



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



FACTSHEET ON GUN VIOLENCE ON THE CAPE FLATS

DATE: 17 SEPTEMBER 2025

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**PARLIAMENTARY
RESEARCH UNIT (PRU)**

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FACTSHEET ON GUN VIOLENCE ON THE CAPE FLATS

BACKGROUND NOTES FOR NA DEBATE (19 SEPTEMBER 2025)

The scourge of gun violence and the killing of innocent children and adults in the Cape Flats communities

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1. OVERVIEW: CRIME TRENDS IN CAPE TOWN AND ON THE CAPE FLATS¹

- The Western Cape province has for years been caught in the grip of violent crime, and Cape Town is infamously regarded as one of South Africa's deadliest cities² due to its extremely high murder rate, in addition to high rates of sexual offences, attempted murder and assaults.
- The high-risk violent crime areas are largely concentrated on the Cape Flats where shootings and ongoing drug turf wars between rival gangs have escalated.
- Shootings and revenge killings have now also spilled over to the courts. A man, believed to be a suspect in a murder case he was due to appear in, was shot inside the Wynberg Court in April 2025, while two men were shot dead by four armed men outside the Mitchells Plain Court on 25 August 2025.³ In a separate incident, a man was shot inside Athlone Magistrates Court on 5 September 2025.
- On 8 September 2025, a man was arrested for trying to smuggle a firearm into the Wynberg Court.⁴
- There have also been incidents of violence related to the transport industry as taxi bosses and groupings compete for taxi routes. On Wednesday, 17 September 2025, the Western Cape Government closed several taxi routes, due to ongoing violence between rival taxi groups CODETA and CATA.
- In addition, there has also been push-back against planned developments by the City of Cape Town,⁵ for example the killing of Wendy Kloppers, a City of Cape Town Official, on 16 February 2023 at a housing site in Delft, while three contractors at the Delft Symphony Way housing project were shot in February 2023.⁶
- The City of Cape Town has experienced persistent challenges in violent crime, gang activity and crimes against vulnerable groups. The metro has a high proliferation of illegal firearms which is the weapon of choice in the commission of violent crimes and gang violence.
- In 2024, the **City of Cape Town signed an MOU with the Minister of Police** which provides for greater co-operation in (a) combating crime and improving safety in Cape Town and the wider Western Cape, (b) resource and intelligence sharing, (c) developing integrated crime prevention strategies, and (d) expanding initiatives like the Law Enforcement Advancement Plan (LEAP).⁷
- **Cape Town is part of the SAPS Safer Cities Model** roll-out with specific policing strategies to be employed in this regard. The **Western Cape Safety Plan** aims to reduce murders by 50 percent by 2029 through *inter alia* increased law enforcement capacity, addressing the root causes of crime and strengthening societal resilience.
- Despite targeted interventions by the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the City's Metro Police, police precincts like Delft, Nyanga, Mfuleni, Kraaifontein, Mitchells Plain and Philippi East frequently appear on the SAPS's list of top 30 police stations nationally, for *inter alia* murder, attempted murder, sexual offences and assault GBH⁸.

¹ Information extracted from the City of Cape Town Integrated Development Plan (IDP), Western Cape Safety and Security Directorate Safety Plan and South African Police Service (SAPS) Crime Statistics 2020 to 2025.

² Van Diemen, E (2025).

³ Smit, L (2025).

⁴ Nene, N (2025).

⁵ Dean, M (2025).

⁶ Solomons, L (2023).

⁷ South African Government (2024).

⁸ Assault with the intention to cause grievous bodily harm.

