

# Crime against women in South Africa

Report 03-40-05



THE SOUTH AFRICA I KNOW, THE HOME I UNDERSTAND

# **Crime Statistics Series Volume V**

## **Crime against Women in South Africa**

**An in-depth analysis of the Victims of Crime Survey data  
2018**

Statistics South Africa  
Risenga Maluleke  
Statistician-General

Report No. 03-40-05 (June, 2018)

## Preface

Women walking free in the streets and children playing safely in open spaces are at the core of the National Development Plan goal on safety and security. These basic human rights were enjoyed by many communities in the pre-colonial South Africa and are enjoyed by some countries in the world today. A society that is free from fear of crime is essential not only as a basic human right but also as the foundation of economic development of a country. Evidence in this report shows that the fear of crime limit women's engagement in various economic activities.

The current report is based on the Victims of Crime Survey (VOCS) data and some administrative data, to a lesser extent, from the World Health Organisation (WHO). The purpose of the report is to highlight the gender impact of crime in South Africa, with particular emphasis on the impact of crime on women. This includes the impact of crime on households headed by women. Statistical evidence provided in this report may assist policy makers, law enforcement agencies and civil society to gauge progress and plan interventions for protecting women as a vulnerable group.

There are two limitations that prevent the report from going deeper and provide information normally sought by researchers, policy makers and civil society. First, the VOCS questionnaire that has been in use for the past seven years, does not go into much detail on crimes that mostly affect women such as sexual offence. This limitation has, to some extent, been addressed by the new survey called Governance, Public Safety and Justice (GPSJ) which has more details on sexual offence. The first results of the GPSJ survey will be published in August 2019. The other challenge is the effective sample size for certain types of crime such as murder and sexual offence. While the VOCS sample size of about 30 000 households is reasonably large, the number of cases for individuals or households that experience these crimes is often very small – to the extent that the sampling error for population estimates is typically very high.

Notwithstanding the limitations mentioned in the previous paragraph, the current report still provides useful information about crime against women.



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**CONTENTS**

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	1
2. INTRODUCTION .....	2
3. BACKGROUND .....	3
4. FINDINGS FROM VOCS .....	5
4.1 Attitudes and perceptions of crime trends .....	5
4.2 Fear of crime.....	8
4.3 Knowledge of shelters or places of safety for victims of crime.....	10
4.4 Accessibility of shelters or places of safety .....	11
4.5 Experience of household crimes .....	11
4.6 Experience of individual crimes.....	14
4.7 Reporting of crime to the police.....	15
4.8 Satisfaction with police response .....	16
5. CONCLUSIONS.....	17
6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE WORK.....	18
7. REFERENCES .....	19
8. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS.....	20
9. ABBREVIATIONS.....	20

## List of Tables

Table 1: Quality levels based on CVs .....	2
Table 2: Percentage of people who think it is acceptable for a man to hit a woman, by race and gender .....	5
Table 3: Percentage of households prevented from partaking in activities due to fear of crime ...	8
Table 4: Experience of household crimes, by gender of the household head .....	12
Table 5: Crude estimates of the number of individuals murdered per 100 000, 2016/17 .....	13
Table 6: Individual experience of crimes by gender of the respondent.....	14
Table 7: Percentage of victims who are women, 2016/17 .....	15
Table 8: Percentage of crimes reported to the police, by gender .....	15
Table 9: Satisfaction with services rendered by the police, by gender .....	16
Table 10: Logistic regression modelling of satisfaction with the police.....	16

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Comparison of trends in murder rates of women, South Africa vs the world .....	3
Figure 2: Comparison of trends in men and women murder rates in South Africa, WHO 2016 .....	4
Figure 3: Percentage of individuals who think it is acceptable for a husband to hit his wife, by gender .....	6
Figure 4: Perceptions of crime trends by gender, 2016/17 .....	7
Figure 5: Percentage of households that think crime increased, by gender .....	7
Figure 6: Feeling of safety to walk during the day, by gender.....	9
Figure 7: Feeling of safety to walk when it is dark, by gender.....	9
Figure 8: Shelter and places of safety that households know about, by gender.....	10
Figure 9: Time it takes to travel to a shelter or place of safety, by gender.....	11
Figure 10: Experience of household crimes, by gender of the household head .....	12
Figure 11: WHO trends in male vs female murder rates in South Africa extended to 2016/17 .....	13
Figure 12: Individual experience of crimes, by gender of the respondent.....	14

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Violence against women has received increasing national and international attention accompanied by calls for stringent measures to mitigate against this social ill. For this reason Statistics South Africa will soon publish a report that focuses exclusively on violent crimes against women. The current report provides an overview of all types of crime, including violent crimes, as they affect women in South Africa. It seems reasonable to conclude that, even though victimisation of women is of primary interest, the story would not be complete without comparisons of the effect of crime on men. Hence, in almost all instances, disaggregation according to gender was used in calculating population estimates.

It should be a matter of concern, however, that while the murder rates of both men and women declined steadily between 2000 and 2015, the murder rate for women increased drastically by 117% between 2015 and 2016/17. The murder rate for men, though still higher than that of women, continued to decline between 2015 and 2016/17. The number of women who experienced sexual offences also jumped from 31 665 in 2015/16 to 70 813 in 2016/17, which is an increase of 53%. These are drastic increases in less than twenty-four months.

Analysis of household crimes showed that male-headed households were targeted more than female-headed households for most crimes considered in this report. In many cases a greater percentage of male-headed households than female-headed households experienced crime. A possible explanation that was also given in the VOCS 2016/17 release is that it may be that female-headed households always have someone at home. The presence of people in a house may act as a deterrent to household crime. The exception is theft of animals and possibly murder, which a greater percentage of female-headed households experienced. Note that a female-headed household experiencing a certain type of crime, say murder, does not mean that the victim was female.

In the case of individual crimes, the percentage of individuals aged 16 or older who experienced any type of crime in 2016/17 was 3,6% for women and 3,9% for men. Greater percentages of victims of theft of personal property, sexual offence and fraud were women, while greater percentages of victims of hijacking of motor vehicles, street robbery and assault were men. In terms of reporting of individual crime, greater proportions of women victims reported hijacking of motor vehicles, sexual offence and assault. In general men were more satisfied with the police response than women except for street robbery and assault, where greater percentages of women were more satisfied than men.

A deeper analysis of household satisfaction with the police response to crime reporting revealed that satisfaction is influenced more by perceptions concerning the police service than the gender of the household head. Population group of the household head is another important factor that determines satisfaction with police response. A white-headed household has more than four times the odds of being satisfied with the police than a black African-headed household.

Perceptions and fear of crime are crucial impact indicators in the National Development Plan. Evidence from the VOCS series shows that the percentage of male- and female-headed households who thought that the level of crime increased declined steadily between 2014/15 and 2016/17 after an increase between 2013/14 and 2014/15. This is progress in the right direction, but the fear of crime is still a challenge. In 2016/17, people refrained from ordinary daily activities due to fear of crime. Women are more affected by this compared to men, as they felt they were not free to express their sexual orientation or walk to fetch firewood or water. The pattern of feelings of safety for men is the same as that of women, but women felt more unsafe than men. Women felt more unsafe than men walking in their neighbourhoods alone both during the day and when it is dark.

