FARM ATTACKS AND MURDERS

FIRST QUARTER

2023



AfriForum

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The report was adapted from AfriForum's report *Farm murders and attacks in South Africa for 2022*.[1]

[1] AfriForum. 2022. *Trends in farm murders and an analysis of arrests and prosecutions 2016–2021*. Available at https://afriforum.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/20220301-Johan-N-Plaasmoordverslag-2022-ENG-GFdB.pdf. Accessed on 25 January 2023.

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Introduction

This report presents attacks and murders on farms and smallholdings for the first quarter of 2023 (i.e., January to March 2023). It is the first of four quarterly reports by AfriForum on farm attacks and murders for the 2023 calendar year. AfriForum has been raising local and international awareness about farm murders since 2006 and views the prioritisation of farm attacks as violent crimes as one of its top priorities. While all forms of crime are harmful to victims and the broader society, different kinds of crimes necessitate a distinct reaction from organisations and role-players who are involved in crime detection and prevention.

AfriForum believes that farm attacks present with four distinct features, which should necessitate a unique response from law enforcement agencies:[2]

1. the frequency of farm attacks
2. the levels of brutality associated with some of these attacks
3. the unique role of farmers within their community
4. the fact that farms are geographically isolated, which makes responding to attacks challenging

The purpose of this report is twofold, namely, to 1) provide the public with the quarterly statistics on farm murders and attacks, and 2) to compare AfriForum's data on the subject with the data from the South African Police Service (SAPS). AfriForum receives regular requests for information on farm attacks and murders, and this report will provide the public – specifically the farming community and relevant stakeholders – with current data. In addition, the information on crime trends in this report may aid the farming community in combatting crime.

Rational for releasing quarterly crime statistics

In June 2016, the cabinet of South Africa decided to release crime statistics on a quarterly basis.[3] Francois Beukman, Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Police, stated at the time that the release of the statistics on a quarterly basis would allow for a closer examination of crime trends, thus enabling a proactive intervention in high-crime areas. Chris de Kock explains that, before this decision, the time and method of the publication of crime statistics had varied, depending on the political leadership in charge.[4] He further argues that there are four reasons for the rationale for releasing crime statistics every three months (i.e., quarterly):

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2 Roets, E. 2018. *Kill the Boer*. Pretoria: Kraal Uitgewers, p. 27.

3 South African Parliament. 2016. *Parliament welcomes decision to release crime statistics on quarterly basis*. Media statement on 9 June. Available at https://www.gov.za/speeches/quarterly-crime-stats-9-jun-2016-0000. Accessed on 5 March 2023.

4 De Kock, C. 2015. *Why crime statistics should be released quarterly*. Politicsweb, 28 July. Available at https://www.politicsweb.co.za/opinion/why-crime-statistics-should-be-released-quarterly. Accessed on 5 March 2023.

1. Crime data is the property of the public, while the SAPS is only the custodian of the data.
2. The elevated levels of crime justify the timely release of the statistics.[5]
3. The frequently released statistics make the SAPS more accountable and create an incentive for the SAPS to combat crime more effectively, as opposed to the combating of crime that is based on data that may be out of date.
4. The frequent release of crime statistics allows for better planning and preparation for other role-players in the fight against crime.

Definition of a farm attack

The SAPS formulated a definition for attacks on farms and smallholdings to determine what constitutes as a farm attack and to maintain a level of consistency in the recording of crimes that are committed on farms and smallholdings.[6] The National Rural Safety Strategy (NRSS) provides the current definition of a farm attack, which is the definition that AfriForum Research uses for the purpose of this report:[7]

> …[a]cts of violence against person(s) living in rural areas, including farms and smallholdings, refer to acts aimed at person(s) residing in, working in, or visiting rural areas, whether with the intent to murder, rape, rob or inflict bodily harm.
>
> In addition, all acts of violence against the infrastructure and property in the rural community, which are aimed at disrupting farming activities or other commercial concerns, whether the motive(s) are related to the commission of other crime(s), ideology, land disputes, land issues, revenge, grievances, racist concerns or intimidation are included in this definition.

The definition excludes cases that 1) are related to domestic violence or alcohol abuse, 2) result from commonplace social interaction between people or 3) any labour disputes.

