Socialstyrelsen

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Statistics on Causes of Death 2024

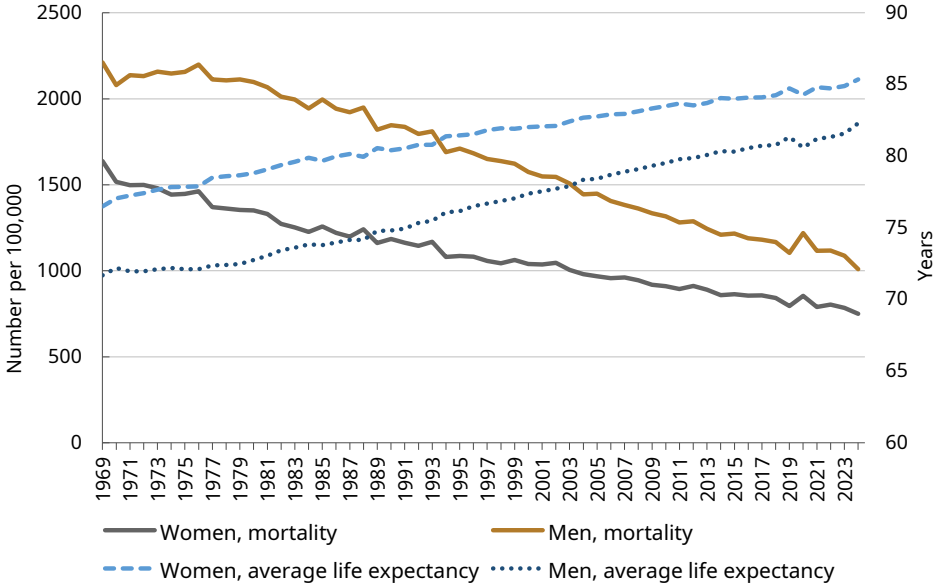
A total of 91,365 people registered in Sweden died during 2024. Of these, 45,881 were women and 45,484 were men. The number of deaths has decreased over time. *Cardiovascular diseases* caused the largest number of deaths in 2024, followed by *tumours*. However, tumours account for an increasing proportion of deaths. *Avoidable mortality* is mortality that is possible to reduce through public health and healthcare policy. In the younger age groups, *external causes of death* are most common. From around the age of 50, tumours and cardiovascular diseases dominate avoidable mortality. There are socioeconomic differences in avoidable mortality, with higher mortality in areas with mixed or worse socioeconomic conditions, compared to areas with better socioeconomic conditions.

The number of deaths has decreased over time

The number of deaths per 100,000 inhabitants and year has decreased over time for both women and men, which has resulted in increased average life expectancy. This can be linked to a number of factors at both the societal and system level, as well as the individual level (Public Health Agency, 2025). In 1969, the age-standardised mortality rate was 1,639 per 100,000 for women and 2,212 per 100,000 for men (Figure 1). The corresponding mortality rate in 2024 was 750 and 1,009 for women and men, respectively. This corresponds to decreases of 54 percent for both women and men during the years 1969–2024. The slight variation towards the end of the period can partly be attributed to a low mortality rate in 2019, and partly to the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic, especially in 2020, contributed to increased mortality.

Figure 1. Mortality rate 1969–2024 and life expectancy 1969–2024, women and men

Age-standardised death rates per 100,000 (left axis) and average life expectancy (right axis). Note the different scales of the two axes.



