

Masibambisane Community-based  
survey findings on the incidences  
and drivers of Gender Based  
Violence & Femicide (GBVF)  
in 18 communities across  
9 provinces

1 November –  
15 December 2022



FOUNDATION FOR  
HUMAN RIGHTS



Masibambisane


*A 4-page pamphlet with the summary findings of the survey is available from FHR on request, or from our FHR and Masibambisane website.*


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## Executive summary

The Foundation for Human Rights (FHR), Lawyers Against Abuse (LVA) and our eighteen GBVF Masibambisane Programme partners, conducted a first annual GBVF household survey, focused on adult women's experiences of gender-based violence in South Africa, in November to December 2022.

**Only one-third of respondents in the survey reported sexual and physical gender-based violence (GBV) to the police; only one in twenty reported cases resulted in a successful conviction.**

Respondents' perception of their relative safety did not align with the actual figures of any form of physical or GBV that the survey participants had experienced.

Half of the women (53%) surveyed had experienced at least some form of GBV, whether physical, sexual or emotional/verbal, in the last twelve months. Almost nine out of ten perpetrators were known to the person who experienced the GBV. Higher income and greater age correlated with less GBV of all types, but all groups had experienced some form of GBV. Younger survey respondents and those with higher education reported more physical and sexual GBV than older and less educated respondents. Employment status did not make a meaningful difference.

Survey respondents in urban areas were the least likely to have experienced any type of GBV. One in three (34%) in urban areas had experienced at least one form of GBV (physical, sexual, emotional/verbal). One in two respondents in informal settlements (55%) or rural areas (53%) and three-quarters (74%) in peri-urban areas had experienced some form of GBV.

One-third of the incidents reported to the police in informal (33%) and rural (38%) areas resulted in arrests – six out of ten cases that had arrests in rural and informal areas resulted in a conviction.

Education level did make some difference in reporting sexual GBV to the police – the more educated a respondent was, the more likely they were to report it to police.

Income was low in all areas. One in two respondents in informal settlements (54%) did not earn enough to meet their basic needs compared to six out of ten in rural (60%) and peri-urban (61%) areas. Just under half of the respondents living in urban areas did not earn enough to meet their basic needs (46%).

Although participants at all income levels had experienced physical and sexual GBV, income did not impact the rate of physical and sexual GBV experienced. Higher income correlated with less GBV of all types.

More than one in two (60%) people in rural areas were food secure; as were four in ten people (43%) in urban areas and one in two (50%) in informal areas. People in peri-urban areas had the highest food insecurity, as only a quarter (26%) were always food secure.

# Report findings

## Answers by area type

**Almost one in two people surveyed were either in an informal settlement (45%) or a rural (44%) area. One in twenty were in a peri-urban area (5%) and one in sixteen were in urban areas (6%).**

### → Perceived safety

Respondents' perceptions of their relative safety did not align with the actual figures of any form of physical or sexual gender-based violence (GBV) that people experienced. Surveyed individuals in rural areas considered their environment the safest, with nearly half (47%) feeling 'very safe' and only a minority (19%) feeling 'very unsafe'. In contrast, urban regions were viewed as less safe, with a significant majority (58%) feeling 'very unsafe' and only a small fraction (16%) feeling 'very safe'. Interestingly, even residents of informal settlements reported a higher sense of security, with 25% feeling very safe. However, subjective feelings of safety did not correspond with the actual incidence of physical or sexual gender-based violence (GBV). Despite a higher perceived sense of safety in rural areas, where 48% felt very safe, a substantial proportion of rural respondents had experienced GBV (35%), which was greater than in urban areas where only 22% reported such experiences but the sense of safety was the lowest.

### → Experience of GBV

Survey participants in urban areas were the least likely to have experienced any GBV, with one in three (34%) having experienced at least one form of GBV (physical, sexual, emotional/verbal). One in two participants in informal settlements (55%) and rural areas (53%) and three-quarters (74%) in peri-urban areas had experienced some form of GBV.

Those most likely to experience some form of physical or sexual GBV lived in peri-urban areas (almost half, at 47%). Around four out of ten participants in informal settlements (38%) and rural areas (35%) had experienced physical or sexual GBV compared to one in five in urban areas (22%).

### → Reports of GBV to police, cases, arrests and convictions

The type of area significantly affected the number of reports of sexual GBV (rape and/or attempted rape). One in ten respondents living in rural areas (9%) and informal settlements (10%) reported experiencing sexual GBV compared to one in twenty in peri-urban (6%) and only one in thirty-three in urban areas (3%). Two out of three survey participants living in urban areas who had experienced sexual GBV reported it to the police (67%), compared to one-third living in informal settlements (33%). The lowest reporting was for participants in rural areas (one in three, at 29%). Four out of ten living in a peri-urban area reported sexual GBV to the police (40%).

Half of the incidents of sexual abuse in urban areas that were reported to the police resulted in an arrest. One-third of the incidents reported to the police in informal (33%) and rural (38%) areas resulted in arrests; and six out of ten cases that had arrests in rural and informal areas resulted in a conviction.

Survey participants living in urban areas reported the least amount of physical GBV, one in five (22%). Almost half of the participants in peri-urban areas experienced physical GBV, as did one in three living in informal (35%) and rural (32%) areas. The

Respondents' perceptions of their relative safety did not align with the actual figures of any form of physical or sexual gender-based violence (GBV) that people experienced.



police opened a case of physical GBV nine out of ten times when it was reported to them in an urban area (89%); rural police opened a case eight out of ten times (78%) and police in informal settlements opened a case two-thirds of the time (63%). Peri-urban police were the least likely to open a case, only doing so one-third (33%) of the time.

**Police in urban areas were far more likely to arrest and convict someone for physical GBV.** One in seven (13%) cases reported to the police in urban areas resulted in convictions (when the police opened a case). This was almost twice the rate in rural areas (6%) and informal settlements (5%). None of the eight cases of physical GBV reported to police in peri-urban areas resulted in an arrest.

### → Income

**Area type made a significant difference in the highest income level of the survey participants** – roughly one in six living in urban areas (15%) earned higher than their basic needs compared to one in fourteen in rural areas (7%), one in twenty in informal settlements (6%) and one in fifty in peri-urban areas (2%). However, the two lower income levels did not differ greatly per area.

