

URBAN PREDATORS

An analysis of gang rapes reported at six inner-city Johannesburg police stations

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We wish to thank those members of the Crime Information Analysis Centre (CIAC) of the South African Police Service who assisted us with gathering data for this study.

Little is known about rape involving multiple perpetrators in South Africa. This policy brief, a quantitative analysis of 162 rapes (both attempted and completed) reported at six police stations in Johannesburg during 1999 and involving two or more perpetrators, outlines and describes a variety of features associated with such rapes. It also explores what differences, if any, exist between rapes involving one assailant and those with multiple assailants, and provides some recommendations aimed at combating gang rape.

Findings from existing research around gang rape in South Africa

Approximately one in ten sexual assaults reported in the USA involve multiple perpetrators (Greenfeld, undated in Krug et al., 2002). In comparison, Statistics South Africa's national *Victims of crime survey* calculated that 12% of rapes reported in their study involved two or more perpetrators (Hirschowitz, Worku and Orkin, 2000) while a study of 1 401 rapes registered between 1996 – 1998 at Hillbrow Hospital, Lenasia South Hospital and Chris Hani Baragwaneth (CHB) Hospital found 27% to have involved two or more perpetrators (Swart et al., 2000). Both sets of writers caution against generalising their findings, however. Statistics South Africa notes that not only was their sample size small, but the study was also designed to be a general survey on crime rather than a study about rape specifically. Swart et al.'s study required staff at the three health facilities to complete data collection sheets for each rape survivor examined. Reluctance on the part of the staff to do so resulted in uneven inclusion of cases at the three sites.

Both studies, then, may well have underestimated the incidence of gang rape.

The proportion of gang rapes reported to the police as opposed to those that are not is also unknown. CIETAfrica's research undertaken in the south of Johannesburg found that women were considerably less likely to report gang rape than single perpetrator rape. In their study, only 30% of women who were gang raped reported the attack to the police in comparison with the approximately 70% of women who reported being raped by one perpetrator (Andersson et al., 1998).

Information about what motivates men to rape in pairs or groups is no less scanty. Anecdotal evidence suggests gang rape may be used as a form of punishment by the friends/acquaintances of men whose girlfriends are suspected or known to have other partners (Wood, Maforah and Jewkes, 1996). Other writers have suggested that it may be used to put "unattainable" women in their place (Mokwena, 1991). Within the Western Cape, participation in gang rape may function as a means of initiating young men into gangs (Marianne Merten, 'What makes boys rape like this?' *Weekly Mail and Guardian*, 2 July, 1999). It has also been alleged that some young women's entry into gang-controlled prostitution follows their rape by gang members (Heather Robertson, 'Girls in gangland' *Elle*, June, 1996).

These various examples suggest that rape by multiple perpetrators may be further distinguished by the degree of formality or structure present in the group, as well as the group's involvement in other criminal activities. Wood et al.'s (1996) example suggests that some gang rapes may be committed by groups of men who are only loosely or temporarily affiliated with one another and who may engage in no other criminal activities, while the examples from the Western Cape point to how rape may be but one of a range of illegal activities that organised criminal gangs engage in (Nott, Shapiro and Theron, 1990; Pinnock, 1984). Mokwena's (1991) study of the jackrollers also highlights how some

gangs may have originally engaged in a range of criminal activities but changed their activities over time in order to focus solely on rape.

A number of writers have theorised that gang rape is closely related to heightened masculinity and masculine aggression (Vogelman, 1990; Reeves Sanday, 1990; Scully, 1990), with Benedict (in Erhart and Sandler, 1985) contending that the motivation for men who rape in groups is somewhat different from that of the man who rapes on his own. She argues that "Boys gang-rape for each other, in a kind of frenzied machismo, to prove themselves, to show off, to be part of a gang, or, at best, out of fear of being ostracised if they don't" (ibid: 7). In acting together, the group develops a common sense of masculinity and power, which may reduce their inhibitions as well as diminish individual feelings of responsibility (Erhart and Sandler, 1985).

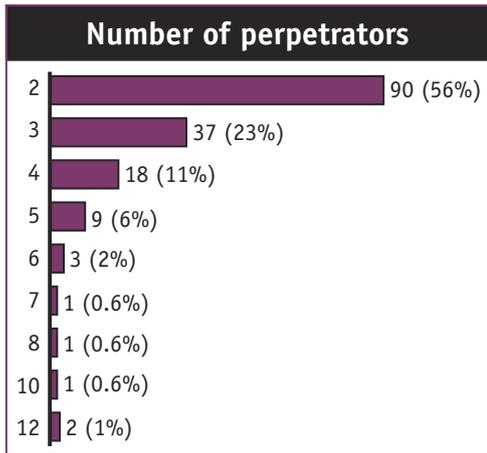
Methodology for this study

This small-scale study was retrospective, and focused on all cases of rape and attempted rape reported by complainants 12 years old or older at six central Johannesburg police stations during 1999. These six stations were Hillbrow, Central Johannesburg, Yeoville, Brixton, Booyens and Jeppe. A total of 591 such cases were identified and data extracted from police dockets according to a standardised, pre-tested data capture sheet. Of this number, a smaller sub-set of 162 cases involving two or more perpetrators was identified and analysed using the statistical package SPSS. Findings from these 162 cases are presented in this policy brief.

