

# Chapter 5

## Cape Town

Compiled by Megan Prinsloo

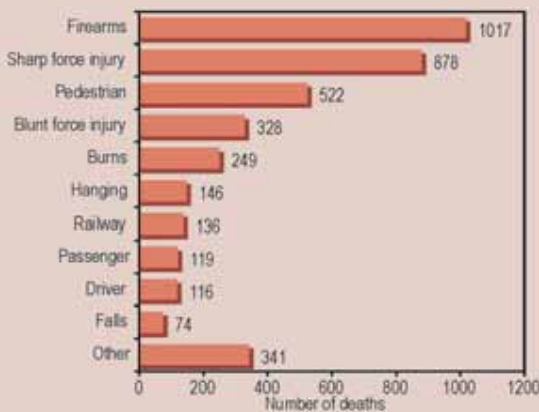
In the 2003 calendar year a total of 5506 deaths presented to the two mortuaries in Cape Town (Salt River and Tygerberg), including 1201 (21.8%) deaths due to natural causes and 379 where the cause of death was undetermined. The analysis that follows is restricted to the remaining 3926 non-natural deaths due to violence, suicide, transport collisions and other unintentional injuries.

### 5.1 EXTERNAL CAUSE OF DEATH

The cause of death was unknown in 0.3% of the 3926 cases. Of the remaining deaths, the leading external cause was firearms (25.9%), followed by sharp force injuries (22.4%), pedestrian fatalities (13.3%) and blunt force injuries (8.4%).

Figure 94

Leading external causes of death (N = 3926)

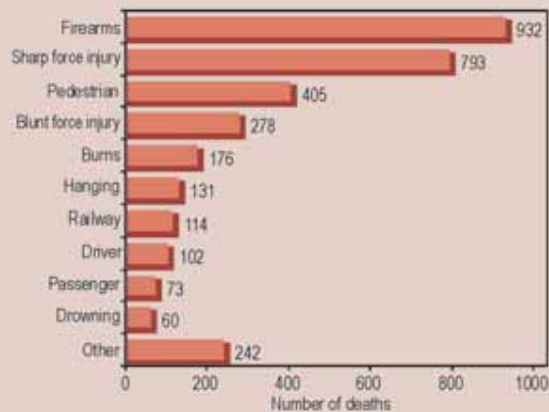


#### 5.1.1 External cause of death, by sex

There were 5.5 male deaths from violence and injury for every female death. Among males the cause of death was unknown in 0.3% of the 3306 cases. Of the remaining deaths, the leading external cause was firearms (28.3%), followed by sharp force injuries (24.1%), pedestrian fatalities (12.3%) and blunt force injuries (8.4%).

Figure 95

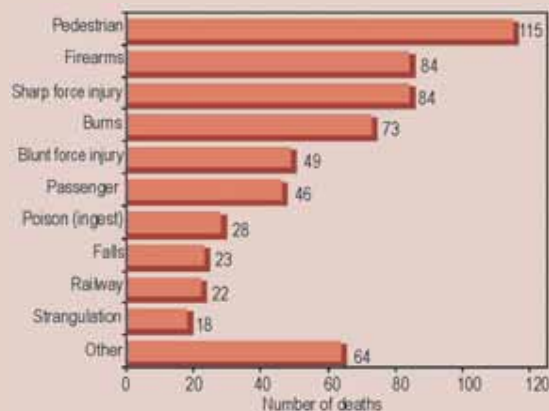
Leading external causes of death among males (N = 3306)



Among females the cause of death was unknown in 0.5% of the 605 cases. Of the remaining deaths the leading external cause was pedestrian fatalities (19.1%), followed by firearms (14%), sharp force injuries (14%) and burns (12.1%).

Figure 96

Leading external causes of death among females (N = 605)

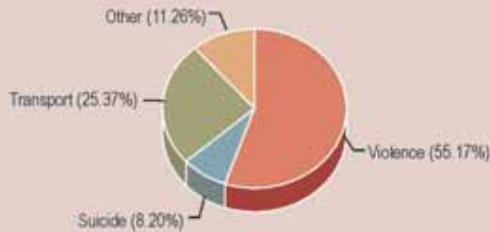


## 5.2 APPARENT MANNER OF DEATH

The leading apparent manner of non-natural death in Cape Town was violence (55.2%), followed by transport injuries (25.4%).