Methodology and data collection

The AfriForum Community Safety database was used to collect, document and compile the data that is contained in this report. As of 2019, AfriForum's Community Safety division has created its own system to monitor, record and evaluate violent crimes committed on farms. The reasoning behind this is that, although government is the sole custodian of official crime statistics, it has in the past

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5 Although De Kock based his argument on the high crime rate of the late nineties, early two thousand and 2015 data, the argument is still justified due to the current high crime trends.

6 Human Rights Watch. 2001. *Unequal protection: State response to violent crime on South African farms*. Available at https://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/safrica2/Safarms7.htm#_1_33. Accessed on 25 January 2023.

7 South African Police Service. 2019. *The National Rural Safety Strategy*, p. 7. Available at https://www.saps.gov.za/resource_centre/publications/national_rural_safety_strategy_2019.pdf. Accessed on 5 March 2023.

failed to publish data on farm attacks.[8]

The data on farm attacks and murders that are contained in this report were collected from several sources, for example AfriForum's Community Safety team (which confers with the SAPS, private security companies and farm attack victims) and media outlets. During the collection and processing phase, data was verified according to the NRSS's definition of a farm attack.

This report comprises four sections. An overview is provided in the first section of the frequency of farm attacks and farm murders for the first quarters of 2019 to 2023. The focus of the second section is the characteristics of these attacks (such as the time and location) for the same periods. The profiles of the victims are described in the third section, while the attackers' characteristics are highlighted in the fourth section.

It is crucial to highlight that the farm murder figures that are included in this report are subject to change because information is often only available long after the crime has occurred, or because there is insufficient or conflicting information on a case. Nevertheless, this report presents the most accurate picture based on the available information on farm attacks and murders throughout the period under review.

Frequency of farm murders and attacks for the first quarters of 2019 to 2023

According to figure 1, the first quarter of 2019 recorded the highest number of attacks (125), including 15 murders. Except for 2019, the number of attacks and murders remained relatively constant for the first quarters of the other years under review, with no significant decrease in the number of attacks. AfriForum verified 77 attacks in the most recent quarter (January to March 2023), which included nine murders. However, as with past statistics on farm attacks, it should be emphasised that the number of attacks may be much higher due to underreporting (the dark figures of crime reporting) of crimes to the SAPD.[9]

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8 Burger, J. 2017. *Accurate statistics are needed for the SA farm murder debate*. Institute for Security Studies. 11 December. Available at https://issafrica.org/iss-today/accurate-statistics-are-needed-for-the-sa-farm-murder-debate. Accessed 5 March 2023.

9 Doorewaard, C. 2014. The dark figure of crime and its impact on the criminal justice system. *Acta Criminologica: Southern African Journal of Criminology* 27(2): pp 1–13. (P1). Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330440395_THE_DARK_FIGURE_OF_CRIME_AND_ITS_IMPACT_ON_THE_CRIMINAL_JUSTICE_SYSTEM/link/5c40217392851c22a37ae0a5/download. Accessed on 8 February 2023.

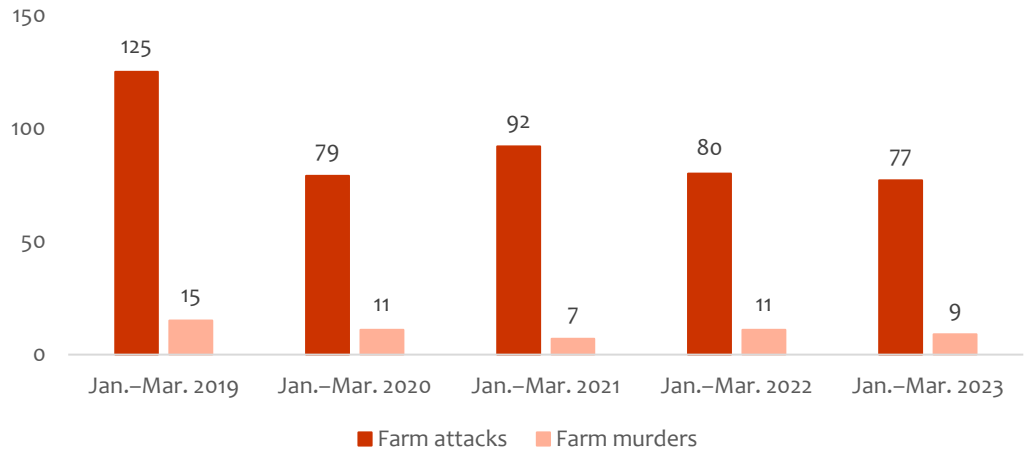


Figure 1: Number of farm attacks and murders for the first quarters of 2019 to 2023[10]

