



Social and Community Listening (SCL)

# SCL Insights Report: Q4-2025

Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) - 1 October to 31 December 2025





This report presents the findings of a comprehensive social and community listening (SCL) study conducted to analyze social media conversations across East and Southern Africa (ESA) related to the topics of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Using a methodology grounded in qualitative and quantitative social media analysis, the research identifies key trends and narratives, country-specific nuances, as well as the risks and opportunities for UNICEF and partners associated with these critical topics. The report aims to inform actionable recommendations for advocacy and communication strategies to support objectives in the region. Please note that any views reported on as part of the social media landscape analysis do not necessarily reflect the views of UNICEF or partners.

This report is produced with support from 2gether 4 SRHR, a joint UN Regional Programme, in partnership with Sweden, which brings together the combined efforts of UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO to improve the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of all people in Eastern and Southern Africa. For a one stop shop of information and resources in Africa, please visit the [SRHR Knowledge Hub](#).

# Executive Summary

- Sexual assault investigations dominated the dataset, accounting for the largest thematic share, with over 32,000 results linked to rape, defilement, domestic violence, and ongoing police appeals for public assistance
- Crime and violence comprised 64.2% of total results but generated only 10.2% of engagement, suggesting high visibility but lower interaction, possibly indicating desensitization or fatigue
- Mental health represented 23% of total volume yet drove 55% of engagement, with young people aged 18 to 24 contributing nearly half of related posts, signaling strong youth interest
- Conversations around HIV and menstrual health showed gendered patterns: men were most active in HIV discussions, while women led menstrual health conversations
- “Sexual assault,” “sexual abuse,” and “toxic masculinity” were the most recurrent phrases across the dataset, reflecting both institutional accountability concerns and contested gender narratives
- Debate around “toxic masculinity” was polarized. Some users linked it to violence and harmful norms, while others rejected the term outright, framing it as anti male rhetoric
- The “Epstein effect” triggered renewed scrutiny of child sexual abuse, trafficking, and judicial bias, with ESA commentators drawing parallels to local power structures and court systems
- Country level discussions reflected both national legal cases and broader global narratives. South Africa and Botswana focused heavily on investigations and sentencing; Kenya and Tanzania showed strong intersections between religion, politics, and SRHR; Ethiopia and Zambia highlighted child protection crises and systemic impunity.
- Eritrea’s dataset indicated probable location spoofing and high volumes of explicit content requests, pointing to methodological and safeguarding concerns in data collection
- High engagement visuals included unverified assault statistics, viral TikTok content framed as toxic masculinity, and media reporting on domestic violence cases, demonstrating how emotive or sensational framing drives amplification

# Methodology



This [social listening and community \(SCL\)](#) insights study was conducted in February 2026, covering 3 months of data between October and December 2025 across the Eastern and Southern Africa region in five languages (English, Portuguese, French, Arabic and Swahili).

The study employed online social listening and community feedback data (where available) to analyze concerns, questions and potential misleading and harmful content from the public. Social listening tool “Talkwalker” and community insights research were used to capture relevant conversations across target countries, with thematic categorization and sentiment analysis applied to structure the findings. While the dataset is extensive, the study acknowledges limitations, including restricted access to private data and potential bias inherent to social listening and community insights research.

**Due to changes in data collection methodology, this report is not directly comparable to Q3-2025 SRHR SCL report.**

## Research Questions

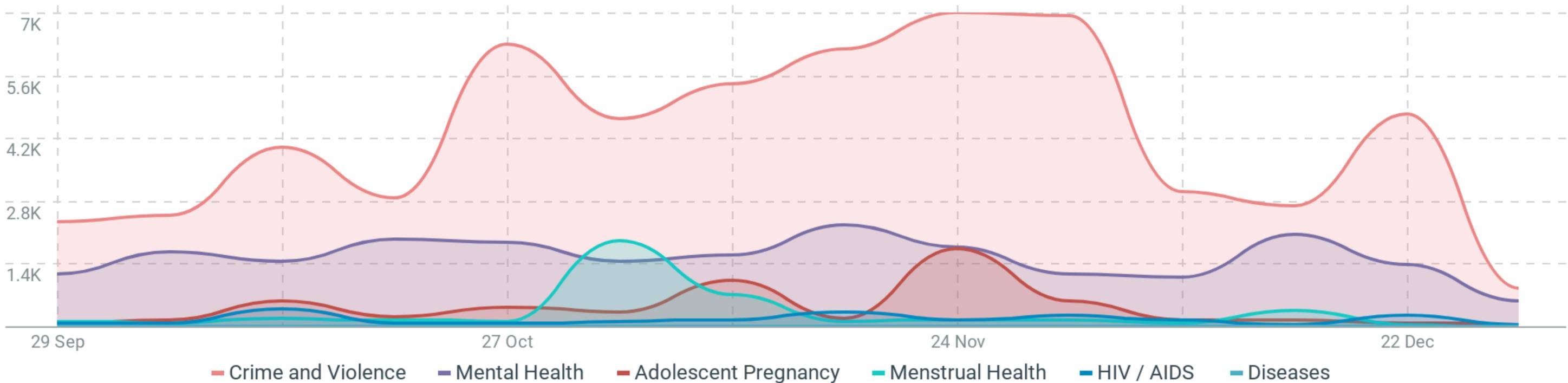
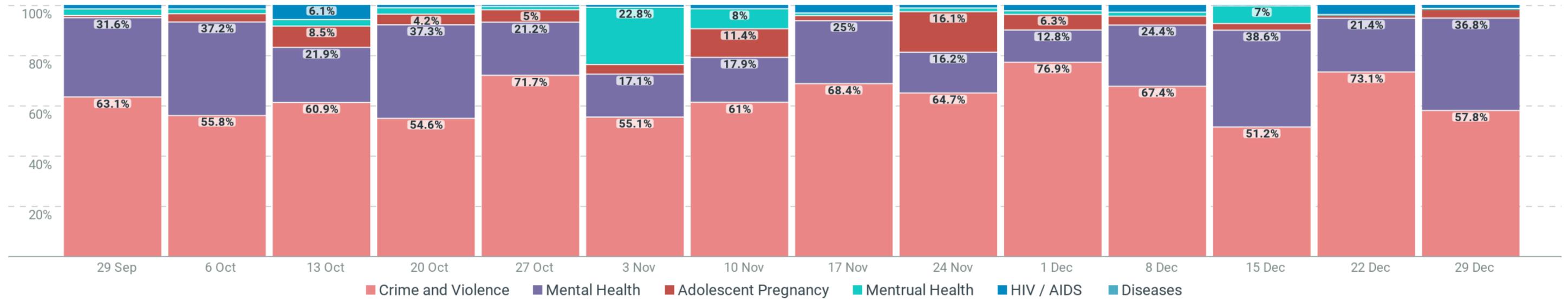
- What trends and issues are the most and the least visible online and in the media?
- What positive and negative narratives are emerging online?
- Misconceptions and Disinformation: what barriers exist to promote programme responses?
- What is the tone and language used to describe all issues selected?
- Which individuals and entities are shaping the debate?
- What are the major behavioral and communications risks, and opportunities to act based on insights provided in the report?
- Which resources can be used to provide a response?

