

# Leading Causes of Death, by Race & Ethnicity

*African Americans had the highest rate of death.*

- Heart disease, cancer and stroke were the top three leading causes of death for whites, African Americans and Asians/Pacific Islanders.
- African Americans were more likely to die from heart disease, cancer, stroke, homicide, unintentional injury, diabetes, essential hypertension and hypertensive renal disease, and HIV, than county residents overall.



**Editor's note:** See the Leading Causes Appendix for more complete numbers and rates for leading causes of death.

Between 2005–2007, the greatest number of deaths in the county was among whites (15,042), followed by African Americans (2,225) Hispanics (1,640) and Asians/Pacific Islanders (1,406).

**Table 1 ■ All-cause mortality by race/ethnicity**

Contra Costa County, 2005–2007

	Deaths	Percent	Rate
White	15,042	73.3%	683.9*
African American	2,225	10.8%	1,002.7*
Hispanic	1,640	8.0%	460.2**
Asian/Pacific Islander	1,406	6.9%	443.9**
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,515</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>651.2</b>

Total includes racial/ethnic groups not included above.

These are age-adjusted rates per 100,000 residents.

\* Significantly higher rate than the county overall.

\*\* Significantly lower rate than the county overall.

The four racial/ethnic groups presented in this section had seven of 10 leading causes of death in common: cancer, heart disease, stroke, unintentional injury, diabetes, influenza/pneumonia and chronic lower respiratory disease.

Heart disease, cancer and stroke were the top three leading causes of death for whites, African Americans and Asians/Pacific Islanders. The top three causes of death for Hispanics were cancer, heart disease and unintentional injury. Other leading causes of death varied by race/ethnicity, including: essential hypertension and hypertensive renal disease (for African Americans, Asians/Pacific Islanders and whites), Alzheimer's disease (for Hispanics and whites), chronic liver disease and cirrhosis (for Asians/

Pacific Islanders and Hispanics), homicide (for African Americans and Hispanics), suicide (for Asians/Pacific Islanders and whites) and HIV (for African Americans).

## Whites

Between 2005–2007, there were 15,042 deaths among whites in Contra Costa. This means that on average 5,014 white residents died each year.

**Table 2 ■ Leading causes of death among whites**

Contra Costa County, 2005–2007

	Deaths	Percent	Rate	
Cancer	3,799	25.3%	175.6*	The unintentional injury and suicide rates shown here differ slightly from those in the Injury section of this report. See table footnotes for further explanation.
Heart disease	3,465	23.0%	151.9	
Stroke	1,043	6.9%	45.6	
Chronic lower respiratory disease	939	6.2%	42.7*	
Alzheimer's disease	771	5.1%	32.6*	
Unintentional injury	520	3.5%	28.9	
Influenza/pneumonia	439	2.9%	18.9	
Diabetes	350	2.3%	16.0	
Suicide	214	1.4%	12.3*	
Essential hypertension/hypertensive renal disease	210	1.4%	9.2	
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,042</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>683.9*</b>	

Total includes deaths from all causes, including but not limited to those listed above.

These are age-adjusted rates per 100,000 white residents.

\* Significantly higher rate than the county overall.

The age-adjusted all-cause death rate for whites (683.9 per 100,000) was higher than the age-adjusted rate for Contra Costa residents overall (651.2 per 100,000).

Cancer was the leading cause of death among whites in the county, accounting for one-quarter (25.3%) of all deaths in this group. Heart disease ranked a close second (23.0%), followed by stroke (6.9%), chronic lower respiratory disease (6.2%), Alzheimer's disease (5.1%) and other causes listed. The top 10 leading causes of death accounted for 78.1% of all deaths among whites.

Whites had higher death rates from cancer, chronic lower respiratory disease, Alzheimer's disease and suicide compared to county residents overall.

## African Americans

Between 2005–2007, there were 2,225 deaths among African Americans in Contra Costa. This means that on average 742 African American residents died each year.

**Table 3 ■ Leading causes of death among African Americans**

Contra Costa County, 2005–2007

	Deaths	Percent	Rate	
Heart disease	538	24.2%	258.8*	The homicide and unintentional injury rates shown here differ slightly from those in the Injury section of this report. See table footnotes for further explanation.
Cancer	512	23.0%	228.0*	
Stroke	161	7.2%	80.5*	
Homicide	146	6.6%	54.5*	
Unintentional injury	122	5.5%	43.8*	
Diabetes	97	4.4%	46.5*	
Chronic lower respiratory disease	71	3.2%	33.9	
Essential hypertension/hypertensive renal disease	53	2.4%	24.9*	
HIV disease	45	2.0%	15.6*	
Influenza/pneumonia	43	1.9%	20.7	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,225</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1,002.7*</b>	

Total includes deaths from all causes, including but not limited to those listed above.

These are age-adjusted rates per 100,000 African American residents.

\* Significantly higher rate than the county overall.

African American residents had the highest age-adjusted all-cause death rate in the county (1,002.7 per 100,000); higher than the age-adjusted rates for county residents overall and all other racial/ethnic groups included in this section.

Heart disease was the leading cause of death among African Americans in the county, accounting for roughly one-quarter (24.2%) of all deaths in this group. Cancer ranked a close second (23.0%), followed by stroke (7.2%), homicide (6.6%), unintentional injury (5.5%) and other causes listed. The top 10 leading causes of death accounted for 80.4% of all deaths among African Americans.