A comparison is made in table 1 between the number of farm attacks and farm murders recorded by AfriForum for the first quarter of each year under review, and of the SAPS's data for the same period. The most notable difference between the two sets of statistics is for the first quarter of 2019 and 2021. Whereas AfriForum recorded 125 attacks (including 15 murders) for January to March 2019, the SAPS recorded only 64 incidents of attacks on farms and smallholdings.[11]

Another major difference is evident for January to March 2021. Whereas AfriForum recorded 92 incidents, the SAPS recorded 130. The reasons for the variation in figures are unknown at this stage.

Table 1: Number of farm attacks and murders recorded by AfriForum and the SAPS for the first quarter.[12]

	Farm attacks		Farm murders	
Period	**AfriForum**	**SAPS**	**AfriForum**	**SAPS**
Jan.–Mar. 2019	125	64	15	6
Jan.–Mar. 2020	79	66	11	6
Jan.–Mar. 2021	92	130	7	11
Jan.–Mar. 2022	80	Not available	11	12
Jan.–Mar. 2023	77	Not available	9	Not available

[10] Please note: The murder numbers are also represented in the number of attacks.

[11] Crime statistics. Republic of South Africa. Fourth Quarter 2020/2021 (January to March 2021). Available at PowerPoint Presentation (saps.gov.za). Available at https://www.saps.gov.za/services/fourth_quarter_2020_21_crimestats.pdf. Accessed on 25 March 2023.

[12] The SAPS recorded crime statistics for the Republic of South Africa for the first quarter of the 2020/2021 and 2022/2023 financial years. See: South African Police Service. N.d. *SAPS Crimestats*. Available at https://www.saps.gov.za/services/crimestats.php. Accessed on 25 March 2023.

Figure 2 illustrates the combined number of farm attacks and farm murders for the first quarter per province. Gauteng experienced almost twice (128) as many farm attacks as North West, which had the second-highest number of attacks (64).

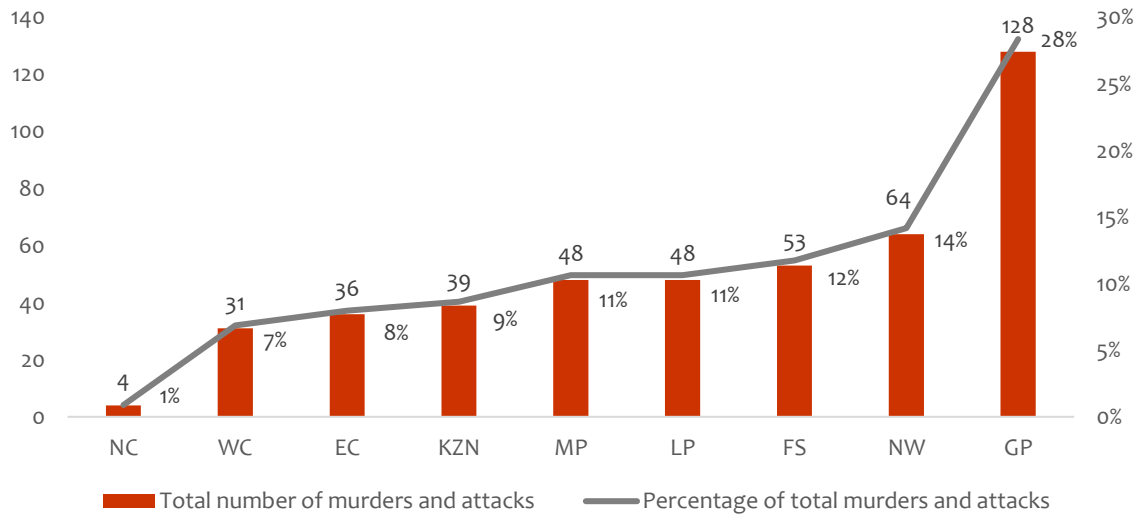


Figure 2: Farm attacks and murders per province (First quarter 2019–2023)[13]

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the statistics in figure 2. Although Gauteng had the highest number of reported incidents, there appears to be a decline since 2019. For the Western Cape there is a decline from 10 incidents in the first quarter of 2019 to 2 incidents for the first quarter of 2022. The first quarter of 2023 saw a spike with 9 incidents.

