

SAFER SPACES

(SUCCESS STORIES ALTERNATIVE)

GUN CONTROL



TO GET YOU THINKING

Safety is a human right

In societies marked by high levels of violence and crime, such as South Africa, people invest in things that make them feel more secure, from burglar bars and alarm panic buttons to high concrete walls and electric fences.

People sometimes also think about arming themselves. Governments tend to take a hard-line approach, putting more police on the streets and tougher punishments for offenders. However, clamping down on violence and crime only affects its symptoms. Focusing on security alone fails to address the causes of violence.

What is needed is a change of emphasis from security to safety.

It is very important to understand this difference. Security means protection against a known or perceived threat, while safety means to live without that threat or fear of that threat.

To create a society where everyone feels safe requires an understanding of safety as a human right and a public good that must be protected, fought and mobilised for.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Share one new idea you discovered after reading this article?

Discuss the kinds of things you do (or don't do) to keep safe from violence or the threat of violence in your community? Are all people in your community able to do these things?

Is safety the same thing for men and women?

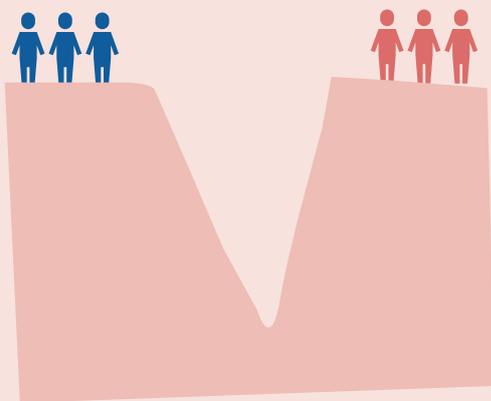
Is safety the same thing for children and adults?

What is the difference between safety and security?

What are the ways you think your community can achieve safety (i.e. living without the threat or fear of violence)?

DID YOU KNOW?

MANY RESEARCHERS AGREE THAT CORE TO THE PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE AND CRIME IN SOUTH AFRICA HAS A LOT TO DO WITH A CULTURE OF VIOLENCE AS A RESULT OF OUR EXTREMELY VIOLENT PAST, WHICH INCLUDES THE APARTHEID SYSTEM.



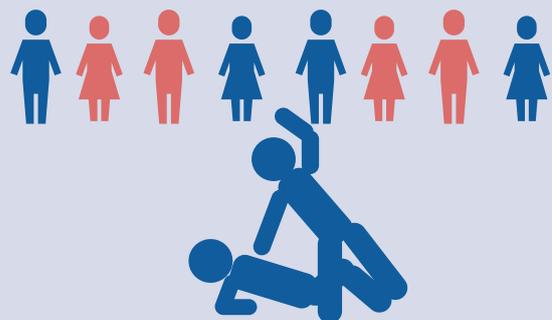
Certain types of violence also become more common, such as:

- Violence within families: between parents, and parents being violent towards their children
- Violence as a means of dealing with feelings of inferiority or to create a feeling of belonging, like when a young man joins a youth gang
- Violence perpetrated by men against girls and women as part of masculine identity, which is behaviour that society expects of a man
- Political violence to deal with difference

Evidence shows that violence occurs at higher rates in societies with high levels of economic inequality, like South Africa. You can think of economic inequality as the wealth gap between the rich and the poor. The higher a country's economic inequality the worse it is likely to perform on social indicators, like levels of violence.



When there are high levels of violence in a society, it becomes normalised. This means that people accept its use, and are no longer shocked when they see violence being committed. Violence can also become glorified, when it's admired and seen as being good and special.



A CULTURE OF VIOLENCE - WHAT DOES THAT EVEN MEAN?

A culture of violence refers to a society that has a greater tendency than average to use violence in day-to-day life.

A culture of violence means most South Africans grow up and live in an environment where violence has become somewhat of a 'norm'.

It does not mean the cultures in South Africa have a violent character.

