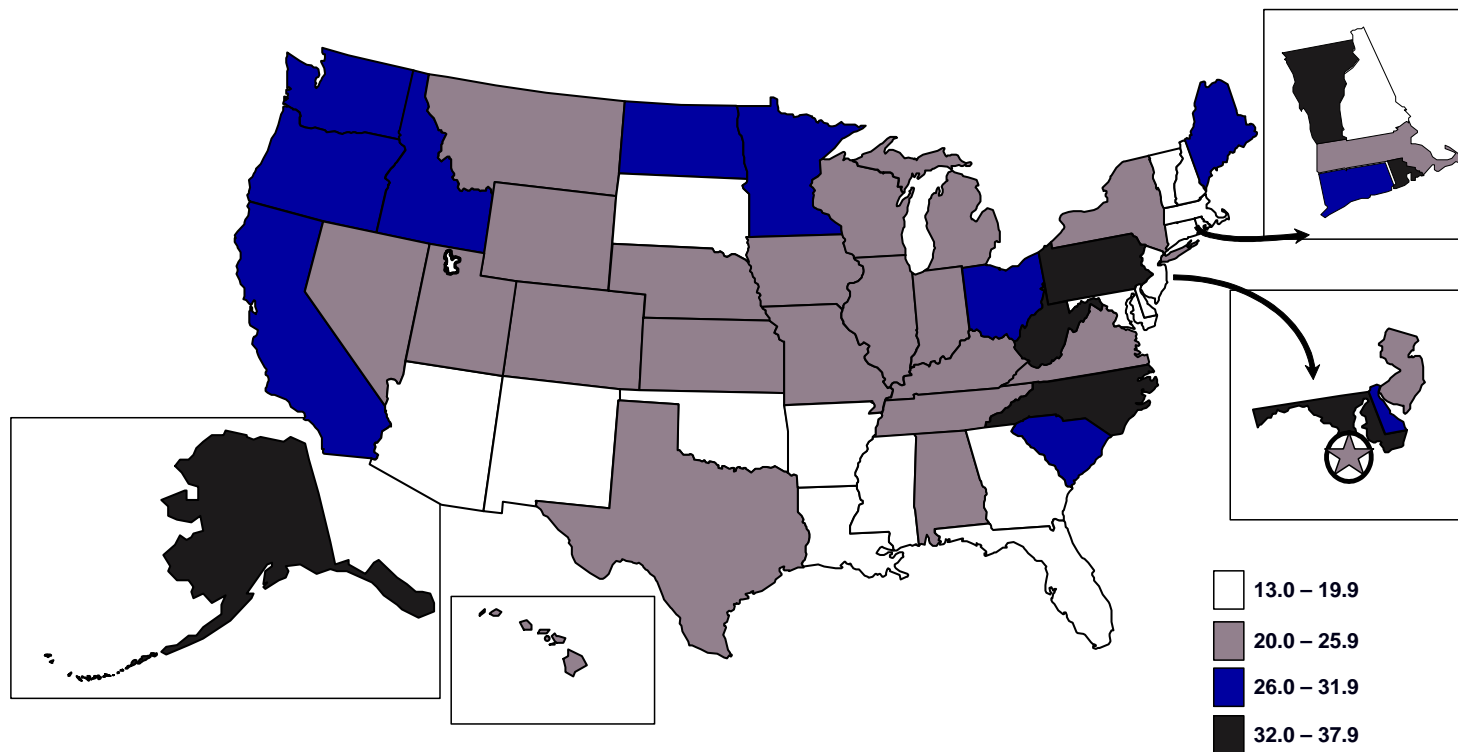


Atrial Fibrillation Fact Sheet

Age-adjusted death rates for atrial fibrillation as a contributing cause— United States, 1999



Age adjusted to the 2000 U.S. population

<p>13.0–19.9: Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota</p>	<p>26.0–31.9: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Washington</p>
<p>20.0–25.9: Alabama, Colorado, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming</p>	<p>32.0–37.9: Alaska, Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia</p>

Source: 1999 multiple-cause mortality data from the National Vital Statistics, CDC. *MMWR* 2003;52:128-131

- Atrial fibrillation is the most common sustained heart rhythm disorder and increases the risk for heart disease and stroke, both leading causes of death in the United States. An estimated 2.2 million adults in the United States have been diagnosed with atrial fibrillation.¹
- Atrial fibrillation is the quivering of the top right chamber of the heart. It is characterized by a rapid and irregular beat that can cause serious complications, even death. If the heart rate is rapid and irregular, a healthcare provider should be seen quickly. Ideal adult pulse is steady with regular rates of 60-80 beats per minute.
- Deaths associated with atrial fibrillation mortality have increased over the past two decades. Overall, the age-standardized death rate (per100, 000 US population) increased from 27.6 in 1980 to 69.8 in 1998.²
- The prevalence of atrial fibrillation increases markedly with age in older adults, from less than 1 percent for those younger than age 60 to roughly 1 in every 10 persons aged 80 years or older.^{1,3}
- Studies have shown that men have a higher prevalence of atrial fibrillation than women, and whites have a higher prevalence than African Americans.¹
- Other factors associated with the development of atrial fibrillation include hypertension, congestive heart failure, previous myocardial infarction and diabetes.⁴
- Atrial fibrillation (AF) accounts for one fourth of all strokes in the elderly. The American Heart Association reports that in the U.S., AF is estimated to be responsible for over 70,000 strokes each year.
- Anti-arrhythmia medications can help regularize the heart rhythm and help prevent the arrhythmia from happening again. In addition, medications that reduce the risk of blood clot formation (aspirin and warfarin are the two most common) can help reduce stroke risk in persons with atrial fibrillation.⁵
- Signs and symptoms that suggest the presence of atrial fibrillation include a sensation of missed or extra heartbeats, an unexplained rapid heartbeat, or palpitation.
- Persons can identify an irregular heartbeat by monitoring their wrist pulse for 1 minute. The irregularity of these beats is detected and the next beat cannot be predicted. Persons who identify the signs of cardiac arrhythmia should seek medical care to determine the presence of AF or other heart disorders.
- Consult your health care provider if you believe you have an irregular heart rhythm or palpitations.

CDC's Public Health Efforts: CDC currently funds health departments in 32 states and the District of Columbia to develop effective strategies to reduce the burden of cardiovascular diseases and related risk factors with an overarching emphasis on heart healthy policies and physical and social environmental changes. Through these state programs, CDC aims to reduce disparities in treatment, risk factors, and disease; delay the onset of disease; postpone death from cardiovascular disease; and reduce disabling conditions. For more information on CDC's State Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program, please visit our Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/cvh/stateprogram.htm>.

For More Information: See the websites of the following organizations:

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, National Institutes of Health: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>

American Heart Association: http://www.americanheart.org/*

American Stroke Association: http://www.strokeassociation.org*

National Stroke Association: http://www.stroke.org*

The Research Center for Stroke and Heart Disease: http://www.strokeheart.org/*

*Links to non-Federal organizations are provided as a service to our users. This link does not constitute an endorsement of this organization by CDC or the Federal Government, and none should be inferred. The CDC is not responsible for the content of the individual organization Web pages found at this link.

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