

DEATH HIGHLIGHTS

A total of 15,745 deaths occurred among Nebraska residents in 2013, which is the state's highest single-year death total since reliable record-keeping began in 1915. This record is not unexpected given that the state's population is both increasing in size and aging. The 2013 figure translates into a crude mortality rate of 8.4 deaths per 1,000 residents and an age-adjusted mortality rate of 714.1 deaths per 100,000 residents, and is an increase from the 15,654 resident deaths that occurred in 2012.

The average age at death among Nebraska residents in 2013 was 75.7 years, which is also a new state record. Last year's figure of 75.5 years had been the previous record, which Nebraska had also achieved in 2011 and 2003. By gender, the average age at death in 2013 was 79.0 years for Nebraska women, up from the 2012 figure of 78.7 years, and 72.1 years for Nebraska men, down slightly from last year's 72.2 years, which remains the all-time state record.

Nebraska's leading cause of death in 2013 was cancer, which accounted for 3,458 resident deaths. This figure represents 22.0% of all deaths that occurred among Nebraska residents in 2013. This is the fifth 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 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 913 deaths (511 men, 402 women). Colorectal (colon and rectum) cancer was Nebraska's second leading cause of cancer deaths overall in 2013, with 323 deaths (162 men, 161 women). However, breast cancer was the second leading cause of cancer deaths among Nebraska women in 2013, claiming 245 lives for the second year in a row. Prostate cancer was the #2 cause of cancer deaths among Nebraska men, claiming 194 lives in 2013. Taken together, these four sites were responsible for nearly half (48.5%) of the state's cancer deaths in 2013.

With only 80 fewer deaths than cancer, heart disease was the second leading cause of death among Nebraska residents in 2013, and was responsible for 3,378 deaths. However, among people age 75 and older, heart disease continued as the state's leading cause of death in 2013, by a count of 2,483 to 1,693 for cancer.

After heart disease and cancer, no other single cause of death accounted for more than 10% of Nebraska resident deaths in 2013. For the fifth year in a row, chronic lung disease was Nebraska's third leading cause of death, accounting for 957 deaths in 2013.

DEATH HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Cerebrovascular disease (often referred to as stroke) claimed 817 lives among Nebraska residents in 2013, up from 776 in 2012, and regained its place as the state's fourth leading cause of death, which it had lost last year to accidents. Accidents (also referred to as unintentional injuries) once again ranked as the state's fifth leading cause of death, with 701 deaths, down from 789 in 2012. Both motor vehicle accidents and falls, the leading causes of accidental deaths, decreased in number from 2012 to 2013. Motor vehicle accident fatalities decreased from 251 in 2012 to 236 in 2013, and accidental deaths due to falls decreased from 215 in 2012 to 187 in 2013.

Also contributing to the decline in Nebraska's accidental death toll was a decrease in accidental poisoning deaths, which went from 131 in 2012 to 107 in 2013, and drowning deaths, which fell from 24 in 2012 to 8 in 2013 (the state's lowest total since 2005). Nebraska also recorded seven farm-related accidental deaths in 2013, down from 10 in 2012. Accidents were the leading cause of death in 2013 among Nebraska residents under the age of 45 years (excluding infants under one year of age), accounting for 220 (28.6%) of 766 deaths.

Alzheimer's Disease has now ranked among the top ten causes of death in Nebraska for over a decade, and in 2013 it was again the state's sixth leading cause of death, accounting for 557 deaths. After Alzheimer's Disease, Nebraska's top ten causes of death in 2013 included diabetes (with 472 deaths), pneumonia (303 deaths), essential hypertension and hypertensive renal disease (221 deaths), and intentional self-harm (suicide) and nephritis/nephrosis (tied with 220 deaths apiece).

A total of 139 infant deaths occurred among Nebraska residents in 2013, which translates into an infant mortality rate of 5.3 per 1,000 live births. This rate is an increase from last year's mark of 4.6, which was the lowest infant mortality rate ever recorded in the state's history. The leading cause of infant deaths in Nebraska in 2013 was birth defects, which accounted for 36 deaths, followed by prematurity (18 deaths), maternal complications of pregnancy (17 deaths) and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) (15 deaths). Low birth weight babies accounted for 98 (70.5%) of Nebraska's infant deaths, with 73 of these children falling into the very low birth weight (<1500 grams) category. Neonates (infants less than 28 days old) accounted for more than two-thirds of Nebraska's 2013 infant deaths, with a count of 96, while post-neonates (infants between 28 days and one year of age) accounted for the remaining 43.