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Xenowatch Factsheet 3: Incidents of Xenophobic Discrimination in South Africa: 2025 - June 2026

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Introduction

As Xenowatch data indicates, xenophobic discrimination-which refers to acts of exclusion, hostility, or violence directed at individuals or groups because they are foreign nationals or outsiders- has become a regular feature of post-apartheid South Africa's socio-political landscape. Indeed, incidents of xenophobic discrimination have been regularly recorded since 1994.

Acts of xenophobic discrimination include violence, denied access to public services, evictions, extortion, harassment, selective enforcement of by-laws, threats, unlawful arrests and detentions, verbal abuse, hate speech, and intimidation. Xenowatch records these acts as xenophobic when they are motivated by anti-immigrant sentiments, regardless of the legal status of the victim. These acts result in deaths, injuries, displacements, looting, and destruction of property and livelihood assets, denied access to essential public services such as healthcare. Visit [Xenowatch](#) for more details and interactive data and analysis.

This factsheet provides a statistical summary of xenophobic discrimination incidents that occurred in South Africa between **January 2025 and 30 June 2026** (hereinafter the reporting period). It is important to note that the statistics provided here are those of incidents reported to, verified and recorded on the Xenowatch platform. Due to underreporting, the total numbers and the prevalence of xenophobic discrimination are likely to be higher.

Incidents at a Glance

During the reporting period, Xenowatch recorded a total of 198 incidents of xenophobic discrimination across the country. As Table 1 below shows, these incidents resulted in at least 25 deaths; 4404 people displaced, and 36 shops looted.

Table 1: Incidents of xenophobic discrimination and resulting victimization: 2025 - June 2026

Category	Total number
Incidents	198
Deaths	25
People displaced	4404
Shops looted	36

Temporal Trends

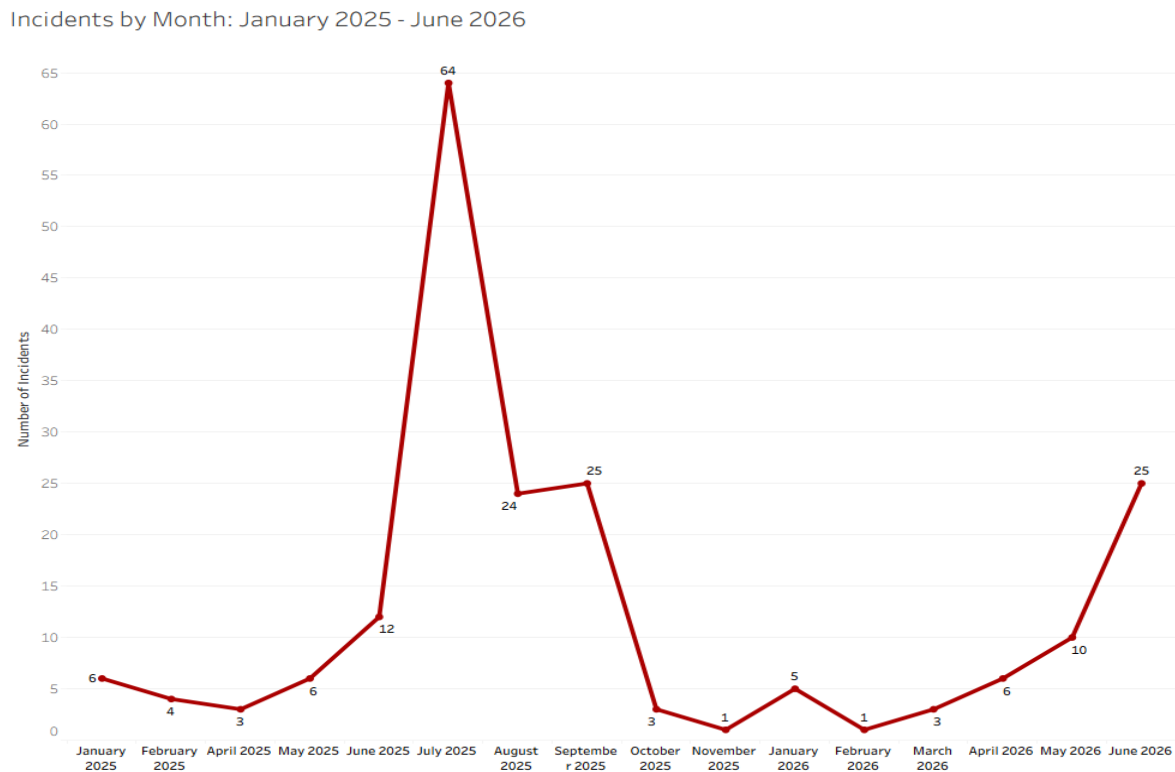
Of the 198 incidents recorded, 148 occurred in 2025, and 50 during the first half of 2026 (see Table 2 below). As indicated above, these incidents resulted in at least 25 deaths (16 in 2025 and 9 in 2026); 4404 displaced people (300 in 2025 and 4 104 in 2026) and 36 shops looted (2 in 2025 and 34 in 2026).

