

STATISTICAL NEWS

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Melanoma Incidence Rates on the Rise

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Pennsylvania Baby Names

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Accidental Drug Poisoning Deaths on the Rise

Overtakes Transportation Accidents As Top Cause of Accidental Death

Deaths due to accidental drug poisoning are becoming a major problem in Pennsylvania. In 2010, accidental drug poisoning deaths accounted for 93.7 percent of all accidental poisoning deaths for Pennsylvania residents.

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Opening Public Access to Historic Birth and Death Records

Update on Act 110 (Public Records Law)

On December 15, 2011, Governor Tom Corbett signed Senate Bill 361, now known as Act 110, into law. This bill amends the Act of June 29, 1953 (P.L. 304, No. 66), known as the Vital Statistics Law of 1953, to provide for public access to certain birth and death certificates.

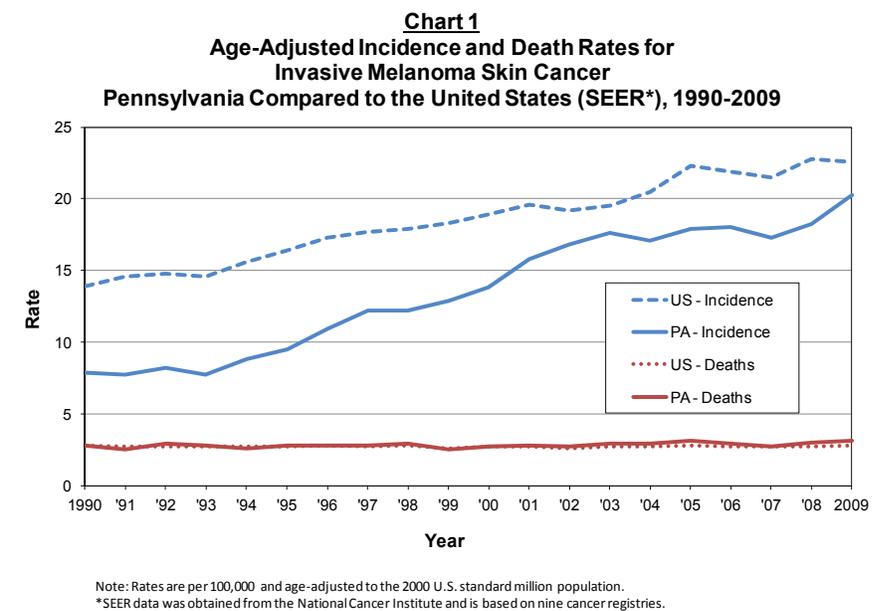
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Melanoma Skin Cancer Statistics in Pennsylvania Reviewed

Melanoma Incidence Rates on the Rise

Skin protects the body from pathogens, prevents water loss, and helps maintain a constant body temperature. The skin's most outer layer, known as the epidermis, is composed of three main cell types: squamous, basal, and melanocytes. The melanocytes produce the pigment melanin which gives skin its color. Exposure to sunlight increases the amount of melanin produced and therefore tans the skin. However, excessive sunlight, artificial light, and/or ultraviolet (UV) radiation can damage the skin and lead to melanoma, a cancerous tumor affecting the melanocytes. Melanoma mainly affects white individuals, although some types of melanoma tend to affect the skin of other races. Additional risk factors for melanoma include: family history; frequent and severe sunburns; moles (especially dysplastic nevi); fair skin; freckles; red or blond hair; blue, green, or light colored eyes; and sun lamps for tanning. Although skin melanomas are rare in comparison to squamous and basal cell carcinomas, melanomas are more likely to spread to other tissues and account for the majority of skin cancer deaths.

Unless otherwise noted, the source of all data in this article was the Pennsylvania Cancer Registry. The number of invasive skin melanomas in Pennsylvania increased by 193.4 percent from 1,002 cases in 1990 to 2,940 cases in 2009. Only two other cancers, from our most often quoted 23 primary site list, experienced a larger percentage increase over this timeframe. Cancers of the thyroid gland increased 439.4 percent from 1990 to 2009 and liver and intrahepatic bile duct cancer



increase by 248.0 percent over this same timeframe.

Age-adjusted incidence rates for invasive skin melanoma also increased consistently since 1990 in Pennsylvania (see Chart 1). Overall, the rate of melanoma has more than doubled from 7.9 per 100,000 in 1990 to 20.3 in 2009. Increasing trends were also observed among males and females, although males generally had higher rates compared to females. Incidence rates of skin melanoma were consistently lower among Pennsylvania residents compared to the United States. In 2009, the rate of melanoma in Pennsylvania (20.3) was 10 percent lower than the United States rate (22.6). You'll notice that there was a more pronounced increase in the incidence rate in Pennsylvania from 1993 through 2003. The rate leveled off for a few years, but has recently started to climb again.

Age-adjusted death rates for skin melanoma have been relatively low

compared to incidence rates and have not changed much over the period 1990 through 2009 for Pennsylvania or the United States (see Chart 1). There was essentially no difference between melanoma death rates in Pennsylvania compared to the United States.

In 2009, the majority of skin melanomas were diagnosed at early stages (in situ or local stage) among Pennsylvania residents as shown in Chart 2, next page. Specifically, 85.0 percent of female melanomas were diagnosed at early stages compared to 81.6 percent among males. These early diagnoses increase the chances for a cure and partially explain why the death rates were very low in comparison to the incidence rates.

