

## MORTALITY FROM CANCER

Cancer caused some 1 320 000 deaths in the European Union in 2015 (Figure 3.13). It is the second leading cause of mortality after cardiovascular diseases, accounting for 25% of all deaths in 2015.

Mortality rates from cancer are lowest in Cyprus, Finland, Malta, Spain and Sweden, with rates at least 10% lower than the EU average. They are highest in Hungary, Croatia, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Poland, with rates more than 15% higher than the EU average (Figure 3.14).

In all countries, mortality rates from cancer are greater among men than women. Overall, some 584 000 women and 739 000 men died from various types of cancer in EU countries in 2015. The aged-standardised mortality rates from cancer was 70% higher among men than women on average in the EU (346 deaths per 100 000 men, compared with 201 deaths per 100 000 women). This gender gap is particularly wide in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Spain and Portugal, with mortality rates more than two times greater among men than among women. It can be explained by the greater prevalence of risk factors among men (e.g. smoking and alcohol consumption), as well as the more limited availability or use of screening programmes for cancers affecting men, leading to lower survival rates after diagnosis.

Lung cancer remains by far the most common cause of death from cancer among men (25% of all cancer deaths across the EU) and the second most common among women (after breast cancer). Some 184 000 men and 89 000 women died from lung cancer in EU countries in 2015. Smoking is the main risk factor for lung cancer. Over the past 10 years, the mortality rate from lung cancer increased by almost 20% across EU countries, driven mainly by a large increase in deaths among women in many countries. This reflects the fact that many women started to smoke several decades later than men (Torre et al., 2014).

Colorectal cancer is the second most common cause of cancer death, killing some 154 200 men and women in EU countries in 2015. The mortality rate from colorectal cancer is about 75% higher among men than among women across EU countries. There are several risk factors for colorectal cancer besides genetic factors and age, including a diet high in fat and low in fibre, alcohol consumption, smoking and obesity. The mortality rate has declined over the past decade in most countries, due to a large extent to earlier detection and higher survival after diagnosis

(see indicator “Survival and mortality from colorectal cancer” in Chapter 6).

Breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among women, causing 94 300 deaths in 2015 and accounting for 16% of all female cancer deaths. While incidence rates of breast cancer have increased over the past decade, death rates have declined or stabilised, indicating increases in survival rates due to earlier diagnosis and better treatment (see indicator “Screening, survival and mortality for breast cancer” in Chapter 6).

Prostate cancer is the third most common cause of cancer deaths among men across EU countries (particularly among men aged over 65), resulting in 75 300 deaths in 2015 and accounting for 10% of all male cancer deaths.

Death rates from all types of cancer combined among men and women have declined at least slightly in most EU member states since 2000, although the decline has been more modest than for circulatory diseases, explaining why cancer now accounts for a larger share of all deaths.

