

The Epidemiology of Female and Child Rape Homicides in South Africa

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Background

- **Rape Homicide combines the most extreme forms of violence against women, rape and murder (Abrahams 2008)**
- **The 1999 MRC Female Homicide study found that South Africa has a rape homicide rate which exceeds the US female homicide rate**
- **Child Rape Homicide has received very little attention, with limited data on this problem globally**
- **Anecdotal evidence from newspaper reports in SA suggests that this is an emerging problem**



Aim

- To describe the epidemiology of female rape homicides and compare this to 1999
- To describe the epidemiology of child rape homicides



Methodology

- **This study was designed as a follow-up to the 1999 Female Homicide study**
- **Mortuary based Study**
- **Data was collected from a nationally representative sample of mortuaries, so that the findings would be generalisable nationally**
- **Mortuaries were stratified based on size:**
 - **Large > 1500 bodies per annum**
 - **Medium 500 -1500 bodies per annum**
 - **Small < 500 bodies per annum**
- **Sample of mortuaries were drawn taking into account this stratification**
- **Sample - 38 mortuaries, spread over all provinces**



METHODOLOGY cont...

- **All child* and female homicides were identified via death registers at sampled mortuaries**
- **If we were uncertain whether a case was a homicide, it was included and verified with police information and pathologist report**
- **Cause of death and sexual assault data was extracted from post-mortem reports**
- **Police case numbers were the crucial link between mortuary and SAPS**
- **Police data was collected to obtain victim-perpetrator relationship, circumstances of the murder, legal outcomes,**
- **Where the IO was not available, information was obtained from the commanding officer or a record review**

*Child – female and male child ≤ 17



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What did we find?



Adult Suspected Rape Homicide

- Rape Homicide was suspected in 18.8% of Female murders compared to 16.3% of female murders for 1999 ($p=0.01$)
- Estimate of 444 cases of suspected rape homicides for 2009
- Decrease of 20.9% in the number of rape homicides for 2009 compared to 1999
- We expected a decrease in rape homicide as overall homicide has decreased in SA (Altbeker 2008).
- Rape homicide rate of 2.48 /100 000 women 14+ yrs for 2009 compared to a rate of 3.65/ 100 000 women 14+ yrs for 1999
- US has an overall female homicide rate of 3.2/100 000 (Hemenway 2002).

