

# Some Insights about Gender-Based Violence in the Gauteng City-Region (GCR)

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## Abstract

The article draws on a specific slice of data about gender-based violence from a recent Quality of Life (QoL) survey conducted amongst 16,729 respondents in Gauteng. While gender-based violence comes in multiple forms, the focus of the survey was on spousal or partner violence. The survey posed a provocative statement to respondents about the circumstances under which a man is justified in hitting or beating his wife/partner, i.e. if she goes out without telling him; if she doesn't look after the children; if she argues with him; if she refuses to have sex with him; if she burns the food; and if she is unfaithful. This article explores the extent to which particular attributes of respondents (sex, race, income, education, participation of men/women; as well as participation in civil society organisations) may account for views that spouse/partner beating or hitting is justified. One finding of interest was that the gender-based violence question 'if she is unfaithful' received the strongest response across all the socio-economic characteristics that were evaluated.

## Keywords

Gender-based Violence; Quality of Life; South Africa; Gauteng

## Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) is recognised as one of the most serious and pervasive human rights violations which compromises the physical and emotional health of women and harms families, communities and broader society (Fischbach and Herbert, 1997; Heise, et al., 2002). GBV includes a range of harmful behaviours directed at women and girls because of their sex and/or gender. Specifically, such behaviours include any act of verbal or physical force, coercion or life-threatening deprivation, directed at an individual woman or girl that causes physical or psychological harm, humiliation or arbitrary deprivation of liberty and that perpetuates female subordination (Heise et al., 1999). Gender violence can

be seen as a type of belief system which determines behaviour, practices and the style of interactions and relationships between sexes (Zapata-Sepulveda et al, 2012).

According to the 1979 United Nations (UN) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (United Nations, 1979), GBV is defined as:

“Any act...that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in private or public life...violence against women shall be understood to encompass but not be limited to, physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, the community, including battery, sexual abuse of female children, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence, violence related to exploitation, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women, forced prostitution and violence against women perpetrated and condoned by the state.”

A definition for GBV in South Africa can be found in the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) 116 of 1998 (Department of Justice, 1998) which replaced the Prevention of Family Violence Act (No.133 of 1993). The Domestic Violence Act is widely regarded as a ground-breaking piece of legislation. The DVA includes a broad range of behaviours within its ambit:

Physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and psychological abuse, economic abuse, intimidation, harassment, stalking, damage to property, entry into complainant's residence without residence where they do not share the same residence or any other controlling or abusive behaviour toward a complainant where such conduct

harms or may cause imminent harm to the safety, health or well-being of the complainant (Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998, 1998, p.4)

Definitional debates about GBV remain highly contested, particularly given vigorous championing by gender activists and academics for recognition of the importance of women's resistance and agency and avoidance of victimhood in terms of GBV. In the same vein, debates about GBV are expanding conceptually in different ways. These include holistically integrating various sectoral approaches to GBV such as HIV/AIDS or health, development etc. or transitioning from a consideration of the immediate effects on women to the broader cumulative effects on families, communities and society. There is now a widespread recognition that GBV needs to be addressed by both men and women, since males are not only perpetrators of GBV, but are viewed as central to the fight against GBV. There is also a focus on concepts of male culture and masculinity which has given impetus to efforts to reach and work with men in ways which challenge male attitudes and behaviour and reframe dominant prevailing constructs of masculinity. Many men are now questioning the gender norms which contribute to gender violence and choosing to reject popular stereotypes of violent masculinity (Brod and Kauffmann, 1994; Connell, 2000; Morrell, 2001).

In 2003, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, 2003) estimated that at least one of three women globally will be raped, beaten or otherwise abused during her lifetime. According to the World Health Organisation (2005), 10% to 69% of women have experienced physical violence from their partners at some point in their lives. According Jewkes (undated), 25% of women population in South Africa have been victims of physical intimate partner violence. Examining specifically in Gauteng, a regional study conducted by Gender Links (GL) and the South African Medical Research Council (MRC) Gender and Health Research Unit, revealed that, 51% of women respondents had experienced some form of gender violence in their lifetime while 75% of male respondents had perpetrated some form of violence (Gender Links, 2011). Given that GBV is a highly sensitive and even 'taboo' issue and one which is surrounded by shame and secrecy, it may well be likely that the figures quoted may represent an underestimate of the actual magnitude of the problem.