2. SELECTED GUN-RELATED INCIDENTS REPORTED IN SEPTEMBER 2025

- September 2025 has turned out to be one of the bloodiest months for people living on the Cape Flats, caught in the grip of ongoing gang warfare between rival gangs, often over drug turf.
- Between 8 and 15 September 2025, several mass shooting incidents claimed the lives of 15 people in Kraaifontein, while four people were killed and three injured in two separate incidents on 14 September 2025 in Gugulethu^{9,10}
- Several others were injured during these shootings.
- Earlier in September 2025, at least 5 people were killed in Steenberg and Retreat, while unconfirmed reports were also received of shootings in Overcome Heights near Capricorn / Vrygrond, Valhalla Park, Delft and Manenberg.
- The motives for the shootings are usually described as “gang related”.
- In most cases, the suspected shooters fled the scene and are yet to be arrested.
- The shootings happen randomly, in broad daylight or dead of night, in residential areas (like the recent mass shootings in Mitchells Plain in which gunmen in a car fired shots at people outside a tuckshop), inside homes and open fields.
- Not knowing when the shootings can occur or who the perpetrators are, adds to the fear in communities.
- Among the suspected gangsters killed are the innocent – adults and children, with no affiliation to gangs.
- On the other hand, the sad reality is that young children are increasingly being recruited into gangs and armed with firearms, presumably to carry out hits.
- **The recent statement by the newly appointed Minister of Police, Feroz Cachalia, that the South African Police Service (SAPS) does not have a workable plan to tackle gang violence on the Cape Flats, has caused an outcry in communities and adds to the low levels of trust affected communities have in the police.**
- The impact of these shootings are felt everywhere on the Cape Flats and in communities, as well as those working in the criminal justice system: “Judge Mabindla-Boqwana described recent court shootings as a scourge that has brought trauma for court workers and residents of surrounding communities. She added that cases have also been delayed due to disruptions caused by the attacks [and highlighted] the psychological impact it has on everyone, the magistrates, the prosecutors, legal representatives, communities and vulnerable people that come in and out of the courts”¹¹.

The following section discusses selected violent crime trends, with reference to the City’s high-risk police precincts on the SAPS Top 30 Stations list. While it is likely that firearms are used in most serious crimes, including sexual offences and robberies, the SAPS crime statistics only lists the use of firearms in respect of murder and attempted murder.

⁹ SAPS (2025a). The Lotus, KTC, and Barcelona informal settlements fall under the jurisdiction of Gugulethu SAPS and Nyanga SAPS. The nearest police station is approximately 7 kilometres away. No mobile Community Service Centre (CSC) is currently stationed in these areas.

¹⁰ Ajam, T (2025).

¹¹ Nene, N (2025a).

