

Causes of death

Did you know?

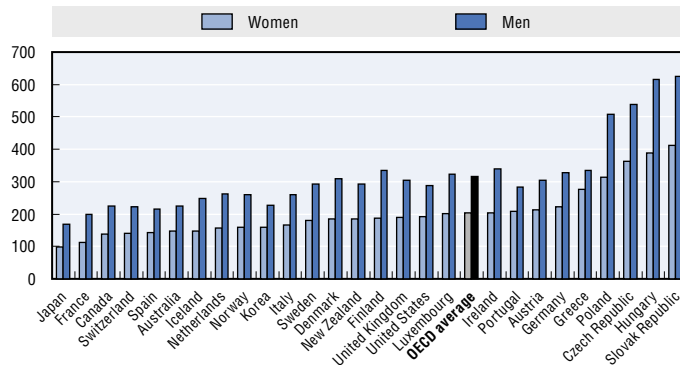
For the population as a whole, the four main causes of death are *circulatory diseases* such as strokes and heart attacks, *cancers*, *respiratory diseases* such as bronchitis and emphysema, and *external causes* such as suicide, homicide and traffic accidents.

At any given age, men are more likely to die from one of these conditions than are women. However, eventually these same sources of mortality are the reason why most women die as well – they are just more likely to strike women at an older age.

Men are more prone to die from circulatory diseases than women in all OECD countries, once adjustments are made to reflect the differences in age structures. Mortality rates from circulatory diseases are particularly high in the Slovak Republic, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland and are lowest in Japan and France. Clearly, diet explains at least part of these differences.

Deaths from circulatory diseases

Number of deaths, standardised for differences in age structures, per 100 000 population (2003 or latest year available)

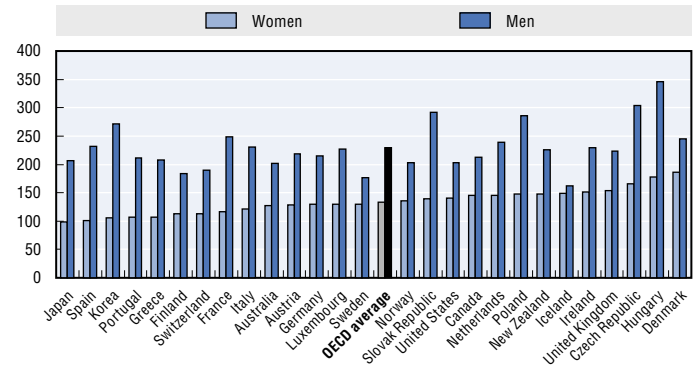


Cancer is the second leading cause of death in most OECD countries, accounting for between 25% and 30% of deaths among men and women. In all countries, mortality rates from cancer are higher among men than among women. The gender gap is particularly large in Spain, France, Korea and the Slovak Republic. Lung cancer still accounts for the greatest number of cancer deaths among men in all OECD countries (except Sweden and Iceland), while it is one of the main causes of cancer mortality among women. As the gap in tobacco consumption between men and women declines, so will differences in rates of lung cancer.

Some cancers of course affect one sex more than the other – breast cancer and prostate cancer. These diseases are very widespread. Fortunately, advances in screening and treatment mean many women and men now survive these cancers.

Deaths from cancer

Numbers of deaths, standardised for differences in age structures, per 100 000 population (2003 or latest year available)



Source: OECD (2005), *Health at a Glance – OECD Indicators 2005*, OECD, Paris; OECD (2006), *OECD Health Data 2006*, OECD, Paris.