

# If the booze doesn't get you, the stats will

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SOUTH Africa has a reputation of being a nation with an alcohol problem, but according to statistics on one website it is not a big killer.

According to [www.worldlifeexpectancy.com](http://www.worldlifeexpectancy.com), only 1.1 South Africans die as a result of alcohol per 100 000 of the population. We share that statistic with countries like the UK, Mozambique and Portugal. We even shine when compared to some of our neighbours: Namibia has 1.5 deaths per 100 000.

We are well behind the highest-ranked country, El Salvador, which is at 25.1.

The vodka-swilling Russians

come in with 2.7 deaths per 100 000.

Worldlifeexpectancy.com compiles its statistics from WHO, World Bank, Unesco and CIA sources, and other databases.

But not everyone agrees with the statistics. Alcohol-related deaths are hard to measure, say the health experts.

Soul City advocacy officer Savera Kalideen says the 1.1 deaths per 100 000 are "too light".

South Africans are known binge drinkers, she says. A binge drink is four units of alcohol, about three quarts of beer for a man in a sitting, and one out of four local drinkers is a binge drinker.

Besides the effects on health,

what also needs to be taken into consideration, says Kalideen, is the part that alcohol often plays in violence-related deaths.

The SA Medical Journal estimated that 130 people a day die from

alcohol-related causes in South Africa. Of these 46% is from injuries; 35% from TB and HIV/Aids; and 15% from non-communicable diseases like cancer, liver and cardiovascular disease.

A WHO report last year said that male deaths in South Africa from motor vehicle accidents were 47.7 per 100 000 of the population and that at least half the fatalities were related to alcohol.

At 1.1 deaths per 100 000, we're well behind El Salvador's 25.1

## #TO THE POINT

Are we a nation of binge drinkers?

Or [tellus@thetimes.co.za](mailto:tellus@thetimes.co.za), or SMS 33971 (SMS costs R1.50)

