

Life Expectancy Gains Level Off

Minnesota females did not increase their life expectancy between 1990 and 1995, and gains for males were smaller than in previous decades. Overall, life expectancy for Minnesota women slipped slightly from 81.0 years in 1990 to 80.8 years in 1995. Male life expectancy grew modestly from 74.6 to 75.1 years.

Female Death Rate Rises As Male Rate Falls

The total female death rate rose even after adjusting for changes in the total population's age distribution since 1990. One reason was an increase in the female cancer death rates, which offset the declining rate of deaths from heart disease. Cause-specific trends suggest that smoking may be a culprit in the stagnating life expectancy level for women. The female death rate for cancer of the trachea, bronchus and lung went up substantially, as did the rate for diseases of the respiratory system.

Male mortality trends were more favorable. Male death rates fell for both cancer and heart disease. The drop in heart disease death rates was larger for men than for women. Despite improvement in the male mortality rates, the 0.6-year increase in male life expectancy from 1990 to 1995 was more modest than the 2.1-year gain posted in the 1980s. Though women continue to outlive men, the gap in life expectancy has declined steadily since 1970.

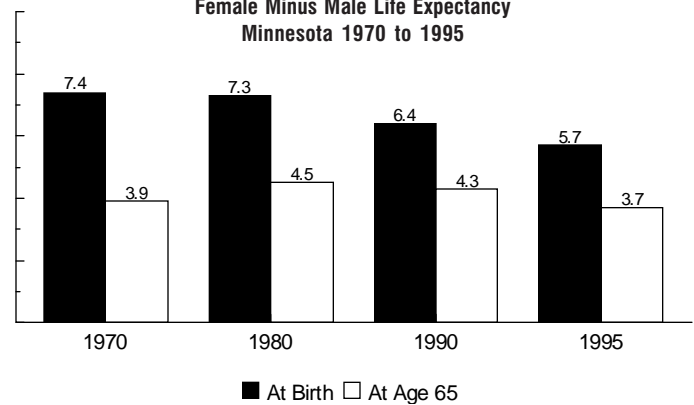
Number of Deaths Rises

The number of deaths in Minnesota went up every year between 1990 and 1995, primarily reflecting the aging of the population. There were 2,688 more deaths in 1995 than in 1990, with more than 90 percent of this increase in deaths attributable to people age 75 or older.

In 1995, heart disease and cancer accounted for 63 percent of total Minnesota deaths. The share of deaths attributed to heart disease dropped from 42 percent of the total in 1990 to 39 percent in 1995. Cancer caused 24 percent of all deaths in both 1990 and 1995.

The third-ranking cause of death was respiratory system diseases. The age-adjusted rate of death from respiratory system diseases was stable overall, with declines for males offsetting gains for females.

Life Expectancy Gender Gap Is Declining
Female Minus Male Life Expectancy
Minnesota 1970 to 1995



Injury and poisoning ranked fourth, accounting for about 6 percent of deaths. This category includes falls, traffic accidents, suicide and homicide. The biggest change in this group was the rising rate of deaths from falls, especially among women. The growing population of very old, frail people may be responsible for this trend.

Mental disorders, including Alzheimer's disease, were responsible for about 4 percent of the deaths in 1995. The age-adjusted death rate for mental disorders rose dramatically from 17.9 per 100,000 in 1990 to 28.1 per 100,000 in 1995. This gain may reflect changes in how cause of death is recorded as well as a true increase in incidence.

This issue of *PopBites* summarizes findings from "Minnesota Mortality Trends: 1990 to 1995," a working paper by Martha McMurry. The paper discusses mortality trends during the first half of the 1990s using data from the Minnesota Center for Health Statistics in the Minnesota Department of Health. To receive a copy of the paper, call the State Demographer's Office Helpline at (612) 296-2557 or write to Minnesota Planning, 658 Cedar St., St. Paul, Minnesota 55155.