

DEATH HIGHLIGHTS

A total of 15,654 deaths occurred among Nebraska residents in 2012, an increase from the 15,473 deaths that occurred in 2011. The 2012 figure translates into a crude mortality rate of 8.4 deaths per 1,000 residents and an age-adjusted mortality rate of 718.8 deaths per 100,000 residents.

The average age at death among Nebraska residents in 2012 was 75.5 years, the same figure recorded in 2011. The 2012 and 2011 figures tied the state's all-time record, which was first set in 2003. By gender, the average age at death in 2012 was 78.7 years for Nebraska women, the same figure recorded in 2011 and 2010, and 72.2 years for Nebraska men, the same figure recorded in 2011 and the all-time state record.

Nebraska's leading cause of death in 2012 was cancer, which accounted for 3,481 resident deaths. This figure represents 22.2% of all deaths that occurred among Nebraska residents in 2012. This is the fourth 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 906 deaths (486 men, 420 women). Colorectal (colon and rectum) cancer was Nebraska's second leading cause of cancer deaths overall in 2012, with 342 deaths (163 men, 179 women). However, breast cancer was the second leading cause of cancer deaths among Nebraska women in 2012, claiming 245 lives. Prostate cancer was the #2 cause of cancer deaths among Nebraska men, claiming 190 lives in 2012. Taken together, these four sites were responsible for nearly half (48.3%) of the state's cancer deaths in 2012.

With only 176 fewer deaths than cancer, heart disease was the second leading cause of death among Nebraska residents in 2012, and was responsible for 3,305 deaths. However, among people age 75 and older, heart disease was the state's leading cause of death in 2012, by a count of 2,397 to 1,677 for cancer.

After heart disease and cancer, no other single cause of death accounted for more than 10% of Nebraska resident deaths in 2012. For the fifth year in a row, chronic lung disease was Nebraska's third leading cause of death, accounting for 978 deaths in 2012.

A remarkable change that occurred in Nebraska vital statistics in 2012 was the replacement of cerebrovascular disease with accidents (also referred to as unintentional injuries) as the state's fourth leading cause of death. Accidents claimed 789 lives among Nebraska residents in 2012, up from 675 in 2011, and ranked ahead of cerebrovascular disease (often referred to as stroke), which claimed 776 lives in Nebraska in 2012. Both motor vehicle accidents and falls, the leading causes of accidental deaths, increased in number from 2011 to 2012. Motor vehicle accident fatalities increased from 188 in 2011 (the state's lowest single-year total since 1944) to 251 in 2012. Similarly, accidental deaths due to falls increased from 173 in 2011 to 215 in 2012.

DEATH HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Also contributing to the increase in Nebraska's accidental death toll was an increase in accidental poisoning deaths, which went from 114 in 2011 to 131 in 2012, and have more than tripled in number since 2000. Nebraska also recorded 10 farm-related accidental deaths in 2012, the same number as in 2011. Accidents were the leading cause of death in 2012 among Nebraska residents under the age of 45 years (excluding infants under one year of age), accounting for 261 (33.6%) of 776 deaths.

Alzheimer's Disease has now ranked among the top ten causes of death in Nebraska for over a decade, and in 2012 it was again the state's sixth leading cause of death, accounting for 569 deaths. After Alzheimer's Disease, Nebraska's top ten causes of death in 2012 included diabetes (with 442 deaths), pneumonia (277 deaths), suicide (232 deaths), and essential hypertension and hypertensive renal disease (228 deaths).

A total of 120 infant deaths occurred among Nebraska residents in 2012, which translates into an infant mortality rate of 4.6 per 1,000 live births. This figure is the lowest infant mortality rate ever recorded in the state's history, breaking the previous mark of 5.2, which was set in 2010. The leading cause of infant deaths in Nebraska in 2012 was birth defects, which accounted for 27 deaths, followed by sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), which accounted for 20 deaths. Low birth weight babies accounted for 75 (62.5%) of Nebraska's infant deaths, with 57 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 2012 infant deaths, with a count of 79, while post-neonates (infants between 28 days and one year of age) accounted for the remaining 41.