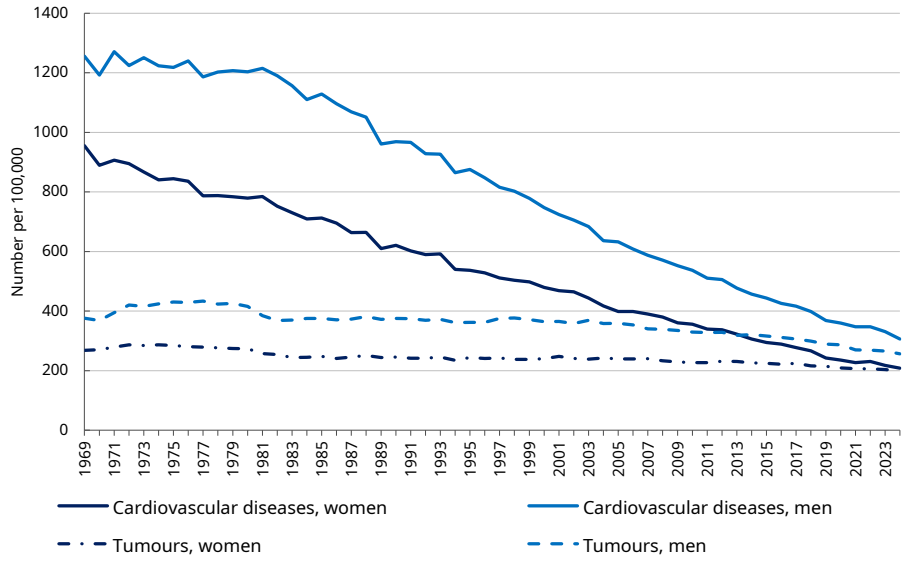
Source: The Cause of Death Register, National Board of Health and Welfare; Statistical database, life expectancy table for 0-year-olds, the whole nation, Statistics Sweden.

Most deaths are caused by diseases of the circulatory system, but an increasing proportion are caused by tumours

The most common causes of death in 2024 were related to *diseases of the circulatory system*, followed by *tumours*, for both women and men (Figure 2). Together, deaths in these two categories accounted for 53.8 and 56.1 percent of the deaths for women and men, respectively. Mortality from diseases of the circulatory system has been significantly higher for a long time but has decreased at a faster rate than mortality from tumour diseases. In 2024, tumours were the most common cause of death among women in Stockholm, Uppsala and Gotland, and among men in Stockholm, Halland and Gotland. In 2023, tumours were the most common cause of death in Stockholm County alone.

Figure 2. Deaths from diseases of the circulatory system and tumours, women and men, 1969–2024

Age-standardised mortality rates per 100,000 inhabitants



Source: The Cause of Death Register, National Board of Health and Welfare

Avoidable mortality

Avoidable mortality is divided into health policy-related and healthcare-related, and the list of causes of death included has been developed by the OECD and Eurostat (see fact box and reference OECD/Eurostat, 2022)[1]. The purpose of the notion of avoidable mortality is to enable international comparisons and serve as a starting point for assessing how public health policies and healthcare systems are performing in terms of avoiding premature mortality from preventable and treatable causes of death (OECD/Eurostat, 2022). In the following sections, we present the most common causes of death within avoidable mortality by age group for the years 2022–2024.

Among girls and boys aged 1–17, *certain perinatal conditions*, i.e. conditions originating in the perinatal period (days 0–6 after birth), were the most common cause of death within avoidable mortality in 2022–2024 (Figure 3a–3b). Besides this, so-called *external causes* dominated such as *intentional self-harm* (suicide) and *accidental injuries* and *transport accidents*. In addition, *congenital malformations of the circulatory system* (heart defects) were the third most common cause of death among girls and fifth most common among boys.

[1]The list of causes of death included in avoidable mortality has been modified regarding intentional self-harm, events of undetermined intent, assault, alcohol- and drug-related deaths and poisonings (see fact box).

