

Deaths in the Ghetto

Categories: Phenomena

Death is one of the most significant factors in the decrease of the population in the ghetto. In the period from May 1940 to December 1943, out of 200,000 persons placed in the ghetto, a decrease of 120,000 was recorded, approximately 41,000 of whom died in the ghetto.

Year	Persons died	Annual mortality rate (percentage).
May 1940	6,800	5.7
1941	11,400	7.6
1942	18,000	16.8
1943	4,600	5.4

(In 1938, the annual mortality rate among Jews in Łódź was approximately 1.1%).

The highest mortality rate was recorded in the summer of 1942 (mortality rate was 19.8% per annum in June, in July – 23.9%, and in August – 19.9%), and the lowest at the end of 1943 (mortality rate per annum 3.3% in October, in November – 2.[?]{%}, in December – 2.9%). The mortality rate among those brought in from cities [other] than Litzmannstadt is higher than among the [rest of] the residents of Łódź (for example, among those brought from the Old Reich (Altreich), Vienna, Prague and Luxembourg, the mortality rate per annum for the period January–June 1942 was 37.9%, while the corresponding number for the total population of the ghetto was up to 17.1%).

The mortality rate for men is much higher than the mortality rate for women. The men-to-women mortality rate ratio was as follows:

1940 (May) – 1.2

1941 – 2.0

1942 – 2.0

1943 – 1.4-1.5

This quotient for those brought in from the Old Reich, Vienna, Prague and Luxembourg amounts to 2.3 for the period January - September 1942.

The highest life expectancy for both genders was recorded in the 9-to-14 year old age group, followed by 15-19 year-olds as the second highest. While resistance in women has been found to decrease with age, men aged 20-25 years showed higher mortality rate than older age groups. The ratio of mortality in the latter age group among men compared to the corresponding mortality rate among women is constantly found to be within the range of 3.5-4.5.

Infant mortality is extremely high. As early as in the period from May 1940 to December 1941, almost 13% of infants in the ghetto died in the first month after birth, and only 62% reached the age of one.

The principal causes of death are as follows: cardiovascular diseases, including cardiomyopathy (28% of total deaths in the period May 1940 to December 1942); tuberculosis of the lungs and other organs (20% of total deaths in the period May 1940 to December 1943); starvation and vitamin deficiency (more than 5,800 deaths, 16% of total deaths in the period May 1940 to December 1942). Less frequent causes include: infectious diseases excluding tuberculosis, respiratory diseases and diseases of digestive organs (6-7% of total deaths in the period May 1940 to December 1943). Other causes of death include: cancer (1% of total deaths in the period May 1940 to December 1943), as well the causes of less than 1% of total deaths: food poisoning (250 cases in the period May 1940 to December 1943), suicide (114 cases in the period 1942-1943), hypothermia (67 cases in the winters of 1940/41 and 1941/42) and murder (three cases in the period May 1940 to December 1943).

The most common cause of death among infants (up to the age of twelve months) is premature birth. It caused, respectively:

In the period May 1940 to December 1941 – more than 11%,
in 1942 – 23%,
and in 1943 – 21% of the total number of deaths among infants.

As for infectious diseases other than tuberculosis, the highest mortality was recorded in the case of dysentery (mortality rate per annum 0.00-0.99%), typhoid (mortality rate per annum 0.01-0.22%), typhus (mortality rate per annum 0.00-0.15%) and pertussis (in children).

Mortality rate per annum – tuberculosis:

1940 (beginning May) 0.5%
1941 1.9%
1942 2.4%
1943 2.6%

Mortality rate per annum – starvation and vitamin deficiency:

1940 (beginning May) 0.1%
1941 1.4%
1942 3.4%

Mortality rate per annum – cardiovascular diseases and cardiomyopathy:

1940 (beginning May) 1.3%
1941 2.2%
1942 4.5%
1943 0.7-1.0%.

(from 60 up to 90% of which is due to cardiomyopathy).

The relationship between mortality and nutrition is clear: any change of food supply is immediately followed by an increase in the mortality rate (within one month).

Mortality rate among various professional groups is related to food rations such groups receive rather than work-related activities. The annual mortality rate for doctors in the period May 1940 to December 1943 is roughly estimated at 5%, and the average age of death is 61.

b.

Resources

Encyclopedia, s. 243-245.

Tags

starvation sanitary conditions

Updated: 29-01-2026

Added: 27-07-2023