# Key Insights

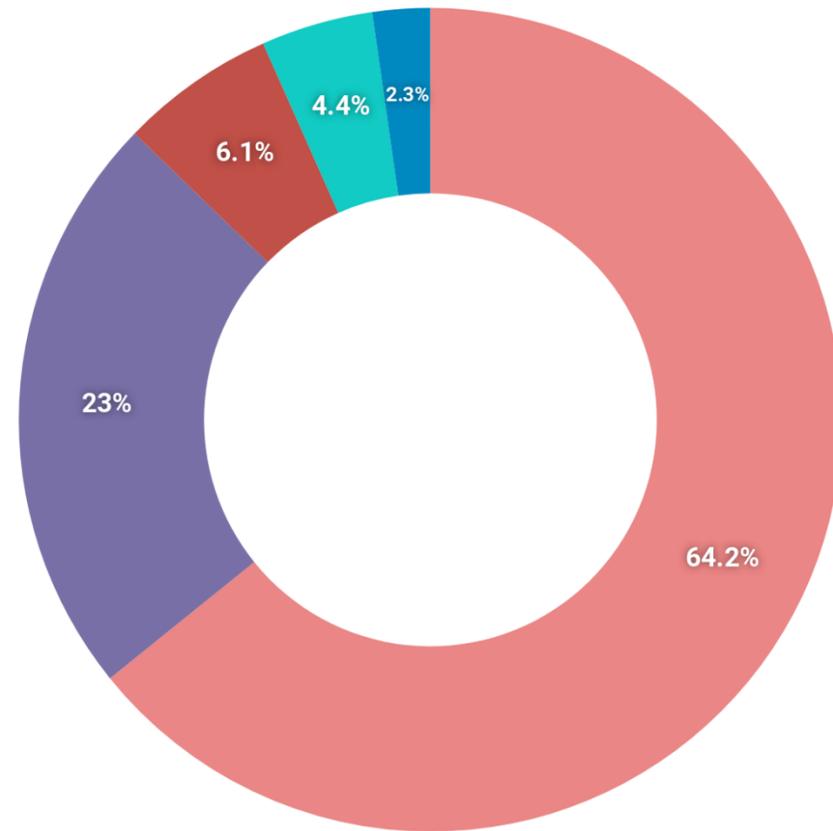


- Crime and Violence has the highest share (64.2%) of the results in the dataset but it also has the lowest engagement share (10.2%) which could suggest complacency and lack of interest by social media audiences.
- Mental Health conversations had 23% of the total results volume but an overwhelming 55% of engagement, suggesting high social media interest in the topic
- Young people 18-24 were the primary drivers of conversations on Mental Health accounting for nearly 50% of all results on the topic in the dataset.
- Diseases did not meaningfully appear in the dataset, less than 2.3% of the results, which could reflect a weakness in the SCL query used.
- Men were most interested in HIV/AIDs (68.7%) related conversations while women understandably were most interested in Menstrual Health (59%)
- 'Sexual assault', 'sexual abuse', and 'toxic masculinity' were the most recurring themes with 32%, 17%, and 4% of the conversation share in the total collected data for this report.
- Comoros, Burundi, Madagascar, Lesotho, and Eswatini are highly under represented in this dataset. This may suggest low online conversation about the topics or SCL query design challenges.
- Majority of the data in this report uses social media and online news data. There is a need to develop a CFM or field-based SRHR data pipeline to be built, so that online conversations can support and complement online data.

