

Briefing Note

South African Police Service Resourcing and Performance 2012 to 2020

14 July 2021

1. Introduction

This document provides data on the trends related to the SAPS budget, personnel, activities, performance and conduct. This data was obtained from the SAPS Annual Reports, SAPS Crime Statistics and Treasury Budget Vote documents. All of the data contained here is available in graphic form on the ISS [Crime Information and Analysis Hub](#) (Crime Hub).

2. Police resourcing has improved in terms of budget and infrastructure

Between 2011/12 and 2019/20, the SAPS budget increased by 65.5% from R58.5 billion to R96.8 billion (an additional R38,3 billion).

- *VisPol gets most of this with a 100% increase (from R24.8 billion to R49.7 billion)*
- *Detectives get an 85% increase (from R10.3 billion to 18.8 billion)*
- *Crime Intelligence gets a 91% increase (from R2.2 billion to R4.2 billion)*
- *VIP Protection gets a 126% increase (from R1.5 billion to 3.4 billion)*
- *Administration gets a 3.6% increase (from R19.2 to 19.9 billion)*

For the period 2021/22 to 2023/24 employee compensation accounts for 77.5% of expenditure (R225.9 billion). This compared to 76.4% between the period 2017/18 to 2019/20.

Number of police stations increased from 1 125 to 1 154.

However SAPS personnel numbers declined over the same period.

- Personnel declined by 6% from 199 345 to 187 358 (11 987 fewer posts)
- Most of these were trained police members hired in terms of the SAPS Act – declining by 6.6% from 157 472 to 147 035 (10 437 fewer posts)
- Administration staff recruited in terms of the Public Administration legislation (and who are therefore civilians), declined slightly by 3.7% from 41 873 to 40 323 (1 550 fewer posts)
- Active Reservists drop by 77% from 30 587 to 6 920 posts (23 667 fewer people)

The key reason behind the decline in personnel numbers in this period is the Safety and Security Sector Bargaining Council agreement that non-commissioned officers receive promotions every four years regardless of performance. For example, in 2018 and 2019, over 42 000 personnel were promoted which added an annual R1.2 billion to the salary bill without improvements in activities or performance as will be seen below.

SAPS activity trends between 2012 and 2020

- Number of roadblocks dropped 40% from 54 748 to 32 760 - (21 988 fewer roadblocks)
- Cordon and searches dropped by 89% from 25 835 to 2 780 - (23 055 fewer cordon and searches)
- Air support operations dropped by 82% from 575 to 141 - (434 fewer operations)
- Vehicles searched dropped by 20% from 7.8 million to 6.2 million - (1.6 million fewer searches)
- Number of people searched dropped by 92% from 20 188 477 to 1 512 045 - (18 676 432 fewer searches)

However, some activities increased as follows:

- Number of premises searched increased by 17.5% from 909 680 to 1 069 100 - (159 420 more searches)
- Number of visits to schools increased by 138% from 1 541 199 to 2 287 184 - (2 132 985 more visits)
- Number of visits to shopping complexes increased by 400% from 1 146 745 to 5 736 264 - (4 589 519 more visits)
- Number of visits to farms increased by 8.4% from 1 003 003 to 1 088 033 - (85 030 more visits)
- Increased number of visits may have contributed to an increase in arrests for serious crimes which increased by 46% from 777 140 to 1 133 891 (356 751 more arrests)
- However, the increase in arrests have not resulted in more cases sent to courts
- Between 2011/12 and 2019/20, the number of cases finalised in all courts with a verdict dropped by 27% from 316 045 to 231 725 - (84 373 fewer cases)
- Given that illegal arrests are one of the largest contributors to civil claims against the police, the consequence of this indicator increasing may be a contributing factor in the increase in civil claim payouts in this period (see below)
- It's not clear what visits achieve but these do not appear to have improved policing outcomes on key indicators or key indicators of public safety

The results of these activities produced a mixed bag of outputs in terms of outcomes:

- Number of firearms recovered or confiscated dropped by 52% from 8 744 to 4 204
- Detection rate (proportion of the crimes reported that are solved) for murder dropped by 38% from 31.1% to 19.3%
- Detection rate for robbery dropped by 24% from 22.2% to 16.9%
- Detection rate for contact crimes dropped by 19% from 60.7% to 49.1%

3. Police officer conduct

Police officer conduct has a direct bearing on their ability to promote public safety. When too many officers engage in unnecessary force, corruption or misconduct, it undermines public trust and legitimacy in the police. Consequently, information on crime and reporting rates decline, limiting the extent to which the police can be effective.

