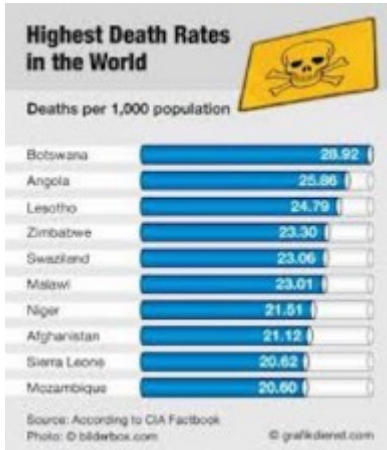


# Heart Disease Deaths Rise, With Cause Unknown

By Gil Ross — February 24, 2016



Death rates in the U.S. took a surprising turn last year. They rose, as compared to 2013-14, which is not supposed to be happening, and hasn't happened in ... a long time.

Heart disease topped the list of causes, according to [new data](#) [1] just released by the CDC. Death rates from stroke, Alzheimer's disease, liver disease and Parkinson's disease also increased. On the positive side, mortality rates for cancer, diabetes, and HIV either stayed flat or fell.

The preliminary analysis of U.S. death records from October 2014 to September 2015 shows that the overall death rate was higher than during the same period one year prior. There were 731 deaths per 100,000 people in the U.S. in the 2014-15 period, compared to 720 deaths per 100,000 the year before, according to the report. The study was published online by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics.

Conditions with higher death rates in 2015 compared with the year before include the following:

- Heart disease, which claimed 168 deaths per 100,000 people, compared to 166 deaths per 100,000 people the year before
- Stroke, which caused 37.5 deaths per 100,000 people, up from 35.9 per 100,000 the year before
- Alzheimer's disease, which took 28.9 lives per 100,000 people in 2015, compared with 24.2 per 100,000 people in 2014
- Drug overdoses, which killed 14.8 per 100,000 people in 2015, compared with 14 per 100,000 the year before
- Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, which together claimed 10.6 lives per 100,000 people in 2015, compared to 10.3 lives per 100,000 in 2014
- Parkinson's disease, which caused 7.7 deaths per 100,000 people in 2015, compared with 7.3 per 100,000 years in 2014

However, the mortality rates from some other conditions saw improvements. For instance, the ongoing decline in cancer mortality persisted, as there were about 159 cancer deaths per 100,000 people in 2015, compared with about 161 cancer deaths per 100,000 the year prior.

Other diseases stayed more or less the same, including diabetes, which had 21.2 deaths per 100,000 people in 2015, and 20.9 deaths per 100,000 people in 2014. Also, HIV went to 1.9 deaths per 100,000 people in 2015 from 2.0 per 100,000 deaths in 2014.

The CDC report gave no hint as to why the long-term decline in death rates, especially for cardiovascular diseases, has at least paused.

It's true of course that the rise in mortality discerned here is quite small, and in and of itself of no specific consequence. But when such a key parameter, having declined for decades, suddenly slows its descent, or reverses it (as now), even a little bit, investigation as to its likely cause or causes seems to be in order.

It recently [came to our attention](#) <sup>[2]</sup> that death rates among less-educated, middle-aged white men and women have significantly risen for the past 20 years or so. That was attributed to drug use, liver disease, and suicide. This more widespread, albeit less stark, report should be a wake-up call to see what's going on before the data become dire.

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**Links**

[1] [http://statnews.us11.list-](http://statnews.us11.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f8609630ae206654824f897b6&id=626cd289b6&e=957e6326ca)

[manage.com/track/click?u=f8609630ae206654824f897b6&id=626cd289b6&e=957e6326ca](http://statnews.us11.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f8609630ae206654824f897b6&id=626cd289b6&e=957e6326ca)

[2] <http://acsh.org/news/2015/11/03/surprisingly-death-rates-rise-for-middle-aged-whites/>