Four in ten survey respondents living in informal settlements (41%) earned just enough for their basic needs – more than in any other area, including urban (38%), peri-urban (36%) and rural areas (33%). One in two respondents in informal settlements (54%) did not earn enough to meet their basic needs compared to six out of ten in rural (60%) and peri-urban (61%) areas. Just under half the respondents living in urban areas did not earn enough to meet their basic needs (46%).

### → Level of education

**University-level education was very rare in all areas**, with the highest number found in informal settlements, at one in twenty (5%). One in fifty people surveyed in rural (2%) and peri-urban (2%) areas had a university degree, and less than 1% in urban areas. Four out of ten respondents in informal settlements had a matric (41%) compared to one-third in urban areas (35%). Rural areas had the highest number of survey respondents with no formal education at one in seven (14%).

### → Age

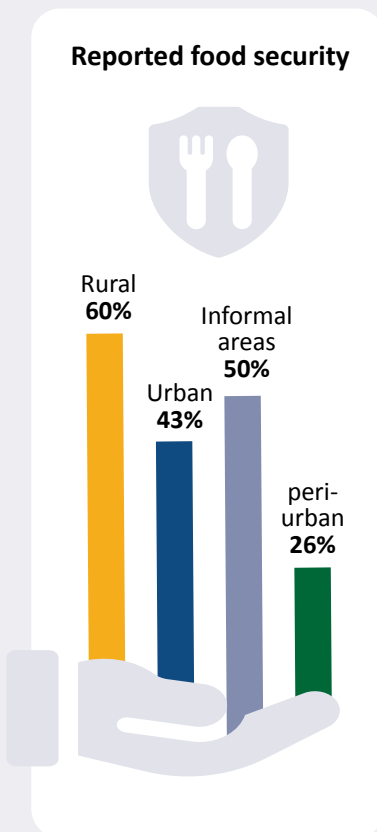
One in ten respondents in rural (11%) and peri-urban (9%) areas was over the age of 65. This was far higher than in any other area, where only one in twenty people in informal settlements and less than 1% in urban areas were over 65. Six out of ten (63%) respondents in urban areas and informal settlements (58%) were between the ages of 18 and 35 compared to roughly four out of ten respondents in rural (36%) and peri-urban (40%) areas. Half the respondents in rural (52%) areas were middle-aged (between 36 and 65 years), contrasted to one-third of respondents in informal and urban areas (both 37%).

### → Employment levels

Survey participants in informal settlements (32%) and urban areas (33%) had similar employment levels (one-third for both). One in five participants were employed in rural (21%) and peri-urban (21%) areas. Nine out of the ten participants in urban areas with employment were employed full time (88%) – a significantly higher number than in any other area. Seven out of ten participants in informal settlements with jobs were employed full time (69%), with six out of ten in rural areas (60%) and four out of ten in peri-urban areas (44%).

### → Food security

**People living in rural areas were the least likely to have food insecurity**, with more than one in two reporting that they always had enough to eat (60%). Four in ten people in urban areas (43%) and one in two in informal areas (50%) were food secure. People in peri-urban areas had the highest food insecurity, as only a quarter were always food secure (26%).



## GBV-related questions

The survey asked a number of questions on GBV, including questions related to sexual, physical and emotional/verbal abuse.

### → Experience of GBV

Almost half of the women surveyed experienced some form of emotional abuse (45%). The next most common form of GBV was physical – one in three women surveyed had experienced physical abuse (34%) and one in ten had experienced sexual GBV (9%). Nine out of ten perpetrators of physical GBV were known to the person who experienced the violence (87%) – a quarter of perpetrators were either currently in a relationship with the person that they were physically harming (24%) or had been a previous partner of that person (25%). Family members were perpetrators almost one-fifth of the time (17%), as were other people who were known to the survivors of physical GBV (20%). Only one in ten people surveyed reported experiencing physical harm from a stranger (12%).

### → Income

Although all income levels had experienced physical and sexual GBV, income did impact the rate of physical and sexual GBV that the survey participants had experienced. Higher income correlated with less GBV of all types. Almost a quarter of the highest-income earners had experienced physical and sexual GBV (28%) compared to one-third of participants with just enough income to meet their basic needs (32%) and to four out of ten whose income did not meet their basic needs (40%). The more someone earned, the less physical GBV they had experienced – four out of ten participants with lower income levels had experienced physical GBV (38%) compared to one-third of medium earners (29%) and a quarter of high-income earners (24%).

Income also influenced the type of GBV (emotional, sexual and physical) that respondents had experienced. Higher income earners were more likely to report having experienced emotional/verbal GBV (43%) compared to those with just enough to meet their basic needs (32%). One out of two people with an income that did not meet their basic needs reported having experienced at least one form of emotional/verbal GBV.

The highest earners were slightly more likely to report having experienced rape or attempted rape (11%) compared to both those who earned just enough (8%) and those who earned less than enough (9%).

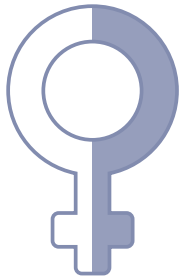
### → Employment

An employed respondent was slightly less likely to have experienced any form of physical GBV than an unemployed respondent (4% difference). Employed respondents experienced sexual GBV marginally less than unemployed respondents had (8% vs 11%).

### → Position in household

Whether the respondent was the head of the household or not did not significantly impact whether someone had experienced physical or sexual GBV. People who were not the head of the household were slightly more likely (4%) to have experienced these forms of GBV. Likewise, whether the person was the head of the household had little impact on whether they had experienced emotional GBV (2% difference) or sexual GBV (3% difference).

Half of the women surveyed had experienced at least some form of Gender Based Violence (GBV), whether physical, sexual or emotional/verbal, in the past twelve months.



Of the women surveyed:



**1 in 3**  
experienced  
physical GBV



**1 in 10**  
experienced  
sexual GBV



**5 in 10**  
experienced  
emotional  
abuse

### → Age

A respondent's age group made a significant difference to reports of physical or sexual GBV. Respondents aged 18 to 35 were almost 15% more likely to have experienced some form of physical or sexual GBV than those aged 36 to 65. However, respondents aged 36 to 65 and over 65 had experienced almost the same levels of physical GBV (1% difference). Younger respondents were also more likely to report sexual GBV than other age groups (11% vs 7%). No respondent over 65 reported having experienced sexual GBV.

