Statistics on Causes of Death 2015

In 2015, a little over 91,000 people died in Sweden. Of these, 46,500 were women and 44,500 men. Cardiovascular diseases and tumours were the most common causes of death for both men and women. There are some geographical differences, with a higher mortality rate in the counties of Norrland than in the southern parts of the country.

Reduced mortality rate and longer life

In Sweden, around 90,000 people die every year. In 2015, 91,000 people died in Sweden, which is a slightly higher number than in 2014, when 89,000 people died. Up until the mid-1990s, more men than women died. Since then, the number of men who die has decreased whilst the number of women who die has remained constant, meaning that today, more women die than men in Sweden.

The number of deaths in a population depends largely on its size and age structure. In Sweden, the population has increased and grown older in recent decades. By calculating the age-standardised mortality rate per 100,000 inhabitants, we take into account both the population size and the age structure. This reveals that the mortality rate has decreased steadily since 1987, for both men and women, even if it increased somewhat between 2014 and 2015.

The reason for the decrease in mortality rate is that we live longer today than we did in the 1980s. The average age at death has increased both for women – from 77 to 82 – and men – from 72 to 77 – during the period 1987–2015.

Cardiovascular diseases and tumours are the most common causes of death

The cause-of-death patterns for men and women are quite similar. Diseases of the circulatory system, together with tumours, accounted for 61 per cent of
deaths in 2015. These are the most common and second most common causes of death among both women and men.

These disease groups have been the dominant causes of death for a long time. However, there is a clear difference over time. Whilst deaths caused by cardiovascular diseases have more than halved since 1987, decreasing from 730 to 330 (55 per cent), the corresponding count for tumours has been reduced by just 13 per cent.

More women than men die of dementia
The proportion of women that die as a result of mental illnesses and syndromes is almost double that of men; see figure 2. The deaths in this group are accounted for primarily by various types of dementia. In 2015, vascular and other, unspecified types of dementia caused 3,800 deaths among women and 1,900 deaths among men.

Greater frequency of suicide and fatal accidents among men
The proportion of deaths as a result of injuries and poisoning among men is double that among women. This is also true for the subgroups. In the group intentional self-harm (suicide), the number of deaths among men (almost 850) was more than double that among women (just over 330). Incidents of injury with unclear intention are often included in the category of suicide. In this case, the number of deaths totals almost 1,100 among men and just over 460 among women.

The age distribution for suicide also differs somewhat between men and women. Suicide among men is most common among people aged 85 and above, whereas suicide among women is most common in the age group 45–54; see figure 3.
Causes of death among people aged 1–39

Among people aged 1–39, injuries and poisoning are the most common causes of death. In 2015, a total of 1,660 people in this age group died. Of these, 1,000 died from injuries or poisoning.

Cancer also accounts for a large proportion of deaths in this age group. Brain tumours were responsible for the majority of tumour-related deaths.

Together, injuries and poisoning and tumours accounted for 79 per cent of deaths among men and 68 per cent among women in this age group in 2015.

Higher mortality rate in the counties of Norrland

Mortality rates have dropped throughout the country in recent decades. The cause-of-death patterns are also relatively similar from one county to the next. There is, however, a geographical difference between counties in terms of mortality rates. Mortality rates in the counties of Norrland are the highest.
Low education associated higher mortality rate

The mortality rate is higher for people who have only primary education, both compared with those who have up to secondary and those with post-secondary education.

The mortality rate for cardiovascular diseases is, for example, more than double among women with only primary education, compared with women who have up to post-secondary education, in the age group 35–79; see Figure 5.

Mortality rates for alcohol-related causes of death differ even more between different levels of education. For both women and men, the mortality rate is almost 3 and 3.5 times higher among people with only primary education than among those who have attained up to post-secondary education.

However, mortality rates have decreased for all levels of education since the early 1990s.

![Figure 5. Mortality rates for cardiovascular diseases, by level of education](image)

Source: Swedish Cause of Death Register, National Board of Health and Welfare and the Swedish Register of Education, Statistics Sweden

More information

You can find more tables, graphs and information in the following Excel file (in Swedish, but with English list of terms):
www.socialstyrelsen.se/publikationer2016/2016-8-4

If you want to use our statistical database:
www.socialstyrelsen.se/statistics/statisticaldatabase/causeofdeath

Contact information:

Jesper Hörnblad
Phone: +46 (0)75-247 35 82
E-mail: jesper.hornblad@socialstyrelsen.se