



**FACT SHEET**

**CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN<sup>1</sup>**

**1. Police Statistics: Reported Rates of Serious Crimes against Children<sup>2</sup>**

**Table 1: Percentages of Certain Crimes Committed Against Children**

	National Totals (adults & children)			Total Number of Children			Percentage of Total for Children		
	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2005/06	2006/08	2007/08
<b>Murder</b>	18 528	19 202	<b>18 487</b>	1 075	1 152	<b>1 410</b>	5.8%	5.9%	<b>7.6%</b>
<b>Attempted Murder</b>	20 571	20 142	<b>18 795</b>	1 378	1 309	<b>1 488</b>	6.7%	6.4%	<b>7.9%</b>
<b>Rape</b>	54 926	52 617	<b>36 190<sup>+</sup></b>	23 453	17 224 <sup>+</sup>	<b>16 068<sup>+</sup></b>	42.7%	32.7%	<b>44.4%<sup>+</sup></b>
<b>Indecent Assault</b>	9 805	9 367	<b>6 763<sup>+</sup></b>	4 726	4 581 <sup>+</sup>	<b>3 517<sup>+</sup></b>	48.2%	48.9%	<b>52%<sup>+</sup></b>
<b>Assault (GBH)</b>	226 942	218 030	<b>210 104</b>	20 879	20 445	<b>19 687</b>	9.2%	9.3%	<b>9.3%</b>
<b>Common Assault</b>	227 553	210 057	<b>198 049</b>	35 941	23 526	<b>21 736</b>	11.4%	11.1%	<b>10.9%</b>

<sup>+</sup> *Statistics relate to April – December for years 2006 and 2007*

Table 1 reflects the number of serious crimes against adults and children in South Africa as published by the South African Police Services (SAPS) in the 2005/06 South African Police Service (SAPS) Annual Report. The 2006/07 and 2007/08 statistics are derived from the SAPS report, Crime situation in South Africa: Trends, spatial distribution and interpretation. According to the SAPS Annual Report 2004/05, 40.8% of rapes in 2004/05 were of children and the number of reported rapes against children increased by 4% from 2003/04. In 2005/06 this trend continued with a 1.9% increase in the proportion of reported rape of children bringing the total to 42.7% of the total reported cases. In 2007/08 the proportion is 44.4% and of added significance is that this only refers to the period April to December 2007.

In 2007/08 more than half of all reported cases of indecent assault (52%) related to children. Indecent assault includes serious crimes such as anal rape (sodomy) and oral rape – these figures will be incorporated into the rape numbers when the Sexual Offences Act is implemented<sup>3</sup> and these crimes will be legally recognised as rape and not indecent assault.

The national totals for the six crime categories for 2001 to 2008 were compared. This data is represented in tables 1 and 2.

**Table 2: Reporting Rates for Certain Crimes in South Africa (all cases)<sup>4</sup>**

	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008
<b>Murder</b>	21 405	21 553	19 824	18 793	18 545	19 202	<b>18 487</b>
<b>Rape</b>	54 293	52 425	52 733	55 114	54 926	52 617	<b>36 160*</b>
<b>Indecent Assault</b>	7 683	8 815	9 302	10 123	9 805	9 367	<b>6 763*</b>
<b>Kidnapping</b>	4 433	3 071	3 004	2 618	2 320	2 345	<i>unknown</i>
<b>Abduction</b>	3 132	4 210	4 044	3 880	3 345	3 217	<i>unknown</i>
<b>Neglect / Ill-treatment of Children</b>	2 648	4 798	6 504	5 568	4 828	4 258	<b>4 106</b>

\* Statistics relate to April – December 2007

**Table 3: Crimes against children under the age of 18 years<sup>5</sup>**

Crime Category	2006/2007	2007/2008	Difference	Increase/Decrease
<b>Murder</b>	1 152	<b>1 410</b>	258	22.4%
<b>Attempted murder</b>	1 309	<b>1 488</b>	179	13.7%
<b>Rape (April – Dec)</b>	17 224	<b>16 068</b>	-1 156	-6.7%
<b>Common assault</b>	23 526	<b>21 736</b>	-1 790	-7.6%
<b>Assault GBH</b>	20 445	<b>19 687</b>	-758	-3.7%
<b>Indecent assault (April – Dec)</b>	4 581	<b>3 517</b>	-1 064	-23.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	68 237	<b>63 906</b>	-	-

Table 3 shows a marked increase of 22.4% in the number of children murdered in 2007/2008. Attempted murder increased by 13.7%.

