# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 1366**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 26 JUNE 2020**

**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 23)**

**Ms S Gwarube (DA) to ask the Minister of Health:**

What (a) total number of persons have died in each province since 1 February 2020 due to (i) natural and (ii) unnatural causes and (b) was the cause of death in each specified case?

###### NW1737E

**REPLY:**

1. Mortality data from the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system permit the production of mortality statistics on a continuous basis and contribute to the understanding of the burden of disease at national, provincial and local geographic levels. The registration of deaths in South Africa falls under the mandate of the Department of Home Affairs. It is governed by the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1992 (Act No. 51 of 1992). The Act has been amended several times, with the last amendment made in 2010 [Births and Deaths Registration Amendment Act (Act No. 18 of 2010)]. The principal Act states that after a death occurs, notice of death should be given as soon as practicable. To better enforce the registration of deaths, the 2014 regulations of the Act mandate the registration of deaths within 72 hours (three days) from date of occurrence. The principal Act further states that a medical practitioner should prescribe the cause of death if satisfied that the death was due to natural causes. However, if there is doubt that the death was due to natural causes, such a death must be reported to the police. After an investigation as to the circumstances of the death in terms of the Inquests Act, 1959 (Act No. 58 of 1959), the medical practitioner shall certify the cause of death. Upon completion of death registration, a death certificate is issued.
2. **Natural Deaths by Province**

A total of 137 816 deaths form Natural causes were recorded for persons 1 year and older for the period, 1 February 2020 to 16 June 2020.

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| **Province** | **Natural Deaths** |
| Eastern Cape | 22 241 |
| Free State | 8 817 |
| Gauteng | 26 941 |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 25 212 |
| Limpopo | 14 306 |
| Mpumalanga | 10 091 |
| North West | 8 711 |
| Northern Cape | 4 416 |
| Western Cape | 17 081 |
| **Total** | **137 816** |

Source: SAMRC

1. **Unnatural Causes**

A total of 13 866 Unnatural Deaths were recorded for the period, 1 February 2020 to 16 June 2020 at national level.

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| **Province** | **Unnatural Deaths** |
| Eastern Cape | 2 173 |
| Free State | 662 |
| Gauteng | 2 946 |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 3 143 |
| Limpopo | 1 005 |
| Mpumalanga | 950 |
| North West | 628 |
| Northern Cape | 323 |
| Western Cape | 2 036 |
| **Total** | **13 866** |

Source: SAMRC

1. All death notification forms are collected by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) from Department of Home Affairs bi-weekly for capturing, processing, assessment, analysis and dissemination of statistical reports and datasets on mortality and causes of death. The last report released by Stats SA reported on deaths was in 2017, citing technical challenges as the reason. SAMRC sources only natural and unnatural causes of death data from the basic demographic information for all deaths registered on the National Population Register on a weekly basis for purposes of monitoring trends on behalf of the Department of Health. However, SAMRC is also not allowed to access detailed causes of death because it is confidential; and as a result the cause of death in each specified case cannot be provided.

END.