
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 the jurisdictional considerations introduce significant bias.

In 2004, the King County Medical Examiner assumed jurisdiction over 765 deaths attributed to natural causes, representing 41% (765/1,863) of the cases investigated. The King County Medical Examiner certified 74% (565/765) of these deaths; attending physicians who had knowledge of the decedent's medical condition certified 26% (200/765). 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 70% (394/565) of the deaths certified as natural, which included autopsies performed in all 11 deaths from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

The data presented in this section are derived from the 765 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 / 2004

NUMBER OF DEATHS	DISEASE DESCRIPTION
CARDIOVASCULAR	
7	Aortic Aneurysm / Dissection
159	Arteriosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease (ASCVD)
2	Bacterial Endocarditis
7	Cardiac Dysrhythmia
11	Cardiomyopathy
7	Congenital Heart Disease
77	Hypertensive ASCVD / Hypertensive Heart Disease
1	Myocarditis
131	Probable Arteriosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease
6	Valvular Heart Disease
3	Other
411	TOTAL CARDIOVASCULAR
CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM	
5	Epilepsy (idiopathic & other non-traumatic etiologies)
9	Meningitis
13	Spontaneous Intracerebral Hemorrhage
15	Spontaneous Rupture of Aneurysm
9	Other
51	TOTAL CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM
ENDOCRINE	
6	Diabetic Ketoacidosis
16	Diabetes Mellitus
1	Pancreatitis
1	Other
24	TOTAL ENDOCRINE
GASTROINTESTINAL	
1	Bacterial Peritonitis
4	Gastrointestinal Hemorrhage
2	Obstruction
5	Perforating Ulcer
2	Other
14	TOTAL GASTROINTESTINAL

Table 5-1 Disease Processes Causing Natural Deaths / KCME / 2004 (continued)

NUMBER OF DEATHS	DISEASE DESCRIPTION
	HEPATIC
14	Cirrhosis
1	Fatty Liver
1	Hepatic Failure
4	Hepatitis
1	Other
21	TOTAL HEPATIC
	MALIGNANCY
7	Breast
1	Colon
13	Lung
3	Pancreas
4	Prostate
1	Rectum
21	Other
50	TOTAL MALIGNANCY
	OTHER PROCESSES
45	Chronic Ethanolism (Alcoholism)
2	Chronic Renal Disease
7	HIV / AIDS
2	Infection
4	Labor / Delivery / Prematurity
10	Necrotizing fasciitis
3	No Anatomic or Toxicologic Cause of Death
20	Sepsis
19	Other
112	TOTAL OTHER PROCESSES
	RESPIRATORY
1	Asthma
26	Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
25	Pneumonia
15	Pulmonary Thromboembolus
4	Other
71	TOTAL RESPIRATORY

Table 5-1 Disease Processes Causing Natural Deaths / KCME / 2004 (continued)

NUMBER OF DEATHS	DISEASE DESCRIPTION
	SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME (SIDS)
11	SIDS
354	TOTAL Non-Cardiovascular Cause of Death
411	TOTAL Cardiovascular Cause of Death
765	Total NATURAL DEATHS under KCMEO Jurisdiction, 2004

