

Vietnamese and Vietnamese-American Health Statistics, 2003-2019

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Key Findings

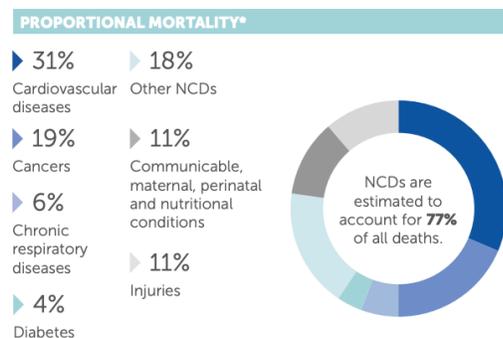
- Cardiovascular disease (CVD), which includes strokes and ischemic heart disease, is responsible for 31% of deaths in Vietnam. Cancers of the lung and liver follow closely behind.
- Strokes cause the most deaths in the Vietnamese population with 200,000 new cases each year; half of them are fatal. Vietnamese-Americans have the 2nd to highest stroke mortality rate among sub-Asian Americans groups.
- Although the prevalence of diabetes in Vietnamese and Vietnamese-Americans are not the highest relative to other ethnic groups, they have one of the fastest-growing incidence rates.
- Vietnamese and Vietnamese-Americans face many challenges including smoking habits, impaired physician-patient communications, and healthcare access that contribute to the health ailments they experience.

Vietnamese-Americans are among the six largest subgroups of Asian-Americans.¹ Despite this, there is still very little data on the health concerns this population faces. Based on current information, there are some slight differences between the major causes of deaths among the Vietnamese compared to Vietnamese-Americans. The purpose of this report is to summarize the health outcomes that these groups face.

Stroke, ischemic heart disease, and lung cancer are some of the biggest causes of death in Vietnamese people.²

- In Vietnam, strokes cause the most deaths with an estimated 200,000 new cases reported each year. 50% of those cases are fatal and 90% of survivors experience post-stroke effects such as cognitive disorders, impaired mobility, and speaking or swallowing problems.³
- Cardiovascular disease (CVD), which includes strokes and ischemic heart disease, accounts for 31% of causes of deaths, equivalent to about 170,000 cases.⁴
- Lung cancer causes 20,710 deaths with 667 new cases each year.

Figure 1: Proportional Mortality Rates

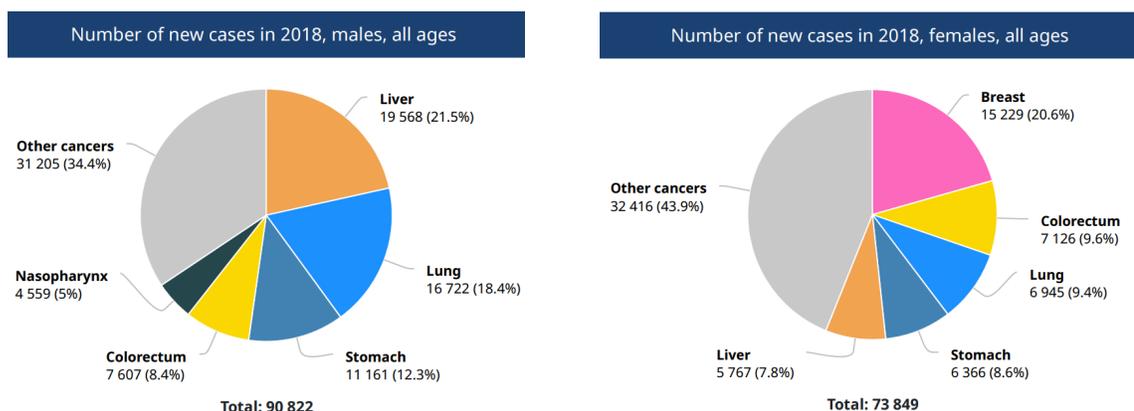


Source: World Health Organization, Non-Communicable Disease Country Profiles: Vietnam

Differing from the Vietnamese, the top leading causes of death in Vietnamese-Americans are malignant neoplasms, diseases of the heart, and cerebrovascular disease.⁶

- Malignant neoplasms, diseases of the heart, and cerebrovascular diseases are the reasons behind 32.5%, 17.7%, and 7.8% of male Vietnamese-American deaths and 27.9%, 19.1%, and 10.7% of female Vietnamese-American deaths, respectively.⁶
- Vietnamese-Americans also presents the 2nd to highest stroke mortality rates amongst Asian sub-groups.⁶
- The Vietnamese has the highest incidence and death rates from liver, lung, and cervical cancer