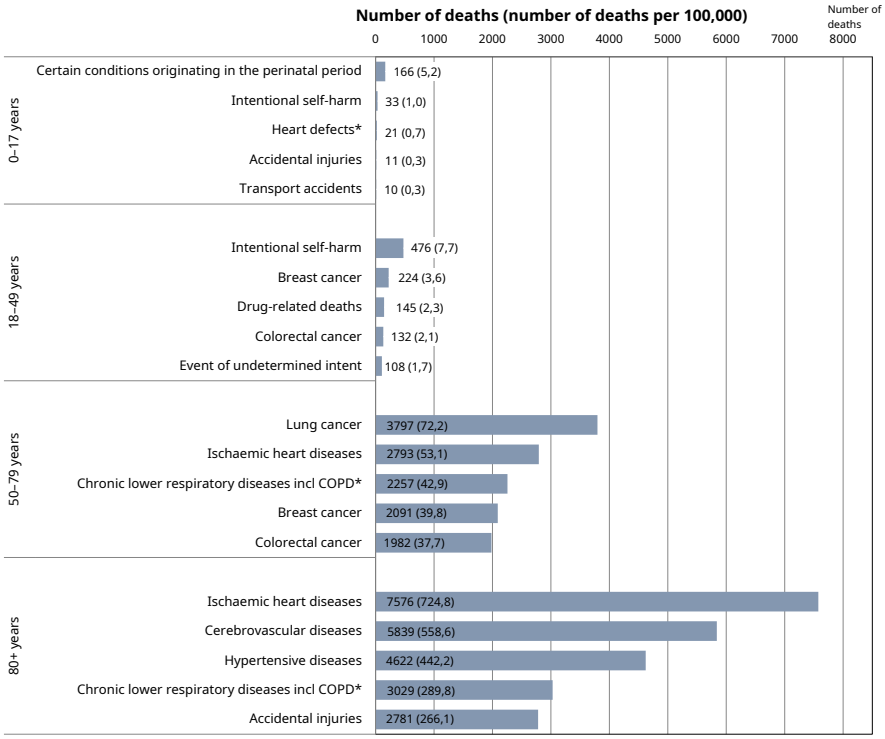
External causes were also the most common causes of death within avoidable mortality among women and men aged 18–49. Besides this, two forms of cancer, breast cancer and colorectal cancer, were the second and fourth most common causes of death among women, respectively. Among men, an even stronger dominance of external causes was observed. *Intentional self-harm* was 2.5 times more common and *drug-related deaths* were more than 3.5 times more common among men than among women in this age group. Among men, no cancer types were among the five most common causes of death within avoidable mortality in this age group, but *ischaemic heart disease* was included.

From around the age of 50, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases as well as tumours dominated avoidable mortality for both men and women. Among women aged 50–79, lung cancer was the most common cause of death within avoidable mortality, followed by ischaemic heart disease. Two other types of cancer were among the most common causes of death in the group: breast cancer and colorectal cancer. Among men aged 50–79, ischemic heart disease was by far the most common cause of death within avoidable mortality. Lung cancer and colorectal cancer were the second and fourth most common causes of death, respectively. To a high extent, women in this age group, unlike men, also died from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). In contrast, men in this age group died from diabetes to a considerably higher extent than women.

In the oldest age group of 80 years and older, ischemic heart disease and other cardiovascular diseases were the most common causes of death within avoidable mortality among both men and women. COPD among women and Covid-19 among men were also among the most common causes of death in avoidable mortality. In this age group, *accidental injuries* were also seen, which primarily concern falls and resulting complications for people 80 years and older.

Figure 3a. The five most common causes of death within avoidable mortality in 2022–2024, by age group, girls and women

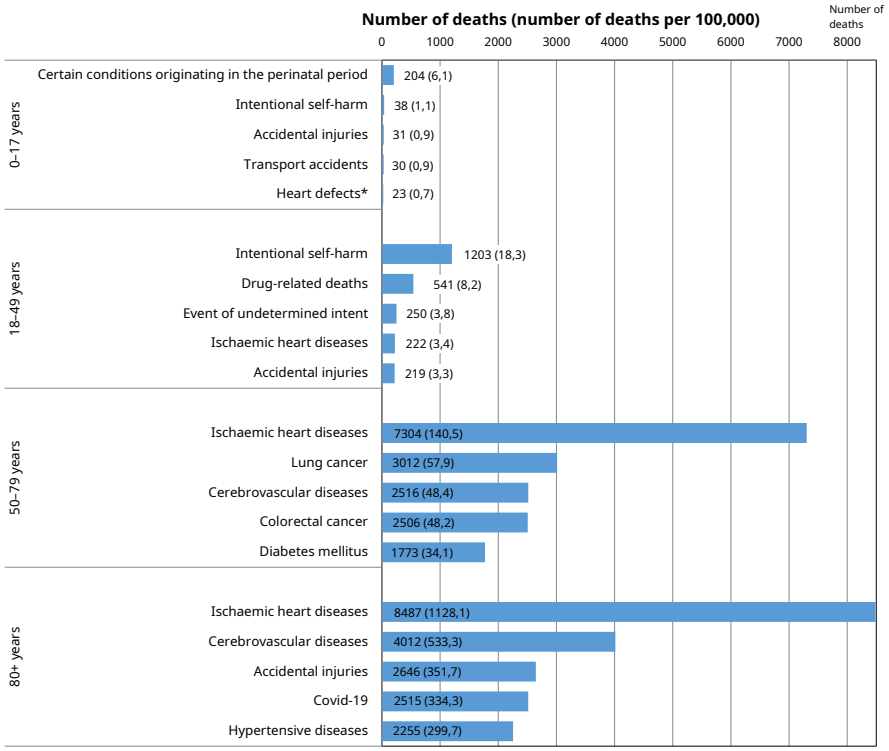
Number and number per 100,000



Source: The Cause of Death Register, National Board of Health and Welfare
*COPD – chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