### → Education

Education level did make some difference in reporting physical and/or sexual GBV. Those with higher levels of formal education reported higher levels of these types of GBV. Respondents with the highest formal education (university degree) reported the most physical and/or sexual GBV – four out of ten at this income level had experienced GBV in the past twelve months (41%). Respondents who had completed matric (37%) or those with a high school education (39%) were the highest after those with a university degree. These trends persisted with sexual GBV – respondents with a university degree (11%), some university education (10%) and matric (9%) reported the highest levels of sexual GBV. People with no formal education reported the lowest amount of sexual GBV (1%).

Education level did make some difference in reporting sexual GBV to the police – the more educated a respondent was, the more likely they were to report the incident to police. Eight out of ten people with a university degree reported sexual GBV to the police (85%) compared to two-thirds of respondents with some high school (67%) or a matric (63%). Neither of the two people with no formal education who reported having been raped in the past year reported it to police. These figures were comparable with respect to reporting incidents of physical abuse to the police, with the exception of respondents with a matric, who were significantly less likely to report physical abuse. Only one-third in this category reported incidents of physical GBV to the police compared to two-thirds for sexual GBV.

Respondents without formal schooling had the lowest level of reporting compared to all of the other education levels. One in three reported having experienced sexual and/or physical GBV (30%). This was close to the reporting levels from respondents with some primary or some university education (at 32% each).

### → Marriage-status

One-third of respondents who were currently married to their partner reported that they had experienced physical and/or sexual GBV (32%) compared to four out of ten people who were not currently married to their partner (41%). There was no significant difference between married (9%) and unmarried respondents (10%) regarding levels of sexual GBV, with one in ten people experiencing sexual GBV regardless of their marital status.

Almost **9/10** perpetrators were known to the women who experienced GBV, only **one in ten** women surveyed reported experiencing physical harm from a stranger.





## Reporting to the police

Only one-third (34%) of the people who experienced physical or sexual abuse (32%) reported it to the police.

The South African Police Service (SAPS) opened a case two-thirds of the time when respondents reported physical and/or sexual GBV to them (67%). The police opened a case when the alleged perpetrator of sexual GBV was a previous partner four out of five times (78%) but was less likely to open a case when the perpetrator was the current partner (63%) and far less likely to open a case when the alleged perpetrator was a family member – only opening a case one-third of the time (33%). The police were slightly more likely to open a case when the alleged perpetrator was a stranger (83%) than when the perpetrator was a previous partner (78%).

Although two-thirds of the incidents of physical abuse reported to the police resulted in a case being opened, less than one in twenty of the incidents resulted in a conviction (4%). The most likely outcome of reporting this kind of GBV to the police was that no arrest was made, with only one in ten cases resulting in an arrest (11%). Out of the 171 reported cases, just six people were convicted.

Only one-third (32%) of the women surveyed who had experienced sexual abuse (rape or attempted rape) reported the incident to the police. Although the police opened a case two-thirds of the time (66%), only one in ten cases of sexual GBV resulted in a conviction – six actual convictions. The most likely outcome of reporting an incident of sexual GBV was that no arrest had been made at the time of the survey.

Half of the perpetrators of physical violence arrested by the police had still not been prosecuted at the time of the survey (50%). And of those who had, two-thirds were convicted (33%). Half of the incidents of psychological abuse reported to the police resulted in an opened case (52%), with one-third not having any case opened (35%). Approximately six out of every ten cases of psychological abuse reported to the police resulted in an arrest (57%), and one in ten reported cases resulted in a conviction (9%). One in twenty perpetrators were still awaiting trial (5%).

Age made little difference to whether or not the police were likely to open a case of physical abuse. One in ten respondents, regardless of their age, explained that the police had opened a case when an incident of physical abuse was reported to them.

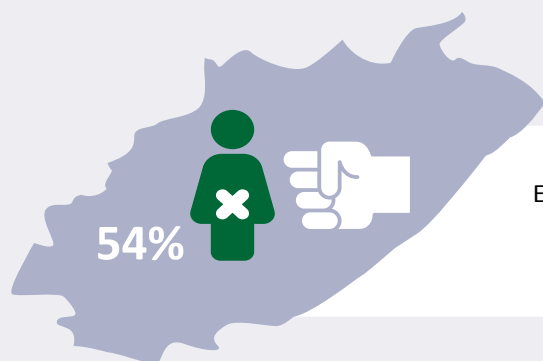
Excluding emotional and verbal abuse, the women in the Eastern Cape suffered GBV at a rate far higher than in any other province (54%) – 10% higher than in the next province (the Northern Cape, at 45%). One in two women living in the Eastern Cape (54%) reported experiencing either sexual (13%) or physical (50%) violence. See Table 1 for a more detailed provincial breakdown.

Although the **police opened a case two-thirds of the time**, only **one in ten cases** of sexual GBV **resulted in a conviction**.



Table 1: Gender-based violence by province

Province	No. responses	Sexual and physical	%	Sexual violence	%	Physical violence	%	Emotional/verbal	%	All GBV	%
EC	196	105	54%	26	13%	97	50%	100	51%	130	66%
FS	353	140	40%	26	7%	132	37%	173	49%	206	58%
GP	240	57	24%	15	6%	50	21%	68	28%	82	34%
KZN	347	138	40%	29	8%	129	37%	178	51%	206	59%
LP	314	88	28%	21	7%	81	26%	111	35%	137	44%
MP	111	40	36%	14	13%	36	32%	61	55%	65	59%
NW	229	73	32%	20	9%	65	28%	101	44%	124	54%
NC	165	74	45%	11	7%	72	44%	103	62%	111	67%
WC	83	24	29%	15	18%	24	29%	29	35%	29	35%
Total	2038	739	36%	177	9%	686	34%	924	45%	1090	53%



Excluding emotional and verbal abuse, the women in the Eastern Cape suffered GBV at a rate far higher than in any other province.