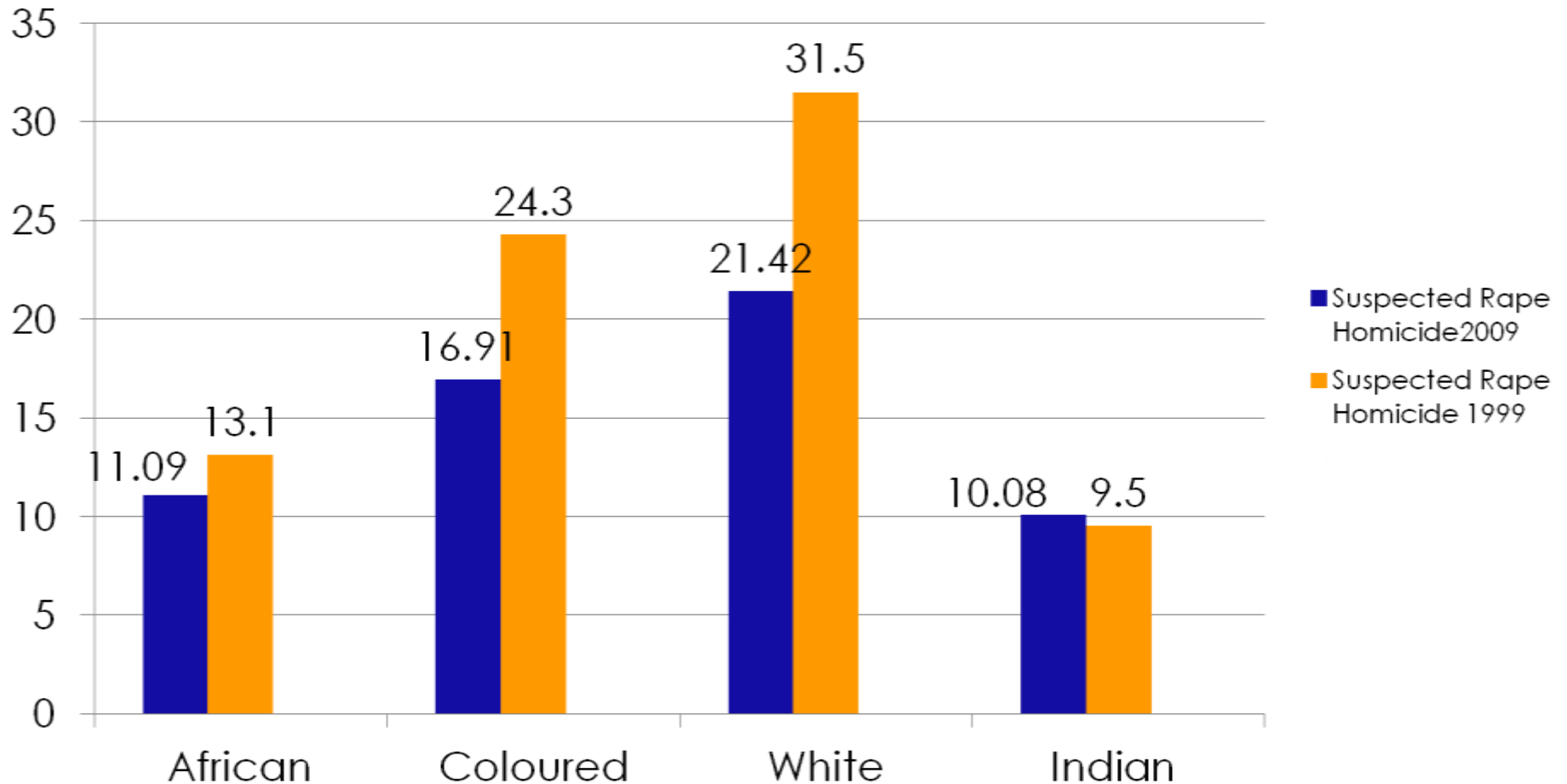


Child Suspected Rape Homicide

- **Child rape homicide was suspected in 11.3% of Child Murders**
- **Estimate of 105 suspected child rape homicides for 2009**
- **19.1% of the total suspected rape homicides was that of children**