An unexpected finding was that women had the same pattern of attitudes towards domestic violence as men. For both men and women, the highest percentage of individuals thought it was acceptable for a man to hit a woman if she argues with him, and the lowest percentage of individuals thought it was acceptable for a man to hit a woman if she burns food. Black African men had the highest percentage of individuals who thought it was acceptable for a man to hit a woman, followed by white women.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to present statistics for some types of crime perpetrated against women in South Africa to provide an assessment of the trends in, and extent of victimisation of women. Although the crime rate, in general, has decreased between 2013/14 and 2016/17<sup>[2]</sup>, violent crimes against women such as sexual assault and murder increased drastically between 2015/16 and 2016/17. For this reason, a more detailed analysis of violence against women will be published in a separate report. Women's' perception of crime is also another important area that warrants investigation. Perception of whether crime is increasing or decreasing and the level of fear of crime associated with these perceptions are important matters that need to be understood in order to inform policy. Perceptions are so important that the first half of the NDP Vision 2030 on crime and safety is stated in terms of perceptions and feelings of safety rather than the actual experience of crime.

*“In 2030, people living in South Africa feel safe at home, at school and at work, and they enjoy a community life free of fear. Women walk freely in the streets and children play safely outside”*

Sections 4.1 – 4.2 will present results on perceptions of crime and feelings of safety based on the Victims of Crime Survey (VOCS) data. Sections 4.3 – 4.4 deal with knowledge and accessibility of places of safety for victims of crime, while the last four sections (4.5 – 4.8) will focus on experience of crime, reporting of crime to the police and satisfaction with police response. Most statistics are based on VOCS data.

### Quality of estimates

In this report, every estimate will be assigned a quality level (colour) based on the coefficient of variation of the estimate. The coefficient of variation (CV) is a measure of the relative size of error defined as

$$100 \times \left( \frac{\text{Standard error}}{\text{Estimate value}} \right)$$

The three quality levels are defined in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Quality levels based on CVs**

Coefficient of variation range	Level	Interpretation
0 – 16.5		Quality statistics (reliable estimates)
16.6 – 33.4		Acceptable estimate (use with caution)
33.5 – 100		Poor estimate (not fit for use)

The survey package of the R software was used to calculate the estimates and the CVs. The package is specifically designed for analysis of data from complex surveys. Every computation using the survey package requires specification of three key design parameters, namely the strata, clusters (PSUs) and final weights. The default method used for the estimation of variance is the Taylor Linearisation technique.



### 3. BACKGROUND

Crime in general does not have gender preference with the exception of sexual offence which often targets females. However, gender-based violence is a topic that has received increasing attention in the country and abroad, accompanied by calls for stringent measures to mitigate against this social ill. Concerning the safety of women, Chapter 12 of the National Development Plan (NDP) stipulates that “gender-based violence in South Africa is unacceptably high”. Gender-based violence is defined as violence that targets individuals or groups of individuals on the basis of their gender. An example of gender-based violence was the murder of Eudy Simelane in 2008 because she was a lesbian.

Femicide is a specific form of gender-based violence where women are murdered, usually by men, just because they are female. Feminist author Diana E.H. Russell<sup>[7]</sup>, an early pioneer of the term, prefers a variant of this narrow definition of femicide namely “the killing of females by males because they are females”. Using Russell’s narrow definition, the murder of Eudy would not count as femicide. Later in Russell and Harmes<sup>[8]</sup> a broader definition of femicide is proposed. Briefly it is defined as death of females resulting from any form of abuse by males. A number of other definitions of the term have been proposed by authors, researchers and activists<sup>[9]</sup>.

Despite the widespread use of the word in the media, femicide, in the narrow definition of the term, is a rare phenomenon in South Africa, while the rate of murder of women is unacceptably high compared to the global average.

**Figure 1: Comparison of trends in murder rates of women, South Africa vs the world<sup>[11]</sup>**

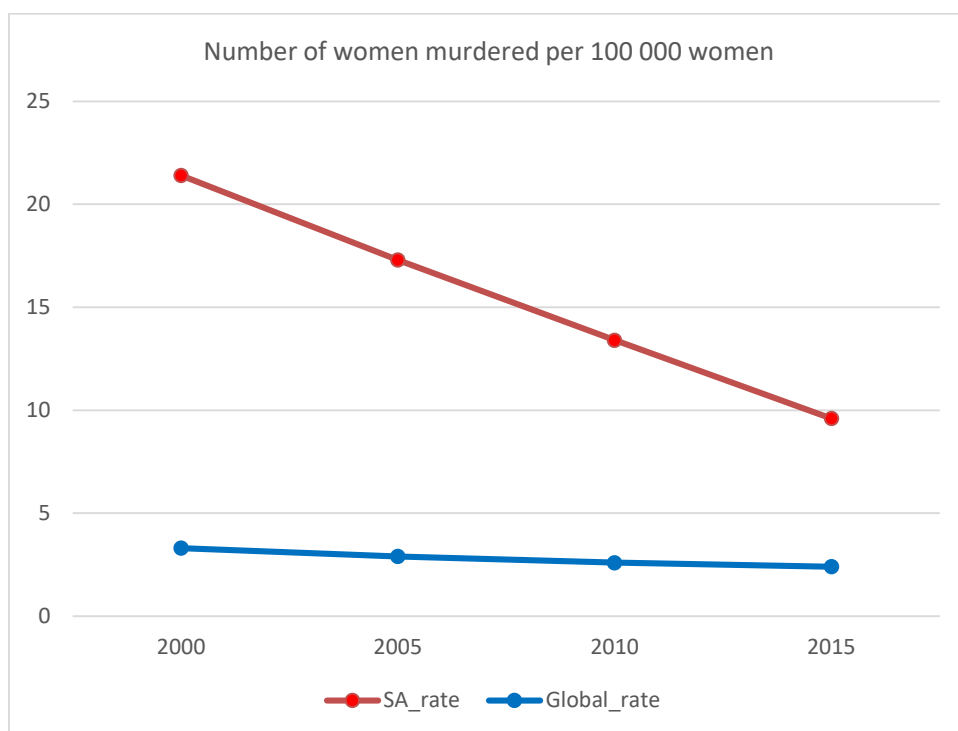


Figure 1 shows that in 2000, the South African murder rate of women was more than five times the global average. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) data presented in Figure 1, the gap between South Africa and the World has consistently narrowed down between 2000 and 2015. Africa Check<sup>[6]</sup> used the WHO female homicide data to highlight the magnitude of femicide in South Africa compared to the world average.

The same WHO source also contained data on male homicide in South Africa. Figure 2 below compares the trends of male and female homicide rates in South Africa between 2000 and 2015.

**Figure 2: Comparison of trends in men and women murder rates in South Africa, WHO 2016<sup>[1]</sup>**



The homicide rate for men consistently stood at more than three times the rate for women during the period 2000–2015. The data suggests that men are three times more likely to be victims of murder in South Africa compared to women.

Rape targeting women and girls is a serious problem in South Africa. The 2016/17 Victims of Crime statistical release<sup>[2]</sup> reported that 250 out of every 100 000 women were victims of sexual offence compared to 120 out of every 100 000 men. Using the 2016/17 South African Police Service statistics, in which 80% of the reported sexual offences were rape, together with Statistics South Africa’s estimate that 68,5% of the sexual offences victims were women, we obtain a crude estimate of the number of women raped per 100 000 as 138. This figure is among the highest in the world. For this reason, some have labelled South Africa as the “rape capital of the world<sup>[3]</sup>”.

Most studies and media reports on crime against women focus on violent crimes. It is difficult to find a study on the experiences of women on theft of personal property, street robbery, fraud and other non-violent crimes. Although these crimes are in general not gender-based, we will present estimates disaggregated according to gender in order to determine whether there is any gender difference in the level of victimisation.