African Americans had significantly higher death rates than county residents overall in each leading cause listed above except for chronic lower respiratory disease and influenza/pneumonia; the African American death rates from these two causes were similar to the county rates.

African Americans had the highest death rates of all of the racial/ethnic groups included in this section from each of the following leading causes: heart disease, cancer, stroke, unintentional injury, and diabetes (see Appendix table for a full list of available rates).

## Hispanics

Between 2005–2007, there were 1,640 deaths among Hispanics in Contra Costa. This means that on average 547 Hispanic residents died each year.

**Table 4 ■ Leading causes of death among Hispanics**

Contra Costa County, 2005–2007

	Deaths	Percent	Rate	
Cancer	360	22.0%	100.6**	
Heart disease	321	19.6%	107.4**	The homicide and unintentional injury rates shown here differ slightly from those in the Injury section of this report. See table footnotes for further explanation.
Unintentional injury	130	7.9%	21.9	
Stroke	107	6.5%	36.1**	
Diabetes	77	4.7%	24.2	
Homicide	75	4.6%	10.1	
Influenza / pneumonia	46	2.8%	16.7	
Alzheimer's disease	44	2.7%	17.3**	
Chronic lower respiratory disease	44	2.7%	15.7**	
Chronic liver disease / cirrhosis	43	2.6%	10.2	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,640</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>460.2**</b>	

Total includes deaths from all causes, including but not limited to those listed above.

These are age-adjusted rates per 100,000 Hispanic residents.

\*\* Significantly lower rate than the county overall.

The age-adjusted all-cause death rate for Hispanics (460.2 per 100,000) was lower than the age-adjusted rate for Contra Costa residents overall (651.2 per 100,000).

Cancer was the leading cause of death among Hispanics in the county, accounting for 22.0% of all deaths in this group. Heart disease ranked a close second (19.6%), followed by unintentional injury (7.9%), stroke (6.5%), diabetes (4.7%) and other causes listed. The top 10 leading causes of death accounted for 76.0% of all deaths among Hispanics.

Hispanics had significantly lower death rates than county residents overall from the following leading causes: cancer, heart disease, stroke, Alzheimer's disease and chronic lower respiratory disease.

## Asians/Pacific Islanders

Between 2005–2007, there were 1,406 deaths among Asians/Pacific Islanders in Contra Costa. This means that there were on average 469 deaths each year among Asian/Pacific Islander residents.

**Table 5 ■ Leading causes of death among Asians/Pacific Islanders**

Contra Costa County, 2005–2007

	Deaths	Percent	Rate
Cancer	404	28.7%	116.2**
Heart disease	299	21.3%	99.5**
Stroke	141	10.0%	47.1
Diabetes	64	4.6%	20.0
Unintentional injury	54	3.8%	14.3**
Chronic lower respiratory disease	52	3.7%	18.1**
Influenza/pneumonia	43	3.1%	15.6
Chronic liver disease/ cirrhosis	25	1.8%	6.5
Essential hypertension/ hypertensive renal disease	24	1.7%	8.2
Suicide	20	1.4%	5.0**
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,406</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>443.9**</b>

The suicide and unintentional injury rates shown here differ slightly from those in the Injury section of this report. See table footnotes for further explanation.

Total includes deaths from all causes, including but not limited to those listed above.

These are age-adjusted rates per 100,000 Asian/Pacific Islander residents.

\*\* Significantly lower rate than the county overall.

The age-adjusted all-cause death rate for Asians/Pacific Islanders (443.2 per 100,000) was lower compared to the age-adjusted rate for Contra Costa residents overall (651.2 per 100,000).

Cancer was the leading cause of death among Asians/Pacific Islanders in the county, accounting for more than one-quarter (28.7%) of all deaths in this group. Heart disease ranked a close second (21.3%), followed by stroke (10.0%), diabetes (4.6%) and unintentional injury (3.8%). The top 10 leading causes of death accounted for 80.1% of all deaths among Asians/Pacific Islanders.

Asians/Pacific Islanders had significantly lower death rates than county residents overall from the following causes: cancer, heart disease, unintentional injury, chronic lower respiratory disease and suicide.

### Data Sources: Leading causes of death, by race/ethnicity

Tables 1–5: These tables include total deaths and age-adjusted average annual death rates for 2005 through 2007. Mortality data from the California Department of Public Health Services (CDPH), <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/>, Center for Health Statistics' Death Statistical Master File, 2005–2007. Any analyses or interpretations of the data were reached by the Community Health Assessment, Planning and Evaluation (CHAPE) Unit of Contra Costa Health Services and not the CDPH. Data presented for Hispanics include Hispanic residents of any race. Data presented for whites, Asians/Pacific Islanders and African Americans include non-Hispanic residents. Not all races/ethnicities are shown but all are included in total for the county.

In this section, the numbers of deaths due to unintentional injury, suicide and homicide include late effects. In the Injury section of this report, late effects are not included and rates are not age-adjusted so numbers, rates and conclusions may differ. A late effect is the residual effect (condition produced) after the acute phase of an illness or injury has terminated.

Population estimates for Contra Costa rates for 2005–2007 were provided by the Urban Strategies Council, Oakland, CA. January, 2010. Data sources used to create these estimates included: U.S. Census 2000, Neilsen Claritas 2009, Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) 2009 Projections, and California Department of Finance Population Estimates for Cities, Counties and the State 2001–2009, with 2000 Benchmark.