

# Why Men's Health Month is Important

As I wrote in last week's post, November is Men's Health Month. Two organizations named "Movember" and "No-Shave November" are helping to change the face of men (pun intended!) to raise awareness of cancer and the rise rates of suicide among men.

For the rest of this month, I'm going to provide information on each of these health issues, starting first with some important statistics about men's health.

I also encourage you to join me in supporting these causes on my No-Shave November page.

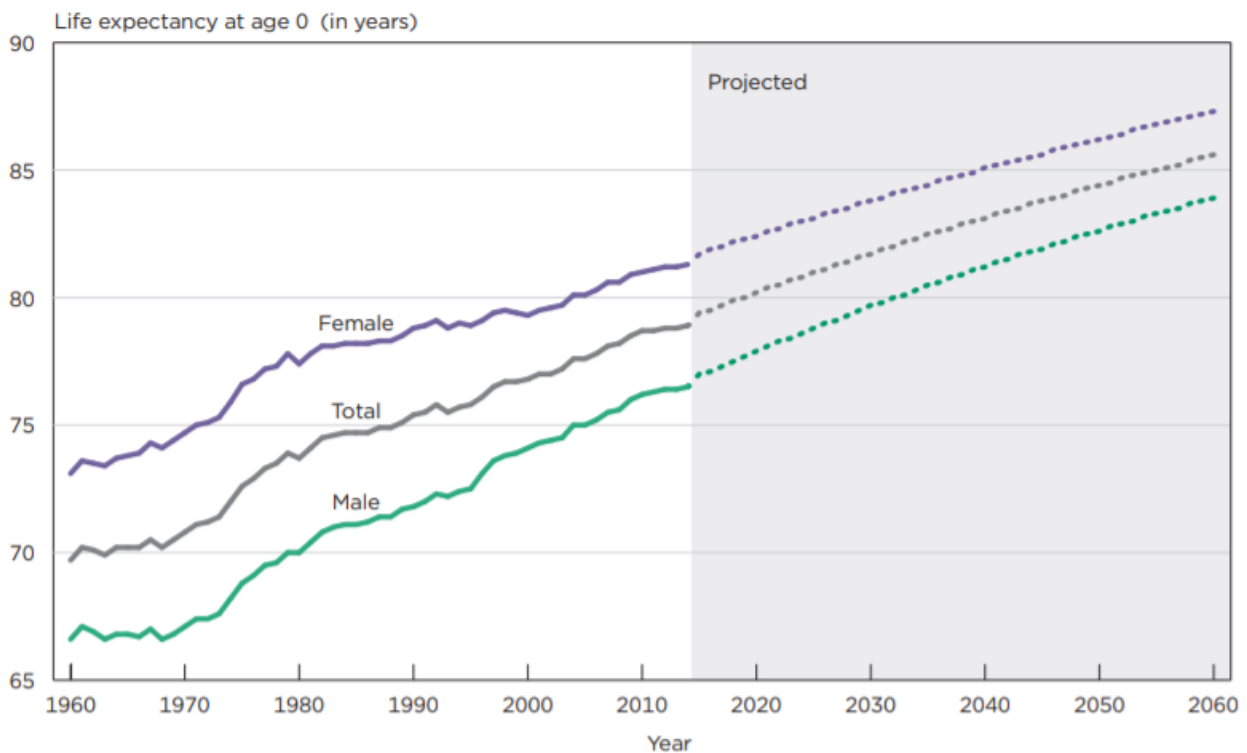
## Life Expectancy – Statistics & Facts

Both men and women are living longer than ever though. But men's health is in a crisis. Simply put, guys are dying way too young, which has a longer-term impact on our spouses and our children.

According to Statista, life expectancy in the United States rose from 39.4 years old back in 1860 to 78.9 years old in 2020, Contributing factors are a decrease in infant and child mortality rates due to medical advancements, fewer wars, and improved living standards.

Figure 1.

### Historical and Projected Life Expectancy for the Total U.S. Population at Birth: 1960–2060



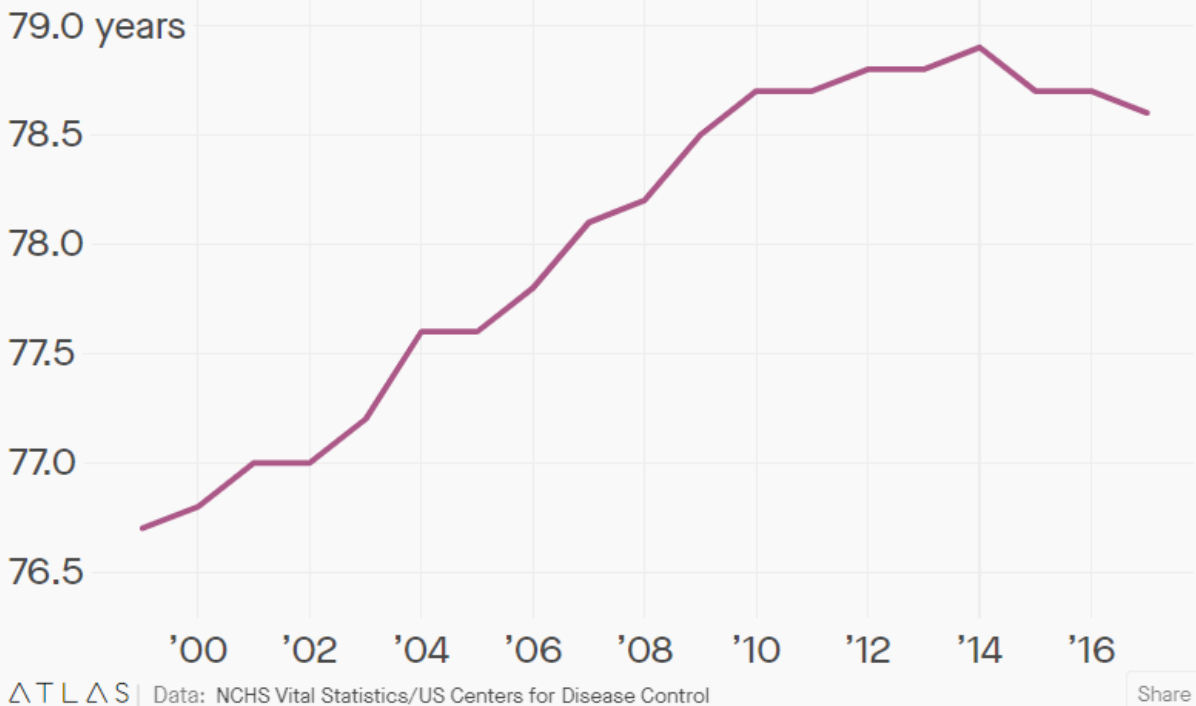
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 National Population Projections, 2015–2060, and National Center for Health Statistics Life Tables, 1960–2014, <[www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr68/nvsr68\\_07-508.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr68/nvsr68_07-508.pdf)>.