## 4. FINDINGS FROM VOCS

In this chapter we present results from an analysis of the VOCS 2016/17 data. Trends over a four-year period (2013/14 – 2016/17) are presented only with respect to perceptions about whether crime increased, decreased or stayed the same during the past three years. It is important to mention from the outset that since VOCS was not specifically designed to measure crime against women, the scope covered by the results presented here is very limited. Many questions of interest cannot be answered from the 2016/17 VOCS data.

The chapter begins with issues of attitudes and perceptions followed by results on fear of crime, knowledge of shelters and places of safety for victims of crime, and accessibility of those shelters and places of safety. The next two sections deal with the actual experience of crime by households and individuals, respectively. The last two sections discuss reporting of crime to the police and satisfaction with police response.

### 4.1 Attitudes and perceptions of crime trends

We start where it all begins, that is, in the human mind. Attitudes and perceptions play a very important role in shaping human behaviour, including criminal activity and vulnerability to crime. Attitudes towards women, driven mostly by cultural and religious beliefs, determine how women are treated in society. This includes attitudes of women about themselves. A few questions were included in the VOCS questionnaire in an attempt to capture the attitudes and perceptions of both men and women concerning violence against women, constitutional rights and crime trends in South Africa.

The first question on attitudes asked respondents whether, in general, it is acceptable for a man to hit a woman. It is estimated from the survey that 3,3% of men and 2,3% of women in South Africa think it is acceptable for a man to hit a woman. It could therefore be fair to conclude that it is not possible to eliminate violence against women when there are women who still believe that it is acceptable to be hit by a man. Nevertheless it is encouraging to see that these percentages are small and one would hope that they will keep on falling.

We also explored whether there was any difference in attitudes between different population groups on the question of violence against women.

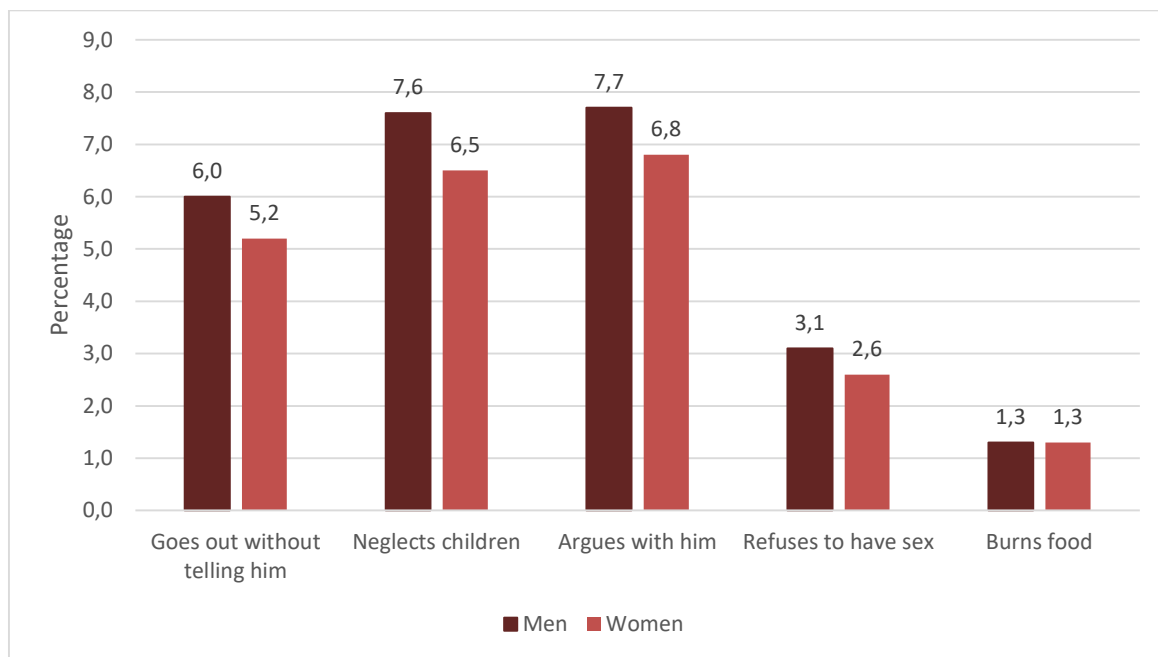
**Table 2: Percentage of people who think it is acceptable for a man to hit a woman, by race and gender**

Population group	Men	CV%	Women	CV%
Black African	3,8	7	2,5	10
Coloured	1,5	30	0,9	41
Indian/Asian	1,0	73	1,1	58
White	1,4	36	2,6	26
<b>All</b>	<b>3,3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2,3</b>	<b>9</b>

The estimates where the CVs are coloured in orange should be used with caution as the error level is too high. Black African men rank the top with the highest percentage of individuals (3,8%) who thought that it is acceptable for a man to hit a woman. The percentage of white women (2,6%) who think it is acceptable for a man to hit a woman is greater than that of black African women (2,5%). This is an unexpected result because most white women live in urban areas where there is greater exposure to human rights issues and liberal thinking.

The second question on attitudes asked respondents whether it is acceptable for a husband to hit his wife in various situations, e.g. if she goes out without telling him, if she neglects the children, if she argues with him, if she refuses to have sex with him, or if she burns the food or cooks the wrong type of food. Given these possible “wrongs” committed by a wife, the percentage of those who thought it is acceptable for a man (husband) to hit a woman (wife) increased. Figure 3 below gives a summary of the results of this question.

**Figure 3: Percentage of individuals who think it is acceptable for a husband to hit his wife, by gender**



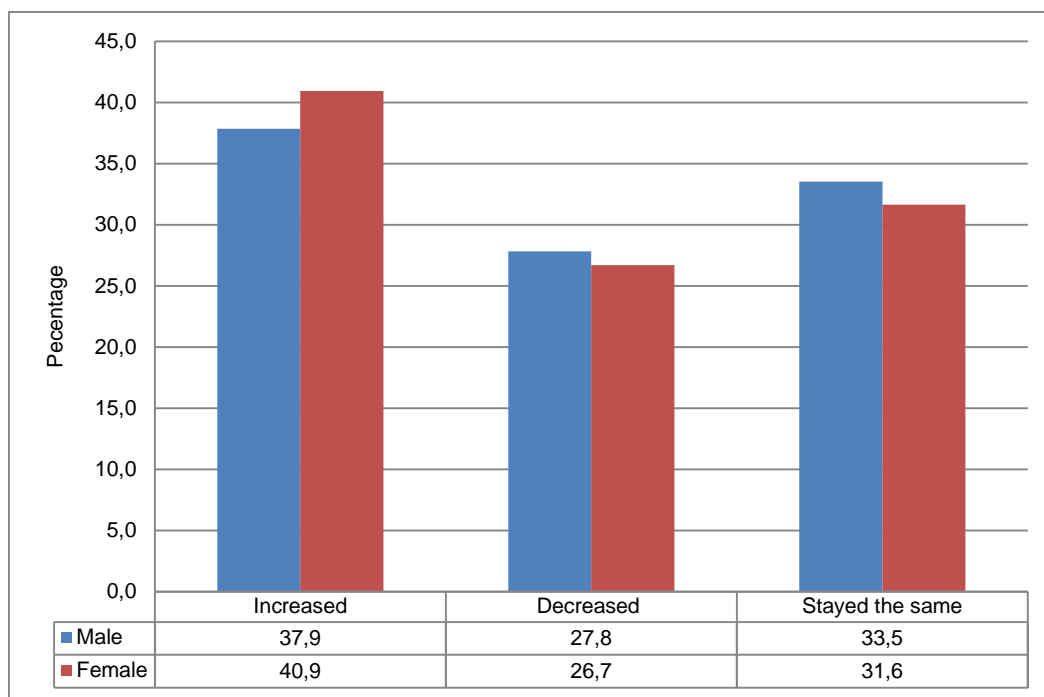
It is interesting to note that the pattern of responses for men and women is quite similar, the only difference being that the percentages for women are slightly lower than those for men. Both groups think in the same way concerning the seriousness of the issues. Neglecting the children and arguing with the husband are considered by both men and women to be the most serious issue, while burning the food is considered to be a minor issue.