Graph 5-1 Deaths due to Natural Causes / King County Medical Examiner / 2004

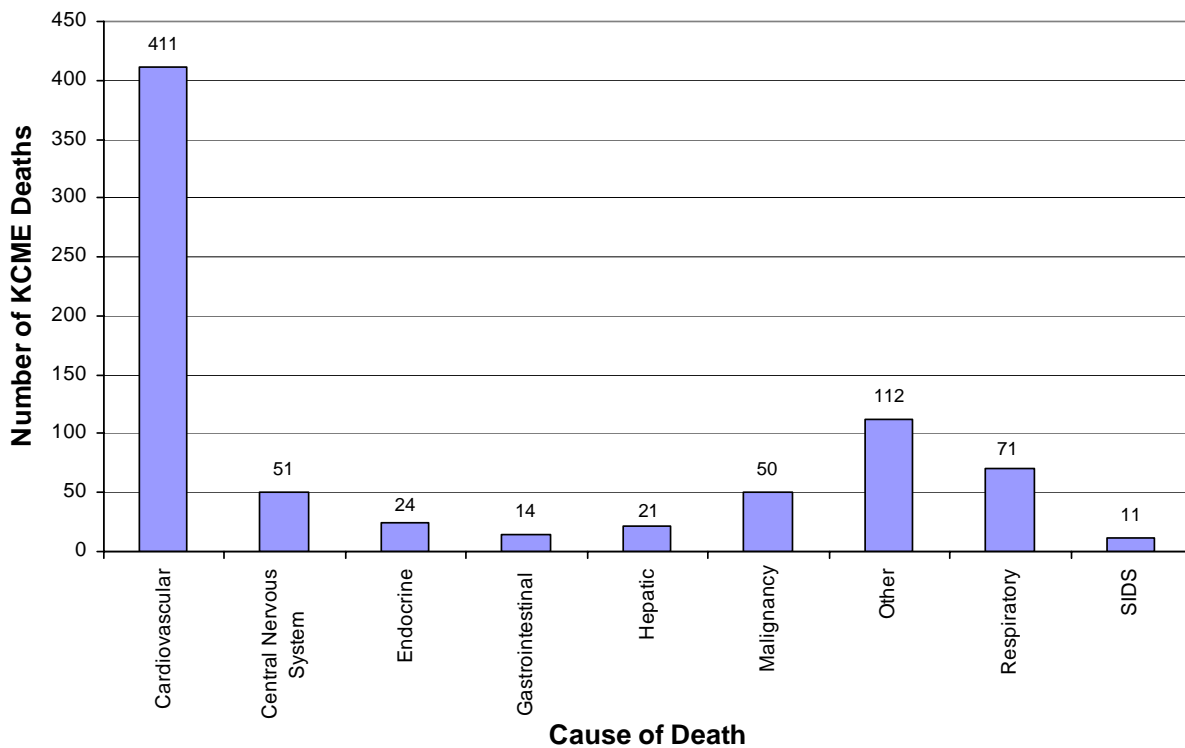
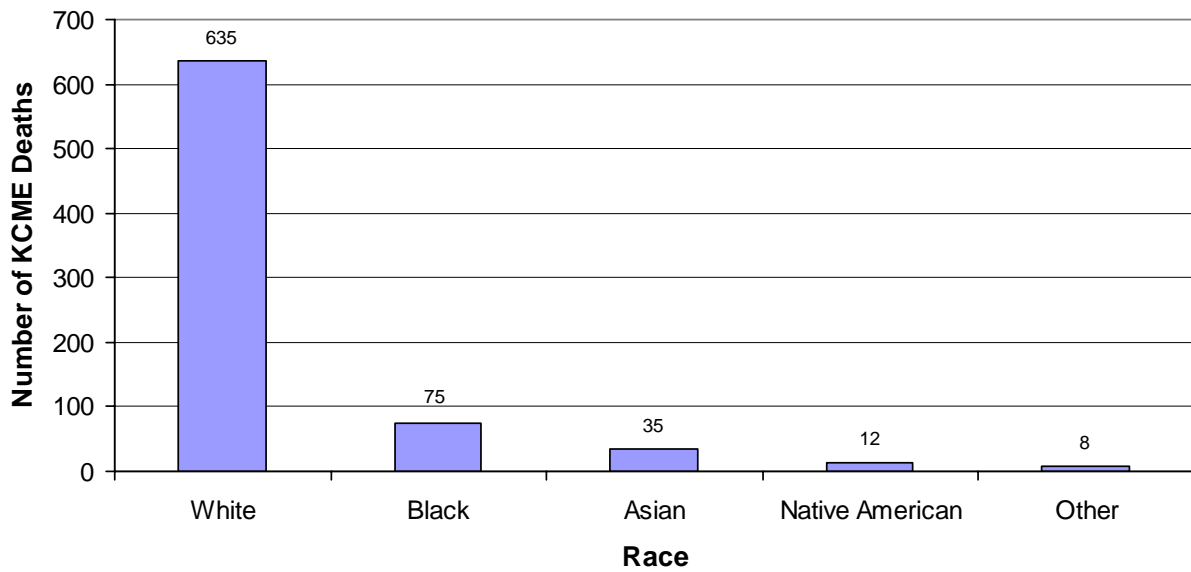


