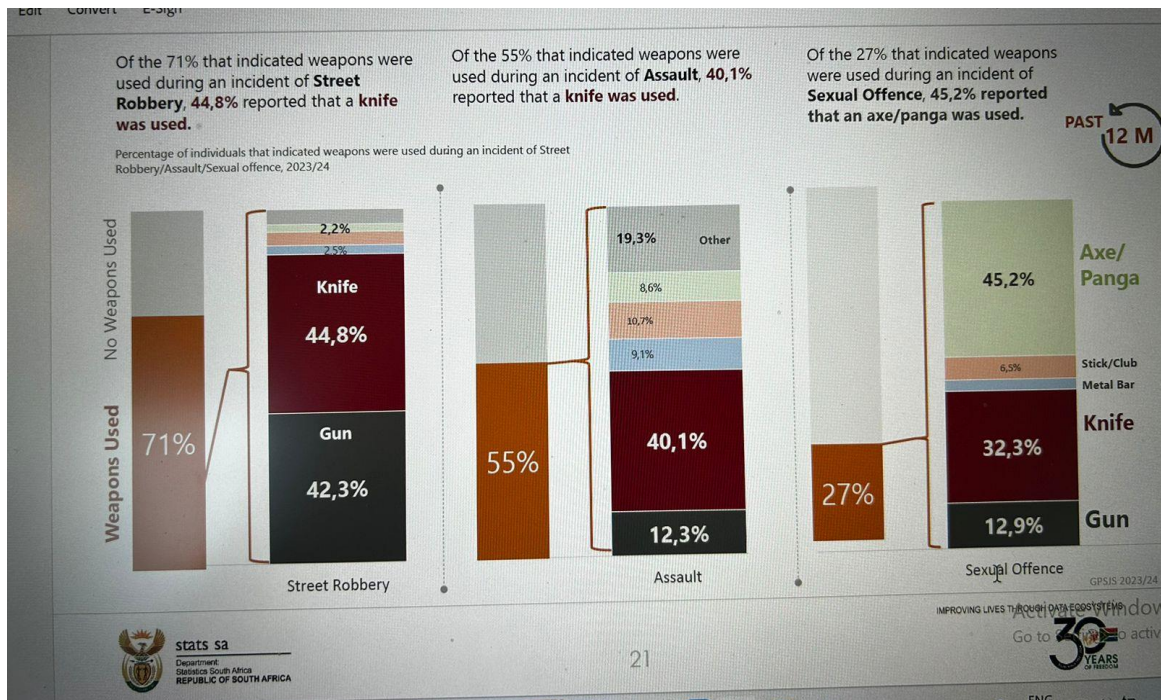


Knives, Not Guns: The Real Weapon of Choice in South African Crime

South Africans are no strangers to crime, and for years, the government has consistently pushed the narrative that guns are the biggest threat to public safety. However, the latest data from Statistics South Africa paints a very different picture, one that challenges this widespread belief. While firearms are certainly involved in violent crimes, the most common weapon used in incidents of street robbery, assault, and even sexual offences is not the gun, but the knife.

What the Data Shows



Street Robbery:

- In 71% of reported street robberies, a weapon was used.
 - **Knife:** 44.8% of incidents.
 - **Gun:** 42.3% of incidents.
 - **No Weapon:** 29% of incidents.

Assault:

