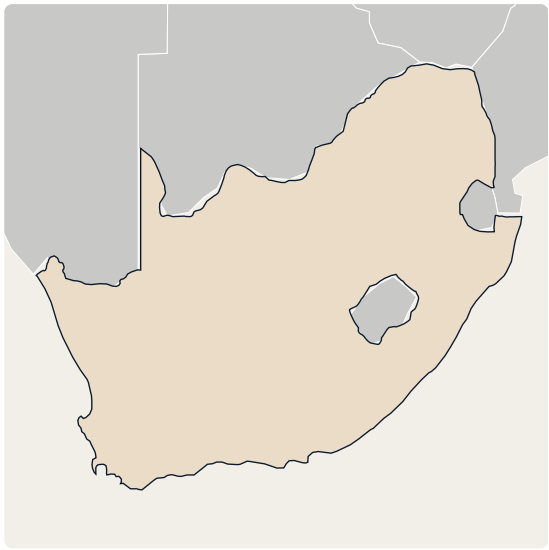
South Africa

Population 64.7 million · Latest figures: 2025



Banks recorded 110,074 digital banking crime cases in 2025, and customers claimed R2.41 billion. The money was 29.2% higher than the R1.86 billion of 2024, and more than double the R1.09 billion of 2023. Cases rose from 52,588 in 2023 to 97,547 in 2024. The police count a wider group, fraud, attempted fraud, forgery and uttering: 147,034 commercial crimes in the year to March 2026, up 2.4% from 143,531, and 36,797 in the January to March quarter, up 4.0%.

The South African Banking Risk Information Centre collects the digital cases from nine banks and runs an anti-scam centre that shares them. The Financial Sector Conduct Authority, the conduct regulator, brought banks, phone companies and the police together in September 2025, and it shares information with the banking centre and the Southern African Fraud Prevention Service. The Financial Intelligence Centre passes reports of suspicious transactions to investigators. Serious dockets sit with the Hawks, the police directorate for priority crime.

From 1 March 2024 the National Financial Ombud Scheme, recognised under the Financial Sector Regulation Act, hears bank, credit and insurance complaints in one office. The Reserve Bank's Directive 2 of 2024, published on 15 November 2024 and in force 90 days later, covers a firm that sends an electronic payment for a customer. That firm must prove the customer agreed the amount and the account, and must refund the customer when the firm is responsible for the loss.

PEOPLE SCAMMED

446,800

1.0% of adults

Women were hit more often, and more than once. In the 2025/26 victim survey, 179,000 women experienced consumer fraud, 0.8% of women aged 16 and over, against 145,000 men at 0.7%. The women accounted for 376,000 incidents and the men for 182,000. People aged 50 to 64 had the highest rate, 0.9% (70,000 people). People aged 16 to 34 were the largest group, 123,000, at 0.6%. People aged 65 and over were 34,000 victims but 121,000 incidents. People educated past school had a rate of 2.3%, against 0.7% after secondary school.

Gauteng had the most victims, 120,000, a rate of 0.9%. The highest rates were in Mpumalanga (1.3%) and North West (1.2%), and the lowest in KwaZulu-Natal (0.2%). The rate was 2.0% for white people and 0.6% for black African people. Metro and non-metro rates were close, 0.8% and 0.7%.

The banking report says the usual path is a message or a live conversation, not a break-in at the bank. Someone impersonates the bank, the police or another trusted body and stays on the line while the person approves a payment in the banking app, often towards a supposed safe account. Others send a false change of bank details, or take payment for goods that never arrive. A SIM swap catches the verification message. The conduct regulator's November 2025 warning describes a second script on WhatsApp, Telegram and Instagram: a group using a real firm's name, a promise of a very fast return, or a fake investigator who says stolen money can be sent back through a crypto wallet.

PEOPLE WHO LOST MONEY

322,857

72% of victims

Most of the recorded digital cases move through the banking app. In 2025 the app accounted for 97,555 of the 110,074 investigations and R1.70 billion of the R2.41 billion claimed, 70.5% of the money. Internet banking was 9,354 cases but R688 million, 28.6% of the money. Mobile banking, the channel tied to SIM swaps, was 3,165 cases and R22 million.