We also explored if there was any relationship between the responses to the first question and those to the second question. For those who said, in general, it is acceptable for a man to hit a woman in Question 1, 51,1% of men and 33,8% of women responded that it is acceptable for a husband to hit his wife if the wife is guilty of one or more of the five “wrongs”. For those who answered ‘No’ to the first question, the percentage of those who said it is acceptable for a husband to hit his wife if the wife is guilty of one or more of the five “wrongs” was 10,4% for men and 9,4% for women. The conclusion is therefore that even those who think that it is not acceptable to hit a woman, also think that in certain circumstances a husband has the right to hit his wife.

The last question on attitudes was whether women should have the same constitutional rights as men. It is estimated that 67% of South African men agreed with this statement, while 73% of women agreed. These relatively low percentages raise the question as to whether respondents understood the concept of “constitutional rights”. It is possible that some understood constitutional rights as meaning that men and women should play the same roles. Some may not know what these constitutional rights entail. This uncertainty may be avoided by including questions on the respondent’s knowledge of the Constitution.

Concerning perceptions of crime, household heads were asked for their opinions on how the levels of crime have changed during the past three years. The response options were: increased, decreased, and stayed the same. Figure 4 below gives a summary of estimates from 2016/17 VOCS data.

**Figure 4: Perceptions of crime trends by gender, 2016/17**



The patterns of opinions for male and female-headed households are similar; however, the percentage of women who thought that crime increased was greater than that of men. A four-year data graph on the percentage of South Africans who thought that crime had increased was plotted to determine the trends in the perceptions of both men and women.

**Figure 5: Percentage of households that think crime increased, by gender**

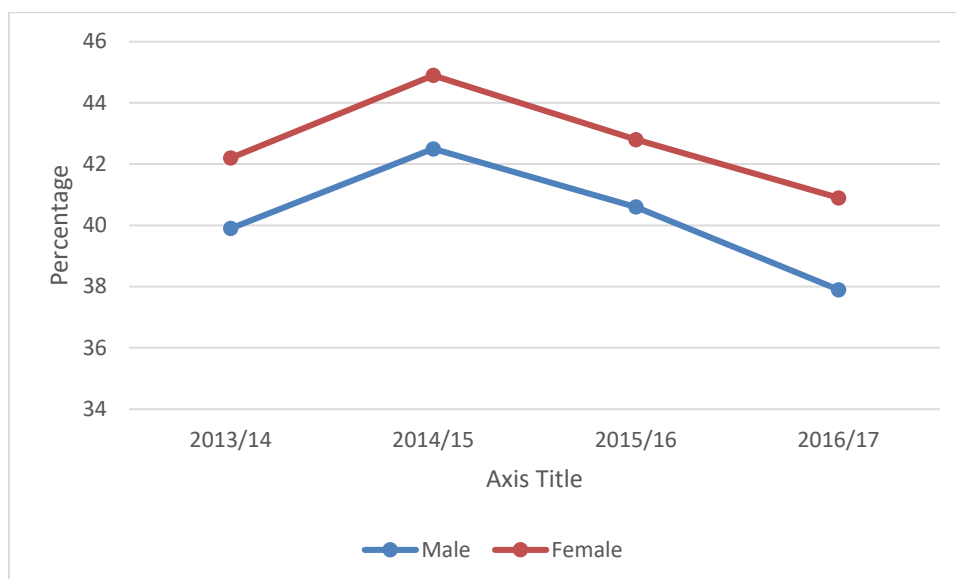


Figure 5 shows that, consistently over the four-year period, the percentage of women who thought that crime increased was greater than the corresponding percentage for men. The trends, however, exhibit similar patterns with percentages declining between 2014/15 and 2016/17, showing that people are becoming more positive about crime trends. Women are less positive compared to men.

## 4.2 Fear of crime

The NDP asserts that the fear of crime “has consequences for women and girls and their ability to achieve their potential in every sphere of social and productive life. Gender-based violence in all its forms denies women and girls the opportunity to achieve equality and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution”. In this section, we use data to explore how crime impacts the lives of women. How are the freedoms enshrined in the Constitution compromised due to fear of crime?

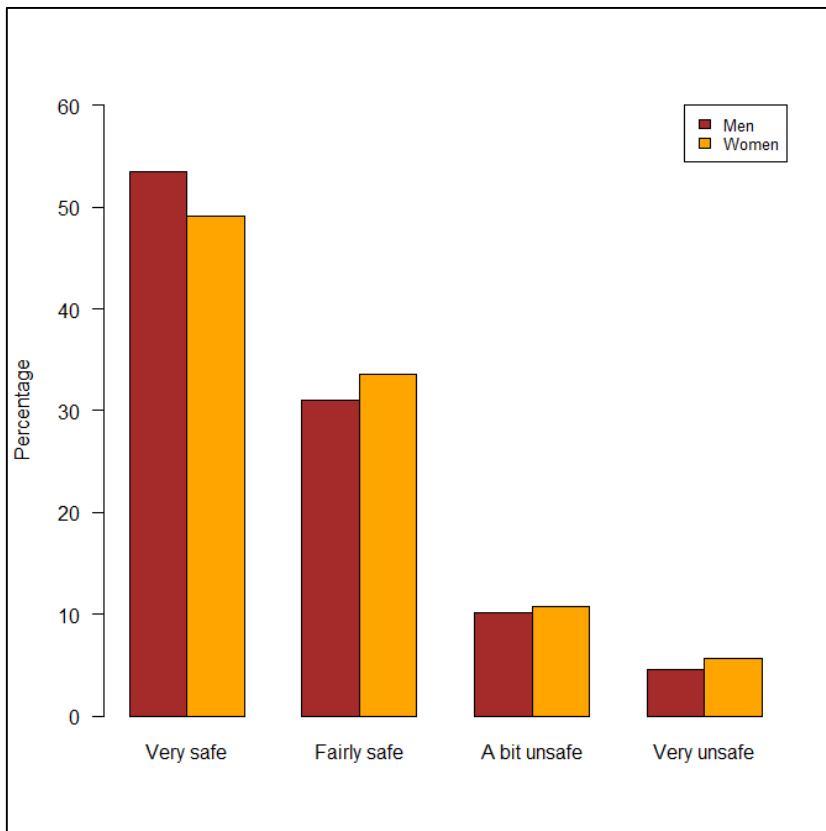
**Table 3: Percentage of households prevented from partaking in activities due to fear of crime**