Table 2: Number of farm attacks and murders per province (First quarter 2019 – 2023)

Province	Jan.–Mar. 2019	Jan.–Mar. 2020	Jan.–Mar. 2021	Jan.–Mar. 2022	Jan.–Mar. 2023	Total
Eastern Cape	12	6	6	9	3	36
Free State	13	8	11	13	8	53
Gauteng	32	27	30	20	19	128
KwaZulu-Natal	11	4	9	5	10	39
Limpopo	13	10	7	10	8	48
Mpumalanga	14	7	9	10	8	48
Northern Cape		2		2		4
North West	20	9	16	9	10	64
Western Cape	10	6	4	2	9	31

[13] The total does not add up to 100% because figures were rounded off. In two instances it is unknown in which province the attack(s) or murder(s) occurred.

Farm murders and attacks (first quarter of 2023)

Premises

Most incidents for the first quarter of 2023 occurred on farms (74%), compared to 26% on smallholdings.[14] However, the majority of murders (six of the nine) occurred on smallholdings.

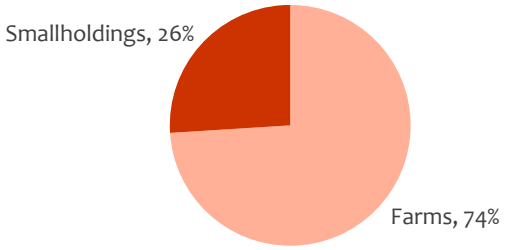


Figure 3: Percentage of attacks and murders that took place on farms and smallholdings (Jan. – Mar. 2023)[15]

Day of the week

Figure 4 depicts the day of the week when farm attacks and farm murders occurred. Almost half of the incidents (48%) occurred over the weekend (which includes Fridays). Thursdays presented with the highest number of incidents during the week (17%).[16]

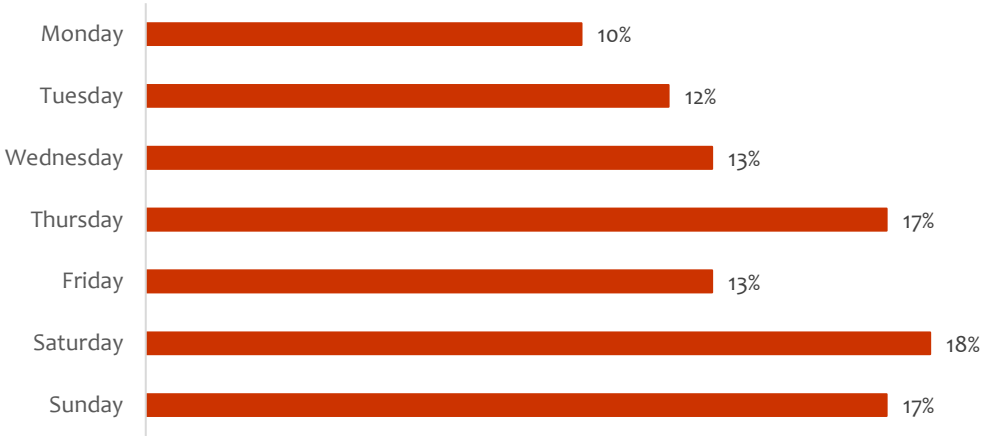


Figure 4: Percentage of attack and murder incidents per day of the week (Jan.–Mar. 2023)

[14] Two attack incidents were committed at lodges, which were included with smallholdings.
[15] In one incident (1% of total incidents) the type of premises could not be determined.
[16] AfriForum. 2022. *Trends in farm murders and an analysis of arrests and prosecutions 2016–2021*. Available at https://afriforum.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/20220301-Johan-N-Plaasmoordverslag-2022-ENG-GFdB.pdf. Accessed on 25 January 2023.

Time of day

The time slots in table 3 are based on the time slots used by the SAPS in its 2019/2020 annual report.[17] As can be seen from the table below, the highest number of farm attacks and farm murder incidents occurred between 00:00 and 02:59. It is clear that people are more likely to be attacked between 18:00 and 09:00 the next morning.

