

CITY OF BALTIMORE

MARTIN O’MALLEY, Mayor



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Commissioner
210 Guilford Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21202

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: *Melisa Lindamood*

Phone: 410-396-4677 or Melisa.Lindamood@baltimorecity.gov

Mortality in Baltimore City – An Update

BALTIMORE, MD (October 12, 2006) —Last month, researchers from Harvard University published a study in the Public Library of Science examining disparities in life expectancy. The researchers released county-specific data on life expectancy based on estimates for the year 1999. Since the study’s publication, members of the public and news media have asked whether more recent data on mortality and life expectancy in Baltimore City are available.

The Baltimore City Health Department requested information on age-adjusted mortality rates and life expectancy from the Vital Statistics Administration of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. The Vital Statistics Administration is the agency in charge of natality and mortality statistics in Maryland.

Age-adjusted mortality. Age-adjusted mortality is the number of people who die per 100,000 population in a given year, adjusted for the age distribution of the population. Age-adjusted rates below are standardized to the 2000 U.S. population.

According to the Division of Vital Statistics, age-adjusted mortality in Baltimore City declined 19.9 % between 1999 and 2005 (Table 1). During this same period of time, age-adjusted mortality for the state of Maryland declined 12.4%.

Table 1: Age-Adjusted Mortality Rates, Maryland and Baltimore City, 1999-2005 (per 100,000 population)

Year	Maryland	Baltimore
1999	907.2	1380.3
2000	905.9	1277.9
2001	890.2	1254.5
2002	863.1	1214.0
2003	850.4	1221.0
2004	804.6	1114.7
2005	794.3	1105.2
Difference 1999-2005	112.9	275.1
Percentage Change 1999-2005	- 12.4 %	- 19.9 %

Source: Vital Statistics Administration, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Life expectancy. The Harvard researchers calculated that in 1999, overall life expectancy in Baltimore City was 68.6 years, with male life expectancy 63.8 years and female 73.4 years.

According to the Division of Vital Statistics, overall life expectancy in Baltimore City has risen from 67.3 years in 1995 to 69.2 years in 2000 to 71.6 years in 2005. Life expectancy increases are seen in both men and women, and in both whites and African-Americans. (Table 2).

	All Races			White			Black		
	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female
1995	67.3	61.5	73.3	72.2	67.7	76.9	64.4	57.9	71.1
2000	69.2	64.7	73.8	73.3	70.3	76.5	67.2	61.5	72.7
2005	71.6	67.3	75.7	74.9	71.5	78.5	69.8	64.8	74.3

Source: Vital Statistics Administration, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

The Harvard researchers and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene used somewhat different approaches to calculating life expectancy, so their numbers are not directly comparable. (The difference relates to the fact that the Harvard researchers used five years of mortality data for each estimate, two on each side of the year in question.) In 1995, the Harvard researchers calculated overall life expectancy in Baltimore at 67.6 years, compared to 67.3 years for the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

“The latest data on mortality demonstrate clear progress in Baltimore City,” said Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Commissioner of Health. “But this is not ‘mission accomplished.’ We still have much more progress to make, especially in reducing disparities in mortality.”

To reduce premature mortality, the Health Department is planning initiatives to increase access to health care, promote prevention, and reduce health care disparities.