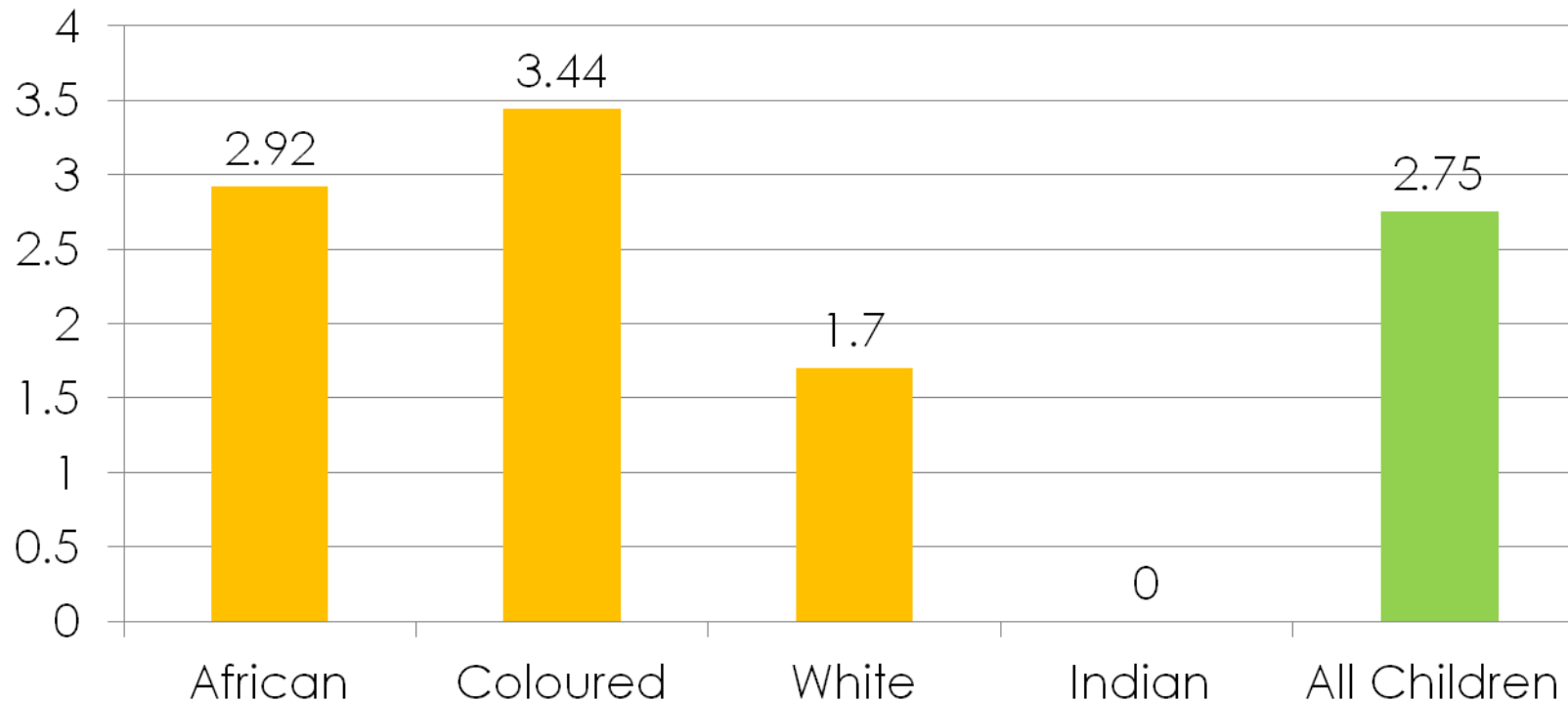


Suspected Adult Rape Homicide Race Distribution



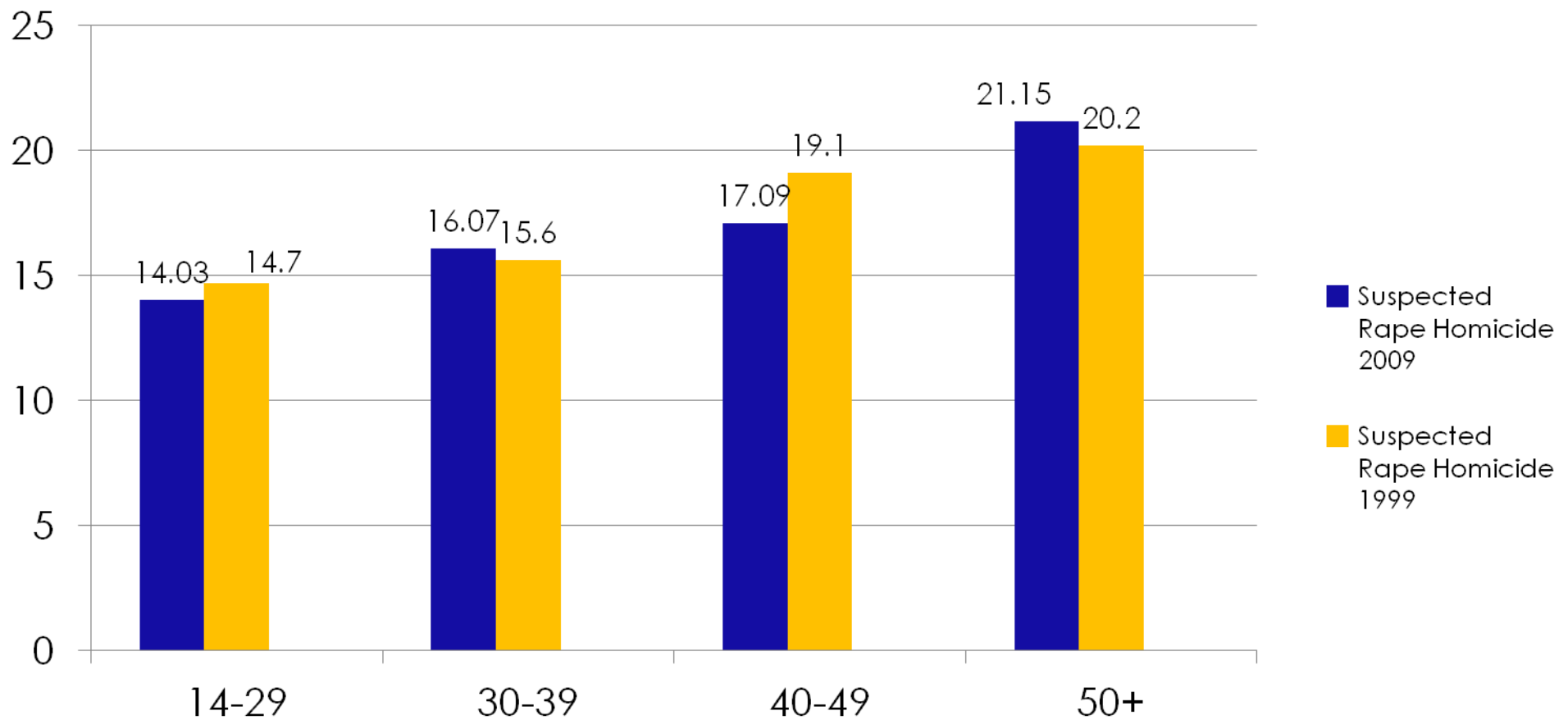


Suspected Child Rape Homicide Race Distribution



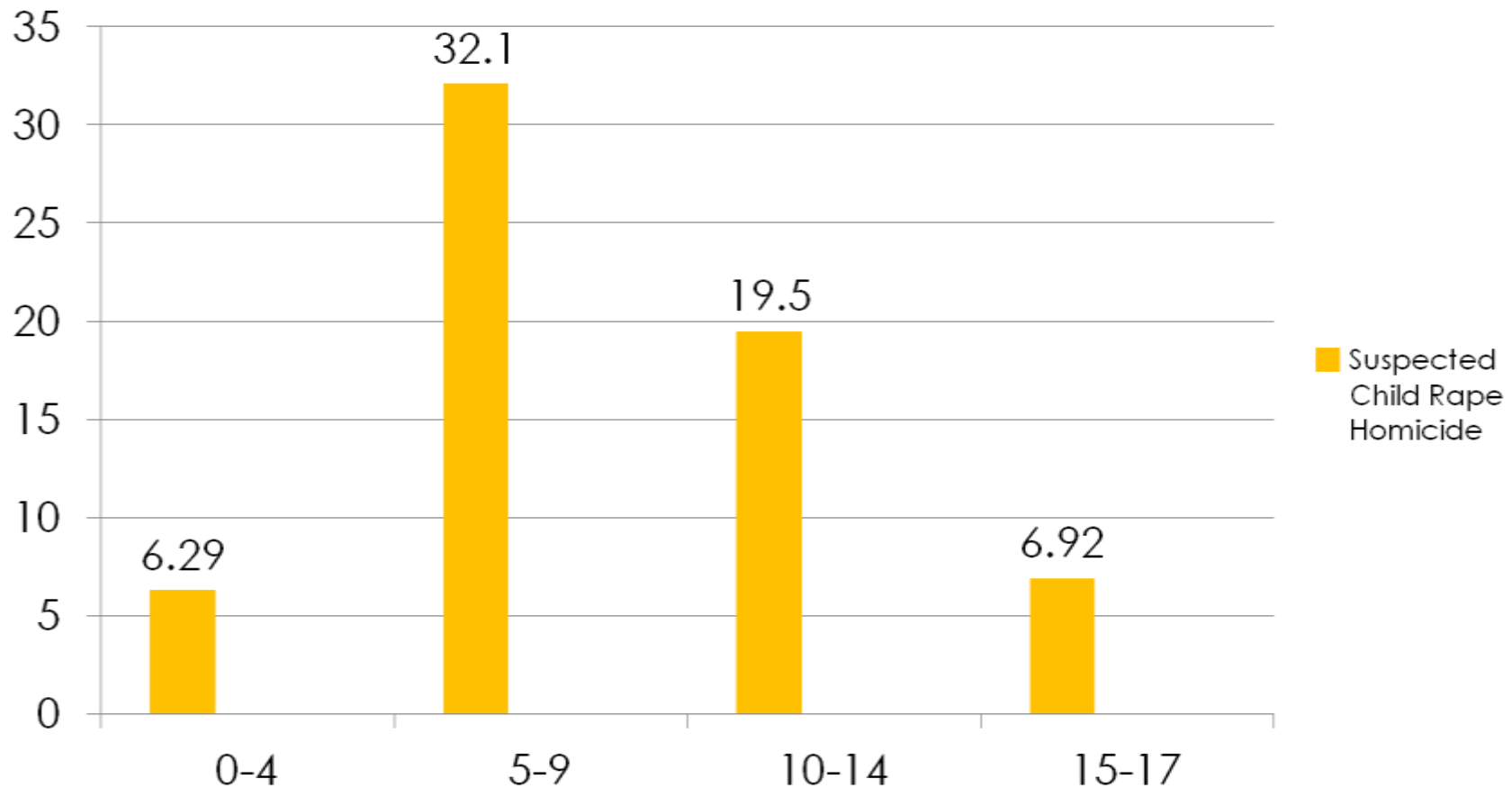


Suspected Adult Rape Homicide Age Distribution



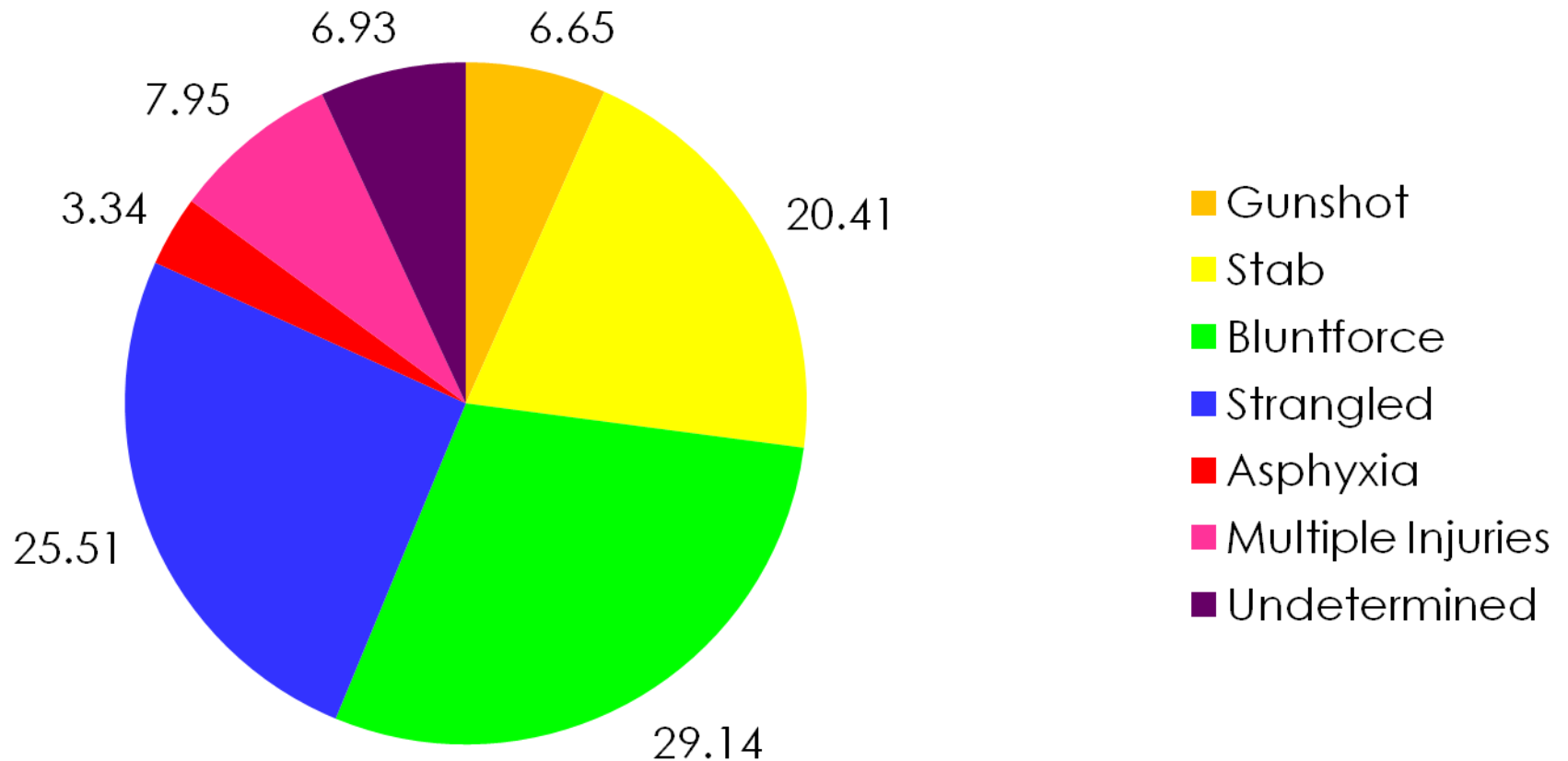


Suspected Child Rape Homicide Age Distribution



