



Nashville City Cemetery: Analyzing Historical Burial Records (1846-1979)

This presentation explores burial records from Nashville City Cemetery spanning over a century. The dataset reveals fascinating insights about mortality trends, demographics, and historical events.



by **Ricardo Cortes**

Data Cleaning Challenges



Race Column Issues

Single-letter abbreviations required contextual interpretation.



Historical Context

Outdated terminology needed careful handling.



Sex Column Fixes

Standardized inconsistent entries like "boy" to "M".





Cleaning Process

Standardized Race

leaned and recoded inconsistent and outdated single-letter abbreviations in the "Race" column by cross-referencing remarks and historical context.

1

2

Corrected Sex Column Values

Ensured consistency in the "Sex" column by correcting typos and standardizing labels.

3

Normalized Cause of Death Entries

Identified and corrected spelling errors and consolidate similar causes of death into categories.

4

Handled Missing or Incomplete Entries

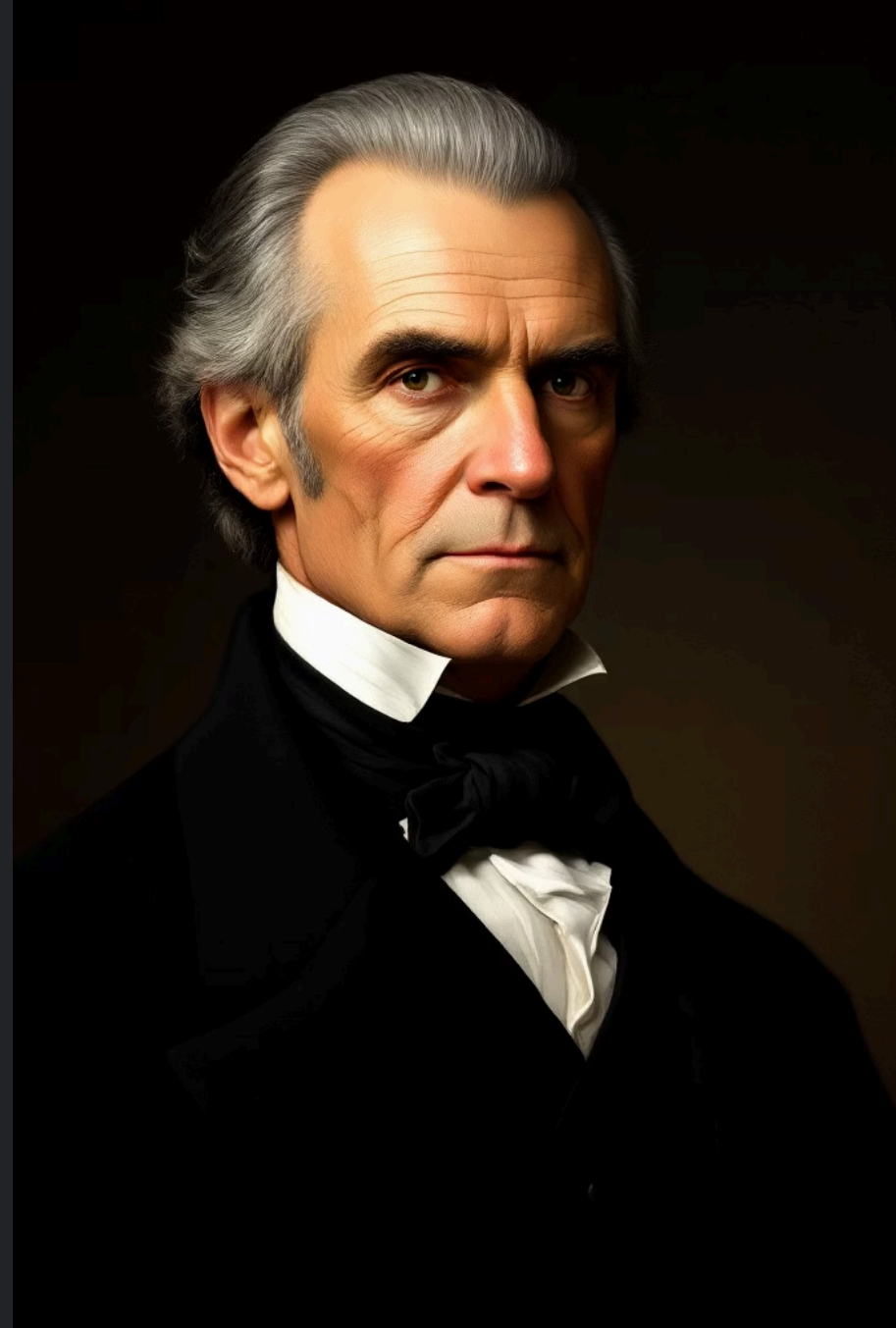
Investigated and flagged rows with missing or malformed data, applying logical inference or excluding when appropriate for analysis integrity.

