
Manner: NATURAL

The Medical Examiner assumes jurisdiction over deaths that are classified as natural due to the sudden and unexpected nature of the death in an apparently healthy individual, when there is no physician who has knowledge or awareness of the decedent's condition, when there is no next of kin to make disposition, or when there are suspicious circumstances surrounding the death. In these situations, the Medical Examiner becomes responsible for certification of death. It should be stressed that the natural deaths the Medical Examiner investigates may not be representative of all natural deaths in the general population, due to the possibility that jurisdictional considerations introduce significant bias.

In 2005, the King County Medical Examiner assumed jurisdiction over 763 deaths attributed to natural causes, representing 39% (763/1,945) of the cases investigated. The King County Medical Examiner certified 84% (639/763) of these deaths; attending physicians who had knowledge of the decedent's medical condition certified 16% (124/763). It should be noted that when a death is initially reported, there may be no evidence of an attending physician; a thorough scene investigation often reveals that the deceased did, in fact, have a physician with knowledge of the decedent's medical condition. That physician would then be contacted to certify the death. The King County Medical Examiner performed autopsies in 74% (470/639) of the deaths certified as natural, which included autopsies performed in all 10 deaths from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

The data presented in this section are derived from the 763 natural deaths in which the King County Medical Examiner assumed jurisdiction. Cardiovascular disease accounted for the greatest proportion of natural deaths. Most deaths in which an autopsy was not performed were certified as due to "probable arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease."

Table 5-1 Disease Processes Causing Natural Deaths / KCME / 2005

NUMBER OF DEATHS	DISEASE DESCRIPTION
CARDIOVASCULAR	
4	Aortic Aneurysm
10	Aortic Dissection
136	Arteriosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease (ASCVD)
2	Bacterial Endocarditis
4	Cardiac Dysrhythmia
19	Cardiomyopathy
4	Congenital Heart Disease
5	Congestive Heart Failure
116	Hypertensive ASCVD / Hypertensive Heart Disease
4	Myocarditis
129	Probable Arteriosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease
6	Valvular Heart Disease
1	Other
440	TOTAL CARDIOVASCULAR
CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM	
11	Epilepsy (idiopathic & other non-traumatic etiologies)
6	Infarct
3	Meningitis
14	Spontaneous Intracerebral Hemorrhage
8	Spontaneous Rupture of Aneurysm
6	Other
48	TOTAL CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM
ENDOCRINE	
9	Diabetic Ketoacidosis
14	Diabetes Mellitus
2	Pancreatitis
0	Other
25	TOTAL ENDOCRINE
GASTROINTESTINAL	
2	Bacterial Peritonitis
4	Gastrointestinal Hemorrhage
3	Obstruction
4	Perforating Ulcer
2	Other
15	TOTAL GASTROINTESTINAL

Table 5-1 Disease Processes Causing Natural Deaths / KCME / 2005 (continued)

NUMBER OF DEATHS	DISEASE DESCRIPTION
	HEPATIC
4	Cirrhosis
0	Fatty Liver
0	Hepatic Failure
8	Hepatitis
0	Other
12	TOTAL HEPATIC
	MALIGNANCY
3	Breast
1	Colon
8	Lung
5	Pancreas
1	Prostate
2	Rectum
21	Other
41	TOTAL MALIGNANCY
	OTHER PROCESSES
39	Chronic Ethanolism (Alcoholism)
0	Chronic Renal Disease
0	HIV / AIDS
0	Infection
2	Labor / Delivery / Prematurity
15	Necrotizing fasciitis
9	No Anatomic or Toxicologic Cause of Death
19	Sepsis
22	Other
106	TOTAL OTHER PROCESSES
	RESPIRATORY
3	Asthma
15	Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
32	Pneumonia
11	Pulmonary Thromboembolus
5	Other
66	TOTAL RESPIRATORY

Table 5-1 Disease Processes Causing Natural Deaths / KCME / 2005 (continued)

NUMBER OF DEATHS	DISEASE DESCRIPTION
	SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME (SIDS)
10	SIDS
323	TOTAL Non-Cardiovascular Cause of Death
440	TOTAL Cardiovascular Cause of Death
763	Total NATURAL DEATHS under KCMEO Jurisdiction, 2005

