

# Deaths, causes of death and life expectancy, 2016

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## The number of deaths reaches highest level since the introduction of vital statistics

There were 267,213 deaths in Canada in 2016—the highest level since the Vital Statistics registration system was introduced in the 1920s. The number of deaths recorded each year in Canada is generally trending upward.

Similar to the national trend, the number of deaths trended upward in the provinces and territories. The number of recorded deaths in 2016 reached record highs in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia.

The increase in the number of deaths can mostly be explained by two factors: population growth (a larger population generates more deaths) and population aging, which tends to increase the concentration of people in older age groups, where mortality is higher. This concentration should increase in the coming years with the aging of the baby-boom cohort, that is, those born between 1946 and 1965, and its sizable demographic weight in the Canadian population.

The age at which the highest number of deaths occurred was 84 years for men and 90 years for women in 2016. For men, three-quarters (75%) of deaths occurred at age 65 or older, compared with 84% for women.

## Life expectancy in Canada continues to increase

In Canada, life expectancy at birth has risen significantly over the years and peaked in the 2014 to 2016 period at 82.0 years for both sexes. In the 2014 to 2016 period, life expectancy at birth reached 84.0 years for women and 79.9 years for men. After peaking at 7.4 years at the end of the 1970s, the gap in life expectancy at birth between men and women decreased to 4.1 years in the 2014 to 2016 period.

Every year over the past 10 years, life expectancy at birth has increased an average of 2.4 months for men and 1.7 months for women. However, the recent gains have been smaller. From 2011 to 2013, for example, life expectancy at birth has increased an average of 1.2 months for men and 0.8 months for women.

## British Columbia and Ontario have highest life expectancies at birth among the provinces and territories

The highest life expectancies at birth among provinces and territories for the period 2014 to 2016 were in British Columbia and Ontario at 82.5 years for both sexes combined. For the first time since the 1992 to 1994 period, life expectancy at birth among men was no longer highest in British Columbia (80.4 years in 2014 to 2016), being surpassed by Ontario (80.5 years). British Columbia has led the other provinces and territories since the 1994 to 1996 period for women (84.6 years in 2014 to 2016).

The lowest life expectancy in the country was in Nunavut, where men could expect to live 70.3 years and women 73.1 years. The difference in life expectancy at birth between Nunavut and Canada was 9.6 years for men and 10.9 years for women.

## Life expectancy at age 65 increases

Life expectancy at age 65 has also increased over the last 10 years, reaching 19.3 years for men and 22.1 years for women. By way of comparison, in 2005 to 2007, it was 17.9 years for men and 21.0 years for women. Since the 2005 to 2007 period, declining mortality rates beyond age 65 has accounted for about 78% of the gains in life expectancy at birth for men and 85% for women. The 2014 to 2016 period life table shows that 90% of newborns would survive to age 65 if, throughout their lives, they were exposed to the mortality risks observed during this period. The probability of surviving from the age of 65 to 85 has risen from 51% in 2004 to 2006 to 57% in 2014 to 2016.



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## More than half of the infants who died in Canada in 2016 died within 24 hours of birth

The infant mortality rate in Canada was 4.5 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2016, the same rate as in 2015 and a record low. A child born in Canada in 1926 was 22 times more likely to die before his first birthday than a child born in 2016. Over half (52%) of the 1,741 infants who died in Canada in 2016 died within the first 24 hours of life.

## Cancer and heart disease remain the two leading causes of death in 2016

Cancer (malignant tumours) and heart disease were the two leading causes of death in 2016, accounting for 48.6% of all deaths. However, this was a marked decline compared with 2000 when they accounted for 54.0% of all deaths. The decrease was essentially due to the relative decline in heart disease, which fell from 25.3% in 2000 to 19.2% in 2016, while the percentage of deaths caused by cancer remained stable.

In 2016, the eight other leading causes of death were the same as in 2015: stroke, accidents (unintentional injuries), chronic lower respiratory diseases, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, influenza and pneumonia, suicide and liver diseases (chronic liver disease and cirrhosis). However, accidents overtook chronic lower respiratory diseases to rank fourth among the leading causes in 2016.

Despite fewer deaths related to transport accidents, the number of deaths attributable to all accidents has increased since 2000, rising from 8,589 deaths in 2000 to 12,524 in 2016. Over the same time period, the number of deaths due to accidental falls and accidental poisoning (by and exposure to noxious substance; for example opioids) increased. In 2016, accidental falls accounted for 4,681 deaths and accidental poisoning 3,117 deaths, compared with 2,144 resulting from transport accidents. In 2000, falls accounted for 1,562 deaths, poisonings 960 deaths and transport accidents 3,151 deaths.

