Annual mortality figures from South Africa show a decline of nearly 4\% between 2008 and 2009. The greatest proportion of deaths occurred in the black population and in those aged 30—34 years. Tuberculosis was the leading natural cause of death, followed by influenza, pneumonia, intestinal infectious diseases, heart disease, and cerebrovascular diseases.

Key findings: P0309.3 - Mortality and causes of death in South Africa: Findings from death notification, 2009

This statistical release presents information on mortality and causes of death in South Africa, based on all death notification forms received from the Department of Home Affairs for deaths that occurred in 2009. The release outlines trends in mortality from 1997 to 2009 and differentials in mortality by selected demographic, social and geographic characteristics for deaths that occurred in 2009.

A total of 572 673 deaths that occurred in 2009 were registered at the Department of Home Affairs and processed at Statistics South Africa during the 2010/11 processing phase. The results indicate that mortality continues to decline in the country as observed from 2007 in both data processed by Stats SA and the number of deaths recorded in the national population register. The decline in the number of deaths was observed for both males and females, with female deaths declining at a higher rate than male deaths.

The majority of deaths occurred among the black African population group. Most deaths occurred at healthcare facilities although about 30\% still occurred at home. The provinces with the largest population sizes (KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Eastern Cape) also had the highest number of deaths.

Information on causes of death indicated that the majority of deaths resulted from natural causes, particularly certain infectious and parasitic diseases. Tuberculosis continued to be the most commonly mentioned cause of death on death notification forms, as well as the leading underlying natural cause of death in the country. However, the number of deaths due to this cause has been decreasing since 2007.
The second leading cause of death was influenza and pneumonia, followed by intestinal infectious diseases, other forms of heart disease and cerebrovascular diseases. This pattern was also observed for males and for females.

Overall, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) disease was the seventh leading cause of death, accounting for 3.1% of all deaths in 2009. It was the sixth and eighth leading cause of death for males and females, respectively.

Tuberculosis was the leading cause of death in all provinces except for Free State and Limpopo, where influenza and pneumonia were the leading causes of death. Tuberculosis was also the leading cause of death in the majority of district municipalities.

Children below fifteen years died mainly from intestinal infectious diseases while those aged between 15 and 64 years died mostly from tuberculosis, and those aged 65 years and older died mostly from cerebrovascular diseases.

A proportion of 8.6% of all deaths were due to non-natural causes of death, with the majority of these due to other external causes of accidental injury. The highest percentage of deaths due to non-natural causes was observed for those aged 15–19 when compared to other age groups; and the number of deaths was generally higher for males of all age groups compared to females. Also, compared to other provinces, the province of death occurrence that had the highest proportion of non-natural deaths was Western Cape.

The proportion of deaths due to transport accidents was highest in Limpopo while that due to assault was highest in Western Cape.