

# Decentralising policing services in South Africa:

## a case in numbers



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## Introduction

Although AfriForum has always adhered to principles of federalism, it was not until 2021 that AfriForum began to actively advocate federalism as a viable alternative to state centralisation in South Africa. The South African government's centralist approach to addressing South Africa's multiple challenges is deeply entrenched; it operates under a centralist framework with singular government entities. For example, South Africa has only one national police service in the fight against crime: the South African Police Service (SAPS).

The purpose of this report is to present the case for a decentralised approach to combat crime in South Africa, with an emphasis on murder trends.<sup>1</sup> AfriForum believes that a major component of the solution of effectively responding to crime lies in a federalist approach. The organisation therefore advocates a shift away from a centralist policing approach towards a more federal, community-focused strategy in South Africa's ongoing battle against crime. AfriForum has already commenced with its decentralised response to crime by empowering communities through resources (for example, equipped neighbourhood watches) and training.

To date, AfriForum has successfully established 160 neighbourhood watches across all nine provinces in South Africa. These neighbourhood watches comprise thousands of volunteers, including 629 specially trained members who form our rapid response (or proto) teams.<sup>2</sup> These dedicated people work to combat crime in their local communities.

## The current state of crime and justice in South Africa

South Africa is in the throes of a crime epidemic. Over the past 29 years, 59 604 554 incidents of serious crimes had been recorded.<sup>3, 4</sup> Moreover, surveys by the Human Sciences Research Council between 2003 and 2015 indicate that 79% of people were not satisfied with the government's crime reduction strategies.<sup>5, 6</sup> The failures of the SAPS are well documented – from political interferences

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<sup>1</sup> This report builds on the work of crime experts, most notably David Bruce, who argues for a more decentralised police service. It must be pointed out here that the views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of Bruce. See:

- Bruce, D. 2022. *South Africa needs less nationally focused policing responses*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies Africa. Available at <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/south-africa-needs-less-nationally-focused-policing-responses>. Accessed on 17 May 2023

<sup>2</sup> AfriForum. N.d. *Neighbourhood watch*. Available at <https://afriforum.co.za/en/what-do-we-do/neighbourhood-watches/>. Accessed on 17 May 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Van Heerden. G. 2023. Crime & security. In: Centre for Risk Analysis. *South Africa survey 2023*, pp.1–66 (p. 9). Available at <https://cra-sa.com/products/socio-economic-survey>. Accessed on 29 June 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Data tables only have records dating back to the 1994/1995 financial year.

<sup>5</sup> Human Sciences Research Council, as quoted in: Faull. A. 2018. *Less crime, more fear*. UCT, 3 October. Available at <https://www.news.uct.ac.za/article/-2018-10-03-less-crime-more-fear>. Accessed on 1 June 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Bohler-Muller, N., Davids, Y.D., Roberts, B., Kanyane, B., Struwig, J., Masiya, T. & Nomdo, A. 2016. Service Delivery Challenges in South Africa. In *South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS)*, p. 11. Available at <https://repository.hsra.ac.za/bitstream/handle/20.500.11910/10377/9475.pdf?sequence=1&i>. Accessed on 19 July 2023.

in the police in what the National Development Plan called a “crisis of top management”<sup>7</sup> to police brutality, including torture and assault.<sup>8</sup> In May 2023 the Public Affairs Research Institute concluded that the SAPS “is not currently fit for purpose” as it is frequently implicated in criminal activities (including all five former national police commissioners since 2019), failing in its duties of crime prevention and detection, and losing the public trust.<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup> Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime asserts that the SAPS lacks a strategic direction for dealing with organised crime while it favours high-visibility but low-impact actions that are focused on big seizures and numerous low-level arrests.<sup>11</sup>

The inability to effectively combat crime is not confined merely to policing services; it permeates the entire criminal justice system. According to Merten, the appointment of politically “pliable” heads for the country’s security, intelligence, and prosecuting services has contributed to the criminal justice system’s inefficiency, with political infighting becoming the norm and paralysing enforcement functions.<sup>12</sup> If the current rate of combating crime in South Africa persists, the National Development Plan’s goal of abolishing crime by 2030 is more likely to be accomplished in 2059.<sup>13</sup>

## Laws governing the SAPS: One service to rule them all?

As a constitutional democracy, South Africa has a three-sphere system of government that comprises national, provincial and local tiers, each with legislative and executive powers within its domain.<sup>14</sup> South Africa’s governmental model has often been labelled quasi-federal.<sup>15</sup> Although the Constitution does not explicitly define the system as a purely federal model, the different spheres of government are entrenched in section 40(1) of the Constitution, thus exhibiting federal

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<sup>7</sup> ISSAfrica.org. 2017. *Police not coping with serious violent crime – ISS Africa*. Media statement on 24 October. Available at <https://issafrica.org/crimehub/analysis/press-releases/police-not-coping-with-serious-violent-crime>. Accessed on 1 June 2023.

<sup>8</sup> SaferSpaces. N.d. *Police brutality in South Africa*. Available at <https://www.saferpaces.org.za/understand/entry/police-brutality-in-south-africa>. Accessed on 1 June 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Pillay, D. 2023. The police are not only failing to keep us safe, they are failing in almost every aspect of their duty. *Daily Maverick*, 1 May. Available at <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-05-01-the-police-are-not-only-failing-to-keep-us-safe-they-are-failing-in-almost-every-aspect-of-their-duty/>. Accessed on 24 May 2023.

<sup>10</sup> SABC News. 2023. *SA Police Services not fit for purpose: PARI* [YouTube video]. 4 May, at 00:13. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmzc6tAwj70>. Accessed on 24 May 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime. 2022. *Strategic organized crime risk assessment South Africa*, p. 32. Available at <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/GI-TOC-Strategic-Organized-Crime-Risk-Assessment-South-Africa.pdf>. Accessed on 24 May 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Merten, M. 2018. Crime stats from Hell – brought to you by years of instability, political pliancy and the SAPS’s internecine battles. *Daily Maverick*, 11 September. Available at <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2018-09-11-crime-stats-from-hell-brought-to-you-by-years-of-instability-political-pliancy-and-the-sapss-internecine-battles/>. Accessed on 27 January 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Baloyi, P. 2017. Crime statistics on creating a safer SA for all to live in. In *Servamus Community-based Safety and Security Magazine* 110(9), pp. 46–47. Available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-94899635b>. Accessed on 23 June 2023.

<sup>14</sup> South African Government. 2023. *Structure and functions of the South African government*. Available at <https://www.gov.za/about-government/government-system/structure-and-functions-south-african-government>. Accessed on 23 June 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Eyrice Tepeciklioğlu, E. 2018. South African Federalism: Constitution-making process and the decline of the federalism debate. In *Journal of Yasar University* 13(50), pp. 164–175. Available at <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/486729>. Accessed on 23 June 2023.

characteristics.<sup>16, 17</sup> However, the South African government currently holds a strong central authority that characterises a concentration of power and decision-making within the institutions and entities of the central government. Conversely, provinces are less influential, which results in a relative imbalance of power and authority between the central government and the provincial administrations within the country.<sup>18</sup>

This concentration of decision-making authority at national level is also reflected in the SAPS.<sup>19</sup> Chapter 11 of the South African Constitution relates to establishing, structuring and conducting security services and stipulates that the security services of South Africa consist of a single defence force, a single police service and intelligence services. Roelf emphasises that South Africa's nine provinces have no jurisdiction over the SAPS, despite having substantial legislative and executive powers under Schedules 4 and 5 of the Constitution.<sup>20</sup> The roles of provincial executives in police matters are limited to monitoring, overseeing and establishing liaisons, as stipulated in section 206 (3) of the Constitution. Even though there are designated members of the executive council (or MECs) for safety and security at provincial level, the primary responsibility for political oversight of the SAPS rests primarily with the Minister of Police.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, the provinces and the local SAPS have some level of autonomy, but this autonomy must be consistent with national policies. Although the South African Constitution does provide some power to provincial policing in terms of section 206(3), these powers seem to be mostly ineffective. Provinces are further limited to making recommendations to the Minister of Police, who may use their discretion regarding how or whether to act upon these submissions. Furthermore, the provincial governments do not have any power to order any form of sanction following their findings.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> De Visser, J. & Steytler, N. N.d. Multilevel government in South Africa, Ethiopia and Kenya: Observations from the practice of designing and implementing multilevel government systems. In *Occupational Paper Series* 20: p. 3. Available at [http://www.forumfed.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/OPS\\_20\\_Multilevel\\_Government1.pdf](http://www.forumfed.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/OPS_20_Multilevel_Government1.pdf). Accessed on 22 May 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Forum of Federations. 2022. *Federal countries: South Africa*. Available at <http://forumfed.org/countries/south-africa/>. Accessed on 22 May 2023.

