

Effect of COVID-19 on Life Expectancy



According to latest findings, decreases in life expectancy during 2020 were much larger in the United States than in other high income countries, particularly among Hispanic and Black Americans.

The findings show that between 2018 and 2020, life expectancy in the U.S. decreased by almost two years - 8.5 times the average decrease in 16 other comparable countries - widening the life expectancy gap to 4.69 years.

The gap between life expectancy in the U.S. and other high income countries has been widening for decades. The U.S. had more deaths from COVID-19 than any other country, but so far no study has measured the pandemic's full impact on 2020 life expectancy in the U.S or the gap with other countries.

A team of researchers at Virginia Commonwealth University set out to compare changes in life expectancy in the U.S. in 2010-18 and during the pandemic in 2020 with 16 other high income nations. Life expectancy estimates for 2010-2018 were calculated from official life tables and were simulated for 2020. Analysis excluded 2019 because life table data were not available for many peer countries.

The results show that between 2010 and 2018, the gap in life expectancy between the U.S. and the peer country average increased from 1.88 years (78.66 v 80.54 years, respectively) to 3.05 years (78.74 v 81.78 years). Between 2018 and 2020, life expectancy in the U.S. decreased by 1.87 years (to 76.87 years), 8.5 times the average decrease in peer countries (0.22 years), widening the gap to 4.69 years.

Life expectancy in the U.S. decreased disproportionately among racial and ethnic minority groups between 2018 and 2020, declining by 3.88, 3.25, and 1.36 years in Hispanic, non-Hispanic Black, and non-Hispanic White populations, respectively. In Hispanic and non-Hispanic Black populations, reductions in life expectancy were 15 and 18 times the average in peer countries, respectively.

Progress made over the past 20 years in reducing the gap in life expectancy between Black and White populations in the U.S. was erased between 2018 and 2020. Life expectancy in Black men fell to 67.73 years, its lowest level since 1998, and the longstanding Hispanic life expectancy advantage almost disappeared.

"Understanding the reasons for the disproportionate toll of the disease on the US population and developing appropriate interventions and policies provides an opportunity to correct the structural factors that have historically been hampering US progress in life expectancy and that have been driving large social and ethno-racial inequities in the risks of death," the researchers conclude.

Source: [BMJ](#)

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