# Background of the study

**Gender-based violence and femicide (GBV, GBVF) is a severe violation of human rights (the rights to dignity, equality, safety and health) and is based on the real or perceived gender of the target of the violence and discrimination.** Although GBVF affects all genders, in South Africa, it affects women, girls and gender non-conforming people at a much higher rate than men and boys. GBV occurs in several dimensions, which work together to increase vulnerability and harm. GBV also includes non-physical violence, such as emotional, psychological and financial harm, which may combine to create immediate and long-term effects that damage individuals, families, groups and society. This harm is not limited to the targets of violence and discrimination, and understanding and addressing GBVF must consider the high physical, emotional and financial costs, including healthcare spending, legal expenditure and productivity losses. Gender-related violence, particularly violence and discrimination against women, girls and gender non-conforming people, is a global concern that transcends cultural, geographical, religious, social and economic boundaries.

In recognition of the severe problems caused by GBVF in South Africa, the European Union (EU) awarded the Foundation for Human Rights (FHR) and Lawyers against Abuse (LvA) a grant to address the lack of accountability for GBVF in 18 selected communities in South Africa. The FHR's Masibambisane programme was tasked with addressing GBVF concerns. The programme's implementation included a household survey conducted in 18 sites around South Africa with people in lower-income areas. The people conducting the surveys were sub-grantees/recipients of the Masibambisane grant. The surveyors, therefore, had real-life experiences of dealing with the consequences of GBVF. To ensure the quality of the data, training and facilitation of the ninety household surveyors was conducted by FHR staff using a training manual developed specifically for this process and an online KOBO data collection tool.



The household survey was conducted in 18 sites around South Africa with people in lower-income areas.

## Definitions and key characteristics



A **rural area**, or the countryside, is a geographic area that is located outside towns and cities. Typical rural areas have a low population density and small settlements. Mostly agricultural activities are practised.



An **urban area** can refer to towns, cities and suburbs. An urban area includes the city itself, as well as the surrounding areas. Commonalities include high population, social distance, economic mobility and mostly formal townships.



**Informal settlements** are residential areas that do not comply with local authority requirements for conventional (formal) townships. They are, typically, unauthorised and are invariably located upon land that has not been proclaimed for residential use. They exist because urbanisation has grown faster than the ability of government to provide land, infrastructure and homes.



A **peri-urban area** is a town – without a local authority but with predominantly formal dwellings – falling outside but sharing at least one common boundary with a proclaimed urban area.



A **township** is a suburb or city of predominantly black occupation, formerly designated for black occupation by apartheid legislation.

## Research areas of the Masibambisane programme








The survey targeted 18 sites for household interviews, in all nine provinces.

**Table 2: Provinces, areas of operation and classification, and implementing organisations**

Province	Area of operation / classification	Implementing organisation
<b>Northern Cape</b>	De Aar / Peri-urban	Ethembeni (Place of Hope) Community Centre
<b>Northern Cape</b>	De Aar/ Rural	Sisterhood Heroines
<b>Free State</b>	Bloemspruit / Township	Free State Network on Violence Against Women (FSNVAW)
<b>Free State</b>	Botshabelo / Rural	SEED Foundation South Africa
<b>Limpopo</b>	Giyani / Rural	Katekani Community Development Agency (KCDA)
<b>Limpopo</b>	Giyani / Rural	Youth Zone Sustainable Enterprise Development
<b>Gauteng</b>	Newlands / Urban	Black Womxn Caucus
<b>Gauteng</b>	Tembisa / Township	Informed Youth Development Centre
<b>Eastern Cape</b>	Mthatha / Rural	Indlezana Yezwe
<b>Eastern Cape</b>	Port Elizabeth / Township	Doxa Youth Programmes
<b>KwaZulu-Natal</b>	Pietermaritzburg/Township	Families South Africa-Pietermaritzburg (FAMSA-PMB)
<b>KwaZulu-Natal</b>	Mpophomeni / Township	uMngeni Unemployed Graduates Forum
<b>KwaZulu-Natal</b>	Mpophomeni / Township	Mpophomeni Gender and Paralegal Office (MGPO)
<b>Western Cape</b>	Cape Town / Township	Langa Community Advice Services
<b>North West</b>	Rustenburg / Rural	Bojanala Legal Advice Centre
<b>North West</b>	Haartbeesfontein / Rural	Lethabong Legal Advice Centre
<b>Mpumalanga</b>	eMalahleni / Township	Phidisa Community Project
<b>Mpumalanga</b>	Verena D / Rural	Ingomuso Lethu Centre

**Table 3: Clustering of implementing organisations by area classification**

This table represents seven of the eighteen sites where the survey was conducted.

Organisation and area		Socio-economic context	Services provided
 <b>Ethembeni (Place of Hope) Community Centre</b>	<p>Located in De Aar, a small town (42,000 inhabitants) in Northern Cape, the largest and least populated province.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unemployment is high due to no industrial activity.</li> <li>• Employment in the government sector and retail shops, banks and other private entities.</li> <li>• No entertainment sites such as community parks or swimming pools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shelter for victims of GBV.</li> <li>• Co-support workers at the court to assist with access to protection orders.</li> </ul>
 <b>Free State Network on Violence Against Women (FSNVAW)</b>	<p>Located in Bloemspruit, township of provincial capital Bloemfontein (520,000 residents), Free State, forms part of the Mangaung District Municipality (population of 747,431).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High number of informal settlements and migrants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling and psychosocial support for victims of gender-related violence.</li> <li>• Community outreach programmes on GBVF.</li> </ul>
 <b>Ingomuso Lethu Centre</b>	<p>Located in Verena D, Thembisile Hani Local Municipality, along the R25 to Groblersdal.</p> <p>Verena D is one of 57 villages and five established townships in the vicinity of eMalahleni (formerly Witbank), the biggest town in Mpumalanga.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dominated by coal mining and power stations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach education, woman empowerment, advocacy on GBVF.</li> </ul>
 <b>Youth Zone Sustainable Enterprise Development</b>	<p>Located at Siyandhani village in Greater Giyani Local Municipality (population of 244,218), Limpopo.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment in retail in commercial markets and malls.</li> <li>• Strong cultural practices and standards.</li> <li>• Efficient usable infrastructure, e.g. community hall, stadium, Department of Social Development offices.</li> </ul>	
 <b>Black Womxn Caucus</b>	<p>Located in Newlands suburb (established 1897), City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, Gauteng.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industrial and commercial sites with job opportunities.</li> <li>• Significant prevalence of gangsterism.</li> <li>• Informal settlement erection due to job seekers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responds to the prevalence of GBVF (including against LGBTQIA+ and differently-abled community).</li> <li>• Community outreach programmes.</li> </ul>
 <b>uMngeni Unemployed Graduates Forum</b>	<p>Located in Mpophomeni township on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg near Howick.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment in industrial areas, agricultural sector (sugarcane and processing) and tourism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach programmes, advocacy and awareness-raising on GBVF issues.</li> </ul>
 <b>Langa Community Advice Services</b>	<p>Located on the Cape Flats in Langa township, under the City of Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Railway station separating Langa from largely white and affluent suburbs, with most open land occupied by informal settlements.</li> <li>• Significant gangsterism.</li> <li>• Tourist attraction due to existence for 100 years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy on GBVF, awareness raising,</li> <li>• mitigation and referrals on cases of GBVF.</li> </ul>