The roots of GBV are located in historical structural relationships of inequality between women and men

as well as pervasive discrimination against women in both public and private spheres. Located as such at multiple levels in all societies across all social classes, GBV is therefore both a 'private' and 'public' phenomenon. It is difficult to monitor 'private' acts of gender violence as many women subjugated to oppressive cultural and traditional practices may be unaware themselves of their rights and remain oppressed. GBV is enforced and promoted through patriarchal disparities in power, socio-economic inequalities, discriminatory traditional beliefs, norms and attitudes and social institutions such as the family, state and society which condone unequal and abusive practices against women and promote the social normalisation of violence. In this way GBV may be seen as an all-encompassing structurally-located phenomenon which ranges widely from the macro-level scale in terms of discriminatory state policies, the legal system and other societal/organisational barriers, to the micro-scale in terms of everyday relationships of inequality between men and women in households, workplaces and other institutions of society.

GBV occurs within a culturally specific context in South Africa which is influenced in part by certain practices and behaviours harmful to women such as virginity testing, dry sex, female genital mutilation (FGM), polygamy, premature or forced marriage and certain practices of widowhood. The different manifestations of GBV and women's particular personal experiences are configured by factors such as class, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality and religion. High levels of GBV in South Africa reflect a complex combination of the long shadow of a post-conflict society recovering from centuries of colonialism, slavery and apartheid as well as more recent stresses such as enduring poverty and inequality in a context of socio-economic uncertainty.

Although gender based violence is globally widespread, there are some instances in which some societies manage to eliminate it (Heise, 2002). For instance, studies done by anthropologists such as Counts (1992) and Levinson (1989) have found that, domestic violence is virtually non-existent in small societies such as the Wape of Papua New Guinea. This reality serves as an encouraging illustration that societies can be organised in such a way to minimise gender-based violence (Heise, 2002). In order to achieve this desired state, it is important to understand the factors contributing to widespread gender-based violence in some areas. However, the relative scarcity of studies providing this

understanding has made it difficult to effectively explore strategies towards community or individual level societal change (Magar, 2003). This was therefore the motivation for this paper, in which a specific slice of data about gender-based violence from a recent Quality of Life survey, conducted in 2011 for Gauteng Province, South Africa, was utilised to provide such insight. The survey questions were designed in order to investigate the extent of GBV in the province and exploit the potential of the survey to create public awareness and debate, and change individual and collective attitudes about GBV. The survey aimed to acknowledge the widespread nature of GBV and flag it as one which merits public attention and intervention, particularly from government.

Overview of the case study area: Gauteng Province

Gauteng is the smallest province of the nine provinces in South Africa, occupying 1.4% (18179 km<sup>2</sup>) of the total land size in the country. Although the smallest province, it is the most densely populated with a population currently estimated at 12.3 million (see Table 1). It is the largest urban economy in South Africa and Africa as a whole and contributes 34% of national gross value added in the country (Gauteng City-Region Observatory, 2011). Despite its large and sophisticated economy, Gauteng is plagued by problems of unemployment, rapid urbanisation and migration, poverty and unequal distribution of wealth (Gauteng City-Region Observatory, 2011).

TABLE 1: POPULATION OF GAUTENG<sup>1</sup>

Population	Number	% of total
Male population	6 189 875	50.4%
Female Population	6 082 386	49.6%
<b>Total population Gauteng</b>	<b>12 272 261</b>	

In terms of governance, the province is structured into category A, B and C municipalities, that is, metropolitan, local and district municipalities respectively (Republic of South Africa, 1998). Metropolitan municipalities are well developed economically and have large urban populations. District municipalities are municipalities that execute certain functions of local government. The district municipalities are then further subdivided into local municipalities. Gauteng province consists of 13 municipalities, of which, 3 are metropolitan, 2 are district and 8 are local (Table 2 and Figure 1).

