

# FACTS ABOUT FATAL INJURIES IN MPUMALANGA: FINDINGS FROM THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NATIONAL INJURY MORTALITY SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM 2009

NOVEMBER 2010

## INTRODUCTION

Injury is one of the major causes of premature death in South Africa. The Safety and Peace Promotion Research Unit of the Medical Research Council and University of South Africa (MRC-UNISA SAPPRU) manages, on behalf of South Africans, the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System (NIMSS). One of the main aims of the NIMSS is to provide epidemiological information about deaths due to external causes and to inform initiatives for the prevention of non-natural fatalities.

The Annual Report on fatal injuries in Mpumalanga during 2009 focuses on 4520 non-natural deaths registered at the twenty medico-legal laboratories (MLLs).

Transport-related injury was the leading manner of death for both males and females as well as in all age groups, followed by death due to violence and suicide (Figure 1). Fatal injuries sustained in road traffic accidents were the three major external causes of death in Mpumalanga, namely motor vehicle passengers, pedestrians and motor vehicle drivers (Figure 2). Overall in Mpumalanga, there were 3.7 male deaths for each female death due to non-natural causes.

Figure 1: Overall manner of death (n = 4520)

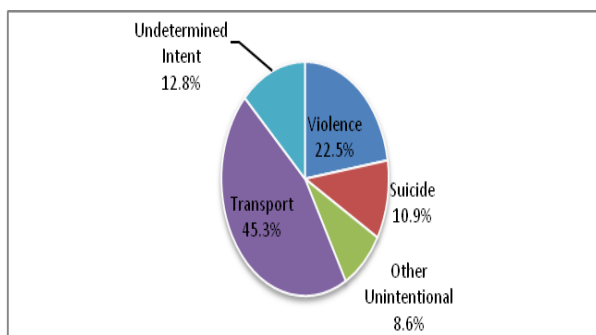
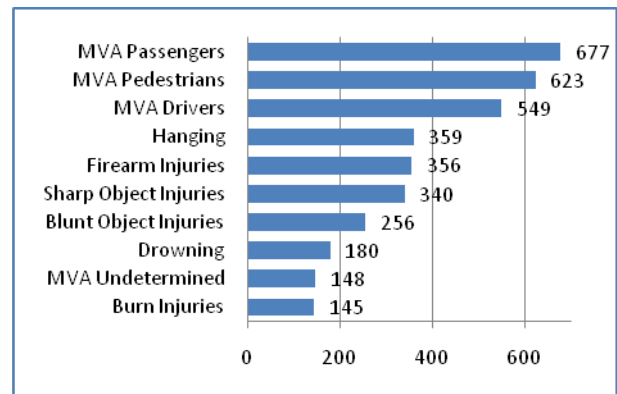


Figure 2: Top 10 external causes of death (n = 3633)



## Death due to Violence and Suicide

Violence accounted for 22.5% of all injury deaths and was most prominent in the 20 – 34 year old age group, where half of the deaths were noted (Figure 3). Sharp force injury was the leading external cause of violent death in one-third of cases. There were five male violent deaths for every female violent death.

Suicide accounted for eleven percent of cases, with hanging being the most common external cause of death for both sexes and across all age groups. Half of suicide victims were aged between 20 and 39 years (Figure 3). Alcohol use was prominent among violent death and suicide victims, where 64.5% and 63.6% of cases that were tested, respectively, had elevated blood alcohol levels.

Figure 3: Number of deaths due to violence and suicide per age group (n = 1 378)

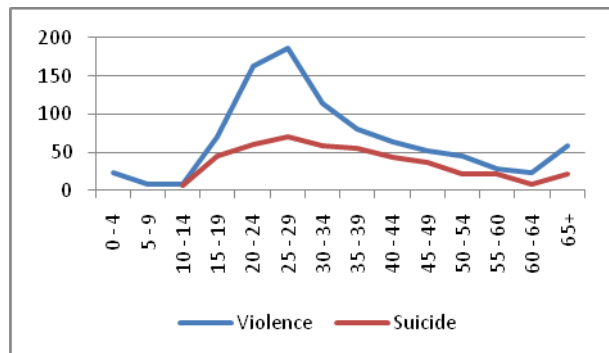
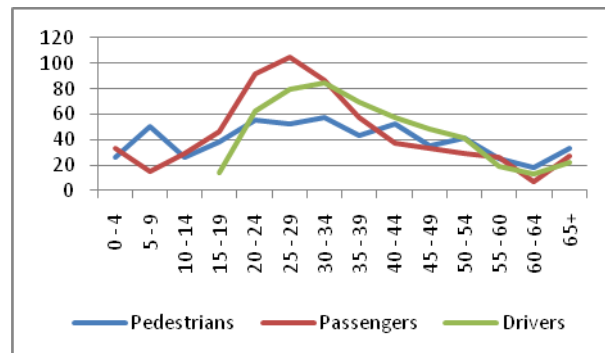


Figure 4: Number of deaths due to major causes of transport related injuries per age group (n = 1 685)



### Transport-related deaths

Transport-related injuries were the leading external cause of death across all age groups; except in children under 5 years old where drowning was the leading external cause of death. Passenger injury accounted for the majority of transport-related deaths, and was the leading cause of death for road users in the 10 – 34 and 55 - 59 year old groups (Figure 4). Pedestrian injury was the leading cause of death in those aged 5 – 9 and 60 years and older (Figure 4). In the 35 – 54 year age group, driver injuries were the leading cause of death (Figure 4). There were 3.5 male deaths per female transport-related death. Of the 450 cases of transport-related death that were screened for alcohol use, 55.4% of drivers and 62% of pedestrians had blood alcohol levels of 0.05g/100ml or more.

### Other unintentional injury deaths

Drowning was the major cause of non-transport related unintentional injury deaths, as well as under the 10 major causes of death in Mpumalanga. Forty percent of drowning occurred in children under 10 years old. One third of the unintentional injury deaths occurred among children and adolescents under the age of 20 years. The male-female ratio of unintentional injury deaths was 2.5.

### Mortality Rates for Mpumalanga

Transport related injuries constituted the largest proportion of injuries in Mpumalanga during 2009. The road traffic death rate of 68.4 per 100 000 in Mpumalanga is higher than the national estimate of 39.7 per 100 000 population, as reported by the latest available burden of disease estimates for South Africa<sup>1</sup>. The violence rate in Mpumalanga of 33.2 is however considerably lower than the reported overall South African rate of 64.8 per 100 000. The suicide rate in Mpumalanga of 17.1 per 100 000 is slightly higher than the average South African rate of 14 per 100 000.

### Conclusion

This provincial report of the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System: A Profile of Fatal Injuries in Mpumalanga in 2009 has identified road traffic deaths as the major cause of injury deaths in Mpumalanga, in all age categories except the under 5-year old, where drowning is the major cause of injury mortality. The rate of road traffic death is higher than the national average, indicating that injury prevention programmes need to focus on preventing road traffic injuries and the role of alcohol needs to be investigated and addressed.

<sup>1</sup> Norman R, Matzopoulos R, Groenewald P, Bradshaw D. The high burden of injuries in South Africa. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 2007;85(9).