

1.6M Excess Black Lives Lost Over Two Decades

A study revealed the staggering number of Black Americans who have died since 1999.

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Black Americans lead sicker lives and die younger compared with white people, according to a study from the Yale School of Medicine.

Published in [JAMA Network](#), the study revealed that between 1999 and 2020, there were 1.63 million excess deaths in the U.S. Black population compared with white people, according to a [Yale Medicine news release](#). This high [mortality rate](#) resulted in more than 80 million excess years of potential life lost.

According to the study, [heart disease](#) was the number one factor contributing to excess mortality for men and women.

Despite a narrowing in the mortality rate gap between Black and white people from 1999 to 2011, the significant number of deaths from COVID-19 essentially erased any progress made, according to a [California Health Care Foundation \(CHCF\) article](#).

Study lead author César Caraballo, MD, told Yale Medicine that the “abrupt worsening of these disparities in the first year of the [pandemic](#) indicates that current efforts to eliminate mortality disparities have been minimally effective and that progress has been fragile.”

The study findings emphasize the need for [health equity](#) and to address structural racism and health disparities.

“The study is hugely important for about 1.63 million reasons,” said senior study author Herman Taylor, MD, MPH, director of the cardiovascular research institute at the Morehouse School of Medicine, [in the CHCF](#) article.

“Real lives are being lost. Real families are missing parents and grandparents,” Taylor added. “Babies and their mothers are dying. We have been screaming this message for decades.”

The study’s authors emphasize the need to prioritize the health of Black Americans, especially babies and children, who are among the most vulnerable. For example, non-Hispanic Black

newborns are more than twice as likely to die before their first birthdays compared with non-Hispanic white newborns. What's more, non-Hispanic Black mothers are more than three times as likely to die of pregnancy complications compared with non-Hispanic white mothers.

"We need targeted strategies aimed at early childhood health and preventing heart disease and cancer, some of the main drivers of these disparities, to build a more equitable future," Caraballo said.

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