



Opinion Piece – 15 July 2024

Women & Firearms

by Jayne Lyle, SAGA member & representative

Pro Gun, Pro Women

1. Gender Based Violence

Gender Based Violence and violence against women and children is an evil and unacceptable scourge of our society. Shockingly 25-40% of South African women have experienced physical or sexual abuse in their lifetimes (*Saferspaces.org.za*).

South Africa is the rape capital of the world, officially reporting 135 rapes per day (Ian Cameron, 2024) however research findings suggest only 15%-49% or on average 1 in 3 rapes are even reported!

South Africa has one of the highest rates of violence against women and girls in the world, with a femicide rate that is 500% of the global average! (*Ian Cameron, Firearms.co.za – August 2021*). This is not only disgusting it's completely unacceptable by any measure.

Amy-Claire Moutin, an analyst with the Institute of Race Relations (*IRR*), argued that banning firearms will only make things worse for women (*BizNews, June 2021*).

2. Firearms as an Equalizer

In the violent society that is modern South Africa today, some critical factors need to be considered:

1. A firearm allows a woman to fight above her weight class and not fear men that are usually physically bigger than she is.
2. An armed woman is more likely to kill than to be killed by the attacker.
3. An armed woman is 77% less likely to be raped.
4. Firearm owners are ONLY 30% as likely to be robbed.
5. Firearm owners are ONLY 17% as likely to be harmed during a robbery IF you are able to fight back.

3. Skills & Training

Women can level the playing field by being armed and trained. The process starts with understanding the legalities of owning a firearm and progresses to proficiency, competency and then licencing.

Training is so important; it is empowering, reduces the perceived risk and danger of firearms, and can be very exciting. Training should include being aware of the situation around you and correct operation of a firearm, and can then progress to intermediate and advanced levels including using a firearm in structures, anti-hijack

and counter ambush situations plus long-range precision shooting, if there is an interest.

Understanding the legality of a situation and having solid medical emergency skills should form the foundation of any training, whether you own a firearm or not! It's particularly important for those women with families and children – you are your own first responder.

The choice of a good firearm instructor and training facility is all important. It can be initially daunting for a woman, in a male dominated industry. Fortunately, South Africa boasts some of the best self-defence and firearms instructors to be found in the world and the firearms community is always willing to share knowledge through their networks. SAGA is a big supporter of women shooters and I have had the privilege to have been involved in supporting and organising such events over the years. It's awesome to have fellow women on the line all enjoying and learning together.

4. Firearms & Children

Women – and mothers especially – are concerned about firearms around their children, and this is one of the first questions they ask about firearms ownership. It all comes down to education and teaching children how to respond when confronted with a firearm. As mothers we are protective of our children and will defend them no matter what. After all, we teach our children about all sorts of dangers; about dealing with strangers, about fire, electricity, water and street smarts and more so why would we not also teach them about firearms?

The rules for children are simple, and something SAGA actively promotes:

1. If you come across a firearm DON'T touch it.
2. MOVE AWAY, and
3. CALL a responsible adult.

With firearms in the house, mothers should start teaching their children about firearm safety from the earliest age because it's less about them being exposed to a firearm in your home or at a responsible firearm owners house, and more about what they are likely to come across when they out with their friends.

5. Summary

As a woman, daughter, mother, grandmother, or spouse, why on earth (and especially in South Africa) would you not want to be legally armed and trained?

There is a misperception among many people that guns kill. Let's all wake up to the reality of life in South Africa! It is the criminal that violates your personal space and who attacks you, these are the rapists and killers, NOT the GUNS! A firearm remains a tool, it does not kill, hurt or maim and owning a firearm could be the only reason you "Live to Tell the Story".

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