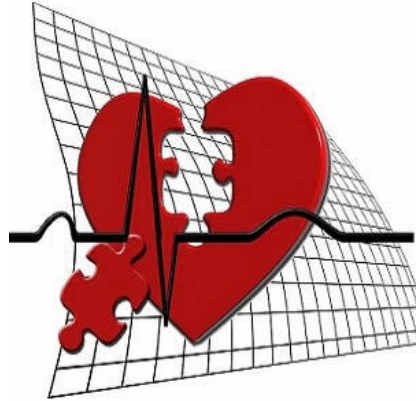




## Cancer Overtakes Heart Disease as Main Cause of Death



With 17.3 million deaths globally, cancer has now overtaken cardiovascular disease as the main cause of death in 12 European countries. New data on the burden of CVD in Europe for 2016 is published in the *European Heart Journal*.

The data shows that in the European region, CVD caused more than four million deaths each year, 45% of all deaths. However, success in preventing and treating the disease has led to large decreases in CVD in a number of countries.

Despite cancer accounting for less than half the number of deaths than CVD in Europe as a whole, in nine of the 15 countries which were members of the European Union before 2004 (EU-15) and in another country that was among those that joined the EU afterwards (EU-28), more men now die from cancer than CVD. These countries are: Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and the UK. This was also the case in Norway and Israel (which are not members of the EU). Among women, more die from cancer than CVD in Denmark and Israel.

Dr Nick Townsend, senior researcher at the BHF Centre on Population Approaches for Non-Communicable Disease Prevention at the University of Oxford (UK), who led the research, said: "These figures highlight the wide inequalities between European countries in deaths from CVD. The 12 countries in which cancer has overtaken CVD as the main cause of death are all found in Western Europe, with nine of them having been members of the EU before 2004. The highest numbers of deaths from CVD tend to be seen in Eastern European countries."

In France, where cancer was first seen to overtake CVD as the main cause of death in men, figures from the most recent year available (2011) show that 92,375 men died from cancer and 64,659 died from CVD. In Spain, the next country in which cancer overtook CVD, 67,711 men died from cancer and 53,487 died from CVD in 2013 (the year with the most recent data). In the UK in 2013, 87,511 men died from cancer and 79,935 from CVD.

Inequalities between European countries can be seen in the percentage of deaths from CVD and age standardised death rates (ASDR). Out of a total of 3.8 million deaths in the EU-15 countries, 33% of these were

caused by CVD, compared to 38% of deaths in the EU-28 countries and 54% of deaths in non-EU member countries. Similar inequalities exist for premature deaths. In the EU-15 countries, 21.4% of premature deaths were from CVD; in the EU-28 countries, 26% were from CVD; and in non-EU countries, 35.8% were from CVD.

For the first time, the researchers also report the number of years of life lost to deaths from CVD or years lived with disability due to the condition, a measurement known as disability-adjusted life years (DALYS). The number of DALYS lost to CVD in 2012 were highest in Ukraine, Russian Federation, Bulgaria, Belarus, and Latvia. They were lowest in Luxembourg, Cyprus, Ireland, Iceland, and Israel.

The authors of the study call for monitoring and surveillance of CVD in order to help countries in Europe work towards reducing the inequalities seen across the continent.

"We need more research into why some countries are showing improved outcomes, while others are not," said Dr Townsend. "Improved data need to be collected in all countries in order to make comparisons on deaths and suffering from CVD between countries so that health professionals and national governments can target interventions more effectively to reduce inequalities.

Source: [European Heart Journal](#)

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