According to the [National Cancer Institute's Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results data](#) from 2001-2008 (the most recent data available), the five-year survival rate from melanoma skin cancer drops

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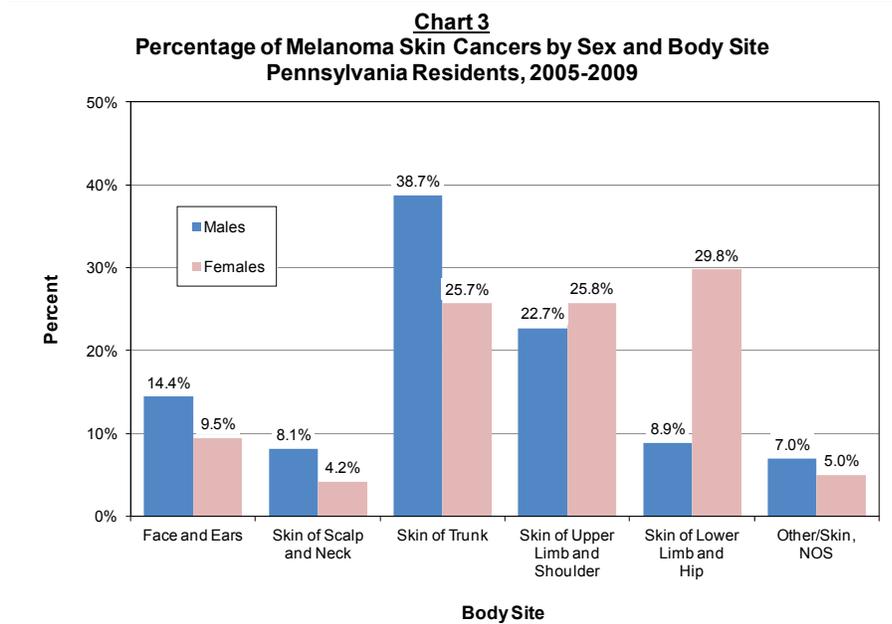
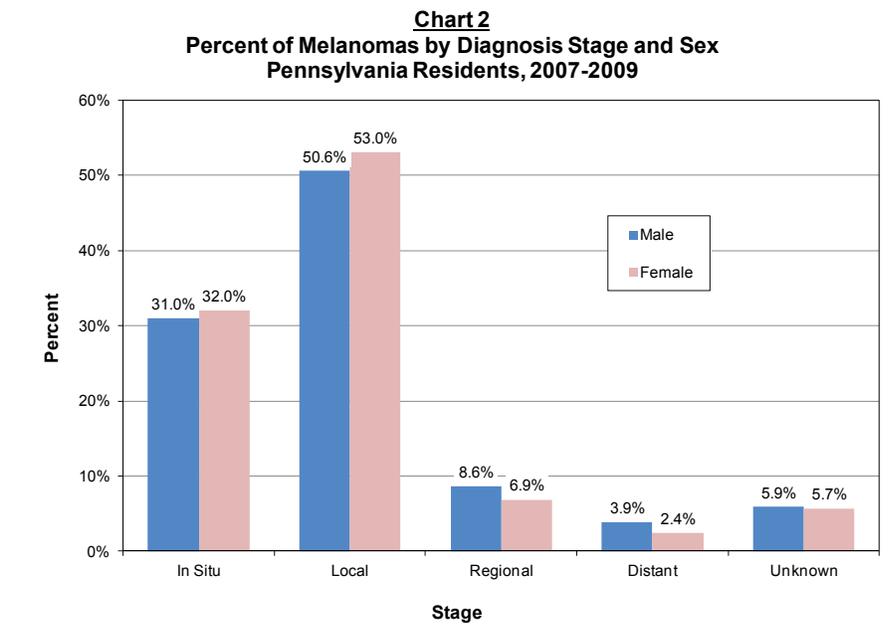
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from 98.1 percent in local stage to 62.1 percent in regional stage and down to 15.4 percent in distant stage cancers. Fortunately for Pennsylvania residents, just 3.9 percent of melanoma skin cancers were diagnosed in the distant stage for males and just 2.4 percent for females.

In Chart 3, the percent distribution of skin melanomas were analyzed by their location on the body and large differences were observed between male and female residents in Pennsylvania. In particular, males had a higher percentage of skin melanomas on the face and ears, scalp and neck, and especially on the trunk compared to females in 2009. Females had a higher percentage of melanomas on the upper limb and shoulder and especially on the lower limb and hip. There was a statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level between the percents for males and females for the following sites on the body: face and ears, skin of scalp and neck, and skin of lower limb and hip.

The significance testing results for age-adjusted rates of melanoma of the skin by county for the 3-year period, 2007-2009 are shown in Map 1, next page. A band of counties with statistically significantly higher rates extends from south central Pennsylvania towards the north. Several counties in the southeast corner of the state also had significantly higher rates. Philadelphia was an exception in the southeast corner of the state and actually had the lowest age-adjusted rate (8.4 in 2007-2009) of any county. The low melanoma rate in Philadelphia could be a result of less outside activity and less sun exposure in a city environment com-



bined with a high population of black residents (47 percent). It is not clear if the counties with higher rates represent true differences or some combination of screening practices, thoroughness of case reporting, racial differences, socioeconomic status, UV exposure, and/or sun protection habits.

Further analysis shows that early stage skin melanoma for 2007-2009 had a similar band of counties extending from south central Pennsylvania to the north with significantly higher rates than the state (see Map 2, next page). Likewise, the southeast corner had many counties with

