



## Crime line crisis – 10111 may leave you hanging

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The number of police officers in the South African Police Service (SAPS) has steadily declined over the years, a concern recently highlighted in the gravely understaffed 10111 call centres – which may leave you hanging in the event of an emergency. Responding to a written parliamentary Q&A, the department of police revealed that only 40% of 10111 call centres across the country are staffed. The response came to questions posed by the Democratic Alliance (DA), which asked the department for the total number of personnel that should be and are employed at the centres and how many dropped calls have been recorded in each province since 2020. According to the department of police, just over 6.3 million calls went unanswered in six out of nine provinces that provided the data over the last three years – meaning the number of dropped calls is likely even higher. The department also provided the ideal number of personnel and the actual number of personnel employed at 10111 call centres in each province. According to the data presented, North West is the worst off, with only 12% of its emergency call centres staffed. This is then followed by Mpumalanga (22%), the Free State (23%), and Limpopo (37%). In contrast, the most staffed call centres are in the Western Cape at 94%, followed by the Northern Cape (71%) and Gauteng (55%). The table below shows the ideal number of personnel vs the actual number employed, representing the percentage of 10111 call centres staffed since April 2022.

Province	Ideal number of personnel	Actual number of personnel	Current capacity staffed (%)
Eastern Cape	628	244	39%
Free State	328	77	23%
Gauteng	630	348	55%
Kwa-Zulu Natal	551	220	40%
Limpopo	237	87	37%

Mpumalanga 405 91 22% Northern Cape 58 41 71% North West 328 39 12% Western Cape 179 168 94% However, the situation seems to be even worse in 2023 than the department of police has reported. Speaking with Carte Blanche, the national manager of the Public Servants Association (PSA), Claude Naicker, said that the 10111 call centres in Gauteng alone were operating with only 74 employees at the beginning of 2023. He added that in December 2022, the peak period for emergency response services, one shift had only 12 employees manning the call centres for the entire province. Even if a caller gets through to the emergency centres, a person familiar with the issue told Carte Blanche that there are simply not enough emergency personnel on the ground to be despatched to the scene, leaving those in distress stranded. The lack of emergency personnel is not new to South Africa, especially regarding the SAPS. Responding in a written parliamentary Q&A in November 2022, police minister Bheki Cele said that the SAPS couldn't meet the country's policing demands. He said that the demand for policing has increased beyond the SAPS' current capabilities – a situation exacerbated by a lack of financial resources afforded to the department. Cele noted that, as of November 2022, 140,000 officers were serving a population of 60 million. Data published at the end of April 2022 showed that the number of SAPS employees had declined steadily over the past decade and is expected to plateau. The SAPS noted that the most significant outflow of workers in recent years has been at the police station level. At the same time, the increase in the average age of police officers within the department meant that another 10,000 retirements were expected by the end of 2022 – leading to fewer boots on the ground. In addressing this, Cele noted the department plans to add 7,000 new recruits in the 2022/2023 financial year, with a further 5,000 recruits to be added in the 2023/2024 financial year. According to the Mail and Guardian, the deputy police minister Cassel Mathale told the NCOP that South Africa needs to “at least” get back to the 150,000 mark – but this is impossible on the current budget. Even if the budget was addressed and the country reached this number, Mathale added that it is still not enough to cover the needed policing capacity as the population continues to grow....