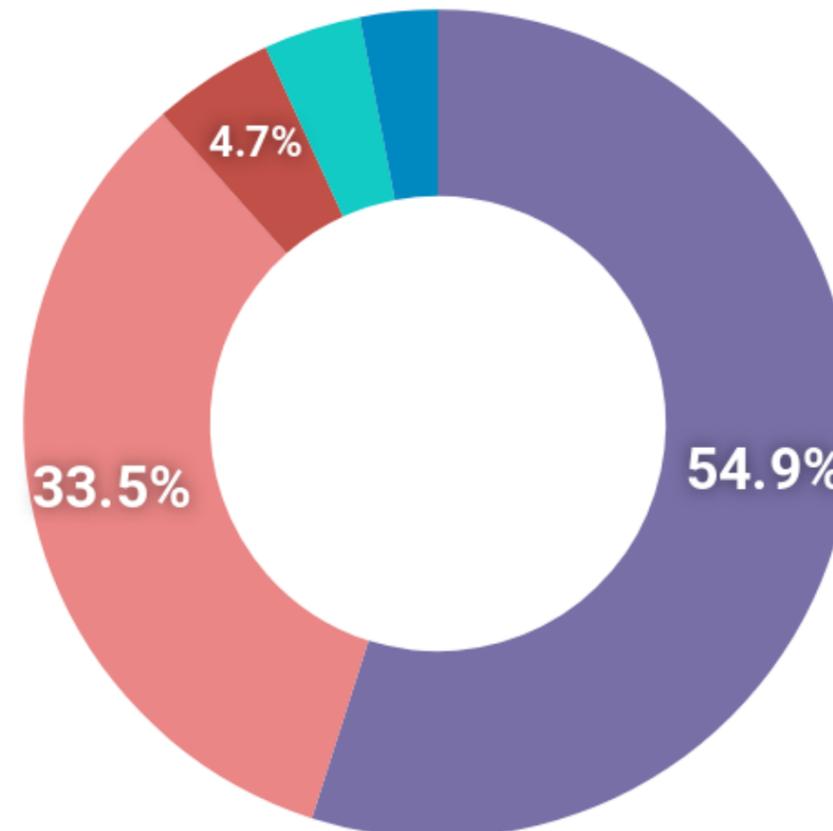
# Topline Data



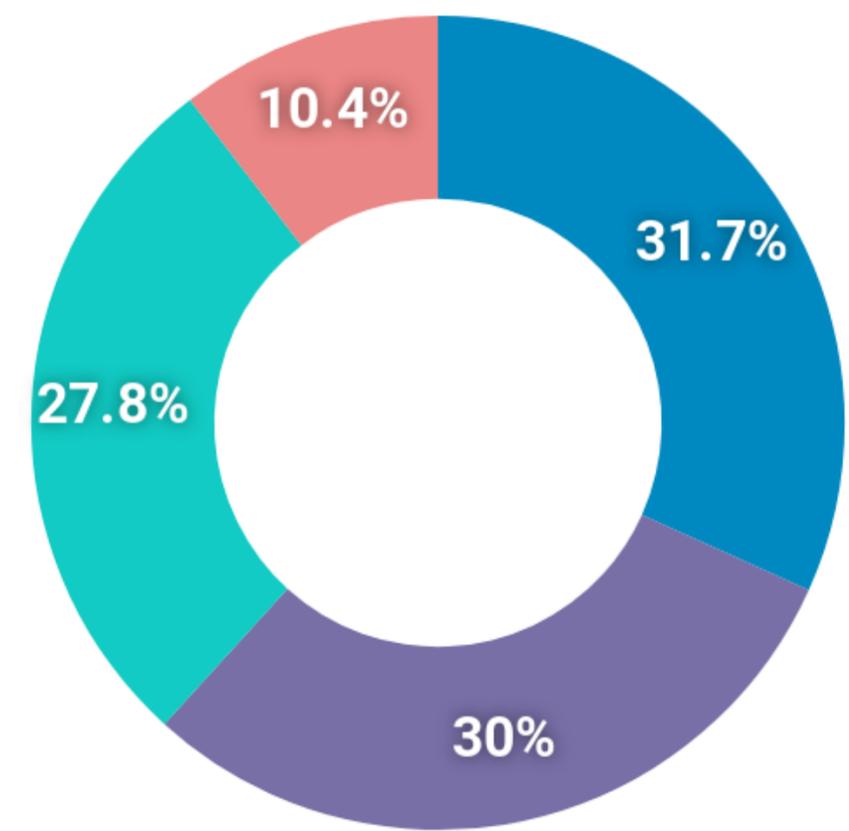
# Topic Interest



Share of Conversation



Share of Reach



Share of Engagement

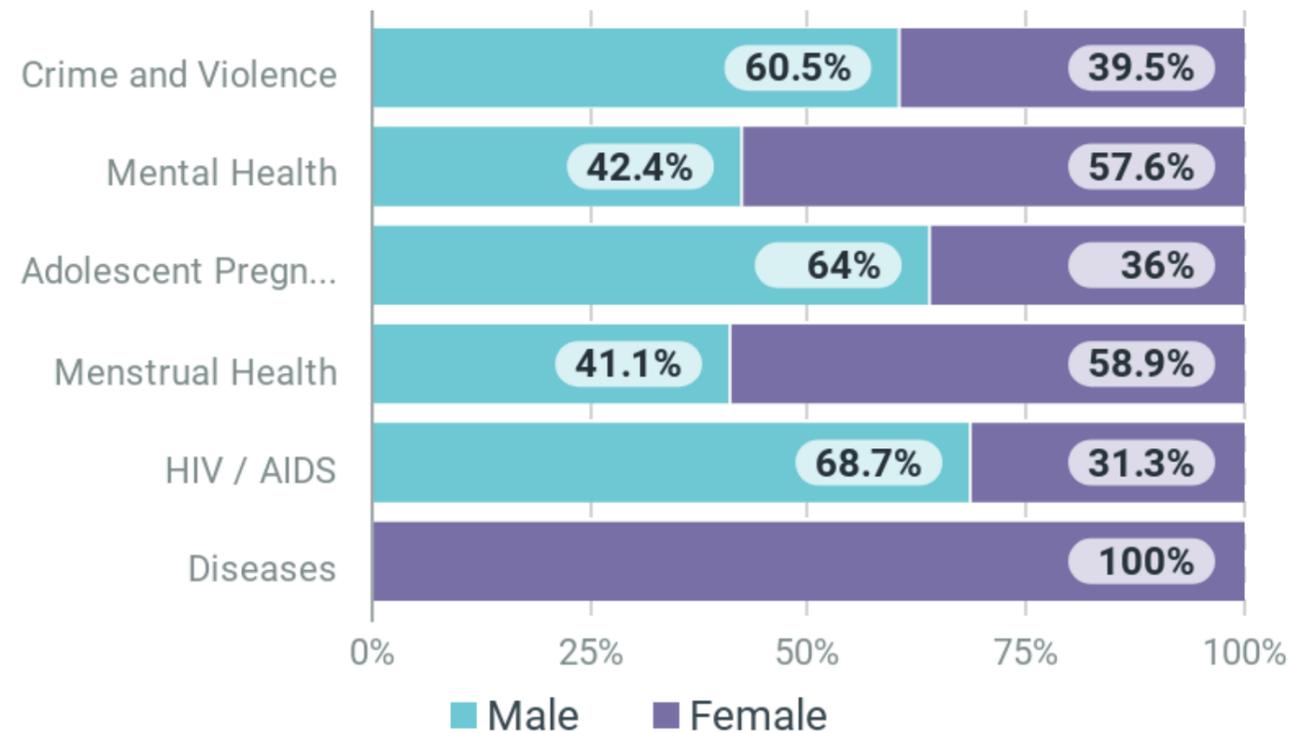
● Crime and Violence ● Mental Health ● Adolescent Pregnancy ● Menstrual Health ● HIV / AIDS ● Diseases

Engagement data not available for Diseases and Adolescent Pregnancy for this dataset due to data collection delay.

