



The Vital Record



From The Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

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Volume 1 - August 10, 2006

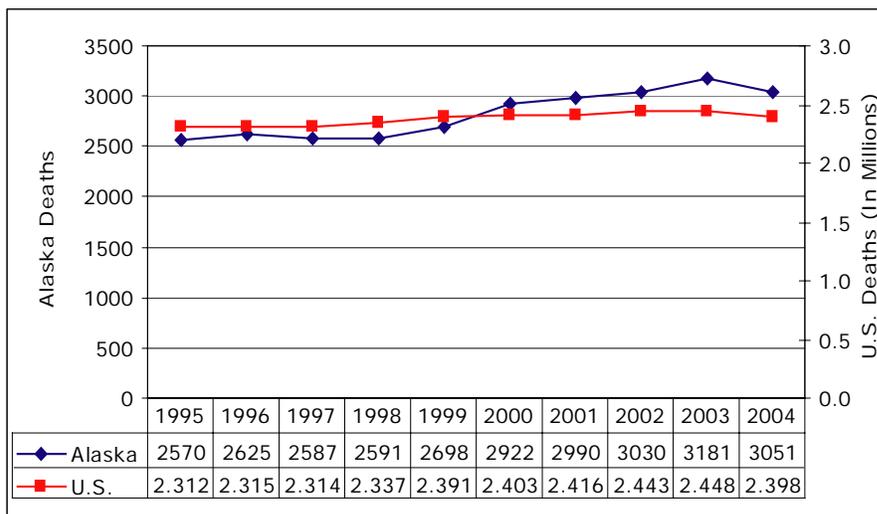
Deaths and Death Rates Drop in Alaska and the U.S.

A recent report from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) reported that the preliminary number of deaths and the death rate declined substantially in the U.S. in 2004¹. A similar trend has occurred in Alaska, with the number of deaths in 2004 declining 4.3 percent from the 3181 deaths reported in 2003 (chart 1). This compares with a 2.0 percent decline for the U.S. during the same time period.

The age-adjusted death rate in Alaska declined to 748.6 deaths per 100,000 standard population, representing a 10.1 percent decrease from the 2003 rate (chart 2). The U.S. age-adjusted death rate dropped 3.8 percent during the same period. Since 1995, the age-adjusted death rate has decreased 19.4 percent in Alaska, compared with 7.8 percent decrease in the U.S. rate.

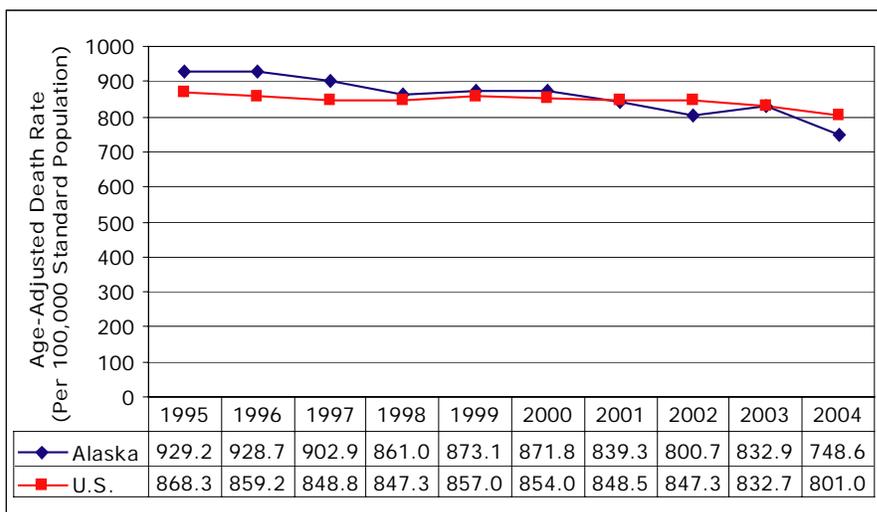
Although there was a slight improvement in the male/female mortality ratio in the United States, the same was not true in Alaska (Table 1, page 2). The male/female mortality ratio increased slightly in Alaska, since the age-adjusted death rate for women decreased more than the death rate for men in 2004. The age-adjusted death rate for men remained over one-third higher than the death rate for women.

