

Researching threats to adolescent survival

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Dr Nicole De Wet is a lecturer in demography and population studies at Wits. Her research is on adolescent health outcomes in South Africa.

There is a dearth of research in South Africa on 10-19-year-olds specifically. This age group is fragmented and generally incorporated into adult or child health studies. However, the needs of this age group are specific and distinct from that of children and adults.

"My doctoral research found that females are at higher risk of disease-related mortality, while males are at a higher risk of non-disease (accidents, homicides) mortality," says De Wet.

Further, a differential exists by place of residence and 15-19-year-old adolescents are at a higher risk of [premature mortality](#) than 10-14-year-olds.

De Wet's postdoctoral studies examine [adolescent health](#) behaviours that either promote or prohibit successful transition to adulthood.

This research aligns with the Policy Guidelines for Youth and Adolescent Health in South Africa, which aim to promote safe and supportive environments for adolescents. These include relationships with families, social norms, and cultural practices.

"Through identifying key behaviours – risky sexual behaviours and illicit drug use – that place adolescents at risk of adverse health outcomes, my research aligns with the South African National Youth Policy

2014-2019," says De Wet. "This policy aims to 'strengthen the capacity of young people to enable them to take charge of their own well-being through building their assets and ultimately realising their potential to the fullest'."

Provided by Wits University

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