

Life expectancy for black Americans is four years below whites

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African-Americans have made gains in life expectancy but major disparities remain in the United States, where blacks can expect to live about four years fewer than whites, US researchers said Tuesday.

In the past two decades, the gap in [death](#) rates between blacks and whites narrowed dramatically—going from 33 percent in 1999 to 16 percent in 2015, said the report by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The death rate for blacks alone fell 25 percent in that time period.

Despite these advances, younger [black](#) men still tend to die far younger than whites, according to the CDC report, describing this trend as a "concern."

"Blacks in their 20s, 30s, and 40s are more likely to live with or die from conditions that typically occur at older ages in whites, including heart [disease](#), stroke, and diabetes," said a CDC statement.

The CDC's Vital Signs report found that blacks aged 35-64 are 50 percent more likely to have [high blood pressure](#) than whites.

It also said blacks aged 18-49 are two times as likely to die from heart disease as whites.

Cancer was far more often a killer among African-Americans, who

"have the highest death rate for all cancers combined compared with whites," said the report.

Violence contributed to the gap, too, with blacks aged 18-34 nine times more likely than whites of the same age to die from homicide.

"Notably, the death rates for homicide among blacks did not change over the 17 years of the study," said the report.

Health causes

Advances have been made in treating heart disease, and the effect was apparent, particularly among older people.

"The racial death rate gap closed completely for deaths from [heart disease](#) and for all causes of death among those 65 years and older," said the report.

Deaths from HIV have dropped dramatically since 1999, falling 80 percent among blacks in the ages range of 18 to 49.

Still, blacks are seven to nine times more likely to die from HIV than whites, said the report.

"We have seen some remarkable improvements in [death rates](#) for the black population in these past 17 years," said Leandris Liburd, associate director of CDC's Office of Minority Health and Health Equity.

"Important gaps are narrowing due to improvements in the health of the black population overall. However, we still have a long way to go."

In the only major developed country lacking national health care for all, the factors that contribute to the gap in [life expectancy](#) include poverty,

lower educational attainment and home ownership among blacks.

"These risk factors may limit blacks' access to prevention and treatment of disease," said the [report](#).

The data for the study came from the US Census Bureau, National Vital Statistics System, and CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

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