Women are slightly more likely than men to die of an accidental fall. In 2016, the mortality rates for accidental falls were 13.5 deaths per 100,000 women and 12.3 deaths per 100,000 men, with 86.6% of fatal falls occurring among people aged 70 years and older.

The mortality rates for accidental poisonings were 12.4 deaths per 100,000 people for men and 4.9 deaths per 100,000 people for women. People aged 20 to 64 years accounted for 91.5% of deaths from accidental poisonings. Drug overdoses accounted for 92.0% of the deaths in his category.

Elsewhere, the number of deaths due to influenza and pneumonia fell from 7,630 (sixth rank) in 2015 to 6,235 in 2016, to rank eighth. Together, the 10 leading causes of death accounted for 195,805 deaths or nearly three-quarters of all deaths in 2016.

Cancer and heart disease were the two leading causes of death in every province and territory except Nunavut, where chronic lower respiratory diseases were the second leading cause of death. Chronic lower respiratory diseases were third leading cause of death in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Quebec. Accidents were the third leading cause in Alberta, and suicide was third in Nunavut. Stroke was the third leading cause of death in every province and territory.

## The leading causes of death vary by sex and age

Cancer and heart disease are the two leading causes of death for both sexes. However, the third leading cause of death varies by sex, with women more likely to die from a stroke and men from an accident.

Among individuals under 15 years of age (excluding those under one year old), the two leading causes of death are accidents and cancer. From 15 to 44 years of age, accidents and suicide are the two leading causes of death. After age 45, cancer and heart disease become the two leading causes of death. However, there are a few differences between the sexes.

Accidents are the leading cause of death for men younger than 45 years of age. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for men aged 15 to 44 years. These two causes of death peak among men aged 15 to 24 years, and accounted for 62.4% of all deaths in this age group in 2016. After the age of 45, cancer and heart disease becomes predominant, accounting for 61.4% of all deaths among men aged 65 to 74 years.

Cancer is the leading cause of death for all women except those aged 15 to 24 years old, those age 25 to 34 years old and those 85 years and older. Accidents and suicide are the two leading causes of death for women aged 15 to 24 years, accounting for 57.9% of deaths in this age group in 2016. Accidents and cancer rank first and second among women aged 25 to 34 years, and second and first among women aged 35 to 44.

From age 45 onward, cancer and heart disease become the leading causes of death, peaking at the ages of 55 to 64, and accounting for 63.5% of all deaths for this age group in 2016.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women 85 years of age and older, followed by cancer.

## Sustainable Development Goals

On January 1, 2016, the world officially began implementation of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)—the United Nations' transformative plan of action that addresses urgent global challenges over the next 15 years. The plan is based on 17 specific sustainable development goals.

*Deaths and Causes of Death* is an example of how Statistics Canada supports the reporting on the Global Goals for Sustainable Development. This release will be used in helping to measure the following goal:



### Note to readers

*Preliminary data for reference year 2016 from the Canadian Vital Statistics—Death Database are now available. Given the timeliness of the data, the final cause of death has yet to be determined probably for a significantly higher proportion of some causes of death, such as homicides, accidents and suicides, where investigation can be very long, than for natural causes like cancer and heart disease. Users should use caution when interpreting the data.*

*Data on deaths and causes of death are collected by the Canadian Vital Statistics—Death Database. It is an administrative survey that collects demographic and medical (cause of death) information annually from all provincial and territorial vital statistics registries on all deaths in Canada.*

*The data are used to calculate basic indicators, such as cause-specific death rates and life expectancy, on the mortality of Canadians.*

*Life expectancy is calculated over a three-year period. All life expectancy data in this release are based on three-year averages.*

Available tables: [13-10-0114-01](#), [13-10-0140-01](#), [13-10-0156-01](#), [13-10-0368-01](#), [13-10-0391-01](#), [13-10-0392-01](#), [13-10-0394-01](#), [13-10-0395-01](#), [13-10-0707-01](#), [13-10-0716-01](#), [13-10-0776-01](#), [13-10-0780-01](#), [13-10-0782-01](#), [13-10-0800-01](#), [13-10-0801-01](#), [13-10-0141-01](#) to [13-10-0155-01](#) and [13-10-0708-01](#) to [13-10-0715-01](#) .

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

*Life Tables, Canada, Provinces and Territories (84-537-X)*, *The 2014-2016 Complete Life Tables* (for Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia) and abridged life tables (for Prince Edward Island, Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut) are now available.

The life tables data that were previously available in table 39-10-0007, now archived, are now included in table 13-10-0114 for Canada and all provinces except for Prince Edward Island; and in table 13-10-0140 for Prince Edward Island and the territories.

*Mortality: Overview, 2014 to 2016 (91-209-X)*. This publication presents data on deaths in Canada, as well as an analysis of the recent mortality trends, including an examination of the differences at the provincial and territorial level.

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](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).