# Demographics

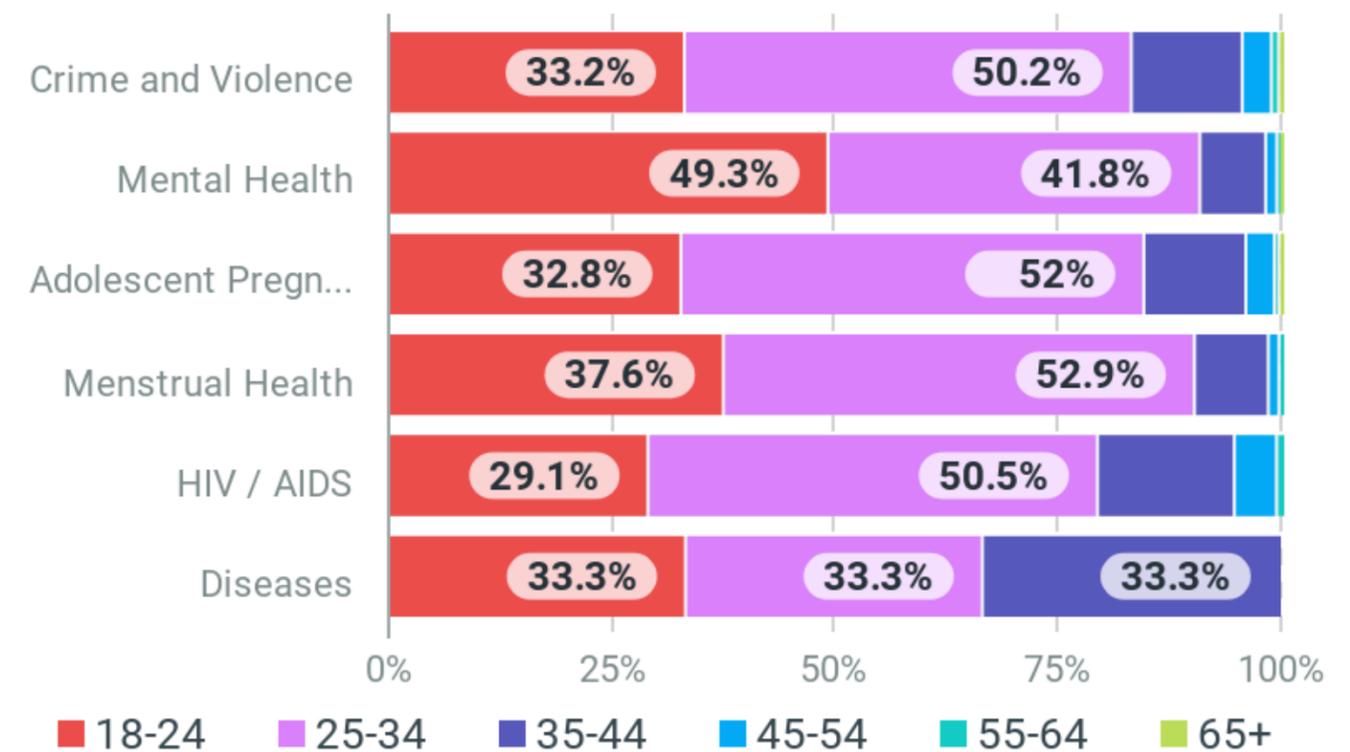
## GENDER

by filter

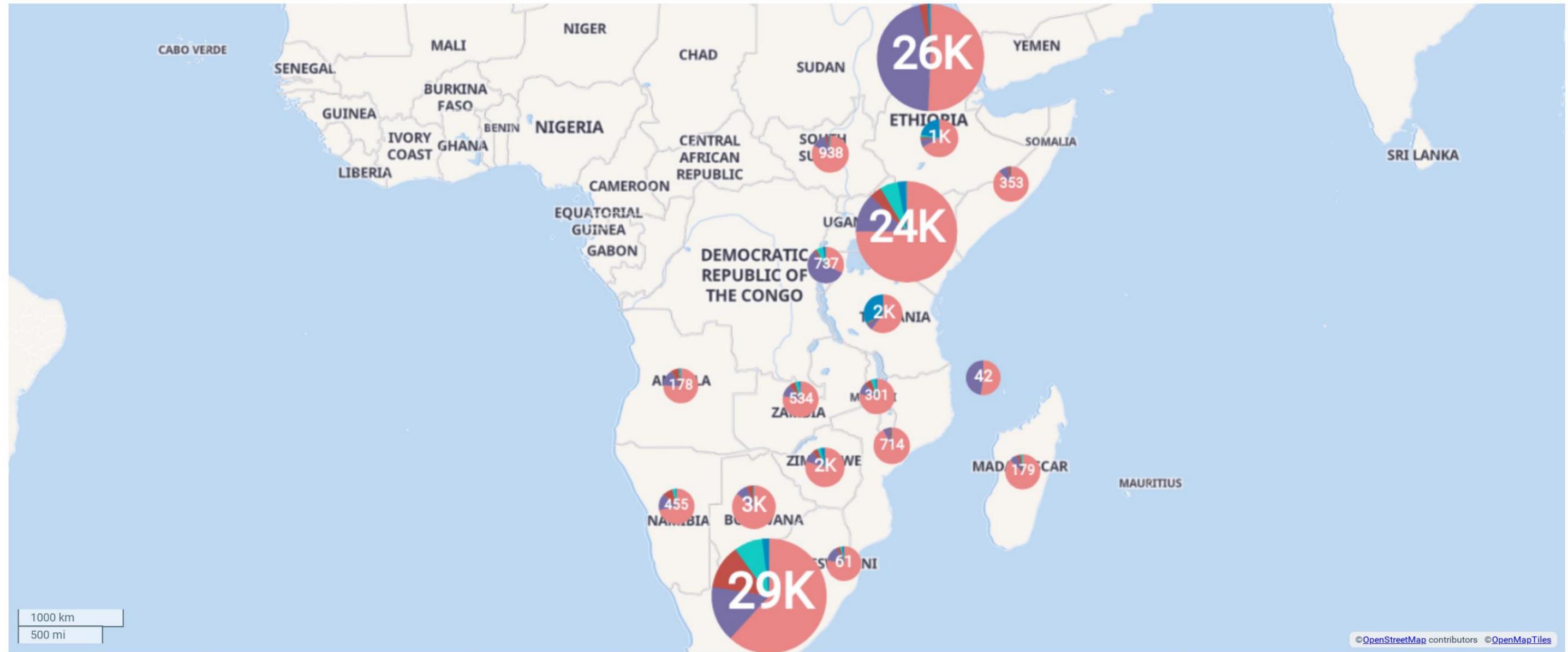


## AGE

by filter



# Geographic Distribution



Location data can be spoofed or faked, use with caution.

# Top Themes



Data visualization based on 2-word phrase / keyword incidence.

# Trend: 'Sexual Assault Investigations'

Sexual Assault Investigations are the most frequent theme (over 32,000 results) in the data, revolving around ongoing investigations into sexual assault cases. Posts detail the release of identikits and requests for public assistance in locating suspects across various locations including Khayelitsha, Kimberley, and Galeshewe. There's a consistent emphasis on the severity of the crimes (rape, sexual assault, attempted murder, and kidnapping) and the need for public cooperation to bring perpetrators to justice. Quotes like, "The police are requesting the public to assist with information that may lead to the apprehension and arrest of the suspect depicted in the identikit," highlight this demand for community involvement.

The dataset includes media reporting on allegations of brutality by British soldiers in Kenya, citing human rights violations such as

unlawful detention and torture. This generated significant discussion about military misconduct and the potential for abuses of power, particularly involving foreign forces operating in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Commentators directly addressed incidents of sexual assault targeting women, including the assault of teenage girls and suicide of a woman following a rape. Some users highlighted the challenges they face in reporting sexual assaults.

Reports of domestic violence, including allegations of strangulation, sexual assault, and abuse. There are also reports of individuals facing legal charges related to sexual assault, and an ex-partner facing multiple charges including sexual assault, abuse, and drug use. One commentators highlighted transgender women being housed in men's prisons, and the lack of action to prevent sexual assault in prison.

Social media discourse demonstrates public awareness and concern regarding sexual assault, with calls for action, support for victims, and criticism of institutions failing to protect vulnerable populations. One high visibility post reiterated the importance of creating safe spaces for survivors to speak out and the need for systemic change.

## COMMUNITY VOICE: BOTSWANA

"Being skeptical is one thing, but immediately writing off someone who speaks up is wrong. If this is how we react, no survivor will ever feel safe speaking up about sexual assault again. We're essentially silencing future victims."