<sup>19</sup> Roelf, N.L. 2019. *Decentralising the South African Police Service: Does South Africa's current public safety crisis and the de facto decentralising of policing necessitate a critical evaluation of its present policing model?* Unpublished master's dissertation from the University of Cape Town. Available at [https://open.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11427/33014/thesis\\_law\\_2020\\_roelf%20nicholas%20louis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://open.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11427/33014/thesis_law_2020_roelf%20nicholas%20louis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y). Accessed on 22 May 2023.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Mabasa, H. & Olutola, A.A. 2021. The structure of South African police: Towards a single police service. In *Cogent Social Sciences*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2021.1959974>.

<sup>22</sup> Roelf, N.L. 2019. *Decentralising the South African Police Service: Does South Africa's current public safety crisis and the de facto decentralising of policing necessitate a critical evaluation of its present policing model?* Unpublished master's dissertation from the University of Cape Town. Available at [https://open.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11427/33014/thesis\\_law\\_2020\\_roelf%20nicholas%20louis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://open.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11427/33014/thesis_law_2020_roelf%20nicholas%20louis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y). Accessed on 22 May 2023.

## The bureaucracy and inefficiencies in SAPS

The SAPS is the largest department of the South African government<sup>23</sup> and one of the largest police forces in the world.<sup>24</sup> In terms of staff, the SAPS comprises 176 180 employees, the bulk of which are visible policing members with 91 377 members.<sup>25</sup> This is more members than the entire military of Australia and New Zealand put together.<sup>26</sup>

An equally important aspect is the SAPS organisational structure and culture. The culture within SAPS has historically been characterised by an entrenched hierarchy, burdensome bureaucratic procedures, and rigid processes.<sup>27</sup> This has contributed substantially to gaps in coordination, delayed responses, and ineffective service delivery. This rigid hierarchical culture persists to this day.<sup>28</sup> In 2021 the SAPS had nearly 200 generals as well as 600 brigadiers in its service who collectively earned a total of almost R1 billion per year.<sup>29</sup> The Institute for Security Services (ISS) has also voiced its concerns about the size of SAPS's top management and argued that this section of the police service needs to be downsized.<sup>30</sup>

The Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) expressed its concern about the SAPS's overly "top-heavy" configuration already in 2012. It recommended a more decentralised approach at station levels.<sup>31</sup> POPCRU pointed out that the SAPS's overly bureaucratic structure resulted in redundant functions, impeded efficient service delivery, consumes a large portion of the budget at the top levels, and created administrative roadblocks that hindered decision-making, ultimately curtailing SAPS's ability to fulfil its primary mandate.<sup>32</sup> POPCRU again raised the SAPS's top-heavy structure and subsequent restructuring in 2020<sup>33</sup> and 2022.<sup>34</sup> As a result, the top-down culture of

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<sup>23</sup> Bruce, D. 2021. *South Africa's police: a rigid bureaucracy struggling to reform* – ISS Africa. Available at <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/south-african-police-a-rigid-bureaucracy-struggling-to-reform>. Accessed on 30 May 2023.

<sup>24</sup> Businesstech. 2015. *South Africa's police force vs the world*. 13 August. Available at <https://businesstech.co.za/news/trending/95069/south-african-police-force-vs-the-world/>. Accessed on 5 June 2023.

<sup>25</sup> South African Police Service. 2022. *Annual report 2021/2022*, p. 320. Available at [https://www.saps.gov.za/about/stratframework/annual\\_report/2021\\_2022/Annual-Report-2021-22.pdf](https://www.saps.gov.za/about/stratframework/annual_report/2021_2022/Annual-Report-2021-22.pdf). Accessed on 14 August 2023.

<sup>26</sup> GlobalFirepower. N.d. *2023 military strength ranking*. Available at <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.php>. Accessed on 5 June 2023.

<sup>27</sup> Gqada, D. 2004. *The South African Police Service organisational culture: the impact on service delivery*. Unpublished master's dissertation, Stellenbosch University. Available at <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/37370326.pdf>. Accessed on 5 June 2023.

<sup>28</sup> Bruce, D. 2021. *South Africa's police: a rigid bureaucracy struggling to reform* – ISS Africa. Available at <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/south-african-police-a-rigid-bureaucracy-struggling-to-reform>. Accessed on 30 May 2023.

<sup>29</sup> Newham, G. 2021. *SA police failures demand urgent reform before it's too late*. Available at <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/sa-police-failures-demand-urgent-reform-before-its-too-late>. Accessed on 5 June 2023.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Parliamentary Monitoring Group. 2012. *SAPS promotion policy (Major and Lieutenant ranks) & alleged top-heavy structure: input by South African Police Service (SAPS), Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU), South African Police Union (SAPU), with Minister*. Available at <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/14572/>. Accessed on 5 June 2023.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Mlamla, S. 2020. *Unions slate SAPS' 'top-heavy' redesign*. IOL, 31 July. Available at <https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/unions-slate-saps-top-heavy-redesign-500acc63-1783-4d6e-afb2-336e9e75aaa>. Accessed on 5 June 2023.

<sup>34</sup> Ndenze, B. 2022. *SAPS' s bloated top structure drains resources needed to fight crime, says Popcru*. EWN, 22 April. Available at <https://ewn.co.za/2022/04/22/saps-s-bloated-top-structure-drains-resources-needed-to-fight-crime-says-popcru>. Accessed on 5 June 2023.

SAPS often dismisses new ideas proposed by station commanders and officers who interact with the public, thus hindering the service's ability to evolve and innovate.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, dysfunction within the SAPS at the top due to its hierarchical structure filters down. The 2018 SAPS Employment Regulations grant excessive authority to the ministry in influencing high-level appointments, with leaders appointed according to their political loyalty rather than their skills or expertise.<sup>36</sup>

## Decentralised law enforcement: a call to action

In the past, the SAPS was met with criticism due to its inability to effectively reduce crime. This has led to some proposals for its decentralisation.<sup>37</sup> However, the impetus for a renewed push towards decentralisation of the SAPS came in the form of the infamous July riots of 2021, which the SAPS failed to manage and contain. The riots resulted in hundreds of deaths, billions of rands in damages, and tens of thousands of job losses. This prompted civil society, top crime and security experts, and opposition parties to take a renewed interest in the decentralisation of the SAPS. According to the report by the expert panel that was appointed by Pres. Ramaphosa to investigate the July 2021 civil unrest, the SAPS – along with other government agencies – were caught off guard by the protest due to a number of factors, including inadequate resources, a lack of intelligence, poor communication and the overwhelming number of looters.<sup>38</sup> Their report noted that the Public Order Police (a division of the SAPS) is centralised and not spread across police stations, which resulted in unavoidable delays in response times when station commanders requested their assistance. In addition, the strategy of the unrest was intentionally designed to strain the SAPS's limited resources, as police capacity was pushed to its limits by spontaneous, numerous and concurrent episodes of unrest, violence and looting.<sup>39</sup>

On 30 July 2021, National Police Commissioner Genl. Khehla Sitole admitted the SAPS's inability to fulfil its mandate due to restructuring and budget cuts. Consequently, the Democratic Alliance again emphasised its call for the decentralisation of the SAPS from national to provincial and municipal levels to improve service delivery to local communities.<sup>40</sup> The Inkatha Freedom Party also called for the

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<sup>35</sup> Bruce, D. 2021. *South Africa's police: a rigid bureaucracy struggling to reform – ISS Africa*. Available at <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/south-african-police-a-rigid-bureaucracy-struggling-to-reform>. Accessed on 30 May 2023.