## **2. Rates of Victimization: Information from Research**

The table below shows that the overall rate of victimisation of adults from the 2003 National Victims of Crime Survey is only about half that of youth in the National Youth Victimization Survey (2005). This supports the theory that youth are more vulnerable to crime than adults.

**Table 4: Comparative Victimisation Rates<sup>6</sup>**

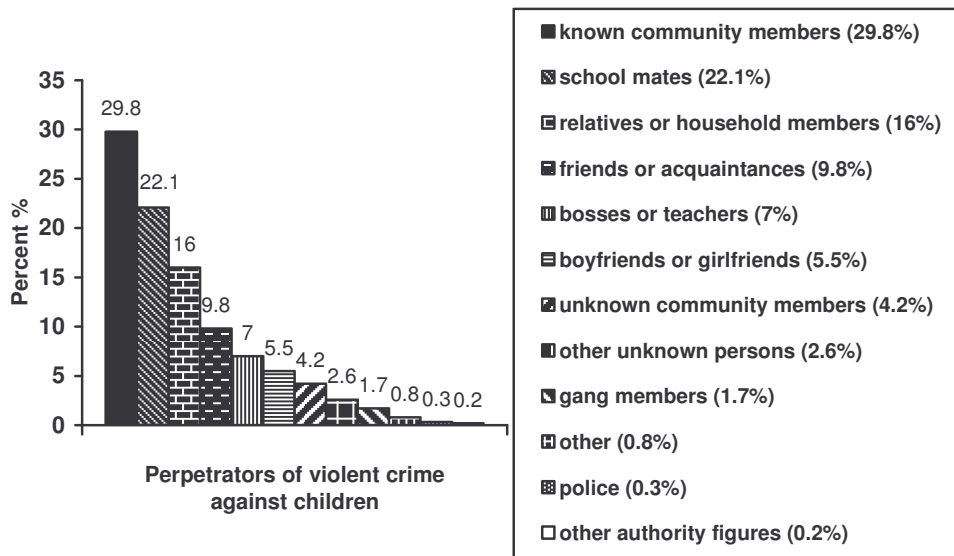
	Adult Rates 2003 (National Victims of Crime Survey) (%) (n = 4860) <sup>7</sup>	Youth Rates 2005 (National Youth Victimisation Survey) (%) (n = 4409)	Difference (%)
Any crime	22.9	41.4	+18.5
Theft of Personal Property	4.7	19.5	+14.8
Assault	2.2	16.5	+14.3
Robbery	2.0	9.4	+7.4
Sexual Assault	0.1	4.2	+4.1
Housebreaking	7.5	9.5	+2
Car Hijacking	0.5	1.7	+1.2

The perpetrators of these violent crimes are more often known to the victim than not. See the statistics related to youth victimisation in the graph below:<sup>8</sup>

### 3. Perpetrators of Crimes against Children

The National Youth Victimization Survey discussed above also considered the question of who the perpetrators of assaults against children and youth were. Figure 1 below reflects the results, which overwhelmingly indicate that assaults are perpetrated by people known to the victims.

**Figure 1: Perpetrators of Assaults against Children and Youth**



The report did, however, note that when violent crimes committed against the youth are reported to the police, they were likely to be incidents in which the perpetrators were strangers and where injuries result and the assailant is armed.

In relation to sexual assault, the study found that the identities of the perpetrators were known in 87.7% of cases. The following groups were primarily implicated as sexual offenders: known community members (30%), friends or acquaintances (28.7%), and relatives or household members (11.2%).<sup>9</sup>

Research conducted by the SAPS and reported in their 2005/06 Annual Report, which sampled 4409 youth aged 12 to 22 years from all the nine provinces, indicated that 75% of rape victims knew the perpetrator. Thus 56.9% of perpetrators were relatives, friends or acquaintances of the victim and of this group, 16.2% were relatives.

The places where these violent acts take place are shown in the table below. The survey used a very broad definition of sexual assault. The single participant from the Northern Cape who was sexually assaulted reported that the incident had taken place at school (100%).

