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Violence and injuries in South Africa: prioritising an agenda for prevention

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Summary

Violence and injuries are the second leading cause of death and lost disability-adjusted life years in South Africa. The overall injury death rate of 157 \hat{A} ·8 per 100 \hat{E} ^000 population is nearly twice the global average, and the rate of homicide of women by intimate partners is six times the global average. With a focus on homicide, and violence against women and children, we review the magnitude, contexts of occurrence, and patterns of violence, and refer to traffic-related and other unintentional injuries. The social dynamics that support violence are widespread poverty, unemployment, and income inequality; patriarchal notions of masculinity that valorise toughness, risk-taking, and defence of honour; exposure to abuse in childhood and weak parenting; access to firearms; widespread alcohol misuse; and weaknesses in the mechanisms of law enforcement. Although there have been advances in development of services for victims of violence,

innovation from non-governmental organisations, and evidence from research, there has been a conspicuous absence of government stewardship and leadership. Successful prevention of violence and injury is contingent on identification by the government of violence as a strategic priority and development of an intersectoral plan based on empirically driven programmes and policies.



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