The customer is usually talked into sending the money, which then moves quickly through mule accounts, opened or handed over so the funds can pass on. From there it is cashed or sent through gaming sites and crypto-asset platforms. Card fraud is a separate series: R1.75 billion on South African cards in 2025, up 18% from R1.48 billion. Card-not-present fraud, an online purchase without the card, was the largest type at R781 million, and more than half of credit-card losses were on transactions outside South Africa. Lost and stolen cards were R287 million, mostly debit cards used at cash machines inside the country.

Banks share suspect cases through the Banking Industry Anti-Scam Centre so a receiving account can be looked at before the money is split. The centre is now a standing operation, and the industry's own report says it is not yet wide or automatic enough to cut the total. Under the Reserve Bank's 2024 directive, a firm that sends a transfer for a customer must detect a fraudulent or unauthorised instruction, show that the customer agreed the amount and the account, and pay the money back when that firm is responsible.

MONEY LOST

US$144.9m

ZAR 2.59b in a year, 0.03% of GDP

The ombud scheme takes a banking dispute after the bank has had it. In 2025 it opened 50,065 cases across banking, credit and insurance and got R442.9 million back for customers, up from R328.5 million in 2024. Banking was R53.0 million of that, from 12,461 complaints. Fraud was the largest banking category. About 60% of the R53 million was refunds and awards in fraud cases, and where money was awarded the scheme often found that the bank had been slow to act once it knew of the fraud. Formal banking cases rose by about a quarter, and the banking division registered 14,685 cases.

The Financial Intelligence Centre can tell an institution not to proceed with a transaction while an investigation continues. In 2024/25 it blocked more than R157.5 million suspected to be criminal proceeds, and its intelligence was used in recoveries of R143.9 million, including more than R33 million through an asset-recovery hub run with the prosecutors. In 2025/26 the blocked amount was R34.2 million and the recoveries that used its intelligence were R37.5 million. Those figures cover proceeds of crime of every kind.

The Reserve Bank's 2024 directive puts the refund on the firm that sent the transfer, and only where that firm is responsible. It must prove the customer agreed the amount and the account, and it must pay the money back within a reasonable time. The ombud awards are a separate route, decided after the bank has already had the complaint.

MONEY RETURNED

US$8.9m

6.2% of the money lost

US$8.9m (ZAR 159.7m) of it was returned to victims, 6.2% of the money lost.

REPORTED

75%

of victims reported it

In the 2025/26 victim survey, 38.8% of people who experienced consumer fraud told the police about at least one incident, 126,000 people. That share rose from 34.9% in 2024/25. In the latest year, 37.3% said they reported every incident and 1.6% reported some, against 33.7% who had reported every incident a year earlier.

Banks recorded 110,074 digital banking crime investigations in 2025, up from 97,547 in 2024 and 52,588 in 2023. The police recorded 147,034 commercial crimes in the year to March 2026, up 2.4%, and 36,797 in the January to March quarter, up 4.0%. The ombud scheme opened 50,065 complaints in 2025. Its banking division registered 14,685 cases, and formal banking cases rose 25.4%. Firms filed 718,464 reports of suspicious transactions with the Financial Intelligence Centre in 2025/26, up from more than 570,000 the year before.

A bank's claim sits with the industry centre. A police docket is a separate commercial crime record, covering fraud, attempted fraud, forgery and uttering. A complaint to the ombud scheme is a dispute with a bank, a credit provider or an insurer. The intelligence centre receives the firms' suspicious-transaction reports and can pass a case to investigators. The conduct regulator shares information with the banking centre and the fraud prevention service, and its November 2025 warning described impersonation on WhatsApp, Telegram and Instagram, including a pitch that money already lost can be sent back through a crypto wallet.