Table 2: Incidents of xenophobic discrimination per Year: 2025 - June 2026

Year	Total incidents
2025	148
2026 (as of 30 June)	50
Total	198

An analysis of monthly trends indicates that July recorded the highest number of incidents in 2025 (64), while, in the first half of 2026, most incidents (25) occurred in June (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Incidents of xenophobic discrimination by Month: 2025 – June 2026



As Xenowatch data indicates, the July 2025 sharp rise in incidents was a result of the mobilisation by anti-migrant organisations, particularly Operation Dudula and March and March, to physically prevent migrants from accessing public services, especially healthcare, in KwaZulu Natal and Gauteng.¹ Incidents in June 2026 occurred in the lead-up to the 30 June deadline imposed by March and March for all undocumented migrants to leave South Africa.²

Spatial Trends

Incidents of xenophobic discrimination by province

Xenowatch data shows that xenophobic discrimination occurs across all nine provinces of South Africa, albeit to varying degrees. During the reporting period, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal were the most affected, recording 85 and 70 incidents, respectively. Together, the two provinces accounted for 155 incidents, representing 78.3% of the total 198 incidents recorded nationally during the reporting period (Figure 2 and 3).

¹ Richter, M., Walker, R., Freemantle, I. and J.P. Misago (2026). *This fight is for all of us" - Movement Building for (Migrant) Rights in South Africa*. Culmination Research Report. ACMS, January 2026.

² Misago, J.P. (2026). *The Hidden Violence Behind the 'Peaceful' Anti-Migrant Protests*. SABC News, 25 July 2026