### Americans are Living Longer!

Unfortunately, life expectancy in the U.S. is declining for just the third time in the last 160 years. The first was from 1865 to 1870 during the American Civil War. The next was during the First World War and subsequent Spanish Flu epidemic from 1915 to 1920.

Most recently, this third decline started in 2014 and is attributed to negative societal trends, unbalanced diets and sedentary lifestyles, high medical costs, and increasing rates of suicide and drug use.

## Life expectancy in the US has been falling since 2014



Overall, life expectancy is declining

The good news is the CDC reports a slight uptick in 2019 thanks largely to a decrease in death rates from cancer and drug overdoses. Additionally, the U.S Census Bureau predicts life expectancy will rise by about six years to 85.6 by 2060 (of course, those are pre-COVID predictions).

## Life Expectancy is Worse for Men

Gender is one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of health and life expectancy.

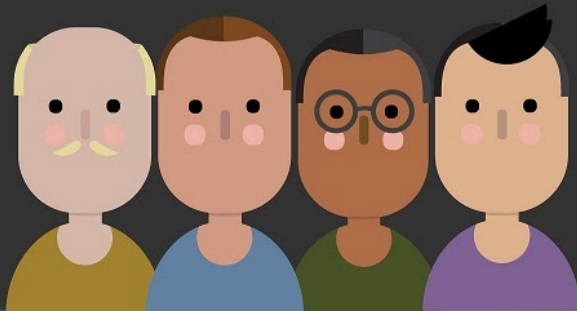
According to this November 2019 article published by John Elflein on Statista.com, the life expectancy for men in the United States was just 76.1 years, about five years less than women who live on average to 81.

The site also shows that the age of men has been declining the last few years.

## Male life expectancy

#HealthUS

Life expectancy at birth for males **decreased each year** since 2014.



Life expectancy at birth (years) for males

76.5  
2014

76.3  
2015

76.2  
2016

76.1  
2017

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### Average Life Expectancy for Men is Declining

Harvard University's Health blog gives many reasons why men, on average, die first before women. The blog states that men tend to:

- Take bigger risks.
- Have more dangerous jobs.
- Die of heart disease more often and at a younger age.
- Be larger than women.
- Commit suicide more often than women.
- Be less socially connected.
- Avoid doctors.

It's a proven fact that the frontal lobe of the male brain – the part that controls judgment and consideration of an action's consequences – develops more slowly in boys and young men than in their female counterparts. Our lack of judgment and consideration of consequences contributes to detrimental lifestyle decisions such as smoking, or drinking to excess, or driving too fast. We also have the riskiest occupations, including military combat, firefighting, and working at construction sites.

Generally, guys are far more likely to skip routine health screens and far less likely to see a doctor during the

previous year than females. Cultural norms discourage us from seeking help for mental illness, so we tend to avoid seeking care for depression.

According to the Cleveland Clinic, 61% of men have neglected to visit a doctor even when they needed to go. So when men are hospitalized, it's more likely to be for complications from serious issues that could be uncovered in routine visits or better managed with regular follow-up.

So whether it's due to cultural norms, stereotypes around machismo, or the fear of invasive physical exams, guys just don't like to see the doctor or even talk about their health issues.

## **What Causes Men to Die Earlier?**

The focus of Movember is specifically prostate cancer and testicular cancer, along with suicide among men, whereas No-Shave November is more general in its support of cancer awareness. But there are many other factors.

In 2017, the leading causes of death in men were heart disease and cancer, which accounts for a combined 46.1 percent of all male deaths that year.



Photo by Rhodi Lopez on Unsplash

The impact of prostate and testicular cancer on our lives is substantial. Specifically, prostate cancer is the second most common cancer in men worldwide, with the number of cases expected to nearly double to 1.7 million by 2030.

Most concerning is suicide among men. While depression is considered more common among women (who make more suicide attempts), men often have more fatal suicides. The World Health Organization reports that suicide represents nearly half of all male violent deaths worldwide. That's more than cancer and heart disease.

These concerns are why people across the globe become a united voice every November to raise money and awareness of the men's health crisis.

These are also the reason you need a God Buddy who will challenge you and encourage you to maintain your health.

So stay with me next week as I begin to unpack these male-specific health issues.