

Cardiovascular disease disproportionately affects middle-income countries, finds study

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Cardiovascular disease (CVD) remains the most common cause of death across Europe, but while CVD mortality rates are generally decreasing, the decline is much less in middle-income countries than in high-income countries, according to new data from the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) Atlas of Cardiology, published in the *European Heart Journal*.

The fourth edition of ESC Atlas statistics again demonstrates that CVD is the most common cause of [death](#) in the 55 ESC member countries studied. There are over 3 million deaths due to CVD per year—the equivalent of 8,500 deaths per day—which represents 37.4% of all deaths annually. Of note, age-standardized mortality rates (ASMRs) were at least 2.5-times higher in [middle-income countries](#) than in [high-income countries](#). Between 1990 and 2021, median CVD ASMRs decreased by more than 50% in all high-income countries, but in middle-income countries, the decrease was less than 12%.

According to the latest data from ESC member countries:

- CVD mortality is higher in middle-income countries (46% of all deaths in [males](#); 53% of all deaths in females) than in high-income countries (30% of all deaths in males; 34% of all deaths in females).
- The estimated age-standardized potential years of life lost was more than three times higher in middle-income countries than in high-income countries.

Professor Adam Timmis, first author of the report, said, "The new statistics on deaths due to CVD illustrate the scale of the problem and underscore the urgent need for effective strategies in prevention and management. The inequalities between middle- and high-income ESC member countries likely reflect heterogeneous exposures to a range of environmental, socioeconomic and clinical risk factors."

According to the latest data from ESC member countries:

- Around one-quarter of persons aged ≥ 15 years were estimated to be tobacco-product users (25.4%), with rates as high as 40.9% among males in middle-income countries.

- Hypertension affected >40% of both sexes in middle-income countries vs.

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