

2D. PATTERNS OF PREMATURE MORTALITY BY ETHNIC GROUP

The average age of Arizonans who died in 2000 was 71.6 years, with males below the mean at 68.7 years and females above the mean at 74.9 years (**Table 2D-1**).

Ethnic differences

Neither the average age at death nor its increase over time was demonstrated in the four racial/ethnic minority groups. White non-Hispanics, the majority ethnic group, had an average age at death close to or exceeding the overall average.

White non-Hispanic males during 2000 died at an average age that exceeded the average age of death of Asian males by 9.3 years, Black males by 14.1 years, Hispanic males by 15.1 years and American Indian males by 19.3 years (**Table 2D-1**).

The gap between the average age at death of White non-Hispanic females and females of other ethnic groups also was substantial. Compared to White non-Hispanic females, on average, Black females were 11.2 years, Hispanic females 13.3 years, Asian females 14 years, and American Indian females 16.6 years younger when they died.

Proportion of premature deaths

As expected, based on the findings for average age at death, White non-Hispanics were the only group with less than 50 percent of all deaths (47.3 percent) occurring before the expected years of life were reached (**Table 2D-2**). The 2000 premature death ratio was 38.7 percent for White non-Hispanic females and 55.4 percent for White non-Hispanic males. In contrast, at least 70 percent of deaths among ethnic minority males occurred prematurely.

Premature mortality by cause

All deaths from *HIV disease* were premature (**Table 2D-4**) and an average age at death from *HIV disease* was 42.3 years (**Table 2D-3**). The average age at death was lower for *homicide*, which had an average age of 36.9 years and a premature death ratio of 97.7 percent. The other causes of death for which a majority of deaths were premature are in rank order from highest to lowest percent: *accidental poisoning* (96 percent), *motor vehicle crashes* (92.3 percent), *drowning* (90.4), *suicide* (90.2 percent), *chronic liver disease and cirrhosis* (88.8 percent), *breast cancer* (70.6 percent), *lung cancer* (68.4 percent) and *diabetes* (60.2 percent).

Alzheimer's disease had both the highest average age at death (85.3 years) and the lowest premature mortality ratio (11.9 percent).