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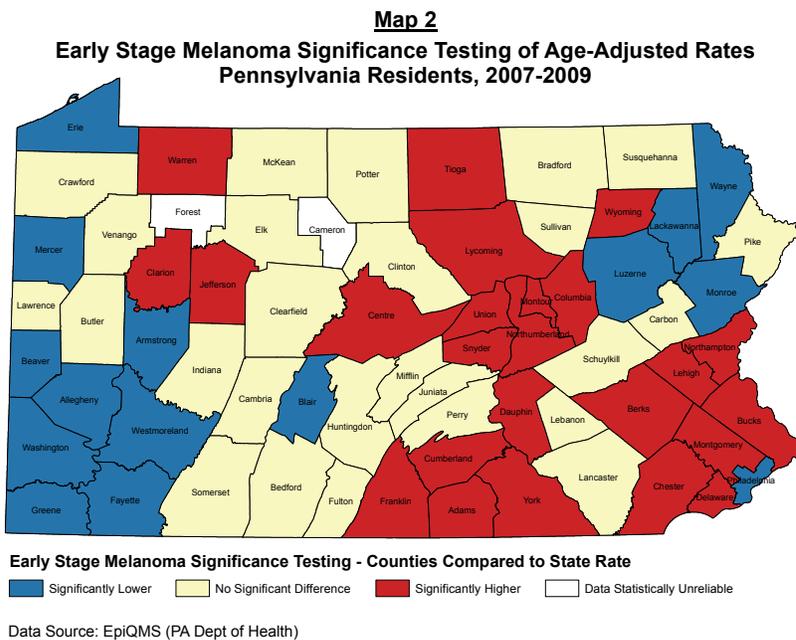
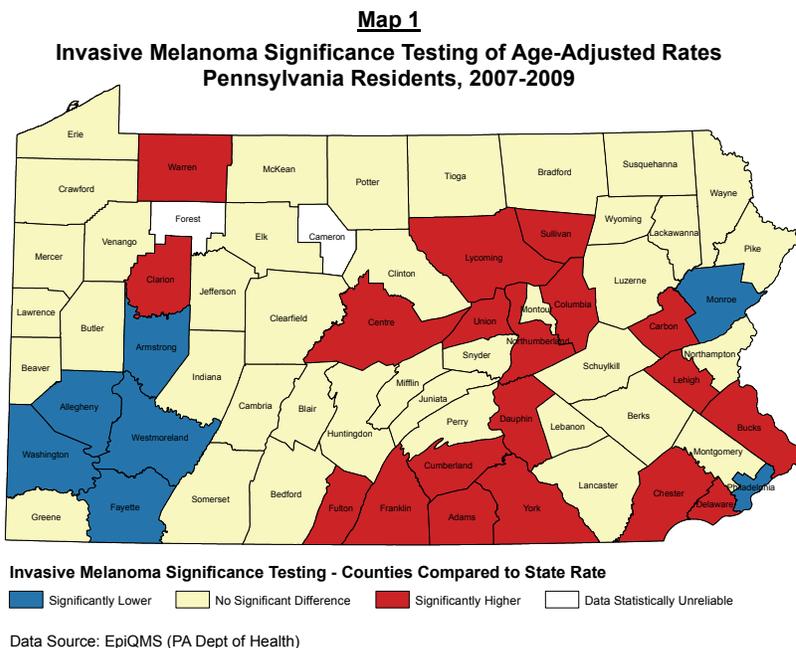
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significantly higher rates of early stage melanoma. These similarities to Map 1 indicate that the significant differences in Map 1 were due to higher rates of early stage cancer. County differences due to late stage (regional or distant stage) melanomas were not common and their rates remained very low throughout the state.

In Table 1, next page, the invasive skin melanomas among Pennsylvania residents were grouped by their histology into several subtypes. While each group of melanoma had an increase in the number of diagnoses since 1990, the percent distribution has changed little. For example, most melanomas continue to be classified in the Not Otherwise Specified (NOS) group. However, the percentage of these NOS cases decreased from 49.5 percent in 1990 to 42.3 percent in 2009, possibly a result of more accurate diagnosing and case reporting.

Superficial Spreading Melanoma (SSM) is a cutaneous melanoma that tends to occur on sun-exposed skin and often evolves from a dysplastic nevus. As shown in Table 1 (next page), SSM was the second most common type of melanoma and also showed the largest proportionate increase among Pennsylvania residents, increasing from 28.5 percent in 1990 to 33.9 percent in 2009.

Nodular Melanoma (NM) is the most aggressive type of skin melanoma. This type of melanoma accounted for 10.6 percent of all skin melanomas in 2009, a slight decrease from the 12.4 percent of cases in 1990. NM can be fatal if left untreated and can be harder to detect since the cancer tends to grow deeper



rather than showing a diametrical increase whose change would be more visible on a topical level.

Lentigo Maligna Melanoma (LMM) usually arises from chronically sun damaged skin. These melano-

mas have a non-invasive precursor known as lentigo maligna. LMM accounted for 7.9 percent of melanomas in 2009 among Pennsylvania residents.

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Melanoma Skin Cancer Statistics in Pennsylvania Reviewed

Acral Lentiginous Melanoma (ALM) is a type of skin cancer that is not linked to sun exposure, but instead occurs on non-hair-bearing skin such as the palms, soles, under the nails, and in oral mucosa. ALM is the most common type of melanoma among Asians and Blacks. In Pennsylvania, ALM is very rare, accounting for 1.5 percent of the skin melanoma in 2009.

According to the National Cancer Institute, sunscreen has not been proven to prevent cancer. Nonetheless, it can reduce the chance of getting a blistering sunburn, an important risk factor of skin melanoma. Avoiding excess sun exposure and sun lamps may be the best way to lower the risk of skin melanoma. The ABCD rule should be used to recognize the warning signs of melanoma arising from a mole, skin lesion, or

Table 1
Number and Percent of Invasive Melanoma Skin Cancers
By Histologic Type, Pennsylvania Residents, 1990 and 2009

Histologic Type	1990		2009	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Malignant Melanoma, NOS	496	49.5%	1,244	42.3%
Superficial Spreading Melanoma	286	28.5%	997	33.9%
Nodular Melanoma	124	12.4%	312	10.6%
Lentigo Maligna Melanoma	62	6.2%	231	7.9%
Acral Lentiginous Melanoma	10	1.0%	45	1.5%
Other Melanoma	24	2.4%	111	3.8%
Total Melanoma of the Skin	1,002	100.0%	2,940	100.0%

other skin growth. A is for asymmetry, B is for border irregularity, C is for color, and D is for diameter. A skin change with any of the ABCD warnings may warrant a visit to the doctor.

