



## The state of men's health across 17 European Countries

### Executive Summary

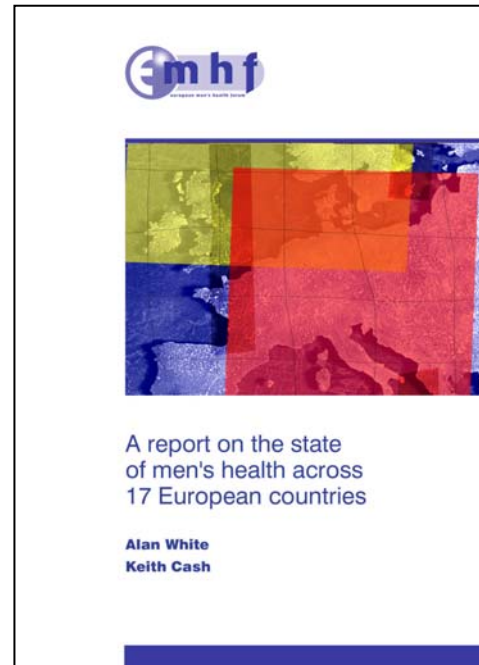
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### Abstract

The higher rate of premature death for men when compared to women is an established fact, but the overall state of men's health has not been previously examined on a European scale. This report brings together the latest available mortality and morbidity figures on men's health for the current 15 European Union countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom) along with Norway and Switzerland to present such an overview.

The report is in three sections: the first relates to general information on the male population, men's perceptions of their health, life expectancy, and causes of death; the second section focuses on specific disease states; and the third section on lifestyle issues.

The findings of the report demonstrate that there are worrying inequalities in men's health and these exist between men from differing countries, and also between men and women. The overall conclusion of the report is that health is gendered and that health policy, health research and health care should more closely relate to the needs of both men and women.



### Main findings

- The male population of these 17 countries amounts more than 190 millions of which the majority are within the age bracket 25-64.
- Men's life expectancy is increasing at a rate faster than that of women, but for many of the countries in this study the projected life expectancy of men in 2020 still has men with a shorter life than women were enjoying in the 1980's.
- The changes in marital status and the increasing trend towards divorce will leave more men alone as they enter old age.
- Men tend to view their health as better than women and tend to report less disability.
- There are many success stories, with decreases in lung cancer, coronary heart disease, etc that suggests that men's health is improving.

- When the causes of death are examined cardiovascular disease is the biggest cause of premature death, followed by deaths as a result of malignant neoplasm with prostate cancer rising in importance.
- The high level of deaths as a result of accidents and external causes further reinforces the implications of men's risk taking behaviour.
- There are worrying trends regarding male suicide with high levels of deaths in older men and an increase in the number of young men committing suicide.
- There is a changing pattern of HIV/AIDS with an increase in heterosexual transmission.
- Levels of sexually transmitted disease in some countries are on the increase.
- There are marked differences between the countries for many of the health conditions examined.
- Men have a distinct and universal disadvantage in all the major disease states that can affect both genders.
- When compared to women, men have a higher rate of incidence for the majority of cancers and a higher rate of premature death across a wide range of major illnesses.
- The data also suggests that there is an issue of under diagnosis and delayed treatment as there are no physiological or medical reasons why men should be more susceptible to all disease states. The most probable cause being a reluctance to seek medical help.

## Recommendations

- The findings of the report suggest that public health strategies in European countries need to address the respective health needs of both men and women rather than rely on a 'one policy fits all' approach.
- Health policy should be formulated that is gender sensitive and should target men as a specific population group.
- Gender must become 'mainstream' and influence the provision and delivery of health services.
- Research must ensure that gender is considered as a possible variable and included where appropriate.
- Health indicators should be collected that are disaggregated for both gender and country to enable a more sensitive understanding of health needs; this is especially true for data on morbidity.
- There is a need to foster collaboration and coordination between European countries to facilitate the dissemination and implementation of example of good practice.

## Overall conclusions

- Even though health is improving for many conditions there are still marked inequalities that exist, both between countries and between men and women.
- There are clear gender-related differences in population health needs.
- National public health strategies should address these needs by promoting gender sensitive policies.
- This report provides a corner stone from which to launch much needed additional research.