Figure 97

Overall apparent manner of death (N = 3926)

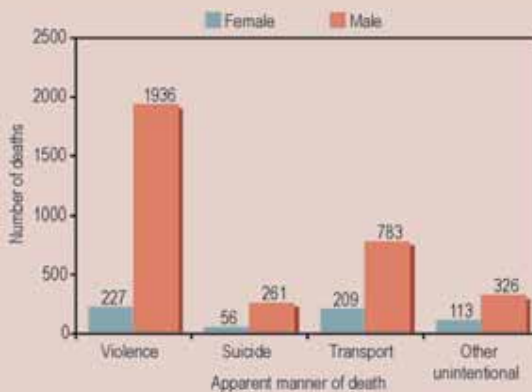


### 5.2.1 Apparent manner of death, by sex

The leading cause of death among males was violence (58.6%), followed by transport (23.7%). The leading cause of death among females was also violence (37.5%), followed by transport (34.5%). There were 8.5 male deaths due to violence for every female death. The ratios for suicide, transport and other unintentional injuries were 4.7, 3.7 and 2.9 respectively.

Figure 98

Apparent manner of death, by sex (N = 3911)



### 5.2.2 Apparent manner of death, by age

The average age at death was 31.3 ( $\pm$  13.8) years. The leading apparent manners of death in various age groups were as follows:

- **0-14 years** — transport (47.3%);
- **15-24 years** — violence (69.3%);
- **25-34 years** — violence (58.9%);
- **35-44 years** — violence (55.6%);
- **45-54 years** — transport (38.1%) followed by violence (37.6%);
- **55-64 years** — violence (38.5%) followed by transport (30.4%); and
- **65+ years** — other unintentional injuries (32.7%).

Figure 99.1

Violence-related deaths by age (N = 2 111)

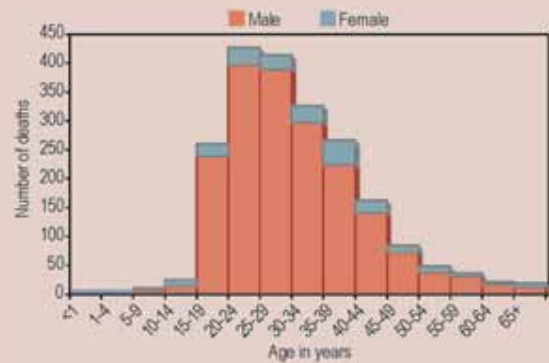


Figure 99.2

Suicide by age (N = 314)

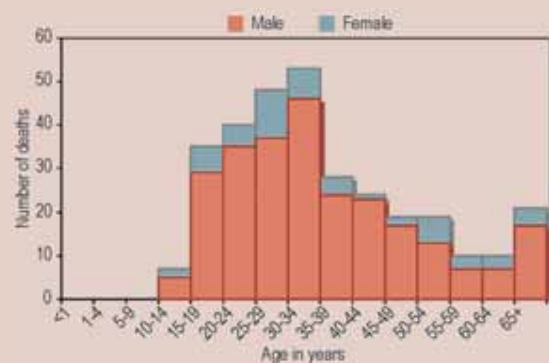


Figure 99.3

Transport-related deaths by age (N = 971)

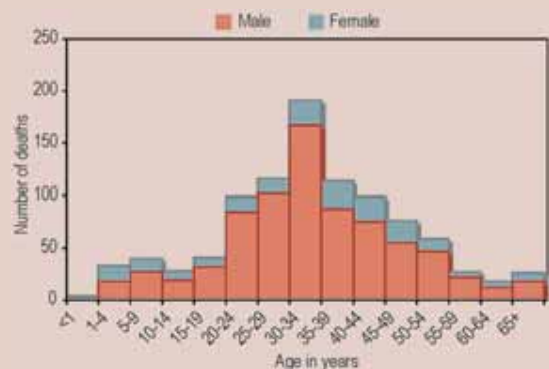
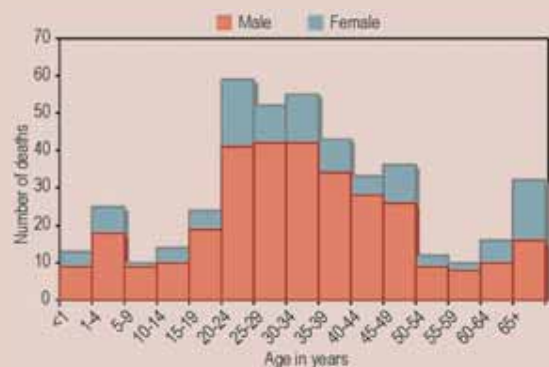