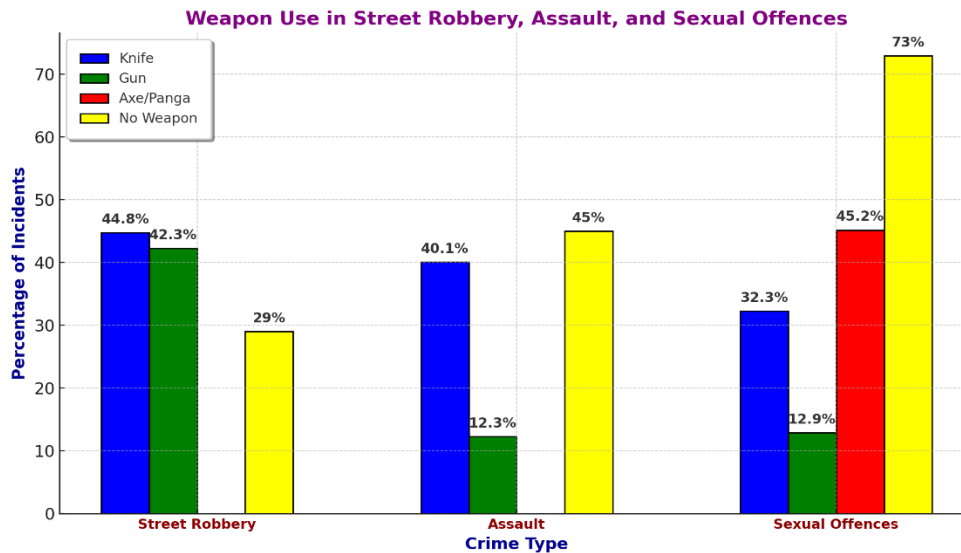
- In 55% of reported assaults, a weapon was used.
 - **Knife:** 40.1% of incidents.
 - **Gun:** 12.3% of incidents.
 - **No Weapon:** 45% of incidents.

Sexual Offences:

- In 27% of reported sexual offence cases, a weapon was used.
 - **Axe/Panga:** 45.2% of incidents.

- **Knife:** 32.3% of incidents.
- **Gun:** 12.9% of incidents.
- **No Weapon:** 73% of incidents.

Below is a simplified representation of the data.



These additional percentages highlight the fact that a significant number of violent crimes occur even without the use of weapons.

These numbers suggest that the knife, and not the firearm, is the weapon of choice in a significant number of violent crimes. This isn't to downplay the use of firearms in crime, but the statistics indicate that knives and other sharp objects pose a greater and more immediate threat in specific types of violent crime.

Implications of the Data

For years, government and certain advocacy groups have focused almost entirely on firearm control, arguing that guns are the root cause of our violent crime crisis. Firearm amnesty programs, and increasingly stringent regulations on legal firearm ownership have been key components of the government's strategy. Yet, these efforts seem to overlook the fact that criminals are just as likely—if not more likely—to use knives or other readily available weapons to commit violent crimes.

The data on street robberies is particularly telling. Despite the common perception that gun-related crimes dominate, **44.8%** of street robberies involved a knife, marginally outpacing the use of firearms.

Moreover, with **40.1%** of assaults involving a knife, the data highlights how easily accessible weapons, like knives, contribute to the country's violence problem.

In the case of sexual offences, the use of weapons like axes, pangas, and knives is even more striking. These weapons are arguably more brutal, often inflicting severe harm

The Gun Control Narrative: A Convenient Scapegoat?

For years, firearm owners and organisations like SAGA have argued that legal, responsible gun ownership is not the problem. The real issue lies with illegal firearms and, as this data suggests, the widespread use of other dangerous weapons.

Targeting only firearms, while leaving out the broader variety of violent weapons used in assaults and robberies, gives the government a convenient scapegoat but does little to improve public safety.

Moving Forward: The Case for Balanced Policy

This data reinforces the argument that focusing exclusively on guns as the source of violence will not solve South Africa's crime problem. Crime in this country is more complex, and other dangerous weapons play a significant role in the violence that plagues our society. Instead of simply demonizing firearms, a more balanced and nuanced approach to crime prevention is needed—one that addresses the root causes of violence, and doesn't vilify responsible gun owners.

The latest crime statistics from Stats SA make one thing clear: it's time for the government to re-evaluate its approach. Guns are not the only, or even the most prevalent, problem in violent crime. South Africa deserves better solutions, and that starts with confronting the facts.