Notable Burials at Nashville City Cemetery

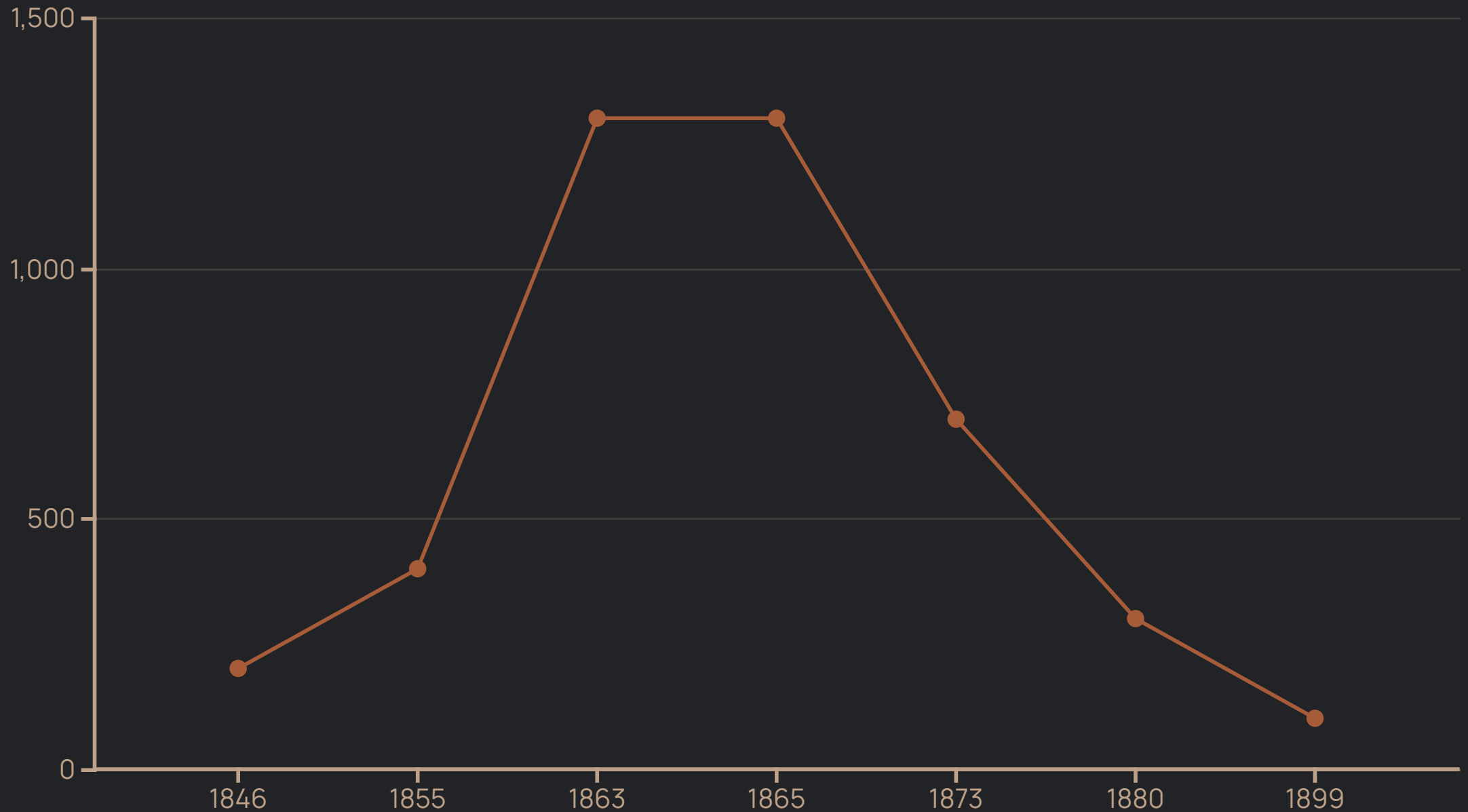
Nashville City Cemetery serves as the final resting place for many prominent historical figures who shaped American history.

- **James K. Polk** - 11th President of the United States
- **Sarah Childress Polk** - First Lady and political advisor
- **Felix Grundy** - U.S. Attorney General under Van Buren
- **William Carroll** - Tennessee Governor and War of 1812 hero

These burials reflect the cemetery's role as Tennessee's premier historic burial ground.



