

# Unnatural deaths in SA fewer than natural deaths

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The number of unnatural deaths in South Africa decreased between 2004 and 2005 compared to the number of natural deaths, said Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) last week.

“Between 2004 and 2005, natural deaths increased by a higher percentage of 3.6% than non-natural causes 0.3%,” StatsSA said in their annual Mortality and Causes of death statistics.

The leading underlying natural causes of death in 2005 were tuberculosis, influenza and pneumonia, and intestinal infectious diseases.

In previous years, the majority of deaths (91%) were linked to natural causes.

The percentage of deaths due to natural causes has consistently increased for each year between 1997 and 2005.

“The ten leading underlying natural causes of death for 2005 were the same as those observed for 2004,” said the report.

Among the ten leading causes of death between 2004 and 2005 was HIV and AIDS related diseases and diabetes mellitus.

Diabetes mellitus was the sixth leading cause of natural death while HIV was the tenth.

Lower respiratory diseases and heart diseases were among the leading natural causes of death only for the male deaths, while HIV and hypertensive diseases were among the ten leading causes only for the female deaths.

With the exception of Free State and Limpopo, the leading natural cause of death for all provinces was tuberculosis.

Influenza and pneumonia were the leading causes of natural deaths in Free State and Limpopo.

The percentage of deaths due to non-natural causes was also observed to decrease with time.

Transport accidents and assault however dominated the non-natural causes of death, the report said.

It further noted that the ages that were mostly affected by non-natural causes were between five and 29 years, with males more affected than females.

Female deaths were mostly linked to transport accidents while male deaths were mostly linked to assaults.

South Africa's death rate has risen with more than 590,000 deaths recorded in 2005 across the country, marking a 3.3% increase compared to 2004.

KwaZulu-Natal registered the highest number of deaths at 23.4%.

Gauteng followed second with 18.2% and the lowest is Northern Cape with 2%.

"The overall number of deaths shows a continuous increase from 1997 to 2005," StatsSA said in the report.

The report noted that the number of deaths was higher in age groups from zero to four and 30–34 than in other ages, and lowest in age group 10–14.

"The overall number of deaths was slightly higher for males as compared to females. For every 100 female deaths, there were 102 male deaths," it said.

However, the report said female deaths were higher than male deaths in age groups 20–34 and from age group 70–74 up to age group 90 and older.

The rate of increase in the number of deaths between 2004 and 2005 was also higher for females than for males.

Female deaths increased by 3.9% while male deaths increased by 2.7% between these two years.

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