Figure 2: New Cancer Cases Profile of Vietnam, 2018



Source: World Health Organization, Globocan 2018: Vietnam

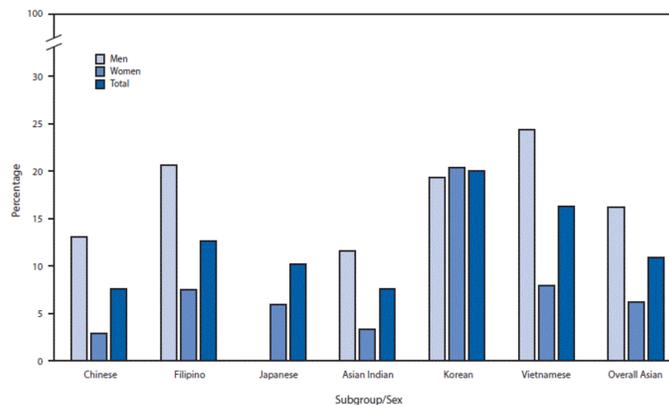
In Vietnam, the incidence of diabetes has been increasing at an alarming rate with it doubling in the past 10 years. The number of pre-diabetics has also increased by three times as many as there are diabetics.⁸

- Despite diabetes incidence rates decreasing for the majority of racial/ethnic groups, rates for Vietnamese-American women are increasing.⁶
- The mortality of cancer and diabetes has been shown to increase for Vietnamese-Americans on temporal trends.⁶
- 1 in 17 Vietnamese adults (1 in 15 men and 1 in 20 women) has diabetes.⁹

Poor health outcomes experienced by the Vietnamese and Vietnamese-Americans may be attributed to a variety of reasons including smoking habits, impaired physician-patient communication, and limited access to healthcare.¹⁰

- Use of tobacco is very high in Vietnam with about 66% of adult men currently smoking.¹¹ In this population, smoking is responsible for 28% of all-cause deaths and 85% of lung cancer deaths.^{12,13}
- Vietnamese-Americans has the 2nd highest cigarette-smoking prevalence among sub-Asian American groups at 16.3%.¹
- 60% of Vietnamese-Americans “do not speak English very well,” the highest percentage among all Asian-Americans.¹⁴
- 8.1% of Vietnamese-Americans are uninsured, the 2nd to highest sub-Asian American group.¹⁵ Health-seeking behavior in Vietnam is also lacking as their health financing system still relies predominantly on out-of-pocket spending.¹⁶

Figure 3: Past 30-day cigarette use among people aged 18+ years



The top 10 causes of deaths in Vietnamese, Vietnamese-American, and American populations vary. More research is needed to find what risk factors underly these differences.

- It should be noted that there are differences between males and females that are not shown in the ranking provided below.
- Compared to Non-Hispanic White Americans, Vietnamese-Americans have a noticeably higher prevalence of stroke, malignant neoplasms, and diabetes. ⁶

Vietnamese

1. Stroke
2. Ischemic Heart Disease
3. Lung Cancer
4. Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
5. Alzheimer's
6. Diabetes
7. Cirrhosis
8. Road Injuries
9. Lower Respiratory Infections
10. Tuberculosis

Source: GBD Compare 2018, Vietnam

Vietnamese-Americans⁶

1. Malignant Neoplasms
2. Diseases of Heart
3. Cerebrovascular Disease
4. Accidents
5. Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease
6. Diabetes
7. Influenza and Pneumonia
8. Alzheimers
9. Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, Nephrosis
10. Suicide (males) / Septicemia (females)

Source: Leading cause of death among Asian American Subgroups (2003-2011)
K. Hastings, et al.

General Americans

1. Diseases of Heart
2. Malignant Neoplasms
3. Accidents
4. Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease
5. Cerebrovascular Disease
6. Alzheimer's
7. Diabetes
8. Influenza and Pneumonia
9. Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, Nephrosis
10. Suicide

Source: NVSS - Leading Causes of Death 2017, Melanie Heron, Ph.D

Summary

Stroke, ischemic heart disease, and cancers are among the major reasons for Vietnamese fatalities. Vietnamese-Americans are unfortunately the most leading sub-Asian Americans group in mortality rates caused by stroke, liver, lung, and cervical cancer. They also have one of the highest incidence rates of diabetes. Some of the major challenges that are compromising to the health of Vietnamese-Americans and Vietnamese people include harmful smoking habits, poor physician-patient communications, limited access to healthcare, etc. The statistics and details provided in this report were gathered from 2003-2019.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the current estimate for the population of Vietnamese-Americans is 2,104,217, making it the 4th largest sub-asian group and 6th-largest foreign-born group in the country. Despite this, there are limitations to current data sources and information about the health outcomes this group faces. It is critical to promote more research looking into this matter as it can effectively improve the care and well-being of Vietnamese-Americans.

Definitions

Cardiovascular Disease (CVD): A cluster of heart conditions involving narrowed, blocked or diseased blood vessels that can lead to chest pain, blood clots, stroke, or heart attack

Ischemic Heart Disease: A disease caused by an interruption in blood supply to the heart

Cerebrovascular Disease/Stroke: An interruption in the blood supply to the brain, preventing delivery of oxygen and nutrients

Cancer: A disease in which abnormal cells divide uncontrollably with the potential to invade other parts of the body and destroy body tissue

Malignant Neoplasms: A tumor/abnormal growth caused by cancer

Diabetes: A disease that results in excess sugar in the blood

Death/Prevalence Rate: A measure of the number of deaths among a certain population per unit of time

Incidence: A measure of the probability of specific medical occurrence in a population during a specific window of time.

About the Authors

Hillary Ta, Bryant Lin and Latha Palaniappan are with the Stanford Center for Asian Health Research and Education.

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