POLICE RECORDS

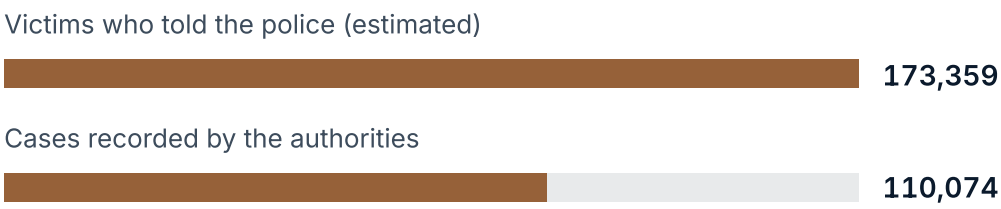
110,074

cases recorded by the authorities

The figure shown here is digital banking crime recorded by the South African Banking Risk Information Centre for calendar 2025: 110,074 client-claim investigations and R2,406,728,972 in client claims. It covers the banking app, internet banking and mobile banking at nine banks: Absa, First National Bank, Nedbank, Standard Bank, Capitec, Bidvest, Discovery, Investec and GoTyme. It leaves out other banks, and it leaves out card fraud, a separate R1.75 billion on South African cards, up 18%. The average digital claim was R21,865. The banking app was 97,555 of those cases.

The police count is wider. Commercial crime, fraud including attempted fraud, plus forgery and uttering, was 147,034 cases in the year to March 2026, up 2.4% from 143,531, and 36,797 in the latest quarter, up 4.0%. The Hawks, the priority-crime directorate, take the serious dockets. In 2024/25 they received 1,461, of which other fraud was 1,097, advance-fee fraud 7, internet-related fraud 3 and Cybercrimes Act charges 5. They took 414 cases to a first court appearance. In 2025/26, 1,681 of 2,221 serious commercial files were ready for trial, 75.7%, against a target of 65%.

With the prosecutors, the Financial Intelligence Centre's asset-recovery hub started 11 investigations in 2024/25 and recovered more than R33 million in criminal proceeds. In 2025/26 its forensic work identified R77.2 million for freezing or forfeiture. Those sums cover proceeds of crime of every kind.



GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The main joint machinery is the banks' own. Through the Banking Risk Information Centre they share cases, and the Banking Industry Anti-Scam Centre was built to trace and hold money before it splits across mule accounts, cash, gaming sites or crypto platforms. The centre is now a standing operation. The same report says it is not yet large or automatic enough to bring industry losses down. Those losses rose 29.2% in 2025, to R2.41 billion, and cases rose from 97,547 to 110,074.

The conduct regulator has started to pull others in. In September 2025 banks, phone companies and the police put real-time sharing, and joint watching of social media, among their priorities. It shares information with the banking centre and the Southern African Fraud Prevention Service, and work with the telecoms regulator on SIM-swap crime is expanding. The Financial Intelligence Centre runs a fusion centre with investigators and an asset-recovery hub with prosecutors. It blocked R157.5 million of suspected proceeds in 2024/25 and R34.2 million in 2025/26, with recoveries of R143.9 million and then R37.5 million. Those amounts cover every kind of criminal proceeds. The ombud scheme, one office since March 2024, returned R53 million to banking customers in 2025, about 60% of it in fraud cases.

The refund rule in force puts the duty on a firm that sends a customer's transfer, and only when that firm is responsible. Police commercial crime rose to 147,034 cases in the year to March 2026.

Calculation Methodology & Sources

People scammed

From one survey:

- 1.0%: Statistics South Africa, Governance, Public Safety and Justice Survey 2025/26 (statistical release P0341), Table 22, page 38, and Table 43, page 108 (12 months to 28 February 2026). Worked out: 0.7% of adults lost money in the survey, and 72.3% of victims lose money (borrowed from Indonesia, Mexico, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam).
- 1.0% of 44,823,478 adults.

People who lost money

- Borrowed from Indonesia, Mexico, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam: 72.3%. Average of the shares measured in Indonesia (60.0%), Mexico (83.6%), Malaysia (72.4%), the Philippines (80.8%), Thailand (79.2%) and Vietnam (57.6%).

