

Leading causes of death in Europe: fact sheet

Noncommunicable diseases

- Noncommunicable diseases – such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease – account for 80% of deaths in the European Region. Diseases of the circulatory system (ischaemic heart disease, stroke, etc.) are the most important cause of premature death (before the age of 65) in the Region, accounting for nearly 50% of the total (Fig. 1). Cancer is the second leading cause, accounting for nearly 20%, while injuries and poisoning are responsible for 9% of deaths (Fig. 2).
- Disease mortality patterns vary widely across the Region, between countries and by age and gender.
- About 30% of deaths in the European Region occur before the age of 65.
- With the ageing population, the risk of cancer is rising. Cancer is the main cause of premature death in 28 of the 53 countries in the Region, and is predicted to further increase by 2020.
- Prevention, as well as treatment, is an effective measure to reduce the premature mortality from diseases of the circulatory system and cancer. Prevention is the only measure to reduce the impact of diseases for which no effective treatment is yet available.

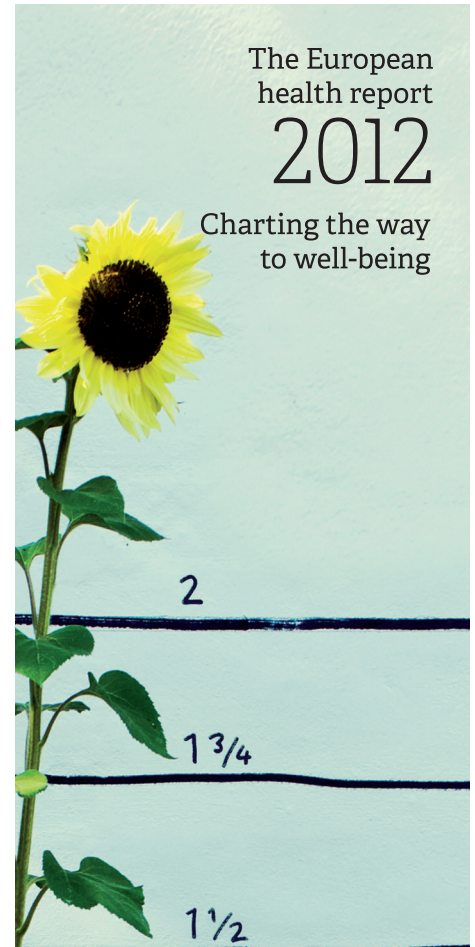
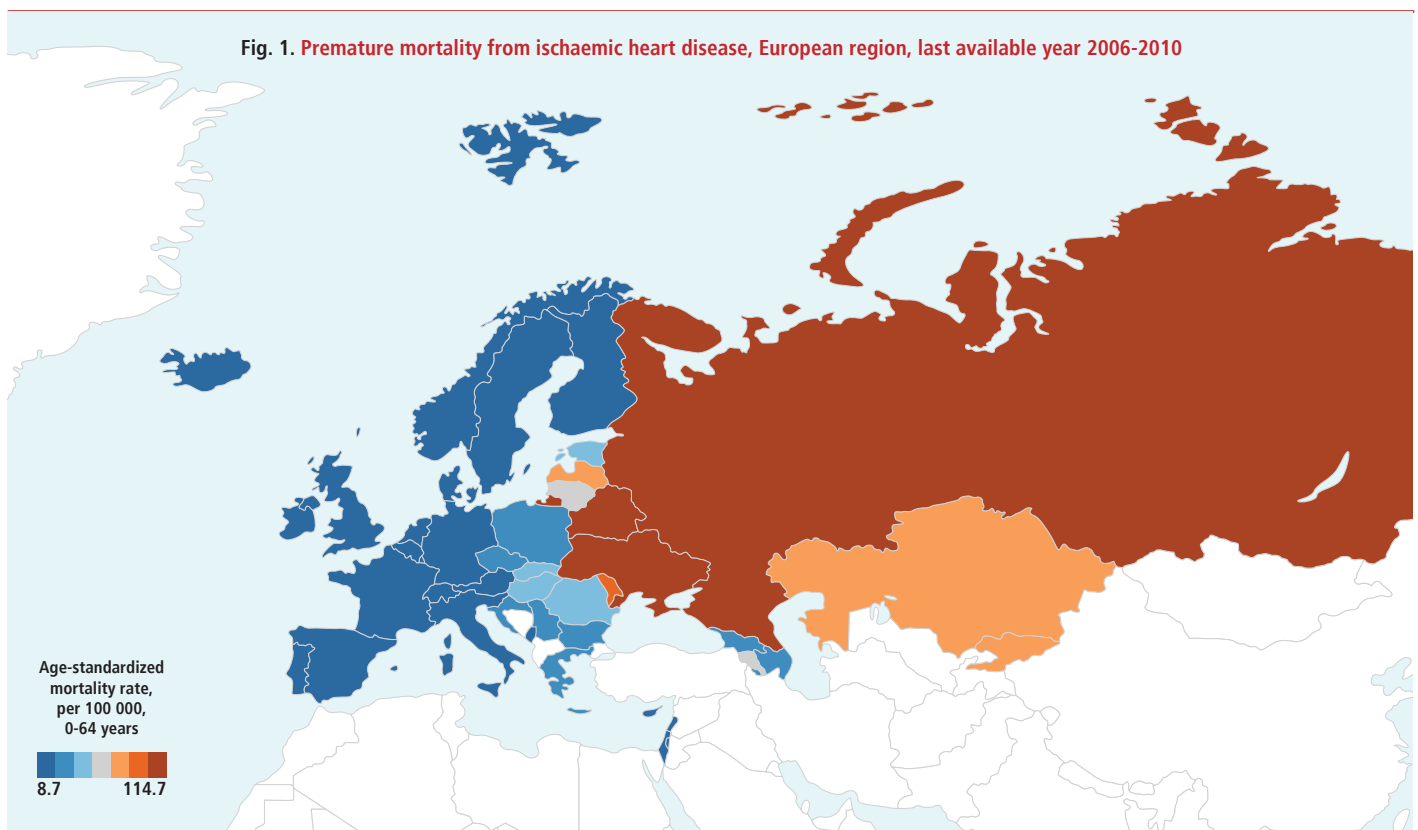