3. SELECTED FOURTH QUARTER VIOLENT CRIME TRENDS (JANUARY TO MARCH 2024 COMPARED TO JANUARY TO MARCH 2025)¹²

- **Murder:** Although murder decreased in the Western Cape by 44% in the Fourth Quarter of 2024/25 compared to the previous year, **murder increased in Delft (1.5%), Mfuleni (8.3%), Phillippi East (63.9%), Kraaifontein (6 counts higher), Samora Machel (17 counts higher) and Lwandle (1 count higher). Murder decreased in Nyanga (-12.5%), Gugulethu (27 counts lower), Khayelitsha (4 counts lower), and Harare (8 counts lower).**¹³ *Of the 1 068 murders committed in the Western Cape, 208 were gang-related and 590 involved firearms. The Western Cape had 57 dockets involving 123 murder victims, of which five multiple-murder victims were shot and set alight inside a vehicle by four armed suspects in Phillippi East, possibly related to extortion.*
- **Attempted murder:** Although attempted murder decreased in the Western Cape by 8.4% in the Fourth Quarter of 2024/25 compared to the previous year, attempted murder increased in De Doorns (38 counts higher), Manenberg (15 counts higher), and Grassy Park (16 counts higher). Attempted murder decreased in Worcester (-20.5%), Mitchells Plain (57 counts lower) and Delft (12 counts lower). *Of the 1 143 attempted murders committed in the Western Cape, 273 were gang-related and 699 involved firearms.*
- **Gang-related violence:** Concentrated on the Cape Flats, with surges in mass shootings and multiple victims (e.g. five victims died in a mass shooting in Phillippi East) and turf wars.¹⁴¹⁵
- **Sexual offences:** Overall, sexual offences in the Western Cape decreased by 3.3% in Q4 of 2024/25 compared to the previous year. Regarding police stations on the top 30 list, sexual offences decreased in Harare (11 counts lower) and remained unchanged at Mfuleni. However, Delft showed an increase in sexual offences of 9.8%, Kraaifontein (7.8%) and Nyanga 19 counts.
- **Rape:** Overall, rape in the Western Cape decreased by 4.3% in Q4 of 2024/25 compared to the previous year. Regarding City police stations on the top 30 list, rape decreased in Kraaifontein (1 count lower) and Harare (8 counts lower). However, Mfuleni showed an increase in rapes (12.2%), as well as Delft (4 counts higher).
- **Sexual Assault¹⁶:** Sexual assault increased overall in the Western Cape by 3.8%, and in most of the City's police stations on the SAPS Top 30 list as follows: Delft (8 counts higher), Paarl East (4 counts), Oudtshoorn (7 counts), Kraaifontein (7 counts), Phillippi (6 counts), Bishop Lavis (1 count), Nyanga (6 counts) and Malmesbury (2 counts). Sexual assault totals remained unchanged in Mitchells Plain and Gugulethu.
- **Assault GBH:** Assault GBH is widespread across the Metro, often linked to domestic violence, gang violence and substance abuse. Overall, assault GBH increased in the Western Cape by 2.1% and in the following City police stations on the SAPS

¹² SAPS (2025). Note that no breakdown was provided for crimes against women and children.

¹³ In the Fourth Quarter of 2024 (Q4), the Western Cape accounted for 7 out of the 10 policing precincts with the highest murder rates in the country. There were increases in the murder rate in Nyanga (65% increase), Phillippi East (76.5% increase) and Khayelitsha (44% increase). Overall, the Western Cape's murder rate increased by 27.5% in Q4 of 2023/24 and by 21.2% in Q1 of 2024/25.

¹⁴ SAPS (2025a).

¹⁵ The SAPS crime statistics also contain information on illegal possession of fire-arms and ammunition. However, it is not included in the discussion as it is unclear from the information how SAPS weighs this crime category due to the colour coding used, as opposed to other crime categories.

¹⁶ Section 5 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007 defines sexual assault as follows: A person who unlawfully and intentionally – (a) sexually violates a person, without his or her consent; or (b) inspires the belief in a person that he or she will be sexually violated, is guilty of the offence of sexual assault.



Top 30 list: Worcester (14.6%), Delft (20.4%) and Khayelitsha (30.3%). Assault GBH decreased at Mfuleni (-1.5%) and Knysna (-14.8%) and remained unchanged at Oudtshoorn.

4. SELECTED ANNUAL CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN (2021/22-2023/24)

The SAPS issued a media statement that it has discovered anomalies in disaggregated statistics concerning crimes committed against women and children for the 2024/25 FY. Consequently, SAPS decided to omit such data.¹⁷ The data discussed with reference to women and children below are thus in respect of earlier periods from 2021-2023.

Selected Crimes against women and children 2021-2023

Murder, Attempted murder and Assault GBH

 WOMAN (18+ yrs)				 CHILDREN (0 to 17 yrs) Boys and		
CRIME CATEGORY	Murder	Attempted murder	Assault GBH	Murder	Attempted murder	Assault GBH
Apr 2021 to Mar 2022	3 771	4 923	55 655	1 273	1 371	7 575
Apr 2022 to Mar 2023	4 169	5 789	58 488	1 194	1 427	7 545
Apr 2023 to Mar 2024	5 578	7 239	63 054	1 656	1 813	7 771
Count Diff	1 409	1 450	4 566	462	386	226
% Change	33,8%	25,0%	7,8%	38,7%	27,0%	3,0%

