

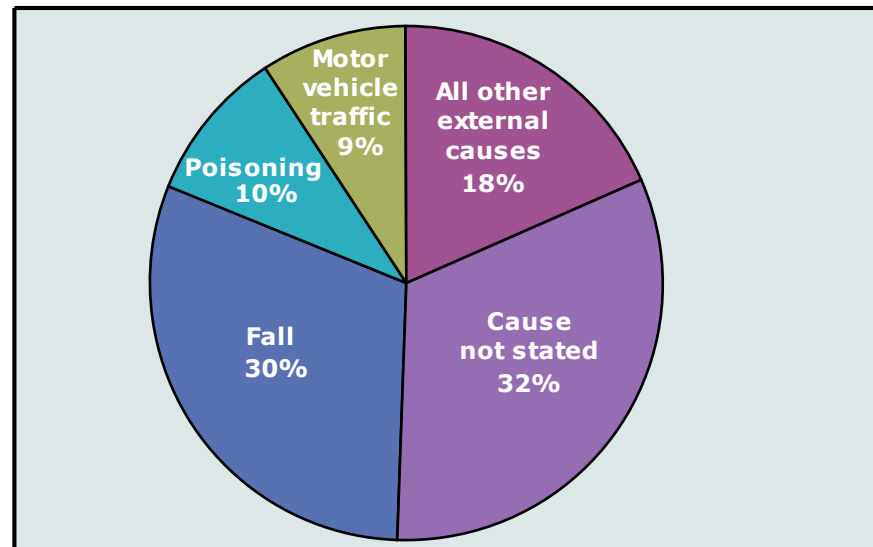
External Cause of Injury

The ICD-9 External Cause Matrix is a two-dimensional array describing both the mechanism or external cause of the injury (e.g., fall, motor vehicle traffic, etc.) and the manner or intent of the injury (e.g., self-inflicted, assault, etc.). (See "Appendix A," ICD-9-CM External Cause of Injury Matrix). While this matrix was originally developed for mortality, it has been adapted for use with the ICD-9-CM (1).

In 2001 approximately one third of injury hospitalizations did not have an external cause code. Of all injury hospitalizations, 30 percent were coded to falls, the leading mechanism of injury coded (figure 20), and, in addition, 58 percent of all injuries were coded as unintentional or accidents (figure 21).

Fractures accounted for about a million injury hospital discharges. Forty-five percent of fractures were coded as fall-related, 9 percent as motor vehicle traffic-related, 12 percent as another external cause, and 34 percent had no external cause of injury code (appendix table 20d).

Figure 20. Percent distribution of injury hospital discharges by mechanism, 2001



SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Hospital Discharge Survey.

In 2001, 1.2 million patients, or 68 percent of patients hospitalized due to injury, had at least one recorded external cause code (appendix table 20a). This percent was similar for males and females, and for white and black persons. In the West over three-quarters had these codes. In the Northeast and Midwest external cause codes were recorded for about two-thirds of the injury discharges, and over 60 percent of discharges in the South contained at least one of these codes. The elderly had a lower percentage of injury discharges with an external cause code than those 15–24, 25–44, and 45–64 years of age (appendix table 20g). There was considerable variation among the various types of injuries in the completion of external cause codes (figure 22). Only 51 percent of the burns had an external cause compared with about 88 percent of those with poisoning and toxic effects. Other categories with at least two-thirds external cause completion were open wounds and dislocations.

Figure 21. Percent distribution of injury hospital discharges by intent, 2001

