

Deaths from congenital anomalies in Canada, 1974 to 2012

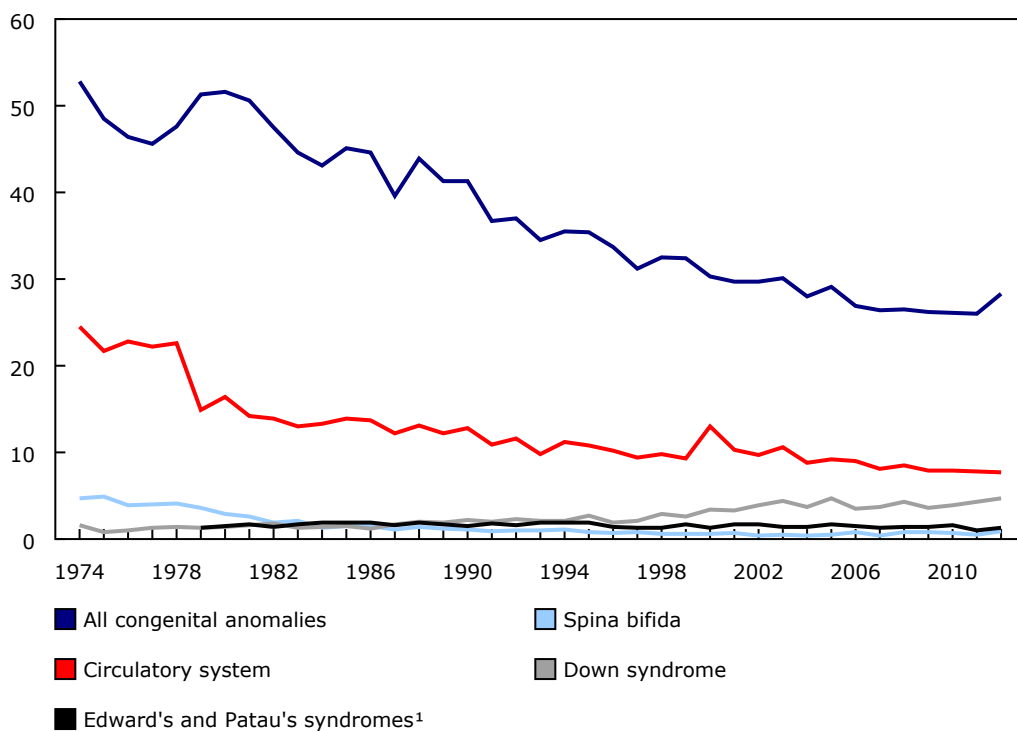
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In Canada, about 1 in 25 babies is born each year with a congenital anomaly—commonly known as a birth defect. There are several hundred separate congenital anomalies and, for most of them, the cause is unknown.

In 2012, the age-standardized death rate for congenital anomalies was 28 deaths per 1 million people, down significantly from 1974, when the death rate for congenital anomalies was 53 per 1 million people.

Chart 1
Age-standardized mortality rate, by congenital anomaly, Canada, 1974 to 2012

rate (per 1 million people)



1. Data for Edwards' and Patau's syndromes are not available before 1979.

Source(s): Vital Statistics – Death Database (3233).

Despite the decline in the death rate in recent decades, congenital anomalies remain the leading cause of infant death in Canada, accounting for about 28% of all infant deaths in 2012.

The average age of death from congenital anomalies has significantly increased in recent decades. In 2012, the average age of death from any congenital anomaly was 27 years, compared with 8 years in 1974.



Note to readers

Congenital anomalies describe developmental or physical disorders that occur during the development of the fetus. They can be identified during pregnancy, after birth, or later in life. In this article, information on deaths from five congenital anomalies is presented: circulatory anomalies, spina bifida, and three chromosomal anomalies—Down syndrome, Edwards' syndrome and Patau's syndrome.

Infant death refers to a death that occurs before the age of one.

To allow for more valid comparisons over time, **age-standardized rates** are used to control for differences in population age-structure. The age-standardized rate is the rate that would occur if the population of interest had the same age-structure as the standard population. The standard population used here is the July 1, 2011, Canadian population.

This release presents data from the [Vital Statistics – Death Database](#), which collects annual demographic and cause of death information for all deaths from all provincial and territorial vital statistics registries in Canada.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3233](#).

The article "[Deaths from congenital anomalies in Canada, 1974 to 2012](#)," published in *Health at a Glance (82-624-X)*, is now available from the *Browse by key resource* module of our website under *Publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).