Graph 5-1 Deaths due to Natural Causes / King County Medical Examiner / 2005

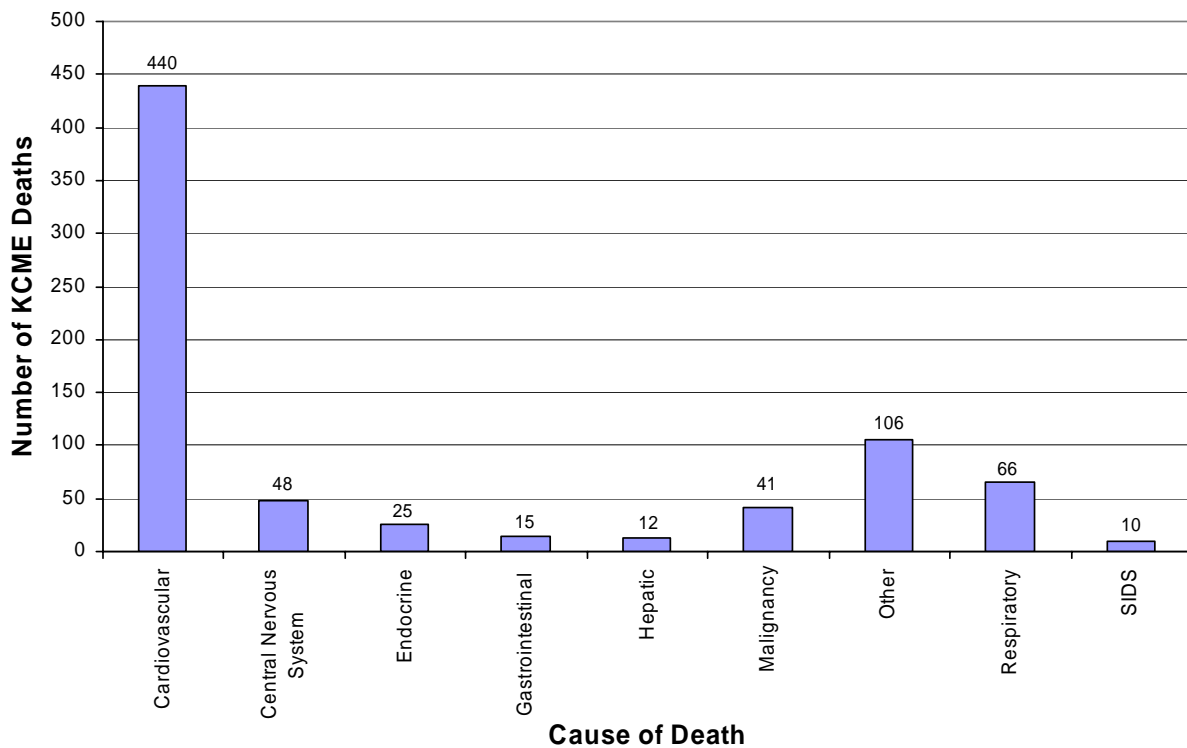
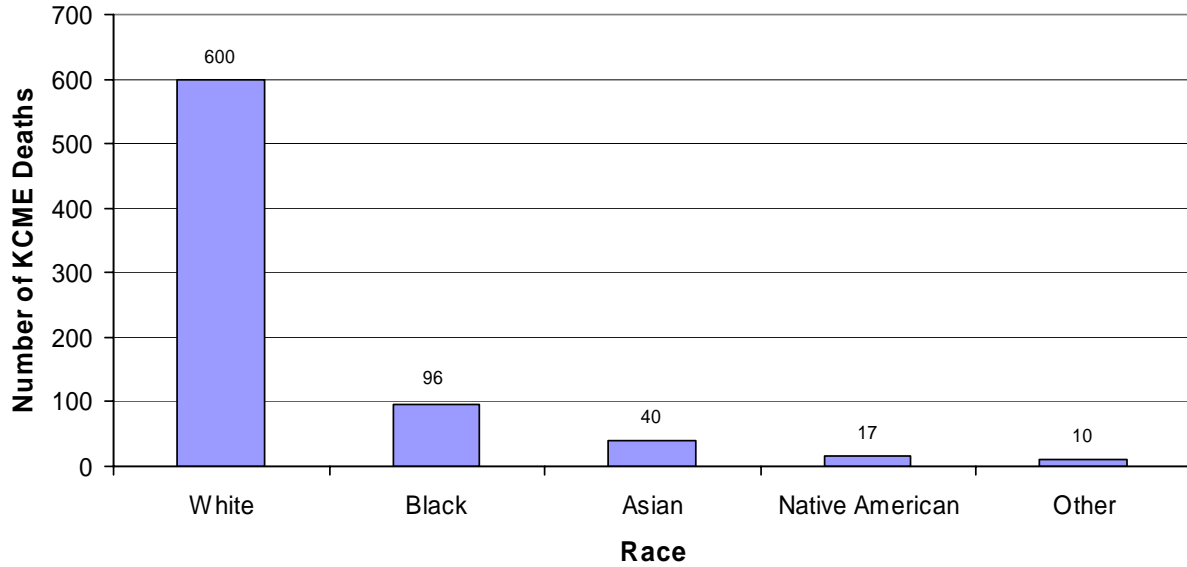