**Table 5: Location of sexual assault, by province (%) (n = 173)**

	At home	At school	In the street (residential area)	In someone else's home	In the bush	At an entertainment area	Near my home
<b>Gauteng</b>	23.9	2.7	7.3	44.5	0	10.9	3.7
<b>Limpopo</b>	10.4	22.8	40.8	0	0	3.3	19.1
<b>Free State</b>	28.6	30.2	21.2	20.0	0	0	0
<b>Mpumalanga</b>	47.3	31.0	8.7	8.8	0	4.1	0
<b>North West</b>	37.5	4.6	19.0	15.0	7.3	0.1	14.1
<b>E. Cape</b>	18.9	24.5	32.0	16.8	0	2.9	4.8
<b>N. Cape</b>	0	100	0	0	0	0	0
<b>KwaZulu-Natal</b>	13.3	32.7	20.9	6.2	3.2	21.8	2.0
<b>W. Cape</b>	16.2	22.4	18.6	6.6	1.7	32.1	0

#### 4. The Context of Under-reporting of Crime

It is important to note that an increase in reported crime from year to year may not mean an increase in the actual levels of crime, but rather increased reporting of crime. The decision of whether or not to report a crime to the police is a complex one, which is influenced by a wide range of factors including levels of trust in the criminal justice system, personal fears of victims of results of disclosure, etc. The reported figures therefore only provide us with a partial picture. Victimization surveys are utilised to provide a further part of this picture, but may also be limited due to the kinds of questions that may be addressed to respondents.

The National Youth Victimization Survey found that while more than three quarters of those that were victimised informed someone about the incident (83.2%), 63.3% told their parents, only 11.3% reported to the police, and 9.5% notified their school authorities. A study by the Medical Research Council similarly found that 1 in 9 rapes are reported to the police.<sup>10</sup>

This means that, if 22 500 child rapes are reported in one year, there are probably about 202 500 rapes of children in that year. However the number of rapes and sexual offences is actually likely to be even higher than this, as it is believed that many victims who have chosen to be silent or forget the incident, will not inform the surveys of their experience. The Children's Institute of the University of Cape Town estimated in 2005 that between 400 000 and 500 000 children are sexually abused each year.<sup>11</sup>

Cases go unreported for a number of reasons. Perpetrators of child abuse often protect themselves from being reported by carefully choosing the child they target and the things they say and do to the child. Many create confusion in the child about whether or not what is going on is "bad" and whether it is the child's fault or not. Children more easily believe that adults are right and they are wrong and thus internalise these messages.

The 2005/06 SAPS Annual Report (which sampled 4409 youth aged 12 to 22 years from all nine provinces) indicates that one in five (20.5%) of the participants felt unsafe in their communities, while about one in ten (11.5%) reported feeling fearful at school, while 8.4% were fearful at home. The lack of safe spaces for youth often complicates the processes of speaking out, reporting and prosecuting these cases.

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#### Endnotes

1. Developed by Samantha Waterhouse (Advocacy Manager, RAPCAN) and Samantha Porter (student intern, RAPCAN)
2. This information was sourced from the South African Police Service Annual Reports for 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 and from statistics provided on the SAPS website for the periods from 2001 to 2008.

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3. The Sexual Offences Act has undergone a reform process over the past 10 years and was enacted in December 2007.
  4. South African Police Service website  
[www.saps.gov.za/statistics/reports/crimestats/2007/pdf/rsa\\_total.pdf](http://www.saps.gov.za/statistics/reports/crimestats/2007/pdf/rsa_total.pdf)
  5. South African Police Service website  
[www.saps.gov.za/statistics/reports/crimestats/2008/docs/introduction2008.pdf](http://www.saps.gov.za/statistics/reports/crimestats/2008/docs/introduction2008.pdf)
  6. Leoschut, L and Burton, P. 2006. *How rich the rewards: Results of the 2005 national youth victimisation survey*. Cape Town: Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention. p.47
  7. Burton, P, Du Plessis, A, Leggett, T, Louw, A, Mistry, D and van Vuuren, F. 2004. *National Victims of Crime Survey: South Africa 2003*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies Monograph 101.p.1 of chapter 2.
  8. Leoschut, L and Burton, P. 2006. *How rich the rewards: Results of the 2005 national youth victimisation survey*. Cape Town: Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention. p.54
  9. Leoschut, L and Burton, P. 2006. *How rich the rewards: Results of the 2005 national youth victimisation survey*. Cape Town: Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention. p.62
  10. Jewkes R, Penn-Kekana L, Levin L, Ratsaka M and Schreiber M. 1999. *Violence Against women in three South African Provinces*. Cape Town: Medical Research Council.
  11. Jacobs M, Shung-King M and Smith C. 2005. *South African Child Gauge*, Cape Town: Children's Institute.