

Death Rates for Young, White Americans Increased from 1999 to 2014



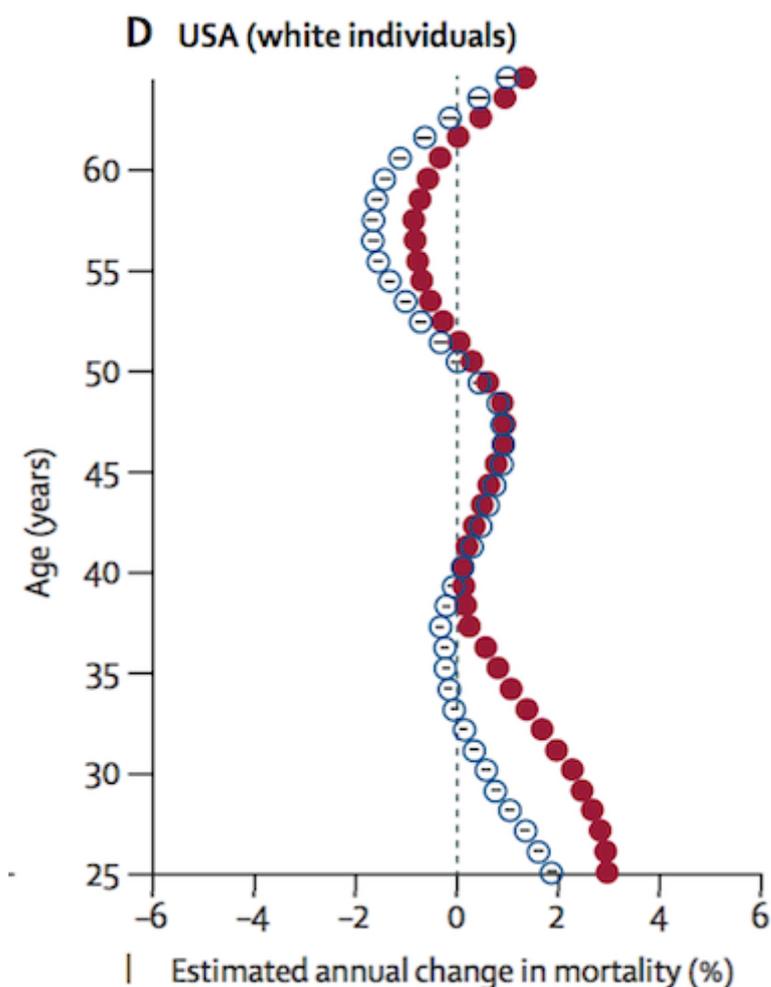
By Alex Berezow, PhD — February 2, 2017



Credit: Shutterstock [1]

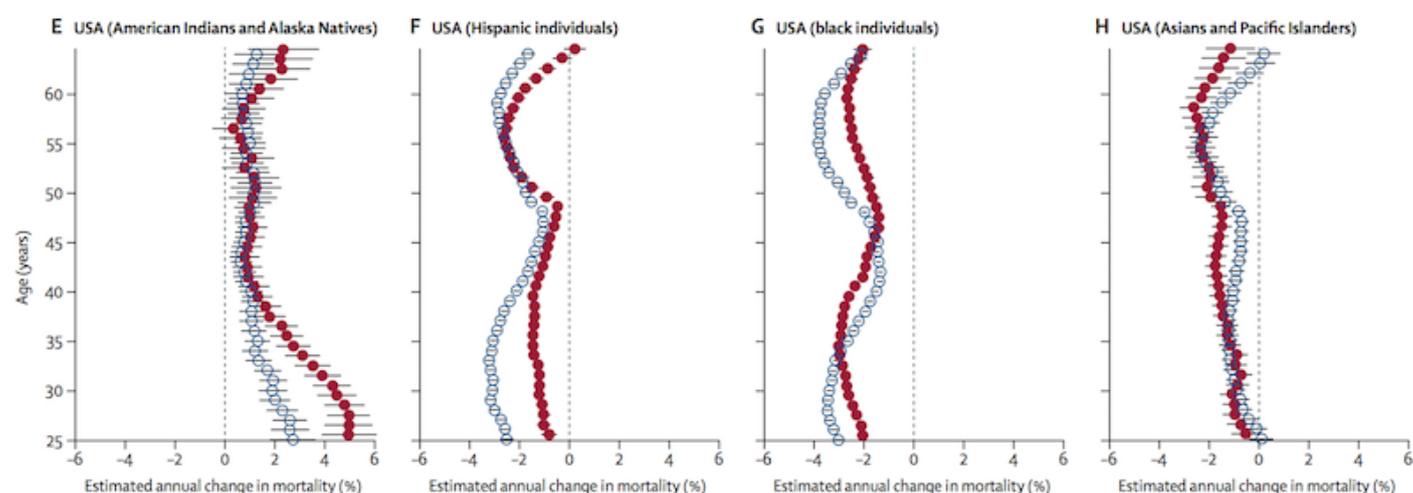
Young adulthood is supposed to be an exciting time. Getting a job, buying a home, and starting a family are on the agendas of many people in this age group. Unfortunately, this facet of the American dream has been snatched away prematurely from an increasing number of young people.