**Table 4: Clustering of Masibambisane branches by area classification**

Area classification	No. Masibambisane branches
Rural	8
Peri-urban	1
Urban	1
Township	8

The household survey took place from 1 November to 15 December 2022. Each site had five surveyors, with a total of 90 surveyors conducting the survey across the country. The training was synchronised in teams of two FHR staff per site during October 2022.

The Violence Against Women questionnaire was designed to collect information on women's experiences of various types of violence to allow for a better understanding of GBVF-related problems in South Africa. Questions in the survey collected information on household members' demographics, employment, support and their experience of violence. The types of violence considered in the survey included psychological and physical violence, and discrimination.

The survey involved interviewing a randomly selected group of girls and women respondents aged 18 years and older. Participants were asked questions about their experiences concerning violence and abuse as well as general questions about their households. The information obtained from the survey will be used to better understand the extent of violence and discrimination experienced by women. It is hoped that such data can be used to improve service delivery and protections for people who experience GBV.

The FHR trained the interviewers as field workers so that they were able to competently and sensitively ask potentially traumatic questions that could elicit emotional responses. Interviewers were instructed to fill the questionnaire in as completely as possible. Re-visits were conducted when a suitable interviewee had not been available.

The survey was conducted on 400 randomly selected households in each area. Each of these households was visited in-person by an interviewer, who was instructed to administer the survey to an eligible participant (a woman over 18 years old). Participants consented to participate in the survey, which was conducted privately to ensure confidentiality. The information gathered by the survey was anonymised and is stored securely by the FHR under the terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act.

## Limitations of the study

### → Gender selection

The people conducting the survey were instructed to only interview 'eligible women'. As such, only people whom the interviewer determined eligible were questioned. Although a form was used to determine eligibility, it is possible that this was a relative decision that may have excluded certain groups (e.g., gender non-conforming or trans women).

### → Language

The questionnaire was in English, with the interviewers instructed to ask the questions in the language of the interviewer where possible and to ensure that the meaning of the questions were not altered when translation took place.

### → Time constraints

The survey was conducted over a limited time. Additional time may have allowed for better responses and ensured that all questions were properly explained, understood and answered.

### → App utilisation

The surveyed used the KOBO app to collect data. Although this was an extremely useful and versatile tool, some interviewers may not have been able to fully use the app successfully despite the training they had received.

### → Tracking of data

Interviewers were tracked to ensure they met their contractual obligations, visited participants physically and spoke to the correct people. The tracking data from some interviewers showed that they had not conducted the surveys properly.

### → Loadshedding

Loadshedding may have interfered with network coverage. Although the software used compensated for network disruptions, this may have led to some data not being properly uploaded and recorded.

### → Gender inclusivity

Although not a limitation per se, some interviewers reported the need for a study which included all genders, not just women and girls.

### → Truthfulness

Some questions relied on the interviewee answering truthfully. This could have been problematic in instances where the interviewee did not feel comfortable discussing the question or felt that telling the truth could lead to shame or other emotions. Answers to questions related to economic status may also have been influenced by this observation. Some people may not have answered questions truthfully if they thought their answers could incriminate someone and lead to their prosecution (for example, if the respondent was financially dependent on the perpetrator).

## Overview: Trends and summary

Households surveyed:



**Access to  
water**  
89%



**Sanitation**  
59%



**Flushing  
toilets**  
52%



**Electricity**  
80%

Responses to the survey showed that almost all types of abuse and violence were perpetrated by someone known to the interviewee. People tended not to report incidents, perhaps because of social or family pressure to protect perpetrators or maybe because survivors were dependent on the perpetrator. Some fundamental socio-economic rights (especially access to water and education as well as electricity) appear to be in evidence. Still, unemployment and poor wages meant that a significant number of people interviewed were neither food nor financially secure. Despite this, half of the interviewees felt safe in their neighbourhoods.

Most people surveyed were in a relationship, with almost 60% living with their partner in an owned brick structure with at least four rooms (excluding a bathroom). Most of the time, the person being interviewed was also the head of the household (39%). Most households had at least one child living in the household and one woman. Generally, more than one adult woman was living in the house.

The vast majority of households enjoyed the right to access water (89%); most received water from a tap in their house or yard. Just over half of the households' right to sanitation was met by their local authority or private company (52%), with refuse collection occurring at least once a week. People who disposed of their refuse themselves generally did so at their own refuse dump (59%), on the street (23%) or in a communal refuse dump (18%). Over half of the households used a flush toilet connected to a sewerage system (52%). Almost all households had access to electricity such that they could use it as the primary energy source to cook their food (80%); even more people used it as their primary lighting source (90%).

The right to basic and further education was fairly accessible – almost all survey respondents had completed at least some formal schooling, with only 7% having received no formal schooling. The majority (68%) had either completed matric (35%) or had received some high school education (33%), but only a few respondents (3%) had a university degree. Unfortunately, unemployment was a significant issue

despite most respondents having at least some form of education – almost three-quarters were unemployed. Unemployment was high even amongst respondents with university degrees, with 41% of university graduates unemployed. Wages were also insufficient – even for respondents working full time. Almost 85% of respondents employed full time still struggled to meet their basic needs, and only 15% had an income higher than their basic needs. As a result, almost everyone experienced some form of financial difficulty (91%).

Despite this fairly adequate service provision, and although just over half the people surveyed had food security, a significant number were food insecure. A quarter replied ‘not very often’ when asked if they had enough to eat (25%), 12% reported not having enough to eat once or twice a week, and 5% said they did not have enough to eat three or four times a week.

