

DEATH HIGHLIGHTS

A total of 15,965 deaths occurred among Nebraska residents in 2014, 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 2014 figure translates into a crude mortality rate of 8.5 deaths per 1,000 residents and an age-adjusted mortality rate of 717.3 deaths per 100,000 residents, and is an increase from the 15,745 resident deaths that occurred in 2013.

The average age at death among Nebraska residents in 2014 was 75.1 years, a decrease from the 2013 figure of 75.7, which is the state's all-time record. By gender, the average age at death in 2014 was 78.3 years for Nebraska women, down from the 2013 figure of 79.0 years, and 71.9 years for Nebraska men, down slightly from last year's 72.1 years.

Nebraska's leading cause of death in 2014 was cancer, which accounted for 3,459 resident deaths. This figure represents 21.7% of all deaths that occurred among Nebraska residents in 2014. This is the sixth 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 nine times since 2000, and the state's heart disease mortality rate has declined by over 30% during the same period. At the same time, the cancer mortality rate in Nebraska has declined only modestly (just over 10%), while 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 889 deaths (507 men, 382 women). Colorectal (colon and rectum) cancer was Nebraska's second leading cause of cancer deaths overall in 2014, with 346 deaths (176 men, 170 women). However, breast cancer was the second leading cause of cancer deaths among Nebraska women in 2014, claiming 251 lives. Prostate cancer and Colorectal cancer tied for the #2 cause of cancer deaths among Nebraska men, each claiming 176 lives in 2014. Taken together, these four sites were responsible for nearly half (48.0%) of the state's cancer deaths in 2014.

With 169 fewer deaths than cancer, heart disease was the second leading cause of death among Nebraska residents in 2014, and was responsible for 3,290 deaths. However, among people age 75 and older, heart disease continued as the state's leading cause of death in 2014, by a count of 2,313 to 1,625 for cancer.

After heart disease and cancer, no other single cause of death accounted for more than 10% of Nebraska resident deaths in 2014. For the sixth year in a row, chronic lung disease was Nebraska's third leading cause of death, accounting for 1,028 deaths in 2014, followed by cerebrovascular disease (often referred to as stroke), which claimed the lives of 797 Nebraska residents in 2014.

DEATH HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Accidents (also referred to as unintentional injuries) once again ranked as the state's fifth leading cause of death, with 777 deaths, up from 701 in 2013. Both motor vehicle accidents and falls, the leading causes of accidental deaths, increased in number from 2013 to 2014. Motor vehicle accident fatalities increased from 236 in 2013 to 250 in 2014, and accidental deaths due to falls increased from 187 in 2013 to 217 in 2014. Also contributing to the rise in Nebraska's accidental death toll was an increase in accidental poisoning deaths, which went from 107 in 2013 to 112 in 2014. Nebraska also recorded 11 farm-related accidental deaths in 2014, up from seven in 2013. Accidents were the leading cause of death in 2014 among Nebraska residents under the age of 45 years (excluding infants under one year of age), accounting for 251 (30.0%) of 837 deaths.

Alzheimer's Disease has now ranked among the top ten causes of death in Nebraska for over a decade, and in 2014 it was again the state's sixth leading cause of death, accounting for 515 deaths. After Alzheimer's Disease, Nebraska's top ten causes of death in 2014 included diabetes (472 deaths), pneumonia (310 deaths), nephritis/nephrosis (265 deaths), and essential hypertension and hypertensive renal disease (253 deaths).

A total of 136 infant deaths occurred among Nebraska residents in 2014, which translates into an infant mortality rate of 5.1 per 1,000 live births. This rate is a decrease from last year's mark of 5.3, but still exceeds the state's all-time lowest infant mortality rate of 4.6, which was recorded in 2012. The leading cause of infant deaths in Nebraska in 2014 was birth defects, which accounted for 41 deaths, followed by sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) (19 deaths), maternal complications of pregnancy (18 deaths), and prematurity (16 deaths). Low birth weight babies accounted for 88 (64.8%) of Nebraska's infant deaths, with 64 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 2014 infant deaths, with a count of 97, while post-neonates (infants between 28 days and one year of age) accounted for the remaining 39.