<sup>1</sup> [www.statssa.gov.za](http://www.statssa.gov.za)

TABLE 2: MUNICIPALITIES IN GAUTENG

Metropolitan municipalities	Districts Municipalities	Local Municipalities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Johannesburg</li> <li>• City of Ekurhuleni</li> <li>• City of Tshwane</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Westrand</li> <li>• Sedibeng</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kungwini</li> <li>• Randfontein</li> <li>• Westonaria</li> <li>• Mogale City</li> <li>• Merafong</li> <li>• Emfuleni</li> <li>• Midvaal</li> <li>• Lesedi</li> </ul>

Source: adapted from SALGA (2011)



FIGURE 1: MAP OF GAUTENG MUNICIPALITIES

TABLE 3: SOCIAL ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SURVEY DATA

Socio-economic characteristics	Male	Female
<i>Race</i>		
Black (n=12950)	43.7%	56.3%
Indian/Asian (n=549)	44.8%	55.2%
Coloured (n=569)	43.2%	56.8%
White (n=2660)	50.6%	49.4%
Age (average)	39.6	41.5
<i>Education</i>		
None	28.3%	71.7%
Primary only	40.7%	59.3%
Secondary incomplete	42.3%	57.7%
Matric	47.3%	52.7%
More	50.1%	49.9%
<i>Employment status</i>		
Formal employment	54.3%	45.7%
Informal employment	49.7%	50.3%
Unemployed	41.8%	58.2%
Other	37.9%	62.1%
<i>Member of organisation</i>		
Mens/ womens organisation	41.5%	58.5%
Church / religious organisation	39.2%	60.8%

Study method and data

This study utilised Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO) Quality of Life (QoL) survey which was

conducted amongst 16 729 respondents in the Gauteng (Gauteng City-Region Observatory, 2012). The socioeconomic characteristic of the survey respondents according to race is given in Table 3.

While gender-based violence comes in multiple forms, the focus of the survey was on one of the most common forms of gender-based violence, that is, physical intimate or partner violence. The survey posed a provocative statement on respondents about the circumstances under which a man is justified in hitting or beating his wife/partner, that is, if she goes out without telling him; if she doesn't look after the children; if she argues with him; if she refuses to have sex with him; if she burns the food and if she is unfaithful. This paper explored the extent to which particular attributes of respondents such as sex, race, employment status, education, income level and participation in civil society organisations, may account for views that wife/partner beating or hitting is justified.

Results

Table 4 presents the results of the respondents to the GBV question highlighted in Section 2. While the survey results shows a high proportion of respondents answering 'No' to the GBV questions, it was of interest in this paper to investigate the small but worrying proportion of respondents who actually responded positively to these questions. While the percentages of 'No' responses may be small, the actual numerical implications are sobering. When the proportion of 'Yes' responses are extrapolated to the adult population in Gauteng, this represents nearly 300 000 persons who believe that women should be beaten in a number of circumstances investigated in this paper. This finding highlights the challenge of addressing complex and long term social change processes.

TABLE 4: RESPONDENTS TO THE SURVEY QUESTIONS ABOUT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

<i>"Sometimes a man is made angry by things that his wife/partner does. In your opinion is a man justified in hitting or beating his partner in the following situations" (GBV questions):</i>	Yes	No
If she goes without telling him?	3%	97%
If she doesn't look after children?	4%	96%
If she argues with him?	3%	97%
If she refuses to have sex with him?	2%	98%
If she burns the food?	1%	99%
If she is unfaithful?	5%	95%

In considering the attitudes towards GBV at the level of Gauteng municipalities, it is observed that the percentages vary (Table 5). The highest percentages are concentrated in Emfuleni and Westonaria (see Table 5 and Figure 2). On the contrary, attitudes towards GBV in Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Tshwane are relatively lower. This suggests that Gauteng's large metropolitan municipalities with urbanised populations may be better resourced in terms of progressive attitudes than smaller local municipalities. Accordingly, local municipalities could be seen as the focus for targeted social change interventions.