Money lost

- ZAR 2.41b was lost in cases recorded by the authorities. Adding the 212,783 victims who lost money but are not in those records, at ZAR 872 each, gives ZAR 2.59b.
- Price of an unrecorded loss: Read off the line fitted to GDP per person in the countries where this price is measured (Canada, Chile, Mexico, Singapore and United States): US$48.77 = ZAR 872.42.
- US dollars at 0.055901058 per ZAR.
- Share of GDP: US$144.9m against GDP of US$427.18b in 2025. World Bank, GDP (current US$) 2025.

Money returned

- Estimated: the median share of money recovered in upper-middle-income countries that publish it: Brazil (12.5%), China (5.8%), Indonesia (6.2%), Mexico (8.6%), Malaysia (5.8%), Thailand (10.2%) and Türkiye (5.8%).

Reported

- Borrowed from Indonesia, India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam: 75.0%. The median of the shares measured by the non-government survey: Indonesia (48.0%), India (87.9%), Malaysia (55.2%), the Philippines (76.9%), Singapore (87.1%), Thailand (75.0%) and Vietnam (65.2%).

Police records

- 38.8%: Statistics South Africa, Governance, Public Safety and Justice Survey 2025/26 (statistical release P0341), Table 32, page 59 (12 months to 28 February 2026).
- 110,074: Digital banking crime cases recorded by the South African Banking Risk Information Centre (client claim investigations).

Sources

- Armidale, ASEAN Consumer Scam Report 2026 for the GSMA (figures computed from the respondent data) (4 September 2026). Survey. Online survey of adults aged 18 and over in each country (Milieu Insight panel). Original https://www.gsma.com/about-us/regions/asia-pacific/gsma_resources/asean-consumer-scam-report-2026/
- Financial Intelligence Centre, Media release on the 2024/25 annual report (30 September 2025). Official source. More than 570,000 suspicious transaction reports. Suspected proceeds frozen above R157.5 million. Recoveries using the centre's intelligence above R143.9 million, including above R33 million through the asset-recovery hub with the prosecutors. Original https://www.fic.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Media-release-FIC-2024-25-annual-report.pdf ·

