Injury

Injury is a significant public health problem in the U.S., causing disability and premature death regardless of race, sex, or economic status, and creating a tremendous burden on our national health care system. Injury is the leading cause of both disability and death in American children and young adults, and is the fifth-leading cause of death overall in the U.S. An estimated 161,000 individuals in the U.S. died from injuries in 2002. In 2004, more than 29 million people were treated for injuries in hospital emergency departments in America, and almost two million of these injuries were so severe that they required hospitalization. Even though there are many types of injuries that contribute to injury mortality, three of the leading causes of death by injury in the U.S. are motor vehicle crashes, suicide, and homicide. Mortality due to injuries are presented as age-adjusted rates.

Motor Vehicle Crash Mortality

A motor vehicle crash is any collision involving one or more ground-transportation motor vehicles. MVCs are the leading cause of injury death in the U.S., and are the leading cause of death overall among individuals ages 1-34. MVCs accounted for more than 40,000 deaths in 1999. It is estimated that an additional three-and-a-half million individuals suffer from nonfatal injuries associated with MVCs each year.

Nationwide, men have a higher MVC mortality rate than women. The risk of MVC mortality is higher among teen drivers (individuals ages 16-19) and drivers ages 80 and older than among the other age groups in the U.S. MVC mortality rates are similar among African-Americans, Hispanics, and non-Hispanic whites in the U.S. Other risk factors for motor vehicle-related fatalities include alcohol or other drug use and not wearing a seat belt. In 2005, 39% of all MVC-related fatalities occurring in the U.S. involved alcohol.

Motor Vehicle Crash (MVC) Mortality in South Texas

In 1999-2003, South Texas had a lower age-adjusted motor vehicle crash mortality rate (15/100,000) than the rest of Texas (18.5/100,000). MVC mortality rates for both Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites were lower in South Texas than in the rest of Texas (Figure 10.1). In South Texas, non-Hispanic whites had a slightly higher MVC mortality rate (16.6/100,000) than Hispanics (14.7/100,000) (Figure 10.1).
The highest MVC mortality rate in South Texas was observed among individuals ages 15-24 (25.5/100,000), with individuals ages 75 and older coming in a close second (24.5/100,000). The MVC mortality rate for South Texas males (21.5/100,000) was nearly two-and-a-half times higher than the mortality rate for females (8.9/100,000). Residents of non-metropolitan counties in South Texas had a higher MVC mortality rate (21.4/100,000) than did residents of metropolitan counties (14.1/100,000). Lower MVC mortality rates were observed in Bexar County (11.6/100,000) and Webb County (9.5/100,000) than in South Texas as a whole (15/100,000).

References


Homicide

A homicide is any intentional injury inflicted by another person with the intent to kill.\(^1\) Homicide, especially among young people, is a serious public health issue in the U.S.\(^2\) Homicide is currently the second-leading cause of death nationwide in young adults ages 15-24, and is the third-leading cause of death among adults ages 25-34.\(^3,4\) In 2003, a total of 17,732 homicide deaths were reported in the U.S., and 5,570 of these homicide victims were ages 10-24.\(^4,5\)

\[\text{Key Point: The homicide rate in South Texas was very similar to rates in the rest of Texas and the nation. In South Texas, Hispanics had a higher homicide rate than non-Hispanic whites.}\]

Nationally, males are almost four times more likely to die from homicide than females.\(^6\) African-Americans were more than seven times more likely to be murdered than non-Hispanic whites in 2002, and Hispanics also had a higher homicide rate than non-Hispanic whites.\(^7\) In the U.S., homicide rates are highest among young adults ages 18-25, with a peak at age 21. However, among individuals less than age 18, a “U-shaped” trend in homicide is seen, with infants having almost as high of a homicide rate (7.5/100,000)