If you have any questions about this article, please contact the Bureau of Health Statistics and Research at

717-783-2548. Additional cancer statistics for Pennsylvania can be obtained from the [Cancer Statistics](#) web page and are available on [EpiQMS](#), our online, interactive data dissemination tool.

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Pennsylvania Baby Names

A Look at Historical Changes

Baby names can be as unique as fingerprints. They often carry a specific purpose or meaning that stems from the parents' life experiences. The source of the baby names chosen can stem from family members, friends, musicians, actors/actresses, sports stars, political figures, or fictitious characters. Identifying the sources of the thousands of different names in Pennsylvania would be a daunting task that is borderline impossible. We can, however, identify patterns through similar demographics.

Life experiences often vary depending on the sex and race of the person, the periods of influential times in their lives, and where the person resides. All of the information gathered within this article, excluding the nation's top names, is based on the mother's status as a Pennsylvania resident and gathered from the birth certificate. This analysis divides the variety of names into three time frames: 1991-1995, 2006-2010, and 2010. These timeframes are divided into three main geographic regions: the whole state, urban, and rural areas of Pennsylvania, since Pennsylvania has one of the largest rural populations in the United States. The White population is also much larger in number than the Black population within Pennsylvania, so races are analyzed separately. Race of the child for this article is solely defined by the race of the mother. Sexes are also broken out to accommodate the variances among the sexes. A different name is defined as a different spelling on the birth certificate. A name could be phonetically identical, but considered different, for example, John and Jon, Steven and

Table 1
Most Common Names in the U.S. and Pennsylvania, 2010

Rank	U.S. Males	PA Males	U.S. Females	PA Females
1	Jacob	Jacob	Isabella	Isabella
2	Ethan	Michael	Sophia	Sophia
3	Michael	Mason	Emma	Emma
4	Jayden	Logan	Olivia	Olivia
5	William	Ethan	Ava	Ava

Source: Social Security Administration (U.S. Data)
Pennsylvania Birth Certificates (PA Data)

Stephen, or Maryann and MaryAnn. There is no effort made to correct typos on the birth certificate.

Nationally, the top names for 2010 in the U.S. are Jacob and Isabella according to the Social Security Administration (see Table 1). Pennsylvania's top names are also Jacob and Isabella. In fact, Pennsylvania's top five female names match the ranking of the nation's top five female names exactly. Logan and Mason are the only male names that appear on the Pennsylvania top five names and are not on the national list of the top five male baby names.

Comparing Pennsylvania's top names by gender to the top names in the nation makes our society seem homogenous. Most of the names appear on both lists. You do not see true diversity until you analyze the names by race. Only the top names for white females are mostly shared between the Pennsylvania and national lists of top names. Males, both black and white, share two names with the national lists. Popular black male names on the national and Pennsylvania lists are Jayden and Anthony. Popular white male names on the national and Pennsylvania lists are Jacob and Michael. Pennsylvania black females share the fewest names with the national list. Only

one name is similar between the two lists and that name is Madison.

Comparing the rankings of names since the 1991-1995 time-frame will show how names change and the cultural influence on these names (see Table 2, next page). The names that appear to change the least are male names. Four of the five top names, Jacob, Michael, Logan, and Ethan, have been in the top 100 since 1991-1995. Michael was the top male name in Pennsylvania in every five-year increment since 1991-1995, but in 2010 Michael was dethroned by Jacob. Michael was also consistently a top white male name. Michael and Ryan both were in the top ten names for white males since 1991-1995. Jacob is also a popular name as it has remained in the top 20 since 1991-1995. Anthony is the only name for black males that has remained within the top 20 since 1991-1995. Jayden is the only name that has skyrocketed into popularity. Jayden is the top black male name for 2010 and 2006-2010, but in 1991-1995 it was ranked very near the least popular black male name at 3,213.

Here is a quick reminder of what was happening in the media spotlight in 1990 and 1991 that might have

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had an impact on some of these top names. *Jacob's Ladder*, a psychological thriller, was released in movie theatres. Michael Jordan wins the most valuable player (MVP) in basketball. Michael Jackson's *Black or White* spent weeks at #1 on the Billboard chart. Michael J. Fox stars in the 3rd *Back to the Future* movie. Ted Logan, a character in the Bill and Ted movie series, is a pop culture icon. The Logan family stars in the hit daytime soap opera, *The Bold and the Beautiful*. The Wolverine, James "Logan" Howlett, is popularized in Marvel Comics. *White Fang*, with Ethan Hawke, hit the big screen. Emma Frost appears in the X-Men comic book series. Emma tells the *Kindergarten Cop*, Arnold Schwarzenegger, that she's not a policeman, she's a princess. Raven-Symone, starring as Olivia, becomes a big hit on the TV series, *The Cosby Show*. Olivia Newton-John and John Travolta release a single called the *The Grease Megamix*, which coincided with the video release of the movie, *Grease*.