Activities affected by crime	Female	CV%	Male	CV%
Going to open spaces or parks	30,9	2,3	29,3	2,2
Allowing children to play freely	16,4	3,3	14,5	3,2
Walking to work/town	12,9	4,0	12,4	3,7
Dressing in a way you want	12,8	4,0	10,1	4,0
Walking to the shops	11,9	4,1	10,4	3,8
Using public transport	11,3	4,3	10,5	3,8
Investing/starting a home business	11,2	4,6	9,3	4,3
Allowing children to walk to school	10,7	4,1	10,1	3,8
Expressing your sexual orientation	10,6	4,6	8,3	4,7
Keeping livestock/poultry in a kraal	6,2	5,8	4,6	5,5
Walking to fetch wood or water	4,4	7,5	2,8	7,9
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1,8</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>1,7</b>

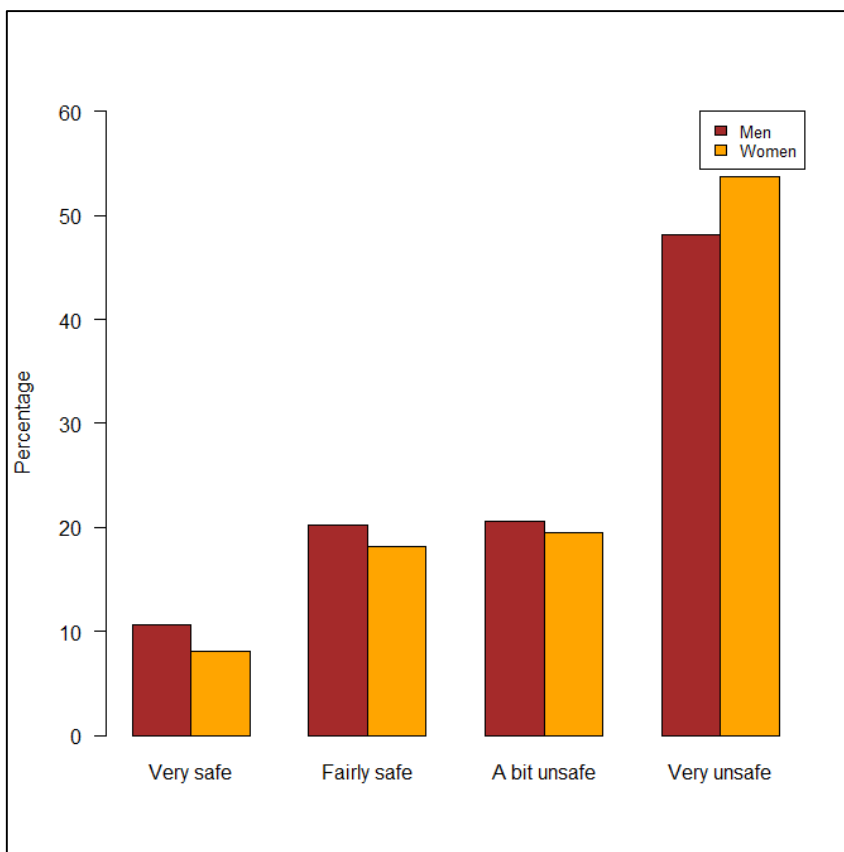
The estimates in Table 3 clearly show that in general, crime impedes the activities of women more than it does those of men, though marginally in some cases. The difference between women and men is more significant in the rural areas, affecting activities of keeping livestock/poultry in kraals and walking to fetch wood or water. It is interesting to note that the activities of going to open spaces or parks, allowing children to play freely and walking to work/town top the list for both women and men. Almost a third of the population feel unsafe going to open spaces or parks.

Walking in your area of residence without fear of being mugged or attacked by a criminal is a basic freedom that everyone should enjoy. In VOCS, respondents were asked how safe they would feel if they were to walk in their neighbourhoods alone. The question was split into two questions: one dealt with walking during the day and the other dealt with walking when it is dark. Results of these questions are summarised in Figure 6 and Figure 7, and are disaggregated according to gender.

**Figure 6: Feeling of safety to walk during the day, by gender**



**Figure 7: Feeling of safety to walk when it is dark, by gender**

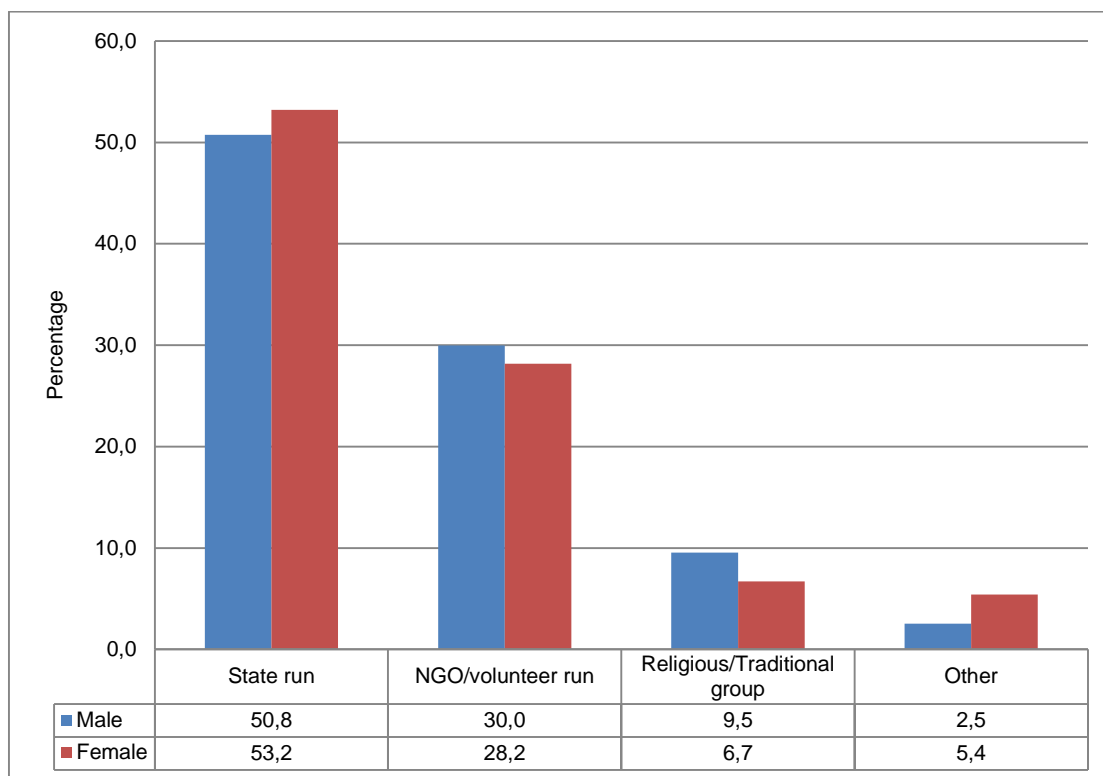


Women feel more unsafe than men walking alone in their neighbourhoods both during the day and when it is dark. About 49% of women would feel very safe walking alone in their neighbourhoods during daytime compared to 54% of men. The figures are swopped when asked about walking alone when it is dark, where 54% of women would feel very unsafe walking alone compared to 48% of men. The estimates here are relevant to South African individuals over the age of 16.

### 4.3 Knowledge of shelters or places of safety for victims of crime

The next question to ask is whether, should their fears become a reality and they become victims of crime, they know shelters and places of safety for victims of crime. Estimates from VOCS 2016/17 data show that only 9% of households in South Africa know a shelter or a place of safety for victims of domestic violence. This is true for both male- and female-headed households. For households that know the location of a shelter or place of safety for victims of domestic violence, Figure 8 shows the type of institution they know.