In this study we have used the terms 'multiple' and 'gang' interchangeably. Both terms refer to rapes involving at least two perpetrators. We also further distinguished between rapes committed by men in pairs (strictly speaking, too small a number to constitute a gang) and men in groups, the latter term describing rapes committed by three or more men.

Victim walking when car with three suspects stopped, forced her into

Findings



In three out of the 591 cases the number of rapists was unknown. Of the remaining 588, just over one in four (or 27%) of all rapes reported at these six police stations during 1999 involved two or more perpetrators.

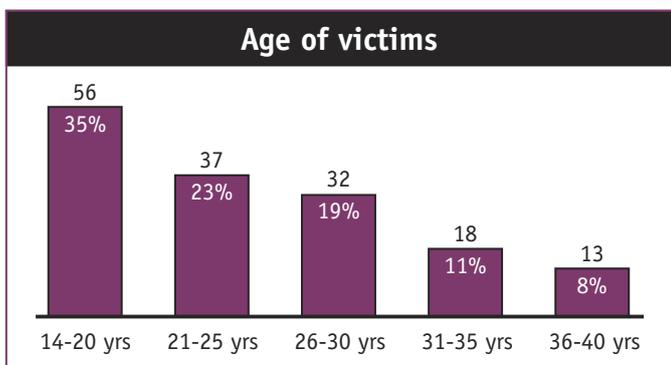
The majority of gang rape cases involved two perpetrators (56%) and in two cases there were as many as 12. Of the 162 cases, nine were recorded as attempted rape. Nine cases also involved more than one victim.

Distribution of multiple rapes by police station

Station	% of single perpetrator rapes (n = 426)	% of multiple perpetrator rapes (n = 162)
Hillbrow	138 (32%)	59 (36%)
JHB Central	99 (23%)	35 (22%)
Jeppe	57 (13%)	11 (7%)
Booyens	57 (13%)	25 (15%)
Brixton	28 (7%)	12 (7%)
Yeoville	25 (6%)	9 (6%)
Unknown	22 (6%)	11 (7%)

More than one in three multiple perpetrator rapes were recorded at Hillbrow station as opposed to 1 in 18 recorded at Yeoville. Generally, the proportion of multiple rapes reported at each police station was similar to the proportion of single perpetrator rapes. The proportion of multiple rapes reported at Jeppe Station, however, was almost half that of single perpetrator rapes reported.

Age of victims



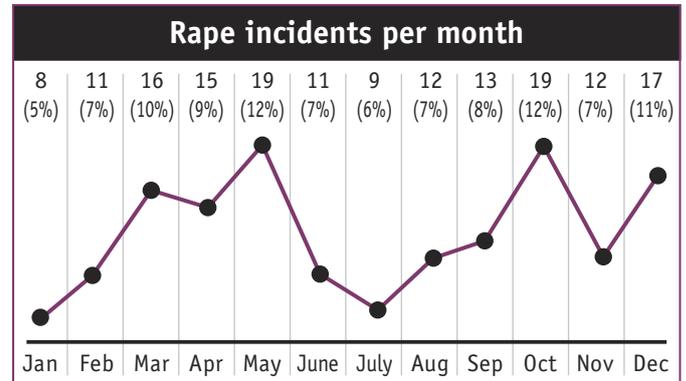
Nearly six in ten of all rape victims were 25 years old or younger. The youngest victim was 14 and the oldest 60 years old. The average age of victims was 25.

Victim-perpetrator relationships

Of the rapes committed by multiple perpetrators, only one in ten of these involved perpetrators known to the victim. An ex-boyfriend was included amongst the perpetrators in one case, while in a further 8% of cases at least one of the perpetrators was known by sight and/or was an acquaintance.

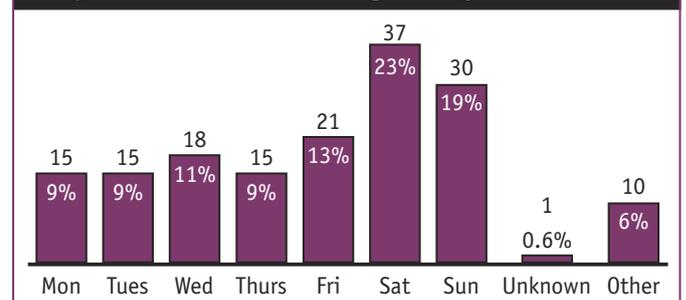
These figures stand in contrast to the figures for single perpetrator rapes, where just short of 50% of assailants were known either intimately by their victims (as either current or former partners) or by sight.