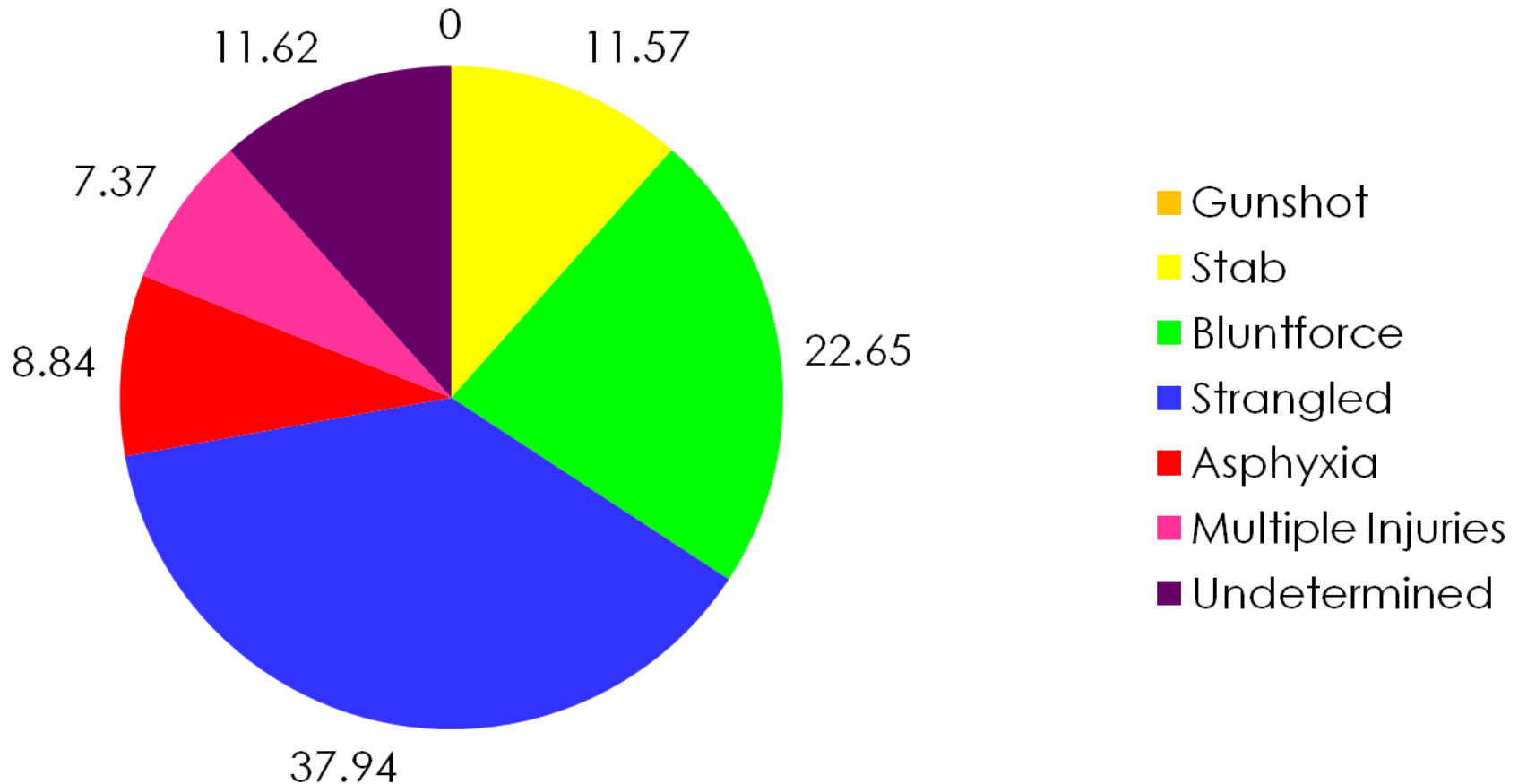


Suspected Adult Rape Homicide Mechanism of Death





Suspected Child Rape Homicide Mechanism of Death





Suspected Rape Homicide and Pregnancy

- **3.97 % of adult rape homicide victims were pregnant at the time of their murder compared to 1.7% in 1999**
- **No children <14 years were pregnant at the time of their murder**



CONCLUSIONS

- **This study has shown that even though rape homicide has decreased overall, its proportion amongst all female murders has increased over the past 10 years**
- **This would suggest that although we see a decline in the overall murder rate rape homicides has not decreased at the same rate**
- **SA had just over 100 child rape homicides for 2009 which is a cause for concern, thus 1 child in every 3 days are raped and murdered**
- **Younger children are most vulnerable, in particular 5-9 year olds**
- **Increasing children's safety in communities is critical to prevent this form of early mortality**
- **Collecting and describing this type of data is critical for us to take action to better protect women and children**