The SAPS internal disciplinary system is the single most important accountability mechanism available to maintain discipline and remove officers who, through their actions, undermine public trust in the organisation.

- Between 2012/13 and 2019/20, the SAPS ability to hold internal disciplinary hearings declined by almost **71%** from 5 786 hearings to 1 682 hearings held.
- 50% of the hearings resulted in either the case being withdrawn against the officer (as witnesses don't turn up, or evidence goes missing), or the officers was found not-guilty.
- In only 7% of hearings did police officers experience punitive sanctions (i.e. suspensions without pay or dismissal).
- The remaining hearings resulted in non-punitive sanctions such as corrective counselling, verbal or written warnings which were removed from their personnel files after six months.

The external police investigative body, the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID), has not performed much better.

- Of the 47 984 cases opened against police officials with IPID between 2012 and 2020, only 16% (7 672 cases) were referred to the SAPS for disciplinary action and only 3.2% (1 553 cases) resulted in a disciplinary conviction.
- Worryingly, only 0.4% or 194 police officials were dismissed as a result.
- An earlier [2020 report](#) found that of the more than 42 000 cases opened with IPID by that year, only 1.3% resulted in a criminal conviction

Consequently, since 2012/13, the SAPS has been ordered by the courts pay **out R2,5 billion to victims** who could prove losses as a result of unlawful police officer behaviour. This annual amount increased by **187%** until 2018/19 before dropping slightly in 2019/20. However, in May 2021, the SAPS had already paid out more than R150 million to victims following civil liability claims.

4. SAPS impact on public safety

The most accurate and reliable crime statistic is the number of murders.

- Between 1994 and 2012, the murder rate decreased by 55.9% from (68 murders per 100 000 to 30 per 100 000.)
- However, between 2012 and 2020, the murder rate has increased every year and currently stands at 20% higher at 36 per 100 000.
- The number of murders increased by 37% from 15 554 in 2012 to 21 325 in 2020 (5 771 more murders than in 2012).
- Another key crime category is aggravated robbery. This crime category typically has higher reporting rates than other violence crimes (e.g. assault, sexual offences, etc.) Aggravated robberies include armed robberies of people in the streets, their homes, places of businesses, vehicle hijacking and cash-in-transit heists. These armed robberies reported to the police increased by 42.9% from 100 769 cases in 2012 to 143 990 cases in 2020.
- This is a very policeable crime as a vast proportion of armed robberies are committed by a relatively small number of repeat offenders who use the same modus operandi.
- Between 2009 and 2011 the Gauteng SAPS – using a clear strategy and a relatively small number of dedicated resources (400 police officers out of 34 000 in Gauteng at the time, mostly detectives and 15 crime intelligence officers) – managed to reduce vehicle hijacking by 32%, house robberies by 20% and business robberies by 19%.
- The strategy and its capacity was thereafter disbanded by the new Gauteng Provincial Commissioner and these crimes have largely increased ever since.

5. Current budget cuts are likely to worsen this situation

SAPS expenditure is expected to decrease at an average annual rate of 0.8%, from R99.6 billion in 2020/21 to R97.1 billion in 2023/24.

- Current budget cuts will see SAPS total employees drop by 13% (24 364 posts) to 162 944 by 2023/24.
- The largest decline in personnel will be in Visible Policing (12%), Administration (11%), VIP Protection (10%), Crime Intelligence (8,3%) and Detectives (5%).
- Top management posts (Generals and Brigadiers) will only drop by 1.9% (15 posts). Given that it is generally agreed that the top management structure is bloated, this should be of concern.
- Non-commissioned officers who are typically based at police stations and undertake operational work in communities will drop by 12.9%.

6. Three priorities

- There is a need for a decisive reform efforts to professionalise and improve performance and effectiveness of the SAPS. This will not happen unless there is a clear reform plan in place against which all ministers and operational

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commanders are held accountable. Various government documents and reports diagnosing the SAPS and offering recommendations for improvements have not been considered and recommendations have not implemented.

2. There is also an urgent need for a rejuvenation of the top management of the SAPS. We need to establish a structure such as recommended in the National Development Plan called a National Police Board to undertake a detailed assessment of the performance of the 200 Generals as a start and also determine whether we need so many.
3. Reducing murder and robbery has to become a key priority for the JCPS and the government as a whole

Briefing note prepared by the ISS Head of the Justice and Violence Prevention programme, Gareth Newham gnewham@issafrica.org