When rapes were most likely to occur



The greatest proportion of incidents was reported in May (12%) and October (12%), closely followed by December (11%). Incidents of multiple rape peaked during the summer months, with 37% of the total number of incidents reported during this period. Fewer cases were reported during the winter months of June, July and August – only 22% of the total number of rapes involving multiple perpetrators.

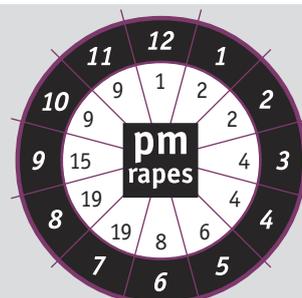
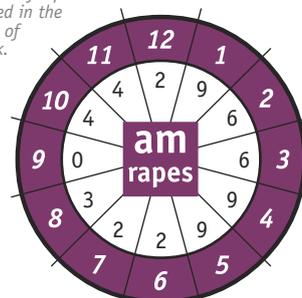
Rape incidents according to day of the week



Approximately 41% of rapes involving multiple perpetrators occurred over the weekend.

Number of rapes reported during a 24-hour period

The number of rapes is indicated in the inner ring of each clock.



Gang rape is most likely to happen at night, particularly during the hours between 7 – 9pm. Approximately 33% of the rapes were committed during this period. The time of 5% of the rapes was unknown.

the car at gun-point, then took her to the veld where they raped her.

Describing the rape

This section describes how multiple rapes were committed and highlights differences between single perpetrator rapes and those committed by pairs or groups of rapists.

The greatest proportion of women (41%) gang-raped were walking at the time of the attack. In a further 11% of cases the victim was socialising, and in 10% of cases waiting at a transport node. In 4% of cases the victim was sleeping, and in a further 3% the victim was at home when she was attacked. By contrast, only 21% of victims of single perpetrator rape were walking prior to being raped and 15% were socialising. A further 11% were sleeping and 17% were engaged in routine household activities in their homes.

Most women, regardless of the type of rape, were not raped where they first encountered their rapist(s). In nearly two-thirds of all types of rapes, victims were taken to another spot and then raped there. In one rape involving a pair of men the victim was abducted from Durban in KwaZulu-Natal and brought to Johannesburg by the two suspects, who then also kept her captive for a few days.

In 20% of cases of gang rape the perpetrators deceived the woman into voluntarily accompanying them to the site of the rape by pretending to know a friend or family member, or offering the victim employment or transport. More frequently, the rapists simply descended upon or surrounded the woman prior to abducting and/or raping her.

Location of the rapes

Significant differences between single perpetrator rapes and multiple perpetrator rapes emerged in an analysis of where the rapes took place. Approximately 36% of multiple rapes occurred in a 'private' space, such as a residence or, less commonly, a workplace. In contrast, 66% of the single perpetrator rapes occurred in a private place. Further, 16% of women raped by single perpetrators were attacked in their homes as opposed to 7% of women assaulted by multiple rapists. With only one exception, victims attacked in their homes by multiple perpetrators were also the victims of housebreaking.

Where gang rapes took place

Public space	%
Unknown (unanswered)	39%
Open area	31%
Roads and alley ways	11%
Transport node (bus stop, taxi rank, train station)	8%
Places of recreation	4%
Petrol station	3%
Other	3%
Public toilet	2%

The greatest proportion of gang rapes occurred in public spaces, with 31% taking place in open spaces like parks, stretches of veld and parking areas. Notably, of the 18 gang rapes that took place in parks, 11 of these were situated within a two-kilometre radius of one another within Hillbrow, Joubert Park, Berea and Yeoville.

What happened during the rapes

In 15% of gang rape cases, the rape was preceded by one of the perpetrators demanding sex from the victim. The rape followed her refusal. Within this category we included the rape of a sex worker who went to a room for business with one client and was then confronted by other suspects who demanded sex. In a further 7% of gang rape cases the incident occurred in the context of another crime such as housebreaking or robbery.

Victim walking home when seven suspects grabbed her, forced her to a park where they raped her.

Victim walking when car with three suspects stopped, forced her into the car at gun-point, then took her to the veld where they raped her.

These were the two scenarios most typical of gang rape, with the use of force increasing with the number of perpetrators involved in the rape. Of the rapes involving one perpetrator, one in two (52%) victims reported the use of force. Of the 90 cases involving two perpetrators, 72% reported the use of force, while of the 72 cases involving three or more perpetrators, 83% reported the use of force.