Table 3: Time of day for farm attack and murder incident[18]

Time of day for farm murders	Percentage of murder incidents
00:00–02:59	30%
03:00–05:59	14%
06:00–08:59	14%
09:00–11:59	4%
12:00–14:59	0%
15:00–17:59	2%
18:00–20:59	18%
21:00–23:59	18%

Profile of victims of farm murders and attacks (first quarter of 2023)

The following section provides a breakdown of victims' demographics such as age and gender as well as the number of victims and the cause of death where farm attacks resulted in murder.

Gender of farm murder victims

Males accounted for 67% of all murder victims, while females made up 33% of victims.[19]

[17] SAPS. 2019/2020 *Annual Crime Report*, p. 30. Available at https://www.saps.gov.za/about/stratframework/annual_report/2019_2020/annual_crime_report_2019_2020.pdf. Accessed on 28 January 2023.

[18] In 27 incidents the time of attacks or murder could not be determined.

[19] No statistics are available on the gender of attack-only victims (incidents where no murder was committed).

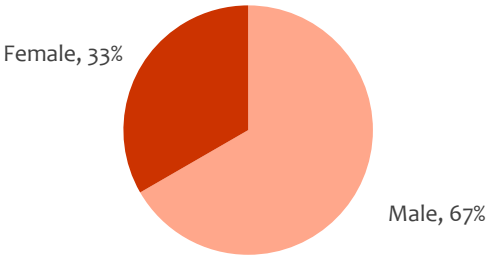


Figure 5: Gender of murder victims

Age of farm attack and farm murder victims

Half of all victims (attacks and murders) are older than 60, even though the age of victims is known in only 36% of cases. If only the age category for murders is considered, 67% of murder victims were older than 60 years. This corresponds with the findings of AfriForum's 2022 report on farm murders, in which most murder victims (52%) were over the age of 60.[20] This phenomenon supports AfriForum's belief that farm murder victims are physically more vulnerable.[21]

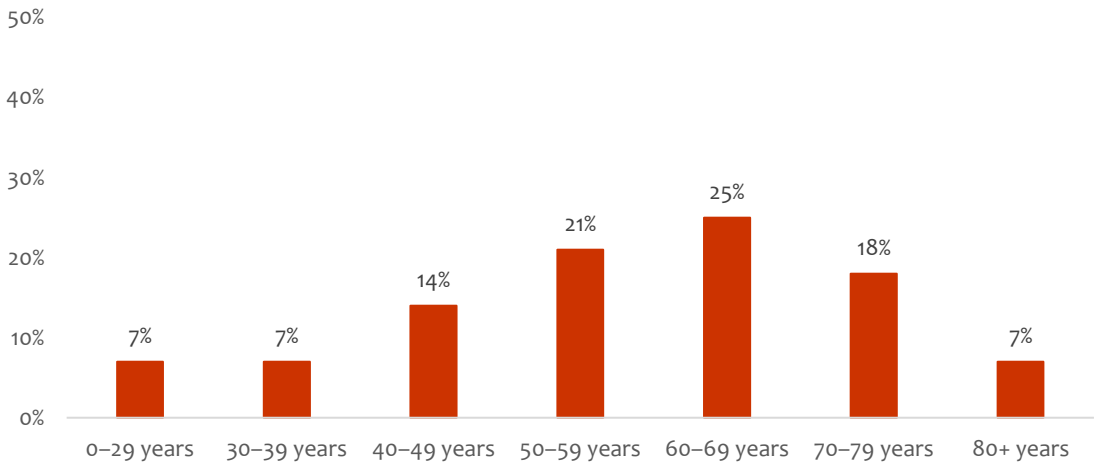


Figure 6: Percentage of attack and murder victims per age group[22]

Number of farm attack and farm murder victims

Figure 7 provides an overview of the number of incidents and the total number of farm attack and farm

[20] AfriForum. 2023. *Farm murders and attacks in South Africa for 2022*. Available at https://stopdiemoorde.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/20230228-Johan-N-Farm-murders-and-attacks-in-SA-for-2022-ENG-GFdB-1.pdf. Accessed on 20 April 2023

[21] AfriForum. 2023. *Farm murder and attacks in South Africa for 2022.* Available at. https://stopdiemoorde.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/20230228-Johan-N-Farm-murders-and-attacks-in-SA-for-2022-ENG-GFdB-1.pd. Accessed on 25 March 2023.

