

STATISTICS PRESS NOTICE – MORTALITY STATISTICS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (2008)



ALMOST 4,000 DEATHS FROM CANCER IN 2008

9:30am – Thursday, 19 March 2009

The number of deaths registered in Northern Ireland in 2008 was 14,900 – a small increase on the 14,600 deaths registered in 2007. Cancer continues to be the most common cause of death with nearly 4,000 cancer deaths last year.

These findings are contained in provisional 2008 mortality figures released today by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

In 2008, over half of all deaths were caused by three main diseases; cancer (4,000 deaths), ischaemic heart disease (2,400 deaths) and stroke (1,300 deaths). Whilst ischaemic heart disease deaths halved from 4,800 in 1978 to 2,400 last year; cancer deaths have risen from 2,900 in 1978 to 4,000 last year.

Over the last few years we have seen marked increases in deaths recorded due to Alzheimer's and other dementia related illnesses; conditions largely associated with the elderly. In 2008, there were 290 deaths due to Alzheimer's disease and a further 520 deaths due to other forms of dementia. This trend is driven by the ageing of the population. Deaths related to healthcare associated infection also increased last year. For example deaths where *Clostridium difficile* was mentioned on the death certificate more than doubled to 190 deaths last year.

A NISRA spokesperson said that:

“The number of deaths recorded in Northern Ireland increased marginally last year. However detailed analysis shows that mortality rates today are significantly less than those seen thirty years ago. Cancer continues to be the most common cause of death. As the population ages we are also witnessing an increase in the number of Alzheimer's and other dementia related deaths.”

Further more detailed statistics are available in the full release at http://www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/demography/publications/births_deaths/births_2008.pdf

Summary

- In 2008, there were 14,907 deaths registered in Northern Ireland, an increase of 258 deaths or 2% on the 14,649 deaths registered in 2007;
- the overall crude death rate in Northern Ireland has fallen significantly over the last thirty years from 11 deaths per 1,000 population in 1978 to 8 deaths per 1,000 population in 2008; and
- more deaths occur in the winter with last year higher numbers of deaths occurring in January and December. On average there are around 20% more deaths in the winter months of December and January than the monthly average.

Age at Death

- over the last thirty years the reduction in the number of deaths has occurred alongside the population has increased in size and become older in age-structure. Last year there were 1,200 fewer deaths than in 1978. However in 2008 there were 16% more people in the population than in 1978 and 78% more people aged 75 and over;
- the average age at death in 2008 was 71.8 years for males and 78.5 years for females, an increase of six years on the average age at death for males in 1978 and seven years for females; and
- there were 93 deaths of centenarians in 2008 (15 males and 78 females). This is the highest number of deaths of centenarians ever recorded in Northern Ireland.

Mortality by Gender and Marital Status

- Female deaths (7,680) outnumbered male deaths (7,227) in 2008, giving a ratio of 106 female deaths for every 100 male deaths; and
- of men whose deaths were registered during 2008, 51% were married at the time of death, while 22% were widowed and 22% were single. In contrast, of women whose

deaths were registered during 2008, 55% were widows at the time of death, with a further 25% married and 16% single.

Deaths by Area

- Belfast Local Government District had the highest death rate (10.8 deaths per 1,000 population) of all Local Government Districts while the lowest death rate (6.4) was in Limavady Local Government Districts.

Cause of Death

- Cancer, all circulatory diseases and all respiratory diseases accounted for nearly three-quarters of all deaths in 2008;
- in 2008, 84 deaths were registered where MRSA was mentioned on the death certificate. Of these deaths 32 had MRSA as the underlying cause of death. This is an increase from the 59 deaths registered with MRSA mentioned on the death certificate in 2007 and 20 deaths with MRSA as the underlying cause of death;
- in 2008, Clostridium difficile was mentioned on 191 death certificates. Of these 64 deaths had Clostridium difficile as the underlying cause of death. This is an increase from the 77 deaths registered with Clostridium difficile mentioned on the death certificate in 2007 and 34 deaths with Clostridium difficile as the underlying cause of death;
- in 2008, there were 276 alcohol related deaths; 185 men and 91 women. This is a marked increase from ten years ago when there were 158 alcohol related deaths recorded;
- in 2008, there were 89 drug related deaths in Northern Ireland. This is a marked increase from ten years ago when there were 40 drug related deaths recorded; and
- deaths classified as 'events of undetermined intent' and 'intentional self-harm' are reported jointly as suicide. In 2008 there were 282 such deaths registered in Northern Ireland, 218 were males and 64 were females.

NOTE FOR EDITORS

1. This information can also be accessed on the NISRA website
<http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp10.htm>.

2. Death figures have been compiled from returns to local registrars. All statistics are provisional with final figures published in the Annual Report of the Registrar General. The results are based on analysis of all deaths registered within the 2008 calendar year and some deaths may have occurred prior to this registration year. Rates for 2008 data are calculated on the projected home population as at 30 June 2008.

3. All media inquiries should be directed to DFP Press Office
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4. Further information on the statistics provided in this publication can be obtained from NISRA Customer Services at:
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