

# Weeks Population

Dr. John Weeks' official demographic blog - just the latest post!

This blog is intended to go along with [Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues](#), by **John R. Weeks**, published by Cengage Learning. The latest edition is the 12th (it came out in 2015), but this blog is meant to complement any edition of the book by showing the way in which demographic issues are regularly in the news.

*If you are a user of my textbook and would like to suggest a blog post idea, please email me at: [john.weeks@sdsu.edu](mailto:john.weeks@sdsu.edu)*

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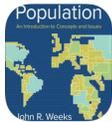


**John Weeks**

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The app provides learning objectives and main points for each chapter, along with a quick POPquiz to test knowledge about key population information, and there is also a link to the WeeksPopulation blog.

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Monday, January 18, 2016

## Early Deaths in the US: Young Whites are Affected, Not Just the Middle Aged

In October 2015, Angus Deaton won the Nobel Prize in Economics. The next month he and his wife, Anne Case, published a [widely cited article](#) on the surprising rise in deaths among middle aged whites, especially men, in the U.S. The discussion around that article unleashed a much larger discussion about the role of prescription opioids as pain-killers that then become people killers because of resulting dependency and overdoses. Sunday's [NYTimes digs into the issue](#) in some depth, discovering in the process that it is not just a middle-aged phenomenon--younger white males are also at risk.

The Times analyzed nearly 60 million death certificates collected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from 1990 to 2014. It found death rates for non-Hispanic whites either rising or flattening for all the adult age groups under 65 — a trend that was particularly pronounced in women — even as medical advances sharply reduce deaths from traditional killers like heart disease. Death rates for blacks and most Hispanic groups continued to fall.

Not many young people die of any cause. In 2014, there were about 29,000 deaths out of a population of about 25 million whites in the 25-to-34 age group. That number had steadily increased since 2004, rising by about 5,500 — about 24 percent — while the population of the group as a whole rose only 5 percent. In 2004, there were 2,888 deaths from overdoses in that group; in 2014, the number totaled 7,558.

Mortality rates, said Mark D. Hayward, a professor of sociology [*and well-known demographer*] at the University of Texas at Austin, are one of the most sensitive measures of quality of life...“There are large numbers of people who never get established in the economy, who live outside family relationships and are on the edge of poverty,” Dr. Hayward said. Many end up taking prescription narcotics, he added. “Poverty and stress, for example, are risk factors for misuse of prescription narcotics,” Dr. Hayward said.

Eileen Crimmins, a professor of gerontology [*and well-known demographer*] at the University of Southern California, said the causes of death in these younger people were largely social — “violence and drinking and taking drugs.” Her research shows that social problems are concentrated in the lower education group.

Of some interest in the story is the idea that whites are more affected than minority group members because physicians are much less likely to prescribe the pain-killers to them for fear that they will be more likely than whites to sell them or become addicted. Here is a rare case where racial/ethnic stereotypes have inadvertently saved lives. The long-term solution seems to be fairly straight-forward--stop prescribing these drugs!

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Posted by [John Weeks](#) at 8:42 PM

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