**Figure 8: Shelter and places of safety that households know about, by gender**



The majority of households, over 50%, know shelters and places of safety which are state-run institutions. The difference between male- and female-headed households in terms of the type of institutions they know is not significant. The distribution in Figure 8 is not in line with the Department of Justice database for shelters of abused women where, in 2012, 90% of the shelters were run by non-profit organisations (NPOs)



### 4.4 Accessibility of shelters or places of safety

Knowing where to get help and being able to get help are two very different things. How accessible are shelters and places of safety for women who experience crime? Respondents were asked how long on average it would take them to get to a shelter or a place of safety. Figure 9 below gives a summary of population estimates based on the responses.

**Figure 9: Time it takes to travel to a shelter or place of safety, by gender**

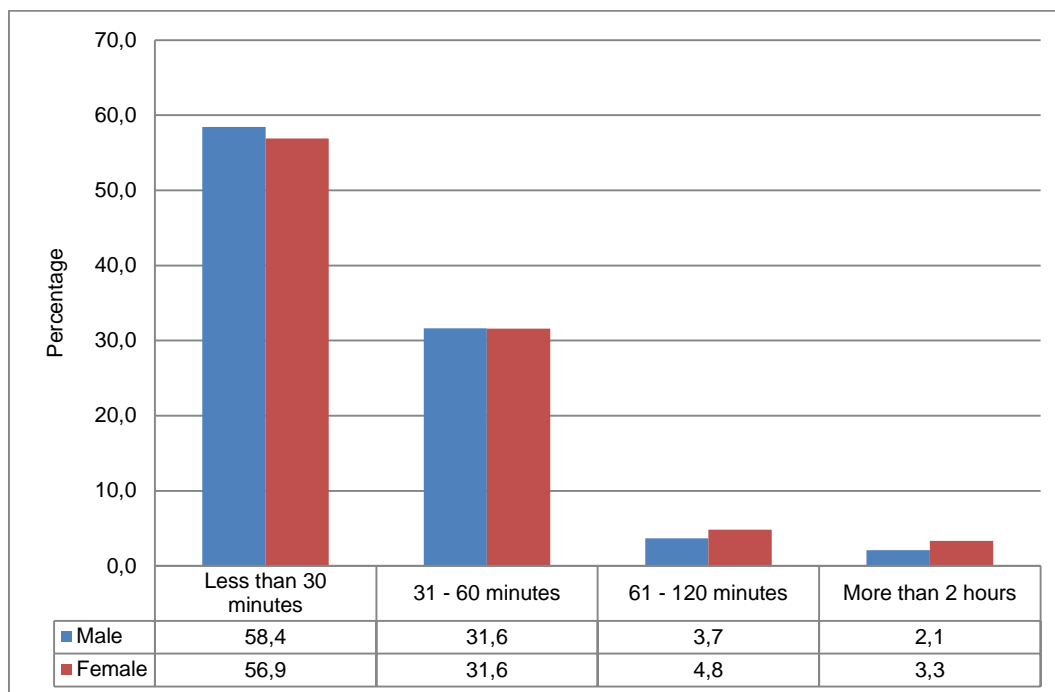


Figure 9 shows that male- and female-headed households have equal accessibility to shelters and places of safety for victims of domestic violence. These facilities are quite accessible to households, as the majority, over 93%, of households would take less than one hour to get there, while almost 60% would take less than half an hour.

### 4.5 Experience of household crimes

In this section we discuss how women experience crime at household level. It is unfortunate that household data does not contain information about experiences of individual women and girls in the household. The data only provides the collective experience of crime of a household. We are thus forced to rely on the gender of the household head as a vehicle towards understanding the way women experience crime. The types of crime covered by the household section of VOCS 2016/17 include theft of motor vehicle, housebreaking or burglary, home robbery, theft of livestock/poultry and other animals, theft of crops planted by the household, murder, trafficking of persons (human trafficking), theft out of motor vehicle, deliberate damaging/burning/ destruction of dwelling, motor vehicle vandalism, and theft of bicycle.

With the exception of murder and human trafficking, these are not the type of crimes that normally receive the attention of researchers, politicians and the media. Despite being out of the spotlight, these crimes have a great impact on the lives and well-being of women. For example, apart from the psychological trauma that comes with home robbery, women sometimes get raped or murdered during a home robbery. Deliberate destruction of a dwelling may sound like a benign type of crime

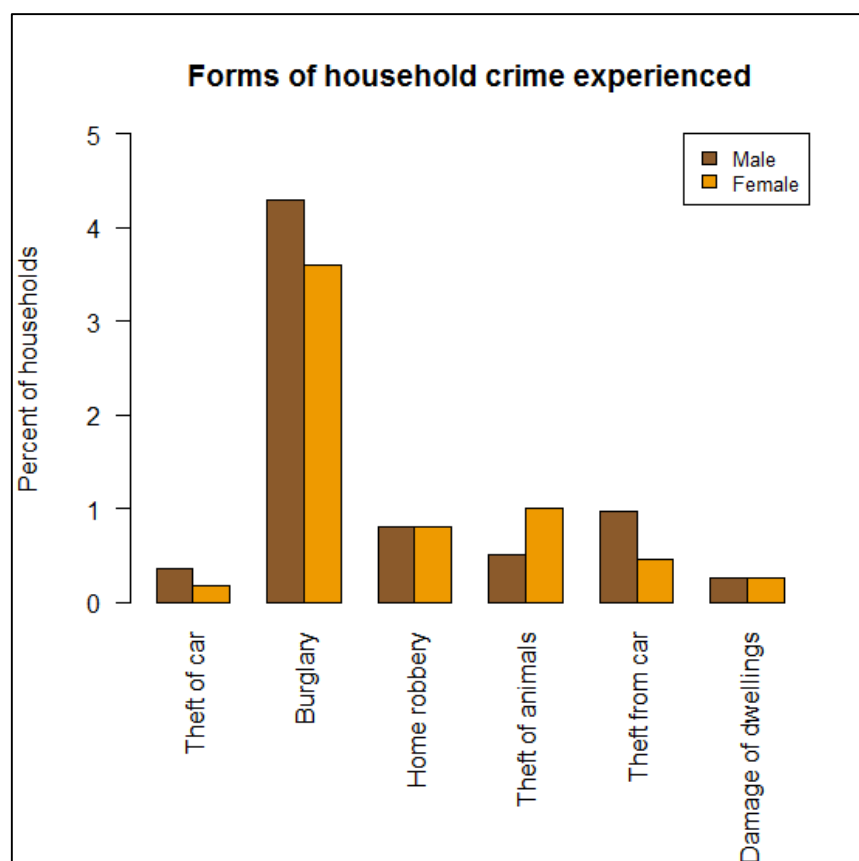
but may have a great impact on women. Table 4 below provides a summary of estimates of the percentage of households that experienced household crime during the past twelve months. Trafficking of persons was left out because the data contained very few incidents on this crime.

**Table 4: Experience of household crimes, by gender of the household head**

Crime experienced	Percentage of male-headed households that experienced crime	CV%	Percentage of female-headed households that experienced crime	CV%
Car theft	0,36	16	0,17	30
Housebreaking	4,3	5	3,6	6
Home robbery	0,8	11	0,8	13
Theft of animals	0,5	11	1,0	10
Theft of crops	0,05	38	0,02	58
Murder	0,06	35	0,16	32
Theft out of car	0,97	10	0,45	19
Damage of dwelling	0,26	18	0,26	21
Motor vehicle vandalism	0,2	21	0,16	39
Theft of bicycle	0,16	23	0,10	36

The bar-chart below provides a clearer picture of the levels of household crime.

