

# Life expectancy gap between Black and white people in Washington, DC, analyzed

27 August 2020



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Heart disease, homicide and cancer are leading contributing factors to stark differences in life expectancy between Black people and white people in Washington, DC, according to a study published in *Scientific Reports*.

Max Roberts and colleagues analyzed 1999-2017 mortality data to calculate [life expectancies](#) for men and women in Washington, DC, and to investigate specific causes of death and their contribution to life expectancy disparities for Black and [white people](#) from different age groups and in three time periods (2000, 2008, 2016).

The authors found that in the most recent observation period 2016, life expectancy for Black men in Washington, DC, was on average 17.23 years shorter than for white men, and life expectancy for Black women was 12.06 years shorter than for white women. In men, the leading contributors to the life-expectancy gap were heart disease, homicide, cancer, and unintentional injuries, such as accidental drug poisoning. Heart disease and cancer contributed most at ages 55-69; homicide contributed most at ages 20-29. In

women, leading contributors were [heart disease](#), cancer, unintentional injuries and perinatal conditions. Heart disease and cancer contributed most at ages 55-69, and unintentional injuries at ages 50-59. The authors also found that, unlike in the United States overall, the life expectancy gap in Washington, DC, has widened in recent years, as life expectancy for white people has continued to increase and life expectancy for Black people has begun to decrease.

The authors suggest that disparities in life expectancy between Black people and white people may be attributable to fundamental social and economic causes that predominantly affect Black neighborhoods, including environmental hazards, high crime rates, poor quality schools and lack of healthcare access.

Equal access to effective education, employment opportunities, safe neighborhoods and housing, and high-quality health care may reduce health and life expectancy disparities between Black people and white people in Washington, DC, according to the authors.

**More information:** Contributors to the black-white life expectancy gap in Washington D.C., *Scientific Reports* (2020). [DOI: 10.1038/s41598-020-70046-6](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-70046-6), [www.nature.com/articles/s41598-020-70046-6](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-020-70046-6)

Provided by Nature Publishing Group

APA citation: Life expectancy gap between Black and white people in Washington, DC, analyzed (2020, August 27) retrieved 14 November 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-08-life-gap-black-white-people.html>

*This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.*