Figure 3b. The five most common causes of death within avoidable mortality in 2022–2024, by age group, boys and men

Number and number per 100,000



Source: The Cause of Death Register, National Board of Health and Welfare
*Heart defects – congenital malformations of the circulatory system

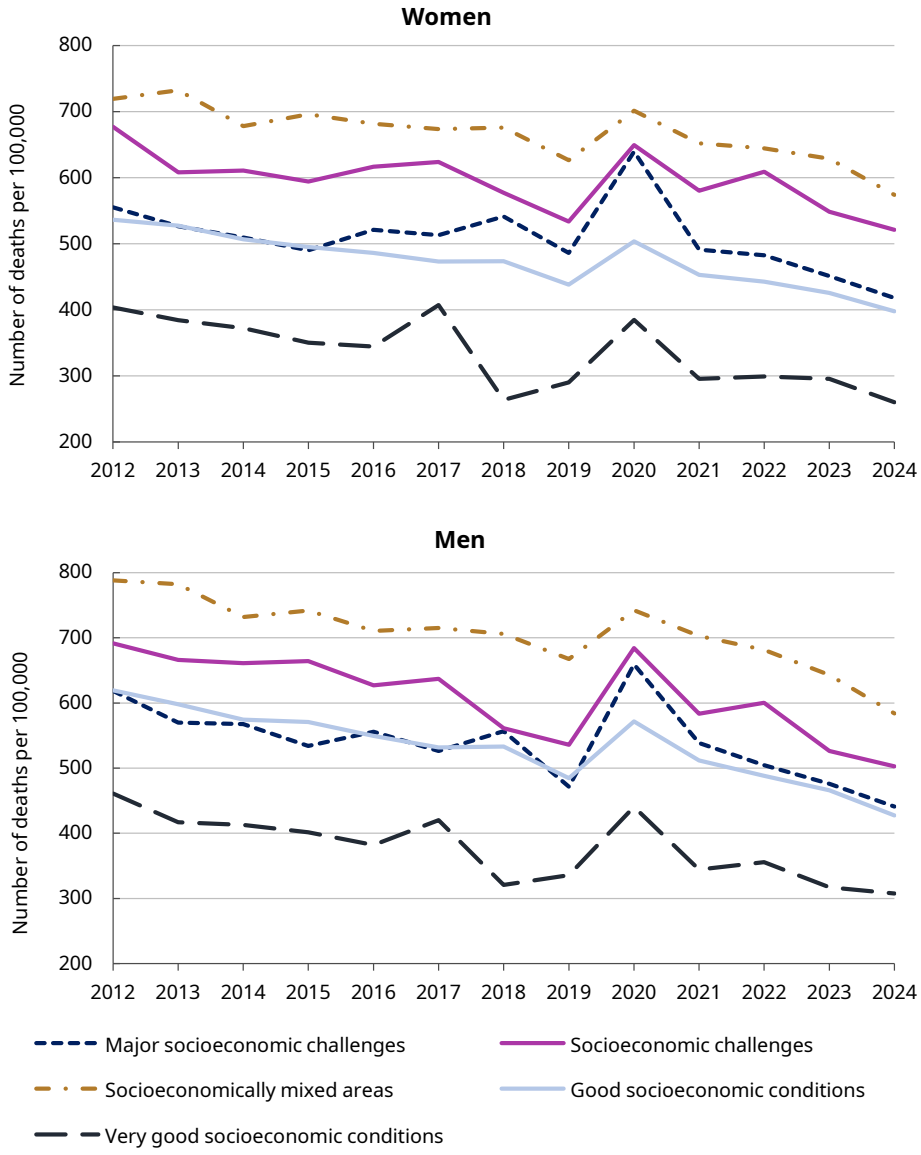
Large socioeconomic disparities in avoidable mortality

The overall avoidable mortality rate differs depending on the type of socioeconomic area (see fact box). During 2012–2024, the age-standardised avoidable mortality was highest in socioeconomically mixed areas (569 and 579 per 100,000 for women and men, respectively) and areas with socioeconomic challenges (516 and 499 per 100,000 for women and men, respectively), while areas with very good socioeconomic conditions had the lowest avoidable mortality (258 and 305 per 100,000 for women and men, respectively) (Figure 4).

