

Health gap in Europe wider than ever

March 26 2013

Life expectancy in Russia has marked time since the collapse of the Soviet Union but risen in its former eastern-bloc allies, *The Lancet* reported on Wednesday.

Alcohol, tobacco and [road accidents](#) head a list of problems that lie behind [premature death](#) in the former Communist eastern Europe but remain chronic in many of the ex-Soviet republics, it said.

In Russia, male life expectancy at birth was 63 years in 1990, but fell to 58 in 2000 before rising to 62 in 2009. For women, it was 74 years in 1990, 72 in 2000 and 74 in 2009.

By comparison, expected lifespan for both sexes in the European Union (EU) rose smoothly by around six years from 1990 to 2009, to almost 80 years.

The EU figures factor in former Soviet bloc countries of eastern and [central Europe](#) which joined the EU in 2004.

"The situation changed when the Communist bloc collapsed," according to a paper published by *The Lancet*.

"Life expectancy improved almost at once in Poland, the former East Germany and what was then Czechoslovakia, but the improvement was delayed until 1993 in Hungary and a few years later in Romania and Bulgaria."

But in Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, life expectancy fell after the fall of the Soviet Union, driven in part by a sharp decline in [health systems](#).

In eight other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)—the rump organisation gathering old Soviet states—it edged upwards.

Male life expectancy at birth in the CIS is now around 12 years behind that for the EU, and for women, it is eight years, The Lancet reported.

"On the basis of 2010 [mortality rates](#), a 20-year-old man in Russia has only a 63-percent chance of reaching 60 years, whereas a similar man in western Europe has a 90 percent chance," said one paper in a series published by the journal on [health disparities](#) in Europe.

(c) 2013 AFP

Citation: Health gap in Europe wider than ever (2013, March 26) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-03-health-gap-europe-wider.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.