Female names tended to change much more with time. Only two of the top female names, Emma and Olivia, have remained in the top 100 since 1991-1995. These two names were also the only white female names that remained in the top 100 since 1991-1995. Ava grew in popularity the fastest climbing from a rank of 732 in 1991-1995 to the most popular female name in 2006-2010. Again, Ava also had the fastest growth in popularity for white females. Ava went from a rank of 674 in 1991-1995 to the most popular white female name in 2006-2010. Black female names change the most

Table 2
Top 5 Baby Names by Race and Sex,
Pennsylvania, 1991-1995, 2006-2010, and 2010

Race	Sex	Names	Rank		
			2010	2006-2010	1991-1995
White	Female	Isabella	1	4	304
		Emma	2	2	83
		Sophia	3	8	229
		Olivia	4	3	45
		Ava	5	1	674
	Male	Jacob	1	1	17
		Mason	2	15	127
		Michael	3	2	1
		Logan	4	4	80
		Ryan	5	3	4
Black	Female	London	1	4	255
		Nevaeh	2	1	-
		Madison	3	11	1,315
		Aniyah	4	3	857
		Aaliyah / Kayla*	5	6 / 2	63 / 14
	Male	Jayden	1	1	3,213
		Elijah	2	2	54
		Jeremiah	3	5	151
		Isaiah	4	3	25
		Anthony	5	4	4
All Races	Female	Isabella	1	4	347
		Sophia	2	8	230
		Emma	3	2	90
		Olivia	4	3	46
		Ava	5	1	732
	Male	Jacob	1	2	19
		Michael	2	1	1
		Mason	3	22	141
		Logan	4	4	84
		Ethan	5	5	78

* signifies a tie

out of the four demographic groups. Two names, Aaliyah and Kayla, remained relatively popular since 1991-1995 by staying within the top 100. Three of the names, Nevaeh (Heaven backwards), Madison, and Aniyah, grew in popularity at incredible rates. Nevaeh did not appear as a name in Pennsylvania until 2001-2005, but

when it did, it appeared at the very popular rank of 11 and claimed its place as the top black female name in 2006-2010.

Dividing the names between rural and urban areas creates a different look at where the most common names are coming from and how

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Table 3
Top Names in Rural Versus Urban Areas by Race and Sex,
Pennsylvania, 1991-1995, 2006-2010, and 2010

		Rural Name Rankings				Urban Name Rankings					
Race	Sex	Name	2010	2006-2010	1991-1995	Race	Sex	Name	2010	2006-2010	1991-1995
White	Female	Emma	1	1	91	White	Female	Sophia	1	5	197
		Isabella	2	5	376			Isabella	2	4	275
		Ava	3	3	1,381			Olivia	3	2	47
		Olivia	4	4	48			Emma	4	3	83
		Sophia	5	11	362			Ava	5	1	564
	Male	Mason	1	5	118		Male	Michael	1	1	1
		Logan	2	2	60			Jacob	2	3	20
		Jacob	3	1	9			Ryan	3	2	4
		Noah	4	4	116			Mason	4	23	126
		Aiden	5	6	1,206			Logan	5	5	90
Black	Female	Aaliyah	1	2	73	Black	Female	London	1	3	252
		Sanaa	2	20	-			Madison	2	11	1,542
		Sophia / Nevaeh*	3	20 / 1	234 / -			Nevaeh	3	2	-
		Lillian / Ava*	4*	12 / 20	- / -			Makayla	4*	6	956
		Aniyah / Kayla*	4*	9 / 20	- / 3			Aniyah	4*	4	823
	Male	Anthony / Kaden / Michael*	1	6 / 37 / 10	7 / - / 3		Male	Jayden	1	1	3,128
		Marcus / Nicholas*	2*	17 / 37	9 / 24			Elijah	2	2	59
		Isaiah / Jacob*	2*	2 / 18	15 / 74			Jeremiah	3	6	159
		Noah / Jayden*	2*	13 / 2	- / -			Isaiah	4	3	25
		Aaron / Micah*	2*	18 / 37	9 / 271			Anthony	5	4	4
All Races	Female	Emma	1	1	92	All Races	Female	Isabella	1	3	338
		Isabella	2	5	370			Sophia	2	5	204
		Olivia	3	4	47			Olivia	3	2	47
		Ava	4	3	1,417			Ava	4	1	638
		Sophia	5	10	354			Emma	5	4	86
	Male	Mason	1	5	120		Male	Michael	1	1	1
		Logan	2	2	60			Jacob	2	3	23
		Jacob	3	1	9			Ryan	3	2	5
		Noah	4	4	117			Mason	4	27	146
		Aiden	5	6	1,279			Anthony	5	4	16

* Signifies a tie in the frequencies

naming conventions differ when you are in diverse geographic settings. Mason and Jacob are the only two male names that rural and urban areas share as a top name (see Table 3). Surprisingly, one male name, Ethan, appeared on Pennsylvania's top name list that did not appear on the rural or urban top male name lists. White male births shared three names, Mason, Logan, and Jacob, as

top names between rural and urban areas.

The black population within rural Pennsylvania is rather small, so some data anomalies occurred. The first of which is the multiple ties for the ranking of the rural black names. Rural black females have two names, Sophia and Nevaeh (Heaven backwards) that are tied for third on the list and four names, Lillian, Ava, Aniyah, and Kayla, tied for fourth.

Only Aniyah and Nevaeh appear on both the rural and urban lists. Rural black male names have multiple ties; so many, in fact, that only two rankings are able to be displayed. There are three rural black names, Anthony, Kaden, and Michael, tied for first. There are eight rural black names, Marcus, Nicholas, Isaiah, Jacob, Noah, Jayden, Aaron, and Micah, tied for second. Only Jayden,