<sup>36</sup> Newham, G. 2021. *SA police failures demand urgent reform before it's too late*. Available at <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/sa-police-failures-demand-urgent-reform-before-its-too-late>. Accessed on 5 June 2023.

<sup>37</sup> Steytler, N. & Muntingh, L. 2016. Meeting the public security crisis in South Africa: Centralising and decentralising forces at play. In Martin B.J. & Koen R. (Eds). *Law and justice at the dawn of the 21st century: Essays in honour of Lovell Derek Fernandez*, pp. 67–88. Available at <https://repository.uwc.ac.za/xmlui/handle/10566/2327>. Accessed on 30 May 2023.

<sup>38</sup> Africa, S., Sokupa, S. & Gumbi, M. 2021. *Report of the Expert Panel into the July 2021 civil unrest*. Available at <https://www.thepresidency.gov.za/content/report-expert-panel-july-2021-civil-unrest>. Accessed on 30 June 2023.

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*, p. 60.

<sup>40</sup> Terblanche, O. 2021. *Sithole admits SAPS is failing, DA calls for devolution of police services*. Media statement by the Democratic Alliance, 30 July. Available at <https://www.da.org.za/2021/07/sithole-admits-saps-is-failing-da-calls-for-devolution-of-police-services>. Accessed on 6 June 2023.

restructuring of the SAPS into a federal system that would allow local and provincial police to be the critical experts on crime in their areas.<sup>41</sup> Dr Jakkie Cilliers from the Institute for Security Studies recommended the decentralisation of the SAPS to the provincial, metropolitan and municipality tiers.<sup>42</sup>

In a broad sense, decentralisation refers to a practice of transferring public authority, resources and personnel from national government level to the sub-national jurisdictions, or regional administrations.<sup>43</sup> Some forms and subtypes of decentralisation include political, administrative and fiscal decentralisation.<sup>44</sup> Political decentralisation entails the devolution of policy choices from a central authority to a sub-national unit. Administrative decentralisation involves limited delegation or devolution of executive responsibilities from a higher to a lower organisational level. Fiscal decentralisation devolves the central government's expenditure and revenue duties to lower tiers of government.<sup>45</sup> According to De Visser, Steytler and Chigwata, the advantage of decentralisation is a more inclusive government that –

- can bolster democracy and provide an environment for multi-party democracy to prosper;
- is more sensitive to the needs of local communities; and
- can counter and resist the abuse of power by the central government.<sup>46</sup>

Decentralisation in terms of police services can be categorised into a centralised, semi-centralised and decentralised police system.<sup>47</sup> In a centralised police system, a single national police authority holds command and control throughout the entire country. Countries with a centralised police force include Chile, Indonesia, Kenya, Thailand and Uganda. In a semi-centralised police system, such as in Japan and Brazil, the central government and local states or provinces share control of the police. However, in a decentralised police system, local state or provincial governments have exclusive responsibility and control over their police forces – a system commonly seen in federal or union settings. Examples of decentralised police systems can be found in the United States of America and Canada.<sup>48, 49</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Import, P. 2023. Opinion: Crime crisis – IFP calls for decentralised SAPS. *South Coast Herald*, 11 May. Available at <https://southcoastherald.co.za/467861/crime-crisis-ifp-calls-for-decentralised-saps/>. Accessed on 8 June 2023.

<sup>42</sup> Ngqakamba, S. 2021. #UnrestSA: SAPS needs to be reformed, decentralised in the future – expert. *News24*, 30 July. Available at <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/frontline-unrestsa-saps-needs-to-be-reformed-decentralised-in-the-future-expert-20210730>. Accessed on 6 June 2023.

<sup>43</sup> Ndegwa, S.N. 2003. Decentralization in Africa: Emerging trends and progress. In *Africa Region Findings & Good Practice Infobriefs* 229: pp. 1–4. (p. 1). Available at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/9726>. Accessed on 29 May 2022.

<sup>44</sup> OECD. 2022. *Decentralisation and regionalisation in Portugal: What reform scenarios?* Available at <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/e5b9ba7d-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/e5b9ba7d-en>. Accessed on 6 June 2023.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> De Visser, J., Steytler, N. & Chigwata, T. 2020. *Fact sheets on decentralisation in Africa: A short-cut guide*, p. 5. Available at <https://dullahomarininstitute.org.za/multilevel-govt/publications/doi-factsheets-combined-print-3mm-bleed-1.pdf/view>. Accessed on 15 May 2022.

<sup>47</sup> UNAFEI. 2003. *Annual report for 2001 and resource material series* 60, p 183. Available at [https://www.unafei.or.jp/publications/pdf/RS\\_No60/No60\\_00All.pdf](https://www.unafei.or.jp/publications/pdf/RS_No60/No60_00All.pdf). Accessed on 6 June 2023.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Lowatcharin, G. & Stallmann, J.I. 2020. Decentralization and citizen trust: An empirical study of policing in more and less developed countries. In *Journal of Public Affairs* 20(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.1974>.



In essence, the overarching concept of decentralised policing concerns 1) the transition of control from the national to the local governmental units, 2) the restructuring of police organisation from a top-down to a more flattened format, and 3) adapting solutions to align with local interests and requirements.<sup>50</sup> When considering policing on a global level, there are both justifications for and objections to the decentralisation of police services. As stated by Han, LaPrade and Hwang, while centralisation versus decentralisation in governments has been a topic of scholarly investigation (with a few notable exceptions), most of the discourse has remained mainly theoretical rather than an empirical study of specific data.<sup>51</sup> Regarding the South African context, reaction to the concept of a decentralised police service is divided. Mabasa and Olutola argue that a centralised police service in South Africa, which integrates the municipal police, the traffic, and the SAPS, could effectively address crime and resolve administrative and operational challenges that are the result of a lack of coordination between these law enforcement agencies.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, Roelf uses the Cape Flats area of Cape Town as an example and argues that the centralist policing model has failed to address local community needs. He therefore argues for a more localised (i.e., federal) model of policing.<sup>53</sup>

## The case for decentralisation is based on crime statistics

South Africa is a highly diverse country, not just in terms of languages, culture and ethnicity, but also in terms of population distribution and geographical features. For example, Gauteng comprises 1,5% of South Africa's surface area, is the most populous province with 16,1 million people and accounts for 50,4% of all corporate turnover in South Africa. On the other hand, the Northern Cape (with a surface area 20 times larger than that of Gauteng) is the least inhabited province, with only 1,3 million people.<sup>54</sup> Just as there are distinct geographical differences from one area to another, there are also significant variations in the types and prevalence of crime in different geographical locations. An example of how geographical features affect crime was illustrated in a study that revealed a strong association between extreme weather conditions (particularly temperature) and the prevalence and geographical distribution of violent, sexual and property crimes in the city of Tshwane.<sup>55</sup> The findings

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<sup>50</sup> Han, S., LaPrade, J. & Hwang, E. 2021. Is a decentralized police organization a better option in a modern democratic society? A case study from South Korea. In *Police Quarterly* 25(3), pp. 364–386. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611211042034>.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Mabasa, H. & Olutola, A.A. 2021. The structure of South African Police: Towards a single police service. In *Cogent Social Sciences*, 7(1): pp. 1–13. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2021.1959974>.

<sup>53</sup> Roelf, N.L. 2019. *Decentralising the South African Police Service: Does South Africa's current public safety crisis and the de facto decentralising of policing necessitate a critical evaluation of its present policing model?* Unpublished master's dissertation from the University of Cape Town. Available at [https://open.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11427/33014/thesis\\_law\\_2020\\_roelf%20nicholas%20louis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://open.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11427/33014/thesis_law_2020_roelf%20nicholas%20louis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y). Accessed on 22 May 2023.

