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National Vital Statistics Reports

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Deaths: Final Data for 1996

by Kimberley D. Peters; Kenneth D. Kochanek, M.A.; and Sherry L. Murphy, Division of Vital Statistics

Abstract

Objectives—This report presents 1996 data on U.S. deaths and death rates according to demographic and medical characteristics such as age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, marital status, educational attainment, injury at work, State of residence, and cause of death. Trends and patterns in general mortality, life expectancy, and infant and maternal mortality are also described.

Methods—In 1996 a total of 2,314,690 deaths were reported in the United States. This report presents descriptive tabulations of information reported on the death certificates. Death certificates are completed by funeral directors, attending physicians, medical examiners, and coroners. Original records are filed in the state registration offices. Statistical information is compiled into a national data base through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program of the National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Changes between 1995 and 1996 in death rates and differences in death rates across demographic groups in 1996 are tested for statistical significance. Unless otherwise specified reported differences are statistically significant.

Results—The 1996 age-adjusted death rate for the United States decreased, reaching an all-time low of 491.6 deaths per 100,000 standard population, and life expectancy at birth increased by 0.3 years to 76.1 years, a record high. The 15 leading causes of death remained the same as in 1995, although there were changes in the ranking of some causes. Replacing homicide, septicemia became the 12th leading cause of death, and Alzheimer's disease moved from the 14th to the 13th leading cause. For the third consecutive year, the number of homicide deaths dropped, making it the 14th leading cause of death. Mortality declined for all age groups, including persons aged 85 and over. The largest decline in age-adjusted death rates among the leading causes of death was for Human immunodeficiency virus infection, which dropped 28.8 percent in 1996, compared with the previous year. The infant mortality rate declined by 4 percent to a record low of 7.3 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 1996. Neonatal and postneonatal mortality rates declined for all races combined as well as for postneonatal

white infants. Although not statistically significant, mortality rates for white and black neonatal infants and black postneonatal infants also declined.

Conclusions—The overall improvements in general mortality and life expectancy in 1996 continue the long-term downward trend in U.S. mortality. The drop in U.S. infant mortality continues the steady declines of the past four decades.

Highlights

In 1996 a record 2,314,690 deaths were registered in the United States, 2,558 more than the previous high of 2,312,132 deaths recorded in 1995. The **crude death rate** for 1996 was 872.5 deaths per 100,000 population, slightly lower than the 1995 rate of 880.0. The **age-adjusted death rate**, which eliminates the distorting effects of the aging of the population, was at a record low of 491.6 per 100,000 U.S. standard population, 2.4 percent lower than the previous low of 503.9 in 1995. The age-adjusted death rates declined between 1995 and 1996 for white and black males and females.

Age-specific death rates significantly decreased for all age groups. The largest declines were as follows: 10.3 percent for ages 25–34 years, 8.1 percent for ages 35–44 years, 6 percent for ages

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