- Financial Intelligence Centre, Media release on the 2025/26 annual report (30 September 2026). Official source. 718,464 suspicious transaction reports. Suspected proceeds frozen above R34.2 million. Recoveries using the centre's intelligence above R37.5 million. Forensic products identified R77.2 million. These are proceeds of crime of every kind. Original https://www.fic.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/Media-release-FIC-Annual-Report-2025-26.pdf ·
- Financial Sector Conduct Authority, Newsletter, second quarter, 30 September 2025 (30 September 2025). Official source. The saved PDF is the 30 September 2025 newsletter. It reports the September 2025 digital fraud roundtable, information-sharing agreements with the banking centre and the Southern African Fraud Prevention Service, and expanding work with the telecoms regulator on SIM-swap crime. Original https://www.fsca.co.za/ ·
- Financial Sector Conduct Authority, Public warning on impersonation and fraudulent investment schemes, 24 November 2025 (24 November 2025). Official source. The saved PDF is the 24 November 2025 press release. It warns of impersonation of the regulator and of licensed firms on WhatsApp, Telegram and Instagram, including a recovery pitch that asks someone who has already lost money to fund a crypto wallet. Original https://www.fsca.co.za/ ·
- National Financial Ombud Scheme, Banking and credit results for 2025 (5 June 2026). Official source. 5 June 2026. Fraud was the largest banking complaint category. About 60 percent of the banking amount awarded was fraud refunds and awards. The banking division registered 14,685 cases. Formal banking cases rose 25.4 percent. Original https://www.nfosa.co.za/nfo-strengthens-trust-with-sweeping-consumer-wins/ ·
- National Financial Ombud Scheme, Second-year results, R442.9 million restored to consumers (5 June 2026). Official source. 5 June 2026. In 2025 the scheme opened 50,065 cases and returned R442.9 million, of which banking was R53.0 million from 12,461 complaints. Industry ombud scheme recognised by the Ombud Council. Original https://www.nfosa.co.za/nfos-second-year-surge-r442-9-million-restored-to-consumers/ ·
- Ombud Council, Recognition certificate OC/001/24 for the National Financial Ombud Scheme (1 March 2024). Official source. Recognises the National Financial Ombud Scheme as an industry ombud scheme under section 194 of the Financial Sector Regulation Act, with effect from 1 March 2024. Original https://ombudcouncil.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Recognition-Certificate_-OC-001-24_National-Financial-Ombud-Scheme-South-Africa.-Effective-01-March-2024.pdf ·
- South African Banking Risk Information Centre, Annual Crime Statistics 2025 (4 August 2026). Industry source. Digital banking crime for calendar 2025: 110,074 client claim investigations and R2,406,728,972 in client claims, from the named member banks. Not every bank, and not card fraud. Release page dated 4 August 2026. Original https://www.sabric.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/SABRIC-Annual-Crime-Statistics-Report-2025.pdf ·
- South African Police Service, Annual Report 2024/2025 (15 October 2025). Official source. Police-recorded commercial crime for 2024/25: 143,531 in the national comparison (page 111) and 142,160 in the ten-year series. Hawks serious commercial crime: 1,461 cases received, actual value R488.3 billion (page 183). No loss total for the commercial crime count. Original https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202511/south-african-police-service-annual-report-2024-2025.pdf ·
- South African Police Service, Police recorded crime statistics, fourth quarter of 2025/2026 (22 May 2026). Official source. January to March 2026. Commercial crime 36,797, up 4.0 percent from 35,374. The PDF file was created on 22 May 2026; the cover does not print a separate release day. Commercial crime means fraud, including attempted fraud, forgery and uttering. Original https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/2025/2025-2026_-_4th_Quarter_WEB.pdf ·
- South African Police Service, Annual Report 2025/26: briefing to the Select Committee on Security and Justice (22 October 2026). Official source. Commercial crime 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026: 147,034, up 2.4 percent from 143,531. Figures as reported on CAS/ICDMS and as audited by the Auditor-General unless flagged. The date is the Parliamentary Monitoring Group file name. No losses are printed with the count. Original https://static.pmg.org.za/261022SAPS_PRESENTATION_FOR_THE_SELECT_COMMIITTEE.pdf ·
- South African Reserve Bank, Directive 2 of 2024 on electronic funds transfer credit payment instructions (15 November 2024). Official source. Government Gazette 51556, Notice 5550, 15 November 2024, in force 90 days later. It binds a firm that sends an electronic payment instruction for the payer. Where that firm is responsible, it must refund the customer, and it must prove the customer agreed the amount and the account if the customer denies the payment. Original https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202411/51556gon5550.pdf ·
- Statistics South Africa, Governance, Public Safety and Justice Survey 2025/26 (statistical release P0341) (1 September 2026). Survey. National household victimisation survey. Fieldwork April 2025 to March 2026. Embargo lifted 1 September 2026. Consumer fraud among people aged 16 and over. Original https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0341/P03412026.pdf ·
- UN DESA, World Population Prospects 2024 (medium variant) (11 July 2024). Official source. Modelled estimates built from censuses and surveys. Original https://population.un.org/wpp/ ·

- Vanguardia, reporting CONDUSEF, Crece la estafa digital: más de 2.4 millones de fraudes bancarios en México durante 2025 (1 August 2025). News report. Press report of CONDUSEF figures on fraud claims and refunds. Original https://vanguardia.com.mx/noticias/mexico/crece-la-estafa-digital-mas-de-24-millones-de-fraudes-bancarios-en-mexico-durante-2025-MK17956794 ·
- World Bank, Official exchange rate (local currency units per US$, period average) 2025 (8 October 2026). Official source. Annual average of official exchange rates reported by national authorities. Original https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/PA.NUS.FCRF ·
- World Bank, GDP (current US$) 2025 (8 October 2026). Official source. National accounts estimates that are revised as countries report. Original https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD ·
