



Empowering survivors of

Gender-Based Violence

GLOBAL AND SOUTH AFRICAN GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE A COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW

Understanding the Bigger Picture

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is one of the most widespread human rights violations in the world. It affects women and girls across all countries, cultures, economic groups, and communities. While violence occurs in many forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and economic abuse, the impact is universally devastating.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) and UN Women, approximately **840 million women worldwide**, nearly **one in every three women**, have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence by a non-partner during their lifetime. Despite decades of advocacy and intervention efforts, the global prevalence of violence against women has remained largely unchanged over the past twenty years.

South Africa reflects many of the same challenges seen globally, but often experiences higher levels of violent crime that further exacerbate the risks faced by women and vulnerable populations. The latest South African Police Service (SAPS) statistics demonstrate the ongoing urgency of addressing GBV at both national and community level.

GLOBAL GBV SNAPSHOT

Worldwide Statistics

- **1 in 3 women globally (31.6%)** have experienced physical and/or sexual violence during their lifetime.
- Approximately **840 million women and girls worldwide** have been affected by violence.
- **316 million women** experienced intimate partner violence within the previous 12 months.
- Around **263 million women** have experienced sexual violence by someone other than an intimate partner since the age of 15.
- Approximately **50,000 women and girls were killed by intimate partners or family members in 2024**.

SOUTH AFRICA: JANUARY TO MARCH 2026

During the fourth quarter of the 2025/26 financial year, SAPS recorded the following GBV-related crimes:

Reported Cases

- **9,782 rapes**
- **12,590 sexual offences**
- **5,181 murders**
- **6,916 attempted murders**
- **43,576 assaults with intent to cause grievous bodily harm (GBH)**

These statistics represent only those incidents that were officially reported to law enforcement and therefore likely underestimate the full extent of violence experienced within communities.

A COMMON GLOBAL PATTERN: VIOLENCE BY PEOPLE KNOWN TO THE VICTIM

One of the most significant findings from both global research and South African crime statistics is that violence is often perpetrated by individuals known to the victim.

Globally, intimate partner violence remains the most common form of violence experienced by women. Nearly **one in four women who have ever been in a relationship** have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a current or former intimate partner.

Similarly, South African data shows that:

47.2% of all reported rapes occurred at the home of either the victim or the perpetrator.

This translates to:

4,620 rapes committed in residential settings during a three-month period.

These figures highlight that many acts of violence occur not in public spaces, but within homes and relationships where trust should exist.

WHAT THESE STATISTICS TELL US

GBV Is Not Just a Women's Issue

Gender-Based Violence affects entire families, communities, workplaces, and societies. The consequences can include:

- Physical injury and disability
- Anxiety, depression, and trauma
- Reduced educational and employment opportunities
- Family instability
- Increased healthcare costs
- Long-term social and economic consequences

The impact extends far beyond the individual survivor and affects future generations.

Violence Often Occurs Behind Closed Doors

The SAPS statistics reveal that nearly half of all reported rapes occur in homes. This mirrors international evidence showing that women are most likely to experience violence from intimate partners, family members, or other individuals known to them.

This reality highlights the importance of:

- Early intervention
- Community awareness
- Survivor support services
- Healthy relationship education
- Prevention programmes targeting harmful social norms

Alcohol and Violence

South African crime statistics revealed that:

7,267 incidents of murder, attempted murder, rape and assault GBH during the quarter were linked to alcohol use.

While alcohol does not cause violence, it often contributes to situations where conflict escalates and individuals become more vulnerable to victimisation.

GLOBAL LESSONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA

Research from around the world demonstrates that reducing GBV requires a coordinated response involving:

- ✓ Government
- ✓ Law enforcement
- ✓ Schools and educational institutions

- ✓ Healthcare providers
- ✓ Faith-based organisations
- ✓ Community groups
- ✓ Families and individuals

Successful prevention requires addressing not only criminal behaviour but also the social, cultural, and economic factors that contribute to violence.

KEY COMPARISON

GLOBAL: Nearly 840 million women, approximately one in every three women worldwide, have experienced physical and/or sexual violence during their lifetime.

SOUTH AFRICA: Between January and March 2026 alone, SAPS recorded 9,782 rapes and 12,590 sexual offences.

COMMON REALITY: Across the world and within South Africa, women are most often harmed by people they know and trust.

Conclusion

Gender-Based Violence is a global crisis with local consequences. While the statistics provide important insight into the scale of the problem, each number represents a real person whose safety, dignity, and wellbeing have been affected.

Ending GBV requires more than awareness. It requires action, accountability, support for survivors, and a collective commitment to creating safer homes, healthier relationships, and stronger communities.

Together, we can help build a future where everyone can live free from violence, fear, and abuse.

Sources

- World Health Organization (WHO): *Violence Against Women Fact Sheet (2026)*. [\[saps.gov.za\]](https://saps.gov.za)
- UN Women: *Facts and Figures: Ending Violence Against Women (2025)*. [\[news.un.org\]](https://news.un.org)
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