Most people surveyed had not experienced physical violence. Respondents who had experienced physical violence tended to have experienced it either once or a few times rather than often. The two most common perpetrators for almost all incidents of violence were either a current or a previous partner. Most respondents who experienced physical abuse did not report the incident to the police (66%). However, respondents were more than twice as likely to report an incident to the police than to a family member (the next highest). This may be due to the perpetrator being a family member (where the perpetrator is the current partner) or to a perceived lack of support from family members.

Respondents who reported an incident of attempted rape were far more likely to have experienced an actual rape than any other group (86% of respondents who had experienced an attempted rape also reported having survived an actual rape). People who reported having had a weapon used against them were also far more likely to have experienced an attempted rape (22%) or an actual rape (25%) compared to those who had not had a weapon used against them (4% of whom were also raped). Respondents who had been intimidated or scared were significantly more likely to have also been raped.

Given that most rapes were committed by a current or previous partner, it is likely that partners who attempt rape will succeed in raping their partner eventually if no changes are made. This means that women should immediately seek assistance when they experience attempted rape, as the attempt significantly increases their vulnerability. Personal relationships with the attempted rapist (whether current or prior) appear to have increased the risk of rape rather than decreased it – and no mitigation seems to have prevented an actual rape following an unsuccessful attempt in the vast majority of cases where the respondent remained in a relationship with the attempted rapist. It is important to remember that some people in relationships may not classify a rape by a current partner as rape; some people may not believe that a current partner can rape them regardless of whether they had consented to a sexual act or not.

Most people surveyed had not experienced psychological abuse. However, almost a quarter had suffered humiliation or had been threatened. As with physical and sexual abuse, the primary source of psychological abuse tended to be someone the interviewee knew, likely a previous or current partner, a family member or some other person they knew. Psychological abuse from strangers was relatively rare.



**86%** of respondents who had experienced an **attempted rape** also reported having **survived an actual rape**



## Analysis

The survey was conducted with 2,048 interviewees in all nine provinces. The Western Cape had the least surveyed (83) and the Free State the most (353).

**Table 6: Number of survey respondents by province**

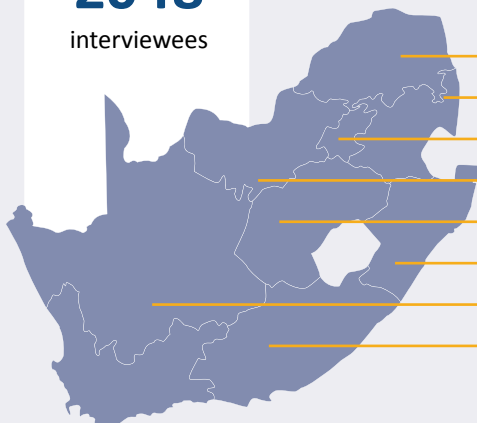
Province	No. respondents
Eastern Cape	196
Free State	353
Gauteng	240
KwaZulu-Natal	347
Limpopo	314
Mpumalanga	111
North West	229
Northern Cape	165
Western Cape	83

Most of the people interviewed were between 18 and 35 years of age, with KwaZulu-Natal having the youngest participants and Limpopo, the oldest average group. The mean age of all interviewees was 39.4 years.

**Table 7: Respondents by age and province**

Age group	EC	FS	GP	KZN	LP	MP	NW	NC	WC
18–35	96	155	163	224	100	36	105	67	30
36–65	77	160	74	109	179	65	106	80	53
>60	23	38	1	14	35	10	18	18	0
<18	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0

A total of  
**2048**  
interviewees



Limpopo (**314**)  
Mpumalanga (**111**)  
Gauteng (**240**)  
North West (**229**)  
Free State (**353**)  
KwaZulu Natal (**347**)  
Northern Cape (**165**)  
Eastern Cape (**196**)



## Households

Women headed most of the households in the survey, and all households included at least one woman (not surprisingly given that the survey was only targeted at women). Houses tended to be brick structures owned by the household, with an average of four rooms (excluding bathrooms). Most households also included children.

Only two people did not know who the head of their household was. The most common answer was that the respondent was the head of the household (806 responses, at 39%), but a quarter responded that their partner was the head of the household (583 responses, at 26%). The third most common response was that some other woman was the head of the household (386). It was almost twice as likely that some other woman was the head of the household compared to some man other than the partner of the interviewee (185). While 30% of households had no men living in them, most had at least one man living there (45%). Almost all households had adult women living in them, with most having either one (38%), two (33%) or three (17%) adult women living in them. On average, households had two women and one man living in them.

Only a small number of people lived in their house alone (5%), with most people living in a house with between two and eight people. The mean average was 4.8 people per household. The majority of people had at least one child living in their household – only 20% had no children living in the household. Most had either one child (25.34%) or two children (24.51%) living in the household; 16% had three children and 14% had four or more children in the household. An average of slightly fewer than two children per household was recorded.

Most respondents lived in brick structures on a separate stand or yard (57%), with 15% living in a house, flat or room in a backyard, and 15% on a farm. Of the 13% of respondents living in an informal dwelling or shack, 8% were on a farm and 6% in an informal settlement. By a significant margin, most people owned the house they were living in (96% of people who owned their house had paid off their bond) when the house was a brick structure on a separate stand or yard (1,100 owned vs 67 rented) or a brick structure on a farm (160 vs 7). Almost everyone living in a traditional dwelling or hut made of traditional materials owned their house (34 vs 2). Of the people surveyed, 38% lived in a house with between one and three rooms (excluding bathrooms), with most respondents living in a house with between four and eight rooms (55%). The average house had four rooms.



## Socio-economic rights

Section 27 of the Constitution lists and describes socio-economic rights. This survey measured access to socio-economic rights via the respondents' access to water, sanitation (type of toilet and collection of refuse), food and type of energy used for cooking and lighting.

**Water:** Most people surveyed accessed water from a tap (89%), with only a small number collecting it from an alternative source (10%). Most respondents accessing water from a tap got it from a tap in their yard (67%) or in their house (22%); 11% used a tap outside their yard. Respondents who did not use a tap and collected their water instead usually collected the water from a water tank (67%) or a water vendor (19%), with 11% collecting their water from a river, three people from a dam or pool, and only one person from a spring.