Table 5-2 Natural Deaths / Race / Sex / King County Medical Examiner / 2004

DISEASE PROCESS / SEX	RACE					SUB TOTAL	TOTAL
	WHITE	BLACK	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	OTHER		
Cardiovascular	342	42	17	5	5		411
<i>Male</i>	249	31	11	4	4	299	
<i>Female</i>	93	11	6	1	1	112	
Central Nervous	43	2	6	0	0		51
<i>Male</i>	21	2	4	0	0	27	
<i>Female</i>	22	0	2	0	0	24	
Endocrine	18	4	1	0	1		24
<i>Male</i>	13	2	0	0	1	16	
<i>Female</i>	5	2	1	0	0	8	
Gastrointestinal	10	3	1	0	0		14
<i>Male</i>	8	2	0	0	0	10	
<i>Female</i>	2	1	1	0	0	4	
Hepatic	19	1	1	0	0		21
<i>Male</i>	14	1	1	0	0	16	
<i>Female</i>	5	0	0	0	0	5	
Malignancy	38	7	4	1	0		50
<i>Male</i>	27	5	2	0	0	34	
<i>Female</i>	11	2	2	1	0	16	
Other	96	8	2	5	1		112
<i>Male</i>	64	7	0	2	1	74	
<i>Female</i>	32	1	2	3	0	38	
Respiratory	61	7	2	1	0		71
<i>Male</i>	38	4	1	0	0	43	
<i>Female</i>	23	3	1	1	0	28	
SIDS	8	1	1	0	1		11
<i>Male</i>	5	1	1	0	1	8	
<i>Female</i>	3	0	0	0	0	3	
Totals	635	75	35	12	8		765
Percent	83%	10%	4.5%	1.5%	1%		100%