In 40% of gang rape cases the perpetrators were armed, usually with either guns (21%) or knives (17%). While the weapon was primarily used to threaten the victim, in 14% of cases it was used both to threaten and hurt the victim. The study found that the greater the number of rapists involved, the greater the likelihood that at least one of the assailants was armed. Approximately one in four of the lone perpetrators were armed, compared to one in three of the rapist pairs and one in two of the rapist groups. The use of guns was also most likely in cases involving group rapists. Fourteen percent of both the lone and pair rapists were armed with guns, compared to 25% of the group rapists.

The majority of victims (59%) were dragged, pushed or shoved to the site of the rape, with a further 29% taken by car. Use of cars was most common in cases involving three or more perpetrators. In 40% of such cases the victim was abducted by car, as opposed to 20% of cases involving two perpetrators, and 19% of cases involving one perpetrator.

In 6% of gang rapes not all perpetrators raped the victim, although they participated in abducting or tricking her. They either appeared to play the role of observer during the rape or, less frequently, left once the rape had begun. Another variation on this scenario was the 3% of cases that initially involved only one or two perpetrators who were then subsequently joined by other men, as this extract from a police docket illustrates:

Victim was walking home from her boyfriend's workplace. Two males followed her and forced her to accompany them to a building where lots of people were staying. Both perpetrators raped her once. One perpetrator raped her a second time. Thereafter she was again raped by the initial two perpetrators and once by six perpetrators.

Boyfriends and gang rape

In 7% of the gang rape cases the victim's boyfriend was present at some point during the attack. In five of these cases he ran away at the outset, and in a sixth was tied up and left in another room while the rape took place. In another four cases he was made a bystander to the rape. The facts of the remaining four cases suggest that the boyfriend may have been complicit with the rape in some way. For example, in one such case, the victim was with her boyfriend when the two suspects began arguing with her, before forcing her into a room where they raped her. The boyfriend took no steps to intervene on her behalf. In another case, involving an ex-boyfriend this time, the victim was assaulted and raped by both him and two of his friends at her home.

Victim got into taxi, driver told her he needed to drop off another passenger. He then drove to a park where he and the passenger forced her out of the taxi and both raped her.

This scenario described four rapes, all of which involved only two perpetrators – the driver and a male passenger.

Finally, there was also at least one case that appeared to involve a female accomplice. This 'friend' invited the victim to her house and on her arrival, announced to the three rapists that she had brought them someone for the night.

Means used to avoid detection

Perpetrators in gang rapes did not often attempt to conceal their identities. In only nine cases the victim's eyes were covered; in four cases her clothes were removed or destroyed (though it is unclear whether this was done to avoid detection or to rob the victim); and in seven cases the perpetrators used a condom (thus ensuring that no semen was available to be analysed for DNA evidence). In nine cases the victim was gagged to prevent her from calling for help.

Outcome of case

Fourteen of the 162 gang rape cases went to court. Only one resulted in a conviction, with the others being either withdrawn by the court or resulting in acquittals. A further 10 cases were either withdrawn by the police (one case) or the victim (6% of cases). No perpetrators were ever arrested in the remainder of the cases.

Concluding discussion and recommendations

As so many women were raped while walking or waiting for or using public transport, this study highlights how gang rape significantly diminishes women's freedom of movement. It also points to the predatory nature of rape committed by men in pairs or groups, with men either lying in wait for the woman unfortunate enough to cross their path, or actively driving about seeking a victim to abduct. The study revealed that men who raped in pairs or groups were also frequently strangers to their victims, typically attacked their victims in public spaces, and were also most likely to use force and weapons against them. Masculine entitlement also appeared evident in some instances, with some men attacking and raping their victim in response to her "no" to their sexual demands.

Apart from the small number of cases that occurred during incidents of housebreaking, it was difficult to say whether or not the men in this study were part of organised criminal gang structures. While the abduction of women by groups of armed men bore some resemblance to Mokwena's "jackrollers" of the late 1980s and early 1990s, it is impossible to say whether or not the particular cases recorded by our study were examples of jackrolling.

Recommendations

While this study provides some preliminary indication of patterns present in gang rape, further research, particularly in smaller rural and peri-urban areas, is required to confirm and extend our findings. Interviews with perpetrators of gang rape would also increase our understanding of the dynamics underpinning such rapes, and what steps could be taken to prevent them.

Our findings also point to the need for the introduction of innovative safety measures to better secure women's freedom of movement. These might include:

- setting up CCTV cameras at public transport nodes, as well as increasing security in these areas – particularly during the early hours of the morning as well as the evening and over weekends;
- increasing security and lighting in parks at night and over weekends; and
- carrying out targeted police patrolling, particularly at night and over weekends, in areas surrounding public transport nodes that women commonly use on their way to and from home.



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