It means that violence is viewed as more acceptable by people generally, possibly because South Africans witness, perpetrate and are the victims of violence more often than people in other countries.

Let's think of examples:

Corporal punishment is a form of violence. It is against the law to use corporal punishment in schools but it still happens. It can be considered as part of a culture of violence.

Can you think of any other examples where violence has become normalised?

HOW SOUTH AFRICANS RESPOND TO FEELING UNSAFE

"And the streets fell silent: How crime impacts the everyday."

The 2017 Victims of Crime Survey (VOCS) released by StatsSA found a "noticeable decline" in people's feeling of safety when walking alone around their areas of residence. One-third of households don't go to open spaces or parks out of fear of crime, while just less than a quarter do not allow children to play outside for the same reason.

GUNS AND SAFETY

The VOCS asked households their perception of guns – both to commit crime and to defend against crime.

Guns to commit crime: Of all weapons used to commit crime and violence, South Africans fear guns the most.

Guns to defend against crime: In response to questions asking South Africans what they are doing to protect themselves from crime, the VOCS shows an increasing trend towards withdrawing from community crime prevention initiatives, instead households are opting to privatise security:

- Over half of South African households have implemented "physical protection measures" such as building high walls, installing razor wire fences and burglar proofing or getting dogs to shield their homes from crime.
- 5.5% of households reported having a weapon for protection in 2015/16 – the highest rate since the VOCS was first conducted in 2011. The weapon in the VOCS is not identified, so could include weapons other than a gun, such as a knife, knobkierie or sjambok. As such, we cannot assume that 5.5% of households own a gun.

DOMESTIC ARMS RACE

The VOCS points to a "vicious cycle" of fear, arming, and violent death and injury, described as follows,

"[...] high crime rates may instigate widespread anxiety and fear, thereby motivating people to arm themselves and give rise to increased gun ownership, which, in turn, increases [gun] availability. [...] abundant gun availability facilitates firearm-related deaths." In other words, the research describes a domestic firearms race.

Ending the "vicious cycle" of violence, fear, arming and further violence in South Africa, rests largely on reducing crime levels, particularly gun-related crime, which is both feared and far more deadly. This in turn calls for a two-pronged approach to reduce the number of guns in the country:

- Reduce the number of guns in circulation, e.g. by holding an amnesty.
- Raise the bar for gun ownership, whether by civilians or the police, to reduce the risk of misuse.

SAFER SPACES AND YOU

Violence prevention and creating safer spaces in South Africa requires collaboration among the many people who work in this field, from the government to NGOs and community-based organisations.

Many of us place the responsibility of safety and security for the country on the shoulders of the police. But we need to think about the ways this responsibility can be shared more among all government departments and other role-players, including your own community.

Everyone needs to contribute to creating a safe country, free of crime and violence.