# Trend: 'Toxic Masculinity'

A significant portion of the social media conversation (5,134 results) revolved around the concept of "toxic masculinity" and its impact on SRHR. People expressed concern about harmful behaviors associated with traditional masculine norms, often linked to aggression, emotional repression, and disrespect towards women.

Conversely, some users strongly reject the idea of "toxic masculinity," arguing it's a manufactured concept used to guilt-trip men. One user asserted that "Men, Lastly, There is nothing like "toxic masculinity," It doesn't exist." This creates a polarized discussion around the validity and application of the term.

People critiqued rigid gender roles and expectations placed on men. One male social media user expressed frustration with women who reject traditional masculinity while simultaneously wanting a traditional marriage.

Another male user proposed a more open approach to masculinity, stating, "We're allowed to say he's (a man) beautiful and pretty." This may reflect a desire for men to express a wider range of emotions and behaviors without judgment.

Many posts featured examples of behaviors that are framed as manifestations of "toxic masculinity," often accompanied by strong reactions. One shared video saw a man quickly engaging in violence, prompting discussion about the potential for aggressive behavior being seen as a positive display of strength. A post noted that in any violent altercation the burden of suspicion always fall on the man regardless of the circumstances.

Some posts suggest a degree of strategic framing within discussions about gender and masculinity. One person pointed out that critiques of

masculinity can sometimes mirror the behaviors they criticize. Another highlighted how feminist organizations may strategically use the concept of "toxic masculinity" to gain leverage.

A lot of these posts and conversations were reposts of conversations relating to or primarily centered outside the scope countries. Yet their presence points to increasing awareness of the subject and a need for practitioners to be aware of this building societal narrative,

## COMMUNITY VOICE: SOUTH AFRICA

"I hate when men take over what should be championed by women and make it thier own initiative, thats toxic masculinity



# Trend: The Epstein Effect

A recurring theme across the dataset with over 3,800 posts is the prevalence of child sexual abuse and exploitation. The Epstein Files investigation in the US, triggered widespread interest and conversations about SRHR across ESA. Local social media commentators condemned trafficking, coercion, and abuse related to Jeffrey Epstein. They frequently linked the conversation to power and influence.

Posts highlighted systemic failures in reporting and investigating these crimes in the region, particularly within religious institutions and family courts, which frequently exhibit disbelief and bias against victims, especially mothers. Quotes like "The system is built on a profound disbelief that fathers abuse — and an equally entrenched view that women lie and manipulate" underscore this troubling dynamic.

The Epstein case is repeatedly referenced,

alongside allegations involving other prominent figures. ESA commentators highlighted that such an investigation needs to be conducted in their own countries as well, while some users wondered if people in their own country (often political personalities) are named in the Epstein Files.

In comments under these conversations, there's a strong current of criticism directed toward legal and judicial systems, particularly family courts, which are accused of failing to adequately protect child victims and often exhibiting bias against mothers who raise allegations.

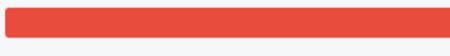
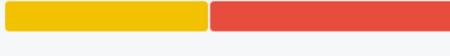
The posts detail instances where claims of abuse are dismissed, minimized, or attributed to manipulation, hindering justice for survivors. One social media user reposted that, "courts find the mother coached the child, accuse her of

alienation, or say the abuse can't be proven on the balance of probabilities." Additionally, there's a concern regarding the lack of accountability for perpetrators, with evidence suggesting a culture of impunity for such crimes. Some online and conventional media journalists emphasized the importance of impartial journalism in reporting child sexual abuse.

## COMMUNITY VOICE: RWANDA

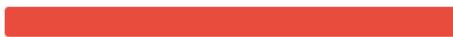
"As a society, we must break the silence, stop protecting perpetrators, and start protecting children. To parents, guardians, teachers, and community leaders be vigilant. Listen to children, believe them when they speak, and report any form of abuse immediately."

# Highest Reach Influencers

Influencer 	Network	Posts	Sentiment	Reach	Reach per mention 	Engagement	Engagement per mention
 <b>Vusi.Bafetane</b> <a href="http://www.msn.com/">http://www.msn.com/</a>		1		173.3M	173.3M	0	0
 <b>China Xinhua News</b> <a href="http://www.facebook.com/">http://www.facebook.com/</a>		2		200.3M	100.1M	32	16
 <b>millardayo</b> <a href="http://instagram.com/">http://instagram.com/</a>		2		31.4M	15.7M	14.5K	7.3K
 <b>Doctors Without Borders (MSF)</b> <a href="http://www.facebook.com/">http://www.facebook.com/</a>		1		13.2M	13.2M	134	134
 <b>Bodokotela Labangenamincele / Doctors Without Borders - MSF</b> <a href="http://www.facebook.com/">http://www.facebook.com/</a>		3		38M	12.7M	1.8K	586
 <b>Citizen TV Kenya</b> <a href="http://www.facebook.com/">http://www.facebook.com/</a>		20		162.1M	8.1M	6.2K	311.8
 <b>Citizen TV Kenya</b>  <a href="https://twitter.com/citizentvkenya">@citizentvkenya</a>		22		151M	6.9M	629	28.6
 <b>News24</b>   <a href="https://twitter.com/News24">@News24</a>		11		73.1M	6.6M	655	59.5
 <b>NTV Kenya</b> <a href="http://www.facebook.com/">http://www.facebook.com/</a>		25		150.2M	6M	17.1K	682.4
 <b>wasafifm</b> <a href="http://instagram.com/">http://instagram.com/</a>		1		6M	6M	276	276

Individuals and organizations listed here may not be supportive of the SRHR agenda and may sometimes have low programme relevance.