Table 5-2 Natural Deaths / Race / Sex / King County Medical Examiner / 2005

DISEASE PROCESS / SEX	RACE					SUB TOTAL	TOTAL
	WHITE	BLACK	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	OTHER		
Cardiovascular	358	45	25	9	3		440
<i>Male</i>	234	34	15	6	2	291	
<i>Female</i>	124	11	10	3	1	149	
Central Nervous	35	5	6	1	1		48
<i>Male</i>	15	1	3	1	1	21	
<i>Female</i>	20	4	3	0	0	27	
Endocrine	15	8	1	1	0		25
<i>Male</i>	11	3	1	1	0	16	
<i>Female</i>	4	5	0	0	0	9	
Gastrointestinal	12	1	1	1	0		15
<i>Male</i>	7	1	0	1	0	9	
<i>Female</i>	5	0	1	0	0	6	
Hepatic	8	1	1	2	0		12
<i>Male</i>	7	1	1	2	0	11	
<i>Female</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Malignancy	33	4	2	0	2		41
<i>Male</i>	20	3	0	0	2	25	
<i>Female</i>	13	1	2	0	0	16	
Other	80	18	2	3	3		106
<i>Male</i>	52	11	0	0	3	66	
<i>Female</i>	28	7	2	3	0	40	
Respiratory	54	10	2	0	0		66
<i>Male</i>	34	7	2	0	0	43	
<i>Female</i>	20	3	0	0	0	23	
SIDS	5	4	0	0	1		10
<i>Male</i>	4	3	0	0	1	8	
<i>Female</i>	1	1	0	0	0	2	
Totals	600	96	40	17	10		763
Percent	79%	13%	5%	2%	1%		100%

