

## DEATH HIGHLIGHTS

A total of 16,207 deaths occurred among Nebraska residents in 2016, which is the state's second highest single-year death total since reliable record-keeping began in 1915. This is not unexpected given that the state's population is both increasing in size and aging. The 2016 number translates into a crude mortality rate of 8.5 deaths per 1,000 residents and an age-adjusted mortality rate of 706.6 deaths per 100,000 residents. Neither of these figures are close to establishing a new record: Nebraska's crude mortality rate was higher as recently as 2003 (when it was 8.9) and the age-adjusted mortality rate was higher as recently as 2007 (when it was 750.1).

The average age at death among Nebraska residents in 2016 was 75.2 years, a decrease from the 2015 figure of 75.3. The state's all-time record, 75.7 years, was set three years ago, in 2013. By gender, the average age at death in 2016 was 78.0 years for Nebraska women, down from the 2015 figure of 78.5 years. It was 72.3 years for Nebraska men, which set the state's all-time record, and was an increase from last year's figure of 72.2 years.

As it was from 2008-2014, cancer was again Nebraska's leading cause of death, surpassing heart disease, with 3,474 resident deaths in 2016. Although this number represents a slight decrease from the 2015 record total of 3,511 cancer deaths, it is within range of previous years: between 1993 and 2014, the number of cancer deaths in Nebraska fell between 3,266 (recorded in 1997) and 3,481 (recorded in 2012).

Cancer of the lung was the year's leading cause of cancer deaths among both Nebraska men and women, accounting for 856 deaths (438 men, 418 women). Colorectal (colon and rectum) cancer was Nebraska's second leading cause of cancer deaths overall in 2016, with 318 deaths (160 men, 158 women). However, breast cancer was the second leading cause of cancer deaths among Nebraska women in 2016, claiming 243 lives. Prostate cancer was the #3 cause of cancer deaths among Nebraska men, claiming 147 lives in 2016. Taken together, these four sites were responsible for nearly half (45.1%) of the state's cancer deaths in 2016.

With 156 fewer deaths than cancer, heart disease was the second leading cause of death among Nebraska residents in 2016, and was responsible for 3,318 deaths. However, among people 75 and older, heart disease was the leading cause of death in 2016, by a count of 2,309 to 1,646 for cancer. Nebraska recorded over 4,235 heart disease deaths as recently as 2002 and 5,092 heart disease deaths as recently as 1995.

After heart disease and cancer, no other single cause of death accounted for more than 10% of Nebraska resident deaths in 2016. For the seventh year in a row, chronic lung disease was Nebraska's third leading cause of death, accounting for 1,032 deaths in 2016. Cerebrovascular disease (often referred to as stroke), which had held the #5 rank among the state's leading causes of death in 2015, regained its typical place as the fourth leading cause in 2016, with 784 resident deaths.

## DEATH HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Accidents (also referred to as unintentional injuries) ranked as the fifth leading cause of death in 2015, with 771 deaths. Motor vehicle traffic accidents decreased in number from 2015 to 2016, from 255 to 199 fatalities, dropping it to the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of accidental deaths. Deaths due to falls, now the leading cause of accidental deaths, accounted for 224 resident deaths in 2016, which was 7 more than that recorded in 2015. Nebraska also recorded 12 farm-related accidental deaths in 2016, down from 14 in 2015. Continuing a long-standing trend, accidents were the leading cause of death in 2016 among Nebraska residents under the age of 45 years (excluding infants under one year of age), accounting for 234 (29.4%) of 796 deaths.

Alzheimer's Disease has now ranked among the top ten causes of death in Nebraska for over a decade, and in 2016 it was again the state's sixth leading cause of death, accounting for 634 deaths. After Alzheimer's Disease, Nebraska's top ten causes of death in 2016 included diabetes (501 deaths), pneumonia (323 deaths), essential hypertension and hypertensive renal disease (266 deaths) and suicide (245 deaths).

A total of 166 infant deaths occurred among Nebraska residents in 2016, which translates into an infant mortality rate of 6.2 per 1,000 live births. This rate is an increase from last year's mark of 5.8. The state's all-time lowest infant mortality rate (4.6) was recorded in 2012. The leading cause of infant deaths in Nebraska in 2016 was birth defects, which were responsible for 31 deaths, followed by sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), which was responsible for 23 deaths. Low birth weight babies accounted for 107 (64.8%) of Nebraska's infant deaths in 2016, with 85 of these children falling into the very low birth weight (<1500 grams) category. Neonates (infants less than 28 days old) accounted for 62.7% of Nebraska's 2016 infant deaths, with a count of 104, while post-neonates (infants between 28 days and one year of age) accounted for the remaining 62.