### Definition and comparability

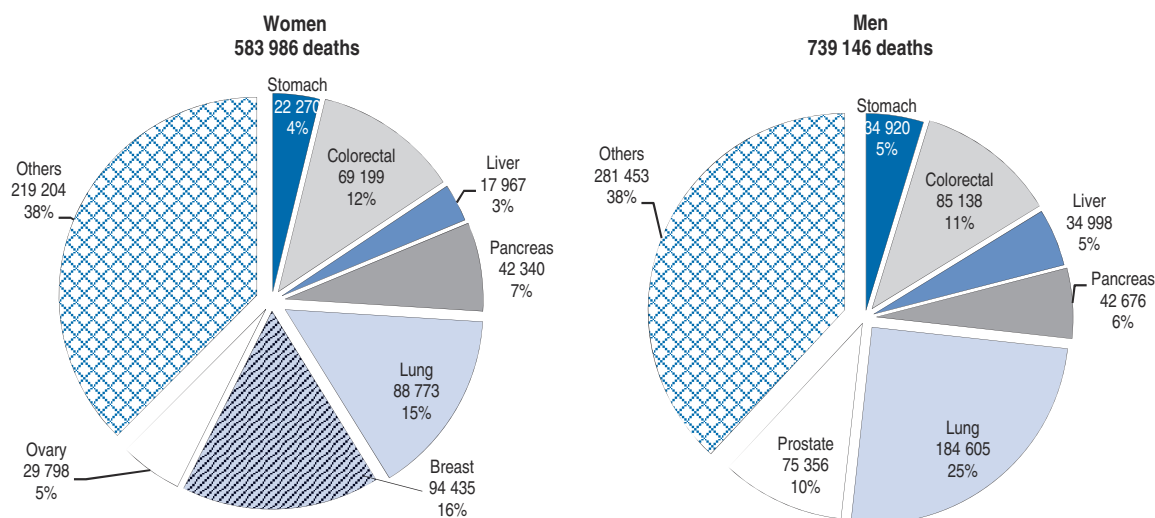
Mortality rates are based on the number of deaths registered in a country in a year divided by the population. The rates have been age-standardised to the revised European standard population adopted by Eurostat in 2012 to remove variations arising from differences in age structures across countries and over time.

Deaths from all cancers relate to ICD-10 codes C00-C97, lung cancer to C33-C34. The international comparability of cancer mortality data can be affected by differences in medical training and practices as well as in death certification procedures across countries.

### References

- Torre et al. (2014), International variation in lung cancer mortality rates and trends among women, *Cancer Epidemiology Biomarkers Prev*, Vol. 23, No. 6, pp. 1025-36.
- OECD (2013), *Cancer Care: Assuring Quality to Improve Survival*, OECD Health Policy Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264181052-en>.

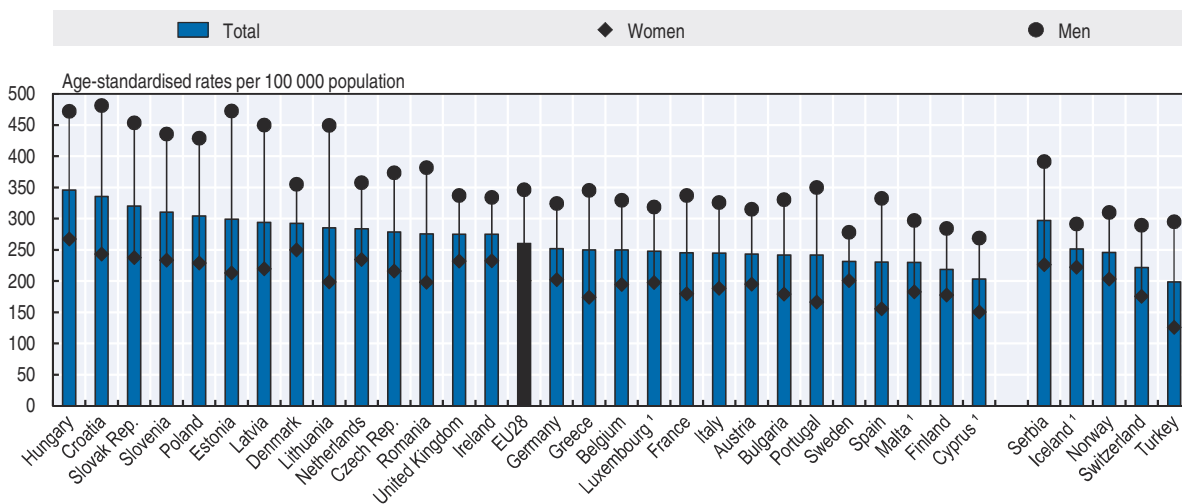
### 3.13. Main causes of cancer mortality among men and women in EU countries, 2015



Source: Eurostat Database.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933834509>

### 3.14. Cancer mortality, 2015



1. Three-year average (2013-15).

Source: Eurostat Database.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933834528>



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