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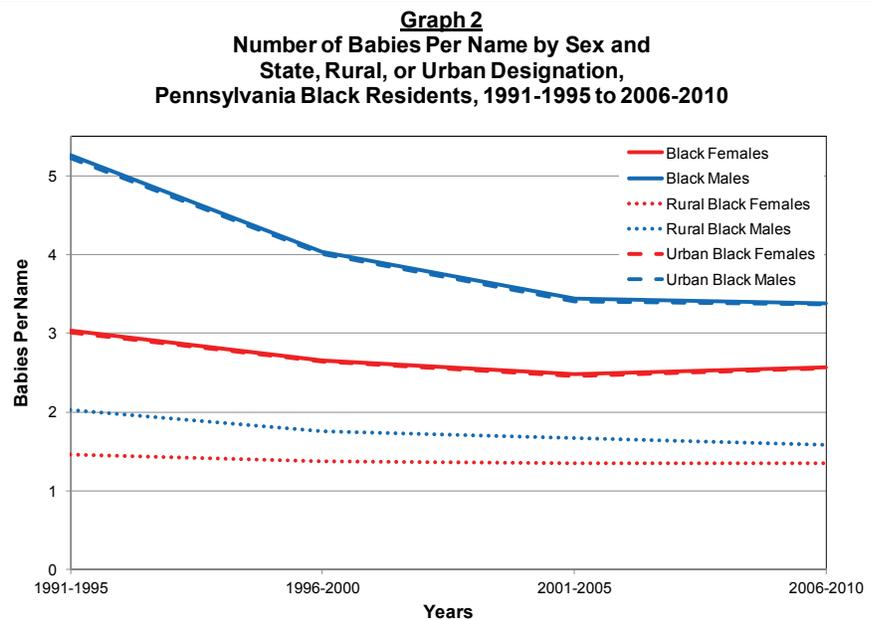
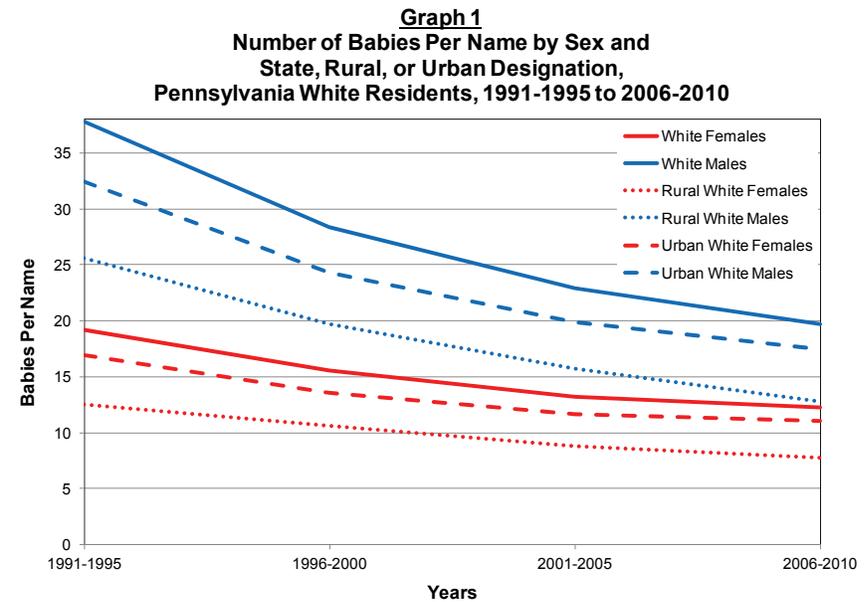
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Isaiah, and Anthony appear on both the urban and rural lists.

Males, urban or rural, both seem to keep a few popular names that withstand the test of time. Rural males have two names, Jacob and Logan, which have remained in the top 100 since 1991-1995. Jacob has been in the top ten since 1991-1995 and was the top rural male name in 2006-2010. Four of the five top male names in 2010, Michael, Jacob, Ryan, and Anthony have been within the top 25 since 1991-1995. Michael and Ryan have been within the top five since 1991-1995. White male names do not have any notably fast growing names in comparison to black male names. Only Aiden has increased from 1,206 in 1991-1995 to sixth in 2006-2010 for rural white males. Black males, on the other hand, saw Jayden skyrocket from 3,128 in 1991-1995 for urban black males to the most popular name in 2006-2010.

We have looked at the occurrence and the popularity of names, but this does not give any inclination about the diversity or uniqueness of names. Dividing the total number of births by the total number of unique names provides an estimate of how many newborns carry the same moniker versus how many have unique names. A ratio of one would mean that every single baby has a different name.

The first noticeable pattern to these graphs is that names are growing more distinctive to the individual since 1991-1995. Every ratio by race, sex, and geographic location is drawing closer to one-to-one (see Graphs 1 & 2). The second noticeable pattern is that rural areas have a consid-



erably lower ratio of babies per name than urban areas for both white and black, males and females. This means that rural Pennsylvanians have more distinct names between each other than urban Pennsylvanians. Take notice to the scale on the vertical axis of these two graphs. The most dramatic change is occurring

for the white names with ratios cut nearly in half from 1991-1995 to 2006-2010. Black names have been historically less commonly used in comparison to white names since 1991-1995. The lowest ratio for white babies by name is still greater than the highest ratio for black ba-

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abies by name. Overall, all ratios of babies per name have been growing at slower rates in recent years. The uniqueness of names for all of the demographics seems to be approaching their limit as time progresses, and the black population may have already reached their limit.

Another way of measuring the uniqueness of names is to identify single name occurrences. This method does not consider large quantities of people carrying popular names such as Jacob and Isabella. Instead it focuses on those individuals with a unique name that no one else in the Commonwealth was given at birth during a specific time period. This method produces the same conclusions that can be made from the babies per name method. Females have a slightly higher percentage of single occurrence names compared to males (see Table 4). Black single occurrence names are more frequent than white single occurrence names. In 2006-2010 all demographics, except urban white males and total black females, have been producing

Table 4
Percentages of Unique Name Occurrences by Sex, Race, and Rural, Urban, or State Designation, Pennsylvania, 1991-1995, 2006-2010

	Rural		Urban		State	
	1991-1995	2006-2010	1991-1995	2006-2010	1991-1995	2006-2010
All Females	63.2%	65.9%	70.8%	72.6%	69.9%	71.6%
Black Females	83.6%	84.9%	74.9%	77.9%	85.0%	77.8%
White Females	60.6%	63.0%	64.5%	64.7%	63.9%	64.2%
All Males	61.4%	65.5%	69.4%	71.3%	68.6%	70.3%
Black Males	74.6%	80.4%	72.2%	74.8%	72.3%	74.8%
White Males	57.3%	62.1%	64.5%	64.0%	62.1%	63.6%

more single occurrence names than in 1991-1995. It is interesting that the total black females have fewer single occurrence names in 2006-2010 compared to 1991-1995 because both urban and rural black female names have experienced an increase in single occurrences over the same time period. This came about because there are single occurrence names in rural Pennsylvania that occur only in urban Pennsylvania. For example, if there is one rural black female named Lucinda in Pennsylvania and another one in urban Pennsylvania, then they will

be counted as a single occurrence for both rural and urban Pennsylvania. They will not be counted as a single occurrence for the total of Pennsylvania because the name Lucinda occurred twice in Pennsylvania for black females.

