American Heart Association.

Top Takeaways from the 2026 American Heart Association Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics

The 2026 American Heart Association Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics Update authored by expert epidemiologists, researchers, and clinicians summarizes and synthesizes the latest national and global data on cardiovascular disease. These key statistics highlight progress achieved, setbacks experienced, and opportunities that remain to improve cardiovascular and brain health for all. Key opportunities identified by the 2026 Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics Update include the importance of prevention, earlier detection, and equitable access to high-quality and affordable care.

Rigorously analyzed and continuously updated data on cardiovascular health and health outcomes are essential to guide clinical practice, research priorities, and public health policy at the local, national, and global levels. Improving cardiovascular and brain health at the population level is achievable but will require coordinated action at the health system-, community-, and policy-level. Moreover, the high economic cost of cardiovascular disease in the United States reinforces the value of prevention as both a health and economic imperative.

The key takeaways and accompanying slides offer critical insights into the 2026 Update of gains made, new and continued challenges, and opportunities for future focus and investment.

1. Cardiovascular disease remains the #1 cause of death in the United States and globally. Despite decades of progress, CVD remains the leading cause of death. In the United States, CVD accounts for 915,973 deaths or 1 death every 34 seconds, more deaths than cancer and chronic respiratory diseases combined. While the majority of deaths from CVD are related to coronary heart disease, conditions like heart failure, hypertension, vascular disease, arrhythmias, and others contribute to the high burden.

2. Inequities in cardiovascular health and CVD outcomes remain pervasive. Profound and persistent inequities in cardiovascular health exist by race and ethnicity, geography, and socioeconomic status, reflecting the impact of structural and social drivers of health. While deaths attributable to COVID-19 declined from 350,831 in 2020 to 49,932 in 2023, a decline of 86%, gaps in cardiovascular health inequities widened as a result of the pandemic.

3. Optimal cardiovascular health is low. Optimal cardiovascular health remains low across the life course with the overall cardiovascular health score for adults of 70 and for adolescents (age 16-19 years) of 73. However, if high CVH were attained for all adults in

the United States, modeling studies suggest an estimated 2 million major CVD events could potentially be prevented annually.

4. Poor state of cardiovascular, kidney, and metabolic health. Awareness and control of hypertension and diabetes remain low and represent a critical opportunity to prioritize prevention and management, particularly among young adults.

5. Adverse pregnancy outcomes are early warning signs of CVD risk. Poor maternal cardiovascular health and adverse pregnancy represent a key opportunity to optimize long-term cardiovascular health for women and their offspring given their long-term health implications.

6. Deaths due to sudden cardiac arrest have declined, but survival remains poor. Sudden cardiac arrests mentioned anywhere on the death certificate contributed to 380,349 deaths in the United States in 2023. Among out-of-hospital cardiac arrests in the United States in 2024, survival to hospital discharge was only 10.5%. Among out-of-hospital cardiac arrests in the United States in 2024, only 42% received bystander CPR and only 13% received public AED use highlighting a key opportunity to impact outcomes and survival.

7. Brain health is an emerging concept of importance given stroke and cognitive decline lead to significant morbidity and mortality. While age-adjusted mortality rates of stroke in 2023 were 39.0 per 100,000, a decline of 24% from 2004, age-adjusted mortality rates of dementia in 2023 were 69.7 per 100,000, an increase of 47% from 2004 to 2023. Vascular risk factors are increasingly recognized as the most important cluster of risk factors for brain health, particularly because of their high prevalence and potential for modification.

8. Evidence-based cardiovascular therapies are under-utilized today. Significant scientific advances have led to a growing array of effective therapeutic options but important gaps in quality of care persist. Programs like Get With the Guidelines (GWTG) are driving meaningful improvements with ongoing opportunities to improve rates of guideline-directed medical therapy in patients with CVD.

9. Economic burden of CVD is high. The annual direct and indirect costs of CVD in the United States in 2021 to 2022 were an estimated $414.7 billion.

10. Global burden of CVD and poor cardiovascular health is high. Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death worldwide accounting for 19.4 million deaths in 2021, which was an increase in total number of CVD deaths of 18.5% since 2010. Poor CVH is highly prevalent across countries, with high systolic blood pressure representing the leading risk factor worldwide.

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