Figure 2: Incidents of Xenophobic discrimination by Province: 2025 – June 2026

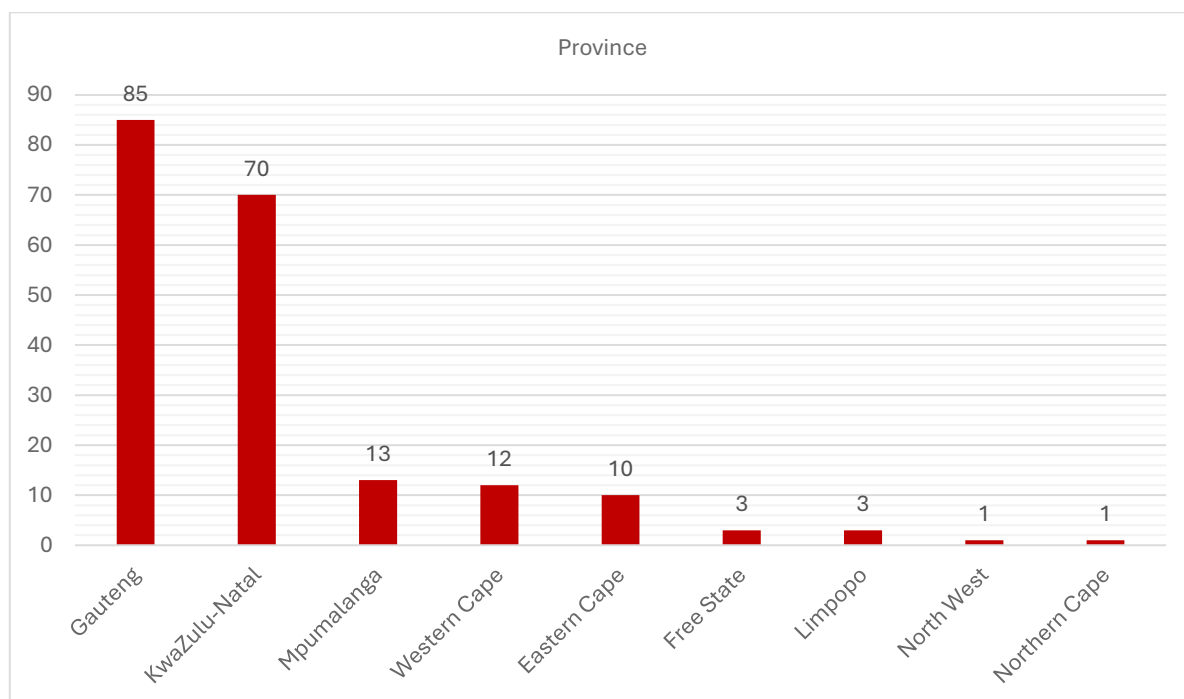
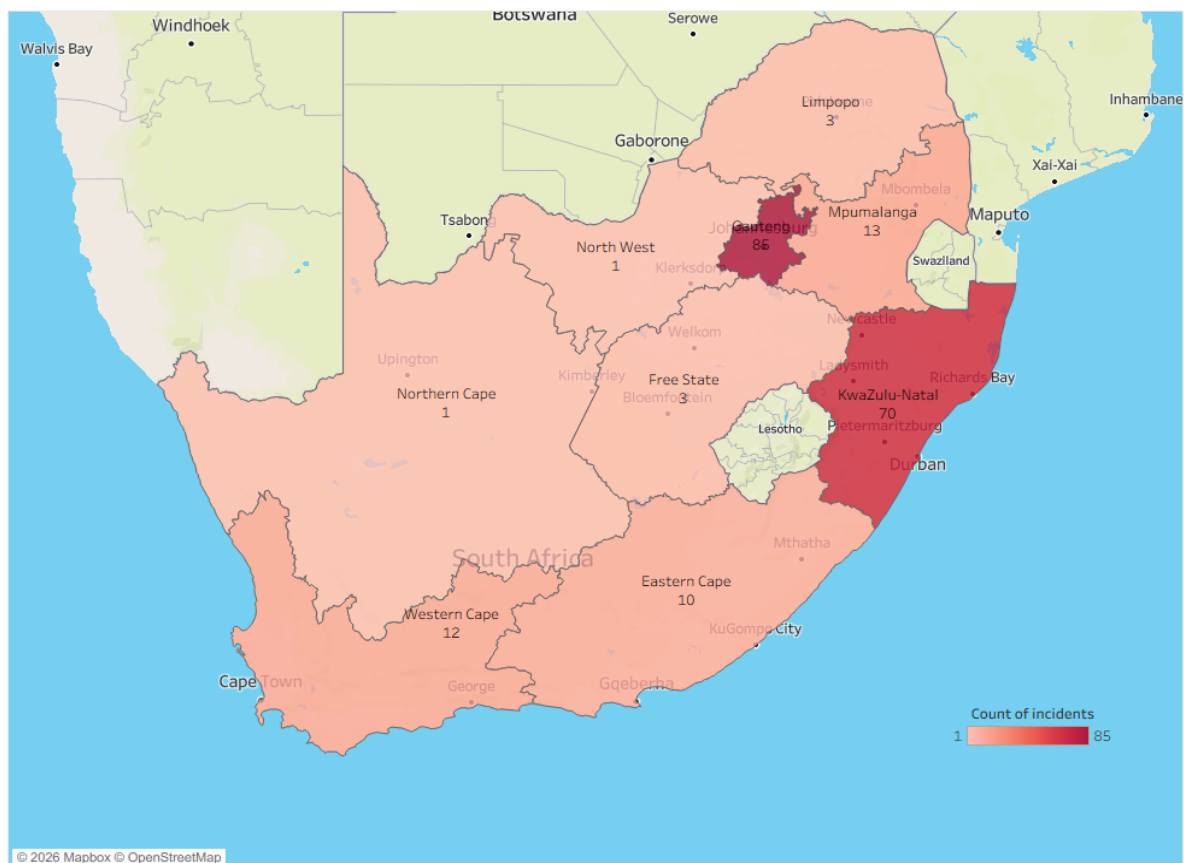