Graph 5-2 Natural Deaths / Race / King County Medical Examiner / 2004



Graph 5-3 Natural Deaths / Age Group / King County Medical Examiner / 2004

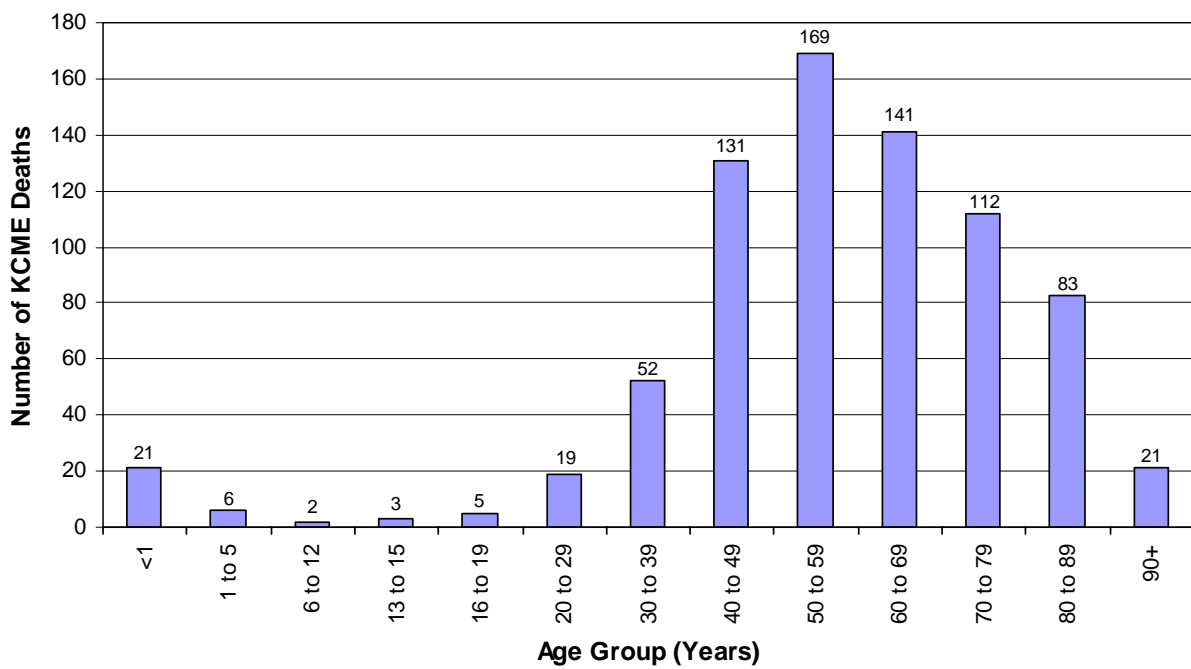


Table 5-3 Natural Deaths / Age / Sex / King County Medical Examiner / 2004

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	4	1	1	0	1	5	28	55	83	96	67	59	11		411
<i>Male</i>	3	0	1	0	1	4	21	44	66	83	43	27	6	299	
<i>Female</i>	1	1	0	0	0	1	7	11	17	13	24	32	5	112	
Central Nervous	0	3	0	2	1	5	3	9	8	4	6	8	2		51
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	1	0	5	2	5	5	1	3	4	1	27	
<i>Female</i>	0	3	0	1	1	0	1	4	3	3	3	4	1	24	
Endocrine	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	8	5	4	1	2	0		24
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	5	3	4	1	0	0	16	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	0	0	2	0	8	
Gastrointestinal	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	3	3	1	4	0	1		14
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	3	1	2	0	0	10	
<i>Female</i>	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	4	
Hepatic	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	10	1	2	1	0		21
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	7	1	1	1	0	16	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	1	0	0	5	
Malignancy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	19	12	11	2	1		50
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	14	9	8	0	0	34	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5	3	3	2	1	16	
Other	6	1	1	0	3	4	12	30	30	10	7	5	3		112
<i>Male</i>	4	0	1	0	1	2	11	19	19	8	5	3	1	74	
<i>Female</i>	2	1	0	0	2	2	1	11	11	2	2	2	2	38	
Respiratory	0	0	0	0	0	5	4	15	11	13	14	6	3		71
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	7	9	10	9	4	1	43	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	8	2	3	5	2	2	28	
SIDS	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		11
<i>Male</i>	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	
<i>Female</i>	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	
Totals	21	6	2	3	5	19	52	131	169	141	112	83	21		765
Percent	2.7	0.8	0.3	0.4	0.7	2.5	6.8	17.1	22.1	18.4	14.6	10.9	2.7		100%

Table 5-4 Natural Deaths / Sex / King County Medical Examiner / 2004

CIRCUMSTANCES	SEX		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	
Cardiovascular	299	112	411
Central Nervous	27	24	51
Endocrine	16	8	24
Gastrointestinal	10	4	14
Hepatic	16	5	21
Malignancy	34	16	50
Other	74	38	112
Respiratory	43	28	71
SIDS	8	3	11
Totals	527	238	765
Percent	69%	31%	100%

Table 5-5 Natural Deaths / Blood Alcohol / King County Medical Examiner / 2004

METHOD	TESTED		NOT	TOTAL
	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	TESTED	
Cardiovascular	39	198	174	411
Central Nervous System	1	17	33	51
Endocrine	1	10	13	24
Gastrointestinal	1	5	8	14
Hepatic	2	9	10	21
Malignancy	2	9	39	50
Other Processes	21	36	55	112
Respiratory	1	31	39	71
SIDS	0	9	2	11
Totals	68	324	373	765
Percent	9%	42%	49%	100%