TABLE 5: POSITIVE RESPONSES TO THE GBV QUESTION ACCORDING TO GAUTENG MUNICIPALITIES

Municipality	GBV questions					
	If she goes without telling him?	If she doesn't look after children?	If she argues with him?	If she refuses to have sex with him?	If she burns the food?	If she is unfaithful?
Ekurhuleni	1.5%	2.8%	1.3%	1.1%	0.7%	3.6%
Emfuleni	15%	17%	15.9%	8.2%	5.8%	20.5%
City of Johannesburg	2.2%	2.4%	2%	0.8%	0.5%	3.6%
Lesedi	9.8%	9%	9.6%	2.3%	0.7%	11.8%
Morafeng	3%	4.2%	3.3%	2.1%	1.5%	6.6%
Mid-vaal	5.4%	5.5%	4.6%	2.7%	0.9%	7.3%
Mogale	3.3%	4.1%	3.7%	2.9%	1.8%	8%
Randfontein	2.3%	3.8%	3.3%	1.4%	2.8%	7%
Tshwane	2.1%	2.7%	2.1%	1.7%	1%	4.4%
Westonaria	9.9%	15.2%	12.3%	12.8%	10.8%	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>5.4%</b>



FIGURE 2: MAP OF GAUTENG SHOWING MUNICIPALITIES WITH HIGHEST POSITIVE RESPONSE TO THE GBV QUESTIONS

When the data was analyzed according to sex (Table 6), the results shows similarities in the forms of roles and responsibilities that appear to justify wife/partner beating. Both men and women responded most strongly to the issue of infidelity, posed in the question of 'if she is unfaithful', which represented 6.5% for men and 4.6% for women. Fidelity thus appears to a very sensitive and controversial issue for both men and women. Similarly, both men and female respondents seemed to strongly respond to the question of looking after children. Of particular

concern is the proportion of women who responded positively to the questions of women being beaten. This implies that that rights-based gender education is an urgent priority, particularly in terms of processes of self-awareness and gender-sensitisation for both women and men.

TABLE 6: POSITIVE RESPONSES TO THE GBV QUESTION ACCORDING TO SEX

GBV questions	Male	Female
If she goes out without telling him?	3.7%	2.6%
If she doesn't look after children?	4.3%	3.5%
If she argues with him?	3.6%	2.6%
If she refuses to have sex with him?	2.4%	1.4%
If she burns the food?	1.3%	1.2%
If she is unfaithful?	6.5%	4.6%

Generally, respondents responded strongly to the GBV question 'if she is unfaithful' across all the socio-economic characteristics that have been evaluated; that is: race, sex, employment status, income and participation to an organisation. A slightly different result is observed when the analysis was categorised according to race (Table 7). While the question of 'if she is unfaithful' received the strongest response for both male and female, Asian / Indian and Coloured women respondents have a higher proportion of response on the GBV question relative to the men in these race category. In addition, women respondents in all race categories with the exception of white women, responded more strongly to the question of 'if she doesn't look after children' relative to the men in the respective race category.

TABLE 7: POSITIVE RESPONSES TO THE GBV QUESTION ACCORDING TO RACE

GBV questions	African		Asian/Indian		Coloured		White	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
If she goes without telling him?	1.7%	1.4%	1.6%	3.2%	0.7%	0.9%	1.8%	1.0%
If she doesn't look after children?	2.0%	2.1%	1.6%	3.4%	1.3%	1.8%	1.6%	1.0%
If she argues with him?	1.6%	1.5%	1.2%	3.0%	0.8%	0.7%	1.7%	1.3%
If she refuses to have sex with him?	1.1%	0.8%	0.7%	1.7%	0.8%	0.5%	1.3%	0.6%
If she burns the food?	0.6%	0.6%	0.3%	1.5%	0.3%	0.1%	0.7%	0.8%
If she is unfaithful?	3.0%	2.6%	3.0%	4.0%	1.8%	3.6%	2.8%	1.7%

Across all the employment statuses, the GBV question 'if she is unfaithful' similarly shows high proportion of positive responses justifying wife/ partner beating (see Table 8). Research has shown that men tend to be especially distressed by the sexual infidelity of their partners (Harris and Christenfeld, 1996) and that in certain culture, infidelity and jealousy concerns may be playing a key role in sanctioning and perpetuating domestic violence and even spousal homicides (Vandello and Cohen, 2003; Buss et al., 1992; Daly and Wilson, 1988). The GBV question 'if she is unfaithful' is closely followed by the questions related to 'if she doesn't look after the children' and then that of 'if she argues with him'.

