



Racial Disparities in Liver Disease Mortality Have Narrowed

The causes of liver disease and attributable deaths differ between white and Black populations.

May 31, 2024 By [Sukanya Charuchandra](#)

Mortality rates due to liver-related causes fell among Black Americans but increased among white people in recent years, according to study results published in the [American Journal of Gastroenterology](#). Given the disparities that still remain in the causes of liver disease among Black and white populations, more targeted interventions are needed.

Yichen Wang, MD, of the University of Pennsylvania, and colleagues explored trends in liver disease mortality among Black and white people between 1999 and 2020. Using the [CDC WONDER](#) database, they analyzed data on age-standardized mortality rates in the two populations.

During this period, 171,627 Black people and 1,314,903 white people died due to liver disease. For Black people, age-standardized mortality rates fell from 22.5 to 20.1 per 100,000 person-years, reflecting a 0.4% reduction. On the other hand, age-standardized mortality rates rose from 17.9 to 25.3 per 100,000 person-years among white people, a 1.4% increase.

The researchers also calculated the mortality rate ratio for the two populations, which fell from 1.26 in 1999 to 0.79 in 2020. This pattern was seen across geographic regions and was especially pronounced for younger age groups. This change may be attributable to a rise in deaths due to [alcohol-related liver disease](#) and [fatty liver disease](#) among white people, while deaths due to hepatitis C and primary liver cancer have fallen among Black people.

“Despite notable improvement, racial disparities persist for the Black population,” the study authors concluded. “The rise in alcohol-related liver disease and metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease-related deaths among whites, and enduring liver cancer and viral hepatitis disparities in the Black population, underscores the urgent need for tailored public health interventions.”