

Dying Young in the United States: What's Driving High Death Rates Among Americans Under Age 25 and What Can Be Done?

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Americans ages 15 to 24 are twice as likely to die as their peers in France, Germany, Japan, and other wealthy nations. While mortality rates for young people have been steadily declining in these nations, rates have remained stagnant or risen in the United States among every age group under 25. And the infant mortality rate is up to three times higher in the United States than in peer countries.

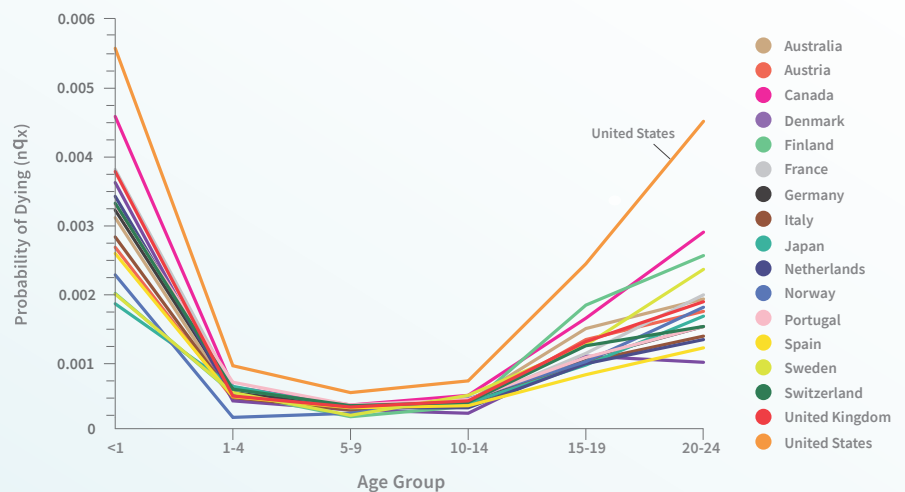
In 2019, 59,865 people under age 25 died in the United States, including 20,921 infants under age 1. This report provides a comprehensive look at deaths of Americans under age 25, examining who is most at risk of early death and why.

KEY FINDINGS

- Compared with other high-income countries, the United States has the highest mortality rates for all age groups under 25.
- Unintentional injuries, suicides, and homicides are the leading causes of death among children and young adults. Premature birth and congenital abnormalities top the list among infants.
- Males are more likely to die before age 25 than females, largely due to greater risk-taking behavior among adolescent and young adult males.
- Residents of U.S. southern states under age 25 tend to have higher rates of early life mortality than residents of states in other regions.
- Black and Mexican American children and young adults ages 1 to 24 face higher death rates than their white peers mainly due to lower levels of family socioeconomic status based on mother's education levels, household income, and other factors.

AMERICANS HAVE A HIGHER LIKELIHOOD OF DYING IN EVERY AGE GROUP UNDER 25 THAN THEIR PEERS IN OTHER HIGH-INCOME COUNTRIES

Probability of Dying in the United States and Peer Countries by Age Group, 2018



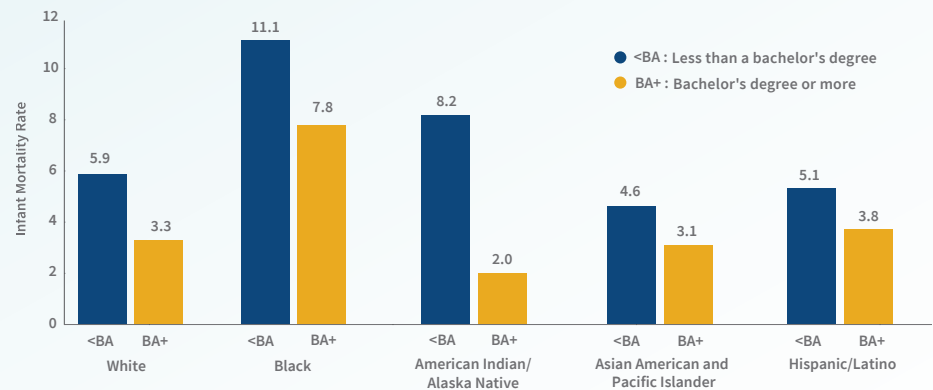
Notes: Data for Germany are for 2017.

Sources: University of California, Berkeley (USA) and Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research (Germany), Human Mortality Database, data downloaded Aug. 16, 2021. Construction of the Human Mortality Database was partially supported by awards R01 AG011552 and R01 AG040245 from the National Institute on Aging.

- Infants born to Black women who have earned at least a bachelor's degree face a higher infant mortality rate than infants born to white women without a bachelor's degree, reflecting wide differences in economic resources between groups and exposure to racism-related stress across the life course for Black women.
- Children who live in married, two-parent households are the least likely to die before age 25.
- Mental health and substance use problems increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and have the potential for both immediate and long-term harm for American children and young adults.

BLACK MOTHERS HAVE THE HIGHEST INFANT MORTALITY RATES AMONG ALL GROUPS WITH AND WITHOUT A COLLEGE DEGREE

U.S. Infant Mortality Rate by Race/Ethnicity and Maternal Education, 2013

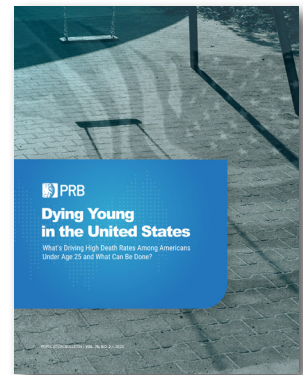


Note: Based on 3,515,242 births.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Vital Statistics Online Data Portal, 2013 cohort linked file public-use record format, Hyattsville, MD: Department of Health and Human Services.

As a society, aggressive action is required to reduce early life mortality. The report recommends the following policy actions:

- Reduce child poverty through direct payments and expanded tax credits and funding for child care, preschool, housing, nutrition, and health care.
- Address racial and ethnic barriers to improve access to quality health care and reproductive health programs.
- Improve treatment for and prevention of mental illness and substance abuse, as well as enact broad safety measures related to guns and gun ownership.
- Reduce sex differences in early life mortality through efforts in schools and communities focused on reducing the harm of boys' high-risk activities such as fighting, speeding and reckless driving, and unsupervised use of guns.



Access the full report:

<https://www.prb.org/resources/dying-young-in-the-united-states/>

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