Regarding crimes against women and children, key concerns include¹⁸:

- Women in informal settlements are disproportionately affected by sexual violence. In addition, while the SAPS Crime statistics on sexual offences and rape are not disaggregated by sex, it can be gauged that women and children are disproportionately affected.
- Although the murder rate of women was much lower than that of men for the period 2021 to 2023, media reports on women and children after that could possibly indicate a surge in violent crimes against women, including those killed in gang violence.
- Women are typically murdered by intimate partners or persons known to them.
- The domestic violence-related crime rate for women is three times higher than for men.
- Domestic Violence: Remains underreported - thematic inspections by oversight institutions have flagged gaps in SAPS responsiveness.
- **Between January 2024 and May 2025, 24 murders were reported nationally relating to femicide, involving firearms.¹⁹**

¹⁷ SAPS (2025). Media Statement

¹⁸ Levendale, C and Matthews, T (2024).

¹⁹ Minister of Police (2025).

5. STATISTICS REPORTED BY THE WESTERN CAPE'S LAW ENFORCEMENT ADVANCEMENT PLAN (LEAP)

- The LEAP Reaction Unit comprising Metro Police Officers was launched in 2022 to serve as a “force multiplier, assisting the SAPS Command Centre in responding to flare-ups and shootings in areas that are not designated LEAP hotspots and which do not have a fixed LEAP deployment. Instead, they are deployed temporarily to restore and stabilise the communities they are placed in.”
- In 2022, LEAP officers were deployed in Manenberg, Elsie's River, Steenberg and Ottery following an increase in gang-related violence and shootings in Lavender Hill and Grassy Park, respectively.
- As of 13 May 2022, LEAP reported the recovery of 8 firearms; and 260 arrests since inception.
- On 21 February 2025, LEAP statistics for the Third Quarter of 2024/25 indicated a 7,9% decrease in the overall murder rate in the Western Cape compared to a 7,1% decrease in the Second Quarter, representing a decrease of 103 murders.²⁰
- There was a 15,5% decrease in murders in the combined LEAP deployment areas, from 459 cases in 2023/2024 to 388 in 2024/2025, with Nyanga recording a decrease of -26%.
- The Western Cape, excluding LEAP deployment areas, recorded a decrease of -3,8% which was attributed to the role of LEAP in combined and continued efforts to reduce the Western Cape murder rate.
- On 23 May 2025, LEAP statistics for the Fourth Quarter of 2024/25 indicated a -4% decrease (44 murders) in the overall murder rate in the Western Cape, following the -7.9% decrease in the Third Quarter and the -8.7% decrease in Second Quarter.²¹
- During the Fourth Quarter, LEAP was deployed in 6 high priority areas: Delft, Nyanga, Philippi East, Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain.
- Decreases were reported in Gugulethu (-39.7%), Khayelitsha (-9.5%), and Nyanga (-12.5%).²²
- However, it was a concern that increases were reported in Delft (1.5%) and Philippi East (63.9%), while data for Mitchells Plain were not available at the time.

6. GUNS AS “MULTIPLIERS AND ENABLERS OF VIOLENT CRIME”²³

- It is widely believed that the proliferation of legal and illegal guns is fuelling the ongoing violence in the Western Cape. Despite reports of successful confiscation of firearms and ammunition by SAPS and LEAP, the shootings seem to continue unabated, as resourcing and other policing challenges persist, including suspected police complicity with criminals in some instances.
- According to Gun Free South Africa, “*civilians reported the loss/theft of 8,452 firearms in the 2023-24 financial year – this number includes 1,648 firearms that were lost/stolen from private security companies, while SAPS reported the loss/theft of 741 service firearms in this time*”²⁴.
- Gun Free South Africa also states that the Central Firearm Registry (CFR) is unable to verify how many guns there are in South Africa and that it has produced contradictory reports in this regard.

