

Introduction

North Carolina Vital Statistics, Volume 2: *Leading Causes of Death* describes North Carolina’s total and cause-specific deaths at the state and county level. More than a dozen of North Carolina’s leading causes of death are depicted in tables and maps. In addition, major site-specific cancer deaths and total infant deaths are tabulated and mapped.

This edition includes the number of deaths and unadjusted death rates for 2008 and the number of deaths and unadjusted and age-adjusted death rates for 2004–2008. Beginning in 1999, causes of death were coded using the 10th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10). For the years 1979 through 1998, the ninth revision of the ICD was used. We have not combined mortality data across these two revisions of the ICD due to comparability problems. “Comparability ratios” for the United States have been provided by the National Center for Health Statistics, providing numerical adjustments for comparing data across the ICD revisions. Appendix A shows these comparability ratios for the major causes of death presented in this volume.

Be sure to read the Technical Notes section of this publication. This section explains some of the limitations of the data and addresses issues of interpretation. Many of the death rates presented here are based on small numbers and should be interpreted with caution.

A detailed breakout of cause-specific deaths by age, race, sex, and county of residence can be found in the companion publication *North Carolina Detailed Mortality Statistics*. This and other publications (listed and described on the inside front cover of this publication) are available from the State Center for Health Statistics. Most are available on the SCHS Web site at www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS.

If you want copies of these publications, contact us at (919) 733-4728

or address correspondence to:

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Caution:

In assessing the relative mortality of a county, be particularly aware of rates based on a small number of deaths (fewer than 20 deaths). Read carefully the section on “Caution About Use of Rates” on page 101.