

MORTALITY AND MORBIDITY AMONG SENIORS AGE 65 AND OVER IN TENNESSEE

Mortality

- The population of seniors increased by 13.7% between the two Census years of 1990 and 2000, from 618,818 to 703,311, respectively.
- The leading causes of death among seniors in Tennessee in 2001 were first heart disease, followed by cancer. The third overall leading cause of death was stroke, followed by COPD and influenza and pneumonia. Rates for these respective causes of death among Tennessee seniors were 1739.5, 1160.1, 493.6, 344.4 and 198.2 per 100,000.
- While heart disease and cancer were the top two leading causes for all race-gender groups, stroke was the third leading cause of death for all groups save white males, for whom it was fourth and COPD was third. COPD was the fourth leading cause of death among senior white females and fifth among senior black males, but it did not appear among the top five causes of death for black females age 65 and over. Diabetes, on the other hand, was the fourth leading cause of death among both senior black males and females, but does not appear among the top mortality causes for senior whites. Senior black females were the only group with essential (primary) hypertension as one of the top causes of death, ranked fifth for that group, while influenza and pneumonia was the fifth leading cause of death for both senior white males and females.
- All-cause death rates among Tennessee seniors rose by 5.1% , from 5280.9 in 1990 to 5552.7 in 2001, due entirely to increases in senior female death rates. Thus, rates decreased by 5.9% among senior males in the State over time, from 4438.1 to 6059.0, while they increased among females from 4534.4 to 5213.8. This 15% increase among females, while from a lower base rate than for males, suggests that improvements in mortality have affected males age 65 and over more than females in the State over the period of interest.
 - Mortality rates show a slight (2.2%) increase in senior black death rates over the period from 6387.1 in 1990 to 6530.8 in 2000, compared to an increase of 6.8% among senior whites from 5144.0 to 5491.5 over the same period.
 - Thus, senior all-cause death rates dropped for both white and black males (by about 5% each) but rose for both black females (by 9.2%) and white females. The largest increases in mortality were observed among white females (17.1%), whose rates were nevertheless still lowest of all groups. Thus, all-cause death rates dropped among white males, from 6267.3 in 1990 to 5965.3 in 2001, and among black males from 7870.7 in 1990 to