

Deaths, 2018

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in The Daily, Tuesday, November 26, 2019

There were 283,706 deaths in Canada in 2018—the highest number since the Vital Statistics registration system was introduced in 1921. The total number of deaths generally rises every year, in tandem with Canada's growing and aging population.

There were slightly more male (144,483) than female (139,223) deaths in Canada in 2018. Males have a higher risk of dying at every age, and a lower life expectancy than females in Canada.

The average longevity of Canadians has been improving over the last decades. In 2018, the highest number of deaths was recorded at age 88, just like in 2017. Four decades ago, the highest number of deaths was recorded at lower ages, often around 78-80 years.

Leading causes of death

Cancer (malignant neoplasms) and heart diseases remained the first- and second- leading causes of death in 2018, accounting for 46.8 % of all deaths. This was a slight drop from 2017, where these two causes accounted for 48.0% of all deaths, and a marked decline compared with 2000, where more than half of deaths were caused by these diseases (54.0%). The decrease was attributable to the lower share of deaths from heart disease, which fell from 25.3% in 2000 to 18.7% in 2018, while the percentage caused by cancer remained relatively stable.

All but one of the remaining eight leading causes of death in 2018 were unchanged from a year earlier: stroke, accidents (unintentional injuries), chronic lower respiratory diseases, influenza and pneumonia, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, and suicide. Kidney diseases such as nephritis, nephrotic syndrome and nephrosis replaced liver diseases (chronic liver disease and cirrhosis) as the 10th leading cause of death in Canada, pushing liver diseases into 11th position. Stroke overtook accidents to rank third among the leading causes of death.

Together, the 10 leading causes of death accounted for nearly three-quarters (71.1%) or 201,598 deaths in Canada in 2018.

Cancer and heart disease were the top two leading causes of death in every province and territory except Nunavut in 2018, where suicides and accidents were the second leading causes of death, following cancer.

Infant mortality

Infant mortality provides key information on maternal and infant health and is often seen as a marker of the overall health of a nation.

In 2018, 87.2% of children who died before the age of 5 did so within their first year of life, representing 1,750 infants or 4.7 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.

For nearly a century, the number of infant deaths and the infant death rate have been declining. In 1921, 1 in 10 live births resulted in an infant death; by 1990 it had fallen to 1 in 146 live births; and by 2018 it was down to 1 in 213 live births. The sharp drop in the mid to late 1900s can be attributed to improvements in living conditions and sanitation, access to health care, and advances in clinical medicine, leading to a decrease in deaths from infectious disease. In more recent years, infant mortality has continued to decline as a result of improvements in prenatal care.

Most infant deaths occur during the neonatal period

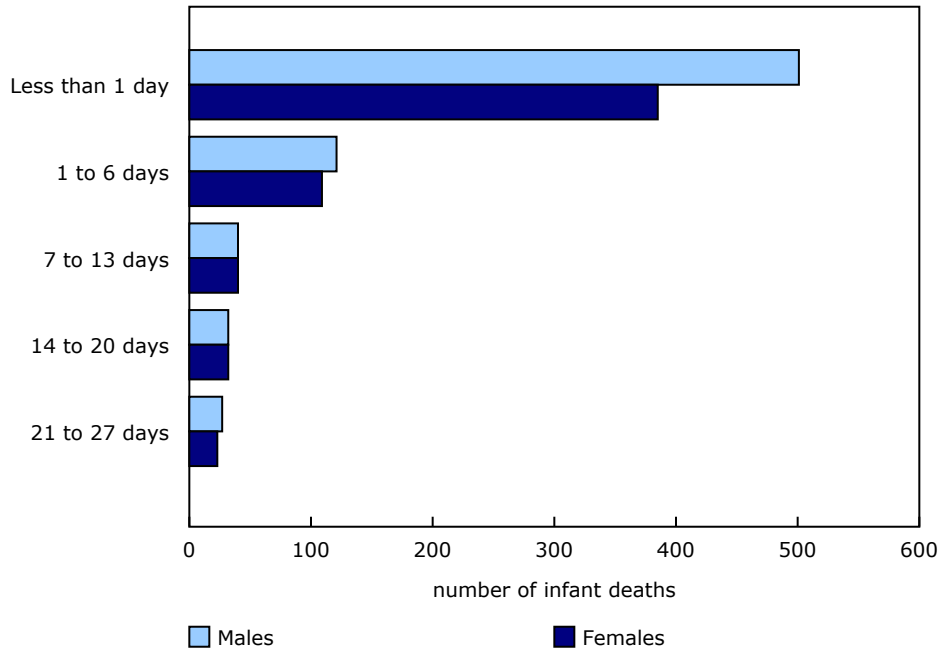
Of the 1,750 infant deaths in 2018, 1,310 occurred during the first four weeks of life (neonatal period). The majority of neonatal deaths occurred within the first week of life (85.2%), with most occurring within 24 hours of birth.