Graph 5-2 Natural Deaths / Race / King County Medical Examiner / 2005



Graph 5-3 Natural Deaths / Age Group / King County Medical Examiner / 2005

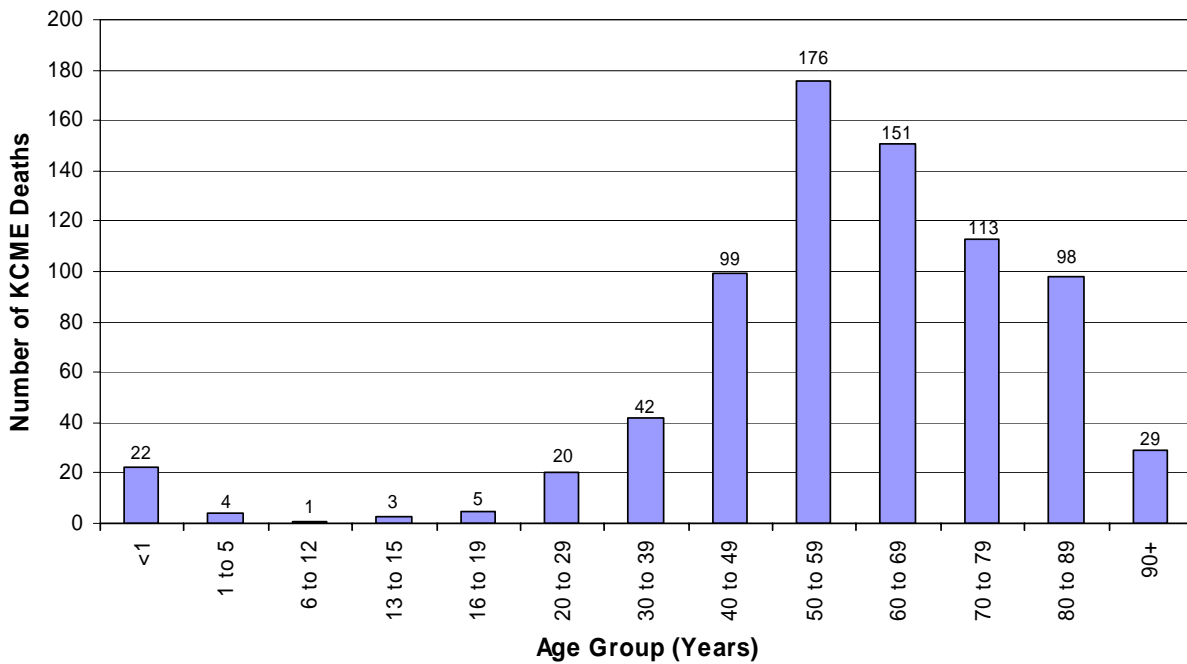


Table 5-3 Natural Deaths / Age / Sex / King County Medical Examiner / 2005

DISEASE PROCESS/ SEX	AGE GROUP (YEARS)													SUB TOTAL	TOTAL
	< 1	1 to 5	6 to 12	13 to 15	16 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 69	70 to 79	80 to 89	90 +		
Cardiovascular	2	0	0	1	2	4	16	44	103	99	81	66	22	440	
<i>Male</i>	1	0	0	0	1	2	9	34	82	78	50	27	7	291	
<i>Female</i>	1	0	0	1	1	2	7	10	21	21	31	39	15	149	
Central Nervous	2	0	1	1	1	4	7	4	8	5	7	7	1	48	
<i>Male</i>	2	0	1	1	1	2	4	2	3	2	2	1	0	21	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	2	5	3	5	6	1	27	
Endocrine	0	1	0	0	0	0	6	6	6	4	1	1	0	25	
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	3	3	1	1	0	16	
<i>Female</i>	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	3	1	0	0	0	9	
Gastrointestinal	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	2	4	0	2	0	15	
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	3	0	1	0	9	
<i>Female</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	1	0	6	
Hepatic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	0	1	1	0	12	
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	4	0	1	1	0	11	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Malignancy	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	6	16	6	7	1	41	
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	5	10	5	2	0	25	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	6	1	5	1	16	
Other	4	2	0	1	1	8	4	26	27	13	8	9	3	106	
<i>Male</i>	3	2	0	1	0	2	4	21	18	8	3	3	1	66	
<i>Female</i>	1	0	0	0	1	6	0	5	9	5	5	6	2	40	
Respiratory	3	1	0	0	1	2	7	7	19	10	9	5	2	66	
<i>Male</i>	2	1	0	0	0	2	5	4	13	8	5	2	1	43	
<i>Female</i>	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	3	6	2	4	3	1	23	
SIDS	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	
<i>Male</i>	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	
<i>Female</i>	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	
Totals	22	4	1	3	5	20	42	99	176	151	113	98	29	763	
Percent	2.9	0.5	0.1	0.4	0.7	2.6	5.5	13.0	23.1	19.8	14.8	12.8	3.8	100%	

Table 5-4 Natural Deaths / Sex / King County Medical Examiner / 2005

CIRCUMSTANCES	SEX		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	
Cardiovascular	291	149	440
Central Nervous	21	27	48
Endocrine	16	9	25
Gastrointestinal	9	6	15
Hepatic	11	1	12
Malignancy	25	16	41
Other	66	40	106
Respiratory	43	23	66
SIDS	8	2	10
Totals	490	273	763
Percent	64%	36%	100%

Table 5-5 Natural Deaths / Blood Alcohol / King County Medical Examiner / 2005

METHOD	TESTED		NOT TESTED	TOTAL
	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE		
Cardiovascular	62	245	133	440
Central Nervous System	3	29	16	48
Endocrine	3	16	6	25
Gastrointestinal	13	6	6	15
Hepatic	1	3	8	12
Malignancy	1	18	22	41
Other Processes	19	46	41	106
Respiratory	2	30	34	66
SIDS	0	9	1	10
Totals	94	402	267	763
Percent	12%	53%	35%	100%