

Murder and robbery

Overview of the official statistics: 2014/15

This factsheet provides an overview of murder and robbery trends between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015 as recorded by the South African Police Service (SAPS). The ISS is using the recalculated figures released by SAPS on 29 September 2015 for the years 2004/05 to 2014/15. The ISS takes no responsibility for the accuracy of these statistics.

A note about SA's crime statistics

On the day of their release, these statistics were already at least six months out of date. That means that the current crime situation, particularly at local level, could be very different to that described by these statistics. For a guide on how to interpret crime statistics see the [Africa Check Factsheet](#). For more factsheets, infographics, interactive maps, analysis and graphics on crime visit the [ISS Crime Hub](#).

Murder has increased

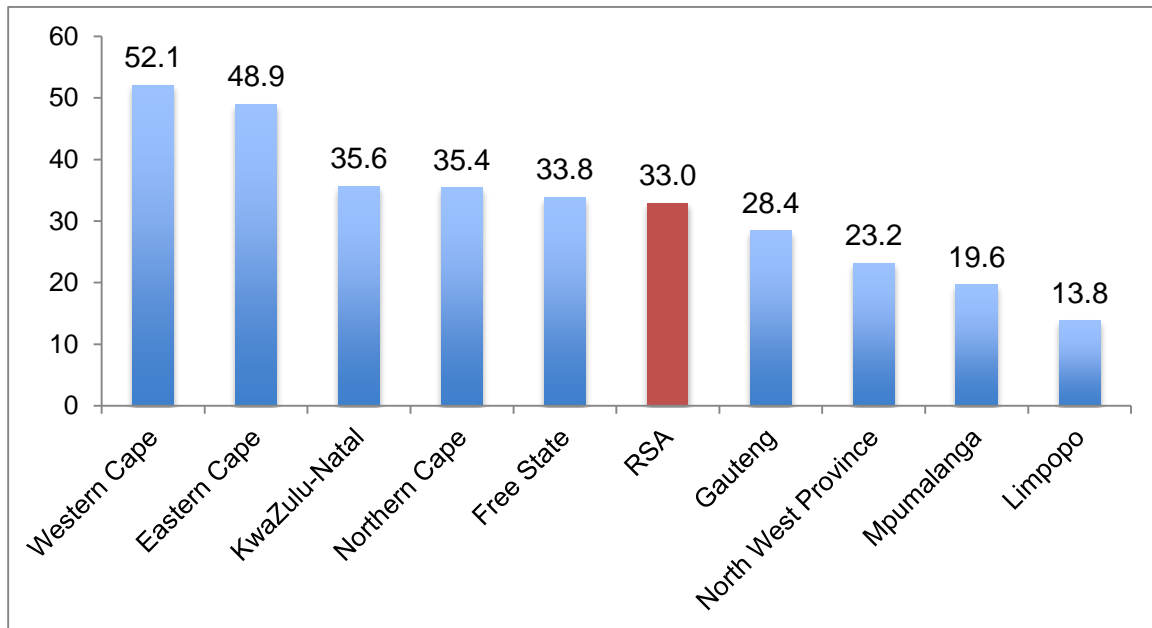
Murder is defined in South African law as the unlawful and intentional killing of another human being.

- The murder rate has increased for a third consecutive year after it more than halved for the first 18 years after democracy.
- Every day, 49 people are killed and 48 people are victims of attempted murder.
- Incidents of murder increased by 4,6% from 17 023 murders in 2013/14 to 17 805 in 2014/15. Two more people were murdered per day than in the previous year, and six more per day than in 2011/12.

Murder is an important crime to monitor because unlike other crimes, the number reported is probably close to the actual number committed. The murder rate is one indicator of a country's stability – the higher it is, the less stable a country is likely to be.

- Using Statistics South Africa's 2014 mid-year estimates, the murder rate in 2014/15 was 33 per 100 000, up from 32,1 in the last reporting period.
- SA's murder rate is more than five times higher than the 2013 global average of 6,2 murders per 100 000.
- Attempted murder cases increased by 3,2% from 16 989 in 2013/14 to 17 537 in 2014/15.