**Figure 10: Experience of household crimes, by gender of the household head**



Poor estimates (marked by orange CVs in Table 4) have been left out of the discussion. Comparing the remaining estimates, we find that female-headed households experienced a higher crime rate compared to male-headed households only for theft of animals (livestock/poultry and other animals). This means that male-headed households are more likely to be victims of household crimes than female-headed households. Many possible explanations can be advanced for male dominance of household crimes.

Although it was not possible to obtain accurate estimates of the proportions of male- and female-headed households that experienced murder during the past twelve months, fairly accurate estimates of the total number of people murdered and the proportion of women murdered could be estimated. These estimates made it possible to calculate crude estimates of murder rates for men and women for 2016/17.

**Table 5: Crude estimates of the number of individuals murdered per 100 000, 2016/17**

	Estimate	CV%
Total number of people murdered	13 962	32
Proportion of women murdered	0.424	27
	<b>Crude estimates</b>	
Number of women murdered	$13\ 962 \times 0.424 = 5\ 920$	
Number of men murdered	$13\ 962 - 5\ 920 = 8\ 042$	
Number of women murdered per 100 000	$100\ 000 \times (5\ 920 / 28\ 529\ 100) = 20,8$	
Number of men murdered peer 100 000	$100\ 000 \times (8\ 042 / 27\ 379\ 800) = 29,4$	

In 2016/17, the number of women murdered per 100 000 was 20,8 compared to 29,4 for men. Figure 11 below uses these estimates to extend the WHO series of Figure 2.

**Figure 11: WHO trends in male vs female murder rates in South Africa extended to 2016/17**



Assuming that we can combine the WHO data and VOCS 2016/17 estimates, then murder rate for men continued to decline while the murder rate for women rose sharply between 2015 and 2016/17 to levels last seen in year 2000.

### 4.6 Experience of individual crimes

In the previous section crime against women in household settings was explored. The focus is now on crimes that affect individual women. The target population surveyed were all members of South African households of age 16 and above. Estimates for different types of crime disaggregated by gender are first presented and discussed.

**Table 6: Individual experience of crimes, by gender of the respondent**

Crime experienced	Percentage of males who experienced crime	CV%	Percentage of females who experienced crime	CV%
Theft of personal property	1,78	8,4	1,77	8,8
Hijack of motor vehicle	0,13	33,1	0,08	44,2
Street robbery	0,99	15,1	0,54	16,7
Sexual offence	0,12	35,0	0,25	24,3
Assault	0,80	14,3	0,66	15,4
Fraud	0,21	31,9	0,22	25,0

Estimates of the percentage of males who experienced sexual offence and percentage of females who experienced hijacking are poor estimates and therefore, these cannot be used in the analysis.

**Figure 12: Individual experience of crimes, by gender of the respondent**

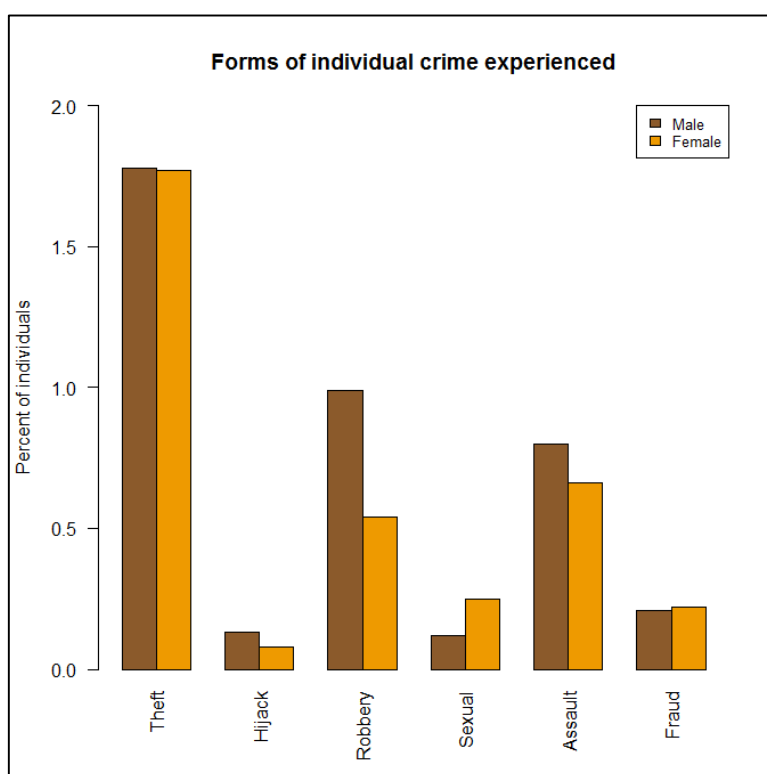


Figure 12 depicts the prevalence of the various forms of crime experienced by individual South Africans. The pattern of types of crime experienced by women is almost similar to that experienced by men. Theft of personal property was the most common crime experienced by women, followed

by assault, robbery, sexual offence and fraud. However, a greater percentage of men experienced these crimes except for possibly sexual offence and fraud.

Table 6 and Figure 12 present population estimates of proportions of individuals aged 16 and above who experienced the various types of crimes. It would also be useful to focus on victims of crime and estimate the proportion of victims who are women. These estimates would help give an indication of the types of crime in which women are most vulnerable.

**Table 7: Percentage of victims who are women, 2016/17**

Crime experienced	Percentage of victims who are women	CV%
Theft of personal property	51,7	6
Hijack of motor vehicle	40,9	33
Street robbery	37,1	13
Sexual offence	68,5	13
Assault	46,7	11
Fraud	53,8	19

Table 7 shows that women are more vulnerable to theft of personal property, sexual offence and fraud compared to men. Sexual offence, in particular, stands out with 68,5% of the victims being women.

#### 4.7 Reporting of crime to the police

Failure of victims to report crime to the police is a major challenge for crime statistics. There are many reasons that victims do not report crime to the police. VOCS reports have consistently identified “police would do nothing or police can do nothing” as the main reasons for not reporting crime to the police. This section seeks to explore the crime reporting level for women for each crime experienced by individual women.

**Table 8: Percentage of crimes reported to the police, by gender**

Form of crime experienced	Percentage of males who reported crime to the police	CV%	Percentage of females who reported crime to the police	CV%
Theft of personal property	34,0	11,8	25,9	15,1
Hijack of motor vehicle	62,7	27,9	72,3	27,6
Street robbery	33,2	15,8	28,7	24,3
Sexual offence	8,2	97,9	30,2	34,6
Assault	33,3	19,3	62,1	12,4
Fraud	38,2	40,3	24,6	38,9

Only four of the six pairs of estimates in Table 8 are usable statistics. The error levels for estimates of reporting rates for sexual offence and fraud are too high. The crimes that were mostly reported by women are hijacking of motor vehicles (over 72%) and assault (over 62%). The least reported crimes are theft of personal property and street robbery.

### 4.8 Satisfaction with police response

Victims of crime may decide not to report to the police due to the negative perceptions they have about the police, such as believing that the police would do nothing, or they may have had unsatisfactory experiences with the police service previously. In this section we investigate factors that determine satisfaction with the police, in particular comparing the extent to which women are satisfied with the police with the extent to which men are satisfied. Are women more satisfied with the police compared to men?

