

16% of total deaths. By 1985, this figure had increased to 58% of total deaths. Over the same time period, infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, which accounted for 15% of total deaths in 1921, diminished to less than 1% of total deaths in 1985.

An examination of leading causes of death by age group for 1985 shows that below age 45, accidents are by far the leading cause of death. This is particularly true for males, as males aged 5-19 are more than twice as likely to die in accidents as females and in the 20-44 age range their death rate due to accidents is more than four times as high as that for females. Malignant neoplasms were the leading cause of death among females aged 20-44 in 1985, at a rate slightly greater than that for males. Suicide was among the leading causes of death for both males and females below age 45 in 1985, although it occurs much more frequently among males. In the 20-44 age range, for example, suicide was the second-ranking cause of death for males and the third-ranking cause for females; however, the male suicide rate, at 27.1 per 100,000 population, was more than four times as great as that for females (6.5).

In the 45-64 age range diseases of the heart were the most frequent cause of death among males in 1985, while malignant neoplasms were the leading cause among females. Males were much more likely to die of heart disease in this age range than females. While the female death rate for malignant neoplasms was at a level of 78% of the male rate, the female death rate for diseases of the heart was just over 30% of the level of the rate for males.

Among the Canadian population aged 65 and over, diseases of the heart were the leading cause of death for both males and females in 1985 by a wide margin, followed by malignant neoplasms. Accidents were the fifth-ranking cause of death in this age group, although they accounted for just over 2% of total deaths. The female death rate for malignant neoplasms decreases to a level of about 58% of the rate for males in the 65 and over age group, compared to a level of 80% or greater in the younger age groups.

**Potential years of life lost (PYLL)** is a useful indicator of premature deaths. It allows heavier weight to be given to deaths occurring at younger ages. This calculation is applied to deaths occurring between birth and age 75, multiplying the number of deaths in a specific age group by the remaining years of life to age 75.

An examination of the potential years of life lost for 10 leading causes in 1985 is shown in Table 3.6. Several contrasts emerge when leading causes of PYLL are compared to leading causes of death. First, while malignant neoplasms are the second-ranking cause of death at all ages, they are the leading cause of PYLL and death among deaths under age 75. Second, accidents and suicide have a much greater impact on PYLL than on the number of deaths. While these causes accounted for 11% of deaths below age 75 in 1985, they accounted for 23% of potential years of life lost. There is also a marked sex difference in PYLL due to accidents and suicide. These causes accounted for nearly three and one-half times as many potential years of life lost among males as females, and they represented 28% of PYLL for males, compared with just 15% for females. The emphasis of the PYLL indicator on early mortality gives greater significance to causes of death such as perinatal mortality and congenital anomalies, which account for less than 3% of deaths under 75 but represent over 10% of PYLL.

**Death rates by leading causes and by sex.** The total death rate for all causes has declined slightly more for males than for females during the 1975-85 period, which is also reflected in the slight convergence of male and female life expectancy. The greatest percentage declines in death rates by leading cause in this period have occurred for cerebrovascular disease, which has dropped by 40% for both males and females, followed by diseases of the heart, where the death rates have declined by more than 20% for both males and females. Among the leading causes of death, malignant neoplasms were the only cause for which death rates increased during the 1975-85 period, by about 5% for both males and females. Within this category, there has been a dramatic increase in the female death rate from lung cancer, which nearly doubled between 1975 and 1985. Table 3.5 examines the five leading causes of death, by age group and sex in 1985.

### 3.1.3 Morbidity and disability

The measure used to express morbidity is patient-days in general and allied special hospitals. The leading causes of hospitalization in 1982-83 were heart disease, mental disorder, stroke, accidents and respiratory disease.

For babies up to a year old, respiratory diseases accounted for 29% of hospital days, and were the leading cause of hospitalization. For children of 1-14 years, the leading causes were respiratory diseases and accidents.