An additional 440 children died during the post-neonatal period (1 to 11 months). Deaths most often occurred during the first two months of this period and declined steadily thereafter.



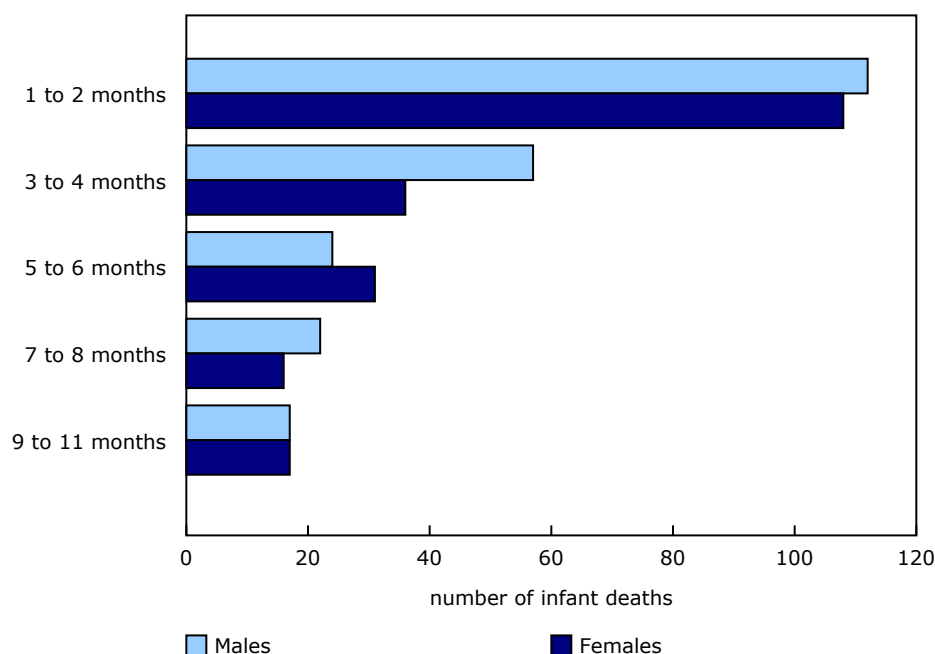
In 2018, male infants (5.0 deaths per 1,000 live births) were more likely to die than female infants (4.4 deaths per 1,000 live births). The gap between the sexes was most prominent in neonatal deaths occurring within 24 hours of birth, and less pronounced in the older infant age groups.

Chart 1
Distribution of neonatal mortality by age group and sex, Canada, 2018



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

Chart 2
Distribution of post-neonatal mortality by age group and sex, Canada, 2018



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

Congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities are the leading cause of infant death

In 2018, the three leading causes of infant death included: congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities (412 deaths), disorders related to short gestation and low birth weight (171 deaths), and maternal complications of pregnancy (167 deaths). The rankings for these three causes have remain unchanged since 2001.

Spotlight on maternal mortality

A maternal death is defined as the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management, but not from accidental or incidental causes. Late maternal deaths are deaths occurring between 42 days and 1 year post-delivery or end of pregnancy. Late maternal deaths are not included in maternal mortality rate calculations.

In 2018, there were 31 maternal deaths and 1 late maternal death in Canada.

The maternal mortality rate was 8.3 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2018. In the past 10 years, the maternal mortality rate has fluctuated between 4.5 and 8.7 deaths per 100,000 live births.

Complications predominantly related to the early postpartum period are the main causes of maternal death

The most common diagnoses associated with maternal deaths in 2018 included the following two direct obstetric causes: complications predominantly related to the early (6 weeks) postpartum period (puerperium) (10 deaths), and postpartum hemorrhage (5 deaths). In addition, several maternal deaths were attributed to indirect causes (6 deaths), which include deaths resulting from previous existing disease or disease that developed during pregnancy, but not caused by the pregnancy itself.

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.

The release on deaths 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

To improve the timeliness of the data, the collection period was shortened in 2018 compared with previous years. As a result, 2018 data are considered preliminary. The data will be revised in future releases.

Data on the causes and number of deaths for deaths that occurred in Yukon or to residents of Yukon in other provinces and territories are not available.

Data on deaths and causes of death are included in 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.

Available tables: [13-10-0141-01](#) to [13-10-0156-01](#) , [13-10-0391-01](#), [13-10-0392-01](#), [13-10-0394-01](#), [13-10-0395-01](#), [13-10-0707-01](#) to [13-10-0716-01](#) , [13-10-0756-01](#), [13-10-0776-01](#), [13-10-0780-01](#), [13-10-0782-01](#), [13-10-0800-01](#) and [13-10-0801-01](#).

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

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).