on prosecution.
- The NPA: decides on the prosecution of cases and the subsequent enrolment of cases in criminal courts.
- The courts: adjudicate on the criminal matters prosecuted by the NPA and either convict or acquit the persons prosecuted.

The number of cases prosecuted on an annual basis is statistically low compared to the reported cases. While SAPS statistics reveal increasing numbers of reported crimes, the NPA statistics reveal that, on average, only 13 percent of dockets received from SAPS are actually prosecuted, and the (limited) statistics available on the courts reveal fewer criminal cases are being enrolled.

This paper provides an explanation of the criminal justice system value chain process and identifies some of the challenges within the value chain that result in low rates of prosecution. These include: fewer cases enrolled, decline in court utilisation, fewer court hours on criminal matters, increase in backlog cases, and withdrawals of cases increased. [Read more...](#)

Mzi Dano

Researcher: Justice

“When you compare conviction rates to the number of reported cases, it is shockingly low.”
Adv. Shamila Batohi

THE ROLE OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Department of Correctional Services is the last link within the chain of the criminal justice system. Many of the challenges faced by the Department are a result of overcrowding in their facilities. In May 2020, the overcrowding rate in correctional centres stood at 32.58 per cent. Although the Eastern Cape has the lowest number of inmates when compared with other regions, it has the highest rate of overcrowding with 54.88 per cent.

It is therefore important that incarceration is used as a measure of last resort and reserved for the most violent offenders. More use should be made of community-based sentences as an alternative to imprisonment. However, this will require that the system of community corrections is fully capacitated. It is also important that, in line with the National Development Plan, the focus is placed on the reintegration process of offenders back into the community to ensure that they do not re-offend after release.

This paper provides an overview of correctional centres in South Africa including inmate population and overcrowding rate. It highlights the high proportion of inmates sentenced to life as a factor contributing to overcrowding and looks at the special remission of sentences as a measure to reduce overcrowding. It outlines the rehabilitation programmes provided to inmates to assist in changing their offending behaviour. Lastly, it highlights the transition from correctional centres to community corrections including some of the challenges faced by parolees during community reintegration. [Read more...](#)

Mpho Mathabathe

Researcher: Correctional Services

“In 2014, 10.5 per cent of the prison population in South Africa were serving life sentences.”

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CRIMES DURING LOCKDOWN: FIRST QUARTER 2020/21 SAPS CRIME STATISTICS

The Minister of Police released the 2020/21 first quarter (01 April to 30 June 2020) crime statistics on 14 August 2020. The quarterly release will enable improved oversight from all spheres of society. Government will be able to monitor key targets, in particular with regard to the reduction of reported serious crimes, as determined by the Medium Term Strategic Framework. Parliament will have a greater opportunity to increase its oversight function over the SAPS on their service delivery performance. Furthermore, communities and especially Community Policing Forums will be able to access specific data of use to them.

The first quarter took place during lockdown Levels 5, 4 and the first month of Level 3. As the movement of goods and people was limited, a sharp decrease in crime was expected. Unsurprisingly, overall crime decreased by 33.7 per cent in the first quarter of 2020/21 compared to the same period of the previous financial year.

Murder decreased with 35.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2020/21 compared to that of the previous financial year. Sexual offences decreased with 39.7 per cent in the first quarter of 2020/21 compared to that of the previous financial year. Within this category, rape decreased with 40.4 per cent.

The only crime category that experienced an increase was burglary at non-residential premises that increased by 9.1 per cent in the first quarter of 2020/21 compared to the same period in the previous year. Between April and June 2020, 18 840 cases were reported, of which 2 692 burglaries were at educational premises and 1 246 at liquor outlets/premises.

The quarterly release of crime statistics has several challenges, including the absence of the dissemination policy. [Read more...](#)

Nicolette van Zyl-Gous
Researcher: Police

“This was the first quarterly release since a 2016 Cabinet decision to increase the frequency of the publication of the crime statistics.”

USEFUL RESOURCES



SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE Department of Police

Speaking notes delivered by the Minister of Police on the release of the annual crime statistics 2019/20, 31 July 2020. [Click here...](#)

SAPS 2019/20 Crime Statistics Presentation. [Click here...](#)

Speaking notes delivered by the Minister of Police on the release of the quarter one crime statistics 2020/21, 14 August 2020. [Click here...](#)

SAPS First Quarter 2020/21 Crime Stats Presentation. [Click here...](#)



**civilian secretariat
for police service**
Department:
Civilian Secretariat for Police Service
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Domestic Violence Act (DVA) Monitoring Report:
Report on the status of DVA implementation
and compliance by the 1 143 police stations.
[Click here...](#)

EXTERNAL PAPER

THE COMING CRIME CATASTROPHE: THE 2019/20 CRIME STATS AND POST-COVID 19 VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

If it had not been for the national socioeconomic crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the emerging corruption scandals associated with funding for relief measures, there most likely would have been a public outcry following the release of the 2019/2020 crime statistics last week.

Many South Africans were hoping that with the deployment of the South African Defence Force alongside the South African Police Service (SAPS) on the Cape Flats from 2019, as well as the dedicated work of the Anti-Gang Unit, that there would have been major reductions in violent crime, especially in the Western Cape. But unfortunately, this has not happened, other than some declines in crime in a small number of traditionally violent areas, such as Mitchells Plain, Bishop Lavis, Nyanga and Lusikisiki. [Read more...](#)

Guy Lamb
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Department of Political Science, Stellenbosch University and the Safety and Violence Initiative: University of Cape Town

“South Africa can effectively respond to the coming crime catastrophe by adopting a whole-of-society approach to violence prevention and safety promotion.”