Figure 3: Incidents of Xenophobic discrimination by Province: 2025 – June 2026

Map - Incidents by Province: 2025 - June 2026



As shown in Table 3 below, Gauteng was the most affected province in 2025, accounting for 70 incidents (47.3% of the annual total). In the first half of 2026, KwaZulu-Natal was the most affected province, with 26 incidents (52% of the total recorded during this period). The Northern Cape and North West were the least affected provinces, each recording just one incident over the reporting period.

Table 3: Incidents of Xenophobic discrimination by Province and Year: 2025 – June 2026

Province	2025	2026 (as of 30 June)	Total
Gauteng	70	15	85
KwaZulu-Natal	44	26	70
Mpumalanga	13	-	13
Western Cape	9	3	12
Eastern Cape	7	3	10
Free State	1	2	3
Limpopo	3	-	3
North West	1	-	1
Northern Cape	-	1	1
Total	148	50	198

Incidents of xenophobic discrimination by municipality

During the reporting period, incidents of xenophobic discrimination were concentrated in the country's main metropolitan municipalities. As Table 4 below shows, eThekwin was the most affected with 57 incidents, followed by Johannesburg with 52, Ekurhuleni with 20 and Cape Town with 10 incidents. Steve Tshwete (9) and Emalahleni (6) were the only local municipalities to record 5 or more incidents.

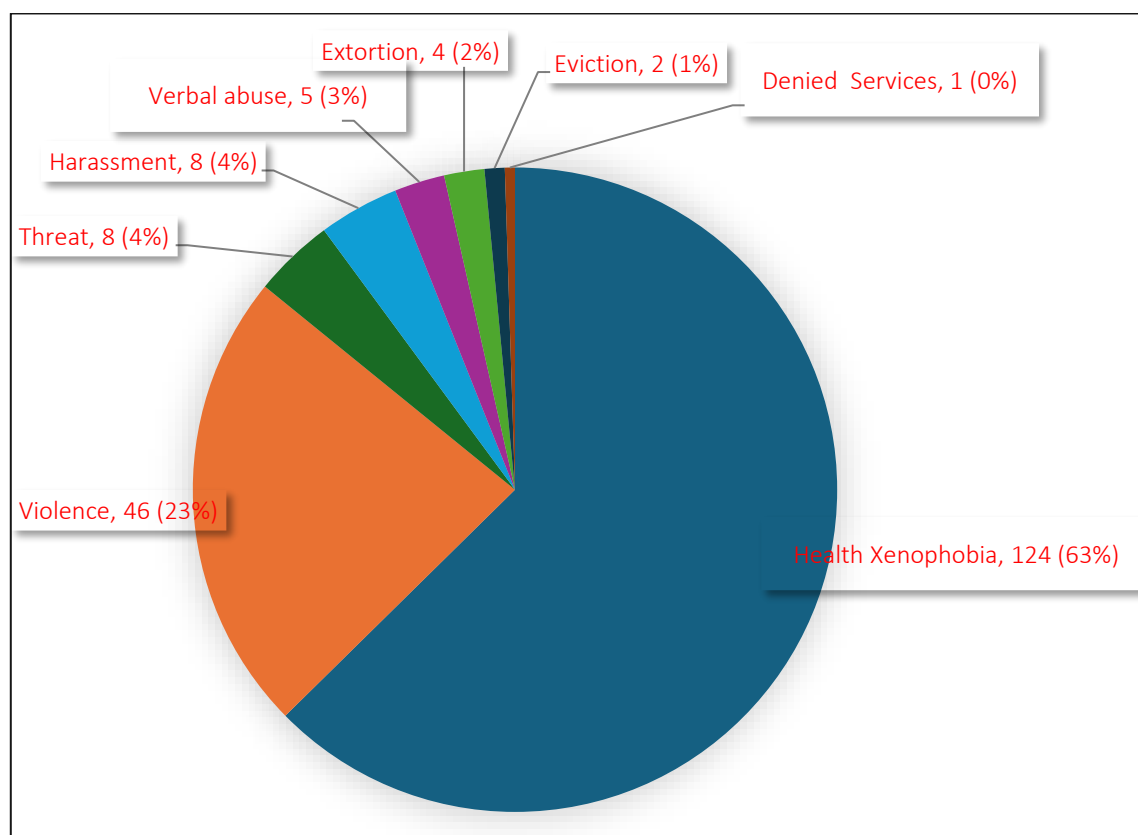
Table 4: Municipalities with 5 or more incidents of xenophobic discrimination: 2025 – June 2026

