



**MEDICAL CAUSES OF DEATH  
IN STATE PRISONS  
2001-2004**

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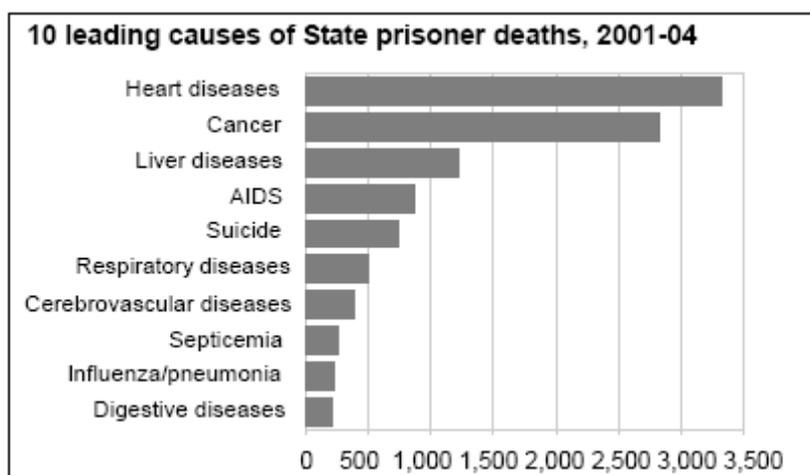
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## MEDICAL CAUSES OF DEATH IN STATE PRISONS, 2001-2004

In January 2007, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) released the data brief, *Medical Causes of Death in State Prisons, 2001-2004*. The data were collected from correctional authorities in all 50 states as part of the Deaths in Custody Reporting Program. States are instructed to include deaths of any inmates held in private prisons, medical facilities, substance abuse or mental health treatment centers, or any deaths at a work release site. Deaths of state prisoners held in local jails are excluded, but are covered by a separate collection. Also excluded are executions and escaped inmates. The following data and graphic come from this report.

- Between 2001 and 2004, state prison authorities nationwide reported 12,129 state prisoner deaths to the Deaths in Custody Reporting Program. In Ohio, there were 446 deaths reported to the program.
- Eighty-nine percent of the reported prisoner deaths were attributed to medical conditions. The remainder was due to suicide (six percent), homicide (two percent), alcohol/drug intoxication (one percent), accidental injury (one percent), and undetermined causes (one percent).
- Heart disease and cancer combined accounted for half of all state prisoner deaths. More state prisoner cancer deaths were caused by lung cancer than the next six leading sites of cancer combined.



- Two-thirds of deaths were the result of pre-existing medical conditions. Ninety-four percent of illness fatalities were evaluated by medical staff for the fatal illness, and 93 percent were given medications for the fatal medical condition. AIDS (94 percent) and liver diseases (88 percent) were the illnesses most commonly present at the time of prison admission.
- During 2001-2004, inmates age 45 or older made up 14 percent of state prisoners, but accounted for 67 percent of all inmate deaths during this time period.
- From 2001-2004, 99 percent of state prisoners fell between the ages of 15 and 64. The overall mortality rate of state prisoners in this age range was 19 percent lower than the mortality rate for U.S. residents in the same age group. The mortality rate for White and Hispanic prisoners was slightly higher than their counterparts in the resident population,

while the mortality rate for Black prisoners was 57 percent lower than their counterparts in the resident population.

A link to the full report can be found on the Bureau of Justice Statistics web site:  
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/mcdsp04.pdf>.