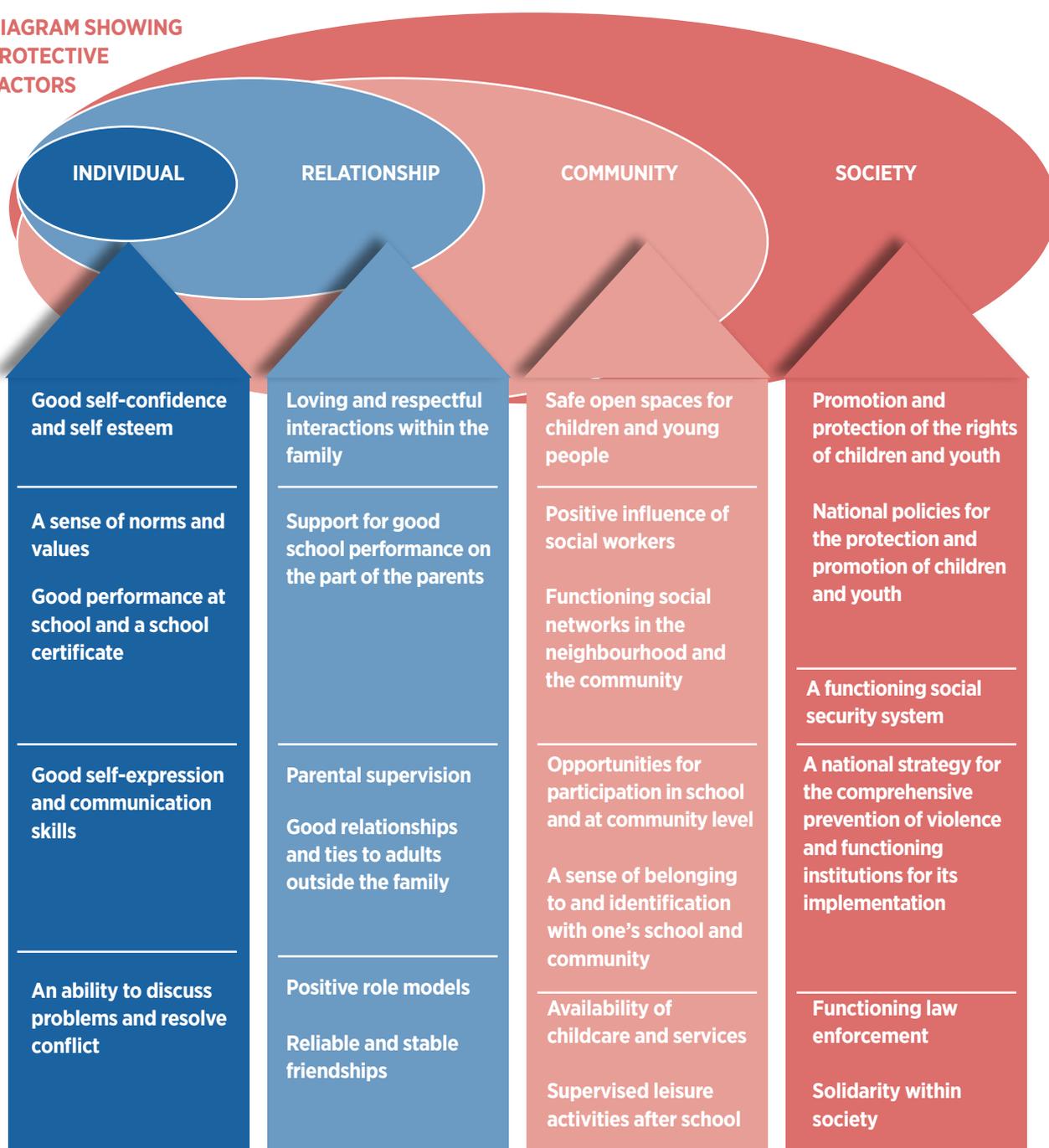
Remember, just as there is no single cause of violence and crime, there is no single solution.

Learn how to make your community safer by referring to the resource below. It provides a guide to understanding how violence and safety works in your community, creating initiatives and getting others involved.

Below is one diagram taken from the tools in the Safer Spaces resource. (<http://www.saferspaces.org.za/learn-how>)

It is a way to get you thinking about safety and the factors that protect children and youth from violent behaviour in the first place. Use the diagram to consider what you can do in your own life and community to influence safety. Remember, this diagram and explanation is about safety and not security.

DIAGRAM SHOWING PROTECTIVE FACTORS



DIFFERENT WAYS TO TALK ABOUT SAFER SPACES

These questions can help guide your radio shows and outreach.

They are angles to the bigger topic of guns and safer spaces.

You have many examples of how to develop your outreaches and radio shows from previous guides. Use them to expand on some of the angles below.



What is the difference between security and safety? How do these two very different things work in your life and community?



What are the ways we can promote safety in our community instead of security?



What are the ways we can create safer spaces for everybody in our community?



What are the risk factors that make violence more likely to happen and what are the protective factors that help to improve safety?



What are the ways we can begin to think and talk about violence in our lives that can make it feel less normal?

Source: Saferspaces