Municipality	Province	Total incidents
eThekwin Metropolitan Municipality	KwaZulu-Natal	57
City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality	Gauteng	52
City of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality	Gauteng	20
City of Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality	Western cape	10
City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality	Gauteng	9
Steve Tshwete Local Municipality	Mpumalanga	9
Emalahleni Local Municipality	Eastern Cape	6

Types of Xenophobic Discrimination Incidents

During the reporting period, Xenowatch recorded different types of xenophobic discrimination incidents including violence, denied access to public services, evictions, extortion, harassment, threats, and verbal abuse. The most prevalent type was health xenophobia (or denied access to public healthcare services). This type accounted for 124 incidents or 63% of all incidents recorded. Violence was the second most prevalent type, with 46 incidents, representing 23% of the total (see Figure 4 below).

Figure 4: Types of xenophobic discrimination incidents: 2025-June 2026



As Table 5 below shows, health xenophobia was the most prevalent type of discrimination in 2025, whereas violence was the most frequently recorded type during the first half of 2026.

Table 5: Types of xenophobic discrimination incidents per year: 2025-June 2026

Incident type	2025	2026 (as of 30 June)	Total
Health xenophobia	124	-	124
Violence	11	35	46
Threat	3	5	8
Harassment	5	3	8
Verbal abuse		5	5
Extortion	3	1	4
Eviction	2	-	2
Denied Services	-	1	1
Total	148	50	198

Gauteng recorded the highest number of health xenophobia incidents (65), followed by KwaZulu-Natal (40). In contrast, KwaZulu-Natal recorded the highest number of xenophobic violence incidents (21), followed by Gauteng, with 9 incidents (see Table 6 below).

Table 6: Health xenophobia and violence incident types by province: 2025 – June 2026

Province	Health xenophobia	Violence
Gauteng	65	9
KwaZulu-Natal	40	21
Mpumalanga	11	-
Eastern Cape	6	2
Western Cape		8
Free State	1	2
Limpopo	1	2
North West	-	1
Northern Cape		1
Total	124	46

Conclusion

The data presented in this factsheet indicates that xenophobic discrimination in South Africa persisted during the reporting period. It peaked in July 2025 and June 2026, each coinciding with anti-migrant mobilisation led by anti-migrant organisations, particularly Operation Dudula and March and March. Incidents concentrated in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces, particularly eThekweni and Johannesburg, while shifting from more health xenophobia in 2025 towards more xenophobic violence in the first half 2026. Due to underreporting, the true prevalence of xenophobic discrimination in the country is likely to be considerably higher than the numbers presented in this factsheet.