# Most Engaging Influencers

Influencer 	Network	Posts	Sentiment	Reach	Reach per mention	Engagement	Engagement per mention 
 <b>Paul</b>  @ouma_neko	X	2		72.2K	36.1K	26.3K	13.2K
 <b>The Duke Of Gordan's Bay</b> @MagoshiNong	X	1		5.9K	5.9K	12.3K	12.3K
 <b>Eric</b>  @amerix	X	2		4.6M	2.3M	19.3K	9.6K
 <b>Platina Line</b> <a href="http://www.facebook.com/">http://www.facebook.com/</a>	f	10		25.1M	2.5M	81.7K	8.2K
 <b>millardayo</b> <a href="http://instagram.com/">http://instagram.com/</a>	ig	2		31.4M	15.7M	14.5K	7.3K
 <b>Siv Ngesi</b> @iamSivN	X	1		122.8K	122.8K	6.3K	6.3K
 <b>jackson ngari</b> <a href="http://nation.africa/">http://nation.africa/</a>	globe	1		534K	534K	6.2K	6.2K
 <b>Man's NOT Barry Roux</b> @AdvoBarryRoux	X	2		4.8M	2.4M	11.9K	5.9K
 <b>Motasem A Dalloul</b>  @AbujomaaGaza	X	1		195.8K	195.8K	5K	5K
 <b>olexander scherba</b>  @olex_scherba	X	1		248.3K	248.3K	4.9K	4.9K

Individuals and organizations listed here may not be supportive of the SRHR agenda and may sometimes have low programme relevance.

# Country Snapshots



## South Africa

Multiple Twitter posts detail ongoing police investigations into sexual assault cases across South Africa, including attempts to identify suspects and trace victims. These cases range from fast-food restaurant assaults to alleged statutory rape and organized crime networks involved in money laundering and human trafficking.

There are discussions surrounding legislative efforts to address menstrual health rights, with a call for Parliament to adopt a Menstrual Health Rights Bill. Additionally, news reports highlight accusations against British soldiers in Kenya and a legal battle involving Meta's policy on reporting child sexual abuse material.

A series of posts express concern about the rapid proliferation of nail bars, vape shops, phone shops suggesting they may be fronts for criminal activity, including money laundering and exploitation of vulnerable women.

## Eritrea

Eritrea had the second highest number of results in the dataset, however, deeper analysis of the data suggests that most of these posts may be coming from people who are spoofing their location to be in the country. Such profiles and posts rarely talk about Eritrean topics or concerns. This suggests a need for greater vigilance and data cleanup protocols in future SCL researches.

Where the posts seem to come from legitimate local social media users, the conversation included details on protection from possible sexually transmitted diseases after sexual assault including reporting, clinical procedures, and preventative measures (PEP).

A substantial number of results contained explicit content requests, including nude images, and sexting services, indicating a prevalent online market for sexually explicit material and potentially exploitative practices. This could suggest the need for improving the SCL query for Eritrean context.

## Kenya

Social media conversations referenced religious and political tensions, including concerns about forced conversions by Hindu nationalist groups in India, accusations of sexual assault involving Christian clergy, and support for Palestine.

People detailed accounts of sexual assault, coercion, sexting, and exploitation, ranging from alleged incidents involving young people to instances of trafficking and abuse.

Discussions addressing 'toxic masculinity', boundary issues, and problematic behaviors within romantic relationships, with criticism of male attitudes and expectations.

People leaned on faith through references to women's protection and rights in the Bible and the Quran. They critiqued societal issues, calling for repentance and return to 'traditional' religious values.

# Country Snapshots



## Uganda

Allegations of defilement and sexual assault were made against a prominent business owner and against a Ugandan man linked to sex trafficking in Dubai. Victims have come forward with confessions, and investigations are ongoing across various locations, including Mbale, Kampala, and Dubai.

Several posts highlight the issue of human trafficking, particularly involving Ugandan women being lured to Dubai for sex work. A BBC investigation exposed a network operated by a Ugandan man raising questions about nationality and accountability.

Social media users discussed initiatives, such as the Cleanette launch and Martha Ahumuza's focus on menstrual health, highlighting the importance of addressing menstrual health challenges and promoting access to sanitary products, alongside discussions about the complexities of sexual violence.

## Zimbabwe

Heavy focus on a sexual assault case involving a 17-year-old boy and a 33-year-old woman, examining the legal complexities of consent, defining "rape" under Zimbabwean law, and highlighting the vulnerability of minors. There's a discussion about victim-blaming and the need for legal reform.

Medical practitioners detailed strategies for HIV prevention, including abstinence, testing, PrEP (Pre-exposure prophylaxis), and PEP, emphasizing the importance of informed decision-making and addressing the issue of frequent exposure.

A 'Daily News' Facebook post advocated for decriminalizing sex work as a strategy to combat HIV transmission, reflecting ongoing debates about the intersection of sex work, public health, and law.

Amnesty International and UNFPA posted on issues of child protection, gender-based violence, menstrual health, and the need for societal change to address systemic issues period poverty.

## Botswana

Multiple documented legal cases of sexual abuse involving minors are being discussed in Botswana, some of them have been concluded with varying sentences and ongoing appeals. Both names and unnamed individuals are implicated in these offenses.

The Botswana Police Service (BPS) is actively involved in investigating defilement and rape cases, providing training to youth and collaborating with the BDF to promote smart parenting in the digital age.