Figure 99.4

Deaths from other unintentional injuries by age (N = 434)



### 5.2.3 Apparent manner of death by blood alcohol concentration

Blood alcohol concentrations (BACs) were obtained in 2588 of the 3926 cases. The average BAC for those who tested positive was  $0.17 \pm 0.07$  g/100 ml.

Figure 100

Blood alcohol levels (N = 2588)



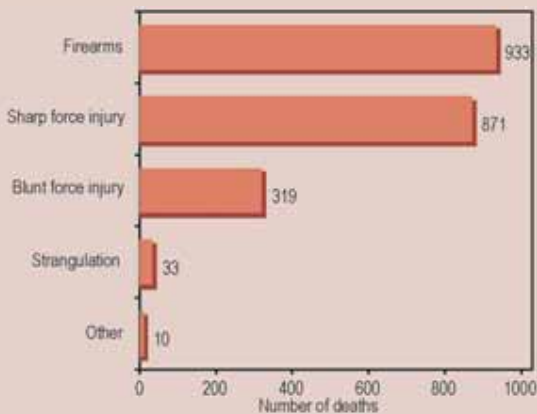
More transport- (54.2%) followed by violence-related fatalities (52.6%) tested alcohol-positive. Among the positive cases, those who died from transport and other unintentional injuries had the highest mean BACs.

### 5.3 VIOLENCE

The cause of death was unknown in 0.3% of the 2166 violence-related deaths. Of the remaining deaths, the leading external cause was firearms (43.2%), followed by sharp force injuries (40.3%) and blunt force injuries (14.8%).

Figure 101

Leading external causes of violence-related deaths (N = 2166)

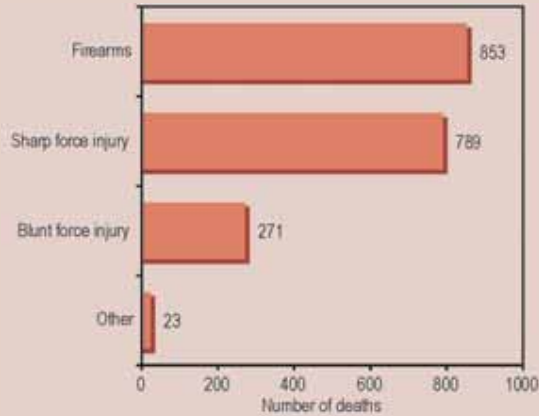


### 5.3.1 External cause of violent death, by sex

There were 8.5 male deaths as a result of violence for every female death. Among males the cause of death was unknown in 0.2% of the 1936 cases. Of the remaining deaths, the leading external cause was firearms (44.1%), followed by sharp force injuries (40.8%) and blunt force injuries (14%).

Figure 102

Leading external causes of violence-related deaths among males (N = 1936)



Among females the cause of death was unknown in 1.3% of the 327 cases. Of the remaining deaths, the leading external cause was sharp force injuries (36.2%), followed by firearms (35.3%), blunt force injuries (21%) and strangulation (7.6%).

Figure 103

Leading external causes of violence-related death among females (N = 227)

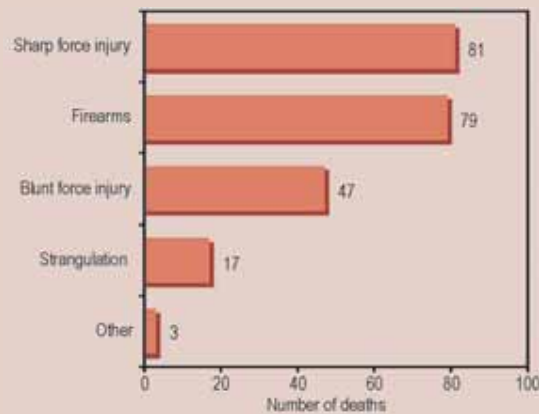


Table XV

Blood alcohol levels (g/100 ml) by apparent manner of death

Apparent manner of death	BACs done N (%)	BAC positive N (%)	Mean BAC	Std dev.
Violence (2166)	1567 (72.3)	824 (52.6)	0.17	0.07
Suicide (322)	242 (75.2)	61 (25.2)	0.17	0.10
Transport (996)	577 (57.9)	313 (54.2)	0.19	0.08
Other unintentional (442)	202 (45.7)	105 (52.0)	0.18	0.07
<b>Total (3926)</b>	<b>2588</b>	<b>1303</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.07</b>