²⁰ Western Cape Government (2025).

²¹ Western Cape Government (2025a).

²² It is not clear from the Media Statement whether the Premier is referring to the murder rate in these areas.

²³ Maphosa, S (2025).

²⁴ Maphosa, S (2025).

- In 2016, the class action involving police Colonel Prinsloo, a custodian of a police armoury, who stole more than 2 000 firearms, (although some commentators believe the number is closer to 9 000), destined to be destroyed for destruction and sold them to gangsters on the Cape Flats. Prinsloo “removed [firearms] from the police computer” before selling them to criminals.
- Gun Free South Africa’s Prinsloo Guns Class Action was instituted on behalf of families who lost more than 200 children to gun violence since Prinsloo stole the guns, which ended up fuelling gang violence on the Cape Flats.²⁵

7. POLICING CHALLENGES IN SELECTED HIGH CRIME PRECINCTS ON THE CAPE FLATS²⁶

- The **Philippi SAPS precinct** faces several operational and environmental challenges that significantly affect policing effectiveness. The precinct, which includes both densely populated urban areas such as Hanover Park and remote rural/agricultural areas creates deployment and resource allocation demands.
 - In Hanover Park, persistent **gang violence** and the proliferation of **illegal firearms** place continuous pressure on policing, while the presence of multiple established gang structures complicates crime prevention and enforcement operations.
 - In Sector 3, which covers the rural and farming areas, remoteness and limited infrastructure hinder police visibility and response times, with the area often being associated with serious crimes such as robberies and body dumping.
 - ***The area is influenced by at least eight established gang structures, namely the Ghetto Kids, Park Kids, OTF, Americans, Laughing Boys, Mongrels, and the IGB gang, together with their associated splinter groups.***
 - Sector 3, which encompasses the Philippi rural and farming area, is characterised by its remoteness and has become a **hotspot for body dumping and robberies**. The informal settlements within this sector report high incidences of assault and sexual offences, much of which stem from domestic violence and substance abuse.
 - Socio-economic pressures, including entrenched poverty, widespread alcohol and drug abuse, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to essential services and opportunities, further contribute to the persistently high levels of crime in the area.
- Policing challenges in **Khayelitsha** include the following:
 - ***High Population Density:*** The Khayelitsha area covers a relatively small geographic footprint but is characterised by a densely concentrated population. This creates a significant crime burden and places extensive demands on policing resources.
 - ***Infrastructure Limitations:*** The prevalence of informal settlements results in limited tarred roads, which hampers police accessibility and response. Many areas are marked by poor or non-existent street lighting, narrow passageways, and dark alleys, all of which create conditions conducive to criminal activity.
 - ***Site C (Taiwan Informal Settlement):*** Site C, home to the Taiwan informal settlement - the largest in the precinct - presents heightened challenges. The area suffers from pothole-ridden roads and inadequate lighting, especially problematic during night operations.

²⁵ In an ongoing matter before court in the Eastern Cape, a gun dealer is accused of selling hundreds of guns to criminals, some of which have ended up on the Cape Flats.

²⁶ SAPS (2025). Information provided by Western Cape Provincial Commissioner, dated 2 September 2025. Received via email from Brigadier Mitchell on 3 September 2025.

- **Highway Corridor Risks:** Along the major highway, traffic congestion caused by infrastructure constraints creates opportunities for robberies and other opportunistic crimes. The presence of small, concealed alleyways further enables criminal activity in these zones.
- **Resourcing Challenges:** Staffing the mobile Community Service Centre (CSC) daily remains difficult due to deployment limitations, reducing the consistency and effectiveness of visible policing in high-demand areas.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS GUN VIOLENCE ON THE CAPE FLATS

