

LIFE EXPECTANCY

Based on preliminary data, the overall life expectancy of a baby born in 2011 was 78.7 years (data not shown); this varied, however, by sex and race and ethnicity. A baby girl born in the United States in 2011 could expect to live 81.1 years, 4.8 years longer than a male baby, whose life expectancy would be 76.3 years. Females had longer life expectancies than males within every race and ethnic group, ranging from an advantage of 4.7 years among non-Hispanic Whites to 6.2 years among non-Hispanic Blacks. A variety of social and biological factors may explain the female longevity advantage, including better health and health-care seeking behaviors and cardiovascular benefits of estrogen.¹⁴

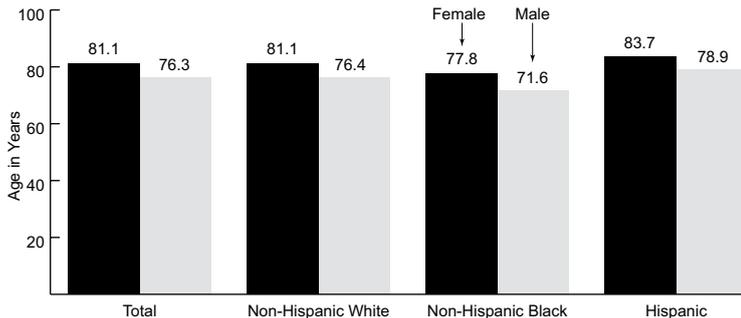
Non-Hispanic Blacks had the lowest life expectancy for both females and males (77.8 and 71.6 years, respectively), while Hispanics had the longest life expectancy for both females and males (83.7 and 78.9 years, respectively). The lower mortality rates of the Hispanic population, despite greater levels of socioeconomic disadvantage, known as the Hispanic paradox, may be due to more favorable health among those who are able to immigrate from their home countries, as well as the possibility that they may return to those countries to die and are not counted in mortality statistics.¹⁵ Life expectancy data are not reported for Asian, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaska Native populations due to known

issues of under-reporting on death certificates.

Life expectancy has increased since 1970 for both females and males. Between 1970 and 2011, female life expectancy increased by 6.4 years from 74.7 to 81.1 years (8.6 percent), while male life expectancy increased by 9.2 years from 67.1 to 76.3 years (13.7 percent). Between 1970 and 2011, the greater gains in life expectancy for males than females have led to reduced disparities by sex, shrinking from a differential of 7.6 to 4.8 years. Of concern, however, is that female mortality rates have recently increased in over 40 percent of U.S. counties whereas the same was true for male mortality rates in only 3.4 percent of counties.¹⁶

Life Expectancy at Birth, by Race/Ethnicity* and Sex, 2011**

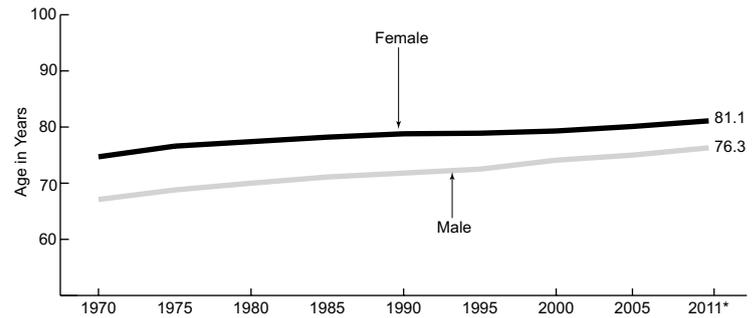
Source II.4: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System



*Data for American Indian/Alaska Natives, Asians, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders were not available. **Data are preliminary.

Life Expectancy at Birth, by Sex, 1970–2011*

Source II.5: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System



*Data are preliminary.