

Sixty Oregonians died in assisted suicides in 2008: Under Death with Dignity Act

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Sixty Oregonians ended their lives last year by taking a lethal drug dose prescribed under the Death with Dignity Act, state officials have reported. That's the highest annual total in the 11-year history of the law—11 more than in 2007. Deaths from a drug prescribed under the Oregon law now account for two of every 1,000 deaths in Oregon.

In all, 401 terminally ill Oregonians have died this way since 1997, when Oregon made it legal for a doctor to prescribe a lethal drug dose to a terminally ill patient who makes the request orally and in writing.

The statistics were released as Washington state on March 5 became only the second state where such a prescription is legal.

As in previous years, most Oregonians who died by doctor-assisted suicide (also called physician aid-in-dying) last year had cancer and were older than 70, white and highly educated. All but one was enrolled in hospice care, and all but two had some form of health insurance. Most died at home; the rest, in an assisted-living center or an adult foster-care home. *-Religion News Service*