[22] The total percentages in the graph do not add up to 100%, because figures have been rounded off.

murder victims. The categories "1 or more" and "2 or more" indicate that the exact number of victims could not be determined. 40% of incidents involved only one victim, while 26% involved two victims and 12 % of incidents three victims.

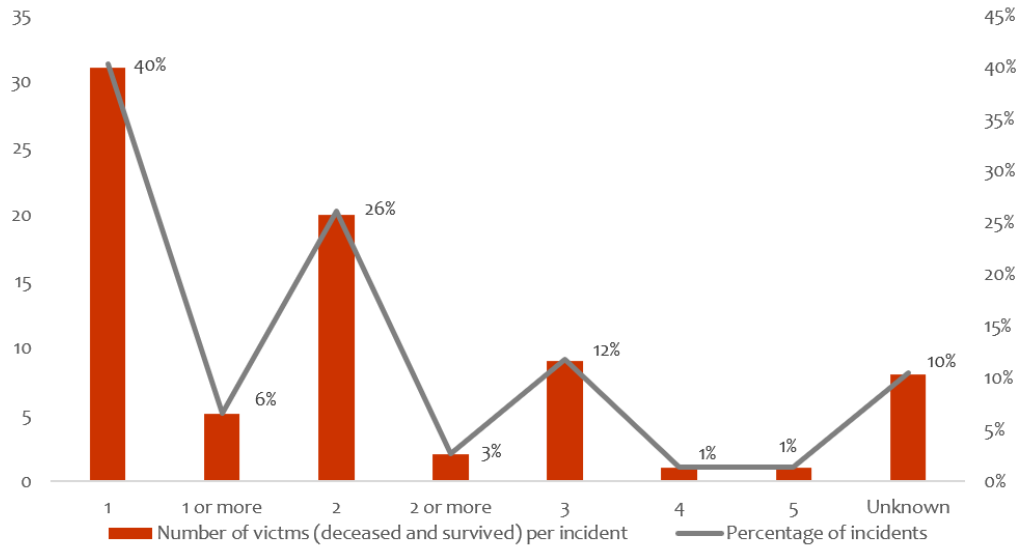


Figure 7: Number of incidents where there were one or more victims (murdered and survived)

Causes of death of farm murder victims

As can be seen in figure 8, 56% (five) victims were shot. According to media reports, three murder victims in two separate incidents were shot execution style.[23] In two other incidents victims were stabbed to death, whereas in another incident a 69-year-old man was attacked and stabbed next to his wife, only a few metres away from where his daughter had also been murdered on the same smallholding 11 years earlier.[24] Another victim was strangled to death – in this case, the suspects first tied up his wife and then strangled him to death, whereafter the suspects fled with the victim's vehicle.[25]

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[23] See:
- Van der Merwe, M. 2023 *Paartjie op 'teregstellingswyse' doodgeskiet*. Maroela Media, 8 March. Available at https://maroelamedia.co.za/nuus/sa-nuus/paartjie-op-teregstellingswyse-doodgeskiet/. Accessed on 24 March 2023.
- Boshoff, M. 2023. *Mpumalanga farm attack: Man nabbed after execution-style killing*. *Benoni Times*, 17 January. Available at https://benonicitytimes.co.za/lnn/1213420/mpumalanga-farm-attack-man-nabbed-after-execution-style-killing/. Accessed on 31 March 2023

[24] Bhengu, C. 2023. *Centurion man killed metres away from where daughter's body was found almost 11 years ago*. News24, 28 February. Available at https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/centurion-man-killed-metres-away-from-where-daughters-body-was-found-almost-11-years-ago-20230228#:~:text=Podcast-,Centurion%20man%20killed%20metres%20away%20from%20where%20daughter%27s,found%20almost%2011%20years%20ago&text=Jan%20and%20his%20wife%20Kitty%20Muller.&text=Jan%20and%20Kitty%20Muller%20were,was%20discovered%2011%20years%20ago. Accessed on 24 March 2023

[25] Swart, M. 2023. *Geliefde boer op Potch-plaas vermoor*. Maroela Media, 6 February. Available at https://maroelamedia.co.za/nuus/sa-nuus/geliefde-boer-op-potch-plaas-vermoor/. Accessed on 31 March 2023.