### 5.3.2 External cause of violent death, by age

Age was unknown in 53 of the 2166 cases. Of the remaining cases the average age at death was 29.7 ( $\pm 11$ ) years. The leading external causes of violence-related death in the various age groups were as follows:

- **0-14 years** — firearms (50%);
- **15-24 years** — firearms (46.4%) followed by sharp force injury (40.2%);
- **25-34 years** — firearms (43.6%) followed by sharp force injury (42%);
- **35-44 years** — sharp force injury (41.7%) followed by firearms (39.3%);
- **45-54 years** — sharp force injury (38.4%) followed by firearms (35.3%);
- **55-64 years** — firearms (40.4%) followed by sharp force injury (38.6%); and
- **65+ years** — sharp force injury (27.8%) and strangulation (27.8%).

### 5.3.3 Violence and alcohol

More victims of sharp-force violence tested alcohol-positive (71%) than those with other external causes of violent death.

### 5.3.4 Violent death by scene of death, by sex

The scene of death was unknown in 1340 (69%) of male and 154 (68%) of female violence-related deaths. Of the remaining deaths, the most common scenes among: males were private homes (34.7%) followed by informal settlements (31.2%); and females were private homes (67.1%) followed by informal settlements (16.4%).

Figure 104

Leading scenes of violence-related death among males (N = 1936)

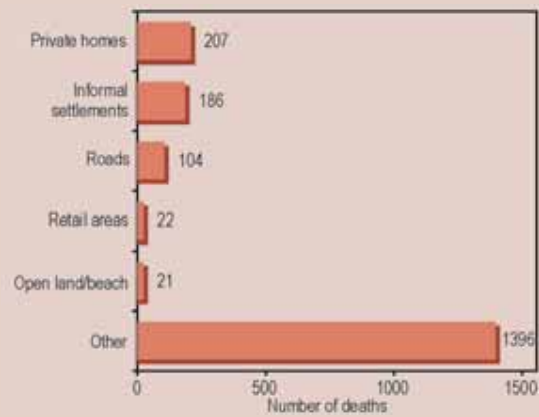
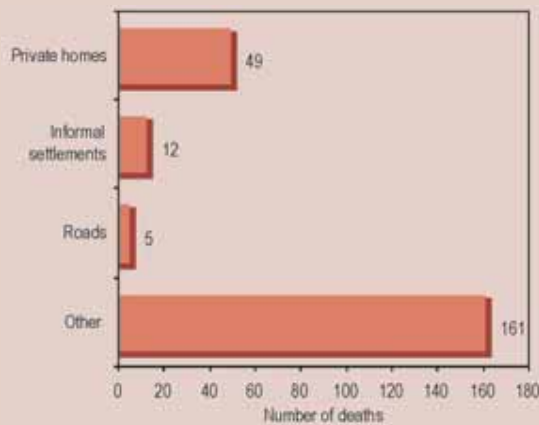


Figure 105

Leading scenes of violence-related death among females (N = 227)



### 5.4 SUICIDE

The cause of death was unknown in 0.3% of the 322 suicides. Of the remaining deaths, the leading external cause was hanging (45.5%), followed by firearms (25.9%), poisoning by ingestion (17.4%) and poisoning by gassing (6.2%).

Table XVI

Blood alcohol levels (g/100 ml) by external cause of violent death

External cause	BACs done N (%)	BAC positive N (%)	Mean BAC	Std dev.
Firearm (933)	689 (73.8)	259 (37.6)	0.15	0.07
Sharp (871)	676 (77.6)	480 (71.0)	0.18	0.07
Blunt (319)	172 (53.9)	73 (42.4)	0.16	0.07
Strangulation (33)	26 (78.8)	9 (34.6)	0.22	0.09
Burns (3)	3 (100)	3 (100)	0.14	0.05
<b>Total (2166)</b>	<b>1567</b>	<b>824</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.07</b>