MORTALITY OF MIDDLE-AGED ADULTS

The 1,070,276 middle-aged adult residents aged 45 to 64 experienced 6,785 deaths or an average of 19 deaths per day. The total mortality rate of middle-aged adults decreased from 677.1/100,000 in 1999 to 633.9/100,000 in 2000 (Figure 2C-11, Table 2C-20), and was 13.7 percent lower than the 1990 rate.

Leading causes of death

In 2000, three of the leading cause-specific rates of death for middle-aged adults were lower compared to 1990. Chronic lower respiratory diseases, the fourth leading cause of death, had the largest decline in rate (29.9 percent; Table 2C-20), followed by diseases of heart, the second leading cause (28.1 percent) and cancer, the leading cause, (20.6 percent). The 2000 rate of death for chronic liver disease and cirrhosis (29.1/100,000), the fifth leading cause of mortality, was no different from the 1990 rate of 29.0/100,000).

In contrast, middle-aged adults were more likely to die in 2000 from unintentional injuries (42.7/100,000), the third leading cause, than they were in 1990 (40.7/100,000).

Among the unintentional injury deaths unrelated to motor vehicles, Arizona’s middle-aged adults experienced a sharp increase in mortality from accidental drug overdoses (Figure 2C-12). In 2000, 84 deaths of middle-aged adults were attributed to accidental drug overdose, compared to 14 deaths in 1990. The 2000 death rate for accidental drug overdose among middle-aged Arizonans was 3.9 times greater than the rate reported for 1989 (7.8/100,000 vs. 2.0/100,000).

Gender differences

The 2000 total mortality rate among middle-age females was 11.6 percent lower and among middle-aged males 5.3 percent lower than their respective rates in 1990 (Table 2C-20). Compared to 1990, the elevation of the male heart disease death rate over the female rate decreased in 2000 (2.8 vs. 2.5:1). Cancer, the leading cause of death of middle-aged women also showed a smaller gender differential in 2000 than in 1990, with men 17 percent (30 percent in 1990) more likely to die from this cause than women.

In 2000, heart disease and cancer death rates differed for males by a mere 5.1 percent. In contrast, middle-aged females were 2.3 times as likely to die in 2000 from cancer than heart disease.

Urban/rural differences

The total mortality rate declined between 1990 and 2000 for both urban and rural middle-aged adults (Table 2C-21). However, the mortality differential between rural and urban middle-aged males changed very little in the eleven-year period from 1990 to 2000. In 1990, the mortality risk of rural compared to urban middle-aged males was 20.8 percent greater, in 2000 it was 18.8 percent greater. In contrast, the mortality risk of rural compared to urban middle-aged females went from a 9.3 percent greater mortality rate in 1990 to 25.2 greater in 2000 (Table 2C-22).