

'Never married' men still more likely to die from cancer

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It is known that the unmarried are in general more likely to die than their married counterparts and there is some indication that the divide is in fact getting worse. New research published in BioMed Central's open access journal *BMC Public Health* looks at the changes in cancer survival over the past 40 years and show that the difference in mortality between the married and never married, especially between married and never married men, has also increased.

Håkon Kravdal from the University of Oslo and Dr Astri Syse from the Cancer Registry of Norway looked at survival data from patients diagnosed with cancer between 1970 and 2007 and compared this to their marital status – married, never married, divorced/separated, or widowed. Their results showed that the unmarried have a greater risk of mortality regardless of age, education, site of tumour, time since diagnosis, and cancer stage. Additionally, over the 40 years for the study, the effect of never having been married on [mortality](#) increased from 18% to 35% for men and from 17% to 22% for women.

Dr Astri Syse explained, "The differences in survival between unmarried and married people with cancer could possibly be explained by better general health at time of diagnosis or better adherence to treatment regimes and follow ups. Håkon Kravdal continued, "One problem with this kind of study is that cohabiting people are scattered throughout the never married, divorced/separated, or widowed groups. Consequently, presuming cohabiters to have the same benefits as married couples, the actual differences between couples and singletons are probably much

higher."

More information: Changes over time in the effect of marital status on cancer survival, Håkon Kravdal and Astri Syse, *BMC Public Health* (in press)

Provided by BioMed Central

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