<sup>54</sup> Statistics South Africa. 2022. *Mid-year population estimates*, p. vii. Available at <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0302/P03022022.pdf>. Accessed on 25 June 2023.

<sup>55</sup> Schutte, F.H. & Breetzke, G.D. 2018. The influence of extreme weather conditions on the magnitude and spatial distribution of crime in Tshwane (2001–2006). In *South African Geographical Journal* 100(3): pp. 364–377. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03736245.2018.1498384>.

show that crime in the city of Tshwane increases with higher temperatures (hot days) and decreases during colder or random temperatures.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, different provinces have different crime rates because of their varying levels of urbanisation, economic activities, demographics and geographic characteristics.<sup>57</sup> The following section will assess the need for decentralisation based on murder trends across geographical areas in South Africa, such as the place of occurrences and motivation for murders. A good example of the ways in which crime is dispersed across geographical areas in the country is to use recorded murder statistics, since it is often regarded as one of the most accurate illustrations of the crime situation in a country.

## Murders per province: variances in crime

Murder rates are one of the most dependable measures of crime levels due to their validity, reliability and association with other violent crimes.<sup>58, 59</sup> Table 1 provides an overview of the murder rate in each South African province from 2006/2007 to 2021/2022.

As can be seen from table 1, reported murders in South Africa are not equally dispersed. Throughout this period, the Eastern Cape, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal consistently recorded the highest average murder rates. In contrast, the Limpopo province recorded the lowest average murder rate. In 2021/2022, the Eastern Cape recorded a murder rate of 66 per 100 000 people, surpassing the global average of 6,1 by eleven times.<sup>60</sup> In comparison, Limpopo's murder rate was 17 per 100 000 for the same period. Although still high (i.e., almost three times the global average), it is considerably lower than the Eastern Cape.

In addition, when looking at the percentage increase in murders over a decade (i.e., from 2012/2013 to 2021/2022), there is a noteworthy rise of over 50% in certain provinces. For example, Gauteng experienced an 86% increase, KwaZulu-Natal a 79% increase, Mpumalanga a 73% increase and the Western Cape a 60% increase. In comparison, the Northern Cape and the Free State murder rates decreased by 11% and 3% between 2012/2013–2021/2022.

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<sup>56</sup> Breetzke, G. 2018. *When temperatures rise, so do crime rates: evidence from South Africa*. The Conversation, 7 August. Available at <https://theconversation.com/when-temperatures-rise-so-do-crime-rates-evidence-from-south-africa-100850>. Accessed on 8 June 2023.

<sup>57</sup> Bruce, D. 2022. *South Africa needs less nationally focused policing responses*. Available at <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/south-africa-needs-less-nationally-focused-policing-responses>. Accessed on 17 May 2023.

<sup>58</sup> Van Breen, J., Devarakonda, S.K. & Liem, M. 2023. Can homicide serve as an indicator of non-lethal crime? A systematic literature review. In *International Criminology* 3: pp. 99–115. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43576-023-00086-1>.

<sup>59</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2019. *Global study on homicide*, p. 7. Available at <https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/Booklet1.pdf>. Accessed on 20 March 2023.

<sup>60</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2019. *Global study on homicide 2019 edition*. Available at <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/global-study-on-homicide.html>. Accessed on 19 July 2023.

Table 1: Average murder rate (per 100 000) per province (2012/2013–2021/2022)<sup>61, 62</sup>

|     | 2012/2013 | 2013/2014 | 2014/2015 | 2015/2016 | 2016/2017 | 2017/2018 | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 | Average over time period |
|-----|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------------------|
| EC  | 50,4      | 51,9      | 50,0      | 54,9      | 54,5      | 57,2      | 59,3      | 57,9      | 55,5      | 66,0      | 55,8                     |
| FS  | 36,3      | 33,4      | 33,2      | 34,8      | 33,2      | 36,6      | 34,5      | 32,3      | 28,6      | 34,0      | 33,7                     |
| KZN | 34,4      | 33,9      | 35,4      | 36,1      | 36,5      | 39,4      | 39,1      | 42,7      | 42,2      | 56,3      | 39,6                     |
| LIM | 12,7      | 13,1      | 13,8      | 15,8      | 14,2      | 15,8      | 15,7      | 15,0      | 12,1      | 17,0      | 14,5                     |
| MPU | 16,6      | 19,0      | 19,3      | 19,7      | 21,6      | 20,6      | 21,9      | 22,6      | 20,0      | 25,4      | 20,7                     |
| NC  | 34,9      | 36,6      | 34,1      | 30,3      | 27,7      | 27,1      | 25,3      | 25,3      | 22,1      | 28,0      | 29,1                     |
| NW  | 23,8      | 22,3      | 22,7      | 23,7      | 23,1      | 24,0      | 23,9      | 21,1      | 17,7      | 24,6      | 22,7                     |
| GAU | 23,0      | 24,9      | 26,8      | 27,3      | 28,4      | 28,6      | 29,7      | 29,4      | 25,8      | 34,6      | 27,9                     |
| WC  | 42,2      | 46,6      | 50,2      | 49,8      | 50,1      | 55,4      | 57,9      | 56,8      | 54,2      | 57,0      | 52,0                     |

Another factor worth noting is variations in the reporting of murder. According to Statistics South Africa’s *Victims of crime survey 2017/2018*,<sup>63</sup> the main reason for the disparity between the estimated number of murders according to its *Governance, public safety and justice survey 2018/2019* and the estimated number of murders according to the SAPS is that the latter also includes homicides of homeless, immigrants or transient visitors, who were not known to the sample households.

As can be seen from table 2, Gauteng had the highest number of reported cases. The Northern Cape was the only province where murder reported to the SAPS decreased over the period under review. Murder reported to SAPS decreased between 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 in the Northern Cape, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, North West and Limpopo, while it increased in other provinces and across South Africa.<sup>64, 65</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Murder rates from 2010/2011 to 2021/2022 was calculated by AfriForum using SAPS data and Statistics population data. See:

- South African Police Service. *Annual Crime Statistics 2021/2022*. Available at <https://www.saps.gov.za/services/crimestats.php>. Accessed on 19 July 2023.
- Statistics South Africa. 2022. *Additional download(s): Provincial projection by sex and age (2002–2022)*. Available at [https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page\\_id=1854&PPN=P0302](https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=1854&PPN=P0302). Accessed on 19 July 2023.

<sup>62</sup> Murder rates and percentages were calculated using financial year crime statistics and calendar year population data.

<sup>63</sup> Statistics South Africa. 2022. *Victims of crime survey 2017/2018*, p. 38. Available at <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0341/P03412017.pdf>. Accessed on 11 July 2023.

<sup>64</sup> Statistics South Africa. 2019. *Governance, public safety, and justice survey 2018/2019*, p. 38–39. Available at <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0341/P03412018.pdf>. Accessed on 19 July 2023.

<sup>65</sup> Statistics South Africa. 2022. *Victims of crime survey 2017/2018*, p. 38. Available at <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0341/P03412017.pdf>. Accessed on 11 July 2023.

