

## Causes of death in the EU25

# Significant differences among Member States

## Two thirds of deaths due to diseases of the circulatory system and cancer

Heart attacks, strokes and other diseases of the circulatory system are the most common cause of death in the **EU25**, accounting for 41% of all deaths, and 52% of deaths among the over 85s. Cancer is responsible for a quarter of all deaths and is the largest single cause of death among the middle-aged (41% of deaths amongst those aged 45-64), while external causes<sup>1</sup> such as transport accidents and suicide are most frequent among the young.

But, according to average figures for the three year period 2001-2003 published<sup>2</sup> by **Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities**, the picture is not uniform throughout the EU25.

### Transport accidents the major external cause of death among the under 20s

Within the **EU25**, 27% of the deaths among those under 20 years old were due to external causes. Around half of these were due to transport accidents, which killed almost two and a half times more males than females. The highest male death rates were found in **Slovakia** (19 deaths per 100 000 men aged 0-19), **Lithuania** (16), **Latvia** (15), **Portugal** and **Greece** (both 14), and the lowest in **Sweden** (5), the **Netherlands** and the **United Kingdom** (both 6), **Hungary**, **Ireland** and **Finland** (7 each).

### Men in the 20-44 age group four times more likely to commit suicide than women

External causes, the largest single cause of death among 20-44 year olds, were responsible for 38% of deaths in this age group in the **EU25**, with suicide (12%) almost as common as transport accidents (13%). On average in the **EU25**, men in this age group were four times more likely to commit suicide than women, with the highest rates reported among men in North-East Europe: **Lithuania** (90 deaths per 100 000 men aged 20-44), **Estonia** (55), **Latvia** (54) and **Finland** (43). **Lithuania** also had the highest rate of suicide among women of this age group (12), followed by **Finland** and the Flanders region of **Belgium** (both 11) and **France** (9).

The lowest rates for both men and women were found in Southern Europe: **Greece** (5 men, 1 woman per 100 000), **Italy** (10 men, 3 women), **Malta** (11 men, 3 women), **Spain** (12 men, 3 women) and **Portugal** (13 men, 3 women). It should be noted, however, that difficulties of investigation and cultural differences may affect the data for this cause of death.

### Cancer responsible for 2 in 5 deaths among the middle-aged

In the 45-64 age group, cancers were responsible for 41% of all deaths. Among men, cancers of the respiratory system (lung, throat, etc) were the most common, responsible for 106 deaths per 100 000 men aged 45-64. The highest rates were found in Eastern European countries: **Hungary** (236), the **Czech Republic** (187) and **Slovakia** (174), and the lowest rates in **Sweden** (39) and **Finland** (51).

Among women in this age group, breast cancer was the most prevalent, accounting for 48 deaths per 100 000 women. The highest death rates were found in **Denmark** (66), the Flanders region of **Belgium** (64) and the **Netherlands** (60), and the lowest in **Greece** and **Spain** (both 38).

## Diseases of the circulatory system in the elderly

Diseases of the circulatory system were the most common cause of death among people aged 65-84, accounting for 42% of all deaths. Within this group of diseases, ischaemic heart disease (including heart attacks) was the major killer, responsible for 17% of all deaths. The highest death rates from this disease were found in **Estonia** (2 305 men, 1 318 women per 100 000), **Lithuania** (2 219 men, 1 335 women), **Latvia** (2 092 men, 1 214 women), the **Czech Republic** (1 778 men, 1 131 women) and **Slovakia** (1 636 men, 1 278 women). The lowest rates occurred in **France** (402 men, 169 women), **Portugal** (460 men, 275 women), **Spain** (505 men, 247 women) and **Italy** (566 men, 293 women).

### EU25 - Principal causes of death by age group, in percent

	Cancer	Circulatory diseases	Respiratory diseases	Digestive diseases	External causes <sup>1</sup>	Others <sup>1</sup>
<b>All age groups</b>	<b>25.3</b>	<b>41.0</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>15.9</b>
0-19 years old	7.2	3.2	2.8	0.9	26.6	59.3
20-44 years old	19.7	13.8	2.5	6.6	38.0	19.4
45-64 years old	41.4	26.3	4.1	7.6	8.3	12.3
65-84 years old	29.1	42.0	8.2	4.2	2.8	13.7
Over 85 years old	11.6	52.0	10.6	3.5	2.9	19.4