**Sanitation:** Access to sanitation was measured by household refuse collection and the primary type of toilet. A local authority or private company collected the refuse of 52% of people surveyed, 39% disposed of their refuse themselves and 8% did not have their refuse collected or disposed of. The vast majority of refuse collection took place at least once a week (98%). Respondents who disposed of their own refuse either did so in their own dump (59%), on the street (23%) or in a communal refuse dump (18%).

The primary type of toilet **used** by those surveyed was a flush toilet connected to a sewerage system (52%; 4% connected instead to a septic tank), followed by pit toilets

(19% used a toilet without ventilation and 12% with ventilation). A dry toilet was used by 7% of respondents and only 3% used a bucket toilet system.

**Food:** Access to food was determined by the question, 'How many times a week do members of your household not have enough to eat?'. Over half of people surveyed answered that they always had enough to eat (52%), 6% said that they had enough to eat 'most of the time', a quarter answered that they did not have enough to eat 'not very often' (25%). Of the respondents, 12% did not have enough to eat once or twice a week, and 5% said that they did not have enough to eat three or four times a week.



### Education

Most people surveyed had completed at least some formal schooling (92%), with only 7% having received none. The majority (68%) had either completed matric (35%) or had received some high school education (33%). Only a relatively small number of people surveyed had a university degree (3%) or had received some university, technical college or post-matric education (9%). Participants were therefore almost twice as likely to have received no formal schooling as to have completed a university degree.

Respondents with a university degree were more likely than any other group to have an income higher than their basic needs but still struggled (20%), with more than half having just enough income to meet their basic needs (53%). Just over a quarter of respondents with a university degree did not receive sufficient income to cover their basic needs (26%).



### Income

Income was measured by asking participants whether their incomes were sufficient to cover all their daily needs (giving examples of food, clothing, housing, education, health, etc.). Most people interviewed (91%) experienced financial difficulties (just enough or too little to meet basic needs), with 36% having just enough and 55% having insufficient income for their basic needs. Few participants had an income higher than their basic needs (6%). The financial difficulties and uncertainties experienced by almost all participants have implications beyond the household. People struggling to meet their needs should be considered vulnerable as they are unlikely to be able to save for retirement or cope with a sudden and unexpected expense (such as a funeral or medical expense). In addition, people with less money are also more likely to take on potentially unsecured debt and be less able to support local businesses, which may further reduce the number of well-paying jobs in the area.

Combined with the survey results on education, it appears that it is extremely difficult for most of those surveyed to easily generate income sufficient to meet their basic needs regardless of their education level. This means that most people surveyed are financially precarious, which has implications for their vulnerability and ability to meet their basic needs.



### Employment

Almost three times as many people surveyed were unemployed (73%) compared to employed respondents (26%). Of those working, 66% were working full-time and 34% were employed part time. Most people surveyed were looking for a job (49%). Although respondents with a university degree were more likely to be employed in a full-time (47%) or part-time (12%) job, they still struggled financially. Almost 85% of respondents employed full time still struggled to meet their basic needs, with only 15% having an income higher than their basic needs. Even those with the most advanced schooling struggled to find employment given that 41% of the respondents with university degrees were unemployed.

The primary reason for respondents not seeking employment was old age (56%), followed by not being able to work or study (13% each), looking after children (11%) and no jobs being available (6%).



### Relationships

Most people surveyed were in a relationship (64%) and living with their partner (57%). The majority of respondents had at least one child (85%), with the most common number being one or two children. Most people interviewed said they did not use contraception (55%). Those who did tended to either make the choice themselves (77%) or with their partner (20%); only 1% had their partner decide for them or had someone else make the decision (1%).



### Psychological abuse

The survey considered a number of different forms of psychological abuse, including humiliation. A quarter (26%) of people surveyed reported that someone had publicly humiliated them in the past twelve months. Of these, 12% reported that their current partner had humiliated them and 12% said it had been their previous partner. Family members (20%) and some other person (40%) were also reported as having been responsible for the humiliation.

In terms of intimidation, 18% of people surveyed said that someone had intentionally scared or intimidated them. Intimidation tended to happen more than once. Although 36% said they had experienced it only once, 45% of the respondents said they had experienced intimidation a few times, and 17% often. The intimidation was most likely perpetrated by someone the interviewee knew, such as their current partner (13%), a family member (15%), a previous partner (18%) or some other person they knew (32%).

In addition to intimidation, the survey also asked if someone had verbally threatened to hurt the interviewee or someone they cared about. While most participants said they had not been threatened, almost a quarter (23%) had been verbally threatened. Those who had been threatened tended to be threatened more than a few times (49%) or often (17%). However, 32% of respondents had only been threatened once. As with the previous questions, the primary source of verbal threats was from someone that the interviewee knew – either a previous partner (20%), a family member (19%), their current partner (15%) or some other person that they knew (31%). Strangers had only threatened 9% of interviewees.

Only a relatively small number of people who had experienced psychological abuse reported it to the police (15%). Of these reported incidents, the police opened a case 48% of the time. Incidents of psychological abuse reported to police resulted in the perpetrator being prosecuted and convicted only 4% of the time, with 17% of reported cases still being investigated and 18% closed without an arrest.

Besides to the police, incidents of psychological abuse were reported to community leaders, family members, medical professionals, therapists and civil society organisations (CSOs).



### Safety

Participants were asked how safe they felt walking alone in their neighbourhood. Of those who felt safe, 19% felt mostly safe and 31% very safe. Almost a quarter of respondents said they felt unsafe, with an additional quarter saying that they felt very unsafe. Some people said they felt safe despite also reporting they had been raped by a stranger. The number of people who felt very safe compared to those who felt very unsafe was almost completely unaffected by whether the respondent had reported being raped by a stranger.