Table 2: Reported murders province from 2013/2014 to 2018/2019.<sup>66, 67</sup>

|     | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 |
|-----|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| NC  | 734     | 759     | 704     | 677     | 665     | 598     |
| FS  | 1 708   | 1 679   | 1 791   | 1 728   | 1 825   | 1 771   |
| NW  | 1 706   | 1 709   | 1 802   | 1 852   | 1 837   | 1 803   |
| LP  | 1 848   | 1 854   | 2 163   | 2 088   | 2 273   | 2 120   |
| MP  | 1 977   | 1 954   | 2 096   | 2 221   | 2 113   | 2 137   |
| WC  | 3 902   | 4 170   | 4 349   | 4 404   | 4 827   | 5 025   |
| EC  | 4 723   | 4 715   | 5 208   | 5 100   | 5 243   | 5 397   |
| KZN | 5 854   | 6 043   | 6 333   | 6 449   | 6 823   | 6 793   |
| GP  | 5 828   | 6 055   | 6 383   | 6 657   | 6 753   | 6 978   |

### Metropolitan and district municipalities

Similar to the provincial data, the prevalence of the murders varies within the different metropolitan and district municipalities. The following section of the report will focus on and provide a breakdown of murder rates across metropolitan and district municipalities in the Eastern Cape, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal for the year 2021/2022.<sup>68</sup> The three provinces with the highest murder rate for 2021/2022 were selected. These three provinces each have a murder rate of above 50 per 100 000 people (see table 1). Within these provinces, there are noteworthy examples of the variations in murders between metropolitan and district municipalities. However, this does not mean that there are no variations in murders between metropolitan and district municipalities within the other provinces. For example, in the Free State province, Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality recorded a murder rate of 43,0 per 100 000 people for 2021/2022, while the Fezile Dabi District Municipality murder rate was 22,3 per 100 000 over the same period (see annexure A).

Despite the Eastern Cape's overall high murder rate, certain municipalities, such as Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality, Chris Hani District Municipality and Amatole District Municipality, display significantly higher murder rates of 80 or higher per 100 000 compared to the other municipalities in the province (table 3).

According to the ISS, one of the reasons for the prevalent level of violence is gang violence, which is

<sup>66</sup> Statistics South Africa. 2019. *Governance, public safety, and justice survey 2018/2019*, p. 38–39. Available at <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0341/P03412018.pdf>. Accessed on 19 July 2023.

<sup>67</sup> Statistics South Africa. 2022. *Victims of crime survey 2017/2018*, p. 38. Available at <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0341/P03412017.pdf>. Accessed on 11 July 2023.

<sup>68</sup> Murder rates and percentages were calculated using financial year crime statistics and calendar year population data.

concentrated around Gqeberha and other neighbouring regions of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro.<sup>69</sup> According to the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), Nelson Mandela Bay has seen a continuous increase in recorded killings and attempted murders since 2012/2013.<sup>70</sup> The GI-TOC suggest that key factors associated with gangsterism and emerging patterns of misgovernance within the city administration are vital in comprehending the significant rise in violence within the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro.

Table 3: Murder ratio (per 100 000) for the Eastern Cape for 2021/2022, shown per municipality (percentages are rounded off)<sup>71</sup>

|  | Murder rate | Murder percentage |
|--|-------------|-------------------|
| Alfred Nzo District Municipality             | 53,3        | 10%               |
| Amathole District Municipality               | 83,9        | 15%               |
| Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality       | 54,2        | 10%               |
| Chris Hani District Municipality             | 80,6        | 13%               |
| Joe Gqabi District Municipality              | 59,1        | 5%                |
| Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality | 80,0        | 22%               |
| Sarah Baartman District Municipality         | 45,9        | 5%                |
| OR Tambo District Municipality               | 63,4        | 22%               |

According to the GI-TOC, the concentration of political assassination between 2020 and 2022 occurred in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, with the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality (Durban) accounting for 19% of assassinations.<sup>72</sup>

As shown in table 4, the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality accounts for 43% of all murders in KwaZulu-Natal. This amounts to a murder rate of 69,7 per 100 000 people. Although the actual number of murders committed in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality for the same period is much lower (12% of murders in the province), the murder rate (69,8 murders per 100 000) is about the same as that of the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality. These details underline the urgent need for increased policing resources and a more focused approach to crime prevention in these specific municipalities.

<sup>69</sup> Bruce, D. 2022. *South Africa needs less nationally focused policing responses*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies Africa. Available at <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/south-africa-needs-less-nationally-focused-policing-responses>. Accessed on 17 May 2023.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas, K., Shaw, M., & Ronan, M. 2020. *A city under siege*, p. 1. Geneva: Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime. Available at <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Gang-violence-and-criminal-governance-in-Nelson-Mandela-Bay.pdf>. Accessed on 20 July 2023.

<sup>71</sup> Data calculated by AfriForum, based on ISS crime statistics and StatsSA population figures. See:

- Institute for Security Studies. 2023. *Crimehub. Crime Statistics Wizard. Murder data for the Eastern Cape per Districts municipalities for 2021/2022*. Available at <https://crimehub.org/wizard>. Accessed on 19 July 2023.

- Statistics South Africa. 2022. *Additional download(s): District Council projection by sex and age 2002–2022*. Available at [https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page\\_id=1854&PPN=P0302](https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=1854&PPN=P0302). Accessed on 19 July 2023.

<sup>72</sup> Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime. 2023. *The Business of killing*, p. 16. Available at <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Rumbi-Matamba-The-business-of-killing-Assassinations-in-SA.-April23-web.pdf>. Accessed on 20 June 2023.

Table 4: Murder ratio (per 100 000) for KwaZulu-Natal for 2021/2022, shown per municipality (percentages are rounded off)<sup>73</sup>

|                                      | Murder rate | Murder percentage |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Amajuba District Municipality        | 34,6        | 3%                |
| eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality  | 69,7        | 43%               |
| Harry Gwala District Municipality    | 43,8        | 3%                |
| iLembe District Municipality         | 54,1        | 6%                |
| King Cetshwayo District Municipality | 57,9        | 9%                |
| Ugu District Municipality            | 44,2        | 5%                |
| uMgungundlovu District Municipality  | 69,8        | 12%               |
| uMkhanyakude District Municipality   | 30,1        | 3%                |
| uMzinyathi District Municipality     | 51,3        | 4%                |
| uThukela District Municipality       | 60,7        | 6%                |
| Zululand District Municipality       | 30,2        | 4%                |

77% of all murders in 2021/2022 in die Western Cape were committed in Cape Town. A breakdown of the data by the ISS shows that Delft, Kraaifontein, Mfuleni, Harare and Khayelitsha – all within relatively close proximity to each other – each recorded over 190 murders.<sup>74</sup>

Table 5: Murder ratio (per 100 000) for the Western Cape for 2021/2022, shown per municipality (percentages are rounded off)<sup>75</sup>

|   | Murder rate | Murder percentage |
|---|-------------|-------------------|
| Cape Winelands District Municipality        | 40,7        | 10%               |
| Central Karoo District Municipality         | 29,1        | 1%                |
| City of Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality | 66,5        | 77%               |
| Overberg District Municipality              | 49,2        | 4%                |
| West Coast District Municipality            | 34,7        | 4%                |
| Garden Route District Municipality          | 33,6        | 5%                |

<sup>73</sup> Data calculated by AfriForum based on ISS crime statistics and Stats SA population figures. See:

- Institute for Security Studies. 2023. *Crimehub. Crime Statistics Wizard. Murder data for the KwaZulu-Natal per Districts municipalities for 2021/2022*. Available at <https://crimehub.org/wizard>. Accessed on 19 July 2023.
- Statistics South Africa. 2022. *Additional download(s): District Council projection by sex and age 2002–2022*. Available at [https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page\\_id=1854&PPN=P0302](https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=1854&PPN=P0302). Accessed on 19 July 2023.

<sup>74</sup> Institute for Security Studies. 2023. *Crime hub. Crime Statistics Wizard*. Available at <https://crimehub.org/wizard>. Accessed on 1 May 2023.

<sup>75</sup> Data calculated by AfriForum based on ISS crime statistics and Stats SA population figures. See:

- Institute for Security Studies. 2023. *Crimehub. Crime Statistics Wizard. Murder data for the Western per Districts municipalities for 2021/2022*. Available at <https://crimehub.org/wizard>. Accessed on 19 July 2023.
- Statistics South Africa. 2022. *Additional download(s): District Council projection by sex and age 2002–2022*. Available at [https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page\\_id=1854&PPN=P0302](https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=1854&PPN=P0302). Accessed on 19 July 2023.