### For a selection of causes, number of deaths per 100 000 inhabitants of the same age group and sex

	Transport accidents		Suicide		Lung, throat etc. cancer		Breast cancer	Ischaemic heart disease	
	<i>aged 0 - 19</i>		<i>aged 20 - 44</i>		<i>aged 45 - 64</i>		<i>45 - 64</i>	<i>aged 65 - 84</i>	
	<i>male</i>	<i>female</i>	<i>male</i>	<i>female</i>	<i>male</i>	<i>female</i>	<i>female</i>	<i>male</i>	<i>female</i>
<b>EU25*</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>105.7</b>	<b>29.1</b>	<b>48.2</b>	<b>787.9</b>	<b>450.5</b>
<b>Belgium**</b>	11.1	6.4	33.3	10.6	113.0	25.6	63.9	630.5	326.3
<b>Czech Republic</b>	12.0	6.9	34.9	6.3	187.5	44.3	59.4	1 778.4	1 131.3
<b>Denmark</b>	8.8	3.3	20.2	5.2	80.8	64.5	65.6	970.6	524.5
<b>Germany</b>	8.3	3.7	18.7	5.0	92.4	30.4	50.7	873.7	524.3
<b>Estonia</b>	11.6	6.5	54.9	7.4	151.9	19.5	52.2	2 305.1	1 317.7
<b>Greece</b>	13.8	5.0	4.8	1.2	116.0	17.0	37.6	589.2	316.1
<b>Spain</b>	10.8	4.1	11.7	3.1	118.0	13.5	37.5	504.6	247.1
<b>France</b>	10.8	4.5	30.1	8.6	120.7	20.7	48.8	401.9	169.0
<b>Ireland</b>	7.3	3.9	27.8	5.1	69.7	29.6	59.2	1 152.8	644.3
<b>Italy</b>	9.7	3.2	10.3	2.6	98.2	19.9	48.1	566.3	292.8
<b>Cyprus</b>	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
<b>Latvia</b>	15.0	8.8	54.0	7.9	167.2	15.1	55.1	2 091.8	1 213.6
<b>Lithuania</b>	16.3	6.2	90.5	12.2	150.5	12.3	55.7	2 218.6	1 334.8
<b>Luxembourg</b>	8.9	6.9	22.2	6.0	81.7	29.6	43.2	642.2	342.4
<b>Hungary</b>	6.8	3.3	40.5	7.8	235.6	66.1	58.4	1 566.9	1 030.0
<b>Malta</b>	8.1	0.7	11.3	3.4	63.7	12.8	47.4	1 214.9	752.2
<b>Netherlands</b>	5.9	2.5	15.3	5.7	79.7	48.5	59.7	662.4	333.9
<b>Austria</b>	8.9	4.4	26.0	7.1	91.9	32.7	46.6	947.2	598.3
<b>Poland</b>	9.7	4.9	30.6	3.9	162.2	37.9	41.3	934.2	520.1
<b>Portugal</b>	14.2	5.5	13.1	2.9	85.8	12.1	42.0	459.7	275.3
<b>Slovenia</b>	11.7	3.2	41.3	6.7	116.2	30.1	51.7	686.3	371.1
<b>Slovakia</b>	18.8	5.9	25.6	4.7	173.7	24.1	53.4	1 635.5	1 278.3
<b>Finland</b>	7.4	3.4	43.4	11.4	51.2	18.7	40.3	1 290.2	708.1
<b>Sweden</b>	4.7	2.5	19.2	7.0	39.2	36.8	41.0	1 040.5	525.8
<b>United Kingdom</b>	5.8	2.0	15.8	3.8	68.1	40.4	53.3	1 099.3	601.6

: data not available

\* EU25 excludes Cyprus

\*\* Data for Belgium refer to the Flanders region only.

1. **External causes** include road, air and water transport accidents, other accidents, homicide, suicide and accidental poisoning.  
**Others** includes diseases of the blood, the nervous system, the genitourinary system, the musculoskeletal system and the skin, endocrine and metabolic diseases, infectious and parasitic diseases, mental and behavioural disorders, complications of pregnancy, congenital malformations, conditions originating in the perinatal period and ill-defined or unknown causes.
2. **Eurostat**, Statistics in Focus, Population and Social Conditions, 10/2006 "**Causes of death in the EU**". This publication can be downloaded free of charge from the Eurostat website.

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