TABLE 8: POSITIVE RESPONSES TO THE GBV QUESTION ACCORDING TO EMPLOYMENT STATUS

GBV questions	Employment status			
	Formal employment	Informal employment	Unempl oyed	Other
If she goes without telling him?	3.7%	2.4%	3.4%	2.1%
If she doesn't look after children?	4.3%	3.7%	4.7%	2.7%
If she argues with him?	3.4%	2.7%	3.3%	2.5%
If she refuses to have sex with him?	2.4%	1.6%	1.9%	1.3%
If she burns the food?	1.4%	1.2%	1.3%	1.1%
If she is unfaithful?	5.9%	6.3%	6.1%	4.1%

The respondents with higher education qualifications (matric, post-matric & more) appear to show a trend of a relatively high proportion of positive responses to GBV questions compared to respondents with other education status (see Table 9). This shows that advanced education levels are not necessarily a guarantor of progressive attitudes towards women and women's rights.

In terms of income level, respondents with a monthly income of R 6401 – R 12 800 show a higher proportion of positive responses to the GBV questions (Table 10). It is of interest that households with mid-range incomes appear to most strongly indicate a higher response rate to all the GBV questions responses

compared to other income level analysed. It is not clear why this range of income should invite a higher response rate than any other level of income, and merits further critical reflection.

TABLE 9: POSITIVE RESPONSES TO THE GBV QUESTION ACCORDING TO EDUCATION LEVEL

GBV questions	Education level				
	None	Primary only	Secondary incomplete	Matric	Post-matric & more
If she goes without telling him?	2.5%	3.1%	3.1%	2.6%	3.9%
If she doesn't look after children?	3.4%	3.6%	4.3%	3.6%	4.3%
If she argues with him?	3.2%	3.1%	3.0%	2.7%	3.9%
If she refuses to have sex with him?	1.4%	1.5%	1.9%	1.8%	2.2%
If she burns the food?	1.8%	0.8%	1.4%	1.0%	1.6%
If she is unfaithful?	4.5%	5.3%	5.6%	4.8%	6.5%

TABLE 10: POSITIVE RESPONSES TO THE GBV QUESTION ACCORDING TO MONTHLY INCOME

GBV question	Income level per month			
	No income and low income (< 3200)	Income level (R 3201 – R 6400)	Income level (R 6401 - R12800)	Income level (> R 12800)
If she goes without telling him?	4.0%	3.9%	6%	2.2%
If she doesn't look after children?	5.6%	5.2%	6.6%	2.1%
If she argues with him?	3.9%	4.4%	6.3%	3.6%
If she refuses to have sex with him?	1.7%	2.9%	4.1%	1.9%
If she burns the food?	1.3%	1.8%	2.2%	3.3%
If she is unfaithful?	6.3%	8%	8.9%	6%

The proportion of respondents who do not participate in men / women organisation, but have positive responses to the GBV questions were lower than those respondents participating in such organisation. These were: 3% in the case of 'if she goes out without telling

him; 3.8% 'if he does not look after children'; 3% 'if she argues with him'; 1.8% 'if she refuses to have sex with him'; 1.2% 'if she burns food'; and 5.2% 'if she is unfaithful'. These are relatively lower percentages compared to those respondents participating in men/women organisations as shown in Table 11. Participating in religious activities does not imply that the respondents do not justify wife/partner beating if they do not meet certain expected roles or responsibilities. However, such participation can play a role in reducing the probability of justifying wife / partner beating. It is observed that the proportion of positive responses by respondents participating in church / religious organisation is relatively lower than those not participating in church / religious activities.

