

## 4.5 Natural causes of death

### Ten leading underlying natural causes of death

We now turn to a detailed analysis of natural causes of death. The main groups of causes of death used in section 4.3 are likely to conceal crucial variations within groups and for various sections of the population. Hence, the analyses that follow are based on the next level of aggregation, referred to as broad groups of underlying causes.

Table 4.4 shows the ten leading underlying natural causes of death in 1997, 1999 and 2001. Complete rankings of all causes for the seven years are shown in Appendix E. In 1997, the ten leading causes collectively accounted for almost 40% of all deaths occurring in South Africa in that year. The top three causes, *tuberculosis*, *other forms of heart disease*, and *cerebrovascular diseases*, accounted for just under a fifth (19%) of all deaths in that year.

The top seven leading underlying natural causes of death remained unchanged for 1999 from 1997, although the ranking changed. The ten leading causes accounted for 42% of all deaths in 1999. The top three causes collectively accounted for just about a fifth (19%) of all deaths. It should however, be noted that *intestinal infectious diseases*, and *human immunodeficiency virus disease*, which were not among the ten leading causes of death in 1997, were among the ten leading causes in 1999. They ranked eighth and ninth respectively.

The top four leading underlying natural causes of death in 2001 remained the same as in 1997 and 1999, although the ranking changed. The ten leading causes accounted for 46% of all deaths in 2001. The top four causes accounted for just over a quarter (28%) of all deaths. Of the two new leading causes in 1999, *intestinal infectious diseases* had moved up the ranking, while *HIV diseases* fell off the list. *Tuberculosis*, which was the leading cause of death in 1997 and 1999, was again the top leading cause of death. *Influenza and pneumonia* came second, while *other forms of heart disease* dropped to third from second place. *Certain disorders involving the immune mechanism*, which was not among the ten leading causes in 1997 or 1999, became the ninth leading cause of death.

**Table 4.4: The ten leading underlying natural causes of death: 1997, 1999 and 2001**

	1997			1999			2001		
	Rank	No.	%	Rank	No.	%	Rank	No.	%
Tuberculosis (A15 - A19)	1	22 021	6,9	1	34 173	8,9	1	50 872	11,3
Other forms of heart disease (I30 - I52)	2	20 103	6,3	2	20 120	5,3	3	22 602	5,0
Cerebrovascular diseases (I60 - I69)	3	16 992	5,3	3	19 948	5,2	4	22 577	5,0
Influenza and pneumonia (J10 - J18)	4	11 503	3,6	4	19 135	5,0	2	31 495	7,0
Diabetes mellitus (E10 - E14)	5	10 828	3,4	6	12 540	3,3	7	14 557	3,2
Chronic lower respiratory diseases (J40 - J47)	6	10 747	3,4	5	12 573	3,3	6	14 681	3,2
Ischaemic heart diseases (I20 - I25)	7	9 794	3,1	7	11 426	3,0	8	11 777	2,6
Malignant neoplasms of the digestive organs (C15 - C26)	8	8 914	2,8	...	...	...	...	...	...
Hypertensive diseases (I10 - I15)	9	7 706	2,4	10	9 427	2,5	10	10 748	2,4
Resp. & cardio. disorders – perinatal (P20 - P29)	10	7 125	2,2	...	...	...	...	...	...
Intestinal infectious diseases (A00 - A09)	...	...	...	8	11 155	2,9	5	16 060	3,6
Human immunodeficiency virus [HIV] diseases (B20 - B24)	...	...	...	9	9 925	2,6	...	...	...
Certain disorders of the immune mechanism (D80 - D89)	...	...	...	...	...	...	9	11 670	2,6
Other causes		192 554	60,5		221 480	58,0		244 897	54,2
<b>Total</b>		<b>318 287</b>	<b>100,0</b>		<b>381 902</b>	<b>100,0</b>		<b>451 936</b>	<b>100,0</b>

... Category not in top ten