Figure 1: National and provincial murder rates per 100 000 population, 2014/15



Robbery has increased

Robberies occur when perpetrators threaten or use violence in order to steal belongings. Common robbery is defined as the unlawful and intentional forceful removal and appropriation of movable tangible property belonging to another. When perpetrators use a weapon or there are 'aggravating circumstances', it is record as 'aggravated robbery'. The SAPS refer to robbery as 'violent property crimes'.

- Most types of robbery increased over the past year.
- 'Aggravated' robbery, which is the most serious kind, increased from 118 963 cases in 2013/14 to 129 045 cases (by 8,5%) in 2014/15.
- The aggravated robbery rate increased from 224,5 per 100 000 people in 2013/14 to 239,0 per 100 000 people in 2014/15. This is an increase of 6,4%.
- Increases in the sub-categories of aggravated robbery are as follows:
 - Every day on average 207 cases of street robbery were reported to the SAPS. Street robberies increased by around 9,7% compared to the previous year.
 - On average 56 households were attacked each day in 2014/15. House robberies occur when armed gangs confront people while they are in their

homes. House robbery increased by 5,2% to 20 281 incidents. For the first time, this crime passed the 20 000 mark.

- An average of 53 businesses (including schools and churches) per day or 19 170 in the year reported being robbed in 2014/15. Compared to 2013/14, business robbery increased by 3,2%. This crime has consistently increased in the past 10 years. It is 421% higher now than in 2004/05.
- Vehicle hijacking increased by 14,2% to 12 773 incidents. This means that 35 motor vehicles were hijacked every day on average in 2014/15. This is of particular concern given that organised crime syndicates probably commit most of these crimes.
- Truck hijacking increased by 29,1% from 991 incidents in 2013/14 to 1 279 incidents in 2014/15. Organised crime syndicates also generally perpetrate this crime, which together with the increase in vehicle hijacking suggests that organised crime is on the rise.
- After seven years of consecutive decreases, cash-in-transit heists decreased from 145 in 2012/13 and 2013/14 to 119 in 2014/15. Bank robberies decreased from 21 robberies to 17 in 2014/15.
- The number of 'common' robberies increased from 53 505 cases in 2013/14 to 54 927 cases (by 2,7%) in 2014/15. Common robberies are typically recorded when the police receive reports such as 'smash and grab' incidents against vehicles, or when criminals grab handbags or items from people walking on the streets.

Street robbery primarily affects the poor and typically occurs as people travel to and from work, school or shops. In the years when street robbery decreased, other more serious robberies namely carjacking, house robbery and business robbery (which the police call the 'Trio crimes') increased substantially.

According to the SAPS, improved visible policing did reduce street robberies. The increased visibility was the result of the almost 70 000 additional police officials who were hired between 2002/03 and 20011/12. However, the police believe that the greater number of officers on the streets contributed towards robbers targeting houses, businesses and vehicles instead.

What does South Africa need to do?

The most effective ways to prevent violence do not involve the police, but do require long-term investment. More must be done to reduce the risk factors for violence by:

- Supporting parents
- Offering counselling to those affected by violence, and
- Ensuring that basic services are delivered

Effective policing can, however, reduce robbery and other organised crime. This requires:

- Collecting and effectively using crime intelligence
- An increase in the number of skilled and trained detectives
- Establishing specialised robbery investigating units

- Improving forensic support to detectives investigating robberies
- Strategically targeted patrols and roadblocks
- Closer cooperation between investigators and prosecutors on robbery cases to ensure convictions of perpetrators
- An increased focus on dismantling the groups and networks that purchase, store, process and sell goods stolen in robberies

An example of how the police can substantially reduce robberies was the successful implementation of the Gauteng Aggravated Robbery strategy. Using the above tactics, the Gauteng SAPS were able to increase robbery arrest and conviction rates resulting in a 20% decrease in residential robberies, a 19% decrease in business robberies and a 31% decrease in hijackings in the province between 2009 and 2011. The strategy was abandoned following a change in police leadership, after which these categories of robberies started to increase again.

Some murders can also be reduced through good policing. These include murders and attempted murders that take place during aggravated robbery or intergroup conflict (such as gang or taxi violence), and vigilantism. These types of murders typically make up between 35% and 45% of all murders and attempted murders.

For more information and detailed crime maps for all municipalities and policing precincts in South Africa, visit the ISS Crime Hub at www.issafrica.org/crimehub.

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