**Table 8: Reporting of psychological abuse and most useful support**

Contacted	No. 'Yes' responses	The most useful type of support provided
<b>Community leader</b>	<b>42</b>	Sixteen people found emotional support very useful (11) or somewhat useful (5). Two people found legal assistance to be very useful, and two people found shelter and other support to be very useful.  Community leaders appear to be most effective when providing counselling/emotional support.
<b>CSO</b>	<b>84</b>	Most people (65%) found counselling/emotional support from CSOs very useful and 6% found it somewhat useful; 14% found legal assistance very useful.  Based on this, CSOs are most effective when providing counselling/emotional and legal support.
<b>Family member</b>	<b>158</b>	Most people found family members very useful (30%) or somewhat useful (11%). Family members were also very useful to six people in providing financial support, shelter, and other support to eleven people.
<b>Medical professional</b>	<b>11</b>	Four people found medical professionals very useful when providing counselling/emotional support; two people found them somewhat useful. Two reported that legal assistance was very useful, and two said emotional support was very useful.
<b>Therapist</b>	<b>26</b>	Most people (31%) found therapists very useful when providing counselling/emotional support.



### Physical abuse

The survey questions covered a number of different kinds of physical abuse: hitting, throwing something, pushing, shoving, pulling hair, kicking or dragging, choking or burning, using a gun, knife or other weapon.

Table 9 shows that the reported violence was most commonly perpetrated by the current or previous partner of the interviewee (intimate partner violence). Violence of the types specified in the table was almost never committed by someone that the interviewee did not know.

Physical abuse cases reported to the police resulted in the police opening a case 61% of the time. When the police opened a case, the case resulted in an arrest 21% of the time (excluding when the respondent did not know or did not answer as to the case's progress). When a perpetrator was arrested and prosecuted, the perpetrator was convicted 67% of the time. However, only a very small number of reported incidents successfully reached the conviction stage (6).

Table 9: Type of physical violence by frequency and perpetrator

Type of physical violence	% 'Yes' response	Frequency	Two most common perpetrators
Hit you or threw an object that could hurt you	15%	Once (45%) A few times (39%) Often (15%)	Current partner (28%) Previous partner (25%)
Pushed you, shoved you or pulled your hair	13%	Once (42%) A few times (38%) Often (17%)	Current partner (30%) Previous partner (25%)
Hit you with their fist or some other object that could hurt you	13%	Once (42%) A few times (39%) Often (18%)	Current partner (28%) Previous partner (27.6%)
Kicked you or dragged you	10%	Once (38%) A few times (38%) Often (22%)	Previous partner (36%) Current partner (32%)
Choked or burnt you	5%	Once (52%) A few times (29%) Often (16%)	Current and previous partner (both 30%)
Used a gun, knife or other weapon against you	10%	Once (62%) A few times (26%) Often (10%)	Previous partner (21%) Some other person I know (18%)

Table 10: Reporting of physical abuse and most useful support

Contacted	No. 'Yes' responses	The most useful type of support provided
Community leader	10	Counselling/emotional support/legal assistance was reported as very useful by 60% of those who had contacted a community leader.
CSO	38	Counselling/emotional support/legal assistance from a CSO was reported as very useful by twenty-one people (55%) and somewhat useful by five people.
Family member	81	The majority of people (62%) found support from family members very useful, 23% found it somewhat useful, 10% found it not very useful, and 4% found it to be of no use at all.
Medical professional	1	The one person who received support from a medical professional rated that support as being very useful.
Therapist	14	Most people (57%) who received support from a therapist found the support to be very useful, 21% did not find the support very useful, and 14% found it of no use at all.

Most people who sought assistance from CSOs after they had experienced physical abuse believed the assistance to be very useful (23 people out of the 38 who had received assistance from CSOs). The majority of people who received assistance from CSOs felt that the assistance they received was at least somewhat useful (79%). Legal assistance and counselling/emotional support were the most useful services provided by CSOs; everyone who received counselling/emotional support was satisfied. However, half of those who received legal assistance (4 out of 8) were not satisfied with the legal assistance received. To increase the effectiveness of CSOs in addressing physical violence, CSOs should receive additional training in providing legal assistance.



### Sexual violence

The survey considers sexual violence through two questions: 'In the past twelve months, has anyone attempted, but NOT succeeded, to force you to have sex of any form against your will?' and 'In the past twelve months, has anyone forced you to have sex of any form against your will?'

Most people surveyed had not experienced an attempted rape (91%). Of those who had, most had experienced one attempted rape (66%). A quarter of respondents who had experienced an attempted rape had done so a few times, and only a small number had experienced a rape attempt often (8%).

Perpetrators attempting rape were fairly evenly distributed between current partners (24%), previous partners (23%), strangers (23%), some other person that they knew (19%) or family members (16%). This means that participants were far more likely to report experiencing attempted rape from someone they knew (partner, previous partner or family member) than from a stranger (82% vs 23%). Given that most attempted rapes happened only once and that the person most likely to have committed the attempted rape was known to the interviewee, it is likely that the interviewee had a successful strategy for avoiding the person after the attempted rape. It is alarming that almost a quarter of the respondents had experienced an attempted rape from their current partner but still considered themselves to be in a relationship with that person.

Most people surveyed reported that they had not been raped in the past twelve months (93%). As with attempted rape, perpetrators of actual rape tended to be known to the person – only 13% of reported rapes were committed by a stranger. Respondents were most likely to be raped by their current partner (28%), a previous partner (25%) or some other person that they knew (22%).



### Gender-based violence

The survey also collected information on gender-based violence (GBV). Of the people surveyed, only 76% said that they could refuse sexual intercourse if they wanted to. Of the 6% who said they had been raped in the past year, most (49%) said that the rape had taken place once, but 39% said that they had been raped frequently. Most victims of rape in the survey had been raped by someone they knew (87%), with the majority having been raped by their current partner (28%), their previous partner (25%) or by a family member (6%); only 13% had been raped by a stranger. With respect to attempted rape, 8% had survived an attempted rape, with 66% of these respondents having experienced one rape attempt and 25% multiple attempts.

When people reported the incident to the police, a case was opened 66% of the time. The results of opened cases are unpacked in Table 11.

Of the eleven incidents reported to the police that resulted in the perpetrator being arrested, six resulted in a perpetrator being prosecuted and convicted, two in the perpetrator being prosecuted and not convicted, and three were still awaiting trial.


This means that of the 138 people who acknowledged being raped in the past twelve months, fifty incidents were reported to the police, resulting in six successful prosecutions (three still awaiting trial), a conviction success rate of 13%.


**Table 11: Results of cases against GBV perpetrators**

Closed without arrest	10
Still being investigated	9
Perpetrator arrested	11
Interviewee did not know	1
Interviewee did not answer	2



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