If you have any questions about this article, please contact the Bureau of Health Statistics and Research at 717-783-2548. Additional birth statistics for Pennsylvania can be obtained from the [Birth, Death, and Other Vital Statistics](#) web page and are available on [EpiQMS](#), our online, interactive data dissemination tool.

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Accidental Drug Poisoning Deaths on the Rise

Overtakes Transportation Accidents As Top Cause of Accidental Death

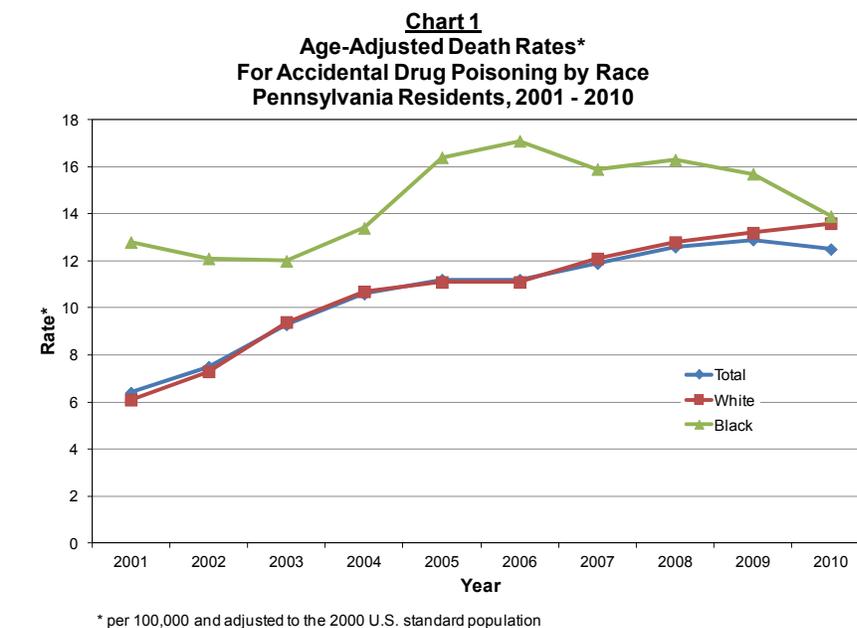
Deaths due to accidental drug poisoning are becoming a major problem in Pennsylvania. In 2010, accidental drug poisoning deaths accounted for 93.7 percent of all accidental poisoning deaths for Pennsylvania residents. This is significant since accidental poisoning is now the leading cause of death among accidents (recently surpassing transportation accidents) for Pennsylvania residents. The age-adjusted death rate for accidental drug poisonings among Pennsylvania residents has almost doubled from 2001 (6.4) to 2010 (12.5). There was actually a rate decrease in 2010 compared to 2009, but this marked the first time there had been an annual decrease since 2001.

Race

In 2010, Pennsylvania residents saw very little difference between the age-adjusted deaths rates among whites (13.6 per 100,000) and blacks (13.9) for accidental drug poisoning deaths. There were 1,352 accidental drug poisoning deaths in 2010 among white residents compared to 189 for black residents. It is important to note that the disparity between whites and blacks for this cause of death has decreased enormously in recent years. In 2001, the rate for blacks (12.8) was more than double the rate for whites (6.1), but the gap between the rates has narrowed in recent years (see Chart 1).

Sex

The majority of accidental drug poisoning deaths for Pennsylvania residents occurred for males. In 2010, the age-adjusted rate among males was more than double the rate for



females - 17.0 per 100,000 compared to 8.0 among females. Of the 1,550 resident drug poisoning (accidental) deaths recorded that year, 1,039 occurred among males. Thus males accounted for over 67 percent of this type of death for Pennsylvania. Of these male deaths, 903 were among whites (age-adjusted rate of 18.5) while 129 were among blacks (age-adjusted rate of 20.1).

Age

Reviewing the number of deaths by age group for accidental drug poisoning shows that young to middle-aged adults had the highest figures in 2010 (see Chart 2, next page). The age group 45-49 had the highest number, accounting for 14.1 percent of all drug poisoning deaths (accidental). The second highest number occurred among those aged 50-54, followed by the age groups 25-29 and 40-44. Over 75 percent of all accidental drug poisoning deaths for Pennsylvania residents occurred between the

ages of 25-54, whose population represents under 40 percent of Pennsylvania's total population.