Burial Trends (1846-1899)



Burials peaked during 1863-1865 (Civil War years) with over 1,300 deaths annually. A smaller spike occurred in 1873 during a cholera outbreak.



Cholera Epidemics Impact

370

June 1850

First recorded outbreak

441

September 1866

19.2% increase from 1850

242

1873 Outbreak

45.1% decrease from 1866

Medical Breakthroughs in Cholera Treatment

1. **Late 1800s - Robert Koch:** Identified cholera bacterium *Vibrio cholerae* in 1883, proving bacterial cause
2. **Scientific Revolution:** Disproved miasma theory that blamed "bad air" for disease spread
3. **1960s - Oral Rehydration Therapy:** Simple sugar-salt-water mix prevents fatal dehydration
4. **WHO Recognition:** ORT named most important 20th century medical discovery

Gender Distribution Across Decades

1860s

52% Male, 48% Female

1850s

53% Male, 45% Female

1880s

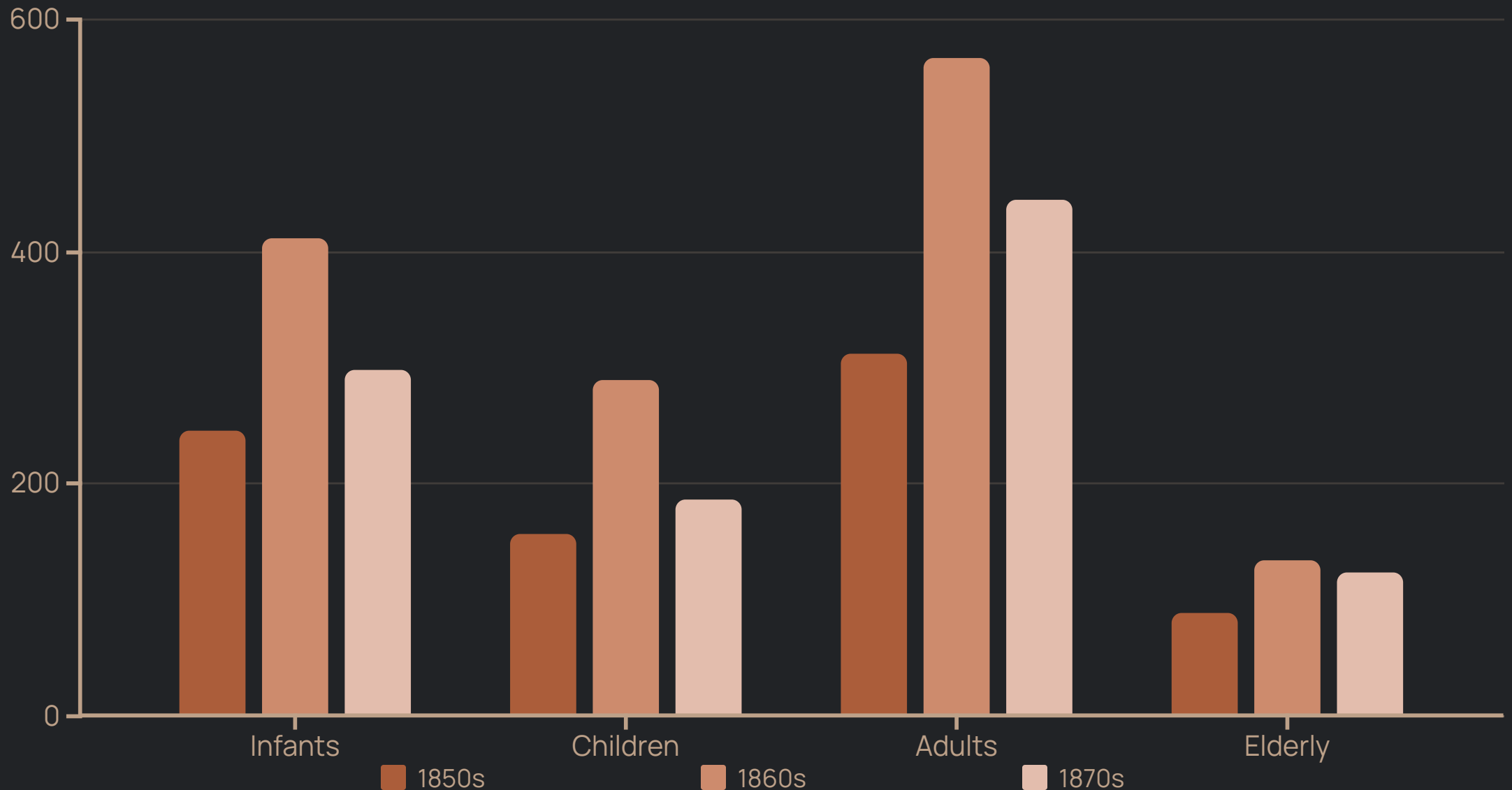
50% Male, 47% Female

1870s

Nearly balanced: 49%
Female, 48% Male