A 74-year-old traditional healer, was granted bail in a case involving the alleged indecent assault of a 9-year-old granddaughter, highlighting concerns about vulnerable individuals and judicial processes.

Reports from various police stations, including Mahalapye Central and Tonota, indicate a concerning increase in assault, theft, and defilement cases, prompting calls for increased vigilance and preventative measures.

# Country Snapshots



## Tanzania

Multiple cases of alleged abuse and violence against women and children are reported. These include instances of extrajudicial killings, torture, sexual assault, and forced disappearances. This is alongside a case of child sexual abuse in Mtwara.

People discuss Government's role in addressing women's health with a focus on policies promoting menstrual health. They highlighted the example of paid leave for female county employees in Nairobi, Kenya, and discussed rising taxes on contraceptives in China to address declining birth rates.

ITV Tanzania, BBC Swahili, thecitizenz, and itvtz actively shared information on criminal cases, social policies, and public health concerns. These included reports on the presence of sex work in public spaces in Dodoma, raising issues of public safety and vulnerability.

## Zambia

Cases of child sexual abuse are prominently featured across several Facebook posts, highlighting serious crimes against minors in Zambia. The posts detail instances involving both immediate family members and neighbors.

There's a significant focus on proposed changes to the Criminal Procedure Code, aiming to deny bail to individuals convicted of serious offenses like rape, defilement, and theft, reflecting ongoing debates about criminal justice and public safety.

Commentators also shared concerns about rising syphilis rates among young adults, alongside efforts to expand access to HIV prevention pills like Lenacapavir.

Several users discussed criminal activity, including escapes from police custody, police officer deaths, and the pursuit of suspects involved in various offenses, showcasing challenges faced by law enforcement in Zambia.

## Ethiopia

People raised alarm at instances of child sexual abuse, including rape and exploitation, occurring in prisons and linked to organized crime networks. There are also mentions of ongoing investigations and allegations against named individuals.

The Tigray region is described as experiencing widespread sexual violence as a weapon of war, documented by the BBC and the UN. People alleged systematic rape, targeting Orthodox Christian women, and the use of sexual violence as a tool for terror.

Posts talked about the prevalence of harmful traditional practices, specifically Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriage, with efforts underway to address these issues through initiatives like the UN's Global Programme.

Addis Standard ran an op-ed saying "beneath official narratives of recovery lies a deepening crisis defined by child trafficking and sexual abuse, carried out with complete impunity."

# High Engagement Visuals

## Amhara Atrocities: A Pattern of State-Directed Violence

**Sexual Violence as a Weapon** (BBC Investigation)

**2,697** Documented Rape Cases  
Found in just 4% of the region's health facilities, suggesting a wider crisis.

**45%** Victims are Children  
Victims' ages range from as young as 8 to 65.

**A Tool of Terror**  
Victims are threatened at gunpoint and assaulted in front of family members.

**UN Assessment: A Systematic Campaign**

**"Ethnically targeted violence against Amharas."**  
The UN holds the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) disproportionately responsible for abuses.

**Pattern of Impunity**  
The UN noted a persistent lack of accountability for extrajudicial killings and torture.

**Indiscriminate Drone Strikes on Civilians** (UN Report)

**28** Verified Strikes on Civilians  
Hundreds were killed between August 2023 and January 2024.

**Civilian Infrastructure Deliberately Targeted**  
School, Ambulance, Bus station, Church

**Foreign-Supplied Drones Used**  
Drones were supplied by Türkiye, Iran, and China, with UAE funding.

A highly reposted Ethiopian post sharing unverified sexual assault data in Amhara

**NOT**

**The Data Itself Is Lopsided**

**What If Men Reported Cases?**

**PENULISM**

TikTok Video in South Africa highlighted as an example of toxic masculinity

**254 NEWS**

**NEWS**

**KENYAN TAXI DRIVER IN DUBAI**

**ATTACKED BY CLIENT AFTER REFUSING TO BE CARESSSED**

*The man was later arrested*

Follow our pages: @254newsofficial

Kenyan taxi driver assaulted in Dubai after refusing sexual advance



Press conference and protest in Nairobi, Kenya, calling for decriminalization of sex work

**15** times

**CESALTY E BUDERBELA ESCLARECEM**

**DETENÇÃO E NEGAM ABUSO**

**PLATINALINE.COM**

Most Engaging Post in Angola detailing a resolved domestic violence case involving a TV personality

# Opportunities to Act

- **Shift from reactive crime reporting to survivor-centred framing:** Support journalists and media outlets to amplify content on assault reporting options, post assault clinical care such as PEP, and survivor protections. High awareness exists, but engagement is low around procedural justice.
- **Develop youth-led mental health and SRHR content streams:** Given strong engagement among 18 to 24 year olds, co-create digital content linking mental health, consent, relationships, and HIV prevention in youth accessible tone, visuals, and language.
- **Address polarisation around masculinity directly:** Create narrative interventions that move beyond the phrase “toxic masculinity” and instead model positive male behaviours, emotional expression, and non-violent norms without ideological framing.
- **Strengthen child protection and judicial accountability messaging:** Leverage momentum generated by global abuse scandals to contextualise local reporting systems, legal safeguards, and reforms. Emphasise belief in survivors and procedural fairness.
- **Improve SCL data quality and misinformation response:** Refine queries to better capture disease related discourse, address spoofed location data, and establish rapid response protocols for viral unverified statistics or high reach harmful narratives.



**Thank You**