

DEATHS

There were 5,044 resident deaths in 2005, 55 more than in 2004. The crude death rate increased to 8.1 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 2005 was 8.7. Comparisons are made to the U.S. white rate because 99.5 percent of Vermont residents who died in 2005 were white ([Table C-9](#)).

For the past 40 years, the two leading causes of death in Vermont have been heart disease and cancer. Heart disease and cancer accounted for 48.2 percent of the deaths in 2005 ([Table C-11](#)). The heart disease crude death rate peaked in the 1960's at 439.5 deaths per 100,000 population, but has decreased significantly since then. The rate for 2005 was 198.4 per 100,000. In contrast to the dramatic declines in the rates for heart disease, the crude death rate for cancer (or malignant neoplasms) rose steadily through the 1980's and 1990's before starting to decline in this decade. After a high of 204.0 per 100,000 population in 2001, the rate decreased to 191.8 in 2005 ([Table C-1](#)).

Chronic lower respiratory diseases (formerly referred to as chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases), the fourth leading cause of death in Vermont since 1985, moved up to the third leading cause in 2005. The crude death rate for this cause has increased over the past twenty plus years from 33.0 in the period from 1979 to 1981 to 50.9 in 2000. Following a few years of declining rates earlier this decade, the rate sharply increased to 61.0 in 2005.

Accidents (or unintentional injuries) moved up to the fourth leading cause of death in Vermont, from a previous position of fifth, which it had maintained since 1999. The crude death rate for 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 continued to increase. The crude rate for 2005 was 43.5.

Cerebrovascular diseases, or stroke, dropped from the third leading cause of death in 2004 to the fifth leading cause in 2005. The crude death rate for cerebrovascular diseases has dropped significantly from its' peak of 131.9 in the early 1960's to 41.7 in 2005.

The crude death rate from Alzheimer's disease steadily increased throughout the 1990's and into this decade, resulting in movement up from the tenth to the seventh leading cause of death in 1999. In 2004, Alzheimer's disease moved up to the sixth leading cause of death, and remained there in 2005 with a crude rate of 29.5.

Diabetes remained the seventh leading cause of death in Vermont in 2005. Though the rate has fluctuated in recent years; generally, Vermont has experienced an increasing trend in the crude death rate for diabetes over the past fifteen years. The rate increased 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, and increasing to 27.6 in 2005.

Influenza and pneumonia moved up to the eighth leading cause in 2005, with a crude rate of 15.6 deaths per 100,000, an increase from 13.8 in 2004. Intentional self-harm (or suicide) dropped from the eighth to the ninth position in 2005 with a rate of 12.0, a decrease from 14.6 in 2004.

Parkinson's disease was the tenth leading cause of death in Vermont in 2005. With a crude rate of 9.1 deaths per 100,000 population, this is the first year that this disease appeared in the top ten.

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 45-84 year olds, and at ages 85 and higher, the causes were reversed with heart disease as the leading cause, followed by cancer.

Death rates dramatically increase after age 75. While people age 75 and over comprised only 6.6 percent of the total population, they accounted for 63 percent of total deaths. Except for accidents and influenza and pneumonia, the leading causes of death in this age group were all chronic diseases.

The leading causes of death varied by sex as well ([Table C-1](#)) and ([Table C-11](#)). The top three causes for males and females were the same: heart disease, cancer and chronic lower respiratory diseases.

Accidents, cerebrovascular diseases and diabetes ranked fourth, fifth, and sixth for males, while cerebrovascular diseases, Alzheimer's disease, and accidents were the fourth, fifth, and sixth leading causes of death for females.

Suicide and Alzheimer's disease were the seventh and eighth leading cause of death among males, while diabetes and influenza and pneumonia were ranked seventh and eighth for females.

Influenza and pneumonia, and Parkinson's disease were the ninth and tenth leading causes for males, and Parkinson's disease and suicide were ranked ninth and tenth among females.

Deaths occurring in a hospital accounted for 40.2 percent of Vermont resident deaths ([Table C-21](#)), down from 62 percent in 1980, 53 percent in 1990 and 41.2 percent in 2000. In 2005, 26 percent of Vermont resident deaths occurred at home, and 24.3 percent occurred in a nursing home.