# Blackpool South leads England in premature deaths, exposing stark North-South health divide



Dozens of areas across England and Wales have been identified as hotspots for premature deaths, sparking serious concern about regional health inequalities. An analysis has revealed that Blackpool South currently holds the highest premature mortality rate in the country, with nearly 730 men per 100,000 dying before reaching the age of 75. This figure represents a staggering 3.4 times higher rate than that observed in North East Hampshire, where the number is significantly lower at just 214.3 per 100,000.

Professor Karol Sikora, a seasoned oncologist with 40 years of experience, described Blackpool's statistics as "dreadful," noting that any rate above 500 is indicative of serious public health issues. Government data indicates that 76 of the 575 parliamentary constituencies—approximately one in eight—exceed this critical threshold. The concerning trend highlights that persistent issues of poverty and lifestyle contribute significantly to these premature deaths.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) defines a premature death as occurring before the age of 75. The age-standardised mortality rates used in this context allow for fair comparisons across populations with different demographic structures. For instance, a neighbourhood dominated by older residents might inherently report higher premature death rates than one with a younger demographic. Thus, the measures taken to adjust for these age distributions are essential for equitable assessments of health outcomes.

Experts attribute these high premature death rates in areas like Blackpool to several interlinked factors. Professor Sikora pointed to poverty as a primary driver, linking it to lifestyle choices and a general lack of health education. He explained that this often culminates in a range of unhealthy behaviours, including smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, and poor diet, as well as contributing to insufficient exercise. These lifestyle-related factors are compounded by inadequate access to healthcare, which, despite being a free service through the NHS, is accessed differently by wealthier individuals compared to those from poorer backgrounds. The implications are clear: systemic socio-economic disadvantages create pathways that lead to reduced life expectancy.

Notably, a stark North-South divide is evident in the mortality data, with the majority of constituencies reporting the worst rates situated in the North of England. Out of the 20 constituencies with the most alarming premature death rates, 13 are in the northern regions, with only three located in the Midlands. This trend is consistent with broader observations regarding health disparities and life expectancy, where areas in the South tend to fare significantly better.

Some health analysts, such as Peter Matejic from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, have highlighted the heartbreaking reality that these figures represent. He emphasised the longstanding connections between poverty and health outcomes, stating, "Many factors throughout your life can lead to dying prematurely, but your economic situation affects your health at every stage." Matejic's plea for a comprehensive review of national health policies underlines the necessity for a more holistic approach, one that extends beyond the confines of the NHS and considers socio-economic conditions as fundamental to fostering healthier communities.

The local health landscape in Blackpool reflects a dire situation, particularly concerning cardiovascular diseases—40.8% of deaths in individuals under 75 in the area are deemed preventable. The preventable mortality rate for cardiovascular conditions in Blackpool stands at 54.7 per 100,000, markedly higher than the national average of 30.5 per 100,000. This reinforces the belief that significant public health interventions could dramatically alter these outcomes.

In conclusion, the health statistics emerging from Blackpool South and similar areas necessitate urgent action. Addressing these premature death rates involves an integrated approach that combines healthcare accessibility, education, and socio-economic upliftment. Without substantial policy changes aimed at combating these disparities, these premature deaths will likely persist, impacting the vitality of communities across the region.

### Reference Map

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Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-14663885/neighbourhood-premature-death-hotspot-Interactive-map.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mortality-profile-november-2024-update/mortality-profile-commentary-november-2024> - The UK's Mortality Profile report for November 2024 highlights significant regional disparities in mortality rates. The North East region recorded the highest all-cause mortality rate at 1,105 per 100,000, 22% higher than the South East's rate of 902 per 100,000. Blackpool emerged as the local authority with the highest mortality rate, 82% higher than Hart, the area with the lowest rate. For individuals under 75, Blackpool also had the highest premature mortality rates across all principal causes, with rates 3.0 times higher for all causes compared to Hart.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-lancashire-22772700> - An article from BBC News discusses the stark contrast in life expectancy within Blackpool, England. Residents at the southern end of the tram route can expect to live ten years less than those at the northern end. The piece highlights the health challenges faced by the town and the efforts being made to improve public health, including a partnership between the local NHS, the council, and the football club to promote healthier lifestyles.
4. <https://www.blackpooljsna.org.uk/Living-and-Working-Well/Health-Conditions/Cardiovascular-Disease.aspx> - The Blackpool Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) provides data on cardiovascular disease in Blackpool. In 2021-2023, 40.8% of deaths from cardiovascular diseases in individuals under 75 were considered preventable. Blackpool's preventable under-75 mortality rate for cardiovascular diseases was 54.7 per 100,000, significantly higher than the national average of 30.5 per 100,000. The rate for males was notably high at 78.5 per 100,000.
5. <https://news.sky.com/story/blackpool-is-now-the-area-with-lowest-male-life-expectancy-in-uk-13266791> - Sky News reports that Blackpool now has the lowest male life expectancy in the UK, with an average of 73.1 years, surpassing Glasgow for the first time since records began. The article highlights the geographical disparities in life expectancy, noting that the top ten areas with the highest life expectancy are all in the south of England, while the lowest are in the north and parts of Scotland and Wales.
6. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/bulletins/avoidablemortalityinenglandandwales/2020> - The Office for National Statistics (ONS) report on avoidable mortality in Great Britain for 2020 reveals that Blackpool had the highest rate of preventable mortality for males, with 355.8 deaths per 100,000 males. This rate was 3.2 times higher than Hart, which had the lowest rate. For females, Middlesbrough had the highest rate of preventable mortality in 2018 to 2020, with 205.4 deaths per 100,000 females.
7. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mortality-profile-march-2023/mortality-profile-commentary-march-2023> - The UK's Mortality Profile report for March 2023 provides age-standardised mortality rates for various causes of death in England for 2021. It shows that the North East region had the highest mortality rate for all causes at 1,121 per 100,000 population, while the South West had the lowest at 917 per 100,000. The report also highlights that people living in the most deprived tenth of local authority areas in England had a mortality rate 48% higher than those in the least deprived tenth.