Causes of Death

When death certificates are created, an ICD (International Classification of Diseases) code is recorded in a database that allows for future statistical analysis. Accidental drug poisoning is made up of 5 ICD codes (X40-X44). The majority of Pennsylvania resident deaths in 2010 due to accidental drug poisoning were given the ICD code X44 (1,115 deaths). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), X44 is defined as "Accidental poisoning by and exposure to other and unspecified drugs, medicaments, and biological substances." This category includes but is not limited to anesthetics, hormones/synthetic substitutes, therapeutic gases, and vaccines. The ICD code with the next highest number of deaths was X42 (382 deaths). X42 is

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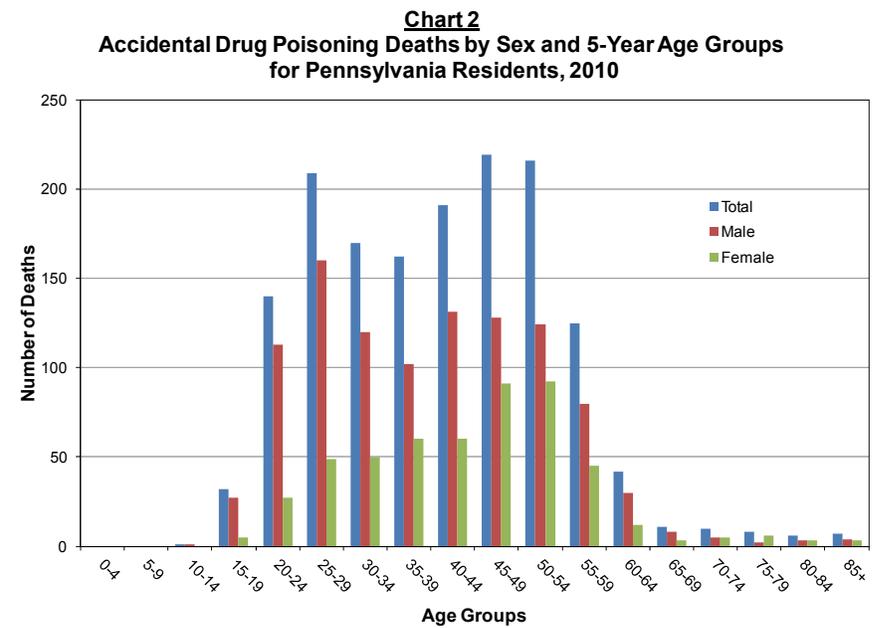
Accidental Drug Poisoning Deaths on the Rise

defined by the WHO as “Accidental poisoning by and exposure to narcotics and psychodysleptics (hallucinogens), not elsewhere classified.” This includes but is not limited to cocaine, heroin, methadone, morphine, and opium.

County

The county with the highest age-adjusted death rate (accidental drug poisoning) for the 3-year period of 2008-2010 was Cambria County (25.0 per 100,000 based on 100 deaths). The second highest rate was for residents of Philadelphia (22.4 based on 976 deaths). Third was Greene, followed by Lackawanna and Carbon Counties. Of the five counties listed above, all but Carbon had significantly higher age-adjusted death rates than the state. It is interesting to note that a majority of these higher rates were among rural counties.

Berks County (3.4 based on 39 deaths) had the lowest age-adjusted death rate for the 3-year period of 2008-2010. Franklin County (5.0 based on 21 deaths) and Lycoming County (5.6 based on 20 deaths) were the next lowest, followed by



Centre (25 deaths) and Lebanon (21 deaths) Counties which were tied with a rate of 6.0. Each of the five counties listed above had a significantly lower rate than the state.

Trends

The age-adjusted resident death rate for Pennsylvania accidental drug poisonings has increased greatly over the past decade. Since 2001, the rate has almost doubled (6.4 in 2001 compared to 12.5 in 2010). The an-

nual rate increased or experienced no change every year from 2001 to 2009, before finally decreasing in 2010. From 2001 to 2010, the age-adjusted death rate for Pennsylvania accidental drug poisonings increased by over 95 percent.

For questions regarding the statistics presented in this article, please contact the Bureau of Health Statistics and Research at 717-783-2548 or

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Opening Public Access to Historic Birth and Death Records

Update on Act 110 (Public Records Law)

On December 15, 2011, Governor Tom Corbett signed Senate Bill 361, now known as Act 110, into law. This bill amends the Act of June 29, 1953 (P.L. 304, No. 66), known as the Vital Statistics Law of 1953, to provide public access to certain birth and death certificates. This legislation provides that such documents become publicly accessible records 105 years after the date of birth or 50 years after the date of death.

The records made available subsequent to the passage of the Open Records Law include 1906 birth certificates and death certificates from 1906-1961. These original records are now under the supervision of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (Archives). The records are available for review at the Archives during their posted business hours.

The [Birth and Death Certificates](#) webpage has a newly created [Public Records](#) link on the left, whose page provides detailed information on how to search and apply for copies of the records. The link also provides indices (available in PDF format)

sorted by years of date of birth and date of death to allow an individual to randomly scan the indices by the subject's last name. Archives also has a link to DOH's website from its website for easy access. Upon locating the subject, the state file number can be retrieved for each respective record. The state file number is the unique number assigned to each certificate. It is important to provide this number to Archives and Vital Records staff to ensure accurate and prompt retrieval of the original documents at Archives or to request a non-certified copy from Vital Records. Once the subject and/or decedent and state file number is located in the indices on Vital Records' website, the researcher may go to the Archives to view the original document or may apply for a non-certified hard copy from Vital Records. The charge for a non-certified birth or death record is \$3.00 per copy. All non-certified copies are issued from the Vital Records central office in New Castle, PA. For added convenience, the application (in PDF format) for a non-certified copy is available on the Public Records webpage.

The Open Records Law went into effect Monday, February 13, 2012. Almost immediately, Vital Records began receiving calls, email inquiries, and paper applications. By the end of the first week, Vital Records had received close to 300 paper application requests. The one unique part of the process is the fact that the applicant is responsible for locating the desired record. The State File Number must be listed on every application for non-certified copies of birth or death certificates. The file number enables staff to readily retrieve the appropriate microfilm/book and issue the requested document.

To date, Vital Records has received over 5,000 pieces of mail, many containing multiple applications for non-certified copies. From what we can see, the general public has really embraced this new law and the information made available to them.

For further information, please check out the [Birth and Death Certificate webpage](#) or the [PA Historical & Museum Commission website](#).

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