

DEATHS

There were 4,989 resident deaths in 2004, 133 less than in 2003. The crude death rate decreased to 8.0 per 1,000 population. The death rate has fluctuated between 8.1 and 8.5 since 1988; prior to then it had been slowly declining from 11.2 in 1960, to 10.0 in 1970, down to 9.0 in 1980. The Vermont crude death rate was slightly higher than the U.S. white crude death rate until 1970 when the rates converged and remained similar through 1980. Since 1981, Vermont's death rate has been slightly lower than the U.S. white rate. The U.S. white rate for 2004 was 8.6. Comparisons are made to the U.S. white rate because 99.6 percent of Vermont residents who died in 2004 were white ([Table C-9](#)).

For the past 40 years, the three leading causes of death in Vermont have been heart disease, cancer and stroke. Heart disease and cancer accounted for 50.1 percent of the deaths in 2004 ([Table C-11](#)). The heart disease crude death rate peaked in the 1960's at 439.5 deaths per 100,000 population. Since then, the rate has declined, and was 206.8 per 100,000 in 2004. The crude death rate from stroke (or cerebrovascular diseases), the third leading cause, has also decreased significantly from a peak of 131.9 in the early 1960's to 48.6 in 2004 ([Table C-1](#)). In contrast to the dramatic declines in the rates for heart disease and stroke, the crude death rate for cancer (or malignant neoplasms) rose steadily over the past few decades from 188.1 in the period from 1979 to 1981 to 204.0 in 2001, before decreasing to 195.6 in 2003 and to 195.0 in 2004. This increase is in part a result of the aging population and the continued rise in crude death rates for lung cancer (44.7 in 1979-81, to 51.4 in 1994-96, to 56.5 in 2001).

Chronic lower respiratory disease (formerly referred to as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) has been the fourth leading cause of death in Vermont since 1985. The crude death rate from this cause increased from 33.0 in the period from 1979 to 1981 to 50.9 in 2000, then decreased to 48.8 by 2003, and again in 2004 to 47.8.

Accidents (or unintentional injuries) have been the fifth leading causes of death in Vermont since 1999. The crude death rate from accidents peaked at 58.4 in the period from 1969 to 1971 and declined to 31.3 in 1994 to 1996. Since the mid 1990's however, the death rate from accidents has gradually increased to 40.6 in 2004.

The crude death rate from Alzheimer's disease steadily increased throughout the 1990's and 2000's, moving up from the tenth to the seventh leading cause of death in 1999. In 2004, Alzheimer's disease became the sixth leading cause of death, with a crude rate of 27.8.

Diabetes dropped from the sixth to the seventh leading cause of death in Vermont in 2004; however, in general Vermont has experienced an increasing trend in the crude death rate from diabetes over the past 10 years. The rate has moved up from 22.0 in the period 1989 to 1991 to 26.9 in 2000 and 29.6 in 2003, before declining to 24.0 in 2004.

After slipping from the ninth to the tenth leading cause of death in Vermont in 2001, intentional self-harm (or suicide) returned to the ninth position in 2002 and moved up to the eighth position in 2004, with a rate of 14.6. Influenza and pneumonia slipped to the ninth leading cause in 2004, with a crude rate of 13.8 deaths per 100,000.

In 2004, nephritis/nephrosis or kidney disease returned to the list of ten leading causes of death in Vermont in the tenth spot with a crude rate of 9.5 deaths per 100,000 population.

The leading causes of death varied with age ([Table C-2](#)) and ([Table C-14](#)). Unintentional injuries were the leading cause of death for people age 15 to 44. Cancer was the leading cause of death, followed by heart disease for 45-74 year olds. At ages 75 and higher, the causes were reversed with heart disease as the leading cause, followed by cancer.

Death rates dramatically increase after age 75. People age 75 and over accounted for over 61 percent of total deaths, but comprised only 6.4 percent of the total population. Except for accidents and influenza and pneumonia, the leading causes of death in this age group are all chronic diseases.

The leading causes of death varied by sex as well ([Table C-1](#)) and ([Table C-11](#)). The top two causes for males and females were the same: heart disease and cancer. Chronic lower respiratory diseases, accidents and cerebrovascular diseases ranked third, fourth, and fifth for males while cerebrovascular diseases, chronic lower respiratory diseases and alzheimer's disease were the third, fourth, and fifth leading causes of death for females. Diabetes and suicide tied for the sixth leading cause of death among males while accidents were ranked sixth for females. The seventh leading cause for females was diabetes. Alzheimer's disease, influenza and pneumonia, and nephritis/nephrosis were the eighth, ninth and tenth leading causes for males. Influenza, nephritis/nephrosis and suicide were ranked eighth, ninth and tenth among females.

Deaths occurring in a hospital accounted for 42.2 percent of Vermont resident deaths ([Table C-21](#)), down from 62 percent in 1980 and 53 percent in 1990 but slightly higher than 41.2 in 2000. In 2004, 23 percent of Vermont resident deaths occurred at home, and 24.7 percent occurred in a nursing home.