

PRELIMINARY DATA FROM AN ONGOING STATEWIDE STUDY

An Epidemic of White Death: A Canary in the Coal Mine?

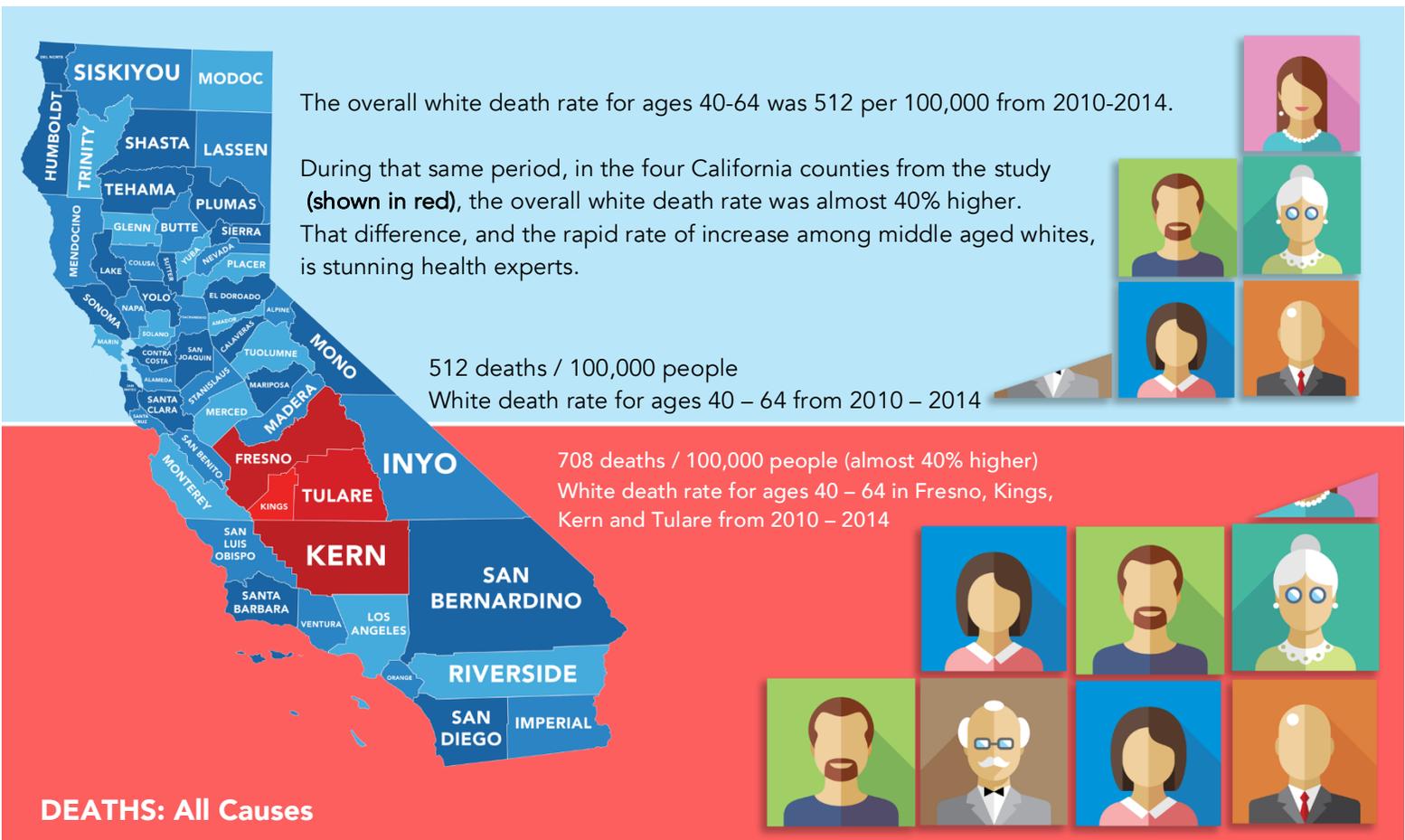
An alarming national trend wreaks havoc in California's South Central Valley

Introduction

Target Counties are among the poorest in the state, if not the nation: Fresno, Kern, Kings, and Tulare.

This is not the time to dismantle the health care safety net anywhere – particularly in an area and for a population that desperately needs it. This preliminary data from an ongoing statewide study targets four counties in California's Central San Joaquin Valley: **Fresno, Kern, Kings, and Tulare**. Residents in these areas are considered the poorest in the state. Any change in safety net services such as health coverage will have devastating and potentially life threatening effects not only in California, which is ground zero based on the findings, but in other rural parts of the country. All residents need to know the facts and that our social compact is being torn apart.

All Deaths in California State vs the Central Valley: Fresno, Kern, Kings, and Tulare



Red Alert

In the two southernmost counties of the Valley, Kern and Tulare, where the poverty rate in 2015 was 22% and 28% respectively, the rising death rates are alarming.

Death rates from stress-related conditions have climbed faster in the Southern Central Valley than they have statewide. Here are some examples:

- In Fresno County, the rate at which middle-aged white adults (ages 40-64 years) are dying from accidental drug poisoning has increased by 212% since the 1990s; and in Kern County it has increased 164% over the same period.
- In Tulare County, the death rate from viral hepatitis has increased by 167% since the 1990s.
- White women are being most affected. In Kern County, the rate at which young white men (ages 25-34 years) are dying from accidental drug overdoses has increased by 248% since the 1990s. Among women, the death rate appears to be rising faster.
- In Kern County, suicides by hanging, strangulation and suffocation among middle-aged whites have increased by 133% since the 1990s.

We cannot blame these deaths simply on the opioid epidemic. These are deaths of despair.

Code Red in Central California: Rising death rates in the Southern Central Valley ages 40-64