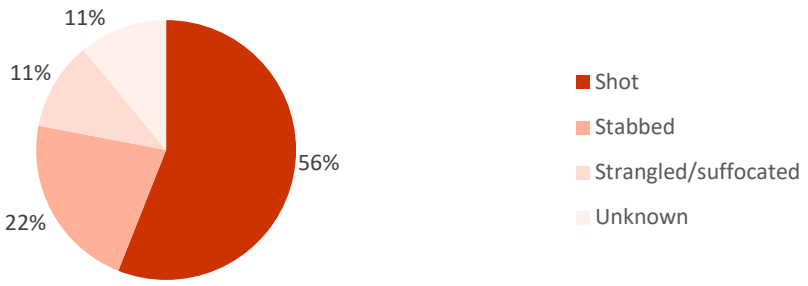


Figure 8: Cause of death of farm murder victims

Modus operandi of suspects (first quarter of 2023)

This section outlines the attacks modus operandi used by the attackers.

Number of attacks

Figure 9 depicts the number of attackers that were involved in incidents for the period under review. Except for the unknown variable, the majority of attacks were committed by more than two attackers. In one incident, there were twenty attackers, but this specific incident was related to stock theft. In the majority of cases where the type of weapon could be confirmed (in 55 of the 77 incidents), the attackers were armed with firearms.

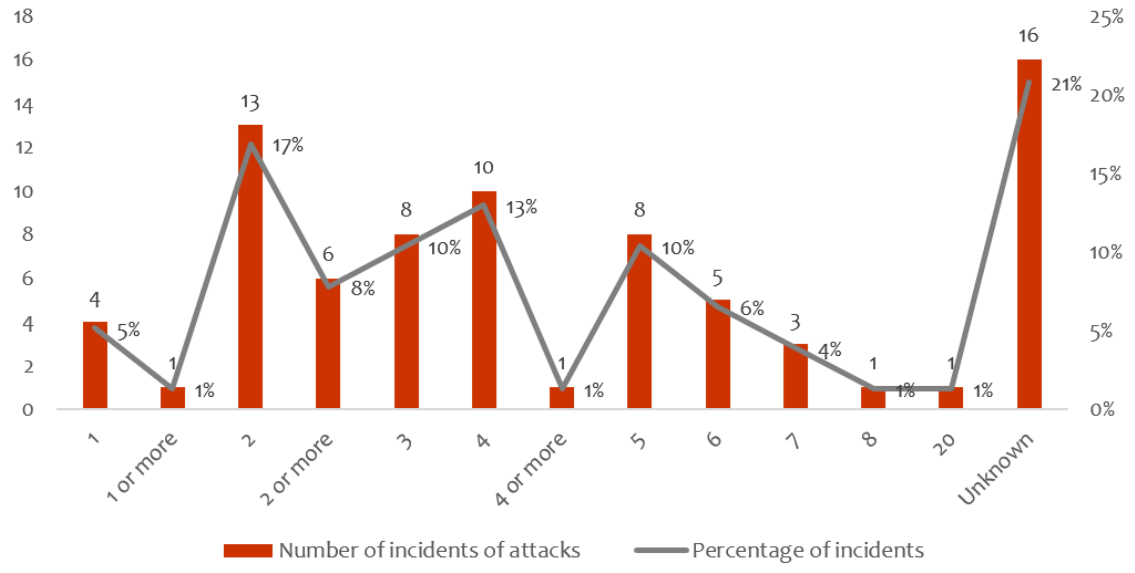


Figure 9: Number of incidents in which one or more attackers were involved.

Items stolen and weapons used

In 11 incidents nothing was stolen or robbed from the victims. Where victims' property was indeed stolen, the most prominent properties included electronics, firearms and vehicles.

Apprehension of suspects

Attackers were apprehended in only 9 out of 77 incidents. Regarding murder incidents, the suspects were apprehended in only two of the eight murder incidents.

Conclusion

It is clear from this report that farm attacks and farm murders continue to be significant in the first quarter of 2023. In terms of the modus operandi, usually more than one attacker is present during the attack, while most attackers strike during the night. In addition, most of these attackers are armed, which suggest there is an intent to cause harm. Furthermore, given that only a few suspects were apprehended, the perpetrators of these acts are likely to continue with their crimes.

Thus, AfriForum must continue to expand the reach of its community safety networks across the country, as well as offer trauma support to victims of farm attacks. In addition, AfriForum must continue to offer training to farmers, including training in first-aid, firearm handling and radio communication.