

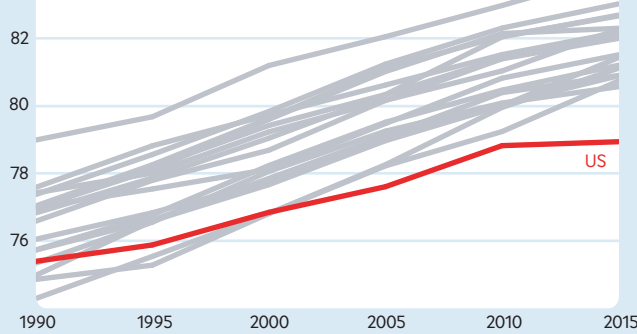


Coming in last

The United States now ranks near the bottom of life expectancy rankings, when compared to other high income countries.

In a 2018 paper in *The BMJ*, authors Ho and Hendi compared life expectancy trends from 1990 to 2015 in 18 countries commonly used in cross national comparisons. These countries have all achieved high levels of development, and underwent changes in mortality associated with that development at roughly the same time. They also have large enough populations to produce reliable estimates of mortality.

Life expectancy at birth, 18 developed countries



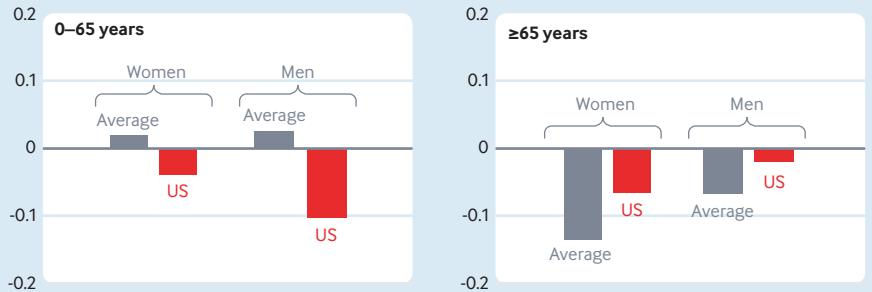
2015 ranking

1	Japan	84.0
2	Switzerland	83.0
3	Spain	82.7
4	Australia	82.7
5	Italy	82.3
6	Norway	82.3
7	Sweden	82.2
8	France	82.2
9	Canada	82.0
10	Netherlands	81.5
11	Finland	81.4
12	Austria	81.2
13	Portugal	81.1
14	United Kingdom	80.9
15	Belgium	80.9
16	Denmark	80.7
17	Germany	80.6
18	United States	78.9

Before their time

Ho and Hendi observed recent widespread life expectancy declines across the 18 high income countries. The decline in most countries was concentrated at ages ≥ 65 , and mostly attributable to diseases related to a severe influenza season. However, the US decline was largely concentrated at younger ages, particularly those in their 20s and 30s, and attributable to external causes like drug overdose.

Change in life expectancy, between 2014 and 2015, for US and average of 18 countries

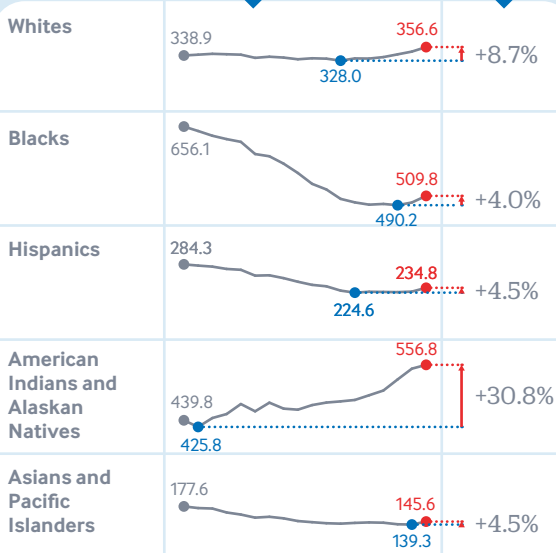


Who is affected?

Further detail is provided by Woolf et al, in their simultaneously published paper in *The BMJ*. They compared midlife mortality patterns in the US across racial and ethnic groups from 1999 to 2016. Among people aged 25-64 years, increases in mortality rates have been observed in all groups in recent years.

Age adjusted mortality rates Deaths per 100 000, 1999-2016

Proportional changes From lowest point to 2016



Cause for concern

Within these groups, there are a variety of different reasons for the observed changes in mortality. Changes were driven not only by external causes of death, but also by a variety of organ diseases and increases in mortality from mental and behavioral disorders.

Top 3 causes of excess deaths 1999-2016

External causes

- Drug overdoses
- Suicides
- Other

49 606

Organ diseases

- Circulatory
- Digestive
- Other

33 431

Mental and behavioural

- Involving psychoactive substances
- Organic

2125

Recent trends in life expectancy across high income countries: retrospective observational study

Jessica Y Ho and Arun S Hendi

thebmj

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Changes in midlife death rates across racial and ethnic groups in the United States: systematic analysis of vital statistics

Steven H Woolf, Derek A Chapman, Jeanine M Buchanich, Kendra J Bobby, Emily B Zimmerman, and Sarah M Blackburn

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