

Pressemeddelelse:

Too many European men die young from preventable causes – WHO report reveals

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Press release of the WHO Regional Office for Europe

Copenhagen, Rome, 17 September 2018 --- The first ever WHO report on men's health and well-being in the 53 countries of the WHO European Region reveals men are living healthier and longer lives than ever before. But despite progress, many of them die far too young from preventable causes, and the reasons behind this go beyond biology.

The new findings are prompting calls to use a gender approach to get men's health on the agenda of health policy-makers in the European Region. The report "The health and well-being of men in the WHO European Region: better health through a gender approach" will be officially launched to delegates at the WHO's decision-making body for the European Region, which starts its session in Rome today. The 53 Member States are expected to adopt a new regional strategy to address men's health challenges.

"The European Region is setting an example through an impressive reduction of premature mortality from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). However, too many men are still not reached by health services and die young from these diseases, as well as injuries. The new report helps us to understand their specific needs and how we can provide gender-appropriate interventions for men that will also help us to meet the Sustainable Development Goal on gender equality," says Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe.

Alarming but preventable differences in mortality between men across the Region

The report highlights the wide gap in men's health across the Region, with average male life expectancy at birth ranging from 64 to 81 years – a 17 year difference among countries. In particular, the report reveals:

- About 86% of all men's deaths can be attributable to NCDs, and injuries which hit men at a younger age.
- In the eastern part of the Region, 37% of NCD-related deaths occur before the age of 60, compared to just 13% in western Europe.
- The main causes of death for men aged 30–59 are cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes and respiratory illnesses.
- In some countries in the eastern part of the Region, men's risk of dying prematurely from cardiovascular diseases is seven times greater than in the western part.
- About three-quarters of men who died in road traffic were under the age of 25.

What lies behind men's risk taking and health-seeking behaviour?

Men's higher exposures to risk factors have been observed for so long that they are almost considered biologically determined, but differences between men across the Region show that they are not. Gender norms and societal expectations influence men's higher rates of smoking, alcohol consumption and injuries and their higher engagement in interpersonal violence compared to women. Their health also deteriorates because of unhealthy diets, which also differ between countries in the Region. For example, the risk of high level consumption of sodium is higher in central Asia, while the leading risk in western Europe is diets low in fresh fruit and vegetables. The latest data show that:

- Smoking was responsible for 1 million men's deaths in 2016 in the European Region and ranks as the leading health risk factor among men in western and central Europe.
- Alcohol and drug use are the leading risk factors in eastern Europe, and cause 24% of men's years lost.
- In central Asia, the main health risk factor is unhealthy diet, to which 17% of men's years lost can be attributed.

Moreover, men are often less likely to consult general practitioners than women. For example, men facing serious emotional problems and symptoms of depression often remain undiagnosed because they do not take these medical conditions seriously and are not as used to reaching out for help. Failure to recognize mental health problems contributes to increasing suicide rates, which are five times higher for men aged 30–49, than for women the same age.

Gender equality as a benefit for men's health

The report reveals that wealth, education, employment, social exclusion and discrimination, retirement and living arrangements are among the key factors that influence men's health and well-being. Living in a country with gender equality benefits men's health and shows up as lower mortality rates, higher well-being, half the risk of being depressed, higher likelihood to have protected sex, lower suicide rates and a 40% reduced risk of a violent death.

The report emphasizes that improving the health and well-being of men is best addressed within a gender equality framework. Engaging men and facilitating their participation in paid and unpaid care, prevention of violence against women and shared responsibility for reproductive health are key interventions to achieve global goals on gender equality and to accelerate progress in reaching health goals.

Public health response

Health policy-makers attending the session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe in Rome will be invited to discuss the new Strategy on the health and well-being of men in the WHO European Region, which has been developed in consultation with countries, experts, partner organizations and civil society.

The Strategy puts forward a raft of measures that can help governments tackle gender imbalances, maximize violence prevention efforts and foster men's involvement in reproductive

health, etc. It aims at making health systems gender responsive and ensuring a model of care that makes health services more accessible for boys and men. Understanding men's health needs, reaching out to men and improving health promotion among them are also part of the plan.

Note for editors:

The embargoed copy of the report "The health and well-being of men in the WHO European Region: better health through a gender approach" is now available on: <https://we.tl/t-rhZlCgCctB>
The report will be published on WHO/Europe's web site on Monday, 17 September at 11:00 CET and will be available on <http://www.euro.who.int/en/menshealthreport>

A fact sheet on men's health will be available from Monday, 17 September at 11:00 CET on: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/gender/mens-health/fact-sheet-mens-health-and-well-being-in-the-who-european-region-2018>

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