**Table 9: Satisfaction with services rendered by the police, by gender**

Crime experienced	Percentage of males who were satisfied with the police	CV%	Percentage of females who were satisfied with the police	CV%
Theft of personal property	30,4	16,2	17,7	22,9
Hijack of motor vehicle	20,7	35,4	13,4	36,2
Street robbery	23,9	29,9	32,8	35,1
Sexual offence	34,5	73,6	21,5	44,1
Assault	33,7	32,5	56,2	17,2
Fraud	76,7	16,9	12,4	73,5

Table 9 presents comparisons for different types of crime. Unfortunately, only comparisons for theft of personal property and assault can meaningfully be made because the CVs are within acceptable limits. In the case of theft of personal property, the percentage of women who were satisfied with the police was almost half that of men, while for assault, the percentage of women who were satisfied with the police is almost double that of men.

A formal way to investigate factors that determine satisfaction with the police is to use a logistic regression model. We shall consider only the example of housebreaking for the purpose of this analysis. Therefore, the factors will be household factors such as the gender and population group of the household head. Gender, population group and general satisfaction with the police were used as independent variables. General satisfaction (satisfy\_1) is a variable that captures the response to a question on satisfaction with police without reference to any crime experienced. This means that general satisfaction is about the respondent’s perception of the police service rather than of the experience. Fitting the model produced the following results:

**Table 10: Logistic regression modelling of satisfaction with the police**

	Estimate	Std error	t value	Odds ratio	Pr(> t )
(Intercept)	-1,7692	0,2369	-7,468	0,17	2,01e-12 ***
factor(gender)2	0,3345	0,2582	1,296	1,40	0,1965
satisfy_1	2,0716	0,2478	8,360	7,94	7,84e-15 ***
factor(e_population)2	0,3875	0,4033	0,961	1,47	0,3377
factor(e_population)3	1,3185	0,5765	2,287	3,74	0,0232 *
factor(e_population)4	1,3972	0,3128	4,467	4,04	1,28e-05 ***

Signif. codes: 0 ‘\*\*\*’ 0.001 ‘\*\*’ 0.01 ‘\*’ 0.05 ‘.’ 0.1 ‘ ’ 1

The above analysis was restricted to households that reported housebreaking to the police. Table 10 shows that female-headed households were not significantly more satisfied with police response

to housebreaking than male-headed households. General satisfaction is shown to be a significant factor in determining satisfaction with police service in response to reported housebreaking. A person who is generally satisfied with police service has about 8 times the odds of being satisfied with police response to reported housebreaking. The results also show that white (e\_population4) and Indian/Asian (e\_population3) households were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the police response than black African households.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This report provided an overview of all types of crime, including violent crimes, as they affect women in South Africa. Although victimisation of women was of primary interest, the report would have been incomplete if comparisons with the effect of crime on men were not made. Hence, in almost all instances, disaggregation according to gender was used in calculating the population estimates.

It should be a matter of concern, however, that while the murder rates for both men and women declined steadily between 2000 and 2015, the murder rate for women increased drastically by 117% between 2015 and 2016/17. The murder rate for men, though still higher than that of women, continued to decline between 2015 and 2016/17. The number of women who experienced sexual offences also jumped from 31 665 in 2015/16 to 70 813 in 2016/17, which is an increase of 53%. These are drastic increases in less than twenty-four months.

Analysis of household crimes showed that for most crimes considered in this report male-headed households were targeted more than female-headed households. In many cases a greater percentage of male-headed households than female-headed households experienced crime. A possible explanation that was also given in the VOCS 2016/17 release is that it may be that female-headed households always have someone at home. The presence of people in a house may act as a deterrent to household crime. The exception is theft of animals and possibly murder, where a greater percentage of female-headed households experienced these crimes. Note that a female-headed household experiencing a certain type of crime, say murder, does not mean that the victim was female.

In the case of individual crimes, the percentage of individuals aged 16 or older who experienced any type of crime in 2016/17 was 3,6% for women and 3,9% for men. Greater percentages of women were victims of theft of personal property, sexual offence and fraud; greater percentages of men were victims of hijacking of motor vehicles, street robbery and assault. In terms of reporting of individual crime, greater proportions of women victims reported hijacking of motor vehicles, sexual offence and assault. In general, men were more satisfied with police response than women, except for street robbery and assault, where greater percentages of women were more satisfied than men.

A deeper analysis of household satisfaction with police response to crime reporting revealed that satisfaction is influenced more by perceptions concerning police service than the gender of the household head. Population group of the household head is another important factor that determines satisfaction with police response. A white-headed household has more than four times the odds of being satisfied with the police than a black African-headed household.

Perceptions and fear of crime are crucial impact indicators in the National Development Plan. Evidence from the VOCS series shows that the percentage of male and female-headed households who thought that the level of crime increased declined steadily between 2014/15 and 2016/17, after an increase between 2013/14 and 2014/15. This is progress in the right direction, but the fear of crime is still a challenge. In 2016/17, people refrained from ordinary daily activities due to fear of crime. Women are more affected by this than men, as they felt not free to express their sexual orientation or to walk to fetch firewood or water. The pattern of feelings of safety for men is the same

as that of women, but women felt more unsafe than men. Women felt more unsafe than men walking in their neighbourhoods alone both during the day and when it is dark.

An unexpected finding was that women had the same pattern of attitudes towards domestic violence as men. For both men and women, the highest percentage of individuals thought it was acceptable for a man to hit a woman if she argues with him, and the lowest percentage of individuals thought it was acceptable for a man to hit a woman if she burns the food. Black African men had the highest percentage of individuals who thought it was acceptable for a man to hit a woman, followed by white women.

Attitudes and beliefs are the key factors that drive crime and particularly violence against women. Non-progressive attitudes and beliefs among the people of South Africa, including women, remain a major challenge in fighting crime against women. Evidence provided in this report also shows that the problem is the level of crime in the country rather than crime against women. In many crimes (including murder) men have been more victimised than women. If crime levels decline then crime against women will also decline. This conclusion does not suggest that there is no need for targeted interventions against crimes that victimise women. However, femicide is a term that is often misused by activists and the media. The killing of females simply because they are females is a rare phenomenon in South Africa, while the incidence of female homicide resulting from domestic violence or violence emanating from broken relationships is unacceptably high.

## **6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE WORK**

The report relied heavily on the VOCS data but the data does not provide detailed information on crimes that mostly affect women. For example, the data provides information about individual experience of sexual offence but it does not provide information about the type of sexual offence experienced (i.e. rape, sexual assault, incest or sexual touching). This limitation has been addressed in the new survey called Governance, Public Safety and Justice. The other challenge is the effective sample size for certain types of crime such as murder and sexual offence. While the VOCS sample size of about 30 000 households is reasonably large, the number of hits for individuals or households that experienced these crimes is often very small – to the extent that the sampling error for population estimates is typically very high. This is particularly the case when a high level of disaggregation is desired. The small effective sample size may also be due to unwillingness on the part of respondents to answer questions which may be viewed as very private, such as sexual offence. Increased use of administrative data such as South African Police Service (SAPS) data to complement the survey data is likely to be the way of addressing this challenge.



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## 8. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Femicide	The intentional killing of females (women or girls) because they are females
Intimate femicide	The killing of women by intimate male partners

## 9. ABBREVIATIONS

CV	Coefficient of variation
NDP	National Development Plan
NPO	Non-profit organisation
PSU	Primary sampling unit
SAPS	South African Police Service
VOCS	Victims of Crime Survey
WHO	World Health Organization

