

How men's lifestyles double their risk of an early death

June 17 2011

A University of Sussex psychologist is one of the key authors of a major new report that reveals that death rates of men aged 16-64 is twice that of women in the same age range in the European Union.

In *The State of Men's Health in Europe*, produced by the European Men's Health Forum and launched in the European Parliament on 14th June, Dr Richard de Visser identifies how poor lifestyles and preventable risks are among the factors leading to high rates of [premature deaths](#) in men.

In particular, Dr de Visser looked at the effect of alcohol, [drug use](#) and [sexual behavior](#). He says: "Lifestyles are not simply the product of individual choice. Those who are in poor material and social conditions eat less healthily, exercise less and are more likely to smoke or misuse drugs. In the context of addressing [premature mortality](#) among men, there is a growing awareness of the need for [lifestyle modification](#) in early life among men engaged in damaging health behaviours."

The report shows that every year 630,000 men of working age die compared with 300,000 female deaths across the EU27 countries in this age group.

Dr de Visser's analysis found:

- Across Europe, men are more likely than women to have smoked: 63 percent of men have smoked at some point in their lives, compared to 45

per cent of women. In all countries men in higher socioeconomic groups are the least likely to smoke. It is estimated that 15 per cent of all deaths in the EU could be attributed to smoking.

- Men are more likely than women to drink and drink in harmful ways. In 23 out of 31 countries the male death rate from chronic liver disease is at least double that of women.
- Men are more likely than women to use illicit drugs and for the outcome to be negative. For example, 82 per cent of heroin overdose deaths occur in men, with men in their 30s most likely to die from heroin overdoses.
- In all but four of 26 countries there was an overall increase in the rate of new cases of HIV in men over the last decade. This increase was greater among men than women.

The EU-commissioned *The State of Men's Health in Europe* brings together the official epidemiological data from across Europe and across all major disease areas from cancer and heart disease to mental health. Its lead author Professor Alan White of Leeds Metropolitan University says: "For the first time we have a clear picture of men's health across the EU. Previously we had a series of partial pictures by country or disease area. This now brings it all together so that policy-makers at all levels across Europe can see exactly what they're dealing with and learn from each other."

Men are dying prematurely but the rates at which they do this vary enormously from country to country and even within countries according to region or social group. This is evidenced by the massive differences in male life-expectancy: just 66 years in Latvia compared to 80 in Iceland, for example - a 21% longer life.

President of the European Men's Health Forum Dr Ian Banks says: "This is not just about health. Premature male death undermines the economy, undermines families, undermines women and their health and undermines our social security and health services.'

"Europe will have far fewer men of working age in the years to come so if we're to succeed economically we need them to be in decent health."

Provided by University of Sussex

Citation: How men's lifestyles double their risk of an early death (2011, June 17) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-06-men-lifestyles-early-death.html>

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