Fig. 1. Premature mortality from ischaemic heart disease, European region, last available year 2006-2010



Communicable diseases

- Communicable diseases are less frequent in the European Region than in the rest of the world, but remain high on the public health agenda.
- Mortality from infectious and parasitic diseases, including re-emerging diseases, has shown a slowly increasing trend in the last 20 years. This highlights the increasing importance of antimicrobial resistance in the Region.
- The infectious illnesses of most concern for the Region are tuberculosis (TB – particularly its drug-resistant forms), HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and hepatitis.
- TB accounts for over 40% of all mortality from communicable diseases and is the most common cause of death among people living with HIV/AIDS.
- HIV/AIDS remains a major public health challenge in the Region, the eastern part of which has the fastest-growing HIV epidemic in the world.
- Although the number of people newly infected with HIV is decreasing globally, it continues to rise in eastern Europe and central Asia. Further, while the numbers of both diagnosed AIDS cases and AIDS-related deaths have declined in central and western Europe, in eastern Europe and central Asia AIDS diagnoses quintupled in 2004–2011 and deaths continue to increase.
- The recent poliomyelitis outbreak, and the rubella and measles epidemics in parts of the European Region have re-emphasized the importance of disease surveillance, immunization and health promotion.

This information is taken from
The European health report 2012: charting the way to well-being.

To download the report, or for more information, visit <http://www.euro.who.int/european-health-report-2012>

Diseases of the respiratory and digestive systems

- Among diseases of the respiratory system, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, pneumonia, influenza and asthma are the main causes of death, particularly in children and older people.
- Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, stomach and intestinal ulcers are the main causes of death among diseases of the digestive system.

Fig. 2. Mortality from main types of cancer in the European Region, 1981 and 2009