Avoidable mortality has decreased in all area types. In areas with major socioeconomic challenges, mortality among women decreased by 25% and among men by 29% during the period. In socioeconomically mixed areas, it decreased by 20% among women and by 26% among men, while the decrease in areas with very good socioeconomic conditions was 36% for women and 33% for men.

Figure 4. Avoidable mortality, by socioeconomic area type, 2012–2024

Age-standardised mortality rates per 100,000 inhabitants



Source: The Cause of Death Register, National Board of Health and Welfare, Statistics Sweden

Avoidable mortality

Health policy-related avoidable mortality is defined by Eurostat/OECD (2022) as mortality that can mainly be avoided through preventive public health measures and primary care, for example, efforts to reduce alcohol consumption and tobacco use. **Healthcare-related avoidable mortality** is mortality that can mainly be avoided through secondary prevention and treatment (i.e. after the onset of diseases, to reduce mortality), for example, screening and treatment. Avoidable mortality is usually presented as the total number of deaths for the entire group 0–74 or 0–79 years. However, in this fact sheet, older age groups are also presented, in order to show the full picture of avoidable mortality. Some modification has been made to the list of causes of death included in avoidable mortality: In the Eurostat/OECD list, the ICD-10 codes X60–X65, X85 and Y10–15 are included in "Alcohol-related and drug-related deaths". In this factsheet, they are included in X60–X84 (*Intentional self-harm*), X85–Y09 (*Assault*) and Y10–Y34 (*Event of undetermined intent*), respectively, in order to distinguish causes of death based on intent, and to be consistent with other, related statistics.

Regional statistical areas and area type

This fact sheet reports statistics by area type, a socioeconomic grouping based on regional statistical areas (acronym in Swedish: RegSO). RegSO divides Sweden into 3,363 areas that adhere to county and municipal boundaries. RegSO are generated on 31 December each year for all living individuals registered in Sweden. Area type is based on a socioeconomical index (SEI) which is calculated for each RegSO. SEI is constructed as the mean value for three statistical indicators: the proportion (of the population in each area) with high school education (20–65 years), the proportion with low economical prerequisites (irrespective of age), and the proportion receiving financial subsidies and/or that are long-term unemployed (20–65 years). A high SEI value is indicative of greater socioeconomical vulnerability. Based on standard deviations from the mean, a grouped variable is derived, namely area type. The variable spans from major socioeconomic challenges (1) to very good socioeconomic conditions (5). The latest relevant year for RegSO and area type is 2024 and 2023, respectively.

About the statistics

Mortality is the total number of deaths in a given population and is measured in **mortality rate**, usually expressed as number of deaths per 100,000 inhabitants of the population. It is used to compare mortality between groups that are different in numbers. **Age-standardised mortality** takes into account the differences in age between the groups. Age-standardised mortality is calculated according to the national average population in 2024.

Underlying cause of death is the disease or injury that initiated the chain of events leading directly to death. This includes the circumstances of an accident or violent act that caused the fatal injury. This fact sheet reports exclusively on the underlying cause of death.

In the statistics presenting data by area type, deceased individuals one year or older have been included. RegSO code, area type and population for each area type have been taken from the year before the death. This is because deceased persons are not registered at the end of the year they died. Age-standardised mortality per area type is calculated according to the national population on the last day of December 2023.

More information

You can find more tables, graphs and information here (in Swedish): www.socialstyrelsen.se/statistik-och-data/statistik/allastatistikamnen/dodsorsaker

If you would like to use our statistical database (in English), please visit: https://sdb.socialstyrelsen.se/if_dor/val_eng.aspx

References

1. OECD/Eurostat. (2022). *Avoidable mortality: OECD/Eurostat lists of preventable and treatable causes of death (January 2022 version).* Retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/data/datasets/oecd-health-statistics/avoidable-mortality-2019-joint-oecd-eurostat-list-preventable-treatable-causes-of-death.pdf
2. Public Health Agency. (2025). *Folkhälsan i Sverige*. Retrieved from https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/contentassets/3a11f1932968414bae25a4da486340a4/folkhalsan-sverige-arsrapport-2025.pdf

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