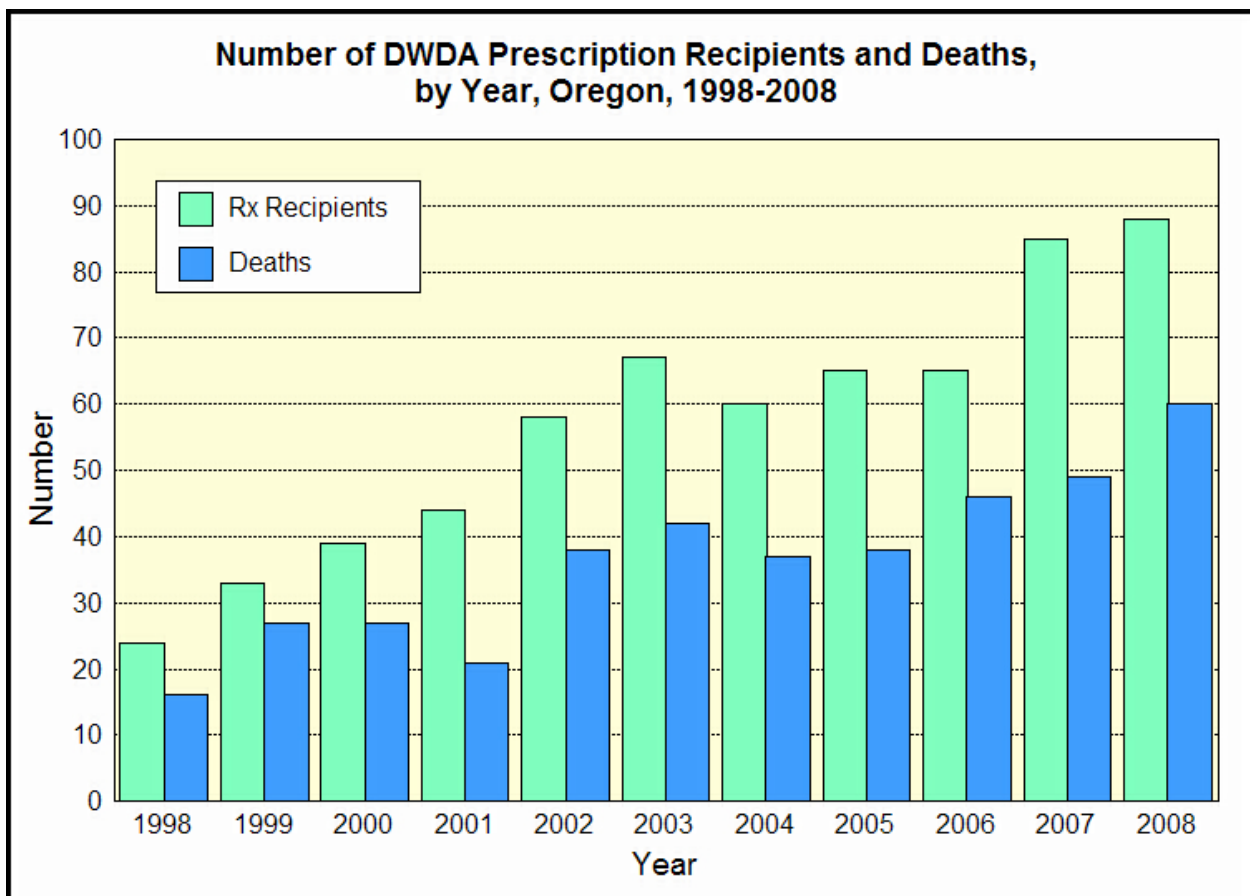


## 2008 Summary of Oregon's Death with Dignity Act

Under Oregon's Death with Dignity Act (DWDA), terminally-ill adult Oregonians are allowed to obtain and use prescriptions from their physicians for self-administered, lethal doses of medications. The Oregon Public Health Division is required by the Act to collect information on compliance and to issue an annual report. The key findings from 2008 are listed below. For more detail, please view the figures and tables on our web site at <http://oregon.gov/DHS/ph/pas/index.shtml>.



- During 2008, 88 prescriptions for lethal medications were written under the provisions of the DWDA compared to 85 during 2007 (Figure). Of these, 54 patients took the medications, 22 died of their underlying disease, and 12 were alive at the end of 2008. In addition, six patients with earlier prescriptions died from taking the medications, resulting in a total of 60 DWDA deaths during 2008. This corresponds to an estimated 19.4 DWDA deaths per 10,000 total deaths.

- Fifty-nine physicians wrote the 88 prescriptions (range 1-5).
- Since the law was passed in 1997, 401 patients have died under the terms of the law.
- As in prior years, participants were between 55 and 84 years of age (78%), white (98%), well-educated (60% had at least a baccalaureate degree in 2008, compared to 41% in previous years), and were more likely to have cancer (80%). Patients who died in 2008 were slightly older (median age 72 years) than in previous years (median age 69 years).
- Most patients died at home (97%); and the number of patients that were enrolled in hospice care (98%) was much greater than in previous years (86%).
- In 2008, 97 percent of patients had some form of health insurance. Compared to previous years, the number of patients who had private insurance (88%) was much greater than in previous years (63%), and the number of patients who had Medicare or Medicaid was much less (8% compared to 36%).
- As in previous years, the most frequently mentioned end-of-life concerns were: loss of autonomy (95%), decreasing ability to participate in activities that made life enjoyable (92%), and loss of dignity (92%). During 2008, more participants were concerned about loss of dignity than in previous years (82%).
- No complications were reported in 2008.
- During 2008, 2 referrals were made to the Oregon Medical Board for incorrectly completed reporting forms. The Oregon Medical Board found no violations of “good faith compliance” with the Act and did not sanction any physicians for “unprofessional conduct” regarding the Act.