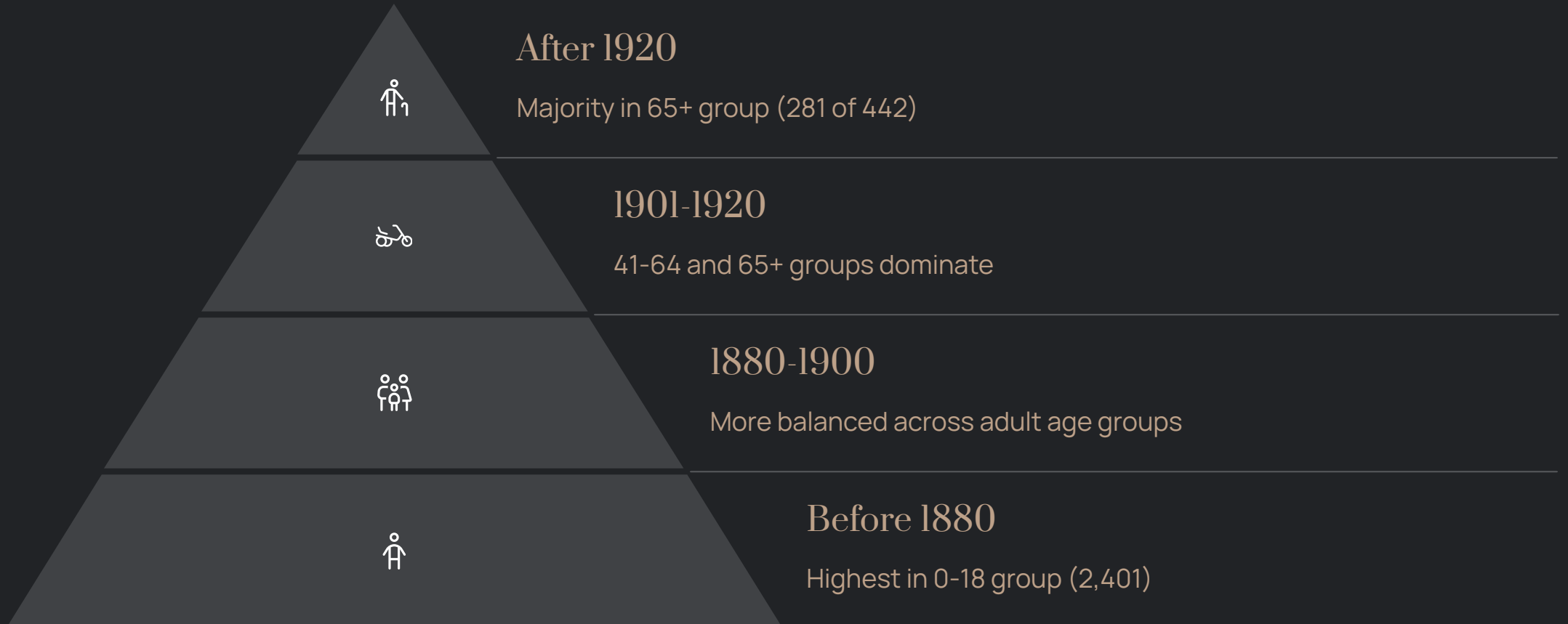
Males slightly outnumbered females in most decades. Burials dropped sharply after the 1880s, with only double-digit totals in the 20th century.

Age Distribution Shifts Over Time



Infant mortality peaked during the Civil War decade. Disease outbreaks and wartime conditions significantly impacted Nashville's youngest residents.

Age Distribution Shifts Over Time



Burials shifted from high child mortality before 1880 to elderly concentration after 1920, suggesting major improvements in public health and life expectancy.

Additional Findings

Name Analysis

"Smith" was the most common surname, appearing 129 times. Notable burial: James Polk.

Technical Challenges

Excel doesn't support dates before 1900, complicating analysis of early records.

Age Averages

"Child" classification averaged 10 years; "Adults" averaged 42 years.

Last Infant Burial

December 29, 1884 - child of Jack Curren, cause: cold.