A spatial analysis that was carried out from 2008 to 2015 and focused on rape, common assault and common robbery in Khayelitsha revealed that 75% of the crime occurred within 20% of the areas covered by three police stations, namely Khayelitsha, Lingeletu West and Harare.<sup>76</sup> The Western Cape Safety Plan subsequently implemented the Law Enforcement Advancement Plan (LEAP) officers as part of the Western Cape Government's strategy to devolve and decentralises policing powers in the City of Cape Town and the Western Cape Province in an effort to combat crime.<sup>77, 78, 79</sup> According to the City of Cape Town, there has been a notable reduction in murders in key areas where LEAP offices have been deployed:<sup>80</sup>

- Mitchells Plain: 42,9% decline
- Kraaifontein: 16,4% decline
- Khayelitsha: 14,3% decline
- Harare: 13,8% decline

### Location of murders

The location where murders took place also varies from province to province. According to the SAPS, a crime scene can be the actual spot where a crime occurred or any other place where evidence of the crime has been discovered.<sup>81</sup>

As can be seen in table 6, just over a quarter of murders committed in public places in the first quarter of 2021/2022 were committed in KwaZulu-Natal, whereas 9% of murders that occurred in public places were committed in the Eastern Cape. However, 67% of murders in prisons or holding cells were committed in the Eastern Cape. Nearly 29% of murders that occurred on public transport premises were committed in Gauteng, while a total of 10% of murders in this category were committed in Limpopo, Mpumalanga, the Northern Cape and the North West.

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<sup>76</sup> Schwabe, C. 2021. 75% of crime occurs in 20% of Greater Khayelitsha. Available at <https://africascope-sa.com/2021/10/12/spatial-clustering-of-crime-in-south-africa-enables-more-targeted-policing-2/>. Accessed on 11 June 2023.

<sup>77</sup> Western Cape Government. 2023. *Western Cape LEAP Officers effectively trained to combat crime*. Media statement on 8 May 2023. Available at <https://www.westerncape.gov.za/news/western-cape-leap-officers-effectively-trained-combat-crime>. Accessed on 11 July 2023.

<sup>78</sup> Allen, R. 2022. Western Cape government believes devolution of policing to provinces is a no-brainer. *Daily Maverick*, 20 July. Available at [https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2022-07-20-western-cape-government-believes-devolution-of-policing-to-provinces-is-a-no-brainer/?fbclid=IwAR3oY4ZXvDjezDGyp6zcJCUSVN5\\_SA\\_ZIQhQkGQnEnvXsJM82Cn5VETQybc](https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2022-07-20-western-cape-government-believes-devolution-of-policing-to-provinces-is-a-no-brainer/?fbclid=IwAR3oY4ZXvDjezDGyp6zcJCUSVN5_SA_ZIQhQkGQnEnvXsJM82Cn5VETQybc). Accessed on 11 July 2023.

<sup>79</sup> Office of the Executive Mayor. 2022. *RE: Request for expanded policing powers for City of Cape Town*. Letter to the Minister of Police and the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, 18 August. Available at <https://press-admin.voteda.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Letter-from-Mayor-Geordin-Hill-Lewis-RE-Policing-Powers-18.98.2022.pdf>. Accessed on 19 July 2023.

<sup>80</sup> Hill-Lewis, G. 2022. 8,2% drop in murder in LEAP deployment areas – GH. *Politicsweb*, 19 August. Available at <https://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/82-drop-in-murder-in-leap-deployment-areas-geordi>. Accessed on 11 July 2023.

<sup>81</sup> South African Police Service. 2020. *Annual report 2019/2020*, p. 17. Available at [https://www.saps.gov.za/about/stratframework/annual\\_report/2019\\_2020/annual\\_crime\\_report\\_2019\\_2020.pdf](https://www.saps.gov.za/about/stratframework/annual_report/2019_2020/annual_crime_report_2019_2020.pdf). Accessed on 7 July 2023.

Table 6: Place of occurrence for murders (percentages are rounded off)<sup>82</sup>

|   | EC  | FS  | GP  | KZN | LP  | MP  | NW  | NC | WC  |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| Residences of perpetrator/victim (including residence known by victims/perpetrators, e.g., family/friends/neighbours) | 15% | 6%  | 16% | 31% | 4%  | 5%  | 5%  | 3% | 16% |
| Public place (street/open field/recreational centre/park/beach/parking area/abandoned building)                       | 9%  | 4%  | 24% | 27% | 4%  | 5%  | 4%  | 1% | 22% |
| Mode of transport (bus/car/lane/boat/ship/taxi)   | 24% | 1%  | 8%  | 32% | 1%  | 6%  | 2%  | 0% | 26% |
| Agricultural land/farm/plot/smallholding  | 11% | 2%  | 28% | 13% | 6%  | 12% | 11% | 0% | 16% |
| Liquor outlets (shebeen/tavern/pub/night club/bottle store)   | 8%  | 8%  | 12% | 28% | 12% | 15% | 9%  | 0% | 8%  |
| Hotel/guest house/BnB/motel/holiday resort  | 0%  | 13% | 38% | 13% | 13% | 25% | 0%  | 0% | 0%  |
| Prison/holding cell   | 67% | 0%  | 0%  | 0%  | 0%  | 33% | 0%  | 0% | 0%  |
| Public transport premises (bus stop/taxi rank/railway premises, e.g., track/station)                                  | 19% | 0%  | 29% | 21% | 4%  | 3%  | 3%  | 1% | 21% |
| Business premises (mall/restaurant/workplace/office park/entertainment centre, e.g., movie theatre/gambling facility) | 4%  | 4%  | 22% | 26% | 10% | 13% | 11% | 1% | 9%  |
| Sea/river/lake/pool/dam   | 4%  | 19% | 11% | 52% | 4%  | 0%  | 0%  | 0% | 11% |
| Educational institutions (school/university/college/daycare facility)   | 0%  | 0%  | 20% | 40% | 0%  | 20% | 0%  | 0% | 20% |

### Cause, motive and multiple of murders per province

There is also a notable difference among the provinces in terms of the motives and causes of murders. The SAPS hold that there are numerous causes of murder, including social, group and criminal behaviour. Also, it is not always possible to determine the motive and cause of death due to the location of the victims as well as the circumstances surrounding the reporting of murders.<sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, the known cause of death for the 2022 calendar year is depicted in table 7.

Nearly 89% of all gang-related murders in South Africa were committed in the Western Cape. By contrast, the Eastern Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal together only accounted for 10% of gang-related murders. Taxi-related murders were most prevalent in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape, whereas 5% of these types of murders occurred in the Eastern Cape.

<sup>82</sup> South African Police Service. N.d. *Police recorded crime statistics – First quarter of 2021/2022 financial year (April to June 2021)*, p. 17. Available at [https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/april\\_june\\_2021\\_22\\_quarter1\\_presentation.pdf](https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/april_june_2021_22_quarter1_presentation.pdf). Accessed on 11 July 2023.

<sup>83</sup> South African Police Service. 2022. *Annual report 2021/2022*, p. 21. Available at [https://www.saps.gov.za/about/stratframework/annual\\_report/2021\\_2022/annual\\_crime\\_report\\_2021\\_2022.pdf](https://www.saps.gov.za/about/stratframework/annual_report/2021_2022/annual_crime_report_2021_2022.pdf). Accessed on 7 July 2023.



