

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder (COPD) refers to a group of diseases that cause airflow blockage and breathing-related problems, including emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Symptoms of COPD include frequent coughing or wheezing, excess phlegm, mucus, or sputum production, shortness of breath, and/or trouble taking a deep breath.¹ In 2020, 12.5 million Americans—5.0% of adults in the United States—reported a diagnosis of COPD, chronic bronchitis, or emphysema, though this is likely underreported. According to 2010 data, 8.5 million adults reported a diagnosis, but more than 18 million Americans had evidence of impaired lung function consistent with COPD.² In 2020, 148,512 people died from COPD, making it the sixth overall leading cause of death in the United States

Racial Disparities

In the United States, White Americans are disproportionately impacted by COPD with 6.2% of White adults reporting a diagnosis of COPD, chronic bronchitis, and/or emphysema, compared to 4.7% of Black Americans, 1.7% of Hispanic Americans, and 3.0% of Other races.

White Americans are also disproportionately impacted by mortality related to COPD, with a rate of 40.4 (per 100k), compared to 27.3 in Black Americans, 15.0 in Hispanic Americans, and 11.9 in Other races.⁴

Sex/Gender Disparities

Across every race category, Women are more likely to be diagnosed with COPD than Men, with 5.6% of Women reporting a diagnosis of COPD, chronic bronchitis, and/or emphysema, compared to 4.3% of Men.⁵

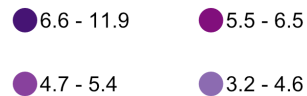
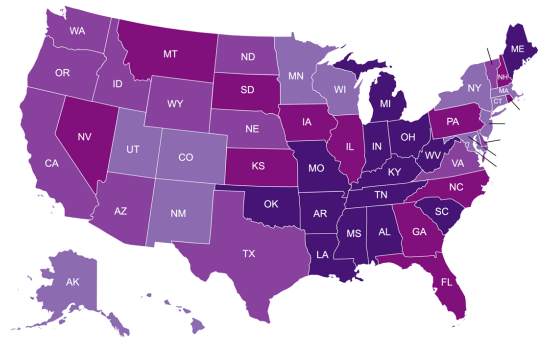
Men, however, are significantly more likely to die from COPD compared to Women across all racial and ethnic groups. Overall, Men have a COPD mortality rate of 39.2, compared to 32.3 in Women. The mortality disparities are particularly pronounced among Black Men and Women, which Black Men dying at a rate of 34.8, compared to 22.5 in Black Women.³

Income Disparities

Americans with Middle Incomes ranging from \$20,000-\$80,000 per year are more likely to be diagnosed with COPD, while Americans earning <\$20,000 per year are more likely to experience severe COPD, with COPD Severity Scores of 1.4 and 3.4, respectively.⁶ Black and Hispanic patients, regardless of income, experience worse COPD health outcomes than their White peers.⁷

Regional Disparities

COPD is most prevalent in the American South and Eastern Midwest. West Virginia has the highest rate of COPD prevalence, with a rate of 11.9, followed closely by Kentucky, with a rate of 11.1. Southern states hold the eight highest rates of COPD prevalence in the United States. Hawaii has the lowest prevalence rate, with a rate of 3.2



Kentucky has the highest COPD mortality rate, with a rate of 174.6, followed closely by West Virginia and Oklahoma, with rates of 174.4 and 174.2, respectively. Southern states comprise seven of the ten highest COPD mortality rates in the United States. Hawaii has the lowest mortality rate, with a rate of 44.5.⁸

References

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, April 08). *What is COPD?* <https://www.cdc.gov/copd/index.html>

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³American Lung Association. (n.d.). *COPD Trends Brief: Mortality*. <https://www.lung.org/research/trends-in-lung-disease/copd-trends-brief/copd-mortality>

⁴American Lung Association. (n.d.). *Trends in COPD Mortality by Sex and Race/Ethnicity*. <https://www.lung.org/research/trends-in-lung-disease/copd-trends-brief/data-tables/trends-in-mortality-sex-and-race>

⁵American Lung Association. (n.d.). *Trends in COPD by Race/Ethnicity, Sex and Age*. <https://www.lung.org/research/trends-in-lung-disease/copd-trends-brief/data-tables/trends-copd-race-ethnicity-sex-age>

⁶Eisner, M.D., Blanc, P.D., Omachi, T.A., et al. (2011). Socioeconomic status, race and COPD health outcomes. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 65(1), 26–34. <https://doi.org/10.1136/jech.2009.089722>

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⁸Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, July 11). *State-level Estimates of COPD*. <https://www.cdc.gov/copd/data-and-statistics/state-estimates.html>