

DEATH HIGHLIGHTS

A total of 15,473 deaths occurred among Nebraska residents in 2011, an increase from the 15,171 deaths that occurred in 2010. The 2011 figure translates into a crude mortality rate of 8.4 deaths per 1,000 residents and an age-adjusted mortality rate of 719.6 deaths per 100,000 residents.

The average age at death among Nebraska residents in 2011 was 75.5 years, an increase from the previous year's figure of 75.4 years. The 2011 figure ties the state's all-time record, which was first set in 2003. By gender, the average age at death in 2011 was 78.7 years for Nebraska women, the same figure recorded in 2010, and 72.2 years for Nebraska men, an increase from the 2010 mark of 72.0 years and a new state record, breaking the previous record (set in 2010) of 72.0 years.

Nebraska's leading cause of death in 2011 was cancer, which accounted for 3,403 resident deaths. This figure represents 22.0% of all deaths that occurred among Nebraska residents in 2011. This is the third consecutive year in which cancer has surpassed heart disease as the state's leading cause of death, although it first occurred among Nebraska men in 2006. This historic shift is primarily the result of a substantial decrease in heart disease mortality; in fact, the annual number of heart disease deaths in Nebraska has fallen eight times since 2000, and the state's heart disease mortality rate has declined by more than 30% during the same period. At the same time, the cancer mortality rate in Nebraska has declined only modestly, and the number of cancer deaths has remained between 3,000 and 3,500 in every year since 1984.

Cancer of the lung was the year's leading cause of cancer deaths among both Nebraska men and women, accounting for 863 deaths (477 men, 386 women). Colorectal (colon and rectum) cancer was Nebraska's second leading cause of cancer deaths overall in 2011, with 356 deaths (176 men, 180 women). However, breast cancer was the second leading cause of cancer deaths among Nebraska women in 2011, claiming 203 lives, which is the lowest annual number of female breast cancer deaths in the state since 1964. Prostate cancer was the #2 cause of cancer deaths among Nebraska men, claiming 189 lives in 2011. Taken together, these four sites were responsible for nearly half (47.4%) of the state's cancer deaths in 2011.

With only 136 fewer deaths than cancer, heart disease was the second leading cause of death among Nebraska residents in 2011, and was responsible for 3,267 deaths. However, among Nebraska women, heart disease remained the leading cause of death in 2011, by a count of 1,625 to 1,576 for cancer. Among people age 75 and older, heart disease was also the state's leading cause of death in 2011, by a count of 2,343 to 1,628 for cancer.

After heart disease and cancer, no other single cause of death accounted for more than 10% of Nebraska resident deaths in 2011. For the fourth year in a row, chronic lung disease was Nebraska's third leading cause of death, accounting for 981 deaths in 2011. Cerebrovascular disease (usually referred to as stroke), for many years the state's third leading cause of death, was again the #4 leading cause of death, and was responsible for 816 deaths in 2011.

DEATH HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Accidents (also referred to as unintentional injuries) were Nebraska's fifth leading cause of death in 2011, claiming 675 lives. Motor vehicle accidents were once again Nebraska's leading cause of accidental deaths, accounting for 188 fatalities. This number is even smaller than the state's record-low total for 2010 (209 deaths), which was the lowest annual number of motor vehicle accident deaths recorded in Nebraska since 1944. Falls were the #2 cause of accidental deaths, with 173 resident fatalities in 2011. Ten of the state's accidental deaths in 2011 were farm-related. Accidents were the leading cause of death in 2011 among Nebraska residents under the age of 45 years (excluding infants under one year of age), accounting for 189 (25.6%) of 738 deaths.

Alzheimer's Disease has now ranked among the top ten causes of death in Nebraska for over a decade, and in 2011 it was again the state's sixth leading cause of death, accounting for 597 deaths. After Alzheimer's Disease, Nebraska's top ten causes of death in 2011 included diabetes (with 459 deaths), pneumonia (304 deaths), nephritis and nephrosis (218 deaths), and essential hypertension and hypertensive renal disease (206 deaths).

A total of 143 infant deaths occurred among Nebraska residents in 2011, which translates into an infant mortality rate of 5.6 per 1,000 live births. This figure is an increase from the 2010 rate (5.2), which is the lowest infant mortality rate ever recorded in the state's history. The leading cause of infant deaths in Nebraska in 2011 was birth defects, which accounted for 50 deaths. Low birth weight babies accounted for 95 (66.4%) of Nebraska's infant deaths, with 67 of these children falling into the very low birth weight (<1500 grams) category. Neonates (infants less than 28 days old) accounted for the majority of Nebraska's 2011 infant deaths, with a count of 95, while post-neonates (infants between 28 days and one year of age) accounted for the remaining 48.