Table 7: Murder causative factors, 2022 (percentages are rounded off) <sup>84, 85, 86, 87</sup>

|  | EC  | FS | GP  | KZN | LP  | MP | NW  | NC | WC  |
|--|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|
| Arguments/misunderstanding/road rage/provocation                             | 13% | 3% | 15% | 28% | 6%  | 3% | 6%  | 6% | 21% |
| Robbery  | 9%  | 4% | 24% | 31% | 5%  | 4% | 7%  | 1% | 16% |
| Vigilantism/mob justice  | 19% | 3% | 19% | 24% | 9%  | 7% | 4%  | 0% | 15% |
| Gang-related   | 5%  | 0% | 4%  | 1%  | 0%  | 0% | 0%  | 0% | 89% |
| Retaliation/revenge  | 12% | 1% | 4%  | 43% | 1%  | 1% | 2%  | 1% | 35% |
| Taxi-related   | 3%  | 0% | 42% | 31% | 1%  | 0% | 0%  | 0% | 24% |
| Rape-related   | 20% | 0% | 14% | 37% | 12% | 1% | 10% | 1% | 4%  |
| Law enforcement & security guards in line of duty (excluding police murders) | 7%  | 2% | 16% | 39% | 6%  | 7% | 6%  | 2% | 16% |
| Illicit mining   | 0%  | 2% | 68% | 0%  | 20% | 0% | 7%  | 2% | 0%  |
| Hijacking and attempts   | 5%  | 1% | 40% | 24% | 4%  | 7% | 5%  | 1% | 13% |
| During commission of other crimes (not robbery and rape)                     | 8%  | 3% | 37% | 15% | 4%  | 4% | 10% | 3% | 16% |
| Intervened in argument   | 20% | 7% | 11% | 26% | 7%  | 7% | 3%  | 2% | 16% |

It is also evident from table 7 that murders that were related to illegal mining were chiefly located in Gauteng, accounting for 68% of cases. Neither KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, the Western Cape nor the Eastern Cape reported any murders linked to illegal mining. Retaliation or revenge as the cause of murder was most prevalent in KwaZulu-Natal (43%), followed by the Western Cape (35%). In terms of hijacking, Gauteng accounted for 40% of murders, while the Free State and Northern Cape each accounted for 1% of incidents.

Multiple murders are defined as the murder of multiple victims in one incident.<sup>88</sup> According to the SAPS, this frequently occurs as a result of social behaviour such as domestic violence, substance addiction, group behaviour such as taxi-related incidents, and criminal behaviour (e.g., illegal mining).<sup>89</sup> As can be seen in table 8, almost a quarter (24%) of all multiple murder docket for the 2022 calendar year were opened in Gauteng.

<sup>84</sup> South African Police Service. N.d. *Police recorded crime statistics: Republic of South Africa: 2022/2023 financial year (January to March 2022)*, p. 17. Available [https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/fourth\\_quarter\\_presentation\\_2021\\_2022.pdf](https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/fourth_quarter_presentation_2021_2022.pdf). Accessed on 2 June 2023.

<sup>85</sup> South African Police Service. N.d. *Police recorded crime statistics: Republic of South Africa: 2022/2023 financial year (April to June 2022)*, p. 18. Available [https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/April-2022\\_23-presentation.pdf](https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/April-2022_23-presentation.pdf). Accessed on 2 June 2023.

<sup>86</sup> South African Police Service. N.d. *Police recorded crime statistics: Republic of South Africa: 2022/2023 financial year (July to September 2022)*, p. 18. Available <https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/July-to-September-2022-Presentation.pdf>. Accessed on 2 June 2023.

<sup>87</sup> South African Police Service. N.d. *Police recorded crime statistics: Republic of South Africa: 2022/2023 financial year (October to December 2022)*, p. 19. Available <https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/October-2022-to-December-2022.pdf>. Accessed on 2 June 2023.

<sup>88</sup> South African Police Service. 2022. *Annual report 2021/2022*, p. 15. Available at [https://www.saps.gov.za/about/stratframework/annual\\_report/2021\\_2022/annual\\_crime\\_report\\_2021\\_2022.pdf](https://www.saps.gov.za/about/stratframework/annual_report/2021_2022/annual_crime_report_2021_2022.pdf). Accessed on 7 July 2023.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

Compared with the Eastern, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, the overall frequency of multiple murders is lower for the Free State, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Northern Cape.

Table 8: Multiple murders<sup>90, 91, 92, 93</sup>

|     | Victim count |    |    |   |   |   |   |    | Dockets | Victims |
|-----|--------------|----|----|---|---|---|---|----|---------|---------|
|     | 2            | 3  | 4  | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 17 |         |         |
| EC  | 144          | 19 | 4  | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 171     | 384     |
| FS  | 17           | 2  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 20      | 47      |
| GP  | 208          | 28 | 13 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 255     | 600     |
| KZN | 270          | 50 | 13 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0  | 342     | 798     |
| LP  | 10           | 1  | 1  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 12      | 27      |
| MP  | 19           | 7  | 1  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 27      | 63      |
| NW  | 32           | 5  | 2  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 39      | 87      |
| NC  | 4            | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 4       | 8       |
| WC  | 156          | 25 | 3  | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 187     | 416     |

Research by the GI-TOC on targeted killings such as assassinations and hits in South Africa revealed that this type of crime tends to be more prevalent in certain provinces.<sup>94</sup> According to GI-TOC data from 2015 to 2020, KwaZulu-Natal consistently had the highest rate of assassinations, accounting for 38% of all national instances. Gauteng came in second with 23%, Western Cape with 16% and Eastern Cape with 15%. The remaining provinces together accounted for less than 8%.<sup>95</sup> GI-TOC's 2023 report noted that the majority of taxi-related killings in 2022 were concentrated in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Western Cape, while organised crime-related targeted killings were most prevalent in the Western Cape.<sup>96</sup> When it comes to politically motivated killings, the vast majority occurred in KwaZulu-Natal (53%), followed by Eastern Cape (10%).<sup>97</sup>

<sup>90</sup> South African Police Service. N.d. *Police recorded crime statistics: Republic of South Africa: 2022/2023 financial year (January to March 2022)*, p. 16. Available at [https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/fourth\\_quarter\\_presentation\\_2021\\_2022.pdf](https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/fourth_quarter_presentation_2021_2022.pdf). Accessed on 2 June 2023.

<sup>91</sup> South African Police Service. N.d. *Police recorded crime statistics: Republic of South Africa: 2022/2023 financial year (April to June 2022)*, p. 17. Available at [https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/April-2022\\_23-presentation.pdf](https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/April-2022_23-presentation.pdf). Accessed on 2 June 2023.

<sup>92</sup> South African Police Service. N.d. *Police recorded crime statistics: Republic of South Africa: 2022/2023 financial year (July to September 2022)*, p. 17. Available at <https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/July-to-September-2022-Presentation.pdf>. Accessed on 2 June 2023.

<sup>93</sup> South African Police Service. N.d. *Police recorded crime statistics: Republic of South Africa: 2022/2023 financial year (October to December 2022)*, p. 18. Available at <https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/October-2022-to-December-2022.pdf>. Accessed on 2 June 2023.

<sup>94</sup> Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime. 2021. *Murder by contract*, p. 11–12. Available at <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/GITOC-Murder-by-Contract-Targeted-Killings-in-eastern-and-southern-Africa-.pdf>. Accessed on 1 May 2023.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime. 2023. *The Business of killing*, p. 9–13. Available at <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Rumbi-Matamba-The-business-of-killing-Assassinations-in-SA-April23-web.pdf>. Accessed on 1 May 2023.

<sup>97</sup> *Id.*, 16.

## Instruments used to commit murders

Using data from the Medical Research Council, both the ISS and the City of Cape Town noticed disparities in the sort of weapons that are used in crime among provinces, with the Western Cape and Gauteng reporting a disproportionately high number of firearm-related fatalities.<sup>98, 99</sup> Evidence for the disparity per province in the types of instruments used to commit murder is presented in table 9.

Table 9: Instruments used to commit murder from April to December 2022 (percentages are rounded off)<sup>100, 101, 102</sup>

|                  | EC  | FS | GP  | KZN | LP  | MP | NW | NC | WC  |
|------------------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|-----|
| Firearm          | 13% | 2% | 27% | 32% | 2%  | 4% | 3% | 0% | 18% |
| Knives           | 23% | 6% | 15% | 20% | 3%  | 4% | 5% | 4% | 20% |
| Sharp instrument | 25% | 6% | 12% | 20% | 4%  | 4% | 4% | 1% | 23% |
| Blunt instrument | 36% | 6% | 11% | 22% | 6%  | 7% | 4% | 1% | 7%  |
| Body part        | 18% | 4% | 25% | 18% | 5%  | 9% | 7% | 3% | 11% |
| Stone/brick/rock | 14% | 3% | 23% | 13% | 12% | 7% | 6% | 1% | 21% |

It is evident that in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng firearms are used more frequently in murders, accounting for 32% and 27% respectively, as opposed to the use of firearms in the Eastern Cape that accounts for only 13% but has on average the highest murder rate out of nine provinces. In addition, blunt instruments (36%), sharp instruments (25%) and knives (23%) are the most commonly used instrument in committing murders in the Eastern Cape.