- On 21 May 2025, in relation to a Petition to address gang violence in the Nelson Mandela Bay area, the Portfolio Committee on Police made several recommendations to the SAPS that can also be applied to the current gang violence situation in the Western Cape.²⁷ SAPS must:
 - Urgently address staffing, equipment, and capacity gaps in the Western Cape’s AGU and Crime Intelligence structures.
 - Prioritise forensic processing in drug-related cases and intensify school-based anti-drug operations.
 - Enforce accountability for misconduct by police officer (e.g. abuse of state vehicles, intoxication) and expand psychological support services to officers.
 - Engage the Department of Justice to assess and, if necessary, reform bail policies in relation to gang and drug-related offences.
- Reducing the proliferation of illegal firearms through stricter gun laws enforcement. According to Gun Free South Africa, South Africa’s challenges lie in a lack of effective implementation of firearm laws and regulations. It recommends the following:
 - Tightening controls over licensed firearms held by the state and civilians to prevent leakage and criminal use, including “urgently repairing our broken Central Firearms Registry” to reflect accurate information on who owns what firearms for which purpose”, through technical upgrades and a cultural shift within the institution regarding possibly “outsourcing (not privatising) functions”.
 - Focus on enforcing current firearm-related laws and addressing legislative loopholes that are being exploited. The recently published draft regulations to strengthen controls over private security company firearms is a step forward, but an urgent amendment to the Firearms Control Act to align it with legal and constitutional developments in South Africa [is needed], as well as our global commitments under conventions like the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime’s Firearms Protocol.
 - Government must prioritise recovering illegal guns already in circulation. The failure of government’s flagship crime-prevention Operation Shanela – which uses a broad stop-and-search approach – is evident from firearm recovery numbers, which show marginal increases.
 - Government must embrace an intelligence-led approach to gun recovery that includes tracking the origin of reclaimed firearms to close leakage loopholes.
 - Institute a National Firearms Amnesty on a “no questions asked” basis and with the focus on bringing unlicensed guns back under legal control by encouraging owners to either surrender guns for destruction or, in the case of expired licences, apply for a new licence (as an expired licence cannot be renewed). South Africa last held two six-month firearm amnesties from December 2019 – 31 May 2020 and 1 August

²⁷ Parliament of South Africa (2025).

2020 – 31 January 2021. The combined totals from both amnesties show that 165 952 firearms and 723 959 rounds ammunition were surrendered.

- Government must embrace civil society as an ally to build trust around sensitive issues, which include gun ownership; and can play a key role in promoting and supporting responsible gun ownership, while also providing independent and useful insight and analysis on gun ownership, use and trafficking.

9. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION BY PARLIAMENT

- The Justice Portfolio Committee has raised concern over the shootings in and around courts, observing that:

“These incidents seem to be on the increase, especially in the Western Cape. **The authorities need to re-look at the security measures currently used to secure our court precincts.** We need to ensure the safety of officials, presiding officers and the public at large...although the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development is not directly responsible for the safety and security at court buildings, as it is a joint responsibility with the South African Police Services and the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, the committee will raise the matter sharply to see what inter-departmental plans are in place to secure courts”.²⁸

- Parliamentary Committees overseeing the SAPS and the Department of Social Development should:
 - Request information from SAPS on the (a) status and resourcing of the Anti-Gang Unit (AGU) and Crime Intelligence in the Western Cape and (b) SAPS’s plans to (i) improve investigation quality, (ii) prioritise forensic analysis, and (iii) enforce discipline among its ranks.
 - Consider holding interdepartmental engagements on the Drug Master Plan and the possibility of establishing a joint oversight mechanism to ensure that national strategies translate into tangible interventions on the ground.²⁹
 - Request a response from SAPS to the recent statement by the newly appointed Minister of Police, Feroz Cachalia, that the SAPS did not have a workable plan to tackle gang violence on the Cape Flats.
 - Consider an urgent amendment to the Firearms Control Act.

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²⁸ Parliament of South Africa (2025a).

²⁹ Parliament of South Africa (2025).

