Life Expectancy Shorter for Black People

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African Americans don't live as long as their white counterparts, according to a study published in the journal Health ServicesResearchers and reported by Medical News Today.

For the study, researchers examined death certificate informationfor more than 17 million individuals in all 50 states and the District ofColumbia, from 1997 to 2004. Scientists recorded sex, race and ethnicity, ageat death, and the states where each individual was born, lived and died.

Researchers found the overall national life expectancy forblack men was almost 68 years compared with a life span of nearly 75 years forwhite men. The overall life expectancy for black women was almost 75 compared withnearly 80 years for white women. And that gap was smaller between women than menin every state.

What's more, in states showing the smallest difference inlife expectancy, it wasn't because African Americans lived longer; it wasbecause whites were dying younger than the national average.

Researchers suggest government agencies use this data to trackand measure disparities in health outcomes. They could then adequately focusand fund programs that help key populations. In addition, scientists suggestedstate governments evaluate these race-based longevity differences to formulateappropriate health policies.

It's important to note that a smaller disparity in lifeexpectancy didn't mean that vulnerable populations were doing better, said NazleenBharmal, MD, lead researcher of the study and a clinical instructor at theDavid Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA.

"In our study, we show that the reason there are smalldisparities in life expectancy is because white populations are doing as poorlyas black populations, and the goal in these states should be to raise healthequity for all groups," Bharmal said.

Could disparities in wealth be causing disparities in lifespan? Click here to learn more.

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