TABLE 11: POSITIVE RESPONSES TO THE GBV QUESTION ACCORDING TO PARTICIPATION IN A CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION

GBV questions	Participation to civil society organisations	
	Men / women organisation	Church/ religious organisation
If she goes without telling him?	4.1%	2.6%
If she doesn't look after children?	4.7%	3.6%
If she argues with him?	3.6%	2.6%
If she refuses to have sex with him?	2.6%	1.6%
If she burns the food?	1.7%	1.2%
If she is unfaithful?	8%	5.2%

Civil society has a very important role in providing the social capital which can possibly help to minimise GBV. Even though the data may indicate otherwise, particularly for the case of 'participation in men/women organisations', it is possible to educate and raise awareness through such platforms. A diverse range of civil society organisations can be mobilised toward this purpose such as youth groups, action and advocacy groups, citizen networks and community-based organisations. Civil society may have the capacity to reach a wider range of constituencies such as youth, children, gay, lesbian and transgendered people as well as the homeless, and can, in fact, complement key interventions and initiatives of the state.

### Discussion and conclusions

This survey has evaluated the attitudes of men and women in Gauteng towards GBV. This paper was centrally motivated by the implications of the small

but highly significant proportion of respondents who positively responded to the GBV question. Even though this percentage is small, it represents a depressing confirmation of the prevalence of the myth of male entitlement and the consequent legitimisation of violence by men. It suggests that there is an urgent need to educate women to defend their rights, and to help promote safe, respectful and equitable relationships between men and women.

It is acknowledged that the survey results may not reveal the most accurate portrayal of the full extent of GBV in Gauteng. While a large scale-survey may give some clues about attitudes, the issue remains a largely 'hidden' or invisible one in our society. It is supposed that respondents may not have been willing to freely express their attitudes toward something essentially seen as private, particularly within the context of a large-scale survey. Gender-based violence often involves shame, silence and a fear of stigmatisation, which may prohibit authentic responses to sensitive questions about attitudes to gender and violence. There is still much work to do in the GCR to change belief and practices which support gender-based violence and abuse.

One of the weaknesses of the paper is that the results are biased towards heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships and does not take into account gay or bisexual relationships. This is because such questions were not included in the QoL survey. Feminist scholars Steyn and van Zyl (2009) have cautioned against the assumption of exclusive heterosexuality which may be responsible for a hegemonic cultural bias against same-sex relationships: "Based on the assumption that there are only two sexes and that each has predetermined gender roles, it pervades all social attitudes, but is particularly visible in 'family' and 'kinship' ideologies. Heteronormativity constructing oppositional binaries—for example, man/woman, homosexual/heterosexual—is embedded in discourses which create punitive roles for non-conformity to hegemonic norms of heterosexual identity" (Steyn and van Zyl, 2009). Subsequent surveys will need to address this issue in the future.

Similarly, the survey did not ask questions such as marital status or the number of children, which could have provided some additional insights into the analysis of GBV. Hence, it was not possible to analyze how respondents with different marital status or number of children would respond to the GBV

questions such as 'if she refuses to have sex with you' or 'if she doesn't look after the children'. The assumption was probably that, all the respondents, irrespective of their marital status or number of children, were capable of answering the GBV questions objectively. It is however acknowledged that this does not necessarily hold true and future detailed investigation will be required.

The findings suggest that there is much work to be done in creating awareness about the full extent of GBV in Gauteng and South Africa. For example human trafficking, harmful cultural practices, hate crimes against lesbians and intimate femicide i.e. the killings of women by their partners are serious forms of GBV that are still inadequately documented in Gauteng and South Africa as a whole. In addition, because GBV is generally regarded as a 'private' matter within the realm of the family, there is often a 'conspiracy of silence' which protects perpetrators and continues to perpetuate the problem.

Although the survey is compelling evidence of violence against women in Gauteng, there is a compelling need to strengthen the knowledge base about GBV in order to inform policy and strategy.

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