A new and disturbing report in *The Lancet*, based on data collected from the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics, shows an increase in the death rates from 1999 to 2014 for young Americans, driven substantially by a shocking increase in the mortality of white women aged 25 to



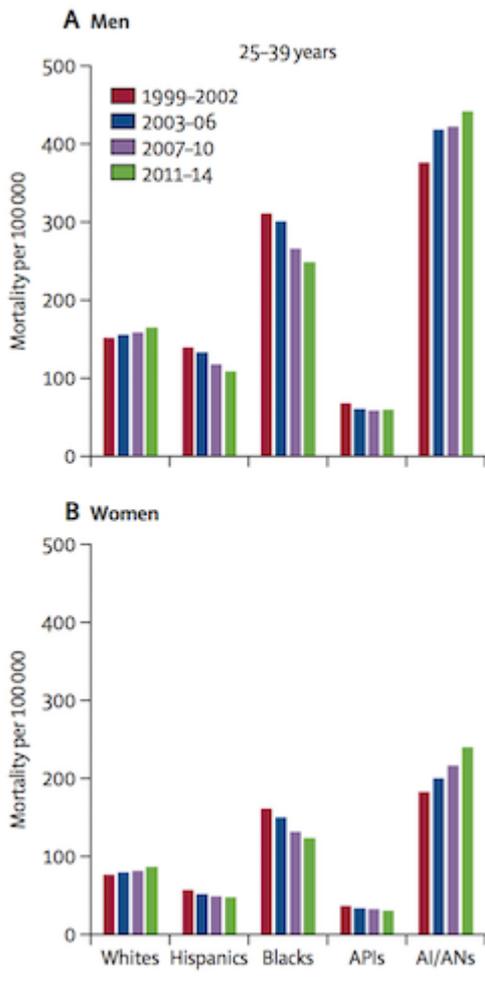
The graph (on left) depicts the average annual change in death rate by age and sex for men (white dots) and women (red dots)* from 1999 to 2014. For instance, 25-year-old white women experienced an average increase in mortality of 3% every year for those 15 years, while 25-year-old white men had an average annual increase of 1.9%. Mortality rates also went up for white men and women aged approximately 40 to 50 and 62 to 64.

All other ethnic groups, with the major exception of American Indians/Alaska Natives, experienced declines in mortality for all ages from 1999 to 2014. (See below.)



What explains this? According to the report, there has been a surge in suicides and accidents among young white people, with the latter being largely due to drug overdoses. This is consistent

with another recent report, which showed that, among Millennials aged 25 to 34, the [death rate from heroin overdoses has quadrupled](#) [2] from 2010 to 2015. In addition to suicide and accidents, liver disease was a major driver for the increase in mortality among Indians/Natives.



Decreases in deaths due to HIV, accidents, cancer, and homicide are among the factors credited for the decline in mortality for young blacks, Hispanics, and Asians.

Despite these recent trends, a substantial gap exists in overall mortality rates between the sexes and ethnic groups. For all age groups, male mortality is greater than female mortality. And for Americans aged 25 to 39, Indians/Natives display the highest death rates, followed by blacks, whites, Hispanics, and Asians. (See chart on left.)

It is impossible to overstate the urgency of these findings. Death rates are supposed to go down, not up. Thus, while the news is encouraging for most ethnic groups, the increase in mortality for young white Americans and Indians/Natives is deeply troubling. The report concludes:

Mortality increases of 2–5% per year are rarely observed in developed countries. The magnitude of such increases is as large as those in two public health emergencies in the past: the substantial mortality increases in Russia during the 1990s and increases in mortality in individuals aged 20–40 years at the height of the AIDS epidemic (mid-1980s to mid-1990s) in the USA.

Let us hope that our nation finally wakes up to address this frightening reality.

Source ^[3]: Meredith S Shiels et al. "Trends in premature mortality in the USA by sex, race, and ethnicity from 1999 to 2014: an analysis of death certificate data." *Lancet*. Published: 25-January-2017. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(17)30187-3

**Note: An earlier version of this article incorrectly labeled the dots in the text. It has now been fixed.*

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[2] <http://acsh.org/news/2017/01/05/heroin-overdose-deaths-quadruple-among-older-millennials-10690>

[3] [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(17\)30187-3/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(17)30187-3/abstract)