Chart 1. Number of Deaths for Alaska and the United States: 1995-2004



U.S. data for 2004 is preliminary.

Chart 2. Age-Adjusted Death Rates for Alaska and the United States: 1995-2004



U.S. data for 2004 is preliminary.

¹Miniño AM, Heron M, Smith BL. Deaths: Preliminary Data for 2004. Health E-Stats. Released April 19, 2006



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Table 1. Age-Adjusted Death Rates by Race and Sex and Mortality Ratios for Alaska and the United States: 2003 and 2004

Sex or Race	Alaska			United States		
	2004	2003	% Change	2004	2003	% Change
Total	748.6	832.6	-10.1%	801.0	832.7	-3.8%
Female	630.6	713.8	-11.7%	680.1	706.2	-3.7%
Male	871.7	958.5	-9.1%	955.1	994.3	-3.9%
Ratio (Male/Female)	1.38	1.34		1.40	1.41	
Alaska Native	1,042.1	1,117.0	-6.7%	not available		
White	730.7	811.6	-10.0%	955.1	994.3	-3.9%
Ratio (AK Native/White)	1.43	1.38				

In Alaska, a similar trend in the mortality ratio was observed in the disparity between the Native and white age-adjusted death rates in 2004. Although both the white and Alaska Native age-adjusted death rates decreased from their 2003 levels, the rate for the white population decreased more. The age-adjusted death rate for Alaska Natives continues to be over 40 percent higher than that for the white population.

The 10 leading causes of death in 2004 for the United States with the comparable Alaska data is shown in Table 2. Although there are many similarities between the leading causes of death in Alaska and the United States, there are also some notable differences. The two leading causes of death for Alaska and the U.S., diseases of the heart and malignant neoplasms (cancer), are the same but the order is reversed. Suicide, the fifth leading cause of death in Alaska, is not in the top ten causes of death in the United States. Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the U.S. with an age-adjusted rate significantly lower than the Alaska rate (10.7 per 100,000 standard population vs. 23.4). The ninth leading cause of death in Alaska, chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, is also not a leading cause of death in the U.S. Unintentional injury deaths rank higher in Alaska too. Unintentional injury deaths are the third leading cause of death in Alaska compared to the fifth leading cause in the United States. The Alaska unintentional injury age-adjusted death rate is also over 50 percent higher than the U.S. rate.

Table 2. Age-Adjusted Death Rates for the Ten Leading Causes of Death: Alaska and the United States, 2004

Cause of Death (ICD-10 Codes)	U.S. Rank	Alaska Rank	U.S. Rate	Alaska Rate
All causes			801.1	748.6
Diseases of heart (I00-I09, I11, I13, I20-I51)	1	2	217.5	155.7
Malignant neoplasms (C00-C97)	2	1	184.6	183.9
Cerebrovascular diseases (I60-I69)	3	4	50.0	52.3
Chronic lower respiratory diseases (J40-J47)	4	6	41.8	39.5
Accidents (unintentional injuries) (V01-X59, Y85-Y86)	5	3	36.6	54.9
Diabetes mellitus (E10-E14)	6	7	24.4	22.5
Alzheimer's disease (G30)	7	8	21.7	17.5
Influenza and pneumonia (J10-J18)	8	10	20.4	14.4
Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome and nephrosis (N00-N07, N17-N19, N25-N27)	9	16	14.3	6.4
Septicemia (A40-A41)	10	17	11.2	4.1
All other causes			181.4	196.9

Cause of death rankings are based on the number of deaths. Rates are age-adjusted rates per 100,000 U.S. standard population. U.S. data is preliminary.