If we shift our focus to farm murders, it is evident that these crimes are more commonly observed in particular provinces. Based on AfriForum's *Trends in farm murders* report, it was found that from 2016 to 2021, the highest proportion of farm murders took place in Gauteng (22%). This was followed by KwaZulu-Natal (16%) and the Free State (15%). Meanwhile, the Western Cape and the Northern Cape accounted for a smaller portion of these crimes, at 6% and 4%, respectively.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Office of the Executive Mayor. 2022. *RE: Request for expanded policing powers for City of Cape Town*. Letter to the Minister of Police and the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, 18 August. Available at <https://press-admin.voteda.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Letter-from-Mayor-Geordin-Hill-Lewis-RE-Policing-Powers-18.98.2022.pdf>. Accessed on 19 July 2023.

<sup>99</sup> Bruce, D. 2022. *South Africa needs less nationally focused policing responses*. Available at <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/south-africa-needs-less-nationally-focused-policing-responses>. Accessed on 7 July 2023.

<sup>100</sup> South African Police Service. N.d. *Police recorded crime statistics: Republic of South Africa: 2022/2023 financial year (April to June 2022)*, p. 20. Available [https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/April-2022\\_23-presentation.pdf](https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/April-2022_23-presentation.pdf). Accessed on 2 June 2023.

<sup>101</sup> South African Police Service. N.d. *Police recorded crime statistics: Republic of South Africa: 2022/2023 financial year (July to September 2022)*, p. 20. Available <https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/July-to-September-2022-Presentation.pdf>. Accessed on 2 June 2023.

<sup>102</sup> South African Police Service. N.d. *Police recorded crime statistics: Republic of South Africa: 2022/2023 financial year (July to September 2022)*, p. 21. Available <https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/October-2022-to-December-2022.pdf>. Accessed on 2 June 2023.

<sup>103</sup> AfriForum. 2022. *Trends in farm murders and an analysis of arrests and prosecutions 2016–2021*. Available at <https://afriforum.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/20220301-Johan-N-Plaasmoordverslag-2022-ENG-GfDB.pdf>. Accessed on 25 January 2023.

## Conclusion

The pattern and prevalence of crime in South Africa present a complex picture that is influenced by many social, economic and geographic factors. It is evident from the analyses that there is considerable variation in crime rates across provinces and even between specific metropolitan and district municipalities. This variation comprises murder rates and the nature of the crime, such as taxi-related violence, assassinations, farm murders and illicit mining-related murders. Further exploration and understanding of these discrepancies are critical for law enforcement agencies, policymakers and stakeholders.

By taking a more federal approach, strategies can be tailored to address each province and municipality's unique challenges and causal factors. This approach will in turn promote more efficient application of resources and potentially lead to more effective crime prevention and reduction strategies. The knowledge acquired could prove invaluable in combating crime and improving safety in South Africa.

Although AfriForum realises that the decentralisation of the SAPS will probably not solve all of South Africa's crime issues, the organisation believes it is an essential first step in empowering local authorities and communities in the fight against crime.

## Annexure A

|                                       |   | Murder count | Murder rate<br>(per 100 000) |
|---------------------------------------|---|--------------|------------------------------|
| Eastern Cape                          | Alfred Nzo District Municipality (DC44)         | 439          | 53,3                         |
|                                       | Amathole District Municipality (DC12)           | 655          | 83,9                         |
|                                       | Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality          | 432          | 54,2                         |
|                                       | Chris Hani District Municipality (DC13)         | 565          | 80,6                         |
|                                       | Joe Gqabi District Municipality (DC14)          | 202          | 59,1                         |
|                                       | Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality    | 970          | 80,0                         |
|                                       | Sarah Baartman District Municipality (DC10)     | 222          | 45,9                         |
|                                       | OR Tambo (DC15)                                 | 973          | 63,4                         |
| Free State                            | Fezile Dabi District Municipality (DC20)        | 115          | 22,3                         |
|                                       | Lejweleputswa District Municipality (DC18)      | 233          | 35,1                         |
|                                       | Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MAN)        | 282          | 33,6                         |
|                                       | Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality (DC19) | 332          | 43,0                         |
|                                       | Xhariep District Municipality (DC16)            | 30           | 22,9                         |
| Gauteng                               | City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality  | 2131         | 35,0                         |
|                                       | City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality       | 822          | 21,0                         |
|                                       | Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality            | 1370         | 33,1                         |
|                                       | Sedibeng District Municipality (DC42)           | 617          | 63,1                         |
|                                       | West Rand DM (DC48)                             | 525          | 54,0                         |
| KwaZulu-Natal                         | Amajuba District Municipality (DC25)            | 196          | 34,6                         |
|                                       | eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality             | 2815         | 69,7                         |
|                                       | Harry Gwala District Municipality (DC43)        | 221          | 43,8                         |
|                                       | iLembe District Municipality (DC29)             | 374          | 54,1                         |
|                                       | King Cetshwayo District Municipality (DC28)     | 554          | 57,9                         |
|                                       | Ugu District Municipality (DC21)                | 356          | 44,2                         |
|                                       | uMgungundlovu District Municipality (DC22)      | 791          | 69,8                         |
|                                       | uMkhanyakude District Municipality (DC27)       | 210          | 30,1                         |
|                                       | uMzinyathi District Municipality (DC24)         | 291          | 51,3                         |
|                                       | uThukela District Municipality (DC23)           | 420          | 60,7                         |
| Zululand District Municipality (DC26) | 267   | 30,2         |                              |
| Limpopo                               | Capricorn District Municipality (DC35)          | 273          | 20,8                         |
|                                       | Mopani District Municipality (DC33)             | 187          | 15,5                         |
|                                       | Sekhukhune District Municipality (DC47)         | 182          | 15,0                         |
|                                       | Vhembe District Municipality (DC34)             | 224          | 15,5                         |
|                                       | Waterberg District Municipality (DC36)          | 146          | 19,3                         |

|               |  |      |      |
|---------------|--|------|------|
| Mpumalanga    | Ehlanzeni District Municipality (DC32)                 | 490  | 26,9 |
|               | Gert Sibande District Municipality (DC30)              | 362  | 28,5 |
|               | Nkangala District Municipality (DC31)                  | 349  | 21,4 |
| Northern Cape | Frances Baard District Municipality (DC9)              | 102  | 24,4 |
|               | John Taolo Gaetsewe District Municipality (DC45)       | 57   | 20,5 |
|               | Namakwa District Municipality (DC6)                    | 31   | 26,7 |
|               | Pixley ka Seme District Municipality (DC7)             | 83   | 39,7 |
|               | ZF Mgcau (DC8)   | 89   | 31,0 |
| North West    | Bojanala Platinum District Municipality (DC37)         | 516  | 26,2 |
|               | Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality (DC40)         | 279  | 33,8 |
|               | Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District Municipality (DC39) | 98   | 20,5 |
|               | Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality (DC38)       | 194  | 21,3 |
| Western Cape  | Cape Winelands District Municipality (DC2)             | 394  | 40,7 |
|               | Central Karoo District Municipality (DC5)              | 22   | 29,1 |
|               | City of Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality            | 3165 | 66,5 |
|               | Overberg District Municipality (DC3)                   | 152  | 49,2 |
|               | West Coast District Municipality (DC1)                 | 164  | 34,7 |
|               | Garden Route (DC4)                                     | 212  | 33,6 |